



**DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

FOR

Beasley Knob OHV Trail Improvement Project

**USDA Forest Service
Southern Region
Blue Ridge Ranger District
Chattahoochee National Forest
Union County, Georgia**

Background

The Blue Ridge Ranger District of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest manages three OHV trail systems for total of 27.7 miles of OHV trails. The Beasley Knob OHV Trail system currently provides approximately 10.6 miles of recreational riding for OHV enthusiasts, including those riding motorcycles, ATVs, and full-size, 4WD vehicles. This system accounts for approximately 38 percent of the total OHV miles on the District and 10 percent of all OHV mileage on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests. The area receives an estimated 15,000 operator visits each year and is accessible from the Blue Rock and Satterfield Trailheads, both located off of U. S. Highway 76 three miles East of Blairsville, Georgia.

In 2011, a collaborative Trails Assessment was conducted on the Beasley Knob OHV Trail system by the U. S. Forest Service, an experienced trails contractor, and representatives from interested user groups; Georgia Bounty Runners and GARTRA. At the conclusion of this assessment, a management plan that included public input, trail inventory, assessment data, and recommendations was developed and provided to the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests for implementation. This assessment provides the framework for management activities within the Beasley Knob OHV Trail System to improve manageability, ascertain more durable and sustainable maintenance practices, and enhance the visitor experience.

The proposed action for this project was released in June of 2012, beginning the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. Through the NEPA process, the proposed action was released for public review and comment. These public comments, along with further review from the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) and consultation with user groups, resulted in minor changes to the proposed action and development of an alternative (Alternative 3), which included additional mileage that incorporates and creates looped trail opportunities for motorized trails within the Beasley Knob OHV Trail System.

Purpose and Need for Action

With the continued increase in the amount of OHV enthusiasts, it is imperative that the areas designated for recreational OHV use on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests are managed in a manner that is consistent with responsible recreation use and sustainability. The Beasley Knob OHV Trail System is readily accessible from many metropolitan areas in the Southeast. It is expected that the average number of annual visits to the Beasley Knob OHV Trail System will increase as the number of OHV owners and enthusiasts increase.



The purpose and need for this project is to address issues identified in the Beasley Knob Trail System Assessment; namely enhancing visitor safety and enjoyment as well as environmental sustainability. More specifically, the existing trail system does not maximize the use of its mileage nor provide options of off-road trail experiences for users with varying experience levels. In its present state, the trail system does not provide recreation experience for less adept visitors and vehicles or those seeking a less challenging trail experience. This action responds to the following goals and objectives outlined in the *Land and Resource Management Plan for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests (January 2004)* and helps move the project area towards desired conditions described in that plan.

Forest-wide Goals:

Recreation Opportunities and Experiences

- **Goal 31:** Provide a spectrum of high quality, nature-based recreation settings and opportunities that reflect the unique or exceptional resources of the Forest and the interests of the recreating public on an environmentally sustainable, financially sound, and operationally effective basis. Adapt management of recreation facilities and opportunities as needed to shift limited resources to those opportunities.
- **Goal 32:** Provide for the physical security of the forest visitor commensurate with the recreation setting.
- **Goal 34:** Trails do not adversely affect soil and water resources.

In addition to responding to the goals and objectives set forth in the *Land and Resource Management Plan for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests (January 2004)*, this project implements many of the management recommendations included in the Beasley Knob Trail Assessment, which provides the framework for this project.

Beasley Knob OHV Trail Assessment Management Recommendations:

Trail Closure Recommendations

- **93E/Wall:** The difficulty in managing water, corralling use to one trail, and minimizing resource impacts in the spectating area are costs that outweigh the benefit of a short connector trail that does not significantly add to the recreational opportunities on this trail system and receives limited use...and represents the largest personal safety issue on the trail system and is not accessible by any existing Forest Service vehicle.
- **Hospital Cove:** The wetland area crossing Hospital cove should be *closed, mitigated, and rerouted*. Ideally this reroute should begin and end approximately 50 to 100 vertical feet above the existing crossing; preliminary assessment of this area found no apparent water resources and would be considered a side-hill route.
- **Dead-End Sections:** The dead-end sections of 93G/Nelson Cove and 93/Roundtop Mountain provide relatively less user satisfaction than looping trails and as a result, do not see the volume of use that the existing intact loops receive, which is critical to spreading visitor density, maintenance dollars and efforts efficiently across the entire system.



