

DEVELOPED AND DISPERSED RECREATION

Affected Environment

Background and Existing Recreation Developments

National Forests provide over 191 million acres of public land within the United States, with Forests in the Southern Appalachian region contributing approximately 4 million acres to the national total. The Southern Appalachian National Forests provide unique settings for a variety of outdoor recreation activities such as primitive and developed camping, hunting, fishing, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, OHV driving, canoeing, kayaking, and whitewater rafting as well as picnicking, sightseeing, nature watching, walking for pleasure and driving for pleasure.

More recreational use is made of National Forest System lands, facilities, and programs than is provided by any other agency, system, or organization in the United States. Recreation on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests is more than just camping, fishing, and hiking. People choose a specific setting for each of these activities in order to realize a desired set of experiences. For example, camping in a large undeveloped setting with difficult access and few facilities offers a sense of solitude, challenge, and self-reliance. In contrast, camping in a setting having easy access and highly developed facilities offers more comfort, security, and social opportunities.

Since the establishment of the Chattahoochee National Forest in 1936 and the Oconee National Forest in 1959, the Forests have provided opportunities and settings for a wide range of recreation activities. During the early years, most recreation use was dispersed, the kind of use that occurs where no developed facilities such as campgrounds and picnic sites exist. The first developed sites on the Forest were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the late 1930's. Several of these sites remain in use today: the Pocket, Lake Conasauga, Winfield Scott, Fern Springs and Warwoman Dell. As the years passed and more recreation areas were constructed, developed site use became increasingly popular. With a few exceptions, most major recreation facilities on the Forest were constructed in the 1950's and 1960's.

The Chattahoochee National Forest and the Oconee National Forest both qualified as Category 1 Urban National Forests in December of 1991 through a letter from the Regional Forester under Special Recreation Designation, 2370. Category 1 includes urban national forests that are less than 1 hour from more than 1 million people. Our forests have the capability of being impacted by more than 3 million people just from the Atlanta area alone. Interstates I-20, I-75, I-85, I-575, and I-985, and Georgia State divided highways 365, 400, 441, and 515, have provided the road corridors for Atlanta population to arrive at even the remotest areas of the forest that are contiguous to roadways with a maximum two hours' drive (*The Atlas of Georgia*,

1986,p. 168). The Greater Southern Appalachian (SA) region consists of 13 National Forests located in seven states of the Forest Service's Southern Region (R8). Almost one-fifth of the SA market area population is in Georgia, largely due to the presence of the Atlanta metropolitan area. (*Public Survey Report - Public Use and Preferred Objectives for Southern Appalachian National Forests - Chattahoochee-Oconee and Sumter National Forests, Forest Service, 2002.*)

Today's users' life-styles on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests focus on short day- trip outings for hiking, picnicking, driving for pleasure, observing wildlife, or visiting historic sites. Time, money, personal health, and being alone are constraints that recreationists are dealing with and solving by short day trips (1994 NSRE, UGA). Because of this increasing use, some of the easily accessed portions of our forests are experiencing environmental degradation. Mountain biking, horseback riding, and off highway use (OHV) are all increasing on both the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests. These uses were not addressed in the 1985 Forest Plan. In the early 1990's, "Urban Interface Projects" targeted the rehabilitation of heavily used dispersed sites along streams, installation of sanitary facilities, and construction of picnic areas.

New technology has provided users with mountain bikes, large wheeled wheelchairs, and different styles of OHVs that were not available during the Forest's first planning effort. Horseback riding, rock climbing, canoeing/kayaking, walking/running are all activities that have seen increased participation levels. These activities take place in undeveloped environments and on or near trails (USDA Forest Service, 1993).

The recreating public has increased in numbers and diversity, with numbers of older individuals increasing with the development of retirement communities. The first wave of "baby boomers" retiring has increased older recreationists who may prefer less physically demanding activities such as leisure driving, sightseeing, studying nature, cultural resources, and developed camping. All these activities favor developed settings. It seems likely, therefore, that the biggest demand will be for developed rather than primitive settings. All this increase in demand will lead to an increase in the net economic value of outdoor recreation (SAMAB, Report4, 1996.)

The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests are the largest provider of public recreation lands in Georgia. The Forest's theoretical maximum annual recreation capability for dispersed recreation opportunities is determined by the amount of acreage within each ROS class. Under the current Forest Plan, acres are classified as primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized and roaded natural, rural and urban.

The theoretical maximum annual capacity is based on the assumption that the Forest is used consistently throughout the year by the maximum possible number of people. For forest planning purposes, reasonable outdoor recreation capacity provides a more accurate account of dispersed recreation capacity. The Forest's total reasonable dispersed recreation capacity is approximately 1,261,540 recreation visitor days (RVDs).

The Chattahoochee Oconee National Forests currently maintains 116 recreation sites featuring 41 improved camping sites, 4 horse camping sites, 12 picnic units, 4 swim sites, 6 boat launches, 4 shooting ranges, 26 trailheads, 6 OHV areas, 7 overlooks, 2 interpretative sites, and 4 visitor centers.

Market Area

Market areas have been established for different national forests to better evaluate public demand for recreation opportunities. Past research has demonstrated that most national forest visits originate from within a 75-mile (1.5 to 2 hour driving time) radius. (*Public Survey Report - Public Use and Preferred Objectives for Southern Appalachian National Forests-Chattahoochee-Oconee and Sumter National Forests, Forest Service, 2002.*). Therefore, for this analysis, the market area has been defined as all counties that fall within a 75-mile straight-line radius from a forest border.

The market area for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests includes the market areas defined for the Sumter National Forests in South Carolina. These market areas were combined in recognition of shared local markets and similar geography and demographic patterns. The Chattahoochee National Forest had the largest market area sample size within Region 8 with 2,361 while the Oconee had 1,366. (*Public Survey Report - Public Use and Preferred Objectives for Southern Appalachian National Forests - Chattahoochee-Oconee and Sumter National Forests, Forest Service, 2002.*) The Oconee National Forest has the largest percentage of upper income category respondents due primarily to their proximity to the affluent suburbs of Atlanta. The largest cities within this shared market area include Atlanta, Chattanooga, Columbia, and Greenville/ Spartanburg.

Opportunities for outdoor recreation are not limited to the national forests within the shared market area. The Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Parks, Kennesaw Mountain National Military Park, and Chattahoochee River National Park expand opportunities for recreation on Federally-managed public lands. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail also provides a unique long distance hiking opportunity across several national forests including the Cherokee, Pisgah, Nantahala, Chattahoochee-Oconee and George Washington & Jefferson National Forests.

Within the state of Georgia, 36 state parks are located within a 75-mile radius of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests borders. These state parks, such as Amicalola Falls, Red Top Mountain, and Unicoi, with their lodges, along with some of the other Georgia state parks often provide higher levels of development.

The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests provide approximately 865,000 acres of public land in the Georgia Piedmont (Oconee/southeastern portion of Chattahoochee), Ridge and Valley province (extreme northwestern portion of Chattahoochee), and the Blue Ridge province (Chattahoochee). Approximately 749,755 acres are on the Chattahoochee while 115,210 acres are situated on the Oconee National Forest.

The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests contain large expanses of three of Georgia's physiographic regions: Blue Ridge, Ridge and Valley, and Piedmont. Both Forests are in close proximity to Atlanta and other population centers and will continue experience significant growth over the next 20 years. Major transportation arteries provide easy access to these Forest, and they are valued by growing urban populations seeking economical "escapes" to undeveloped landscapes. The Forest's mission with respect to the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest's recreation alignment strategy is as follows. Provide quality outdoor recreation experiences that reflect the unique or exceptional resources of the Forest and interests of the recreating public on an environmentally sustainable and financially sound basis (US Forest Service, *February, 2002*).

Each Forest provides experiences specifically related to distinctive natural features. The mountainous Chattahoochee National Forest provides opportunities for high quality nature related sightseeing and scenic viewing. Day-use experiences often include short distance hikes to scenic features. The Forest offers a variety of cold-water fishing and enjoyment of streams, waterfalls, and pristine mountaintop lakes. Many sightseers visit the National Forest as part of an interwoven experience with other tourist opportunities in the area. Other features on the Chattahoochee National Forest include the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River, Congressionally designated wilderness areas, the southern terminus of the Appalachian Trail, and remote mountain hunting experiences.

The piedmont of the Oconee National Forest offers premier opportunities for large and small game hunting and wildlife viewing. The Oconee National Forest also provides for a variety of high quality warm water fishing experiences on both streams and lakes.

The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests are uniquely positioned to address increasing demand for non-motorized trail experiences as access to large expanses of public and private land diminish. Similarly, demand for ORV experiences will increase with the Forest's providing carefully focused opportunities managed in an environmentally responsible manner.

Recreation Demand and Trends

Recreation demand is a complex relationship mix of people's desires and preferences, availability of time, price, and availability of facilities. The evaluation of current and future demand for recreation on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests is based on recent surveys that identify and quantify:

- Estimated number of current recreation visits to the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests
- Participation rates for recreation activities within the forest market area
- Future activity demand based on projected population growth
- Activity demand by demographic strata.

The recent National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) effort by the Forest Service has provided baselines for estimating current use of recreation sites on the

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests (Table 3- 177). These numbers only account for people visiting developed or dispersed sites for the purpose of engaging in a recreation activity. They do not include the millions of people that drive through the National Forest.

Table 3- 177. Baselines for Recreation Use on Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

Type of Recreation Sites	Current Percentage of Total Estimated National Forest Recreation Visits ¹
Day-Use Developed –Proxy ² Sites	22%
Day -Use Developed -Non-Proxy Sites	7%
Overnight-Use Developed Proxy sites	4%
Overnight-Use Developed Non-Proxy Sites	1%
Wilderness (Dispersed Sites)	1%
General Forest Areas (Dispersed Sites)	65%
Total	100% (1,917,906 estimated visits)

¹Refer to Appendix B.

² Proxy sites are those developed recreation sites for which a visitor use or parking fee is charged

Based on this NVUM data, "developed recreation" areas on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests accommodate approximately 34 percent of the estimated recreation visits. The remaining 66 percent of recreation visits can be defined as "dispersed recreation" that occurs away from developed sites in general forest areas and within in designated wildernesses.

People within the defined market area for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests engage in a variety of recreation activities. The following tables outline the types of activities that can be enjoyed on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests. They have been ranked in order from highest to lowest participation rates based on the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NRSE), an on-going national telephone survey conducted by the U.S. Forest Service.

Table 3- 178 identifies trends in public demand. Data reflects participation in an activity within the defined market area and not necessarily the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests. The data comprising this table was averaged between the market areas; the Chattahoochee being one area and the Sumter and Oconee collectively being the second market area. As previously discussed, these market areas were established for the Chattahoochee, Sumter and Oconee National Forests as an avenue for evaluation of public recreational opportunity demand. The market area has been defined as counties that fall within a 75-mile line radius from a forest border. As the Sumter National Forest is adjacent to the Chattahoochee National Forest in the Northeast corner of Georgia and within the 75 mile radius of the Oconee in Piedmont Georgia, the data from the two research reports were combined as an

average. The participation rates within each recreational activity was within a 3 to 5 percent range. Additionally, the base percentage coefficient percent (15, 31, 48, etc.) was a constant for both reports. Appendix B details the process involved in the National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) data tabulation.

Table 3- 178. Number of People (in millions) Over 16 years old Participating in Recreation Activities in Chattahoochee and Oconee NFs Market Area and Percentage Increase Over Next 50 Years

Recreation Activity	2001 Participation Rate	2000 # of People	2010 increase*	2020 increase*	2030 increase*	2040 increase*	2050 increase*
View-photograph nature or scenery		5.05	15%	31%	48%	66%	86%
			5.81	6.62	7.47	8.38	9.39
Driving for pleasure	57%	4.63	15%	31%	48%	66%	86%
			5.32	6.07	6.85	7.69	8.61
Picnicking	55%	4.46	11%	23%	37%	53%	71%
			4.95	5.49	6.11	6.82	7.63
Visit historic site	50%	4.105	22%	47%	77%	113%	155%
			5.01	6.03	7.27	8.74	10.47
Swimming in streams, lakes,	46%	3.775	6%	13%	20%	29%	41%
			4.00	4.27	4.53	4.87	5.32
View wildlife	46%	3.785	15%	31%	48%	66%	86%
			4.35	4.96	5.60	6.28	7.04
View natural vegetation, trees	46%	3.74	15%	31%	48%	66%	86%
			4.30	4.90	5.54	6.21	6.96
View birds	32%	2.665	15%	31%	48%	66%	86%
			3.06	3.49	3.94	4.42	4.96
Visit wilderness or primitive area	34%	2.74	25%	57%	96%	108%	171%
			3.43	4.30	5.37	5.70	7.43
Day hiking	32%	2.535	19%	38%	59%	78%	94%
			3.02	3.50	4.03	4.51	4.92
Warm water fishing	30%	2.395	9%	17%	24%	26%	26%
			2.61	2.80	2.97	3.02	3.02
Motor boating	29%	2.35	1%	3%	6%	11%	17%
			2.37	2.42	2.49	2.61	2.75
View--photograph fish	27%	2.17	15%	31%	48%	66%	86%
			2.50	2.84	3.21	3.60	4.04

Table continued next page.

Recreation Activity	2001 Participation Rate	2000 # of People	2010 increase*	2020 increase*	2030 increase*	2040 increase*	2050 increase*
Developed Camping	23%	1.88	27% 2.39	60% 3.01	98% 3.72	144% 4.59	201% 5.66
Drive off-road	20%	1.58	5% 1.66	10% 1.74	16% 1.83	23% 1.94	34% 2.12
Mountain biking	18%	1.47	12% 1.65	26% 1.85	42% 2.09	61% 2.37	83% 2.69
Primitive camping	16%	1.29	-2% 1.26	0% 1.29	0% 1.29	5% 1.35	0% 1.29
Coldwater fishing	15%	1.22	9% 1.33	17% 1.43	24% 1.51	26% 1.54	26% 1.54
Rafting	13%	1.025	5% 1.08	9% 1.12	16% 1.19	30% 1.33	51% 1.55
Backpacking	11%	0.87	23% 1.07	57% 1.37	96% 1.71	108% 1.81	171% 2.36
Big Game Hunting	10%	0.77	97% 1.52	93% 1.49	89% 1.46	83% 1.41	76% 1.36
Small-game Hunting	9%	0.735	0.97 1.45	0.93 1.42	0.89 1.39	0.83 1.35	0.76 1.29
Horseback riding on trails	8%	0.67	9% 0.73	19% 0.80	27% 0.85	30% 0.87	31% 0.88
Canoeing	8%	0.64	5% 0.67	9% 0.70	16% 0.74	30% 0.83	31% 0.84
Kayaking	3%	0.215	5% 0.23	9% 0.23	16% 0.25	30% 0.28	31% 0.28
Migratory bird hunting	2%	0.12	97% 0.24	93% 0.23	89% 0.23	83% 0.22	76% 0.21

*Increase data show change from 2001.

