

**MEETING OF THE
STAKEHOLDERS FORUM FOR THE NANTAHALA & PISGAH PLAN REVISION
NANTAHALA GEOGRAPHIC AREA FOCUS MEETING RECORD**

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

10:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Lake Logan Conference Center
25 Wormy Chestnut Lane, Canton

ATTENDANCE:

Stakeholders Forum

Kevin Colburn, American Whitewater
J.D. Diefenbach, Sierra Club, Wenoca Chapter
Rob Elliot, Evergreen Packaging
Sam Evans, Southern Environmental Law Center
Susan Fletcher, Pisgah Hardwood
Jim Gray, Ruffed Grouse Society
Ruth Hartzler, Carolina Mountain Club
Bill Hodge, Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards
Hugh Irwin, The Wilderness Society
Lang Hornthal, Root Cause
Bill Kane, North Carolina Wildlife Federation
Josh Kelly, Mountain True
Zach Lesch-Huie, Access Fund
Andrea Leslie, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

Deirdre Lightsey, Back County Horseman of North Carolina and Headwaters Outfitters
Gary Peters, National Wild Turkey Federation
Ben Prater, Defenders of Wildlife
Morgan Somerville, Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Megan Sutton, The Nature Conservancy
Gordon Warburton, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
Julie White, Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association and International Mountain Bicycling Association
David Whitmire, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council
Bill Yarborough, North Carolina Department of Agriculture

USDA Forest Service

Michelle Aldridge
Sheryl Bryan
Dave Casey
Alice Cohen
Eric Crews
William Davis
Logan Free
Larry Hayden
Gary Kauffman
Nick Larson

Jake Lubern
Heather Luczak
Matt McCombs
Steverson Moffat
Allen Nicholas
Susan Parker
Jason Rodrigue
Holly Stratton
Amber Vanderwolf
Mike Wilkin

Alternates and Observers

Chris Coxen
Jill Gottesman
Jon Hallemeier

Don Mallicoat
Richard Mode

National Forest Foundation

Karen DiBari
Ben Irej

Mark Shelley

MEETING OBJECTIVES

- Gain familiarity with the pre-draft Management Areas (MA) and Geographic Areas (GA) chapters and the Forest Service (FS) process behind developing them.
- Provide initial feedback on the Nantahala National Forest (NF) MA and GA chapters and identify any GAs with conflicting interests that merit more discussion.
- Determine how the Stakeholders Forum members and/or alternates can serve as ambassadors for the ongoing plan revision process during the district level meetings planned for the summer.

WELCOME AND GREETINGS

Members and observers signed in, introduced themselves, and were reminded of objectives for the meeting. The SF discussed plans for the summer, including an August meeting date, district meetings, webinars, etc. There will be an Organizing Committee (OC) meeting to think about process for developing collaborative proposals. The SF is going to need at least two weeks to get proposals back to their constituency for review. Because of the tight timeline, SF members will need to stay in more constant communications with their networks to let them know how proposals are developing so that there are no surprises.

Karen DiBari reviewed several items from the Code of Conduct.

OPENING THOUGHTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Deputy Forest Supervisor Matt McCombs

The Forest Service appreciates the group's willingness and efforts to be involved in the Forest planning process. Your involvement is fundamental. The Forest Service is committed to ensuring that all of the stakeholders continue to have a seat at the table, and looks forward to the point where stakeholders can advocate for each other's interests.

The Forest Service needs the Stakeholders Forum (SF) to help shape the future of these National Forests. All are encouraged to think of ways we can strengthen the relationships in this room and between the SF and the Forests.

Facilitator Karen DiBari - Announcements

- Jill is stepping in as Hugh's alternate for this meeting.
- Richard Mode was awarded a national wildlife conservation award for his decades of work pursuing and advocating for wildlife, habitat, and public lands. All applauded his achievement!

REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT AREA CHAPTER – Michelle Aldridge

Geographic Area (GA) goals are intended to provide emphasis for each GA. They are not meant to describe everything that ever will occur in that GA. Given what we intend to do at the forest level, this is where we intend those activities to occur.

