

2530 0029

247

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Toiyabe NF P.O. Box 3940
Tonopah RD 1400 S. Erie Main Street
Tonopah, NV 89049-3940
(702) 482-6286

ITEM 96

Reply to: 7710

Date: November 4, 1993

Ron Hess
Nevada Bureau of Mines & Geology
University of Nevada-Reno
Reno, NV 89557-0088

Dear Mr. Hess

In cooperation with Nye County, the United States Forest Service, Tonopah Ranger District is considering re-opening the Jefferson Canyon road east of the town of Round Mountain. This project would entail both reconstruction and construction using a D-6 or D-7 equivalent tractor to repair approximately 1/4 mile of washed-out portions of the roadway. Construction activity would occur following spring run-off in 1994.

The Jefferson Canyon Road (US Forest Service Road 010), up until 1983, provided access to the historic Jefferson townsite and a through route across the Toquima Mountain Range from the town of Round Mountain to Meadow Canyon. Jefferson City is an abandoned National Historic Register eligible mining town. Although some buildings have been recently vandalized, much of the town is in better condition than many other abandoned ghost towns in Nevada. It is a recognized, highly important historic mining district. In addition, prehistoric dwelling sites occur within the canyon and the proximity of the Jefferson Road.

Portions of this road, in the main Jefferson Canyon drainage, were obliterated by flood damage in 1983. That damage was not repaired, and between 1983 and 1990, this road was blocked about two miles downstream from the Jefferson townsite. During this time, travelers began detouring by way of mine exploration roads, switchbacking over the hillside south of Jefferson Canyon. This was a hazardous route, neither safe nor recommended for public use.

During the summer of 1990, Round Mountain Gold Corporation was authorized to re-open that lower portion of the road to the Jefferson townsite in order to conduct mineral exploration. At the conclusion of their exploratory drilling, Round Mountain Gold Corporation reclaimed most of the historic switchback exploration roads on the south side of Jefferson Canyon. These roads had been used as precarious routes across the range to Jefferson Summit.

Currently, public access for high clearance vehicle travel on the Jefferson Canyon Road is open up-canyon to the Jefferson townsite, and four-wheel drive vehicles can travel from Jefferson Summit down-canyon on the original road to within about a half-mile of the townsite. Through access is prevented by

several hundred feet of complete road obliteration in two locations within this half-mile length.

In September 1992 Nye County Commissioners expressed an interest in re-opening the Jefferson Canyon Road to through access, petitioning that this is an important historic route to Monitor Valley from Smoky Valley. Although the re-opening of this road is not a priority for the Toiyabe National Forest (since primary arterial, well-maintained cross-range routes are located to the north via the Moores Creek Road and to the south via the Manhattan Road), it was agreed that the Forest Service would consider allowing Nye County to perform environmentally acceptable repair of the washed out portions of the road. This would allow through access, but only for high-clearance all-wheel drive vehicles. It would not be the intent to up-grade the entire route to be suitable for sedan traffic.

The proposed road repairs and/or realignments are located 1) at the east end of the main townsite (SE4NW4 of Section 13, Township 10 North, Range 44-1/2 East) where approximately 150 feet of the original road is now an active stream channel, and 2) about 1/2 mile upstream from the townsite at the confluence of Grassy Canyon with Jefferson Canyon (NE4NE4 of Section 13, Township 10 North, Range 44-1/2 East) where new alignment/construction is necessary to connect a dead-end exploration road from the canyon's south bench across the stream just above the confluence to a point upstream from several hundred feet of obliterated road (this new construction would be about 1/4 mile in length).

Current Alternatives include:

1. No action (primitive access is provided to Jefferson Townsite)
2. Rebuilding the actual historic route which is now active stream bed--the stream would have to be returned to the old channels and extensive road-fill would be necessary. Subjection to flood events would remain a hazard.
3. Rechannel the stream at the lower location at the east end of the townsite, placing the necessary road fill along the 150 length and armoring the stream-side of the road-bed with heavy rock rip-rap. Realign and construct 1/4 mile of new road out of the canyon bottom at and above the confluence with Grassy Canyon.
4. Rebuild the recently disturbed/created alignment which lies immediately above the historic roadway (now stream channel) at the lower location. Realign and construct 1/4 mile of new road out of the canyon bottom at and above the confluence with Grassy Canyon.
5. Reclose the road below Jefferson townsite, in the vicinity of Slaughter House Canyon, and at Jefferson Summit, eliminating about four miles of Forest Road 110 and virtually all access to Jefferson Canyon.

Note that inherent to any alternative selected that would re-open the road is the premise that this route is not on an active maintenance schedule by the Forest Service. Primitive maintenance only would be provided. It would not be suitable for sedan traffic and could, in fact, provide hazards to all-wheel vehicular travel. An option, acceptable to the Forest Service, would be for Nye County to apply for an easement and include this route on their maintenance schedule.

Preliminary issues and concerns include:

1. Integrated management of the Jefferson Canyon mining district area--What impacts will occur to the historic site as a result of improved access and

increased travel? What protection or restoration measures will be necessary?
What type and extent of informational signing will be necessary?

2. Actual disturbance or destruction of historic and/or prehistoric features by heavy equipment.
3. Susceptibility of the existing route, as well as the reconstruction or realignments, to future flood events.
4. Destruction of streamside habitat.
5. Presence of sensitive plant or animal species.
6. Public need.
7. Cost versus benefit.
8. Safety of travelers.
9. Primitive maintenance level or Nye County easement and maintenance.

Nye County is preparing a formal proposal to open the Jefferson Canyon road to through traffic. Nye County officials have met with Tonopah Ranger District personnel on several occasions to discuss this proposal.

When Nye County presents its formal proposal, the Tonopah Ranger District will determine, which is the best alternative. To do that it needs to assess what additional concerns or issues there might be and what mitigating measures would be required?

Please send your comments on this proposal to Bud Henderson, Tonopah Ranger District, P.O. Box 3940, Tonopah, NV 89049 or call 702-482-6286.

Sincerely,



David R. Grider
DISTRICT RANGER