



File Code: 1950

Date: April 15, 2008

Dear Forest User,

The Nantahala Ranger District on the Nantahala National Forest is conducting an environmental analysis for proposed management activities in the Wet Face Project. Implementation of the activities would occur in a five to ten year period. The project is located in Jackson County, North Carolina, on National Forest lands designated as the Roy Taylor Forest, east of Sylva and Cullowhee. The area encompasses approximately 13,056 acres of National Forest land located in nine Forest Service administrative units called Compartments (C.87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 95, and 96).

### **Public Involvement**

This proposed project is being considered by the Forest Service and it is anticipated that a document disclosing the environmental effects (Environmental Assessment, or EA) will be prepared and made available to the public within the next six months. With this Scoping letter, I am asking for your input concerning the proposal. Your comments will help us determine the significant environmental issues and public concerns associated with this project. To be most helpful, please make your comments as specific to the proposal as possible, and contain the following: your name, address, title of the project (Wet Face), and specific facts or comments along with supporting reasons for me to consider in evaluating the proposal.

I am posting this letter, the accompanying maps of the proposed activities, and our preliminary assessment of the roads system in the Wet Face project area on the National Forests in North Carolina website, at: <http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc>.

To give us ample time to analyze your comments, please provide them to us by May 30, 2008 by mailing them to the Nantahala Ranger District, 90 Sloan Road, Franklin, NC 28734. Or you may email your comments to [rsemingson@fs.fed.us](mailto:rsemingson@fs.fed.us). For additional information, please contact Rick Semingson, Project Team Leader, at the Murphy office at 828-837-5152.

### **Purpose and Need for the Proposed Activities**

The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan, referred to simply as the Forest Plan, describes the levels of management practices that may take place on specific "Management Areas" that have been designated across the Forest. Each Management Area (MA) has unique goals assigned to it, along with appropriate management direction and standards to achieve these goals. The National Forest lands in the Wet Face Project have been designated as MAs 1B, 2A, 3B, 4C, 4D and 18 (refer to table below)



Acres in Project Area	Management Areas and Resource Emphasis In the Wet Face Project Area
1,782	<b>1B</b> – Emphasis is on a sustainable supply of timber and providing motorized access into the forest for traditional forest uses such as hunting and gathering, firewood cutting, fishing, and recreational activities. These lands have open roads.
2,737	<b>2A</b> – These areas are scenic travelways with an emphasis on providing pleasant scenery for people who experience the forest by driving or boating through it. Timber production is permitted, but modified to meet visual quality objectives.
2,697	<b>3B</b> – Emphasis is on a sustainable supply of timber, achieved through regulating the growth and removal of trees through time. This MA also provides for the habitat needs of wildlife such as wild turkey, deer, a variety of small mammals, and other species that will benefit from a managed forest with limited motorized use.
4,659	<b>4C</b> – Emphasis is on visually pleasing scenery and nonmotorized recreation use. This MA is classified as not suitable for timber production.
1,181	<b>4D</b> – Emphasis is on high quality wildlife habitat (particularly for black bear) and nonmotorized recreation use. Like MA 4A, timber production is permitted, but modified to emphasize visual quality objectives and wildlife habitat needs.
*	<b>18</b> – *These are riparian lands consisting of aquatic ecosystems, riparian ecosystems and associated plant and animal communities. MA 18 lands are embedded in the other Management Areas. They include perennial streams and lakes, wetlands, and 100-year floodplains.
13,056	<b>Total Acres</b> National Forest System lands in the Wet Face Project Area

### Proposed Activities

The following management activities are being proposed:

**Two-Aged Regeneration Cuts:** Harvest 157 acres in six separate stands using a two-aged method of harvest, followed by activities to prepare the sites for regeneration of new seedlings. In the two-age method the mature stand is partially cut. Enough of the mature stand is removed in order to ensure enough light reaches the forest floor to sustain growth and development of the new stand. Some trees, approximately 15 to 20 “square feet basal area” per acre, are left standing to meet visual quality and wildlife objectives. Den trees and hard mast producing trees are the favored leave trees. Logging would be accomplished by using both a conventional ground-based system that skids the logs on the ground to a designated landing, and an overhead cable system to cable logs up terrain when it is too steep for operating ground-based skidders. Site preparation involves cutting down competing and noncommercial vegetation.

