



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

National Forests in North Carolina
Pisgah National Forest
Pisgah Ranger District

1001 Pisgah Hwy
Pisgah Forest, NC 27868-7721
828-877-3265

File Code: 1900

Date: August 25, 2008

Dear Interested Members of the Public and Forest Users:

I have signed the Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Bent Creek New Conference Center Construction Environmental Assessment (EA) within the Pisgah Ranger District, Buncombe County. The DN discusses in detail my decision and rationale for reaching it. Copies of the EA and DN & FONSI documents are enclosed. These documents are available upon request or can be downloaded from the Forest's website: www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/nepa/nepa.htm.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11. A written appeal, including attachments, must be postmarked or received within 45 days after the date this notice is published in *The Asheville Citizen-Times*. The Appeal shall be sent to National Forests in North Carolina, ATTN: Appeals Deciding Officer, 160 Zillicoa Street Suite A, Asheville, North Carolina, 28801. Appeals may be faxed to (828) 257-4263. Hand-delivered appeals must be received within normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Appeals may also be mailed electronically in a common digital format to: **appeals-southern-north-carolina@fs.fed.us**.

Those who provided comments or otherwise expressed interest in a particular proposed action by the close of the comment period may appeal this decision (as per *The Wilderness Society v. Rey* ruling). Appeals must meet content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. For further information on this decision contact Michael Hutchins, Pisgah National Forest NEPA Coordinator at 828-682-6146.

Sincerely,

1/s/ Randall Burgess

RANDALL BURGESS
District Ranger

Enclosure





United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

August
2008



Decision Notice & Finding Of No Significant Impact

Bent Creek New Conference Center Construction

**Bent Creek Experimental Forest
Pisgah National Forest
Pisgah Ranger District
Buncombe County
North Carolina**

Decision Notice &
Finding of No Significant Impact

Bent Creek New Conference Center Construction

USDA Forest Service
Bent Creek Experimental Forest
Pisgah National Forest
Pisgah Ranger District
Buncombe County
North Carolina

Decision and Rationale for the Decision

Decision

Based upon my review of the alternatives, I have decided to select **Alternative B** (Selected Alternative) of the Bent Creek New Conference Center Construction Environmental Assessment (EA – Section 1.3, Chapter 1) on the Bent Creek Experimental Forest within the Pisgah Ranger District, Pisgah National Forest. My decision also incorporates Project Design Features listed in Section 2.4, Chapter 2 and Appendix D. The Selected Alternative will:

- Construct a new conference building at Bent Creek to facilitate meetings, training sessions, and science delivery. The new conference building will be located at the Bent Creek administrative site and near the existing nursery; the old conference modular trailer will be removed following completion of the new building. The new building will also adhere to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. In addition, a parking area for about 50 vehicles will be developed, and utility lines will be placed below ground.
- The new conference building will 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 will be about 4,300 ft² in size and a septic field will be developed. Non-native invasive species such as Oriental bittersweet would be treated as often as needed with herbicide (Glyphosate

and/or Triclopyr) or by manually pulling/cutting to reduce their potential for spread.

- The access road will use the existing ~1/5 mile gravel road near the nursery. The access road will be paved, will become a classified (system) road, and will be placed on the Forest's transportation system to receive future maintenance (see also Roads Analysis, Appendix B). Some trees (predominantly white pine and scarlet oak) and brush will be removed to facilitate construction of the parking area and conference center; however, in keeping with LEED design features, the fewest number of trees and brush will be cut as possible—mature oak trees will be retained where project implementation allows. Merchantable trees removed as a result of developing the conference center, access route, and parking area will be sold with a small timber sale. While about 15 acres of Bent Creek have been surveyed and analyzed for biologic and archaeological resources, only about one acre will actually be developed into the parking area and conference center.

Rationale

The purpose and need for the proposal is disclosed in Section 1.4, Chapter 1 and below:

- Provide employees of the Southern Research Station and Pisgah National Forest, other Federal and State agencies, and members of the public with a conference center that has adequate meeting and parking space. A new conference building is needed because the existing modular trailer is old, undersized, and does not provide adequate parking.

With a new facility, I believe Bent Creek employees will be able to accommodate more participants while providing concurrent workshops and classes to accommodate several different user groups at one time. The new facility will also allow for a technology transfer lab that will provide space to design large projects such as bulletin boards and signs, and provide the general public with an accessible building to access the information. I believe the Selected Alternative will achieve the purpose and need for the project while addressing concerns raised by members of the public (see also Appendix C for public comment highlights and the Agency's response).

In reaching my decision, I reviewed the purpose and need for the project and the alternatives presented in the EA. I then weighed the effects analyses of the alternatives analyzed in detail and the public comments received. The Bent Creek New Conference Center Construction Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) conducted field surveys, database queries, and other localized analyses in order to determine the effects each alternative analyzed in detail could have. During their analysis, they took a hard look at past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions that could be combined with expected effects from the proposal. I believe they provided me sufficient analyses and conclusions to make a reasoned decision.

Alternatives Considered

In addition to the Selected Alternative, I considered one other alternative in detail: Alternative A – No Action. A comparison of these alternatives can be found in Section 2.5, Chapter 2 of the EA.

Alternative A – No Action

Under this alternative the actions described in the proposed action (Section 1.3, Chapter 1) would not be accomplished and Forest Service employees and members of the public would continue to use the current facility. I did not select this alternative because I believe a new conference center with additional parking best meets the purpose and need. The current modular trailer is over 17 years old, undersized, and has very limited parking. These factors decrease the ability of Bent Creek Experimental Forest employees to provide science delivery to

members of the public, agencies, and organizations.

Public Involvement

The proposal was listed in the January, April, and July 2008 editions of the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA); a scoping package was mailed to over 125 members of the public who have either expressed interest in management on the Pisgah Ranger District or live near the project area. Pursuant to 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 215.6(a)(1)(i) and 215.6(a)(1)(iv), a formal 30-day Notice and Comment period for the proposal began January 26, 2008, and ended on February 25, 2008; six members of the public provided written comments on the proposal. Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.5, the legal notice initiating the 30-day Notice and Comment period was placed in the January 25, 2008, edition of *The Asheville Citizen-Times*, the National Forest's in North Carolina's newspaper of record.

Finding of No Significant Impact

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

1. My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action (Section 1.3, Chapter 1).
2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety and implementation will be in accordance with project design features (Section 2.4 Chapter 2; Section 3.2, Chapter 3; and Appendix D).
3. There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area, because there are no park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas in the project area, nor are there local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (Section 3.3, Chapter 3).
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial because there is no known

- scientific controversy over the impacts of the project (Sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3, Chapter 3).
5. We have considerable experience with the types of activities to be implemented. The effects analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk (Sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 Chapter 3).
 6. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, because the project is site specific and effects are expected to remain localized and short-term (Sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 Chapter 3).
 7. The cumulative impacts are not significant (Sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3, Chapter 3).
 8. The action will have no effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (Section 3.2.2, Chapter 3). The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources (Section 3.2.2, Chapter 3). A heritage review was completed for this project during summer 2008. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concluded in a letter dated July 18, 2008; *During the course of the survey, no sites were located within the project area. Mr. Shumate has recommended that no further archaeological investigation be conducted in connection with this project. We concur with this recommendation since the project will not involve significant archaeological resources.*
 9. A biologic evaluation (BE) was completed on July 2, 2008, that determined: *Hexastylis rhombiformis, a Regional Forester's S vascular plant, can be found within the analysis area of this project within the Bent Creek riparian area. This species was surveyed for and was not located within the proposed treatment areas for the conference center and associated activities. There will be no impacts to individuals, populations, or habitat for Hexastylis rhombiformis. Trillium rugellii, a Regional Forester's S vascular plant, can also be found within the analysis area of this project within the Bent Creek riparian area. This species was surveyed for and was not located within the proposed treatment areas for the conference center and associated activities. There will be no impacts to individuals, populations, or habitat for Trillium rugellii. The implementation of the proposed Bent Creek Conference Center and associated*

activities will not affect any federally listed T&E species and will not have any impacts to any Regional Forester's S species including Hexastylis rhombiformis and Trillium rugellii. Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is not required.

