

Recreation Trails - 2004
BLM/EK/PL-2004/005
Proposed Action and Alternatives

Introduction

In the winter of 2003, the Elko Convention and Visitors Authority (hereafter referred to as ECVA) in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management-Elko Field Office and U.S. Forest Service-Humboldt/Toiyabe National Forest, and the communities of Elko, Carlin, and Wells, began discussions about proposals to obtain grant funding to develop motorized trails from the Nevada Division of State Parks. The original concept was to develop a series of motorized trail loops connected to each of these communities whereby OHV riders, primarily tourists, would have the opportunity to use their equipment to explore the lands near these communities, while at the same time spending additional tourism revenues within the communities.

The exploratory committee began reviewing several proposed routes near the communities only to find that the numerous gates, blocked access, and private lands concerns were too large of a task to handle while attempting to submit a grant application by April 2003 to develop the trails. The committee decided that the best course of action was to focus on large blocks of public lands within Elko County that offered high scenic and/or historic values, already had a series of connected road networks in place, and would minimize potential conflicts with other resource uses and private lands. The location chosen to explore on BLM administered lands is around the Spruce Mountain area. All existing road routes in the area were mapped out and members of the committee and BLM personnel inspected the routes to identify loop routes that could be used to bring the users back to a centralized staging area. Routes that would expose users to high risk (steep routes, mining hazards, steep drop offs, etc.) were eliminated during the route selection process.

Purpose and Need

The proposed action would provide an opportunity for recreational OHV use. There is a regional demand for these opportunities with visitors expected from Nevada, Utah, Idaho and California. Opportunities for motorized recreation are becoming more difficult because of increasing development near urban areas and resource management restrictions in southern Utah, southern Nevada and California. Other communities throughout the West are developing similar OHV trails to encourage tourism.

The ECVA identified both the Spruce Mountain and Stag Mountain areas as Off Highway Vehicle Trail location in the "*Adventures on the Edge*" recreation guide on public lands (2002). No clearly identified Trail route is shown within this brochure, and visitors may be drawn to the area and begin utilizing roads and routes where OHV use may not be desired due to resource concerns. The ECVA desires to identify a series of looped, clearly marked routes to allow the visitors to safely follow already established roads in the area, that would both maximize their riding enjoyment and minimize

conflicts with other resource uses. It is the ECVA desire that the routes identified be at least 50 miles in length, and if at all possible, minimize any “backtracking” which would allow the visitors to continually explore new country and further enhance their experience.

The BLM has identified the need to utilize a marked trail route to guide the visitors along the myriad of roads that exist in both the Spruce Mountain and Stag Mountain area. Although the area has an Open designation for OHV use, BLM desires to direct the visitors along routes that are safe to travel, and into areas where OHV use would not adversely affect critical resource values. At the same time, BLM desires to direct visitors away from certain areas on and around Spruce Mountain and Stag Mountain areas where any increase in vehicular activity would not be desired due to resource concerns. This is BLM’s first attempt in Elko County to manage dispersed recreational OHV use, and it is hoped that the trail users will be motivated to conduct OHV activities in a responsible manner on other public lands areas after visiting a designated OHV Trail.

PROPOSED ACTION, ALTERNATIVE A, ALTERNATIVE B, HANKS CREEK/MARYS RIVER ALTERNATIVE, AND NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Proposed Action

The Spruce OHV Trail, hereafter referred to as the Trail, would be approximately 88 miles long and would be divided into two loops. The beginning point for each loop would be at a staging area, parking area, information kiosk, located at T. 31 N., R. 63 E., Section 7. A primitive campground would also be located at this point. Interpretive signs along the Trail route is included with the proposed action. Each of the actions proposed is described in detail below. Map 2 shows the entire Trail route proposed.

Trail Routes and Marking

Loop 1, the southern loop, would be approximately 68 miles long and would cross the following lands:

- T. 31 N., R. 63 E., Secs. 7, 13, 14, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, and 23 (BLM Roads 1037 and 1031)
- T. 31 N., R. 64 E., Secs. 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 23, 27, 28, 33, 34 and 36 (BLM Road 1037, a two-track road, and BLM Road 1023)
- T. 30 N., R. 64 E., Secs. 3, 4, 9, 13, 15, 16, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 32, 33, 35, and 36 (BLM Road 1023, a two-track road, and BLM Road 1055)
- T. 30 N., R. 65 E., Secs. 4, 5, 6, 7, and 18 (BLM Road 1055)
- T. 31 N. R. 65 E., Secs. 7, 17, 18, 19, 20, 28, 30, and 33 (BLM Road 1038 and a two-track route).

