

Rapid Assessment For the Project Record

Assessment:

Area 5

Date:

9/15/09

Management Area Objectives

- 1B** Emphasize sustained-yield timber management. Emphasize motorized recreation use. Permit road construction Base method of harvest on site specific analysis. Manage habitats of mixed ages or forests primarily for deer, grouse, and animals requiring similar environments. (1,215 acres)
- 2A** Emphasize visually pleasing scenery. Emphasize motorized recreation use. Permit timber production, but modify it to meet visual quality objectives. Permit road construction. Manage habitat of mature forests primarily for squirrel, pileated woodpecker, and animals requiring similar environments. (1,024 acres)
- 2C** Emphasize visually pleasing scenery. Emphasize motorized recreation use. The management area is classed as unsuitable for timber production in order to meet visual quality objectives or lands are not efficient for timber production. Manage habitat of older forests primarily for squirrel, pileated woodpecker, and animals requiring similar environments. (960 acres)
- 3B** Emphasize sustained yield timber management. Close most roads to motorized vehicles. Permit road construction. Base method of harvest on a site-specific analysis. Manage habitat of mixed ages of forests primarily for turkey, and animals requiring similar environments. (4,956 acres)
- 4A** Emphasize visually pleasing scenery. Emphasize non-motorized recreation use. Close most roads to motorized vehicles. Permit timber management modified to emphasize visual quality and wildlife benefits. Permit road construction. Manage habitat of mature forests primarily for bear, and animals requiring similar environments. (99 acres)
- 4C** Emphasize visually pleasing scenery. Emphasize non-motorized recreation use. Close most roads to motorized vehicles. Classify land as not suitable for timber production in order to meet visual quality objectives and wildlife habitat needs, or lands not cost efficient for timber management over the planning horizon. Manage habitat of older forests primarily for bear, and animals requiring similar environments. (6,545 acres)
- 4D** Emphasize high quality wildlife habitat particularly for black bear. Emphasize non-motorized recreation use. Close most roads to motorized vehicles. Permit timber production, but modify to emphasize visual quality objectives and wildlife habitat needs. Permit road construction. Base method of harvest on a site-specific analysis. Do not harvest areas larger than 25 acres in size when even-aged regeneration is selected. [Amendment #4] Manage habitat of mature forests primarily for bear, and animals requiring similar environments. (1,806 acres)
- 14** Appalachian Trail and Corridor and its foreground zone as mapped through the Visual Management System. Management emphasis for this area is in accordance with the National Trails System Act (Public Law 90-543) and carried out through the Cooperative Management System as defined in the Appalachian Trail Comprehensive Plan. Management practices will strengthen the role of the volunteer and protect the Trail for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, and cultural qualities of the land through which the Trail passes. (2,011 acres)

Existing Condition(s)	Desired Condition(s)	Statement(s) of Need	Data/Responsibility
Recreation			
* (1) There are several dispersed recreation sites in the AA, but their condition and potential impact to resources is unknown	<i>a. Permanently close and rehabilitate sites that cannot accommodate use without unacceptable impacts to riparian area resources. b. Rehabilitate active sites that are contributing visible sediment to the stream channel. Use site-specific analysis to determine rehabilitation needs that will prevent or minimize sediment from reaching the stream channel.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-184)	There is a need to repair and/or relocate dispersed recreation sites that are causing impacts to aquatic resources	Lorie/Dave M/Brady to review existing dispersed recreation sites to assess if they are functioning properly. If not, a recommendation should be made for either repairing them or decommissioning and relocating them.

