

RCORUA submits that the Agency assertion that the subject route is “too steep” is technically flawed. EXHIBIT C displays the elevation profile of the Cold Spring Hill South route (red on EXHIBIT A). The average grade for this route is 7.9%, well within the target grade range for a Class 3 ATV trail (see EXHIBIT D). The maximum grade on the route averaged over 520 foot intervals is 16.8%, well within the “short pitch maximum” grade requirements of 25% for an ATV Class 3 trail (EXHIBIT D), and all of the route is well below the “maximum pitch density” requirement for a Class 3 ATV trail. In a nutshell, the Cold Spring Hill South route easily satisfies the requirements for a Class 3 ATV trail and is not “too steep”.

Relief from this Claim would be to look at the data, drop the “steepness” assertion, and include the Cold Spring Hill South route in the final DN.

Claim #3: The Cold Spring Hill South Route Is Not Difficult to Maintain

The roads involved in the Cold Spring Hill South route (FS 73833 and FS 73984) have been on the ground for at least three decades. During that time, the roads have been through many spring thaws and unusual rain events. According to RCORUA’s 2010 observations, there is no evidence of erosion or rutting on either of these roads. In other words, there is no evidence that these roads would be “difficult to maintain” as claimed in the Draft DN.

During the implementation of the Phase I Darby Lumber project, many similar roads were incorporated into OHV Loops. Included in the implementation of Phase I routes were requirements for brushing, clearing and grubbing, installation of rolling dips, preservation of roadside wetlands, and other BMP’s to ATV Class 3 specifications. We would anticipate that similar treatments to the Cold Spring Hill South route would result in a stable and sustainable route that would provide a high value opportunity for OHV visitors.

Relief from this Claim would be to look at the data, drop the “maintainability” assertion, and include the Cold Spring Hill South route in the Final DN.

Summary

RCORUA asserts that their observations for the Cold Spring South route have not properly been incorporated into the analysis and decision for the Darby Lumber Phase II Project. In view of the apparent lack of site specific analysis by the Agency, we claim that the data supplied by RCORUA should be taken more seriously. We submit that RCORUA’s data refutes claims in the EA and Draft DN that this route is “mostly grown in”, is “too steep” and “difficult to maintain”. We suggest that the data is compelling, and that the Cold Spring South route should be included in the Final DN.

Respectfully Submitted,



Dan Thompson, President
Ravalli County Off Road User Association
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The Darby Lumber Lands – Phase II Project was released for scoping comments on September 12, 2017. The scoping documents did not include the Cold Spring South route. On October 13, 2017, RCORUA submitted scoping comments refuting the Agency’s evaluations of Roads 73833 and 73984 (primary components of the Cold Spring South route) based upon RCORUA’s 2010 observations and requested that this opportunity be more carefully evaluated.

On October 19, 2018, the Forest Service released the EA for the Darby Lumber Lands – Phase II Project. Once again, the EA did not include RCORUA’s recommended Cold Spring Hill South route and repeated the claim that Rd 73833 was “mostly grown in” – a claim that is entirely inconsistent with RCORUA’s 2010 observations. On November 15, 2018 RCORUA submitted comments on the EA. Once again, we pointed out, based on our 2010 observations, that the roads involved in the Cold Spring Hill South route “...are high and dry and don’t have any soil or water issues; there are no particular wildlife or fish issues; neither road contains any excessive grades, washouts, or ruts; and the area is within a Management Area suitable for timber management.” We renewed our request to include this route in the project because it has very high recreational value and no resource or environmental issues.

On February 25, 2019, the Draft DN and FONSI were released. Once again, RCORUA’s recommended Cold Spring Hill South route was not included. This time, the claim was that “This proposed connector is too steep and would be difficult to maintain.” See attached EXHIBIT B. RCORUA has carefully examined the Administrative Record and have not found any documentation to support this claim.

