

MEETING RECORD
Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala & Pisgah Plan Revision

Meeting Record

Thursday, October 22, 2015

12:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

The North Carolina Arboretum, Asheville, North Carolina

Members

Kyle Brown, Quality Deer Management Association

Kevin Colburn, American Whitewater

John Culclasure, Ruffed Grouse Society

JD Diefenbach, Sierra Club, Wenoca Chapter

Rob Elliot, Evergreen Paper

Phil Elliott, Columbia Forest Products

Sam Evans, Southern Environmental Law Center

Jim Gray (Alternate for Jeff Johnson)

Susan Fletcher, Pisgah Hardwoods

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, NC Wildlife Resources Commission (shared seat)

Deirdre Lightsey, Back Country Horsemen of NC

Gary Peters, National Wild Turkey Federation

Ben Prater, Defenders of Wildlife

Jim Sitts (Alternate for Steve Henson)

Curtis Smalling, National Audubon of NC

Morgan Sommerville, Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Gordon Warburton, NC Wildlife Resources Commission (shared seat)

David Whitmire, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council

Megan Sutton, The Nature Conservancy

Bill Yarborough, NC Agriculture

Julie White, Mountain Biking

Alternates Attending as Observers

Tracy Davids (Alternate for Ben Prater)

Jill Gottesman (Alternate for Hugh Irwin)

Ryan Jacobs (Alternate for Gordon Warburton)

Brad Miller (Alternate for Gary Peters)

U.S. Forest Service

Michelle Aldridge, National Forests of NC

Erik Crews, National Forests of NC

Heather Luczak, National Forests of NC

James Melonas, National Forests of NC

Susan Parker, National Forests of NC

National Forest Foundation

Karen DiBari, National Forest Foundation

Mark Shelley, National Forest Foundation

Welcome and Introductions

Karen DiBari welcomed all participants to the meeting. Twenty-seven Stakeholders Forum members (or their designated alternate), two U.S. Forest Service (FS) representatives, three Forest Service presenters and two National Forest Foundation staff were present. There were also ten observers including: four designated alternates (for Forum members present at the meeting), three Forest Service staff, two people representing other organizations and one from the press.

Meeting objectives:

- Finalize additions to the Code of Conduct
- Gain an understanding from the Forest Service of the context of the three major issues the Stakeholders Forum will be addressing
- Gain an understanding of the special designations evaluation process
- Determine approach and match with meeting schedule and rotating “thematic emphasis” at each meeting

Setting the Context: “Key issues” on the Nantahala and Pisgah Forest Plan

Michelle Aldridge provided an update about where the Forest Service is in the Plan Revision process, reviewing the needs for each issue that the Stakeholders Forum is focused on and what type of input would be most helpful to the process.

Purpose statement: In a collaborative dialogue amongst stakeholders representing diverse interests, identify zones of agreement to form recommendations around critical resource issues related to the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests’ plan revision. The key issues are forestry and restoration, special designations, and sustainable recreation. Recommendations should achieve clean and abundant water, connect communities to the land, and maintain and restore resiliency and diversity.

Plan assessment activities:

- In 2014, the FS compiled an Assessment of current ecological, social, economic and cultural conditions and trends across the forest. The Executive Summary synthesized primary findings about current conditions.
- Public Input - The FS shared the Assessment and Need to Change document with the public and collected input on what needs to change in the revised plan.

Using the Need to Change document as a reference, Michelle reviewed the needs that the FS identified for each of the three key Stakeholder Forum issues: forestry and restoration, special designations, and sustainable recreation (see attachment for further information).

Wild and Scenic Rivers and Wilderness Plan Evaluation Processes

James Melonas introduced the Wild and Scenic Rivers and Wilderness planning processes required by the 2012 Planning Rule. The emphasis for the FS right now is to move forward, going from inventory into the evaluation phases.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Susan Parker of the Nantahala & Pisgah National Forests gave a presentation about the required FS process to identify the eligibility of rivers for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The agency has identified [53 rivers with potential outstandingly remarkable values](#). The FS is asking the public to provide input via evaluation forms – reviewing the maps (posted online Oct. 23rd) and providing the agency with information on these rivers. The FS is asking for input to be submitted by December 15th.

