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Cherokee National Forest

2016 Weekly Fall Color Report

The factors that influence fall leaf color are shorter day lengths, weather (primarily cooler temperatures and less moisture) and changing levels of leaf pigments. The only constant factor from year to year is the shortening day length. As days become shorter and nights grow longer, biochemical processes in the leaf initiate changing leaf color. All the other factors vary annually, making the prediction of fall color peak difficult.

The average peak period of fall color in east Tennessee ranges from mid-late October through early November. Northern Ranger Districts (Watauga & Unaka) - last two weeks of October.. Southern Ranger Districts (Tellico, Ocoee) – Last week of October and first week of November.

CURRENT CONDTIONS

North Cherokee National Forest

Unaka & Watauga Ranger Districts: Fall has just arrived. There is a little color at the higher elevations. Leaves should begin to show more color each week as the days become shorter and the temperatures drop at night.

South Cherokee National Forest

Ocoee & Tellico Ranger Districts: There is not much color showing now. Leaves should begin to change as the days become shorter and the temperatures drop at night.

NOTE: The extended hot and dry conditions we've experienced could cause some leaves to turn brown on the trees and drop early.

Forest Service

Report 1: September 26, 2016

National Weather Service information: http://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?lat=36.21&lon=-83.3#.VFPnxkZ0x9M

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Fall Color Viewing Routes

Following are a few possibilities:

Northeast Tennessee

Paint Creek Corridor – Unaka RD, Greene County, TN: Latitude: 35.977583 - Longitude:-82.843763— Meander along 5-mile Paint Creek Corridor to historic paint Rock. Picnicking and many other recreation opportunities are available along scenic Paint Creek Corridor.

Unaka Mountain Scenic Drive – Unaka RD, Unicoi County,TN : Latitude: 36.117632 - Longitude:-82.333151—From Erwin, this drive makes a circle connecting TN 395, graveled Forest Road 230 and TN 107, a state scenic parkway, past Limestone Cove. The route winds from the valley floor in Unicoi County, TN to high-elevation spruce forests and balds atop Unaka Mountain.

TN State Route 143 to Carver's Gap – Watauga RD, Carter County, TN : Latitude: 36.106911 - Longitude:-82.111158. - This state scenic parkway climbs through Roan Mountain State Park to Carvers Gap, with numerous long-distance mountain vistas, picnic spots, rhododendrons and spruce-fir forests spectacular.

Brush Creek Mountain Loop – Unaka RD, Cocke County, TN : Latitude: 35.964287 - Longitude: -82.943475— Travel along TN 107, Forest Road 209 (some portions are gravel) and US 25/70. FR 209 meanders through a narrow canyon with rhododendron-covered bluffs.

Southeast Tennessee

Ocoee Scenic Byway – Ocoee RD, Polk County TN: Latitude: 35.102244 - Longitude:-84.557121—The first designated national forest scenic byway in the nation includes 26 miles of US 64 and Forest Road 77. The two-lane route winds past Parksville Lake, through the scenic rocky bluffs of Ocoee River Gorge and past the Ocoee Whitewater Center. Take a side trip up the 7-mile Chilhowee Scenic Spur, Forest Road 77, to Chilhowee Recreation Area.

Hiwassee River Road – Ocoee RD, Polk County, TN: Latitude: 35.198842 - Longitude:-84.473566—State Route 30 follows Hiwassee State Scenic River to the historic community of Reliance. Cross the bridge and turn east to Forest Road 108. Climb the mountain to Big Bend and Apalachia Powerhouse. Enjoy the views from Hood Mountain overlook and other spectacular sites along the corridor.

Tellico River Road – Tellico RD, Monroe County, TN: Latitude: 35.323117- Longitude:-84.175768—Take State Route 165 from Tellico Plains to Forest Road 210. The route follows Tellico River past Bald River Falls, where you can pull off to view the magnificent falls. A few miles farther, stop to view pools of teeming trout at historic Pheasant Fields Fish Rearing Pools.

Cherohala Skyway – Tellico RD, Monroe County, TN: Latitude: 35.324505 - Longitude:-84.177268—View some of the best mountain scenery in the world from this 43-mile National Scenic Byway through the Cherokee and Nantahala national forests. Drive along the sparkling rush of the Tellico River, stop at overlooks to take in expansive views of the Tennessee Valley and waves of mountain peaks, hike to high elevation mountain balds or nearby Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest. Stop for a picnic at Indian Boundary Recreation Area.

