



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

National Forests in North Carolina
Pisgah National Forest
Appalachian Ranger District
Burnsville Station

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Burnsville, NC 28714-0128
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File Code: 1900/7310

Date: November 6, 2006

Dear Interested Members of the Public and Forest Users:

Enclosed is an environmental assessment (EA) staff on the Pisgah National Forest assembled evaluating a proposal to construct a new district office building in Mars Hill, North Carolina that would replace the two facilities currently used to serve the Appalachian Ranger District in Hot Springs and Burnsville. The new office building would be located in Madison County just west of the US 19E and Interstate 26 interchange. Two alternatives have been developed and are currently being analyzed; Alternative A – No Action and Alternative B – Proposed Action. A decision will be made by the Responsible Official Marisue Hilliard, National Forests in North Carolina Forest Supervisor that selects one of these alternatives or a modification of the Proposed Action. While Alternative B has been identified as the preferred alternative, a final decision has not been made yet. We are seeking your input on this EA before a decision is made.

In accordance with 36 CFR 215.6(a)(3), individuals or organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal a decision must provide the following information: 1) Your name and address; 2) Title of the Proposed Action; 3) Specific substantive comments (215.2) on the proposed action, 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* the newspaper of record. 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-appalachian@fs.fed.us; regular mail to: Appalachian Ranger District, Attn: District Ranger, PO Box 128, Burnsville, NC 28714; or faxed to 828-682-9179.

Please contact Michael Hutchins, Interdisciplinary Team Leader at 828-682-6146 if you have questions concerning this proposal. Thank you for your continued interest in management of the Pisgah National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/PL Bradley

PAUL L. BRADLEY
District Ranger

Enclosure





United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

November 2006



Environmental Assessment

Appalachian Ranger District New Office Construction

Appalachian Ranger District, Pisgah National Forest
Madison County, North Carolina

Appalachian Ranger District New Office Construction

Environmental Assessment

Location of Action: Appalachian Ranger District
Pisgah National Forest
Madison County, North Carolina

Lead Agency: USDA Forest Service

Responsible Official: Marisue Hilliard
NFs NC Forest Supervisor
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Send Electronic Comments to: comments-southern-north-carolina-pisgah-appalachian@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 alternatives. The document is organized into five parts:

- *Chapter 1 – Purpose and Need:* This section includes information on the history of the project proposal, the purpose of and need for the project, and the agency’s proposal for achieving that purpose and need. This section also details how the Forest Service informed the public of the proposal.
- *Chapter 2 – Alternatives:* This section provides a detailed description of alternative methods for achieving the stated purpose as well as the No-action Alternative. These alternatives were developed based on significant issues raised by the public and other agencies. This discussion also includes project design features. This section also provides a summary of the environmental consequences associated with each alternative.
- *Chapter 3 – Environmental Consequences:* This section describes the environmental effects of implementing the proposed action and other alternatives. This analysis is organized biologic resources, physical resources, and other resource and human concerns.
- *Chapter 4 – Preparers and Public Involvement:* This section provides a list of preparers and members of the public consulted during the development of the environmental assessment.
- *Appendices:* The appendices provide more detailed information to support the analyses presented in the EA.

1.1.1 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

In 1995 administrative oversight for the French Broad Ranger District headquartered in Hot Springs, North Carolina was transferred to the then Toecane Ranger District office headquartered in Burnsville, North Carolina to become the current Appalachian Ranger District. Both offices are currently staffed by employees and both currently provide services to members of the public. The two offices are separated by over 50 miles; requiring about 1½ hours to drive between them. In February 2005 the USDA Forest Service purchased about nine leveled and compacted acres and a 50 foot wide right-of-way access near Mars Hill, North Carolina in Madison County to construct the new office, parking area, and work center on. The location of the office was established based on a Forest Service management efficiency analysis and input from elected officials. The acquired land has not been assigned management area (MA) designation, but would best meet MA 16 which provides [s]upport facilities for the Forests and the public. It

includes District offices and workcenters, Job Corps Centers, the Beech Creek Seed Orchard and other facilities (Forest Plan, page III-173). Appendix B provides digitals of the activity area and a location map.

