



File Code: 2320

Date: September 24, 2018

Dear Interested Party:

I am pleased to announce my decision for the Pemigewasset Wilderness Thoreau Falls Trail Bridge Removal Project (Thoreau Falls Bridge Project). The bridge is located near the center of the Pemigewasset Wilderness and the town of Lincoln, New Hampshire. The Pemigewasset was designated as a wilderness in the New Hampshire Wilderness act of 1984.

Having considered on-the-ground conditions, extensive input from the public, input from an interdisciplinary team of resource specialist, the Environmental Assessment (EA), and the project record, I have decided to implement Alternative 1 – Bridge Removal Without Replacement, as described in the Thoreau Falls Bridge Project EA and Decision Notice / Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI).

The reason I selected Alternative 1 is based off my following the process that is outlined in our Forest Service Manuals and Handbooks and the statutory requirements and guidelines found in the Wilderness Act of 1964. Being bound by these manuals and handbooks, I have also allowed the 'intent' of the Wilderness Act of 1964 to assist in my thoughts and decision process. As described in the Act, a wilderness is *"an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain,"* and *"an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions."*

One accepts a certain amount of risk when they enter a designated Wilderness Area. The condition and risks associated with the Thoreau Falls Trail are in alignment with the risks one takes upon entering the Wilderness- it is supposed to be harder to get to, harder to hike through, it is supposed to be a different experience than our developed non-wilderness experiences on White Mountain National Forest. This decision will contribute to enhancing the qualities of the Pemigewasset Wilderness's character. I also remind recreationalists to be prepared, follow recommendations in the "hikeSafe" program including hiking with the "10 Essentials," to be informed and know of active



weather alerts that could result in rapidly changing water levels and flow rates due to storms or spring snow melt that may increase risks.

I hope that you will read my final decision and findings, and in particular my detailed reason for moving forward with Alternative 1. My decision can be downloaded from our Forest website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=46602>.

It is also available at the Pemigewasset Ranger District Office, 71 White Mountain Drive, Campton, NH.

This decision is subject to the administrative review process, governed by the provisions of 36 CFR Part 218, Subparts A and B. Six objections were filed in a timely manner in accordance with the requirements in 36 CFR § 218.9 and were determined to be eligible. An Eastern Region Forest Service interdisciplinary team reviewed the eligible issues set forth in the objection letters as well as documentation in the project record, including, but not limited to, the EA and the DN. The objection review did not find any violation of law, regulation, or policy. One instruction resulted from the review and was addressed prior to my making this decision. I was instructed to add an explanation of the change in the proposed action between the scoping document and the EA to allow for mechanized and motorized methods of bridge removal. This instruction was addressed through an errata to the EA.

The Reviewing Officer sent a written response to the objectors on September 20, 2018. This decision is not subject to further administrative review or objection per 36 CFR § 218.1(b)(2) and the project may be implemented immediately after the decision is signed.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns regarding my decision. I can be reached by phone or email brookebrown@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,



BROOKE M. BROWN
District Ranger