



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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

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US 19 Bypass
Burnsville, NC 28714-0128
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File Code: 1950-1
Date: May 10, 2005

Dear Interested Members of the Public:

The Appalachian Ranger District of the Pisgah National Forest is initiating the environmental analysis process for the South Toe River rehabilitation project. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), we are beginning our process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and identifying the significant issues related to this proposed action. In conjunction with our NEPA scoping, we are also providing the proposed action for comment pursuant to the Notice, Comment, and Appeal Procedures at 36 CFR 215. Through this scoping and the legal comment period, we are asking for meaningful input early in the decision making process. We are requesting written or oral comments from the public regarding issues, concerns, and suggestions associated with the proposed project and achieving the stated purpose and need by **June 9, 2005**. If we do not receive any comments from you regarding this project, we will not send you additional information for the South Toe River rehabilitation project. Refer to the Comment Procedures section of this letter for more detailed instructions.

Background Information

The concentrated rainfall we received from the tropical storms of September 8, 17 and 24, 2004 caused flood conditions along the South Toe River. As a result, a portion of the South Toe River Road (FSR 472) just inside the National Forest boundary was severely eroded by the South Toe River. The floods shifted the course of the river at this location so the entire force of the river flow is now directed at the base of the road. We plan to repair the South Toe River Road back to its original two lanes. However, the force of the water against the road base will continue to jeopardize the integrity of the road until we can redirect the river back to a normal stream channel. The South Toe River Road is located about 14 miles southwest of Burnsville off North Carolina Highway 80.

Proposed Action

After consulting with Forest Service engineers, hydrologists, and other resource specialists, the Appalachian Ranger District proposes redirecting the flow of the South Toe River using a natural stream channel design so the river no longer flows directly into the base of the road embankment (refer to attached enclosures). The river will be redirected using the following measures:

- ⇒ Using large rock, build a structure within the South Toe River Channel approximately 800 feet upstream from the severely eroded section of the South Toe Road to help channel the water flow into a newly constructed stream channel. This structure would not be visible from the road.
- ⇒ Plug the current river channel with excavated material from newly constructed channel. Reinforce with excavated soil, trees and shrubs from the newly constructed stream channel. Plant additional trees and shrubs as need to stabilize the channel blocking structure.
- ⇒ Excavate approximately 540 feet of new river channel between the existing South Toe River location and an existing side channel. This new channel would be designed using a



natural channel design model to construct a stable reach of stream. It would be approximately 60 feet wide and the average bankfull channel depth would be 3 feet.

- ⇒ Place large wood and boulders in the new channel to enhance channel stability and aquatic habitat.
- ⇒ Excavate the existing side channel approximately 205 feet from the junction of the newly constructed channel to where it rejoins the existing main channel of the South Toe River. Place large wood and boulders in this reach to enhance channel stability and aquatic habitat.
- ⇒ Place large boulders and large woody debris on the outside river bends oriented to maintain desired direction of water flow.
- ⇒ Construct a second large rock structure within 200 feet upstream from the road failure.
- ⇒ A temporary road will be cleared and graded as needed to provide equipment access to the river channels.

Purpose and Need

The South Toe River Road is a heavily used two lane road. It provides access to private homes, the Black Mountain Campground and Briar Bottom Group Campsites, numerous hiking trails and to the Blue Ridge Parkway. Continued safe passage along the South Toe River Road is a high priority for the Appalachian Ranger District, the Pisgah National Forest and residents who use this road to access their homes.

I would like to hear your comments on this proposal. I plan to analyze this proposal and its effects in an EA. To most effectively incorporate your comments into our analysis for the stream channel rehabilitation, I am combining the scoping period required under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), and the 30 day notice and comment period required under 36 CFR 215.

Comment Procedures

I want to be clear that this letter is soliciting comments under both NEPA and the Notice, Comment, and Appeal regulations at 36 CFR 215.

The 36 CFR 215 rules and regulations for commenting on proposed actions and establishing appeal rights contain very specific procedures. If you have any questions about these regulations of the process for providing comments, please contact us. In summary, the regulations require that, to establish and maintain appeal eligibility, you must provide timely and substantive comments during the 30-day legal notice and comment period. All written or oral comments must be received no later than 30 days following the date of publication of the legal notice in the Asheville Citizen-Times, Asheville, NC. As defined in the regulations, substantive comments are comments that are within the scope of the proposed action, are specific to the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official (District Ranger Paul Bradley) to consider.

