

Managing Scenery in Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests

Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests attract millions of recreationists each year. People visit these Forests to hike, bike, hunt, fish, canoe, camp, swim, ride horseback, drive OHVs, study historic sites, or drive for the pleasure of viewing scenery. They also come to savor the beauty and tranquility of the forest environment. Visitors might enjoy panoramic displays of brilliant fall colors or study wildflowers along a mountain stream. Whether large or small, there are many beautiful places in these Forests.

Do you have a special route in these Forests? Are you interested in the scenery of a particular location?

The scenery inventory. As a part of Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests' current Land Management Plan revision, an inventory of scenic resources is being updated. The Forest Service uses the Scenery Management System to develop this inventory, which ranks the value of scenery on all forest lands. One of the steps in the process is working with ***you - neighbors, communities and visitors*** - to learn the areas *most valued* for scenery. Once the inventory is complete, it is used, along with inventories for wildlife, water, vegetation and other resources, to determine priorities for Forest lands through the land management planning process.

One of the components in the inventory process is establishing *concern levels* for forest lands. These levels of concern measure the degree of importance placed on landscapes viewed from travel corridors and use areas and those landscapes infrequently seen. Every area in Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests is assigned a level of concern from 1 to 3.

Nationally or regionally important locations, largely associated with recreation and tourism and where the interest in scenery is high, are classified as **Concern Level 1**. Examples of these include developed recreation areas like Davidson River Campground and Jackrabbit Mountain Recreation Complex; corridors through National Forest like US276 and Cherohala National Scenic Byway; roads with views to National Forest like US 64 and many highways in the North Carolina Scenic Parkway system. Also included are corridors of Appalachian National Scenic Trail and other trails of national significance; river and lake corridors; and the area's abundant waterfalls.

Locally important locations associated with all types of use including recreation and tourism, where there is moderate interest in scenery, are classified as **Concern Level 2**. Examples of these include non-motorized forest trails not inventoried as CL1; many county and forest roads; and secondary recreation areas. Areas classified as **Concern Level 3** include designated OHV trail complexes; the Forests' shooting ranges; and other areas not frequently seen by recreationists or where concern for scenery is low.

Remember, we use an objective process based on significance (national, regional and local) and use (duration, frequency, and type) to determine the actual concern level designation. Categories and corresponding examples of specific places in the forest are available in the attached list.

How can you help? We need your help with reviewing maps and lists of use areas, travelways and water bodies to identify the places in the Forest you value for scenery. These places could be waterfalls, rock formations, areas of unusual vegetation or any other area that you feel is uniquely scenic. Please review this information, then tell us about any scenic places that do not appear. Include the name of the area; its location; and your suggested level of concern.

By reviewing our lists and maps and by telling us what places you consider highly scenic, you can help determine the value of scenery in Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. If you have questions about scenery management, you can contact Erik Crews at (828) 257-4807.