

**DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Enoree Ranger District Administrative Site Reconstruction
USDA Forest Service – Region 8
Sumter National Forest
Enoree Ranger District
Newberry County, South Carolina**

The Enoree Ranger District, Sumter National Forest has decided to reconstruct the Enoree Ranger District administrative site (also known as the Indian Creek Office).

Reconstruction is needed to provide forest visitors and Enoree District employees with a safe and efficient facility. The need for the actions proposed are discussed more fully in the Purpose and Need section of the Environmental Assessment (EA), which is available for review at the Tyger District Office in Union and at the Forest Supervisor's Office in Columbia, South Carolina. In addition, the project has been posted on the *Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) for the Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests*, which also appears on the Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests internet website at:

http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa_project_exp.php?project=39938

The EA documents the analysis of two alternatives that were evaluated to determine how the purpose and need for the proposal could be met.

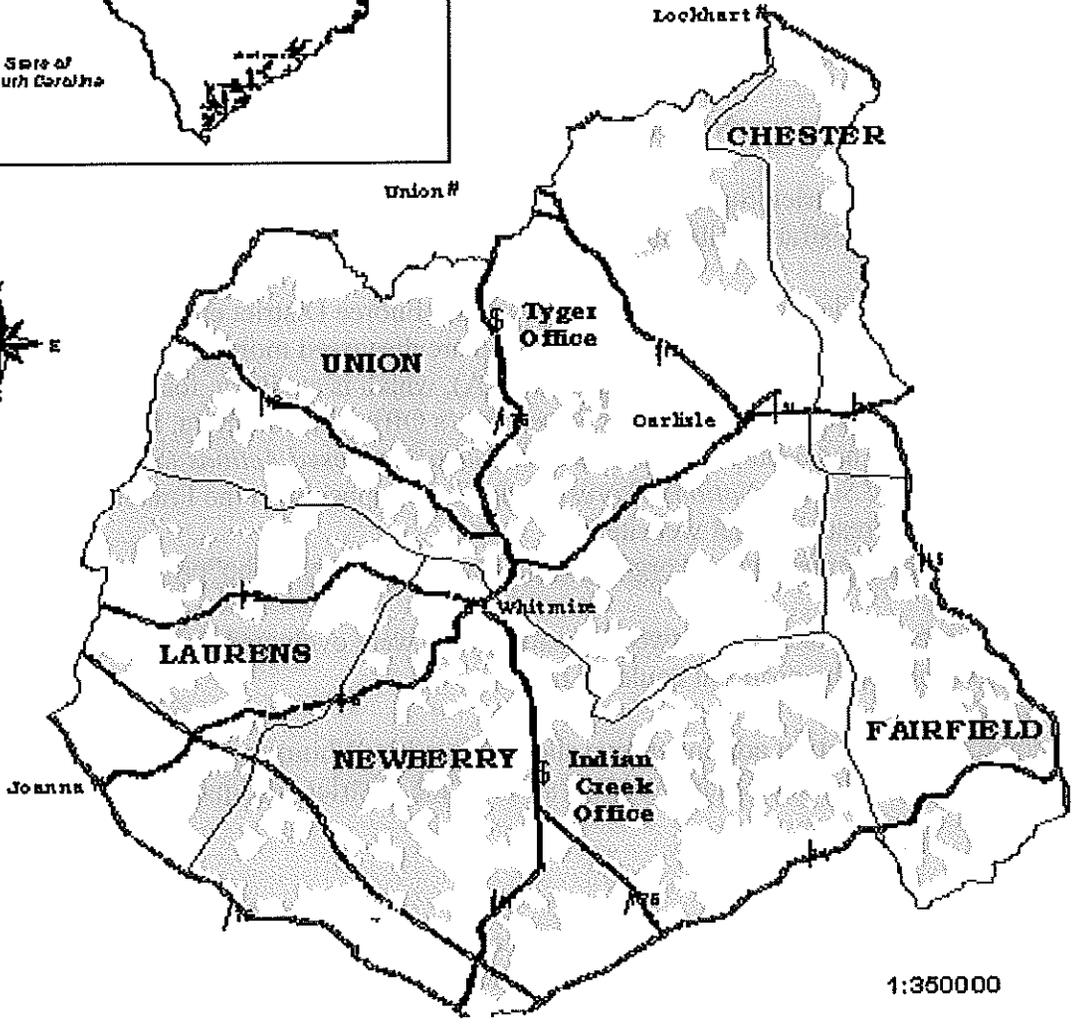
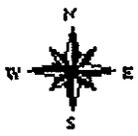
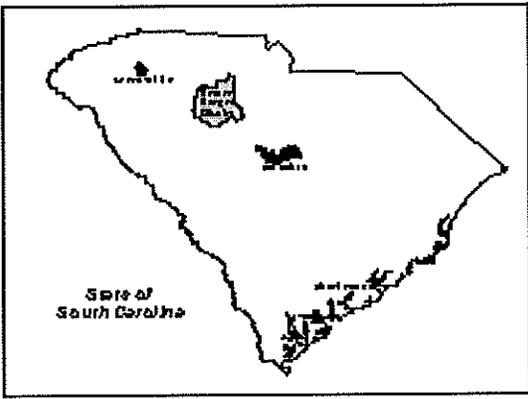
The Enoree Ranger District administrative site is located in Whitmire, SC along US Highway 176 (see page 3 for a location map) and will serve as the District headquarters.