Source: *Chattahoochee National Forest Recreation Realignment Report, Overdevest and Cordell, 2001* and from *Outdoor Recreation in American Life, A National Assessment of Demand and Supply Trends, H. Ken Cordell, Principal Investigator, 1999*

Oconee and Sumter National Forest Recreation Alignment Report, Overdevest and Cordell, 2001 and from *Outdoor Recreation Alignment Report, Overdevest and Cordell, 2001* and from *Outdoor Recreation in American Life, A National Assessment of Demand and Supply Trends, H. Ken Cordell, Principal Investigator, 1999*

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)

Recreation Supply

For planning purposes, recreation supply is defined as the opportunity to participate in a desired recreation activity in a preferred setting to realize desired and expected experiences. Three components of supply are settings, activities, and facilities. Recreationists choose a setting and activity to create a desired experience. Facilities such as campgrounds and trails are supplied to assist uses of the setting and to support activities (SAA, *pg. 140*).

These activities are provided in a variety of recreation settings that the Forest Service calls the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS). The ROS offers a framework for understanding these relationships and interactions. As a planning tool, it provides a framework for defining and evaluating classes of outdoor recreation opportunities, activities, and experiences. The ROS has been divided into six major classes for Forest Service use: primitive (P), semi-primitive non-motorized (SPNM), semi-primitive motorized (SPM), roaded natural (RN), rural (R), and urban (U).

The end product of recreation management is the experience people have. The key to providing most experience opportunities is the setting and how it is managed. The 1986 ROS document (Table 1), summarizes the activity, setting, and experience characterizations for the ROS (U.S. Forest Service ROS, 1986 page II-32). Our Forest goal is to manage these characterizations; however, no Primitive, Rural or Urban settings exist on the Forest.

Primitive (P) is the most remote, undeveloped recreation setting on the forest. These settings are generally located at least three miles from any open road and are 5,000 acres in size or larger. Primitive ROS generally does not exist because no single area is large enough to meet all criteria. A buffer distance of three miles from existing open roads shows no areas that would meet size constraints for primitive in terms of an inventory. However, the Forest Service manages for those aspects of primitive setting that it can meet. The opportunity to create a primitive inventory by closing Forest Service roads would only exist in the Blue Ridge mountains and only if the Forest Service were to close existing recreation sites or deny access to provide in-holdings. While some of the alternatives move in this direction, the Forest Service does not show any primitive inventory in this Forest plan. Designated wilderness areas on the Chattahoochee National Forest range in acres from 83 (Big Frog) to 35,233 (Cohutta). There are no wilderness areas currently on the Oconee NF.

Semi-primitive non-motorized (SPNM) settings are characterized by an environment where the natural landscape has been subtly modified and where alterations, though noticeable, would not draw the attention of most users. These areas are at least one-half mile but not further than 3 miles from all roads, railroads or trails with motorized use and generally 2,500 to 5,000 acres in size unless contiguous to wilderness (*U.S Forest Service ROS, 1986*). Semi-primitive non-motorized areas may include the existence of primitive roads and trails if usually closed to motorized use. Specific activities are oriented toward both consumptive and non-consumptive use of the land

and water resources of the area, including hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and nature study. Basically these settings accommodate dispersed, non-motorized recreation.

Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) settings are characterized by naturally appearing environment. These areas are within one-half mile of primitive roads or trails used by motor vehicles; but not closer than one-half mile from better than primitive roads. Concentration of users is low. Motorized use is permitted.

Roaded Natural (RN) settings are located within one-half mile of a road and usually provide higher levels of development such as campgrounds, picnic areas and river access points. Service level B and C roads are included - open road density less than 1.5 miles per 1,000 acres.

Rural (R) management emphasis is for rural and roaded-natural recreation opportunities. These settings represent the most developed sites and modified natural settings on the forest. There is no distance criteria associated with this setting. Motorized and non-motorized recreation, such as driving for pleasure, viewing scenery, picnicking, and fishing are possible. There are no rural ROS setting on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests.

Urban (U) represents a landscape character that has resulted from extensive human activities, no longer appearing natural, such as conversion of natural landscapes into an extensively altered landscape, such as a town, city or metropolitan area. As with the rural setting, there is no distance criteria. No urban ROS settings exist on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests.

Table 3- 179. Current Estimated Distributions of ROS Acreage Classes on the Chattahoochee NF

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Class Inventory	Current Percentage Of National Forest	Current Inventoried Acres
Primitive (Wilderness) (P)	0	0
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	30%	222,712
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	1%	13,817
Roaded Natural (RN)	69%	514,826
Rural (R)	0%	0
Urban (U)	0%	0
Total	100%	751,355 Acres

Source: GIS Roads Model Data, August, 2003.

Table 3- 180. Current Estimated Distributions of ROS Acreage Classes on the Oconee NF

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Class Inventory	Current Percentage Of National Forest	Current Inventoried Acres
Primitive (Wilderness) (P)	0%	0
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	1%	1,006
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	1%	1,388
Roaded Natural (RN)	98%	112,827
Rural (R)	0%	0
Urban (U)	0%	
Total	100%	115,221 Acres

Source: GIS Roads Model Data, August, 2003.

In addition to evaluating the supply of ROS classes on the forest, the existing supply of recreation infrastructure must be addressed. Infrastructure such as electrical systems, campsites and swimming areas facilitate recreation activities in Roaded Natural and Rural developed recreation settings.

Other types of infrastructure such as signs, trailheads, and river access points facilitate dispersed use of the forest in remote ROS classes like Primitive, Semi-primitive Non- Motorized and Roaded Natural (RN). Therefore, the existing types and capacities of recreation infrastructure play an integral part in evaluating supply and demand for both developed and dispersed recreation opportunities.

For planning purposes, recreation supply is defined as the opportunity to participate in a desired recreation activity in a preferred setting to realize desired and expected experiences. Recreationists choose a setting and activity to create a desired experience. Three components of supply are settings, activities and facilities. (SAA, p.140) *The US Forest Service manages a supply of settings and facilities.*

The Southern Appalachian Assessment Social, Cultural, Economic Technical Report (SAA) states that in the Southern Appalachian, region approximately 45 percent of region is in Rural Setting, 24 percent in Roaded Natural Setting, 18 percent in Urban, Suburban, or Transitional Setting, and 8 percent is considered Primitive or Semi-Primitive Setting. This indicates that Primitive and Semi-Primitive are in short supply.

Developed Recreation

A developed site is a discrete place containing a concentration of facilities and services used to provide recreation opportunities to the public and evidencing a significant investment in facilities and management under the direction of an administration unit in the National Forest System. Recreation sites are developed within different outdoor settings to facilitate desired recreational use. Developed

recreation sites include such facilities as campgrounds, picnic areas, shooting ranges, swimming beaches, visitor centers and historic sites. Developed recreation sites provide different levels of user comfort and convenience based on the assigned ROS setting. Development Levels range from 1 to 5, with Level 1 representing the most primitive, natural settings with minimal or no site amenities. Level 5 represents the highest level of development with fully accessible facilities.

The Brasstown Bald Visitor's Center and Anna Ruby Falls Visitor's Center are the only Level 5 developed sites on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests. Lake Russell Recreation Area, Lake Blue Ridge Recreation Area, Morganton Point, Rabun Beach, Lake Winfield Scott and Lake Sinclair are examples of Level 4 campgrounds offering paved campsites, water hook ups, bath houses and, to a degree, electric hook-ups.

Campgrounds such as Dockery Lake with vault toilets, designated campsites and a developed water source are considered to be Level 3. Different levels of development may be present within large campgrounds; however the designated development level represents at least 70 percent of the facilities.

Supply of Developed Recreation Sites

The Forest Service defines the capacity of developed recreation sites in terms of "people at one time" a site can support (PAOTs). Currently, there are over 211 developed sites managed by the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests to accommodate different recreation activities. Table 3- 181 and Table 3- 182 illustrate the different types of facilities provided across the forest and their current capacity in PAOTs.

Table 3- 181. Current Capacities of Day-Use Developed Areas on Chattahoochee-Oconee NF

Type of Day Use Developed Areas	Total Number of Areas	Total Capacity (PAOT)
Picnic Areas	12	1,115
Beaches & Swimming Areas	4	485
Boat Launches	6	525
Shooting Ranges	4	135
Trailheads	26	1,070
OHV Areas	6	595
Overlooks	7	175
Minor Interpretative Sites	7	65
Visitor Centers	4	1,280
Total Day-Use Capacity	71	5,445

Table 3- 182. Current Capacities of Overnight-Use Developed Sites on Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

Level of Campground	Total Number of Campgrounds	Total Capacity (PAOTs)
Level 2 Campgrounds	10 (2 horse camps)	615
Level 3 Campgrounds	29 (inclusive of 4 horse camps)	3,365
Level 4 Campgrounds	6	3,185
Total Overnight Capacity	45	7,165

Several Level 2 and 3 campgrounds on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests are being developed in response to riparian resource degradation and sanitation concerns in concentrated use areas along popular river corridors. Examples of this work include the Toccoa Sandy Bottoms canoe launch site on the Toccoa River and the Ocmulgee horse camp. Site rehabilitation usually includes the provision of vault toilets, designated parking areas and campsites.

This trend is continuing with the Conasauga River and Chattooga River initiative rehabilitation projects and will continue to increase the number the number of improvements to existing Level 2 and 3 campgrounds and day-use sites on the Chattahoochee National Forest.

The public demand for campsites with a development level of 4 or 5 currently exceeds supply on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests. As older campgrounds are being reconstructed, electric and water hook-ups are being provided in response to this demand.

Consequently, use has increased in updated and upgraded existing campgrounds. Overall PAOTs have not increased, but PAOTS for Level 4 and 5 campground loops have increased while Level 3 sites have decreased.

Dispersed Recreation

Dispersed recreation is defined as those activities that occur outside of developed recreation sites such as boating, hunting, fishing, hiking and biking. There are nearly 33 developed recreation sites that facilitate dispersed use of the forest such as trailheads and boat ramps.

Recreational panning for gold is an intrinsic recreational activity on the districts lying within the “gold belt,” Blairsville east to Clayton and south to Dahlonega. Currently gold panning is the only allowed method to recover gold from the many streams and rivers within the acknowledged gold belt.

The expressed public desire to intensify gold exploration/gathering through the applied use of hand held suction dredges and portable stream sluice boxes would present concern with respect to other water-based activities. Suction dredging can conflict with river recreation such as boating, swimming, camping, and fishing. Peak periods for dredging and river recreation would usually coincide during summer low flows. On-site negative impacts of suction dredging on recreation include:

- 1) competition for sites along and in streams;
- 2) degradation of aesthetic values by noise, petrochemical odors, turbidity, disturbance of channels and riparian areas, water pollution, and litter;
- 3) degraded air and water quality from two-cycle engines;
- 4) hazardous passage of boats because of cables used to stabilize dredging platforms;
- 5) hazards to wading fishermen due to unnatural deep and steep-sided holes; and
- 6) unfavorable conditions for fishing due to turbidity.

(Harvey, Lisle, Vallier, Fredley, Effects of Suction Dredging on Streams: a Review and Evaluation Strategy, September, 1995 National Wildlife Federation et al v. Agpaoa ,et al p. 16)

Table 3- 183. Developed Access Points for Dispersed Recreation on Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

Type of Developed Site	Total Number of Sites	Total Capacity (PAOT)
Trailheads	26	1,070
Lake Boat Ramps	6	525
Fishing Sites	1	105
Total	33	1,700

Table 3- 184. Miles of Non-Motorized Trails on Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests*

Type(s) of Non-Motorized Use Allowed	Existing Miles of Designated Trails
Hike only	454.5
Hike and Bike only	6.7
Horse only	138.1
Hike, Bike and Horse only	48
Mountain Bike only	20.6
Canoe Trail	12.6
Total	680.5

Table 3- 185. Miles of Motorized Multiple Use Trails on Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests*

Type(s) of Motorized Use Allowed	Existing Miles of Designated Trails
Motorcycle only	8
ATV only	8
Motorcycle and ATV only	89.5
4-WD, High Clearance Vehicles and Motorcycles only	27.5
Total	133.0

** ATVs and motorcycles are also allowed on these trails –miles not included in motorcycle/ATV column*

Utilizing the ranking tabulation method for calculating available motorized trail mileage, the following table was generated. To formulate the final trail mileage and resultant trail percentage between alternatives, the following tabulation criteria were established:

Each management prescription (Rx) was categorized for management flexibility to develop OHV trail systems.

The descriptive scale for OHV access is as follows: (Refer to Appendix I of the Plan for screening criteria for new OHV Systems)

1. prohibited
2. trailhead and connector only
3. existing 4 WD, minimal new
4. trail systems provisionally OK
5. trail systems OK

Within each of the respective Alternatives, A, B, D, E, F, G, and I, the sum of management prescription acreage for each category was multiplied by the descriptive scale (1-5) value for that category. The products were then summed across categories and that sum was divided by the total acres of the Chattahoochee National Forest to establish a numerical “index” value. This allows the ranking of alternatives relative to each other. This numerical “index” value for each alternative is divided by the “index” value for current management alternative (Alternative F), which is, in this case, referred to as the “base” alternative. The percentage produced by this calculation is then multiplied by the current OHV miles in Alternative F (117 miles-Chattahoochee National Forest, 16 miles Oconee National Forest; total 133 miles). The result is the estimated miles that would be expected to be provided within the given alternative. This same procedure is followed in calculating the values for the Oconee National Forest.

