



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

February 2023 Foothills Collaborative Group Meeting USFS Project Updates



Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest

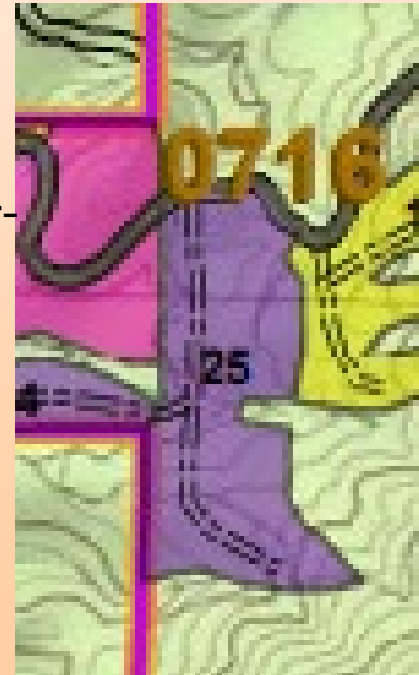
Project Planning

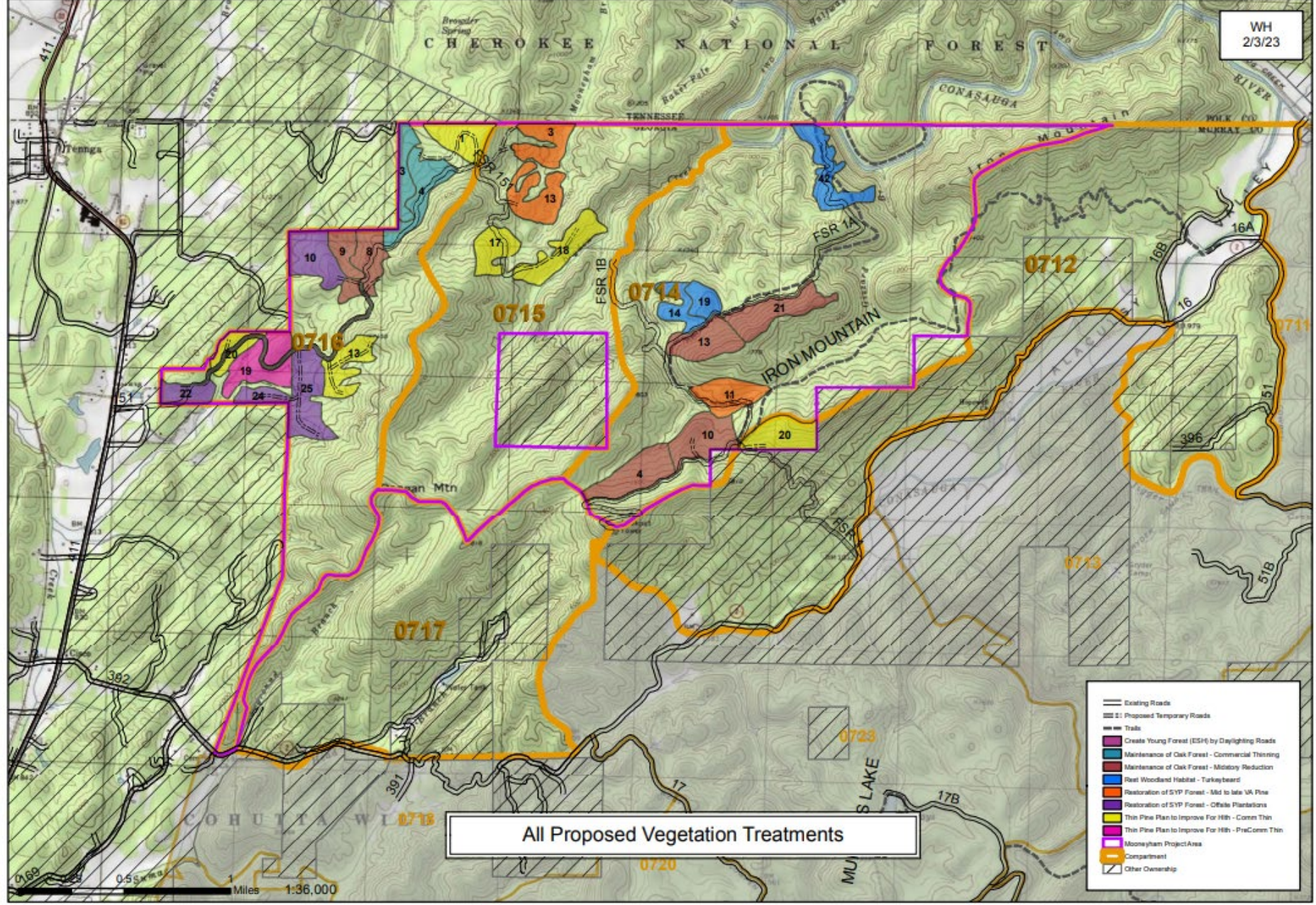
- Inform: FY23 Conasauga Ranger District Implementable Actions
- Continued Consultation: Mooneyham Implementation Area (IA) updates incorporating public feedback
- Consultation: Chattooga River Ranger District prescribed burning
- Consultation: Earls Ford Wild and Scenic River Corridor



Continued Consultation - Mooneyham IA: Updates to Proposed Actions

- Comp 716 Stand 25: mixed Virginia pine stand with hardwoods. Originally proposed to restore shortleaf pine, creating young forest acres and restoring fire adapted vegetation.
- Public feedback to consider restoring oak by commercially thinning Virginia pine and leaving oak
- ID Team supports this proposed change, creating a 60-year-old oak stand. This action was analyzed in the Foothills EA.





