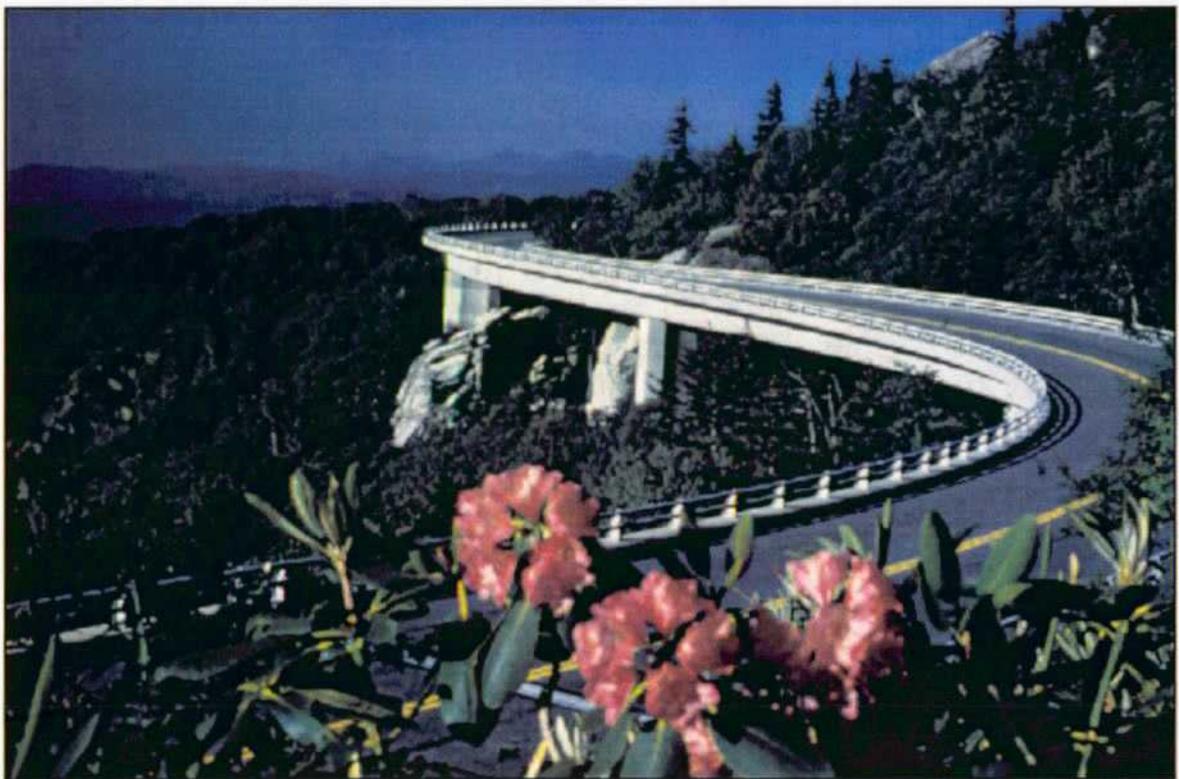


601/D-631

LONG-RANGE INTERPRETIVE PLAN

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY



BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



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JAN 30 2003

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Blue Ridge Parkway

From: Associate Manager, Interpretive Planning, Harpers Ferry Center

Subject: Distribution of Approved Long-Range Interpretive Plan for Blue Ridge Parkway

The Blue Ridge Parkway Long-Range Interpretive Plan was approved by your memorandum, undated. All changes noted in the memorandum have been incorporated in this final document.

Twenty bound copies are being sent to you with this memorandum, along with one unbound copy for your use in making additional copies as needed in the future.

We have certainly appreciated the fine cooperation and help of your staff on this project.


Donald E. Kodak

Enclosure (21)

Copy to:
Patty Lockamy, Chief of Interpretation

bcc:

HFC-Files

HFC-Dailies

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LONG-RANGE INTERPRETIVE PLAN

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

2002

prepared by

**Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**Blue Ridge Parkway
Branch of Interpretation**

**Harpers Ferry Center
Interpretive Planning**

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INTRODUCTION

THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY, IN LINKING THE SHENANDOAH AND GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARKS, IS DEDICATED TO ENHANCING THE OUTSTANDING SCENIC AND RECREATIONAL QUALITIES OF THE CORRIDOR THAT IT TRAVERSES, CONSERVING UNIMPAIRED ITS SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES, AND PROMOTING IN PERPETUITY THE PUBLIC ENJOYMENT AND APPRECIATION OF THE CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS.

Blue Ridge Parkway Mission Statement

This Long- Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) presents a visitor experience vision for Blue Ridge Parkway (Parkway) based on purpose, significance, and mission goals identified in the Parkway's Strategic Plan. It provides direction and focus to visitor experiences at the Parkway for the next ten years, and it identifies a media and activity action plan that best meets current and future visitor needs and effectively tells Parkway stories.

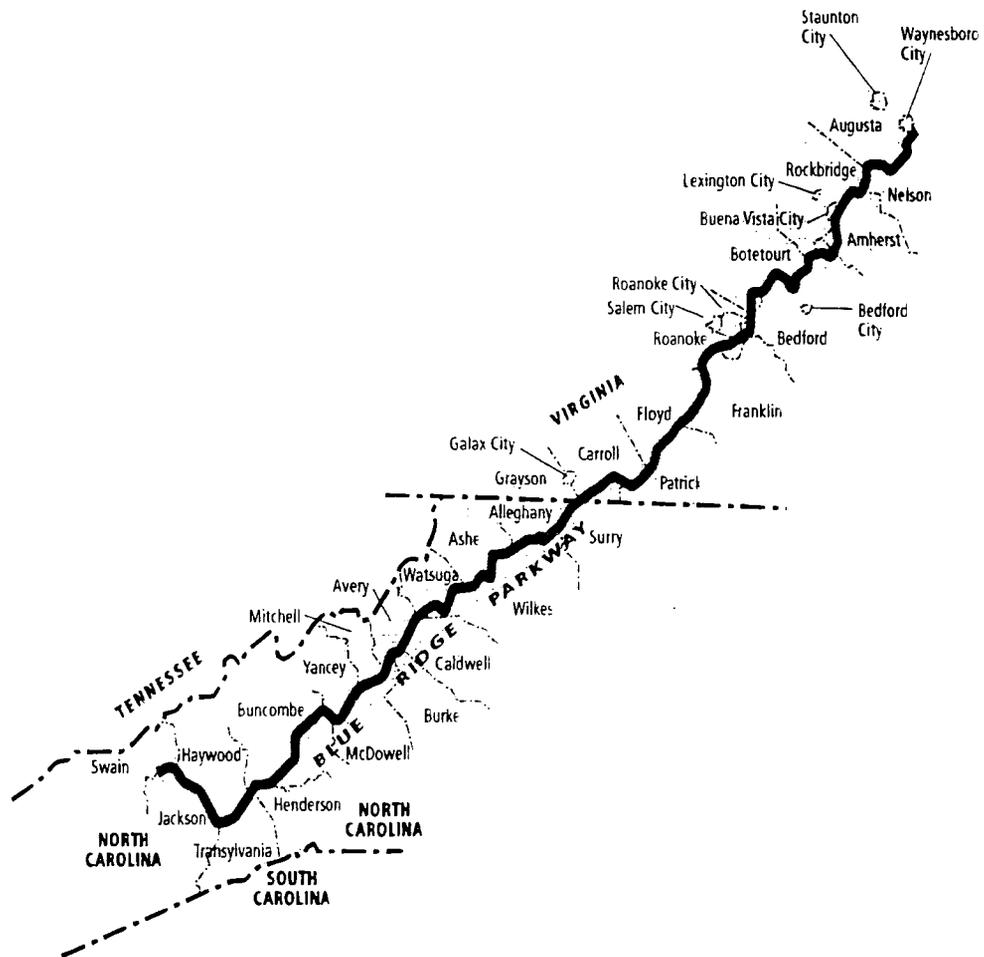
The LRIP is a conceptual plan to guide interpretive managers through elimination or modification of existing programs, creation of new programs, and determination of future media needs. It describes long-range and short-range views and deals with all media, including personal services and facilities. The LRIP provides recommendations for broad general management planning decisions for park-wide operations and development that affects interpretation and visitor experience. It also lays the foundation for the next phases of a comprehensive interpretive planning process—media planning, design and production, and the organization of staff and activities into annual implementation plans. It provides a standard for evaluating accomplishments of the Parkway's interpretation and visitor experience programs. As future general management plans are completed or amended, the LRIP itself will be evaluated to assure compatibility with management goals.

During this long-range interpretive planning process National Park Service staff, interpretive partners, and media specialists evaluated the Parkway's interpretive program. Goal-driven team planning focused interpretive proposals on significant resources, themes and issues, and developed interpretive strategies to enhance opportunities for visitors to understand, enjoy, and appreciate resources the Parkway was established to conserve.

INTRODUCTION

This LRIP looks at the Parkway comprehensively, not piecemeal. It focuses on critical needs, defines minimal level programs, and describes interpretation concepts for developed areas. It provides direction and focus, not detailed recommendations for interpretation at every overlook.

The strength and success of concepts in this LRIP depends upon management's priority for education and interpretation for Parkway visitors and neighbors.



BACKGROUND FOR PLANNING

PARKWAY PURPOSE

The legislated purpose of the Blue Ridge Parkway, under the Act of June 30, 1936, is to link Shenandoah National Park in Virginia and Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina and Tennessee by way of a recreation- oriented motor road intended for public use and enjoyment. Under the provisions of the act approved August 25, 1916 (39 Stat. 535), the intended purpose of the Blue Ridge Parkway is to conserve, interpret, and exhibit the unique natural and cultural resources of the central and southern Appalachian Mountains, as well as provide for leisure motor travel through a variety of environments.

The general interpretation of the Parkway's legislated purpose has been refined into the following specific purpose statements:

- Connect Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks by way of a "national rural parkway"—a recreational, destination-oriented motor road traveling through a variety of scenic ridge, mountainside, and pastoral farm landscape.
- Conserve the scenery and preserve the natural and cultural resources of the Parkway's designed and natural areas.
- Provide for public enjoyment and understanding of the natural resources and cultural heritage of the central and southern Appalachian Mountains.
- Provide opportunities for high quality scenic and recreational experiences along the Blue Ridge Parkway and within the corridor through which it passes.

RESOURCE SIGNIFICANCE

The route of the Blue Ridge Parkway follows mountain and valley landscapes to link Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks. Its location was selected to provide the best in a variety of scenic, historic, and natural features that evoke the regional image of the central and southern Appalachian Mountains. To maximize scenic views and give visitors the impression that they are in a park with boundaries to the horizon, the Parkway was located in mountainous terrain that roads would normally have avoided.

The Parkway extends 469 miles through the Blue Ridge, Black, Great Craggy, Great Balsam, and Plot Balsam Mountains. It is known for spectacular mountain and valley vistas, quiet pastoral scenes, sparkling waterfalls, colorful flowers and foliage displays, and interpretation of mountain history and culture. Designed for recreational driving, the Parkway provides visitors with quiet, leisure travel, free from commercial traffic and the congestion of high-speed highways. As its All-American Road in NC and VA State Scenic Byway status indicates, it is one of the most diverse and high quality recreational driving experiences in the world.

The following significance statements summarize the importance or distinctiveness of the aggregate of resources along the Parkway.

- The Blue Ridge Parkway was the first national rural parkway to be conceived, designed, and constructed as a leisure-type driving experience. Its varied topography and numerous vista points offer easy public access to spectacular views of southern Appalachian rural landscapes and forested mountains.
- As an example of pre- and post-war automotive rural parkway design, the Blue Ridge Parkway retains the greatest degree of any parkway in the United States. The Parkway is further recognized throughout the world as an international example of landscape and engineering design achievements with a roadway that lays easily on the land and blends into the landscape.
- The Parkway is the highest and longest continuous route in the Appalachian area. Along its 469-mile length, the Parkway provides scenic access to crests and ridges of five major ranges within the central and southern Appalachian Mountains, encompassing geographic and vegetative zones that range from 649 feet at James River in Virginia to 6,053 feet at Richland Balsam in North Carolina.

RESOURCE SIGNIFICANCE

- The park's uninterrupted corridor facilitates the protection of a diverse range of flora and fauna including rare and endangered plant and animal species and areas designated as national natural landmarks.
- The park preserves and displays cultural landscapes and historic architecture characteristic of the central and southern Appalachian highlands.
- The Blue Ridge Parkway is a primary catalyst for promoting regional travel and tourism, serving as a unifying element for 29 counties through which it passes, engendering a shared regional identity, providing a common link of interest, and being a major contributor to economic vitality.

Because of its long length, proximity to large eastern United States urban areas, numerous access points, quality design and diversity of scenic, natural, and cultural resources, the Blue Ridge Parkway is the most visited National Park Service area.

RESOURCE VALUES

Proximity of the Blue Ridge Parkway to urban and suburban areas provides opportunities for large populations to find scenery and relatively unspoiled natural resources convenient and close to home. For millions of visitors who drive the Parkway each year, myriad opportunities for recreation, interpretation, education, relaxation, or contemplation await. The scenic motor road traverses Virginia and North Carolina landscapes containing a diverse range of natural and visual resources. Within the first hour of travel along the Parkway, visitors feel they are experiencing more than just a long stretch of asphalt. They sense they are in for an adventure. After a few hours on the road, with many stops along the way, they may conclude that the Parkway is akin to a tapestry. Natural environments of extraordinary diversity, awesome geological history, and breathtaking scenic vistas are woven together to create a remarkable image.

Just as the Parkway is a transect that encompasses a variety of ecological and biological zones, in a cultural sense it also cuts across much of the American experience, both geographically and temporally. Within the Parkway boundary there is evidence of Indians who came to the mountains 12,000 years ago. There are traces of wagon roads traveled by early settlers and trails trod by Revolutionary War and Civil War soldiers. There are 19th century canal locks and rail routes, and, along Parkway boundaries, farms that have been in agricultural production for many

generations. The 99 historic structures in the Parkway include examples of log architecture, as well as a gristmill, a country school, and a turn-of-the-century country estate.

The diversity and richness of cultural stories are not restricted to resources within national park boundaries. Parkway designers deliberately appropriated and incorporated landscapes and views that extend far beyond the limits of the park. The visible built environment, whether country churches, distant communities or rock quarries, become interpretive possibilities. The Parkway's length and mountain crest location make it a carefully crafted window to the people, culture, and history of Appalachia.

There are many biological resources along the Blue Ridge Parkway, including rare high elevation spruce-fir forests, hardwood-cove forests, mountain streams and bogs, rare and endangered plants, and other ecological communities. This home to some of the richest and most diverse plant communities in America offers many biological stories.

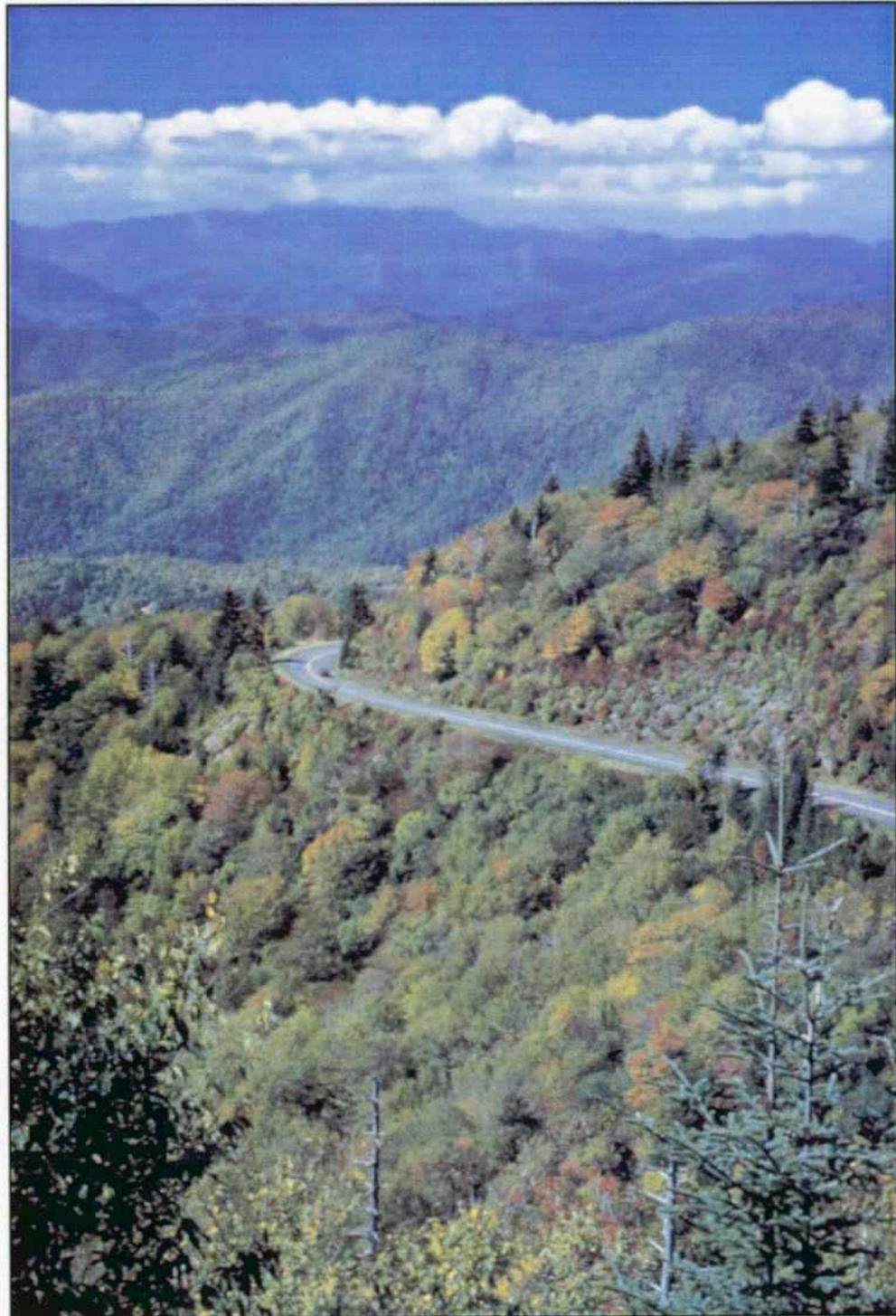
An abundance of geological phenomena continues its work along the Parkway. Five mountain ranges include the oldest mountain building processes in the world. Visitors see evidence of nationally significant geologic structural events (folding, faulting, windows, vertical strata), weathering and erosion, metamorphism of sedimentary rocks into gneiss, schist, greenstone and marble, and economically significant minerals.

The Parkway stands at the summit of many local and regional watersheds that define the hydrologic patterns of much of southeastern United States. While vegetation often covers and obscures these resources they are no less valued. Mountain streams attract visitors of all kinds. To many visitors, a shady riverside is a place of cool respite; to others it is a laboratory of biology, and to the fisherman, it may be a place of recreation. With a splendid array of lakes, rivers, creeks, streams, and springs the Parkway has the opportunity to provide much more interpretation concerning the importance of clean water and the role of water in mountain ecology. The idea of all locations being "downstream" from the Parkway is an important concept in water management.

The Parkway is a place of extremes and differences, especially in regards to weather. From Canadian climatic conditions of Mt. Mitchell and Grandfather Mountain to piedmont weather of James River, the Parkway associates many observable events with differences in elevation and exposure to weather. These differences provide visitors escape

RESOURCE SIGNIFICANCE

from high temperatures and affect the blooming of flowers and the color changes of autumn leaves. The effects of ice storms on trees, high velocity winds on forest blow downs, and continuous winds on the growth of trees reflect the area's weather extremes.



THEMES

Primary interpretive themes describe ideas, concepts, or messages about Blue Ridge Parkway that are so important all visitors should understand them. Based on the Parkway's purpose and significance, these themes provide guidelines for making decisions concerning which interpretive stories will be told to visitors and what interpretive facilities and activities will be required to tell those stories. Primary themes do not include everything that may be interpreted, but they include those ideas that are critical to understanding the Parkway's significance. All interpretive efforts (both media and personal service) should relate to one or more of the themes, and each theme should be addressed by some part of the interpretive program.

PARKWAY DESIGN/LANDSCAPE

The Blue Ridge Parkway originated to generate employment and promote tourism in the mountains of southern Appalachia; it continues to influence and provide great economic benefits to the region.

The Blue Ridge Parkway incorporates innovative and enduring design, engineering, and construction techniques that harmonize with the southern Appalachian landscape.

The Blue Ridge Parkway is a linear park threaded by a motor road in which visitor driving and enjoyment of scenery is the primary objective.

The Blue Ridge Parkway is a human-manipulated environment that continues to shape park management practices.

BIOLOGY

The Blue Ridge Parkway has more diversity of habitat, and thus supports more plant species than any other park in the United States.

The Blue Ridge Parkway provides a protected migration corridor for many forms of life.

Visitors and residents have long interacted with the Appalachian environment, both adapting to and altering the natural history of the area.

GEOLOGY

Blue Ridge Parkway stands at the summit of many local and regional watersheds that define the hydrological patterns of much of the southeastern United States.

The five mountain ranges of the Blue Ridge Parkway include the oldest mountain-building processes in the world and contain economically significant minerals.

AIR QUALITY, WEATHER, CLIMATE

Activities of people living outside the Blue Ridge Parkway and extreme weather conditions in the southern Appalachians influence the natural resources, visitation patterns, and air quality of the Parkway.

HUMAN CULTURE

The Blue Ridge Parkway conserves diverse and important examples of architecture, industry, and transportation associated with the people and communities of the mountains in southern Appalachia.

The Blue Ridge Parkway preserves evidence of human occupation from prehistoric to contemporary times.

Many Blue Ridge Parkway sites have been tourist and vacation destinations for more than two centuries.

A unique Appalachian culture, defined by arts, crafts, music, and social institutions, have evolved and persist in the region through which the Blue Ridge Parkway passes.

Media planners and Parkway interpreters will apply these themes to the National Park Service's Thematic Framework (1996) to develop compelling stories for presentation to visitors through individual interpretive activities and media. Appropriate Thematic Framework subjects could include Peopling Places, Creating Social Institutions and Movements, Expressing Cultural Values, and Transforming the Environment.

MISSION GOALS

The following goals from Blue Ridge Parkway Strategic Plan reflect National Park Service and Parkway missions. These mission goals are broad conceptual statements that are inclusive of all that National Park Service employees do.

PRESERVE PARK RESOURCES

NPS Goal: Natural and cultural resources and associated values are protected, restored, and maintained in good condition and managed within their broader ecosystem and cultural context.

Parkway Goals:

- The natural and cultural resources are protected, restored, and maintained in good condition.
- The natural resources are protected to maintain ecological and biological diversity with the abundance of plant and animal species found in the central and southern Appalachian ecosystem.
- Significant structures, sites, collections, features, and (cultural) traditions are protected to assure research accessibility and to interpret the local color, character, and diversity of the central and southern Appalachian Mountains.

NPS Goal: The National Park Service contributes to knowledge about natural and cultural resources and associated values; management decisions about resources and visitors are based on adequate scholarly and scientific information.

Parkway Goals:

- The Blue Ridge Parkway contributes to the knowledge about natural and cultural resources and associated values of the central and southern Appalachian Mountains.
- The Blue Ridge Parkway is protected in order to convey and continue the traditions of its engineering and design.

PROVIDE FOR THE PUBLIC ENJOYMENT AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE OF PARKS

NPS Goal: Visitors safely enjoy and are satisfied with the availability, accessibility, diversity, and quality of park facilities, services, and appropriate recreational opportunities.

Parkway Goals:

- The scenic resources are protected, maintained, and restored to provide a variety of visitor experiences that reflect central and southern Appalachian rural landscapes.
- Parkway visitors safely enjoy and are satisfied with the availability, diversity, and quality of park facilities, services, and resource-based recreational opportunities.

NPS Goal: Park visitors and the general public understand and appreciate the preservation of parks and their resources for this and future generations.

Parkway Goals:

- Parkway visitors, neighbors, and general public understand the unique and diverse resources of the Blue Ridge Parkway and its context within the central and southern Appalachian Mountains.
- Parkway visitors, neighbors, and general public appreciate the values of the Blue Ridge Parkway and support its mission.

ENSURE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

NPS Goal: The National Park Service uses current management practices, systems, and technologies to accomplish its mission.

Parkway Goals:

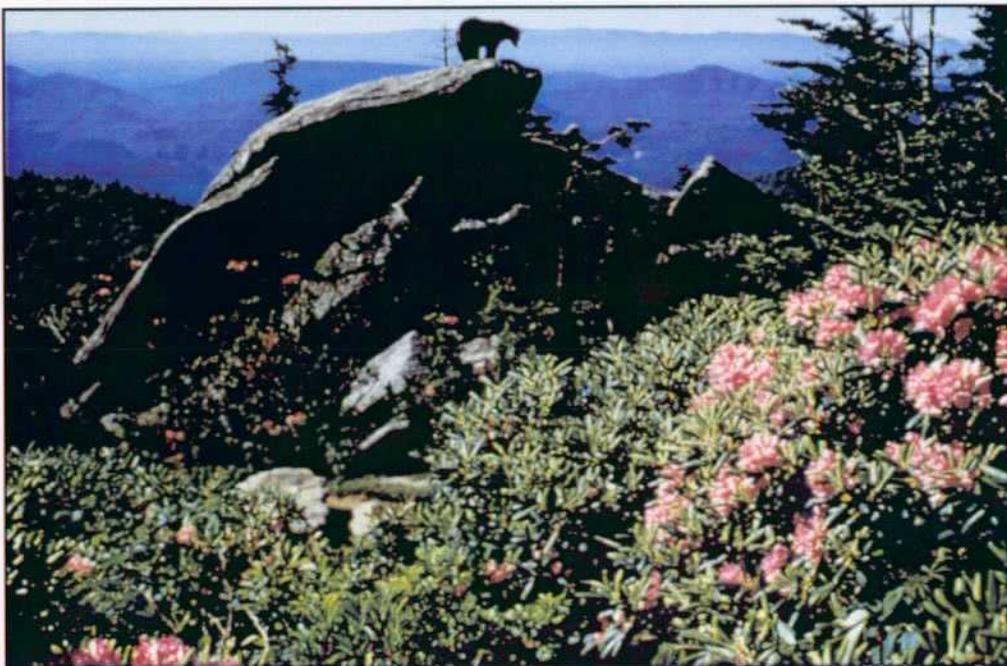
- Parkway employees and partners are motivated individually through teamwork and through initiatives and support from other agencies, organizations, and individuals to achieve an efficient and effective organization, which provides for the optimal protection of resources and quality visitor experiences.

- Parkway employees and partners work in an environment and organization structure that fosters a diverse work force.
- Parkway employees work in and contribute to an environment that emphasizes safe work practices, employee development, and performance feedback.

NPS Goal: The National Park Service increases its managerial capabilities through initiatives and support from other agencies, organizations, and individuals.

Parkway Goals:

- Parkway employees and partners are motivated individually through teamwork and through initiatives and support from other agencies, organizations, and individuals to achieve an efficient and effective organization, which provides for the optimal protection of resources and quality visitor experiences.



VISITOR EXPERIENCE OBJECTIVES

Visitor experience objectives describe management's intent in offering interpretive programs and services. They state visions for the Parkway's future, conditions to be achieved through planning, design, development, and operation. Based on Parkway purpose, significance, management goals and themes, objectives provide guidelines for making decisions concerning desirable visitor experience opportunities.

Opportunities will be provided for visitors and area residents to:

- view the scenic forested mountain slopes and rural farm landscapes in Virginia and North Carolina while leisurely driving the Blue Ridge Parkway.
- gain insight, at their own level of interest, into the salient ecological, geological, and cultural features of the Blue Ridge Parkway and be able to relate that insight to the broader scope of American experience.
- explore the diversity of Parkway cultural and natural resources and be inspired to participate in perpetuating the area's heritage.
- obtain information necessary to safely, enjoyably, and easily find and participate in available Parkway recreational opportunities, cultural and natural features, visitor facilities, activities, and services without adversely impacting resources.
- obtain information about accommodations and tourism services (museums, music festivals, farmers markets, and community celebrations) available in adjacent communities that offer opportunities for furthering their understanding of regional resources.
- understand and appreciate the value of Blue Ridge Parkway as a special place preserving and interpreting nationally significant resources that should be protected and preserved.
- understand the economic, environmental, and social effects of the Parkway and wisely use, develop, and preserve natural and cultural resources in the future.
- experience current and historic lifestyles of the region, through interaction with people knowledgeable about and skilled in regional folkways, to understand similarities and differences between contemporary and historic people.

- achieve satisfaction with appropriate Parkway recreational opportunities, facilities, and services.
- participate in a range of interpretive and recreational activities from passive watching/listening to active involvement that are appropriate for audiences with differing levels of interest, understanding, and sophistication.
- receive current, accurate, and balanced information that presents all viewpoints and beliefs regarding the area's people, technology, and resources.
- understand that the Parkway landscape is the product of continuing changes in natural and cultural environments.
- participate in a integrated interpretive program developed cooperatively by the National Park Service and other visitor service providers to offer a complete, balanced southern Appalachian visitor experience.
- identify Blue Ridge Parkway as a unit of the National Park System.

In applying these objectives, the Parkway should be mindful that visitor experience may be described as those memories, often few and characterized by feelings rather than knowledge, visitors accrue during their contact with a place. Often the most memorable experiences occur informally. The best experience for some visitors could be the cool feel and soothing rhythm of water tumbling into a pool on a hot summer afternoon. Others may remember the gentle pattern of a split rail fence beckoning feet to a cultural landmark and thoughts to a bygone time. Gentle curves of a rural roadway and vistas into pastoral valleys may become another visitor's most memorable experience.

EXISTING CONDITIONS & ISSUES

For 50 years Parkway managers' focus on building the road took nearly all resources, leaving little to develop the interpretation program. Major construction is now completed, but prospects for increased interpretation program funding are dim. It is now imperative to use limited resources effectively. The long-range interpretive plan proposes practical, feasible recommendations that limited National Park Service budgets and cooperation among appropriate partners can implement. Failure to address these important issues could lead to undesirable results from a threat or from failure to capitalize on an important opportunity.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING

The Resource Management and Visitor Service Division roles and responsibilities include visitor protection, fee collection, resources management, special park uses, and interpretation. The Chief Ranger supervises these functions in four administrative districts, each managed by a team that includes a District Interpreter, District Ranger, and District Resource Management Specialist who supervise and oversee day-to-day operations of their respective areas. The District Management Teams each also include a Facility Manager, who is supervised by the park's Chief of Maintenance.

The Chief Ranger directly supervises all protection functions through the District Rangers and a Protection Specialist. Resource Management and Interpretation are considered "Branches" of the division. The Chief Ranger supervises these functions through the branch Chief of Resource Management and the branch Chief of Interpretation.

The Branch of Interpretation in the Resource Management and Visitor Service Division has seven permanent interpretive positions, including a branch chief, four district interpreters, an interpretive specialist, and part-time administrative assistant. The branch of interpretation also hires approximately 50 seasonal interpreters, including five winter seasonal employees, and over 20 cooperating association employees. This large number of employees assigned along the 469-mile linear Parkway makes Blue Ridge Parkway branch of interpretation one of the largest and most complex interpretive operations in the National Park System.

With many facilities and annual visitation of more than 20 million visitors, the Parkway has difficulty providing a desirable level of visitor service, especially during the early spring and late fall periods, with current employee numbers and administrative organization. The Parkway

relies on the cooperating association and volunteers for much information facility staffing. In some cases, visitor centers must close during lunch periods and, on occasion, for longer periods when the cooperating association is unable to fill its sales clerk positions and volunteers are not available.

The large size, complexity, and associated responsibilities of each interpretive district along the Parkway equals many independent National Park Service areas. To fully implement those responsibilities some districts need permanent staff in addition to the one supervisor position currently available. Lead temporary positions currently utilized are inadequate because turnover erodes ability to develop professionalism and maintain consistency of high quality programming.

Under the current organization, the branch chief lacks complete capacity to represent the branch of interpretation in funding and other decision making. Current supervision of the Division of Resources Management and Visitor Services is good; different personalities in the division and branch could impact operations. The Chief Ranger position currently requires a commissioned law enforcement officer highly skilled in law enforcement management. It is unrealistic to expect that position to be filled by a professional interpretive manager. The branch of interpretation budget is nearly \$1,000,000 annually. Combined with the large staff described above this makes the branch of interpretation a significant component of total park operation without an active role at the budget and operation decision-making table.

VISITOR CENTERS AND INFORMATION PROGRAMS

Blue Ridge Parkway is unquestionably one of the most diverse resources administered by the National Park Service. It receives more recreational visits than any other unit of the National Park System. The Parkway currently has fifteen visitor centers that offer a variety of information and interpretation activities through media and personal services. Some facilities are small, and provide little more than orientation for people traveling the Parkway. Linville Falls and Cone Manor are essentially stores that sell books and crafts but miss opportunities for more in-depth interpretation of primary themes. A few visitor facilities are out-of-date. Information conveyed is sometimes inaccurate and inconsistent with current scientific knowledge and interpretations of regional culture.

Creative acquisition and utilization of funds enabled staff to reduce visitor center deficiencies at Humpback Rocks, Peaks of Otter, and Museum of North Carolina Minerals. Other visitor centers also need

significant exhibit rehabilitation. Prospects for funding major rehabilitation of Linville Falls and Craggy Gardens are good.

