



File Code: 1950

Date: July 27, 2010

Dear Interested Public:

The purposes of this letter are to inform potentially interested parties that the St. Francis Ranger District (the District) of the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests (the Forest) has developed a preliminary proposed action to construct an interpretive hiking trail commemorating the Louisiana Purchase and to solicit comments on it. The proposed project's title is the *Louisiana Purchase Baseline Trail Project*; it will be identified in this letter as the proposed action.

### **Purpose Of and Need For Action**

The Revised Land and Resource Plan for the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests (Forest Plan) identifies a need to shift toward providing more day use activities to meet outdoor recreational needs in the future. These types of activities include sightseeing and trail use. Compared to other Districts on the Forest, trail-based recreation opportunities on the St. Francis Ranger District are currently limited. The purposes of the proposed *Louisiana Purchase Baseline Trail Project* are to provide a trail-based educational and interpretive experience for those visiting the District.

### **The Proposed Action**

Construction of an interpretive hiking trail approximately 2.24 miles in length is being proposed. The route generally follows a portion of the surveyed base line of 1815 extending east to west on National Forest System lands between Forest Development Roads (FDR) 1901 and 1900. This area occurs within Sections 35 and 36, T. 1N, R. 4E in Lee County and Sections 1 and 2 T. 1S, R. 4E in Phillips County as shown on the attached map.

The proposed project area does not contain any acreage designated as a wilderness, a wilderness study area or national recreation site, nor is it within an inventoried roadless area, potential wilderness area, or research natural area. FDR 1900 is designated as three scenic byways: twice as portions of National Scenic Byways (the Crowley's Ridge Parkway National Scenic Byway and the Great River Road National Scenic Byway) and once as a Forest Service designated Scenic Byway (the St. Francis Scenic Byway). FDR 1901 is known locally as the Low Road.

Design standards prescribed by the Forest Service's Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook would be utilized for this project. That document is available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/pubs/pdfpubs/pdf07232806/pdf07232806dpi72.pdf>. Construction of the trail corridor would involve selective removal of non-merchantable trees and brushy vegetation (including root stocks) and branches within a corridor approximately 6 feet wide and 8 feet high. Drainage features and switchbacks would be installed as needed.

The tread would be constructed with hand tools or a small excavator and would consist of native materials. Treated timbers may be utilized to construct structural features such as steps or revetment. The finished tread would be between 18 to 24 inches in width. Interpretive signs would be placed where the trail intercepts the surveyed baseline.

A trailhead with parking for up to 5 passenger vehicles and interpretive signs would be located at each end of the trail. Construction of trailheads would include clearing and grubbing each specified area, spreading aggregate surfacing, and installing the signs.

If any cultural resources are inadvertently discovered during project implementation, construction will be stopped and the appropriate authorities will be notified.

After construction of the trail and trailheads was completed, brush would be cleared from the corridor with hand tools as needed and drainage features would be maintained to ensure they function properly.

This proposed action was designed to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations and with the requirements of the Forest Plan. The Forest Plan is posted on the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests' website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/oof/ozark/projects/planning/planning.html>

#### **Alternatives Currently Being Considered:**

Alternatives currently being considered for this project include 1) a no action alternative in which the trail would not be constructed, and 2) the proposed action alternative as described in this letter.

#### **Submitting Comments:**

We invite you to participate in the development of this project and are asking for your comments on it. Information you provide may help us refine the proposed action, identify pertinent issues related to the proposed action, or develop any additional alternatives or mitigation measures that may be needed. Please be as specific as possible with your comments or in expressing concerns so that we can more effectively address them. Your comments are welcome at any time, but those received within 30 days of this notice will be especially useful in the preparation of the environmental analysis for this project.

At this time, it is anticipated that this action will be excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the following categories of actions listed in FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30:

Section 31.11: "*Educational and informational programs and activities*" [7 CFR 1b.3(a)(4)] and Section 31.2: "*Construction and reconstruction of trails.*" [36 CFR 220.6 (3)(1)]

After completion of the environmental analysis and consideration of all comments received on the proposed action, a decision on whether or not to implement the project will be made and

documented in a Decision Memo. The decision will not be subject to appeal. The Decision Memo will be posted on the St. Francis Ranger District's project webpage at <http://www.fs.fed.us/oonf/ozark/projects/planning/stfrancisproject.html> , and will be available upon request. If you respond to this solicitation and provide a mailing address, a copy of the Decision Memo will be sent to you.

Please note that comments received during this project's development (including names and addresses of those who comment) will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

Your comments can be submitted via the U.S. Postal Service, via e-mail, facsimile, telephone or presented in person at our office. When submitting a comment, please provide the following information:

- Your name and mailing address.
- Title of the proposed action: *Louisiana Purchase Baseline Trail Project*
- Your comments on the proposed action.

Please submit written comments to me: Deputy District Ranger Benjamin L. Battle, St. Francis Ranger District, Ozark-St. Francis National Forests, Attn: *Louisiana Purchase Baseline Trail Project*, 2675 Highway 44, Marianna, AR 72360. Our telephone and FAX numbers are: Phone (870) 295-5278, FAX (870) 295-3382. Hand-delivered comments may be submitted at the St. Francis Ranger District office at the aforementioned address in Marianna within the normal weekday business hours of 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. To mail your comments electronically, use a common digital format (without attachments) and submit it to the following e-mail address: [comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-stfrancis@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-stfrancis@fs.fed.us) .

Thank you for your interest in the management of the St. Francis National Forest. If you have questions regarding this proposed action please contact me at the address or phone number in the previous paragraph or the District's Technical Services Assistant Chris Furr at (870) 269-3228.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Benjamin L. Battle*

BENJAMIN L. BATTLE  
Deputy District Ranger

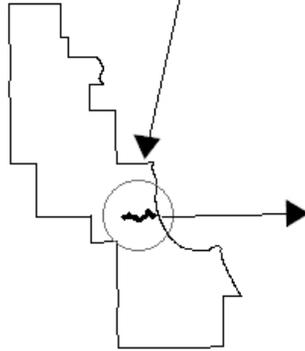
attachment (1 map)  
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# Louisiana Purchase Base Line Trail Project Ozark-St. Francis National Forests

T. 1N, R. 4E, Sections 35 and 36 and T. 1S, R. 4E, Sections 1 and 2



### St. Francis Ranger District Project Vicinity

The Forest Service uses the most recent and complete data available. GIS data and products may vary. They may be developed from sources of differing accuracy, accuracy only at the scale scales, based on model or ground truth data, or complete with being created or revised, etc. Using GIS products for purposes other than those for which they were created may yield inaccurate or misleading results.

The Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace GIS products without notification. For more information contact: Sylvan R. Paige, District, 1001 East Main, Morrilton, AR 72560 (870) 269-3228.

