

## Roads

### Draft Desired Conditions:

1. Roads open to public vehicles are safe for forest visitors in non-4-wheel-drive vehicles and for emergency vehicles: there are no gullies, washouts, or slides; there are adequate turnouts or passing areas and adequate sight distances; the road surface is relatively smooth. Some heavily traveled Forest roads are paved.
2. Closed roads are used by hikers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders except when signed as closed to a particular use. The road surface is free of gullies and is generally covered with native materials or native grasses and forbs. The road edges are intact and not broken by excessive traffic of forest visitors. During rain events, water is able to seep into the soil gradually without causing erosion.
3. There is little or no evidence of new road construction. Many existing roads are closed to public **motorized** vehicles to reduce human disturbance to wildlife. **Old unused woods roads** (i.e. unclassified in Forest Service lingo, and not part of the trail system) **are seldom encountered.**
4. Sediment from roads is not reaching streams.

### Possible guideline:

1. Limit roads in sensitive areas, and to reduce the spread of invasive species and reduce sedimentation of streams.

## Trails

### Draft Desired Conditions:

1. An exceptional system of trails draws visitors to the Uwharrie; provides unique opportunities for visitors to experience natural forest settings while enjoying physical activities with family and friends; and provides economic benefits to the local communities.
2. Trails are available for hikers, horseback riders, off-roaders, and mountain bikers. User conflicts are rare. The trails are designed, constructed, and maintained so that a variety of levels of challenge is available and minimal damage occurs to other forest resources such as soil and water.
3. The trail system has trails of varied lengths, including loop trails and trails with multiple access points. Trailheads are easy to locate and safe vehicle parking is nearby. Trail users are well-informed about the trails and about ways to minimize their impacts on the environment during their visits. Many trails have vistas – points along the trails that allow for long-range views.

DRAFT DESIRED CONDITIONS (modified base on comments received at the October 24<sup>th</sup> public meeting)

4. Trails are safe. They are well marked and easy to find; trails that cross roads are well marked for safety at all intersections. There are no hazard trees. **For added safety, horse use and OHV use is occurring on separate trails.**
5. There is good trail access for visitors to both northern and southern portions of the Forest.
6. The 50-mile Uwharrie Trail is complete and marked for hikers.
7. Mountain biking occurs on roads and designated trails in several parts of the Forest.
8. Horseback riding occurs on a designated trail system and riders are conscientious about safety when riding. Horse trails are well designed and maintained to provide varied user experiences (easy to more rugged) while minimizing resource damage. While trails avoid wet areas, access is available to horse watering areas. **While on the horse trails, visitors seldom see evidence of erosion into streams or litter.**
9. An OHV trail system exists that is well designed and maintained to provide varied user experiences (easy to more challenging) while minimizing resource damage. Off-highway vehicles are operating only on designated routes. Little sediment can be seen entering streams from the OHV system, and trails are free of litter.
10. Partners and volunteer groups are working with well-trained professionals to maintain or improve the trail systems.

Possible Guidelines:

1. User groups are involved in the designs, improvements, and maintenance of trails.
2. Existing hiking trails are maintained in the desired condition (little or no evidence of off-site impacts) prior to making additions to the hiking trail system.
3. Existing horse trails are maintained in the desired condition (little or no evidence of off-site impacts) prior to making additions to the horse trail system.
4. Existing mountain bike trails are maintained in the desired condition (little or no evidence of off-site impacts) prior to making additions to the mountain bike system.
5. Existing OHV trails are maintained in the desired condition (little or no evidence of off-site impacts) prior to making additions to the OHV system.

**Facilities**

Draft Desired Conditions:

1. Campgrounds, restrooms, and showers are clean, safe, and in good repair. Campgrounds are available, convenient, and appropriately designed for a variety of Forest visitors.

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2. Parking areas exist for users at convenient locations and are well-designed for their intended use, including parking for vehicles towing trailers. Forest users are parking in a safe manner along roads: not blocking roads, and not impacting adjacent landowners.
3. Trash receptacles are located at high-use areas, but forest visitors pack out their own trash and generally leave the forest cleaner than they found it.
4. Gates withstand wear and tear, have working locks, and are free from wasp infestation.