The following is a description of the above route, using geographic landmarks as reference:

Loop 1 would start at a point approximately three miles northwest of historic Sprucemont site. The route would travel generally southeast and then east to the Standard Mine in the

Spruce Mining District (BLM Road 1037). At this point the road splits, with one branch following the south side of the canyon through the Sprucemont townsite, and the other branch following the north side of the canyon. The two roads converge again near the Monarch Mine, and this road continues east over the top of Spruce Mountain Ridge and down Cole Creek drainage past the Black Forest Mine and townsite. As the road reaches the edge of the juniper zone, the route would follow a bladed road (no road number) that proceeds southeast through an old chaining area, to eventually intercept the Brush Creek Road (BLM Road 1023). The route follows this road south over Coyote Pass and out of the hills into the north end of Goshute Valley. Travelers could continue south on Road 1023 to the intersection with BLM Road 1021 where a second staging area would be located, or they could turn off to the southeast on a two-track road and intercept BLM Road 1055, and follow this road north to Boone Springs and the Indian Creek drainage. The route intercepts BLM Road 1038 and follows the southern boundary of the South Pequop WSA towards Feedlot Well, and turns off on a two-track road to rejoin the road in Cole Creek. From here the traveler would back track on BLM Road 1037 over Spruce Mountain Ridge, down to Sprucemont and the staging area.

Loop 2, the northern loop, would be approximately 20 miles long and have the same point of beginning as Loop 1, and would follow the Loop 1 route across the following lands:

- T. 31 N., R. 63 E., Secs. 7, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18 (BLM Road 1037)
- T. 31 N., R. 64 E., Secs. 8, 9, and 18 (BLM Road 1037)

At a point in T. 31 N., R. 64 E., NE1/4 NW1/4 Section 9, Loop 2 would follow roads north, west and then south back to the point of beginning, crossing the following lands:

- T. 31 N., R. 64 E., Secs. 4, 5 and 9 (BLM Road 1525)
- T. 32 N., R. 64 E., Secs. 17, 18, 20, 29, 30, 31, and 32 (BLM Road 1523)
- T. 32 N., R. 63 E., Secs. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 29, and 32 (Two-track route and BLM Road 1048)
- T. 31 N., R. 63 E., Secs. 5, 6, and 7 (BLM Road 1048)

The following is a brief description of the above route, using geographic landmarks as reference:

Loop 2 would start near Cole Creek, approximately 4 miles northeast of the Black Forest Mine. The route would follow BLM Road 1525 northwest, skirting the edge of a pinyon-juniper chaining to intercept the Latham Creek Road (BLM Road 1523). The route would proceed north on BLM Road 1523 for approximately 3 miles across the sagebrush/crested wheatgrass flats to intercept a two-track road that proceeds due west across Spruce Mountain Ridge. This road intercepts BLM Road 1048 in Clover Valley, and the route would follow this road south approximately 6 miles to return to the staging area.

A second staging area and information kiosk would be located at T. 30 N., R. 64 E., Section 32 (south end of Loop 1).

The course would be marked with brown Carsonite trail markers (fiberglass). The markers would protrude approximately 54" out of the ground, and would be two-sided to

allow the placement of stickers on both sides of the marker to accommodate the two way traffic on the trail. The trail markers would be placed at intervals often enough to assist the visitor in following the route (generally, one marker every ½ mile; more often if side routes are encountered). Each side of the marker would have, from top to bottom: a 2.5” x 2.5” reflective decal, a 2.5” x 16” trail identity sticker, a 2.5” x 2.5” directional arrow (indicating straight ahead, right or left turn), and a 2.5” x 2.5” Tread Lightly sticker. The GPS coordinates (latitude/longitude) would be written on one side of each marker with paint pen or permanent marker to assist those travelers with GPS units to identify locations.

Staging and Parking Areas

The primary staging and parking area would be located three miles northwest of Sprucemont in T. 31 N., R. 63 E., Section 7. A public lands information kiosk is already at this location (placed in 2002 by Law Enforcement Ranger). This location is at the lower edge of the juniper zone, with the vegetation consisting of scattered juniper trees interspersed with sagebrush and grass. An area of approximately ½ acre (150’ x 150’) would be required for the staging/parking area to accommodate vehicle parking and turnaround. All juniper trees in the area would remain, however the sagebrush within the parking area would be removed by either hand grubbing or mechanical means (grading). The area would be covered with a layer of crushed gravel road base which would be rolled to create a firm surface.

