

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Coeur d'Alene Field Office
3815 Schreiber Way
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815

Categorical Exclusion Documentation

Middle Fork Pine Creek Temporary Road Closure

NEPA # DOI-BLM-ID-C010-2013-0010-CX

1. Description of the Proposed Action

Due to the presence of cutthroat trout habitat, and riparian habitat concerns, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes to temporarily close two miles of road to all motorized vehicles to protect natural resources in the Middle Fork of Pine Creek in the Coeur d'Alene Field Office. The temporary closure will be in effect for up to 2 years, or until the Field Office completes travel management planning for this area. New information regarding damages to natural resources in the area, including habitat for BLM Sensitive species, necessitates a review of the travel management in the West Fork of Pine Creek. Damage to riparian areas and threats to habitat have been documented from ongoing motorized vehicle use.

The original road was constructed parallel to the main channel of the Middle Fork of Pine Creek, however, the 1996 flood washed away the road in this section leaving a rocky overflow channel. The creek regularly runs through this overflow channel where the road used to exist during periods of high flow. Approximately 750 feet of the designated road is now directly in this creek overflow channel. Jeep type vehicles use the overflow creek channel area because of the extremely challenging rocky obstacles.

The 2007 Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan (CDA RMP) specifically designated this section of road as seasonally open to motorized use from 12/31 to 8/25. At the time of completion of the 2007 CDA RMP no fish surveys had been conducted in the Middle Fork of Pine Creek. In 2010, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) conducted fish surveys throughout the Pine Creek drainage and identified Westslope cutthroat trout and Idaho giant salamanders, both BLM sensitive species, at survey sites in the Middle Fork of Pine Creek. In July of 2010 the BLM fisheries biologist observed a dead cutthroat trout at the lower end of the overflow channel. In July of 2012 the BLM fisheries biologist identified several Westslope cutthroat trout in a small pool just above the overflow channel. These surveys and observations confirmed the presence of Westslope cutthroat trout and Idaho giant salamander habitat in the Middle Fork of Pine Creek that had not previously been identified.

Motorized vehicle activities within this boulder and bedrock stream segment pose a risk to sensitive species habitat, soils, and water quality from increases in sediment and potential oil and fuel releases. Oil and grease stains are clearly visible on rocks when the overflow channel is dry at summer low flow. Vehicle use may also pose a physical hazard by running over individual fish and/or salamanders.

A temporary road closure in the Middle Fork of Pine Creek is needed to prevent further resource damage pending a permanent solution. Two miles of road would be designated as closed in order to effectively manage motorized vehicle access and protect habitat in the riparian area. This temporary closure would be effective upon the publication of a Federal Register Notice. The BLM plans to revise the travel management plan for the Pine Creek/Rochat Watersheds in 2015 and will make permanent travel designations at that time.

2. Location

Shoshone County, Idaho

Boise Meridian, T. 47N., R. 1E, section 13, 23, 24

3. Land Use Plan Conformance

In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), this proposed action has been reviewed for conformance with the Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved June 2007. It is consistent with the following decisions from the RMP:

Goal SS-2 – Ensure that BLM-authorized actions are consistent with the conservation needs of special status species and do not contribute to the need to list any special status species under provisions of the Endangered Species Act.

Objective SS-2.1 – Implement recovery activities for fish and wildlife species that inhabit aquatic, riparian, and wetland areas.

Action SS-2.1.1 – Implement the strategies outlined in CNFISH (Appendix A).

Action SS-2.1.2 – Adverse impacts on listed and sensitive species will be avoided and/or minimized.

Action SS-2.1.3 – Continue to inventory for populations of sensitive fish species. Where populations do exist, ensure that management of permitted activities maintains and/or improves the quality of habitat.

