

Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests

Process Paper:

Identifying and Evaluating

Lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the

National Wilderness Preservation System

October 22, 2015

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Identifying and Evaluating Lands That May Be Suitable For Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

This report summarizes the process to date that the Forest has completed for identifying and evaluating lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and determining whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness designation. The paper details the process used to date and next steps.

Introduction

The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests are in the required¹ process of revising the forest plan. Part of the revision process includes identifying and evaluating lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) and determining whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness designation. A description of this process can be found in the 2012 Forest Service Planning Rule and Chapter 70 of the Forest Service Land Management Planning Handbook 1909.12. This process includes the following four steps:

1. Identify and inventory all lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System
2. Evaluate the wilderness characteristics of each area based on a given set of criteria
3. Determine which areas to further analyze in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process
4. Decide which areas, if any, to recommend for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Lands evaluated and analyzed through this process and the resulting NEPA analysis are only preliminary administrative recommendations; Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation.

Step 1: Identify and inventory all lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The primary function of the inventory step is to efficiently, effectively, and transparently identify all lands in the plan area that may have wilderness characteristics as defined in the Wilderness Act.

It is important to note that areas included in the inventory themselves do not convey or require any particular kind of management. All inventoried areas are carried on to the next step for a

¹ National Forest Management Act of 1976

closer look at whether the areas possess wilderness characteristics. During subsequent steps inventoried area boundaries may change, or areas may be combined or divided. Some of these areas may be considered in alternatives for the forest plan revision. Management direction for areas that are inventoried, but ultimately not recommended for inclusion in the NWPS will be left to the discretion of the Responsible Official.

As one of the first forests to begin applying the 2012 Planning Rule, the planning rule directives were not yet complete when the Nantahala and Pisgah NFs began the inventory process. The inventory was developed over a year and a half, was adjusted twice in response to two rounds of public engagement in Spring 2014 and Fall 2014. It was revised again after the release of final agency directives in early 2015. The inventory includes forest lands that meet inventory criteria on the basis of size, and do not include certain types of roads or other improvements.

As a result of these adjustments, the October 2015 inventory is broad and inclusive, consistent with Forest Service policy and the intent of the Eastern Wilderness Act and reflects many but not all of the areas recommended for consideration by the public. The October 2015 inventory is approximately 150,000 acres larger than the first version seen by the public because it removes road buffers, removes minimum width criteria, includes roads that are gated and closed to the public, and includes areas that can be passively restored. Detailed discussion of the changes of the inventory between Spring 2014, Fall 2014 and October 2015 are provided in Appendix A.

Step 2. Evaluate the wilderness characteristics of each area based on a given set of criteria

The next step in the plan revision process for inventorying and evaluating lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System is to evaluate each area on the inventory map for wilderness characteristics. Evaluation of wilderness characteristics is done using five criteria set forth in the Wilderness Act of 1964 and required in the Forest Service Handbook final directives FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70, Section 72.1. A summary of these five criteria is as follows:

1. Evaluate the degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable (apparent naturalness).
2. Evaluate the degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. The word "or" means that an area only has to possess one or the other. The area does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both elements, nor does it need to have outstanding opportunities on every acre.
3. Evaluate how an area of less than 5,000 acres is of sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable.
4. Evaluate the degree to which an area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. These values are not

required in an area to be present, but their presence should be identified and evaluated where they exist.

5. Evaluate the degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics.

The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests plan revision team has developed questions and measures to address each of these five criteria, and to provide a consistent way to evaluate each area in the inventory for wilderness characteristics in a comparable manner. These are outlined in the Evaluation Criteria, available in Appendix D.

From late October to mid-December, we are asking for input on these draft evaluation questions, and asking for input that should be considered as we answer these questions for each area. Over the next several months, the plan revision team will be evaluating each area of the inventory using these questions, and we appreciate your input.

Step 3. Determine which areas to further analyze in the National Environmental Policy Act process

Following the evaluation step, the Forest Supervisor will decide, based on evaluation and public input, which areas, or portions thereof, will be considered in draft forest plan alternatives during the development of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The DEIS will analyze the environmental effects and management tradeoffs associated with recommending areas or not recommending areas for wilderness designation. The DEIS is expected to be released in the spring of 2016.

Step 4. Decide which areas, if any, to recommend for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

Once the forest plan is finalized, the final environmental impact statement is released, and a record of decision is signed, the Forest Supervisor may recommend suitable lands for National Wilderness Preservation System designation to the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, if the record of decision contains suitable lands. Such recommendation may then be forwarded to the Secretary of Agriculture, and ultimately to Congress, for their consideration and possible designation. Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation.

Appendix A: Inventory Adjustments Spring 2014 – Fall 2015

Version 1 Inventory of Lands that may be Suitable for Inclusion in the NWPS

The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests interdisciplinary team (ID team) began identifying and inventorying lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the NWPS using the size, adjacency, and road improvements criteria outlined in the Forest Service Handbook.² The directives used to complete the Version 1 inventory were the draft directives dated February 14, 2013.

To begin the inventory process, a map of each of the six ranger districts was created (Cheoah, Tusquitee, Nantahala, Pisgah, Appalachian, Grandfather) showing existing wildernesses, wilderness study areas, inventoried roadless areas, other areas recommended for wilderness during the assessment, roads (other than maintenance level 1 roads), maintained wildlife openings, recent timber regeneration areas (in the last 20 years), and property boundaries.

Using these maps along with satellite imagery, other Geographic Information System (GIS) data layers, and on-the-ground knowledge of Forest Service personnel, a preliminary map was drawn of areas to be included in the Version 1 inventory. This preliminary inventory was presented to the public for review and comment at a public meeting in April 2014. While the draft directives provided guidance for areas to include or exclude, the proposed directives did not direct precisely where or how to draw the lines that would identify the areas in the inventory. The ID team approached the task from the perspective of reasonableness, based on the FACA Committee's addition of the word "reasonably" to the proposed directives sentence, "The inventory is intended to be reasonably broad.....".

When portions of an area were determined to have improvements such as recent vegetation treatments, cleared transmission line corridors, or developed recreation sites, the portion removed from the inventory varied, depending on:

- a) The number, proximity, and location of the roads, wildlife openings and recent timber management relative to each other.
- b) The width of the area: The ID team included areas with lobes as long as the area was at least one-half mile wide.

In many, but not all cases, if no improvements were present, the ID team drew the Version 1 boundary all the way to the edge of the national forest boundary, in order to be "reasonably inclusive." In some cases, the boundary was drawn at a ridge top or other obvious physical feature in order to make it easier to locate and manage.

² See FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70, 71.21 and 71.22a

Consideration of Improvements (Proposed FS 1909.12, Chapter 71.22)

Substantially noticeable vegetation treatments

Chapter 71.22b states that areas in the inventory may include vegetation treatments that are not substantially noticeable. To determine if substantially noticeable vegetation treatments were present in a potential inventory area, a working definition of “substantially noticeable” was presented to the public in April 2014 for feedback:

- Timber regeneration areas less than 20 years old
- Wildlife openings, including linear wildlife strips
- Areas such as balds that are maintained in their desired condition through intense management such as mowing, grazing, burning, cut-and-leave, herbicide use, etc.

While the proposed directives include the words: “recognize that these improvements may achieve wilderness character through passive or active restoration,” the proposed directives do not require such areas be either included or excluded. Given the long lasting status of these openings and the public expectation that they would be maintained in a managed open condition, we excluded these areas from the inventory.

Maintenance Level 2 Roads

Proposed FS 1909.12, Chapter 71.22a(3) version 02/14/2013 directs evaluation of areas that contain forest roads maintained to level 2. If the road has been improved and is maintained by mechanical means to ensure relatively regular and continuous use, the area need NOT be included in the inventory. The default assumption used in the Version 1 inventory was that maintenance level 2 roads have been improved and are “maintained by mechanical means to ensure relatively regular and continued use.” It was expected that the public involvement process would be useful in identifying those maintenance level 2 roads where “closed yearlong to motor vehicles” status should be checked.

Regarding the exclusion of roads from the inventory, the proposed directives are silent as to what “area” is to be excluded. The ID Team established the following protocol for developing the Version 1 inventory that would be a starting point for public feedback:

1. The area of a road would be 500 feet on either side of the centerline; that area would be excluded.
2. If there were multiple roads in close proximity and the 500-foot buffer left a narrow lobe or narrow passage, that constricted portion was eliminated from consideration. The justification for eliminating these portions is tied to Chapter 71.22a(3)(b) which is a road density factor.