1.3 Proposed Action

The Appalachian Ranger District, Pisgah National Forest proposes to construct a new District office building, work center, and associated improvements near the junction of US Highway 19E and US Interstate 26, about two air miles northeast of Mars Hill, North Carolina in Madison County (immediately NW of Exit 9 on Interstate 26). Activities that would be part of the new Appalachian Ranger District Office construction are:

- Construction of a new office building for the Appalachian Ranger District which would also include: improving the existing access route which would become an open classified Forest Service road; developing paved parking areas; installing utility lines and wastewater treatment facilities; constructing a work center; placing security fencing around the property; and landscaping around the facilities. The activities would require minor site grading and removal of some side slope soil to accommodate the work center—less than an acre would be newly impacted. The proposal would designate the newly acquired NFS lands as MA 16.

1.4 Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the proposal is to provide Appalachian Ranger District employees with a single, more centrally located office in relation to the Appalachian Ranger District and to continue to provide services to members of the public. The proposed site would roughly split in half the current driving distance and time between the two offices and would also split in half the driving time and distance between the two existing offices and the headquarters for the National Forests in North Carolina in Asheville, North Carolina. Over time, consolidating the current two offices into a single office is expected to increase financial, planning, and logistical efficiency of the Appalachian Ranger District.

1.5 Decision Framework

Based on the analysis disclosed in this EA, the Responsible Official will make a decision and document it in a Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact. The Responsible Official can:

- Select the Proposed Action along with designating the NFS lands as MA 16, or
- Select the No-action Alternative.

1.6 Public Involvement

The proposal was listed in the July and October 2005, and January, April, July, and October 2006 editions of the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA)—no comments on the proposal have been received from members of the public through this scoping effort. Beginning in 2002, local governments in each community and county were briefed on the proposal, leading to the project design feature listed in Section 2.3, Chapter 2.

1.7 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.

1.7.1 Non-significant Issues

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1.7.1.1 Water Quality and Aquatic Resources – | <i>Constructing the new office may adversely affect water quality and threatened, endangered, sensitive (TES), Forest Concern (FC), and Management Indicator aquatic species (MIS)</i> |
| 1.7.1.2 Wildlife Resource – | <i>Constructing the new office may adversely affect TES, FC, and MIS wildlife species</i> |
| 1.7.1.3 Botanical Resource – | <i>Constructing the new office may adversely affect TES, FC, and MIS botanical species</i> |
| 1.7.1.4 Soil Resource – | <i>Constructing the new office may adversely affect soils</i> |
| 1.7.1.5 Scenic Resources – | <i>Constructing the new office may adversely affect scenic resources</i> |
| 1.7.1.6 Cultural Resources – | <i>Constructing the new office may adversely affect cultural sites</i> |
| 1.7.1.7 Invasive Exotics – | <i>Constructing the new office may increase infestation of invasive exotic plants</i> |
| 1.7.1.8 Civil Rights – | <i>Constructing the new office may adversely affect civil rights of employees and members of the public</i> |
| 1.7.1.9 Other Areas of Concern – | <i>Constructing the new office 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.</i> |

CHAPTER 2 – ALTERNATIVES

Chapter 2 is the “heart” of an EA (40 CFR 1502.14) and describes alternatives the agency considered in addition to the proposed action. This chapter compares each alternative considered in detail and lists project design features.

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 (Chapter 1, Section 1.4), 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

Three alternatives were developed by the IDT in response to the issues and concerns regarding the proposal; Alternative A – No Action, Alternative B – Proposed Action, and Alternative C. The action alternatives fulfill the specific purpose and need for these actions. Project design features for activities in each action alternative are also described in this chapter.

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. No management actions would take place at this time to improve the existing condition of the environment in the project area. There would be no regeneration or timber stand improvements, treatment of non-native invasive species, designation of small patch old growth, or wildlife or aquatic habitat improvements made. 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.

