



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Brasstown Ranger
District

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File Code: 1950/2600

Date: March 21, 2003

Dear Forest User,

The Brasstown and Toccoa Ranger Districts of the Chattahoochee National Forest are taking public comments on a project designed to enhance conditions for wildlife species that utilize early successional habitat. The Forest Service and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources are jointly proposing to daylight 5 roads on Coopers Creek Wildlife Management Area on the Chattahoochee National Forest. Daylighting is a term used for expanding the edges of an existing road by removing mature forest canopy or overstory allowing sunlight to reach the forest floor along road edges.

The following road are proposed for treatment:

1. Road to Mulky Gap food plot (0.5 mi.) (Brasstown RD)
2. Road to Cavender Gap food plots (0.5 mi.) (Toccoa RD)
3. Road to Fanny Gap food plots (2.1 mi.) (Brasstown RD)
4. Fanny Gap linear food plot (0.5 mi.) (Brasstown RD)
5. Road to check station food plot (2.0 mi.) (Toccoa RD)

All of the roads are gated roads used to access existing food plots. No new roads will be constructed. The locations of these roads are shown on the attached map.

The amount of early successional habitat on the Chattahoochee National Forest has been in decline for several years and currently is in extremely short supply. The daylighting of these existing roads will create much needed wildlife habitat. Many game and non-game species benefit from improved foraging substrate (plants, such as grasses, herbs and forbs, woody seedlings and saplings) that the tree removal would create. These areas also are important insect gathering sites for birds and they provide vital nesting areas for species that prefer open conditions. Species directly benefiting from this management (depending upon elevation) would be golden-winged warbler, prairie warbler, chestnut-sided warbler, and ruffed grouse. All are important game or non-game species currently declining due to lack of early successional habitat.

The road surface itself would not be increased to any great extent (except maybe where opportunities to construct a safer turn out area exist), but the road edge or right-of-way would be expanded by about 30-100 feet on each side of the road. To accomplish this, selected overstory trees adjacent to the road would be cut to increase the sunlight reaching the forest floor and allow the development of early successional conditions. There would be a wide variety in width dictated by terrain and overstory tree species. Individual prescriptions will be developed for each road to fit the need for early successional habitat with the existing forest. A portion of the overstory along these roads will be retained including selected oaks to provide for acorn production.



Methods to be considered include the cutting and removal of merchantable trees through small commercial timber sales or personal use firewood permits. Where these methods are not appropriate, selected trees may be cut and left on site. Following treatment, the areas would be maintained by mowing or chainsawing at 5-15 year intervals to keep them in an early successional stage.

We are currently in the process of determining the significant environmental issues and public concerns. You can help us in completing our analysis by providing comments on this proposal. Your comments should be as specific as possible and contain the following information: your name and address, the project name (Coopers Creek Daylighting Project), and specific comments along with supporting reasons you believe your comments should be considered by the Deciding Officials. Environmental concerns already being considered by the planning team include protection of water quality, protection of archaeological resources, protection of sensitive and endangered plant and animal species, and maintaining the established Visual Quality Objectives.

If you have any concerns and considerations that you want the Forest Service to consider in our decision-making process, you can send them to Jim Wentworth at the address shown above or by e-mail to jwentworth@fs.fed.us. Please submit your comments by April 18, 2003.

Thank you for your interest in management of the Brasstown and Toccoa Ranger Districts of the Chattahoochee National Forest. We look forward to your comments and working with you on this and other projects.

