

# Foothills Collaborative Group

Foothills Landscape Project  
Union County Community Center

July 19, 2023



# Agenda

Welcome and Introductions

Old Business

Understanding Implementable vs Collaborative Actions  
Completed and In-Progress Actions

New Business

Implementable Actions  
Collaborative Actions

Working Group Session

Select Representatives for FCG voting  
Discussion of needs related to Collaborative Actions

Reconvene the Whole

Needs of Working Groups  
Next Steps

Public Comment

Adjourn



# Understanding Implementable vs Collaborative Actions

The Purpose of the Foothills Landscape Project EA



# Understanding Implementable vs Collaborative Actions

## Implementable vs. Collaborative Actions

- Implementable: USFS will inform
- Collaborative: USFS requests FCG feedback



# Understanding Implementable vs Collaborative Actions

## Actions Outside of the Foothills Landscape:

- USFS will inform



# FCG Meetings and Workflow for Collaborative Actions

- Meeting 1 – Action 1 Presented (draft plan)  
FCG Working Groups – Identify Information Needs, Action 1
- Interim – Subject Matter Expert Input, Field Trips, Etc.  
Ad Hoc Working Group Meetings
- Meeting 2 – Feedback on Action 1 to USFS  
Action 2 Presented (draft plan)  
FCG Working Groups – Identify Information Needs, Action 2
- Interim – Subject Matter Expert Input, Field Trips, Etc.  
Ad Hoc Working Group Meetings
- Meeting 3 – Action 1 Presented (final plan)  
Vote on Action 1  
Feedback on Action 2 to USFS  
Action 3 Presented

And so on!



# Understanding Implementable vs Collaborative Actions

Signing Up for Project Updates: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/conf/home/?cid=fseprd514937>

**USDA Forest Service**  
Caring For the Land and Serving People

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest  
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Keyword Search

## Foothills Landscape Project

### Foothills Landscape Project Summary

#### Upcoming Opportunities

The Foothills Collaborative Group members will meet at 11a.m. on Tuesday, February 28, 2023, at the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest Supervisor's Office (1755 Cleveland Highway, Gainesville, GA 30501) to finalize the group's operating guidance and receive an update on current forest projects. The meeting is open to the public.

The Foothills Collaborative Group will be providing feedback and recommendations on three projects within the Foothills Landscape:

- [Updated Mooneyham Implementation Area Guide](#)
- [Draft Chattooga Ranger District Prescribed Burning Implementation Guide](#)

The Collaborative will also be informed about implementable actions from the Environmental Assessment that are being taken on the landscape:

- [Final Conasauga Ranger District FY23 Implementable Activities Implementation Plan](#)

#### Project Summary

The Foothills Landscape Project was proposed to create, restore, and maintain resilient ecosystems through a variety of active management techniques that address unique habitats, forest composition and structure, risks to forest health, resilience to climate change, forest successional diversity, aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitat, communities at risk of wildfire, and sustainable recreation opportunities.

This project is part of the Forest's larger strategy to systematically approach the goals and objectives in the Land and Resource Management Plan, or [Forest Plan](#), in the face of a dynamic, ever-changing environment. The range of management actions proposed are a necessary step to ensure these public lands remain healthy and resilient for generations to come.

A final Decision Notice which documents the decision and rationale for approving the proposed project was published on April 27, 2022, and is based on and supported by the October 2021 Foothills Landscape Project Programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA). These documents and supporting materials can be viewed on the project webpage at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=52509>

#### Alerts & Warnings


- [Rock Creek Road \(FSR #69\) Closure](#)
- [Dry Creek Road Maintenance](#)
- [Lake Conasauga Reservation Only](#)
- [Recreation passes available online, by phone and in-person](#)
- [Road Closures on the Chattooga River Ranger District](#)
- [Coleman River Rd \(FSR #54\) Closure](#)
- [CAUTION Waterfall Dangers](#)
- [CALL BEFORE YOU HAUL - ATV and OHV](#)
- [Panther Creek Trail Temporary Hiker Restrictions](#)
- [Don't Move Firewood!](#)

#### Quick Links

- [Sign up to stay in touch!](#)



# Understanding Implementable vs Collaborative Actions



Sign up to stay in touch!

