

United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Environmental Assessment: ID230-2006-EA-1402

Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Record

Rotarun Trail Network

Location: Blaine County, Idaho

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Shoshone Field Office
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Date: September 21, 2007

Finding of No Significant Impact / Decision Record Shoshone Field Office

INTRODUCTION:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental analysis (EA No. ID230-2006-EA-1402) for a proposed action to address trail designation, construction, and revegetation of unnecessary routes in the Croy Creek area in Blaine County. The project would construct and designate six loop trails, see Map 1. The trail network will total 18.8 miles consisting of 14.9 miles of constructed single-track trail, 3.1 miles of adopted single-track trail and .8 miles of existing two-track road. The .8 miles of existing two-track will be designated as part of the trail system. Loops One through Four will be non-motorized with the exception of the trail that connects the Wood River Recreation Area and Bullion Gulch. This trail and Loop Five will be open to motorized and non-motorized use. Signs will be placed along the trail to indicate the designated trail, allowable uses (motorized or non-motorized) and whether the trail is closed. The trail network will be closed to all users when the trail tread is wet and muddy. Muddy would be defined as, soil sticking to and being transported by tires, shoes or hooves or when ruts result from mountain bikes or motorcycles.

The single-track sections of the trail have been designed to contour hillsides at an average grade of less than 10%, the grade never exceeds 15%. International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) design standards recommend the average trail grade of 10% or less is most sustainable. Constructed single-track trail will be a full bench design with a tread width of 18-24 inches, outsloped at 3-5% and have constant rolling grade dips and knicks. This design assists with shedding of water from the trail tread. These trail construction standards allow water to sheet flow perpendicular across the trail tread reducing the chance of soil erosion. There are also no switchbacks in the planned trail network.

The proposed trail crosses two fences that are used to keep cattle within the Croy Creek Allotment. There is a small cattle-guard at one fence crossing; a similar cattle-guard will be installed at the second fence crossing.

In addition to constructing trails the proposed action adopts a trail on BLM land, locally known as the Lambs Gulch trail. This trail connects Lambs Gulch existing user-constructed single-track trail to Democrat Gulch. Along with BLM, the single-track trail and two-track road passes through private and State owned lands. Access to this trail is on the Democrat Gulch road claimed by Blaine County. The trail is four miles long and consists of 1.1 miles of private (two-track and single-track), .6 miles of State (single-track) and 2.3 miles of BLM (two-track and single-track). This trail will also be designated non-motorized, see Map 1. Prior to designating trails on private and State lands easements and/or maintenance agreements will have to be obtained. Construction could occur on private lands with landowner consent; however, federal money could not be obligated for construction or maintenance without proper easements.

Construction Standard Procedures:

- Trails will be primarily located on hillsides with sideslopes that range from 5-50%.
- Perennial and intermittent streams of concern (Democrat, Bullion, Wilson and any incised stream where trail construction and rock armoring would compromise bank stabilization) will be crossed with a bridge to keep users out of the stream. Bridges will cross perpendicular to the stream and grade reversals have been designed on both sides of stream crossings to prevent water and sediment from flowing down the trail and into the streams. Bridges will be constructed above the normal high water mark of the channel.
- Trail construction equipment will be transported around perennial streams.
- Trail construction equipment will be washed prior to use to remove unwanted seeds and reduce the chance of weed spread in construction corridors.
- The trail corridor will be monitored for noxious weed spread and will be treated using Integrated Pest Management techniques appropriate for the taxa and site conditions. These techniques will be implemented by trained personnel.

Identified roads and trails will be rehabilitated on BLM land within the rehabilitation zone, see Map 2. The rehabilitation zone has been identified so unauthorized trails are not constructed to extend or connect the designated trail network to other existing roads or trails. The identified user-created trails within the rehabilitation zone total approximately 3.88 miles of trail and 2.78 mile of two-track road. The single-track trails to be rehabilitated are labeled on Map 2 as: A, B, and C, two-track roads are labeled as: D, E, F, and G.

