



Nantahala and Pisgah NFs Wilderness Evaluation Process

October 2015

What we will cover today

- ❑ Process overview
- ❑ Nantahala and Pisgah steps to date
- ❑ Evaluation
- ❑ Your input needed
- ❑ Questions?





Process Overview

Why evaluate wilderness?



Federal Regulation:

In developing a proposed new plan or proposed plan revision, the responsible official shall:

...

(v) Identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and determine whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness designation.

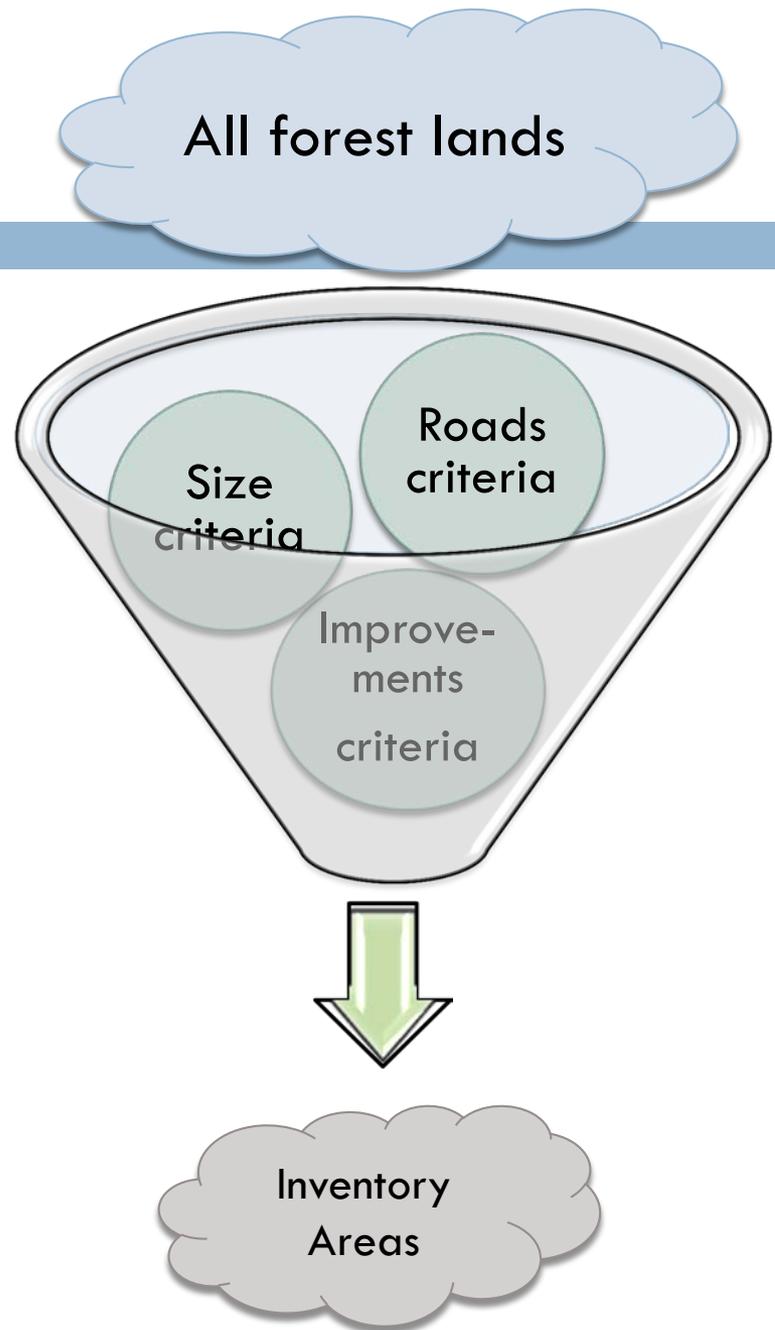
Process steps

- Identifying and evaluating lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System consists of 4 primary steps:
 1. Inventory
 2. Evaluation
 3. Analysis
 4. Recommendation

- Each step requires public participation & documentation.

