



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests



Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Land Management Plan

Appendix H: Public and Government Involvement



Forest
Service

Southern
Region

National Forests
in North Carolina

R8 MB-155 H

January
2020

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Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests
Proposed Land Management Plan**

Appendix H: Public and Government Involvement

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Introduction

A forest plan that is reflective of diverse interests can only be achieved through sustained public involvement. The proposed Plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement have been built on an unprecedented degree of public and government input for the National Forests in North Carolina. The Plan's strong emphasis on public involvement has provided a platform for diverse interests to work together to create a more collaborative plan. This appendix documents that involvement.

In this planning process, Forest leadership and the plan revision team invested in dialogue and relationships with partners and community stakeholders and engaged them early and often throughout the planning process. In building the Plan, EIS alternatives and the analysis, the Forest Service engaged with interested citizens, resource professionals, state agencies, local governments, other Federal agencies, federally recognized Tribes, non-government organizations, researchers, the academic community, and youth. Additionally, there have been three active collaborative groups involved with the Nantahala-Pisgah plan revision process, each comprised of diverse interests.

Pre-draft pieces of the Plan have been shared with the public at every stage: Assessment, Need for Change, pre-draft Plan Development, and to gather input on the range of alternatives for the EIS. More information about each of these stages can be found below. In addition, the public has had an opportunity to provide input on specific plan processes, including, but not limited to, the Wilderness Evaluation process, the Wild and Scenic River evaluation process, the transition to the Scenery Management System and the identification of Species of Conservation Concern. Different levels of public participation were used, depending on the piece of plan development. Strategies ranged from collaborating, involving, consulting or informing.

Both traditional and emerging technologies have been used to reach diverse audiences. The Forest Service hosted 47 traditional face-to-face meetings at locations around the forest. When requested, the Forest Service has participated in meetings of others, including local governments, non-governmental organizations and interest groups. Forest staff attended approximately 200 meetings with collaborative groups and met with federally recognized Native American Tribes 15 times. The forest also reached out to local, state and federal agencies throughout the process, including more than 53 meetings with County representatives.

The Forest Service also shared information via traditional print, television and radio media. Requests for radio and television interviews were accepted in addition to print media correspondence and outreach. The internet was utilized to broadcast updates to the forest listserv of approximately 12,000 subscribers and to the forest website, to include regular updates as well as use of creative media tools. The Forest Service used emerging technologies, such as interactive maps, Facebook Live, YouTube postings, and social media to share pre-draft content. Sometimes, members of active collaborative groups have joined the Forest Service in sharing messages to the public.

Input from the public has been used to:

- Document the current condition and trend of forest resources
- Identify the need for change
- Draft plan direction by resource topic
- Develop a management area structure
- Create a geographic area chapter
- Create of alternatives

- Inform the analysis of effects

Public and government involvement is not just part of plan development – it will be an integral part of plan implementation, monitoring and adaptive management. One of four plan themes is Partnering With Others, outlining how forest managers will work with other federal, state and local governments, Tribes, and partners across boundaries to achieve shared objectives. Working collaboratively allows the Forest Service to accomplish more work on the ground than any one entity could accomplish alone. The very first section of plan direction outlines desired conditions for working with others, stating that public involvement will lead to better outcomes for forest resources. During implementation, public and government involvement will allow for continued learning and understanding between the Forest Service and others, and will promote a common understanding of resource opportunities and challenges. The plan intends that proactive efforts reach both traditional and non-traditional users and lead to a greater citizen understanding, appreciation, advocacy, and participation in forest stewardship and conservation.

More on public involvement milestones and the individuals, organizations and governments involved in forest plan development is outlined in the pages that follow.

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Major Milestones of Public Involvement

The process included the following steps and public involvement from initiation to release of draft plan and environmental analysis.

2013: Plan Revision Process Initiation

In February and March of 2013, the U.S. Forest Service, National Forests in North Carolina held six public meetings to initiate the Forest Plan revision process for the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests (NFs). During the meetings, Forest Service staff members provided an overview of the plan revision process, shared information regarding the existing condition of forest resources, and received input from the public on benefits they obtain from the Nantahala and Pisgah NFs. Each meeting was 3-hours in the evening and was in the vicinity of the six ranger districts.

Attendees included local residents, members of organized recreation groups, tribal members, county and city planners, government officials, local business owners, outfitter guides, and environmental advocates. There were more than 570 attendees at the six meetings, and many individuals attended more than one district meeting. Members of the Forest Service plan revision interdisciplinary team (ID team) and ranger district employees were present at all of the public meetings.

