



File Code: 1950-1

Date: April 12, 2004

Greetings:

The North Fork Ranger District, Salmon-Challis National Forest is initiating scoping and requesting public comments on the **Pine Creek and Cove Creek Bridges Replacement Project**. This letter includes information on what is being proposed and how you can be involved.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is replacement of three Forest Service bridges on the Salmon River Road (Forest Service Road # 60030). Two of these bridges cross the Salmon River at Pine Creek and Cove Creek. These two bridges currently are double span bridges that are supported by piers in the river. Their existing total span lengths are 172 feet and 196 feet respectively. The third bridge (Little Pine Bridge) is a 20 foot single span bridge that crosses Pine Creek just south and west of the Pine Creek Bridge.

Forest Service specialists identified viable replacement bridge designs, considering threatened, endangered and sensitive fish and wildlife species, recreational use, span lengths, costs, transportation needs, and impacts to hydrology, visuals, cultural and vegetation resources. Based on preliminary design review, the proposed action is to replace the Pine Creek and Cove Creek bridges and approaches with a steel girder bridge design that emphasizes correcting the approach angles and radii that will accommodate current and expected traffic and vehicle use and comply with the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials design guidelines. Each alignment would be evaluated with and without center supporting piers. The Pine Creek Bridge would be a two lane road width design with a total span length of 230 feet. The Cove Creek bridge would have a road width of 18 feet in accordance with the 1994 Salmon River Road Improvement Project Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision and a total span length of 270 feet. The Little Pine Bridge would be replaced with a 20 foot long, two lane pre-cast box culvert, or a three sided box culvert leaving the bottom unfinished. Project design includes protection of threatened, endangered and sensitive species habitat through mitigation and implementation of Best Management Practices, avoidance of all known historic and prehistoric sites, compatibility with Wild and Scenic River corridor objectives, permitting from the Corps of Engineers, implementation of noxious weed treatment, and maintaining vehicular access across the existing bridges during construction. Detailed drawings and specifications for the proposed bridge replacement alignment and design are available for review at the North Fork Ranger Station or the Forest Headquarters in Salmon. The replacements would occur during years 2006 and 2007.

PURPOSE AND NEED



The two Forest Service bridges that cross the Salmon River at Pine Creek and Cove Creek have been evaluated and determined to be structurally deficient and functionally obsolete. A third bridge (Little Pine Bridge) that crosses Pine Creek also has reached the end of its expected and useful service life. All three bridges were constructed in the mid 1950's, with portions of the structures dating back to the 1930's. The need to replace is a result of the deterioration and degradation of the structural capacity of the bridges as well as changing demographic use of the road and bridges. The Salmon River Road parallels the Salmon Wild and Scenic River. Continued access with safe bridge crossings is critical to maintain the historical uses of recreation, access to private property, logging, mining, road maintenance, support services, and emergency access.

LOCATION

The proposed bridge replacements are located about 20.3 miles and 28.5 miles west of North Fork, Idaho on the Salmon River Road (T 24 N, R 18 E, section 36, and T 23 N, R 17 E, section 13, Boise principal meridian), North Fork Ranger District, Salmon-Challis National Forest, Lemhi County, Idaho. See the attached map.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

Based on past Salmon River road projects and preliminary bridge design review, the following preliminary issues have been identified:

- Effects on access: recreational use, local residents and businesses, emergency access, and other users of the National Forest System Lands.
- Effects on resources including fish, wildlife, water quality, vegetation including noxious weeds, aesthetics, heritage, and Wild and Scenic River values.

PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

The preliminary alternatives that will be considered in the environmental analysis are as follows:

- No Action: Bridges would remain as they currently exist.
- Bridges replaced without center supporting piers (single span)
- Bridges replaced with center supporting piers (double span)

SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION OF ANALYSIS

- Scoping and public review and comment on the proposed action would begin with publication of a legal notice in the Salmon Recorder Herald, and end 30 days later.
- The environmental analysis is tentatively scheduled to be completed and appropriate decision(s) issued in summer of 2004.

How Can You Be Involved?

The North Fork Ranger District is seeking comment on the following proposed action from Federal, State and local agencies, Native American Tribal Governments, and other individuals and organizations that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. This analysis is being completed under revised 36 CFR 215 appeal regulations. Please be aware that there are many changes in the appeal regulations that are important to understand:

- (1) Your comments must be substantive. This means that comments must be within the scope of, are specific to, and have a direct relationship to the proposed action. They must include a supporting reason that I should consider in making a decision.
- (2) Your comments must be timely. **This means that comments must be submitted within 30 days following publication of a legal notice of opportunity to comment on this proposed project in the *Recorder Herald*.**
- (3) You must comment on this proposed action to be able to appeal any future decision. If you submit comments, you must either sign the comments or otherwise verify identity in order to be able to appeal.
- (4) Your comments can be submitted in written format to our mailing address, delivered to our office, sent via e-mail, facsimile, or presented in person at our office. Include your name, address, telephone number, and title of the project on which comment is being submitted.

Send substantive comments regarding the proposed action to the Responsible Official for this project, who is: Patty Bates, District Ranger, P.O. Box 180, North Fork, Idaho, 83466; phone (208) 865-2700; FAX (208) 865-2739; or you may hand-deliver your comments to the North Fork Ranger District Office located at 11 Casey Road, North Fork, Idaho during normal business hours from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Email comments (in Word or .rft format) may be sent to comments-intermtn-salmon-challis-northfork@fs.fed.us.

Your comments will continue to help refine the proposed action, any alternatives, as well as the environmental analysis. Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.3(a), this proposal is subject to legal notice and opportunity to comment. Comments on the proposed action will be accepted for 30-days following publication of a legal notice (36 CFR 215.5(b)(1)(iv)). In order to be eligible for appeal, comments must be substantive and timely. Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.2, substantive comments are within the scope of the proposed action and would include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider.

NOTICE: Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR parts 215 or 217.

Thank you for your interest in management of the Salmon-Challis National Forest. If you have questions regarding this proposal, please contact Norm Ando, Interdisciplinary Team Leader at (208) 865-2737, or at the North Fork Ranger District Office address above.

Sincerely,

/s/ **Patty Bates**

PATTY BATES
District Ranger

Enclosures (3)