

SCOPING/INFORMATION PACKAGE

Juniper Dunes Vault Toilets

Border Field Office

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to install permanent vault toilet(s) in the Juniper Forest Management Area in Franklin County, WA. This proposal is in accordance with the Spokane Resource Management Plan Record of Decision (1987) and Spokane Resource Management Plan Ammendment (1992). Federal actions must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences.

The purpose of this report is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal and to solicit comments to assist with the NEPA review of the proposal. Analysis of the proposal is ongoing, and will be documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA) with an estimated completion date of June 15, 2009. Comments received in response to this solicitation will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposed action and to identify alternatives to the proposed action that meet the purpose of and need for the project.

Purpose and Need for Action

The objective of this action is to address the increasing ‘white paper’ and uncontrolled human waste problem at off highway vehicle (OHV) staging areas in the Juniper Dunes. Currently there are no restrooms or sanitary facilities, yet thousands of visitor-use-days occur in the area. Internal BLM reports have documented the problem as serious and increasing. In addition to the public health hazard, unsanitary staging areas reduce the quality of the recreational experience.

Existing Condition

The Juniper Forest Management Area is composed of three distinct land designations. Approximately 7,100 acres of the area were designated as the Juniper Dunes Wilderness in 1984. An OHV area adjacent to the Wilderness area consists of approximately 4,400 acres designated “Open” to OHV use. There are approximately 8,100 acres designated for “Limited” OHV use within an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), meaning OHV use is limited to designated roads and trails. The ACEC was created to protect natural values and sensitive species, including the ferruginous hawk and to serve as a noise buffer for adjacent farm land and wilderness.

Recreational use at Juniper Dunes has consisted primarily of dispersed OHV use centered mostly within the OHV “Open” area, but also extending into those portions of ACEC that have not been fenced off for grazing or resource protection purposes. Camping and picnicking, typically associated with OHV riding is also very popular. A conservatively estimated 19,609 visits for OHV riding occurred in Juniper Dunes from October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008. Within the wilderness, an additional approximately 601 visitors came to hike, nature watch, horseback ride, hunt, or pursue other recreational activities. Peak recreational use season is September through May as the during the rest of the year daytime temperatures can be uncomfortably hot. Currently, the only recreational facilities include kiosks and a voluntary sign-in station.

Recreational use of OHVs has increased since 2004 in the Smith Canyon portion of the ACEC (see attached map). The OHV use has resulted in a large, informal staging area and a new and intensive trail network in Smith Canyon. State-listed ferruginous hawks have declined drastically in the Juniper Forest Management Area, and their primary prey, jackrabbits, have largely been extirpated. Some of the few remaining ferruginous hawks use the area for foraging and nest in the area.

Proposed Action

The BLM is proposing to install two vault toilets at two existing staging areas. One toilet would be located at the traditional staging area in the OHV “Open” area along Juniper Road at T10N R31E Section 11 (see map). The other toilet would be located at the staging area in the Smith Canyon portion of the ACEC at T10N R31E Section 28. Because the ACEC is designated as “Limited,” meaning OHV use is limited to designated trails, the BLM would designate 0.4 miles of existing road from Peterson Rd to the toilet as “Open” and designate a parking area of approximately 3 acres at the toilet location.

Preliminary Issues

1. Recreation:
 - OHV recreational use continues to increase at Juniper Dunes, increasing the potential for recreational users to suffer health hazards due to a lack of sanitary facilities.
 - Non-contained human waste reduces quality of recreational experience for visitors.
 - Installing vault toilets without trash collection may lead to an increase in the amount of trash accumulation in the staging areas.
2. Area of Critical Environmental Concern:
 - The existing trail network and OHV use in the Smith Canyon portion of the ACEC is in conflict with ACEC management direction and motorized vehicle designation in the RMP.
 - Increased OHV use in the ACEC will likely lead to increased degradation of wildlife habitat quality.
3. Cultural Resources:
 - The potential exists for disturbance of cultural resources at the proposed vault toilet locations.
4. Access:
 - Installing recreational use amenities (vault toilets) will lead to increased public use, and public access has not been formally established along the first two miles of Peterson Road.
 - There is no legal access from the Smith Canyon portion of the ACEC to the OHV-Open area. Existing use accesses the open area via private property.

Preliminary Alternative Development

Three alternatives have been developed.

Alternative 1 (Proposed Action). Install two vault toilets (one in the OHV-Open area, one in Smith Canyon) and designate 0.4 miles open route and 3 acres of designated parking associated with the toilet in Smith Canyon.

Alternative 2. Install one vault toilet in the OHV-Open area. No new motorized routes would be designated.

Alternative 3. No action. No vault toilets would be installed, no new motorized routes would be designated.

Decision to be Made

BLM will decide whether or not to install one or more vault toilets at Juniper Dunes, and whether or not to designate motorized routes to allow access to the toilets.

