



# **NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH • CAROLINA**

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## **NEWS • RELEASE**

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### **National Forests in North Carolina Announces Closures to Protect Special Areas and Historical Artifacts**

ASHEVILLE, N.C.— The National Forests in NC is enacting two closures to better protect special areas and historical artifacts from damage. The first order prohibits leaving geocaches in Wildernesses, Experimental Forests or Wild and Scenic River corridors, the second limits the possession or use of metal detectors on National Forest lands.

Under these closures, geocachers are still allowed to advertise and seek out “virtual” caches in these areas - virtual caches reference already existing features such as waterfalls and scenic vistas. “The reason we’re implementing this order is to protect the unique wild values found in wilderness and on designated rivers, and also avoid leaving items that could conflict with research activities.” said Mary Noel, the Forest Lands and Planning Staff Officer. One popular area that is affected by this rule is the Bent Creek Experimental Forest near Asheville. A list of all affected areas is posted on the forest website ([www.cs/unca/nfsnc](http://www.cs/unca/nfsnc))

Geocachers are also reminded that Federal regulations already require they get permission from the local ranger district office prior to leaving a cache anywhere on the forest. “In a recent incident an unmarked/unapproved geocache was left in an

ammunition box not far from Asheville – it appeared to be a threat to public safety and cost our law enforcement personnel a lot of time investigating it,” said Ms. Noel. Detailed information on geocaching requirements can also be found on the forest website.

The second rule prohibits possession or use of metal detectors outside of designated areas. “Many archaeological sites on the forest have been significantly damaged from treasure hunting, by those who loot sites to sell artifacts, and by others just unaware that it’s illegal to disturb and remove artifacts from federal land without a research permit. Existing laws protect historical sites like early farms and logging camps as well as Native American artifacts,” said Ms. Noel. Several forest areas have been identified that will remain open to recreational metal detecting for modern items like coins – primarily swimming beaches. These include Lake Powhatan Swim Beach, Jackrabbit Swim beach, Cheoah Point Swim Beach, Flanners Beach (Croatan NF) and Kings Mountain Point Beach (Uwharrie NF). Permission for one-time use of metal detectors to help find lost personal property could still be granted by Forest Officers.

Additional information on these closures can be found on the forest website ([www.cs/unca/nfsnc](http://www.cs/unca/nfsnc)).