

Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests Plan Revision



Assessment Public Session Summary

May 23, 2013 – Franklin, NC

May 30, 2013 – Asheville, NC

The second round of public involvement sessions for the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests' Plan Revision were held in May of this year. Over 200 participants attended one of two meetings held in Franklin and Asheville, NC. Participants included those that had attended the first round of public meetings that were held in February and March as well as new participants that were joining the process for the first time.

The public sessions ran from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and included presentations by Forest Service staff followed by group discussions centered around three main topics: young forests and wildlife habitat, recreational access and scenery, and designated areas. These discussion topics were selected based on public comments and input that we received at the first round of public meetings earlier this spring. Information on each of these topics was presented to the entire group of attendees and is available at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/home/?cid=stelprdb5422944>.

After presentations of background information on each of the topic areas, public participants were divided into three groups and dispersed to one of three areas for discussions specific to the topic area. Below is a summary of information that was shared and discussed at each of the three topic sessions.

Young Forests and Mature Forest Habitat

The ecosystems team provided definitions and information regarding vegetative conditions in the forest and suitable habitat for wildlife. Discussion questions that were posed to the group included: 1) What does young forest habitat look like to you? 2) Why do we need this? 3) Where do we need this? and, 4) How much do we need? Public responses to these questions is available online at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/home/?cid=stelprdb5422944>.

In general, people still have a wide range of ideas about what early successional habitat/young forest looks like, how it functions, and how much there should be. Many individuals expressed that they would like to see more of the landscape in the 0-10 and 11-20 year old forest age classes.

Recreational Access and Scenery

The recreation team provided the public with an opportunity to share their preferences for recreation settings, access, and scenery via an interactive activity. Feedback from the activity provided information on the types of recreation activities the public conducts on the forest, what range of settings they prefer to conduct these activities, how they gain access to these areas, and what their interest in high quality/nature appearing scenery would be while participating in the activities. Recreation activities participated in by the public are varied and include hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, camping, and gathering, just

to name a few. In addition, participants had the opportunity to ask questions and provide their concerns for recreation topics to be included in the Forest Plan assessment. Public comments ranged from “how do you define high quality scenery” to “we need more parking for horse trailers”.

Recreation Activity	Preferred Recreation Setting					Access for Recreation Activity					Interest in Scenery Sensitivity or Concern Level 1 - High 2 - Moderate 3 - Low
	Urban	Rural	Roaded Natural	Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	Primitive	Open NF System or State Road	Gated NF System Road	Motorized NF System Trail	Non-Motorized NF System Trail	Overland	
<i>Hiking</i>		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	1
<i>Hunting</i>			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		1
<i>Picnic</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			1-2

Designated Areas

Designated areas are areas or features identified and managed to maintain their unique special character or purpose. The Designated Areas discussion focused on considering attributes that individuals felt would make an area suitable for special designation and those attributes that would preclude an area from special designation. Group participants had the opportunity to provide answers to each of these two questions and comments were captured on flip chart paper at the front of the room. There were some questions regarding the distinction between what is a ‘designated area’ versus a ‘management area’ and who has the authority to designate special areas. A list of existing designated areas on the Nantahala and Pisgah NFs and the respective authority that is responsible for designation is available on the forest website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/home/?cid=stelprdb5422944>.

As part of the process for considering additional designated areas in the revised plan, interested individuals will have the opportunity to collaborate on developing objective evaluation criteria for designated areas. An ad hoc group will be convened in late summer/early fall to work on developing evaluation criteria for areas that could be administratively designated in the revised plan. Interested individuals in attendance at the May meetings provided their contact information and will be included in future discussions on this topic.

Next Steps

The Forest Service Plan Revision team is working hard to complete the assessment report for plan revision this summer. This report will provide information on the existing conditions of the forest and serve as a foundation for evaluating the need for change in the revised plan. Public discussions regarding the need for change will take place later this summer. If you have any questions about the plan revision process or would like to provide feedback to the Plan Revision team, you can send email to NCPlanRevision@fs.fed.us or physical mail to 160 Zillicoa Street, Ste A, Asheville, NC 28801.