

SCOPING/INFORMATION PACKAGE

Bureau of Land Management Idaho, Cottonwood Field Office

Old Powerline Road ATV Trail Extension

September 5, 2013

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Cottonwood Field Office (CFO) proposal to designate 118 feet of road, known locally as the Old Powerline Road, as open to all-terrain vehicle (ATV) of less than 50" in width (Map 1). The proposed action includes reopening the decommissioned road prism and decommissioning an unauthorized route on BLM lands (Map 2).

The purpose of this report is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal and to solicit comments to assist with review of the proposal in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The BLM's analysis of the proposal is ongoing, and will be documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA). Comments received in response to this solicitation will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposed action and to identify alternatives to the proposed action that meet the purpose of and need for the project.

Location

Boise Meridian, T. 29 N., R. 8 E., Sec. 36., in Idaho County, near the town of Elk City, ID.

See the attached location map – Map 1

Purpose of and Need for Action

In 2012, the Cottonwood Field Office received a request from Idaho County to re-open the closed section of road to recreate a popular loop trail through Elk City, Idaho. The Cottonwood Resource Management Plan (RMP) designated the road as open to all vehicles, but the BLM subsequently closed the road as a result of Bennett Forest Industries, Inc. (BFI) not allowing public access on one mile of adjacent BFI property in Section 36, Township 29 N 8 E, Boise Meridian. The BLM closed and obliterated 118 feet of road base to prevent trespass on BFI, now known as the Idaho Forest Group (IFG). An unauthorized route was created by the local ATV community during the fall of 2011 to circumvent the closed route, creating a trespass issue on IFG lands.

In April, 2013, IFG granted a temporary easement to Idaho County for public use of the portion of the road that crosses their property. The BLM's reopening 118 feet of road base would reestablish a year-round ATV loop trail. Reopening the route on the BLM managed lands would decrease the likelihood of local creation of additional unauthorized routes and would aid in the ability of the BLM to permanently close the unauthorized route.

The purpose of the proposed action will address the following goals of the Cottonwood Resource Management Plan (RMP) as approved on December 21, 2009 (BLM 2009):

Goal TM-1—Manage travel, roads, and trails to provide access and recreation opportunities, while minimizing resource impacts and user conflicts.

Objective TM-1.3-Make future route modifications (amending, revising, or revoking route designations) as needed based on access needs, recreational opportunities, results of environmental monitoring, and natural and cultural resource constraints.

Action TM-1.3.4-...[Designated] trails shall be located in a manner to minimize impacts on physical resources (soils, watersheds, vegetation, air, and other resources)...

Goal LR-1—Meet the needs of government agencies and the public for various realty authorizations, access, and landowner adjustments.

Objective LR-2.3-Minimize the adverse impacts of unauthorized use of the public lands.

Proposed Action

Designate 118 feet of a closed segment of road prism, locally known as the Old Powerline Road, as Limited to ATVs of less than 50” in width, located in southeast corner of the Elk City township, Idaho.

The proposed action would include removing the berm and rock barrier used to close the road prism, reduce the running surface of the road prism to 55” width using soil and other barriers created from the road work to limit travel on the route. This action will be accomplished with minor amount of grubbing and ripping with a small excavator, improvement of drainage by hardening of cross drainage. Localized clearing of trees and brush with chainsaws and hand crews as necessary would occur along with selective placement of woody debris and rock to achieve desired trail prism width.

The physical process, or method, of decommissioning the unauthorized route depends on the condition of the disturbance, the magnitude of the side slope on which the unauthorized route is located, the proximity to the stream and cost. This process can range from simply abandoning the route to removing the route completely, including re-contouring the landscape, reseeding and creating barriers to prevent further incursions. In general, the preferred method is to obliterate the route template and re-contour to natural slopes. Seeding with desired species, mulching, and placement of slash and large woody debris would also be conducted. This method is most effective in removing the route as a source of sediment and restoring the natural hydrologic function of the watershed. It is, however, also the most costly method.

