

Submission of Current DRAFT Proposals 1 September, 2017

Mountain True - Bob Gale
American Whitewater - Kevin Colburn
Carolina Mountain Club - Ruth Hartzler/Tish Desjardins
Int Mtn Bike Asso/SORBA - Julie White
Access Fund - Zachary Lesch-Huie
N.C. Trout Unlimited - John Rich
BCH of NC/NC Horse Council - Deirdre Perot Lightsey

Forest Wide DOGS

Recreation

Trails: Desired Conditions - Add italicized - Trailheads are well maintained *and appropriately designed to meet the needs of the designated user(s) of the trails they serve.*

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 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.

Recognize and support a "Recreation Users Council" (RUC) made up of representatives of the various user and/or stewardship groups, including local community representatives 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, safe, 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.

Recommend adding guidance language regarding climbing fixed anchors, to be included as Standard under Recreation Settings: Opportunities. The Wilderness related language could also be incorporated into the Wilderness management section of the plan.

- *Non-Wilderness Management Areas* - Use, placement and replacement of fixed anchors are essential for climbing, climbing safety and resource management.

- *Wilderness* - Use, placement and replacement of fixed anchors are essential for climbing, climbing safety and resource management. Need to add 'non motorized placement of fixed anchors in Wilderness.'

Use of Erosion Control/Mitigation for Non-System Trail Management

Propose to add to Trails>Management Approaches:

Maintain and restore access for foot traffic only and sustainability for recreational resources that are not serviced by designated transportation systems or trail networks through activities such as erosion control and education. (examples include river access stairs / erosion control devices to the Davidson River, and climbing route access - we intend to improve upon this language)

Special Interest Areas

Recreation is listed as a potential defining characteristic for SIAs: unique attributes may be recreational, should remain persistent over time, and can benefit from specific management direction to maintain the special attributes of the resources in question. However, despite the available recreational criteria, we noted that few Special Interest Areas (MA-5) utilize recreation

as a defining unique attribute. In fact in the current inventory only two SIAs are designated for unique recreational attributes, despite significant, longstanding recreational use within a majority of the listed SIAs. Linville Gorge, Looking Glass, and Whiteside Mountain--three of the Forest's most significant and highly visited recreational sites--are just three outstanding examples where recreation should be recognized as one of the unique attributes that warrants their SIA status.

In recognition of their unique recreational attributes, including rock and ice climbing, we recommend Recreation be listed in addition to the other qualifying criteria for the SIAs listed below. Climbing at these areas has remained persistent over time and could benefit from specific management direction to maintain the special attributes of the climbing resource.

- Black Mountains
- Craggy Mountains/Big Ivy
- Linville Gorge
- Bonas Defeat Gorge
- Cullasaja Gorge
- Ellicott Rock-Chattooga River Gorge
- Scaly Mountain and Catstairs
- Whiteside Mountain
- Whitewater Falls
- Dismal Falls
- Fork Ridge/Mount Hardy
- John Rock
- Black Rock Mtn/Granite City
- Looking Glass Rock
- Linville Dolomite
- Fodderstacks

Including recreation in these areas' unique attributes is important and necessary to more accurately account for the unique characteristics which make these areas special. Doing so will memorialize needed management plan revisions that can substantiate the continued maintenance of valuable recreation and climbing opportunities.

Geographic Area Specific Proposals

Pisgah Ledge

DOGS

- Manage Art Loeb Trail corridor consistent with the trail's designation language.

Propose and administratively designate a Pisgah Gateway Special Area focused on non motorized recreation that encompasses the trails, streams, cliffs, and forested lands that support vast recreational use and enjoyment centered around the Highway 276 corridor. The Pisgah Gateway Special Area would be bordered by the Art Loeb Trail to the South (with a ¼ mile trail buffer); Generally the Butter Gap and Cove Creek trails to the West (with a ¼ mile trail buffer), the Black Mountain, Thrift Cove, and Sycamore Cove trails to the Northeast (with a ¼ mile buffer); and the Blue Ridge Parkway to the Northwest. It would replace (and perhaps integrate) currently proposed MAs.