Areas less than 5,000 acres

For Version 1 of the inventory, if an area was clearly less than 5,000 acres and did not border an existing wilderness or recommended Wilderness Study Area, it was not included in the inventory.

The proposed directives and the Wilderness Act use these words when referring to areas of less than 5,000 acres: “The area contains less than 5,000 acres but is of sufficient size to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.” The Forest determined that there were no inventoried areas less than 5,000 acres on either the Nantahala or Pisgah National Forest of sufficient size to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.

However, only those areas substantially less than 5,000 acres were excluded from the inventory based on insufficient size. For example, if an area was 4,750 acres or greater, the area was included in the inventory to account for a margin of error around acreage calculations.

The one-half-mile wide criterion

In order to address fragmented Forest Service ownership patterns on the Nantahala and Pisgah NFs, the ID Team set a criterion that areas in the inventory needed to be at least one-half mile wide to preserve wilderness character, basing such rationale on the need to limit human intrusion and the idea of having a “reasonably broad and inclusive” inventory. This approach was presented to the public for feedback along with all other considerations. While many public participants voiced approval for this approach, many did not as it was not a criterion specified in the Chapter 70 draft directives.

Version 2 Inventory of Lands that may be Suitable for Inclusion in the NWPS

Over 130 comments were received in response to the initial inventory areas and the process used to arrive at the inventory. Comments included 1) those that were specific to the forest’s interpretation of the draft directives and the criteria used to develop the inventory maps; and 2) comments on specific areas and the condition of specific roads. In response to the public comments, eight areas less than 5,000 acres that were specifically commented on were reconsidered to determine if they were “of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition”. Additionally, all maintenance level 2 roads in areas of the Version 1 inventory that received public comments, were reconsidered to determine if they were closed or open to public access. Roads that were open to public access year-round or seasonally were excluded from the inventory, consistent with the version 1 inventory. Roads that were closed to the public, regardless of their maintenance schedule or administrative use, were now included in the inventory.

In October 2014, the Forest shared the Version 2 inventory with the intent of beginning the evaluation of areas. The revised inventory included six additional areas and approximately 22,000 additional acres. Inventory maps were published online through the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool and hard copy maps were available at ranger district offices. Evaluation criteria and questions were provided to the public along with a request for information on individual areas in response to the evaluation questions. The online Collaborative Mapping Tool was available to the public from mid-November through the end of February 2015. Approximately 500 comments were received through the Collaborative mapping tool and thousands of additional comments were received by email and postal mail.

Public response to the October 2014 inventory (approximately 230,600 acres) indicated continued disagreement on the use of inventory criteria such as:

- 1) Recent substantially noticeable vegetation treatment as a disqualifying factor;
- 2) Exclusion of 500 ft buffers from roads in inventory areas; and
- 3) The ½ mile minimum width as a qualifying factor for inventory areas.

There was also concern that the Forest had not applied the correct interpretation of the directives with regards to maintenance level 2 roads and areas less than 5,000 acres.

Version 3 Inventory of Lands that may be Suitable for Inclusion in the NWPS

Following the publication of the final directives in January 2015, several updates were made to the inventory of lands that may be suitable for wilderness. The ID team took a broader and more inclusive look at areas proposed through public comment, including new proposals brought forward in March 2015, and dropped some of the previously applied criteria that were not specifically identified in the final directives.

The 500 ft. road buffers were removed and the criteria regarding a minimum area width of a half-mile was dropped. In addition, all roads extending into inventory areas were reconsidered to determine their open versus closed status based on allowed public access identified in the 2013 Motor Vehicle Use Maps. Portions of roads that were gated and closed to the public were subsequently included in the inventory areas.

The criteria for considering substantially noticeable vegetation treatments were also revisited in the context of the Eastern Wilderness Act. With the recognition that the inventory is intended to be broad and inclusive and that many vegetation treatments and maintained wildlife openings could be passively restored to a natural condition over time, these areas were not considered as disqualifying features at the version 3 inventory.

The resulting updated inventory for lands that may be suitable for wilderness consists of approximately 362,411 acres. Appendix B provides a brief description of each area included in the inventory and an explanation of why specific areas proposed by the public are not in the inventory. Inclusion in the inventory is not a designation that conveys or requires a particular kind of management and each area will be independently evaluated for wilderness characteristics. Additionally, the boundaries of inventory areas are subject to change and will likely be refined for those areas that are carried forward in the analysis of the draft environmental impact statement.

Table 1. Comparison of Version 1, Version 2, and Version 3 Inventory Results.

Ranger District	Version 1: Number of Areas	Version 1: Acres (approximate)	Version 2: Number of Areas	Version 2: Acres (approximate)	Version 3: Number of Areas	Version 3: Acres (approximate)
Standalone Areas						
Appalachian	3	28,457	5	33,812	8	45,541
Grandfather	6	45,791	6	47,987	7	62,237
Pisgah	3	23,906	4	33,295	4	48,427

Ranger District	Version 1: Number of Areas	Version 1: Acres (approximate)	Version 2: Number of Areas	Version 2: Acres (approximate)	Version 3: Number of Areas	Version 3: Acres (approximate)
Nantahala	2	10,779	3	14,156	7	44,853
Tusquitee	4	37,062	4	37,554	6	67,290
Cheoah	2	15,929	2	15,929	4	27,343
Total	20	161,924	24	182,733	36	295,691
Areas Adjacent to Existing Wilderness or Recommended Wilderness Study Areas						
Appalachian	1	4,649	1	4,649	1	10,653
Grandfather	3	19,285	3	19,285	4	21,402
Pisgah	2	11,049	2	10,125	2	11,644
Nantahala	2	3,001	3	3,490	3	6,678
Tusquitee	3	4,981	4	7,579	2	8,944
Cheoah	3	3,846	3	2,798	4	7,399
Total	14	46,811	16	47,926	16	66,720
Grand Total	34	208,735	40	230,659	52	362,411

Appendix B: Inventory of Areas That May Be Suitable For Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The following areas have been identified as lands that may have wilderness characteristics as defined in the Wilderness Act. The inventory is intended to be reasonably broad and inclusive and to identify lands that may be suitable, so that they can be further evaluated through the public involvement process. Inclusion in the inventory is not a designation that conveys or requires a particular kind of management.

Name	Ranger District	County	Acreage
Ash Cove	Tusquitee	Cherokee	5,885
Bald Mountain	Appalachian	Madison	11,616
Barkers Creek (Ext. D)	Nantahala	Macon	1,556
Bearwallow	Appalachian	Yancey	4,131
Black Mountains	Appalachian	Yancey	12,473
Bluff Mountain	Appalachian	Madison	3,335
Boteler Peak	Tusquitee	Clay	10,524
Cantrell Top	Tusquitee	Cherokee	3,664
Cedar Rock Mountain	Pisgah	Transylvania	8,681
Cheoah Bald	Cheoah	Swain, Graham	9,400
Cherry Cove (Ext. E)	Tusquitee	Clay	1,159
Chunky Gal (Ext. B)	Tusquitee	Clay, Macon	7,785
Craggy	Appalachian	Buncombe	10,653
Daniel Ridge	Pisgah	Transylvania	11,695
Deep Creek/Avery Creek Ext. 2	Cheoah	Graham	2,313
Dobson Knob Ext. B	Grandfather	McDowell, Burke	11,763
Ellicott Rock West Ext.	Nantahala	Macon	824
Fishhawk Mountain	Nantahala	Macon	5,669
Harper Creek	Grandfather	Caldwell, Avery	7,432
Harper Creek Ext (Sugar Knob)	Grandfather	Burke	6,175
Highlands of Roan #2	Appalachian	Avery, Mitchell	5,217
Jarrett Creek	Grandfather	McDowell	8,972
Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Ext. 1	Cheoah	Graham	3,553
Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Ext. 4	Cheoah	Graham	326
Laurel Mountain	Pisgah	Henderson, Transylvania	10,946
Linville Gorge Addition	Grandfather	Burke	2,844
Linville Pinnacle Ext.	Grandfather	Burke	620

