RESOLUTION NO. 22-_____

RESOLUTION OBJECTING TO PORTIONS OF THE NANTAHALA AND PISGAH NATIONAL FORESTS DECISION NOTICE ON A NEW LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN_____

WHEREAS, Asheville is the most populous city within the 18-county footprint of the Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Plan. Asheville is also the county seat of Buncombe County, which has the most forest users of any county in the Pisgah-Nantahala National Forest region. The City of Asheville has significant interest in the outcome of the forest plan. The City is surrounded on three sides by Pisgah National Forest. Asheville's water quality, air quality, and scenic views are especially important to Asheville residents and visitors; and

WHEREAS, Asheville's economy is especially dependent on recreation, tourism, and scenery. The Blue Ridge Parkway passes directly through Asheville, and Craggy Gardens is just 15 miles from downtown Asheville. Craggy Gardens is the most popular and photographed spot along the Parkway and an important part of Asheville's recreation and tourism. Over 500,000 visitors travel to Craggy Gardens each year for its scenic views; and

WHEREAS, The Craggy/Big Ivy section of Pisgah National Forest comprises most of the viewshed from Craggy Gardens and over seven miles of the most popular stretch of the Blue Ridge Parkway. The Craggy/Big Ivy section of Pisgah National Forest also provides the drinking water for the rapidly growing town of Weaverville and interconnects with Asheville's water system; and

WHEREAS, The Craggy/Big Ivy section of Pisgah National Forest is also home to the last old-growth forests near Asheville. Over 1,500 acres of these ancient forests have been placed in management areas considered "suitable for timber production," where the Forest Service has prioritized logging. The plan states, notably, that future projects will not be proposed for the "primary" purpose of timber production, but makes clear that logging and road construction would nevertheless occur in order to meet both acreage and timber volume targets. The plan does not provide guidelines requiring the protection of old growth, rare biological values, or unroaded areas within areas considered suitable for timber production; and

WHEREAS, Asheville is also home to the largest Black and Hispanic population in the 18-county Pisgah-Nantahala National Forest footprint. The Forest Plan does not consider these communities as environmental justice communities, and fails to consider the impacts of quadrupling timber harvests on the air, water, climate, and health of these communities; and

WHEREAS, The Forest Service failed to consider the impact of its management allocations on the city of Asheville. It failed to properly analyze as a reasonable alternative the protection of the entire area for its scenic, water, biological, and recreational values, including over 4,000 acres in the Ivy Knob, Snowball Mountain, Ox Creek, and Shope Creek portions of the Craggy/Big Ivy section of Pisgah National Forest. The Forest Service also improperly failed to include these key conservation and recreation areas in its Forest Scenic Area designation. The Forest Service also failed to fully consider and analyze the proposed Craggy National Scenic Area with embedded wilderness designation for an expanded Craggy Mountain Wilderness Area; and

WHEREAS, The City of Asheville seeks a change to the final plan that would include those 4,000

acres of Snowball Mountain, North Fork, Shope Creek, and Ox Creek in its Forest Scenic Area, and fully consider recommending the proposed Craggy National Scenic Area; and

WHEREAS, The Asheville City Council has submitted previous substantive formal comments during public comment periods for the Nantahala and Pisgah Forest Plan. The previous comments were within the scope of the proposed plan, specific to the plan, and had a direct relationship to the plan; and

WHEREAS, Specifically, the Asheville City Council submitted a unanimous bipartisan resolution supporting the protection of the entire Craggy/Big Ivy area, including the Ivy Knob, Snowball Mountain, Ox Creek, and Shope Creek portions. It highlighted the widespread public support and the long history of local community support for protecting all of Big Ivy. Asheville City Council supported the protection of the entire Big Ivy area not only because of its incomparable scenic value, but also because of the entire area's importance for protecting water quality, its old-growth forests and other biological values, and its world-class recreational setting and experience; and

WHEREAS, The Asheville City Council resolution passed in 2017 included detailed and substantive comments describing the unique conservation attributes of the Craggy/Big Ivy section of Pisgah National Forest. These attributes were neither protected nor analyzed in the Draft Record of Decision and Final Environmental Impact Statement. Additionally, the Forest Service chose not to even study the Craggy National Scenic Area proposal recommended by the Buncombe County Commission, but offered no explanation for this decision.

WHEREAS, City Council finds that the Forest Service decision in this matter failed to consider the impact of its management allocations on the City of Asheville; failed to properly analyze as a reasonable alternative the protection of the entire area for its scenic, water, biological, and recreational values; failed to include these key conservation and recreation areas in its Forest Scenic Area designation; and failed to fully consider and analyze the proposed Craggy National Scenic Area with embedded wilderness designation for an expanded Craggy Mountain Wilderness Area; and

WHEREAS, City Council finds that it is in the best interests of the citizens and residents of the City of Asheville to Object to the Revised Nantahala and Pisgah Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Record of Decision;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

1. That the Mayor, or her designee, is hereby authorized to execute and file an Objection to the Revised Nantahala and Pisgah Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Record of Decision.

2. That the Mayor, or her designee, is hereby authorized, empowered and directed to do any and all other acts and to execute any and all other documents, which they, in their discretion, deem necessary and appropriate in order to consummate the transactions contemplated by this Resolution, except that none of the above shall be authorized or empowered to do anything or execute any document which is in contravention, in any way, of the specific provisions of this Resolution.

3. All acts and doings of officers, employees and agents of the City, whether taken prior to, on, or after the date of this Resolution, that are in conformity with and in the furtherance of the purposes and

intents of this Resolution as described above shall be, and the same hereby are, in all respects ratified, approved and confirmed.

4. That this resolution shall become effective upon its adoption.

Read, approved and adopted this the 22nd day of March, 2022.

_____ _____

City Clerk Mayor

Approved as to form:

_____

City Attorney