Decision Memo

Huntington Canyon Trailhead Improvements

Manti-La Sal National Forest
Ferron-Price Ranger District
Emery County, Utah

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Approver: Darren Olsen
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Manti-La Sal National Forest
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INTRODUCTION
Public access to the Horse Canyon Trail (Forest Trail #5076) in Huntington Canyon is difficult when camping is occurring in the immediate vicinity of the trailhead. This commonly occurs during weekends throughout the summer and fall season.

Mill Canyon Trailhead (Forest Trail #5063) is geographically squeezed between Huntington Creek and Utah Highway 31 (U31). Parking availability, especially for those pulling horse trailers is very limited. Trailhead camping opportunities are not available.

Engineer Canyon, approximately 0.5 north of Mill Canyon along U31 has sufficient area for trailhead parking and camping. Linking Engineer Canyon to Mill Canyon with a non-motorized trail would provide these opportunities and alleviate congestion at Mill Canyon trailhead.

PROPOSED ACTION
The Ferron-Price Ranger District of the Manti-La Sal National Forest proposes improving the trailheads at Horse Canyon and Engineer Canyon.

Horse Canyon Trailhead Improvements
- Construct a gravel parking area approximately 0.15 acres in size accommodating up to three tow vehicles with horse trailers.
- Decommission one existing campsite where the parking area would be constructed.
- No camping would be allowed in the trailhead parking area (the graveled area referred to above as the 0.15 acre area).

Engineer Canyon Trailhead Improvements
- Construct a gravel parking area approximately 0.5 acres in size accommodating 6-7 tow vehicles with horse trailers.
- Improve the existing access road to existing dispersed campsites by resurfacing with gravel for approximately 450 feet.
- Extend the Huntington Pipeline Trail (Forest System Trail #5958) approximately 0.5 miles to provide access between Mill Canyon and Engineer Canyon Trailheads.
- Improve the two existing dispersed campsites in Engineer Canyon by installing fire rings and graveled spurs.
- Construct approximately 200 feet of log and block fencing to contain motorized use.

PURPOSE AND NEED
The Purpose for this proposal is to improve public access to Horse Canyon and Mill Canyon trails by providing facilities that serve the interest and needs of users.

The Need is to meet Manti-La Sal National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan direction for local road construction and reconstruction, trail construction and reconstruction, and dispersed recreation management.

PROJECT LOCATION
The Huntington Canyon Trailhead Improvements Project is located in Emery County on the Ferron-Price Ranger District of the Manti-La Sal National Forest approximately 20 miles northwest of Huntington, UT. The legal description of the improvements proposed for the Horse Canyon Trailhead is section 29, T15S, R7E, Salt Lake Base Meridian. The legal description of the improvements proposed for Engineer Canyon is sections 31 and 32, T14S, R7E, and section 6, T15S, R7E, Salt Lake Base Meridian. See Appendix A for project location maps.
DECISION TO BE MADE
Decide whether or not to implement the proposed trailhead improvements in Huntington Canyon. In order to make a decision about this proposal, the Forest Service needs to evaluate what environmental impacts, if any, would result from this decision. The Forest Service also needs to assure compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and follow the direction given in the Manti-La Sal National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP).

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
Letters describing this proposed action were mailed on January 20, 2012 to 46 individuals, groups and organizations believed to be interested. A news release describing this proposal was published in the Emery County Progress on January 17, 2012. A description of this proposal has also been available for public review on the forest’s external website since January 20, 2012.

Six comments were received during the scoping period which ended February 17, 2012. One additional comment was received after this date. Comments received were supportive of the proposal and offered suggestions on development of these trailheads.

Another 30-day comment period began with publication of a legal notice of proposed action in the Sun Advocate newspaper on April 3, 2012. Letters were mailed to the seven previous respondents informing them of this additional comment period. One response from a previous respondent was received. This comment was again supportive.

DECISION TO BE IMPLEMENTED
I have decided to implement the Huntington Canyon Trailhead Improvements Project with the following modifications to what was originally proposed.