By taking the estimated miles that would be expected to be provided within each alternative and dividing by the “base” mileage of 117 miles attributed to the

Chattahoochee National Forest (of the 133 total miles) in Alternative F, the percentage increase/decrease can be exhibited. In the case of the Oconee National Forest, the “base“ mileage would be 16 (of the 133 total miles) in Alternative F. Calculations for the Oconee would be performed the same as for the Chattahoochee National Forest as shown in Table 3- 186 and Table 3- 187.

Table 3- 186. Estimated Percent of Change of Designated OHV Trail Miles by Alternative for the Chattahoochee NF

	ALT A	ALT B	ALT D	ALT E	ALT F*	ALT G	ALT I
Motorized Use	-23	-2	-10	-52	N/A	-49	21

Table 3- 187. Estimated Percent of Change of Designated OHV Areas by Alternative for the Oconee NF

	ALT A	ALT B	ALT D	ALT E	ALT F*	ALT G	ALT I
Motorized Use	-12	-12	-19	-25	N/A	-31	-12

Table 3- 188. Acres of Current Fish and Wildlife Habitat Emphasis Areas* Chattahoochee NF

Type of Fish & Wildlife Habitat Emphasis	Unit of Measure
General Big & Small Game Habitat (Equivalent to 7.E.2, 8.A.1, 8.C and 9.H)	0 Acres
Early-successional Habitats (Equivalent to 8B1)	0 Acres
Stocked (Put & Take) Streams	144 Miles of Streams**
Stocked (Put & Take) Reservoirs***	354 Acres

*Based on current Alternative F

** 1800 miles of trout streams on the Chattahoochee –800 miles of which are considered fishable.

*** Trout is stocked in 250 acres of reservoirs. Exceptions are Nancytown Lake (10 acres) and Lake Russell (94 acres) located on the Chattooga Ranger District.

Table 3- 189. Acres of Current Fish and Wildlife Habitat Emphasis Areas - Oconee NF

Type of Fish & Wildlife Habitat Emphasis	Unit of Measure
General Big & Small Game Habitat (Equivalent to E2, 8A1, 8C and 9H)	0 Acres
Early-successional Habitats (Equivalent to 8B1)	0 Acres
Streams	393 Miles of Streams
Stocked (Put & Take) Reservoirs	15 Acres

**Based on current Alternative F*

***Of the 393 miles of stream identified on the Oconee, 100 miles are considered fishable.*

As the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests are urban national forests due to their closeness to Atlanta and outlying cities within a 75-mile radius of the Forest's proclamation boundaries, many people travel further into the forest to find more solitude and resources such as rivers for rafting, trails to hike, and higher quantities of fish and game. With respect to trail corridors, recreation use is concentrated where trails are well developed and interconnected to allow travel in loops. Trails leading to waterfalls are popular on the weekends and fall leaf color season. OHV activities are extensive within the Forest's designated OHV areas on weekends as well as holidays. OHV use on the Forest continues to be an issue of public concern. Horseback riding and mountain biking are showing increasing user patterns, emphasizing the need to initiate studies for identifying the need for more new trails for this specific user type or allocation of traditional hiker trails to horse/mountain bike use. Road segments that parallel streams or rivers (usually within 150 feet) are used heavily for dispersed camping and fishing. Road segments where hunters park to enter preferred areas are used heavily, often creating an overcrowding issue. Conversely, overcrowding is an issue on road corridors where several key attractions are clustered within short distances. Campgrounds near lakes and rivers receive heavy use during peak season weekends. Capacity is often exceeded on dispersed camping spots adjacent to streams. Day-use areas receive heavy use in places with close proximity to distinctive natural landscapes and scenic overlooks.

Environmental Consequences

Existing recreation demand is expected to grow for a variety of activities including dispersed and developed recreation (See Table 3- 178). Existing use on the National Forest will increase as recreation demand and population grows over the next ten years. No changes to existing wilderness designations (1 A) or the Appalachian Trail have been proposed in any alternative.

General themes were developed for Alternatives A, B, D, E, G and I that emphasize different resource management objectives. Alternative F is the current management alternative and will provide the baseline for evaluating other alternatives. Each alternative theme and its allocation of prescription areas provide the parameters for redefining the current distribution of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, as well as facility development scale and development. Road management direction and the

emphasis placed on recreational use, either dispersed or developed, were major factors in determining the effects of each alternative to recreation.

National Forest management could affect recreation by constructing or removing recreation facilities and improvements; changing their development level; restricting, prohibiting or encouraging use; altering the land to make it suitable or unsuitable for use; and changing the landscape setting. Evaluation of potential recreation effects requires that these elements be considered: activities, setting, and experiences.

Refer to other sections of the EIS for additional recreation environmental consequences related to Scenery, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, Roadless Areas, Special Areas and Heritage resources.

The Southern Appalachian Recreation Rivers and Wilderness Advisory Group (SARRWAG) assigned desired ROS settings by management prescription.

Table 3- 190 shows these assignments in the last four columns. In October 2002, a GIS analysis using ROS class characteristics as GIS analysis criteria was done to estimate the existing acreage distribution by ROS class. This estimate was then correlated with the management prescriptions of each alternative. (Existing is characterized as an estimate because the GIS analysis is not precise enough to say it is actual.) The pattern of distribution is shown in columns three through six. The *estimated* ROS settings were then compared to the *assigned* (SARRWAG) ROS settings by each management prescription; that is a comparison of present situation to a future desired condition. The current situation acreage estimate by ROS class was then cross-walked to assigned ROS classes. That is, what exists now was theoretically moved to how it would be managed to meet the desired condition of each management prescription in the future. In cases where SARRWAG had not assigned a setting, existing settings were either retained unchanged or matched to the most-comparable prescription with assigned settings. Appendix B, "ROS Existing Situations" explains the analysis process in greater detail.

The result was a comparison of recreation emphasis of each alternative. It is critical to understand that the process described was used as a way to evaluate alternatives in terms of the types of recreation settings they emphasize. Since roads heavily influence ROS class, creating conditions that would meet inventory criteria for a specific ROS class would often require road closure or decommissioning. The plan is not deciding to close specific roads. As described for the Primitive setting, we may not actually be able to create an ROS inventory that replicates the results of this analysis. But we can and do manage land as if it were in the desired ROS class. For example, we manage Wilderness as if it were Primitive for those features that are within management control such as the type of facilities permitted, types of materials used, numbers of visitors, and so on.

Table 3- 190. Management Prescriptions with GIS Model Settings and SARRWAG- Assigned ROS Settings

MRx	Description	Forest GIS ROS Setting Used 1 st Before				SARRWAG ROS Setting 2 nd After			
		P	SPNM	SPM	RN	P	SPNM	SPM	RN
0	Custodial Mgt.		X		X		X		X
1.A	Designated Wilderness/ Wilderness Study Areas		X	X	X	X	X		
1.B	Recommended Wilderness Study Areas		X	X	X	X	X		
2.A.1	Designated Wild Rivers		X		X		X		
2.A.2	Designated Scenic Rivers		X		X		X	X	X
2.A.3	Designated Recreational Rivers		X		X		X	X	X
2.B.1	Recommended Wild Rivers		X	X	X		X		
2.B.2	Recommended Scenic Rivers		X		X		X	X	X
2.B.3	Recommended Recreational Rivers		X	X	X		X	X	X
3.A	Natural Scenic Areas		X	X	X		X	X	X
3.B	Experimental Forests				X				
3.C	National Recreation Areas		X	X	X		X		X
3.D	Proposed National Recreation Areas		X	X	X				
4.A	Appalachian Trail Corridor		X		X		X		X
4.B.1	Murder Cr. Research Natural Area			X	X	X	X		
4.C	Geologic Paleontologic				X				
4.D	Botanical /Zoological		X		X		X	X	X
4.E.1	Cultural/ Heritage				X		X		X
4.F	Scenic and Wildlife Mgt Areas		X	X	X		X	X	X
4.F.2	Regional Forester Scenic Areas		X		X		X	X	X
4.H	Outstandingly Remarkable Streams		X		X		X		X
4.I	Natural Areas w/ Few Open Roads		X	X	X		X	X	X
5.A	Administrative Sites		X		X				
5.B	Communications Sites		X		X				

Table continued next page

MRx	Description	Forest GIS ROS Setting Used 1 st Before				SARRWAG ROS Setting 2 nd After			
		P	SPNM	SPM	RN	P	SPNM	SPM	RN
5.D	Military Use Areas				X				X
6.A	Old Growth Natural Process Areas		X	X	X		X		X
6.B	Areas Managed to Restore/Maintain Old		X		X				X
6.D	Areas Managed to Restore Old Growth Characteristics		X		X				X
6.E	Old Growth Core Areas Surrounded by Uneven-aged		X	X	X				X
7.A	Scenic hwy. Corridors		X	X	X				X
7.B	Scenic Corridors and Sensitive Viewsheds		X		X			X	X
7.C	OHV Use Areas		X	X	X				
7.D	Concentrated Recreation Zones		X	X	X		X	X	X
7.E.1	Dispersed Recreation Areas		X	X	X		X	X	X
7.E.2	Dispersed Recreation Areas w/Vegetation Mgt.				X				
8.A.1	Mid-to-Late -Successional Forest Emphasis		X	X	X				X
8.A.2	Areas Sensitive Mid-Late Successional Forest		X		X				X
8.B	Early-Successional Habitat Emphasis		X	X	X				X
8.D	Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Habitat Mgt. Area			X	X				X
8.D.1	Red-Cockaded woodpecker Sub-habitat Mgt. Areas			X	X				X
8.E.3	High Elevation Early-successional Habitat		X	X	X				
9.A.1	Source Water Protection Watersheds		X		X				
9.A.3	Watershed Restoration Areas		X		X				
9.G	Restoration			X	X				X
9.H	Mgt., Mtnce., and Restoration of Plant Associations		X		X		X		X
10.A	Sustained Yield Timber Mgt.		X	X	X				X
10.B	High Quality Forest Products Emphasis		X	X	X				X
10.E	Timber Mgt. With Recreation Emphasis		X	X	X				
12.A	Remote Backcountry Recreation -Few Open		X	X	X				
12.B	Remote Backcountry Recreation -Non-motorized		X		X				

Table 3- 191. Chattahoochee NF Estimated ROS Class Management Emphasis by Alternative in Acres

ROS Class	ALT A	ALT B	ALT D	ALT E	ALT F*	ALT G	ALT I **
P (MRx 1A&1B)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPNM	191,259	197,274	218,200	238,605	222,712	250,142	216,818
SPM	6,271	5,023	11,193	8,210	13,817	6,685	8,203
RN	553,471	548,708	521,606	503,479	514,826	494,266	526,010
R	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
U	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	751,001	751,005	750,999	750,294	751,355	751,093	751,031

* Baseline = Alternative F, Existing ROS Inventory (Table 3- 179)

** Acres based on land acquisition since January, 2000 Analysis run may project different acreage figures for each alternative . Difference +/- 400 acres.

Table 3- 191 displays estimated distribution of acres of ROS Classes by Alternative for the Chattahoochee NF. A GIS model was generated on the Forest which provided the initial basis for the ROS settings. In this Forest model, no primitive or rural/urban settings occurred. Alternative I provides a variety of recreation opportunity spectrum settings from the semi-primitive to more developed. The emphasis in this alternative is to provide recreation opportunities in settings that are more remote and less developed, such as roaded natural, semi-primitive motorized and semi-primitive non-motorized. The acres of semi-primitive decreased 105 percent in Alternative I. Acres for more developed setting (roaded natural) increased 105 percent. Effects of this change in settings will be positive for those visitors seeking a more developed experience and less positive for those visitors who prefer a more remote experience. Within Alternative A, primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized, and semi-primitive motorized decreased 120 percent. Acres for the developed settings (roaded natural) increased 108 percent. This alternative would promote both developed and dispersed recreation opportunities. Emphasis would be on developed recreation such to generate a production of goods/services beneficial to local economies and communities. Alternative B reflects a 275 percent decrease in the semi-primitive motorized settings while a 113 percent decrease in semi-primitive non-motorized is exhibited. Acres for the developed setting (roaded natural) increased 107 percent. Emphasis on recreation is viewed through biological initiatives-compatibility to attain restoration goals and objectives. Alternative D shows a 102 percent decrease in semi-primitive non-motorized and a 123 percent decrease in semi-primitive motorized. Acres for the developed settings (roaded natural) increased 101 percent. Recreational opportunities in this alternative would be managed through natural settings. Alternative E indicates a 107 percent increase in the semi-primitive non-

motorized, and a 168 percent decrease in semi-primitive motorized settings. The emphasis in Alternative E is to provide a high quality recreation experience both in terms of remote backcountry, dispersed and developed recreation. A variety of recreation uses would occur including concentrated use and off-highway use. Acres for the developed setting (roaded natural) decreased 102 percent. Alternative G affords a 112 percent increase in semi-primitive non-motorized and a 123 percent decrease in semi-primitive motorized. A 104 percent decrease is noted in the developed settings (roaded natural is noted). This alternative stresses the recreation experience through habitat needs and ecosystem function. Semi-primitive, wildlife and nature oriented opportunities would be paramount.

