

DECISION NOTICE AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

PINE RIDGE CAMPGROUND & DAY-USE AREA

Forest Plan Amendment #8

USDA Forest Service
Siuslaw National Forest
Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area

T.19S; R.12W; Sections 32 & 33

An Environmental Assessment (EA) that discusses the proposal to construct a 25 acre, 124 site full service campground and day use facility just north of the existing Driftwood II Campground in Lane County, approximately 6 miles south of Florence, Oregon is available for public review in Forest Service offices in Corvallis and Reedsport, Oregon.

DECISION

It is my decision to implement the proposed action, Alternative 3, which provides for an incremental, staged development of a campground and day-use area just north of Driftwood II campground in the Siltcoos Recreation Corridor. This project responds to management direction established in the 1994 Management Plan for the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area (Dunes Plan), to replace off-highway vehicle (OHV) camping capacity lost as a result of dispersed camping restrictions and closure of some developed campgrounds to OHV operation.

OHV restrictions were needed to protect certain environmentally sensitive areas, improve safety, and separate motorized and non-motorized recreation activities. At the same time, the plan provided that OHV recreation capacity would be maintained through subsequent development of this and other projects.

This decision also amends the Dunes Plan and the Siuslaw National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1990) by adding approximately 45 acres to the Siltcoos Recreation Corridor (Management Area 10(D), and reducing a corresponding acreage in Management Area 10(C) - ORV's Restricted to Designated Routes. Although total overnight camping capacity (both dispersed and developed) will see little change, this amendment will boost potential developed overnight camping capacity on the Dunes by approximately 18 percent.

Six issues were identified in the EA, and the selected alternative addresses each of these, as summarized below:

Recreation Demand--The Dunes Plan provides for redirecting use patterns for OHV recreation from certain sites and areas to other sites to accomplish Plan objectives such as environmental protection and public safety. The selected alternative provides a moderate to high level of mitigation in providing replacement capacity.

Resource Protection--The Dunes Plan provides for enhanced resource protection of wetland areas and wildlife habitat through an integrated

group of activities and actions. This project helps facilitate that protection. The Biological Evaluation for the project concludes that

implementation of Alternative 3, the selected alternative, will have No Effect on any listed species found on the Oregon Dunes NRA.

Type of Facilities--The type of facilities determines the degree of resource protection, the responsiveness to customer preferences, and the degree of accessibility. Hardened sites, a relatively high level of facility development preferred by customers (e.g., flush toilets), and accessibility are included in the selected alternative.

Safety and Health--The design, type, and number of facilities can affect customer safety and health. The selected alternative controls use in hardened sites to promote health and safety. Safe interactions among vehicles and between vehicles and pedestrians are planned. Sanitation will be provided with flush toilets.

Recreation Experience--The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum recognizes a continuum of recreation experiences based on settings, activities, and facilities. Mixing motorized and non-motorized recreation in the same time and space tends to degrade the experiences of each group. The selected alternative helps facilitate a better separation of recreation groups and will tend to enhance the experiences of both groups.

Development and Operations & Maintenance Costs--The size and efficiency of expenditures to construct, operate, and maintain a facility are important. Partnerships are of increasing importance. The selected alternative uses a phased approach to providing the quality facilities desired by customers. Strong partnerships will be needed to fund implementation of the various increments. The phased approach is responsive to concerns about funding, operations and maintenance costs, and the effect of possible new facilities adjacent to the ODNRA in this area. It provides for logical development based on available funding and priority of the various project components.

I have selected Alternative 3 because it best meets specific project objectives outlined in the Environmental Assessment and the six issues identified without causing significant resource impacts. It is responsive to the Dunes Plan which provided for separation of motorized and non-motorized recreation, enhanced safety, and better protection of sensitive sites in the Siltcoos area. It further implements that Plan, facilitating the balance provided in that Plan and mitigating the effects of other Plan actions. Alternative 3 best meets specific project objectives as follows:

1. It provides individual, group, and temporary camping sites sufficient to mitigate most impacts to OHV recreationists and meet direction in the Dunes Plan.
2. It provides a day-use staging area mitigating most effects to OHV recreationists and meeting direction in the Dunes Plan.
3. It provides for development of water and sewer facilities to support the overnight and day use while maintaining a high level of sanitation.
4. It provides for development of hardened roads, spurs, and parking areas to support uses while protecting the site.

