



# NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH • CAROLINA

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

## NEWS • RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

### **U.S. Forest Service Announces Decision on Upper Tellico OHV Trails System**

ASHEVILLE, NC ....The US Forest Service announced today that it is permanently closing the Upper Tellico OHV trail system in order to correct serious erosion problems in the Upper Tellico River watershed in Cherokee County, NC.

“When we first began our analysis we hoped we could make repairs and modifications to the existing OHV Trail system that would correct the water quality problems while still allowing for some level of OHV use in this area to continue,” said National Forests in North Carolina Supervisor Marisue Hilliard. “Unfortunately we discovered that repairing the existing problems and maintaining these Upper Tellico OHV trails in the future would be much more difficult than we expected,” Hilliard said.

“Our analysis has shown the problems to be worse than we first thought,” said Forest Supervisor Hilliard. “The 39 mile Upper Tellico OHV Trail System is currently contributing 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. Many of the trails are on steep slopes and they all occur on very erodible soils. Much of the Tellico OHV trail system runs parallel to streams in the area, with over six miles within 100 feet of streams. The locations of these trails make it extremely difficult to prevent sediment from reaching the streams even if we are successful in repairing existing problems. ” Hilliard said.

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In February, 2009, the Forest Service sought public comment on a detailed environmental assessment which looked at six alternatives for future management of the Upper Tellico OHV trail system including a preferred alternative of closing the OHV trail system.

“After careful considering the 2,400 public comments we received and thoroughly reviewing all alternatives in the environmental assessment, I have selected Alternative C, which closes the OHV System,” said Hilliard. “While we are closing the 39 mile OHV Trail system we will be keeping 13 miles of FS system roads in the area open year round or seasonally for highway legal vehicles. This will provide access for hunting, fishing and other recreation activities. We also will be paving and reconstructing a portion of HW 420-1 which accesses private land and serves as a through route from TN to NC for recreationists visiting the Tellico area. Closed roads and trails will be stabilized and rehabilitated to eliminate future sedimentation into the Tellico River,” Hilliard said.

“While I realize that our OHV recreationists are understandably disappointed with this decision on Tellico, I want to reassure our OHV users that we are committed to maintaining other OHV trail opportunities on the National Forests in North Carolina which are located on more suitable sites” said Hilliard.

Other national forest OHV trail systems in North Carolina include:

Wayehutta, Nantahala NF, 21 miles (21 miles ATV and motorcycle),  
Brown Mountain, Pisgah NF, 34 miles (6 miles 4WD, 27 miles ATV, 34 miles motorcycle)  
Badin Lake, Uwharrie NF, 16 miles (16 miles 4WD, ATV and motorcycle)  
Black Swamp, Croatan NF, 8 miles (8 miles 4WD, ATV and motorcycle)

Copies of the decision notice, environmental assessment, proposed additional supporting documentation can be found at <http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/nepa/tusquitee/tellico.htm>

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