The meetings were opened by a welcome from the District Ranger, Forest Supervisor, Kristin Bail, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Diane Rubiaco, and Public Affairs Officer, Stevin Westcott. Former Forest Planner, Ruth Berner, presented information on the background of forest planning, the plan revision process, and a general timeline for how the agency would proceed over the next 3-4 years. The slideshow presentation is available on the forest website. All comments that were provided on the posters were collected at the end of each meeting and are also available for review on the forest website.

Meeting location	Date	Approximate number of public attending
Robbinsville, NC	2/21/2013	54
Murphy, NC	3/05/2013	71
Franklin, NC	3/19/2013	60
Mars Hill, NC	2/25/2013	110
Brevard, NC	3/18/2013	190
Marion, NC	3/12/2013	91
Total		576

The second round of public involvement sessions were held in May 2013. Participants attended one of two meetings held in Franklin and Asheville, North Carolina. Participants included those that had attended the first round of public meetings, held in February and March, as well as new participants that were joining the process for the first time.

Meeting location	Date	Approximate number of public attending
Franklin, NC	5/23/2013	64
Asheville, NC	5/30/2013	135
Total		199

The public sessions were 3-hour evening meetings and included presentations by Forest Service staff followed by group discussions centered around three main topics: young forests and wildlife habitat, recreational access and scenery, and designated areas. These discussion topics were selected based on public comments and input received at the first round of public meetings earlier in the spring. Information on each of these topics was presented to the entire group of attendees and is available on the forest website.

2013-2014: Need for Change

In November and December of 2013, the Nantahala and Pisgah NFs held six public open houses to gather information on what needed to change in the revised forest plan. The open houses were informal, not facilitated, and designed for people to drop by and share ideas and feedback that would be used to craft a “Need for Change” statement.

Meeting location	Date	Approximate number of public attending
Robbinsville, NC	12/05/13	40
Murphy, NC	12/03/2013	27
Franklin, NC	12/17/2013	34
Mars Hill, NC	12/03/2013	33
Brevard, NC	11/19/2013	64
Marion, NC	11/18/2013	26
Total		224

Additionally, on Sept 20, 2013, a draft work-in-progress Assessment was posted on the internet. This document assessed current condition and trends on the landscape for a full range of ecological, social and economic topics. This Assessment, along with public input, led to the development of the preliminary Need for Change as identified in the Federal Register Notice of Intent, published on March 12, 2014, with the final published in June 14, 2014.

2014: Wilderness, Other Designated Areas and Scenery

Wilderness and Designated Areas

The 2012 planning rule directs forests to identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) and determine whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness designation.

A meeting covering the Initial Inventory of potential additions to Wilderness and Designated Areas was held on April 17, 2014 in Asheville, NC with a total attendance of 75. The meeting began with a presentation that provided information on the current designated wildernesses, the 2012 planning rule requirements, and the seven step process that the interdisciplinary team used to identify areas in the initial inventory. Following the presentation, meeting participants were divided into small group discussions with a goal of getting people engaged and to recognize where there are similarities and differences with how people perceive wilderness. The small group discussions then focused on each of the seven process steps that were used to identify areas in the inventory. Following the discussions, the public had the opportunity to provide area specific comments on maps which were posted on walls around the room.

The afternoon of the meeting was focused on designated areas other than wilderness. These include special interest areas, research natural areas, experimental forests, Cradle of Forestry, as well as others. A presentation included information on designated areas in the current forest plan and an explanation of the proposed criteria that the Forest Service will be using to evaluate proposals for new designated areas in the revised forest plan. Following the presentation, small group discussions were focused around the proposed criteria for evaluating designated areas. Forest-wide maps were provided for each small group and individuals were invited to identify places on the map that should be considered for designation in the revised forest plan, as well as existing designated areas that should be modified or reevaluated for designation.

Scenery Inventory

The Need for Change process identified a need to update to the Scenery Management System, which has been the agency standard for two decades. To describe this process, a drop-in session was held to during the morning and afternoon provide information on the updated system and gather input on the initial scenery inventory. A self-view presentation was available to provide the background context for scenery management. Large scale maps were available for each ranger district with the initial scenery concern levels. Forest Service personnel were available to answer questions and provide additional information to interested individuals. Following the workshop, the PowerPoint presentations, inventory process steps, and inventory maps were posted on the forest's plan revision website.

Additional opportunity to comment on the wilderness inventory process, designated areas, and scenery inventory was invited through May 15, 2014.

