

CAROLINA CONNECTIONS

NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH CAROLINA SEASONAL UPDATE SUMMER 2013

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 1 Plan Revision & Flash Flooding
- 2 Croatan National Forest
- 3 Nantahala National Forest
 - Cheoah Ranger District
 - Nantahala Ranger District
 - Tusquitee Ranger District
- 4 Pisgah National Forest
 - Appalachian Ranger District
 - Grandfather Ranger District
 - Pisgah Ranger District
- 5 Uwharrie National Forest
- 6 Accessible Fishing & Flash Flooding (cont'd from page 1)

Nantahala-Pisgah Plan Revision Continues

Revision of the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forests management plan (the Plan) continues.

Thanks to the more than 400 people who attended the first round of meetings this spring. A [summary](#) of the six meetings is available on the Plan revision webpage, www.fs.usda.gov/goto/nfsnc/nprevision, as are comments from at-

tendees of the meetings.

Meetings were held in late May in Franklin and Asheville to further discuss information and findings collected during the Assessment Phase of Plan revision. The Forest Service's ID team will continue to compile information for the assessment report, which is scheduled to be completed by fall 2013.

The Planning Phase will begin this autumn during which the Forest Service, in collaboration with the public, will analyze the data collected; determine the management practices needed to accomplish the desired goals and the effects those management practices may have on the land. Employees will also draft the revised Plan, seek and respond to public comment and release the final Plan. This phase will take approximately two years to complete.



This Word Cloud reflects the answers that attendees gave to the question: "What is one way you personally benefit from Nantahala and/or Pisgah National Forests?"

Flash Flooding: A Danger Any Time of Year

It can happen too quickly. A rapid surge of water can claim victims in less than one minute.

This is the speed in which flash flooding can occur and forever change someone's life. Visitors to the national forests in North Carolina should remember that flooding can occur during all four seasons.

(cont'd on page 6)



Summer in the Coastal Plain

Search for a New Ranger

Forest Service managers are searching for a new, permanent ranger at the Croatan National Forest. A new ranger could be announced this fall. Stay tuned.

Pine Cliff Recreation Area

Equestrians will enjoy the trails at Pine Cliff this summer. Trail work completed last year now provides 13 miles of horse trails around the Pine Cliff area. The recreation area also offers picnicking and hiking along cypress-lined beaches on the Neuse River. It is also the start of the 21-mile Neusiok Trail, which is part of the Mountains-to-the-Sea National Recreation Trail. Dispersed camping is prohibited in the Pine Cliff area.

Boating Opportunities

Boating is a fun way to cool off and enjoy the waterways of the Croatan National Forest. Launch your motor boat from these ramps: Brice Creek, Cahooque Creek and Haywood Landing. Brice Creek and Haywood Landing also offer fully accessible fishing piers. Want to launch a kayak into one of the Croatan's rivers? Try Cedar Point, Long Point and Oyster Point. Boating is also popular on the interior lakes, including Catfish and Great lakes.

Protecting the Island Creek area

This year, the Forest Service decided to close parts of Island Creek Walking Trail because sections of trail were created illegally. The closures help protect known heritage sites and rare species. Federal law requires an evaluation of all proposed resource management actions such as new trail construction.

Prescribed Burning in the Summer

The Forest Service conducts prescribed burns in the Croatan National Forest during the summer months to mimic what often occurs in nature. Prescribed burns help reduce the amount of fuel on the forest floor, preventing catastrophic wildfire and protecting neighbors. The burns also help restore longleaf pine forests and improve habitat for fire-adapted species, such as the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.

At the Croatan National Forest, the Forest Service uses a combination of prescribed burning, thinning and replanting to restore the longleaf pine tree to the Croatan. So far, the agency has restored about 13,000 acres of the original 60,000 acres of longleaf in the forest. The goal is to burn about 20,000 to 25,000 acres and restore up to 150 acres of longleaf pine annually.

The safety of the public and firefighters is the number one priority during every prescribed burn. When prescribed burns occur, the Forest Service may close area trails and roads, usually the day before the prescribed burn. The public is asked to heed signs posted at trailheads and roads and to stay away from burn sites.



Prescribed burning promotes the regeneration of longleaf pine trees, a fire-adapted species that provides habitat for red-cockaded woodpeckers (RCWs). Restoration of longleaf pine and RCWs is a priority of the Forest Service and many other organizations across the South.

Cheoah Ranger District

Forest Service Road (FSR) 81C, also known as Whigg Branch Rd., is closed because of damage caused by a winter storm. Approximately 1.6 miles of Whigg Branch Road is closed to motor vehicles beginning at the intersection of FSR 81 and FSR 81C. A reopening date has yet to be determined.

Boaters will be happy to know that the Massey Branch Boat Launch is now open, giving visitors easier access to

Santeetlah Lake. Construction of the ramp began last fall and was recently concluded.

