



File Code: 1950-1

Date: April 7, 2006

Dear Interested Members of the Public and Forest Users:

This letter is part of the public involvement and scoping phase of the *Lake Powhatan Dredging Environmental Assessment*, on the Pisgah National Forest, Pisgah Ranger District and Bent Creek Experimental Forest in Buncombe County, North Carolina.

In the fall of 2004, storm remnants of three hurricanes severely damaged western North Carolina. The storms generated heavy rains resulting in mudslides, flooding, and severe erosion. Due to these storms, and other storms in previous years, Lake Powhatan has received an influx of sediment from the Bent Creek Watershed. Most of the sediment is composed of sand size or smaller particles (fines).

Lake Powhatan Recreational Area is located approximately 8 to 10 miles southwest of Asheville, North Carolina in the Bent Creek Experimental Forest (Figure 1). The Bent Creek Watershed is comprised of 13 perennial streams that eventually feed into Lake Powhatan. A dam located at the east end of the lake controls the water flow through the lake. The Lake Powhatan Recreation Area is used for hiking, camping, picnicking, swimming, cycling, and fishing.

Since the storms of September 2004, sediment has continued to enter Lake Powhatan. This sediment is coming from stream banks, trails, roads and bare areas within the watershed that were eroded during the storm events. The Pisgah Ranger District has started efforts to reduce the sediments entering the rivers and creeks by repairing trails, roads, streams, and other storm-damaged sites within the watershed. This reduction in sediment will help with future water quality but will not diminish the sediment already in the rivers and creeks and in Lake Powhatan.

The purpose and need (objectives) of this proposal is to improve water quality and aquatic habitat and maintain recreation opportunities in Lake Powhatan. The desired condition is to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act and to rehabilitate and stabilize eroding areas thereby providing a safe, aesthetically pleasing, non-urban atmosphere that supports picnicking, swimming, boating, fishing, and viewing of wildlife and scenery (Forest Plan Amendment 5, Management Area 12, Developed Recreation Areas, page III-140).

Since the recreation area is surrounded by experimental forest and the haul route and disposal site may fall within the experimental forest, it is important that alternatives meet the desired condition for the Bent Creek Experimental Forest. The desired condition is to ensure that no ongoing or projected experiments are interrupted (Forest Plan Amendment 5, Management Area 8, Experimental Forests, page III-123).

The U.S. Forest Service proposes to improve water quality and aquatic habitat and maintain recreation opportunities in Lake Powhatan by changing the Bent Creek inlet channel to improve water flow through the lake, mechanically dredging 11,000 cubic yards (cy) of excess sediment from the lake, and hauling the dredged material to an approved disposal site. Within the Proposed Action, three initial alternative disposal sites will be analyzed; Deer Lake Lodge Area, Ledford Branch, and Lake Powhatan Picnic Area. These disposal sites are discussed below in Table 2. Table 1 shows the steps needed to remove the sediment, estimated time to accomplish the step, and the approximate date the step is proposed to start.



Table 1 - Steps Required to Complete Lake Powhatan Dredging

Step	Approximate Completion	Potential Start Date	Notes
1) Lower Lake Water Level	2 weeks	September 18	The lake will be lowered one foot per day using two 8” diameter siphons with filter screens to prevent flushing bed load sediment in front of the dam and to maintain dam safety. Riprap rock may be added to the stream bed below the dam to prevent erosion while the lake is lowered.
2) Divert inflow from Bent Creek	1 week	September 28	Water flow from Bent Creek will be captured with a temporary dam at the mouth of the lake and channeled through a 24” diameter flexible high density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe to the Lake Powhatan dam outlet gate valve, also 24” diameter. The flexible HDPE pipe can be moved slightly during dredging to allow access.
3) Fish population	2 weeks	September 18	Fish will be collected and moved to nearby ponds as appropriate. Some fish loss is still expected.
4) Dewater Lake Sediments	2 weeks	October 2	Sediments will be allowed to dry.
5) Place Wood Mats	1 week	October 16	Wood mats will be placed on the lake bed to enable excavators to work.
6) Dike Construction at Disposal Site	1 week	September 28	Dikes will be used to retain the sediments in the disposal area. A drainage ditch at the site will allow water to flow out of the retained sediments.
7) a. Dredging and Disposal b. Bent Creek Inlet Channel Modification	4 to 6 months	October 23	a. Excavators will remove approximately 11,000 cy of sediments to dump trucks. The dump trucks will move the sediment along forest roads to a disposal site. Three disposal sites will be analyzed in the EA. b. The Bent Creek inlet channel will be straightened to improve water flow through the lake and maintain the recreation sites.
8) Disposal Site Rehabilitation	2 weeks	April 30, 2007	After the dredging is complete and sediments have sufficiently dried, the disposal area will be shaped and rehabilitated with native plant species.
9) Lake Filling	2 weeks	April 16, 2007	The lake will be allowed to refill naturally from the flow from Bent Creek. This will be accomplished by removing the bypass HDPE pipe from Bent Creek to the dam outlet.

There is no preferred disposal site for the sediments at this time. Three initial sites, along with their respective haul routes, will be analyzed in the EA. Other sites may be analyzed in the EA based on public comment. Each of the sites has advantages and disadvantages that will be weighed in the final decision based on resource effects, issues, and public comment. An initial comparison is made here for your review and comment. One or more of these sites or another appropriate site developed from scoping could be used for disposal.

