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USDA FOREST SERVICE, 160A ZILICOA STREET, ASHEVILLE, NC 28801

NEWS • RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Forest Service Releases Uwharrie National Forest Proposed Land Management Plan for Public Comment

A proposed revision of the Uwharrie National Forest Land Management Plan is now available for a 90 day public review and comment period. The Uwharrie Proposed Plan is the result of a collaborative effort among the USDA Forest Service, numerous members of the public, and other local, state, and federal agencies. When finalized, it will replace the original Uwharrie Plan which has not been updated since 1986.

“I’m proud of this plan as much for what it represents as a community effort as for what it represents as a change in direction for forest management,” states Marisue Hilliard, Forest Supervisor for the National Forests in North Carolina. “The public has worked with us to build this Plan every step along the way.”

This Proposed Plan focuses around three main themes:

- 1. Restoring the forest to a more natural ecological condition:** The primary change would be reducing the amount of loblolly pine plantations in favor of reestablishing longleaf pine forests or oak-hickory forests.
- 2. Better managing heritage resources:** The historic and prehistoric sites and artifacts found on the Uwharrie would be protected, but we would also use them to provide opportunities for research, teaching, and interpretation.

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3. Providing outstanding and environmentally friendly outdoor recreation

opportunities, with excellent trails and facilities: The focus for this program would be on improving the conditions of the horse and off-highway vehicle trails in the Badin Lake area and working to complete the Uwharrie National Recreation Trail.

The Proposed Plan also recommends 32 areas totaling 5,391 acres for special designation, including areas with unique or rare botanical, zoological, geological, historical and archeological, scenic and/or recreational values.

A 90-day comment period for the Proposed Plan was first initiated on February 15, 2007 but was not completed because of a national legal challenge to the agency's 2005 Planning Regulations. The Forest Service revised its planning regulations in 2008 and the Uwharrie Proposed Plan has been modified slightly to meet these new regulations.

This new Proposed Plan differs only slightly from the version released for comment in 2007. Numerous editorial changes were made to more accurately indicate the intent of particular plan components, and a discussion of climate change was added to the Plan Set of Documents

“I know there is some concern within the equestrian community over the desired condition to have horses only on “designated trails,” as opposed to allowing cross-country travel,” said Forest Supervisor Marisue Hilliard. “This desired condition would not be put in place until a site-specific plan is developed and analyzed in collaboration with the equestrian community,” she added.

People may submit comments on the Proposed Plan for a 90 day period starting February 23d. The Proposed Plan, along with several related documents, is available electronically at: http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/uwharrie_plan. Hard copies of the Proposed Plan or any other of the other documents may be requested by e-mail at: comments-southern-north-carolina@fs.fed.us. Or, make a written request to:

Proposed Land Management Plan
NFsNC/Uwharrie National Forest
160A Zillicoa Street
Asheville, NC 28801

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