



# NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH • CAROLINA

USDA FOREST SERVICE, 160A ZILICOA STREET, ASHEVILLE, NC 28801

## NEWS • RELEASE

Contact: Terry Seyden, 828-257-4202  
2/27/2009

For Immediate Release

### **U.S. Forest Service Seeks Comment on Upper Tellico OHV Trails Environmental Assessment**

ASHEVILLE, NC ....The US Forest Service is seeking comments on six alternatives for long-term management of the Upper Tellico OHV Trail System. The 39 mile Upper Tellico OHV Trail System is located on the Tusquitee Ranger District, Nantahala National Forest, Cherokee County, NC. In June 2008, the Forest Service initially proposed a reduction in the size of the trail system in order to stem the flow of sediment from the trails into the Tellico River which is classified as a native brook trout stream.

“We received around 1,500 public comments on this initial proposed action,” said National Forests in North Carolina Supervisor Marisue Hilliard. “We have completed an environmental assessment (EA) which includes six alternatives and would now like the public’s comments on the alternatives and analysis before making a final decision on long-term management of the System,” Hilliard added.

“Our analysis indicates that on-the-ground conditions are worse than we first thought,” Hilliard said. “The EA shows that the Upper Tellico OHV Trail System has extensive damage and contributes unacceptable levels of sediment into the Tellico River and its tributaries. The Forest Service is in violation of its own standards and North Carolina state water quality standards because visible sediment from the OHV trails is reaching the Tellico River and its tributaries in hundreds of locations,” Hilliard said.

-more-

“Additionally, since the Upper Tellico River watershed is located in an area of steep terrain, highly erosive soils, and high rainfall, our analysis tells us that maintaining an OHV trail system without causing significant environmental damage at this location would be extremely difficult,” Hilliard added.

“After careful consideration of the environmental effects of the alternatives as presented in the EA, my preferred alternative is Alternative C, which closes the OHV System,” Hilliard said. Alternative C would maintain over 10 miles of existing Forest system roads (currently also OHV trails), open year-round or seasonally, to provide public access for hunting, fishing and other recreation uses. Trail 1 (FS Road 420-1) would be paved and kept open as a through route for highway-legal vehicles. Closed roads and trails would be stabilized and rehabilitated to eliminate future sedimentation into the Tellico River,” Hilliard said.

“I want to emphasize that a final decision has not yet been made. This public review period is an opportunity for you to give us constructive feedback. I encourage you to review the environmental assessment closely and provide us with any information that you think we have not considered adequately” Hilliard said.

The Forest Service is also seeking comment on a proposed temporary closure of the Upper Tellico OHV Trail System for resource protection. It would be effective from April 1, 2009 until a final decision is reached. A final decision on the Upper Tellico OHV trail system is expected by May 2009.

Copies of the environmental assessment, proposed temporary closure and additional background information on the Upper Tellico OHV Trail System can be found at

<http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/nepa/tusquitee/tellico.htm>.

Comments must be postmarked or received within 30 days of the start of the comment period. Comments may be mailed electronically, in a common digital format, to: [comments-southern-north-carolina-nantahala-tusquitee@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-southern-north-carolina-nantahala-tusquitee@fs.fed.us); or by regular mail to: National Forests in North Carolina, Attn: Candace Wyman, 160 A Zillicoa Street, Asheville, NC 28801, or faxed to 828-257-4263. Hand delivered comments must be received within our normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For more information contact: Tusquitee District Ranger, Steve Lohr 828-837-5152 or Candace Wyman, UpperTellico Project Coordinator, at 828-257-4816.

###