Table 3- 192. Oconee National Forest Estimated Distributions of ROS Classes by Alternative

ROS Class	ALT A	ALT B	ALT D	ALT E	ALT F* (ACRES)	ALT G	ALT I **
P (1A&1B)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPNM	1,755	1,004	1,004	1,004	1,006	1,004	1,004
SPM	1,004	2,019	1,645	2,042	1,388	1,811	2,216
RN	112,462	112,198	112,572	112,175	112,827	112,406	112,001
R	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
U	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	115,221	115,221	115,221	115,221	115,221	115,221	115,221

* Baseline = Alternative F, Existing ROS Inventory (Table 3- 180)

** Acres based on land acquisition since January, 2000 Analysis run may project different acreage for each alternative within +/- 1 acre

Table 3- 192 displays estimated distribution of acres of ROS Classes by Alternative. As with the Chattahoochee ROS settings, there were no primitive rural or urban settings generated in the GIS model for the Oconee. Alternative I provides a variety of recreation opportunity spectrum settings from the most primitive to more developed. However, the emphasis in this alternative is to provide recreation opportunities in settings that are more remote and less developed, such as roaded natural, semi-primitive motorized and semi-primitive non-motorized. The acres of semi-primitive settings increased 135 percent in Alternative I. Acres for more developed setting (roaded natural) decreased 100 percent. Effects of this change in settings will be positive for those visitors seeking a more remote experience and less positive for those visitors who prefer a more developed experience. Within Alternative A, semi-primitive non-motorized increased 174 percent, and semi-primitive motorized decreased 138 percent. Acres for the developed settings (roaded natural) decreased 100 percent. This alternative would promote both developed and dispersed recreation opportunities. Emphasis would be on developed recreation such to generate a production of goods/services beneficial to local economies and communities. Alternative B reflects a 100 percent decrease in the semi- primitive

non-motorized and a 145 percent increase in semi-primitive motorized setting. Acres for the developed setting (roaded natural) decreased 101 percent. Emphasis on recreation is viewed through biological initiatives-compatibility to attain restoration goals and objectives. Alternative D shows a 100 percent decrease in semi-primitive motorized and a 119 percent increase in semi-primitive non-motorize. Acres for the developed setting (roaded natural) decreases by 100 percent. Recreation opportunities in this alternative would be managed through natural settings. Alternative E indicates a 100 percent decrease in the, semi-primitive non-motorized, and a 147 percent increase in semi-primitive motorized settings. A variety of recreation uses would occur including concentrated use and off-highway use. Acres for the developed setting (roaded natural) decreased 101 percent. Emphasis in alternative E is to provide a high quality recreation experience both in terms of remote backcountry, dispersed and developed recreation. Alternative G affords a 100 percent decrease in semi-primitive non-motorized and a 130 percent increase in semi-primitive motorized. A 100 percent decrease in the developed settings (roaded natural) is noted. This alternative stresses the recreation experience through habitat needs and ecosystem function. Semi-primitive, wildlife and nature oriented opportunities would be paramount.

Increasing remote settings may be associated with road closures in some areas, both seasonal and permanent. The effect of road closures is to decrease access by motorized vehicles. Closing roads increases the satisfaction of visitors that prefer solitude and fewer disturbances (such as dust and noise) by motorized vehicles. Road closure often reduces wildlife poaching and litter. (If there are any areas proposed for wilderness, then designations of wilderness will move the managed setting to Primitive.)

Developed Recreation

Table 3- 193. Estimated Increase in Capacity of Developed Recreation Areas by Alternative

Type of Development	ALT A	ALT B	ALT D	ALT E	ALT F* (PAOT)	ALT G	ALT I
Day-Use Areas	<i>low</i>	<i>mod</i>	<i>high</i>	<i>low</i>	5,445	<i>mod</i>	<i>low</i>
Level 2 Campground	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>	615	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>
Level 3 Campground	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>	3,365	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>
Level 4 Campground	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>	3,185	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>
Total					12,610		

*Baseline = Alternative F, Existing Developed Recreation)
 Low Increase = < 5% increase in existing PAOTs
 Moderate Increase = 6-25% increase in existing PAOTs
 High Increase = > 26% increase in existing PAOTs
 Decrease = any net loss of existing PAOTs

Table 3- 193 displays allocation of capacity in terms of People At One Time (PAOT) by alternative to existing Developed capacity. Alternatives B, D, and G have little change in the amount and capacity, or development level of developed recreation sites on the forest, but do emphasize changes to upgrade the accessibility of existing sites, which are considered high priority improvements. PAOTs will increase in alternatives A E, and I. Within alternative A, an increase in PAOTs will be noted as activities related to trailhead parking areas (i.e., hiking) and launch sites (i.e., canoeing and floating) will increase in this alternative. Overall dispersed recreation activities will increase. Alternative E will reflect an increase in developed recreation areas PAOTs as developed recreation site facilities construction would be increased. Trailhead development with incentive to provide additional trails and a general increase in dispersed recreation activity potential. Alternative I would reflect an increase in dispersed recreation oriented PAOTs as more dispersed/remote recreation experiences would be provided. This alternative would show a reduced emphasis in developed recreation development. Effects include a greater satisfaction for users of all abilities as more sites become accessible. However, with limited capacity increase, some sites will be increasingly overused and crowded at peak times such as holidays and weekends, and may lower satisfaction levels for some visitors. Use will reach capacity more often over time and some visitors will have unmet expectations.

Some activities/actions will effect developed recreation and effects will depend on the proximity and magnitude of the activity. These activities include construction, reconstruction and maintenance of roads and trails, vegetation management (including thinning, conversion, regeneration, insect and disease contrail, prescribed burning and pesticide use) and mineral exploration. Some activities have short term effects such as prescribed burning or pesticide use that decrease the satisfaction of the visitors in the area for a short time. Other activities such as road construction or insect and disease control may influence satisfaction on a long-term basis. Other natural causes such as wildfires or tornadoes can greatly affect developed recreation areas long-term or permanently.

The allocation of lands to Wilderness will affect all mechanical and motorized-transport forms of recreation, such as mountain bike riding according to Wilderness Act of 1964. Refer to the wilderness/roadless section for acres allocated to wilderness study area.

With additional designations of Wild and Scenic Rivers, increased public interest would result in more river use for canoeing, camping, and fishing. Opportunities for fishing and hunting may be reduced. The acres allocated to Wild and Scenic River prescriptions under each alternative is provided in the discussion of Wild and Scenic Rivers later in this chapter.

Hotspots of developed recreation are sites that are consistently at or over their design capacity. On the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest, these include areas such as Anna Ruby Falls and Brasstown Bald on certain weekends and holidays. Hotspots of use for developed recreation will continue to be more and more crowded over time as use continues at these popular places. Upgrades of facilities, visitor use

controls and implementation of fees often help control use and overuse at these sites.

Dispersed Recreation

Motorized and Non-motorized Trails

Most management prescriptions are conducive to some degree of increase in non-motorized trail development. However, with respect to overall recreation management objectives, Alternative E has the greatest potential for high associated trail development.

Table 3-194. Estimated Extent of Increase in Non-Motorized Trails by Alternative

Type of Trail		ALT B		ALT E	ALT F* (Miles)	ALT G	ALT I
Hike only	<i>mod</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>high</i>	454.5	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>
Hike and Bike only	<i>mod</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>high</i>	6.7	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>
Hike and Horse only	<i>mod</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>high</i>	138.1	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>
Hike, Bike and Horse only	<i>mod</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>high</i>	48	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>
Total Existing Miles					680.5		

*Baseline = Alternative F, Existing Miles of Trail

Low increase = < 5% increase of existing miles of trail

Moderate increase = 6-25% increase of existing miles of trail

High increase = > 50% increase of existing miles of trail

Highest increase = alternative with the highest increase in existing miles of trail

Decrease = any net loss of existing trail

The management prescriptions are more favorable in terms of open Forest acres for motorized development in Alternative B (74 percent), Alternative D (70 percent), current Alternative F (69 percent), Alternative A (67 percent), and Alternative I (65 percent). The least opportunity for motorized development is in Alternative G (48 percent) and Alternative E (46 percent). (Refer to Table 3-5 in the *Soils* topic of the FEIS.) However, Alternative E has the highest potential for OHV developmental trails due to this alternative's high recreation management objective.

Table 3- 195. Estimated Extent of Increase of Designated OHV Areas by Alternative

Type of Motorized Use	ALT A	ALT B	ALT D	ALT E	ALT F*	ALT G	ALT I
7C Designated OHV Area	<i>mod</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>high</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>none</i>

Allocations of OHV trail riding opportunity will increase noise disturbance and may lessen the recreation experience of other recreation participants such as hikers, hunters, fishermen, campers, and those seeking solitude.

Alternative E has the potential to afford increases in trail systems, including hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, OHV and interpretive trails the greatest. Alternative A increases dispersed recreation access points such as boat ramps and trailheads the greatest. Increases in dispersed recreation access points may include greater user satisfaction for some users, higher use for trails and easier access to different parts of the forest for some users. Some users may experience user conflicts on increased trails. Increases in the trail systems will also have effects of more litter, safety concerns, law enforcement needs. Interpretive trails and locations enhance experiences for most visitors. Also, by sharing information about ecosystems, history and resource management through interpretation, better informed visitors often result in good partners in management.

The Appalachian Trail

The Appalachian Trail (A.T.) is a beacon for dispersed recreation on National Forest lands in the Southern Appalachians. It is a magnet for day hikers, and is preeminent in its long distance backpacking opportunities. As a result of the popularity of the A.T., use of the trail has been increasing. Alternative I has been modified to allow recreational special uses only under certain conditions. Use of the trail will be monitored and evaluated periodically to determine if these limitations are still appropriate.

Hunting

All alternatives show a decrease in general big and small game habitat over Current Alternative F. Alternative B (401,585) reflects the greatest increase in big and small habitat acreage. Alternative B exhibits a 77 percent decrease over Alternative F. Alternative I reflects a 51 percent decrease over Alternative F. Alternatives A, E, G, and D round out the acreage level of descending acreage. With respect to early-successional habitat, three alternatives (D, Current Alternative F, and G) show no acres for early-successional habitat. Alternative E produces the greatest early-successional habitat acreage (35,619 acres) - which is 39 percent more than Alternative A, and 48 percent more than Alternative B. Alternatives B, I, D, E, A, and G exhibit reduced acreage increases over Current Alternative F in descending order of total acreage available (general habitat and early-successional). Alternative B emphasizes hunting, fishing and non-consumptive wildlife opportunities the most.

Effects of this emphasis will include increased opportunities for hunting, fishing and non-consumptive wildlife viewing on some parts of the Forest.

Table 3- 196. Estimated Total Acres of Big & Small Game Emphasis Areas by Alternative for the Chattahoochee National Forest

Type of Game Habitat	ALT A	ALT B	ALT D	ALT E	ALT F*	ALT G	ALT I
General Habitat	36,622	384,319	205,149	27,551	518,852	44,305	263,496
Early-successional Habitat	13,764	17,266		35,619			
Total	50,386	401,585	205,149	63,170	518,852	44,305	263,496

*General big & small game habitat includes Prescription Areas 7E2, 8A1, and 9H and 10A (10A was Management Area 16 under the previous Land Management Plan and included early-successional plant communities)

Early-successional habitat for game includes Prescription Area 8B.

Table 3- 197. Estimated Total Acres of Big & Small Game Emphasis Areas by Alternative on the Oconee National Forest

Type of Game Habitat	ALT A	ALT B	ALT D	ALT E	ALT F*	ALT G	ALT I
General Habitat	17,336		18,559	2,627	82,429		43,346
Early-successional Habitat		5		11,026		5	
Total	17,336	5	18,559	13,653	82,429	5	43,346

*General big & small game habitat includes Prescription Areas 7E2, 8A1, and 9H and 10A (10A was Management Area 16 under the previous Land Management Plan and included early-successional plant communities)

Early-successional habitat for game includes Prescription Area 8B.1

All alternatives show a decrease in general big and small game habitat over Current Alternative F. Alternatives B and D (5 acres each) reflect the greatest decrease in big and small habitat acreage. Alternative I (43,346) exhibits only 53 percent of current alternative F big and small game acreage. With respect to early-successional habitat, only Alternative E (11,026) acres) of the alternatives reflect any acreage for early-successional habitat. Alternative I emphasizes hunting, fishing and non-consumptive wildlife opportunities the most based on the total acreage afforded. Effects of this emphasis will include increased opportunities for hunting, fishing and non-consumptive wildlife viewing on some parts of the forest.

Recreation Development Potential by Alternatives

Through land management plan initiatives, a descriptive scale of none, low, moderate, and high degree of facility development was outlined as it relates to developed and dispersed recreation sites. The scale is also inclusive of trails. This context of range is provided across all the management prescriptions.

Alternative A. Developed and dispersed recreation opportunities and high-quality scenery would be provided in a variety of settings - both natural and managed. These would include both commercial recreation and increased public access. Public access (travelways, use corridors, waterways, trails-including off-highway vehicles)- would be increased in high-use areas and/or improved to provide for more recreation opportunities."

Alternative B. A variety of recreation settings would occur in areas where they would be compatible with restoration activities and in areas where restoration is not occurring.

Alternative D. Developed and dispersed recreation opportunities would be " provided in a variety of settings - both natural and managed. Potential for roaded natural experiences would increase as access roads for timber harvest are built or improved. The semi-primitive experiences would be primarily on unsuited lands.

Alternative E. A natural setting and concentrated facilities would be provided that could attract a variety of recreation users. Active resource management would be concentrated in certain locations and supports recreation use and visual quality. Large blocks of the forest would be maintained in a roadless condition to provide remote, backcountry recreation. Dispersed and developed recreation areas and opportunities would be increased. A variety of recreation experiences would occur including concentrated use and off-highway vehicle use. Public access (travelways, use corridors, waterways, trails-including off-highway vehicles)- would be increased in high-use areas and/or improved to provide for more recreation opportunities (same as Alternative A).

Alternative F. No Action Alternative. The current ROS distribution is not expected to vary from description provided in the Affected Environment.

Alternative G. Backcountry, late-successional wildlife species, and nature-oriented non-motorized recreation opportunities would be emphasized. Most roadless areas would be recommended for wilderness. Road network mileage would be reduced through closure and obliteration of roads not needed for ecosystem stewardship or restoration. Recreation would take place within a context set by habitat needs and ecosystem function. Semi-primitive, wildlife, and nature-oriented recreation opportunities would be emphasized. Developed facilities would occur where they do not detract from ecosystem function and landscape connectivity.

Chattahoochee National Forest

Alternative A is the strongest economic based alternative. This alternative has the greatest potential for moderate/high developed and dispersed recreation and trail developmental opportunities with 454,880 acres. Alternative E is a recreation-based alternative as with Alternative A providing a similarly equal amount of developed/dispersed recreation and trail development potential of 436,934 acres.

Alternative B, a biologically based alternative, provides basically the same moderate/high developed and dispersed and trail recreation development (74,770 acres) as the Alternative F (No Action) alternative 75,878 acres.

Alternative D, a balanced age class alternative, would provide developed/dispersed and trail development potential at a slightly less acreage level as Alternative A and B with 327,259 acres of moderate/high development potential.

Alternative F, the “No Action” alternative, affords the greatest acreage for low developed/dispersed recreation and trail potential, with 670,121 acres, while Alternative B affords 599,063 acres of low developed/dispersed recreation and trail development potential. Alternatives G, I, and D afford 495,563,504,780, and 405,902 potential low recreation developmental potential respectively while Alternative E with an acreage of 306,523 affords a varying degree of low developmental recreation potential.

Alternative G, the most area-sensitive wildlife alternative, and Alternative I (natural resource agenda) would provide the same basic moderate/high developed/dispersed recreation and trail potential with 144,508 acres and 140,120 acres.