The Special Area would be administratively designated to protect and manage for sustainable public use and enjoyment of the area through non motorized recreation including but not limited to hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, paddling, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, camping, and water play.

Other uses, such as timber harvest, would be permitted to the extent that these uses are in harmony with the desired condition for which the area was designated.

This Special Area would recognize the large economic and recreational role that the area serves as a gateway to Pisgah National Forest. See FS Manual 2372 for USFS policies on Special Areas.

(We would like to acknowledge that there is an overlapping proposal that seeks to accomplish some of the same goals as this proposal, in a mutually exclusive manner, for the entire GA. We look forward to continuing to openly consider and explore both proposals for this area.)

Recommended changes to GA Description and Goals

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, horseback riding, camping and climbing."*

Goals: Enhancing and restoring resiliency

Edit to d): *"Continue to support conservation and protection of peregrine falcons through monitoring, seasonal closure orders on rock faces, and collaboration with the climbing and recreation community."*

Goals: Connecting people to the land

Add new goal to emphasize recreational management focus:

"Respond to increased demand for recreational resources for mountain biking, climbing, paddling, hunting, fishing, hiking and, horseback riding."

Add new goal related to the need to address erosion and mitigate impacts to 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" Add new goal to emphasize recreational management focus:

“Respond to increased demand for recreational resources for mountain biking, climbing, paddling, hunting, fishing, hiking and, horseback riding.

Add new goal related to the need to address erosion and mitigate impacts to recreational resources that are not part of the Forest’s designated sites or trails.

Maintain and restore access for foot traffic only and sustainability for recreational resources that are not serviced by designated transportation systems or trail networks through activities such as erosion control and education.

Eastern Escarpment

DOGS

- Take advantage of current rec assets that can be resurrected to increase recreational opportunities, including Boone Fork. Opportunities to partner with others, propose adding d) Partner with equestrians and mountain bike organizations to restore the facilities, example Boone Fork that will support access to the Forest in this under-served GA.
- Recommend other changes to GA Description, goals, etc.
 - Description of the area section. Change to: The region contains distinct projecting rocks and cliffs and sudden elevation changes - the most dramatic along the perimeter of Linville Gorge - *which offer highly valued scenery and recreational opportunities such as hiking, backpacking, and climbing.*
- Goals, Connecting people to the land - Add new goals: (1) *Maintain and enhance access to the region’s outstanding recreational opportunities for climbing, fishing, hiking, hunting, mountain biking, horseback riding, scenic viewing, rockhounding, wildlife viewing, whitewater boating and sustainable other recreation activities.* (2) *Improve monitoring and inventory of recreational use sites*
- Connecting people to the land - Add new goal related to the need to address erosion and mitigate impacts on and to recreational resources that are not part of the Forest’s designated sites or trails. This recommendation is based on other National Forest’s use of ‘erosion control/mitigation’ in their management activities: *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.*
- Change and add to language on peregrine falcon goal: *Continue to support conservation and protection of peregrine falcons through monitoring, seasonal closure orders on rock faces, and collaboration with the climbing and recreation community.*
- Places to be managed in consideration of their unique features: Remove mention of hiking and climbing from (c) and (d) so they read as below:
(c) Emphasize treatment of non-native invasive species in Linville Gorge. (d) Reduce or eliminate impacts to T&E species such as Heller’s Blazing Star, mountain golden heather, and gnome lichens at Linville Gorge. Alternatively, given the specificity of (c) and (d), consider removing from GA document and placing them in appropriate management chapter guidelines, if not already there. More general language, such as below, could also be a replacement for use in the GA document: *Maintain the integrity and resiliency of rare rock outcrop plant communities through site specific management, user group collaboration, stewardship and education.*
- Opportunities to partner with others: Add to (b) to include Wilderness recreation: Partner with wilderness *and outdoor recreation* advocacy groups to assist in managing Linville Gorge Wilderness and the geographic area’s wilderness study areas

and in educating visitors about wilderness ethics and low impact camping *and climbing techniques*.