### **Two-aged regeneration sites**

Compt.-Stand	Acres	M.A.	Compt.-Stand	Acres	M.A.
88 - 05	28 ac.	2A/3B	89 - 02	25 ac.	2A
88 - 06	29 ac.	2A/3B	89 - 05	18 ac.	2A
88 - 16	23 ac.	3B	89 - 06	34 ac.	2A

**Prescribed Burning:** Prescribe burn 985 acres during the dormant winter months in order to reduce fuel buildup and improve wildlife habitat conditions. Trained Forest Service personnel ignite the areas on a day when fuel moisture and weather conditions are within required

parameter and follow-up the burn by patrolling the fire edges to ensure proper containment of the fire within the established lines of control.

**Prescribed burn sites**

Area #	Area Name	Acres	M.A.
1	Black Mountain	85 ac.	1B & 4C
2	Moses Creek	150 ac.	2A
3	Sheep Mountain	100 ac.	2A
4	Sassafras Knob	650 ac.	2A & 3B

**Establish one new wildlife opening** between Sassafras Knob and Coward Bald by removing the existing trees, stumps and other vegetation, disking, and planting with a wildlife food mix. Routine maintenance of the openings will consist of mowing, periodic overseeding with a wildlife seed mix, liming and fertilizing. Invasive plants sometimes become established and grow in wildlife openings. To accomplish removal of these invasive plants three herbicides, each distinctive in the species of plants they effectively treat, would be applied as a liquid spray, either singly or in combination: Glyphosate, Imazapic, and Triclopyr.

**Install road closure devices** at 13 locations to reduce open road densities in the project area (refer to the enclosed maps and to the enclosed preliminary road analysis).

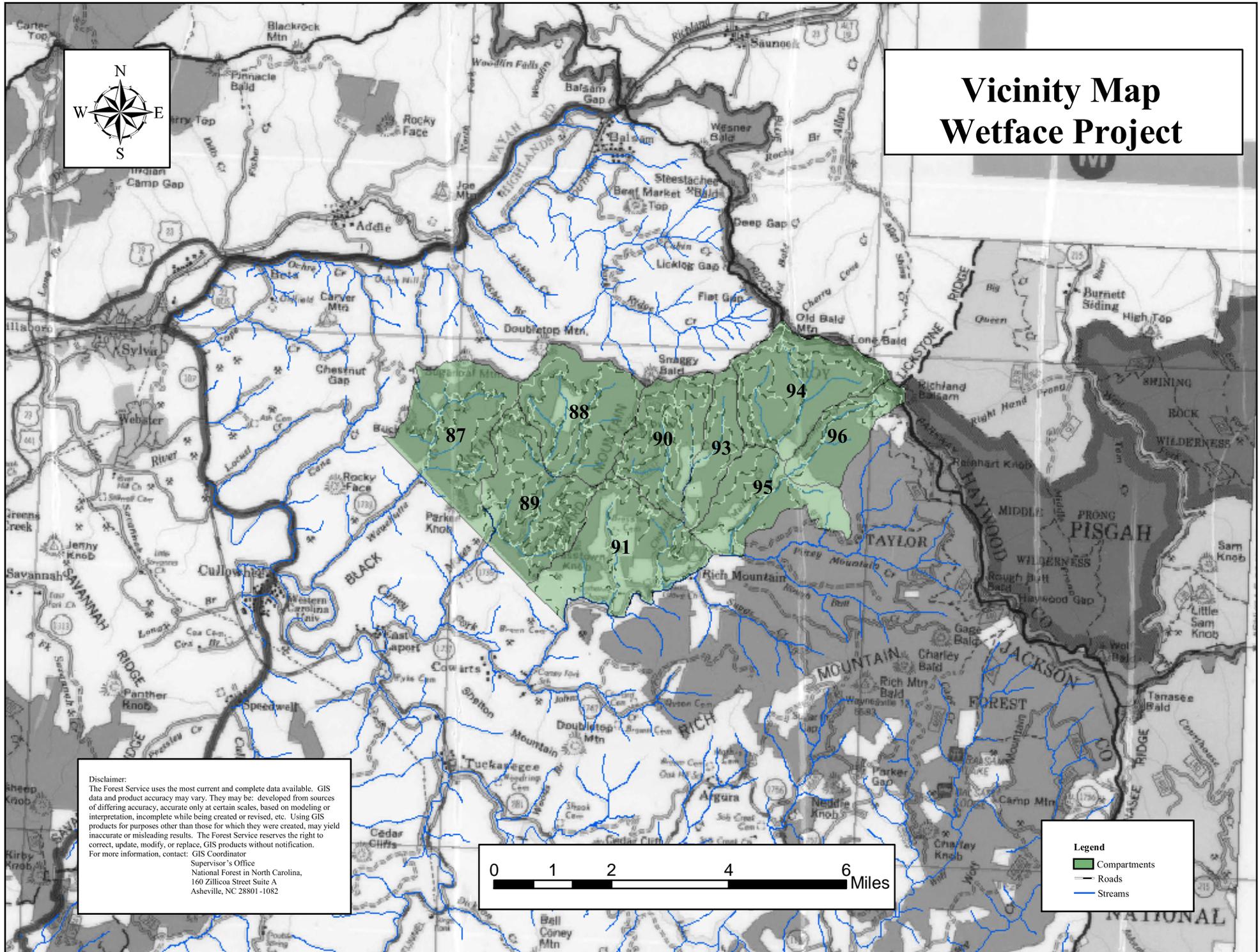
**Watershed restoration activities** on approximately two mile of Mull Creek Road (Road # 4643) consisting of using heavy equipment such as a trackhoe or dozer to break compacted soils, fill gullies and reshape the terrain; install dips and tanktraps or other water diversion devices. This would be followed by seeding with a grass seed mixture, liming, and fertilizing and mulching as needed.

