

Special Meeting – December 10, 2015

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Thursday, December 10, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC for a special meeting to finish the discussions on Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers. All board was present.

1. Vice-chairman Nelms called the meeting to order.
2. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
3. Vice-chairman Nelms asks Andy Cable to speak. Mr. Cable stated that he had met with the local Forest Service Ranger Angela Gee and she reviewed the comments that the board and public had made concerning the proposed wilderness and wild and scenic rivers designations. Mr. Cable stated that this is an informal meeting and welcomes any input from the public at any time. Mr. Cable stated that the plan is a big undertaking and it was key to make known that Graham County does not want any more restrictions on our land or forest service lands. Mr. Cable stated that in the packet the same comment is made about various areas and Ms. Gee stated that these comments will be counted as one entry. Mr. Cable supplied the group with the necessary paperwork to fill out that will be submitted to the Forest Service next week as well as the comments that the board and the public had wanted submitted. Mr. Cable stated that one particular handout names the stakeholders who sit at the table and propose the changes concerning the forest service plan and further stated that if anyone knows the stakeholders to please reach out to them and urge them to stop adding restrictions to our lands. Mr. Cable provided a web page for the public to go to that will contain the forms that are required to be submitted.
4. The public in attendance was: Jimmy Millsaps; Lisa Russo; Lois and David Satterfield; Doug Cable; Bill Flannigan; Bo Collins & his son; Mark and Wanda Hill and Brandon Jones, Tribal Council.
5. Those email addresses are: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfscn/home/?cid=fseprd476345> and <http://mountaintrue.org/forestmou/>
6. Mr. Cable stated that the NC Wildlife has also helped with the comments. Those comments include: addressing evaluation criteria 1, 2,3,4,5 from evaluation criteria and comment form USFS. The areas discussed are: Cheoah Bald; Deep Creek/Avery Creek ext. 2; Joyce Kilmer Slickrock ext. 4; Snowbird; Yellowhammer Branch ext. 3; Yellow Creek Mountains; Joyce Kilmer Slickrock ext. 1; Santeetlah Headwaters. Mr. Cable stated that he would provide copies of the comments at the county manager's office for the public to pick up.
7. The board discussed the issue of the delayed harvest just starting and if this area is turned into wilderness, the fish to stock that creek would have to be backpacked in. Jimmy Millsaps asks if the comments should be removed concerning the Appalachian Trail. Andy Cable stated that it has been proposed that bathing shelters be built and if this is in wilderness that would not be allowed.
8. Mr. Cable stated that we would now discuss the wild and scenic rivers. Mr. Cable stated that if any individual writes a letter he would like a copy so that we can deliver these to our representatives. Commissioner Nelms stated that there are different levels to the wild and scenic rivers and recreation does have a part in some of this. Commissioner Nelms stated that these rivers must have outstanding valuable features that are not found anywhere else and we needed to compare these rivers to the whole region. Commissioner Nelms stated that we need to take each river and tell why they are not special and identify why they think it is unique. The board also learned that there will be a right of way of ¼ acre on each side of the river. Commissioner Williams stated that if Long Creek is designated then the Town of Robbinsville could not take equipment to their reservoir to repair it.
9. The group discussed Tatham Gap and Brandon Jones stated that there is an Executive Order with the Eastern Band concerning this area and he would contact the EBCI Attorney on this issue. Mr. Jones also stated that they have been working with the Forest Service on the plants that are used by EBCI.
10. The group discussed that on Santeetlah Creek there is an Indian Cemetery with over 100 Indians buried there.
11. The group discussed the Cheoah River and the FIRK Permits. The group learned that the forest service has not completed work as according to the permits and this needed to be looked into.

12. Andy Cable stated that he will attempt to find something in all of these areas that would make our stand stronger.
13. The group all agreed that Congressman Mark Meadows office needed to be contacted, the Bear Hunters Association and all the stakeholders needed to hear from us.
14. Commissioner Orr thanked everyone for coming and offering comments. Jimmy Millsaps thanked Andy Cable for the fine job that he has done in compiling all the information. Andy Cable stated that this is just the first steps and further stated that we needed to continue to pursue this till the end. Andy Cable thanked everyone for attending the meetings and stated that he would get the paperwork prepared for distribution by tomorrow.
15. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

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Keith Eller, Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

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Jacob Nelms, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

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Lynn Cody, Member, Graham County Commissioner

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Connie Orr, Member, Graham County Commissioner

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Raymond Williams, Member, Graham County Commissioner

ATTEST:

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Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board