Decision to be Made

The decision to be made by the Cottonwood Field Manager is whether to designate the Old Powerline Road prism as open to ATVs less than 50” in width trail to reconnect the loop trail to the newly authorized Idaho County IFG easement, and conduct construction necessary to limit use to 50”.

Preliminary Issues

Issues are generated through the public scoping process, a review of the RMP, and/or generated from a need for compliance with laws or regulations as determined by the Interdisciplinary Team. Preliminary issues that have been identified include:

- Recreation – Potential impacts to other recreational users from authorized use of trail to motorized vehicles less than 50 inches width. Continued unauthorized creation of a trail to circumvent a closed route leading to trespass and route proliferation..
- Wildlife – Potential for disturbance or displacement of wildlife from ATV use and from project construction activities and use.
- Fisheries – Project area occurs within 300 feet (designated Riparian Conservation Area – RCA) of American River and has the potential to impact designated critical habitat for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed fish (steelhead trout and bull trout) and BLM sensitive fish species (spring/summer Chinook Salmon, westslope cutthroat trout, and redband trout). Direct and indirect impacts may potentially occur from project related erosion, sediment, and impacts to riparian and aquatic habitats.

Alternatives Development

In addition to the proposed action, the BLM will analyze a No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative the route would remain closed to motorized vehicle use.

Coordination and Consultation

The BLM will use the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) public participant requirements to assist the agency in satisfying the public involvement requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (16 U.S. C. 470(f)) pursuant to 36 CFR 800.2(d)(3). The information about historic and cultural resources within the area potentially affected by the proposed action will assist the BLM in identifying and evaluating impacts to such resources in the context of both NEPA and Section 106 of the NHPA.

The BLM will consult with Indian tribes on a government-to-government basis in accordance with Executive Order 13175 and other policies. Tribal concerns, including impacts on Indian trust assets and potential impacts to cultural resources, will be given due consideration. Federal, State, and local agencies, along with tribes and other stakeholders that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action that the BLM is evaluating, are invited to participate in the scoping process and, if eligible, may request or be requested by the BLM to participate in the development of the environmental analysis as a cooperating agency.

If the BLM determines that the project may affect ESA-listed fish or designated critical habitats for the species, the BLM will conduct consultation in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. As needed, project design measures would be implemented to minimize or avoid adverse impacts to fish habitat, water quality, and riparian habitats.

Public Input Invited

Comments are specifically requested on the proposed action, alternatives and preliminary issues. Comments would be most helpful if they are directly relevant to the proposal and project area, and identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions and design of the proposed action and alternatives, or the analysis of effects to be presented in the EA.

To ensure we can consider your input as we prepare the EA, BLM requests you provide your comments on this proposal in writing by **October 15, 2013**. Comments should be submitted electronically to **BLM_ID_PowerlineTrail@blm.gov**. Please include the title of this project in the subject line.

Comments may also be submitted by mail or in person to:

BLM Cottonwood Field Office
ATT: Powerline Trail
2 Butte Dr
Cottonwood, ID 83522

Your input will be used to identify issues for consideration in the development of alternatives for this project, and the subsequent environmental analysis. Comments should include the following:

1. Your name, address, and (if possible) telephone number, and organization represented (if any);
2. Name of the project for which you are submitting comments (Old Powerline Road ATV Trail Conversion) in the title;
3. Issues and concerns, and specific facts and supporting reasons that you feel should be considered in the environmental analysis and decision;
4. Additional alternatives or management opportunities that should be considered; and
5. Any other additional comments or information you wish to submit on the proposal.