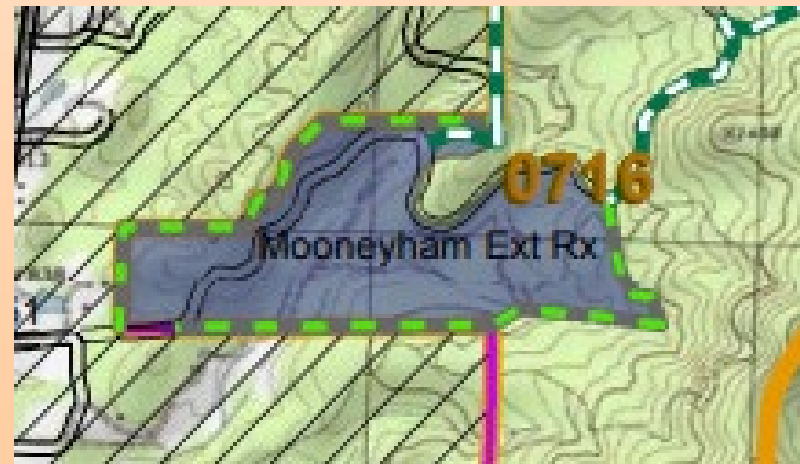
Mooneyham Implentation Area - Foothills Landscape Project

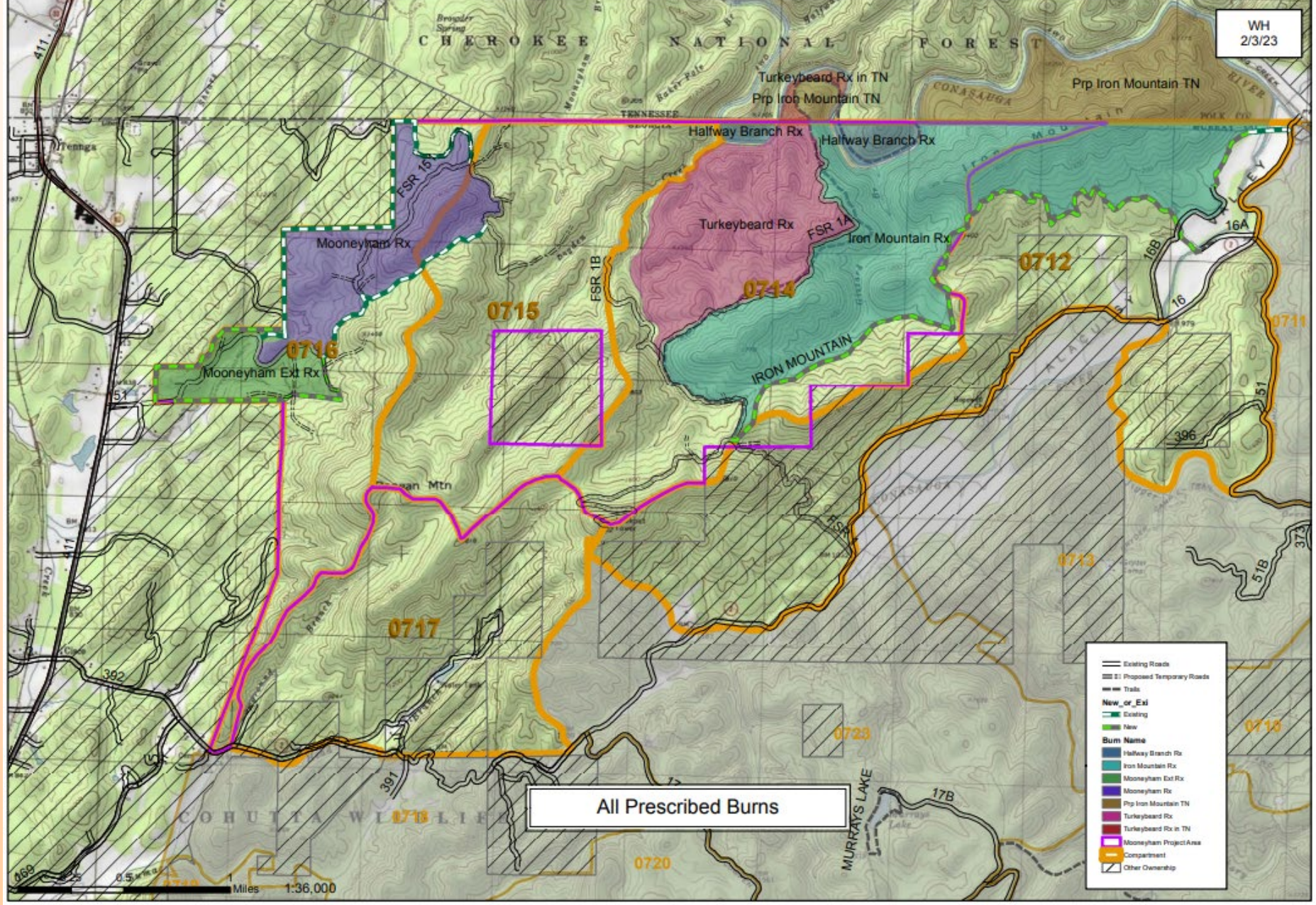
Conasauga Ranger District, Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest



Mooneyham IA: Updates to Proposed Actions

- Mooneyham Extension Rx Burn: Public feedback about stand 25 included an interest in burning it to restore oak
- The shape of the proposed Mooneyham Extension prescribed burn has been adjusted to include the northern portion of this stand.
- This action is covered by the Foothills EA (prescribed fire in new burn blocks)





Mooneyham Implentation Area - Foothills Landscape Project

Conasauga Ranger District, Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest



Mooneyham IA: Updates to Proposed Actions

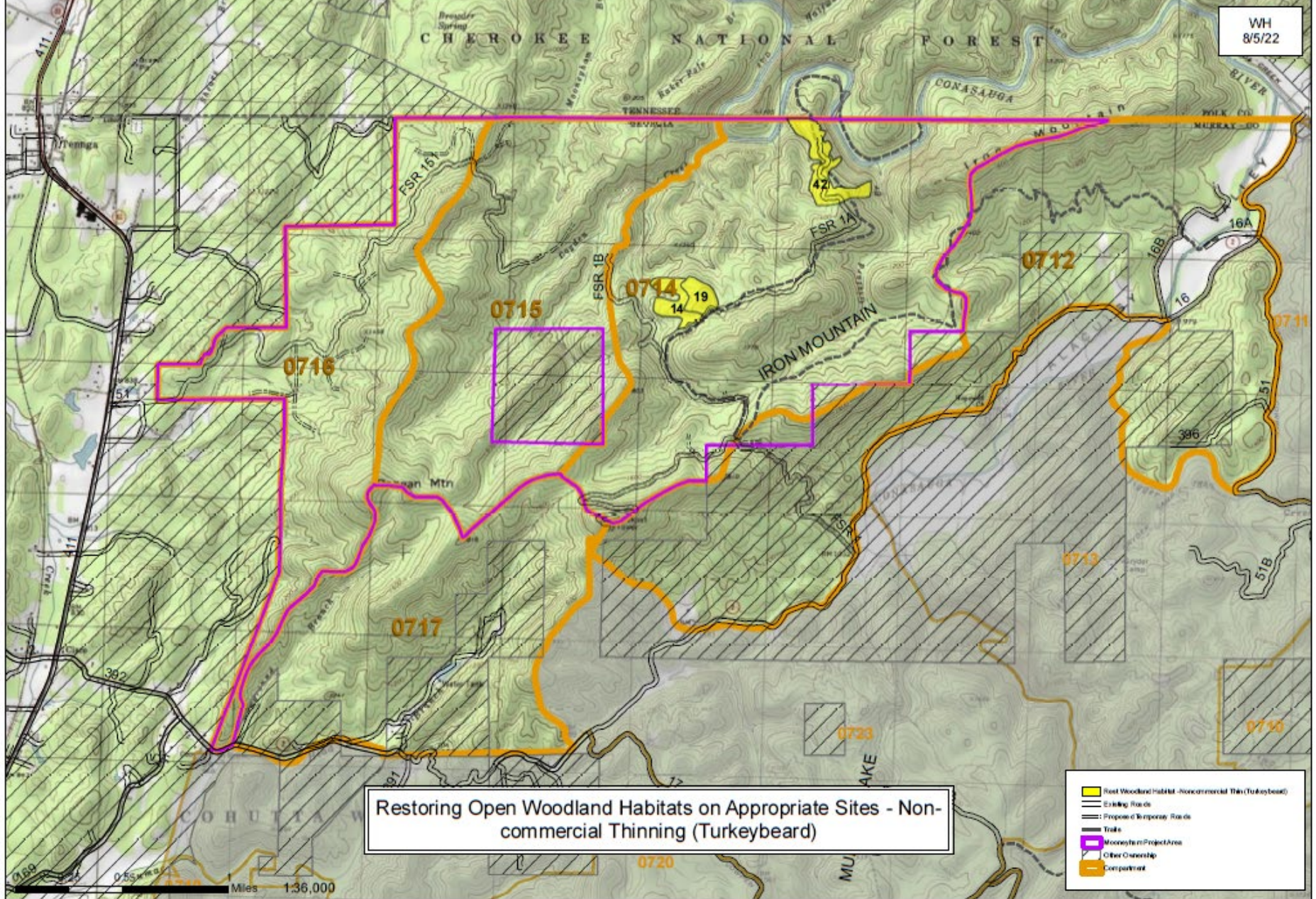
- Maintenance of oak forest – midstory reduction: The proposed oak midstory treatment will be applied to “trees below the main canopy” and “[o]ak and hickory species would not be treated with herbicides....”(Foothills EA, B8)



Mooneyham IA: Updates to Proposed Actions

- Prescribed fire to be applied first, prior to follow up herbicide treatments for C714 S42 Eastern turkeybeard population in proposed Iron Mountain burn.
- Not proposing to rake any plants prior to burning. This was not done prior to successfully restoring fire to plants in the Turkeybeard Rx and may work against the nature of their fire adaptation.





Restoring Open Woodland Habitats on Appropriate Sites - Non-commercial Thinning (Turkeybeard)

- Rest Woodland Habitat - Noncommercial Thin (Turkeybeard)
- Existing Roads
- Proposed Temporary Roads
- Trails
- Mooneyham Project Area
- Other Ownership
- Compartment



Mooneyham Implentation Area - Foothills Landscape Project

Conasauga Ranger District, Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest



Mooneyham IA: Updates to Proposed Actions

- Acres have been updated for proposed actions in the implementation guide “Final Acres” column for the above actions and others. Some acres have changed because burn boundaries have been updated with more accurate imagery.

Decommissioning of ML2 and ML1 system roads	FSR 1 Doogan Mountain Rd from intersection of Iron Mountain Trail to end of road	1.3 mi	1.3 miles	2023
Implement changes to system road ML and or use restrictions – reduce ML	FSR 1 Doogan Mountain Rd from start at Old Hwy 2 to Iron Mountain Trail	1.2 mi	1.2 miles	2023
Restoration of southern yellow pine forest on dry sites dominated by mid to late-successional Virginia or white pine – 2 aged regen harvest	Comp 714 Stand 11; Comp 715 Stands 3, 13; Comp 716 Stand 25	128 ac	86 ac	2023-2030
Restoration of southern yellow pine forest or oak forest on sites currently occupied by off-site pine plantations or failed shortleaf or	Comp 716 Stands 10, 22, 24	59 ac	101 ac	2023-2030