Name	Ranger District	County	Acreage
Lost Cove	Grandfather	Avery	5,934
Mackey Mountain	Grandfather	McDowell	14,985
Middle Prong Ext.	Pisgah	Haywood	6,676
Nolichucky Gorge	Appalachian	Yancey	2,465
Overflow Creek	Nantahala	Macon	3,901
Panther town Valley (1)	Nantahala	Jackson	4,395
Piercy Mountain	Tusquitee	Macon	9,109
Pigeon River	Appalachian	Haywood	6,105
Santeetlah Headwaters	Cheoah	Graham	4,448
Shining Rock Exts.	Pisgah	Haywood	4,968
Siler Bald	Nantahala	Macon	6,280
Slide Hollow	Appalachian	Avery	199
Snowbird	Cheoah	Graham	9,051
Southern Nantahala Ext.	Nantahala	Macon	4,298
South Mills River	Pisgah	Transylvania, Henderson	17,105
Steels Creek	Grandfather	Burke	5,841
Tellico Bald	Nantahala	Macon	12,525
Terrapin Mountain	Nantahala	Jackson, Macon	5,441
Tusquitee Bald	Tusquitee	Macon, Cherokee, Clay	29,156
Unicoi Mtns / Upper Bald River	Tusquitee	Cherokee	8,952
Upper Wilson Creek	Grandfather	Avery, Caldwell	6,372
Wesser Bald	Nantahala	Swain, Macon	6,642
Woods Mountain	Grandfather	McDowell	12,701
Yellow Creek Mountains	Cheoah	Graham	4,444
Yellowhammer Branch Ext. 3	Cheoah	Graham	1,207
Inventory Total			362,411

Additional information about each of the above areas is provided in the narratives below with a comparison of acreage between version 1, version 2, and version 3. Acreage that is identified as Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) will remain as IRA regardless of the outcome of the wilderness evaluation process.

In the version 3 inventory, all closed maintenance level (ML) 2 roads and recent vegetation treatments have been included in the inventory with recognition that these improvements could be passively restored to a natural condition over time. Where there are notes on the presence of ML 2 roads or vegetation treatments (including wildlife fields), it is to indicate where the version 3 inventory differs from the earlier versions which excluded those treatments.

Ash Cove		Tusquitee RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	0	5,885

The proposed Ash Cove area is an area of approximately 5,885 acres on the Tusquitee Ranger District. When originally considering this area, the eastern most portion was excluded because it is less than ½ mile width at its narrowest point, resulting in an area of less than 5,000 acres. When the ½ mile width criterion was dropped in version 3, this no longer affected the size of the area. There is one closed ML 2 road, National Forest System Road (NFSR) 2616, that comes in on the northern side and there are vegetation treatments less than 20 years old along this road. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Bald Mountain		Appalachian RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
11,234	11,414	11,414	11,616

The Bald Mountains area is an Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) that borders the Cherokee NF, with the Appalachian Trail running along the North Carolina/ Tennessee state line. The area on the adjacent Cherokee NF includes approximately 11,260 acres of IRA which is managed as backcountry and scenic areas, and was not recommended for wilderness designation in the 2004 Forest Plan revision. NFSR 466 is a ML2 road that is open for the first 0.6 miles and then restricted with a gate. The open portion of NFSR 466 is not included in the inventory area. The Bald Mountain area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Barkers Creek (Ext. D)		Nantahala RD	
IRA acreage (approx.)	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
976	975	975	1,556

The Barkers Creek area is adjacent to the Southern Nantahala Wilderness on the east side. The eastern portion of the area was not included in the version 1 inventory because there is less than a half mile between open road 7293A and private ownership. When the criteria for narrowness was dropped, additional acreage to the east was included in the inventory area. This extension to the Southern Nantahala Wilderness will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Bearwallow		Appalachian RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
4,116	0	4,116	4,131

The Bearwallow IRA is separated from the Balsam Cone IRA by a cleared utility transmission corridor on its northeastern boundary. There are approximately 2.5 miles of linear wildlife corridors off of NFSR 472, and a maintained wildlife opening. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Black Mountains		Appalachian RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage June 2015
10,661	11,760	12,426	12,473

The Black Mountains area is all inclusive of the Balsam Cone IRA and is just north of the Bearwallow area, separated by a cleared utility transmission corridor. The southern boundary for this area follows the 2001 IRA boundary. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Bluff Mountain		Appalachian RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	0	3,335

The Bluff Mountain Area is just west of Hot Springs, NC. The area is divided by NFSR 3506, which is a ML 2 road open to the public and frequently used for hunting access. State route 1183 is the western boundary of the area. There is a cleared utility transmission corridor that goes through the center of the area in a SE to NW direction. There are timber regeneration harvest units off of NFSR 3505 that are less than ten years old. Due to the presence of the open road south of the transmission line and the small size of the area (2,529 acres), only the area northeast of the utility corridor will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Boteler Peak		Tusquitee RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
4,220	5,503	5,702	10,524

The Boteler Peak area is bordered by NFSR 351 on the northwest side, which is an ML3 road that is open seasonally. There are numerous vegetation treatments less than 20 years old along NFSR 351. NFSR 6237 on the east side of the area is used to access a communication site on the north side of NFSR 6237. There is a cleared utility corridor that runs in a north south direction

between NFSR 348 and NFSR 350 on the east side of the area. Boteler Peak will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Cantrell Top		Tusquitee RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	3,361	3,361	3,664

Cantrell Top borders the Cherokee NF along its entire northern boundary and is adjacent to the Upper Bald River Inventoried Roadless Area on the northeastern boundary, an approximately 9,000 acre area which has been recommended for wilderness designation. NFSR 50 is an open ML 3 road that separates the area from Unicoi Mountains/Upper Bald River inventory area to the east. There are two linear wildlife corridors on the west side of NFSR 50 which were excluded in versions 1 and 2. Cantrell Top will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Cedar Rock Mountain		Pisgah RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	5,651	5,540	8,681

National Forest System Road 2058 is a ML 3 road that is restricted by a gate but open to the public for access to the Kuykendal campground, a developed campground with restroom facilities, and was therefore excluded from the inventory area. There are also recent vegetation treatments along the southern boundary of the area, and approximately six miles of ML 2 roads that are maintained as linear wildlife corridors and are closed by a gate. Cedar Rock Mountain will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Cheoah Bald		Cheoah RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
7,808	7,433	7,433	9,400

NFSR 418 is open for two weeks to the public every spring for ramp gathering and is therefore excluded from the area. The approximately 1,080 acre area on the west was excluded from the versions 1 and 2 inventories based on the ½ mile width criteria, but has been included in the version 3 inventory area. NFSR 259, 259A, and 259B are closed roads that were originally excluded from the inventory but have been included in the version 3 inventory area. The portion of NFSR 259 (Nolton Ridge) that is open for leaf viewing and hunting during October, is outside of the area. The Appalachian Trail (AT) traverses the area and the Stecoah Gap trailhead and parking area provides access to the AT on the northwest boundary of the area. Cheoah Bald will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Cherry Cove (Ext E)		Tusquitee RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
844	819	819	1,159

The Cherry Cove area is adjacent to the Southern Nantahala Wilderness on the state border with Georgia. The version 1 and 2 inventories included only the acreage that was in the Cherry Cove IRA, and excluded portions outside of the IRA due their narrowness (1/2 mile width criterion). The version 3 inventory includes the entire National Forest System acreage which will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Chunky Gal (Ext B)		Tusquitee RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
3,475	3,555	4,875	7,785

Version 3 of the inventory expanded the boundary on the Chunky Gal extension to US 64, which surrounds a private inholding owned by the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee. The 1,115 acre Yellow Mountain area east of the Chunky Gal area, was originally identified as a separate area because NFSR 71D divides the two areas. However, 71D is a closed ML 2 road maintained as a linear wildlife opening which was included in the version 3 inventory, so the two areas are combined. In the western portions of the Chunky Gal extension, there are recent vegetation treatments, less than 10 years old, and an open ML 3 road (NFSR 6230B). The version 3 inventory area also includes 607 acres identified as the Sharptop Ridge area in the version 1 inventory. The Chunky Gal area, an extension to the Southern Nantahala Wilderness, will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Craggy		Appalachian RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
2,658	4,649	4,649	10,653

