

News Release

USDA Forest Service

Appalachian Ranger District



For Immediate Release

Contact: Paul Bradley, 828-682-6146

12-Mile Strip Road in Haywood County Will Be Periodically Impassable in May

National Forest Road 288, which provides access to the 12-Mile Strip and Sutton Top area of the Pisgah National Forest southwest of I-40 at the Harmon Den exit, will be impassable periodically due to high water at the low water bridge on the Pigeon River. In May, water will be released periodically at the Walters Dam for the rafting industry making road impassable at the crossing. The public is advised to use alternate access into the Sutton Top area by going southeast out of the Mt. Sterling community and taking Forest Road 289 to the Sutton Top area.

The scheduled dates for releases are May 15, 17, 19, 22 and 24, 2001. The spillway at the Walters Dam will open at 9:00 AM each of those days, making the low water crossing impassable at approximately 9:00 AM. The spillway will be closed by 6:00 PM, making the low water crossing passable between 6:30 and 7:00 PM.

The Carolina Power and Light Company (CP&L) has begun a maintenance action at the Waterville Power Plant just off of I-40 at the North Carolina/Tennessee state line. They are making repairs to the tunnel that brings water from Waterville Reservoir to the power plant. As they make these repairs, water cannot flow through the tunnel and all

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water flow will be turned in to the Pigeon River from the Walters Dam to the power plant. When the power plant is operating, the Pigeon River from the Walters Dam to the power plant is usually at relatively low flow. With no water going through the tunnel, flows in this stretch of the river will increase and could fluctuate significantly whenever it rains and when releases are made at the dam for rafting.

CP&L usually schedules releases of water from the Waterville Power Plant for the rafting industry as part of their Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license. These releases begin in May and continue throughout the summer. Since the tunnel and power plant are shut down for maintenance, scheduled releases for the rafting industry will be made at the Walters Dam. This will raise the water in the Pigeon River between the dam and the power plant and make the low water crossing on Forest Road 288 south of I-40 at the Harmon Den exit impassable during the releases. The power plant should be operating again by June, so future releases during the summer should not affect the low water crossing.

For additional information, please contact the Appalachian Ranger District in Hot Springs, NC at 828-622-3202.

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