

**DISCUSSION AGENDA OF Pisgah Ledge GEOGRAPHIC AREA
SMALL GROUP MEETING SUMMARY – REVIEWED**

Wednesday, August 2, 2017 12:00 – 4:00pm Brevard, NC

The Meeting Outcomes:

1. One or more proposals of mutual interests are developed and described for the geographic area (s) of focus and discussion.
2. Members are committed to work toward mutual understanding and refine proposals where possible that present opportunities for continued dialogue and areas of concern between now and Aug 21.
3. For proposals that result in a range of disagreements, request that other Forum members review and provide suggestions to help foster mutual gains.

Resources Available:

- Please review the USFS map, description, and goals of the **PISGAH LEDGE GA**:
www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/home/?cid=fseprd491137
- Review PISGAH LEDGE Synopsis document which is a summary of the June 6 Stakeholder Forum facilitated group discussions on pgs: 5-6, 13-14, 18, 24-25).

Attendees: Kevin Colburn, Bob Gale, Jim Gray, Ruth Hartzler, Hugh Irwin, Ryan Jacobs, Deirdre Lightsey, Richard Mode, Julie White, & David Whitmire.

Group Exercise: what interests are currently represented in the meeting?

1. Recreation: horse, hunting, paddle, fish, hike, commercial, bike, rock climbing, birdwatching, wildlife, viewing, native life viewing, photography (scenery, wildlife, butterflies) camping, scenic driving, seasonal usage, special use holders.
2. Clean and abundant H2O & rivers, and aquatic resource enhancement protection and diversity.
3. Forest Health (flora, fauna, function, function,..)
4. Ecological Integrity – connectivity
5. Restoration (stream, forest, pollinator, structure, composition, function, native plant communities, NRV, wildlife habitat)
6. Wildlife diversity
7. Backcountry values
8. Forest access – all of the above
9. Historical knowledge/local heritage

Group Exercise: what interests are currently represented in the meeting?

Given this list, what interests are not present in the meeting?

1. Timber interests: logging, forest products, non-forest products (galax), commercial and non-commercial forest products
2. Economic development interests: municipal and local/county government (David represents the Transylvania Resources Council)
3. Tribal Interests
4. Summer Camps, Outward Bound, Trails Carolina

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Areas of Agreement for the Pisgah Ledge GA

1. Topic: Need for Chestnut and Spruce Restoration in the Pisgah Ledge GA.

Group fully supports: Proposal 1: When the American Chestnut Society seedlings are available, highly resistant, and represent the American Chestnut genome, then chestnut restoration should proceed in GA area. Currently, Spruce restoration occurs in the GA; this should continue and expand.

2. Topic: Bent Creek (Oldest Experimental Forest in the US). How can we support the high volume and variety of recreational use in the Bent Creek area while preserving the quality of experiments being conducted in this area? *(note was listed as #1 under area for discussion)*

Group fully supports: Proposal 1: In the Bent Creek Experimental Forest, a public education campaign should be developed with input from the Forest Service and non-profit groups involved in the area. Education will emphasize the importance of the experimental forest and its work as well as the need for various user groups to show respect for each other's needs and safety. Consideration should be given to conducting experiments related to recreation.

3. Topic: Partnerships. How can we coordinate the huge volunteer numbers available in the Pisgah Ledge while understanding the limitations of the FS budget/manpower available? *(note was listed as #7 under area for discussion)*

Group fully supports: Proposal 1: Recreation User Council (RUC)

(RUC) made up of representatives of the various user and/or stewardship groups to monitor and mitigate and resolve any user conflicts if they arise. RUC would assist the Forest Service in:

- Education and interaction with the public to promote responsible and sustainable public use practices.
- Assist in Social media and field interpretation to educate Forest users on management activities supporting a healthy forest ecosystem.
- Work with and help coordinate trail volunteers to build and maintain a sustainable multi use trail system
- Help the Forest Service in communicating needs and objectives to the public and involved organizations.

Key Points:

- Pisgah Conservancy – recognized as great multi -user partnership with capacity for outreach and to raise funds.
- This kind of partnership can work with the help of USFS, with someone facilitating the effort (someone like an Alice). The volunteer personnel currently exist in mass in various user groups

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with ample resources, extensive knowledge, and expertise to support the USFS in managing recreational endeavors.

4. **Topic Wildlife:** How can the USFS promote and enhance a diversity of wildlife habitats while ensuring protection of recreational resources and opportunities? (Note: This replaced question 5 and proposal 1).

Group fully supports: Proposal 2: A % of timber sales are prioritized within the GA for habitat restoration to address non-native species, recreation, interpretation, and restoration. Focus duality use of fire break corridors for recreational trail use.

