



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

P.O. Box 1960
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Clarkesville, GA 30523

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File Code: 2720

Date: October 8, 2004

Dear Forest Stakeholder:

Chattooga Ranger District personnel are in the process of considering a special use application from Alltel to install telephone line at a site on the northeast side of Yonah Mountain on National Forest System (NFS) lands in White County, Georgia. Alltel presently holds a special use permit for other sites on NFS lands on the Chattahoochee National Forest, therefore the addition of the requested line would require an amendment to their permit.

The Alltel request involves installation of approximately 1,750 feet of telephone cable and support strand that would be attached to existing powerline poles in cooperation with the Habersham Electric Membership Corporation (HEMC). A minimum amount of soil and vegetation disturbance would occur during the installation process. This project is needed to provide telephone service to new residents whose property is accessed through Mt. Yonah Scenic Estates via Glenn's Drive (map available upon request).

As per the application, Alltel also considered placing this telephone line underground, but determined that the aerial method was preferred due primarily to environmental considerations. The project site is along a one-lane road, and underground installation would involve digging through rock and under culverts on steep topography, which would increase the possibility of soil erosion. Alternative routes for the telephone line on private lands were also assessed, but there are no other accessible routes available that would not require use of NFS lands.

I would like to hear from you regarding this proposal before making a decision. The requested actions appear to fall into a category of actions that may be excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment. This determination, however, will not be finalized until after consideration of your comments and concerns. The proposal is a starting point for discussion and analysis and no decisions have been made. Responses from the local community, interested individuals and groups, other government agencies, and Forest Service employees are needed to help determine the extent of analysis so we meet the intent of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Comments received help us to assess the proposal and indicate the type of mitigation and monitoring measures that may be needed.

Responses should contain relevant facts or comments along with supporting reasons that we would then consider in reaching a final decision on this proposal. Comments received, including names, become part of the public record and are available for public review. **To have your comments considered in our decision process, we would appreciate receiving your comments by October 22, 2004.** This will help ensure a complete and thorough analysis of the proposal. Send your written comments to the Chattooga Ranger District at the address provided on the letterhead.



You may also comment by phone or fax (see letterhead), by e-mail to bboydstun@fs.fed.us, or in person at our office on Highway 197 North in Clarkesville, Georgia. Please note that you will be sent further correspondence on this proposal **only** if you comment or request further correspondence on the proposed amendment to the Alltel permit.

In general, the special use process involves a careful review of each application received to determine how the request would affect NFS lands and the public's use of NFS lands. Special use applications must be consistent with Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and special orders that apply to the national forests. Applications are closely examined to determine whether the proposal is an appropriate use of NFS land and whether it is dependent upon NFS land. Applications must also be consistent with the Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests (January, 2004), including all objectives and standards for management of the lands where a proposed special use area(s) is located.

This letter is being sent to organizations and individuals who have previously participated or been interested in our project proposals, specific areas, or specific uses of the Forest. This letter assumes that you have some familiarity with the planning process as conducted by the Forest Service in accordance with NEPA. If you are receiving this letter and are unsure of the context or how to participate, please contact us at the Chattooga Ranger District. Management of the National Forest is a public trust and is best conducted with broad participation.

Thank you for your interest and involvement.

Sincerely,

/s/ Michael Gryson

MICHAEL GRYSON
District Ranger