

DOCUMENTING

THE DECISION



*"When the bird
and the book disagree,
always believe
the bird."*

Birdwatcher's Proverb

Documenting the Decision

This unit will focus on determining the significance of your proposed change in Wilderness management direction in terms of environmental effects and programmatic plan amendments. It will also discuss how to decide where to document your decision in a categorical exclusion, environmental assessment, or environmental impact statement. Each agency has different regulations for complying with NEPA, so check with your specialists. This unit contains interpretations used by the Forest Service.

Objectives

1. Participants can define what it meant by “significance” both in terms of environmental effects and program level plan amendments.
2. Participants can identify the probable document needed for their Wilderness management direction and can explain the rationale behind choosing an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement.

Key points

- Determine significance in terms of environmental effects.
- Determine significance in terms of changes to the current plan direction.
- The choice between an EA and an EIS is the degree of uncertainty over the effects of the action.
- Determine the consistency of your new management direction with applicable laws (e.g., the Wilderness Act).

Documenting the Decision

This section will only provide a brief overview of NEPA requirements relative to determining significance and documenting the decision. Public notification and documentation requirements vary by agency. Thus, it is essential that you consult with NEPA specialists who can give you the specific details during this phase.

Determining significance

When doing program level plan amendments to adopt new management direction, there are two significance hoops to jump through. The first is to determine significance in terms of the environmental impact of a proposed action. Significance requires considering the context and the intensity of the impact. To test the degree of significance, refer to the 10 criteria established under 40 CFR 1508.27 (Council of Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA).

The second significance hoop is to determine how much the proposed management direction will change current Plan direction. Plan amendments may or may not be significant, depending on your answer to the following questions:

- Does it change the overall goals or objectives identified in the program level Plan?
- Would implementing new Wilderness management direction change the level of goods and services provided by the Forest?

Nonsignificant

Within the Forest Service, nonsignificant amendments to Forest Plans are considered to be:

1. Actions that do not significantly alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management.
2. Adjustments of management area boundaries or management prescriptions resulting from further on-site analysis when the adjustments do not cause significant changes in the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management.
3. Minor changes in standards and guidelines.
4. Opportunities for additional management practices that will contribute to achievement of the management prescription.

Significant

Significant amendments are considered to be:

1. Changes that would significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goods and services originally projected.
2. Changes that may have an important effect on the entire forest plan or affect land and resources throughout a large portion of the planning area during the planning period.

Typically, overall goals and objectives contained in program level plans are general. Thus, adopting new management direction that just provides more specific direction in terms of desired conditions, objectives, and monitoring indicators for an already established Wilderness usually does not constitute a “significant” change to overall goals and objectives. Exceptions to this might be situations such as adopting direction that would eliminate outfitted use where this use was allowed under current direction

Documentation

or major reductions in grazing use where this use could not be transferred to other areas of the Forest.

After scoping is completed, the degree of significance determines the appropriate document. There are three choices:

Categorical Exclusion

This document is used when the proposed action will clearly not have a significant effect on the human environment. To use a categorical exclusion, the proposed action must fit one of the categories established by the agency and there must not be any extraordinary circumstances. There are two types of categorical exclusions—some require a project file and decision memo, others do not require a project file or decision memo. Check your specific agency categories to determine the level of documentation if a categorical exclusion appears to be the appropriate document.

Forest Service Note

The fact that the proposed action is within Wilderness, does not automatically eliminate the use of a categorical exclusion. However, Forest Plan amendments to adopt new Wilderness management direction, require at least an environmental assessment (i.e. a categorical exclusion cannot be used). This is because there is no category established by the Forest Service to cover Forest Plan amendments with a categorical exclusion.

Environmental Assessment

This document is used when the significance of the proposed action is unknown. An environmental assessment is completed and the findings of the analysis are used to determine the degree of significance. If it is determined that the effects are not significant, then a Finding of No Significant Impact is prepared along with a Decision Notice. If it is determined that the effects may be significant, then an Environmental Impact Statement must be prepared. The degree of controversy does not determine whether the effects are significant. Rather, it is based on whether or not there is dispute over the potential effects of the proposed action (i.e. the degree of certainty or uncertainty over effects).

Environmental Impact Statement

This document is used when there may be or will be a significant effect on the human environment. A Notice of Intent must be filed in the Federal Register to notify the public that an environmental impact statement will be prepared. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement is then prepared and sent out for public review. A Final Environmental Impact Statement is then prepared along with a Record of Decision.

