



File Code: 1900

Date: January 23, 2008

Dear Interested Members of the Public and Forest Users:

The Southern Research Station, Bent Creek Experimental Forest (BCEF) in conjunction with the Pisgah National Forest is proposing to construct a new conference building at BCEF to facilitate meetings and training sessions. The new conference building would be located at the BCEF administrative site and near the existing nursery; the old conference modular trailer would be removed following completion of the new building (see Figures 1 and 2). The new building would also adhere to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards (see website: usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=222).

Figure 1: Vicinity Map

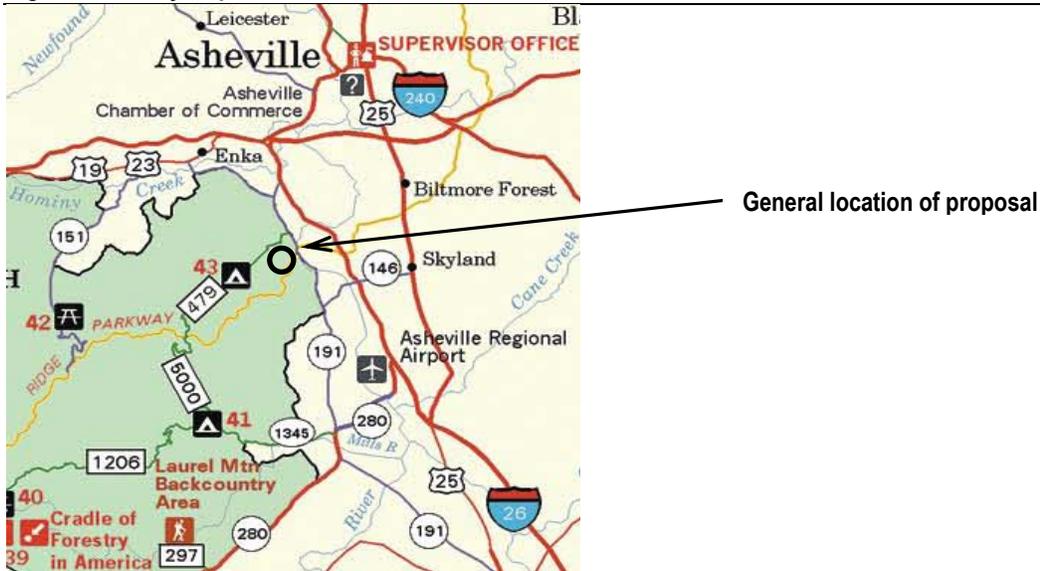
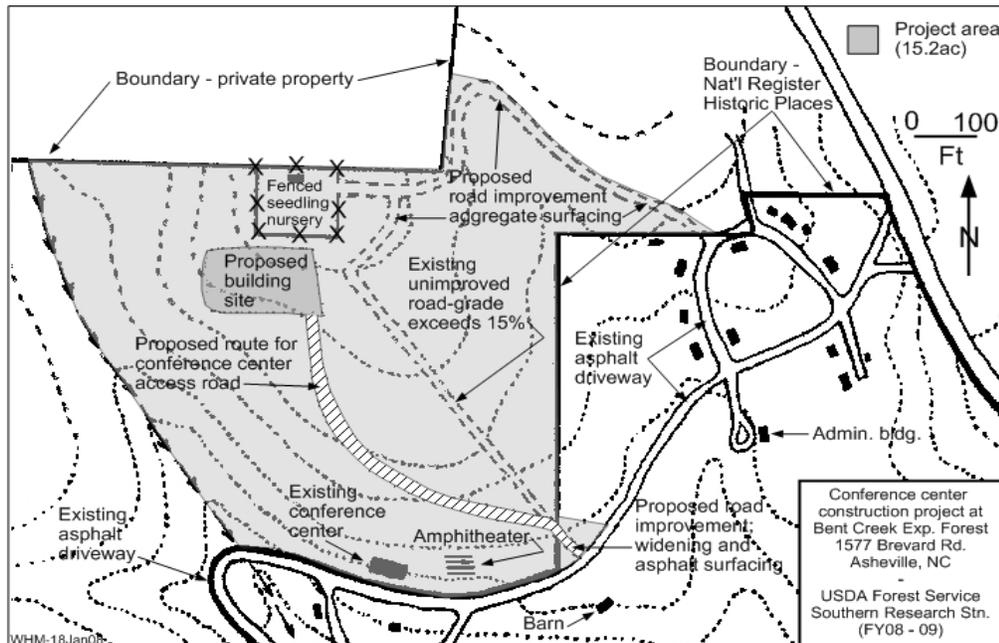


Figure 2: Project Area



A new conference building is needed because the existing building is old, undersized, and does not provide adequate parking. The new conference building would meet requirements of the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) Accessibility Guidelines and is expected to be constructed in late 2008 and early 2009. The new building would be about 4,300 ft² in size, and a permeable parking area for about 50 vehicles and a septic field would be developed. A new paved road (~1/5 mile) heading northwest from the barn would be constructed to access the building. An existing gravel route (~1/5 mile) accessing the nursery would be used as a service route for the building and would remain unpaved. Both routes would become classified (system) roads and would be placed on the Forest's transportation system. Some trees (predominantly white pine and scarlet oak) and brush would be removed to facilitate construction of the access route, parking area, and building; however, in keeping with LEED design features, the fewest number of trees and brush would be cut as possible—mature oak trees would be retained. While about 15 acres of BCEF would be surveyed and analyzed for biologic and archaeologic resources, only about one acre would actually be developed into the parking area and building.

Your comments on this proposal need to be as specific as possible and must provide the following information: 1) Your name and address; 2) Title of the proposal; 3) Specific comments (215.2) on the proposal, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision; and 4) Your signature or other means of identification verification. For organizations, a signature or other means of identification verification must be provided for the individual authorized to represent your organization.

In accordance with 36 CFR 215.6(2)(4), comments must be postmarked or received within 30 days beginning the day after publication of this notice in *The Asheville Citizen-Times*. Oral or hand-delivered comments must be received within our normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Comments may be mailed electronically, in a common digital format, to: comments-southern-north-carolina-pisgah-pisgah@fs.fed.us; regular mail to: Appalachian Ranger District, Attn: Michael Hutchins, P.O. Box 128, Burnsville, NC 28714; or faxed to 828-682-9179.

We encourage your participation during this 30-day notice and comment period. Following this 30-day notice and comment period, an environmental assessment (EA) will be published with the decision. Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11(a) and 215.15(a), the decision will initiate a 45-day appeal period.

Please contact Michael Hutchins, Interdisciplinary Team Leader at 828-682-6146 or Henry McNab, Bent Creek Experimental Forest Manager at 828-667-5261 x119 if you have questions concerning this proposal. Thank you for your continued interest in management of BCEF and the Pisgah National Forest.

Sincerely:

Concurred by:

/s/Randy Burgess

/s/Cathryn Greenberg

RANDALL BURGESS
District Ranger

DR. CATHRYN GREENBERG
Project Leader