2.3 Project Design Feature

Alternative B includes design features that would become mandatory if the responsible official selects it for implementation.

- The Forest Service would initially provide “storefront” access in Burnsville and Hot Springs to issue permits and other services as requested by elected officials in the area.

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 District office, associated utilities and access, parking area, work center and security fence, and landscaping near US Highway 19E and US Interstate 26?	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 impacts to S aquatic, botanical, or wildlife species as the approximately nine acre site is currently leveled, compacted and field surveys have not identified TES species or their habitat on the site.

3.1.1.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

A biological evaluation (BE, Appendix A) was completed for the proposed action that concluded: *An informal consultation with the USDI Fish & Wildlife Service determined that this project is not likely to adversely affect any Federally listed species. No further consultation with USDI Fish & Wildlife Service is required.*

The natural community type that exist within the activity area is very altered and considered anthropogenic (man made) and consists of a powerline corridor, a leveled and grassy area about nine acres in size, cut banks, an interstate highway on ramp, and a graveled access route (see also digital in Appendix B). Originally, judging by surrounding vegetation, the area was acidic cove forest—a common community type within the region.

The acidic cove forest within the activity area is a very common community type with a relatively low probability of occurrences for TES species—making a generally low potential for TES species to occur in the potential activity area. This community type is briefly described in *The Natural Vegetation of North Carolina* by M. Schafle and A. Weekley.

No population of any TES species are known to be directly or indirectly affected by this proposal. The risk of directly or indirectly affecting a TES species is very low—no known TES species would be affected by this proposal. This conclusion was reached based on:

- No known element occurrences (EO) of TES species are known;
- Site visits reveal that habitat of any TES species does not exist; and
- The amount and area of disturbance is minimal (less than nine acres).

3.1.2 Management Indicator Species (MIS) and Forest Concern (FC) Aquatic, Botanical, and Wildlife Species

3.1.2.1 Alternative A – No Action

Under this alternative the new office would not be constructed. There would be no adverse effects to MIS or FC aquatic, botanical, or wildlife species as the site is currently leveled, compacted and field surveys have not identified MIS or FC on the site.

3.1.2.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Surveys of the area have taken place and no MIS or FC species was identified. As stated above, the project area is very altered—consisting of a large cut and fill with a major interstate highway less than ¼ mile away. No population of any MIS or FC species are known to be directly or indirectly affected by this proposal. The risk of directly or indirectly affecting either an MIS or FC species is very low. No known MIS or FC species would be affected by this proposal, including MIS biological communities or habitat components.

3.1.3 Exotic Invasive Plants

3.1.3.1 Alternative A – No Action

Under this alternative the new office would not be constructed—the site would remain heavily altered. There would be potential for exotic invasive plants to become established as some species prefer disturbed sites. Field surveys have not identified exotic invasives plants; however, should future monitoring identify presence of exotic invasives, treatments conducted pursuant to Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Chapter 31.12, Category 3 could take place: *Repair and maintenance of administrative sites. Examples include but are not limited to: a.) Mowing lawns at a District office; b) Replacing a roof or storage shed; c) Painting a building; or d) Applying registered pesticides for rodent or vegetation control.*

3.1.3.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

The proposed construction site had been previously cleared of forest vegetation, graded, and an access route established prior to Forest Service acquisition. Grasses and shrubs have re-established since the site was developed and the activity area is considered highly altered and suburban. Surveys did not identify exotic invasives in the activity area, but they are likely in the surrounding area. The activity area has a lack of suitable habitat and establishment of exotic invasives should be a minimal risk. Should observations identify their establishment, future control could occur pursuant to FSH 1909.15, Chapter 31.12, Category 3: *Repair and maintenance of administrative sites.*

3.2 Physical Factors

3.2.1 Hydrologic Resources

3.2.1.1 Alternative A – No Action

The proposed construction site is not located within areas identified as wetlands or floodplains based on a review of the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service *Wetlands Online Mapper* and the North Carolina *Flood Mapping Program*. If Alternative A were implemented, the new office would not be constructed; however, the site would still remain heavily altered. There is no evidence remaining of previous streams (perennial, intermittent, or ephemeral) on the nine acre site; however, a drain was developed along the southern side of the leveled site to facilitate future

runoff for the proposed construction. No adverse effects would be expected on hydrologic resources as a result of implementing this alternative.