- Add additional goal: *Work with recreation groups to maintain the integrity and resiliency of rare plant communities through site specific management, stewardship and education.*

Harper Creek & Lost Cove - We recognize that Harper Creek and Lost Cove WSA's have strong wilderness character and could meet important wilderness needs, but we also recognize that they can remedy the unmet need for trail mileage and connectivity to satisfy multiple user groups. We recommend that the Forest Service address this unmet need by providing adequate opportunities in the Eastern Escarpment. If the Forest Service recommends HC/LC as wilderness, we suggest that the recommendation be made provisional, subject to the following milestones: (1) between 15 and 20 additional miles of class 2 or 3 trails whose designation includes bike and horse, (2) network connectivity providing loop options of varying length and commitment levels within the Upper Wilson Creek/Harper Creek/Lost Cove/Sugar Knob complex and (3) a broadly supported plan in place in 3 years to meet these goals and within the next 3 year cycle, at least 2 identified projects will have completed the NEPA process. The Partnership recognizes their responsibility in the development of a plan for the area and stands ready to work towards that goal.

We also ask that the Forest Service reconsider finding the Gragg Prong, Lost Cove Creek, North Harper Creek, and Harper Creek as eligible for Wild and Scenic designation for their outstanding scenic and recreational values, in recognition that Wild and Scenic Corridors could one day serve as protected corridors that support multi-use trail use and connectivity.

Black Mountains

DOGS

We request that equestrians are added to the goal under connecting people to the land to support the possibility of a future project of trailer access to the Buncombe Horse Range Trail, one of the few designated multi-use trails in the area (as in below).

Under Goals - Connecting People to the Land - Replace 'respond to' with 'Maintain and enhance access to'; and include horseback riding and other rec activities for more inclusive statement: *Maintain and enhance access to mountain biking, climbing, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, hiking, boating and other sustainable recreational experiences for which there is growing interest and demand.*

We support the findings of the USFS May 2017 Wild and Scenic River Summary Evaluations that moved forward the South Fork of the Toe River in this GA as newly eligible for Wild and Scenic designation, and we feel that Rock Creek should be reconsidered and found eligible.

MA Map Adjustments

Support for Woods Mountain land allocations:

We support the USFS 2017 Building Block MA boundaries in the Woods Mountain Area and encourage the FS to look at this area for its potential to contribute to their goal of increasing opportunities for equestrian and mountain bike access.

Recommended changes to GA description, goals, other sections

Description of the area: Connecting people to the land
(3rd paragraph, last sentence)

“...and rock climbing is popular at Snake Den Cliff *and Corner Rock.*”

Goals: Places to be managed in consideration of their unique features

Add additional focus under i. , e., under '(a) Manage the Big Ivy Area...':

i., e. Improving recreational management and stewardship

Add the following edit to ii.

Maintain and enhance dispersed recreation opportunities

Highland Domes

DOGS

Recommended changes to GA Description and Goals

a. Description of the area

- Many of the cliffs in this GA are much taller than 300'. Recommend replacing with "*cliffs and high granitic domes many hundreds of feet tall.*"
- Mention of non-water based recreation examples is needed in the landscape overview of first paragraph: "*The steep forested mountains, coves and soaring granite cliffs provide outstanding opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking and climbing.*"

b. Make an addition to the non-Forest landmarks list.

