



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Salmon-Challis
National Forest
Middle Fork Ranger District

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File Code: 2350

Date: 8 December 2008

Raenette Didier
Chairman
Back Country Horsemen of Idaho
230 Pleasant Valley Road
Clearwater, ID 83552

Raenette,

I received your letter via Bill Wood here in Challis on Dec. 3rd and it could have not been more timely. On Dec. 4, I met with the Forest Engineer, the Wilderness Specialist and the Forest Trails lead to discuss three bridge projects: Little Pistol; Elkhorn and Warm Springs. Little Pistol will be high priority. Your offer of assistance is much appreciated and, again, very timely.

We have been able to obtain most of the funding we need through internal sources. However, we will probably need to augment these funds if we are to install durable, low maintenance and wilderness consistent bridges. Of equal importance is your offer of on-site assistance. I will be hiring a packer within the month but we are likely to need additional hauling capacity when it comes time to move materials to the sites. We may also be able to use help bringing materials from Missoula and/or Idaho Falls. Below is a quick summary.

Little Pistol Creek: The treated wood bridge abutment burned and three avalanches subsequently covered the trail with debris. During the summer of 2008, a trail crew of two people rerouted the trail. This work was not planned or funded but the trail is important and I wanted to get a passable trail in. Unfortunately, reestablishing the original route through the debris was not practical given the hazard of doing so as well as the time and labor constraints. Any funding and labor remaining after the bridge project will be used to deal with trail sections affected by avalanche debris.

As you know, we will need to reconstruct one bridge abutment, then lift and position the bridge onto the abutment. The proposal had been to put the bridge on gabion abutments. I changed this approach and we will be constructing the abutment with more durable and wilderness consistent materials. The



photo at right depicts the concept. I have obtained a commitment for free engineering and design work. Putting this on the ground will involve packing in the "stones" which are actually precast concrete (big ones will be about 75 lbs. ea). A good bit of work, but the result will be long lasting, low maintenance, and fire proof - something for our great grandchildren to use. It may be labor intensive, and initially a bit more costly, but it always costs less in the long run to do it right once.



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Warm Springs Creek Bridge: As with Pistol Creek, the treated wood bridge abutment burned leaving the bridge with no approach. When the abutment burned, it weakened the structural steel under the bridge. The girders will have to be reinforced so we will have to bring a portable welder to the site. The approach and abutment here are much larger than the Pistol Creek project. I would like to get this bridge operational again as Warm Springs Creek is a Chinook spawning stream and the trail is an important, frequently used asset.

Elkhorn Creek Bridge: This is another important facility, both from an access and resources standpoint. The site is located on a main line trail and crosses a Chinook spawning reach on Elkhorn Creek. The entire facility: bridge; abutments, and approaches were lost. There is nothing on site to work with. Unfortunately, there is no site plan in our files either so we cannot begin design work

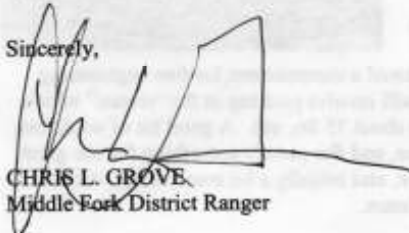


immediately. We want to use the "packable" wooden stock bridge like the one shown in the photo. The six-foot sections can be moved to the site by raft or by pack stock.

As it stands now, our plan is to start with Little Pistol. It is the least complex and we are most likely to be able to finish it relatively quickly. It will also be a good project to work out any problems with new materials and techniques. While the construction crew is working Little Pistol, we can survey the Elkhorn Creek Bridge site. After Little Pistol is complete, we will move to Warm Springs. Elkhorn Creek Bridge will be designed and materials obtained while the Warm Springs Bridge work is being accomplished. Once the Warm Springs project is finished, work will begin at Elkhorn Creek. Elkhorn Creek obviously presents the greatest challenge and completion this year is tenuous.

As you can see, it will be a busy summer and help at the sites, and with moving materials, will be very welcome. You also mentioned help with grant money. Additional funds can always be put to good use and may be needed before this is over. Once design work is done, materials such as "stones" could be purchased and moved to the sites by the Backcountry Horsemen. Thank you for your interest and your offer of help. I look forward to working with the Backcountry Horsemen this field season.

Sincerely,


CHRIS L. GROVE
Middle Fork District Ranger