

DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS
For
The Anderson Creek OHV Trail System Project
USDA Forest Service
Southern Region
Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests
Blue Ridge Ranger District
Gilmer County, Georgia

BACKGROUND

The Anderson Creek OHV Trail System is located along the southern boundary of the Blue Ridge Ranger District (formerly the Toccoa Ranger District prior to April 29, 2007) off of State Highway 52 in Gilmer County, Georgia. It is one of eleven OHV trail systems on the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests, which provide a total of 116 miles of trail riding. Of the 116 miles of designated OHV trails offered on the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests, 34 miles are managed by the Blue Ridge Ranger District, constituting roughly 29 percent of off-road mileage on the forest.

The current Anderson Creek OHV Trail System consists of approximately six miles of authorized trails, which has been open to four-wheel drive vehicles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and trail bikes. It is one of three trail systems on the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests which allows for full-size passenger vehicles.

As directed by the 1985 Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (hereby referred to as the Forest Plan), Anderson Creek was established as an OHV *area* in 1987, prior to motorized route designation which restricted OHV travel to authorized routes, only. For more than ten years, Anderson Creek was managed as an *area* of use, until 2001, when nine miles of designated trail were formalized. In 2003, augmented concerns about resource damage to the forest environment and illegal riding led to a closure of the area in order to develop a new management strategy for the trail system. Inventory of illegal user created trails, stream inventories, and photo point monitoring were among the methods of data collection employed during 2004 to help make determinations about the future use of Anderson Creek. Significant impact to the forest environment was noted through each of these studies. As a result, a Decision Memo was signed March 18, 2004 to close approximately five to seven miles of unauthorized vehicle trails, and maintain approximately six miles of authorized trails. In April 2004, the Toccoa Ranger District successfully completed the work as outlined. Upon completion of work performed in 2004, the OHV Trail System remained closed until further direction was formulated.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

While OHV recreational travel is a legitimate use of National Forest lands, the U.S. Forest Service is also responsible for ensuring that recreation settings and opportunities are provided to be environmentally sustainable, financially sound and operationally effective. Specifically, trails should not adversely affect soil and water resources. Increased motorized use on national forest lands, prevalent cross-country travel, environmental concerns and significant administrative, organizational and policy changes have warranted the re-evaluation of the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System and its status.

Based on this need for action, the following purpose and need was developed for the project:

1. Reduce the amount of soil and water damage occurring within and adjacent to the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System. This addresses Forest-wide Goals 22, 24, 26 & 34 that relate to the management and restoration of watersheds, soil productivity and quality, and aquatic ecosystems to protect ecological functions and support viable populations of aquatic flora and fauna.

DECISION

Based on my review of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System Project, including the discussion of the alternatives considered, the issues associated with this proposal, the environmental effects analysis, and my personal knowledge of the area, I have decided to select the actions in Alternative 2 because it best meets the purpose and need for action and the Forest-wide Goals, as listed above. The actions under this alternative are as follows:

1. Close all trails within, and connected with, the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System, including approximately six miles of authorized trails and several miles of unsigned and undesignated trails.
2. Prevent illegal access from adjacent private ownerships and enforce closures through placement of physical barriers such as gates, fallen trees or any combination thereof.
3. Decommission the trail system and ensure rehabilitation through any combination of techniques including natural re-growth, earth reshaping, earthen blockades, fallen trees or any combination thereof. Erosion control measures, such as the installment of hay bales and/or silt fences may be used to prevent soil movement. Heavy equipment may be used to form blockades in those areas which have been surveyed by the District Archeologist, including those portions identified in the cultural report.
4. Maintain FDR #357 as a system road.

Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

Mitigation measures are actions taken to lessen adverse impacts or enhance beneficial effects. General mitigation and monitoring measures are listed in Chapter 2.3 of the EA (pg 16).

All mitigation and monitoring measures directly related to Alternative 2 are listed below.