Road and trail rehabilitation will include breaking up the old compacted soil in the trail tread, scarifying the soil so that new plants can establish themselves, construction of water bars and check dams, placement of rocks to prohibit access, partial recontouring, and reseeding with native plants. Seeding will be done in the fall using a broadcast method of grasses native to the watershed. A trail construction machine will be utilized to break up the compacted soil. Sagebrush and other native materials removed during trail construction will be used to disguise existing roads and trails identified for rehabilitation. Roads and trails that are rehabilitated will also be signed, encouraging users to stay on the new trail network. Any “new” user established route within the rehabilitation zone will be immediately rehabilitated.

The implementation sequence will be:

1. Adopt the Lambs Gulch trail.
2. Construct Loops One and Five.
3. Rehabilitate all roads and trails identified on Map 2. Road and trail rehabilitation on private land will require land owner permission.
4. Construct Loops Two, Three, and Four.
5. Maintenance and noxious weed control will be implemented throughout the project and post construction.

A kiosk will be installed at the Wood River Recreation Area parking area, approximately 200 feet north of the Croy Creek road. This kiosk will be located on BLM land at the current informal parking area. The purpose of the kiosk is to educate users about personal, community, environmental and economic outcomes that can be obtained from this single-track trail experience. Use restrictions (motorized and non-motorized), trail etiquette, when to expect to encounter livestock operations and other trail use rules also will be posted at the kiosk. The kiosk will be installed during the construction of Loop One.

The BLM will be responsible for trail maintenance. Portions of the trail will be maintained by BLM fire crews and through adopt-a-trail agreements with Big Wood Backcountry Trails, and local businesses.

The underlying need for the proposal would be met while accomplishing the following objectives:

1. Address unauthorized, user-created trails.
2. Address the demand for single-track trail opportunities for recreational use in close proximity to Hailey, Idaho.

Environmental Analysis No. ID230-2006-EA-1402 is available at the Shoshone Field Office or <http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/info/nepa.html>, is incorporated by reference for this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The EA analyzed three alternatives: the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action, and Alternative II.

PLAN CONFORMANCE AND CONSISTENCY:

The proposed action and alternatives have been reviewed and found to be in conformance with the following BLM Land Use Plans and the associated decision(s):

All of the Public Lands mentioned in the Proposed Action and alternatives are located in the Big Wood Analysis Unit of the Sun Valley Management Framework Plan (MFP), 1981. It states that *“This unit will be managed to protect the watershed resources, wildlife habitat, open space, and scenic values. However, continued livestock grazing, timber harvesting, recreational activities and mineral development will be encouraged as long as the proposed uses do not significantly reduce the other values.”*

It also states, *“Continue to recognize present uses of the Wood River Recreation Area. This area provides for intensive ORV use and reduces pressure on other areas within the unit. This provides an area for many types of ORV events, reducing the need on adjoining public lands.”*

Also in the MFP under Off-Road Vehicles (ORV’s) it states: *Designate public lands as “open areas and trails” subject to adjustment for special needs identified in the future. Closures of small areas to eliminate resource damage may be implemented either by permanent or temporary designations.*

The Sun Valley MFP Watershed Decision #2 states: *Minimize stream sedimentation by stabilizing deteriorating streambanks. Improve to at least fair condition riparian areas, and reduce sediment from high source areas such as mine tailings, poorly located or designed roads, areas of active channeling, etc.*

The Sun Valley MFP Wildlife Decision #2 states: *Manage major deer migration routes to minimize impedance to big game. Facilities such as fences, right-of-way facilities and buildings will be constructed in such a way to have minimal effect. Bureau fencing specifications will be used which are designed to minimize impacts on big game habitat. Particular emphasis will be placed on maintaining the migration route between Stanton Crossing and Hot Springs Landing.*

The project is also consistent with the following plans: The August 2002 Blaine County Recreation District 10-Year Recreation Facilities Plan identifies desired facility location for non-motorized trails is highest in the Hailey/Bellevue/Gannett area. It also identifies a Croy Canyon Trail System as a possible project. Incorporated into the Facilities Plan was a Recreation Needs Survey that identified non-motorized trails as one of the most important recreation needs in the Hailey/Bellevue/Gannett Area and motorized trails were ranked as very unimportant.

