

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
*Adoption of U. S. Forest Service Environmental Assessment
For Union County Shooting Range, Union County, Georgia*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has prepared this document in accordance with the procedures for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as it applies to the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act, as amended 50 Stat. 917, 16 U.S.C. Sec. 669 et seq.).

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division (GAWRD) requests Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) grant funding to construct Union County Shooting Range. This Proposed Action (PA) would be completed approximately nine miles southeast of Blairsville in Union County, Georgia, within the Blue Ranger District of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests (CONF). On March 3, 2020, the U. S. Forest Service (USFS) issued a special use permit to the Union County Government to construct the public shooting range on National Forest (NF) lands. In support of this federal decision, USFS prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with NEPA and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. The USFS analyzed the impacts of the PA and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Final Decision Notice (DN) were signed on November 15, 2019.

To meet NEPA procedural compliance at 40 CFR §1506.3, the Service has conducted an independent evaluation of the USFS EA and determined the EA adequately assesses and discloses the environmental impacts of the PA. The action described in the EA, the construction of a public shooting range within the CONF, is substantially the same as the proposed action in the GAWRD grant application submitted to WSFR.

The EA discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts that would result from the construction and operation of a public shooting range on USFS land. The purpose of the PA is to address the need for a facility that is designated to minimize the impacts to physical, biological, and social resources from unmanaged, dispersed target practice on NF lands in Union County and the surrounding area. The Service is adopting the USFS EA and subsequent documents to meet NEPA compliance requirements for the grant and to reduce duplication and paperwork.

Based on the review of the USFS EA, DN, and FONSI and the Service's evaluation of the effects of the PA, I find that the PA is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of the NEPA of 1969, as amended. Consequently, no Environmental Impact Statement is required. I concur with the USFS DN and FONSI.

This FONSI will be advertised by GAWRD to the public via a Notice of Availability in accordance with Code of Federal Regulations 40 CFR 1501.4(e)(1). The posting will provide a method by which any member of the public can request a copy of this FONSI.

This FONSI incorporates by reference the project record (including the Service evaluation) and the USFS EA, DN, FONSI and other documents on the project website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54559> . The USFS and Special Use Permit Holder are the responsible parties for mitigation and have assumed the authority/enforcement requirement for the mitigation measures in the EA.

APPROVAL:

Paul Wilkes, Manager
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior Regions 2 and 4