10. The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA. The action is consistent with the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan Amendment 5 (Section 1.3, Chapter 1).

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

My decision to implement the Selected Alternative is consistent with the intent of the long-term goals listed on pages III-1 and III-2 of Forest Plan Amendment 5. The project was designed to meet land and resource management plan standards and incorporates appropriate land and resource management plan guidelines.

Administrative Review and Contacts

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11. A written appeal, including attachments, must be postmarked or received within 45 days after the date this notice is published in *The Asheville Citizen-Times*. The Appeal shall be sent to:

National Forests in North Carolina
ATTN: Appeals Deciding Officer
160 Zillicoa Street, Suite A
Asheville, North Carolina 28801-1082

Hand-delivered appeals must be received within normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Appeals may be faxed to (828) 257-4263 or mailed electronically in a common digital format to: **appeals-southern-north-carolina@fs.fed.us**.

Those who provided comments or otherwise expressed interest in a particular proposed action by the close of the comment period may appeal this decision (as per the recent *The Wilderness Society v. Rey* ruling). Appeals must meet content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. For further information on this decision contact Michael Hutchins, Pisgah National Forest NEPA Coordinator at 828-682-6146.

Implementation Date

As per 36 CFR 215.9, if no appeal is received, implementation of this decision may occur on, but not before, the 5th business day following the close

of the appeal-filing period (215.15). If an appeal is filed, implementation may occur on, but not before the 15th business day following the date of appeal disposition.

/s/ Randall Burgess

8-25-08

RANDALL BURGESS
Pisgah District Ranger

Date

Concurred by:

/s/ Cathryn H. Greenberg

8-25-08

DR. CATHRYN GREENBERG
Bent Creek Project Leader

Date



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

August
2008



Environmental Assessment

Bent Creek New Conference Center Construction

Bent Creek Experimental Forest
Pisgah National Forest
Pisgah Ranger District
Buncombe County
North Carolina

Bent Creek New Conference Center Construction

Environmental Assessment

Location of Action: Bent Creek Experimental Forest
Pisgah Ranger District
Pisgah National Forest
Buncombe County, North Carolina

Lead Agency: USDA Forest Service

Responsible Official: Randall Burgess
District Ranger – Pisgah Ranger District
1001 Pisgah Highway
Pisgah Forest, NC 28768

For More Information: Michael Hutchins
ID Team Leader
(828) 682-6146
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Send Electronic Comments to: comments-southern-north-carolina-pisgah-pisgah@fs.fed.us

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CHAPTER 1 – PURPOSE AND NEED

The Forest Service has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. This EA discloses direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects that would result from the proposed action and no action.

1.1 Project Record

This EA incorporates by reference (40 CFR 1502.21) the project record. The project record contains specialist reports and other technical documentation used to support the analysis and conclusions in this EA. The specialist reports provide additional detailed analysis. This EA incorporates by reference the Nantahala and Pisgah Management Indicator Species (MIS) Report. This report along with Monitoring and Evaluation Reports for the National Forests in North Carolina contains the most current information about forest population trends for MIS species.

1.2 Background

The existing conference modular trailer is over 20 years old; provides adequate meeting space for up to about 25-30 individuals; and provides suitable parking for about three-four vehicles. Additional vehicles park off of the paved road's shoulder near the building. A new conference building is needed because the existing building is old, undersized, and does not provide adequate parking.

1.3 Proposed Action

The Southern Research Station, Bent Creek Experimental Forest (Bent Creek) in conjunction with the Pisgah National Forest is proposing to construct a new conference building at Bent Creek to facilitate meetings and training sessions. The new conference building would be located at the Bent Creek administrative site and near the existing nursery; the old conference modular trailer would be removed following completion of the new building. The new building would also adhere to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards (see website: <http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=222>). In addition, a parking area for about 50 vehicles would be developed, and utility lines would be placed below ground.

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 septic field would be developed. Non-native invasive species such as Oriental bittersweet would be treated as often as needed with herbicide (Glyphosate and/or Triclopyr) or by manually pulling/cutting to reduce their potential for spread.

In January 2008, a scoping notice explaining the proposal was mailed to interested and potentially affected members of the public. In the proposal it was explained that two access roads would be developed; one for general access (near the existing barn) and the other for service (near the nursery). Following scoping, it was determined the general access road could not be adequately developed near the barn because the slopes were too steep from the barn to the proposed parking area. As a result, the access road will now use the existing ~1/5 mile gravel

road near the nursery. The access road would be paved, would become a classified (system) road, and would be placed on the Forest's transportation system to receive future maintenance (see also Roads Analysis in Appendix B). Some trees (predominantly white pine and scarlet oak) and brush would be removed to facilitate construction of the parking area and conference center; 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 where project implementation allows. Merchantable trees removed as a result of developing the conference center, access route, and parking area would be sold with a small timber sale. While about 15 acres of Bent Creek would be surveyed and analyzed for biologic and archaeologic resources, only about one acre would actually be developed into the parking area and conference center.

The proposed action is located within Management Areas 8 (experimental forests) and 16 (support facilities) as described in the Forest Plan for the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests (pages III-123 and III-173) and has been designed to meet Forest Plan direction and standards and incorporates by reference the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Forest Plan..

1.4 Purpose and Need for Action _____

The purpose of the proposal is to provide employees of the Southern Research Station and Pisgah National Forest, other Federal and State agencies, and members of the public with a conference center that has adequate meeting and parking space. A new conference building is needed because the existing modular trailer is old, undersized, and does not provide adequate parking.

The current modular trailer was purchased in 1991 as a temporary facility to conduct technology transfer (science delivery) activities. Bent Creek's technology transfer activities consist of disseminating information from research findings since 1925 to interested user groups. Bent Creek is the oldest research facility operated by the U.S. Forest Service in the eastern United States that conducts forest research.

Information is disseminated through workshops, tours, environmental education, publications, pamphlets, bulletin boards, a webpage, and simulation models. Over the last 17 years Bent Creek's programs have grown and the need for a permanent structure has greatly increased.

1.5 Public Involvement _____

The proposal was listed in the January, April, and July 2008 editions of the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA); a scoping package was mailed to over 125 members of the public who have either expressed interest in management on the Pisgah Ranger District or live near the project area; and a legal notice was placed in the January 25, 2008, edition of *The Asheville Citizens-Times* that initiated a 30-day Notice and Comment period. Six comments on the proposal were received from members of the public through this scoping effort (see Appendix C).

1.6 Issues _____

Issues are defined as a point of discussion, debate, or dispute about environmental effects. Issues are used to develop alternatives, mitigation measures, or analyze environmental effects. The

Forest Service separates issues into two groups: significant and other—no significant issues were identified that required development of an alternative to the Proposed Action.

1.6.1 Non-significant Issues

1.6.1.1 Water Quality and Aquatic Resources – *Constructing the new center may adversely affect water quality and threatened, endangered, sensitive (TES), Forest Concern (FC), and Management Indicator aquatic species (MIS)*

Non-significant because the project has been designed to reduce potential for adverse impacts to water quality and aquatic resources (location of activities away from aquatic resources, LEED design, and placement of erosion control measures during implementation).

1.6.1.2 Wildlife Resource – *Constructing the new center may adversely affect TES, FC, and MIS wildlife species*

Non-significant because field surveys were completed and no wildlife TES, FC, or MIS species were located in the project area. The project has been designed to reduce potential to impact resources including wildlife (LEED design).

1.6.1.3 Botanical Resource – *Constructing the new center may adversely affect TES, FC, and MIS botanical species*

Non-significant because field surveys were completed and no botanical TES, FC, or MIS species were located in the project area. The project has been designed to reduce potential to impact resources including botanicals (LEED design).