Heavy Maintenance:

- Sections 93/Roundtop Mountain, 93B/Blue Rock, 93C/Nicholson Gap, 93D/Bridge Gap, 93F/Connector Trail, and 93G/Nelsons Cove have been identified as needing heavy maintenance in the form of light armoring (#3 stones embedded four inches into the trail), heavy armoring (large rocks embedded into the trail), or both, to properly maintain drainage structures on trail segments with a grade over 30 percent.

Trail Expansion:

- The creation of new loop trail opportunities that are less challenging would encourage the dispersal of visitor use across more of the trail system and better serve the recreational experience needs that the trail system currently lacks.

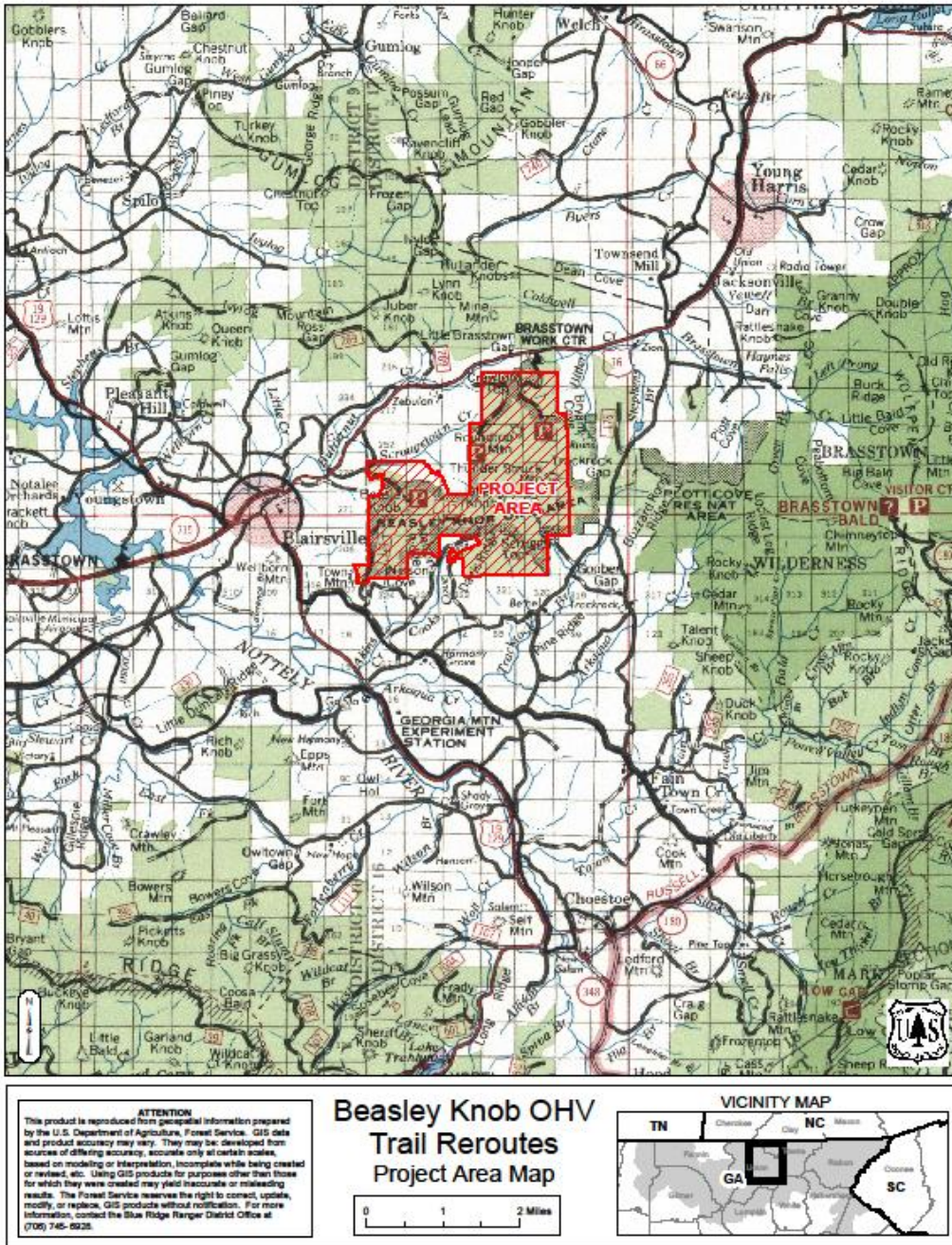
The purpose of this project is to improve the sustainability and user experience of the Beasley Knob Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Trail System in Union County, Georgia. The Trail System is located approximately three miles East of Blairsville, Georgia in the Nottely River/Nottely Lake watershed, which is a sub-basin of the Tennessee River basin. A developed network of trails has been identified for use by motorized vehicles intended for unpaved roads, including four-wheel-drive (4x4) and all-terrain (ATV) vehicles and trail bicycles. At present, the unsustainable grades of some sections of trail are creating conditions that have can have adverse impacts on the resources, user safety and enjoyment.

