

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Cades Cove Opportunities Plan

Appendix K **Public Meeting Materials**

October 2004

United States Department
Of the Interior
National Park Service

**Notice of Public Scoping Meeting for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan
Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

A formal public scoping meeting for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan (Development Concept and Transportation Management Plan) will be held on May 23rd, 2002 at the Townsend Elementary School, 140 Tiger Drive, Townsend TN. The meeting will be held from 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM in the cafeteria. Everyone is invited to attend this meeting to provide comments. Additional comments can be submitted during the 30-day scoping period (ending June 22, 2002) and should be mailed or hand delivered to the attention of Cades Cove Opportunities Plan, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg TN 37738. For additional information, contact the Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park (865) 436-1207.



CADES COVE OPPORTUNITIES PLAN *Looking back - Moving forward* COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE ON IDEAS & ISSUES

The National Park Service and Knoxville Transportation Planning Organization will be holding an open house forum for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan on Thursday May 23rd from 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM at the Townsend Elementary 140 Tiger Drive. The purpose of the meeting is to seek public input regarding ideas and issues about visitor experience and the Loop Road in Cades Cove.

Cades Cove has experienced the pressures of increasing visitation for decades. Over the years this pressure has caused slow changes in the Cove in order to accommodate the growing numbers of visitors and automobiles while also trying to retain its unique sense of place. In 1955 the road was paved and converted to a one-way loop providing access to cabins, and trails located along the 11-mile road. Today Cades Cove is an "idealized" pastoral landscape combining mown fields, native grassland restoration, and pioneer architecture which gives the Cove a unique identity and attracts both wildlife and human visitors from across the country. Managing the Cove in a manner that keeps its character intact has become increasingly difficult as its popularity has grown. When visitors see wildlife they will stop, creating traffic jams. Many will pull off to the side in order to allow traffic to pass; this practice has created a large number of unpaved pull-off areas that have steadily increased over the years. These pull-off areas damage plant life, and are slowing eroding the resources that sustain the wildlife that make the Cove such an attractive destination. Over the years various management measures have been attempted to protect the resource. These include placing fencing, boulders, and logs along areas where the pressure of vehicle traffic has been damaging the resource. Cades Cove has become so popular that visitor access related problems are overshadowing the visitor experience. During peak times it often takes up to four hours to negotiate the 11-mile loop road.

The National Park Service and the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization have undertaken a development concept & transportation management planning project for Cades Cove. The National Park Service's mission is to "... preserve, unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Parks System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations." This mission statement is the guiding principle for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan. The issues surrounding Cades Cove are complex. A broad vision is needed to manage the demands being placed on the Cove. Establishing the most important values and a holistic view of the Cove is a critical foundation for making management decisions about the Cove's future. The Cades Cove Opportunities Plan will result in a range of alternatives that provide for a comprehensive, long-range approach for managing the natural and cultural resources and improving the quality of visitor experience by providing for greater visitor mobility through a variety of transportation initiatives. The alternatives will:

- ❑ Be consistent with National Park Service goals, policies and procedures.
- ❑ Reflect a process that is consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (106); and
- ❑ Reflect input from a wide range of public involvement opportunities throughout the project.

A project web site will be available by the end of May 2002. The site www.cadescoveopp.com will be used not only to announce the dates of future meetings but also to provide project information and public comment forms.

CADES COVE OPPORTUNITY PLAN

"Looking back moving forward"

Please respond to this post card by mailing it back or by faxing it to:
(865) 546-0300 include the following information (check boxes):

☐ I prefer to receive information by email.

☐ Please keep my name on the mailing list,
I would like additional information on this project.

☐ Remove my name from the mailing list

Please provide us with your name and email address:

Name: _____

Address: _____

email: _____



MEETING REMINDER
 May 23, 2002
 Townsend Elementary School
 Cafeteria
 140 Tiger Drive
 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM

Place
Stamps
Here

Return to:
 507 South Gay Street
 Suite 903
 Knoxville, TN 37902



Cades Cove Opportunities Plan

Looking Back - Moving Forward

Project Background

Cades Cove has experienced the pressures of increasing visitation for decades. Over the years it has slowly changed to accommodate growing numbers of visitors while also trying to retain its unique sense of place. The setting today, an "idealized" pastoral landscape of mown fields and late 19th century pioneer architecture has taken on an identity of its own to park visitors and regional residents. Managing the Cove in a manner that keeps its rural character intact has become increasingly difficult as its popularity as a destination has grown. Cades Cove has become so popular that visitor access related problems are issues that potentially overshadow the visitor experience. It often takes up to 4 hours during a peak autumn day to negotiate the 11-mile loop road.

The issues surrounding Cades Cove are complex. A broad vision is needed to manage the demands being placed on the Cove. Establishing the most important values and taking a holistic view of the Cove are critical foundations for making management decisions about the Cove's future.

With this background in mind, the National Park Service and the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization have undertaken a development concept & transportation management planning project for Cades Cove. The National Park Service's

mission is to "... preserve, unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Parks System for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations." This mission statement is the guiding principle for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan.

The Cades Cove Opportunities Plan will result in a range of alternatives that provide for a comprehensive, long-range approach for managing the Cove's natural and cultural resources and improving the quality of visitor experience by providing for greater visitor mobility through a variety of initiatives. The alternatives will:

- ❑ be consistent with National Park Service goals, policies and procedures.
- ❑ reflect a process that is consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (106); and
- ❑ reflect input from a wide range of public involvement opportunities throughout the project.

Web Access

A project website will be available by the end of May 2002. The site www.cadescoveopp.com will be used to announce the dates of future meetings, and to provide project information and public comment forms.

Steps in the Process

Project Initiation

Review existing data, studies and relevant information

Issues Identification

Public scoping, gathering new data
Open house May 23, 2002

Goals and Objectives

Define desired conditions for visitor experience and resources
Open house sessions Summer 2002

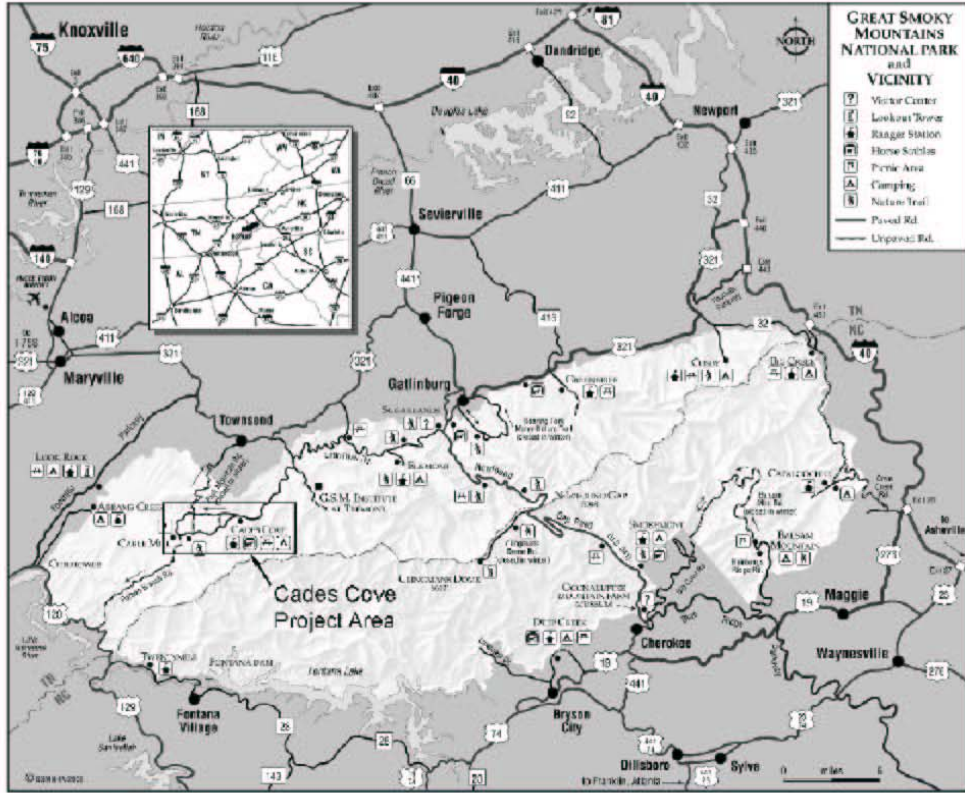
Alternatives Development

Develop a range of reasonable alternatives based on agency objectives and public interests
Public meetings Autumn 2002

Future Phases

Preparation of EIS, preferred alternative identification, public meetings, etc

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Project Vicinity Map



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

If you are interested in additional information or would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact us at:

Superintendent
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
107 Park Headquarters Road
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

Website
www.cadescoveopp.com
(available May 31, 2002)

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



May 2002

Overview of the May 2002 Meeting

During Phase I, public involvement focused on providing community members and interested parties with opportunities to identify issues and areas of concern. As the first public scoping session was being planned, it was determined that a questionnaire would be distributed during the meeting and included on the project website. The comment form was drafted by the consultant and refined and produced by the NPS to serve as a continuous source of input for the project. With this decision, the project team determined that survey items would be put on hold until Phase IV.