Decision

I have decided to implement Alternative B. This alternative with design criteria and monitoring best meets the Purpose and Need as stated in the *Enoree Ranger District Administrative Site Reconstruction* Environmental Assessment (EA).

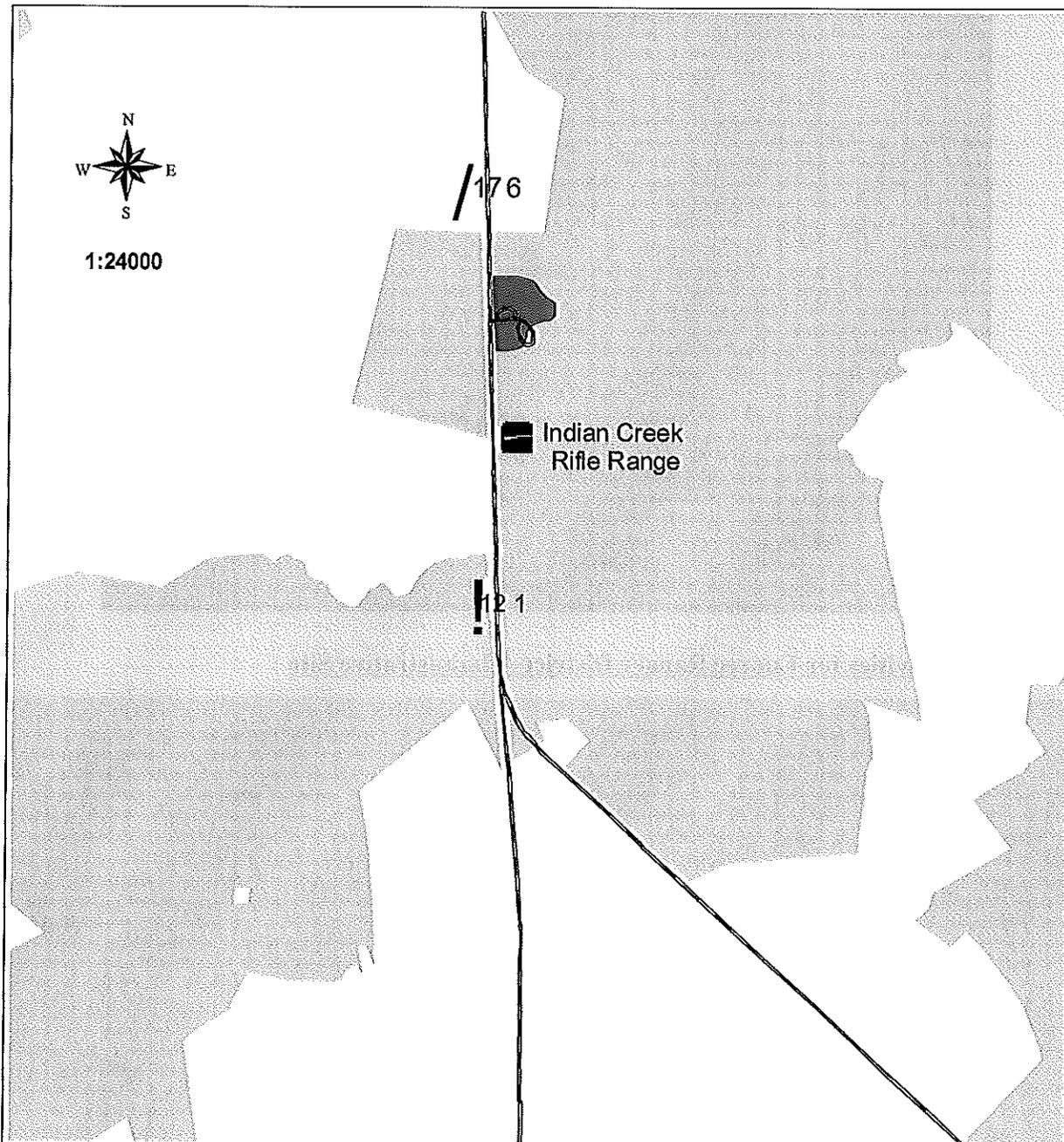
The decision involves reconstructing the existing Enoree Ranger District administrative facilities located six miles south of Whitmire in Newberry County, South Carolina. The existing site will be renovated to provide an 8,000 square foot office building to accommodate district staff; visitor area; 50-space employee parking; 10-space visitor parking; entrance road; water service; septic tank; drain field; outdoor covered pavilion; and electric service. Additionally, minor renovations will be done to the existing work center complex at a future time when funding becomes available. This will include additional outbuildings; 24-space fleet parking; updated fuel station; electric service; antenna tower; and minor site renovations as necessary within the existing fence line of the work center complex. This decision will combine the Tyger and Indian Creek offices, associated parking and storage structures at primarily one location.

