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Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

National Forests in  
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## **NEWS RELEASE**

**October 18, 1999**

### **For Immediate Release**

### **Nantahala NF Timber Sales Released; Forest Service Enters Formal Consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the Indiana Bat**

ASHEVILLE.... The Forest Service today released all remaining timber sales in Graham and adjoining counties where work had been stopped because of the discovery last August of 28 endangered Indiana bats.

“At this time of year, all the bats are back at their winter caves, and resuming these sales poses no risk to the bat,” said Larry Hayden, planning and ecosystems staff officer for the National Forests in North Carolina.

The Forest Service also announced that it was formally consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that future management activities on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests do not jeopardize the long-term survival of the Indiana bat.

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In August the Forest Service suspended all tree cutting in a four county area of the Nantahala National Forest after discovering 28 Indiana bats roosting in an old dead hemlock tree. Last month, the Forest service allowed about half the suspended timber sales to resume after surveys showed no bats present on the units and adequate bat habitat remaining in the surrounding forest.

“There is only a very slight chance that future projects under our current forest management direction would pose a direct risk to the bat or its habitat,” said Hayden. “In fact our analysis shows that there is now an abundance of suitable Indiana bat summer foraging and roosting habitat on the forest. Experts have told us that the Indiana bat needs large, old trees with loose bark for summer roosting sites. Under current forest management direction, the number of suitable roosting trees across the forest will gradually increase over time,” Hayden said.

“We have asked the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to formally review our finding that the current Nantahala and Pisgah forest plan, with existing standards and guides, is adequate to provide bat habitat, and contribute to the recovery of this species,” Hayden said. The Forest Service hopes that formal consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service can be completed by early next year.

“We know the loggers who had purchased timber from the Forest Service have been hurt by our temporary suspension of timber harvest in Graham, Macon, Swain and Cherokee counties,” said Forest Supervisor John Ramey. We now want to complete formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as soon as possible, so that we can implement future projects with the assurance that the Indiana bat and its habitat will be adequately protected,” said Ramey.

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