The introductory public meeting, held in Townsend on May 23, 2002, took the form of a brief welcome by the Park Superintendent, remarks by HNTB's project manager and a short question-and-answer period facilitated by the Superintendent. This formal opening was followed by an "open house" with displays of information and opportunities for participants to discuss their issues and concerns with consultants and NPS/TPO staff. A court reporter was made available to take statements from the public (10 participants used this service) and questionnaires were provided. Attendance was more than 130.

Comments Received - Open house participants were given a number of opportunities to provide comments and ask questions about the project. Members of the consultant team, as well as TPO and NPS staff members, were available to take comments and answer questions. The meeting room was set up with large display boards that provided participants with information about the purpose of the project, the Cove's natural and cultural resources, and transportation and visitation trends. Maps and writing tablets also were available. Staff members from the project team utilized the large tablets to note comments from participants.

Comments from the May public scoping meeting focused on education/enforcement, roadway improvements, communication, access restrictions, bicycle/pedestrian trails and mass transportation.

Four comments were made relative to visitor education and/or enforcement. These comments included one that suggested that an alternative to driving on the Loop Road be provided. Others suggested writing more tickets (for motorists stopping in the roadway) and informing visitors of other areas of the park where they might visit.

A few people suggested increasing the number of lanes and/or pull-off areas around the Loop Road. In this case, one lane could be for stopping and viewing wildlife, while the other could remain open for driving.

A few ideas were suggested on intelligent transportation technologies. One suggested that changeable message signs be placed at Tremont or outside the Park to help visitors make decisions about their visit in light of traffic conditions.

Several people suggested restricting the total number of vehicles allowed on the Loop Road. At least one person noted that such a measure could be paired with mass transit service.

Three comments were made regarding bicycle/pedestrian facilities. These included a suggestion to separate bicyclists and pedestrians from motorized vehicle traffic and another to connect the gateway communities to Cades Cove via a trail.

One of the most frequently discussed issues during the meeting was mass transportation. Eight comments were made on this topic. Three were negative, as people indicated that mass transit should not be considered as an alternative because it would reduce the “personal experience” of visitors and that the parking facilities for transit would sit empty from December to March when the service is not needed. Positive comments on mass transit focused on the ability of transit service to reduce traffic congestion. Transit would also have the advantages of being easy to board and de-board, in addition to serving people with disabilities and working in tandem with a reservation system to allow private vehicles to use on a less-congested Loop Road.

A project questionnaire entitled “Your Views—Cades Cove Opportunities Plan” also was developed. This included 13 questions related to issues, ideas, visitation activities and the management of Cades Cove. The questionnaires were first distributed at the May 2002 meeting and 38 of these were returned. A complete list of comments has been compiled and is available upon request. A summary is included below.

One question on the form asked: *“What do you see as a major issue/concern facing the National Park Service related to the management of Cades Cove?”*

The answers to this question fell into three areas: overcrowding/congestion, resources and education.

In terms of overcrowding and congestion, respondents indicated that some motorists lack consideration for others when they stop in the middle of the road to look at wildlife; others noted that they were inconvenienced because of Loop Road congestion (causing them not to be able to complete a tour in a reasonable amount of time). Still others voiced concern about the deteriorated condition of the roadway and how this related to traffic congestion. Many concerns were raised about the air pollution generated by the vehicles traveling the Loop Road.

Comments related to resources included a concern about litter and vandalism spoiling the cultural setting as well as the dangers to people and wildlife resulting from inappropriate visitor behavior (such as chasing bears). Another sentiment was voiced about the importance of maintaining open fields to promote views of wildlife.

Comments related to visitor education stated that information about the history, wildlife, and rules of Cades Cove should be conveyed to visitors through many means. Many comments noted that enforcement within Cades Cove should be improved.

Meeting Recap - After the May public scoping session, the project team evaluated this input as well as how participants reacted to the materials and meeting rooms. The team determined that the meeting room crowded too many people into a single space, making it difficult for individuals to hold meaningful discussions.

Notice of Public Scoping Meetings for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan Great Smoky Mountains National Park

A formal public scoping meeting for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan (Development Concept and Transportation Management Plan) will be held on July 22nd, 2002 at the Candy Factory, 1060 Worlds Fair Park Drive, Knoxville, TN. A meeting will also be held on July 23rd, 2002 at Townsend Elementary School, 140 Tiger Drive, Townsend, TN. Both meetings will be held from 5:30 PM to 8 PM. Everyone is invited to attend and provide comments. Additional comments can be submitted during the 30-day comment period (ending August 22, 2002) and should be mailed or hand delivered to the attention of Cades Cove Opportunities Plan, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg TN 37738. For additional information, contact the Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park (865) 436-1207.



CADES COVE OPPORTUNITIES PLAN – PUBLIC MEETINGS ON GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The National Park Service and the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization will be holding public meetings for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan on Monday, July 22nd and Tuesday, July 23rd to seek public input regarding goals and objectives for the long-term management of Cades Cove.

The meeting on July 22nd will be held in Knoxville at the Candy Factory, 6th Floor, 1060 World's Fair Park Drive. The meeting on July 23rd will be held in Townsend at the Townsend Elementary School, 140 Tiger Drive. Both meetings will begin at 5:30 p.m. and end at 8:00 p.m.

Final versions of the goals and objectives now being developed will set the standards by which the ultimate success of the management plan for Cades Cove will be judged. Management decisions over time will rely on these goals and objectives when the plan does not provide more explicit guidance. Moreover, ideas and concepts suggested for the plan will be tested against the goals and objectives to see whether they are worthy of further study and inclusion.

The agenda for the meeting includes an overview of the issues and concerns from the May 23rd public meeting; a presentation of proposed goals and objectives; small group "break out" sessions for more in-depth discussion among the audience, NPS and TPO staff, and consultants.

Web Access

The project website www.cadescoveopp.com was inaugurated in early June 2002. The site will be used to announce the dates of future meetings, provide project information and accept public comment.

CADES COVE OPPORTUNITIES PLAN

"Looking back, moving forward"

Goals & Objectives Public Meetings

The National Park Service and the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization will hold public meetings on July 22nd and July 23rd to seek input regarding goals and objectives for Cades Cove.

Monday, July 22nd in Knoxville

5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The Candy Factory, 6th Floor
1060 World's Fair Park

Tuesday, July 23rd in Townsend

5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Townsend Elementary School
140 Tiger Drive



For more information go to www.cadescoveppa.com
or contact:
Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park
107 Park Headquarters Road
Gatlinburg, TN 37738
(865) 436-1207



507 South Gay Street
Suite 903
Knoxville, TN 37902

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Cades Cove Opportunities Plan

"Looking Back - Moving Forward"

Issues & Concerns Identification

The National Park Service and Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization held a public scoping meeting on May 23, 2002. More than 120 participants attended the meeting held at the Townsend Elementary School. The meeting provided participants the opportunity to ask questions, make comments, and to meet with individual project team members to discuss issues and concerns regarding the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan.

The meeting featured a series of boards that showed existing conditions within Cades Cove. These included natural and cultural resources, access issues, visitor experience, and infrastructure. The boards also summarized issues and concerns that had been identified through previous processes and comments received by the NPS. These boards were used to stimulate discussion and to prompt the public to identify other issues and concerns. Comment sheets and a court reporter were also available during the meeting to give participants additional ways to provide input.

After the meeting, comment forms were distributed within Cades Cove and made available on the project website. The website, www.cadescoveopp.com, was developed to open the project up to a wider range of park users. This combination of public outreach has produced significant input to the project. An overview and sample of

the issues and concerns received from comment forms, the website, and letters and e-mails to the NPS is listed here:

Overview of Issues & Concerns

May 23rd meeting attendees = 127
Comments and comment forms received since May 23 = 190
Locations that comments are coming from: 18 states. The majority have come from TN and NC. A map of the 18 states is on the back page of this project report.

A sample of the issues and concerns received from the public include:

- ☐ Lack of signs/visitor information
- ☐ Lack of park rangers/enforcement
- ☐ Vandalism/littering
- ☐ Noise (vehicles, dogs in campground)
- ☐ Level of visitor services (electricity/showers)
- ☐ Condition of historic structures
- ☐ Natural areas being damaged
- ☐ Lack of bicycle trails
- ☐ Too few auto-free times for biking/walking
- ☐ Narrow road /number of pull-outs
- ☐ Need for alternative transportation such as buses
- ☐ Loss of automobile access to Cades Cove
- ☐ Loss of ability to experience the cove at their pace.
- ☐ Loss of ability to continue family activities/traditions

Steps in the Process

Project Initiation

Review existing data, studies and relevant information



Issues Identification

Public scoping, gathering new data
*Open house held
May 23, 2002*



Goals and Objectives

Define desired conditions for visitor experience and resources
*Open house sessions
July 22, 23 2002*



Alternatives Development

Develop a range of reasonable alternatives based on agency objectives and public interests
*Public meetings
Autumn 2002, and
Spring 2003*



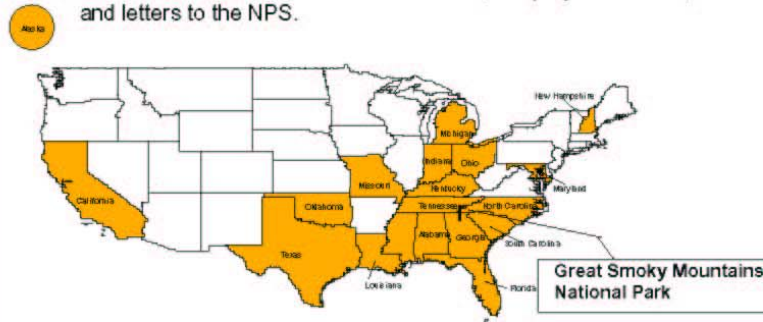
Future Phases

Preparation of EIS, preferred alternative identification, public meetings, etc

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Cades Cove Opportunities Plan Public Comments

Comments have been received from eighteen states including Alaska. Sources for comments have included: the May 23rd public meeting, comment forms distributed in Cades Cove, the project web site, and letters to the NPS.



