

# Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership

April 28, 2014

Kristin Bail, Forest Supervisor  
National Forests in North Carolina  
Nantahala-Pisgah Plan Revision  
160 Zillicoa St., Suite A  
Asheville, NC 28801

Dear Supervisor Bail:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Preliminary Need for Change statement that guides the consideration of alternatives for the new Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest Land Resources Management Plan. Revising the Forest Plan is a formidable task. To lessen that burden, and to strive to develop a Plan alternative that best suits the diverse interest of the public we have convened the Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership on behalf of which we submit these comments.

The Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership is a volunteer citizen's collaboration, representing a wide range of regional interests, working to support the revision of the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest Land Resources Management plan and advance implementation, new partnerships, and the engagement of the diverse interests in our public lands.

The Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest faces unique challenges. It receives some of the heaviest recreational use – including hunting and fishing - in the country, is a haven for wildlife as habitat and access on private lands is reduced, has strong support for production of traditional forest products, is ecologically rich, and is the primary viewshed for three National Park units. These and other “issues” will be addressed in different ways in different Plan alternatives. For instance, one alternative may emphasize recreation, while another may not. Finding a Plan alternative that can be successfully implemented by accommodating all of these sometimes divergent interests will require agreement, compromise, and time.

The Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership seeks to engage all interests across the forest to find a balance of these “issues” which lead to a Forest Plan alternative that we can not only “live with” but that we each actively “support.” In truth, it is an arduous and at times contentious task. It is a task however that we are committed to seeing through, though we have not yet accomplished it. In that light, the Partnership is not prepared to specifically comment on any of the agency's published “needs for change.”

The Partnership was founded because we all agreed there was a need to change the current Plan and we believe we can better accomplish our individual goals as a partnership rather than separately. We each have specific changes to the Forest Plan we would like to see implemented but understand that other members of the partnership do as well.

Primarily, we believe there is a need for change to develop a Forest Plan that reduces conflict across the forest, whether at the project-level, or on the ground, and that is the alternative we will ultimately submit to you.

The 2012 Planning Rule requires Plan revision to be “collaborative” and “science-based.” 36 C.F.R. 219.1(c). We have taken those mandates to heart and request that the Forest Service does the same by leaving space for consideration of the consensus Plan alternative we will provide. By reaching consensus now, we believe we are setting the course for a better future for our individual interests, for the Forest Service, and for these public lands.

Sincerely,  
The Nantahala Pisgah Forest Partnership

American Whitewater  
Appalachian Trail Conservancy  
Back Country Horsemen of America  
Back Country Horsemen of North Carolina  
Banner Forest Resources  
Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
Carolina Mountain Club  
Columbia Forest Products  
David Wood, Cherokee County Commissioners  
Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians  
High Country Hikers  
Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition  
International Mountain Biking Association  
North Carolina High Peaks Trails Association  
North Carolina Horse Council  
North Carolina Youth Camp Association  
Southern Off-Road Biking Association  
Sustainable Foothills  
The Wilderness Society  
Trout Unlimited  
Western North Carolina Alliance  
Wild South  
The Nature Conservancy  
Southern Environmental Law Center