

**Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala & Pisgah Plan
Revision**

Tuesday, May 10, 2016

10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Wells Event Center

248 North Main Street, Waynesville

Members

Kevin Colburn, American Whitewater
JD Diefenbach, Sierra Club, Wenoca Chapter
Phil Elliott, Columbia Forest Products
Rob Elliott, Evergreen Paper
Sam Evans, Southern Environmental Law Center
Jim Gray, Ruffed Grouse Society
Fred Hardin, Gilkey Lumber (alternate to Jim Sitts)
Ruth Hartzler, Carolina Mountain Club
Bill Hodge, Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards
Lang Hornthal, Root Cause
Hugh Irwin, The Wilderness Society
Bill Kane, NC Wildlife Federation
Josh Kelly, MountainTrue
Andrea Leslie, Wildlife Resource Commission
Deirdre Lightsey, Back Country Horsemen of NC
Gary Peters, National Wild Turkey Federation
Ben Prater, Defenders of Wildlife
Morgan Sommerville, Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Gordon Warburton, Wildlife Resources Commission
Julie White, SORBA/IMBA
David Whitmire, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council
Bill Yarborough, Commission of Agriculture, North Carolina

Alternates Attending as Observers

Bob Gale, Mountain True
Ryan Jacobs, Wildlife Resources Commission
Richard Mode, NC Wildlife Federation

U. S. Forest Service

Michelle Aldridge, National Forests of NC
James Melonas, National Forests of NC

National Forest Foundation

Karen DiBari
Mark Shelley

Welcome and Greetings

Karen DiBari welcomed all participants to the meeting. Twenty-two Stakeholders Forum (SF) members and 3 alternates were present. Members were joined by 7 Forest Service (FS) staff and 3 additional observers.

Self-introductions were made by the members around the table (and with observers in attendance).

Karen reviewed the objectives for the meeting:

- Review and recognize the accomplishments of the Stakeholders Forum
- Lay out a roadmap for moving forward on key issues and gather Stakeholders Forum input on that roadmap
- Ensure we have continued energy and support for moving forward to a draft plan
- Identify next steps for summer and fall

Allen Nicholas, Forest Supervisor

As the new Forest Supervisor, Allen expressed appreciation for the opportunities to talk to the staff and SF members and to get up to speed. The agency is thankful for the contributions and dedication by the SF. With the open lines of communication, the goal is to have no surprises when the draft plan is released. This is the most diverse and engaged group of stakeholders he has been associated with.

He values the ability of the group to talk and to listen to the different perspectives. He offered kudos to the group for staying with it and working toward consensus and appreciative of members' time. Allen pointed out that this process is helping to lay the groundwork for planning work across the country. There is great interest outside the region and across the nation about how things are going with the collaborative planning effort on the Nantahala & Pisgah National Forests (NPNF).

Moving forward, there will be activities planned through the summer as the agency integrates SF and public input. The FS will continue to provide information in a transparent manner. The SF has and will continue to help the agency put forth an implementable plan. He encouraged the SF members to continue to stay engaged over the summer.

James Melonas, Deputy Forest Supervisor

James offered an example of the interest in the Nantahala Pisgah NFs collaborative planning. He attended the national Collaborative Restoration Workshop (hosted by the NFF in Denver) where he talked with agency staff and community partners from across the nation.

James introduced the concept of the roadmap (see attached document), which was developed by NPNF staff. The intent is to demonstrate how SF members can engage in the plan component development process in the coming months.

Roadmap for Addressing Remaining Plan Components

Michelle Aldridge provided an overview of the roadmap, which focuses activities on the components remaining in plan development.

Web sharing: Plan building block elements

Before management areas mapping meetings, the Forest Service will be putting together the remaining plan elements and sharing them with the public. These include:

- Remainder of forest-wide DOGSs (Desired Conditions, Objectives, Guidelines and Standards)
- Objectives – initial set (end of June)
- Priority Watersheds
- Wild and Scenic River Evaluation Results (53 rivers)
- Wilderness Evaluations Results & Proposed Criteria for moving from evaluation to analysis Recommendations

Management Area Mapping

The constructs for Management Areas are similar between SF and the Forest Service. The proposal is to integrate the Forest Service and SF information, include the data that has not been incorporated thus far and to share this information at 6 interdisciplinary team (IDT) meetings at districts across the Forest. The intention is to work toward an alternative that addresses the integrated interests.

Michelle Aldridge presented a process for how the Forest Service can use input from the SF and the public to inform the identification of management areas in the proposed forest Plan, including two opportunities to provide additional feedback to the Forest Service this summer.

