



USDA Forest Service – Southern Region
Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests
GEORGIA



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Issue: Land Management Planning

The Chattahoochee and Oconee Land and Resource Management Plan provides the framework for agency land managers to balance the resources that best match the public's needs and values.

The Final version of the Land Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement were released in January, 2004. There will be a 90-day appeal period beginning with the publication of the Record of Decision in the Federal Register. After 30-days, the Forest Service can begin the process of implementation of the Land Management Plan.

The Plan outlines the Forest Service proposal for land allocation on Georgia's two national forests and sets the broad guidelines for how the forests will be managed over the next 10-15 years. One significant element of this Plan is the extraordinary amount of public involvement that occurred during the planning period. Tens of thousands of people commented on the development of the Plan. Meetings were open for public participation and open houses were held in many locations throughout the State.

The Land Management Plan and EIS provide for forest health. The goal is to offer clean, clear water, varied and quality recreation opportunities, protected habitat for sensitive or endangered species, and forests that are resilient and resistant to disease and insect infestation.

There are 10 areas that are recommended for consideration for wilderness designation totaling more than 8,000 acres. There is a significant increase in watershed protection and protection of riparian corridors. One of the more significant changes to the Plan is that there is no objective in the new Plan for timber management. Although timber harvesting may occur for other reasons, there will be no timber harvesting done for timber production purposes. Other reasons that harvesting may occur include opening scenic vistas or overlooks, creating wildlife openings, or addressing an insect infestation.

For additional information on the Land Management Planning effort, contact John Petrick at (770) 297-3000.