



Great Smoky Mountains National Park

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

March 2017



Newfound Gap Road Scenic Byway CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

Chapter 1: Vision and Goals

Purpose of the Plan

Seek designation of Newfound Gap Road as a National Scenic Byway.

The National Park Service (NPS) recognizes Newfound Gap Road corridor not just a way to get between Gatlinburg, TN and Cherokee, NC, but as the primary park experience for many visitors to Great Smoky Mountains National Park (Park). The corridor offers the chance to discover resources associated with different periods of history and to experience high elevation lands and ecological features that are unlike other lands in the Park.

For these outstanding qualities, the NPS seeks to designate Newfound Gap Road as a National Scenic Byway. This designation can also inspire gateway communities to integrate aesthetically with the Byway, and allow local projects to compete for scenic byway grants.

To seek designation as a National Scenic Byway, the Park must complete a Corridor Management Plan (CMP). A CMP is a written plan that addresses the visitor experience of the corridor and outlines how to protect and enhance its defining intrinsic qualities and character. The CMP serves to guide the management of the corridor and protection of the important qualities associated with it.

What's special about a National Scenic Byway?

To be designated as a National Scenic Byway, a road must significantly exhibit at least one of six intrinsic qualities: scenic, natural, historic, cultural, archaeological or recreational. It must have distinctive characteristics that make it one of the best representations of that quality in its region. To receive the even more exclusive designation as an *All-American Road*, the route must offer two of the intrinsic qualities, and they must be among the best representations on a nationwide basis.

The National Scenic Byways Program is administered through the Federal Highway Administration, which describes it as “a grass-roots collaborative effort established to help recognize, preserve and enhance selected roads



throughout the United States.” In previous years, the program provided grant funding for byway enhancement, safety improvements, and interpretative and marketing activities. Although the program has not received funding in several years, there are still reasons to seek designation as a National Scenic Byway. It constitutes public recognition of the route’s national value and the

importance of preserving and enhancing the corridor’s qualities. There is also value in using the actions listed in the Corridor Management Plan to ensure that the byway retains the outstanding qualities for which it was nominated and/or designated.

To be considered for National Scenic Byway designation, a road must first be designated as a State scenic byway,

an Indian tribe scenic byway, or as a Federal land management agency byway. Newfound Gap Road is already a designated state scenic byway in both TN and NC. The Park now seeks National Scenic Byway status, which requires the adoption of a formal Corridor Management Plan, on the basis of its outstanding historic and scenic qualities.

Plan Requirements

Federal requirements for a Corridor Management Plan (CMP) are outlined in Title 23, Section 162 of the United States Code, and list 14 elements that must be included in the CMP. These elements are shown at right, along with a chapter reference indicating where the element is discussed in this plan. Several elements are, at least partially, addressed through the National Park Service and park-specific policies, plans, and regulations.



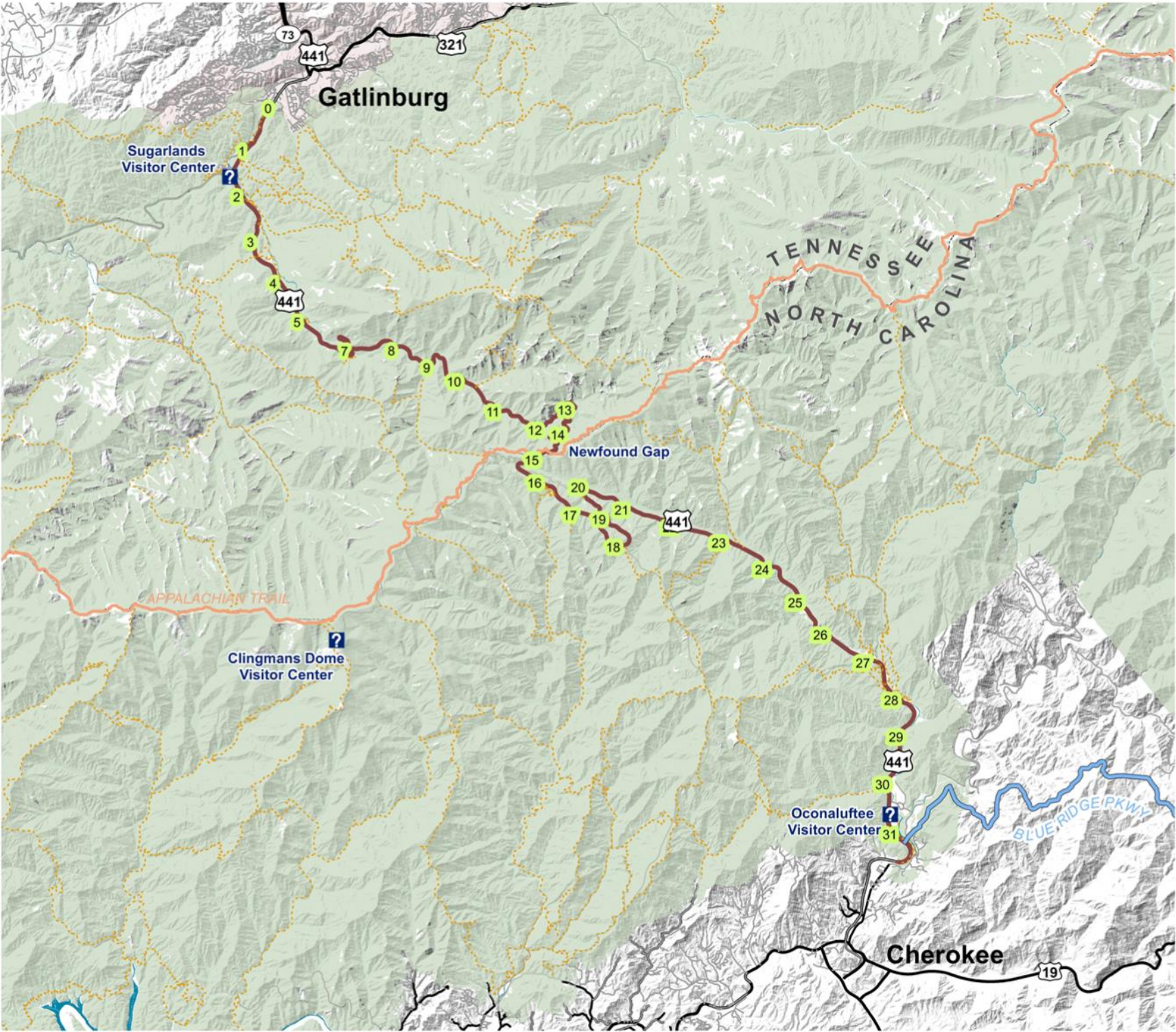
Elements of a National Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan

Required CMP Element	Location in this Document
Map(s) showing corridor boundaries, location of intrinsic qualities, and existing land uses.	<i>Chapters 2 and 3</i>
Demonstration of compliance with all existing federal, state and local laws on the control of outdoor advertising.	<i>Outdoor advertising is prohibited in the corridor due to its location within a national park.</i>
Plan to accommodate commerce while maintaining a safe, efficient level of road service, including convenient user facilities.	<i>Commercial services for visitors are provided in the gateway communities, which lie outside the corridor.</i>
Assessment of intrinsic qualities and their context.	<i>Chapter 3 describes the corridor’s intrinsic scenic, natural, recreational, cultural, historic and archaeological qualities.</i>
Strategy for maintaining and enhancing the intrinsic qualities of the byway corridor.	<i>Chapter 4 addresses stewardship of the corridor.</i>
Demonstration that intrusions on the visitor experience have been minimized to the extent feasible, and what improvements are planned to enhance the visitor experience.	<i>Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7</i>
Strategies to enhance existing development and accommodate new development while preserving the corridor’s intrinsic qualities.	<i>Development in the corridor is limited to the uses outlined in the Park’s General Management Plan (discussed in Chapter 2).</i>
General review of the road’s safety record to identify correctable issues in road design, maintenance and/or operation.	<i>Chapter 5 addresses roadway safety and design.</i>
Signage plan that shows how the number and placement of signs will be supportive of the visitor experience.	<i>Chapter 2 explains the National Park Service sign policy. Chapter 5 discusses policies and recommendations for the corridor.</i>
Discussion of design standards related to any proposed roadway modification, and how it may affect the corridor’s intrinsic qualities.	<i>Chapter 2 describes current Park policies and standards. Chapter 4 outlines strategies for enhanced corridor guidelines.</i>
Description of plans to interpret the byway’s significant resources.	<i>Chapter 6</i>
Description of how the National Scenic Byway will be positioned for marketing.	<i>Chapter 7</i>
How the plan will be implemented: which agencies and/or individuals, the schedule, and the enforcement and review mechanisms to be used.	<i>A summary of implementation roles, schedule, and review/enforcement is provided in Chapter 8.</i>
Plan for ongoing public involvement in plan implementation.	<i>Chapter 8</i>

Corridor Definition

The Newfound Gap Road Byway corridor, about 31 miles in length, lies wholly within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. On either end, located just outside the Park, are the “gateway” communities of Gatlinburg, Tennessee and Cherokee, North Carolina.

Although the route belongs to, and is maintained and operated by the Park, it remains designated as U.S. Highway 441. Outside the Park, the byway connects in Tennessee to State Highway 73 and in North Carolina to U.S. Highway 19.



Newfound Gap Scenic Byway

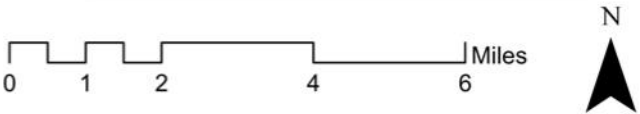
Corridor Management Plan

BASE MAP

Legend

- Newfound Gap Scenic Byway
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Trails
- Appalachian Trail
- Visitor Centers
- Mile Markers

GIS DATA SOURCES: ESRI NPS, USGS



Guiding Vision

To preserve, protect and enhance Newfound Gap Road so that it continues to embody the significant scenic, natural and cultural resources of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and to facilitate visitors’ enjoyment of those resources.

Corridor Management Goals

Preserve and enhance the visual and scenic quality of Newfound Gap Road and the related scenic corridor.

Present the best interpretative programs and experiences to promote awareness, appreciation and sensitivity for the significant resources, values and history that Newfound Gap Road represents.

Maintain and enhance safety, accessibility and visitor amenities in a manner consistent with the road’s historic design and purpose.

Create a corridor-specific maintenance plan and capital needs list to ensure Newfound Gap Road continues to provide visitors with the quality of experience associated with a scenic byway.

Increase recognition and awareness of Newfound Gap Road’s significance.

Work in partnership with gateway communities where there are mutually beneficial opportunities consistent with the other goals of the CMP.

Newfound Gap Road Vision and Goals

The strategies developed and described throughout this Plan are a reflection of the Vision and Goals developed by the Plan’s Steering Committee for the Newfound Gap Road Byway corridor. This group included representatives of the public agencies responsible for the ongoing management of the byway or other roads that link directly to it:

- Great Smoky Mountains National Park
- Federal Highway Administration, Eastern Federal Lands Division
- Tennessee Department of Transportation
- North Carolina Department of Transportation



Focus on Roadside Management

Management of this scenic byway is greatly enhanced by the fact that the corridor lies entirely within the boundaries of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and is therefore subject to the conservation and resource management policies of the National Park Service. The visitor experience is influenced by the “gateway communities” of Gatlinburg, TN and Cherokee, NC which border Newfound Gap Road Byway on either end, but local land use and zoning policies do not directly impact the corridor. The Park has sole jurisdiction over the corridor.

An additional advantage the corridor possesses is strong public visibility due to its presence in the most heavily-visited National Park in the country. Marketing the corridor to attract visitors is unnecessary for this byway; in fact, portions of this plan deal with strategies to spread and/or divert visitors to less heavily-used areas of the Park, and to promote visitor cooperation in respecting and guarding the intrinsic qualities they experience by driving the route.

Much of the Newfound Gap Road Byway was designed and constructed for the purpose of creating an auto-oriented experience for visitors to the Park, and Park survey data indicates that many visitors do indeed remain either in or within a short distance of their vehicles. This particular corridor management plan therefore has a strong focus on conservation and management of the resources immediately adjacent to the roadway.



Chapter 2: Planning Context

National Park Service Policies & Plans

Management for the entire Newfound Gap Scenic Byway corridor is under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. The core values which guide management of this corridor and all other lands under NPS jurisdiction – to preserve Park resources and character while providing opportunities where possible for visitors to enjoy them – are reiterated in multiple Congressional Acts, NPS Management Policies, and in the local Park-level plans, policies and procedures of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

All of the NPS Management Policies, and the Director’s Orders which provide further detail for their implementation, apply to the Newfound Gap Byway corridor, but two are particularly relevant to its management as a scenic byway:

The **NPS Park Road Standards** (part of Director’s Order 87A) were created to establish roadway designs that address safety issues regulated on other roads by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) while still “continuing to preserve the natural or historic characteristics of park areas.” The design philosophy is entirely consistent with the goals of the National Scenic Byway program in its emphasis on the traveler’s experience:

“Each segment of every park road should relate to the resource it traverses in a meaningful way. [...] Park roads are not intended to provide fast and convenient transportation; they are intended to enhance visitor experience while providing safe and efficient accommodation of park visitors and to serve essential access needs.”

Signage in the corridor is governed by the **NPS Sign Standards Manual** and the 2004 **Uniguide** (Director’s Order 52C). The Sign Standards Manual addresses signs for motorist guidance and wayfinding, traffic regulation, identification of facilities, and other signs related to safety, resource protection, and interpretation. The Uniguide provides for the planning and design of signs along with graphic standards, material specifications, and installation. Through a memorandum of understanding with NPS, the FHWA has recognized and

approved the Uniguide standards as being in “substantial conformance” with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, which is the standard for signage on public roads outside national parks.

Other federal legislation affecting resource management in the corridor includes:

- Historic Sites Act (1935)
- Executive Order 11593 – Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment (1971)
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act (1979)
- National Historic Preservation Act (1969)
- Executive Order 13112 – Invasive Species (1999)

Local Park Policies and Plans

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, in accordance with NPS Management Policies, has adopted certain standard park planning elements which provide a rationale for its decisions. These include its Foundation Statement/Document, General Management Plan and various program management plans .

Foundation Statement / Document / Purpose

The 1926 Act of Congress that established the Park stated its purpose is “for the enjoyment and benefit of the people.” It also referenced the 1916 National Park Service Organic Act, which says the fundamental purpose of national parks is to “conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

General Management Plan (1982)

The Park’s General Management Plan, or GMP, sets long-term goals for the park based on the foundation statement. It designates areas of the Park as various



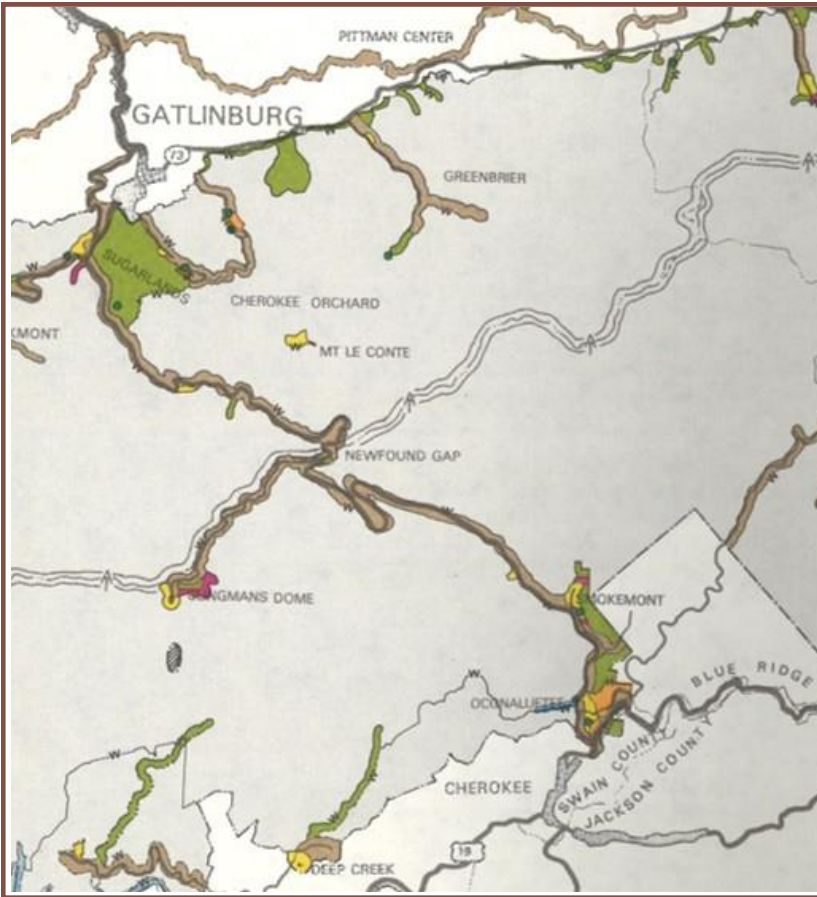
management zones based on the uses, activities, and actions that are appropriate. Zone types include Natural, Historic, Development, and Special Use.

Generally, the GMP calls for visitor services and facilities to be located along the edges of the Park and along Newfound Gap Road, leaving the interior lands to be maintained in natural conditions.

A narrow corridor immediately adjacent to Newfound Gap Road is classified as part of the Development Zone, whose stated purpose is “to permit visitors to experience the values for which Great Smoky Mountains Park was established.” It is further designated as a Transportation Subzone, a category assigned to all of the public road corridors in the Park. The GMP does not list

any particular management actions associated with this subzone.

On either side of the narrow Transportation Subzone, the majority of the byway corridor is classified in the Natural Zone as subzone Type 1. In these areas, natural processes are to be allowed to operate wherever possible. Park management actions are taken only to restore and/or maintain the environmental conditions that would exist without interference by non-native species or modern technology. Visitor use is permitted in Natural Zone Type 1 areas up to the point that it does not create significant deterioration of resources. Permitted activities are to be “transient in nature” and non-motorized, such as hiking, fishing, horseback riding, swimming and backcountry camping.



MANAGEMENT ZONES AND SUBZONES		AREA		
		EXISTING	PROPOSED	Percent of Park
NATURAL		Acres	Acres	
	NATURAL ENVIRONMENT - TYPE I	415,767	464,544	88.6
	NATURAL ENVIRONMENT - TYPE II	22,900	13,640	2.6
	EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH (Andrews and Gregory Balds)	none	132	
	PROTECTED NATURAL (Blow Hole Cave and Bull Cave)	6	12	
HISTORIC				
	HISTORIC PRESERVATION	450	450	0.1
	LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT	5,727	5,715	1.1
DEVELOPMENT				
	GENERAL PARK DEVELOPMENT	2,456	3,301	0.6
	TRANSPORTATION	26,982	30,920	5.9
	PARK UTILITIES	746	746	0.1
SPECIAL USE				
	RESERVOIR	4,587	4,587	0.9
	NON-PARK UTILITIES	450	450	0.1
	PRIVATE MANAGEMENT (Lands within the authorized boundary are proposed to be acquired and managed as Natural Environment Type I or Type II (the authorized boundary is subject to legislative change))	2,611*	none	none
	RESERVED RIGHTS	42,165	none	none
44,170 Ac Tract	TOTAL	524,856	524,497	100.0

Park Management Zones, from the *General Management Plan (1982)*

The visitor access and support facilities associated with these recreational activities are designated to take place in the Development Zone, specifically in areas within the General Park Development subzone. Within the Newfound Gap Road corridor, these areas are primarily designated at the northern and southern termini. Lands in this zone include camping and picnic grounds, access roads and parking areas, interpretative facilities, and the Park’s operations and maintenance facilities.

Areas at the northern and southern ends of the corridor also include lands designated for the Natural Zone with a subzone of Natural Environment Type II. This includes areas that would not be designated in the more restrictive Type 1 subzone because of established uses and the periodic need to use mechanized equipment. Uses falling into this category include cemeteries, the Smokemont riding stables, and paved or heavily used trails.

At the southern end of the corridor, the Oconaluftee Historic District is designated for the Historic Zone, subzoned specifically for Historic Landscape Management. This subzone calls for maintenance of the pastoral scenes characteristic of the areas being farmed before the Park was established. Fences are to be maintained, along with growing hay and cutting trees, with use of motorized equipment permitted.

The GMP recognizes that increasing visitation to the Park has the potential to impact natural and cultural resources, and to lessen the quality of visitor experience. It acknowledges certain management actions will need to occur “to curb such degradation. This probably can be accomplished without reducing the annual visitor total, but it will require drawing the line at certain peak use levels and increasing the management of some activities.”

Increasing traffic congestion on Newfound Gap Road is also recognized in the GMP as an issue of concern.

The **Road System Evaluation**, a 1985 addendum to the GMP, identifies the construction of the Foothills Parkway along the northern border of the Park as the ultimate solution to draw some visitors and other traffic into other areas.

The GMP also proposes spreading visitors both spatially and temporally. Options to limit the number of entering vehicles and encourage transit (either privately or publicly operated) are discussed as measures that can be taken if growing traffic congestion creates significant impacts to the Park’s resources or visitor experience.

Vista Management Plan (2012)

This document catalogs and classifies the most important scenic views within the Park, many of which were created or enhanced as part of the Park’s 1942 Vista Plan. Vistas have been rated according to view quality and interpretative and historic significance. The plan prioritizes viewpoints for management on a cyclical basis in order to allow visitor enjoyment, preserve the historical/cultural context in which the vista was created, and protect cultural resources and sensitive plant and animal species.

Cultural Landscape Assessment (Tennessee portion)

This 2009 document was developed in preparation for the Park’s planned rehabilitation of the Tennessee portion of Newfound Gap Road (Milepost 0.0 to Milepost 14.5) It provides historical documentation, reports existing conditions, and evaluates character-defining features for this section of the route.

State Scenic Byway Programs

In 2009, Newfound Gap Road was designated by Tennessee as a state scenic highway and by North Carolina as a state scenic byway.

The North Carolina and Tennessee Departments of Transportation each maintain a website showing Newfound Gap Road as part of their state’s scenic byway network and links to additional information on the experiences that motorists may enjoy on those routes.

Other Relevant Programs, Plans & Studies

Foothills Parkway

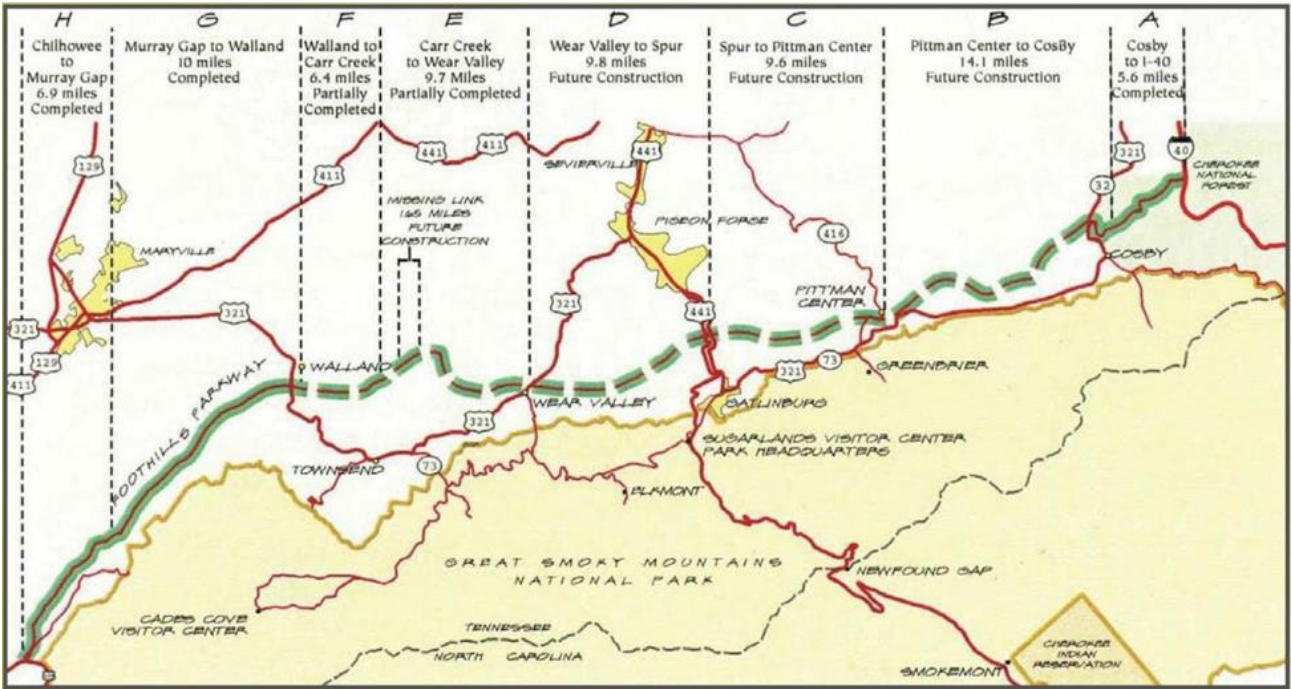
Congress authorized the Foothills Parkway as a scenic parkway on February 22, 1944 (Public Law 232). Its stated purpose is to provide beautiful vistas of the Great Smoky Mountains along their northern flank in Tennessee and to disperse traffic in the area. The entire 72-mile corridor is administered by Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The Parkway parallels the Park’s northern boundary from U.S. Highway 129 at Chilhowee Lake, TN to I-40 near Cosby, TN.

To date, two discontinuous segments totaling 22.5 miles are completed and open: the far eastern section between I-40 and US 321 at Cosby, and on the western end, a 17-mile stretch from U.S. 129 to U.S. 321 in Walland.

Another 16 miles extending eastward from Walland to Wears Valley is anticipated for completion by the end of 2018.

Three unfinished segments remain, totaling 33.5 miles between Wears Valley and Cosby. No planning work has been done for Section 8C, which would link the Town of Pittman Center and the Gatlinburg Spur Road. Environmental reports have been developed for Sections 8B (Pittman Center to Cosby) and 8D (Wears Valley to the Spur), but further work has been suspended because of the uncertainty of funding.

Proposed Foothills Parkway



Cades Cove Opportunities Plan

In the early 2000s, the Park undertook an analysis of the visitor experience and transportation needs for the Cades Cove area, another area of the Park which is heavily used by visitors. The study is relevant to the Newfound Gap Road corridor because it reviewed many of the same issues addressed by this corridor plan: balancing extremely high demand for visitor access and the need to preserve and protect natural and cultural resources.

At the time, more than 2.1 million annual visitors to Cades Cove were reported along with heavy congestion on the road more than 50 percent of the time during summer and fall seasons. The plan included extensive public involvement and developed several alternatives for transportation management, including the use of a reservation system or the creation of a shuttle system that visitors would use during peak periods in lieu of private vehicles. Significant public opposition was expressed to any changes to vehicle access to Cades Cove although peak period travel times for the 11-mile, one-way Loop had grown to 3 or 4 hours in length.

Park Visitation and Use

In 2015, there were more than 10.7 million recreational visits to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the highest visitation of any of the 59 national parks. Low gas prices, a recovering economy and the Park’s proximity to many population centers are credited with the continued rise in visitors.

At least 60 percent of those visitors experience at least a portion of Newfound Gap Road, based on the Park’s traffic

counts. In 2015, approximately 1.58 million vehicles passed through the Gatlinburg station, the primary park entrance used for major destinations such as the Sugarlands Visitor Center, Newfound Gap, and Clingmans Dome. Close to 1 million vehicles passed through the Oconaluftee entrance station in the same year, and use of that entrance continues to rise since the opening of the new Oconaluftee Visitor Center in 2011 near the North Carolina end of the corridor.

Based on a multiplier of 2.5 to 2.8 persons per vehicle (depending on whether it is peak season), the number of visitors using Newfound Gap Road in the course of one year was somewhere between 6.5 and 7.2 million. By comparison, the 2015 report for the Blue Ridge Parkway estimates about 15 million visitors – only twice the number of people on Newfound Gap Road despite the Parkway being a 469-mile route stretching across two states.

Great Smoky Mountains Park is primarily a day-use park. Other than campgrounds and LeConte Lodge, overnight lodging is available only in the gateway communities on either end of Newfound Gap Road. This contributes to the traffic situation because the majority of the Park’s visitors are trying to drive into the park every morning, and trying to drive out of it every evening. Some additional traffic may also have been generated in recent years by new development associated with the opening of a casino in Cherokee. Current traffic data collection does not distinguish between through-traffic or drivers whose destination lies within the Park.



Newfound Gap Road:

Introduction and Existing Conditions

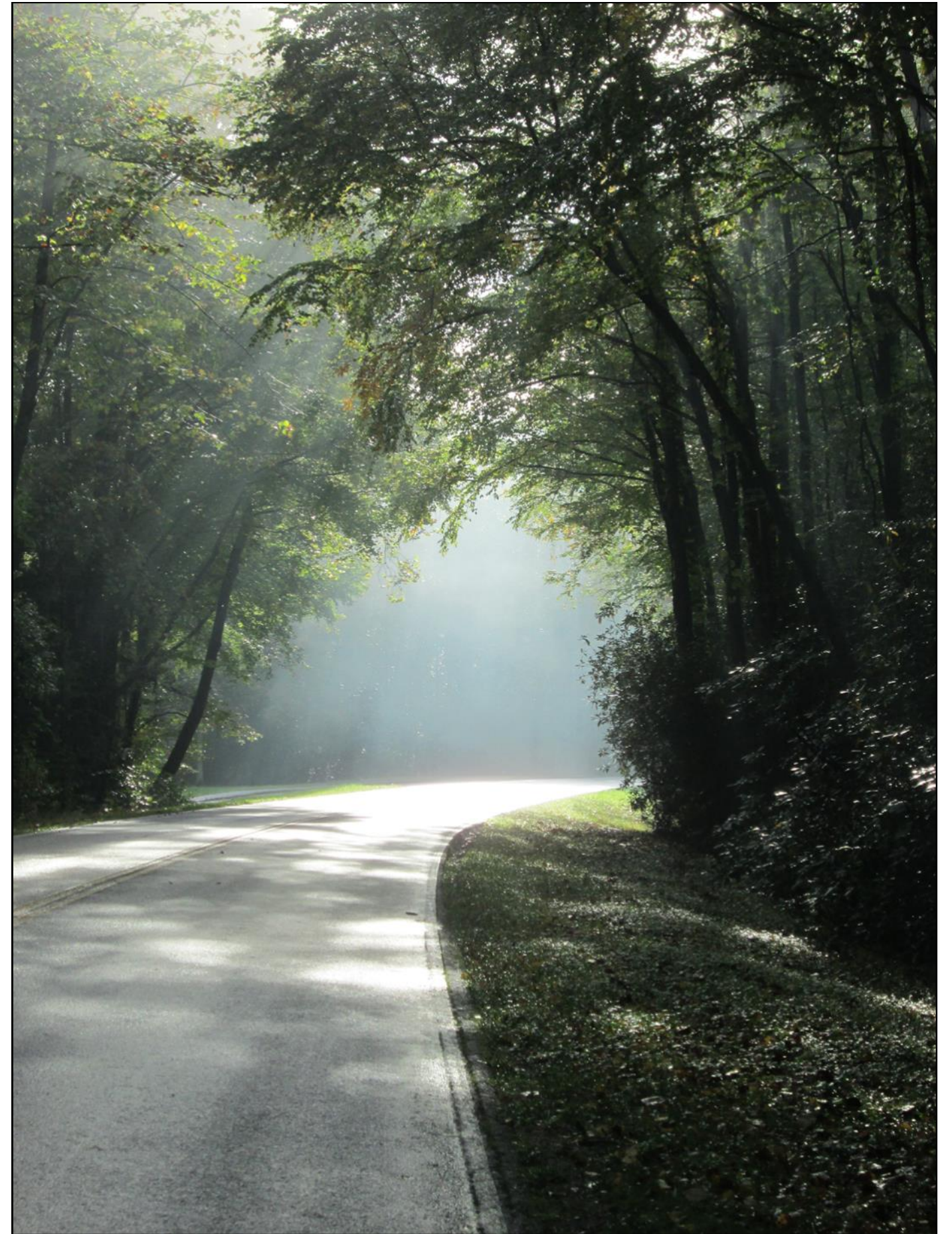
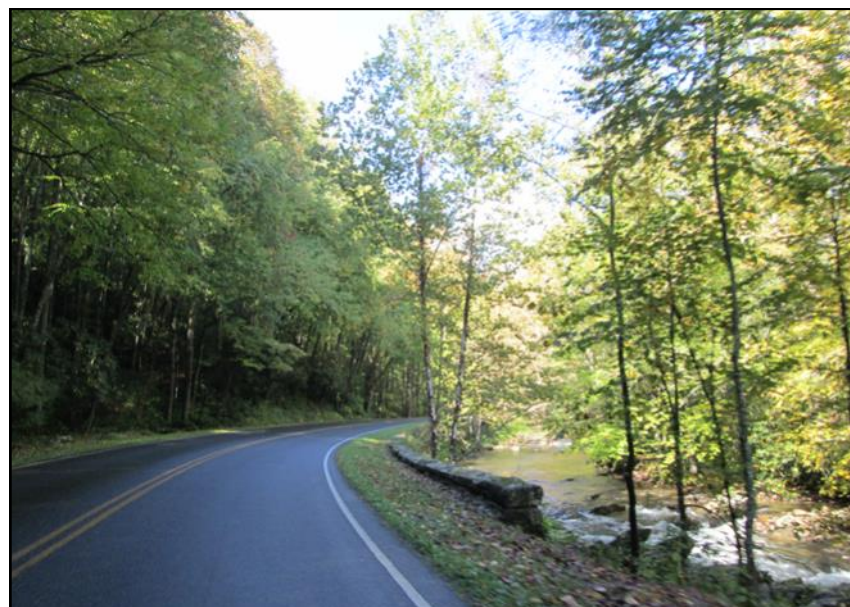
Newfound Gap Road is a 31-mile-long linear landscape that connects Gatlinburg, Tennessee with Cherokee, North Carolina. It forms a vital component of the Park's circulation system and is the only improved road that crosses the entire Park.

The road was constructed not only as a transportation route between the two states, but also as a scenic route with carefully planned views of the landscape for motorists and hikers. Pulloffs, located at regular intervals along the road, provide stopping points and opportunities to park and explore the areas immediately adjacent to the roadway. These pulloffs often incorporate a picturesque landscape feature, such as a waterfall or vista of a river. At Newfound Gap, which forms the Tennessee-North Carolina border, visitors can leave their vehicles to experience the road at its highest elevation, view the landscape from overlooks, and visit the Rockefeller Memorial. Newfound Gap Road also provides visitors with access to many of the Park's most popular sites and facilities, including trails, picnic areas, campgrounds, and historically important sites.

The 1930s reconstruction of the road responded to the natural topography, landscape features, and views to enhance the motorist's experience. This reconstruction transformed the roadway to follow the design philosophies of the NPS. Consequently, the road was realigned to avoid steep grades, road banks were restored to have a naturalistic appearance, and all road-related structures were built in a rustic aesthetic in order to harmonize with the surrounding landscape. The Civilian Conservation Corps provided the manpower for many landscaping and road-building projects in the Park during the 1930s and 1940s. Newfound Gap Road strongly bears the imprint of their work.

Character Areas

Physical and visual surveys were conducted to identify any negative impacts to be addressed by strategies in the Corridor Management Plan. Landscape features along the Newfound Gap Road corridor were evaluated by dividing it into segments, or character areas. Character areas are defined by visually similar vegetation communities, terrain, views, and built features. The complete Visual and Physical Inventories with Character Area maps are located in Appendix A; summaries are included on the next page.



Character Area 1, Mile Marker 0–1.3: Park entrance road from Gatlinburg



The entrance to the Park at Gatlinburg is characterized by cove hardwood forest deciduous canopy and intermittent views of a stream on the right. The forest floor is generally clear to the right, providing visibility well beyond the road shoulder. There are steeply sloping, sometimes rocky outcroppings at the left side of the roadway. Pulloffs with stone curbing are frequent. A Park entrance sign is located on the right side of the road. The Gatlinburg Trail is visible from the roadway intermittently on the right side. Gatlinburg Bypass crosses the roadway just before Mile Marker 1.

Character Area 2, Mile Marker 1.3-1.7: Sugarlands



A maintained landscape of the Sugarlands Visitor Center and Park Headquarters characterizes this segment of the corridor. An open grassy area and widened corridor offers views to the surrounding valley to the right with steeper terrain to the left. A large parking area is adjacent to the visitor center. Sugarlands offers visitor

services such as rest rooms, information, a bookstore, interpretive exhibits, vending machines, and access to drinking water. From the visitor center, visitors can access Fighting Creek National Trail or walk to Cataract Falls via the Cove Mountain Trail. Park Headquarters is located across the lawn from the Visitor Center near Mile Marker 1.5. The West Prong of the Little Pigeon River crosses beneath the roadway near Park headquarters through a stone triple arch bridge.

Character Area 3, Mile Marker 1.7-3.7



There are steep slopes on the right and stream valley immediately on the left. The densely wooded corridor narrows and widens intermittently. Rock outcroppings on the right (SB) dissipate and return. The understory includes herbaceous/deciduous cover as well as rhododendrons, montane alluvial vegetation, oak, heath and successional base vegetation. Pulloffs in this segment range from asphalt with stone curbing to gravel, social pulloffs. Trails are generally accessed from asphalt pulloffs (Sugarland Valley + Bullhead Quiet Walkway).

Character Area 4, Mile Marker 3.7-4: Carlos Campbell Overlook (north and south)



This segment is characterized by the incredible views from Carlos Campbell North and South overlooks. Traveling southbound the view opens up to ridges at the guard rail on the left. The roadway curves around a steep outcropping at the right. The base vegetation is oak and cove with herbaceous/deciduous understory. Overlooks are asphalt with stone curbing. Meadow grasses, sumac and solidago are among the vegetation seen from the overlooks, just beyond the asphalt walkway.

Character Area 5, Mile Marker 4-6.2



The roadway is shaded primarily by deciduous canopy with filtered views to the mountains/ridge lines on the left (SB). Rocky, mossy terrain is to the right, sloping steeply in some areas. The road parallels the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River offering intermittent stream views. Understory is primarily herbaceous/deciduous with rhododendrons. Base vegetation is montane alluvial, oak, and successional.

Character Area 6, Mile Marker 6.2-6.4: Chimneys Picnic Area



This area is primarily a maintained landscape with a seasonally lush, wooded picnic area, rest room facilities, and asphalt parking. The picnic area is located off of a sharp curve where the roadway begins to ascend into the higher terrain. A well-crafted stone bridge crosses the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River at the curve in the roadway. Views to the river can be seen from the picnic area. A trailhead for Cove Hardwood Nature Trail is located in the parking area and indicated with an interpretive sign. Land cover includes a base of oak and successional vegetation with herbaceous/deciduous understory.

Character Area 7, Mile Marker 6.4-7: Curve/Switchback



A sharp switchback characterizes this segment. Traveling southbound, one begins to ascend with steeply sloping terrain to the left and rocky steep outcroppings on the right. After curving to the right, the left side is characterized by steep outcroppings and the right side slopes steeply downhill toward the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River and the road below. Herbaceous/deciduous understory and some rhododendron make up the understory. The forest base vegetation is oak and successional. This segment approaches the Chimney Tops Overlooks .

Character Area 8, Mile Marker 7-7.7: Chimney Tops Overlooks



The Chimney Tops Overlooks are located in this segment. There are six pulloffs with some providing better vistas to Chimney Tops than others. The third pulloff does not have a vista, but it does have a grassy shoulder area. A steep rock face is on the left, behind the overlooks, and a steep, vegetated slope is just beyond the overlooks to the right of the roadway. Vegetation includes oaks, tulip poplars and maples. Base vegetation is oak, heath, and successional. Understory is herbaceous/deciduous.

Character Area 9, Mile marker 7.7-9.0



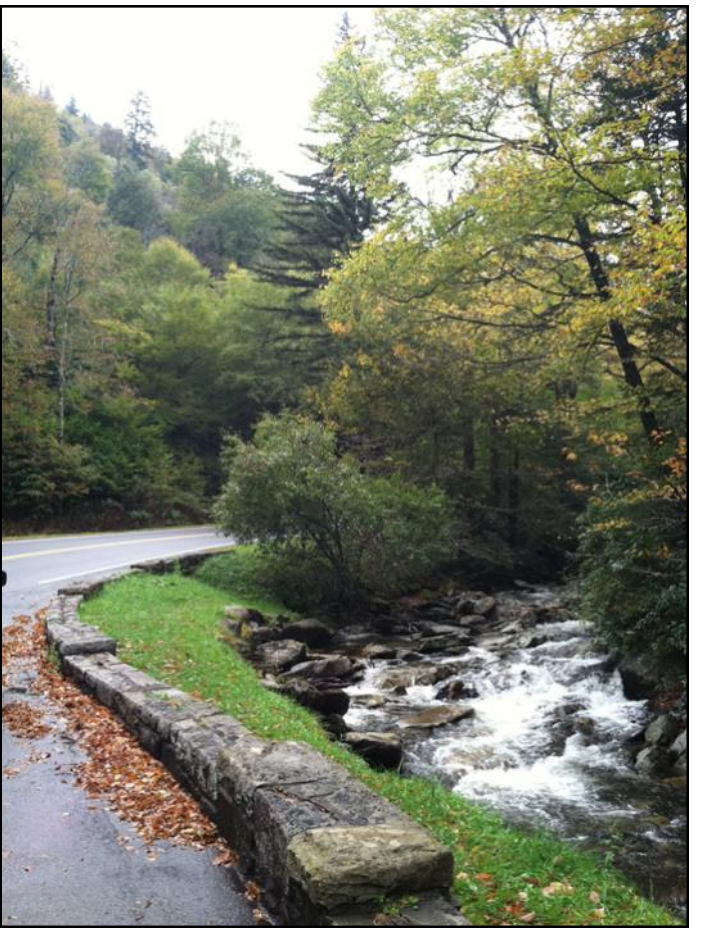
The roadway is characterized by a rocky terrain with varying steepness on the left and the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River on the right. Understory is herbaceous/deciduous with medium cover of rhododendron. Base vegetation is heath, high hardwood, and successional. There are approximately eight pulloffs within this segment and access to the Chimney Tops Trailhead. There are intermittent river views along the roadway.

Character Area 10, Mile Marker 9.0-10.9: The Loop to the stream valley/ Ascending to the Loop



This portion of the roadway is characterized by a descent into the stream valley with several opportunities for glimpses of the river and mountain streams, as well as places to stop and enjoy the nearby waterways. Streams and roadway crisscross in a fashion requiring headwalls and culverts; however, most are not immediately visible from the roadway. Major landscape features include “The Loop,” stone arch bridges, and pulloffs including the Alum Cave Trailhead. The vegetation is generally dense with shrubs and stands of rhododendron. Such growth creates a narrow, channel-like experience in some areas. The Alum Cave Trailhead pulloff and parking area is frequently congested.

Character Area 11, Mile Marker 10.9-13.0: Spruce/Fir & Rhododendron



As with Character Area 10, this segment features many headwalls and culverts accommodating the crossing of waterways with the road. Such streams and river approach the elevation of the roadway, allowing for a scenic and dynamic experience. Still ascending, the corridor is dotted with spruce and fir trees, oak, high hardwood, and successional base vegetation. Understory includes herbaceous/deciduous and dense rhododendron stands. Major landscape features include tree wells (see Chapter 3), stone walls, culverts, and stone bridges.

Character Area 12, Mile Marker 13.0-14.8: Transition to “High Mountains”



This area of the corridor is characterized by scenic views toward ridges to the northwest vegetated with firs and spruces. Dead trees are highly visible from the Morton Overlook. Major physical features include several lengthy stone guard walls, stone overlooks, a stone faced tunnel, and several pulloffs. Traveling toward the Newfound Gap, visitors ascend to the High Mountain ecoregions. The left side of the roadway becomes steep rock outcropping and cliff, while the right side of the road opens up toward the vistas of distant ridges. Base vegetation is spruce/fir and hardwood. Herbaceous/deciduous vegetation and dense rhododendron make up the understory.