Existing Condition(s)	Desired Condition(s)	Statement(s) of Need	Data/Responsibility
*(2) The Shut-in Trail is causing sedimentation/erosion that is impacting water quality and aquatic habitat	<i>Manage all trails to minimize adverse effects on riparian area resources.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-185)	There is a need to relocate the Shut-in Trail out of the riparian area where feasible to improve water quality and aquatic habitat and place waterbars along it	Lorie/Dave M/Cleve/Brady to assess feasibility of relocating trail out of riparian area
*(3) Van Cliff Trail is causing sedimentation/erosion that is impacting water quality and aquatic habitat	<i>Manage all trails to minimize adverse effects on riparian area resources.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-185)	There is a need to relocate/harden portions of the Van Cliff Trail where impacts are occurring to improve water quality and aquatic habitat	Lorie/Dave M/Cleve/Brady to assess feasibility of relocating/hardening portions of trail
(4) There are numerous stocked streams in the AA and limited opportunities for disabled individuals to fish	Provide the opportunity for visitors to experience a variety of recreation activities with minimum regulation, manage use through information rather than regulation where possible. (Forest Plan, page III-12)	There is a need to improve recreation opportunities in the AA by developing facilities that provide access for disabled fishing	Dave M/Lorie to identify potential areas for developing facilities
Archaeology			
(1) The Paint Rock archaeological property [just outside the analysis area (AA)], but extensive boundary for property is one of the oldest in the SE. An assessment has been completed and there may be opportunities for protecting the property from vandalism and wildfire [it is a priority heritage asset (PHA)].	<i>Protect heritage resources by: [P]rotecting appropriate heritage resource properties for ceremonial and religious purposes by Native Americans.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-9). <i>Foster public use and enjoyment of heritage resources through interpretation or development of suitable sites</i> (Forest Plan, page III-10).	There is a need to control/manage rock climbing and non-native invasives (wildfire vector) near the property and identify interpretation potential at Murray Branch day-use recreation facility	Scott to identify feasible protection measures Tina to determine if protection measures should be part of proposed activities since property is outside AA
(2) Past heritage surveys have identified important archaeological properties and others are likely in the AA	<i>Protect heritage resources by: Completing heritage resource inventories prior to ground disturbing or land transfer projects.</i> (Forest Plan, page 9)	There is a need to complete an archaeological survey/report prior to project implementation	Scott to review map of existing properties and develop interpretive options
Scenery			
(1) The analysis area contains the town of Hot Springs, the French Broad River, and the Appalachian Trail. Two major traffic corridors pass through the area, US70 and NC209. Rocky Bluff Campground is along NC209. There are many secondary roads, open FS roads, FS trails, popular trout streams, and interspersed private lands in the	Management areas 2C & 4C are unsuitable for commercial timber production. All portions of MA 1B, 3B & 4D visible from the AT must meet a PR VQO. Visible foreground along the AT will be mapped and field verified; this area is unsuitable for timber production. All remaining portions of MA 1B, 3B & 4D must meet M VQO. Visible portions of MA 4A and 2A must meet PR VQO, except where seen in the	There is a need to insure all proposed activities meet the assigned VQO's. This should be done through leaf-off viewpoint identification, GIS analysis, use of computer simulations, and design features incorporated into proposed activities.	A preliminary seen-area analysis was done in GIS to determine analysis area VQO's based on assumed viewpoints from the AT. A more detailed scenery analysis will be conducted when possible treatment areas are identified.