Notification

Each agency has specific requirements for public comment periods during preparation of environmental assessments and environmental impact statements. Make sure you budget enough time for public comment and notification when you prepare your time line (refer to “getting started” unit).

After the decision is approved, you need to notify the public. The agency usually requires publishing a legal notice in a local or regional newspaper.

Finally, make sure the new direction is physically incorporated into all of the existing Plans.

12 Documenting The Decision

blank

DOCUMENTING THE DECISION

Significance

- In terms of environmental effects
- In terms of proposed change to current program level Plan

Two criteria for determining significance of a proposed plan amendment:

- Does it change the overall goals or objectives in the existing Plan?
- Would implementing the new Wilderness management direction change the level of goods and services provided by the entire Forest, Park, Resource Area or Refuge?

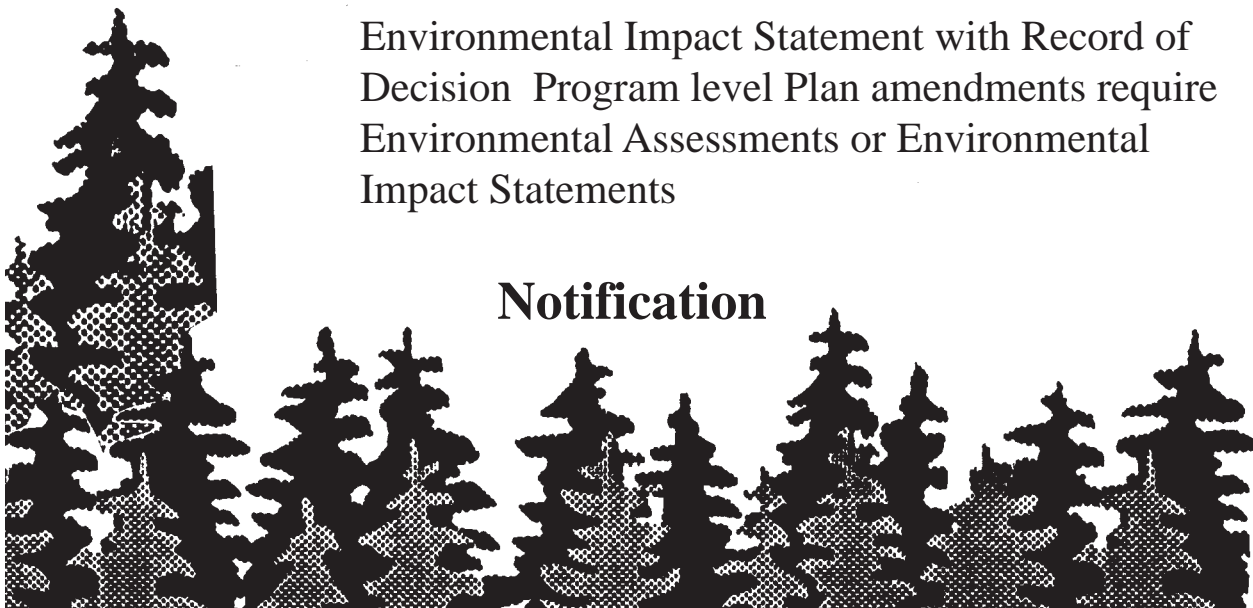
Documentation

Categorical Exclusion with decision memo

Environmental Assessment with Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Notice

Environmental Impact Statement with Record of Decision Program level Plan amendments require Environmental Assessments or Environmental Impact Statements

Notification



12 Documenting The Decision

blank

WORKSHEET

DOCUMENTING THE DECISION

Pick one of your alternatives from the previous work sheets.

Refer to CEQ regulations to determine whether adopting this alternative would be significant in terms of environmental effects.

1. Will there be severe beneficial and adverse impacts? Yes____ No____
2. Will public health or safety be greatly affected? Yes____ No____
3. Will unique characteristics of the geographic area be greatly affected (e.g. cultural resources, wetlands, prime farmlands, ecologically critical areas)? Yes____ No____
4. Are the effects on the quality of the human environment highly controversial? Yes____ No____
5. Are the possible effects highly uncertain or involve unknown risks? Yes____ No____
6. Will this new management direction set a precedent for future actions that may have significant effects? Yes____ No____
7. Is this proposed action related to other actions with cumulatively significant impacts? Yes____ No____
8. Will significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources be adversely affected? Yes____ No____
9. Will endangered or threatened species or their critical habitat be adversely affected? Yes____ No____
10. Would Federal, State, or local laws to protect the environment possibly be violated? Yes____ No____

Determine whether adopting new Wilderness management direction would constitute a significant change to the current Plan.

