

# DECISION MEMO

## Appalachian Trail Relocation at Stover Creek, Shelter Replacement, and Mouldering Privy Installation Project

USDA Forest Service, Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, Toccoa Ranger District, Fannin County, Georgia

### 1. DECISION, and Purpose and Need

I have decided to proceed with activities near Stover Creek in Fannin County Georgia to (1) relocate approximately one-half mile of the Appalachian Trail. Activities include removing limbs, saplings, wood and rock debris, and preparing a trail tread by constructing steps, water bars, dips, out sloping of the tread, cribbing, and other standard and customary Forest Service trail construction practices. (2) Fix two stream crossings by placement of stepping stones and possibly a single-track trail bridge. (3) Relocate and rebuild a trail Shelter, which will also include placement of a mouldering privy for human waste management, 4-6 primitive campsites, and a short spur trail to a spring for water. And, (4) rehab the abandoned Appalachian Trail and existing shelter site by placing brush, logs, rocks and/or other loose native material in the abandoned treadway and shelter site, and possibly sowing a one-time application of Annual Ryegrass to establish initial groundcover.

The purpose for this project is to (1) provide a more environmentally friendly method of backcountry sanitation for trail users, thus reducing health risks associated with exposure to human waste as well as reducing potential water quality impacts to streams, and, (2) move the trail and the associated shelter away from fragile streamside environments and steep grades and put them on more sustainable locations, thus reducing sedimentation runoff into Stover Creek and its feeder streams. This decision will implement direction in the Chattahoochee-Oconee Forests' Plan as outlined in Goal 31 "Provide...high quality...environmentally sustainable (recreation opportunities)" (p. 2-31), Goal 34 "Trails do not adversely affect soil and water resources." (p. 2-32), Management Prescription 11 Riparian Corridors (Desired Condition), and Management Prescription 3.C Ed Jenkins National Recreation Area (Desired Condition).

### 2. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Toccoa Ranger District mailing list of individuals and groups known to have an interest in the management of National Forest lands was utilized. Scoping responses did not identify any issues that were not considered by the Interdisciplinary Team, i.e., protection of cultural resources, identifying any protected plant and animal species (PETS), soil and water quality protection, and visual quality guidelines.

### 3. REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE DECISION

These actions do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, and therefore, are categorically excluded from documentation in an

environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The category, identified in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 “Environmental Policy and Procedures” Section 31.2, is Category #1, “Construction and Reconstruction of Trails”.

## **FINDING OF NO EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES**

The District interdisciplinary team screened these actions for the presence of any one of the extraordinary circumstances identified in FSH 1909.15 Section 30.3. No extraordinary circumstances were found to exist that might cause the action to have significant effects on the quality of the human environment.

### **4. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS**

Forest Plan Consistency – I find that these actions are consistent with the management direction and management requirements of the Forest Plan for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest, as amended.

Cultural Resources – The actions will not adversely affect any sites listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will they cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historic resources. (See project file for CRS results and findings)

Endangered Species - Implementing this decision will not adversely affect threatened or endangered species or result in loss of any other species’ viability, or create significant trends towards Federal listing of the species under the Endangered Species Act. (See BE in project file for findings)

Water Quality - Water quality standards will be adhered to, including Georgia’s Forest Best Management Practices (BMP’s). Direction in the Forest Service Trails Management Handbook (Ch. 2, Sec 2.31b) will be followed to further minimize potential off-site impacts.

### **5. IMPLEMENTATION**

On-ground implementation of this project is planned to begin during the winter of 2005-2006. Regular inspections of the project site will be made by the Project leader during the implementation phase to ensure that appropriate standards are being met. Forest Service personnel and Georgia Appalachian Trail Club members will monitor the project area on a regular basis thereafter to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. (See also the rehab comments in #1 above)

### **6. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW, or APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES**

This decision is not appealable (36 CFR 215.8). These actions are not subject to notice and comment (36 CFR 215.4). This decision can be implemented immediately (36 CFR 215.10).

**7. CONTACT PERSON**

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**8. RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL**

/s/Alan Polk

December 15, 2005

**ALAN POLK**  
District Ranger  
Toccoa Ranger District

**DATE**