

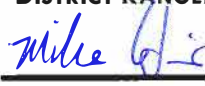


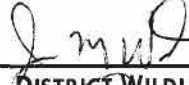




# Wilderness Wildfire Operation Plan Blood Mountain and Brasstown Wilderness

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APPROVED BY:	 FOREST SUPERVISOR	7/16/13 DATE
RECOMMENDED BY:	 DISTRICT RANGER – BLUE RIDGE RD	7/8/13 DATE
RECOMMENDED BY:	 FOREST FMO	7/10/13 DATE
RECOMMENDED BY:	 DISTRICT FMO – BLUE RIDGE RD	7/8/13 DATE
RECOMMENDED BY:	 DISTRICT RECREATION STAFF	7/26/13 DATE
RECOMMENDED BY:	 DISTRICT WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST	6/27/13 DATE
RECOMMENDED BY:	 FOREST RECREATION STAFF OFFICER	7/12/13 DATE
RECOMMENDED & PREPARED BY:	 FUELS SPECIALIST (TRAINEE)	7/22/13 DATE



**USDA FOREST SERVICE – R8 SOUTHERN REGION**

**CHATTAHOOCHEE-OCONEE NATIONAL FORESTS**

**BLUE RIDGE RANGER DISTRICT 2013**

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## INTRODUCTION

**THE INTENT OF THIS PLAN IS TO PROVIDE A CENTRALIZED INFORMATION SOURCE FOR INCIDENT COMMANDERS AND DECIDING OFFICIALS REGARDING THE POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGEMENT OF FIRE IN CONGRESSIONALLY DESIGNATED WILDERNESS.** Currently, this plan reflects guidance specific to those portions of the **Brasstown Wilderness and Blood Mountain Wilderness** areas within the Chattahoochee National Forest. The Brasstown Wilderness area is approximately (12,896 acres) and Blood Mountain Wilderness area is approximately (7,800 acres). The Cedar Mountain Wilderness Study Area is east of Blood Mountain Wilderness. Wilson Cove is northeast and Duck Branch is southwest of the Brasstown Wilderness Area. The Cedar Mountain, Wilson Cove and Duck Branch Wilderness Study Area are combined total of (1,893 acres). The Brasstown and Blood Mountain Wilderness Areas part of the 110 million acres of National Wilderness Preservation System. All of the Wilderness areas in North Georgia are managed by the United States Forest Service (USFS).

## SNAP SHOT

RADIO FREQUENCY: Tactical Channel 3 (R8 Fire) or backup Channel 4 (R9 Fire). Command Frequency for the Brasstown Wilderness is Brasstown Repeater and for Blood Mountain Wilderness either Brasstown Repeater or Black Mountain Repeater.

GENERAL RISK CATEGORY: Low/Medium

FIRE BEHAVIOR INDICATOR: BI, ERC

ACRES/AGENCY (WILDERNESS): 12,896 and 7,800 acres./ Chattahoochee National Forest/Brasstown and Blood Mountain Wilderness

ACRES/AGENCY (WILDERNESS STUDY): 1,893 acres Duck Branch, Wilson Cove and Cedar Mountain/Chattahoochee National Forest

PREDOMINANT VEGETATION TYPES: Southern Yellow Pine and Pine/Oak, White Pine and Hemlock, and Upland Hardwood, Chestnut Oak, Scarlet Oak, Black Oak and Northern Red Oak-Hickory

UNIT: Blue Ridge Ranger District

DUTY OFFICER: Blue Ridge DFMO or designee

IA DISPATCH OFFICE: Georgia Interagency Coordination Center (GA-GIC) or Blue Ridge Ranger District dispatcher, if contact with GA-GIC is not possible.

IA ASSETS ASSIGNED TO THIS FMU: District Resources include: 1-Type 6 Engine w/300 gallons, 1-Type 3 Dozer w/transport and district personal. Local Chattahoochee -Oconee Type III Incident Management Team (IMT) is available. Regional Type III helicopter stationed at Glassy Mountain Helibase, but will require approval prior to use in wilderness. Regional air tanker is staged at Chattanooga, TN during the spring fire season.

COMMUNITIES ADJACENT OR WITHIN FMU: Private land abuts the Brasstown Wilderness Area. The Suches Community is an unincorporated Wildland Urban Interface area along the west boundary of Blood Mountain Wilderness area.

LRMP OPTIONS AVAILABLE FOR RESPONSE TO IGNITION: Suppression, Natural ignition fires

SPECIAL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Complex terrain features and remoteness of the Wilderness can impact the effectiveness of radio and cell phone communications. Terrain is rugged and foot access is primarily through a well- developed trail systems such as the Wagon Train and Arkaquah Trail that runs thru the Brasstown Wilderness area and the Appalachian Trail that runs thru the northern portion of the Blood Mountain Wilderness area. There are other safety concerns such as Black Bears which occur in most areas of the Wilderness with Blood Mountain having seasonal camping restrictions due to bear activity. Also rattlesnakes, copperheads, stinging insects, and poison ivy exist.

## POLICY

National and regional policy for wilderness management (FSM 2300) and fire management (FSM 2500, 5100) as well as the Chattahoochee-Oconee NFs Land and Resource Management Plan (2004) and Fire Management Plan (2012; updated annually) are the guiding documents for this plan. Wilderness designation and additional direction is included in the Wilderness Act of 1964, the Eastern Wilderness Act/Public Law 93-622 (1975), Public Law 94-268 (1976) and Public Law 99-555 (1986).

**The term 'Wildland Fire Use' is no longer being used, but the concepts stated below meet the current policy under 'Use of Wildland Fire'.**

Chattahoochee-Oconee SUPPLEMENT (R8-5100-2009-1)

- **5143-Wildland Fire Use**

*Authorize implementation of Prescribed Fire Burn Plans (RXBP) and Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) for all complexity levels at Regional and National Preparedness Levels I, II, and III.*

**Human caused fires require a suppression response as outlined in the Fire Management Plan. Initial action on human-caused wildfires will be suppressed at the lowest cost with the fewest negative consequences with respect to firefighter and public safety. The appropriate management response can vary from aggressive initial attack to a more defensive posture based on the fuels, weather, topography, health and safety issues, fire behavior, cost plus loss, and other considerations between the Agency Administrator and the Incident Commander. No human caused wildland fires, including any escaped fire use, will be managed for resource benefits (emphasis added).**

*Manage natural ignitions for resource benefits are authorized in the Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), Fire Management Plan (FMP). The District Fire Management Officer or acting will prepare a Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) for wildland fire use; the plan will be approved by the agency administrator.*

Changes relevant to previous fire management policy as stated in "Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management policy" (2009) are as follows:

- Initial action on human-caused wildfire will be to suppress the fire at the lowest cost with the fewest negative consequences with respect to firefighter and public safety
- A wildland fire may be concurrently managed for one or more objectives and objectives can change as the fire spreads across the landscape. Objectives are affected by changes in fuels, weather, topography; varying social understanding and tolerance; and involvement of other governmental jurisdictions having different missions and objectives
- Managers will use a decision support process to guide and document wildfire management decisions. The process will provide situational assessment, analyze hazards and risk, define implementation actions, and document decisions and rationale for those decisions.

## Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) EMPHASIS (page 3-8)

Allow ecological and biological processes to progress naturally with little to no human influence or intervention. Minimum impacts made by those who seek the wilderness as a special place offering opportunities to experience solitude and risk in as primitive surroundings as possible may occur.

## Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) DESIRED CONDITION

(abridged – pages 3-8 through 3-10)

The natural evolving landscape character in wilderness expresses the natural evolution of biophysical features and processes with very limited human intervention. The forest cover is primarily older forests with a continuous canopy, except for occasional gaps created by natural occurrences such as storms, insect or disease outbreak, and fire. Natural ignition fires are permitted to play a natural role when weather, terrain, and external values at risk permit. Management of the area is focused on protecting and preserving the natural environment, natural processes, and heritage properties from human influences.

Natural processes such as ice storms or windstorms, insects, diseases, and lightning fires are the primary influences to vegetation. These processes would periodically remove the canopy and result in large and small areas of young and small trees. The range of canopy breaks includes the common occurrence of small gaps created by individual tree mortality, to frequent insect or disease-killed groups up to approximately one hundred acres, and infrequent large contiguous areas up to several hundred acres caused by storms or wildfire.

These areas have a Scenic Integrity Objective of Very High, which generally provides for ecological change only. Natural change is assumed to be visually acceptable and no active management is directed at moderating visual contrasts. Evidence of human intervention in the appearance of the landscape is minimal and would normally be overlooked by most visitors. Human-caused change may be specifically mitigated to be made less obvious.

Travel and recreation within wilderness is strictly non-motorized. Although open roads may serve as boundaries to the area, its interior includes no open roads. Human access is by non-motorized means only.

## Goals and Objectives

Wilderness is different from other public lands, by law and agency policy. Fire management activities in wilderness must be conducted to meet wilderness management goals and objectives. Fire management activities in wilderness are accomplished through preparation and implementation of unit fire management plans, understanding of wilderness management techniques, use of the minimum requirements and MIST concepts to determine appropriate management response and actions, and minimizing the need for restoration of suppression impacts. **Cost, convenience, and efficiency are not the key determining factors for fire management actions in wilderness.** Firefighter and public safety and risk to adjacent lands are still key decision points for fire management in wilderness.

**Goal** – Protect life, property, and resources from unwanted fire

- Keep firefighter and public safety the highest priority in all fire management operations.  
LRMP GOAL 57 (pgs. 2-53)

**OBJECTIVE** – reduce to an acceptable level, the risks and consequences of wildfire within wilderness or escaping from the wilderness (FSM 2324.21)

**Goal** – Allow fire to achieve its natural role

- Expand the role of fire to recover and sustain short interval fire-adapted Ecosystems through the use of both prescribed and managed ignition fires, including allowing lightning-caused fire to function, as much as possible, as a natural process; especially in Wilderness or other custodial management areas. LRMP GOAL 61 (pgs. 2-53)
- Manage fire in wilderness to benefit the wilderness resource and in accordance with the approved Wilderness Management Plans. LRMP GOAL 63 (pgs. 2-53)

**OBJECTIVE** – Permit lightning caused fires to play, as nearly as possible, their natural ecological role within wilderness (FSM 2324.21)

**OBJECTIVE** – Naturally ignited fires will be managed to achieve LRMP goals unless conditions determine wildfire will not achieve resource objectives.

**Goal** – Avoid unacceptable effect of fire and fire suppression

- Determine values at risk and conduct fire management operations to minimize damage to resources. LRMP Goal 60 (pgs. 2-53)

## Standards –

### General Forest

- Obtain approval from the Forest Supervisor for the limited use of mechanized equipment in management prescription areas where its use is normally prohibited. FW-187 (2-54)
- In all fire operations, emphasize the use of naturally occurring barriers to fire spread to the maximum extent compatible with other goals, objectives and standards; particularly riparian area standards. FW-194 (LRMP pgs. 2-54)
- Locate and construct firelines to minimize mineral soil exposure in both suppression and prescribed fire operations consistent with fire danger, values at risk, operational efficiency, and applicable objectives. Compliance may include adjustments to fireline location even when the readjustment may impose into an area prescribed for less fire use. FW-195 (LRMP pgs. 2-54)
- Firelines which expose mineral soil are not located in riparian corridors along lakes, perennial or intermittent springs and streams, wetlands, or water-source seeps, unless tying into them as natural barriers to fire spread at designated points with minimal soil disturbance. (See riparian standards for distances.) FW-196 (LRMP pg 2-54)
- Rehabilitation of wildfire control lines will be included as an objective of fire operations plans, will occur promptly after the burn, and will meet all other applicable standards of the Plan. FW-197 (LRMP pgs. 2-55)

### Wilderness

- Use suppression methods with the least detriment to wilderness, unless the fire is threatening public safety within the wilderness or resources and property outside the wilderness. 1.A-012 (LRMP pgs. 3-11)
- Natural ignition fires may be managed in wilderness areas to allow fires to play, as nearly as possible, their natural ecological role, as long as the applicable documentation has been prepared and approved. 1.A-014 (LRMP pgs. 3-11)

- Emphasize Minimum Impact Suppression Techniques (MIST) when suppressing wildfires in wilderness. 1.A-015 (LRMP pgs. 3-11)
- Use of motorized equipment in Wilderness will comply with FSM 2326. Regional Forester approval is required for the use of tractors in fire suppression. The Forest Supervisor may approve the use of limited mechanized equipment in Wilderness in instances of 'inescapable urgency and temporary need for speed beyond that available by primitive means.' 1.A-016 (LRMP pgs. 3-11)

#### Wilderness Study Areas

- Use the minimum amount of ground, vegetation, or stream disturbance that is effective to achieve fire management objectives. 1.B-015 (LRMP pgs. 3-17)
- Use suppression methods with the least detriment to wilderness, unless the fire is threatening public safety within the wilderness or resources and property outside the wilderness. 1.B-016 (LRMP pgs. 3-17)
- Natural ignition fires may be managed in recommended wilderness areas to allow fires to play, as nearly as possible, their natural ecological role, as long as the applicable documentation has been prepared and approved. 1.B-018 (LRMP pgs. 3-17)

