

Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala & Pisgah Plan Revision
Outreach Strategies Web Meeting
Thursday, February 22, 2018
12:00 to 1:30 E.T.

ATTENDANCE

Alice Cohen, USDA Forest Service; Kevin Colburn, American Whitewater; Jim Gray, Ruffed Grouse Society; Ruth Hartzler, Carolina Mountain Club; Lang Hornthal, Root Cause; Ben Irey, National Forest Foundation; Bill Kane, North Carolina Wildlife Federation; Josh Kelly, MountainTrue; Naomi Neal, National Forest Foundation; Deirdre Perot, Back Country Horsemen of NC; Jim Sitts, Columbia Forest Products; Curtis Smalling, National Audubon of NC; Megan Sutton, The Nature Conservancy; David Whitmire, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council.

MEETING OUTCOMES:

Action Items

- Hold a DEIS meeting shortly after plan is released to discuss it as a group.
- Alice will send out a written summary of her updates to the Forum.

MEETING RECORD:

Agenda review

- The objectives of this web meeting are to share avenues for outreach regarding the draft forest plan, have members to share avenues and messaging to help other forum members, and to develop joint outreach where possible. The agenda for today is organized around the questions Karen DiBari sent out and the Forum's responses.

The "Why?" behind today's web meeting

- This web meeting is a result of an Organizing Committee meeting, where questions arose regarding how to maintain public engagement with plan revision, how to reach out, and what messaging to use.
- Suggestions for/help with outreach? The goal is more disclosure. Communications in past usually from point of view of a hiker, biker, wildlife advocate, etc. Could other stakeholders' perspectives be shared? How would other stakeholders articulate their perspectives? There is the desire to share other points of view with our constituents.

Responses to "How are you communicating with your constituencies regarding the N&P forest plan revision?"

- Curtis Smalling, Audobon of NC: We have established a regular organizational communications plan & schedule. Our outreach has consisted mainly of advertising opportunities for public comment, mostly informational in nature.

- Jim Gray, Ruffed Grouse Society: We have been in touch with our national organization.
 - We have not engaged in a mass effort to sway public at this time. We are generally keeping people informed of our needs and desires and providing a scientific background.
- Deirdre Perot, Backcountry Horsemen: We are bringing items of concern to our constituency groups, especially the directors and public lands folks. I have reached out to members about issues they may be concerned with.
- Right now, we're getting a pulse from constituency on feelings about these issues and trying to get ahead of work being done. We're planning to contribute and respond as a group. We have lots of public outreach opportunities through emails, Facebook, and quarterly meetings.

Responses to “What information could other interests share that would help you in developing communications? What can you offer to help others?”

- Curtis Smalling, Audobon of NC: It's most helpful to produce videos and other communications products that can be shared broadly. We need to keep one another in the loop.
- David Whitmire, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council: We want to look at a Geographic Area for wildlife project as a test site. An example to see how different alternatives will affect future work and projects moving forward.
- Ruth Hartzler, Carolina Mountain Club: I would be interested to hear more about progress on trails and active management.
- Josh Kelly, MountainTrue: I welcome inquiries, but I have no questions and no desire to speak for other groups.
- Kevin Colburn, American Whitewater: We're waiting to hear about the DEIS, and would like to have time to digest it and communicate with other groups about it before the comment period.
- Lang Hornthal, Root Cause: expressed agreement with Kevin; would like time to digest DEIS before comment period.

Responses to “What outreach strategies are you using to reach people about the forest plan?”

- Curtis Smalling, Audobon of NC: We want to see the DEIS & hear from rest of group before taking a formal position so we can help people make an educated choice.
- Deirdre Perot, Backcountry Horsemen: Our desire is to keep collaborating, keep representing interests, and seek win-win opportunities.
- David Whitmire, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council: We would like to meet with the USFS regarding alternatives once the DEIS comes out, so that we can get questions answered before making any kind of public-facing statement. However, we do have concerns about the time limits of the comment period.

