

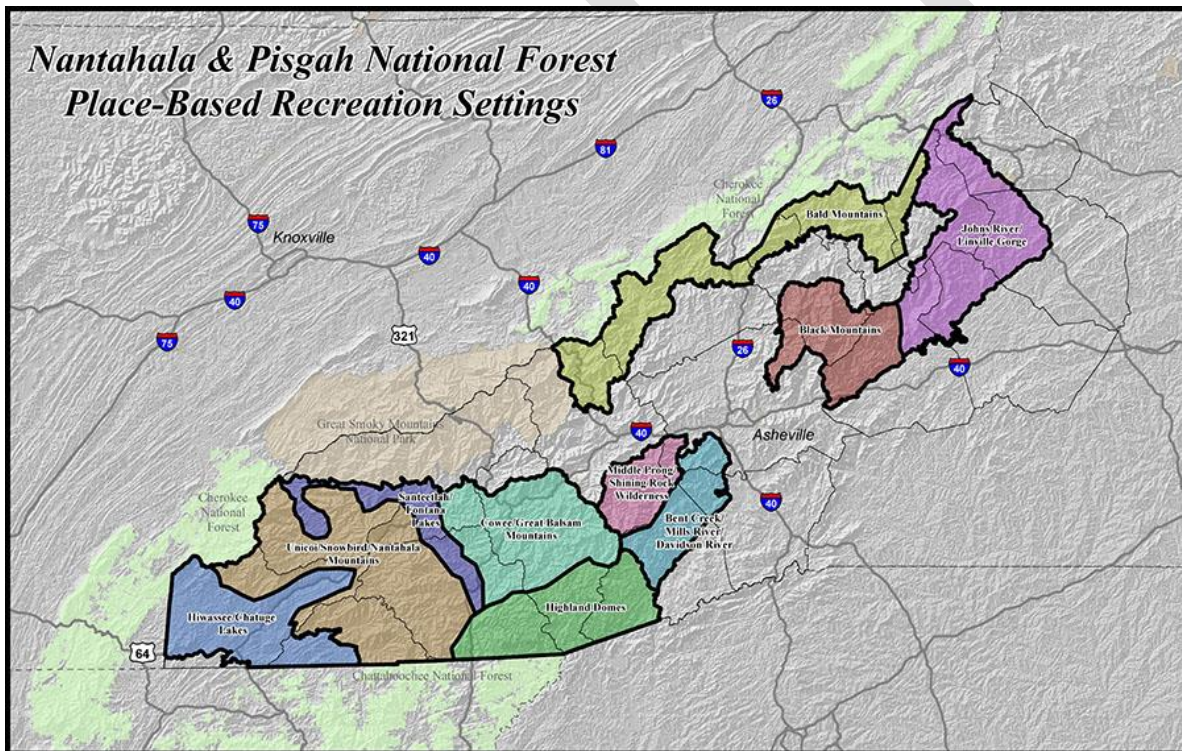
Recreation: Place-based Settings

Introduction

In the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests, geology, topography, ecozones, cultural landscapes and other scenic resources contribute to the landscape character in distinct geographically based settings across the Forests. These place-based settings provide a diverse sense of place for community residents and visitors. Each of these areas varies in the type and amount of recreation settings provided, ranging from primitive and unroaded backcountry areas that offer solitude and quiet recreation, to roaded settings that connect communities to the forest and offer visitors the opportunity to easily travel and gather in the forest. Focusing on the unique opportunities and landscape character offered by these places can help guide recreation program priorities on a forest-wide basis and within each place-based geographic setting in order to best utilize limited financial resources and transition to a sustainable recreation program level. These current conditions of these unique geographically defined Place-based Settings are summarized as follows.

Place-Based Settings and Program Emphasis

Note: Geographic map is included for general location and is further subject to change.



Note: Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests are Wildlife Management Areas managed in cooperation between the US Forest Service and North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. Hunting for large and small game and fishing occurs throughout these Forests, but may not be the primary recreation emphasis in each area.

