



Forest Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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# Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests



## Final Environmental Impact Statement

for the  
Land Management Plan

**Appendix G: Coordination with  
Other Public Planning Efforts**

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**Final Environmental Impact Statement  
Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests  
Appendix G. Coordination with Other Public Planning Efforts**

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## Introduction

Intergovernmental coordination results in more robust forest plans that better meet the needs of governments, including the Forest Service. As a result of this coordination, governments can more effectively use limited resources, staffs, and budgets, as they work cooperatively to manage forest resources on lands across multiple jurisdictions. The collaborative role of State and local governments in the planning process is unique. The opportunity for government involvement throughout the planning process is essential to the successful development and implementation of the Nantahala and Pisgah Forest Plan, and is also required by the 2012 Planning Rule.

The 2012 Planning Rule requires a review of planning and land use policies of federally recognized Indian Tribes (43 U.S.C. 1712(b)), other Federal agencies, and State and local governments, where relevant to the plan area. The purpose of this review is to foster greater recognition and discussion of issues that have cross-boundary effects, look for common objectives and solutions, and find opportunities to integrate management across landscapes. The review of these documents considered the following:

- (i) *The objectives of federally recognized Indian Tribes, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments, as expressed in their plans and policies;*
- (ii) *The compatibility and interrelated impacts of these plans and policies;*
- (iii) *Opportunities for the plan to address the impacts identified or contribute to joint objectives; and*
- (iv) *Opportunities to resolve or reduce conflicts, within the context of developing the plan's desired conditions or objectives.*

In 2018, the Forest Service asked governments to share their strategic plans and guidance documents with the planning team, offering an opportunity to listen to their concerns and requesting a copy of their land management plans. The process for attaining relevant plans included a letter to over 60 county and local municipality government offices, along with an additional ninety emails to all county commissioners in the planning region. We also visited government websites and conducted web searches to acquire available plans. Of the 18 counties in the planning area, eight responded with a link and three were without a current land management plan. When county plans were not available, local municipality and regional plans were referenced in order to shed light on county interests. In addition, the five relevant state-authorized, Regional Councils of Government (COG) plans were reviewed. Three of the five COGs include numerous counties within the forest plan area and were, therefore, contacted and asked to provide their regional plans and a list of the municipalities or towns they recommended for review in this process. Some additional towns were added to this review based on their request or proximity to national forest lands to provide a representation of municipality interests across the planning area. We also referenced plans for state parks, state forests, state wildlife commission game lands and National Park Service units in the planning area, including the North Carolina's Forest Resources Assessment, 2010, and the State Wildlife Action Plan (see Table 1). Coordination with Native American Tribes is covered in Tribal Resources and Cultural Resources sections of the draft Environmental Impact Statement.

The review provided insights into local values across the planning area, along with a better understanding of local interests, priorities and government capacity. The Nantahala and Pisgah Proposed Land Management Plan has been informed by input from these government entities and generally compliments their plans. Unique elements in neighboring government plans as they relate to national forest lands are also noted in the review below. All of the plans reviewed were considered in the forest plan development process to assure mutual benefit to the extent possible. Unique values of

specific areas helped shape the proposed plan's Geographic Areas chapter, a chapter added in direct response to public input. Reference to other government entities is found throughout the forest plan. Common resource management issues such as controlling invasive species, the threat of unwanted wildfire, and general species management were reviewed and found broadly compatible within a shared-stewardship approach. Specific local projects and issues across the forest plan area may be addressed at the time of individual forest project review, as well, as consideration of local governments is part of the project review process.

Below is a complete list of the 62 government entities whose plans were reviewed followed by narratives addressing the 2012 Planning Rule elements listed above.

<b>Counties</b>	<b>Municipalities</b>	<b>Councils of Governments</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avery County</li> <li>• Buncombe County</li> <li>• Burke County</li> <li>• Caldwell County</li> <li>• Cherokee County</li> <li>• Clay County</li> <li>• Graham County</li> <li>• Haywood County</li> <li>• Henderson County</li> <li>• Jackson County</li> <li>• Macon County</li> <li>• Madison County</li> <li>• McDowell County</li> <li>• Mitchell County</li> <li>• Swain County</li> <li>• Transylvania County</li> <li>• Watauga County</li> <li>• Yancey County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town of Andrews</li> <li>• City of Asheville</li> <li>• Town of Beech Mountain</li> <li>• Town of Black Mountain</li> <li>• Town of Blowing Rock</li> <li>• Town of Boone</li> <li>• City of Brevard</li> <li>• Town of Bryson City</li> <li>• Town of Burnsville</li> <li>• Town of Clyde</li> <li>• Village of Flat Rock</li> <li>• Town of Franklin</li> <li>• Town of Hayesville</li> <li>• City of Hendersonville</li> <li>• Town of Laurel Park</li> <li>• City of Lenoir</li> <li>• Town of Maggie Valley</li> <li>• City of Marion</li> <li>• Town of Marshall</li> <li>• Town of Montreat</li> <li>• City of Morganton</li> <li>• Town of Murphy</li> <li>• Town of Robbinsville</li> <li>• Town of Seven Devils</li> <li>• Town of Sylva</li> <li>• Town of Waynesville</li> <li>• Town of Weaverville</li> <li>• Town of Woodfin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Southwestern Commission</li> <li>• Land of Sky Regional Council</li> <li>• High Country Council of Governments</li> <li>• Western Piedmont Council of Governments</li> <li>• Isothermal Planning &amp; Development Commission</li> </ul> <p><b>State</b></p> <p>NC Wildlife Resources Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cold Mountain Game Land</li> <li>• Needmore Game Land</li> <li>• Toxaway Game Land</li> </ul> <p>NC State Parks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chimney Rock State Park</li> <li>• Grandfather Mountain State Park</li> <li>• Gorges State Park</li> <li>• Lake James State Park</li> <li>• Mount Mitchell State Park</li> </ul> <p>NC Forest Service</p> <p>NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources</p> <p><b>Federal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue Ridge Parkway National Park</li> <li>• Great Smoky Mountains National Park</li> </ul>

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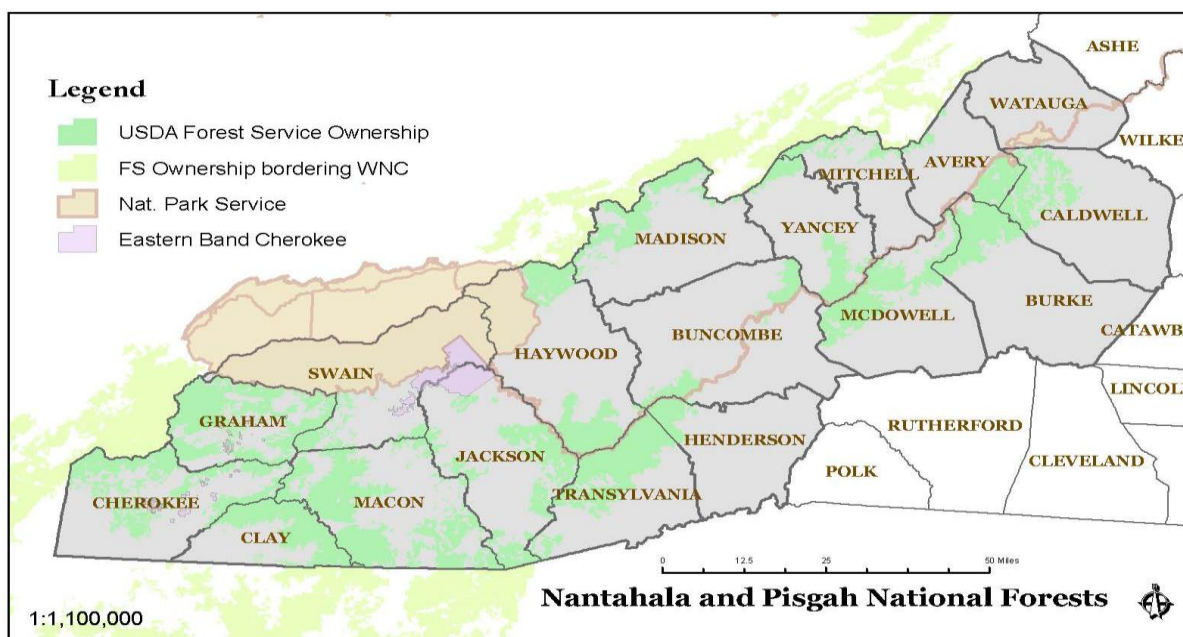
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## Western North Carolina Counties

The forest planning area includes the eighteen far western counties in North Carolina. The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests include approximately 1.1 million acres divided into 6 Ranger Districts within those counties, some of which are nearly 75 percent federal land base. Each county is represented by a County Commission composed of 4-7 elected county commissioners and additional county managers and staff.



**Figure 1. Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests in context with Western North Carolina counties and National Forest Service, National Park Service, and tribal lands**

County land management plans express pride in regional and local identity, and acknowledgment and appreciation for the natural beauty of the area. In some cases, plans express an interest in less restrictive guidance, such as zoning, within their counties. Many counties referenced the influence of having a large percentage of publicly owned lands. Some aim to capitalize on the public lands in their county by building on an existing ecotourism industry or developing new industries. Many counties referenced their local heritage and expressed desire to preserve their rural culture. Several counties referenced state guidance for resource management, including unique regional issues addressed by the state.

Some of the state guidance was initiated by the Mountain Resources Commission (MRC), established to “encourage quality growth and development while preserving the natural resources, open spaces, and farmland of the mountain region of Western North Carolina.” At an initial planning meeting, MRC members “noted the top resource concern is slope development and ridgetop protection, with resulting water quality problems where regulations are poor or non-existent.” The Commission produced the Western North Carolina Vitality Index ([www.wncvitalityindex.org](http://www.wncvitalityindex.org)) in 2012, summarizing its work on the region’s natural, social, built and economic environments for the 27 Western North Carolina counties. The WNC Vitality Index continues to be a valued resource for a wide range of uses, including its use as a reference for the assessment phase of the plan revision process. These resource concerns are included in many of the plans reviewed below.

The North Carolina Mountain Ridge Protection Act was enacted in 1983, a state law restricting tall building construction along North Carolina’s mountain ridges. This law shows the value placed on the

aesthetics of the mountainous Western North Carolina. Many counties have adopted soil erosion and sedimentation control ordinances in keeping with state laws to protect the region's high quality waters. Additionally, counties have watershed protection ordinances, both in support of and coordination with state guidance.

The Forest Service is regularly in communication with county representatives. District Rangers interact with their elected officials and staff via email, phone calls, and in person meetings and discussions. The counties were contacted by the Forest Service more than 100 times between October 2015 and August 2016, with an additional round of face-to-face meetings to discuss forest plan revision and other topics offered to all eighteen counties by the Forest Supervisor and District Rangers in 2017. The Forest Supervisor followed-up with counties with specific reference to the forest plan in 2018 along with continued interaction by District Rangers. Another round of face-to-face meetings with the Forest Supervisor and Rangers took place in fall 2019. The continued interaction with counties further informed the proposed forest plan and supports addressing shared stewardship opportunities across the forest. Appendix H: Public Involvement Process details county involvement along with all other public involvement.

Input of note during the plan revision process was the development of county resolutions that addressed concerns around the Forest Service recommending additional designated wilderness. Early Forest Service information about the required wilderness evaluation process was misunderstood to suggest a majority of the forest would be recommended for wilderness designation. Resulting concerns led to numerous Western counties passing resolutions calling for no new wilderness designations due to actual and perceived limitations to access for recreation, resource extraction and other economic opportunities, as well as search and rescue operations. Some additional state and county agencies, along with some municipalities also submitted formal comments about additional wilderness in support of county views. There was also public input from other government entities in support of recommending additional areas for future Congressional designation as wilderness.

In an effort to be responsive to these concerns, the topic of wilderness was raised directly by the Forest Service during a variety of communications with counties over recent years to further understand the issues and to clarify what wilderness designation means and doesn't mean. The forest has incorporated those concerns into the design of the plan alternatives. The alternative proposes a range of approaches addressing resource needs and public interest. This was done with an eye toward win-win solutions, i.e. addressing multiple public interests in each alternative. In addition to how wilderness recommendations are addressed in plan alternatives, there are numerous other avenues throughout the plan that address and support county interests of increased active management, other economic opportunities, outdoor recreation and access. The Forestwide Resources chapter (Chapter 2) of the plan along with the Geographic Areas chapter (Chapter 3) address these concerns directly, as do the specifics of locations identified within the alternatives and analyzed in the draft Environmental Impact Statement. A balance of public interests is represented.

In addition to personal communications with counties, we reviewed all available individual county plans to facilitate intergovernmental collaboration. The review includes the objectives and overview of the county plans; ways in which county plans are compatible and interrelated with the forest plan; how the forest plan contributes to local objectives; and opportunities for the forest plan to address common objectives and potential areas of conflict. The following are those reviews.

## **Avery County**

### **Objectives**

The *Avery County Land Use Plan* was finalized in September 2012. County ordinances pertinent to the forest plan include a Mountain Ridge Protection Ordinance and Watershed Protection Ordinance. Three principle areas make up the county's economy including horticulture (Christmas trees and ornamental shrubbery), travel and tourism, and the second home industry. Approximately 46 percent of Avery County, nearly 27,000 acres, is national forest land. The travel and tourism industries are the largest employers in the county. Several key travel destinations are located within the county and Pisgah National Forest, including Linville Falls, Elk River Falls, Roan Mountain, Harpers Creek, Lost Cove Creek, and Wilson Creek, along with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and Overmountain Victory National Heritage Trail. Natural resources and their beauty are listed as important to the quality of life in the county. In a citizen survey, 54 percent of respondents were in favor of more National/State Forests, Parks and Wilderness. Within the issue of economic development and tourism, plan objectives promote nature-oriented activities and aim to preserve and promote Avery County's appealing natural environment and ecotourism amenities.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the Avery County Land Use Plan with specific issues including the value the county places on the proper management of their natural resources and the scenic beauty of the area. They have also listed the preservation of environmentally and culturally significant areas, along with concern for preserving threatened or endangered species.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan will contribute to the goals of Avery County by creating a more resilient, healthy, and scenic forest, which is so highly valued by their residents. The forest plan will also move toward sustainable recreation opportunities in the area, addressing the county's reliance on travel and eco-tourism. Geographic Area goals in the plan that relate to Avery County include emphasizing visitor safety at highly used recreation sites such as Elk River Falls. The forest plan has separate management areas for the National Scenic Appalachian Trail Corridor and Heritage Corridors including the Overmountain Victory Trail in order to continue to manage these areas for their unique values. There is also a management area for Roan Mountain.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

No explicit conflicts were identified between the forest plan and Avery County Plan. There have been numerous opportunities for residents of the county and others with concerns about the county to attend public meetings throughout the Forest Plan revision process. In addition, the Forest Supervisor reached out directly to county commissioners and managers to hear their concerns on more than one occasion. There was a face-to-face meeting in October, 2017, along with follow-up communications and a draft plan review meeting offered. This will continue into implementation of the forest plan.

## **Buncombe County**

### **Objectives**

Buncombe County's values are noted in their *Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2013 Update* vision statement:

Buncombe County is a leader in sustainable practices through the collaboration of citizens, institutions, businesses and government. We promote a sense of community through public

engagement. We celebrate a healthy, safe, well-educated, and thriving community with a sustainable quality of life. We are stewards of the environment who advocate the conservation, preservation, and restoration of resources. We are part of a community and environmentally-conscious economy that is stable and diverse. We have a strong sense of place, and continue to work to preserve our distinctive landscape and culture. We are committed to continually improving our community for the betterment of future generations.