Restoration and resiliency goals were identified through a departure analysis and by looking at our desired conditions. The departure analysis is a behind the scenes Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. Redundant goals are not repeated. If something is exactly the same in each GA, it will not be repeated 12 times, it will be discussed in the specific resource area.

Matrix is the largest management area across the Forest and extends from the edge of Interface to Backcountry. It is the connective tissue. It is an active management MA. It provides areas for wildlife habitat and recreation. Matrix is guided by the 25 forest-wide expectations. If one Matrix area is kind of different than another Matrix area the FS has created a goal for that GA.

The Forest Service had some requests for changes to maps after the last meeting. There are full GA map at each table. The Forest Service added more info on the detailed maps (trails, rivers, landmarks, roads legend, etc.). Other requests for info the Forest Service was not able to accommodate, though they saved those requests for the online GIS.

The Forest Service also received some feedback on the Reader's Guide. "Givens" were moved up to the second page. Givens are supposed to reflect that there are core things that the Forest Service will address. The Forest Service wants to continue to dispel the myth that there is no "shadow" forest planning process. The Forest Service encourages the SF to go through the Givens and make sure that the Forest Service has it right.

Not every area that is open for restoration is open to timber production. The SF needs to have a webinar on this topic to provide the needed clarification, including how suitability is articulated in the 2012 Forest Planning Rule and how forest restoration efforts are integrated. The SF needs to address this topic sooner rather than later.

Discussion points:

- Proposed wilderness boundaries will be resolved in the Draft EIS.
- As the SF moves through its work, it would be extremely helpful to hear about "win / win" resolutions re: wilderness proposals.
- The suitability analysis paper was posted on the Forest Service plan website last night. The two MAs that will have suitable acres in it are Matrix and Interface.
- The Forest Service has a timber target, but they don't do it just for volume, it is for restoration. Timber production is a core part of the Forest Service mission and will continue to be. Very little restoration work will be done by the timber industry unless these things are economically viable.

SMALL GROUP REVIEW OF SEVEN NANTAHALA GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

- The group used the same process as the June 6th meeting to review and discuss the seven Nantahala GAs. This was the bulk of the meeting. Please see the [June 13 Nantahala compiled notes](#). Other background materials are on the [National Forest Foundation's Stakeholders Forum webpage](#).

FULL GROUP DISCUSSION

Summarize next steps – plan for the summer

The OC meeting will be week after next, but if there are other SF members interested in the collaborative proposal development process, please offer your ideas.

- The NFF and the Forest Service will identify priorities for further collaborative discussion based on what resulted from today.
- The September 1 deadline is coming fast! SF members expressed concern about being able to meet this timeframe.
- More information on forest-wide issues will be helpful before developing proposals.
- Shape files are a useful tool for continuing this discussion.

General path forward:

- Cull, lump, split, and prioritize outcomes of the GA discussions on June 6 and 13
- Share that information with the OC
- Gain agreement on the priority list of discussion items
- Have small groups develop proposals
- Host webinars and an informational meeting on forest-wide issues (suitability, NRV, others)
- FS hosts district meetings
- Meet again as a full group (mid September) to register agreement/disagreement on proposals

Stakeholders Forum Members as Ambassadors at District Meetings

The group discussed what being an “ambassador” means and approved the following “Stakeholders Forum Roles and Responsibilities as Ambassadors of the Planning Process at District Meetings” language with a consensus vote:

Stakeholders Forum members can be of service to the public at district meetings in the following ways:

- Serve as a bridge between the Forest Service and members of the public (clarify language, acronyms, and Forest Service mission)
- Help members of the public understand the Forest Planning process
- Communicate the role of the Stakeholders Forum, with its diversity of perspectives, in the Forest planning process
- Engage in one-on-one conversations with the public to: (1) address their questions, (2) help them interpret maps and other materials, and (3) help insure the Forest Service connects with unique perspectives
- Outreach to your communities of interest regarding attendance at the district meetings (Wearing two hats: your interests and the interest of the SF. Code of Conduct still applies.)