To maintain appeal eligibility, those providing comments must meet the following criteria: (1) comments must be timely and substantive, (36 CFR 215.2); (2) comments must be signed (or

identity verified upon request) by the individual or a representative of the organization submitting the comments; and (3) comments must contain the information listed in 36 CFR 215.6(a)(3). Specifically, the required information includes: (1) name and address; (2) title of the project on which comments are being submitted; (3) specific substantive comments, along with supporting reasons that you believe the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision; and, (4) signature or other verification of identity upon request.

Written comments should be sent to the Responsible Official, Paul Bradley, District Ranger at Appalachian Ranger District, P. O. Box 128, Burnsville, North Carolina, 28714. You may also fax your comments to 828-692-9179. Oral or hand-delivered comments must be received within our normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m Eastern Time. Comments may also be mailed electronically in a common digital format to: comments-southern-north-carolina-pisgah-appalachian@fs.fed.us.

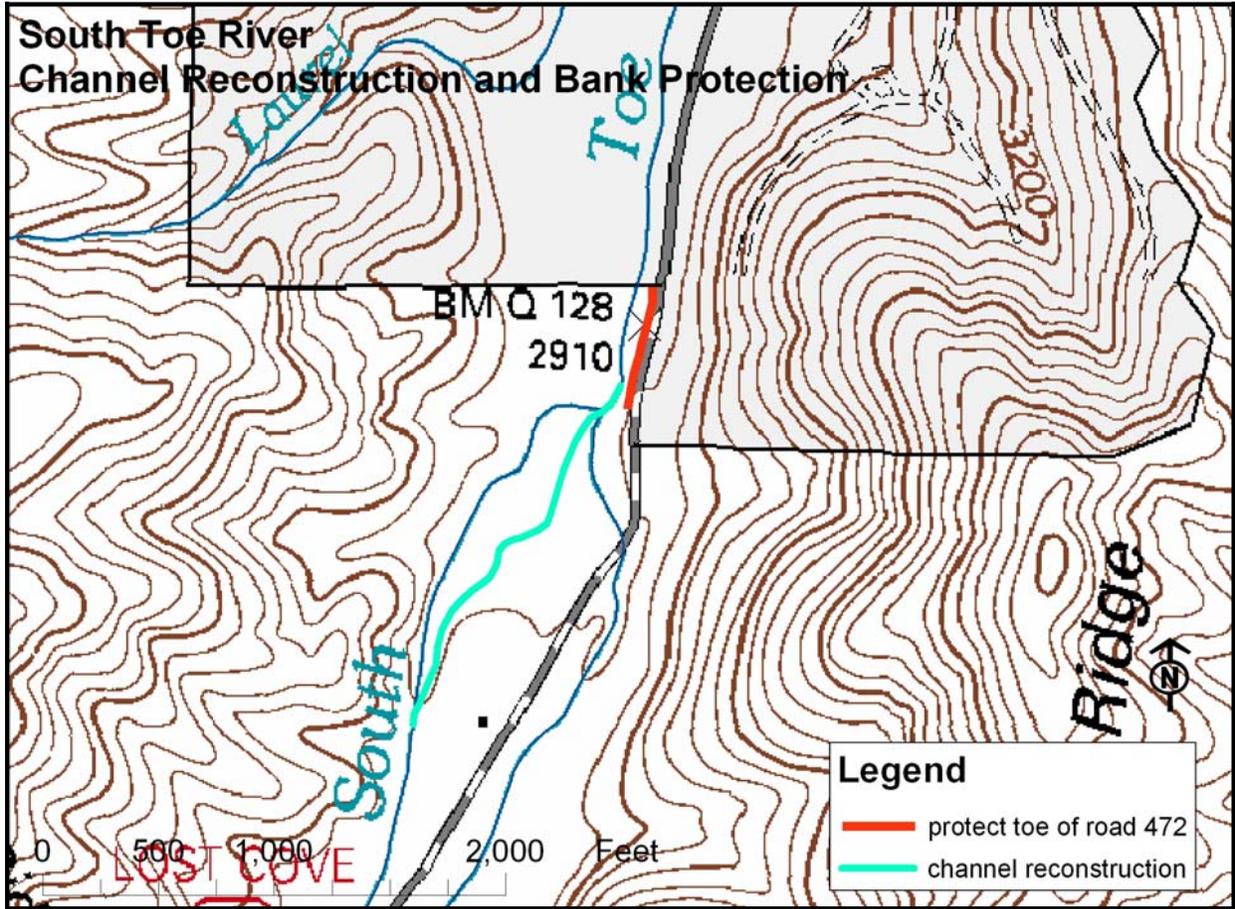
Feel free to contact David McFee, Burnsville Operations Assistant or me at 828-682-6146 if you have questions or need additional information regarding this proposal. I appreciate your continued interest in management of the Pisgah National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Paul L. Bradley

PAUL L. BRADLEY
District Ranger

Figure 1. Location of South Toe Road (FSR 472) and of stream channel reconstruction.