Cherokee NF file photos:

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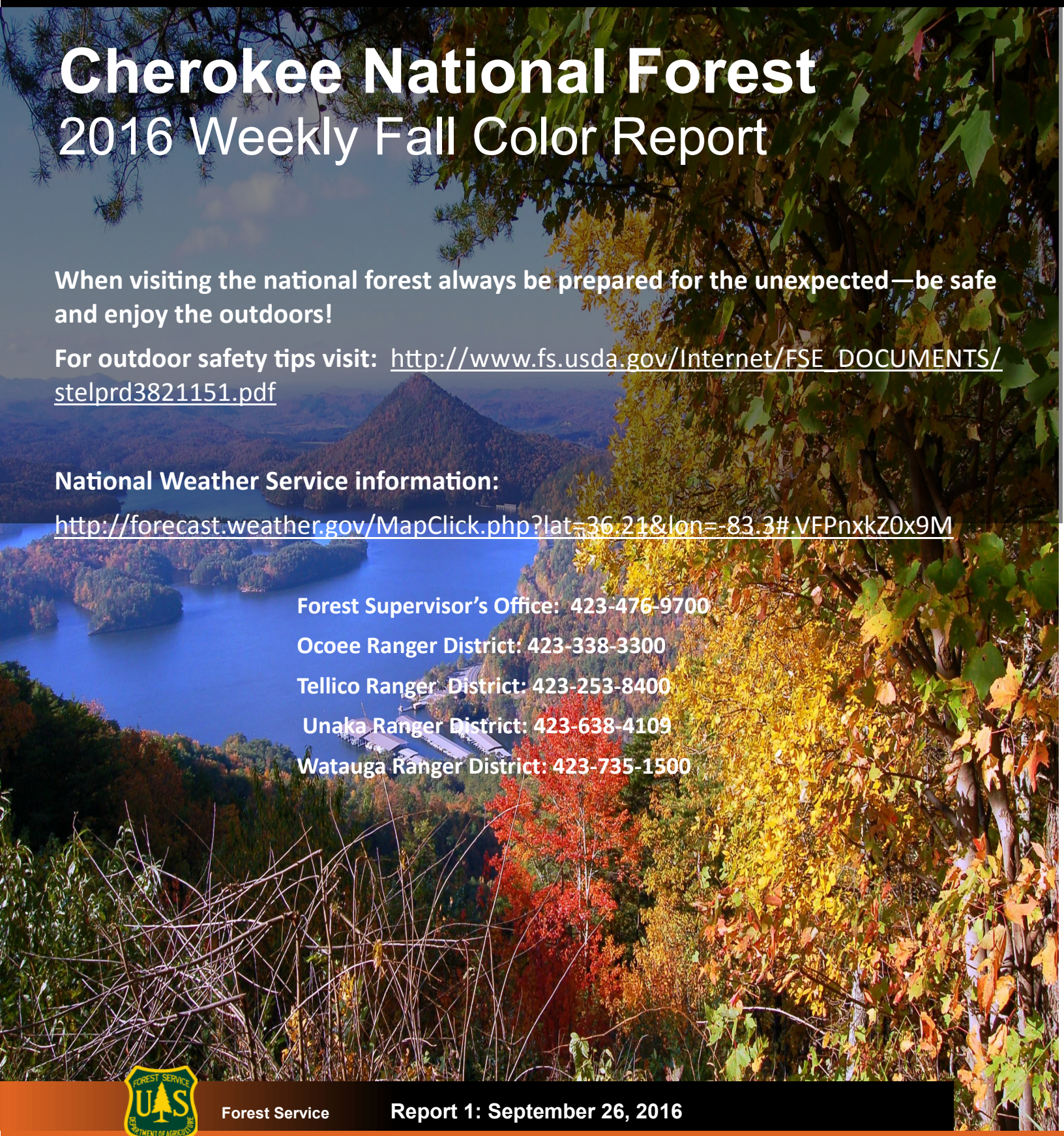

When visiting the national forest always be prepared for the unexpected—be safe and enjoy the outdoors!

For outdoor safety tips visit: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3821151.pdf

National Weather Service information:

http://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?lat=36.21&lon=-83.3#.VFPnxkZ0x9M

Forest Supervisor's Office: 423-476-9700

Ocoee Ranger District: 423-338-3300

Tellico Ranger District: 423-253-8400

Unaka Ranger District: 423-638-4109

Watauga Ranger District: 423-735-1500

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