

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.

Chapter 3: Management Areas

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*****A special note for this pre-draft May 2017 version*** – Given that this latest thinking is being shared as a separate chapter, please keep in mind that this management area chapter does not stand alone. The plan direction in this chapter builds on the existing content on all of the Forestwide sections listed below, and does not repeat that direction that applies wherever you are on the forest.

Of the sections listed below, an asterisk indicates that there is additional Interface, Matrix, or Backcountry direction on this Forestwide topic. Topics without an asterisk will not differ by management area. For example, aquatic systems will be the same between the three general forest management areas (Interface, Matrix, and Backcountry), so there is no need for additional aquatic systems direction in this chapter.

- Geological Resources
- Soils
- Water
- Air
- Climate
- Aquatic Systems
- Streamside Zones
- Wildlife*
- Rare Habitats
- Threatened and Endangered Species and Species of Conservation Concern
- Vegetation Management*
- Fire*
- Forest Health and Invasive Species*
- Lands and Special Uses
- Facilities
- Transportation and Forest Access*
- Recreation*
- Scenery*
- Cultural Resources*
- Tribal Resources*
- Minerals and Energy Resources*
- Forest Products (Non-timber)
- Community Connections
- Conservation Education

Please keep in mind that as a result of these Forestwide sections, there are plan givens which are intended to be addressed across the all management areas. These givens include, but are not limited to:

- *Emphasis is on restoration, enhancement, and maintenance of native forest communities to provide a mix of habitats for plants and animals associated with spatially heterogeneous forest habitats.*
- *Wildlife habitat conditions are present in amounts, arrangements, and conditions to support a diversity and abundance of native species typical of the Southern Appalachians within the planning area, resulting in natural population dynamics. A wide variety of habitats are found in each management area, including patches of early seral to older forest, stream and river corridors, and rare ecological communities.*
- *Rare species, rare communities, and a network of old growth will be maintained across multiple management areas and ecozones.*
- *Independent of whether an area is identified as a Special Interest Area, we will have a guidance in the forestwide plan direction that will require projects to consider state data, such as the presence of Natural Heritage Natural Areas (NHNA), in project development.*

- *Prescribed fire plays an important role to maintain or restore fire-associated forested communities, to improve forest structure, and to reduce fuel buildups.*
- *Roads shall be located, designed, and maintained to minimize impacts to resources.*
- *A sustainable transportation system of roads and trails provides safe and efficient public access and connectivity between communities and the Forests. Access supports traditional uses, such as hunting, fishing, and gathering, as well as tourism.*
- *Scenery across the Forests include intact, natural appearing, predominantly forested landscapes that include openings for cultural or historic sites, pastoral areas, rivers, developed recreation areas, roads, and administrative sites. Scenic resources compliment recreation settings and experiences.*
- *And many more...*

(Additional plan givens are included Appendix A).

(Additional information for reviewers about the Scenery Management System is included in Appendix B.)

What is a management area?

While the majority of forest plan direction is contained in the Forestwide Chapter, there are areas of the forest that have similar management intent and a common management strategy. These areas are known as management areas.

Management areas ensure consistent approaches to achieving desired conditions and objectives among the six ranger districts who will administer this plan. Most of the management areas are not spatially contiguous, but instead, are distributed among the 12 Geographic Areas that divide the forest (described in Chapter 4: Geographic Areas). Each management area emphasizes different aspects of the vision established in the forest plan themes and Forestwide desired conditions. A distinct set of plan components for each management area provides for its unique emphases.

Management area direction builds on the direction that is provided in the Forestwide chapter. This chapter does not substitute for, or repeat, Forestwide direction. In the event that direction in this chapter and direction in another section conflict, a project or activity level evaluation may be required to resolve the conflict; generally the more restrictive plan decision prevails. If management area direction does not address a particular topic, that is because that topic is addressed in the Forestwide chapter and does not vary within the management area.

What are the management areas on the Nantahala Pisgah?

There are three general forest management areas: Interface, Matrix, and Backcountry.

There are also two management areas that describe Concentrated Recreation Sites and Administrative Sites.

The additional management areas are designated by statute or through administrative process because their unique or special characteristics correspond to designated special areas, including: National Recreational Trails, National Scenic Byways, National Historic Trails, Wild and Scenic River Corridors, Special Interest Areas, Research Natural Areas, Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, Experimental Forests, Roan Mountain, and the Cradle of Forestry Historic Site.

How were management areas determined?

The concept and spatial arrangement of the general forest management areas of Interface, Matrix, and Backcountry, were derived by using the principles of both landscape ecology and human benefits-based management. Landscape ecology considerations included the overall landscape structure and function - the spatial pattern of landscape elements and the movement and flows of animals (including humans), plants, water, wind, materials, and energy through the structure. Management allocation also considered the benefits of the forest provides to people - personal, social, economic, and environmental. These management areas consider the recreation settings, activities, and opportunities for experiences and the scenic conditions across the landscape, as well as the primary ways that the forest is accessed.

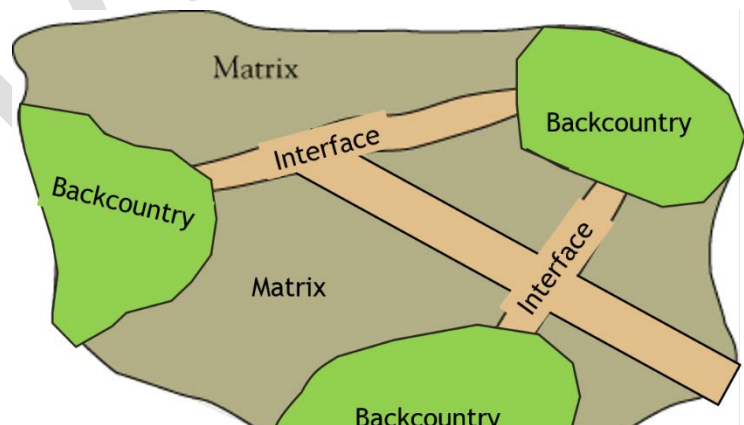


Figure 1: Conceptual representation of Interface, Matrix, and Backcountry Management areas

Adjustments were made to management area locations based on information provided during public meetings, including meetings with agencies of state and local governments, and Native American tribes. Forest Service personnel collaborated with people representing a full spectrum of interests to derive the spatial arrangement of the management areas.

How do management areas work together?

When viewed as a complete forest landscape, these management areas work together to form a network of patches, edges, corridors, and mosaics. A patch exhibits consistent characteristics across a specific land area, but varies by size, number, and shape. Edges are outer portions of patches, where environments differ from the inside of the patches. Corridors are structures that provide connectivity, such as roads or stream and river corridors used by humans and wildlife. Mosaics are patches of various sizes and shapes formed by a combination of networks, disturbances, and other change factors.

