DECISION MEMO
Odell Lookout Trail Reconstruction

USDA Forest Service
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Wisdom/Wise River of Ranger District(s)
Beaverhead County
Township 3 South, Range 13 West, Section 18

Background
This project is located on the top half mile of non-motorized FS system trail #3010 which climbs straight up the ridge to the top of Odell Mountain. The trail is in the Pioneer Landscape, West Pioneer Wilderness Study Area and West Pioneer Inventoried Roadless Area at T3S, R13W, in Section 18 in Beaverhead County.

Decision
I have decided to authorize reconstruction of the top half mile of FS system trail #3010, replacing the current trail with approximately ¾ of a mile of new trail tread, switchbacks and/or climbing turns and rehabilitation of the current trail tread to prevent future use and soil erosion.

Mitigation and Design Features Required by This Decision:

Wildlife
- Crews will properly store all attractants to minimize potential impacts to transient grizzly bears. Attractants include but are not limited to food and beverages. Attractants should be stored in a bear-resistant container or hard-sided vehicle or hung at least 10 feet high and 4 feet out from any vertical support when unattended during the day.
- Trail will be situated away from forested stringers.

Heritage
- A heritage specialist/archaeologist will visit the site during the reconstruction project.
- If heritage resources are located we will ensure through project redesign heritage resources will not be adversely impacted.
- If cultural resources are located and cannot be avoided operations in the area of the discovery shall cease until analysis and evaluation of the heritage resources are completed, including consultation with the Montana SHPO and appropriate Indian Tribes.

Vegetation
- Noxious weeds will be controlled following procedures in the Noxious Weed Control Program ROD (2002) for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.
Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Action

An action may be categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA) if it is within one of the categories identified by the USDA in 7 CFR part 1b.3 or 7 CFR part 1b.3 or 36 CFR 220.6(d) or (e), and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative effect on the quality of the human environment.

This project has been reviewed in accordance with FSH 1909.15 Chapter 30. I have determined the project fits the following category: 36 CFR 220.6(e) (1):

*Construction and reconstruction of trails.*

I have determined this category is the appropriate one to authorize this decision because this trail reconstruction project fits the described Categorically Excluded category.

My decision is based on a review of the project record that shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgement of incomplete or unavailable information. The record includes the following resource specialist reports or documentation of review:

*Biological Assessments for Aquatic and Wildlife TES species*
*Tribal and Heritage Resource Findings*
*Recreation Review—Inventoried Roadless*

By definition, categorical exclusions do not individually or cumulatively have significant effects on the human environment (40 CFR 1508.4). Resource specialists considered direct and indirect effects from the proposed action coupled with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. I have examined the proposed action and the effects analyses disclosed in the resource specialist reports listed above and conclude that without notable individual effects from the proposed action, there would be no discernable cumulative effects.

The interdisciplinary team reviewed the resource conditions listed in FSH 1909.15 Chapter 30 (31.2) and other concerns applicable to this project to determine whether any extraordinary circumstances exist. The mere presence of one or more of the resource conditions listed below does not preclude the use of a categorical exclusion. It is the existence of a cause-effect relationship between a proposed action and the potential effect on these resource conditions, if such a relationship exists, and the degree of potential effect of a proposed action on these resource conditions that determine whether extraordinary circumstances exist.

The following table provides a summary of the final determinations regarding the cause-effect relationship between the proposed action and degree of potential effect on the resource conditions in the left hand column in the table below. All specialist reports (available in the project record) have been finalized and I have reviewed them in detail prior to reaching this decision.

**Table 1. Potential Effects to Resource Conditions Considered for Extraordinary Circumstances**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE CONDITION</th>
<th>POTENTIAL EFFECT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat,</td>
<td>Threatened or Endangered Species: There would be no adverse effects to grizzly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed</td>
<td>bears, canada lynx, or their habitat. The proposed action will not jeopardize</td>
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<tr>
<td>proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.</td>
<td>continued existence of Designated Proposed Species—Wolverine.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No Impact – all other Sensitive terrestrial, aquatic, and plant species.</td>
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<tr>
<td>RESOURCE CONDITION</td>
<td>POTENTIAL EFFECT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds</td>
<td>No municipal watershed, wetland or floodplain within the project area, therefore we anticipate no negative effects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas.</td>
<td>The proposed project is located within the West Pioneer Wilderness Study Area; the proposed project will not affect the suitability of the WSA for potential wilderness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAS)</td>
<td>The proposed project is located within the West Pioneer Inventoried Roadless Area (No. 1-006); the proposed project will not affect the roadless characteristics of the IRA.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Natural Areas (RNAs)</td>
<td>There are no research natural areas within the project area. Therefore, negative impacts to any research natural areas are not projected.</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites. Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.</td>
<td>Section 106 consultation will take place under the auspice of R1 Programmatic Agreement with Montana SHPO.</td>
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I find that the determinations reached in the extraordinary circumstances consideration table above maintain a high degree of certainty. Therefore, I am confident that this project would have no significant effect on the human environment, individually or cumulatively, and no uncertainty exists regarding this degree of potential effect. I have reviewed the individual specialist reports submitted for detailed descriptions of the methods and data used to come to these determinations if a written analysis was required.