Oconee National Forest

As with the Chattahoochee National Forest, Alternative A on the Oconee is an economic based alternative. On the Oconee, this alternative provides potential for moderate/high developed and dispersed recreation and trail opportunities with 9,492 acres. This is commensurate with the 9,735 acres afforded in Alternative B.

Alternative E is a recreation-based alternative, as with Alternative A providing a similarly equal amount of developed/dispersed recreation and trail development potential of 16,201 acres.

Alternative B, a biologically based alternative, provides basically the same moderate/high developed and dispersed and trail recreation development (9,735 acres) as Alternative A (9,492 acres).

Alternative D, a balanced age class alternative, would provide developed/dispersed and trail development potential at a higher acreage level than Alternative F with 3,803 acres of moderate/high development potential.

Alternative E is a recreation-based alternative providing a similar amount of developed/dispersed recreation and trail development potential (16,201) as Alternative G (12,383) acres.

Alternative G, an area-sensitive wildlife alternative, and Alternative E would provide the same basic moderate to high developed/dispersed recreation and trail potential with 12,383 acres and 16,201 acres respectively.

Alternative I (natural resource agenda) would provide 5,817 acres of moderate to highly developed and dispersed recreation and trail potential.

Alternative D affords the greatest acreage for low developed/dispersed recreation and trail potential with 112,288 acres while Alternative A affords 104,367 acres of low developed/dispersed recreation and trail development potential. Alternatives B, E, G, and I afford 104,411, 96,979, 93,323, and 96,968 acres of potential low recreation developmental potential respectively.

Alternative F the "No Action" alternative provides 106,833 acres of low developed/dispersed recreation development potential.

Alternative I, the "Rolling Alternative"

Specific goals were identified for developing Alternative I, the "Rolling Alternative." These goals set direction to "provide a spectrum of high quality, nature-based recreation settings and opportunities which are not widely available on non-Federal lands," and more specifically, "strive to meet the following recreation needs within the capabilities of the land:"

- 1) Hiking, biking, and equestrian trail systems, especially in non-motorized settings with high quality landscapes. (Provide separate-use trails where necessary to reduce user conflicts or to improve the quality of recreation experiences).
- 2) Designated OHV routes (which will occur primarily in RN settings).
- 3) The high priority improvements, expansions, or additions of facilities providing developed recreation opportunities, hunting, fishing, and non-consumptive wildlife opportunities.
- 4) Improved interpretive opportunities or other special recreation needs locally identified. (Goals/Design Criteria, 9/16/99 Version).

Design criteria included direction to provide a variety of ROS class allocations (RN, SPM, SPNM, Primitive, Rural, Urban) and strive to for an increase (from the current inventory) in acres of non-motorized recreation opportunities (RN, SPM, SPNM).

Cumulative Effects

A discussion on cumulative effects of the alternatives presented in this EIS examines how social and land use trends on public and private lands in the Southern Appalachians together influence the healthy and sound management of National Forest lands.

As discussed in the EIS sections dealing with recreation and scenery, overall demand for outdoor recreation opportunities, and the settings that provide them, is increasing and it is increasing at a rate greater than population growth.

The demand for a particular type of recreation activity remains either stable with population growth, or increases more rapidly, depending on the activity. Generally, due to the aging population, the demand for less physically challenging activities, and therefore the demands for developed or improved settings, are likely to rise faster than demands for remote and primitive settings (*Southern Appalachian Assessment, Summary report, p. 37*).

Trends on private lands are relevant to Forest Service lands. Currently, public holdings represent one-third of the roaded-natural appearing settings and two thirds of remote settings in the Southern Appalachians. These are the preferred settings for outdoor recreation experiences. Due to continuing development of roads and buildings, these settings on privately owned lands are being converted to rural forested settings. (*Southern Appalachian Assessment, Social Cultural Economic Technical Report p.140, 157, 173*.) The ability for the public to recreate on private lands is changing. About $\frac{1}{4}$ of private landholders in the Southern Appalachians provide access for the recreating public for certain compatible activities. However, over time, less private land is predicted to be available. (*Southern Forest Resource Assessment, draft, Chapter Socio-6, pp. 2 and 12*.)

Streams, rivers, and lakes draw people because of water's importance in high quality scenery and the recreation opportunities offered. Today, National Forests are seeing congestion and overuse on many of its waterways. Use is exceeding capacity and public access provided by private lands for water for recreation is diminishing.

Therefore, a general trend on private lands surrounding the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests is the gradual loss of preferred settings for nature based recreation as well the potential to access private lands. Private lands are not expected to increase the supply for the settings preferred by outdoor recreationists for their activities. As a result, public lands will face most of increasing recreation demand. *Southern Forest Resource Assessment, draft Chapter SOCIO-6*.

Related to recreation demand are tourism and its importance to gateway communities and regional economies. Many communities are encouraging tourism centered around the attractions of National Forest to stimulate their local economy. On the Chattahoochee NF, Blairsville, GA is a small community nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Union County, of which Blairsville is the county seat, lies completely within the proclamation boundary of the Chattahoochee NF. Tourism plays an important part of Union County's economy, based in part on the abundance of recreational opportunities on the surrounding National Forest, including waterfalls, campgrounds and trails. Adjacent Towns County shares in the recreational treasures offered by the Chattahoochee NF, including a visitors/interpretative center on the top of Brasstown Bald-Georgia's highest point at an elevation of 4,784 feet. Alpine

Helen—a small town in White County transformed into the theme of a Bavarian village in the early 1970s is adjacent to both Unicoi State Park and the Forest Service’s Anna Ruby Falls visitor/interpretative center. Anna Ruby Falls has been identified as Georgia’s most visited waterfall. Approximately 60 percent of Rabun County is in the Chattahoochee.

The Oconee NF in the Piedmont section of Georgia is recognized for its hunting and warm water fishing opportunities. Located only 50 miles from Atlanta, this Forest receives a heavy influx of visitors seeking recreational solitude and enjoyment.

Finally, nature-based settings are key ingredients for enhancing a sense of place in the Southern Appalachian communities. Rapid development of private lands in the South appears to be taking away the sense of place of long-term residents. Local communities identify with landscape features or have cultural practices related to natural settings. Also, traditional uses of the land by residents for hunting, fishing and gathering of natural forest products have transferred in part to Forest Service lands as private lands become unavailable. Some conflicts may exist or may arise between long time residents and new development related to tourism and outdoor recreation. (*Southern Appalachian Assessment, Summary Report, pg. 38*)

The primary challenge for recreation managers is how to maintain the integrity of the ecosystems and high quality natural settings as more and more people want more and more conveniences in a “natural setting.” Alternatives A, and E emphasize recreation opportunities. Alternatives B, D, G, and I emphasize other values on National Forest land and therefore provide less recreation opportunities.

Alternative A would emphasize production of goods and services beneficial to local economics and communities. Developed and dispersed recreation opportunities and high-quality scenery would be provided in a variety of natural/managed settings.

Alternative B is biologically based with an emphasis on restoring the natural resources, natural processes, creating and maintaining wildlife habitats.

Alternative D is structured to reach and maintain a balanced age class. Developed and dispersed recreation opportunities would be provided in natural/managed settings.

Alternative E affords dispersed/developed recreation areas, and opportunities would be increased.

Alternative I will provide high quality, nature based recreation opportunities, emphasizing non-motorized settings with natural appearing landscapes .

Regardless of the alternative selected, recreation demand is increasing and effects will occur. Effects, such as user conflict and resource impacts to riparian corridors, will simply show up sooner in alternatives that do not emphasize recreation opportunities. User controls will be needed, in varying degrees, to protect the health

of the natural systems and to maintain an acceptable recreation experience. These controls will begin in current problem areas.

Regardless of alternative selected, it is unknown if future Forest Service budgets will be able to support the recreation staff, law enforcement and facilities (whether for developed or dispersed settings) called for by recreation demand. This is particularly important for high maintenance and operational cost facilities or trail systems such as OHV areas where on-going maintenance and on-the-ground personnel are needed.

For those alternatives generally emphasizing recreation management, there will be a better opportunity to maintain scarce settings, provide high quality recreation experiences and manage impacts on the land. Also there will be a better opportunity to develop tourism linkages and partnerships to support local economies and sound recreation management programs.

There is a grass roots partnership approach currently in place on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests. The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest Interpretative Association, through its partnership with the Forest, has provided an avenue for garnering grants for providing natural resource improvement projects (i.e. Upper Chattahoochee River watershed project to harden riparian-oriented dispersed recreation camping sites.).

The Georgia Appalachian Trail Club provides invaluable trail maintenance activities along the 89 miles of Appalachian Trail traversing Georgia within the administrative boundaries of the U.S. Forest Service. A Challenge Cost Share agreement between the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club and the U.S. Forest Service provides a cooperative financial channel to fund both a Caretaker and a Ridge Runner along the Appalachian Trail on an annual basis. The Georgia Pinhoti Trail Association has been a pivotal force securing funding and providing on-the-ground construction of the Pinhoti as it traverses U.S. Forest Service lands in Northwest Georgia on the Chattahoochee National Forest. Georgia Recreational Trail Riders Association has been a strong partner in securing trails grants as well as providing intensive trail maintenance activities within various designated off -road riding areas within the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests.

WILDERNESS AND ROADLESS AREAS

Affected Environment

Wilderness

Congressionally designated wilderness areas are protected by law and valued for their ecological, historical, scientific and experiential resources.

Currently on the Chattahoochee National Forest, there are 10 designated wilderness areas approximately 117,378 acres in size (16 percent of the total Forest area). These areas were designated by national legislation based upon the 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act, the 1986 Georgia Wilderness Act, and the Chattahoochee Forest Protection Act of 1991. There are no wilderness study areas or recommended wilderness study areas (prior to the SAA inventory) that have not been acted upon by Congress under the 1985 Forest Plan. The existing wilderness areas are managed to maintain natural characteristics. Natural occurrences such as outbreaks of insects or disease are allowed. Human-caused intrusions are limited to wildfire suppression under emergency conditions, at which time mechanical equipment and motorized transport may be approved for use to control fire that threatens life, property, or the wilderness resource; search and rescue; or pest outbreaks threatening private property. All existing wilderness areas are located within the Blue Ridge Mountains Section. Of the 117,378 acres designated, 47,930 acres (41 percent) are at an elevation of 3,000 feet or higher. This is 43 percent of the total acres over 3,000 feet on the Chattahoochee.

The 1985 plan used the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II) as its basis for inventoried roadless areas to address the wilderness/roadless issue in that plan. The plan allocated and recommended to Congress nine RARE II areas for wilderness designation, plus one smaller extension area. These totaled approximately 114,000 acres. (Management Area Prescription 1, wilderness.)

The remainders were allocated into Management Area 4, rugged high-elevation land. These areas generally had ROS settings that ranged from semi-primitive to semi-primitive non-motorized to semi-primitive motorized. Table 3- 198 provides the acreage for all current, designated wilderness areas.

Table 3- 198. Wilderness Area Acreage

Designated Wilderness Areas	Acres
Big Frog	83
Cohutta	35,233
Ellicott Rock	2,073
Southern Nantahala	12,949
Raven Cliffs	9,113
Brasstown	12,949
Tray Mountain	10,414
Rich Mountain	10,343
Blood Mountain	7,800
Mark Trail	16,880
Total Acres	117,378

Roadless

The first step in the evaluation of potential wilderness is to identify and inventory all roadless, undeveloped areas that satisfy the definition of wilderness found in Section 2 (c) of the 1964 Wilderness Act (*FSH 1909.12, Chapter 7, item 7.1*). Roadless areas are places that have retained or are regaining a natural, untrammeled appearance; any signs of prior human activity are disappearing or being muted by natural forces. Criteria provide for an individual roadless area to include no more than one half mile of improved road for each 1,000 acres.

In the forest planning process, National Forests are required to assess roadless areas on a forest (*Chapter 7 of FSH 1909.12*). A new roadless inventory was conducted as a part of the Southern Appalachian Assessment with additional guidelines developed by the SAA team and the Southern Regional Office of the Forest Service to facilitate consistent application of the process.

Currently on the Chattahoochee National Forest, there are some areas outside of wilderness that exhibit some roadless characteristics except in size (individually total less than 5000 acres) and are adjacent to existing wilderness areas. These inventoried roadless areas have the potential to provide additional acres to those wilderness areas they are adjacent to, and may provide additional recreation opportunities.

For each roadless area, a report was prepared that evaluates its wilderness potential. These reports are found in Appendix C and are in accord with *36 CFR 219.17*. The evaluation reports consider wilderness potential in three main categories:

- capability (the qualities that make a roadless area suitable or not suitable for wilderness);
- availability (an assessment of the non-wilderness resources and demand of the area); and
- need (a consideration of the amount of wilderness already in the area and region).

The Chattahoochee National Forest currently has 23 inventoried roadless areas, totaling approximately 64,500 acres that could be recommended for wilderness study. One of the areas is shared with the Sumter National Forest (Big Mountain). The inventory was finalized in October, 1999; results are shown in Table 3- 199.

Table 3- 199. Acreage of Inventoried Roadless Areas

Inventoried Roadless Area	Acres	Inventoried Roadless Area	Acres
Ben Gap	1,294	Ken Mountain	527
*Big Mountain	2,923	Miller Creek	714
Boggs Creek	2,075	Patterson Gap	1,209
#Cedar Mountain	1,140	Pink Knob	12,174
Duck Branch	190	Rocky Mountain	4,306
#Lance Creek	9,064	Sarah's Creek	6,922
*Ellicott Rock Addition	704	Shoal Branch	412
Foster Branch	165	Tate Branch	1,085
Helton Creek	2,451	Tripp Branch	638
Indian Grave Gap	1,024	Turner Creek	1,515
Joe Gap	5,383	Wilson Cove	563
Kelly Ridge	8,396	TOTAL	64,874

**Big Mountain includes 1,135 acres of existing Chattooga Wild and Scenic River; Ellicott Rock Addition includes 142 acres of existing Chattooga Wild and Scenic River.*

Cedar Mountain includes 579 acres of existing DeSoto Falls Scenic Area; Lance Creek includes 7,031 acres of existing Ed Jenkins National Recreation Area.