Pre-DRAFT

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Interface

Background

The Interface management area provides primary access to the Forests for visitation and management activities through a network of open system road corridors. Management activities, such as mechanical timber harvest, controlled burning, and invasive species management are conducted in Interface to support healthy ecosystems and wildlife habitats. The design of these management activities considers the high levels of human activity in this area.

The network of open road corridors in Interface is the main entry point to the Forests, connecting people with forest resources and providing access to destinations and places. When compared to Matrix or Backcountry, the Interface management area exhibits the highest opportunity for road accessible multiple uses. From the Interface, visitors have easy access to a variety of forest activities, everything from scenic driving along the roads, visitor facilities, and access to trailheads that make hiking, biking, horseback riding, climbing, hunting, and gathering possible. Recreation opportunities and settings in the Interface emphasize experiences that consider the comfort and convenience of visitors more than in other management areas.

The Interface is generally one mile wide because the human influence on the Forests is generally found within one half mile on each side of open roads.¹ Within the mile width, the degree of human influence is generally a gradient where the area next to the road is most influenced by humans and the area furthest from the road tends to function more like the mosaic and large patch habitats found in other adjacent management areas.

Matrix

Background

The Matrix is the largest management area in the Forests and serves as connective tissue between Interface, Backcountry, and other Special designations. The Matrix begins approximately one-half mile from primary open road corridors and extends to Backcountry or other management area designations. The Matrix provides both edge and interior wildlife habitat with a diversity of sizes and shapes, as well as providing multiple uses sustained by low-levels of motorized and non-motorized access.

In addition to the mix of patch sizes and types of National Forest, the Matrix also contains smaller isolated patches of National Forest land surrounded by private ownerships. These patches contribute to maintaining a broader forested landscape in conjunction with adjacent landowners.

The Matrix is comprised of diverse vegetation ranging from young forest to old growth and includes stream and river corridors, rare habitats, and common communities. With fewer and smaller landscape-fragmenting features than would be found in the Interface, the Matrix functions as a large patch landscape feature connecting wildlife habitats across the landscape. Within the Matrix, diverse forest habitat is provided primarily through structural or compositional restoration activities and augmented by natural disturbance regimes. Since the Matrix management area is actively managed to achieve forest desired conditions for healthy ecosystems and wildlife populations, there is high potential for encountering management activity, including mechanical timber harvest and prescribed fire.

Recreational opportunities emphasize moderately secluded habitats for hiking, biking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, and watersports. Interactions with other visitors are of a low to moderate frequency.

¹ One half mile is identified as the area of human influence in the Forest Service Recreational Opportunity Spectrum as well as landscape ecology science.

Plan Direction Common to Both Interface and Matrix

Vegetation Management

Objective

- **Across Interface and Matrix**, restore young forest conditions using mechanical treatment as a tool on between 650 and 1,200² acres annually, with the possibility of more with the help of partners or in the event of natural disturbance. Mechanically thin 150 to 400² acres annually and more with the help of partners and by using prescribed fire. With expanding opportunities, including with partners where possible, this work could accomplish up to approximately 3,000 to 4,000 acres annually as shown in the Forestwide objective #2, background, and rationale. These would be accomplished using the following considerations:
 - Emphasize ecosystem restoration (as reflected in forestwide desired conditions) and maintain existing silvicultural investments.
 - Prioritize ecozone restoration of shortleaf pine, dry-mesic oak, spruce fir, mesic oak, and pine oak heath; as well as off-site white pine and poplar-dominated coves to return these systems to their natural composition.
 - Enhance edge habitat by maintaining roadsides to promote: young forest conditions, grass and shrub habitat, soft mast, and diverse pollinator habitat.
 - In the presence of rare habitats and old growth patches, design treatments to maintain or restore or accelerate the characteristics of these features.
 - Treatments around concentrated recreation sites will consider the recreation values and visitor safety of the areas.
 - Use geographic area goals and ecosystem departure to aid in the identification of these opportunities.

² May 2017 Reviewers Note: The forestwide objectives (June 2016) identified an intent to increase regeneration activities from the annual average of 650 to at least 1200 acres of regeneration over 10 years. The forestwide objectives also call for increasing the average annual acres of thinning from 150 to 400 acres annually. For now, we have included the same acreage as the forestwide objective in the combined Interface and Matrix, however we expect additional regeneration and thinning will occur outside of Interface and Matrix. Because of this, the forestwide number in the forestwide objectives will likely increase, but we haven't yet completed an analysis to know how many additional acres could be expected in other Management areas (such as the AT Corridor, Byways, Heritage Corridors, Cradle of Forestry, Experimental Forests). This is in progress.

Also note that this objective does not account for the 1000s of acres of stand improvement activities that take place each year that improve species composition and structure of young forests, as well as the midstory and understory of mature forest communities.

Desired Condition

- Timber harvest³ will occur on both lands identified as suited for timber production⁴ as well as those lands identified as not suited for timber production. Together, these harvesting activities will provide a flow of wood products that benefit local communities.
- Forest product commodity outputs contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of the people living in the area and help maintain a way of life long associated with Western North Carolina.
- Lands identified as suitable for timber production have a regularly scheduled timber harvest program that contributes to forestwide desired conditions. The rotation ages needed to meet restoration and habitat objectives for young forest habitat are also compatible with the production of sawtimber and pulpwood products.
- Land identified as not suitable for timber production, but where timber harvesting could occur for other multiple-use purposes, have an irregular, unscheduled timber harvest program. Harvest meets management direction and desired conditions for the area, while providing services and benefits to the public.

Standards

- Confirm the lands suitable and not suitable for timber production within project areas during site specific analysis. Timber production will not be the primary purpose for projects and activities, and shall complement the ecological restoration desired conditions and objectives.^[1]
- While timber harvest can occur on lands both suitable and not suitable for timber production; for lands not suitable for timber production, timber harvesting can only occur when it is determined that timber harvesting activities are needed to protect multiple use values other than timber production, such as (1) for salvage of dead or dying trees from fire, natural disturbances, and insect and disease, (2) to address issues of public health or safety; (3) to reduce hazardous fuels; (4) to restore and maintain an ecological system or habitat over time and within the natural range of variation; (5) to perform research studies; or (6) for recreation and scenic-resource management purposes.
- Construction of new permanent wildlife fields and linear wildlife habitats is permitted.
- Existing wildlife fields, linear wildlife habitats, old fields, balds, and other permanently open wildlife habitats may be present and maintained. Some of these permanent openings may provide more shrub/sapling habitat as a result of longer maintenance cycles.
- Creation of brushy interface adjacent to or expansion of existing wildlife habitats described above is permitted.

Wildlife*Desired Conditions*

- Wildlife habitat conditions facilitate stable to increasing game species populations (such as ruffed grouse and deer) through active forest management.
- Wildlife habitat conditions support rare and unique species.

³ Timber harvest is defined as the removal of trees for wood fiber use and other multiple use purposes (36 CFR 219.19).

