

# Decision Memo

## Lake Blue Ridge Campground

### Conversion to a Day Use Recreation Site

USDA Forest Service  
Toccoa Ranger District, Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest  
Fannin County, Georgia

#### I. DECISION

##### A. Description

My decision is to convert the Lake Blue Ridge Campground to a day use recreation site.

##### B. Purpose

The purpose of this action is to convert the Lake Blue Ridge Campground to a day use site emphasizing walking, boat launch, and fishing opportunities. This is in response to changing recreation use patterns and low overnight use at the site. The conversion to day use will require the removal of all restroom facilities and accompanying septic systems, picnic tables, tent pads, fire rings, and lantern poles, among other minor site amenities. The long-term objective of the conversion to day use is to have the level of development reflect the recreational use of the site by providing for lake access and recreational walking on the existing trail and paved road. I believe that conversion of the Lake Blue Ridge site will result in a better experience for the general public.

#### II. REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE DECISION

Decisions may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment when they are within one of the categories identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR part 1b.3 or one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 sections 31.1 or 31.2, and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect.

##### A. Category of Exclusion

The project is within the category of exclusion FSH 1909.15 Section 31.12 (5) Repair and maintenance of recreation sites and facilities.

##### B. Relationship to Extraordinary Circumstances

1. Steep Slopes or Highly Erosive Soils -

The Lake Blue Ridge Campground is situated upon rolling to steep terrain, with the exception of the road and day use recreation areas. The terrain is conducive to the activities included in the decision, since all walking activities occur on flat terrain. To mitigate for potential soil erosion during deconstruction, silt barriers will be placed throughout the campground as required by State and County guidelines. For those activities to remain in this area, there will be no significant soil-related impacts (Planning Record).

2. Threatened and Endangered Species or Their Critical Habitat –

As required by this Act, potential effects of this decision on listed species have been analyzed and documented in a Biological Evaluation (Planning Record). It was determined that this decision will have ‘no effect’ on listed species or their critical habitats.

3. Floodplains, Wetlands, or Municipal Watersheds -

*Floodplains:* Executive Order 11988 is to avoid adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains. Floodplains are defined by this order as, “. . . the lowland and relatively flat areas adjoining inland. . . including at a minimum, that area subject to a one percent [100-year recurrence] or greater chance of flooding in any one year.”

The project is not located in or near floodplains. Lake Blue Ridge is a reservoir operated by the Tennessee Valley Authority. Historical floodplains are currently under the area occupied by the water in the reservoir.

*Wetlands:* Executive Order 11990 is to avoid adverse impacts associated with destruction or modification of wetlands. Wetlands are defined by this order as, “. . . areas inundated by surface or ground water with a frequency sufficient to support and under normal circumstances does or would support a prevalence of vegetative or aquatic life that requires saturated or seasonally saturated soil conditions for growth and reproduction. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas such as sloughs, potholes, wet meadows, river overflows, mud flats, and natural ponds.”

No mechanical equipment use will be allowed within or immediately adjacent to wetland sites. This decision will not affect wetlands.

*Municipal Watersheds:* Municipal watersheds are managed under multiple use prescriptions in forest plans. This decision will not affect municipal watersheds.

4. Congressionally Designated Areas -

Wilderness:

The project is not in or near Wilderness (Forest Plan Management Area 1.A.).

Wilderness Study Areas:

The project is not in or near a Wilderness Study Area.

National Recreation Areas:

This decision will not affect National Recreation Areas.

Wild and Scenic Rivers:

There are no Forest Plan recommended WSR located in or adjacent to the project area.

5. Inventoried Roadless Areas -

The project is not in or near an inventoried roadless area.

6. Research Natural Areas -

There are no Research Natural Areas in the decision area.

7. Native American Religious or Cultural Sites, Archaeological Sites, or Historic Properties or Areas

Surveys were conducted for Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, and historic properties or areas that may be affected by this decision (Planning Record). A 'no properties affected' determination was made. Consultation on this finding occurred with the State Historic Preservation Office (Planning Record ).

8. No other extraordinary circumstances related to the project were identified (Planning Record ).

### **III. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Public involvement included listing in the Forest's Schedule of Proposed Actions, information board announcements, news release (07/05), and meeting(s) with elected officials. No specific issues, concerns or opportunities for changes to the proposed action were received.

Received comments were evaluated to refine the project and analysis. Received comments were also evaluated to explore the possibility of extraordinary circumstances and potential effects to those resources.

### **IV. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY AND/OR RELATED TO OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

My decision will comply with all applicable laws and regulations. I have summarized some pertinent ones below.

Forest Plan Consistency (National Forest Management Act) - This decision is responsive to guiding direction contained in the Chattahoochee-Oconee Forest Plan, as summarized in Section I of this document. This decision is consistent with the standards and guidelines contained in the Forest Plan.

This project is specifically intended to respond to the emphasis of Forest Plan Management by addressing public health and safety within a developed recreation area, 7.E.1 dispersed recreation.

Sensitive Species (Forest Service Manual 2670) - Potential effects of this decision on sensitive species have been analyzed and documented in a Biological Evaluation (Planning Record). This decision will have “no impact” on sensitive species.

Clean Water Act - This Act is to restore and maintain the integrity of waters. The Forest Service complies with this Act through the use of Best Management Practices. This decision incorporates Best Management Practices to ensure protection of soil and water resources.

Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898) - This Order requires consideration of whether projects would disproportionately impact minority or low-income populations. This decision complies with this Act. Public involvement occurred for this project, the results of which I have considered in this decision-making. Public involvement did not identify any adversely impacted local minority or low-income populations. This decision is not expected to adversely impact minority or low-income populations. (Reference the Civil Rights Impact Analysis)

## **V. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL**

This decision is not subject to a higher level of administrative review or appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12(f).

## **VI. IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

These actions are expected to occur in spring of 2006 and continue until completion.

## **VII. CONTACT PERSON**

Further information about this decision can be obtained from Alan Polk at the Brasstown Ranger District, Highway 515, Blairsville, GA 30512; telephone 706-745-6928.

## **VIII. SIGNATURE AND DATE**

I have concluded that this decision may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment as

it is within one of the categories identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR part 1b.3 or one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 sections 31.12 or 31.2, and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect. My conclusion is based on information presented in this document and the entirety of the Planning Record.

/s/ Alan Polk  
Alan Polk  
District Ranger

3/20/06  
Date

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) Should contact USDA's target center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-w, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.