



**Friends of Panthertown, Inc.**  
**P.O. Box 51, Cashiers, NC 28717**  
(828) 269-4453 friends@panthertown.org

**Comments on Proposal to Require Bear Resistant  
Food Containers for Overnight Campers in Panthertown**

September 19, 2018

Mr. Johnny Wills, Wildlife Biologist  
Nantahala Ranger District  
90 Sloan Road, Franklin, NC 28734

The U.S. Forest Service is seeking input on a proposal to require bear resistant food containers for all overnight campers in Panthertown on the Nantahala Ranger District.

Due to the increasing number of human encounters with black bears exhibiting bold behavior over food in the past few years in Panthertown, the Board of Directors of Friends of Panthertown, Inc. are in support of the U.S. Forest Service proposed efforts to reduce human-bear interaction in Panthertown by requiring bear resistant food containers for overnight campers.

Panthertown is designated by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission as part of the Panthertown-Bonas Defeat Bear Sanctuary. We are in support of this designation. We agree that close interactions with bears must be reduced for the sake of the bears and for the safety of visitors. After considering public input, we are in support of whatever conclusion the U.S. Forest Service determines to be the best action for Panthertown.

In partnership with the U.S. Forest Service Nantahala Ranger District, our organization will continue to inform the public to be bear aware, leave no trace, and use proper food storage when visiting. We will continue to assist the U.S. Forest Service public awareness efforts by posting and maintaining material at Panthertown trail heads, on our website, in our newsletters, and on social media in an effort to educate visitors on the importance of eliminating human behaviors that lead bears to see people as a source of food.

With appreciation,

Jason Kimenker, *Executive Director*

Margaret Carton, *President*

Mike Purdy, *Vice-President, Trail Boss*

Virginia Willard, *Vice-President*

Paul Johnson, *Treasurer*

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Mike English      Margo Purdy      Wynette Wiles