Sign up to get the news and updates you want about Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest delivered to your inbox.

\* Email Address

Email Lists

- Tallulah River Road construction updates
- #BurnAlerts - Chattahoochee NF
- #BurnAlerts - Oconee NF
- Children's Forest Network of the Georgia Mountains
- Foothills Collaborative Group updates
- News Releases - Blue Ridge Ranger District (Blairsville, Dahlonega, Blue Ridge and surrounding areas)
- News Releases - Chattooga River Ranger District (Clayton, Toccoa, Helen and surrounding areas)
- News Releases - Conasauga Ranger District (Dalton, Chatsworth, Ellijay and surrounding areas)
- News Releases - Oconee Ranger District (Eatonton, Monticello and surrounding areas)

By submitting this form, you are consenting to receive marketing emails from: Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest, 1755 Cleveland Hwy, Gainesville, GA, 30501 United States, <http://www.fs.usda.gov/conf>. You can revoke your consent to receive emails at any time by using the [SafeUnsubscribe®](#) link, found at the bottom of every email. Emails are serviced by Constant Contact. [Our Privacy Policy](#).





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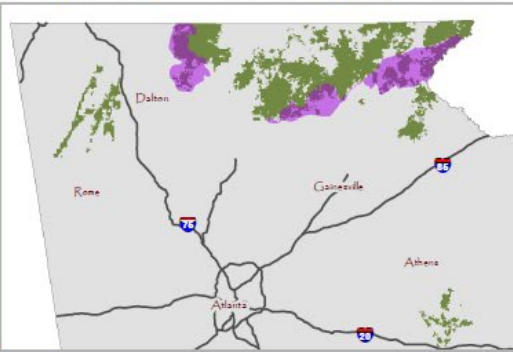
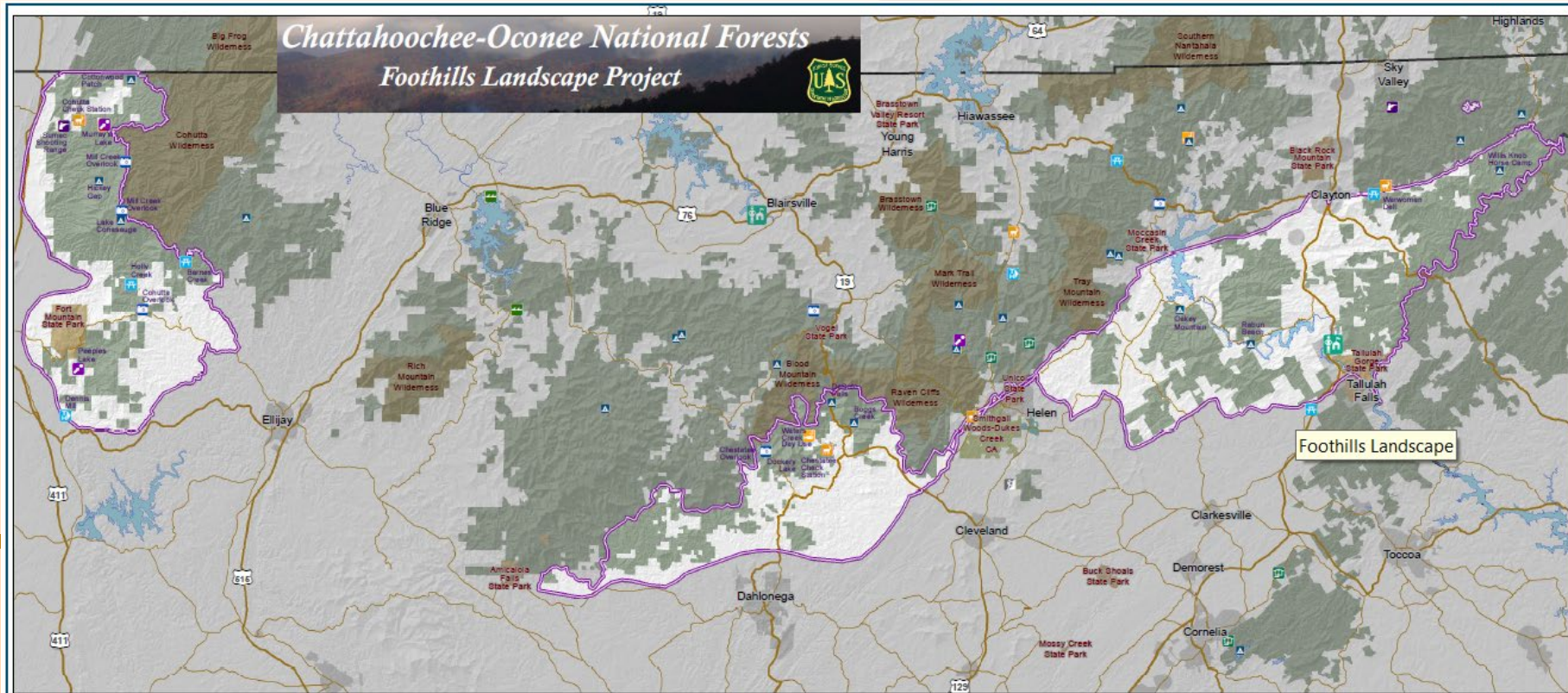
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- |                     |                   |                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Foothills Landscape | Picnic Site       | US or State Highway | State Park        |
| Boating Site        | Interpretive Site | County Road         | Historic Site     |
| Camping             | Observation Site  | Wilderness          | Conservation Area |
| Climbing Area       | Picnic Site       | Forest Service Land | City              |
| DNR Check Station   | Target Range      |                     |                   |
| Recreation Area     | Trailhead         |                     |                   |
| Fishing Site        |                   |                     |                   |