The Bald/Unaka Mountain Area (including Roan Mountain)

High elevation grassy balds add a striking diversity to the landscape, occurring on the height of the land and allowing long-range views including openness to the night sky. Eleven named grassy balds occur in this area: Big Hump Mountain, Little Hump Mountain, Yellow Mountain, Grassy Ridge, Jane Bald, Round Bald, Roan High Knob, Roan High Bluff, Beauty Spot, Big Bald and Max Patch Mountain. At over 6,000 feet in elevation, Roan Mountain Rhododendron Garden is internationally known for its annual dazzling floral display. The predominant terrestrial ecosystems that occur at the highest elevations are the spruce-fir and northern hardwood forests. Several large rivers flow through the area, including the French Broad River, the longest river in western NC and believed to be the third oldest river in the world; the Nolichucky River, valued as a remote whitewater river with Class IV rapids and also popular for fishing; the Pigeon River, popular for whitewater rafting below the Walters Dam, which creates Waterville Lake; and the Elk River, with popular Elk Falls. Currently, more than half the area exhibits frontcountry characteristics, with roads and developed sites; most of the rest exhibits semi-primitive backcountry settings. This area contains no designated Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas, but does contain two Inventoried Roadless Areas. Cultural/Heritage features include two lookout towers, Camp Creek Bald and Rich Mountain; Paint Rock along the French Broad River near Hot Springs; and the remnants of the Lost Cove community along the Nolichucky River. The nearest towns are Hot Springs, Burnsville and Bakersville in NC and Roan Mountain, TN.

Recreation Emphasis	Activities	Destination Sites and Facilities supporting the emphasis
Sightseeing	Viewing Scenery, Nature Study and Picnicking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roan Mountain Rhododendron Gardens • Elk River Falls • Murray Branch Picnic Area, including picnic pavilions
Non-Motorized Trails	Hiking Hike and Bike Pack and Saddle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appalachian National Scenic Trail, including Max Patch • Mountains-to-the-Sea National Recreation Trail • Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail • Roan Mountain Trail / Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail Complex • Lost Cove / Flattop Mountain Trail Complex • Shelton Laurel Trail Complex • Hot Springs Trail Complex • Harmon Den Horse Trail Complex • Harmon Den Campground
Water-based Recreation	Whitewater rafting Fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poplar and Stackhouse Boat Launches • Murray Branch boating access and accessible fishing pier

Johns River/Linville Gorge Area

The predominant landscape is craggy -- steep, rough, rugged with projecting rocks, cliffs, and sudden elevation changes. The most dramatic of these massive, rugged rock formations are Sitting Bear, Hawksbill, Table Rock, and the Chimneys flanking Linville Gorge and Grandfather Mountain. This area also features lush, moist valleys flowing with creeks and rivers. The steep slopes and abrupt elevation changes set the stage for some of the most scenic waterfalls in the eastern United States, on Anthony Creek, Harpers Creek, Upper Creek, Wilson Creek, Steele’s Creek, North Fork of the Boone and Linville River. From its headwaters high on Grandfather Mountain, the powerful Linville River carved the rugged, steep-walled gorge known as Linville Gorge, dropping 2,000 feet in elevation before leveling out in the Catawba Valley. The Johns, Catawba and Linville Rivers flow into Lake James. These waterbodies are highly valued for their beauty, diversity of vegetation and wildlife, unique geology and recreation opportunities. This area is easily accessed by road, except for rugged Linville Gorge and the Harpers Creek/Lost Cove area. Currently in this area, there is one designated Wilderness (Linville Gorge) and two Wilderness Study Areas, Harper Creek and Lost Cove. Wilson Creek is a designated Wild and

Scenic River. There are three Inventoried Roadless Areas – Dobson Knob; Linville Gorge Addition; Wilson Creek. The nearest towns are Blowing Rock, Boone, Lenoir, Linville and Morganton.