Part of the Craggy Mountain area is both an Inventoried Roadless Area and a Wilderness Study Area (WSA) recommended for wilderness designation in the original 1987 Forest Plan. The version 2 inventory area was expanded to include additional acreage north of the WSA. NFSR 74 is an open, heavily used ML3 road that extends into the interior of the area for 8.4 miles and will be excluded from the area. NFSR 5548 is a closed ML 2 road that is maintained as a linear wildlife corridor and is included in the version 3 area of consideration. In addition to NFSR 5548, there are three linear wildlife corridors on the north side of the area, totaling approximately 5.2 miles. The Craggy area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Daniel Ridge		Pisgah RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
9,303	0	9,500	11,695

The Daniel Ridge area is just south of the Blue Ridge Parkway on the Pisgah Ranger District. The area was not included in the version 1 inventory because it contains numerous ML 2 roads used for administrative and public access; including NFSR 5031, NFSR 140, NFSR 229, NFSR 137, NFSR 225, NFSR 809, NFSR 5046. Part of the area was included in inventory version 2 with acreage slightly larger than the IRA, but road buffers, substantially noticeable vegetation treatments, and narrowness criteria was applied. Version 3 expanded the area to include all closed ML2 roads and eliminated the narrowness and vegetation treatment criteria. Several roads in the area are currently closed for maintenance or have been damaged by storm events, but are managed as open seasonally or year-round. NFSR 140 is currently closed due to replacement of bridge and will reopen upon completion of the bridge work. NFSR 229 is currently closed and will reopen to the public when road maintenance is complete. NFSR 137 is a closed ML 3 road that had a bridge replaced following the 2004 storms and is driven by USFS staff for maintenance of several trails in the area. NFSR 225 is currently closed at NFSR 475B and will reopen to the public when the washed out culvert is repaired. NFSR 809 is a ML2 road, used daily by the public who rent the two campsites at Cove Creek Campground and by the NCWRC for maintenance of wildlife openings. Cove Creek Campground is a developed group campground with restroom facilities and has been excluded from the area. The Daniel Ridge area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Deep Creek/Avery Creek Ext 2		Cheoah RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
1,895	2,313	1,265	2,313

The Deep Creek/Avery Creek area is an extension on the east side of the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness Area. In the version 2 inventory a portion of the area was excluded due to a closed ML 2 road that is used for administrative access. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics as an extension existing wilderness.

Dobson Knob		Grandfather RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
2,800	11,234	11,234	11,763

The Dobson Knob area is adjacent to Linville Gorge Wilderness, but since it is separated from the wilderness by SR 1238 (Kistler Memorial Highway) it is considered a stand-alone area. NFSR 106 is an open road which has been excluded from the area. There are a few vegetation treatments that were excluded from the versions 1 and 2 inventories but are included in the version 3 inventory. The Dobson Knob area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Ellicott Rock West Extension		Nantahala RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	489	824

The Ellicott Rock West Extension area is adjacent to Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area on its west side. The area that was included in the version 2 inventory has been expanded to include additional acreage to the north where there are vegetation treatments and linear wildlife openings. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics as an extension to existing wilderness.

Fishhawk Mountain		Nantahala RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	0	5,669

The Fishhawk Mountain area was excluded from the versions 1 and 2 inventories because of three inholdings in the area, one of which has a private road easement. NFRS 4527 is a ML 2 road that accesses the western most private inholding through an existing easement. Additionally, NFSR 4525 is a ML 2 road in the western portion of the area that is accessible by 4-wheel drive vehicles and is mowed annually as a linear wildlife opening. NFSR 4522 is an open level 2 road in the eastern portion of the area with mowed wildlife fields off of it and is not included in the inventory area. Overall, the area has a very irregular ownership boundary with, and is almost entirely surrounded by non-FS lands. The area was reconsidered and included in the version 3 inventory and will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Harper Creek		Grandfather RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
7,351	7,140	7,140	7,432

The Harper Creek Area is an Inventoried Roadless Area and a designated Wilderness Study Area that was recommended for wilderness designation in the 1987 Forest Plan. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Harper Creek Ext (Sugar Knob)		Grandfather RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	5,206	5,206	6,175

The Harper Creek Extension is an area just south of the Harper Creek Wilderness Study Area. There are approximately four miles of linear wildlife corridors off of SR 181 in the southern portion of the area. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Highlands of Roan 2		Appalachian RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	0	5,217

The Highlands of Roan 2 is an area over 5,000 acres reconsidered and included in inventory version 3. It was excluded in earlier versions because the area contains multiple high elevation grassy balds in the Roan Mountain area which are regularly maintained by mechanical means. However, the area would be capable of reverting to a natural condition if left unmanaged. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Jarrett Creek		Grandfather RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
7,499	7,824	7,824	8,972

NFSR 482A is a closed ML2 road extending approximately three miles into the center of the area, and NFSR 482B is a closed ML1 road on the northern edge that is approximately one mile long; both roads are maintained as linear wildlife openings. The Jarrett Creek area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Ext 1		Cheoah RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	0	3,553

This area is adjacent to Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness on the southern side. It was not included in the version 1 or 2 inventories because of the presence of maintained linear wildlife corridors, recent vegetation management, an open ML 4 road (81F) that bisects the area, and numerous ML1 and ML2 administrative access roads. The proposed area includes roads that provide vehicular access to the Wolf Laurel Trail, Stratton Bald Trail, Stewart Cabin, and Swan Cabin. The area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics as an extension to existing wilderness-.

Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Ext 4		Cheoah RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	326	326	326

This area is adjacent to Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness on the eastern side and will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics as an extension to existing wilderness.

Laurel Mountain		Pisgah RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
5,682	5,682	5,682	10,946

The Cradle of Forestry is adjacent to this area on the western side, but was not included in the inventory because of its Congressional designation and specific management direction that would preclude it from being recommended as wilderness. There are numerous recent vegetation treatments, linear wildlife corridors, and closed ML 1 roads in the eastern and norther portions of this area. The area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Linville Gorge Addition		Grandfather RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
2,800	2,845	2,845	2,844

This area is adjacent to the Linville Gorge Wilderness on the east side. The entire area is an IRA and will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics as an extension to existing wilderness.

Linville Pinnacle Ext		Grandfather RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	0	620

This area is adjacent to Linville Gorge Wilderness on the south side. There are six vegetation management units that have received treatment within the last 20 years and two wildlife fields which together total approximately three acres. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics as an extension to existing wilderness.

Lost Cove		Grandfather RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
5,954	5,954	5,954	5,934

Lost Cove is both an Inventoried Roadless Area and a designated Wilderness Study Area recommended for wilderness designation in the 1987 Forest Plan. The area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Mackey Mountain		Grandfather RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
5,932	10,490	11,870	14,985

Approximately 40% of the Mackey Mountain area is an Inventoried Roadless Area. NFSR 1188 is a ML3 road in the northern portion of the area that is not included in the inventory. There is a private road easement used to access private ownership in the southeastern portion of the area that has been excluded from the version 3 inventory. Portions of the area were excluded in the versions 1 and 2 inventories because of narrow fingers of ownership. The Mackey Mountain area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Middle Prong Ext		Pisgah RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
1,852	6,351	5,427	6,676

This area is adjacent to Middle Prong Wilderness on its northern side. The 1,852 acres of Inventoried Roadless Area are directly adjacent to the wilderness. It is surrounded by private ownership on the eastern, western and northern sides. NFSR 97 is a ML 2 road, a portion of which is open seasonally for hunting access and is therefore excluded from the area. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Nolichucky Gorge		Appalachian RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	0	2,465

This area is adjacent to lands on the Cherokee NF that are managed for dispersed recreation with vegetation management, the Appalachian Trail, and recommended Wild and Scenic River. NFSR 5583 has an easement to access private property and there are linear wildlife openings and wildlife fields along this road. NFSR 5506 is an open level 2 road in the southwest corner of the area. There is a private parcel of approximately 188 acres in the center of the area, with a private road easement that accesses the property from the east. An active railroad line runs along the Nolichucky River in the gorge. With consideration of the active railroad and private parcel, only the portion south of the railroad and private ownership will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Overflow Creek		Nantahala RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
3,378	0	3,377	3,901

