

News Release



News Release USDA Forest Service Tusquitee Ranger District Nantahala National Forest

September 14, 2007
Release: Immediate
Contact: Tina Tilley
Phone: (828) 837-5152

Forest Service Starts Environmental Studies for Tellico OHV Area, Murphy, North

Carolina (September 17, 2007) —The U.S.D.A. Forest Service asks for comments on two proposals for the Upper Tellico OHV Area, Murphy, North Carolina (Sept 14, 2007).

The U.S.D.A. Forest Service announced plans today to go out for public comment on two proposals on the Upper Tellico Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Area in Cherokee County, North Carolina.

The first proposal is to close Lower Trail 2 (The Rock Garden), Trail 7 (Peckerwood), and Trail 9 (Slick Rock). This temporary closure is needed to provide immediate short-term resource protection and reduce sedimentation. This closure is expected to last for one year or until a comprehensive plan is in place to protect water quality.

The second proposal is to establish a winter-time (January 1 to March 31) closure for most of the trail system. Trail 1 and the upper section of Trail 2 would remain open however to provide access to thru traffic and to private lands by street legal vehicles only. This is in an effort to reduce the damage to the trail tread that occurs during the winter freeze/thaw period when soils are subject to increased rutting and displacement. This closure would allow us to complete trail maintenance with minimal impact to users of the area.

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1st Add: U.S. Forest Service starts studies

If you would like to comment on either of these proposals, you may do so by sending you comments to the Tusquitee District Ranger, 123 Woodland Drive, Murphy NC 28906 by October 17, 2007.

Comments may also be sent via email to: comments_southern_north_carolina_nantahala_tusquitee@fs.fed.us. We hope to make a decision on both of these proposals before the end of the year.

Starting later this fall, the forest service will also start condition surveys on all sections of trail that fall within 100 feet of a streams within the area. These surveys will help to define where maintenance, rehabilitation or trail relocation may need to take place through out the trail system.

As an agency, we do recognize that OHV use is a legitimate use of National Forest System lands. We do however want to ensure that this use can be provided in a way that water quality within the Tellico watershed is protected. The proposed actions above in conjunction with the surveys and maintenance/rehabilitation of the trail sections are the first steps to improving water quality along the Tellico River.

The Upper Tellico OHV area was acquired by the Forest Service in 1980. Prior to becoming part of the National Forest System the area was basically wide open to all forms of recreation. In fact, according to long time users, OHVs have been using this area since the end of World War II.

Stakeholders, including representative from the OHV and environmental communities have partnered with the Forest Service to manage the area since the onset of the trail. These groups have donated countless volunteer hours in the area as well as supporting it financially. As we move forward with these actions, we would like to continue this history of stakeholders working together with the Forest Service for the management of the Upper Tellico OHV Area. Together we can make a difference.

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File Code: 2350-5/1950

Date: September 17, 2007

Dear Interested Public,

I am seeking comments on two proposals to establish new Forest Supervisor's Orders on the Upper Tellico Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Area in Cherokee County, North Carolina. This OHV area, located 15 miles north of Murphy on the North Carolina/Tennessee state line, includes approximately 38 miles of existing roads and trails that are managed for motorized recreation use. **The following actions are being proposed:**

1. A Forest Supervisor's Order prohibiting motorized vehicles on Lower Trail # 2, Trail # 7, and Trail # 9, duration of order not to exceed one year or until a reasonable plan is in place to prevent adverse impacts to the aquatic resource.
2. A Forest Supervisor's Order prohibiting winter-time motorized vehicle use on the Upper Tellico OHV Trail System from January 1 to March 31 each year. This would include all trails in the system except Trail # 1 and the upper section of Trail # 2 which would remain open as system roads used by vehicle types normally found on public roads.

