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NEBO, N.C.— As the new ranger for the Grandfather District, Miera Crawford plans to wear many hats, from friendly neighbor to good land steward.

Starting July 15, Crawford will oversee 189,000 acres of the Grandfather District, part of the Pisgah National Forest. Crawford replaces Mike Anderson, who retired in April.

A 13-year Forest Service veteran, Crawford comes from the Payette National Forest in McCall, Ida., where she served for 4 years as the staff officer for public affairs, tribal relations, recreation, wilderness, heritage, information/education, and the senior, youth and volunteer programs. She recently served as acting district ranger for the New Meadow and Krassel districts on the Payette National Forest.

“In my new job, I really look forward to getting to know the people—the district employees and those living in adjacent communities. I’m also looking forward to reacquainting myself with the land of the Southern Appalachians.

The new ranger emphasizes that she will have an open-door policy. “My goal is to work together to find solutions. I really like working with people.”

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The former public affairs officer says one of her most challenging assignments was working on a team that developed a communication plan for the 1996 Olympic whitewater canoe and kayaking event. The event occurred on the Ocoee River in the Cherokee National Forest.

“For 3 years we prepared for this event. It was so complex because there were so many partners involved and the pace was so intense—no give in the deadline,” she says.

“Another challenge was serving as the forest public affairs officer for the Payette National Forest during the 2000 fire season,” Crawford says. “More than 360,000 acres burned. Except for 3 days, I worked every day, from July 15 to Sept. 15. I worked one-on-one with the numerous community leaders, relayed information to national and international media, and coordinated the visits of a list of VIP’s—from the Forest Service chief to the president.”

Crawford also worked from 1988-1993 on the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests in Arkansas.

A native of Arkansas, Crawford says she misses fried okra and oak trees and is anxious to again experience these southern pleasures. “I love the Appalachians and the ecological diversity of the forests,” she says.