

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

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## **Cultural Resources**

### **Background**

*The unique and diverse environments of the southeastern United States and the Southern Appalachian Nantahala and Pisgah NFs have facilitated prehistoric and historic populations for more than 10,000 years and possibly as long as 20,000 years. Archeological sites associated with these populations are a record of human use, as well as environmental data including vegetation, animal species, and climate. The Nantahala and Pisgah NFs strive to provide the link between past and present cultures; expand knowledge and understanding of the past; share the cultural and archeological resources with the public; actively care for the resources; participate in ecosystem management; and support on-the-ground project management activities.*

*Cultural resources include the artifacts, archeological sites, historic structures and built environments created by past inhabitants, our ancestors, and those areas used or affected by them with their ways of life. Cultural resources documented on the Nantahala and Pisgah NFs and surrounding areas have provided evidence for each one of these periods and their related cultures, from the Paleoindian (ca. 12,000(+) to 8000 B.C.); the Archaic (ca. 8000 to 1000 B.C.); the Woodland (ca. 1000 B.C. to A.D. 1000); the Mississippian period (ca. A.D. 1000 to 1500); the Protohistoric-Contact period (ca. A.D. 1500 to 1700); European and American settlement period; and the more recent development period through the present.*

*The cultural resources of the Forests include a diverse and unusually rich range of prehistoric and historic artifacts and sites, including 1) prehistoric campsites, villages, graves, stone quarries and workshops, trails, pictographs (painted) and petroglyphs (incised), and rock shelters; 2) American Indian sacred and traditional sites; 3) historic cabins, trails, mines, logging camps, railroad grades, farms and homesteads, mills, original highway grades, and cemeteries; 4) historic Forest Service structures, including guard stations, lookout towers, camps, administrative centers, and Civilian Conservation Corps-era campgrounds, roads, and buildings; and 5) historic landscapes. Many of these properties and areas are unique and provide the only and/or best preserved record of their former inhabitants and makers, ways of life, human behavior, adaptation and change in western NC.*

*Cultural resources are inventoried and managed to protect their significant cultural, historical and archeological values. Cultural resources listed or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) are maintained or restored. Cultural resources identified as priority heritage assets (PHAs) have distinct public and scientific values but are in unstable or deteriorating condition.*

**Desired Conditions**

- Significant prehistoric and historic sites and resources are preserved and protected for their cultural importance and retain their historical, scientific research and educational value.
- Priority Heritage Assets (PHA) are protected, preserved and maintained.
- All known cultural resources are evaluated for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Cultural resource protection efforts span boundaries to encompass collaboration with other government, public, and private partners.
- The integrity of sites that contain scientific data that benefits the public, tribal and scientific communities is maintained.
- Artifacts and historic collections are properly accessioned, curated, archived and preserved. Historic documents, including photographs, maps, journals and program management records are available to the public and scholars for research and interpretation.

**Standards**

- Projects shall be designed to avoid, minimize, or mitigate negative effects on potentially significant cultural resources. In-place protection of identified sites is the minimum requirement until site significance is determined.
- Protect cultural resources by completing cultural resource inventories, including field surveys, prior to ground disturbance or land transfer projects as well as prior to management activities or designations that may have potential adverse effects. Formally consult with the NC State Historic Preservation Office, Tribes, and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.
- Avoid disturbance of known cultural resources until evaluated and determined not significant.
- Prescribe and implement necessary mitigation measures if site disturbance is necessary, in consultation with NC State Historic Preservation Office, Tribes, and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.
- Cultural resources are protected from loss. National Register of Historic Places eligible and unevaluated sites are stabilized, treated, managed and preserved for their historical research value.
- Formally consult with Tribes as appropriate to identify and determine the significance of cultural resources.
- For cultural resource projects, archeological and historic investigations, with the potential to address the culture history of Tribes, ensure that such projects address topics of known importance to and methods preferred by Tribes.
- Maintain confidentiality of heritage resources. Do not show locations in public documents or files unless agreed upon by all parties.

## Guidelines

- Cultural resources should be managed according to their FS Management Use allocation category, including preservation, enhancement-public use, or scientific investigation.
- Antiquities and Archaeological Resources Protection Act permits should be issued only to qualified<sup>1</sup> academic institutions, other organizations, or individuals for the study and research of sites. Consult with appropriate parties, State Historic Preservation Office and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, to agree upon measures needed to mitigate potential adverse effects prior to conducting or permitting excavation at identified sites.

## Management Approaches

- Site protection law enforcement protocols are in place to prevent damage or loss of cultural resources.
- If additional evidence or information regarding the eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places of a cultural resource or historic property becomes available, it will be re-evaluated.
- Plan for mitigation of potential impacts to cultural resources from climate change.
- Complete the Forest Heritage Program Plan.
- Complete Historic Property Plan.
- Complete a Cultural Landscape Report for the Trail of Tears.
- Complete a Comprehensive Management Plan for the Trail of Tears.  
*Feb 2016 Note: The Revised Plan will include a management area for National Historic Trails, including plan direction specific to the Trail of Tears. We are including this statement in the forestwide direction for now, but it be moved to that section when ready.*
- Maintain and revise the Programmatic Agreement with State Historic Preservation Office and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices.
- Maintain the Heritage Resources INFRA & GIS NRM Databases.

## Other sources of information

- NFsNC Section 106 Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement with NC State Historic Preservation Offices, President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and Tribes.
- Programmatic Agreements with State Historic Preservation Offices and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices.

**See also:** Tribal resources, Climate change

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<sup>1</sup> Qualified institutions are those that meet Department of Interior or Office of Personnel Management 118 standards.