Goals and Objectives - Public Input

Public input is an important element in the development of a set of goals and objectives. These goals and objectives will guide the development of alternatives and management activities for Cades Cove now and into the future. The success of the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan will be measured by its ability to accomplish these goals and objectives. Goals and Objectives comments will be accepted through August 22, 2002.



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Superintendent
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
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Website
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Boards from the first public meeting
are available on the website

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



July, 2002



Cades Cove Opportunities Plan

"Looking Back - Moving Forward"

JULY 22, 2002
PUBLIC MEETING
KNOXVILLE TENNESSEE 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM

The following is a transcript developed from each of the break out session groups. They are listed in order by table.

Table/Group 1

Resource Education

Recent incident w/bear & people (attacking it) - demonstrates the need for resource education at the beginning of Loop Rd.

People too close to bears

Not enough law enforcement – some people ignore volunteers – “petting zoo”

Comment on resource education objective - What curriculum, for college and high school?

Communicate w/ signs or people – not enough people

Signs can disturb visual/scenic – but need happy medium b/w brochures and signs- people won't read 8pg booklet and don't read signs often.

If public transit is chosen, that presents many new opportunities for communication about resources and why public transportation is important.

Properly educate people for backcountry preparation

Safety & Facilities

More volunteers needed

Public transportation can have restrooms on board

Opportunity for disabled population to experience Cove

Pets – public upset that pets not allowed on trails and with bears

Need more bathrooms

If public transportation, have to determine location of stops and then facilities relate to those stops, then could concentrate resources there.

Definition of “appropriate” – balance b/w user needs and Cove setting/resources

Problem of people using bathroom anywhere – damage resources

Disabled/accessible trail needed in Cove

Integration – all these goals are interrelated; many things can positively or negatively affect others



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Car breakdowns – only one ranger available, if didn't have cars, that would resolve the problem of people riding unsafely – rules about in back of pickups, open doors, etc.

Don't think public transportation is needed –

Road is not adequate for buses or even heavy auto traffic. (This relates to the concern about there not being enough room for other modes w/bus.)

Commercial vehicles not supposed to be allowed but buses & motor homes go through now, don't know how - not enforced? But illegal.

No tour companies on permit list

Limiting number of vehicles per day reverse flow of traffic, but first cabin is close to road so it would be tremendously impacted.

Bus is not only transit option- would improve road before put buses in.

Resources

Agree 100% (goal statement) with natural and cultural resources – “enhance protection” – target youth about vandalism – who is doing it? Signage that there is a fine for graffiti – solution needs something strong but the goal is ok.

Like the air quality/technology objective.

Access/transportation gets lost in objectives – it's a huge issue.

We must recognize that this is a more comprehensive process than “just a transportation plan”.

Switzerland – tourism – access/transportation – trails, public transit – Cades Cove not static experience

What about scientific inquiry – a sub-bullet addressing it – teachers.

Visitation

Exceptional – Need to define.

Public transportation would really help educate and make opportunity for video and audio, not just guide.

Appropriate/illegal activities – people ask if they have to use a seat belt, perception that laws don't apply in the Cove.

Need to attract minorities – how to reach out – broaden audience

Sugarlands has a lot of foreign visitors – we need interpretive materials (on public transportation) in other languages, text-based system technology to translate.

People ask about having bike paths – concern about safety of youth cyclists who can't handle bike too well.

Make everyone ride bikes

Free bikes or check-out bikes

<Note, there was not a “Table 2”>



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Table/Group 3

Safety & Facilities

Ensure that facilities and services are safe, accessible, appropriate and sustainable

Dislike: need more definition on statement – “appropriate” to whom

- Location
- access
- Safety

Resource Education

Create opportunities for enjoyment, understanding, appreciation and protection of natural and cultural resources within Cades Cove.

Likes: Appreciation and protection.

- Public Education – well rounded (facilities and resources)
- Opportunity to have choices in level of education
- Management of info to public

Dislikes: Cades Cove is a classroom (disagree with this)

- Structured education (sounds like building)
- Construct Facilities for Education and not appropriate
- Emotional connections as a concern, not the job of the NPS.
- Word “expand” - gives the impression that there is development proposed.
- More infrastructure to be added for education

Needing resource education

- Awareness – communicate the message.
- Communication => Education (verbage)

Measurement of success

Money resource is needed – Funding.

Survey to measure success

Table/Group 4

Resource Goal

What is single biggest threat?

- Vandalism – cultural
- Disturbance of wildlife and habitats – natural

Educate visitors

Likes: Designed for diversity experience

Dislike: how to balance preservation vs. experience

State goal as “balancing” – can’t do both?

Funnel visitors at the beginning

- Video at visitor center
- CD ROM or tape for car

Objectives

- Coordinate strategy – do it!
- Opportunity to use cove as education on how to protect resources

Personal responsibility!

Air quality education



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Visitation Goal

Educate visitors

- Inside park
- Before visitors get there

Charge people, they will still come

Preserve resources or there will be nothing to come for

Safety & Facilities

Ensure that facilities are safe, accessible, appropriate and sustainable

Will safely take away from the visitor

What aspects need safety? Experience?

- Bicycle & pedestrian access
- Safety for all modes of transportation/ all visitors
- Safety for wildlife – education

Facilities

- Less/more limited access for private vehicles
- More alternatives! (transportation)
- Change scheduling/availability of bike/ped access
- Car free days
- Inform people of options
- Access roads – change accessibility level/type

Sustainability

Reduce traffic = reduce maintenance

Alternative energy source vehicles

More people in groups – reduce vandalism

Educate public about management goals – currently no facility for this

Objectives

Need facility when you enter Cove

Likes: get information

Campground – less impact on resources like trails

Dislikes: must commit to long drive to access trails

Litter control on trails, including toilet paper/bathroom adequacy

Sequencing of visitation

Cars

Implementation

- Mass transit – what do we do w/ cars?
- Funding – vote for democrats

If you do have cars – radio stations to inform visitors (wait times, air quality)

Find different methods of outreach NPS visitor guidelines

Charge vehicles according to weight

Regulate visitation – reservation system

- Private vehicles – disincentives
- Promote filled vehicles



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Table/Group 5

Resource Goal

Goal: Enhance the protection & preservation of the natural & cultural resources ... continuing to provide exceptional visitor experience opportunities

Both can't occur simultaneously, resources should be ultimate goal
Reduce number of people and vehicles to reach goal
Reservation system

Ultimate goal preserve, 2nd enhance

Should not link reducing personal vehicles with reducing people
Can't separate people and vehicles
Balance protection vs. exceptional visitor experience and many things to balance
Reduce private vehicles and implement mass transit
Focus should be on History
Implementation
Bicycle lane (expand OK to accommodate)
Mass transit majority of week (5 days/2 days private cars).
Pollution free – fuel cell or electric bus
Stick to one vehicle lane (don't widen existing road)
Regularly spaced bus stops
Reduce private vehicle traffic
Install counting device at Wye to reduce vehicles on Loop Road
Create parking garage off site
Interpretive info on Mass Transit vehicle
Out reach by park to educate public about Cades Cove Plan

Resource Education

Increase Ranger/volunteer presence to increase education
Education should focus on history and wildlife
Small educational displays at structures
Explain relationship between transportation and its effects on park
Visitor facility
Education on Mass transit vehicle. But presentation on vehicle may get redundant for frequent visitors.

Implementation

Visitor facility outside Cades Cove
Walks/talks given by park personnel
Use existing amphitheater for talks
Multiple sources for education: i.e. small signs, presentation on mass transit vehicles, visitor center, talks/walks



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Visitation Goal

Exceptional experience is not tied to number of people
Experience enhanced with fewer people
Fewer visitors good for park; bad for adjacent communities (TN)
Fewer visitors may be good for adjacent communities as people wait for reservation time
Increase opportunity for interpretive info about Cove
In favor of visitors center to educate
Visitor center should not be inside loop
 Locate at mass transit staging area
Implementation
Implement a mass transit plan

Table/Group 6

Resource Goal

Do not allow another film crew in at Cove – because it could impact resources and this is not the correct use of a national park
Deer herd is nearing or over carrying capacity – should reducing herds be considered?
Need to maintain ecosystem

Objectives

Would like meadows maintained
Any new facilities should be sustainable and use alternative energy resources and environmentally sensitive design
Restore wetlands and streams to “natural path”
Reduce noise and improve air quality (like this objective)
Establish standards for resource objectives
Visitation Goal
Objectives
Need a visitor center and parking area.
Need visitor center similar to a smaller version of Sugar Lands

General Comments

- Does free mean you can not restrict vehicles?
- Need to identify what transit means

Objective #3 – like term “accessible transportation”

Resource Education

Objectives

A visitor center would help with resource education
Hayrides, walking tours and bike tours (guided) during closed times could provide education opportunities
Provide more “Closed to Auto” time.