Emphasis	Activities	Destination Sites and Facilities supporting the emphasis
Non-motorized Trails	Hiking <i>(Growing mountain bike use where appropriate.)</i> Rock Climbing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mountains to the Sea National Recreation Trail Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail Linville Gorge Wilderness / Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail Complex Wilson Creek / Steel's Creek Trail Complex Boone Fork / Globe Trail Complex <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linville Gorge, Lost Cove Cliffs
Motorized Trails		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brown Mountain OHV Trail Complex (and nearby dispersed campsites)
Water-based recreation	Fishing Wading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boone Fork Pond Wilson Creek Wild/Scenic River access Mortimer Campground Lake James and Lake James State Park
Sightseeing	Viewing Scenery, including Waterfalls; Picnicking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waterfall trails: Linville Falls (on BRP), Upper Creek Falls, Harper Falls Brown Mountain Overlook Wisemans View
Hunting		

The Black Mountains Area

With multiple peaks exceeding 6,300 feet in elevation, the Black Mountains are the highest in North Carolina and create a dramatic place-based setting. At the center of this area lies Mt. Mitchell, the highest mountain in the eastern United States at 6,684 feet. Mt. Mitchell and adjacent mountains receive heavy winds and an average of more than 70 inches of precipitation per year. The mountains within this geographic area are rocky with rounded tops and steep slopes. Narrow drainages and stream valleys are typical, although the Toe River Valley is very broad. South Toe, Cane and Catawba are the major rivers in the area. Waterfalls include Catawba, Roaring Fork, Walker Creek and Toms Creek. The spruce-fir ecosystem is present in the highest elevations. More than 60% of the area is currently remote backcountry and other remote settings in one Wilderness Study Area, Craggy Mountain, and six Inventoried Roadless Areas. In contrast, almost 40% exhibits roaded frontcountry characteristics with the Blue Ridge Parkway running diagonally through the area. The nearest towns include Burnsville, Spruce Pine, Marion and Black Mountain.

Emphasis	Activities	Destination Sites and Facilities supporting the emphasis
Non-Motorized Trails	Hiking Pack and Saddle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mountains to the Sea National Recreation Trail Mackey Mountain / Curtis Creek Trail Complex Old Fort / Catawba Falls Trail Complex Black Mountain Campground Briar Bottom Group Camp South Toe River Trail Complex Big Ivy / Big Butt Trail Complex Woods Mountain / Armstrong Creek Trail Complex
Sightseeing	Viewing Scenery (including Waterfalls); Picnicking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waterfall trails including Catawba, Roaring Fork, Walker Creek, Toms Creek Old Fort Picnic Area Green Knob Fire Tower Curtis Creek Campground Blue Ridge Parkway day use and camping facilities (Crabtree Meadows, Craggy Gardens)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mount Mitchell State Park
Water-based Recreation	Fishing Wading and Tubing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jarrett Creek accessible fishing pier • Carolina Hemlocks Recreation Area

Bent Creek/Mills River/Davidson River Area

Many of the most well-known and heavily visited areas on the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests are in this highly scenic and easily accessed area. Many are centered around the Davidson River Corridor such as Sliding Rock, the Cradle of Forestry national historic site, and Davidson River Campground. Narrow valleys, plenty of water, beautiful views from the Blue Ridge Parkway, and easy access contribute to the heavy recreation-based visitation. This area is the northern end of the granitic dome landscape, characterized by bare, rolling rock faces, and includes Cedar Rock, Pilot Rock, John Rock, and Looking Glass Rock. It offers an abundance of water, including Moore Cove and Slick Rock waterfalls; South and North Forks of Mills; Davidson; and North Fork, French Broad are the major rivers in the area. There are an abundance of popular trail complexes for hiking, mountain biking and pack and saddle. Backcountry opportunities are available a small percentage of this area, particularly in two Inventoried Roadless Areas. The nearest towns include Brevard, Mills River, Hendersonville and Asheville.

Recreation Emphasis	Activities	Destination Sites and Facilities supporting the emphasis
Sightseeing	Viewing Scenery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Davidson River Corridor, including Forest Heritage Scenic Byway; Sycamore Flats and Coon Tree picnic areas and accessible fishing piers (including the picnic pavilion at SF); Davidson River Campground • Forest Heritage National Scenic Byway • Group campgrounds including Cove Creek and Kuykendal • Blue Ridge Parkway, including day use and camping facilities at Mt. Pisgah Recreation Area
Non-Motorized Trails	Hiking Hiking, Mountain Biking, and/or Pack and Saddle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountains-to-the-Sea National Recreation Trail (hiking) • Art Loeb National Recreation Trail (hiking) • Rock viewing areas including Pilot Rock and Johns Rock • North Mills River Recreation Area • Wash Creek Trail Complex • Headwaters Trail Complex • Bent Creek Trail Complex • Lake Powhatan Recreation Area • South Mills River Trail Complex • US 276 Corridor Trail Complex • Wolf Ford Campground
Water-based Recreation	Fishing Wading/Tubing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sliding Rock Recreation Area • Lake Powhatan accessible fishing pier • North Mills River accessible fishing pier • Sycamore Flats and Coon Tree picnic areas and accessible fishing piers
Heritage and Conservation Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cradle of Forestry in America/Biltmore Forest School, including Pink Beds Picnic Area