5. It provides for recreation use in a properly sited and designed area, thus alleviating use on more environmentally-sensitive sites.
6. It improves safety by providing safer and less-congested recreation sites with direct sand access and by providing better separation of motorized and non-motorized recreationists.
7. It provides barrier-free facilities.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The selected alternative provides for development in three phases. Phase I will provide about 30 campsites, a 45 site day-use staging area, paved roads, and supporting utilities and signs. The overnight sites in this phase will mitigate some of the OHV site capacity lost in Waxmyrtle, Lagoon, and Lodgepole campgrounds. The day-use site will provide necessary staging for those OHV recreationists who wish to use Waxmyrtle and Lagoon campgrounds. It will also facilitate closing the Siltcoos Beach Parking Lot to OHV staging as provided in the Dunes Plan. Development will likely be staged in increments, pending funding.

Prior to construction of phase II, an informal monitoring assessment will be done to determine the use and occupancy in phase I facilities and in Driftwood II campground. In addition, an assessment will be made of how much additional OHV overnight capacity is needed for the public using the Siltcoos riding area.

With actual development based on available funding, phase II will incrementally add about 43 campsites, a shower, an RV-dump station, and supporting roads and utilities. The overnight sites in this phase will replace the remaining site capacity lost in Waxmyrtle, Lagoon, and Lodgepole campgrounds. The shower and RV-dump station will provide two new amenities desired by recreationists. The shower project was specifically identified in the Dunes Plan Activity Schedule (Appendix B).

Upon completion of phase II, a monitoring assessment will be done to document the level of success in implementing the Dunes Plan in this area and to verify whether phase III is still needed. An assessment of overnight capacity improvements serving this riding area will also be made as described above. If these assessments confirm the continued need, phase III will proceed, as funding permits. However, if the assessments indicate a lack of demand, phase III will be scaled back appropriately.

Full implementation of phase III would provide an additional 51 permanent and 16 temporary campsites. This would partially compensate for closures of some dispersed camping capacity, closure of the seasonal wetland overflow camping area, and conversion of the north half of Driftwood II campground to an overflow camping facility. As part of this decision, during phase I, gates will be installed at the entrance to the north portion of Driftwood II campground to facilitate use as a seasonal and peak use overflow camp. At this time it is estimated that roughly 73% of capacity for dispersed camping and 56% of overflow camping capacity losses would be mitigated in this phase. The actual percentage of the former may vary to some degree, pending a future independent decision on dispersed camping restrictions following additional site specific analysis. Dispersed camping restrictions may be implemented prior to development of this phase. It is expected that most restrictions will be phased in to avoid unnecessary capacity bottlenecks.

Alternative 1, the no action alternative, was not selected because it does not satisfy the balance provided in the Dunes Plan. It fails to meet mitigation needs, creates congestion, and discourages separation of motorized and non-motorized recreationists. It will create additional management concerns, especially in keeping heavy use out of environmentally-sensitive areas.

Alternative 2, which proposed a 35 acre, 172 site campground, was not selected because it would affect 40% more acres and cost an estimated 24% more than the selected alternative. Resource effects would be greater. Funding this alternative would be a concern not only due to the higher cost but because all or most of the project could be constructed at once. It would provide the highest level of mitigation but incur some risk of exceeding mitigation needs if other private or public OHV capacity develops adjacent to this riding area.

Alternative 4, which proposed a 10 acre, 51 site campground, was not selected because it does not satisfy the balance provided in the Dunes Plan as well as alternative 3. The alternative does provide facilities but in insufficient amounts and a high percentage of mitigation needs are not met.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Environmental Assessment has been available for two 30 day pre-decisional comment periods. During the first, one verbal and two written responses were received. Two of the three supported the preferred alternative 3. One supported alternative 2 which provides additional facilities. All three respondents had other specific comments, all of which are addressed in an appendix to the EA.

The EA was slightly revised and put out for a second 30 day review on May 24, 1996. Twenty-two written, one oral, and one 25 name petition were received. Roughly half supported the project and half did not support the project. Supporters stated that the facilities were needed and would benefit the local area. Most of those not supporting the project cited their concerns with noise. Several stated they felt OHV use damaged dune resources. All comments are addressed in the appendix.