Overflow is an Inventoried Roadless Area and a designated Wilderness Study Area (WSA) which was not recommended for wilderness designation in the 1987 Forest Plan due to

configuration and adjacent uses. An extension to the WSA in the southwest of the existing WSA, and bordering GA will also be included in the inventory area. NFSR 79 is an open ML 3 road that extends into the interior of the area and is excluded from the version 3 inventory. The area is bordered on the east by Blue Valley Experimental Forest, NFSR 79C, and a cleared utility corridor along NFSR 367B. The entire WSA and additional acreage to the southwest will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Panthertown Valley		Nantahala RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	0	4,395

This area was not included in the versions 1 and 2 inventories because of administratively used roads and size. The area is bordered on the east by a cleared transmission line corridor. There are numerous deeded access roads along the utility corridor that extend on to National Forest Service lands and have been excluded from the inventory area. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Piercy Mountain		Tusquitee RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	0	9,109

This area was not included in versions 1 and 2 inventories primarily due to the presence of mowed linear wildlife corridors, recent vegetation treatments, and ML 2 roads. It is being included in version 3 inventory and will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Pigeon River		Appalachian RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	5,283	5,657	6,105

This area is adjacent to the Devil's Backbone IRA (4,283 acres) on the Cherokee NF. Interstate 40 runs along the southern boundary of this area. In inventory versions 1 and 2, acreage was excluded because of ML 2 roads and linear wildlife openings. Forest Service road 2580 is a closed ML 2 road that traverses the area in an east-west direction. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Santeetlah Headwaters		Cheoah RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	0	4,448

The Santeetlah Headwaters area was not included in the versions 1 and 2 inventories because of a combination of administratively used ML 2 roads, wildlife improvements, and size (<5,000 acres). The area is separated from Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Extension #1 by NFSR 81, and from Snowbird WSA by the Cherohala Skyway. The area contains four ML 2 roads that extend into the interior of the area (NFSR 2564, NFSR 2564A, NFSR 2804, and NFSR 2805), all of which are closed to the public with gates. Some of these roads are maintained as linear wildlife corridors or provide access to wildlife fields; NFSR 2805 is used primarily as access to mow Huckleberry Knob Bald. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Sharptop Ridge		Tusquitee RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
607	607	607	607

This area is now included in Chunky Gal inventory version 3, and will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics as part of that area.

Shining Rock Ext. (Sam Knob and Graveyard Ridge)		Pisgah RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
4,505	4,698	4,698	4,968

Shining Rock Extension is bordered by the Shining Rock Wilderness to the north and the Blue Ridge Parkway to the south. NFSR 816 (Black Balsam Road) is a paved road accessing the highly developed Black Balsam Trailhead, and separates the Sam Knob IRA from Graveyard Ridge IRA. There is a paved parking area and restrooms located at the end of NFSR 816 which is excluded from the area. This area (including both the Sam Knob and Graveyard Ridge areas) will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics as an extension to existing wilderness.

Siler Bald		Nantahala RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	0	6,280

This area was excluded from the versions 1 and 2 inventories because of numerous linear wildlife openings, wildlife fields, and ML 2 roads maintained as wildlife openings, as well as vegetation management less than 20 years of age. The area contains over 17 miles of ML 2 roads routinely mowed as linear wildlife openings, including NFSR 7280, NFSR 388B, NFSR 7131A,

NFSR 7131D, NFSR 7131E. Siler bald itself is also mowed to maintain the open grass bald. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Slide Hollow		Appalachian RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
199	0	199	199

This area is contiguous with the Slide Hollow Inventoried Roadless Area on the Cherokee NF which is managed as backcountry, Appalachian Trail Corridor, Restoration and management of rare communities, and recommended recreation river. The Slide Hollow IRA was not recommended as a wilderness study area in the Cherokee NF plan revision of 2004. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Snowbird		Cheoah RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
8,501	8,496	8,496	9,051

Part of Snowbird is both an Inventoried Roadless Area and a designated Wilderness Study Area, which was not recommended for wilderness designation in the 1987 Forest Plan. The version 1 and 2 inventories excluded the eastern portion because an open ML 4 road (NFSR 75) bisects that portion of the area and a closed ML 2 road, partly maintained as a linear wildlife opening extends into the area for approximately 7.6 miles. The entire Snowbird Wilderness Study Area and additional acreage to the east will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Southern Nantahala Ext.		Nantahala RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
1,742	2,026	2,026	4,298

This area was previously identified as Scream Ridge. It is adjacent to the Southern Nantahala Wilderness on the northeast side. Parts of the area were excluded in the versions 1 and 2 inventories because of several ML 1 and ML 2 roads which are maintained as linear wildlife openings and used for administrative access. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics as an extension to existing wilderness.

South Mills River		Pisgah RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
8,627	12,573	12,573	17,105

Approximately 50% of the South Mills River area is in an Inventoried Roadless Area. In the area outside of the IRA, NFSR 5015, 5018, 5019, 5057, 5057A, 5058, 5059 are all closed ML 2

roads. Several of these roads are also maintained as linear wildlife openings. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Steels Creek		Grandfather RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	0	5,841

The Steels Creek area is east of the Linville Gorge Wilderness area and NFSR 496. This area was not included in the version 1 or 2 inventory because of the presence of maintained linear wildlife openings and recent vegetation treatments resulted in an area of less than 5,000 acres. Additionally, NFSR 228 is a ML 3 road that extends approximately two miles into the area from the east. Although this area was not considered in earlier versions of the inventory, it was included in version 3 because it was proposed by the public for consideration in March 2015. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Tellico Bald		Nantahala RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	5,765	5,765	12,525

Earlier versions of the inventory included a much smaller area for Tellico Bald primarily due to the presence of maintained linear wildlife corridors and recent vegetation treatments which are not considered disqualifying features in the version 3 inventory. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Terrapin Mountain		Nantahala RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	0	5,441

There are seven private inholdings within the Terrapin Mountain area, ranging from 8 acres to 142 acres. NFSR 2052, NFSR 4564, and NFSR 4568 are closed ML 2 roads maintained for administrative access on the western side of the area. NFSR 2052 and NFSR 4564 are maintained as linear wildlife openings. NFSR 4598 is a ML 3 road on the eastern side of the area, and state road 1104 accesses a private inholding on the eastern side of the area. There are mowed wildlife fields off of NFSR 4564, NFSR 4568, and NFSR 4598, and vegetation treatments on the western side of the area that are less than 15 years old. The Terrapin Mountain area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Tusquitee Bald		Tusquitee RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
13,788	19,278	19,571	29,156

NFSR 340, 340A, 340C, and 427A are open roads that run east/west through the area and have been excluded from the area of the inventory. Additionally, there are vegetation treatments less than 20 years old along both NFSR 427 and NFSR 427A which were excluded in the version 1 and version 2 inventory but have been included in the version 3 inventory. In the far eastern section of the area there are several closed roads that are maintained as linear wildlife corridors. There is also a 50 acre private inholding in the western portion of the area just north of NFSR 340A1. The Tusquitee Bald area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Unicoi Mountains / Upper Bald River		Tusquitee RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	8,920	8,920	8,952

This area is adjacent to the Upper Bald River Inventoried Roadless Area on the Cherokee NF, an approximately 9,000 acre area which has been recommended for wilderness designation. NFSR 50 is a ML 3 road that separates the Unicoi Mountains area from the Cantrell Top area. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Upper Wilson Creek		Grandfather RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
4,989	4,942	4,942	6,372

Approximately 78% of the Upper Wilson Creek area is in an Inventoried Roadless Area. Portions of the area outside the IRA were excluded from earlier versions of the inventory because of recent vegetation treatments and maintained linear wildlife openings west of the IRA. There is also a road easement to a private inholding on the eastern side of the area. The Upper Wilson Creek area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Wesser Bald		Nantahala RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
4,093	5,014	5,014	6,642

Approximately 62% of the Wesser Bald area is in an Inventoried Roadless Area. The initial inventory did not include narrow fingers of ownership that were less than a half mile across but the latest version of the inventory does include those areas. The Wesser Bald area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Woods Mountain		Grandfather RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
9,604	9,441	10,257	12,701

Approximately 75% of this area is an Inventoried Roadless Area and was included in the initial inventory with minor corrections to the boundary. In response to public comments received in May 2014, the northern boundary of this area was extended up to the Blue Ridge Parkway. NFSR 470 is an open road that extends into the area from the south and is not included in the inventory area. The Woods Mountain area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Yellow Creek Mountains		Cheoah RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
0	0	0	4,444

Yellow Creek Mountains is an area that was brought forward from the public in March 2015 for consideration in the inventory. It was not previously included in the inventory because of ML 2 roads maintained for administrative use, narrow fingers of ownership, and size less than 5,000 acres with adjacent private ownership. This area will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics.

