



File Code: 1950-1

Date: May 13, 2008

### Scoping Notice

#### Improved Recreational Access to Mountaintown Creek

Dear Interested Citizen:

The Conasauga Ranger District of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests is beginning the environmental analysis process for a proposal to address issues relating to public access in the Mountaintown Creek area.

We are seeking your input and encourage you to participate by providing your comments and suggestions on this proposal. Please provide your comments by **Monday, June 16, 2008**.

Scoping is an important “first step” of the environmental analysis process. Your comments will be used to identify relevant issues and help guide the environmental analysis. The environmental analysis of the proposal will be documented in an Environmental Assessment.

#### **Purpose and Need**

The 5.6-mile Mountaintown Creek Trail has been popular with hikers, anglers, and mountain bikers for many years. The Trail is located on an old logging road, which follows along the length of Mountaintown Creek. The upper portion of the Trail is fairly steep so the majority of the trail users begin at the top trailhead and hike, or mountain bike, to the bottom of the trail (see attached map).

The lower trailhead is located on National Forest System lands on Forest Road 394. The access to Forest Road 394 is from a private road (Hills Lake Road). In the late 1990's, the landowners installed a locked gate on Hills Lake Road, but still permitted general public foot traffic and mountain bike use. In the past few years, the landowners have prohibited public use of the access road through their property, effectively blocking public access to the lower trailhead on National Forest.

Mountaintown Creek is a recognized blue ribbon trout stream. The Forest Service, in partnership with Trout Unlimited, has installed and maintained numerous structures in the lower stream over the past 20 years to improve fish habitat. The Mountaintown Creek Trail has provided stream access to anglers, as well as hikers and mountain bike riders.

Additional access to Mountaintown Creek is provided by the Pinhoti Trail (FDT 3). The Pinhoti Trail is a long distance, through-trail that intersects the Mountaintown Creek Trail about 1.7 miles up from the southern terminus, then turns north and follows the Mountaintown Creek trail to Forest Road 64. Mountain bikes are currently not allowed on this section of the Pinhoti Trail.



The purpose and need for this project is to:

- Reestablish public access to Mountaintown Creek that bypasses private land in order to provide opportunities for dispersed recreational uses within the Mountaintown Creek drainage that includes fishing, hiking and mountain biking.

The project is consistent with Forest Plan Objective 31.1 which provides direction to “Provide a spectrum of high quality, nature-based recreation settings and opportunities that reflect the unique or exceptional resources of the Forest and the interests of the public on an environmentally sustainable, financially sound, and operationally effective basis. Adapt management of recreation facilities and opportunities as needed to shift limited resources to those opportunities.” The project complies with Forest Standards 127-designated trails and 128-management prescription compliance.

The project is located within the Pink Knob Roadless Area. It falls within and complies with Management Prescriptions 7.E.1 - Dispersed Recreation Areas and 12.A – Remote Backcountry Recreation. Trail design and construction will comply with plan direction for Management Prescription 11-Riparian Corridors.

### **Purpose and Need**

The following actions are proposed:

1. Construct an angler access trail to provide foot access to lower Mountaintown Creek. Use the existing Bear Creek parking area as a trailhead.
2. Route mountain bike riders and hikers traveling down the Mountaintown Creek Trail onto the Pinhoti Trail to provide them with a through trail opportunity. Change the management of this 1.5-mile section of the Pinhoti trail from hiking only to hiking and mountain biking.
3. Relocate about 0.6 miles of the Pinhoti Trail. Move the trail off of an old roadbed and onto a sideslope that is farther away from a perennial stream. Rehabilitate and close the old roadbed and construct the new trail section to a standard suitable for mountain biking.
4. Change the management of the Mountaintown Creek Trail downstream from its intersection with the Pinhoti trail from hiking and mountain biking to hiking only.

### **How to Provide Comments**

You may send your comments and suggestions as follows:

<b>Comment Format</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>
Hard Copy Letter	Conasauga Ranger District Attn: Mountaintown Creek Trail 3941 Highway 76 Chatsworth, GA 30705
E-mail	<a href="mailto:lrthomas@fs.fed.us">lrthomas@fs.fed.us</a> Subject: Mountaintown Creek Trail
FAX	706-695-1872

Phone	Larry Thomas, 706-695-6736, x 103
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The electronic versions of the information provided in this scoping letter are available on the Forest's website at: [www.fs.fed.us/conf/](http://www.fs.fed.us/conf/).

Please note that you will be sent further correspondence on this proposal **only** if you comment or request further correspondence.

If you have questions or need additional information concerning this project, please contact Larry Thomas, Resources Forester, at 706-695-6736 x 103.

Thank you for your interest in the management of the Conasauga Ranger District.

Sincerely,

*/S/ MICHELE H. JONES*

MICHELE H. JONES  
District Ranger

Enclosure 2: Maps