Character Area 13, Mile Marker 14.8-14.9: Newfound Gap Parking Area



Newfound Gap is located in this segment of the corridor. It is a perceived summit with wide open panoramic views of the surrounding mountains. It is a maintained landscape mostly covered with asphalt parking. A terraced stone monument is located at the foot of a high point on the site, where Roosevelt gave his dedication speech in 1940. The Appalachian Trail crosses at the center of the parking area generally around the same location of the boundary between Tennessee and North Carolina, marked by a Park sign. The vegetation is herbaceous/deciduous understory with high hardwood base vegetation. Peak visitation results in overcrowding in the parking area and pedestrian/vehicle conflicts at crossings, particularly at the Appalachian Trail. This segment marks the transition from the Lower French Broad watershed into the Tuckaseegee Watershed. The old road alignment can be seen at the west end of the parking area.

Character Area 14, Mile Marker 14.9-15.5



The access road to Clingmans Dome marks the beginning of this segment. It is characterized by steep, rocky outcroppings or rock face on the right (similar to Character Area 12) when traveling southbound. Understory vegetation is herbaceous/deciduous. Base vegetation is spruce/fir and high hardwood. There are no scenic views from this segment. Southbound travel is generally downhill.

Character Area 15, Mile Marker 15.5-16.5



A major landscape feature of this character area is Luftee Overlook where visitors can capture a vista toward the dramatic ridges east of the pulloff. Two other pulloffs are in this segment: one is a very large gravel pulloff and the other is a small gravel pulloff. The roadway character beyond Luftee Overlook is generally flanked by forested canopy with open grassy shoulders. Base vegetation is spruce/fir and high hardwood; understory vegetation is herbaceous/deciduous with dense rhododendron.

Character Area 16, Mile Marker 16.5-17: Deep Creek Overlook



Two overlooks characterize this corridor segment, Deep Creek Valley 1 and 2. Views open to the right to the valley and ranges (SB). Intermittent canopy filters the light on the right (SB). Vegetation includes herbaceous/deciduous and dense rhododendron understory. Base vegetation is spruce/fir and high hardwood.

Character Area 17, Mile Marker 17-17.3: Swinging Bridges



The Swinging Bridges overlooks characterize this portion of the corridor, with fantastic views to ridges at the south. A metal guard rail is highly visible from the roadway, and the adjacent walkway is relatively narrow and close to the road. Understory is composed of herbaceous/deciduous vegetation and dense rhododendron stands. Base vegetation is spruce/fir, high hardwood, and heath.

Character Area 18, Mile Marker 17.3-18.5: Vistas to southwest on loop/switchback



This segment of the corridor continues to follow the ridgeline of Thomas Ridge. It is one side of the long switchback that loops along the ridges. Webb Overlook offers high quality views to mountains and valley to the southwest. Thomas Divide Trail is accessed from a pulloff just beyond Mile Marker 18. The canopy and wooded corridor allows for filtered and dramatic vistas. Understory includes herbaceous/ deciduous vegetation with high hardwood and heath base vegetation.

Character Area 19, Mile Marker 18.5-20: Descent from ridge line and vistas



On this sinuous segment of the corridor, the southbound traveler begins to descend down the ridge with several gravel pulloffs and one overlook. Views are mostly to the northeast. The old road alignment can be seen to the left at about Mile . Beech Flats Quiet Walkway trailhead is accessed from this character area around Mile 19.7. The wooded corridor allows for filtered and dramatic vistas. Understory includes herbaceous/ deciduous vegetation with high hardwood and heath base vegetation.

Character Area 20, Mile Marker 20-22.8: Transition from High Mountains



In this segment, visitors traveling toward Cherokee descend from the High Mountains. The roadway is less sinuous here, with a wooded corridor and stream valley to the left. There are four pulloffs in this segment. Vegetation includes herbaceous/ deciduous and medium to heavy coverage of rhododendron understory. Base vegetation is cove, high hardwood, oak, and successional forest.

Character Area 21, Mile Marker 22.8-27.5: Descending closer to the valley after exiting a large curve



The segment of the corridor continues to descend toward the Oconaluftee River valley, with the river almost at road level by mile 23.4. Three streams converge here to form the Oconaluftee River. Views to the river get wide and then narrow depending on the forest canopy. Bridges and stone walls are visible from the road. The road grade flattens at about Mile 23.5. The Cliff Branch Falls can be touched from the road around Mile 23.9. This area is characterized by rocky

outcroppings with rhododendron, and hemlock forests are intermittent with stands particularly around the Collins Creek area. Understory is herbaceous/deciduous with rhododendron, and cove, high hardwood, oak, montane alluvial, heath, and successional forest compose the base vegetation.



Character Area 22, Mile Marker 27.5-28.3

The roadway runs closely parallel to the Oconaluftee River in this segment. A stone bridge to Smokemont and stone guard walls are noticeable built features along this corridor. Visitors can turn off to Smokemont Riding Stables on the left. Horses at the stable can be seen from one of the pulloffs on the left side of the road. Understory vegetation is herbaceous/deciduous and mountain laurel. Base vegetation is successional, cove, and montane alluvial.

Character Area 23, Mile Marker 28.3-29.2: Towstring/Horse Camp



The valley widens dramatically in this area, as the space between the Oconaluftee River and the roadway becomes an expanse of open grassy field. Specimen trees dot the field area at the left. Tow String Horse Camp and Tow String Community are accessed on the left. Intermittent wooded sections are also experienced in this segment. Understory includes herbaceous/deciduous vegetation. Base forest vegetation is montane alluvial, cove, heath, and successional.

Character Area 24, Mile Marker 29.2 - 30.5: Mingus Mill



The corridor view widens and narrows from open grassy areas to wooded canopy. Vistas to distant ridges can be enjoyed in areas of clearing. Grassy shoulders are also common throughout. Major features along this corridor include the Mingus Mill attraction and parking area. Four cemeteries are within walking distance of the roadway. Understory is herbaceous/deciduous and rhododendron. Forest base vegetation includes montane alluvial, cove, heath, successional, hemlock and oak.

Character Area 25, Oconaluftee Visitor Center and Mountain Farm Museum to Cherokee Terminus



The immediate corridor landscape is maintained in this character area segment. The Oconaluftee Visitor Center and Mountain Farm Museum is at one end and Cherokee is at the other. The Oconaluftee Visitor Center is the first new visitor service facility to be constructed in the Park since the 1960s. It offers visitors interpretative exhibits, a bookstore, public restrooms, and soda and water machines. Much of the corridor is open to mountain views and the roadway widens to a 4-lane divided facility. This section of the route offers viewing of elk as well as maintained budsages around the museum and visitor center. Occasional forested canopy closes the corridor to views. A Park entrance sign is also located on the right when traveling northbound. The Blue Ridge Parkway’s southern terminus is located along this segment. Understory vegetation includes herbaceous/deciduous material. Forest base vegetation includes oak, cove, montane alluvial, heath, successional and some hemlock.

Chapter 3: Intrinsic Qualities

To be designated as a National Scenic Byway, a road must significantly meet one of six intrinsic qualities:

- Scenic
- Natural
- Recreational
- Cultural
- Historic
- Archaeological

Specifically, the route must possess distinctive characteristics that make it one of the best representations of that particular intrinsic quality in its region.

To be designated as an All-American Road, an even more exclusive category, the route must meet two of the intrinsic qualities listed, and represent unique features that do not exist anywhere else.

Visitors to Newfound Gap Road will find outstanding historic and scenic qualities throughout the byway corridor.



HISTORIC

Newfound Gap Road reflects outstanding **historic qualities** because the Park has preserved and maintained its original design and architectural character. All bridges, tunnels, and walls have retained their integrity as products of the 30's and early 40's. Even though they are man-made elements they fit harmoniously in the landscape and represent the workmanship of the early twentieth century. The building materials used reflect resources from the surrounding landscape.

SCENIC

Newfound Gap Road also exhibits outstanding **scenic qualities** through its one of a kind climate range, vegetation range, and breath-taking mountain vistas. Roadside pull-offs provide stunning views of various mountain peaks in the Smoky Mountains, provide access to nature walkways, views of wildflowers, and sometimes wildlife. Along the way, visitors will find campgrounds, picnic areas, and several trailheads. The road alignment, views and vistas, vegetation, and associated stone masonry structures maintain the original feeling of the NPS rustic design aesthetic of the initial period of development in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. New Deal Era construction and design features correlate with the NPS New Deal Era 1933-1942 historic context.

Historic Significance of Newfound Gap Road (Primary Intrinsic Quality)

Newfound Gap Road exhibits nationally significant historical qualities based on its association with National Park landscape design principles adapted to Eastern National Parks, especially for its period of significance, from 1933-1942. These landscape design principles emphasize landscape harmonization, careful shaping of the visitor’s exposure to the Park’s natural wonders, and the use of rustic, quarry-faced stone to visually link road structures and buildings to the landscape.



A 2009 Cultural Landscape Assessment performed for the Tennessee section of the route found that Newfound Gap Road is a significant cultural landscape within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park:

“The states of Tennessee and North Carolina initially built Newfound Gap Road between 1926 and 1930, and it was realigned by the National Park Service (NPS) and the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) according to the design standards of the NPS between 1933 and 1939. Improvements to the roadway and to the surrounding landscape continued, with the help of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), until the onset of World War II in 1942.”

And further:

“Character-defining features of Newfound Gap Road include topography and drainage, spatial organization and circulation,

vegetation, views and vistas, and road-related structures. Although the road has been modified since its initial reconstruction in the 1930s, its character-defining features retain sufficient integrity to collectively convey the road’s significance as a cultural landscape.”

While not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Newfound Gap Road is considered eligible for listing under Criteria A and C. Criterion A requires the resource be associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; Criterion C requires that it embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

- Under **Criterion A**, Newfound Gap Road is significant as a representation of New Deal-era programs involving the efforts of state and federal officials of Congress and the Roosevelt Administration and conservationists. In addition, the construction and design of the road is representative of efforts during the New Deal to revive the economy through public works (Civilian Conservation Corps) while conserving natural resources and providing recreational opportunities.
- Newfound Gap Road meets **Criterion C** as an embodiment of the NPS naturalistic design philosophy and craftsmanship refined during the New Deal era as noted above.

The period of significance for Newfound Gap Road is 1933 to 1942. The existing road falls within the context period of initial development of the Park (1926-1942) and reflects the NPS reconstruction of Newfound Gap Road that took place between 1932 and 1939. Improvements on the road and the surrounding landscape continued through 1942, when all work stopped after the onset of World War II.

In 1956, the NPS initiated Mission 66, a multimillion-dollar program to meet the needs of growing levels of visitors and to improve the Park visitor’s experience including more interpretation, modern facilities, and upgrades to roads, trails, campgrounds, and other amenities. Several significant changes occurred as part of

Mission 66:

- Realignment of 8.5 miles of Newfound Gap Road, improvement of several of its sections, and repaving of the entire North Carolina portion of the road;
- Repairs on the Morton Mountain Tunnel ;
- Improvements to the bridges that crossed the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River;
- Expansion and reconfiguration of the Newfound Gap parking area; and
- Construction of the Sugarlands Visitors Center using mid-century Modern design principles associated with Mission 66.

The historic bridges, culverts, tunnels, and masonry walls continue to convey the feeling of the naturalistic NPS design philosophy and further express its association as a New Deal -era designed landscape within a period of National Park expansion. The majority of the additions and alterations made to landscape features along Newfound Gap Road are indistinguishable from those built during the New Deal era.

Although the cumulative effect of a few visible additions, such as late twentieth and early twenty-first century guard wall and guardrail, have altered the portions of the original design, materials, and workmanship of Newfound Gap Road, the road still retains its original configuration and its natural setting with enough integrity to convey its historic significance including its integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling and association.

Historic Roadway Design Features

Individually notable historic roadway design features of Newfound Gap Road include:

Stone Masonry Structures: The road-related stone masonry structures located along Newfound Gap Road were primarily built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and reflect the rustic design aesthetic practiced by the NPS during the New Deal Era. These structures include bridges, tunnels, culverts, guardwalls, retaining walls, and tree wells. The stone masonry structures are the most visible and prominent character-defining features of the Newfound Gap Road cultural landscape.

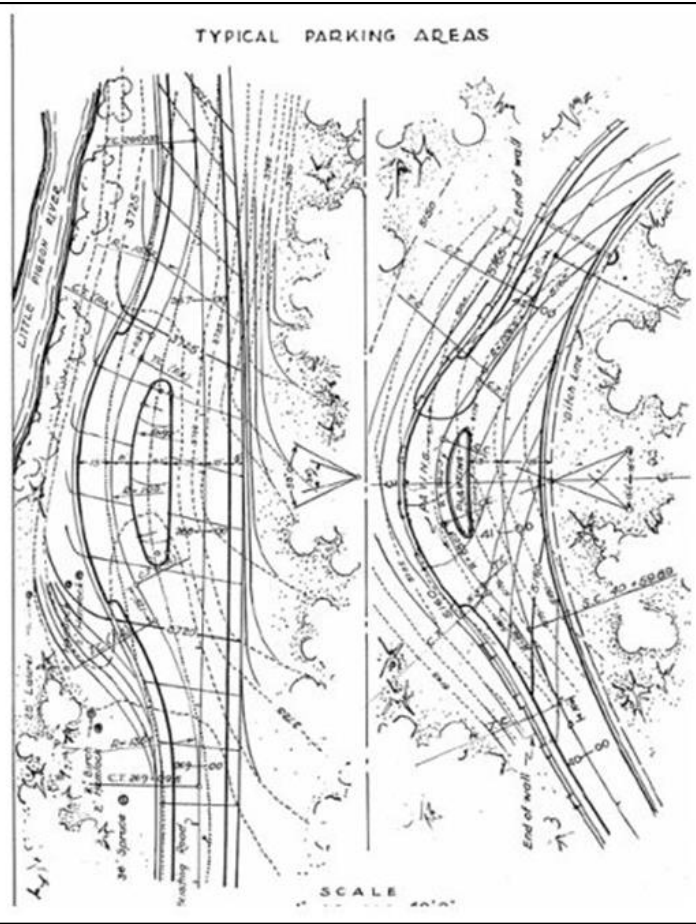


Historic Roadway Design Features (continued)

Tree Wells: Construction drawings for Newfound Gap Road illustrate the importance the NPS placed on preserving the landscape and harmonizing the architectural features into the existing landscape. Drawings specify the location, size, and species of trees that were present at the time of construction. A number of these trees were saved during the construction process. Some of them required stone-lined tree wells in order to protect these important specimen trees from the surrounding fill.

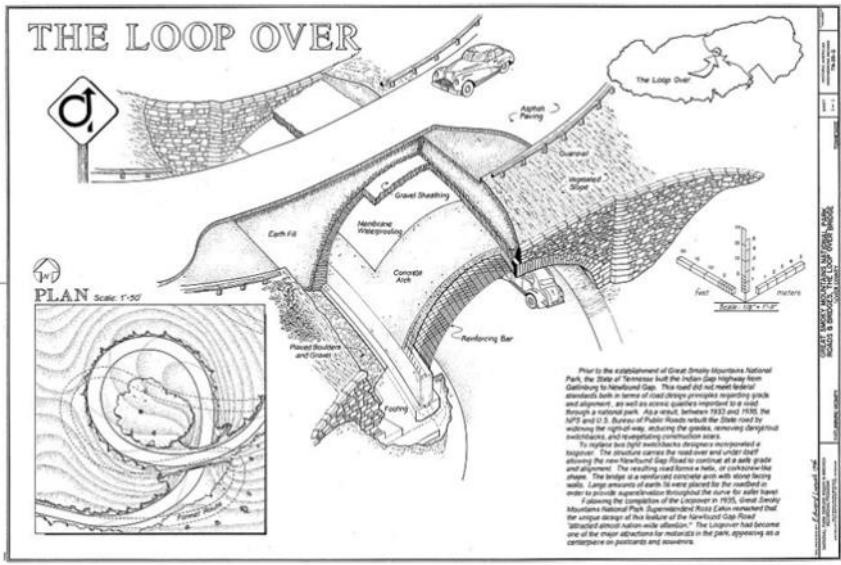


Pulloffs and Overlooks: Newfound Gap Road’s historic significance is integrally tied to its design as a scenic road with carefully planned views of the landscape for motorists and hikers. The pulloffs and overlooks were included in the road’s design to create transition areas for motorists by allowing places of rest, a more intimate view of landscape features or access to trails, and controlled vistas of the surrounding landscape for the visitors. Master Plans for the Park dating from the late 1930 or early 1940s state that there were seven existing overlooks, including the Chimneys and Alum Cave parking areas. A 1940 Park map shows nine “overlooks” or parking areas were located between the Gatlinburg entrance and Newfound Gap. Additional pulloffs were informally added through the years in order to meet visitors’ and motorists’ needs.

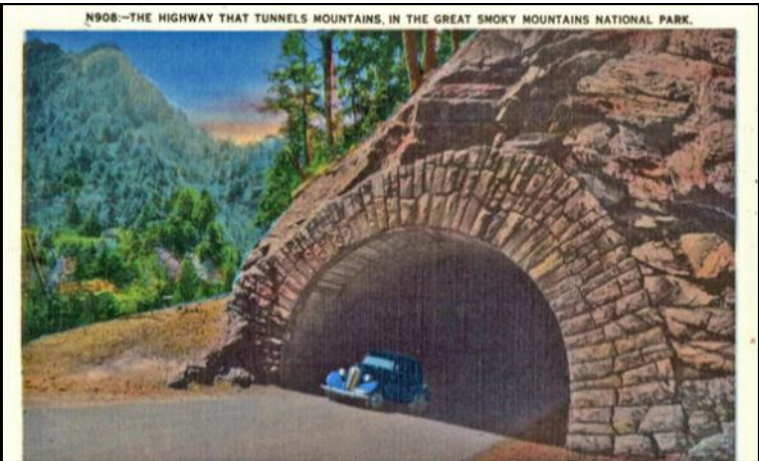


Historic Roadway Design Features (continued)

Loop-Over Bridge: The second tunnel on Newfound Gap Road, referred to as "The Loop", is a switchback and curves around and back over itself. The Loop was added to alleviate the extreme slope of the mountain and was not part of the original road through the Park. The original road alignment eventually had to be upgraded to meet Park Service standards. Following its completion in November 1935, the Loop Over Bridge became an attraction in itself and has been featured on numerous postcards and souvenirs.



Chimney Tops and Morton Mountain Tunnels: The two tunnels built by the Bureau of Public Roads on Newfound Gap Road in 1937, functionally speaking, permitted safe and continuous travel up to Newfound Gap. Aesthetically speaking, the tunnels allowed for the avoidance of major road scars and created picturesque focal points along the road. The tunnel portals exhibit weathered stone, laid in random, irregular, and rough courses blended with the surrounding landscape.



Locations of Historic Significance

Locations of historic significance along the corridor include some that pre-date the Park, as well as others related to the Park's development:

Mingus Mill: Built for Abraham Mingus in the 1870s by Sion Thomas Early, Mingus Mill was the best and most advanced gristmill in the Smokies. The mill used a penstock and turbine to power two sets of grinding stones – one for corn and one for wheat – and operated regularly until 1935. ▼



Mountain Farm Museum: The Mountain Farm Museum, an open-air museum situated adjacent to the Oconaluftee Visitor Center, occupies an open valley between the Oconaluftee River and Newfound Gap Road. The museum represents an effort to preserve the cultural heritage of the Smokies. Most of the buildings date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but were moved from their original locations and reconstructed on this site. ▼



Rockefeller Memorial: To thank the Rockefeller family for its assistance in establishing Great Smoky Mountains National Park, a memorial was proposed and constructed at Newfound Gap. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt dedicated Great Smoky Mountains National Park at this spot on September 2, 1940. ▼



Clingmans Dome Road and Tower: Just south of Newfound Gap Road, a seven-mile road climbs to within a half-mile of Clingmans Dome, the highest peak in the Smokies. From the large Parking area at the end of the road, a 0.5-mile trail climbs steeply to an observation tower at the top. The 45-foot concrete observation tower, built in 1959 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, offers a panoramic view of the mountains. Clingmans Dome Road is contemporary with Newfound Gap Road, exhibits many of the same characteristics, and is also considered eligible for listing in the NRHP. ►



▲ **CCC Structures and Sites:** Shortly after the formation of the Park, the Civilian Conservation Corps constructed a camp along the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River which operated from 1933–1942 to build roads and trails in the area. The ruins of this camp remain along a bend in the Old Sugarlands Trail. The closing of the CCC camp after World War II was the end of permanent human habitation in the Sugarlands. Other remaining CCC-era resources include the Park Headquarters building at Sugarlands; the Administration Building at Oconaluftee; and the Chimneys Picnic Area, which was built by the CCC as a campground and retains the same circulation patterns, comfort stations and fish pond remnants.



Other Historic Resources Nearby

A number of separate visitor experiences with their own historic importance are also accessible from Newfound Gap Road, including:

Appalachian Trail: The Appalachian Trail is a 2,190-mile long public footpath that traverses the scenic, wooded, pastoral, wild, and culturally resonant lands of the Appalachian Mountains. Conceived in 1921, built by private citizens, and completed in 1937, today the trail is managed by the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, numerous state agencies and thousands of volunteers. The Appalachian Trail crosses over Newfound Gap Road and straddles the state line between North Carolina and Tennessee for most of its length through the Park.



Blue Ridge Parkway: The Blue Ridge Parkway is the longest road planned as a single unit in the United States. It connects Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Shenandoah National Park. Terminating near the southern end of the Newfound Gap Road corridor and elongated in shape, it protects significant mountain landscapes. The Parkway, owned and managed by the National Park Service, was determined eligible for the NRHP as a part of an environmental review. The historic resources study and National Historic Landmark nomination for the Parkway are currently in draft form. Eligible boundaries for the Blue Ridge Parkway would likely include everything within the maintained right-of-way for the road.

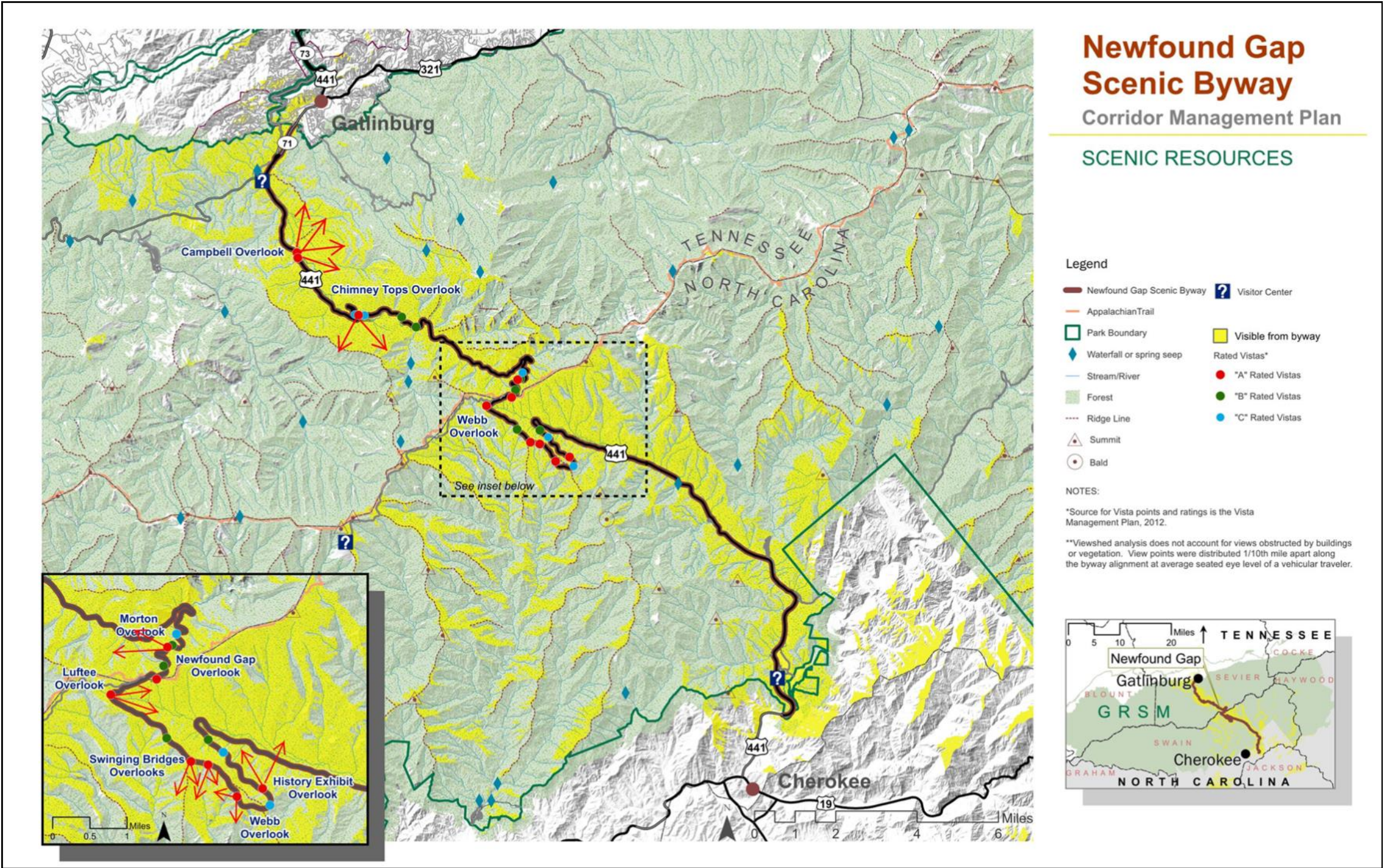
Scenic Qualities

The Newfound Gap Road byway represents scenic quality because of its one-of-a-kind climate range, vegetation range, and breath-taking mountain vistas. As described in its history, the route was specifically designed to provide various views and vistas of the landscape either from inside an automobile while traveling the road, or outside an automobile while stopped at a designated pulloff. The winding nature of the road lends itself to a progression of more confined vistas, framed by the tree-

lined, tunnel-like route of the lower elevations that open to expansive mountain views in the upper elevations. Pulloffs and overlooks on the roadside guide visitors to specific locations of designed views and vistas.

While Newfound Gap Road has a strong relationship with the Blue Ridge Parkway, connecting just south of the Oconaluftee Visitor Center, it is different in that it runs across the Appalachian Mountain divide, rather than running parallel or along its path. The result is a dramatic rise in elevation over a short distance of roadway

bringing with it significant changes in the physical landscape—from an intimate, narrow stream valley to a broad, dissected upland with open views of ancient mountain ranges. As the road ascends and descends the ridges, the viewshed expands and closes in, offering experiences of distant mountain and valley vistas as well as narrow, wooded tunnel-like sections. The Scenic Resources map below shows the viewshed as seen from a seated position traveling on the roadway by car. On a winter’s day, when the leaves have dropped, visibility is greatest.



The Park’s 2012 *Vista Management Plan* provides vital groundwork for managing the scenic resources of the Newfound Gap Road corridor.

The plan defines vistas as “beautiful distant scenic views of exceptional aesthetic quality...[that] can typically be enjoyed from overlooks and pull-offs.” It provides an inventory of such vistas, rating them as A, B, or C, and provides management recommendations for maintaining the views.

Group A Vistas

“Vistas in Group A shall include the most visited and influential vistas in the Park, such as the vistas along Newfound Gap Road, Clingmans Dome Road, and other primary roads, as well as those with handicap parking. Some vistas on secondary roads have been included in the A category because they are the only vistas on a designated scenic route (Rich Mountain Road and Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail.)”

Group B Vistas

“Vistas in Group B shall include vistas on secondary roads and those that are used, but might only have seasonal views.”

Group C Vistas

“Vistas in Group C shall include vistas that might not be visited as often or vistas on unpaved roads.”

Group “A” Vistas on the Byway

Vistas along Newfound Gap Road rated “A” are noted below with descriptions from the Vista Management Plan.

Vista points rated “A,” “B,” and “C” are also identified on the Scenic Resources map on the previous page.

Campbell Overlook North and South



Campbell Overlook North

Focal Points: Balsam Point, Bullhead, and the panoramic view up the valley

Campbell Overlook South

Focal Points: Balsam Point, Bullhead and the long ridge trending north; views down into the foreground valley; and forest types on opposing slopes (mapped on interpretive exhibit sign)

Description: Divided into two pull-offs, this is one of the most heavily visited overlooks in the Park. For many visitors travelling southward, it is the first place they stop for views of the Park. It is known for its magnificent views, beautiful sunrises and sunsets, and outstanding fall color. This iconic view of the Smokies is well photographed. The views at Carlos Campbell have been used as illustrations in ecology books, as they provide an excellent example of forest communities in relation to elevation, slope, aspect and other issues that are favorable to those communities.

A “bald” forest community can be seen at Campbell Overlook. Balds appear as level expanses—smooth like a bald head—which are composed of vegetation growing at an even level. Vegetation might include mountain laurel, blueberries, rhododendron, and myrtle.

Chimney Tops Overlook



Focal Points: Summit and slopes of Chimney Tops, and slopes of Sugarland Mountain on opposing side of the valley

Description: Chimney Tops Overlook is one of nine main vistas along Newfound Gap Road. Five pull-offs offer a convenient opportunity to view the Chimney Tops, rocky outcroppings piercing through the trees at elevation 4,700 feet. Dead hemlocks—victims of the woolly adelgid infestation—are visible from this point. Another feature of this site is the evidence of CCC efforts to create the roadway, as the visible rock outcroppings behind the vista are evidence of rock blasting. Chimney Tops is also known for its magnificent views and outstanding fall color. This vista, too, is frequently visited and one of the more photographed points in the Park.

Morton Overlook



Focal Points: Surrounding high peaks; long view down valley to areas outside the Park; short view of Newfound Gap Road, well below; Chimney Tops, Mount Mingus, and Sugarland Mountain

Description: Morton Overlook is known for its magnificent panoramic view and outstanding fall color. Named after Ben Morton, an advocate for establishing the Smokies as a National Park, the vista is a popular spot for sunset photographs. Vegetation visible here includes high elevation trees such as yellow birch, red spruce, serviceberry, and fire cherry.

Newfound Gap Overlook



Focal Points: Distant major peaks outside of the Park (close ridge 200 m to the east) and Thomas Divide including Newfound Gap Road below in the Oconaluftee Valley

Description: Newfound Gap Overlook provides an iconic view of the Smokies and is one of the most heavily visited overlooks in the Park. A large parking lot straddles the Tennessee/North Carolina state line. The Rockefeller Memorial offers an additional vantage point to take in the magnificent views; Roosevelt stood at this location in 1940 to dedicate the Park. The Appalachian Trail also crosses Newfound Gap Overlook and is accessible just to the right of the Rockefeller Memorial and continues across Newfound Gap Road.

Luftee Overlook



Focal Points: Long view down to Oconaluftee Valley with view of both slopes, and close-up views of forest below and above the overlook. “Forest transition” interpretive exhibit sign shows the deciduous forest below the overlook and the conifers above the overlook.

Description: A dramatic view to the Beech Flats Valley is captured from Luftee Overlook, as the view from the roadway here opens up and follows the long ridge of Thomas Divide. The name is derived from the Cherokee word, ekwanulti, which means ‘along the river.’ A large parking area on the west side of the road offers ample parking and a great vantage point for enjoying the breathtaking view.

Swinging Bridges & Catwalk North and South ►

Focal Points: Middle and South- Panoramic view of ridges both close and distant and view of valley of Little Tennessee River in distance; North- Views of close slopes, distant peaks in the Park and outside, and Fontana Reservoir area, with its frequent valley fog shroud.

Description: Views at these overlooks can be enjoyed from railed catwalks or cantilevered bridges at the edge of the roadway. Spectacular “window” vistas to Deep Creek Valley can be captured from these vantage points. Swinging Bridges are known for magnificent panoramic views, beautiful sunrises and sunsets, and outstanding fall color.

Webb Overlook



Focal Points: Panoramic views, especially to the left and Clingmans Dome summit to the right

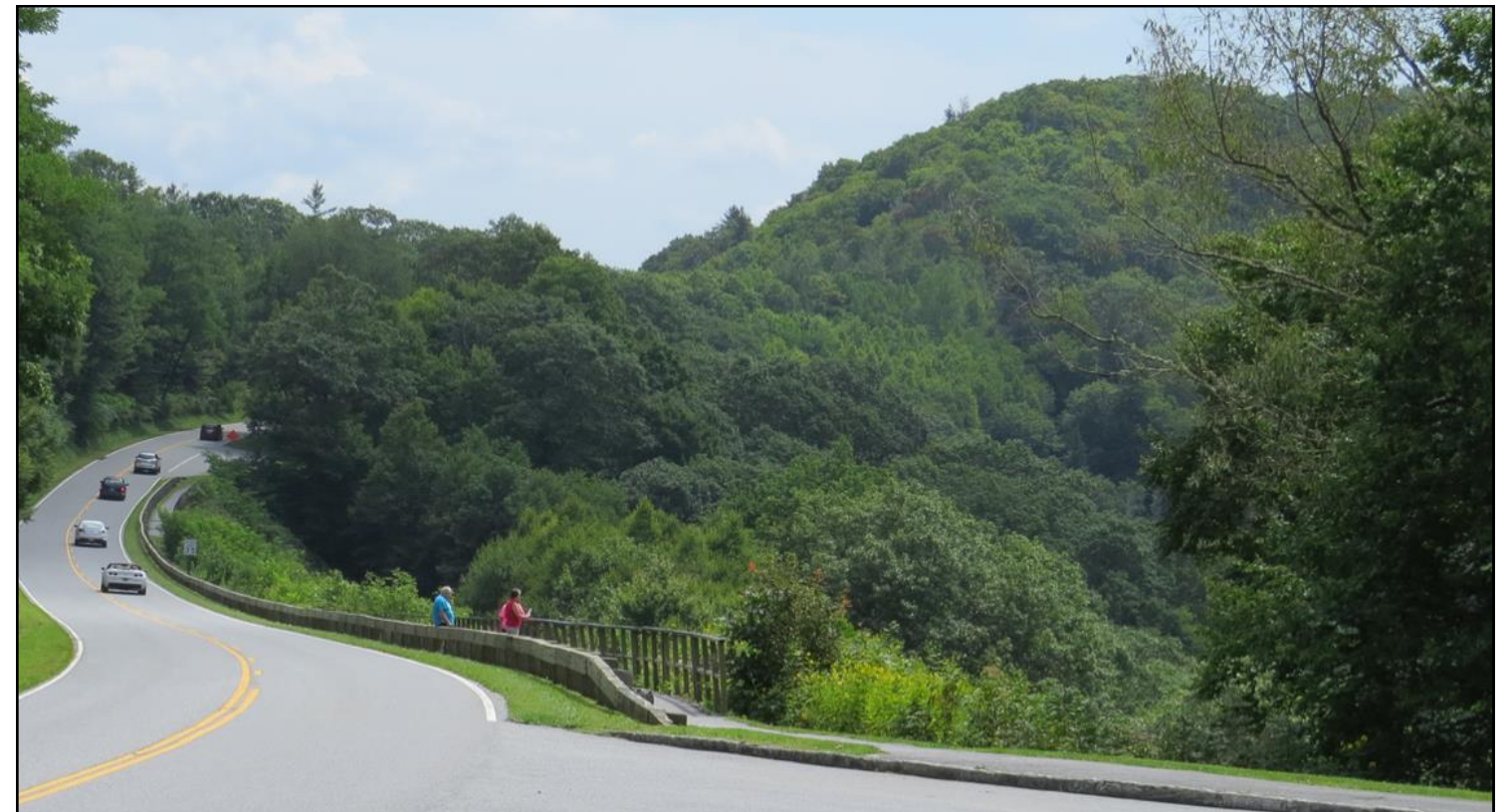
Description: This overlook is named after Charles A. Webb, editor of the *Asheville Citizen-Times* in the early 1930s, and an advocate for establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. An interpretive sign at Webb Overlook describes the efforts of scientists to determine the height of Clingmans Dome, the highest peak in the Smokies and visible from this point. A large parking area offers easy access to the vista.

History Exhibit Overlook



Focal Points: View of Richland Mountain on opposite side of Oconaluftee River Valley and Newfound Gap.

Description: History Exhibit Overlook once captured a landscape of scarred ridges from “cut-and-run” logging by the Champion Fiber Company in the early 1900s, when lumber companies dominated the Smokies. Now, the ridges of Richland Mountain are covered with trees. The foreground at the overlook is characterized by a large clearing, contrasting with the dense vegetation in this part of the corridor.

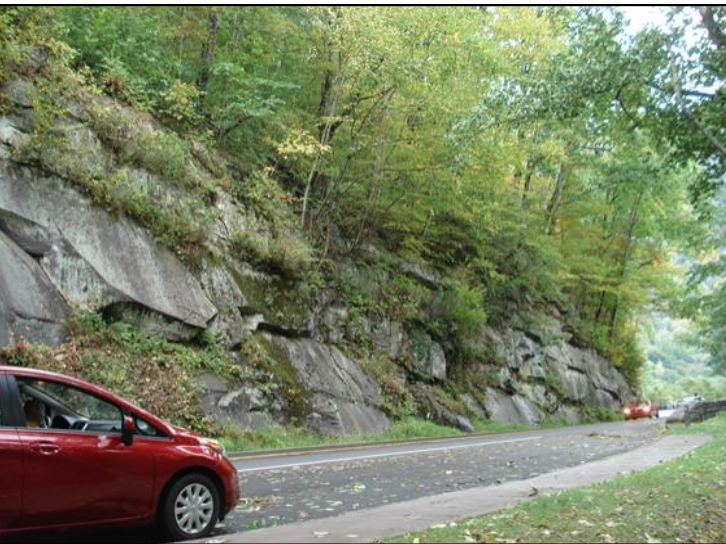


Natural Qualities

The Newfound Gap Road byway corridor is contained within the 800-square-mile Great Smoky Mountains National Park crossing through Tennessee and North Carolina. Designated as an International Biosphere Reserve, the Park is known for its biological diversity with over 17,000 species documented and conceivably up to 80,000 undocumented species. The landscape is characterized by scenic mountain vistas, lush, forested corridors, meandering streams and rivers and occasional waterfalls. Natural resources found within the corridor are further described below and shown at right on the Natural Resources map.

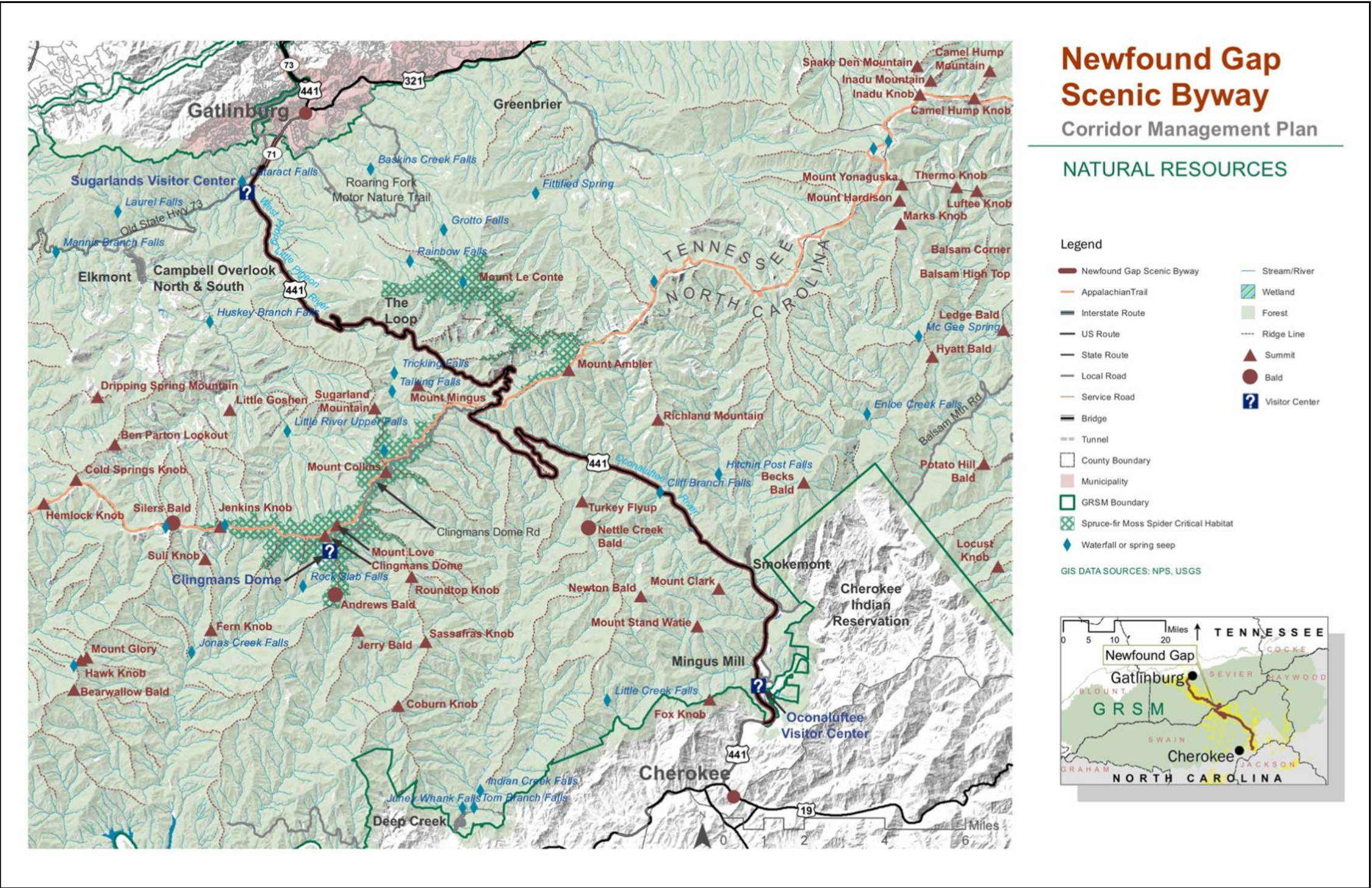
Geology, Physiography, and Ecoregions

Some of the most interesting landscape features of the Park are its geologic bones—the mountain peaks, limestone bluffs, coves, and metasandstone boulders scattered in the stream valleys. Most of the rocks in the Great Smoky Mountains are over a billion years old and their geologic



stories are complex. Newfound Gap Road passes through some of the oldest mountains in the world, the Appalachian Mountains, and among the tallest in the range, the Great Smoky Mountains of the Blue Ridge province.

Forming around 200 to 300 million years ago, the Appalachian Mountains are primarily sedimentary rock layers that collided under extreme geologic pressure. The oldest sedimentary rocks in the Park were formed during the Proterozoic Era, 800-545 million years ago. Metamorphosed sandstone boulders are common throughout the Smokies in streams. The boulders fell from the high mountain cliff outcrops and eventually moved to the stream valleys. In the streams they gradually become worn down to cobbles and eventually to silt.



The Smokies are part of the physiographic province (geographic region) of the southern Blue Ridge Mountains. This area is further subdivided into ecoregions—the Southern Metasedimentary Mountains and the High Mountains. The byway route traverses approximately seven miles through the High Mountains ecoregion in the ascent to and descent from the Newfound Gap. The remainder of the route travels through the Southern Metasedimentary Mountains ecoregion.

An elevation change of 3,500 feet can be experienced along the byway, with the highest elevation of 6,643 feet at the nearby summit of Clingmans Dome, the highest point in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Clingmans Dome is accessible from the byway via Clingmans Dome Road, which is seven miles to the end, with pulloffs for enjoying the surrounding vistas.