2014: Wildlife Habitat, Ecosystem Integrity and Diversity, Wild & Scenic Rivers (WSR) 2014

A meeting on Wildlife Habitat; Ecosystem Integrity and Diversity; and Wild and Scenic Rivers was held in Asheville, NC on July 10, 2014 with a total attendance of 124. The creation, quality, and amount of early successional wildlife was a substantial issue that was raised during the March and April scoping period. Additionally, the consideration of ecosystem integrity and diversity and how to establish these in the revised forest plan was a topic of concern. The morning session was focused on wildlife habitat diversity and began with a presentation of information on how the forest is using public comment and best available science to inform how the revised forest plan may address wildlife habitat creation. Following the presentation, participants were invited to identify specific areas on ranger district maps "that are important to you or that you think should be highlighted for specific management or species".

The afternoon session focused on ecosystem integrity and diversity. Attendees were provided background information on the historical context of ecosystem drivers and stressors in the southern Appalachians. A hypothetical watershed was used to provide the context for discussing tools that can be

useful for evaluating ecosystem integrity. Some example management scenarios were presented and the public was asked to share their suggestions for management opportunities that might address a range of public perspectives. This was a facilitated large group discussion and public comments were recorded. Additionally, a poster presentation on wild and scenic rivers was available for question and comment.

2014: Preliminary Plan Pieces

In October and November 2014, the forest held six public meetings to present the public with preliminary information for the proposed Forest Plan for the Nantahala and Pisgah NFs. Each meeting was in the vicinity of one of the six ranger districts at the following locations:

Meeting location	Date	Approximate number of public attending
Robbinsville, NC	11/06/2014	27
Murphy, NC	10/30/2014	44
Franklin, NC	10/28/2014	54
Mars Hill, NC	11/03/2014	70
Mills River, NC	10/21/2014	81
Marion, NC	11/13/2014	80
Total		356

All information shared at the public meetings was draft and intended to provide context for the revised forest plan to which the public could respond. Each meeting was initiated with a presentation that provided an update on the revision timeline, context for how issues were developed, draft management area descriptions, and forest-wide desired conditions. An update on the wilderness inventory and evaluation process was provided as well as a brief tutorial on how to use the online Collaborative Mapping Tool that was made available on November 14 for the evaluation of land that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Following the presentation, there was a question and answer period with Forest Service staff. The remainder of the public meeting was an open format to allow individuals an opportunity to review information that was presented on posters and maps.

Information presented on posters at each of the meetings included the following:

- Draft management area framework and approximate acres
- Draft forest-wide desired condition statements
- Draft list of priority watersheds for restoration
- Recreation: Place-based settings
- Draft management area maps
- Proposed additions to Special Interest Areas

2015: Wild and Scenic River Evaluation and Revised Wilderness Inventory

As a requirement of the Nantahala and Pisgah forest plan revision process, the forest identified and evaluated lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, prior

to analyzing the effects of recommending (or not recommending) any such lands for wilderness designation. The Forest must also identify eligibility of rivers for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Public meetings were held to provide an update on these processes and share how public input has been used to date; to provide an opportunity for the public to have discussions with Forest Service staff and one another, on these evaluation processes; and to let people know how to best share information throughout these processes.

Meeting location	Date	Approximate number of public attending
Franklin, NC	11/9/2015	58
Asheville, NC	11/16/2015	158
Total		216

2016: Initial Forestwide Plan Direction Including Plan Components

Meetings were held in 2016 to discuss initial forestwide plan direction, including versions of desired conditions, standards and guidelines for each forestwide section. In summer 2016, an initial set of forestwide objectives was released, along with the rationale behind the objectives. The summer meetings allowed input on these developing plan pieces.

Meeting location	Date	Approximate number of public attending
Robbinsville, NC	09/22/2016	20
Murphy, NC	09/27/2016	9
Franklin, NC	09/15/2016	57
Mars Hill, NC	10/13/2016	28
Mills River, NC	10/12/2016	23
Marion, NC	10/06/2016	21
Total		158

2017: Geographic Areas and Management Areas

The forest held open houses across the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests to provide the public with opportunities to learn about preliminary plan building blocks of the management area and geographic area chapter and talk with Forest Service staff about local issues. The open houses allowed the public to talk directly with Forest Service staff one-on-one. Each District Open House highlighted the areas within that district. District Rangers and members of the Forest Plan revision team were available to discuss the materials.

Meeting location	Date	Approximate number of public attending
Robbinsville, NC	07/25/2017	12
Brasstown, NC	08/08/2017	53
Franklin, NC	07/11/2017	70
Mars Hill, NC	07/25/2017	120
Pisgah Forest, NC	07/13/2017	128
Morganton, NC	06/29/2017	45
Total		428

2016-2017: Open Interdisciplinary Team Meetings

There were eight interdisciplinary team meetings between April 2016 and August 2017 that were attended by 22 members of the public. Input was gathered through October 2017 and used during the EIS Analysis.

