Dear Interested Parties,

The White Sulphur Springs Ranger District on the Lewis & Clark National Forest is initiating public scoping for the Grasshopper Campground/Wapiti Peak Trail 717 Reroute Project. This notice supports requirements for 36 CFR 220.4(e) where scoping is required for all Forest Service proposed actions, including those that would appear to be categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement.

**Purpose and Need**
The goal of this project is to relocate trail 717 around the Grasshopper Campground in order to eliminate stock and off highway vehicles (OHVs) from accessing the trail through the developed campground site. The new trail would prevent mixed motorized and stock use and address safety concerns within the campground. The project is located east of White Sulphur Springs in the Castle Mountains adjacent to Grasshopper Campground. The legal description for proposed activities is T. 9 N, R 8 E, section 17.

**Proposed Action**
We are proposing to reroute trail 717 around Grasshopper Campground to eliminate OHV and stock access through the Campground. The proposed activity would construct 1 mile of new trail around the Grasshopper Campground and provide a new trail outside the developed campground for continued access and use of trail 717. Existing travel management would apply to this trail extension: open to foot, horse and motorcycle, from 12/1 through 10/14 per the 2007 Little Belt, Castle, and Crazy Mountain Record of Decision (ROD). The portion of trail leading directly into the Grasshopper Campground would be decommissioned and obliterated. We intend to complete this project under the following category: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(1) Construction and reconstruction of trails.

This project appears on the Lewis & Clark National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) webpage. Input has been considered from an interdisciplinary team and through preliminary project analysis. Public input is welcome, and will be considered and analyzed before a final decision is made. For specific project information, please contact John Metrione, Resource Specialist at Belt Creek Ranger District, 4234 US HWY 89, Neihart, MT, (406)236-5102 or by email at jmetrione@fs.fed.us.

**Proposed Decision(s)**
The responsible official is considering approving the project as it is currently proposed. Our preliminary analysis indicates that there are no extraordinary circumstances to resource conditions as outlined at 36 CFR 220.6(b). The following resource conditions are being considered in our preliminary analysis. Resource reports and conclusions will be available in the project record.

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.
  - **Plants** – There are no threatened and endangered plants listed for the Lewis and Clark National Forest. Therefore, there would be No Effect. Potential habitat may exist in the project area for Short Styled columbine, Northern wild rye, Hall’s rush, English sundew and Linear-leaved sundew, however no plants were located during surveys therefore a May Impact Individuals or Habitat determination was made but the project activities would not likely result in a trend toward federal listing or reduced viability for the population or species. For the remainder of
sensitive plant species either habitat does not exist in the project area or the species is not known to occur on the Jefferson Division of the Lewis and Clark National Forest. A No Impact determination has been made; therefore, no extraordinary circumstances exist.

- **Wildlife** - A No Effect/Impact determination has been made pertaining to federally listed T&E species, designated critical habitat, or species proposed for listing or proposed critical habitat. T&E species of the Lewis & Clark National Forest (grizzly bear) is not present in the proposed project area. A No Impact determination has been made pertaining to sensitive species of the Lewis & Clark National Forest. Regarding wildlife, no extraordinary circumstances exist.

- **Fisheries** - A Not likely to Adversely Affect determination has been made for western toad. Western toads could temporarily inhabit or migrate through the project area although the area is considered marginal habitat. Some disturbance would occur during construction but would be temporary but would not pose a viability threat of adverse impact. Westslope cutthroat trout, western pearlshell mussel and Northern Leopard Frog do not occur in the project area. Therefore a No Impact determination has been made.

- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – No proposed activities would take place in flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds associated, and therefore no extraordinary circumstances exist.

- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – The project area is not within or adjacent to a wilderness area, wilderness study area, or a national recreation area, and therefore no extraordinary circumstances exist.

- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – The Castle Mountain Inventoried Roadless Area lies adjacent to this proposal, but does not include the Grasshopper Campground or the area proposed for the new trail location. The proposed reroute would join existing trail 717 along the northeastern boundary of the roadless area. Due to the project’s short duration, limited scope, and its proximity to a highly developed campground, there would be No Effect to opportunities for solitude, natural integrity, primitive recreation experience and manageability. Additionally, the existing trail, which does lie within the roadless boundary, would be decommissioned and obliterated, contributing to improvements in roadless characteristics. Therefore, no extraordinary circumstances exist.

- Research natural areas – There are no research natural areas in or near the project area, and therefore no extraordinary circumstances exist.

- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites - There are no known sites in the proposed area. If unknown sites were encountered during implementation, these sites would be subject to appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer review and comment, as per the 36 CFR 800 compliance process.

- Archeological sites, or historic properties or areas – The project area have been surveyed for archeological resources and no sites were found in the proposed impact area. Surveys would continue and would take place prior to implementation according to the National Historic Preservation Act. Any undocumented archeological resources found during project implementation would be reported to a Forest Service archaeologist and, if necessary, project design would be modified to avoid any impacts to those resources. No extraordinary circumstances apply relative to cultural resources.
Findings and Consistency with Laws, Regulation, and FS Policies
The proposed project is consistent with Forest Plan management direction, standards, and guidelines. No potential effects to Lewis & Clark National Forest Management Indicator Species (MIS) have been identified in our preliminary analysis. The project meets the requirements found in but not limited to the National Forest Management Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Public Involvement
Please share your comments, concerns, or ideas with Carol Hatfield, White Sulphur Springs District Ranger, at the District Office, 204 West Folsom, White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645 or by phone at (406) 547-6000. Office hours are 8:30AM to 4:30PM, Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. If you prefer, send your comments electronically to comments-northern-lewisclark-white-sulphur-sprg@fs.fed.us.

Your comments are welcome anytime, but they would be most helpful if submitted by May 2, 2014. Comments received, including names, addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

Thank you for your interest!

CAROL HATFIELD
District Ranger

4-4-2014
Date