



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Boston Mountain
Ranger District

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File Code: 1950-1

Date: September 9, 2010

Dear Reader:

The Boston Mountain Ranger District is initiating the National Forest Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for a proposal to improve watershed conditions, recreation experiences, and hunting and wildlife habitat within the Mulberry River Wild and Scenic River (WSR) Corridor on the Boston Mountain Ranger District in Franklin County, Arkansas. Activities would include building canoe access, providing wildlife improvements and improving disabled hunter access. This proposal is known as the **Mulberry River Watershed Improvement and Access Project**. This letter serves as notification to local landowners and others who have an interest in these types of activities. If you do not have an interest in this project, you do not need to respond.

BACKGROUND

In April 1992, Congress designated six Wild and Scenic Rivers on the Ozark National Forest, including the Mulberry River. The area encompassing the Mulberry River Corridor is managed to enhance and protect the outstandingly remarkable values and unique qualities of the river and its surroundings. The Mulberry River has a comprehensive Wild and Scenic River Plan (1996) that provides direction for managing the forest lands within corridor boundaries. The forest also has a Mulberry River Assessment (2010) to guide management planning for the Mulberry River Corridor for the Pleasant Hill and Boston Mountain Ranger Districts.

Recreation and Fisheries are the two outstandingly remarkable values identified for the Mulberry River. The upper section of the Mulberry to Big Eddy Hollow (section 13 T11N R 23W) is classified as recreational. The section west of this downstream to the Forest boundary is classified as scenic.

Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (P.L. 90-542) directs us to protect designated rivers from the harmful effects of water resources projects. It also allows us to initiate projects which must be evaluated and given a determination to ensure there are no harmful effects.

WHY THESE ACTIONS ARE NEEDED

The proposed actions are needed due to increased recreational demands on the Mulberry River and negative impacts to resources as a result of unmanaged recreation. The purpose of the additional canoe access site is to decrease the pressure on Turner Bend for canoe access to facilitate enjoyment of the extraordinary resource values of this Wild and Scenic River. The purpose of the camping restrictions in the user-created Big Eddy dispersed camping area is to improve safety and reduce the negative impacts to water quality, wildlife/fisheries habitat, and visual and scenic resources caused by unmanaged recreation activities such as parking and driving along the channel and flood prone area. These activities are well documented and have been ongoing for over 20 years. This proposal would also move resource conditions toward management guidelines and desired conditions as described in the Ozark – Saint Francis Land



and Resource Management Plan (LRMP 2005) as well as the Mulberry River Wild and Scenic Management Plan and the Mulberry River Assessment. With your help we will look at recreational access issues and opportunities to improve overall watershed conditions as we strive to protect and enhance resources along the river.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Two sites are under review for development of a river access site on the Mulberry River in the Turner Bend area. Site 1 is located below the Highway 23 bridge on the west side of the river in the small game area. Site 2 is located further downstream at the “Big Eddy” dispersed recreation location (see map).

Proposed Recreation Actions at the small game area

- Construct a gravel road from shores lake road through the game area to access the river (0.36 mile).
- Develop a parking lot and canoe-small boat launch site.
- Develop picnic sites with picnic tables and grills at appropriate locations.
- Install toilet facilities.
- Designate area as a Day-Use Only Site – do not allow overnight dispersed use in this flood prone area to protect the public by reducing potential negative effects of flash flood events on public safety.

Proposed Recreation Actions at the Big Eddy Site

- Reconstruct and pave Shores Lake Road#1501 from Highway 23 to Big Eddy Site (2.5 miles).
- Develop a road, parking lot, and canoe-small boat launch site, to provide access to the gravel bar at Big Eddy for canoe and small boat entry into the river.
- Install toilet facilities.
- Develop picnic sites with picnic tables and grills at appropriate locations.
- Designate area as a Day-Use Only Site – eliminate overnight dispersed use in this flood prone area to reduce resource damage and protect water quality; protect the public by reducing potential negative effects of flash flood events on public safety.
- Eliminate user-created roads and trails in this area to control access and reduce resource damage.

WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Native Grassland Restoration: Turner Bend Fields (Turner Bend Small Game Area): Eradicate non-native sercia lespedeza, fescue and Bermuda grass on 72 acres of existing fields through herbicide treatments. Following herbicide treatments, the fields will be planted in native warm season grasses and a quail forb mix. Approximately 3 to 5 years following establishment of the grasses, the area will need to be maintained through prescribed burning, disking on an annual or

bi-annual rotation, or hay removal. Other activities may include the planting of shrub thickets (wild plum, dogwood, elderberry, blackberry, sumac) or existing thickets left around edges of the fields for quail covey headquarters. This activity will improve wildlife habitat for quail, turkey, neotropical migratory birds, deer, small mammals and monarch butterflies.

Mobility Impaired Hunting Blinds/Access: Two areas within the Turner Bend Small Game Area will have portable wheelchair accessible ground hunting blinds placed during the gun deer and turkey hunting seasons. These blinds will be available to mobility impaired hunters through a reservation system on a first come first serve basis and youth mobility impaired hunters will receive first priority. These blinds will be removed after the gun seasons.

Bank stabilization/watershed improvement: With the anticipated canoe launch, there will be approximately 5 acres of watershed improvement work that will be needed. This can include any or all of the following: closure of illegal trails and roads, hardening of stream crossings, revegetation, stream bank stabilization and mulching if sufficient topsoil does not remain on disturbed sites in the riparian areas.