## DESCRIPTION/CHARACTERISTICS

### Safety

- Steep, rocky terrain
- Trails may become slippery with any amount of precipitation due to clay surfaces.
- Large number of visitors could be present in the event of a fire. This could cause evacuation problems.
- Complex terrain features and remoteness of the Wilderness can impact the effectiveness of radio and cell phone communications.
- Safety concerns such as: black bears, rattlesnakes, copperheads, stinging insects, and poison ivy.
- Potential for high amount of visitor traffic within the Brasstown Bald Recreation Area and Visitors Center, which is located adjacent to the Brasstown Wilderness Area.
- Ensure adequate public notification regarding fire activity/restrictions due to heavy recreational use in and adjacent to the Wilderness.
- Fire management operations in the Wilderness may rely heavily on aviation resources for wildfire suppression with proper approval, because of dense vegetation, steepness and rugged terrain.
- Aviation Hazards – power lines or communication sites (outside of Wilderness boundary)
- The remoteness of the Wilderness means longer response times during emergencies. Extraction of injured personnel will be complex and depend heavily on local Rural Fire Department efforts.
- Three trails bisect the Brasstown Wilderness and may have seasonally high traffic- Arkaquah, Wagon Train, and Jacks Knob.
- The Appalachian Trail also runs thru Blood Mountain Wilderness Area. The peak season for A.T. use is in the spring and fall but hikers utilize the trail year-round.

## Physical

- The Brasstown Wilderness is located in North Georgia's Union County (40%) and Towns County (60%). The majority of the Brasstown Wilderness area has trails and creeks that run through the area. The Wilderness is administered by the Blue Ridge Ranger District of the Chattahoochee National Forest.
- The Blood Mountain Wilderness area lies in North Georgia's Union County (10%) and Lumpkin County (90%). The Wilderness is administered by the Blue Ridge Ranger District of the Chattahoochee National Forest.
- The Blood Mountain and Brasstown Wilderness are located in the Southern Blue Ridge Mountains, which are part of the Blue Ridge Mountain chain. The area is characterized by steep, rugged terrain. Elevations range from 2,200 feet to 4,784 feet.
- The Blood Mountain and Brasstown Wilderness are part of the 110 million acre National Wilderness Preservation System.

## Biological

Vegetation types found in the Wilderness:

### Brasstown Wilderness

Community Type	Acres	Percent
White Pine	104.256	0.758
White Pine-Cove Hardwood	0.000	0.000
White Pine-Upland Hardwood	0.000	0.000
Shortleaf Pine-Oak	0.001	0.000
Virginia Pine-Oak	33.297	0.242
Virginia Pine	63.992	0.465
Cove Hardwood-White Pine-Hemlock	0.005	0.000
Upland Hardwoods-White Pine	0.001	0.000
Southern Red Oak-Yellow Pine	707.106	5.141
Chesnut Oak-Scarlet Oak-Yellow Pine	35.965	0.261
White Oak-Black Oak-Yellow Pine	0.000	0.000
Northern Red Oak-Hickory-Yellow Pine	0.001	0.000
Yellow Poplar	105.452	0.767
White Oak-Northern Red Oak-Hickory	12269.900	89.203
Yellow Poplar-White Oak-Northern Red Oak	431.466	3.137
Unknown/Unforested	3.639	0.026
<b>Total=</b>	<b>13755.081</b>	<b>100%</b>



### Blood Mountain Wilderness

Community Type	Acres	Percent
White Pine	2138.051	28.279
White Pine-Cove Hardwood	175.872	2.326
White-Pine-Upland Hardwood	68.609	0.907
Virginia pine-Oak	63.150	0.835
Virginia Pine	0.000	0.000
Upland Hardwoods-White Pine	407.191	5.386
Chestnut Oak-Scarlet Oak-Yellow Pine	0.000	0.000
Yellow Poplar	0.001	0.000
Chestnut Oak	301.946	3.994
White Oak-Northern Red Oak-Hickory	4201.424	55.571
Yellow Poplar-White Oak-Northern Red Oak	153.618	2.032
Scarlet Oak	43.324	0.573
Unforested/ Unknown	7.293	0.096
<b>Total</b>	<b>75604.478</b>	<b>100%</b>

- **Vegetation:** The majority of the stands in the Blood Mountain and Brasstown Wildernesses are in mid-to-late successional conditions. Upland hardwoods (white oak-red-oak-hickory) are the dominant Forest Type in both the Blood Mountain Wilderness and Brasstown Wilderness.
- Brasstown and Blood Mountains Wilderness could be considered as a moderate interval fire-adapted ecosystem through the use of both prescribed and managed ignition fires.
- No Threatened and Endangered species are known to occur in either Wilderness. However several Sensitive and Locally Rare plants are present. In addition, the locally Rare Appalachian Wood Rat also is known to be present in the Blood Mountain Wilderness.
- The Hiawasse River and Nottley River are major tributaries for the Brasstown Wilderness areas. These large tributaries can be used as a water source for suppression in the event of a wildfire in the Brasstown Wilderness area. The Dicks and Waters Creek watersheds are major tributaries for Blood Mountain Wilderness area.

#### Resources/Values at Risk

##### Special designations:

- Wilderness and Wilderness Study (Management Prescription Areas 1.A and 1.B, respectively)

##### Cultural and historical:

- Of particular note is the CCC-built Blood Mountain Shelter, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, found along the Peak of Blood Mountain on the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. The Walisi-Yi Inn, also a nationally registered historic site, is located just east of the Blood Mountain Wilderness at Neels Gap in Union County, Georgia. Otherwise, isolated occurrences of

cultural and historic resources occur although none require protection from fire. Consult Forest Archeologist prior to soil disturbing activities.

### Recreation:

- The recreation in Blood Mountain Wilderness is primarily limited to hiking and backpacking the trail systems, as well as hunting and fishing.
- Infrastructure present is limited to trail improvements within and adjacent to the Wilderness. Improvements include historic A.T. shelters (Black Mountain, Blood Mountain and Woods Hole Shelters), trail signs, bulletin boards, and latrine (privy) facilities along the Appalachian Trail as well as gates in trailhead parking lots.
- Currently, no permitted outfitters and guides operate within the Wilderness Areas; however many small groups utilize the wilderness.
- Estimated 25,000 to 50,000 visitors annually for both Brasstown and Blood Mountain Wilderness area.
- Dispersed camping, foot trails, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, day use, and hunting and fishing are opportunities provided throughout both Wilderness areas.
- The Brasstown Bald Recreation Area and Visitors Center is surrounded by the Brasstown Wilderness area.
- The Desoto Falls Scenic Area, with its waterfalls, marks the eastern boundary of Blood Mountain Wilderness area.
- Blood Mountain Wilderness area is surrounded by numerous recreation areas and campgrounds including Lake Winfield Scott, Desoto Falls, Dockery Lake and Vogel State Park.