1. Will adopting new direction change the overall goals or objectives in the program level plan? Yes____ No____
2. Will adopting new direction alter the level of goods and services provided by the Resource Area, Wildlife Refuge, Forest, or Park? Yes____ No____

What kind of documentation is appropriate? Why?

Categorical exclusion and decision memo _____ Environmental Assessment, FONSI, and Decision Notice _____
 Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision _____

Example:

Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact

Cherokee National Forest Amendment No. 23 to the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan

The Environmental Assessment for Standards and Guides in Wilderness documents the analysis of two alternatives for implementing the “Limits of Acceptable Change” process for managing recreational use on four wildernesses on the Cherokee National Forest. The four wildernesses are: Little Frog on the Ocoee Ranger District, Bald River Gorge on the Tellico Ranger District, Unaka Mountain on the Unaka Ranger District, and Sampson Mountain on the Nolichucky and Unaka Ranger Districts. The environmental assessment is enclosed.

Based on the analysis documented in the environmental assessment, it is my decision to adopt Alternative 2, which will amend the current Cherokee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan by incorporating the recommendations developed by the “Limits of Acceptable Change” (LAC) process for recreational use in Little Frog, Bald River Gorge, Unaka Mountain, and Sampson Mountain wildernesses.

Public participation has been encouraged throughout the LAC process. Letters were sent to the general public to solicit their view on recreational use of the wilderness resource and to identify issues relating to this use. News articles about the LAC process as well as news articles about public meetings for issue identification were released. Public meetings for each wilderness were held for issue identification as well as extending the invitation to become a member of a task group for the LAC process. Task groups were formed to work through the LAC process and consisted of individuals, representatives from organizations, and agency officials. Letters were sent to those interested in the LAC process informing them of dates, times, and locations of the task group meetings and to inform them of what occurred at each meeting on a continuing basis. Issues raised through the process were primarily related to campsite conditions, visitor use, and wilderness and trail facilities.

Alternative 1

No Action. Current implementation of the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan would continue for managing the wilderness resource. Recreational use parameters developed by the LAC process would become recommendations rather than Standards and Guidelines.

Alternative 2

Issue a Forest Land and Resource Plan Amendment. This alternative would amend the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan by incorporating the recreational use parameters developed by the LAC process into Standards and Guidelines for wilderness. It will also add the definition of Opportunity Classes to Management Area 8 under the “Description heading found in Chapter IV of the Cherokee Forest Land and Resource Management” Plan. (See “Section II. Alternatives,” in the environmental assessment for detail). I have chosen Alternative 2 because it provides for:

1. Wilderness management in conformance with the 1964 Wilderness Act, 1984 and

1986 Tennessee Wilderness Acts, Forest Service Manual Direction for wilderness (FSM 2320) and the Cherokee Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

2. Provides protection of wilderness resources from recreation use.

I have determined through the environmental assessment that this is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulative with other actions in the area; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors:

- There are no known effects to human health and safety, critical habitat for proposed endangered, threatened, or sensitive species, or cultural and historic values. This decision complies with the National Historic Preservation Act and with the Memorandum of Agreement with the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office.
- The physical and biological effects are listed to these immediate geographic areas, any unique and unusual features will not be affected, and the action does not set a precedent for other projects that may have significant effects.
- There are no known effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks, and based on scoping, the effects of this action are not likely to be controversial.
- There are no known significant irretrievable or irreversible commitments of resources and the action does not threaten violation of federal, state, or local law.
- This decision complies with the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as amended . This decision will be implemented no sooner than seven (7) days after publication of this decision.

This decision is subject to appeal, pursuant to 36 CFR 217 and 36 CFR 251. A notice of appeal must be filed with the Regional Forest, USDA Forest Service, 1720 Peachtree Road, NW, Atlanta, GA 30367 within 45 days after the publication of this date of decision. For additional information concerning this decision, contact John Romanowski, USDA Forest Service, P.O. Box 2010, Cleveland, TN 37320, Telephone (615) 476-9758.

John Ramey
Forest Supervisor

Environmental Assessment for Standards and Guidelines in Wilderness (Management Area 8)

**Cherokee National Forest
Little Frog, Bald River Gorge, Unaka Mountain, and Sampson Mountain
Wildernesses**

October 1993

Proposed Action

Purpose and need

The Forest Service proposes to amend the Cherokee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan by incorporating Standards and Guidelines developed by the “Limits of Acceptable Change” (LAC) process for recreational use in wilderness where currently there are none. The proposed action would incorporate direction into the Cherokee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (FLRMP) for wilderness (Management Area 8) under “Use Administration (A08), Trail Construction and Reconstruction {A10, All), and Use Management (B03). “ It will also add the definition of Opportunity Classes to the “Description” heading of Management Area 8 to the FLRMP.

