



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Idaho Panhandle
National Forests

Coeur d'Alene River
Ranger District

P.O. Box 159
Smelterville, ID 83868

2502 East Sherman Avenue
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814

File Code: 1950

Date: January 25, 2011

Dear Interested Party,

The Panhandle Nordic Ski Club has operated and proposed to continue winter activities in the **4th of July Cross-Country Ski and Snowshoe Area** located on National Forest System lands south of Interstate 90 at 4th of July Pass (please refer to the enclosed map). The Nordic Ski and Snowshoe Trail System is located within the South Fork Cedar Creek drainage (T49N, R2W, Sections 1, 2, and 11-14, Boise Meridian). The Forest Service is analyzing a Special Use Permit and Challenge Cost Share Agreement that would allow the activities to continue. The purpose of this letter is to share information regarding the existing trail system and structures in the area and the changes that are being proposed. We invite your comments on the proposal.

Background

The trail system has been in place for more than twenty years, and currently consists of over 18 miles of Nordic (cross-country) ski and snowshoe trails on mostly old logging roads, of which about half are groomed for winter recreation. The trails are maintained for public use by Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) through their Park and Ski Program, and on a volunteer basis by the Panhandle Nordic Ski Club.

Of the existing routes through the area, only Roads 614 and 918 are currently open to all motorized vehicles during the entire year. Other routes through the area are not designated for wheeled motorized uses. Both Roads 614 and 918 are open to winter motorized uses, but are not identified routes on the Snowmobile Trails Map for the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District.

Over the years, eight small structures have been built to support the trail system. The kiosk (Figure 1) is located at the main parking area. It has been damaged by trees downed in a wind storm, and the roof is caving in. Two "CXT" outhouses at the parking area (Figure 2) also have major damage due to a combination of weather and vandalism. A third (wood-framed vault) outhouse located further up the trail (Figure 3) is in good shape, with a sturdy snow pavilion that protects it from winter snow loads.



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At approximately 300 square feet, the Nordic Club Hut (on the left in Figure 4) is the larger of the two warming huts; it is an A-frame structure in good condition, with few repairs needed.

Ian's Eagle Hut is the smaller of the two warming huts (on the right in Figure 4) at 168 square feet; it is also an A-frame, newer and in better condition than the larger hut. The two remaining structures on the system (not pictured) are a picnic shelter and a shelter for grooming equipment.





Figure 2. Two CXT-type outhouses at the parking area have significant damage.



Figure 3. Wood-framed vault toilet and pavilion protecting it from heavy snow loads.



Figure 4. A-frame warming huts are in good condition, needing minor repairs.

Proposed Activities

The Panhandle Nordic Ski Club has asked that they be allowed to continue using the structures described above, that Road 614 be closed to motorized uses during the winter months, and that this road be groomed for Nordic ski and snowshoe recreation.

The Forest Service proposes to authorize a Special Use Permit to the Nordic Club and to enter into a Challenge Cost Share Agreement with the Nordic Club and Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. The proposal includes the following activities and management of the area:

- An area closure order would continue to prohibit use of over-snow motorized vehicles to protect the groomed routes and increase public safety (refer to the enclosed map). Under the 2003 Travel Plan for the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, use of motorized vehicles (including over-snow vehicles) was prohibited off main travel roads in the Nordic ski and snowshoe area (Area Closure 'A'). The current Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM), which supersedes previous travel plans for the District, only applies to wheeled motorized travel, which is why an area closure order would be needed to prohibit use of over-snow motorized vehicles.
- From Rose Saddle to the winter parking area at 4th of July Pass, Road 614 would be closed to over-snow motorized traffic and wheeled motorized traffic during the winter months when the route is being groomed for Nordic ski and snowshoe use (it would remain open to wheeled motorized traffic for the remainder of the year). This proposal would close Road 918 to over-snow motorized traffic and wheeled motorized traffic during the winter months as well. To facilitate the seasonal road closure, a gate would be installed on the north end of Road 614, near Interstate 90 (refer to the enclosed map).
- A Special Use Permit would be issued to the Panhandle Nordic Ski Club authorizing the continued use of the following structures, which are owned and operated by the Nordic Ski Club on National Forest lands: three outhouses, two warming huts, one grooming equipment shelter, and one picnic shelter. Temporary structures that facilitate winter operations may be installed in the fall and used during the winter but would be removed in the spring. The existing kiosk would be torn down. The two CXT-type outhouses would be repaired or replaced. Minor repairs would be made to the other existing structures as needed.
- The trails would continue to be cooperatively managed and maintained by IDPR, the Panhandle Nordic Ski Club, and the Forest Service through a Challenge-Cost Share Agreement, which provides funding for trail maintenance.

