

Charter for the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forest Restoration Collaborative

November 16, 2010

I. Purpose

The Nantahala and Pisgah Restoration Collaborative (Collaborative) will provide science-based input to inform and facilitate ecological restoration¹ efforts on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. This charter will be updated as needed by the Restoration Steering Team.

II. Background

In 2008, the National Forests in North Carolina (NFsNC) initiated a ¹collaborative² restoration planning process, inviting partners and the public to identify and prioritize ecological restoration goals for the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. A Steering Team was established to help guide this effort. (See Attachment A: List of Steering Team Members.) The Steering Team organized two stakeholder meetings in the summer of 2008. Over 50 people attended and six priority ecological restoration goals were identified. (See Attachment 2 and NFsNC web site for more details). The Steering Team has met a number of times since then and three Working Groups have been formed to address specific restoration goals.

III. Objectives

The objectives of the Collaborative are as follows:

1. Improve the resiliency, health and sustainability of the terrestrial, wetland and aquatic ecosystems in the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests, and indirectly, the broader region;
2. Identify and explore specific restoration goals for the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests that are widely supported by partners, scientists and managers, emphasizing restoration efforts that address urgent regional challenges. Restoration goals identified to date include:
 - a) Restore native communities and threatened and endangered species
 - b) Restore viable plant communities by controlling invasive species
 - c) Restore stream systems and watersheds
 - d) Restore fire dependent and fire adapted ecosystems
 - e) Restore diversity in low-diversity forest stands
 - f) Restore wildlife habitat(See attached summary and NFsNC web site for more details).
3. Ensure that restoration will be guided by sound science;
4. Work together toward a subset of critical ecological restoration activities by supporting initiatives led by partners;
5. Encourage constructive dialogue and the application of the best science on topics where viewpoints differ;
6. Inform and educate Forest Service (FS) staff and partners about current and planned ecological restoration activities and results;

¹Ecological Restoration. The process of assisting the recovery of resilience and adaptive capacity of ecosystems that have been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. Restoration focuses on establishing the composition, structure, pattern, and ecological processes necessary to make terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems sustainable, resilient, and healthy under current and future conditions. (Source: *Forest Service Manual 2020-2008-1*)

²Collaboration. A process where people with diverse interests share knowledge and resources to seek common-ground solutions and improve outcomes (Source: US Forest Service National Partnership Office, *Partnership Guide: The Power of People Working Together*).

7. Strengthen FS relationships with partners through routine involvement in all stages of project planning and implementation.

IV. Membership Roles

A. Steering Team Members

Steering Team members are accountable to one another in the spirit of collaboration built on a foundation of mutual respect, mutual trust, and mutual benefit. Members are ultimately responsible for making recommendations to the Forest Supervisor for issues related to restoration.

Steering Team members are selected by group consent based on their broad interest in restoration, their commitment to seeking collaborative solutions, and their ability to communicate back to the broader community of stakeholders interested in restoration on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. Additions or replacements to the Steering team will be made by the Steering Team as needed.

The Steering Team will assemble during the quarterly meetings and as necessary throughout the year to further the objectives of the Collaborative. Steering Team meetings are open to the public and advance notice of these meetings will be provided to agency partners and other stakeholders with interest in restoration on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests.

The role of Steering Team Members is to:

- Attend regular meetings and complete assignments.
- Ensure that the Collaborative is working towards its goals.
- Collaboratively work to inform and facilitate restoration efforts on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests.
- Establish a process for identifying, prioritizing and implementing actions toward long-term and short-term restoration goals on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests as well as on other western NC lands.
- Serve as liaisons between the Steering Team and the various Working Groups established to focus attention on specific restoration goals.
- Periodically help organize and convene meetings with agency partners, other groups and individuals who have expressed an interest in restoration efforts on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests.
- Discuss progress made and seek additional opportunities for collaborative approaches toward meeting ecological restoration goals for the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests.
- Handle, in a responsible manner, information and materials provided by the NFsNC and other participants.

- B. **Working Groups** are composed of Steering Team Members and other interested parties and are convened as needed to address specific issues. Current there are two working groups: the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and Wildlife Working Groups. Additionally the invasive species restoration goal is being addressed within the existing structure of the Southern Appalachian Weed Management Partnership. The Collaborative Working groups are established on an as-needed basis by the Steering Team and are disbanded when they are no longer needed.

Working Groups meet on an as-needed basis. Their meetings are open to the public and advance notice of these meetings will be provided to agency partners and other stakeholders with interest in restoration on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests.

The role of Working Group members is to:

- Accomplish predetermined tasks identified by the Steering Team in a collaborative fashion and report results to the Steering Team.
 - Convene specialists from across agencies and organizations to discuss long- and short-term opportunities and barriers to ecological restoration goals, with specific emphasis upon the Working Group focal area.
 - Provide documentation of meetings to US Forest Service for posting to their website.
- C. **Stakeholders** consist of agency partners, other groups and individuals who have expressed an interest in restoration efforts on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. Stakeholders will be kept informed through periodic e-mails and web postings. They are welcome to attend Steering Team and Working Group meetings, and will be afforded an opportunity to participate in discussions at designated points on meeting agendas.

The role of Stakeholders is to:

- Provide input to the Steering Team and Working Groups on restoration priorities for NFS lands and other western NC ecosystems.
- Share ongoing activities and success stories regarding key restoration in their own entities.
- Work collaboratively toward shared objectives of the Collaborative.

D. The US Forest Service has the ultimate responsibility for managing the NFsNC

The role of the US Forest Service is to:

- Encourage collaborative involvement early and throughout its project and landscape level planning processes.
- Ensure that the Southern Research Station provides the best available scientific support for management of forest resources in the context of restoration.
- Implement and monitor restoration projects on NFS lands each year with the support of the Restoration Group.
- Maintain a web site summarizing all collaborative restoration efforts.
- Communicate periodically with a broader community of interested parties about progress made and continuing opportunities for stakeholder input and involvement in restoration activities on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests.
- Provide advance notice of all Steering Team and Working Group meetings to agency partners and stakeholders.
- Provide all logistical and staff support to Steering team.