Step 1: Inventory

- Identify and create an inventory of all lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.
- Inclusion in the inventory is not a designation that conveys or requires a particular kind of management.



Step 2. Evaluation

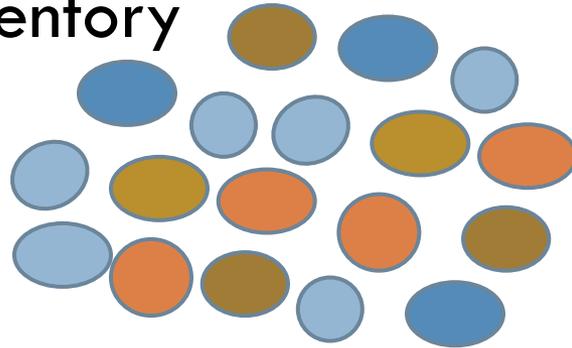


- Evaluate the wilderness characteristics of all lands in the inventory.
 - Apparent naturalness
 - Outstanding opportunities for solitude OR for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation
 - Ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value
 - Manageability to preserve its wilderness characteristics

Step 3. Analysis

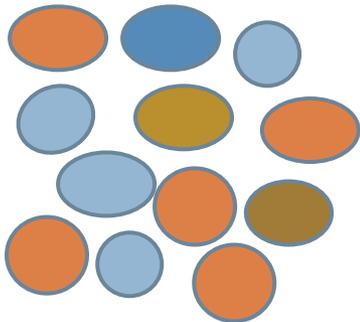
Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Inventory

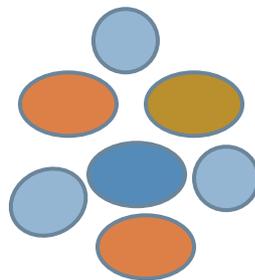


Evaluation

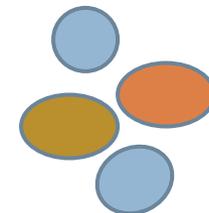
Alternative 1



Alternative 2



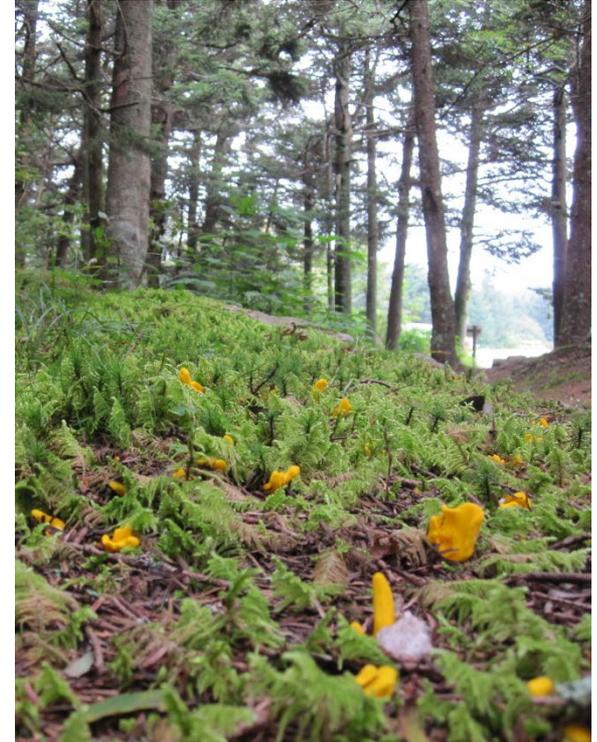
Alternative 3



A N A L Y S I S

Step 4. Recommendation

- ❑ The **Record of Decision** for the revised Forest Plan will include any areas to recommend for wilderness.
- ❑ Describe what management is provided for those lands that were in the inventory and evaluation **but not** included in a recommendation.



Nantahala and Pisgah NFs Process

How we got to where we are now...

