

Case File No.: AA-86330
AK-040-06-EA-022



Bureau of Land Management
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Environmental Assessment

Carlanna Lake Hiking Trail, Ketchikan, Alaska
USDA Forest Service
AA-86330
AK-040-06-EA-022

Construction and Maintenance of Hiking Trail

Location:

Lot 5, USS 3835
Copper River Meridian, Township 75 S., Range 90 E., Sections 11, 12, and 14

Prepared By:

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March 27, 2006

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been working with the Forest Service (FS) Ketchikan-Misty Fjords Ranger District to help them pursue a proposal involving public lands. This project has been in the pre-application stage for approximately three (3) years.

The Forest Service is currently working with the Ketchikan Gateway Borough, Alaska State Parks, and the Ketchikan Outdoor Recreation and Trails Coalition (KORTC) on a proposal to construct **hiking** trails in the Ketchikan area. These organizations entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 1999 to engage in a cooperative effort to plan, locate, design, construct, and maintain hiking trails for the purpose of establishing a public trail system. Under this MOU, the FS agreed to facilitate the construction of five trails in the Ketchikan area, including the Minerva Mountain Trail.

The Minerva Mountain Trail connects the Perseverance Lake Trail, which starts adjacent to Ward Lake, with the Bear Valley neighborhood in Ketchikan. The trail also includes a link from the Minerva Mountain Trail to Carlanna Lake. The trail is designed to be constructed in three phases. Phase 1 starts at the Perserverance Lake Trail and ends at Mt. Juno. Construction of Phase One was completed in 2004. Phase 2 starts at Carlanna Lake and ends where it intersects with the Phase One trail. Phase 3 continues on from the end of Phase One into the Bear Valley neighborhood in Ketchikan.

It has been determined due to the confusion of this project, the Carlanna Lake trail and Phase 3 of the entire trail will be renumbered. Carlanna Lake trail is now Phase 1 and the second part of the trail (waiting for funding) is now Phase 2.

The Carlanna Lake portion of the trail (Phase 1) is located within public lands under the jurisdiction of the BLM. Parts of Phase 2 are also under the jurisdiction of BLM.

This Environmental Assessment covers Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the trail.

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to grant the FS authorization to construct and maintain the Carlanna Lake Trail. This trail will provide access to recreational opportunities on the 32-acre Carlanna Lake, as well as the alpine areas along the Minerva Mountain ridge. The trail will also link the community of Ketchikan to the Minerva Mountain Trail, the Perseverance Lake Trail and the Ward Lake Recreation Area. The trail will be constructed in two phases. **See map.** Phase 1 of this trail will be constructed during the summer of 2006. Phase 2 of the trail will be flagged and brushed in the short term. It will be constructed when additional funds are available.

The need of this Proposed Action is due to trail use that is growing in the Ketchikan area. Recreational opportunities for hiking on trails accessible from the Ketchikan road system are very limited. This trail meets the need of the public by increasing the number of trails that can be used from the Ketchikan road system and providing trails with legal access to public and National Forest lands.

B. Conformance With Land Use Plan:

Currently, there is no Land Use Plan in effect for this area. The Proposed Action would occur within an area covered by the Ring of Fire Resource Management Plan (RMP). The draft EIS for the Ring of Fire RMP has been circulated for comments. The analysis in this EA relies on the information in the September 2005 draft of the Ring of Fire RMP.

The Ring of Fire RMP is considering four alternatives. The Proposed Action is in conformance with all of these alternatives. The Proposed Action is not within an avoidance or exclusion area for rights-of-way. *See p. 2-13, Ring of Fire Draft RMP/EIS, September 2005.* Although the Proposed Action would occur in an area withdrawn as a municipal watershed for the City of Ketchikan, the City has consented to the construction of the trail and the watershed is only a backup water supply. Accordingly, the Proposed Action meets the objectives of the Ring of Fire Draft RMP/EIS by providing “a balance between land use (ROW’s, land use permits, leases and sales) and resource protection that best serves the public at large.” *See p. 2-4, Ring of Fire Draft RMP/EIS, September 2005.*

BLM received a MOU, 99-MOU-1005-510, dated October 1, 1999, showing each agency and organization involved concurs with this action (see below).

On May 3, 2002, BLM received a letter from KPU asking BLM to allow the construction of the Carlanna Lake Trail and accept the letter as a formal request made by the City of Ketchikan in support of the development of the trail.