Claim #1: The Agency Failed to Meaningfully Incorporate Public Comments in Their Analysis

When RCORUA partnered with the Forest Service in 2008 to evaluate the road system on the Darby Lumber Lands, Association volunteers participated in training exercises from Road Specialists on what to look for and how to report the condition of the Darby Lumber roads. Over the next three field seasons, dozens of RCORUA volunteers devoted nearly 800 hours of their time to the project and faithfully reported their observations to the Agency. The data reported to the Agency on the Cold Spring Hill South route is substantive, quantitative, and objective (see EXHIBIT E). The Agency has failed to provide any data to contradict RCORUA’s reports: No site specific observations, Specialist’s reports, or other observational data.

RCORUA submits that the Agency’s decision to deny the Cold Spring Hills South route is in violation of NEPA requirements to incorporate substantive public comments into their decision making process.

Relief from this claim can be easily accomplished by incorporating RCORUA’s data supplied to the Agency in 2010 in a meaningful way. If that were done, we are confident that the Cold Spring Hill South route would be included in the final DN and FONSI.

Claim #2: The Cold Spring Hill South Route is Not Too Steep



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March 18, 2019

DARBY LUMBER LANDS – PHASE II PROJECT OBJECTION

This document constitutes the Objection to the Darby Lumber Lands – Phase II Project in the Bitterroot National Forest, Darby/Sula Ranger District. The Draft DN and FONSI for this project was released to the public on February 25, 2019. This Objection is submitted on behalf of the Ravalli County Off Road User Association (RCORUA).