Buncombe County values its natural resources and expresses a sense of responsibility to help steward their environment. The county has made the protection of working farmland and the conservation of open space a priority.

### **Compatibility**

Multiple prior and current Buncombe County plans identify preservation and conservation of the environment as key issues for the future of the county. The *Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2013 Update* reaffirmed that fertile farmland, open space, and scenic mountain vistas are important and valuable natural resources that warrant protection. Additionally, the Buncombe County *2012 Sustainability Plan* has identified partnerships for conservation/preservation/restoration of natural resources as one of its 14 goals. The county created the Land Conservation Advisory Board (LCAB) in 2004 to promote the use of voluntary land conservation easements to preserve the beauty and ecology of Buncombe County, including ecologically sensitive areas on their list of priorities. More than 72,000 acres were secured in conservation easements by the end of 2012. Some of these acres border, or are in close proximity, to larger protected landscapes such as national forest lands.

The county identifies several values of the protected land that are comparable to forest plan values: providing a voluntary way to support the conservation of rural communities; supporting each community's rural heritage and economy, and providing local jobs and tax income; maintaining scenic views and tourism-based economic activity; supporting clean air and water; and providing wildlife habitat. The county's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance helps protect water resources, ecological systems, and wildlife; and restores the natural resources and function of floodplains by promoting and working in collaboration with stream restoration and hazard mitigation grant programs. Additionally, the Sustainability Plan for Buncombe County was developed around the triple bottom line approach, wherein social, economic, and environmental impacts are considered. They have modified their land use application process to directly consider environmental considerations including slope, elevation and flood hazard areas. The county created a Conservation Zoning District to more readily identify lands, including federal lands that are permanently protected from development. They have recognized the need to work with regional planning efforts, in part to preserve the "unique mountain aesthetic."

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan theme of creating resilient, healthy forests promotes the aesthetic and ecologic qualities valued by Buncombe County. Geographic Area goals in the plan that relate to Buncombe County include managing the Big Ivy area in recognition of its unique features, and continuing to support scientific forestry research at Bent Creek Experimental Forest.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

The county's attention to hazards such as landslides and flooding, values such as viewsheds and attention to soil erosion and water quality are topics addressed in numerous sections of the forest plan. There have been numerous opportunities for county residents and others with concerns about the county to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. In addition, the forest

supervisor reached out directly to county commissioners and managers to hear their concerns on more than one occasion. This will continue into implementation of the forest plan.

## **Burke County**

### **Objectives**

Burke County is one of the eastern counties touched by the Pisgah National Forest. The *2016 County Land Use Plan* includes the following vision statement for the county: “The Burke County Land Use Plan seeks to promote planned economic, recreational, and residential growth in harmony with areas most suitable for development while preserving community character and protecting the county’s rural and natural areas.”

Two of the eight guiding principles in the plan are especially relevant to the forest plan. The first addresses promotion of outdoor recreation in natural areas including national forest lands. The second is “enhancing the health and well-being of the citizens of Burke County to include an aggressive parks, recreation, and trails strategy.”

The county was negatively affected by the recession of 2008. Its efforts to bring back industry include a focus on outdoor recreation, among other industries. Parks and state land make up over 23 percent of the county’s land base. They include the Pisgah National Forest Special Planning Area with reference to the Pisgah Loop Scenic Byway.

### **Compatibility**

Growing the tourism industry is Burke County’s first goal under Economic Development. The tourism industry is based on the natural and historic resources in the county. There was also reference to promoting a high quality of life, in part through access to the outdoors. The county’s environmental goal is: “To protect, support and enjoy Burke County’s natural environment, through stewardship of its natural resources, managing forest resources, and expanding recreational opportunities.” The county is working with the state and others to create a multi-use trail to connect Morganton, the county seat, to Asheville, including a section through the Pisgah National Forest. The county will partner with local, state and federal jurisdictions to promote expansion of existing and future greenways, long-range planning and recreation infrastructure improvements, with an eye to mutual benefits. The county references sustainable development in watershed and critical areas. They have an action item specifically addressing water quality improvement. The emphasis on outdoor recreation and resource protection in the county is compatible with the forest plan direction.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan will complement and benefit the county through the continuation of effective, long-term collaborative restoration and recreation management efforts. The emphasis on sustainable recreation will also benefit the county’s interest in sustainable recreation development.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

No conflicts were noted in the review of the Burke County Land Use Plan. There will continue to be opportunities for county planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Caldwell County**

### **Objectives**

Caldwell County is currently guided by their *Comprehensive Land Development Plan of 2007*, which will soon be updated. The purpose of the Caldwell County Plan is to ensure that Caldwell County continues to be a “great place to live, work, and play.” They note a desire for growth, and respect the unique character of their communities, mountains, rivers, and cultural heritage, while also respecting the rights of private property owners. Their mission statement includes a goal of providing their citizens an opportunity to realize the “American Dream” in which they specifically include “a clean and green environment.”

The Comprehensive Plan is based on common threads from five small-area plans reflecting the voice of those area communities. They note that the more than 50,000 acres of national forest within the county is a draw for the construction of new residences. New housing construction for retirees was referenced as a significant economic factor, especially in the general vicinity of the Pisgah National Forest boundary. Additionally, the Wilson Creek area is noted as a significant recreation draw, both of which contribute to greater demand for goods and services in that area. An excerpt from the county plan highlights the emphasis placed on natural resources: “It is important that we protect our natural resources and environment to ensure quality of life and recreational opportunity. These resources can’t ever be outsourced or duplicated overseas!” They list public lands and water resources as two important considerations for the county. They reference water quality and quantity as vital to the health and prosperity of the county. The county looks to their natural resources as one avenue to diversify their economy.

### **Compatibility**

The county’s first goal under the Land Use Residential Development heading is minimal impact to the natural environment, referencing protection of sensitive areas and watersheds, among other environmental factors. They list sensitivity to protecting viewsheds from light sources and ridgelines from development.

They reference the Boone Fork Equestrian and Mountain Biking Center as an expanded benefit to tourism in partnership with the national forest, referencing the draw of high adventure and nature-based travel. They are looking to expand their greenways and trail systems that includes the Wilson Creek Corridor Plan. They are interested in partnering with the Forest Service on large-scale recreation projects to increase the economic impact of these natural resources, including master plans for Wilson Creek and Boone Fork. The latter project includes more than 5,000 acres. They are also looking to multi-county and municipality projects for regional benefits. Caldwell County Environmental Department enforces the Caldwell County Stormwater and Erosion Control Ordinance for the county and municipalities. The county also instituted 14 emissions reductions strategies to address ozone and air quality concerns.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan is focused on creating healthy, resilient forests leading to long-term stability of the natural resources valued by the county. A healthier forest will be visually pleasing for the residents moving to the county for the aesthetic values. The Forest Service focus on partnering for sustainable recreation will further the recreation goals of the county. The county’s attention to water quality, soil erosion issues and air quality supports Forest Service management of those resources as well. The forest plan will complement and benefit the county through the continuation of effective, long-term

collaborative restoration and recreation management efforts. There is a management area in the forest plan for managing designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, including Wilson Creek.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

The forest plan takes into consideration the county's objectives within the Wilson Creek Master Plan, including connections to Collettsville through multiple greenways and blueways. The Forest Service agrees with the county on the need to address capacity concerns and economic impacts. Protecting the "authentic" character of the countryside is of major concern for the county. Presumably the forest is a valued part of that character, so a healthier forest will support the goal of protecting the character of the countryside. There will continue to be opportunities for county planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

### **Cherokee County**

The *Cherokee County Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan* draft was completed in 2014. Because it has not yet been adopted, the county requested it not be included in this review. In lieu of a county-specific plan, we reviewed the 2015 *Opt-In: Opportunity Initiative of Southwestern North Carolina* report, including Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain— and the Sovereign Nation of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). The project was facilitated by the Southwestern Commission Council of Governments. Please see the review of the 2015 Opt-In report within the Southwestern Commission review for reference to Cherokee County.

### **Clay County**

#### **Objectives**

The *2011-2021 Clay County Comprehensive Plan* notes that improving the economy while preserving the small town feel, rural character, and quality of life is of primary interest to county residents. They have adopted a regional opportunities concept to best address their needs within their abilities and constraints. Clay County and the region have similar natural features outdoor recreation opportunities, a shared cultural heritage, and overlapping events. Clay County plans to work with other communities to develop and market regional tourism opportunities.

The natural environment and scenic beauty are important to Clay County residents, as is a diverse public recreation system. Therefore, Clay County can protect sensitive environmental areas and meet future recreation goals through a system of greenways and natural parks. The natural resources in Clay County are vast and diverse. The Nantahala National Forest is 47 percent of their land base. Protecting and enhancing these resources improves public health, public safety, and quality of life. Clay County can take steps to better protect its natural resources without adding layers of new regulations. They note increasing coordination of efforts, education, and monitoring can make a big difference. The county's Watershed Protection Ordinance has restrictions and requirements related to density, buffers, erosion and sedimentation controls, and others. They have considered creating a local soil erosion and sedimentation program to protect surface waters, while currently operating under state guidelines. Attention to these natural resources is supportive of forest goals of protecting water quality. The county's three watershed areas – Fires Creek, Tusquittee Creek and Upper Nantahala, are primarily within the national forest boundary. They note that 33 species in the county are on the NC Endangered Species Act and numerous state Natural Heritage areas noted within and outside the forest boundary, which they recognize is a consideration for developers.

## **Compatibility**

The Clay County Comprehensive Planning Committee recommends implementation of an appropriate set of slope development regulations aimed at minimizing safety hazards—specifically actions that minimize the risk of property damage due to landslides, and life and property damage related to wildfires, and poor emergency access. The forest plan includes management actions that will reduce the risk of wildfires, and incorporate geological hazards into project design. The county also notes the increased threat of wildfire and its management in areas with steep slopes, due to the science of how fire spreads along with the challenge of providing safety along narrow, steep and winding roads. They praise the Forest Service Jackrabbit Recreation Area for bringing attention to the county. They are exploring ways to address the demand for more outdoor recreation.

## **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan will contribute to the county's vision and concerns through the creation of more resilient and healthier forest resources, so valued by the county. There are specific provisions in the plan to address the risk of wildfires and tools to compliment the work of the county to address wildland urban interface concerns. The forest plan also recognizes the importance of economic opportunities for areas around national forests, including the ever growing demand for outdoor recreation on public lands. The forest plan identifies Fires Creek watershed as a priority watershed for aquatic restoration activities, and the watershed is recognized via a Geographic Area goal for its recreational features.

## **Opportunities in Plan Development**

The county notes little concern between county and national forest lands – with the exception of the threat of wildfires, especially as development moves towards the national forest boundary. They note that 21 percent of the county is within the Forest Service Wildland Urban Interface designation. They have worked with the Forest Service to consider the creation of a community wildfire protection plan. They also note prescribed fire as a tool to address potential threats from wildfire. With the strong emphasis on partnerships and collaboration included throughout the forest plan, there will be a number of opportunities to work together to achieve mutual goals around resource protection, hazard mitigation and outdoor recreation.

## **Graham County**

### **Objectives**

Graham County participated in the *Opt-In, Opportunity Initiative of Southwestern North Carolina*, to create their *Gateway to Tomorrow Plan of Graham County* in 2015. This followed the 2013 Strategic Plan created by the Graham Revitalization Economic Action Team focusing on economic development, including emphasis on maintaining Appalachian culture and noting tourism based on natural assets as a key to local identity and economy. They note that capitalizing on the Nantahala National Forest, Great Smoky Mountains National Park and other cultural and natural features is key to their economic development. Graham County residents and visitors acknowledge the significant value of scenic resources. These landscapes are visually intact, iconic, and are noted for their contributions to a sense of place for residents and visitors. Nearly all of Graham County is forested. Over 64 percent of the county's land base is national forest and is seen as an asset. They state, "The unique character that the forest lands bring to Graham County cannot be underestimated, for their aesthetic, historic, and economic value." Though the county has no federally designated areas of critical habitat for endangered species, the county is very concerned about invasive species and actively working to address the problem.



Environmental hazards of concern include landslides, with the acknowledgment that they are a natural part of the landscape and can be exacerbated by development in areas with steep slopes. The Little Tennessee River valley and surrounding areas, in which Graham County is located, is one of the richest archaeological areas in the southeastern United States, since it was home to numerous prehistoric settlements. The area of Graham County is highly valued by the Cherokee people with one of the highest densities of historic sites in the country.

The county is looking to an expanded hardwoods business to significantly contribute to the local economy and notes public and private timber resources as potential for the growth of the industry. There is also a long history of hydroelectric projects in the county.

There was no reference to national forest lands in the *Graham County Strategic Tourism Plan Destination 2025* beyond general reference to the aesthetic and outdoor recreation opportunities in the area, considerations covered above, and the limitations created by and regulations associated with the presence of federal lands.

More recently Graham County summarized input on the forest planning process from county residents in the *Citizen Input, USFS Forest Plan Revision* document dated May 2017. Citizens offered locations for timber harvesting; roads on which they want access for recreation and safety; recreation opportunities; and a rating of numerous questions related to the county's economy and relationship to the forest. Key topics of concern gathered at that meeting included strong interest in more access to the forest, increasing the outdoor recreation industry, assuring an increase in local logging opportunities, a disinterest in new Wilderness designations in the county with concern for logging opportunities, and the need for maintenance of Forest Service recreation facilities to better serve tourists.

In October 2019, the county released *Graham County Outdoor Recreation, Economy-Building Strategy & Report* (GCOR). The report noted the economic values based on use of the surrounding public lands. There was also reference to seasonal closure of forest roads, shrinking budgets and aging volunteer workforce as obstacles related to the Forest Service. The county plans states "visitors who come with respect for, and seeking understanding of, the environment are preferred." The report also references creating more formal partnerships with public land managers, creating more avenues for influence in their infrastructure management and development plans. The report includes an "Economic Positioning Statement" that reads "Graham County stewards the natural environment as infrastructure and a platform for a wide variety of outdoor, nature-based recreation activities, opportunities for improved mental and physical health and a sustainable community economy. The natural environment/infrastructure is preserved and conserved as a critical economic asset to be used wisely."

## **Compatibility**

Graham County includes the following objectives that relate to the forest plan: the desire to preserve the rural character and rural residential areas in the county; increasing awareness of dangers of developing on steep slopes; and restrictions and increase in sustainable logging on public and institutional lands.

Areas of emphasis for the county include: Capitalize on the county's natural and scenic resources as its biggest economic driver; improve water quality including working with watershed organizations; use environmental best management practices in conjunction with new transportation projects; encourage site planning that respects the natural topography and avoids mass grading where feasible; and incorporate Cherokee people and Graham County heritage into future public works projects. There is also the list of current issues listed above reflecting a broadening view of economic opportunities and traditional values of the forest. The emphasis on outdoor recreation and resource protection in the county is noted as such in the GCOR: The focus of the report included non-motorized recreation and noted priorities to activities that "appreciate, maintain and even preserve or restore qualities of nature

and natural communities- diversity, topography, geology, smells, sounds.” This is compatible with the forest plan direction.

There is reference to connecting Forest Service trails with communities within the county. The plan references working with the Forest Service to complete the local section of the Corridor K project.