⁴ Timber production is defined as the purposeful growing, tending, harvesting, and regeneration of regulated crops of trees to be cut into logs, bolts, or other round sections for industrial or consumer use (36 CFR 219.19).

^[1] Identification of lands as suitable for timber production does not mean that those lands meet only the objective of growing trees on a rotation or that it has to be the primary objective. In many cases, these same lands contribute to desired young forest habitat or ecological restoration as the primary objective during district resource management projects with timber production as the secondary objective (FSH 1909.12 § 61.2).

- Young forest habitat occurs in greater proportions in Interface and Matrix when compared to Backcountry, providing proportionally more edge habitats that provide early seral conditions, and supporting species (such as bats, pollinators, ruffed grouse, and golden winged warblers) that depend on grass and shrub habitat and soft mast.

Pre-DRAFT

Plan Direction Specific to Interface

Vegetation Management

Desired Conditions

- As a result of the increased interaction between visitor use and forest management in the Interface, vegetation treatments, though designed for restoration, projects are designed to recognize recreation and scenery in project development.

Management Approach

- Management activities will be designed to limit extended visual impacts to forest users through scenery mitigation techniques such as increased edge shading, irregular edge design, re-contouring and advanced closure techniques for temporary road, etc.
- Roadside edges will be managed to avoid overgrowth, using techniques such as bush hogging, brush clearing, mowing, etc.
- Where roadside habitat can benefit wildlife species consider techniques to support increased edge habitat (see related DC in the wildlife section).

Forest Health

Management Approach

- Given the high movement of a variety of vehicles and associated use by the public in Interface, and therefore, the increased likelihood of nonnative invasive species infestations, emphasize education, control, early detection and rapid response. Monitoring and treatment should be higher across Interface than in other management areas in order to meet this management approach.
- Removal of hazard trees will be higher in Interface compared to other management areas given the higher public use that that occurs.

Transportation and Access

Desired Conditions

- Safe primary passenger car access to the forest is retained along roads that are heavily used for recreation, tourism, and well as traditional and local uses, such as hunting, fish and plant gathering.
- Shoreline access along recreational reservoirs supports and encourages local tourism.
- Designated off-highway vehicular areas support this motorized recreational use.

Standard

- While designing projects, determine if road management objectives should change due to updated information, policy, or public preferences,⁵ such as: it is determined that public use varies from planned use ; fire suppression access or safety can be accommodated with a different maintenance level; probable project and resource activity proposals do not depend on current road management objectives for implementation; resource uses change; public safety becomes a concern, land movement occurs; sensitive soils or wetlands are impacted; resources are being impacted by traffic or forest users; or illegal uses are occurring.

⁵ May 2017 clarification: The Monitoring and Adaptive Management Chapter of the Plan (not yet drafted) will outline a method for adjusting to these changes.

- Any closed roads could be open seasonally for short timeframes for specific purposes, such as hunting, berry picking, or seasonal foliage viewing.

Recreation

Desired Conditions

- The desired recreational settings range from Rural to Semi-Primitive Motorized (Rural, Roaded Natural, Semi-Primitive Motorized). See forest-wide direction for detailed information regarding these settings.
- Designed sites with rustic or contemporary improvements in developed recreation sites (development scale of 3 – 5) are provided for both resource protection and user comfort and convenience.
- Main access corridors and contact points such as developed trailheads and observation points have high-quality visitor information available to enhance visitor safety and experiences and to provide a transition and orientation place for visitors as they enter the forests.
- While use may range from highly concentrated to relatively uncrowded, generally recreation in Interface is more concentrated than in other management areas.
- A full range of motorized and non-motorized trail uses are available, which provide high quality user experiences with minimal impacts to environmental and cultural resources.
- Trail classes range from 1 (minimally developed) to 5 (highly developed), with features and structures consistent with appropriate recreational opportunity spectrum classifications.
- Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) trail systems are managed to provide a variety of motorized recreation opportunities on identified routes in natural appearing settings. Routes are well maintained and trail improvements or relocations focus on mitigating impacts to environmental and cultural resources, while providing for user satisfaction. Trail difficulty levels vary to accommodate a variety of desires and abilities within the capabilities of the environment. Users are adequately advised of trail difficulty levels and hazards. Support facilities, including trailheads, parking lots, restrooms, water access, and information boards are well designed to meet the needs of the visitor. Trail information and regulations are provided to make the visitors' experience more enjoyable. These routes and areas are managed for moderate to high levels of use, and routinely monitored for impacts to natural and cultural resources.

Standards

- Within motorized trail systems, ATVs, side-by-sides, UTVs, and un-licensed motorcycles are restricted to trails specifically designated as open to such vehicles.
- Improving or expanding existing OHV trails is given priority consideration over designating new OHV trail systems, and expansion of existing OHV trails are for resource protection or user safety.

Scenery

Desired Conditions

- Landscape character is predominately natural appearing, with some pastoral, cultural-historic, and developed areas.
- Management activities generally blend with the surrounding forested, pastoral, or developed landscape.

Standards and Guidelines

- Design proposed activities to meet the following assigned Scenic Integrity Objectives for the associated Scenic Class after site specific field verification as described in Forestwide Plan Components.

Management Area 1 - Interface					
Desired Landscape Character: Natural Appearing					
Inventoried Scenic Class	1	2	3	4	5
Assigned Scenic Integrity Objective	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low

Cultural Resources, and Tribal Resources

Management Approach

- Emphasize cultural resources and tribal history interpretation in this area more than in Matrix or Backcountry, and use American Indian languages in interpretation, in consultation with Tribes.

Plan Direction Specific to Matrix

Vegetation Management

Desired Conditions

- Young forests, across all ecozones, occur at a higher frequency in Matrix compared to Interface. Locally, young forest patch size may exceed average natural disturbance gap size to provide for habitat diversity, and to facilitate restoration operations and financial considerations, but will not contribute to exceeding the Natural Range of Variation at the landscape scale.

Transportation and Access

Desired Conditions

- Roads in the Matrix provide the public varying levels of access, both motorized and non-motorized, to areas of the forest that are less frequently visited. Access in this management area is retained for traditional uses, such as hunting, fishing, and gathering, as well as for future active restoration and forest health needs.
- Service on roads ranges from basic custodial care, to open for use to high clearance vehicles. Some roads in this area may be suitable for passenger cars, although comfort and convenience is not emphasized, and these roads are intended for travel at low speeds with single lanes and turnouts. Roads are maintained to protect water quality and prevent erosion.
- Any closed roads could be open seasonally for short timeframes for specific purposes, such as hunting, berry picking, or seasonal foliage viewing.

Standards and Guidelines

- Allow construction and reconstruction of only FS Maintenance Level 1, 2 or temporary roads.
- While designing projects, determine if road management objectives should change due to updated information, policy, or public preferences,⁶ such as: a portion of the ML 2 road has been opened seasonally and it is determined that longer timeframes should be allowed for multi-seasonal public access.

