

Scoping Form and Project Summary
February 24, 2006
Daniel Boone National Forest
Cumberland Ranger District
White's Branch Arch Trail Project

Responsible District: Cumberland Ranger District.

Project Name: White's Branch Arch Trail Project

Scoping Team Members: Ron Taylor, Team Leader; Lee Broth, Assistant Ranger, Recreation; Tom Biebighauser, Wildlife Biologist; Johnny Faulkner, Heritage Resources Technician/Archaeology; Rita Wehner, Backcountry Ranger.

Location of the Project Area: This road/trail is located along the eastern boundary of Sand Lick watershed of the Red River, southwest of Natural Bridge State Park, approximately 3 miles south of the Slade, Mt. Parkway exit (see map, attached).

Project Description: The damage from unauthorized use of off-highway vehicles (OHV's) would be repaired along that portion of the Sheltoew Trace National Recreation Trail and along a section of Forest Road 2120 (see attached maps). The area would be closed to motorized use from Pot Hollow on the north down to Big Bend Ridge on the south. The trail would be closed at each end, leveled and re-vegetated. The trail would still be open to hikers and mountain bikers.

The Sheltoew Trace National Recreation Trail in this area would be maintained to standard. Directional and regulatory signs would be posted as necessary.

The actual roadbed/trail tread would be ripped to a depth of eighteen inches or more to loosen compacted soils. A mixture of native grasses, consisting of Indian grass, big bluestem, little bluestem, and wild rye will be sown, and straw used to mulch exposed soils for reducing erosion and possible occupation by invasive plants.

Oil and gas pipes that are exposed, and those buried lines encountered during ripping would be removed and disposed of at an approved disposal facility or landfill.

Areas of standing water along the trail would generally not be drained. These areas of standing water would be used as habitat for the Endangered Virginia big-eared bat, Indiana bat, and Sensitive eastern small-footed bat. These areas of water would be contoured, shaped and planted to reduce erosion, thereby improving water quality for these species. Contouring involves sloping vertical banks and tapering steep slopes. Such action would also make the sites appear more like natural wetlands found in the area.

Native plants consisting of sedges, grasses and forbs would be sown around each water source to reduce the establishment of invasive species such as Japanese Grass. Areas of exposed soil would be mulched with weed free straw as needed. To provide for amphibian, reptile, and bird habitat needs branches and logs would be placed within the water sources.

Objective 1.2.B. Establish upland water sources (c.g., seasonal or permanent waterholes), within 5 miles of significant Indiana bat hibernacula, at a frequency of one every half-mile in upland areas and along ridge tops (Forest Plan, p. 2-7).

Goal 5-Protect geological features such as arches, caves, and rock shelters (Forest Plan, p. 2-13).

Goal 12.1-Minimize road or trail sediment that reaches streams (Forest Plan, p. 2-16).

Objective 12.1.B. Bring 20 percent of existing system trails into compliance with erosion control standards (Best Management Practices) each year; consider relocating, reconstructing, or closing trails that cannot be maintained to standard. Give priority to those affecting riparian/aquatic areas (Forest Plan, p. 2-17).

Objective 12.1.C. Annually, inventory 20 percent of user-developed trails in conjunction with annual integrated inventories. Close and/or rehabilitate trails causing resource damage. Give priority to those within riparian/aquatic areas. If appropriate, trails may be added to the Forest's trail system (Forest Plan, p. 2-17).

Standard DB-REC-2. Except for administrative purposes, motorized vehicles will be allowed only on designated trails (Forest Plan, p. 2-21).

Management area goals, objectives, and standards: Management Area 3.E Red River Gorge Geological Area

3.E-Goal 7. Manage this area to primarily provide for non-motorized dispersed recreational activities in Semi-primitive Motorized and Roded Natural ROS experiences (Forest Plan, p. 3-68).

Standard 3.E-REC-4. No trails will be designated for off-highway vehicles (Forest Plan, p. 3-69).

Preliminary Issues: Soil erosion into surrounding creeks/streams

White's Branch Arch is eroding from OHV's driving over it.

Unauthorized use of the Sheltoewee Trace National Recreation Trail by motorized vehicles

Decision to be made: The decisions I will make are:

1. Whether the proposed action will proceed as proposed, as modified by an alternative, or not at all. If it proceeds:
2. What mitigation measures and monitoring requirements will the Forest Service apply to the project?
3. Whether the project requires a Forest Plan Amendment.
4. What level of analysis is appropriate?

