

Sandy Ridge Trailhead Access Improvement Environmental Assessment



Environmental Assessment, Finding of No Significant Impacts, and Decision

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As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering economic use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

BLM/OR/WA/AE-17/001+1632

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Finding of No Significant Impact

The Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is defined in 40 CFR 1508.13 as a document briefly presenting the reasons why an action will not have a significant effect on the human environment which includes the natural and physical environment and the relationship of people with that environment.

If the agency “finds” that the action has “no significant impact”, the agency is not required to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project. 40 CFR 1508.27 defines the factors to consider in determining whether a project is anticipated to “significantly” impact the human environment. The following FONSI documents the BLM’s evaluation of the potential impacts of the Sandy Ridge Trailhead Access Improvement Project.

Based upon review of the Sandy Ridge Trailhead Access Improvement EA and supporting documents, the proposed project is not a major federal action and would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the area. No environmental effects described in the EA meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, supplemental or additional information to the analysis in the RMP/FEIS in the form of an EIS is not needed. This finding is based on the following discussion:

Context [40 CFR 1508.27(a)] refers to the suitable scale for analysis. Potential effects resulting from the implementation of the proposed project have been analyzed within the context of the Sandy River Basin planning area that is comprised of BLM-administered public lands located in Clackamas and Multnomah Counties of western Oregon. The 4.2 acre project would affect less than .01 percent of the total planning area.

Intensity [40 CFR 1508.27(b)] refers to severity of impact. The following ten sections refer to the specific conditions/concerns addressed in §1508.27 and document the BLM’s consideration of the severity of the impacts as assessed in the Sandy Ridge Trailhead Access Improvement EA.

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (1)]: The proposed project is unlikely to have a significant adverse impacts on the affected elements of the environment (socio-economic, recreation, visual resources, cultural resources, hydrology/water quality and quantity/soils, fisheries, wildlife, invasive non-native plants and botany) for the following reason:

- For all resources, the project will be designed to follow RMP standards and guidelines and to be within the effects described in the RMP/EIS.
- *Socio-economics:* Proposed projects would be comparable to existing land uses and ecological management practices within the planning area and would be consistent with local and regional civic and economic initiatives. Effects to population distribution and social trends would be minimal on a local and regional scale. Effects to economic activity would also be minimal, and are likely to be beneficial (*EA Section 3.3*).

- *Recreation:* No uses, activities, or infrastructure is unprecedented within the planning area that is among the proposed project. No existing recreation areas would be removed, closed, or otherwise adversely impacted. Effects to recreation would be beneficial, resulting in the expansion and improvement of recreational opportunities (*EA Sections 3.2 and 3.3*).
- *Visual Resources:* The new structures will contrast with the existing forest in form and line, though visual precedent exists with the existing restroom and information kiosks. Structure color palettes will be selected to blend as much as practicable and architecture will continue the “Cascadia” look of existing structures (*EA Section 3.1*).
- *Cultural Resources:* Pre-disturbance site discovery was performed and no cultural resources were located. Avoidance and protection measures will be implemented during construction to ensure if any cultural resources are discovered they will be protected (*EA Sections 1.6.2 and 2.4*).
- *Hydrology/Water Quality and Quantity/Soils:* The one site-potential tree height distance for the Riparian Reserve (RR) Land Use Allocation would be maintained. Overall, this project would not have any measurable effect on stream temperatures, pH, or dissolved oxygen. Sediment transport and turbidity would not be affected due to the construction not being located near streams or rivers (*EA Sections 1.6.2 and 2.4*).
- *Fisheries:* This project would have no impact on habitat quality or quantity due to construction not being adjacent to streams or rivers (*EA Sections 1.6.2 and 2.4*).
- *Wildlife:* Overall effects to wildlife would be low due to the Project Design Features in place to restrict construction timeframes and location. Survey and manage surveys will be completed before construction begins to monitor for Bureau Sensitive Species (*EA Sections 1.6.2, 2.4, and 3.6*).
- *Invasive Non-native Plants and Botany:* Monitoring of the Sandy Ridge Trail System will continue and construction of a bike wash station, with signage that encourages riders to wash their bikes before and after trail use, will reduce the amount of invasive non-native plants that is spread at the project location (*EA Sections 2.4 and 3.5*).

[40 CFR 1508.27(b) (2)] - The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety (*EA Sections 2.2, 2.4, and 3.2*): The project would not adversely affect public health or safety because:

- Public access to hazardous work areas during construction would be restricted by flaggers, warning signs, and temporary traffic control barriers or devices.
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) mandated health and safety regulations are applied to all project operations related to the project implementation.
- All actions of the project must meet national and State of Oregon DEQ air and water quality standards, as provided for by the RMP/FEIS.

[40 CFR 1508.27(b) (3)] - Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas (EA Sections 1.6.2, 2.2, and 2.4): Effects to these resources would not have significant impacts because:

- The project would not affect historical or cultural resources because there are no known cultural resources within the project area or other locations where they could potentially be impacted by project operations. On site cultural and historic surveys have been completed and have not produced evidence to support the previous or present existence of artifacts of significant cultural or historical value.
- There are no park lands or prime farmlands within the project area to be impacted.
- The Proposed Action would not infringe upon the suitable Wild and Scenic River's free-flowing values and will maintain its outstanding remarking values.

[40 CFR 1508.27(b) (4)] - The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial: The project is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing actions similar to the Proposed Action in similar areas so the effects are well known and not highly controversial. The Proposed Action is likely to increase the quality of the human environment.

[40 CFR 1508.27(b) (5)] - The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks: The effects of the project do not have any uncertain, unique, or unknown risks because the BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas without these risks. No potential unique or unknown risks were identified by the BLM or by comments submitted in response to internal and external scoping. Project Design Features would minimize the risks associated with the project (*EA Section 2.4*).

[40 CFR 1508.27(b) (6)] - The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration: The project would not establish a precedent for future actions beyond the time frames analyzed nor would they represent a decision in principle about a further consideration for the following reasons:

- The project is in the scope of proposed activities documented in the RMP/FEIS.
- The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas without setting a precedent for future actions or representing a decision about a further consideration.

[40 CFR 1508.27(b) (7)] - Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts: The interdisciplinary team evaluated the proposed project in context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. Cumulative effects associated with the proposed project would not exceed impacts beyond those already analyzed in the Salem District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement, September 1994 (RMP/FEIS) to which this environmental assessment is tiered. The

action will have no significant impacts and in some instances will generate positive cumulative effects.

[40 CFR 1508.27(b) (9)] - The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (EA Sections 1.6.2, 2.4, and 3.6): The project is not expected to adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat for the following reasons:

- ***ESA Wildlife - Northern spotted owl:*** The project area is not within the historic or known home range of any Northern spotted owl sites. The area is dispersal habitat and the Proposed Action habitat modification is not likely to adversely affect the species. Consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service was completed in 2015 (FWS Reference Number 01EOFW00-2016-I-0251).
- ***ESA Fish:*** The project will have no impacts on fisheries within the project area. The project has been designed to be constructed outside the one site-potential tree height distance of the RR located on Little Joe Creek northwest of the trailhead. The design and location of the project will provide adequate drainage to prevent runoff into the wetland or creek and would result in no changes in stream shading or wood delivery to Little Joe Creek.

[40 CFR 1508.27(b) (10)] - Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (EA Section 1.7): The proposed action has been designed to follow Federal, State, and local laws.

John Huston, Manager, Cascades Field Office – Unsigned, for Review and Comment

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

Sandy Ridge Trail is a popular recreation site that served nearly 90,000 visitors during 2015. Sandy Ridge Trail is located in the Sandy River Basin, Clackamas County, Oregon. In order to effectively manage the site, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) that describes and analyzes alternative approaches to managing the trailhead access. The BLM will utilize the information contained in the EA to formulate a final design for the Sandy Ridge Trailhead.

The BLM's approach to meeting recreation demand encompasses two distinct recreation management areas (RMAs): Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) and Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs). Under the 1995 RMP the BLM designated SRMAs where the lands in question were experiencing heavy recreation use or where the BLM planned to make large investments in staff, funding, facilities, or time (*1995 RMP*, p. 3-63). In addition, ERMAs are administrative units that require specific management consideration in order to address recreation use or demand, but where recreation management is commensurate and considered in context with the management of other resources and resource uses. BLM-administered lands that do not meet these policy definitions are not identified for recreation or visitor services management.

The Sandy River SRMA boundary defines the planning area, helps determine the management of recreation use, and represents a commitment from the BLM to provide a higher level of recreation-related resources when compared with BLM-administered lands outside the SRMA. The SRMA designation provides for the protection of recreation setting characteristics (physical, social, and operational).

This EA has been prepared to present and analyze a range of potential management strategies for BLM-administered lands within the Sandy River SRMA. An EA is a public document that provides a tool for decision making by describing reasonable alternatives, considering their possible effects, and disclosing to the public what the BLM is considering.

1.1 Project Area Location

The proposed project is located within the Sandy River Basin in Clackamas County, Oregon in Township 2 South, Range 6 East, Section 23. The project area is located within the Middle Sandy River 5th field Watershed. The BLM-administered lands are intermixed with privately-owned lands, United States Forest Service (USFS) lands, and Clackamas County lands.