Figure 3 - 26. Vicinity Map of Inventoried Roadless Areas on the Cohutta Ranger District (Chattahoochee National Forest)

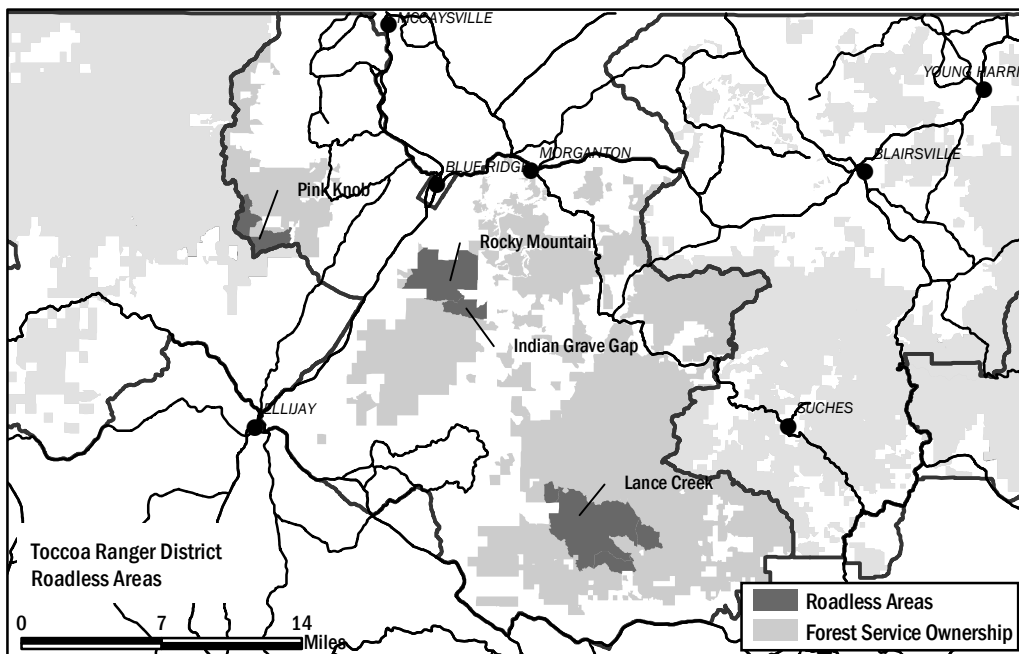
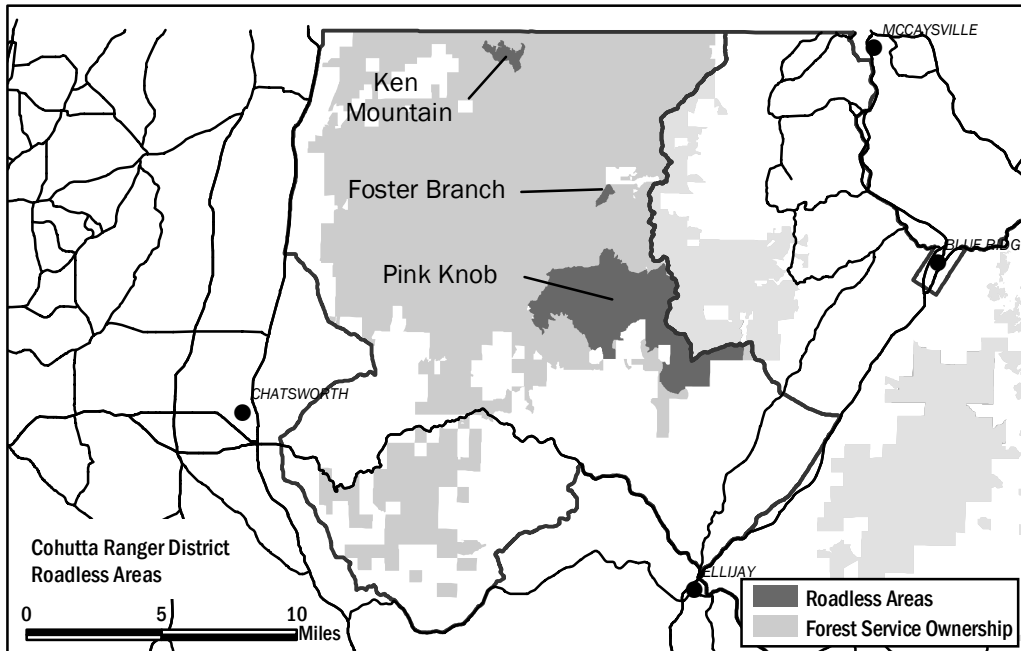


Figure 3 - 27. Vicinity Map of Inventoried Roadless Areas on the Toccoa Ranger District (Chattahoochee National Forest)

Figure 3 - 28. Vicinity Map of Inventoried Roadless Areas on the Brasstown Ranger District (Chattahoochee National Forest)

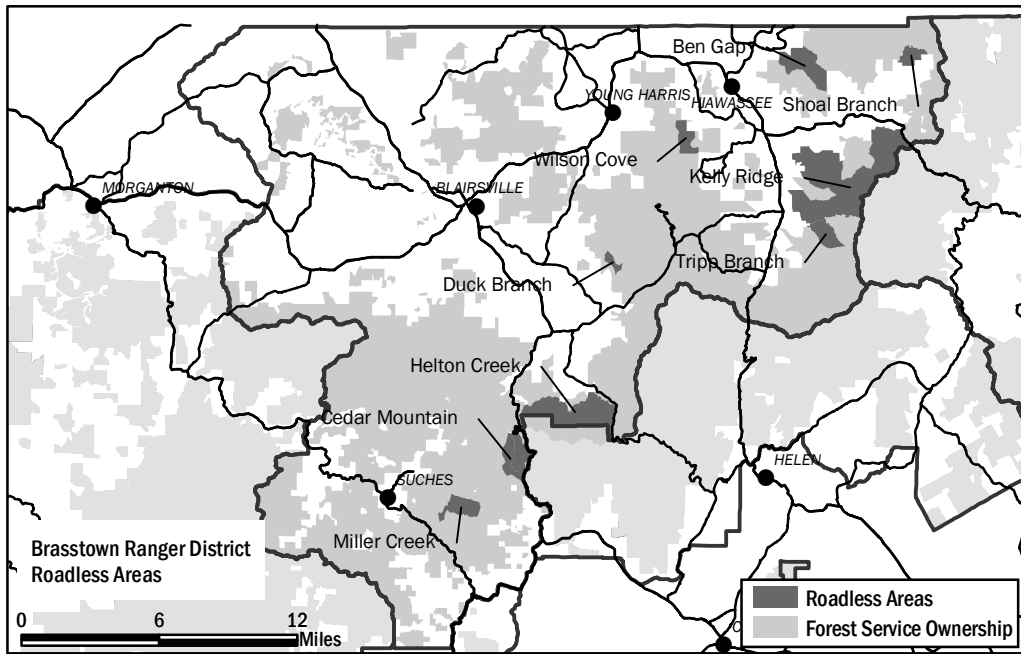
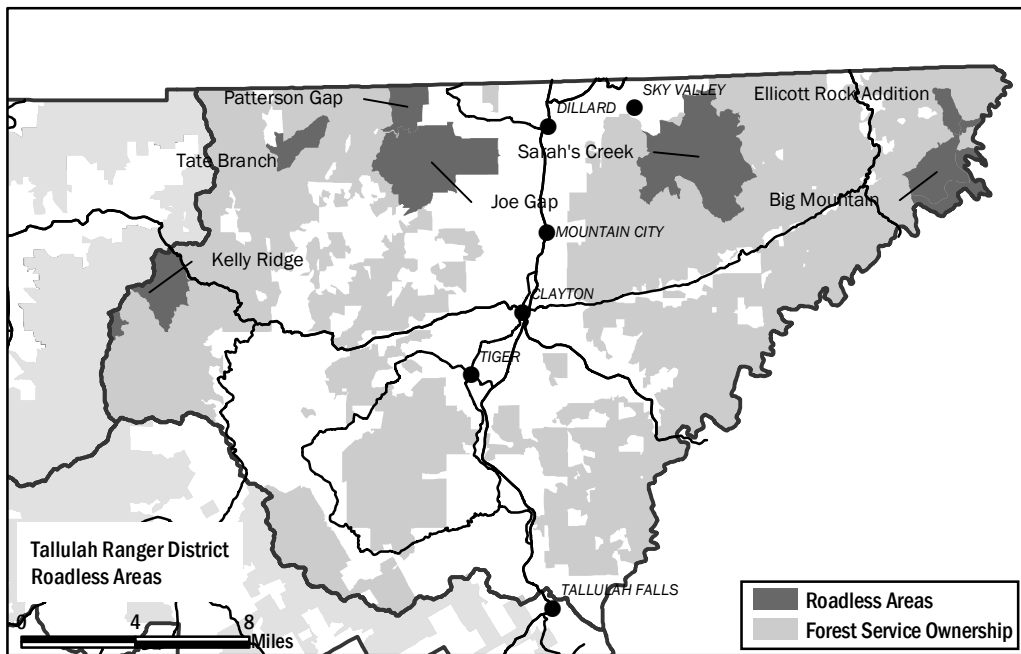


Figure 3 - 29. Vicinity Map of Inventoried Roadless Areas on the Tallulah Ranger District (Chattahoochee National Forest)



(Chattahoochee National Forest)

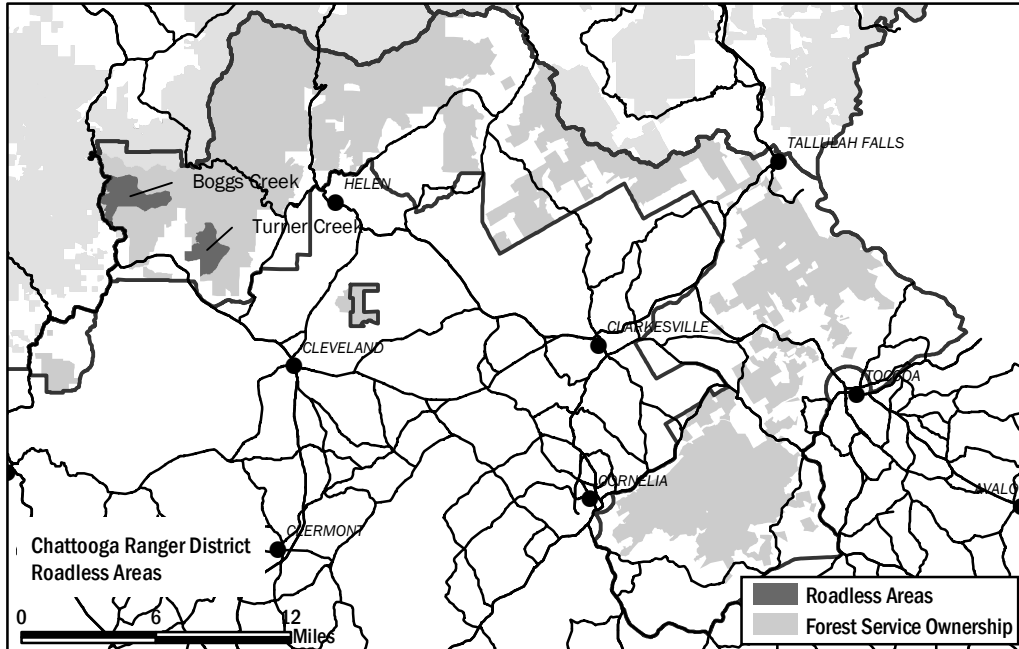


Figure 3 - 30. Vicinity Map of Inventoried Roadless Areas on the Chattooga Ranger District (Chattahoochee National Forest)

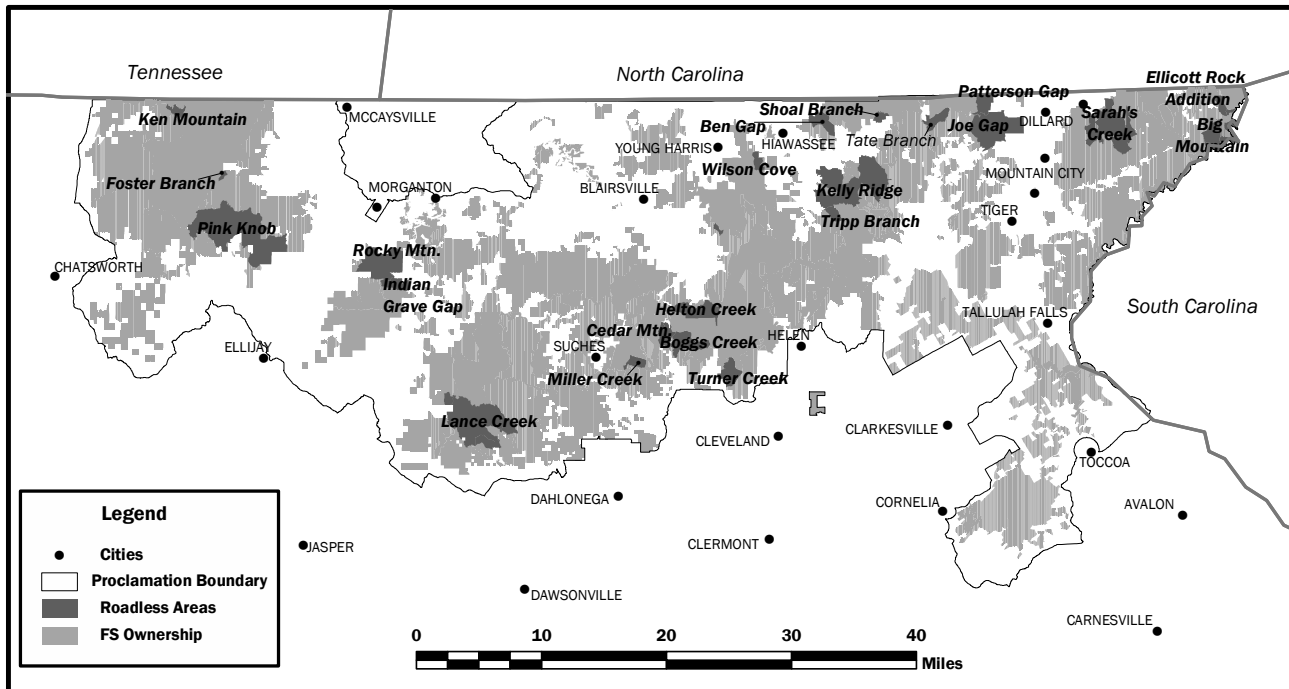


Figure 3 - 31. Vicinity Map Showing Location of Inventoried Roadless Areas On the Chattahoochee National Forest.

