

MEETING RECORD
Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala & Pisgah
Plan Revision DRAFT Meeting Record

Tuesday February 9, 2016

10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Blue Ridge Assembly

Black Mountain, NC

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
Susan Fletcher, Pisgah Hardwoods
Jim Gray, Ruffed Grouse Society
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
Zach Lesch-Huie, Access Fund
Andrea Leslie, Wildlife Resource Commission
Deirdre Lightsey, Back Country Horsemen of NC
Ben Prater, Defenders of Wildlife
Jim Sitts, Columbia Forest Products
Megan Sutton, The Nature Conservancy
Gordon Warburton, Wildlife Resources Commission
Julie White, SORBA/IMBA
David Whitmire, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council
Greg Yates, NC Forest Service
Bill Yarborough, Commission of Agriculture, North Carolina

Alternates Attending as Observers

Tracy Davids (Alternate for Ben Prater), Defenders of Wildlife
Bob Gale (Alternate for Josh Kelly), MountainTrue
Jill Gottesman (Alternate for Hugh Irwin), The Wilderness Society
Fred Hardin (Alternate for Jim Sitts), Gilkey Lumber Co.
Ryan Jacobs (Alternate for Gordon Warburton), NC Wildlife Resources Commission

U. S. Forest Service

James Melonas, National Forests of NC

Michelle Aldridge, 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. Twenty-four Stakeholders Forum (SF) members (or their designated alternate) were present. Members were joined by twelve Forest Service staff and eight additional observers. Everyone in the room introduced themselves.

Karen opened by introducing the objectives to be covered during the course of the meeting, including approval of Code of Conduct updates, discussion and approval of the conceptual management area framework and review of the Desired Conditions material components of the forest-wide plan. She described the opportunity before the SF in working together to build consensus recommendations for the forest plan.

James Melonas highlighted the incomparable qualities of the Nantahala & Pisgah National Forests. He stated that the Planning rule requires the agency to address sustainable recreation, increased management and special designations (including wilderness eligibility). In an effort to keep the process open and inclusive, the Forest Service is sharing information with the public and the SF and looking for opportunities to work collaboratively throughout plan development. James emphasized the value of a collective statement coming from a diverse group such as the SF.

- **CONSENSUS AGREEMENT:** The SF reviewed the original intent of the group and agreed to continue working collaboratively to address the three key issue areas.

The SF discussed its target of April to make recommendations regarding the forest plan, and the importance of focusing on interests rather than positions in order to move forward.

Code of Conduct

The SF reviewed proposed changes to the Code of Conduct. Members were concerned regarding language in Section 5 on page 2 and the use of the word “contrary.” Members discussed their commitment to use positive language to emphasize what the group is attempting to accomplish, continued effort to express support of decisions made by the SF when speaking to the public or their constituents, and striving to identify common goals.

Membership

- CONSENSUS AGREEMENT on membership changes:
 - Jim Gray will become the member representing the Ruffed Grouse Society (John Culcasure is stepping down to serve as an alternate due to a job change that requires him to be out of state for several months).
 - Jim Sitts, previously an alternate, will fill the seat of Steve Henson, who resigned in January.
 - Greg Yates will fill the seat previously held by Jeff Johnson (wood products).

Announcement of alternates:

- John Culclasure will serve as Jim Gray's alternate.
- Fred Hardin will serve as Jim Sitts alternate.
- During introductions, Jill Gottesman (alternate to Hugh Irwin), announced that she will be going on maternity leave and Brent Martin will serve as Hugh Irwin's alternate while she is gone.

Presentation – Forest-wide Plan Components

Michelle Aldridge explained how forest-wide desired conditions, ecozones and MAs relate to each other in the plan (see attached ppt). Michelle explained that wildlife is being considered as an integral component throughout the plan and is addressed in multiple sections rather than a stand-alone area of management.

The planning rule calls for development and maintenance of desired conditions forest-wide, as well as focus upon specific management areas and special areas within the forest. The goal is to have a desired direction for the entire forest while taking into account individual management areas and special areas. Ecozones, which are discrete units of land within the entirety of the forest that support specific plant communities, also will have specific management direction. Rare communities embedded within existing ecozones require more specialized management

The Forest Service passed out copies of four sections of forest-wide plan components: aquatic resources, ecozones, vegetation management, and recreation. SF members briefly reviewed plan sections and then divided into small groups to discuss answers to the following questions:

- What caught your attention in the draft forest-wide plan components?
- What are you excited about (positive responses)?
- What raises concern or doubt?
- What suggestions do you have for modification?

