

MEETING RECORD
Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala & Pisgah
Plan Revision D R A F T Meeting Record
Tuesday, November 10, 2015
2:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
The Wells Event Center
Waynesville, North Carolina

Members

Kyle Brown, Quality Deer Management Association
John Culclasure, Ruffed Grouse Society
Kevin Colburn, American Whitewater
JD Diefenbach, Sierra Club, Wenoca Chapter
Rob Elliot, Evergreen Paper
Phil Elliott, Columbia Forest Products
Sam Evans, Southern Environmental Law Center
Susan Fletcher, Pisgah Hardwoods
Ruth Hartzler, Carolina Mountain Club
Steve Henson, retired, former ED of S. Appalachian Multiple Use Council
Bill Hodge, Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards
Lang Hornthal, Root Cause
Hugh Irwin, The Wilderness Society **Jeff Johnson**, builder
Ryan Jacobs (Alternate for Gordon Warburton), Wildlife Resources Commission
Bill Kane, NC Wildlife Federation
Zach-Lesch Huie, Access Fund
Andrea Leslie, Wildlife Resource Commission
Deirdre Lightsey, Back Country Horsemen of NC
Gary Peters, National Wild Turkey Federation
Ben Prater, Defenders of Wildlife
Curtis Smalling, National Audubon of NC
Megan Sutton, The Nature Conservancy
Julie White, mountain biking
David Whitmire, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council
Greg Yates (alternate for Bill Yarborough), NC State Forest Service

Alternates Attending as Observers

Jim Gray (Alternate for Jeff Johnson)
Tracy Davids (Alternate for Ben Prater)
Richard Mode (Alternate for Bill Kane)

U. S. Forest Service

Michelle Aldridge, National Forests of NC

Erik Crews, National Forests of NC

Delce Dyer, National Forests of NC

Derek Ibarguen, National Forests of NC

Heather Luczak, National Forests of NC

Matt McCombs, National Forests of NC

Dale Remington, National Forests of NC

Jason Rodriquez (?), National Forests of NC

National Forest Foundation

Karen DiBari, National Forest Foundation

Mark Shelley, National Forest Foundation

Welcome

Karen DiBari welcomed all participants to the meeting. 26 Stakeholders Forum members (or their designated alternate) were present. They were joined by 8 Forest Service staff and 5 other observers.

Karen reviewed the objectives for the meeting, and highlighted that the thematic emphasis is sustainable recreation. She also acknowledged the work by the temporary committees in preparation for this meeting.

October Meeting Record

- CONSENSUS AGREEMENT was reached in support of the draft October 22, 2015 Meeting Record with no substantive changes (with the exception of 2 minor changes to Alternate information).

Values, Needs and Resources

The NFF shared an updated version of the Values and Needs document, and the group discussed whether further summarization/refinement is needed.

The Stakeholders Forum decided to utilize the Values and Needs document as a reference, to help build understanding among members and useful to identify points of agreement (or non-agreement) as the group continues with issues discussion,

- Action: Members who have not yet submitted their responses will do so as soon as possible, and NFF will update the “Values and Needs” document and distribute to the group.

Management Areas – Forest Service (see attached presentation)

Michelle Aldridge set the context for the Forest Service's Management Areas presentation to assist the Stakeholders Forum process approach. She explained that from the Stakeholder Forum -planning perspective, some management areas are open to adjustment during revision, but other areas (such as designated wilderness areas, experimental forests, and the Cradle of Forestry, and those you mention in paragraph 2) are not going to change as part of the revision process. These areas have special management determined by higher authorities outside the forest planning process.

Heather Luczak presented an overview of the current management areas, displaying these areas on a forest map. The Forest Service (FS) has determined that approximately 150,000+ acres do not need to change in the revised plan due to their management area designation within the current Forest Plan. These Management Areas include: Wilderness Study Areas, Wilderness, Experiment Forests, Roan Mountain, Research Natural Areas, Cradle of Forestry, Developed Recreation Areas, Special Interest Areas, Appalachian Trail, Wild and Scenic Rivers and Administrative Facilities. Heather reviewed the management direction for each category.