Vicinity Map



-  County
-  District
-  Roads
-  National Forest

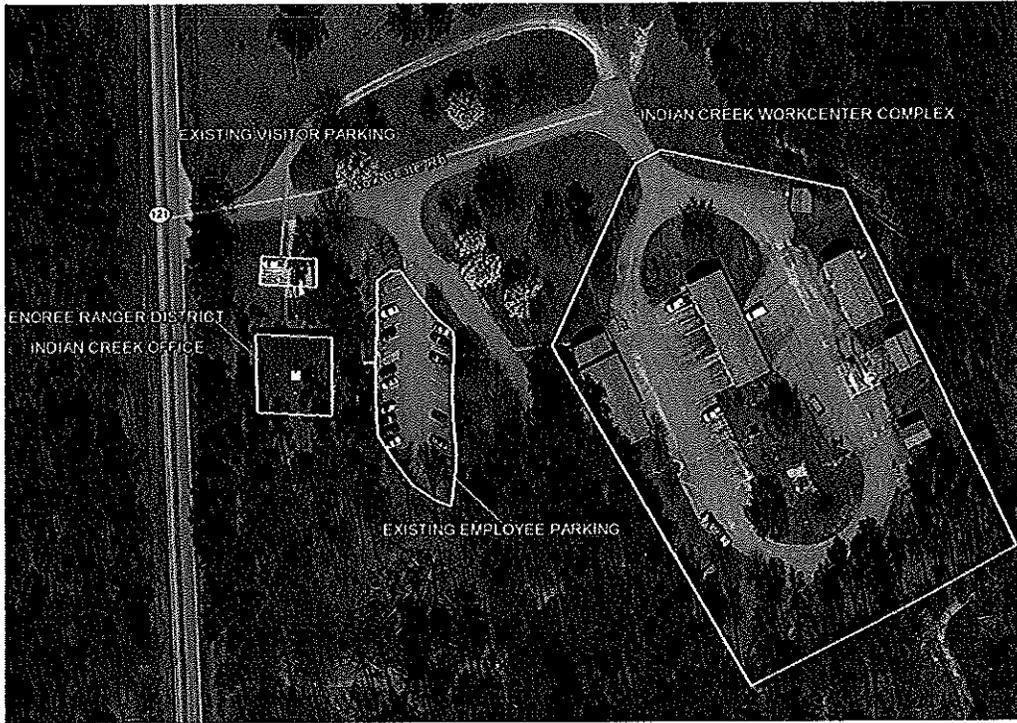
**Office Reconstruction
Enoree Ranger District
Sumter National Forest**



-  Roads
-  Administrative Site
-  District
-  National Forest

**Indian Creek Office
Enoree Ranger District
Sumter National Forest**

Enoree Ranger District



Proposed Activities for Enoree Ranger District Administrative Site



Connected Actions

Connected actions associated with the office construction include the following:

- Trees on site will be removed and sold on one to two acres to allow expansion or construction of the new office. The existing parking on site will be expanded and trees removed to accommodate the new facilities. Trees removed from the site may be sold via a timber sale.
- Minor excavation of the site will be needed to accommodate water drainage and office building and parking lot expansion.
- Temporary sanitation facilities and portable offices will be needed for employees currently housed at the Indian Creek Office site. Cost for these temporary facilities is not included in the construction cost estimate. The employees currently stationed at the Tyger Office will use the existing leased facilities until the renovations are completed.
- Erosion control measures, such as silt fences, temporary seeding and mulching will be used to limit off-site soil movement.
- Minor soil disturbance and clearing may be needed along existing utility lines adjacent to US Highway 176 to accommodate expansion of the office and parking lot.