Public Involvement: Copies of this scoping form and associated maps will be posted to the Daniel Boone National Forest website



File Code: 1900/2300

Date: February 24, 2006

Dear Interested Public:

I am proposing to implement an action titled White's Branch Arch Trail. Attached is a summary of the proposal for you to review. You can help me in the planning process by sharing any concerns or information you may have about this proposal. I will use your comments to identify issues and to develop alternatives to the proposal being presented.

Comments on this proposal are due to me by March 27, 2006.

Your comments should include the title of the proposal and your comments. Also, include your name, address and phone number so I can keep you informed throughout the planning process or contact you if I have questions about your comments.

Written comments can be sent in one of several ways:

- 1) By mail or hand delivered to: USDA Forest Service
Daniel Boone National Forest
Cumberland District
Morehead Office
2375 KY 801 South
Morehead, KY 40351
- 2) By facsimile to: (606) 784-6435
- 3) By computer, electronically to: comments-southern-daniel-boone-cumberland@fs.fed.us Subject: White's Branch Arch Trail Project

For additional information, contact Ron Taylor, Project Team Leader at the above address or by calling (606) 784-6428 during normal business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm.).

Sincerely,

/s/ James D. Manner
JAMES D. MANNER
District Ranger





United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Cumberland
Ranger District

2375 KY 801 South
Morehead, KY 40351
606-784-6428

File Code: 1900/2700

Date:

Route To: Ron Taylor, Lee Breth, Jim Twaroski, Tom Biebighauser

Subject: White's Branch Arch Trail Project Decision

To: Files

I have decided to proceed with the White's Branch Arch Trail Project as outlined in the scoping summary sent to the public on February 26, 2006.

This project falls within a Categorical Exclusion. Specifically, in FSH 1909.15, chapter 30, Section 31-Categories of Actions Excluded from Documentation, section 31.1-Categories for Which a Project or Case File and Decision Memo are not Required, 31.12-Categories Established by the Chief, The following categories of routine administrative, maintenance, and other actions normally do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment (sec. 05) and, therefore, may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EIS or EA unless scoping indicates extraordinary circumstances (sec. 30.3) exist, Category 4-"Repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries." This project may begin immediately.

There were no comments from the public on the project. The scoping period ran from February 26 to March 27, 2006. The scoping summary was posted to the Daniel Boone National Forest Internet website for this time period. The project was also given to the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission and Natural Bridge State Park for their review.

A heritage resource survey was undertaken in March 2006. The project area is heavily impacted by off highway vehicles. No significant heritage resource sites were found.

The Cumberland District Biologist has looked at the project area and determined that federally threatened, endangered, and sensitive species will not be negatively impacted by this project.