- Trails (authorized and unauthorized) will be monitored for encroachment by illegal motorized use and corrective action will be taken as needed based on the capabilities of the District.
- Illegal access from adjacent private land will be discouraged through the placement of physical barriers such as gates, earthen blockades, fallen trees, etc. based on the capabilities of the District.
- Appropriate erosion control measures will be used to minimize potential impacts from the proposed activities. Examples may include the use of silt fences, hay bales, brush barriers, and prompt re-vegetation of exposed soils. The Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control in Georgia (Fifth Edition, 2000) and Forest Service engineering technical handbooks are sources for design specifications for erosion and sediment control measures.
- Riparian corridors are designated on all perennial and intermittent streams within the trail system as directed by the Management Prescription 11 in the Forest Plan. The corridors will provide protection of streams and aquatic habitats.
- Forest Supervisor Closure Orders will be developed to establish the seasonal and/or permanent closure status of the trail system. Information will be provided to the public to make them aware of the current trail system status.
- Law Enforcement presence will be maintained to ensure compliance with the Decision. Also, in the event that OHV users continue to generate or utilize user-created trails or enter the trail system by means of illegal access, the District will increase the presence of law enforcement personnel throughout the trail system to the best of their ability.
- Field reviews will be conducted by District and Forest-level staff to ensure that the appropriate Forest Service standards and mitigation measures are implemented and that these measures are effective in protecting soil productivity, water quality, and other resources as they were designed to do. Annual field reviews will also occur for detection of illegal OHV use on non-designated trails and to determine any further needs.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL

In addition to the selected alternative (Alternative 2), I considered all of the other alternatives as presented in the EA. A complete description of these alternatives is provided in Chapter 2 of the EA.

Alternative 1 (No-Action)

Under this alternative, the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System would be managed and operated within its current structure. The situation as it currently exists reflects the Selected Alternative from the Decision Memo signed March 2004 by District Ranger Cassius Cash, to maintain approximately six miles of authorized trail. No additional measures other than current regulations would be taken to protect resources, except to close illegal trails as needed to protect the integrity of the system.

Alternative 2 - Proposed Action

(See description on page 2)

Alternative 3

This alternative would designate approximately nine miles of diverse, user experienced OHV trails that support ATV, motorbike, and OHV use. Approximately four miles of the existing trail would be utilized, approximately five miles would be added to the trail system, and approximately two miles of existing trail would be obliterated. This alternative was developed in response to issues identified through the scoping periods. Alternative 3 attempts to provide quality off-highway motorized recreation, while mitigating against negative environmental effects. The design of the proposed trail system incorporates existing trail and new construction in order to find the best suitable locations for motorized trails in the Anderson Creek area.

The following briefly describes the proposed trail segments:

- *Trail 1.* Trail 1 is approximately 3.5 miles in total length and utilizes existing trail bed and new contour trail construction.
- *Trail 2.* Trail 2 is approximately 2.2 miles in total length and utilizes, primarily, existing road and trail bed. Only a short section, approximately ¼ mile would require new trail construction where the trail adjoins FDR #357.
- *Trail 3.* Trail 3 is approximately 3.4 miles in total length and utilizes a combination of existing trail bed, existing Forest Service skid roads, and new contour trail construction.

ALTERNATIVES ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY

An alternative was considered to develop a high challenge system for full-size, four-wheel drive passenger vehicles, only (i.e. rock crawl, hill climb, etc.). In this alternative, the trail system would be substituted for this highly concentrated form of recreation. Allowing this area to serve as a four-wheel drive challenge ride is not within the purpose and need of the decision to be made since it is a proposal outside of the scope of the Anderson Creek Trail System itself. The proposal would have no effect on the issues at hand concerning erosion, sedimentation and water quality along the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System. Nor would it provide an alternative riding system. However, this type of recreation may be a consideration for future use on the forest. A separate decision would be made to implement such an activity.

An additional alternative was considered to designate the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System as a full-size, four-wheel drive vehicle riding system, only. In this alternative, ATVs and two-wheeled vehicles would be prohibited from riding the trail system. This alternative is not addressed in detail because restricting use to particular types of vehicles, in itself, would not fulfill the purpose and need of the decision to be made. Again, the purpose and need is to reduce erosion and sedimentation and to improve water quality. Restricting vehicle type may be a consideration for future management action, but would require a separate decision.

