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Wilderness evaluation input

Area Name: Craggy

Criterion 1- Apparent Naturalness: The degree to which an area generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

\* Considerations

Narrative

\* 1a) Within the area, do ecological conditions appear natural or to be noticeably modified by human intervention? Describe the natural appearance of the area. Consider the composition of plant and animal communities, water, and soil.

The area has outstanding natural features and currently

appears in an almost total natural condition. The area has diverse ecological, topographical and geological features. 14000 acres of USFS lands separated from other USFS lands, but connected to BRP, and several municipal watersheds-part of a large forested landscape. High mountains on N, E and S. Three main streams forming headwaters of Ivy R. are completely contained within the area. Highly dense and diverse plant and animal communities. Many Community types, including High Elevation rocky outcrops, Mid elev Rocky Outcrops, Boulderfields, Rich and Acidic Cove forest, Northern Hardwoods, High Elevation Red Oak, Sp-Fir, Seeps, and several others. One of the best areas for Rich Coves, and Boulderfields anywhere. Important geological feature include amphibolite patches, outcrops and bands, which play an important role in plant (and animal) diversity through circumneutral soils The area contains at least 3000 acres of forests categorized as old growth by any reasonable definition, with much more growing every day into near old growth condition-an important consideration! Much logging has taken place here, but most obvious signs are mostly gone and recovery is advanced. Relatively few NNIS. Outstanding waterfalls, clean water and native Brook trout. Scenic and incredible.

1b) Describe deviations from the natural condition and the extent to which they occur, including evidence of past management activities.

\* Are vegetation management, timber harvest, or restoration treatments substantially noticeable? Describe the type and extent of vegetation management activities and associated landscape modifications; including existence of recent even-aged harvests, plantation style forest, low maintenance-level roads, skid roads, logging decks, cable yarder landings, fire lines, etc.

\* Are there maintained wildlife fields or linear wildlife openings, straightened or modified stream channels, modifications from past agricultural practices, etc.

\* Are there concentrations of invasive plants and/or animals within the area which appear substantially unnatural? Describe species, locations, and extent of occurrences.

\* The area has three more or less equal sized parts, each with a single gravel USFS or state road leading into or through. A few trails and logging roads lead off each.

\* There has been little timber harvesting in the last 20 years. There are 15-20 small and moderate sized clearcuts conducted in 1970's and 80's scattered at lower-mid elevations.

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\* Very few maintained wildlife fields. None needed, there is plenty of game! I hunt there and want no more early succession habitat. Plenty is provided by natural events.

\* \

\* Relatively few NNIS. Hemlock adelgid has killed many hemlocks, including old growth stands.

\* 1c) Describe the presence and extent of improvements in the area, including the type of improvement, approximate size of affected area, and whether structures may be considered historic (>50 years old).

\* Does the area contain constructed improvements such as airstrips, heliports/landing zones, vertical structures (towers), utility corridors, buildings, dams, water tanks, penstocks, remnants of past occupation, etc.?

\* Are there recreation improvements within the area that are substantially noticeable modifications to the landscape; such as highly developed trails, day-use or overnight developed recreation sites, recreation structures, access roads, etc.?

No such improvements

Trails for hiking, equestrian, and cycles are mostly on old skid roads.

\* 1d) Other (Include any additional information related to criterion 1)

I am familiar with most of Pisgah NF and know of no other part that equals Big Ivy.

Criterion 2- Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation: the degree to which the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Considerations

Narrative

2a) Describe the opportunities for, or impacts to, solitude within the area.

\* Are pervasive sights and sounds of civilization evident? Describe type, extent, and duration of sights and/or sounds, and the general location from which they are experienced. Consider topography, presence of screening, distance from impacts, and degree of permanent intrusions.

\* Are there developments or recurring activities immediately adjacent to the area that impact opportunities for solitude? Describe the type of development and proximity to area. Consider recreation developments and high use areas, private lands and associated infrastructure, roads/highways, airport flight paths, etc.

The area is particularly well shielded from sights and sounds of encroaching civilization. The high elevations, low local population and shape of the area preclude disturbance. Outstanding opportunities for solitude, primitive, and recreation.

No

2b) Describe the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

\* Are there opportunities to engage in primitive and unconfined recreation activities that connect visitors to

nature; such as hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, floating, kayaking, camping, rock climbing, hunting, fishing, observing wildlife, or enjoying nature? Describe type of activity and extent of availability throughout area.

\* If other recreation activities occur within the area which would not be considered primitive and unconfined, describe those uses; such as mountain bike trails, concentrated use/large group gatherings, wagon trains, motorized-use trails, etc.

The entire area is highly suitable for all of these except watercraft

Mountain biking is confined to a few trails, mostly on old skid roads.

2c) Other (Include any additional information related to criterion 2)

Good for Solitude and RE creation

Criterion 3- Stand-alone area of less than 5,000 acres that is not adjacent to existing wilderness or administratively recommended wilderness: evaluate how an area less than 5,000 acres is of sufficient size to make its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition practicable.

Considerations

Narrative

\* 3a) If the area is less than 5000 acres in size and not adjacent to existing designated or administratively recommended wilderness, is it of sufficient size to be preserved and used in an unimpaired condition?

\* Consider if the area is self-contained or topographically isolated.

\* Can the area be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics?

\*

\* More than 5000 acres of Big Ivy should be recommended for wilderness study area!!

