

# Urbanization On the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests



U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Southern Region

One of the challenges that Forest Service managers face is the increasing urbanization of lands adjacent to the national forest. In Georgia, it seems there has been an increase in larger land holdings being subdivided and developed. Individuals are seeking full-time as well as part-time residences adjacent to the national forests. With this trend, a host of management challenges face national forest land managers. These include:

**Trespass:** Landowners sometimes unwittingly build structures, driveways, pools, gardens, etc over the land line onto national forest property.

**Special Use Permits:** The number of requests for special use permits have increased dramatically in recent years as landowners make requests for right-of-ways and permits.

**Escaped Fire:** Every year, some wildfires are caused by adjacent landowners who were burning leaves or trash and accidentally allowed the fire to escape their control. Penalties and fees for suppression of the fire can be expensive.

**Invasives:** Adjacent landowners who landscape with non-native materials may unintentionally introduce pests to the national forest such as hemlock wooly adelgid.

**Use Impacts:** Forest Service managers are increasingly seeing user-created trails being built and maintained from subdivisions and residences. These trails can create extensive resource damage and if discovered, a landowner may be responsible for restoration costs.

**Increased Crime:** As more people use the national forests, Forest Service personnel are seeing higher instances of violent crimes including theft, rape, gang activity, and murder.

**Expectations:** Some individuals who purchase property adjacent to the national forest do not realize that these forests are actively managed which can result in visible changes to the landscape. Additionally, these are public lands which are open to public access. Conflicts can arise between landowners and the visiting public.

- Loss of open space on private lands adjacent to national forests increase pressures on public lands for recreation use and for wildlife habitat.



Mountain Home Construction



Residential Development

**For additional information, call Karen McKenzie at (770) 297-3061.**

**Chattahoochee Oconee National Forests – Georgia  
Winter 2008**

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