



## U.S. Forest Service News Release

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### Partnership Releases Plan to Improve Parking/River Access at Wilson Creek

**Nebo, NC, September 25, 2024**— The Wilson Creek Action Plan to improve parking, river access and visitor safety issues was released today after six months of collaboration. Input from more than 600 public comments, dozens of community meetings, and a diverse coalition of partner organizations guided the proposed improvements for the Wilson Creek Wild and Scenic River in Pisgah National Forest.

“We asked for folks to help us build this plan, and we’ve had a huge response from our local communities,” said Lisa Jennings, Recreation Manager for the Grandfather Ranger District. “What we heard is a need for clear parking, more restroom and trash facilities, a plan for enforcement, and continued protection of the character of the Wild and Scenic River. This feedback helped guide the recommendations to protect the river by better managing use.”

Wilson Creek was designated as a National Wild and Scenic River by Congress in 2000. Originating at its headwaters just below Grandfather Mountain, it flows 23 miles through mostly protected forest lands before it eventually joins the Johns River in Caldwell County. The Creek’s remarkable features include whitewater rapids, world-class trout fishing, and picturesque boulders surrounded by sandy beaches popular in the summer for swimming and sunbathing. Like many sites in Pisgah National Forest, visitation and use have increased significantly in the past 5 years.

The Action Plan provides a clear path forward to support better stewardship and an improved recreation experience along Wilson Creek and is organized around three main goals:

- (1) **Visitor Orientation**- Clearly define public land boundaries and provide consistent information and signage throughout the corridor.
- (2) **Visitor Experience**- Organize existing parking by concentrating infrastructure development into “focus areas” while maintaining current levels of use across the corridor. Provide parking, vault toilets, and bear-proof trash cans at each focus area to address waste management. Explore opportunities for trail connectivity between sites.

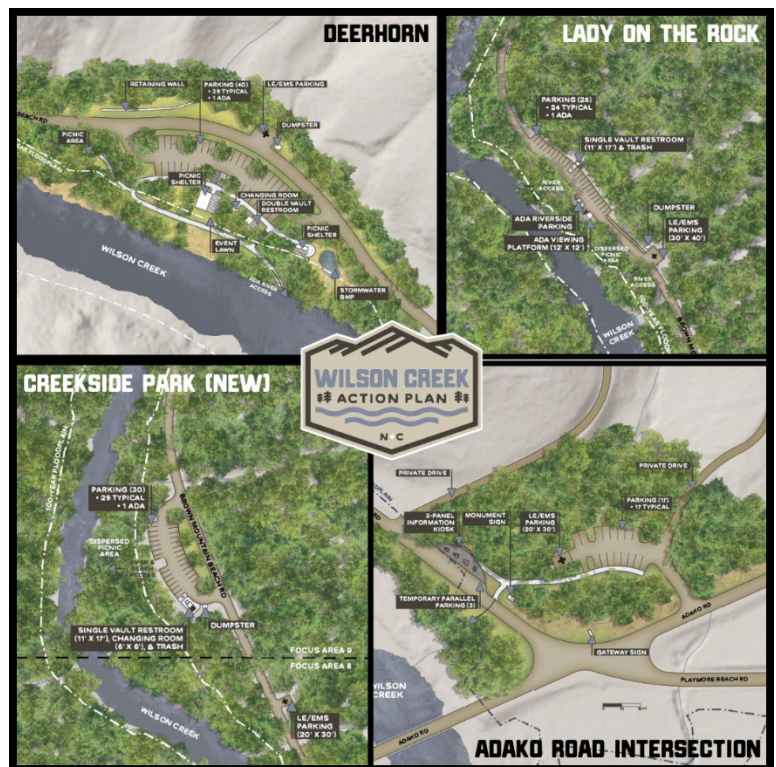
(3) **Visitor Safety**- Provide reserved parking and turn-around areas for law enforcement and emergency management. Eliminate parking in non-designated areas using boulders, guardrails, and road realignment.

The project area covers the lower 9 miles of the Wilson Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor along Brown Mountain Beach Road from Adako Road to NC 90 at Mortimer. Proposed improvements are concentrated in the popular Wilson Creek Gorge, the 5-mile stretch from Adako Road to Craig Creek Road. The Action Plan details 11 recommended river access parking areas, or “focus areas”, within this section on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and Caldwell County.

For full details on the plan, visit [www.g5trailcollective.org/wilsoncreek](http://www.g5trailcollective.org/wilsoncreek).

"We are excited to unveil the Wilson Creek Action Plan to the public," said Melissa Patton, Executive Director of Carolina Land and Lakes Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D). "This collaborative effort will not only enhance the visitor experience but also ensure the long-term protection of this important natural resource. Managing use along the corridor will protect river-side vegetation and water quality. This is a critical time for Wilson Creek and we are pleased to provide a working Action Plan for all three public landowners."

Destination by Design, a planning firm located in Boone, NC produced the action plan with funding from Carolina Land and Lakes RC&D. The U.S. Forest Service Grandfather Ranger District led the effort in collaboration with land managers from the NC Wildlife Resources Commission. A diverse partnership representing local residents, businesses, and users guided the plan development process. These partners include: A Clean Wilson Creek, American Whitewater, Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce, Caldwell County Planning Department, Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina, G5 Trail Collective, Latinos Aventureros en las Carolinas, Northwest NC Mountain Bike Alliance, Trout Unlimited and Wild South.



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