Recreation

Desired Conditions

- The desired recreational settings include Roded Natural and Semi-Primitive Motorized. (See forest-wide direction for detailed information regarding these settings.)
- A variety of dispersed recreation opportunities are provided, with an emphasis on non-motorized recreation uses. Limited motorized use is allowed only on NFS roads open to those uses as identified on the national forest's Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM).
- Developed facilities are generally limited, and primarily provide for health, sanitation, and resource protection. Developed recreation sites are designed with rudimentary or rustic improvements at lower development levels (development scale of 0-3).
- Non-motorized trail opportunities exist across the area, and are designed for high quality user experiences and resource protection. Trail classes range from 1 (minimally developed) to 5 (highly developed), with features and structures consistent with RN and SPM ROS settings.

⁶ May 2017 clarification: The Monitoring and Adaptive Management Chapter of the Plan (not yet drafted) will outline a method for adjusting to these changes.

Standards and Guide:

- See forest-wide direction

Scenery*Desired Conditions*

- Landscape character is generally natural appearing, pastoral, cultural-historic.
- Management activities blend with the surrounding forested, pastoral, or cultural-historic landscape.

Standards and Guidelines

- Design proposed activities to meet the following assigned Scenic Integrity Objectives for the associated Scenic Class after site specific field verification as described in Forestwide Plan Components.

Management Area 2 - Matrix					
Desired Landscape Character: Natural Appearing					
Inventoried Scenic Class	1	2	3	4	5
Assigned Scenic Integrity Objective	High	Moderate	Low	Low	Low

Backcountry

The Backcountry management area is often remote and unroaded, and management focuses on maintaining large blocks of relatively undisturbed forested conditions. Sections of the Forests within this management area are generally 2,500 acres or greater in size, however some areas may be smaller if they are adjacent to wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas. These areas are primarily shaped by natural processes such as floods, storms, insects, diseases, and fires. Existing roads are maintained, and road construction and reconstruction is limited.

The landscape features predominantly mid- to late-successional forest communities with a continuous forested canopy. The Backcountry management area emphasizes habitat for species that thrive in large blocks of older forest. Forest restoration and habitat improvement 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.

These areas provide large tracts of backcountry recreation opportunities, emphasizing a semi-primitive, non-motorized setting with limited recreational facilities. Hiking, backpacking, mountain bike riding, horseback riding, rock climbing, nature study, hunting, fishing, boating, and watersports are typical activities that may be available in a setting where freedom from the sights and sounds of modern civilization is important. Visitors see little evidence of human activities other than backcountry recreation use, maintenance of existing wildlife openings, and occasional prescribed burning or fire lines.

Part of this management area includes all the inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) governed by the Roadless Area Conservation Rule **that are not within** wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, or areas recommended for wilderness, and these areas have additional management guidance specified below. These IRAs were identified in the national 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which prohibited road construction and reconstruction in IRAs and outlined roadless area characteristics. IRAs are characterized as having an undeveloped character and are valued for many resource benefits including wildlife habitat, biological diversity, and dispersed recreation opportunities. Restoration activities in IRAs will have different management guidance, as specified below, consistent with national policy.

Plan components listed below apply to the whole Backcountry management area, unless a plan component is specified as only applying to the Inventoried Roadless Area portions of this management area, or those portions of the management area outside IRAs.

Vegetation Management

Desired Conditions

- Large blocks of remote and unroaded forest appear to be primarily shaped by natural processes.
- Mid- to late-successional forest communities predominate, providing a contiguous forest canopy 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 the ecozone desired conditions.

Standards and guidelines

- **Within Inventoried Roadless Areas** lands are not suitable for timber production. Timber may not be cut, sold, or removed except when the cutting, sale or removal of generally small diameter timber is needed for one of the following purposes and will maintain or improve one or more of the roadless area characteristics, and the latest FS policy regarding delegation of approval of these activities must be considered:
 - To improve threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species habitat; or
 - To maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure;
 - The cutting, sale, or removal of timber is incidental to the implementation of a management activity not otherwise prohibited;
 - The cutting, sale, or removal of timber is needed and appropriate for personal or administrative use.

- **Outside of Inventoried Roadless Areas**, in order to retain backcountry character, the cutting, sale or removal of timber must meet the same purposes as within IRAs, however there is not a diameter size restriction.
- Across the Backcountry management area (both outside and within Inventoried Roadless Areas)
 - Existing wildlife fields, and linear wildlife habitats may be present and maintained. Some openings may provide more shrub/sapling habitat as a result of longer maintenance cycles.
 - Creation of brushy interface adjacent to or expansion of existing wildlife fields and linear wildlife openings will not exceed 100 feet in any direction or a doubling of the current opening size, whichever is smaller. Construction of new permanent wildlife fields and linear wildlife habitats is not permitted.
 - These lands are unsuitable for timber production.

Wildlife

Desired Conditions

- Wildlife habitat conditions in Backcountry reflect larger contiguous blocks, core and interior forest conditions and proportionally more mature and old growth forest conditions than Interface and Matrix.
- Wildlife habitat conditions support rare and unique species, and game species (such as veery, hermit thrush, Swainson's thrush, wood thrush, cerulean warbler, worm-eating warbler and Kentucky warblers, and black bear) that thrive in larger blocks of older forest

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, first consider Integrated Pest Management such as biological controls, then hand-control methods, and finally pesticides. Consider the least ecologically disruptive technique that will accomplish control of the pest.

Fire

Desired Conditions

- Fire in these large forested landscapes plays an important role to maintain or restore fire-associated forested communities, to improve forest structure, and to reduce fuel buildups.
- Fire suppression alternatives will be based on values at risk, such as firefighter and public safety, infrastructure and neighboring lands.
- Where fire does not pose threats to values at risk and is naturally occurring, then fires may burn at higher intensity and extent than would be found in Interface or Matrix. As a result there may be larger acreages that exhibit fire effects in Backcountry than would be found in other management areas.
- Prescribed fire and naturally ignitions could be managed to reduce to high fuel loadings, improve and maintain and create wildlife habitat, or to benefit fire-dependent ecosystems and associated species such as table mountain pine and oak forests.
- Where ignitions are human caused, the values at risk analysis considers a range of suppression options.

Standards and guidelines

- Allow for fuels reduction needs when necessary to reduce hazards to visitors, wildlife urban interface environments or for safety, with consideration of protection of adjacent lands.
- High intensity prescribed fire may be used to create openings to support habitat development and early seral forest conditions.

- Use natural fuel breaks such as streams, roads, rock slides, etc., where possible to minimize fireline construction. Emphasize the use of handlines and minimize dozer lines.

Roads

Desired Condition

- Within Inventoried Roadless Areas, the undeveloped character identified in the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule is retained.