1.6.1.4 Soil Resource – *Constructing the new center may adversely affect soils*

Non-significant because the project has been designed to reduce potential to impact resources including soils (LEED design) and only about one acre total would be impacted.

1.6.1.5 Scenic Resources – *Constructing the new center may adversely affect scenic resources*

Non-significant because the project has been designed to reduce potential to impact resources including scenery (LEED design) and only about one acre would be impacted.

1.6.1.6 Cultural Resources – *Constructing the new center may adversely affect cultural sites*

Non-significant because the project has been designed to reduce potential to impact resources including cultural (LEED design) and only about one acre would be impacted. An archaeological review and report was completed summer 2008 for the 15 acre analysis area that did not identify any sites.

1.6.1.7 Non-native Invasives – *Constructing the new center may increase infestation of non-native invasive plants*

Non-significant because only about one acre would be impacted and non-native invasive species such as Oriental bittersweet would be treated as often as needed with herbicide (Glyphosate and/or Triclopyr) or by pulling/cutting to reduce their potential for spread. Employees at Bent Creek Experiment Forest would be able to assess potential increases in non-native invasive species in the activity area over time and could take appropriate actions pursuant to 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 220.6(d)(3)(iv).

1.6.1.8 Civil Rights – *Constructing the new center may adversely affect civil rights of employees and members of the public*

Non-significant because impacts on employees, leadership, and delivery of services are expected to improve over current conditions due to a new center and increased parking availability. A Civil Right Impact Analysis was completed summer 2008 that did not identify adverse impacts to civil rights as a result of the project.

1.6.1.9 Other Areas of Concern – *Constructing the new center may adversely affect park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, ecologically critical areas, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

Non-significant because there are no park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, ecologically critical areas, or local requirements within the 15 acre analysis area.

CHAPTER 2 – ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Range of Alternatives

The range of alternatives developed and analyzed by the interdisciplinary team (IDT) was driven by the purpose and need underlying the proposal (Section 1.4, Chapter 1), and by the significant issues responding to the proposal. An alternative should (1) reasonably respond to the purpose and need, and (2) address one or more significant issue. The only exception is the No Action Alternative, which is required by regulation [40 CFR 1502.14(d)]. For this proposal, two alternatives were considered in detail. Based on the issues identified no other alternatives were considered.

2.2 Alternatives Considered in Detail

Two alternatives were developed by the IDT in response to the issues and concerns regarding the proposal; Alternative A – No Action and Alternative B – Proposed Action. The action alternatives fulfill the specific purpose and need for these actions.

2.2.1 Alternative A – No Action

Under this alternative the actions described in the proposed action (Chapter 1, Section 1.3) would not be accomplished. District employees would continue to provide services out of both office locations. This alternative serves as the environmental baseline for analysis of effects.

2.2.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

A complete description of the Proposed Action can be found in Section 1.3, Chapter 1 above. No additional project design features were developed for Alternative B.

2.3 Alternative Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

No alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed study.

2.4 Summary Comparison of Actions by Alternative

The following table summarizes management activities within each of the alternatives:

Table 2-1: Summary Comparison of Proposal by Alternative

Activity	Alternative	
	A	B
Construct new conference center, vehicular access routes, parking area, and associated utilities near the Bent Creek Experimental Forest Headquarters?	No	Yes

CHAPTER 3 – ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Included in this chapter are disclosures of effects of the alternatives on the different factors. Reports from different resource specialists supplied information for portions of the analysis in this chapter.

3.1 Biologic Factors

3.1.1 Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive (TES) Aquatic, Botanical, and Wildlife Species

3.1.1.1 Alternative A – No Action

Under this alternative the new office would not be constructed. There would be no adverse effects to T&E aquatic, botanical, or wildlife species or adverse impacts to S aquatic, botanical, or wildlife species because no actions would take place and field surveys did not identify TES species or their habitat within the approximately one acre activity area.

3.1.1.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Two S botanical species were identified within the 15 acre analysis area, but outside the approximately one acre activity area (*Hexastylis rhombiformis*, North Fork heartleaf and *Trillium rugelii*, Southern nodding trillium) – no other TES species were identified within either the 15 acre analysis area or approximately one acre activity area.

A biological evaluation (BE, Appendix A) was completed for the proposed action that concluded: *The implementation of the proposed Bent Creek Conference Center and associated activities will not affect any federally listed T&E species and will not have any impacts to any Regional Forester's S species including Hexastylis rhombiformis and Trillium rugelii. Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is not required.* This conclusion was reached because the two S botanical species would not be impacted because their habitat is far enough removed from proposed activities.

3.1.2 Non-native Invasive Plants

3.1.2.1 Alternative A – No Action

Under this alternative the new conference center, access routes, and parking area would not be constructed—the site would remain vegetated. There is potential for non-native invasive plants to become established over time because Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatas*) was identified within the 15 acre analysis area.

3.1.2.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Field surveys did not identify non-native invasive plants in the approximately one acre activity area; however, Oriental bittersweet was identified within the 15 acre analysis area. Clearing vegetated areas for the new access route, the new conference center, and the new parking area could provide suitable habitat for non-native invasive species to become established and Oriental bittersweet to spread. To reduce potential for spread and to begin to control/manage non-native invasive species, especially Oriental bittersweet they would be treated as often as needed with

herbicide (Glyphosate and/or Triclopyr) or manually by pulling/cutting to reduce potential for their spread.

3.2 Physical Factors

3.2.1 Soil Resources

3.2.1.1 Existing Condition

The following is an analysis of the soils that would be impacted by construction/access activities in the 15 acre project area. The following table lists the soil map units in the project area:

Table 3-1: Primary Soil Map Units within the Bent Creek New Conference Center Project Area

Primary Soil Map Unit Name (w/ Slope Range) ¹	Alternative A (acres)	Alternative B (acres)
Evard/Cowee (C&D)	0	13
Saunook/Thurmont (C)	0	2
Total Acres⁴	0	15

1 – Average slope percent ranges are for soil map units from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) data and are not necessarily the average slope within the stand (A = 0%-2%, B = 2%-8%, C = 8%-15%, D = 15%-30%, E = 30%-50%, and F = 50%-95%)

The following table displays characteristics of each soil map unit:

Table 3-2: Comparison of Soil Map Units¹

Soil Map Unit Name	Characteristics
Cowee	The Cowee series consists of moderately deep, well drained, moderately permeable soils on ridges and side slopes of the Blue Ridge. They formed in residuum affected by soil creep in the upper part, and weathered from felsic to mafic, igneous and high-grade metamorphic rocks. Well drained; moderate permeability. Runoff class is low on gentle slopes, medium on strong or moderately steep slopes, and high on steeper slopes. Runoff is much lower where forest litter has little or no disturbance.
Evard	The Evard series consists of very deep, well drained, moderately permeable soils on ridges and side slopes of the Blue Ridge. Well drained; permeability is moderate in the subsoil and moderately rapid in the underlying material. Runoff class is low on gentle slopes, medium on strong or moderately steep slopes, and high on steeper slopes. Runoff is much lower where forest litter has little or no disturbance.
Saunook	The Saunook series consists of very deep, well drained, moderately permeable soils on benches, fans, and toe slopes in coves in the Blue Ridge. They formed in colluvium derived from materials weathered from felsic to mafic, igneous and high-grade metamorphic rocks. Well drained; saturated hydraulic conductivity is moderately high or high, permeability is moderate. Surface index runoff is negligible to medium. These soils receive surface and subsurface water from surrounding uplands, and seeps and springs are common.
Thurmont	Soils of the Thurmont series are very deep and well drained soils. They formed in alluvial and colluvial materials on footslopes, colluvial fans, benches, and stream terraces. Well drained; medium to rapid surface runoff; moderate permeability. Depth to a seasonal high water table is 3 to 6 feet.

1 – Information taken from USDA NRCS website

3.2.1.2 Alternative A – Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

There would be no adverse effects (long-term soil compaction) to soils with this alternative because no activities are proposed.

