Decision Memo
Detroit Ranger District Trail Reconstruction Projects
USDA Forest Service
Detroit Ranger District
Willamette National Forest
Marion and Linn Counties, Oregon

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to repair sections of several trails on the Detroit Ranger District which are causing excessive damage to the landscape, including concerns with soil erosion and sedimentation in waterways. These sections of trails are causing resource damage because of the overly steep grades (>25%), trail routing through wet areas and/or lack of drainage structure on the trail course. Bridges are needed to provide for safe crossing.

The need for the project is to reroute or repair trail sections that are causing damage to the landscape, watersheds and associated resources. Planning for trail improvements would follow standards and specifications established in the USDA Forest Service Trails Management Handbook FSH 2309.18, including specifications on maximum grade, frequency of drainage structure, guidelines for safety of user groups and requirements established by engineering specifications on structures that require engineer consultation.

Proposed Action

The trails program for the Santiam River Zone, Detroit Ranger District of Willamette National Forest has discovered resource concerns with several trails. The Forest Service proposes to repair each trail with design improvements that will adhere to Forest Service specifications. The proposed projects are:

- **Kopetski Trail #4157** - realign approximately ¾ of a mile of the trail to eliminate the need for the replacement of a log stringer bridge over Opal Creek, thus reducing significant infrastructure maintenance costs.

- **Little North Fork Trail #3338** - replace a trail bridge at Little Cedar Creek at a narrower crossing just downstream of the previous bridge location. The approaches would be realigned.

- **Opal Lake Trail #3372** - decommission and rehabilitate the current steep trail and wet meadow crossing, and relocate the entire trail to a more stable and resilient location. This would involve construction of approximately one mile of trail to provide the access to Opal Lake.
- **South Breitenbush Gorge Trail #3366** - relocate trail out of wet areas or install trail structures to prevent user damage to wet areas. Installation of as many as three trail bridges could occur to address resource damage at creek crossings.

- **South Breitenbush Trail #3375** – relocate and realign multiple poorly located sections of trail off steep slopes, and out of meadows, to improve the public safety and provide resource protection.

- **Bingham Ridge Trail #3421** - decommission and rehabilitate the first ¼ mile of trail and replace it with approximately ½ mile of new trail in a location that would follow a gently-graded course with frequent drainage opportunities to increase the stability of the trail; and reduce damage to the surrounding landscape from erosion and sedimentation in waterways.

- **Swallow Lake Trail #3488** – decommission and rehabilitate approximately one mile of the current trail, and construct approximately 1½ miles of new tread in a more stable and resilient location. This project will provide benefits to the landscape by reducing the amount of soil erosion caused by excessive trail grades and no drainage.

- **Detroit Lake State Park Campground Trail** - improve and extend the access trail network to create a full loop trail around the perimeter of the park. Approximately ¾ miles of additional trail length would be added to the current trail mileage within the boundaries of the park. Creating a loop trail through the park would benefit public safety by providing an alternate area to walk off of busy park roads.

Trail projects on Detroit Ranger District will follow all: 1) guidelines established by the Wilderness Act including the use of non-motorized tools within Wilderness Areas, 2) restrictions on working in-stream and limit such activities to the in-stream water work window, 3) wildlife seasonal restrictions, and 4) fire restrictions when such rules are applicable. No trees would be felled to create the trail course beyond the limits of the 8-inch (dbh) parameters established.

**Scoping and Public Involvement**

Interested parties, including area trail user groups, members of the public contacted at trailheads and organizations known to do work, or have facilities nearby, have been contacted for questions and concerns with the project proposals. Conversations with groups and individuals have been included in the project files. These trail projects were discussed at monthly meetings with interested local groups including the Detroit Lake Recreation Area Business Association and Federal Lakes Recreation Committee for Detroit Lake in April 2012. All of the projects included in this decision memo have been published in the Forest Schedule of Proposed Action listing on or before April 2012. Tribal Consultation has started as of April 2012. A Public Notice for a 30-public comment period was published in the Statesman Journal on April 16, 2012. Program managers have posted information with contact details at trailhead locations and will continue to do so to include public trail users in the discussion with trail plans. All comments received to date have been in support of the planned action.
Categorical Exclusion Criteria

Decisions may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment when they are within one of the categories identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR part 1b.3 or one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 sections 31.12 or 32.2, and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect.

The specific category for this project is found in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Chapter 30, Section 36 CFR220.6(e)(1). This category covers, “Construction and reconstruction of trails.”