In the Blaine County Code, August 22, 2006, Section 10; Natural Resources Blaine County desires: To protect and enhance existing natural resources in Blaine County, preserve and protect the scenic and aesthetic values of Blaine County, protect the public health and general welfare, and to minimize property loss and public expenditure from flooding, avalanche, pollution, and natural hazards and support projects that protect or enhance the natural resources of the county. In section 14; It is the intent of the recreation section of the Blaine County Comprehensive Plan to: protect and enhance the health and lifestyles of residents and visitors, support the goals of the Natural Resource, Historic and Aesthetic sections of the Comprehensive Plan, protect the environmental and scenic qualities in Blaine County, preserve and enhance the recreational opportunities now available and provide a plan to serve the recreation, parks and open space needs for residents and visitors over the next twenty (20) years.

In the Idaho Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plan 2003-2007 a goal is to, *Work with communities to develop additional trails near population centers.* The overall findings stated that, *mountain bike use has significantly increased. The 1987 Pacific Northwest Outdoor Recreation Survey found that 8.9% of Idaho households participated in mountain biking. The 2002 Idaho Outdoor Recreation Survey found that 14.1% of respondents participated in mountain biking.*

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT DETERMINATION:

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the

human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects described in the Sun Valley Management Framework Plan. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described:

Context: The project is a site-specific action directly involving BLM administered public land that does not in and of itself have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance. The trail network does cross State and private lands. Prior to designating trails on private and State lands easements and/or maintenance agreements will have to be obtained. Construction could occur on private lands with landowner consent; however, Federal money could not be obligated for construction or maintenance without proper easements.

Intensity: The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into BLM's Critical Elements of the Human Environment list (H-1790-1), and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations and Executive Orders. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.** The beneficial effects of the proposed action allow the BLM to construct a trail network that will directly address targeted experiences and opportunities identified by mountain bikers and motorcycle riders. They include: being close to nature, enjoying the scenery and being with friends and family. Beneficial Outcomes include: improved physical fitness, heightened sense of satisfaction with our community, increased desirability as a place to live or retire and increased awareness and protection of landscapes. This information was derived from a 2006 Wood River Valley Lands Benefits Study done cooperatively between the Blaine County Commissioners, BLM, and Arizona State University.

Adverse effects include minor impacts to soils, vegetation, wildlife, and visual resources that will occur as a result of the Proposed Action. The proposed action was designed to reduce the impacts from poorly designed roads and trails and provide a sustainable trail network. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA and associated appendices are considered significant.

2. **The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.** The proposed action is designed for the average mountain biker. This means grades average no more than 10 %. This trail specification provides safe opportunities and trails that are environmentally sustainable.
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** The following Critical

Elements of the Human Environment and Other Resource Issues are not affected because they are not present in the project area. They include historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** There is no scientific controversy over the nature of the impacts.
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The project is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas. The environmental effects to the human environment are fully analyzed in the EA. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.
6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The actions considered in the selected alternative were considered by the interdisciplinary team within the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the selected alternative and all other alternatives is described in the EA.
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts – which include connected actions regardless of land ownership.** The interdisciplinary team evaluated the possible actions in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete disclosure of the effects of the project is contained in the EA.
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The project will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. A cultural inventory has been completed for the proposed action, and no cultural resources were found.
9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, or the degree to which the action may adversely affect: 1) a proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species or its habitat, or 2) a species on BLM's sensitive species list.** Qualified biologists and botanists conducted field surveys for Threatened and Endangered

Species and BLM sensitive species. Based on findings of the field surveys it was determined that this project will not adversely impact any special status plant species or their habitat. A full clearance Special Status Animal Species Assessment was done in May 2007. It was also determined that this project will not adversely impact any special status animal species or their habitat.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non-federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements.