3.2.1.3 Alternative B – Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

There would be long-term compaction on the access route to the parking area, the parking area, and the new conference building. However, only about one acre of the total 15 acres in the project area would be impacted and erosion control measures would be implemented to reduce potential for erosion and sedimentation to impact aquatic resources. The one acre of area impacted by the proposal and immediate surrounding area occurs on Evard and Cowee soil map units. These soil map units are well drained, moderately to very deep, and moderately permeable. The remaining 14 acres in the project area would not be affected by the proposal. As a result, compaction outside the total one acre is not expected to be long-term nor produce adverse impacts to aquatic resources from erosion and sedimentation. There are no other future foreseeable actions in the project area that could have effects cumulatively added to the proposal that would cause adverse cumulative effects.

3.2.2 Cultural Resources

3.2.2.1 Alternative A – No Action

There would be no adverse effect to cultural resources under this alternative because no ground disturbing activities would occur.

3.2.2.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

A cultural review was completed for the proposed action that identified no archaeological sites in the 15 acre analysis area. As a result, there would be no adverse impact to archaeological resources.

3.2.3 Herbicides

3.2.3.1 Alternative A – No Action

Under this alternative, there would be no adverse direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to wildlife, water quality, and humans as related to pesticide use as none would be applied. The existing condition would remain the same; non-native invasive plant species would be expected to continue to spread in the AA.

3.2.3.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Herbicide application (Glyphosate and/or Triclopyr) is proposed to control/manage non-native invasive species such as Oriental bittersweet in/near the activity area. Treatment would occur by hand application as necessary to ensure spread potential is reduced. Herbicides would also be used following harvest activities for site preparation and timber stand improvement activities.

The following table displays expected maximum acreages of herbicide treatment that may occur – additional treatments within these acres may be necessary as site specific monitoring determines, especially for management of non-native invasives:

Table 3-3: Maximum Acres of Herbicides Applied Manually by Alternative¹

Herbicide	Alternative A	Alternative B
Triclopyr or Glyphosate (ac)	0 ac	15 ac

1 – Not all acreage is treated, i.e. buffers along streams and “non-target” species would not be treated. Herbicides are applied manually and would not be applied aerially (see also Appendix D).

Use of herbicides is not expected to have measurable adverse effects on wildlife, water quality, and humans due to proper application as per Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs); product labels; risk assessments; fact sheets; mitigation measures contained in the *Vegetation Management in the Appalachian Mountains* (VMAM) Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), issued in July 1989; design features disclosed in Appendix D; and standards and guidelines from the Forest Plan including *Requirements For Vegetation Management In The Appalachian Mountains* listed in Appendix I of the Forest Plan (pages I-10 – I-14). Any herbicides applied would be done according to the labeling information, at the lowest rate effective at meeting project objectives in accordance with guidelines for protecting the environment, and manually (not aerially). Risks of adverse effects are further reduced by requiring the applicator to be trained in safety precautions, proper use, and handling of pesticides. Other factors reducing risk are the low level of active ingredient per acre and placement of notice signs in areas where herbicides have been applied. The signs include information on the herbicide used, when it was applied, and who to contact for additional information.

Herbicide with the active ingredients Glyphosate and Triclopyr are not considered soil active (mobile). In addition, with the provision of riparian buffer strips on stream zones, the risk of herbicide spills or movement into stream zones is further reduced. Due to project design, effects of the treatment would be limited to individual non-native invasive plants that are treated and the immediate area near them and is not expected to adversely affect private residences downstream. All applicable mitigation measures contained in the VMAM FEIS and Forest Plan standards and guidelines would be followed. A complete discussion of the effects of herbicides is contained in this FEIS, to which this analysis tiers to. Current pesticide information for Glyphosate and Triclopyr may be found at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/pesticide/risk.shtml>.

Impacts of pesticide use to wildlife, water quality, and humans are expected to be low due to proper handling and application. The use of pesticides would have no measurable impact on water quality because according to the VMAM FEIS: *No herbicide is aerially applied within 200 horizontal feet, nor ground-applied within 30 horizontal feet, of lakes, wetlands, or perennial or intermittent springs and streams. No herbicide is applied within 100 horizontal feet of any public or domestic water source. Selective treatments (which require added site-specific analysis and use of aquatic-labeled herbicides) may occur within these buffers only to prevent significant environmental damage such as noxious weed infestations. Buffers are clearly marked before treatment so applicators can easily see and avoid them* (VMAM FEIS, page II-67). There would be no adverse effects (direct, indirect, or cumulative) of the usage of pesticides associated with the action alternatives if no spills occur within riparian areas—no pesticide would be applied within at least 30 feet of riparian areas. According to the VMAM FEIS: *The greatest hazards to surface and ground water quality arise from a possible accident or mishandling of concentrates during transportation, storage, mixing, and loading, equipment cleaning, and container disposal phases of the herbicide use cycle.* Herbicides would be mixed at the Bent Creek Experimental Forest headquarters and not in the field, and applicators do not carry concentrated amounts of herbicide in the field. There are no other known foreseeable applications of pesticides on NFS lands in the AA that could affect pesticide use with this proposal. The Forest Service is unaware of any large-scale quantities of herbicide being applied

on adjacent non-NFS lands within the watershed that could cause adverse cumulative effects. Individual home owners are expected to use herbicides on their properties; however, determining measurable amounts, formulations, locations, frequency, and timing of their use would be speculative.

3.3 Other Factors

3.3.1 Civil Rights

A Civil Rights Impact Analysis (CRIA) was completed and approved in May/June 2008. The CRIA analyzed impacts on employees, leadership, and delivery of services.

3.3.1.1 Alternative A – No Action

Impacts on Employees

There would be continued, relatively manageable adverse impacts to Southern Research Station and National Forest employees under Alternative A because the current modular trailer is undersized, old, and does not provide parking for the number of individuals that can access the building.

Impacts on Leadership

There would be continued, relatively manageable adverse impacts to Southern Research Station and National Forest leadership under Alternative A because the current modular trailer is undersized, old, and does not provide parking for the number of individuals that can access the building.

Impacts on Delivery of Services

There would be continued, relatively manageable adverse impacts on delivery of services under Alternative A because the current modular trailer is undersized, old, and does not provide parking for the number of individuals that can access the building.

3.3.1.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Impacts on Employees

There would be positive impacts to Southern Research Station and National Forest employees under Alternative B because the new conference center would be constructed within 1/5 mile of the existing modular trailer, would be larger than the current building, and would have additional parking.

Impacts on Leadership

There would be positive impacts to Southern Research Station and National Forest leadership under Alternative B because the new conference center would be constructed within 1/5 mile of the existing modular trailer, would be larger than the current building, and would have additional parking.

Impacts on Delivery of Services

There would be positive impacts on delivery of services under Alternative B because the new conference center would be larger than the current building and would have additional parking.

3.3.2 Other Areas of Concern

3.3.2.1 Alternatives A & B

Under these alternatives park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, ecologically critical areas, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment would not be adversely affected because none of these areas of concerns occur on the nine acre site or are imposed to the property.

CHAPTER 4 – PREPARERS

The following individuals helped develop this environmental assessment:

4.1 ID Team Members

4.1.1 Core IDT

Dr. Cathryn Greenberg – Wildlife
Michael Hutchins – Team Leader
Mark McDonough – Engineering
Henry McNab – Project Management
Tracy Roof – Botany/GPS
Rodney Snedeker – Archaeology
Lorie Stroup – Aquatics

4.1.2 Other Forest Service Personnel Providing Input

Jacqui Adams – Project Management
Randy Burgess – Project Management
Sandy Burnet – Wildlife
Lisa Coman – Engineering
David Danley – Botany
Barry Jones – Engineering
Cliff Northrop – Engineering
Ted Oprean – Timber/Roads
Andrew Quillen – Civil Rights
Drew Selig – Engineering
Scott Shumate – Archaeology (contractor)
Mike Williams – Civil Rights

APPENDIX A – BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION

BIOLOGICAL EVALUTATION FOR THE

Bent Creek Conference Center

**PISGAH NATIONAL FOREST
PISGAH RANGER DISTRICT
BUNCOMBE COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA**

Contact Person:

**Lorie L. Stroup
Pisgah National Forest Fisheries Biologist
1001 Pisgah Highway
Pisgah Forest, NC 28768**

**(828) 877-3265
email: loriestroup@fs.fed.us**

July 2, 2008

ABSTRACT: Based on the findings contained within this biological evaluation, the proposed construction of the Bent Creek Conference Center is not likely to adversely affect any threatened, endangered, or sensitive aquatic, botanical, or terrestrial wildlife species. Informal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service is not required.