### **Plan Contributions**

One key theme of the forest plan is connecting people to the land. The *2015 Gateway to Tomorrow Plan* has a wide range of examples of connecting residents and visitors to the land in their communities and surrounding forests. The outdoor recreation elements of the county’s economic development goals fit well into the forest plan. Additionally, safety is one of the four pillars of the forest plan. The forest plan will complement and benefit the county through the continuation of effective, long-term collaborative restoration and recreation management efforts. The forest plan specifically mentions Geographic Area goals for emphasizing water-based recreation near Fontana Lake; providing sustainable access and opportunities to support the local economy along lakeshores that do not compromise scenic or recreational experiences; working with local government and tourism organizations to support additionally access in winter months; and goals for Cherohala Skyway, Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest, the Appalachian Trail, Bartram Trail, Benton MacKaye Trail, high elevation balds, and more.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There may be an opportunity at the forest project level to more directly link to the planned Young America Outdoor Recreation Park, trails that link to communities, and other projects and opportunities listed in the GCOR. There have been numerous opportunities for county residents and others to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. In addition, the forest supervisor reached out directly to county commissioners and managers to hear their concerns on more than one occasion. There will continue to be opportunities for county planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Haywood County**

### **Objectives**

The *Haywood County 2007 Systemwide Parks and Recreation Master Plan* notes there are approximately 70,000 acres of national forest within Haywood County, with nearly one third of the county’s total acreage within the Pisgah National Forest and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Additionally, the Nantahala National Forest is in close proximity to the county. They list the Nantahala National Forest as providing a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities and as one of several factors that support the area as a potentially prominent tournament sport destination. This plan focused on developed recreation opportunities, rather than undeveloped or more natural settings like forest trails. There was no reference to connecting greenways to forest service lands or recreation opportunities.

Additional input was gathered from a review of the 2015 *Opt-In: Opportunity Initiative of Southwestern North Carolina* report, including Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain and the Sovereign Nation of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). The project was facilitated by the Southwestern Commission Council of Governments. Please see the review within the Commission review for reference to Haywood County.

### **Compatibility**

There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility with county plans.

## **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan will move toward sustainable recreation opportunities in the area, addressing the county's interest in outdoor recreation. The forest plan will also complement and benefit the county through the continuation of effective, long-term collaborative restoration and recreation management efforts. The forest plan includes specific goals for restoring forest structure and diversity outside of designated wilderness areas to improve forest resilience; protecting wilderness values in the area that might be impacted by high visitation; improving game and nongame wildlife habitat for hunting and wildlife viewing; and maintaining or improving wildlife habitat for hellbenders and native brook trout, to name a few.

## **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents of the county and others with concerns about the county to attend public meetings throughout the Forest Plan revision process. In addition, the Forest Supervisor reached out directly to Haywood County Commissioners and managers to hear their concerns on more than one occasion. There was a face-to-face meeting in April, 2017, along with follow-up communications and a draft plan review meeting offered. There will continue to be opportunities for county planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Henderson County**

### **Objectives**

Approximately 12 percent of Henderson County is listed as conserved forestland. Three of the seven elements of the *Henderson County 2020 Comprehensive Plan* mission statement link to forest planning, including: the protection of life and property, to stimulate economic growth and regional cooperation and to balance the preservation and utilization of all their resources. Additionally several of the county's key principles may be addressed in the forest plan, including: high quality of life; sustaining their heritage, culture and traditions; economic sustainability; environmental sustainability; and regional coordination and collaboration.

They list two plan-relevant attributes of quality of life as: pristine, biologically diverse natural environment; and rural landscape with scenic vistas. The county aims to balance growth with a sensitivity to impacts on the natural environment, while taking a comprehensive approach to planning that links physical, environmental, economic, social and cultural issues.

Hendersonville draws its water from reservoirs in the Pisgah National Forest and from the Mills River, whose headwaters are within the national forest. The county survey of residents indicated high agreement that a visually attractive community and a clean natural environment are necessary for economic growth. Residents are concerned about the potential impact to quality of life that may occur with increased tourism. It was noted there was very little interest among the public in government involvement in economic development activities.

The county lists recreation services as including greenways, attracting tourists, creating economic opportunities and contributing to a better quality of life. The county will create a recreation plan in order to continue to promote recreation in a way sensitive to its residents' concerns. The county noted that publicly owned lands can be an impediment since they are removed from opportunities for development, but they can contribute to a higher quality of life making the area more attractive to tourists, businesses and residents. They also recognize the value of recreation, natural resources, water supply and other services. They define a sustainable economy as diverse, with local focus and within

natural and social limits. The county will continue to explore ways to promote tourism that highlights their heritage and important recreational, cultural and historic resources.

The county notes an interest in environmental stability while promoting economic viability and social equity and minimizing impacts to the natural environment. The county acknowledges the need to maintain sensitive natural areas and minimize the impact on the landscape and natural processes.

Along with reference to required conservation measures such as restrictions relating to steep slopes, they state they will maintain a 30-foot stream setback requirement and streamside vegetation requirements. The Henderson County Land Development Code lists primary and secondary Conservation Areas to address issues around steep slopes, floodplains, historic and archaeological sites, and natural areas with special ecological interest. The Code also outlines guidance for soil erosion and sedimentation control, water quality, mountain ridges and other natural resources management considerations.

### **Compatibility**

The county states they will work with Federal and State agencies to manage boundaries with public lands and facilities. The forest plan will help protect and improve the natural resources and their benefits noted by the county. The forest plan will also move toward sustainable recreation opportunities in the area, addressing the county's reliance on tourism. The Mills River watershed is recognized as a priority watershed in the forest plan where activities will be undertaken to maintain or improve watershed conditions. The forest plan has a goal to provide high quality water sources for municipal watersheds and focus management area activities on reducing sedimentation and other negative impacts to water quality while sustaining forest health.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines a path that restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit the county by contributing to local economies based on outdoor recreation, tourism and the scenic values of residents. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with the county and other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

The county lost 640 acres per year of forest canopy cover from 1992-2001. The county notes concerns raised by this type of deforestation as potential destruction of scenic vistas, fragmentation of habitat and loss of species diversity, threats to water and air quality, and the loss of open space and other aesthetic qualities, among other concerns not directly related to forest plan management. The county is experiencing parcelization in areas surrounded by national forest which may lead to increased wildland urban interface concerns for the county and national forest.

## **Jackson County**

### **Objectives**

The *Jackson County Land Use Plan 2040* examines and projects existing and future development and growth trends. The county recognizes and values their natural resources as evidence in the numerous references within their vision statement. The Plan includes goals for Public Health, Education, Infrastructure, Natural Resources, Housing, Economic Development, Transportation, Recreation, Land Use and Cultural Resources. The planning elements of Natural Resources and Land Use are the most directly linked to forest management.

The Natural Resources and Land Use goals include: preserve habitat for identified endangered species; preserve and protect natural habitats and corridors for migrating wildlife; encourage development that minimizes impervious surfaces; encourage development that is compatible with the natural environment; limit commercial and industrial development along the Tuckasegee River and other trout waters; protect the county's natural view-scape; and ensure that the county is Dark Sky compliant.

The county's economic development goals include reference to tourism and quality of life objectives. An objective for Cultural Resources is to recognize and document past and present historic and cultural events.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan compliments the objectives of Jackson County planning efforts through conservation of the natural resources within the county and within national forest boundary while benefitting neighboring lands. The forest plan is also compatible with the county's interest in tourism and quality of life. The forest plan recognizes three 6<sup>th</sup> level priority watersheds of the Tuckasegee River as priority watersheds for restoration and has a geographic area goal to enhance native brook trout.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan contributes to the achievement of a number of diverse objectives identified in the plan. The Forest Service has made a concerted effort to include the interests and needs of the communities surrounding the Nantahala and Pisgah Forests, including attention to economic impacts and benefits to counties. The forest plan outlines guidance for sustainable recreation management which ties into Jackson County's interest in expanding eco-tourism. Additionally, the goals of protecting endangered and significant species, and wildlife corridors works in concert with Forest Service efforts. Protection of sensitive areas, watersheds, trout habitat and use of best management practices to protect natural resources are also compatible with Forest management objectives.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

As with areas across the plan area, the forest plan revision process has included extensive outreach to stakeholders in rural and traditional communities within Jackson County. The forest supervisor reached out to each of the eighteen counties within the planning area, and met with Jackson County commissioners. Forest Service personnel have offered information on how the forest plan revision process has progressed throughout the planning process, incorporating local government input into the drafts, and will continue to do so throughout the plan implementation process.

## **Macon County**

### **Objectives**

The *Macon County Comprehensive Plan* was originally adopted in 2011 and a revised draft was released in 2016. The county's guiding principles include: preserve our mountain heritage; maximize the welfare of our citizens; allow the natural environment to flourish; sustain economic vitality and allow our economy to grow in a way that does not compromise the rural heritage, and pristine natural environment of Macon County. They note their heritage of honor and pride, along with the high value they place on the county's natural attributes. They state, "We must work together to ensure that the beauty of our landscape is preserved and the natural assets in Macon County are protected." They express concern that economic development does not come at a cost to these other values. The county has zoning regulations only in the municipalities of Franklin and Highlands. Additionally there are ordinances to protect "critical areas" in other parts of the county to include floodplains, watersheds, protected ridgelines and agricultural lands.

Macon County is interested in promoting tourism and economic development through trout fishing opportunities in Mountain Heritage Trout Waters.

### **Compatibility**

The *Macon County Comprehensive Plan* is focused on public and private lands within the more developed areas in the county. There is little reference to national forest lands within the plan. There is reference to the value placed on the natural beauty of the area. There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility between county and forest plans.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan will create healthier and more resilient forests adding to the natural beauty of the county. The forest plan includes Geographic Area goals to work with local communities, counties and chambers of commerce; enhance native trout habitat and stream passage for aquatic organisms; maintain and balance access for a diverse range of recreation opportunities, settings and experiences; respond to demand for quality hunting opportunities; and restore and maintain age class and structural diversity, and more.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

Working collaboratively to increase trout fishing may provide the economic benefit the county is seeking while preserving the natural resources associated with increased fishing. There have been numerous opportunities for residents of the county and others with concerns about the county to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. In addition, the forest supervisor reached out directly to county commissioners and managers to hear their concerns on more than one occasion. There was a face-to-face meeting in June, 2017, along with follow-up communications and a draft plan review meeting offered. There will continue to be opportunities for county planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Madison County**

### **Objectives**

The things people value about their communities in Madison County include natural resources and beauty – mountains, rivers, trees, nature, scenic views, clean water and good drinking water, and rich heritage. These values are reflected in the 2010 *Madison County Comprehensive Plan*. Madison County's north and northwest sections contain a large amount of Forest Service land, accounting for 16 percent of the total land area in the county. The remaining land is almost all in private ownership. The county notes the important habitat provided by large tracts of land, especially for larger animals and for plants such as ginseng and goldenseal which need larger and less disturbed forest areas to survive.

They reference the wide range of valued outdoor recreational activities, including hiking, fishing, hunting, rafting/kayaking, horseback riding and camping enjoyed on neighboring national forest lands. There is an interconnected network of trails, including the Appalachian Trail, which runs across the northern part of the county. The county lists its primary economic drivers as outdoor recreation; and heritage and cultural tourism. There is a strong desire to maintain the rural character of the county in the midst of growth and development. They look to partnerships between public and private entities to find creative solutions to accomplish this goal. Additionally, in the *Madison County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan 2015* they note an interest in continuing to work with the Forest Service to identify opportunities for improved facilities at trailheads and campsites to improve safety for residents and visitors.

## **Compatibility**

The county lists a preference to leave large, unfragmented natural areas intact – through education, incentives and requirements. Fragmentation of the landscape reduces the diversity of wildlife and contributes to the degradation of water resources. The county emphasizes the preservation of land for outdoor recreation and for the education of the general public; the protection of a relatively natural habitat for fish, wildlife, plants or similar ecosystems; the preservation of open space, for preservation of historical sites and recreational opportunities. The emphasis on outdoor recreation and resource protection in the county is compatible with the forest plan direction. The forest plan is also compatible with the county plan with specific issues including the value the county places on the proper management of their natural resources and the scenic beauty of the area.

## **Plan Contributions**

National forest lands provide large blocks of land that complement the county's efforts to maintain wildlife habitat and water resources. The forest plan includes Geographic Areas to highlight elements of the landscape valued by local communities and others. The Bald Mountain Geographic Area acknowledges the value placed on the beauty and recreation opportunities in the area. The forest plan includes a chapter on public involvement and references collaboration and partnerships, an interest noted in the Madison County Plan. The forest plan includes a specific management area for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. The forest plan also includes direction for sustainable natural resource and recreation management to provide those benefits into the future.

## **Opportunities in Plan Development**

A large number of parcels under private ownership are adjacent to national forest lands. The North Carolina Forest Service (NCFS) has developed a comprehensive education and implementation program which provides details on construction and landscaping practices and selective clearing to reduce the risk of structural fire damage as the result of a wildlands fire designed for use by communities. The forest plan addresses wildfire risks including working with partners such as the NCFS to help county residents to prevent risks to human safety and loss of property.

Madison County's economy is primarily made up of outdoor recreation and heritage and cultural tourism. The county's main assets and strengths include its wealth of natural resources, scenic beauty, cultural heritage, outdoor recreation opportunities, and strong tourism, business and community organizations. Two of the four pillars of the forest plan address the county's strengths and assets and include: Sustainable Recreation and Restoring and Maintaining Healthy Forests. These pillars are seen throughout the forest plan and support the values of the county.

## **McDowell County**

### **Objectives**

McDowell County Planning and Land Use Ordinances were reviewed, as a comprehensive plan was not provided or found. The *Lake James Protection Ordinance of 2016* outlines the natural and social elements to be protected within 250 feet of the Reference Line of Lake James. The Reference Line is the Duke Power Company Lake James Project Boundary of 1,200 feet above mean sea level. Those protections include negative impacts to water quality, public safety, aesthetics, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreational use. Impacts may include siltation or impacts to fish populations, for example. The county requires control of sedimentation and erosion by following the best management practices set forth by the state. The county *Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance* addresses floodplain planning, hazard mitigation and safety from floods. The county *Watershed Ordinance* protects the public water

supply for the county. All three ordinances result in protections to natural resources as a secondary benefit to the dominant objectives of health, safety and protection of property.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan compliments the objectives of McDowell County planning efforts through conservation of the natural resources within the county within national forest boundary and benefitting neighboring lands.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan will conserve and follow similar management practices as the county and state best management practices referenced above, on lands that adjoin public lands and non-public lands resources within the county. The Lake James-Catawba River is identified as a priority watershed in the forest plan.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents of the county and others with concerns about the county to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. In addition, the forest supervisor reached out directly to county commissioners and managers to hear their concerns on more than one occasion. There was a face-to-face meeting in April, 2017, along with follow-up communications and a draft plan review meeting offered. There will continue to be opportunities for county planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Mitchell County**

### **Objectives**

The *Mitchell Works: An Economic Development Strategic Plan for Mitchell County, NC 2016 (Mitchell Works Plan)*, lists 7 economic development foundations for the county, including Tourism. They note the assets of the natural beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities in the county, with a recommendation to expand outdoor recreation including hunting and fishing opportunities. Roan Mountain in the Pisgah National Forest is at the county's northern border, and is important for its natural resources and for recreation opportunities. The county has the Blue Ridge Parkway at its southern border and that also attracts tourists. The north fork of the Toe River is a recreation resource for fishing. They reference expanding education about resource protection within their section on Agriculture, listing state and local partners.

The NC High Country Council of Governments (COG) created a long range plan for its seven-county region, four of which are within the forest planning area, including Mitchell County. The regional plan was referenced for this review and is included in the High Country COG review below. A *Community Understanding Report (CUR)* was created in 2014 as part of the regional long range plan. The CUR lists natural resources as an important part of the county's identity and economy, especially as relates to recreation and tourism. Significant hardwood forests are prevalent in Mitchell County as are mineral resources as noted in the *Mitchell CUR*.

A review of the Mitchell County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) is also included below in the High Country COG planning reviews.

