

DECISION MEMO

Pinhoti Trailhead Parking and Horse Camp Construction
Armuchee-Cohutta Ranger District
Chattahoochee National Forest
USDA Forest Service
Chattooga County, Georgia

DECISION

I have decided to construct a trailhead parking lot and adjacent horse camp as part of the Pinhoti Trail development project. The facility construction is located off Forest Road 226 in Chattooga County in an area known as Dry Creek.

The purpose of the construction is to provide day use parking and overnight camping for equestrians and other trail users and national forest visitors. The horse camp is needed as there are no developed camping facilities for equestrians in this popular horse riding area. The developed horse camp will provide more resource protection, public safety and security than is otherwise afforded by unmanaged dispersed camping. The parking lot is needed as there is no safe, secure area for horse trailer or other vehicle parking in the vicinity.

The facility construction will support the large-scale Pinhoti Trail Construction project, a multi-phase project that develops a long distance trail from Alabama across Georgia linking to and effectively extending the length of the nationally significant Appalachian Trail.

The following actions will be implemented:

1. Construction of a 22,000 square foot gravel parking area suitable for vehicles with horse trailers.
2. Construction of a fully developed equestrian camping area and access road.
3. Installation of an ADA toilet.
4. Construction of a potable well and hand pump water system.
5. Construction of a horse watering station.

REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE DECISION

Decisions may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment when they are within one of the categories identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in [7 CFR part 1b.3](#) or one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in [Forest Service Handbook \(FSH\) 1909.15 sections 31.1b or 31.2](#), and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect.

A. Category of Exclusion

The specific category – identified in the Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, “Environmental Policy and Procedures” Section 31.1b – is described below:

Category 5 – Orders issued pursuant to 36 CFR Part 261: Repair and maintenance of recreation sites and facilities.

B. Relationship to Extraordinary Circumstances

The project interdisciplinary team conducted the environmental analysis. The ID team consisted of the following individuals:

Debra Whitman – District Ranger
Larry Thomas – Operations Leader
Larry Holsomback – Engineering Technician
Ruth Stokes – Wildlife Biologist
Becky Bruce - Archeologist

Based on interdisciplinary team findings, I have determined that no extraordinary circumstances exist that could cause the actions involved to have significant effects. The following were considered in the decision making process:

- The biological evaluation (BE) completed for this project determined there would not be any adverse effects on proposed, endangered, threatened, or sensitive species.
- This action complies with the National Historic Preservation Act. A cultural resource survey determined that the project will have no effect on heritage resources.
- This action will not affect wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, erosive soils, or municipal watersheds.
- This project does not contain any Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas.
- This proposal is consistent with state and other federal environmental laws and regulations such as state approved Best Management Practices, the Endangered Species Act, Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

On April 18, 2000, a public meeting was held in Dalton, Georgia to discuss a proposed horse camp and parking area in the Dry Creek area. The meeting was attended by 43 interested people. All persons in attendance supported the proposal.

No negative comments were received concerning the proposal. One letter in support of the proposal was received by the district office.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY AND/OR RELATED TO OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

My decision will comply with all applicable laws and regulations. I have summarized some pertinent ones below.

As required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976, I have determined that this action is consistent with the Forest Plan, as amended. The area encompassed by my decision is within Management Area 16; the project adheres to applicable standards, guidelines, and monitoring requirements in the Forest Plan.

This project complies with the seven requirements of 36 CFR 219.27(b) by following the Forest-wide standards and guidelines as mentioned above.

For water quality management, the direction of Georgia state approved “Best Management Practices” (BMPs) will be met through implementation of the Forest Plan standards and guidelines for this project. These BMPs are from State water quality management plans and have been designed with the goal of producing water that meets or exceeds State water quality standards.

The planning and implementation of this decision complies with the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Forest Management Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act and their implementing regulations.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL

This decision is not subject to a higher level of administrative review or appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8 (a) (4).

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Implementation of this decision may begin immediately (36 CFR 215.10).

CONTACT PERSON

For further information concerning this decision contact Debra Whitman, Armuchee-Cohutta Ranger District, 3941 Highway 76, Chatsworth, GA, 30705. Telephone (706) 695-6736, between the hours of 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday.

SIGNATURE AND DATE

I have concluded that this decision may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment as it is within one of the categories identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR part 1b.3 or one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 sections 31.1b or 31.2, and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect. My conclusion is based on information presented in this document and the entirety of the Planning Record.

/s/ Debra L. Whitman

DEBRA L. WHITMAN
District Ranger
Armuchee-Cohutta Ranger District

March 18, 2003

Date