

National Forests in North Carolina Non-Motorized Trails Strategy Questions and Answers

1. *What is the Non-motorized Trails Strategy?*

The Forest Service initiated the collaborative process to analyze the existing trail systems and complexes, evaluate current and predicted needs, and create a coordinated approach to managing forest trails.

2. *Why is the Forest Service creating this strategy right now?*

Outdoor recreation on trails is increasing every year. The Forest Service receives numerous requests across each forest for additional trails for each type of use. There is a need to strategically address these requests given current and future resources. The process will also inform the revision of the Nantahala/Pisgah National Forests Land Management Plan (Forest Plan) slated to start in 2013.

3. *What is the timeframe for the Trails Strategy?*

The Forest Service will start the process by addressing the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests starting in January of 2012. The process for the Uwharrie and Croatan National Forests is tentatively scheduled summer 2012. The collaborative process will likely take a year to complete.

4. *How will the strategy be used?*

The strategy will identify issues to address in order to provide sustainable, diverse, quality trail experiences well into the future. Trail work priorities will be listed for reference by managers. Also, upcoming Forest Plan revision can reference the strategy for the Forest under review. The process will create new partnerships and provide additional volunteer support for trail management on National Forest System lands.

5. *Who are the collaborators?*

The process is open to the public. Collaborators will represent user groups and clubs representing the large majority of trail users. Collaborators will also include community representatives and others representing interests related to recreation and eco-tourism. Individuals, who are not members of organized groups, may also participate.

6. *What are the expectations of the collaborators?*

Collaborators will represent their group, community or other affiliate's interests through the year-long strategic process. Much of the benefit of a collaborative process is in the continuity of and rapport-building between participants to create the best solutions for all.

7. *What are the goals of the strategy?*

To identify:

- a) Trails that are meeting the needs of user groups. These trails are sustainable for their designed use and "fit" into a larger landscape, economic and recreation context.
- b) Trails that are needed but require relocating or redesign because of unsafe conditions for users or they are causing environmental damage.

- c) Trails which are little-used, unsustainable for their designed use, or incompatible with other resource objectives in the area that can be decommissioned.
- d) Opportunities to connect Forest Service trails with those on adjacent, non-Forest Service lands.
- e) A community of organizations and individuals committed to service to help maintain Forest Service trails. Increase number of volunteers available to help with trail management on Ranger Districts currently lacking sufficient support.

8. *What are the tangible products the collaborative effort will produce?*

- a) Recommendations for a map and comprehensive plan for each forest outlining a larger recreation infrastructure including:
 - i. Connectors, links and/or relocations of trails, prioritized.
 - ii. Maintenance priorities.
 - iii. Available federal and non-federal resources to manage the trails.
- b) A process for listing criteria to address future requests for new or changes in existing trails.
- c) A list of funding strategies for the work identified and evaluation points to monitor progress on the comprehensive plan.
- d) Establish annual coordination meetings with recreation partners to implement the trails strategy and receive formal feedback on general recreation experiences across the forests.

9. *How many miles of trails are there on the four National Forests in North Carolina?*

There are more than 1,600 miles of non-motorized recreation trails across the more than 1.25 million acres of North Carolina National Forest System lands from the mountains to the sea. The Forest Service is currently updating its trails inventory data.

10. *What types of uses are allowed on National Forest trails?*

Trail types include hiking, biking, motorized, and equestrian. These trails support other recreation activities, such as hunting and fishing, swimming, canoeing and kayaking, guiding, nature study, photography, and viewing great scenery. There are national standards for building trails for particular uses or designations.

11. *What determines who can use particular trails?*

Trail managers analyze terrain, soil types, other environmental considerations, and social factors to determine suitable uses of trails. Often trail designations are a result of historic use.

12. *How many people use the trails each year?*

There are nearly 5 million visitors to North Carolina national forest trails each year.

13. *Where can I find information on trails on the National Forests?*

Information on the trail system is currently available in all Forest Service offices and in the **Recreation** section of the forest website at www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc.

14. Will there be separate strategies for each National Forest?

There are different uses, types of opportunities available and user groups in the mountains, piedmont and coast. Separate, complimentary strategies will be created for the forests in those areas.

15. How do I keep up to date on the progress on the Strategy?

Monthly updates will be posted to the forest website, Trails Strategy page at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/nctrailstrategy

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