### Identified Land Features for Blood Mountain and Brasstown Wilderness areas:

#### **Blood Mountain**

Brushy Knob Burnett Field Mtn. Blood Mountain Cove Slaughter Gap Cedar Mountain  
Rocky Mountain Daniels Gap Buck Knob Granny Top Dan Gap Pigeon Roost  
Big Cedar Mountain Lunsford Gap Jacobs Knob Steel Trap Knob

#### **Brasstown**

Double Knob Ridge Tarkiln Ridge Carrol Gap Buck Ridge Chimney Top Rocky Cove  
Cold Hollow Buzzard Ridge Grassy Branch Cove Little Bald Mountain Fork Ridge  
Flat Gap Chestnut Cove Big Bald Cove Cove Gap Low Gap

**Trails:** Appalachian Trail- Blood Mountain Wilderness  
Arkaquah, Jacks Knob, and Wagon Train Trails- Brasstown Wilderness

#### Adjacent Infrastructure and Land features:

Vogel State Park, one of the largest state recreation parks in North Georgia, is located northeast of the Blood Mountain Wilderness area and southwest of the Brasstown Wilderness. This area experiences high visitor use from spring through fall. This area could also be affected by smoke in the event of a wildfire in either the Brasstown or Blood Mountain Wilderness.

*Overlooks: none*

#### In holdings and Subdivisions:

*Within:* There is a private inholding inside the Brasstown Wilderness area located in the northwest corner. The Blood Mountain Wilderness has a small private inholding in the northwest portion of the Wilderness near Jarrard Gap Spring. Subdivisions adjacent to the Brasstown Wilderness includes: Ridge at Trails End, The Mountain, Rocky Top Estates, Bald Mountain Park, and Overlook at Young Harris, Eagle Chase Reserve, Arden Acres, H. Alexander, Hidden Lake, Coosawattee, Moon View, Settlers Landing, Huckleberry Hills, Wolfpen Gap, and Fortenberry Creek.

#### Smoke Sensitive Areas and Mitigation Measures:

The Brasstown Wilderness area has a significant amount of Wildland Urban Interface in the area which can cause smoke management issues in the event of a wildfire. The areas of concern for the Brasstown Wilderness would include the Brasstown Bald Recreation Area and Visitors Center. Young Harris College is also a major concern because of the people who attend school and work there. The other smoke sensitive areas would be the towns of Blairsville, Young Harris, Helen, Cleveland, Dahlonega, and Hiawassee in Georgia as well as communities in Cherokee and Clay counties in North Carolina depending on the amount of fire activity and prevailing wind/weather conditions.

The Blood Mountain Wilderness areas of smoke concern include the Appalachian Trail, adjacent recreations areas/campgrounds and the communities of Suches, Dahlonega, Cleveland, and Blairsville, Georgia depending on the amount of fire activity and prevailing wind/weather conditions. Also State Highways 129, 180 and 60 would be major concerns if a wildfire was to occur in the area because of smoke that could cause visibility and traffic problems.

During a fire emergency, evacuations and road closures would need to be coordinated through USFS and local Law Enforcement personnel as well as local DOT officials.

#### Adjacent:

Some portions of the Wilderness border Wildland Urban Interface, specific areas of concern are the Plott and Pea Bottom Cove areas on the northwest border of the Brasstown Wilderness; and the Bald Mountain Park on the northeast boundary. Structures associated with the Brasstown Bald Recreation Area and Visitor's Center are also areas of concern. The Spring Cove and Plott Cove subdivisions are both Firewise Communities. Young Harris College, and the community of Young Harris, Georgia have numerous structures and improvements adjacent to the (north of) Brasstown Wilderness.

The headquarters for Blue Ridge Electric Membership Cooperative, which provides electricity to the multi-county area, also has facilities and infrastructure north of Brasstown Wilderness in Young Harris, Georgia. Brasstown Valley Resort also located in Young Harris, has year-round lodging, golf, spa, stables, and trail facilities and improvements just north of the Brasstown Wilderness. Local fire stations for the Brasstown Wilderness include Union County Station #12 and Towns County Stations 2, 4 and 5. For the Blood Mountain Wilderness, the primary areas of concern are structures in the Suches and Lake Winfield Scott areas to the west and Vogel State Park and Neels Gap area to the north and east. The Blood Mountain Wilderness area has Lumpkin County Fire Station #2 where most of the wilderness lies. Union County Fire Stations #12 and #5 will also be able to assist in the event of a wildfire because of their location in the vicinity of the Blood Mountain Wilderness. The nearest county fire department will be responding to a Wilderness fire for both Brasstown and Blood Mountain because automatic mutual-aid has already been established for both areas.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Agency Administrator or Designee**

- Communicate the land management objectives of the fire area to the Incident Commander /Incident Management Team (IMT) and define specific land and fire management protection objectives. Periodically review for compliance and to ensure resource objectives are met.
- Ensure agency personnel are provided with appropriate MIST/ Leave No Trace (LNT) training and informational/educational materials at all levels.
- Participate in incident debriefing and assist in evaluation of performance related to MIST/LNT.
- Evaluate need for area closure order and initiate process.
- Request authorization for motorized/mechanical equipment use through Forest Supervisor (or Regional Forester for Tractor/Dozer use), if appropriate.

### **FMO/Duty Officer**

- Carry out instructions given by the responsible line officer both verbally and through the WFDSS. Establish and nurture a close dialogue with the resource advisor assigned to the fire team.
- Review actions on site and evaluate for compliance with line officer direction and effectiveness at meeting fire management protection objectives.
- Initiate WFDSS process.

### **Resource Advisor**

- Ensure the interpretation and implementation of WFDSS and other oral or written line officer direction is adequately carried out. Provide specific direction and guidelines as needed.
- Participate at fire team planning sessions, review incident action plans and attend daily briefings to emphasize resource concerns and management's expectations.

- Monitor on the ground applications of MIST/LNT.
- Provide assistance in updating WFDSS when necessary.
- Participate in debriefing and assist in evaluation of performance related to MIST/LNT.
- Review Incident Action Plans (IAP) and provide specific direction and guidelines as needed.
- Lead MRDG process. Consult with IC and Line officer regarding need for mechanized/motorized equipment.
- Prepare post fire rehabilitation plan.