Sincerely,

/s/ Alan Polk

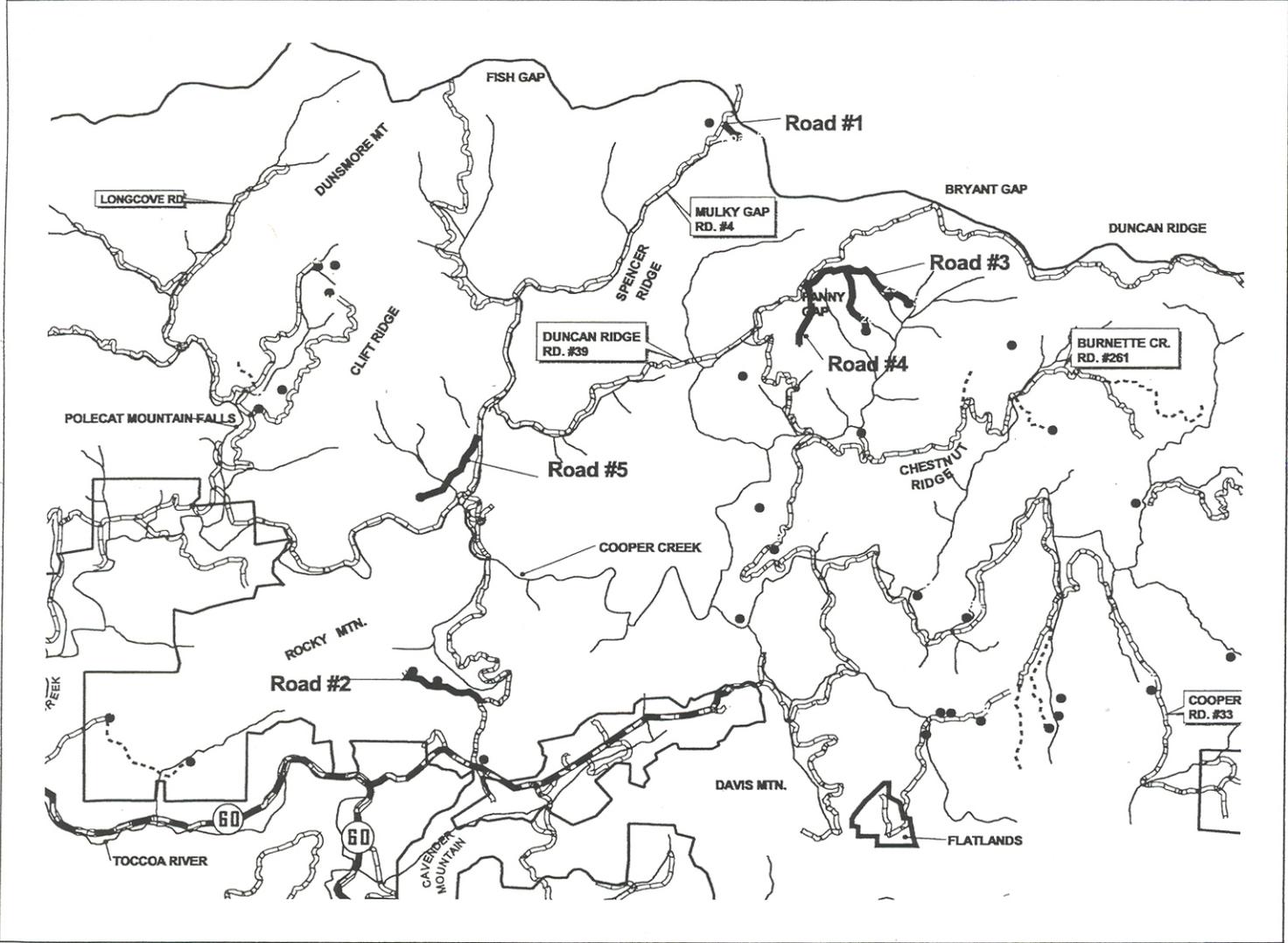
Alan Polk
District Ranger
Brasstown Ranger District

/s/ Rebecca Bruce

(for) Cassius Cash
District Ranger
Toccoa Ranger District

Enclosure

Cooper Creek Road Daylighting Project



LEGEND

-  Rds. To Be Daylighted
-  WMA Boundary
-  Food Plots