Need for the Proposed Action

In accordance with the Cherokee FLRMP, the Forest Service is to determine the maximum number of commercial outfitter guide permits suitable for the wilderness and establish the total number of service days allowable for the area (page IV-113). Other requirements include: for organized groups (institutional, semi-public), determine the maximum number of groups allowable at any one time (page IV-118); and visitor use impacts will be monitored and managed based on the “Limits of Acceptable Change” (LAC) system. The LAC system developed for each wilderness will identify impact parameters, measurement procedures, and evaluation/rating criteria (page IV-119). The proposed action is to fulfill these requirements for Little Frog, Bald River Gorge, Unaka Mountain, and Sampson Mountain wildernesses.

Subsequent actions may include FLRMP amendments for the remaining wildernesses on the Forest as LAC processes are completed for each wilderness. In addition, revisions to the standards and guidelines may occur as the Forest Service uses the LAC process to review and monitor initial LAC decisions. This may require additional FLRMP amendments in the future.

Location

All four wildernesses addressed in the proposed action are administered by the Cherokee National Forest.

Little Frog wilderness is a 4,666 acre area located in the southern section of the Cherokee National Forest in Polk County, Tennessee on the Ocoee Ranger District.

Bald River Gorge wilderness is a 3,721 acre area located in the southern section of the Cherokee National Forest in Monroe County, Tennessee on the Tellico Ranger District.

Unaka Mountain wilderness is a 4,700 acre area located in the northern section of the Cherokee National Forest in Unicoi County, Tennessee on the Unaka Ranger-District.

Sampson Mountain wilderness is a 7,991 acre area located in the northern section of the Cherokee National Forest in Greene, Unicoi, and Washington Counties. Tennessee on the Nolichucky and Unaka Ranger Districts.

Issues

Scoping of significant issues was conducted during the LAC process with concerned organizations, agencies, and individuals. The major issues developed were those associated with campsite conditions, trail needs, visitor use, and wilderness facilities. These major issues were composed of smaller issues that incorporated what the public wrote and said about the topic. This was accomplished by the LAC task group made up of interested individuals, representatives from organizations, and agency officials for each wilderness. The LAC task groups were opened to anyone at any time while the process was conducted

The Forest Service has encouraged public participation throughout the LAC process. Steps taken to keep the public involved include: Letters to the Public—The public was asked to identify issues through the use of a letter with accompanying comment sheet. The initial mailing list was composed of those individuals and organizations on the Cherokee National Forest LMRP list. Subsequent mailings to the public were made to individuals and organizations that expressed an interest in the LAC process and wilderness management. The current wilderness mailing list is composed of 272 persons and organizations (Appendix B). In addition to this master wilderness mailing list, individual Ranger Districts made mailings to those parties that participated or expressed an interest about the process. These mailings were made to inform the public of the time and location of the LAC meetings as well as to distribute information on what occurred at the previous LAC meeting for that wilderness.

Media—Several press releases were distributed to local media by the Cherokee National Forest Public Affairs Office for each wilderness. These media releases were requests for help in identifying issues and to announce the dates, times, and locations of public meetings for each wilderness.

Public Meetings - A series of public meetings were held for each wilderness to clarify issues that were received from the comment sheets and to generate any additional issues by the public. At the conclusion of these public meetings the formation of task groups were made for each wilderness so that the affected publics could participate in the LAC planning process.

Alternatives

There are two alternatives that are considered in detail that respond to the issues that were surfaced during scoping. Alternative 1 represents the No Action alternative while Alternative 2 would permit the Cherokee FLRMP to be amended.

The alternatives are:

Alternative 1

No Action. This alternative would continue the implementation of the current Cherokee National Forest FLRMP for managing wilderness. There will be no net change in the flow of goods and services provided by the Cherokee National Forest. The maximum number of commercial outfitter/guide permits as well as the total number of service days allowable for the area; maximum number of organized groups

12 Documenting The Decision

(institutional, semi-public) allowed in an area; and recreational use parameters developed by the LAC process will become Forest recommendations rather than Standards and Guidelines in the FLRMP.

