Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala and Pisgah Plan Revision

Launching a Collaborative Process

Photo by Jeff Clark

NATIONAL FOREST FOUNDATION
Protecting America’s Backyard
Meeting Objectives

• Kick-off the Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala & Pisgah Plan Revision

• Gain a shared understanding of the Forest Service’s management planning process and timeline

• Finalize the Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala & Pisgah Plan Revision purpose, goals, code of conduct, and meeting schedule
Groundrules

• Stay engaged with the group – keep side conversations to a minimum
• Please turn off cell phones and resist the urge to text
• Listen carefully to others, value the experience and knowledge in the room, and be respectful
• Speak your mind freely and honestly, but be brief and to the point so others may also speak
• Stay focused on the purposes of the meeting and this group
Who is the National Forest Foundation?

- Chartered by Congress to work with the U.S. Forest Service

- Bring people together to restore and enhance National Forests and Grasslands

- Engage America in community-based and national programs that promote heath and enjoyment of the National Forest System

- Administer private gifts of funds and land for the benefit of National Forests
Why is the National Forest Foundation Involved?

• Neutral convener/facilitator of stakeholder involvement with extensive collaborative process experience

• Facilitate results-oriented partnerships with the Forest Service
Typical Features of Successful Collaborative Processes

• Diverse participants representing key stakeholders

• Participants are committed to working respectfully together and through consensus to find “zone of agreement”

• Facilitator ensures a fair, open and honest process

• Clear purpose, objectives and timeline
Process

June-July 2015
Complete Collaborative Assessment and Form Organizing Committee

July-August 2015
Organizing Committee Drafts Purpose, Goals, Timeline, and List of Suggested Interests

September 2015
Kickoff of Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala & Pisgah Plan Revision

September 2015 until ?
Convene Stakeholders Forum on a Monthly Basis
Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests Land & Resource Management Plan Revision Effort

Collaborative Assessment Summary & Themes We Heard

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Themes We Heard

The need for clear, substantive dialogue

• Improved communication amongst all players – collaborative members, the Forest Service, and stakeholders who are not directly involved with a collaborative group

• Shifting the focus from information sharing and presentations to “drilling down to the details”

• The need for spatial discussions and “drawing lines on the map”
Themes We Heard

Need for a basic understanding of forest planning and the 2012 Planning Rule

- Many stakeholders do not fully understand the planning process timeline and milestones
- Need to understand the basics of forest planning, including key terms and concepts
- Discuss the challenge of operating without directives, and take steps back where needed (wilderness inventory was mentioned in one instance) to ensure alignment with the new directives
Themes We Heard

The importance of a clear and transparent timeline and sideboards

- Transparency was brought up many times; stakeholders feel as though communications have improved, yet some feel like input often goes into a “black box”

- Fear of the final plan being too general, leading to "refighting old battles” later at the project level
Issues related to power dynamics and leadership

• Concerns about detracting from existing efforts in this collaborative process

• Perception that some have more of a direct line to the Forest Service, and more power and authority as a result

• Perception that recreation interests or potential conflicts are being minimized in light of the conflict between forest management strategies and Wilderness designations

• Trust between all parties should be strengthened
Themes We Heard

Issues Related to Agency Leadership and Expectations

- Concerns that the Forest Service’s goals for inclusivity will make consensus – even by a smaller group – impossible

- Role of Forest Service staff in the collaborative process is critical

- Two overarching needs:
  1. the need to communicate clear sideboards for the process – what does the Forest Service desire from stakeholders, and what are the agency’s limitations?
  2. the need for clear, substantive feedback – when stakeholders are out of bounds or on the wrong track, they want to know that the Forest Service will raise red flags
Visions of a successful collaborative outcome

- Stakeholders generally agree that collaborative success could result in a Forest Plan that is:
  - released without threat of objections or litigation
  - implementable, especially within budget limitations
  - something all stakeholders can live with

- The agency will need the stakeholders in order to implement the plan in the future

- Some see participation in the revision as a way to strengthen partnerships with the agency
Thank You

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Photo by Jeff Clark