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area. All of these locations would be considered when analyzing scenery impacts. Visual Quality Objectives range from Retention to Modification.	foreground of SL1 viewpoints where it must meet R VQO.																																												
Roads																																													
*(1) There are existing roads in Doe Branch and Becky Branch that may be excess to long-term management needs	<i>Identify where existing road conditions do not meet water quality standards and develop strategies to bring them into compliance, except where physical conditions preclude complete correction and the road can not be legally closed.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-46 & 47)	There is a need to decommission existing system roads unnecessary to long-term management to reduce road maintenance costs and improve habitat.	Lorie/Dave M/Ted/Barry to identify system roads not needed for future management																																										
(2) Many of the system roads are overgrown with vegetation, increasing maintenance costs/frequency	<i>Maintain all roads (open or closed) at a level sufficient to provide appropriate use and protect soil, water, and other resources.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-51)	There is a need to daylight along some sections of existing system roads to reduce future maintenance costs.	Barry to identify daylighting opportunities for maintenance objectives																																										
(3) There are system roads without right-of-way easements across private lands	Acquire rights-of-way to provide access opportunities to NFS lands for public and administrative needs. (Forest Plan, page III-45)	There is a need to secure r-o-w easements for system roads in the AA.	Barry/Ray Johns to assess feasibility of securing easements as requested or necessary.																																										
<p>(4)</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="94 914 485 1198"> <thead> <tr> <th>MA</th> <th>Miles of Road</th> <th>Sq. Miles of MA</th> <th>Miles per Sq. Mile</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>14</td><td>2.7</td><td>3.1</td><td>0.9</td></tr> <tr><td>1B</td><td>4.8</td><td>1.9</td><td>2.5</td></tr> <tr><td>2A</td><td>4.3</td><td>1.6</td><td>2.7</td></tr> <tr><td>3B</td><td>7.2</td><td>7.7</td><td>0.9</td></tr> <tr><td>4C</td><td>0.6</td><td>10.2</td><td>0.05</td></tr> <tr><td>4D</td><td>0.3</td><td>2.8</td><td>0.1</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Roads 223, 3500, 3505, 3505A, 3506, 3548, 3548A, 3550 and 805 were used in this calculation</p>	MA	Miles of Road	Sq. Miles of MA	Miles per Sq. Mile	14	2.7	3.1	0.9	1B	4.8	1.9	2.5	2A	4.3	1.6	2.7	3B	7.2	7.7	0.9	4C	0.6	10.2	0.05	4D	0.3	2.8	0.1	<table border="1" data-bbox="514 914 737 1166"> <thead> <tr> <th>MA</th> <th>Miles per Sq. Mile</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>14</td><td>0.0</td></tr> <tr><td>1B</td><td>2.0</td></tr> <tr><td>2A</td><td>2.0</td></tr> <tr><td>3B*</td><td>0.5</td></tr> <tr><td>4C*</td><td>0.25</td></tr> <tr><td>4D*</td><td>0.25</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>*Where existing open road densities exceed [0.5 or 0.25] miles per square mile, and, if closure of existing roads is prohibitive for administrative or legal reasons, then document these exceptions to the standard and investigate strategies to reduce the open road density.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-69, 87)</p>	MA	Miles per Sq. Mile	14	0.0	1B	2.0	2A	2.0	3B*	0.5	4C*	0.25	4D*	0.25	There is a need to determine if there are open roads in these MAs that can be closed to reduce open road densities within them.	IDT to identify during project development roads that can be closed to reduce open road densities where available.
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Existing Condition(s)	Desired Condition(s)	Statement(s) of Need	Data/Responsibility
(1) There is a sensitive turtle species near the French Broad River and 4 wildlife Forest Concern species in the AA	<i>Provide site specific analysis of occurrence and effects on proposed, endangered, threatened, and sensitive (PETS) species and Forest-listed species at the project level. Provide aquatic, botanical, and wildlife analyses, biological assessment and/or biological evaluation as necessary to comply with the Endangered Species Act [ESA] and FSM 2670. (Forest Plan, page III-23)</i>	There is a need to ensure management activities do not adversely impact sensitive species nor cause a species to become listed under ESA	Sandy to determine effects/impacts following alternative development
*(2) There may be opportunities for developing golden wing warbler habitat – the AA is not suitable for developing cerulean warbler habitat as they only pass through the area	<i>Use vegetative management practices, including commercial and noncommercial timber harvest, to accomplish fish and wildlife habitat objectives. (Forest Plan, page III-23)</i>	There is a need to develop gold wing warbler habitat by two-age harvesting in suited and unsuited lands to improve habitat diversity	Sandy to identify stands suitable for gold wing warbler habitat development
*(3) There is currently 19 acres of linear wildlife openings (LWO) in the AA, and 45 acres of wildlife fields	<i>Provide at least 0.5% of Management Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 in grass/forb openings at any one time including mowed landings and roads except where desired conditions for forest interior birds or old growth management are specified. Select locations to avoid conflict with recreation uses. Do not include openings which receive heavy recreation use as contributing to this standard. (Forest Plan, page III-23)</i>	There is a need to develop additional acres of grass/forb habitat in the AA to improve wildlife habitat, including using log landings	Sandy to identify location/acres of grass/forb habitat development
Lands/SUP			
(1) There are existing outfitter guide permits in the AA for outfitting and guiding. Activities include hiking and backpacking. Some permits on the AT. Done on an annual basis – none currently.	<i>Respond to special use requests according to the following priorities: - Those relating to public safety, health and welfare, e.g., highways, power lines, and public service improvements; - Those contributing to the general public benefit associated with National Forest resources; and - Those that benefit only private users, e.g., road permits, rights-of-way for power lines, telephones, waterlines etc. (Forest Plan, page III-44). Allow organized recreational events when they meet management area direction. Require a permit. Forest Plan, III-22</i>	There is a need to maintain existing organized recreation SUPs where compatible with other resources.	N/A
Aquatics/Hydrology			

