



U.S. Forest Service

National Forests in North Carolina



July 2016

## Myth Buster

### Wilderness Evaluations Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests

Myth	Truth
<p><i>Any new wilderness recommendations will prevent the Forest Service from doing the work needed to provide young and open forest conditions.</i></p>	<p>None of the proposed recommended areas in any alternatives have a high likelihood of commercial timber sales, nor are they identified by the wildlife community as high priorities for young forest habitat. During the evaluation, area boundaries were adjusted to best reflect the portions of those areas that contain wilderness characteristics. As a result, maintained wildlife openings which were in inventory areas are generally not included in the revised boundaries moving into analysis. Most of the recommended areas lie within existing Wilderness Study Areas or Inventoried Roadless Areas.</p>
<p><i>If the FS designates more wilderness, then significantly less money will be coming into our local economies.</i></p>	<p>These recommendations would not preclude Forest Service from increasing the pace and scale of restoration under any alternative. None of the proposed recommended areas in any alternatives have a high likelihood of commercial timber sales, nor are identified by the wildlife community as high priorities for young forest habitat. Additionally, wilderness designation will not reduce payments to counties.</p> <p>Wilderness designation could potentially increase tourism and outdoor recreation income in local economies. For many recreationists, the special qualities of wilderness areas (apparent naturalness, solitude, primitive and unconfined recreation) make them desired venues for backpacking, hiking, fishing, hunting, wildlife-watching, and other outdoor pursuits. More than 12 million people visit wilderness areas in the U.S. each year. Wilderness also provides clean air, clean water, and scenery that draws visitors to western North Carolina.</p>

<b>Myth</b>	<b>Truth</b>
<i>New wilderness recommendations will reduce opportunities for mountain biking across the forest.</i>	None of the proposed recommended areas include places with Forest Service designated mountain biking trails or a high potential for future collaborative recreation planning around mountain biking opportunities. During the evaluation, area boundaries were adjusted to best reflect the portions of those areas that contain wilderness characteristics. As a result, Forest Service designated mountain biking trails which were in inventory areas are not included in the revised boundaries moving into analysis.
<i>New wilderness recommendations will reduce access to the forest.</i>	None of the proposed recommended wilderness areas include forest roads open to public vehicular access. During the evaluation process, area boundaries were adjusted to best reflect the areas that contained wilderness characteristics (e.g. natural appearing, opportunity for solitude) which exclude open roads.
<i>All of the FS alternatives consider a substantial increase in wilderness acres.</i>	Alternative A considers no new wilderness areas for recommendation. Alternative B considers an increase to the total forest area in wilderness by about 1% compared to the current forest plan. Alternative C considers an increase in the total forest area in wilderness by about 7% compared to the current forest plan. Alternative D considers no new wilderness areas compared to the current forest plan.
<i>The public hasn't had a say in the wilderness discussion.</i>	The public has been actively involved in every step of the wilderness process so far and will continue to have opportunities for involvement. The public provided input on the inventory and evaluations, and currently has the ability to provide input via U.S. mail or email on the results of the evaluations and proposed alternatives. Now, we are interested in knowing if we have captured the appropriate range of alternatives for wilderness recommendations. Additional opportunities to comment on the fully developed alternatives and the impacts of a wilderness recommendation on other forest resources will be available during the 90-day comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
<i>The Forest Service won't listen to my feedback or the feedback of my constituents.</i>	As required by the 2012 planning rule, the Forest Service will consider all feedback provided throughout the forest plan revision process. The wilderness evaluations and proposed alternatives are based on the criteria identified in the Wilderness Act, Forest Service expertise and public input. However, they are not the final product or a decision; the process is iterative. We are seeking input and expertise from the public on the evaluations and alternatives before we move forward on analysis of alternatives for our Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Myth	Truth
<p><i>If we move forward with any of these alternatives, then most of the Nantahala and Pisgah NFs will be wilderness and we won't be able to use the forest for other needs.</i></p>	<p>In fact, under any proposed alternative most of the forest will be non-wilderness, but wilderness is open to many uses including hiking, backpacking, camping, hunting, fishing, trapping, rock climbing, paddling, and horseback riding (on designated trails).</p> <p>Alternative A results in 91% of the forest <u>not</u> being considered for recommendation as wilderness. Alternative B results in 90% of the forest <u>not</u> being considered for recommendation as wilderness. Alternative C results in 84% of the forest <u>not</u> being considered for recommendation as wilderness. Alternative D results in 91% of the forest <u>not</u> being considered for recommendation as wilderness.</p>
<p><i>The wilderness recommendation has already been made, my input won't make a difference.</i></p>	<p>The recommendation has not yet been made nor has a decision. Any input can still make a difference in the process and the outcome. The wilderness evaluations and proposed alternatives are based on the criteria identified in the Wilderness Act, Forest Service expertise and public input. However, they are not the final product or a decision; the process is iterative. We are seeking input, feedback, and expertise from the public on the evaluations and alternatives before we move forward on analysis of alternatives for our Draft Environmental Impact Statement.</p>
<p><i>If someone is lost or injured in the wilderness, the designation prevents using motorized vehicles for rescue.</i></p>	<p>The use of motorized equipment (ATVs, helicopters, etc.) is allowed for search and rescue operations in life threatening situations. Counties and their local Forest Service District Ranger offices can work together to develop a Wilderness emergency response plan. Haywood County, for example, successfully worked through this issue with the Pisgah Ranger District.</p>
<p><i>If a wildfire in the wilderness is threatening property, then the FS can't use the necessary equipment to put it out.</i></p>	<p>Motorized equipment can be authorized to suppress wildfires in wilderness areas when there is a threat to life and/or property. In addition, it can be authorized for other reasons, such as preventing the spread of insects and diseases that threatens adjacent property.</p>
<p><i>Wilderness areas have already been added to the forests recently by the Forest Service.</i></p>	<p>Six wilderness areas currently exist in the Nantahala and Pisgah NFs, all of which were congressionally designated. Two were designated in 1964, two in 1975, and two in 1984. Currently the forest has 5 congressionally-designated wilderness study areas, all of which were designated in 1984. In total the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests have 66,337 acres of congressionally designated wilderness and 27,907 acres of congressionally designated wilderness study areas.</p>