

Decision Memo
USDA Forest Service
Rocky Mountain Region



San Isabel National Forest
Salida Ranger District
Five Year Recreation Event Special Use Permits
Chaffee County, Colorado

INTRODUCTION

The Salida Ranger District has received 5-year recreation event permit requests for the following events: Crest Crank, Vapor Trail 125, Collegiate Peaks Trail Run, Garfield Continental Divide Hill Climb, Autumn Color Run and Run Through Time. The Vapor Trail 125 and Crest Crank partially take place on the Gunnison National Forest, Gunnison Ranger District. The remaining events are on the San Isabel National Forest, Salida Ranger District. All of these recreation events have been authorized on an annual basis since the early 2000's and are in good standing. Authorizing 5 year recreation event permits eases the administrative burden for the Salida Ranger District and the event holders. This action falls in line with the Modernization of Special Uses to Enhance Visitor and Community Benefits.



BACKGROUND

National Forest System (NFS) lands on the Salida Ranger District provide desirable locations for a variety of recreation events, due to the area's qualities as a destination, existing facilities, and vast amenities provided by the adjacent cities of Salida, Poncha Springs and Buena Vista, CO. Recreation events are organized commercial activities that must be authorized under a special use permit {Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 251.50 [a] [b]}. These permits have expired and the Salida Ranger District has received proposals by the event proponents requesting issuance of new permits. These recreation events range from marathons to mountain bike rides to motorized events, and the uses are for a short duration (one to four days) which includes set-up and takedown of staging areas. The events occur within developed recreation sites and/or on NFS roads and trails. Event activities are consistent with the typical public use occurring at the proposed locations and the sites are capable of reasonably accommodating the recreation events. There are no proposed changes for the new permits to locations and uses authorized under the existing or expired permits.

The purpose of this decision is to respond to applications for issuance of new special use permits for previously authorized, recurring recreation events on the Salida Ranger District. The need for this decision is to authorize the proposed commercial recreation events in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies governing such use.

DECISION

To issue a series of special use permits for up to five-year terms to authorize multiple recreation events to operate annually on National Forest System (NFS) lands administered by the San Isabel National Forest, Salida Ranger. These recreation events have been authorized in previous years under temporary (less than one year) recreation event special use permits. The proposed special use permits will be issued for terms up to, but not exceeding five years and will replace the existing or expired temporary recreation event special use permits authorizing these events.

I have determined that this action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). This activity falls under the category **36 CFR 220.6(e) (15)**.

(15) Issuance of a new special use authorization for a new term to replace an existing or expired special use authorization when the only changes are administrative, there are not changes to the authorized facilities or increase in the scope or intensity of authorized activities, and the applicant or holder is in the full compliance with the terms and conditions of the special use authorization.

I have concluded that this action falls under this category because there will be no change in area, user days, season of use or types of activities. These events have been in full compliance with the terms and conditions of their prior authorizations and the only change is to renew their permits up to 5 years.

The table below lists the events that were scoped to the public for inclusion in the proposed action:

Event Name	Permittee	Activity	Timing
Autumn Color Run	Autumn Color Run	Marathon	Fall
Collegiate Peaks Trail Run	Buena Vista Optimist Club	Marathon	Summer
Run Through Time	Falcon Events, LLC	Marathon	Spring
Crest Crank	Alliance Against Domestic Abuse	Mountain Bike Ride	Summer
Vapor Trail 125	Absolute Bikes Inc.	Mountain Bike Ride	Summer
Garfield Continental Divide Hill Climb	Colorado Hill Climb Association	Motorized Hill Climb	Summer

My decision associated with each specific event is included below. For a full description, map, and design features associated with each event, please see Exhibit A.

Autumn Color Run: It is my decision to issue a multi-year recreation event permit to authorize this activity, as proposed, for five years (2018-2022).

Collegiate Peaks Trail Run: It is my decision to issue a multi-year recreation event permit to authorize this activity, as proposed, for five years (2018-2022).

Run Through Time: It is my decision to issue a multi-year recreation event permit to authorize this activity, as proposed, for five years (2018-2022).

Crest Crank: It is my decision to issue a multi-year recreation event permit to authorize this activity, as proposed, for five years (2018-2022).