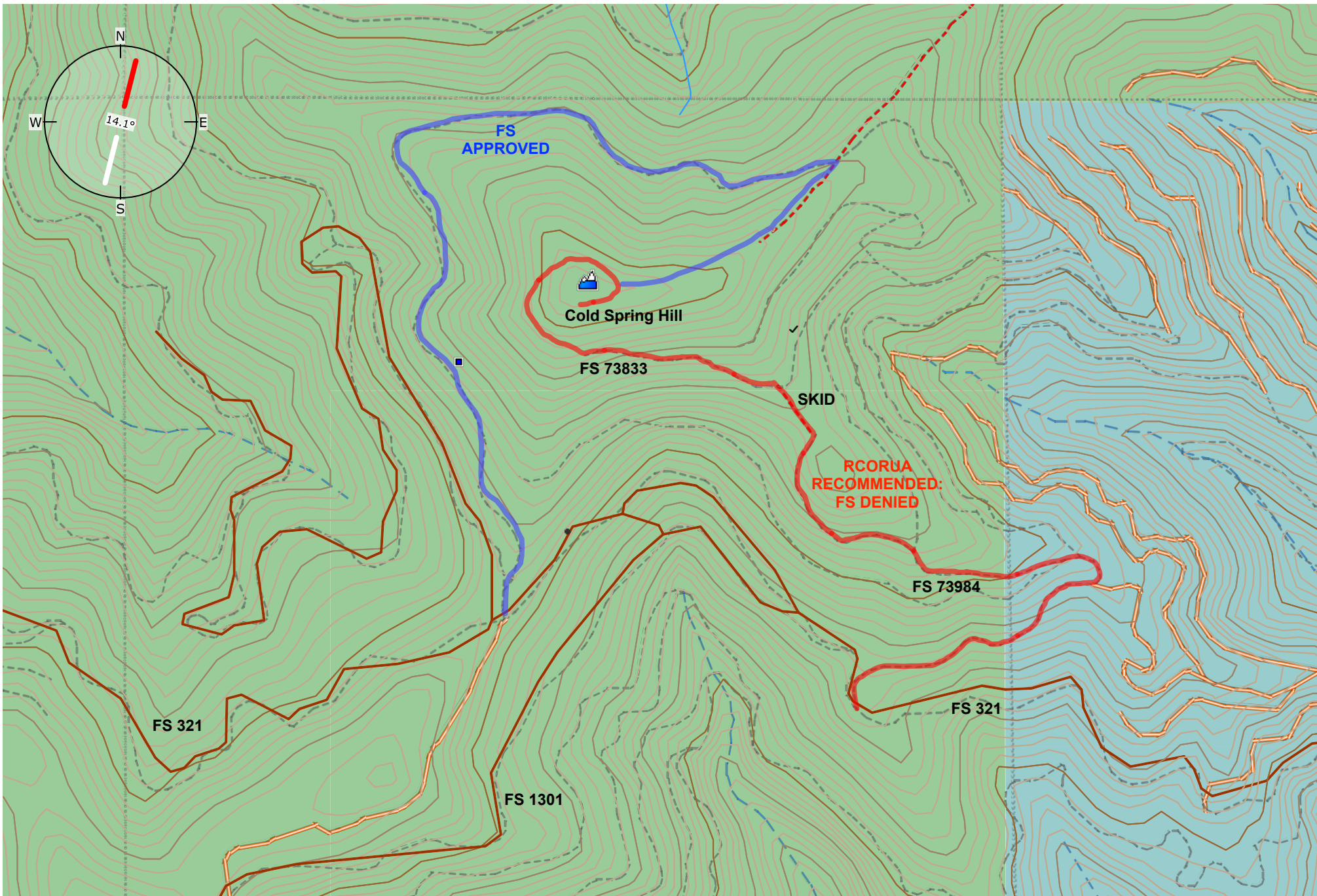
Background

In the fall of 2008, the Ravalli County Off Road User Association (RCORUA) entered into an agreement with the Darby Ranger District to evaluate the road systems on the recently-acquired Darby Lumber Sections. After receiving training by FS specialists, RCORUA volunteers visited every road in the 11 sections of land acquired from the Darby Lumber Company and noted the condition of each road and its potential for OHV loop routes. These recommended loop routes generally consisted primarily of old logging roads tied together with short trail connectors. On every road, RCORUA noted the location and size of culverts, the location and severity of ground water intercepts, the locations of water control structures, the location and severity of washouts and slumps, the location and severity of ruts and the location and abundance of regrowth. Additionally, GPS tracks of each road were recorded and photos of problem areas acquired. This field work was performed during the summer field seasons of 2009, 2010 and 2011. At the end of each field season, all of the compiled data was furnished to the Bitterroot National Forest in the form of a comprehensive report and digital files of GPS tracks, waypoints, and photos, along with recommendations for possible loop routes.

The area of concern for this objection is in Section 35 of the Darby Lumber Lands, approximately two miles north of the Deer Mountain Fire Lookout. The physiographic feature of interest herein is Cold Spring Hill. This Section was evaluated by RCORUA during the summer of 2010 and a comprehensive report supplied to the Forest Service in December of 2010. Portions of this report are attached hereto as EXHIBIT E. The point being that RCORUA's observations were substantive, comprehensive, and objective and that information was supplied to the Agency.

RCORUA's recommendation to the Agency in 2010 included an OHV loop route to the top of Cold Spring Hill. This loop route, portions of which have been modified and improved by the Forest Service, is shown on EXHIBIT A. The portion of this recommended loop route that is the subject of this objection is shown on red on EXHIBIT A, and referred to herein as "Cold Spring South".

History



HUNT_ROCKIES_NORTH

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EXHIBIT A

Cold Spring Hill Loop

N46° 02.858' W114° 01.945'



ISSUE/CONCERN (PARTY/IES ACRONYM)	SUGGESTED REMEDY	RESPONSE	REMARKS AND/OR PROJECT RECORD CITATIONS
OHV Routes not considered (RCORUA, JMW)			
Include proposed construction of a connector trail in Section 35 (Cold Spring Hill) between Roads 73833 and 73984, using an existing old skid trail		Comment considered but no changes needed	This proposed connector is too steep and would be difficult to maintain.
Travel Plan designates Road 10005 as an OHV road open yearlong - the EA arbitrarily and capriciously imposes seasonal restrictions, which is unnecessary		Proposed action modified	This road will maintain the designation from the 2016 Bitterroot Travel Plan and remain open yearlong as an OHV road.
Routes from Phase I were not properly constructed (KT)		Comment considered but no changes needed	We are currently monitoring these trails have do not believe there are issues at this time. Trails were constructed to Forest Service standards and we will continue to monitor their use into the future.
ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE			
Economic feasibility related to volume removed (KT)		Analysis supplemented, improved or modified	Please see project file document ECON-001 for the economic analysis. Please see project file document TIMBER-001 for volume estimates.
Weed introduction (KT)		Comment considered but no changes needed	Please refer to the Invasives (pp. 60-63) section of the EA and Project File document INVASIVE-001. Design criteria for the project (EA pp. 11-20) have been included to help prevent the spread of weeds.