Areas for Continued Discussion – Pisgah Ledge

1. **Topic: 276 Corridor.** How can we protect the scenic & recreation value of the 276 Corridor, this highly visited section of the Pisgah Ledge while providing the tools for restoration needs & educating the visiting public on the management needs of the area?

Proposal 1: Special Interest Area (SIA) proposal called "Special Recreation area".

Group's Decision on Next Steps led by Kevin*, Hugh, and David

1. Work on the language of the SIA – Kevin, Hugh, David, Ruth
 2. Determine the boundary of the SIA (proposal from Kevin)
 3. Ensure the SIA takes in the various trail interests. The Art Lobe: national trail to keep in mind in the SIA. (Kevin work with Ruth)
2. **Topic: Trails GA Wide.** How can we maintain the high quality, highly visited recreation trail system in the Pisgah Ledge while addressing the backlog of trail maintenance with an emphasis on reducing stream sedimentation?

Proposal 1: Recreation User Council approach (representation by all user groups)(see below)

Comment from DW: Missing is the county resolution for Transylvania County that looked at the area as a whole and sent forth a recommendation capturing all users. Produced by the TNRC – *reference resolution.*

Group's Decision on next steps: Put forth question to SF for forestwide discussion of issues

3. **Topic: Cedar Rock.** How can we (USFS) preserve the scenic value and interest in moving the Cedar Rock area to Back Country MA, while reducing the fire fuel load requested by residents?

Proposal 1 (DW): Utilize Transylvania Natural Resources Council recommendation. **Not supported by the entire group**

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Proposal 2 (HI): Within the Daniel Ridge and Cedar Rock WIAs core areas of roadless area would be allocated to back country (5,000 acres/each- approximately). **Not supported by the entire group:**

- Outside the core areas management would be allocated to ecological restoration including all needed vegetation management and timber harvest.
- Outside the WIA, Matrix and Interface would remain USFS proposal.

Proposal 3: Still Under Group Discussion

1. Zone of agreement are the green areas outside the 2000 ft road buffer, and inside the Daniel Ridge, that will be managed as back country.
2. Recognition of the natural heritage areas, and resources for which they are designated will be protected or enhanced by Forest Service.

Following Aug 2 meeting: Hugh clarified he prefers – “Partial area of agreement in the Daniel Ridge and Cedar Rock area are the unroaded areas of Daniel Ridge and Cedar Rock outside the 2000 ft road buffer, that will be managed as back country”. That there is not overall agreement on the broader Daniel Ridge and Cedar Rock area.

4. Topic: Wildlife. How can we preserve, protect, and increase the important wildlife habitat in the Pisgah Ledge area while at the same time operating within the budget remains?

Group reframed question. See Areas of Agreement.

Group drafted new proposal for topic on wildlife. Proposal 1: Partnering with NCWRC, QDM, etc.

Group’s Decision on Next Steps: Explore How folks like David Whitmire can help USFS move wildlife projects forward to avoid user conflicts.

6. Topic: Roads. How can we provide the "right sized" road system while maintaining Back Country qualities in current Backcountry /IRA's & provide for firefighting needs?

Proposal 1: No proposal provided

Group’s Decision on next steps:

1. Put forth question to SF for forestwide discussion

8. Topic: North Mills. How can we provide for restoration needs in North Mills while at the same time within Back Country MA, maintain the current high recreation value?

Proposal 1: Include CFLR (Collaborative Forest Restoration Program).

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Not supported by the entire group: Group in part ok with the Backcountry IRA, WI outside of the IRA and there is concern with ecological restoration for that WI.

Question for group – what is WI – wilderness inventory?

9. Topic: Sam Knob/Graveyard Ridge (Shining Rock Wilderness Extension areas). How can we (USFS) maintain and regain the quality Wilderness/Back Country/IRA experience while at the same time dealing with the sheer number of visitors/users that are "loving" the area?

Proposal 1: key points: **still under discussion by entire group**

1. Define Limits of Acceptable Change for the Wilderness proposal (as a group who would be impacted by the decision)
2. Solid and Dotted lines on the maps have been confusing the public in regard to location of the wilderness areas
3. Appears Shining rock/extension and Graveyard ridge extension are requested for Wilderness Designation (Tennent Mountain was not a request for TWS). **Hugh to verify inventory.** If not part of inventory, may assist in removing "No Wilderness" resolution of Haywood Commission.