3.2.1.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

The proposed construction site is currently leveled and compacted and was developed by previous property owners through cutting and filling techniques midslope on a hill with 30%-50% slopes. Construction would be accomplished with erosion control measures and best management practices (BMPs) in place to reduce potential for erosion and sedimentation to impact hydrologic resources. There are no expected adverse effects to hydrologic resources as a result of the proposed action because the site is already heavily altered and there are no streams (perennial, intermittent, or ephemeral) on-site.

3.2.2 Soil Resources

3.2.2.1 Alternative A – No Action

Under this alternative, there would be no expected adverse effects to soil resources because the area has been leveled, compacted and is considered an urban development or Ud – Udorthents (nearly level and gently sloping areas where the original soils have been cut away) by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Due to the leveling and compaction, this classification negates previous classifications; however, prior to this classification, the site was classified as soil mapping unit 630 – Walnut series. The Walnut series is considered acceptable for the type of construction proposed (NRCS, pers. comm.).

3.2.2.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under this alternative, construction would be accomplished with erosion control measures and BMPs in place to reduce potential for erosion and sedimentation. There are no expected adverse effects to soils anticipated as a result of the proposed action because the site is already heavily altered and as a result, the site is classified as urban.

3.2.3 Scenic Resources

3.2.3.1 Alternative A – No Action

Under this alternative, there would be no adverse impacts to scenic resources because the site is heavily altered, is adjacent to an interstate freeway, and existing residences and businesses.

3.2.3.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

The Forest Plan established general direction for administrative sites. They are to provide an inviting public perception (Forest Plan, page IV-174). Under this alternative the new office and surrounding facilities would be designed to meet visual quality objectives (VQOs) consistent with the setting where the facility would be located.

3.2.4 Cultural Resources

3.2.4.1 Alternative A – No Action

There would be no adverse effect to cultural resources under this alternative because the site is a cut-and-fill area and a cultural review in the field did not identify any significant archaeological sites.

3.2.4.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

A cultural review was completed for the proposed action that concluded: *Recommend archeological clearance because activity will be within previously disturbed area with little or no potential for containing significant archeological sites. The proposed project has no potential for effect, adverse or beneficial, to a significant heritage resource, and therefore is an Exempt Undertaking, no further Section 106 compliance documentation is required, other than recommended mitigation or protection measures.*

The area is highly disturbed and consists of cut-and-fill material created during US I-26 construction and was previously surveyed by a North Carolina Department of Transportation archaeologist in 1990, with no significant sites recorded in the proposed area.

3.3 Other Factors

3.3.2 Civil Rights

A Civil Rights Impact Analysis (CRIA) was completed and approved in March 2006. The CRIA analyzed impacts on employees, leadership, and delivery of services.

3.3.2.1 Alternative A – No Action

Impacts on Employees

Currently employees are stationed in four separate offices in three communities. Opportunities to work directly with all district employees, staff, and the District Ranger is limited; requiring separate meetings in a few locations throughout the year to interact all together. Lack of day-to-day interaction amongst all employees has potential to decrease “team” opportunities and the benefits highly productive teams produce. Twelve times a year employees meet at AB Technical College in Marshall, North Carolina to hold monthly safety/employee meetings. Meetings at this location require employees to drive up to 30 miles and 45 minutes each way.

The Hot Springs office is not large enough to accommodate the employees headquartered there, requiring some employees to work out of the work center. The Forest Service rents the Hot Springs office and it is not designed for efficient use—both electronically and work-space.