However, in order to accomplish the improvements and recommendations, the Land and Resource Management Plan will need to be amended. Currently, Standard 8.E.3-010 states that there can be “no new OHV trails”. For this project, this standard will need to be amended to allow for the new trail segments to be constructed.

This decision notice documents my decision to implement Alternative 3, as described in the Beasley Knob OHV Trail Improvement Project Environmental Assessment (EA). The environmental and social effects of this alternative, the Proposed Action, as well as No Action, are described in detail within the EA, Section 2.1.

The Blue Ridge Ranger District is proposing to construct 3.95 miles of new trail to create loop opportunities to replace dead-end routes and reduce resource impacts at various trail segments within the Beasley Knob OHV Trail System. This project will improve user safety by eliminating dead-end routes, improve the sustainability of the trail by armoring steep sections to prevent soil erosion, and improve the overall enjoyability of the trail system for users.

Figure 1. Project Area and Vicinity Map





DECISION

After consideration of the Beasley Knob OHV Trail Improvement Project Environmental Assessment (EA), I have decided to implement Alternative 3. Alternative 3 meets the project's purpose and need by creating a sustainable motorized trail system through decommissioning and rehabilitating unsustainable sections, creating loop opportunities to improve user safety, and armoring trails using large boulders and other means to reduce soil erosion and improve water quality. This decision will implement direction in the Chattahoochee-Oconee Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as outlined in Goal 31 "Provide...high quality...environmentally sustainable (recreation opportunities)" (p. 2-31), Goal 34 "Trails do not adversely affect soil and water resources." (p. 2-32), and the General Standards for Management Prescription 11-Riparian Corridors.

My decision is based on Forest Plan direction for management area 8.E.3 (High Elevation, Early Successional Habitat), but my decision will also involve amending a standard in the Forest Plan to allow this project to move forward. The specific actions are described below and in the EA, Section 2.1.