A public meeting was held on July 5, 1996 to address comments received during the comment periods. Twelve members of the public were at the meeting, most from the Westlake area. The Dunes Plan and project were discussed but most discussion centered on existing noise concerns. A summary of the meeting along with key questions and responses is in the appendix.

All the public input was considered in my decision.

Most of those expressing concerns about the project indicated the effect of noise on adjacent residents as an important concern to them. Some felt existing noise impacts were too great and feared building the project would increase OHV use and noise impacts. The project is intended to maintain rather than significantly increase OHV use levels in this area. Use will be relocated to a good, hardened site which will further reduce resource effects. The selected alternative will be implemented in three phases and each of those phases are likely to have increments. Additional actions that reduce dispersed camping capacity will also be phased in during or following campground development. In addition, monitoring assessments following phase I and phase II will be conducted to assess continued mitigation needs and to document the

level of success in implementing several key parameters of the Dunes Plan in this area. This project is not expected to increase noise or other resource impacts. Other Dunes Plan actions, in fact, will tend to reduce existing impact levels over time.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have determined that this action is not a major Federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment as a result of implementation. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be needed. This determination was made considering the following factors:

Context: The project expands from existing developments at Driftwood II Campground into an area which has historically been open to motorized recreation. OHV campers are simply being shifted to a different site. Level of use anticipated in the Dunes Plan is not expected to change significantly. This project is not expected to have any effect on the surrounding locale; and existing use will continue at existing levels. Concerns about noise have been addressed in the Dunes plan. Therefore I find that with respect to context this project is not significant.

Intensity:

Both beneficial and adverse effects have been taken into consideration when making this determination of significance. Information available from past actions of similar intensity in the Oregon Dunes NRA indicates that no significant impacts should be anticipated from this project.

Characteristics of the geographic area are unusual, being that they are sand dunes. However, this does not make the area uniquely sensitive. In fact, virtually the entire project will occur on previously disturbed ground. The site is a 35-40 year old plantation of shorepine planted on a gentle-sloped dune. This project will not affect any unique geographic characteristics such as wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically sensitive areas. Nor would it affect floodplains, prime farmland or rangeland.

Public response to this proposal indicates this is not an action which is likely to cause effects which are highly controversial.

Irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources and adverse cumulative or secondary effects are consistent with those discussed and evaluated in the Dunes Plan.

A Biological Evaluation (BE) was completed for this project in 1996. This BE determined that the selected alternative "...will have No Effect on any listed species found on the Oregon Dunes NRA." The monitoring and evaluation built into this plan prior to implementation of phase III will ensure the confidence of a No Effect determination prior to implementation of this phase. This project will also have no adverse effect on the Regional Forester's list of threatened and sensitive species.

A Cultural Resource Assessment was completed in 1996 and determined that no districts, sites, highways, structures or objects listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places would be affected by this project.

There will be no adverse impacts on consumers, civil rights, minority groups or women.

Implementing this project will follow guidelines to ensure that public health and safety are not significantly affected.

This project does not set a precedent, nor does it involve unique, unknown or highly uncertain risks.

This project does not violate federal, state or local laws or regulations imposed for the protection of the environment. It is consistent with the Coastal Zone Management Act.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

Based on the the analysis and discussion in the EA and the BE, I find this decision to be consistent with the Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted, (Northwest Forest Plan, USDA/USDI 1994).

Pursuant to 36 CFR 219.10(f) this decision constitutes a nonsignificant amendment to the 1990 Siuslaw National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan (1994) and the 1994 Management Plan for the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW AND APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.7. Any written appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14, "Content of an Appeal," including the reasons for appeal. It must be postmarked or received by:

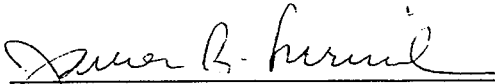
Regional Forester
ATTN: 1570 APPEALS
P.O. Box 3623
Portland, Oregon 97208-3623

(Appeal Deciding Officer), within 45 days of the date legal notice of this decision appears in the Corvallis Gazette-Times. This project will not be implemented until 5 days after the end of the 45 day period or, in case of appeal of the decision, 15 days after final disposition of the appeal.

CONTACT PERSON

For further information regarding this project, contact: Recreation Assistant,
Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, 855 Highway Ave., Reedsport Oregon
97467, or phone (541)271-3611.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:



James R. Furnish
FOREST SUPERVISOR

July 17, 1996
Date