Purpose of Biological Evaluation

The purpose of this biological evaluation (BE) is to ensure maintenance of species viability for federally threatened, endangered and Regional Forester's sensitive species (TES).

Proposed Action

The Bent Creek Experimental Forest on the Pisgah Ranger District, Pisgah National Forest proposes to construct a conference center, build an access road to the facility, remove existing conference building which is an old mobile housing unit and obliterate an old road (Forest Service Road-FSR 479J) in the area of Bent Creek Experimental Forest office and housing compound. This activity will include timber extraction, burial of utility lines and the construction of a parking area adjacent to the proposed building.

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of the proposal is to provide employees of the Southern Research Station and Pisgah National Forest, other Federal and State agencies, and members of the public with a conference center that has adequate meeting and parking space. A new conference building is needed because the existing building is old, undersized, and does not provide adequate parking.

The existing conference room is located within a mobile housing unit and has become insufficient for the need of the Bent Creek Experimental Forest. The new building would also adhere to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards (see website: <http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=222>). Forest Service Road 479J is an old "woods" road (non-system) that is no longer needed for access to the area and is causing resource damage (erosion and sedimentation).

Location and Description of the Project Area

The Bent Creek Experimental Forest office and housing compound is located off highway 191 in Buncombe County, North Carolina. The analysis area is located within compartment 128 of the Pisgah Ranger District. The project area is located in the on the western side of the Bent Creek Experimental Forest compound near the nursery. The project lies within the Bent Creek Watershed (Land and Resources Management Plan watershed #27).

The TES species considered are those included in the National Forests in North Carolina species list. The North Carolina Natural Heritage Program Biological Conservation Database was queried for any element occurrence records of these species in the project area.

Sandy Burnet, USFS Wildlife Biologist, evaluated the proposed project in April of 2008. She determined the effects of this proposed project to threatened, endangered, or sensitive wildlife species and discussed surveys needs with Katie Greenberg. Katie Greenberg, USFS Project Leader and Research Ecologist, conducted field surveys of the proposed conference center area and FSR 479J on May 15, 2008. According to her surveys and the evaluation of the Natural

Heritage Programs rare species list, there are no federally listed species or Forest sensitive wildlife species known to occur in the treatment areas.

Tracy Roof, Lead Forestry Technician and Dave Danley, USFS Botanist, evaluated and surveyed the proposed conference center and associated activities on May 6 and June 4, 2008. They determined the effect of this proposed project to threatened, endangered or sensitive plant species. There are two sensitive species considered for this analysis; *Hexastylis rhombiformis* and *Trillium rugellii*.

Lorie Stroup, USFS Fisheries Biologist, evaluated the proposed project in June 2008. She determined the effects of this proposed project to threatened, endangered, or sensitive aquatic species. There are no known TES species located within the aquatic resources of this analysis area therefore no this area of Buncombe County, therefore none of the TES aquatic species for Buncombe County have been considered for this analysis.

Species	Type	Natural Community or Habitat	Occurrence
Federally Threatened or Endangered Species (T&E)			
N/A	N/A	N/A	None known to occur
2005 Region 8 Regional Forester's Sensitive Species (S)			
<i>Hexastylis rhombiformis</i>	Vascular Plant	Acidic cove forest; alluvial riparian zones	Known to occur outside treatment area; within analysis area
<i>Trillium rugellii</i>	Vascular Plant	Rich Coves. Rich bottom lands, Alluvial Forest	Known to occur outside treatment area; within analysis area

ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE FOR SPECIES EVALUATED

Existing Biological Condition

Field surveys revealed that there are two Natural Communities surrounding the building site (Chestnut Oak Forest, Montane Oak-Hickory Forest) Natural Communities. These two communities grade into each other throughout the site. Both of these communities are described in detail by Schafale and Weakley in *Classification of the Natural Communities of North Carolina* publication and are not described here. Pertinent information concerning these communities is as follows:

Chestnut Oak Forest and Montane Oak-Hickory Forest

The Chestnut Oak Forest and Montane White Oak Forest are common throughout Bent Creek Experimental Forest. The herbaceous diversity within these two communities is often very low. No vascular TES plant species are known to be present within these two communities of the proposed treatment area.

The analysis area is located within the Bent Creek Watershed of the French Broad River system (Forest Plan Watershed #27). There are no aquatic resources located within the treatment areas of the project.

Hexastylis rhombiformis, a Regional Forester's S vascular plant, can be found within the analysis area of this project within the Bent Creek riparian area. This species was surveyed for and was not located within the proposed treatment areas for the conference center and associated activities. There will be no impacts to individuals, populations, or habitat for *Hexastylis rhombiformis*.

Trillium rugellii, a Regional Forester's S vascular plant, can also be found within the analysis area of this project within the Bent Creek riparian area. This species was surveyed for and was not located within the proposed treatment areas for the conference center and associated activities. There will be no impacts to individuals, populations, or habitat for *Trillium rugellii*.

The implementation of the proposed Bent Creek Conference Center and associated activities will not affect any federally listed T&E species and will not have any impacts to any Regional Forester's S species including *Hexastylis rhombiformis* and *Trillium rugellii*. Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is not required.

Prepared by:

/s/ Lorie L. Stroup

July 2, 2008

Lorie L. Stroup
Fisheries Biologist, Pisgah National Forest

APPENDIX B – PROJECT-LEVEL ROADS ANALYSIS

Bent Creek New Conference Center Roads Analysis Supplement to 2003 Compartment 128 Roads Analysis