My decision would include the following activities:

- Construct approximately 3.95 miles of new trail to create loop opportunities, replace dead end routes, and reduce resource impacts to 93/Roundtop Mountain, 93D/Bridge Gap, and 93G/Nelson Cove. Construction will include trails capable of supporting OHV vehicles with an approximate 96"-120" tread. When necessary, water control techniques such as grade dips and armoring will be used to reduce the potential for future soil movement and loss. More specifically, trail construction will create the following trail additions:
 - A .70 mile trail addition to 93/Roundtop to create a loop option and convert approximately .75 miles of FS 745 into the Beasley Knob Trail system.
 - One mile trail relocation, including decommissioning and rehabilitation of an existing .25 mile section of 93D/Bridge Gap; reducing riparian area impacts in Hospital Cove.
 - A 1.5 mile trail addition to 93G/Nelson Cove, to create a loop option and eliminate .40 miles of dead-end route leading to the FS gate at the head of Nelson Cove.
- Decommission and rehabilitate the following sections of trail that have significant resource impacts and are unsustainable in nature:
 - 0.20 miles of 93E/Hill Climb
- Heavy maintenance in the form of armoring will be performed on the following trail sections: 93, 93B, 93C, 93D, 93F, 93G.
- Use native materials such as logs, stones, downed brush, and leaves, close and rehabilitate approximately 3 miles of trail that will be abandoned upon completion of the relocation routes. If necessary, use mechanized equipment to reshape and scarify the old trail tread to reduce water movement and aid in the re-vegetation of abandoned trail sections. Plant a Forest Service-approved seed mixture in these sections.
- Amend Standard 8.E.3-010 in the Forest Plan which states that there will be "no new OHV trails", to allow for the construction of 3.95 miles of new OHV trail segments within the Beasley Knob project area.
- The removal and sale of timber incidental to trail construction, relocation, and maintenance.

Best management practices for erosion control will be used to prevent soil erosion of the treated sites, including the use of surface water control practices, seeding exposed soils on closed trails, mulching as needed, and installing temporary silt fences and/or hay bales where needed. Mechanical equipment such as bulldozers and small track hoes will be used to construct water control measures, shape eroded trail treads, and install vehicle barriers. Seed and fertilizer will be applied using farm tractors or ATVs with seed distribution equipment mounted on the rear of the equipment.