### **Compatibility**

There is no conflict between the plans found associated with Mitchell County and the forest plan.



## **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines a path that will restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit the county by contributing to local economies based on outdoor recreation, tourism and scenic values of residents. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape. The forest plan has direction specific to Roan Mountain and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

## **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents of the county and others with concerns about the county to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. In addition, the forest supervisor reached out directly to county commissioners and managers to hear their concerns on more than one occasion. There was a face-to-face meeting in October, 2017, along with follow-up communications and a draft plan review meeting offered. There will continue to be opportunities for county planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Swain County**

### **Objectives**

Swain County drafted a *Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Facilities Plan 2018-2028*. This draft plan focuses on National Park federal lands and does not reference Forest Service lands.

### **Compatibility**

There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility between the Forest Service and county plans.

## **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines a path that will restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit the county by contributing to local economies based on outdoor recreation, tourism and scenic values of residents. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape. The forest plan's geographic area goals for the Fontana Lake, Nantahala Mountains and Great Balsam GA emphasize on opportunities in the greater Swain area, including promoting access to support the local economy; restoring and maintaining age class and structural diversity, and reducing offsite species; maintaining and balancing access for a diversity of recreation opportunities; responding to demand for high quality hunting opportunities, and more.

## **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents of the county and others with concerns about the county to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. In addition, the forest supervisor reached out directly to county commissioners and managers to hear their concerns on more than one occasion. There was a face-to-face meeting in June, 2017, along with follow-up communications and a draft plan review meeting offered. There will continue to be opportunities for county planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Transylvania County**

The Pisgah National Forest has an active membership on the Transylvania County Natural Resource Council. The 15-member Council was created in 2004 to identify and inventory the natural resources

significant to the county and to make recommendations to commissioners on how to best manage those resources. The Council meets monthly to discuss natural resource topics. The community is very active in activities that coordinate with the USFS, including leading two visitor safety campaigns on topics such as waterfall safety. The community is also active in providing grants that improve trails on the Pisgah Ranger District.

## **Objectives**

Transylvania County's vision statement as noted in the *2025 Comprehensive Plan* is "Through leadership and community engagement, Transylvania County preserves the county's natural beauty and cultural resources while developing our built environment to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of our county." Two of the four focal areas in the plan relevant to forest planning are: Environment Health (forests; water quality; agriculture; flora and fauna biodiversity); and Land Use and Livability (land development; floodplain; public safety; zoning/ordinances). The natural environment is listed as one of the county's greatest attributes, drawing tourists from around the world. It also poses some of the county's greatest challenges. Thirty-seven percent of the county is federal- or state-owned land, and is out of the tax base, except for Payments in Lieu of Taxes and Secure Rural Schools funds.

Tourism and outdoor related businesses have grown. Several businesses take advantage of the Pisgah National Forest and other nearby public lands. Tourism, with a focus in part on the county's outdoor resources, continues to grow. The larger waterways provide opportunities for fishing, paddling and tubing. The county has a large biking community that uses over 300 miles of gravel and single-track bike trails in the Pisgah National Forest and DuPont State Recreational Forest. The City of Brevard has developed local bike paths that connect parts of Brevard with Pisgah National Forest and other points of interest. According to a recent USDA 2015 report, Transylvania County is identified as having a "recreation economy."

Additionally there are valuable forest products, including timber, tree bark and the diversity of tree species adding to the scenic values. The economic gain from timber resources is significant for the county. Transylvania County has abundant natural resources that are also important for the preservation of the county's culture and quality of life. Some of the future action steps listed within the county plan include; encourage use of best management practices to limit negative environmental impact, such as air and water pollution; and an economic focus to support marketing campaigns that promote the French Broad River and other outdoor recreational opportunities.

## **Compatibility**

As with the forest plan, the county intends to promote collaboration between private, nonprofit and public agencies at the local and regional levels to benefit the county's sensitive areas and significant natural resources. The county also suggests an approach similar to the Forest Service shared-stewardship approach, encouraging responsible resource management on public and private lands throughout the county. The county proposes proactive steps to support the health of the natural resources by discouraging habitat fragmentation and encouraging use of native and nectar plants in public and private landscaping. They intend to coordinate efforts with other agencies, jurisdictions and stakeholders throughout the county to make possible the preservation of historical and cultural resources. The county will help preserve "significant lands and scenic areas." The county will review and update existing ordinances as needed to facilitate development that preserves forests, prime agricultural lands, sensitive areas and natural resources including the native flora and fauna. The forest plan is compatible with the Transylvania County plans to properly manage their natural resources and the scenic beauty of the area. They have also listed the preservation of environmentally and culturally significant areas, also

compatible with the forest plan, along with the emphasis on outdoor recreation and general resource protection.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines desired future conditions, objectives, goals and strategies that will support the Transylvania County's objectives of preserving the natural environment for all the benefits outlined in the county plan. There are also components of the forest plan that target sustainable recreation management and address sustainable forest products, both of which are expressed as valued by the county. The Forest Plan includes goals to emphasize management actions that sustain and enhance high quality recreation experiences with a focus on visitor safety, improving access and reducing impacts to natural resources; improving coordination with local governments, volunteer organizations, and nongovernmental organizations and working with volunteers and partners to meet critical needs; sustain and improve aquatic habitat; provide high quality water sources for municipal watersheds; sustaining oak species across a range of age classes, contributing to game and non-game habitat, and more.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

The forest plan includes sustainable recreation components that may be referenced as the county expands their recreational programs and facilities to capitalize on the abundant natural resources found in the county. There have been numerous opportunities for county residents, planners, and leaders to offer input to the forest planning process. There will continue to be opportunities for county planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Watauga County**

### **Objectives**

The *Watauga County Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Systemwide Plan 2010-2019* was provided by the High Country Council of Governments and reviewed. The plan references the North Carolina Recreation Enabling law and the importance the state places on the availability of recreation for the wellbeing of its citizens. Many resource-based recreation facilities in Watauga County are along the Blue Ridge Parkway and include the newer Elk Knob and Grandfather Mountain State Parks. Because of these state and federal facilities, and others in neighboring counties, Watauga County has focused more on user-oriented facilities.

The plan references the natural features of the county as providing recreation opportunities such as scenic views and enjoyment of wildlife. Topography is especially significant in Watauga County because the geographic features themselves (e.g. mountains, rivers) are recreation facilities, and usually accessible with only minimum support facilities. They reference the Watauga and New Rivers along with Hanging Rock, Grandfather and Beech Mountains, as recreation draws.

The county notes the range of recreation activities popular with their constituents including a range from visiting a primitive area and hunting, to visiting nature centers, and they are planning to position themselves as one of the top outdoor recreation destinations in the country.

### **Compatibility**

They note the Boone Greenway Trail and the Mountains-to-Sea Trail located along the Blue Ridge Parkway with easy access from numerous communities within the county. The plan notes the popularity of activities usually considered to be tourism-oriented: natural scenery, sightseeing, historic sites, wildlife, etc., acknowledging these activities are generally facilitated by state and federal entities while benefiting the county with little effort on their part. The emphasis on outdoor recreation and resource

protection in the county is compatible with forest plan direction. Though there is very little Forest Service land within the county, a Forest Service trail links the county to the Curtis Creek area with multiple recreation opportunities within Caldwell County.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan will provide sustainable recreation opportunities throughout the planning area. Multiple recreation opportunities within the Pisgah National Forest are in close proximity to and serve recreationists from the Watauga County area. The forest plan has a management area specific to the Blue Ridge Parkway corridor, and includes plan direction for national trails like the Mountains-To-Sea Trail.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

Watauga County recognizes it is perceived as falling behind other counties in providing recreation opportunities and notes the desire of its constituents to provide recreation opportunities throughout the county. There have been numerous opportunities for residents of the county and others with concerns about the county to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. In addition, the forest supervisor reached out directly to county commissioners and managers to hear their concerns on more than one occasion. There will continue to be opportunities for county planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Yancey County**

### **Objectives**

There are over 30,000 acres of Pisgah National Forest land within Yancey County. In lieu of a comprehensive plan, the 2008 *Comprehensive Transportation Plan for Yancey County and the Town of Burnsville* was referenced. The county is well known as a tourist destination for outdoor recreation and this continues to be a major segment of the local economy with both state and federal lands located there. Bicycle enthusiasts gather annually for the “Assault on Mt. Mitchell,” an annual bike race originating in the City of Marion and following North Carolina Highway 80 to the Blue Ridge Parkway to access Mt. Mitchell.

### **Compatibility**

The emphasis on outdoor recreation in the county is compatible with the forest plan direction. There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility with county plans.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan will contribute to the goals of Yancey County by creating a more resilient and healthy forest leading to a more scenic forest, valued by their constituents. The forest plan will also move toward sustainable recreation opportunities on forest lands in the area, addressing the county’s reliance on travel and eco-tourism. The plan recognizes Mountain Mitchell State Park as a major tourism destination and forest access point and emphasizes opportunities to partner to ensure recreation linkages and high-quality conservation education opportunities.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents of Yancey County and others with concerns about the county to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. In addition, the forest supervisor reached out directly to county commissioners and managers to hear their concerns on more than one occasion. There was a face-to-face meeting in October, 2017, along with follow-up

communications and a draft plan review meeting offered. There will continue to be opportunities for county planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## Municipalities

Western North Carolina is a predominantly rural region that boasts the richness of the Southern Appalachian Mountains, one of the most biodiverse areas in the world. This biodiversity and the region's topography creates an abundance of natural beauty in the area and much of the draw for tourists from population bases such as Atlanta, Greenville-Spartanburg, Raleigh-Durham, Charlotte, Chattanooga and Knoxville. There is also a rich heritage in the planning area including Cherokee historic and current tribal lands and culture and Scots-Irish settlements, to name two influences. The local towns and communities, some of which are surrounded by national forest, take great pride in their lands and communities, many families having resided in the area for seven or more generations.

This is a review of strategic and comprehensive management plans for communities within the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests Land Management Plan area. In their plans, many municipalities focus on their developed core areas, rather than surrounding public lands. The municipalities vary in size and proximity to public lands and were chosen based, in large part, on input from the regional Councils of Governments in the planning area. A letter requesting their plans was sent to more than 30 municipalities in the planning area. Eleven responded and other's plans were found through web research when available. Rather than a fully inclusive review of all communities in the eighteen-county planning area, this is meant to be representative of community concerns that should be considered in the plan review process.

The list of municipalities is included in the introduction of this appendix (see Table 1) and are addressed in alphabetical order below. As with the counties, the review of individual municipalities includes the objectives and overview of their management plans, ways in which they are compatible and interrelated with the forest plan, how the plan contributes to local objectives, and opportunities for the forest plan to address common objectives and potential areas of conflict.

## Town of Andrews

### Objectives

The Town of Andrews in Cherokee County takes pride in their history, which is rich with railroad history as well as Native American influences and the impact of the removal of the Cherokee Indians in the 1880s. The Cherokee Preservation Foundation is a local resource whose focus is to help improve the quality of life, economic opportunities, natural environment, and preserve the culture of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). They provide economic support to EBCI members, as well as outreach into the rural schools.

The Town of Andrews' *Town Plan 2035 Comprehensive Land Use & Master Plan* notes the economic benefit of the nearby Nantahala River Gorge and the local Valley River. The local valley topography is unlike the more common mountainous terrain of the area and lends itself to agriculture, recreation, transportation facilities, and growth. The valley hosts more municipal, county and private recreational facilities and opportunities than many municipalities its size. They note a successful outdoor adventure and camp business along with a service project program that accomplishes projects for low-income residents and related organizations. The town is also within 10-20 minutes of a wide variety of outdoor adventure opportunities. Additionally, Andrews acknowledges the value and growth in the Heritage Tourism industry.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the known values of the Town of Andrews regarding use and appreciation of their natural surroundings and outdoor recreation opportunities. The Town's interest in promoting Heritage Tourism is also compatible with the direction taken by the forest plan.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines a path that will restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit the Town of Andrews by contributing to local economies based on outdoor recreation, tourism and scenic values of residents. Cultural and heritage resources are addressed in the forest plan, with an eye toward supporting preservation of those resources. The forest plan also supports the economic benefits that result from heritage tourism. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for Town planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **City of Asheville**

### **Objectives**

The City of Asheville created its *2018 Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan* to continue to guide the growth of the city while preserving its authenticity. The city intends to be a leader in climate change resiliency, including planning around potential hazards and decreasing its direct negative impact on climate. The city's water source primarily originates on the Pisgah National Forest. The city is addressing natural hazards by minimizing exposure and increasing adaptive capacity such as updating its steep slopes ordinance and enhancing streamside buffers. The city lists numerous strategies for protecting its land and water assets. In valuing the benefits of the region, the city suggests participating and even leading efforts to protect the region's natural landscapes, hillsides, waterways, sensitive habitats and agricultural lands.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the City of Asheville Plan including protection of the natural resources that the city clearly values. There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility with the city plan.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines a path that will restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit the City of Asheville by contributing to local economies based on outdoor recreation, tourism and scenic values of residents. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for city planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Town of Beech Mountain**

### **Objectives**

Beech Mountain expresses a high regard for its natural setting and resources in its *Comprehensive Plan 2013-2030*. The town's vision statement lists a commitment to protecting its environment and ecology to which its success as a resort destination is attributed. The economy is dependent on tourism, recreation and real estate. The town values outdoor recreation for its significant contributions to its economy as well as the well-being of its residents. The town will expand and improve its extensive trail system and now offers mountain biking on ski slopes during warm months to expand their market. Additionally the town is creating a plan to conserve open spaces. They name the beauty of the surrounding forest as a key economic driver along with the environmental benefits of a healthy forest.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the Town of Beech Mountain Plan including the value the town places on the proper management of their natural resources and the scenic beauty of the area. The emphasis on the economic benefits of tourism and recreation with a sensitivity for resource protection is compatible with the forest plan direction. There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility with the town plan.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines a path that will restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit the Town of Beech Mountain's outdoor recreation economy and address residents' value of the natural landscape surrounding the town. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

Beech Mountain faces unique mountaintop challenges in protecting their water source and its quality. They recognize the threat of landslides on their steep slopes, though they don't have additional restrictions beyond the state laws. The forest plan incorporates geological hazards into project design, where it is possible to address this risk. There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for county planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Town of Black Mountain**

### **Objectives**

The *2014 Comprehensive Plan Update* for the Town of Black Mountain calls for the protection of trees, environmentally sensitive lands and open spaces. The town believes the quality of life and local economy depend on the natural resources in their vicinity and note its rich biodiversity. The plan states that Black Mountain has several ordinances in its Land Use Code designed to preserve the natural resources and landscapes, open spaces, trees, mountain ecology, and town viewshed. They also have provisions to address flooding. There are numerous references to outdoor recreation opportunities including an extensive network of trails and plans to expand the greenways program. Tourism is listed as one of the town's economic drivers.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the Town of Black Mountain plan including the value the town places on the proper management of their wooded areas and other natural resources. The emphasis on the economic benefits of tourism and outdoor recreation is compatible with the forest plan direction. There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility with the town plan.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines a path that will restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit the Town of Black Mountain's outdoor recreation economy and address residents' value of the natural landscape surrounding the town. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for Town planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Town of Blowing Rock**

### **Objectives**

The 2014 *Comprehensive Plan Update Town of Blowing Rock* notes that the town is surrounded by outdoor recreational opportunities and breathtaking scenery. They list local cultural attributes as including unique architecture, natural landscape, tourism-based economy and small town charm, contributing to a high quality of life and draw for visitors. Natural beauty and resources are emphasized in their vision statement noting they will provide abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation and preserve the culture of the area, including the influences of the mountain setting. They will continue to rely on the economic benefits of tourism and outdoor recreation. The Town is planning to expand walking and bicycle facilities to connect to the broader region. They look to expand and enhance their reputation as an outdoor recreation destination. They intend to minimize the environmental impacts of development on scenic views and the natural landscape with a focus on both preserving the quality of natural resources and minimizing future costs associated with natural hazards and environmental degradation. They also note measures to reduce potential flooding with a look toward environmentally sustainable practices. A central tenet for the Town is to preserve its unique historical and cultural background and sense of place.