Data shown on this map are for reference only. The Forest Service strives to obtain accurate and precise data; however, there are likely some errors in these data.

## Activities within Foothills IA, but different decision

<b>District</b>	<b>Implementation Area</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Decision</b>
<b>CRD</b>	Sumac-North Prong	Sumac III timber sale	Sumac EA
<b>BRRD</b>	Three Sister's	Three Sister's timber sale	Forest Health South EA
<b>BRRD</b>	Three Sister's	Road closure order FSR 135 and 135A	CE – in process
<b>CRRD</b>	Sarah's Creek	Metcalf creek culvert replacement	CE - completed
<b>CRRD</b>	Sarah's Creek	Earl's Ford dispersed rec improvements outside WSR corridor	CE – in process

# Accomplishments

<b>District</b>	<b>Implementation Area</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Units Accomplished</b>
<b>CRD</b>	Mill Creek/Rockflat Branch	Convert the Rocky Flats OHV trail back to a system road	3.36 miles
<b>CRD</b>	Jigger Creek	Continuation of Rx burning - Buffalo Rx Unit	26 acres
<b>CRD</b>	Mill Creek/Rockflat Branch	Continuation of Rx Burning - Rocky Flats Rx Unit	77 acres
<b>CRRD</b>	Tallulah River	Continuation of Rx Burning – Slick Shoals	1,943 acres
<b>CRRD</b>	Tiger	Continuation of Rx Burning – Stonewall	338 acres



