



File Code: 1950

Date: December 24, 2002

SCOPING STATEMENT

USDA FOREST SERVICE
Shoshone National Forest
North Zone/Wapiti Ranger District
Park County, Wyoming

Dear Interested Party:

The Shoshone National Forest is considering an improvement project for maintenance of the Wapiti Wayside sewer system. The proposal is located in Park County at T52N, R106W, Section 21 in the North Fork of the Shoshone River corridor (*see vicinity map*). The location is approximately 25 miles west of Cody, Wyoming on U.S. Highway 14, roughly halfway between Cody and the east entrance to Yellowstone National Park.

The proposal is known as the Wapiti Wayside Sewer System Project. The wayside is a visitor contact facility, with the primary purpose of providing information and bear education to tourists and recreationists to reduce bear/human conflicts, inform the public of food storage orders, etc. The estimated use of the North Fork corridor and travelers to the east gate of Yellowstone National Park exceeds 400,000 visitors annually. Restroom facilities are part of the wayside's facilities; maintenance of the current facility is needed for human health and safety. The project is planned for the spring/summer of 2003.

Introduction

This project will replace the septic tank and the sewage lift station that are located east of the Wapiti Wayside structure, west of the entrance road to the Wapiti Ranger Station, and just north of Highway 14,16,20 inside of the fenced horse pasture. Deferred maintenance inspections have shown that the existing steel septic tank is in poor condition and in danger of collapsing. The sewage lift station, which pumps the septic tank effluent under the highway to the drainfield on the south side of the highway, is in poor condition. These sewage pumps cannot be maintained without workers entering the pit, an OSHA-defined confined space. New septic tank(s) and sewage pumps would be sized to handle increasing traffic volume at the wayside facility. New sewage pumps would be mounted on rails so that they could be removed without the need to enter a confined space.

Drainfield replacement would not be included in this project.

The total area disturbed by this project should be less than 0.25 acres. All of the disturbance would be inside the fenced horse pasture, part of the Ranger Station compound. Contractor time on-site would be 30 to 60 days.

The purpose of this scoping letter is to solicit written comments from all concerned parties regarding the proposal. Your comments and suggestions are needed and encouraged. Project alternatives will be determined and environmental consequences analyzed during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process initiated by this scoping letter.



Purpose and Need

The proposal involves maintenance of the existing sewer system that serves the wayside facility. This is identified as a deferred maintenance project, or as a backlogged maintenance project to be completed when funds become available. Additional alternatives will be developed as needed based on the comments received from this scoping.

This action is tied to guidance set forth in the 1986 Shoshone National Forest Plan and Record of Decision. General direction in the Forest Plan (FP-III-7) is "Ensure that National Forest developed sites are appropriate for the surrounding forest setting and do not compete with the private sector of unnecessarily duplicate other public land facilities and services."

- The purpose and need for the proposal is to maintain the Wapiti Wayside facility in a safe condition to meet health and safety standards.

Proposal

Project implementation involves:

- Forest Service contractors performing the work to replace septic tank(s) and sewage pumps. The contract work could take 30 to 60 days.
- Obtaining any necessary permits.
- An archaeological survey of the site was completed with the original project construction.
- Rehabilitation of any disturbed areas as needed (<0.25 acres).
- New septic tanks and sewage pumps would be sized to handle increasing volume at the facility.

Preliminary Issues and Potential Mitigation Measures

- Potential visual resource concerns, need for rehabilitation of disturbed areas, and possible scheduling of work during busy summer season
- Health and safety issues associated with the existing facilities and drainfield
- Other concerns or possible mitigation measures as identified during scoping

Possible Alternatives

- No Action Alternative – the current situation would continue with an old, inadequate system that may contribute to violating EPA requirements for drinking water. It is probable that the campground and/or the ranger station water systems would be closed down in this case.
- Alternative 2 - the project would be implemented by replacing the existing drainfield.
- Other alternatives or methods will be analyzed if issues and concerns raised through this public involvement opportunity are identified and could not be mitigated.

Nature of Decision

The decision to be made is whether to implement the proposed action, or an alternative to the proposed action. In addition, the decision could include what mitigation measures need to be applied to the proposed action. The project's conformance to the Forest Plan and any need for a plan amendment will be determined. Based on public comment from this scoping notice and environmental analysis, the Forest Service must determine whether significant issues or concerns exist. If there are any, they will be addressed in the analysis and the eventual decision. The target date for a decision is spring 2003 with implementation during the spring/summer of 2003.

Contacts

The public is provided this opportunity to identify and submit issues and concerns they feel the Forest Service should address. To be most helpful, written comments need to be submitted no later than February 10, 2003. Comments should be as specific as possible to assist us in the analysis. For further information on the project, contact project leader Tom Koenig at 307-527-6241.

Written comments should be mailed to: Marty Sharp, North Zone NEPA Coordinator, Wapiti Ranger District, 203A Yellowstone Ave., Cody, Wyoming 82414. Comments can be e-mailed to msharp@fs.fed.us.

Again, your comments are important to us.

Sincerely,

/s/ Marty Sharp for

BRENT L. LARSON
District Ranger