Figure 2. Map of Alternative 3

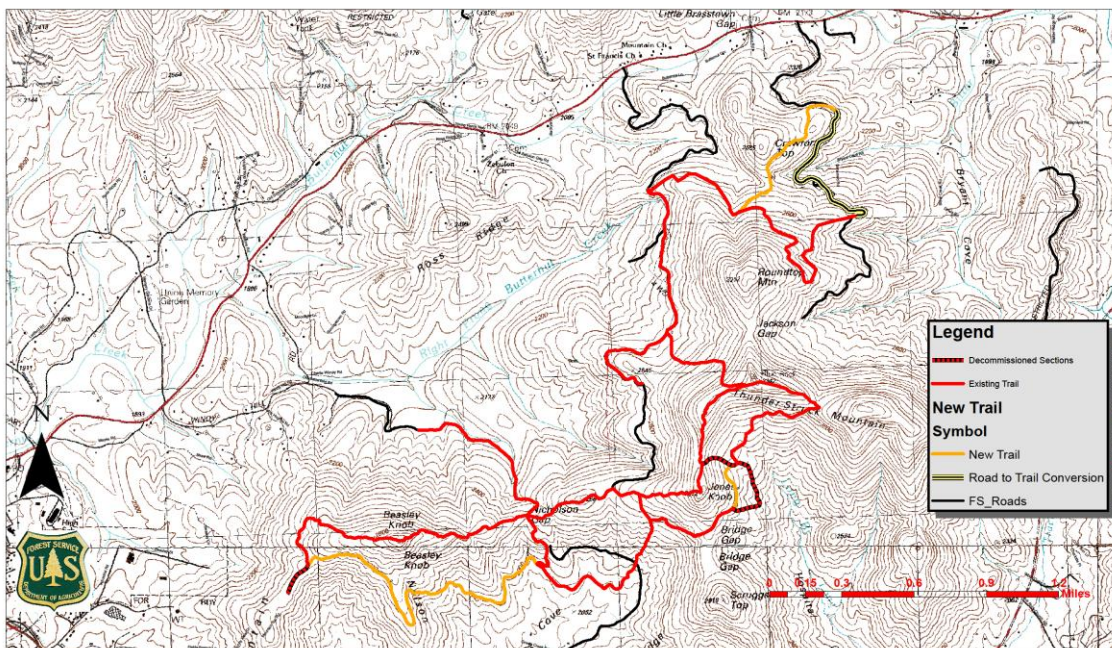


Table 1. Alternative 3

Proposed Activities	Alternative 3
Miles of new trail to be constructed	3.95
Miles of trail to decommission	.85
Miles of road to convert to trail	.75
	*Included in total number of new trail construction
Total Miles of trail to maintain	13.7



DESIGN FEATURES

Applicable Forest Plan standards and guidelines, Best Management Practices, and Forest Service Manual and Handbook direction will be incorporated in implementation. The following features are design elements that further detail management actions and mitigate environmental consequences.

Wet Weather Conditions

The motorized trail system will be subject to the wet weather travel restrictions that will temporarily close the trail system to motorized vehicle use when heavy precipitation or ice causes saturation of soils or dangerous driving conditions. Closures are implemented as an administrative decision, based on weather conditions to allow flexibility due to the variable weather of the area.

Wildlife

- In areas where potential roost trees for the Indiana Bat may be present, slight trail modifications will be made to avoid potential roost trees and those trees that may be unavoidable, will be felled prior to March 31, when the roosting season begins.

Trail Construction

- In road to trail conversion for OHVs, a trail surface of 96''-120'', using the old road bed for trail tread will be constructed and limited to locations where a road is no longer needed for any administrative purposes in a suitable trail location.
- Road to trail conversion may require additional trail structures and features including rolling dips and integrated water control with drainage.

Safety

- Trail design will incorporate numerous curves and few long, straight sections, while also incorporating line of sight for safety purposes.
- Signage indicating trail direction at junctions will be installed to ensure that users navigate successfully through newly constructed trail loops.

Noxious/Invasive Weeds

- For new construction, decommissioning, and rehabilitation, all mechanized heavy equipment to be used off of system roads will be cleaned prior to entering the project area. This is to reduce the likelihood of introduction or spread of non-native invasive plants. In addition, high risk areas will be treated prior to construction activity as a mitigation because the high risk for spread due to this project.
- Disturbed soils would be sown with perennial native grasses or non-persistent, non-native species. Successful establishment of vegetation should reduce microsites for non-native invasive plant establishment. Additionally, the use of mulch may also prevent establishment of non-native invasive plants. The use of weed-free mulch and hay will be used as much as possible.



Monitoring

Trail Assessment and Condition Surveys (TRACS) is the current method used by the Forest Service to monitor trail conditions and needs. TRACS is a systematic and standard approach for collecting and updating field data on trail conditions and determining needs to meet trail standards to provide for public health and safety, reduce soil erosion and sediment, and deliver quality recreational experiences. The National Forest Service protocols require the completion of some type of trail assessment and condition survey on an annual basis. Currently, the Blue Ridge Ranger District is performing trail assessments and surveys in accordance with this requirement.

TRACS will be an important monitoring tool for the improvements that are being made to the Beasley Knob OHV Trail System. The Trail Management Objectives (TMOs), which are the cornerstone of how the trail is managed, will be updated for trails that are being transformed into loop trails and changed for trails that are being decommissioned. Volunteer organizations such as the Georgia Bounty Runners and CoTrails, will assist the Blue Ridge Ranger District in monitoring trail conditions and performing TRACS surveys on the Beasley Knob OHV Trail System.

DECISION RATIONALE

After thorough review of the analysis as documented in the EA, I have determined that Alternative 3 complies with all laws and regulations, including the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended (see the Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations section below), and meets the project's purpose and need by:

- Providing safe and enjoyable solutions through the creation of loop trails that meet the increasing public demand of motorized OHV trails, while protecting Forest resources.
- Implementing actions that will assist in achieving Forest-wide Goals 22 and 25 to protect soil, water, and aquatic resources.