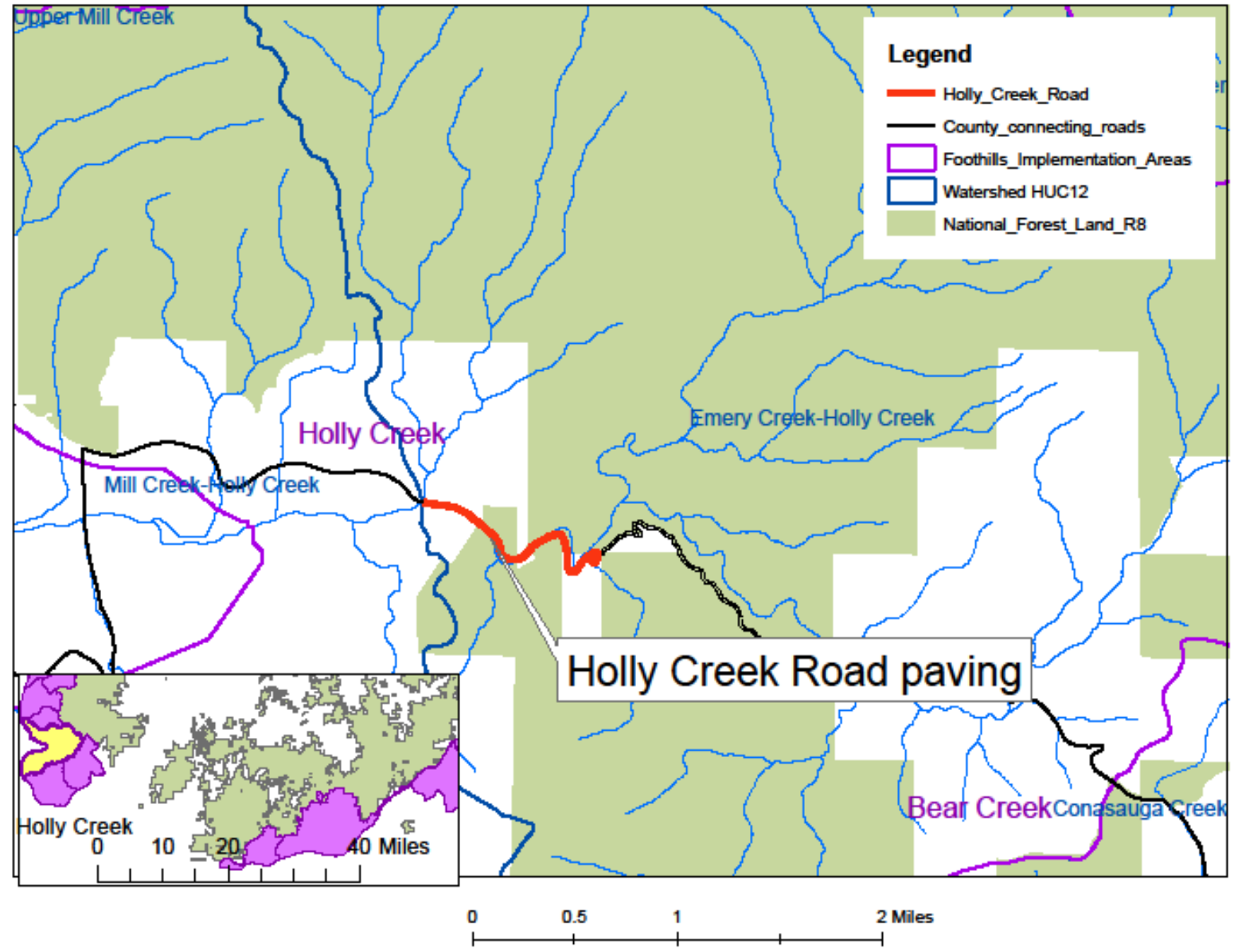
# Implementable Action: Holly Creek road paving

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# Foothills Landscape Project - Holly Creek Road Paving

## Conasauga Ranger District - Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest



# Implementable Action: Holly Creek road paving

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- Foothills action Table 17: implement changes to system road ML and/or use restriction
- The purpose of this project is to reduce sedimentation to the stream, which threatens aquatic habitat for rare and endangered fish and mussels in Holly Creek.
- The paving project would include replacement of any undersized culverts, adding roadbed base materials, reshaping ditches, addition of asphalt or other paving materials, elimination of some of the existing ‘pull-off’ parking and improvement/paving of other areas, and construction of speed control and other safety features.
- Problem areas along the affected section of road will also be repaired: for example, there is an existing area where Holly Creek is undercutting the road and the streambank needs stabilization, and several visitor-created paths from road to creek which are funneling sediment into the stream need hardening or relocating.