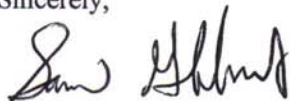
Opportunity to Comment

This project meets the requirements to be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement pursuant to 36 CFR 220.6(3)(3): *Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land.*

We would like to learn your thoughts on whether the Forest Service should authorize the Special Use Permit and enter into the Challenge Cost Share Agreement to allow the proposed activities. We ask that you provide comments on this proposal by **February 28, 2011**. Please mail your written comments to the NEPA Coordinator, Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, Fernan Office, 2502 East Sherman Avenue, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814. Written comments may also be faxed to the NEPA Coordinator at (208) 769-3062. Written comments may be hand-delivered to either the Fernan Office or to the Smelterville, Idaho offices (office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday). Electronic comments may be submitted to: comments-northern-idpanhandle-coeur-dalene@fs.fed.us. Please include the name of the project (**4th of July Cross-Country Ski and Snowshoe Area**) on the subject line. Acceptable formats are MS Word, Word Perfect, or RTF.

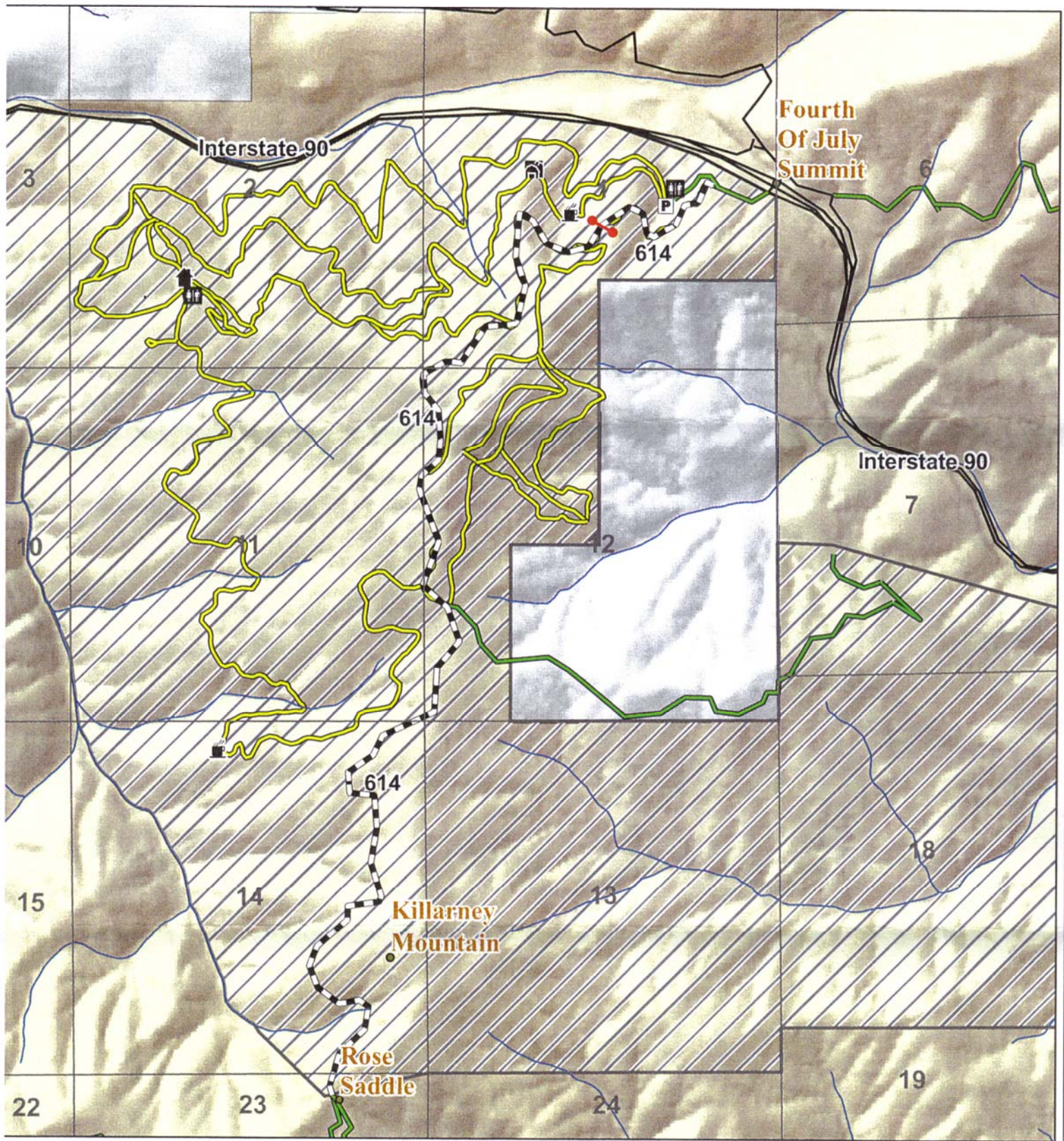
We will be available during the comment period to visit with interested parties. If you have questions regarding this project, please contact Project Leader Mike Leverick by telephone (208-769-3013) or by email (mleverick@fs.fed.us).

Sincerely,











SAMUEL GIBBONS
Acting District Ranger

Enclosure



Features

-  Parking Area
-  Picnic Shelter
-  Warming Hut
-  Restrooms
-  Grooming Equipment Shelter
-  Nordic and Snowshoe Trails
-  Road 614 - Proposed Over-Snow Vehicle Restriction
-  Proposed Gate Location

Roads

-  Open Roads
-  Non-Forest Service Roads

Ownership

-  National Forest Land
-  Private Ownership
-  Winter Area Closure

4th of July Pass Special Use Permit Proposal



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Miles