Middle Prong/Shining Rock Area

In contrast to the highly developed Bent Creek/Mills River/Davidson River Area, this is a “quieter side” of the Pisgah Ranger District. About half of this area is in designated Wilderness (Middle Prong and Shining Rock), providing remote backcountry settings, although visitation in Shining Rock Wilderness is high. The Wildernesses provide an undeveloped backdrop for, and are surrounded by, the Forest Heritage Scenic Byway and Blue Ridge Parkway, both of which provide easy access into these backcountry areas. Backcountry opportunities are also available in three Inventoried Roadless Areas, Graveyard Ridge

Addition, Middle Prong Addition and Sam Knob. Other beloved and highly advertised destinations include Graveyard Fields, Black Balsam and Devil’s Courthouse. Hunting is popular in the Lickstone area adjacent to Middle Prong Wilderness and west of the West Fork, Pigeon River. High-elevation mountains include Cold Mountain and Richland Balsam, the highest section of the Blue Ridge Parkway that travels along the area’s southern boundary. Mount Pisgah is a highly visible landmark. Little East Fork and East and West Forks of the Pigeon are the major rivers in the area. The nearest towns include Canton, Candler, Waynesville and Rosman.

Recreation Emphasis	Activities	Destination Sites and Facilities supporting the emphasis
Sightseeing	Viewing Scenery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest Heritage Scenic Byway • Blue Ridge Parkway, including day use and camping facilities at Mt. Pisgah Recreation Area
Non-Motorized Trails	Hiking Hiking/Pack and Saddle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountains-to-the-Sea National Recreation Trail (hiking) • Art Loeb National Recreation Trail (hiking) • Graveyard Fields Trail Complex • Shining Rock and Middle Prong Wilderness Trail Complex
Water-based Recreation	Fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality trout streams including Yellowstone Prong
Hunting		

Highland Domes

The Highland Domes area is known as “the land of granite walls and waterfalls.” The granitic domes, characterized by bare, rolling rock faces, include Terrapin Mountain, Whiteside Mountain and Panthertown Valley, sometimes referred to as “the Yosemite of the East.” This area is heavily watered. Major rivers include Horsepasture and Chattooga designated Wild and Scenic Rivers; Tuckaseegee, Cullasaga, Whitewater, and the North and West Forks of the French Broad. The Chattooga and Cullasaja areas are often referred to as “gorges” based on the dramatic rock formations and changes in elevation. One of North Carolina’s newest state parks, Gorges, is nearby. Waterfalls include Whitewater Falls, often referred to as the highest waterfall east of the Mississippi; Rainbow, Turtleback, Silver Run, Glen, Dry, Bridal Veil, Quarry and many others. About 40% of the area is currently in backcountry settings, including Ellicott Rock Wilderness; Overflow Creek Wilderness Study Area, rugged Bonas Defeat and a number of designated scenic areas. The Chattooga River offers an unusual backcountry whitewater experience during high-flow days in late-winter and early spring months. The Cliffside and Dry Falls Recreation Areas is CCC-era construction, part of the 1949 Highlands historic recreation area. Much of the area is forested with Acidic Cove and oak forests. The nearest towns include Highlands, Cashiers, Sapphire and Rosman.

