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For Immediate Release

USDA Forest Service Plans Repairs and Improvements at Bent Creek

ASHEVILLE.....The Forest Service announced today a number of planned actions to reduce erosion and sedimentation and improve road and trail conditions in the Bent Creek Experimental Forest, a Southern Research Station facility located on the Pisgah National Forest.

According to Randy Burgess, Pisgah District Ranger, “Heavy rainfall during last year’s Hurricanes Ivan and Frances resulted in widespread erosion and sediment getting into Bent Creek. The floodwaters carried large amounts of sediment into Lake Powhatan, which is one of our most popular fishing and swimming areas on the Forest. We plan to take a number of steps to repair the damage and reduce the long term risk of future sediment adversely affecting Bent Creek and Lake Powhatan.

While these actions are designed to protect the water quality and fisheries of Bent Creek and Lake Powhatan, they will also make the Bent Creek roads and trails better and safer.”

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The Forest Service is currently looking at options for dredging a portion of Lake Powhatan to remove the sediment that was deposited there. During the dredging later this year Lake Powhatan will likely be closed to swimming or fishing for several months.

The Forest Service is also taking a number of steps to reduce the amount of sediment entering Bent Creek and Lake Powhatan. A variety of techniques will be used to divert water off the roads and trails and away from streams. The following actions should be completed over the winter and spring of 2006:

- Repair and improve Bent Creek Road along with seven other gated Forest Service roads (includes replacing culverts and installing new ones),
- Repair several designated trails used for mountain biking (includes five minor re-routes),
- Close out and rehabilitate a number of unauthorized user-created trails,
- Relocate and improve one user-created trail that connects the North Boundary Trail with the Sidehill Trail and designating it as part of the trail system to provide an additional trail loop,
- Stabilize eroded stream banks to reduce sediment entering Bent Creek.

The Forest Service has also improved several visitor facilities at Bent Creek, including new trailhead parking facilities and vault toilets at Rice Pinnacle, Hardtimes, and Ledford Branch. Last spring new water lines were installed at Lake Powhatan Campground and a number of campsites will be renovated this year.

In addition, archeological research is planned on two 19th century mill sites that were damaged by heavy rainfall following the hurricanes. The Forest Service also plans to refurbish a damaged stone sluiceway and spring box constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's.

Burgess added that “the Forest Service will make every effort to time these repairs to minimize temporary impacts to the recreational users at Bent Creek. In addition, the Forest Service is employing experienced trail contractors in order to make sure the repairs are done in a way that maintains the recreational experience at Bent Creek without disturbing important research studies that are underway.”

The Bent Creek Experimental Forest, located on the Pisgah National Forest, is one 28 Southern Research Station research facilities and one of the oldest research and demonstration forests in the country. Researchers and science delivery professionals at Bent Creek work closely with Pisgah National Forest employees to continue Bent Creek primary mission of research and demonstration of Southern Appalachian forest ecology and management while maintaining visitor services. Previously planned plot installations being done for research studies will be finishing up this spring and summer. More information about Bent Creek Experimental Forest can be found at <http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/bentcreek/>.

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BENT CREEK DRAINAGE WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