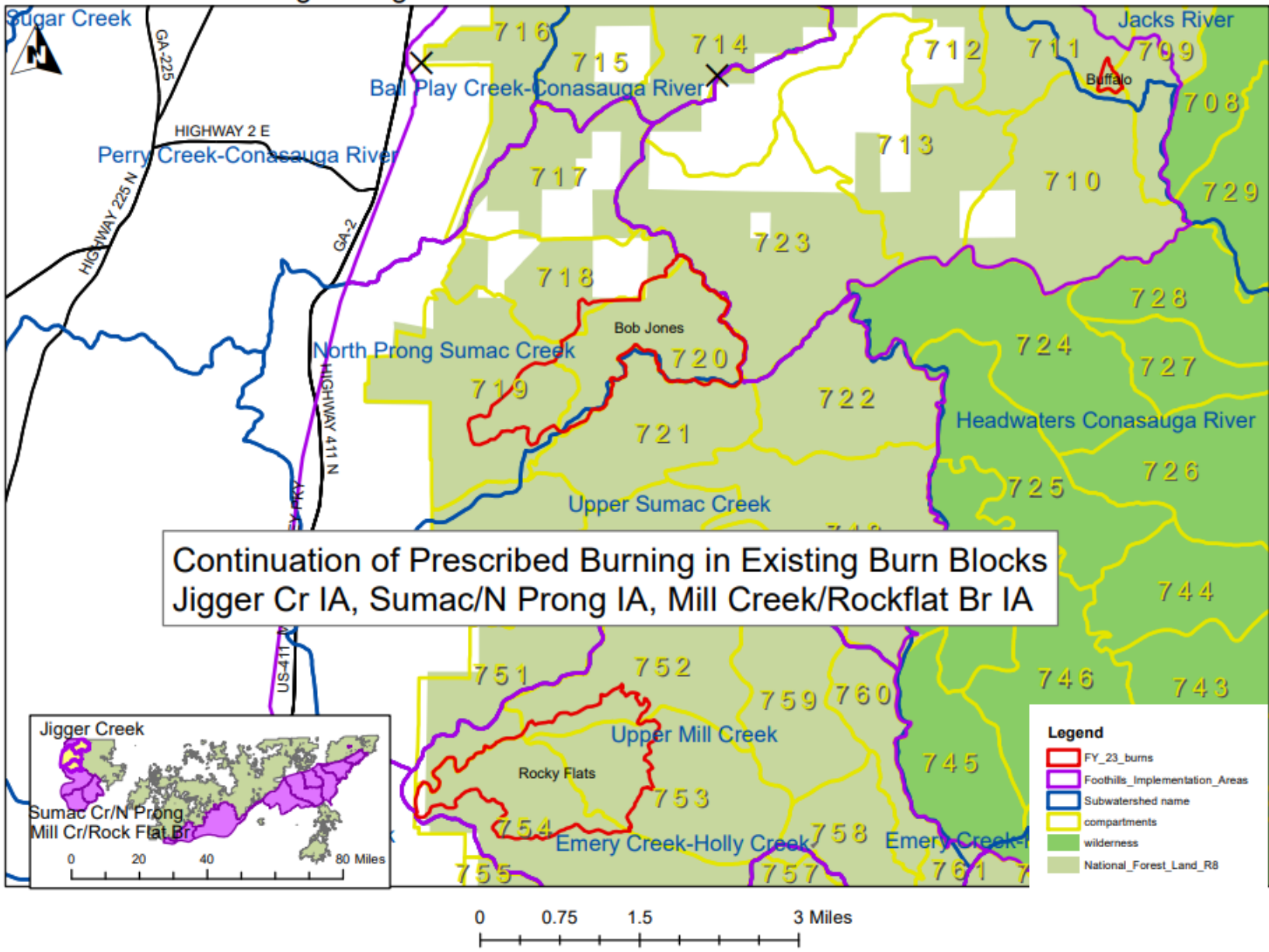
Inform: FY23 Conasauga Ranger District Implementable Actions

- **Action:** Continuation of prescribed burning within existing burn blocks
 - Bob Jones Rx – 1,191 acres
 - Buffalo Rx – 26 acres
 - Rocky Flats Rx – 1,172 acres
- **Existing Condition (Need):** The 3 burn units have each received multiple prescribed fire treatments within the past 10+/- years, moving them from FCC 3 to FCC2. There is a need to maintain this trend. The units still have a variety of fuel loadings ranging from heavy to moderate due to wildfires, prescribed burns, vegetation management activities and the continued need to restore native vegetative conditions. Due to their location these burn units have served as buffer zones to prevent fires from entering or exiting the Cohutta Wilderness area or burning onto or off private lands. This has been proven to be an effective strategy as evidenced during the drought and severe fire season of 2016. When the Rough Ridge fire impacted the Buffalo Unit, the reduced fuels created a barrier to the fire's spread and allowed firefighters to take effective control operations in the Jigger Creek Area, preventing fire spread onto private lands. Continued burning of these units will enhance the reduction of hazardous fuels and aid in the restoration of native communities. These units have several occurrences of firedependent species.
- **Desired future condition:** recover and sustain healthy, fire-adapted ecosystems



Foothills Landscape Project - 2023 Projects

Conasauga Ranger District - Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest



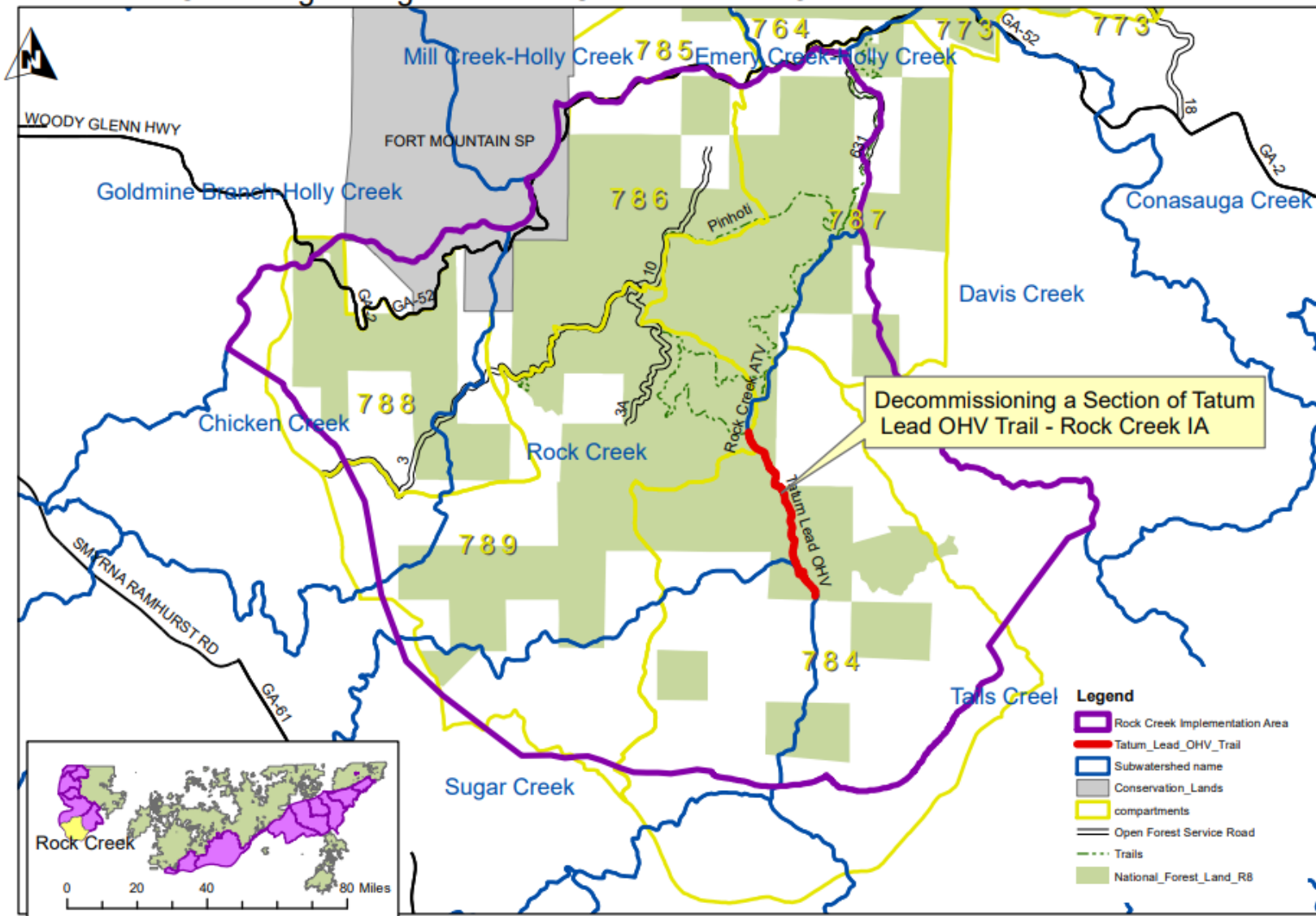
FY23 Conasauga Ranger District Implementable Actions

- **Activity Name:** Decommission a segment of Tatum Lead motorized trail
- **Existing Condition (Need):** OHV use was designated without previous analysis on roads and trails without consideration of ecological setting or social setting. The primary issue is erosion and sedimentation caused by the illegal use off-trail between the trails, FS roads, and streams, the degradation of FS roads, and access to and from private property. Efforts to block this illegal usage have been ineffective. Motorized vehicles, including OHVs (4-wheelers) are only legal to operate on designated roads and trails.
- **Desired Condition:** User conflicts are decreased, and satisfaction increased by adding or modifying section of trails that do not adversely affect soil and water resources (Forest Plan Goal 34).
- **Known Conditions that Trigger Restoration Actions:** Tatum Lead is a 4-wheel- drive and OHV trail which dead-ends into private property, which has been causing resource damage on and off the Forest for at least 10 years.
- **How to Implement Change:** Closure of the last 1.8 miles of Tatum Lead Trail is proposed by decommissioning, to include earthen barriers, posts or guardrail barriers, reshaping the roadbed to restore drainage, seeding, fertilizing, and scattering debris.



Foothills Landscape Project - 2023 Projects

Conasauga Ranger District - Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest



- Legend**
- Rock Creek Implementation Area
 - Tatum_Lead_OHV_Trail
 - Subwatershed name
 - Conservation_Lands
 - compartments
 - Open Forest Service Road
 - Trails
 - National_Forest_Land_R8

0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles

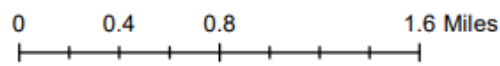
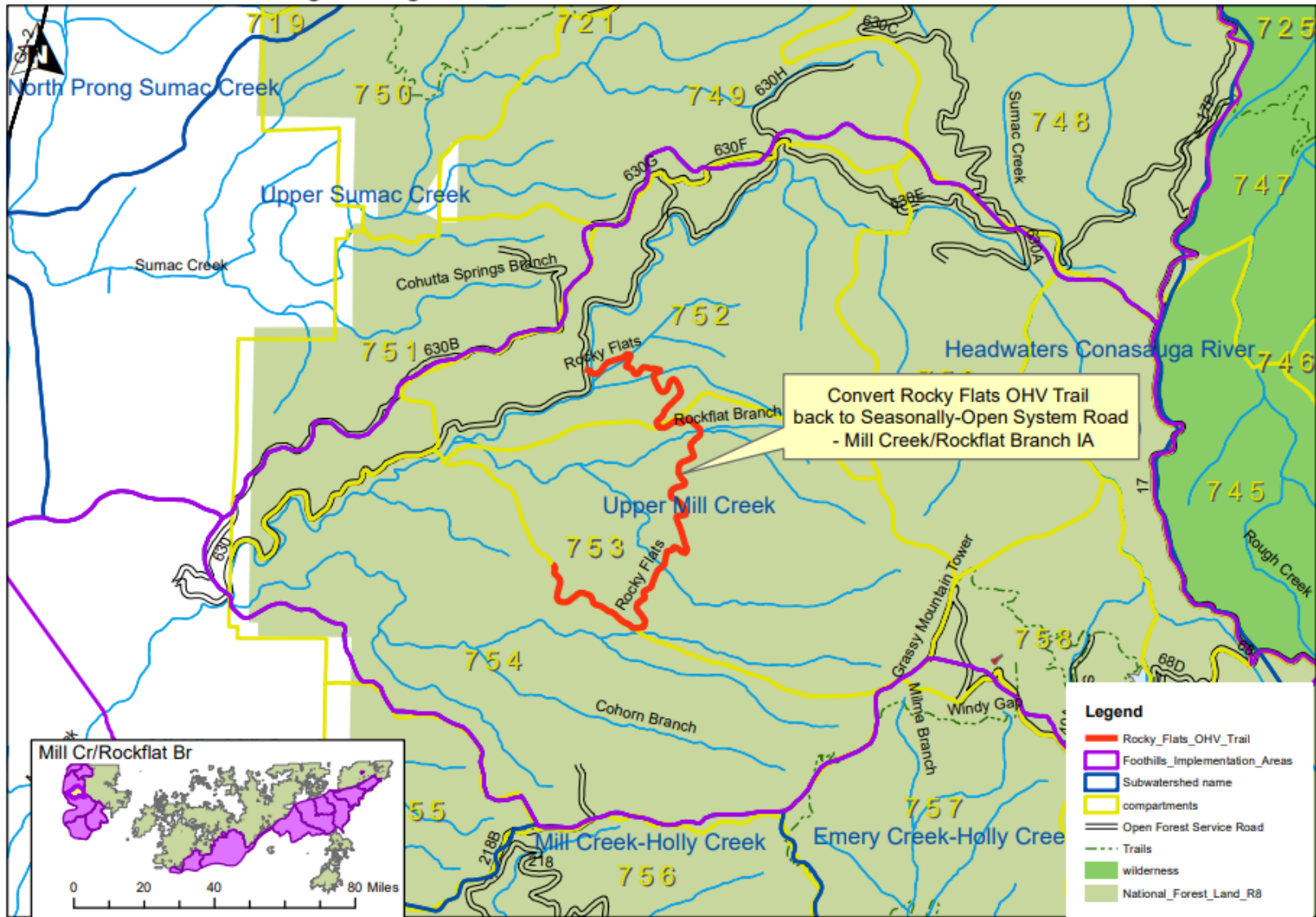
FY23 Conasauga Ranger District Implementable Actions