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses:

The FS and the BLM entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on May 20, 1980, entitled Bureau of Land Management-Forest Service Interagency Right-of-Way and Road Use Agreement. This MOU established procedures for granting and acquiring property rights, by each agency from the other, necessary for road and trail use. This includes the construction, improvement, maintenance, and transferring jurisdiction of roads and trails.

In 1990, the Ketchikan Gateway Borough, the Ketchikan Outdoor Recreation and Trails Coalition, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of

Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Ketchikan District, and the Forest Service entered into an MOU to plan, locate, design, construct, and maintain hiking trails. The Minerva Mountain Trail is one of the trails specifically mentioned in the MOU. The Carlanna Lake Trail, described in the Proposed Action, is one of the segments of the Minerva Mountain Trail.

In 1995, the Ketchikan Gateway Borough, Parks and Recreation Department, and the City of Ketchikan, Ketchikan Public Utilities, Water Department, entered into an MOU supporting the development and management of the Carlanna Lake area for recreational use.

The FS has applied for a wetlands permit from the Corps of Engineers. No construction in wetland areas would commence until the permit is granted. All construction in wetland areas would comply with the terms of the wetlands permit.

- D. Alternatives Considered But Not Analyzed in Detail:
No alternatives were considered and analyzed due to safety, desired access, and liability concerns.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE

A. Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action is for the FS to construct a trail on public land under the jurisdiction of BLM on Lot 5 of USS 3835, which is located in the Ketchikan Recording District. The trail ROW would be issued pursuant to an interagency MOU with the FS, in accordance with Section 507 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (90 Stat. 2781, 43 U.S.C. 1767).

The trail ROW would begin adjacent to USS 1281, owned by the City of Ketchikan, in Section 14 of Township 75 South, Range 90 East, Copper River Meridian. The trail would follow the Carlanna Lake Trail alignment through Sections 11 and 12 of Township 75 South, Range 90 East, Copper River Meridian and end where the trail crosses the boundary of the Tongass National Forest in Section 12. **See map.**

The ROW would allow a clearing corridor of 8 feet in width for approximately 2.1 miles of the trail. No large trees will be removed however some removal of small vegetation will be necessary. The treadwidth of the trail will be approximately 3 feet wide. The tread will generally be gravel, with mixed sections of natural tread and boardwalk. The trail would occupy approximately 2 acres of land in Lot 5 and be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 is approximately 1 mile and Phase 2 is approximately 1.1 mile.

Phase 1 is planned to begin in May 2006 and completed in September 2007. Phase 2 has not been funded yet, but the intended route will be brushed and markers will be left in place until funding is available. This trail will link the City of Ketchikan to the Minerva Mountain Trail, Perseverance Lake Trail, and the Ward Lake Recreation Area. The trail would start adjacent to Carlanna Dam access road and will end on BLM's land at the back of the lake. Phase 2 will continue until it reaches the Tongass National Forest.

Construction and removal of brush will be done by hand tools. No heavy equipment will be necessary. If items are needed that can not be carried in they will be slung in by helicopter.

A couple of small areas (1/8 acre) may be needed for the helicopter to land. If specific areas are not necessary, the helicopter may land in an existing open place. These areas are not known at this time. If re-vegetation is necessary upon completion, the FS will use their best standard practices known for that location.

This is a cooperative effort between the Ketchikan Gateway Borough, Alaska State Parks, Ketchikan Outdoor Recreation and Trails Coalition, and the Forest Service of the Misty Fjords Ranger District, to construct new hiking trails in the Ketchikan Area.

B. Alternative #1 - No Action Alternative:

Under the No Action alternative, BLM would not issue a trail ROW to the FS and continue its current management of the area. No trail would be constructed. The public would not have the access the trail will yield and the FS would not maintain the area.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Critical Elements:

The following critical elements are either not present or would not be affected by the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternatives:

ACEC's
Air Quality
Cultural Resources
Energy
Environmental Justice
Farmlands, Prime/Unique
Floodplains
Invasive, Nonnative Species
Native American Religious Concerns

Subsistence
Threatened and Endangered Species
Waste, Hazardous and Solid
Water Quality, Surface & Ground
Wild & Scenic Rivers
Wilderness

1. Wetland/Riparian Zones:
Most of the first mile of the trail would be constructed on forested wetlands. A Wetlands Report has been completed for this action which indicates that the proposed activity would result in the loss of some wetlands.
2. Water Quality:
The FS and the BLM have determined the scope of the project will not affect quality of water within the Carlanna Lake watershed.