JAMES D. MANNER
District Ranger

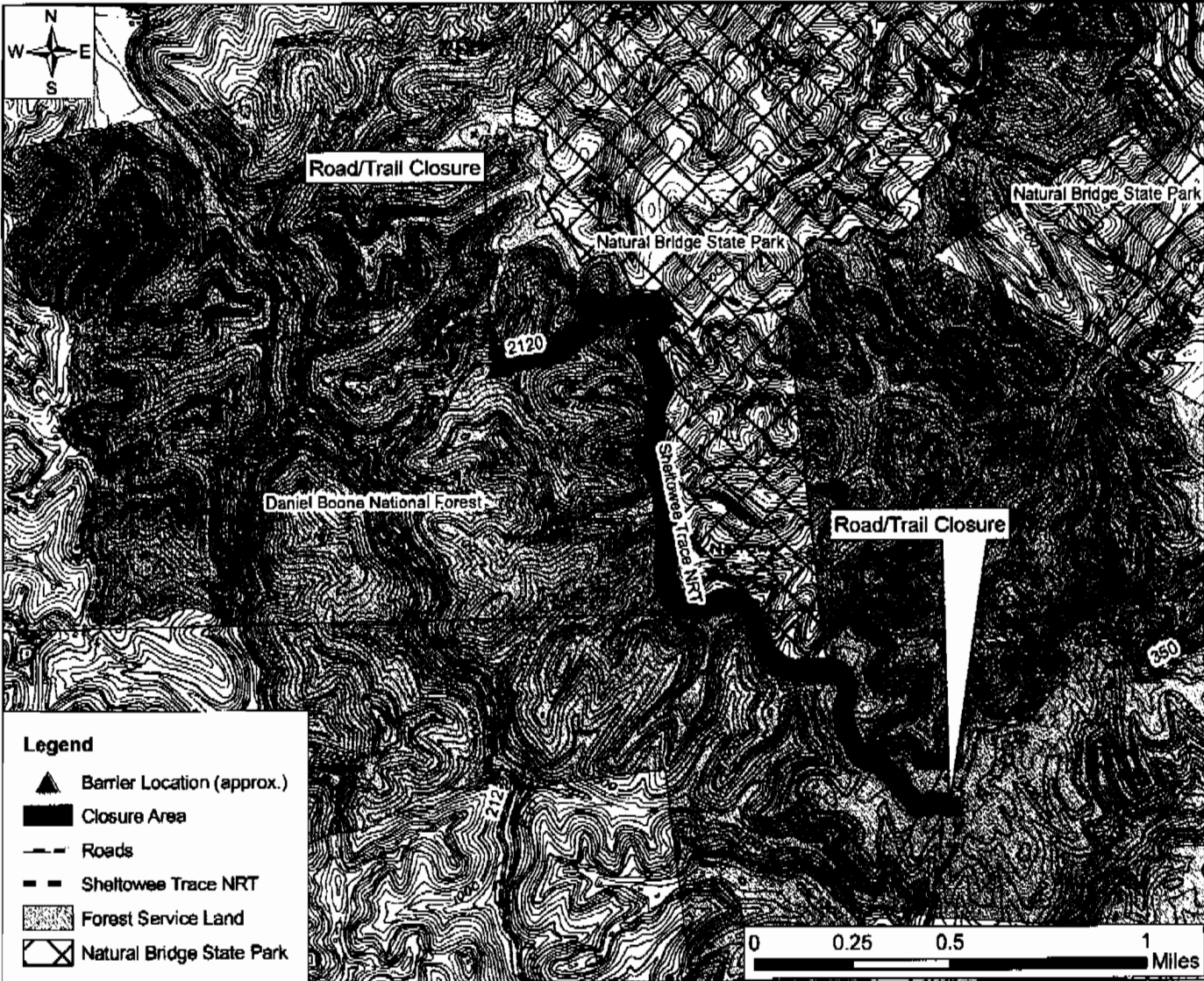
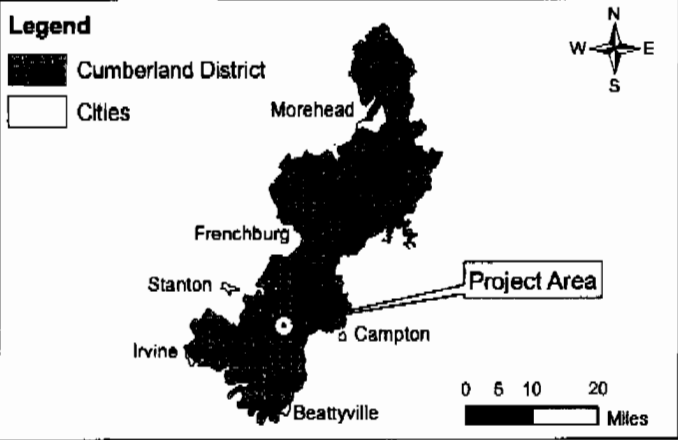
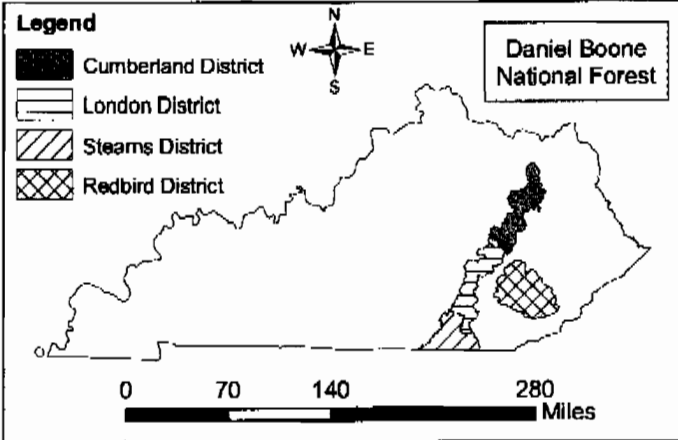


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**White's Branch Arch Trail Project
Cumberland District
Daniel Boone National Forest**



JET
02/21/2006

**White's Branch Arch Trail Project-Scoping Form and Project Summary
Cumberland District, Daniel Boone National Forest, USDA Forest Service**

February 24, 2006

(http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/boone/planning/project/projcum/11_whites_trail.shtml) and sent to individuals and organizations on the Cumberland Ranger District mailing list that have requested they be informed of projects of this nature. This project also appears in the Forest's quarterly publication of the Schedule of Proposed Actions. It first appeared in the January 2006 issue.