Impacts on Leadership

Currently the District Ranger and Assistant District Rangers are in two separate offices. This reduces potential for face-to-face interactions between the District leaders and employees and members of the public. The District Ranger is stationed at the Burnsville office and spends three to six hours a week driving between the two offices to provide leadership at the Hot Springs office. This reduces the District Ranger’s efficiency due to “lost” driving hours as well as reducing leadership opportunities at Hot Springs to specific days a week. As a result, opportunities for day-to-day interaction with all employees are reduced.

Impacts on Delivery of Services

Under this alternative the current delivery of services to members of the public would continue. Both offices provide full services to members of the public which include issuing permits and providing information to tourists. The Hot Springs office is located on Bridge Street (US 25/70)

and the Appalachian Trail (AT) and is the first full service community on the AT from hikers heading north. As a result, many of the “walk-ins” at the Hot Springs office are hikers.

3.3.2.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Impacts on Employees

There would be some impacts to current employees; however, they would be non-discriminatory as they would affect employees equally. Commute time to the office location from Burnsville is approximately twenty minutes and commute time from Hot Springs is approximately 40 minutes. Commute time from the SO is approximately 20 minutes. Driving time for employees would vary (more or less) depending on which side of Hot Springs, Burnsville, and Asheville they live. Office space conditions would improve for Hot Springs employees due to the unacceptable conditions at the currently leased office. Conditions would be essentially the same for employees in Burnsville and Asheville.

Impacts on Leadership

There would be no adverse impacts on leadership. Positive impacts would be improved communication and efficiency by being in one location.

Impacts on Delivery of Services

The new office is needed to provide forest visitors and the Appalachian District employees with a safe and healthy facility that meets American’s with Disability Act (ADA) requirements. The existing Appalachian District Office in Hot Springs is too small to accommodate the existing organization and visiting public and does not fully meet ADA requirements. The general public would have greater access to resources in the reception area and lobby with the increase in size of the new building. The current offices total approximately 6,000 square feet, including reception areas. Some employees are currently located at the Hot Springs Work Center and the Supervisors office. The proposed facility is expected to be approximately 7,600 square feet. Working efficiency of the office in general would increase as well as employee productivity based on the increased space and unified location. A more efficient, more productive work space leads directly to an increase in services and product to the public. As disclosed in Section 2.3, Chapter 2 above, the Forest Service would initially provide “storefront” access in Burnsville and Hot Springs to issue permits and other services as requested by elected officials in the area.

3.3.3 Other Areas of Concern

3.3.3.1 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 AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The following individuals helped develop this environmental assessment:

4.1 ID Team Members

4.1.1 Core IDT

Sandy Burnet – Pisgah NF Zone Wildlife Biologist

David Danley – Pisgah NF Botanist

Michael Hutchins – Pisgah NF Planner

Bob Noel – Pisgah NF Archaeologist

Lorie Stroup – Pisgah NF Fisheries Biologist

4.1.2 Other Forest Service Personnel Providing Input

Dan Belanger – NFs in NC Land Acquisition Negotiator

Paul Bradley –Appalachian District Ranger

Erik Crews – NFs in NC Landscape Architect

Alice Goldstein – Forest Civil Rights Coordinator

Marisue Hilliard – NFs in NC Forest Supervisor

Dan Manning – NFs in NC Soil Scientist

APPENDIX A – BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION

BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION
FOR THE
HOT SPRINGS, BURNSVILLE RANGER RESIDENCES, BUSICK WORK CENTER, ALLEN GAP
RESIDENCE AND **MARS HILL ADMINISTRATIVE SITE**
PISGAH NATIONAL FOREST
APPALACHIAN RANGER DISTRICT

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Purpose of the Biological Evaluation

The purpose of this Biological Evaluation is to make sure that the United State Forest Service is in compliance with various federal environmental laws (ESA, NFMA, NEPA) regarding Federally Endangered or Threatened, Regional Sensitive or Forest Concern species. It is also to provide biological information to the Forest Service decision maker so that he may make an knowledgeable decision.

B. Proposed Action

The Appalachian Ranger District proposed exchanging or selling three administrative sites and developing a new site. The sites are listed below. The proposed sites total less than two acres in Yancey and Madison Counties, North Carolina. The areas that potentially may be exchanged, sold, or developed are referred to as the activity areas. See the individual project proposal for detailed description of proposals.