Vapor Trail 125: It is my decision to issue a multi-year recreation event permit to authorize this activity, as proposed, for five years (2018-2022).

Colorado Hill Climb: It is my decision to issue a multi-year recreation event permit to authorize this activity, as proposed, for five years (2018-2022).

This decision will be implemented through issuance of six special use authorizations for six different recreation events that meet the requirements of the decision and Forest Service regulations. Forest Service regulations require the applicant to: submit (or resubmit) an operation and maintenance (O&M) plan that complies with the decision requirements; pay any necessary fees; post any necessary bonds; and secure any state or federal permits or authorizations required by law.



EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER LAWS

The environmental analysis conducted that this action falls within a category of actions, which normally do not individually or cumulatively have significant effect on the environment and, therefore, can be excluded from documentation in an environmental analysis (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS). For the Forest Service, this provision is in 36 CFR 220.6 (e) (15). Issuance of a new special use authorization for a new term to replace an existing or expired special use authorization when the only changes are administrative, there are no changes to the authorized facilities or increase in the scope or intensity of authorized activities, and the applicants or holders are in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the special use authorizations. A project or case file is required. The project file will be maintained and is available for review at the Salida Ranger District, 5575 Cleora Road, Salida, Colorado 81201.

I find the proposed action can be categorically excluded because there were no extraordinary circumstances or issues identified by the interdisciplinary team nor resource specialists that analyzed this proposal.

Extraordinary circumstances considered in my evaluation, but dismissed with reasoning are as follows: *The mere presence of one or more of these resource conditions does not preclude the use of a categorical exclusion. It is the degree of the potential effect of a proposed action on these resource conditions that determines whether extraordinary circumstances exist.*

- *Threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat:* A Biological Assessment and Biological Evaluation was prepared for these events in the past. These documents have been reviewed for sufficiency and found no changes or additions are necessary.
- *Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds:* This project will not take place in a flood plain or in a municipal watershed. The project is anticipated to have minimum to no impacts on wetlands and riparian areas.
- *Congressionally designated area (such as wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, etc):* This project will not take place in designated wilderness. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) falls within this project area. It was determined that there will be minimal to no impact on the CDNST. The events occur during such time that the intended uses are low.
- *Roadless areas (wild and scenic river study rivers, etc):* This project is not located in a roadless area.
- *Research Natural Area:* There are no Research Natural Areas located within the analysis area.
- *Native American Religious or Cultural Sites, Archaeological Sites, or Historic Properties or Areas:*

I have determined that implementing the action will cause no extraordinary circumstances or issues, rather improve resource conditions. Therefore, this action can be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.



DESIGN CRITERIA

An operating and safety plan will be made a part of this permit and will address the following operation.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Internal scoping has been completed with input from the Pike and San Isabel National Forest Specialists (Wildlife Biologist, Recreation, Archeologist, Botanist, Range, Recreation, Hydrologist and Cultural Resource personnel).

The Five Year Recreation Event Special Use Permits project was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions starting on August 22, 2017. A legal notice of this project was published in the Mountain Mail on August 25, 2017. The scoping comment period started on August 22, 2017 and continued through September 23, 2017.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The proposed action is consistent with the Pike and San Isabel National Forests, Comanche and Cimarron National Grasslands (PSICC) Land and Resource Management Plan (1984) as required by the National Forest Management Act. The project was designed in conformance with Forest Plan standards and incorporates appropriate Forest Plan guidelines for the protection of forest resources and the Final Environmental Impact Statement (1996) as amended).

APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPLEMENTATION DATE

The approved activities within this decision are not subject to appeal in accordance with the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014, Pub. L. No. 113-76, 128 Stat. 5 (2014). Section 431 of the Act directs that the 1993 and 2012 legislation establishing the 36 CFR 215 (post-decisional appeals) and 36 CFR 218 (pre-decisional objections) processes “shall not apply to any project or activity implementing a land and resource management plan...that is categorically excluded...under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).”

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This project may be implemented immediately

CONTACT

For further information, contact Ben Lara at the Salida Ranger District, telephone (719) 530-3955.



RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL AND DATE OF DECISION

James Pitts

Date

Salida District Ranger

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