Annual visitation to Parkway information facilities average more than one million, representing an outstanding opportunity to convey information and engender support for Parkway values. The Parkway has made significant progress in improving visitor centers and increasing personnel necessary to adequately staff the facilities and provide visitor services. There remains room for improvement to make interpretation a full part of this dynamic park. Many actual and potential visitors do not become fully aware of available opportunities. The existing program relies heavily on seasonal employees. More permanent employees are needed to provide continuity and consistency of operations and to improve the range of recreational and educational activities.

Visitor contact stations are usually open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. from mid-May through October and, when cooperating association or volunteer staff is available, on weekends in April and daily in early May. In peak season, visitor demand extends far past 5 p.m. In recent years, visitation in April and November has increased, but staff is not available to extend the season. The interpretive operation is heavily dependent on seasonal personnel, who are restricted to working 1039 hours over six months, annually. The conversion of strategic positions from seasonal to permanent would help resolve this challenge. The Folk Art Center, where an information desk is staffed daily year-round by cooperating association staff, and the Museum of North Carolina Minerals, operated five days a week from April to November by the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce, are exceptions.

PERSONAL SERVICE PROGRAMS

The Parkway currently offers visitors a diverse range of staff conducted activities. Campfire programs are offered two days weekly in most campgrounds, more often at Price Park and Pisgah. Occasional weekend guided walks are provided at many developed areas. Humpback Rocks and Mabry Mill offer cultural (folklife) demonstrations daily during much of the visitor season and Brinegar Cabin at Doughton Park, another historic structure, is staffed by a uniformed or costumed interpreter on weekend afternoons. A variety of recreation-based programs are offered to visitors on weekends. Still the Parkway misses many opportunities to provide effective interpretation to a vast audience.

The Parkway passes through two urban areas and 29 counties that provide opportunities for regional students to learn National Park Service values. Several million visitors annually from other regions provide

opportunities to distribute those values nationally. Available staff cannot provide nightly campfire programs warranted by current visitation levels. Similarly, demonstrations at historic sites are suspended when staff shortfalls arise. Cultural demonstrations, when presented, focus too narrowly on spinning and weaving. Finally, seasonal staff often lacks knowledge and expertise to interpret the depth and diversity of Parkway's compelling stories. Recent studies show visitors, especially those who take part in programs, are well educated and more than capable of recognizing programs that lack depth. This does not demean talents and devotion of Parkway staff, but simply recognizes the complexity of Appalachian culture and diversity of natural features that demand knowledge and expertise that temporary staff cannot quickly acquire. Seasonal staff that continually changes and absence of permanent staff makes continuity of high quality interpretation difficult.

Special events and programs provide opportunities for in- depth interpretation of specific Parkway themes. Mountain Music programs at Roanoke Mountain Campground on Sunday draw up to 200 visitors, and the Music Center hosts programs every Saturday night. Brinegar Days, a weekend celebration in early August at Brinegar Cabin, often attracts more than 1,500 visitors who participate and watch demonstrations ranging from spinning and weaving to ox drawn sleds and use of common tools. Over- Mountain Trail celebration at Museum of North Carolina Minerals in September attracts Revolutionary War re- enactors who relive the exploits of men who defeated the British at the battle at King's Mountain. Re- enactors in period uniform demonstrate camp life, arms and equipment to several thousand visitors, including many students from local schools.

In recent years the Parkway has established and nurtured a Parks- As- Classrooms Program (PAC). PAC grants funded development of North Carolina and Virginia curriculum guides, which enable teachers to meet required state standards of learning while on Parkway trips. Park staff in each district provide outreach services to students. Nine employees work with 40 school systems from 29 counties to provide offsite and onsite activities to 23,000 contacts annually. Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation and other partners fund approximately one- half of the PAC program.

A Junior Ranger Program that sensitizes young visitors to the value of Parkway resources has proven popular with visitors. Activity booklets distributed free at visitor centers enable children to earn badges upon completion of educational activities. Junior Ranger activities are presented Saturday afternoon in many locations. A Junior Ranger three- day camp is offered June and July in the Asheville area. One- day

encampments are presented in every district. The camps provide children deeper immersion in values and resources represented along the Parkway.

Vital to all interpretation services is the role of volunteers, partners, and cooperators. In 2001, volunteers contributed nearly 40,000 hours of service, 12,000 hours of that total devoted to interpretation. Volunteers staffed visitor centers and participated in the full range of conducted and special programs. The popular Mountain Music at Mabry Mill programs on Sunday afternoon are presented entirely by local musicians. Likewise, volunteers who augment demonstrations conducted at Humpback Rocks, Mathews Cabin at Mabry Mill, and Johnson Farm at Peaks of Otter contribute vital support services to the Parkway's interpretive program. Volunteers provided many, if not most, slides and photographs for wayside and visitor center exhibits. Eastern National (EN), the Parkway's cooperating association, also contributes substantially to operation of visitor centers. Several visitor centers are staffed seven days weekly by cooperating association employees. Association donations in 2002 amounted to more than \$51,000. These funds supported a variety of demonstrations and conducted activities, special events, and visitor center upgrades. EN also publishes the Parkway newspaper, *Parkway Milepost*, which is produced three times a year with a press run of 225,000.

Many other partners participate in information and interpretation activities on the Parkway. National Council for the Traditional Arts operates the Blue Ridge Music Center. Southern Highland Craft Guild operates the Folk Art Center in Asheville and the Parkway Craft Center at Flat Top Manor on the Moses H. Cone Memorial Park. Guild members demonstrate a variety of traditional and contemporary arts and crafts at both locations. The Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce, through a memorandum of agreement, enables the Museum of North Carolina Minerals to remain open year-round. Chamber of Commerce staff augments National Park Service staff to operate the museum in summer. Parkway concessionaires provide essential orientation services and distribute Parkway newspaper, folder and site bulletins at their restaurants, lodges, and other facilities. Blue Ridge Parkway Association publishes and distributes an annual directory to accommodations at Parkway and concessionaire facilities. This directory obviates the need to provide pamphlets and brochures of countless private accommodations and services provided along the Parkway. The Association also evaluates regional information centers and recommends offsite facilities for identification on the Parkway. These regional centers enable visitors to obtain information about nearby travel services that otherwise would remain unknown to them. The Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation sup-

ports a variety of interpretive programs and provides funds for special non-recurring projects. Parkway staff also participates in the Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere Program, Appalachian Consortium, and other organizations devoted to regional cooperation and sharing. Friends of Blue Ridge Parkway supports preservation and protection of the Parkway with emphasis on conservation, public education, and volunteer involvement that significantly adds to interpretive opportunities.

The Roanoke River Parkway connects the Blue Ridge Parkway motor road with Virginia's Explore Park, which features a number of reconstructed historic buildings. Explore Park interpreters in period dress, provide demonstrations, talks, and presentations that acquaint visitors with the park and with history, settlement, and development of southwest Virginia. These programs complement and expand services offered by the National Park Service. A road links the Parkway and the North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville. Just as Explore Park complements the cultural stories told along the Parkway, the North Carolina Arboretum complements the Parkway's natural history interpretation.

One issue confronting the National Park Service staff is how best to expand and build upon partnerships already established with the many political jurisdictions, state and federal land managing agencies, and private organizations and educational institutions along the Parkway corridor. The challenge may be how to focus and prioritize partnerships to provide the greatest contribution to Parkway mission. As a related issue, the Parkway continually accesses methods to achieve the greatest interpretive benefit from its volunteers, associations, concessionaires, and other long established and closely allied partners. Given the widely dispersed nature of facilities, achieving interpretation goals in cooperation with concessionaires is appropriate.

Now that the Parkway has developed many good personal service activities, the focus of the future personal service program should be maintenance of existing activities, improvement in quality, quantity, and marketing to potential audiences. Staff should evaluate the existing program routinely to identify activities that no longer meet needs of current audiences or achieve management goals. Accurate assessment of current visitors and trends in visitor needs, wants, and expectations is needed to guide planning and design creative interpretive services that meet future audience needs for things such as active recreational activities.

PUBLICATIONS AND WEBSITE

The Parkway's cooperating association, Eastern National, has produced several publications and sales items. The cooperating association's relatively small budget for product development limits the potential for producing additional items. Other partnerships could help underwrite production costs to fill gaps and improve quality of interpretive literature. The highly acclaimed study of Parkway visual character is a good example of a publication that could be edited and printed for sale to visitors. Parkway staff currently produces 40 site bulletins, approximately 500,000 items biennially, that provide visitors free information on camping, fishing, hiking, and other recreational opportunities and Parkway features. Existing site bulletins are effective and the Parkway website includes a virtual visitor center and information beyond National Park Service minimum requirements.

The design of current publications is dated given the flexibility of advancing desktop publishing technology. Additional publications are needed to provide more detailed information about campgrounds and trails throughout the Parkway. Technology used in the web page needs updating to reflect current expectations of web users. The site also needs to project Parkway and National Park Service identity more clearly and to describe resources and programs in more detail. Staff needs to build flexibility and speed into editing the web page to assure accurate information and efficient use of this increasingly popular medium to its fullest advantage.

ROADSIDE INTERPRETATION

Wayside exhibits, many constructed of routed wood, describe features at more than 265 overlooks along the Parkway. These exhibits are the most heavily used interpretive media; however, the wooden exhibits are expensive to maintain and lack the capability to display photographs and other graphic elements. These 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s exhibits contain out-of-date information and portray a stereotypical Appalachia. A wayside exhibit plan (1986) proposed production of 100 embedded fiberglass exhibits. To date only half of the proposed exhibits have been produced and installed. Many of those already need replacement because of cracked and faded surfaces. Others provide interpretive messages and media unrelated to their location. They do not reflect the diversity of the Parkway or its relationship to the region through which it passes. Unless the exhibits are replaced visitors will continue to receive inaccurate or misleading information in a text-only format. The Parkway will continue to replace the routed wood signs as needed and as personnel permit. More and better wayside exhibits are needed.

Because of rapid plant growth and succession changes, many scenic vistas quickly become overgrown and no longer present the view intended. The clearing of vistas is a very costly and labor-intensive activity. With staffing reductions, traditional vista-clearing program is becoming less certain.

INTERPRETING MYTHS

In building major sections of the Blue Ridge Parkway in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, landscape architects used old buildings to create places that had never existed. The siting of log buildings relocated to Humpback Rocks is historically inaccurate and misleading. Few farms were so isolated, and farm buildings tended to be located closer to one another. Relocation of Polly Woods Ordinary and creation of a lake on the original site altered an historical area. A log cabin replaced the clapboard-sided Mabry farmhouse. These and other facilitated landscapes belie the complexity of Appalachian culture.

Natural resource interpretation also needs reconsideration in light of the rapidly expanding information base generated by resource management staff concerning sensitive habitats, rare and endangered species, native habitats, and air and water quality.

USER PROFILE

The Parkway records approximately 20 million visits annually. Visitor studies have provided valuable information about some aspects of visitor use. Few professional visitor studies conducted in recent years provide information about visitor needs and wants for interpretive services. Inadequate demographic and personal information about visitors prevent managers from being able to accurately assess the desires of present visitors and to plan objectively for the short and long term.



VISITATION & VISITOR USE DATA

ANNUAL RECREATION VISITS - 1991 TO 2000

	Virginia	North Carolina	Total
1991	6,915,659	9,472,058	16,387,717
1992	7,621,494	9,913,541	17,535,035
1993	6,915,659	10,338,703	17,862,977
1994	6,906,807	10,021,832	16,928,639
1995	7,418,469	9,997,050	17,415,519
1996	6,671,275	19,431,965	17,103,240
1997	6,696,949	11,676,330	18,373,279
1998	6,812,726	12,359,355	19,172,081
1999	6,938,269	12,898,573	19,836,842
2000	7,072,071	11,972,613	19,044,684

AVERAGE MONTHLY RECREATION VISITS - 1998 TO 2000

	Virginia	North Carolina	Total
January	318,231	289,754	607,985
February	254,112	237,631	491,743
March	530,219	428,373	958,592
April	569,662	909,016	1,478,678
May	611,060	1,012,005	1,623,065
June	713,263	1,491,082	2,204,345
July	771,773	1,698,890	2,470,663
August	697,449	1,607,781	2,305,230
September	764,469	1,069,232	1,833,701
October	831,072	1,703,337	2,534,409
November	750,439	1,025,438	1,775,877
December	311,872	504,440	816,312

AVERAGE SEASONAL VISITATION PATTERN - 1998 TO 2000

	Virginia	North Carolina	Total
Spring	9.0 %	12.3 %	21.3 %
Summer	11.4 %	25.1 %	36.5 %
Autumn	12.3 %	19.9 %	32.2 %
Winter	4.6 %	5.4 %	10.0 %

A "1995- 96 Economic Impact of Travel to the Blue Ridge Parkway - Virginia and North Carolina" prepared by North Carolina State University yielded the following visitor information.

TRIP CHARACTERISTICS

Visitors throughout the Parkway expressed overall trip satisfaction with their experience (VA 6.31 and NC 6.25) when measured on a scale of 1-7.

Visitors to North Carolina and Virginia sections of the Parkway rated the benefits of their visit on a scale of 1 = least important to 7 = most important.

observe the beauty of nature	VA (6.64)	NC (6.62)
have a peaceful vacation	VA (6.09)	NC (6.01)
feel close to nature	VA (5.92)	NC (5.92)

Visitors also rated perceived problems with their visit on a scale of 1 = not a problem to 7 = major problem. Visitors to both states identified the same four major problems. North Carolina visitors also listed insufficient number of parking spaces at access points (2.31) as one of their top five problems; Virginia visitors identified too much traffic (2.33) as one of their perceived top five problems.

lack of restrooms	VA (2.87)	NC (2.78)
lack of drinking water	VA (2.45)	NC (2.34)
lack of gas station	VA (2.37)	NC (2.36)
lack of car repair service	VA (2.36)	NC (2.55)

The most common trip purposes include:

outdoor recreation	VA (42.74%)	NC (41.96%)
just passing through	VA (21.19%)	NC (16.56%)
visiting friends and relatives	VA (11.85%)	NC (14.48%)

The party size in Virginia was 3.32 (2.96 adult - .36 child) and 3.36 (3.06 adult - .3 child) in North Carolina.

Family members comprised 74.58% of Virginia travel parties but only 69.5% of North Carolina parties. A slightly higher number of North Carolina travel parties were composed of friend groups (15.74%) than were Virginia parties (VA 11.73%).

VISITATION & VISITOR USE DATA

Repeat visitors accounted for 72.5% of Virginia groups and 69.5% of those in North Carolina.

The most common sources of trip planning information included:

previous experience on the Parkway	VA (63.36%)	NC (61.33%)
state highway maps	VA (54.82%)	NC (54.1%)
friends and relatives	VA (37.74%)	NC (45.54%)
state and local tourism organizations	VA (24.80%)	NC (25.30%)

The most popular commercial information sources consulted for trip planning include:

attraction brochures	VA (37.10%)	NC (41.57%)
automobile clubs	VA (20.94%)	NC (19.04%)

Activities most frequently participated in include:

visiting a scenic area	VA (94.77%)	NC (90.84%)
visiting a historical site	VA (56.47%)	NC (63.61%)
hiking	VA (42.42%)	NC (43.01%)

DEMOGRAPHICS

Virginia travel parties were composed of 54.88% males and 45.12% females; North Carolina parties were 50.44% male and 49.56% females.

Ages:

55 and over	VA (48.76%)	NC (42.16%)
35 - 54	VA (38.01%)	NC (43.86%)
34 and under	VA (13.25%)	NC (13.98%)

Education:

High School Graduates	VA (24.51%)	NC (17.41%)
College graduates	VA (48.75%)	NC (49.01%)
Graduate School	VA (24.79%)	NC (33.33%)

Income:

Under \$30000	VA (19.64%)	NC (15.83%)
\$30000- 59999	VA (50.15%)	NC (40.90%)
\$60000- 89999	VA (19.64%)	NC (23.61%)
\$90000 and over	VA (10.57%)	NC (19.66%)

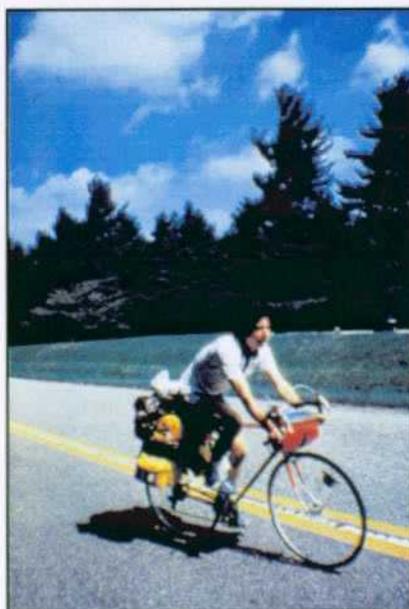
Occupations:

Retired	VA (36.67%) NC (26.74%)
Managerial/Professional	VA (30.83%) NC (40.24%)

Residence:

Virginia Visitors	North Carolina Visitors
VA (32.96%)	NC (43.65%)
NC (20.11%)	SC (09.67%)
PA (04.47%)	FL (07.50%)
FL (0 4.19%)	TN (05.56%)
MD (03.91%)	GA (04.47%)

The small number of visitors surveyed (449) and the time of the survey (height of the autumn color season) limits the effectiveness of the results of the economic study as an interpretive management tool. Interpretive managers need additional visitor studies to accurately describe visitor uses identified by the economic study and observed or predicted by Parkway staff. Several questions need to be answered. Do managers have a good idea of visitor flow? How many visitors drive the entire length of the Parkway? Are some Parkway sections traveled more than others? Are some entry/exit points used more than others? What percent of visitors stop at visitor contact facilities? What percentage attends National Park Service led activities? What percentage realizes who administers the Parkway?



INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This plan proposes interpretive and informational media and personal services to enhance the interpretive future of Blue Ridge Parkway. Proposals are specific enough to define interpretive concepts but not so specific as to thwart the creativity of future media designers.

The following interpretive program proposals organize recommendations into two sections: Parkwide Recommendations and Site Strategies. Proposals of a general, parkway-wide scope appear first in categories for Visitor Experience, Non-Personal Services, Education and Junior Ranger Program, Partnership Opportunities, Access, Research and Planning, Library and Collections, and Personal Services and Staffing. Specific Site Strategies organized by milepost numbers are presented in district boundaries: Ridge District, Plateau District, Highlands District, and Pisgah District.

Recommendations for building modifications, facility relocation, and landscape design concepts may be proposed to achieve visitor experience objectives. The feasibility and design of these concepts will need further evaluation in implementation plans for each concept if funded.

A significant commitment of resources and management support will be necessary to realize the outstanding interpretive possibilities on the Parkway.

PARKWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Blue Ridge Parkway is more than a scenic natural resource drive along a 469-mile road. It is also a natural and cultural pathway into the rich resources and diverse people and culture of the central and southern Appalachians. The Parkway serves as a mechanism for travel through many historic periods, adventures, and events. It is a pathway of intrigue for millions of visitors throughout the year.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Anticipation and excitement about Blue Ridge Parkway should begin long before visitors arrive at the Parkway entrance. Potential visitors and others seeking knowledge of this National Park Service area should have convenient access to adequate, accurate information and interpretation of Parkway resources, activities and programs through telephone, website, mail, and state tourism media. As visitors approach the region, promotion through Virginia and North Carolina heritage sites, local media, and state and regional visitor centers could attract their attention. Descriptions of the Parkway should create images of a varied landscape, a fascinating combination of engineering design and historic and natural resources that create a unique cultural landscape. Signs on access roads should give potential visitors clear directions to easily locate Parkway entrances by the most convenient, scenic, and historic routes.

As visitors enter the Parkway, their anticipation should heighten. Manicured landscapes and natural vegetation would create a sense of arrival at a special place. Visual, spatial transitions and signs should slow visitors down, setting the tempo for their visit. Visitors should promptly find clearly stated directions and information about nearby features. Roads, trails, buildings, and landscapes along the scenic motor road should make desired travel routes easy to follow, interesting to the senses, and barrier free. The approach to contact facilities must be clear to first time visitors and the appearance of the buildings should attract attention and interest.

Personal contact with Parkway staff must be available promptly upon entering visitor contact facilities. Visitor experience inside the facilities should contribute to a welcoming atmosphere in which the staff treats visitors like family, acknowledging each person as an individual.

Opportunities should be available throughout the Parkway for visitors to participate in a variety of activities appropriate for audiences with dif-

fering levels of interest, understanding, and sophistication. Most visitors would find activities that match their preferred level of involvement with the sites. Some could choose in-depth education. Others might select activities appropriate for a pilgrimage to a special place. Still others could pursue a casual experience that has a cultural or natural theme. Whatever their level of interest visitors should quickly identify appropriate options and select the ones most likely to meet their need.

Interpretation proposed for the Blue Ridge Parkway should involve a variety of media, including personal services, exhibits, waysides, publications, historic furnishings, audiovisuals, and web pages to meet the needs of varied existing and potential audiences. At many places along the Parkway, the drive and vistas are so powerful a formal interpretation program may be a distraction. At other sites, media may help explain how these magnificent natural features were formed.

Easy, convenient access to all significant resources, programs, and facilities would minimize distractions. Interpretive programs and services would contribute to clean, comfortable visitor use areas and a safe environment. Polite, sensitive, knowledgeable, courteous, professional, and efficient staff and innovative media would provide accurate interpretation based on the best available documented research.

Visitors who tour a significant portion of the Parkway - between any two primary entrance/departure points - should find opportunities to explore resources and interpretive program elements that represent all primary interpretive themes. All visitors should acquire an understanding and appreciation of Parkway values and a sense of the importance of preservation.

At each information/interpretation facility, visitors should easily differentiate among functional areas such as orientation/information, sales, exhibit areas and auditorium, especially larger facilities such as the Folk Art Center, Cone Manor House, and Minerals Museum. Routes to each functional area should be visible and clearly signed. A variety of personal service and information media would orient visitors to the Parkway, explain experience opportunities and tell visitors what they can do to have a safe visit. Visitors could obtain information about other points of interest in the region.

Visitor contact facilities at Roanoke, Asheville, Rockfish Gap, and Cherokee should provide a context for visitor experiences throughout the Parkway. (Proposals for Asheville and Roanoke visitor facilities discussed conceptually here will need further development in subsequent planning documents). This does not suggest that every visitor center

must relate all Parkway stories. There is a need, however, to make sure visitors are aware that the Blue Ridge Parkway is not only a scenic motor road connecting Shenandoah National Park and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It also offers access to an array of natural and cultural features and recreational opportunities. The goal should be to encourage visitors to explore and discover the Parkway in its many expressions. This approach will assure that visitors understand the overall purpose of this National Park Service area.

All interpretive activities and media at visitor contact facilities must effectively use the limited space available and be relevant and meaningful, especially to children. Exhibits should be dynamic, interactive, and provide accurate information. Audiovisual media must invite visitors to explore the Parkway to discover opportunities to experience significant resources.

Visitor center exhibits and presentations must reflect the social diversity of Appalachia. The role of women and the presence and contributions of racial and ethnic groups should be fully studied, documented, and incorporated into the interpretive program. Similarly, research now shows that Appalachia was not a classless society, but rather a mix of sharecroppers and slaves, of independent farmers, small shop and store owners, powerful industrialists, and social elite who made summer homes and estates here. By telling stories about all these people of diverse gender, race, class, and social position, Parkway interpretation becomes rich, compelling, and meaningful to the broad range of people who visit.

As visitors leave visitor contact facilities, the landscape character, road and trail design, and location should direct them toward primary Parkway resources.

Roadway design quickly shifts visitors from the turmoil of interstate and urban travel to natural and cultural landscapes. A pleasant drive through a variety of landscapes should provide many vistas beyond Parkway boundaries. Frequent parking areas enable visitors to escape traffic, leave their automobiles and pause to enjoy the scenes, sounds, and smells of the mountains and valleys. Many pullouts may have a conspicuous absence of facilities to offer opportunities for quiet, reflective contemplation. Others may provide minimal interpretation devices, perhaps wayside exhibit or audio station, where such devices may enhance visitor understanding and appreciation of the resources surrounding the pullout. A few pullouts could offer additional development, perhaps an exhibit shelter and trails (a variety of difficulty levels, including wheel chair accessible trails) that encourage visitors to become more intimately involved with resources.

Much of the visitor's time on the Parkway involves driving through spectacular scenery. Content and style of personal service programs and audiovisual media should encourage learning by sharing among family and social group members as they travel from stop to stop. Waysides, publications, and exhibit design should encourage and facilitate conversation that enhances learning and appreciation for the resources. The goal is to help visitors understand that the resources, not the interpretive media, provide the experience; to the extent that this is achieved, interpretation becomes truly facilitative.

Many developed areas offer opportunities for intensive interpretive activities and facilities. Here visitors may pause to look at museum exhibits, wander through historic structures, and explore trails to a variety of natural environments.

Many sites in nearby communities offer visitor experiences related to Parkway stories. Visitors traveling to those sites should find opportunities to participate in an integrated, progressional program of interpretive activities produced by the National Park Service and cooperators that offer a complete, balanced regional heritage experience.

Each Parkway district will have its own visitor experience statement, interpretive goals, and management objectives. Within districts, significant interpretive sites will have specific visitor experience objectives. While those district and site statements could differ throughout the Parkway, they will all support the preceding interpretive objectives and visitor experience statements.

NON- PERSONAL SERVICES

Extensive display of the Parkway logo and name on signs, wayside exhibits, and publications does an excellent job identifying the Blue Ridge Parkway. There is very limited identification on those materials of the Parkway as a unit of the National Park System. Increased identification of the National Park status of the area is encouraged. Perhaps a "Arrowhead" logo with each Parkway logo would quickly identify affiliation of the site with the National Park Service and assure visitors of the national significance of their experience. Standards and guidelines developed by the Message Project and Director's Order 52A, Communicating the National Park Service Mission, should be reviewed to determine which media could appropriately display both emblems.

Waysides

A Wayside Exhibit Plan (1986) identified need for 100 wayside exhibits. More than a decade later only one half of the identified exhibits has been produced. Currently a variety of old and new exhibit styles and qualities greet the public. Review and revision of the current Wayside Exhibit Plan is needed to insure that future funding of exhibits meets current visitor needs. One-time funding of \$200,000 would allow Parkway staff, working through Harpers Ferry Center, to research and produce the remaining exhibits and purchase and install bases.

Wayside exhibits at each interpreted site should relate the story at that site to other exhibits located north and south to tell a complete and continuous story from one end of the Parkway to the other.

Revision of the Wayside Exhibit Plan should evaluate the appropriateness of the flintlock rifle and powder horn logo as a universal symbol of Parkway themes. While that logo is appropriate and attractive on the wooden gun board exhibits, it seems out of context and inappropriate on newer waysides, especially those interpreting themes not related to cultural stories. Interpretation managers should consider including NPS Arrowhead and Parkway logo on all wayside exhibits as universal symbols. The design chosen should adhere to standards and guidelines developed by the *Message Project*.

All wayside exhibits should include the same verbal slogan to link all sites. A brief, stylized verbal description could succinctly convey to visitors the Parkway purpose and, like the visual logo, help visitors focus on the Parkway mission as they travel from place to place. Visitors would realize that this National Park System area is not a collection of isolated sites but a series of pearls on a single, valuable necklace. A subordinate set of standard messages might further unite sites that have similar themes. For example, picnic areas attract tremendous use by local residents yet no interpretation takes place there. A standard message could relate to similar uses in all picnic areas. Likewise, a standard message related to the "isolation stereotype" could be presented on waysides at all cabins.

Each visitor contact facility should have exterior exhibits at or near the entrance and clearly visible to all visitors, especially those who arrive when the facility is closed. The exhibits should orient visitors to the Parkway sections north and south to the next visitor facility. Each exhibit cluster should also provide basic interpretation of site themes and relate those themes to the Parkway's primary themes. Exhibits may also include a map or brochure dispenser to inform visitors about near-

by points of interest and encourage them to participate in other activities in the area. The existing three side vertical waysides at many locations accomplish some of these objectives for the sites where they are installed. The interpretive staff should revise exhibits to assure they are up-to-date, incorporate recommendations of this plan, and focus on resources and opportunities in the immediate area.

Audiovisuals

Produce a 12- 15- minute motion picture for showing at the theater in the Folk Art Center and at other locations where appropriate, such as campground amphitheatres and lodging facilities. A motion picture can take visitors on a virtual journey along the Parkway to see the grand sweep of the landscape, natural processes at work and cultural history coming to life. A film touches the emotions by putting the viewer into the resource and allows those who are unable to travel off-road a chance to experience inaccessible resources vicariously.

In conjunction with the 12 - 15 minute theatre presentation, a longer 45 - 60- minute version could be produced, perhaps with corporate sponsorship to reduce Parkway cost, and sold in video format where appropriate. Revenue generated from sales could offset production costs or support other interpretation projects.

The films described above offer the greatest opportunity to package and widely distribute all Parkway themes, possibly making them the most cost effective of all media proposals in this long- range interpretive plan.

Until funding for the films described above, a slide show will be shown in the Folk Art Center auditorium on a regular schedule. It may also be shown at other sites along the Parkway as a special program and at off-site locations as requested.

Parkway managers should consider producing public service announcements and short audiovisuals to highlight specific management issues, especially issues significantly affected by adjacent communities. Video and audio spots at Roanoke, Asheville, Staunton, Charlottesville, and Winston- Salem could reach large audiences. The weekly live radio program produced by the interpretive specialist provides the Parkway high community exposure. Such programs are appropriate for other locations.

Publications

The quality and range of sales materials available to visitors is impressive, especially the selection of materials for children. Previous expansion of the number of sales outlets along the Parkway created some of the best sources of interpretive information for visitors. Staff should recommend sales items that are appropriate and relevant to Parkway themes for inclusion in concessionaire inventory.

Publication recommendations can be divided into three types: general publications, general Parkway publications, and "site bulletin" topical publications.

General publications about the Parkway are readily available through commercial sources. The cooperating association offers an excellent array of high quality products for sale in most visitor contact facilities when those facilities are open and staffed. The current product line will be continued and new products sought to improve, augment, or replace existing inventory.

The Parkway and Eastern National may suggest to private publishers specific items that would fill an interpretive niche and meet a ready market. This would reduce the need to use cooperating association funds for new product development and allow use of EN funds for other critical projects. For example, EN funds should be used to edit, revise, and print the well reviewed and award winning study of Blue Ridge Parkway visual character. Parkway and EN staff should also explore the feasibility of joint publishing ventures with Shenandoah National Park and Great Smoky Mountains National Park Natural History Association. The similarity of resources and, to some extent, the commonality of visitors make it likely publications would match shared interpretive themes and find a sizable market.

The Parkway should explore the possibility of using current research from Appalachian Studies programs at regional universities to develop a publication that dispels misconceptions of Appalachia. A publication attempting to dispel myths would have a ready market throughout Appalachia, especially at three popular National Park Service areas: Shenandoah National Park, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and Blue Ridge Parkway. High quality design, accurate text and appropriate photographs could creatively depict the differences in past and present Appalachian culture.

An effective, if somewhat aging, series of site bulletins for many topics has been developed. Given the diversity, size, and heavy visitation to

Parkway developed areas, consideration should be given to developing more comprehensive, site specific bulletins. For example, a single sheet, four- fold brochure similar to mini- folder design of a decade ago would be very effective at Peaks of Otter. It could simply encourage wetting a fishing line at the lake or identify the range of concession services available. The brochure might suggest a visit to Johnson Farm, a bus ride to Sharp Top, or a hike to Falling Waters Cascades. If Harpers Ferry Center or Parkway budgets can not fund such undertakings, perhaps the cooperating association could produce a sales publication.

Historic Furnishings

The Parkway has a number of furnished historic buildings, none that are climate controlled. To the contrary, most are exposed to extreme variations in temperature and humidity and to infestation by insects and rodents. These exposures mean the National Park Service must devote considerable resources to the care of historic furnishings that are the primary media at a site. Recommendations for further use of historic furnishings as a medium of interpretation must not be made lightly or without consideration for the high costs of implementing and maintaining a furnished structure.

There are some advantages to the use of historically furnished areas:

- Specificity to site: a visitor is present in places where events occurred in lives of families in Appalachia.
- Period imagery: when furnishings are based on careful documentation, what a visitor sees resembles a room's historic appearance.
- Intangibles: beyond a visual image, a visitor can experience the sounds, smell, and less tangible "feel" of a room (even if latter- day "feel" is different than it would have been during the historical period).

Some areas can be furnished for year- round visitation; others can and should be furnished seasonally. Some should not be furnished at all. Where possible, the Parkway should defer the furnishing and interpretation of some places to complementary organizations, such as Virginia's Explore Park.

Traveling from south to north, several sites are potential candidates for historic furnishings, including period and reproduction pieces. Sites for consideration include the Moses H. Cone Estate, Brinegar Cabin, Matthews Cabin and Blacksmith Shop at Mabry Mill, Kelly School,

Johnson Farm and Polly Woods Ordinary, and Humpback Rocks Farm Museum. Specific proposals for each site will be described in **SITE STRATEGIES** section of this plan.

In general, and absent a compelling justification to the contrary, furnished areas should display period or reproduction pieces instead of high value historic objects. To assure that these objects are appropriate, site-specific historic furnishing guides should identify specific pieces to be acquired or removed. Each guide should include a floor plan indicating where and how objects are to be displayed and providing direction to onsite staff for display, interpretation, and use of objects.

EDUCATION AND JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAMS

Blue Ridge Parkway offers remarkable opportunities for visitors and neighbors to learn history and nature in an outdoor, practical laboratory. The Parkway is already a popular attraction for school groups, especially in the spring and fall.