Sites:

- 1) Ranger's Residence, Serpentine St., Hot Springs, Madison County
- 2) **Construction of Administrative site Mars Hill, Madison County** [emphasis added]
- 3) Ranger's Residence, Burnsville, Yancey County
- 4) Busick Work Center and residence, Yancey County
- 5) Allen Gap Residence, Allen Gap, Madison County

II. SPECIES CONSIDERED AND SPECIES EVALUATED

A. Federally Threatened and Endangered or Proposed Species (T&E)

Any species that has been formally listed or is proposed for listing by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service is considered within this evaluation.

B. Regionally Sensitive Species (S)

Any species appearing on the current (2002) Regional Foresters Sensitive Species List for the Southern Region is considered within this evaluation.

III. METHODS

Potentially affected T&E or S species were identified after:

- (1) Reviewing the list of T&E or S species of the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forest and their habitat preferences.
- (2) Consulting element occurrence records of T&E or S species as maintained by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program.
- (3) Consulting with individuals both in the public and private sector who are knowledgeable of the area and its biology.
- (4) Because all of the areas were visited in the recent past by all resource biologists, existing information and field surveys in areas designated for activities were considered adequate.

Table A-1: Potential & Known T&E or S Species in the Activity Areas

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)			
N/A	N/A	N/A	None known to occur

III. ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE FOR SPECIES EVALUATED:

A. Existing Biological Condition

The natural communities type that exist within the proposed are all very altered and may be considered anthropogenic (man made) such as lawn habitat. Originally, judging by surrounding vegetation, the ranger's residence in Hot Springs was probably Chestnut Oak Forest community, the Mars Hill site, the Burnsville, Allen Gap residences and Busick were Acidic Cove Forest. These are all common community types within the region.

The Acidic Cove Forest and Chestnut Oak Forest communities within the activity area are very common community types and have a relatively low probability of occurrences for T&E or S plant species. This makes a general low potential for T&E or S species to occur in the potential activity areas. These community types are briefly described in The Natural Vegetation of North Carolina by M. Schafle and A. Weekley.

B. Biological Surveys

Lorie Stroup, fisheries biologists, Pisgah National Forest evaluated potentially affected aquatic resources. David Danley, botanist, Pisgah National Forest evaluated potentially affected

botanical resources in the activity areas and Sandy Burnet Pisgah National Forest evaluated potentially affected wildlife resources. All evaluations and surveys were conducted June 2005.

IV. BIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF PROPOSED MANAGEMENT ACTION

Botanical, Aquatic Resources and Wildlife resources

No population of any T&E or S species are known to be directly or indirectly affected by this proposal. The risk of directly or indirectly affecting a T&E or S species is very low. This conclusion was reached based on:

- 1) No known element occurrences of T&E or S species are known.
- 2) Site visits reveal that habitat of any T&E or S species does not exist.
- 3) The amount and area of disturbance is minimal. Therefore, it is concluded that no known plant or aquatic T&E or S species will be affected by this proposal.
- 4) The use in the residence sites is likely to remain similar to the present use.

V. DETERMINATION OF EFFECT

An informal consultation with the USDI Fish & Wildlife Service, determined that this project is not likely to adversely affect any Federally listed species. No further consultation with USDI Fish & Wildlife Service is required.

VI. MITIGATION MEASURES

None

VII. LIST OF PREPARERS

David M. Danley, Botanist, Appalachian Ranger District (BE and Botanical analysis, June, 2005)

Lorie Stroup, Fisheries Biologist, Appalachian Ranger District (Aquatic Resources Analysis, June, 2005).

Sandy Burnet, Wildlife Biologist, Grandfather Ranger District (Wildlife Resources analysis, June, 2005)

/s/Dave Danley

David M. Danley June 30, 2005
Botanist

APPENDIX B – DIGITALS OF CONSTRUCTION SITE AND PROJECT LOCATION MAP



Appalachian Ranger District New Office Construction

