

Refining Management Area Lines, Spring 2017

Updated: June 4, 2017

The public has provided extensive information to the Forest Service about places and uses that are important on the landscape. That information has been considered and incorporated where possible into the pre-draft revised Forest Plan (hereafter “the Plan”) in multiple locations, including in the development of Forestwide direction, the geographic area narratives and goals, and the management area boundaries and plan components. This paper outlines how two datasets provided by the Stakeholders Forum were considered: (1) Natural Area Priorities (NAPs), (2) Wildlife Habitat Active Management Areas (WHAMAs), and restoration needs. While additional information beyond these sources of information has been received from public and stakeholder input, this paper only addresses these datasets. Other process papers address those other sources of information.

To consider wildlife habitat management needs, the Forest Service considered three datasets: 1) WHAMAs provided by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission in early 2016, that include both focal and priority areas for six species: Elk, White-tailed Deer, Wild Turkey, Ruffed Grouse, Cerulean Warbler, and Golden-winged Warbler; 2) shapefiles of restoration needs across the landscape shared by the NC Wildlife Resources, and 3) the NC Wildlife Resources Commission proposal for areas identified as front-, mid-, and back-country.

NAPs were shared with the Forest Service in early 2016 by Mountain True, the Wilderness Society, and other partner organizations. The NAPs include three sets of information: 1) Wilderness Society Mountain Treasures; 2) State Natural Heritage Areas; and 3) old growth areas, including areas mapped by the Wilderness Society (and other partners) along with designated Forest Service patches of potential old growth.

As discussed below, in some cases NAPs and WHAMAs information had an effect on management area lines, and other cases the values expressed by these datasets are addressed in other parts of the Plan, such as in Forestwide, Management Area, or Designated Area plan direction.

Concepts based on landscape ecology principles provided by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) helped shape the overall management area construct of Interface, Matrix, and Backcountry. While this paper does not specifically address the 30 priority core forest areas identified by TNC, that information was useful in deliberations by Forest Service and the authors of NAPs and WHAMAs. Further analyses will address the core forested landscapes.

The management area lines discussed in this paper are Interface, Matrix, and Backcountry. In some cases, Special Interest Areas are referenced. This paper does not discuss the identification of any area as “Recommended Wilderness;” the options about that management area and the diversity of perspectives are discussed in other process papers.

It cannot be over-emphasized that the information below represents our latest May 2017 thinking, with ink still wet on the paper. This information is expected to evolve based on district and public input and that feedback will help shape the development of all plan alternatives.

Considering NAPs

NAPs Part 1: Mountain Treasure Areas

Mountain Treasures areas were suggested by the Wilderness Society for either Recommended Wilderness or Backcountry, primarily on the basis of their unroaded, undeveloped character. Each area was reviewed by the Forest Service to determine whether the area would be most appropriately identified for Backcountry, Matrix, or Interface management. (These areas were also included in the FS Wilderness Evaluation in a separate plan revision process, not further discussed in this paper)

Mountain Treasure Areas, or portions of areas, that exhibited the following characteristics were considered by the Interdisciplinary team for inclusion in Backcountry management:

- Semi-primitive non-motorized inventory areas greater than 2,500 acres. (This minimum size threshold for backcountry is criterion for Forest Service Recreational Opportunity Spectrum practices. This size criteria can also provide for species requiring forest interior habitats).
- Semi-primitive non-motorized inventory areas less than 2,500 acres that are adjacent Inventoried Roadless Areas, Wilderness, or Wilderness Study areas that are of sufficient size and characteristics to be managed as Backcountry.
- Lands did not contain significant needs for ecosystem restoration that would be inhibited by the Backcountry management direction, which calls for very limited road construction or reconstruction and very limited expansion of wildlife openings.
- Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs). The Backcountry management area includes all IRAs that are not currently in Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs).