The following persons would be exempted from these orders:

- Persons with a permit from the Forest Service specifically authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission.
- Any Federal, State, or local officer, or member of an organized rescue or firefighting force in the performance of an official duty.
- Owners or lessees of land in the Closure Area are exempt from the prohibitions listed above to the extent necessary to gain access to their land.
- Residents in the Closure Area are exempt from the prohibitions to the extent necessary to gain access to their residences.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

These actions are needed to correct and/or repair ongoing impacts to the aquatic resource caused by sediment entering area waters from the Tellico trail system.

Action # 1, prohibitions on Lower Trail # 2, Trail # 7, and Trail #9, is needed to provide immediate short-term resource protection measures. The greatest impact to area waters is coming from the movement of sediment off these three trails, as indicated by observation and on-site measurements of turbidity and suspended sediment concentrations.



Action # 2, winter-time closure of the OHV Area, is needed to provide resource protection. Forest Service personnel have observed that most of the damage to the trail tread occurs during the winter freeze/thaw period from January to late March, at which time soils are subject to increased rutting and displacement.

These actions would implement direction in the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan to emphasize protection of perennial and intermittent streams in compliance with North Carolina Forest Practice Guidelines Related to Water Quality.

The actions would be implemented pursuant to 36 CFR 261.50 (b) which states, "The Chief, each Regional Forester, each Experiment Station Director, the Administrator of the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit and each Forest Supervisor may issue orders which close or restrict the use of any National Forest System road or trail within the area over which he has jurisdiction."

Before a final decision is made I welcome your comments. Please make your comments as specific as possible along with supporting reasons why you believe your comments should be considered. Please include your name and address in any correspondence.

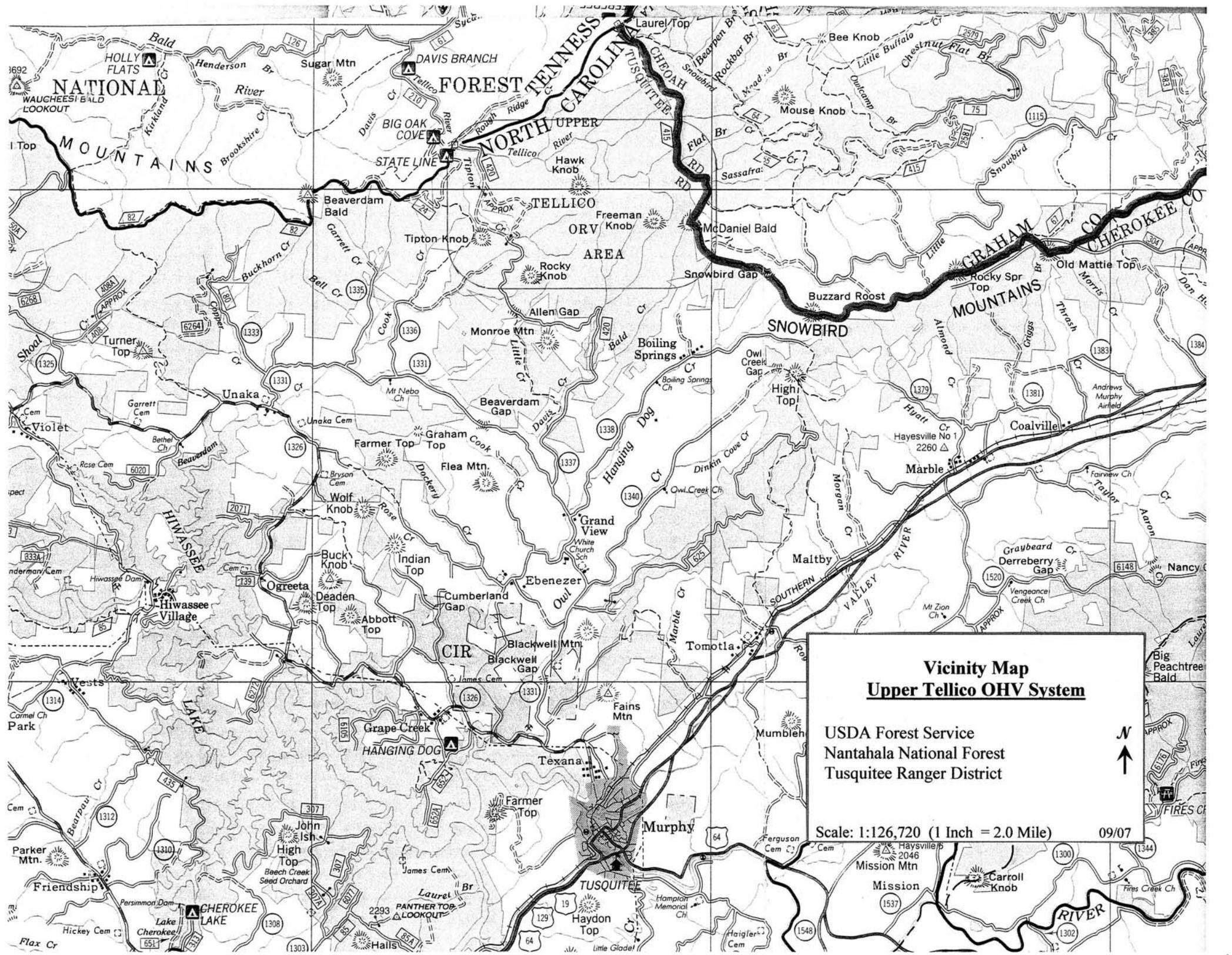
Your comments may be sent to Tusquitee District Ranger, 123 Woodland Drive, Murphy, NC 28906. Comments may also be sent via email to comments-southern-north-carolina-nantahala-tusquitee@fs.fed.us.

