



# **NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH • CAROLINA**

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

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## **NEWS • RELEASE**

Contact: Terry Seyden 828-257-4202  
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For Immediate Release

### **Forest Service Issues Decision for Globe Project**

After gathering the feedback and suggestions of local citizens, the USDA Forest Service today announced its decision for the Globe Forest Management Project. “We have worked very hard to address the concerns of the people of Blowing Rock and Watauga County and we have added a number of specific modifications to ensure we maintain the scenic values of the Pisgah National Forest, especially near the Town of Blowing Rock,” said Joy Malone, Grandfather District Ranger.

No clearcuts are planned. The scaled-down project will be comprised of seventeen small partial harvest units averaging 11 acres in size, distributed across the 11,225 acre project area. These partial harvests are called “two aged” management because about a third of the trees are left uncut in each small unit in order to greatly reduce the potential visual

impact. This technique is very similar in appearance to a heavy thinning, and after one or two growing seasons these units are much less noticeable and often difficult to pick out.

“During this long planning process we received considerable public input from many people in the surrounding communities,” said Malone. “We understand the value of tourism and the scenic quality of the area and its importance to residents and visitors to western North Carolina. We want to build strong relationships with local governments in order to work together in a neighborly fashion to achieve our mutual goals. In communities like Blowing Rock mountain scenery is an economic asset and our own figures show that tourism is important. For instance, the National Forests in North Carolina is the most visited of any national forest in the country, if you don’t count the White River National Forest in Colorado with all of its downhill ski resorts,” Malone said.

In response to concerns expressed by Watauga County Commissioners and the Towns of Blowing Rock and Boone and others, the Forest Service has conducted additional project impact analysis on several scenic vistas near Blowing Rock. Forest Landscape Architect Erik Crews took additional photographs from a number of these viewpoints, both during leaf off conditions in the winter and leaf on conditions in summer. He then used these actual photographs to ensure the accuracy and reliability of earlier computer simulations.

These new photographs will also serve as baseline records to document any visual effects from the Globe project. In addition, the landscape architect visited three recent two age timber harvests similar to those called for in the Globe project. He has put together a

portfolio of these photographs which can be seen on the Forest Website at <http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc>. “The recent photos taken from the Blue Ridge Parkway and other visually sensitive sites indicate that the two age harvest method is very successful in minimizing visual impacts on the landscape” Malone said .

“We thought it very important to go out and actually check what these recent two age units look like,” said Terry Seyden, spokesman for the National Forests in North Carolina. “The survey results show that this method dramatically reduces visual impact over just a short time. I would encourage people to take a look at these photos and judge for themselves,” Seyden said.

“The Globe project is part of our overall management strategy for the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forest,” said District Ranger Malone. “Our long term priority is to maintain a healthy and productive forest. In many cases this requires active management. Our wildlife biologists and forest ecologists tell us that the healthiest and most productive forests are ones that contain a good mixture of old growth forests, openings, and young vigorously growing trees;” Malone said.

“The Globe project is designed to foster a healthy ecosystem that provides the types of wildlife habitat scarce in this part of the forest,” Malone said. “We are also taking steps to regenerate oak trees on the forest because of their high wildlife habitat value. At the same time we recognize the importance of old growth forest habitats; about half of the project area is set aside to maintain old growth values,” Malone said. “Over ninety-eight percent of the project area will be left for future management decisions.”

No new permanent roads will be built as part of the Globe Project. Part of the proceeds from the timber sale associated with this project will be used to conduct necessary maintenance on existing roads. These existing roads provide important access for Forest Service personnel responding to wildfires and often can be used as firebreaks to prevent forest fires from spreading. A few temporary roads will be necessary but they will be re-vegetated immediately after the project.

Some of the specific design elements included in the decision to protect scenic views in and around Blowing Rock include:

- Leave a buffer of uncut trees to screen roads from view
- Screen log landings from view
- “Feather” the upper edges of unit boundaries
- Burn or lop and scatter slash to within 2 to 4 feet of the ground below roads and cable landings
- Forest landscape architect to meet with district personnel on site before tree marking and during harvest to ensure all of the design elements are correctly applied.
- Forest landscape architect to conduct photo monitoring immediately after harvest and 1, 2, and 5 years after harvest to ensure visual quality objectives are met.

“Many North Carolinians look to the national parks and forests to ensure that we will always have healthy and visually pleasing forests as part of our southern Appalachian heritage, said Seyden. “In light of the considerable public interest, we have been very

careful in examining this project. We are confident we can protect sensitive views while achieving our resource management objectives. We certainly cannot afford to have any surprises show up on the national forest landscape.”

“As a result of the extensive review, we now are relying heavily on the two aged method to maintain scenic values while still accomplishing important forest wildlife and timber objectives,” Seyden said. “Many people in the Blowing Rock community still remember what some of the older, larger clearcuts used to look like and we want to keep that kind of impact from occurring again.”

The Globe project is tentatively scheduled to be implemented in 2009. Copies of the Globe project decision notice, environmental assessment and photographic portfolio are available on the Forest website <http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc> and at the Blowing Rock public library.

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