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News Release

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Applicants Sought for Southwest Mississippi Resource Advisory Committee

MEADVILLE, Miss. September 2, 2020 –The USDA Forest Service today announced that members are needed to serve on the Southwest Mississippi Resource Advisory Committee that serves the Homochitto National Forest under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act amended and reauthorized for fiscal year 2018. by Public Law 115-141.

This committee is chartered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the Federal Advisory Committee Act and consists of 15 members representing a wide array of interests. Members are needed to help represent the following vacant categories, which includes:

<u>Category A</u>	<u>Category B</u>	<u>Category C</u>
Organized labor or non-timber forest product harvester groups	Nationally recognized environmental organizations	Hold State elected office or their designee
Developed outdoor recreation, off highway vehicle users, or commercial recreation activities	Regionally or locally recognized environmental organizations	County or local elected official
Energy and mineral development interests; or commercial or recreational fishing interests	Dispersed recreational activities	American Indian tribes within or adjacent to committee area
Commercial timber industry	Archaeological and historical interests	School officials or teachers
Federal grazing or other land use permittee or represent nonindustrial private forest land owners, within the area for which the RAC is organized	Nationally or regionally recognized wild horse and burro interest groups, wildlife or hunting organizations, or watershed associations	Represent the affected public at large.

One replacement member at large may also be selected for each category. Committee members will be responsible for reviewing and making recommendations concerning project proposals to be funded under Title II of the Act; coordinate with Forest Service and other land management officials; and provide opportunities for interested parties to participate in the project development and nomination process.

This committee will make recommendations concerning projects in counties which make up the Southwest Mississippi Resource Advisory Committee. In accordance with the law, at least 50 percent

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of the Title II project funds are to be used for road maintenance, decommissioning, or obliteration and/or to restore streams and watersheds.

The geographic boundaries of the Resource Advisory Committee include all counties within the Homochitto National Forest. Committee members are needed who fit one or more of the interests listed previously and who are committed to working cooperatively with other interests for the benefit of national forest lands and nearby communities.

Committee members serve a four-year term without compensation, but may be entitled to per diem and travel expenses, as determined by your local national forest, while attending meetings, according to current travel regulations for federal employees. Meetings are typically held 1-2 times per year. One of the purposes of Public Law 115-141 was to create a means to encourage communities and federal land managers to work together to recommend projects to be conducted on federal lands (or that would benefit resources on federal lands). Resource Advisory Committees are to be diverse and balanced and must include representation from industry, environmental groups, elected officials and local people.

Nominees will be evaluated based on education, training, and experience in the interest area they represent, knowledge of the geographic area covered by the committee, demonstrated commitment to collaborative decision-making, and contribution to the balance and diversity of the committee. In line with USDA policies, equal opportunity practices will be followed in all membership appointments to the committee. To ensure that the recommendations of the committee have taken into account the needs of the diverse groups served by the Department, membership shall include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

Individuals may nominate themselves or others, but the nominees should live within one of the counties in Mississippi that include national forest lands. You can find a nomination application form at this link: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd725795.pdf. Application forms are also available at your local district office or may be emailed upon request.

If you need assistance with the application form or additional information, contact Southwest Mississippi RAC Coordinator Bill Meriwether by phone at (601) 384-5876 or by email at bill.meriwether@usda.gov. Nominations and application packets are due to the above by October 31, 2020.

For more information on the Secure Rural Schools visit the following website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/pts/>. If you would like information about National Forests in Mississippi, visit our website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/mississippi>.

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