The Forest Service will continue to work on defining the desired condition for the areas where management is not determined by some authority beyond the planning process. These are the areas where they expect to hear a range of alternatives proposed by the public about desired conditions and objectives. determine the management approach for other Management Areas based on their designation and desired future condition. She noted that Roadless Areas were not included in her review and that similar to other management areas mentioned above that have authorities beyond the forest plan, Roadless Areas will not be revisited as part of the planning process. These areas will be managed to retain their roadless character. If any Roadless Areas or portions thereof are recommended for wilderness, additional restrictions could take place.

Sustainable Recreation Presentation - Forest Service (see attached presentation)

Delce Dyer presented an overview of sustainable recreation and the importance of public lands for recreation on the Nantahala Pisgah National Forests (NPNF) and western North Carolina. The NPNF is visited by 4 million people and is one of the top five most visited national Forests in the nation. It is estimated that 68% of these visitors come for recreation.

The NPNF has developed place-based Recreation Niches across a wide spectrum (with social and ecologic components considered). These include: sightseeing, water-based recreation, non-motorized trails (hiking, mountain biking, pack and saddle horse), motorized trails, remote backcountry experience, hunting and fishing and conservation education.

The FS is the largest provider of diverse recreation opportunities in the world. The FS estimates only ¼ of the NPNF trails are managed to standard and they can only sustain 44% of current recreation sites/facilities. Due to high visitation and recreation demand and diminished budgets, the FS needs to collaborate with others to deliver sustainable opportunities for recreation across the forest.

Sustainable Recreation definition: The set of recreation settings and opportunities on the National Forest System that is ecologically, economically and socially sustainable for present and future generations.

The FS “Framework for Sustainable Recreation” is a national strategic planning document that identifies guiding principles and focuses on three spheres that frame sustainability: ecologic, economic and social.

The Southern Region developed a Sustainable Recreation Strategy: “Vision 2020” – with seven focus areas which are tied to long term outcome by critical success factors. Planning sideboards are guided by these Southern Region’s Sustainable Recreation Critical Success Factors:

- Define Mission, Role and Desired Future Conditions
- Achieve visitor satisfaction
- Be financially sustainable
- Manage effectively
- Protect Natural and Cultural Resources

The 2012 Planning Rule requires that a plan include these components to provide for sustainable recreation, including recreation, settings, opportunities, access and scenic character. The FS is applying an integrative approach that uses a collaborative, place-based settings approach using smaller units rather than a focus on the entire NPNF.

Niche + Setting + Collaboration + sideboards (critical success factors) = Sustainability

The NPNF delineated units as “place-based areas settings to conserve setting and focus on recreation priorities” – identifying 10 geographic units across the forests. These units are based on recreational character (zone), individual connection and availability.

Recreation Presentation – Forum (see attached presentation)

Outdoor recreation has a powerful impact on the Western North Carolina economy from manufacturing, publishing, camps, and outfitters and guides, among others. Other important economic impacts are the people who move here, companies that relocate because of the outdoor recreation opportunities, and quality of life.

Identified common interests among groups:

- Greater emphasis on recreation experiences
- Better trail system (net gain of sustainable trails)
- Improved trail maintenance
- Safety managed professionally by the FS
- Improved signage, communications and education
- Protect and enhance natural resources
- Improve wildlife habitat

It was agreed that mapping will be a necessary activity in upcoming meetings as the group develops recommendations. The Forest Partnership has compiled data and developed a resource for recreation that can be used for the purposes of this collaborative.

Action: A Recreation Committee will formulate draft recommendations to bring back to the group for discussion. This Recreation Committee consists of Julie White, Deirdre Lightsey, Sam Evans, Kevin Colburn, Ruth Hartzler, John Culclasure, Gary Peters and Bill Hodge.