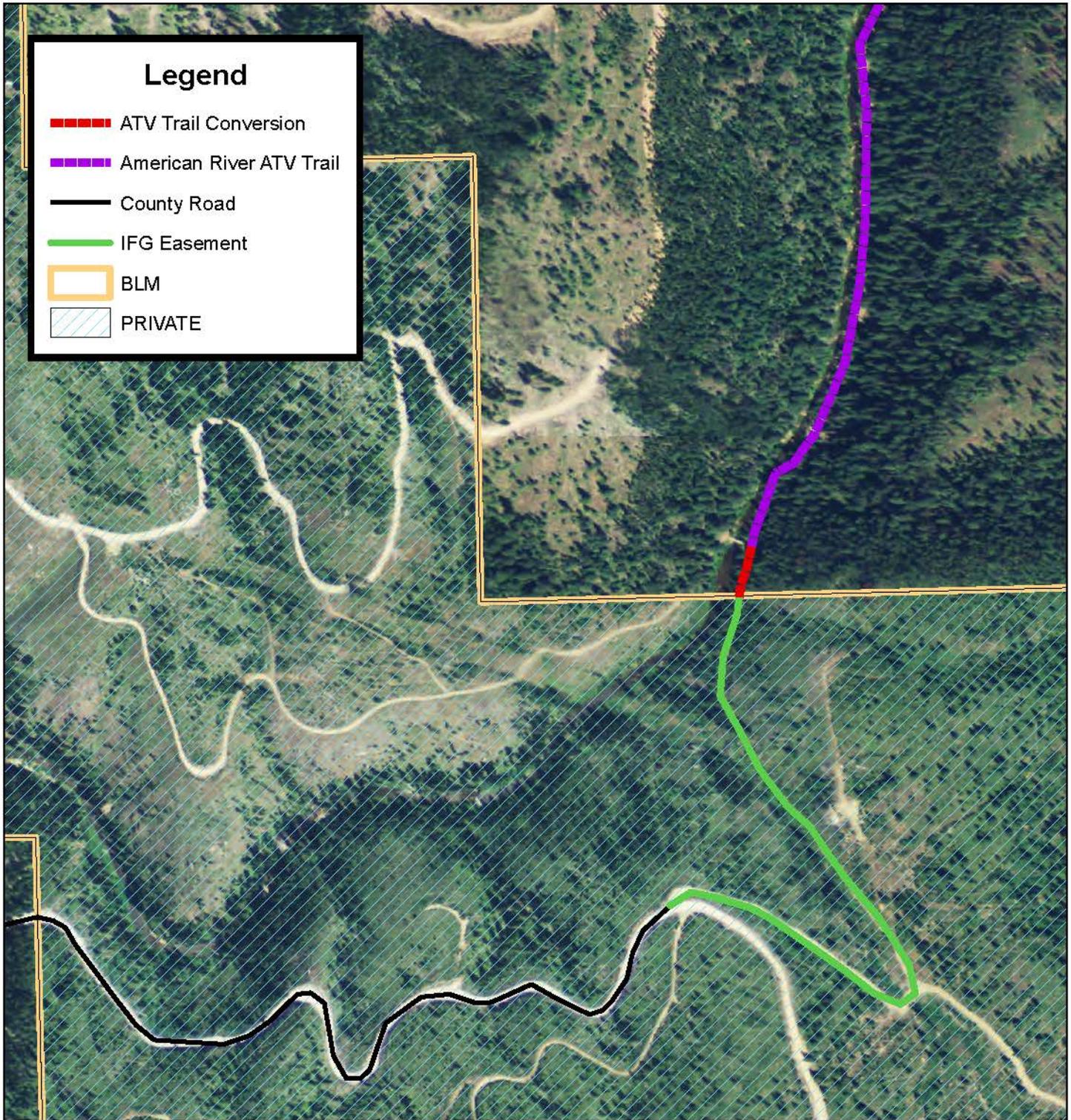
Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, is advised that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

If you have questions regarding this proposal please contact **Judy Culver at (208) 962-3796**. Thank you for your interest in this project proposal. We look forward to hearing from you.

Attachments:

- 1) Map 1
- 2) Map 2

Old Powerline Road ATV Trail Extension EA Map 1



Map Created: 8/20/2013

The surface management status ("land ownership") should be used as a general guide only. Official land records, located at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other offices, should be checked for up-to-date information concerning any specific tract of land.

