



News Release

Monroe County Mayor Tim Yates would like for you to be aware of this announcement.

August 21 Solar Eclipse

Significate visitation expected in South Cherokee National Forest

CLEVELAND, TENN, June 23, 2017 – U.S. Forest Service officials at the Cherokee National Forest are preparing for an increase in visitation for the total solar eclipse occurring in August. National forest campgrounds and other facilities, as well as certain high elevation locations are expected to be at capacity prior to and during the August 21 eclipse.

On August 21 a total solar eclipse will pass over 12 states, including Tennessee. The eclipse (partial) will be visible throughout the United States. A 70 mile wide path of total darkness begins in Oregon and exits the nation at South Carolina. Areas within the 70 mile wide path will experience total darkness for up to 2 mins 40 seconds. The southern portion of the Cherokee National Forest (Ocoee Ranger District & Tellico Ranger District) is within the 70 mile wide total darkness path.

The total eclipse path will pass through the southern portion of the Cherokee National Forest in Monroe, McMinn and Polk counties. Communities throughout the area will be hosting celebrations and showcasing local culture. Many of these areas offer excellent opportunities to view the eclipse while enjoying art, music, and local cuisine. These events are easily accessible and offer various amenities. There are several online sources to learn more about the eclipse and activities in the area.

Some people may wish to view the eclipse in a more natural setting. Much of the Cherokee National Forest is remote and rugged, and the environment is much different than in urban areas. High clearance vehicles are recommended for many roads in the national forest. Planning your visit ahead of time may help make it safer and more enjoyable.

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Several locations outside of developed recreation areas that may seem suitable for viewing the eclipse in the southern Cherokee National Forest may have environmental or road access concerns associated with them. Many of these locations have rough dirt/gravel roads leading to them with limited access, parking, crowd capacity, restricted traffic flow and no sanitation facilities or water. National forest visitors should expect many locations to be heavily visited and congested.

Forest Service management for the eclipse is focused on public safety and protecting the natural and cultural resources. Cherokee National Forest Supervisor JaSal Morris said, "We want national forest visitors to have a safe and enjoyable experience. It may be necessary to control traffic and parking and to restrict vehicular access to some locations. Because of limited safe parking places and traffic flow it may require walking to get to some locations. We are expecting a significant increase in visitation for the eclipse and we will manage various locations accordingly to ensure public safety, while protecting the natural resources."

There are 30 developed campgrounds, 45 day-use sites and numerous dispersed camping sites scattered throughout the 650,000 acre Cherokee National Forest. Many campsites in developed campgrounds are available on a first come-first served basis, but some can be reserved in advance online:

www.Recreation.gov - or by calling: 1-877-444-6777.

All sites at the Indian Boundary Campground in the Tellico Ranger District have been reserved for the weekend of the eclipse - there is a first come-first served overflow area that will accommodate approximately 30 vehicles. The Ocoee Ranger District reports that as of June 21th some sites are still available for the weekend of the eclipse at Chilhowee Campground (11 sites available) and Parksville Lake RV Campground (5 sites available). All sites in Thunder Rock Campground have been reserved – there are also 8 first come-first served sites.

Morris said, "We are working on eclipse management measures for a number of locations outside of developed recreation areas in the South Cherokee National Forest. When we have this completed a summary for each location will be publicized and posted to the Cherokee National Forest web site. This information will provide an overview of what you can expect to find at various locations regarding access, parking and traffic control, if there are any restrictions in place and if the location offers any amenities."

For information about the Cherokee National Forest visit online: <http://fs.usda.gov/cherokee> or call 423-476-9700.

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Forest Service