Cold Spring South



EXHIBIT C



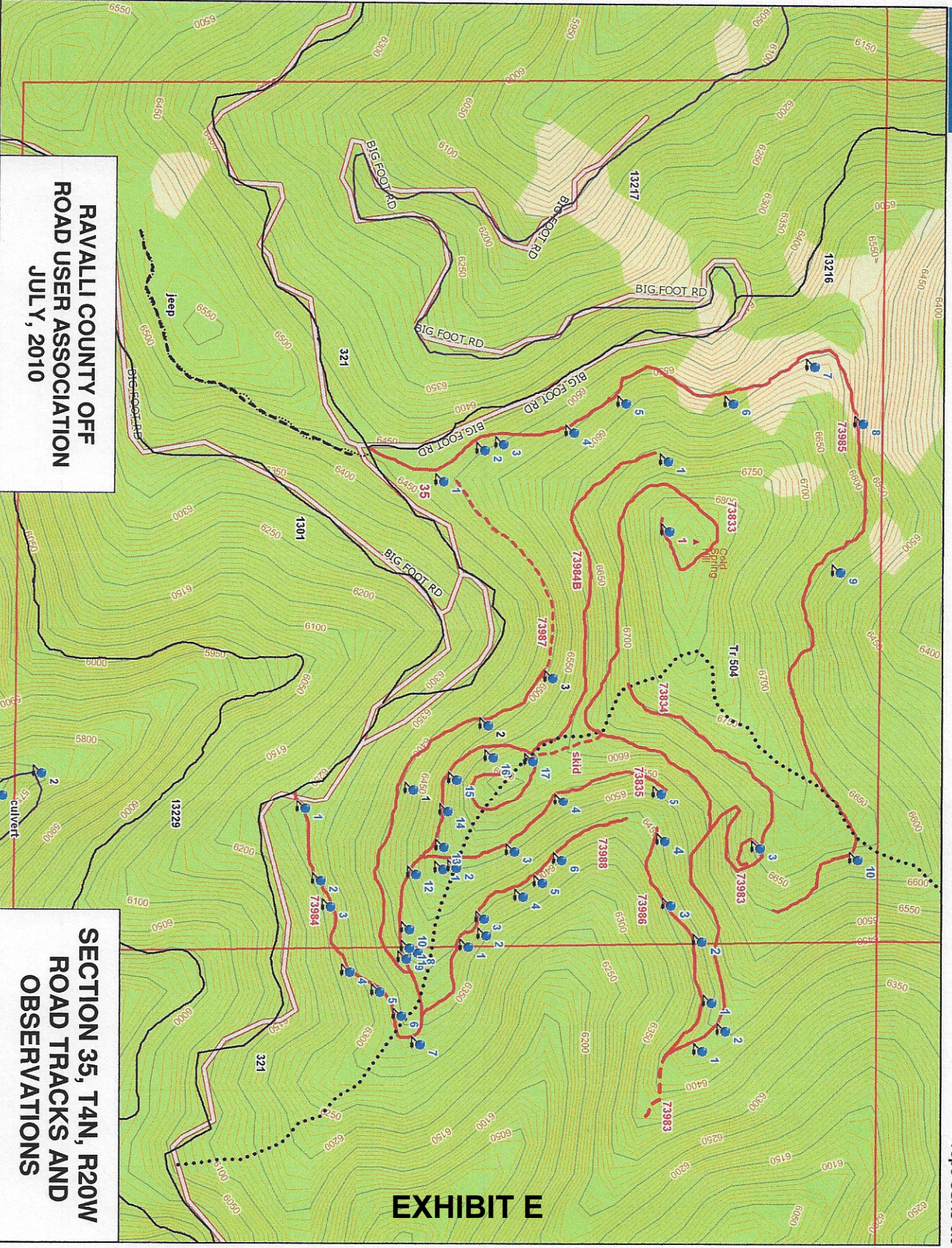
Design Parameters

Design Parameters are technical guidelines for the survey, design, construction, maintenance, and assessment of National Forest System trails, based on their Designed Use and Trail Class and consistent with their management intent¹. Local deviations from any Design Parameter may be established based on trail-specific conditions, topography, or other factors, provided that the deviations are consistent with the general intent of the applicable Trail Class.

