



News Release

U.S. Forest Service

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARIENVILLE RANGER DISTRICT REQUESTS PUBLIC COMMENTS ON IMPROVEMENTS TO MAPLE RUN, ELK COUNTY

Kane, Pa. – District Ranger Rob T. Fallon has initiated a new scoping period for public comments on proposed modifications to the watershed improvement project on Maple Run. An initial comment period in March of 2008 resulted in modifications to the initial proposals to reduce erosion and sediment deposition in the stream. Ranger Fallon would like comments on the changes to the initial proposal. Maple Run is near Forest Road (FR) 104 south of State Route 948 in Highland Township, Elk County. Additional information is available by contacting the Marienville Ranger District, or from the Forest website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/allegheny/projects/other/>.

The changes in road management and fish habitat work would:

- Remove from the Forest Service road system and decommission two segments of FR 104, totaling 0.1 mile, by removing the roadbed and culverts at the two Maple Run stream crossings, stabilizing and rehabilitation the stream banks (including the road approaches), and restoring the stream bed to allow fish passage. FR 134 would provide the only motor vehicle crossing on Maple Run;
- Add six new culverts to the Timberline ATV Trail C Loop to improve natural drainage and reduce soil erosion;
- Improve fish habitat (as in the original proposal) by adding logs and rock structures, and removing excessive sediment; and
- Remove from the Forest Service road system the remaining 1.5 miles of FR 104. This road would no longer be open to public use. Some segments would continue to function as part of the Timberline ATV Trail, while others would continue to provide restricted access to privately-held oil and gas developments. Maps are available from the district office, or on the Forest website.

The Forest Service is planning to document the proposed fish habitat work, including the stream crossings, using a category of exclusions under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(7), allowing for “modification or maintenance of stream or lake aquatic habitat improvement structures using native materials or normal practices”, and 36 CFR 220.6(f)(4), allowing for “repair and maintenance of roads, trails and landline boundaries”. The categorical exclusion is provided as a tool to improve planning efficiency (40 CFR 1500.4(p) and 1500.5(k)) where no significant adverse effects are anticipated based on past experience with this type of work.

The analysis will consider whether extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action warrant further consideration in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. Resource conditions that will be considered include: federally listed threatened or endangered species or Forest Service sensitive species; floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds; Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas; inventoried roadless areas; research natural areas; or American Indian and Alaska Native religious/cultural sites, archaeological sites, or historical properties/areas (Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 30, Section 30.3, Paragraph 2). The

mere presence of one or more of these conditions does not preclude use of the category. Rather, it is the degree of the potential effect that determines whether extraordinary circumstances exist.

Comments should be submitted, or postmarked if mailed, no later than November 17, 2008. Submit comments to: District Ranger Robert T. Fallon, Marienville Ranger District, Allegheny National Forest, HC 2 Box 130, Marienville, Pa. 16239, or via facsimile 814/927-2285. The office hours for hand-delivered comments or oral comments are from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic comments can be submitted to: comments-eastern-allegheny-marienville@fs.fed.us in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Microsoft Word (.doc). The contact for additional information is Kevin Treese at 814/927-5759.

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