



NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH • CAROLINA

USDA FOREST SERVICE, 160A ZILICOA STREET, ASHEVILLE, NC 28801

NEWS • RELEASE

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REVISED CROATAN FOREST PLAN RELEASED

ASHEVILLE, NC--The USDA Forest Service this week released the final Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Croatan National Forest. This revised Plan replaces the original Croatan National Forest Plan, which was issued in 1986.

The Croatan National Forest includes about 161,000 acres in the eastern coastal plain of North Carolina near the Atlantic coast. The forest contains a unique mixture of pocosin swamps, upland longleaf pine forests, bottomland hardwoods, pocosin lakes, blackwater rivers, salt marshes, and tidal creeks. It covers portions of three counties: Craven, Carteret, and Jones. Major nearby communities include New Bern, Jacksonville, Beaufort and Morehead City.

Two major objectives of the revised Croatan Plan are:

- 1.) Helping to recover the federally endangered red cockaded woodpecker (RCW), and
- 2.) Restoring the longleaf pine ecosystem.

This longleaf ecosystem is considered critical not only to RCW populations but also to a whole host of rare species associated with longleaf pine savannas.

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The Plan also calls for:

- Identification and protection of Special Interest Areas,
- Recovery of rare species and communities,
- Restoring old growth habitat,
- Maintaining black bear habitat and hardwood cypress wetlands,
- Restoring hydrological function to key aquatic habitats,
- Restoring upland hardwoods on suitable sites.

The Plan also expands the use of prescribed fire to improve RCW habitat and to reduce the threat of wildfires. Fuel reduction efforts will be concentrated in a defined wildland urban interface zone. A reduction in fuel loads is needed to decrease the risk of uncontrollable wildfires spreading into the rapidly expanding urban interface along the boundaries of the forest.

Recreation opportunities will be increased including primitive camping, water-based recreation, and dispersed recreation, as well as hunting, fishing, and wildlife related recreation opportunities. Vehicle access to the forest will be maintained, but a number of non-system/user-created roads will be closed, and OHV use on the Forest will be restricted to one designated area.

The Forest Plan recommends 691 acres of additions to existing wilderness areas on the Croatan. Of the remaining roadless areas, the vast majority will be managed to maintain their roadless conditions. The Forest is also recommending that the state of North Carolina conduct further evaluations of White Oak River and Brice Creek for possible designation as Wild and Scenic Rivers. Although considered eligible for designation, the Forest Service is not recommending these watercourses at this time because of the large amount of private land within the study corridors. However, these river corridors will continue to be managed to maintain their outstandingly remarkable characteristics.

The Plan and EIS are available electronically on the National Forests in North Carolina website, www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc or by calling the National Forests in North Carolina, at 828-257-4200.