Alternative 2

Issue a Cherokee FLRNP amendment (see Appendix A). This alternative would continue the implementation of the current National Forest FLRMP for managing wilderness. There will be no net change in the flow of goods and services provided by the Cherokee National Forest. The maximum number of commercial outfitter/guide permits as well as the total number of service days allowable for the area; maximum number of organized groups (institutional, semi-public) allowed in an area; and recreational use parameters developed by the LAC process will become Standards and Guidelines-in the FLRMP. The Definition of Opportunity Classes will be added to Chapter IV in Management Area 8 under the heading "Description."

Environmental consequences

Both alternatives are similar in nature in that they address the major issues that surfaced during scoping. Neither alternative will result in the net change of the flow of goods and services provided by the Cherokee National Forest. There are no irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources under either alternative. Short term use of the wilderness resource under these alternatives will not affect the maintenance of the long term productivity of the resource. The only difference among the alternatives is whether the direction developed by the LAC process should become Forest recommendations or be incorporated into the Cherokee FLRMP .

Alternative 1 (the no action alternative) will have no direct effect. Indirect effects will be those associated with continuing visitor use impacts. Impacts will continue to occur to the wilderness resource (which will include total campsite area; barren core area; campsite density per mile of trail; number of social trails at campsites; number of fire rings at campsites; number of additional tree stumps, damaged trees, and trees with exposed roots at campsites; number of campsites within sight of each other; group size; occurrence of human waste and litter; and areas of trail damage). No limitation on the number of organized groups in a wilderness would be made nor would the determination of the need for outfitter/guide permits and accompanying service days be made.

Indirect effects would be manifested by increased soil compaction and soil erosion at campsites, campsites devoid of vegetation, trampling and damage to vegetation at the campsite and to the immediate surrounding area (as campsites enlarge over time as well as the development of social trails at these campsites from human use). Litter and the evidence of human waste at these campsites would tend to become more prevalent at these sites. There would also be a tendency for additional campsite areas to become established as no limitation on the density of campsites per mile of trail would be enforced. The number of areas on the trail system that show soil erosion, trampling of vegetation, exposure of tree roots and other signs of impact from human use will tend to increase as no limitations on the group size, number of groups or use by outfitter guides would be enforced. Campsite impacts (as described above) would also increase from large group use as well as outfitter guide use. The opportunity for solitude would also tend to lessen as the possibility of encounters with large groups and large numbers of groups to be in the wilderness would be permitted. Solitude would also be lessened by the number of campsites permitted within sight of each other as no restrictions to limit these sites would be in place. Cumulative impacts would be associated with the continuance of the indirect impacts over time. The wilderness resource would continue

to degrade and be impaired by human use (as described above) as related to soils, vegetation, and wilderness solitude. The overall wilderness experience by wilderness users would be lowered from these impacts.

Alternative 2 (issue a Cherokee FLRMP amendment) will have the direct costs associated with issuing a plan amendment in both time and money spent on the project. Indirect effects will be the establishment of parameters to allow the maximum allowable change to the wilderness resource to occur from continuing visitor use (items outlined in Alternative 1). These effects will be the same to the wilderness resource as in Alternative 1 until the parameters established are reached. Although these are the maximum changes allowed, management actions will be implemented to try to prevent these parameters from being reached. The major management action will be to implement wilderness education programs with emphasis on the "Leave No Trace" program. The maximum number of organized groups permitted in each wilderness at one time will be established as well as the need for outfitter guide services and accompanying service days as required by the Cherokee FLRMP. This alternative will also require monitoring by the Forest Service of the LAC parameters to ensure that the Standards and Guidelines are not exceeded. Cumulative effects will be similar to Alternative 1 until the LAC parameters are reached. Management actions will be undertaken to insure that the wilderness resource does not exceed the allowance of acceptable change. This action will depend on the type of impacts occurring and what method will be most effective in accomplishing wilderness goals and will be site specific.

Cherokee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan

Amendment #23

October 1993

Chapter IV. Forest Management Direction. Management Area 8, Wilderness.

Page IV-113. Add, under Use Administration (A08), the following:

Little Frog Wilderness—No commercial outfitter/guide permits will be allowed in this wilderness

Bald River Gorge Wilderness—No commercial outfitter/guide permits will be allowed in this wilderness.

Unaka Mountain Wilderness—Maximum number of commercial outfitter/guide permits is established at one, with a total of 210 service days.

Sampson Mountain Wilderness—No commercial outfitter/guide permits will be allowed in this wilderness.

Page IV-114. Add, under Trail Construction/Reconstruction (A10, All), the following:

Little Frog, Bald River Gorge, Unaka Mountain, and Sampson Mountain Wilderness—Trail improvements may be present but natural materials dominate all improvement.