Again, please provide your comments to us by May 30, 2008. Thank you for your time and interest in management activities on the Nantahala Ranger District.

Sincerely,

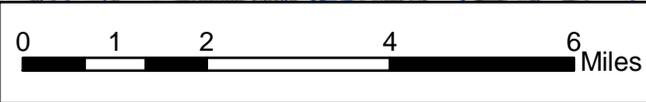
/s/ Michael L. Wilkins  
Michael L. Wilkins  
District Ranger

# Vicinity Map Wetface Project



Disclaimer:  
The Forest Service uses the most current and complete data available. GIS data and product accuracy may vary. They may be developed from sources of differing accuracy, accurate only at certain scales, based on modeling or interpretation, incomplete while being created or revised, etc. Using GIS products for purposes other than those for which they were created, may yield inaccurate or misleading results. The Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace GIS products without notification.

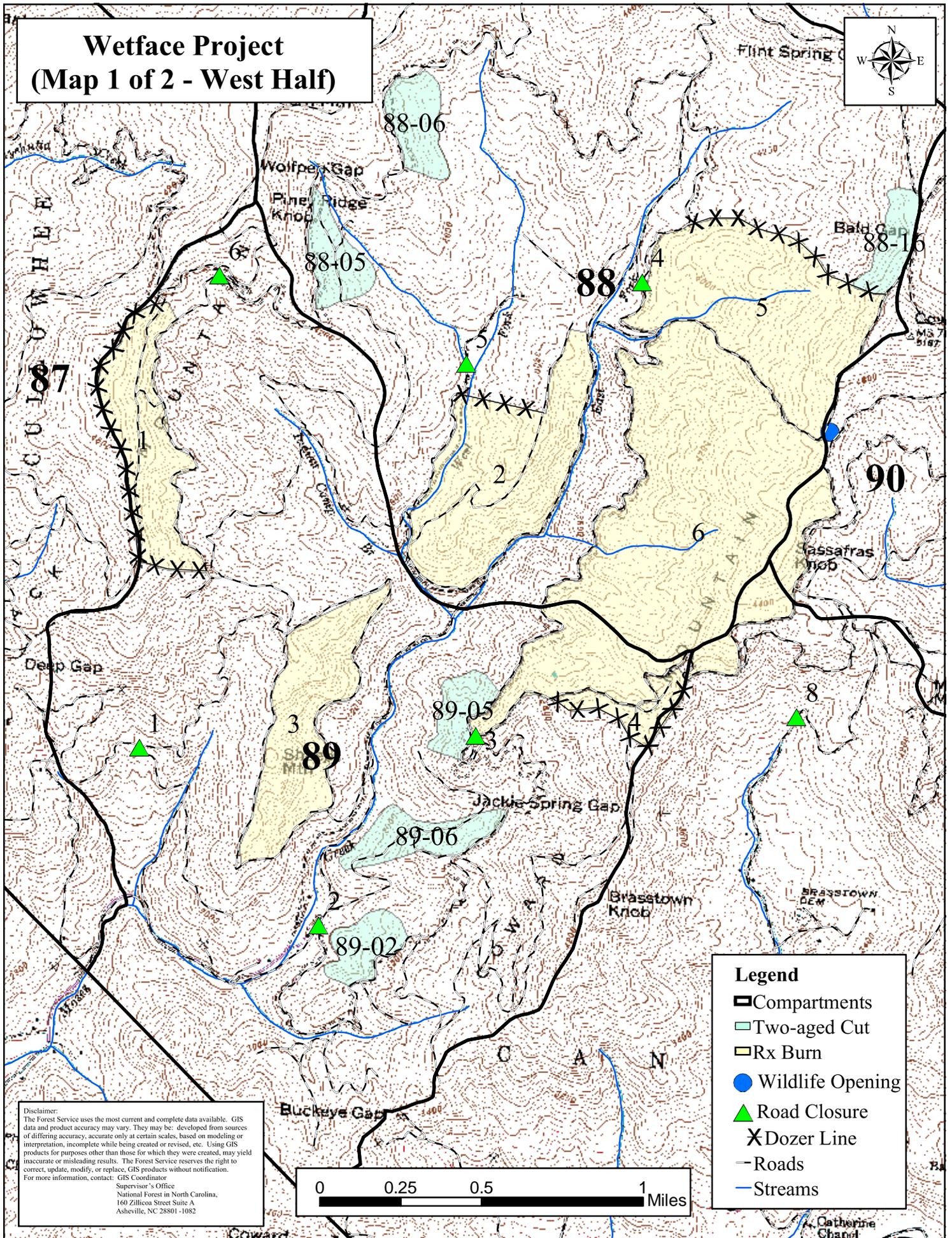
For more information, contact: GIS Coordinator  
Supervisor's Office  
National Forest in North Carolina,  
160 Zilliox Street Suite A  
Asheville, NC 28801-1082



**Legend**

- Compartment (Green box)
- Roads (Black line)
- Streams (Blue line)

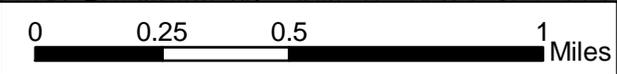
# Wetface Project (Map 1 of 2 - West Half)