Horse Canyon Trailhead Improvements
• Construct a gravel parking area approximately 0.15 acres in size to accommodate three tow vehicles with horse trailers. Improve the existing trailhead access road by resurfacing with gravel for approximately 400 feet. Pave this road as funding becomes available.
• Decommission one campsite and limit camping where the parking area would be constructed.
• Install a new trailhead kiosk to replace the existing one.
• Replace the fire ring at the remaining campsite adjacent to the trailhead.

Engineer Canyon/Mill Canyon Trailhead Improvements
The 48,000 acre Seeley Wildfire which began in June 2012 and subsequent flooding have dramatically changed conditions in this portion of the proposed project area. The Mill Canyon trailhead and mouth of Engineer Canyon have experienced multiple flood and debris flow events. These events are expected to continue for the next two or three years. Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) work has taken place and will continue in the project area. Until this work is completed and conditions stabilize, I have decided to defer implementation of the trailhead and dispersed campsite improvements at Engineer Canyon and to defer extension of the Huntington Pipeline Trail (Forest System Trail #5958).
REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THIS ACTION
This decision does not have individual or cumulative significant effects on the quality of the human environment. This project falls under 36 CFR 220.6, which allows categories of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment to be excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS). Specifically, this action falls into 36 CFR 220.6(d)(5) repair and maintenance of recreation sites and facilities. A project file and Decision Memo are not required but may be prepared at the discretion of the responsible official.

DECISION RATIONAL
This decision was made after careful consideration of the proposal, public involvement, and the entirety of the supporting record. No one fact or single piece of information led to this decision. Rather, a combination of factors contributed to it.

My decision is not unique. Approving the specified trailhead improvements and decommissioning one dispersed campsite is well understood and complies with existing Law, Regulation and Policy. Effects on the environment are minimal individually and collectively. My decision represents an action where effects are specifically understood and will be minimal. Some of the key factors used in reaching my decision are summarized below.

Consistency with the forest plan: This action is consistent with the following general direction in the 1986 Manti-La Sal National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan).

- Construct and reconstruct local roads to provide access for specific resource activities such as campgrounds, trailheads, timber sales, range allotments, leases etc. with the minimum amount surface disturbance and fitting the road to the topography (MLSNF LRMP, page III-41).

This action is also consistent with the following management area specific direction in the Forest Plan as the project site is located within an Undeveloped Motorized Recreation Area.

- “Emphasis for this management area is on "providing high quality dispersed recreation opportunities in areas characteristically receiving moderate to heavy levels of use” (MLSNF LRMP, page III-52).
- “On-site visual quality objective is partial retention or modification” (MLSNF LRMP, page III-53).
- “Provide facilities as appropriate, including development level one or two campgrounds. Trailheads, local roads, parking lots, and signing may also be provided”(MLSNF LRMP, III-53).

My decision to implement this project is consistent with both the general and management area specific direction because this project improves access for recreation activities on the forest, conforms with the visual quality objectives for the area, is consistent with a roaded-natural recreation opportunity setting, and improves trailhead facilities.
Extraordinary Circumstances 36 CFR 220.6(b)(1):
Existing resource conditions and potential extraordinary circumstances have been considered in making my decision. I have determined that there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the project.

1. Threatened and endangered species or their critical habitat. A review of the project area for listed and candidate plant, wildlife, and fish species that could occur found no suitable habitat for all species except the southwestern willow flycatcher. There is suitable habitat in the project area for this species, but none will be removed or disturbed as a result of this project. There will be “No effect” (Wildlife Report, Huntington Canyon Trailheads Improvement Project).

A review of the project for sensitive plant, terrestrial wildlife, and aquatic wildlife species considered 23 species. There will be “No Impact” to these species (Wildlife Report, Huntington Canyon Trailheads Improvement Project).

Management Indicator Species
Management Indicator Species (MIS) are a select group of species that can indicate change in habitat resulting from activities on the Forest. Management Indicator species associated with the Manti Division of the Manti-La Sal National Forest are Rocky Mountain Elk, Mule Deer, macro-invertebrates (aquatic insects), Northern Goshawk, and Golden Eagles. This project will have no impact on these species or their habitat (Wildlife Report, Huntington Canyon Trailheads Improvement Project).

2. Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds. There are floodplains, wetlands, and municipal watersheds in the project area, and no adverse effects are anticipated. Implementation of guidelines with respect to surface water control and soil and water conservation best management practices (SWCP) should provide adequate protection.

3. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas. This project area does not lie within any congressionally designated wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas. Consequently, this project will have no impact on these types of areas.

4. Inventory roadless areas. The project area does not lie within an inventoried roadless area. Consequently, this project will have no impact on these types of areas.

5. Research Natural Areas. The project area is not located within or adjacent to any Research Natural Areas (RNAs). Consequently, RNAs will not be affected.

6 & 7. Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas. A cultural resource reconnaissance has been completed for the entire project area. No artifacts or sites were identified. Section 106 consultation with Utah SHPO has been finalized with the determination of No Historic Properties (significant sites) Affected (see CE Review, Cultural Resources).

There are no conditions associated with this action that were identified during scoping and project analysis as potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. There are no extraordinary circumstances present related to this proposed action as listed in 36 CFR 220.6(b)(1).
V. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

To the best of my knowledge, my decision to approve the proposed project would comply with all applicable laws and regulations. My decision in relation to pertinent legal requirements is summarized below.

**National Forest Management Act of 1976:** The Forest Plan (1986), as amended, was developed as required by this Act. This long-range land and resource management plan provides guidance for all resource management activities in the Forest. The National Forest Management Act requires all projects and activities to be consistent with the Forest Plan. The Forest Plan has been reviewed in consideration of this project. My decision will be consistent with the Forest Plan and this Act.

**Best Practicable Science**
Upon review of the documentation and discussions with the resource specialists, I have determined that the practicable science has been properly considered, interpreted and the risks identified. Contrary science was not raised during the scoping or applicable comment periods. It is my opinion that the use of existing FS manual direction, protocols, and best management practices represent the best practicable science.

**National Historic Preservation Act:** My decision complies with this Act. No known cultural resources sites are present within the proposed project's area of Potential Effect. Consequently, the Forest Service has determined that this project will have no impact on NHPA sites. (See CE Review, Cultural Resources).

**Clean Water Act:** My decision complies with this Act. Trailhead and trail construction activities would employ SWCP's for wetlands, floodplains, and municipal supply watersheds specified in the Categorical Exclusion (CE) Review prepared for this project.

**Endangered Species Act:** My decision complies with this Act. A review of the project finds there would be NO effect on TE&S species or their habitat (Wildlife Report, Huntington Canyon Trailheads Improvement Project).

**Executive Order 12898. "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations."** The decision for this document will not amend or preclude any existing private or treaty rights in the National Forest. A review of potential effects to human health and safety and natural resources in the vicinity of minority and low-income communities did not identify any significant or disproportionately high or adverse effects in these areas because of the lack or residential houses in the vicinity of the existing and proposed development.

**Executive Order 13186. Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds. January 10, 2001.** The proposed action complies with the intent of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Executive Order 13186. There is suitable habitat on land adjacent to the project area for eight of the bird species evaluated. However, no habitat would be removed by this project and work would occur within already disturbed sites (Wildlife Report, Huntington Canyon Trailheads Improvement Project).
National Environmental Policy Act: The entirety of documentation for this project supports that the analysis and decision comply with this Act.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION DATE AND APPEAL OPPORTUNITY
Copies of this decision will be made available to those who expressed interest in this proposed action by submitting comment during the scoping period or during the 30-day comment period which began on April 3, 2012.

This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215.12(e)(1) as no substantive comments expressing concern or only supportive comments were received during the comment period. This project may be implemented immediately after publication of this decision.

VII. CONTACT PERSON
For additional information concerning my decision, please feel free to contact me at (435) 636-3586.

Darren Olsen
District Ranger
Ferron/Price Ranger District
Manti-La Sal National Forest

11/16/12
DATE