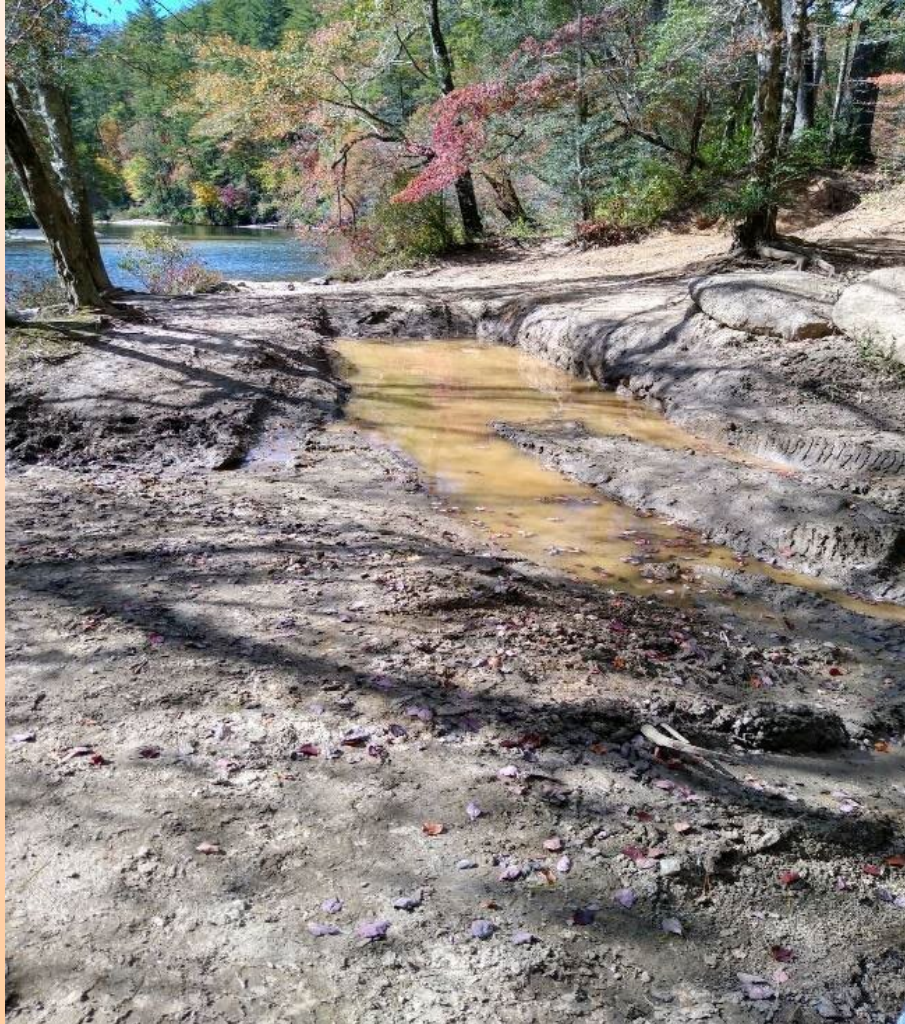
# Implementable Action: Holly Creek road paving

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- **Step 1:** Forest identifies all management opportunities within implementation area.
  - Stand alone action in Holly Creek IA
- **Step 2:** Complete initial field reviews and validate thresholds for proposed action
  - Completed
- **Step 3:** Draft implementation plan and initiate surveys
  - Completed
- **Step 4:** Present draft implementation plan to stakeholders (Foothills Collaborative Group)