As staff increases, the education program currently in place will expand. New program components will enhance educational opportunities throughout the Parkway with emphasis on population centers at Roanoke and Asheville and at Kelley School. The program will fit established state curricula of North Carolina and Virginia, the states that send most education groups to the program. Teachers from those areas are assisting with design and implementation of activities that enhance their classroom teaching. Pre-visit and onsite materials are being prepared to assure teachers and students beneficial site visits. Time spent at the Parkway will include activities in visitor contact facilities, a visit to selected resources, and a stroll in surrounding forests. Student or teacher-directed, interesting and enjoyable activities can be used at the site or on buses after leaving. Post-visit activities will reinforce topics to extend the learning experience throughout the school year. Students will realize that the Parkway is a unique and valuable resource worthy of protection. This is an especially key concept since adjacent land use issues are a top management concern.

A permanent District Interpreter has been assigned to each district to provide interpretive program direction and continuity to outreach and education programs. A Park Interpretive Specialist provides speciality support, media development and training for the overall park program. The District Interpreters, trained in preparing and presenting education activities, attend faculty meetings, in-service workshops, seminars, and other teacher meetings. They also provide offsite formal education programs. As the education program expands in the future, additional

interpretive specialists and education staff will be needed to maintain active and direct involvement with cooperating school districts to assure a well- coordinated, beneficial education experience for all groups.

In summer, the education program should be adapted to provide teacher workshops for continuing education credits. As appropriate, self- directed activities developed for the education program will be made available to individuals and family groups visiting the Parkway year- round.

The current education program is highly acclaimed. Continuity and consistency is key to maintaining and improving all these activities. The permanent interpreters and six- month seasonal employees provide summer interpretive activities and spring and fall education programs. While the Parkway is commended for re- allocating resources to provide seasonal employees for outreach activities, in the long term, permanent staff will be necessary to maintain contacts and build the program from year- to- year. The five- month seasonal positions should be converted to permanent full time or 9 to 11- month subject- to- furlough positions to fulfill demands of regional school systems for full school year programming of onsite and offsite activities.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

National Park Service areas that share common themes with other sites or that collaborate with other agencies may include partnership concepts in the long- range interpretive plan. The concepts identify each entity's role in presenting shared themes and providing complimentary experiences.

The following description of partnership opportunities expresses Blue Ridge Parkway's interest in collaborating with other visitor service providers. Successful implementation of this long- range interpretive plan depends on continuation and expansion of existing partnerships and initiation of new ones, especially with visitor service providers in the immediate vicinity of the Parkway. These sites and organizations collectively offer a complete, balanced visitor experience, providing opportunities to understand critical elements of the region's natural and cultural history. Positive cooperation among Parkway managers, Regional and Washington leaders, and providers of tourism services in the region, help each respond to opportunities and challenges that face them in providing positive visitor experience opportunities. State and local governments, non- government organizations, and individuals may provide funds or services to improve educational and interpretive programs.

Partnerships will be sought with regional school districts to encourage education programs, with friends group to assist interpretation activities and with other organizations to conduct research, resource management projects, and visitor surveys. Activities may include sharing of expertise, training, historical research, special events and seminars, exhibit planning and development, site promotion and tours. Visitors and regional residents will benefit from expanded, multifaceted visitor experience opportunities. The overriding consideration is integration of interpretive themes to present a more complete, balanced story and to efficiently use resources of each partner.

An effective partnership between the National Park Service and the National Council for the Traditional Arts provides operation of the Blue Ridge Music Center. As additional development of the Music Center occurs, such as construction of an interpretation center, the partnership will be evaluated and agreements established to specify additional roles and responsibilities of each partner.

Other potential partnership opportunities that advance the mission and goals of the National Park Service should be explored. Staff should continually analyze interpretive support for Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation and Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Managers should continue to promote and enhance use of volunteers to augment interpretive services and look for ways to build upon long established and highly successful partnerships with Eastern National, Blue Ridge Parkway Association, and other organizations. The potential for expanding interpretive activities in concert with concessionaires is high. The Southern Highlands Craft Guild has indicated an interest in greatly expanding its education program. At the Folk Art Center in Asheville, National Park Service staff should work closely and cooperatively with the Guild to plan and implement an interpretation and education program. Permanent exhibits, audiovisual programs, and other interpretive services should explain the importance and relevance of regional folk art, the development of the crafts revival movement, and the historical and contemporary context of cultural expressions. The Folk Art Center is the largest and most heavily visited interpretive center on the Parkway. The potential for elevating public awareness and appreciation for Appalachian culture at the center is great.

This by no means describes the only opportunity for concessionaires to assist with interpretive services for the visiting public. The heavily visited Northwest Trading Post provides an important orientation service since there are no other visitor facilities between Doughton Park and Cone Park, a distance of nearly 60 miles. The facility has been expanded to accommodate a cooperating association (Eastern National) bookstore and Parkway information desk. The effectiveness of the sales and

information operations should be routinely assessed to determine if they function as planned. Adjustments to staffing and facility should be based on sound evaluations to assure high quality customer service that meets the needs of visitors and all partners (concession, Parkway, and cooperating association).

Parkway staff should consider development of interpretive materials and media at other concessionaire facilities. The Virginia Peaks of Otter Company currently provides a site-specific interpretive publication for lodge guests. Similar publications could be developed and distributed at other lodges. There may also be opportunities for developing video programs to orient people to nearby areas. Videos could be shown in the lodge lobby, restaurant, or other public gathering places. For example, a five-minute video about things to see and do at Peaks of Otter could be shown continuously on monitors in the lodge lobby. A similar program at the Parkway Craft Center should be equally well received. These are only examples of many approaches that might be employed by partnership between the Parkway and concessionaires. The essential point is that concessionaires serve large numbers of visitors and are in a position to provide an equally large interpretive benefit to those visitors.

Another opportunity for continued partnership is the Museum of North Carolina Minerals. Much of the cost to build the facility in the 1950s was borne by the state of North Carolina. Fifty years later the National Park Service, Mitchell County, NC and the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation partnered to enlarge the museum building and to upgrade exhibits to tell the story of minerals in North Carolina in the larger geological, social, and historical context. The existing partnership with Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce at the same facility provides year-round visitor center operations. The National Park Service should continue to nurture the partnerships to maintain the museum as a point of pride for the Parkway, the state, and adjoining communities.

Blue Ridge Parkway should examine ways to share information and resources with its National Park Service neighbors to the north and south.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park has proposed a visitor center expansion and renovation for Oconaluftee. While not located on the Blue Ridge Parkway, the proximity of this center offers a chance to briefly tell the story of the Parkway and its link between Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Shenandoah National Park. The staff of Great Smoky and Blue Ridge could cooperate to improve information, increase visitation, and enhance visitor experience for visitors to both areas. The staffs could work with Southeast Regional Office to secure

funding to design and place waysides at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center. Exhibits in the visitor center parking lot could effectively orient visitors, especially those arriving when the visitor center is closed, to both parks. Wayside exhibits could explain that there are two adjacent national parks in the area, identify the purpose of each, provide directions to both from Oconaluftee, and describe why visitors should visit the areas. Orientation inside the Oconaluftee Visitor Center should include basic information about the Parkway. An orientation exhibit could introduce Blue Ridge Parkway and Great Smoky Mountains to visitors and explain that the Parkway is the connecting link between Great Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah. Color brochures of both parks should be prominently and accessibly displayed.

The possibility of a jointly operated visitor facility at Rockfish Gap should be explored. The Blue Ridge Parkway, Shenandoah National Park, US Forest Service, Virginia and local organizations could work together should land become available for a multi-agency facility at this location.

The Parkway, Shenandoah, Great Smoky Mountains, and other Appalachian parks with similar resources should cooperate to facilitate development of films, handbooks, and cooperative education programs that are applicable to a number of areas. For example, a Great Smoky Mountains and Blue Ridge cooperative education program at Balsam Mountain campground could meet goals of both parks with a significant economy of scale to each partner.

As the Parks-as-Classrooms and other educational outreach activities are expanded, strong consideration should be given to working cooperatively with other organizations and agencies that provide similar services. For example, the Parkway PAC program at Roanoke could be coordinated with Virginia's Explore Park so services are complementary, not redundant. Parkway and Explore Park might, for instance, each target certain grade levels to reach a wider audience and capitalize on the expertise of both staffs. In the same way, the already well developed education program offered in the Asheville area could be coordinated with Cradle of Forestry in America (United States Forest Service), Mt. Mitchell State Park, Western North Carolina Nature Center, Park Place, and North Carolina Arboretum.

A promising PAC program between the Parkway and the Great Smokies provides joint outreach to schools in the western NC counties bordering both parks. This partnership focuses on developing curriculum based programs and materials focusing on themes common to both parks. It increases outreach to the Cherokee Indian Reservation.

One especially distinctive partnership opportunity is to mobilize the support and participation of Floyd County and other nearby school systems to bring classes to Kelley School. This would not only use the school in a profoundly relevant way, but would also instill student pride in their Appalachian communities and roots.

ACCESS

Design of all media, services, and facilities will provide the highest level of accessibility and use by all people, regardless of age, gender, physical or mental ability, to the greatest extent possible and reasonable without the need for "separate" adaptation or "specialized" design.

Accommodation will be made for access to sites as well as to most of the interpretive media. Guidelines and regulations are available to assist staff and media/facility designers. Generally, these accommodations will benefit all visitors.

Public Law 90-480, the Architectural Barriers Act, and the American's With Disabilities Act establish standards for physical access. Any new facilities constructed will be designed for accessibility of visitors and employees.

All new interpretive media will conform to National Park Service June 1999 Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media (see Appendix A).

Many visitors are denied access to a "wilderness" experience and to many out of the way Parkway resources because of rugged terrain and lack of accessible trails and alternative access media. Existing programs and facilities will be made accessible as a high priority. Audio description tapes could be developed to describe wayside exhibits and indoor exhibits at key locations, such as the exhibits at Humpback Rocks. Future planning for all new indoor exhibits should include consideration of audio elements. Where feasible, trail construction will include boardwalks or modified surfaces to allow access by wheelchairs and other equipment used by mobility impaired visitors. Cultural sites and natural areas that cannot be made physically accessible will be interpreted by alternative methods at nearby facilities to enable all visitors to understand and appreciate the resource. Wayside exhibits and audio overlook parking areas. Audiovisual media can do an even better job where structural protection enables use of that type of media. Examples of sites that can benefit from alternative access include:

James River - Basic orientation should be provided at the parking lot for visitors who do not or cannot walk to the visitor contact facility. Wayside exhibits outside the visitor center could interpret area themes; this facility is frequently not open when large numbers of visitors are present. The wayside exhibits could use photos to present scenes of the historic locks across the river that are only accessible by a long walk and climbing stairs. Audio stations incorporated into wayside exhibits could enhance experiences for all visitors.

Falling Water Cascades - Distance and rough terrain of a national recreation trail leading to a waterfall prevent most visitors from seeing this significant resource. Alternative accessibility should be provided through audiovisual, publication, and wayside media.

Peaks of Otter Visitor Center - A variety of media are needed here to assure visitors an opportunity to receive essential information and interpretation when the visitor center is closed. Brochure boxes may distribute information outside the building and wayside exhibits near the parking lot could provide interpretation. Access to the Johnson Farm is restricted to those visitors who have time and energy for a strenuous walk. Alternative accessibility may be provided with audio and visual media in the visitor center.

Jeffress Park/Cascade Trail - A wayside exhibit with color photographs could show cascades and trail scenes for those visitors who cannot or do not walk the trail.

A few premiere sites along the Parkway should be selected by interpretive and resource management staff for "Wilderness-on-Wheels" experiences. There are very few opportunities for visitors with limited mobility to experience off-road park resources. Creating, in locations where feasible, boardwalks or hard surfaced pathways that allow physically challenged visitors a chance to leave the roadway and parking areas would also appeal to visitors who have limited time, yet desire short walks and time-off from driving. Short trails into a variety of plant communities and several landscapes would provide most visitors relatively easy access to the diversity of resources. Trails would also provide a welcome change from the usual method of seeing the Parkway - driving with short stops at overlooks. John's River Road in Price Park is an example of an area that might easily be adapted for a "Wilderness on Wheels" experience. Other sites may be identified to offer even more remote, multi-use experiences incorporating several activities such as fishing, bird watching, and visiting waterfalls.

RESEARCH AND PLANNING

Preparation of a long-range interpretive plan is the initial step in the National Park Service comprehensive interpretive planning and media planning, design, and production processes. Parkway staff will program the following specialized, detailed plans to implement long-range interpretive plan proposals.

Visitor Surveys

Although a few visitor studies provide valuable information about some aspects of visitor use at the Parkway, they do not provide some important information about visitors. Many important questions could be answered with improved visitor studies. What do people need or want during their visit? How many people just want to experience the drive and scenery? How many people leave the Parkway without understanding the themes represented by resources? Do visitors appreciate the significance of Parkway resources as a national treasure?

A professional, comprehensive evaluation of visitor profiles, activities, and needs will be programmed as a component of general management planning in 2002/03. A second study should evaluate effectiveness of the existing interpretive program in meeting the needs of the visitor types profiled in the first study. Both studies are essential for implementation of many of the proposals in this plan. Because of ever changing demographics, assessment of visitor trends should be conducted on a five-year cycle to assure that interpretive and other services are tailored to customer wishes. Cyclical studies should be supplemented by thoughtful, ongoing use of focus groups.

Wayside Exhibit Plan

A revised, detailed design and production plan will be requested as soon as possible to implement wayside exhibit proposals. The exhibit plan will include label copy, design elements, graphic components, and site development recommendations.

Exhibit Plan

A design, production, and installation plan for the Interpretive Center at the Blue Ridge Music Center will include label copy, object and specimen selection and identification, design elements, and graphic components for new exhibits.

Audiovisual Plan

A detailed plan including film treatments, film script, audio scripts, presentation hardware, and implementation strategies is needed to guide production and installation of proposed new audiovisual media.

Publication Plan

This plan should identify Parkway publication program deficiencies in meeting needs of the many audiences served. It should also describe appropriate publication topics and design and production schedules for products. The cooperating association Scope of Sales statement is a recognized need and should be completed at the earliest opportunity.

Historic Furnishings Guides

An evaluation of existing furnishings and recommendation to improve interpretive experiences at Cone Estate, Brinegar Cabin, Kelley School, Johnson Farm, Polly Woods Ordinary, Humpback Rocks Farm Museum, and Mathews Cabin at Mabry Mill would provide documentation and site plan for all building interiors and adjacent outbuildings.

Special Studies

An oral history survey should be prepared to identify the many individuals whose knowledge of Parkway administration, management, and resources should be tapped. Additional natural and cultural history inventories are needed at many developed areas. Historic resource studies of Basin Cove, Rockcastle Gorge, and other large developed areas should be conducted to provide an information base that is indispensable to a detailed, revamped interpretive program.

Impact Studies

Any future economic studies should evaluate the impact of interpretive activities. A diverse high quality interpretive program would attract more visitors and encourage them to extend their stay. This in turn would generate additional revenues for communities along the Parkway and may well encourage public support to sustain and nurture interpretive services.

LIBRARY AND COLLECTIONS

The museum and library collection includes historic photographs and extensive archives documenting construction and history of the

Parkway. These are invaluable aids to interpretation and should be used to the fullest advantage.

Alternatives for expanding the main library at Oteen should be considered. The library has little room for adding new acquisitions to its extensive vertical files and studies documenting resources. The primary slide collection is also housed at Oteen. Ongoing efforts to expand and upgrade the library and slide file are essential to professional interpretation and should be continued.

An essential reading list should be identified and included in smaller libraries at Vinton and in each district. While there is no need to replicate the central library at Oteen in every district, convenient access to basic information about the Parkway and its resources has to be assured. All library sites need to be evaluated to assure essential reference resources are readily available to district staff.

Appropriate staff should review the Scope of Collection Statement in light of recommendations in this plan. Location and acquisition of items for new exhibits may be necessary. Funding for such acquisitions should be pursued through partnership, such as with Eastern National funds.

PERSONAL SERVICES AND STAFFING

Personal service programs will continue to be an essential component of the overall interpretive operation. Personal services tailored to the needs of individuals or groups help people understand and appreciate the significance of the Parkway.

Visitation to various sections of the Parkway will be monitored regularly and visitor contact facilities opened and staffed in response to changing uses. Staffing will be scheduled to seasonal, daily, and hourly visitation patterns to assure the maximum visitor contact possible within allotted budget. Developed areas that may frequently attract visitors, such as the Headquarters Building and Music Center, should have a welcoming area staffed with informed personnel and an information area available for walk-in visitors. Facilities designed primarily for visitor use, such as visitor centers, Folklife Center, and interpretation facility at the Music Center, should be staffed and equipped with interpretive media. Park managers should continually monitor visitor use and allocate funding as necessary to maintain facility opening period and staffing levels that provide access to interpretation, bathrooms, and water during periods of significant visitation.

The entire interpretive program should be re-examined in light of this plan to evaluate its thematic depth and diversity. In addition, continuous appraisal of the program should focus activities on specific resources and compelling stories and reduce occasional repetition of stories told. In the same vein, interpretive staff should experiment with program offering to assure that visitor desires and management needs are met with the greatest possible effectiveness.

Parkway staff will continue to sponsor and/or assist with special events and interpretive activities both on and offsite.

Roving interpretation at roadside overlooks and in developed areas provide informal visitor contact that encourages personal discussion of primary themes. Rangers may present a variety of short, interpretive talks at visitor contact facilities, the Headquarters Building, campgrounds, concession facilities, and cultural sites. Talks could focus on the landscape and cultural and natural themes to interpret specific resources in context of the entire Parkway and visitors perspectives.

Communication between Parkway staff and neighbors through outreach programs create a positive personal relationship. Outreach services effectively communicate important resource based messages to local communities, especially densely populated areas at Roanoke and Asheville. Current criteria for adjacent land use encourage voluntary compliance of development. The branch of interpretation plays an important role, along with the planning division, in educating the public about adjacent land issues. Interpreters are responsible for informing the public about the values of the Parkway and surrounding resources. They educate the public about the role and responsibility of the National Park Service in land conservation, and encourage the public to accept personal responsibility in preserving the Parkway and conserving surrounding resources. A variety of audiovisual presentations, personal contact activities, and publications provide information to the public.

Staffing Plan

The following recommendations reflect the long-range interpretive planning team proposals for enhancing the interpretive program through staffing.

This plan recommends expanding visitor center operations so all visitor centers will open early April and remain open through the autumn foliage color season. April and November visitation to the Parkway totals well over three million recreational visits. In addition, visitor center hours of operation should be extended 9a.m. to 6p.m. from June to

October and 9a.m. to 7p.m. at selected high visitation areas such as Folk Art Center, Craggy Gardens, Cone, and Humpback Rocks during the same period.

Increased staffing levels can diminish the overwhelming reliance on cooperating association and volunteer staff to operate visitor centers. This is not to suggest that Eastern National and Volunteers-in-Parks programs do not have a major role to play in operating facilities. Visitors should have the opportunity for face to face contact with trained National Park Service interpreters at most visitor centers. These staffing levels do not permit an unlimited range of program offerings. Every district will not be able to offer the same kinds and quantities of programs. Managers will still need to allocate resources based on visitor demand, interpretive themes, resource needs, and other management concerns.

Visitor use patterns also suggest the desirability of expanding evening programs at campgrounds. Programs should be scheduled seven days a week at Price, Pisgah, Peaks, and Linville Falls. A minimum of three evening programs weekly should be presented at other campgrounds, except Roanoke Mountain. Considering the limited response at the latter campground, reallocation of limited staff there could focus on special events, establish a Junior Ranger Camp to serve children in the adjacent community, and concentrate on education outreach.

Expanded staffing will offer a greater variety of programs that enable managers to better assess the desires and wishes of visitors and will enable visitors to learn about and appreciate a broader range of Parkway resources.

Conducted programs should reflect the diversity of resources at individual developed areas and districts as well as the diversity of people and culture of the region. Currently, evening programs, walks, and cultural demonstrations are replicated from district to district. Additional staff could provide new experimentation activities including skills-based recreational programs such as fly-fishing, canoeing, photography, minimum impact camping, and cross-country skiing.

Increased staffing levels will also facilitate a greatly expanded offering of impromptu programs at high visitation areas. For example, an interpreter could give programs at Linville Falls overlooks surrounded by some of the most visited and visually and geologically interesting resources on the Parkway. Similarly, an interpreter at many ecologically sensitive areas (Rough Ridge, Craggy Pinnacle, Devils Courthouse) could increase visitor awareness of fragility of these rare and vulnerable natural areas while deterring adverse and damaging visitor use.

Vital to success of all expanded services is presence of the permanent District Interpreters. These positions are essential to promote professionalism of seasonal employees, coordinate and review interpretive activities, and provide continuity and quality to formal education outreach programs.

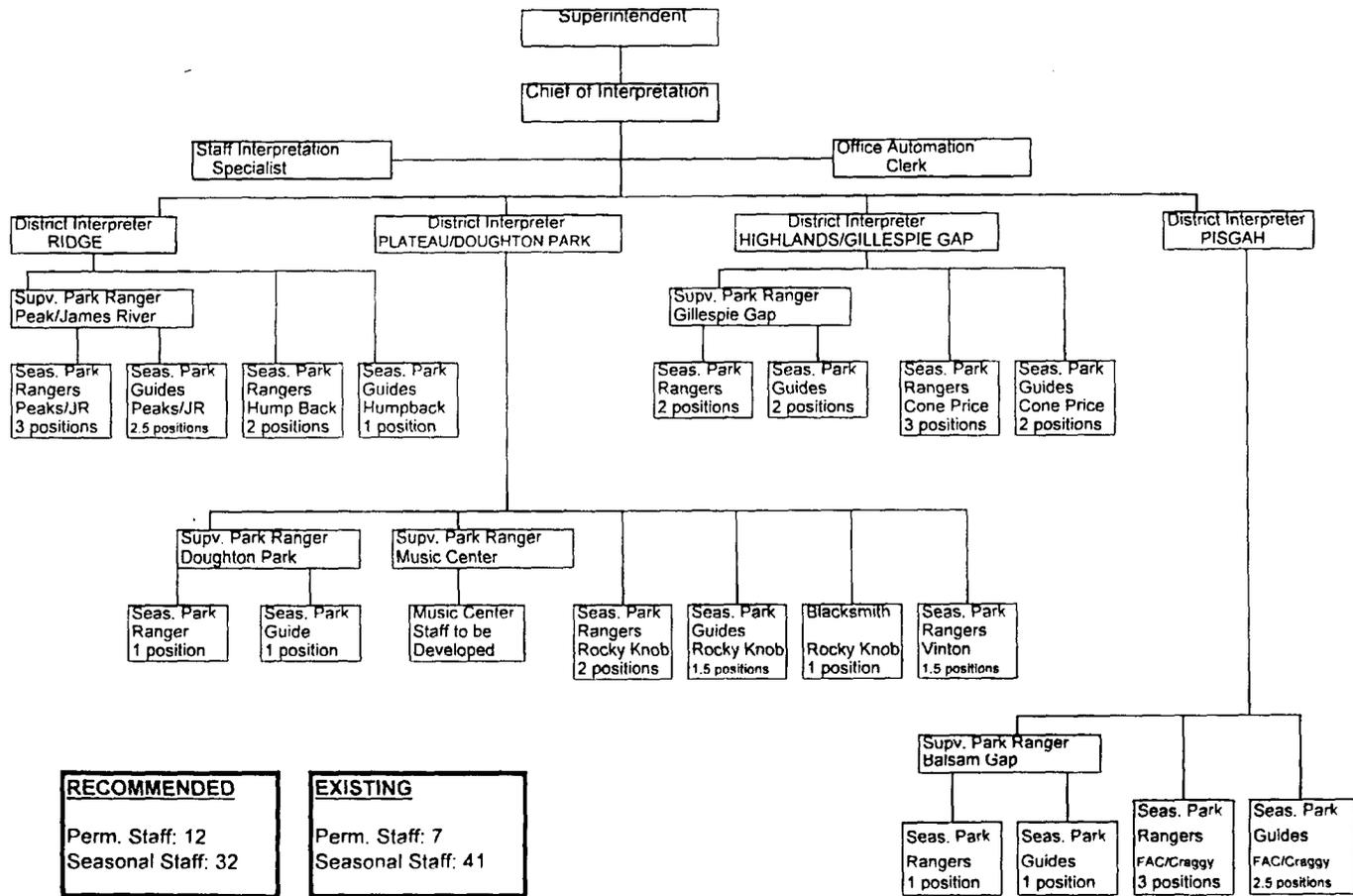
The planning team for this long- range interpretive plan strongly recommends a Division of Interpretation with an independent Chief of Interpretation. Everything is in place to implement such a re- organization - structure, staffing, funding. Essentially, the Branch of Interpretation functions that way now. Consideration could be given to re- organizing with the current branches of resources management, protection, and interpretation organized as divisions under independent division chiefs. Such an arrangement would provide more in- depth functional representation in decision making. It would also facilitate communication and coordination of functions along the full length of the Parkway with little or no additional expense. Ideally and long- term, such a division would assure the highest quality programs. The increasing specialization of disciplines across the National Park Service supports such an organizational structure.

Five full- performance permanent Interpretive Ranger positions, located at Peaks of Otter, the Blue Ridge Music Center, Doughton Park, Gillespie Gap and Balsam Gap are needed to support the interpretive operations in the park. Position management from existing seasonal summer and winter positions could be utilized to convert positions with low impact on the park budget. The addition/conversion of these positions will allow District Interpreters to develop and implement the interpretive media proposed in this plan.

District Interpreters are now graded GS- 9. The complexity of work performed is comparable to that of the existing District Rangers and District Facility Managers. A position review should assess duties currently performed, determine if additional duties should be assigned, and evaluate the accuracy of current position descriptions in describing desired duties and levels of responsibility. The long- range interpretive planning team believes that all or some of the positions may represent GS- 11 level of work and recommends that re- written position descriptions be classified to establish appropriate grade levels.

While these recommended increases are significant, they are diminutive when compared to the Parkway's size, geographic range, and complexity. Several developed areas have diverse themes and high levels of visitation; they are comparable to many independent national park areas and may be considered almost parks within a park.

**Recommended Staffing Chart
BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY
Division of Interpretation**



RECOMMENDED
Perm. Staff: 12
Seasonal Staff: 32

EXISTING
Perm. Staff: 7
Seasonal Staff: 41

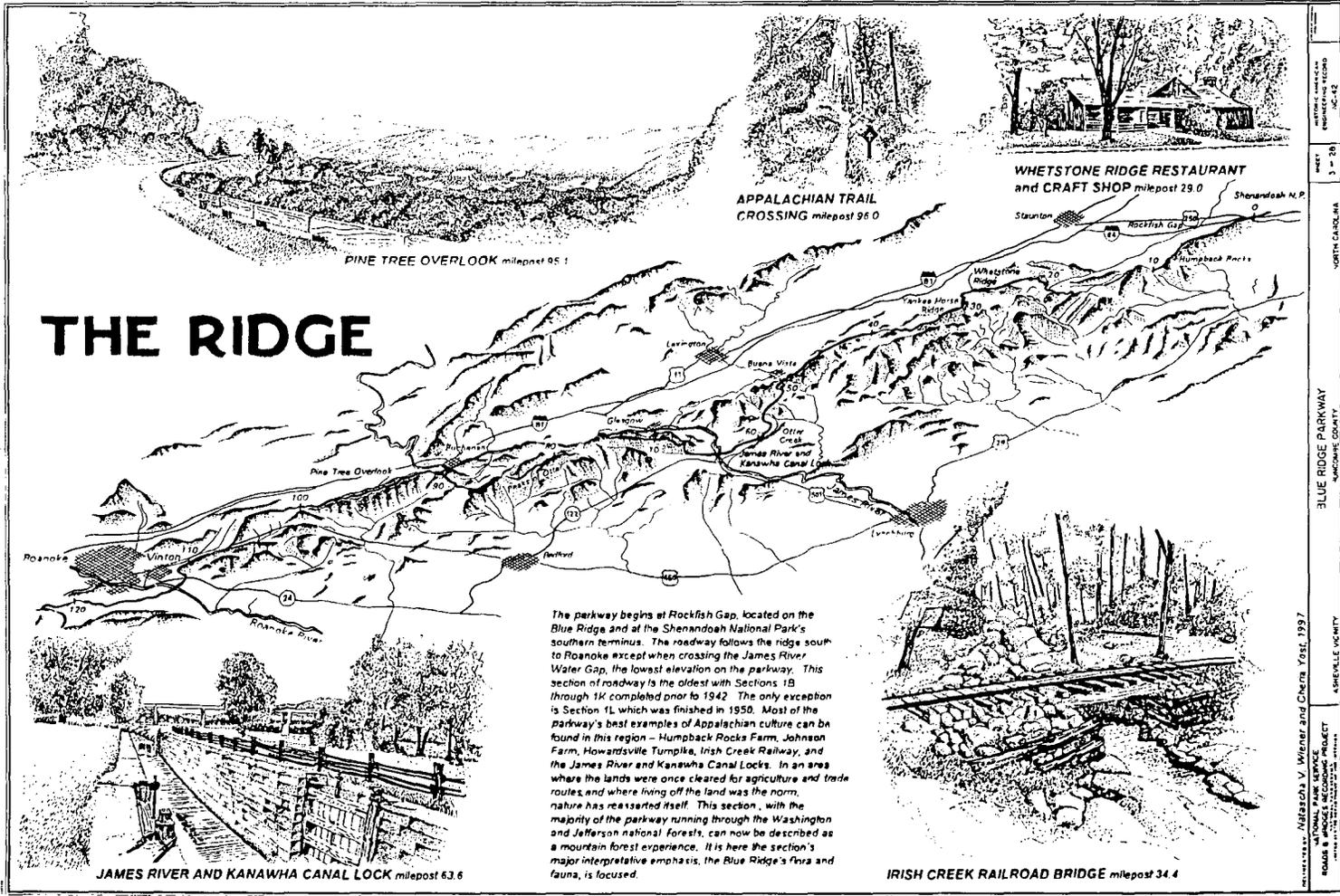
SITE STRATEGIES

Interpretive sites along the Parkway are grouped into management districts within which problems and obstacles, visitor uses and services, interpretive themes, and natural, cultural, and scenic values are similar. Identification of values and prescription of objectives for managing visitor experiences related to resources within each district assures a variety of appropriate experience opportunities.

RIDGE DISTRICT

Visitors traveling through the Ridge District experience a scenic drive through a mountain forest interspersed with agricultural lands. Climbing and descending ridge tops and gaps offer magnificent views of the Great Valley, Rockfish Valley, and flora and fauna of Appalachian hardwood forests. The unit also includes some of the Parkway's best examples of pre-1950, Appalachian culture. Areas once cleared for agriculture, trade routes and subsistence living now support deep forests void of lights at night, National Forest Service lands designated as wilderness, and beaver, otter and cougar not seen in years. Educating the public about what was once here is as important as educating them about how fragile the new system is. Visitors should learn why and how the Parkway was constructed and gain an appreciation for the intensive management efforts necessary to preserve Parkway values.

Management objectives for the Ridge District ensure perpetuation of cultural and traditional pastoral scenes. Managers will develop incentives to increase interest and motivate participation that assure continuation of the cooperative agricultural program of leasing Parkway lands to reflect adjacent and historical agricultural uses. Resource managers will identify and inventory potential and active threats or encroachments to resources and develop a process for monitoring and controlling these elements. Adequately staffing and funding an effective cyclic maintenance program recognizes the need to repair or replace deteriorating infrastructure. Development of a comprehensive plan of access to the Parkway in coordination with local and state governments and the public will consolidate access points, control hazardous crossings, and reduce traffic congestion.



ROCKFISH GAP/MILEPOST 0

Overview

The entrance to the Parkway should convey a "sense of arrival" at a special place for visitors arriving from outside parklands or from Shenandoah National Park. The existing hodgepodge of hotels, service stations, shops, and other services does anything but convey this sense. The existing Rockfish Gap Visitor Center provides basic orientation to Blue Ridge Parkway, Shenandoah National Park, and neighboring communities. However, the visitor facility is difficult to see in a setting inconsistent for introducing a national park visit. The location of information and interpretation wayside exhibits at this entrance to the Parkway prevents visitors reading the text from their vehicle, and absence of parking denies foot access to this important exhibit area. Visitors traveling from Shenandoah National Park to Blue Ridge Parkway who miss the exhibit may drive almost six miles to Humpback Rocks Visitor Center before realizing they have entered a different National Park System area.

Site Theme

Rockfish Gap is an historic tourist destination and an appropriate starting point for two major National Park Service areas designed to promote tourism in the mountains of southern Appalachia.

Appropriate Topics

Tourism in the mountains

Design of the Blue Ridge Parkway

Impacts of Shenandoah National Park and Blue Ridge Parkway on the southern mountains

Things to see and do in the region

Specific sub- topics: Crozet railroad tunnel and regional transportation

Rockfish Gap as a regional landmark

Rockfish Tavern and associated planning of

University of Virginia

Visitor Experience

Visitors should be exposed to the concept of tourism in the mountains and the Blue Ridge Parkway and Shenandoah National Park role in that story.

Visitors should have easy, well- defined access to information about facilities, recreational opportunities, and services that enable them to plan their Parkway or area visit.

Visitors will have an aesthetically pleasing origin for visits to both national parks.

Interpretive Recommendations

Parkway staff should work to the extent possible with nearby property owners to reduce visitor confusion caused by the conglomeration of commercial facilities adjacent to the Parkway. Shenandoah National Park, Blue Ridge Parkway, United States Forest Service, and local communities would be well served by complete redesign of this national park entrance. A multi- agency regional information center could provide information about parks and forests as well as regional visitor attractions and travel accommodations and services in the Waynesboro, Staunton, and Charlottesville areas. Clear directions and well- defined routes should make the national park entrance easy to find.

