

Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala & Pisgah Plan Revision
ACCOMPLISHMENTS as of May 2016

The National Forest Foundation convened the Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala & Pisgah Plan Revision in 2015. The Forum developed the following purpose statement and goals:

In a collaborative dialogue amongst stakeholders representing diverse interests, identify zones of agreement to form recommendations around critical resource issues related to the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests' plan revision. The key issues are forestry and restoration, special designations, and sustainable recreation. Recommendations should achieve clean and abundant water, connect communities to the land, and maintain and restore resiliency and diversity.

GOALS:

- *Supplement the Forest Service's public involvement process with collaborative dialogue*
- *Strengthen relationships amongst stakeholders with differing views about how to manage the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests*
- *Develop consensus recommendations on key issues to provide to the Forest Service*
- *Support the development of an implementable Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan*

The Stakeholders Forum is proud of group's collective accomplishments:

➤ **Organized and Launched a Diverse Collaborative Effort**

A small organizing committee met in July and August 2015 to begin organizing the Stakeholders Forum. Members developed and sought agreement on a purpose statement, goals, code of conduct, list of interests to invite, and membership list. The full Stakeholders Forum met for the first time in September 2015. **The Stakeholders Forum represented a more inclusive constituency than had previously come together on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests.** The cross section of diverse interests at the table agreed to move forward to develop forest plan recommendations around the issues of sustainable recreation, forest management/restoration and special area designations.

➤ **Improved Communication among Stakeholders and the Forest Service**

The Stakeholders Forum's collaborative efforts **fostered dialogue** among forest stakeholders, the Forest Service and the broader community. Additionally, **Stakeholders led informal discussions and meetings outside of the formal process that may not have otherwise happened, such as a gathering at Lake Logan among various interests, and on-going discussions around spatial data and mapping.**

➤ **Increased Understanding of and Support for the Forest Planning Process**

Through continual dialogue between the Stakeholders Forum and Forest Service staff, **Stakeholders Forum members developed an important understanding of the Forest Service's plan revision approach, and helped build support for the process.** For example, after learning about the Forest Service's evaluation process for Wild & Scenic Rivers and inventory process for wilderness characteristics in October 2015, the Forum agreed on this statement by consensus:

The Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala & Pisgah Plan Revision expresses confidence in the work done by the Forest Service to identify rivers that may be identified as Wild & Scenic Rivers, and to inventory areas that may have wilderness characteristics. We look forward to participating in the evaluation process.

Many forum members also attended the Forest Service's public meetings, **servicing as ambassadors of the Stakeholders Forum, answering questions from other members of the public, and showing support for the Forest Service's process.**

The Forest Service, in turn, has demonstrated transparency in plan component development through the Plan Revision website and by opening interdisciplinary team meetings (IDT) to the public.

➤ **Established and Strengthened Relationships and Built Trust**

Stakeholders Forum members improved relationships and built new trust across interests with a history of conflict. Even during rocky points, **Forum members made good faith efforts to build bridges, understand the values of individual members, and overcome old conflicts.** Many feel optimistic that the Forum will help transition a historically contentious environment toward more positive, productive space for communication and collaboration around forest issues beyond the forest planning process. The Stakeholders Forum recognizes that trust building efforts need to continue.

➤ **Provided Input on Draft Forest Plan Components**

The Stakeholders Forum provided the Forest Service with proposed recommendations, modifications and additions to the Forest Service's draft plan components focused on sustainable recreation, aquatics, ecozones, and forest/vegetation management. The Stakeholders Forum also provided input regarding Management Areas and engaged in initial discussions around special designations.

The Stakeholders Forum's input **provided a social context for science and technical information and incorporated local knowledge.**

Group members independently and in cooperation with the Forest Service **developed map-based products that spatially displayed various interests as a base for further detailed discussion.**

➤ **Established a Model for a Collaborative Process Engaging in Forest Planning and Learned Many Lessons**

Not many National Forests & Grasslands have worked with a collaborative group like the Stakeholders Forum in their plan development processes. **The Stakeholders Forum established a model from which other forests and communities can learn due to the lessons and experience resulting from this process.**

Stakeholders Forum members have gained a tremendous amount of knowledge, and have served as liaisons with their own organizations and constituencies by sharing information about the planning process and bringing information back to the collaborative table.