Standards and guidelines

- Maintenance of existing system roads is permissible.
- Across the Backcountry management area (both outside and within Inventoried Roadless Areas) system roads may not be constructed or reconstructed unless one of the following conditions applies. **Within Inventoried Roadless Areas**, the latest FS policy regarding delegation of approval of these activities must be considered:

(1) A road is needed to protect public health and safety in cases of an imminent threat of flood, fire, or other catastrophic event that, without intervention, would cause the loss of life or property;

(2) A road is needed to conduct a response action under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) or to conduct a natural resource restoration action under CERCLA, Section 311 of the Clean Water Act, or the Oil Pollution Act;

(3) A road is needed pursuant to reserved or outstanding rights, or as provided for by statute or treaty;

(4) Road realignment is needed to prevent irreparable resource damage that arises from the design, location, use, or deterioration of a system road that cannot be mitigated by road maintenance. Road realignment may occur under this paragraph only if the road is deemed essential for public or private access, natural resource management, or public health and safety;

(5) Road reconstruction is needed to implement a road safety improvement project on a system road determined to be hazardous on the basis of accident experience or accident potential on that road;

(6) The appropriate decision-maker determines that a Federal Aid Highway project, authorized pursuant to Title 23 of the United States Code, is in the public interest or is consistent with the purposes for which the land was reserved or acquired and no other reasonable and prudent alternative exists; or

(7) A road is needed in conjunction with the continuation, extension, or renewal of a mineral lease on lands that are under lease or for a new lease issued immediately upon expiration of an existing lease. Such road construction or reconstruction must be conducted in a manner that minimizes effects on surface resources, prevents unnecessary or unreasonable surface disturbance, and complies with all applicable lease requirements, land and resource management plan direction, regulations, and laws.

Roads constructed or reconstructed pursuant to this paragraph must be obliterated when no longer needed for the purposes of the lease or upon termination or expiration of the lease, whichever is sooner.

- Outside of Inventoried Roadless Areas, ecological restoration desired conditions and objectives can be achieved through use of existing roads, or construction of temporary roads or equipment trails. These temporary roads and trails must be obliterated and the remote characteristics of the area must be restored as soon as practical.
- Outside of Inventoried Roadless Areas, along roads that form the boundary of Backcountry, the following activities are allowed within 100 feet of the road: minor road relocation, vegetation management for road maintenance, and vegetation management to facilitate project implementation in adjacent management areas, such as cutting of trees for auxiliary facilities such as landings, cable yarding corridors, etc., associated with

timber harvesting on acres in adjacent management areas. Impacts should be restored to ensure maintenance of backcountry characteristics, including obliterating and reforesting road relocations or landings.

Recreation

Desired Conditions

- The desired recreation settings are predominately Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, but also include some Semi-Primitive Motorized, and Roded Natural settings.
- Non-motorized recreation provides opportunities for solitude, risk, and challenge in remote areas. The predominant means of access is over non-motorized trails, although limited public motorized use is allowed on a few open roads.
- Non-motorized trail opportunities exist across the area, and are designed for high quality user experiences and resource protection. Trail classes range from 1 (minimally developed) to 3 (moderately developed), with features and structures consistent with a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized setting.
- Recreation facilities are generally limited to trailheads and provide for visitor health and safety or resource protection rather than user comfort or convenience.

Standards and Guide:

- See forest-wide direction

Scenery

Desired Conditions

- Landscape character is natural evolving to natural appearing.
- Management activities are generally subtle and blend with the surrounding natural-appearing landscape.

Standards and Guidelines

- Design proposed activities to meet the following assigned Scenic Integrity Objectives for the associated Scenic Class after site specific field verification as described in Forestwide Plan Components.

Management Area 3 - Backcountry					
Desired Landscape Character: Natural Appearing					
Inventoried Scenic Class	1	2	3	4	5
Assigned Scenic Integrity Objective	High	High	High	High	High

Management Area: Concentrated Recreation Areas

This management area includes the precise footprint of places where there is concentrated recreation use, both in developed recreation sites and dispersed recreation areas.

March 2017: Plan direction for this management area is currently described in Forestwide: Recreation: Concentrated Use Areas (Feb 2016 version), and is designed to manage for the characteristics that make the area unique.

Management Area: Administrative Sites

Background

The Administrative Sites management area includes Forest Service facilities and grounds used to manage the operations of the Forests, including ranger district offices, Job Corps Centers, the Beech Creek and Chilhowie Seed Orchards, work centers, and other facilities. Sites are managed to serve and support resource programs and are maintained to protect capital investment.

March 2017: Plan direction for this management area will be forthcoming, and will be designed to manage for the characteristics that make the area unique.

Management Area: Appalachian Trail

Background

The Appalachian Trail extends for 2,180 miles from Georgia to Maine, traversing four ranger districts on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests as it crosses through North Carolina. Completed in 1937, the trail is one of the best known and most popular recreation destinations on the Forests. It follows the crest of the Appalachian Mountains and predominantly crosses through naturally appearing environments, although sections also extend into urban areas.

The Appalachian Trail traverses North Carolina for approximately 95 miles and another 225 miles straddle the North Carolina-Tennessee border. Managed under a partnership between the National Park Service, the Forest Service and other government and private agencies, the trail's management activities are directed in accordance with the National Trails Systems Act (Public Law 90-543) and the Appalachian Trail Comprehensive Plan.

March 2017: Plan direction for this management area will be forthcoming, and will be designed to manage for the characteristics that make the area unique.

Management Area: National Scenic Byways

Background

This management area includes the scenic corridors along the Blue Ridge Parkway, Cherohala Skyway and the Forest Heritage National Scenic Byway. These byways are nationally designated because of their scenic beauty and the opportunity they provide to view the scenic and cultural landscapes of western North Carolina.

The Blue Ridge Parkway is a 469-mile motor route administered by the National Park Service that crosses landscapes with views of spectacular mountain and valley vistas, quiet pastoral scenes, sparkling waterfalls, colorful wildflower and foliage displays, as well as signage and visitor centers that provide interpretation of mountain history and culture. Established in 1936 to provide a safe, uninterrupted scenic route through the Southern Appalachian Mountains, the Parkway stretches from the George Washington National Forest, passing through North Carolina's National Forests before terminating in the Cherokee Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

March 2017: Plan direction for this management area will be forthcoming, and will be designed to manage for the characteristics that make these byways unique.

Management Area: Heritage Corridors

Background

As cited in the 1968 National Trails Act:

National historic trails shall have as their purpose the identification and protection of the historic route and its historic remnants and artifacts for public use and enjoyment. Only those selected land and water based components of an historic trail which are on federally owned lands and which meet the national historic trail criteria established in this chapter are included as Federal protection components of a national historic trail. (P.L. 90-543, as amended through P.L. 111-11, March 30, 2009).