- \* The rest of the area is adjacent to Craggy scenic area and existing wilderness Study area.
- \* 3b) Other (Include any additional information related to criterion 3)

Criterion 4- Unique and outstanding qualities: the degree to which the area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

#### Considerations

#### Narrative

- \* 4a) Does the area contain rare plant or animal communities, or ecosystems?
- \* Consider the extent and general location of rare communities or ecosystems.

The area contains many rare plants and animal species, both well documented (NC Natural Heritage and others), and personally observed (by me). Many (at least 14) are FS Species of Conservation Concern, including No. Broad Beech Fern, Climbing Fumitory, Shooting Star, Goldenseal, Gray's Lily, Divided leaf Milfoil, Mt. Catchfly, White mandarin, Large Purple fringed Orchid, Roan Sedge, Water Shrew, App. Woodrat, Cerulean Warbler, Hellbender, and the ever delightful Rock Gnome Lichen. Many other rare species on NC Heritage rare plant and Watch Lists (30 or so) also occur. The close proximity to known populations of other rare species adds to the likelihood of more rare species occurrences here. The rare species are distributed widely over the Big Ivy watershed, and not confined to any one community types, or location. Most are at mid to higher elevations. (3400' and above).

Big Ivy has an impressive list of community types. These most common types are Rich Cove Forests, Northern Hardwoods (both particularly outstanding), Acidic Coves, High elevation No. Red Oak, and other Oak communities. The important rarer natural communities include high and mid elevation pock outcrops, cliffs and summits. Boulderfields (particularly well developed), high elevation seeps, and waterfall spray areas.

4b) Does the area contain outstanding scenery or landscape features such as waterfalls, rivers, mountains, viewpoints, or geologic features?

Several outstanding waterfalls, mostly in the central Coleman Boundary portion.

Corner rock.

Amphibolite bed rock patches

4c) Is there a presence of structures, dwellings, sites or other remnants of past occupation that are considered part of the pre-historic, historic, or cultural landscape of the area? Note: Confidentiality requirements with respect to cultural resource sites must be respected (25 U.S.C 3056).

No structures.

Small amount of past logging debris

4d) Does the area contain sites of scientific or educational value, such as research natural areas or ongoing research?

Value? Value? Seriously?

The high level of biodiversity begs to be the focus of educational studies, short term and long term research. Many such efforts have been carried out here, but have barely scratched the surface of what is here.

There is a great opportunity to make all of Big Ivy a Research Natural area. Why not? There are Research Natural Areas in other places, but none in such a diverse and contained area. Cove and Northern Hardwoods are better examples here than anywhere, and the community diversity, elevation, geology and land use history would make an incredible opportunity. What a coup for the Pisgah! Go for it. BIRNA, BIRNA

4e) Does the area contain high quality water resources or important watershed features? Consider municipal water sources, brook trout habitat, and/or eligible or designated Wild and Scenic River segments.

Yes, exceptional.

4f) Other (Include any additional information related to criterion 4)

The condition and importance of this area in terms of Biodiversity and high quality natural condition cannot be over stated. USFS has a great opportunity to create a more permanent future for Big Ivy, and a continuing treasure for the public.

OTHER COMMENTS: The Big Ivy Area has been fragmented somewhat over the years, but still retains unique possibilities for establishing an outstanding and I believe truly important part of the Wilderness system. After studying this area for over 35 years, and considering some possibilities, I would note the following: There are 5 focal areas where old growth, species diversity, and natural community diversity are concentrated. These focal areas could and should be linked realistically to form a larger designated wilderness area. From south to north, these focal areas are 1) north slopes of Snowball Mt and Hawkbill Rock west of FS 63 and above about 4000'. 2) Craggy Scenic Area and Wilderness study area. 3) Walker Cove/Falls and slopes above, extending to Little Butt, mostly above Laurel Gap Trail (184). 4) North and Northwest slopes of Big Butt from High Knob to Cane River Gap. 5) Coxcomb Mt and upper Ogle Creek. I believe a linked unit of these areas would be a realistic minimum for a proposed Wilderness Study Area and should be proposed by USFS as such. My second alternative proposal is to designate all of Big Ivy as a Wilderness Study area. My third alternative proposal is to designate a considerable amount as Backcountry, and my minimum area as Wilderness Study Area. My fourth and last alternative proposal is to designate Big Ivy as a Research Natural Area, expressly for Biodiversity (BIBRNA). See 4d above.

Criterion 5- Management: the degree to which the area may be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics, considering shape, configuration, legally established rights or uses, presence and amount of non-federal land, and management of adjacent lands.

Considerations

Narrative

5a) Describe the size, shape, configuration, and boundaries of the area and its ability to be managed to preserve wilderness characteristics. Consider narrow land areas, cherry-stemmed roads, inholdings, topography, etc. Address whether or not boundary changes could enhance preservation of wilderness characteristics.

14000 acres MoL. Shaped like a big kidney. Much if not all of the area has characteristics suitable for wilderness designation. very few if any inholdings. Limited but great access. Limited trail system.

Rugged terrain. Easy to manage as wilderness, wilderness study area, or backcountry.

5b) Describe any legally established rights or uses within the area, including Tribal uses, reserved or outstanding mineral rights, easements, or rights of way? Describe the type, location and extent of these rights or uses.

None?

5c) Describe any State or Federal laws that may affect availability of the area for wilderness, or the ability to manage the area to preserve wilderness characteristics?

None?

5d) Describe the location, size, and extent of any inholdings of non-Federal lands within the area.

None, I believe

5e) Describe the ownership, management, and/or use of adjacent lands.

BRParkway, Weaverville watershed, very large private tract, private on east and west

5f) Other (Include any additional information related to criterion 5)

Evaluation By

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