

Courthouse Rapid Assessment

Public Comments from 2/24/09 Meeting in Brevard

FIRE

Utilize larger landscape burns with ridge ignitions to replicate more natural burn patterns with different intensities.

RESTORATION

Oak hiker's emphasis -- more stand diversity. Interested in being involved in the board meetings.

ROADS

Look for potential for road decommissioning. Also look at road impacts of closed as well as open roads.

Open more of the Forest Service roads. By limiting the number of open roads it greatly increases the impact of certain areas and limits the accessibility of other areas.

Road access has been a major factor in this area because of previous storm damage. Replace culverts and use gates instead of berms for seasonally closed roads. Recommend consideration of seasonal closings of some gates for bear hunting (mid Oct to end of Dec) – do not recommend year-round openings. Better access may help with hog problems.

NATURAL AREAS / OLD GROWTH

Establish a new Natural Areas at Bruce Knob.

Work with the NCNHP to design old-growth stands. Don't log within the primary boundary of the State proposed natural heritage area.

More accessible old growth areas—so families, children actually see a tree older than 90 years. Old growth areas in multiple, diverse sites eg, aspects – diverse soils, slopes, ect.

WILDLIFE HABITAT / GRASS FORBS

Prioritize 20 – 30 yr stands for restoration of grass/forbs habitat. Suggested area: Chestnut Ridge

Currently the NCWRC does no open maintenance in Courthouse – There likely are 7 plus acres of openings, but because of a lack of access, these openings have not been maintained. They will

likely need reclamation and are probably in pole-timber stands. Additional grass/forb openings are needed (11.3 ac).

Support the Pilot Mtn. burn and would like to see more burns (smaller) in south-west facing slopes. Strongly support cutting the maximum acreage in MAs 4A and 4D (324 acres). Support any timber stand improvement work in previously regenerated stands, especially to favor oak/mast trees. Any linear wildlife openings (LWO) need to be closed to bike/horse trails (note: does not object to some bike/horse trails – just not in LWOs). Any wildlife openings need to have edges cut back at least 100 feet – consider periodic fire to maintain them. Improve access to wildlife fields.

All of Pisgah National Forest is in disparate need of timber management “Logging”. Wildlife in all of this area & surrounding areas are dying off due to bad habitat. Wildlife need a healthy environment to live in which includes food & cover. Court House Road needs to be open all the way through to Pilot Mnt. We need food plots in this area. This area also needs lots of prescribed burns, and no building of new hiking trails.

Bog area off of 5031 approx ½ way between the fork of 5033/5031 and Kissee Creek @ a large rock outcropping ~1–2 acres. I have pictures if interested.

Pleased to hear about plans for control burns & food plots for wildlife. Along with this will be a need for better law enforcement, (state & federal) to deal with gate destruction and poaching of game and fishing violations. Pleased to hear plans for more controlled burn, clear cuts, selective cuts, & food plots. These are all needed to return wildlife to its former abundance. There is no wildlife in old growth.

Appreciates necessary management of the Forest to accomplish goals. Existing roads need to be reworked to better access wildlife openings. Prescribed burn needs to be done hot enough to kill out some mountain laurel that is choking some other vegetation. Some timber thinning or small clear cuts to create browse & habit for all wildlife.

OTHER

Unauthorized ATV access from private property is occurring near Cycleham Gap Rd. – most likely from Mason Creek (not within the Courthouse AA). I have encountered people hunting out of season and in possession of hand guns in the Forest off road 471 just past Kuykendall Group Camp.

Please provide maps to download on your website so I can review with our One NC Naturally Conservation Planning Tool (www.onencnaturally.org).

Wild South is available to assist with research or H₂O quality testing.