Mountain Treasure Areas, or portions of areas, that exhibited the following characteristics were considered by the Interdisciplinary team for inclusion in Interface or Matrix management:

- Semi primitive non-motorized inventory areas less than 2,500 acres that are not adjacent to Inventoried Roadless Areas, Wilderness Study Areas, or Wilderness.
- Lands in need of restoration or in areas where tools needed to achieve desired conditions would likely be incompatible with Backcountry management direction.

NAPS Part 2: State Natural Heritage Areas

The North Carolina Natural Heritage Natural Areas (NHNAs), formerly known as State Natural Heritage Areas, include 288 areas identified by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program (NCNHP) as areas of land or water that are important for the conservation of the state's natural biodiversity. Through their inclusion in the Natural Area Priority dataset, members of the Stakeholders Forum asked the Forest Service to consider these NHNAs when identifying management areas.

Prior to NHNA identification as part of the NAPs layer, in 2014, the State Natural Heritage Program submitted a comment letter asking the Forest Service to consider 36 new areas as Special Interest Areas (SIAs) in the revised Plan. NCNHP recognized that some of these areas may also be suitable for designation as other management areas (besides SIAs), as long as the Forest Plan recognizes and protects their important natural features. The 36 new areas submitted by the state were those NHNA ranked as 'Exceptional' and contain some of the best examples of imperiled species and habitats on the

Forests. The State specifically asked the Forest Service to consider 'Exceptional' areas as the highest priority for Special Interest Area designation.

In 2014, the leadership team of the Forest Service reviewed the list of exceptional NHNAs and made a preliminary recommendation about which areas to recognize as SIAs. In 2017, the Forest Service received updated information from the State which includes additional areas identified as 'Exceptional'. Therefore, in March 2017, the leadership team reviewed the list of 'Exceptional' NHNAs to confirm which areas align with Special Interest Area management and considered whether other places (either non-exceptional NHNAs or non-NHNAs) also needed to be considered for SIA designation. The results of this evaluation are explained in a separate paper documenting the development of the Special Interest Area management area.

In addition to identifying some NHNAs as SIAs, the Forest Service decided to add a guideline to the Forestwide unique habitats section to consider the characteristics of the NHNAs in project analyses. Given this additional Forestwide guideline, the Forest Service found that all of the NHNAs, regardless of whether they are identified as SIAs, will receive due consideration in the Plan and in project level analysis. The NHNAs that were considered for Backcountry are those that were immediately adjacent to other land identified as Backcountry (meeting the criteria above such as 2,500 acres or more of semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation, etc), where including the NHNA further enhanced the Backcountry intent.

NAPs Part 3: Old Growth

The NAPs dataset includes two categories of old growth:

- Potential old growth patches that are recognized by the Forest Service in the current plan, and
- Existing old growth stands that have been surveyed and documented as such by the Wilderness Society and Mountain True.

The current plan contains a network of designated old growth built around large, medium, and small patches that work together to manage for old growth characteristics over time. To be clear, these areas may not currently contain old growth but have been identified as potential future old growth. In addition, existing old growth have been surveyed and documented by other organizations, these areas have been ranked on a scale of quality where stands are assigned as grade A, B+, B, and C, with A being the highest quality.

The Forest Service is currently reviewing the potential old growth network from the current plan and information about surveyed existing old growth in the context of our revised plan ecozone approach. We want to ensure the amount and distribution of ecozones are represented effectively within the network. Old growth is part of the natural range of variation and managing for old growth requires planning so as not to take an action that inadvertently impacts this representational network. The Forest Service believes that old growth conditions can be not just maintained, but restored and in some cases enhanced. We are working on plan components in the forestwide section that will support this old growth network.

Given the ongoing analysis and plan component development, the Forest Service assumed that characteristics of an old growth network would be retained and enhanced across multiple management areas. The Forest Service assumed designated old growth patches do not need their own management

area allocation. Just as with NHNAs, potential old growth patches from the current Plan and existing old growth stands of the highest quality (A or B+) were considered for placement in the Backcountry if they were immediately adjacent to other Backcountry locations (they met the criteria above such as 2,500 acres or more of semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation, etc), and including the old growth area further enhanced the Backcountry intent.