The staging area would also have an information kiosk. This would be a two-sided wooden structure with a gable style roof. The structure would be approximately eight feet high at the apex of the roof; approximately eight feet long, and approximately four feet wide. It would be supported by two upright timbers that would be anchored into a concrete footing, approximately two feet deep. See Attachment 2 for a sketch map that depicts these planned developments.

An “Iron Ranger” fee tube would be placed near the information kiosk, and a fee structure established for use of the area. Since this area is included within the Elko Fee Demonstration Project, 100% of the fees collected would be used for maintenance of the site.

A second staging / parking area with information kiosk would be located in T. 30 N., R. 64 E., Section 32. This location is a wide open, flat, low sagebrush area. A kiosk identical to the kiosk described above would be located here. No grubbing or blading of vegetation to provide clearance would be done at this location, and no gravelling to create a firm surface would be done.

Primitive Campground / Picnic Area

Immediately adjacent to the primary staging / parking area, or across the road (depending on site conditions), a primitive campground/picnic area would be developed. Included within the primitive campground would be a single unit, SST vault toilet; four picnic tables, four fire rings, and a loop road. The loop road would connect with the main bladed road (BLM Road 1037), and the toilet structure would be located on the inside of

the loop. The four designated campsites would be located along the outside of the loop. Each site would consist of a picnic table and fire ring. No juniper trees would be removed in the campground area. The road would be bladed or hand grubbed to remove the sagebrush. Approximately .25 acres of disturbance would be associated with development of the campground, broken down as follows:

- Road: 500' x 15' = .17 acres
- Camping area spurs: 30' x 20' x 4 ea. = .05 acres
- Toilet excavation: 10' x 20' = .005 acres.
- TOTAL = .225 acres.

The loop road would be covered with a layer of crushed gravel road base which would be rolled to create a firm surface.

An "Iron Ranger" fee tube would be placed near the vault toilet structure, and a fee structure established for use of the area. Since this area is included within the Elko Fee Demonstration Project, 100% of the fees collected would be used for maintenance of the site.

See Attachment 2 for a sketch map that depicts these planned developments.

Interpretive Signs

Numerous historic structures are found along the Trail route, especially in the area of the Spruce Mining District. Numerous old wood buildings are located in what used to be the townsite of Sprucemont. The remnants of brick and mortar, stone, concrete, and wood and metal structures can be found at the old mine sites of the Standard, Ada, Kile, Monarch and Black Forest mines. A series of interpretive signs would be placed at key locations near the historic structures to both explain the history of the area, and hopefully thwart vandalism of the sites by educating the visitors of the importance of preserving the traces of our past.

Other Signs

Additional directional signs are planned along the Trail route to help guide the visitors at key intersections. Along the entire route, there are only three directional signs currently in place. Approximately six additional directional signs would be placed to bring the total to nine directional signs along the route.

Other proposed signs includes additional Carsonite markers that could be placed, as needed, to deter vehicle use of critical areas, dangerous side routes, etc. There are numerous side routes (bladed and two-tracks) that branch out from the main designated trail routes, that resource specialist may identify as needing restrictions from OHV use, either yearlong or seasonally. Carsonite has a wide variety of decals and signs available for virtually any application needed: from protection cultural sites and wildlife habitats, mine hazard warnings, etc. Examples of directional and Carsonite signs are found in Attachment 3.

Spruce: Alternative A

This alternative is approximately 76.5 miles long, and follows the same route as the Proposed Action, with the following changes.

The portion of Loop 1, located in T. 31 N., R. 63 E., Secs. 21, 22, and 23 that follows a bladed road through the Sprucemont townsite would be eliminated. This portion would be eliminated to avoid conflicts with landowners of the numerous patented mining and millsite claims that this route crosses; to reduce the potential safety hazards to the public that are present in the Sprucemont area (shafts, adits, old buildings); to reduce the potential for conflict with bats that use these old buildings, adits and shafts as roosting and breeding habitat; to reduce the potential for vandalism of the structures, equipment and other private and historic properties that are found in the Sprucemont area; and to provide for a greater degree of public safety by not guiding visitors near these areas. Only the branch on Loop 1 that follow BLM Road 1037 along the north side of the canyon would be identified and marked as the Trail route on the northwest side of Spruce Mountain. See Map 3 for location of this route.

Since the Trail route would not be traversing the Sprucemont area and the numerous historic structures there, there would be not opportunity to develop an interpretive program at the various private mine sites. However, an interpretive site that provides an overall interpretation of the Sprucemont Mining District would be possible from an overlook located along BLM Road 1037, north of Sprucemont.

Total Trail miles from Loop 1 would be 57.5 miles. Loop 2 would be 19.0 miles long.