2017-2019: Environmental Impact Statement Development

From Fall 2017 to Fall 2019, the comments and input that had already been provided were incorporated into edits to the proposed plan, the development of the Environmental Impact Statement range of alternatives and the analysis of effects. The Forest Service did not host public involvement meetings during this time, although members of the interdisciplinary team and rangers did continue to provide information and updates to organizations, by request, and media interviews were also given. The IDT posted a “Thankful for you!” video to YouTube just before Thanksgiving to let the public know their input is being appreciated.

Throughout: Public Comments

In addition to the face-to-face involvement opportunities listed above, we also receive comments from individuals and organization in the form of postal mail or e-mail. Public comments help the FS team understand how different people use, depend on, and appreciate the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. Public comments provide us with information that we may not have. Comments are used, along with Forest Service knowledge and best available science, to build a strong plan that is reflective of both community interests and best management practices.

The Forest Service is often asked how many comments have we received. We don't count comments, because forest management input is not a voting process. And how would each be counted - does a comment from one individual get counted once, but an organization or community comment gets counted as many times as there are members or residents? Instead of focusing on the volume of comments we receive, we have encouraged the public to submit comments with detailed information about specific places and uses of the forests. Then, specialists consider these comments when writing their plan sections or completing their analysis.

Considering public comments is a shared task by our interdisciplinary team. Typically, comments are reviewed first by the NEPA specialist or forest planner and then shared with the specialists that cover the topics reflected in the comments. How they are analyzed depends on where we are in the process when we receive them. Here are some examples: comments received earliest in the process were

useful for our assessment of current conditions; comments received on the Wilderness evaluation process were used in the inventory and evaluation of individual areas; comments that we will receive during the formal comment period of the draft Environmental Impact Statement will be responded to in a Final EIS appendix. Since the comments came at different stages, they are considered and incorporated at different points in time.

Comments themselves are multi-dimensional, describing both opinions and facts on all kinds of topics that span all FS natural resource management. For example, we received comments from a landslide geologist that had recommendations for managing roads and soils in landslide prone areas. We have received input from community members about places that are important for their family where they want to see continued access. We have heard from individuals supporting the designation of new special areas like wilderness, and heard from others that they don't want any more permanent designations. We have heard from recreationists who want clearer guidance about opportunities for rock climbing or rock collecting or National Trails. We have heard from the forest products industry about ways we can support jobs in the economy, and from local woodworkers who desire sustainable harvested local wood products. We have heard from those who collect medicinal herbs for their livelihood, from biologists who want to see protections for rare species, from sportsmen and women who are concerned about wildlife habitat and diversity, and from folks who visit the forest to relax and get away...and more. Public input is as diverse as those who use and love these forests.

Comments are available for review in the project record. Comments received during the formal 90 day comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will have responses in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Appendix A.

Federal Register and Newspaper of Record Notifications

Required notice	Federal Register Publication Date
Notice of Initiation	10/3/2013
Notice of Notice of Intent to Revise the Forest Plan	3/12/2014
Final Need for Change	6/14/2014

Interested Individuals and Organizations

General Public

National forest lands belong to all Americans. Members of the public were welcomed to participate in the above activities. As such, opportunities to attend these meetings and digital gathering was widely advertised on listservs, through paper flyers, word of mouth, and the media.

In addition to opportunities hosted by the Forest Service, staff attended a myriad of events hosted by others, where Forest Plan Revision was shared to broad audiences.

Date	Organization/Audience	Approx. # of Attendees
05/02/2017	Webinar- draft MAs and GAs/stakeholders	20
06/01/2017	Field Trip- Restoration/ stakeholders	10
06/03/2017	Cold Mountain Music Festival Booth	100
06/09/2017	Transylvania Natural Resources Council	30
07/21/2017	Webinar- Suitability/stakeholders	26
1/30/2018	Area 1 Soil and Water Conservation District Education Meeting- 6 counties plus area leads	10
3/15/2018	Mountain True panel, Sylva	75
3/22/2018	Mountain True panel, Boone	70
03/23/2018	Envirothon Regional Competition Advisors Training Envirothon Team Advisors	20
3/27/18	Mountain True panel, Brevard	220
3/29/18	Mountain True panel, Andrews	35
11/28/2018	Mars Hill University students	20
12/14/2018	Pathways to Parks Director and interns	3
4/9/19	BCHA National Board meeting	130
4/12/19	FWCC meeting of Legislators	30
05/04/2019	May the Forest Be With You, Cradle of Forestry event- booth and presentation	200
9/27/2019	Everybody's Environment Emerging Leaders' Summit presentation	12
9/27/2019	Cherokee Archaeology Conference- booth and presentation	70
10/10/2019	Outdoor Economy Conference booth	500
10/10/2019	Annual Indian Fair Tribal Elder's Day booth	200

Collaborative Groups

Stakeholders eagerly awaited the Nantahala and Pisgah revision for years and formed collaboratives early in the process, prior to the Assessment.