The project does not violate any known federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. State, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. In addition, the project is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.

DECISION:

It is my decision to authorize the trail designation, construction, and revegetation of unnecessary routes as outlined in the Introduction of this Decision Record and in the Proposed Action of the EA.

Authorities: FLMPA

Alternatives Considered: Two Alternatives were also considered, they were Alternative II and the No Action Alternative. Alternative II constructed and rehabilitated the same trails as the Proposed Action. However different portions were designated motorized. This alternative was not selected because the direction of Proposed Blaine County Recreation and Travel Plan being conducted by the Blaine County Commissioners only allows for motorized use to occur west of the Wilson Gulch/Rotarun ridge. Also private property owners in Democrat Gulch have indicated that they would not consider motorized easements across their private property.

The No Action was not considered because it does not allow the BLM to provide recreation and trail opportunities that are in demand by local residents.

Rationale for Decision: The decision to authorize the trail designation, construction and rehabilitation has been made in consideration of the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action. The action is in conformance with the 1981 Big Wood Analysis Unit of the Sun Valley Management Framework Plan, which encourages recreational activities as long as the proposed uses do not significantly reduce the other values. The action also conforms to the relationship to Off-Road Vehicles (ORV's) it states: Designate public lands as "open areas and trails" subject to adjustment for special needs identified in the future. Conformance of the action is also supported in the Watershed Decision #2 which

states: Improve to at least fair condition riparian areas, and reduce sediment from high source areas such as mine tailings, poorly located or designed roads, areas of active channeling, etc.

The action is also consistent and supports the August 2002 Blaine County Recreation District 10-Year Recreation Facilities Plan that identifies desired facility location for non-motorized trails is highest in the Hailey/Bellevue/Gannett area. It also identifies a Croy Canyon Trail System as a possible project. Incorporated into the Facilities Plan was a Recreation Needs Survey that identified non-motorized trails as one of the most important recreation needs in the Hailey/Bellevue/Gannett Area.

The action is also consistent with the Idaho Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plan 2003-2007 a goal to, *Work with communities to develop additional trails near population centers.* The overall findings stated that, *mountain bike use has significantly increased. The 1987 Pacific Northwest Outdoor Recreation Survey found that 8.9% of Idaho households participated in mountain biking. The 2002 Idaho Outdoor Recreation Survey found that 14.1% of respondents participated in mountain biking.*

The action to designate, construct and rehabilitate trails within the project area addresses unauthorized and user-created trails by identifying recreation demand and providing sustainable trail alignment that supports that demand without compromising the integrity of existing natural resources.

The demand for recreation activities and experiences were derived from a Wood River Valley Lands Benefits Study that was conducted in 2006 and can be found at: http://www.co.blaine.id.us/blm_study.htm. This study was done cooperatively between the Blaine County Commissioners, BLM, and Arizona State University. Some of the implications and recommendations derived from this study include: *Irrespective of type of recreation use, being close to nature emerged as one of the most frequently reported experiences resulting from recreation in the Wood River Valley lands. Managing to ensure that opportunities for getting close to nature are enhanced should be a priority. Management attention focusing on maintaining the distinctive character of the setting and preserving the views and scenery are important components to consider.* Therefore this action provides recreation opportunities addressed from that study, informal discussions with local residents and Big Wood Backcountry Trails, a local trail advocacy group.

Also addressed in the 2006 Wood River Valley Lands Benefits Study was that there is an overall sense of conflict between motorized use and non-motorized use, where non-motorized users feel that motorized users are destroying the resource and causing noise pollution near towns and motorized users feel that more and more of their land base for recreation is being taken away. Based on this information and private property owner concerns loops 1-4 will be open to non-motorized users only and loop 5 will be open for motorized use.

Finally the action allows the BLM to construct a trail network that will directly address targeted experiences and opportunities identified by mountain bikers and motorcycle riders. They include: being close to nature, enjoying the scenery and being with friends and family. Beneficial Outcomes include: improved physical fitness, heightened sense of satisfaction with our community, increased desirability as a place to live or retire and increased awareness and protection of landscapes.