Potential areas for developing recommendations draft consensus inputs to the DEIS:

- Sight lines on trails
- Safety guidelines
- User Council
- Volunteer partnerships
- Communications re: management activities

Forest Management and Restoration Presentation – Forest Service (see attached presentation)

Dale Remington, Sales Forester/Contracting Officer, provided an overview of the forestry/timber management program. He listed the following reasons why the USFS harvests timber: oak regeneration, openings for wildlife, habitat diversification, job creation, opening views, support of the local economy, mast production, plywood production, forest products, grouse habitat, thinning for (?)forest health and age class management.

Refer to the attached list of terms that Dale Remington distributed at the meeting.

Stakeholder Forest Management and Restoration - Issue Discussion

The group agreed to focus recommendations on desired conditions, standards and guidelines. The group also wants to collaboratively review and discuss resource issues spatially, using GIS and maps. Roads infrastructure/travel system data needs to be available for the mapping exercise.

- Action: A Forest Management/Wilderness Temporary Committee will meet to formulate draft recommendations to bring back to the group for discussion. This Committee will be made up of Megan Sutton, Rob Elliot, Hugh Irwin, Josh Kelly, Sam Evans, Susan Fletcher, Jeff and Jeff Johnson.

Potential areas for developing recommendations draft consensus inputs to the DEIS:

- Coordination standards (?)
- Road infrastructure
- Certification

Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers

The public meeting on Nov. 9th in Franklin was well attended by Stakeholder Forum members and the public (93 in attendance). The Forest Service and Forum addressed questions from the public and from some members of the press who also attended.

At the upcoming November 16th meeting in Asheville, Lang Hornthal will make a short statement about the Stakeholders Forum and the FS will point out Forum members in attendance.

The Stakeholder Forum members who plan to attend include: consists of: Lang Hornthal, Kevin Colburn, John Culclasure, Bill Hodge, Deirdre Lightsey, Megan Sutton, Julie White, and Ruth Hartzler.

- Action: Temporary Committee assigned to come back with recommendations for the larger group:
 - Formatted using DOGS
 - Desired Conditions, Objectives, Guidelines, Standards
 - Trial balloons
 - Mapping / visual
 - Final product examples

Approach for Recommendations Development - Discussion

The Stakeholder Forum discussed identifying a range to indicate areas of agreement and where there would be exceptions. This would be a useful reference for the development of Management and Special Designation recommendations. These can be used to establish “straw DOGS” or trial balloon recommendations. The FS will determine whether recommendations are Desired Conditions, Objectives or Standards and Guidelines (DOGS), so the Stakeholders Forum doesn’t need to worry about which category they fit under. The group decided to review

recommendations developed by other collaborative groups regarding forest plans as models for the format and structure of the “final product”.

The group also discussed working as committees to identify potential overarching recommendations (trial balloons), and then the group will look at specific geographically-based recommendations.

Action Items and Preparation for December Meeting

December 8, 2015 from 12p – 6p at the Pack Library, 67 Haywood Street in Asheville.

- Action: Stakeholder Forum members who have not yet responded to the “Values and Needs” request will submit their responses as soon as possible. Once received, the NFF will update the “Values and Needs” document and distribute to the group.
- Action: Members are asked to send map/data resources to Karen and Mark for compilation and use by the Stakeholder Forum.
- Action: NFF will organize meeting objectives, develop a draft agenda and distribute to the Forum
- Action: Sam Evans will send an example of collaborative recommendations on the George Washington National Forest plan to the NFF, and the NFF will research other examples to distribute to the Stakeholders Forum.
- Action: Hugh Irwin and Rob Elliot will connect the NFF with Jon Hallemeier from University of Georgia , who has mapping resources.
- Action: The NFF will distribute a survey to the Stakeholders Forum to determine future meeting times and locations.
- Action: The NFF will work with temporary committees (Recreation and Forest Management/Designations) to schedule teleconference meetings.

| Record of Decisions | Consensus |
|---|------------------|
| The Stakeholders Forum approved the Meeting Record for the October 22, 2015 meeting | Yes |