Yellowhammer Branch Ext 3		Cheoah RD	
IRA acreage	Version 1 Acreage April 2014	Version 2 Acreage Nov. 2014	Version 3 Acreage October 2015
1,271	1,207	1,207	1,207

This area is adjacent to Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness on the east side. The entire area is an Inventoried Roadless Area and will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics as an extension to existing wilderness.

Areas that were proposed by members of the public during the inventory phase but not included in the inventory

Area Name	Ranger District	Proposed Area Acreage
Alarka Laurel	Nantahala	2,485
Highlands of Roan 1	Appalachian	4,059
Little Rock Knob-Strawberry Mtn	Appalachian	788
Panthertown Valley 2	Nantahala	3,778
Panthertown Valley 3	Nantahala	314
Upper Toms Creek – Strawberry Mtn	Appalachian	855

Alarka Laurel, Highlands of Roan 1, and Panthertown Valley 2 and 3 were all considered in the initial inventory but were eliminated based on the following rationales:

Alarka Laurel is an area of approximately 2,486 acres on the Nantahala Ranger District. NFSR 70 (ML3), 86 (ML3), 86F (ML2), and 86G (ML2) are all open roads that bisect the area. With the consideration of these open roads, this area is not included in the inventory.

Highlands of Roan 1 contains the highly visited Roan Gardens developed recreation area, including a picnic area, paved trails, restrooms, and a visitor center. With the consideration of these improvements, the Highlands of Roan 1 is not included in the inventory.

Panthertown Valley 2 is an area less than 4,000 acres that is surrounded almost entirely by non-federal ownership and bordered by a cleared transmission line corridor on the western boundary. There is a corridor of private ownership that extends approximately 1.3 miles into the area and nearly bisects the area. This area is not of sufficient size or configuration as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.

Panthertown Valley 3 is completely surrounded by non-federal ownership and is not considered to be of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.

Little Rock Knob-Strawberry Mountain and Upper Toms Creek – Strawberry Mountain were proposed by the public in March 2015 and considered for inclusion in the inventory; however, these areas were not considered to be of sufficient size as to make practicable their preservation and use in an unimpaired condition and they are therefore not included in the inventory.

Appendix C: Maps of Inventory Areas

Individual area maps as well as an online interactive map of the inventory areas can be found at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/home/?cid=fseprd476345>

Alternatively, hard copy maps can be requested by emailing NCPlanRevision@fs.fed.us and including 'Map Request' in the subject line.

Areas included in the inventory have been identified as lands that may have wilderness characteristics as defined in the Wilderness Act. The process for identifying lands for the inventory is described in FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70. This is the third version of the inventory for the Nantahala and Pisgah NFs. The inventory is intended to be reasonably broad and inclusive and to identify lands that may be suitable, so that they can be further evaluated through the public involvement process.

These maps represent areas identified through the inventory process and do not convey or require a particular kind of management. Many area boundaries will be refined through the evaluation and analysis steps in order to accommodate practical management of recommended wilderness areas.

The description of how these maps were developed is included in the "Process Paper: Identifying and Evaluating Lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System". The road maintenance level (ML) definitions below provide the context for how the Forest Service categorizes roads. Maintenance level 1 and closed maintenance level 2 roads were included in the inventory and ML 3- 5 roads were excluded from inventory areas. Open roads shown on these maps are those roads identified as open to the public according to the 2014 Motor Vehicle Use Maps. Closed roads are also displayed but were not excluded from areas in the version 3 inventory.

Table 1. List of Areas included in the Inventory.

Name	Ranger District	County	Acreage
Ash Cove	Tusquitee	Cherokee	5,885
Bald Mountain	Appalachian	Madison	11,616
Barkers Creek (Ext. D)	Nantahala	Macon	1,556
Bearwallow	Appalachian	Yancey	4,131
Black Mountains	Appalachian	Yancey	12,473
Bluff Mountain	Appalachian	Madison	3,335
Boteler Peak	Tusquitee	Clay	10,524
Cantrell Top	Tusquitee	Cherokee	3,664
Cedar Rock Mountain	Pisgah	Transylvania	8,681
Cheoah Bald	Cheoah	Swain, Graham	9,400
Cherry Cove (Ext. E)	Tusquitee	Clay	1,159
Chunky Gal (Ext. B)	Tusquitee	Clay, Macon	7,785
Craggy	Appalachian	Buncombe	10,653
Daniel Ridge	Pisgah	Transylvania	11,695
Deep Creek/Avery Creek Ext. 2	Cheoah	Graham	2,313
Dobson Knob Ext. B	Grandfather	McDowell, Burke	11,763
Ellicott Rock West Ext.	Nantahala	Macon	824
Fishhawk Mountain	Nantahala	Macon	5,669
Harper Creek	Grandfather	Caldwell, Avery	7,432
Harper Creek Ext (Sugar Knob)	Grandfather	Burke	6,175
Highlands of Roan #2	Appalachian	Avery, Mitchell	5,217

Name	Ranger District	County	Acreage
Jarrett Creek	Grandfather	McDowell	8,972
Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Ext. 4	Cheoah	Graham	326
Laurel Mountain	Pisgah	Henderson, Transylvania	10,946
Linville Gorge Addition	Grandfather	Burke	2,844
Linville Pinnacle Ext.	Grandfather	Burke	620
Lost Cove	Grandfather	Avery	5,934
Mackey Mountain	Grandfather	McDowell	14,985
Middle Prong Ext.	Pisgah	Haywood	6,676
Nolichucky Gorge	Appalachian	Yancey	2,465
Overflow Creek	Nantahala	Macon	3,901
Panthertown Valley (1)	Nantahala	Jackson	4,395
Piercy Mountain	Tusquitee	Macon	9,109
Pigeon River	Appalachian	Haywood	6,105
Santeetlah Headwaters	Cheoah	Graham	4,448
Shining Rock Exts.	Pisgah	Haywood	4,968
Siler Bald	Nantahala	Macon	6,280
Slide Hollow	Appalachian	Avery	199
Snowbird	Cheoah	Graham	9,051
Southern Nantahala Ext.	Nantahala	Macon	4,298
South Mills River	Pisgah	Transylvania, Henderson	17,105
Steels Creek	Grandfather	Burke	5,841
Tellico Bald	Nantahala	Macon	12,525
Terrapin Mountain	Nantahala	Jackson, Macon	5,441
Tusquitee Bald	Tusquitee	Macon, Cherokee, Clay	29,156
Unicoi Mtns / Upper Bald River	Tusquitee	Cherokee	8,952
Upper Wilson Creek	Grandfather	Avery, Caldwell	6,372
Wesser Bald	Nantahala	Swain, Macon	6,642
Woods Mountain	Grandfather	McDowell	12,701
Yellow Creek Mountains	Cheoah	Graham	4,444
Yellowhammer Branch Ext. 3	Cheoah	Graham	1,207
Inventory Total			362,411

Road Maintenance Level (ML) Definitions:

ML 1: These are roads that have been placed in storage between intermittent uses. The period of storage must exceed 1 year. Basic custodial maintenance is performed to prevent damage to adjacent resources and to perpetuate the road for future resource management needs. Emphasis is normally given to maintaining drainage facilities and runoff patterns. Planned road deterioration may occur at this level. These roads are not shown on motor vehicle use maps.

Roads receiving level 1 maintenance may be of any type, class, or construction standard, and may be managed at any other maintenance level during the time they are open for traffic. However, while being

maintained at level 1, they are closed to vehicular traffic but may be available and suitable for nonmotorized uses.

ML 2: Assigned to roads open for use by high clearance vehicles. Passenger car traffic, user comfort, and user convenience are not considerations. Warning signs and traffic control devices are not provided with the exception that some signing, such as W-18-1 “No Traffic Signs,” may be posted at intersections. Motorists should have no expectations of being alerted to potential hazards while driving these roads. Traffic is normally minor, usually consisting of one or a combination of administrative, permitted, dispersed recreation, or other specialized uses

ML 3: Assigned to roads open and maintained for travel by a prudent driver in a standard passenger car. User comfort and convenience are not considered priorities. Warning signs and traffic control devices are provided to alert motorists of situations that may violate expectations. Roads in this maintenance level are typically low speed with single lanes and turnouts.