Special Designations/Wilderness

Heather Luczak and Erik Crews (FS) presented information about what the FS is required to do during a forest plan revision as it pertains to wilderness inventory and evaluation:

- Identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and determine whether to recommend any such lands for designation
- The 2012 Planning Rule requires an inventory of areas that meet basic criteria and address public input/comments. The agency only recommends areas; only Congress can designate Wilderness.

The FS is asking the public to provide comments and supporting information about specific areas via evaluation forms after reviewing the maps and descriptions by December 15th. After collecting the information from the Evaluation Criteria and Comment Forms, the FS Interdisciplinary (ID) Team will consider input for evaluation. The responses will be used to identify which areas may be eligible and this information will be included in the DEIS. The public will have another opportunity to engage in this process through the 90-day comment period following the release of the DEIS.

The presentation and other supporting materials from the FS on designations can be accessed at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/home/?cid=fseprd476345>.

Wild & Scenic Rivers and Wilderness Evaluation Discussion

The Stakeholders Forum considered the importance of discussing special designations in the context of the other two key issues of focus, and not in isolation.

- **CONSENSUS AGREEMENT** was reached in support of the following statement: *The Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala & Pisgah Plan Revision expresses confidence in the work done by the Forest Service to identify rivers that may be identified as Wild & Scenic Rivers, and to inventory areas that may have Wilderness characteristics. We look forward to participating in the evaluation process.*

- **Action:** A temporary committee will meet to focus on framing the next steps for Stakeholder Forum discussion about special designations in November (Megan Sutton, Hugh Irwin, Kevin Colburn, Bill Hodge, Bill Kane). The NFF will help schedule a teleconference.
- **Action:** A temporary committee will work with the Forest Service and plan how Forum members can support public engagement at Forest Service public meetings on designations (scheduled for 11/9 and 11/16), and also share information about the work of the Stakeholders Forum (such as at a Forum table, side presentation). The group will hold a planning teleconference. (Bill Hodge, John Culclasure, Josh Kelly, Kevin Colburn, David Whitmire, Michelle Aldridge)

Forestry and Restoration

The group decided that it makes more sense to schedule the thematic emphasis on forestry and restoration for December instead of November. The FS needs to be able to prepare adequately to develop a presentation that responds to the Forum's questions. Time will be scheduled on the November agenda for a presentation about terms and an overview about forest management.

- **Action:** A temporary committee will meet to identify key questions in order to help frame the forest management and restoration discussion, and identify information needs of the FS (Megan Sutton, Jim Gray, Sam Evans, Jim Sitts, Gordon Warburton, Bill Kane). The NFF will help schedule a teleconference.

Recreation

The Forum decided to make recreation the thematic emphasis for the November meeting. Michelle Aldridge will work with the FS Recreation staff to plan a presentation about sustainable recreation, sideboards/constraints, and process.

- **Action:** A temporary committee will meet to prepare a presentation for Stakeholder Forum members about sustainable recreation (Kevin Colburn, Deirdre Lightsey, Bill Hodge, Richard Mode, Julie White, Ruth Hartzler; they will ask David Whitmire and Kyle Brown to review). This committee will also identify key questions that will help the FS provide desired information to the Forum.

All Three Key Issues

Action: Stakeholders Forum members will identify needs and values to share back at the November meeting, as well as resources and information that may help advance discussions. The NFF will send out a request for this information and will compile it for discussion at the November meeting.

Code of Conduct

- **CONSENSUS AGREEMENT** was reached in support of the revised Code of Conduct and Addendum.

Record of Decisions	Consensus
The Stakeholders Forum approved language changes to the Code of Conduct and Addendum	Yes
<p>Statement in support of Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers process.</p> <p><i>The Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala & Pisgah Plan Revision expresses confidence in the work done by the Forest Service to identify rivers that may be identified as Wild & Scenic Rivers, and to inventory areas that may have Wilderness characteristics. We look forward to participating in the evaluation process.</i></p>	Yes