After review of the Environmental Assessment and issues identified by the public and Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team), I have determined that mitigation measures and design features will avoid or minimize the impact of all potential effects.

The reason I have chosen Alternative 3 rather than the No Action Alternative or the Proposed Action is because this alternative will optimize the Beasley Knob OHV Trail System by providing greater recreation opportunity and greater accessibility, while achieving a decrease in soil erosion and increase in user safety within the project area. Alternative 3 will provide a total of 13.7 miles of trail capable of supporting OHVs, which is one mile more than in the Proposed Action.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The public scoping period began on May 22, 2012. Hard copies of the scoping letters, including the proposed action and map, were sent to 5 individuals, and one State agency, identified as being potentially interested through the quarterly Schedule of Proposed Activities (SOPA). An email containing the scoping letter, proposed action, and map were also sent to 68 contacts; the mailing list was comprised of potentially interested contacts from the Blue Ridge Ranger District Public Scoping list.

Members of the public and other government agencies were supportive of the project; however, concerns regarding the minimal additional mileage that the Proposed Action included were raised by volunteer organizations. Concerns during the public scoping period were used to identify issues, which were addressed in the Environmental Assessment. In response to the comments received, Alternative 3 was created to address the needs of motorized users by providing more loop opportunities and better



connectivity within the project area. Comments received during the public scoping period can be found in the project record.

The Environmental Assessment was released for 30-day public comment period beginning on November 14, 2012 ending after December 14, 2012. Legal notices were posted in the Gainesville Times, the North Georgia News, and the News Observer announcing the comment period November 14, 2012, ending on December 14, 2012. The Blue Ridge Ranger District did not receive any comments during the public comment period for this project.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

In addition to Alternative 3, Alternative 1: No Action and Alternative 2: Proposed Action were analyzed. Under the No Action Alternative, current management plans would continue to guide the management of the project area and existing conditions would continue. The No Action Alternative was determined to not meet the Purpose and Need of the Project because it would not improve current trail conditions and fail to meet the public demands for a more sustainable motorized trail system. Under Alternative 2: Proposed Action, the creation of loop trails would be implemented, as well as decommissioning and rehabilitation of unsustainable trail segments and the armoring of steep trail sections. Alternative 3 was determined to best meet the Purpose and Need of the project by providing a more comprehensive, sustainable trail system, while mitigating resource damage.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS OR REGULATIONS

The planning and decision-making process for this project was conducted in accordance with all applicable laws, regulations, policies, and plans. This section briefly describes my findings regarding the legal requirements most relevant to this project decision.

- ***National Pollution Discharge Elimination System:*** At this time, there is uncertainty whether a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit would be required for stormwater discharges from logging roads. A Supreme Court decision is expected in the first half of 2013, and could affect whether any NPDES permitting requirements apply to stormwater discharges from logging roads.
- ***National Forest Management Act and 36 CFR 219 Regulations:*** Alternative 3 complies with the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests Forest Plan as amended. This project is in compliance with the Forest Plan's goals and objectives, and it incorporates all applicable forest-wide standards and guidelines and management area direction as they apply to the project area. All required interagency review and coordination has also been accomplished.

The plan amendment part of this decision was made under the provisions of the 1982 planning regulations. According to 36 CFR 219.17(b), during the transition period that ends on May 9, 2015, the responsible official may elect to conduct the plan amendment process under the provisions of the prior regulation (which includes the transition period in the 2000 regulations that allows for the use of the regulations in effect before November 9, 2000 [the "1982 planning regulations"].)