### **Compatibility**

The emphasis on outdoor recreation and resource protection in the county is compatible with the forest plan direction. There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility with the Town's plan.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan will contribute to the Town's goals by creating a more resilient and healthy forest leading to a more scenic forest, which is so highly valued by their residents. It will also move toward sustainable recreation opportunities in the area, addressing the Town's reliance on outdoor recreation. The forest plan will complement and benefit the town through the continuation of effective, long-term collaborative restoration and recreation management efforts.



## **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for Town planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented. They note tourism as an important part of their economy and acknowledge the need to minimize its impact on the environment.

## **Town of Boone**

### **Objectives**

The *Town of Boone 2006 Comprehensive Plan Update* attributes local topography and streams as key to the success and popularity of their greenways. They note tourism as an important part of their economy and acknowledge the need to minimize the “wear and tear” it causes on the environment. They list environmental quality as one objective among others that have a more urban focus. They note greenways serve the multiple objectives of open space preservation, transportation, recreation, floodplain management, wildlife conservation, and a multitude of other purposes. They list the following elements of consideration under Environmental Quality: protection of water quality; controlling development in sensitive areas (floodplains, ridge tops, areas of excessive slope, or wetland areas); water and energy conservation; other sources of pollution (excessive noise, odor, air, water and light pollution). They also mapped “protected” and “critical” areas of the town’s watershed. The Town has been pro-active in floodplain management and open space preservation for 25 years.

### **Compatibility**

The emphasis on outdoor recreation and resource protection in the county is compatible with the forest plan direction. There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility with Town of Boone’s plans.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan will contribute to the Town’s goals by moving toward sustainable recreation opportunities in the area, addressing the town’s interest in outdoor recreation. The forest plan will complement and benefit the town through the continuation of effective, long-term collaborative restoration and recreation management efforts.

## **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for Town planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **City of Brevard**

### **Objectives**

The *City of Brevard 2015 Comprehensive Plan* elements include Environmental Health. The City notes the wealth and value of the natural setting and waterways of the area. They acknowledge the scenic values, ecological sensitivity and safety issues surrounding the floodplains and steep slopes in the area. They note the development pressures on their limited available lands will put pressure on the above-mentioned unsuitable lands. They also note that a key challenge will be balancing development demand with environmental sustainability. The Pisgah National Forest is included in a list of current partners.

The City has a monitoring program in place to follow progress toward environmental health in these areas: water quality of urban creeks and the French Broad River; biodiversity of surrounding ecosystems; and accomplishing their goal of Bicycle Friendly Community award level.

The City plan includes the following goal: “Through appropriate conservation and preservation measures that protect the health and sustainability of the environment and our abundant natural resources, Brevard will: successfully preserve our woods and water for future generations; promote our world-class natural resources as an asset; prevent development in environmentally sensitive and critical areas.”

### **Compatibility**

The City of Brevard clearly values the benefits gained from healthy, sustainable natural resources management and use in their area. The forest plan is compatible with Brevard’s plan including the value the city places on the proper management of their natural resources and the scenic beauty of the area.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines a path that will restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit Brevard’s outdoor recreation economy and address residents’ value of the natural landscape. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

The City intends to look for new ways to connect to national forest lands. There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for City planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

### **Town of Bryson City**

Bryson City is the county seat of Swain County. The *2007 Bryson City Land Development Plan* was designed to guide the town for the subsequent 20-25 years. They note 75 percent of the land base in the county is federal which limits the amount of growth and management flexibility. They note the importance of working with the county to leverage resources. They are transitioning from a traditional resource extraction, manufacturing and agriculture economy to one based primarily on information and services. Forest plan-related references can be found in the Swain County and Southwestern Commission plan reviews herein.

### **Town of Burnsville**

The *CTP Plan Study Report for Yancey County and Town of Burnsville*, was available for review and noted the significance of outdoor recreation in the county, referencing state and federal parklands as a factor. It also listed the amount of public lands and steep slopes as a factor in population growth potential or restriction. Forest plan-related references can be found in the Yancey County and Southwestern Commission plan reviews.

### **Town of Clyde**

A review of the *2012-2022 Clyde Land Use Plan* revealed no direct reference to the national forest or public lands. They referenced Haywood County plans, reviewed herein.

## **Village of Flat Rock**

### **Objectives**

The *Village of Flat Rock 2013 Comprehensive Land Use Plan* attributes the character of the Village to the amount and location of its open spaces. Elements defining the Village's character include protection of agricultural lands, view corridors, environmentally important land, parkland, historic properties, and street corridors. They list an emphasis on trails and historic structures and offer a context of nearby Hendersonville and Henderson County, though there is no direct reference to the national forest.

## **Town of Franklin**

### **Objectives**

*BikeWalk Franklin 2017* is the town's bicycle and pedestrian comprehensive plan, approved in 2017. There is a reference to greenway connectivity to parks. Macon County plans and the Southwestern Commission plans, which are reviewed herein, also reference the Town of Franklin.

## **Town of Hayesville**

The Town of Hayesville is the county seat of Clay County. The *2010 Historic Hayesville Market Analysis* was the only plan found specific to the town. It focuses on the town's business district. See the review of Clay County and the Southwestern Commission for more information on this area.

## **City of Hendersonville**

### **Objectives**

The *2030 Hendersonville Comprehensive Plan* is the City's first of its kind and is based on a foundation of previous plans on specific topics. The process was citizen-driven and outlines their values and visions for the future. The plan includes recommendations for land use, housing, natural resources, utilities, transportation, cultural resources and community facilities for the entire City as well as adjacent areas. Hendersonville attributes their natural resources as providing beautiful scenery, clean air and water, locally-produced food, recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat.

Hendersonville's mountainous terrain is a unique asset that defines the City's scenic character. Steep slopes hinder development, particularly in the western reaches of the City. Beyond increasing development costs, development on or near steep slopes is vulnerable to the damaging effects of landslides. Additionally, the city must follow state restrictions on development on steep slopes and on Protected Ridges, two of which are located adjacent to Hendersonville. There are numerous creeks and wetland areas in and around Hendersonville that the city acknowledges are important for protection against flooding and water quality issues. Hendersonville values its natural surroundings as shown by a Tree City USA designation in 1991. The City has also declared itself a sanctuary for birds and squirrels.

They acknowledge their State Natural Heritage Areas. The city references sustainable development and an emphasis on green infrastructure. Hendersonville is interested in local and regionally connected recreational greenways. They have set a goal for providing open space for outdoor recreation and aesthetic benefits along with an additional goal to decrease their ecological impact.

### **Compatibility**

Hendersonville's natural resources provide beautiful scenery, clean air and water, locally-produced food, recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat. There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility with the Hendersonville plan.

## **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan will contribute to the goals of Hendersonville by creating a more resilient and healthy forest leading to a more scenic forest, which is so highly valued by their residents. The forest plan also addresses sustainable recreation management including partners and neighboring communities.

## **Opportunities in Plan Development**

The landscape around Hendersonville presents challenges to development and the potential for natural hazards such as flooding and landslides.

## **Town of Hot Springs**

### **Objectives**

The Town of Hot Springs' tag line is "Where the French Broad River meets the Appalachian Trail," and it is a designated Appalachian Trail Town. Both reference the value the town places on its natural and recreational assets. The town had a population of under 600 in 2010. There was no relevant planning document found in an online search or provided by the town. Madison County and Land of Sky Regional Council planning documents include the Town of Hot Springs and are referenced elsewhere in this appendix.

## **Town of Laurel Park**

### **Objectives**

The *Town of Laurel Park 2016-2026 Comprehensive Plan* objectives include recreation, natural resource and ecological, public facility, transportation, and land development services needed. The Town sees outdoor recreation as its greatest asset and intends to expand its trail system. It values its rural and natural character and values its wooded areas for recreation, wildlife, scenery and other values that contribute to the character of the Town. The Town plan includes a recommendation to consider ordinance changes related to tree protection and maintenance, planting buffers, and native plant usage. The Town was creating a Firewise plan at the time of the writing of the Comprehensive Plan and notes its effort to preserve and restore natural systems. It will address development using environmentally sound practices and will follow some of Henderson County's approach. The Town plan promotes conservation of open space and use of native plants to counter its invasive species issues.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the Town of Laurel Park Plan including the value the Town places on the proper management of their natural surroundings and recreation opportunities. There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility with the Town plan.

## **Plan Contributions**

The Forest Plan outlines a path that will restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit the Town of Laurel Park by contributing to local economies based on outdoor recreation and will provide additional nearby wooded areas, which are so valued by its residents. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

## **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for Town planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the forest plan is implemented.

## **City of Lenoir**

### **Objectives**

The 2007 *City of Lenoir Comprehensive Plan* references as assets to their community the numerous state and national parks and the Pisgah National Forest landmarks and opportunities. They reference their involvement in the regional Unifour Air Quality Committee to lessen their contributions to particulate matter concerns for Caldwell County. They are looking to increased greenways and protection of open space for future generations. They also reference the value of cultural and heritage tourism for their area.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the City of Lenoir's values around natural and heritage resources.

### **Plan Contributions**

The implementation of the forest plan will benefit local economies based on outdoor recreation, tourism and scenic values of residents. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

## **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for City planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Town of Maggie Valley**

The 2007 *Maggie Valley Land Use Plan* references a lack of public access to the Jonathan Creek and other natural areas within their Town boundaries. They note the challenge of steep slopes limiting development. Additionally, Maggie Valley is included in the Haywood County and Southwestern Commission plans. There is no direct reference to public lands outside of the Town's boundary.

## **City of Marion**

### **Objectives**

The 2016 *City of Marion Comprehensive Land Use Plan* references the newly established sections of the Flora Fonta state trail, which would connect the area to the Pisgah National Forest. There has been an increase in angling and other forms of outdoor recreation, outdoor education and a resulting boost to the outdoor recreation economy. They reference the numerous outdoor recreation opportunities on the nearby Pisgah National Forest, as well as opportunities on state lands.

The 2012 *City of Marion Comprehensive Land Use Management Plan* also referenced the benefits of the views and recreation opportunities in the surrounding National Forest for their tourism economy. They reference the wildlife management areas on the forest as a benefit to hunters. The forest also contains the watershed for the City's water supply.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the known values of the City of Marion regarding use and appreciation of their natural surroundings and outdoor recreation opportunities.

### **Plan Contributions**

The implementation of the forest plan will benefit local economies based on outdoor recreation, tourism and scenic values of residents. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for City planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Town of Marshall**

### **Objectives**

The *2030 Comprehensive Land Use Plan for the Town of Marshall* includes this vision statement: “The Town of Marshall provides a beautiful and tranquil setting in which to live, work, and recreate for every generation.” They value the mountain and river scenes, including national forest lands. They reference themselves as an outdoor recreational corridor between Hot Springs and Asheville serving biking, hiking and paddling enthusiasts. They are interested in environmentally sensitive growth and acknowledge the environmental constraints on development resulting from the local mountainous topography. They also list other natural considerations that create the need and their willingness for both regulatory protection and flexibility in the design of development. Flooding and landslides are prevalent concerns, addressed through consultation with other entities and through ordinances.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the Town of Marshall Plan including the value placed on the proper management of their natural resources and the scenic beauty of the area. The sensitivity for resource protection is compatible with the forest plan direction. There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility with the town plan.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines a path that will restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit the Town of Marshall’s outdoor recreation economy and address residents’ value of the natural landscape surrounding the town. Safety is one of the four pillars of the forest plan. Ideas to increase community safety aligns with forest interests. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for Town planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Town of Montreat**

### **Objectives**

The Town of Montreat adopted their *2008 Comprehensive Land Use Plan* to ensure the Town remains “a tranquil town, while much of the natural environment remains intact.” In several sections of the plan they reference the value they place on the “pristine mountains and wilderness” along with the viewshed that surrounds the town. They noted development has caused sedimentation and erosion concerns. The Town’s wilderness area was designated the National Wildlife Federation’s first Community Wildlife Habitat. They note the potential risk of bear encounters in the wild areas of the Town and the threat of invasive species on the valued biological diversity of the area. Montreat land contained in conservation easements is noted for its part in preserving the community’s viewsheds.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the Town of Montreat’s values relating to natural resources.

### **Plan Contributions**

The implementation of the forest plan will benefit local economies based on outdoor recreation, tourism and scenic values of residents. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for Town planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **City of Morganton**

### **Objectives**

The *2018 Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan for the City of Morganton* references the scenic and recreation benefits provided by the nearby Pisgah National Forest. They also reference that “the designated wilderness areas within the forest make enjoying the natural beauty of the mountains an exciting adventure for all ages.”

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the known values of the City of Morganton regarding use and appreciation of their natural surroundings and outdoor recreation opportunities.

### **Plan Contributions**

The implementation of the forest plan will benefit local economies based on outdoor recreation, tourism and scenic values of residents. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for City planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Town of Murphy**

### **Objectives**

In May 2012, the Town of Murphy partnered with the Cherokee County Arts Council to launch an N.C. Small Towns Economic Prosperity Program (NC STEP), as outlined in their *NC STEP Economic Development Strategic Plan and Implementation Strategy*. NC STEP is part of the Small Towns Initiative of the NC Rural Economic Development Center and focuses on how to help individual small towns reinvigorate their economies particularly if experiencing economic hardship or natural disaster. They created a list of 54 town assets, four of which included aspects of the natural surroundings and outdoor recreation. A lack of businesses catering to outdoor recreation was listed as one of their challenges. The town shifted its economic focus from attracting large businesses to the tourism economy in 2012. These concerns and changes were included in their 2023 vision statement. One of their economic development strategies is to make Murphy “a premiere destination for eco-friendly outdoor enthusiasts.” One of the two reasons they list people visit the area is “the beauty, the recreational opportunities, education and conservation of a complex ecosystem of our surrounding mountains, lakes, rivers and streams.” They list opening access to, and appropriately developing and promoting eco-friendly outdoor destinations as their biggest challenge in accomplishing this strategic goal. They note recreational boating and mountain biking as two target industries. The Murphy Marble Creek Biking and Hiking Trail System already involves the Forest Service.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the Town of Murphy NCSTEP goals, including the value the town places on the proper management of their natural resources and the scenic beauty of the area. The emphasis on the economic benefits of tourism is compatible with the forest plan direction.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines a path that will restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit the Town of Murphy’s outdoor recreation economy and address residents’ value of the natural landscape surrounding the town. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There may be an opportunity for shared-stewardship projects around the Payne Street Boat Ramp and Fishing Pier Recreation Area. These areas are already managed in partnership with state and regional organizations and are in close proximity to the forest boundary. There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for Town planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Town of Robbinsville**

### **Objectives**

Robbinsville is the county seat of Graham County. The *Robbinsville Pedestrian Connectivity Plan and Health Impact Assessment of 2013* included a suggestion of connectivity to a Forest Service trail within a section of the plan addressing greenways.