**Scoping and Public Involvement**

The project was first published on the SOPA on May 23rd 2016. The proposal was provided to 79 interested members of the public, organizations, tribes and other government agencies for scoping period from May 23rd, through June 23rd, 2016. One response recommending project completion was received.

**Forest Plan Direction**

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires the development of long-range land and resource management plans. The Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest Plan was approved in 2009 and provides guidance for all natural resource management activities on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. NFMA also requires that all projects and activities be consistent with the plans. The decision is consistent with Forest Plan direction including all applicable standards.

**Forestwide Goals and Objectives**

**Recreation Objectives—Trails:** Maintain motorized and non-motorized trails to standard. Reconstruct trails that do not meet standards based on the following Region One priorities: a) Safety hazards to users. b) Actual or Potential resource damage, especially in key watersheds. c) Level of use.(FP pg. 31)
Findings Required by Law

National Forest Management Act - The Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) was approved in 2009, as required by this Act. The Forest Plan has been reviewed in consideration of this project and the project meets all applicable management direction, including consistency with all applicable standards.

On April 9, 2012 the Department of Agriculture issued a final planning rule for National Forest System land management planning (2012 Rule) 77 FR 68 [21162-21276]). None of the requirements of the 2012 Rule apply to projects and activities on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, as the 2009 Beaverhead-Deerlodge Forest Plan was developed under a prior planning rule (36 CFR §219.17(c)). Furthermore, the 2012 Rule explains, “[The 2012 Rule] supersedes any prior planning regulation. No obligations remain from any prior planning regulation, except those that are specifically included in a unit’s existing plan. Existing plans will remain in effect until revised” (36 CFR §219.17).

Endangered Species Act - See the “Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Action” Section of this document, and Table 1, for a summary of the effects of this project to Endangered, Threatened, or Candidate Species for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF (list dated January 8, 2015). The summary is based on a more thorough analysis available in the project record. This project is consistent with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act.

Sensitive Species (Forest Service Manual 2670) - This direction requires analysis of potential impacts to sensitive species and the Regional Forester approved the sensitive species list on February 25, 2011 (updated August 26, 2011 to include white bark pine). Our review of the potential effects of this decision upon the sensitive species has been completed and the analysis documented in the project file and Resource Condition Table above.

Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898) - This Order requires consideration of whether projects would disproportionately affect minority or low-income populations in or around the project area. Based on internal review and public scoping, the proposed action did not identify any adversely impacted local minority or low-income populations.

Clean Water Act – The intent of the Act is to restore and maintain the integrity of waters. The Forest Service complies with this Act through the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs). This decision incorporates Best Management Practices to ensure protection of soil and water resources and complies with the Clean Water Act and State water quality standards.

Clean Air Act – Under this Act, areas of the country were designated as Class I, II or III airsheds for “Prevention of Significant Deterioration” purposes. There will be no air quality impacts as a result of this decision.

The National Historic Preservation Act – As discussed earlier in this document and in detail in the project file, impacts to cultural resources are not expected.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act – There will be no known substantial losses of migratory bird habitat expected from the implementation of this proposal.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – This Act requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental effects. This decision memo and the project record provide documentation of NEPA compliance.

Other Laws or Requirements – The proposed action is consistent with all other Federal, State, and/or local laws or requirements.
Administrative Review Opportunities

Decisions made under Categorical Exclusions are not subject to objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218. Decisions made under Categorical Exclusions are not subject to objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218. Permittees, however, may appeal this decision pursuant to Department of Agriculture regulations 36 CFR 214.

Implementation Date

This decision is not subject to objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218 and may begin immediately. Work is expected to commence in July of 2016.

Contact Person

Supporting documentation for this decision is available for public review at the Wisdom Ranger District Office, 300 Forest Road, Wisdom, MT 59761.

Further information about the decision can be obtained from Russ Riebe at the Wisdom Ranger District during normal office hours (weekdays, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) at the address above. Phone: 406-689-3243; by mail, or send request via email: to riebe@fs.fed.us.

Responsible Official

/s/ Russell B. Riebe       June 23, 2016

(RUSSELL, B. RIEBE)       Date
District Ranger
Wisdom/Wise River Ranger Districts

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