



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Chattahoochee-Oconee
National Forests

Tallulah Ranger District
809 Highway 441 South
Clayton, GA 30525
(706) 782-3320

File Code: 1950

Date: March 27, 2003

Dear Interested Person:

The Tallulah Ranger District of the Chattahoochee National Forest is considering a proposal from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to enhance wildlife habitat within the boundary of the Warwoman Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The proposed site is within the Chattooga Watershed and is located adjacent to the Walnut Fork Road (FR 155) in Northeast Rabun County. The location of the project is shown on the attached maps.

The proposed action consists of expanding an existing one-acre wildlife opening currently maintained by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The proposal would add approximately 8 acres to the opening. The purpose of the wildlife opening expansion is to increase the amount of high quality habitat and provide additional food sources for early-successional forest users such as white-tailed deer, wild turkey, ruffed grouse and various small game and non-game species (Forest Plan, page 4-18). Currently, less than 1% of Warwoman WMA is in high quality early-successional habitat. This high quality habitat exists primarily in wildlife openings maintained by the DNR. The increase in the forest edge would also provide habitat for various songbirds that may nest in forest cover and feed in openings. The expanded opening would assist in providing both the quality and quantity of food sources needed to support local populations of wildlife species. After expansion, the opening would be maintained by DNR in clover or a clover and grass mixture. Brush piles created while developing the opening would remain and serve small mammals and other non-game species by providing nesting and cover habitat. No new roads would be constructed. A gate would be installed on the existing access road to restrict vehicle access. All Best Management Practices (BMP's) and Standards and Guidelines (Forest Plan) would be followed. Less than 30 merchantable pine trees exist in the proposal site. These trees would be sold if a current market exists, otherwise they would be made available for firewood if possible.

The site is located within the Sarah's Creek current inventoried roadless area. Since the acreage in wildlife openings within the roadless area is very low, this 8 acre expansion would not exceed criteria for roadless areas in the East (Forest Service Handbook 1909.12.7.11b).

This proposal is a starting point for discussion and analysis and no decision has been made. With this letter (and a variety of other methods), we are now in the scoping period, which includes public involvement with concerned citizens like you. Responses from the local community, interested individuals and groups, other government agencies, and Forest Service employees are needed to help determine the issues or extent of analysis for this project. Comments received help define the issues to be considered, contribute to the development of viable options to the proposal, and/or indicate mitigation measures needed.

It is very helpful to receive your comments, concerns, and ideas early in our planning process to identify all of the important issues and conduct an analysis of the proposed project that meets the



intent of NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act). This project appears 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. My staff may also use your comments to modify the specific methods described in the proposal. Planning and analysis within the project area is expected to be completed over the next six to eight months.

Responses should contain specific facts or comments along with supporting reasons that I would then consider in reaching a final decision on this proposal. Comments received, including names, become part of the project record and are available for public review. We would appreciate receiving your comments by April 30, 2003. This will help ensure a thorough and complete analysis of the proposed project. Send your written comments to the Tallulah District address provided on the letterhead. You may also comment by phone (see letterhead), or e-mail to Andy Gaston (avgaston@fs.fed.us) or in person at our office across from the Guest House Inn in Clayton, Georgia. Please note that you will be sent further correspondence on this proposed project *only* if you comment on it or if you request further correspondence on it.

This letter is being sent to organizations and individuals who have previously participated or been interested in our project proposals. 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. Management of the National Forest is a public trust and is best conducted with broad participation.

Thank you for your interest and involvement.

Sincerely,

David W. Jensen
District Ranger

Enclosure: Maps of wildlife habitat improvement area.