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Comments:

Forest Managers

Please accept my brief comments. Given the sparse information provided, the limited amount of time to respond and the fact that the comment period coincided with the Thanksgiving holiday I am sure most comments will be brief.

The primary need on the Chattahoochee Oconee National Forest is road repair and maintenance. Fifty years ago on this Forest most important system roads were passable by normal passenger cars. Today many of these same roads such as the section of FS 28-1 from Bucktown to Nimblewill Gap, the eastern section of FS 79, the Tray Mt. road and FS 55 to name a few are barely passable by aggressive high clearance 4x4 vehicles. These roads are functioning in large part as defacto ORV courses. In addition, there are numerous unrepaired road landslides awaiting repair funding thro an arcane process involving the Federal Highway Administration. Road slides only worsen over time. A slide on FS 26, the Wildcat road has blocked access to two developed campgrounds for over two years.

Even well-maintained roads such as FS 42 are suffering from a lack of gravel. Every time a road is bladed some erosion occurs and more underlying rocks are uncovered. A number of years back the Agency experimented with a contractor who had a machine that theoretically ground up exposed rock on system roads. Essentially creating gravel on site. It did not prove to be practical. Given the distance FS roads are from quarries it can cost up to \$25,000 per mile to lay down an adequate amount of graded aggregate base to provide a reasonably smooth ride.

I can understand the need to repair existing recreational facilities but people cannot recreate if they cannot reach the recreational areas in normal automobiles. The vast majority of Americans do not drive pickups or other high clearance vehicles.

I cannot understand the dedication of scarce road money to the yet to be finalized Foothills Landscape project. If the project were to go forward it would take place on low elevation areas of the forest where the need for road repair is least pressing. The high elevation steep roads have the greatest needs for repair and maintenance. The plan mentioned to fund an expansion of the existing Aska Mountain Bike trail system should be abandoned. According to a recent article in the Gilmer Times Courier the estimated cost of this project is \$476,000. Bikers have the entire Pinhoiti trail to ride on as well as numerous single-track trails. In addition, Bikers can ride their bikes on any Forest Service road open or closed. This significant sum of money should be spent on road repair.