Figure 1: Vicinity Map

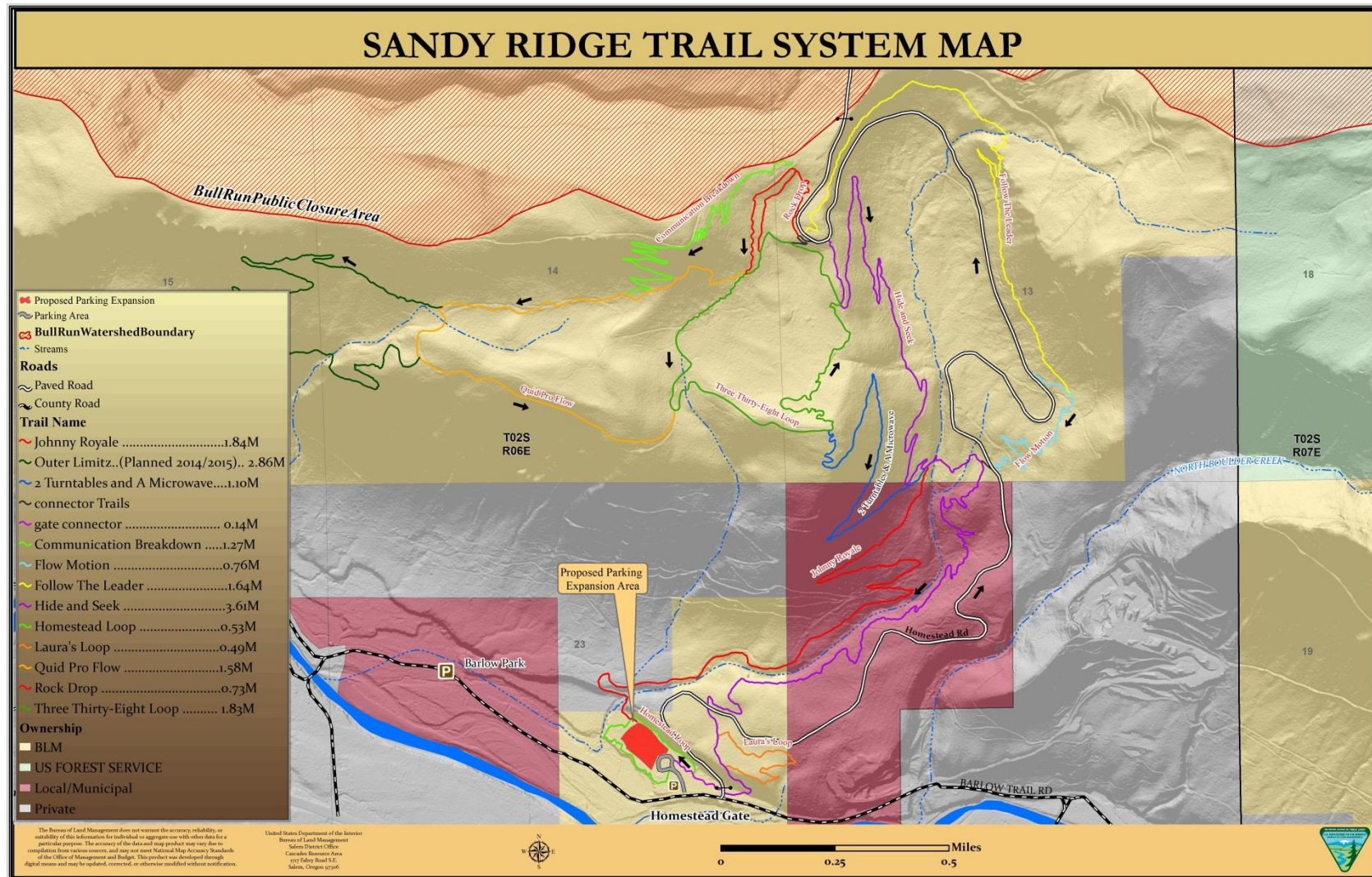
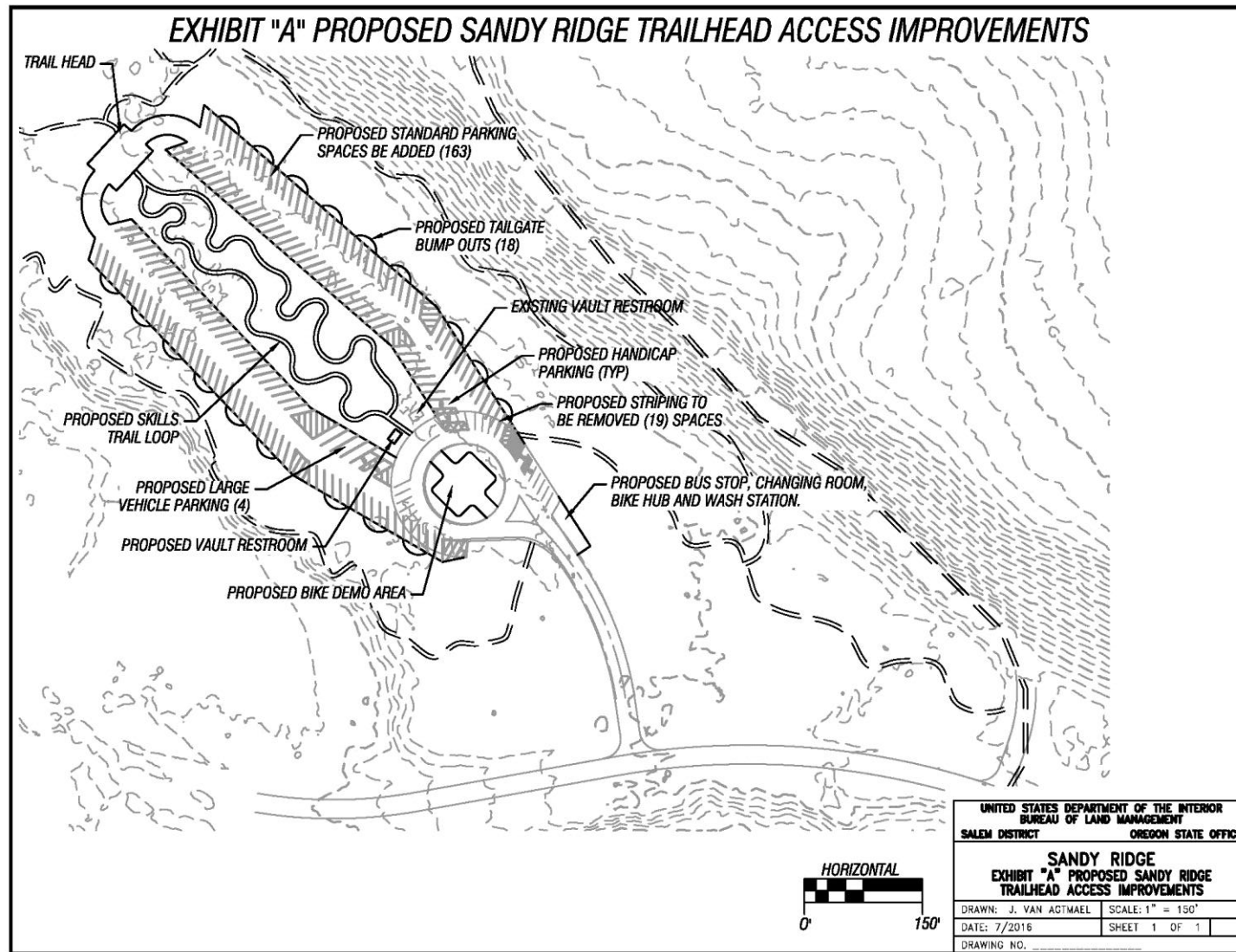


Figure 2: Proposed Action Map



1.2 Purpose and Need

Sandy Ridge Trailhead and Trail System SRMA is one of the most popular federal recreation facilities in the Sandy River Basin, hosting approximately 90,000-120,000 visitors each year. The purpose of the proposed development is to increase access, enhance user experience, and safety of visitors by increasing parking capacity, which will reduce the need for people to park on Barlow Trail Road.

There is a need to provide increased site access, improved safety, availability of amenities, and to protect the natural environment to provide for a high quality recreation experience. The popularity of Sandy Ridge Trail for mountain biking far exceeds what the current parking allows for, forcing people to park along a section of county road, which presents a serious safety concern due to the amount of commercial hauling and the limited sight distance that is present on the road. In addition to the above concerns the Sandy River Basin Integrated Management Plan calls for site-specific NEPA analysis to be done for any new development.

1.3 Decisions to be Made

The Cascades Field Office Field Manager will decide whether or not to implement the trailhead access improvement actions most appropriate for managing the recreation resources and human use at the Sandy Ridge Trailhead using the following criteria in the decision-making process:

- Best meets the purpose of and need for the project (EA Section 1.1);
- Is consistent with the Salem District RMP/ROD (EA Section 1.4); and
- Does not have a significant impact on the affected elements of the environment beyond those already anticipated and addressed in the RMP EIS.

1.4 Conformance with Land Use Plan, Statutes, Regulations, and Other Plans

1.4.1 Applicable Land Use Plans

This project falls in Northwestern and Coastal Oregon ROD/RMP category I (2016 ROD/RMP p. 10).

I. Projects Begun Prior to the ROD/RMP, but Decided After the ROD/RMP
The BLM signed a Record of Decision approving the Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Resource Management Plan (2016 ROD/RMP) on August 5, 2016.

Revision of an RMP necessarily involves a transition from the application of the old RMP to the application of the new RMP. The planning and analysis of future projects, such as recreation projects, requires several years of preparation before the BLM can design a site-specific project and reach a decision. Allowing for a transition from the old RMP to the new RMP avoids disrupting the management of BLM-administered lands and allows the BLM to utilize work already begun on the planning and analysis of projects.

The 2016 ROD/RMP (p. 10) allows the BLM to implement projects consistent with the management direction of either the 1995 RMP or the approved RMP, at the discretion of the decision maker, if—

- The BLM had not signed a project-specific decision prior to the effective date of the ROD;
- The BLM began preparation of NEPA documentation prior to the effective date of the ROD; and
- The BLM signs a project-specific decision on the project within two years of the effective date of the ROD.

The Northwest Oregon District began preparation of NEPA documentation for the Sandy Ridge Trailhead Access Improvements Project (Project) prior to the effective date of the 2016 ROD/RMP, as the District initiated planning and NEPA documentation for this project on April 14th, 2016. This project was designed to conform to and be consistent with the Salem District's 1995 Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (1995 ROD/RMP).

This Project meets the criteria described in the 2016 ROD/RMP that allows the BLM to implement projects that conform and are consistent with the 1995 ROD/RMP, with the exception of five categories of prohibited carry-over actions (2016 ROD, pp. 10-11). The Project does not include any actions that are excepted and therefore precluded from the 2-year transition period under the 2016 ROD/RMP.

- 1) Regeneration harvest (construction of roads or landings does not constitute regeneration harvest) within the Late-Successional Reserve allocated by this ROD that is inconsistent with the management direction for the Late-Successional Reserve contained within the approved RMP.

The Project proposes access improvements for the Sandy Ridge Trailhead and does not include any proposed regeneration timber harvest within any Land Use Allocation (LUA).

- 2) Issuance of right-of-way grants within the Late-Successional Reserve allocated by this ROD that are inconsistent with the management direction for the Late-Successional Reserve contained within the approved RMP.

The Project is not located within the Late-Successional Reserve and does not propose any right-of-way actions which would result in the issuance of right-of-way grants.