Considering WHAMAs & Restoration Needs

Part 1: WHAMAs

The Forest Service reviewed the WHAMAs dataset. Two of the six WHAMA species - turkey and deer - are forest generalists. By accomplishing Forestwide desired conditions and objectives for each ecozone that should provide a mosaic of habitats across the landscape; EIS analyses will further inform how well their needs are met. Plan components were added to all three general forest management areas to reflect the intent to manage for wildlife habitat in all parts of the forest. The elk WHAMA occurs in a single location on the forest, the Harmon Den area of Haywood and Madison Counties and overlaps Ruffed Grouse and Golden-winged Warbler WHAMAs in both geography and habitat composition. Therefore, the elk WHAMA was considered along with the other WHAMAs to influence management area boundaries. The Harmon Den area falls within the Bald Mountains Geographic Area, which was given specific goals to emphasize elk habitat.

Places on the landscape where Cerulean Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, or Ruffed Grouse WHAMA priority areas, or Golden-winged Warbler or Cerulean Warbler WHAMA focal areas overlapped with NAPS or existing Forest Service Backcountry were examined closely to determine whether active management needs in this area best aligned with Matrix or Interface vs Backcountry. Of the three species, habitat for Cerulean Warblers is most consistent with Backcountry management techniques. In many cases, WHAMAs also identified as NAPS or previously identified by the Forest Service as Backcountry are not in areas where active management is expected during the life of the revised plan--largely because of topographic features, limited access, and greater restoration priorities elsewhere on the Forests. Documentation of how the WHAMAs were considered with the NAPS is described for each area reviewed (see below).

Part 2: Considering other restoration needs

In addition to WHAMAs, the Forest Service considered whether there were other known restoration needs that would align best with Interface and Matrix plan direction. Sources used for this review included specialist's local knowledge, Forest Service data on recent activities, and data provided by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, the Nature Conservancy, or other collaborators.

Part 3: The NCWRC Assignments of Front-, Mid- and Backcountry

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission also provided the Forest Service with a "Wildlife Alternative" that considered both WHAMAs and restoration needs. This alternative categorizes areas on the Forest as either Frontcountry (a proposed management area construct from 2016 that no longer exists in the current Plan management structure), Midcountry (another 2016 proposed management area that no longer exists) and Backcountry (which was part of the 2016 construct and remains

essentially the same). The Backcountry identified by the NCWRC was developed using different criteria than was used by the Forest Service. For example, areas as small as 500 acres were identified for inclusion in the NCWRC's Backcountry, while the Forest Service relied on the agency Recreation Opportunity Spectrum standard of at least 2,500 acres. The NCWRC Wildlife Alternative dataset does inform the adjustments to management area lines and is still being considered in making continued adjustments to management area lines. Habitat needs for the diversity of wildlife species can be provided in all management areas, including Interface, Matrix, and Backcountry, though the tools for providing these habitats may differ by management area.

Documentation of individual area adjustments

As a result of the above considerations, the May 2017 maps show the following:

Pisgah National Forest

- Bald Mountain – Identifies the portion that is IRA as Backcountry, except for the portion along the Appalachian Trail that rests in the AT management Area (it still shown an IRA overlay). The additional part of the Mountain Treasure area that is outside the IRA boundary north of SR1313 will be assigned to Backcountry as well.
- Bearwallow – This area is almost exclusively IRA and will be identified as Backcountry. The small portion of the area shown outside the IRA boundary by SR128 will also be Backcountry as it is surrounded by other Backcountry lands. The area contains two SIAs.
- Black Mountains – Given the large semi-primitive non-motorized area, the NAP area is identified as Backcountry, minus the two places on the north end of the polygon that were adjusted back to the IRA boundary because of the presence of municipal water supply and Ray Mine; as well as excluding the RNA. Also, the fingers on the north and east are available for Interface and Matrix. While there is a WHAMA in this area, management in this area is not able to consider tools available to Interface or Matrix plan direction because of the area's steep slopes and IRA status. A portion of this area is identified as a Special Interest Area.
- Cedar Rock Mountain – The area is identified for Matrix and Interface and includes an SIA in the north. The area has recent vegetation treatments, linear wildlife openings, several low maintenance level roads, and opportunities for restoration. The area does not contain a semi primitive non-motorized area sufficient to a backcountry experience.
- Craggy Gardens: The area contains an existing Wilderness Study Area and will contain a newly proposed Special Interest Area (Big Ivy) up to SR 197 in recognition of the area's scenic, recreational, and ecological values. North of 197 and the Snowball Area west of Craggy WSA and FS road 63 will be available for Interface and Matrix.
- Daniel Ridge – This area contains a range of forest management activities, including developed and dispersed camping, and is in Interface, Matrix, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. The Forest Service is currently in discussions with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, the Cherokee Nation, and the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians to identify places in this area that will receive Special Interest Area designation because they have unique connections to the Tribes and are important to Tribal cultural identity; history, culture, beliefs, and traditions. Exact locations are being determined.
- Deerpark Mountain (previously identified as Bluff Mountain)– This area does not contain a core area of 2,500 acres of semi primitive non-motorized; however, it is recognized for its scenic

values. The area will be recognized as a Special Interest Area. The Appalachian Trail corridor also runs through this area.

- Dobson Knob Extension – The semi primitive non-motorized area south of Dobson Knob has restoration needs that align with Interface or Matrix management. The southern portion of the polygon is IRA and will be in Backcountry. The designated old growth patch on the north side of the IRA will also be added to Backcountry. There is also a small Special Interest Area in this polygon as well as a portion of the Overmountain Victory Trail corridor.
- Harper Creek – This area is a Wilderness Study Area and an Inventoried Roadless Area.
- Harper Creek Sugar Knob Extension – This polygon contains two areas of semi primitive non-motorized: one that is greater than 2,500 acres and one that is less than 2,500 acres. The Forest Service identifies the land managed as Backcountry under the current plan to remain as Backcountry, as well as the old growth patch just south. The remaining lands are identified as Interface and Matrix.
- Highlands of Roan – This area is identified as its own management area – the Roan Mountain Management Area. The area along the Appalachian Trail corridor is identified as Appalachian Trail Management Area, and the area also contains the Overmountain Victory Trail Management Area.
- Jarrett Creek - This area is largely Inventoried Roadless Area and therefore Backcountry. The area south of the IRA but within the NAP polygon has been managed as Backcountry under the current plan and is identified to continue that management. The northern areas outside the IRA are Blue Ridge Parkway and Interface. Two SIAs are included in the northern portion. Two southern portions are identified as Matrix because of restoration needs. Non-IRA land around 482 is identified as Interface given the high use heading toward Curtis Creek campground.
- Laurel Mountain – Lands outside the IRA have opportunities for restoration that align with Matrix or Interface management. The IRA will be identified as Backcountry.
- Linville Gorge Addition – The current IRA is identified as Backcountry. On small portions of the southern part of the area outside the IRA, there are opportunities for restoration accessible from roads, so these are identified for Interface and Matrix.
- Linville Pinnacle Extension- The area is small, surrounded by roads, and contains recent vegetation management, as well as future restoration needs, and so will be available for Interface and Matrix This small area did not contain any semi primitive non- motorized classification. The area also includes the Overmountain Victory Trail.
- Lost Cove- This area is a Wilderness Study Area and Inventoried Roadless Area.
- Mackey Mountain– This area is largely Inventoried Roadless Area, and therefore, Backcountry. Areas that were managed for Backcountry under the current plan have been retained. The western side includes a highly developed road to the Curtis Creek campground that is better represented by Interface. An area to the far east, north of SR1422, is identified as Matrix because of restoration needs.
- Middle Prong Wilderness Extension –The northern portion of the area will be Interface and Matrix as it is managed for timber and wildlife. The area is popular for hunting with seasonally open roads. The area contains a municipal watershed for the town of Waynesville. The IRA part of the area will be Backcountry.
- Nolichucky Gorge – Linear wildlife openings and opportunities for restoration are available in Interface and Matrix. This area contains existing management and investment, supporting high quality White-tailed Deer and Ruffed Grouse habitat. Backcountry in this area corresponds with the Backcountry managed in the current plan, and a NHNA. Portions identified as Backcountry have steep slopes and are largely inaccessible.