The Reimagining Robbinsville report, 2012 references the Nantahala National Forest, Slickrock Wilderness, Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest, Lake Santeetlah and other surrounding forest features and



areas valued for the economic benefits through tourism. They note diversifying the local economy as one of their goals. The report also suggests connecting the town's greenway to the Massey Branch Trail located at the Cheoah Ranger District, as well as connecting to Lake Santeetlah, and thereby the Nantahala National Forest.

Additionally, the Town of Robbinsville is referenced in the Graham County and Southwestern Commission plan reviews.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the known values of the Town of Robbinsville regarding use and appreciation of their natural surroundings and outdoor recreation opportunities.

### **Plan Contributions**

The implementation of the forest plan will benefit local economies based on outdoor recreation, tourism and scenic values of residents. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for City planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Town of Seven Devils**

### **Objectives**

The Town of Seven Devils amended their *Comprehensive Land Use Plan* in 2018. Their mission is "... to preserve, protect, and enhance those gifts of Nature that make up the unique quality of our Town and its environs and ensure that all values inherent in the Town Vision Statement are realized..." The Town references their care for the natural environment as their obligation based on the benefits they receive. They list careful management of development and preservation of environmentally sensitive areas. They also list their sense of obligation to collaborate with other entities and protect the Watauga River Basin Watershed. One objective they list in their plan is "The Town of Seven Devils conserves, protects, restores and enhances the natural beauty of its setting and minimizes disturbances to the natural environment."

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the Town of Seven Devils Plan including the value placed on the proper management of their natural resources and the scenic beauty of the area. The emphasis on the economic benefits of tourism with a sensitivity for resource protection is compatible with the forest plan direction.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines a path that will restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit the Town of Seven Devils by contributing to local economies based on outdoor recreation, tourism and scenic values of residents. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

## **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for Town planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Town of Sylva**

The Town of Sylva is the county seat of Jackson County. They did not reference national forests directly in their available plans, *Town of Sylva Five-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan (2017 – 2021) & Year One Implementation Plan (2017 -2018)*, though the town is considered in the Jackson County plans reviewed herein.

## **Town of Waynesville**

### **Objectives**

The Town of Waynesville's *2020 Land Development Plan* includes a goal of protecting their natural resources, referencing the community's natural beauty, and critical environmental areas as part of its approach to smart growth. Additionally, improved air and water quality and a variety of benefits associated with the preservation of open space is also attributed to smart growth development. Waynesville's mission is "to preserve and promote our neighborhoods, open spaces, vistas, natural and cultural resources and historic places."

The Town will work with the state to protect wetlands, along with following state laws regarding protection of natural resources. They are sensitive to the impacts of urban sprawl on the natural beauty of the area and list numerous ways they will preserve and promote their natural resources. The Town will work to preserve outstanding scenic landscapes, roads and views that define the natural character of the community.

They note tourism is an increasingly important economic driver and they reference issues common to the region such as steep slopes and flooding concerns and limitations. The Town benefits from regional tourist attractions such as national forests and parks, providing goods and services to many who travel to those nearby destinations. The Town will expand its multi-modal trail system to include connections to government facilities.

Within the *Systemwide Parks Master Plan: 2017-2026 Town of Waynesville*, the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests are included in the Regional Park section noting this niche is fulfilled, therefore the Town should not spend resources to create them.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the Town of Waynesville Plan including the value placed on the proper management of their natural resources and the scenic beauty of the area. The emphasis on the economic benefits of tourism with a sensitivity for resource protection is compatible with the forest plan direction. There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility with the Town plan.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines a path that will restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit the Town of Waynesville by contributing to local economies based on outdoor recreation, tourism and scenic values of residents. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate

with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for Town planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Town of Weaverville**

### **Objective**

The Town of Weaverville approved a *Comprehensive Land Use Plan in 2012*. They note concerns related to the wildland-urban interface due to development in the more rural and suburban neighboring areas. There is an increased risk to life and property due to homeowners' preference to retain much of the forest vegetation around their homes. The Town looks to the large tourism draw of the area to pull in tourism dollars related to ecotourism, outdoor recreation and other economies to continue serving as a foundation of the local economy.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the Town of Weaverville Plan including the value the Town places on the proper management of their natural resources and the scenic beauty of the area. The emphasis on the economic benefits of tourism with a sensitivity for resource protection is compatible with the forest plan direction. There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility with the Town plan.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines a path that will restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit the Town of Weaverville by contributing to local economies based on outdoor recreation, tourism and scenic values of residents. There are specific provisions in the plan to address the risk of wildfires and tools to compliment the work of local governments to address wildland urban interface concerns. With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for Town planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Town of Woodfin**

### **Objectives**

The Town of Woodfin is located along the French Broad River and is working on a Woodfin Greenway-Blueway Plan, linked to the *Buncombe County Greenways and Trails Master Plan*, connecting the town to other parts of the county. The Woodfin plan is in conjunction with the town's *Silver-Line Park Master Plan*. Woodfin is also planning a Whitewater Wave Park within its Woodfin River Park, increasing water recreation in the area. The Town Plan doesn't directly reference national forest lands. The Town's interests are covered within Buncombe County and the Land of Sky Regional Council planning areas referenced elsewhere in this document.

## Councils of Governments

There are five Councils of Government (COG) in the forest plan area. They are designated by both state and federal governments as the official agency for the administration of various funds and programs. COGs provide services and resources which might not otherwise be affordable or available to local governments. They serve as technical, economic and planning resources for their areas and administer regional projects and programs. The majority of the eighteen counties in the forest plan area are represented by three COGs. Relevant plans and references to counties within the forest plan area are reviewed below.

### Southwestern Planning and Economic Development Commission (Southwestern Commission)

#### Objectives

The Southwestern Commission (Commission) includes Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon and Swain Counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The Commission conducted an in-depth sensing of its residents from 2013-2014. The result is their *Opt-In: Opportunity Initiative of Southwestern North Carolina* (Opt-In) report. The Opt-In regional vision identifies broad regional agreement on goals for economic development, transportation planning, and environmental stewardship, and suggests ways for regional leaders to accomplish the goals. This effort was a response to controversy over the proposed highway route, Corridor K, through the region.

Five of the six following pillars of Opt-In vision statement relate to forest planning: The Way We Get Things Done, which is about the leadership and strategies required to carry the vision forward; The Economy We Need, including tourism, economic development, and job creation; The Place We're Given, referencing the region's exceptional natural and cultural resources; The Places We Make, about the built environment; The Ways We Get Around, including the full range of transportation modes that connect people and commerce within and beyond the region; and The Quality of Life We Expect, referencing access to educational opportunities, facilities and programs that support healthy living, and venues and programs that promote regional arts and culture. These pillars reflect the values of the residents of the Commission's region, fully within the forest planning area.

Of three public surveys issued, the survey of registered voters listed protecting natural resources as third most important to residents, behind quality education and medical care. When surveyed, participants overwhelmingly supported focusing on tourism and small businesses versus larger employers and even light industry. There was concern about restrictions on private property rights by some, though they noted the region is more united than previously thought. Additionally, "Advance the goal of protecting and enhancing the region's unique natural and cultural assets but require more regional collaboration and management" rated the highest of a set of actions participants would support within the context of the tradeoffs of increasing local regulations or taxes, both of which rated lower in support.

A key element of the regional vision is the public's desire to balance protection of the region's natural and scenic resources with improvements to the region's economy. Solutions to some of their current challenges and ideas to address this vision include: small-scale industries that don't damage or over-burden lands and resources, managed logging, small-scale sustainable farming that provides food products for locals and nearby big-city residents while generating income for local landowners. Businesses tied to recreation and natural and cultural resources, among others, are likely to play a key role in establishing that balance.

The report called for the Commission to form an Environmental Leadership Forum that includes the EBCI, county representatives, large property owners, local watershed organizations, and other nonprofits. The Leadership Forum will help implement environmental aspects of the vision and expand the regional dialogue on environmental issues. This includes protecting scenic beauty and unique ecosystems and increasing dialogue on local and regional environmental issues. They note a desire to expand trails and greenways, especially long-distance trails such as the Appalachian Trail, which serves as an ecological corridor. They also propose to make clean air and clean water a priority.

### **Compatibility**

The Opt-In report shows support for protection of natural and cultural resources along with environmentally sensitive economic development. The ideas within the report are compatible with the forest plan. There were no elements of the Opt-In report that suggested incompatibility with the forest plan.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan will complement and benefit the Southwest NC region through the continuation of effective, long-term collaborative restoration and recreation management efforts. The forest plan outlines a path to restore the forest into the future. These efforts will benefit the region by contributing to local economies based on outdoor recreation, tourism and scenic values of residents. With a shared stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

The report notes interest in more regional collaboration and management. There have been numerous opportunities for residents of the region and others with concerns about the area to attend public meetings throughout the Forest Plan revision process. In addition, the Forest Supervisor reached out directly to the Commission to hear their concerns on more than one occasion. There was a face-to-face meeting in May, 2017, along with follow-up communications. There will continue to be opportunities for regional planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Land of Sky Regional Council**

### **Objectives**

Land of Sky (LOS) Regional Council includes Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties. The Council led a regional planning effort, *GroWNC*, from 2011-2013 including the LOS region plus Haywood County. Nearly 5,000 individuals participated in the project. The report presents a regional vision for the future and a set of voluntary recommendations and implementation strategies. Of the eight themes of the plan, the following five most directly relate to forest management: business support and entrepreneurship, resource conservation, accessibility and connectivity, land use policies, and healthy communities.

The topic areas include: economic development, housing, transportation, land use, energy, health and wellness, natural resources and cultural resources. A sampling of goals under the eight overarching topics include:

- Integrate/coordinate local and regional planning for economic development, land use and infrastructure;
- Preserve scenic quality;

- The region invests in eco-tourism as a key economic driver, supporting collaborations, land and water conservation, stewardship, promotion, and educational or support infrastructure;
- The region's decision-makers, community leaders, and landowners recognize that sustaining high quality natural habitats enhances and sustains the region's economy and overall quality of life for its residents, and aim to maintain or improve water resources, air quality, biodiversity and scenic viewsheds;
- Residents recognize the health and restorative benefits associated with outdoor recreation and regularly take advantage of opportunities throughout the region;
- The region recognizes the importance of connectivity between protected lands by managing wildlife and recreation corridors for biodiversity and protecting unfragmented forest blocks;
- Preserve, restore, and cultivate our natural and cultural landscapes and resources.

The planning process included evaluating five scenario alternatives. The preferred scenario was selected as a vision for the future of the region with the recognition that accomplishing the vision would take public, private and non-profit entities working together. Protection of natural resources is noted, in part, in support of the economic benefits of tourism. Half of the policies developed around the preferred scenario can relate to forest management, including:

Policy #1: Support watershed protection efforts that preserve the integrity of the region's critical watersheds. Goal Supported: Water is clean and plentiful.

Policy #2: Discourage development of prime agricultural land and forestry land. Goal(s) Supported related to national forest lands: Farming and forestry remain key elements of the economy, and more products are produced locally from locally-sourced materials.

Policy #6: Preserve the viewsheds of the Appalachian Trail, the Blue Ridge Parkway and other viewsheds of regional significance. Goal(s) Supported: Scenic beauty is maintained as the region develops, and tourism remains a key element of the economy.

Policy #8: Limit the fragmentation of prime habitat and ecological corridors. Goal(s) Supported: Plant and animal habitats are connected and healthy, and low impact development techniques reduce impacts of growth on the environment.

Drilling down further into the *GroWNC* plan reveals recommendations and strategies to accomplish the goals identified. One of the Business and Economics recommendations relevant to forest planning includes "Ensure the region remains a premier destination for recreation and tourism" (BE4). There were several BE strategies promoting recreation in the region.

The goals of the Resource Conservation theme as relates to the preferred scenario will improve water quality by limiting the amount of development in critical watersheds. They promote an economy and culture rooted in farming and forestry by discouraging new development on prime agricultural and forestry land. The region's viewsheds, such as the Appalachian Trail and Blue Ridge Parkway, are preserved to maintain the scenic beauty in the region. The Preferred Scenario also protects key ecological corridors and prime habitats that contribute to the region's system of green infrastructure and serve as regional greenways and recreation corridors.

An additional recommendation within the Resource Conservation theme is to "improve monitoring and data collection to build awareness of the region's natural assets" (RC7). Similarly, RC8 states "raise awareness of the region's system of natural assets."

One relevant strategy listed is to "identify candidates in the region to apply for the Forest Service Community Forests Program, where financial assistance is provided to communities to sustainably manage forests for

multiple public benefits” (Strategy RC2.9). Another strategy that specifically references the Forest Service is “coordinate with non-profits, land trusts, NCDENR, U.S. Forest Service and NC Wildlife to identify priorities for wetlands and stream restoration as well as wildlife underpasses or overpasses” (RC5.1). Another example is “identify and develop more regional and local sources for conservation funding, encouraging public-private partnerships” (Strategy RC5.3). In Strategy RC5.6, the plan suggests they “update local ordinances with best practices from NC Wildlife’s Green Growth Toolbox” to include buffers around adjacent public lands.

One element of the Accessibility and Connectivity theme relevant to the forest plan is that the preferred scenario “preserves key ecological corridors that could accommodate greenways, which serve as recreational and transportation corridors.”

The Healthy Communities theme also references the preservation of key ecological corridors in the preferred alternative thus ensuring protection of the region’s natural assets. This results in cleaner air and water as well as parks and open space for recreational activities.

Under the Land Use theme as it relates to national forest planning, “the Preferred Scenario discourages high intensity uses in critical watersheds, namely water supply watersheds (WSW), high quality watersheds (HQW), and Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW). It protects working lands by limiting development of prime agricultural land and forestry land.” This theme also references the preservation of key ecological corridors and “limits fragmentation of prime habitats by encouraging conservation subdivisions and other low impact development techniques in these areas.”

Another regional planning document reviewed was the *French Broad River 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan*. It revealed one of the six goals, “Ensure Changes Respect Our Unique Places and Environments” as relevant to national forest planning. In particular, the following sub-goals could have implications for broader, public lands:

- Find a meaningful way to address natural environment issues at a system level
- Develop an objective measure to balance additional costs for environmental preservation with the benefits provided, not just as percentage of highway investment
- Include environmental review elements in project “dossiers” and related project publications

The *Blue Ridge Bike Plan (BRBP)* was developed for Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Madison, Swain and Transylvania Counties from 2011-2013. It primarily focused on roads that bicyclists use, although greenways and multi-use paths along major road corridors are also considered. The environmental considerations are more directly related to air quality, water quality and energy conservation than land-based concerns that may relate to the forest plan. Additional themes include safety, economic development, health and mobility.

In the BRBP initial survey of 500 cyclists in the region, the highest rated bicycle improvement desired was more off-road, multi-use paths or greenway opportunities for bicyclists and pedestrians. This reference appears to refer most to non-federal lands. The same survey results rated environmental benefits to water and air quality and to recreation as two benefits and uses of a regional bike plan. The Transylvania County and City of Brevard sections reference links to the Pisgah National Forest. Bent Creek mountain bike trails are referenced in the Buncombe County section along with the numerous mountain biking trails in Swain County, including Tsali Recreation area, a top mountain biking destination in NC.

The *NC 280 Corridor Bikeway Study* for the Town of Mills River and Transylvania County references important connections from NC280 to the Pisgah National Forest, noting the need for access.