- 3) Commercial thinning within the inner zone of the Riparian Reserve allocated by this ROD that is inconsistent with the management direction for the Riparian Reserve contained within the approved RMP.

The Project does not propose any commercial thinning within the inner zone of the Riparian Reserve or any other LUA.

- 4) Projects within the District-Designated Reserve – Lands Managed for their Wilderness Characteristics allocated by this ROD that are inconsistent with the management direction for the District-Designated Reserve – Lands Managed for their Wilderness Characteristics contained within the approved RMP.

The Project is not proposed within a District-Designated Reserve-Lands Managed for their Wilderness Characteristics. The Project is proposed within the Congressionally Reserved Land Use Allocation under the 1995 RMP/ROD.

- 5) Timber harvest that would cause the incidental take of northern spotted owl territorial pairs or resident singles and does not have a signed Biological Opinion and Incidental Take Statement that predates the effective date of the Biological Opinion for the approved RMP.

The Project does not propose any timber harvest operations. There will be no incidental take of Northern spotted owl territorial pairs or resident singles due to nesting disruption or habitat disturbance because:

- 1) No suitable habitat will be removed or downgraded;*
- 2) The project area is not in the home range of any known owl sites; and*
- 3) The project will have a seasonal restriction for no construction during breeding/nesting season (EA Section 2.4.5).*

The Sandy Ridge Trailhead Access Improvements Project (Project) complies with the following documents, which direct and provide the legal framework for management of BLM lands within the Northwest Oregon District:

Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan, May 1995 (RMP) as amended. The RMP has been reviewed and it has been determined that the proposed activities conform to the land use plan (RMP p. 41). This project specifically follows the direction on page 41 of the RMP, which directs the BLM to provide a wide range of developed and dispersed recreation opportunities that contribute to meeting recreation demand.

Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl, April 1994 (the Northwest Forest Plan, or NWFP).

Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines, January 2001, as amended (2001 SM ROD).

The analysis in this EA supplements analyses found in the Salem District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement, September 1994 (RMP/FEIS), the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-

Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl, February 1994 (NWFP/FSEIS). The RMP/FEIS is amended by the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines, November 2000.

The above documents are incorporated by reference in this EA and are available for review in the Northwest Oregon District BLM Office. Additional information about the proposed project is available in the Plan analysis file, which is also available at the Northwest Oregon District BLM Office.

1.4.2 BLM Land Allocations Under the Salem District RMP/ROD

1.4.2.1 Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA)

The proposed project is within the Sandy River SRMA. The SRMA designation provides for high quality recreation opportunities. BLM-administered lands within the SRMA allow for dispersed camping, hiking, mountain biking on designated trails, fishing, and other recreational activities. The Proposed Action is in conformance with the SRMA Management Direction outlined in the 1995 RMP/ROD because watershed analysis has been completed, recreation management area issues have been identified, and projects within the SRMA have been prioritized, including development of the Sandy Ridge Trail System and Trailhead (1995 ROD, p. 44)

1.4.2.2 Congressionally Reserved Lands-Mount Hood Corridor

The Mt. Hood Corridor was designated under Title IV of the Oregon Forest Resource Conservation (OFRC) Act of 1996, Public Law 104-208. The legislation required that all BLM-administered lands located in Townships 2 and 3 South, Ranges 6 and 7 East, Willamette Meridian, that can be seen from U.S. Highway 26 be managed “*primarily for the protection or enhancement of scenic qualities. Management prescriptions for other resource values associated with these lands shall be planned and conducted for purposes other than timber harvest, so as not to impair the scenic qualities of the area.*” The Act further specifies that “*timber cutting may be conducted following a catastrophic event. Such cutting may only be conducted to achieve the following resource management objectives, in compliance with current land use plans to maintain safe conditions for the visiting public; to control spread of forest fire; for activities related to the administration of Mt. Hood Corridor Lands and for removal of hazard trees along trails and roadways.*”

The proposed project is in compliance with the direction under the Mt. Hood Corridor designation because it will not impair the scenic qualities of the area by adhering to the project layout and design features included in Chapter 2 to minimize impacts (EA Section 2.2 and 2.4).

1.4.3 Related Plans and Reports

The following reports provided important background information for designing and analyzing the proposed project:

Sandy River Basin Integrated Management Plan EA, Finding of No Significant Impact, and Decision Rationale, April 2009, analyzes BLM proposed potential management actions for recreation related issues within the Sandy River Basin.

Upper Sandy Watershed Analysis (1996) presents a watershed-level perspective on the physical, social, and environmental conditions and trends with the Sandy Watershed.

1.4.4 Compliance with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS)

The RMP incorporated the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS), a component of the Northwest Forest Plan. The proposed project is in compliance with the ACS objectives because it is located outside the one site tree potential height wide stream protection buffer, thus there are no effects on the inner riparian zone and no impacts to ACS objectives.

1.4.5 Survey and Manage Review

Surveys, monitoring and project design were planned to comply with the 2001 SM ROD. The project utilizes the December 2003 species list. This list incorporates species changes and removals made as a result of the 2001, 2002, and 2003 Annual Species Reviews (ASR) with the exception of the red tree vole. For the red tree vole, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in *KSWC et al. v. Boody et al.*, 468 F3d 549 (9th Cir. 2006) vacated the category change and removal of the red tree vole in the mesic zone, and returned the red tree vole to its status as defined in the 2001 SM ROD Standards and Guidelines, which makes the species Category C throughout its range.

For the red tree vole, habitat-disturbing activities “are defined as those disturbances likely to have a significant negative impact on the habitat, life cycle, microclimate, or life support requirements of the species. The evaluation of the scale, scope, and intensity of the anticipated negative impact of the project on habitat or life requirements should include an assessment of the type, timing, and intensity of the disturbing activity. If the proposed activity is determined to not pose a potential significant negative effect at the site, then surveys are not required” (2001 SM ROD p. 22). The Project was determined to not pose a potential significant negative effect to red tree vole habitat because the project would not affect any habitat that supports Survey and Manage species.

1.5 Public Involvement and Project Scoping

An e-mail was sent to 145 interested public, Federal, State, Tribal and local agencies for the start of the public involvement and project scoping in April 2016. Clackamas County held public open house for projects in the Sandy River Basin area at The Resort at the Mountain on April 14th, 2016, in which the BLM participated. During this open house no substantial comments were made about the access improvements, however the public generally showed support for the Project.

An internal scoping meeting was held on May 2nd, 2016 with the BLM Interdisciplinary Team (IDT). During the internal scoping meeting, the IDT identified issues and provided comments on the Project.

An external scoping meeting was held June 7th, 2016 with The Villages Chamber of Commerce. During this meeting several questions were asked, but no substantial issues or concerns were raised. At the end of the meeting it was noted that the Chamber of Commerce was in support of the proposed Project.

An additional external public scoping meeting was held on June 8th, 2016 at the Sandy Community Center in Sandy, Oregon. During this scoping meeting four comments were received that were directed toward the Project.

A field trip to the projects location was taken by the IDT on July 12th, 2016. During the field trip the IDT did not have any additional comments or concerns.

1.6 Identification of Issues

The BLM IDT identified relevant issues based on applicable law, management direction contained in the RMP, and information gathered during the internal and external scoping and the Project planning process. Issues are analyzed in detail if the analysis of the issue is necessary to make a reasoned choice between alternatives, if the issue is associated with potentially significant impacts, or analysis is necessary to determine the significance of the impacts. Analysis of these issues provides a basis for comparing the environmental effects of the alternatives discussed in Chapter 2 as well as aids in the decision-making process. The IDT considered the following issues as it developed and refined the alternatives, identified PDFs, and analyzed the environmental effects.

1.6.1 Issues Considered in Detail

The following issues were identified during internal and external scoping and are carried forward for analysis in Chapter 3 of this document.

Issue 1: How would the Proposed Action maintain the visual character of the trailhead access area? (*EA Section 3.1*)

Issue 2: How would the Proposed Action affect public safety and traffic within the Barlow Trail Road corridor? (*EA Section 3.2*)

Issue 3: How would the trailhead access improvements effect the day-use visitation and recreation experience at the Sandy Ridge Trailhead? (*EA Section 3.3*)

Issue 4: How would the Proposed Action affect the socio-economics of the Sandy River Basin Area, including the permitting of food carts within the trailhead access improvement area? (*EA Section 3.4*)

Issue 5: How would the BLM control the spread of invasive weeds within the Sandy Ridge Trail System and the proposed access improvement area? (*EA Section 3.5*)

Issue 6: How would the Proposed Action affect Bureau Sensitive Species within the project area? (EA Section 3.6)

1.6.2 Issues Considered but Not Analyzed in Detail

The following additional concerns were submitted during internal and external scoping. After initial analysis, the BLM determined that these concerns were not issues requiring detailed analysis because they were either not affected by the Proposed Action or their effects are avoided through Project Design Features (PDFs). Therefore, these issues were not analyzed in further detail.

- *How would the Proposed Action affect cultural resources?*

An archeological survey was conducted May 4th, 2016 of the Project area and no cultural resources were discovered. Additionally, during construction of the project, if any cultural resources are discovered, all work will be halted until an evaluation of the site can be performed (EA Section 2.4.1). By avoiding cultural and historic resources and requiring PDFs for the Project, direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts from project implementation would be reduced or eliminated.

- *How would the Proposed Action impact migratory birds?*

In order to prevent the take of migratory birds and reduce impacts during project implementation, the PDFs for seasonal timing restrictions in EA Section 2.4.5 would be adhered.

- *How would the increase in visitor use impact elk around the Sandy Ridge Trail System?*

The current level of trail use has most likely already displaced elk from the trail system. Any increase in use of the trail system due to the project or any other visitation increasing action is unlikely to have a discernable impact to elk disturbance that is beyond what is presently occurring.

- *How would the Proposed Action affect water temperature and water quality?*

The Proposed Action will not affect water temperature or water quality. The Proposed Action will be located outside of the one site-potential tree height wide stream protection zone on Little Joe Creek and will not be located near any run-off locations (EA Section 2.4).

- *How would allowing food carts at the designated area within the Proposed Action affect resources?*

The BLM will allow food carts or trucks within a designated area after the Sandy Ridge Trailhead Access Improvements are completed. Any food cart wanting to utilize the designated area would be required to submit a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) application to the BLM Cascades Field Office. The BLM will enforce stipulations on food cart SRPs, including the following:

- Food cart vendors will not be able to serve individually packaged food, or be able to use excessive packaging and will be responsible for site clean-up after closing for the day.
- To reduce noise, the food vendors will need to use propane and low dB inverter generators.

