



File Code: 1950

Date: April 10, 2012

Route To: PROJECT FILE

Subject: Special Use Permit, MAFFS Training Flights

It is my decision to issue The National Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS) a one year temporary use permit for access to National Forest System Lands. This permit is located in Laurens County in Compartment 77 in vicinity of Forest Service Road 334. Issuance of this permit will allow MAFFS to conduct training exercises and certify flight crews to attack wildfires by releasing water from aircraft to hit specific targets. The training exercise will begin at Donaldson Field in Greenville, SC and route to selected targets on the Enoree Ranger District of the Sumter National Forest for one week during the spring or summer (usually during May).

The MAFFS training flight will use only water (no retardant) from sanitary sources. Targets will receive approximately 2,700 gallons of water from each flight discharged from the aircraft under pressure resulting in a fine mist to light sprinkles as the water reaches the ground. Normal drop patterns are 20 to 40 feet wide and about ¼ mile to ½ mile in length. The water is normally dropped between 200 and 500 feet above the tree tops at about 150 knots air speed. Overall the water-drops impact to the ground is similar to a moderate to heavy rain shower. Therefore, no ground-disturbing activity is anticipated. Potential sites were reviewed by district staff and specialists to meet forest plan desired conditions and uses. Compartment 77 (Latitude 34.33, Longitude 81.45) was a selected target area (See attached map).

In the “Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook” of the Forest Service Handbook (FSH 1909.15) certain proposed actions are identified as “Categories of Actions Excluded from Documentation” (FSH 19019.15 Chapter 32). Chapter 32 includes the following exclusion:

32.12 – 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 and, therefore, may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EIS or an EA unless scoping indicates extraordinary circumstances exist:

8. Approval, modification, or continuation of minor, short term (1 year or less) special uses of National Forest System lands. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - (i). Approving, on an annual basis, the intermittent use and occupancy by a state-licensed outfitter or guide;
 - (ii). Approving the use of National Forest System land for apiaries; and
 - (iii). Approving the gathering of forest products for personal use

I have decided that the proposed action meets the description of activities referenced in the above §32.12 (8), 36 CFR 220.6(d)(8): "Approval, modification, or continuation of minor, short term (1 year or less) special uses of National Forest System lands.". I have also determined that the proposed action does not pose any "extraordinary circumstances" and does not "individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment".

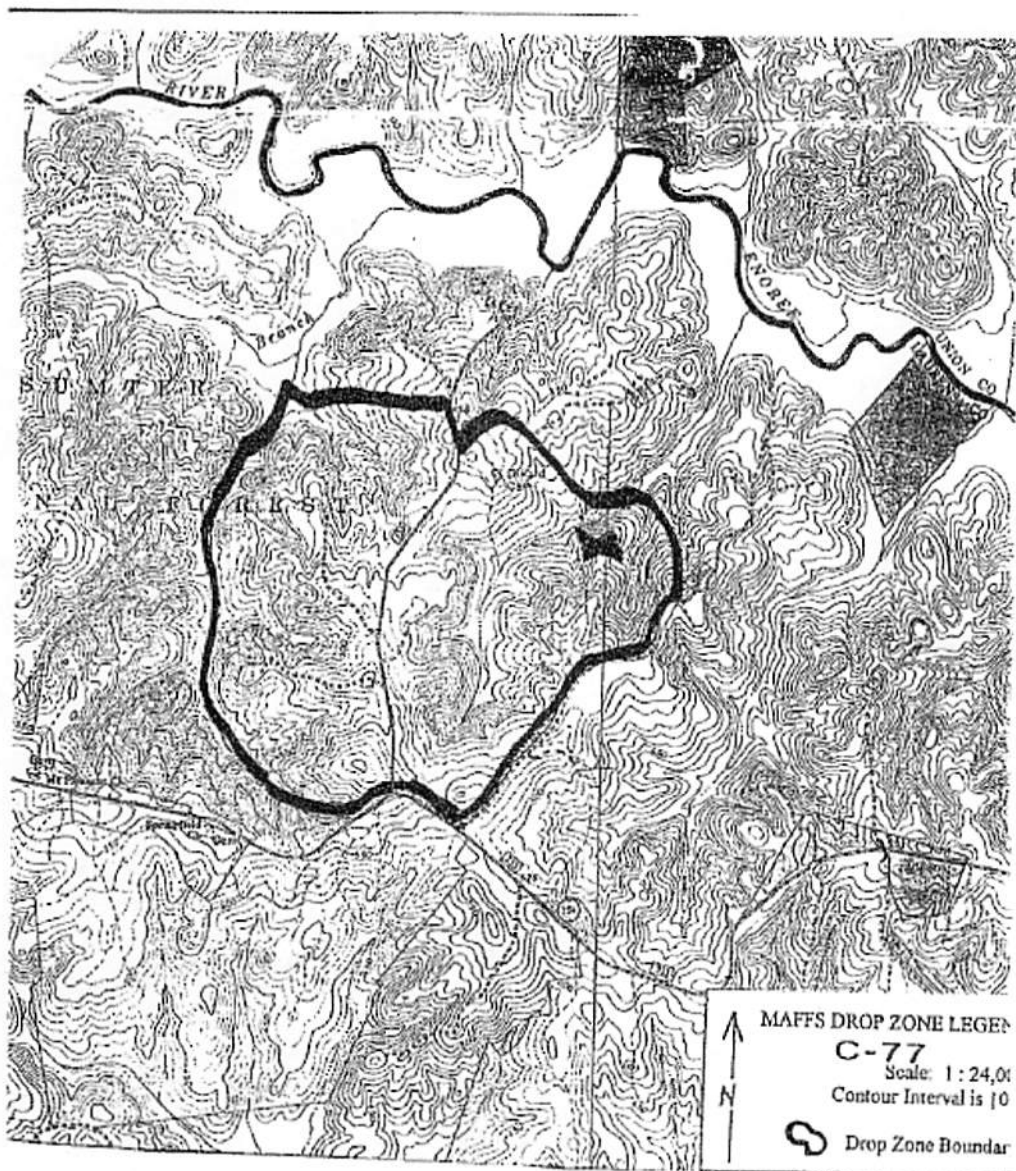
Scoping was conducted internally and by placing calls with some key members of the public. Since there are no ground-disturbing activities resulting from this training exercise and aircraft noise will be very brief over this remote area of the Enoree Ranger District, I conclude that the environmental effects will not be significant.

In accordance with FSH 1909.15- Chapter 32.12, as the "responsible official", I have decided that a decision memo is not required for the proposed action, but that a project file shall be established. This decision is consistent with the *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Sumter National Forest*, as identified in Goals and Objectives on page 2-31, Goal 37: Manage special uses in a manner that protects natural resource values and public health and safety.

The Forest Archaeologist was consulted and his comments are on file. No impacts to Threatened and Endangered species are anticipated. Public safety is a concern and a sign will be posted along FS Road 334 warning the public of the training flights.



ELIZABETH T. LEMASTER
District Ranger



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 LAT 34.33 LON 81.45