COMMENTS REQUESTED:

I invite your comments on the proposed action. The Interdisciplinary Team will use your comments as they identify issues and develop alternatives to the proposal for my consideration. The team will analyze the proposed action and alternatives and summarize the disclosure of environmental effects in an environmental document which will be available to the general public on our website at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/oonf/ozark/projects/planning/bostonmtnproject.html>. The environmental document will be mailed to those who have commented on this proposal and to those who request a copy.

Please use the enclosed comment form. Our mailing address is: U. S. Forest Service, 1803 N 18th Street, Ozark, AR 72949. You may also call, or email your comments to: *comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-bostonmtn@fs.fed.us*. All comments are public information and will be released, unless otherwise requested. If you have questions on this proposal or the analysis decision process, please call John Lane or me at 479-667-2191.

The Forest Service will accept appeals of the decision only from those who commented or expressed interest in the proposal before the close of the 30-day comment period beginning the day after the date of the legal notice of availability of this information in the *Southwest Times Record*, the newspaper of record for projects on the Boston Mountain Ranger District.

Sincerely,

ROB KOPACK



Deputy District Ranger

Acting D.R.

***Mulberry River Watershed Improvement and Access Project
Boston Mountain Ranger District, Ozark National Forest***

Name: _____

Address: _____

Date: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Comments:

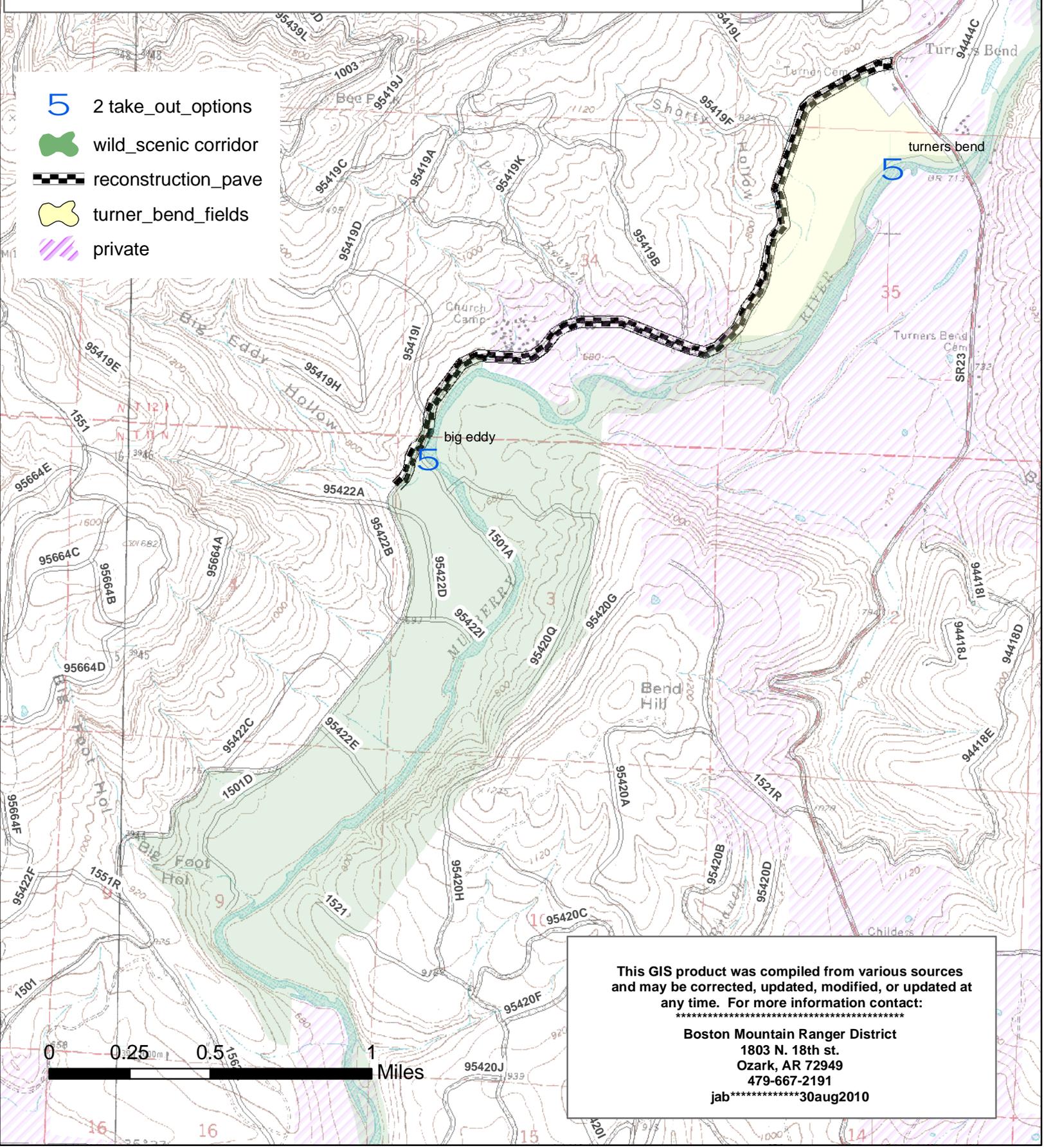
Please mail your completed comment form to Jobi Brown at 1803 North 18th Street, Ozark, AR 72949. Comments are also accepted verbally at 479-667-2191 or TTY 479-667-1931, or by email at comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-bostonmtn@fs.fed.us. Your input is important.



Mulberry River Watershed Improvement and Access Project

Ozark-St. Francis National Forests
Boston Mountain Ranger District
Franklin County, AR

-  2 take_out_options
-  wild_scenic_corridor
-  reconstruction_pave
-  turner_bend_fields
-  private



This GIS product was compiled from various sources and may be corrected, updated, modified, or updated at any time. For more information contact:

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