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**File Code:** 1800  
**Date:** May 15, 2020

Dear Valued Partners and Volunteers:

For more than 100 years, the Forest Service has been caring for the land and serving people by collaborating with its partners and volunteers; they are part of the very foundation of this Agency. In late March of 2020, the National Forests in North Carolina (NFsNC) made the difficult decision to suspend the Volunteer Program to reduce potential exposure to volunteers and to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. NFsNC has a dedicated and hardworking group of volunteers and partner organizations who contribute to the successful management of forest resources. We deeply appreciate the work volunteers help us accomplish.

On Friday, May 15, NFsNC's current Volunteer Program suspension will expire. The continued suspension or resumption of volunteer engagement will vary by Ranger District based on local management decisions. As COVID-19 continues to influence our operations this year, public health guidance will inform how we can work together. Volunteers and partner organizations will receive direction from their local District contacts on when and how to best reengage along with new COVID-19 health and safety protocols. We appreciate your patience and flexibility as operations may resume at different times on each district based on varying local conditions, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) availability, and the capacity to coordinate and manage volunteers safely. In addition, we recognize that volunteer and partner organizations may have different abilities to manage COVID-19 risk and implement the health and safety protocols required. As a result, some volunteers may be delayed on resuming activity at the District Ranger's discretion.

NFsNC asks that volunteers and partner organizations stay updated on CDC guidelines and to carefully consider the logistics of volunteer events. Special forethought should be given to how groups gather, arrive and leave a site, share resources, and work in proximity to others/social distance. We expect volunteers and partner organizations to follow local, state, and national public health guidance around the use of PPE related to the current pandemic. We encourage and appreciate volunteers who are able to provide their own PPE as supply shortages and limited availability may reduce the number of volunteer engagement opportunities available.



The health, safety, and well-being of our employees, partners, volunteers, and the public is of top priority for NFsNC. The National Forests in North Carolina would not be what it is today without your hard work, commitment and passion. Thank you in advance for your continued support, patience, cooperation and partnership as we work together to conserve our public lands during the current pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'HAN', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

HURSTON A. NICHOLAS  
Forest Supervisor