USDA United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Powell Ranger District | Lolo, Montana 59847
208/942-3113
Fax: 208/942-3311

File Code: 1950
Date: June 19, 2008

RECEIVED
JUN 3 0 2008
Ravalli County Commissioners

Interested Party
Clearwater National Forest

Dear Interested Party,

The Powell Ranger District of the Clearwater National Forest is proposing trail work to address deteriorating conditions on Garnet Creek Trail #43. This trail is located within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and accesses Bear Pass at the Idaho/Montana border and Bear Creek Trail #5 on the Bitterroot National Forest. Work is proposed along the entire length of the 3.7 mile trail located between the junction of Colt Killed Creek Trail #50 (T.36N, R.16E, Sec.25) and the Idaho/Montana border (T.36N, R.16E, Sec.30 Boise Meridian). (See attached map).

Purpose and Need for the Project

Recent trail condition surveys reveal unacceptable resource impacts along the trail. Trail widening, gully development, boggy areas and dangerous rock hazards are contributing to resource damage and unsafe conditions for trail users. The trail is designed and managed for use by both hikers and pack and saddle stock users. The current trail conditions are unsuitable and unsafe for these users. The purpose of this trail work is to stabilize the trail tread, prevent further resource damage, and better manage trail conditions for user safety. An added benefit of the trail work will be improved user access to the Idaho/Montana border from the Idaho side, as the connecting trail on the Montana side of the border is currently maintained.

Applicable General Management Direction (GMD) in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness

Trail reconstruction direction in the GMD indicates:

- *During reconstruction the previous trail location(s) will be stabilized to prevent further resource damage.*
- *Relocations can be considered in order to prevent or control resource damage, and shall retain the appropriate degree of challenge for the opportunity class.*
- *If a relocation either crosses into another opportunity class, or has potential for eroding opportunity class objectives the alternatives will be developed and analyzed through the NEPA process addressing environmental and social effects to each opportunity class.*

It is anticipated the entire length of the Garnet Creek Trail is located in Opportunity Class 2. Goals for Opportunity Class 2 as defined by the GMD are:

- *Trails in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness will be managed as a tool to protect the wilderness resource by managing the movement of people and stock. The primary emphasis is on resource protection, and the minimum tool principle will be applied to this end.*

- *The trail maintenance level will retain a primitive condition requiring a high degree of skill and challenge to travel.*

Description of Proposed Trail Work

The proposed trail work includes:

- Reconstructing in place 3.7 miles of trail to improve erosion control and boggy areas through the placement of native material waterbars (both rock and wood) and turnpikes or puncheon (non-treated wood and filter cloth). Trail width will be 18 inches wide, and clearing limits will be 4 feet on both sides of the trail at 8 feet high.
- Relocating short trail sections (with the average section being about 100 feet long) in the last .3 mile section of the trail to alleviate steep, hazardous grade with areas of bed rock impassable for pack and saddle stock users. Wherever possible, switchbacks will be built on the existing trail tread. The use of motorized rock drills may be necessary, to some extent, in this .3 mile section. The Minimum Requirements Decision Guide completed for this project will address the need for motorized rock drills.

Comments Requested

I will make the decision, based on an interdisciplinary environmental analysis and use of the Minimum Requirements Decision Guide, regarding the minimum necessary to complete this trail work. Although the proposal is located within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, there is no indication significant effects to the environment would result from implementing this proposal. However, we are asking for your comments to further evaluate this proposal.