#### Incident Commander/Incident Command Team

- Communicate land and fire management objectives to assigned resources/general staff.
- Understand and carry out an appropriate suppression response, which will best meet the land management objectives of the area.
- Evaluate suppression tactics during planning and strategy sessions to see that they meet the Agency Administrator's objectives and MIST guidelines.
- If fire is likely to impact multiple jurisdictions, ensure that unified command is agreed upon and that all non-agency resources understand the management objectives and MIST/LNT guidelines.
- Ensure all forces used on the fire understand the plan for suppressing the fire in conjunction with MIST. Monitor operations to ensure MIST is implemented during line construction as well as other resource disturbing activities.
- Ensure LNT practices are being adhered to in camp and during daily operations.
- Include agency Resource Advisor and/or local representative during planning, strategy, and debriefing sessions.
- Keep in communication with responsible fire management or line officer to insure understanding and support of tactics being used on the fire. Evaluate and provide feedback as to the tactical effectiveness during and after fire incident.

#### Planning Section

- Anticipate fire behavior and ensure all instructions can be implemented safely.
- Use Resource Advisor to help assess that management tactics are commensurate with land/resource and incident objectives.
- Ensure that instructions and specifications for MIST/LNT are communicated clearly in the IAP.

#### Logistics Section

- Ensure actions performed around Incident Command Post (ICP), staging areas, camps, helibases, and helispots result in minimum impact on the environment. Logistical needs to conform to LNT outdoor ethic will be more particular than normal fire operations.

#### Operations Section

- Evaluate MIST objectives to incorporate into daily operations and IAP.
- Monitor effectiveness of suppression tactics in minimizing impacts to resources and recommend necessary changes during planning/strategy sessions.

- Communicate MIST to Division Supervisors and Air Ops/Support during each operational period briefing. Explain expectations for instructions listed in Incident Action Plan.
- Participate in incident debriefing and assist in evaluation of performance related to MIST.

#### Single Resource Bosses

- Monitor effectiveness of suppression tactics in minimizing impacts to resources and recommend necessary changes to supervisor.
- Communicate MIST objectives to crew members and monitor work to ensure that crews are adhering to MIST guidelines and specific incident objectives.
- Provide feedback to supervisor on implementation of MIST/LNT.

# Wildland Fire Operational Guidance – Blood Mountain & Brasstown Wilderness

Management of Unplanned Ignitions

**REPORT OF FIRE**

Mobilize resources to obtain information (ground or air resources)

Inform District Ranger/DFMO of potential Wilderness Wildland Fire

Order Wilderness Resource Advisor

Plot fire location to determine values at risk

Complete Decision Criteria Checklist  
(See Attachment)

Proceed with predetermined wildfire management strategy with concurrence from IC, DFMO and Line Officer

## PREDETERMINED WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Conduct all fire management activities within wilderness in a manner compatible with overall wilderness management objectives. Give preference to using methods and equipment that cause the least:

- Alteration to the wilderness landscape
- Disturbance of the land surface or degradation of habitat or water quality
- Disturbance to visitor solitude
- Need for subsequent restoration or mitigation

The District Ranger will be notified of all wildland fires occurring within the District. District Ranger and District Fire Management Officer or Acting will communicate or meet within 6 hours of the reported ignition (or as soon as logistically possible) within the Wilderness Area while dispatch initiate WFDSS. The Forest Supervisor and Forest Fire Management Officer will be notified upon verification of wilderness fire.

Detection of fire using aerial patrol may occur at or above 2,000 AGL and above, with minimal disturbance to allow visitors to enjoy their wilderness experience. All flights for reconnaissance, monitoring, etc. will be kept to the minimum number possible. Aircraft may also be utilized to locate visitors in the event of necessary closure to the area for public safety.

Wilderness Resource Advisors (WREA) will be assigned as soon as possible after detection of every wildland fires in the wilderness on the Chattahoochee-Oconee NFs, to monitor and work with fire management personnel.

Wildfires caused by **natural means** outside of the wilderness may be allowed to enter into the wilderness.

Minimum Impact Suppression Techniques (MIST) will be used on all wilderness fires. Leave No Trace outdoor ethic guidelines will be followed by all personnel while in the wilderness.

Use suppression methods with the least detriment to wilderness, unless the fire is threatening public safety within the Wilderness or resources and property outside the wilderness. Select management tactics matching with the fire's potential or existing behavior while producing the least possible impact on the resource being protected. Evaluate the appropriateness of water use and burnout operations to 'guide' fire, rather than ground disturbing equipment or line construction.

Consider the use of leaf blowers, pumps, and water use (sprinklers, bucket drops) over use of ground disturbing hand tools or mechanized equipment such as chainsaws and dozers.

Confine or contain wildfire spread within natural barriers unless additional measures are necessary to protect life and or property values. Consider more aggressive suppression efforts on fires that are likely to negatively impact private ownership.

Travel to and from fires should be planned considering impacts on wilderness values (response to National or Regional direction may dictate alternate travel methods in cases of extreme emergency). Utilize trailheads and existing trails for entry and travel routes, whenever possible.

District will make provisions for fighting fires in wilderness when motorized or mechanical equipment cannot be used. This will include having alternate suppression equipment available, special training for fire suppression crews, and use of confine or contain tactics.



All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and UTV are not permitted on wildland fires, including patrol. ATVs are banned from travel on hand-constructed fire lines and hiking trails for hauling and towing cargo, for carrying passengers; and for travel on terrain over manufacturer's recommendation for slope. Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTVs) are permitted on prescribed and wildland fire and may be used for hauling cargo, passengers and other supplies, including fuel, drip torches, and for patrol. Prohibit travel on terrain over manufacturer's recommendation for slope. (Chattahoochee-Oconee SUPPLEMENT R8-5100-2009-1)

No helispots will be constructed in the Wilderness without prior approval. No dip sites will be used within the Wilderness boundary without prior approval. The closest helispot to the Blood Mountain Wilderness is High Valley Airpark, located in Suches, Ga. The Latitude/Longitude for the High Valley Airpark is N34°-41-53.3240 / W084°-00-45.6880 or by phone at 404-747-5011. The closest airport to the Blood Mountain Wilderness is Wimpy Airport in Dahlonaga, Ga. The latitude/longitude for the Wimpy Airport is N34°-41-53.3240, W084°-00-45.6880. The closest airport or helispot for the Brasstown Wilderness is Blairsville Airport in Blairsville, Ga. The latitude/longitude for Blairsville Airport is N34°-51-15.9350 / W083°-59-50.3700 or by phone at 706-745-4307. The Brasstown Valley Resort helispot is located in Young Harris, Ga. The Latitude/Longitude for the Brasstown Valley Resort is N34°- 57.0000, W083°- 50.47.0004 or by phone at 706-379-9900.

