



File Code: 1950

Date: April 29, 2002

The Appalachian Ranger District sent a letter on March 25, 2002 informing the public of a decision to reconstruct the Hickey Fork Road, which was extensively damaged as a result of flooding in July and August of 2001. Recently, we received requests for additional documentation and more comprehensive environmental analysis of this decision.

I have decided not to implement the road reconstruction until additional analysis and documentation are completed and available for public review. Over the next several months the Appalachian Ranger District will prepare an environmental assessment on whether to reconstruct or close the Hickey Fork Road. At a minimum, we will address the two options we have been considering which are:

- 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 two 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.

If you have previously provided input on this project, you need not resubmit comments; all comments received to date will be considered in the environmental assessment. If you have additional issues or concerns regarding this project, please submit them to me by May 20, 2002. You will be provided with a copy of the draft environmental assessment and another opportunity to comment in the future. After evaluating public comments, a Decision Notice will document how we intend to proceed. If you have any questions about the Hickey Fork Road project or the ongoing environmental documentation, please contact Karen Compton or me at 828-682-6146 or David McFee at 828-622-3202.

Sincerely,

/s/Paul L. Bradley
PAUL L. BRADLEY
District Ranger

