

Popular Whitewater Falls to reopen

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FRANKLIN, N.C. - Whitewater Falls will soon be back in action.

The viewing area for the falls, which was closed since November due to damage from the Whitewater fire, is expected to reopen by the July 4 weekend, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

Whitewater Falls, which is near the town of Cashiers in the Nantahala National Forest, is one of the most popular falls in WNC, and arguably the prettiest and the highest, with a 400-foot drop.

The Whitewater fire, which began Nov. 6 and grew to 23 acres, destroyed the staircase and access facility to the Whitewater Falls observation deck. Because of the steep terrain, the site has been considered unsafe to the public.

The overlook to the top of the falls is an easy walk from the parking area off N.C. 281, but the access was damaged and the 154-step stairs to the bottom of the falls was completely burned. It was built in 1992.

Some 75,000 people visit the falls each year, said District Ranger Mike Wilkins.

Williams Brothers Construction in Andrews was recently awarded a contract for \$85,000 to rebuild this infrastructure. The Foothills Trail Club has also secured a \$5,000 grant from REI to assist in re-decking the trail bridge over Whitewater River.



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Whitewater Falls in Transylvania County is set to reopen this summer. It has been closed since November.