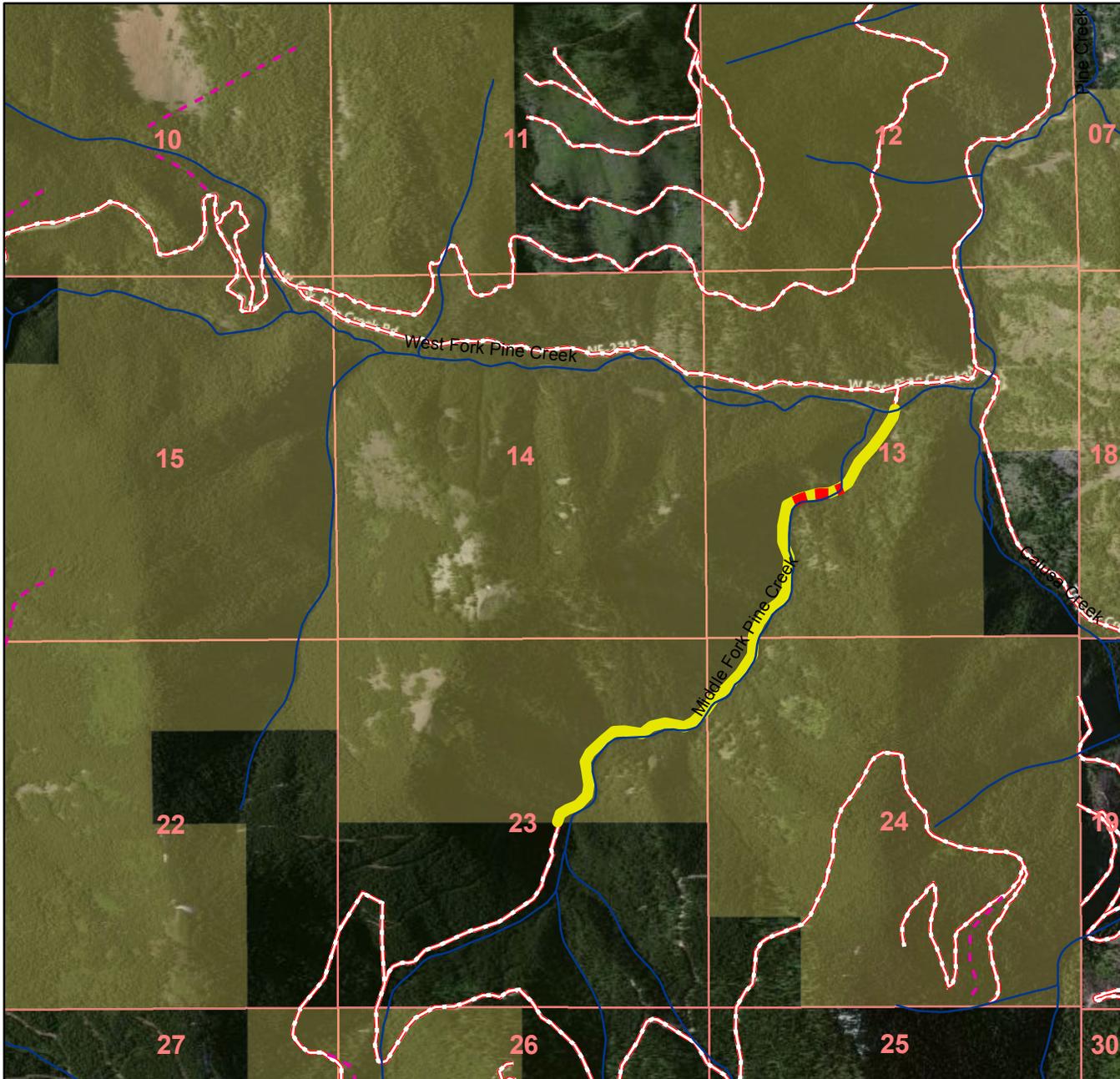
Goal RC-1 – Provide opportunities for quality outdoor recreation experiences ensuring enjoyment of natural and cultural resources on BLM-managed or partnered lands and waters.

Objective RC-1.5 – Manage the Rochat Divide/Pine Creek SRMA (backcountry motorized zone) to provide opportunities for visitors to engage in motorized primitive road and trail-related activities for adventure, exploration, challenge or risk, outdoor sport, and social group or family affiliation in mid-country and backcountry settings.

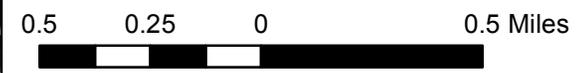
Action RC-1.5.7 – Manage the Middle Fork Pine Creek Road as a motorized trail for “rock crawling” (extreme 4WD) activities. Only limited maintenance actions will be performed, and restrictions will be established when necessary for minimizing unacceptable resource damages.

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T47N, R1E, Sec 13,23,24



-  BLM
-  Proposed Road Closure
-  Washed Out Road
-  Unimproved Road
-  Trail
-  streams



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