

BREAKING OUT

New maps help adventurers ramble

Jocassee Gorge, Foothills Trail guides provide in-depth information

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The new map of the Jocassee Gorges was a long-awaited baby. It had a gestation period of more than a decade.

"It was kind of getting to be a joke," said Greg Lucas, a S.C. Department of Natural Resources employee in the Clemson office. "I didn't know if we'd ever get it done."

The sprawling 33,500-acre Jim Timmerman Natural Resources Area at Jocassee Gorges was largely bought in 1997 from Duke Energy in a \$21 million deal. Since then, other bits and pieces of land were purchased to fill in pockets that weren't included in the original transaction.

But ever since the possibility of bringing the land into public use was broached, everyone has wanted a guide to know what is out there and how to get to it.

"The hunters and anglers around here, they've known about the Gorges for more than 30 years," Lucas said. "But folks in Greenville and elsewhere, they might have heard about it, but it's so big they don't know where to go."

Trying to fit the huge area on one map was one reason it took so long to develop, Lucas said.

"It was very complicat-

ed," he said. "We had to decide, do we include Duke land that's under conservation agreements? Do we include Gorges State Park (in N.C.)?"

In the end it was decided to make a 38-by-27-inch map that encompasses dual uses. One side shows the Jim Timmerman area, as well as all or portions of three state parks — Keowee-Toxaway, Devils Fork and Table Rock — plus state game lands and Gorges State Park.

On the other side is a "Driving the Jocassee Gorges" tour, which includes 18 stops beginning at the Jocassee Gorges Visitor Center at Keowee-Toxaway Natural Area on S.C. Highway 11 in Pickens County.

Besides the maps, the foldout publication includes sections on fishing, hunting, hiking, birdwatching, wildlife, camping, botanical areas and access points and overlooks. Lucas also said it gave the DNR a chance to put all the regulations covering the area in one place.

One essential part of the map is the interior roads of the vast tract. Some of those are closed for periods of time each year so wildlife can roam more naturally and to protect re-

sources.

Another unique aspect of the map is that it's free. The Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund, a private, nonprofit corporation that partners with the DNR, provided funding for it.

Because the wilderness area is so large — and there are so many access points — there's no good way to know if the guide will increase usage of the tract, Lucas said, although he assumes it will.

"I think some people will just want to drive, get out for a few minutes and see some of the sights," Lucas said. "Others, they want ideas on places to go. I



Maps for the Foothills Trail and Jocassee Gorges are available.

think the map can provide help for both types of visits."

The Jocassee Gorges map comes on the heels of a new map released earlier this year for the Foothills Trail. The 77-mile Foothills Trail is located along the Blue Ridge Escarpment in the Upstate and crosses into North Carolina.

The new water-resistant map gives a better at-a-glance view of the trail and is a great asset to use along with the Foothills Trail Guide Book, which gives users an almost step-by-step detailed description of the trail.



STAFF / File

The Jocassee Gorges are one of the better places to see fall colors and a new map for the area helps you find pleasant vistas.

GET A MAP

■ The new map of the Foothills Trail is available at: www.foothillstrail.org The cost is \$11. Also indispensable is the Foothills Trail Guide Book, which gives detailed descriptions of every trail segment. It sells for \$13.

■ The free Jocassee Gorges map is available in numerous locations, including: the Clemson DNR office, Jocassee Gorges Visitor Center, Table Rock, Devils Fork state parks and Gorges State Park in Sapphire, N.C. In Greenville, the map can be found at the Greenville History Museum.