

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Changing Appalachian Forests

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

The US Forest Service, has begun taking a predictive look at the future of Southern forests, coming out with an initial report looking at the Southern Appalachians. The results aren't especially unexpected, but still warrant the attention of forest users and community leaders, because it does show a change in our forests and how they are used.

The Forest Service found that our Appalachian forests aren't heavily influenced by wood prices, like softwood forests of the Piedmont and coastal plain, however, they do face the threat of conversion into a developed landscape with a growing population. Our forests won't so much be cut for wood products, rather forests will be cut to make way for new homes, roads, and shopping centers. Thing is, when you cut a forest for wood production, you can plant trees back at the same site. When you build on a site, those trees are gone for decades, if not centuries. An increasing Southern population is also expected to bring increased forest recreation, meaning more people on your favorite mountain biking trail, more people filling up campgrounds, more people fishing rivers.

At the end of the day, the report basically issues a warning to those of us who live near and enjoy southern Appalachian forests that we have to learn how to deal with more people, for the good of our forests and the time we spend in them.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.