Small Group Review

Each group recorded answers to the four questions about different forest-wide component sections. General feedback from this exercise included:

- Appreciation to the Forest Service for sharing the forest-wide plan components;
- Excitement about what is included in the drafts;
- SF members had constructive discussions about the material;
- Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team members provided helpful context to the small groups.

Action: SF members volunteered to work in committees on each of the four topic areas to develop recommendations, making an effort to have people with diverse perspectives represented on the committees.

Action: The NFF will incorporate the small group comments into the plan component documents for use by committees and will schedule committee meetings.

Aquatics Committee

Bill Kane
Andrea Leslie
Kevin Colburn

Recreation Committee

Ruth Hartzler
Bill Hodge
Sam Evans
Julie White
David Whitmire
Diedre Lightsey
Zach Lesch-Huie

Ecozones Committee

Hugh Irwin
Gordon Warburton
Megan Sutton
Ben Prater
Rob Elliot
Jim Gray

Vegetation Management Committee

Susan Fletcher
Jim Sitts
Lang Hornthal
Josh Kelly

Management Areas Discussion

Following the January SF meeting, a committee developed a conceptual framework for management areas, which was presented verbally.

- **CONSENSUS AGREEMENT:** The SF agreed to support the Management Area Committee continuing to work to fill in details under the conceptual framework of four MAs.

Action: The MA committee will meet by teleconference to prepare a draft for discussion at the March SF meeting.

Framework of Management Areas:

MA 1 Accelerated pace and scale of management and restoration
MA 2A Restoration focused and at a moderate pace
MA 2B Sensitive inventory, less restrictive
MA 3 Back country/Inventoried Roadless Areas

Management Area Committee

Bill Hodge
Rob Elliot
David Whitmire
Gary Peters
Sam Evans
Bill Kane
Megan Sutton

Mapping Priorities Discussion

The SF discussed how to approach looking at spatial data layers to identify areas of aligned interests.

Action: A Map Committee will work together to 1) identify data layers; 2) assemble them into one map presentation so that the interaction amongst the layers can be seen; 3) explore a mapping platform that is user friendly, portable (so people can see it on their own desktops and potentially work with it), and at a fine scale. The Map Committee will present their work at the March meeting.

Map Committee

Hugh Irwin
Josh Kelly
Ryan Jacobs
Gary Peters
Kevin Colburn

End Product For the SF

The SF is striving to build agreement around recommendations to the Forest Service in these areas:

- Forest-wide plan components and desired conditions

- Management areas
- Location of special areas and management activities on the landscape
- Special designations

Reminder of Process: Committees will draft recommendations to be presented, reviewed and decided upon by the full SF.

Code of Conduct Review

The SF reviewed and discussed revisions to the Code of Conduct but members were not ready to approve it.

Action: The SF asked the NFF to compose a final draft of the Code of Conduct for consideration.

Communications

Action: A committee will draft a joint statement for consideration by the SF to help communicate the intent of SF members to work together toward consensus recommendations.

Committee:

- Sam Evans
- David Whitmire
- Jim Gray
- Josh Kelly
- Hugh Irwin

March Meeting Details

Tuesday, March 8th, 2016, from 10a until 4p, at the Asheville Event Center

Summary of Action Items

- SF members volunteered to work in committees on each of the four topic areas to develop recommendations, making an effort to have people with diverse perspectives represented on the committees.
- The NFF will incorporate the small group comments into the plan component documents for use by committees and will schedule committee meetings.
- The MA committee will meet by teleconference to prepare a draft for discussion at the March SF meeting.
- A Map Committee will work together to 1) identify data layers; 2) assemble them into one map presentation so that the interaction amongst the layers can be seen; 3) explore a mapping platform that is user friendly, portable (so people can see it on their own

desktops and potentially work with it), and at a fine scale. The Map Committee will present their work at the March meeting. The SF asked the NFF to compose a final draft of the Code of Conduct for consideration.

- A committee will draft a joint statement for consideration by the SF to help communicate the intent of SF members to work together toward consensus recommendations.

| Record of Decisions | Consensus |
|--|------------------|
| The SF reviewed the original intent of the group and agreed to continue working collaboratively to address the three key issue areas. | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jim Gray will become the member representing the Ruffed Grouse Society (John Culcasure is stepping down to serve as an alternate due to a job change that requires him to be out of state for several months). • Jim Sitts, previously an alternate, will fill the seat of Steve Henson, who resigned in January. • Greg Yates will fill the seat previously held by Jeff Johnson (wood products). | Yes |
| The SF agreed to support the Management Area Committee continuing to work to fill in details under the conceptual framework of four MAs. | Yes |