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

Based on the analysis presented in the Environmental Analysis for the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System Project, I have decided to select Alternative 2 because it best meets the purpose and need and the Forest-wide Goals discussed above. The following is the rationale for my decision.

Alternative 1

I eliminated the No-Action Alternative (Alternative 1) since it failed to meet the purpose and need established for the project in several ways. As stated, the purpose and need for action is to reduce the amount of soil and water damage occurring within and adjacent to the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System. Alternative 1 proposes that six miles of OHV trail remain for recreational use. Such a decision would allow for more than seven acres of continued soil disturbance in an area with a “severe” erosion hazard rating due to the underlying soils found within the project area. The configuration of the trail network would allow for ½ mile of trail to be located within riparian corridors and would allow the trail to cross streams at eight locations, where sediment would be unloaded in each case. This is even more significant considering that most of the perennial streams in the project area are classified as primary trout waters by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and are, thus, capable of supporting a self-sustaining population of rainbow, brown or brook trout. Over 10% of the soils along the existing trail system of Alternative

1 are rated as “severe” for its potential rutting hazard, while nearly 90% are rated as “moderate.”

The layout and design of Alternative 1 does not provide for more than a 2-mile section of trail. In addition, three of the four trails being offered are dead-end segments. It is foreseeable, then, based on its improper design and past performance that visitors will create user-created trails within the project area. In 2004, ten miles of unauthorized trails were inventoried. Such unmanaged recreation would be an even greater threat to forest health.

Alternative 3

I also eliminated Alternative 3. Alternative 3 proposes that nine miles of OHV trail be maintained for recreational use. Such a decision would affect more than 10 acres of national forest by eliminating all vegetation within the trail tread and would dramatically disturb soil and hydrological conditions. In this alternative, the trail system would cross seven streams feeding into designated trout waters and allow for approximately 1/3 mile of trail to be located within riparian corridors. In general, direct effects from implementing this alternative would be greater than those under Alternative 1 because approximately five miles of trail would be newly constructed. Newly constructed trails *would* lie along topographical contours. However, all of the trails would be located in areas rated as “severe” or “moderate” for rutting hazard. In addition, soils located throughout the entire trail system of the proposed new trail corridor are rated as “severe” for erosion hazard.

Alternative 3 creates an entire loop system, which should help to reduce the number of user-created trails. However, past evidence has shown that user-created trails will be created without the strictest of management. Operation, maintenance and enforcement would be more difficult considering the current configuration and location of Forest Service employees and management staff. Therefore, the effects of unmanaged recreation would be an added concern to that of the managed trail system.

While environmental parameters were set forth in the design of the trail system under Alternative 3 to help protect the forest environment, the analysis clearly shows that the existing physical conditions of the area will not allow for a safe, environmentally sustainable motorized trail system.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 provides the greatest potential for reduction in the amount of soils and water damage to occur within and adjacent to the existing Anderson Creek OHV Trail System. The actions planned in Alternative 2 will decommission and rehabilitate approximately six miles of trail. This will reduce soil disturbance, areas of erosion and rutting by nearly 7 ½ acres. It will also eliminate seven stream crossings based on the trail’s current configuration. By eliminating these crossings, less sediment will be deposited into sensitive waters. The actions of Alternative 2 meet the goals of reducing

soil and water damage by promoting natural vegetative growth within the trail tread corridor. The reduction in bare soil will, therefore, reduce the likelihood of water contamination and aquatic species disturbance. Erosion control measures, such as the installment of hay bales and/or silt fences will prevent soil movement while decommission work is being performed. While it can be recognized that eliminating all designated trails within the Anderson Creek project area will not likely prevent unauthorized OHV use throughout the area, it will make enforcement more efficient by eliminating the need to decipher legal riding versus illegal riding.

PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The Anderson Creek OHV Trail Project Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) conducted public involvement with the primary objective of discovering the concerns of the public. The IDT took the following steps to gather issues from the public:

- Public scoping for the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System was initiated July 5, 2005 and ended September 7, 2005. A letter of invitation to comment on the Proposed Action was mailed to 51 individuals and organizations that had expressed interest in local Forest Service projects. 206 responses were received from initial public scoping efforts.
- Simultaneous with the mailing, the District issued a press release to the local newspaper, *The News Observer*, seeking comments from the “scoping letter”.
- During the scoping period, the District Ranger and Deputy District Ranger made a presentation in Cumming, GA to 54 attendees from various clubs including Southern Jeeps, Georgia Bounty Runners, Georgia Cruisers and Southern Land Rover, to discuss the Anderson Creek proposal.
- During the 30-day comment period, 365 comments were received, evaluated and considered for response. Written responses are provided in Appendix A.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the Environmental Assessment, I have determined that Alternative 2 with the mitigating measures and management requirements applied, is not a major Federal action, either individually or cumulatively, and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the preparation of an environmental impact statement is not necessary. This determination is based upon the following factors found at 40 CFR 1508.27 (b):

1. Both beneficial and adverse effects have been considered. The proposed actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of human environment. (EA pages 27-58)
2. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed actions. (EA pages 56-58)
3. Within the limited context of the planned actions along with the restrictions and mitigation measures (EA page 16), there will be no significant effect on any unique characteristics or features of the geographic area. (EA pages 27-58)
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial based on new or unusual methods, tools, or quantity of activities being approved. (Issues from scoping efforts: EA pages 8-10) None of the actions involves an irreversible commitment of resources.
5. There are no known effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. (EA pages 27-58)
6. The actions in this decision will not set a precedent influencing approval of future actions with significant effects.
7. The possible cumulative effects of the proposed actions have been analyzed with consideration for past and reasonably foreseeable future activities on adjacent private and public lands. Each environmental component in Chapter III of the EA includes consideration of cumulative effects. The context and intensity of cumulative impacts over space and time will not be significant. (EA pages 27-58)
8. The proposed actions will not adversely affect any sites listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places, or will they cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources. This is based on findings of site-specific cultural resource surveys of the road corridor and concurrence by the State of Georgia Historic Preservation office as per Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. (Heritage Resources Report in Project Folder)
9. Implementing this decision will not adversely affect threatened or endangered species, or result in loss of any other species' viability, or create significant trends toward Federal listing of the species under the Endangered Species Act. This determination is based site-specific surveys, the Biological Evaluation for the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System Project, and concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7(a) (2) of the Endangered Species Act. (BE and USFWS concurrence in Project Folder)
10. None of the actions threaten a violation of federal, state, or local laws imposed for the protection of the environment. The proposed actions will be implemented in a

way that is consistent with the standards and management requirements established in the Forest Plan for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, and in site-specific mitigation measures. (EA page 16)

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

National Forest Management Act

This decision is consistent with the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 regarding the effective management, use, and protection of the natural resources of the area affected by this project.

Forest Plan Consistency

I have determined that all actions of the selected alternative will be consistent with the management requirements for the revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, January 2004. This includes general standards of the Forest Plan and the specific management direction for lands in Management Prescriptions 8.A.1 (Mix of Successional Forest Habitats) and 11 (Riparian Corridors) as designated by the Forest Plan.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

This Decision is subject to appeal, pursuant to the Forest Service regulations 36 CFR 217.3(a)(1) by those who provided comments or otherwise expressed interest in this particular proposal during the 30-day public comment period. A written Notice of Appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14, "Content of Notice of Appeal", including the reasons for appeal. Appeals must be postmarked or received in duplicate within 45 days after the legal notice publication date in *The North Georgia News* and *The News Observer*. The appeal should be sent to: Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests; ATTN: Appeals Deciding Officer; 1755 Cleveland Highway, Gainesville, Georgia, 30501.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

If no appeal is received, implementation of this decision may occur on, but not before, five business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is received, implementation may not occur for 15 days following the date of appeal disposition. (36 CFR 215.9) The appeal period begins immediately after publication of legal notice in *The North Georgia News*.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information concerning this decision, contact Alison Koopman, Anderson Creek OHV Trail System Project IDT Leader at: U. S. Forest Service, P. O. Box 9, Blairsville, GA 30514, or by phone at (706) 745-6928 ext. 118, or by email at akoopman@fs.fed.us.

