



File Code: 2720-1

Date: March 22, 2005

Dear Forest Stakeholder:

Tallulah Ranger District personnel are in the process of considering an application for an outfitter/guide special use permit, as follows:

- ❖ A permit has been requested by Phoenix Outdoor, LLC, to provide outfitter/guide services as part of a wilderness therapy program for teens and families in crisis. The applicant has requested the use of the following designated hiking trails: Bartram Trail, Holcomb Creek Trail, and Three Forks Trail. Other routes requested for hiking include the Addie Gap/Bailey Branch area, a route along Big Ridge, and the Windy Gap area. Phoenix Outdoor would use several Forest Service system roads for transportation, supply, and evacuation purposes. The trails and roads requested for use are located in the northeast area of Rabun County, Georgia on National Forest System (NFS) lands of the Chattahoochee National Forest that are administered by the Tallulah Ranger District. A map(s) of these trails and roads is available upon request.

The Phoenix Outdoor application includes a detailed operating plan. This program would target adolescent youth between the ages of 13 to 17. The requested trails would be used for both day hiking and overnight camping trips from mobile base camps. Two base camps would be operational at any given time, with the locations of the base camps shifted periodically to minimize impacts. A typical weekly itinerary would involve three days of day hiking in the area of the base camps, two days at the base camps in layover, and two days per week taking overnight trips, with each group typically following this itinerary for approximately four to eight weeks.

Group size would be limited to a maximum of fourteen persons, with ten or fewer students in each group and at least three field instructors present at all times. This would result in an average leader to client ratio of approximately 1 to 3. Phoenix Outdoor would operate this program year-round, with a maximum of five groups in the field at program capacity.

The "Leave No Trace" outdoor skills and ethics would be taught and practiced at all times during program outings. Field instructors would be certified at a minimum in basic first aid and CPR, with Wilderness First Aid training stressed.

I would like to hear from you regarding this proposal before making a decision on this request. The requested action appears to fall into a category of actions that may be excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment. This determination, however, will not be finalized until after consideration of your comments and concerns. This proposal is a starting point for discussion and analysis and no decision has been made. Responses from the local community, interested individuals and groups, other government agencies, and Forest Service employees are needed



to help determine the extent of analysis so we meet the intent of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Comments received help us to assess the proposal and indicate the type of mitigation and monitoring measures that may be needed.

Responses should contain relevant facts or comments along with supporting reasons that we would then consider in reaching a final decision on this proposal. Comments received, including names, become part of the public record and are available for public review. **To have your comments considered in our decision process, we would appreciate receiving your comments by April 8, 2005.** This will help ensure a complete and thorough analysis of the proposal. Send your written comments to the Tallulah Ranger District at the address provided on the letterhead. You may also comment by phone or fax (see letterhead), by e-mail to [bboydstun@fs.fed.us](mailto:bboydstun@fs.fed.us), or in person at our office on Highway 441 South in Clayton, Georgia. Please note that you will be sent further correspondence regarding this proposal *only* if you comment or request further correspondence on the requested use.

In general, the special use process involves a careful review of each application received to determine how the request would affect NFS lands and the public's use of NFS lands. Special use applications must be consistent with Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and special orders that apply to the national forests. Applications are closely examined to determine whether the proposal is an appropriate use of NFS land and whether it is dependent upon NFS land. Applications must also be consistent with the Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, including all objectives and standards for management of the NFS lands where a proposed special use area(s) is located.

This letter is being sent to organizations and individuals who have previously participated or been interested in our project proposals, specific areas, or specific uses of the Forest. This letter assumes that you have some familiarity with the planning process as conducted by the Forest Service in accordance with NEPA. If you are receiving this letter and are unsure of the context or how to participate, please contact us at the Tallulah Ranger District. Management of the National Forest is a public trust and is best conducted with broad participation.

Thank you for your interest and involvement.

Sincerely,

*/s/ David W. Jensen*

DAVID W. JENSEN  
District Ranger