- The BLM will also provide animal resistant trash cans around the trailhead to prevent wildlife from rummaging.

By requiring a SRP for food cart use in the designated area and enforcing stipulations on the SRP, impacts from food cart use would be reduced or eliminated.

- *How would adding a well head described under the Proposed Action and its subsequent use affect the water table?*

The estimated use for the wellhead will be below the regulated amount of 5,000 gallons per-day. There are no other hydrological or other resource concerns from placing a well at the development location. Water sampling will occur on all potable water locations in accordance to Clackamas County's guidelines.

- *How would the Proposed Action and implementation affect non-bureau sensitive or Threatened and Endangered wildlife species within the proposed project area?*

The Proposed Action would have no wildlife concerns for non-bureau sensitive or Threatened and Endangered species within the proposed project area due to the proximity of the already developed Sandy Ridge Trailhead and the stipulations that would be enforced for food cart SRPs. The BLM will also provide animal resistant trash cans around the trailhead to prevent animal rummaging.

- *How would off leash dogs utilizing the access improvements described under the Proposed Action affect wildlife?*

There would be no impact to the wildlife due to off leash dogs. The current BLM policy does not allow dogs to be off of leashes in developed recreation locations. Dogs must be on a leash no longer than 6 feet. The BLM will continue to post and enforce the off leash rule.

- *How would the Proposed Action impact Northern spotted owl populations and habitat?*

The project area is not within the historic or known home range of any Northern spotted owl sites. The area is dispersal habitat and the Proposed Action habitat modification is not likely to adversely affect the species. Consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service was completed in 2015 (FWS Reference Number 01EOFW00-2016-I-0251).

- *How would the Proposed Action impact wildlife associated with dead wood, including snags and coarse woody debris?*

The Proposed Action is likely to reduce the number snags in the immediate vicinity of the proposed parking area. Snags poses a risk to public health and safety and with large numbers of public recreating within the Sandy Ridge Trailhead, any tree that becomes a snag will likely be removed and would not contribute to habitat for cavity nesting species. The project area will likely have a snag deficit for the foreseeable future. However, across the Middle Sandy River 5th field Watershed, the impact to snags resulting from the Proposed Action will be negligible.

- *How would the Proposed Action and implementation effect fisheries within the Sandy Ridge Trailhead area?*

The project will have no impacts on fisheries within the Sandy Ridge Trailhead area. The project has been designed to be constructed outside the one site-potential tree height distance of the Riparian Reserve located on Little Joe Creek northwest of the trailhead (*see Figure 1*). The

design and location of the project will provide adequate drainage to prevent runoff into the wetland or creek and would result in no changes in stream shading or wood delivery to Little Joe Creek.

Chapter 2: Proposed Action and Alternatives

2.1 Alternative Development

Pursuant to Section 102 (2) (E) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, Federal agencies shall "...study, develop, and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources."

This section describes the alternatives analyzed in detail and considered through this project. PDFs associated with the Proposed Action are presented in EA Section 2.4. The PDFs are in place to minimize impacts to recreation, visuals, wildlife and their habitat, vegetation, and water resources.

The BLM has identified a Proposed Action and a No Action Alternative for the Sandy Ridge Trailhead Access Improvements Project. The IDT developed the Proposed Action during the scoping process.

BLM planned the proposed project, including the Proposed Action (*see EA Section 2.2*), using an IDT process. An IDT composed of experienced professional resource specialists developed and analyzed the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative in addition to the PDFs and best management practices. The IDT requested comments from the public and other interested parties and agencies during this process through scoping (*see EA Section 1.5*) and considered these comments when developing and analyzing the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative. The IDT leader developed this EA from those reports. The IDT has reviewed this EA and now invites the public to review and comment on the project alternatives and information presented in this EA.

The IDT and the Decision Maker will evaluate and incorporate information from this process into the final project design, or selection of the No Action Alternative, which will be described in the Final Decision Record (DR), to be published later. The Proposed Action, including the PDFs, has been developed on a site-specific basis for the project analyzed in this EA.

The expected effects of the Proposed Action and the expected effects of selection of the No Action Alternative will be described in detail in Chapter 3 of this EA.

Other improvements the EA will analyze is the potential to add a bus stop , develop a formal bike demo and event staging area, formal picnic areas to move people away from the ingress and egress lanes, and add a bike hub for visitors to make repairs, small fixes and to clean their bikes of invasive weeds.

2.2 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action involves the construction of an expanded parking area at the Sandy Ridge Trailhead and improved visitor amenities in order to increase functionality of the trailhead and to accommodate day-use recreation. The expanded parking area will be located northwest of the existing parking area and will increase capacity from 36 standard parking spaces to 180 standard

parking spaces, with an additional 4 large vehicle parking spaces and a handicap parking space. Security cameras will be installed within the trailhead access area. All new structures and facilities will incorporate natural material and include art work, like sculptures of native wildlife, trees, and mountain biking. The design of the structures and art work will be similar to those that are present at Wildwood Recreation Area.

Expanded Parking Area

In order to construct the parking area and additional amenities, a total footprint of 4.2 acres will be disturbed. To construct the parking area, 2.02 acres of the total footprint will be cleared of all vegetation, including small diameter trees if necessary for safety and overall design. The type of vegetation that would be removed includes small Black Cotton Wood, Red Alder, small Western Hemlock, Salmon Berry, California Hazelnut, and Vine Maple. The parking area will be asphalted and parking spaces will be delineated with strips and curbs.

The parking spaces are designed to be over sized spaces to allow for any size passenger vehicle to be parked comfortably and leave ample space to maneuver their gear in and out of the vehicles. Eighteen additional areas for tailgating or picnicking between three parking spots, or bump-outs, will be cleared, graveled, and outfitted with a picnic table for spaces on the exterior of the parking area (*EA Figure 2*). The expanded parking area will remove 19 standard parking spaces from the existing trailhead parking area, leaving 17 standard parking spaces; while adding 163 new standard parking spaces, four large vehicle parking spaces, and additional handicap designated parking. One additional vault restroom will be installed adjacent to the existing vault restroom to accommodate visitors within the expanded parking area. Two gates will be installed on either side of the expanding parking area loop near the large vehicle spaces to allow for winter season closure of a majority of the new parking spaces for public health and safety.

Within the interior of the expanded parking area a mountain bicycle beginner skills trail will be built. The skills trail area will encompass approximate 2 acres of the disturbance footprint within the expanded parking area loop (*EA Figure 3*). Vegetation within the 2 acres will remain in place, including large woody debris. The BLM will remove any non-native and invasive plant species and replace them with fruiting and flowering shrubs and understory trees, Western red cedar, and other vegetation as prescribed by the BLM Wildlife Biologist and Botanist to facilitate wildlife and migratory bird habitat. Construction of the beginner trails will be completed by either BLM or the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) through an existing assistance agreement for the Sandy Ridge Trail System. All trails constructed in the beginner skills area will follow IMBA and BLM non-motorized trail guidance and design features (*EA Section 2.4.4*).

Bicycle Hub Structure

A bicycle hub, wash station, changing room, and bus stop will be encompassed into one structure and installed south of the existing parking area (*EA Figure 3*). The structure will be built and installed in cooperation by a BLM non-profit partner. The hub itself will provide tools for small bicycle repairs as well as local area safety equipment and information. Changing rooms and a Mount Hood Express bus stop will also be added to the hub structure. All of the amenities included in the bicycle hub will have a total disturbance foot print of approximately 800 square feet. For additional design drawings, see EA Chapter 5.

The bicycle wash station will help reduce the spread of non-native and invasive species by providing an area for visitors to pressure spray dirt and debris from their bicycle before entering and leaving the trail system. The bike wash station would consist of a structure to hang the bikes on, a low pressure water source to spray bikes and gear off, and a stiff bristle brush to brush off any remaining dirt that cannot be sprayed off. A well head will be installed near the hub to provide less than 5,000 gallons a day of potable water for drinking and for the wash station, which would not require a water right according to the state water master of the region.

Designated Events Area

The existing parking area will be re-purposed to function as an area for permitted trailhead events and concessionaires, including bicycle demos and food carts (*EA Figure 3*). The Designated Events Area will be built within the center of the existing parking area. A bike demonstration event is where a mountain bike manufacturing or retail company brings a trailer of mountain bikes to Sandy Ridge Trailhead and allows potential customers to test ride the mountain bikes. There is a need to develop a formal bike demo and event area to allow for better accommodations and to reduce the amount of parking spaces used for events. In 2016, there have been 28 scheduled events at Sandy Ridge Trailhead.

A 125 foot by 150 foot pad will be cleared of vegetation, graded, and paved with asphalt within the interior of the existing parking area. Approximately 20 small trees will be removed from the areas in order to construct the pad. In addition to formalizing the event area for bike demos, the re-purposed area would allow for food trucks and carts, providing for a greater level of service for the community and visitors. The area will be available to reserve for events through the Northwest Oregon District SRP process.

Entrance Redesign

A new entrance will be developed that better meets the management objectives of the Sandy Ridge Trailhead. The entrance will incorporate the same style of design, material, art, structure, and sculptures that will be throughout the parking area. The new entrance design may feature an arch entry way that spans the width of the entrance road, with sculptures and stonework of mountain bikers and native wildlife. The location of the new entrance design will be in roughly the same location as the current entrance sign. Considerations for security and safety will be taken into consideration for the new entrance design. For additional design drawings, see EA Chapter 5.

Connecting Trails

Two small connecting trails, totaling 120 feet in length, will be built to connect to the existing trails that are near the trailhead (*EA Figure 3*). There is currently a loop trail that rings around the proposed parking area. A new trail will be built connecting the northern most portion of the trailhead to the existing loop trail.