Objectives

Provide more Ranger interpretation or use volunteers to provide interpretation
Ranger/volunteer interpretation (guided) is better than written materials



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Visitation Goal

Provide exceptional visitor experiences that respect the natural environment and

Enhance the protection and preservation of the natural environment and cultural resources...

Objectives

Comments

- Local interest is heritage; non-local has different interests
- Education program at Tremont is good
- Need education about wildlife and safety (i.e. bear incidents)

Resources objective #3 is good

Need to support stewardship – do not allow digging up plants or poaching of animals. Enforce park rules.

Need education on reasons for not mowing – important to natural resources

Decide policy and then educate public

Safety and Facilities

Objective

New facilities should be sustainable, “green”, environmentally sensitive and consider alternative energy/fuels

Restrooms – needed at entrance of Cove

Visitor Center (smaller version of Sugar Lands) at entrance of Cove

Enforcement of park rules, specifically plants/animals

Comments

Need more volunteers

Willing to pay to go into Cove – need to have fees, (would help reduce number of people or vandals, it would help with funding improvements) or use for alternative transportation

Maintenance Facility – location can be problematic – noisy at campgrounds, access difficult. Move to a better location (towards Townsend)



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Cades Cove Opportunities Plan

"Looking Back - Moving Forward"

JULY 23, 2002
PUBLIC MEETING
TOWNSEND TENNESSEE 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM

The following is a transcript developed from each of the break out session groups. They are listed in order by table.

Table/Group 1

Comments/Issues

- Air Quality
- Vehicle Emission Testing
- Corporate pollution
- Don't report air pollution during park burns

Traffic

- Pull-off areas
- Enforcement on Loop Road/Citations
- Reintroduce V.I.P program
- "Right" to keep cars on the Loop Road
- No commercialism of Cades Cove and transportation system

Resource Goal

- Like - PRESERVE AND PROTECT
- Objective: reintroduction of Cattle so landscape management plan is not needed.
- Like introduction of native wildflowers
- Like Restoration of existing facilities
- Dislike: Means "HOW TO" preserve
- Objective re-hashing historical character (management plan)
- Objective: Dislike the idea of visitors picnicking in the fields (too much trash)

Resource Education Goal

- MAKE IT USER FRIENDLY
- EXPAND VISITOR CENTER EDUCATION PROGRAMS
- Radio station outreach
- More signage
- EXPAND VIP PROGRAM
- USE MORE VOLUNTEERS
- Improve intra-park information C.C.P.A.

Facilities & Safety Goal

- KEEP CAMPGROUNDS PRIMITIVE - No electric hook ups



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1

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

NEED MORE RESTROOMS
Need to separate horse trails from hiking trails
HIKER EDUCATION SAFETY
Directional signage on trails (a way out)
Wildlife/Visitor education (conflicts)
MORE PARKING AT TRAIL HEADS

Visitation Goal

Expand biking/walking hours
Need separate bike trails from loop road
Reduce biking hours
DON'T REMOVE CAR ACCESS
PROVIDE MORE PULL OUTS
ENFORCEMENT ON LOOP ROAD TO KEEP TRAFFIC FLOWING
Need an alternative transportation other than cars.

Table/Group 2

Visitation Goal

Provide exceptional visitor experiences that respect the natural and cultural resources of Cades Cove.

VISITOR WANTS HAVE TO BE BALANCED

No major bus terminal
Solution add another lane
Visitor goal should be related to what an individual or family would experience

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

OPTIONS FOR QUICK EXITS ON THE LOOP ROAD

Add/provide map
Expanding the road may degrade the visitor experience
Improve signing/communication. More rangers . . . MORE ENFORCEMENT
Numbers of lanes is not the solution nor are pull off areas.
Limit the number of vehicles

KEY IS TRAFFIC FLOW - KEEPING IT MOVING

Use Peak times to manage visitation.
Radio communication with visitors

DEVELOP PLAN THAT ALLOWS FOR CHANGES/GROWTH INCREMENTALLY, NOT EVERYTHING ALL AT ONCE.

HAVE VISITOR CONTACT STATION NEAR ENTRANCE TO PARK BEFORE THE "Y".



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2

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

Group/Table 3a

Resource Education Goal

Add: Physical connection, because walking to sites is part of the experience.
Foster understanding of natural resources should focus on wildlife interaction
Don't rely on people reading publications - install signs along road and add message to radio about how to interact with wildlife.

Safety and Facilities Goal

Appropriate roadway facility is 2 lanes
Add restrooms at beginning of loop
Add visitor center at beginning of loop
Agree with goal and objectives
Comment: Cattle graze to keep grass height low

Visitation Goal

Agree with goal
Provide transit for those who wish to use it, do not force everyone to use transit - this will degrade visitor experience for some.

Resource Goal

Agree with goal

Table/Group 3b

Goal 1 Resource Goal

GOOD TO HAVE PULL-OFF AREAS
PROVIDE EDUCATION/HISTORY OF SITES (SIGNS)
EDUCATE VISITORS ON RULES/POLICIES WHEN THEY ENTER
Transit would increase noise
More volunteers to help clean/restore/maintain sites - volunteer campaigns
LEAVE THE COVE AS IT IS
Keep the fields maintained as is

CHANGING ROADS WOULD IMPACT HISTORIC WALLS AND HISTOIC CHARACTER OF THE ROADS
Busses more fumes/air pollution
Cars are not the only pollution - plants (industry) airport, highway traffic.

Safety/Facilities/Access
Services (food, drinks, restrooms) at entrance

PROVIDE FREEDOM FOR DECENDANTS TO VISIT

FREEDOM TO MOVE AT OWN PACE

COSTS OF MASS TRANSIT
Parking lots
Busses/gas



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3

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

picnicking
PROVIDE ALTERNATIVES TO VISITORS IN LIEU OF CADES COVE FOR SAME
ACTIVITIES

Resource Education

More advanced info to visitors prior to arriving to the Cove
Rules - "Rules of the Road"
MORE ON-SITE EDUCATION BY RANGERS OR VOLUNTEERS "LIVING HISTORY"
Facilities and Safety
More restrooms (at each church)
EVALUATE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO REALLY UTILIZE OTHER ROUTES TO ENJOY
CADES COVE

Table/Group 5

Safety/Facilities Goal

There is not a safety or facilities problem out there now. Why have this goal? We already have this.
Need educational programs for people around the cove
MORE PARK RANGERS TO ENFORCE!
NEED MORE PULL-OFF AREAS TO ACCOMMODATE MORE STOPS
NEED SIGNAGE TO HELP REINFORCE APPROPRIATE STOP AND DON'T STOP AREAS

Keep staging area if necessary outside of the park

Some think its fine just the way it is
- need 2 lanes with pull-off areas

Enforcement of penalties and fines
Need for better visitor information and communications around cove as well as BETTER
EMERGENCY INFORMATION (signage)

NEED TO ADDRESS - VEHICLE VS BIKERS CONFLICTS SUCH AS SEPARATE WALKING
BIKING PATH IN PARKS

Resource Goal

MAINTAIN OPEN VISTAS LIKE WHEN KERMIT WAS IN THERE
Educate visitors about the rules of the Cove
Address items listen under goal number 4 and your addressing this goal
ADD MORE FENCES FOR PEDESTRIAN CONTROL KEEP FENCES TO ELIMINATE
VISITORS DRIVING ONTO OPEN FIELDS
Advertise/flaunt how busy Cades cove is and how many people are coming there to scare
others away from visiting the area.
REESTABLISH LIVESTOCK cattle IN FIELDS TO MAINTAIN SUCCESSION IN LIEU OF
BURNING

Objective 2 can be tied to new transportation and historic/heritage museum proposed for Townsend.



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5

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

Visitation Goal

Objective 1 there are already appropriate activities occurring in the park - why reinvent?

Objective 1 and 2

NEW MUSEUM PROGRAM CAN BE BROADENED & PARTNERED WITH NPS TO
PROVIDE AN OVERALL IMPROVED VISITOR FACILITY

The following were additional ideas written on comment sheets and included with the large tablet sheets developed by this group.

Generally there is nothing wrong with the Cove. "It ain't broke, don't fix it"

NO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS - such as buses, trams, or rail

Maintain only personal or private vehicles

Resource Education Goal

Potential for a video providing an overview of cultural and natural resources at the existing gateway centers.

Why foster change and add programs if it already works - objectives aren't necessary.

Need for more educational media use at each park structure.