- Based on knowledge about the resources and information that has been shared by the SF, the Forest Service will label MA areas where there has been incongruence.
- In addition to the inputs already described, the FS will overlay supplementary information, including: priority watersheds, areas that have been proposed as special interest areas, and areas that may be analyzed as wilderness in the environmental impact statement (EIS) based on the wilderness evaluation.
- The Forest Service will develop a map that aims to integrate interests expressed by the public. Six total pieces of the map (one per district) will be shared back with the public in advance of hosting 6 district based open IDT meetings.
- The 6 district meetings meeting will be designed to identify needed modifications to the map.

Long-term goals of the management area discussion:

- Create a management area structure that incorporates FS and local knowledge about interests and needs on the land.
- Efficiently identify areas where there is broad support for management as front-, mid- or back-country.
- Identify those places where there is a difference of opinion on the desired management approach. Explore and understand the interests that underlie differing viewpoints and whether those interests are mutually exclusive. To the extent possible, develop common ground solutions for these areas.
- Where common ground is not possible, ensure that the FS understands the different interests. The FS could choose to analyze desired differences as needed in the EIS alternatives.

Additional Considerations:

Not all interests are represented in either the natural area priorities or wildlife habitat management areas (WHMAs) and need to be better captured. The FS has additional information that hasn't been considered yet including priority watersheds and areas that have been proposed for other special interest areas (other than recommended wilderness). Once the wilderness evaluations are complete, thoughts about potential wilderness areas can be integrated into a place-based mapping discussion. SF members have also expressed a desire to have more detailed conversations around zoomed-in geographies.

After MA mapping meetings, the FS will share the MA plan components, an advanced iteration of forest-wide plan components, and a thematic alternative comparison. The FS will use information from the summer meetings to develop the draft plan and alternatives. SF members are encouraged to attend district meetings with information that reflects the constituents they represent. As the maps for each alternative evolve, the FS will share them with the public, just as they are sharing other plan building blocks.

Monitoring Summit (Forest Service led)

The FS will conduct a public meeting with partners who bring data or have an interest in monitoring. This will also be an opportunity to discuss how uncertainties in plan components can be monitored and adaptively managed.

Informal activity (Forest Service led)

The FS is planning a mid-summer outing opportunity to observe applied plan components in the field.

SF Formal meeting

Currently the plan is to reconvene for a formal SF meeting in the fall when the draft plan and draft EIS are ready to be released. The purpose of the meeting is to give the FS the opportunity to explain the plan and how SF and public input was integrated into alternatives.

SF-led informal activities

The SF is considering activities and opportunities to keep communications open and to further the understanding of each other's shared interests.

Small Group Discussions

The SF separated into four breakout groups to discuss the following topics, with each group circulating among all of the four issue stations.

- Wilderness evaluation results rollout
- Mapping process
- Engagement with counties and local elected officials
- Informal activities coordinated by SF members over the summer

Please see the attached notes from each breakout for detail.

SF Accomplishments and Statement of Good Intent

The SF reviewed and edited two documents:

- *SF Accomplishments as of May 2016*
- *SF Statement of Good Intent*

The SF discussed how these documents would be shared:

- Posted on the SF webpage managed by the NFF;
- Shared by SF members with constituents and the media;
- Shared by the NFF and the NPNF with other forests going through planning in the future.

After discussion and adding additional concepts and/or editing the language, the SF approved the *Accomplishments* document with the understanding that the NFF will convert the added ideas into sentences.

The SF reviewed the draft of the *Statement of Good Intent* document and incorporated changes, discussed the interests of organizations and the ability of members to advocate for these, and the goal of not getting locked into positions or drawing hard lines that prevent collaboration further down the road. After discussion and editing, the SF approved the *Statement of Good Intent*.

Consensus Decisions (everyone thumbs up):

- Approved the *Accomplishments as of May 2016* document.
- Approved the *Statement of Good Intent*.

Actions: The NFF will clean up the two documents and send them around to the SF.

The SF discussed whether it was useful for members to make individual statements about the SF to be gathered into a document, and decided to have the collective statements expressed through the *Accomplishments* and *Statement of Good Intent* be the vehicles for SF communication.

Review of Next Steps and Summer/Fall Plans

Each SF member and FS around the table provided their reflections on the SF process and moving forward. Many expressed positive sentiments about the relationships established and strengthened and their hope for keeping the momentum moving forward toward a great plan.

Summary of Actions:

- The FS and the NFF will identify next steps for summer and fall and will communicate to the SF about how they can engage.
- SF members will identify activities they can lead to support continued dialogue throughout the summer.
- The NFF will share the final version of the *Statement of Good Intent* with the SF

- The NFF will share the final version of the *Accomplishments as of May 2016* with the SF
- NFF will email a draft of the May SF meeting record for review, as well as other documents related to the meeting.