# Collaborative action: Earl's Ford



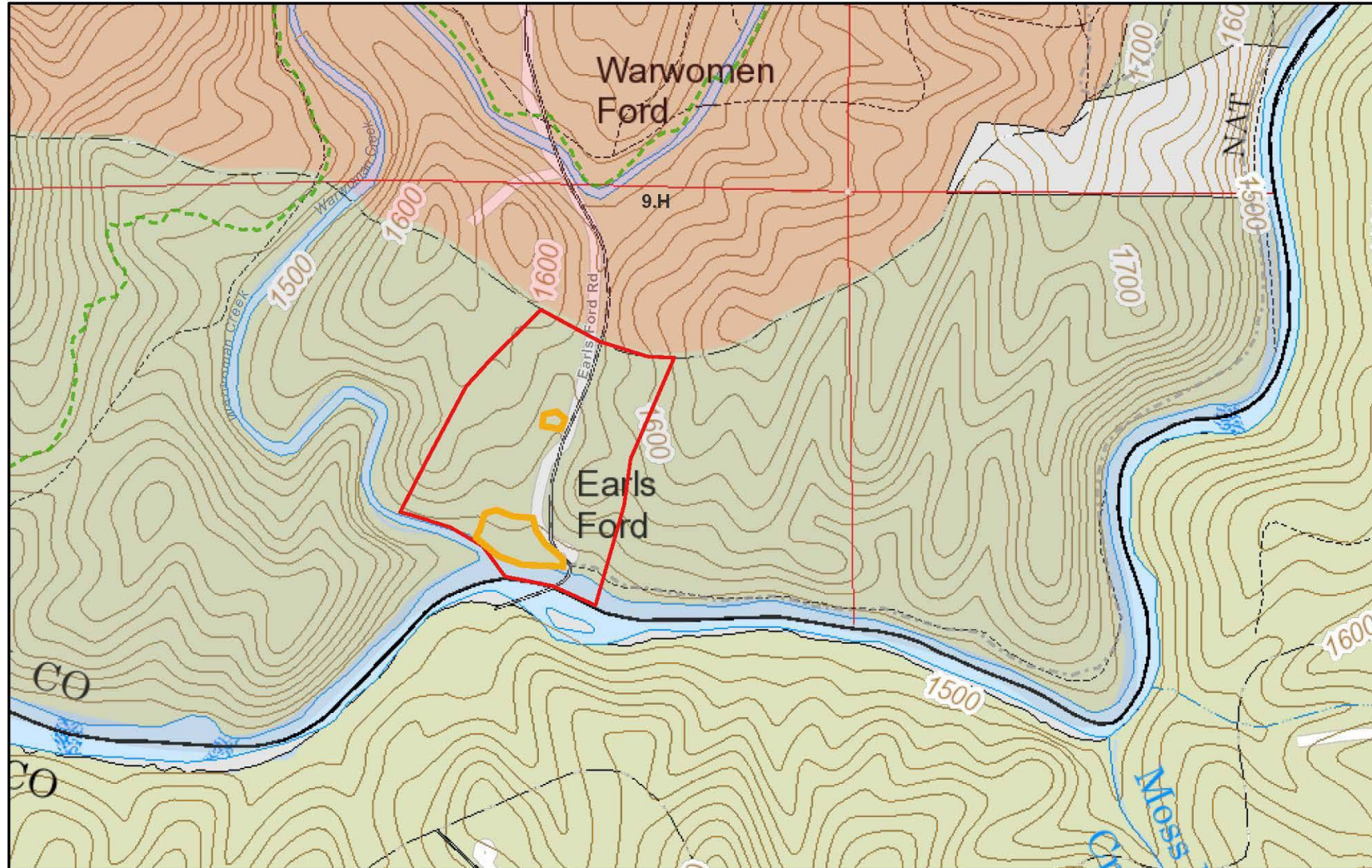
Foothills action Table 17: develop and maintain sustainable recreation within the WSR corridor – Earl's Ford

Dispersed recreation (user-created campsites and trails) and illegal motorized vehicle activities within the WSR Corridor of the Chattooga River have resulted in extensive impacts to riparian habitat within stream management zones.

These impacts include, soil compaction, loss of riparian vegetation, reduced streambank stability, and increased sediment production to aquatic habitats within the Chattooga River.



# Dispersed Recreation Sites: Chattooga River WSR



9/21/2022, 8:59:17 AM

Chattahoochee Oconee Trails Forest Plan Prescriptions 2004

- Hike
- Horse
- 9.H
- Other

1:9,028  
0 0.05 0.1 0.2 mi  
0 0.1 0.2 0.4 km  
Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA, Esri Community Maps Contributors, ©  
OpenStreetMap, Microsoft, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph,  
USFS Staff

# Collaborative action: Earl's Ford

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Eliminate ability for motorized vehicles to operate outside the established Earls Ford Road prism, and onto NFS lands within the WSR Corridor:

- Bollards or large boulders would be installed every 4ft-5ft on the southern edge of Earls Ford Road and extend approximately 40ft-60ft from the terminus of Earls Ford Road at the edge of the Chattooga River (high-water mark elevation) westward towards Warwoman Ford.
- Final design and placement of traffic control devices will consider potential impacts to visual qualities within the WSR Corridor, safety of public users, effectiveness, and sustainability.

# Collaborative action: Earl's Ford

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Rehabilitate 1.0 acres of riparian habitat within the SMZ of the Chattooga River that have been impacted by the dispersed recreation and illegal motorized vehicle activities referenced above.

