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Comments:

I was disappointed to see the lack of projects targeted for Max Patch Mountain, as it is one of the most heavily used areas in western NC accessed by unpaved forest roads. I am a member of the Carolina Mountain Club and trails contributor for NC and southern VA to [www.HikingUpward.com](http://www.HikingUpward.com), and have been hiking all over the Southeast consistently for the last 12 years. Max Patch is one of the best bald summits in the Southeast, but I have avoided it in the last few years due to overcrowding, inconsiderate hikers and campers, and a terrible parking/driving situation.

The Appalachian Trail is heavily eroded, and the grassy bald invites unofficial usage trails all over Max Patch contributing to more erosion and destruction of plant species. FSR 1182 is crowded every weekend, and parking is grossly insufficient around Max Patch. I have encountered hundreds of cars lining the narrow forest road on past weekends, making it impossible for 2-way traffic and nearly impossible to either park or turn your car around, resulting in traffic jams that last nearly an hour in the afternoon when people are trying to leave while others are arriving for sunset or overnight camping. This is the primary reason I avoid Max Patch, but other landowners and hikers use FSR 1182 to access their property and other nearby trails, so the Max Patch parking should be addressed. Because the summit is close to the FSR 1182 parking, it has become a weekend camping party destination with hundreds of inexperienced campers ignoring all Leave No Trace ethics. You will commonly see used toilet paper, food waste, liquid bottles and cans, tents, sleeping bags, chairs, etc. left at the summit without punishment. If volunteers did not clean up Max Patch every week the summit would look like a landfill.

A similarly crowded area, Sam Knob/Black Balsam Knob parking, has pit toilets and paved parking. It is included in the proposal as an area that needs improved parking and toilet facilities. Max Patch needs improvements just as badly, maybe more. Pit toilets or restroom facilities are desperately minimum needed at the parking area to reduce fecal and paper waste around the summit. Parking should be expanded to reduce the number of cars lining FSR 1182 restricting vehicle flow through that area. These two things won't reduce the crowds, but they could reduce waste and vehicle bottlenecks. I think a permit system with parking fees and camping fees should be implemented, with strict enforcement or cooperation with local hiking groups to oversee permit allocation. Lastly, I believe that a temporary or permanent camping ban should be explored for Max Patch, reducing human waste and weekend car camping traffic.