The *Land of Sky Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* references tourism as a mainstay of the economy and states it continues to grow due to increased focus on outdoor sports and recreation and cultural

activities. The third goal of the strategy is to “support an economic development approach that fosters a diversified economy built on the region’s priorities, unique assets, competitive advantages, and local initiatives.” It notes the need to balance enjoyment of the landscape and conservation of sensitive resources as the population grows. One strategy to accomplish this is to promote water resources management and regional collaboration to ensure long-term water supply and quality. Approaches to accomplish this relevant to forest planning is their recommendation to develop watershed and watershed restoration plans, and facilitate WNC Stormwater Partnership among regional stakeholders, among others. Another strategy included in the CED third goal is to coordinate “on-going conservation of natural resources identified through land use planning—farmland, steep slopes and watersheds.” They recommend collaborating with partners to identify priority conservation areas, among other suggestions.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the *GroWNC* vision and direction on several fronts, including the protection and promotion of clean water; healthy, scenic forests; protection of cultural resources; provision for quality outdoor recreation opportunities; and species populations will be addressed and habitat improved.

The *French Broad River 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan* referenced the value placed on the natural beauty of the region, along with its associated economic benefits and the costs of addressing environmental protection.

The *Blue Ridge Bike Plan* and the *NC280 Corridor Bikeway Study* referenced air and water quality issues along with energy conservation as benefits of biking and noted the need for access to public lands.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan focuses on restoration and resiliency of the forests. As a result, it will enhance the quality of natural habitats, resources and landscapes. The plan addresses the value placed on scenery. Included are strategies for sustainable outdoor recreation addressing the importance of eco-tourism as a key economic driver, while maintaining the natural and cultural values listed in the plans reviewed above. The plan will contribute to clean water and air quality in the region. National Forest lands provide connectivity for wildlife and recreation interests. With a shared stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents of the LOS region and others with concerns about the area to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. In addition, the forest supervisor reached out directly to LOS to hear their concerns on more than one occasion. There was a face-to-face meeting in May, 2017, along with follow-up communications. There will continue to be opportunities for regional planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

### **High Country COG**

#### **Objectives**

High Country COG includes Avery, Mitchell, Watauga and Yancey Counties within the forest planning area. Goal four of the *Strategic Plan 2015-16* included collaborating with federal agencies.



Additionally, multiple High Country Long Range Transportation Planning documents were reviewed to address any recommendations for connectivity to public lands. The *High Country Regional Bike Plan* focuses on road cycling and does not reference national forest lands.

Natural resources data is considered throughout the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) process, including for indirect and cumulative effects studies. The *Yancey County and Town of Burnsville CTP 2003-2030*, noted the significance of outdoor recreation in the county, referencing state and federal parklands as a factor. It also listed the amount of public lands and steep slopes as a factor in population growth potential or restriction.

The *2014 Avery County CTP*, includes a reference to public lands in the Consideration of Natural and Human Environment chapter, in reference to EPA requirements. The maps revealed no trails or roads projects that linked to or were dependent on national forest lands. The *2013 Watauga County CTP* lists needed improvements to NC State Road 221 that runs through the Pisgah National Forest (NF) for on road cycling and multi-use. There is a proposed off-road pedestrian trail connecting to the Pisgah NF. The Mitchell County Community Understanding Report, reviewed above, was used in the development of the county Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP).

### **Compatibility**

There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility with High Country COG regional plans.

### **Plan Contributions**

With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents and agency representatives with concerns about their areas to attend public meetings throughout the forest plan revision process. In addition, the forest supervisor and forest staff reached out directly to Councils of Governments to hear their concerns on more than one occasion. There will continue to be opportunities for High County COG planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **Western Piedmont and Isothermal COGs**

### **Objectives**

The Western Piedmont COG (WPCOG) includes Burke and Caldwell Counties, and the Isothermal Planning and Development Commission (IPDC) includes McDowell County within the planning area.

The Western Piedmont COG addressed air quality issues by forming the Unifour Air Quality Committee (UAQC), to abate ozone levels. They entered into an Early Action Compact (EAC) with EPA and DENR to comply with Federal EPA ozone standards at an accelerated pace. The UAQC has since developed into the Western NC Air Quality Conference and the subsequent Western NC Water Quality Conference.

There were no other specific comprehensive or other relevant land use plans relevant to this review found within the online resources.

The *Isothermal Planning and Development Commission Regional Economic Development Strategy 2017* includes tourism as one of its targeted industry clusters, naming examples of outdoor recreation as top tourist draws. They also reference the great opportunity they have to expand this economic driver. The

IPDC strategy does not specifically refer to McDowell County, the area of the IPDC within the forest plan area.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the WPCOG's attention to air and water quality. There were no items discovered in the review that suggested incompatibility with WPCOG or IPDC regional plans.

### **Plan Contributions**

With a shared-stewardship approach, the Forest Service will continue to collaborate with other government entities and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There have been numerous opportunities for residents and agency representatives with concerns about their areas to attend public meetings throughout the Forest Plan revision process. There will continue to be opportunities for county planners and residents to offer input through a number of avenues as the plan is implemented.

## **State Agencies**

### **North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission**

The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests fall within District 9 of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC), a valued partner in wildlife management. NCWRC completed its Strategic Plan in 2015. The mission of the NCWRC game lands program is to "enhance, facilitate, and augment delivery of comprehensive and sound wildlife conservation programs." The 2 million acres of NCWRC owned and managed land create high ecosystem value in flood protection with positive effects on property values and air and water quality, while helping to prevent additional restrictive environmental regulations. Similar to the U.S. Forest Service, the NCWRC looks to multiple uses on state-owned game lands including hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing along with other uses compatible with these traditional uses. They provide opportunities for all ages and abilities. Education and communication are listed as important services to help citizens understand wildlife resources. The NCWRC recognizes "the value of working lands and their wildlife inhabitants." They have strong partnerships and leverage resources to accomplish their mission.

The North Carolina Wildlife Action Plan (NCWAP) was completed in 2005. The NCWAP is a comprehensive wildlife conservation plan that prioritizes species native to North Carolina for which there is a concern of population decline either due to known declines or suspected declines (i.e. Species of Greatest Conservation Need).

Additionally there are game land management plans for specific areas within the District. The primary purpose of state game lands is the conservation of North Carolina wildlife species and the provision of public hunting, trapping and fishing opportunities; along with the preservation of rare, threatened and endangered species. The NCWRC utilizes prescribed burning, disking, streamside buffers and water impoundment among some of their management approaches to benefit wildlife habitats. Additionally Heritage forest land is preserved. Rare forestlands are also protected. Game lands also provide extensive recreational opportunities and economic benefits. The NCWRC notes the transition of the state's traditional economy from tobacco, furniture and textiles to a global economy driven by knowledge-based enterprises, noting a value of managed public game lands is to help preserve the state's traditional economy and way of life.

## **Compatibility**

NCWRC enjoys a long-standing alliance with the U.S. Forest Service. Wildlife resources on national forest lands are cooperatively managed by both agencies. The forest plan is consistent with the NCWAP.

## **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan compliments the five NCWRC strategic goals, which include safety, availability for recreation interests and opportunities for varying physical abilities. The forest plan outlines improvements and expansion of wildlife habitats, complementing the NCWRC goal of abundance and diversity of fish and wildlife. The Forest Service supports the NCWRC in conserving wildlife habitats and species diversity while helping to maintain the hunting and fishing heritage of North Carolina through recognition of citizens' values throughout the forest plan.

## **Opportunities in Development of the Plan**

The forest plan has addressed local and traditional values and ways of life within the planning area. This is addressed in the Geographic Area construct and throughout the plan. Additionally, there is careful guidance for providing and increasing wildlife habitat. The planning team has interacted with a broad range of hunters and other wildlife interests at least monthly for several of the years of the planning process and regularly prior to that time frame. The interests of the broad game and non-game wildlife communities and stakeholders has had a significant voice at the collaborative table.

## **Game Land Management Objectives**

North Carolina Game Lands are managed to provide, protect, and actively manage habitats and habitat conditions to benefit aquatic and terrestrial wildlife resources; to provide public opportunities for hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife viewing; to provide for other resource-based game land uses to the extent that such uses are compatible with the conservation of natural resources and can be employed without displacing primary users; and to provide an optimally sustainable yield of forest products where feasible and appropriate as directed by wildlife management objectives

Three game lands are adjacent to forest lands within the planning area. Cold Mountain and Needmore Game Lands Plans are reviewed below. It should be noted that there is currently no plan available for the Toxaway Game Lands.

## **Cold Mountain Game Lands**

### **Objectives**

Cold Mountain Game Land (CMGL) consists of approximately 3,600 acres of state-owned lands located in Haywood County, approximately 10 miles southeast of Waynesville, NC. CMGL is bordered by national forest land on three sides, a portion of which is part of the Shining Rock Wilderness Area. The game land also borders Camp Daniel Boone, a Boy Scouts of America property. The purpose of CMGL is to manage habitats to benefit aquatic and terrestrial wildlife resources and flora on the property. Cold Mountain Game Land, combined with extensive holdings of the Forest Service and the Blue Ridge Parkway, help protect the entire upper watershed of the Pigeon River. The cities of Canton, Clyde and a portion of Haywood County, derive their primary water supply from the Pigeon River, as does a major manufacturing plant in Canton which is approximately fifteen miles south of the game land. Referencing the extensive opportunities available on the Pisgah National Forest, the NCWRC does not encourage mountain biking on the CMGL. However, NCWRC views geocaching on CMGL as a positive education opportunity and is awaiting their final policy update regarding geocaching on game lands.

Restoration and enhancement of critical wildlife habitats and communities is the overall management objective for CMGL, similar to management objectives of adjacent federal lands.

### **Compatibility**

Forest Service management efforts on lands surrounding the CMGL can support the goals of the CMGL plan through a shared-stewardship lens, including:

- Restore a diversity of habitat types and forest age classes using science-based land management practices that are properly interspersed and juxtaposed across the landscape to ensure that a wide variety of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species are conserved on the game land.
- Manage popular game species and sport fish at huntable/fishable levels through science-based land management and sound regulations.
- Provide quality habitat for endangered, threatened, and rare species located on the game land to ensure their continued existence and recovery.
- Provide sufficient infrastructure and opportunity to allow all game lands users a quality experience while on the game land with minimal habitat degradation and minimal conflict among user groups.

The forest plan addresses species of greatest conservation need as listed in the CMGL plan, along with other rare species, as required by Forest Service guidance. The forest plan references collaboration in management of aquatic habitat and water quality necessary for target game and non-game species on game land property. Both agencies work cooperatively with other governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and landowners to protect and improve riparian areas throughout the watershed. The Forest Service cooperates with NCWRC to use some CMGL roads for management needs.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan includes objectives to increase wildlife habitat, which compliments the CMGL plan objective of increasing game populations to help to maintain or increase the current numbers of hunters and trappers using the game land. The forest plan also addresses access onto forest lands, a concern of NCWRC within the CMGL. Fishing is listed as a primary use of the CMGL, and aquatic species and habitat management goals within the forest plan will benefit fishing opportunities within the CMGL.

Though NCWRC does not list the Pisgah National Forest as a current partner in game land management, there is current and ongoing consultation and communication between the two agencies. There are opportunities to continue to partner on mutual objectives into the future.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

The Forest Service has the opportunity to support NCWRC's desired future condition for the CMGL forested habitats, along with supporting the habitat health of target game and non-game species where appropriate and found on Forest Service lands. NCWRC has also listed management challenges, many of which are in common with Forest Service management challenges when taking a shared-stewardship approach. Wildlife viewing is listed as a high use of the game lands. Loss of good wildlife viewing areas to succession is listed as a challenge. The forest plan's goal of increasing early successional habitat across the forest will provide more opportunities for wildlife viewing. The Forest Service can outline opportunities to work directly with the NCWRC to creatively and cooperatively address the challenges.

## **Needmore Game Lands**

### **Objectives**

The *Needmore Game Lands Plan 2017-2026* addresses 4,797 acres of state-owned lands in Macon and Swain counties. Several additional disjunct parcels lie upstream of the contiguous portion for several miles. The principal activities in Needmore Game Lands (NGL) are hunting, fishing, trapping, walking, research, and observation. The preserve consists of a Primary Area (approximately 2,339 acres), a Buffer Area (approximately 2,149 acres), and a Special Management Area (3 acres). The Primary Area consists of the exceptionally significant aquatic habitat and adjoining high quality and restorable natural communities. This includes all areas within 300 feet of the Little Tennessee River and major tributaries that contain rare aquatic species. Needmore Game Land was dedicated as a State Nature Preserve on December 27, 2010. The Dedicated Nature Preserve is managed as a natural area for hunting, fishing, trapping, walking, research and observation. Prohibited activities in the dedicated area include construction, commercial activities and development, and more. The cutting or removal of trees or the disturbance of other natural resources is prohibited except as necessary for hazard removal, restoration after storm damage, trail maintenance, and purposes of natural community maintenance or restoration.

Because opportunities to harvest timber across NGL are limited and because of the value and cost benefit of prescribed burning to develop and manage wildlife habitat, prescribed burning will remain a top forestry priority for NGL. Approximately 35 percent of the game land is currently in or scheduled to be in a prescribed fire rotation. However, future timber harvests on NGL are planned and will be needed to meet restoration and wildlife habitat objectives. Implemented timber harvests will improve stand age class distribution on these game lands and will provide opportunities for continued productive forest stands in the future.

Hunters and trappers are a primary user group for NGL, with white-tailed deer and wild turkey being the two primary hunted game species. Many wildlife viewing enthusiasts come to NGL to view and to study birds, butterflies, and other wildlife species associated with the game land. Wildlife viewers are a primary user group at NGL, and NGL is implementing management strategies to increase the number of wildlife viewers using the game land. Water-related recreation such as canoeing, kayaking and swimming are very popular activities on the game land. Hiking is also a popular activity on the game land and occurs year-round. There are no designated hiking trails currently located at NGL. However, there are several miles of maintained paths, roads, and linear wildlife openings available for hiking. Mountain biking currently occurs at NGL, but at low levels. The current level of mountain biking is not causing any immediate resource issues but should not be increased.

### **Compatibility**

The primary focus of forest management on the game land is directed towards restoring ecosystem functionality and improving wildlife habitat within the oak and mountain yellow pine forest communities. The forest plan references collaboration in management of terrestrial and aquatic habitat necessary for target game and non-game species on game land property. Both agencies work cooperatively with other governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and landowners to protect and improve riparian areas throughout the watershed. The forest plan addresses species of greatest conservation need as listed in the NGL plan, along with other rare species as required by Forest Service guidance.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan includes objectives to increase wildlife habitat, which compliments the NGL plan objective of increasing game populations to help to maintain or increase the current numbers of hunters

and trappers using the game land. Wildlife viewing is listed as a primary use of the NGL, also addressed in the forest plan. There are opportunities to continue to partner on mutual objectives into the future.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There is an opportunity to clearly address allowed and prohibited activities on the Nature Preserve while noting how Forest Service management compliments or enhances the qualities of the Nature Preserve through a shared-stewardship perspective. A primary resource concern in the NGL is sedimentation of waterways. There is an opportunity for the forest plan to consider these concerns during project development in the affected area.

## **North Carolina State Parks**

### **Overview**

Western North Carolina is rich with natural beauty and opportunities to enjoy and benefit from the natural surroundings. The NC State Parks System provides recreation opportunities and resource management capacity that complements that of the Forest Service. The 2018 *System Wide Plan for North Carolina Parks* was produced by the NC Division of Parks and Recreation (DPR), NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The state parks system's statutory mandate is to protect representative examples of the state's significant archaeological, geological, scenic, recreational, and biological resources. There are six types of units included in the North Carolina State Parks System: State Parks, State Natural Areas, State Recreation Areas, State Trails, State Rivers, and State Lakes. Strategic goals for the 2018-2023 planning period include: continue expansion of the State Parks System; provide the best possible visitor experience; increase efficiency; support local economic development; support health and wellness and other state and local initiatives through expanded marketing efforts; and improve natural and cultural resource stewardship.