How to Comment: Comments on this proposal are due to me by **March 27, 2006**.

All comments will be considered by the Responsible Official throughout the scoping and analysis process. Comments should include the project name and can be submitted in any of the following ways:

By US mail to: Attn: White's Branch Arch Trail Project
USDA Forest Service, Daniel Boone National Forest
Cumberland Ranger District
2375 KY 801 South
Morhead, KY 40351

By facsimile to: (606) 784-6435

By phone to: (606) 784-6428

By Email to: comments-southern-daniel-boone-cumberland@fs.fcd.us , Subject: White's Branch Arch Trail Project

Recommendation: Based on preliminary scoping and team input, it appears that the analysis of effects of the proposed action will likely be documented in a Categorical Exclusion. Specifically, in FSH 1909.15, chapter 30, section 31.12, Categories Established by the Chief, Category 4- "Repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries."

The responsible official, after reviewing and considering the scoping input, will determine the appropriate type of documentation for the analysis and the decision. The final determination as to the type decision document required will not be made until the public scoping comments are analyzed and significant (key) issues determined.

Questions: If you have questions or concerns related to this project contact Ron Taylor, Project Team Leader at (606) 784-6428 during normal business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm.).

Responsible Official: District Ranger, James D. Manner

Anticipated Decision Date: April 2006

Planned Implementation: April 2006

JAMES D. MANNER
District Ranger

Date

**White's Branch Arch Trail Project-Scoping Form and Project Summary
Cumberland District, Daniel Boone National Forest, USDA Forest Service**

February 24, 2006

Purpose and Need for Action: The purpose of the project is to manage the Sheltoewe Trace National Recreation Trail to Forest Service standard and protect White's Branch Arch from further deterioration from motorized use. Control of soil erosion resulting from motorized use is also the goal of this project.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky, Commerce Department, Department of Parks (Parks) owns an area of land known as the Narrows that includes a sandstone arch known as White's Branch Arch which is a part of the Natural Bridge State Resort Park, located in Powell County, in Slade, Kentucky. White's Branch Arch is also included within the area dedicated by the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet, Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission (Commission) as Natural Bridge State Park Nature Preserve. The Daniel Boone National Forest (DBNF) owns the land adjoining White's Branch Arch and the state park nature preserve. (see attached maps).

An unofficial off-highway vehicle trail (OHV trail) follows the ridge top from Big Bend Road to the Narrows, traversing back and forth over the boundary line onto both the state park nature preserve and the DBNF, crossing on top of White's Branch Arch and onto DBNF land at Pot Hollow.

The OHV trail is neither an official Forest Service Road, a county road nor a state road and off road vehicles are utilizing and abusing this trail creating deep pits, cutting down trees to widen the trail, creating erosion causing loss of soils and the rock surface above White's Branch Arch, leaving behind automotive parts and other litter and illegally camping on the state park nature preserve.

Travel by OHV's is prohibited and illegal on both state parks and state nature preserves and violates the statutes and regulations governing both. OHV use on the Daniel Boone National Forest is limited to designated trails (Forest Plan Standard DB-REC-2). This section of the Sheltoewe Trace National Recreation trail is not designated for OHV.

The DBNF recognizes the damage this OHV trail is causing and seeks to assist Parks and Commission in ending these illegal activities on Natural Bridge State Park and Nature Preserve.

All three parties seek to permanently close the trail in question to motorized vehicles to prevent further damage to the natural and biological values of this sensitive and outstanding state park nature preserve area and to restore the degraded areas as much as possible.

The Land and Resource Management Plan for the Daniel Boone National Forest provides direction for management. The Goals, Objectives, and Standards that would be met by this proposal are listed below:

Forest Wide Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1.2-Create and maintain water sources with a mixture of temporary/seasonal and permanent shallow water pools throughout the Forest (Forest Plan, p. 2-7).

Objective 1.2.A. Establish water sources adjacent to mature forest and/or woods road corridors (Forest Plan, p. 2-7).