This management area consists of Congressionally designated National Historic Trails (NHTs), National Millennium Trails, and other historic routes eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Historic trails are administered through guidelines developed by the National Park Service (NPS) in conjunction with partners including the Forest Service, American Indian tribes, state parks, non-profits, and private landowners. Associated landscapes of cultural significance are managed to maintain and restore their inherent cultural values through consultation with American Indian Tribes and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the National Park Service, and other partners.

There are two NHTs located on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests: the American Revolution Overmountain Victory Trail and the Trail of Tears. The American Revolution **Overmountain Victory Trail** (OMVT) was designated in 1984. The 330 mile long OMVT route, which was used to reach Kings Mountain during the American Revolution, crosses 7.64 miles on the Appalachian and Grandfather Ranger Districts of the Pisgah NF.

The **Trail of Tears**, originally established in 1987 and later extended by Congress in 2008 to include portions in North Carolina, is a total of 5,045 miles in length with 40.9 miles crossing the Nantahala National Forest along six connecting routes on the Cheoah, Nantahala, and Tusquitee Ranger Districts. The Trail of Tears National Historic Trail, a tribally recognized sacred site, commemorates the removal of the Federally Recognized Tribes and the paths that 17 Cherokee detachments followed westward in 1838-1839.

The **National Millennial Trail Unicoi Turnpike** (UT), Nantahala National Forest, is a commercial wagon road crossing the southern Appalachians that was also used as part of the Trail of Tears route from North Carolina into Tennessee. The turnpike road was completed in 1816 as a commercial route across the Cherokee Nation from the head of navigation on the Savannah River in Georgia to the Little Tennessee River near Maryville, Tennessee. The TOT and UT routes often overlap.

Heritage Corridors are designated as a mile wide corridor, ½ mile either side of the trail route.⁷ The one mile corridor may contain lands that are suitable for timber production.

Heritage corridors have an interior corridor which is 1,500 feet wide⁸, 750 feet either side of the route and around associated sites, unless adjusted for topographic considerations. The interior corridor is managed primarily for the

⁷ The one mile wide corridor was decided upon to meet the guidelines developed for National Historic Trail corridor widths, in the absence of knowing all exact on-the-ground trail locations and associated sites. Tribes expressed a need for a one-mile wide corridor as needed for protection of the TOT/UT Sacred Site.

⁸ The 1,500 feet wide corridor was developed based upon National Historic Trail (NHT) guidelines that suggest a 200 – 300 meter [600 – 900 feet] buffer (either side) of a NHT be used to complete a Cultural Landscape Inventory. This direction when compared with the known locations of the TOT/UT and associated sites as well as their topographic conditions and view sheds on the Nantahala National Forest resulted in a designated buffer of 750' either side. Field visits with tribal members led to agreement as this would be the best way to proceed.

identification, protection, preservation, restoration, and interpretation of trail routes as well as associated sites identified in Cultural Landscape Inventories (CLI) and Cultural Landscape Reports (CLR). The interior corridor is not suitable for timber production.

Table 1. Heritage Corridors Miles and Acres

<i>Corridor Name</i>	<i>Miles (FS)</i>	<i>Mile Corridor Acres (FS only)</i>	<i>1500' Corridor Acres (FS only)</i>
Overmountain Victory Trail	7.64	4,890	1,389
Trail of Tears	40.9	26,176	7,315
Unicoi Turnpike	8.8	5,497.5	1,573.4

March 2017: Plan direction for this management area will be forthcoming, and will be designed to manage for the characteristics that make the area unique. These plan components are under development with input from Federally recognized Tribes.

Management Area: Wild and Scenic Rivers

Background

Wild and Scenic Rivers are managed to maintain the free flowing status, to maintain Outstanding Remarkable Values (ORVs), and enhance the wild, scenic, and riparian features of the river and to provide water-oriented recreational opportunities in a natural setting. All lands are managed in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

This management area includes Wild and Scenic Rivers and the adjacent lands that make up the river corridors. Management direction for Congressionally designated Chattooga, Horsepasture, and Wilson Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers as well currently eligible rivers are included here.

Wild and Scenic River	River Miles	Established	Ranger District
Chattooga River	50	1974	Nantahala
Horsepasture River	4.2	1986	Nantahala
Wilson Creek	23.3	2000	Grandfather

Eligible Wild and Scenic River	River Miles	Ranger District
Big Laurel and Puncheon Fork	2.8	Appalachian
Davidson River	15.5	Pisgah
East Fork Pigeon River (including Dark Prong and Yellowstone Prong)	9.8	Pisgah
French Broad River	1.9 ⁹	Appalachian
Linville River	14 ¹⁰	Grandfather

⁹ On Forest Service Lands

¹⁰ On Forest Service Lands

Eligible Wild and Scenic River	River Miles	Ranger District
Mills River System (North Fork, South Fork, Mills)	23.6	Pisgah
Nantahala River (above and below the Nantahala Lake)	19 (above) 18 (below)	Nantahala
Nolichucky River	7.2	Appalachian
Snowbird Creek		Cheoah
Tellico River	6	Cheoah

Plan direction for this management area will be forthcoming, and will be designed to manage for the characteristics that make the area unique.

May 2017 Reviewer's Note: As part of the Plan revision process, the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests are conducting an evaluation to determine if there are additional rivers that are eligible as Wild and Scenic Rivers, and are evaluating to ensure the rivers currently identified as eligible still meet the criteria. This documentation is available in a separate document on the Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River Evaluation page.

Management Area: Special Interest Areas & Research Natural Areas

Background

The Forest Service designates Special Interest Areas to protect the unique scenic, geological, botanical, or zoological attributes of sections of the Forests and foster public use when appropriate. Special interest areas would be managed to perpetuate the rare species, conditions, or features that characterize the individual Special Interest Area.

Research Natural Areas represent current natural conditions, and designation of these areas allows natural physical and biological processes to prevail without human intervention. They will be managed for scientific research.

Plan direction for this management area will be forthcoming, and will be designed to manage for the characteristics that make the area unique.

May 2017 Reviewer's Note: The Forest Service is currently evaluating which areas should be recognized as Special Interest Areas in the revised Plan and changes are expected from the current Plan. A separate process paper on Special Interests Areas on this topic is available on our website.

Management Area: Wilderness

Background

The National Wilderness Preservation System was established by Congress in 1964 to protect and preserve sections of the American landscape in a state untouched by man. Wilderness designations extend to more than 107 million acres nationwide, including more than 70,000 acres on the Nantahala and Pisgah Forests.

To qualify as wilderness, an area must (1) generally appear to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) have outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) have at least 5,000 acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Designated wilderness provides for the most restrictive level of management activities on the Forests. Many wilderness areas on the Forests also contain old growth restoration areas, US Fish and Wildlife critical habitat, and North Carolina significant natural heritage areas.