NEED FOR A STAFFED EDUCATION CENTER IN TOWNSEND - Need information a park entrance at Townsend to indicate visitors are heading into loop Road System

Idea, Use of headsets as an educational tool/media form

Table/Group 6

Resource/Resource Education Goal

Cultural, archaeological and natural resources as number 1 objective

Consider in field's management plan:

1. Prescribed burn is eliminating bramble bushes and therefore removing food source for wildlife (bears) – they move into campgrounds
2. What are pros & cons of mowing vs. not mowing
3. Decline of historic structures and vandalism and lack of vibrancy and interpretation (resource education) including physical decline as well as the bats and infestations of small animals
4. Access to historic structures need to be balanced with preserving historic buildings. Maintenance should be continuous
5. Need to maintain the road system w/in park before implementing new transportation infrastructure transportation projects
6. Parsons Branch Rd needs grading more often (keep Parson Branch and Rich Mountain as dirt because less crowded and peaceful – natural/quiet experience. Used often by residents)
7. Eliminating pulloffs before Cades Cove has channeled everyone to Cades Cove
8. Improve education of visitor regarding dealing with wildlife in natural habitat. (may need counter TV program that create false info dealing with wildlife like petting/feeding)
9. Educate public to reduce littering
 - Littering is also an enforcement issue
 - Educate people to pullover – this would alleviate congestion
 - Make people accountable for their actions
10. Concern that implementation of alternate models in other parks is the reason behind considering transit in Smokies



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6

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

11. Consider adding lane to pass stopped traffic and enforce so people don't stop in thru traffic lane – put signs "if you stop in the left lane you will get a ticket" (left lane cars only)
12. Forget the buses
13. Opinion: environmentalists part of problem in not implementing changes
14. Solutions could vary by season/time of year.
15. Volunteers could help with education (training may be too restrictive)
16. Try some practical solutions in near-term before implementing a lot of long term big decisions (education, signs, .. etc.)
17. Change Cades Cove Circulation to reduce congestion at exit
 - Eliminate 2 stop signs
 - Add new connector road to avoid campground traffic
 - Have campground traffic stop (instead of Cades Cove traffic)
 - Could reverse flow and traffic would queue traffic prior to Cades Cove Entrance rather than at the end.

Table/Group 7

Resource Goal

Concern: Maintain Historic Structures

-Not letting them fall

Develop Resource Model

-What does that mean?

-Sounds like development – new

Fields management plan – they should be mown better

Letting fields grow helps native grasses – helps wildlife

Elk? Concern is that their introduction to Cades Cove would slow traffic more.

Visitation Goal

Tour buses not on Cades Cove Road (re commercial services)

More comm. Services – impact more on Cove

Access that accommodates the range of visitor needs

-Hikers, sightseers, etc.

Reversing flow of Loop Road

Increase number of lanes

-Leaves one lane open for traffic flow and other for stopping viewing

Post travel time

-Changeable for conditions

Special Permits for descendant access

Fencing at Oliver Springs Cabin has impacted informal parking, may need again

Importance of communicating rules etc. before Cove

Booth at entry to give info out

More restrooms

Volunteer bike patrols to help curb bear jams

-But people ignore volunteers?

Need to better communicate volunteer opportunities

Where will funding come for communication idea

-Fines for stopping in road

Tell people about cut across access routes & Rich Mountain (communication)



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7

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

Resource Education Goal

- Workshops for volunteers
- More storytelling
- Reenacting
- Safety & Facilities
- Where does money come from?
 - Campground go?
 - Horse concession, etc. go?
- Restrooms
- Emergency Access – need improvement
- Improve maintenance of facilities
 - Clean restrooms
- Horse & Hikers on same trails – smells, etc.
- Add showers to campground
 - Stop bubbles in stream
- General
- Why do they turn down volunteer help at park?

Table/Group 8

- Wildlife Concern
- Bike/hike/cars interface
- Cades Cove descendent/keep as is
- Transportation Concern – does everyone have a right to drive a car to Cades Cove?
- Opinion against bus transportation
- Job is to suggest appropriate goals
- Stay as is – more pull-off/need to be able to stop and see wildlife
- Teacher: photos and video of Cove taken back to students – need to use own car to do this
- Viewing areas to park and view wildlife provide seats to shade to view wildlife

Resource Education Goals

- Not Comprehensive "minimal"
- Assume massive development
 - New –VC/bus parking/classrooms etc.
- Assume that facilities stay the same (modest intrusive)
- What are appropriate facilities?
- Don't want to see another Government bad film
- Some visitors want to see film about Cades Cove
- Personal DVD movie of Cades Cove (watch if you want)
- Choice of mode of transportation
 - 1Can drive and sit in traffic
 - 2Provide alternative to get around Cades Cove quicker
- Don't increase size of road
- Educate visitor about wildlife

- Literature for visitor
- Education is solution for a lot of Cades Cove problems
- Access to emergencies on Loop Rd



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8

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

Communication for Emergencies
Can be a great learning experience without new facilities
More bathrooms
Bicycles – poor road conditions
 -Fords are in poor condition
 -Expand bike use
 -Road width won't accommodate bikes and buses at same time
Diesel not only fuel for mass transit
Enforce dogs on trail restriction
Wagons



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9

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

Notice of Public Scoping Meetings for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan Great Smoky Mountains National Park

A formal public scoping meeting for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan (Development Concept and Transportation Management Plan) will be held on September 17, 2002 at Heritage High School, 3741 E Lamar Alexander Parkway, Maryville, TN. A meeting will also be held on September 19, 2002 at Cokesbury Center, 9915 Kingston Pike, Knoxville, TN. Both meetings will be held from 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM. Everyone is invited to attend and provide comments. Additional comments can be submitted during the 15-day comment period (ending October 1, 2002) and should be mailed or hand delivered to the attention of Cades Cove Opportunities Plan, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg TN 37738. For additional information, contact the Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park (865) 436-1207.



CADES COVE OPPORTUNITIES PLAN – PUBLIC MEETINGS ON OPTIONS, PROBLEMS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

The National Park Service and the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization will hold public meetings for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan on Tuesday, September 17th and Thursday, September 19th. The public is invited to review and add to the list of problem statements, options and evaluation criteria.

The meeting on September 17th will be held in Maryville at Heritage Middle School, 3741 East Lamar Alexander Parkway. The meeting on September 19th will be held in Knoxville at the Cokesbury Center, 9915 Kingston Pike. Both meetings will begin at 5:30 p.m. and end at 8:00 p.m.

The planning process to date, including previous public meetings and other public comments received, has yielded a large number of ideas and issues to be addressed in the plan. The September meetings will allow the public to review a list of problem statements and add to the list of options. These problems and options are organized into four groups: visitor experience, resource protection, resource education, and facilities and services. Evaluation criteria will also be reviewed. These criteria will be used to review the options for compliance with National Park Service policies, mandates and mission statement, and for conformance to project goals and objectives. The third step will be a screen for fatal flaws based on available data and information.

The meeting will begin with a short presentation, followed by small group discussion about the problem statements, options and evaluation criteria. At the end of the meeting, there will be a report-out session from the groups and an opportunity for comments and questions. A court reporter will be available throughout the evening to record comments. Comment forms will also be available.

Following these meetings, the various options will be screened using the evaluation criteria and assembled into a range of draft alternatives. Public comment on these alternatives will be solicited in early 2003.

Web Access

The project website www.cadescoveopp.com provides project information, accepts public comments and announces meeting dates. The information displays created for the September meetings will also be posted on the website.

CADES COVE OPPORTUNITIES PLAN

"Looking back, moving forward"

Public Meetings on Evaluation Criteria and Options

The National Park Service and Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization will hold public meetings to seek input regarding options for management in Cades Cove, as well as the criteria that will be used to evaluate options.

Tues., Sept. 17th in Maryville

5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Heritage High School

3741 E Lamar Alexander Parkway

Thurs., Sept. 19th in Knoxville

5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Cokesbury Center

9915 Kingston Pike



For more information, go to www.cadescoveopp.com or contact:

Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park
107 Park Headquarters Road
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Cades Cove Opportunities Plan

"Looking Back - Moving Forward"

Purpose Statement

PURPOSE of the Project:
Develop a long-range management vision for Cades Cove that will protect natural and cultural resources and ensure that the visitor has a quality experience.

Visitor Experience **Problems/Facts/Options**

PROBLEM

Congestion in Cades Cove

FACTS

- Congestion impacts the visitor experience (delays, rushed to keep up with traffic flow, forced to skip attractions due to lack of parking).
- Congestion inhibits park operations (emergency response, maintenance activities, etc.).
- Congestion is not constant (wildlife jams, peak season of June, July & Fall color, special events).

OPTIONS

- No Change
- Add additional pull-off areas
- Variable Message Signs
- Add a second lane
- Establish a reservation system
- Develop a seasonal transportation system (tram, trolley, etc.) utilizing low emission/alternative fueled vehicles
- Develop a voluntary transportation system as above using a tram, trolley, etc.
- Increased enforcement of park regulations
- Increased ranger presence including Rangers on bicycles
- Utilize alternative vehicles for emergency access (Cushman cart/bicycles etc.)
- Educate visitors
- Charge an entrance fee to Cades Cove
- Reverse traffic flow on the Loop Road
- Create alternative routes within the Loop Road system
- Provide alternative visitor activities
- Provide visitor center other than Cable Mill
- Unlimited descendant access
- Provide map that identifies quick exits

or shorter drives through Cades Cove

- Provide signs for the "quick/short" routes.

