



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Ashley National Forest

Flaming Gorge Ranger District
PO Box 279
Manila, UT 84046

File Code: 1950

Date: March 28, 2003

Dear Friend of the Ashley:

I have enclosed the Decision Memo for the Firehole Campground Fence Project. If you have any questions about my decision, please contact Dustin Bambrough or me at (435) 784-3445.

Thank you for your interest and participation in the management of the Ashley National Forest.

Sincerely,

EILEEN RICHMOND
District Ranger

Enclosure



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DECISION MEMO

Firehole Campground Fence Construction

**USDA Forest Service
Ashley National Forest
Flaming Gorge Ranger District
Daggett County, Utah**

It is my decision to construct an extension of the fence around the Firehole Campground to prevent cattle from entering the campground. Firehole Campground is located within the Ashley National Forest on the Flaming Gorge Ranger District. The campground is located on the northeastern end of the Flaming Gorge Recreation Area in Sweetwater County, Wyoming.

The fence will be constructed using both steel and wood fence posts along with barbed wire. A cattleguard will be installed at the entrance to Firehole Campground at the junction of this entrance and F.S. Road # 106. A point of unauthorized vehicular access through the existing fence will also be obliterated and rehabilitated. This fence will eliminate cattle/recreational user conflicts in the Firehole Campground.

Approximately 86 scoping requests were sent out on May 9, 2002 for this project proposal. One letter expressing comments or concerns was received. From this letter the following concerns/suggestions were raised: 1) Removal of cattle from public land would eliminate the costs associated with fencing. 2) Livestock grazing permit holders should be required to pay for the fencing costs. 3) The impacts of fencing on wildlife. 4) Preclusion and/or fragmentation of habitat caused by fencing. 5) Forest Service should design fence for the least impacts on wildlife. 6) Surveys should be completed for sensitive plant species. 7) Forest Service should restrict construction during breeding and nesting seasons. 8) Additional explanation is needed for the alteration and additional fencing at Firehole Campground.

In response to the concerns/suggestions listed above the following is provided:

- 1) The Environmental Assessment (EA) Number WY/04-EA01-139 assessed the effects of cattle grazing on the Rock Springs Allotment and concluded in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) decision dated August 15, 2001, that grazing of domestic livestock is an acceptable use for the Rock Springs Allotment.
- 2) "The benefiting activity shall provide funds for fences that are needed to support other activities or that are not identified in an allotment management plan (FSM-2241.14a). The benefiting activity in for this project is recreation at the Firehole campground and marina.

- 3) Fence construction will be completed according to USFS standards that have been developed to mitigate effects on wildlife (R4-FSM 2242.03).
- 4) Wildlife will not be precluded from any available habitat because the fence will be constructed to facilitate wildlife movement (see #3).
- 5) See #3).
- 6) Biological Assessment for Threatened Endangered and Proposed Plant Species was completed for the project area and concluded, "no effect to these species or their habitat is determined for activities of the proposed action."
A Biological Evaluation for Sensitive Plant Species was also completed for the project area and concluded; "Based on habitat and botanical surveys, a determination of 'No Impact' is made for sensitive plants in relation to the proposed action."
- 7) Project will occur in open country in a high use recreation area where human disturbance already occurs; therefore, the additional risk of disturbance during breeding and nesting seasons is low. However, to minimize the possible effects of disturbances, this project will not occur until late spring.
- 8) Additional fencing is required at the Firehole Campground because fluctuations of the Flaming Gorge Reservoir have eliminated historical natural water body barriers. The additional fencing will create a barrier that will prevent cattle from entering the campground and be functional during the dynamic fluctuations of Flaming Gorge Reservoir.

There are no extraordinary circumstances present that would be affected by this project. Additionally, there are no significant issues within the scope of this proposal that were identified during the scoping process. Therefore, this action falls within Category 9. "Implementation or modification of minor management practices to improve allotment condition or animal distribution when an Allotment Management Plan is not yet in place" (FSH 1909.15, Section 31.2), and is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment.

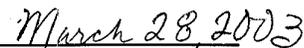
This project may be implemented beginning in February 2003.

This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215.8 (a) (4).

For further information concerning this decision contact Dustin Bambrough at the Flaming Gorge Ranger District, P.O. Box 279, Manila, Utah 84046 or (435) 784-3445.



EILEEN RICHMOND
District Ranger



Date