A pre-decisional draft Environmental Assessment was made available for a 30 day public comment period starting April 18, 2007. The document could be viewed on the BLM website, hardcopies were also available. Fourteen comments were received.

The majority of comments received were in support of the Proposed Action. However one comment recommended that trails for motorcycles need to range from 40-60 miles long. The extension of the trail system to connect to United State Forest Service system trails is currently being addressed in the Blaine County Cooperative Conservation Recreation and Travel Plan which was identified in the Cumulative Impacts section of the Rotarun Trail Network Environmental Analysis.

Another comment related to sage-grouse and their habitat. There are only two sage-grouse leks within two miles of the project area and they have not been active for 20 years. Also the shrub/steppe habitat which occurs within the trail network likely provides sage-grouse nesting and brood rearing habitat. The sagebrush habitat which grows adjacent to riparian zones likely provides escape cover and foraging habitat for Sage-grouse during the late brood rearing period. The trail was designed to mitigate impacts to riparian vegetation and associated wildlife. This was done by avoiding these areas or when necessary cross in a perpendicular fashion. Also some roads and trails will be rehabilitated that parallel riparian areas. This allows the trails to be used in the spring while minimizing impacts to sage-grouse and their habitat.

Appeals:

The decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR Part 4. Public notification of this decision will be considered to have occurred on September 14, 2007. Within 30 days of this decision, a notice of appeal must be filed in the office of the authorized officer at 400 West F Street, Shoshone, Idaho 83352. If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, U.S. Department of the Interior, 801 North Quincy St., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22203 within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed with the authorized officer.

If you wish to file a petition for stay pursuant to 43 CFR Part 4.21(b) the petition for stay should accompany your notice of appeal and shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,

- (3) The likelihood of irreparable harm to the appellant or resources if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

If a petition for stay is submitted with the notice of appeal, a copy of the notice of appeal and petition for stay must be served on each party named in the decision from which the appeal is taken, and with the IBLA at the same time it is filed with the authorized officer.

A copy of the notice of appeal, any statement of reasons and all pertinent documents must be served on each adverse party named in the decision from which the appeal is taken and on the Office of the Regional Solicitor, U.S. Department of the Interior, 6201 Federal Building, 125 South State Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84138-1180, not later than 15 days after filing the document with the authorized officer and/or IBLA.