For additional information on the Forest Service planning process as it relates to this decision, contact John Petrick, Forest Planner, at USDA Forest Service, Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest, 1755 Cleveland Hwy, Gainesville, GA 30501; or by phone at (770) 297-3005, or by e-mail at jpetrick@fs.fed.us.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL APPROVAL

/s/ Alan Polk

May 23, 2008

ALAN POLK
District Ranger
Blue Ridge Ranger District

Date

APPENDIX A

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS **Anderson Creek OHV Trail System EA**

Date: May 19, 2008

Responsible Official: Alan Polk
District Ranger
Blue Ridge Ranger District
Chattahoochee National Forest

In regards to soil productivity:

- *“Soils information is from old USDA mapping and is very general, because their mapping covers large areas and may not be site specific. Assuming detailed soil mapping was done, one can read the review and see the similarity and almost nullification of the Cumulative Effects of Alternative 2 versus a managed Alternative 3 for Soil Productivity.”* (Barnhart)

As noted, citation for *Table 5: Soil Series, Characteristics and Suitability Ratings for the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System Project, Chattahoochee National Forest* includes both the Cherokee-Gilmer-Pickens counties Soil Survey (Sept. 1973) and the USDA Forest Service (2005). The Anderson Creek project area, and subsequent environmental analysis, required that a minimum of seven acres be evaluated. For a project of this scale, it is typical for the Forest Soils Scientist to begin investigation by analyzing county soil surveys and then validating this information by performing site visits and studies. In this case, the Forest Soils Scientist has served as an Interdisciplinary Team Leader for other projects involving the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System since 2000. Repetitive, on-the-ground investigation has generally validated the findings of the Cherokee-Gilmer-Pickens counties Soil Survey. Any slight errors in data would, however, be consistent across all alternatives, and, therefore, be nullified.

While the cumulative effects of Alternative 2 versus Alternative 3 may appear “similar” based on their general assessment, there is one clear distinction as noted on page 28 which distinguishes the two proposals. Under Alternative 3, “five additional miles would be subject to the cumulative effects of prolonged use.” The five miles, as stated, is in addition to an additional four miles of existing trail to be maintained. In summary, the total acres of soil potentially affected for Alternative 2 is 0, compared to 10.8 acres for Alternative 3.

In regards to aquatic resources:

- *“With respect to Aquatic Resources, the statement ‘...there is the potential for a slight increase of adverse effects on aquatic resources that would contribute to a*

slight increase...’ To me a slight increase on a slight increase is very, very little.”
(Barnhart)

As defined in 40 CFR 1508.7, “cumulative impact” refers to the “impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions.” As stated, the Anderson Creek project area is not scheduled for any future management actions that would contribute to cumulative impacts on aquatic resources. In addition, the Forest Service is not aware of any other significant private actions which would affect aquatic resources in the Anderson Creek or Tickanetley Watersheds. Therefore, cumulative impacts would be few. “There is the potential for a slight increase of adverse effects” due to the cumulative and repetitive action of OHV users crossing through 7 stream crossings. While Alternative 3 was designed to limit the number of stream crossings, it could not and cannot limit the potential number of users to the area. Considering that motorized vehicle use is a fast growing form of recreation, it is likely than that the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System would experience an increase in use, as well. While the number of stream crossings would remain the same over time, an increase in the number of users would likely result in an increase of adverse effects, and therefore, cumulative effects, as well.

In regards to recreational use:

- *“There is one statement that speaks volumes ‘...decommissioning of the Anderson Creek Trail System would allow Forest Service personnel to concentrate their time at other recreation areas.’ Does this mean other areas and other users are more important or more deserving?”* (Barnhart)

The Blue Ridge Ranger District, under direction of the Chattahoochee National Forest leadership and Region 8 recreation staff, has implemented many changes during the past four years to be more operationally effective and financially sustainable within the recreation program. This effort has resulted in the decommissioning of three campgrounds (Lake Blue Ridge, Lake Chatuge and Waters Creek), a reduction in services at more than eight recreation areas (primarily picnic & swimming areas), concession of six recreation areas, contracting of maintenance items and consolidation of district offices and work centers. However, within the past five years, there have been no reductions in designated trail opportunities on the Blue Ridge Ranger District, which manages over 300 miles of motorized and non-motorized trails. The District strives to provide a variety of recreational experiences within its physical and financial capabilities. Any decisions to reduce recreational opportunities are taken very seriously and are not biased towards one group or another.