Preference will be given to water drops over retardant. Avoid aerial application of retardant or foam within 300 feet of waterways. Exceptions may be made when life or property is threatened and the use of retardant or foam can be reasonably expected to alleviate the threat. The unit administrator should approve this deviation. Once foam or retardant is applied, the District Biologist, Forest Botanist, Forest Fisheries Biologist and Fish and Wildlife Service will be contacted for mitigation.

Existing area Closure Orders limiting group size and use of pack stock have exemptions for public health and safety that allow firefighters/law enforcement to exceed.

#### **WILDLAND FIRE DECISION SUPPORT SYSTEM (WFDSS)**

The direction for the USFS is to enter all fires into WFDSS as of September 2009. Information entry requirements will vary based on the complexity and duration of the fire. Temporary paper forms for entering a WFDSS incident are included in the Appendix, as well as FAQ sheet and simple 'thought-flow' outline. A Line Officer WFDSS presentation is provided in the Digital Appendix, as well as other useful WFDSS information. The WFDSS Manual is located in the Blue Ridge Ranger District in the FMO's office; and the on-line help guide is a good resource.

In the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS), objectives are broken down in the following format: Management Requirements, Strategic Objectives, Incident Requirements and Incident Objectives. Management requirements and Strategic Objectives are derived from land and resource management plan and fire management plan standards and guidelines information. Management requirements and Strategic objectives are designed to automatically 'fill-in' based on information provided through the LMRP and FMP. However, this may not happen. Incident requirements and Incident objectives will be specific to an incident and will need to be entered. Instructions are included in the digital Appendix regarding how to add objectives as well as sample objectives.

**MOTORIZED/MECHANICAL DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY**

See the Decision Criteria Checklist located in the back of Operation Plan on pages 21-26 for guidelines related to each category of motorized/mechanized use.

**Allow the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport only for: Emergencies where the situation involves an inescapable urgency and temporary need for speed beyond that available by primitive means. Categories include fire suppression, health and safety, law enforcement involving serious crime or fugitive pursuit, removal of deceased persons, and aircraft accident investigations. (FSM 2320, 2326.1)**

A sample letter requesting motorized/mechanical authorization is included in the Decision Criteria Checklist located in the back of Operation Plan on pages 20-24.

Motorized/Mechanical Request	Authorization for Non-Emergency	Authorization for Emergency
Chainsaws, Pumps, Leaf Blowers	Regional Forester	Forest Supervisor
Helicopters-Fixed Wing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retardant Delivery</li> <li>• Bucket Work</li> <li>• Personnel Shuttle</li> <li>• Low level flights under 2000 Feet AGL</li> </ul>	Regional Forester	Forest Supervisor
Transport & supply by aircraft, air drop & mechanical transport	Regional Forester (2326.1)	Forest Supervisor
Helispot Construction	Regional Forester	Forest Supervisor
Motor Vehicle	Regional Forester	Forest Supervisor
Tractors (Heavy Equipment)	Regional Forester	Regional Forester
Prescribed Fire in Wilderness	Regional Forester	Forest Supervisor
BAER projects in Wilderness	Regional Forester (2323.04c.11)	Forest Supervisor

**AVIATION RESTRICTIONS**

The Federal Aviation Administration has issued a notice to pilots to fly at a minimum altitude of 2,000 feet above the terrain or above the uppermost rim of a canyon or valley over a wilderness area. If there is a need for any low level flights less than 2,000 feet AGL there must be approval from the Forest Supervisor. When constructing retardant delivery the pilot must be clear of any natural waterways by 300 feet.

### **AREA CLOSURE ORDER**

In the event that an area is deemed unsafe, or to become so, the District Ranger has the authority to issue emergency closure orders to provide short term resource protection or to protect public health and safety. Once a closure order is approved, post closure order at District office and areas of public access (trailheads). Public Information officers will distribute information of closure to the media in a timely manner.

Personnel involved in fire management efforts are exempted from existing closure orders limiting group size, packstock, and campsite use during an emergency. All efforts will be made to comply with orders when possible.

### **REHABILITATION OF BURNED AREA**

Fire in wilderness is considered to be a part of the ecological processes that create the natural conditions that have statutory protection in wilderness. BAER stabilization treatments in wilderness are limited to those consistent with law and agency policy. Utilization of MIST throughout operations should reduce the need to rehabilitate any suppression-action caused damages.

Specific Forest Service Policy regarding BAER activities in wilderness is contained in FSM 2323.43b:

“Permit emergency burned area rehabilitation only if necessary to prevent an unnatural loss of the wilderness resource or to protect life, property, and other resource values outside of wilderness. Normally use hand tools and equipment to install selected land and channel treatments”

and in FSM 2323.43a:

“Use indigenous or appropriate naturalized species to reestablish vegetation where there is no reasonable expectation of natural healing.”

Additional direction regarding use of non-motorized equipment applicable to emergency stabilization is contained in FSM 2323.43a: “Use non-motorized equipment to accomplish improvement objectives. Only imminent threat to important values downstream justifies the use of motorized equipment.”

**Decision Criteria Checklist**

Is it human caused?

Is there a threat to life, property, or resources that cannot be mitigated?

Is current/predicted weather or fire behavior unacceptable?

Are potential effects on cultural and natural resources outside the range of acceptable effects?

Are relative risk indicators and/or risk assessment results unacceptable to the appropriate Agency Administrator?

Is there other proximate fire activity that limits or precludes successful management of this fire?

Are there other Agency Administrator issues that preclude use of this fire?

Do expected management needs for this fire exceed available capabilities?

**A yes response to any element on the checklist indicates that the appropriate response should be suppression orientated.**

Yes	No

Approved Response	Signature/Position	Date
Suppression Response		
Use of Wildland Fire Response		

**Justification for Response:**

**Approval for Motorized Equipment or Mechanical Transport in Wilderness in Support of Fire Management Activities**

**I. FIRE INFORMATION:**

Date/Time:		Start Date/Time:	
Fire Name/Number:		Current Size:	
Wilderness Area:		General Location:	
FMP Polygon(s):		Managed Fire	

**II. POTENTIAL NEED FOR MOTORIZED EQUIPMENT:**  
**(Check and explain all applicable needs; to be completed by Fire Management Officer):**

<b>Check</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>SITUATION (briefly describe)</b>
	<b>SAFETY:</b>	
	-Firefighter Safety	
	-Public Safety	
	<b>RESOURCE IMPACTS:</b>	
	-Wilderness Resources	
	-TES habitat or populations	
	-Cultural Resources	
	<b>OTHER PROPERTY AND VALUES:</b>	
	-Adjacent private land/ structures	
	-FS or other agency infrastructure	
	-Permitted activities	
	<b>LOCAL CONDITIONS:</b>	
	-Extreme fire indices	

	-High potential for spread	
	-Current/projected weather conditions	
	<b>FIRE MANAGEMENT RESOURCES:</b>	
	- Availability is low.	
	- Amount of other proximal fire activity.	
	- Regional Preparedness Level	
	-Remoteness, accessibility, response time	
	<b>OTHER (specify):</b>	
	-Traditional skills not available	
	-Non-motorized equipment not available	

### III. ALTERNATIVES AND RATIONALE FOR USE OF MOTORIZED EQUIPMENT or MECHANICAL TRANSPORT

(To be completed by Resource Advisor or Wilderness Technical Specialist)

Utilize MIST and wilderness fireline and restoration standards to minimize impacts in all actions.