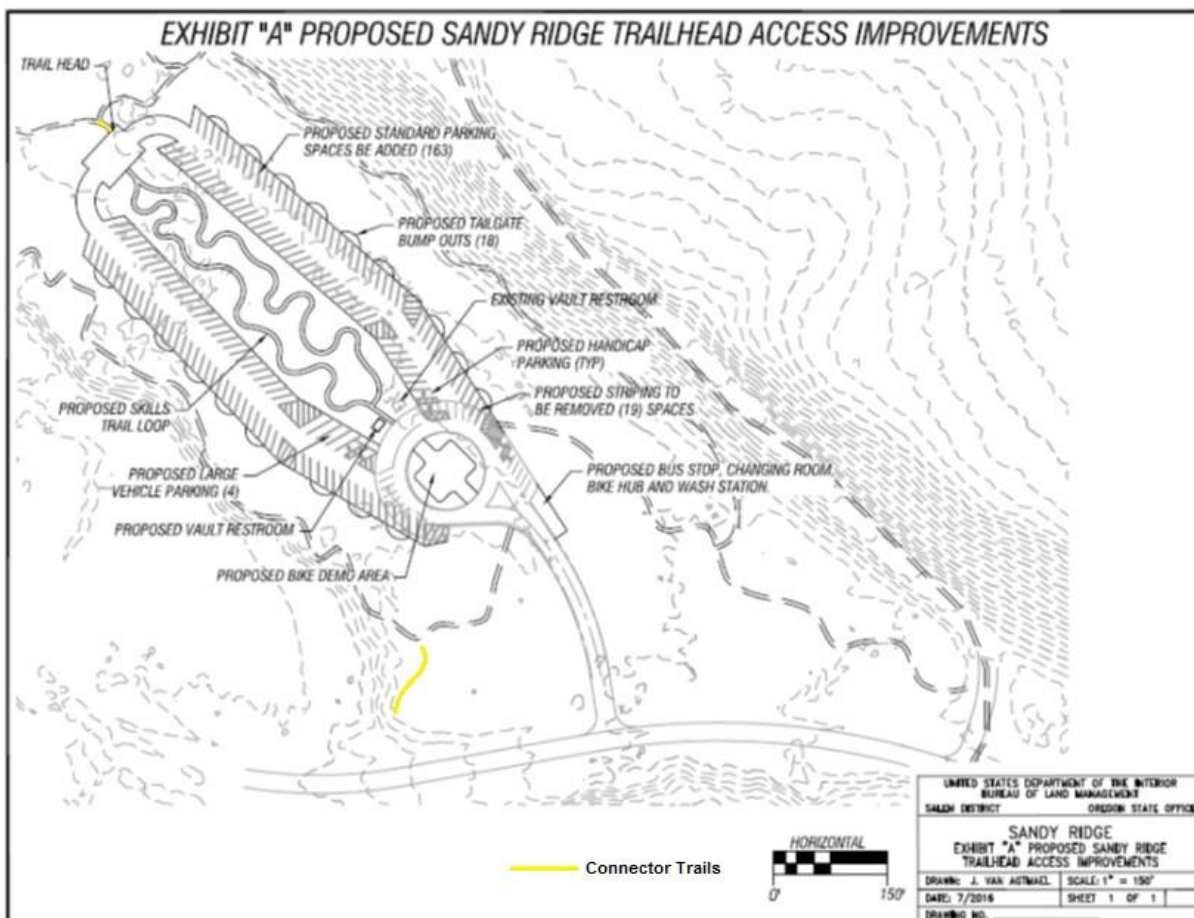
Another connecting trail will be built to tie in a nearly completed trail from Barlow Wayside trail to the Sandy Ridge Trailhead. This connecting trail will be for pedestrians only, and trail constructing may include stairs or other built in obstructions to deter the use of bikes on the Barlow Wayside trail.

2.3 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative describes the baseline, against which the effects of the Proposed Action can be compared, i.e. the existing conditions in the Plan area and the continuing trends in those conditions if BLM does not implement the proposed project. The No Action Alternative means that no site improvements would occur at the location at this time. Selection of the No Action Alternative would not set a precedent for consideration of future action proposals.

The Sandy Ridge Trailhead would continue to have a 36 vehicle capacity with no formal area for bike events or concessioners, no bus access, and no invasive weed wash station. Visitors would continue to use the site as they have in the past with excess parking remaining on Barlow Trail Road. Only administrative tasks such as basic maintenance and repairs would continue at the trailhead and public safety would continue to be a concern with parking on Barlow Trail Road. The spread of invasive weeds throughout the trail system would continue to be a concern with nothing in place to clean mountain bikes or stop the spread of the invasive weeds.

Figure 3: Proposed Sandy Ridge Trailhead Access Improvements Design



2.4 Project Design Features (PDFs)

2.4.1 Cultural Resources

- If any cultural and/or paleontological resource (historic or prehistoric site or object) is discovered during project activities, all operations in the immediate area of such discovery shall be suspended until an evaluation of the discovery can be made by a professional archaeologist to determine appropriate actions to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientific values.

2.4.2 Water Resources

- The project design will include a vegetated buffer area surrounding the project for run-off and drainage to enter.
- During project construction and implementation, there will be no disturbance or take of trees within the one site-potential tree height stream protect zone Riparian Reserve.

2.4.3 Safety

- Public access to the project area will be restricted during heavy construction.
- Notices to the public explaining the construction and project schedule will be maintained at the site and on the BLM and project website pages during construction.
- A majority of construction will take place during recreations shoulder season (October 31st through April 1st), to reduce the impact to visitors.
- Security cameras will be installed and monitored to deter crime within the Sandy Ridge Trailhead area.
- The expanded parking area at the Sandy Ridge Trailhead will be gated during the low-use season (October 31st through April 1st) to allow for easier monitoring of visitor use.

2.4.4 Recreation/Visual Resources

- Facilities will be designed to blend with the natural characteristics of the site by incorporating locally sourced material and structure color palettes.
- BLM and IMBA trail guidance, designs, and best management practices will be used in the construction of the skills area and connector trails. Pedestrian trails will be constructed using BLM guidance and best management practices.

2.4.5 Wildlife

- No construction or large vegetation removal activities will be completed during the nesting and breeding season, April 15 through July 31. This seasonal restriction can be waived once the BLM Wildlife Biologist is consulted after field surveys are completed and no breeding/nesting birds or their activity is discovered.
- Tree cutting will be avoided during the migratory bird nesting season, generally March 1st to July 31st. This seasonal restriction can be waived once the BLM Wildlife Biologist is consulted after field surveys are completed and no nesting birds or their activity is discovered.

- Surveys for Bureau Sensitive species will occur prior to project construction and implementation as soon as environmental conditions are within parameters of survey protocols.
- BLM will continue to post and enforce the rule that requires dogs to be on leash no longer than 6 feet at developed locations.
- Any trees, snags, or woody debris would remain on site in as large of chunks as manageable.

2.4.6 Vegetation and Non-Native/Invasive Plant Species Management

- In order to minimize the introduction of invasive and non-native species, including noxious weeds, all equipment brought on site associated with construction will be washed of all dirt, debris, and plant material before entering and prior to leaving the project area. Disturbance areas will be replanted with species native to the area as selected by the Cascades Field Office Botanist. Public access to native re-planting areas will be restricted and blocked to prevent damage to soil and re-vegetation.

2.5 Alternatives Considered but Not Analyzed in Detail

2.5.1 Construction of Additional Trailheads

During external scoping, comments were received proposing to construct additional trailheads connecting to the Sandy Ridge Trail System in order for the public to access the trail system from other locations. The mix of various land management agencies (i.e. BLM, USFS, etc.) and private property does not allow for consistent public access or additional trail connection alternatives. Without having trail connection alternatives there are no feasible alternative trailhead locations, due to the BLM having no other right of ways to the trail system.

2.5.2 Expanded Food Vendors

During external scoping, comments were received proposing BLM allow for food carts to serve alcohol within the designated area that would be constructed for food carts. Through internal discussion and scoping, it was determined that serving alcohol within the designated area would not be permitted by the BLM due to public safety and transportation concerns.

2.5.3 Additional Improvements for Water Trails

During external scoping, comments were received proposing the BLM add parking areas and designated river access to the Proposed Action for water trails within the area. The proposed location of the project is not a suitable location for river trail parking and river access due to the distance from the river and the heavy use that occurs just from the Sandy Ridge Trail system. Developing a water trail, signage, and a parking location is beyond the scope of this project.

Chapter 3: Affected Environment and Environmental Effects

The Affected Environment describes the present condition and trend of issue-related elements of the human environment that may be affected by implementing the alternatives described in Chapter 2. It describes past and ongoing actions that contribute to present conditions, and provides a baseline for analyzing cumulative effects. The effects are the known and predicted effects from implementation of the actions, limited to the identified issues.

Direct effects are those caused by the action and occurring at the same time and place. Indirect effects are those caused by the action but occurring later or in a different location. Cumulative effects result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. The cumulative effects analysis includes other BLM actions, other federal actions, and non-federal (including private) actions. Reasonably foreseeable future actions are those for which there are existing decisions, funding, formal proposals, or which are highly probable, based on known opportunities or trends.

Chapter 3 discusses the Affected Environment for each Issue Considered in Detail listed in EA Section 1.6.1. The direct, indirect, and cumulative effects for each issue and action alternative are also discussed.

3.1 Issue 1: How would the Proposed Action maintain the visual character of the Sandy Ridge Trailhead access area?

Sources: Sandy Ridge Trailhead Access Improvements Project EA Visual Resource Inventory Report; Moore 2016

3.1.1 Affected Environment

Visual Resource Management (VRM)

Situated approximately 1 air mile north of Welches, Oregon, in Clackamas County, the area is characterized as rural with small communities separated by agriculture lands and managed forests. The landscape exhibits extensive forest management on the rolling hills of the western slopes and hilltops of the Cascade Foothills. The Willamette Valley and the city of Portland, Oregon are located west of the project area. The overall Visual Resource Inventory (VRI) Class rating for the project area is Class II. These ratings resulted from the Scenic Quality Ratings of B, which factors in the timber management landscape, coupled with moderate to high Visual Sensitivity to change and the foreground-middle ground Distance Zones from the nearest Inventory Observation Points.

A Key Observation Point (KOP) was established for the project. KOP 1 was located within the existing parking area, approximately 75 feet from the Proposed Action. The BLM determined that KOP 1 provided good duration and representative direct views of the project area. With the exception of this KOP, the project area was located outside the travelers' field of view and not visible from elsewhere. Views of the project area are primarily available from the existing

parking area. The viewable landscape from this area is limited to approximately 100 meters due to dense forest cover. However, roadside trees, curves, dips, ridge angles, and rises in the canyon bottom hide the project site from view of the nearby East Barlow Trail Road and passersby.

The foreground -middle ground (road side) is predominately timber sparsely bordered by deciduous trees and shrubs interspersed with conifer species. The background landscape is not visible from within the dense forest canopy. This project is in the Seldom-seen Zone for the town of Welches, major highways, and other population centers along Highway 26 due to the dense forest cover and topography.