Public Input Needed

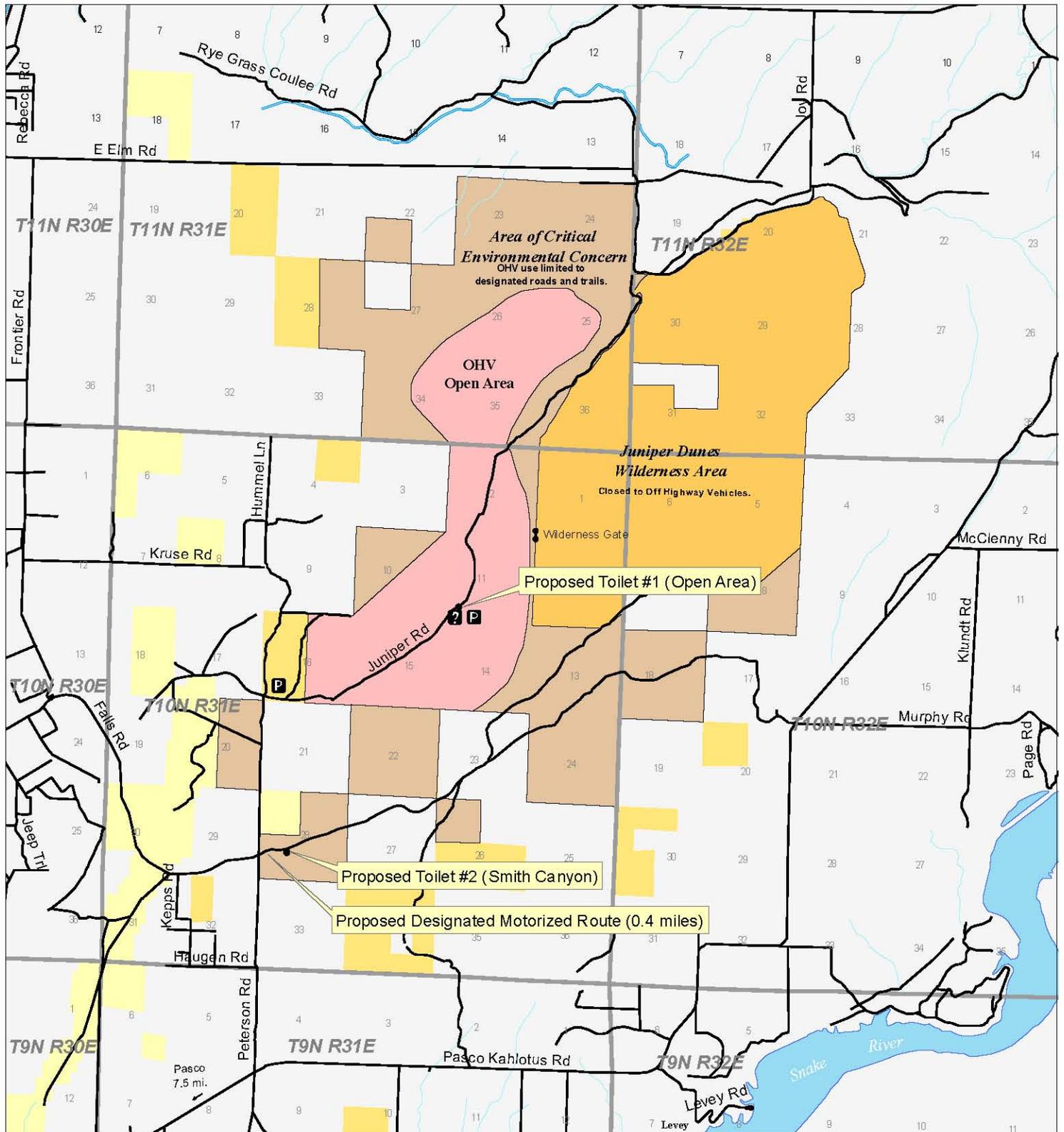
Comments are specifically requested on the proposed action, preliminary issues, and alternatives. Comments made on this proposal would be most helpful if they are received **within 30 days** of the posting of this notice and are directly relevant to the proposal and project area. The BLM will not reject public feedback outside established public involvement timeframes; however, these comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner and may only be assessed to determine if they identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions, proposal, design, or analysis presented in the EA. Comments sent electronically should be sent to **or_spokane_mail@blm.gov** with **"Juniper Dunes Vault Toilets"** in the subject line. Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. Issues that are outside the scope of the proposal will not be addressed at this planning level.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

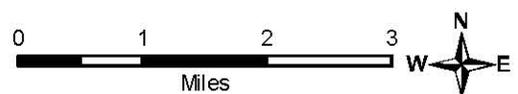
The primary contact for questions and comments for this analysis is Jason Lowe, Wildlife Biologist, (509) 536-1244.

Attachment: Map of Project Area

Juniper Dunes Proposed Vault Toilet Locations



- OHV
- ACEC
- Wilderness
- BLM Land (undesignated)
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Roads
- Streams



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