Nantahala and Pisgah National Forest Stakeholders Forum Proposal

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Proposal supporters:

Chris Coxen, National Wild Turkey Federation

Megan Sutton, The Nature Conservancy

Rob Elliot, Evergreen Packaging

Lang Hornthal, Root Cause

Sam Evans, Southern Environmental Law Center

Richard Mode, North Carolina Wildlife Federation

As part of the Eastern Escarpment Small Group Meeting, Chris Coxen and Ryan Jacobs crafted the framework for the following language, which is intended help amend management concerns across the National Forest. This language was also brought to the Forest Partnership by Chris Coxen. It received broad support among those partners (even though not all of them are featured supporters on this document). Additions to the original Small Group Meeting language reflect Partnership additions.

Within identified old growth communities occurring in Matrix or Interface:

Assess the need for management activities and permit only those activities which would enhance or restore forest community composition and structure. Structural restoration will maintain the current old growth seral stage and address the restoration of natural processes or disturbance as needed to correct ecological departure from expected stand conditions. Restoration of old growth composition will be in accordance with the community type descriptions described in the Region 8 "Guidance for Conserving and Restoring Old-Growth Forest Communities on National Forests in the Southern Region" document. Restoration of old growth structure will be in accordance with the forest-wide goals and desired conditions derived from NRV and the Region 8 "Guidance for Conserving and Restoring Old-Growth Forest Communities on National Forests in the Southern Region" document.

Within natural heritage areas occurring in Matrix or Interface:

Assess the need for management activities and permit only those activities which would enhance or restore the composition and structure for which the natural area was designated. Structural restoration will address the restoration of natural processes or disturbance as needed to correct ecological departure from expected stand conditions. Restoration of natural

area composition will be in accordance with the natural community description within the most recent "Guide to the Natural Communities of North Carolina" document. Restoration of natural area structure will be in accordance with the forest-wide goals and desired conditions derived from NRV.

Utilizing partnerships to increase forest restoration:

Based on Geographic Area Description and Goals, utilize collaborative partnership groups to identify, guide, and implement GA-specific habitat restoration projects to help reach restoration stretch goals. Utilize Good Neighbor authority to partner with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, North Carolina Forest Service, and other NGO partners to increase restoration capacity. Utilize Stewardship Agreements with partners to increase restoration-based habitat management projects.

Focus on increased implementation of prescribed fire as a habitat management tool across all seral stages (Avoiding and or safeguarding areas where fire will have deleterious effects on the native community composition)

Increase the use of prescribed fire through both USFS resources and Good Neighbor authority opportunities to increase forest resiliency to catastrophic wildfires, protect wildland-urban interface, and restore/maintain fire-adapted ecosystems. Utilize prescribed fire in post-harvest and young forest (ESH) wildlife openings to maintain, enhance, and direct plant composition towards desired conditions.

Megan Sutton, Kevin Colburn, and Chris Coxen crafted language related to the Backcountry MA description as part of a Forest Partnership exercise. This language is designed to allow for more flexible, restoration-based active management within Backcountry areas.

Changes to the description of the Backcountry MA

Large blocks of remote and unroaded forest are primarily shaped by natural processes, except where active management is needed and utilized to restore ecosystem structure and function. Mechanical treatment activities encourage and/or restore natural processes, with the goal of eliminating the need for future mechanical management. Fire is present on the landscape and is managed to benefit natural resources and reach desired conditions.

The landscape features predominantly mid- to late-successional forest communities with a continuous forested canopy that changes in density (or openness) based on ecozone desired conditions. Forest management that enhances or restores forest community composition and

structure may occur in this management area to accomplish site-specific restoration goals, although the cutting, sale, or removal of timber in these areas is expected to be infrequent.

Backcountry recreationists will notice in these areas ecological restoration management, maintenance of existing wildlife openings, and occasional prescribed controlled burning and associated fire lines.

Vegetation Management-Desired Conditions

- Large blocks of remote and unroaded forest appear to be primarily shaped by natural processes, and, over time, old growth
- Mid- to late-successional forest communities predominate, providing a contiguous forest canopy (that changes in density or openness based on ecozone desired conditions) across most of the MA. Patches of young forest and canopy gaps, generally smaller in size when compared to Interface and Matrix, trend towards an amount and distribution described in ecozone desired conditions.

Forest Health-Standard

- Allow control of insect and disease outbreaks when necessary to reduce hazards to visitors, for safety or to protect scenic and recreational values, with consideration of protection of adjacent lands. When actions are needed use Integrated Pest Management such as biological controls, then hand-control methods, and finally pesticides. Consider the most effective and least ecologically disruptive technique that will accomplish control of the pest. Also consider the role of native pests as natural disturbance processes that are consistent with NRV.