- Jim Gray, Ruffed Grouse Society: expressed agreement with Curtis and Kevin. It would be best to delay the comment period so there is sufficient time to digest the plan, understand alternatives, and then do outreach.
- Megan Sutton, The Nature Conservancy: expressed agreement with Kevin. Delaying the comment period would enhance opportunities for the group to meet and collaborate on outreach plans. Can this group do anything to further that idea with the agency?
- Ruth Hartzler, Carolina Mountain Club: We're interested in working with other stakeholders on win-win possibilities.
- Josh Kelly, MountainTrue: Leading up to DEIS, we're trying to keep people aware that it is coming.
- Kevin Colburn, American Whitewater: We would like to create an outward-facing map to help illustrate the story of potential outcomes from taking different alternatives; this would require input from other stakeholders.
- Lang Hornthal, Root Cause: Our only plan is to get involved with MountainTrue events where needed.
- Jim Gray, Ruffed Grouse Society: expressed agreement with Lang and with Kevin's suggestion that a preview of the DEIS and overall plan would help members to collaborate on outreach.
- Bill Kane, North Carolina Wildlife Federation: agreed with others on the desirability of some kind of pre-comment preview period.

General Q&A

- Jim Sitts, Columbia Forest Products: Between now and the DEIS release, we should define what "win-win" means to the various groups. Does it mean anything but status quo, or something else more specific? Can we sit down with maps and all parties involved to see how all these ideas fit together? We need to agree about what we want to achieve before taking it to the public.
- Alice Cohen, USDA Forest Service: Maybe we should talk about "mutual gains" rather than "win-win".
- Josh Kelly, MountainTrue: Win-win doesn't mean everyone gets everything they want, it means every interest gets something more than the status quo; we need to avoid zero-sum games.

Final Thoughts

- Lang Hornthal, Root Cause: It's good that we're having this conversation & keeping up with one another. It would be helpful to understand what USFS wants from NPSF members, sooner rather than later.
- Alice Cohen, USDA Forest Service: Michelle is considering the possibility of releasing preview of DEIS to Forum members.
- Ben Irely, National Forest Foundation: Is the idea that the Forum will meet before members come out with public positions on the alternatives?

- Kevin Colburn, American Whitewater: It might be helpful to think of a “cease-fire”: we should give members time to talk and understand one another before making public statements. It would be best as a preview period, but could be built into the beginning of the 90-day comment period.
- Deirdre Perot, Backcountry Horsemen: Kevin’s idea (of a preview period) would allow some members who haven’t been as involved to get input from other members/stakeholders before forming positions publicly.
- Bill Kane, North Carolina Wildlife Federation: A “win-win” is a situation in which all interests get what they *need* to have: we should try to satisfy all need-to-have interests, if not all want-to-haves.
- David Whitmire, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council: expressed agreement with plan for group to meet before members take a public position.
- Curtis Smalling, Audobon of NC: expressed appreciation for others’ willingness to slog through the process.
- Ruth Hartzler, Carolina Mountain Club: The idea of having a delay before the comment period is a really good idea.
- Jim Sitts, Columbia Forest Products: It would be wise to get together just prior to DEIS/plan release to review a preview of it. Once the plan is released, things will move very quickly.
- Jim Gray, Ruffed Grouse Society: Agreed with Bill Kane on “win-win” scenarios. MountainTrue panels give us a great opportunity to gauge how balanced the discussions are and how balanced outreach to public is.
- Alice Cohen, USDA Forest Service: provided an update on USFS’s ongoing work on revisions in response to NPSF recommendations. Updates to plan language are in the works; hopefully everyone will see how their comments have been incorporated into the revisions. Clarifications have been made in accordance with stakeholder concerns; sections have been added to specifically address input, and efforts are being made to build non-polarizing ranges of alternatives. Objectives have been reframed in terms of current vs. desired conditions, plan components have been fleshed out, and the management area framework has been expanded. All changes will go through an internal review of edits and restructuring.

Meeting adjourned: 1:10 PM Eastern.