- B. Land Status:
The Proposed Action is located on public lands managed by the BLM on Lot 5 of USS 3835, which is located in the Ketchikan Recording District. The trail discussed in the Proposed Action will also cross land managed by the DNR the City of Ketchikan, and the FS. The DNR and the City of Ketchikan have been notified that the FS is proposing to construct the Carlanna Lake Trail, which will utilize the trail ROW as discussed in the Proposed Action. The Mental Health Land Trust owns land adjacent to Lot 5 of USS 3835.

Lot 5 of USS 3835 encompasses most of the Carlanna Lake watershed. This watershed was withdrawn, by the Act of July 27, 1939, to protect it as a municipal water supply for the City of Ketchikan, however, it is only a back up watershed.

- C. Vegetation:
The trail crosses through several different vegetation types as it travels from Carlanna Lake up to the ridgeline above the lake. The portion of the trail next to the lake is primarily in a coniferous forest. This area is a forested wetland, which typically includes hemlock, cedar, or other conifer overstories, and ground cover consisting largely of skunk cabbage and deer cabbage. As the trail moves away from the lake and up the hillside behind the lake it moves into forested non-wetlands, but is still primarily a coniferous forest. The trail moves into an alpine area as it crosses the back face of the watershed and crosses the ridge. Stunted lodgepole pine, yellow cedar, and mountain hemlock are found in peat deposits in this area.

D. Visual Resources:

The Ring of Fire Draft RMP/EIS proposes to place the Carlanna Lake area into a Class IV Visual Resource Inventory in Alternatives B and a Class II Visual Resource Inventory in Alternative C and D. Class IV allows for major modifications to the existing character of the landscape and Class II seeks to preserve the existing character of the landscape. Under Class II, change to the characteristic landscape may be seen, but should be low and not attract the attention of the casual observer.

The trail design and construction techniques ensure that any change to the landscape would meet or exceed the objectives for an area with a Class II Visual Resource Inventory.

E. Wildlife:

There have been no wildlife surveys completed in this area to determine the numbers or distribution in the area of the Proposed Action. However, given the type of trail construction being proposed, the project is not anticipated to affect wildlife in the area.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:

1. Critical Elements:

a. Wetlands/Riparian Zone:

Construction of the trail may result in excavating and filling in some wetland areas. When wetland areas are covered with fill it results in a permanent loss of the wetlands. Considering that the trail tread width would be three feet, approximately one-half an acre of wetlands will be crossed by the trail. Not all of this one-half acre would be impacted because raised wooden boardwalks would be used in some of the wetland areas.

b. Vegetation:

Construction of the trail will result in the clearing of a right-of-way up to 8 feet in width. Small trees and understory vegetation will be impacted when the right-of-way is cleared. The right-of-way will remain cleared and brushed for the lifetime of the trail. Rather than remove large trees the trail alignment will be slightly adjusted to avoid the tree. These will be left in place.

- B. Impacts of Alternative #1 - No Action Alternative
Under the No Action Alternative impacts will continue to occur from natural forces such as wind and water and from human activity in the area associated with dispersed recreation and fishing near the lake.
- C. Cumulative Impacts:
There are no reasonably foreseeable future actions within this area.
- D. Mitigation Measures:
Mitigation measures will be taken from the best practices known to the FS.

V. **CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

- A. Persons and Agencies Consulted:
A description of the Carlanna Lake Trail project was mailed to approximately 81 individuals and the following organizations:
Alaska Forest Association
Alaska State Dept. of Fish & Game
City of Ketchikan
Alaska State Dept. of Natural Resources
Alaska State Parks
Concerned Alaskans for
Evergreen Timber LLC
Farwest Research
Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce
Ketchikan Daily News
Ketchikan Gateway Borough
Ketchikan Visitor's Bureau
Ketchikan Outdoor Rec and Trails Coalition
Muskeg Excursions
Organized Village of Saxman
Bureau of Land Management
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Sierra Club
Sitka Conservation Society
Southeast Alaska Conservation
Southeast Alaska Outdoor Recreation
Tongass Conservation Society
University of Alaska – SE
USDI Office of Env. Policy & Comp.
Ketchikan Indian Community
Saanya Kwan - Tei Kweidi
Tongass Tribe

A legal notice was placed in the *Ketchikan Daily News* on September 24-25, 2005.

Meetings with the Ketchikan Outdoor Recreation and Trails Coalition have occurred on a monthly basis for the last few years. These meetings are open to the general public and no negative comments have been recorded from these meetings. The community strongly supports the Trails Ketchikan initiative.

B. List of Preparers:

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Bruce Seppi, Wildlife Biologist, BLM, Anchorage Field Office
Jeff Denton, Subsistence Specialist, BLM Anchorage Field Office