Spruce: Alternative B

This alternative is approximately 70.3 miles long, and was developed in response to a letter received from one private landowner (Sorenson) stating that they would not grant an easement across their private property for the proposed OHV Trail use. This alternative completely avoids private lands owned by the Sorenson family. This alternative follows the same route as the Alternative A, with the following changes.

Only the branch on Loop 1 that follows BLM Road 1037 along the north side of the canyon would be identified and marked as the Trail route on the northwest side of Spruce Mountain. The Trail route would continue to follow BLM Road 1037 to a point in T. 31N., R. 64E., middle of Section 18. At this point, Loop 1 would depart BLM Road 1037 and follow a road leading generally east – southeast, which would wind through a pinyon-juniper-sagebrush area and circumvent the Sorenson private lands.

BLM Road 1037, from the intersection just described above, would be used as Loop 2 (the northern route) down Cole Creek Canyon to a point just west of the Sorenson private lands in T. 31N., R. 64 E., Sections 4 and 9. A new two-track route would be established from BLM Road 1037, proceeding north to the west of the western boundary of the Sorenson private lands, and connect with BLM Road 1525. This new two-track route

would be approximately 811 meters (.5 miles) long, and would traverse an area that has been previously disturbed for a pinyon/juniper chaining project. Assuming an eight foot width of disturbance to existing vegetation from this two-track route, approximately .49 acres of vegetation would be disturbed.

Sorenson owned private lands are also located at Boone Springs, in T. 31N., R. 65E., Section 19. These private lands would be avoided by deleting that portion of Loop1 as described in the Proposed Action (delete approximately 5 miles), and instead following an established road that is three miles south and east of Boone Springs that loops around to the east of these private lands and connects with BLM Road 1038. This road is located in T. 31N., R. 65E., Section 20, 28, and 33; and also in T. 30N., R. 65E., Section 4, 5, and 6.

To again avoid the Sorenson private lands in T. 31N., R. 64 E., Sections 4 and 9, the end of Loop 1 would follow already established road routes from the BLM Road 1038 directly to the Coyote Pass Road, and connect back with the new Loop 1 route identified above (east-southeast of Sorenson private lands).

As the Trail route is laid out and surveyed, if any additional Sorenson private lands are encountered, they can be easily circumvented by either following established two-track routes, or by establishing new two-track routes. The total extent of new two-track routes needed to circumvent private lands is not known, but it is anticipated to be less than .5 miles total. Assuming an eight foot width of disturbance to existing vegetation from these new two-track routes, approximately .49 acres of vegetation would be disturbed.

Approximately .25 miles of private lands (owned by Thomas Buranek) would be crossed.

See Map 4 for the location of this route.

Total Trail miles from Loop 1 would be 53.3 miles. Loop 2 would be 17.0 miles long.

Hanks Creek / Marys River Alternative

The Hanks Creek / Marys River Trail, hereinafter referred to as the HM Trail, would be approximately 66 miles long. The primary access and beginning point would be at a staging area, parking area, information kiosk, located at T. 40 N., R. 59 E., Section 7. A primitive campground would also be located at this point. Interpretive signs along the Trail route are included with the proposed action. Map 5 shows the complete trail route.

Trail Routes and Marking

The HM Trail would be approximately 66 miles long and would cross the following lands:

- T. 40 N., R. 59 E., Secs. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 (BLM Road 1064)
- T. 41 N., R. 59 E., Secs. 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, 36 (BLM Road 1064 and two-track roads)
- T. 42 N., R.59 E., Secs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33,

- 34 (BLM Road 1064 and 1096, and two-track roads)
- T. 42 N., R. 60 E., Secs. 6, 7, 17, 18 (BLM Road 1096 and two-track roads)
- T. 43 N., R. 59 E., Secs. 9, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 35, 36 (BLM Road 1096, FS 10309, and a two-track roads).

The following is a description of the above route, using geographic landmarks as reference. The route would start at a point approximately 26 miles north of Deeth, NV. Access to the area is via Elko County Road C 747. After leaving the staging area in T. 40 N., R. 59 E., Section 7, the route would proceed generally east and then north on the south side of the Hanks Creek drainage (BLM Road 1064 and two-track routes). After crossing the Hanks Creek drainage, the route continues north to the Orange Bridge across the Marys River. At this point, a visitor could continue generally northeast to Meadow Creek and T Creek, and then loop back to the Orange Bridge, and then back to the staging area.