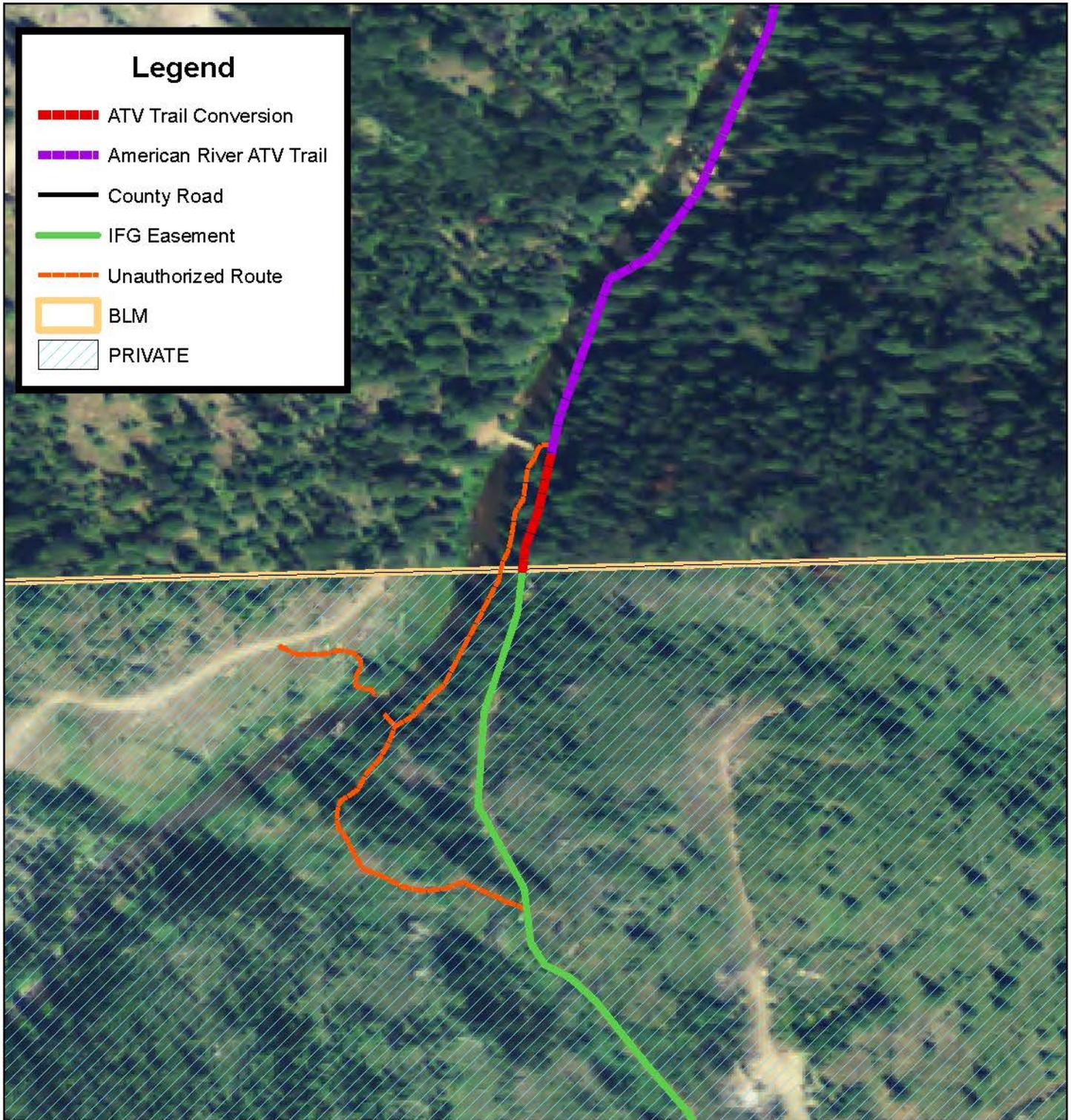
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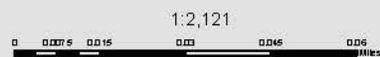
Old Powerline Road ATV Trail Extension EA Map 2



Map Created: 8/20/2013

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