The Steering Team for the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests was established in 2008 for the purposes of discussing ecological restoration opportunities on the National Forest and met a few times each year. This group anticipated serving as a collaborative during forest plan revision, but meetings were put on hiatus shortly after other forest plan collaboratives emerged.

The Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership (Partnership) originated in 2012 by interested NGOs who wanted to form a collaborative on a Forest that is an early adopter of the 2012 Planning Rule. They specifically aim to raise the interests of all of their interest areas, including: Recreation, Forest Products,

Water, Conservation, Wildlife, Economic Development, and Cultural Heritage. They have met nearly every month plus Leadership Team monthly meetings and small working group meetings when needed.

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council (Council) is an association of sportsmen's groups and individual sportsmen and women from Western North Carolina. The group was formed over 20 years ago to provide a voice for wildlife and sportsmen on issues relating to the National Forests. Revived around 2013, the Council has brought together many local and some regional and national wildlife clubs and organizations to address wildlife concerns.

In late 2014 after an initial management area framework was shared, interests between these two collaborative polarized, especially around issues of recommended wilderness and acres of active management.

In April 2015, the Forest brought stakeholders together to help create a more constructive path forward, addressing existing tensions between collaborative groups. The Forest asked the National Forest Foundation, the federally designated non-profit partner of the Forest Service to assist in bringing the competing interests to one collaborative table: the Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala and Pisgah Forest Plan Revision. Membership was decided by an initial group of interested collaborators with the intent of including representation of all interests. The Council is a member of the Forum, along with many member organizations of the Partnership, though the Partnership is not represented as a separate organization by their choice. The National Forest Foundation continues to facilitate the Forum group. The Forum is focused on working on the plan revision process to the final plan and EIS.

Meanwhile, the Partnership and Council continue to meet almost monthly. They have met on a regular basis since each became involved with the revision process. Between 2012 and 2016, a range of forest staff attended their meetings and addressed their concerns via phone, email and additional meetings when needed. Though there were more than monthly meetings at times, one or more forest service staff attended an estimated 100 collaborative group meetings between 2012 and 2017. There were extensive additional phone, email and other communications during those years.

Those stakeholders involved in one or more collaboratives have provided extensive input. A small group of stakeholders have provided several hundred hours of input on the process, working towards a broadly supported and implementable plan.

Upon hiring a collaboration specialist in February 2017 to assist the plan revision team, the Forest was able to more regularly attend meetings held by the collaboratives. In addition, there were field trips, webinars and presentations requested and offered to facilitate stakeholders' involvement in the process.

Youth

Early in plan development, presentations were made to schools to share information about the Forest and forest planning with youth. Later in plan development, an emphasis was shifted to share materials with educators, such as through the Envirothon competition, so educators could incorporate the forest planning process into their own curriculum.

Date	Organization	Audience	Approx. # of Attendees
09/26/2013	Jewish Community Center, Asheville	Kindergarten – 4 th grade	50
10/24/2013	Oakley Elementary, Asheville	2 nd grade class	16
10/21/2013	Eliada School, Asheville	Pre-Kindergarten	10

Date	Organization	Audience	Approx. # of Attendees
		program	
11/18/2013	Charles Bell Elementary, Asheville	Kindergarten class	17
11/25/2013	Emma School, Asheville	Kindergarten classes	16
03/14/2014	Odyssey Community School, Asheville	4 th – 8 th grades science	13
03/14/2014	Asheville Catholic School, Asheville	Kindergarten	11
03/21/2014	Odyssey Community School, Asheville	2 nd and 3 rd grades	11
04/03/2014	Asheville Catholic School, Asheville	6 th – 8 th grades math	18
04/08/2014	Cub Scout Pack 14, Barnardsville	1 st – 4 th grades	6
04/09/2014	Cub Scout Pack 3, Asheville	1 st – 5 th grades	16
04/11/2014	Rainbow Community School	7 th – 8 th grades science	20
04/14/2014	Boy Scout Troop 15, Weaverville	6 th – 12 th grades	25
04/21/2014	Cub Scout Pack 72, Skyland	1 st – 5 th grades	18
04/22/2014	Emmanuel Lutheran School	Kindergarten – 3 rd grade	55
04/22/2014	Cub Scout Pack 77, Asheville	Kindergarten – 3 rd grade	9
04/23/2014	Rainbow Community School	5 th grade	20
03/21/2014	Odyssey Community School	2 nd and 3 rd grades	13
4/27/18	State Envirothon judges	6 th -12 th grades	30
08/17/2018	I Heart Pisgah Kids Rally	Families, all ages	100
Total			474

Government Involvement

Intergovernmental coordination results in more robust forest plans that better meet the needs of governments, including the Forest Service. As a result of this coordination, governments can more effectively use limited resources, staffs, and budgets, as they work cooperatively to manage forest resources on lands across multiple jurisdictions. The collaborative role of State and local governments in the planning process is unique. The opportunity for government involvement throughout the planning process is essential to the successful development and implementation of the Nantahala and Pisgah Forest Plan, and is also required by the 2012 Planning Rule.