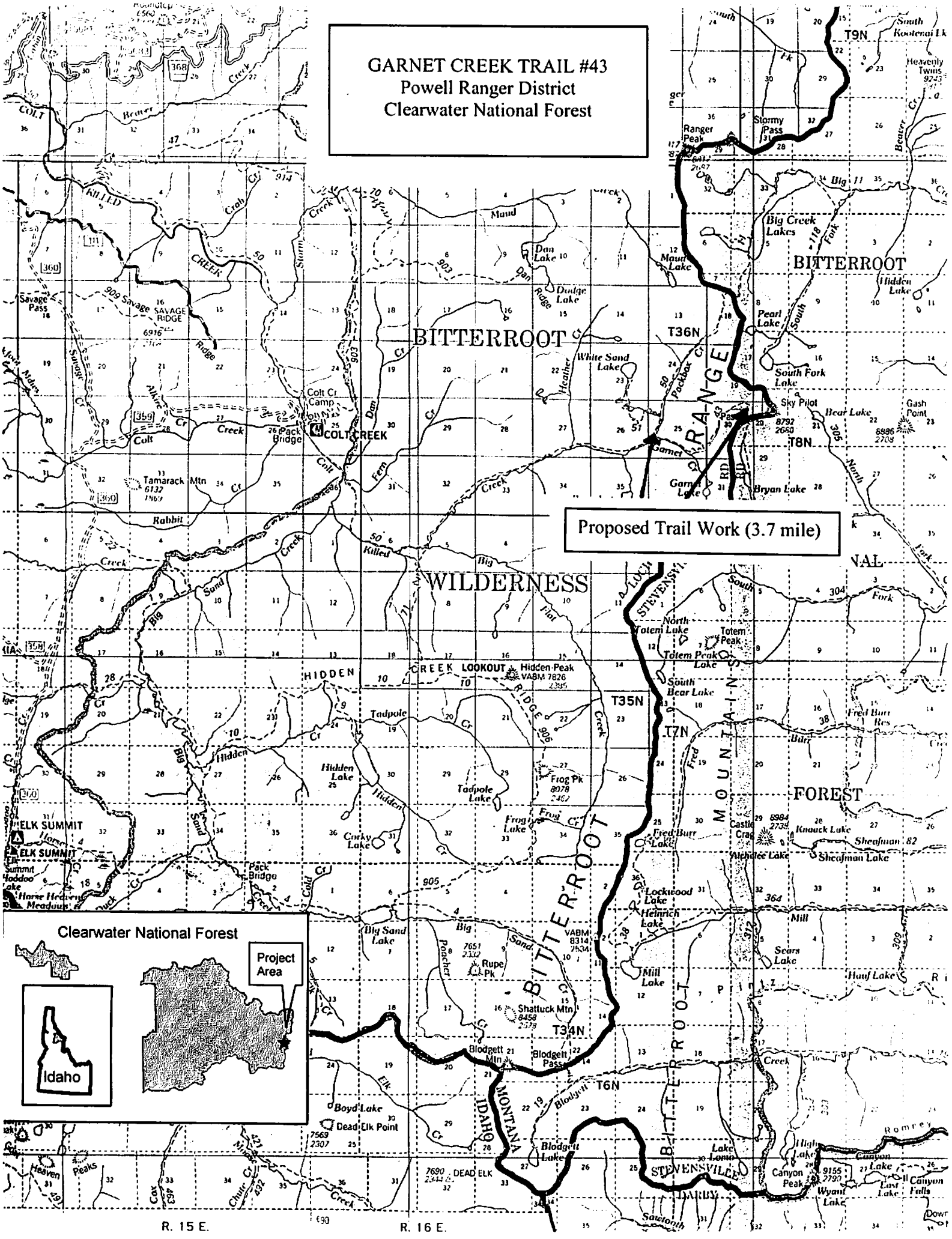
If you have any comments, questions or need additional information about this proposal please contact Katie Knotek at the Powell Ranger District (address, phone and FAX numbers are found above in the letterhead). In order to do our planning in a timely manner, **we would appreciate hearing from you by July 19, 2008.** If we don't hear from you we will assume you are not interested in the project, and we won't send you any more information.

Thank you for your helpful participation.

Sincerely,

CHAD W. BENSON
District Ranger

Enclosure: vicinity map


GARNET CREEK TRAIL #43
Powell Ranger District
Clearwater National Forest
Proposed Trail Work (3.7 mile)
Clearwater National Forest
Project Area
Idaho
BITTERROOT
WILDERNESS
BITTERROOT
RANGE
BITTERROOT
MOUNTAINS
FOREST
COLT CREEK
ELK SUMMIT
LOOKOUT
Hidden Peak
Ranger Peak
Stormy Pass
Big Creek Lakes
Pearl Lake
South Fork Lake
Sky Pilot
Bear Lake
Gash Point
Bryan Lake
Garnet Lake
White Sand Lake
Dodge Lake
Dan Lake
Maud Lake
Savage Pass
SAVAGE RIDGE
Colt Cr Camp
Pack Bridge
Tamarack Mtn
Rabbit
Killed
Big Sand
Hidden Lake
Tadpole Lake
Frog Pk
Frog Lake
Corky Lake
Big Sand Lake
Rupe Pk
Shattuck Mtn
Blodgett Mtn
Blodgett Pass
Blodgett Lake
Boyd Lake
Dead Elk Point
DEAD ELK
Heaven Peaks
North Totem Lake
Totem Peak
Totem Peak Lake
South Bear Lake
Fred Burr Lake
Castle Crag
Knauck Lake
Sheafman Lake
Alchelee Lake
Lockwood Lake
Heinrich Lake
Mill Lake
Sears Lake
Hauf Lake
Canyon Peak
Canyon Lake
Wyant Lake
Last Lake
Canyon Falls
Heavenly Twins
T9N
T36N
T8N
T35N
T7N
T34N
T6N
MONTANA
IDAHO
STEVENSVILLE
DARBY
R. 15 E.
R. 16 E.