Page IV-119. Add, under Wilderness Use Management (B03), the following:

Little Frog Wilderness—Maximum number of organized groups (institutional, semi-public) at any one time is 3.

Bald River Gorge Wilderness—Maximum number of organized groups (institutional, semi-public) at any one time is 2.

Unaka Mountain Wilderness—Maximum number of organized groups (institutional, semi-public) at any one time is 4.

Sampson Mountain Wilderness—Maximum number of organized groups (institutional, semi-public) at any one time is 3.

Page IV-119. Add, under Wilderness Use Management (B03), the following:

Little Frog Wilderness—Visitor use impact parameters as determined by the “Limits of Acceptable Change” (LAC) system for each Opportunity Class (OC) are as follows:

<u>Campsite Conditions</u>	<u>OC 1</u>	<u>OC 2</u>	<u>OC 3</u>
Size of campsite area (square feet).	0	300	800
Size of barren/core area (square feet).	0	100	200

Campsite density per each mile of trail.	N/A	≤2	≤3
Number of social trails leading from campsite.	0	≤2	≤2
Number of fire rings/campsite.	0	1	1
Number of new tree stumps/campsite.	0	0	0
Number of newly damaged trees/campsite.	0	0	0
Number of trees with newly exposed roots/campsite.	0	0	0
Number of campsites within sight of each other.	0	1	1

<u>Group Conditions</u>	<u>OC 1</u>	<u>OC 2</u>	<u>OC 3</u>
Group size (heartbeats).	≤4	≤8	≤12

Human Waste Conditions

Occurrence of litter.	0	0	0
Evidence of human fecal matter campsites.	0	0	0

Trail Conditions

Number of areas per trail that show trail damage from recreation use.	N/A	0	0
---	-----	---	---

Bald River Gorge Wilderness—Visitor use impact parameters as determined by the “Limits of Acceptable Change” (LAC) system for each Opportunity Class (OC) are as follows:

<u>Campsite Conditions</u>	<u>OC 1</u>	<u>OC 2</u>	<u>OC 3</u>
Size of campsite area (square feet).	0	300	1200
Size of barren/core area (square feet).	0	75	125
Campsite density per each mile of trail.	N/A	≤3	≤5
Number of social trails leading from campsite.	0	≤2	≤4
Number of fire rings/campsite.	0	1	1
Number of new tree stumps/campsite.	0	0	0
Number of newly damaged trees/campsite.	0	0	0
Number of trees with newly exposed roots/campsite.	0	0	0
Number of campsites within sight of each other.	0	1	2

12 Documenting The Decision

<u>Group Conditions</u>	<u>OC 1</u>	<u>OC 2</u>	<u>OC 3</u>
Group size (heartbeats).	≤4	≤8	≤12
<u>Human Waste Conditions</u>			
Occurrence of litter.	0	0	0
Evidence of human fecal matter campsites.	0	0	0
<u>Trail Conditions</u>			
Number of areas per trail that show trail damage from recreation use.	N/A	0	0

Unaka Mountain Wilderness—Visitor use impact parameters as determined by the “Limits of Acceptable Change” (LAC) system for each Opportunity Class (OC) are as follows:

<u>Campsite Conditions</u>	<u>OC 1</u>	<u>OC 2</u>	<u>OC 3</u>
Size of campsite area (square feet).	0	200	500
Size of barren/core area (sq. ft.).	0	25	50
Campsite density per each mile of trail.	N/A	≤2	≤3
Number of social trails leading from campsite.	0	1	1
Number of fire rings/campsite.	0	1	1
Number of new tree stumps/campsite.	0	0	0
Number of newly damaged trees/campsite.	0	0	0
Number of trees with newly exposed roots/campsite.	0	0	0
Number of campsites within sight of each other.	0	0	1
<u>Group Conditions</u>			
Group size (heartbeats).	≤4	≤8	≤14
<u>Human Waste Conditions</u>			
Occurrence of litter.	0	0	0
Evidence of human fecal matter campsites.	0	0	0

<u>Trail Conditions</u>	<u>OC 1</u>	<u>OC 2</u>	<u>OC 3</u>
Number of areas per trail that show trail damage from recreation use.	N/A	0	0

Sampson Mountain Wilderness—Visitor use impact parameters as determined by the “Limits of Acceptable Change” (LAC) system for each Opportunity Class (OC) are as follows:

Campsite Conditions

Size of campsite area (square feet).	0	200	500
Size of barren/core area (square feet).	0	25	50
Campsite density per each mile of trail.	N/A	≤2	≤3
Number of social trails leading from campsite.	0	1	1
Number of fire rings/campsite.	0	1	1
Number of new tree stumps/campsite.	0	0	0
Number of newly damaged trees/campsite.	0	0	0
Number of trees with newly exposed roots/campsite.	0	0	0
Number of campsites within sight of each other.	0	0	1

Group Conditions

Group size (heartbeats).	≤4	≤8	≤14
--------------------------	----	----	-----

Human Waste Conditions

Occurrence of litter.	0	0	0
Evidence of human fecal matter campsites.	0	0	0

Trail Conditions

Number of areas per trail that show trail damage from recreation use.	N/A	0	0
---	-----	---	---

(N/A - Not Applicable).