A segment of outdoor recreation is one of the benefactors of wilderness and is one of the drivers of wilderness demand and wilderness management. According to trend data collected from 1965 to 1994, the trend in recreation visits to National Forest Wilderness has paralleled designations and increased over time. In the Southeast, participation rates and trends in wilderness indicate a continued increase in visitation to wilderness with an estimated 7,860,000 visits to wilderness by the year 2050.

In addition to outdoor recreation in wilderness, there is a non-user component that values American wilderness and is important to understand when analyzing wilderness and roadless allocations. Wilderness is valued for preserving representative natural ecosystems and local landscapes. The very existence of wilderness is valued by the American public as part of the natural heritage of the country. The National Survey on Recreation and the Environment, 2000, found that 69.8% of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed to the question, "How do you feel about designating more federal lands in your state as wilderness?" Over 96 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I enjoy knowing that future generations will be able to visit and experience wilderness areas." But in a public survey for the Southern Appalachian National Forests to describe public use, July 2002, found that for 75 percent of those surveyed, the most popular outdoor recreational activity is driving for pleasure, while visiting a wilderness or other primitive area is 40 percent, followed by day hiking at 39 percent. What is interesting about these facts is that designation of wilderness on national forests includes the closing of roads.

The current uses of wilderness are hiking developed trail systems and dispersed camping. Lesser amounts of hunting, fishing, and baseline research monitoring also occur.

Environmental Consequences – Direct and Indirect Effects

Wilderness

The designation of Wilderness has some desirable effects. As stated previously, wilderness conserves some natural systems (baseline reference areas or streams) and can provide places of solitude for visitors. However, there are environmental effects within wilderness from many sources. Recreational use can have negative impacts to the quality, character and integrity of the wilderness resource due to overuse. Some of these negative impacts include soil compaction; vegetation loss; disturbance of cultural/historic resources; disturbance and/or replacement by non-native species such as noxious weeds within riparian corridors and along trails and campsites caused by heavy recreation use; crowding and loss of solitude; deterioration of water quality from improper disposal of human waste and waste water; which could lead to localized threats to biological/ecological processes and biodiversity.

Other environmental effects which impact the integrity of the natural systems in wilderness include air pollution from outside sources, interruption of naturally-

functioning ecosystems by fire suppression (see *Fire effects* section); and threats to native plant species from feral hogs; the spread of native and non-native insects, disease, and noxious weeds from sources outside wilderness such as adjacent development on private land.

Fire management direction for the ten designated wildernesses is similar in all alternatives. Firefighter and public safety is always the primary consideration for all suppression strategies and tactics. The full range of appropriate suppression strategies can be utilized ranging from direct attack that attempts to minimize acreage burned and resource value loss, to indirect attack, and to simply monitoring a fire to evaluate its progress. Strategies and tactics for the fire are commensurate with resource values at risk. Natural barriers such as rock slides, riparian corridors, trails and boundary roads are utilized when possible to minimize the construction of firelines and to mitigate impacts to soil, water, vegetation, to reduce costs, and to provide for other safety considerations.

Wildland fire use is being able to utilize lightning ignitions, both inside and outside of wilderness, utilizing various parameters such as weather, fuel conditions and expected fire behavior to determine if the prescribed fire is within management parameters. A wilderness fire plan is required for each wilderness area if fire management is to be carried out.

Strategies that allow the fire to burn to natural barriers are favored and if fire control line must be constructed, it is of minimum width and depth to stop fire spread. Limited brushing and cutting of trees or dead standing trees is required unless these are a safety hazard or threaten the security of a fireline.

Management ignited prescribed fires in wilderness may be ignited for threatened and endangered species and to reduce unnatural buildups of fuel to meet at least one of the wilderness fire management objectives set forth in FSM 2324.21.

Wildland Urban Interface zone treatments along the wilderness boundary must be further detailed in a Fire Management Plan. The use of fire in the treatment of adjacent private lands is the selected alternative; however, some fuels manipulation and management to reduce hazardous fuels may be required to achieve public and firefighter safety.

The maintenance of trails, facilities, and portions of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail that travels through wilderness, and with its associated shelter sites, is done using hand tools only and access within wilderness is made using non-mechanized/non-motorized means. Management of the Appalachian Trail is subordinate to wilderness management, when the A.T. passes through designated wilderness areas. Any Wild and Scenic River designations within wilderness are subordinate to the wilderness MRx.

All designated wilderness areas are allocated to MRx 1.A.

Inventoried Roadless

Both the decision to designate wilderness study areas and the decision not to designate wilderness study areas have environmental consequences. The magnitude of the effects varies by alternative depending upon the number of roadless areas allocated.

Table 3- 200 summarizes all inventoried roadless area allocations by Management Prescription by alternative.

Roadless Area Conservation Rule

On January 12, 2001, the Forest Service issued the Final Rule for Roadless Area Conservation in the **Federal Register**. Since that time, numerous legal challenges have been made to this decision, including a ruling on July 14, 2003 from the United States District Court, Wyoming District, where Judge Clarence Brimmer found the Roadless Area Conservation Rule to be in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act and the Wilderness Act, and enjoined its implementation. However, this issue is far from settled. Appeals of the Wyoming District Court decision, other litigation, new rulemaking, or new FSM directives could result in a change in direction for inventoried roadless areas.

The Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule) would place restrictions on road construction and reconstruction activities; and the timber cutting, sale, or removal activities that could occur in inventoried roadless areas. The exceptions when road construction/reconstruction activities and timber cutting and removal activities are allowed are identified in *36 CFR 294.12 and 294.13*.

In this EIS, the inventoried roadless areas were evaluated for possible wilderness study area recommendations. If areas were not recommended for wilderness study designation, other land allocations were considered for these areas, depending upon the overall emphasis of each plan alternative. In some alternatives, a particular roadless area's characteristics are to be maintained, while in other alternatives, the area's roadless characteristics could be altered. The following describes by alternative, what would happen to these land allocations should the Roadless Area Conservation Rule restrictions in effect.

Table 3- 200. Inventoried Roadless Area Allocations By Management Prescription By Alternative

Inventoried Roadless Area	Alt A MRx	Alt B MRx	Alt D MRx	Alt E MRx	Alt F MRx	Alt G MRx	Alt I MRx
Ben Gap	10.B	1.B	6.A	1.B	10.A	1.B	1.B
Big Mountain	12.A	1.B	12.A	12.B	10.A	1.B	2.A.1/12.A
Boggs Creek	7.D	8.A.1	6.C	12.B	10.A/7.E.2	1.B	4.F.1/6.B
Cedar Mountain	1.B	8.A.1	4.F.2/6.C	12.B	12.A	1.B	1.B
Duck Branch	1.B	1.B	6.C	1.B	10.A	1.B	1.B
Lance Creek	3.C/D	3.C/D	3.C/D	3.C/D	3.C/10.A/12.B	3.C/D	3.C/3.D
Ellicott Rock Addition	1.B/2.A	1.B/2.A	8.A.2/2.A	2.A/1.B	2.A/10.A	1.B/2.A	1.B/2.A.2
Foster Branch	1.B	1.B	8.A.1	1.B	10.A	1.B	1.B
Helton Creek	1.B	1.B	6.C	12.B	7.B/7.E.2/10.A/12.B	1.B	1.B
Indian Grave Gap	12.A	1.B	1.B	12.B	12.A	1.B	12.A
Joe Gap	12.A	1.B	1.B	12.B	12.A	1.B	12.A
Kelly Ridge	3.D/8.A.1/12.A	8.A.2	6.A/8.A.2/10.A	3.D/12.B	4.A/10.A/12.B	1.B	12.A/4.A
Ken Mountain	1.B	1.B	1.B	1.B	12.B	1.B	1.B
Miller Creek	12.B	1.B	6.C	1.B	7.E.2/10.A	1.B	4.F.1
Patterson Gap	12.A	1.B	1.B	12.B	7.B	1.B	12.A
Pink Knob	12.A	8.A.2/9.H	8.A.2	1.B	10.A/12.B	1.B	12.A/7.E.2
Rocky Mountain	12.A	8.A.1	7.A/10.A	1.B	10.A/12.B	1.B	7.E.1/12.A
Sarah's Creek	7.E.2/12.A	4.I/9.H	1.B/10.B	1.B/7.E.1	10.A/12.A	1.B/6.C	4.I/9.H
Shoal Branch	1.B	1.B	1.B	1.B	10.A	1.B	1.B
Tate Branch	2.B.2/8.A.2	1.B	1.B	1.B	7.E.2/12.A	1.B	1.B/4.H
Tripp Branch	1.B	8.A.2	10.A	12.B	10.A/12.B	1.B	1.B
Turner Creek	12.B	1.B	6.C	1.B	10.A/12.B	1.B	4.F
Wilson Cove	1.B	1.B	10.A	1.B	10.A	1.B	1.B

Source: GIS stands and roadless inventory data layers, 8/2003

Recommended for Wilderness Study (MRx 1.B)

Inventoried roadless areas recommended for wilderness study are set aside for future consideration as wilderness and are not available for activities such as wildlife habitat manipulation or road construction. These areas are managed much the same as designated wilderness until a final determination is made by Congress as to whether they are to be added to the National Wilderness Preservation system.

Designation as wilderness study areas could conserve additional areas that would be managed to allow certain natural processes to occur, provide additional areas for solitude and primitive recreation, and minimize the impacts of human activities on the land. The highest priority for management is for the naturalness of the area.

Inventoried roadless acreage recommended for wilderness study by alternative is displayed in Table 3- 201. This table also shows the potential total wilderness acreage for each alternative (currently designated plus recommended for study).

Table 3- 201. Acres Allocated to Recommended Wilderness Study by Alternative

Alt	Acres	Number of Areas	Potential Wilderness Acres (% change)
Alt A	6,648	9	124,026 (+5%)
Alt B	19,972	15	137,350 (+16%)
Alt D	9,581	7	126,959 (+8%)
Alt E	29,251	13	146,629 (+25%)
Alt F	0	0	117,378 (0%)
Alt G	55,810	22	173,188 (+33%)
Alt I	8,094	11	125,472 (+7%)

Source: GIS stands data layers

Generally, the resource effects of managing wilderness study areas include maintaining soil, hydrologic and air quality conditions prevailing within the areas. Roads begin to be closed, decommissioned and rehabilitated or allowed to return to a natural state. Water quality and air quality remain high locally and the imprint of human influence diminishes over time.

Opportunities for solitude and remoteness increase as does the opportunity for primitive and dispersed recreation (hiking and camping) due to road closures and prohibiting motorized use. Non-motorized dispersed recreation activities such as hiking, horseback riding, camping, fishing, and hunting could continue and use levels are expected to remain about the same as currently takes place. Visual contrasts between inventoried roadless areas and other forested lands could increase. Additional acreage for wilderness study will theoretically increase the carrying capacity and allow for user impacts to be dispersed across a larger area providing an increase in wilderness visitor solitude for those recreationists who visit new areas.

However, road closures result in decreased access for some activities. There are approximately 19 miles of roads within the inventoried roadless areas. Due to road closures, wildfires will become larger and possibly more intense. A decrease in opportunities and designated infrastructure (trails) for bicycling, off highway vehicles and other forms of recreation requiring motorized transport or mechanized equipment will result. Bicycle and motorized use must be displaced to other areas.

The Bear Creek and the Mountaintown Creek trails for mountain bicycles (approximately 12 miles) will be eliminated for bike use within the Pink Knob area. Maintenance of trails and facilities, including the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and associated shelter sites, will be done using hand tools only and access is made using non-mechanized/non-motorized means. The developed recreation use and other use associated with motor vehicles currently taking place in these areas ceases.

There could be a slight increase in visitation and associated economics in the surrounding local communities. However, there could also be a reduction in economic benefits associated with wildlife and forest management and associated activities from the inventoried roadless areas since natural resource management activities will not be allowed in these areas. Little or no mineral development or its associated impacts are expected under the alternatives that recommend areas for wilderness study.

Educational opportunities for the scientific study of natural ecological processes could increase.

The naturalness, uniqueness, and the representative watersheds of designated areas could be maintained. Natural processes will continue including plant succession. Larger blocks of undeveloped land and reduction in open road density in areas recommended for wilderness study could favor area-sensitive and disturbance-sensitive species. Rare communities and threatened and endangered species will be managed within the limitation of activities allowed within wilderness study areas.

Additional wilderness area designation may be affected by the lack of or reduced potential for fire management. In the alternatives, all lightning and human caused fires will be managed or suppressed by strategies documented in a Fire Management Action Plan. Fire suppression of all human-caused wildfires will minimize the potential effects on wilderness values, however fires in these areas could become larger in size than under normal forest management because of the restrictions on motorized equipment such as bulldozers and helicopters. Under emergency situations, appropriate officials may approve use of helicopters, air tankers, and other mechanized equipment and motorized transport. These actions impact wilderness character and visitor experiences and leave evidence of man, although rehabilitation helps to reduce those impacts afterward.

Lightning ignited fires, if allowed to burn (wildland fire use), enhance the wilderness' natural systems that are fire dependent. It will benefit recreation by opening up the

forest, by reducing fuel loading to acceptable levels, and by maintaining certain vegetation. There are a short-term negative impact to wilderness air quality, visual aesthetics, impacts to wilderness visitor's experiences, and possibly water quality. These fires too, managed according to strategies set forth in the Fire Management Action Plan.

Additional effects to wilderness study areas are similar to those found in wilderness, such as limited soil compaction; limited vegetation loss or disturbance, nonnative species, crowding and loss of solitude at scenic areas, deterioration of water quality from improper disposal of human waste and waste water; and loss of or threats to biological/ecological processes and biodiversity, through human disturbance.

In Table 3- 202, an X indicates that the total acreage is allocated to MRx 1.B. A partial allocation to the wilderness study prescription is indicated by the percentage, and a blank means no allocation.