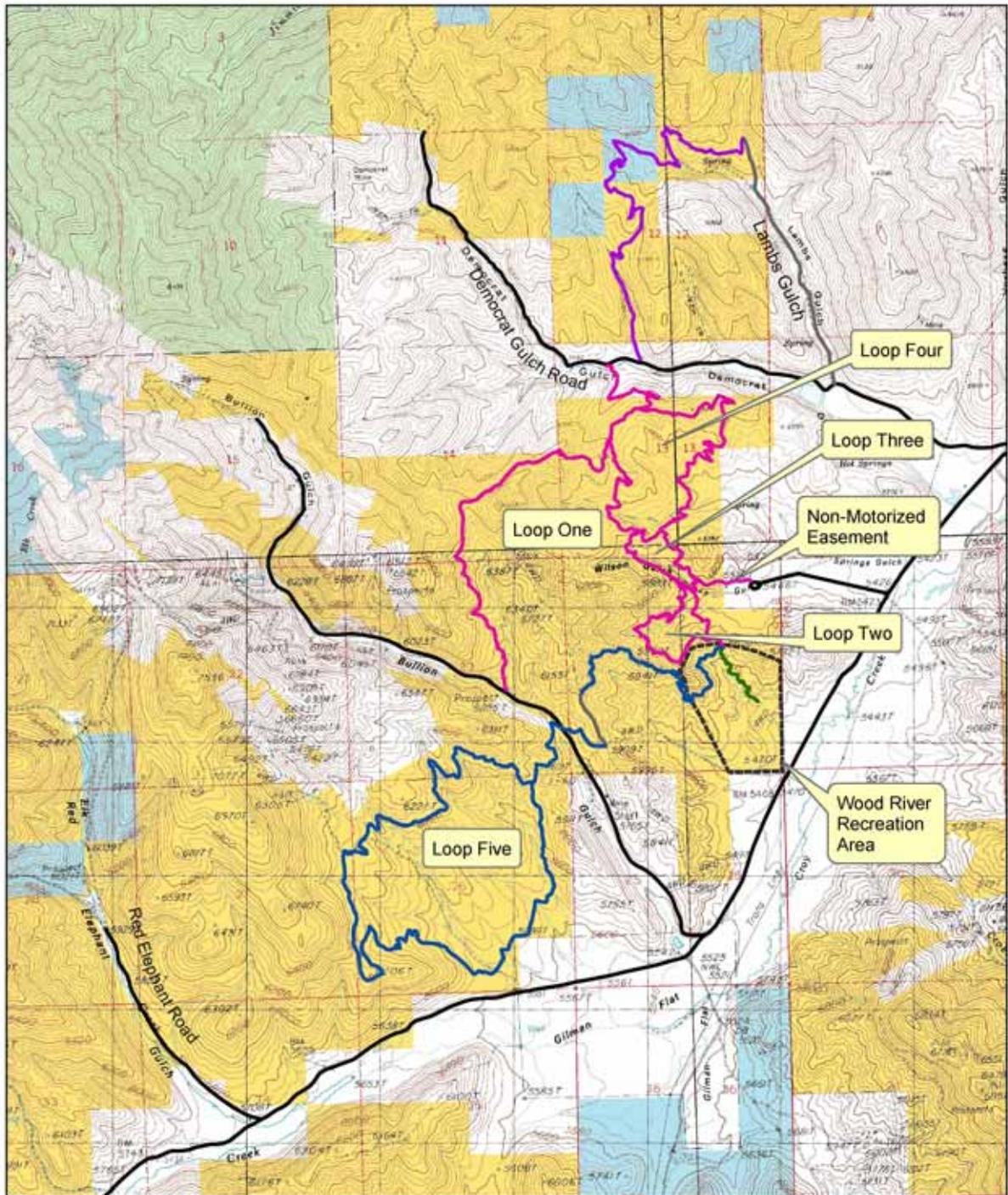
Approved:

/s/ Lori Armstrong
Lori Armstrong, Shoshone Field Manager

September 21, 2007
Date

Attachments: Map(s)

Proposed Rotarun Trail Network (Alternative 1) Map One



Proposed Trails	Roads	Ownership
Existing Single Track	Light Duty Road	BLM
Proposed Non-Motorized Single Track	Unimproved	PRIVATE
Existing Single Track	County Roads	STATE
Existing Two Track	Wood River Recreation Area	USFS
RotarunRehabTrails		

Data sources are as follows:
 Ownership: circa 2005
 Idaho BLM 1:24k GIS Data
 Trails: circa 2002 - 2006
 Shoshone FO Rec' Staff GPS Data
 Background Imagery: (see publication date)
 1:24,000 scale USGS DRG