Design Criteria

Standards set forth in the *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan Sumter National Forest* (USDA FS 2004a) will be followed. Potential erosion and sedimentation will be reduced by the use of South Carolina Best Management Practices for Forestry (BMPs) during clearing operations and soil disturbing activities.

The following design criteria are included with the action alternatives:

1. Construction noise and dust: Watering of ground disturbance areas will be performed to minimize construction-related dust. To mitigate the effect of construction noise on adjacent residences, construction work hours will be limited to Monday through Friday 7:30 am to 6:00 pm, unless otherwise approved.
2. To limit the spread and establishment of invasive plant species into the project area, all off-road heavy equipment used during project implementation will be free of noxious weeds and seeds or invasive exotic weeds and seeds before entering the project area. Additionally, all hand tools, (picks, shovels, etc.), must also be free of noxious weeds and seeds or invasive exotic weeds and seeds. The Forest Botanist will provide guidance for a wash down method that will be effective and practical.
3. Any reseeding or planting plans must first be approved by the Forest Botanist. Any landscaping will utilize native plants appropriate to the site conditions.

4. Any mulch, hay or rice straw brought to the site must be certified weed free.
5. Equipment refueling must be conducted in a manner that will ensure no contamination of soils or water will occur. Refueling cannot occur within 100 feet of any drainage or riparian area.
6. Project-generated garbage will be properly stored/disposed of on a daily basis. When operations are complete, any excess materials or debris will be removed from the work area.
7. All personnel involved in project implementation will receive a briefing from the project biologist to describe sensitive resources that may be encountered in the project area. Wildlife encountered during the course of project implementation should be given the opportunity to evacuate the site. Personnel will be reminded that harassment, handling or removal of wildlife from the site is not permitted.
8. Erosion control measures will include the establishment of silt fences, hay bales and/or brush barriers around construction areas to prevent sediment from moving off-site.
9. Exposed soils will be promptly disked, fertilized, seeded and mulched to prevent soil erosion.
10. Drainage structures will be used to limit concentrated water flow by dispersing water into the forested area.
11. Where possible, oaks and hickories will be retained on site for wildlife.
12. Mechanized equipment will avoid disturbing steep side slopes during construction operations wherever possible.
13. Potential impacts to scenic resources will be reduced by the implementation of ecological treatment standards for urban and naturally appearing landscape areas. Ecological treatment standards for the site will include 1) enhancement of fall color species through practices such as selective tree removal and the retention of visually attractive trees and shrubs; 2) creation of a park-like effect within the existing pine or pine-hardwood stand; 3) featuring flowering trees, character trees, and shrub species; and 4) maintenance of trees to enhance visual quality (e.g. limbing up trees, removal of leaning/bent over trees, variable density feathering, etc.). Additional ecological treatment standards will be applied to tree maintenance, road construction, and road maintenance.

Monitoring

Activities and effects will be monitored to ensure compliance with the Forest Plan. Monitoring is done through periodic site evaluations. Timber harvesting and logging operations will be supervised by a Forest Service timber sale administrator. Understory vegetation will be monitored on a periodic basis to determine management actions needed to ensure that the abundance and diversity of native herbaceous understory species is increased and improved. The project area will also be monitored for the introduction and spread of non-native invasive plant species.

Reasons for the Decision

Based upon the analysis presented in the EA, I have selected Alternative B, because it meets the purpose and need for the action. My reasons are:

1. This project will improve management efficiency by combining the Tyger and Indian Creek Ranger Stations, associated parking and storage structures at primarily one location.
2. Customer service will be improved by having one location with adequate staffing to meet all customer needs, without directing customers to another location for certain services.
3. Emergency fire response time and general management in the field will be more efficient by locating the office site at primarily one location.
4. Impacts to employees will be more equitable; all employees will relocate their offices into one administrative building.
5. Parking will be available for large recreational vehicles and for vehicles towing trailers. The parking will allow for better maneuverability for turning of trailers and recreation vehicles.
6. The Forest Service's credibility is maintained with employees, partners, local governments and the general public. We followed a well-defined process for site evaluations, which identified Alternative B as the preferred; and our process was completely open and transparent to all.
7. Though the new office site is physically located in Newberry County, it will continue to support all counties within the Forest Service proclamation boundary.
8. The Enoree Ranger District office will be easily assessable from a well-traveled highway, US Highway 176. A high level of customer service will be maintained.