Newfound Gap reaches an elevation of 5,046 feet and was discovered by Swiss geographer Arnold Henry Guyot

in 1872 as the lowest pass or “gap” through the range, which allowed for a drivable route crossing the ridgeline at the Tennessee/North Carolina border. It is not uncommon to find snow at higher elevations along the route, and particularly at Newfound Gap, as temperatures are nearly 10 degrees cooler here than at lower elevations. Stunning vistas to Tennessee and North Carolina can be enjoyed here.

Pulloffs near the Oconaluftee Ranger Station offer views to some of the oldest rocks in the Park—Precambrian basement complex rocks with origins deep within the earth.

The following summits, balds and prominences are located within the corridor (approximately 5 miles):

Many other peaks and ridges are visible from the byway

<i>Chimney Tops</i>	<i>Charlies Bunion</i>
<i>Mount Love</i>	<i>Mount Mingus</i>
<i>Roundtop Knob</i>	<i>Sassafras Knob</i>
<i>Mount Ambler</i>	<i>Richland Mountain</i>
<i>Mount Le Conte</i>	<i>Turkey Flyup</i>
<i>Nettle Creek Bald</i>	<i>Newton Bald</i>
<i>Mount Clark</i>	<i>Mount Stand Watie</i>
<i>Fox Knob</i>	<i>Little Goshen</i>
<i>Becks Bald</i>	

and are indicated on the Natural Resources map on the previous page.

Rivers, Streams, and Waterfalls

Along much of the byway corridor, the roadway and waterways crisscross and run parallel within the stream valleys, significantly contributing to the quality of the byway experience.



Little Tennessee River Basin

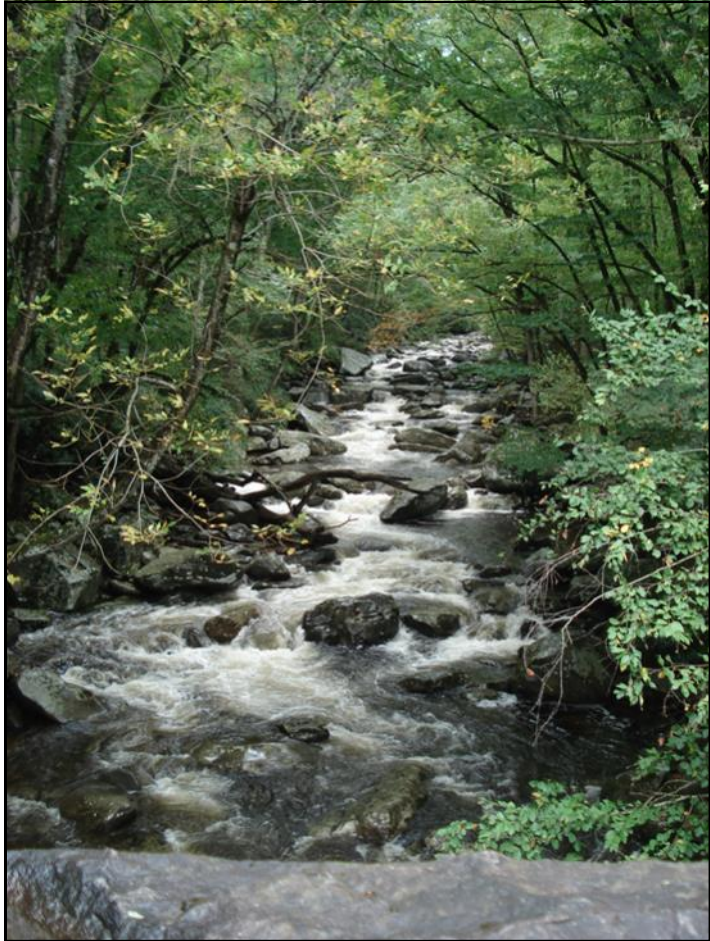
The North Carolina portion of the Park is entirely part of the Little Tennessee River Basin. The river flows north from Georgia to North Carolina with tributaries including the Cullasaja, Nantahala, Tuckasegee and Cheoah rivers. Most of the land in the basin is publicly owned, and 89 percent of the land is forested. Wildlife diversity is strong within the basin, with rich trout streams and aquatic wildlife in waterways known to have generally excellent water quality.

Oconaluftee River



This river parallels the byway for most of the route between Cherokee and Newfound Gap. Nicknamed “The Luftee” by locals, the river flows into downtown Cherokee and the boundary with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The waters of the Oconaluftee River are a valuable and sacred resource for the Cherokee people, whose ancestors lived on the surrounding lands for thousands of years. Visitors to the Park can enjoy excellent trout fishing on The Luftee, as it is stocked with brown and rainbow trout every year outside the Park.

West Prong of the Little Pigeon River



The West Prong of the Little Pigeon River parallels Newfound Gap Road starting at the Gatlinburg entrance to the Park and is quite accessible from the roadway for a few miles from the entrance. This waterway is designated as an Outstanding Natural Resource Water and is considered to be one of the best fly fishing streams in the Park.

Cataract Falls

Cataract Falls is located just after entering the Gatlinburg entrance to the Park and a quarter-mile hike (15 minutes) from the Sugarlands Visitor Center. The trail to the falls is considered to be easy, with no climbing required. Cascading 40 feet down a rocky face, the falls meet Fighting Creek, which also parallels the trail to Cataract Falls.

Cliff Branch Falls



Cliff Branch Falls, a popular stop for photos, is located very close to the roadway near pullout parking at Mile 24.1.

Flora and Fauna

Glaciers from the last ice age — 10,000 years ago — did not reach the Smokies, allowing for plant and animal species to remain in this region and diversify. The northeast to southwest orientation of the ridges consequently allowed for species migration during that era. For these reasons, there is great diversity in plant and animal species in the Park today.

Forest Ecosystems



During the reconstruction of Newfound Gap Road, great care was taken to preserve existing vegetation. Where it was necessary to remove trees, CCC crews often moved them to a nursery located at Sugarlands; the trees were subsequently replanted. When new planting was required to disguise road construction scars, only appropriate species that were already found in the area were planted. The vegetation is thus a contributing character-defining feature of the Newfound Gap Road scenic landscape.

Boasting more than 100 native shrubs and around 100 native trees species, the Smokies provide a rich experience for naturalists and those simply seeking respite below the various forest canopies found along the byway. With such vast changes in elevation, several forest ecosystems can be seen when driving the route. From the lowest elevations to the highest, the experience is likened to driving from Georgia to Maine, as visitors can experience forests of cove hardwood, pine-oak, northern hardwood, evergreen spruce-fir, and hemlock forest.

Cove hardwood forests are the most diverse of the five types found in the Park, with 40 to 60 tree and shrub species. Coves are typified by rich, deep soils in sheltered

valleys. Some of the most common trees found in cove forests include magnolia, Carolina silverbell, basswood, and dogwood. Generally, cove hardwood forests are found below 4,500 feet. A walk down the Cove Hardwood Nature Trail offers the cove hardwood forest experience. This trail is 0.75 miles in length and is accessible from the byway at the Chimney Tops picnic area.

Predominantly found on dry, exposed slopes, pine-oak hardwood forest communities are commonly composed of scarlet oak, black oak, chestnut oak, Table Mountain pine, pitch pine, Virginia pine, mountain laurel, trailing arbutus, and galax. These forests are mostly found on the west side of the Park.

Northern hardwood forests are found in the Park between elevations of 4,500 and 6,000 feet. Considered to have an open appearance, these forest communities are predominantly composed of American beech and yellow birch, as well as pin cherry, mountain maple, yellow buckeye, and hobblebush.



Spruce-fir forests are recognizable for their evergreen trees—Fraser fir and red spruce—growing on the tops of high peaks above 4,500 feet in what is called the Canadian Zone ecosystem. Another tell-tale sign of this forest community is the presence of dead Fraser firs which are threatened by the non-native balsam woolly adelgid.

Hemlock forests are commonly found along streams and on damp, shady slopes up to 4,000 feet. In the Park there are sizeable eastern hemlocks on slopes and in old-growth coves. Commonly found in the understory of these forests is the Rosebay rhododendron, an evergreen shrub with big white summer blooming flowers. Stands

of hemlock forest are declining due to the Eurasian hemlock woolly adelgid; the Park service is currently working to address these pests.

Old-growth forests are extant in the Park, and an estimated twenty percent of the Park is considered to be “uncut.” The forest composition for these “virgin” forests includes trees of various stages of maturity and decline, fallen logs often decaying, canopy gaps, a great diversity in plant species, and minimal or no disturbance from logging or agricultural practices. For many, hikes to old-growth forests can be a rewarding experience. Some of the best hikes to these forests are a half day’s hike or less. Fork Ridge Trail, a NPS suggested old-growth trail of moderate difficulty, can be accessed from Clingmans Dome Road. Cove Hardwood Nature Trail, is considered to be easy and is accessible from the Chimneys Picnic Area.

There are also two major plant communities identified separately from the forests: these areas are the grassy balds and the heath balds. These “balds” are large meadows or treeless areas, located at mid- to high level elevations that have distinctive plants and animals associated with them. The balds found within the viewsheds of Newfound Gap Road are heath balds, which have a heavy, shrubby vegetative cover, comprising plants such as mountain laurel, rhododendron, blueberry, huckleberry, and sand myrtle.

Wildlife



While the American Black Bear may be the most well-known inhabitant of the Smokies—there are now around 1,500 living in the Park—the wildlife species diversity is extremely rich. Sixty-five species of mammals, over 200

varieties of birds, 67 native fish species, and over 80 species of reptiles and amphibians find habitat here. The Park is considered to be the “Salamander Capital of the World,” supporting 30 known salamander species.

As with Park flora, the elevation change in the Smokies provide habitat for species that are found as far north as Canada. Such animals include the northern flying squirrel, red squirrel, and rock vole. The Smokies are also the southern-most breeding point for birds such as the Common Raven and Canada Warbler.



Since the Park functions as a sanctuary, many animal species are protected, including some endangered species such as the northern flying squirrel, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Indiana bat, spruce-fir moss spider, and the Smoky madtom. To protect wildlife, the Park has enacted management practices such as limiting entry to caves in order to protect bats and starting controlled fires to create habitat for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers.

The Park has also reintroduced species that had disappeared due to hunting and land development. Successful efforts include the elk now commonly seen in the Oconaluftee Valley at the south end of the Newfound Gap Road corridor. Other species recently restored to the Park include river otter and the peregrine falcon.

Federally threatened and endangered fish have also been reintroduced, including the Smoky Madtom, Yellowfin Madtom, Spotfin Chub, and Duskytail Darter.

Recreational Qualities

While simply traveling the route is a pleasing recreational experience, there are countless opportunities for passive and active recreation throughout the corridor. A host of recreational “hubs,” trails, campgrounds, backcountry campsites and shelters provide access to opportunities for immersion among the natural and cultural features of Newfound Gap Road.

Sugarlands Visitor Center



Located about two miles south of Gatlinburg, the Sugarlands Visitor Center offers a short movie, exhibits, restrooms and drink machines, a back-country reservation office, and a Park bookstore. Volunteers and Park rangers are available to provide information on Park roads, alerts, or other trip information.

Located behind the building is a self-guiding nature trail, Fighting Creek. One spur of the trail leads to the John Ownby Cabin, a traditional example of a mountain cabin, while the other leads to Cataract Falls in less than a half-mile.

Campbell Overlook

This overlook, one of two parking areas at Mile Marker 4, is named after Carlos Campbell, the author of *Birth of a National Park*. A textbook example of forest ecology can be seen from this overlook, with views of heath bald and spruce-fir plant communities. Mt. Le Conte, the third highest peak in the Smokies, is also visible from here.

Chimney Tops Picnic Area



At Mile Marker 6.3 there is a large wooded area for picnicking known as Chimneys Picnic Area. Visitors can use this area from sunrise to sunset seasonally, with amenities such as restrooms, picnic tables, and a trailhead to the Cove Hardwood Self-Guiding Trail. Highlights of the trail include opportunities to explore creeks, watch wildlife, and enjoy the wildflowers from March to April.

Chimney Tops Overlooks are located just under a mile from the picnic area, continuing toward Newfound Gap. From here the “Chimneys” are visible, as well as patches of declining hemlocks (now infested with hemlock wooly adelgid).

The Loop

The Loop got its name from the circular road alignment that appears as a ‘tied knot’ or loop, engineered and constructed to accommodate the steep terrain at this point in the narrow valley, where a hairpin curve could not fit. This is a point of interest for engineering enthusiasts and history buffs alike.

Morton Overlook

Morton Overlook is known for its magnificent panoramic view and outstanding fall color. Named after Ben Morton, an advocate for establishing the Smokies as a National Park, the vista is a popular spot for sunset photographs.

Newfound Gap

At Mile Marker 14.7, Newfound Gap Overlook is one of the most heavily visited overlooks in the Park. A large parking lot straddles the Tennessee/North Carolina state line. The Rockefeller Memorial offers an additional vantage point to take in the magnificent views; Roosevelt stood at this location in 1940 to dedicate the Park. A point of interest for hikers, the Appalachian Trail also crosses Newfound Gap Overlook and is accessible just to the right of the Rockefeller Memorial and continues across Newfound Gap Road. The site has restrooms available for visitors.

Clingmans Dome

At Mile Marker 14.8, just beyond Newfound Gap, is the road leading to Clingmans Dome, the highest summit in the Smokies and in Tennessee at 6,643 feet. It is also the highest point along the Appalachian Trail. The 7-mile road to the Dome offers hiking options such as the Spruce-Fir Self-Guiding Nature Trail. An observation tower offers 360-degree views to surrounding mountains. Amenities at Clingmans Dome include restrooms and a bookstore. Access to the Appalachian Trail is a few yards from the viewing tower. Clingmans Dome Road is typically closed from December to late March but may also be closed at other times when wintry weather occurs, so visitors should check ahead. However, wintry weather can also provide the opportunity for cross-country skiing and sledding.

Collins Creek Picnic Area

At Mile Marker 25.4, Collins Creek Picnic Area is an enjoyable spot for lunch or just a visit to Collins Creek. Trails lead down to the water and a Quiet Walkway steadily meandering along an old forest road can be reached near the picnic pavilion. Picnic tables are available in both sunny and shady locations, in addition to the picnic pavilion. Restrooms are also available at this site.

Smokemont Campground

At Mile Marker 27.4, Smokemont is a favored spot for tent camping and is considered one of the best in the Park. Cherokee villages, mountain farms, sawmills, railroad lines and a CCC camp are located here. Along the Smokemont Loop Trail, one can find several homesites and the Bradley Cemetery dating back to the 1800s. Amenities at Smokemont include tent sites, RV sites, and trailer/sanitary stations. Smokemont Riding Stables and several trails are also in the vicinity.

Mingus Mill

This historic site at Mile Marker 30.1 contains the historic Mingus Mill, which was built in 1886, then restored in 1937 by the CCC and in 1968 by the National Park Service. This functioning mill can be accessed by a short path crossing Mingus Creek, and is within close proximity of the parking area. A miller can be found operating the mill between mid-March and Thanksgiving. Restrooms are located at the parking area.

Oconaluftee Visitor Center and Mountain Farm Museum

The Oconaluftee Visitor Center, near Cherokee, lies just inside the Park entrance at the southern end of the byway corridor. It offers a range of visitor amenities similar to those at Sugarlands, such as visitor information, exhibits, and a bookstore.



The Mountain Farm Museum, a complex of historic buildings preserving examples of traditional southern Appalachian life, is just beyond the visitor center. Elk can often be seen in the general area. The Oconaluftee River Trail connects the visitor center with the town of Cherokee in a short 1.5-mile jaunt; Cherokee exhibits and wildlife can be viewed from this trail.

Trails

Trails of varying levels of difficulty can be accessed from the Newfound Gap Corridor; most are mapped in visitor guides. The Recreational Resources map (at right) identifies trails and trailhead locations.

Appalachian Trail (AT)

A stretch of the Appalachian Trail—approximately 72 miles—is located in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The trail crosses Newfound Gap Road at the Newfound Gap and the Tennessee and North Carolina line. The total distance of the trail is 2,190 miles, from Maine to Georgia.

Benton MacKaye Trail

Traversing remote backcountry and wilderness areas, this trail extends 300 miles in its entirety, from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Big Creek Campground in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. One hundred miles of the trail can be accessed by foot in the Park.

Mountains-to-the-Sea Trail (MST)

Linking Great Smoky Mountains with the Outer Banks, this North Carolina trail stretches 1,150 miles. Experience the mountain side of the trail where it crosses Newfound Gap Road near Mingus Mill. MST extends 27 miles through the Park.

Quiet Walkways

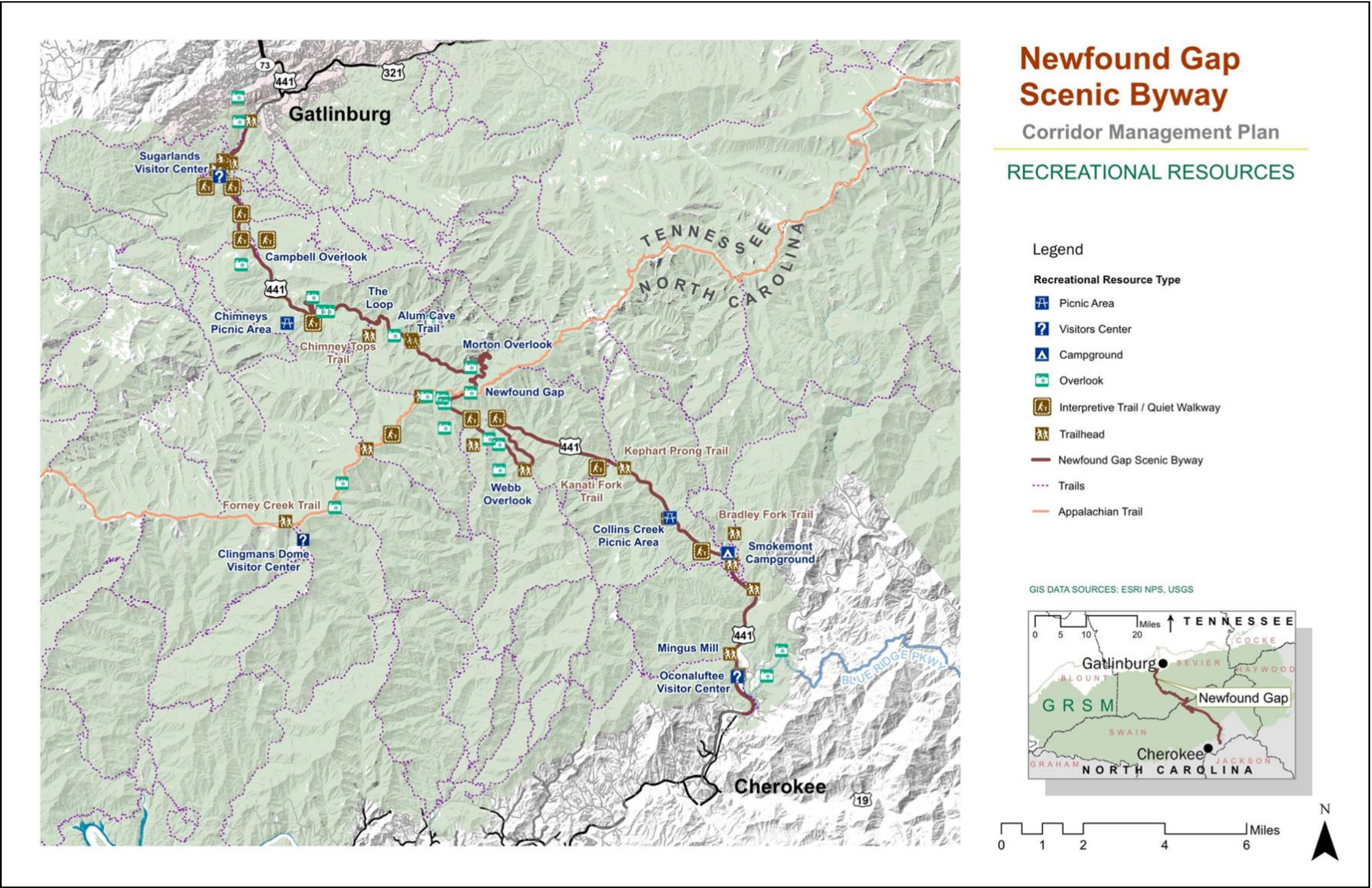
Several Quiet Walkways—paths offering some distance from the noise of traffic—are located at pull-offs along the Newfound Gap Road.

Most Quiet Walkways are signed with trailheads. These rustic trails are generally unpaved with varying widths and steepness. Most of the Quiet Walkways are not loops, so hikers must backtrack to return to the road.

Nature Trails

A few nature trails can be accessed along the corridor, including Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail near Sugarlands Gift Shop and Book Store, and Chimneys Picnic Area and Cove Hardwood Nature Trail.

These are self-guided walks, usually under a mile. A brochure identifying trailheads can be obtained at visitor information centers.



Chapter 4: Stewardship

Context and Responsibilities

The National Park Service is the agency responsible for the Newfound Gap Road corridor within Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Within a National Park setting, the context of the transportation system plays an important part in determining appropriate design and management techniques for the corridor. The Organic Act of 1916, established the basic premise that controls all planning, as well as development and management of national parks, monuments, and parkways:

“The service [NPS] thus established shall promote and regulate the use of Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations hereinafter specified by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

Design and engineering support for changes to the transportation system within the Park may be provided by the Federal Highway Administration through its Office of Federal Lands Highways (FLH). FHWA is “ultimately responsible for ensuring the program is administered according to the statutory and implementing regulations for title 23, United States Code. This includes conformity to highway planning, design, construction, maintenance, and safety standards.”

Multiple agreements have been developed between NPS and FHWA to establish roadway standards that address the USC 23 requirements while also meeting the purposes of the Organic Act and other NPS statutory obligations. This includes the NPS *Park Road Standards* (1984) as well as the *Uniguide* standards for roadway signage.

Other governing laws for the corridor include Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, which requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on properties listed or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register. Newfound Gap Road has been determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register; therefore, prior to any modifications, Section 106 review is required.



The following strategies are recommended to preserve, maintain and enhance the character defining features of Newfound Gap Road that are the basis for its eligibility for the National Register for Historic Places and for designation as a National Scenic Byway:

- ◆ Develop and adopt specific Corridor Design Guidelines;
- ◆ Develop and implement recommendations of the Vista Management Plan;
- ◆ Protect resources and the visitor experience with the proactive use of mitigation strategies as part of the physical design and/or renovation of visitor areas;
- ◆ Develop and implement sustainable landscape design strategies to guide management of visitor use areas, overlooks or pull-offs;
- ◆ Update and document a set of Corridor Maintenance/Resource Management Guidelines;
- ◆ Update existing inventories of ongoing maintenance/resource management activities, problematic areas and critical needs;
- ◆ Update and identify additional partnership opportunities for increasing maintenance resources; and
- ◆ Establish a system to regularly monitor resources and facilities within the corridor.

Develop and adopt specific Corridor Design Guidelines for Newfound Gap Road (based on its original design intent) to serve as a coordinating document for all future preservation actions.

Most management actions likely to occur in the corridor fall into these five categories:

- **Roadway Reconstruction:** refers to removing all or a significant portion of the pavement material and replacing it with new or recycled materials. Reconstruction often includes widening or geometrical changes to the roadway profile.
- **3R Work** (roadway resurfacing, restoration and rehabilitation) focuses primarily on the preservation and extension of the service life of existing facilities and on safety enhancements. This would include resurfacing, pavement structural and joint repair, minor lane and shoulder widening, minor alterations to vertical grades and horizontal curves, bridge repair, and removal or protection of roadside obstacles.
- **Maintenance:** actions necessary to keep an existing highway facility in good condition, including repainting lane and edge lines, removing accumulated debris from drainage inlets, repairing surface drainage features, mowing, and removing snow.
- **Modifications to bridge structures:** these warrant special attention within any design guidelines to be developed.
- **Visitor services and support:** includes related facilities directly accessed from Newfound Gap Road such as roadway pulloffs, trailheads, wayfinding and signage, visitor communication, and visitor comfort.

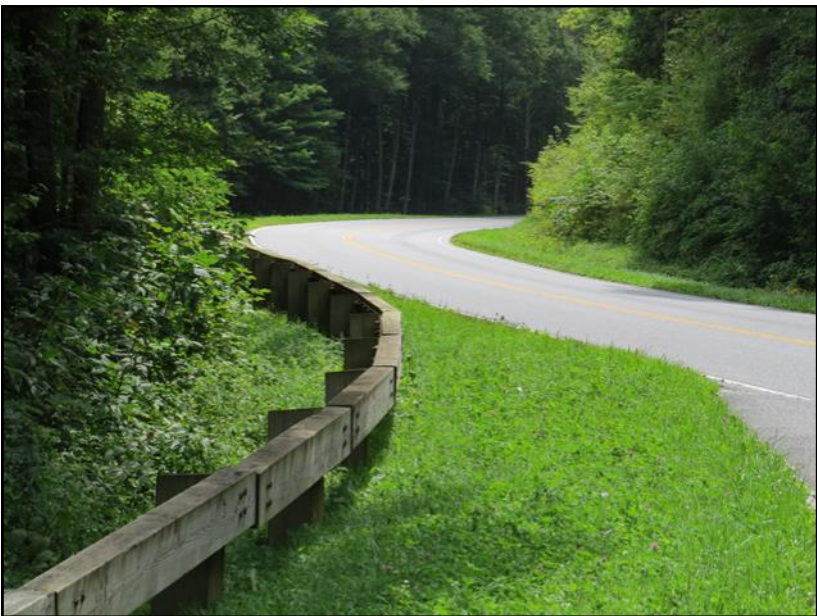
Corridor design guidelines are needed as the basis for ensuring that future changes to the Newfound Gap Road corridor address visitor and safety needs while at the same time preserving and maintaining the character defining features that make the corridor worthwhile. The guidelines can be utilized to mitigate any potential adverse impacts to the character-defining features of the corridor when modifications of any scale are made. The guidelines would identify a program of context-sensitive design treatments that can be used that are compatible with the existing historic features for any reconstruction and repair activities. The corridor guidelines would also address how new design elements can be designed to reflect the scale, proportion, materials and details of the existing historical features, while not mimicking their form and appearance.

The approach to the guidelines should utilize a “context sensitive solutions” (CSS) approach. CSS, as applied to scenic and historic roads such as Newfound Gap Road, refers to a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to ensure that modifications to that scenic and historic road and corridor fit its setting. For scenic and historic roads, CSS provides the underlying rationale for applying alternative and more flexible approaches to transportation design and management. Flexible design approaches reflect the need to maintain the route’s significant character-defining features while increasing safety.

Chapter 3 documents the significance of Newfound Gap Road’s character-defining features and intrinsic qualities. Additional park inventory and management documents contain extensive information about the character defining features as they might apply to Newfound Gap Road. The following recommended actions outline the CSS approach needed to establish corridor guidelines for future transportation-related modifications to the road:

ACTIONS:

- **Document and confirm applicable design standards used for:**
 - Roadway engineered features including design speed, vertical and horizontal alignment, bridges, drainage, shoulders, guardwalls and guardrails
 - Landscape design (plant species, etc.)



- Regulatory and informational roadway signage
- **Confirm existing or establish new design standards and/or guidelines, based upon the Secretary of Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties, for the preservation and enhancement of existing or the development of new:**
 - Pulloffs and overlooks
 - Trailheads
 - Stone masonry walls (headwalls, retaining walls, tree wells) and culverts
 - Roadside barriers (barrier guard walls, wood steel-backed)
 - Resource educational signage
 - Regulatory, informational and wayfinding signage (including posts and sign backs)
 - Variable Message Signs
 - Security and access control gates
 - Support equipment (solar panels, generators, monitoring equipment)





Develop and implement recommendations of the Vista Management Plan for identified vistas along Newfound Gap Road.

As noted in Chapter 2, the 2012 *Vista Management Plan* provides an inventory and management recommendations for maintaining scenic vistas. Maintenance of the Park's vistas along Newfound Gap Road is critical to the enjoyment and understanding of the Park's intrinsic qualities. The Vista Management Plan has established a systematic strategy to:

- Prioritize viewpoints for management on a cyclic basis.
- Restore visitor use opportunities associated with lost vistas.
- Preserve the historical and cultural contexts in which the viewpoints were created.
- Identify which methods of vegetation clearing are appropriate, and when and where to use them.
- Protect cultural resources and sensitive plant and animal species.

While the Vista Management Plan has been implemented on some of Newfound Gap's most significant vistas (the "A" category), further monitoring and refinement may be needed over time to ensure that the recommended treatments function as intended.

ACTIONS:

- **Regularly review and identify maintenance needs at the corridor's high priority vistas ("A" category) and establish a prioritized maintenance plan for current available funds.**
- **For the unfunded maintenance needs identified, develop supplemental budget requests or seek partner funding and/or support.**

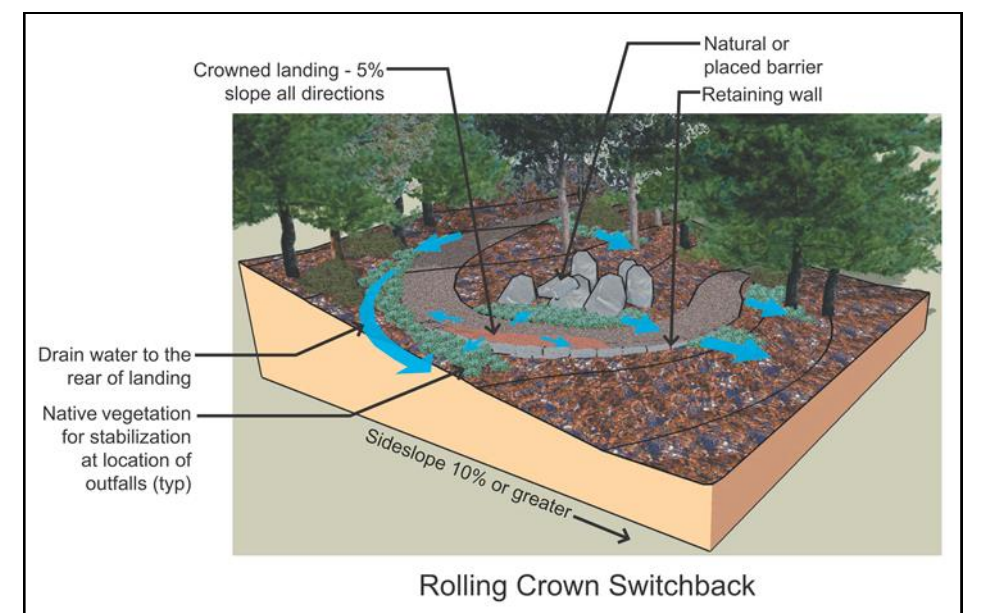
Protect resources and the visitor experience with the proactive use of sustainable design strategies when constructing, renovating and maintaining visitor areas.

A physical inventory identified several critical management issues (e.g. roadside erosion) that are prevalent throughout the entire corridor. Most of these issues are related to the intensity and pattern of visitor use. When trailheads, popular viewpoints and recreation areas reach or exceed their visitor carrying capacity, visitors tend to improvise until they either leave or achieve the desired visitor experience. When the parking lot is full, visitors park along roadside shoulders, many of which are unsafe, do not provide adequate site distance, or damage existing roadside features and vegetation. When trails are crowded, visitors seek out and follow improvised trails (referred to as "social paths") to find places where they can enjoy the Park's qualities when other sites are full.

Some of these issues can be addressed through physical design modifications to reduce impact, such as using reinforced turf shoulders to accommodate the increased use where appropriate; or physical barriers to eliminate access where not appropriate. Other issues can be addressed through timely visitor communication using technology to direct visitors to other less used, but perhaps just as interesting, places within the Park. The modifications themselves need to be carefully designed so that the barriers do not detract from the Park experience using the context sensitive design approaches noted earlier.

ACTIONS:

- **Protect vegetation and reduce erosion along road sides, at pull-offs and around resource educational signs.**
 - Install reinforced turf shoulders using an approximate 50-50 mix of suitable topsoil and aggregate applied to shoulder areas.
 - Manage shoulders to lessen/limit over parking at high visitor use areas.
 - Follow sustainable trail maintenance standards: sustainable design elements and construction practices allow the trail to make use of natural systems so that the trail both stands up to anticipated use levels, adapts to environmental conditions, and therefore requires minimal maintenance and operational costs. *(See example at right)*
 - Use split rail barriers, seat walls, or fencing to control visitor circulation and prevent entry into steep or sensitive landscape areas.
 - Maintain vegetation per the Vista Management Plan to enhance visibility to scenic vistas, and maintain a buffer to separate parking areas from scenic viewing areas.
 - Examine ways to discourage social paths at wayside exhibits through landscape design strategies. Such strategies are employed in the *'Concept Illustration: WEBB OVERLOOK'* on the following page.





Paving pattern at Newfound Gap

Use stone pavers as an attractive alternative to asphalt or concrete in the viewing area; use stone pattern/material similar to that used at Newfound Gap (Also shown below as sidewalk.)



Stone paver application



Rhododendron



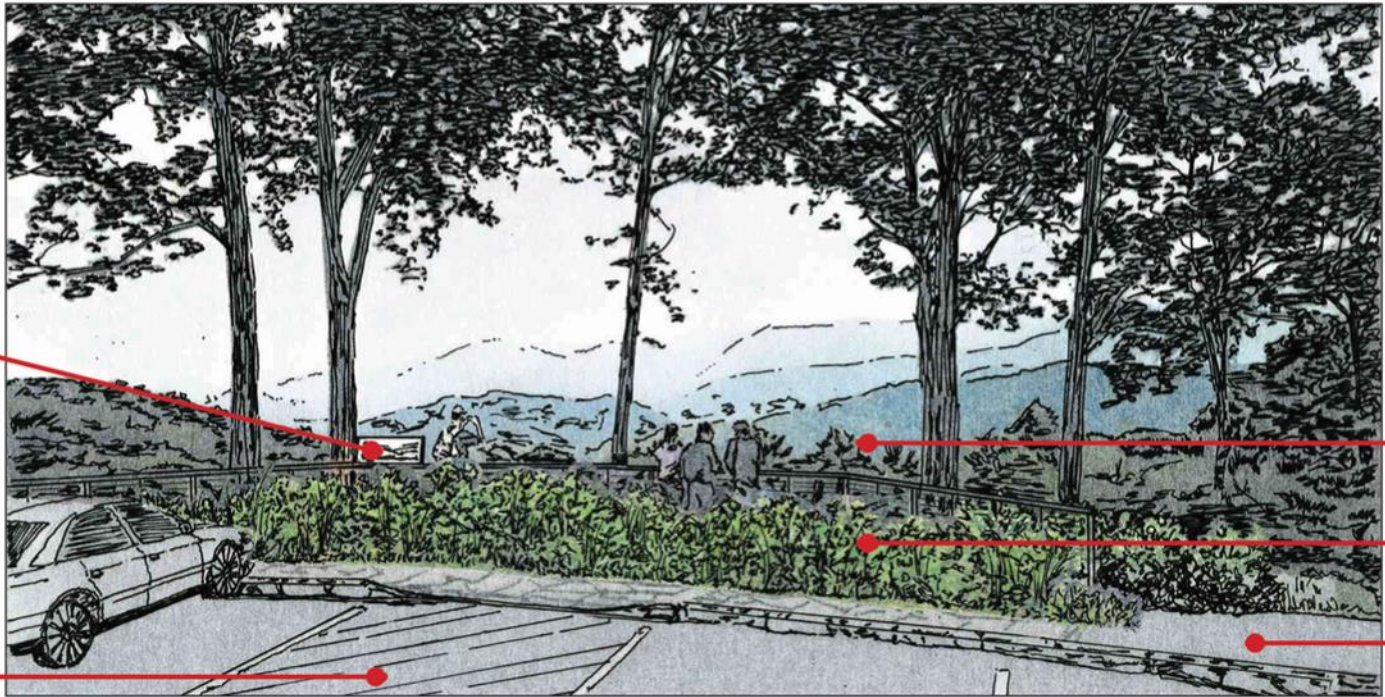
Viburnum

Plant shrubs native to the Smokies to define the edge of the viewing area and to control visitor circulation; shrubs or groundcover at these edges will also help to prevent erosion, where applicable. (Also shown below.)

Incorporate fencing where topography becomes steep to provide safety and to control visitor circulation; Use fence materials that recede from view and allow for some transparency. (Also shown below.)

Locate resource education signage at the periphery of the viewing area while visually aligning the view to match any graphics identifying ridges or other geologic forms. Use NPS Cap Mount or Deck Mount for wayside signage to integrate signage directly into wall or railing (See VIS and Wayside Hardware Specification Manual).

Provide an access aisle for ADA accessible parking spaces. Include a curb cut in stone curbing where adjacent to a sidewalk. (Also shown above.)



Vegetative buffer/meadow application



Carex pensylvanica



Poa palustris

Continue to maintain vegetation per the Vista Management Plan to enhance visibility to scenic vistas. (Also shown above.)

Maintain an area of native groundcover or meadow as a buffer to separate the parking lot from the scenic viewing area

Consider a resin-based, eco-friendly pavement alternative to pave a path to the viewing area; alternatively, use stone pavers.

ACTIONS (continued):

- Enhance pull-offs, their site furnishings, and resource educational installations.
 - Using the Corridor Design Guidelines, enhance existing site furnishings to be more in keeping with the original design intent of the pull-off areas.
 - Minimize the visible use of concrete where inappropriate.
 - Review the location of resource educational signs and consider where minor adjustments could improve the visual impact and/or enhance the interpretative experience. Resource education signs should be visible, but not blocking the view, and “lead the eye” to the feature being interpreted.



- Maintain tree and shrub plantings to preserve or restore historic context, or to reduce runoff and provide shade at appropriate locations.
 - Utilizing corridor design guidelines and following NPS policy regarding re-vegetation and landscaping, identify historically appropriate areas suitable for plantings and where key views will not be obstructed, potentially including:
 - ◇ Park Headquarters, tree wells and other areas where missing or declining trees and/or shrubs need to be replaced to maintain historic character;
 - ◇ At overlooks where trees could help create an “outdoor room” (See *‘Concept Illustration: Webb Overlook’ on previous page*)
 - ◇ In large parking areas such as Newfound Gap to reduce runoff and visual impacts of large asphalt surfaces.

Protect soundscapes and night skies.

In addition to the direct impacts of visitor use on the byway corridor, there are also indirect effects of broader activities beyond the control of the National Park Service. These include external factors such as air quality, urbanization approaching the Park boundary, noise and light pollution. The two latter factors are issues which have been receiving new attention at the Park and could be managed to improve the Newfound Gap Road corridor experience.

Managing noise levels is important to avoid negative impacts on wildlife and to minimize intrusions on the natural soundscape that is part of the Park’s visitor experience. Park management of noise is guided by NPS Director’s Order #47, *Soundscape Preservation And Noise Management*. It directs park managers to measure baseline acoustic conditions and set management goals. This includes determining which human-made sources are consistent with park purposes – including noise generated by the Park itself through maintenance and other management activities – and which noise sources need to be addressed by management.

Potential noise concerns for the byway corridor are primarily related to roadway traffic. Given the importance of Newfound Gap Road as an auto-oriented visitor experience, and the fact that the corridor has been assigned to the General Development management zone, a relatively high level of traffic is acceptable. However, certain driver behaviors can create sudden or intense noise levels that startle visitors and drown out normal conversation, including interpretative talks. The revving of motorcycle engines and honking in tunnels are examples of such behavior, as well as loud car radio volumes.

Natural sounds [...] are inherent components of ‘the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife’ protected by the NPS Organic Act.

They are vital to the natural functioning of many parks and may provide valuable indicators of the health of various ecosystems. Intrusive sounds are of concern to the NPS because they sometimes impede the Service’s ability to accomplish its mission.

NPS Director’s Order #47

The Park has also joined other NPS units in monitoring the presence of artificial light pollution from urban areas that impacts visitors’ ability to view the natural nighttime sky. Based on recent monitoring from Clingmans Dome, the Park is relatively dark at night compared to some other NPS units across the country. Even so, some light pollution is visible from Knoxville, Asheville, development in Sevier County and as far away as Atlanta. Managing the night sky will help protect the visitor experience for nighttime activities such as stargazing and the Park’s popular Firefly Viewing annual event.

ACTIONS:

- As part of the Park’s noise monitoring and management program, establish baseline levels specific to the byway corridor that are sufficient to protect the visitor experience while recognizing the corridor’s auto-oriented functions. (As a starting-point, 36 CFR Section 2.12, Audio Disturbance, prohibits operating motorized equipment or machinery that exceeds a noise level of 60 decibels measured on the A-weighted scale at 50 feet.)
- Communicate the Park’s desire to control noise levels to visitors as they enter the Park. Outreach tools are not limited to brochures or signs. The message can also be conveyed through cell phone texts and videos. Some Parks have recorded and measured sound levels to help make motorcycle riders aware of the noise levels they generate. NPS also publishes a handbook, *The Power of Sound*, to help Park units develop their own multimedia programs to interpret the unique soundscape to visitors.



The Park hosts an annual nighttime event in late May/early June for visitors to view the mating display of *Photus carolinus* (synchronous fireflies), one of only a few species known in the world to synchronize their flash patterns.

- Consider the use of “quiet pavement” materials when roads are being repaved, as discussed in the NPS *Quieter Pavements Guidance Document*.
- Consider the impacts of lighting on night skies when designing or renovating corridor facilities, including visitor centers, parking areas, and campgrounds.
- Provide recognition to communities in the region surrounding the Park who have adopted a “dark sky” ordinance to promote lighting levels and designs that direct illumination only to where it is needed.

Update and document a set of Corridor Maintenance/Resource Management Guidelines to be used as a basis for addressing maintenance and management activities on Newfound Gap Road in a manner consistent with its historic design intent.

In addition to guiding future physical changes to the roadway corridor, there is a need to address external factors associated with such issues as non-native invasive species, effect of climate change on species composition, addressing issues of visitor use that exceed the carrying capacity of the site and corridor, and addressing issues related to water quality and quantity resulting from these external factors.

Servicewide policy on management of invasive species and pests provide some guidance but further guidance needs to be developed for specific issues that affect the visitor experience along the byway corridor.



Given that the majority of park visitors use Newfound Gap Road to access and experience the Park, the byway presents an excellent opportunity to educate visitors about the kinds of disturbances that affect the Park and about the holistic approach being used to address those issues and resulting disturbances. External influences, such as climate change, where non-native invasive species come from

and how they change the species composition in the park, are already being interpreted at existing waysides, or within interpretive centers. However, as research media and technology advances, so too can the communication approach. For example, three-dimensional visualization tools can be utilized to project the future appearance of a particular wayside if current trends continue and those images can be used as “after” and “before” images to help visitors understand the implications.

Recent and ongoing research, such as that developed in 2014 by the Landscape Climate Change Vulnerability Project at Montana State University, can be used to help communicate changes that are happening. A good example of the type of activity that could be brought more directly to the visitor is the ozone bio-monitoring garden located at Purchase Knob. Establishing a similar type of hands-on facility at a more heavily visited location presents an excellent opportunity to bring these issues to the forefront of the visitor experience in a manner that all ages can understand.

ACTIONS:

- Using the Corridor Design Guidelines that are developed, create a list of actions for the following maintenance priority issues:
 - Management of pests that threaten the corridor’s scenic qualities
 - Management of invasive species
 - Restoration and maintenance of the character-defining native vegetation features at developed areas such as at the Luftee Overlook
 - Reforestation of disturbed areas, where deemed appropriate
 - Renovation and redesign of destinations such as the Newfound Gap parking area to address high volume of visitor usage, traffic calming and pedestrian safety modifications, and other enhancements (See Concept Illustration: ‘Enhancements at Newfound Gap’ on next page.)
 - Maintenance of existing stone masonry walls and culverts
 - Screening or softening the visual impact of built features that do not meet the design standards, where possible and deemed appropriate by management.
 - Promoting the use of sustainable materials.