Following the Aug 2 discussion, TWS verified that the Shining Rock Extension and Graveyard Ridge Extension for Wilderness Designation differ from the USFS maps but it's not clear by how much and in which direction except to say it may not make a difference for the Haywood Commission. Does the TWS ask extend to the "blue stippled areas"? Proposal needs further discussion as others cannot support additional lands for inclusion into the Wilderness Area. Comment from Hugh: The boundaries of public wilderness proposal on USFS map for Shining Rock/Graveyard Field differ from TWS proposal (see attached map Shining Rock Proposal)

10. Topic: Trail Protection. This could be a forest wide Guideline or Management Approach under recreation:

36 CFR 219 11 (d) Limitations on timber harvest; Timber harvest will be carried out in a manner consistent with the protection of soil, watershed, fish, wildlife, recreation and aesthetic resources. It was suggested yesterday that trail protection/buffers is a Forest Wide consideration. Here is a stab at some wording. Since trails are a valuable recreation resource, how can we implement restoration projects while still protecting trail resources and trail aesthetics? [See proposal 1 then proposal 2, **and then latest proposal #3 which is the one the group is working from and seems to have a lot of support around]**

Proposal 3 – (Ruth submitted: Essentially Julie's Proposal 2 with some clarification)

Projects involving active management along trail corridors should be designed to have minimal impacts to trail corridors and their special characteristics while achieving project objectives. Factors that contribute to the quality of the trail experience include the natural environment of plants, geology, wildlife viewing, and scenic views, up close and distant, among others. Trail users should be involved in pre-scoping of such projects to provide input concerning special characteristics of the

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trail experience, acceptable temporary disturbance to trail users, notification of road closures, opportunities to educate the public through signage, and opportunities to improve the trail experience following the project, i.e. providing opportunities for wildlife and scenic views and improving condition of the trail.

Proposal 2: (Julie’s). Projects involving active management along trail corridors should be designed to have minimal impact on the trails and their special characteristics. Trail users should be involved early in the development of such projects to provide input concerning such things as acceptable temporary disturbance to trail users, opportunities to educate the public through signage, and opportunities to improve the trail experience following the project, i.e. providing opportunities for wildlife and scenic views and improving condition of the trail.

Proposal 1. (Ruth’s). Define DOGS that would require establishing a corridor or buffer around trail areas. Trail user representatives would be involved in early stages of project planning and throughout implementation and monitoring.

11. Proposals from a Climbing Community regarding the Pisgah Ledge Geographic Area Narrative Developed by USFS and submitted by Zachary Lesch-Huie

Similar to the Eastern Escarpment, the Pisgah Ledge Geographic Area is an especially significant region to the climbing community. It offers a large number and high concentration of climbing sites and experiences, from remote, backcountry rock and ice climbing opportunities, to multi-day aid climbs to a variety of bouldering sites. These climbing areas are an essential part of the local region’s outdoor recreation and education industries; many summer camps, colleges, guides and other outdoor programs utilize multiple different climbing sites in the area to give their participants and clients transformative climbing experiences. Local climbers from Asheville, Brevard, Hendersonville and other surrounding communities utilize these areas year-round, in addition to visitors from nearby states like South Carolina and Georgia. Areas like Looking Glass are nationally known and attract visitors from further afield.

We recognize and appreciate the acknowledgement of rock climbing in this section, however we recommend additions and changes and overall greater emphasis on climbing to better account for the climbing significance of this GA, and need for climbing related stewardship.

Proposal 1: Description of area. Add language and a new sentence that describes trails, trail use and climbing: The region is defined by mountain peaks *and cliff faces that give way to narrow valleys with striking rivers and waterfalls. The mountainous landscape provides many ideal opportunities for hiking, biking, camping and climbing.*

Proposal 2: Goals: Enhancing and restoring resiliency. Edit to d), consistent with suggested edit recommended for Linville Gorge above. *Continue to support conservation and protection of*

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peregrine falcons through monitoring, seasonal closure orders on rock faces, and collaboration with the climbing and recreation community.

Proposal 3: Add new goal related to the need to address erosion and mitigate impacts recreational resources that are not part of the Forest’s designated sites or trails. *Maintain and restore access and sustainability for recreational resources that are not serviced by designated transportation systems or trail networks through activities such as erosion control and education.*

Proposal 4. Goals: Connecting people to the land. Add new goal to emphasize recreational management focus: *Maintain and enhance mountain biking, climbing, paddling, hunting, fishing, hiking, horse-back riding and sustainable recreational resources and experiences for which there is strong, ongoing demand. [insert Deidre and Trish]*

Proposal 5: Goals: Opportunities to partner with others. Remove and replace b) to be consistent with similar need in Eastern Escarpment. *(d) Work with recreation groups to maintain the integrity and resiliency of rare plant communities through site specific management, stewardship and education.*
