



File Code: 1950

Date: November 6, 2006

Mr. Steve Novak
WildLaw
46 Haywood Street Suite 323
Asheville NC 28801

Dear Mr. Novak:

As a follow-up to our telephone conversation October 27, 2006, I have reviewed the roads analysis, environmental assessment, and decision notice for the Case Camp project. My September 29, 2006, decision did not authorize placing new roads (unclassified or temporary) on the Forest's transportation system. As a result, I have clarified the roads analysis by removing the paragraph on page 25 that stated: *Incorporate the following unclassified roads into the Forest Road System to access suitable lands not accessible with present road system: Pounding Mill Road, Bennett Cove Road, Justice Branch Road, Bridges Camp Gap Road, Gumstand Branch Road, and Big Bear Pen East Road* and updating the map on page 28.

You also commented about open road densities. The current open road density in Management Area (MA) 4 lands that the project area is within is 0.96 mi/mi² (see attached map). As you noted in your August 14, 2006, comment letter, the Forest Plan standard for open road density in MA 4 is approximately 0.25 miles/mile². The Forest Plan also states that *[W]here existing open road densities exceed 0.25 miles per square mile, and, if closure of existing roads is prohibitive for administrative or legal reasons, then document these exceptions to the standard and investigate strategies to reduce the open road density* (Forest Plan, page III-87). The open road density in these MA 4 lands exceed the 0.25 mi/mi² standard due to Forest Service Roads 475B and 225, both of which provide important access for recreationists and will not be closed at this time.

The information considered in this letter does not change my September 2006 decision nor the environmental effects disclosed for this project.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the Case Camp project with you. Should you have further questions, feel free to contact me at 828-877-3265.

Sincerely,

/s/ Randall Burgess
RANDALL BURGESS
District Ranger

Enclosure