Blue Ridge Parkway and the National Park Service should be prominently identified and orientation promptly available and readily accessible immediately before or after the Parkway entrance. Evaluate the location and availability of parking at the vertical wayside exhibit at Milepost 0 for the possibility of improving visitor's arrival experience. Consider relocating the exhibit and/or providing parking to facilitate visitor access to the information on interpretive panels. Visitors should not have to travel 5.8 miles to Humpback Rocks to find out the Parkway experience is not for them.

Visitors traveling between Shenandoah National Park and Blue Ridge Parkway should find a clear distinction between the areas but understand that both are equally important as National Park Service areas. Message Project guidelines should be applied to design of signs, media, and facilities to improve identity of Blue Ridge Parkway as a unit of the National Park Service.

The Milepost 0 sign, eliminated from this location because of frequent thefts, should be re- installed and maintained since this is the symbolic beginning of the Parkway. Special installation options should be considered to prevent theft.

HUMPBACK ROCKS VISITOR CENTER/MILEPOST 5.8

Overview

Humpback Rocks is the first major developed area on the Parkway encountered by visitors traveling south from Rockfish Gap. The visitor center and adjacent mountain farm museum provide an attractive stop. The area is a popular field trip location for many local schools. Like other Parkway facilities, it is open most of May and June to October.

Site Theme

The Humpback Rocks developed area is representative of the varied natural and cultural resources preserved along the entire Blue Ridge Parkway.

Appropriate Topics

Cultural resources, including interdependence with natural resources
 Adaptation to the land by living and working in the mountains
 Diversity of cultural resources and lifestyles along the Parkway
 Transformations brought about by tourism and industrialization
 Specific sub- topics include:
 Humpback Rocks as a regional landmark
 Development of farm museums as an interpretive device
 Appalachian Trail

Visitor Experience

Visitors will recognize that many kinds of farms dotted the region and diverse social classes and ethnic groups lived nearby.

Visitors will understand the difficulties and advantages associated with farming and living in the mountains in the nineteenth century.

Visitors will understand that major transportation routes, like the Howardsville Turnpike, linked mountain residents in the region.

Visitors will understand the variety of resources in the mountains and be able to plan their Parkway and area visits.

Interpretive Recommendations

Personal services, publications, and wayside exhibits should link visitor center exhibits to the adjacent Mountain Farm Museum. Messages link exhibits to actual people to personalize interpretive stories of people at

home, people at work, and people on the move. The themes of farming, industrialization, transportation, community and tourism should dispel the myth that mountain people led isolated, unchanging lives.

Visitors need access to wayside exhibits, brochures, or site bulletins outside the building. A combination of these media should summarize orientation and interpretation provided inside the visitor center for visitors who arrive early or late in the day or during the off-season when the facility is closed.

Until implementation of improved developments to orient visitors at or near the northern Parkway entrance at Rockfish Gap, Humpback Rocks Visitor Center will introduce the Parkway to southbound visitors and summarize experiences for northbound travelers.

Information collected during research for production of the visitor center exhibits should be made available to visitors through websites and publications.

HUMPBACK ROCKS MOUNTAIN FARM MUSEUM/MILEPOST 5.8

Overview

Adjacent to Humpback Rocks Visitor Center, an outdoor farm museum is surrounded by nearly 3000 acres of predominantly forested lands. The heavily used Appalachian Trail runs through a portion of the area and parallels the Parkway to Rockfish Gap. The site also contains traces of historic Howardsville Turnpike. The farm is operated a minimum of weekends during May and five days weekly the remainder of the summer season. The outdoor museum and nearby visitor center are popular with local residents, regional school groups, and other visitors.

The Mountain Farm Museum consists of a single-room log cabin and a series of outbuildings that represent elements of regional vernacular architecture of the 19th and early 20th century. These buildings, collected during the early 1950s from several locations, were assembled on this site as an outdoor museum. They do not reflect spatial arrangements found in regional farms of the late 19th century. Costumed interpreters provide demonstrations, including weaving, basket making, and gardening. Interpretation focuses on late 19th and early 20th century although provided in a generalized way that emphasizes life styles of subsistence farmers.

Site Theme

In this collection of buildings, the Parkway attempts to preserve selected interesting examples of late 19th century mountain farming, crafts, and family life.

The Mountain Farm Museum is representative of outdoor museums popularized in the 1920s by Colonial Williamsburg and employed by the National Park Service at a number of locations, including Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Appropriate Topics

Advantages and disadvantages of farming in the mountains
 Nineteenth-century farming, crafts, community, and family life
 Living on the Howardsville Turnpike
 Architecture and building techniques of Appalachian farms
 The farm as an outstanding example of an outdoor museum

Visitor Experience

Visitors may observe and participate in "hands on" cultural demonstrations depicting domestic and farm chores. Activities paint a picture of one style of family life in the mountains, reveal the difficulties of subsistence farming in the Nineteenth century, and give insight into regional material culture.

Visitors will understand that advent of summer resorts, logging, railroads, and rural mail delivery altered the lives of many farmers and their communities.

Interpretive Recommendations

Rename the facility "Humpback Rocks Mountain Farm Museum" to clarify that the area does not accurately represent a traditional farmstead. Renaming will require altering references in literature and replacing signs along the motor road and in front of the Humpback Rocks Visitor Center.

Expand on visitor center exhibit messages through personal services and other media in the Mountain Farm Museum.

Development of wayside exhibits throughout the area and update of the Mountain Farm Trail Guide must be a high interpretive priority. Since the farm is representative, frequent references to "William Carter Farm" should be omitted or de-emphasized. Interpretation should also make

clear that these buildings were collected from various sites and are not representative of an actual farm. Interpretation should focus on the late 19th century in this region. It should not give a general impression that this assemblage of farm buildings is representative of all classes of people and communities in the region. This site was integrated into larger markets and transportation systems and economic and social patterns. Presentation of the museum buildings in context with other architectural sites along the Parkway, including Mabry Mill, the smaller Brinegar Cabin, Johnson Farm and Cone Manor, should interpret the evolution of buildings from cabin to clapboard.

Develop a historic furnishing guide in cooperation with Harpers Ferry Center specialists to assure that all objects displayed in buildings are illustrative of the material culture of the place and social class interpreted. The guide should identify furnishing objects to be added or removed. It should include a floor plan indicating where and how objects are to be displayed. It should also provide direction to staff for appropriate display, interpretation, and use of objects.

Interpretation and cultural resource managers should consider using reproduction or consumable, low value period pieces that allow visitors to participate in demonstrations and feel that they are visiting an actual home and not a museum. People should be encouraged to sit and interact with interpreters in an informal, family atmosphere. Interpretation should emphasize "hands-on" experiences for visitors; demonstrations and discussions should be as diverse as possible to include the social roles and activities of women and African Americans who lived in the community. Audio stations in and around the structures could tell the story of farm life and add a personal touch to the site when interpreters are not present. The Parkway should consider white washing the cabin interior and restoring the window removed when reassembling the cabin on this site.

Re-allocate Parkway staff, if possible, or recruit additional volunteers to open the farm museum seven days a week from April to November.

GREENSTONE OVERLOOK/MILEPOST 8.8

Site Theme

Greenstone, originally deposited as ancient lava flow, is representative of the unusual geological features found in the Parkway's five mountain ranges.

Appropriate Topics

Mountain building
Introduction to geological stories related to the Blue Ridge
Diversity of habitat and resources influenced by geology

Visitor Experience

Visitors will learn geological stories associated with the southern mountains.

Visitors will learn about the diversity of resources and habitats they will encounter during the remainder of their Parkway travel.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation may include roving personal service, wayside exhibits, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside visitor centers.

YANKEE HORSE RIDGE OVERLOOK/MILEPOST 34.4

Site Theme

The mountains have supplied timber for America since the late 19th century, yielding resources that influenced regional industrialization and social transformation.

Appropriate Topics

Logging in the mountains
Natural resources conservation issues
Railroads in the mountains, including social and economic impact.

Visitor Experience

Visitors can walk along the remains of a narrow gauge railroad and learn about the impact of logging in the mountains.

Interpretive Recommendations

Revise existing wayside exhibit to incorporate social, economic, and natural resource themes.

Maintain trail for easy access to railroad remains, forest, and waterfall.

JAMES RIVER DEVELOPED AREA/MILEPOST 60.8 - 63.6

Overview

The James River developed area, including Otter Creek Campground and Restaurant, may be considered a single site given the proximity of resources and facilities. Recreational opportunities include hiking, camping, picnicking and concessionaire dining, and fishing. An accessible fishing pier on Otter Lake provides opportunities for visitors with impaired mobility to fish for warm water species. A bridge across James River, including a suspended pedestrian walkway, connects the James River Visitor Center with restored Battery Creek lock. At the visitor center, constructed as an open-air interpretive shelter and later enclosed, exhibits relate the stories of canal building and transportation. A small cooperating association sales area makes available relevant interpretive materials. The visitor center is open weekends in May and daily June to October. Visitation averages approximately 43,000 annually. Area residents, many from Lynchburg vicinity, often use a picnic area near the visitor center. Interpretive services include guided walks to the canal locks and trails, weekend campfire programs at an amphitheater at Otter Creek Campground, a popular children's fishing program and occasional music programs on the landscaped floodplain below the visitor center. Occasional major flooding restricts the type development appropriate in the floodplain.

Otter Creek

Site Theme

Parkway lands contain many streams and rivers, providing recreational opportunities and helping protect the hydrological patterns of the region.

Appropriate Topics

Aquatics of Otter Creek and James River

The natural history of low elevations of the Blue Ridge Parkway

Recreational opportunities at Otter Creek and Otter Lake

Visitor Experience

Visitors will understand the importance of protecting the James River and Otter Creek drainage systems and related vegetation patterns and aquatic life.

Visitors will have opportunity to hike, fish, and explore the Otter Creek area.

Interpretive Recommendations

Maintain and interpret trails, wayside exhibits, and site bulletin publications.

Diversify types and times of activities offered in the campground to meet the needs of a repeat, local audience.

James River Visitor Center

Site Theme

James River, the lowest elevation along the Blue Ridge Parkway (650 feet above sea level) and a historic transportation route through the mountains, represents a major geological (water gap) and cultural component of the Blue Ridge section of Virginia.

Appropriate Topics

Canal construction, operation and role in transportation history of the region

Cultural and social impact of river traffic

Water gaps and related geology influences on transportation

Visitor Experience

Visitors will understand the cultural and historical importance of the transportation system along the James River and the social life associated with river transportation.

Visitors can see the James River water gap and understand the basic geology of the area.

Visitors will have opportunities to walk across James River to see an original lock and to understand how a canal and lock system works.

Visitors will have easy access to maps and information necessary to plan their trip to the area.

Interpretive Recommendations

Revise the vertical wayside exhibits located near the parking lot to make them site and area specific. Outdoor orientation/interpretation should be available at the parking lot or outside the visitor center for visitors arriving when the visitor center is closed. Outdoor messages will briefly cover subjects interpreted in detail inside the building.

While the trail from the parking lot to the visitor center is not difficult for most people, managers should consider making the trail to the visitor center and the walkway suspended beneath the bridge more accessible to mobility impaired visitors. This would complement accessible recreational opportunities offered for fishing at Otter Creek. All museum exhibits and waysides east of James River should consider the distance and stairs required to visit Battery Creek lock on the west side of the river. Alternative lock experiences should be provided at or near the visitor center for visitors who do not have time, physical ability, or inclination to walk to the lock.

Replace dated visitor center exhibits as part of the ongoing rehabilitation program. New exhibits should include stories about life on the canal, including the heroic life saving efforts of Frank Padget, an African American. Exhibits and other media could show routes of American Indian trails, colonial roads, canal, railroads, modern highways, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. The routes could be linked to mountain gaps and rivers to interpret the relationship between natural features and human activities. A working model of the canal and lock would give visitors a more complete understanding of its mechanism and should prove interesting to a wide audience. Hands-on exhibits should be considered for any new development. The hands-on objects displayed on a "touch table" in the visitor center currently consist of natural history items. This popular exhibit should be retained, but objects selected for display should reflect the site's transportation theme.

Visitor center and wayside exhibits should include audio elements to interpret social topics related to transportation. Recorded voices might describe family life on a canal barge, how canal men entertained themselves, and the difficulty of building the canal. Many local stories could relate the economic and social impact of changing transportation in the region. Canal Society members might volunteer to present special programs and events that bring history to life, including talks or display of small bateau.

When possible, Parkway managers should allocate personnel to open the visitor center seven days weekly in May.

Upgrade the nearby Trail of Trees wayside.

APPLE ORCHARD MOUNTAIN/MILEPOST 76.5

Site Theme

The forces of wind and weather severely affect Apple Orchard Mountain, like most high elevations of the Parkway.

Appropriate Topics

High elevation weather

Safety issues related to weather

Opportunities to experience high elevation environment in US Forest Service, Appalachian Trail areas

Unique vegetation - northern red oak "apple" trees and understory of mayapple

Identify radar unit at top of Apple Orchard Mountain

Gypsy Moth

Visitor Experience

Visitors will understand the influence of weather on high- mountain flora and fauna.

Visitors will have opportunity for exposure to the weather that creates this unusual environment and develop appreciation for the plants and animals that have adapted to its harshness.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation may include a wayside exhibit supplemented with roving personal service, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside visitor centers.

FALLING WATER CASCADES TRAIL/MILEPOST 83.5

Site Themes

Parkway lands protect the headwaters of many local and regional watersheds, creating unique habitats and defining drainage patterns for many areas below the mountains.

Appropriate Topics

Blue Ridge water resources
Aquatic life
Coves and stream habitat

Visitor Experience

Visitors may hike a national recreational trail to explore cove and stream habitat.

Interpretive Recommendations

Wayside exhibits or publications with photographs at the trailhead could provide interpretation of the natural resources of the area for visitors who cannot walk the trail.

PEAKS OF OTTER DEVELOPED AREA/MILEPOST 86

Overview

An intriguing interpretive and recreational complex rests within the triangle formed by Sharp Top Mountain, Flat Top Mountain, and Harkening Hill. Abbott Lake, created by Parkway designers, provides the esthetic focal point. Nearby, Peaks Restaurant and Lodge (open year-round), gasoline station and camp store with bus service to near the summit of Sharp Top Mountain, provide convenient visitor services. A visitor center, open May to October, highlights the natural and cultural history of the Peaks area. Johnson Farm, a ten-minute walk from the visitor center and open four days weekly during the visitor season, provides opportunity for insight about the Johnson family and community life in late 19th and early 20th centuries. Architecturally, the Johnson Farm is the Parkway's best example of a log cabin home that was enlarged successively, clap boarded, and otherwise modified to reflect the evolution and development of Appalachian homes. The farm also represents what may be styled "middle class" life in the mountains. It provides a significant contrast to log homes selectively preserved along the Parkway and the "country places" represented by the Moses Cone estate at Blowing Rock. In addition, the Johnson Farm contains several out buildings associated with the site. The Peaks community also included African Americans, including the Saunders family whose home remains as visible ruins near the picnic area. Polly Woods Ordinary, built circa 1840 and located near Abbott Lake, is open when staffing is available. Both Johnson Farm and the Ordinary are furnished, the former much more extensively than the latter. A picnic area, campground, and extensive hiking trail system provides related recreational opportunities.

Ecologically, the Peaks area is representative of the hardwood forests common along the 2000 to 2500 foot elevations of the Parkway. The area is also home to rare plants and animal species. Historically, the area has been visited, occupied, or otherwise used by humans for 10,000 years. In the 18th and 19th centuries the cool weather, scenery, and mountain summits began to attract site seers and summer vacationers. In mid and late 1800s, a small community developed to serve the needs of the tourists. The Johnson family and Polly Woods Ordinary are both intricately connected with tourism development.

Interpretive services include evening campfire presentations in the visitor center amphitheater three or more nights weekly during the visitor season. Programs highlight both natural and cultural history topics appropriate to the area. Morning "Coffee With A Ranger" programs let visitors interact informally with Parkway staff. People who hike to Johnson Farm visit with volunteers and seasonal staff who demonstrate farm life and show people through the farm complex. The informal atmosphere conveys a sense of visiting an occupied farm site in early 20th century. The National Park Service offers talks around the restaurant, lodge and lake and inside the Polly Woods Ordinary. The concessionaire bus to Sharp Top includes an audio program that introduces riders to natural and cultural themes of the area. Extensive roving interpretation augments the information available to visitors to Sharp Top.

Visitor Center

Site Theme

High mountains, cool summer temperatures and diversity of natural resources, have made the Peaks of Otter a hunting destination for American Indians and a destination for travelers for centuries.

Appropriate Topics

Diversity of natural resources, including remarkable topography (Flat Top Mountain and Sharp Top Mountain), eastern deciduous forest, and endangered or threatened species that influenced tourism.

Tourism and travel in the mountains

Peaks of Otter as a "hunting ground" for Indians

Diversity of cultural resources reflecting a biracial community

Visitor Experience

Visitors understand that many of the things attracting them to the Peaks of Otter have attracted visitors for centuries.

Visitors will have easy access to information enabling them to effectively plan their visit to this site.

Visitors can choose from an array of interpretive opportunities to explore area resources and stories.

Interpretive Recommendations

Exhibits incorporate site themes by enfolding the cultural story of tourism with the story of the area's natural resources. This encourages visitation to Johnson Farm and Polly Woods Ordinary. Merging natural and cultural themes require sensitivity to adequately convey these inter-related stories to visitors. Interpreters at Peaks should be sensitive to this when providing interpretive services to the public.

Parkway managers should encourage continuation of interpretation to concession patrons. A range of program offerings, such as guided bus tours and guided walks to Sharp Top summit, would be appropriate. In addition, the Parkway should work with the concessionaire to develop a video of Peaks area to be shown in the restaurant and lodge. This would provide guests with year-round orientation instead of seasonal programs at Peaks of Otter Visitor Center.

Peaks of Otter is a prime candidate for an expanded site bulletin to acquaint visitors with interpretative stories and recreational opportunities found here.

The vertical wayside exhibit panels outside the visitor center should be revised to improve orientation and interpretation for visitors arriving when the facility is closed. One panel should relate natural resources to the tourism theme and provide orientation to things to see and do in the immediate area. Improve visibility of the orientation brochure distribution box at the front door of the visitor center. Upgrade the material and content of the Elk Run Trail wayside exhibit.

Johnson Farm

Site Theme

Mountain communities sometimes developed around vacation spots and residents often cater to the tourism industry for a substantial portion of their livelihood.

Appropriate Topics

Mountain communities, including concepts of class, race, and gender
 Dependence on tourism industry
 Economic and professional growth of mountain families
 Family farming
 Vernacular architecture - evolution of Appalachian dwellings

Visitor Experience

Visitors will be able to relate to a family that clearly breaks down the stereotypes often associated with mountain residents.

Visitors will learn how tourism in the mountains affected the economy of many mountain communities.

Visitors may visit the Johnson Farm, relax in the furnished farmhouse and garden, interact with staff and participate in informal, hands-on living history demonstrations that convey a sense of visiting an occupied family home.

Interpretive Recommendations

Develop a historic furnishing guide for the farmhouse and outbuildings to ensure accurate representation of the time period interpreted and to establish professional procedures for care of all objects. The guide should identify furnishing objects to be added or removed. It should include a floor plan indicating where and how objects are to be displayed. It can also provide direction to staff for appropriate display, interpretation, and use of objects.

Research existing artifact collection and establish a clear line of ownership for all objects to improve property control, accountability as well as meeting museum requirements. Consumptive use policies and reproduction objects would permit the interaction that is recommended and largely taking place now. Chairs on the front porch and inside the farmhouse should invite sitting, relaxation, and reflection rather than placed behind barriers.

To serve visitors and lend life to the setting when interpretive staff is unavailable, battery powered audio-stations might be installed at various locations around the farm. Excerpts from diaries, letters and oral histories, and typical sounds of activities that might come from a home of this type would speak about community and how a mountain environment affects the way people live. This recommendation should be

considered with caution, and implemented only if personal service presentations cannot be provided. If implemented, audio locations, length and volume should be planned carefully to not detract from the farm atmosphere. A battery-powered radio broadcasting original programs from appropriate time period could be used effectively for atmosphere inside the house.

Historic base maps should be developed to depict the historic scene. The encroaching woods convey a sense of isolation that is inappropriate to this site. Historic scene restoration could include Callie Bryant's flower garden and farm orchards. Restoration of farm out buildings should follow recommendations in the 1990 Historic Structures Report for Johnson Farm.

Cultural resource maintenance should stabilize the Saunders Farm, remove trees to create a clearing, and develop a hiking trail to the site. Researchers should photograph and document the Saunders family history for incorporation into interpretive media. At a minimum, a wayside should be developed for the site.

The name Harkening Hill should be returned to its original identity, Harking Hill.

Transportation should be available from the visitor center to Johnson Farm for mobility impaired visitors. Also, a video about the Johnson Farm shown in the visitor center would provide alternative access that effectively interprets the site to all visitors.

Mons Hotel Site and Polly Woods Ordinary

Site Theme

Substantial industries based on the needs of travelers developed around destination sites in the mountains.

Appropriate Topics

Nineteenth Century travel/tourism and "resort" and "ordinary" hotels
Entrepreneurial ventures by Appalachian women
The Peaks of Otter as a vacation destination
Prominent historical characters visiting the area

Visitor Experience

Visitors will have opportunity to interact with a living history interpreter and participate in a variety of hands- on living history activities.

Visitors will see a range of historic and current lodging representing the tourism industry at Peaks of Otter.

Visitors may view modern and historic furnished tourist facilities to compare/contrast sights, sounds, and smells of past and present accommodations.

Interpretive Recommendations

Develop a historic furnishing guide to identify furnishing objects to be added or removed. The guide should include a floor plan indicating where and how objects are to be displayed. It should also provide direction to staff for appropriate display, interpretation, and use of objects. Presently the structure is too sparsely furnished and lacks the feeling of abundance that would have characterized such an establishment. Furnishings recommended should be appropriate for hands- on, living history activities.

Develop a historic structure maintenance plan to guide structure preservation and employee safety.

Conduct additional research on Appalachian women, especially their entrepreneurial role.

Open the house during peak visitation periods, weekend afternoons in season a minimum.

An audio station could interpret mountain travel and the importance of inns as resting and feeding spots in the 1800's.

Sharp Top Mountain

Site Theme

The three mountains defining the Peaks of Otter have long been recognized as a landmark in the region and a destination spot for hikers and vacationers.

Appropriate Topics

Unique biology of the area as a vacation attraction
Prominent historical characters who have climbed these peaks
Role of these mountains in historical writing and literature
Identification of the surrounding landscape features
Weather and unique geology

Visitor Experience

Visitors can see tremendous views from Sharp Top and outstanding flora and fauna on Flat Top and Harking Hill.

Visitors will have a sense of walking in the steps of prominent historical characters.

Interpretive Recommendations

Visitors can choose to hike or take bus transportation to the summit. Road trail guides in publication or audio format should be available for hikers and bus passengers.

Develop a site bulletin to present the site theme and selected topics related to the theme.

An interpretive product, either collector print or publication, would be an effective interpretive item for sale in the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center.

The District Interpreter should encourage roving public contact by interpretation, protection, and resource management staff.

HARVEY'S KNOB OVERLOOK/MILEPOST 95.3

Site Theme

Hawks, falcons, and an occasional eagle migrate down the Blue Ridge each fall, taking advantage of the lift provided by warm air currents, or thermals, which rise from the valleys.

Appropriate Topics

Mountains as a migration corridor for a variety of species
Types of birds that migrate along the Blue Ridge corridor
Seasonal changes in animal behavior patterns

Visitor Experience

Visitors in the fall and spring will have opportunities to see birds migrating and understand the important role of Blue Ridge Parkway as a migratory route.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation may include wayside exhibit supplemented with roving personal service, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside visitor centers.

Volunteer ornithologists provide roving contacts and bird watching walks and photography during September and October migrations.

IRON MOUNTAIN HOLLOW/MILEPOST 96.4

Site Theme

Economically significant minerals have been mined in many areas of the Blue Ridge.

Appropriate Topics

Economically significant minerals in the Blue Ridge
Early industry in the mountains

Visitor Experience

Visitors will understand that economically significant minerals are part of the region's economic history and development, and are still important resources protected within the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation may include wayside exhibit supplemented with roving personal service, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside Minerals Museum.

GREAT VALLEY OVERLOOK/MILEPOST 99.6

Site Theme

The mountain ranges surrounding the Parkway define the eastern edge of the Great Valley, which served as a major transportation route for

European settlers and American Indians through the southern mountains.

Appropriate Topics

Shenandoah Valley history and geography
Indian and European migration through the Great Valley
Geography of the Appalachian Mountains west of the Blue Ridge

Visitor Experience

Visitors will be able to see a section of the valley and understand the important role of the Great Valley as a transportation corridor.

Visitors will understand how the mountains and valleys defined transportation and settlement in the region.

Visitors may compare historic and modern transportation and develop appreciation for the difficulties of historic travel and the beauty and convenience of the Parkway as a travel route.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation may include wayside exhibit supplemented with roving personal service, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside visitor centers.

APPALACHIAN TRAIL/MILEPOST 0 - 101.5

Site Theme

The Blue Ridge Parkway corridor serves the recreational needs of millions of Americans, including hikers on the Maine-to-Georgia Appalachian Trail that parallels the Parkway in many places.

Appropriate Topics

Hiking techniques and safety
Appalachian Trail history and development
Advantages of seeing the Blue Ridge by foot

Visitor Experience

Visitors will be provided opportunity and encouragement to become immersed in the Blue Ridge environment.

Interpretive Recommendations

Visitors will have several opportunities to access long and short sections of the Appalachian Trail for foot travel.

A wayside with bulletin board should be placed at major intersections between the Parkway and Appalachian Trail to inform visitors of the opportunity to hike portions of the trail as part of their Parkway experience.

Develop a site bulletin in cooperation with Appalachian Trail Conference to interpret the trail to interested visitors.

PLATEAU DISTRICT

The pulse of the Parkway begins to change as visitors travel into the Roanoke Valley, the largest urban area along the motor road with a population of 225,000. The elevation is lower, the number of farms increase as the land levels, and the city encroaches. Visitors find this area in a state of dramatic change from pastoral landscape to suburban residential growth. This area is one of the best on the Parkway for interpreting land use through time, as well as the current issue of scenic protection and land use management. Farther south in the district visitors have intensive exposure to Blue Ridge cultural themes through many cultural sites, landscapes, and facilities. They may learn that isolation and assimilation played important roles in the culture and that the Parkway has influenced change in the area. The main story to be told here is how man and the land interact in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The forces of nature always effect how man socializes, constructs, and survives. This district provides a rural countryside experience emphasizing "man on the land."

At Roanoke, staff will work with local governments, adjacent landowners and private interests to ensure ample accommodations and services for visitor use and enjoyment. Management activities would ensure that recreational opportunities, visitor services, and public facilities on and near the Parkway are complementary and efficiently serve the needs of visitors and local and regional residents. Management objectives for this district emphasize Blue Ridge culture. Parkway staff will secure adequate information on historic resources to determine suitability for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and in the List of Classified Structures and Historic Landmarks. They will safeguard the scenic corridor and ensure cultural and natural resource conservation and use by skillful management in cooperation with other agencies, organizations, and private landowners. Adequate data developed

through research or other means can be used in cultural and natural resource management. Staff will inventory, document and prioritize the natural, cultural, visual, and recreational resources into levels of significance in order to assure resource protection. A cooperative program of leasing Parkway lands for agriculture that reflects adjacent and historical agricultural uses ensures perpetuation of cultural and traditional pastoral scenes. Managers will develop incentives to increase interest and motivate participation in leasing programs. Resource managers will identify and inventory potential and active threats or encroachments to resources and develop a process for monitoring and controlling these elements.

ROANOKE/MILEPOST 106 - 135

Overview

Roanoke is a major access and departure point for the scenic motor road. Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center on Virginia Explore Park road provides visitor information. Here travelers on the Parkway and residents in the Roanoke area can conveniently learn about recreational opportunities. Many people fish and hike along Roanoke River. A loop road to the top of Roanoke Mountain is a popular attraction with dramatic overlooks of the city and the Roanoke valley. Hang glider enthusiasts use the summit by permit. Mill Mountain road provides access to a local zoo and city overlooks as well as access to the lightly used National Park Service campground. Hiking opportunities are offered along the Roanoke River and near the campground. The area also offers horseback riding. Attendance is miniscule at weekend evening programs currently scheduled at the campground. Mountain music events presented at the campground from June to October is the most popular visitor service. Local bands skilled in traditional and contemporary country music play to crowds that often exceed 200 people. These programs elevate awareness of the Parkway in the local community. Educational outreach services are currently limited though the opportunity for expansion is great. The Roanoke River Parkway, a little more than one-mile connector to Virginia's Explore Park, opened in May 1998. Historic buildings relocated to Explore Park and a variety of living history demonstrations provide insight into the development of southwest Virginia.

Site Theme

Roanoke, the largest metropolitan area on the Blue Ridge Parkway, offers many recreational activities for visitors to enjoy.

Roanoke is a major point of entry and departure between the Parkway and surrounding communities and transportation corridors.

Appropriate Topics

Roanoke as a transportation center - roads, railroads, waterways
Recreational opportunities available along the Parkway
Impacts of the Parkway on communities through which it passes
Protection of views from the Parkway

Visitor Experience

Depending on the seasons, visitors will have many opportunities in the Roanoke area to hike, bicycle, cross- country ski, or hang- glide.

Visitors will find easy, convenient access between the Parkway and Roanoke metro area.

Visitors and residents will be encouraged to explore the rich cultural and natural history of the Roanoke Valley.

Visitors will understand the process of dramatic change in Appalachia from pastoral rural landscape to suburban residential development.

Parkway neighbors will be able to listen, see, and participate in a variety of activities that instill understanding of Parkway values and that encourage appropriate behavior.

Interpretive Recommendations

Cooperate with Virginia's Explore Park and other state and local organizations to develop programs for the multi- organizational Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center. The facility introduces major resources in the region and provides information on what to see and do on the Parkway and nearby. Continue use of multi- agency participation to lessen the burden of visitor service for each participating agency.

Parkway staff should continue to emphasize the Parks- As- Classrooms program in the Roanoke Valley. This not only sensitizes students to Parkway values but nurtures support for view shed protection along the urban reach of the motor road. A full- time permanent interpreter should coordinate summer activities and provide year- round Parks- As- Classrooms programming. The popularity of mountain music programs suggests the local community would welcome other special events. In addition, interpretive staff in the Roanoke area should pro-

vide a Junior Ranger Program, similar to the one in place in Asheville. As noted elsewhere in this plan, coordination of Parks-as-Classroom activities with Explore Park would prove beneficial to the Parkway and that organization.

Parkway interpretive managers should consider changing the programming strategy at this location. Future programs should focus more effort on outreach to clubs and organizations in surrounding communities. The program should also offer more recreation-based activities that meet potential visitor interests, such as astronomy and cross-country skiing.

KELLY SCHOOL/MILEPOST 149

Site Theme

The Kelley School is a rare surviving example of the small rural schools that characterized formal public education in Appalachia in the late 19th century and early 20th century.

Appropriate Topics

Education in Appalachia

Visitor Experience

Visitors can see a furnished schoolroom representative of this part of Virginia about 1925 to relate local stories and resources to the broader scope of America's education experience.

Students from nearby communities can visit and participate in traditional classroom activities of the time period interpreted.

Everyone may feel an aura of stepping back in time to their own childhood or that of their parents that encourages learning by intergenerational sharing of previous experience.

Interpretive Recommendations

The Kelley School, a unique and now rare center of early education in rural America, deserves careful restoration and interpretation tempered by the realities of limited budgets and staff. It remains a fine interpretive prospect to tell the story of rural education in southern Appalachia. The school building should be returned, as close as possible, to its exterior appearance as a two-room school in 1924. One room should present a

replica 1920s classroom; the other room and any usable upper floor space could accommodate a mini- museum, information station, office space, or a reasonable and economical combination thereof. Furnishings should be acquired and installed with the understanding that students will use part of the interior space as a classroom. Group leaders should invite students to compare the classroom of the 1920s with theirs in such areas as racial integration, segmenting by grade level, courses studied, and the lack of electronic technology. A rich "sound-scape" of classroom activities would enhance furnishings and help visitors connect to a time and a place.

Parkway staff should work closely with local school districts in developing and using this resource.

Parkway staff should identify parking and related infrastructure needs as soon as possible and identify essential lands for acquisition.

Develop a historic furnishing guide to identify furnishing objects to be added or removed. The guide should include a floor plan indicating where and how objects are to be displayed. It should also provide direction to staff for appropriate display, interpretation, and use of objects.

SMART VIEW PICNIC AREA/MILEPOST 154

Site Theme

Smart View presents a microcosm of the entire Plateau District.

Visitor Experience

Restroom, trails, and group shelter facilities provide opportunities for visitors to participate in a variety of recreational activities.

Visitors can see a log cabin typical of those preserved along the Parkway.

Interpretive Recommendations

Install upright wayside exhibit and bulletin board to interpret area and provide safety information.

ROCKY KNOB AND ROCKCASTLE GORGE/MILEPOST 167 - 169

Overview

Rocky Knob and Rockcastle Gorge is one of the Parkway's original developed areas. The picnic area receives moderate use including people from neighboring communities. A small visitor center with publication sales operates from May to October in an original gasoline station converted to visitor use. The gasoline station building is an excellent example of Parkway design. The visitor center also provides orientation to Rockcastle Gorge. An extensive trail system in the gorge offers visitors access to one of the most floral-rich sections of the Parkway. Rockcastle Gorge, especially its moisture rich north facing slopes, provides home to a number of rare plants. The gorge also offers opportunities for resource monitoring and comparative study since the National Park Service owns and administers the entire watershed from summit to valley.