Update existing inventories of ongoing maintenance and resource management activities, problematic areas and critical needs, and estimate future needs in tandem with potential enhancements to waysides, pull-offs and visitor amenities along Newfound Gap Road.

The Park currently records, tracks and reports the condition of its facilities through the NPS Facility Management Software System (FMSS). Decisions about where to prioritize the Park’s limited funds and staff time are based on the extent to which an asset is critical to the Park’s mission, its current condition rating, and whether a comparable asset exists that could be substituted.

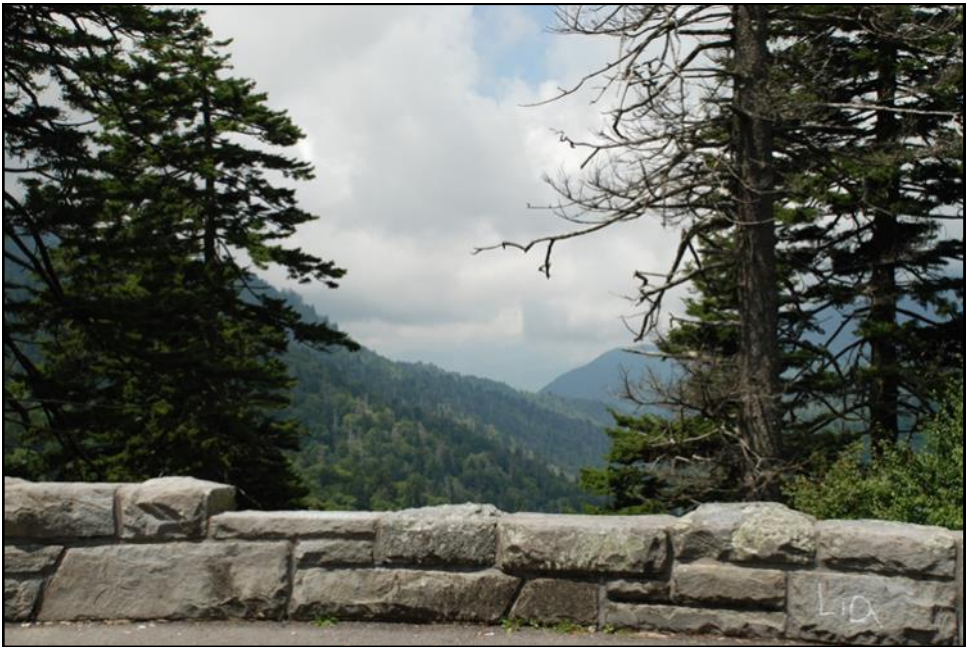
The Newfound Gap Road Byway corridor is an essential link in the Park’s transportation network, not only for visitors but for Park staff who use it to reach various areas to perform their duties. Its visitor facilities receive heavier use than many other areas of the Park. As Chapter 3 describes, the corridor also possesses outstanding intrinsic natural and historic qualities, not all of which can be found elsewhere in the Park. It is therefore reasonable to anticipate that maintenance of facilities in the byway corridor will continue to receive significant emphasis in the Park’s decision-making process. Flagging the facilities that are part of the byway corridor will allow the Park to track which needs may be eligible for competitive funding opportunities that are enhanced by byway status.

ACTIONS:

- **Define maintenance and resource management needs that are critical for preserving the corridor’s character defining features and setting as defined in the Park’s enabling legislation.**

Chapter 8 contains an initial list of maintenance, repair and rehabilitation needs that should be reviewed and expanded as needed. Periodic road repaving and restriping is obviously essential to maintain safe travel on this and all of the Park’s public roads. However, there are other ongoing maintenance needs specific to Newfound Gap Road’s function as a byway, such as vegetation management at scenic vistas and resetting the stonework that is fundamental to the route’s historic character.

- **Establish maintenance and resource management action plan that consolidates needs and priorities for preserving the character defining features and context of Newfound Gap Road.**
- **Determine maintenance/resource management needs that can be accomplished utilizing existing funds.**
- **Identify maintenance/resource management gaps that cannot be accomplished utilizing existing funds.**



Update and identify additional partnership opportunities for increasing maintenance resources (such as organizational, sponsorship, volunteer work parties, or adoption programs).

Friends of the Smokies and the Great Smoky Mountains Association (GSMA) both provide the Park with critical support by raising public awareness, funds, and recruiting volunteers for various projects.

Volunteer assistance includes trail maintenance, staffing at Clingmans Dome and other visitor sites, and support of various public education efforts. The groups also raise funds designated for projects and programs related to resource management; resource education; and facilities repair, restoration and management.

Numerous other organizations have an interest in ongoing contribution and participation in the Park’s mission. These include recreational clubs for enthusiasts of hiking, camping, fishing and hunting, horseback riding, and stargazing. An effective way to involve these additional groups may be to encourage them to partner with Friends of the Smokies or GSMA due to their long-established relationships and prior training as volunteers.



ACTIONS:

- **Working with the Park’s volunteer coordinator, identify potential partnership opportunities along with levels of effort (e.g. level of expertise, estimated volunteer hours needed at level of expertise, estimated supervisory hours needed to coordinate volunteers).**
- **Identify more complex maintenance actions that are beyond the capacity of volunteers. Publicize a list of these activities for potential sponsorship by interested groups.**

This list could be a byway-specific document like the annual Park Support List published by Friends of the Smokies, which identifies nearly \$850,000 in program and capital needs for 2016. Byway projects on the current list include the repointing of chimneys and fireplaces in several historic structures in the Oconaluftee Historic District, the rehabilitation of Alum Cave Trail, and support for the Volunteer Roadside Assistance Program, which recruits retired law enforcement officers to help patrol Newfound Gap Road to provide directions, respond to disabled vehicles and lock-outs, and assist with motor vehicle accidents and wildlife-related traffic jams.



Establish a system to regularly monitor resources and facilities within the corridor, and identify baselines against which to measure resource degradation.

One critical management issue for the byway corridor is balancing its heavy visitor use with protection of the resources visitors have come to experience. NPS Management Policy 8.2 (Visitor Use) requires the Park to adjust public use if there is a “reasonable basis for believing [it]... would cause unacceptable impacts to park resources or values.” The data used to determine this is obtained through the Park’s periodic monitoring of resources and facilities, and compared to its definition of desired conditions.



As described earlier, the Park uses FMSS to record the condition of infrastructure such as buildings, roads, bridges, and water/ wastewater systems. This tracking addresses many of the byway corridor’s most critical facilities, including the Sugarlands and Oconaluftee Visitor Centers, Newfound Gap Comfort Station, parking areas and pull-offs, and the road itself along with bridges, tunnels and signage. Trail conditions are also monitored through volunteer assessments. Some monitoring of natural and cultural resource conditions also takes place, but the data is not currently collected or tabulated in a way that facilitates evaluation of impacts from the use of Newfound Gap Road and adjacent facilities. There are opportunities as the Park updates its management plans to incorporate baselines and define thresholds specific to the byway corridor.

Some facilities should be monitored not only for asset condition, but also for the level of use they receive. Roadway use is already measured through collection of traffic count data, and the Park tracks annual visitation as well as the users of the two visitor centers. Level of usage should also be monitored for other facilities near capacity, such as parking areas, campgrounds and trails.

ACTIONS:

- Ensure the resource monitoring that currently occurs within the Newfound Gap Road Byway corridor is accompanied by a definition desired conditions, appropriate visitor activities, facilities, and services.

EXAMPLE OF A MONITORING & MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

(from Cuyahoga Valley National Park’s Sustainable Trail Guidelines, 2012. For illustration purposes only.)

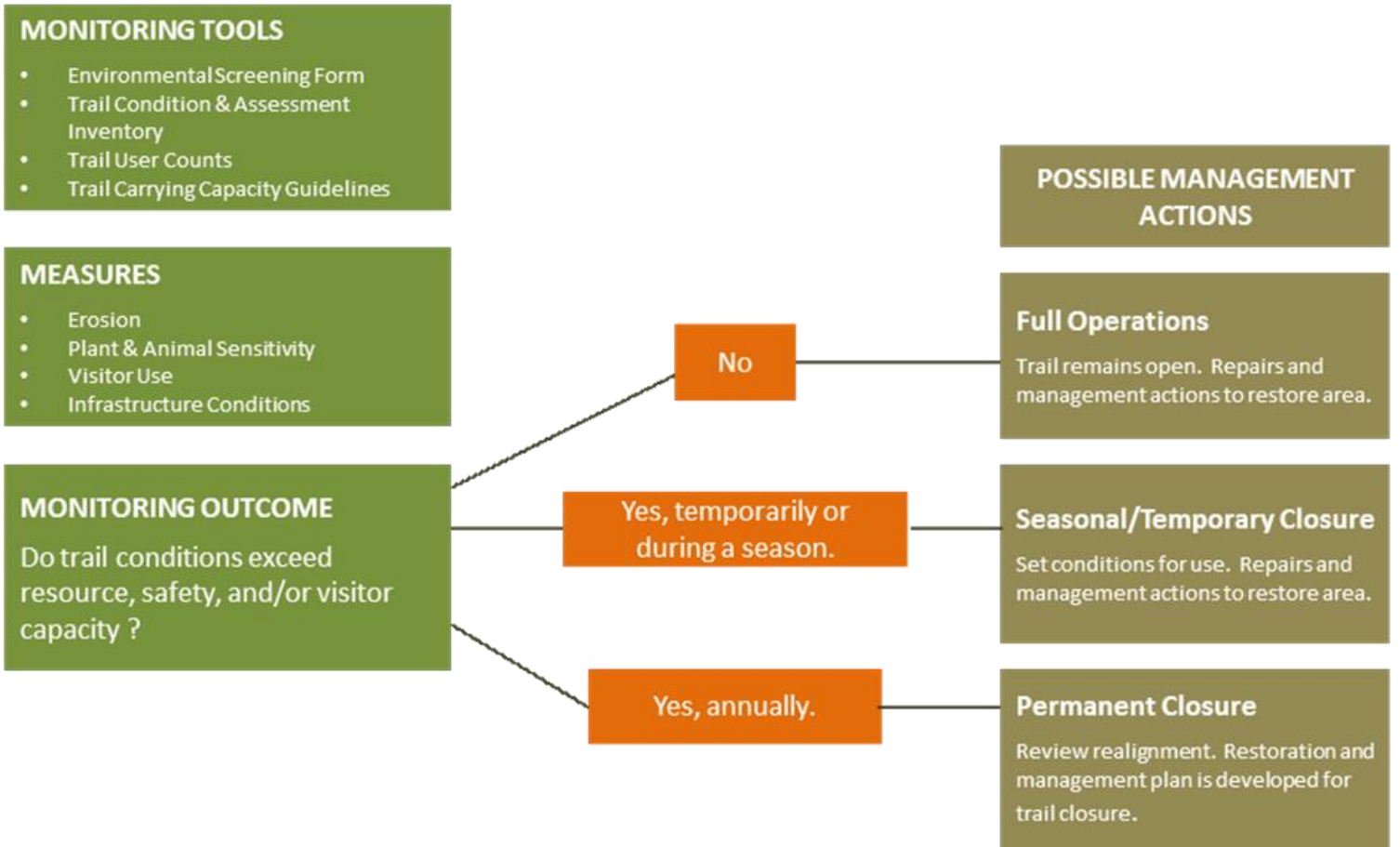
Monitoring Use and Impacts ►

Matrix showing the indicators and methods used to monitor usage and impacts to trails, parking areas and campgrounds, the maximum acceptable values, and potential management strategies to be applied depending on the extent of the impact measured.

Linking Monitoring to Management Actions ►

Potential decision-making process to monitor and manage trails. As seen, the potential management actions include placing limits on usage, temporary closure, or permanent closure.

Facility Type	Capacity Indicators	Capacity Standards	Monitoring Method	Potential Management Strategies
Trails	Number of users per day	No more than __ people at one time in a 2-hour period	Periodic counts of select-ed trail segments by staff or volunteers	1. Educate users 2. Reallocate users (by permit or use limits) 3. Enforce use limits 4. Trail closure (based on operational guidance) 5. Redesign trail
	Number of reported user incidents per month	Exceeds __ incidents in any given month during a 12-month period	Record of reported inci-dents to Visitor Protec-tion Division	
	Mean trail width	Mean trail width does not exceed 10% of de-sign standard/baseline	Point sampling method developed by Inventory & Monitoring Program	
Parking	Number of hours that all spaces are full at trail-head parking areas.	Hours per week that all spaces are full	Parking area counts dur-ing average peak days	1. Direct visitors to other areas. 2. Redesign lots to accom-modate more vehicles.
Campsites	Number of permits per day	Camping sites full all weekends during camp-ing season (May-Oct.)	Count number of permits during seasonal week-ends.	1. Educate users 2. Reallocate users (by permit or use limits) 3. Enforce use limits
	Area of vegetation loss within proximity of campsite	No more than __ square feet of vegetation loss	Sampling method devel-oped by Inventory & Monitoring Program	



Chapter 5: Traffic, Travel and Safety

Because of Newfound Gap Road’s dual function – providing access to Great Smoky Mountains National Park and serving as US Route 441 linking Gatlinburg to Cherokee – trips along the corridor represent a variety of tourist, recreational, and local purposes. This traffic mix poses certain challenges for managing the corridor in a way that balances the differing needs of multiple user groups.

Although large trucks and commercial traffic are prohibited on Newfound Gap Road, the corridor does receive recreational vehicle (RV) traffic as well as motorcyclists and bicyclists. Because much of the traffic is related to tourism and recreation, drivers may exhibit behavior not expected of normal traffic. They may drive below the posted speed limit in order to enjoy scenic views at a more leisurely pace. They may also make unexpected turns into and out of parking areas and side roads, or come to a stop in the roadway, especially if a parking area or sign is not visible well in advance of the turn.

Wildlife sightings also prompt many visitors to slow down abruptly, sometimes even stopping their vehicles in the middle of the road for a better look, even on sections of the road with very limited sight distance. “Elk jams” and “bear jams” – in which traffic comes to a crawl or stops while people take photos of the wildlife– are common occurrences on Newfound Gap Road.



Consistent with the intent of the landscape architects who originally designed the road, traffic speeds along many sections of Newfound Gap Road are naturally slowed by its winding alignment through mountainous terrain. However, much of the North Carolina portion of the route has less dramatic curvature and when heading southbound, drivers experience an almost continual descent from the high point of Newfound Gap, requiring lower gears and/or frequent braking to maintain safe speeds.

Dense fog and wintry weather can present challenging driving conditions. Due to its altitude and geography, Great Smoky Mountains experiences a humid continental climate with lower temperatures and greater rainfall than other parts of Tennessee and North Carolina. Some of the lane marking strategies often used on roads outside the Park, such as reflectors that are embedded in the pavement, cannot be used on Newfound Gap Road because of the frequency of snowplowing. Although such reflectors are considered “snowplowable,” this requires treating the road first with salt. The Park instead uses sand, due to concerns about salt’s impacts on natural resources.



The following strategies are recommended to improve roadway travel conditions and visitor safety both on and off the roadway.

Enhance motorist safety through conscious use of visual cues to encourage safe vehicular operating speeds and through enhanced roadway markings.

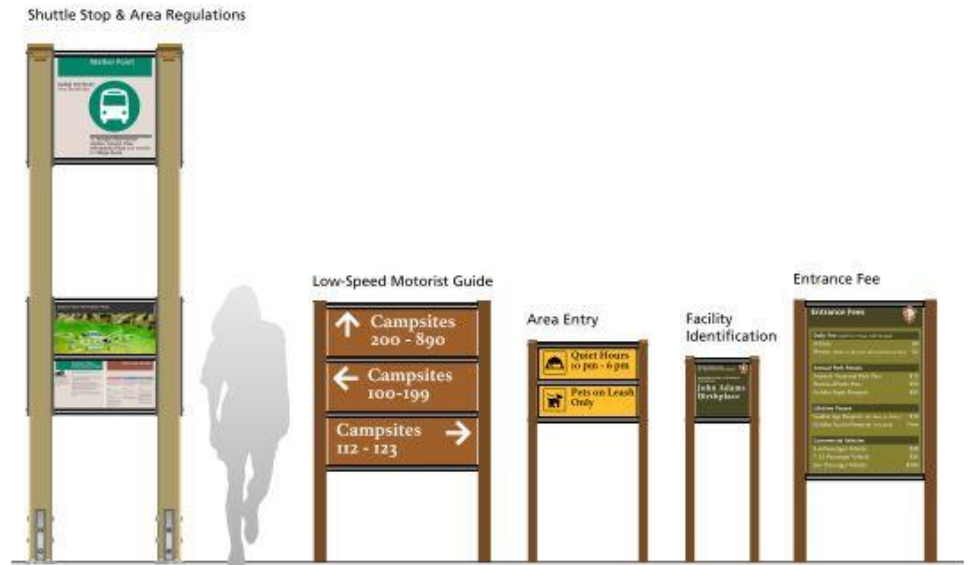
ACTIONS:

- Consider the use of pavement surface treatments to differentiate areas for slower travel speeds.
Certain areas of the Newfound Gap Road corridor could benefit from additional measures to alert drivers to changing road conditions. Care is particularly important around pulloffs, where vehicles are either slowing down in order to exit the roadway, or pulling back onto the roadway before regaining normal travel speeds. On the following page, *Concept Illustration: Pulloffs* shows how stone safety islands, such as those currently used on the Gatlinburg Spur, might help define the edge between a pulloff and the travelway.
- Consider use of potential low-cost road marking techniques from FHWA’s *Traffic Calming on Main Roads Through Rural Communities* such as transverse pavement markings, wider fog lines, etc.
- Improve the durability of safety-related pavement markings through the following measures:
 - Use of recessed pavement markings and reflective beads
 - Testing the use of alternate, approved de-icing materials (other than the sand currently used)
- Install reflectors on timber barriers, concrete bridge abutments and at selected curves, as appropriate.



Ensure wayfinding, cautionary, and advisory signs are legible and appropriately located.

The standards for Park signs – including graphics, materials and placement – are established in the *NPS Sign Standards Manual* and the 2004 *Uniguide* (Director’s Order 52C). As mentioned in Chapter 2, FHWA has a memorandum of understanding with NPS to recognize the Uniguide standards as being in “substantial conformance” with the standards for signage on other public roads. The most noticeable difference is the use of relatively muted colors and striving to minimize the number of signs in order to detract as little as possible from the natural setting.



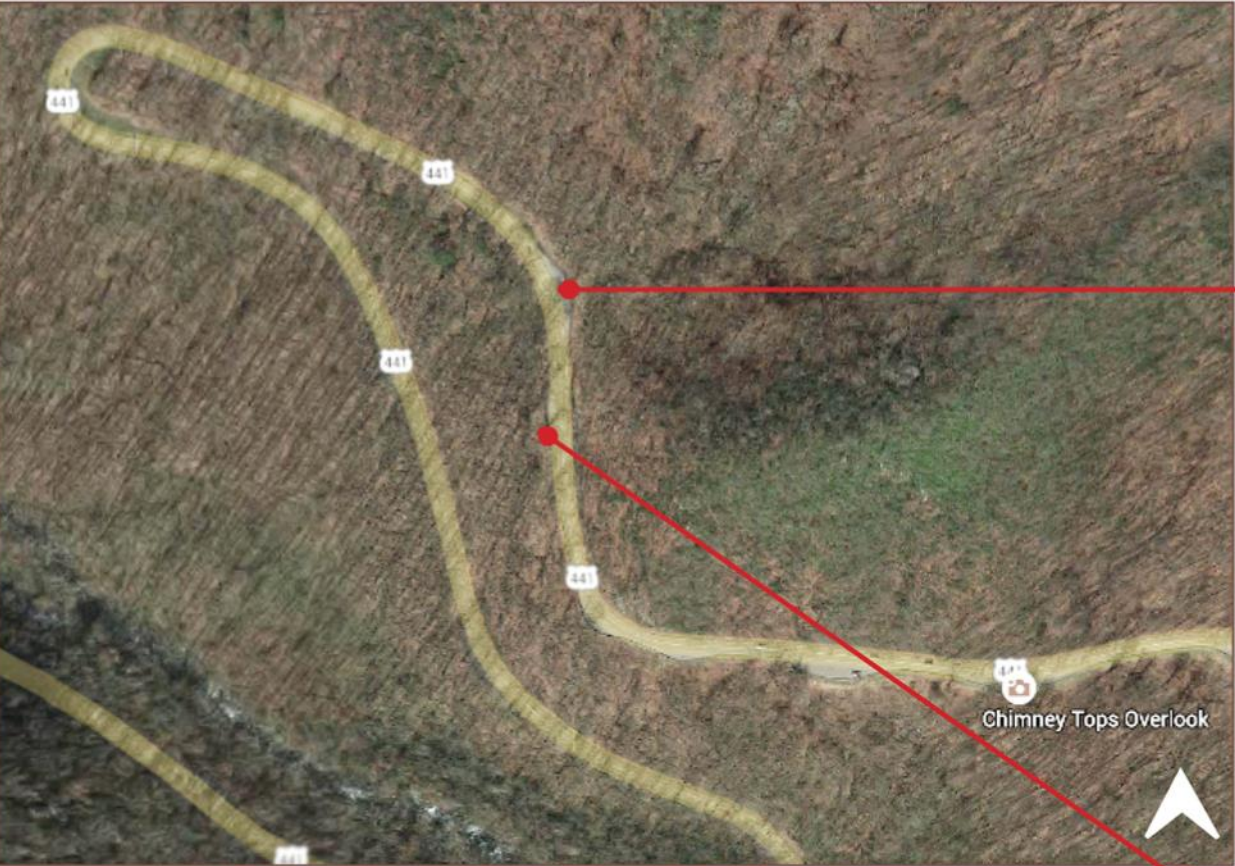
Visitors driving the Newfound Gap Road corridor are typically focused on the scenery, watching for wildlife, and steering the road’s tight turns. They may therefore be less attentive than usual to navigation or route advisories. This makes it particularly important to ensure that signs are visible and well-positioned, giving drivers ample notice of turns for campgrounds, trails, and other attractions along the route.

ACTIONS:

- Establish corridorwide consistency with the Uniguide sign standards as older signs are replaced.
- Consider the provision, positioning and legibility of signs, especially those used to alert visitors that they are approaching a turnoff for a destination. These particular locations may warrant review:
 - Gatlinburg Trail trailhead
 - Carlos Campbell Overlook
 - Chimneys Picnic Area
 - Fort Harry
 - Collins Creek Picnic Area

Small/Narrow Pull offs: Near milepoint 6.9 and Chimney Tops Overlook
Defining edge of travelway and pulloff using stone safety islands

Concept Illustration: Pull offs



Small/narrow pull offs near milepoint 6.9 and Chimney Tops Overlook



Stone safety island on the Gatlinburg Spur route

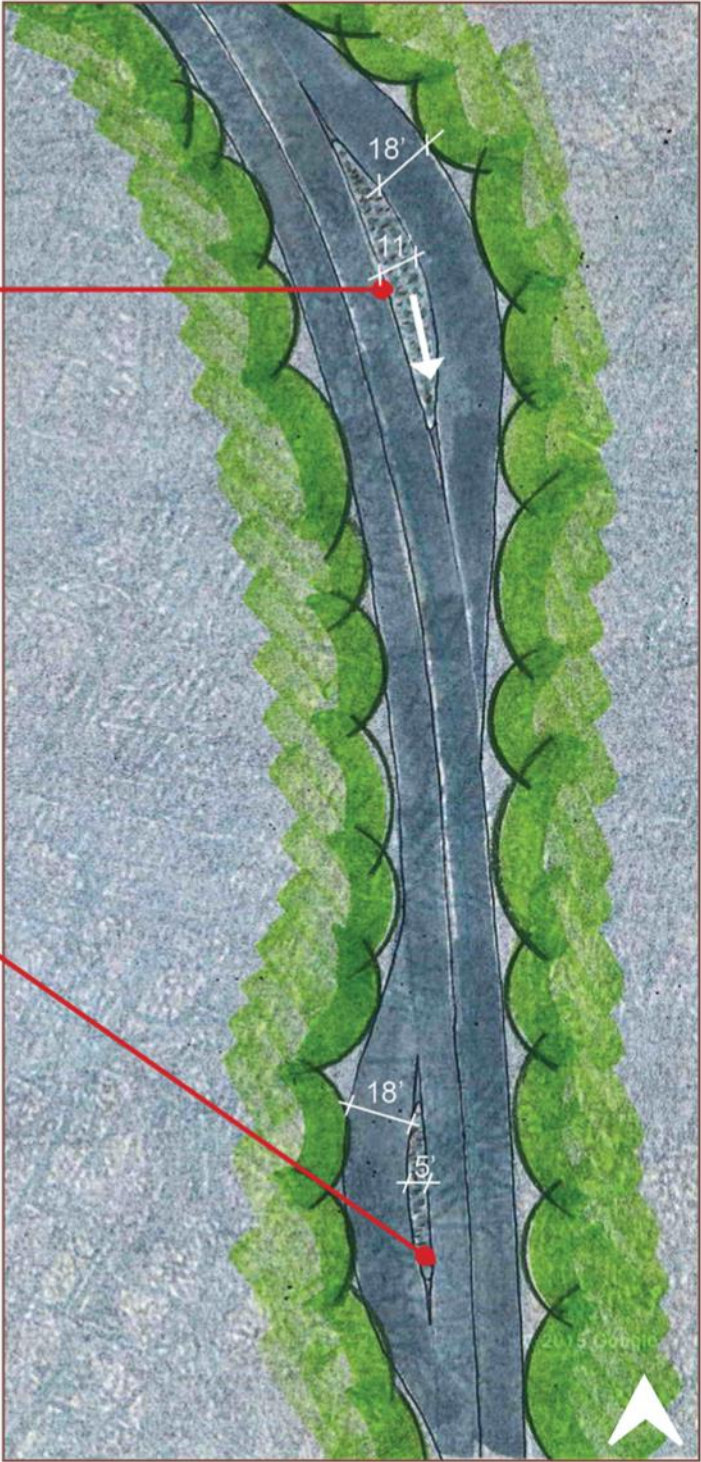
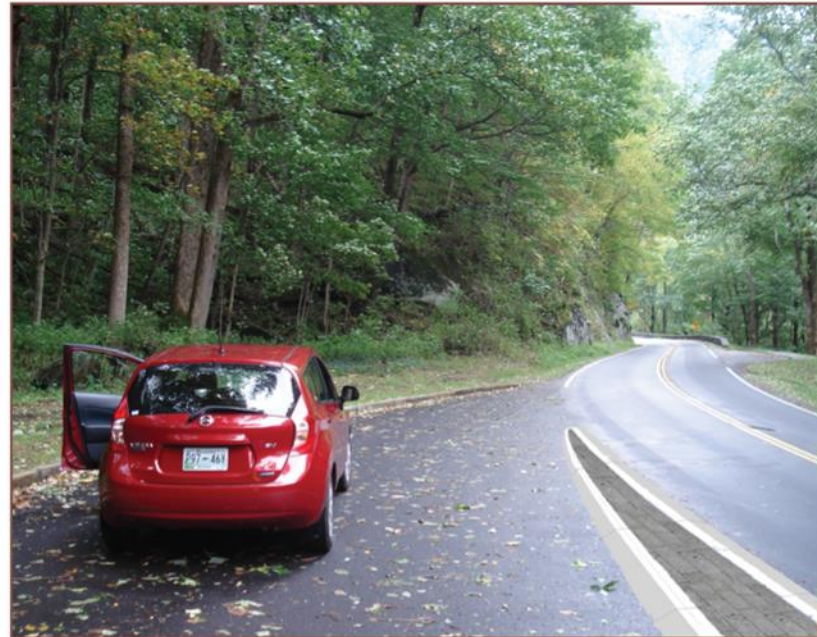


Illustration of stone safety medians



Photo at pull off looking south toward Chimney Tops



Sketch showing granite stone median with NCDOT 8" x 6" median curb

Develop and implement appropriately scaled communication technology to provide real time traffic and weather condition information to visitors prior to their arrival.

Given the number of daily visitors to the Park, and Newfound Gap Road’s role as a trunkline for movement in and through the Park, a closure on this corridor has much broader traffic impacts. Full or partial closure of the road may be caused by rock slides, downed trees from storms, and wintry weather conditions. Road maintenance activities may also require lane closures, although the Park has policies to schedule maintenance for off-peak days and times whenever possible.

Road closures and advisories within the Park are posted on its website and included in the recorded messages visitors can access by phone or AM radio. Two Twitter accounts are also active: one operated by the Park for the status of roads within its boundaries, and a separate account (linked to the Friends of the Smokies website) dedicated to road conditions on Newfound Gap Road itself. Further distribution of this information through various channels will help visitors make informed decisions when to visit the corridor.

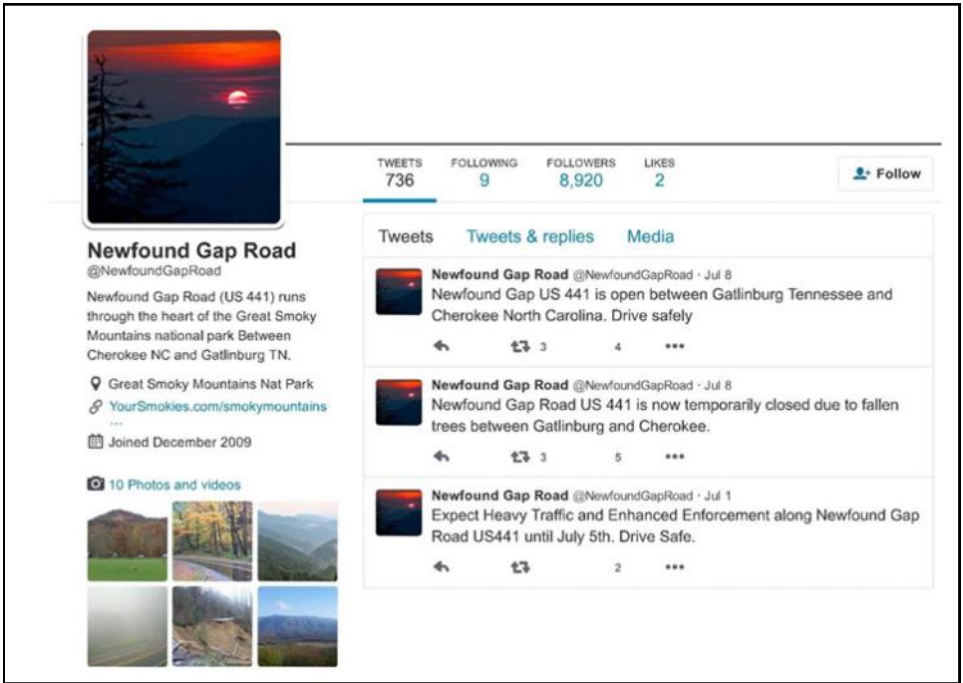
ACTIONS:

- Establish links from the Park’s road conditions webpage/social media feeds to area hospitality websites.
- Partner with gateway communities to establish/operate kiosks to provide traffic and weather information.
- Continue and expand use of webcams, tweets, Facebook announcements, etc. to let visitors know of conditions at particular sites within the Park.
- Participate in TN and NC’s 511 system by providing traffic/weather alerts when appropriate.
- Maintain and enhance safety at visitor sites and along the corridor.

In addition to travel behavior along Newfound Gap Road, other safety issues to consider include safety of visitors at pulloffs and parking lots when they leave the vehicle; their safe use of paths and trails to explore the resources within easy distance of the road; and the capacity of Park staff responsible for law enforcement and emergency response.

ACTIONS:

- Address potential pedestrian/vehicular conflicts at the most heavily used visitor sites, including Alum Cave Trailhead, Chimneys Trailhead and Newfound Gap. (See Concept Illustration: Newfound Gap Enhancements, Chapter 4, Page 7.)
- Evaluate information posted at some trailheads. The Park’s changing audience reflects a nation in which the majority of people now live in urban and suburban areas. Visitors used to walking on greenways may not realize how hiking differs in a natural setting.



- Consider installation of cameras at major parking areas to discourage vehicle break-ins, including video feeds from webcams if an expanded communications network becomes available in the corridor.

Consider the needs of visitors of all ages and abilities in the provision of park facilities, as feasible, in proposed renovation and development along Newfound Gap Road.

NPS Director’s Order #42 requires “universal design” for all new and renovated facilities, and directs each park to evaluate its existing facilities to determine the current level of accessibility for disabled persons. Although it is recognized that resource preservation requirements may not make it possible to make all areas of national parks fully accessible, the Park maintains an action plan with identified funding needs to address barriers where feasible.

Since one of Newfound Gap Road’s purposes is to provide an auto-oriented Park experience (which can be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities), it is also a suitable place to focus on providing more accessible facilities than may exist in other areas of the Park. One opportunity for improvement is at the Newfound Gap Comfort Station, where public restrooms are located down a steep path leading from the parking area. Newfound Gap is a stopping point for a large number of visitors because of its historic and scenic value, but also because it offers restrooms at a halfway point along the corridor’s 2— 2 ½ hour driving time.

ACTIONS:

- Address visitor restroom needs and access at Newfound Gap.

The cost of adapting the existing path for ADA accessibility should be compared to the cost of adding vault toilets with related pathway and parking modifications, as done at Clingmans Dome.
- Provide enhanced visitor safety and accessibility through measures such as:
 - Non-slip trail pavement and steps
 - ADA parking spaces and access aisles linked to paved walkways and resource educational signs
 - ADA compliant signage and mile markers
 - Pavement resurfacing for ADA compliancy, where applicable
 - Ramps where applicable

- Consider creation of an additional ADA-accessible trail.

There is one ADA-accessible trail in the corridor: Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail, located near the Sugarlands Visitor Center. This half-mile paved trail is popular with wheelchair users as well as families with children. A similar trail in the North Carolina portion of the corridor would create more accessible opportunities to get out of a vehicle and enjoy the corridor’s natural resources.

Chapter 6: Resource Education

The Park's 2001 Comprehensive Resource Education Plan (CREP) contains an analysis of resource education needs and recommendations for effectively communicating Great Smoky Mountains National Park's purpose, significance, themes, and values to the public and to its many Park partners. The plan seeks to achieve a balance of services based on visitor use, critical resource issues, and Service-wide initiatives.

Since the plan's completion fifteen years ago, many of its recommendations have been implemented, especially along Newfound Gap Road. Looking ahead to the next fifteen years, the Park should develop additional guidance and projects along Newfound Gap Road – not necessarily to change the fundamental message as outlined in the CREP (park purpose, significance, themes and values to the public), but to take better advantage of opportunities to introduce millions of new visitors to the Park and all it has to offer.

By making a strong commitment as part of the CMP, Newfound Gap Road's resource education initiatives can go a long way towards introducing new and younger visitors to the Park and establishing the same lifelong connections that the first and now second generation of park visitors have attained.

Eight specific strategies are recommended to achieve the resource education goals for Newfound Gap Road:

- Gain greater recognition and awareness of the national significance of Newfound Gap Road.
- Pursue designation of the route as a National Scenic Byway.
- Continue to pursue listing of Newfound Gap Road on the National Register of Historic Places to increase awareness of its significance and to provide the rationale for continuing to invest in the preservation and maintenance of its character defining features.
- Work cooperatively with existing local, state, federal and non-governmental organizations and supporters of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to advance the vision and goals for Newfound Gap Road as means of introducing and reintroducing visitors to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.
- Expand resource education programs to include interactive mobile and web-based media.
- Review and update comprehensive resource education planning for the Corridor.
- Based upon updated resource educational planning, identify ideas for new/revised communication tools.
- Use Newfound Gap Road as an opportunity to encourage all visitors to get out of their car and participate in a more engaging park experience.



Gain greater recognition and awareness of the national significance of Newfound Gap Road.

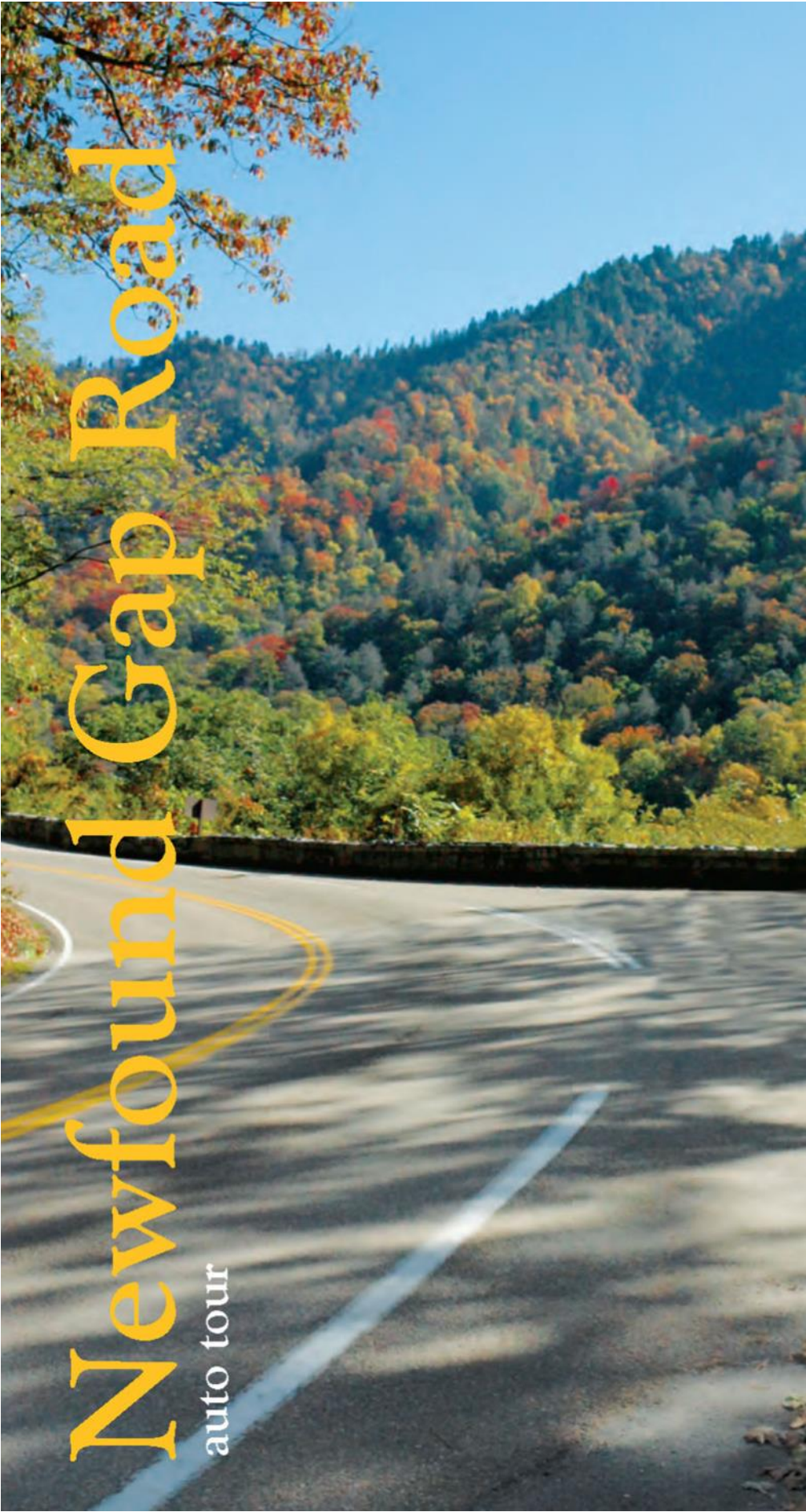
While the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is well known and recognized as a nationally and globally significant resource, less is known and understood about the significance of the Newfound Gap Road and its role in providing access to all the Park has to offer (see Chapter 3). The Park has produced excellent interpretive materials that describe the intentional design of Newfound Gap Road as a scenic road with carefully planned views of the landscape for motorists and hikers, as well as the CCC-era stories associated with the route’s construction and its role in reviving the national economy through public works while conserving natural resources and providing recreational opportunities.

The route’s story shares several themes with the Blue Ridge Parkway, which connects to the southern end of the Newfound Gap Road corridor and operates as an independent national park unit which concentrates on byway management. To help visitors distinguish and build appreciation of Newfound Gap Road, it may be useful to add another, more unique theme: the experience of traveling the route as an introduction to the Park’s role as a global biosphere reserve.



ACTIONS:

- Promote Newfound Gap Road as an easily accessible introduction to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, focusing on the role that each part of the Park’s ecosystem plays in the global environmental health of the planet.
- Facilitate and encourage the writing of travel, historical interest, and nature articles in local and national media by:
 - Identifying image and media resources specific to Newfound Gap Road
 - Hosting travel writer familiarization tours



Pursue designation of the route as a National Scenic Byway.

The National Scenic Byway Program was established in response to the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). Dedicated funding for byway programs and projects has not been included in more recent reauthorizations of federal surface transportation programs. Nonetheless, byway leaders from around the country have found new ways to manage byways on a more sustainable basis. To compete for funding and to attract younger generations of visitors, byway projects and programs must be be linked to larger regions and related programs. Programmatic themes include the “get outdoors” movement; local food and community-based agriculture; and heritage- and nature -based tourism.



There continues to be national interest in seeking support and funding for a new round of National Scenic Byway designations. FHWA does not currently have the funding available to support the designation process, including the revisions to maps and web sites that accompany such designation. However, as of the writing of this plan, groups such as the National Scenic Byway Foundation (NSBF) as well as state and local byway leaders continue to seek funding for a new nomination period. With that in mind, the Park and its partners in North Carolina and Tennessee should position Newfound Gap Road for a possible nomination opportunity.

ACTIONS:

- Monitor status of new nomination round and the NSBF’s efforts to gain funding for another round of byway nominations.
- Work with local leaders, gateway communities, and partner organizations to provide local congressional delegations with information about the interest in National Scenic Byway designation.
- Use CMP and 2008/9 nomination guidance to pull together information that will be needed for a nomination application (high quality photographs of intrinsic qualities, 1,000-word statement of significance, etc.).



Continue to pursue listing of Newfound Gap Road on the National Register of Historic Places to increase awareness of its significance and to provide the rationale for continuing to invest in the preservation and maintenance of its character defining features.

According to the National Register of Historic Places Program, “[t]o be considered eligible, a property must meet the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. This involves examining the property’s age, integrity, and significance:

“Age and Integrity. Is the property old enough to be considered historic (generally at least 50 years old) and does it still look much the way it did in the past?”

Significance. Is the property associated with events, activities, or developments that were important in the past? With the lives of people who were important in the past? With significant architectural history, landscape history, or engineering achievements? Does it have the potential to yield information through archeological investigation about our past?”

A Cultural Landscape Assessment (CLA) was prepared in 2009 for the Tennessee portion of the road (Mile Marker 0.0 to 14.5) in preparation for a project to rehabilitate the road and reconstruct its stone masonry guardwalls. The CLA confirmed this part of the route is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NHRP) as a cultural landscape.

Newfound Gap Road exhibits all aspects of integrity through most of its 31-mile length. The 10-mile segment directly south of Newfound Gap, completed between 1961 and 1965, is visually consistent with the earlier road segments with stone facing on the road structures. The feeling, association, and setting of the newer road segment are compatible with the original road and do not detract significantly from the integrity of the original road. The vistas and opportunities to park in pull-offs provide essentially the same aesthetic experience envisioned by the first group of park planners in the 1930s. Because it exemplifies the pre-1942 NPS design approach, the newer road section does not preclude the road’s eligibility for listing under Criterion C.

ACTIONS:

- **Complete a cultural landscape inventory for the entire length of the corridor, building on work already completed for the Tennessee portion of Newfound Gap Road.**
- **Determine eligibility of road for listing on the National Register; prepare a National Register Nomination Form and supporting documentation.**



Work cooperatively with existing local, state, federal and non-governmental organizations and other supporters to advance the vision and goals for Newfound Gap Road as a means to introduce and reintroduce visitors to the Park.