The 2012 Planning Rule requires a review of planning and land use policies of federally recognized Indian Tribes (43 U.S.C. 1712(b)), other Federal agencies, and State and local governments, where relevant to the plan area. The purpose of this review is to foster greater recognition and discussion of issues that have cross-boundary effects, look for common objectives and solutions, and find opportunities to integrate management across landscapes. That review is documented in Appendix G. Here in Appendix H, the discussion focuses on meetings and coordination that happened between the Forest Service and other governments.

Counties

The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests are divided into 6 Ranger Districts located within 18 counties in Western North Carolina. Each county is represented by a County Commission composed of 4-7 elected County commissioners and additional county managers and staff. District Rangers interact with these elected officials and staffers through a variety of means; email, phone calls, and in person meetings/discussions. The 18 counties within the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests were contacted 108 times between October 2015 and August 2016, including 33 in-person meetings, 31 phone calls (+ voice mails), and 41 emails. There continues to be regular contact between district rangers and county officials.

Total number of Ranger District interactions by County Office October 2015-August 2016:

County	Ranger District	Number of Interactions
Buncombe	Appalachian/ Pisgah	4
Madison	Appalachian	5
Mitchell	Appalachian	3
Yancey	Appalachian	10
Graham	Cheoah	14
Swain	Cheoah/ Nantahala	7
Avery	Grandfather/ Appalachian	5
Burke	Grandfather	3
Caldwell	Grandfather	3
McDowell	Grandfather	4
Jackson	Nantahala	5
Macon	Nantahala/Tusquitee	15
Haywood	Pisgah/ Appalachian	6
Henderson	Pisgah	0
Transylvania	Pisgah/ Nantahala	5
Watauga	Grandfather	2
Cherokee	Tusquitee	5
Clay	Tusquitee	5
Total:		101

Additionally, the Forest Supervisor reached out to counties directly requesting a meeting to hear of their interests and concerns related to national forest lands along with providing them an update on forest plan revision efforts. Fourteen of the 18 counties responded, offering input and insights about their interests. There were also additional meetings with counties attended by the forest supervisor and other

forest staff, listed below. Additional meetings between district staff and county officials are in addition to those listed below.

Date	County	Details
04/25/2017	McDowell County/Forest Supervisor meeting	County Manager and Commissioner
04/27/2017	Cherokee County/Forest Supervisor meeting	County Manager and Commissioners
04/27/2017	Clay County/Forest Supervisor meeting	County Manager and Commissioners
04/27/2017	Graham County/Forest Supervisor meeting	County Commissioners
04/28/2017	Haywood County/Forest Supervisor meeting	County Manager and Emergency Management Director
04/28/2017	Henderson County/Forest Supervisor meeting	County Manager
5/23/17	Land of Sky and Southwestern Commission Council of Governments meeting	Director of Economic and Community Development and Executive Director
06/09/2017	Transylvania Natural Resources Council (TNRC)	Addressed Council and guests at monthly meeting
6/16/2017	Macon County/Forest Supervisor meeting	County Manager and Commissioners
07/11/2017	Jackson County/Forest Supervisor meeting	County Manager and Commissioners
07/24/2017	Caldwell County/Forest Supervisor meeting	County Manager
07/30/2017	Swain County/Forest Supervisor meeting	County Manager and Commissioners
10/13/2017	Avery County/Forest Supervisor meeting	County Manager and Commissioner
10/16/2017	Outreach meeting of Stakeholder Forum	Graham, Transylvania, SW Commission
11/13/2017	Madison County/Forest Supervisor meeting	County Commissioner
11/27/2017	7 Western Counties; Nantahala, Cheoah, Tusquitee	Presentation to Southwestern Commission Council of Governments
03/09/2018	TNRC	FS and Climate Change, incl FPR
05/11/2018	Yancey County/Forest Supervisor meeting	County Manager and Commissioner
07/12/2018	Letter to 18 counties and approx 40 municipalities	Reconnect and request for plans for review
11/9/2018	TNRC	David and Josh presenting on FPR
04/12/2019	FWCC hosted meeting for legislators and county representatives	FS attended and presented on FPR
5/1/2019	Mountain West Partnership	5-county Economic Development Directors meeting

Councils of Government

There are five Councils of Government (COG) in the forest plan area. They are designated by both state and federal governments as the official agency for the administration of various funds and programs. COGs provide services and resources which might not otherwise be affordable or available to

local governments. They serve as technical, economic and planning resources for their areas and administer regional projects and programs.

