

USDA Forest Service is Seeking Feedback on a Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project in Pisgah National Forest

February 13th, 2026

The Loggy Knob and Upper Poplar Creek Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project is on the Appalachian Ranger District of the Pisgah National Forest. This project aims to reduce wildfire risk and restore forest health in areas severely impacted by Hurricane Helene.

Background

Hurricane Helene struck Western North Carolina in September 2024, causing catastrophic damage across the Pisgah National Forest. High winds and flooding led to widespread tree blowdown, landslides, and erosion, leaving large tracts of dead and dying trees. These conditions have created extreme fuel loads, increasing the risk of catastrophic wildfires and threatening public safety.

Project Details

The proposed project will mechanically remove hazardous fuels across approximately 1,000 acres in two salvage units:

- Loggy Knob Unit (approximately 700 acres) southwest of Iron Mountain Gap in Mitchell County, NC
- Upper Poplar Creek Unit (approximately 300 acres) near Unaka Mountain in Tennessee

Removing downed timber will reduce wildfire risk, improve emergency access, and support ecological recovery. The project is essential to protect nearby communities and enhance resiliency along the Appalachian National Scenic Trail corridor.

Proposed Action

To achieve the overarching goal of reducing hazardous fuel loads and increasing resilience to wildfire.

The proposed undertaking consists of the mechanical removal of hazardous fuels and trees for life, property, and critical infrastructure (i.e. the use of commercial harvest and non-commercial fuels management methods to remove larger

diameter windthrown and storm-damaged trees, reduce hazardous fuel loads, and facilitate regeneration).

- Windthrown and damaged trees will be targeted to reduce heavy fuel loads and facilitate any future ecosystem restoration. This would include the removal of any tree that is leaning, root sprung, broken, or blown over or trees laying partially or wholly on the ground and are therefore obstructing access for fire suppression efforts and emergency first responders.
- The primary objective is to remove as much downed, damaged, and windthrown trees as feasible in an economically viable manner while minimizing environmental impact. A minor amount of standing green trees may be removed to provide for safety of the operations and the construction of temporary landings and skid trails needed for the harvest operation. Damaged timber would be removed with logging equipment including but not limited to skidders, dozers or like equipment. These actions will drastically reduce heavy fuels that can increase fire duration and severity and increase resistance to control.
- Road maintenance and erosion control measures will be implemented before, during, and after salvage activities as needed. Existing forest roads used for transportation during salvage activities will be stabilized. The use of temporary roads is proposed but not the establishment of permanent roads. Temporary roads, skid trails, and landings will be designed to minimize soil disturbance. Initial post-treatment recovery efforts are also proposed; this includes the establishment of water bars, seeding, and mulching to prevent erosion and promote site recovery.

Proposed Compliance Pathway

Section 605 of HFRA (16 U.S.C. 6591d).

Public Feedback Opportunity

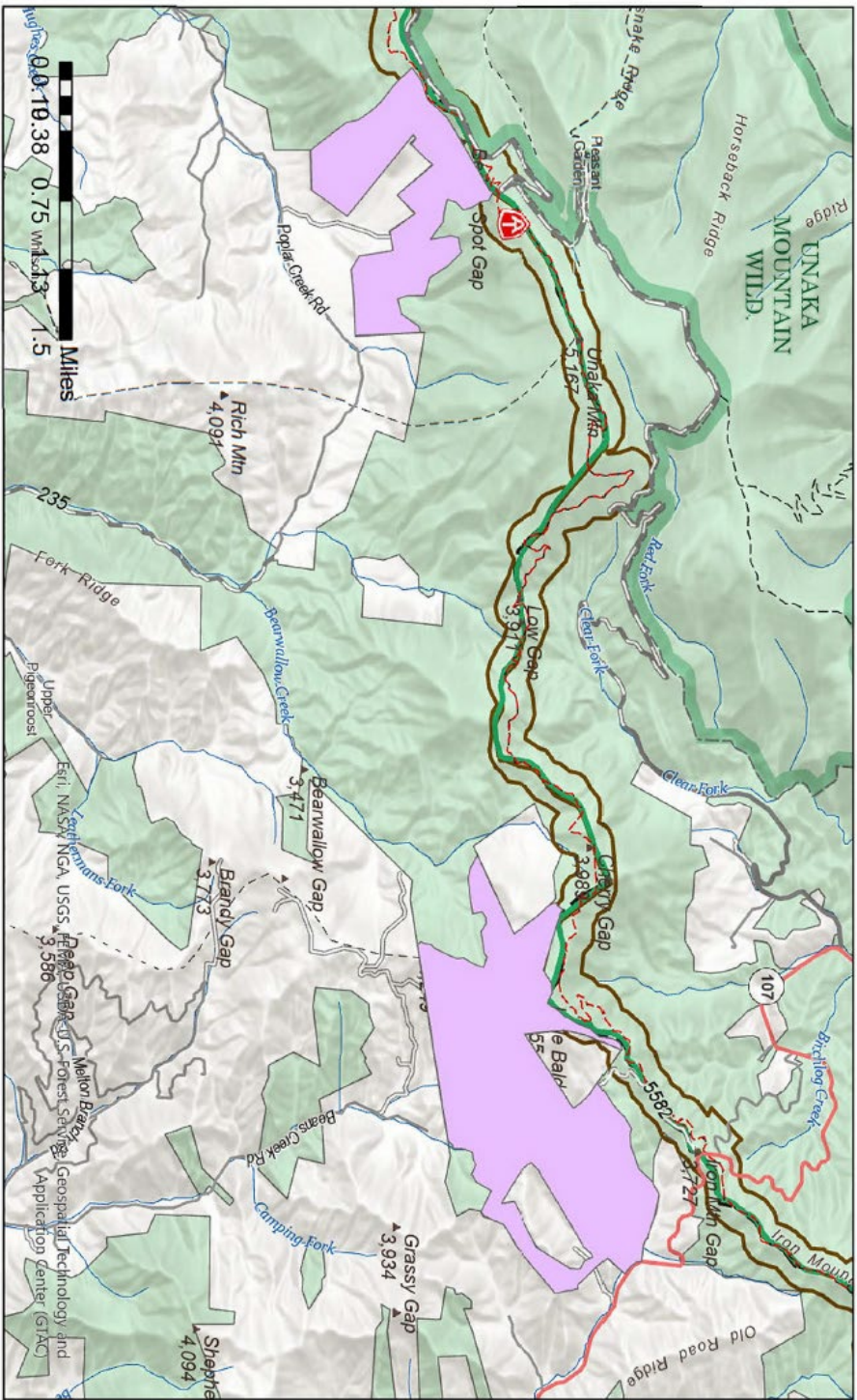
The public is welcome to learn more about this critical fuel reduction effort and provide feedback. Forest Service staff will have a table at the upcoming Mitchell County Landscape Recovery & Preparedness Open House hosted by Blue Ridge RC&D, Saturday, February 21, at Bowman Middle School (410 S Mitchell Ave. Bakersville, NC 28705).

In addition, members of the public can provide feedback by email at:

SM.FS.R8ncsocom@usda.gov. Feedback is most useful by: **February 25th, 2025**.



Loggy Knob and Upper Poplar Creek Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project, Pisgah National Forest, Appalachian Ranger District



- Legend**
- Loggy Knob and Upper Poplar Creek Units

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