

2026 NFL season preview

Rams look built to win it all in their own stadium



Times News



WEEKEND

HENDERSON, POLK & TRANSYLVANIA COUNTIES | SERVING THE BLUE RIDGE SINCE 1871

SUNDAY, AUGUST 23, 2026

BLUERIDGENOW.COM | PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

EXCLUSIVE

Artist, scholar, poison victim?



Leela Livis was an artist who spoke German and Japanese, and according to those who knew her, kept her circle small. PROVIDED BY TRAVIS PETERSON

A look at Leela Livis, subject of death investigation

Kara Fohner Asheville Citizen Times | USA TODAY NETWORK

Leela Livis called her mother, Gudrun Casper-Leinenkugel, almost every day. • They’d talk about Leela’s day, or things that went wrong. She called so frequently that her family laughed about it, her sister, Maija Lacey, told the Citizen Times Aug. 14. • “She was a huge mama’s girl. Anything mom said was correct,” Lacey said. “We jokingly said that she would call (Gudrun) to tell her that she farted. They were the closest out of everyone.”

See POISON, Page 8A

Feds move to build roads in ‘pristine’ WNC forests

Will Hofmann
Asheville Citizen Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

ASHEVILLE - The U.S. Forest Service has initiated the process of rolling back protections that prevented logging and construction across 45 million acres of national forests, including forests near major North Carolina hotspots like Craggy Mountain, Mt. Mitchell and Graveyard Fields.

The move comes nearly a year after the U.S. Forest Service first indicated it would move to eliminate the “Roadless Rule” as President Donald Trump ordered his administration to increase logging across public lands. The agency’s August 2025 notice of intent regarding the rule led to a public comment period, where many wrote in opposition to the USDA’s plan. Enacted in 2001, the rule protects more than up to 58.5 million acres of the 193 million acres of National Forest across the country.

In the Aug. 18 announcement to rescind the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins described the rule as “outdated” and “failed.” Though the administration has sought to increase logging, the revocation effort was described as helping “reduce wildfire risk.”

“For too long, outdated restrictions have kept tens of millions of forested acres off-limits to the very treatments that improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk to our communities,” Rollins said, adding that the USDA needed to return “our forests to health and productivity.”

The Forest Service’s announcement was followed by a burst of criticism, with environmental nonprofits, activists and legal centers across the political spectrum denouncing the decision. In news releases, the Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship President David Jenkins called the decision “one of the most boneheaded and fiscally irresponsible actions this administration could take,” as the U.S. Department of Agriculture continues to face a backlog of road maintenance across the country. The NC Sierra Club described the move as one that will “devastate” national forest land. The USDA did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the proposal to rescind the rule.

Of the state’s roughly 140,000 acres of national forest protected by the rule, most of North Carolina’s roadless land is in the mountains, and within an hour drive from Asheville, including Big Ivy, a roughly 16,000-acre area known for its waterfalls, mountain vistas and popular recreation opportunities. The areas are part of the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests, which spread across 1 million acres of rugged and forested terrain in Western North Carolina.

Other areas protected by the rule in WNC include South Mills River and Craggy Mountain, according to a map of areas protected by the roadless rule released by the USDA. Lost Cove, Harpers Creek, Wilson Creek, Laurel Mountain and Graveyard Ridge, which sits above Graveyard Fields, are also protected.

See FORESTS, Page 10A



Expanding Primary Care in South Asheville

Kayla Pulley, PA-C, is now caring for patients at AdventHealth Medical Group Multispecialty at Turtle Creek. Kayla provides personal, thoughtful family medicine care to support patients through every stage of life.

Now Accepting New Patients
828-684-2610 | AdventHealthHVL.com



