
P.O. Box 2010
Cleveland, TN 37320
(423) 476-9700



2800 North Ocoee Street
Cleveland, TN 37312

News Contacts:
Terry McDonald 423- 476-9700
Jo Ann McGee 423 -476-9700

Outdoor Recreation in Cherokee National Forest

CLEVELAND, TN – May 14, 2005 ... USDA Forest Service officials at the Cherokee National Forest say they are preparing for another busy outdoor recreation season. Last year the Forest received over 2 million visitors who visited a variety of recreational sites. In addition, approximately 5 million people drive for pleasure in and adjacent to the Cherokee NF.

One of the busiest weekends is just around the corner - Memorial Day. Terry Pierce, Recreation Staff Officer for the Cherokee National Forest explained that, "Memorial Day generally marks the end of the school year and the beginning of summer vacation for many people. The majority of our recreation sites and campgrounds will be operating at or near full capacity during this busy holiday weekend. This is an extremely busy time for us. For a more enjoyable visit I suggest visitors read and become familiar with all posted information, including various rules and regulations. Maps and general Forest information are available at all District Ranger offices."

The Cherokee National Forest (CNF) is home to 30 developed campgrounds, 30 picnic sites, and 700 miles of trails. There are also a number of beaches/swimming areas and boat ramps for water enthusiasts. Two Forest Service Scenic Byways, the Ocoee (Ocoee/Hiwassee Ranger District) and the Cherahala Skyway (Tellico/Hiwassee Ranger District) provide visitors with outstanding scenic beauty viewing opportunities. Several whitewater rivers including the Nolichucky, Hiwassee and the "Olympic River" - the Ocoee, flow through the CNF. The Ocoee Whitewater Center, site of the 1996 Olympic Canoe & Kayak competition offers picnic sites, hiking and biking opportunities and provides a variety of regional information at the administration building. Fishing is permitted in the CNF with appropriate licenses. The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (1-800-262-6704 or 1-800-332-0900) sets seasons and limits, and establishes regulations.

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Licenses are available at many local retail outlets. Many streams throughout the CNF contain rainbow, brown and brook trout.

"As you can see the Cherokee National Forest offers a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. Many of our campgrounds fill up fast on holiday weekends. I suggest that if you plan to camp over the Memorial Day weekend you get there early, most campsites are on a first-come first-served basis. Remember, you cannot hold campsites for others, and a campsite must be occupied the first 24 hours. Many areas are full by Friday afternoon or evening," said Rickerson.

Additional information and maps are available at any of the following Cherokee National Forest offices:

- *Forest Supervisor's Office: 2800 North Ocoee St. - P.O. Box 2010, Cleveland, TN 37320 - Phone: (423) 476-9700*
- *Ocoee/Hiwassee Ranger District: 3171 Hwy 64, Benton, TN 37307 - Phone (423) 338-3300*
- *Tellico/Hiwassee Ranger District: 250 Ranger Station Road, Tellico Plains, TN 37385 - Phone (423) 253-2520*
- *Nolichucky/Unaka Ranger District: 4900 Asheville Hwy SR 70, Greeneville, TN 37743 - Phone (423) 638-4109*
- *Watauga Ranger District: 4400 Unicoi Dr, Unicoi, TN 37692 - Phone (423) 735-1500*