Nantahala and Pisgah NFs Process

Step 1: Inventory

- ❑ **Spring 2014** - Shared version 1 maps with the public
- ❑ **Fall 2014** - shared version 2 maps, and initiated the evaluation
- ❑ **January 2015** - New agency policy was finalized
 - ❑ Additional updates to the inventory



Proposed FS1909.12, Chapter 70, Version—02/14/2013
Information on how to comment is available online at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/foia/landmanagement/feedback>

1909.12
Page 1

 **FOREST SERVICE HANDBOOK
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS (WO)
WASHINGTON, DC**

**FSH 1909.12 - LAND MANAGEMENT PLANNING HANDBOOK
CHAPTER 70 - WILDERNESS EVALUATION**

Amendment No.: The Directive Manager completes this field.

Effective Date: The Directive Manager completes this field.

Duration: This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

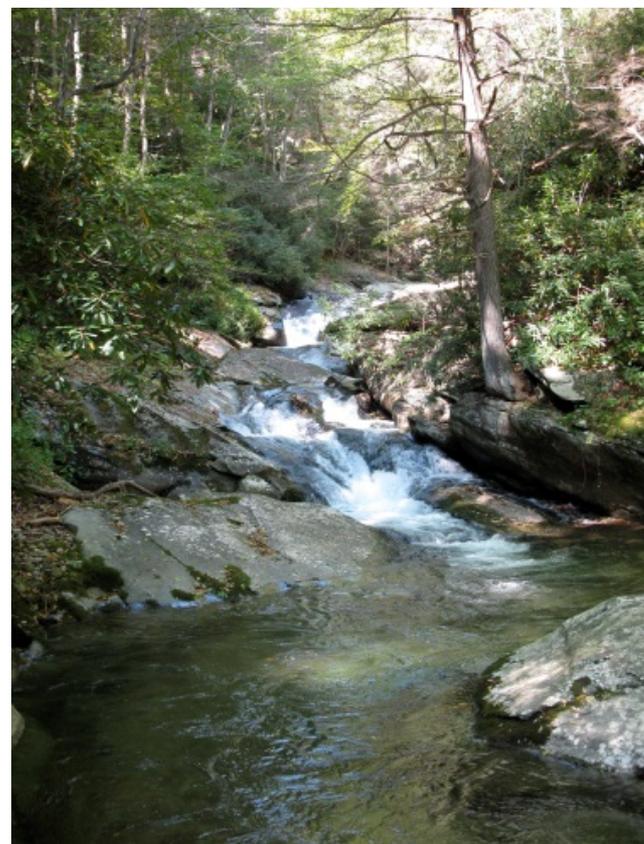
Approved: NAME OF APPROVING OFFICIAL
Title of Approving Official **Date Approved:** mm/dd/yyyy

Posting Instructions: Amendments are numbered consecutively by Handbook number and calendar year. Post by document; remove the entire document and replace it with this amendment. Retain this transmittal as the first page(s) of this document. The last amendment to this Handbook was xx09.xx-xx-x to xxxxx.

Nantahala and Pisgah NFs Process

October 2015 Inventory

- ❑ Broad and inclusive
- ❑ Includes many but not all of the areas that were recommended to consider by the public
- ❑ **All** inventory areas will be evaluated for wilderness characteristics
- ❑ Inventory area boundaries will likely be revised through the evaluation and analysis processes



Nantahala and Pisgah NFs Process October 2015 Inventory



Inclusion in inventory and evaluation does not mean that the area will be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics

- ❑ 52 areas
- ❑ Approximately 362,400 acres
- ❑ Approximately 35% of the Forest
- ❑ The inventory is ~150,000 acres larger than the version seen by the public in April 2014
 - ❑ Removed road buffers
 - ❑ Removed minimum width criteria (fingers of narrow ownership)
 - ❑ Includes roads that are gated and closed to the public
 - ❑ Includes vegetation treatments that can be passively restored in the future

How we have used the information you provided to date?



- Inventory criteria were revised based on public input.
- Site specific information that was relevant to the inventory was incorporated into the consideration of areas.
- Some information provided during the inventory phase is in fact more relevant to the evaluation and will be considered in the context of the five evaluation criteria.