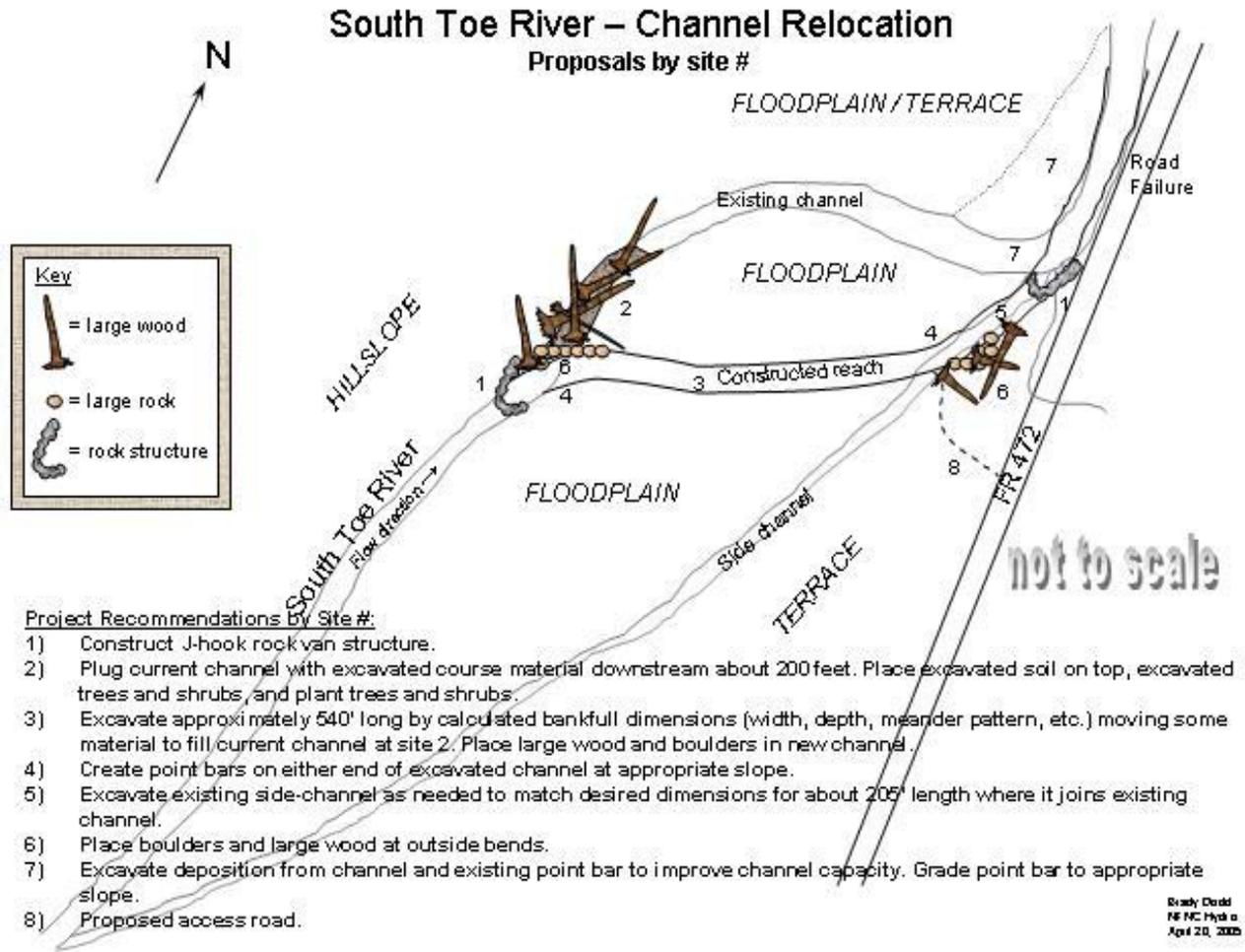


Figure 2. Proposed Stream Channel Rehabilitation Activities.