- Pigeon River Gorge (also known as the Harmon Den Area) – The whole area is within the Elk WHAMA, and there are also WHAMAs for Ruffed Grouse and Golden Winged Warbler. The east portion of the area has been managed as Backcountry under the current plan and is identified to stay Backcountry on the basis of the semi primitive non- motorized area and terrain that is difficult for active management. Much of the greater Harmon Den area has been managed for Ruffed Grouse in the past, although not the portion proposed as Backcountry. The areas south of the AT corridor and west of existing Backcountry will be identified for Matrix and Interface to meet restoration and habitat needs. The portion along the Appalachian Trail will be part of the AT Management Area. The area also includes the Harmon Den Bear Sanctuary.
- Shining Rock Wilderness Extension – Sam Knob. This area is entirely Inventoried Roadless Area and will be Backcountry. The area also includes the Blue Ridge Parkway corridor (on the west).
- Shining Rock Wilderness Extension – Graveyard Fields. This bulk of this area is Inventoried Roadless Area and will be Backcountry. The non IRA portion is identified for Special Interest Area. The southern portion of the area contains the Blue Ridge Parkway.
- South Mills River – The area contains a core of Inventoried Roadless Area that would be Backcountry, as well as lands surrounding the IRA that are currently managed as Backcountry. The remaining lands fall into Interface and Matrix for restoration needs.
- Steels Creek – This area will be identified for Interface and Matrix. It did not contain a semi primitive non-motorized core.
- Upper Wilson Creek – in the IRA portion will be backcountry. The portion outside the IRA boundary have opportunities for restoration and better align with Matrix or Interface management. The Ruffed Grouse priority WHAMA is within the area shown as Interface.
- Woods Mountain – The eastern boundary along FS roads 469A and 469D will be identified as Matrix because of the roads and opportunities for more active management. The Inventoried Roadless Area lands will be Backcountry, as well as some lands to the northwest and southwest of the IRA. There is also an SIA on the western side of this area, and the Blue Ridge Parkway corridor.

Nantahala National Forest

- Ash Cove – This area is identified for Interface and Matrix as it has restoration needs, recent timber harvest units, linear wildlife openings and does not contain a core semi-primitive non-motorized area of greater than 2,500 acres. The area contains a Golden Winged Warbler and Ruffed Grouse WHAMA priority areas.
- Boteler Peak – Given the large semi primitive non-motorized area, much of the area will be identified as Backcountry, including a portion of the area beyond the IRA. The area identified as Backcountry will conform to current plan Backcountry on southern, northern, and western sides and will match the boundary of the area inventoried for wilderness on the southeast. The remainder of the land in the north is available for Interface and Matrix, and there is an SIA on the east. There is a Ruffed Grouse WHAMA priority area in the north portion identified as Interface and Matrix.
- Cantrell Top - This area is adjacent to an IRA on the Cherokee National Forest. For cross forest compatibility, include a portion of the area in Backcountry adjacent to the State line. The remainder of the area is identified as Interface and Matrix. Closed FS roads 50c and 50d and currently managed wildlife fields as well as restoration opportunities will be identified in Matrix and Backcountry. A portion of the Ruffed Grouse WHAMA priority area occurs in this area however, in this portion management is unlikely due to topographic features, natural disturbance will provide habitat, not active management.

