



File Code: 1950/2300

Date: February 6, 2008

Dear Forest Stakeholder:

The Oconee Ranger District is inviting you to comment on the following proposed actions on the Ocmulgee River Trail (ORT) and the Town Creek All Terrain Vehicle Trail (TCATV) in Jasper and Greene County, respectively (maps attached). Both projects would improve safety, trail conditions, water and wet area crossings, and riding experience and would reduce soil erosion. On the ORT, several user created trail segments will be incorporated into the trail system to provide trail loops for horseback riders. Additionally, on the ORT, some existing trail segments will be relocated and unauthorized user-created trails will be blocked and repaired as necessary.

TOWN CREEK ATV TRAIL

The primary objective of the TCATV project is to eliminate or lessen the adverse effects on the soil and water resources on and adjacent to the trail, while providing a safe and quality riding experience for ATV, motorcycle and bike enthusiasts. Specific actions would include:

- Drainage crossings, areas with puddling, or areas with standing water, will be drained, graded, and/or hardened. Hardening of surfaces will be done using rock, gravel or other materials that will lessen the impact of ATVs/motorcycles on rutted wet eroding surfaces. For areas where hardening alone will not be effective, the wet areas will be crossed using puncheons or boardwalks.
- User-created “wallowing areas” near the trail will be fenced or otherwise blocked off to avoid further damage to those areas. These areas will be seeded to allow rehabilitation of the damaged areas. Unauthorized user created trails will also be obliterated or blocked and repaired as needed.
- Fencing or other methods will also be used to direct traffic to the trailhead and discourage users from entering the trail from unauthorized locations along the trail.
- Routine maintenance of the trail system, e.g. grading and repair of waterbars, will also occur.

The existing trail consists of 2 loops totaling 16.1 miles. This project involves reconstruction and maintenance of the existing trail; no new construction is included. This project also will not upgrade, widen, or modify the trail to increase either the level or types of use by ATVs.

OCMULGEE RIVER TRAIL

The ORT consists of four trail segments: Kinnard Creek Trail, Wise Creek Trail, Rush Creek Trail, and Ocmulgee River Trail. The primary objectives of this project are to improve the existing trail system by configuring several loop trails, reconstructing and/or relocating existing trail segments and water crossings, and blocking off and repairing unauthorized user-created trails in the vicinity. The trail presently has few loops to allow users to return to areas where



they started without simply backtracking on the same trail segment, lessening the overall experience for riders and increasing wear on the trail. Existing user-created trails would be incorporated as appropriate. New segments of trail would be added as needed. Some segments of existing trail may require relocation. An additional 8 miles would be added to the 21 miles of existing trail. Wet area crossings would be improved by the use of bridges and surface hardening using gravel or similar materials. This project would also obliterate or block unauthorized user-created trails and repair damage where needed. The result would be a safe and quality riding experience for horseback riders.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, scoping is being conducted on these projects and your comments are requested. It is anticipated that the activities described fall within Category 31.2 (1) of Forest Service Handbook 1909.15: Construction and reconstruction of trails. Under this category, the decision would be documented in a Decision Memo and would not be subject to appeal (36 CFR 215.11(e)). Portions of these projects involve routine maintenance that falls within Category 31.12 (1) of Forest Service Handbook 1909.15: Repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries. This category does not require documentation in a decision memo.

If you would like to comment on these projects or need additional information, please contact Jeff McDonald at (706) 485-1776, ext. 101, between 8:00 and 4:30, Monday through Friday. Comments can be sent or delivered to 1199 Madison Road, Eatonton GA 31024 or faxed to (706) 485-7141. Your comments must be postmarked or received by **March 6, 2008** and should include the following information:

1. Name, address, and (if desired) telephone number,
2. Title of the project (**TCATV and ORT Projects**), and
3. Specific facts or comments along with supporting information that I should consider in reaching a final decision.

I appreciate your interest in the Oconee National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Erin M. Bronk

ERIN M. BRONK
District Ranger