



File Code: 1900

Date: June 20, 2108

Subject: Scoping – Opportunity to Provide Input - Brushy Mountain Grouse Management Area Roads

Dear Friends and Neighbors of the Monongahela National Forest:

The Marlinton/White Sulphur Springs Ranger District is proposing to provide improvements to several forest roads within the Brushy Mountain Grouse Management Area of the Monongahela National Forest, which were heavily damaged by storms and flooding in 2016. The Forest Service is partnering with the Eastern Federal Lands Division Office of the Federal Highway Administration to complete the environmental assessment, design, and construction of the proposed improvements.

Please take a few minutes to review the following information and provide your input about proposed activities.

Your comments will be used to help identify relevant issues. They will help guide the environmental analysis and documentation. Please be as specific as possible when responding. If you provide or refer to data or research results, please identify why the information is pertinent to the Brushy Mountain project and provide a copy of the information.

For additional information about this project, or to provide comments, please contact Lisa Landers, Environmental Protection Specialist. You can reach her at the Federal Highway Administration, Eastern Federal Lands Division Office, 21400 Ridgetop Circle, Sterling, VA 20166-6511; by phone at (703) 404-6201. You may also email comments to Lisa.Landers@dot.gov. Please include the project name in the subject line of the e-mail.

Please provide your comments within 30 days from the date of this letter. If you do not wish to comment at this time, but would like to continue receiving information about this project, please let us know. Additional information about this project will be sent to those people who request it or who have submitted comments during the analysis process.

Also, let us know what format you prefer for receiving information: hard copy; or e-mail. It is the responsibility of interested parties to respond to this notice within the established time period. If a document is not available or delivered at the expected time, please the District office address above to ascertain the document's availability, and if necessary, to arrange an alternate delivery method.





Overview

In June of 2016, torrential rain caused epic flooding in West Virginia. This one-in-one-thousand-year event severely damaged roads, trails, and recreation sites in the southern half of the Monongahela National Forest (MNF). In the Brushy Mountain Grouse Management Area, heavy rainfall that caused extensive damage to forest roads. As such, emergency repair funds through the Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) program were made available to assist with repairs to this section of the forest.

The project is located entirely within Greenbrier County, with the City of White Sulphur Springs approximately 3.5 miles southwest of the project area. The MNF and project area, are located north of I-64, and west of the Virginia state line. The project consists of multiple forest roads and is located entirely within the MNF land, though it provides access to private landholders who are encircled by the forest. No activities for this project are proposed on private lands. Please refer to the figure for a location map of the project area and proposed repairs.

After you review this letter and attached map, please consider if you are interested in this project or would like to learn more about it. Your comments concerning this project are welcome. While comments will be accepted, and considered at any time on this project, in order for them to be most useful in developing and analyzing the proposal, please provide them by July 20, 2018. Please refer to the cover or Public Comments section of this letter to see how you can submit your input.

Purpose of and Need for Action

The “Need” for taking action can be thought of as the problems identified in the area. The “Purpose” can be thought of as objectives – what the end results should be when the problems are solved or lessened.

The MNF is proposing to take action in the Brushy Mountain Grouse Management Area to address the damages incurred in 2016 to Sulphur Lick Run Road (Forest Road 719) and an unnamed woods road. Portions of the gravel or earthen roads were partially or completely washed out by Sulphur Creek Run and other, unnamed stream reaches. Sulphur Lick Run Road (Forest Road 719), between mile post (MP) 0.8 and the beginning of the unnamed woods road, suffered catastrophic damage and are unusable due to slide slope and roadway washouts. Due to the proximity of this section of road runs to Sulphur Lick Run, it is likely that future heavy rain events will continue cause washouts. Bringing this road up to standard is environmentally and economically unfeasible.

Like most of the roads in this section of the forest, the unnamed woods road is an old logging road; while Sulphur Lick Run Road (FR 719) and FR 719A were officially adopted as US Forest





Service system roads and brought up to appropriate standards. The unnamed road is still an informal road that remains substandard.

Need: There is a need for safe motorized transportation vehicular access for forest administration, vegetation management, and fire protection, as well as access to private properties within the Brushy Mountain Grouse Management Area. The access requires managing the transportation system at a minimum standard needed to allow safe travel by forest vehicles, logging trucks, and private vehicles.

Purpose: The purpose of the project is to restore safe motorized traffic within the Brushy Mountain area, which includes:

- Access for Forest Service administration and land management;
- Access to private lands for management and use of those lands;
- Public access for hunting and wildlife viewing; and
- Access for forest fire protection and suppression activities.

Proposed Action

As displayed in Figure 1, the various improvements involve the decommissioning of most of Sulphur Lick Run Road and rehabilitation of the FR 719A extension road and an unnamed woods road. The portion of Sulphur Lick Road that is not being decommissioned would be reconstructed at locations that received storm damage. Specific improvements to FR 719, FR 719A, and the unnamed woods road are described in detail below.

- **Sulphur Lick Run Road (FR 719)** – This work includes reconstructing the roadway in areas that received storm damage such as side slope and roadway washouts outside of the portion of the roadway that is being decommissioned. This includes clearing and grubbing, embankment construction, construction of mechanically stabilized earth walls, culvert replacement, and resurfacing. Instead of reconstructing storm damaged areas between MP 0.8 of Sulphur Lick Run Road and the intersection with an unnamed woods road, this section of the roadway will be decommissioned. Decommissioning includes full recontouring of the road template and re-establishment of the drainages back to similar existing contours.
- **FR 719A extension road** – This work includes rehabilitating this roadway from the end of FR 719A to the beginning of the unnamed woods road. This includes clearing and grubbing and resurfacing.
- **Unnamed Woods Road** – This work includes rehabilitating this roadway from the end of the FR 719A extension road to the intersection with Sulphur Lick Run Road. Roadway widening will occur on about 1 mile of the roadway. Areas that received storm damage such as side slope and roadway washouts will be reconstructed. This includes clearing and grubbing, embankment construction, construction of mechanically stabilized earth walls, culvert replacement, and resurfacing.





Public Involvement

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and if denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within five days.

The environmental assessment is being developed in accordance with the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations (40 CFR Part 1500), the Forest Service's NEPA regulations (36 CFR Part 220) and the Forest Service Manual and Handbook direction. The environmental assessment is also being developed to meet the NEPA requirements of the Federal Highway Administration (23 CFR Part 771). If you have no input at this time, but wish to remain on the mailing list, please for this project call or write to show your interest. If you would like to be taken off the Monongahela National Forest mailing lists, likewise, please notify us.

Thank you for your interest in the Monongahela National Forest.

Sincerely,

CYNTHIA SANDENO
District Ranger