Recreation Emphasis	Activities	Destination Sites and Facilities supporting the emphasis
Sightseeing	Viewing Scenery(including waterfalls and rock outcrops) Picnicking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain Waters Scenic Byway, including Cullasaja, Quarry, Bridal Veil waterfalls • Cliffside Lake Picnic and Swim Area, with Van Hook Glade Campground • Dry Falls Recreation Area • Whitewater Falls Overlook/Picnic Area • Other waterfalls including Rainbow Falls, Glen Falls, Rockhouse Falls, The Potholes • Rock viewing areas including Whiteside Mountain, Granite City, Panthertown
Non-Motorized Trails	Hiking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foothills Trail • Mountains-to-the-Sea National Recreation Trail • Bartram National Recreation Trail • Highlands Complex • Ammons Branch camping area

	Mountain Biking and Pack and Saddle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panthertown Trail Complex
Water-based Recreation	Fishing	

Cowee and Great Balsam Mountains Area

High-elevation mountains form the backdrop to broad valleys, accessed by networks of US and state highways. Currently, 75% of the area is roaded frontcountry. Forest Service ownership is widely dispersed in this area, but includes high concentrations of timber and wildlife management. This is a popular area for hunting, in part due to the highly productive hardwood forests. The Wayehutta OHV Trail Complex offers the only motorized trail complex in Nantahala National Forest. The Blue Ridge Parkway runs along the high-elevation eastern edge of this area that contains some Spruce-Fir forest. One of the most unique recreation destinations in this area is Alarka Laurel, a high elevation “hanging valley,” a boggy red spruce forest in the Cowee Mountains. Major rivers include Little Tennessee and Tuckasegee; narrow, scenic lakes at 3000+ feet include Bear, Wolf, Tanasee and Balsam lakes. The nearest towns include Sylva and Cullowhee.

Recreation Emphasis	Activities	Destination Sites and Facilities supporting the emphasis
Hunting	Target Shooting Range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moss Knob Shooting Range
Motorized Trails		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wayehutta OHV Trail Complex
Non-Motorized Trails	Hiking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountains-to-the-Sea National Recreation Trail
Water-based Recreation	Fishing Canoeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balsam Lake Lodge and Day Use Area • New FERC day use picnic sites on Tanasee Lake • Paddle-in dispersed campsites

The Santeetlah and Fontana Lakes Area

A primary draw to this part of the Nantahala National Forest is water-based recreation. The Little Tennessee River forms narrow Fontana Lake, while the Cheoah River forms the open waters of Santeetlah Lake. Numerous boat ramps provide access for motorized boating, and houseboats are popular on these lakes. With most of the perimeters of both of these lakes in federal ownership, the land is natural appearing with little development. Winter draw-down, however, is dramatic on Fontana Lake. River valleys are encircled by high mountain ranges including the Snowbird and Unicoi mountains and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The valley tracts that are in private ownership are predominantly agricultural. The Cheoah River is popular for fishing and wading, but becomes a high-challenge Class IV and V whitewater river during scheduled water releases throughout the year. The Finger Lakes area where Nantahala and Little Tennessee rivers converge is popular with kayakers. Roads provide frontcountry access to most of the area. US 129 is a famed motorcycle route called “Tail of the Dragon.” Several long-distance trails provide backpacking opportunities through this area and into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The area is forested with deciduous species and evergreens including shortleaf pine and rhododendron. The nearest towns are Bryson City, Franklin and Robbinsville.

Recreation Emphasis	Activities	Destination Sites and Facilities supporting the emphasis
Water-based Recreation	Motorized boating and water sports Fishing Swimming Whitewater Rafting and Kayaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motorized boat launches: Massey Branch, Cheoah Point, Avey Branch, Tsali, Lemmons Branch, Cable Cove • Cheoah Point Recreation Complex (camping, swimming and picnicking) • Santeetlah Lake dispersed campsites • Massey Branch accessible fishing pier • Cheoah River Non-motorized boat launches/Fishing access • Finger Lakes water access
Non-Motorized Trails	Mountain biking Pack and Saddle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tsali Mountain Bike and Horse Trail Complex • Tsali Recreation Area

	Hiking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appalachian National Scenic Trail • Benton McKaye Trail • Bartram National Recreation Trail
Sightseeing	Viewing Scenery Picnicking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheoah Point day use facilities
Hunting		