Evaluation

Where we are now

Remember: Step 2. Evaluation

- Look at all inventory areas and apply criteria to see whether they meet the intent of the Wilderness Act attributes:
 - Apparent naturalness
 - Outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation
 - Ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value
 - Manageability to preserve its wilderness characteristics

Step 2. Evaluation

- Developed evaluation questions based on public input from last Fall and final 2015 directives
- Providing blank evaluation forms to fill out
- Also have a sample area evaluation to show how questions could be answered

The cover page of the evaluation form features the USDA logo on the left and the U.S. Forest Service logo on the right. The title is "Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests" followed by the subtitle "Evaluation Criteria and Comment Form for Areas That May Be Suitable for Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System". Below the title, a paragraph explains the revision process, and a numbered list of four steps is provided. At the bottom, it states that the revision team developed the following questions to gather information related to each of the five criteria for wilderness.

The sample form includes a box for "Area Name:" and a section for "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." Below this is a table with two columns: "Considerations" and "Narrative".

Considerations	Narrative
1a) <u>Within</u> 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.	
1b) Describe deviations from the natural condition and the extent to which they occur, including evidence of past management activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Are</u> vegetation management, timber harvest, or restoration treatments substantially noticeable? Describe the type and extent of vegetation management activities and associated	

The sample area is provided to illustrate the type of information that we will be compiling.

Your input needed

- Review the maps and descriptions of the lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the NWPS
 - What information do you have about these areas that can help us answer the evaluation questions?
 - Be specific regarding where things occur.

Your input is important!

The evaluation will provide info to help determine which areas will be considered further in alternatives developed and analyzed in the Revised Plan's Environmental Impact Statement.

Tools available to you



- ▣ Interactive GIS map and storyboard

GIS Storyboard – Available online

← → ↻ 🏠 usfs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=463e95d052b044cbb977cccc966815c9 ☆ ☰

Inventory and Evaluation Process of Lands that may be Suitable for Wilderness

[Edit](#) A story map  USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

[Introduction](#) [Inventory](#) [Evaluation](#) [Analysis](#) [Recommendations](#) [Share Your Thoughts](#)