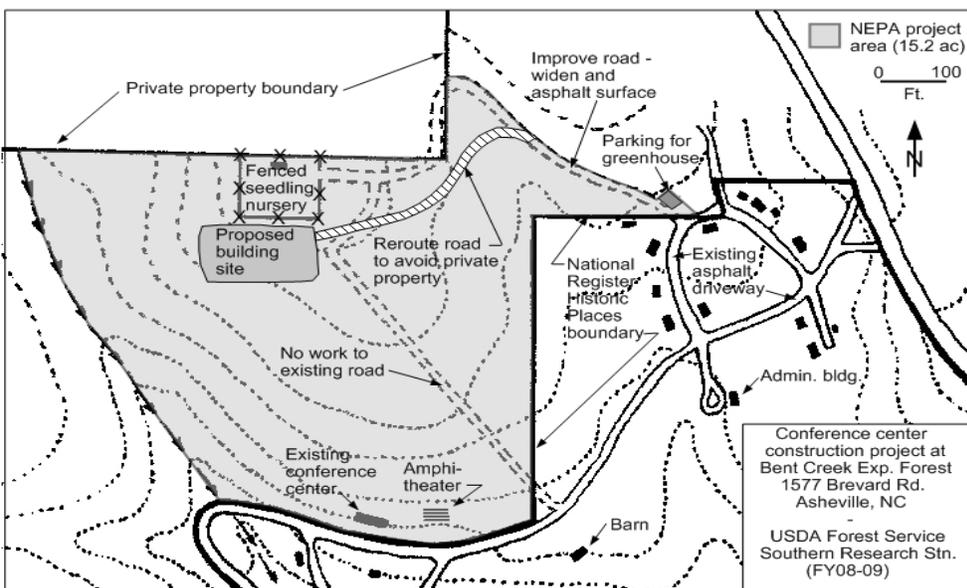
SETTING UP THE ANALYSIS & DESCRIBING THE SITUATION

Existing Condition & Proposal

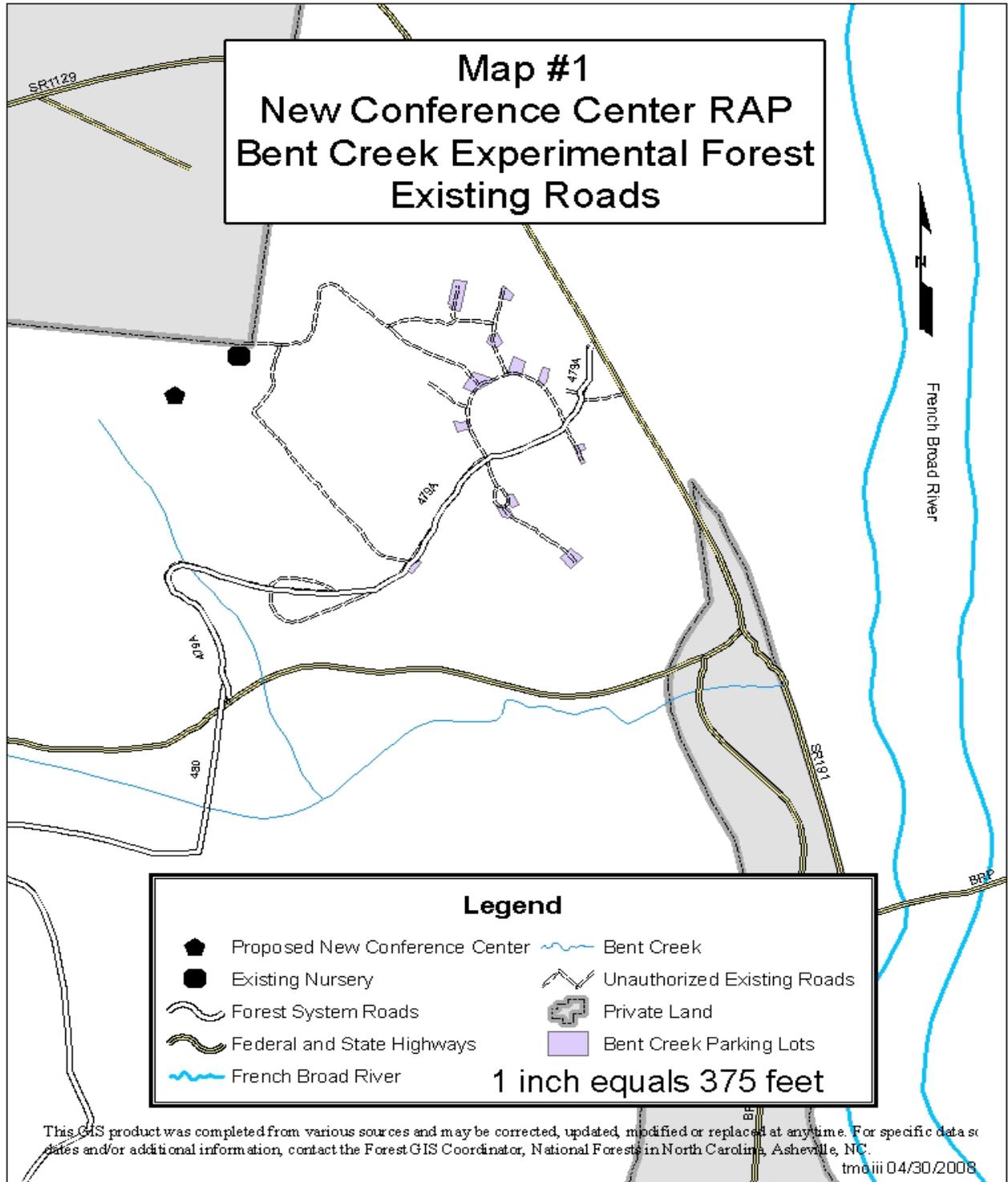
On July 29, 1927, the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service designated the Bent Creek Experimental Forest (Bent Creek). The purpose (objectives) of Bent Creek is to:

- Provide opportunities for the systematic development of experiments in silvicultural practice and uncover problems that need to be addressed by further experiments.
- Bring a comparatively large area of forest land under close observation and record in order to accumulate data on management problems.
- By concentrating silvicultural experiments within a single easily accessible tract, provide a means of demonstrating purposes and methods of management and forest research.

Bent Creek staff are proposing to construct a new conference center for near the nursery about ¼ mile north and uphill of the current conference center and is within Buncombe County, North Carolina. A new conference center is needed because the existing building is old, undersized, and does not provide adequate parking. To facilitate construction, access, and maintenance of the new building, two roads are proposed to be placed on the Forest's Transportation System. One road would be new construction and would be used to access the new parking area for the conference center. The second road is an existing unclassified (non-system) road near the nursery and would facilitate maintenance of the new conference center.



To facilitate current administrative access, research, and maintenance, 10 existing unclassified (non-system) roads are proposed to be placed on the Forest's Transportation System (see Map 1).



This roads analysis supplements the 2003 roads analysis completed for the Bent Creek Complex, Lake Powhatan Campground, and North Carolina Arboretum projects.

Forest Plan Direction – Management Area 8

Bent Creek is designated as Management Area (MA) 8 (experimental forest) under the Forest Plan. Forest Plan direction for the transportation system and road construction in MA 8 states: *Manage roads to meet research objectives. [C]onstruct or reconstruct roads primarily to support research and administrative activities.* Forest Plan standards for the transportation system and road construction in MA 8 states: *Allow motorized vehicle use upon concurrence by both the Station Director and the Forest Supervisor. Close roads when traffic is detrimental to research objectives. [U]se design standards that are compatible with research objectives* (Forest Plan, page III-126).

ISSUES & ASSESSING BENEFITS, PROBLEMS, AND RISKS

Issue Summary

1. Provide Safe Access To New Conference Center

There is currently no safe access to the proposed location for the proposed conference center. The proposed access route is vegetated with trees and shrubs. There is a need to provide safe, year-round access to the proposed parking area and to place the road on the Forest's Transportation System so it would receive periodic maintenance to ensure it is safe to use for its intended purpose.

2. Provide Adequate Parking At The New Conference Center

There is currently no parking area at the proposed conference center. The proposed parking area is vegetated with trees and shrubs. There is a need to provide safe, year-round parking for the proposed conference center.

3. Provide Safe Access To Bent Creek Headquarters Buildings And Infrastructure

There are currently 10 non-system "spur" roads off of Forest Service Road 479A (Headquarters Road) that are being used by Bent Creek staff for administrative, research, and maintenance purposes to access the saw shed, parking lots, and the bunk house. There is a need to add these roads to the Forest's Transportation System so they would receive periodic maintenance to ensure they are safe to use for their intended purposes.

4. Impacts On Visitors

The existing conference center is old, does not provide adequate space for the number of prospective visitors that come to Bent Creek for training/research/education, and does not provide enough safe parking for the number of people that can effectively occupy it. There is a need to provide a larger conference center capable of holding more individuals and providing additional parking. The existing area immediately surrounding the Bent Creek headquarters does

not provide biking or hiking recreation opportunities. As a result, changes to the transportation system near the Bent Creek headquarters should have no impact to these recreationists.

5. Impacts On Biologic And Archaeological Resources

Constructing a new road, parking area and conference center may impact biologic and archaeological resources. Full biologic and archaeological surveys and reviews would be completed prior to project implementation and appropriate project design features would be developed to protect resources should surveys determine a need to.

6. Other

The construction of the new conference center road would eliminate the need for the existing unauthorized road to access the nursery and power line. The existing unauthorized road does not meet Forest guidelines for grade and is only accessible with four wheel drive.