The majority of the eighteen counties in the forest plan area are represented by three COGs. The Southwestern Commission (Commission) includes Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon and Swain Counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Land of Sky (LOS) Regional Council includes Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties. High Country COG includes Avery, Mitchell, Watauga and Yancey Counties within the forest planning area. The Western Piedmont COG (WPCOG) includes Burke and Caldwell Counties, and the Isothermal Planning and Development Commission (IPDC) includes McDowell County within the planning area.

The forest reached out to the three primary COGs for the planning area, meeting and communicating with them on numerous occasions (included above). Additionally, the WPCOG and IPDC interests were also referenced during the planning process.

State Governments

The Forest has worked closely with the **NC Wildlife Resources Commission** on the development of plan objectives and management area boundaries, incorporating wildlife needs. We considered the Species of Greatest Conservation Need in our wildlife analysis and when developing the list of Species of Conservation Concern. The NCWRC is an active member in the Stakeholders' Forum for the Nantahala and Pisgah Plan Revision. Relevant NCWRC management plans were reviewed to facilitate complimentary actions in the forest plan when possible (See Appendix G).

The Forest also worked with the **NC Forest Service** on topics such as prescribed burns and shortleaf pine restoration. We are involving them in an all-lands implementation strategy in order to ensure our implementation meets shared priorities of our both forest plan and their State Forest Action Plan. Relevant NCFs management plans were reviewed to facilitate complimentary actions in the forest plan when possible (See Appendix G).

The Forest has worked with the **NC Heritage Program** on managing around state recognized rare plant communities. NCHP staff presented to the Stakeholders' Forum to increase knowledge and understanding of their program as relates to the forest plan revision process.

The **NC Secretary of Agriculture** has been represented and has provided input to the Stakeholders Forum for the Nantahala and Pisgah Forest Plan revision and provided comments. Relevant NC Department of Agriculture management plans were reviewed to facilitate complimentary actions in the forest plan when possible (See Appendix G).

Federal Agencies

The Forest has coordinated with adjacent **USDA Forest Service** National Forests, including the Cherokee NF, George Washington-Jefferson NF, Francis Marion and Sumter NF, and the Chattahoochee-Oconee NF on cross-boundary issues, such as management of rivers, trails, management areas, and resource topics that span across state boundaries.

The Forest also worked with the **National Park Service**, including the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Great Smoky Mountain National Park and the National Scenic and National Historic Trail offices on cross boundary and adjacent lands initiatives. Management for the Blue Ridge Parkway and Great Smoky Mountains National Park were reviewed to facilitate complimentary actions in the forest plan when possible (See Appendix G).

The Forest is working with the **US Fish and Wildlife Service** on the plan as it relates to effects on threatened and endangered species. US FWS has been involved in the development of the species of conservation concern list, development of plan components and the analysis of impacts to species.

Cooperating Agency: Bureau of Land Management

Cooperating agencies have contributed their knowledge and understanding of the concerns and needs of the land and of local communities in the planning area. The Bureau of Land Management is a cooperating agency in the Nantahala and Pisgah NF plan revision, because the agency has legal jurisdiction over the vast federal mineral estate underlying the Nantahala and Pisgah NFs. The BLM has cooperating agency status to provide information and special expertise related to subsurface mineral resources. We are not making an oil and gas availability decision in this forest plan.

Federally recognized Native American Tribes

The following federally recognized Native American Tribes have an interest in the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests:

- Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas
- Alabama-Quassarte Tribal Town
- Catawba Indian Nation
- Cherokee Nation
- Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana
- Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- Kialegee Tribal Town
- Muscogee (Creek) Nation
- Poarch Band of Creek Indians
- Thlopthlocco Tribal Town
- United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
- Shawnee Tribe

These Tribes have had an opportunity to engage in the Assessment and Plan and EIS development, notified by letter. Input from formal consultation has been integral to the development of the Tribal Resources and Cultural Resources sections of the Plan, along with the Heritage Corridors Management Area, Geographic Areas chapter, among others.