Proposed Action	Alternative	
<b>Motorized Equipment or Mechanical Transport Tactic</b>	<b>Non-Motorized Equipment or Non-mechanical Transport Tactic</b>	<b>Rationale for Authorizing Motorized Equipment or Mechanical Transport</b>  <i>Note - Be specific and identify why motorized equipment or mechanical transport is the minimum necessary requirement.</i>
Aerial delivery of fire fighters	Walk, pack, or boat in	
Helispot construction	Use natural openings or existing helispots	
Helicopter landings	Personnel and materials are packed or floated in or out	
Helicopter sling loads	Pack or float materials in or out	
Para-cargo drops	Pack or float materials in or out	
Helicopter water drops	Use backpack pumps, gravity fed hose lays, or dry mop	
Aerial retardant application	Manage fire using natural features and fuel breaks	
Chain saws	Use cross-cut saws Locate line to avoid or minimize need for cutting Avoid or isolate hazard trees Revise mop-up standards	
Water pumps	Use backpack pumps, gravity fed hose lays, dry mop	

Bull dozers or tractors	Manage fire using natural features, fuel breaks, and burnout	
Other:		



**IV. SPECIFIC REQUEST and AUTHORIZATION:**  
**(To be completed or approved by the Line Officer)**

Based on the above needs and rationale, the following motorized equipment is requested. Authorized use for the specified time periods and locations is as follows.

<b>Motorized Equipment</b>	<b>Equip. Request (Check)</b>	<b>Specific Use or Objective</b> (Check blank or provide specific information)	<b>Authorized Time Period and Specific Area of Fire</b>
Chainsaw		Fell Trees/snags posing a threat to the integrity of the fireline.	
		Fell Trees/snags posing a threat to firefighter safety.	
		Clearing fireline of brush/limbs to control spread.	
		Bucking logs posing threat to integrity of fireline.	
Portable Pump		Support to: ___ Initial attack; ___ Extended attack, and/or ___ Mop Up.  Approved water source(s): _____  Water sources to avoid: _____	
Helicopter		Landing for Initial attack: ___	
		Landing at approved helispots: ___	
		Transport of _____ personnel, _____ supplies/equipment	
		Bucket Drops to support ___ Initial attack, ___ Extend attack ___ Other	

		Approved water source(s)	
		Water sources to avoid: _____	
Bulldozers		Protect private property	
Other Equipment			

**Authorization Requested by:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title** \_\_\_\_\_

**Wilderness Resource Advisor Review by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Authorized by:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Line Officer**

*Note – the following table represents national policy as indicated in FSM 2320. Some FS regions have re-delegated authority and should either delete this table or replace it with one that reflects regional direction.*

LINE OFFICER APPROVAL: Listed below is the line officers delegation level for the approval of motorized or mechanized equipment: FSM 2326.04b and 2326.04c

<b>Motorized/Mechanical Request</b>	<b>Authorization for Non-Emergency</b>	<b>Authorization for Emergency</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chainsaws, Pumps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Forester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest Supervisor</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helicopters-Fixed Wing</li> <li>• Retardant Delivery</li> <li>• Bucket Work</li> <li>• Crew Shuttle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Forester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest Supervisor</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helispot Construction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Forester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest Supervisor</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motor Vehicle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Forester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest Supervisor</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tractors (Heavy Equipment)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Forester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest Supervisor</li> </ul>

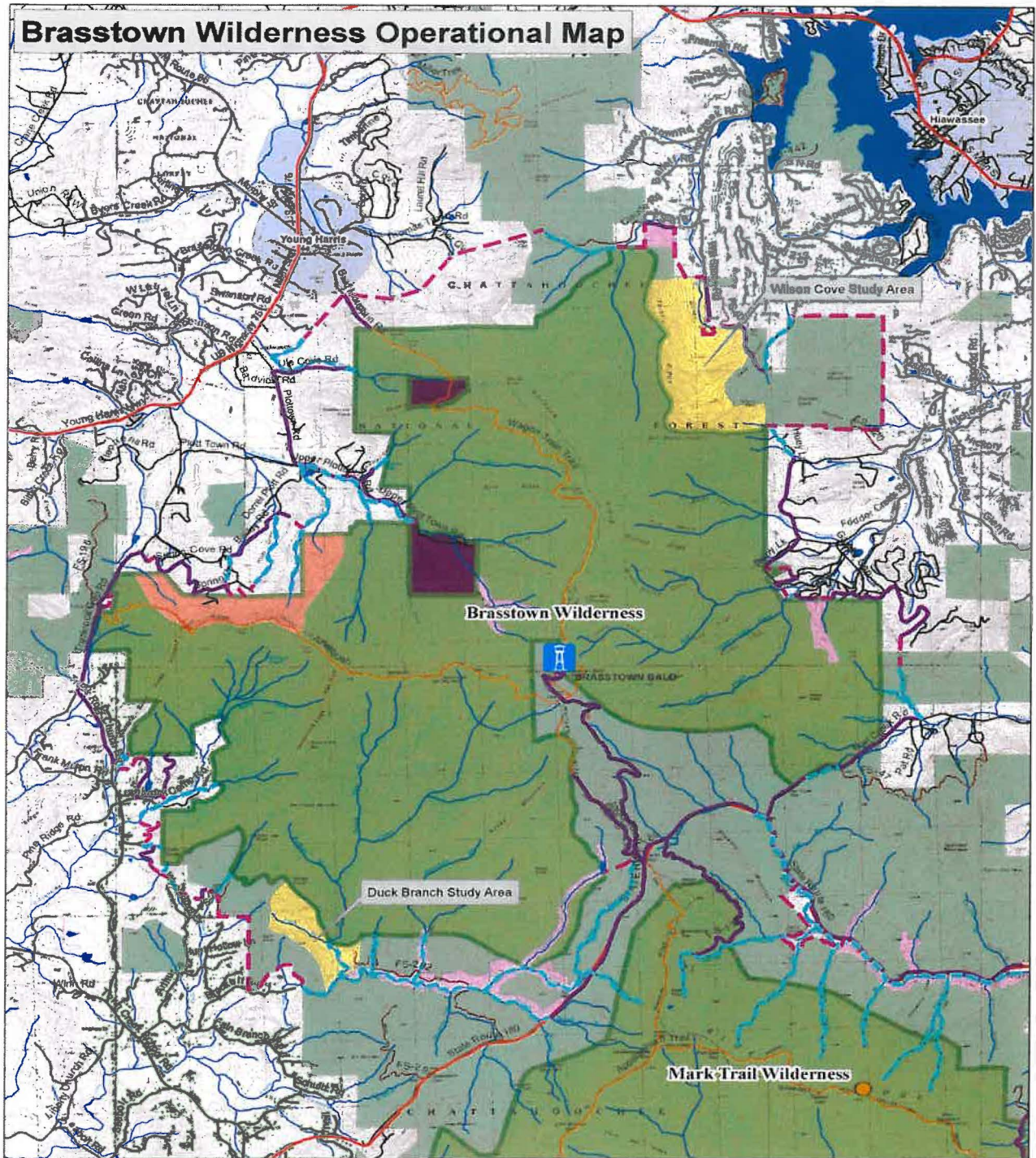
## REQUEST FOR EQUIPMENT USE IN WILDERNESS