Interpretive services include the visitor center, wayside exhibits, and a weekend campfire program in the campground. Rockcastle Gorge, like so many areas along the Parkway, once boasted a small community. Population dwindled even prior to establishment of the national park; fields and pastures associated with the community have been largely replaced by forest regeneration.

A concessionaire operates Rocky Knob cabins, once part of a 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps camp, from late May to Labor Day.

Site Theme

The high plateau areas of Rocky Knob demonstrate how designers fit the Parkway into the agricultural landscape and community that continues today.

Appropriate Topics

- Agricultural landscape of the southern mountains
- Rockcastle Gorge community
- Natural history of Rockcastle Gorge
- Crafts and skills associated with past agricultural practices
- Role of Civilian Conservation Corps in Parkway construction

Visitor Experience

Visitors participate in and enjoy a range of recreational and interpretive opportunities that provide immersion in the resource to the extent they want from passive to active, including hiking on a national recreational trail to floral- rich Rockcastle Gorge.

Visitors will see rural agricultural landscapes and land use practices that give a sense of the communities and lifestyles that existed in the past and persist along the Parkway.

Visitors will have access to information and orientation that enables them to plan their site visit.

Interpretive Recommendations

Parkway staff should evaluate the appropriateness of moving the information and interpretation functions at this location to Mabry Mill if a visitor center is developed at that location. If those functions remain appropriate for this site, staff should implement the following recommendations.

Consideration should be given to redesigning the entrance road to Rockcastle to create a desirable arrival experience. Prominent location of new signage could attract visitors to the facility and interpret its historic and current function.

Visitors need access to orientation outside the visitor center through a combination of wayside exhibits, brochures, or site bulletins. Interpretive messages should summarize orientation and interpretation provided inside the center for visitors who arrive early or late in the day or during the off- season when the facility is closed. Orientation should include trail access points, lengths and difficulty, other points of interest, campground location, and vicarious representation of Rockcastle Gorge features.

Interpretive and cultural resource management staff should assess the importance of this facility design to Parkway significance. If design quality would not be compromised, enclosing the covered, open- air section would create a more comfortable visitor experience and accommodate additional exhibits. Enhanced interior lighting and relocation of a wall mounted orientation exhibit would improve visitor experience until further renovation is completed. The current exhibit featuring a gorge scene could be positioned on the interior wall of the visitor center opposite the information/sales desk. Interpreting agriculture in the area is appropriate and consideration should be given to developing exhibits in partnership with Bi- County Commission.

Redesign of restrooms should provide full access for visitors with mobility impairment. Visitors should also have virtual access to the wonderful but difficult to reach resources of Rockcastle Gorge. A short, locally produced, relatively inexpensive, audiovisual presentation at the visitor center could provide sights and sounds from the valley and mountain slopes when the facility is open. Wayside exhibits or brochures displayed outdoors could provide similar, although less effective, views of this significant resource when the building is closed. Interpretive managers should consider special event programs, such as a pilgrimage into the gorge for natural and cultural interpretation, in the spring and fall seasons. Cooperation with local communities could encourage development of complimentary activities. For example, a museum of agriculture was proposed several years ago.

MABRY MILL/MILEPOST 176

Overview

The Mabry Mill complex is arguably the most picturesque cultural site on the Parkway. The focal point is a mill built about 1908 by Ed Mabry, a jack of all trades. He subsequently added a wheelwright shop, sawmill and blacksmith shop to his enterprise and built a two-story frame house. The mill operated until the mid- 1930s. Once acquired by the National Park Service, the dilapidated mill was restored and a reflecting pool added to enhance esthetics. In the mid- 1950s, the Mathews house was brought to the site after having extensions, siding and other improvements stripped away to restore it to a prior appearance. It replaced Mabry's larger farmhouse which Parkway designers apparently found too modern. The house became the interpretive site while a concession operation was constructed nearby. In addition to mill and blacksmith shop, designers added a number of other outdoor exhibits, including a sorghum cooker and shed, moonshine still, and farm implements.

Initially the concessionaire was to provide all demonstrations, including blacksmithing, molasses making, and operation of the mill. When these services proved unprofitable to the concessionaire, the National Park Service assumed responsibility for all cultural demonstrations except grinding corn meal that continued to provide revenue. Today the mill wheels are turned several times each day but not operated continuously due to concerns for the structural integrity of the mill building. Public health concerns prevent sale of mill products; instead meal is purchased from other sources for resale.

Interpretive rangers and volunteers staff Mathew's Cabin daily in visitor season, often carding, spinning and making baskets while orienting visitors to the area. Blacksmith demonstrations are presented several days weekly in the blacksmith shop. On weekends in late September and October apple butter is made to the delight of large numbers of visitors. The restaurant complex is a popular gathering place and on Sunday afternoons local musicians enrolled as national park volunteers provide appropriate music. Visitors are invited to listen and participate in dances.

The popularity of the site required addition of overflow parking and a stand-alone comfort station east of the mill complex. Mabry Mill, like Humpback Rocks, remains one of the Parkway's premier outdoor museums. The eclectic assemblage of buildings and exhibits offer insight into some of the more colorful elements of rural life in Appalachia.

Site Theme

Mabry Mill is an assemblage of buildings representative of those housing mountain industries that provided necessary services to many early 20th century rural Appalachian communities.

Appropriate Topics

Appalachian stereotypes and myths
Rural life in Appalachia
Mabry Mill as a casual meeting place for the community
Skills and crafts representing elements of rural life
Mabry Mill, example of outdoor museum development of disparate structures
Income from mountain industries

Visitor Experiences

Visitors can see an early 20th century gristmill, sawmill, and wheelwright shop, participate in or watch a variety of cultural demonstrations and understand how these facilities worked.

Visitors may sense the important services provided to the local community at Mabry Mill and gain insight into the region's society and economy of early 20th century.

Visitors will feel a sense of community surrounding Mabry Mill as a gathering place.

Visitors will experience current and historic lifestyles of the region, through interaction with people knowledgeable about and skilled in regional folkways, to understand similarities and differences between contemporary and historic people.

Visitors can mingle with staff, volunteers and cultural demonstrators and musicians to share experiences, knowledge and culture in a harmonious community spirit.

Visitors may take a casual stroll through one of the more picturesque areas on the scenic motor road to relax from travels and reflect on their Parkway experience.

Interpretive Recommendations

This long-range interpretive plan supports the idea to relocate the current concession operation to another building and convert the existing concession building adjacent to the parking lot to a visitor center. In conjunction with the relocation, site design should be evaluated and changes implemented to provide intuitive wayfinding from the parking lot to the visitor center and then from the visitor center to the outdoor museum. Ideally this would suggest relocation of the parking lot so the visitor center intercepts visitors as they travel from the lot to the outdoor museum.

Mabry Mill and surrounding interpretive development will be maintained and operated as an outdoor museum.

Update the three-sided wayside exhibit in front of the current concession area. Relocate signs at the parking area and entrance to the outdoor museum to enhance the visitor's arrival experience.

Mabry Mill complex must not be portrayed as a romanticized past. Landscape and interpretation will reinforce the concept that rural life here bore many similarities to rural life elsewhere. This would make the past more relevant. Demonstrations should be used not as ends unto themselves, but as means to encourage interpreters/visitor interactions - conversation about women, children, and racial groups that reinforces the complexity and diversity of the region. Additional research needs to be conducted on these specific topics. Integrate all personal and media interpretive services to assure that facilities and stories are accurately presented and fully understood by most visitors.

Because the focal point of the developed area is Mabry Mill, National Park Service staff should be located at the mill. Concession employees could continue to sell meal in the gift shop next door. Parkway staff

could provide more detailed explanations of the gristmill and adjoining sawmill and shop. To the extent possible, volunteers could continue to staff Mathews Cabin.

A historic furnishing guide is needed to identify appropriate furnishings and their use and care for the cabin. The guide should include a floor plan indicating where and how objects are to be displayed. It should also provide direction to staff for appropriate display, interpretation, and use of objects.

The types of interpretive demonstrations should be increased to include a wide variety of folkways. Ferrum Institute could provide directions in this regard. This is not to say that carding and spinning now performed at the Mathews House should necessarily be discontinued; however, these same activities are offered at Humpback Rocks and Brinegar Cabin. Activities at various sites along the Parkway should be coordinated to reduce duplication and present specific demonstrations in culturally appropriate sites. Demonstrations at Mabry Mill might include tanning, shoe making, rifle making, cooking, and canning. The Parkway could expand sale of items produced by demonstrators through the concession operation. Money received could replace supplies used in demonstrations and otherwise support the interpretive program at Mabry Mill.

A garden/field crop area may be developed in the meadow adjacent to the museum and overflow parking area. In addition to enhancing the historic scene surrounding the outdoor museum buildings, the crop area could provide materials for demonstrations.

Mabry Mill offers locations for effective Parks-As-Classrooms activities. If exhibits are developed to enhance Parks-As-Classrooms or other visitor understanding of the area, audiovisual elements might include videos or audio messages relating to grist and sawmills, blacksmith shop, lumbering, lifeways, and local music.

GROUNDHOG MOUNTAIN/MILEPOST 189

Site Theme

Construction of fences and buildings of native materials is an important part of the heritage and visual experience of the Parkway.

Appropriate Topics

Abundance, types and common uses of wood

Fence construction as a historic practice and Parkway design feature
Why is it called "Groundhog?"

Visitor Experience

At a single location, visitors can see a variety of fences that represent the types found along the Parkway.

Visitors will have opportunity to understand the importance of fences in an evolving culture - self reliance and freedom of low population regions changing the need for control (of livestock, property, and self) as population increases.

Visitors may picnic in a relaxing, reflective environment.

Interpretive Recommendations

This is the only location where fence styles are interpreted. Interpretation of several types of fences observed here should be designed to facilitate conversation within the visitor group and to motivate visitors to observe and discuss practical and esthetic qualities of fences throughout the Parkway. Wayside exhibits and site bulletins would be appropriate to interpret at the site and in vehicles as visitors further explore fence styles along the Parkway.

Research the significance of the fire tower. Is it part of the scene that the Parkway traveled through originally? Is it appropriate just because it reflects the "ranger" image?

PUCKETT CABIN/MILEPOST 189.8

Site Theme

Puckett Cabin represents the unique Appalachian culture that evolved in this region, especially the role of women and children in that culture.

Appropriate Topics

Women's role in Appalachian culture
Infant mortality in Appalachia

Visitor Experience

Visitors can see one of many examples of colorful architecture on the Parkway while learning about the importance of midwives in Appalachia.

Visitors can relate the difficulties of pioneer life to their own lifestyle. They may feel empathy for women and children in historic Appalachia and feel positive about modern lifestyles in Appalachia and in their own home communities.

Interpretive Recommendations

The cabin will be left unfurnished and interpreted by wayside exhibit.

The cabin can remain closed. A read-through-the-window panel can focus on the role of midwives and birthing in rural areas. The panel will build on information at the parking lot wayside exhibit to remind visitors of early death. Position panel to minimally intrude on the esthetic character of the structure.

FISHERS PEAK AND BLUE RIDGE MUSIC CENTER/MILEPOST 213

Site Theme

A tremendous heritage of Blue Ridge old-time and string band music exists in this area; much of it was commercially recorded in the 1920s and 1930s but with roots going back to European and African influences.

Appropriate Topics

Influence of music on Appalachian culture
Natural history of Fishers Peak as an example of how nature influenced Appalachian music
European and African influences of music
Instrument making
Songs and song writing
Early roots of recorded country music

Visitor Experience

Visitors will have opportunity to listen to a variety of traditional music in both live and recorded performances.

Visitors will learn about the roots and heritage of regional music to the depth they choose through a variety of media.

Visitors will have the opportunity to participate in informal musical and dance activities.

Interpretive Recommendations

The interpretive planning team recommends full implementation of the Fishers Peak Music Center Interpretive Plan as quickly as funds can be made available. A fully developed facility including trails and space for visitor education, interpretation, and participation is essential to offer visitors a unique opportunity to learn about and experience traditional musical forms of the region. A variety of methods - music listening stations; performance and documentary videos; live and recorded demonstrations of instrument building; oral history listening library; live concerts by master musicians and local musicians; interpretive talks - can help preserve and carry on an important and essential element of our national heritage.

The National Park Service and the National Council for the Traditional Arts should clearly define the roles of each partner in operation of the Music Center. The National Park Service should have a visible presence at the site, including at the Interpretation Center and outdoor facilities. Examples of National Park Service activities might include uniformed rangers to open each public event with a welcome from the National Park Service and to staff the information and interpretation desk at the Interpretation Center. Other activities could include interpretive presentations in the center and at appropriate outdoor locations. Potential roles for the park cooperating association or other partners also need to be formally identified.

HIGHLANDS DISTRICT

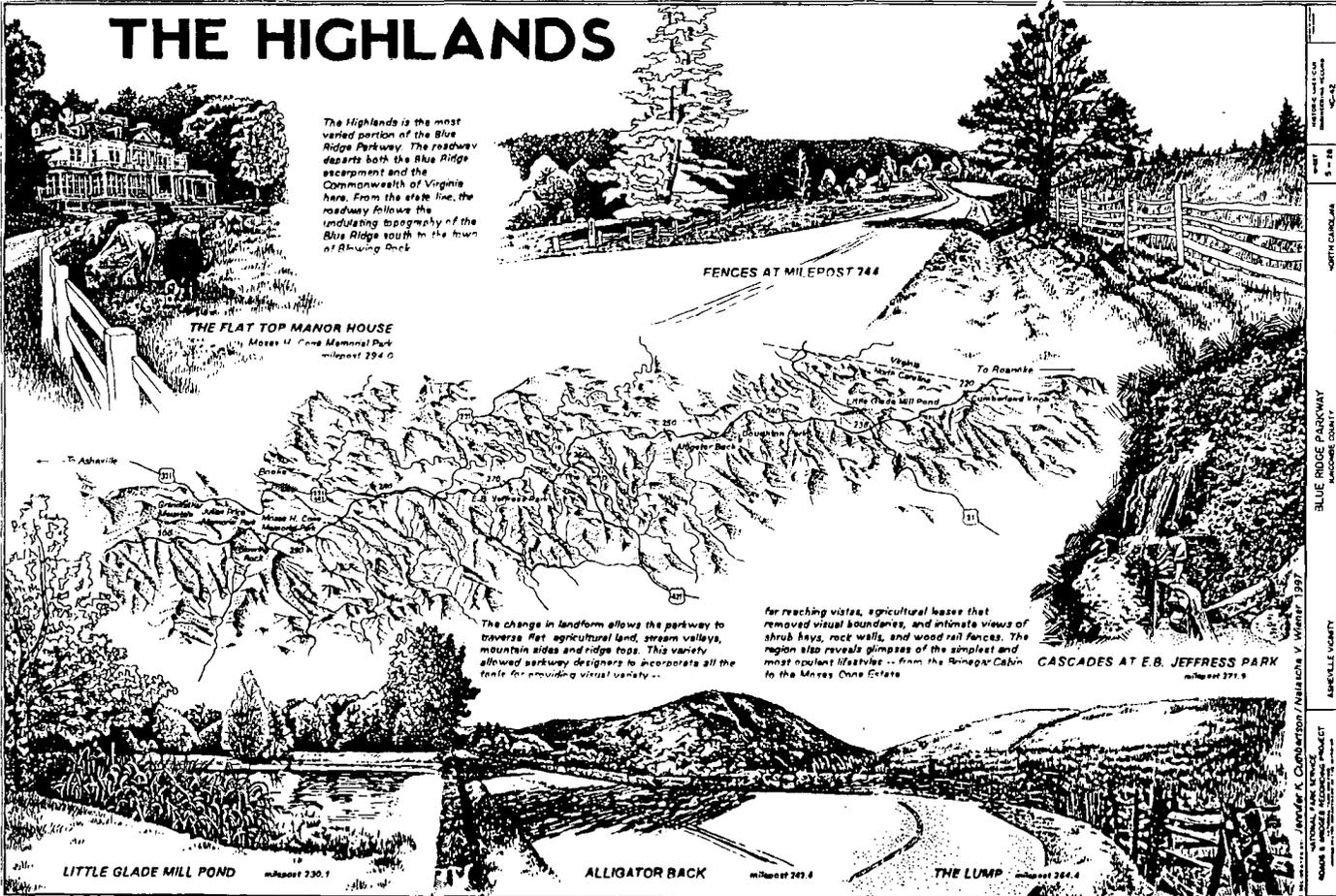
At the state line between Virginia and North Carolina, landform shifts from flat plateau to mountain ridge. Experiences through the Highlands District are greatly varied. Sometimes visitors are on flat agricultural land, sometimes they are climbing up the mountain and sometimes they ride the ridge. Just south of the state line the Parkway climbs onto the edge of the escarpment. From there it continues to wind around high mountain pastures before it drops in elevation to a forested experience with views to the piedmont and high mountain valleys to the west. Much of the motor road passes through private lands in this area. These lands offer glimpses of high mountain farms, timber harvests, and piedmont. Views of the expanding urban area surrounding Boone and a visit to the Moses Cone Estate offer glimpses of human interaction with the region past and present. Julian Price Park is developed in a manner more consistent with the Parkway. Both retain a high degree of the original design that influence visitor experience through the district. Original vistas, shrub bays, agriculture leases, stone walls, and wood fences can all still be found.

THE HIGHLANDS

The Highlands is the most varied portion of the Blue Ridge Parkway. The roadway departs both the Blue Ridge escarpment and the Commonwealth of Virginia here. From the state line, the roadway follows the undulating topography of the Blue Ridge south to the town of Blowing Rock.

THE FLAT TOP MANOR HOUSE
Moses Cone Memorial Park
milepost 294.0

FENCES AT MILEPOST 244



The change in landform allows the parkway to traverse flat agricultural land, stream valleys, mountain sides and ridge tops. This variety allowed parkway designers to incorporate all the forms for providing visual variety.

far reaching vistas, agricultural bases that removed visual boundaries, and intimate views of shrub hays, rock walls, and wood rail fences. The region also reveals glimpses of the simplest and most opulent lifestyles -- from the simple Cabin to the Moses Cone Estate.

CASCADES AT E.B. JEFFRESS PARK
milepost 321.5

LITTLE GLADE MILL POND milepost 230.1

ALLIGATOR BACK milepost 241.4

THE LUMP milepost 264.4

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
NORTH CAROLINA
SHEET 5-18
NORTH CAROLINA
BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY
MAJOR COUNTY
ASHEVILLE VARIOUS
JANUARY 1937
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY

Management objectives for this district extend the objective for the Plateau District southward with a few changes. Here management stresses a blend of cultural uses and natural mountain environments. Visitors have relatively intensive exposure to natural themes. They learn how the natural environment of the Blue Ridge highlands attracted people and influenced how they interacted with the topography, climate, and forests of the region. Visitors learn how both isolation and assimilation played important roles in the culture of the area and how the Parkway continues to influence change in the area.

CUMBERLAND KNOB/MILEPOST 217.9

Overview

The Parkway's first recreation area, Cumberland Knob includes 2000 acres of mostly forested mountainside. The picnic area is an appropriate location for family reunions and other informal social gatherings for Parkway neighbors. The adjoining recreation field is often used for ball games and other sports played in conjunction with family gatherings. Hiking trails lead to Cumberland Knob along mountain slopes and across Gully Creek providing a mix of natural resources for hikers to observe. The small visitor center opened in the 1980s in what was originally a concession building that provided picnic supplies. Near the visitor center is a small family cemetery. The visitor center, open 9a.m. to 5p.m. during peak season, offers information and orientation and Eastern National sales material.

Site Theme

Cumberland Knob is the Parkway's first recreation area and marks the Parkway's great beginning.

Appropriate Topics

Parkway design, engineering, and construction
 Civilian Conservation Corp
 History of tourism in the mountains
 Visitor orientation

Visitor Experience

Visitors should be exposed to the story of the Parkway's beginning.

Visitors should understand the concept of tourism in the mountains and the Parkway role in that story.

Visitors will be exposed to the influences of landscape architecture and engineering in building the Parkway while conserving sensitive natural environments.

Visitors will have convenient access to accurate, current information and orientation necessary to plan their visit to the area.

Interpretive Recommendations

Cumberland Knob and the Linn Cove Visitor Center are the two most logical sites for telling the story of Parkway design and construction; here it began, there, 87 miles away, it concluded.

After an interpretation center opens to the public at the Blue Ridge Music Center, located four miles away, the information and cooperating association sales functions at Cumberland Knob can be relocated to that facility.

An open-air exhibit area in the covered patio at the rear of the Cumberland Knob building and on the adjacent lawn could tell the story of Parkway design and construction. When funding to implement this proposal appears imminent, interpretive managers should program an exhibit plan. The plan would describe exhibits to interpret the site theme comprehensively using each of the topics described for this area. These exhibits should clearly identify role of the Parkway in regional tourism and economy. They could describe the role played by Bureau of Public Roads, state highway engineers, and immigrant laborers, Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees both white and African American in Parkway construction.

Resources and facilities surrounding the visitor center and exhibits at the center could be used as an important component of the Parks- As-Classrooms education program.

Modification of the paved trail at nearby Fox Hunters Paradise could make it accessible to mobility impaired visitors.

LITTLE GLADE MILLPOND/MILEPOST 230.1

Site Theme

Originally built by the Parkway to power an old "tub" mill, today Little Glade Millpond provides a healthy habitat for mountain aquatic life.

Appropriate Topics

Aquatic ecosystems/pond exploration
Fishing
Secondary topics: types of mills

Visitor Experience

Visitors will have opportunity to fish and explore pond waters.

Visitors should understand the effect of water quality on aquatic life.

Interpretive Recommendations

Improve access to millpond resources. Assess the feasibility of developing a trail around all, or at least part, of the millpond. As much of the trail as possible should be wheelchair accessible to encourage use by mobility impaired and elderly visitors. Accessible portions of the trail should include wheelchair accessible platforms with safety railing to encourage contemplation, fishing, and environmental education activities.

Wayside exhibits at parking areas could introduce site theme, describe the trail, and encourage visitors to enjoy and protect area resources. Wayside exhibits at viewing platforms along the trail could interpret topics related to the site theme.

Scheduled guided walks and impromptu roving contacts could supplement wayside exhibits.

Little Glade Millpond offers exceptional opportunities for school group activities. A site bulletin and curriculum-based education activities could supplement Parks- As- Classrooms activities.

STONE MOUNTAIN OVERLOOK/MILEPOST 232.5

Site Theme

Dome-shaped Stone Mountain, a geologic "curiosity" for centuries, is a remnant of early Appalachian mountain-building processes.

Appropriate Topics

Geology: mountain building, batholiths, plutons, underground volcanics, erosion.

Mountain "landmarks"
Land use/protection

Visitor Experience

Visitors should understand the significance of geology in shaping the natural and cultural history of the Mt. Airy area and the Southern Appalachian region.

Visitors can view dramatic vistas to appreciate the beauty of the region.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation may include wayside exhibit supplemented with roving personal service, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside visitor centers.

MAHOGANY ROCK/MILEPOST 235.1

Site Theme

Mahogany Rock, a fin-shaped rock outcropping, once supported a tree that resembled the mahogany (believed to be a black birch or "cherry" birch) and became a wind-blown landmark for area residents.

Landscapes in the valley reflect the mix of agriculture land use patterns of the region.

Appropriate Topics

Land use patterns/changing landscape
Mid-point of the Blue Ridge Parkway
Southern Appalachian geology
Rare/fragile habitats
Orientation to the sweeping view of Virginia/Carolina Great Valley
Caroline Brinegar's childhood home
Mountain orchards/agriculture/Christmas tree production

Visitor Experience

Visitors should have opportunity to understand the effect of the Bluffs geology on vegetation, land usage, and tourism.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation should include wayside exhibit to present the primary site theme.

Personal service could supplement the wayside interpretation with more detailed presentation of topics related to the site theme.

BRINEGAR CABIN/MILEPOST 238.5

Site Theme

Brinegar Cabin provides a glimpse into middle class Appalachian farming/family life from 1885- 1935.

Appropriate Topics

Small Appalachian farms and domestic economies: Caroline Brinegars' weaving talents

Effect of the Parkway on area residents

Appalachian myths and stereotypes

Architectural evolution of homes

Visitor Experience

Visitors will have opportunity to participate in living history demonstrations and plan their Doughton Park visit.

Visitors should get a sense of what life might have been like for the Brinegar family near the turn of the 20th century.

Interpretive Recommendations

Retain the routed wood gunboard format but alter wayside exhibit text to incorporate topics of domestic architecture, family life and Parkway esthetic design.

The interpretive panel in front of the house should be upgraded and an audio station installed to provide interpretation when the site is not staffed. It has typically only been open on weekends during the visitor season.

The two outbuildings are in historic sites. Along with the cabin, they more accurately reflect the spatial arrangements of an actual farm than many other sites along the Parkway. Interpretation should treat all these buildings as equally important.

Develop a historic furnishing guide for structures. The main room of the cabin should be furnished with reproductions or low value consumable items that can be used by visitors. The kitchen could be used for exhibits orienting visitors to recreational opportunities at and near Doughton Park. This would meet visitor expectations to find a house appropriately furnished, and it will fill the information void created by absence of any staffed orientation facility at this developed area, one of the largest along the Parkway.

The historic furnishing guide should include a historic structure maintenance component to guide preservation activities and to assure employee safety.

Conduct research to document Caroline Brinegar's life after her husband's death, including her interaction with other residents of the Air Bellows community.

Examine the feasibility of expanding the parking lot to accommodate recreational vehicles.

DOUGHTON PARK/MILEPOST 238 - 245

Overview

This recreation area of more than 5000 acres contains the entire watershed for Basin Cove and is contiguous with Thurman-Chatham Game Lands and Stone Mountain State Park. Originally called the Bluffs, this area, like other large developed areas, contains a full complement of concessionaire services. Facilities include a 24 room Bluff Lodge, coffee shop, gift shop, and service station. There is no visitor center or contact station in Doughton Park. This area has one of the Parkway's larger campgrounds, a popular picnic area and more than 30 miles of hiking trails that access forested slopes, streams and backcountry in Basin Cove. The Cove is popular for fly-fishing, horseback riding (Grassy Gap fire road) and backcountry camping.

Evening programs are offered three nights each week in season at the campground and occasionally on the patio at Bluff Lodge. Walks and talks are also provided on weekends. Brinegar Cabin is staffed on weekends in season at a minimum and more often as personnel permit. A popular special event in early August, Brinegar Days, features a variety of craft and folk demonstrations.

The Basin Cove section of this area was home to an active community in the early 20th century. A devastating flood in 1916 forced many people

to leave. Parkway designers retained a solitary cabin that is visible from Wild Cat Rocks on the bluffs. It gives a somewhat misleading impression that this cabin existed in a virtual wilderness.

Site Theme

The Doughton Park Area contains some of the richest natural and cultural history stories in the southern Appalachians.

How did anyone manage to live in Basin Cove?

Appropriate Topics

The Bluffs

Mountain meadows

Agricultural practices in family farming

Geology

Wildlife

Weather

Mountain communities

Parkway design

History of mountains - American Indian passages and white settlement

Fragile habitats - living in harmony with the land, native vegetation

Visitor Experience

Visitors can learn information and stories associated with interpretive themes to the depth they choose through a variety of media consistent with the character of the area.

Visitors can choose to participate in a range of recreational activities, including camping, backcountry camping, fishing, picnicking, and hiking.

Visitors will have available a full range of travel accommodations and services.

Visitors will understand the significance of the natural and cultural resources in the Doughton Park area, especially the "Bluffs" and their significance in Appalachian mountain building.

Visitors will gain insight into land use patterns and Parkway design features.

Visitors will discover, contrary to its wilderness setting, how the Caudill Family, whose cabin is in Basin Cove, and their peers were part of a larger community.

Interpretive Recommendations

This is a prime location for cooperating with the concessionaire to provide orientation for visitors. A low budget video depicting scenes of natural and cultural resources and things to see and do in the area might be shown in the lodge or coffee shop. Concession employees could easily distribute a comprehensive, site-specific folder to visitors.

Revise the vertical orientation wayside at Bluffs Coffee Shop.

The popularity of trout fishing in this area suggests fly-fishing skills programs, possibly offered on a volunteer basis through Trout Unlimited, would be popular with visitors.

Wayside exhibits, supplemented with bulletin boards and brochure dispensers as appropriate, should provide orientation and interpretation at campground, picnic area, and trailheads. Trailhead exhibits should include trail length, difficulty, estimated time, safety considerations, and description of experience opportunities.

ALLIGATOR BACK/MILEPOST 242.2

Site Theme

The elongated outcropping of gneiss known as Alligator Back may resemble an "ole gator" asleep on the mountaintop, but it also supports a wide diversity of plant life.

Appropriate Topics

Southern Appalachian natural history, including plant communities on the nearby Bluffs

Visitor Experience

Visitors will see, understand, and appreciate unusual natural features of Alligator Back area.

Interpretive Recommendations

Revise wayside exhibit content to focus on the ecological community in the area and the challenges imposed by adjacent land development.

SHEETS CABIN/MILEPOST 252.5

Site Theme

Jess Sheet's Cabin tells the story of one family's life in the mountains from 1815 until the 1930's.

Appropriate Topics

Nineteenth century Appalachian cultural history
Family farming

Visitor Experience

Visitors will understand how one family lived and worked to sustain life in 19th century Appalachia.

Interpretive Recommendations

Include interpretation of Sheets Cabin in several interpretive products, such as campfire programs, auto tours, and guide books.

NORTHWEST TRADING POST/MILEPOST 258.6

Site Theme

Local color displayed on the shelves of Northwest Trading Post represents the diversity of cultures and crafts in the eleven county area of northwest North Carolina.

Appropriate Topics

Appalachian cultural history
Crafts and cooking
Trading posts in Appalachia

Visitor Experience

Visitors will have easy access to people, maps, and information necessary to plan their Parkway and area visit.

Visitors will be able to experience the flavors (sight, sound, smell, people) of the trading post, purchase locally produced craft items as well as souvenirs, and understand the importance of trading posts and mercantiles to local families.

Interpretive Recommendations

Monitoring the Eastern National cooperating association sales outlet and information services at the trading post will provide data to evaluate effectiveness of their service to visitors. Continue to routinely assure the appropriateness of sales items to site theme. Visitors should be informed that the purpose of the trading post is to outlet a variety of local crafts and food products. These crafts are significantly different from the elite crafts offered for sale by Southern Highland Handicraft Guild; these are in a sense more representative of the broad range of regional folk art.

Develop a weather resistant exhibit of historic photo images depicting trading post activities for display outside the trading post building to welcome visitors and interpret "Country Stores in Appalachia."

E.B. JEFFRESS PARK AND CASCADES NATURE TRAIL/MILE-POST 271.9

Site Theme

The picnic area, nature trail, water fountains and restrooms at E.B. Jeffress Park honor a North Carolina native son for his tireless work in persuading the Federal Government to situate the Blue Ridge Parkway in its present location.

Cascades Nature Trail beautifully represents the tranquility and splendor visitors may encounter while enjoying natural resources in the park.

Appropriate Topics

History of the Blue Ridge Parkway
Waterfalls and associated drainage and diverse plant communities

Visitor Experience

Visitors may picnic and explore scenic and plant rich Cascades Trail to develop appreciation of the beauty and diversity of resources that lie within the forests along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Visitors should gain insight to the early history and politics associated with construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Visitors should have opportunity (real and vicarious) to escape the highway and parking area for immersion in a tranquil natural environment.

Interpretive Recommendations

Wayside exhibits at this location are effective. Additional exhibits at the trailhead could convey a sense of the range of resources to be found along the trail.

Upper portions of the trail should be modified to make them fully accessible for mobility impaired visitors. Wayside exhibits on the accessible portion of the trail should illustrate scenes on the less accessible sections that many visitors cannot get to. See Accessibility Section in PARKWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS.

JESSIE BROWN CABIN AND COOL SPRING BAPTIST CHURCH/MILEPOST 272.6

Site Theme

The water from cool springs sustained families and congregations in turn- of- the- century western North Carolina.

Appropriate Topics

Religion in Appalachia

Visitor Experience

Visitors will have opportunity to learn about the connections of community and religion in this part of western North Carolina.

Interpretive Recommendations

Complete research to determine origins and significance of the structures. There is some indication they were moved to this site to serve as visual props.

Place a wayside exhibit at the parking lot overlooking buildings to interpret the site theme and primary topic.

BOONES' TRACE/MILEPOST 285.1

Site Theme

Daniel Boone's adventures led him over the mountains and into American Indian contact many times often using this location as a favorite place to cross the ridge.

Appropriate Topics

Daniel Boone

Early exploration patterns

Relationships between American Indians and white explorers

Transportation routes in the mountains

Visitor Experience

The visitor should understand that Daniel Boone passed through here, become aware of the larger story of early transportation routes in the mountains, and be able to relate those historic uses to today's travel.

Interpretive Recommendations

Correct errors in existing wayside exhibit.

MOSES H. CONE MEMORIAL PARK/MILEPOST 295.5

Overview

The Parkway acquired 3500 acre Moses H. Cone Memorial Park as a gift in 1949. This country estate was developed during the 1890s and early 1900s by Moses and Bertha Cone, the son and daughter of German and Jewish immigrants. Moses and his brother Caesar established one of North Carolina's largest textile empires during the late 19th and early 20th century. Their mammoth denim and flannel mills in Greensboro, North Carolina and their export and commission company in New York City were the basis of appreciable wealth and status.

