

Southern Four Wheel Drive Association

Conservation - Education - Recreation

September 5, 2005

Chattahoochee National Forest
Brasstown Ranger District
District Ranger Alan Polk
1881 Highway 515
P.O. Box 9
Blairsville, GA 30514

File code: 1950/2330
Subject: Beasley Knob OHV Trail System

Dear Ranger Polk,

Please accept the following comments for the record made on behalf of Southern Four Wheel Drive Association (Southern) regarding the Beasley Knob Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Trail System project. Southern is a regional association of four wheel drive clubs and enthusiasts dedicated to the conservation and utilization of public lands. These comments do not preclude other Southern representatives and members from submitting other comments.

It is consistent with the current Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (forest plan) to reroute trails #229 and #228 (Objective 34.2). Please ensure that the new location of these routes takes into consideration the needs of OHV users and provides similar mileage and similar quality riding opportunities.

We do support the building of a new entrance / parking area on the south side of Beasley Knob OHV Trail System. The new entrance on that part of the trail system will enhance safety as it will allow easier exit of vehicles that may have broken down in the southern section of the area and it will also allow easier access to the area for emergency vehicles in the unlikely event of a medical emergency in the area. We do however insist that the new entrance be built and completed before the current entrance at Satterfield is considered for closure. However, we ask that you consider keeping open the Satterfield entrance for public use, whether or not the new southern entrance is built. Considerable money and effort has been spent on the maintenance and upkeep of the Satterfield entrance and it would be a significant loss of public money and volunteer labor to close the entrance at this point.

Furthermore, in the undesired case that the Satterfield entrance is closed, we ask that you consider keeping open the long entrance trail (#230) from Satterfield to the main trails in the OHV trail system. Please consider making another loop trail out of #230 to other nearby trails, such as to #228, or a loop back on itself so that this considerable trail mileage is not lost to public use.

Forest Plan Goal 31 seeks to “Provide a spectrum of high quality recreation settings and adapt management of recreation facilities and opportunities as needed to shift limited resources to those opportunities”.¹ Please consider adding trail mileage to the Beasley Knob OHV Trail System to enhance and enlarge the loop OHV trail system. Specifically, consider within each alternative the construction of new trails to meet the opportunities that will likely be lost as a result of the proposed closure of the Anderson Creek OHV Trail System. Such a consideration is within the scope of the Beasley Knob OHV project whose stated purpose is to provide “additional and new riding opportunities for ATV, OHV, and motorcycle recreationists” and within the Goals and Objectives of the Forest Plan.

Because Beasley Knob OHV Trail System only contains 10.8 miles of trails and the Forest Service goal is to have 20 miles of trails in an OHV area, please consider strategies to add sufficient trail mileage to bring Beasley Knob OHV Trail system up to the 20 miles recommended by Forest Service policies for an OHV area. As part of this effort, please consider and plan for land acquisitions and/or in-kind exchanges for some of the immediately adjacent lands that seem to be suitable for OHV recreation. In addition, please consider and work to adopt changes to the management criteria (per the Forest Plan) for adjacent National Forest lands to expand the Beasley Knob OHV Trail system acreage to allow construction of new trails and trail loops.

We have extensive experience in maintaining OHV trails. Southern 4WD Association is the primary volunteer group that maintains the Upper Tellico OHV Area trails in the Tusquitee Ranger District in the Nantahala National Forest near Murphy, NC. We have been maintaining Tellico for over 15 years and we perform \$30,000 to \$50,000 per year in volunteer maintenance services at Tellico. Our member club Georgia Bounty Runners is the primary volunteer group that maintains the Adopt-A-Trail program in the Beasley Knob OHV Area in the Brasstown Ranger District in the Chattahoochee National Forest near Blairsville, GA. Other member clubs are very active in the Uwharrie National Forest in North Carolina and the Royal Blue Recreation Area in Tennessee.

Our clubs in Georgia are very interested in improving 4-wheel-drive trail riding opportunities in the Beasley Knob OHV Trail System. We are willing and eager to help with all phases of the project. We have extensive experience in all phases of trail maintenance:

- Mapping existing trail systems
- Designing and laying out new trails or trail systems
- Closing undesired or illegal trails and returning old roadbed to natural state

¹Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, Land and Resource Management Plan, January 2004, Page 2-31.

- Developing trailhead facilities (parking areas, entrance signs, etc.)
- Building trail features such as water bars, silt screens, silt traps, etc.
- Seeding and fertilizing trail sides
- Installing trail signage
- Trash pickup and general cleanup

To support our many efforts, we own (or lease as needed) heavy equipment such as a back hoe, dozer, dump truck, deuce and a half army truck, and heavy-duty trailers for transporting trail building materials (culverts, lumber, etc.). In addition, we have operators certified by the Forest Service for the above equipment.

Funding and long-term care for the maintenance of this area and new trail mileage can be secured through collaborative agreements and partnership with our and other four wheel drive organizations utilizing their volunteer efforts and access to the Recreational Trails Program. Availability of Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funds has ballooned, such that the Brasstown District could request a \$100,000 grant from RTP for Beasley OHV Trail System every year and could reasonably expect to win the grants on a frequent basis.

Utilizations of this collaborative solution with four wheel drive partners was highlighted and encouraged by Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth recently at the OHV Collaborative Summit in California in April, 2005.

We look forward to working with the Forest Service in the near future as this project is developed.

Respectfully yours,