Possible Guideline:

1. Information and ideas from forest visitors is used to help prioritize improvements to facilities.

## **Visitor Information**

Draft Desired Conditions:

1. Visitors have access to accurate maps and detailed information so they can have a safe, positive experience in the forest. Information on trails includes distances, difficulty, and trailhead locations.
2. **Up-to-date** printed information such as brochures or visitor guides is widely distributed and available at other area attractions such as the zoo, **and at area visitor/welcome centers.**
3. Visitors have access to natural and cultural history information, including interpretive exhibits. Information on both aquatic and terrestrial resources is available.
4. Visitors are informed about ways to lessen their impact on the environment, including the importance of not littering in the forest and not leaving trash at campsites, parking areas, or the rifle range.

## **Scenery**

Draft Desired Conditions:

1. Scenery is pleasant and generally consists of older, closed canopy forests with a **park like or semi-open** understory, except in young regeneration areas, prairie-like openings, glades, and wildlife openings.
2. The Uwharrie National Forest is free of litter and refuse.

## Wilderness

### Draft Desired Condition:

**The wilderness exhibits little evidence of modern human disturbance, and is remote from the sights and sounds of 21st-century civilization such as traffic from roads. Natural processes such as succession, decomposition and natural regeneration, and disturbance factors such as fire, wind, and water shape vegetation. Large areas of uninterrupted habitat provide a safe haven for animals. Visitors to the area include nature enthusiasts, hikers, hunters, and researchers. No facilities are present other than the occasional fire ring. Motorized or mechanical vehicles, equipment, or devices are absent. Information signs are not seen within the wilderness boundary.**

## Water-Based Recreation

### Draft Desired Conditions:

1. Access to the water is available for water-oriented activities such as canoeing, kayaking, power boating, fishing, waterfowl hunting, and horse watering. (moved from fisheries)
2. Anglers have good access for fishing and success in catching fish. (moved from fisheries)

## Wildlife

### Draft Desired Conditions:

1. The Forest exhibits ~~a high~~ **the** diversity of **native** ecosystems and species ~~native to~~ **typical of** the Piedmont ecoregion.
2. Wildlife fields and openings in the forest are predominantly filled with native grasses, herbs, and shrubs of species that native wildlife use for food. Forest openings are dispersed across the forest.
3. Some non-native non-invasive plants such as grains are growing in a fraction of wildlife openings in order to provide the wildlife viewing experience desired by forest visitors.
4. Populations of ~~a~~ **the** diversity of native species **typical of the Piedmont ecosystem** - vertebrates, invertebrates, game and non-game, and including herptiles - are at healthy levels in balance with their habitat.
5. Habitat structural components such as dens, snags and downed wood is evident in most stands. However **the** amount of dead wood is limited near private developments to reduce fire danger.

DRAFT DESIRED CONDITIONS (modified base on comments received at the October 24<sup>th</sup> public meeting)

6. Suitable habitat for red-cockaded woodpecker is restored **on sites where is occurred historically.**
7. ~~Regeneration of~~ **Regenerating** hardwoods are evident, **such as oaks and hickories** for continual mast production (~~needed by many forest-dwelling wildlife species~~), ~~often in~~ **following disturbances in tree canopies** (canopy gaps) in multi-age forests. **Acorns and hickory nuts (important wildlife food sources) are abundant most years in oak-hickory forests.**
8. Ephemeral pools, ponds, swamps, seeps, bogs, and other wetlands are frequent throughout the Forest and visited by many wild animals. Conditions are secure for animals that use these habitats for reproducing such as amphibians.

## Heritage Resources

### Draft Desired Conditions:

1. Archeological treasures are protected from loss and appropriately restored, including and significant prehistoric and historic sites (i.e. Thornburg place). Cultural resources are intact yet available for interpretation.
2. Visitors to the Uwharrie have opportunities to learn about the past, including how to protect these resources, through interpretive programs and information.