ML 4: Assigned to roads that provide a moderate degree of user comfort and convenience at moderate travel speeds. Most roads are double lane and aggregate surfaced. However, some roads may be single lane. Some roads may be paved and/or dust abated.

ML 5: Assigned to roads that provide a high degree of user comfort and convenience. These roads are normally double lane, paved facilities. Some may be aggregate surfaced and dust abated.

Appendix D. Evaluation Criteria and Comment Form for Areas That May Be Suitable for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System

The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests are in the process of revising the forest plan. A required part of the revision process includes identifying and evaluating lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and determining whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness designation. A description of this process can be found in the 2012 Forest Service Planning Rule and Chapter 70 of the Forest Service Land Management Planning Handbook 1909.12. This process includes the following four steps:

5. Identify and inventory all lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System
6. Evaluate the wilderness characteristics of each area based on a given set of criteria
7. Determine which areas to further analyze in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process
8. Decide which areas, if any, to recommend for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS).

To complete the second step, the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forest Plan revision team developed the following questions to gather information related to each of the five criteria for wilderness characteristics listed in FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70 - Wilderness. Responses to these questions from planning team members, other national forest staff, and interested members of the public will be used to evaluate areas that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This information will be used to determine which areas, or portions thereof, will be included in the forest plan alternatives considered in the NEPA Environmental Impact Statement.

Please use this form to comment on areas identified in the inventory. Use one form per area and note the area name in the space provided. If your comment is not addressed in the “considerations” column of each criterion, please include additional information in the “other” narrative section. If additional space is needed, provide your comments on separate sheets of paper and reference area name, evaluation criterion, and question number being addressed. Completed forms may be submitted by email to NCplanrevision@fs.fed.us with the subject line: “Wilderness evaluation input”, or by mail at the following address:

Attn: Plan Revision Team Leader,
National Forests in North Carolina
160 Zillicoa St., Suite A
Asheville, NC 28801

Area Name:

Criterion 1- Apparent Naturalness: The degree to which an area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.

Considerations	Narrative
<p>1a) Within the area, do ecological conditions appear natural or to be noticeably modified by human intervention? Describe the natural appearance of the area. Consider the composition of plant and animal communities, water, and soil.</p>	
<p>1b) Describe deviations from the natural condition and the extent to which they occur, including evidence of past management activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are vegetation management, timber harvest, or restoration treatments substantially noticeable? Describe the type and extent of vegetation management activities and associated landscape modifications; including existence of recent even-aged harvests, plantation style forest, low maintenance-level roads, skid roads, logging decks, cable yarder landings, fire lines, etc. • Are there maintained wildlife fields or linear wildlife openings, straightened or modified stream channels, modifications from past agricultural practices, etc. • Are there concentrations of invasive plants and/or animals within the area which appear substantially unnatural? Describe species, locations, and extent of occurrences. 	

<p>1c) Describe the presence and extent of improvements in the area, including the type of improvement, approximate size of affected area, and whether structures may be considered historic (>50 years old).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the area contain constructed improvements such as airstrips, heliports/landing zones, vertical structures (towers), utility corridors, buildings, dams, water tanks, penstocks, remnants of past occupation, etc.? • Are there recreation improvements within the area that are substantially noticeable modifications to the landscape; such as highly developed trails, day-use or overnight developed recreation sites, recreation structures, access roads, etc.? 	
<p>1d) Other (Include any additional information related to criterion 1)</p>	

Criterion 2- Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation: the degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Considerations

Narrative

<p>2a) Describe the opportunities for, or impacts to, solitude within the area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are pervasive sights and sounds of civilization evident? Describe type, extent, and duration of sights and/or sounds, and the general location from which they are experienced. Consider topography, presence of screening, distance from impacts, and degree of permanent intrusions. • Are there developments or recurring activities immediately adjacent to the area that impact opportunities for solitude? Describe the type of development and proximity to area. Consider recreation developments and high use areas, private lands and associated infrastructure, roads/highways, airport flight paths, etc. 	
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<p>2b) Describe the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there opportunities to engage in primitive and unconfined recreation activities that connect visitors to nature; such as hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, floating, kayaking, camping, rock climbing, hunting, fishing, observing wildlife, or enjoying nature? Describe type of activity and extent of availability throughout area. • If other recreation activities occur within the area which would not be considered primitive and unconfined, describe those uses; such as mountain bike trails, concentrated use/large group gatherings, wagon trains, motorized-use trails, etc. 	
<p>2c) Other (Include any additional information related to criterion 2)</p>	

Criterion 3- Stand-alone area of less than 5,000 acres that is not adjacent to existing wilderness or administratively recommended wilderness: evaluate how an area less than 5,000 acres is of sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable.

Considerations

Narrative

<p>3a) If the area is less than 5,000 acres in size and not adjacent to existing designated or administratively recommended wilderness, is it of sufficient size to be preserved and used in an unimpaired condition?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider if the area is self-contained or topographically isolated. • Can the area be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics? 	
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<p>3b) Other (Include any additional information related to criterion 3)</p>	
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Criterion 4- Unique and outstanding qualities: the degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Considerations	Narrative
<p>4a) Does the area contain rare plant or animal communities, or ecosystems?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the extent and general location of rare communities or ecosystems. 	
<p>4b) Does the area contain outstanding scenery or landscape features such as waterfalls, rivers, mountains, viewpoints, or geologic features?</p>	
<p>4c) Is there a presence of structures, dwellings, sites or other remnants of past occupation that are considered part of the pre-historic, historic, or cultural landscape of the area? Note: Confidentiality requirements with respect to cultural resource sites must be respected (25 U.S.C 3056).</p>	
<p>4d) Does the area contain sites of scientific or educational value, such as research natural areas or ongoing research?</p>	

<p>4e) Does the area contain high quality water resources or important watershed features? Consider municipal water sources, brook trout habitat, and/or eligible or designated Wild and Scenic River segments.</p>	
<p>4f) Other (Include any additional information related to criterion 4)</p>	

Criterion 5- Management: the degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics, considering shape, configuration, legally established rights or uses, presence and amount of non-federal land, and management of adjacent lands.

<p>Considerations</p>	<p>Narrative</p>
<p>5a) Describe the size, shape, configuration, and boundaries of the area and its ability to be managed to preserve wilderness characteristics. Consider narrow land areas, cherry-stemmed roads, inholdings, topography, etc. Address whether or not boundary changes could enhance preservation of wilderness characteristics.</p>	
<p>5b) Describe any legally established rights or uses within the area, including Tribal uses, reserved or outstanding mineral rights, easements, or rights of way? Describe the type, location and extent of these rights or uses.</p>	
<p>5c) Describe any State or Federal laws that may affect availability of the area for wilderness, or the ability to manage the area to preserve wilderness characteristics?</p>	
<p>5d) Describe the location, size, and extent of any inholdings of non-Federal lands within the area.</p>	

5e) Describe the ownership, management, and/or use of adjacent lands.	
5f) Other (Include any additional information related to criterion 5)	

Appendix E. Excerpt from FSH Handbook 1909.12- Land Management Planning Handbook, Chapter 70- Wilderness

FSH 1909.12 – LAND MANAGEMENT PLANNING HANDBOOK

WO AMENDMENT 1909.12-2015-1

EFFECTIVE DATE: 01/30/2015

DURATION: This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

Excerpt, pgs. 10-15

71.3 – Inventory Documentation

The Responsible Official shall ensure the Interdisciplinary Team documents the process used to identify and inventory areas. The purpose is to present a transparent description of how the inventory process was conducted and the results of the inventory.

The Responsible Official should release the inventory documentation and the map(s) described below to the public before conducting the evaluation. The Responsible Official shall also include the documentation required by this section in the applicable NEPA documents.