Existing Condition(s)	Desired Condition(s)	Statement(s) of Need	Data/Responsibility
*(1) The West Fork of Shut-in Creek is deficit of large wood	<i>Provide conditions for the large group of game and non-game animals that are dependent on aquatic and riparian systems. Emphasize habitat for specific Management indicator Species which represent this group. (Forest Plan, page III-185). Maintain the natural hydraulic and hydrologic functioning of the stream channel and protect the integrity of the stream system including channel, banks and stream bottom. (Forest Plan, page III-187).</i>	There is a need to place large wood into the stream, preferably by pushing over hemlock and ensuring they stay in place to improve aquatic habitat	Lorie/Brady to identify where large wood can effectively be placed in the stream
*(2) There are streams in the AA that do not have brook trout within them that may be able to sustain them if suitable habitat was available	<i>Use habitat restoration, improvement, and reintroduction to re-establish or expand native species populations and diversity (Forest Plan, page III-24).</i>	There is a need to restore brook trout in the West Fork of Shut-in Creek to ensure native species are expanded in the AA	Lorie/Sheryl to work with NCWRC, Trout Unlimited, and organizations to develop strategies/funding for brook trout reintroduction
(3) The condition of fish structures in Shut-in Creek is not known	<i>Improve habitat of wild trout streams as a first priority. (Forest Plan, page III-185)</i>	There is a need to assess the current condition of existing fish structures to ensure they are functioning properly and contributing to quality fish habitat	Lorie/Sheryl to assess function of structures
*(4) The culverts in the AA have not been assessed for proper sizing	<i>Construct and maintain roads to management standards for the adjacent management area. (Forest Plan, page III-188)</i>	There is a need assess the proper sizing of existing culverts to ensure aquatic habitat and hydrologic function in the AA are not impaired	Brady/Lorie/Barry to work with cooperators/ organizations for assessing size of existing culverts
Botany/Old Growth/Non-native Invasives			
(1) Paint Rock is a Forest Plan special interest area (SIA) – feature is outside the AAs	<i>Maintain the natural vegetative community for enhancement of unusual plant species and associations. Allow low impact, non-motorized use such as nature study and hunting. Apply management direction for Management Area 13. Register 96 acres with the NCNHP. (Forest Plan, page III-199)</i>	There is a need to ensure management activities do not impact the natural communities at Paint Rock.	N/A
(2) There are 3 proposed State Natural Heritage Areas (SNHA) in the AA (Spring Creek, Lover’s Leap, and Big Rock)—this proposed SNHAs are not Forest Plan Special Interest Areas (Forest Plan, page III-190 – III-208)	N/A	N/A	Coordinate with State NHA program

Existing Condition(s)	Desired Condition(s)	Statement(s) of Need	Data/Responsibility
<p>* (3) There are numerous rare plants (no T&E) along large drainages in the AA (Spring Creek & French Broad River) including <i>Buckleya distichophylla</i> (piratebush)</p>	<p><i>Protect the following community types when identified as unique in the botanical or wildlife analysis: caves and rare plant communities including bogs, rocks cliffs, granitic domes, high elevation rocky summits, barrens and glades, balds, boulder field forests and seeps.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-23).</p>	<p>There is a need to complete a botanical survey and BE prior to project implementation to meet ESA and Forest Plan direction</p>	<p>Dave to survey activity areas once they are identified. In season survey needed for proposed activity areas.</p>
<p>* (4) There is large patch, small patch, and Forest Plan initial inventory old growth (O/G) in the AA. There is no Messick O/G in the AA.</p>	<p><i>SMALL PATCHES: In each compartment containing more than 250 acres of national forest land, select a small patch for future old growth management. If 5% of the compartment acres are already part of a large or medium patch, an additional small patch is not needed.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-27)</p>	<p>There is a need to designate small patch O/G prior to timber harvesting</p>	<p>Dave to identify potential O/G areas. Assess potential impacts/ enhancement after proposed harvest stands are developed.</p>
<p>* (5) There have been past treatments of non-native invasive species with cooperators along the French Broad River and the AT and priority for future treatments is within SIAs and SNHAs</p>	<p><i>Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as the strategy in managing pest populations to achieve resource management objectives.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-52)</p>	<p>There is a need to control/manage non-native invasive species in the AA, especially forested areas opened through management activities</p>	<p>Seasonal surveys needed to assess species/locations – typically coincides with harvest stand surveys.</p>