Many visitors to the Park arrive from its gateway communities, drive along Newfound Gap Road, stop at a few viewpoints but never get out of the car to walk down to a stream, hike along a mountain trail or visit a nearby historic site. When they do stop, it is often at the most visited places where the number of visitors detracts from the full experience of a hike or a scenic view.

Newfound Gap Road can and should be utilized to introduce visitors to the kinds of experiences that can be found beyond the road and roadside areas or the crowded trailheads. The system of “quiet walkways,” originally conceived as just that—a quiet place to appreciate nature—presents a key opportunity to introduce visitors to experiences readily available throughout the Park.

The Park's partner organizations offer many programs that can be used as a foundation for increasing the role of Newfound Gap Road as an introduction to what the Park has to offer. The Park should further collaborate with these groups to identify ways in which the Newfound Gap Road experience can lead to the more in-depth programs offered by affiliated groups such as Friends of the Smokies, Great Smoky Mountains Association, Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont, and the Smoky Mountains Field School.

ACTIONS:

- **Incorporate the CMP vision and goals (especially the goal of using Newfound Gap Road as a “sampler” for all that the Park has to offer) into the Park’s Foundation Document and future planning efforts.**

Review and update comprehensive resource education planning for the Corridor.

The next update of the Park’s Comprehensive Resource Education Plan will provide the opportunity to revitalize the way in which the Park’s purpose, mission and overall themes are communicated, so that they better match the types of audiences that need to be served in the future.

With renewed interest among both parents and educators in hands on learning (rather than just teaching to a test), coordinated development of both school-based and parent-child park experiences with park educational opportunities can help to reconnect nearby communities with nature-based activities in the Park. The Park has outstanding educational programs and ranger-led experiences that could be utilized as a basis to capture this increasing interest in outdoor education and hands on learning.



Photo from Friends of the Smokies

Coordination between the exhibits in the visitor center and the quiet walkways would help to reinforce the educational message delivered at the visitor center with the places nearby where the plant and animal habitat can be found. Future updates to the Resource Education Plan can be utilized to provide the needed coordination effort.

ACTIONS:

- **Develop and implement a visitor survey to determine what encourages (or discourages) visitors to get out of their car to experience the Park. The survey should identify:**
 - Existing and potential new audiences and their interests
 - Length of time, origin and destination, age composition, and other visitor use patterns
 - Trends in visitation (e.g. group travel composition, multi-generational travel, changing activities, etc.)

ACTIONS (continued):

- Based on the survey, evaluate existing tools, media, and resource education opportunities to determine how to adapt resource education along Newfound Gap Road to meet changing visitor use patterns, needs and opportunities.
- Regularly review interpretive media and replace outdated, inaccurate, and substandard interpretive exhibits, signs, films, and other media with innovative, immersive, fully accessible, and learner-centered experiences.
- Transform existing resource educational wayside signs into three dimensional resource educational exhibits by incorporating landscape design techniques as a means of meeting resource educational goals.



- Reach out to visitors through roving interpretive programs and a mobile (portable) visitor center. Stage these at less intensively used locations to spread out visitor use patterns and tell the story in a more engaging way.
- Present Newfound Gap Road as an outdoor museum that extends and links the resource educational exhibits of the existing visitor centers to the pull-offs and quiet walkways.

Based upon updated resource educational planning, identify new/revised communication tools, including interactive mobile and web-based media.

While the Park has outstanding resource education programs and materials, they are not reaching younger audiences in ways to which they are accustomed. The challenge of not having good cell phone coverage or wireless connectivity has limited the ability to use some of the advancements in resource education being tried at other parks. Improved connectivity would help make the Park more accessible and engaging and therefore help to expand the Park’s audience.

As noted in Chapter 3, Newfound Gap Road is a transportation backbone and is used by 60 percent of the Park’s visitors. Equipping the route with wireless access would serve the needs of the majority of visitors while leaving the more remote parts of the Park free from the intrusions that Wi-Fi access might bring. As Wi-Fi hot spot technology advances, it can be harnessed to broaden the Park’s reach to more diverse audiences, introduce new visitors to Park resources, and better communicate about safety and Park conditions. IT resources are also needed to support increased Wi-Fi access at visitor centers, developed campgrounds, and heavily used visitor sites.



ACTIONS:

- Use visitor centers as technology centers, coupled with development of selected mobile hot spots, to take advantage of advancing technologies.
- As technologies expand, continue to refresh and update interpretive tools, prioritizing investments in visitor centers and hot spots. Opportunities to use technology include:
 - “Yesterday, today, and tomorrow” exhibits that illustrate how the park has changed over time, especially at overlooks where significant disturbances have altered the visitor experience.
 - Providing digitally retrievable information (QR codes or a similar tool) in places where visitors often stop, such as photo opportunity sites.
 - Developing multilingual interpretive media.



Use Newfound Gap Road as an opportunity to encourage all visitors to get out of their car and participate in a more engaging park experience.

The trailheads and quiet walkways along Newfound Gap Road, coupled with the emphasis on using Newfound Gap Road to introduce visitors to the Park, provide a tremendous opportunity to connect new and more diverse audiences with the outdoors. The audience is already there, but they mostly stay in their cars or only get out for picture opportunities.

New resource guides need to be developed (both print and web-based) that challenge visitors to take a hike or learn a new story about who lived in the Park before it became a National Park or how some of the engineering marvels were created. Coupling stories with the idea that a short walk is good for the body and the mind can also enhance awareness of the Park’s importance for health and wellness.

ACTIONS:

- Develop highly accessible “short little walks to great park experiences.” These settings should encourage visitors to leave their vehicles parked and spend some time experiencing the Park directly. Potential opportunities include:
 - Nearby places that can be seen from the road, or at least an enticing glimpse, such as creeks and waterfalls, bridges over creeks
 - Historic sites with an interesting story to tell
 - Engineering marvels such as the Loop

Chapter 7: Visitor Management & Marketing

Strategies to attract more visitors to the byway, an important element of many corridor management plans, are unnecessary in the case of Newfound Gap Road. However, there is a need to attract younger audiences while at the same time managing the heavy visitation that already occurs. Previous Park documents have identified the need to redistribute the heaviest visitation to other areas of the Park. Newfound Gap Road can play an important role in meeting both these needs.

Effective management is important to prevent growing traffic delays on the route, which is the backbone of the Park's road network. It is also critical to preserving the quality and purpose of the Park experience, which according to the General Management Plan is "to demonstrate to visitors the value of the park as a sanctuary from some of the effects of the modern technological world."

The Park should continue to enhance its capabilities to monitor and report real-time visitor conditions throughout the corridor, steering motorists away from busy times and locations whenever possible. Alternative visitor experiences should also be identified and marketed, especially to the segments of the visitor population most likely to embrace them, with the help of partner organizations.

Better inform and educate visitors about current park visitation, parking availability and sites, and alternative visitor experiences available in less crowded areas.

One approach to spread visitation to the Newfound Gap Road corridor is on a **temporal basis**, by encouraging people to travel the byway on weekdays or during off-peak season. Over time the Park's gateway communities have gradually diversified their local activities and attractions to attract year-round tourism, making it possible for visitors to the byway to easily obtain lodging and other supporting services even at off-peak times.

There is also some benefit to providing visitors with guidance on when to visit within the span of a particular day. The Park is largely a day-use facility since most overnight lodging is located in the gateway communities. Those who enter the Park in the early morning therefore tend to enjoy less crowded conditions. Beyond that general truth, it can be difficult to predict throughout the day which areas of the Newfound Gap Road corridor are currently too crowded to get an unobstructed view or find a place to park.



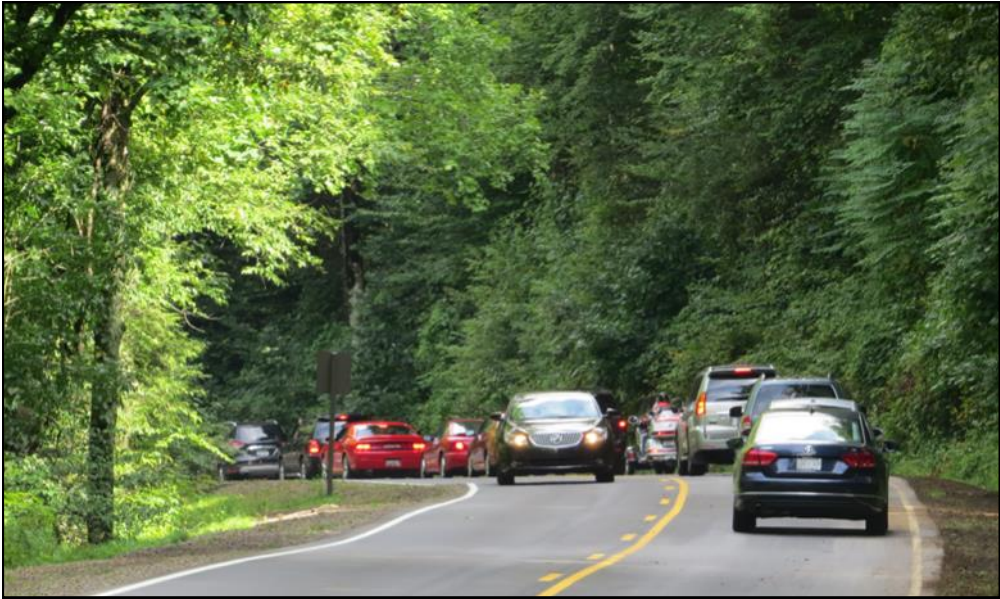
A reservation system such as those used by other Parks would be difficult to operate without placing an entrance station at each end of the corridor. However, there is an opportunity to expand the real-time information that the Park and its partners are providing through social media. At least two Twitter accounts currently provide updates on road conditions: one operated by the Park, and one linked to the Great Smoky Mountains Association which is devoted exclusively to Newfound Gap Road. Some visitors may even be eager to help with status updates by submitting reports when they encounter a full parking lot, similar to the way motorists report a traffic incident via a smartphone application. Implementing such a system would require some cellular or Wi-Fi availability in the corridor, an issue also noted in Chapter 6 with regard to enhancing resource education.



Another approach to managing the number of visitors to Newfound Gap Road is to distribute them **spatially** to other, less-visited areas of the Park. Not all visitors will be interested in an alternative experience: some are there because of particular attractions on Newfound Gap Road, because they are already bound for a particular destination on the other side of the Park, or because they actually prefer to be amid large groups. However, there are other types of visitors who could be encouraged to try other areas: those pursuing a recreational opportunity such as hiking or fishing with no particular locational preference; those who are simply there to enjoy the experience of driving in the Park and could obtain a similar experience on another route; and those who consciously seek “hidden treasures” that other travelers pass by.

ACTIONS:

- **Use existing pull-offs and quiet walkways to increase resource education opportunities for visitors seeking to learn more about the natural and cultural history represented in the corridor. Alert visitors to these opportunities at the visitor centers and through other means.**
- **Identify tourist guidebooks and websites that target audiences for “alternative” and “slow travel,” and encourage them to promote less heavily visited areas of the Park. They could develop in-depth stories based on the “Off the Beaten Path” suggestions that the Park lists on its website.**
- **Promote activities such as earth caching (adhering to Park policies) or similar opportunities to attract people to explore less visited areas of the byway corridor or other areas of the Park.**
- **Continue to promote all available digital sources of information on current Park conditions (Facebook, Twitter, websites) to encourage byway visitors to plan ahead.**
- **Establish capability for real-time monitoring of the number of vehicles parked at each major visitor destination in the corridor, perhaps using webcams.**
- **Consider the use of mobile hotspots to enable visitors to access real-time information about parking availability (or closures) at popular sites.**



Participate in ongoing state and regional transportation planning to better communicate the needs for peak congestion management and increasing alternative modes of travel to decrease pressure on Newfound Gap Road.

Traffic in and around the Park is a frequent topic of discussion and has been the subject of multiple studies. The proposed Foothills Parkway shown in the General Management Plan was envisioned as an alternative route that would relieve through-traffic on Newfound Gap Road; however, obtaining funding and support to fully complete the route has been increasingly challenging. Various concepts for mass transit in the Park have also been explored, although no specific proposals have gained traction. The Park, a major regional trip attractor, has traditionally been an invited partner in both local and regional transportation planning initiatives and should remain active in analyzing issues and developing solutions.

ACTIONS:

- **Participate as appropriate in local and regional meetings of transportation planning bodies, including the Sevier County Transportation Board, the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization and the Land of Sky Council of Governments.**
- **Participate in NCDOT and TDOT plans and projects, including the updates of Intelligent Transportation System planning documents.**
- **Communicate the Park’s visitor traffic management strategies to the NCDOT and TDOT scenic byway programs so that their marketing can convey appropriate messages to visitors.**
- **Continue to encourage the development, and use of, alternative non-park routes for thru-traffic in the area.**



Encourage partner websites to link to local visitor information and guidance.

One of the responsibilities associated with managing a national scenic byway is to ensure motorists have ready access to information about visitor services, such as lodging and dining in the area. Although the Park does not operate such commercial services and its policies would preclude listing specific businesses, this is a very appropriate role for its partners.

Both the Friends of the Smokies and the Great Smoky Mountains Association (GSMA) provide links and listings on their websites for restaurants, hotels and area attractions both inside and outside the Park. GSMA also worked with a private company to develop a downloadable mobile application with parkwide visitor information. NCDOT’s state scenic byway program partners with UgoTour, a smartphone application which offers motorists information about byways in Western North Carolina, including Newfound Gap Road. All of these partnerships can help expand the reach of the Park’s digital sources for visitor information.

ACTIONS:

- Work with state scenic byway programs and partner websites to promote visitor opportunities for:
 - Lodging and dining
 - Notable events and sites to visit outside the Park
 - Typically congested times and locations along the corridor
 - Alternative experiences that are available in the Park



Raise awareness in gateway communities of the national significance of the Newfound Gap Road corridor, and the sensitivity of its resources to high visitor use.

As noted in Chapter 6, gateway communities play an important role in helping to introduce visitors to the experiences that can be found beyond the most heavily used places in the Park. From a marketing perspective, providing information about “off the beaten path” opportunities can often be best communicated at hotels and local visitor information centers. Park staff, working together with the county-level destination marketing organizations, can help provide both guided and self-guided high quality park experiences to the less heavily-visited places that can easily be found along Newfound Gap Road.



NPS management policies encourage such coordination between the Park and the tourism industry, especially where it results in greater awareness of the value of Park resources and their preservation for future generations of visitors.

ACTIONS:

- Host educational/workshop opportunities for front-line hospitality workers about resources and preservation issues in the Newfound Gap Road corridor.
- Develop a short video about Newfound Gap Road resource preservation for broadcast on the locally-oriented travel channel at area hotels.
- Seek opportunities for gateway communities to participate in programs to monitor visitor impacts in the corridor.



Chapter 8: Proposed Strategies

This chapter contains proposed actions for the next 5 to 10 years for maintaining or improving visitor experience and resource conditions associated with the corridor. Some of these actions can be implemented through existing programs or through coordination with partners such as the Federal Highway Administration, Friends of the Smokies, Great Smoky Mountains Association, gateway communities, the respective States, the Tennessee and North Carolina Departments of Transportation, and the states’ scenic byways programs. The actions are not listed in any order of priority and funding (if needed) is contingent upon approval of project requests and Congressional approval of the Park’s budget.

Also included at the end of this chapter is a list of the Park’s operational and maintenance activities and capital projects that are proposed along the Newfound Gap Road corridor during the next 5 to 10 years. Many of these activities and projects will help carry out the CMP recommendations to preserve, maintain and enhance corridor resources as well as visitor experience.

Stewardship (Chapter 4)

Develop and adopt specific Corridor Design Guidelines
Document and confirm applicable design standards for roadway engineered features, landscape design, signage
Confirm existing or establish new design standards to preserve, enhance, or develop new roadside facilities.
Develop and implement recommendations of the Vista Management Plan for Newfound Gap Road
Regularly review maintenance needs at the A-rated vistas and establish a prioritized maintenance plan based on available funds
Develop supplemental budget requests or seek partner support for unfunded vista maintenance needs.
Protect resources and the visitor experience with proactive use of sustainable design strategies at visitor areas
Protect vegetation and reduce erosion along roadsides, at pulloffs and around resource educational signs.
Enhance pulloffs, their site furnishings and resource educational installations.
Review location of resource educational signs and consider minor adjustments to enhance interpretive experience.
Maintain tree and shrub plantings where appropriate to preserve or restore historic context, reduce runoff and provide shade.
Protect soundscapes and night skies
Establish baseline noise levels specific to the Newfound Gap Road corridor
Communicate to visitors the Park's desire to control noise levels
Consider use of "quiet pavement" materials
Consider impacts of lighting on night skies when designing or renovating corridor facilities
Provide recognition to area communities who have "dark sky" ordinances

Update and document a set of Corridor Maintenance and Resource Management Guidelines
Using the Corridor Design Guidelines that are developed, create a list of actions for priority maintenance issues
Update existing inventories of ongoing maintenance and resource management activities, problematic areas and critical needs
Establish action plan that consolidates needs for maintenance and resource management to preserve the corridor's character -defining features
Determine which maintenance and resource management needs can be accomplished with existing funding
Identify maintenance and resource management gaps that cannot be accomplished with existing funding
Identify additional partnership opportunities to increase maintenance resources
Identify specific partnership opportunities for corridor maintenance
Identify maintenance actions beyond capacity of volunteers, and publish a list for potential sponsorship by interested groups
Establish a system to monitor resources and facilities in the corridor, and identify baselines for measuring resource degradation
Define desired conditions, select indicators, and establish thresholds for each of the major resource monitoring activities that occurs within the corridor.

Traffic, Travel and Safety (Chapter 5)

Enhance motorist safety along the roadway
Consider use of pavement surface treatments to differentiate areas for slower travel speeds
Consider low-cost road marking techniques
Improve durability of safety-related pavement markings
Install reflectors on timber barriers, bridge abutments, selected curves
Ensure wayfinding, cautionary and advisory signs are legible and appropriately located
Establish corridorwide consistency with Uniguide standards as older signs are replaced
Consider positioning and legibility of signs, especially at turnoffs for destinations
Develop and implement appropriate communication technology to provide real-time traffic and weather information prior to arrival
Establish links from the Park's road conditions website and social media accounts to area hospitality websites
Partner with gateway communities to establish and operate kiosks with Park traffic and weather information
Continue and expand use of webcams and social media to inform visitors of conditions at particular Park sites
Participate in TN and NC's 511 systems
Maintain and enhance safety at visitor sites
Address potential pedestrian/vehicle conflicts at the most heavily used visitor sites
Add or enhance safety information at trailheads
Maintain adequate stationing and staffing of Park law enforcement, especially in peak periods of visitation
Consider cameras at major parking areas to discourage vehicle break-ins
Consider the needs of visitors of all ages and abilities
Address visitor restroom needs and access at Newfound Gap
Enhance visitor accessibility through non-slip surfaces, ramps, etc. where feasible and appropriate
Consider creation of an additional ADA-accessible trail

Resource Education (Chapter 6)

Gain greater recognition and awareness of the corridor's national significance		Review and update comprehensive resource education planning for the corridor	
Promote NFG Road as an accessible introduction to the Park		Develop and implement a visitor survey	
Facilitate and encourage local and national media coverage of the corridor's national significance		Use survey results to evaluate existing tools, media and resource education opportunities for the corridor	
Pursue designation of the route as a National Scenic Byway		Regularly review interpretive media and replace materials as needed to implement innovative learning experiences.	
Monitor status of new round of NSB nominations		Incorporate landscape design techniques to create three-dimensional exhibits at existing wayside signs.	
Work with partners to inform local congressional delegations about interest in NSB designation		Use roving interpretive programs and a mobile (portable) visitor center	
Use CMP and 2008/09 nomination guidance to assemble materials needed for nomination application		Present Newfound Gap Road as an outdoor museum linked to the educational exhibits found at the visitor centers.	
Continue to pursue listing of the route on the National Register of Historic Places		Identify new or revised communications tools, including interactive mobile and web-based media	
Complete a cultural landscape inventory for the NC portion of the route		Use visitor centers as technology centers, coupled with development of selected mobile hot spots	
Determine eligibility; prepare a National Register Nomination Form and supporting materials		Develop updated interpretive tools based on opportunities provided by expanding technologies	
Work with existing partners to advance the vision and goals for the route as an introduction or re-introduction to the Park		Encourage visitors to get out of their cars and participate in a more engaging Park experience.	
Incorporate the concept into the Park's Foundation Document and future planning efforts		Develop highly accessible "short little walks" to places that can be seen from the road	

Visitor Management & Marketing (Chapter 7)

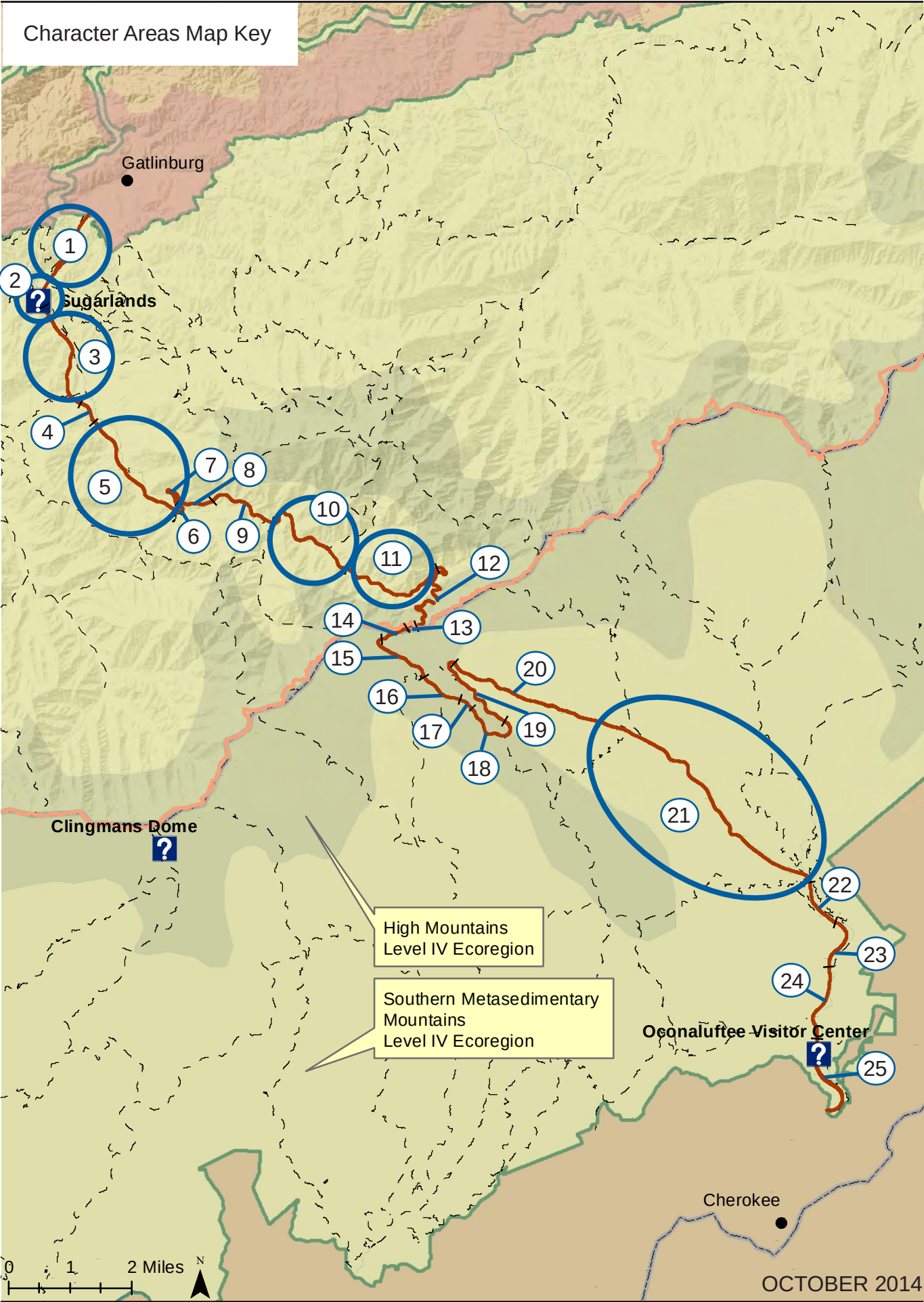
Better inform and educate visitors about current park visitation, parking availability and alternative experiences
Continue to promote all available digital sources of real-time Park information
Establish capability for real-time monitoring of parking availability at key visitor destinations along the corridor
Consider use of selected mobile hotspots to give visitors access to real-time information after they have entered the Park
Alert visitors to "quiet walkways" opportunities
Identify "slow travel" or "alternative travel" authors and websites who can promote alternative areas of the Park
Promote activities such as geocaching to attract people to less visited areas of the corridor or Park
Participate in ongoing transportation planning to communicate need to manage peak congestion and decrease visitor pressure
Participate as appropriate in meetings of local and regional planning bodies
Participate in relevant NCDOT and TDOT transportation plans and projects
Communicate the Park's visitor traffic management strategies through NC and TN state scenic byway promotion
Continue to encourage development/use of alternative non-Park routes for thru-traffic
Encourage partner websites to link to local visitor information and guidance
Work with state scenic byway programs and partner websites to promote visitor opportunities outside the Park
Raise awareness in gateway communities of the corridor's national significance and sensitivity to high visitor use
Host educational opportunities for front-line hospitality workers
Develop short video about Newfound Gap Road preservation for broadcast on local hotel channels
Seek opportunities for gateway communities to participate in monitoring visitor impacts in the corridor

Ongoing Operational and Maintenance Activities in the Newfound Gap Road Corridor

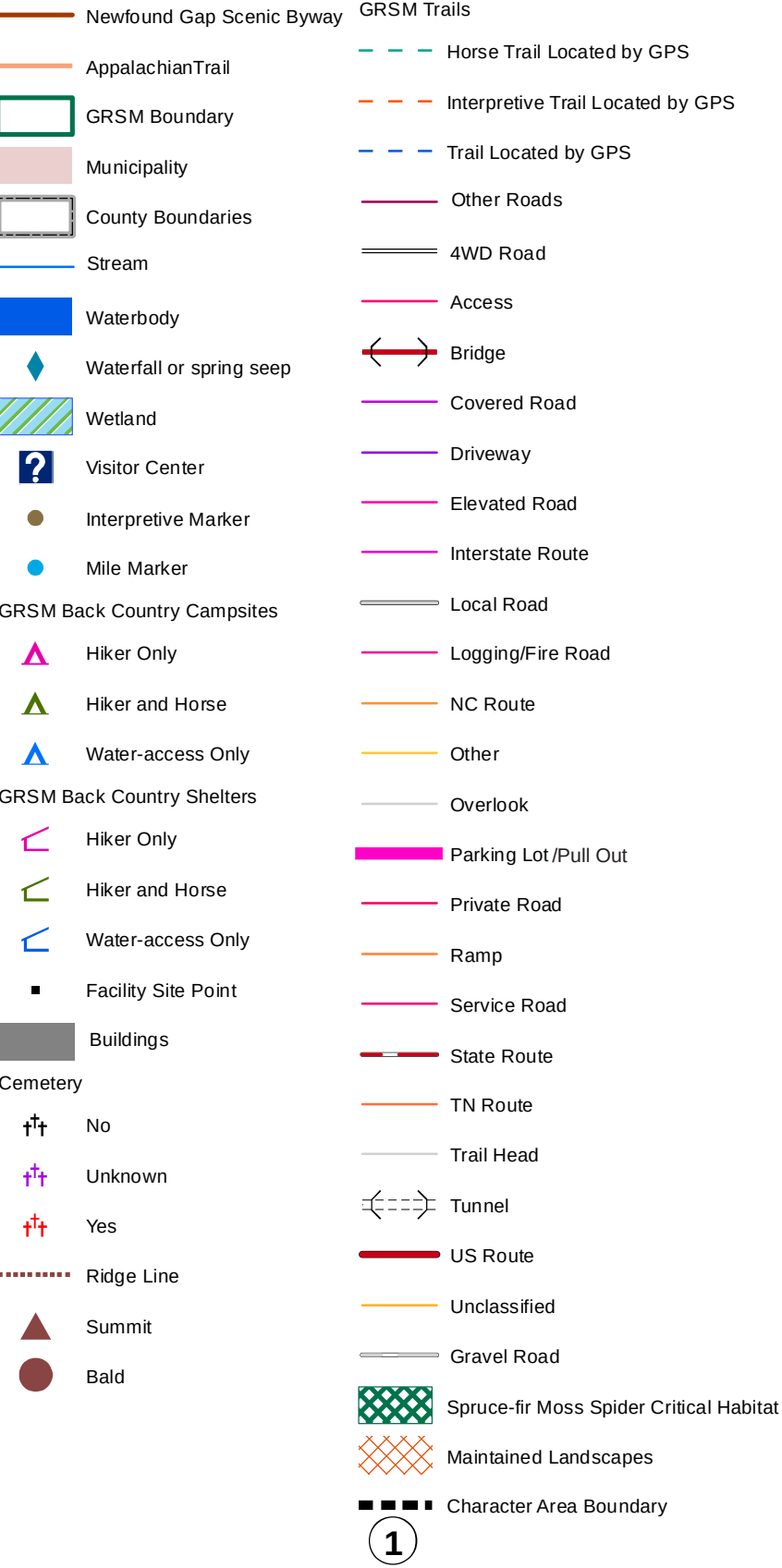
Below are operational and maintenance activities, research, and significant capital projects proposed to take place along the Newfound Gap Road corridor during the next 5 to 10 years. They are not listed in any order of priority and funding of actions is contingent upon approval of project requests and Congressional approval of the Park’s budget.

PROJECT / PROGRAM
Annual Maintenance
Restripe Park Roads
Brushing and Clearing of Vistas/Tree Trimming/Hazardous Tree Removal Parkwide
Maintain Campgrounds/Picnic Areas
Historic Structures Rehab
Reset Stone Work at Rockefeller Memorial, Adjacent Pathways and Stone Walls at Newfound Gap
Safety & Traffic
Parkwide Road Engineering and Traffic Study
Conduct Slope Stability Study
Road-Related Projects
Pavement Preservation of Newfound Gap Road, NC Side (MP 14.98 to MP 31.96)
Pavement Preservation of Smokemont Area Roads
Pavement Preservation of Newfound Gap Road, NC Side (MP 17.98 to MP 31.96)
Pavement Preservation of Collins Creek Picnic Area Roads
Pavement Preservation of Newfound Gap Road, TN Side (MP 0 to MP 6.5)
Pavement Preservation of Newfound Gap Road, TN Side (MP 6.5 to MP 15)
Rehabilitation of Sugarlands Visitor Center Loop Road and Parking Areas
Water & Wastewater Projects
Rehabilitate Sugarlands Area Sewer Mains
Rehabilitate Newfound Gap Comfort Station
Rehabilitation of Newfound Gap Water System
Rehabilitate Chimneys Picnic Area Water System (11)
Replace Septic Tank and Drain Field Lines at Chimney Tops Picnic Area (2016)
Corridor Facilities
Rehabilitation of Sugarlands Visitor Center Pedestrian Walkways and Benches
Rehabilitate Electrical and Mechanical Systems at Visitor Center, Admin Bldg and Training Facility
Reroof, Replace Guttering and Install Insulation Oconaluftee Administrative Building

Appendices



Newfound Gap Scenic Byway Physical Inventory Map Legend



Appendix A

PHYSICAL INVENTORY AND VISUAL SURVEY

On the following pages:

701 Number on each photo corresponds to the same numbered location on the map.

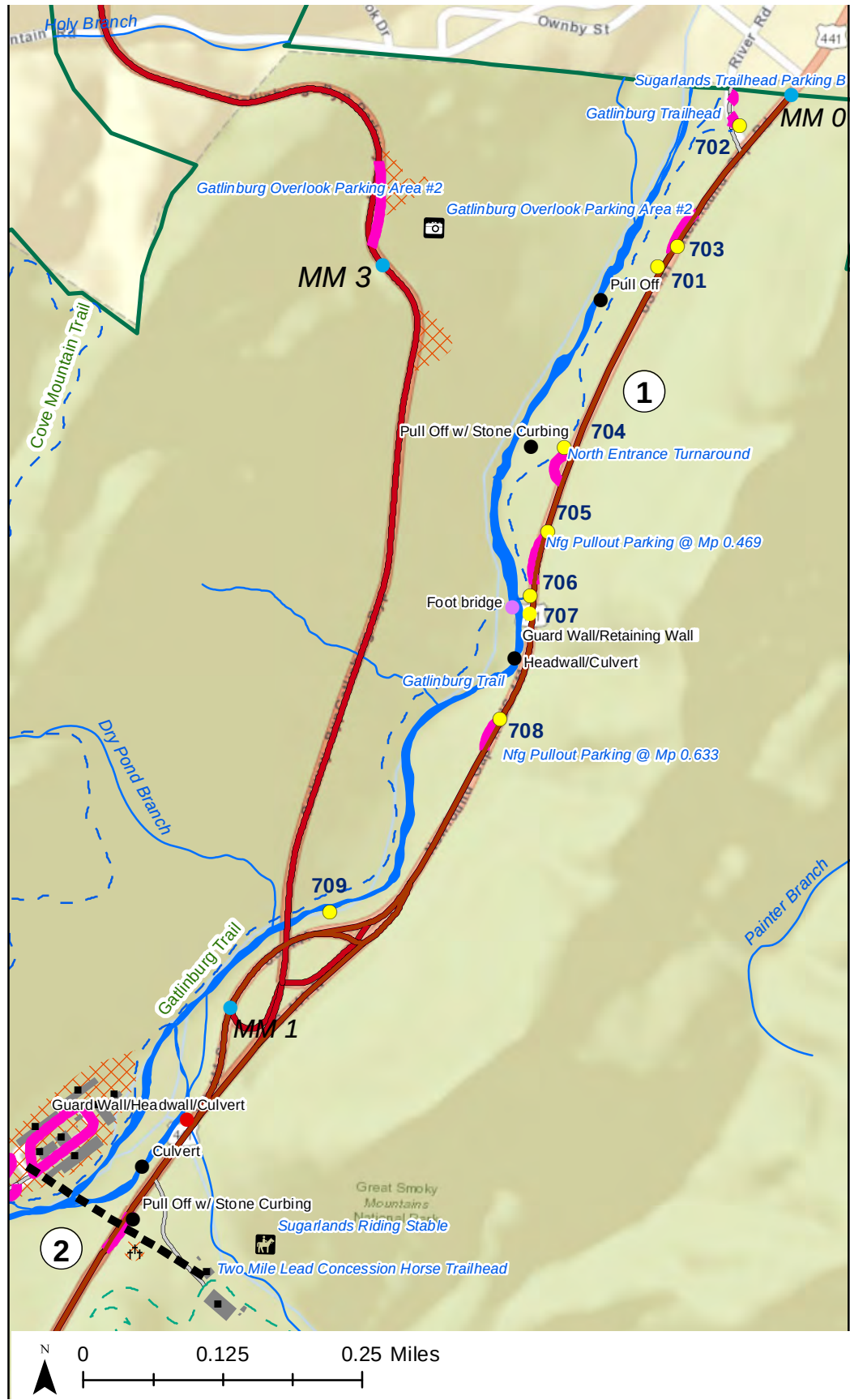
Symbols +, - or O indicate whether this feature was considered to be a positive, negative, or neutral quality when the visual survey of the corridor was performed.



CHARACTER AREA 1:
Mile 0–1.25: Park entrance road from Gatlinburg

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 1



DESCRIPTION
The entrance to the park at Gatlinburg is characterized by cove hardwood forest deciduous canopy and intermittent stream views on the right. The forest floor is generally clear to the right, providing visibility well beyond the road shoulder. There are steeply sloping, sometimes rocky outcroppings at the left side of the roadway. Pull offs with stone or wood curbing are frequent.

A brown NPS-style GRSM sign is located on the right side of the road. The Gatlinburg Trail is visible from the roadway intermittently on the right side (SB). A foot bridge to the trail and a stone guard wall are located around mile marker .5 . Bypass 5 crosses the roadway just before mile marker 1.

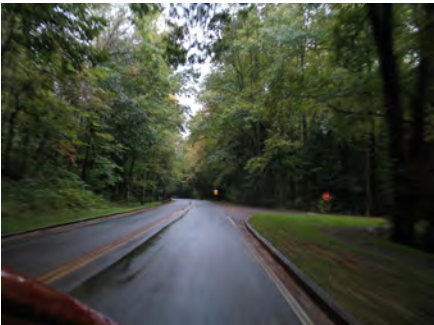
Landform Features and Land Cover



Cove hardwood forest and West Prong of the Little Pigeon River (+)



Hemlock stand (+)

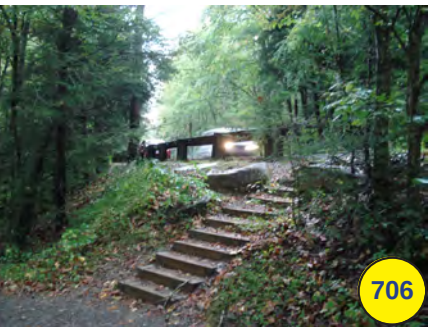


Overhead canopy (+)

Man-Made Features



Wood guard rail (o)



Wood steps to Gatlinburg Trail (o)



Stone wall (+)



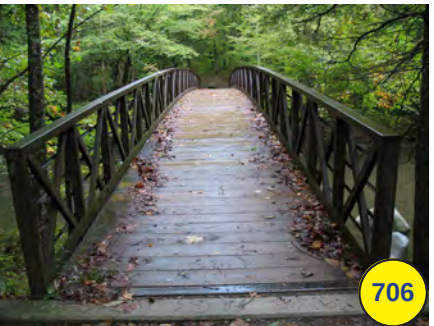
Pull off and wood guard rail (o)



Entrance to the GRSM at Gatlinburg (-)



Park entrance sign (+)



Foot bridge across the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River



Bypass 5 bridge (-)



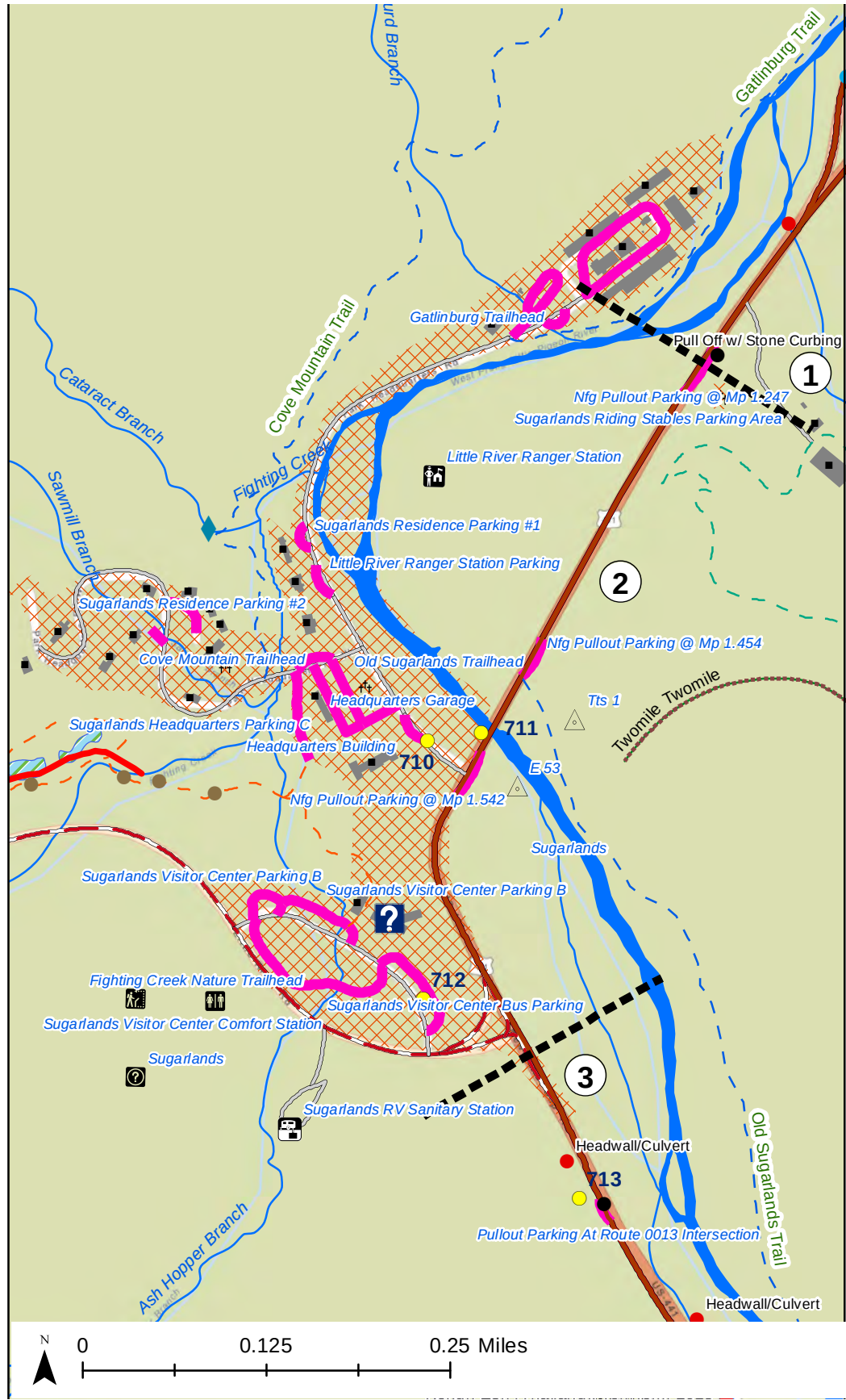
CHARACTER AREA 2:
Mile 1.25-1.7: Sugarlands Visitor Center



PARSONS
BRINCKERHOFF

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 2



Landform Features and Land Cover

Man-Made Features

DESCRIPTION

A maintained landscape of the Sugarlands Visitor Center characterizes this segment of the corridor. An open grassy area and widened corridor offers views to of the surrounding valley to the right with steeper terrain to the left. A large parking area is adjacent to the visitor center. A large electronic sign is on the right shoulder (SB). Park headquarters is located near mile marker



Open grassy area and view of the ridges beyond the visitor center (+)



Open grassy landscaped area with trees next to park headquarters (+)

1.5. Sugarlands Visitor Center offers visitor services such as rest rooms, information, a gift shop, interpretive exhibits, and access to drinking water. The West Prong of the Little Pigeon River crosses beneath the roadway near park headquarters through a stone arch bridge. Visitors can access Cataract Falls from the Visitor Center via the Cove Mountain Trail.