Add the 'Laurel Knob Cliff and Climbing Area', owned and managed by Carolina Climbers Coalition, under 'Landmarks within the geographic area that are not managed by the Forest Service' list. Laurel Knob is the tallest unbroken cliff face in the Eastern U.S., an outstanding example of the granitic domes characteristic of this region, and a significant climbing site managed for the public. It is accessed from the Forest's Panthertown Valley access point.

c. Connecting people to the land

- Goals: Enhancing and restoring resiliency
Add new goal f) to cover peregrine falcon protection; remove from a) under Connecting people to the land: f) "*Continue to support conservation and protection of peregrine falcons through monitoring, seasonal closure*

orders on rock faces, and collaboration with the climbing and recreation community.” Add “such as” before peregrine falcon.

- Add new goal a) *“Maintain and enhance mountain biking, climbing, hunting, hiking, fishing, horseback riding and other recreational resources and experiences.”*
- Add new goal related to the need to address erosion and mitigate impacts on and to 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.”*
- Goals: Places within the area that will be managed in consideration of their unique features
Add to first bullet point under Panthertown a) *“Maintain and enhance recreation experiences for visitors engaged in sightseeing, hiking, horseback riding, fishing, climbing and other sustainable recreational activities.”*
- Goals: Opportunities to partner with others
Change f) to be consistent with similar management goal in Eastern Escarpment and Pisgah Ledge: *(d) Work with recreation groups to maintain the integrity and resiliency of rare plant communities through site specific management, stewardship and education.*

d) Eligible Wild and Scenic Streams

We support the findings of the USFS May 2017 Wild and Scenic River Summary Evaluations that moved forward 5 fine streams as newly eligible for Wild and Scenic designation, except we feel that the following additional streams should be reconsidered and found eligible: North Fork French Broad River (starting at the FS boundary), Panthertown, and Greenland creek as well as East & West fork of Overflow

Fontana

DOGS

Propose changes in language, in Connecting people to the Land :

Replace - *The Tsali Recreation Area on Fontana Lake provides access for mountain biking which draws national recognition, as well as and horseback riding, boating, and developed camping.*

With - *The Tsali Recreation Area on Fontana Lake provides access for mountain biking and horseback riding which draws national recognition, as well as boating, and developed camping.*

MA Map Adjustments

The Fontana GA affords numerous opportunities to enhance recreation and consequently take some of the pressure off of other areas that are at risk of being over utilized.

- Goal of Increased camping opportunities along Lake Santeetlah. Examples could include new opportunities on the Long Hungry Peninsula and increased opportunities on Avey Branch.
- Develop DOGS that would support continuing development of the trail that goes around Lake Santeetlah. In the late 1990’s early 2000’s 7 of 19

proposed miles of multi-use trails (hiking/horseback riding, bicycling) were developed. The trail is not at all well marked and as such is not currently easy to find. Better signage and further development of the remaining 12 miles originally proposed would help to put this trail on the map for horseback riding enthusiasts in particular and provide an easy to moderate hiking trail for those wishing to explore the forests who may not have the ability to traverse the more challenging trails of Graham County.

- Support the USFS in maintaining the existing infrastructure. This is including but not limited to existing restrooms, campsites and trails.
- Designate the waterfront on both lakes and the Cheoah river as Recreation Priority areas
- Develop DOGS that would support re-opening Meeting House Mountain Road and revitalize multi-use trails the road leads up to, such as a goal to increase public access to the Fontana shorelines.
- Develop DOGS that would support the trail that runs along the northern border of Snowbird being maintained for multi-use and not excluded from the opportunity to be a part of recreation events such as foot races, triathlons, etc. regardless of MA designation.

Bald Mountains

DOGS

Proposal, in italics, to add addition to sentence in second paragraph of Bald Mountains GA Description: A prominent tourist destination since the 19th century, the Roan Highlands remain one of the most visited sites in the region, *and also offer unique winter-based recreation opportunities such as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, ice climbing and winter camping.*

Great Balsam

DOGS

a) Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers

We support the findings of the USFS May 2017 Wild and Scenic River Summary Evaluations that moved forward 10 fine streams as newly eligible for Wild and Scenic designation (zero in this GA), except we feel that Tanasee Creek should be reconsidered and found eligible.