In addition, the Forest planner has attended the annual To Bridge A Gap meetings between Federal agencies and Tribes. To Bridge A Gap was established in 2001 to strengthen government-to-government relationships between the U.S. Forest Service and with federally recognized tribal governments on a variety of cultural and natural resource management issues. It is an official government-to-government meeting funded by all parties, where there are mutual interests in managing archaeological, natural, or cultural resources of the Forests.

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Date	Attendees	Location/ Source	Topic	Forest Service Personnel
5/15/2013	Tribal Historic Preservation Office of Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	Cherokee, NC	Plan revision introduction	Archeologists
1/31/2014	Tribal Executives & Staff of Catawba Tribe	Rock Hill, SC	Plan revision introduction NFsNC & FM	Forest Service Executives, Staff, and IDT members
5/1/2014	Tribal Staff, Natural Resources of Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	Cherokee, NC	Plan discussion, issues discussion and open house	IDT members
6/1/2014	Tribal Historic Preservation Office of Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	Cherokee, NC	Mapping significant locations	IDT & Archeologists
7/1/2014	Tribal Historic Preservation Office of Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	Cherokee, NC	Refining significant locations maps	IDT & Archeologists
11/1/2014	Tribal Historic Preservation Office of United Keetoowah Band	Email	Shared locations maps	Forest Archeologist
12/01/2014	Executives of Muscogee Creek Nation	E-mail	1920/1560 Plan update and request for comments	Forest Archeologist
11/15/2016	Executives of 11 Tribes	US Mail	Draft MA Heritage Corridors	Forest Supervisor
11/15/2016	Tribal Historic Preservation Offices of 11 Tribes	Email	Draft MA Heritage Corridors	Forest Supervisor & Archeologist
1/30/2017	Executives of 11 Tribes	US mail	Draft S&G's	Forest Supervisor
1/30/2017	Tribal Historic Preservation Offices of 11 Tribes	Email	Draft S&G's	Forest Archeologist
2/22/2017	To Bridge a Gap Meeting	Tulsa, OK	Newest S&Gs, MA4C, overview, request for comments	Forest Supervisor, Forest Planner, Tribal Liaison, and Regional Office Staff Liaisons
6/08/2017	Tribal Historic Preservation Offices of 11 Tribes	Email	Plan updates GAs & MA's request for input	Forest Archeologist
6/10/2017	Executives of 11 Tribes	US Mail	Plan updates GAs & MAs offer conference call / meeting	Forest Supervisor
9/7/2017	Tribal Executives, Staff and Tribal members of Cherokee Nation, Eastern	Cherokee, NC	Plan updates	Forest, Pisgah and Nantahala Zone Archeologists

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Date	Attendees	Location/ Source	Topic	Forest Service Personnel
	Band of Cherokee Indians and United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians			
4/1/2018	Tribal Historic Preservation Office of Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	Murphy, NC	Refining significant locations maps	Forest, Pisgah and Nantahala Zone Archeologists
4/20/2018	Tribal Historic Preservation Office of Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	Asheville, NC	SIAs - Areas of Tribal Interest	Forest Supervisor IDT & Archeologists
7/11/2018	Tribal Historic Preservation Office of Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	Cullowhee, NC	Refining significant locations maps	Tot Coordinator, IDT & Archeologists
9/6/2018	Tribal Executives, Staff and Tribal members of Cherokee Nation, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians	Cherokee, NC	Plan updates	Forest, Pisgah and Nantahala Zone Archeologists
5/23/2019	Tribal Historic Preservation Office of Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	Cherokee, NC	Refining significant locations maps, SIAs – Areas of Tribal Interest	Forest and Nantahala Zone Archeologists
5/21/2018	To Bridge a Gap Meeting	Tulsa, OK	The Forest hosted a breakout session to discuss plan revision, Trail of Tears management and other topics.	Forest Supervisor, Forest Planner, and Regional Office staff
4/1/2019	To Bridge a Gap Meeting	Wyandotte, OK	The Forest hosted a breakout session to discuss plan revision, Trail of Tears management and other topics.	Deputy Forest Supervisor, Forest Planner, and Regional Office staff
9/24-25/2019	Tribal Learning Exchange with US Forest Service and representatives from Alabama-Quassarte, Cherokee Nation, Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, Eastern Band of Cherokee, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Thlopthlocco, United Keetoowah Band of	Murphy, NC	Discussion about forest management	Forest Leadership Team, District Staff, Forest Planner, Tribal Liaison

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Date	Attendees	Location/ Source	Topic	Forest Service Personnel
	Cherokee			
9/26-27/2019	Cherokee Archaeological Symposium	Cherokee, NC	Display and panel discussion on the forest plan revision.	Forest Archaeologists and Collaboration Specialist
10/10/2019	Tribal Elders Information Fair	Cherokee, NC	Display and representation on forest plan revision	Forest Archaeologist