# Wilderness.net's Southern Nantahala Wilderness Fact Sheet

## Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Southern Nantahala Wilderness in 1984 and it now has a total of 23,365 acres. Georgia contains approximately 11,633 acres. North Carolina contains approximately 11,732 acres. It is managed by the Forest Service.

## Description

The Cherokee Indians thought of the Blue Ridge Mountains as the Great Blue Hills of God. These original inhabitants named the shady forests and deep, dark gorges Nantahala, or Land of the Noonday Sun. Later settlers saw this same area as fodder for their mills. They removed virtually every piece of good timber that was at least 15 inches in diameter from the main drainages of the southern end of the Blue Ridge Mountains, what is today Southern Nantahala Wilderness and shared by North Carolina and Georgia. The main line of that railway ran along the Nantahala River, and evidence of it still exists.

Steep, rugged, reforested country cut by numerous streams and old drainages characterizes the southern end of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The streams feed the Nantahala, Hiwassee, and Tallulah Rivers, and the wide non-Wilderness right-of-way along the Tallulah neatly divides the Georgia share of the wildland. The eastern section is the northern portion of Georgia's Coleman River Wildlife Management Area. In both sections spruce and fir cover the ridges (opened by grass-heath "balds") and mixed hardwoods grow on the slopes. Several unique bogs support endangered species such as the bog turtle and rare combinations of other species found nowhere else in the world.

Other than four miles of the Appalachian Trail, which runs north-south through the larger western section, you won't find developed pathways on the Georgia side. However, old roadbeds provide hiking access. Off these old roads and deep in the shade of the many trees, where the walking is difficult, you'll find Georgia at her most unspoiled. On the North Carolina side, almost all of the developed trails are steep and strenuous, with a rough tread that is sometimes a challenge to find. But few places in the southern United States offer such outstanding backpacking opportunities. Many people wander into the area from the popular adjacent Standing Indian Basin. Thirty-two miles of the Appalachian Trail (AT) pass through the Southern Nantahala, following the ridge crest of the Nantahala Range. In addition to the AT, the most used trails are the Lower Ridge Trail (4.1 miles), Big Indian Loop (8 miles), and Beech Gap (2.8 miles).

## Leave No Trace

How to follow the seven standard Leave No Trace principles differs in different parts of the country (desert vs. Rocky Mountains). Click on any of the principles listed below to learn more about how they apply in the Southern Nantahala Wilderness.

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly

4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

For more information on Leave No Trace, Visit the Leave No Trace, Inc. website.

## Area Management

The Southern Nantahala Wilderness is part of the 109 million acre National Wilderness Preservation System. This System of lands provides clean air, water, and habitat critical for rare and endangered plants and animals. In wilderness, you can enjoy challenging recreational activities like hiking, backpacking, climbing, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, horse packing, bird watching, stargazing, and extraordinary opportunities for solitude. You play an important role in helping to *"secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness"* as called for by the Congress of the United States through the Wilderness Act of 1964. Please follow the requirements outlined below and use Leave No Trace techniques when visiting the Southern Nantahala Wilderness to ensure protection of this unique area.

## General Wilderness Prohibitions

Motorized equipment and equipment used for mechanical transport is generally prohibited on all federal lands designated as wilderness. This includes the use of motor vehicles, motorboats, motorized equipment, bicycles, hang gliders, wagons, carts, portage wheels, and the landing of aircraft including helicopters, unless provided for in specific legislation.

In a few areas some exceptions allowing the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport are described in the special regulations in effect for a specific area. Contact the Forest Service office for more specific information.

These general prohibitions have been implemented for all national forest wildernesses in order to implement the provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The Wilderness Act requires management of human-caused impacts and protection of the area's wilderness character to insure that it is "unimpaired for the future use and enjoyment as wilderness." Use of the equipment listed as prohibited in wilderness is inconsistent with the provision in the Wilderness Act which mandates opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation and that wilderness is a place that is in contrast with areas where people and their works are dominant.

## Wilderness-Specific Regulations

Wilderness managers often need to take action to limit the impacts caused by visitor activities in order to protect the natural conditions of wilderness as required by the Wilderness Act of 1964. Managers typically implement 'indirect' types of actions such as information and education measures before selecting more restrictive measures. When regulations are necessary, they are implemented with the specific intent of balancing the need to preserve the character of the wilderness while providing for the use and enjoyment of wilderness.

The following wilderness regulations are in effect for this area. Not all regulations are in effect for every wilderness. Contact the Forest Service office for more specific information about the regulations listed.

ALL VISITORS

Group size is limited to 10 people

Dogs must be on leash or under control

OVERNIGHT VISITORS

Campsites must be at least 100 feet from streams

Maximum length of stay is 14 continuous days

STOCK USERS

Stock animals cannot be tethered within 50 feet of streams

Stock animals allowed on designated horse trails only

## Contacts

**Tusquitee Ranger District**
123 WOODLAND DRIVE
MURPHY, NC 28906

Phone: 828-837-5152

**Wayah Ranger District**
90 SLOAN RD
FRANKLIN, NC 28734

Phone: 828-524-6441

## Links on Wilderness.net

National, Regional and Local Wilderness Organizations (NGOs)
A listing of societies, organizations, coalitions and other wilderness-related advocacy and stewardship groups.

Career and Volunteer Opportunities
A listing of sites providing information about wilderness- and environmentally-related career and volunteer opportunities.

## Applicable Wilderness Law(s)

| Law | Date | Acreage Change (in acres) |
|---|---|---|
| **Public Law 98-324** | **June 19, 1984** | **10,900** |

North Carolina Wilderness Act of 1984 - Public law 98-324 (6/19/1984) To designate certain public lands in North Carolina as additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System

download 98-324

**Public Law 98-514 October 19, 1984 12,439**

Georgia Wilderness Act of 1984 - Public law 98-514 (10/19/1984) To designate certain National Forest System Lands in the State of Georgia as Wilderness, and for other purposes.

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