Cone fashioned this country place at Blowing Rock with its 23- room Colonial Revival mansion as a healthful retreat from the rigors of his business empire. It was also a status statement to earn social standing at a time when immigrants and their children were largely resented and feared. He built approximately 25 miles of well- planned and exquisitely maintained carriage roads, two man- made lakes and deer parks. On Flat Top Mountain and Rich Mountain he and Bertha raised cattle and sheep and planted more than 32,000 apple trees. These orchards included a number of cultivars now considered rare and established Moses Cone as a scientific farmer no less than George Vanderbilt and his work with scientific forestry at Asheville. After Cone died in 1908 his widow continued to operate the estate until her death.

Soon after Bertha's death the Cone heirs offered the property to the National Park Service with the promise that it would be operated in

perpetuity as a public park and pleasuring ground. Having little staff to operate such an estate and little understanding of the estate's historical importance in the "Country Place Movement," national park managers removed the boat house, bowling alley, gas and laundry house and most servant and tenant quarters. In the early 1950s, the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild opened the Parkway Craft Center in the manor house. This quickly proved profitable to the Guild and enabled the Parkway managers to keep the house open to the public without having to staff it. Over the years the Guild has provided interior maintenance and ongoing educational demonstrations of arts and crafts. In the early 1980s, the National Park Service opened an information desk and cooperating association book store in a room of the manor which had been used to display folk objects from the Francis Goodrich Collection.

Today the manor and the entire estate are one of the most heavily used areas along the Parkway. Carriage roads are popular for hiking, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing, especially by residents of the Boone/Blowing Rock area. While adjacent development has degraded some views from the estate, overall it retains most of the elements and the atmosphere of the premier country estate that it was. During summer and fall Parkway staff provide frequent short talks on the manor porch. They also offer weekly walks to the Cone Cemetery and occasional guided walks elsewhere on the estate. A concessionaire operates the Manor from March to January and the Parkway information desk and sales area is usually open May to October. Annual association sales total approximately \$100,000.

Site Theme

Moses H. Cone Memorial Park is a tribute to textile giant Moses Cone and the influence of 19th century landscape architecture and the Country Estate Movement on life in the Appalachians.

Appropriate Topics

Recreational opportunities

The life, influence, and social context of Moses Cone and family

Nineteenth century landscape architecture

The Country Estate Movement in America

Estate features, such as orchards and carriage trails

Scientific agriculture in the mountains

Life, work, and social relations of estate tenants and servants

Visitor Experience

Visitors can participate in a wide range of recreational activities, including hiking, horseback riding, and cross country skiing in an unhurried, quiet, reflective and relaxing environment.

Visitors will come to appreciate the design ingenuity of the Moses Cone Estate.

Visitors will understand the historical context of the estate construction.

Visitors will get a sense of what life on the Estate might have been like for the Cone Family and other estate residents.

Visitors will get to know the people who built and developed the Cone property, and those who continue to maintain and love it.

Interpretive Recommendations

Develop a comprehensive area management plan to address issues of access to the area, infrastructure and facilities as well as interpretive objectives. The main considerations in the plan should be establishing a more prominent National Park Service presence at the manor, interpreting the Cones and the estate, and how to appropriately balance sales and interpretive functions.

The interpretive story of the Cone estate and its historic context needs to be told. Ideally, this would be done at the manor house. However, displacing the Southern Highland Craft Guild would be especially sensitive given the guild's nearly 50- year tenure in the house. Nevertheless, this alternative must be considered. Crafts and the story of folk art are marginally related and inappropriate to a country estate. It may be possible for the guild to build a sales outlet in proximity to the estate to continue to serve and capitalize on visitors. Changes phased through a few years would lessen impact to the guild, the national park, and visitors. The area management plan could consider, as an interim strategy, opening to the public spaces within the manor that the guild currently does not actively use.

The arrival experience at the house is also a serious issue. The existing parking lot brings people from the rear and side of the house. The historic site design and location of roads were carefully orchestrated to show the house in its most impressive light to approaching visitors. Obviously, this is not now achieved. These issues and others, including management of popular but resource impacting horseback riding, visi-

tor use, maintenance, historic preservation, environmental compliance, adjacent land use, and interpretation should be addressed comprehensively.

As an interim measure, the Parkway should begin acquiring historic objects associated with the Cone family and the estate in its historic period, which includes Bertha Cone's long life and management of the property. These objects would make it possible to furnish and develop exhibits in the entrance hall to interpret the Cones, their textile empire and the estate. Such furnishing and exhibit would acquaint visitors with the site's essential interpretive stories while still allowing the Guild to operate in the building. This would require re-negotiation of the existing contract with the guild, but is highly desirable. Should the entire house become available for interpretation, selected downstairs rooms could be re-furnished to convey a sense of the material culture associated with the site. This would not preclude development of exhibits about the Cones, other country estates and the Parkway to be placed in one or more of the manor rooms. Oral history interviews are available and should be used in exhibits. Additional oral history should include video record of Bertha Cone's grand nieces, who lived at the estate during the 1930s, and people who worked on the estate during its later period.

Develop a historic furnishing guide to identify furnishing objects to be added or removed. The guide should include a floor plan indicating where and how objects are to be displayed. It should also provide direction to staff for appropriate display, interpretation, and use of objects.

Porch furniture should be replaced with chairs and tables more indicative of the historic period. Administrative difficulties notwithstanding, the interpretive managers should consider providing simple food service, such as tea and pastry, in a historic manner on the front porch. The Jordan Pond House in Acadia National Park does this successfully. The popular ranger talks on the manor porch should be offered frequently in peak periods when there is high visitation and relatively rapid turnover in visitors. Talks could be augmented with photographs to pass among the audience.

Update the existing folder on Cone estate produced by Harpers Ferry Center to interpret the home in its proper historical context and give broader orientation to estate resources.

As special event activities, former estate workers could be invited to the manor porch to give talks or converse informally with visitors about their experiences.

Carriage rides in historically correct conveyances should be once again offered on the estate. A choice of trip lengths would offer visitors with more or less time an opportunity to participate in this very relevant historical experience. The National Park Service would carefully monitor care of carriage horses to assure that abuse or over work does not occur. Because the estate is most heavily used as a recreational resource, interpretive services should expand to include recreation skill activities such as cross-country skiing in winter.

The Parkway should work closely with Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation and other partners to tap community support for the preservation and interpretation of the estate.

Develop a wayside exhibit plan for the estate. High visitation and scattered nature of points of interest would make such exhibits worthwhile.

JULIAN PRICE MEMORIAL PARK/MILEPOST 295.5 - 300

Site Theme

The wilderness appeal of the forested highlands and cold mountain streams of Julian Price Memorial Park welcomes campers, hikers, picnickers, and fishermen.

Appropriate Topics

Southern Highland natural history: birds, wildflowers, beaver, aquatic and forest ecology, deer, amphibians, and high elevation endangered species

Cultural history: Julian Price, Civil War in the mountains, historical mountain roads and transportation, early residents, history of recreation in the area

Visitor Experience

Visitors will appreciate the beauty and diversity of resources within Julian Price Memorial Park.

Visitors can participate in a variety of recreational activities to enjoy outdoor resources.

Interpretive Recommendations

An immediate interpretive priority should upgrade the sound system at the campground amphitheater. Since this is a very large capacity amphitheater, consideration should also be given to upgrade projection capabilities to include a video projector, laser disc player, and a control unit.

Site bulletins are appropriate to interpret the many natural and cultural topics related to the site theme.

District Interpreters should frequently profile site users and develop activities appropriate to the needs and expectations of current and potential audiences. A diversified venue of activities, including recreation related workshops and guided experiences, would meet the needs of many types of stakeholders.

The site trail system should be identified at central locations to assure all visitors an opportunity to learn about walking opportunities. Distinct trailhead wayside exhibits should identify individual trails in the area. Each trailhead exhibit should illustrate the trail in relation to other trails in the area. It should also show trail route, length, difficulty, and experience opportunities.

SIMS POND/MILEPOST 295.9

Site Theme

Sims Pond and nearby old growth forest not only enhance the Parkway landscape, but they provide a bountiful aquatic life and great enjoyment for fishermen. One of the best examples of old growth forest exists here also.

Appropriate Topics

Ponds/lakes in landscape design
 Aquatic ecology
 Fishing
 Birds
 Life of Hamp Sims
 Old growth forests

Visitor Experience

Visitors will appreciate the beauty and natural significance of the pond and old growth forest.

Visitors will know who Hamp Sims was and why Sims Creek and the pond are named for him.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation may include wayside exhibits supplemented with roving personal service, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside visitor centers.

PRICE LAKE/MILEPOST 296.7

Site Theme

Price Lake, 47 acres of cool, mountain headwaters, fulfills the wish of Julian Price to provide a public pleasuring ground for boaters, hikers, campers, and fishermen.

Appropriate Topics

Aquatic ecology, including birds and amphibians
Recreation: canoeing and fishing
History of Julian Price
Parkway landscape design

Visitor Experience

Accessible trails and other interpretive opportunities will help most visitors identify with the dream of Julian Price to provide a beautiful place for enjoyment and recreational opportunity in the mountains.

Interpretive Recommendations

Visitors will be encouraged to pursue opportunities for guided canoe tours and aquatic experiences.

BOONE FORK TRAIL/MILEPOST 296.5

Site Theme

The 4.9-mile Boone Fork Trail guides visitors along mountain mead-

ows, forests, and stream banks for an up-close look at high elevation natural history.

Appropriate Topics

Appalachian forest ecology
 Appalachian aquatic ecology, beaver, bog turtles
 High elevation habitat, including mountain meadows
 Natural Heritage designations

Visitor Experience

Visitors will appreciate the natural ecosystems and associated species along the Boone Fork Trail.

"Universal design" facilities and accessible interpretation encourage visitors to walk through natural landscape to view a variety of high elevation resources.

Interpretive Recommendations

Wayside interpretive exhibits and trailhead exhibits will interpret the site theme and appropriate topics. Trailhead exhibits should include trail route, length, difficulty, and experience opportunities. Interpretive exhibits should focus on forest and aquatic ecology in high elevations.

ROUGH RIDGE/MILEPOST 302.9

Site Theme

Scrubby, wind-buffeted Rough Ridge harbors some of the rarest species on earth.

Appropriate Topics

Habitat protection
 Orientation to available scenic views
 High elevation natural history: weather, geology, endangered species, wildflowers, birds

Visitor Experience

Visitors will appreciate the fragility and natural significance of Rough Ridge.

Interpretive Recommendations

Provide convenient, safe trail access.

A trailhead exhibit should include information about trail length, difficulty and experience opportunities.

TANAWHA TRAIL/MILEPOST 298- 305

Site Theme

The Tanawha Trail (Cherokee for hawk or eagle) meanders 13.5 miles through the Grandfather Corridor that protects some of the most significant natural habitat in the southern Appalachians.

Appropriate Topics

High elevation natural history: weather, geology, endangered species, wildflowers, birds

High elevation hiking safety

Habitat protection

Visitor Experience

Visitors will appreciate the significance and beauty of the natural habitat along the Tanawha Trail.

Visitors will learn that the Cherokee once lived and traveled extensively through the area, using Grandfather Mountain as a point of reference.

Interpretive Recommendations

The entire trail and its location in relation to the Parkway should be identified at central locations to assure all visitors an opportunity to learn about walking opportunities. Distinct trailhead wayside exhibits should identify individual access points. The trailhead exhibits should show trail route, length, difficulty, and experience opportunities.

LINN COVE VIADUCT/MILEPOST 304.4

Site Theme

The Linn Cove Viaduct is a symbol of pride to landscape architects and engineers for its marriage of beauty with utility and habitat protection.

Appropriate Topics

Parkway design and engineering
Habitat protection
Viaduct construction
History of the Blue Ridge Parkway
Grandfather Mountain
Area orientation

Visitor Experience

Visitors will understand the relationship of the Linn Cove Viaduct to overall Parkway design and engineering, as well as its role in protecting the fragile habitat on Grandfather Mountain.

Visitors will have easy access to maps and information needed to plan their trip to the site and nearby areas.

Visitors can walk beneath the viaduct to relate visitor center interpretation to the real object being interpreted.

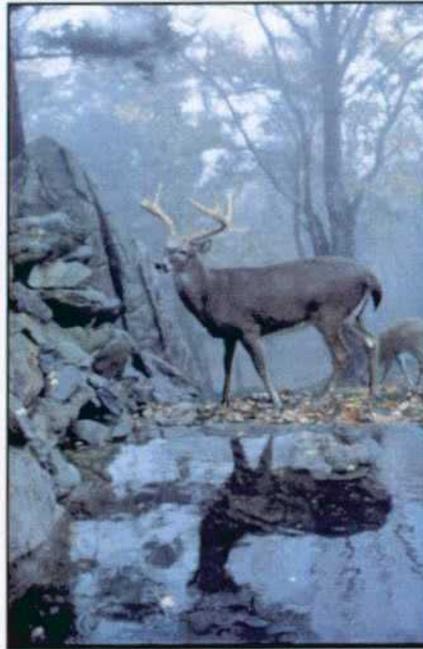
Interpretive Recommendations

Develop an interior exhibit plan for the Linn Cove Visitor Center. An impressive model in the visitor center depicting construction of Linn Cove Viaduct should be retained as the centerpiece of new exhibits proposed for the facility. The beautiful high ceiling and wall panel design of the building lends itself to display of photographic exhibits that complement the model. Photographs and profiles could identify people involved in the project (designers, engineers, landscape architects, construction supervisors, and laborers). Interpretation should emphasize their professional points of view in terms of their design vision, engineering skill, pride of craftsmanship as well as the overall vision for scenic motor road landscape design. Audiovisual clips would add a human aspect to the story of Parkway construction.

Design award plaques displayed in the visitor center could be replaced with a small tactile model showing the same scene as the large model currently on display. Such a hands-on model would communicate to sight impaired people how the viaduct was constructed and how it wrapped around the mountain. It would also provide a wonderful experience for children.

Exterior wayside exhibits near the visitor center should summarize interior exhibit themes for visitors who arrive when the visitor center is

closed. Wayside exhibits at the parking lot should orient visitors to the viaduct trail.



PISGAH DISTRICT

Interpretation in this district emphasizes the natural environment of the southern part of the Parkway. Stories told here will illustrate how the mountains provide refuge for relict populations, many descended from tropical and boreal plant species, and how the Parkway provides a representative transect of Blue Ridge habitats. Remote natural areas and dramatic views of high mountains less affected by human presence dominate visitor experience opportunities. Here visitors can see sites and facilities that highlight the story of biological diversity as a product of the area's varied geology and topography. Visitors are encouraged to experience this area through scenic overlooks and hiking and camping in primitive backcountry areas. Visitors will have many opportunities to understand the significant role of Blue Ridge Parkway in protecting the abundant unusual plant and animal species of the region.

At the mid-point of this district, Asheville emphasizes recreation and education for a large local urban population. This is a major access between the Parkway and regional transportation corridors. Visitors to this short section of the Parkway should be able to obtain key orientation at existing and future information and orientation facilities such as the Folk Art Center and Parkway Headquarters at Hemphill Knob.

Management objectives for this district will focus on safeguarding the scenic corridor. Skillful management of the Parkway in cooperation with other agencies, organizations, and private landowners conserves the current high quality cultural and natural resources. Managers will seek to secure, through acquisition, boundary adjustment, or other means, a land base that is adequate to ensure long- term perpetuation of resources, efficient management, and diverse recreational opportunities. Resource managers will develop, through research or other means, an adequate database for the Blue Ridge Parkway that can be used in cultural and natural resource management.

Management objectives for the Parkway in the vicinity of Asheville emphasize cooperation with urban and non- urban areas. Innovative partnerships can establish a conservation and ecological ethic that will create sound use patterns and foster understanding, appreciation, and protection of the Parkway and its resources. Provision of appropriate visitor contact facilities help visitors understand, appreciate, and properly use and protect significant resources.

BEACON HEIGHTS/MILEPOST 305.2

Site Theme

The smooth, quartzite outcrop called Beacon Heights provides a spectacular view of the Grandfather Corridor.

Appropriate Topics

History of Beacon Heights as a vantage point for travelers
High elevation natural history
Orientation to peaks of Linville Gorge
Geology

Visitor Experience

Visitors will appreciate the rugged natural and cultural history of Beacon Heights.

Interpretive Recommendations

A trailhead exhibit should summarize appropriate topics and describe trail route, length, difficulty, and experience opportunities.

THE BLACK MOUNTAINS

BLACK MOUNTAINS OVERLOOKING THE ASHEVILLE WATERSHED milepost 259

BLACK MOUNTAINS OVERLOOKING THE ASHEVILLE WATERSHED milepost 259

AMPHITHEATER AT CRABTREE MEADOWS milepost 340

LIN COVE VIADUCT, ROUGH RIDGE, & "THE GREAT WALL" AT GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN milepost 304.0

LINVILLE FALLS & OVERLOOK milepost 316.4

LINVILLE RIVER BRIDGE milepost 316.6

TANAWHA TRAIL BRIDGING BOONE FORK milepost 300

Soon after the roadway crosses Grandfather Mountain, the highest point on the Blue Ridge, it passes the 1,500 foot deep chasm, Linville Gorge. Geology is one of the main features of this region. The Museum of North Carolina Minerals was constructed to showcase the mineral wealth of the region. Past the Linville area, the Parkway leaves the Blue Ridge and skirts the Black Mountains and the highest peak east of the Mississippi, Mount Mitchell at 6,684 feet. The departure from the Blue Ridge is necessary to provide the connection to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. From Mount Mitchell, the Parkway negotiates the Great Craddy Mountains and its open heath beds on its way to the city of Asheville.

DATE: 1997
 DRAWN BY: CAROL K. HAZEL, LISA SHANKLIN & ELIZABETH GRADIN
 PROJECT: BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY
 COUNTY: WATAUGA
 CITY: CARRIAGE
 STATE: NORTH CAROLINA
 SCALE: 1" = 1 MILE
 SHEET: 112

GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN OVERLOOK/MILEPOST 306.6**Site Theme**

Grandfather Mountain represents the peak of the Blue Ridge in height and grandeur.

Appropriate Topics

Natural history of the Grandfather Corridor
How Grandfather Mountain got its name

Visitor Experience

Visitors will understand the natural and cultural significance of Grandfather Mountain in the Blue Ridge province.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation may include wayside exhibits supplemented with roving personal service, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside visitor centers.

FLAT ROCK PARKING AREA AND NATURE TRAIL/MILEPOST 308.3**Site Theme**

The one-half mile Flat Rock Nature Trail loops visitors through a geologic marvel of weatherworn, gray quartzite crisscrossed with stringers of white quartz.

Appropriate Topics

Geology of the Grandfather Corridor
Weather
Orientation to the view of the Linville River valley

Visitor Experience

Visitors will discover how weather and geology have combined to form a geologic marvel.

Hikers and motor road travelers will have a beautiful location to view this natural phenomenon.

Interpretive Recommendations

A trailhead exhibit should include trail route, length, difficulty, and experience opportunities.

Update and reinstall trail wayside exhibits at appropriate locations along the nature trail.

LOST COVE CLIFFS/MILEPOST 310

Site Theme

Mysterious lights from the valley of Brown Mountain have "haunted" residents and travelers for generations.

Appropriate Topics

Mystery of the Brown Mountain lights
Mountain "lost coves," isolated inlets extending far into the mountains.

Visitor Experience

Visitors will learn about the legend of the Brown Mountain lights, and may be lucky enough to witness the lights for themselves.

Interpretive Recommendations

Maintain the existing wayside and conduct roving personal services when possible.

LINVILLE FALLS/MILEPOST 316.5

Site Theme

Linville Falls pours through a forested gorge of virgin timber stands, as pristine and primitive as in the days when only American Indians frequented this area.

Appropriate Topics

Cultural history of Linville Falls
Geology of Linville Falls
Natural history of Linville Falls, including aquatic and forest ecology and associated species

Visitor Experience

This area offers several experience "zones" to help visitors appreciate the natural and historical significance of Linville Falls and the Linville River:

parking lot and visitor contact station - easy to understand site orientation and trip planning;

bridge and short section of trail south of river - overview interpretation of site themes easily accessible to all visitors;

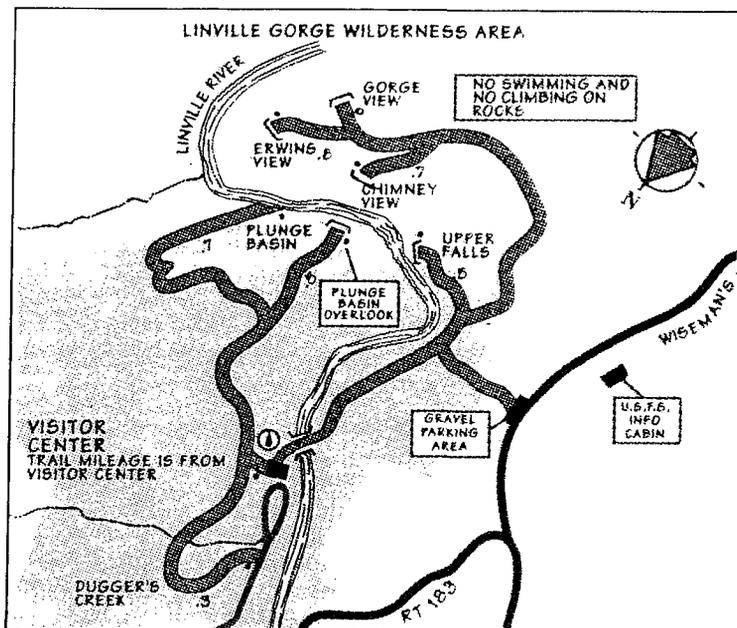
waterfall trail and overlooks - immersion in area resources.

Visitors can view interpretive media compatible with the natural character of the experience "zone" they choose to visit.

Visitors can explore trails to find their own level of intimacy with the resources from passive at the visitor center to wildness and solitude in the gorge.

Interpretive Recommendations

Develop a visitor center interpretation plan. The plan should analyze and recommend actions to improve visitor services at the visitor center and surrounding landscape.



Visitor center interpretation should emphasize personal services and an effective site orientation exhibit. The information desk should be reconfigured to more effectively facilitate interaction between desk personnel and the visitor seeking orientation and trip planning information. If the information desk cannot be enlarged to accommodate both orientation and sales, only site-specific items should be offered for sale at this location to increase space available for orientation/information.

Consideration should be given to enclosing a portion of the breezeway, perhaps creating a "L" shaped information desk with separate sections of the desk dedicated to sales and information. Architectural modification should be done carefully to retain the pleasing, open-air character of the original design.

The existing orientation map faces 180 degrees from the location it was designed to occupy. In its present position, it creates more confusion than clarification of visitor location in relation to primary resources.

The panel should be replaced with a more effective orientation exhibit that provides concise information about the Linville Falls Trail system and points of interest.

New wayside exhibits, four to six in number, at the parking lot, mounted on the bridge across Linville River and on a short section of trail south of the river could interpret site themes. Exhibit location in an outdoor environment would emphasize area resources and encourage visitors to further explore trails in the vicinity. One or two exhibits at the parking lot would welcome visitors, direct them to the visitor contact station, and provide basic interpretation of site theme. One exhibit on the bridge, facing up-stream, would interpret headwaters aquatic ecology. Another, facing down-stream, would interpret Linville Gorge geology and valley aquatic ecology. One exhibit on the trail immediately beyond the end of the bridge would interpret forest ecology and invite visitors to the trail system. A second trail exhibit a short distance from the first, at least prior to entering the hemlock grove, should attempt to establish a sense of wildness to facilitate visitor experiences farther along the trail that do not require interpretive media.

The experience of "immersion in the resource," the roaring water rushing through the gorge and the phenomenal rock formations that are accessible to visitors who walk area trails should be the primary interpretation media in the area beyond the wayside exhibit locations described above. Publications and, when staff is available, roving personal service to avoid media intrusion upon a spectacular natural environment should accomplish additional interpretation at the trails and

overlooks. Publication of a simple inexpensive sales item sold at the visitor center information desk when staffed and from a exterior dispenser box when the facility is closed could function as a onsite trail guide and souvenir booklet.

VIEW OF NORTH TOE RIVER VALLEY/MILEPOST 318.4

Site Theme

The Toe River region is 250 square miles of mineral wealth.

Appropriate Topics

Mineral formations: mica, feldspar, kaolin, and quartz.
Mining in the Blue Ridge

Visitor Experience

Visitors will understand the natural processes associated with mineral production and mining in the area.

Visitors can view dramatic vistas to appreciate the natural beauty and hidden wealth of the region's geology.

Interpretive Recommendations

Develop a wayside exhibit for this location to complement Museum of North Carolina Minerals interpretation. Exhibit content should link minerals themes and topics to roadside experiences available to visitors traveling north or south.

VIEW OF APPLE ORCHARDS FROM HEFFNER GAP/MILEPOST 325.9

Site Theme

The garden-like arrangement of apple trees has brought both beauty and prosperity to the Heffner Gap area.

Appropriate Topics

Mountain agriculture/industry - focus on apple/orchard production
Orchard life exemplified by the McKinney and Heffner families
Honeybees
Scenic view protection

Visitor Experience

Views from the overlook will help visitors appreciate the aesthetic cultural landscape created by agriculture in the mountains and understand the fiscal value of apples to the area.

Visitors will get to know the people and understand the colorful history of the families associated with the orchard.

Interpretive Recommendations

Nearby privately owned orchard facilities could supplement wayside exhibit interpretation at the overlook by providing craft demonstrations, music, and sales.

VIEW OF "THE LOOPS"/MILEPOST 328.6

Site Theme

Railroads "looped" upward along these mountain slopes, carrying produce from Appalachian fields and manufactured goods from distant factories.

Appropriate Topics

The Clinchfield Railroad
Industry and agriculture in Appalachia
Transportation routes through the mountains

Visitor Experience

Visitors will learn the role of Clinchfield Railroad in sustaining mountain industries and community life.

Visitors will be encouraged to relate local transportation stories to the broad scope of American transportation experience.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation includes wayside exhibits supplemented with roving personal service, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside visitor centers.

MUSEUM OF NORTH CAROLINA MINERALS/MILEPOST 330.9

Overview

The National Park Service cooperated with the state of North Carolina in 1958 to fund and open the Museum of North Carolina Minerals at Gillespie Gap to assist regional visitors in experiencing the mineral resources of the area. The museum originally had an extensive reference collection of minerals, an active collecting policy, a technically equipped mineralogical laboratory, a permanent staff geologist/naturalist, and an up-to-date and accurate series of exhibits. The museum is still the largest facility on the Parkway constructed primarily for interpretation and receives approximately 215,000 visits annually.

Exhibits and related personal service activities at the museum present economic themes related to mining (past and present).

Exhibits based on the most recent research and professionally planned, designed and produced now interpret themes reflective of the interest and sophistication of today's visitors. Exhibits tell the story of North Carolina's minerals within a larger geologic context that includes social, economic, and cultural aspects of mineral extraction in the region. Exhibits display mineral specimens and gems to attract several levels of visitor interest.

Personal services encourage visitors to participate in learning activities, and audiovisual elements help people understand geologic processes. Video components attract visitors and effectively bring to life the social and cultural aspects of minerals for both children and adults. Interpretation enhanced by identification of common, contemporary products derived from minerals illustrates processes necessary to manufacture those products from their mineral origins.

Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce occupies a portion of the building to provide regional orientation to visitors. Eastern National staff operates sales area and answers questions about the Parkway. An annual Over-Mountain Victory Trail Celebration in September attracts visitors interested in seeing living history demonstrations commemorating exploits of the mountain men who defeated the British in the Battle of Kings Mountain.

Site Theme

The wealth of minerals found in North Carolina has a profound influence on the history, environment, and social evolution of the region.

Appropriate Topics

Mines and mining technology
Mining community life
Regional gems and minerals
Mountain building processes
Geology of the Southern Appalachians
The Over- Mountain Men

Visitor Experiences

Visitors will have easy access to staff, maps, and information necessary to plan their trip to the area.

Visitors can participate in appropriately balanced and integrated interpretation and information services provided by National Park Service and partner agencies.

Visitors will receive interpretation that reflects current, accurate, balanced research information.

Visitors can learn about site interpretive themes to the depths they choose through a variety of media.

Visitors will have an understanding of the wealth of minerals found in the state, and their relationship to natural and cultural life.

Visitors will learn of the significance of this site to the Over- Mountain Men, who passed here on their historic trip to Kings Mountain during the Revolutionary War.

Visitors can discover the relevance of minerals to themselves that encourage wise use and appreciation of minerals in modern life.

Interpretive Recommendations

Interpretive managers should consider development of a Discovery Station exhibit for display in the museum. The exhibit could also be transported to regional schools and community gatherings as part of the Parks- As- Classrooms program to encourage school systems to visit the Museum as an education lab.

If the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce vacates their portion of the facility, the vacated space should be considered for a computer/science lab as part of the Parks- As- Classrooms program.

The "over- mountain" story is referenced inside the museum exhibit space, but the story could be told outside. The story told inside the museum relates to the geology of the area and its affect on transportation. The over- mountain troops passed this way because of gaps (geology) in the mountains. Demonstrations and other personal service activities would be appropriate as commemorative events. A wayside exhibit appropriately located in relation to the existing monument to the Over- Mountain Men, parking lot and museum building would link this section of the Parkway to Kings Mountain National Military Park in South Carolina.

CRABTREE MEADOWS RECREATION AREA/MILEPOST 339.5

Site Theme

The meadows, adjoining forest, and spectacular Crabtree Falls provide a cool and delightful summer retreat within the shadow of the massive Black Mountain Range.

Appropriate Topics

Appalachian forest succession and ecology
 Waterfalls, streams, and aquatic ecology
 Camping safety
 Visitor orientation
 Parkway design of recreation areas
 Civilian Conservation Corps and conscientious objectors
 Area- specific Appalachian culture

Visitor Experience

Visitors will have opportunities to participate in a variety of recreational activities at Crabtree Meadows.

Visitors will appreciate the natural significance of Crabtree Falls and understand the ecosystem it helps support.

Visitors can immerse themselves in the resource to the extent they want and that is compatible with resource conditions.

Interpretive Recommendations

Develop a site bulletin with map, text, and graphics to identify and encourage use of all facilities and experience opportunities.

Develop an orientation exhibit for display where it can easily be seen at the concession facility and the campground entrance. Like the site bulletin described above, orientation exhibits should include a map of the entire site and description of experience opportunities. Each orientation exhibit could include a brochure dispenser to distribute the site bulletin described above.

Parkway staff should work with concession staff to improve orientation and interpretation inside the concession facility.

MOUNT MITCHELL STATE PARK/MILEPOST 355.4

Site Theme

Mount Mitchell, the broad, central dome of the massive Black Mountain Range, rises 6,684 feet, the highest point in eastern America.

Appropriate Topics

Partnership management - state and federal

What's killing the trees?

Air pollution

High elevation habitat/forest ecology, including native natural/endangered species

Hiking/camping

Cultural history of Mt. Mitchell - story of Dr. Elisha Mitchell, tourism, logging

Visitor Experience

Visitor understanding and appreciation of the fragility of the habitat on Mount Mitchell encourages appropriate behavior that contributes to resource protection.

Visitors will learn the story of Dr. Mitchell and his attempts to prove the height of Mt. Mitchell.

Visitors can participate in an array of interpretive and recreational activities from passive watching/listening to active involvement.

Visitors participate in an integrated interpretive program developed cooperatively by the National Park Service and partners.

Visitors will become oriented to the Black Mountain Range and understand their relationship to surrounding ranges in the southern Appalachians.

Interpretive Recommendations

Enhance cooperative interpretive activities between the National Park Service and North Carolina State Parks.

GLASSMINE FALLS/MILEPOST 361.2

Site Theme

Near the base of this 200- foot waterfall, the glint of mica shines as a reminder of old mountain "glass" mines.

Appropriate Topics

Mica mining

Geology of the southern Appalachians

Waterfalls

Local cultural history - Will Arwood and the Abernathy Mine

Visitor Experience

Visitors will understand that the term "Glassmine" refers to the old glass or mica mines at the base of the waterfall, and will learn the relevance of mica mining to the Toe River area.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation includes wayside exhibit supplemented with roving personal service, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside visitor centers.

CRAGGY GARDENS/MILEPOST 364.1 - 367.6

Site Theme

The mass of rhododendron blossoms that blanket the heath balds of Craggy has attracted visitors for generations.

Appropriate Topics

Air quality/weather/climate

High elevation vegetation - wildflowers, heath balds, rhododendron varieties, rare plants

Native wildlife/bears

History of tourism in the mountains

Visitor Experience

Visitors will understand the unique natural features of the Heath Balds at high elevations and contemplate reasons for their formation.

Visitors will understand that Craggy Gardens has attracted tourists since the early 19th century.

Visitors may choose to view the heath balds from the comfort of a warm, welcoming visitor center interior or from outdoor overlooks to experience the sometimes- harsh (cold, windy) natural environment.

Interpretive Recommendations

The park- produced exhibits are very well done. They can be retained with modification until funding is available for improvement. The protruding exhibit panels on the south wall should be redesigned as flat wall- mounted exhibits to improve lighting on the "Nature's Garden" exhibit and adjacent photo panel. Original botanical sketches in the exhibits are faded; they should be replaced with copies or with new original art that can be protected from damaging light.

When funds become available, the interior of the visitor center should be redesigned and new exhibits installed. Interior design should facilitate exterior views from the interior and enhance interior atmosphere as a comfortable, welcoming place in a sometimes- harsh natural environment. An interior design exhibit plan should be funded as soon as possible to guide development of improvements.