- **Activity Name:** Convert the Rocky Flats OHV trail back into a NFSR (system road)
- **Existing Condition (Need):** Rocky Flats trail is a gravel road open year-round to jeeps and other highclearance vehicles. It is also classified as an OHV trail and mixed traffic is a safety issue. OHV trail users have created a network of user-created trails over the past 20-plus years. There is no unloading area available for this trail, thereby creating issues with OHV illegally riding FS roads to access this trail, and safety concerns with mixed traffic types.
- **Desired Condition:** User conflicts are decreased, and satisfaction increased by adding or modifying sections of trails that do not adversely affect soil and water resources. (LRMP goal 34). Provide a spectrum of high quality, nature-based recreation settings and opportunities that reflect the unique or exceptional resources of the Forest and the interests of the recreating public on an environmentally sustainable, financially sound, and operationally effective basis. Adapt management of recreation facilities and opportunities as needed to shift limited resources to those opportunities. (LRMP goal 31)
- **Known Conditions that Trigger Restoration Actions:** Full size vehicles and OHV operators utilize this road, creating a dangerous mixed traffic situation and resulting in an ongoing challenge to prevent illegal off-trail damage. Efforts to block this illegal usage to access the trail have been ineffective.
- **How to Implement Change:** Administratively convert a section of the trail back to a seasonally open system road. This action would result in a complete loss of access for OHV riders (3.36 miles) and a seasonal loss of access for full-size vehicle users. The road would be gated and opened for about 6 months per year.

Foothills Landscape Project - 2023 Projects

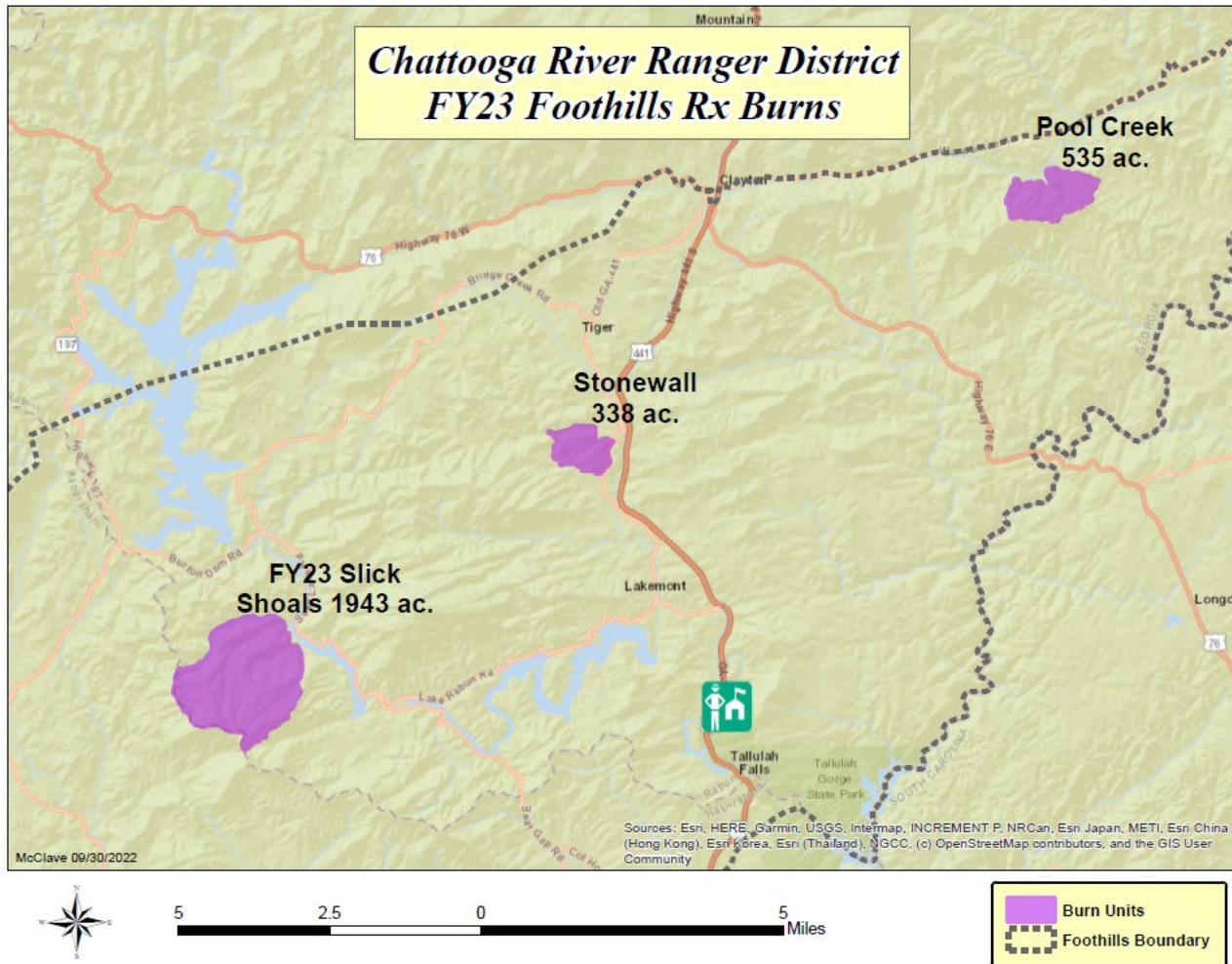
Conasauga Ranger District - Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest



Consultation: CRRD prescribed burning

- **Action:** Continuation of prescribed burning within existing burn blocks
 - Slick Shoals Rx– 1,858 acres
 - Stonewall Rx – 338 acres
 - Pool Creek Rx – 585 acres
- **Existing Condition (Need):** Two of the three burn units (Slick Shoals Rx & Stonewall Rx) have received prescribed fire treatments within the past 15 years, while the third (Pool Creek Rx) has no known prescribed fire history. The Pool Creek Rx unit was established under the Warwoman Watershed Restoration Project, yet no treatment has occurred since that time. The majority of the area within these three Rx units is classified as FCC3, with objective of trending conditions toward FCC2 & FCC1, and the restoration of native vegetative conditions through the use of prescribed fire. The Slick Shoals burn units contains a 10 acre mountain bog which will benefit from the continuation of prescribed burning to reduce woody vegetation encroachment.
- All three Rx units are situated in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) adjacent to private property, including several primary and secondary residences, businesses, and County infrastructure. The area within and surrounding these units have a greater potential for wildfires given the increased visitor use of NFS lands and various recreational opportunities that area available, including hunting, hiking, fishing, biking, OHV riding, and general forest visitation. During the spring of 2021, wildfires caused by an arson burned 84 acres adjacent to and within the Pool Creek burn unit along the Bartram Trail, and 0.03 acres within the Stonewall burn unit along Old HWY 441. Prescribed burning will reduce fuel loading and reduce fire intensity in the event of a future unplanned ignition (wildfire).
- **Desired future condition:** Recover and sustain healthy fire-adapted ecosystems and restore native vegetative conditions, including that within rare mountain bog habitat.

Consultation: CRRD prescribed burning



Consultation: CRRD prescribed burning

- **Action:** Prescribed fire in new burn blocks to facilitate restoration or maintenance of fire-adapted ecosystems or to reduce hazardous fuels
 - Slick Shoals Rx addition– 85 acres
- **Existing Condition (Need):** There is a need to expand the existing Slick Shoals Rx Unit by 85 acres to greatly increase our ability to maintain the prescribed burn within established holding lines, and mitigate the high risk to firefighter safety when operating along the western holding line in the headwaters of Crow Creek. This stretch Creek has several patches of old-growth hemlock snags that pose significant risk to personnel when prepping and holding the prescribed fire. Previous prescribed burning experience on the district has shown that even backing fire will carry as far as the creek edges, and the old growth hemlock snags are receptive to fire. The potential exists for winds along the creek to loft embers across the line.
- **Desired Future Condition:** The desired future condition for this 85 acre addition to the Slick Shoals Rx unit would not differ than that for the adjoining 1,858 acres. Specifically, to Recover and sustain healthy fire-adapted ecosystems and restore native vegetative conditions. The majority of the revised holding line on the west flank of the Slick Shoals Rx unit would be comprised of the Oakey Mtn OHV Trail. Approximately 1.0 mile of “new line” would connect Oakey Mtn OHV Trail to the main channel of Crow Creek. This new segment of holding line is located on an old dozer push that may have been established during a prior wildfire or prescribe fire.