After reviewing the Environmental Assessment that includes this amendment to the Forest Plan, I have determined that the decision to implement this amendment will not result in a significant change to the Forest Plan. This determination was made after consulting 16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f) (1982 regulations), Forest Service Manual 1926.51 and 1926.52. Based on these planning requirements, I have determined that:

- This amendment will not significantly alter the levels of goods and services projected by the Forest Plan; nor will it prevent the opportunity to achieve those outputs in later years.
 - This amendment will not affect the entire land management plan, nor will it affect a large portion of the planning area during the planning period.
 - The effects on one threatened and endangered species (Indiana Bat), and 15 Forest Service (Region 8) management indicator species (MIS) that are found or have potential habitat in the project area were also considered. A Biological Evaluation (BE) for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species was prepared for this project and effects are summarized in the EA.
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- ***National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA); Archeological Resources Protection Act; American Indian Religious Freedom Act; Executive Order 11593 (Cultural Resources):*** Cultural resource surveys within the project were performed and it was determined that there were not any cultural resources present. It was determined in the cultural resources heritage survey that activity in the project area would not affect cultural resources (Vaughters 2012 and Wettstead 2012).
 - ***Endangered Species Act:*** Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires that Federal agencies consult with the USFWS, as appropriate, to ensure that our actions do not jeopardize the continued existence of species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA, or destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat. A Biological Evaluation for threatened and endangered species was submitted to the USFWS. The USFWS concurred with the Forest Service’s determination that Alternative 3 “may affect but is not likely to adversely affect threatened or endangered species”.



FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

After considering the environmental effects as described in the EA, I have determined that the actions described in Alternative 3 will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, considering the context of the project area and intensity or severity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

Context and Intensity

This project is a site-specific action that by itself does not make international, national, regional, or statewide decisions. The Forest Service proposes to construct new trail segments in an existing motorized, OHV trail system located within the Blue Ridge Ranger District of the Chattahoochee National Forest. The scope of this decision is specific to the project area of the Beasley Knob OHV Trail System.

The following discussion is organized the ten intensity factors described in the National Environmental Policy Act regulations (40 CFR 1508.27) as they pertain to the context of the Beasley Knob OHV Trail Improvement Project under Alternative 3.

1. Neither beneficial nor adverse effects are significant.

Direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the project activities on various resources are disclosed and discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA and associated project record. While implementation of this alternative may result in slight impacts to resources and slight increased economic activity, these effects would be extremely limited or immeasurable when measured at the scale of wildlife populations, the local economy, or at the watershed scale. As a result, while there may be both beneficial and adverse effects, their intensity would be of minor intensity.

2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety.

Alternative 3 was developed to address the public's desire for a more sustainable and enjoyable trail system with more trail connectivity in the Beasley Knob OHV Trail System. The design features and mitigation measures of Alternative 3 were designed to provide for a safe and sustainable motorized recreation experience. As a result, no significant effects are expected to public health or safety (see EA Chapter 3, Recreation and EA Chapter 2, Design Features).

3. There will be no significant effects on the unique characteristics of the area, such as historic or cultural resources, designated park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas (research natural areas).

There are no designated park lands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas in or around the project area; therefore, there are no effects on these unique characteristics. Historic and cultural resources are numerous on the Chattahoochee National Forest; however they are predicted to be sparse and primarily historic within the project area. No ground disturbing activities will be permitted within known historic and cultural sites sensitive to disturbance in order to protect these resources.

Alternative 3 would not pose a risk to riparian area function and downstream water quality because of adequate design features and implementation of soil and watershed BMP's (see EA Chapter 3, Soil and Water and Chapter 3 Aquatic Habitat).

4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial.

The determination as to whether the potential effects of this proposal will be controversial is subjective. OHV recreation can cause impacts to wildlife, water quality, soil quality, air quality, and enjoyment of non-motorized users. Public concerns and input have been considered throughout the analysis process, resulting in the creation of Alternative 3. The best available science was used to mitigate these impacts and develop an alternative that would have a minimal impact. I am certain that the effects on the quality of human environment are not likely to be highly controversial from a scientific or technical standpoint, as the purpose of this project is to create a more sustainable trail system. These effects are documented in the EA and are typical for the action proposed (see EA Chapter 3, Environmental Consequences, and EA Chapter 5, References).