HAW CREEK VALLEY OVERLOOK/MILEPOST 380.0

Site Theme

The Haw Creek Valley, largely a farming valley until the 1980's, now represents one of the fastest growing suburban neighborhoods in the city of Asheville, and thus one of the fastest changing views along the Parkway.

Appropriate Topics

View protection
Urbanization
Exotic species

Visitor Experience

Visitors will appreciate how quickly land use can change and how Parkway views can change.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation could include a wayside exhibit interpreting the changing landscape supplemented with roving personal service, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside visitor centers.

FOLK ART CENTER/MILEPOST 382.0

Overview

Built with funding from Appalachian Regional Commission and Southern Highland Craft Guild and in conjunction with the National Park Service, the Folk Art Center opened in 1980. Under terms of its agreement with Appalachian Regional Commission and the Parkway, the center was developed to preserve and interpret the many expressions of folk art associated with the southern Appalachians, including music, dance, and storytelling as well as crafts. The Folk Art Center is by



far the largest visitor facility on the Parkway. It houses the Allen Stand Craft Shop, library, exhibit gallery for rotating displays, a large auditorium, and a cooperating association book store and Parkway information desk. The facility, open seven days a week year-round with extended

hours of operation in summer, annually receives over a quarter million visits. A handicapped accessible trail encourages exterior exploration. Because crafts are exempt from franchise fees, the guild provides no direct revenue to the National Park Service; however, it does maintain the building and is responsible for repair of the structure. In addition, it provides grounds maintenance for the immediate exterior.

Guild artisans demonstrate a variety of arts and crafts in the Folk Art Center lobby. Special events and workshops highlight a wide range of craft production techniques. The guild is expanding educational activities with a goal of substantially increasing its commitment to public education.

Parkway staff offers orientation slide programs in the auditorium during the summer. The Folk Art Center also supports Junior Ranger camps during the summer.

Site Theme

The Folk Art Center, showcasing area crafts through a successful partnership between the Southern Highland Craft Guild and the National Park Service, highlights and sells mountain art from traditional to contemporary.

Appropriate Topics

Parkway orientation

Crafts, traditional music, dance, and storytelling

Cultural history of the southern Appalachians

Crafts Revival Movement in Appalachia

Related topic: natural resources and their influence on arts, crafts, music, and mountain life

Visitor Experience

Exposure to a variety of arts and crafts will help visitors understand traditional, and secondarily contemporary, arts and crafts in their cultural context - historic origins and continuity and change over time.

Visitors will participate in appropriately integrated activities developed cooperatively by the National Park Service and guild to offer a complete, balanced southern Appalachian cultural experience.

Visitors will understand history of Southern Highland Craft Guild and the social and economic role of crafts.

Visitors will understand the influence of the natural environment on artistic expression and the creation of handicrafts.

Visitors will be able to learn about things to see and do in the area and on the Parkway and purchase related literature.

Visitors will be able to view exhibits of craft history, techniques and products, and participate in production of a variety of crafts.

Visitors will identify the Folk Art Center and Blue Ridge Parkway as a single unit of the National Park System.

Interpretive Recommendation

Redesign and relocation of interior and exterior exhibits would improve arrival experience for visitors to the Folk Art Center.

Exterior wayside exhibits should focus more closely on cultural stories specifically related to the Center. These exhibits would be more effective if placed between the parking lot and the Center rather than their present location adjacent to the entrance road.

New exhibits are needed for the interior entrance area to set the stage for the visitor experience and to give an overview of the guild, Parkway, and this facility. The importance and historical context of the guild and the arts and crafts movement are poorly communicated at present. One exhibit, "What Is Folk Art?" could introduce the many interpretations of folk art and the media by which it is expressed. A prominent park ranger presence and information desk near the entrance, museum exhibits, audiovisual programs and publications should be used in such a way that visitors will understand the importance and connection of this Center to the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The previous recommendations are based on existing developments. Should a regional destination center be built as has been proposed in the past, the Parkway should re-evaluate how to present the orientation function to visitors. Media presentation and publication distribution might more appropriately focus at the new destination center.

As an immediate action, a video produced by the guild and a Parkway orientation slide program should be shown regularly in the auditorium. In the future, a 10- 15 minute professional quality video should replace the slide program. The program would orient visitors to the Parkway and provide vicarious accessibility to scenes that are often not available to visitors because of distant location, difficult terrain, and frequent fog.

The video could also present examples of the grand sweep of the landscape, natural processes at work and cultural history coming to life to encourage visitors to travel more of the Parkway to experience it more completely. The video could effectively convey the scenic values, recreational opportunities, and significant resources along the 469-mile roadway.

In addition to this short theater presentation described above, a longer, perhaps 60-minute, version should be considered for sale where appropriate. Revenue generated from sales would offset production costs and could possibly be used for other interpretive projects.

The theatre should be rehabilitated to correct the echo and "hardness" in the room. Carpeting and wall treatments would help to soften the sound. A Harpers Ferry Center technical director could evaluate the theater and recommend specific changes to improve audio and visual quality.

National Park Service interpretive managers should be involved early and thoroughly in the guild's proposed education program development. Continued and improved coordination and cooperation between national park and guild staff would enhance visitor experiences in the Center and on the Parkway. Special programs might describe what folk art means and present talks on history and meaning of the craft movement. A new publication providing an overview of the interpretive stories associated with the Folk Art Center might become a popular interpretive and souvenir sales item.

Develop placards for the sales area to identify traditional crafts, illustrate how these objects are made and to introduce the craftsman. These could be displayed at various places in the shop. The many DO NOT TOUCH signs should be removed and sensitive items that cannot withstand visitor contact displayed in glass cases.

HEMPHILL KNOB/MILEPOST 384

Site Theme

Hemphill Knob houses the administrative offices of the Blue Ridge Parkway and provides a source for orientation and information for visitors.

Appropriate Topics

Orientation to the Blue Ridge Parkway

Orientation to western North Carolina
Parkway design and construction
History of the Blue Ridge Parkway
Appalachian natural history
Appalachian cultural history

Visitor Experience

Visitors can easily obtain basic information necessary to safely, enjoyably, and easily find and participate in available Parkway recreational and interpretive opportunities.

Visitors find directions to locations for more detailed information and interpretation related to cultural and natural features, visitor facilities, activities, and services.

Visitors should understand the significance of the Blue Ridge Parkway as a national attraction and appreciate the diversity of Parkway resources.

Interpretive Recommendations

The Park Headquarters should have information available for walk-in visitors. The receptionist stationed there should be well informed and well equipped with information handouts.

A major access center should be developed at Asheville, either at the Parkway Headquarters at Hemphill Knob, the Folk Art Center, or a new facility to be developed in the vicinity. This location is convenient to travelers and provides Parkway access from major interstate travel corridors. The access center would interpret area themes, orient visitors to Blue Ridge Parkway, provide information about experience opportunities on the Parkway and in nearby communities, and distribute pre-visit materials to potential visitors. Multi-agency participation would lessen the burden of visitor service for each participating entity.

THE NORTH CAROLINA ARBORETUM/MILEPOST 393.6

Site Theme

The North Carolina Arboretum provides one of the best displays of Appalachian flora in the region and tells the continuing story of how people have adapted to and used these native plants in their daily lives.

Appropriate Topics

Useful plants: medicinal, wild edibles, and natural dyes
Native landscapes
Habitat diversity
Rare plants
Forest ecology
Mountain farming practices

Visitor Experience

Visitors will learn the significant role that native plants have played in the lives of southern Appalachian residents.

Interpretive Recommendations

Continue and enhance cooperative programming between the National Park Service and the North Carolina Arboretum.

THE FRENCH BROAD PARKING OVERLOOK/MILEPOST 393.8

Site Theme

The French Broad River has provided access and livelihood to southern Appalachian residents for centuries.

Appropriate Topics

The Drover's Road
Water gaps
Aquatic ecology: water quality/watersheds
View protection

Visitor Experience

Visitors will learn about the historical importance of the French Broad River to the cultural, natural, and scenic health of the Appalachian Mountains.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation could include wayside exhibits interpreting topics related to the site theme. Wayside exhibits should be supplemented with roving personal service, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside visitor centers.

MT. PISGAH/MILEPOST 408

Overview

The Mt. Pisgah developed area provides recreational and educational opportunities appropriate for a varied audience. A popular concession operated lodge and restaurant attracts many visitors who want to experience the resources of the Parkway from a somewhat comfortable environment. Other visitors use the campground and trails to experience the resources from a different perspective. Each group may have an equal interest in the Parkway and should have equal opportunity to access information and interpretation concerning the resource.

Most interpretive activities in the developed area are concentrated at the campground where campfire programs are held seven days a week. The small amphitheater attracts up to 125 people, but has seating for considerably fewer. It is difficult to find, especially for people from the lodge, and there is no parking for people who are not staying at the campground.

Site Theme

This major natural landmark in the southern mountains has attracted entrepreneurs, loggers, and visitors for two centuries.

Appropriate Topics

- High altitude bog habitat
- Tourism in the mountains
- Impacts of logging and industrialization
- Air quality
- High elevation forest decline
- Buck Spring Lodge/George Vanderbilt

Visitor Experience

Visitors can select from a variety of media to explore interpretive themes to the depth they choose and participate in interpretive activities at locations appropriate to their level of interest, acceptable comfort, and accessibility.

Visitors will learn about the natural and cultural significance of the Mt. Pisgah area.

Interpretive Recommendations

Interpretive media at Mt. Pisgah will include amphitheater programs, interpretive roves, programs at the Pisgah Inn, wayside exhibits, and site bulletins.

Some trails in this area need better identification. The developed area trail system should be identified at central locations to assure all visitors an opportunity to learn about walking opportunities. Distinct trailhead wayside exhibits should identify individual trails in the area. The trailhead exhibits should illustrate the trail in relation to other trails in the area; it should also show trail route, length, difficulty, and experience opportunities.

The amphitheater at Pisgah Campground needs to be updated and improved. It should either be relocated or expanded on the existing site and adequate parking provided nearby. Lighting along the walkway to the amphitheater would attract visitors and provide safe access to the seating area. Perhaps a map on the back of a ticket would help visitors find the amphitheater.

Personal service activities should be provided convenient to and appropriate for the visitors who use this developed area. Activity locations should be alternated between the amphitheater and the lodge to meet the needs of both user groups. Interpreters should answer the following questions before designing interpretive activities. Who is the audience? How can the approved themes for this area be most effectively presented to that audience? Where can activities best be presented to encourage intended audience participation?

Facilitate cooperation between the National Park Service and the concession to enhance interpretation opportunities.

PINK BEDS/MILEPOST 410.3

Site Theme

The Pink Beds contain one of the most extensive and luxuriant understories of mountain laurel and rosebay rhododendron in the southern Appalachians.

Appropriate Topics

Appalachian flora
 Scenic views and adjacent land development/protection
 Historic natural attractions

Visitor Experience

Visitors will learn about the natural history of health communities that have attracted people for generations.

- Visitors gain an appreciation of the exceptional scenic attractions along the Parkway and understand the importance of their preservation.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation could include wayside exhibits interpreting topics related to the site theme. Wayside exhibits could be supplemented with roving personal service, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside visitor centers.

CRADLE OF FORESTRY/MILEPOST 411

Site Theme

The science of American forestry was born in these scenic woodlands, later dubbed "The Cradle of Forestry."

Appropriate Topics

Forestry science in America
Logging in the mountains
Appalachian forest ecology
Lives of George Vanderbilt and Gifford Pinchot
Modern forestry practices visible along the Parkway

Visitor Experience

Visitors will learn about the history of forestry in America and about the importance of modern national forest management practices to the beauty and health of the region.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation could include wayside exhibits interpreting topics related to the site theme. Wayside exhibits could be supplemented with roving personal service, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside visitor centers.

CHERRY COVE/MILEPOST 415.7

Site Theme

Millions of monarch butterflies make their epic migrations through Cherry Cove each fall, their destination – Mexico!

Appropriate Topics

Monarch migration
The Appalachian migration corridor
Parkway as a migration corridor

Visitor Experience

From mid- September until early November, visitors may witness the migration of monarch butterflies as those seemingly fragile creatures pass directly through the overlook on their long journey.

Visitors will understand the significance of this species migration and how the Parkway helps protect the corridor.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation could include wayside exhibits interpreting topics related to the site theme. Wayside exhibits could be supplemented with roving personal service interpretation, especially in September.

LOOKING GLASS ROCK/MILEPOST 417

Site Theme

Although Looking Glass Rock, a geologic pluton, was originally formed by underground volcanic activity, centuries of erosion have shaped it to the familiar dome we see today.

Appropriate Topics

Appalachian mountain formation
Geology
The "Looking Glass" (water frozen and reflected off the granitic rock face)

Visitor Experience

Visitors will have opportunity to experience the beautiful view of Looking Glass Rock.

They will gain an understanding and appreciation of the interesting geologic history associated with the Appalachian Mountains.

Interpretive Recommendations

Site interpretation could include wayside exhibits depicting the geological process that created Looking Glass Rock. Wayside exhibits could be supplemented with roving personal service, free and sales publications distributed elsewhere, or media inside visitor centers.

GRAVEYARD FIELDS/MILEPOST 418.8

Site Theme

The extraordinary biological diversity apparent at Graveyard Fields is partially the result of a great fire that destroyed over 25,000 acres of high-grade timber on Thanksgiving Eve, 1925.

Appropriate Topics

High elevation forest ecology: fire, succession, historic logging practices, wild edibles

Air quality

Bear management

Aquatic ecology and fishing

Hiking and backpacking safety

Visitor Experience

Visitors can choose to see Graveyard Fields from an overlook or to immerse themselves in this special environment by hiking.

People should have access to information that encourages an appreciation for the ancient natural history of the area and of the permanent effects of people on the environment.

Interpretive Recommendations

Continue cooperation with the National Forest Service to provide visitor access from the Parkway to the national forest trail system.

Encourage park ranger personal service roving contacts at the overlook.

DEVIL'S COURTHOUSE/MILEPOST 422.4

Site Theme

The bare rock profile of Devil's Courthouse is forbidding in look and legend; its "devilish" appearance contributes to folk tales surrounding this mountain. Despite its name and reputation, Devil's Courthouse provides a safe haven to rare and delicate high- altitude plants.

Appropriate Topics

High altitude ecosystems and rare plants
 Geology
 Appalachian folk tales and legends
 Climbing safety and ethics

Visitor Experience

Visitors gain a clear understanding of the natural and cultural significance of Devil's Courthouse.

Interpretive Recommendations

Evaluate the existing wayside and make changes if necessary to accurately relate the Cherokee legend in a sensitive manner that may be accepted by affected culture groups.

RICHLAND BALSAM/MILEPOST 431.4

Site Theme

This highest peak of the Great Balsam Range is also the highest point on the Blue Ridge Parkway, but its beauty may be destroyed and its forests changed forever by the ravages of insects and air pollution.

Appropriate Topics

High elevation forest ecology
 Balsam wooly adelgid
 Highest point on Blue Ridge Parkway
 Mountain building processes
 Rare and endangered species
 Climate and weather in the mountains

Visitor Experience

Visitors will experience the natural beauty of the high elevation peaks and the views from this highest point on the Parkway.

Visitors will gain an understanding of the fragility of this natural area.

Interpretive Recommendations

An existing wayside exhibit and trail interprets high elevation plants. Existing interpretive media should be supplemented with roving personal services at the overlook and occasional guided walks on the trail.

RABB KNOB OVERLOOK/MILEPOST 441.9

Site Theme

Balsam Gap provided vital passage through the Appalachian Chain for American Indians, European explorers, and white settlers alike.

Appropriate Topics

Rutherford's expedition
Appalachian valleys as transportation corridors
Settlement in the mountains

Visitor Experience

Visitors will learn about transportation and settlement in the Appalachian region.

Interpretive Recommendations

Review existing wayside exhibit for accuracy and cultural sensitivity. Make changes if either accuracy or sensitivity can be improved.

WATERROCK KNOB/MILEPOST 451.2

Site Theme

The 360-degree view from Waterrock Knob stretches the eyes over the heart of the Southern Highlands, including all of the major southern mountain ranges (the Great Balsams, Great Smokies, Coweas, Nantahalas, Blue Ridge, Newfound Mountains, Blacks, and Craggies.)

Appropriate Topics

Visitor information/orientation
 The Great Smoky Mountains
 Air quality
 Cherokee history
 Mountain range identification
 Appalachian flora/fauna, especially high elevation forest ecology

Visitor Experience

Visitors will view the extraordinary vistas from Waterrock Knob.

Visitors will become oriented with the Blue Ridge Parkway and gain an understanding of the natural and scenic significance of the park.

Visitors will receive information about past (Cherokee, early settlers) and present uses in the southern mountain ranges that fosters appreciation for natural/cultural integration and encourages appropriate visitor behavior and conservation of resources.

Interpretive Recommendations

An audio or traveler's information station (TIS) at the parking lot powered by 12-volt deep cycle marine batteries would provide information and interpretation when the visitor center is closed. Interpretive staff could easily change messages in response to changing resources (fall colors) and safety conditions (snow, fog). The station speakers may be incorporated into a wayside exhibit.

PARKWAY SOUTH ENTRANCE/MILEPOST 469

Overview

The entrance to the Parkway should convey a "sense of arrival" at a special place for visitors arriving from outside parklands or from Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The existing obscure entrance does not convey this sense. The proximity of entrances to two national parks probably confuse many potential visitors who first stop at the much more visible Oconoluftee Visitor Center at the entrance to Great Smoky Mountains National Park. That visitor center provides no orientation or information concerning its neighbor, Blue Ridge Parkway. The orientation and interpretation wayside exhibits at the entrance to the Parkway are not located where visitors can safely stop their vehicles to read them from their car, and absence of parking denies foot access to this important exhibit.



Site Theme

Cherokee, North Carolina is a historic tourist destination and an appropriate starting point for two major National Park Service areas that were designed to promote tourism in the southern mountains.

Appropriate Topics

Orientation to Blue Ridge Parkway

Blue Ridge Parkway - a connecting road between Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Shenandoah National Park

Tourism in the mountains

Visitor Experience

Visitors will have an aesthetically pleasing and welcoming starting point for their visit to the Parkway.

Visitors should have easy access to information on facilities, recreational opportunities and services available on the Parkway.

Visitors will have opportunity for exposure to the concept of tourism in the mountains and the role of Blue Ridge Parkway and Great Smoky Mountains National Park in that story.

Visitors traveling between Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Blue Ridge Parkway should find a clear distinction between the areas but understand that both are equally important National Park Service areas.

Interpretive Recommendations

Parkway staff should work with Great Smoky Mountains National Park staff to reduce confusion caused by the proximity of entrances to Blue Ridge Parkway and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The Parkway should be introduced to visitors inside the Oconoluftee Visitor Center. Directions to the Parkway should be clearly indicated and the route of travel should be easy to find from Oconoluftee Visitor Center and Cherokee, North Carolina.

The Parkway entry area should be redesigned to create an appropriate "sense of arrival" at a special place. The Parkway should be prominently identified at the entrance in compliance with guidelines and standards outlined in the National Park Service "Message Project." Orientation should be promptly available and readily accessible immediately before or after the entrance. The existing wayside might be relocated and a welcome area developed to allow visitors to stop to get information and interpretation necessary for them to appreciate the experiences awaiting them on the 469-mile Parkway. Information could also help visitors departing the Parkway decide their appropriate route of travel to Cherokee or to Great Smoky Mountains National Park. An alternative to exhibits might be a travelers information radio station (TIS) at the entrance to provide the information and interpretation.

A joint visitor center with vehicle access to both park entrances should be considered for future development to provide information about parks, forests, and regional visitor attractions and travel accommodations and services.

PLANNING TEAM AND CONSULTANTS

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

Dan Brown	Superintendent
Bruce Bytnar	District Ranger
Ed W. Clark	Supervisory Park Ranger
Tina Charlebois	District Interpreter
Mindy DeCesar	District Interpreter
Gary Everhardt	Former Superintendent
Peter Givens	Staff Interpretive Specialist
Jill Hawk	Former District Ranger
Gary W. Johnson	Chief, Resource Planning/ Professional Services
Roy Jones	Civil Engineer
Patty Lockamy	Chief of Interpretation
Michele Maertens	District Interpreter
Phil Noblitt	Management Assistant
Will Orr	Former Landscape Architect
Brent Pennington	District Ranger
Randy Sutton	District Interpreter
Gordon Wissinger	Chief, Resource Management/ Visitor Services
Rick Wyatt	Concessions Specialist

SOUTHEAST REGION

Pricilla L. Nalls	Education and Visitor Services
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HARPERS FERRY CENTER

John Demer	Historic Furnishings Specialist
Ben Miller	Exhibits Specialist
Keith Morgan	Park Ranger - Planner
Anne Tubiolo	Audiovisual Producer- Director

OTHER

Art Allen	Blue Ridge Parkway (Retired)
Gib Backland	Stones River National Battlefield
Thomas B. Bailey	Southern Highland Handicraft Guild
W. Eugene Cox	Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Gerldine Ellis	Mitchell Chamber of Commerce
Tom Hardy	Blue Ridge Parkway Association
Laurie Huttunen	Allanstand Craft Shop

James W. Milburn, Jr.	National Park Concessions, Inc.
Rich Owings	North Carolina Arboretum
Karen Searle	Eastern National
Jane Sutton	Quinn Publishing Company
Stephen V. Toomey	Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce
Phillip Williams	Eastern National
Kathleen Curtis Wilson	Asheville, North Carolina

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Special Populations: Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media

National Park Service
Harpers Ferry Center

June 1999

Prepared by
Harpers Ferry Center
Accessibility Task Force

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Wayside Exhibits

GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETIVE MEDIA - JUNE 1999

The following guidelines were prepared by the Harpers Ferry Center Accessibility Task Force to advise the National Park Service concerning interpretive media planning and design.

Statement of Purpose

This document is a guide for promoting full access to interpretive media to ensure that people with physical and mental disabilities have access to the same information necessary for safe and meaningful visits to National Parks. Just as the needs and abilities of individuals cannot be reduced to simple statements, it is impossible to construct guidelines for interpretive media that can apply to every situation in the National Park System.

These guidelines define a high level of programmatic access that can be met in most situations. They articulate key areas of concern and note generally accepted solutions. Due to the diversity of park resources and the variety of interpretive situations, flexibility and versatility are important.

Each interpretive medium contributes to the total park program. All media have inherent strengths and weaknesses, and it is our intent to capitalize on their strengths and provide alternatives where they are deficient. It should also be understood that any interpretive medium is just one component of the overall park experience. In some instances, especially with regard to learning disabilities, personal services, that is one-on-one interaction, may be the most appropriate and versatile interpretive approach.

In the final analysis, interpretive design is subjective, and dependent on aesthetic considerations as well as the particular characteristics and resources available for a specific program. Success or failure should be evaluated by examining all interpretive offerings of a park. Due to the unique characteristics of each situation, parks should be evaluated on a case by case basis. Nonetheless, the goal is to fully comply with NPS policy:

"...To provide the highest level of accessibility possible and feasible for persons with visual, hearing, mobility, and mental impairments, consistent with the obligation to conserve park resources and preserve the quality of the park experience for everyone."

NPS Special Directive 83, Accessibility for Disabled Persons

Audiovisual Programs

Audiovisual programs include video programs, and audio and interactive programs. As a matter of policy, all audiovisual programs produced by the Harper's Ferry Center will include some method of captioning. The approach used will vary according to the conditions of the installation area and the media format used, and will be selected in consultation with the parks and regions.

The captioning method will be identified as early as possible in the planning process and will be presented in an integrated setting where possible. To the extent possible, visitors will be offered a choice in viewing captioned or uncaptioned versions, but in situations where a choice is not possible or feasible, a captioned version of all programs will be made available. Park management will decide on the most appropriate operational approach for the particular site.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

1. The theater, auditorium, or viewing area should be accessible and free of architectural barriers, or alternative accommodations will be provided, UFAS 4.1.
2. Wheelchair locations will be provided according to ratios outlined in UFAS 4.1.2(18a).
3. Viewing heights and angles will be favorable for those in designated wheelchair locations.
4. In designing video or interactive components, control mechanisms will be placed in accessible location, usually between 9" and 48" from the ground and no more than 24" deep.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

1. Simultaneous audio description will be considered for installations where the equipment can be properly installed and maintained.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

1. All audiovisual programs will be produced with appropriate captions.
2. Copies of scripts will be provided to the parks as a standard procedure.

3. Audio amplification and listening systems will be provided in accordance with UFAS 4.1.2(l 8b).

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Learning Impairments

1. Unnecessarily complex and confusing concepts will be avoided.
2. Graphic elements will be chosen to communicate without reliance on the verbal component.
3. Narration will be concise and free of unnecessary jargon and technical information.

Exhibits

Numerous factors affect the design of exhibits, reflecting the unique circumstances of the specific space and the nature of the materials to be interpreted. It is clear that thoughtful, sensitive design can go a long way in producing exhibits that can be enjoyed by a broad range of people. Yet, due to the diversity of situations encountered, it is impossible to articulate guidelines that can be applied universally.

In some situations, the exhibit designer has little or no control over the space. Often exhibits are placed in areas ill suited for that purpose, they may incorporate large or unyielding specimens, they may incorporate sensitive artifacts that require special environmental controls, and room decor or architectural features may dictate certain solutions. All in all, exhibit design is an art that defies simple description. However, one central concern is to communicate the message to the largest audience possible. Every reasonable effort will be made to eliminate any factors limiting communication through physical modification or by providing an alternate means of communication.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

Note: The **Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)** is the standard followed by the National Park Service and is therefore the basis for the accessibility standards for exhibits, where applicable.

1. Height/position of labels: Body copy on vertical exhibit walls should be placed at between 36" and 60" from the floor.
2. Artifact Cases:
 - a. Maximum height of floor of artifact case display area shall be no high-

er than 30" from the floor of the room. This includes vitrines that are recessed into an exhibit wall.

b. Artifact labels should be placed so as to be visible to a person within a 43" to 51" eye level. This includes mounting labels within the case at an angle to maximize its visibility to all viewers.

3. Touchable Exhibits: Touchable exhibits positioned horizontally should be placed no higher than 30" from the floor. Also, if the exhibit is approachable only on one side, it should be no deeper than 31".
4. Railings/barriers: Railings around any horizontal model or exhibit element shall have a maximum height of 36" from the floor.
5. Information desks: Information desks and sales counters shall include a section made to accommodate both a visitor in a wheelchair and an employee in a wheelchair working on the other side. A section of the desk/counter shall have the following dimensions:
 - a. Height from the floor to the top: 28 to 34 inches. (ADAAG 4.32.4)
 - b. Minimum knee clearance space: 27" high, 30" wide and 19" deep of clearance underneath the desk is the minimum space required under ADAAG 4.32.3, but a space 30" high, 36" wide and 24" deep is recommended.
 - c. Width of top surface of section: at least 36 inches. Additional space must be provided for any equipment such as a cash register.
 - d. Area underneath desk: Since both sides of the desk may have to accommodate a wheelchair, this area should be open all the way through to the other side. In addition, there should be no sharp or abrasive surfaces underneath the desk. The floor space behind the counter shall be free of obstructions.
6. Circulation Space:
 - a. Passageways through exhibits shall be at least 36" wide.
 - b. If an exhibit passageway reaches a dead-end, an area 60" by 78" should be provided at the end for turning around.
 - c. Objects projecting from walls with their leading edges between 27" and 80" above the floor shall protrude no more than 4" in passageways or aisles. Objects projecting from walls with their leading edges at or below 27" above the floor can protrude any amount.
 - d. Freestanding objects mounted on posts or pylons may overhang a maximum of 12" from 27" to 80" above the floor. (ADAAG 4.4.1)

- e. Protruding objects shall not reduce the clear width of an accessible route to less than the minimum required amount. (ADAAG 4.4.1)
 - f. Passageways or other circulation spaces shall have a minimum clear head room of 80". For example, signage hanging from the ceiling must have at least 80" from the floor to the bottom edge of the sign. (ADAAG 4.4.2)
7. Floors:
- a. Floors and ramps shall be stable, level, firm and slip-resistant.
 - b. Changes in level between 1/4" and 1/2" shall be beveled with a slope no greater than 1:2. Changes in level greater than 1/2" shall be accomplished by means of a ramp that complies with ADAAG 4.7 or 4.8. (ADAAG 4.5.2)
 - c. Carpet in exhibit areas shall comply with ADAAG 4.5.3 for pile height, texture, pad thickness, and trim.
8. Seating - Interactive Stations/Work Areas: The minimum knee space underneath a work desk is 27" high, 30" wide and 19" deep, with a clear floor space of at least 30" by 30" in front. The top of the desk or work surface shall be between 28" and 34" from the floor. (ADAAG 4.32, Fig.45)

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

- 1. Tactile models and other touchable exhibit items should be used whenever possible. Examples of touchable exhibit elements include relief maps, scale models, raised images of simple graphics, reproduction objects, and replaceable objects (such as natural history or geological specimens, cultural history items, etc.).
- 2. Typography - Readability of exhibit labels by visitors with various degrees of visual impairment shall be maximized by using the following guidelines:
 - a. Type size - No type in the exhibit shall be smaller than 24 point.
 - b. Typeface - The most readable typefaces should be used whenever possible, particularly for body copy. They are: Times Roman, Palatino, Century, Helvetica and Universe.
 - c. Styles, Spacing - Text set in both caps and lower case is easier to read than all caps. Choose letter spacing and word spacing for maximum readability. Avoid too much italic type.

- d. Line Length - Limit the line length for body copy to no more than 45 to 50 characters per line.
 - e. Amount of Text - Each unit of body copy should have a maximum of 45- 60 words.
 - f. Margins - Flush left, ragged right margins are easiest to read.
3. Color:
- a. Type/Background Contrast - Percentage of contrast between the type and the background should be a minimum of 70%.
 - b. Red/Green - Do not use red on green or green on red as the type/background color combination.
 - c. Do not place body copy on top of graphic images that impair readability.
4. Samples: During the design process, it is recommended that samples be made for review of all size, typeface and color combinations for labels in that exhibit.
5. Exhibit Lighting:
- a. All labels shall receive sufficient, even light for good readability. Exhibit text in areas where light levels have been reduced for conservation purposes should have a minimum of 10 foot- candles of illumination.
 - b. Harsh reflections and glare should be avoided.
 - c. The lighting system shall be flexible enough to allow adjustments on- site.
 - d. Transitions between the floor and walls, columns or other structures should be made clearly visible. Finishes for vertical surfaces should contrast clearly with the floor finish. Floor circulation routes should have a minimum of 10 foot- candles of illumination.
6. Signage: When permanent building signage is required as a part of an exhibit project, the ADAAG guidelines shall be consulted. Signs, which designate permanent rooms and spaces, shall comply with ADAAG 4.30.1, 4.30.4, 4.30.5, and 4.30.6. Other signs, which provide direction to or information about functional spaces of the building, shall comply with ADAAG 4.30.1, 4.30.2, 4.30.3, and 4.30.5. Note: When the International Symbol of Accessibility (wheelchair symbol) is used, the word "Handicapped" shall not be used beneath the symbol. Instead, use the word "Accessible".

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

1. Information presented via audio formats will be duplicated in a visual medium, such as in the exhibit label copy or by captioning. All video programs incorporated into the exhibit, which contain audio, shall be open captioned.
2. Amplification systems and volume controls should be incorporated with audio equipment used individually by the visitor, such as audio handsets.
3. Information desks shall allow for Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDD) equipment.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Learning Impairments

1. The exhibits will present the main interpretive themes on a variety of levels of complexity, so people with varying abilities and interests can understand them.
2. The exhibits should avoid unnecessarily complex and confusing topics, technical terms, and unfamiliar expressions. Pronunciation aids should be provided where appropriate.
3. Graphic elements shall be used to communicate non-verbally.
4. The exhibits shall be a multi-sensory experience. Techniques to maximize the number of senses used in the exhibits should be encouraged.
5. Exhibit design shall use color and other creative approaches to facilitate comprehension of maps by visitors with directional impairments.

Historic Furnishings

Historically furnished rooms offer the public a unique interpretive experience by placing visitors within historic spaces. Surrounded by historic artifacts visitors can feel the spaces "come alive" and relate more directly to the historic events or personalities commemorated by the park.

Accessibility is problematical in many NPS furnished sites because of the very nature of historic architecture. Buildings were erected with a functional point of view that is many times at odds with our modern views of accessibility.

The approach used to convey the experience of historically furnished

spaces will vary from site to site. The goals, however, will remain the same, to give the public as rich an interpretive experience as possible given the nature of the structure.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

1. The exhibit space should be free of architectural barriers or a method of alternate accommodation should be provided, such as slide programs, videotaped tours, visual aids, dioramas, etc.
2. All pathways, aisles, and clearances shall (when possible) meet standards set forth in UFAS 4.3 to provide adequate clearance for wheelchair routes.
3. Ramps shall be as gradual as possible and not exceed a 1" rise in 12" run, and conform to UFAS 4.8.
4. Railings and room barriers will be constructed to provide unobstructed viewing by persons in wheelchairs.
5. In the planning and design process, furnishing inaccessible areas, such as upper floors of historic buildings, will be discouraged unless essential for interpretation.
6. Lighting will be designed to reduce glare or reflections when viewed from a wheelchair.
7. Alternative methods of interpretation, such as audiovisual programs, audio description, photo albums, and personal services will be used in areas that present difficulty for visitors with physical impairments.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

1. Exhibit typefaces will be selected for readability and legibility, and conform to good industry practice.
2. Audio description will be used to describe furnished rooms, where appropriate.
3. Windows will be treated with film to provide balanced light levels and minimize glare.
4. Where appropriate, visitor-controlled rheostat-type lighting will be provided to augment general room lighting.
5. Where appropriate and when proper clearance has been approved, surplus artifacts or reproductions will be utilized as "hands-on" tactile interpretive devices.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

1. Information about room interiors will be presented in a visual medium such as exhibit copy, text, pamphlets, etc.
2. Captions will be provided for all AV programs relating to historic furnishings.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Learning Impairments

1. Where appropriate, hands- on participatory elements geared to the level of visitor capabilities will be used.
2. Living history activities and demonstrations, which utilize the physical space as a method of providing multi- sensory experiences, will be encouraged.