Vegetation

<p>(1) There are 29 acres of early successional habitat (ESH) in the AA and it will “age out” of ESH in 2010</p>	<p><i>MA</i></p>	<p><i>Compartment</i></p>	<p><i>AA</i></p>	<p>There is a need to develop at least 323 acres of ESH in the AA to meet Forest Plan standards</p>	<p>Ted to identify candidate ESH stands</p>
	<p><i>2A</i></p>	<p><i>At least 5% Not to exceed 10%</i></p>	<p><i>At least 5% Not to exceed 10%</i></p>		
	<p><i>1B & 3B</i></p>	<p><i>At least 5% Not to exceed 15%</i></p>	<p><i>At least 5% Not to exceed 15%</i></p>		
	<p><i>4A & 4D</i></p>	<p><i>Not to exceed 10%</i></p>	<p><i>Not to exceed 10%</i></p>		
<p>(Forest Plan, page III-31)</p>					
<p>* (2) There are currently 265 acres of young, previously harvested stands in unsuitable MAs – including white pine stands</p>	<p><i>Use tree cutting practices on lands not selected for timber production during the 10 to 15-year period of the Plan [lands classified as not suited or not appropriate for timber production based on factors identified in the Regulations to implement NFMA (36 CFR 219 14)] to meet</i></p>			<p>There is a need to cut and retain vegetation in previously harvested acres within unsuitable stands to improve ESH in the AA</p>	<p>Ted/Sandy to identify candidate areas</p>

Existing Condition(s)	Desired Condition(s)	Statement(s) of Need	Data/Responsibility
	<i>management objectives.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-37)		
*(3) All regeneration harvested stands are candidates for timber stand improvement (TSI) through manual and chemical treatments	<i>Provide for stocking control and species variety through timber stand improvement practices.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-37)	There is a need to control stocking levels and species diversity through TSI applications on up to 892 acres in the AA	Ted to identify candidate stands for TSI
*(4) There are 2 hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) conservation areas in Compartments 435 (#38 Little Bottom Branch) and 440 (#39 Puncheon Camp Branch) with most of the hemlock killed. Loss of hemlock from HWA in riparian areas may have long-term impacts on aquatic habitat and hydrologic function.	<i>Develop conservation strategies for sensitive species beginning with those of highest risk.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-23). <i>Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as the strategy in managing pest populations to achieve resource management objectives.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-52).	There is a need to establish an additional hemlock conservation areas in the AA to prolong hemlock diversity and to identify suitable replacement species (white pine and/or any hardwood?) for hemlock in riparian areas.	Ted to determine feasibility of a new hemlock conservation area According to Coweta: 1) fell dead hemlocks away from the stream. 2) plant with evergreen species (white pine?) and slow decomposers (chestnut?). 3) manage rhododendron (thin, burn, remove)
Fire/Fuels			
*(1) There has been periodic prescribed burning at Max Patch and other areas may be suitable for burning, especially where table mountain pine is established	<i>Use prescribed fire (controlled fire) to create and maintain desired vegetative composition, scenic vistas, and wildlife habitat, reduce fire hazards, control forest pests, and accomplish other management objectives including site preparation.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-52)	There is a need to ensure the Max Patch burn is implemented on a rotational basis by burning about 500 acres to improve habitat diversity. There is a need to establish a 500 acre rotational prescribed burn in the Doe Branch area to improve habitat diversity.	Ensure additional acreage at Max Patch and Doe Branch burns are analyzed under NEPA.
*(2) There is NFS/PVT land interface throughout the AA and establishing control lines for prescribed burning to reduce fuels and wildfire threat adjacent to these boundaries would be difficult	<i>Wildfire detection and suppression will be commensurate with the resource values protected. Detection and suppression will be planned based on an analysis of probable fire locations, expected fire intensities, potential threat to health, safety, and adjacent properties, and potential threat to resources.</i> (Forest Plan, page III-51)	There is a need to reduce wildfire risk between NFS/PVT interface through manual/mechanical understory removal and development of a community wildfire protection plan (CWPP) [see website for possible equipment to use in developing fuel breaks in specific areas: http://www.tushogg.com/index_4800.cfm]	Cleve/Ted to identify feasibility of fuel breaks in specific portions of the AA. There is a CWPP in progress with the Spring Creek VFD.

* Potential Restoration Opportunity