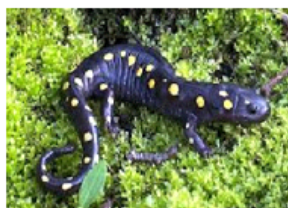
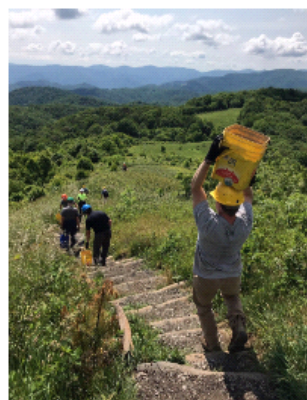
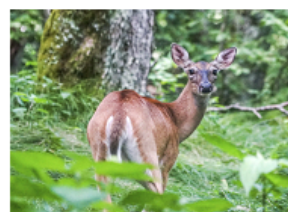
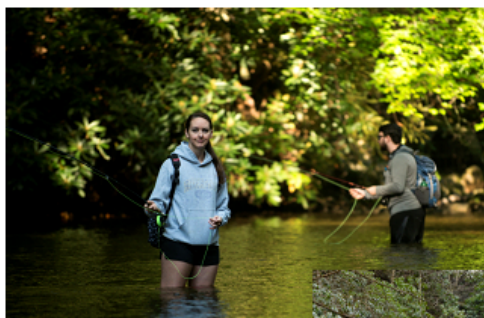


# Nantahala and Pisgah Forest Plan Revision Reader's Guide



Greetings forest user,

The U.S. Forest Service has revised the land management plan for the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. The forest plan provides a strategic framework for the next 20 years. The plan includes desired conditions and goals for the future of the Forests and objectives that describe actions the Forest Service will take to move toward those goals.

The plan positions the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests to address the challenges that we anticipate in the years ahead, such as the growth of wildland urban interface; the spread of insects, disease, and invasive species; development pressure on adjacent private lands; unprecedented increase in recreation; and the escalating impacts from climate change. In this time of accelerated change, ensuring our forest ecosystems are healthy and resilient is critical to long-term sustainability of the diverse habitats these forests provide for wildlife and plants, and for supplying the clean water and other ecosystem benefits that we all depend on.

In addition to the final plan, we are releasing an environmental analysis of the plan, called an Environmental Impact Statement. This Reader's Guide provides an overview of these documents with references for more information.

This plan was developed and shaped by extensive public input. We worked with diverse interests to build a broadly supported and implementable forest plan that will connect people to the land; restore forest resiliency, forest health, and wildlife habitat; provide clean and abundant water; support recreation and local jobs; and provide a platform for working together toward shared goals.

We encourage you to reach out to organizations who have been involved in the process and that represent your interests to see how your interests have been incorporated.

-The Nantahala and Pisgah Plan Revision Team  
January 2023



# Connecting People to the Land



From the very beginning, the forests of Western North Carolina have been recognized for their importance to people. The rich cultural mosaic of people who have called this region home look to the forest for spiritual renewal, traditional uses like hunting, fishing, and gathering, scenic beauty, year-round outdoor play and exercise, and economic opportunity. The revised plan:

- Establishes a framework for **sustainable recreation**, including standards for **new trail construction** built on modern design and collaboration.
- Calls for developing trail **loop opportunities**, a strategy for **climbing opportunities**, an operations and maintenance guide for dispersed **campsites**, and more.
- Supports **economic development** and **tourism** in local communities, the **forest product industry** and **nontimber forest product collection**, maintains the forests' **scenic integrity, access**, and sustains our **cultural and historic resources**.
- Honors and redeems our **trust responsibility to tribes**, recognizing tribes and tribal members as partners in managing the national forests, and valuing **traditional ecological knowledge** and places of tribal significance.



The revised plan emphasizes forest places and uses by identifying 12 geographic areas and a new management area that recognizes access and concentrated recreation use, including National Recreation Trails.

# Sustaining Healthy Ecosystems



The forests contain incredible biodiversity, from hardwood forests to southern pines, coldwater streams, and habitat for plants and animals. The revised forest plan:

- Establishes a clear vision for each ecological community on the forest.
- Accelerates the development of young forest and open forest, which are currently underrepresented habitats, while also ensuring that development of old growth characteristics will be prioritized:
  - Doubles annual **young forest** creation practices (from 650 to 1,200 acres) and accomplishes even more with the help of partners (up to 3,200 acres annually).
  - Emphasizes using fire and mechanical harvest to restore **open forest** conditions in tiered objectives.
  - Increases the designated **old growth** network by more than 50,000 acres.
  - Increases **prescribed fire** up to 20,000 annual acres and up to 45,000 annual acres with additional resources.
- Restores and maintains **rare habitats**, including wetlands and Southern Appalachian bogs, Carolina hemlock bluffs, balds, spruce fir, and more.
- Provides overall **habitat diversity** of all wildlife, including habitats to support recovery of federally **threatened and endangered species**.
- Increases **nonnative invasive species treatments**, habitat restoration and **watershed projects**.