We would appreciate receiving your comments by October 17, 2007.

Thank you for your time and interest in our management activities on the Tusquitee Ranger District.

Sincerely,

/s/ Tina R. Tilley, Acting District Ranger
TINA R. TILLEY, Acting District Ranger



Vicinity Map
Upper Tellico OHV System

USDA Forest Service
Nantahala National Forest
Tusquee Ranger District



Scale: 1:126,720 (1 Inch = 2.0 Mile)

09/07

| Trail Symbol | Trail Number | Trail Name | Miles | Difficulty Level | Allowed Use |
|--------------|--------------|----------------------|-------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| | 1 | Tipton Creek | 5.3 | Easy | All |
| | 2 | Tipton Knob | 3.2 | Difficult | All, except where indicated on map |
| | 3 | Bearpen | 3.9 | Moderate | All |
| | 4 | Fain Ford | 4.8 | Moderate | All |
| | 5 | Tellico River | 1.6 | Moderate | All |
| | 6 | State Line Loop | 2.3 | Difficult | All |
| | 7 | Peckerwood Connector | 0.5 | Difficult | All |
| | 8 | Bob Creek | 5.8 | Moderate | All |
| | 9 | Mistletoe Connector | 0.7 | Difficult | All, except ATVs |
| | 10 | Round Mountain | 4.5 | Moderate | ATVs only |
| | 10A | Round Mountain Spur | 2.0 | Moderate | ATVs only |
| | 11 | Chestnut Mountain | 2.7 | Difficult | All |
| | 12 | Hawk Knob | 1.2 | Difficult | All |

