



File Code: 1950

Date: October 2, 2001

On July 29, 2001 a severe thunderstorm flooded the Shelton Laurel and Little Laurel areas. One week later on August 4 another storm flooded the same area with eight inches of rain in a three-hour period. As a result of the flooding, forest system roads on Hickey Fork, Big Creek, Dry Creek, and Rich Mountain were damaged. Most of the damage was relatively easy to repair; however, a significant portion of the entire roadbed on Hickey Fork Road was destroyed. Wood debris, rocks and silt have been deposited in the Hickey Fork Creek flood plain affecting drainage patterns. Damage along Hickey Fork road is extensive. In addition, hiking trails on Hickey Fork, Jerry Miller, White Oak Flats, and Laurel River were also damaged. Pictures of the damage are included at the end of this scoping notice.

Repairs have already been completed on Big Creek and Rich Mountain roads. Emergency stabilization measures consisting of opening culverts and constructing water bars by hand also have been completed on the Hickey Fork road. Most of the damage to the trails has been repaired except for the trail bridge at the beginning of Hickey Fork Trail. All of this work was completed under maintenance authority with a great deal of assistance from volunteers.

Damage from the storms requires the Forest Service to do extensive repair and stabilization in the Hickey Fork area. The purpose of our actions in this drainage is to reduce the threat to property, protect resource values and public safety by stabilizing the eroded banks of Hickey Fork Creek and removing the debris dams obstructing water flow and repair the transportation system to the extent feasible. The stabilization work would prevent long-term degradation of aquatic and riparian habitats by greatly reducing the extent of further stream bank damage and sedimentation that would occur without treatment. Stabilization would also improve the visual/aesthetic values of the damaged areas

This was the second storm resulting in major damage to Hickey Fork Road in just over two years. Approximately \$250,000 in repairs was required to fix similar, but less extensive damage from a storm in 1999; most of that investment was lost in these storms. Because of the reoccurring damage and the extensive nature of the damage this time, we are evaluating an option that would not reconstruct the Hickey Fork Road.

The main uses of the Hickey Fork Road include access for hunting (primarily bear hunting) and recreational access to two trails, the Hickey Fork and White Oak trails. There is no private land served by the Hickey Fork Road beyond the gate.



So far, two options have been developed for evaluation:

- 1) Repair damage from the storm and reconstruct the road to its previous condition. This option would maintain roaded, motorized access into the Hickey Fork area. Stabilization actions similar to option one would also be implemented.
- 2) Stabilize the damaged area to provide for public safety, basic resource protection, and non-motorized public access through the damaged areas; With this option, access to the Hickey Fork Area would be limited to foot travel beyond the gate just below where the bridge for Hickey Fork trail was destroyed. White Oak trailhead would be eliminated and access would be served by a new trailhead at the end of Hickey Fork Road.

We are asking the public for their issues and concerns prior to making a decision. The Forest Service is in the process of developing for engineering plans and cost estimates for both options. If you have issues or concerns that need to be addressed in our analysis, please submit that information to us by November 2, 2001. For additional information on this project, please contact Linda Randolph at our office in Burnsville, NC at (828) 682-6146. Written correspondence should be addressed to: Paul Bradley, District Ranger, USDA Forest Service, P.O. Box 128, Burnsville, NC 28714 or faxed to (828) 682-9179.

Thank you for your continued interest in the management of our National Forests in North Carolina.

Sincerely,

PAUL L. BRADLEY
District Ranger

Hickey Fork Flood Damage

Two floods on July 28 and August 4, 2001 left Hickey Fork Road washed out, without bridges, and covered with trees and debris. The thin ribbon of road remaining is unstable and hazardous.