The revised plan recommends more than 49,000 acres of undeveloped land for **recommended wilderness**.

These areas have the highest degree of wilderness characteristics, and due to their remote and inaccessible character and adjacency to existing wilderness, there is a low probability of conflicts with other management goals and multiple uses.

# Providing Clean and Abundant Water



Water is a life-sustaining resource for the Nantahala and Pisgah NFs and the natural and local communities that depend on it. Beyond ecological communities, forest waters also support municipal water supplies, tribal lands, agriculture, and industry. Increasing development pressures and impacts of climate change will make water from the forests even more vital in the next generation.

The revised forest plan:

- Identifies **priority watersheds** for watershed restoration activities during the next 20 years, spread across the forest.
- Emphasizes **aquatic organism passage, stream channel improvement** projects, maintaining and expanding the range of **brook trout, freshwater mussels and other aquatic species**.
- Establishes **streamside zones** where activities contribute to improving the larger stream ecosystem.
- Includes an objective to develop a forestwide **road maintenance** plan to promote public safety, prevent erosion, and protect water quality while maintaining access.
- Provides the flexibility to **adapt** to changing conditions in the face of **climate change**.



# Partnering with Others



The future of public lands is larger than the work of the Forest Service. The plan values the contributions of State and local governments, non-governmental partners, and citizens in working together toward our shared goals. The planning process has involved an unprecedented amount of engagement from the public. Continued public involvement will be an integral part of plan implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management. We are committed to working with partners and the public as we implement the new plan.

The revised forest plan:

- Builds on **thousands of ideas** that citizens, organizations, and governments shared during plan development.
- Ensures that **all interests** benefit from the implementation of our **multiple use mission**.
- Identifies **stretch goals** for nearly all objectives if additional capacity in the form of resources or help from others is available during plan implementation; and **identifies ways to work with others** to accomplish shared goals.
- Positions the forest to become a **partner** of choice for **volunteers** and local communities as well as local and national organizations.



The revised plan ensures **all are welcome** to the national forest, positioning the forest to expand the diversity of **visitors, volunteers, and partners**, and increase public land **employment pathways** across all demographics.

## What will the final plan enable?

### The Plan will:

- ◇ **Recognize and contribute to multiple uses of the Forest Service mission** including timber harvest, recreation, wildlife, water and wilderness.
- ◇ **Improve forest health and resiliency**, increase the pace and scale of restoration above current levels; maintain and improve the diversity of forest vegetation especially young forest, open forest, and oldgrowth conditions; increase management activity using silviculture and fire as tools; and control invasive species.
- ◇ **Improve or maintain wildlife habitat conditions** for the wildlife species that depend on the forest, including federally listed species and species of conservation concern, rare and unique habitats, resident and migrant game species, pollinators, birds, bats, fish, and more.
- ◇ **Contribute to clean and abundant water** by sustaining surface water and groundwater flows, protect water quality, maintain fish and wildlife habitat, control erosion, restore streams and streamside zones, and continue to sustain forests as a source of drinking water to communities in Western NC.
- ◇ **Improve the Forests' world class recreation opportunities** for year-round outdoor play and exercise. The plan will provide for both developed and dispersed recreation on land and water, from an outdoor multiple use trail system to indoor facilities, ensuring opportunities and sites are sustainable.
- ◇ **Enable forest access**, including for hunting, fishing and gathering of forest products, as well as providing for the needs of Federally recognized Tribes.
- ◇ **Contribute to local economies** by collaboratively providing resources, improvements to infrastructure, sustainable levels of renewable forest commodities that contribute to local businesses, tourism, and sustainable community growth.
- ◇ **Sustain the Forests' scenic beauty and cultural resources**, enabling the forest to remain a destination for spiritual renewal and connecting to our shared history.
- ◇ **Continue to manage existing administrative and Congressionally designated areas which will not be changed during revision.** These areas include:
  - National Scenic & Historic Trails, such as the Appalachian Trail and the Trail of Tears*
  - Congressionally designated Wilderness*
  - Wild & Scenic Rivers*
  - Inventoried Roadless Areas*
  - Roan Mountain*
  - Wilderness Study Areas*
  - Experimental Forests Research*
  - Natural Areas Cradle of Forestry Historic Site*
- ◇ **Identify land allocations in the following three areas:**
  - Recommended Wilderness*
  - Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers*
  - Special Interest Areas*
- ◇ **Recognize the value of partners in shaping our shared future**, identify how other agencies, government and non-government partners, volunteers and visitors contribute to sustaining these National Forests; and identify and help facilitate additional opportunities to work together for shared goals.
- ◇ **Be inclusive of input from the public, governments, Federally Recognized Tribes, and best available science.** The plan is developed with input from the public and future planning and projects will be undertaken in collaboration with the public. The Forest Service will continue to collaborate with the public on implementing the revised plan.

**The Revised Plan will not:** Decide the future of a particular trail, road, recreation site, or project design; make any leasing decisions about oil and gas resources; or authorize activities to take place on the forest. (All future projects must be analyzed prior to implementation.)