3.1.2 Environmental Effects

No Action Alternative

Visual effects associated with the No Action Alternative would include the continuance of existing BLM management activities in the project area. The BLM would expect the project area to remain in the current condition unless natural or catastrophic events were to occur. The BLM does not anticipate landscape changes which may affect visual qualities within the greater project area.

Proposed Action

Immediately after construction, pavement colors would contrast between the new, darker material and the older, lighter oxidized material. The new structures will contrast with the existing forest in form and line, though visual precedent exists with the restroom and information kiosks. Structure color palettes will be selected to blend as much as practicable and architecture will continue the “Cascadia” look of existing structures. The Proposed Action will provide major modification to the existing landscape, continuing the existing visual themes, and will be screened by the vegetative barrier of trees and underbrush from Barlow Trail Road. No significant impacts to Visual Resources will occur as a result of this project.

3.1.3 Cumulative Effect

The area analyzed for cumulative effects includes the project area visible from KOP 1. This KOP was chosen to represent the overall visual analysis and is the only likely public gathering place within this project as it is a parking and staging area supporting mountain bike trail opportunities.

There are no known cumulative effects for the Proposed Action. Various landowners with varying land management objectives (e.g., timber harvest and agriculture) and natural events such as fires and high winds will maintain the ever-changing, patchwork pattern on the landscape over time, maintaining the overall VRM Class II ratings.

Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions across the landscape consist of forest management, road and transmission lines construction, and quarry resource extraction, creating a mosaic of colors, patterns, and textures on hillsides and the valley floor. This project is an activity that fits within this pattern. The project would not substantially change the appearance

of the larger landscape because it is similar to the type and size of activities that occur in the area.

3.2 Issue 2: How would the Proposed Action affect public safety and traffic within the Barlow Trail Road corridor?

3.2.1 Affected Environment

The designated parking area for the trailhead is currently limited to 36 cars with overflow parking along Barlow Trail Road and in some user created parking spots off the road, including spots with poor sight distance. Barlow Trail Road is a narrow road with poor site distance that commercial hauling vehicles use such as log trucks and rock quarry trucks, as well as local commuters that are looking to bypass Highway 26. The BLM and Clackamas County have both agreed that parking along Barlow Trail Road is a public safety concern.

Current day-use activities take place within the small parking area, which includes tail gating, picnicking, bike repairs, and children riding. During hot weekend days the parking area can become congested, especially during permitted events. All of the activity is concentrated in the small parking area and there is no formal area designated for events, tail gating, bike repairs, or for children to ride.

3.2.2 Environmental Effects

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result with continued use of the current facilities in the same way. After parking capacity is reached in the existing parking area at the trailhead, the remaining vehicles will have to park along Barlow Trail Road, or in any other location they can find, including vegetated areas. Visitors parking along the Barlow Trail Road would continue to have to unload their vehicle and traverse their way to the Sandy Ridge Trailhead by riding on Barlow Trail Road.

The BLM and volunteers will continue to patrol during the high use recreation season. Law enforcement presence will continue, but at an undetermined level based on available funding and resources. Managerial controls will come mostly in the form of signage outlining prohibited activities.

Visitors will continue to not have any formal areas designated for the different activities that occur during day-use trips to the Sandy Ridge Trailhead, including tail gating, bike repairs, picnicking, permitted events, and children riding bikes. These activities would continue to occur within the existing parking area when capacity is routinely exceeded, which will continue to cause public safety concerns.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would allow for adequate capacity for vehicle parking to accommodate current and future use of the trailhead. It is expected that visitors to the Sandy Ridge Trail System would no longer be forced to park along Barlow Trail Road, reducing the safety risk associated with parking along the road and traveling back to the trailhead. The addition of a bus stop would reduce the amount of vehicle traffic and congestion within the parking area.

Formal day-use areas would be created to allow for tailgating, bike repairs, picnicking, permitted events, and a bike skill development area young or new riders. Having formal day-use areas will allow for more site efficiency, reduced impacts to public safety, and better overall site management. Each of the created formal day-use areas will move people out of the parking area, reducing chances of user conflict, and allowing for safer recreation. Visitors will be focused away from the flow of vehicle traffic and into the formalized day-use recreation areas while staying in the designated trailhead area, further reducing the chance of injury.

The Proposed Action will increase visitor safety and decrease overall traffic on the Barlow Trail Road by removing the need to park a long side the road. The bus stop would reduce traffic congestion along Barlow Trail Road and within the parking area by providing a cheap alternative to driving a personal vehicle to Sandy Ridge Trailhead.

3.2.3 Cumulative Effects

Past actions include Barlow Trail Road being utilized for commercial hauling for resource extraction like timber and rock. The road is utilized for other recreation like road biking and to access portions of the Sandy River for fishing or other recreational water activities.

The present actions within the analysis area include the ongoing visitor use of the Sandy Ridge Trailhead and Trail System, which increases the amount of vehicle, bike, and pedestrian traffic on and alongside Barlow Trail Road. The overall increase of traffic on the narrow county road has increased safety concerns on the road and near the trailhead.

Reasonably foreseeable actions in the planning area include Clackamas County's future plan to widen the Barlow Trail Road as well as provide a shoulder for cyclists. This action, along with the Proposed Action, will positively impact public health and safety by decreasing the safety concerns with cyclists parking and riding along Barlow Trail Road.

3.3 Issue 3: How would the trailhead access improvements affect the day-use visitation and recreation experience at the Sandy Ridge Trailhead?

3.3.1 Affected Environment

The Sandy Ridge Trailhead SRMA is an important recreation resource for the residents of northwest Oregon, including the Portland-Metropolitan areas. There are few mountain biking destinations in the state that offer such ease of access to dynamic trail opportunities that are

within close proximity to major urban areas. Sandy Ridge Trail System has started to see international attention and is known to be one of the best mountain biking destinations in the Northwest.

Most recreation occurs within the trailhead and on the lower section of the trail system. Current recreation use is structured through signage and development layout that is primarily used for gravity fed, downhill mountain biking. Facility development is limited to a single vault restroom, informational signage, and 36 parking spaces. Additional day-use activities include picnicking, tailgating, permitted events, and socializing.

The Sandy Ridge Trail System offers a unique opportunity for the local residents to enjoy a world class trail system that provides several benefits. The personal benefits that the trailhead and system provides are better mental health and health maintenance, stronger ties with family and friends, and greater cultivation of an outdoor-oriented lifestyle. Social benefits include improved community integrations, heightened sense of satisfaction with community, and improved community pride.

Visitation at the Sandy Ridge Trailhead is broken down into 2 seasons of use. Those seasons are the summer season and the winter season. The summer season of May through September make up the peak season of visitation coinciding with higher temperatures and rain-free, longer days. Holidays, events, and weekends with above average temperatures draw large numbers of visitors to the trailhead. During the summer season visitation to the trailhead often exceeds the capability of the existing trailhead parking area, forcing day-use visitors to park along the Barlow Trail Road or trying to squeeze into non-parking spaces in vegetated areas near the trailhead. Currently, the only access to the trailhead is by personal vehicle or by bike if visitors are in the local area.

The feeling of overcrowding is common during the summer season at the trailhead, but once on the trail system people report to not feel crowded as they ride toward the top. However, as they near the end of the ride, they report the feeling of being crowded again. The lower portion of the trail system that feeds back into the parking area can become congested during the summer season as it is the only option to travel back to the trailhead. The feeling of overcrowding is expected to increase as visitation to the site increases.

The winter season of use at the Sandy Ridge Trailhead is October through April and coincides with rainy, cool weather. Visitation is low during this timeframe because of inclement weather and safety concerns caused by trail damages. During the winter season, riders have no feeling of overcrowding since use of the trail system is minimal.

3.3.2 Environmental Effects

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in a continuation of the current visitation type and experience trend with existing facilities and feelings of crowding by visitors. Capacity at the trailhead will continue to be determined by the size of the parking area rather than the quantity or quality of recreation opportunities available at the site. Existing parking and facilities would

continue to be utilized to capacity, in which case visitors would continue to have to park along Barlow Trail Road. The trailhead would only be able to be accessed by personal vehicle, unless visitors are already in the current area, which would allow them to bike to the trailhead. Visitation to the site would continue to grow as the site's popularity and recognition, both nationally and internationally, continues to grow. The growth of visitation would result in more visitors having to park along Barlow Trail Road. Perceptions of crowding and user conflict will remain high at the trailhead and moderate on the lower section of the trail system, resulting in a less than satisfactory visitor experience.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would provide additional parking spaces to allow for visitors to park at the trailhead rather than parking on Barlow Trail Road, increasing visitor satisfaction and overall experience. The parking spaces are designed to be over sized spaces to allow for any size passenger vehicle to be parked comfortably and leave ample space to maneuver their gear in and out of the vehicles. Large vehicle and handicap parking spaces will be constructed to ensure that every user to the trail system or day-use area will have an appropriate parking space.

Day-use activities will be better incorporated within the site. Parking spaces are designed to be in tail gate clusters to give a formal space for groups to picnic or barbeque before and after their rides, moving this activity away from the flow of traffic. A new skills development area for young or new riders will be placed in the center of the new parking area to ensure that the children will be within eye sight of the parents. Additional restroom facilities will be added to the site and a well to provide potable water and water for the wash station.

A defined space for events or services such as bike demos, food carts, and races will be developed at the center of the current parking area. Having a defined space will better formalize the parking area and allow for less mixing of foot traffic and vehicle traffic in the area. People not wanting to participate with the events would be able to further separate themselves from those activities, which would allow each visitor to determine what type of recreation experience they will participate.

The multifunctional facility that incorporates the bike hub, bus stop, changing area, and bike wash station will define a space for these activities, again removing people from the flow of traffic where these activities currently happen and improving overall visitor experience. The changing area will allow people to dress into their riding clothes privately, increasing the visitor's experience and comfort. The bike hub will act as a common gathering area for visitors to interact and meet other riders with similar interest. The bus stop would allow visitors that do not have access to privately owned vehicles the ability to frequently access the trailhead from the surrounding communities and the Portland-Metropolitan area. Overall, day-use and recreation experience for individual and groups of visitors is expected to improve under the Proposed Action.