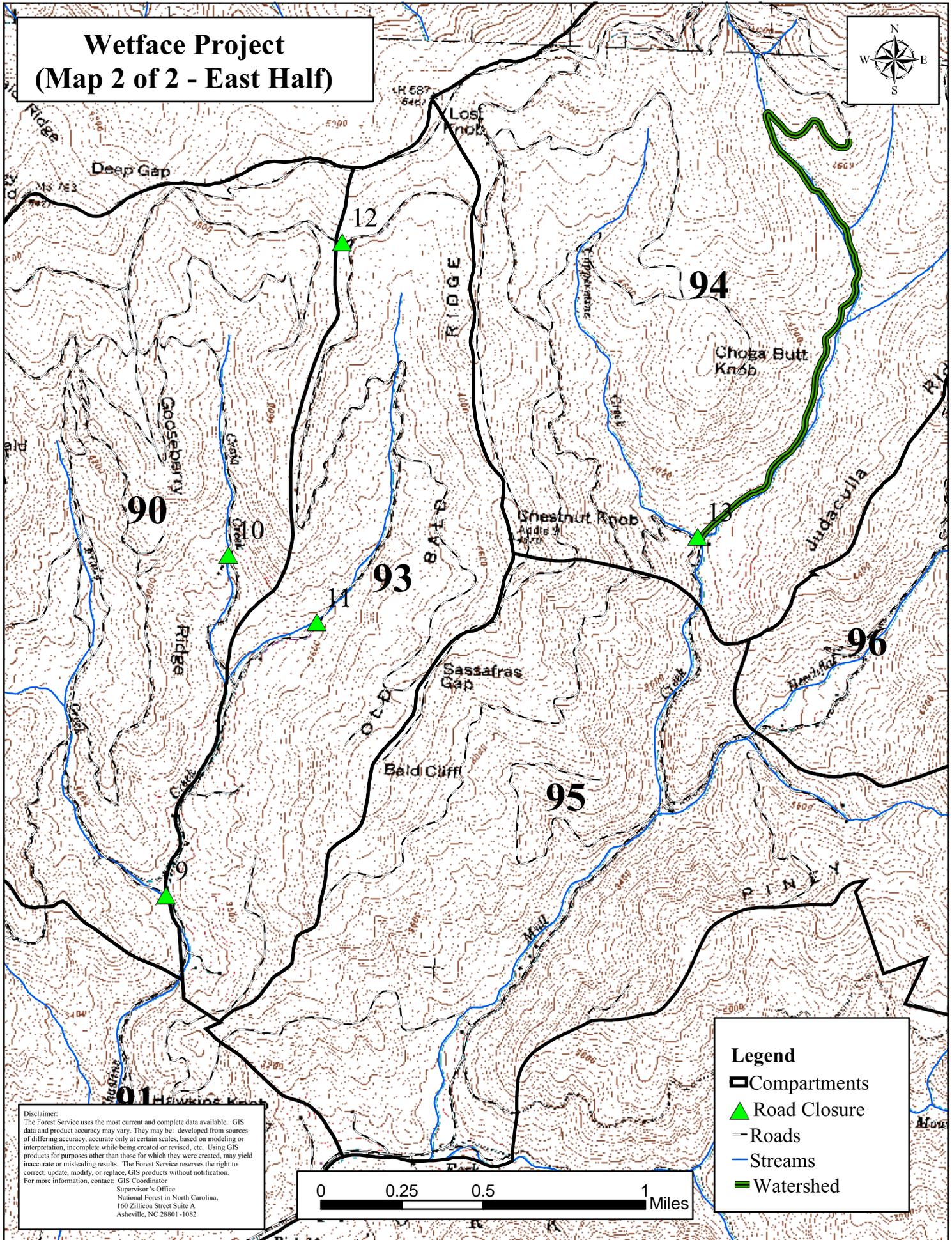
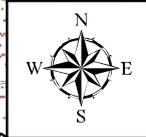
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**Legend**

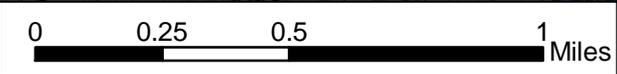
- Compartments
- Two-aged Cut
- Rx Burn
- Wildlife Opening
- Road Closure
- X Dozer Line
- Roads
- Streams



# Wetface Project (Map 2 of 2 - East Half)



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**Legend**

- Compartments
- ▲ Road Closure
- Roads
- Streams
- Watershed

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# Preliminary Roads Analysis Report

## Wet Face Project

**Introduction** – The Nantahala Ranger District is conducting an environmental analysis for a proposed project, referred to as the Wet Face Project, in Jackson County, North Carolina. The project area is located on National Forest lands designated as the Roy Taylor Forest, in the vicinity of Coward Mountains east of Sylva and Cullowhee (see the attached map). The area encompasses approximately 13,056 acres of National Forest land located in nine Forest Service administrative units called Compartments (C.87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 95, and 96). There are no designated roadless areas within the project area.

This report is a preliminary roads analysis for the Wet Face Project area. The scoping process under NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) will be the primary means of seeking input from the public for this roads analysis. Following public scoping, the interdisciplinary team (IDTeam) will develop the primary issues relating to the project area road system. Other data sources that will be used in this process include Road Management Plans for individual roads, the Forest's geographic information system (GIS), and the Forest's infrastructure database for travel routes (INFRA). The final Roads Analysis will be made available to the public upon completion of the Wet Face Project Environmental Assessment.