Slick Shoals Rx Unit & Addition

Chattahoochee-Oconee
National Forest
Chattooga River District

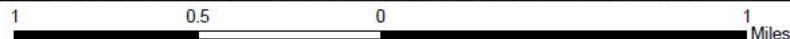
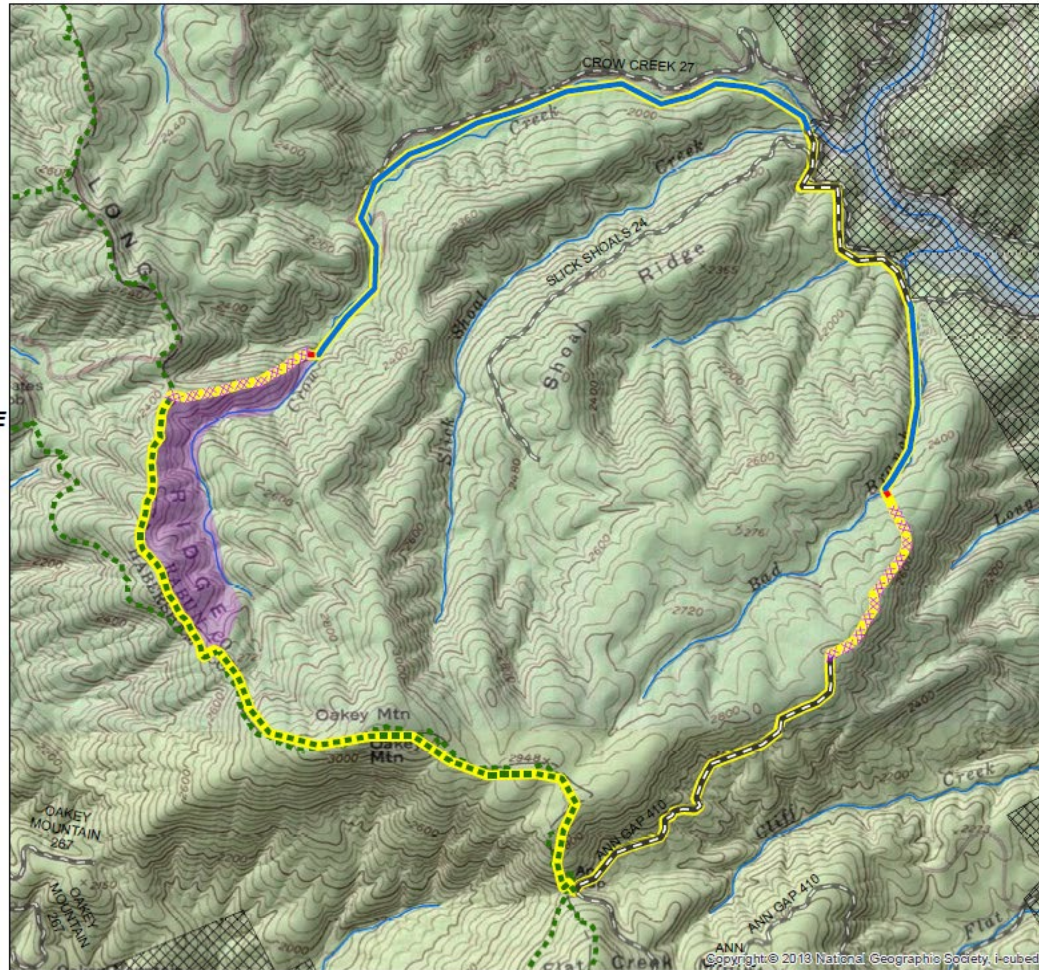
FY23 Slick Shoals

1943 Acres



Quad:
Lake Burton, Clarkesville NE
34° 45.646' N x
83° 32.189' W

Last Burned: 2014

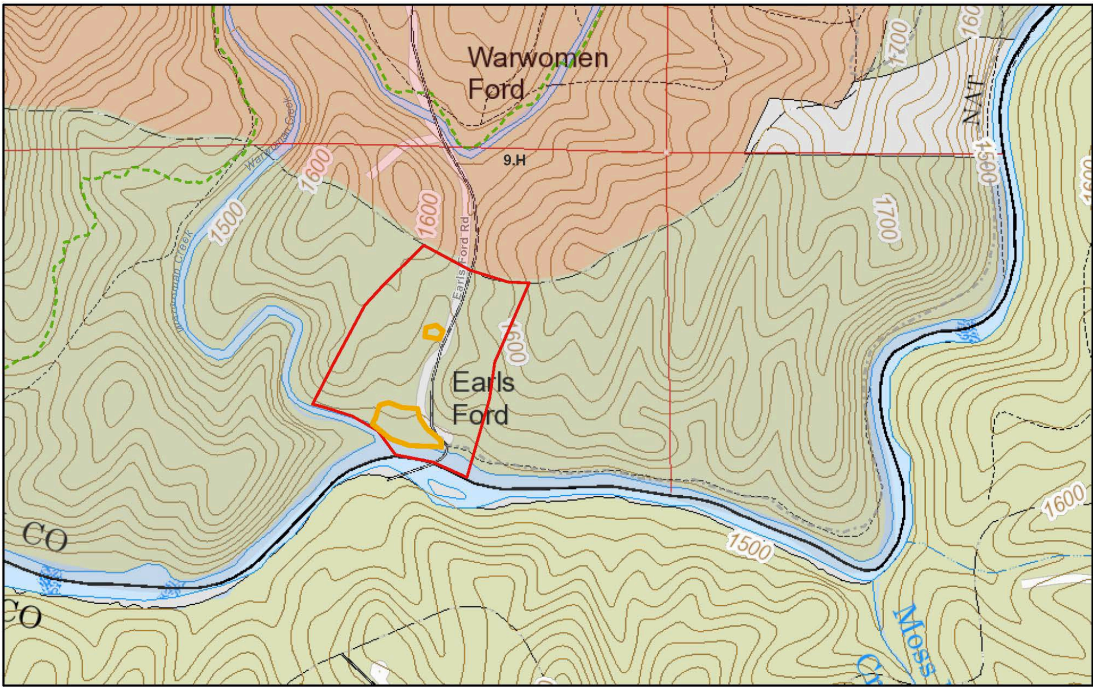


Consultation: Earls Ford WSR Corridor

- **Action:** Develop- and maintain sustainable recreation within the WSR corridor – Earls Ford
- **Existing Condition (Need):** 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. This project would include the rehabilitation of approximately 1.0 acres riparian habitat within the Chattooga River WSR Corridor adjacent to Earls Ford Road between Warwoman Creek and the Chattooga River.
- **Desired Future Condition:** Eliminate the ability for motorized vehicles from operating outside the Earls Ford Road prism within the WSR Corridor. The installation of bollards and/or large boulders would be placed along 40ft-60ft of the edge of Earls Ford Road, from the banks of the Chattooga River, westward towards Warwoman Ford. Rehabilitate 1.0 acres of riparian habitat within the SMZ of the Chattooga River that have been impacted by uncontrolled motor vehicle access. This would include decompaction the upper 2"- 4" of soil (soil ripping) using mechanized equipment, recontour slopes and erosion gullies posing chronic sediment sources to the Chattooga River, and finally seeding the area with native vegetation and/or placement of appropriate ground cover. Dispersed camping within the WSR Corridor, adjacent to Earls Ford Road is not a sustainable recreational opportunity, thus this activity would be prohibited.

Consultation: Earls Ford WSR Corridor

Dispersed Recreation Sites: Chattooga River WSR



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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
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Consultation: Earls Ford WSR Corridor