Visitor center sign (o)



Stone arch bridge (+)



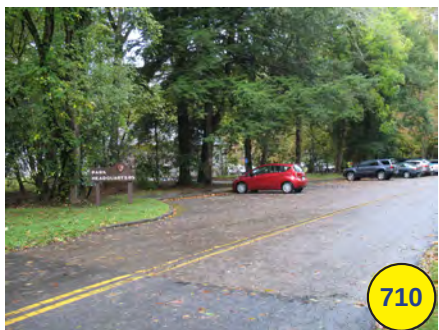
Wayfinding signage (o)



Split rail fence at visitor center (+)



Electronic informational sign (-)



Park Headquarters (o)



Sugarlands Visitor Center and parking (o)



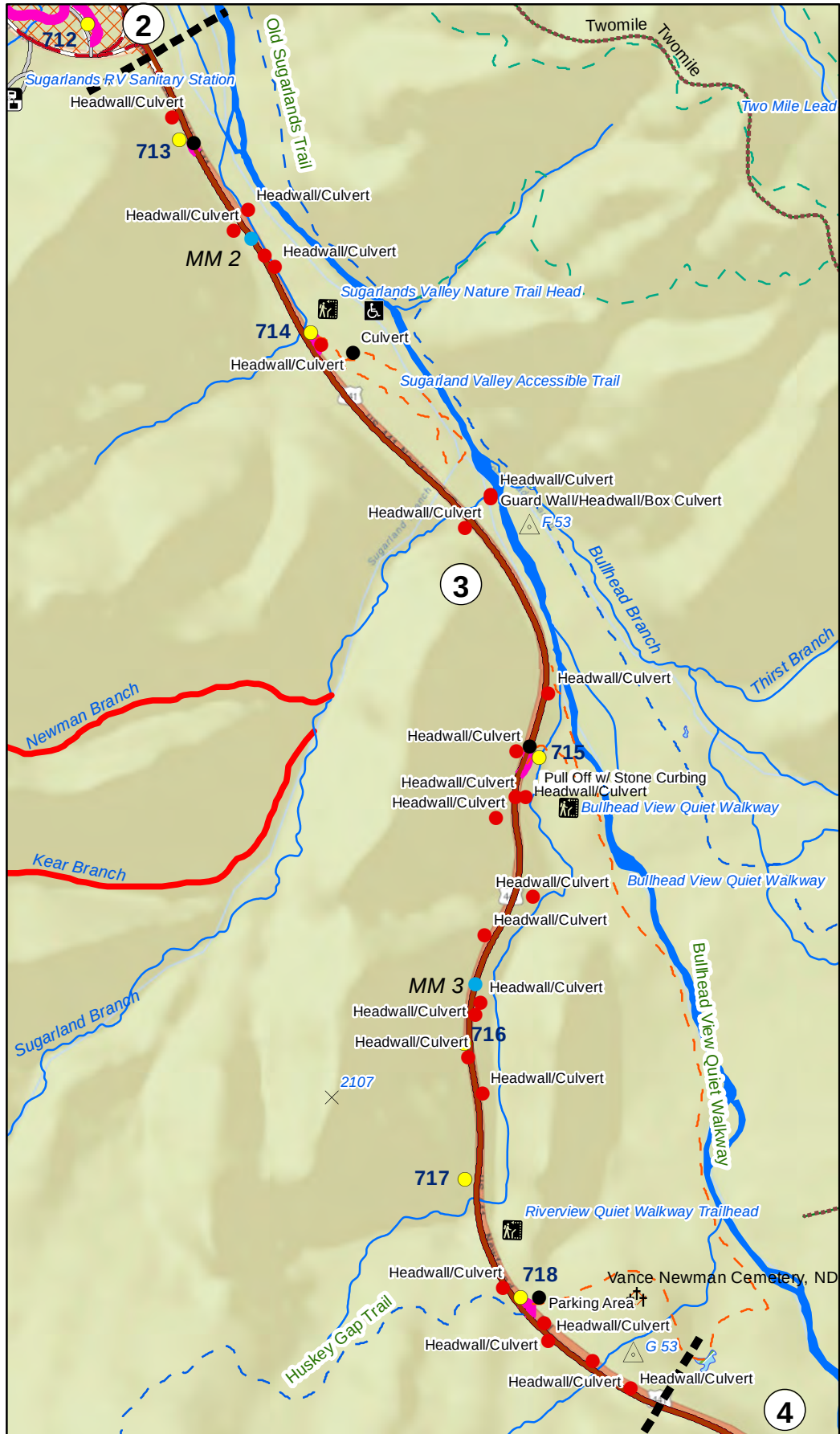
Sugarlands Visitor Center (+)



CHARACTER AREA 3:
Mile 1.7-3.7

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 3

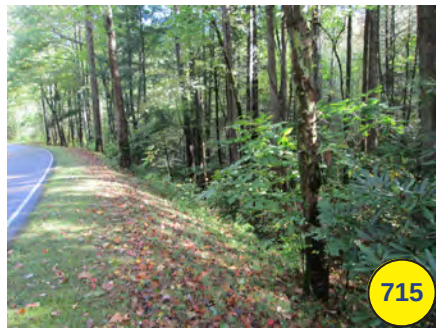


DESCRIPTION

There are steep slopes on the right and stream valley immediately on the left. The densely wooded corridor narrows and widens intermittently. Rock outcroppings on the right (SB) dissipate and return. The understory includes herbaceous/deciduous cover as well as rhododendrons, montane alluvial vegetation, oak, heath and successional base vegetation. Pull offs in this



Forested canopy (+)



Diversity of understory shrubs (+)



Diversity of understory shrubs (+)



Quiet Walkway rustic trail (+)

Landform Features and Land Cover

Man-Made Features



Pull off - asphalt w/ stone curb (o)



Sugarlands Valley Trail parking (+)



Metal culvert (-)



Sugarlands Valley Trail trailhead sign (-)



Bullhead Quiet Walkway pull off (-)



Quiet Walkway sign (o)



Quiet Walkway sign at roadway (-)



Gravel pull off (-)

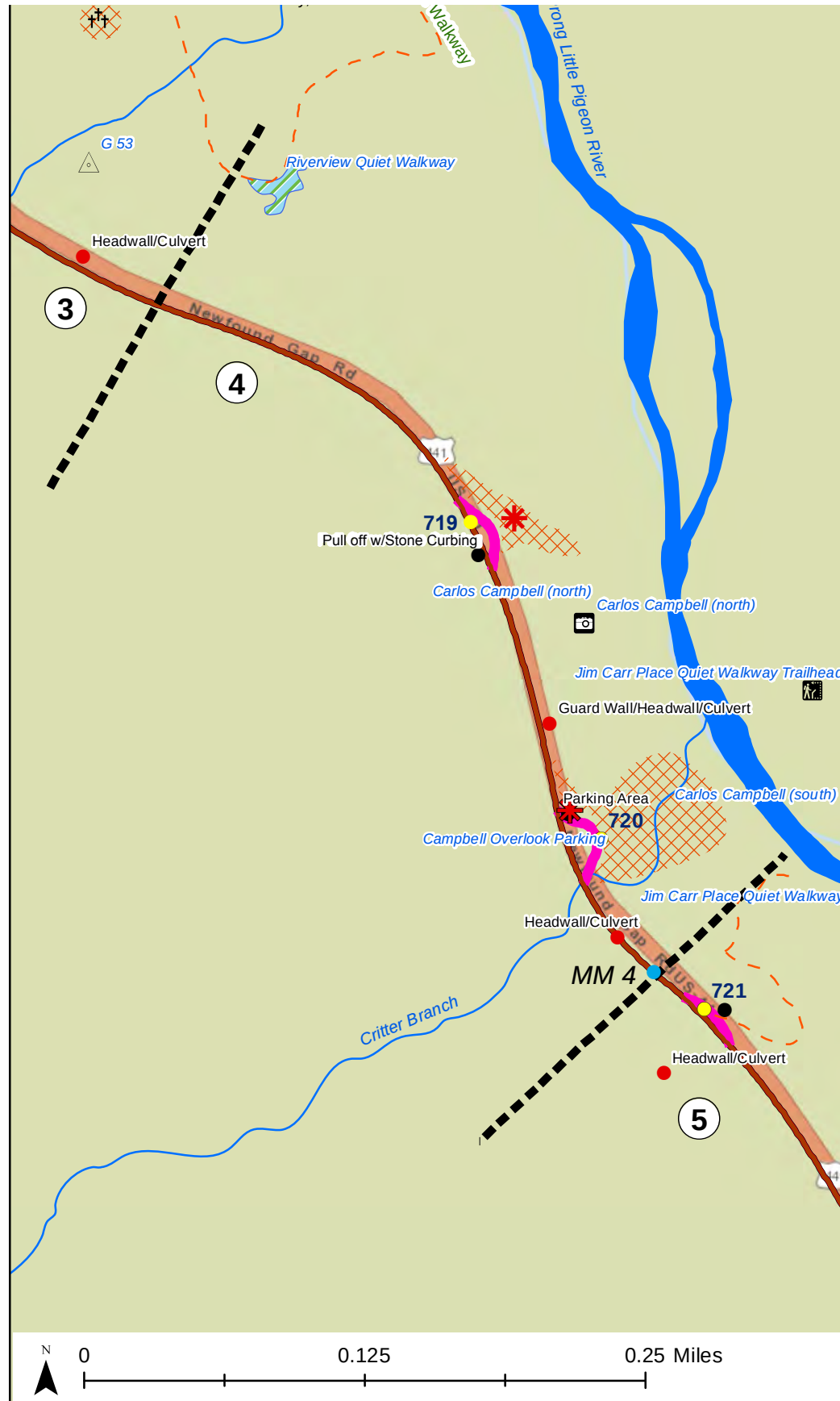
segment range from asphalt with stone curbing to gravel, social pull offs. Trails are generally accessed from asphalt pull offs (Sugarland Valley + Bullhead Quiet Walkway). Several headwalls and culverts are within this segment; however, many of them are not visible from the roadway.



CHARACTER AREA 4: Mile 3.7-4: Carlos Campbell Overlook (north and south)

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 4



DESCRIPTION

This segment is characterized by the incredible views from Carlos Campbell North and South overlooks. Traveling southbound the view opens up to ridges at the guard rail on the left. The roadway curves around a steep outcropping at the right. The base vegetation is oak and cove with herbaceous/deciduous understory. Overlooks are asphalt with stone

curbing. Meadow grasses, sumac and solidago are among the vegetation seen from the overlooks, just beyond the asphalt walkway. Parking is striped with white lines and a narrow grass median strip runs between the parking area and the main roadway.



Scenic vista of ridges at Carlos Campbell Overlook (+)



Wooded corridor between overlooks (+)



Vines growing on trees at Carlos Campbell Overlook South (-)



Carlos Campbell Overlook North (-)



Asphalt walkway and vegetation at Carlos Campbell Overlook North (-)



Stone curbing at Carlos Campbell Overlook North (o)



Asphalt walkway at Carlos Campbell Overlook South (-)



Interpretive sign at Carlos Campbell Overlook South (+)



Carlos Campbell Overlook South parking (+)



CHARACTER AREA 5:
Mile 4-6.2

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 5

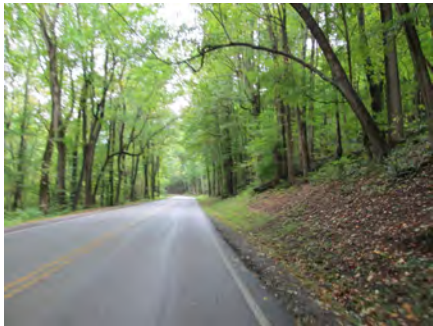


DESCRIPTION

The roadway is shaded primarily by deciduous canopy with filtered views to the mountains/ridge lines on the left (SB). Rocky, mossy terrain is to the right, sloping steeply in some areas. The road parallels the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River offering intermittent stream views. Understory is primarily herbaceous/deciduous with rhododendrons. Base vegetation is montane



Dense, forested canopy (+)



Roadway cut through sloping terrain (o)

alluvial, oak, and successional. Many headwalls/culverts are constructed on this segment; however, many are not visible from the roadway. Those that are visible are in character with the old stonework of the CCC.

Landform Features and Land Cover

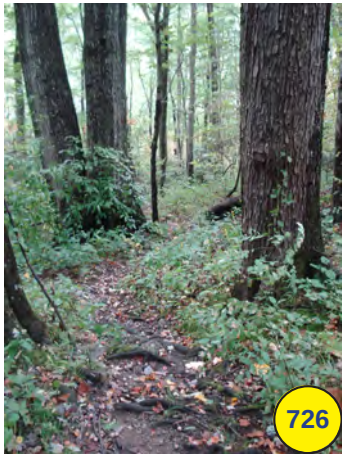
Man-Made Features



Balsam Point Quiet Walkway sign (-)



Pull off with stone curbing and asphalt (o)



Rustic trail without signage (-)



Stone culvert (o)



Gravel pull off (-)



Gravel pull off (-)



Large pull off with diagonal parking (-)



Stone headwall/culvert (o)

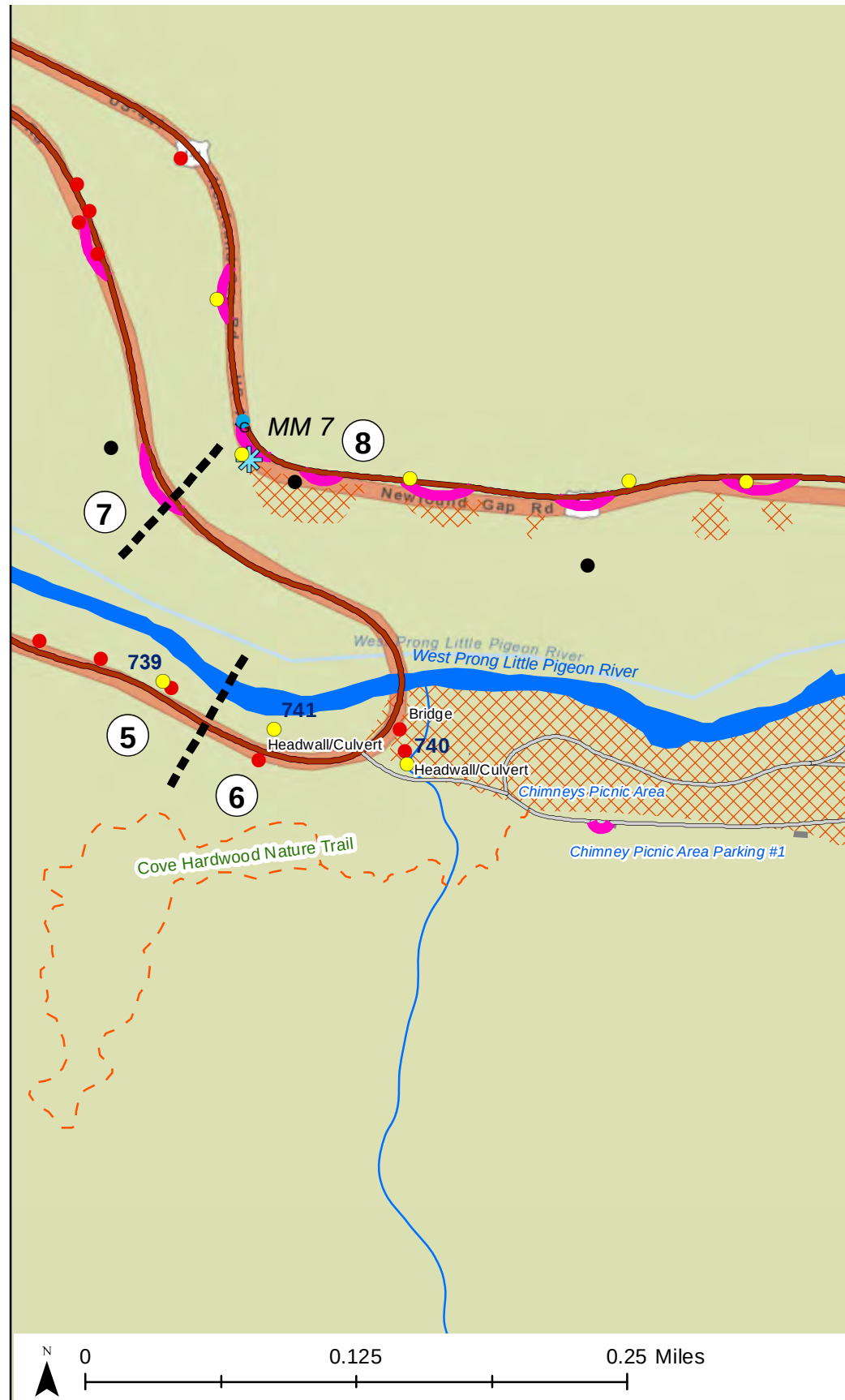


CHARACTER AREA 6:

Mile 6.2-6.4: Chimney Tops Picnic Area

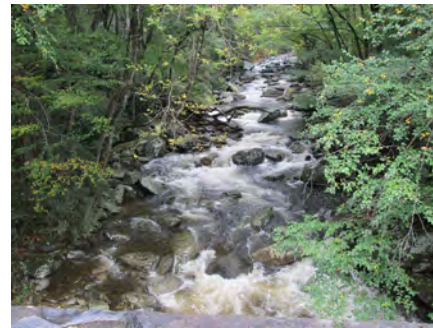
PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 6



DESCRIPTION

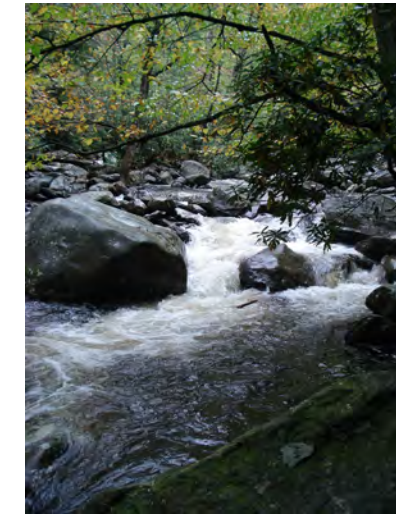
This area is primarily a maintained landscape with a seasonally lush, wooded picnic area, rest room facilities, and asphalt parking. The picnic area is located off of a sharp curve in the roadway where it begins to ascend into the higher terrain. A well-crafted stone bridge crosses the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River at the curve in the roadway. Views to the river



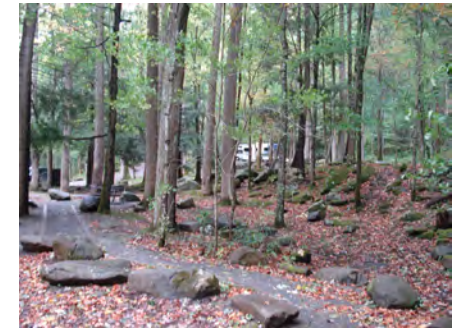
Rocky, picturesque river view from the stone bridge (+)



Successional vegetation with herbaceous/deciduous understory (+)



West Prong of the Little Pigeon River (+)



Boulders and wooded landscape of the picnic area (+)

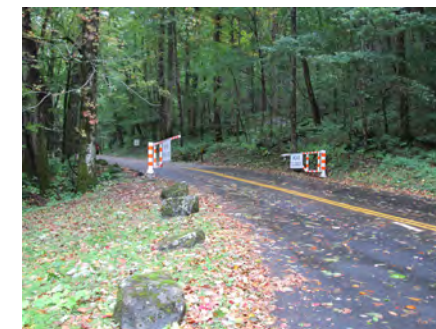
Landform Features and Land Cover



Cove Hardwood Trail trailhead (o)



Parking (asphalt) at Chimney Tops Picnic Area (o)



Entrance gate to Chimney Tops Picnic Area (-)



Entrance beyond the curve at Chimney Tops Picnic Area (-)



Stone arch bridge over the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River (+)



Brown, columnar communications apparatus at entrance to picnic area (-)



Picnic area and rest room (o)



Rest room at the picnic area (o)

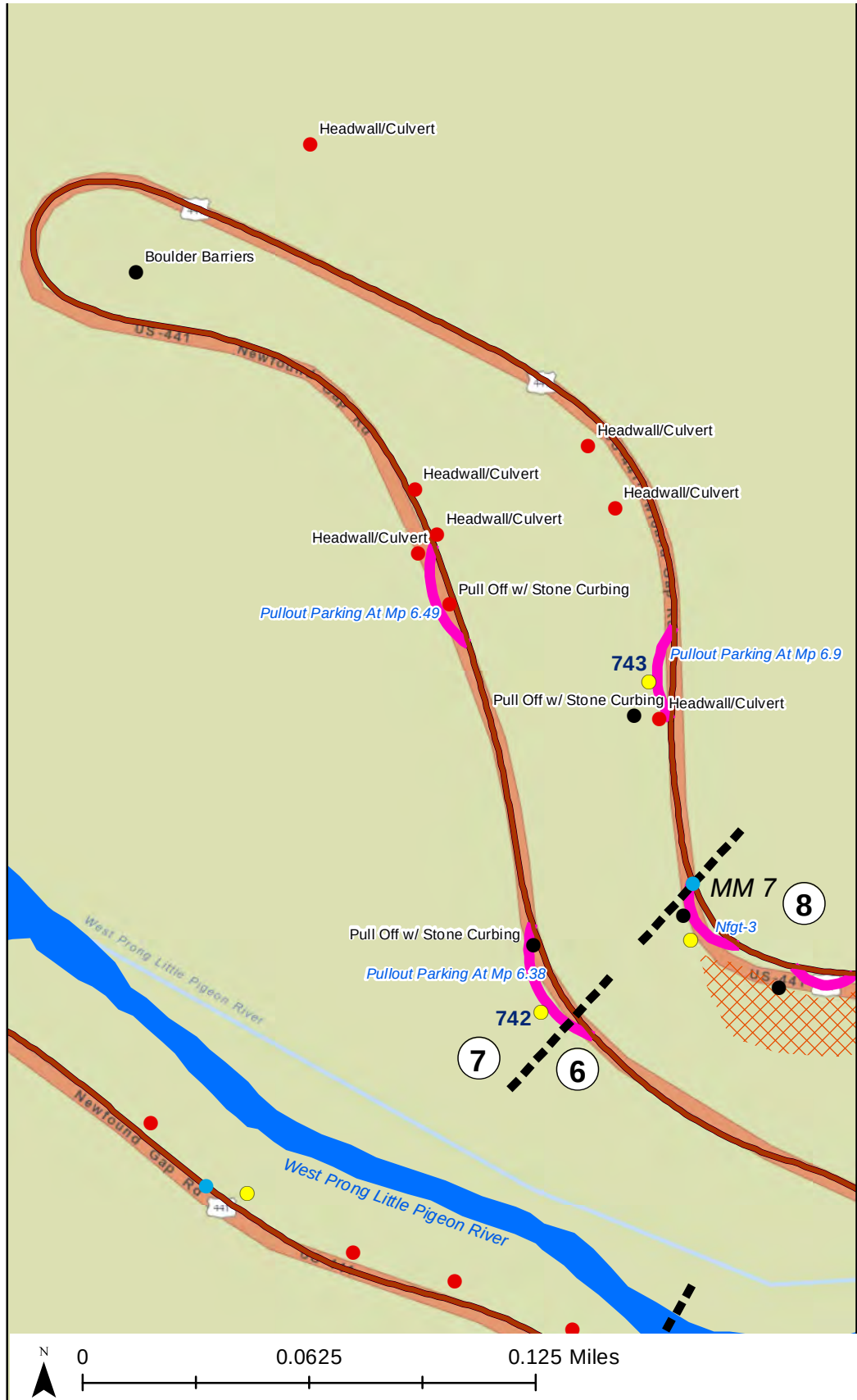
Man-Made Features



CHARACTER AREA 7:
Mile 6.4-7: Curve/Switchback

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 7



DESCRIPTION

A sharp switchback characterizes this segment. Traveling southbound, one begins to ascend with steeply sloping terrain to the left and rocky steep outcroppings on the right. After curving to the right, the left side is characterized by steep outcroppings and the right side slopes steeply downhill toward the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River. Herbaceous/deciduous

understory and some rhododendron make up the understory. The forest base vegetation is oak and successional. The first of four pull offs is somewhat dangerous because of the limited visibility beyond the roadway curve around steep rock face. This segment approaches the Chimney Tops Overlooks (SB).



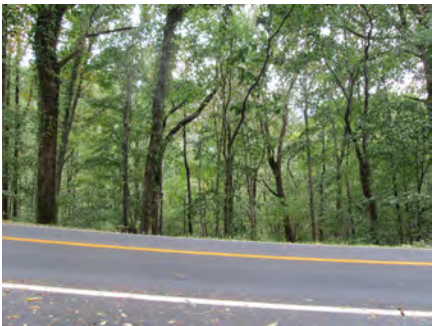
Stone rock face (+)



Steep terrain and wooded corridor ascending the switchback (+)



Steep stone rock face (+)



Wooded slope toward the river (+)



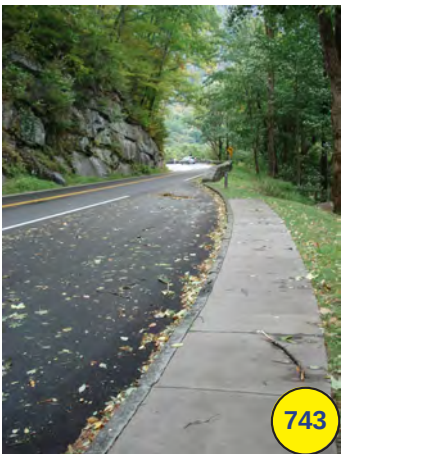
Asphalt with stone curbing pull off (o)



Pull off with concrete sidewalk (o)



Pull off with stone curbing (o)



Pull off with concrete sidewalk (o)



Wooden guardrail (o)

Landform Features and Land Cover

Man-Made Features

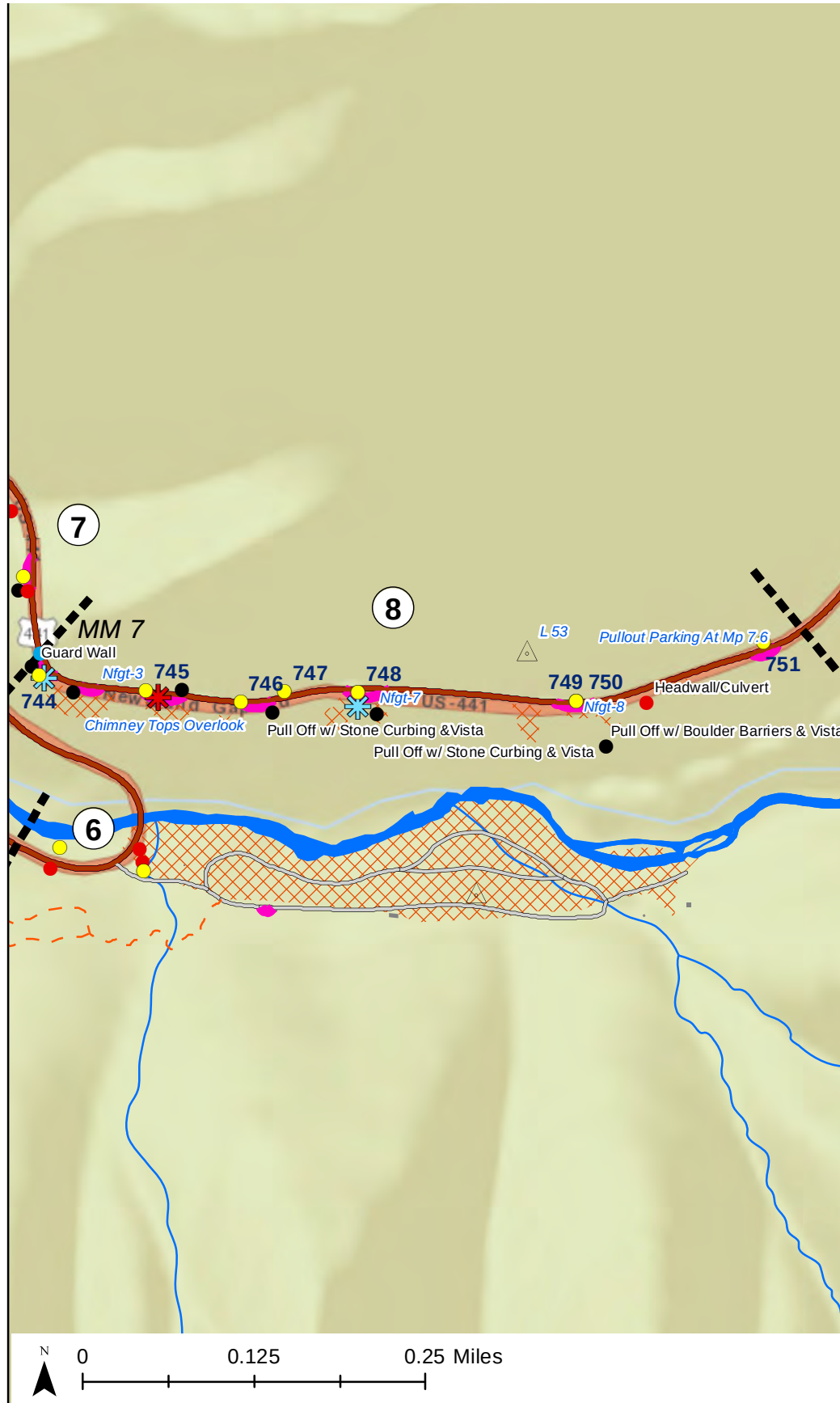


CHARACTER AREA 8:

Mile 7-7.65: Chimney Tops Overlooks

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 8



DESCRIPTION

The Chimney Tops Overlooks are located in this segment. There are six pull offs with some providing better vistas to Chimney Tops than others. The third pull off does not have a vista, but it does have a grassy shoulder area. Pull offs appear to be recently constructed, particularly concrete sidewalks and wooden guardrails. A steep rock wall is on the left, behind the overlooks

(SB) and a steep, vegetated slope is just beyond the overlooks to the right of the roadway. One overlook has an interpretive sign orienting the visitor to the ridge lines of Chimney Tops. Vegetation includes oaks, tulip poplars and maples. Base vegetation is oak, heath, and successional. Understory is herbaceous/deciduous.



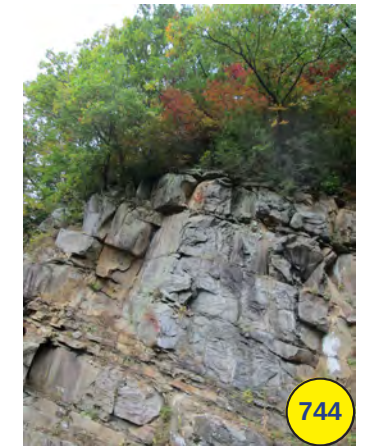
View to Chimney Tops at overlook pull off (+)



Vista foreground vegetation (o)



Vines growing on trees (-)



Stone rock face (+)



Stone guardrail (+)



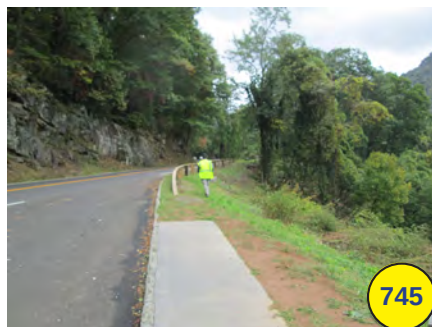
Asphalt overlook with stone and concrete at Chimney Tops Overlook (o)



Stone guard wall with concrete repair (-)



Interpretive sign at Chimney Tops Overlook (o)



Eroded, messy edge along concrete sidewalk at pull off (-)



Stone headwall/culvert (+)



CHARACTER AREA 9:
Mile 7.65-8.96

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 9



DESCRIPTION

The roadway is characterized by a rocky terrain with varying steepness on the left (SB) and the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River on the right. Understory is herbaceous/deciduous with medium cover of rhododendron. Base vegetation is heath, high hardwood, and successional. One begins to notice Hemlock die off among canopy. There are approximately eight pull offs



Wooded roadway corridor (+)



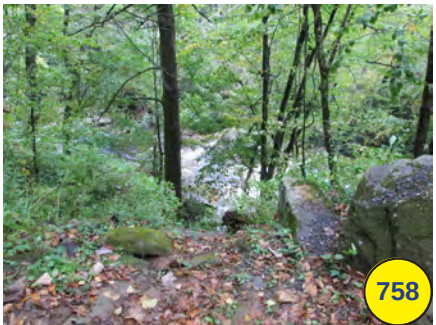
Rocky and lush forest floor at former Old Buckeye trailhead pull off (+)



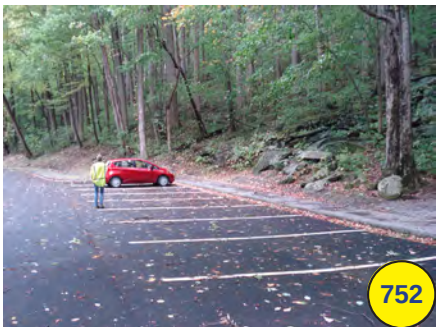
Wildflowers along undesignated foot trail (+)



Rock outcropping (+)



View to the river from pull off (+)



Asphalt pull off with angled parking stripes and stone curbing (o)



Interpretive sign on species diversity at former Old Buckeye trailhead (o)



Stone and concrete swale at former Old Buckeye Trail pull off (o)



Stone curb pull off w/ muddy edge (o)



Stone mile marker 8 (o)



Large pull off with Nature Exhibit sign (o)



Attractive tunnel and stone wall (+)



Chimney Tops Trailhead pull off closed (-)



CHARACTER AREA 10:
Mile 8.96-10.9: *The Loop descending to the stream valley/Ascending to the Loop*

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 10



DESCRIPTION

This portion of the roadway is characterized by a descent into the stream valley with several opportunities for glimpses of the river and mountain streams, as well as places to stop and enjoy the nearby waterways. The river and roadway crisscross in a braided fashion requiring headwalls and culverts; however, most are not immediately visible from the roadway. Major

landscape features include “The Loop,” stone arch bridges, and pull offs including the Alum Cave Trailhead. The vegetation is generally dense with shrubs and stands of rhododendron. Such growth creates a narrow, channel-like experience in some areas. The Alum Cave Trailhead pull off and parking area becomes congested during peak visitation at the park. Fast moving vehicles traveling down the hill or those ascending leave the smell of brakes.

Landform Features and Land Cover



Canopy and understory vegetation (+)



Mountain stream at pull off (+)



Lush rhododendrons at Alum Cave Trailhead (+)



Alum Cave Creek view from trail (+)



Signage for “The Loop” (o)



Construction fence at The Loop tunnel (-)



Stone headwall at pull off (+)



Pull off with trail to stream views (+)



Access Trout Branch from pull off (+)



Curving stream parallel to pull off (+)



Wooden guard rail (o)



Stone arch bridge (+)



Alum Cave pull off often congested (-)



Alum Cave restroom parking (o)



CHARACTER AREA 11:

Mile 10.9-12.95: Spruce/Fir & Rhododendron

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 11



Landform Features and Land Cover

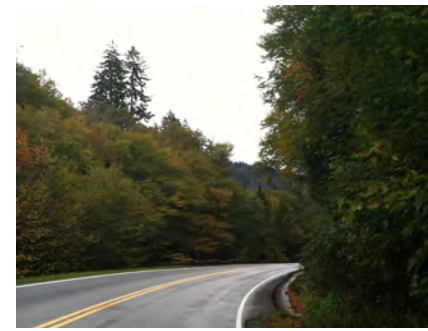
Man-Made Features

DESCRIPTION

As with character area 10, this segment features many headwalls and culverts accommodating the crossing of waterways with the road. Such streams and river approach the elevation of the roadway, allowing for a scenic and dynamic experience. Still ascending, the corridor is dotted with spruce and fir trees, oak, high hardwood, and successional base vegetation. Understory includes



Vegetative character (+)



Few spruce and firs at beginning of segment (SB) (+)



Stone wall at picturesque river (+)



Grassy shoulder and forest character (+)



Asphalt pull off with stone curb and concrete sidewalk (o)



Interpretive sign on "Lifeblood of the Mountain"(o)



Culvert with shallow asphalt swale (-)



Striped ADA access aisle and interpretive sign (o)



Tree well visible from road and pull off (+)



Tree wells at pull off (+)



Stone bridge and wall (+)



Asphalt pull off with stone wall and limited striping (+)



CHARACTER AREA 12:

Mile 12.95-14.75: Transition to “High Mountains” from
“Southern Metasedimentary Mountains” (and vice versa)

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 12



DESCRIPTION

The first of the major overlooks, this corridor is characterized by scenic views toward ridges to the north west vegetated with firs and spruces. Dead trees are highly visible from the Morton Overlook. Major physical features include several lengthy stone guard walls, stone overlooks, a stone faced tunnel, and several pull offs. Traveling toward the Newfound Gap, visitors

ascend from the Southern Metasedimentary Mountains to the High Mountain ecoregions. The left side of the roadway becomes steep rock outcropping and cliff, while the right side of the road opens up toward the vistas of ridges. Base vegetation is spruce/fir and high hardwood. Herbaceous/deciduous and dense rhododendron make up the understory.

Landform Features and Land Cover



View to the river from a pull off (+)



Spruce and fir trees at pull off (+)



Vista from Morton Overlook (+)



Meadow vegetation and spruces (+)



Character of roadway vegetation and terrain (+)



Pull off and mile marker 13 (o)



Pull off at stone bridge (+)



Stone bridge (+)



Very long stone guard rail (+)



Graffiti on stone wall at overlook (-)



Stone tunnel headwall (+)



Morton Overlook (o)



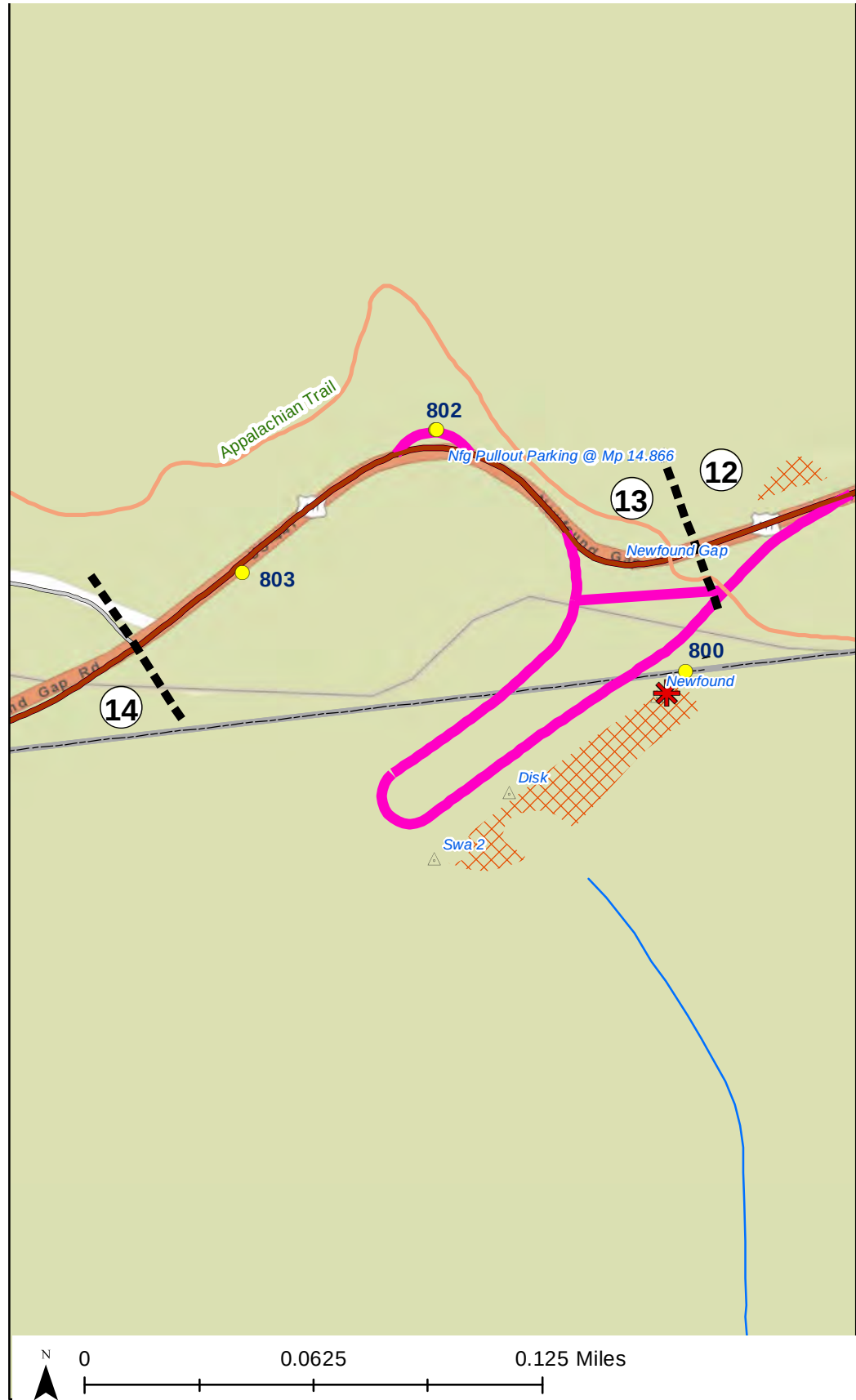
Stone wall at pull off (+)



CHARACTER AREA 13:
Mile 14.75-14.8: Newfound Gap Overlook

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 13



Landform Features and Land Cover

Man-Made Features

DESCRIPTION
The Newfound Gap is located in this segment of the corridor. It is a perceived summit with wide open panoramic views of the surrounding mountains. It is a maintained landscape mostly covered with asphalt parking. A terraced stone monument is located at the foot of a high point on the site, where Roosevelt gave his historic speech. Restroom facilities do not have water access.



Vista to ridges from Newfound Gap (+)



Terrain at the Newfound Gap (+)



View to ridges and foreground vegetation (+)



Interpretive signage on Roosevelt's historic speech in strange location (-)



Stone monument terrace at Newfound Gap (+)



Congestion at parking area (-)



Flagstone paving (+)



Peak visitation and congestion (-)



Pedestrian and vehicle conflict at crossing to the Appalachian Trail (-)



Trail head to Appalachian Trail (o)



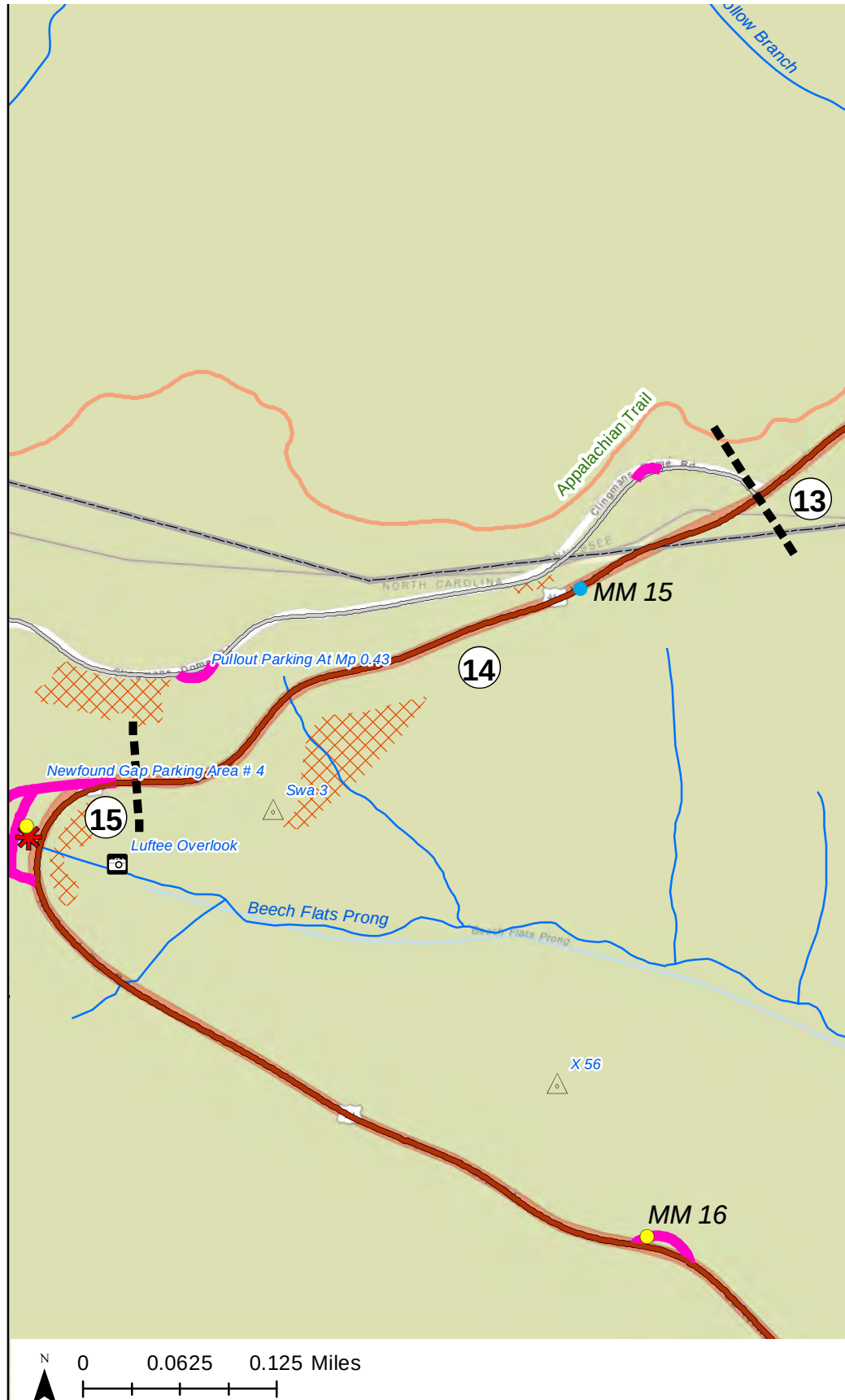
Stone walls and steps to vista (+)



CHARACTER AREA 14: Mile 14.8-15.45

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 14



DESCRIPTION

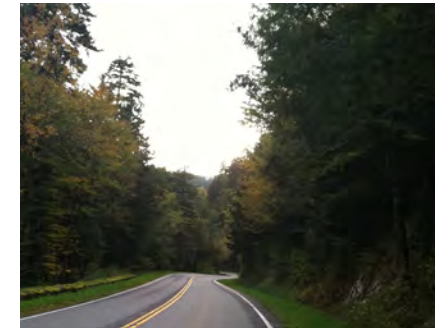
The access road to Clingmans Dome marks the beginning/end of this segment, and it terminates just before Luftee Overlook. It is characterized by steep, rocky outcroppings or rock face on the right (similar to character

area 12) when traveling south bound. Understory vegetation is herbaceous/deciduous. Base vegetation is spruce/fir and high hardwood. There are no scenic views from this segment. South bound travel is generally down hill.