Boating is a popular recreation activity, but it can also be a dangerous one as well. The four major causes of drowning are: (1) not wearing a life jacket, (2) abuse of alcohol, (3) lack of sufficient swimming skill and (4) hypothermia. Nearly 1,000 people die in boating accidents every year. It is estimated that more than 80 percent of boating accident victims would have survived if they had been wearing a life jacket. For a complete list of boating safety tips, visit: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5300303.pdf.

Nantahala Ranger District

The Panthertown area of the Nantahala Ranger District is a great place to visit during the summer months. Waterfalls are among the many attractions of Panthertown, located along the eastern border of Jackson County, N.C.

The Forest Service and partners are working to enhance hiking trails in the area. This summer, the agency and Friends of Panthertown volunteers will reroute Wilderness Falls trails. Also, the Forest Service recently decided to add Carlton's Way trail to the district's inventory of trails in Panthertown.

When visiting Panthertown, make sure to practice [bear awareness](#). Bears live in the area, and they are more than

happy to share a camper's food supply. While attacks from black bears are rare, they can occur and cause at least one fatality a year in the United States. Most males weigh about 400 lbs, with the females weighing about 250 lbs.

When camping, make sure food is stored in a bear proof container. Never intentionally feed bears. Hang food in a tree 150 feet away from the camp and cooking area. Do not store food or clothes in tents. Keep a clean camp site by properly disposing of food scraps and garbage. Do not leave food or garbage inside fire rings, grills or around your site. Never leave food or coolers unattended, even in developed picnic areas. Remember, be bear aware.

Tusquitee Ranger District

Segments of several roads in the Tusquitee Ranger District remain [closed](#). Parts of Forest Service Road (FSR) 423 (Tatham Gap), FSR 440 (Tuni Gap) and FSR 340 (Fires Creek) are closed to traffic because of damage caused by a storm that occurred last winter. Closures were put in place after approximately 11 inches of rain fell last January.

A reopening date for the roads has yet to be determined. Early estimates are that it could be two years before repairs are completed. Repair costs in the Tusquitee and Cheoah districts are likely

to exceed \$5 million. Forest Service engineers are working to address damage to these and other roads in the Pisgah and Nantahala national forests that were damaged by heavy winter rains.

"Parts of the roads are too dangerous for motor vehicle travel right now, and our first priority is to protect public safety," said District Ranger Lauren Stull. "We're working quickly to obtain funding to repair these sections and get folks safely back out on these roads, but sometimes Mother Nature deals you a tough hand."

Appalachian Ranger District

A search is underway for a new ranger of the Appalachian District. Tina Tilley left the position to become forest supervisor of the Land Between the Lakes Recreation Area in Kentucky.

Repairs are completed to the scenic area known as Max Patch. This spring, volunteers rebuilt gates and repaired damage to the scenic area caused by off-highway vehicles this winter. Thanks to the volunteers who assisted with the effort.

Forest Service Road (FSR) 2074 (Neals Creek) and FSR 63 (Stony Fork)

are closed temporarily because of damage caused by a storm earlier this year. Approximately 2.4 miles are closed to all forms of vehicular traffic on Neals Creek Rd. beginning at FSR 472 (South Toe River Rd.) and continuing to the Blue Ridge Parkway. On Stony Fork Rd., approximately 4.1 miles are closed to vehicular traffic beginning at the intersection with State Route 2178 (Graggy Garden Rd.) and running to the Blue Ridge Parkway. While closed for motor vehicle use, the two roads may be used for hiking or other non-motorized purposes. A reopening date for the two roads has yet to be determined.

Grandfather Ranger District

Nick Larson is the new ranger of the Grandfather District. Before coming to North Carolina, he served as Tusayan District ranger in the Kaibab National Forest in Arizona. Born in Pennsylvania, he studied forestry at Penn State University. Nick began his



Forest Service career on the research side of the agency, working in Forest Inventory and Analysis in Utah and West Virginia. He then worked on the Talladega National Forest as a forester trainee and as a timber management assistant on the Oakmulgee Ranger District. In 2008, he moved to the Klamath National Forest in Northern California for a timber management officer position, managing a complex timber and planning program on the Happy Camp/Oak Knoll Districts.

Pisgah Ranger District

The Cradle of Forestry in America offers a number of special events that the whole family can enjoy this summer. Programs include:

- Thursdays from June 6-Aug 1, Woodsy Owl's Curiosity Club
- June 8, National Get Outdoors Day
- June 15, Twilight Firefly Tour
- June 22, Bug Day!
- Sundays in July: Songcatchers Music Series
- July 13, Winged Creatures of the Night Twilight Tour
- July 27, Train History Day

- Aug. 3, Smokey Bear's Birthday Party
- Sept. 14, Afternoon Tea with Llamas
- Sept. 22, Bring Back the Monarchs

The Cradle of Forestry, the birthplace of modern forestry in America, features many educational exhibits. It is located on Hwy. 276 in the Pisgah National Forest near Brevard, six miles north of Looking Glass Falls and four miles south of the Blue Ridge Parkway. For more information call 828-877-3130 or go to www.cradleofforestry.com. The Forest Service operates the Cradle in cooperation with the nonprofit Cradle of Forestry in America Interpretive Association.