**Objectives of the Wet Face Roads Analysis** – This project-level roads analysis will provide the decision maker with critical information to develop road systems that are safe and responsive to public needs and desires, are affordable and efficiently managed, have minimal negative ecological effects on the land, and are in balance with available funding for needed management actions. The analysis will evaluate the existing condition of the transportation system within the project area and will make recommendations for action. The completed Roads Analysis will inform and support the Environmental Assessment and the decision to be made for the Wet Face Project. The final report will include analysis of all the roads in the project analysis area including the classified system roads and the unclassified nonsystem roads. Objectives of the Wet Face roads analysis are:

- Identification of needed and unneeded roads
- Identification of road associated environmental and public safety risks
- Identification of site-specific priorities and opportunities for road improvements and decommissioning.
- Identification of areas of special sensitivity or unique resource value that may require specific road management
- Provide other specific information that may be needed to support the Wet Face Project and other future resource management projects.

**Existing Road and Access System Description** - The area is served by a road system that provides both open roads for the public and roads closed except for administrative use and wildlife habitat. There are a total of 49.84 miles of classified system roads in the project area (refer to table 1.1 below). 31.57 miles of these roads are classified as open to public use. 18.27 miles of road are classified as closed to public use

Classified system roads include:

1. **Mull Creek Road (#4643):** An open road. The management objective is to physically close and obliterate the road, to eliminate and prohibit all motorized access, and allow woody vegetation to grow in the road prism. The roadway would be available for future access for timber harvesting and resource management. The Forest-Scale Roads Analysis Process (RAP), January 2003, identified this road for consideration for reduced maintenance levels, closure, or conversion to a trail or linear wildlife opening. About 8,300 feet of the road parallels trout streams.
2. **Coppermine Road (#4644):** Open road to mile post 2.5 where it is closed by a gate, beyond which it is managed as a linear wildlife opening to mile post 3.5. The Forest-Scale Roads Analysis Process (RAP), January 2003, identified this road for consideration for reduced maintenance levels, closure, or conversion to a trail or linear wildlife opening.
3. **Sassafras Gap Road (#4645):** Closed to public use with a gate. Maintained as a linear wildlife opening. Managed to provide occasional access for fire protection, resource management, and future timber harvesting.
4. **Chastine Creek Road (#4646):** Open to public use by high clearance vehicles. This road provides access to private property. About 4,100 feet of the road parallels trout streams.
5. **Fradly Creek Road (#4647):** The road is physically closed but the roadway is available for future access for timber harvesting and resource management.
6. **Wayehutta Road (#4650):** Open to all traffic. This road provides access to private property. The Forest-Scale Roads Analysis Process (RAP), January 2003, identified this road as being a high priority for improvement funding.
7. **Lands Gap Road (#4650A):** Closed to public use with a gate. Managed to provide occasional access for seasonal hunting, fire protection, resource management, and future timber harvesting.
8. **Moses Creek Road (#4651):** Open to all traffic. The Forest-Scale Roads Analysis Process (RAP), January 2003, identified this road as being a high priority for improvement funding. This road provides access to private property. About 3,400 feet of the road parallels trout streams.
9. **Rocky Branch Road (#4651A):** Open to public use by high clearance vehicles. This road provides access to private property.
10. **Moses Creek Camp Road (#4651B):** Closed to public use with a gate. Public access allowed seasonally for hunting. Provides private access. The Forest-Scale Roads Analysis Process (RAP), January 2003, identified this road for consideration for reduced maintenance levels, closure, or conversion to a trail or linear wildlife opening.
11. **Indian Camp Road (#4651C):** Closed to public use with a gate. Managed to provide occasional access for seasonal hunting, fire protection, resource management, and future timber harvesting. This road provides access to private property.
12. **West Fork Ridge Road (#4651C1):** Closed to public use with a gate. Managed to provide occasional access for seasonal hunting, fire protection, resource management, and future timber harvesting. Maintained as a linear wildlife opening. The Forest-Scale Roads Analysis Process

(RAP), January 2003, identified this road for consideration for reduced maintenance levels, closure, or conversion to a trail or linear wildlife opening.