DESCRIBING OPPORTUNITIES, SETTING PRIORITIES, AND REPORTING

The following table displays specific road-related information for this analysis:

Table 1: Information on Roads in BCEF Proposed for Addition to the Forest's Transportation System

Route Name	Route Number	Length (mi)	Existing Route	Functional Class	Operational Maintenance Level	RMO	Surface Type
Headquarters South Entrance	479A-1	~0.1	Y	Local	5	A1	Asphalt
Residence	479A-2	~0.1	Y	Local	5	A1	Asphalt
Headquarters Circle	479B	~0.2	Y	Local	5	A1	Asphalt
Saw Shed	479B-1	~0.1	Y	Local	5	A1	Asphalt
Greenhouse	479C	~0.2	Y	Local	5	A1	Asphalt
Trailer Spur	479C-1	~0.1	Y	Local	5	A1	Asphalt
Ozone Spur	479C-2	~0.1	Y	Local	5	A1	Asphalt
Conference Center	479D	~0.2	N	Local	5	A1	Asphalt
Nursery Road	479J	~0.1	Y	Local	3	C1	Aggregate
Administration	479K	~0.2	Y	Local	5	A1	Asphalt
Springhouse Loop	479L	~0.1	Y	Local	5	A1	Asphalt

The roads listed in Table 1 are necessary to meet Forest Plan objectives for forest research (Forest Plan, pages III-123 – III-126) as well as the purpose (objectives) Bent Creek was established as listed above. Each road listed would be added to the Forest's Transportation System. Locations of each new road are displayed on Map 2 on page 5.

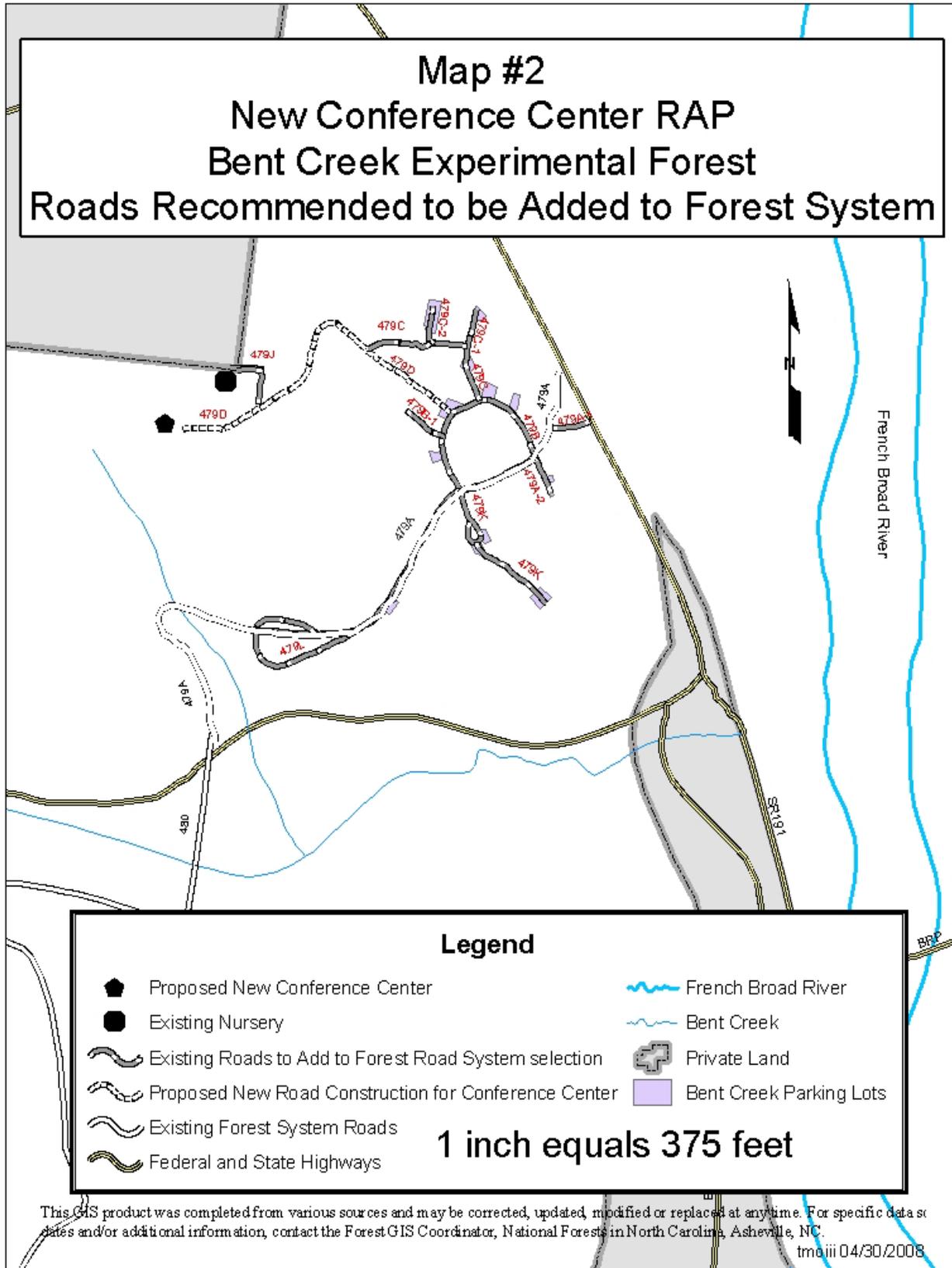
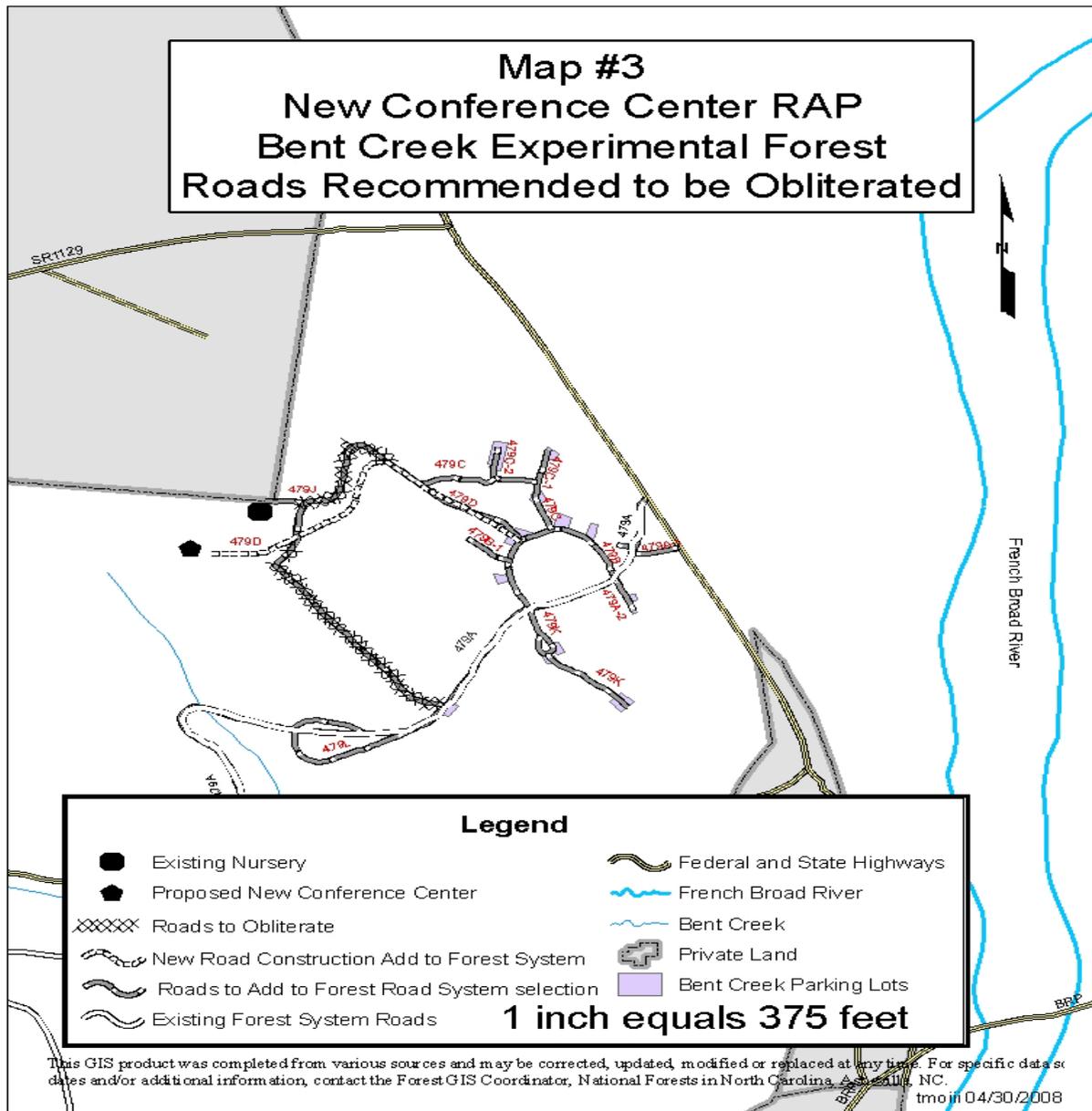