In addition, while Alternative 2 would allow Forest Service personnel to concentrate their time at other recreation areas, this was not the initial purpose and need. As stated on page 6, the purpose and need for action is to “reduce the amount of soil and

water damage occurring within and adjacent to the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System.”

In regards to economical issues:

- “...analysis for the other two alternatives is not complete enough for either of them to be a supportable decision. One main example is the economics analysis for Alternative 1 and 3. That analysis focuses solely on the economics benefits to OHV riders. The costs and impacts to other recreational users are not documented.” (Vaughan)
- “...adverse impacts to recreational users who fish for trout is an obvious cost not fully explored by the EA.” (Vaughan)

Determining the economic impacts for project proposals can often be a difficult task. It can be surmised that closure of the area to motorized vehicles would make the area more attractive to local hunters and anglers. However, vehicular access to this area is only provided via Forest Development Road 357 which, in turn, provides only two places for parking (limited to the gap and termini of FDR 357). Therefore, it can be predicted that a majority of users would be local to the area, and thus the economic impacts would be minimal. In addition, it is not foreseeable that other forms of dispersed recreation, such as hiking and backpacking, would greatly increase, upon closure of the trail system. The closest hiking trail to the Anderson Creek area is the Appalachian Trail Approach Trail, located approximately two miles away and not connected to the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System.

In regards to law enforcement:

- “The EA fails to show that the agency will have the necessary resources to accomplish, monitor and enforce the selection of Alternatives 1 or 3.” (Vaughan)

Implementation, monitoring and enforcement are critical for each of the project alternatives. While the level of these actions will differ based on the scope of each proposal, each will require a significant level of resources to accomplish. Implementation of Alternative 1 requires the least effort since it reutilizes the existing trail network. We believe it is within the capabilities of the district to accomplish. Implementation of Alternative 3 will require the closure of two miles of existing trail and construction of approximately five miles. While the Forest Service has the capabilities and expertise to complete such work, it would most likely be accomplished through contract due to workload constraints. For this reason, cost of implementation could be as much as \$50,000. It is likely, though, that grant funding through the Georgia Recreational Trails Program could be approved for such work. In this scenario, the Forest Service would be responsible for 15% of the total project cost plus overhead. Monitoring and enforcement will be performed to the best of the ability of the district, despite the selected alternative.

In regards to air quality and forest vegetation:

- “The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest should consider the impacts of their travel management plan on Global Climate Change, including the potential for impacts to air pollution and removal of vegetation.” (Kassar)

The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest Travel Management Program is administered at the National Forest level, as directed under 36 CFR Part 212. Therefore, any potential impacts to air pollution and removal of vegetation regarding the forest transportation system and designation of roads, trails and areas across the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest would be considered through development of this program and is, therefore, outside the scope of this project.

In regards to water quality:

- “Georgia ForestWatch repeatedly has submitted reports of water quality in the streams affected by the Anderson OHV trail system that falls short of this standard. We incorporate our 2001 report into these comments and ask that our prior comments be included in the administrative record for this decision.” (Jenkins)

The 2001 water quality report, as submitted by Georgia ForestWatch, will be retained in the project record for future reference.

- “We suggest a comparative sampling system (i.e., upstream and downstream of trail areas) with an increased number of sites and repetitions to increase statistical significance. Further, while we strongly support Project Alternative 2, we encourage the use of long-term biological monitoring regardless of which alternative is implemented, so that water quality response can be gauged.” (Moore)
- “HRWC supports conscientious stream restoration activities and encourages the incorporation of Natural Channel Design principles into this Project in order to maximize habitat quality. We further encourage a formal, documented post-restoration monitoring program to ensure stability and proper stream function including sediment transport.” (Moore)

The Forest Service, Blue Ridge Ranger District, will pursue opportunities to partner with qualified organizations that can provide assistance in biological and post-restoration monitoring, as an alternative means of accomplishing work in the future.