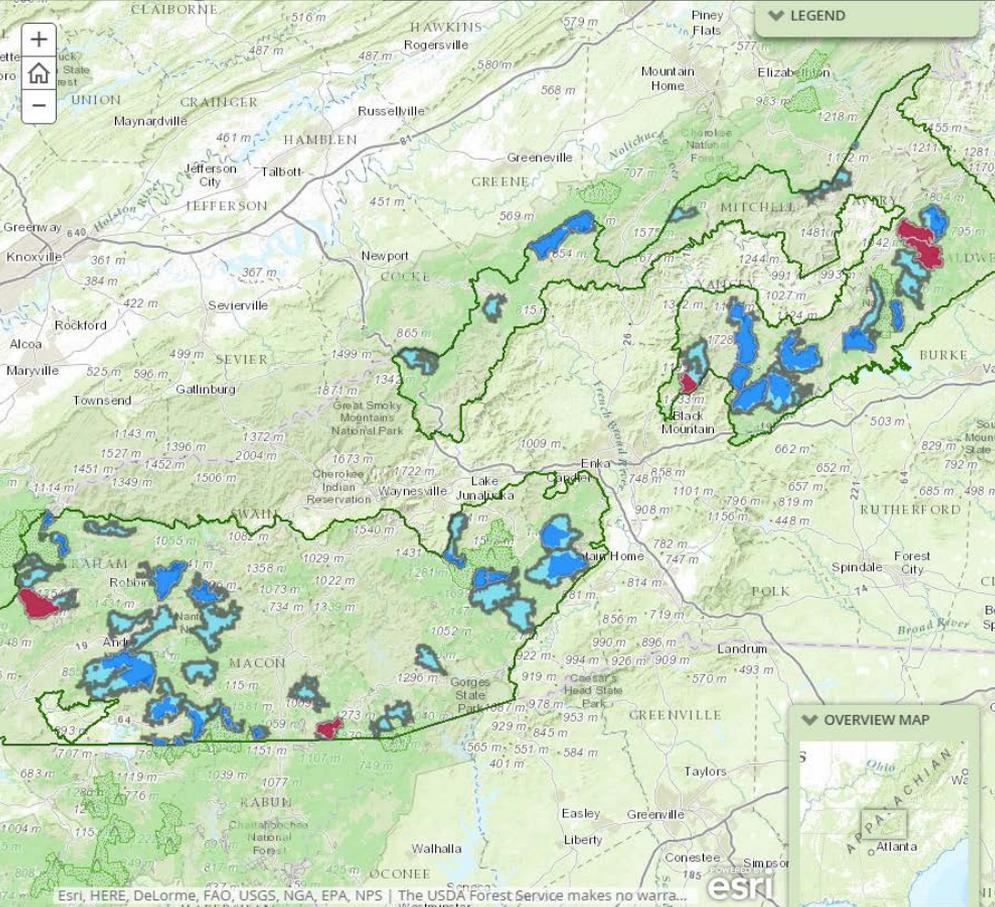
Inventory - Early 2014 to Summer 2015

This map represents the inventory of 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. All inventoried areas are carried on to the next step (evaluation) for a closer look at whether the areas possess wilderness characteristics. During subsequent steps inventoried area boundaries may change, or areas may be combined or divided.

It is important to note that areas included in the inventory themselves do not convey or require any particular kind of management. 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 National Wilderness Preservation System will be left to the discretion of the Responsible Official.

Using the Forest Service Handbook direction (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70), the inventory includes forest lands that met inventory criteria on the basis of size, and did not include certain types of road or other improvements. The Nantahala and Pisgah NFs 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. As a result of these adjustments, the October 2015 inventory is 150,000 acres larger than the first version seen by the public. 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.

Detailed discussion of the factors that led to the development of the inventory map is available in the process paper titled "Process Paper: Identifying and Evaluating Lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System."



Esri, HERE, DeLorme, FAO, USGS, NGA, EPA, NPS | The USDA Forest Service makes no warra... 

Tools available to you



- ❑ Interactive GIS map and storyboard
- ❑ Detailed process paper with maps and descriptions of the inventory areas
- ❑ Wilderness evaluation questions (Evaluation Forms)
- ❑ Sample of how these questions could be applied

All of the above are available at:
www.fs.usda.gov/goto/nfsnc/nprevision

Or, you may request hard copies
by sending an email to
NCplanrevision@fs.fed.us
with the subject line:
“Request for hard copy resources”