Table 2: Information on Existing Unauthorized Roads in BCEF Proposed for Obliteration

Route Name	Route Number	Length (mi)	Existing Route	Functional Class	Operational Maintenance Level	RMO	Surface Type
Old Power Line	None	0.25	Y	Local	0	n/a	Natural

The road listed in Table 2 would no longer be necessary to meet Forest Plan objectives for forest research (Forest Plan, pages III-123 – III-126) as well as the purpose (objectives) Bent Creek was established as listed on page 3 above once the new road is constructed. The road would be obliterated from the landscape following construction of the new Conference Center Road. The location of the road to be obliterated is displayed on Map 3 below:



APPENDIX C – RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

General Discussion

Pursuant to 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 215.6(a)(1)(i) and 215.6(a)(1)(iv), a formal 30-day Notice and Comment period for the proposal began January 26, 2008, and ended on February 25, 2008; six members of the public provided written comments on the proposal. Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.5, the legal notice initiating the 30-day Notice and Comment period was placed in *The Asheville Citizen-Times*, the National Forest's in North Carolina's newspaper of record on January 25, 2008. The written comments received and the Agency's response to each is below.

Commenter 1	Chrys Baggett, NC Department of Administration
Commenter 2	Claudia Nix, Liberty Bicycles
Commenter 3	Ed Ingle
Commenter 4	Brian Cole, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service
Commenter 5	Charles Parris
Commenter 6	Chrys Baggett, NC Department of Administration

Commenter 1

The N.C State Clearinghouse has received the above project for intergovernmental review. This project has been assigned State Application Number 08-E-0000-0234. Please use this number with all inquiries or correspondence with this office. Review of this project should be completed on or before 02/29/2008.

Agency Response

Comment is noted.

Commenter 2

I am writing concerning the Bent Creek Experimental Forest News Conference Building. I am glad to see that you plan to build using LEED design features for this building. I have been in meetings in the present conference building and agree that it is too small. I support the building of this building as long as you do keep the number of mature trees being cut to a minimum.

Agency Response

Comment is noted.

Commenter 3

Congratulations on getting approval for a new conference center. You have my full support with this undertaking. I know that construction will be done in an environmentally friendly manner of materials that will cause no harm to the environment. This is wise use of public funds. You all do fine work.

Agency Response

Comment is noted. Approval for construction will come once a decision is signed.

Commenter 4

We have no objections to the subject project as proposed in your letter. Based on the information provided and a review of our records, we do not believe the project will affect federally listed endangered or threatened species or critical habitat. Thus, the requirements of section 7(c) of the Act are fulfilled. However, obligations under section 7 of the Act must be reconsidered if: (1) new information reveals impacts of this identified action that may affect endangered or threatened species or critical habitat in a manner not previously considered, (2) this action is subsequently modified in a manner not considered in this review, or (3) a new species is listed or critical habitat is determined that may be affected by the action.

Agency Response

Comment is noted.

Commenter 5

In regards to the Bent Creek Experimental Forest New Conference Building, I see no problem with going forward with this project. I do hope that future needs have been considered in both the parking lot size and the building size. All guidelines should be met in both structure and the parking area so as to adhere to all government regulations. One thing that I would like to see take place at this facility would be the education of those ignorant to the value of reforestation and wildlife management and the harm actually done to the forest and its inhabitants when there is little or no management measures being taken (disease, insect infestations, overgrowth of invasive plants, lack of food sources, etc.).

Agency Response

The facility and associated parking area has been designed to meet current and future needs. The facility and Bent Creek will continue to be used for research and education that informs members of the public, natural resource agencies, and universities on various methods of natural resource management.

Commenter 6

The above referenced environmental impact information has been submitted to the State Clearinghouse under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act. According to G.S. 113A-10, when a state agency is required to prepare an environmental document under the provisions of federal law, the environmental document meets the provisions of the State Environmental Policy Act. No comments were made by any state/local agencies during the course of this review. If any further environmental review documents are prepared for this project, they should be forwarded to this office for intergovernmental review.

Agency Response

Comment is noted.

APPENDIX D – PROJECT DESIGN FEATURES FOR PESTICIDE USE

Pesticide Application Project Design Features (see also Forest Plan, Appendix I, pages I-10 – I-14)

1. Pesticides are applied according to labeling information and the site-specific analysis done for projects. This labeling and analysis are used to choose the herbicide, rate, and application method for the site. They are also used to select measures to protect human and wildlife health, non-target vegetation, water, soil, and threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species. Site conditions may require stricter constraints than those on the label, but labeling standards are never relaxed.
2. Only pesticide formulations (active and inert ingredients) and additives registered by EPA and approved by the Forest Service for use on National Forest System lands are applied.
3. Public safety during such uses as viewing, hiking, berry picking, and fuel wood gathering is a priority concern. Method and timing of application are chosen to achieve project objectives while minimizing effects on non-target vegetation and other environmental elements. Selective treatment is preferred over broadcast treatment.
4. Areas are not prescribed burned for at least 30 days after pesticide treatment.
5. A certified pesticide applicator supervises each Forest Service application crew and trains crew members in personal safety, proper handling and application of herbicides, and proper disposal of empty containers.
6. Each Contracting Officer's Representative (COR), who must ensure compliance on contracted pesticide projects, is a certified pesticide applicator. Contract inspectors are trained in pesticide use, handling, and application.
7. Contractors ensure that their workers use proper protective clothing and safety equipment required by labeling for the pesticide and application method.
8. Notice signs (FSH 7109.11) are clearly posted, with special care taken in areas of anticipated visitor use.
9. No pesticide is ground-applied within 60 feet of any known threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive plant. Buffers are clearly marked before treatment so applicators can easily see and avoid them.
10. Application equipment, empty pesticide containers, clothes worn during treatment, and skin are not cleaned in open water or wells. Mixing and cleaning water must come from a public water supply and be transported in separate labeled containers.
11. No pesticide is ground-applied within 30 horizontal feet of lakes, wetlands, or perennial or intermittent springs and streams. No pesticide is applied within 100 horizontal feet of any public or domestic water source. Selective treatments (which require added site-specific analysis and use of aquatic-labeled pesticides) may occur within these buffers only to prevent significant environmental damage such as noxious weed infestations. Buffers are clearly marked before treatment so applicators can easily see and avoid them.
12. During transport, pesticides, additives, and application equipment are secured to prevent tipping or excess jarring and are carried in a part of the vehicle totally isolated from people, food, clothing, and livestock feed.
13. Only the amount of pesticide needed for the day's use is brought to the site. At day's end, all leftover pesticide is returned to storage.
14. Pesticide mixing, loading, or cleaning areas in the field are not located within 200 feet of private land, open water or wells, or other sensitive areas.
15. During use equipment to store, transport, mix, or apply pesticides is inspected daily for leaks.

APPENDIX E – VICINITY MAP