9. The current Indian Creek Work center in Newberry County will continue to be used until funding becomes available to reconstruct and renovate the work center complex.

In making this decision, I also considered the Forest Plan and associated Environmental Impact Statement and the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) regulations. Other documents that I considered in making my decision were the Biological Evaluation.

Alternatives Considered

One other alternative was considered in detail in the Environmental Assessment.

No Action alternative. Only projects covered under previous environmental decisions would have been implemented along with ongoing recreational activities and facilities maintenance. This alternative would have retained the existing facilities in Union and Newberry Counties. This alternative does not meet the purpose and need of moving Enoree district employees into one office location.

Another alternative considered but not developed was locating all facilities at the Tyger Office and work center complex. While this facility could be renovated easily to accommodate all employees, this alternative was not considered because there would be the continued expense of a lease. The landlord was only willing to sell the work center.

Public Involvement

The District Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) conducted scoping with 30-Day Notice and Comment Period to identify the issues related to the Proposed Action. On August 4, 2012, a letter announcing the proposed project was sent to organizations and individual citizens on the Enoree Ranger District mailing list requesting their comments on the project. An article ran in *The Newberry Observer* on August 3, 2012 and the project also appeared in the Fall 2012 issue of the *Schedule of Proposed Actions for the Francis Marion and Sumter National Forest (SOPA)*, which also appears on the Francis Marion and Sumter National Forest's website at . No comments were received during the 30-Day Notice and Comment Period.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

Forest Plan Consistency

The selective alternative is consistent with the Forest Plan. Forest-wide goals, objectives, standards and management prescriptions are described in Chapter 2 and 3 of the Forest Plan.

Biological Assessment/Evaluation (BA/E), Heritage Resources

A BA/E was completed for this project. Since all threatened and endangered species were eliminated from consideration due to lack of habitat in the project area, consultation with the US

Fish and Wildlife Service under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act is not necessary (BA/E, page 2). The BA/E also determined that there would be “no impacts” to all sensitive species.

The project area was surveyed and it was determined that no historic properties would be impacted by reconstruction activities. The South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was consulted and concurred with this finding (letter dated May 17, 2007).

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, *Enoree Ranger District Administrative Site Reconstruction*, I have determined that the actions in Alternative B are not a major federal action having a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my findings on the following:

Context

The physical, biological, and social effects are limited to the project area and immediate adjacent areas, which are analyzed in Chapter 3 of the EA. All actions are consistent with the *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Sumter National Forest* and all environmental effects are within the range disclosed in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan Sumter National Forest*.

Intensity

1. Both beneficial and adverse effects have been considered (see EA, Chapter 3, Environmental Consequences). Design criteria include actions to prevent or lessen adverse impacts of the decision (EA, pages 11-12, DN 4.0 Design Criteria). The low intensity of the effects within the limited context of this project makes the adverse effects insignificant.
2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety (see EA, Chapter 3, Environmental Consequences).
3. There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area (historic and cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas) (see EA Chapter 3, Environmental Consequences).
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial because there is no scientific controversy over the impacts of the project (see EA, public involvement section and Chapter 3, Environmental Consequences).
5. The effects documented in the EA are not highly uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown environmental risk (see EA Chapter 3, Environmental Consequences).

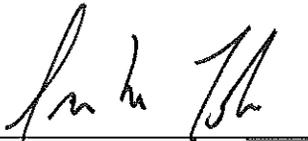
6. The actions in this decision are not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, and do not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration (EA, page 6, 1.5 Decision to be Made and 2.1 Alternatives Considered in Detail, pages 8-10).
7. There are no significant adverse cumulative effects between this project and other past, present and reasonable foreseeable actions (see EA Chapter 3, Environmental Consequences).
8. The actions will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and will not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources (see SHPO concurrence letters on file in the project record).
9. The actions will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (see Biological Evaluation, Appendix A of EA).
10. The actions will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA. South Carolina Best Management Practices will be met through application of Forest Plan standards.

Decision Not Subject to Appeal

The 30-day comment period for this project ended on September 3, 2012. This decision is not subject to appeal (36 CFR 215.12) since no comments expressing concerns were received. Implementation may begin immediately.

Contact

For further information on this decision, contact District Ranger, 3557 Whitmire Highway Union, South Carolina 29379, Telephone: (864) 427-9858, FAX: (864) 427-3529.



Steven M. Lohr
Acting Forest Supervisor
Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests

1/16/13
Date

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