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First name: Morgan

Last name: Sommerville

Organization: Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Title:

Comments: Union County Target Range Objection

Supervisor Jewett and Ranger Baker:

Attached is the formal objection of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) to the Union County Target Range proposed for construction on the Blue Ridge Ranger District of the Chattahoochee National Forest, overseen by District Ranger Andy Baker.

I will be ATC's lead objector, though both ATC's President/CEO and ATC's VP of Conservation and Trail Management Programs concur with this decision to object to this proposal as currently designed.

Additionally, ATC shares the many points of objection described by the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club in their objection to this project.

I look forward to participating in a successful, consensus resolution of this process. Thank you for your facilitation of that process.

Morgan Sommerville

Regional Director

Appalachian Trail Conservancy

160 Zillicoa Street

Asheville, NC 28801

Phone: 828.254.3708 x12

Mobile: 828.551.4873

msommerville@appalachiantrail.org

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Forest Supervisor Betty Jewett

12 September 2019

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

Cleveland Highway

Gainesville, GA

Re: Objection to the Proposed Union County Target Range Project Dear Supervisor Jewett:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is formally objecting to the Finding of No Significant Impact decision regarding the proposed Union County Target Range Project.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is a 94-year-old, non-profit educational organization dedicated to the maintenance, management and protection of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT.). The A.T. became a unit of the National Park Service (NPS) when it was designated the first National Scenic Trail in 1968. ATC works in close cooperation with the NPS, USDA Forest Service and the volunteers of 31 A.T. maintaining Clubs; in Georgia the AT. Club assigned responsibility for the AT. is the Georgia A.T. Club (GATC).

ATC values Union County as an A.T. Community and is supportive of a target range in Union County[shy] but not as proposed. ATC's reasons for our objection are as follows:

[bull] Safety - the range points straight at the AT. and there is realistic possibility that a stray bullet could reach hikers on the Trail.

[bull] Noise - the range points straight at the AT. creating noise from the range which will be very intrusive and concerning.

[bull] The A.T. in this location is within the Mark Trail Wilderness and the noise from this range will detract significantly from the Wilderness character of the area, which the USFS must protect.

[bull] Alternative sites have not been adequately explored, and there was inadequate consultation before a site was chosen by Union County.

[bull] There is an existing USFS shooting range, in the adjoining county, about 4 miles away. Adequate explanation as to why it cannot be used by Union County has not been given.

ATC looks forward to participating in a process that helps Union County select a target range location which is suitable for both a range, and the neighbors of the range, including the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

Thank you for the opportunity to continue to work with Union County and the Chattahoochee National Forest on a Union County target range that provides a win/win solution to Union County needs.

Sincerely,

Laura Belleville

VP of Conservation and Trail Management Programs