- Cherry Cove Area – The majority of this small area is currently an IRA, and will be identified as Backcountry. The spurs are unroaded and undeveloped, surrounded by private land and do not have substantial opportunities for restoration. Managing the spurs differently than the core area could complicate management. Therefore, the whole area will be identified as Backcountry.
- Cheoah Bald – This area is largely IRA, which will be in Backcountry, the Appalachian Trail Corridor and SIA. The Appalachian Trail Corridor bisects the area. The land south of the IRA will be within the newly proposed Nantahala Gorge SIA for recreational and biological values. Areas West of the IRA boundary will be in the AT management area, as well as Interface and Matrix. The Interface and Matrix lands areas contain multiple WHAMAs, including priority areas for Cerulean Warbler, Golden Winged Warbler and Grouse. The SIA in this area would allow for management that would improve both Golden Winged Warbler and Cerulean Warbler in this area.
- Chunky Gal Extension – This location contains a core of semi-primitive non-motorized area, including an Inventoried Roadless Area. The IRA, the portion just north of the IRA south of 71, and a small piece of land just west of Bly Gap will be identified as Backcountry. The remaining area between the Chunky Gal IRA and the Sharptop IRA will be identified as Matrix for its restoration needs. The northwestern portion of the area and the eastern portion of the area beyond the IRA are also identified for Matrix and Interface because of restoration needs. That part of the land contains a Golden Winged Warbler Focal Area WHAMA. This area also contains a piece of the Appalachian Trail corridor and a Special Interest Area.
- Ellicott Rock Extension – This area is adjacent to existing wilderness and exhibits semi primitive non-motorized characteristics as well as undeveloped character and is identified as Backcountry. The northwest portion of the area includes recent vegetation work and future needs, and wildlife openings and linear fields. There is also a Ruffed Grouse WHAMA here.
- Overflow Creek – The current Wilderness Study Area will be identified as such. The NAP land southwest of the WSA includes a small portion of additional acres, which include previous timber harvests, and is adjacent to an active management area on the Chattahoochee NF. This portion will be identified as Matrix to support restoration needs.
- Piercy Mountain Range – This area contains restoration needs and about than 700 acres of recent vegetation treatments and lots of permanently maintained wildlife fields. The area also has low maintenance roads that are open to the public. It does not contain a large block (2,500 acres plus) of semi-primitive non-motorized. It will be identified as Matrix and Interface, except a small corridor near 308, identified as the Trail of Tears corridor. The area contains a Ruffed Grouse priority WHAMA.
- Slide Hollow – This polygon is entirely an IRA and will be identified as Backcountry.
- Siler Bald – This area is bisected by the Appalachian Trail corridor and contains about 20 miles of low maintenance roads which serve as trails and linear wildlife openings. Siler Bald itself is mowed regularly to maintain grassy conditions. The area contains surveyed existing old growth and an NHNA, as well as a Ruffed Grouse habitat and a priority WHAMA area for Golden Winged Warbler. The area does not contain a large block of semi-primitive non-motorized area. The area outside the Appalachian Trail corridor will be identified for Interface and Matrix.
- Santeetlah Creek – The area includes the Santeetlah Bluffs SIA, and some Class A old growth as identified by partners and a small (less than 2,500 acre) semi-primitive non-motorized area. It also contains several closed roads, maintained wildlife openings, past vegetation treatments and restoration needs including Ruffed Grouse and Golden Winged Warbler priority areas. The area will be identified as Interface and Matrix, and SIA. The southern boundary of the area is also identified as the Trail of Tears historic trail corridor.

