



File Code: 2350
Date: December 4, 2018

SAMUEL GREEAR
BLACK HILLS TRAILS
PO BOX 661
STURGIS, SD 57785

Dear Mr. Greear:

Thank you for submitting a proposal using our new Trail Proposal Process. Since your proposal includes six different trails on three Districts, we elected to review each as individual new trail proposals. In addition to your six trail proposals, we received a similar proposal from the Ridge Riders for the addition of the Tinton Trail system.

Each trail proposal was reviewed by the host District and then by a Forest wide leadership and recreation team. We have accepted two trail proposals to move forward at this time. There is an opportunity to work together on at least two of the other proposals to mitigate for significant modifications before we continue.

The Tinton Trail System proposal on the Northern Hills Ranger District, as proposed by the Ridge Riders of the Black Hills, is one of the two trail projects we will move forward with. This proposal, although similar to yours, was chosen because it reflected the most recent proposed route that the forest has invested resources in. Ridge Riders of the Black Hills also holds a large permitted annual event on the proposed route. Steve Kozel, the District Ranger anticipates working on the NEPA process this winter.

The Northern Hills Ranger District reviewed the Little Elk Trail proposal and has decided that this proposal needs further information before we can accept it. Please work with District staff identified by Ranger Kozel to identify needed re-routes and associated facilities to analyze in the NEPA process. I would also request you identify what resources BHT, or other partners, would provide to assist with planning and implementation of this proposal.

Your three Mystic Ranger District proposals for mountain bike trails have been reviewed and evaluated. Discussions over the previous years have revealed numerous benefits and issues to resolve regarding the inclusion of Storm Mountain, Victoria Lake and Shank's Quarry as system trails. Given our staff capacity, budget constraints, and work on several other trail additions, the District has elected to accept working on inclusion of the Shank's Quarry proposal in FY 2019. This proposed system trail was selected as it will likely be the quickest to implement. There are existing required infrastructure such as trailheads and parking available, and this system has the opportunity to provide the addition of mixed-use trails. As you know, the Forest Service cannot designate trails through private property that do not have a public easement. Therefore, we are asking BHTA to work with the Mystic Ranger District staff to resolve public/private land conflicts. We will need to complete NEPA prior to finalizing this project in FY 2019.



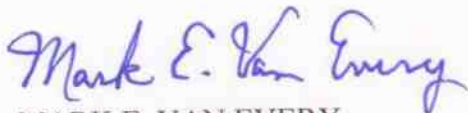
At this time, the Forest will defer action on the Storm Mountain and Victoria Lake trail proposals. Storm and Victoria have significant merits and broad community support including proximity to Rapid City, trails for all levels of expertise, looped systems and sustainable trail surfaces. These two proposals have multiple issues that will take time to work through, and thus will take more time to add as system trails. Issues include routes through documented cultural sites, crossing private property, permitting bicycles on the historic Flume Trail where they are currently not authorized, crossing a major highway, fence crossings in the Foster Gulch area, lack of parking, and potential conflict with big game winter range. We are hopeful that many of these issues can be resolved using proposed reroutes and other mitigation strategies. I ask that you work with the Mystic District staff to identify specific mitigation measures on these two proposals. We would request that once mitigation measures are identified that the proposal be resubmitted.

The Paha Sapa Trail, on Hell Canyon Ranger District, was decommissioned as part of a Forest Plan decision. My understanding is that this decision was made because the Forest elected to support two other northerly running trails that ran the length of the Black Hills (Mickelson and Centennial). Many parts of the Paha Sapa have been obliterated by road construction and/or timber harvest activities over the years, though I have heard that portions of the proposed trail still exist.

I do not support reconstructing the Paha Sapa Trail in large part because we are providing similar opportunities with the Mickelson and Centennial Trails. We are also currently evaluating the proposed Rushmore Connector Trail which, if approved, would provide additional non-motorized trail opportunities in the area. The Forest Plan limits the number of Trail miles in Norbeck Wildlife Preserve which contributed to the Decision to construct the Centennial Trail and decommission the Paha Sapa Trail.

In summary, we will move forward on working on the Tinton Trail System and the Shanks Quarry Trails and ask that measures be taken by your group to remedy concerns we have about the others. Once these concerns are mitigated, we will gladly accept the revised proposals for further consideration. In addition, we continue to dedicate staff time and resources to adding the Deadman Trail system outside Sturgis, the Rushmore Connector trail system proposal, and a new trail proposal for the Devil's Bathtub in Spearfish Canyon.

Sincerely,



MARK E. VAN EVERY
Forest Supervisor

cc: Steve Kozel, Tracy Anderson, Nancy Veres, Jerry Krueger, Anne Apodaca, Ralph Adam