5. The degree of possible effects on the human environment is not highly uncertain, nor are there unique or unknown risks involved.

The effects analysis in Chapter 3 of the EA discloses the effects related to project activities including constructing new trails, decommissioning roads and trail segment, and armoring steep sections of trail. The selected actions included in Alternative 3 are routine in nature; land management agencies have established and managed motorized trail systems for over 30 years in every part of the country. The approved alternative includes implementing standard practices and protection measures and the effects are well known (see EA Chapter 3, Environmental Consequences). These effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk on the human environment.

6. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Improvements made to the Beasley Knob OHV Trail System are not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. This decision responds to the need to protect forest resources while providing a diverse trail system that meets the increasing demand for motorized recreation in the Beasley Knob OHV Trail System on the Blue Ridge Ranger District. The decision in no way represents a decision in principle about a future consideration in the project area or on other locations on the Forest or surrounding areas.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The cumulative impacts to different resource areas are discussed and disclosed in Chapter 3 of the EA. None of the effects were determined to be cumulatively significant.

8. The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

While historic and cultural resources are numerous on the Blue Ridge Ranger District, none have been found within the project area. Archaeologists have surveyed this area and determined that there were not any cultural or historic resources.



9. The action is not likely to adversely affect any threatened or endangered species or their habitat that has been determined to be critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

There is a potential habitat for the endangered Indiana Bat, however, mitigation efforts will be made to avoid these areas as much as possible. In addition, trees that have been identified as potential roost trees will be felled prior to the breeding season to ensure that impacts to the Indiana Bat are limited.

Consultation was completed with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) following preparation of a Biological Assessment and Evaluation for this project. The USFWS concurred with the Forest Service's determination that Alternative 3 is not likely to adversely affect the Indiana Bat or its critical habitat or other threatened or Endangered Species (04EG1000-2013-R-0297).

10. The action will not violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Alternative 3 is consistent with applicable Federal, State, and local laws for protecting the environment.

IMPLEMENTATION

This project may be implemented 5 business days following the close of the appeal filing period established by the legal notice of decision in the *Gainesville Times*, *North Georgia News*, and *News Observer* if no appeals are filed. If an appeal is filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, 15 business days following the date of the last appeal disposition.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITY

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to regulations at 36 CFR 215. Individuals or organizations who provided comment or otherwise expressed interest in the proposed actions during the comment period may appeal. Interest expressed or comments provided on this project prior to or after the close of the comment period do not have standing for appeal purposes.

The appeal must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, express delivery, or messenger service) with the appropriate Appeal Deciding Officer. Submit appeals to:

LIZ AGPAOA, REGIONAL FORESTER
USDA SOUTHERN REGION (R8)
1720 PEACHTREE RD. NW
ROOM 700B NORTH
ATLANTA, GA 30309
FAX: (404) 347-4821

If hand delivered, the appeal must be received at the above address during business hours (Monday - Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm), excluding holidays. Electronic appeals may be submitted to vcmorris@fs.fed.us with (.doc, .docx, .rtf, .pdf, or .txt formats only). The appeal must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. Names and addresses of appellants will become part of the public record. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic appeals. Upon receipt of an electronically-mailed appeal, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated electronic acknowledgement, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.



Appeals, including attachments, must be in writing, fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14, and filed (postmarked) within 45 days following the date the legal notice is published in the *Gainesville Times*, *North Georgia News*, and *The News Observer*. The publication date is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframes provided by any other source.

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

CONTACT PERSON

Additional information regarding this project can be obtained from Valencia Morris, District Recreation Program Manager, Blue Ridge Ranger District via electronic mail at vcmorris@fs.fed.us or via phone at (706) 745-6928, ext. 118.

DAVID SCHMID,
Acting Forest Supervisor
Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

2/28/13

Date

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