The table below evaluates whether there are extraordinary circumstances that would cause the proposed action to have significant environmental effects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extraordinary Circumstance to be Evaluated</th>
<th>Present?</th>
<th>Is project causing Significant Effect on this Resource?</th>
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</table>
| Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species | Unknown  | **T and E species** - Surveys are currently being conducted and necessary restrictions would be incorporated into the project design  
**Critical habitat** - Surveys are currently being conducted and necessary restrictions would be incorporated into the project design  
**Sensitive species** – Surveys are currently being conducted and necessary restrictions would be incorporated into the project design |
| Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds                                  | Yes      | No, project work will result in an improvement to current condition.                                                     |
| Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas or national recreation areas | Yes      | No, all impacts on the landscape would be beneficial to reduce erosive effects and improve watershed impacts caused by trails. Work will occur in a fashion that is consistent with the Wilderness Act. |
| Inventoried Roadless Areas or potential wilderness areas                        | No       | None present                                                                                                           |
| Research Natural Areas                                                          | No       | None present                                                                                                           |
| American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites                  | Unknown  | Interface with Tribal Groups is presently occurring.                                                                   |
| Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas                           | Unknown  | Surveys are being conducted on all projects to assess the impact to any cultural sites. Any located cultural sites would be protected and/or avoided. |
Currently collected information on the listed projects do not have concerns which would prevent the trail improvements from continuing. As concerns arise, issues will be recorded and addressed in each project file.

**Decision and Rationale for Decision**

Based on my review of the information presented in this document and the supporting documents in the project record, I have decided to implement the proposed action as described above. The action addresses the purpose for the project and the need to improve the listed trails and issues they pose with their current routes on the landscape. Upon completion of biological and archeological surveys, the projects will be designed to avoid any resources, if discovered, and incorporated in the final project design.

Through past experience and review of similar projects, I have concluded that this project is not a major Federal action. It will have limited context and intensity (40 CFR1508.27), individually or cumulatively, to the biological, physical, social, or economic components of the human environment. It does not pose a violation of Federal, State, or local law requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. The action that I have selected falls within a category established by the Forest Service that normally does not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment and no extraordinary circumstances exist that would cause the proposed action to have any significant environmental effects. Therefore this action is excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment, so neither will be prepared.

**Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations**

I find that this project complies with all laws, regulations and policies regarding, “Construction and reconstruction of trails,” as described in Forest Service Handbook 1901.15 National Environmental Policy Act Handbook. The table below outlines the major laws, regulations and policies with respect to, “construction and reconstruction of trails,” and displays how this project complies with those laws.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Enacted</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>How applied in this project</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Organic Act</td>
<td>This Law is the foundation for multiple use and Forest Service management of National Forest System Lands</td>
<td>Implementation of this project follows direction in this law for the Forest Service to manage National Forest System Lands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)</td>
<td>Creates the environmental impact statement (EIS) and environmental assessment (EA) as instruments of environmental policy. Requires public participation. Council on Environmental Quality regulations allow federal agencies</td>
<td>Scoping was conducted as required by NEPA. This project follows FSH 1909.15 Chapter 30 requirements for categorically excludable activities.</td>
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<td>1973</td>
<td>Endangered Species Act (ESA)</td>
<td>Provides broad protection for species of fish, wildlife and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered in the U.S. or elsewhere. Provisions are made for listing species, as well as for recovery plans and the designation of critical habitat for listed species. The Act outlines procedures for federal agencies to follow when taking actions that may jeopardize listed species, and contains exceptions and exemptions.</td>
<td>The project is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. Applicable procedures were followed with respect to threatened and/or endangered species. Specialists have been and are being consulted in regards to issues associated with the ESA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>National Forest Management Act (NFMA)</td>
<td>Requires the Secretary of Agriculture to assess forest lands, develop a management program based on multiple-use, sustained-yield principles, and implement a resource management plan for each unit of the National Forest System. It is the primary statute governing the administration of national forests.</td>
<td>This project was developed in full compliance with NFMA via compliance with the Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan 1990, as amended. The project follows appropriate standards and guidelines and management direction for the Management Allocations in the project area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Survey And Manage</td>
<td>Requires identification, mapping and management of known sites of Component 1 Survey and Manage Species.</td>
<td>This project is exempt from pre-disturbance surveys, but known site management may apply.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Wilderness Act</td>
<td>Requires all tools required for work in wilderness areas will follow the guidelines established by the act.</td>
<td>All site work will be conducted with adherence to these guidelines.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Clean Water Act</td>
<td>Requires all work conducted with stream channels will only be conducted during the in-stream water work window.</td>
<td>All work within stream banks or influencing stream banks will follow the rules established by the act.</td>
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**Appeal Rights**

No comments expressing concern or only supportive comments were received during the 30-day comment period; therefore, this project is not subject to appeal. 36 CFR 215.12.

**Implementation Date**

It is anticipated project work to begin in summer of 2012, upon letter to the file to authorize project work to proceed.
Contact Information

For further information, please contact Brad Peterson – Wilderness, Trails and Winter Recreation Manager, at the Detroit Ranger District, 44125 North Santiam Highway, Detroit, OR (503)854-3894, bcpeterson@fs.fed.us.

Approved by:

/S/ Grady A. McMahan 5/17/12

GRADY MCMAHAN Date

District Ranger
Detroit Ranger District
Willamette National Forest

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