Wilderness	Acres	Established	Ranger District
Ellicott Rock	3,394	1975	Nantahala
Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock	17,418	1975	Cheoah
Linville Gorge	11,893	1964	Grandfather
Middle Prong	7,482	1984	Pisgah
Shining Rock	18,479	1964	Pisgah
Southern Nantahala	11,703	1984	Nantahala
Total	70,369		

March 2017: Plan direction for this management area will be forthcoming, and will be designed to manage for the characteristics that make the area unique.

Management Area: Wilderness Study Areas

Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) are lands designated by Congress for further study for potential designation as Wilderness or their release from further consideration for designation. Until designated or released, these lands are managed to preserve their wilderness characteristics. There are five wilderness study areas on the Nantahala and Pisgah NFs; Craggy Mountain, Harper Creek, Lost Cove, Overflow, and Snowbird.

Wilderness Study Area	Acres	Established	Ranger District
Craggy Mountain	2,380	1984	Appalachian
Harper Creek	7,140	1984	Grandfather
Lost Cove	5,710	1984	Grandfather
Overflow	3,200	1984	Nantahala
Snowbird	8,490	1984	Cheoah
Total	26,920		

March 2017: Plan direction for this management area will be forthcoming, and will be designed to manage for the characteristics that make the area unique.

Management Area: Experimental Forests

Background

Experimental Forests provide the Forest Service and other researchers with real-world laboratories in which to conduct long-term science and management studies aimed at enhancing the health, productivity, and diversity of the nation's

forests and improving forestry practices. The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests have three experimental forests – Bent Creek in Buncombe County near Asheville and Coweeta Hydrologic Laboratory and Blue Valley in Macon County.

Established in 1925 to research rehabilitating forests damaged by overharvesting and promote sustainable forestry, the Bent Creek Experimental Forest in the Pisgah National Forest is the oldest federal experimental forest east of the Mississippi. The Coweeta Hydrological Laboratory in the Nantahala Forest, established in 1934, has conducted the longest continuous environmental landscape in North America and one of the oldest gauged watersheds in the world. The Blue Valley Experimental Forest in the Nantahala Forest provides researchers with data on eastern white pine and associated hardwoods.

Experimental Forest	Year Established	Acres
Bent Creek	1925	5,242
Coweeta Hydrologic Laboratory	1934	5,482
Blue Valley	1964	12,124
Total		22,848

March 2017: Plan direction for this management area will be forthcoming, and will be designed to manage for the characteristics that make the area unique.

Management Area: Roan Mountain

This area is Roan Mountain on the Appalachian Ranger District. It will be managed to maintain distinctive outstanding scenic qualities, wildlife and plant communities, spruce-fir and northern hardwoods.

March 2017: Plan direction for this management area will be forthcoming, and will be designed to manage for the characteristics that make the area unique.

Management Area: Cradle of Forestry in America

The Cradle of Forestry in America is a historic site within the Pisgah National Forest designated in 1964 to commemorate the beginning of forest conservation in the United States. Congress recognize this site as the birthplace of forestry and forestry education in America to promote, demonstrate and stimulate interest scientific forest management and showcase partnership opportunities. The Cradle of Forestry tells the story of the first forestry school and the beginnings of scientific forestry in America. Once home to the Biltmore Forest School, the site includes a visitor center; amphitheater; and a collection of historic and reconstructed buildings, objects, and site furnishings, and the Pink Beds area.

March 2017: Plan direction for this management area will be forthcoming, and will be designed to manage for the characteristics that make the area unique.

Appendix A, Forest Plan Givens

The revised Nantahala and Pisgah Forest Plan will guide the Forests' future

All Plan alternatives will recognize multiple uses of the Forest Service mission including timber harvest, recreation, wildlife, water and wilderness.

All Plan alternatives will improve forest health and resiliency. The Plan will increase the pace and scale of restoration above current levels; maintain and improve the diversity of forest vegetation especially young forest, open forest, and old growth conditions; increase management activity using silviculture and fire as tools; and control invasive species.

All Plan alternatives will improve wildlife habitat. The Plan will maintain or improve habitat conditions for the wildlife species that depend on the forest, including federally-listed species and species of conservation concern, rare and unique habitats, as well resident and migrant game species, pollinators, birds, bats, fish, and more.

All Plan alternatives will contribute to clean and abundant water. The Plan will sustain surface water and ground water flow, protect water quality, maintain fish and wildlife habitat, control erosion, restore streams and streamside zones, and continue to be a source of drinking water to communities in Western NC.

All Plan alternatives will improve the Forests' world class recreation opportunities for year-round outdoor play and exercise. The plan will provide for both developed and dispersed recreation on land and water, from an outdoor multiple use trail system to indoor facilities, ensuring opportunities and sites are sustainable for the future.

All Plan alternatives will enable forest access for visitors, including hunting and fishing and gathering of forest products, as well as providing for the needs of Federally recognized Tribes.

All Plan alternatives will contribute to local economies by collaboratively providing resources, improvements to infrastructure, sustainable levels of renewable forest commodities, and that contribute to local businesses, tourism, and sustainable community growth.

All Plan alternatives will sustain the Forests' scenic beauty and cultural resources, enabling the forest to remain a destination for spiritual renewal and connecting to our shared history.

All Plan alternatives will continue to manage existing administrative and Congressionally designated areas which will not be changed during revision. These areas include:

The Cradle of Forestry Historic Site	Wild and Scenic Rivers	Inventoried Roadless Areas
Research Natural Areas	Experimental Forests	National Scenic and Historic Trails, such as the Appalachian Trail and the Trail of Tears
Wildernes	Wilderness Study Areas	

All Plan alternatives will recommend changes in land allocations in the following three areas :

Recommended Wilderness	Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers	Special Interest Areas
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All Plan alternatives will recognize the value of partners in shaping our shared future. The Plan will state how other agencies, government and non-government partners, volunteers and visitors contribute to sustaining these National Forests, and will identify and help facilitate additional opportunities to work together for shared goals.

All plan alternatives will be built around input from the public, governments, Federally Recognized Tribes and best available science. In addition to a broad and inclusive public involvement process, the FS is working with the National Forest Foundation and the Stakeholders Forum the Nantahala and Pisgah Forest Plan in a collaborative process to ensure that the concerns of diverse interests are addressed .

The Forest Service will continue to collaborate with the public on implementing the revised Plan. The Plan is developed with input from the public and future planning and projects will be undertaken in collaboration with the public.

Appendix B – Scenery Management notes for reviewers

This Appendix is for May 2017 reviewers (it won't stay as part of this chapter in the draft plan). It is provided since the Forestwide section on scenery management was not previously available. The following are key excerpts of draft Forestwide scenery direction.