From the Orange Bridge, a visitor could also proceed southwest on BLM Road 1096 approximately 10 miles to intercept Elko County Road C 747 (Charleston Road). Once the county road is intercepted, only licensed vehicles could legally follow C 747 south approximately 8 miles to return to the staging area. A visitor may also choose to continue north to Charleston Reservoir, Charleston, Wildhorse or Jarbidge via Elko County roads. Unlicensed vehicles (ATVs, motorcycles) would need to backtrack along the Trail route to the staging/parking area.

A visitor could also choose, from the Orange Bridge to proceed southeast approximately 10 miles to intercept Elko County Road C 753 (O'Neil Basin Road). From this point, licensed vehicles could continue on the county road north to the O'Neil Basin, or south to Deeth or Wells, each about 36 miles via the County Roads. Unlicensed vehicles (ATVs, motorcycles) would need to backtrack along the Trail route to the staging/parking area.

Course marking (with fiberglass Carsonite posts) would be the same as described for the proposed action.

Staging and Parking Areas

The primary staging and parking area would be located 26 miles north of Deeth in T. 40 N., R. 59 E., S1/2 Section 7, near the South Fork Hanks Creek. This location is a sagebrush and grass flat, with meadows associated with Hanks Creek nearby. An area of approximately ½ acre (150' x 150') would be required for the staging/parking area to accommodate vehicle parking and turnaround. The sagebrush within the parking/staging area would be removed by either hand grubbing or mechanical means (grading). The area would be covered with a layer of crushed gravel road base which would be rolled to create a firm surface.

The staging area would also have an information kiosk. This would be a two-sided wooden structure with a gable style roof. The structure would be approximately eight feet high at the apex of the roof; approximately eight feet long, and approximately four feet wide. It would be supported by two upright timbers that would be anchored into a

concrete footing, approximately two feet deep. Attachment 2, which is the sketch map for the Spruce Mountain Trail parking/staging area, depicts the concept for these planned developments. The actual development at the South Fork of Hanks Creek would be designed to conform to the existing landscape characteristics.

An “Iron Ranger” fee tube would be placed near the information kiosk, and a fee structure established for use of the area. Since this area is included within the Elko Fee Demonstration Project, 100% of the fees collected would be used for maintenance of the site.

Primitive Campground / Picnic Area

Immediately adjacent to the primary staging / parking area, or across the road (depending on site conditions), a primitive campground/picnic area would be developed. Included within the primitive campground would be a single unit, SST vault toilet; four picnic tables, four fire rings, and a loop road. The loop road would connect with the main bladed road (County Road C 747), and the toilet structure would be located on the inside of the loop. The four designated campsites would be located along the outside of the loop. Each site would consist of a picnic table and fire ring. The road would be bladed or hand grubbed to remove the sagebrush. Approximately .25 acres of disturbance would be associated with development of the campground, broken down as follows:

- Road: 500' x 15' = .17 acres
- Camping area spurs: 30' x 20' x 4 ea. = .05 acres
- Toilet excavation: 10' x 20' = .005 acres.
- TOTAL = .225 acres.

The loop road would be covered with a layer of crushed gravel road base which would be rolled to create a firm surface.

An “Iron Ranger” fee tube would be placed near the vault toilet structure, and a fee structure established for use of the area. Since this area is included within the Elko Fee Demonstration Project, 100% of the fees collected would be used for maintenance of the site.

Attachment 2, which is the sketch map for the Spruce Mountain Trail camping area, depicts the concept for these planned developments. The actual development at the South Fork of Hanks Creek would be designed to conform to the existing landscape characteristics.

Interpretive Signs

The potential exists along the trail route to install interpretive signage to explain to the visitor a variety of resource management programs. Riparian management, wildlife habitats, fisheries management, threatened species management, and fire management are a few of the topics that could be considered for interpretation.

Other Signs

Directional signs are planned along the Trail route to help guide the visitors at key intersections. Along the entire route, there are no directional signs currently in place. Approximately six directional signs would be placed along the route.

Other proposed signs include additional Carsonite markers that could be placed, as needed, to deter vehicle use of critical areas, dangerous side routes, etc. There are numerous side routes (bladed and two-tracks) that branch out from the main designated trail routes, that resource specialist may identify as needing restrictions from OHV use, either yearlong or seasonally. Carsonite has a wide variety of decals and signs available for virtually any application needed: from protection cultural sites and wildlife habitats, mine hazard warnings, etc. Examples of directional and Carsonite signs are found in Attachment 3.

No Action Alternative

The Trail system would not be marked and advertised, no brochures developed, and no additional recreational developments would take place. The existing “open” OHV designation would remain in place with no further restrictions until such time that the Wells RMP is either amended or rewritten.