- Limit number of vehicles
- Provide alternate vehicles for Loop Road access such as electric carts or horse drawn wagons (during peak season)
- Put signage on the pavement "NO STOPPING OR PARKING"
- Phone/dial-up number to get information on current traffic situation
- Provide web-based information on traffic conditions in Cades Cove
- Coordinate solutions with the Gateway Community
- Restrict recreational vehicles from accessing the Loop Road
- More car free days
- Fewer car free days
- Add a bike lane to the road or separate bike/pedestrian path
- New two-way road to provide access into and out of the west-end of the cove

PROBLEM

Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized vehicles.

FACTS

- Existing road is too narrow to safely accommodate the multiple modes of transportation that currently use the road (pedestrian, bicycle, car, motor home, and school bus).
- May through September, Loop Road closed to motorized vehicles on Wednesday and Saturday mornings from sunrise to 10:00 AM.
- Mixed bicycle and motor vehicle use creates safety concerns.

OPTIONS

- No Change
- Establish a bicycle/pedestrian trail separate from the Loop Road.
- Expand bike/pedestrian hours
- Reduce bike/pedestrian hours
- Close the Loop Road to motorized vehicles

Steps in the Process



Sept 2002



PROBLEM

Visitor orientation of Cades Cove is inadequate.

FACTS

- Many visitors do not understand their options for visiting the Cove and don't know the "rules".
- Orientation shelter at entrance often is unmanned, easily missed by first time visitors, and has limited information available.

OPTIONS

- Stop all visitors prior to entering (and provide information)
- Provide orientation information prior to entering the Cove for trip planning
- Provide orientation facility at the "Wye", before entering the Loop Road
- Provide more human contact, Ranger/VIP
- Provide orientation information on radio

Facilities & Services

Problems/Facts/Options

PROBLEM

The roadway (Loop Road) is in poor condition.

FACTS

- FHWA Pavement Assessment reflects poor roadway conditions along the Loop Road.
- Roadway lacks capacity to handle the current vehicular demand.
- Maintenance is restricted by heavy traffic.

OPTIONS

- No Change
- Reconstruct the existing roadway on the existing alignment without any changes
- Reconstruct the roadway to accommodate additional formal pull-off areas
- Reconstruct the roadway to accommodate two lanes of traffic (one for travel and one for wildlife viewing)
- Reconstruct the roadway and include a separate bicycle lane

PROBLEM

Inadequate parking to serve visitors to Cades Cove.

FACTS

- Visitors park in unauthorized locations in order to visit cabins/churches.

- Parking conflicts exist in the camp store and horse concessions areas.
- Day hikers and bicyclists use picnic area for parking.
- Heavy parking congestion during bicycle only periods.
- Parking occurs in fields and other unauthorized locations.

OPTIONS

- No Change
- Provide additional parking for visitors to attractions along the Loop Road
- Utilize a mass transit system to reduce parking demand
- Establish more parking at trailhead areas
- Designate day use horse trailer parking areas
- Undertake greater enforcement to curb illegal parking

PROBLEM

Lack of facilities within Cades Cove that meet the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

FACTS

- There are no ADA accessible trails in Cades Cove
- There are 2 accessible picnic sites, and 2 accessible camp sites within Cades Cove.
- There are only 12 accessible parking spaces within the Cove.
- Most attractions within Cades Cove are not accessible.

OPTIONS

- No Change
- Develop ADA accessible trails within Cades Cove
- Provide information about accessibility within Cades Cove
- Identify an appropriate number and distribution of ADA accessible picnic and campsites.
- Provide electrical hook-up service to ADA accessible campsites

PROBLEM

Inadequate utility infrastructure to serve visitor and NPS needs.

FACTS

- Lack of utilities (water, electric, phone) to Cable Mill and other areas within the Cove.
- No emergency communication or cellular phone coverage for visitor use in emergency.
- Capacity of sewage treatment facilities is not adequate to accommodate expanded visitor demand.

OPTIONS

- No Change
- Extend utilities to Cable Mill and other Cove areas including phone, sewer, electric, and water.
- Improve/expand capacity of sewage treatment facilities

Definitions

Purpose of the Project:

The basic reason why the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan is being done.

Problem Statements:

Developed from the issues and concerns identified in May, 2002 and from internal scoping with the NPS

Facts:

Information gathered from the NPS and other sources that verify and support the problem statement(s).

Options:

Compiled from public comment sheets, website comments, public meetings, and internal scoping meetings with the NPS.

Evaluation Criteria:

Questions that will be asked to see if the options are viable to be carried forward into alternative development.
(See also page 5)

PROBLEM

Campground, camp store, and horse concession areas lack the amenities many visitors expect.

FACTS

- Campground, camp store, and horse concession facilities and amenities are at or below 1975/76 levels.
- Storage area for camp store is limited
- Restrooms at the camp store, and horse concession are inadequate.

OPTIONS

- No Change
- Rehabilitate or replace restrooms
- Enhance campground amenities i.e. hot water/electric/showers.
- Identify the capacity/needs for the general store.
- Remove campground

PROBLEM

Designated picnic facilities are over capacity during seasonal peak periods.

FACTS

- There are no picnic facilities around the Loop Road.
- The existing picnic area has 57 picnic sites (2 are accessible).
- Day hikers and bicyclists use the picnic area for parking.

OPTIONS

- No Change
- Develop picnic facilities around the Loop Road
- Develop group picnic facilities around the Loop Road
- Develop a "day use" pavilion in the vicinity of the Loop Road

PROBLEM

Restrooms (lack of sufficient number and appropriate location)

FACTS

- No restroom facility from the entrance contact station to Cable Mill.
- Within Cades Cove there are 13 (combination urinal/stall) restroom stalls for men and 8 restroom stalls for women.
- Restrooms are located at Cable Mill, camp store, picnic facility and horse concession area.
- Visitors do not know where restrooms are located.
- Visitors urinate and defecate in inappropriate locations (fields and historic buildings).
- Utilities do not extend around the 11-mile Loop Road.

OPTIONS

- No Change
- Identify and develop adequate restroom facilities in appropriate locations based on visitor demand and activity areas
- Provide information to the visitor on the location of public restrooms at the beginning of the Loop Road/entry contact station
- Provide restrooms at Abrams Falls trailhead

PROBLEM

Location of horse camp and day-use horse parking area results in conflicts with other activities/users.

FACTS

- Access to horse camp is through the picnic area.
- Some of the more popular trails require day use horse riders to travel through the picnic area.
- Rules for horse use in picnic area are not always followed (dismount/pick-up manure).

OPTIONS

- No Change
- Move horse camp to a more appropriate location
- Provide alternate route to avoid picnic area

PROBLEM

Cades Cove District administrative and operations facilities are inadequate and in some instances inappropriately located.

FACTS

- Ranger station, maintenance facility, resource education office, antiquated and/or too small for current operations.
- The maintenance facility has restrictions on working hours due to noise being carried into the adjacent campground.
- Maintenance facility is not centrally located in relationship to the Cades Cove district that it serves (the district is larger than the Loop Road area).
- Storm events can block staff access to needed equipment (stored in Cades Cove) making it difficult to clear roads and fallen trees.

OPTIONS

- No Change
- Relocate the road maintenance facility outside of the Cades Cove area.

- Provide adequate facilities (that are appropriately located for providing efficient visitor service).

PROBLEM

Incident response time impacts visitor safety in Cades Cove (congestion, level of staff, volume of calls)

FACTS

- Approximately 45% (86 of 191 in 2001) of the Park's visitor injury/illness incidents requiring Ranger response occur in the Cades Cove District
- Approximately 75% (275 of 365 in 2001) of liquor law violations in the Park occur in the Cades Cove District.
- Approximately 15% (48 of 275 in 2001) of motor vehicle accidents in the Park occur in the Cades Cove District, most with property damage of under \$1,000.

OPTIONS

- No Change
- Establish an emergency communication system for visitor use to notify rangers of incidents.
- Develop an emergency evacuation system
- Increase the number of Rangers patrolling Cades Cove

Resources (natural/cultural) Problems/Facts/Options

PROBLEM

Deteriorating natural and cultural resources

FACTS

- Parking/driving in fields
- Feeding/harassing wildlife
- Unplanned trails and vehicle pull off areas.
- Erosion of trails, ditches and roadway embankments
- Damage that has been done to historic structures (graffiti).
- Existing policy documents do not provide sufficient guidance on the management of Cades Cove as a cultural resource.
- Clean Air Act designates National Parks as mandatory Class I areas requiring the greatest degree of air quality protection.