The Interdisciplinary Team shall record all lands included in the inventory on a map of the planning area. In addition, the Team shall identify on the same map (or a series of maps), at a minimum, the following lands:

1. Existing designated wilderness and primitive areas.
2. Congressionally designated wilderness study areas, and any wilderness proposals pending before Congress. Indicate relevant statutory dates, if any.
3. Areas identified in the Forest Service Roadless Area Conservation Final Environmental Impact Statement (Volume 2, November 2000), or in a Forest Service State-specific roadless rule, or identified as undeveloped or for primitive non motorized management in the current land management plan.
4. National Forest System lands statutorily designated for management for non-wilderness purposes. Indicate effective dates, if any.
5. Other areas that the Responsible Official determines would be useful to show on the map to facilitate effective and transparent public participation and input on this topic.

72 – EVALUATION

The primary function of the evaluation step is to evaluate, pursuant to criteria set forth in the Wilderness Act of 1964, the wilderness characteristics of the lands included in the inventory. All lands included in the inventory must be evaluated. The Responsible Official may divide or consolidate lands identified in the inventory into grouped areas for the purpose of evaluation, and may vary the scope of the evaluation based on the specific characteristics of each area or portions thereof.

The Responsible Official should provide opportunities for public and governmental participation when evaluating lands identified in the inventory (sec. 70.61 of this Handbook). The Responsible Official should communicate the evaluation process to the public, and shall be able to clearly and efficiently describe and document the wilderness character associated with each area at the end of the evaluation step.

The Responsible Official is not required to carry all lands evaluated forward for further NEPA analysis as potential recommendations for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (secs. 73 and 74 of this Handbook).

72.1 – Evaluation of Wilderness Characteristics

The Interdisciplinary Team shall evaluate areas, which must include all lands identified in the inventory (sec. 71 of this Handbook), to determine potential suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System using criteria included in the Wilderness Act of 1964, section 2(c), as follows:

1. Evaluate the degree to which the area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable (apparent naturalness). Consider such factors as:

a. The composition of plant and animal communities. The purpose of this factor is to determine if plant and animal communities appear substantially unnatural (for example, past management activities have created a plantation style forest with trees of a uniform species, age, and planted in rows);

b. The extent to which the area appears to reflect ecological conditions that would normally be associated with the area without human intervention; and

c. The extent to which improvements included in the area (sec. 71.22 of this Handbook) represent a departure from apparent naturalness.

2. Evaluate the degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. The word "or" means that an area only has to possess one or the other. The area does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both elements, nor does it need to have outstanding opportunities on every acre.

a. Consider impacts that are pervasive and influence a visitor's opportunity for solitude within the evaluated area. Factors to consider may include topography, presence of screening, distance from impacts, degree of permanent intrusions, and pervasive sights and sounds from outside the area.

b. Consider the opportunity to engage in primitive-type or unconfined recreation activities that lead to a visitor's ability to feel a part of nature. Examples of primitive-type recreation activities include observing wildlife, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, floating, kayaking, cross-country skiing, camping, and enjoying nature.

3. Evaluate how an area less than 5,000 acres is of sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable.

4. Evaluate the degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. These values are not required to be present in an area for the area to be recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, but their presence should be identified and evaluated where they exist. Such features or values may include:

- a. Rare plant or animal communities or rare ecosystems. Rare can be determined locally, regionally, nationally, or within the system of protected designations.
 - b. Outstanding landscape features such as waterfalls, mountains, viewpoints, waterbodies, or geologic features.
 - c. Historic and cultural resource sites. (Confidentiality requirements with respect to cultural resource sites must be respected (25 U.S.C 3056)).
 - d. Research natural areas.
 - e. High quality water resources or important watershed features.
5. Evaluate the degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics. Consider such factors as:
- a. Shape and configuration of the area;
 - b. Legally established rights or uses within the area;
 - c. Specific Federal or State laws that may be relevant to availability of the area for wilderness or the ability to manage the area to protect wilderness characteristics;
 - d. The presence and amount of non-Federal land in the area; and
 - e. Management of adjacent lands.

72.2 – Documentation for Evaluated Areas

The Responsible Official shall ensure that the Interdisciplinary Team documents the evaluation and include this documentation, along with map(s) required by section 71.4 of this Handbook, in an appendix to the applicable NEPA document. The intent is to ensure that the process for inventory and evaluation is transparent and accessible to the public for input and feedback. This documentation will also be available for participation opportunities during the plan revision or development process.

73 – ANALYSIS

Based on the evaluation and input from public participation opportunities, the Responsible Official shall identify which specific areas, or portions thereof, from the evaluation to carry forward as recommended wilderness in one or more alternatives in the plan EIS (36 CFR 219, FSM 1920, and FSH 1909.15).

Not all lands included in the inventory and subsequent evaluations are required to be carried forward in an alternative.

For each evaluated area or portions thereof that are not included in an alternative in the applicable NEPA analysis, the Responsible Official shall document the reason for excluding it from further analysis.

For each area included in one or more alternative, the Responsible Official shall identify the:

1. Name of the area and number of acres in the area to be considered for recommendation.
2. Location and a summarized description of a recommended boundary for each area. To identify a clearly defined boundary for each area, evaluate how the location of the boundary will support management of the area for wilderness and other adjacent uses. Where possible, boundaries

should be easy to identify and to locate on the ground. Potential boundaries may be identified as follows, listed in descending order of desirability:

- a. Use of natural features that are locatable both on the map and on the ground. Examples include, but are not limited to perennial streams, well-defined ridges, mountain peaks, and well-defined natural lake shorelines. If a stream is used, note whether the thread (centerline of a stream) or either bank (to mean high water line) has been used as the boundary.
 - b. Use of human-made features that are locatable on the map and on the ground. Examples include, but are not limited to roads, trails, dams, powerlines, pipelines, and bridges. Where a human-made feature is used, note whether the feature itself forms the boundary or whether the boundary has been set back from the feature, and by what distance. Setbacks should be used only where necessary for future maintenance of the human-made feature.
 - c. Use of previously surveyed lines or legally determined lines such as section and township lines, section subdivision lines, metes and bounds property lines, county or State boundaries, or National Park or Indian Reservation boundaries.
 - d. Use of a straight line from one locatable point to another. These points should normally be high points in the landscape as they must be visible to be effective.
 - e. Use of a series of bearings and distances between locatable points as in a metes and bounds survey. Use this technique when other methods are not available or practicable.
3. A brief description of the general geography, topography, and vegetation of the recommended area.
 4. A brief description of the current uses and management of the area.
 5. A description of the area's wilderness characteristics and the ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics.
 6. A brief summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s).
 7. A brief summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for the area's suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

74 – RECOMMENDATION

The Responsible Official shall document a decision on whether to recommend specific areas for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System or as a Wilderness Study Area east of the hundredth meridian, based on the analysis disclosed in the applicable NEPA document and input received during public participation opportunities (sec. 70.61). This decision must be included in the final decision document for the plan. The final decision document must identify the wilderness recommendation proposal as a "preliminary administrative recommendation" and qualify it by stating:

This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. The Congress has reserved the

authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation. Plan implementation is not dependent upon subsequent action related recommendations for wilderness designation.

The decision must include a summary of the information required in steps 1 through 7 in section 73 of this Handbook for each area recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System or as a Wilderness Study Area. Furthermore, the decision document must affirm that the plan includes plan components that provide for managing areas recommended for wilderness designation to protect and maintain the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for each area's suitability for wilderness recommendation (36 CFR 219.10 (b) (iv) and chapter 20 of this Handbook).

For lands in the inventory and evaluation that were not recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System or as a Wilderness Study Area, the decision document must briefly identify or describe what management direction is provided in the plan for those lands. Once a final decision has been made and documented, the Responsible Official, through the Regional Forester, shall notify the Chief of preliminary administrative recommendations for wilderness designation following the direction in FSM 1923.11.

74.1 – Management of Recommended Areas

When developing plan components for recommended wilderness areas, the Responsible Official has discretion to implement a range of management options. All plan components applicable to a recommended area must protect and maintain the social and ecological characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness recommendation. In addition, the plan may include one or more plan components for a recommended wilderness area that:

1. Enhance the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness designations;
2. Continue existing uses, only if such uses do not prevent the protection and maintenance of the social and ecological characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness designation;
3. Alter existing uses, subject to valid existing rights; or
4. Eliminate existing uses, except those uses subject to valid existing rights.

The Responsible Official should strive to maintain consistency with the provisions of 16 USC 1133(d) and the content of FSM 1923.03(3) when developing plan components for the management of recommended wilderness areas.