The majority of visitation to the Sandy Ridge Trailhead is by locals from the area including the Portland-Metropolitan Area. Recreation visitation is expected to increase at a rate that is similar to the growth of the local area, including the Portland-Metropolitan Area. According to the US

Census Bureau, the Portland-Metropolitan Area's population will increase at a rate of 1.5 percent to 2 percent. Any other visitation increases to the Sandy Ridge Trailhead will result from non-local destination travel, which will most likely stem from information provided by media outlets.

The expectation for growth is 2 to 4 percent. The BLM has seen a steady decline in the growth of use from more than doubling to just increasing by 8 percent a year. The BLM asserts that the local mountain biking market is sufficiently saturated with information about the Sandy Ridge Trailhead, and the only expected growth would be from destination tourism and population growth. BLM estimates a total of 326 vehicles a day during the peak riding season of 184 days. The Sandy Ridge Trailhead could see the largest current visitation estimate of 120,000 riders a year, assuming all the visits only occurred during the 184 days. The peak visitation times are from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM, according to vehicle counts. The average ride time is between two to four hours, with a median of three, resulting in approximately 120 vehicles at a time in the parking area.

The Sandy Ridge Trailhead will likely see maxed capacity on event days and lower than the estimated 120 vehicles at a time on other days, since the Sandy Ridge Trailhead remains open year around and the estimate only accounted for the peak riding season of 184 days. The projection uses assumptions that there is not a hidden local mountain biking market, vehicle turn over will be steady, majority of riders only go during the peak recreation season, and the area's population growth will remain steady.

The Sandy Ridge Trail System is the main draw for public visitation. It is highly unlikely to see an increase of visitors to the trailhead due to the improvements that would be made, aside from capturing those that are currently parking along the road. Visitors are more likely to stay longer due to the improvements at the trailhead which would increase the overall appeal to destination travelers. Providing the opportunity to host more events in a formal area and providing the opportunity for food carts could lead to having more events that draw in larger crowds. Even if more trails are made or other modifications are made to the system, it is unlikely to see a large increase in visitation. It is more likely to see a small increase in destination visits since this is a day-use only area and people's ability to visit is limited if they live further away than 50 miles.

3.3.3 Cumulative Effects

The effects area includes the Sandy Ridge Trailhead and the immediate area surrounding the trailhead that is currently being used as parking overflow.

The past actions of developing a trail system and trailhead have resulted in the trailhead being overwhelmed by the amount of people wanting to visit. The visitation to the trailhead is ranges from 90,000 to 120,000 people a year.

The current Proposed Action would allow accommodations for the current and future visitation to the trailhead and trail system. Adding additional bus services will result in a better access for visitors to the trail head and trail system.

The reasonably foreseeable future action of a proposed interconnected trail system through The Villages, leading to Sandy Ridge Trailhead, Wildwood Recreation Area, and the USFS's recreation areas would result in increased visitation to the trail system.

3.4 Issue 4: How would the Proposed Action affect the socio-economics of the Sandy River Basin Area, including the permitting of food carts within the trailhead access improvement area?

3.4.1 Affected Environment

The analysis area for potential socio-economic impacts is The Villages at Mt. Hood and Sandy River Basin, which include The City of Sandy, Brightwood, Welches, Wemme, Zigzag, and Rhododendron. This area lies directly east of the Portland-Metropolitan area and includes portions of Multnomah and Clackamas Counties. Due to the high percentage of federal ownership, population distribution is generally clustered along Highway 26. According to the Census Bureau, the Portland-Metropolitan area's population in 2015 was nearly 2.4 million, with a continuing growth rate between 1.5 percent and 2 percent (*US Census Bureau, 2016*).

The social environment and demographics of the two counties included within the planning area, Clackamas and Multnomah, have a median age of 39 and a median household income of \$58,772 according to the US Census Bureau, placing the average resident's age and household income above that of the national average (*US Census Bureau, 2016*).

Travel Oregon commissioned a study with Longwood International about the economic impact that tourism has on in the Mount Hood-Columbia River Gorge. A total of \$360 million dollars were spent on tourism, with \$35 million of that being spent just on recreation in 2013. Many businesses in the surrounding area, such as Bright Wood Tavern and Otto's Ski & Mt. Bike, have experienced positive economic benefits from the development of the Sandy Ridge Trail System and Trailhead. The BLM also receives 20 to 30 SRPs per year for bike demonstration events. This has resulted in increased sales for the local bike shops, helping increase economic revenue in the area.

Currently, the most frequented food service option is the Brightwood Tavern, which is 1.1 miles away or a 10 minute bike ride to Brightwood. The next available food is nearly a 30 minute ride to the Dragonfly Café & Bakery, Whistle Stop Bar & Grill, Rendezvous Grill, Wraptitude, and El Burro Loco.

3.4.2 Environmental Effects

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative will result in no changes to the current socio-economic benefits from the trailhead and trail system. Visitors will continue to utilize local area businesses, including bicycle shops and restaurants, similarly to current use. Local area businesses will continue to benefit from visitors to the Sandy Ridge Trailhead at the current rates. Bicycle demonstrations

and other events would continue to be permitted by the BLM through the SRP process. The existing parking area limits the amount of bike demonstrations or other permitted events that can occur, maintaining the amount of events privately owned businesses can hold during a year at current levels.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would increase socio-economic benefits in the area of analysis. The Proposed Action will allow double the current amount of permitted events and would include permitted food carts or trucks. The BLM believes that the addition of allowing food trucks or carts will benefit local restaurants by allowing them another area of operation to sell food, and would also allow for new private businesses to take advantage of the Sandy Ridge Trailhead market. The Proposed Action would further increase the socio-economic benefits through an increase in private business opportunities and higher visitation due to the greater destination appeal.

Adding in a bus stop and gaining bus services to the Sandy Ridge Trailhead will allow for people to access the trailhead who do not have access to privately owned vehicles. People within the Portland-Metropolitan area will be able to take bus services to the Sandy Ridge Trailhead. The low bus fees would make it economically feasible for those that are of low socio-economic status to be able to enjoy and receive the benefits of an internationally recognized mountain biking destination.

3.4.3 Cumulative Effect

Past recreation development including overnight camping and other opportunities within the analysis area has resulted in an increase in socio-economic benefits, helping supplement the community with additional tourism.

The current Sandy Ridge Trailhead provides additional socio-economic benefit to the analysis area though local area business revenue from visitors. Other recreation development within the analysis area also increases socio-economic benefits to local communities through the tourism market.

The future development of campgrounds, bike paths, and bike hubs within the analysis area will also increase the total destination appeal of the area for outdoor recreation. This will further improve the overall tourism market for the area, increasing the benefits to the local communities.

3.5 Issue 5: How would the BLM control the spread of invasive weeds within the Sandy Ridge Trail System and the proposed access improvement area?

3.5.1 Affected Environment

The Sandy Ridge Trailhead acts as the gateway to the nearly 16 mile Sandy Ridge Trail System, which receives 90,000 to 120,000 riders per year. These riders travel from not only all over the

country, but also from all over the world. There are currently no measures in place other than signage and word of mouth about reducing the spread of invasive weeds by cleaning bikes and gear before entering public lands. The invasive weeds specialist for the Northwest Oregon District BLM has completed surveys of the Sandy Ridge Trail System and reported an increase of Herb Robert geranium (*Geranium robertianum*) and Himalayan Blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*) along the trailhead and trail crossings.

3.5.2 Environmental Effects

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in the current management for invasive weeds. Signage and messaging would continue to be the only preventative measures used to stop the spread of invasive weeds. The Northwest Oregon District BLM would continue to spend resources on combating new invasive weeds and halting the spread of existing patches of invasive weeds. Visitors would have no method of cleaning dirt, vegetation, and seeds off their bikes and gears before or after their rides, increasing the risk of spreading invasive weeds.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action calls for building a bike wash station with a catch basin to collect the dirt and seeds that are cleaned from the bikes. Signage and messaging would be in place to encourage visitors to wash their bikes and gear both before and after riding the trail system. With the additional preventive measures installed under the Proposed Action, a reduction in the spread and introduction of non-native and invasive species will occur. The BLM will continue to monitor the trail system after installation of the bike wash station for non-native and invasive species.

3.5.3 Cumulative Effect

The past development in the analysis area that have impacted the spread of invasive weeds includes the large powerline corridor that is not routinely treated or controlled for invasive weeds above the trail system. Additionally, surface disturbance activities on private land adjacent to public land within the Sandy Ridge Trail System have the potential to contribute to the spread of non-native and invasive species.

Present development within the analysis area includes the Sandy Ridge Trail System, Barlow Trail Road, timber sales on private land, and other surface disturbance activities occurring on private land. The addition of the Proposed Action would potentially decrease the spread and introduction of non-native and invasive species currently occurring within the area.

Reasonably foreseeable future actions that may increase the spread of invasive weeds include private timber sales, widening of the Barlow Trail Road by Clackamas County and future private development along the Barlow Trail Road.

3.6 Issue 6: How would the Proposed Action affect Bureau Sensitive Species within the project area?

Sources: Sandy Ridge Trailhead Access Improvements Project EA Wildlife Report; Murphy 2016

3.6.1 Affected Environment

There are three Bureau Sensitive Species that are suspected to occur within the project area based on the habitat types found within the area. On April 12th, 2016, the BLM IDT completed a field visit of the Proposed Action to document the current conditions of the habitat within the project area. These species are the Larch Mountain Salamander, Columbia Side Band, and Evening Field Slug. Surveys for these species have not been completed for the project area to date. Surveys will take place in the fall when conditions meet the parameters of the Terrestrial Mollusk Survey Protocol and the Larch Mountain Salamander Survey Protocol.

The project area is located in the Sandy River bottom and is comprised of a low elevation mixed conifer hardwood forest. Two acres of the project area is a 30 year old stand of black cotton wood, red alder, and small western Hemlock. A little over two acres is in an 80 year old stand that is dominated by Douglas fir and big leaf maple. Within all stands, there is a well-developed shrub understory of salmon berry, California hazelnut, and vine maple. The project area is 14 air miles south of the Columbia River at an elevation of approximately 1060 feet above sea level. The project area has an accumulation of coarse woody debris, however there were no snags observed in field visits to the project area. The soil condition of the project area is generally comprised of a few inches of duff over fine gravel and silt.