Landform Features and Land Cover



Rock face on the right (SB) (+)



Character of vegetation (+)

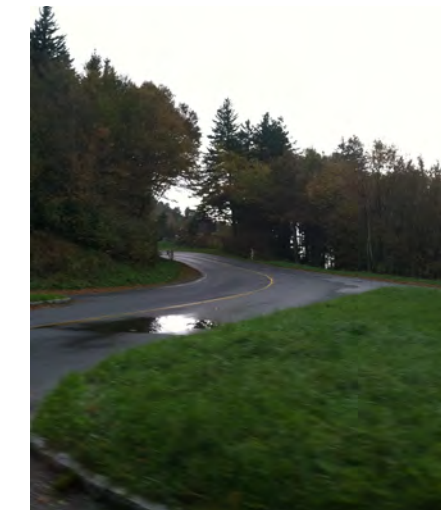
Man-Made Features



Brown NPS wayfinding sign (o)



Intersection with Clingmans Dome access road (o)



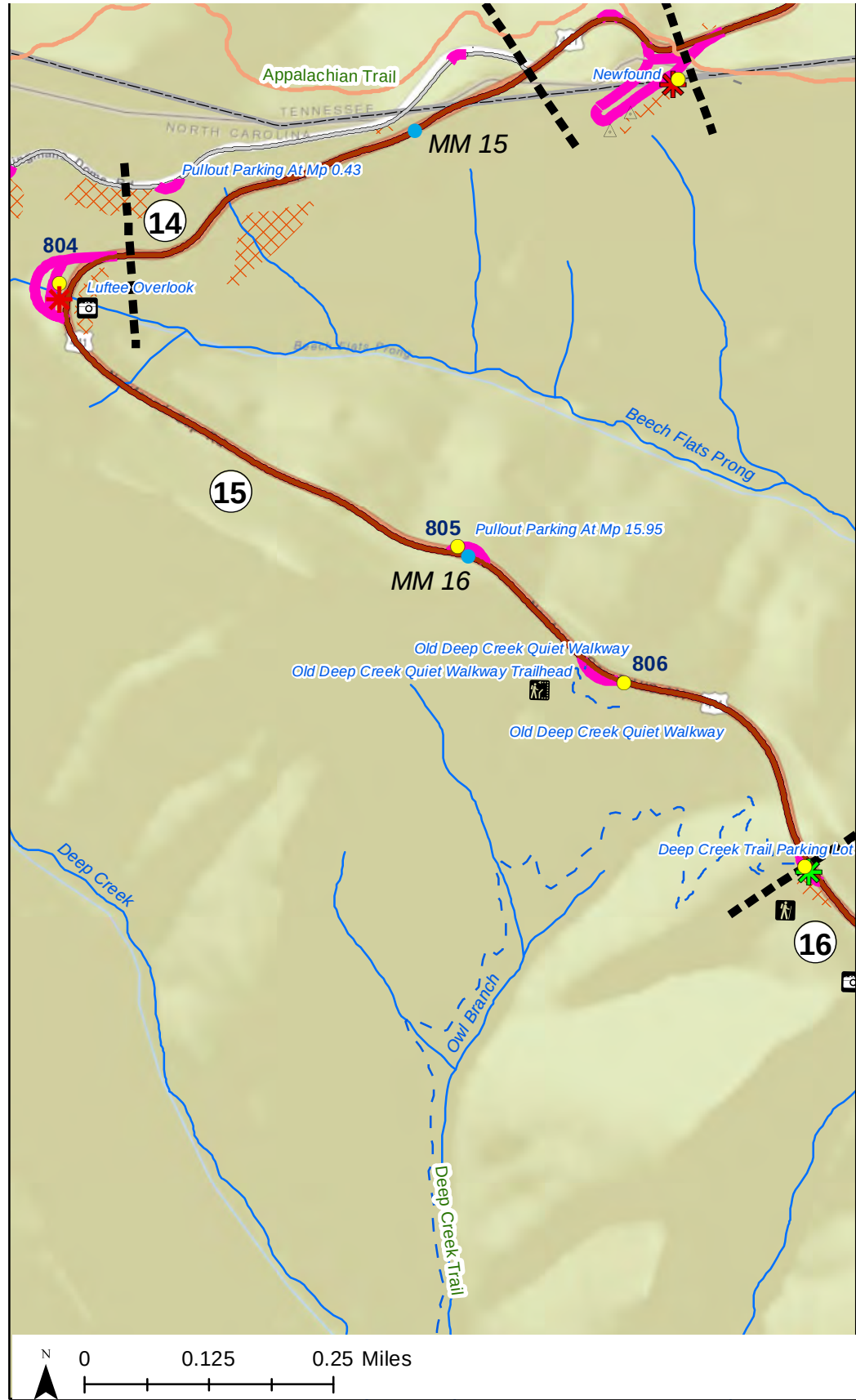
Access road to Clingmans Dome (o)



CHARACTER AREA 15:
Mile 15.45-16.5

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 15



Landform Features and Land Cover

Man-Made Features

DESCRIPTION
A major landscape feature of this character area is Luftee Overlook where visitors can capture a vista toward the dramatic ridges and valley east of the pull off. Two other pull offs are in this segment--one is a very large gravel pull off and the other is a small gravel pull off. Both are lacking interpretive

features or attractions. The roadway character beyond Luftee Overlook is generally flanked by forested canopy with open grassy shoulders. Base vegetation is spruce/fir and high hardwood; understory vegetation is herbaceous/deciduous with dense rhododendron.



Vista to ridges from Luftee Overlook (+)



Character of the vegetation (SB) (+)



Rock face (+)



Interpretive signage at Luftee Overlook (o)



Open view to the right; Luftee Overlook to the left (NB) (+)



Open view to the left; Luftee Overlook to the right (SB) (+)



Very large gravel pull off (-)



Small gravel pull off (o)



Wood guard rail and grass shoulder (o)

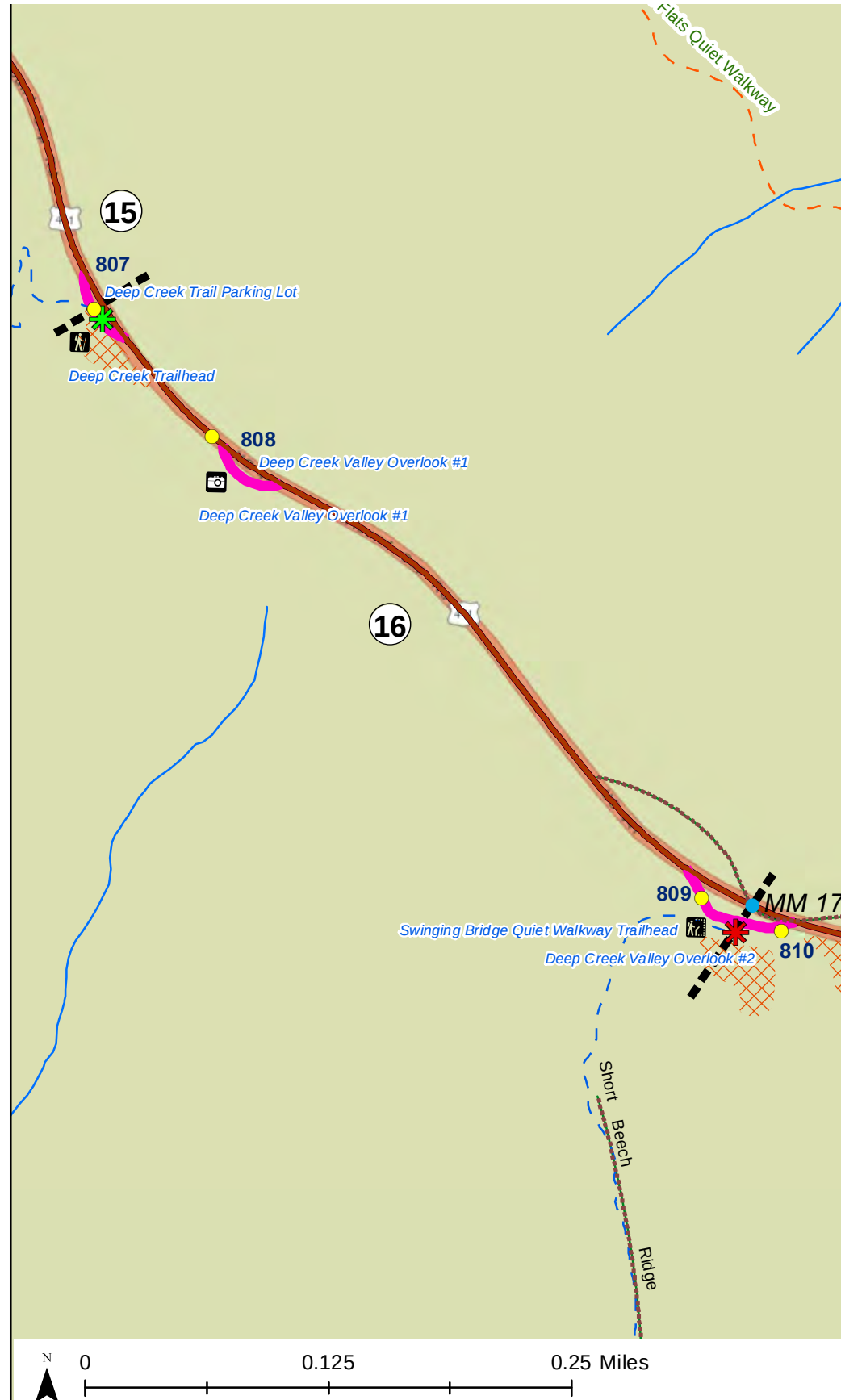


CHARACTER AREA 16:

Mile 16.5-17: *Deep Creek Overlook*

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 16



DESCRIPTION

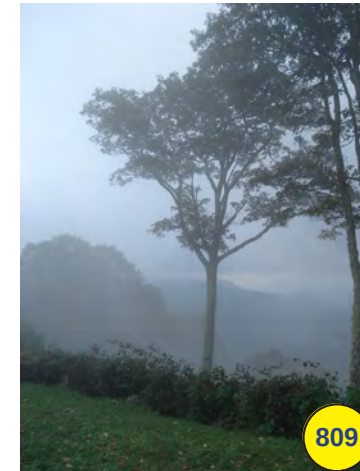
Two overlooks characterize this corridor segment, Deep Creek Valley 1 and 2. Views open to the right to the valley and ranges (SB). Intermittent canopy filters the light on the right (SB). Vegetation includes herbaceous/

deciduous and dense rhododendron understory. Base vegetation is spruce/ fir and high hardwood. A new stone retaining wall/guard wall detracts from the overall character of the site.

Landform Features and Land Cover



Vista from Deep Creek Valley Overlook (+)



Character of Deep Creek Valley Overlook vegetation (+)



Deep Creek Trail trailhead sign (o)



Deep Creek Valley pull off (o)



Interpretive sign (o)



Deep Creek Valley Overlook (o)

Man-Made Features



Retaining wall/guard wall (-)



Retaining wall/guard wall at pull off (-)

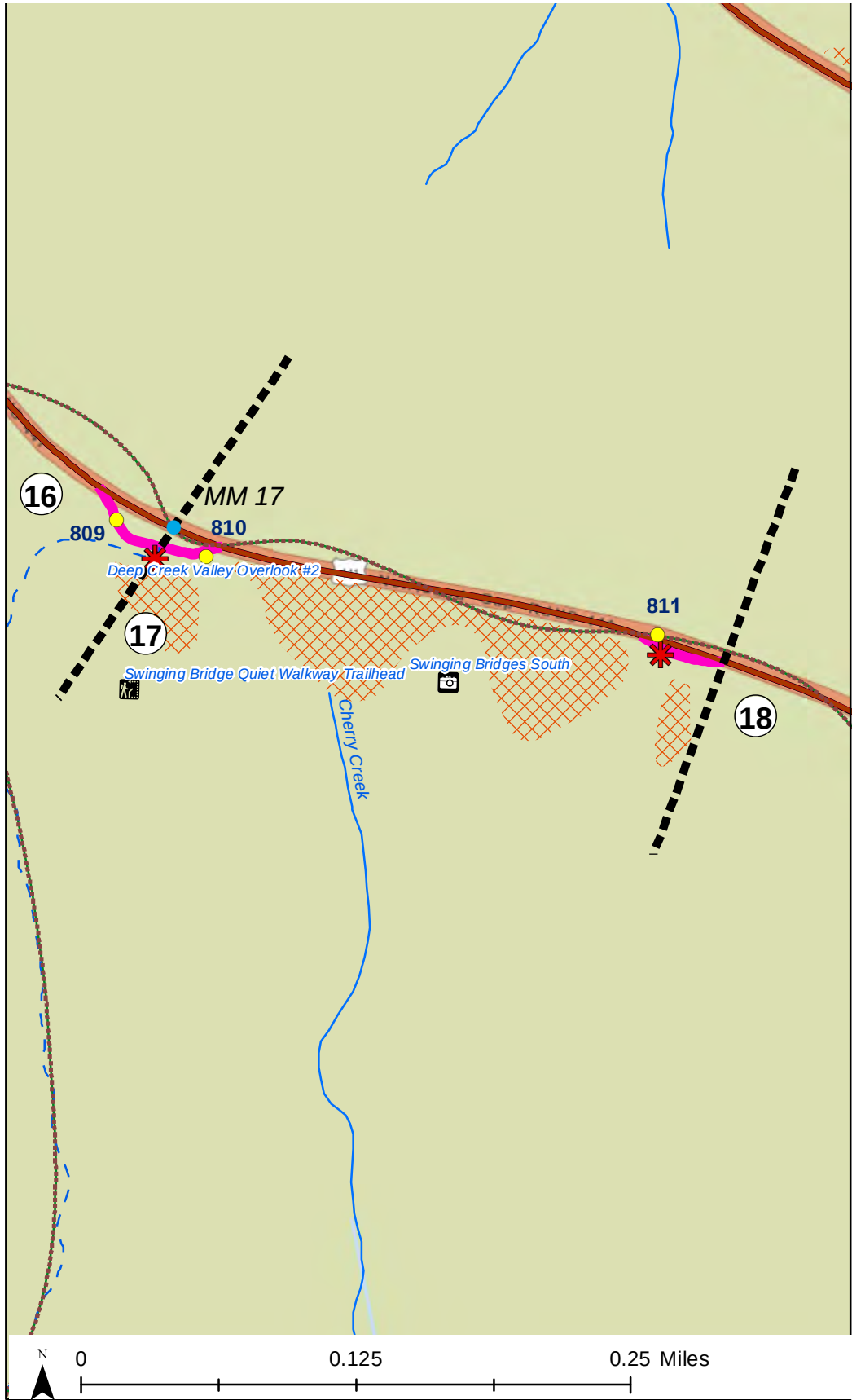


Stone culvert at Deep Creek Valley Overlook 2 (+)



CHARACTER AREA 17:
Mile 17-17.25: *Swinging Bridges*

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

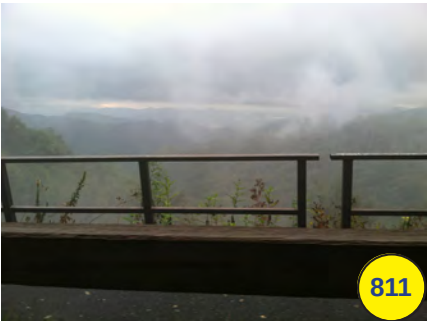


DESCRIPTION

The Swinging Bridges overlooks characterize this portion of the corridor, with fantastic views to ridges at the south. A metal guard rail is highly visible from the roadway, and the adjacent walkway is relatively narrow and close to the

road. Intermittent canopy separate Swinging Bridges north, middle, and south. Understory is composed of herbaceous/deciduous vegetation and dense rhododendron stands. Base vegetation is spruce/fir, high hardwood, and heath.

Landform Features and Land Cover



Vista from Swinging Bridges (+)

Man-Made Features



Guard rail at Swinging Bridges (o)



Walkway at Swinging Bridges (-)



Guard rail graffiti (-)

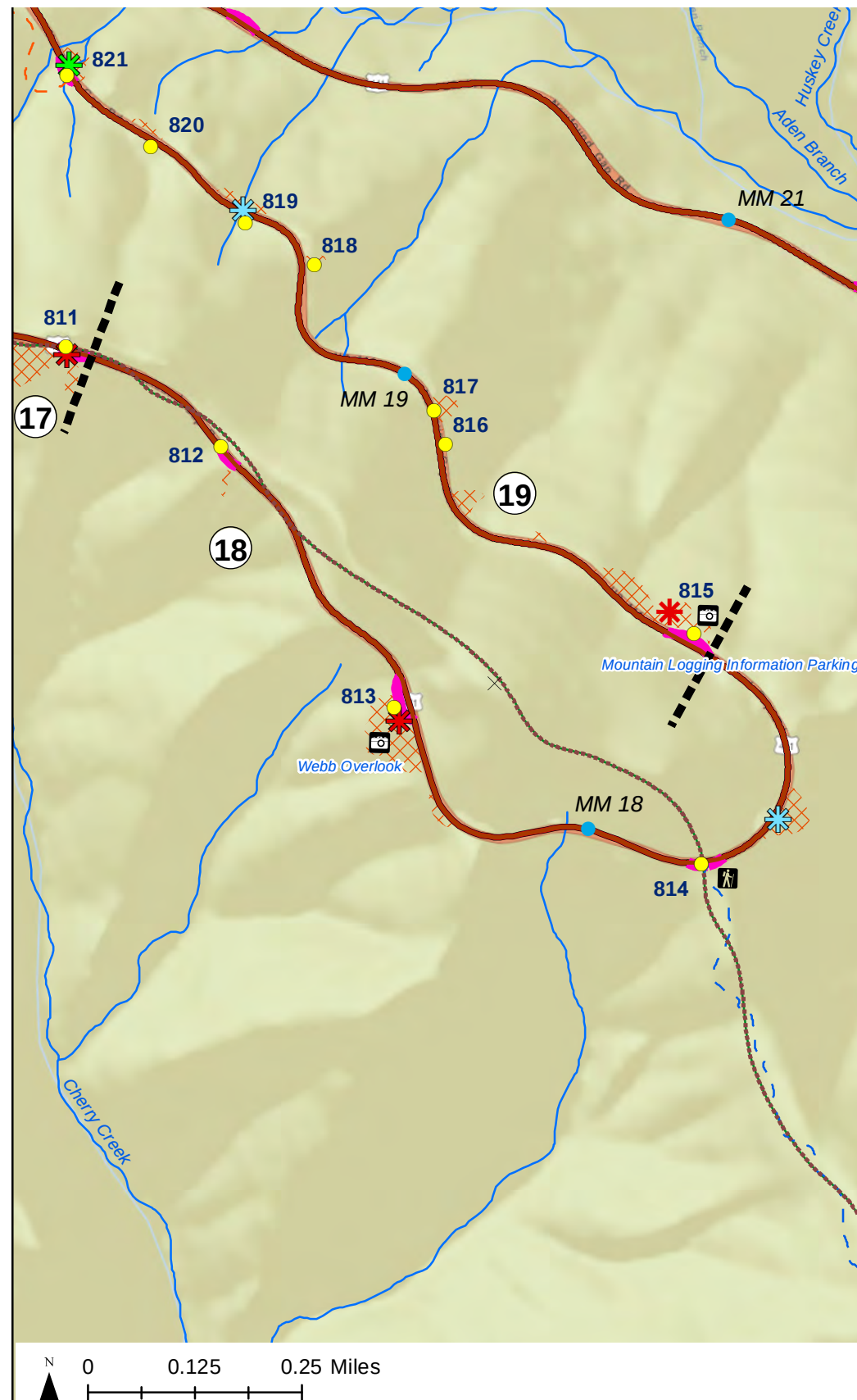


CHARACTER AREA 18:

Mile 17.25-18.45: Ascent and vistas to southwest on loop/
switchback/ Descent and vistas to southwest

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 18



DESCRIPTION

This segment of the corridor generally follows the ridgeline of Thomas Ridge. It is one side of the long switchback that loops along the ridges. Webb Overlook offers high quality views to mountains and valley to the south west. Thomas Divide Trail is accessed from a pull off just beyond mile marker

18. The canopy and wooded corridor allows for filtered and dramatic vistas. Understory includes herbaceous/deciduous vegetation with high hardwood and heath base vegetation.

Landform Features and Land Cover



Forested corridor character (+)



Character of vegetation and vista at Webb Overlook (+)

Man-Made Features



Pull off at Webb Overlook (o)



Vegetation obscuring view at Webb Overlook (-)



Grassy median at Webb Overlook (o)



Interpretive sign (o)



Gravel area behind interpretive sign (-)



Gravel area in foreground of vista (-)



Grassy area at Thomas Divide Trail pull off (-)



Stone headwall/culvert (o)

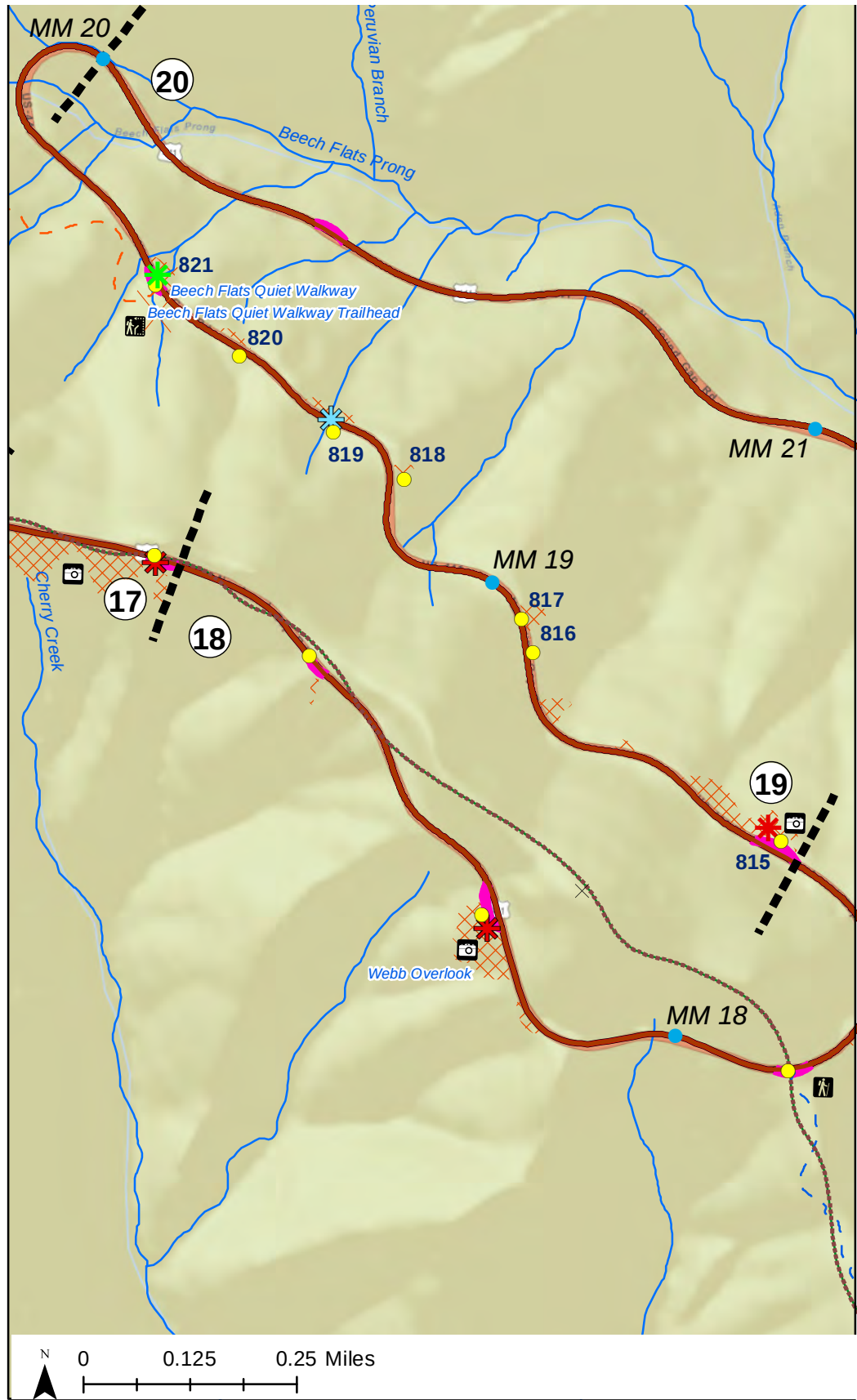


CHARACTER AREA 19:

Mile 18.45-20: Descent from ridge line and vistas/Ascent to the ridge line and vistas

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 19



DESCRIPTION

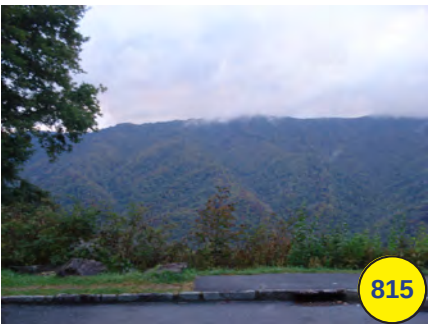
On this sinuous segment of the corridor, the southbound traveler will begin to descend down the ridge with several gravel pull offs and one primary overlook, History Overlook. Views are mostly to the north east. Beech Flats Quiet Walkway trailhead is accessed from this character area around mile 19.65.

The wooded corridor allows for filtered and dramatic vistas. Understory includes herbaceous/deciduous vegetation with high hardwood and heath base vegetation.

Landform Features and Land Cover



Vegetation and boulders at History Overlook (+)



Vista at History Overlook (+)



Curving roadway, view to mountain and vegetative character (+)

Man-Made Features



History Overlook (o)



Accessible sign at History Overlook



Gravel area at History Overlook (o)



Eroded gravel area at History



Gravel pull off (-)



Gravel pull off (-)



Wood guard rail (o)



Typical North Carolina pull off; Beech Flats Quiet walkway (o)

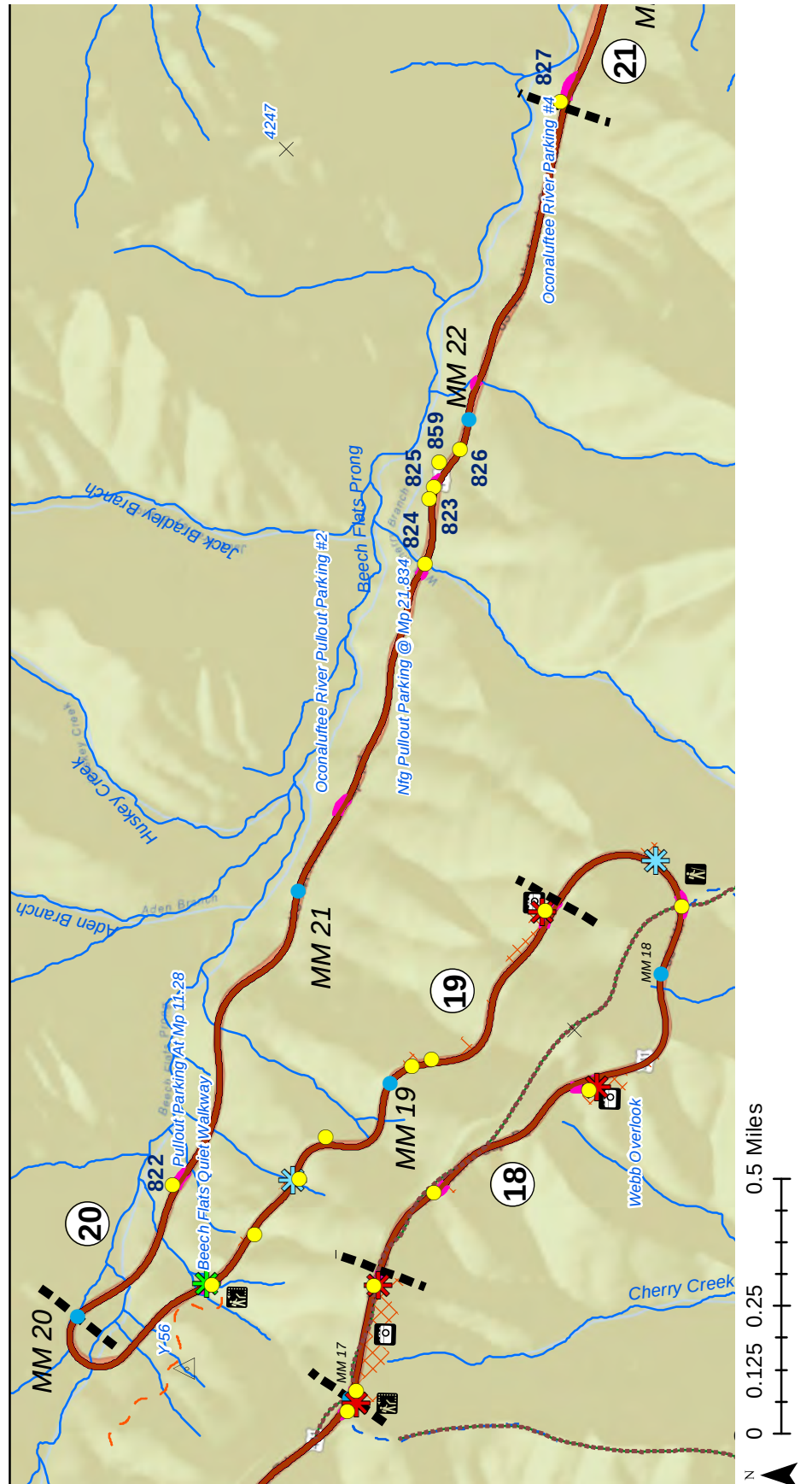


CHARACTER AREA 20:

Mile 20-22.75: Transition from “High Mountains” to the “Southern Metasedimentary Mountains” (and vice versa)

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 20



Landform Features and Land Cover

DESCRIPTION

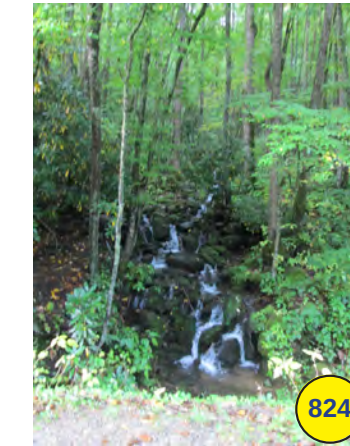
In this segment, visitors traveling toward Cherokee descend from the High Mountain ecoregion to the Southern Metasedimentary Mountains ecoregion. The roadway is less sinuous here, with a wooded corridor and stream valley to the left (SB). There are at least four pull offs in this segment. A large clearing area is on the right side of the road (SB), which



Forested corridor character (+)



Vegetation along corridor (+)



Mountain falls visible from roadway (+)



Filtered sun through canopy (+)



Pull off (o)



Pull off (o)



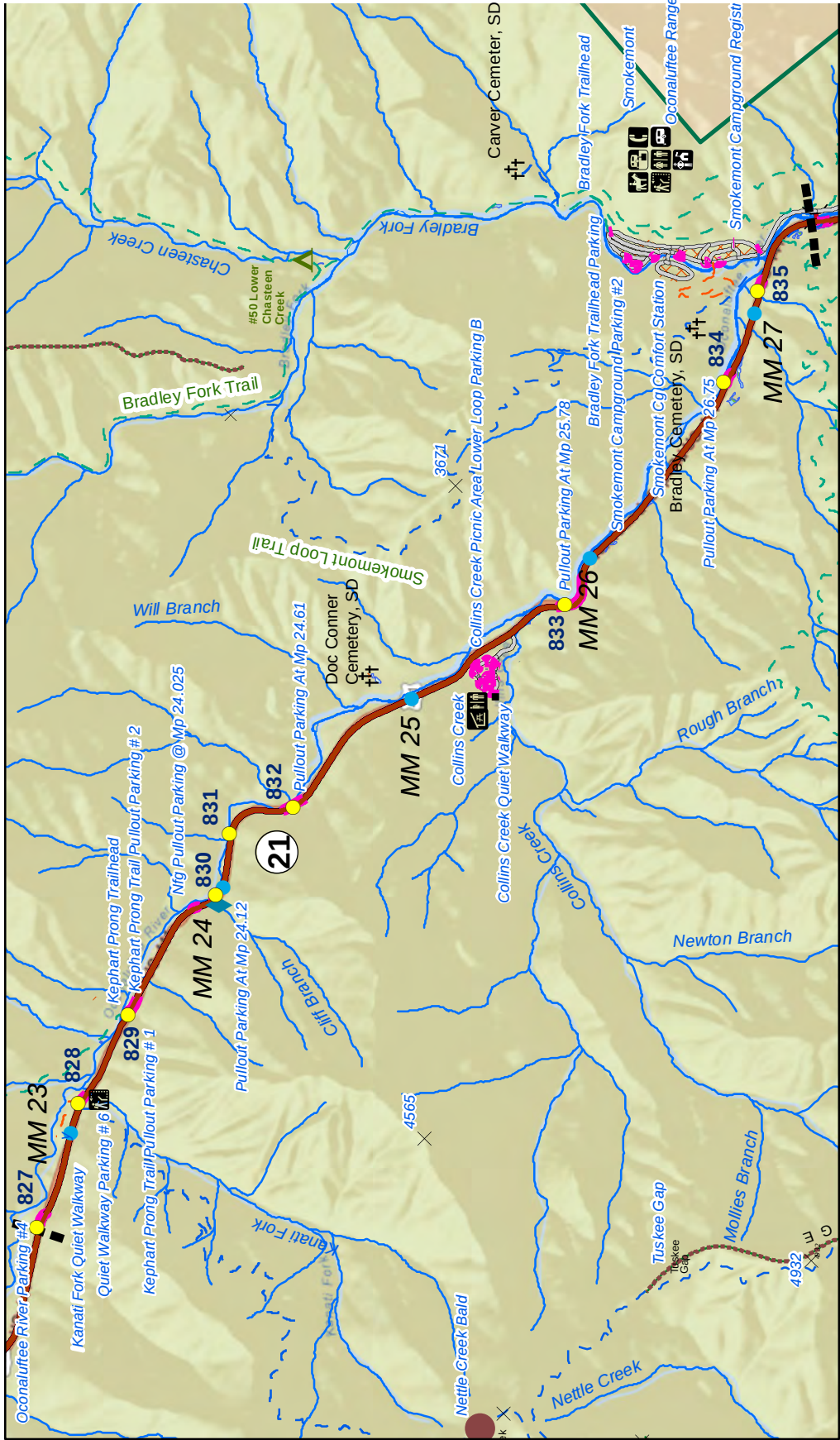
Boulders at shoulder (+)



CHARACTER AREA 21:

Mile 22.75-27.45: Descending closer to the valley/
Ascending from the valley

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

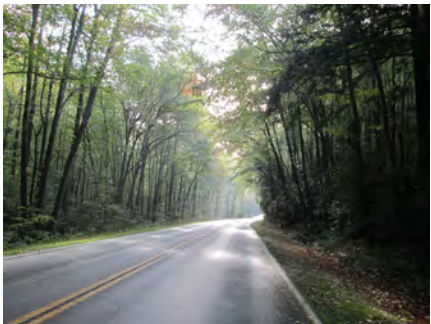


DESCRIPTION

The segment of the corridor continues to descend toward the Oconaluftee River valley, with the river almost at road level by mile 23.35. Views to the river get wide and then narrow depending on the forest canopy. Bridges and stone walls are visible from the road. The Cliff Branch Falls can be touched from the road around mile 23.9. This area is characterized by rocky

outcroppings with rhododendron, and hemlock forests are intermittent with stands particularly around the Collins Creek area. Understory is herbaceous/deciduous with rhododendron, as mentioned above, and cove, high hardwood, oak, montane alluvial, heath, and successional forest compose the base vegetation. Eight pull offs were recorded in this segment.

Landform Features and Land Cover



Canopy filtering sunlight (+)



Cliff Branch Falls at road (+)



Mountain Laurel understory (+)



Dense evergreen vegetation - rhododendron and hemlock (+)



Understory vegetation on sloped road shoulder (+)



Mountain Laurel understory on slope (+)

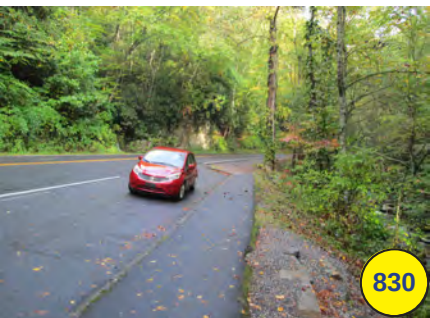
Man-Made Features



Very large pull off (-)



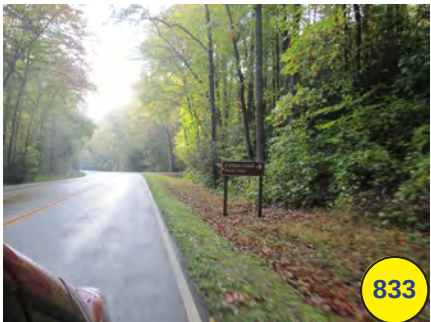
Pull off (o)



Pull off with steps down to stream (o)



Precarious steps to stream (-)



Sign to Collins Creek Picnic Area (o)



Very large pull off (-)



Typical NC pull off (o)



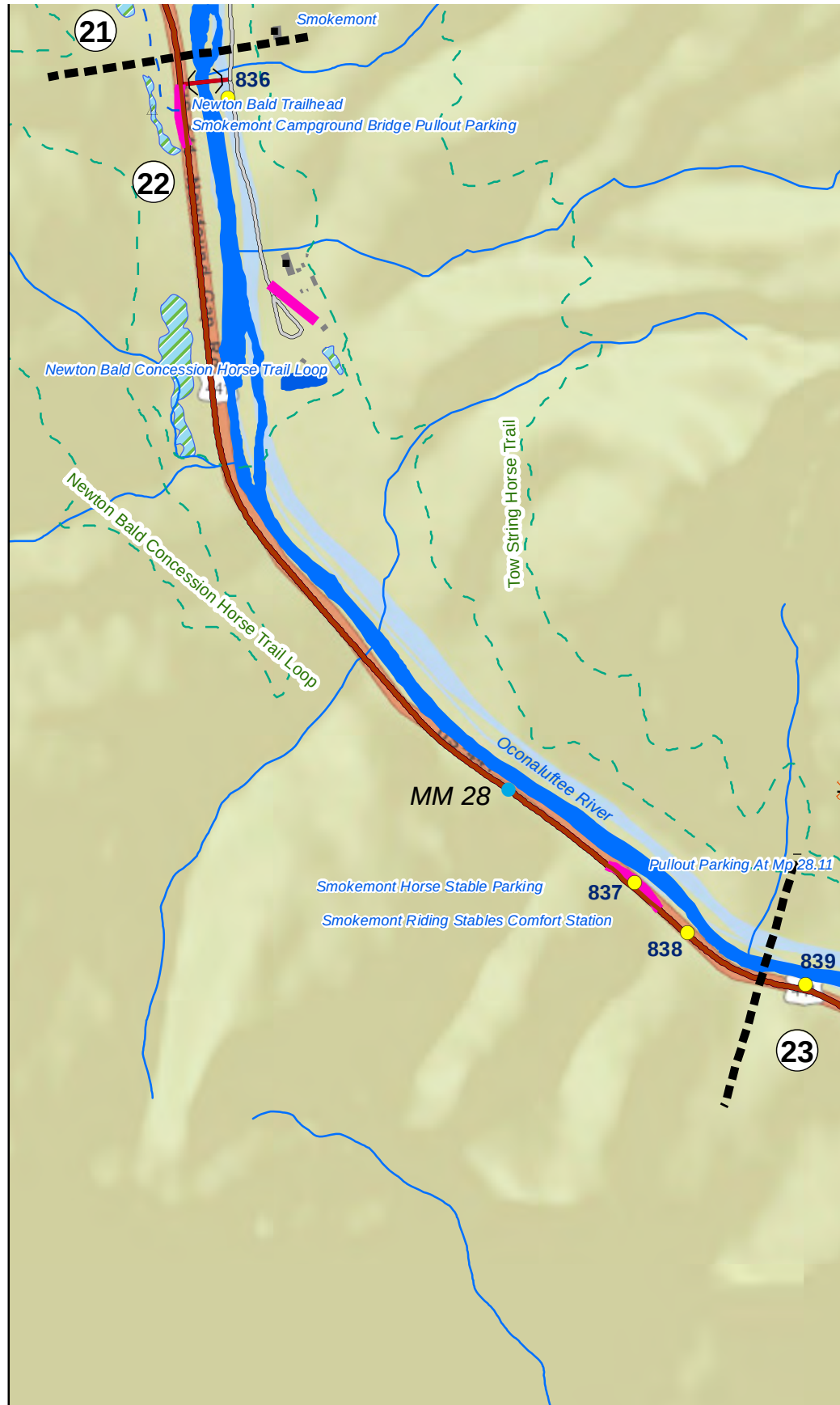
Pull off (o)



CHARACTER AREA 22: Mile 27.45-28.25

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 22



DESCRIPTION

The roadway is closely parallel to the Oconaluftee River in this segment. Access to Smokemont Riding Stables Barn is on the left traveling south bound. The river can be seen from the roadway on the right side (SB). A stone bridge to Smokemont and stone guard walls are noticeable built

features along this corridor. Pull offs vary in size and materials; five were identified. Horses at the stable can be seen from one of the pull offs on the left side of the road (SB). Understory vegetation is herbaceous/deciduous and mountain laurel. Base vegetation is successional, cove, and montane alluvial.