Page IV-112. Add, under DESCRIPTION, the following:

OPPORTUNITY CLASS DESCRIPTIONS

OPPORTUNITY CLASS I

Resource Conditions: Area is characterized as having no defined trails or previous campsites. There are no obvious exotic plant species evident. Past impacts of human use and vegetation management are not evident. Vegetation consisting of mature forest may be found in this area. Fish and wildlife populations are managed in their most natural state. There is minimal impact on fish and wildlife populations.

Social Conditions: There is little or no chance of human contact in this area. There is an outstanding opportunity for solitude. Human activity tends more toward observation than recreation. Activities are usually out of sight and sound from other users. People's thoughts tend to be primarily focused on appreciation of the attributes of their physical location, i.e., being only one of a few to find this spot. There is essentially no evidence of past use of the area.

Management Setting: Likelihood of contact between public and Forest Service personnel is low. Maintenance and compliance activities are scheduled on an "as needed" basis. Signing will conform to the Standards and Guidelines as found in the Cherokee Forest Land and Resource Management Plan under "Wilderness."

OPPORTUNITY CLASS II

Resource Conditions: Area is characterized by a limited number of low standard trails. Area tends to be a destination location. There are no obvious exotic plant species evident. Past impacts of human use and vegetation management are minimal. Fish and wildlife populations are managed in their most natural state.

Social Conditions: The frequency of human contact is low. Encounters may occur on a trail but probably do not happen while off the trail or camped. There is a good chance for solitude for an extended period of time. There may be minimal evidence of previous camping activity with little or no evidence of large group camping.

Management Setting: Likelihood of contact between the public and Forest Service personnel is low. Maintenance and compliance activities are scheduled on an "as needed" basis. Signing will conform to the Standards and Guidelines as found in the Cherokee Forest Land and Resource Management Plan under "Wilderness."

OPPORTUNITY CLASS III

Resource Conditions: Area is characterized by a defined trail system that is developed to accommodate a variety of users at a fairly high use rate. Trails are on stable ground, with visible improvements evident and intended to provide visitors with access to destination area. Past impacts of human use and vegetation management are evident. The opportunity to view wildlife in a undisturbed condition is low. Horse use if permitted, may be evident on certain trail segments.

Social Conditions: This Opportunity Class is characterized as a place for entry into the wilderness with a portion of it within sight and sound of trailheads and parking lots. The frequency of human contact decreases the further users travel from the main trailheads or dispersion points. Those frequencies vary from a situation where encounters are common to a situation where encounters are quite infrequent. Well used

campsites are spread out at key convenient locations. A variety of users and length of stay will take place, including day hikers, children, the elderly, the physically challenged and possible large groups. Prolonged solitude of more than one day or two may not be possible in this area.

Management Setting: Likelihood of contact between the public and Forest Service personnel is moderate. Maintenance and compliance activities are regularly scheduled in these areas, resulting in little or no opportunity for litter accumulation and associated impacts. Signing will conform to the Standards and Guidelines as found in the Cherokee Forest Land and Resource Management Plan under “Wilderness.”

OPPORTUNITY CLASS - AT

Resource Conditions: Area is a defined trail system that is limited to foot travel only, at a moderate use rate. Improvements may be evident along the trail. There are no obvious exotic plant species. Past impacts of human use and vegetation management are minimal. Fish and wildlife populations are managed in their most natural state.

Social Conditions: With the exception of the Appalachian Trail shelter the frequency of human contact is low. Encounters may occur on a trail but probably do not happen while off the trail or camped. There is a good chance for solitude for an extended period of time. There may be minimal evidence of previous camping activity with little or no evidence of large group camping.

Management Setting: Likelihood of contact between the public and Forest Service personnel is low. Maintenance and compliance activities are scheduled on an “as needed” basis. Signing will conform to the Standards and Guidelines as found in the Cherokee Forest Land and Resource Management Plan under “Wilderness.”