Created using ArcMap v9.1 December 2006
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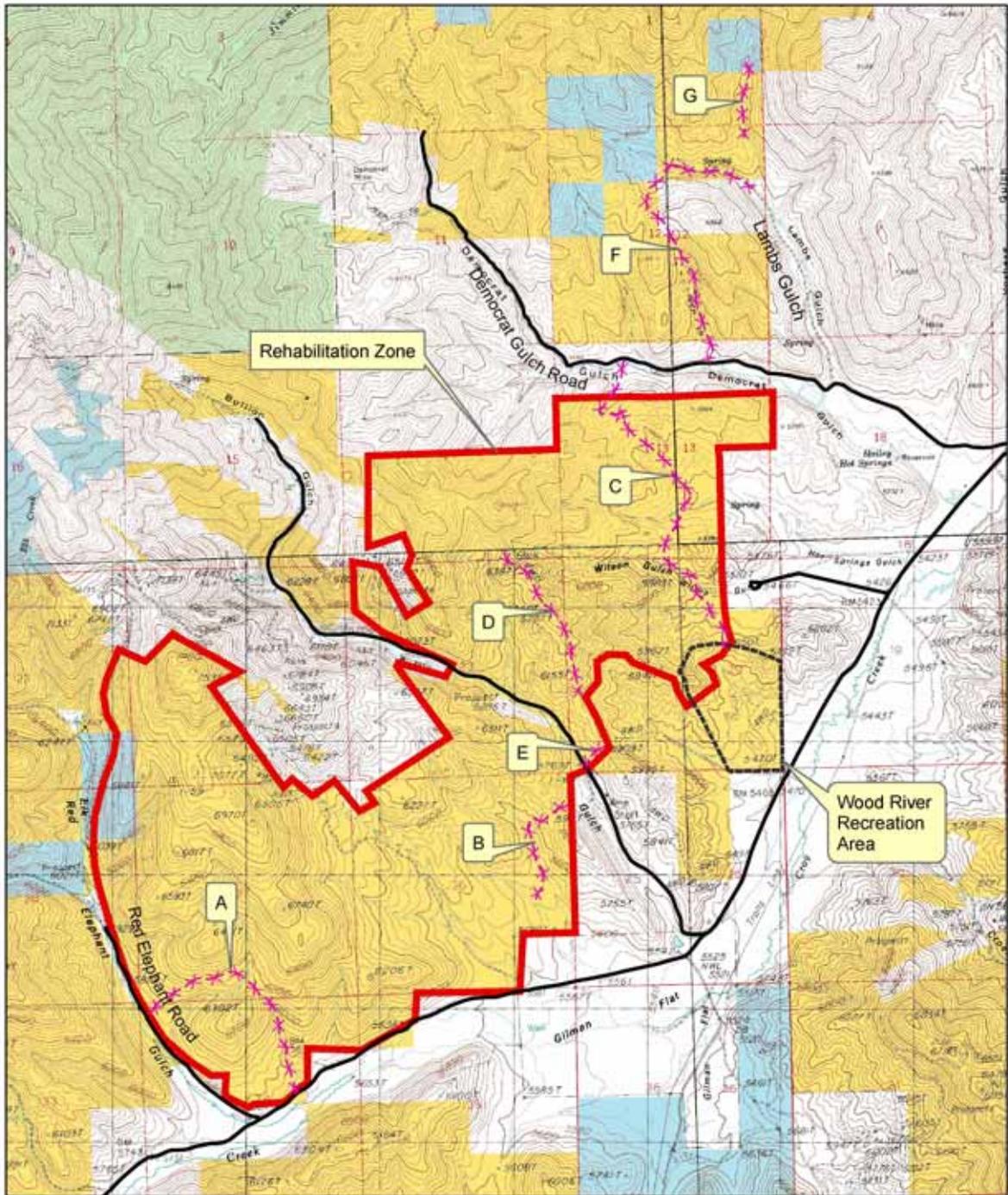
No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management for use of the data for purposes not intended by BLM.

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Map Scale = 1:38,526

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 0.2 0.1 0 0.2 km

Proposed Rotarun Trail Network Map Two



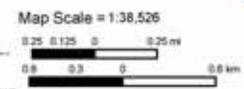
Proposed Trails	Roads	Ownership
Existing Single Track	Light Duty Road	BLM
Proposed Non-Motorized Single Track	Unimproved	PRIVATE
Proposed Non-Motorized Single Track	Trails (USGS)	STATE
Existing Single Track	County Roads	USFS
Existing Two Track	Wood River Recreation Area	
Proposed Single Track	Rehabilitation Zone	
Roads and Trails to Rehabilitate		

Data sources are as follows:
 Ownership: circa 2005
 Idaho BLM 1:24k GIS Data
 Trails: circa 2002 - 2006
 Shoshone FO Rec' Staff GPS Data
 Background Imagery: (see publication date)
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