Summer in the Piedmont

Kids Fishing Day

The Uwharrie National Forest hosts its annual Kids Fishing Day on June 8 at King's Mountain Point on Badin Lake. The event enables families to share a fun, quality outdoor experience, while teaching kids about one of our nation's favorite pastimes – fishing. Kids Fishing Day is free for all children ages 2 to 13 years old. Adults must accompany all children. The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is co-sponsoring the event along with local businesses from the Troy area. Prizes will be awarded by age group and category. This fishing event at Badin Lake is conducted as part of National Fishing and Boating Week, June 1 – 9, during which local events will occur in communities across the country.



Trail Improvements

The motorized trails in the [Badin Lake Off-Highway Vehicle \(OHV\) Trail Complex](#) have been busy since they opened on March 29. The Uwharrie National Forest has implemented several projects on the motorized trails using Recreation Trails Program (RTP) grants. Slab Pile Trail #79 reopened with a new bottomless arch culvert to replace an old crossing. The change will improve water quality and passage for aquatic organisms. OHV clubs partnered on the project. Funding was provided from fees for the OHV trails,

appropriated trails maintenance funds and a RTP grant. This has been a great accomplishment for the trail system. Additional trails projects are planned through this summer.

Thanks to the RTP grant program, equestrian trails are also being maintained. Many partners and volunteers from the equestrian community are helping with trail improvements this summer. Greg's Loop Trail will receive some maintenance and reconstruction. Trail signs were posted in several locations through a partnership with the Back Country Horsemen of America – Uwharrie Chapter.

Volunteers Make a Difference

Some of the work on the Badin Lake OHV Vehicle Trail this spring was conducted by volunteers with the nonprofit organization Tread Lightly!. Volunteers helped the Forest Service in constructing three new informational trailhead kiosks, installing approximately 700 feet of wooden guiderail (pictured above) and mitigating impacts to water quality from the use of OHVs in the forest.

In May, members of the Veterans Historic Preservation Team made improvements to Thornburg Farm in the national forest. Eight veterans performed a variety of repairs, such as roofing the house, jacking and rebuilding one corner of the barn and stabilizing several small outbuildings.

Thornburg Farm is a complex of 19 buildings, including the farmhouse and large hay barn. The farm is significant because of its history, architecture and progressive agricultural practices. The repairs will promote public access and enjoyment of the buildings and grounds.

The projects help veterans with re-entry into civilian life. The veterans gain concrete skills and experience, positioning them to secure meaningful and career-oriented employment. Additionally, the program helps them to become highly qualified and well-trained conservation leaders, building on their military training.

NATIONAL FORESTS in NORTH CAROLINA

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and serving people.*

Accessible Fishing Opportunities Abound

Fishing is a favorite summer pastime. Anglers in wheelchairs or with other physical disabilities who visit the four national forests in North Carolina have a number of accessible piers to choose from. Accessible fishing piers on small lakes and ponds include:

- Nantahala National Forest: Balsam Lake; Cherokee Lake; Cheoah Work Center Pond.
- Pisgah National Forest: Lake Powhatan; Max Patch Pond; Boone Fork Pond.

Accessible piers on rivers and streams include:

- Pisgah National Forest: North Mills River at North Mills River Campground; Davidson River at Syc-

amore Flats and Coontree day use areas; Curtis Creek near Curtis Creek Campground; French Broad River at Murray Branch day use area.

- Croatan National Forest: Brice Creek pier and accessible launch; White Oak River pier and accessible launch at Haywood Landing.

Accessible piers on large lakes include:

- Nantahala National Forest: Jackrabbit Mountain at Chatuge Lake; Massey Branch at Santeetlah Lake.
- Uwharrie National Forest: Kings Mountain Point at Badin Lake Recreation Area.

Flash Flooding A Danger Any Time of Year *(cont'd from page 1)*

A low-lying area can become a death trap in a matter of minutes.

"There is very little time to react," said Kristin Bail, forest supervisor of the National Forests in North Carolina. "Forest visitors need to be [more conscious](#) about sudden storms. Families should discuss how they would alert each other and climb to safety if rushing water arrives."

When visiting a forest always be alert for heavy rains and sudden changes in the weather, especially at night. Whenever severe weather is forecasted, go home or stay home. Your safety is your own responsibility. Remember, city sirens don't exist out in nature.

When water rises at a camp site or recreation area, climb to higher ground immediately. If traveling, do not drive

across roads that are covered with water. Make safe choices.

A smart phone app or cell phone mobile alert can help you stay tuned-in to weather conditions before and during your outdoor activities. But remember, your cellular provider may not offer services and alerts in remote outdoor locations like forests and wilderness areas. The National Weather Service, www.weather.gov, is our nation's exclusive and trusted source for weather forecasts and warnings.

Bring along a battery powered radio when camping and be aware of the local weather forecast. It could save your life. At the Forest Service, safety is top priority. Agency officials want every visitor to the national forest to enjoy themselves and make it home safely.

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