## Lands

### Draft Desired Conditions:

1. Uwharrie National Forest land base is sufficient to protect wilderness, provide **habitat, refuges and corridors for native wildlife**, ~~provide adequate opportunities for wildlife management~~, to protect special areas **thus increasing ecological integrity**, to protect views and vistas, and to provide **a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities including** adequate water-based recreation including access to the Uwharrie River.
2. The land base is consolidated to allow for better resource management, **however isolated tracts with special resource values are retained in the land base.**

### Possible Guidelines:

1. Ensure new land acquisitions do not contribute to resource damage or other destructive or illegal uses.
2. Be attentive to forest quality/integrity/etc. when considering land swaps to consolidate forest landholdings. **Land exchanges will help meet plan desired conditions other than just land consolidation. Tracts along the PeeDee, Uwharrie or Little Rivers,**

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**and tracts along Barnes Creek/Poison Fork are not traded for consolidation purposes.**

## Water Quality and Fisheries

### Draft Desired Conditions:

1. Aquatic ecosystems are diverse, functioning properly, and providing high quality habitat for all indigenous aquatic species, including non-game species.
2. Fish are plentiful in streams and lakes. Water is clean and clear, and there is in-stream habitat for fish to hide, spawn, and find food. Non-native aquatic species do not threaten UNF lakes, rivers, or streams.
3. Native fresh water mussel communities are thriving.
4. Streambanks are covered in native riparian vegetation, including trees capable of adding large woody debris for hydrologic stability and instream fish habitat. Stream channels are connected to their floodplains so that high **streamflow events** ~~rainfall amounts~~ can be processed through the ecosystem without creating gullies or eroding stream banks.
5. Bogs and seeps have only native vegetation and are maintaining or increasing their size.
6. Stream channels degraded by historic mining are exhibiting improved biological and hydrological conditions.

### Possible Guideline:

1. Stream restoration uses the least intensive methods capable of achieving results.

### Possible Monitoring Items:

1. Monitor chemical, nutrient, **and sediment** levels and water quality in the river and also creeks that feed the river.
2. Bog communities are monitored regularly.

## Vegetation

### Draft Desired Conditions:

1. Woodlands and open forests with small canopy gaps, interspersed with glades and Piedmont prairies, occupy **portions** ~~a large fraction~~ **of the forest where they occurred historically**. These forests contain mixed ages with old trees and old forest conditions.

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2. Non-native invasive species are at low levels that do not interfere with native plant reproduction and distribution. New outbreaks soon disappear.
3. Plant and animal communities more common in the past are reestablished on suitable sites across the forest. These include longleaf and shortleaf pine woodlands, oak/hickory forests, glades, and canebrakes.
4. Schweinitz sunflowers are ~~abundant~~ **restored throughout its historical range** across the forest. Other rare species are sustaining or increasing in population.
5. Biological diversity is evident across the forest, and is further enhanced by a network of areas maintained in a natural condition. Rare plant and animal communities are well represented in this network.
6. ~~Regeneration of~~ Regenerating hardwoods are evident ~~often in~~ **following disturbances in tree canopies** (canopy gaps) in multi-age forests.
7. The forest is in a healthy condition. Most trees are in good health, well-formed, and with little evidence of widespread insect and/or disease damage. A healthy forest includes some dead and dying trees as well as snags and den trees that contribute to wildlife habitat.

## **DRAFT Guiding Principles for Community Relations**

1. The UNF managers are viewed as good neighbors and positive members of the community. They are involved in community groups like land trusts, forest use groups, and community planning groups.
2. UNF managers implement projects in Randolph, **Davidson**, and Montgomery County.
3. Neighbors of UNF are consulted and informed about Forest plans and programs. Project implementation is coordinated/partnered with adjacent landowners whenever possible to promote efficient land stewardship and positive relationships.
4. The UNF managers welcome visitors and widely distribute information on facilities and programs.
5. UNF managers support establishment of Friends of UNF group.
6. UNF managers support and encourage responsible service providers and outfitters in promoting the forest, informing the public of its existence, and insuring responsible usage.

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