12 Documenting The Decision

United States Forest CNF
Department of Service
Agriculture

Reply To: 2670 Date: September 20, 1993

Subject: Biological Evaluation for the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) within the Little Frog, Bald River Gorge, Unaka Mountain, and Sampson Mountain Wildernesses —Amendment #23 to the Cherokee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan

To: Forest Supervisor

In compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, I have conducted the following biological evaluation. Habitat for the following Endangered, Threatened, or Sensitive species exists in the project area, or past occurrence of one of these species in the project area has been documented:

1. Species

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), Common Raven (*Corvus corax*), Star-nosed Mole (*Condylura cristata parva*), Ocoee Covert Snail (*Mesodon archeri*), White Heath Aster (*Aster ericoides*), White-leaved Sunflower (*Helianthus glaucophyllus*), Roan Mountain Rattlesnake Root (*Prenanthes roanensis*), Round-leaved Water Cress (*Cardamine rotundifolia*), Southern Lobelia (*Lobelia amoena*), Nevius' Stonecrop (*Sedum nevii*), Fraser's Sedge (*Cymophyllus fraseri*), Appalachian Gentian (*Gentiana austromontana*), Blue Ridge St. John's Wort (*Hypericum mitchellianum*), Fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*), Large Round-leaved Orchid (*Platanthera orbiculata*), and Goldeneye Saxifrage (*Saxifraga careyana*).

2. Program

Establishing limits of acceptable change within wildernesses

3. Location

The LAC standards and guidelines would be implemented for the following wildernesses: Little Frog, Bald River Gorge, Unaka Mountain, and Sampson Mountain.

4. Status of Species and Habitat in Project Area

<u>CLASS/FAMILY</u>	<u>SCIENTIFIC NAME</u>	<u>COMMON NAME</u>	<u>FED ST G S </u>
Bird	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Peregrine Falcon	E E 3 H
Bird	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Common Raven	- E 5 2
Mammal	<i>Condylura cristata parva</i>	Star-nosed Mole	C3C S 5 3
Snail	<i>Mesodon archeri</i>	Ocoee Covert Snail	C3C ? 2
Asteraceae	<i>Aster ericoides</i>	White Heath Aster	~ T 5 1
Asteraceae	<i>Helianthus glaucophyllus</i>	White-leaved Sunflow	C3C E 3 1
Asteraceae	<i>Prenanthes roanensis</i>	Roan M.Rattlesnake-r	C3C T 3 2
Brassicaceae	<i>Cardamine rotundifolia</i>	Round-leaved Water C	- T 1 4 1 1
Campanulaceae	<i>Lobelia amoena</i>	Southern Lobelia	~ S ? 1
Crassulaceae	<i>Sedum nevii</i>	Nevius' Stonecrop	C2 E 2 1
Cyperaceae	<i>Cymophyllus fraseri</i>	Fraser's Sedge	C3C T 4 3

Gentianaceae	Gentiana austromontana	Appalachian Gentian	C3C T 3Q 2
Hypericaceae	Hypericum mitchellianum	Blue R. St. John's W	- T 3 3
Onagraceae	Epilobium angustifolium	Fireweed	- S 5 1
Orchidaceae	Platanthera orbiculata	L. Round-leaved Orch	E 5? 2
Saxifragaaceae	Saxifraga careyana	Goldeneye Saxifrage	C3C S 3 3

FED = Federal status, ST = State status, G = Heritage Program global ranking,
S = Heritage Program state ranking

5. Proposed Action

Incorporate recreational use parameters developed by the LAC process into the wilderness Standards and Guidelines of the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

6. Other Activities

Normal recreational use of the wildernesses will continue.

7. Effect on Species and Habitat

No direct impacts will occur to the TES species in these wildernesses. By limiting the size of groups and the amount of area that one group can occupy, there will be less disturbance to the habitats for these species.

8. Consultation with Others and References

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Handbook, "Endangered and Threatened Species of the Southeastern United States."

Cherokee National Forest Sensitive Species List. 1993.

Maps of locations of Endangered, Threatened, or Sensitive species in Tennessee. Tennessee Department of Conservation and Environment, Tennessee Heritage Program. Updated Oct. 1992.

9. Determination of Effect

This proposed project will have no impact on the any of the Sensitive species that occur within the area of consideration. There will be no effect on any species federally listed as Threatened or Endangered and no effect on any species currently Proposed for federal listing. No other Threatened, Endangered, Proposed or Sensitive species or their habitats are known to be found within the project area. Formal consultation with the USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service is not required.

Jim Herrig
Forest Biologist