Table 2 - Initial Comparison of the Disposal Sites

	Deer Lake Lodge	Lake Powhatan Picnic Area Redesign	Ledford Branch
Distance (miles)	2	at site	1
Capacity (cubic yards)	Unknown	Unknown	10-11,000
Current Condition:	Undeveloped forest knoll	Recreation area with concessionaire	Former disposal site and wildlife opening
Management Area:	MA 8, Experimental Forest borders on MA 18, Riparian Area	MA 12, Recreation borders MA 8 and MA 18	MA 8
Haul Cost:	\$114,500	Unknown - low	\$82,500

Based on past activities in the area and initial discussions with resources specialists some preliminary issues were developed. These issues may be fully analyzed in the EA if they are determined to be key issues or they may have only a short analysis if they are determined non-key issues. They are listed here for your review and comment:

- Air Quality
- Aquatic Habitat
- Impacts to local residents
- Noise Pollution
- North Carolina Department of Transportation restrictions for haul vehicles
- Potential resource impacts if the Lake Powhatan Picnic Area redesign option is used for the disposal site.
- Public Health and Safety
- Recreationists
- Research (ongoing or projected experiments)
- Water Quality

I encourage your participation during this 20-day scoping period for the proposed action. Following this 20-day period, the results of an analysis of the potential impacts of the proposed action and no-action alternatives will be reported in an environmental assessment. This environmental assessment will be sent to those that provided comments to this letter, for a 30 day comment period. After the 30 day comment period, a decision on whether or not to implement an action alternative will be made based on the issues, public comments, and environmental analysis.

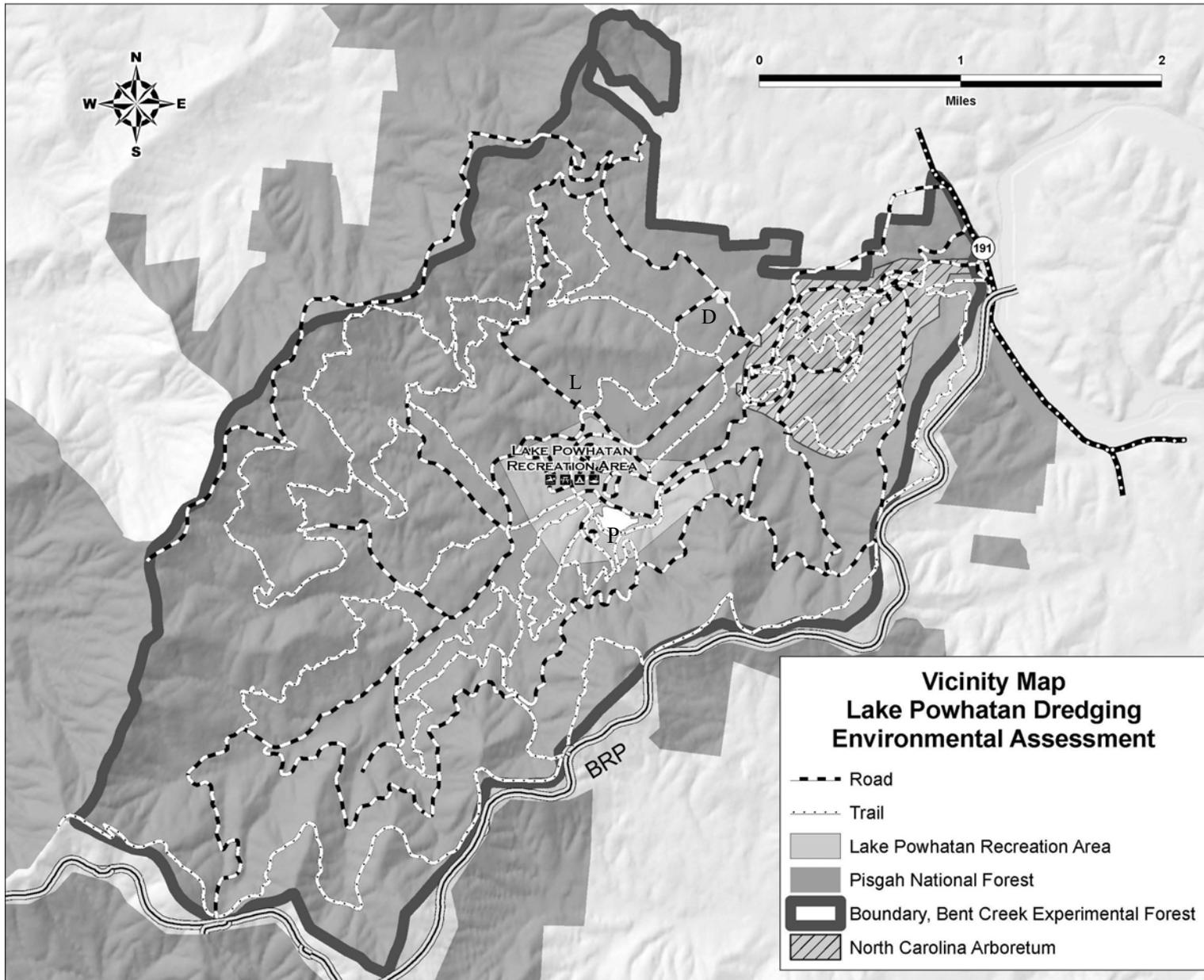
Comments may be mailed electronically, in a common digital format, to: comments-southern-north-carolina-pisgah-pisgah@fs.fed.us. The subject line must contain the name of the project for which you are submitting comments. Comments may also be mailed to: the Pisgah Ranger District, ATTN: District Ranger, 1001 Pisgah Highway, Pisgah Forest, NC 28768.

A decision is expected in the Spring 2006. If you have questions regarding this proposal, you may contact me at (828) 877-3265. Thank you for your continued interest in management of your National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Randall Burgess

Randall Burgess
District Ranger
Pisgah Ranger District



Possible Disposal Sites

D – Deer Lake Lodge

L – Ledford Branch

P – Picnic Area