The responsible Line Officer or Acting will want the answers to these questions when a unit calls for approval of mechanized equipment.

Complete this questionnaire before calling.

1. What is the threat to life and property within or outside wilderness boundary?
2. What is the predicted fire behavior and expected rate of spread in the next burning period?
3. What is the probability of success of handtool attack is under observed and predicted burning conditions?
4. What is the estimated size of containment if mechanized equipment is not used?
5. What type of mechanized equipment is being requested?

# Brasstown Wilderness Operational Map



## References

Data acquired from a variety of sources of differing accuracy, precision, and reliability. Features represented by these data may not represent accurate geographic locations. This map is an updated representation of the Chattahoochee-Oconee Visitor Map.

## Disclaimer

The USDA Forest Service makes no warranty, expressed or implied regarding the data displayed on this map, and reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace this information without notification.

## Legend

- Highway
- State/County Road
- FS Road
- Trail
- City
- Private Inholding
- Wilderness Study Area
- Wilderness
- NF Land
- Special Area
- HWA Site
- Existing Break
- Natural Break
- Predetermined Dozer
- Private Inholding

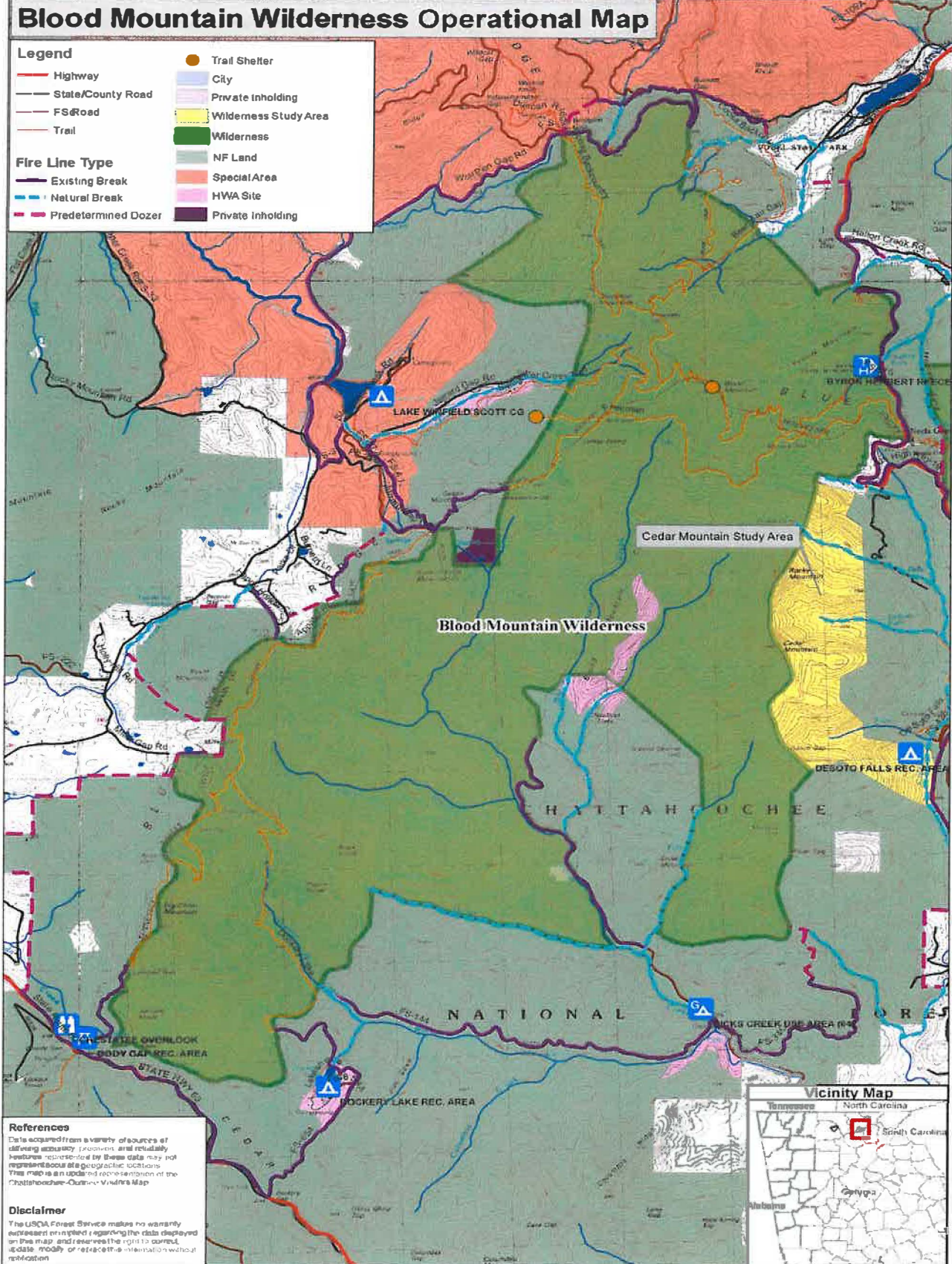
## Vicinity Map



# Blood Mountain Wilderness Operational Map

**Legend**

Highway	Trail Shelter
State/County Road	City
FS Road	Private Inholding
Trail	Wilderness Study Area
<b>Fire Line Type</b>	Wilderness
Existing Break	NF Land
Natural Break	Special Area
Predetermined Dozer	Private Inholding



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