

This developing plan content is under construction and is being shared as a snapshot of thinking. Additional changes based on Forest Service and public input are expected.

Transportation and Access

Background

Most users of the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests use motor vehicles to access the National Forests, whether for recreational sightseeing, camping and hiking, hunting and fishing, commercial purposes such as logging, administration of utilities and other land uses, outfitting and guiding, or the many other multiple uses of NFS lands. The road system components that provide this access are highly diverse ranging from double lane paved roads to single lane grave, and from native surface roads that may be usable by passenger cars, to high clearance routes. The road system also includes travel ways that are closed for multiple-year periods. Forest roads are currently classified using Road Management Objectives and Maintenance Levels. These reflect the level of access that is provided and the type and frequency of maintenance that is needed to reduce risks to public safety and impacts to resources.

Desired Conditions

- A sustainable transportation system provides safe and efficient public access and connectivity between communities and the Forest. The transportation system reflects the expected level of use and public desires, while having minimal impacts on resources.
- Roads serve a variety of public and administrative needs including access for recreational purposes, vegetation and wildlife management, fire suppression activities, access to facilities, access to private land inholdings, and energy and mineral development.
- Access is provided for Tribal members for cultural and ceremonial practices.
- The transportation system is connected to federal, state and local roads and trails.
- The transportation system's size and type are able to be maintained to standards using resources available to the forest.
- Where possible, the transfer of roads to other jurisdiction is utilized to accomplish road maintenance.
- Unneeded roads are removed from the system and decommissioned to restore hydrology and soil productivity.
- New routes shall only be planned, constructed and designated following public involvement and site-specific environmental analysis.
- Temporary roads are located and constructed to minimize impacts to resources while providing short-term, single purpose access to management units.
- Road cut and fill slopes are stable, and are not contributing to landslides.
- All roads are in full compliance with water quality standards.
- Intended road use is communicated effectively to users through maps and signage. All designated routes open to wheeled motorized vehicles are shown on a motor vehicle use

map (MVUM) that is readily available to the public. Motorized vehicle use only occurs as identified on the MVUM, except as authorized by permit or for administrative uses.

- Unauthorized routes are stable, non-erosive and untraveled.
- Access is designed to minimize conflicts between users.

Standards

- Roads shall be located and designed to minimize impacts to resources.
- Road design shall comply with Traffic Service Level and Road Management Objective standards.
- Erosion of and sediment movement away from all components of roadway during and after construction shall be controlled and mitigated using measures identified through storm drainage design and through the implementation of North Carolina Best Management Practices. Drainage control features (rolling-dips, culverts, grade-sags, etc.) are of adequate frequency and size to ensure runoff is able to seep into the soil without causing erosion, including gullies and catastrophic events of mass wasting of road material.
- Stream crossings shall be designed to allow for aquatic passage and shall be designed to minimize impacts including diversion and sedimentation from the road.
- Stream crossings, where possible shall occur at right angles with the natural alignment of the stream. When replacing existing crossing, assess whether realignment of stream crossing is appropriate to reestablish historical channel. Roadway storm drainage structures shall discharge away from stream crossings. Improve surfacing at stream crossings to prevent sedimentation.
- Revegetation of areas disturbed due to road construction or maintenance activities shall be accomplished
- Road work shall be timed to reduce impacts to resources and infrastructure.
- Open roads shall be seasonally closed, to the extent possible when conditions require closures, to prevent resource and infrastructure damage.

Guidelines

- New road construction that impacts special areas of concern should be minimized.
- Along trails and roads with existing populations of PET and SCC plant species, such as Virginia Spiraea (*Spiraea virginiana*), glade spurge (*Euphorbia purpurea*), Smoky Mountain mannagrass (*Glyceria nubigena*), ash-leaved golden-banner (*Thermopsis fraxinifolia*), or Appalachian violet (*Viola walteri* var. *appalachiensis*) ground disturbance activities should be minimized that displace plants. Maintenance activities such as mowing and/or herbicide applications should be timed when the rare plants are dormant unless the disturbance is beneficial.