- Sharptop Ridge – The area is almost entirely IRA and semi-primitive non-motorized adjacent to existing Wilderness. The area will be identified as Backcountry.
- Southern Nantahala Extension – This area is adjacent to the Southern Nantahala Wilderness. The eastern portion is comprised of two Inventoried Roadless Areas. These and the area between them is identified as Backcountry. The area west of the IRAs does not contain much semi-primitive non-motorized, is adjacent to highly developed recreation corridors, and has several existing closed roads. This portion will be identified as Matrix and Interface, except the south of the westernmost part, which is part of the Appalachian Trail corridor.
- Tellico Bald – This area is bisected by the Appalachian Trail which runs north-south. The central area of the NAP was managed as Backcountry under the current plan and will be retained. That central area is surrounded by active management and likely will continue to provide some habitat for Golden-winged Warblers; the southern portion of this area is identified as Golden-winged Warbler priority area. The area contains excellent grouse habitat and is popular for hunting. It contains lots of recent vegetation and skidrows, nearly 30 acres of wildlife fields and 11 miles of open linear wildlife openings.
- Terrapin Mountain – This area is bisected by the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River corridor and is largely undeveloped by roads. The area adjacent to Chattooga River Wild and Scenic corridor and containing Terrapin Mountain itself will be identified as Backcountry. Considerations included public interest in retaining undeveloped character. Ruffed Grouse would benefit from compositional restoration and there are restoration opportunities on the east side of the area.
- Tusquitee Bald – This large area contains an Inventoried Roadless Area in the east and a large semi-primitive non-motorized area which covers the southern portion of the area. There is limited restoration along that southern boundary. Just west of the semi-primitive non-motorized block are old growth areas, including 50 acres west of Tooney Gap and upslope of road, just west of the NAP boundary. These areas will be reflected as Backcountry, using a demarcation that runs parallel to the rim trail downslope. A small piece of current MA5 (Backcountry) will be identified as Backcountry in the Northeast corner. Vengeance Creek quarry area will be excluded from Backcountry. The rest of the area including the existing roads will be identified as Interface and Matrix in order to meet diverse goals for recreation, habitat and restoration.
- Unicoi Mountains, Upper Bald River – Similar to Cantrell Top, this area is adjacent to an IRA on the Cherokee NF. The portion along the border is identified for Backcountry for compatibility across state lines. The area that includes closed FS roads 50a and 50b are excluded. The southern portion of the area where there have been recent timber activities and where there are still active management restoration needs are identified as Interface and Matrix. A small percentage of Ruffed Grouse priority WHAMA is identified for inclusion in the Backcountry, however active management is unlikely in this area due to topographic features, so natural disturbance is the most likely creator of habitat needs.
- Wesser Bald - The Appalachian Trail and Trail of Tears corridors bisect this area. The IRA areas, and the land north of the IRA outside these corridors is identified as Backcountry. The area south of the IRA is identified as Matrix and Interface to meet restoration needs.
- Yellow Creek Mountain – Given the high amount of restoration needs in this area, the presence of several low maintenance roads and maintained wildlife openings plus the small amount of semi-primitive non-motorized, this area is identified as Interface and Matrix. The area contains a priority WHAMA for cerulean warbler, golden winged warbler and ruffed grouse. The Trail of Tears corridor also bisects this area.

Other Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Considerations

During the review for areas on the Forests that could meet Backcountry characteristics, the only area on the Forests that contained semi-primitive non-motorized areas greater than 2,500 acres that was not a Mountain Treasure NAP is the area formerly known as the Tellico OHV area. While this area contains a core block of semi-primitive non-motorized recreation, the other characteristics here better aligned with Matrix management.

May 2017: We're still in the process of landscape scale refinements

Concurrent with District Review of the March 2017 maps, the IDT will be looking at the results of the above on a full landscape scale and ensuring that the land allocation makes sense in the context of the following:

- Refinement of management area lines to better correspond to natural features on the ground.
- Connectivity of forested landscapes across the broader area, including lands that provide both a mosaic of habitats, including core interior habitat, considering lands on Cherokee NF and Chattahoochee-Oconee NF; other federal and state lands, and lands protected through conservation easements, and adjacent lands.

Pre-DRAFT