Unicoi/Snowbird/Nantahala Mountains Area

Long-range views of layered mountains and generally narrow river valleys characterize this area. Ridges along these steep mountains feature rock outcrops and cliffs, as well as the diversity of high elevation balds (e.g., Cheoah, Wesser, and Tusquitee). The area is abundant with water, including Nantahala, Tellico and Tallulah rivers; Nantahala Lake; and Fires, Snowbird and Santeetlah creeks. Many waterfalls (Middle, Big, Sassafra, Leatherwood, Queens, White Oak Creek, Camp Branch, Rufus Morgan, Mooney and Big Laurel) offer popular destinations. The internationally known Nantahala River draws thousands of whitewater rafters and on-lookers annually. Two designated scenic corridors, Cherohala National Scenic Byway and Mountain Waters Scenic Byway, as well as several state-designated scenic byways, provide motorized sightseeing opportunities through this large area; Cherohala is a popular destination ride for motorcyclists. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail and Bartram Trail allow visitors to backpack over long-distances. Hunting is a recreation emphasis in this area. More than half of the area offers remote backcountry settings in Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock and Southern Nantahala wildernesses, Snowbird Wilderness Study Area and 11 inventoried roadless areas. Rich and acidic coves and mesic oak forests occupy almost 2/3 of this area. Historic Wayah Bald Fire Tower is a popular sightseeing destination. Wilson Lick, the 1913 historic ranger station, is an interpretive attraction nearby. The nearest towns include Robbinsville, Bryson City and Franklin.

Recreation Emphasis	Activities	Destination Sites and Facilities supporting the emphasis
Sightseeing	Viewing Scenery (Waterfalls) Picnicking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cherohala Skyway National Scenic Byway • Mountain Waters Scenic Byway • Wayah Bald Firetower and Picnic Area • Joyce Kilmer Trailhead Picnic Area • Fires Creek Picnic Area , including Leatherwood Falls
Water-based Recreation	Whitewater rafting Fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nantahala River Corridor, including Bypass Flow sites and Appletree Campground
Hunting and Target Shooting	Target Shooting Range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dirty John and Atoah Shooting Ranges • Santeetlah Creek dispersed sites and other dispersed hunt camps
Non-Motorized Trails	Hiking Hiking, and Pack and Saddle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appalachian National Scenic Trail • Bartram National Recreation Trail • Benton McKaye Trail • Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness Complex • Snowbird Complex • Yellow Creek / Cheoah Bald Complex • Rattler Ford Group Campground • Standing Indian Recreation Area • Swan Cabin • Standing Indian Trail Complex • Wine Springs / Wayah Bald Complex • Chunky Gal / Southern Nantahala Complex • Fires Creek Complex • • Bristol Fields, Fires Creek, Hurricane Creek and Wine Springs camping areas

Hiwassee and Chatuge Lakes Area

This portion of the Nantahala National Forest contains long river corridors and two large TVA-managed lakes, offering a distinct water-based setting in elevations near 2,000 feet. Shortleaf pine is a predominant vegetation type. Characteristically, large rivers run through broad, flat valleys surrounded by steep mountain ranges; these are evident along the Valley, Hiwassee and Nottely rivers. The Trail of Tears crossed through these traditional Cherokee lands, now commemorated by the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. Most of the area is easily accessed by a network of roads, including US 64. Historic Panther Top Fire Tower is open seasonally during fall color. The nearest towns include Murphy, Hayesville and Andrews.

Recreation Emphasis	Activities	Destination Sites and Facilities supporting the emphasis
Water-based Recreation Sightseeing	Motorized boating and water sports Fishing Swimming/Wading Picnicking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Motorized boat launches: Hanging Dog, Jackrabbit Mountain, Ramsey Bend, Grape Creek• Jackrabbit Mountain Recreation Area, including picnic pavilions• Cherokee Lake Picnic Area, including its accessible fishing pier and picnic pavilion• Hanging Dog day use facilities, including picnic pavilion
Non-Motorized Trails	Mountain Biking Hiking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jackrabbit Mountain Complex• Hanging Dog Complex
Hunting and Target Shooting	Target Shooting Range	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Panther Top Shooting Range

Help us identify issues about the conditions in these Place-based Settings in Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests

Please let us know if there are any of the conditions below, and where.

Are there

- Conflicts caused by different users?
- Is there declining infrastructure?
- Is the use exceeding capacity?
- Is there the need to restore natural or cultural resources due to damage from recreation use?
- Are there declining scenery conditions?
- Are invasive plants threatening the forest setting?
- Other issues?

Your name and affiliation (optional): _____