



File Code: 2300
Route To:

Date: May 7, 2018

Subject: Wildcat Canyon Project Initiation and Expectations

To: South Platte & South Park Ranger District Employees

Background:

Wildcat Canyon has been highly contentious for many reasons over the past several years. The South Platte River, Colorado's Front Range major water supply, flows through Wildcat Canyon. The currently closed road system previously provided legal motorized recreational value and now non-motorized value to many individuals over the years. Besides the wide array of recreational opportunities, the Canyon provides habitat for unique and sensitive wildlife and fisheries resources as well as high quality scenic value. These are only a few of the exceptional resources that Wildcat Canyon has to offer.

The entire Pike National Forest is impacted by the activities occurring in the canyon. The canyon is located on both the South Platte and South Park Ranger Districts and the Pikes Peak District provides the main access into this area.

On June 21, 2004, the PSICC adopted Forest Plan Amendment 31 to protect segments of the South Platte River and North Fork of the South Platte River that were determined eligible for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This amendment to the Forest Plan protects these segments from activities which could diminish or change the values which make the rivers eligible for designation. Under this amendment, Wildcat Canyon (identified as Segment C) is classified as "Scenic" with Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) in Scenery, Geology, Fisheries, and Wildlife (as described in the 2003 South Platte Protection Plan, Attachment A). Recreation was not included in Segment C as an ORV.

Wildcat Canyon was closed to motorized vehicles following the 2004 Hayman Roads Decision. In separate decision notices, the South Platte and South Park district rangers (Randy Hickenbottom and Sara Mayben) closed roads to Wildcat Canyon (i.e., FSR 205-Metberry, 220-Hackett, 220.A-Crossover, 220.B-Widow Maker, 221-Longwater, and 540-Corral Creek). These decisions allowed for the roads to be reopened only if a written easement, agreement, or special use permit is entered into by a public road management agency. As part of the decisions, road easements would be considered with respect to individual roads, providing that each easement, agreement, or permit contains an agreed maintenance standard for that road (September 9, 2004). Teller and Jefferson Counties did apply and received road easements. Park County initially did apply but has since withdrawn their easement request.

Issues have been arising within the area as road closures have been difficult to enforce in this



remote location. The canyon has been illegally re-opened in the past few years and resource damage is occurring. As Park County has withdrawn their request and due to the resource damage actively occurring, the Districts need to take action and fully implement the Hayman Roads Decision.

Action:

The South Park and South Platte District Rangers have agreed to coordinate our actions within the Canyon to implement a full closure. Scott Dollus, Recreation Manager on the South Platte District, will be the team lead for this project.

The objective is to develop a plan for the Canyon that is fully ready to hand over to a contractor to implement in 2019. This plan would address the needs for comprehensive management of this area and would include viable options for all of the closed roads. This plan would include items such as:

- GPS locations and a written description of vehicle barriers such as boulders and post and cable.
- GPS locations and a written description of any needed signage or kiosks.
- GPS locations and a written description to remove all of the existing signs and post and cable currently within the Canyon.
- GPS locations and written plans for areas where full road obliteration and re-contouring are required for ecological or closure purposes.

The plan will need to be fully ready for submission to contracting on December 1, 2018. Therefore, this plan will need to be extremely detailed, with maps, GPS locations, lengths of barriers, etc. and will need to be submitted to the district rangers no later than October 31, 2018 for final review.

A second product that will be provided to the district rangers on October 31, 2018 will be a comprehensive summary of any NEPA necessary to be completed prior to the contract submission. At this time, we expect that all necessary closure work can be completed through the use of Categorical Exclusions. In order for the districts to complete any necessary NEPA during the winter of 2019, all field surveys for wildlife, archaeology or any others will need to be completed prior to October 31, 2018. It is critical that specialists actively work with Scott to ensure this work is completed.

In order to keep this project moving along throughout the summer season, we will require Scott Dollus to provide monthly updates to the district rangers. These updates will include a progress report and a list of items that need attention. Scott will also be expected to have regular meetings with the involved participants to ensure progress is continuing. Early plans and GPS data will be important for specialists to carry out their surveys within the 2018 field season.

Not all employees will be needed for this project. However, if you are needed for this project we fully expect that you will make yourselves available to complete this project. Failure to complete this work within this schedule is not acceptable.

Full Team Members:

South Park District:

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| 1. Kristen Meyer | Wildlife and Fisheries Biologist |
| 2. Jeff Hyatt | Recreation Specialist |

South Platte District:

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| 1. Mikele Painter | Wildlife and Fisheries Biologist |
| 2. Scott Dollus | Project Lead |
| 3. Julie Bell | Archaeologist |

Other Resources Required:

- | | |
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| 1. Jamie Statezny | Forest Roads Engineer |
| 2. Cait Woods | Roads Engineer |
| 3. Leah Shipstead | Hydrologist |

This is an important project for the Pike National Forest. Wildcat Canyon has been a significant cause of concern for the public and for all of us for well over 15 years. Especially as concerns grow for the public and Forest, we need to work together to define a permanent solution to these issues.



JOSH VOORHIS
District Ranger

BRIAN BANKS
District Ranger



cc: PSICC Supervisors Office