OPTIONS

- No Change
- Establish management policies for cultural and natural resources
- Increase ranger presence/patrol to reduce the incidence of vandalism

- Education regarding costs of vandalism and other illegal behavior
- Establish a maintenance program with adequate staff and funding
- Increase visitor management (for example group tours)
- Mark home sites with family names and history
- Selected options should be sensitive to noise, light and air pollution impacts

Resource Education Problems/Facts/Options

PROBLEM

Inadequate interpretive services to inform visitors about the resources of Cades Cove.

FACTS

- Visitor information at the entry orientation shelter is limited.
- Many visitors do not stop at the entry contact station.
- Number of interpretive programs available to the public is limited (seasonal).
- Limited number of VIP and Park staff to inform the public about the resources of Cades Cove.
- Need to reflect the themes of biodiversity, refuge of scenic beauty, and continuum of human activity in Cades Cove.

OPTIONS

- No Change
- Provide visitor center/museum prior to entering the Cove - for instance at the Wye
- Develop other media such as radio, CDROM, etc.
- Develop education materials on safety and management (pamphlets)
- Provide more outreach programs
- Develop programs in multiple languages
- Provide additional interpretive information - signs, wayside exhibits along the Loop Road and hiking trails.

If you are interested in additional information, would like to comment, or be added to our mailing list, please contact us at:

Superintendent
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
107 Park Headquarters Road
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

Or visit the website
www.cadescoveopp.com

Comments received through
October 1, 2002

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

Sept. 2002

EVALUATION CRITERIA

A series of questions have been developed for evaluating the suggested options. These questions have been grouped into three categories and will be used as a screening review that will help identify those options that will be carried forward for alternative analysis.

POLICY SCREEN (First Level)

The first screen will evaluate options against existing National Park Service policies, mandates, and goals.

- What NPS or Legislative Mission/Mandates/Policies does it meet or violate?
- What Park Mission /Goal does it meet or violate?
- Does the agency have the authority to do this?
- What is the authority?

CADES COVE GOALS & OBJECTIVES SCREEN (Second Level)

The second level screen will evaluate options against the goals and objectives that have been established for the Cades Cove project.

- Does the option conform to or conflict with the Cades Cove project Goals/Objectives for natural and cultural resources?
- Does the option conform to or conflict with the Cades Cove project Goals/Objectives visitation?

- Does the option conform to or conflict with the Cades Cove project Goals/Objectives for resource education?
- How does the option conform to or conflict with the Cades Cove Goals/Objectives for facilities/services?

FATAL FLAW ANALYSIS SCREEN (Third Level)

This level screens options for NEPA related fatal flaws (reasonableness and appropriateness) based on available data and information.

- Positive/negative effects on cultural resources?
- Positive/negative effects on natural resources?
- Positive/negative effects on visitor experience? (Does the option enhance or unreasonably inhibit the diverse range of traditional use activities within the Cove?)
- Can the options be supported by existing infrastructure or does it require additional infrastructure?
- What are the operational impacts/Is it feasible?
- Is it economically viable? (Federal appropriation and/or private funding)
- Will there be positive/negative impacts on the gateway community?

If you are interested in additional information, would like to comment, or be added to our mailing list, please contact us at:

Superintendent
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
107 Park Headquarters Road
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

Or visit the website
www.cadescoveopp.com

Comments received through October 1, 2002

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

SCREENING PROCESS

POLICY SCREEN:
Each option will be evaluated against the first level of policy screen questions.



Second Level Screen:
Options that pass through the first level policy screen will be evaluated against the project goals and objectives.



Third Level Screen:
Options reaching the third level will be further evaluated to look for fatal flaws based on available knowledge of resources (natural, cultural, operational, visitor experience, etc.)



Options combined into Alternatives:
Options that pass through the third level screen will be combined to formulate alternatives.



Fourth Level Screen:
Alternatives will be more thoroughly evaluated during the environmental documentation phase (EIS impact topics).

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

Sept. 2002

[illegible][illegible]

Sept. 2002

[illegible]

Or e-mail comments to:
comments@cadescoveopp.com

Sept. 2002

SEPTEMBER 17, 2002
PUBLIC MEETING
MARYVILLE TENNESSEE 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM

The following is a transcript developed from each of the break out session groups. They are listed in order by the breakout room.

Group 1 - Room 600

Problem Statement - Congestion

- √ Tolerance of visitor to congestion differs
- √ Advance knowledge of restrooms/drinks may increase tolerance
- √ Changeable message board in advance
- √

Problem Statement - Deteriorating natural and cultural resources

- √ Increase maintenance of structures
- √ Community support of funding historic structure repair
- √ Dedicated historic structure team (maintenance) for Cades Cove
- √ Better interpretation may decrease graffiti
- √ Ownership
- √ Adopt a historic site volunteer program
- √ Increase enforcement for wildlife protection
- √ Balance wildlife encounters with visitor experience and natural /native grasses
exotic grasses
- √ Balance era of interpretation and natural resource
- √ Restoration (animals/plants etc.)
- √ Create other wildlife viewing areas in the Park to decrease pressure in Cades
Cove.

Problem Statement - Inadequate interpretation

- √ Services to inform. . . about the resource
- √ Continue to collect information from Cades Cove descendants
- √ Through CCPA assistance
- √ Create multi media on mass transit
- √

Problem Statement - Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized vehicles
Make bike and pedestrian closure hours more flexible to meet visitor demands
Open closed old roads to bikes also existing trails

Problem Statement - Visitor Orientation to Cades Cove is inadequate
Entrance station and comfort station in field at entrance
Mandatory stop at entrance for information and rules - contact with uniformed ranger.

Problem Statement - Road is in poor condition
Heavy equipment (vehicles) damages roads
Work at night
Road maintenance funds
Design standards for Cades Cove roads (for visitor experience)

Problem Statement - Parking
Fact - demand for parking variable - it is not as bad during the weekdays.
Restrict access to match facilities (road/parking)
Enforcement

Problem Statement - ADA
Fact - Lack of education of ADA facilities for Park and Cades cove
Provide more information about ADA accessibility

Problem Statement - Restrooms
Consider primitive restrooms
New problem - lack of drinking water

Group 2 - Main room
Problem Statement - Loop Road is in poor condition
Additional options - Widen - two lanes won't make any difference - won't help wildlife viewing
Present condition of the road contributes to siltation need to correct
Separate bikes from traffic

Problem Statement - Inadequate Parking
Additional options - Restrict access
Relay messages to entrance to manage entries (the number of people at one time is overcrowding/damaging facilities - needs policing)
Add parking spaces at some locations
Build parking facility outside of park (desire is to encourage free enterprise - visitors can participate in Townsend activities first).
Move maintenance facility out - convert to parking

Problem Statement - Facilities ADA standards
Additional options
If reconstruction occurs, we must comply with ADA. . . So: Pave up to cabins, pave some trails, add railings and other methods to assist going up hills
Note: Issues surround changes to historic structures,

Improve cemetery access

Problem Statement - Utility infrastructure

Additional Options

Improvements to serve emergency needs would be good however improvements may encourage more people to visit (use caution).

Depends on entrance restrictions (or not)

Expand/extend communication capabilities - fiber optics - rangers

Call boxes

Problem Statement - Campground store, etc amenities

Additional options:

Cut back horses in Cove

Provide alternate access to horse camp

Problem Statement - Picnic facilities - Capacity at peak period

Additional Options:

Additional parking

Problem Statement - Restrooms number and location

Additional options:

Add signs

Consider site near school

Add trailhead at Abrams Falls parking lot to restroom

Add portable outhouses

Problem Statement - Admin and operations facilities

Additional Options:

Consider relocating facility so new location can grow with future needs

Problem Statement - Incident response time

Additional options:

Keep more rangers on duty until Cove is clear of people at end of day.

Problem Statement - Congestion at Cades Cove

Additional Options:

Quick, short routes/short cuts out

Fees

ROOM 608

Problem Statement - Campground problem statement

There were questions and comments about air pollution from the campground

Primitive or commercial? Cades Cove is unique because of primitive nature, these areas don't need to be pretty or have a lot of amenities.

Question - How many people support each option? - Can we have a handout that shows that?

How much weight to locals vs. visitors when considering options?

Problem Statement - Picnic Facilities

Facilities developed in 1970's - that is how NPS managed demand, by limiting number of sites - and that is OK.

Traffic problem is primary

Additional picnic facilities would increase traffic congestion and litter (need more pull-offs)

Restrooms - common complaint - should plan ahead

Transit will require a large bus - people who visit all tend to want/need to go at once.

Port-a-potties for old timer day

Need them at churches

Problem Statement - Location of Horse camp

Cars park in horse trailer parking lot - put sign up "FOR HORSE TRAILERS"

Need more parking lots for horse users

Need a sign saying to walk horse through picnic area - good to have separation of picnic and trail

Problem Statement - Admin offices and facilities

Lack of knowledge of where maintenance facility is

Problem Statement - Response time

Need more rangers

One sign saying "NO STOPPING" isn't enough

Train VIPs on bicycles - to urge people to move vehicles

Problem Statement - Roadway in Poor Condition -

Problem Statement - Inadequate parking

More parking where it is easy, little impact (pull offs or two lanes)

More lanes and more room, more people and more congestion

Not too many vehicles - the problem is inadequate enforcement

Problem Statement - Lack of ADA facilities

How much are ADA accessible trails used?

