



File Code: 1950-1

Date: January 27, 2004

Greetings:

The North Fork Ranger District is in the process of completing an environmental analysis of the proposal to repair the washout of the Indian Creek Road. I am writing to provide an update on this project, as well as to provide you an opportunity to comment on the proposed action.

Background Information

Approximately 700 feet of the Indian Creek Road washed out during the spring of 1997 snowmelt runoff. The washed out portion of the road was not immediately repaired because of an on-going dispute over where the road passed through private property. All-terrain vehicles began driving up the old roadway and through the creek, impacting the creek and fisheries habitat. Because of this, the Forest closed the creek area to motorized vehicles. Currently vehicle access to the area is available only via the East Fork of Indian Creek Road.

Purpose and Need For Action

An Idaho Supreme Court ruling on December 27, 2002, determined that Indian Creek Road is a public road. Since this ruling, Lemhi County has requested the Forest Service complete road repair to assure there is motorized vehicular access up Indian Creek Road.

I heard from private land inholders that repair of the road is critical to their access and use of private property. Phone and propane services, fire suppression and law enforcement and access have been severely impeded by the washout of the road. I also heard from many public land recreationalists that Indian Creek Road is necessary to access public lands. While alternative access exists via the East Fork of Indian Creek, both private inholders and public land users believe that this alternative access is inadequate, seasonally limited, longer and more restrictive to vehicles.

I've enclosed a [map](#) of the area to highlight where the road is washed out, where private property lies and work is proposed.



Proposed Action

The proposed project activities are located about three miles north of the Salmon River Road, within T 24 N, R 20 E, section 6, Boise Principal Meridian on the North Fork Ranger District of the Salmon-Challis National Forest, Lemhi County, Idaho

Based on the request from Lemhi County, private inholders and the public, as well as in response to initial scoping, a short road reconstruction is proposed. I have enclosed [current design specification](#) for the proposed action for your review and comment. Road construction cost including clearing, windrowing slash, excavation, seeding, placement of riprap and mobilization is estimated to be \$12,000.

Additional costs, approximately \$ 8,000, associated with opening the road would include signing, bridge approach repair, removal of bridge gravel decking and replace with running planks, brushing, construction staking and construction engineering. Potential funding sources would be Forest Service appropriated funds, a co-op project with the County, sharing work and expenses and possibly funds from the County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC).

An alternative route to Indian Creek from Brushy Gulch Road was considered but dismissed because it would entail the construction of approximately 2.5 miles of road on steep terrain at an estimated expense of \$50-75,000 per mile.

The proposed re-route has been designed to minimize potential sediment to Indian Creek, through the placement of riprap and vegetative windrows. A biological assessment and biological evaluation will be completed to assess the impacts of the proposed action on threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, including steelhead, bull trout, chinook salmon, and westslope cutthroat trout. In addition, the design specifications for the proposed road reroute include requirements to reduce the potential spread of noxious weeds. If the decision is made to reconstruct the road, appropriate permits from the Corps of Engineers and Idaho Department of Water Resources will be acquired.

Based on comments previously received, our analysis is considering impacts to fisheries, watershed conditions, sediment, weeds, wildlife, access, safety and the historical status of the road. We will also be considering cumulative impacts, including potential for mining, timber harvesting, and increased recreation use in the future. Requests to analyze potential impacts to private land along the first couple of miles of Indian Creek Road (i.e., trespass, littering, speeding, dust, etc.) is an issue that is being discussed with the County, as are long term maintenance responsibilities for the entire road, approximately 9 miles and 6 bridges.

Indian Creek Road is categorized as a Maintenance Level 2 road. Maintenance Level 2 roads are assigned to roads open for use by high clearance vehicles. Passenger car traffic is not a consideration. Traffic is normally minor, usually consisting of one or a combination of

administrative, permitted, dispersed recreation, or other specialized uses. Log hauling may occur at this level.

Opportunity to Comment

Comments submitted previously are being considered and utilized in the current analysis. This letter provides an additional opportunity to comment regarding the proposed action.

This analysis is being completed under revised 36 CFR 215 appeal regulations, which became effective June 4, 2003. 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 of when this notice appears 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 either written format to our mailing address, delivered to our office, sent via e-mail, facsimile, or presented orally in person at our office.

Please direct comments on the proposed action to:

Patty Bates, District Ranger
C/o IDT Leader Dan Garcia
North Fork Ranger District
11 Casey Road
P O Box 180
North Fork, ID 83466
Telephone: (208) 865-2700
Facsimile: (208) 865-2739
E-mail: 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)). You may submit comments by letter, telephone, facsimile, electronically (in Word or .rtf format) or office visit (during the hours of 8 AM to 4:30 PM). 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.

For additional information on the project, contact IDT Leader Dan Garcia at (208) 865-2722.

Sincerely,

/s/Dolores P. Baker (for)

PATTY BATES
District Ranger

Enclosures (2)