Publications

A variety of publications are offered to visitors, ranging from park folders, which provide an overview and orientation to a park, to more comprehensive handbooks. Each park folder should give a brief description of services available to visitors with disabilities, list significant barriers, and note the existence of TDD phone numbers, if available.

In addition, informal site bulletins are often produced to provide more specialized information about a specific site or topic. It is recommended that each park produce an easily updateable "Accessibility Site Bulletin" which could include detailed information about the specific programs, services, and opportunities available for visitors with disabilities and to describe barriers that are present in the park. A template for this site bulletin will be on the Division of Publications website for parks to create with ease, a consistent look throughout the park service. These bulletins should be in large type, 16 points minimum and follow the large- print criteria below.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

1. Park folders, site bulletins, and sales literature will be distributed from accessible locations and heights.
2. Park folders and Accessibility Site Bulletins should endeavor to carry information on the accessibility of buildings, trails, and programs by visitors with disabilities.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

1. Publications for the general public:

a. Text

- (1) Size: the largest type size appropriate for the format.
(Main body of text should be 10pt)
- (2) Leading should be at least 20% greater than the font size used.
- (3) Proportional letter spacing
- (4) Main body of text set in caps and lower case.
- (5) Margins are flush left and ragged right
- (6) Little or no hyphenation is used at ends of lines.
- (7) Ink coverage is dense
- (8) Underlining does not connect with the letters being underlined.
- (9) Contrast of typeface and illustrations to background is high (70% contrast is recommended)
- (10) Photographs have a wide range of gray scale variation.
- (11) Line drawings or floor plans are clear and bold, with limited detail and 8 pt type minimum.
- (12) No extreme extended or compressed typefaces are used for main text.
- (13) Reversal type should be minimum of 11 point medium or bold sans serif type.

b. The paper:

- (1) Surface preferred is a matte finish. Dull-coated stock is acceptable.
- (2) Has sufficient weight to avoid "show-through" on pages printed on both sides.

2. Large- print version publications:

a. Text

- (1) Size: minimum 16 point type.
- (2) Leading is 16 on 20pt.
- (3) Proportional letter spacing

- (4) Main body of text set in caps and lower case.
- (5) Margins are flush left and ragged right.
- (6) Little or no hyphenation is used at ends of lines.
- (7) Ink coverage is dense.
- (8) Underlining does not connect with the letters being underlined.
- (9) Contrast of typeface and illustrations to background is high (70% contrast is recommended)
- (10) Photographs have a wide range of gray scale variation.
- (11) Line drawings or floor plans are clear and bold, with limited detail and minimum 14 pt type.
- (12) No extreme extended or compressed typefaces are used for main text.
- (13) Sans- serif or simple- serif typeface
- (14) No oblique or italic typefaces
- (15) Maximum of 50 characters (average) per line.
- (16) No type is printed over other designs.
- (17) Document has a flexible binding, preferably one that allows the publication to lie flat.
- (18) Gutter margins are a minimum of 22mm; outside margin smaller but not less than 13mm.

b. Paper:

- (1) Surface is off- white or natural with matte finish.
- (2) Has sufficient weight to avoid "show- through" on pages printed on both sides.

3. Maps:

- a. The less clutter the map, the more visitors that can use it.
- b. The ultimate is one map that is large- print and tactile.
- c. Raised line/tactile maps are something that could be developed in future, using our present digital files and a Thermaform machine. Lines are distinguished by line- weight, color and height. Areas are distinguished by color, height, and texture.
- d. The digital maps are on an accessible web site.
- e. Same paper guides as above.

- f. Contrast of typeface background is high. (70% contrast is recommended)
 - g. Proportional letter spacing
 - h. Labels set in caps and lower case
 - i. Map notes are flush left and ragged right.
 - j. Little or no hyphenation is used as ends of lines.
 - k. No extreme extended or compressed typefaces are used for main text.
 - l. Sans- serif or simple- serif typeface.
4. The text contained in the park folder should also be available on audiocassette, CD and accessible web site. Handbooks, accessibility guides, and other publications should be similarly recorded where possible.
 5. The official park publication is available in a word processing format. This could be translated into Braille as needed.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

1. Park site bulletins will note the availability of such special services as sign language interpretation and captioned programs.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Learning Impairments

1. The park site bulletin should list any special services available to these visitors.
2. Publications:
 - a. Use language that appropriately describes persons with disabilities.
 - b. Topics will be specific and of general interest. Unnecessary complexity will be avoided.
 - c. Whenever possible, easy to understand graphics will be used to convey ideas, rather than text alone.
 - d. Unfamiliar expressions, technical terms, and jargon will be avoided. Pronunciation aids and definitions will be provided where needed.
 - e. Text will be concise and free of long paragraphs and wordy language.

Wayside Exhibits

Wayside exhibits, which include outdoor interpretive exhibits and signs, orientation shelter exhibits, trailhead exhibits, and bulletin boards, offer special advantages to visitors with disabilities. The liberal use of photographs, artwork, diagrams, and maps, combined with highly readable type, make wayside exhibits an excellent medium for visitors with hearing and learning impairments. For visitors with sight impairments, waysides offer large type and high legibility.

Although a limited number of NPS wayside exhibits will always be inaccessible to visitors with mobility impairments, the great majority is placed at accessible pullouts, viewpoints, parking areas, and trailheads.

The NPS accessibility guidelines for wayside exhibits help insure a standard of quality that will be appreciated by all visitors. Nearly everyone benefits from high quality graphics, readable type, comfortable base designs, accessible locations, hard-surfaced exhibit pads, and well-landscaped exhibit sites.

While waysides are valuable on-site "interpreters," it should be remembered that the park resources themselves are the primary things visitors come to experience. Good waysides focus attention on the features they interpret, and not on themselves. A wayside exhibit is only one of the many interpretive tools which visitors can use to enhance their appreciation of a park.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

1. Wayside exhibits will be installed at accessible locations whenever possible.
2. Wayside exhibits will be installed at heights and angles favorable for viewing by most visitors including those in wheelchairs. For standard NPS low-profile units the recommended height is 30 inches from the bottom edge of the exhibit panel to the finished grade; for vertical exhibits the height of 6-28 inches.
3. Trailhead exhibits will include information on trail conditions which affect accessibility.
4. Wayside exhibit sites will have level, hard surfaced exhibit pads.
5. Exhibit sites will offer clear, unrestricted views of park features described in exhibits.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

1. Exhibit type will be as legible and readable as possible.
2. Panel colors will be selected to reduce eyestrain and glare, and to provide excellent readability under field conditions. White should not be used as a background color.
3. Selected wayside exhibits may incorporate audio stations or tactile elements such as models, texture blocks, and relief maps.
4. For all major features interpreted by wayside exhibits, the park should offer non-visual interpretation covering the same subject matter. Examples include cassette tape tours, radio messages, and ranger talks.
5. Appropriate tactile cues should be provided to help visually impaired visitors locate exhibits.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

1. Wayside exhibits will communicate visually, and will rely heavily on graphics to interpret park resources.
2. Essential information included in audio station messages will be duplicated in written form, either as part of the exhibit text or with printed material.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Learning Impairments

1. Topics for wayside exhibits will be specific and of general interest. Unnecessary complexity will be avoided.
2. Whenever possible, easy to understand graphics will be used to convey ideas, rather than text alone.
3. Unfamiliar expressions, technical terms, and jargon will be avoided. Pronunciation aids and definitions will be provided where needed.
4. Text will be concise and free of long paragraphs and wordy language.

APPENDIX B: MESSAGE PROJECT GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

In survey after survey, Americans consistently rank the National Park Service as one of the most respected Federal agencies. Based on these surveys, the National Park Service has gone about its business confident of the public's support.

But what does the public really know?

The National Park Service, through a collaboration with the National Park Foundation, asked this question and received an unanticipated wake-up call. While the public does truly love national parks, we found limited understanding - or even awareness - of the depth and breadth of the National Park System and the mission of the National Park Service.

Simply put, too many Americans see National Parks as only a handful of western wilderness vacation destinations.

To understand and then bridge the gap between the reality and the perception of the National Parks, the Message Project was born.

Its goals were to identify ways to:

- Increase awareness of the depth and breadth of the National Park System and the mission of the National Park Service;
- Increase awareness that the parks are authentic places that offer unique learning opportunities;
- Provide useful and compelling information that will help visitors plan a better experience; and,
- Invite the public to find relevance in this information, make personal connections to the parks, and join us as partners in stewardship - both in the parks and in their own communities.

While straightforward, these are not simple goals. They challenge us to change the public perception of, and experience with, the National Parks and to develop a public understanding of the mission of the National Park Service outside of National Parks.

To be successful, we must fundamentally alter the way we communicate, whether in publications, films, exhibits, interpretive talks, or community forums.

This publication - *Communicating the National Park Service Mission* - will help. It is designed to begin the implementation of the policy articulated in Director's Order #52A. It provides basic tools and suggestions for immediate action. It also summarizes the research and other steps that shaped this effort. It is intended to create a common beginning, not to define all that must be done. The changes we are making must become part of our culture and part of the way we do business now and every day in the future.

The impact of these changes will be seen in a variety of ways.

- Families planning a vacation will understand that there are options beyond the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, and Yosemite - and that there are times to visit those parks other than peak summer months.
- Visitors will arrive at a park with an understanding of why that place is special, how to craft a visit that will be meaningful to them, and how to experience the park in a way that is safe for themselves - and for the park.
- All Americans, whether they visit a National Park or not, will have access to information about the places and stories that the National Park Service preserves.
- Teachers and students will view the National Park Service as a partner in education offering authentic learning experiences, unique research facilities, and invaluable educational resources.
- The 275 million annual visitors to national parks will know that they are in a national park.
- Community leaders searching for help in preserving local history or creating close-to-home recreational opportunities will think: National Park Service.

To help make this happen, we encourage your creativity, enthusiasm, and ideas. Take the basic tools you will find on the following pages and go even farther. Then share your successes, experiences, and questions with colleagues servicewide at www.graphics.nps.gov.

The National Park Service has made the commitment to connect to the public. Fulfilling that commitment will take every employee. Keep reading to see what you can do.

TWELVE THINGS YOU CAN DO TODAY!

1. Wear your uniform
2. Adopt the new graphics standards
3. Connect what you do to the whole
4. Listen to yourself talk
5. Treat visitors as stakeholders, not tourists
6. Understand the impact of change
7. Seek out the opinions of non- visitors
8. Review your publications
9. Tell visitors what you are doing with their fees
10. Pictures are worth 1,000 words!
11. Share what you know
12. Be an ambassador

1. Wear Your Uniform

The Issue

Visitors to parks immediately recognize Park Rangers. The National Park Service uniform is a powerful symbol, yet it is not routinely worn by uniformed employees who represent the Service at public events outside of parks.

The Fix

When you represent the National Park Service in public - at community meetings, media interviews, etc. - unless there is a good reason not to, if you have a uniform, wear it! Wear it proudly and properly, because in it YOU are the National Park Service.

Best Practices

In Brownsville, Texas, Park Rangers at Palo Alto Battlefield are sometimes mistaken for Border Patrol agents, but the power of the National Park Service uniform hit home one day. It had been two weeks since one of the park's interpretive Rangers had taken her school program to a classroom of 6th graders. Arriving home one night, a different park employee - in uniform - was approached by a kid in the neighborhood she did not know who pointed at the Arrowhead on her shoulder and said, "I know you. You work at Palo Alto for the National Park Service." The child had been in Ranger Karen's class two weeks before and made the connection.

2. Adopt the new graphics standards

The Issue

The National Park Service has hundreds of publications. We have thou-

sands of signs, waysides, and exhibits. Twenty thousand employees regularly hand out business cards, send faxes, and write memos. Other than the Unigrad brochure, there is no common look to any of it. Without a unifying look, you fail to convey that your park or program is connected to all the others.

The Fix

Use the *Communicating the National Park Service Mission* CD (and supporting information) or go to www.graphics.nps.gov and download the templates for fax sheets and other forms. Start using them now! When your current supply of business cards is gone, follow the simple ordering process at the website address <http://www.graphics.nps.gov/templates/bcards.htm> to get the new ones. Adopt the new graphics standards when current supplies of printed materials are exhausted, when replacing or installing new signs, or when designing next year's park newspaper. Use the Arrowhead on ALL public materials you produce. It is the symbol of the National Park Service.

[Note: Even prior to finalizing the Servicewide graphics standards, many parks and programs saw the value and adopted the elements of the developing standards - a black band and an Arrowhead - and applied them to their projects. Many of the following best practices reflect that early work.]

Best Practices

Park Newspapers - The *Alaska Region* led the way by bringing a unified look to all park newspapers in the state through the use of a common masthead and a common theme for welcome letters from park superintendents.

Signs - Mount Rushmore became the first park to apply the developing sign standards to the park's new entrance sign.

Arrowhead - The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program created a beautiful Citizens' Conservation Tool Kit proudly bearing the Arrowhead front and center.

Websites - The ParkNet Team carried the unified graphic identity to the creation and implementation of new Park Profile pages.

Publications - The Natural Resource Challenge and CRM - the magazine for cultural resource managers - early and easily adopted elements of the developing design standards.

3. Connect what you do to the whole

The Issue

Bringing a consistent look to National Park Service materials is the first step. The second is to use those materials and other opportunities to make a connection on content. Talking only about your park or your program is an opportunity missed.

The Fix

Always make the connection between where you work and what you do and the rest of the National Park Service. Add a second layer of connections that are relevant based on geography or theme. For example:

- Use the Power Point presentation on the *Communicating the National Park Service Mission* CD as an overview of the National Park Service. It can be easily adapted and serve as the first five minutes of a presentation or as the way you open a public meeting.
- Use the following sentence that succinctly describes what we do, how the public is involved, and why it matters: The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. It can be used wherever a simple expression of mission is appropriate, as the last line of a press release, or in the "signature" block of your email.
- The tagline **EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA**tm should be used, as appropriate, on all official National Park Service materials. [NOTE: This phrase has been trademarked by the National Park Foundation and its use granted to the National Park Service. Any use other than on official National Park Service materials must be approved in advance by the Chief, National Park Service Partnership Office.]
- When talking about your park always mention that it is "one of nearly 400 national parks around the country." The public is confused by the multiple legal designations assigned to parks. Unless the situation requires the formal name(s) of the park, refer to all as "national parks." If you are talking about your program, for example the National Register of Historic Places, or Rivers and Trails, make it clear that this is a program of the National Park Service. Try not to shorten "National Park Service" to "Park Service."
- Many Rangers begin their talks by asking visitors their hometowns. When they reply, name a national park nearby and ask them if they've visited that close-to-home national park.

- Make thematic and geographical connections to other parks and programs.

Best Practices

C&O Canal became a trash-free park and added the EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™ tagline and an Arrowhead to the messages of recycling and stewardship on the trash bags made available to visitors.

National parks that preserve elements of African American history are finding ways to link those stories together on the Internet (see <http://www.cr.nps.gov/aahistory/>), in publications like the guidebook for the Underground Railroad, and in philanthropy through the new African American Experience Fund of the National Park Foundation.

National Capital Region parks have agreed to create a map of all parks in the region and otherwise "market" themselves cooperatively. They have also partnered with the National Park Foundation to launch the Greater Washington National Parks Fund to do region-wide fundraising.

The staff at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site produced a several minute overview of the national parks that opens its "Capture the Dream" video tour of the Atlanta park, which runs on a continuous loop in the visitor center lobby

Regional Director Marie Rust used an early prototype of the National Park Service overview CD as part of her presentation at an international conference.

National parks in Utah worked together to prepare for the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. A handsome publication highlighting all the national parks nearby was available at a prime downtown location staffed by the National Park Service and at park visitor centers throughout the area.

New Bedford Whaling and Native Alaskans share a common history connected by the culture of whaling. Exchanges with the park and its Alaskan partner, the Inupiat Heritage Center, have brought two communities closer together and shared with visitors the unique perspectives of two cultures so far apart but with so much in common.

National Parks Pass materials introduce Pass buyers to the entire System of national parks and the work of the National Park Service. Information on how to enter the photo contest that selects the image for the Pass is available in all national parks.

Grand Canyon's new Canyon View Information Plaza features an enormous - and cool - map of the entire National Park System.

National Park Service training professionals have created a Fundamentals course for new employees which emphasizes the organization's mission, core values, and functions. These values are expressed in clear and concise language that will be shared with all employees.

4. Listen to yourself talk

The Issue

Terms like "charismatic megafauna," "viewshed," and "cultural resources" (not to mention "submerged cultural resources") that make sense to other employees can be unintelligible to the public. Comprehension can be lost in the desire to be precise. Language in planning documents that speaks of "tolerating visitors" or "visitor impacts" can come across as unintentionally hostile - that you are protecting these places from rather than for the public.

The Fix

Eliminate jargon. Use acronyms sparingly - if at all. Address specific concerns in ways that are specific and do not indict the public or visitors as a whole. Rather than leading with what someone can't do, use the following simple, three-step architecture as you think about what you want to get across:

First, why is this place special?

Second, what kinds of meaningful - which is not every - experiences can you have here?

Third, what does the National Park Service do to guarantee that these places and these experiences are here today and in the future?

Best Practices

Mount Rainier National Park reviewed its draft General Management Plan and revised passages that unintentionally painted visitors as the problem the park is trying to fix.

New Bedford Whaling produced reader friendly newsletters and publications throughout its General Management Planning process. The effort created public understanding and support and culminated in the local newspaper editorializing in favor of the plan.

5. Treat visitors as stakeholders, not tourists

The Issue

Americans visit amusement parks as tourists. They visit national parks as owners.

The Fix

While not every management decision is best- seller material, identify those that are teachable moments of stewardship - and use them. Explain not only what you are doing but why, and if it makes sense, how a visitor can help. Send your visitors home with a powerful sense of place, a personal investment in it, and an invitation to come back.

Best Practices

Yosemite National Park placed simple signs in a grove of oak saplings to explain to visitors that the PVC pipe around the trees was to protect the young trees from deer, giving a glimpse at how the park balanced the well- being of the trees with the natural inclinations of deer.

Golden Gate and its partner, the Golden Gate National Parks Association, made sure that the restoration of Crissy Field involved the entire Bay Area. In a project called "Help Grow Crissy Field," volunteers tended thousands of native plants at the park's greenhouse. San Francisco's children were invited to plant the seedlings at Crissy, which taught stewardship and built long term ownership in an unmatched urban oasis and premier coastal wildlife habitat.

Grand Teton National Park teamed up with its concessioner to provide lodge guests with a better understanding of the park's plans for the future - and how they could help. The program offers guests several opportunities to learn about park projects undertaken with the support of Grand Teton National Park Foundation and invites them to get involved by making a \$1 per night donation toward these efforts. In its first year, the program raised \$50,000.

Lassen Volcanic National Park puts the back of their entrance signs to great use with the message - "Thank you for visiting!"

6. Understand the impact of change

The Issue

Significant changes in a park, especially large construction projects, can have profound effects. Regular visitors, park neighbors, and even those who may not have visited for years have cherished memories of a place they do not want changed.

The Fix

A major change requires a major communication effort, beginning well before the project starts and continuing until well after the dust has settled. Visitors arriving three years after the project's completion may still be surprised by the changes, and will need an explanation if they are to understand National Park Service stewardship.

Best Practices

Learning from Mount Rushmore's experience in discovering lingering issues years after the completion of an enormous construction project, Mount Rainier has increased its emphasis on communications as it begins planning to demolish and rebuild a longtime visitor center named for a legendary U.S. senator.

With funds raised by their partners - the National Park Foundation and Target Stores - National Capital Parks Central was preparing to begin the restoration of the Washington Monument. As the three partners planned for the project, they realized there was an opportunity to use the construction as a way to reach out to the public. Target brought in architect Michael Graves to design an eye-catching wrap for the scaffolding that would surround this American icon for 18 months. The design generated local as well as national and international attention for the project. Events, national advertising campaigns, and timely updates to the media kept the public interested and made them want to come rather than stay away. In addition, Discovery Communications partnered with the National Park Service and the National Park Foundation to create a temporary interpretive center on the Monument grounds. The Center offered a "virtual visit" (especially helpful when the Monument was closed!) and an opportunity to offer information about the construction project, the Service's role in historic preservation, and our first President.

7. Seek out the opinions of non-visitors

The Issue

For years the National Park Service has surveyed visitors about their experiences in parks. While such surveys provide important information, those surveyed do not mirror the population as a whole. Management and policy decisions should be informed by the thinking of not only visitors but non-visitors as well.

The Fix

Because comprehensive consumer research is very expensive, parks and programs with resources or willing partners should consider targeted research that can be shared Servicewide. While not all results can be

extrapolated to all parks and programs, common themes will emerge and offer clear guidance on the attitudes of segments of the American public. Absent the resources to undertake this type of formal research, much can be learned informally. Meet with local opinion leaders and organizations - Rotary, NAACP, church groups, etc. - and ask their thoughts on issues you are confronting as well as what is on their minds that you should be thinking about. [Note: Public research conducted by or for the National Park Service requires prior approval from the Office of Management and Budget. For information, contact the National Park Service Social Science Program at 202-208-6330 or via email at: bforist@uidaho.edu]

Best Practices

Mount Rainier National Park was interested in how different ethnic groups viewed the park. In talking with African American groups, they found out that the current layout of picnic areas was not conducive to family reunions and other large gatherings that are an integral part of the African American community. The picnic areas were redesigned. Mount Rainier is actively sharing these results and other insights with park managers throughout the System.

8. Review your publications

The Issue

Many parks and programs produce a broad range of publications but without any overall strategy about audience, a coordinated message, or how to maximize resources. Too often, the answer to one publication not being effective is simply to do another, rather than focusing on why the first one didn't meet its objectives. Lots of time and money is spent, with only limited information conveyed.

The Fix

Take all your publications and lay them out on a table. You'll be stunned by how much you actually publish. Some duplication and conflicts will become immediately obvious; others will require you to match publications against audiences. What are you saying and to whom? Identify what information - like seasonal programs - changes frequently; If it is joined with information that is relatively static - like safety advice - in one publication, you're reprinting some information without needing to. Can multiple publications to similar or overlapping audiences be consolidated? Is there any overlap with information provided by nearby or thematically related parks? If so, can you partner and produce a single publication that will meet both/all parks needs? Think about when people receive information and how that corresponds to decision making. For instance, giving visitors lodging information at the park gate is

almost always too late. Finally, develop a park/program- wide system for publications - who writes them, who manages the strategy and messages, how resources can be maximized. [This approach can apply to other media (e.g., exhibits, audio visual) as well.]

Best Practices

Yosemite National Park held a "Publications Summit" including park staff, concessioners, and non- profit partners to coordinate and organize their publications and provide better information to visitors and prospective visitors.

The National Center for Historic Preservation is doing a comprehensive review of its publications, starting with its flagship magazine, CRM. The review will help identify who its current audiences are, who its audiences should be, and how best to get information to them.

9. Tell visitors what you are doing with their fees

The Issue

Lots of smart projects are underway thanks to the Fee Demo Program. Surveys show that visitors are supportive of new or higher fees if the money is put back into the parks. They won't know this is happening if we don't tell them.

The Fix

Clearly identify fee projects that are visible to the public with signs, banners, or exhibits. Explain what the project is, its public benefit, and how "your" fees made it possible. Include stories on fee projects in the park newspaper, on your website, or in exhibits in the visitor center. If possible, leverage fee income with your Friends Group or other non- profit partner to multiply every fee dollar - and then make sure public credit for the project is shared not only with visitors but with your partner.

Best Practices

Joshua Tree National Park publishes simple, friendly newsletters on its fee projects, with pictures and text that make clear how strategic and creative the park managers are at stretching fee dollars.

10. Pictures are worth 1,000 words!

The Issue

The images we use to illustrate our materials are generally gorgeous - and devoid of any human beings! This can send several unintended messages. First, these places are beautiful - when you're not here. Second, without superb outdoor skills, you won't survive here.

The Fix

Start using pictures that show people experiencing your park in a way that is safe for them- and the park. The goal is to have someone want to be the person in the picture! Remember: This is an opportunity to model behavior in the park.

Best Practices

The National Park System Advisory Board Report "Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century," issued in August 2001, from cover to cover, featured evocative shots of visitors having wonderful experiences in national parks.

The Cabrillo Journal, published by Cabrillo National Monument with funding from its partner the Cabrillo National Monument Foundation, is filled with great photographs of visitors enjoying the park and Rangers at work. The stories are also bylined by park staff and volunteers, with a picture of the author creating another avenue of personal connection.

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial's brochure announcing its Museum Education Programs for 2000- 2001 is chock full of inviting photographs - every one of which has people in it! The photos bring the programs to life because teachers and students can see themselves in the images.

11. Share what you know

The Issue

Every employee has figured out some smarter, better way to do a part of his or her job. Other employees throughout the Service could do their jobs better - if they knew what you know.

The Fix

When you figure something out that could be useful to your colleagues, share it! If there is no formal method within your park, program, region, or professional discipline, send it to the Morning Report or the *Arrowhead* newsletter, where it can be published and reach the entire Service and our partners. Improving communications among employees and our partners is one of the goals of the *Arrowhead*. If your best practice relates to communicating with the public, also share it online at www.graphics.nps.gov.

Best Practices

The Interpretation and Education team of the Intermountain Support Office developed a new process for creating Comprehensive Interpretive Plans. To share their innovations Servicewide - and even

outside the National Park Service - they offer their assistance to one park outside the region every year.

With the 25th anniversary of the Alaskan Native Claims Act on the horizon, the Alaska Region looked for a way to celebrate the occasion and highlight the national parks in the state. The first "annual report" to the people of Alaska was issued in August 2000. The idea was shared at the Discovery 2000 Conference.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park has no entrance fee. But that did not stop the Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park from seeing an opportunity in selling the National Parks Pass. The Friends positioned the Smokies as "your gateway to the national parks," with the added incentive that Pass sales would benefit the hometown national park. The idea was shared with other parks and Friends Groups through the Friends' newsletter.

12. Be an ambassador

The Issue

It's all too easy to be consumed by internal management responsibilities. But when that happens, no one is serving as the external ambassador of your park or program.

The Fix

Management responsibilities and meetings will not disappear, but some simple time management techniques can help. Analyze last month's calendar and assign percentages of time spent to internal management versus external relations. Set a goal of the incremental shift of those percentages towards the outside. Target key audiences - e.g., business groups and elected officials - and try to reach one new audience each month.

Best Practices

John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor needed to figure out how to invite the local community to learn more about the American Industrial Revolution that grew up along its 48 miles of rivers and canals running through two states. One casting call later, a cable access show was born, hosted by a Park Ranger who takes the audience to places along the valley, visiting with community leaders, mill owners, and others who care for the places important to this area's history.

The relationship between the National Park Service and the community around Kenai Fjords National Park was not always the best. That

changed when the Superintendent made a committed effort to get out of the park and become a visible member of the community. By joining civic organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, the Superintendent put a face on the organization and opened up lines of communication that had never before existed.

New Orleans Jazz is a new park with lots of heart, but no facilities. Yet. With no public base of operations in Armstrong Park, the Superintendent and staff have created ways to meet and engage the community and the jazz world. They are regulars on the local non-commercial public radio station WWOZ - and have established a temporary visitor center in the French Quarter. They participate in the annual International Music Colloquium, a scholarly gathering of jazz researchers and historians, many of whom have been recorded by the park for its oral history library. The park sponsors the children's tent at Jazz Fest, staffed with uniformed Rangers and exhibits, to introduce the nearly one million attendees to the park.

APPENDIX C: ANNUAL INTERPRETIVE PLAN

A Strategy for Improving Interpretive Operations on the Blue
Ridge Parkway
Developed at the Annual Park Interpretive Planning Meeting
February, 2002

Introduction

The permanent interpretive staff met in February of 2002 in a planning/visioning session to develop strategies and goals for improving the overall interpretive operation on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The group, who met over a period of three full days, included the following:

Patty Lockamy: Chief, Branch of Interpretation
Peter Givens: Staff Interpretive Specialist
Randy Sutton: District Interpreter, Ridge
Mindy DeCesar: District Interpreter, Plateau/Doughton Park
Tina Charlebois: District Interpreter, HighlandsSouth/Linville/
Gillespie Gap
Michele Maertens: District Interpreter, Pisgah

The group went through a standard nominal group process to develop a series of achievable short- term goals, long- term goals, and action plans for accomplishing each.

Process

The session opened with a process for consideration of what is already working well within the Branch. The group focused on why they were attracted to apply for their positions, what they enjoyed, what they did NOT want to change, and what made interpretation work for them within their Districts. Brainstorming brought several elements to the forefront, with the following selected as the top three strengths of the operation:

1. The opportunity to continue to grow professionally
2. Flexibility in managing their district operations
3. Opportunity to be in on the ground floor in significantly expanding the role of interpretation in a major park.

Next, the group focused on those things that they felt needed improvement in order for interpretation to fully succeed within the park. A comprehensive list was developed. When asked to prioritize the many

responses that were listed, three elements quickly rose to the top of the list:

Most Significant Needs Overall:

1. Improve the organizational structure within the park to significantly strengthen the role of interpretation in overall park management.
2. Improve the ratio of permanent to temporary staff
3. Improve/streamline the daily working relationships with our partners.

Next, the group was directed to divide the "needs" list into two groups:

1. Those needs that could be addressed in three years or less (short-term)
2. Those needs that would take longer than three years to address. (long-term)

The needs in each group were prioritized in order of the top five for each group, with the following results:

Needs to be Addressed in the Short Term:

1. Strengthen the grade structure of interpretive positions to reflect the actual duties required and to be compatible with other similar NPS interpretive operations.
2. Improve/streamline the daily working relationships with our partners.
3. Provide adequate interpretive office/storage space in Districts
4. Improve Park Signage
5. Finish the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan.

Needs to be Addressed through Long-Term Management:

1. Improve the organizational structure within the park to significantly strengthen the role of interpretation in overall park management.
2. Improve the ratio of permanent to temporary staff.
3. Make interpretive resources fully available to entire park staff
4. Update and improve park publications and develop a Publications Plan
5. Implement/Improve year-round upkeep of cultural resources/structures.

Finally, action plans were thought through and developed as ways of making both short- term and long- term goals actually obtainable. The following results were proposed by the group as ways to begin reaching solutions to the "needs"

Action Plans for Achieving Short- Term Goals

1. **Strengthen the grade structure of interpretive positions to reflect the actual duties required and to be compatible with other similar NPS Interpretive Operations.**

Action: Gather position descriptions from similar positions in other parks, document actions and responsibilities, better integrate ourselves into overall park operations, continue to diversify duties, openly make case (no complacency).

2. **Improve/streamline the daily working relationships with our partners.**

Action: Discuss current issues with Eastern, Concessions Management Specialist and Management Assistants. Actively review and provide input on partner work plans and publications. Work closely with Management Assistants and others on proposed partnership projects that impact the district operations. Work on improving personal relationships with partners, actively making efforts to develop working relationships with Guild, EN, NTCA, Friends, Foundation, and Concessions field personnel.

3. **Provide adequate interpretive office/storage space in Districts.**

Action: Secure EN and other funding to improve/build offices. Work closely with other District Management Team Members to resolve space issues.

4. **Improve Park Signage**

Action: Chief Interpreter and Resident Landscape Architect schedule trip to develop a comprehensive signage plan. Interpretive staff will provide significant input.

5. **Finish the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan**

Action: Chief Interpreter will work with HFC to update and finish plan. Interpretive staff will provide review and input.

Action Plans for Long- Term Goals:

1. **Improve the organizational structure within the park to significantly strengthen the role of interpretation in overall park management.**

Action: Provide overall recommendation to be included in updated version of Park Comprehensive Interpretive Plan. Discuss Strategies with Chief Ranger, Superintendent, and other Management Staff. Build overall professionalism of staff, actively pursue and advocate for structure with partners and in larger NPS community.

2. Improve the ratio of permanent to temporary staff.

Action: Find money! Use position management techniques to slowly begin filling needs correctly where they occur.

3. Make Interpretive Resources Fully Available to Entire Park Staff.

Action: Procure CD burners and begin digitizing photographic and library resources. Use EN funding to boost library resources in each district.

4. Update and improve Park Publications and Develop a Publications Plan.

Action: Develop PMIS Request in '03 Call to request Publication Plan Development with HFC. Begin editing existing publications, consider potential sales of nicer publications, such as Bloom Calendar or Maps. Work with RPPS to develop better trail maps.

5. Implement/Improve year-round upkeep of cultural resources/structures.

Work with District Maintenance Staff to develop work orders to address deficiencies. Work with Resource Management to develop rodent control plans. Be advocates for cultural resources, send reports to Cultural Resource Management Specialist, keep issues on the front burner,

The significance of these goals and action plans is that they were developed directly by park staff and represent a clear vision on where interpretation needs to go to be successful. The group is striving to bring the park to the forefront in interpretive excellence. We seek to make the Blue Ridge Parkway a leader in the nation and region in upholding interpretation as a vital tool for park management and accomplishing the National Park Service mission. The accomplishment of these goals is a good step in that direction and the right thing to do for this park and NPS Interpretation overall.

A Strategy for Improving Interpretive Operations
on the Blue Ridge Parkway

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