DPR notes that the state's rural areas have been increasingly turning to ecotourism for economic growth and stability. State parks are important regional attractions that can form the cornerstone of these local efforts. In addition, DPR can support local economic development by participating in local and regional tourism initiatives, by coordinating multi-jurisdictional recreation planning, by offering grants for local park and trail projects, and by providing environmental education opportunities for schools and universities. DPR will develop partnerships with public and private health organizations to explore ways to use the state parks to encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyles.

The *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)* developed in 2015 and administered by DPR is required for the state to be eligible for federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LCWF) acquisition and development assistance specifically addressing outdoor recreation. This includes consideration of supply and demand; public engagement; consideration of wetlands; among other factors. DPR has received \$80 million since the LCWF was enacted in 1965, addressing the needs of the state. They conducted an outdoor recreation survey in 2014 as part of the SCORP to update their assessment of those needs. They included information from a variety of local, state and national sources. This provided background for outdoor recreation and management in the state.

The mission of the State Trails Program is "to promote sustainable trail planning; to conserve our natural resources; insure the responsible use of public funds; and to facilitate low infrastructure economic development opportunities across the state. The State Trails Program administers the Federal Recreational Trails Grant Program (RTP). Regional trail plans are reviewed within relevant entities in this document.

Mount Mitchell State Park is directly linked to thousands of acres in adjacent Pisgah National Forest and to over 15,000 acres of high quality private and municipal conservation lands. At 6,684 feet in elevation, it is the highest point east of South Dakota and, as a result, is home to unique species for the region.

A review of the *Lake James State Park General Management Plan* (LJGMP) revealed the identification of several parcels under consideration for land and watershed protection purposes and located adjacent to state or privately owned lands. The majority of the LJGMP included descriptions and plans for infrastructure needs within the Park, unrelated to forest plan purposes. No conflicts were noted in the review of the *Gorges State Park General Management Plan*. Chimney Rock and Grandfather Mountain State Parks do not have General Management Plans, currently.

### **Compatibility**

The mandates and many of the strategic goals of the 2018 System Wide Plan parallel those of the forest plan themes and goals. The forest plan notes the role of the forest to support local, rural economies through partnerships. The primary objective of DPR's natural resource management initiatives is to correct or compensate for the disruption of natural processes caused by human activities. These initiatives include the reintroduction of natural fire regimes, restoration of natural communities, and removal of exotic invasive species. The primary goal of their cultural resource management is to protect and preserve historically significant features. The responsibility of protecting cultural and natural resources pervades all DPR's activities, from field operations and interpretive programming to the planning and construction of park facilities. This, too, parallels Forest Service efforts.

DPR has partnered with the Forest Service on prescribed fire, as well as in the development of the Fonta Flora State Trail and RTP grants. The National Forests in North Carolina has been awarded approximately \$6.5 million dollars in RTP grant funds since 2006.

Three State Parks are adjacent to National Forest lands. No conflicts were noted in the review of the *Mount Mitchell State Park General Management Plan* (GMP), *Lake James State Park GMP* or *Gorges State Park GMP*.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan will move toward sustainable recreation opportunities in the area, aware of community reliance on travel and eco-tourism. Additionally, the forest plan will complement and benefit State Parks through the continuation of effective, long-term collaborative restoration and recreation management efforts.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

There are opportunities to continue to work with the NC Division of Parks and Recreation to manage national forest lands adjacent to Mount Mitchell State Park for preservation of the unique species and habitats found in the Park.

There are parcels listed for land and watershed protection considerations in the Mount Mitchell and Lake James GMPs that are adjacent to national forest and/or state-owned lands sharing a boundary with the Pisgah National Forest. Where possible, management direction will include considerations for management across agency boundaries on contiguous public lands such as these.

## North Carolina Forest Service

### Overview

The mission of the NC Forest Service (NCFS) as listed in their *2013-2016 Strategic Plan* is to protect, manage and promote forest resources for the citizens of North Carolina. They envision a North Carolina with healthy trees and forests that provide essential environmental, economic and social benefits served by a professional workforce recognized as a leader in forest protection, emergency response, resource management and environmental education. The NCFS protects North Carolina's forests from wildfire and from insect and disease outbreaks. The NCFS promotes the conservation, development and profitable use of North Carolina's forests. They accomplish this by helping forest landowners establish new forests; supporting existing, new, and emerging forest product markets; and educating youth and adults on the benefits of forest resources.

In June, 2010 the NCFS, along with numerous partners, completed a comprehensive forest resource assessment for North Carolina. This state-wide assessment, along with its accompanying strategic plan and priority maps, was titled *North Carolina's Forest Resources Assessment, 2010*. The *North Carolina's Forest Action Plan, Updated 2015* (NCFAP) was a comprehensive effort that developed a broad and collective vision for protecting and enhancing North Carolina forest values and benefits over a five-year period. Additionally, the *State and Private Forestry North Carolina 2018* fact sheet lists the accomplishments of the joint efforts of state, federal and other entity's forest management. These programs promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural economies. Emphases are on timber and other forest products, wildlife, water resources, rural economies, and conservation practices.

The NCFS is currently drafting a NCFAP 2020. The three national priorities tiered to in the 2010 assessment frame the plan and include: Conserving and manage working forests for multiple uses; Threats to forest health; and Changing the benefits of NC Forests. They are working with a wide range of partners and stakeholders with an interest in the future of North Carolina's forest resources. They identified the following goals for the NCFAP 2020: Increase the sustainable management and conservation of forests; Reduce negative impacts from forest threats; Increase the beneficial use of prescribed fire; Manage and conserve forests for clean water; and, Enhance the ecosystem services, economic and human health benefits and sustainable management of urban forests. The overarching goal is to maintain and improve the health of rural and urban forests and related economies, as well as to protect the forests and citizens of the state.

The NCFS includes the NCFS Fire Environment Program that has facilitated the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans in communities across the state with the support of the U.S. Forest Service. The NCFS is also active in forest health protection programs, educating and facilitating work on private lands as well as state lands. They use the Federal Forest Legacy Program to acquire important forest lands across the state.

### Compatibility

The NCFAP speaks to the level of collaboration that continues today and is noted in the forest plan.

The NCFAP 2020, includes the three national priorities as guided by the 2008 Farm Bill amendments to the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978. These priorities and goals in the NCFAP are common to and addressed in the forest plan. They include objectives to conserve high-priority forest ecosystems and landscapes and strengthen partnerships with public and private entities. The USFS is listed as a key partner to accomplish stated goals and address threats. They call for increased coordination among



agencies and organizations. They reference a need for more education and outreach to increase public awareness and involvement.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan outlines a path that will restore the forest into the future. With a shared-stewardship approach, the USFS will continue to collaborate with the NCFS and consider the effects of resource management across the broader landscape. Many plan components align directly with and will be beneficial to the objectives of the NCFAP. The NCFS is a key partner in accomplishing USFS fire management goals. The plan will also support Community Protection Plans and other efforts led and participated in by the state.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

The U.S. Forest Service will continue to work with the NCFS and others to continue with the shortleaf pine initiative and develop/implement a plan to address sustainability of other tree species, forest types, and forest ecosystems in decline to address their goal of increasing public awareness of the benefits of forests and services available through the NCFS. There will be continued partnership to address cooperative fire protection through programs such as Firewise. These are examples of the broader range of collaboration in which the USFS will engage the NCFS.

## **North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources**

### **Overview**

The NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Natural Heritage Program provides public access to information that is needed to weigh the ecological significance of natural areas and to evaluate the potential ecological impacts of conservation and development projects. The Natural Heritage Program works in partnership with a variety of state and federal agencies, private organizations, individuals, and corporations to identify the most significant natural areas of North Carolina and share information about these significant natural areas so that future generations can enjoy the full diversity of North Carolina's natural heritage.

### **Compatibility**

The NC Natural Heritage Program publishes four reference publications including 1) NHP List of the Rare Animal Species of NC; 2) NHP List of the Rare Plant Species of NC; 3) Classification of the Natural Communities of NC; and 4) Priority List of Natural Areas. The information provided by the Natural Heritage Program is an important resource for identifying and conserving the state's biodiversity. These documents were used in the development of management areas and the allocation of areas to the Special Interest Area Management Area.

### **Plan Contributions**

The Forest Plan includes desired conditions, guidelines and management approaches to coordinate with the NC Natural Heritage Program during project planning and development. The Special Interest Area management area includes many of the 'exceptional' natural heritage natural areas that occur on NFS lands. This management area includes exceptional ecological communities that serve as core areas for conservation of the most significant and rare elements of biological diversity on the Forests. Many SIAs have been identified in cooperation with the Natural Heritage Program. In addition to Special Interest Areas, NC Natural Heritage Areas can be found in other management areas, including Interface and Matrix. Regardless of management area, close coordination with the state will ensure that the unique

ecological values of the area are considered when designing projects. These plan components were designed in coordination with the NC Natural Heritage Program.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

The Forest Service will continue to work with the Natural Heritage Program through project planning and implementation to identify and evaluate impacts to rare plant and animal species and to look for opportunities to restore unique habitats. When projects are proposed in Natural Heritage Areas, the Forest Service will coordinate with the NC Natural Heritage Program early during project development and will review proposed changes to the Heritage Program's state registry including refinement of area boundaries to reflect new information about species and rare communities.

## **Federal**

The Southern Appalachian mountain range is one of the oldest and most biodiverse mountain regions in the world. The portion of the range contained in Western North Carolina includes some of the highest peaks in the Southern Appalachians and the highest point along the Eastern seaboard at Mount Mitchell. The area has always drawn tourists with its long-range vistas and wide-ranging opportunities for outdoor recreation, leading to a significant amount of the region designated as federal lands. The Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests include over 1.1 million acres of the region. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP) includes over 520,000 acres. The Blue Ridge Parkway National Park (BRP) conserves approximately 250 miles of within the region. The Blue Ridge Natural Heritage Area (BRNHA) was established to maintain the rich culture of the area. The National Park Service also manages the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Trail of Tears National Historic Trail and the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail in Western North Carolina.

The revised forest plan supports the efforts of the BRNHA to preserve the local culture. The national trails listed above are addressed in the recreation section of the forest plan. Below is a review of the GSMNP and the BRNP master plans with an eye to compatibility with the forest plan.

## **Blue Ridge Parkway National Park**

### **Objectives**

The Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP) is a "national rural roadway with limited access... designed for pleasant motoring, a form of recreational driving free from commercial traffic." It is also described as a "museum of the managed American countryside." The *Final General Management Plan 2013*, notes the uniqueness of the elongated configuration of the park necessitating "strong and coordinated external relations" with agencies within overlapping jurisdictions and interests. They note the management complexities inherent in the park, from diverse flora and fauna to management of the numerous historic structures and other features amidst 16 million visitors, annually. The purpose of the BRP is to provide a connection between the GSMNP and the Shenandoah National Park; conserve scenic, cultural and natural resources; educate about the central and southern Appalachians; and provide for high quality scenic and recreational opportunities within its corridors. Their fundamental resources and values include cultural and natural resources, visitor experience and regional connectivity.

The BRP has been in formal partnership with the Forest Service since 1941 to address their shared boundaries and to coordinate conservation of the scenic values of the parkway. They are involved in the Asheville Corridor Plan and numerous other recreation, cultural and natural resources management plans addressing particular segments and uses of the BRP and surrounding areas. They note their involvement in the forest plan revision process. The parkway's establishing legislation includes the goals

to “conserve, interpret, and exhibit the unique natural and cultural resources of the central and southern Appalachian Mountains.”

The BRP has included special management consideration for adjacent Forest Service areas and amenities such as Wilson Creek Wild and Scenic River and Forest Service regional trails to augment conservation efforts, consider potential connections to address visitor interests and support mutual goals with partners. They note needs for support facilities around Linville Falls and nearby areas. They discuss the need for safe access to adjacent trails, working with the Forest Service and other trail managers. When considering recreation enhancements, they note the Buncombe County greenways projects connecting three counties, five municipalities, the Appalachian Trail and the parkway. They also list the Estatoe Trail, connecting the town of Brevard to the Pisgah Ranger District and parkway as another notable enhancement and opportunity to create more connections to the parkway.

The BRP plan notes working with the Forest Service and their Visual Management System to protect and maintain scenic views during active management projects. Public lands also protect the viewshed from land conversion to developments. They also list considerations for managing sensitive species and soil compaction concerns around informal trail connector pullouts.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the goals of the BRP. Sensitivity to the visitor’s experience while traveling the parkway includes safety, scenery considerations and appropriate recreation access and opportunities, similar to the adjacent national forest lands.

### **Plan Contributions**

As referenced above, the protection of the viewshed of the Blue Ridge Parkway is a significant consideration in their plan. The forest plan will continue to utilize the Visual Management System to preserve the viewshed, in collaboration with the National Park Service. The forest plan addresses sensitive species consideration and management approaches. The forest plan will complement and benefit the parkway through the continuation of effective, long-term collaborative restoration and recreation management efforts.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

Through a shared-stewardship approach, the BRP and Forest Service will be more effective in coordinating mitigation of impacts from recreation. Coordination will improve the health of the natural resources and protection of cultural resources.

## **Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

### **Objectives**

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP), established in 1926, includes 520,000 acres and shares a boundary with the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. The park is world-renowned for its biodiversity. The purpose statement guiding all management at the park is: “the Great Smoky Mountains National Park preserves a vast expanse of the southern Appalachian Mountains ecosystem including its scenic beauty, extraordinary diversity of natural resources, and rich human history, and provides opportunities for the enjoyment and inspiration of present and future generations. The Park was designated an International Biosphere Reserve in 1988 and a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983. The Park is also a Class I air area under the Clean Air Act. Most of the Park’s waterways are rated highest quality. It includes the largest collection of Appalachian log structures, over 800 miles of trails and includes a portion of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. According to the Park’s *2017 Foundation*

*Document*, they host more than 11 million visitors annually making it one of the most heavily visited parks in the system. The park also hosts the largest number of volunteers in the national park system.

The Park Significance statements reference the importance of its proximity to half the population of the US and the mountainous terrain of the park, along with its scenic, historic and cultural attributes. The resources and values to be protected include air and water quality; the continuation of its history as a living laboratory and outdoor classroom; ancient mountain ecosystems; wilderness and backcountry experiences; opportunities for connecting to the cultural and natural history; the enduring cultural ties to the land; opportunities for a variety of types of journeys; partnerships, volunteerism and stewardship; and the park's scenic beauty.

The Forest Service is listed as a current partner in their landscape level planning process. They note a Memorandum of Understanding with the Forest Service addressing the portion of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail within the park, as well.

The *2008-2012 GSMNP Strategic Plan* addressed many of the same topics as the Foundation Document with the addition of more financial and planning details. The plan lists percent improvements on targets such as managing shoreline and stream channels to desired condition.

### **Compatibility**

The forest plan is compatible with the purpose, elements of significance, resources and values outlined in the GSMNP Foundation Document as well as goals of the strategic plan as relates to the forest plan, such as control of invasive pests. The forest plan also outlines resource management direction that addresses many of the threats and opportunities associated with the resources and values listed above. Addressing the issues, for example invasive pests, on neighboring public lands will benefit the park and forest, as well as other adjacent lands.

### **Plan Contributions**

The forest plan enables and facilitates working with other agencies and neighboring lands. It will complement and benefit the park through the continuation of effective, long-term collaborative restoration and recreation management efforts.

### **Opportunities in Plan Development**

Through a shared-stewardship approach, the GSMNP and Forest Service will be more effective in coordinating mitigation of impacts from high visitation on the resources. Coordination on resource management work along with monitoring will improve the health of the natural resources and protection of cultural resources.

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