

**Decision Memo
For Turner Creek Road
(F.S.R. # 57)
Decommissioning/ Soil and Water Restoration Project**

USDA, Forest Service
Chattooga River Ranger District
Chattahoochee National Forest

White County, Georgia

DECISION and PURPOSE and NEED

I have decided to decommission approximately 1.5 miles of the lower unpaved surface and illegal spurs of Forest Service Rd. 57 (locally referred to as Turner Creek Road) to its terminus. The decommissioning activities would begin .5 miles east of Kellum Valley Road, located in southwest White County, Georgia and found on the CowRock quadrangle map (see attached map).

Turner Creek road is currently maintained by the Forest Service as a Level II road. Years of use and poor road design have lead to entrenchment, thus creating a situation where the road can no longer be maintained. As a result of these conditions a portion of the road is deeply entrenched, scarred and heavily eroded. These conditions make sections of the road all but impassable and unusable for most passenger vehicles. However, illegal Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) and All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use is increasing, further impacting the resource.

It has been determined that Forest Service Rd. 57 does not meet current Forest Service Standards for its level of use. Therefore, it does not meet Forest Plan goals, objectives, and forest wide standards. The following Forest Plan goals are applicable to the issues associated with the Turner Creek Rd.:

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| Goal 24 | Maintain or restore soil productivity and quality. |
| Goal 34 | Trails do not adversely affect soil and water. |
| Goal 47 | Provide a transportation system that supplies the public, the Forest Service, and other user's safe, environmentally sustainable, equitable, financially sound and operationally effective access to roaded portions of the forest. |
| Goal 48 | Roads do not adversely affect soil and water resources |
| Goal 49 | Close and restore unneeded roads and motorized trails |

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Beginning in June of 2007, a project identified in the Schedule of Proposed Actions as “06-116 - Turner Creek Rd. (F.S.R. #57) Decommissioning” was listed for the Chattooga Ranger District in the Schedule of Proposed Actions for the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests. The Schedule was made available to the public via the Forest Service website.

Scoping letters were sent out to the Chattooga Ranger District’s list of persons, agencies and organizations known to be interested in projects of this type. Only one response was received:

Mr. Elmer Butler (16 July 2007) stated, “*He was in favor of the project and wanted it to begin immediately.*”

REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

Routine administrative, maintenance, and other associated actions normally do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. These actions have been determined by the Chief of the Forest Service to be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), unless extraordinary circumstances exist. A Decision Memo and Project File are not required for this action, which is identified in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 “Environmental Policy and Procedures”, Chapter 30, Section 31.1(b) (Section 31.12), Category # 4, as follows:

“Repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries.”

We have determined that no extraordinary circumstances exist that may cause the project to have significant effects. Specifically:

- Ground disturbing activities will not take place on steep slopes. The canopy will be retained in areas along this road that are greater than 45% slope. Appropriate mitigation measures will be applied such as prompt revegetation of exposed soils and installation of erosion control structures. Similar past projects in this district were determined to have no significant soil-related impacts.
- No actions will take place in a floodplain, wetland, or municipal watershed.
- This area is not within a current inventoried roadless area.
- The project is not within a research natural area.

- The cumulative effects of this project combined with others in the foreseeable future will not be significant.
- This project will not involve the use of herbicides and will not involve the construction of any temporary use or low standard roads.

FINDINGS OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

The determination that no significant impacts exist was based on the following (consideration included, but was not limited to, the extraordinary circumstances identified in FSH 1909.15, Section 30.3):

- This project will not adversely affect protected, endangered, threatened or sensitive (PETS) plant or animal species or any critical habitat. No new ground disturbance will take place. A Biological Evaluation (BE) was prepared for this project by the Zone Wildlife Biologist, August 2007.
- All project areas occur on lands designated as within Management Prescription 4.F. by the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests (Forest Plan).
- The project area does not contain any congressionally designated wilderness, wilderness study area or National Recreation Area. The project areas do not contain any Research Natural Area, inventoried roadless area or unallocated lands.
- No cultural, historic or archaeological site will be affected; this planned action is not disturbing any new areas and is an action that is categorically excluded from the compliance review process procedures under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Memorandum of Understanding (1994), Project Types # 5 and # 6). (Report on file)
- Public health or safety will not be adversely affected.
- The project area does not have any other circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly effect the environment.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

State-approved Best Management Practices (BMP's) will be met and this project will comply with the Clean Water Act.

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.

This project complies with the four (4) requirements of the National Forest Management Act related to vegetation manipulation (36 CFR 219.27(b)):

1. It is best suited to the multiple-use goals established for the area based on Forest-wide direction. This suitability is based on the potential environmental, biological, cultural resource, aesthetic, engineering, and economic impacts.
2. This action has not been chosen primarily due to cost considerations, although this was taken into account.
3. The proposed action will avoid permanent impairment of site productivity and ensure conservation of soil and water resources.
4. The action will provide the desired effects on water quantity and quality, wildlife and fish habitat, woody regeneration, forage production, recreation uses, aesthetic values, and resource yields.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this decision may begin immediately.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8 (a)(4), this decision is not subject to appeal.

CONTACT PERSON

For additional information concerning this decision, contact John D. Westbrook by phone at 706-754-6221. Ext. #150

SIGNATURE OF RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

/s/ DAVID W. JENSEN

David W. Jensen
District Ranger
Chattooga River Ranger District
Attachments – Project Area Maps

August 13, 2007

Date