- The upper 2"-4" of the upper soil profile would be de-compacted using mechanical equipment to allow for reestablishment and growth of desired native riparian vegetation.
- Those areas where illegal motorized activities have created user-created trails and alterations to landforms within this riparian area heavy equipment would be used to recontour slopes and fill erosion gullies currently posing chronic sediment sources to the Chattooga River.
- Seeding with native vegetation and/or placement of appropriate ground cover would occur within this 1.0 acres to reduce further erosion and promote reestablishment of ground vegetation.



# Collaborative action: Earl's Ford

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To achieve desired watershed and riparian restoration objectives within the WSR Corridor, dispersed camping on NFS lands adjacent to Earls Ford Road would be designated and in compliance with Forest Order # FMS-13-01 (36 CFR 261.58 (e)).

# Collaborative action: Earl's Ford

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- **Step 1:** Forest identifies all management opportunities within implementation area.
  - Stand alone action in Sarah's Creek IA
- **Step 2:** Complete initial field reviews and validate thresholds for proposed action
  - Completed
- **Step 3:** Draft implementation plan and initiate surveys
  - Completed
- **Step 4:** Present draft implementation plan to stakeholders (Foothills Collaborative Group)

# Implementation Guide- Next Steps:

- **Step 5:** Public notice and opportunity for input
- **Step 6:** Conduct field trip(s)/educational outreach
- **Step 7:** Identify additional monitoring needs
- **Step 8:** Finalize implementation plan
- **Step 9:** Submit for District Ranger approval
- **Step 10:** Conduct contract review

Foothills Landscape Project  
Pre-Implementation Process Guide and Checklist

**Step 5: Public Notice and Opportunity for Input**

*Instructions:* The Forest will hold an annual meeting (anticipated late summer/ early fall) to provide public assessment of the draft implementation plan(s), refined maps, and schedule. If planned activities are demonstrated to fall within the scope and scale of the final EA/DN, feedback received during the annual meeting will be considered by implementation teams and responsible official and used to further collaborative efforts and adjust implementation activities as appropriate. If subsequent analysis is needed due to new or changed conditions in the IA that were not accounted for in the programmatic EA/ DN, the Forest will also seek official comment in accordance with NEPA. Outyear plans may also be presented at this time with opportunity for public engagement, though in less detail.

**Summary of Comments Received:**

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Summary of how comments were incorporated into Implementation Plan:**

Click or tap here to enter text.

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# Thank you for your engagement with this process!

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Visit [www.fs.usda.gov/goto/Foothills](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/Foothills) for project information and updates.

Email your feedback to [sm.fs.Foothills@usda.gov](mailto:sm.fs.Foothills@usda.gov) by Nov 13th.



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Working Group	Organization	Representative
<b>Wildlife/Hunting/Fishing</b>	Georgia Wildlife Federation	JT Pynne
	Ruffed Grouse Society	Nick Biemiller
	National Wild Turkey Federation	Ricky Lackey
	Congressional Sportsmen Foundation	John Culclasure
	National Deer Association	Matt Ross
	Backcountry Hunters and Anglers	Chris Jenkins
	DNR – Wildlife	John Bower/Emily Rushton
<b>Conservation</b>	Sierra Club	Larry Winslett
	Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance	Jennifer Ceska
	Georgia Audubon	Adam Betuel
	Georgia Forest Watch	JD McCrary
	The Nature Conservancy	Erick Brown
	Chattooga Conservancy	Nicole Hayler
	Wilderness Society	Jess Riddle
	DNR Wildlife Conservation	Katrina Morris
	US Fish and Wildlife	Mincy Moffett
<b>Economic Development</b>	Georgia Forestry Association	Tim Miller
<b>Recreation</b>	Appalachian Trail Conservancy	Cassidy Lord
	Chattahoochee Trail Horse Association	Ann Wyrosdick
	NE Georgia SORBA	Stan Crane
	SORBA	Philip Darden
<b>Local</b>	Resident	Marie Dunkle
	Resident	Robert Black
<b>Local (Invited)</b>	Forward Rabun	Rick Story
	Fannin County Chamber	Christy Gribble
	Mayor, Hiawassee	Liz Ordialis
	Habersham Co Economic Development	Charlie Fiveash
	Union County Economic Development	Mitch Griggs