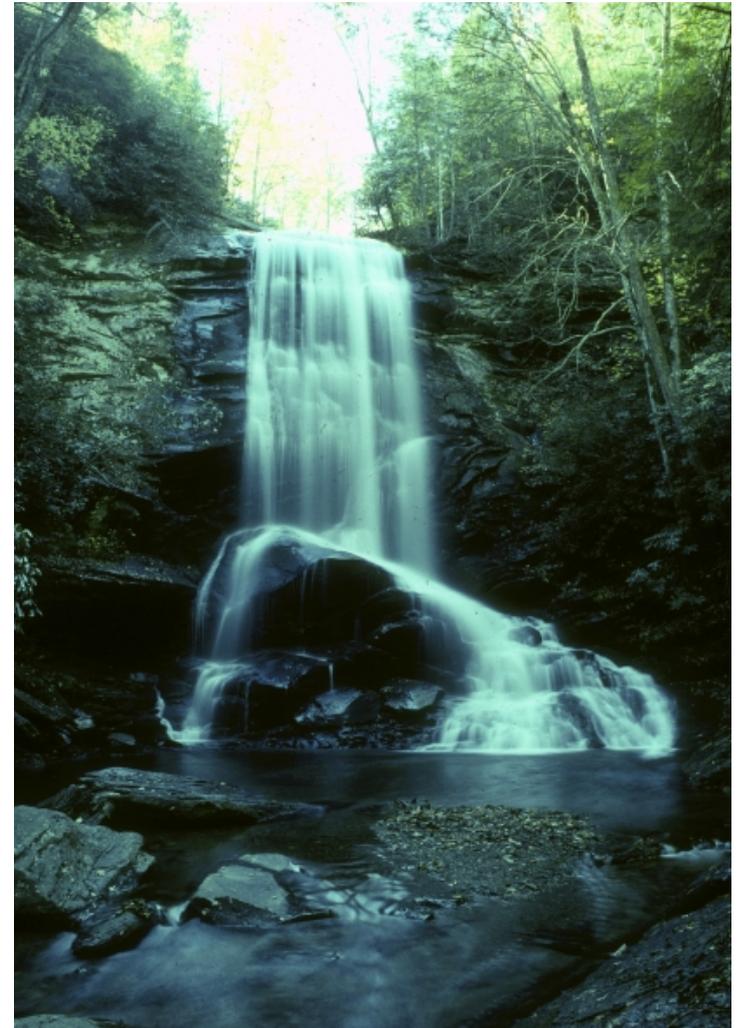
How to submit input

- Please submit input electronically:
NCplanrevision@fs.fed.us
 - with a subject line: “Wilderness evaluation input”
- Or via postal mail:
ATTN Forest Plan Revision
160A Zillicoa Street
Asheville, NC 28801
- Input is most useful by December 15, 2015.



After we hear from you...

- We will incorporate your input into the evaluation process
- There will be additional opportunities to participate in future steps of the process



Let's take a look at the form...

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

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.

1b) Describe deviations from the natural condition and the extent to which they occur, including evidence of past management activities.

- Are vegetation management, timber harvest, or restoration treatments substantially noticeable? Describe the type and extent of vegetation management activities and associated

Evaluation Form

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.



Evaluation Form

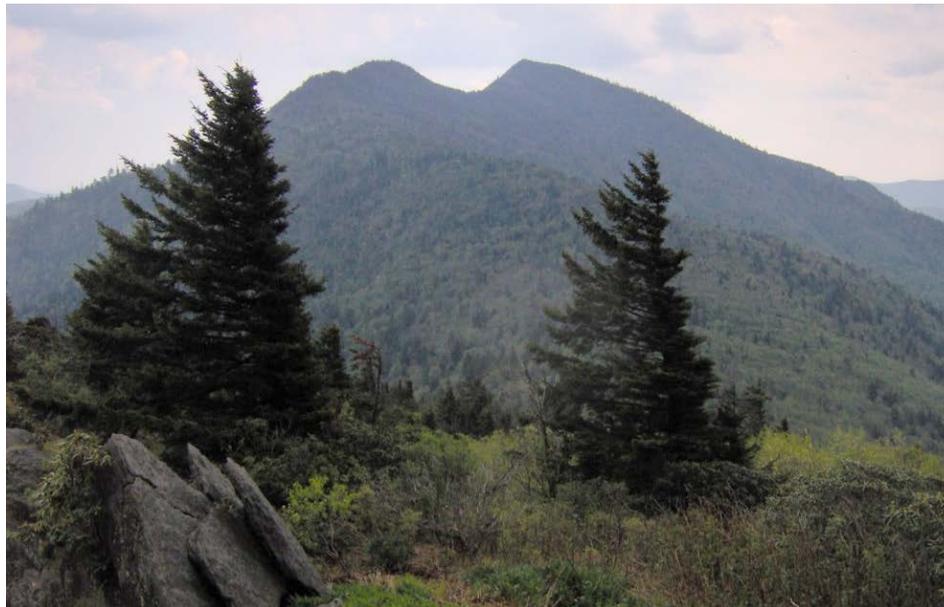
**Criterion 2- Outstanding opportunities for solitude OR
for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.**



Evaluation Form

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.



Evaluation Form

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.



Evaluation Form

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.





QUESTIONS?

Nantahala and Pisgah Plan Revision Team

NCplanrevision@fs.fed.us