

News Release



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News Release USDA Forest Service Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest

March 9, 2006
Release: Immediate
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U.S. Forest Service Plans to Combine Offices in Blairsville and Blue Ridge

Blairsville, Georgia—Alan Polk, District Ranger for the U.S. Forest Service, announced plans today to combine two district offices, located in Blue Ridge and Blairsville, Georgia, into one office facility currently located in Blairsville. The decision is the result of a forest-wide assessment of facilities to decrease overhead costs and increase funding for forest management.

“With the rising cost of office space and the decreasing size of our workforce, we have determined that combining these two offices into one would save money and make our operations more efficient,” said Ranger Polk. “This decision will enable the Forest Service to use these savings to more effectively manage the forest resources.”

The U.S. Forest Service office in Blue Ridge, known as the Toccoa Ranger District office, is a leased office building located on Highway 515 and currently houses about 11 full time employees. The U.S. Forest Service office in Blairsville, called the Brasstown Ranger District office, is owned by the federal government and is also located on Highway 515. The Blairsville office currently houses about 17 full time employees. The two offices are located about 20 minutes and 18 miles apart.

Ranger Polk said, “It was a difficult decision for the leadership of the Forest Service to move out of a community that we have been a part of for over 70 years. We studied a variety of alternatives to ensure that we considered every aspect of this potential move.” The estimated savings to the

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government of this decision is approximately \$840,000 over then next five years.

“We have friends and neighbors in the Blue Ridge area and many of our employees and their families live in the area. After this move takes place, the Forest Service is committed to maintain a solid presence in Blue Ridge. By exploring new ways to work with local organizations and businesses our goal is to continue providing information and quality customer service to the people of Blue Ridge,” he said.

Although there is no specific date identified for the move, Polk feels that the move will take place sometime toward the end of this year. “We still have details to work out,” says Polk, “but we will keep the community informed at every step.”

For additional information, contact District Ranger Alan Polk at (706) 745-6928 or Deputy District Ranger Tina Tilley at (706) 631-3031. For information on the forest-wide facilities assessment, contact Karen McKenzie at (770) 297-3061.

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