



FACT SHEET

Uwharrie National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan

Overview

In May 2012, the U.S. Forest Service National Forests in North Carolina unveiled the revised Uwharrie National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (The Plan). The Plan guides management activities for the 50,814-acre national forest, which spans three counties in the piedmont of (central) North Carolina, for the next 15 years.

The Forest Service unveiled the draft management Plan and draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) in June 2011. The original Plan for the Uwharrie National Forest was signed in 1986.

Major Themes

The Plan includes three major themes:

1. **Restoring the forest to a more natural ecological condition:** For example, the Plan reduces the amount of loblolly pine plantations in favor of reestablishing longleaf pine forests or oak-hickory forests. Increased prescribed burning will play a role in restoring longleaf, recovering endangered Schweinitz's sunflower and enhancing other rare sun-loving plants. Selective stream improvement and treatment of non-native invasive species will enhance the Forest Service's restoration efforts.
2. **Better management of cultural resources:** The Uwharrie National Forest has an abundance of artifacts and historic and prehistoric sites within its boundaries. These need protection, but they also provide opportunities for research, teaching and interpretation.
3. **Providing outstanding and environmentally friendly outdoor recreation opportunities, with excellent trails and facilities:** It is a challenge to provide the kind of experience recreationists want while minimizing impacts to other forest resources and other forest users. Equestrians, mountain bikers, off-highway vehicle enthusiasts, hikers and hunters are all vying for the same intensely used areas that are also home to numerous archeological sites, streams, and special botanical features. The Plan requires equestrians and mountain bikers to stay on designated trails after an initial collaborative trail-system design phase. Off-highway vehicles remain restricted to designated trails. This would go a long way in managing these intensive uses.

Additional Plan Highlights

The Plan also calls for the following management practices.

Forest Restoration:

- The Forest Service's objective is to restore 100 acres of longleaf pine trees and 200 acres oak/hickory forest per year. Removal and thinning objectives for maturing loblolly stands (prior to restoring longleaf or oak-hickory) will result in timber harvest volumes similar to what has been achieved in recent years. Loblolly pine harvests will also benefit the local economy.
- Doubling the amount of prescribed burning will help re-establish fire regimes necessary for maintaining and restoring longleaf and promoting the suite of sun-loving species now rare in the North Carolina Piedmont, including the endangered Schweinitz's sunflower. The Plan establishes Schweinitz's sunflower management areas in the locations most conducive to restoration of it and its associated sun-loving species. These efforts could lead to the plant's removal from the endangered list.
- Additional objectives:
 - The agency will remove 100 acres of non-native invasive plant species per year.
 - Gaps will be created in existing oak-hickory stands if needed to promote regeneration, to provide for a more consistent amount of acorn production.
 - Targeted stream channel and aquatic habitat improvements will address those few stream reaches with long-standing water quality issues.
- The Plan calls for the reintroduction of the endangered Carolina heelsplitter, a mussel, to help the species avoid extinction.

Sustainable Outdoor Recreation:

- The Plan establishes goals for the hiking, equestrian, mountain bike and OHV trail systems, and a new emphasis on partnerships should improve the quality of the recreation experience for users.
- The Plan limits equestrian and mountain bike use to designated trails. The goal is to minimize user conflicts and resource damage. A forest-wide trails strategy will be developed collaboratively with user groups. This should also result in better user experiences, since trails could be located appropriately and therefore be easier to maintain. The Plan also calls for developing and maintaining vistas along trails.
- The Plan responds to the expressed needs of users by setting objectives for providing visitor information.

Cultural Resources Management

- Due to the importance of the Uwharrie National Forest cultural resources, the Plan's components exceed those of most forest plans.
 - Each year, deferred maintenance needs will be addressed on an average of five significant cultural sites vulnerable to degradation.
 - The Forest Service will develop a cultural resources interpretive trail.
 - A Passport In Time project will be hosted at least every two years.
 - The agency will evaluate an average of five unevaluated cultural resource sites annually.
 - The agency will complete one thematic evaluation for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places such as gold mines, archaic rock quarries or Revolutionary War sites.

Special Management Areas

- The Plan recognizes 34 sites in special interest management areas for a total of 5,396 acres (just over 10 percent of the national forest), including 14 sites that are important

cultural resources and numerous sites that are special because of their botanical, geological and recreational values.

- Four small tracts adjacent to Birkhead Mountains Wilderness Area that are potential additions to the wilderness will be managed to retain their roadless character and two of the tracts that have an untrammled appearance (totaling 7.1 acres) would be recommended as additions to the wilderness.

Collaboration and the Planning Process

Informational meetings with state and local government officials took place prior to kicking off the collaborative public involvement process. The collaborative process to develop the Plan components consisted of 10 public meetings and two field trips during 2005 and 2006 with up to 100 participants per meeting. Other federal and state agency representatives, local officials, adjacent landowners, non-governmental organizations and user group representatives, academia and other interested individuals participated. The earliest meeting focused on finding common ground among participants. At subsequent meetings, a variety of techniques were employed to educate participants about forest resources, receive suggestions for specific plan components, and review work from the previous meeting. Public- and private-sector scientists participated in the pre-planning assessment work and the Plan development process.

With input from partners, the Forest Service developed the Plan and draft environmental impact state using the 2000 Planning Rule, as amended (1982 rule provisions). Three opportunities for comment allowed for additional input in 2007, 2009 and 2010 following release of the Notice of Intent to revise using the 1982 rule provisions. Additional public involvement in the summer of 2010 served to update participants and validate the current approach to issues and alternatives in the draft environmental impact statement. Two public meetings were held in the summer of 2011 during the comment period for the draft documents.

For more information

For additional information about the Plan, visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/nfsnc/uwharriplan>. Questions can be sent to comments-southern-north-carolina@fs.fed.us.

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