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Date: January 30, 2007

Dear Friends:

The Uwharrie National Forest Proposed Land Management Plan is now ready for your review and comment. The Proposed Plan was developed over the course of about a year, in collaboration with a great group of citizens interested in the future of the Uwharrie. Local landowners and community leaders, State and other federal agency representatives, interest and user group representatives and many others who value the Uwharrie National Forest participated along with us in this effort. I am proud of this Proposed Plan as much for what it represents as a community effort as for what it represents as a change in direction for national forest management.

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.
3. **Providing outstanding and environmentally friendly outdoor recreation opportunities, with excellent trails and facilities:** Our 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.

In comparison to the 1986 Forest Plan, the Proposed Plan places much more emphasis on restoring native ecosystems and historic fire regimes. The specific focus on restoring Schweinitz's sunflower and native mussels is completely new. The 1986 plan allowed for as much prescribed burning as the Proposed Plan, but did not provide for growing season burning, which is thought to have greater potential for both fuels reduction and control of undesirable species. The Proposed Plan would allow growing season burns to occur.

Another big change would be the designation of 32 Special Areas on the Uwharrie National Forest, comprising a total of 5,391 acres. These areas contain unique or rare botanical, zoological, geological, historical and archeological, scenic and/or recreational values. They also include the best examples of more commonly encountered ecological systems, such as intact oak/hickory forests.



The Proposed Plan has been developed under Forest Service planning regulations which were established in 2005. The Proposed Plan is more streamlined than the existing plan. However, additional environmental documentation is available in the Plan Set of Documents, which is also available for your review. The Plan Set of Documents includes:

- ☐ The Uwharrie National Forest Proposed Land Management Plan
(Includes 11x17 Proposed Forest Plan map
and 11x17 Badin Area Proposed Plan map)
- ☐ The Comprehensive Evaluation Report:
 - »☐ Identifying the Need to Change the Current Plan
 - How the Revised Plan will Address the Need for Change
 - »☐ Sustainability Reports
 - Social and Economic Sustainability Report
 - Social and Economic Overview
 - Economic Impact Tables
 - Terrestrial Ecosystem Sustainability Report
 - Aquatic Ecosystem Sustainability Report
 - Aquatic Ecosystem Sustainability Appendices
- ☐ Strategic View
- ☐ Silviculture/Timber Report
- ☐ Options
- ☐ The Collaborative Process
- ☐ Photo Supplement

Most reviewers will want to start with the Proposed Plan and refer to the other documents as they desire a more complete understanding of the plan components, the rationale for proposing them and the projections of expected outcomes.

In the past a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) would have been available for review at the same time as a draft plan. This is no longer required since land management plan development, amendment, and revision are categorically excluded from documentation in an EIS or environmental assessment. This change was authorized by the Chief of the Forest Service on December 15, 2006.

We encourage your comments on all aspects of the plan. The 90-day comment period begins on February 15, 2007. Notice of the 90-day comment period will be published in the Federal Register, and in the Asheville Citizen Times (the newspaper of record for the National Forests in North Carolina), and the Montgomery Herald. The Proposed Plan, along with the Plan Set of Documents, is available electronically at: http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/uwharrie_plan/.

Send your comments by e-mail to: comments-southern-north-carolina@fs.fed.us, subject: Uwharrie plan.

For those of you who have previously requested a hard copy of the Proposed Plan, it is enclosed with this letter. If you prefer hard copy correspondence, you may request copies of the Proposed

Plan or any other of the Plan Set of Documents, and you may submit comments on the Proposed Plan by contacting us at:

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

Sincerely,

/S/ Marisue Hilliard

MARISUE HILLIARD
Forest Supervisor