- Forestwide DC: The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests provide many opportunities for viewing high-quality scenery, rural and cultural sightseeing, and nature-based tourism. Numerous distinctively scenic places of local or regional interest are available for people to enjoy, and the Forests offer outstanding opportunities for scenic viewing from trails, roads, rivers, lakes and recreation areas.
- Forestwide DC: Scenery across the Forests include intact, natural-appearing, and predominantly forested landscapes; as well as openings for cultural or historic sites, pastoral areas, developed recreation areas, roads, and administrative sites. Scenic resources compliment recreation settings and experiences.
- Forestwide DC: Vegetation treatments and other proposed actions are designed to ensure scenic integrity is maintained or enhanced.
- Forestwide Standard: Use the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forest's Scenic Class Inventory as a reference to determine Scenic Classes for specific locations within each management area... Adhering to processes described in the Scenery Management Handbook
 - Use site-specific analysis to verify, or identify adjustments to, inventoried Scenic Classes at the project level...
- Forestwide Standard: At the project-level, analyze potential scenery impacts...
- Forestwide Management Approach: The following process can be used to conduct a project-level scenery analysis:
 - 1) Reference the Nantahala and Pisgah NF Scenic Class Inventory map (GIS Layer) to identify Scenic Classes for proposed treatment areas.
 - 2) Considering Concern Levels of potential viewpoints and the Distance Zone at which the proposed activity would be seen, verify that the inventoried Scenic Class is mapped correctly. If a mapping error is found and a project-level adjustment to the inventoried Scenic Class is needed, provide justification and supporting documentation in the project effects analysis.
 - 3) Identify the assigned Scenic Integrity Objective for the proposed activity location in management area scenery standards.
 - 4) Review the Southern Region Scenery Treatment Guide to identify types of management activities that might meet the assigned SIO.

- 5) Identify locations of potential viewpoints (use areas, water bodies, open roads, trails, closed roads used as trails).
- 6) Ensure that visible portions of proposed activities meet the assigned SIO as seen from identified viewpoints. Effects analysis should consider topographic screening, vegetative screening (preferably in leaf-off season), duration of view (moving or stationary), landscape character, cumulative effects of multiple treatment activities, etc. For more details see: *Agriculture Handbook Number 701, Landscape Aesthetics; A Handbook for Scenery Management.*
 - Forestwide Management Approach: The latest version of the Scenery Treatment Guide for the Southern Region should be used in project planning and implementation as a reference to determine vegetation treatment types that could meet assigned SIOs and to provide guidance for mitigating scenery impacts for various management activities.
 - Forestwide Management Approach: In addition to identifying appropriate activities from the Scenery Treatment Guide, the following design features can be incorporated into vegetation treatments to mitigate scenery impacts. Consult the Forest Landscape Architect to determine circumstances where these techniques may be utilized most effectively:
 - Depending on the viewing distance and assigned SIO to be met, maintain 25 to 35 square feet of residual basal area per acre in the visible portions of two-aged shelterwood treatments.
 - Where possible, leave screening vegetation down-slope from log landings, cable landings, roads, and skid roads.
 - Feather upper boundaries of regeneration treatments to reduce the shadow line as seen from MG viewpoints.
 - Select “leave” trees with well-formed crowns.
 - Shape unit boundaries to eliminate straight lines or geometric shapes.
 - Leave uncut clumps of trees (inclusions) within a regeneration treatment to visually “break up” the opening.
 - Locate regeneration treatment boundaries below a ridge line.
 - Insure that the timber sale administrator understands and implements design features and scenery mitigation.

Key terms of the Scenery Management System

Scenic Attractiveness (SA) is a measure of the scenic importance of a landscape based on human perceptions of the intrinsic beauty of the landform, water characteristics, and vegetation patterns. In combination, these attributes determine the natural scenic beauty of a landscape.

- Class “A” Landscape - Distinctive
- Class “B” - Common or Typical
- Class “C” - Indistinctive

Lands of the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests inventoried as Scenic Attractiveness Class “A” Landscapes include:

- Congressionally Designated Wildernesses and Wilderness Study Areas
- Congressionally Designated Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Forest Designated Scenic Areas
- Eligible W/S Rivers – to recognize and protect their ORVs
- Special Interest Areas – other than Forest Designated Scenic Areas
- Other distinctive landscapes

All other Forest lands were inventoried as Scenic Attractiveness Class “B”.

Concern Levels (CL) are a measure of the degree of public importance placed on landscapes viewed from travelways and use areas. “Primary” travelways and use areas are typically of regional or national importance, while “Secondary” travelways and use areas are usually of local importance.

- CL1 - Primary or secondary travelways or use areas of any use-level where the public has a high interest in scenery.
- CL2 - Primary or secondary travelways or use areas of any use-level where the public has a moderate interest in scenery; or high or moderate use primary travel ways or use areas where the public has a low interest in scenery.
- CL3: Secondary travelways or use areas, or low-use primary travelways or use areas where the public has a low interest in scenery.

Note: An example of a primary travelway or use area of national or regional importance would be the Blue Ridge Parkway and other Scenic Byways; or National Scenic, Historic, or Recreation Trails. Examples of secondary travelways would be all Federal and State roads not listed as primary travelways; or USFS roads which serve as connectors between nearby communities or provide access to recreation sites.

Distance Zones (DZ) are the distance at which an activity or area is viewed.

- Foreground (FG) from viewer up to 0.5 miles away
- Middleground (MG) from 0.5 miles to 4 miles away
- Background (BG) from 4 miles away to the horizon

Scenic Classes (SC) are the combination of the three inventory components: Distance Zone, Concern Level, and Scenic Attractiveness. Scenic Classes are identified for each combination of these components in the following table:

		Inventoried Distance Zones and Concern Levels								
		FG1	MG1	BG1	FG2	MG2	BG2	FG3	MG3	BG3
Inventoried Scenic Attractiveness	A	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3
	B	1	2	2	2	3	4	3	5	5
	C	1	2	3	2	4	5	5	6	7

See Table 4-2 in the Scenery Management Handbook, pg. 4-15.

Note: The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests were not inventoried with Scenic Attractiveness Class “C” landscapes, so Scenic Classes 6 and 7 do not apply.

Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIOs) are assigned to each Scenic Class through the forest planning process, which may differ between management areas. Scenic integrity is “stated in degrees of deviation from the existing landscape character of a national forest”, and “describes the state of naturalness, or conversely the state of disturbance created by human activities or alteration” (Scenery Management Handbook, Glossary-5). See definitions of each SIO in the Forest Wide Desired Conditions for scenery.

Visual Management System vs. the Scenery Management System

Lands of the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests were inventoried in the 1980s based on the Visual Management System (VMS). With that inventory, Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) became established standards for each management area described in the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended. This revised Land and Resource Management Plan incorporates the updated Scenery Management System (SMS). General concepts are similar in VMS and SMS, but many new processes and terminologies were developed for the updated system. For example, the following table shows the relationship between VQOs and SIOs:

Crosswalk between VMS and SMS:

Visual Management System: Visual Quality Objective (VQO)	Scenery Management System: Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO)
Preservation (P)	Very High (VH)
Retention (R)	High (H)
Partial Retention (PR)	Moderate (M)
Modification (M)	Low (L)