Larch Mountain Salamander

Known populations of the Larch Mountain salamander are found along approximately 14 miles of the Columbia River, in Multnomah and Hood River Counties between 160 to 4,200 feet in elevation. The current knowledge of the species range is likely incomplete and several range extensions have occurred over the past decade. Larch Mountain salamanders occur in a wide array of habitat types including old-growth forests, younger, naturally regenerated forests in gravelly/cobble soils with residual late successional features (snags and large down logs), scree and talus (forested and un-forested), and lava tube entrances where debris has accumulated (CRISAFULLI *et. al.*, 2008).

The closest known site is 10 miles to the northeast of the project area. Surveys were conducted 10 years ago in the areas at the headwaters of Little Joe Creek, and no Larch Mountain salamanders were found during.

Columbia Sideband

The habitat for the Columbia sideband mollusk is described as relatively low elevations in comparatively uncut, partly shaded, somewhat rocky Douglas-fir forest (Frest and Johannes [n.d.], cited in Foltz 2009). The taxon appears to favor shaded basalt outcrops and talus in seasonally moist areas (Frest and Johannes [n.d.], cited in Foltz 2009). The parent species is

found in mesic forest habitats or near springs and other water sources in forested areas, generally with rock substrates or large woody debris and logs for refugia. The closest known site of the Columbia sideband is near the Salmon River, approximately two miles from the project area..

Evening Field Slug

The evening field slug is strongly associated with wet areas and riparian vegetation. Most current research indicates that evening field slug (*Deroceras laeve*) and the gray field slug (*Deroceras hesperium*) are the same species. A molecular phylogenetic and morphological analysis of two putative species, the widespread *Deroceras laeve* and *Deroceras hesperium*, considered a narrow-ranging endemic of conservation concern in Pacific Northwest National Forests, supports the existence of a single species. What was called *Deroceras hesperium* is likely an anatomical variant of *Deroceras laeve* (Guralnick et. Al., 2013). As such, surveys will be conducted for this species, however, based on best available science it is not recommended that the sites be managed differently than those of *Deroceras laeve*.

3.6.2 Environmental Effects

No Action Alternative

The BLM would expect the project area to remain in the current condition unless natural or catastrophic events were to occur. The project would not be implemented, thus there would be no effects to Bureau Sensitive species due to habitat modification.

Proposed Action

Larch Mountain Salamander and Columbia Sideband

Surveys will be conducted in the fall to see if individuals are present. Based on the range, nearest known sites, and the habitat present in the project area, the species is suspected to occur.

The Proposed Action will impact the Larch Mountain salamander and Columbia sideband by the proposed habitat modification. Under the Proposed Action, vegetation would be removed and the parking area would be paved, which would remove habitat for the two species. Surveys will determine if the species are present within the project area. If the two species are present within the project area, habitat loss would likely preclude the species from continuing to persist within the project area. Preserving the Course Woody Debris present in the center of the parking area where the proposed beginner's skill course is located would help to maintain functional habitat requirements for both species.

The project area is small (approximately 4 acres) in relation to larger, contiguous BLM-administered lands (approximately 4,500 acres) located north of the Sandy River with the required habitat to support both the Larch Mountain salamander and Columbia sideband. Habitat for both of these species will remain across the 4,500 acres of BLM lands in the area. Due to the

relatively small project area, the direct and indirect impact to both species is negligible and would not contribute to the need to list either the Larch Mountain salamander or the Columbia sideband, if either species is found to be present.

Evening Field Slug

Evening field slug are strongly associated with wet areas and riparian vegetation. Within the project area there are few wet areas that contain the presence of wetland plant species key to the evening field slug, such as skunk cabbage. If the species is found during surveys, due to the project area habitat modification, it is unlikely individuals will continue to be supported. However, based on the most recent study indicating the evening field slug is the same species as the gray field slug, whose habitat range is wide, the species will not be impacted from the Proposed Action.

3.6.3 Cumulative Effect

The Proposed Action is approximately 4 acres of surface disturbance causing habitat modification for three Bureau Sensitive Species. Potential habitat for the three species adjacent to the project area encompasses approximately 4,500 acres on the north side of the Sandy River. Within this area, there are no past or present actions that would cumulatively add to the impacts from the Proposed Action on Bureau Sensitive Species. Future actions, including private timber sales, widening of the Barlow Trail Road by Clackamas County, and future private residential development along the Barlow Trail Road, have the potential to minimally impact the three species through habitat modification and removal.

Chapter 4: Consultation and Public Scoping

4.1 Consultation

BLM completed consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 2015. The project is included under the USFWS document number 01EOFW00-2016-I-0251. The Proposed Action is not within the historic or known home range of any Northern spotted owl sites. Project Design Features (*EA Section 2.4*) will be adhered to during implementation of the Proposed Action. The project area is considered dispersal habitat and as such, habitat modification is not likely to adversely affect the species.

Consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service is not warranted since the Proposed Action was designed to occur outside of the one-site tree potential buffer for Riparian Reserves around Little Joe Creek (*EA Section 1.6.2*).

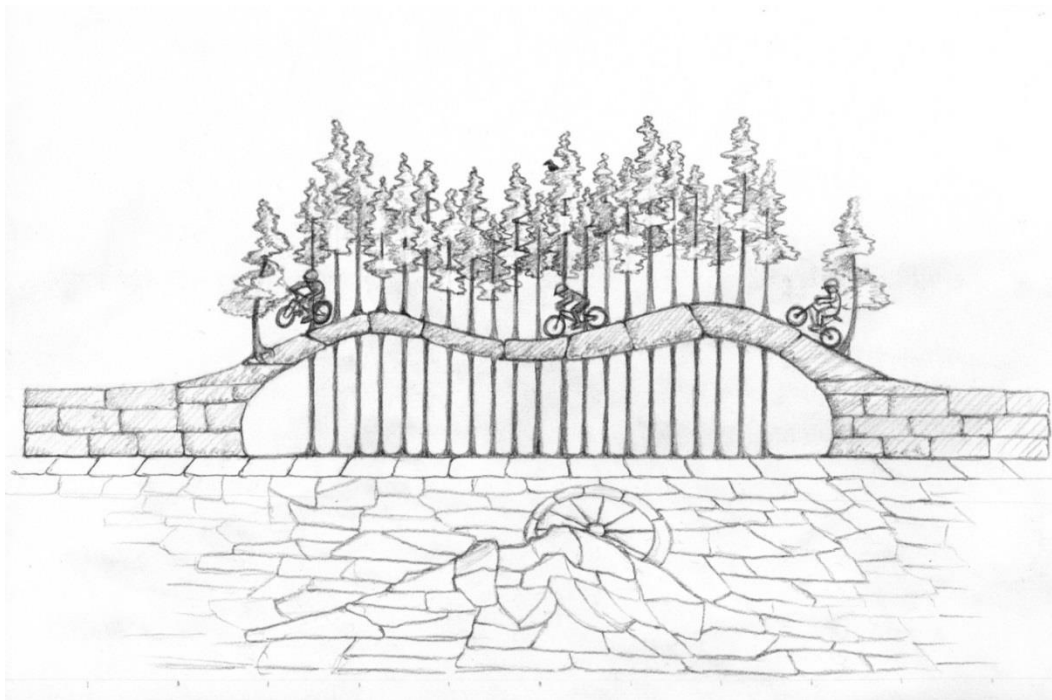
4.2 EA Public Comment Period

The EA and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be made available for public review and comment from November 9th to December 8th, 2016. On or before the first day of the public review and comment period, letters announcing the public review and comment period will be mailed to persons and organizations on the project mailing list, those who submitted Scoping Comments, and other interested parties. The letter, the EA, and the draft FONSI will be posted on the ePlanning project website at <http://tinyurl.com/SandyRidgeTrailheadProject>.

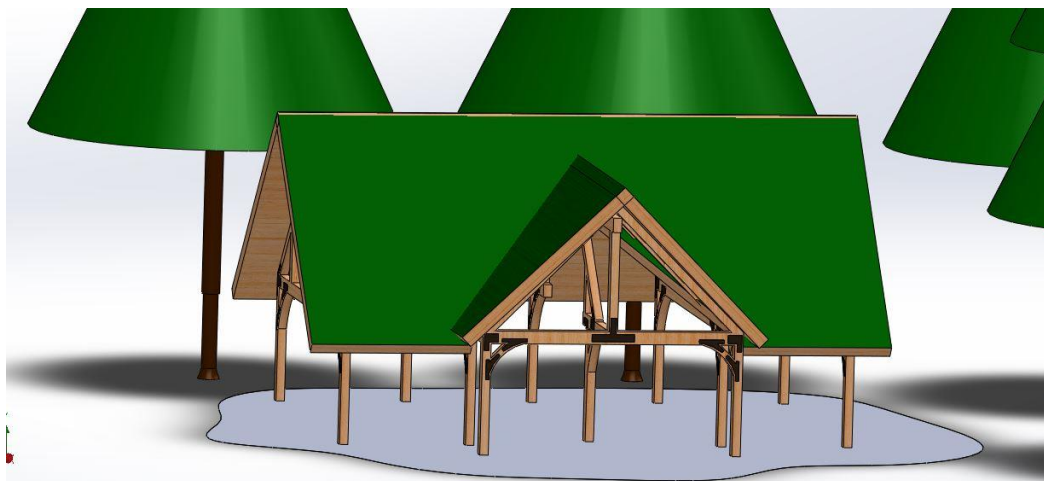
Written comments should be addressed to Dan Davis, Northwest Oregon District Recreation Planner, 1717 Fabry Road SE, Salem, Oregon 97306. Emailed comments may be sent to BLM_OR_NO_Rec_publiccomments@blm.gov or submitted via the project ePlanning page above, under the “Documents” section.

Chapter 5: Additional Facility Designs

Bike Rack



Bike Hub/Bus Stop




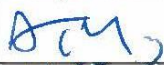






Changing Room



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List of Interdisciplinary Reviewers

| Team Member | Specialty/Discipline | Signature |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Dan Davis | Team Lead Recreation/Rural Interface |  |
| Corbin Murphy | Wildlife | Cal |
| Patrick Hawe | Hydrology and Soils | WPH |
| David Moore | Visual Resources/ Wilderness/State Scenic Waterway/ Wild and Scenic Rivers |  |
| Bruce Zoellick | Fisheries | BWZ |
| Whitney Wirthlin | Planning and Environmental Coordinator |  |
| Belle Verbics | Natural Resource Supervisor |  |
| Fred Groatorex | Cultural |  |
| Heidi Christensen | Invasive Plant Management |  |
| Terry Fennell | Botanist |  |
| Kenny Ruzicka | Silviculture |  |