- 13. West Fork Judaculla Road (#4651C2):** Closed to public use with a gate. The management objective is to obliterate the road if/when private land has been acquired. The roadway would be available for future access for timber harvesting and resource management.
- 14. Black Mountain Road (#4651C3):** Closed to public use with a gate. Managed to provide occasional access for seasonal hunting, fire protection, resource management, and future timber harvesting. The Forest-Scale Roads Analysis Process (RAP), January 2003, identified this road for consideration for reduced maintenance levels, closure, or conversion to a trail or linear wildlife opening.
- 15. Sheep Mountain Road (#4651C4):** Closed to public use with a gate. Managed to provide occasional access for seasonal hunting, fire protection, resource management, and future timber harvesting. The Forest-Scale Roads Analysis Process (RAP), January 2003, identified this road for consideration for reduced maintenance levels, closure, or conversion to a trail or linear wildlife opening.
- 16. Melton Place Road (#4651D):** Closed to public use with a gate. Managed to provide occasional access for seasonal hunting, fire protection, resource management, and future timber harvesting. The Forest-Scale Roads Analysis Process (RAP), January 2003, identified this road for consideration for reduced maintenance levels, closure, or conversion to a trail or linear wildlife opening.
- 17. Fern Mountain Road (#4651E):** Closed to public use with a gate. Managed to provide occasional access for fire protection, resource management, and future timber harvesting. Maintained as a linear wildlife opening.
- 18. Old Bald Ridge Road (#4652):** Open to all traffic. The Forest-Scale Roads Analysis Process (RAP), January 2003, classified this road as not meeting LRMP Standards for a desired minimum maintenance level of 3 (one of 36 roads forest-wide not meeting the desired level). The Rap identified this road as being a high priority for improvement funding.
- 19. Gooseberry Ridge Road (#4652A):** Closed to public use with a gate. Managed to provide occasional access for fire protection, resource management, and future timber harvesting. Maintained as a linear wildlife opening.
- 20. Old Bald Ridge Extension (#4652B):** Closed to public use with a gate. Managed to provide occasional access for fire protection, resource management, and future timber harvesting. Maintained as a linear wildlife opening.
- 21. Upper Frady Creek Road (#4653):** Closed to public use with a gate. Managed to provide occasional access for fire protection, resource management, and future timber harvesting. The management objective is to maintain as a linear wildlife opening.
- 22. Piney Mountain Flats Road (#4666):** Open to public use by high clearance vehicles. This road provides access to private property. About 3,300 feet of the road parallels trout streams.
- 23. Beech Flat Creek Road (#4668):** This road provides access to private property. Closed to general public use with a gate. Managed to provide occasional access for fire protection, resource management, and future timber harvesting. About 4,000 feet of the road parallels trout streams.

The GIS indicates there are approximately 55 miles of unclassified roads in the project area.

**Preliminary Issues** – The project IDTeam identified the following important issues affecting road-related management in the project area.:

- Illegal Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) and All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use.
- Lack of adequate road maintenance on some roads.
- Introduction of nonnative invasive plant species.
- Aquatic conditions and vulnerability where roads are near streams or at stream crossings, including fish passage concerns.
- Access to private property.
- Current condition of the roads and usefulness for providing administrative access for vegetation management, commodity production and wildfire suppression.
- Noncompliance of road density standards in Management Areas 3B, 4C and 4D.

### **Benefits, Problems and Risks Relevant to Roads in the Project Area:**

**Benefits** – For the most part, the road system offers adequate access for long-term timber management, access for wildlife habitat management, access for fire control, foot access for hunters and gatherers, access for inventory, survey and research, and efficiency of maintenance. All gated roads are open to public use by hikers, bicyclists, and horse riders.

**Problems** – Illegal Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) and All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use.

- Lack of adequate road maintenance on some roads.
- Fish passage concerns.
- Providing access to private property via Forest Service roads.
- The open road density in Management Areas 3B, 4C and 4D exceed the standards described in the Forest Plan in order to be in full compliance with the Forest Plan.

**Risks** – Introduction of nonnative invasive plant species.

### **Opportunities for Addressing Important Problems and Risks Relevant to Roads in the Project Area**

- Enforce regulations regarding OHV and ATV use.
- Prioritize road maintenance needs and develop funding sources to maintain roads.
- Address problems of fish passage where roads cross streams.
- Treat invasive exotic plants with herbicides as they are encountered in the project area.
- Close undesignated roads as they are known to occur in the project area.
- Opportunities should be considered for closing some system roads that are currently managed as open.