

Custer County Commissioners  
USFS – Roads  
Special Meeting  
April 10, 2025

The Special meeting with the Salmon/Challis National Forest Supervisor- Heather DeGeest was called to order at 10:00 AM in the large meeting room at the Challis Field Office. Attending were Commissioner Chairman Randy Corgatelli, Commissioner Gordon Vaden, Commissioner Will Naillon, R&B Supt. Brandon Jones and Deputy Clerk Tina Hawkins representing Custer County. Heather DeGeest, Josh Milligan, Lance Stavast, Mike Carrol, Chris Waverek, Jeff Huntzman, Nick Shade and Shane Warrington representing the Forest Service. Introductions were done around the table to help get acquainted.

Maintenance Plan Schedule: Mike began with an explanation of the 2025 Maintenance Plan schedule. The main forest traffic within Custer County is on Custer Motorway/Yankee Fork Road, Morgan Cr./Panther Cr. Road, and the Boundary Cr. Road. They have a total of 4000 miles of forest system roads. About 1000 miles are service roads and are closed until needed, but 2000 miles are level 2 roads, suitable for 4x4 vehicles. They will mainly be doing surface grading and ditch work on these roads. The USFS Road Crew currently has 9-person road crew, and have a good amount of equipment. I.e: backhoe, dozer, grader (just broke down) roller, excavator, loader and truck. Due to their remote location the Salmon/Challis NF has the largest FS road crew in the state. Mike has worked out a trade with SNRA to use their grader as they have no staff to operate it. The main forest access roads in the Lost River RD have all been turned over to Lost River Highway District. I.e: Trail Cr. Road, Copper Basin Road, Double Springs Road, Pass Creek Road, and North Fork Road. The connector road from Copper Basin to Antelope Cr. is scheduled to be worked on this summer. It will be a major job as there are 100's of culverts that need to be replaced. The majority of Forest Service road use is now by UTV's. They seem to like the rougher level two roads. Jeff let the group know that originally it was logging stumpage that paid for USFS road building. Road costs have risen so high now that timber sales no longer earn enough to do so. Will inquired about maintenance on the lower 4 miles of the Jordan Cr. Road up the Yankee Fork? The stream has jumped out of the original channel and is washing across the road. There are two plugged culverts that are causing the problem and without being cleaned out the road will wash out again this year. Shane will look into the matter.

Cooperative Road Maintenance Agreement: Mike discussed the "Schedule A" agreements that are valid for 5 years. Currently they have them with Custer Co. Road & Bridge on Custer Motorway/Yankee Fork, Morgan Cr. Road, Leaton Gulch and some roads in the Stanley area. Brandon verified that he maintains 65 road miles under Schedule A agreements with the USFS. The current agreement has expired and they are working on getting another completed. No funding changes hands for the Schedule A's, but supplemental agreements for special projects can involve funding. Last year it was used for cattleguard replacements. Brandon asked just what the USFS requirements were for road maintenance. Mike explained "Roads must be in a condition to be safely driven by prudent drivers". He agreed that the County road conditions were well above the USFS expectations. With funding being cut all around, Brandon wanted it to be understood that the Road Department may not be able to maintain all the miles of roads as well as they have in the past. The "good neighbor" sharing program the County and USFS have enjoyed in the past will continue. Heather let the group know that the County Sheriff can request emergency assistance from the USFS in emergency situations. Mike then explained the USFS rules on plowing of snow. They are actually prohibited from plowing snow and they do not provide

access to private lands. They can authorize private landowners to build their own access routes. Brandon explained that adding miles to the Schedule A agreement does not automatically increase the amount of funding the R&B Department receives. There is one pot of fuel tax money that is evenly divided between all the road departments. More miles at times will just cut down the percentage a Dept. receives per mile. Mike has been able to utilize some disaster funding for the Swamp Cr. Road in the Stanley area through the Wapiti Fire funds. He then reviewed the changes in cost for the Custer Motor Way improvements. The original cost for the project was 3 to 4 million, that has now risen to 17 million. This price increase has pared down the project to fixing two places along Mill Creek in 2026. The other improvements such as turn outs may be built by the local road crews instead of being contracted out. Will inquired about working with the Tribes to get fish mitigation monies to rebuild bridges and culverts? Heather felt a joint conversation with the USFS/Custer County/Indian Tribes/Trout Unlimited could be beneficial for everyone. All agreed.

Bayhorse Area Roads: Mike is working on forestry road improvements in the Bayhorse drainage. The NEPA work is completed for this project but the funding is still to be obtained. Turnouts are needed for the large vehicles that use this area. The County and USFS are working on the purchase of a screen plant that will enable them to make surface materials. Nick inquired about who would purchase the plant? The County would buy the screen plant, but the materials could/would be sold to the USFS for their road work, and enable the purchase to be made. It will be a great mutual benefit. With the mandated 25% increase in timber sales for the next 4 to 5 years, there will be other roads that need surface materials as well.

Upper Challis Creek Roads: Mike explained the plans to rebuild the road above Mosquito Flats Reservoir and replace the bridge that failed, when funds allow in 2028. The IDP&R is working on maintaining the motorized trails that begin at the end of the road.

Mike and Brandon agreed that they will continue to do the Schedule A Road Maintenance agreements as before, and that USFS maintenance standards will apply. The USFS is still the owner of the road, even though the county does the annual maintenance.

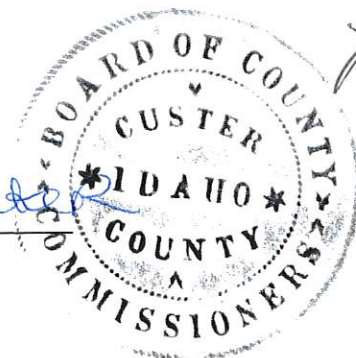
Final items of interest briefly discussed were:

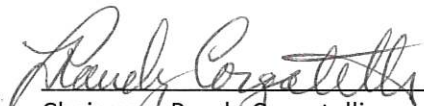
- 1) Range improvement materials being requested by permittees.
- 2) Vacant grazing allotments. (Currently 21 vacant due to no access, small size and NEPA)
- 3) Allowing limited chainsaw use in the wilderness to enable clearing of the trail system.

All attending agreed that another meeting should be scheduled for next month with Range as the topic. A tour of the Salmon River Timber Product Mill in Salmon, Idaho was also suggested. Meeting adjourned at 12:01 PM.



Attest: Clerk Lura Baker



  
Chairman, Randy Corgatelli