Table 3- 202. Wilderness Study Allocations by Alternative

Inventoried Roadless Area	Alt A	Alt B	Alt D	Alt E	Alt F	Alt G	Alt I	Open Road Miles
Ben Gap		X		X		X	X	0.47
Big Mountain		X				X		0
Boggs Creek						X		1.44
Cedar Mountain	X					X	X	0
Duck Branch	X	X		X		X	X	0.11
Lance Creek								3.24
Ellicott Rock Addition	81%	81%		81%		81%	81%	0
Foster Branch	X	X		X		X	X	0
Helton Creek	X	X				X	X	0.58
Indian Grave Gap		X	X			X		0
Joe Gap		X	X			X		2.30
Kelly Ridge						X		3.50
Ken Mountain	X	X	X	X		X	X	0.31
Miller Creek		X		X		X		0
Patterson Gap		X	X			X		0.02
Pink Knob				X		X		2.55
Rocky Mountain				X		X		2.53
Sarah's Creek			96%	96%		96%		2.55
Shoal Branch	X	X	X	X		X	X	0
Tate Branch		X	X	X		X	84%	0
Tripp Branch	X					X	X	0.32
Turner Creek		X		X		X		0
Wilson Cove	X	X		X		X	X	0

Cumulatively, Alternative G will allocate 22 areas for wilderness study. Two inventoried roadless areas will not be totally allocated to MRx 1.B. Alternative G increases potential wilderness allocation by 33 percent (55,510 ac) to 173,188 acres across the Chattahoochee.

Ninety-four permanent wildlife openings maintained by Georgia DNR or the Chattahoochee NF will be allowed to revert back to forest within these areas. Alternative G necessitates the closing 16.68 miles of open roads. Within this alternative, 16,502 acres of land that is 3,000 feet or higher in elevation is included in the 1.B allocation. This is an increase of 35 percent to 64,254 acres.

Alternative B allocates 15 areas for wilderness study with one area partially allocated to MRx 1.B. Alternative B increases potential wilderness allocation by 16 percent (19,972 ac) to 137,350 acres across the Chattahoochee.

Five permanent wildlife openings maintained by Georgia DNR or the Chattahoochee NF will be allowed to revert back to forest within these areas. Alternative B necessitates the closing of 3.79 miles of open roads. Within this alternative, 4,608 acres of land that is 3,000 feet or higher in elevation will be included in the 1.B allocation. This is an increase of 10 percent to 52,360 acres.

Alternative I allocates 11 areas for wilderness study with two areas partially allocated to MRx 1.B. Alternative I increases potential wilderness allocation by 7 percent (8,094 ac) to 125,472 acres across the Chattahoochee.

Sixty permanent wildlife openings maintained by Georgia DNR or the Chattahoochee NF will be allowed to revert back to forest within these areas. Alternative I will necessitate the closing of 1.79 miles of open roads. Within this alternative 1,782 acres of land that is 3,000 feet or higher in elevation is included in the 1.B allocation. This is an increase of 4 percent to 49,534 acres.

Alternative E allocates 13 areas for wilderness study with two areas partially allocated to MRx 1.B. Alternative E increases potential wilderness allocation by 25 percent (29,251 ac) to 146,269 acres across the Chattahoochee.

Thirty-five permanent wildlife openings maintained by Georgia DNR or the Chattahoochee NF will be allowed to revert back to forest within these areas. Alternative E necessitates the closing of 8.52 miles of open roads. Within this alternative 8,837 acres of land that is 3,000 feet or higher in elevation is included in the 1.B allocation. This is an increase of 19 percent to 56,589 acres.

Alternative A allocates 9 areas for wilderness study with one area partially allocated to MRx 1.B. Alternative A increases potential wilderness allocation by 5 percent (6,648 ac) to 124,026 acres across the Chattahoochee.

There will be 1 permanent, maintained wildlife opening allowed to revert back to forest within these areas. Alternative A necessitates the closing of 1.32 miles of open roads. Within this alternative 1,401 acres of land that is 3,000 feet or higher in

elevation is included in the 1.B allocation. This is an increase of 3 percent to 49,153 acres.

Alternative D allocates 7 areas for wilderness study with one of these areas partially allocated to MRx 1.B. Alternative D increases the potential wilderness allocation by 8 percent (9,581 ac) to 126,959 acres across the Chattahoochee.

Nineteen permanent wildlife openings maintained by Georgia DNR or the Chattahoochee NF will be allowed to revert back to forest within these areas. Alternative D necessitates the closing of 5.18 miles of open roads. Within this alternative 7,690 acres of land that is 3,000 feet or higher in elevation is included in the 1.B allocation. This is an increase of 16 percent to 55,442 acres.

Alternative F will not allocate any inventoried roadless area to management prescription 1.B. All areas are allocated into different management prescriptions. In Alternative F, focus remains on the existing wilderness areas whose acreage remains at 117,378.

No permanent, maintained wildlife openings will be impacted in this alternative. No open roads will be permanently closed. The allocation of land over 3,000 feet in elevation remains at 47,752 acres.

Inventoried Roadless Areas Maintaining Roadless Character

Areas identified in this category are assigned to management prescriptions that manage in ways similar to their inventoried characteristics. The management of these areas provide users with a degree of solitude and a semi-primitive experience but still allow the use of limited public motorized access.

Management prescriptions that do not compromise an area's inventoried roadless character are: 2.A/B; 3.C/D; 4.A; 4.F.1/2; 4.I; 6.A/C; 9.F; and 12.A/B.

Wildlife habitat manipulations, endangered, threatened, sensitive species, rare community restorations, and forest community restorations occur as necessary and as existing access allows, but some temporary use roads to aid in these activities are be allowed in some management prescriptions so long as these activities meet the roading criteria of the inventoried roadless area.

While most management prescriptions (listed previously) allow existing roads to either remain intact or be closed to the public, but usable for administrative purposes only, the MRxs in the 12 categories differ. MRx 12.A emphasizes remote backcountry recreation with few open roads. 12.B emphasizes remote backcountry recreation, but in a non-motorized setting. That is, open roads are closed to all uses except hiking. MRx 12.B is the closest to MRx 1.B without being a study area for wilderness.

Sights and sounds of man's activities are temporarily increased under these management prescriptions, but probably no more than is allowed at present. Opportunity for solitude could be diminished due to a broader range of activities under the various management prescriptions. Some recreation facilities such as

trails, access parking at trailheads or information boards, may be constructed to enhance the visitor's experience. Recreation may include motorized trails and bicycle trails and be at a higher density than wilderness study areas.

Prescribed fire will be used to reduce fuel loadings, aid in forest community restorations, forest health and for wildlife habitat enhancements. Mechanized equipment and motorized vehicles are used. Wildfire suppression would also utilize motorized firefighting equipment. Mitigations applied after the fire emergencies diminish effects that harm the inventoried roadless character.

In Table 3- 203 an X indicates that the total acreage is allocated to the management prescriptions above. A partial allocation to a prescription that maintains roadless character is indicated by the percentage. A blank means no allocation.

Table 3- 203. Inventoried Roadless Character to be Maintained by Alternative.

Inventoried Roadless Area	Alt A	Alt B	Alt D	Alt E	Alt F	Alt G	Alt I
Ben Gap			X				
Big Mountain	X		X	X			X
Boggs Creek			X	X			
Cedar Mountain	X		X	X	X		
Duck Branch							
Lance Creek	X	X	X	X	3%	X	X
Ellicott Rock Addition	19%	19%	19%	X	19%	X	X
Foster Branch							
Helton Creek			X	X	56%		
Indian Grave Gap	X			X	X		X
Joe Gap	X			X	X		X
Kelly Ridge	6%		26%	X	34%		
Ken Mountain					X		
Miller Creek	X		X				
Patterson Gap	X			X			
Pink Knob	X				63%		80%
Rocky Mountain	X				60%		66%
Sarah's Creek	4%				61%	4%	82%
Shoal Branch							
Tate Branch	16%				74%		98%
Tripp Branch				X	65%		
Turner Creek	X		X		88%		
Wilson Cove							

Alternative G allocates, either entirely or partially, three inventoried roadless areas to management prescriptions that do not compromise the roadless character.

See Table 3- 199 and Table 3- 200 for acreage allocations for each inventoried roadless area and the management prescriptions by alternative.

Alternative B allocates, either entirely or partially, two inventoried roadless areas to management prescriptions that do not compromise the roadless character.

Alternative I allocates, either entirely or partially, nine inventoried roadless areas to management prescriptions that do not compromise the roadless character.

Alternative E allocates, either entirely or partially, eleven inventoried roadless areas to management prescriptions that do not compromise the roadless character.

Alternative A allocates, either entirely or partially, fourteen inventoried roadless areas to management prescriptions that do not compromise the roadless character.

Alternative F allocates, either entirely or partially, fourteen inventoried roadless areas to management prescriptions that do not compromise the roadless character.

Alternative D allocates, either entirely or partially, ten inventoried roadless areas to other management prescriptions that do not compromise the roadless character.

Inventoried Roadless Areas Not Maintaining Roadless Character

In this category, inventoried roadless areas are made available for management prescription allocations that are designed to retain a forested canopy across at least 50 percent of the area, maintain or enhance hard and soft mast production and to increase vegetative diversity both structurally and spatially. These activities could involve road construction, wildlife habitat manipulations, restoration of endangered, threatened, sensitive, or rare species communities and associated silvicultural methods to aid in reaching these goals.

Management prescriptions that could compromise an areas' inventoried roadless character are: 6.D; 7.D; 7.E.2; 8.A.1/2; 9.H; and 10.A/B.

The inventoried roadless areas shift towards a more semi-primitive motorized setting and the changes that are be allowed could make an area no longer suitable for wilderness designation, or may no longer provide primitive or semi-primitive settings. Opportunities for solitude and remoteness will decrease. Sights and sounds of man's activities could become more noticeable. Hiking, biking, motorcycling, and horse trails may be constructed along with support facilities. Noise levels could temporarily increase during any of these activities.

The inventoried roadless character in some of these areas may diminish over time. The naturalness of these undesignated areas will be reduced by the interruption of early forest succession that is moving toward late-successional age classes.

Vegetation composition and structure will be manipulated for many management activities resulting in a greater diversity of age-classes among forest types. Prescribed fire will be used and roads to aid in the management of the area may be constructed. Sustained yield forest management, forest health management, forest habitat restorations will occur.

Management of prescribed fire would be used to reduce fuel loadings, aid in forest community restorations, and for wildlife habitat enhancements. Mechanized equipment and motorized vehicles will be used. Wildfire suppression will also utilize motorized firefighting equipment and benefits from the increased access.

Air and water quality may temporarily decrease locally due to increased activities of all types within the inventoried roadless areas, but still meet State of Georgia's Best Management Practices, as well as the requirements of Georgia's Environmental Protection Division and the U.S. EPA.

The construction of roads, prescribed burning, or timber harvest is not an irreversible commitment of resources. Re-consideration for wilderness study could occur in the future.

In Table 3- 204, X indicates that the total acreage is allocated to the management prescriptions above. A partial allocation to those prescriptions is indicated by the percentage. A blank means no allocation.

Table 3- 204. Allocations for Inventoried Roadless Areas Not Maintaining Inventoried Roadless Character - by Alternative

Inventoried Roadless Area	Alt A	Alt B	Alt D	Alt E	Alt F	Alt G	Alt I
Ben Gap	X				X		
Big Mountain					X		
Boggs Creek	X	X			X		
Cedar Mountain		X					
Duck Branch					X		
Lance Creek							
Ellicott Rock Addition			19%		19%		
Foster Branch			X		X		
Helton Creek					41%		
Indian Grave Gap							
Joe Gap							
Kelly Ridge	6%	X	24%		73%		
Ken Mountain							
Miller Creek					X		
Patterson Gap					X		
Pink Knob		X	X		33%		20%
Rocky Mountain		X	33%		33%		33%
Sarah's Creek	4%	61%	4%	4%	61%		19%
Shoal Branch					X		
Tate Branch	13%				13%		13%
Tripp Branch		X	X		34%		
Turner Creek					10%		
Wilson Cove			X		X		

Alternative F will allocate, either entirely or partially, 18 inventoried roadless areas to management prescriptions that could compromise the roadless character.

See Table 3- 199 and Table 3- 200 for acreage allocations for each inventoried roadless area and the management prescriptions by alternative.

Alternative G will not allocate any inventoried roadless areas to management prescriptions that could compromise the roadless character.

Alternative A will allocate, either entirely or partially, five inventoried roadless areas to management prescriptions that could compromise the roadless character.

Alternative I will partially allocate four inventoried roadless areas to management prescriptions that could have compromised their roadless character. However, a Forest wide standard was added to the plan that requires that Forest Service roadless criteria continue to be met. In addition, affected management prescriptions

also had a standard added identifying that they contained a portion of an inventoried roadless area and requiring that roadless criteria continue to be met.

Alternative B will allocate either entirely or partially, seven inventoried roadless areas to management prescriptions that could compromise the roadless character.

Alternative E will allocate either entirely or partially, one inventoried roadless area to management prescriptions that could compromise the roadless character.

Alternative D will allocate either entirely or partially, seven inventoried roadless areas to management prescriptions that could compromise the roadless character.

Cumulative Effects for all Alternatives

Cumulative effects to the existing wilderness resource are mostly directed at the overuse of certain, favorite destinations (such as Jacks River Falls/Beech Bottom in the Cohutta wilderness). Expansion of existing wilderness is proposed by allocating adjacent lands to wilderness study areas. This could mean a better distribution of visitors but still places a hardship on managers since only primitive tools are used for rehabilitation or maintenance of overused areas.

The alternatives with more acres allocated to MRx 1.B, potentially affect more resources by potentially having more visitors to an area. There will be an increase in effects by dispersed camping within riparian corridors. Larger inventoried areas that are allocated will receive the most impacts on an individual basis due to current access along their boundaries and the possibility of containing more desirable locations on larger streams to camp or hike. Likewise, the opportunity to camp or hike within a primitive area increases, too.

It is possible that some inventoried areas not recommended for study may eventually lose their roadless character and not be available for primitive experiences, if allocated to certain management prescriptions.

There will be more opportunity to visit potential old-growth forest communities and to find solitude in Alternatives G (55,810 ac), E (29,251 ac), and B (19,972 ac).

In Alternatives F (0 ac), A (6,648 ac), D (9,581 ac), and I (11,093 ac), there will be more potential to view, hear, photograph, or hunt, both non-game and game species of wildlife due to the potential of having a more varied habitat structure favorable to more suites of species. There will not be a continuous mature tree canopy in some areas.

In areas designated to further wilderness study, forest health issues are a concern due to the lack of management ability to treat these areas if disease or insect infestations arise.