Landform Features and Land Cover



Character of vegetation at pull off (+)



Mountain Laurel understory (+)



Oconaluftee River (+)

Man-Made Features



Smokemont wayfinding sign (o)



Stone bridge with wood guardrail at Smokemont (+)



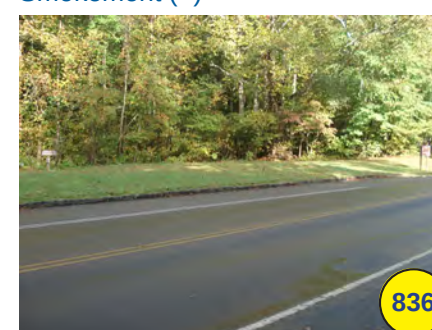
Smokemont parking area (o)



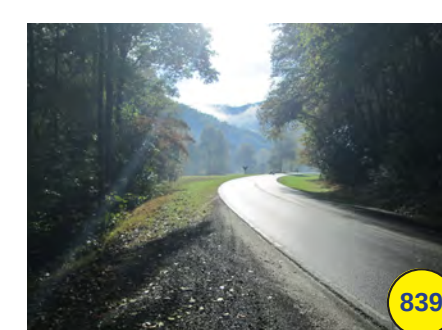
Pull off near bridge to Smokemont (o)



Gate near Smokemont (-)



Very narrow pull off across from bridge to Smokemont (-)



Gravel pull off frames view to mountain (o)

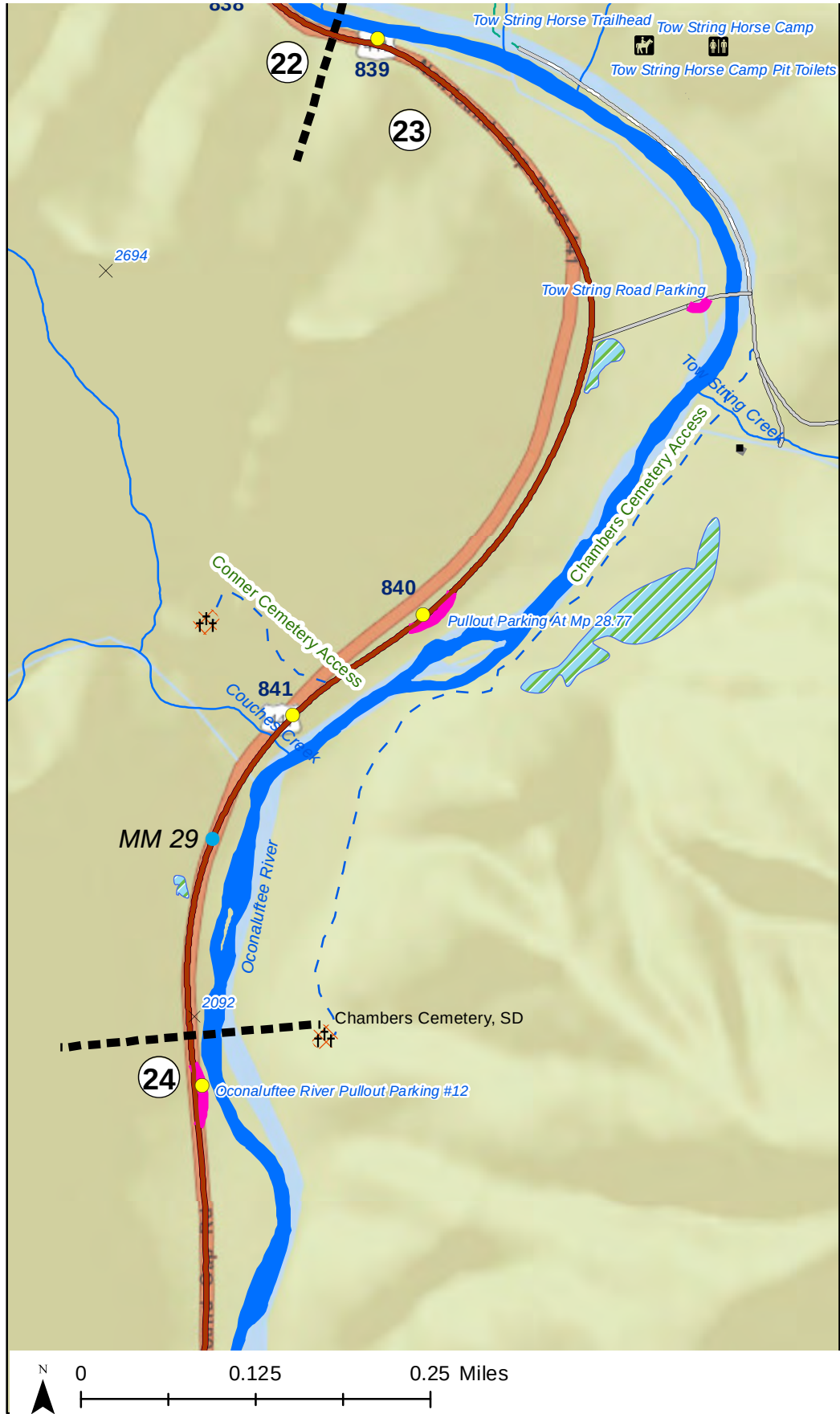


Stone wall parallel to curve in river (+)



CHARACTER AREA 23:
Mile 28.25 - 29.15: Towstring/Horse Camp

PHYSICAL INVENTORY



DESCRIPTION

The corridor viewshed widens dramatically in this character area, as the space between the Oconaluftee River and the roadway becomes an expanse of open grassy field. Specimen trees dot the field area at the left (SB). Tow String Horse Camp is accessed on the left. One pull off and a headwall

are noted built features in this area. Intermittent wooded sections are also experienced in this segment. Understory includes herbaceous/deciduous vegetation. Base forest vegetation is montane alluvial, cove, heath, and successional.

Landform Features and Land Cover



Open view to ridges toward southeast (+)



Open field at left and grassy shoulder at right at Tow String (+)



View to distant ridge and corridor vegetation (+)

Man-Made Features



Typical NC pull off (o)



Wide gravel area at pull off (-)



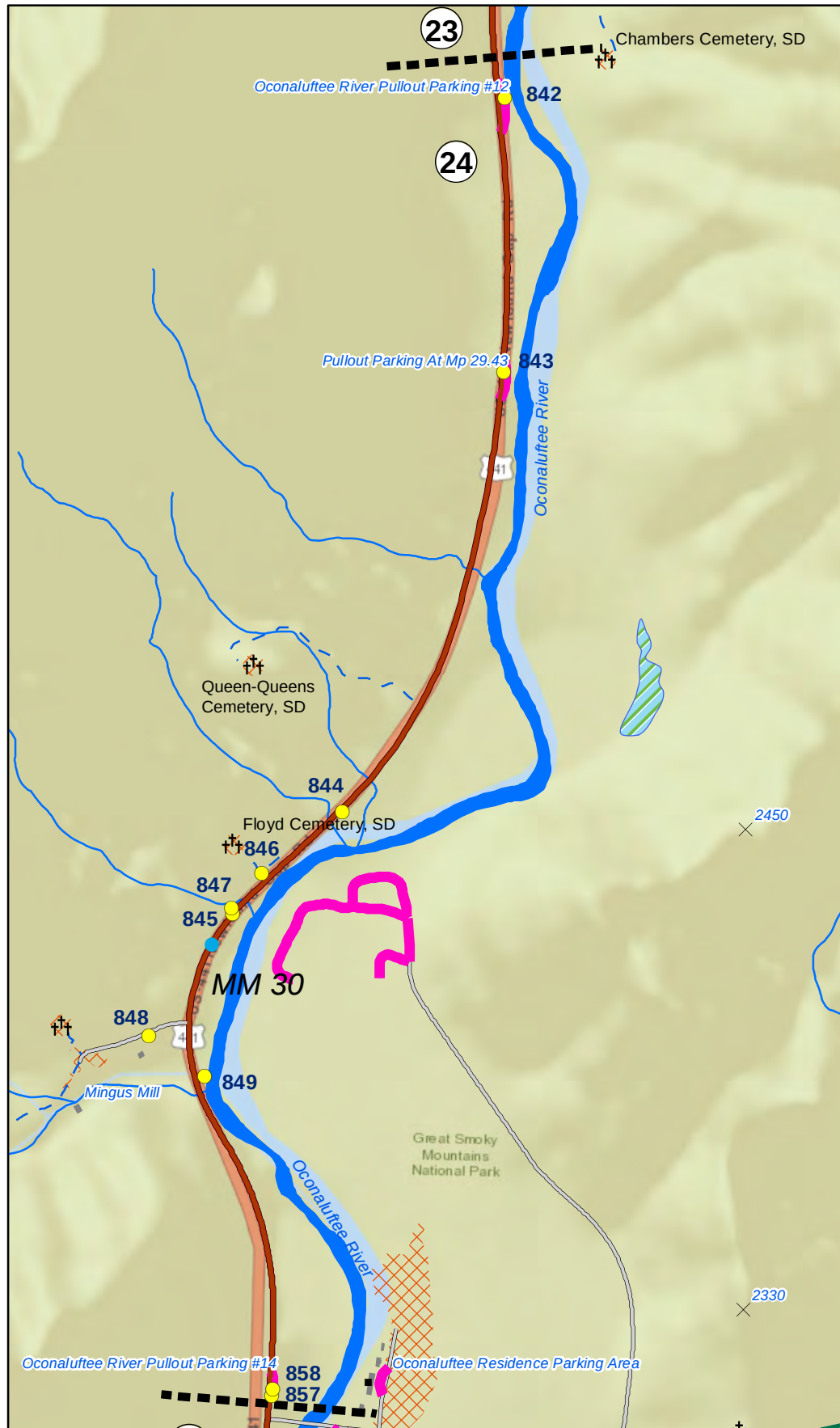
Stone headwall (+)



CHARACTER AREA 24: Mile 29.15 - 30.5: Minus Mill + Four Cemeteries

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 24



DESCRIPTION

The corridor view widens and narrows from open grassy areas to wooded canopy. Vistas to distant ridges can be enjoyed in areas of clearing. Grassy shoulders are also common throughout. Major features along this corridor include the Mingus Mill attraction and parking area. Four cemeteries are within walking distance of the roadway; however it is not clear if the

cemeteries are private or open to the public. An obscured foot path to Floyd Cemetery can barely be detected from the roadway. Four pull offs were identified along this segment. Understory is herbaceous/deciduous and rhododendron. Forest base vegetation includes montane alluvial, cove, heath, successional, hemlock and oak.

Landform Features and Land Cover



Open grassy area with trees at right (+)



Open grassy area at right (+)



Open space and mountain view (+)

Man-Made Features



Pull off (o)



Gravel shoulder/makeshift pull off (-)



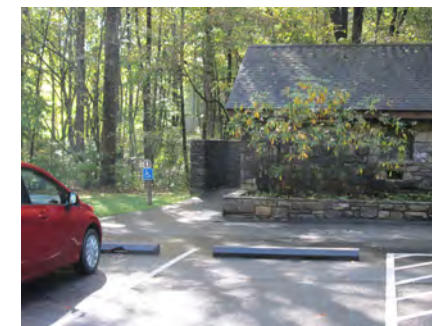
Pull off (o)



Floyd Cemetery (+)



Mingus Mill site (+)



Mingus Mill restroom facilities (+)



Mingus Mill parking (o)



Stone bridge (+)

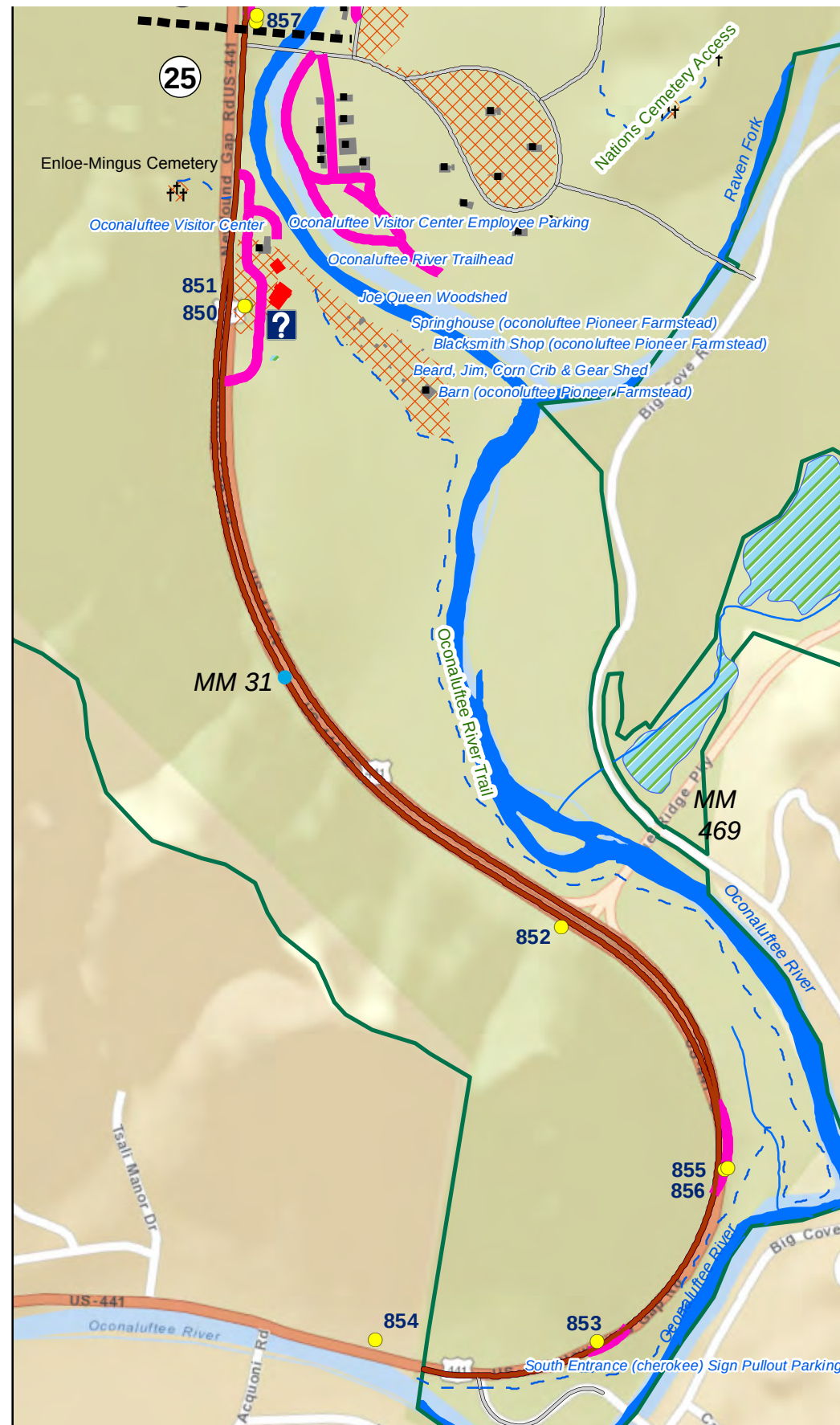


CHARACTER AREA 25:

Mile 30.5 to Cherokee: Oconaluftee Visitor Center to Cherokee Terminus

PHYSICAL INVENTORY

CHARACTER AREA 25



DESCRIPTION

The immediate corridor landscape is maintained in this character area segment. The Oconaluftee Visitor Center and Pioneer Farmstead is at one terminus and Cherokee is at the other. Much of the corridor is open to mountain views and the character begins to resemble that of a divided rural highway. Occasional forested canopy closes the corridor to views. A

Landform Features and Land Cover



Character of roadway terrain (+)



Open mountain view from Oconaluftee Visitor Center (+)



Character of roadway traveling north bound toward Oconaluftee VC (+)



Divided highway roadway character (-)



Roadway and median (+)



Oconaluftee Visitor Center (+)



Pull off (o)



Stone wall at Cherokee park entrance (+)

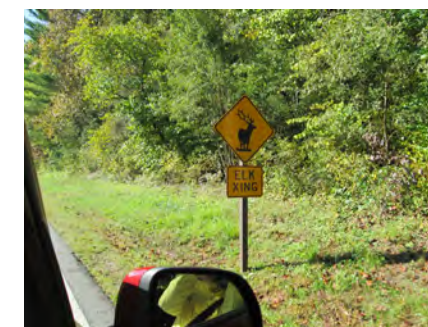
GRSM entrance sign is also located on the right when traveling north bound. Access to the Blue Ridge Parkway is within this segment. Understory vegetation includes herbaceous/deciduous material. Forest base vegetation includes oak, cove, montane alluvial, heath, successional and some hemlock.



Oconaluftee Pioneer Farmstead landscape (+)



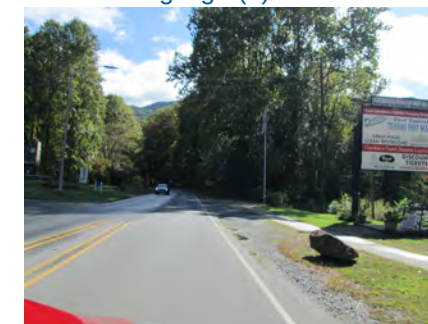
Character of corridor vegetation and landform (+)



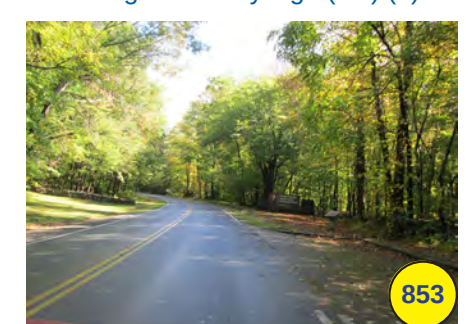
Elk Crossing sign (o)



Blue Ridge Parkway sign (SB) (o)



Entrance to park at Cherokee (NB) (-)



NPS GRSM entrance sign and pull off (NB) (+)

Appendix B: Public Comments

Overview

Public comment on the draft CMP was obtained by posting the document on the National Park Service’s Planning, Environment & Public Comment (PEPC) website for a 30-day review period from January 23 to February 24, 2017. In addition to providing general input on the draft, the public was asked to comment whether there were any significant visitor experiences available on the byway that had not been considered in the draft plan, and whether there were additional steps or strategies that should be considered to help maintain the corridor’s outstanding qualities.

The Park also directly contacted a wide range of stakeholders, including community leaders in the gateway communities and other cities and counties near the Park; the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; state and local agencies responsible for transportation, tourism and environment; chambers of commerce, area media outlets, and others to make them aware that the draft CMP was available for review.

All comments received through PEPC have been included in this appendix. Although no changes were made to the document, a short discussion is provided below to help clarify or provide additional information related to some of the key issues raised.

Several commenters expressed concern that the adoption of the CMP might lead to the implementation of a park entrance fee. The CMP does not recommend a park entrance fee. Its purpose is to identify the qualities that make Newfound Gap Road worthy of designation as a national scenic byway, and to adopt strategies to preserve, protect and enhance those qualities. The CMP recognizes that Newfound Gap Road is under mounting pressure from millions of annual Park visits as well as local traffic, and identifies potential strategies to help manage traffic to minimize its impact on the visitor experience and Park resources. None of the recommended strategies involves an entrance fee.

Comments were received both in support and in opposition to the potential expansion of wireless communications capability along the byway route. These mixed feelings are reflective of the larger national discussion currently being held about the provision of wireless communications in national parks. Public wi-fi is currently available on either end of Newfound Gap Road, at the Sugarlands and Oconaluftee visitor centers. The CMP recommends adding a small number of “mobile hotspots” along the byway corridor to allow visitors to access real-time safety and

traffic information after they have entered the Park. One of the goals is to encourage visitors to avoid the most crowded times and locations, and provide them with alternative experiences in less busy areas of the Park. It is possible that the provision of wi-fi could be configured to allow access only to the Park’s sites, in order to encourage visitors to focus on the qualities and resources surrounding them.

Several people suggested providing additional parking at the most popular sites along the corridor. The Park recognizes the high level of parking demand at the Alum Cave Trailhead and other sites mentioned. However, the CMP recommends better management of existing parking and demand, rather than building additional facilities. When a parking area is full, it means the location already has a substantial number of visitors. Providing additional parking could lead to crowding in these areas, impacting visitors’ experience of Newfound Gap Road’s unique natural and scenic resources. The CMP proposes to reduce parking demand by encouraging visitors to try other sites in the Park at busy times, and to provide more information to visitors about when parking is available at popular locations.

Suggestions were also made about visitor center enhancements. Partial rehabilitation of the Sugarlands Visitor Center is among the capital projects identified for the next 5 to 10 years, contingent on project request approval and budget availability. To serve other locations along Newfound Gap Road – including the Newfound Gap site itself – the CMP recommends the Park create a mobile (portable) visitor center. This will provide maximum flexibility in staffing and location, as the station could be moved to another site if necessary.

A publicly-operated transit system within the Park has been often discussed, but ultimately was not included as part of the CMP recommendations. The Park currently has a successful partnership with the Gatlinburg Trolley System during the annual Firefly Event to provide shuttle service and limit parking during the heavily-attended event. However, previous proposals for the use of shuttles in the Park have had a mixed reception from the public. The Park will continue to monitor resource impacts from the growing traffic along Newfound Gap Road. If shuttle or other transit service is considered in the future, that decision will be made through a public process.

Press Release (continued next page)



National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

Great Smoky Mountains

National Park

107 Park Headquarters Road

Gatlinburg, TN 37738

865/436-1200 phone

865/436-1203 fax

www.nps.gov/grsm

Great Smoky Mountains News Release

Release Date: January 23, 2017

Contact: Dana Soehn, Dana_Soehn@nps.gov, 865-436-1207
Jamie Sanders, Jamie_Sanders@nps.gov, 865-436-1203

Park Requests Public Input on Draft Corridor Management Plan for Newfound Gap Road

Great Smoky Mountains National Park is seeking the public's input on a draft corridor management plan for Newfound Gap Road. The development of the plan is required for park officials to seek designation for the road as a National Scenic Byway which opens up opportunities to the park and gateway communities to compete for special grants that enhance the travel corridor.

The draft Newfound Gap Road Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan has been posted on the National Park Service Planning, Environment and Public Comment website for public review and comment at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/grsm> . Comments received during the 30-day review period, ending February 24, 2017, will be considered in the development of the final plan.

Newfound Gap Road is already a designated state scenic highway in both Tennessee and North Carolina. Park officials believe that Newfound Gap Road also meets the qualifications necessary to be designated as a National Scenic Byway. The first step in the eligibility process for this national designation is the preparation of a corridor management plan that addresses a variety of roadway attributes including the visitor experience and sustainability as a scenic byway.

page 2

Corridor management plans serve to guide the management of scenic byways to protect the important qualities associated with the byway. These are not decision making documents such as those prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act which typically evaluate a specific proposal or a set of alternatives for decision. Rather, corridor management plans provide an overarching framework for future planning.

Specifically, the park is interested in learning the following from the public: 1) if there are significant visitor experiences available to visitors traveling Newfound Gap Road that have not been considered and what those experiences are, and 2) if there are additional steps or strategies that should be considered that would help maintain the outstanding qualities of this corridor.

View and comment on draft plan online at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/grsm>. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment (including your personal identifying information) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act and may be made publicly available. While you may request in your comment to withhold your personal identifying from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will legally be able to do so.

For more information on National Scenic Byways, please visit <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/byways/byways>.

-NPS-

www.nps.gov/grsm
[www.Facebook.com/GreatSmokyMountainsNPS](https://www.facebook.com/GreatSmokyMountainsNPS)
[www.Twitter.com/GreatSmokyNPS](https://www.twitter.com/GreatSmokyNPS)
[www.Instagram.com/GreatSmokyNPS](https://www.instagram.com/GreatSmokyNPS)

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

Affiliation:

Received:

Correspondence Type:

Correspondence:

2

Project:

51080

Document:

77147

Knoxville, TN

Unaffiliated Individual

Jan,23,2017 15:12:04

Web Form

Topic Question 1:

The most outstanding areas have nowhere to pull off to enjoy them, you have to keep moving.

Topic Question 2:

It is really getting difficult as you pass Alum Cove Trail Head because cars are parked everywhere! as well as at the Chimney Tops. Is there a way to get folks to park at Sugarland and then they are transported to the two trailheads via shuttle which runs on a schedule during the day. It is dangerous between the cars and the people walking on the side of the road.

Comments: I love the corridor. I love the Smokies. It was truly a great vision to preserve it for all generations. No to cell towers, no to anything that compromises the beauty of the corridor. We are going to have to look at a solution to number of vehicles.

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

Affiliation:

Received:

Correspondence Type:

Correspondence:

3

Project:

51080

Document:

77147

Harriman, TN

Unaffiliated Individual

Jan,24,2017 15:37:39

Web Form

Topic Question 1:

Newfound Gap Road is a wonderful treat to travel. It is one of those roads that you can experience all the beauty of the Smoky Mountains. On this road we have a lot of stop offs to see the beauty. You have the Newfound Gap that is cool to be in both North Carolina and Tennessee at the same time. Then go up the road and we have the beauty of Clingman's dome. Along the road is so many beautiful view. If we have it as a National Scenic Road can one image what can be done for all the side roads. For instance, the mills, picnic areas and the welcome centers. Both centers are so wonderful. Let's not forget the pleasure of seeing all of the wildlife. I LOVE THE SMOKIES!

Topic Question 2:

I feel that the park service does a great job on maintain of the parks. They also protect the public. The rangers that I have had the pleasure to meet have been extremely helpful and a total joy to speak with. I can say I LOVE being in the GSMNP!

Comments: This is one of my favorite place on earth to be. I spent as much time as I can in the GSMNP and Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, and Cherokee, North Carolina. This is what I tell people as my HAPPY PLACE! I seem to enjoy every trip I take to the area. There is always something to enjoy.

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

Affiliation:

Received:

Correspondence Type:

Correspondence:

4

Project:

51080

Document:

77147

Harriman, TN

Unaffiliated Individual

Jan,24,2017 15:48:31

Web Form

Topic Question 1:

The GSMNP is such a joy to travel. The trip across the mountain on Newfound Gap Road has some wonderful views. It is one of the most scenic road in the mountains. You have so many things to see. I think it would be great to see the road to become a scenic byway.

Topic Question 2:
I have been coming to the park for more than 60 years. I remember as a child my mother would make fried chicken and we would have a picnic in the park. One of my favorite childhood memories. The parks have seen many updates since my childhood and I hope to see it be as wonderful for the future generations.

Comments: This is one of the most beautiful places I have been. I have travel and seen many parks in my years. Old Faithful was wonderful to see. However, the GSMNP is my favorite to come to visit. I hope that it continues to improve for the future generations. Like, I said one of my favorite memories is as a child riding over to the park and having a picnic. My mom would make fried chicken and all the fixings and we would eat it at the park. I remember one time a bear crawled into the back of our truck. I hope the park is taking care of for all the generations to come.

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

Affiliation:

Received:

Correspondence Type:

Correspondence:

5

Project: 51080

Document: 77147

Pigeon forge, TN

Unaffiliated Individual

Jan,24,2017 19:14:24

Web Form

Topic Question 1:
Need extra parking at Chimneys picnic area, Newfound gap, and Clingmans dome. An extra lane could be added easily on the road up to the Chimneys picnic area. Also a hotel could be added on the NC side of the park. All the other national parks have them, why not the Smokies?

Comments:

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

Affiliation:

Received:

Correspondence Type:

Correspondence:

6

Project: 51080

Document: 77147

Knoxville, TN

Southern Forest Watch Unaffiliated Individual

OfficialRep

Jan,24,2017 19:18:35

Web Form

Topic Question 1:
irrelevant question

Topic Question 2:
Steps should include managing your over blown budgets and focusing on how you have screwed up pretty much everything you touch at the NPS>L

Comments: NO, NO NO. This is a trick to impose an entrance fee. You are legally bound by a deed restriction and this will not fly. The TN state legislature designed it that way. Not no but HELL NO. You folks are master manipulators and we have decades of experience with NPS tactics. NO, NO, NO. Expect legal action if you try.

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

Affiliation:

Received:

Correspondence Type:

Correspondence:

7

Project: 51080

Document: 77147

Knoxville, TN

Unaffiliated Individual

Jan,24,2017 19:53:20

Web Form

Topic Question 1:
DO NOT DO THIS!

Topic Question 2:
DO NOT DO THIS!

Comments: NO NO NO NO NO! This is a foot in the door to start charging an entrance fee to land that was donated by or purchased with money from donors and taxpayers! I STRONGLY object to this!

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

Affiliation:

Received:

Correspondence Type:

Correspondence:

8

Project: 51080

Document: 77147

Sevierville, TN

Unaffiliated Individual

Jan,24,2017 21:11:38

Web Form

Topic Question 2:
My primary concern is the flow of traffic. I understand that alternate routes are being explored for through traffic. However, until there are viable alternatives, facilitating free-flowing traffic without sacrificing safety and ease of access to overlooks and areas of interest. Many tourist visitors staying in Cherokee or Gatlinburg make day trips over the mountain, in addition to people who travel the road for work. Not all are interested in or have time to sight see at a leisurely pace. Many visitors are very nervous driving over the mountain and can cause dangerous traffic problems. I hope that this plan will address these issues.

Comments:

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

Affiliation:

Received:

Correspondence Type:

Correspondence:

9

Project: 51080

Document: 77147

Rock Hill, SC

Unaffiliated Individual

Jan,25,2017 06:14:49

Web Form

Topic Question 1:
I'm intimately familiar with the road and have traveled along it, fished the waters paralleling it, and walked trails starting from it literally hundreds of times. To my knowledge there are no significant visitor experiences not already available. Incidentally, the phrase "been considered" is amorphous in the extreme.

Topic Question 2:
No.

Comments: If, as many feel may be the case, this is a back door attempt to make this a toll road, it is nothing less than a singularly shameful effort to break existing agreements. The NPS needs to do one of two things: State unequivocally that it in no way contemplates a toll or else acknowledge that a toll is or could be part of the process.

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

Affiliation:

Received:

Correspondence Type:

Correspondence:

10

Project: 51080

Document: 77147

Atlanta, GA

Unaffiliated Individual

Jan,25,2017 06:48:22

Web Form

Topic Question 1:
No. There are plenty of pull-offs, trailheads, quiet walkways, and informational plaques to give visitors every experience they could need in the park.

Comments: Please do not pursue this. People do not trust the federal government, the NPS in particular. I am concerned this is some sort of back-door play to get a fee enacted.

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

11

Project: 51080

Document: 77147

Knoxville, TN

University of Tennessee Unaffiliated Individual

Affiliation: OfficialRep
Received: Jan,25,2017 07:34:03
Correspondence Type: Web Form
Correspondence: Topic Question 1:
I think all visitor experiences have been considered.

Topic Question 2:
Bicycle lane.

Comments: I strongly disagree with implementing a fee for usage of the Newfound Gap Road and/or any fee for using public lands already provided for with our tax payer dollars.

Correspondence ID: 12 **Project:** 51080 **Document:** 77147
Address: Birmingham, AL
Outside Organization: Unaffiliated Individual
Affiliation:
Received: Jan,25,2017 18:06:55
Correspondence Type: Web Form
Correspondence: Topic Question 1:
The nature, and quiet of the park is an experience in itself. We love being able to unplug and spend time enjoying nature. (See comment below).

Topic Question 2:
I think you are not considering the ramifications of the addition of Wi-Fi. Bringing people to the park is a great chance to unplug and spend time as a family. We are able to do this because there is no WiFi in the park. People are forced to leave their phones, devices and unplug, and enjoy NATURE. Adding WiFi will destroy this atmosphere, and bring unnecessary noise, and distractions to the park we so love.

Comments: Please leave the park as is (no wifi) so that we can continue to let future generations have the experiences we have in the park.

Correspondence ID: 13 **Project:** 51080 **Document:** 77147
Address: Knoxville, TN
Outside Organization: Unaffiliated Individual
Affiliation:
Received: Jan,25,2017 18:50:25
Correspondence Type: Web Form
Correspondence: Topic Question 1:

In the summer of 1962 I had an experience that may illustrate the high potential impact of this road. I was a driver for a group of European young adults (college age and slightly older) on a driving tour to the southern U.S. Our southernmost stop had been Atlanta where we had significant experiences, meeting both the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr. Our next stop was to be Knoxville. Although I was sure it was not the fastest route from Atlanta to Knoxville, I thought it was important that we drive via Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It was a good decision. As I recall, we stopped at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center and then drove the Newfound Gap Road. People exclaimed that there was nothing like this in Europe, that this was a uniquely American experience, perhaps the most uniquely American experience of their entire visit. I believe that any steps to preserve and improve this sort of experience for future visitors, American and foreign, will be extremely worthwhile.

Comments: The recent expansion of the Oconaluftee Visitor Center provides excellent orientation for visitors entering or leaving on the North Carolina side of the Park. Some expansion and updating at the Sugarlands Visitor Center might be beneficial.

Correspondence ID: 14 **Project:** 51080 **Document:** 77147

Address: Talbott, TN
Outside Organization: Unaffiliated Individual
Affiliation:
Received: Jan,25,2017 19:14:31
Correspondence Type: Web Form

Correspondence: Topic Question 1:
There are a number of waterfalls and Vistas that could use restored pulloffs or even full on formal parking lots. As far as I can remember several of the waterfalls have no official names. One in particular, a large waterfall that seems to always have lots of tourists and children especially, has a gravel parking lot and the trails near it are deteriorating.

Topic Question 2:
In some areas the drainage of water can be missing so rain and snow can cause additional issues. This should be examined along the highways stretch.

Comments: The Newfound Gap Rd is a valuable asset to the national byway name. I have been driving it since I was a child, at first with my family and then as a teenager and adult in my car. It deserves the designation of National byway. We need to preserve the area and the highway for the future.

Correspondence ID: 15 **Project:** 51080 **Document:** 77147
Address: smyrna, TN
Outside Organization: Unaffiliated Individual
Affiliation:
Received: Jan,26,2017 06:16:13
Correspondence Type: Web Form
Correspondence: Topic Question 1:
no

Topic Question 2:
no

Comments: There is no need to change anything about the corridor,it is a state road to Cherokee, N.C.

Correspondence ID: 16 **Project:** 51080 **Document:** 77147
Address: Charlotte, NC
Outside Organization: Unaffiliated Individual
Affiliation:
Received: Jan,26,2017 10:21:12
Correspondence Type: Web Form
Correspondence: The Park Service should not approve any plan that leads to or facilitates charging entrance fees to the park. The land was ceded with the understanding that it would be available for the enjoyment of ALL people, regardless of income.

Correspondence ID: 17 **Project:** 51080 **Document:** 77147
Address: Knoxville, TN
Outside Organization: Southern Forest Watch Unaffiliated Individual
Affiliation: Member
Received: Jan,26,2017 15:53:44
Correspondence Type: Web Form
Correspondence: Topic Question 1:
It will be very significant if you guys try to start charging for using Newfound Gap Road. Instead of trying to charge a fee to use the road that is restricted, give the National Park back to the people of Tennessee and North Carolina.

Topic Question 2:

Yes. Do not charge for using Newfound Gap Road.....ever.

Comments:

Correspondence ID: 18 **Project:** 51080 **Document:** 77147
Address: Waynesville, NC
Outside Organization: Unaffiliated Individual
Affiliation:
Received: Jan,27,2017 08:50:38
Correspondence Type: Web Form
Correspondence: Topic Question 1:
I believe it is VERY important to protect and maintain this opportunity to experience nature and its beauty.

Topic Question 2:
I like your plan

Comments: I spend a lot of time in and around the great Smoky Mountain National Park because its beauty is unspoiled and it is a great place to experience nature. In fact, that is why I moved here when I retired. I am writing to urge you to continue to keep this place unspoiled.

Correspondence ID: 19 **Project:** 51080 **Document:** 77147
Address: Waynesville, NC
Outside Organization: Southwestern Regional Planning Commission Unaffiliated Individual
Affiliation: Member
Received: Jan,29,2017 09:23:52
Correspondence Type: Web Form
Correspondence: Topic Question 1:
Local residents enjoy the opportunity to see the reactions of new/inexperienced visitors to the park when they encounter the wonders and natural beauty of the park. To see the awe and wonder as expressed on people's faces is consistent with the mission of the park. Seeing others enjoy their first experience reminds those who live within this beauty how much we should treasure it. Listening to the comments of these new visitors affirm the commitment and dedication of the founders of the park and validates the need to protect/preserve/promote the park's well being.

Topic Question 2:
If US Hwy 441 were to be redesignated as "Scenic US Hwy 441", those who use the highway as a thoroughfare could be redirected to other major highways in the area (including US 19/23 and US 74 and US 321 and I-40). Thereby alternative routes could be given, allowing through travelers to use more expedient routes in travel along highways with higher speed limits and more readily available customer services.

Comments: As a frequent user and nearby resident of GSMNP, I consider the park to be invaluable. I appreciate the beauty, the ecosystem, and the recreational opportunities the park affords. While I understand the desire of millions to experience the park, I also understand the need to protect and preserve. The history and heritage of the park deserves careful consideration in any and all plans for the future maintenance and development of the park. I applaud the efforts of those seeking to develop and manage Newfound Gap corridor. It is not easy to envision the future but it must be done through diligent planning and realistic foresight.
Using new technologies to address communication and monitoring needs of the park will connect the park's message and purpose to the younger generations.

Correspondence ID: 20 **Project:** 51080 **Document:** 77147
Address: Sevierville, TN
Outside Organization: Unaffiliated Individual
Affiliation:
Received: Jan,31,2017 12:53:39
Correspondence Type: Web Form

Correspondence: Topic Question 1:
There are many pull-offs and viewing areas that showcase the beauty of the National Park.
It would be nice if a small visitor/information center were located close to the "top" where the state lines of TN and NC meet. Possibly have credit card only donation swipe kiosks?
There are also several trails and hiking and quiet walkways which are nice, but maybe offer a couple donated rest benches for those unable to do the trails?
Possibly a summit webcam for those unable to actually visit this lovely area?

Topic Question 2:
Is it possible to have people donate native plant species in areas that might need them? This is a wonderful and lovely drive, the road is always so well maintained and the views are so lovely.

Comments:

Correspondence ID: 21 **Project:** 51080 **Document:** 77147
Address: Brandon, MS
Outside Organization: Unaffiliated Individual
Affiliation:
Received: Feb,02,2017 22:07:07
Correspondence Type: Web Form
Correspondence: Topic Question 1:
Such a wonderful road where you can see & experience all different aspects of GSM.

Topic Question 2:
Just keep it as is as best you can with minimum tree clearance to protect traffic.

Comments: Really a great roadway.

Correspondence ID: 22 **Project:** 51080 **Document:** 77147
Address: Harrison, OH
Outside Organization: Unaffiliated Individual
Affiliation:
Received: Feb,05,2017 07:20:18
Correspondence Type: Web Form
Correspondence: Topic Question 1:
This is one of the most scenic and traveled roads in the Great Smoky Mountain National Forest, during all four seasons. Winter with the icicles forming from the rocks, spring with the many shades of green and wildflowers, summer with families seeing the beautiful mountains for the first time, and the unbelievable fall foliage.

Topic Question 2:
Because this road is already within the park, it is protected. However, I want to be certain it always remains as it is now.

Comments:

Correspondence ID: 23 **Project:** 51080 **Document:** 77147
Address: Hazle Twp, PA
Outside Organization: Unaffiliated Individual
Affiliation:
Received: Feb,05,2017 08:02:50
Correspondence Type: Web Form
Correspondence: Topic Question 1:
Yes, all significant pull offs have postings of what you are looking at and history of that area.

Topic Question 2:

More parking availability at the popular hiking trails.

Comments: We visit the Smoky's every year and travel through the National Park regularly. It is a beautiful drive and you can always see something you may have missed on our previous ride. It has such beautiful views of the mountains. We have mountains here in PA, but nothing that compares the the Smoky's.

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

Affiliation:

Received:

Correspondence Type:

Correspondence:

24

falkville, AL

Unaffiliated Individual

Feb,05,2017 14:18:24

Web Form

this is my favorite road to travel in the entire country there is so much beauty along the entire road.it deserves to be a national scenic byway

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

Affiliation:

Received:

Correspondence Type:

Correspondence:

25

West Chester, PA

Unaffiliated Individual

Feb,07,2017 20:20:42

Web Form

Focus on settling the North Shore lawsuit because its the right thing to do for the residents of Swain County first...

The US Government, including the NPS and Dept of Interior, have swindled the citizens of Swain County of their property, livelihood and treasury...enough. I'm sure that you agree 70 years is far too long...

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

Affiliation:

Received:

Correspondence Type:

Correspondence:

26

Corryton, TN

Unaffiliated Individual

Feb,15,2017 08:25:02

Web Form

Topic Question 1:
See Question 2

Topic Question 2:
I believe there needs to be an additional strategy under Visitor Management and Marketing. It is transportation; a transportation solution that gets traction.

The action: Host a demonstration project to use shuttle bus system as a seasonal alternate means of traveling NFG Road. The system would be designed and implemented to enhance visitor experience, interpretation included, and help protect the historic qualities of the road.

The project will be successful through the engagement of partners across east Tennessee and nationally: for example, a project manager could come from UT Center for Transportation Research; the transit organizations in gateway communities (Cherokee and Gatlinburg) could be major providers of vehicles; for profit sponsors like Pilot Corp and Harrah's Casinos and non-profit funders like National Park Foundation and Friends of the Smokies could together fund this important demonstration effort. This is a nice project to engage the next generation of Park advocates and users; they can be the architects and implementers of the project as they will be the primary beneficiaries of the project in years to come.

I personally found the short-lived, seasonal Cherokee Transit bus shuttle from Cherokee to Pigeon Forge a wonderful addition to the Park. I used it a lot. It can work if we pay attention to and promote it, provide a unique experience, keep

cost manageable, and engage in partnerships with others. Transportation partnerships work!!

Comments:

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

Affiliation:

Received:

Correspondence Type:

Correspondence:

27

Knoxville, TN

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Unaffiliated Individual

OfficialRep

Feb,21,2017 15:26:40

Web Form

Topic Question 1:
No

Topic Question 2:
In looking at the plan, there is a high level outline for addressing the additional vehicular traffic that may result from this reclassification. The Smoky Mountains Hiking Club has a long history with the GSMNP authorities and feel that the details of this plan will be sufficient to address this challenge.

The Smoky Mountains Hiking Club also recognizes that the GSMNP and the FHA have been working in conjunction along the US441 corridor within the park boundaries, and that the reclassification of this road will not have any negative impacts on the relationship and how the right of way and easements are managed.

Comments: The Smoky Mountains Hiking Club is in support of the proposed changes that are outlined by the Management Plan developed by the GSMNP to include the following:

- Reclassification of US 441 as a National Scenic Byway
- Addition of 2 new pull off areas along the route between Chimney Tops Trailhead and the Chimney Picnic area

This is based on our current understanding of the following:

- The Newfound Gap Road will continue to be managed under the same federal authority as it is currently
- This reclassification will provide more potential funding opportunities for the communities of Gatlinburg and Cherokee to promote additional tourism to the area
- The park has, or will develop, a plan to address future increases in vehicle traffic as a result of this new roadway designation
- There are no current plans to reclassify any of the other roads in and around the GSMNP as a result of this proposal

We understand that the reclassification will not occur until the next nominating window opens. At such time, the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club would be happy to provide an official letter of support for this proposal.

Franklin LaFond
Smoky Mountains Hiking Club
Conservation Committee Chair
678-464-3380
Ox97GaMe@aol.com

Correspondence ID:

Address:

Outside Organization:

Affiliation:

Received:

Correspondence Type:

Correspondence:

28

Edwardsburg, MI

Unaffiliated Individual

Feb,23,2017 07:00:26

Web Form

Topic Question 1:

When I was a child and we went down to the Smokies, you used to be able to see the views on the road for miles. Now you can't see them thru all the trees. I'd like to see better management of the treeline and have more places for people to pull off the road to see them.

Topic Question 2:
Traffic is a major problem on this road in the summer. Perhaps a stop light or two in a few key spots (Newfound Gap parking lot and the road up to Clingman's Dome come to mind) might help get people to where they want to go more safely.

Comments:



Great Smoky Mountains National Park

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior