DECISION MEMO
North Zone (Legacy Trails) Trail Stabilization Project

USDA FOREST SERVICE
Rocky Mountain Region (R2)
Shoshone National Forest
Wapiti and Greybull Ranger District
Park County, Wyoming

Background
The North Zone of the Shoshone National Forest proposed to implement a trail stabilization project, known as the Legacy Trail Reconstruction Project on the North Zone. The proposal is similar to other actions that have been implemented on the Forest (i.e., the reconstruction/stabilization work for the Ishawooa Trail).

The Shoshone National Forest proposed the trail rehabilitation work, primarily in the Gunbarrel fire area and the Jim Mountain area in the North Fork of the Shoshone River drainage, and Little Venus Creek area of the Greybull River.

These systems trails are in need of reconstruction, stabilization and maintenance after wildfires. The trails are located on the Greybull and Wapiti Districts. It is the responsibility of the Forest Service to maintain these system trails up to standard and to provide recreation opportunities, reduce resource damage, and protect human health and safety.

The trail work is a high priority to be completed because of the immediate need for reconstruction and maintenance and to correct safety problems and resource impacts.

An environmental review was conducted to evaluate any issues and concerns specific to the potential effects of the proposed action on natural resources within the project area.

Our analysis of this proposal indicates that it falls into a category of actions that may be excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS. Therefore, as no extraordinary circumstances were identified which would significantly affect the environment; my decision is documented in a Decision Memo under Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Category 31.2(1): Construction and reconstruction of trails.

Decision
Based upon review of the proposal, I have decided to implement the proposed action as summarized below.

The Shoshone National Forest, North Zone proposed to implement trail work projects within the North Zone in the 2009 and 2010 field seasons. There are three geographic areas involved in the decision: 1) Gunbarrel fire area, 2) Jim Mountain area (Gunbarrel and Jim Mountain areas were affected by the 2008 Gunbarrel fire), and 3) the Venus Creek area (affected by the 2006 Little Venus fire). The majority of the proposal is located in the Wapiti Ranger District, in Park County, Wyoming, with the exception of the Venus Creek area, which is in the Greybull Ranger District.

Areas affected by these recent wildland fires are proposed for trail reconstruction and stabilization to bring the system trails into compliance with Forest Plan and safety standards and guidelines and to reduce hazard trees and potential erosion.

Trails would be stabilized so that users would have a trail to follow and not create new trails on the hillside or across burned areas, reducing resource impacts. After the wildfires, there are extensive areas of hazard trees near the trail or downed trees across the trail that will be removed.

Resource impacts caused by ongoing erosion would be reduced and users would have a trail to follow and not create new trails on the hillside. The approved actions would make the trail safer, but still meet
wilderness objectives and provide for an experience that provides a high degree of challenge, self-reliance, and risk where the trails are located in wilderness. Visitor use numbers, campsite impacts or visitor encounters are not intended or anticipated to increase substantially along the trail corridor as a result of this action.

The decision and actions being implemented are the most expeditious, cost efficient methods available to address concerns in terms of human health and safety, wilderness management and trail maintenance, and the least impact to the wilderness resource and the visitor experience.

The decision involves numerous trails that were proposed for stabilization work; all are system trails that are in need of reconstruction, stabilization and maintenance after the Gunbarrel and Little Venus fires.

The trails are located on the Greybull and Wapiti Ranger Districts, some in wilderness and some outside wilderness and it is the responsibility of the Forest Service to maintain these system trails to standard and to provide recreation opportunities, reduce resource damage, and protect human health and safety.

The trail work is a high priority to be completed because of the immediate need for reconstruction and maintenance after the fire and to correct safety problems and reduce resource impacts.

The trails are primary and secondary trail system trails and are used by horses and pack stock and hikers as the main access and transportation routes into the backcountry and wilderness areas of the North Zone.

Public involvement and an environmental review was conducted to evaluate any issues and concerns specific to the potential effects of the proposed action on natural resources within the project area.

**Decision**

Specifically, the Decision consists of trail reconstruction as summarized in this general project description:

- The objective of the project work is the stabilization and reconstruction work of the identified trails.
  - Work would be preformed by a contractor. The contractor would be authorized to camp in proximity to the work site since it is located in a remote setting.
  - Implementation is proposed for late spring and would be conducted during the 2009 and 2010 field season (approximately May 1-September 30). Construction work could be carried out over two field seasons.
- Trail reconstruction work primarily consists of–
  - Restoring the original trail template, following existing alignment that was present prior to the fires.
  - Repairing and reshaping trail tread, reconstruct switchbacks, restoring drainage structures to reduce erosion, clearing rocks, removing down trees and hazard trees, clearing and brushing as needed, and building minimal rock retaining walls as needed.
  - A large supply of fire killed trees close to the trail exists, they would be used as barrier/retaining logs along the trail tread as needed. Native materials would be used for the barrier logs and any rock retaining walls.
- Trail maintenance work primarily consists of–
  - Reshaping trail tread, restoring drainage structures and water bars. Replace log retaining barriers as needed.
These trails are included for trail work in the Gunbarrel Fire Area:

- **Trail # 759 Clearwater Creek Trail**, Mileage 4.6, Secondary Class 2 Trail from Clearwater Creek Trailhead to end of trail.

- **Trail # 761.5 Big Creek Trail**, Mileage, 12.5, Way Class 1 Trail from “Chinese Wall” area, and Public Fishing Access on State land, across the Shoshone River to junction of Trout Peak Trail # 761.

- **Trail # 764 Gunbarrel Creek Trail**, Mileage 6.1, Secondary Class 2 Trail from parking area of Highway 14/16/20 near Absorka Lodge to end of trail.

- **Trail # 790 Goff Creek Trail**, Mileage 3.0, Secondary Class 2 Trail from Fishhawk Trailhead to junction of Libby Creek trail # 791.

- **Trail # 791 Libby Creek Trail**, Mileage 5.0, Secondary Class 2 Trail from Eagle Creek Trailhead through Cross Sabers Guest Ranch to Libby Creek basin.

To summarize the proposed 2009 field season work in the Gunbarrel area, work consists of removal of downfall and hazard trees and loose rock removal on approximately 23.9 miles of trails and removal of 630 danger trees. For the 2010 field season, work consists of approximately 5280 linear feet (LF) of reconstruction, removal of downfall and hazard trees and loose rock removal on approximately 23.9 miles of trails work. Work primarily involves restoring the original trail template, following existing alignment that was within the Gunbarrel Fire area of 2008. Work will include clearing, removing slough and berm, borrow, reshaping backslopes, reshaping trail tread and switchbacks, installing native log barriers, restoring drainage structures and waterbars, and removing rocks, roots and stumps.

Outside of the burn area, maintenance operations will include work on approximately 7.3 miles of trails; maintenance will be performed one time each year. Trail maintenance segments are outside of the wilderness area.

These trails are proposed for trail work in the Jim Mountain Area:

- **Trail # 762 Jim Mountain Trail**, Mileage 8.1, Secondary Class 2 Trail from Jim Mountain Trailhead to junction of West Trout Creek Trail # 763.1a.

- **Trail # 762.1a Jim Mountain Cut-Across**, Mileage, 2.4, Secondary Class 2 Trail from junction of Jim Mountain Trail # 762 to junction of Trout Creek Trail # 763.

- **Trail # 763 Trout Creek Trail**, Mileage 11.1, Secondary Class 2 Trail from junction of Four Bear Trail # 763.1a and Jim Mountain Cut-Across to junction of Dead Indian Trail # 600.

- **Trail # 763.1a West Trout Creek Trail**, Mileage 2.4, Way Class 1 Trail from junction of Trout Creek Trail # 763 to junction of Jim Mountain Trail # 762.
• **Trail # 763.1b Four Bear Trail**, Mileage 1.4, Secondary Class 2 Trail from junction of Trout Creek Trail # 763 and Jim Mountain Cut-Across Trail # 762.1a to the Forest boundary on Four Bear Trail # 763.1b.

To summarize the proposed 2009 field season work in the Jim Mountain area, work consists of removal of downfall and hazard trees and loose rock removal on approximately **11.5** miles of trails, removal of **300** danger trees, construction of **10** rock cairns and **60 linear feet** (LF) of trail puncheon. For the 2010 field season, work consists of approximately **5280** LF of reconstruction work and removal of downfall and hazard trees and loose rock removal on approximately **11.5** miles of trails.

Work primarily involves restoring the original trail template, following existing alignment that was within the Gunbarrel fire. Work will include clearing, removing slough and berm, borrow, reshaping backslopes, reshaping trail tread and switchbacks, installing native log barriers, restoring drainage structures and waterbars, and removing rocks, roots and stumps.

For trail work outside the burned areas, maintenance operations will include work on approximately **14.1** miles of trails; maintenance will be performed one time each year.

All trail work described for the Jim Mountain area is outside of the wilderness area.

**These trails are proposed for trail work in the Little Venus Fire Area:**

• **Trail # 763.1b Four Bear Trail**, Mileage 1.4, Secondary Class 2 Trail from junction of Trout Creek Trail # 763 and Jim Mountain Cut-Across Trail # 762.1a to the Forest boundary on Four Bear Trail # 763.1b.

• **Trail #637 Greybull River High Water Trail**, Mileage 3.3, Mainline Class 3 Trail from Jack Creek Trailhead to Greybull River Trail #655.

• **Trail #655 Greybull River Trail**, Mileage 12, Mainline Class 3 Trail from Greybull River High Water Trail #637 to end of the burn area on the Greybull River Trail #655.

• **Trail #655/1A Jack Creek Trail**, Mileage 4.1, Secondary Class 2 Trail beginning of burn area on Jack Creek Trail #655.1A to junction of Francis Fork/Haymaker Trail #657.

• **Trail #655.2A Warhouse/Stuart Creek Loop Trail**, Mileage 1.0, Mainline Class 3 Trail from junction of the Anderson Creek Trail #663 heading east to the top of the ridge on Warhouse/Stuart Trail 655.2A.

• **Trail #655.2B Zig-Zag Trail**, Mileage 2.0, Secondary Class 2 Trail from junction of the Greybull River Trail #655 to junction of Vick Creek Cut-Across Trail #642.

• **Trail #658.1 Boulder Basin Trail**, Mileage 2.0, Mainline Class 3 Trail from junction of the Warhouse/Stuart Trail #655.2A to end of burn area on Boulder Basin Trail #659.1.

**Project Design Features**

Stipulations for implementation and project design features to minimize environmental effects have been identified and are part of the decision. These operational and procedural requirements include:

- All persons involved with this contract/operation will comply with the requirements of the Grizzly Bear Food Storage Special Orders (Order #90-0813, superseded by #04-00-104) in effect for this area in the conduct of any and all activities authorized (storage of attractants and maintaining a safe distance).
The authorized forest officer may order an immediate temporary suspension of all human activity associated with the contract/operation, if needed, to resolve potential and existing grizzly bear/human conflicts. The authorized forest officer would assure compliance with regulations and best management practices in order to prevent grizzly bear/human conflicts, and to minimize injuries if an encounter should occur.

- If inadvertent subsurface discovery of cultural resources occurs, stop work provisions would be implemented and the forest archaeologist contacted.

- Weed-free certified feed is required for horse/pack stock.

The contractor must furnish all labor, materials, equipment, tools, livestock, transportation and supplies and perform all work required to complete the project in accordance with drawings, specifications, and provisions of the contract. The trails would remain open to the public during operations, with the exception of short periods during reconstruction and felling operations or as public safety dictates.

**Scoping and Public Involvement**

Internal scoping and an environmental review were conducted to evaluate the issues and concerns specific to the potential effects of the proposed action on resources or other values within the project area. This project was listed on the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) Report.

No other actions or alternatives were identified that would meet the need.

No significant adverse effects on the physical, biological, economic, or social elements of the human environment were identified.

**Decision Rationale and Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Action**

This action falls under Category 1, in Section 31.2 of the Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 – *Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook* – “Construction and Reconstruction of Trails.”

Based on internal and external scoping, field reviews, specialist’s input and past experience, and project design measures, the effects of implementing this action would be of limited context and intensity and would result in little or no environmental effects to either the physical, biological, or social components of the environment. In my decision, I have included the identified project design features for implementation to minimize any environmental effects or for site enhancement. These operational and procedural requirements (design features) are listed above.

**Forest Plan Direction/Findings Required by Other Laws**

This decision is consistent with laws, regulations, and policy, and directions/standards and guidelines in the Shoshone Forest Plan, as amended.

**Finding of No Extraordinary Circumstances**

Extraordinary circumstances, such as steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, threatened and endangered species, congressionally designated areas, wilderness, inventoried roadless areas, research natural areas, and cultural resource management implications were considered. I have determined these resources are not present or would not be adversely affected.

**Summary**

I have reviewed the proposal and determined that no significant effects would occur from its implementation. The effects of the actions are not highly controversial and are similar to other actions that have been implemented in the area.

No significant adverse effects on the physical, biological, economic, or social elements of the human environment were identified at this time.

The action is not related to any actions that would result in significant cumulative impacts when viewed with ongoing and reasonably foreseeable actions.
Implementation
This decision can be implemented immediately.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities
This decision is not subject to administrative appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8 (a) (4).

Contacts
For further information on this decision, contact Terry Root, District Ranger or Bill Oliver/Dallas Cooley, Project Leads, 203A Yellowstone Ave., Cody, Wyoming 82414, telephone 307-527-6921.

/s/ Marty Sharp 5-15-2009

Terry A. Root Date
District Ranger

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA’s TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.