UPPER TELLICO OFF HIGHWAY VEHICLE (OHV) SYSTEM

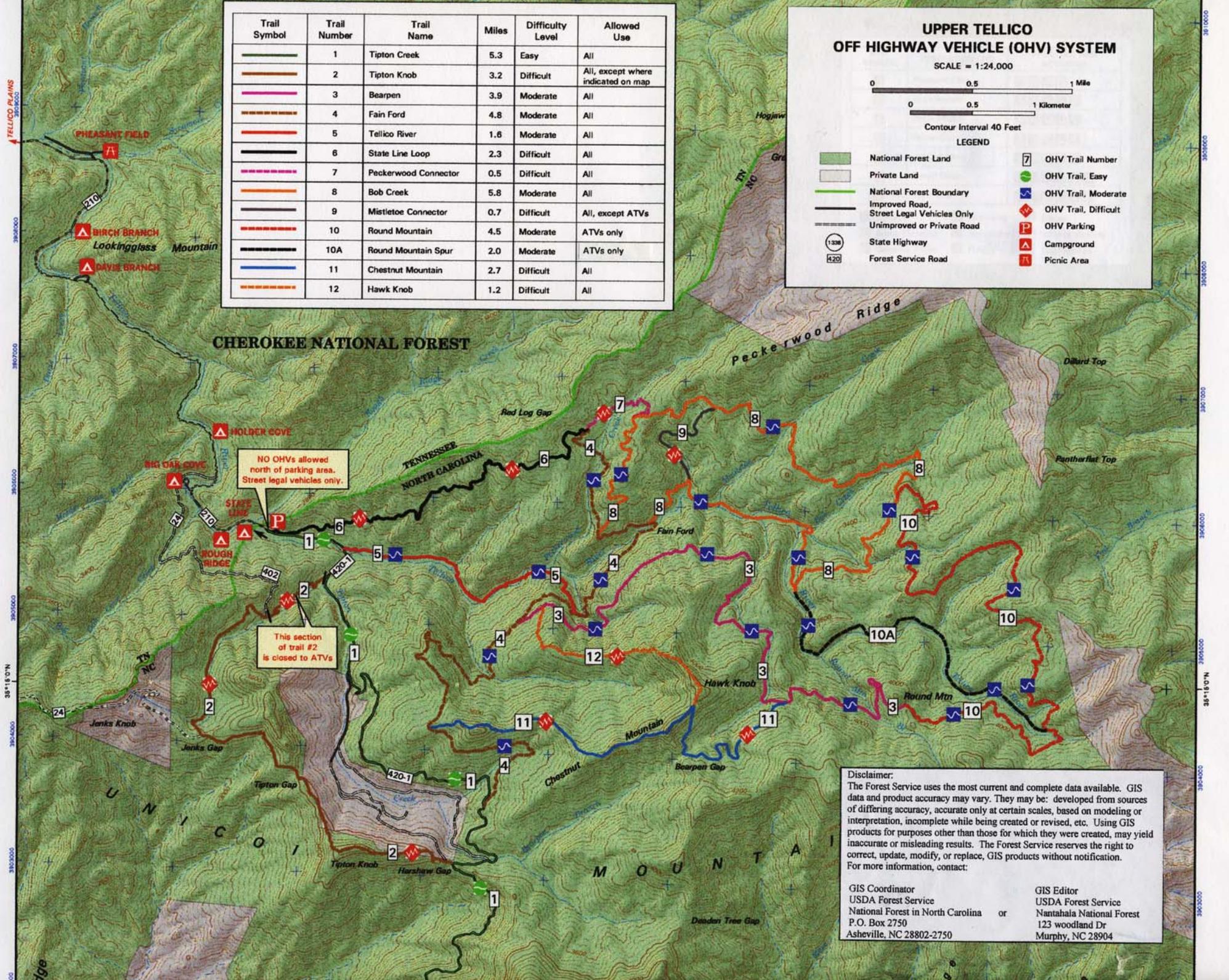
SCALE = 1:24,000

0 0.5 1 Mile
0 0.5 1 Kilometer

Contour Interval 40 Feet

LEGEND

| | | | |
|--|---|--|----------------------|
| | National Forest Land | | OHV Trail Number |
| | Private Land | | OHV Trail, Easy |
| | National Forest Boundary | | OHV Trail, Moderate |
| | Improved Road, Street Legal Vehicles Only | | OHV Trail, Difficult |
| | Unimproved or Private Road | | OHV Parking |
| | State Highway | | Campground |
| | Forest Service Road | | Picnic Area |



NO OHVs allowed north of parking area. Street legal vehicles only.

This section of trail #2 is closed to ATVs

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| GIS Coordinator USDA Forest Service National Forest in North Carolina P.O. Box 2750 Asheville, NC 28802-2750 | or | GIS Editor USDA Forest Service Nantahala National Forest 123 woodland Dr Murphy, NC 28904 |
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