Designed Use ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE		Trail Class 1	Trail Class 2	Trail Class 3	Trail Class 4	Trail Class 5
Design Tread Width	Single Lane	Typically not designed or actively managed for ATVs, although use may be accepted	48" – 60"	60"	60" – 72"	Typically not designed or actively managed for ATVs, although use may be accepted
	Double Lane		96"	96" – 108"	96" – 120"	
	Structures (Minimum Width)		60"	60"	60"	
Design Surface ²	Type		Native, limited grading May be continuously rough Sections of soft or unstable tread on grades < 5% may be common and continuous	Native with some onsite borrow or imported material where needed for stabilization, occasional grading Intermittently rough Sections of soft or unstable tread on grades < 5% may be present	Native with imported materials for tread stabilization common, routine grading Minor roughness Sections of soft tread not common	
	Protrusions		≤ 6" May be common and continuous	≤ 3" May be common, not continuous	≤ 3" Uncommon, not continuous	
	Obstacles (Maximum Height)		12" May be common or placed for increased challenge	6" May be common, left for increased challenge	3" Uncommon	
	Design Grade ²	Target Grade	10% – 25%	5% – 15%	3% – 10%	
	Short Pitch Maximum	35%	25%	15%		
	Maximum Pitch Density	20% – 40% of trail	15% – 30% of trail	10% – 20% of trail		

EXHIBIT D

10/16/2008



**RAVALLI COUNTY OFF
ROAD USER ASSOCIATION
JULY, 2010**

**SECTION 35, T4N, R20W
ROAD TRACKS AND
OBSERVATIONS**

EXHIBIT E

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TN
MM (1:40,000)

Scale 1 : 9,600
0 200 400 600 800 1000
0 80 160 240 320 400
ft m
Data Zoom 14-4

**SECTION 35, T4N, R20W
ROAD OBSERVATIONS**

Ravalli County Off Road User Association
Observations made June 19, 2010

73833

Great panorama of the Bitterroots. No culverts, standing or running water, no erosion. Road in great shape.

73834

No drainage issues observed on this road.

73835

1. Rolling Dip
2. Rolling Dip
3. Fill side slump
4. Fill side slump
5. Small ground water intercept

75836

This road has already been treated for long-term storage and was not evaluated as part of this project.

75838

This road has already been treated for long-term storage and was not evaluated as part of this project.

73983

1. Rolling Dip
2. Intersection with road bearing NW
3. Large puddle and debris blocking road. Puddle may be spring fed.

73984

1. Large tank trap
2. Rolling Dip
3. Rolling Dip
4. Rolling Dip
5. Rolling Dip
6. Rolling Dip
7. Rolling Dip
8. Rolling Dip
9. Rolling Dip
10. Rolling Dip
11. Rolling Dip
12. Rolling Dip
13. Rolling Dip

14. Rolling Dip
15. Rolling Dip
16. Rolling Dip
17. Rolling Dip

73984B

1. Road heavily overgrown with conifers and bushes.

73895

1. Single track trail leading NE
2. Rolling Dip
3. Rolling Dip
4. Rolling Dip with wood debris
5. Rolling Dip
6. Large perennial spring with water on road. No drainage ditches or culverts.
7. Portions of this road have been ripped.
8. Large rolling dip/check dam
9. Perennial ground water intercept with water on road approximately 100'. No drainage ditches or culverts.
10. Intersection with trail 504

73986

1. Rolling Dip
2. Rolling Dip
3. Rolling Dip
4. Road terminates at perennial live stream.

73987

1. Rolling Dip
2. Rolling Dip
3. Remainder of road heavily populated with regrowth – not evaluated beyond this point

73988

1. Rolling Dip
2. Cut side slump – no road interference
3. Two small cut side slumps – no road interference
4. Rolling Dip
5. Fill side slump
6. Rolling Dip