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Date:

Dear

I thank all of you who were able to meet with me in April during the To Bridge A Gap meeting in Kinder, Louisiana. There we discussed the 32 large water bars and three tank traps constructed March-June 2014 along a three-quarter mile stretch of the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail/ Unicoi Turnpike on the Cherokee National Forest.

The Forest Service's actions damaged the Trail of Tears / Unicoi Turnpike, historic trails that you have told us are sacred to your tribes. Many of you have told me about the great harm this has done to the tribes, emotionally and spiritually. On behalf of the U.S. Forest Service, I sincerely apologize to each and every member of your respective tribes and to each of you individually for this incident.

One of the things you requested at our meeting in Kinder, is an outline of what occurred. I also think this is important. Because this is a complex issue, we have provided both a narrative description of how this happened and a timeline of events that we have been able to reconstruct. These are in Attachments 1 and 2.

In Kinder, some of you also requested information about Forest Service personnel matters related to this issue. I need to ask for your understanding about this. We have reviewed the matter and are taking appropriate action. However, because of policy and Privacy Act requirements, I cannot share specific information about personnel actions being taken against employees.

I recently received and shared with you some initial recommendations from the National Park Service's National Historic Trails Intermountain Region regarding repairs to the damaged area of the Trail of Tears NHT. I have shared their report with you to initiate our discussions for repairing the physical damage. Once we agree on a general approach, then we'll involve the other consulting parties in the Section 106 process regarding the repair of the physical damage. I realize this is not our only work; there is a need to resolve the adverse effects beyond the physical repair of the damage to the Trail of Tears. I will continue to listen and work with you so we can take the next steps in resolving the adverse effects of this incident.

I have asked someone many of you know – Melissa Twaroski, Regional Archaeologist/ Heritage Program Manager – to work as your primary day-to-day contact for all matters related to the Trail of Tears. Melissa will work to ensure these matters receive proper attention. You can contact Melissa anytime at (404) 347-7250 or at mtwaroski@fs.fed.us. In addition, I have asked several other employees to work with me to coordinate all efforts associated with the Trail of Tears. The other team members and the team's charter is in Attachment 3.

I am looking forward to meeting with you again on July 7-8, 2016. In discussions with most of



you, we recently changed the meeting location to Norman, Oklahoma. My team is beginning to work on the logistics for that meeting, and I will have a draft agenda to you for review and consultation soon.

Sincerely,