How much of a problem is it?
Can't make everything accessible
There are accessible trails but it is not publicized as ADA
Remember other disabilities - deaf, blind

Problem Statement - Inadequate utility infrastructure
Problem in all parks, etc. Never satisfy everyone
What does NPS want Cades Cove to be? - Kermit's house was not right era - then phones aren't either.

Problem Statement - Congestion in Cades Cove
Covered earlier

Problem Statement - Conflict between bicycle and motorized
Completely close to bicycles - how many crashes are cyclists? And how much is due to motor vehicle conflicts vs. cyclist error

Problem Statement - Visitor orientation
Visitors are very interested but some people are misinformed and have spread false information - myths.
CCPA working at churches and can answer questions-
Develop a souvenir book - NPS could make money and help spread information
Money in donation boxes should stay in Cades Cove for funding orientation programs - Use descendants to give interpretation orientation and history

Preserve cultural resources (buildings) through 1900's not just 1800's.

SEPTEMBER 19, 2002
PUBLIC MEETING
KNOXVILLE TENNESSEE 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM

The following is a transcript developed from each of the break out session groups. They are listed in order by the breakout room.

Group 1 - Blue Room

Problem Statement - Loop Road in poor condition

- √ No comments

Problem Statement - Congestion on the Loop Road

- √ Allocate time - park should create a predictable cycle for visitors to allocate reasonable visitation time.
- √ Seasonal fees
- √ No fees

Problem Statement - Conflict between motorized/non motorized vehicles

- √ Close road to vehicles
- √ Do not close road to vehicles
- √ No new trails - No "designated" paths for bikes/horses/ADA, etc.

Problem Statement - Utilities

Expectations

Problem Statement - Facilities

Move them

Problem Statement - Deteriorating natural and cultural resources

Protect cemeteries

Charge fee/enforce regulations (create pamphlet/brochure on rules)

Close church doors at night (keep bats out)

Group 2 - Salmon Room

Problem Statement - Congestion in Cades Cove

Minimum speed of 45 mph

Close Cades Cove

One on One experience

Time for private vehicles and transit/Time for trams in same day - peak/off peak

Provide alternative entrance/exit

Increase number of bikes available for rental

Pay public to drive the Loop.

Problem Statement - Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized vehicles

Wider road for bike lane (more serious bikers rider faster than casual)

Afternoon bike times

Publicize pedestrians can travel Loop Road when closed.

Problem Statement - Visitor orientation

Sign to indicate information available at entrance.

Improve signage for improved orientation

Cades Cove brochure should indicate other ways of experiencing Cove (other than car).

Improve maps

Reorient shelter to make more apparent

Problem Statement - Road is in poor condition

Re pave it

Reword signs to make (directions) clear - especially more wildlife pull over areas.

Avoid sign clutter

Cooperating association - directed for Cades Cove

Redirect money raised in Cades Cove (friends, NHA)

Establish an advocacy organization for Park user.

Get legislation passed to remove Cades Cove as a part of the Great Smoky Mountains

National Park - - - make it a national park in and of itself - - - This would allow a structure to charge fees.

Problem Statement - Parking

Where park if mass transit - - mass transit shifts the problem

Ticket illegal parking

Horse trailer parking is inadequate

Increase number of pull-offs

Existing pull-offs are eroded

Add more bike racks.

Problem Statement - Americans with Disabilities Act

Mounting blocks needed for horse facilities

No access to most all historic structures - need to make them accessible.

Problem Statement - Utility and infrastructure

Cellular tower

Two way radio stations

Use fence line for phone line

Composting toilet

Eliminate electricity at Cable Mill

Problem Statement - Campground amenities

Inadequate retail space

Make propane available

Propane grills (reduce pollution)

No increase in commercialism
Local economy support by limiting commercialism

Problem Statement - Picnic facilities capacity
Direct to Metcalf bottoms
Or the Foothills Picnic area and Look Rock camping
Promote other nearby areas
Maps - etc... to explain picnic location options
-The fact obligated to accommodate all -

Problem Statement - Restrooms
Composting toilets

Problem Statement - Horse camp
Combine day use and horse camp facilities in the same area. These should be adjacent but separate facilities.
Look at past plans for relocation

Problem Statement - Admin and operations facilities

Problem Statement - Incident response
Alternate emergency route other than the loop road
Policy relaxation for trail rescues (for park staff)

Problem Statement - Cultural and natural resources
Give due consideration to impacts on watersheds and mitigation - filtration of run-off
More education works with community organization for implementation interpretation.
Protect cemeteries
Cooperating association to advocate for park users
Increase volunteer hours through groups to preserve structures/historic resources
Public - private partnerships
Post fines for:
 Animal harassment
 Vandalism
Increase fines/penalties

YELLOW ROOM

Problem Statement - Campground lacks amenities
Educate visitors about what to expect not to expect Disneyland, or showers
Picnic facilities - visitors are using fields/trails for picnicking - causes problems with bears, etc. - no change - will keep these problems occurring in the future.

Expand existing facility

Consider in combination with transportation options would need parking for picnic areas around Loop.

Restrooms

Consider primitive Baptist Church - high volume of visitors

Horse Camp location

Remove horse camp from Cades Cove - relocate

Minimize use of horse camp

Administration/operation facilities

Move main facility outside cove but keep small one inside.

Response time

Increase access - lanes of road

Helicopter pads (in combination with emergency centers)

Education - that emergency response is not fast - lack of knowledge that no gas stations.

Inadequate parking

Charge for parking permits - small (Oregon does this). Unintended consequence of this may be to encourage driving through without stopping.

Parking outside Cades cove park with shuttle

Lack of ADA

Make some historic buildings accessible (ADA)

Question of maintain historic nature

Could be first 2 miles of a trail - not whole thing to an overlook or other feature area.

Inadequate utility/infrastructure

Concern about impact on primitive felling - don't want it commercialized

Make sure it is low impact, in keeping with historic feeling - not modern, high tech

Reduce what is already there (gift shop) here is what it was like then - put commerce somewhere else - outside Cove or outside Cable Mill area.

Congestion

Year-round transit, not just seasonal

Buses should be small

COMMENTS ON EVALUATION CRITERIA

Everything affects other things - can't look at it in isolation

Question about gateway impact being in third tier - more appropriate in tier two was suggested

Education is part of all options

Visitor orientation

Provide orientation on transit vehicles

But locals/descendants don't need that general information - they tell their own stories to family.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Can the planning team propose alternatives other than provided from public input process?

Can the team review other studies from other parks and sites?

Mixed transit with private vehicles and transit

Will solutions be transitional?

What is the long-term time frame for solutions?

Cades Cove is unique site from other NPS locations.

Elizabeth and Teresa

Additional options

Resource

Surveillance Equipment at cabin sites

Increase volunteers during peak seasons as eyes and ears "responsible human presence"

Expand interpretive services - tours through or at cabin sites/historical sites (resource education)

Resource Education

Expand wayside exhibits

Expand personal side of Interpretative Services, more person to person contact and communication.

Design interpretation to assist with visitor management

Facilities and Services

Loop Road - Road maintenance during non use (not traffic) time (i.e. night time)

Prohibit heavy vehicles (tour buses)

Re-alignment of Loop Road at certain locations (bike/walk locations)

Parking

Problems:

- Along Loop Road at cabin sites and trailheads

- Prior to Loop Road (horse) by different types of uses visitor purposes

- Transit Parking

More bikes parking areas for bikes

Option - detailed analysis of parking needs and in the Cove.

ADA

Bike/walking trail separate from vehicles accessible to/from wheel chairs

Utility infrastructure

Emergency cellular phone coverage but not "at will" cell phone service

Port a potty

Compost toilet

Campground camp store

No change showers

Picnic Facilities

Picnic facility at camp store

Positive message signs directing to picnic areas in the GSM park.

Eliminate picnicking in Cove

Restrooms

Provide a bathroom at Abrams falls

Restrooms at shelter at entrance

Horse/Day use conflicts

No comments

Administrative operations

Option - year round caretakers in Cove

Incident response

Better education of visitors regarding laws

Better signage regarding law (liquor)

Congestion

NEW ADA facilities

Pay visitors to visit Cove

Alternative vehicles / routes for emergency services.

Improve all signage and legends in (currently inadequate) for visitor use -maps
communicating visitor services

Ranger led programs at Cove (advertised commercially need to be expanded and increased.

GENERAL COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

If Loop Road is (temporarily) closed, such as for bicycle only dates, what do you do with the people waiting to enter the Loop Road when it does open?

Have alternative Days for other uses IE RVs, bikes, and pedestrians.

Is Cades Cove being prepared for reintroduction of Elk?

- Non barbed wire fences

- More fences

- Grass management plan

Is NPS looking for additional land for parking or other intentions?

What is the punishment in fines for people who break the rules? 50 or 100 dollars.

COMMENTS 9/17

Parking in Townsend is a NO - Townsend has been torn up enough

Congestion is worst only a few hours in a day work out a system to spread out demand "shoulder times" people understand why road is closed - location of sign needs moving.

If mountain bikes for Rangers are working to reduce bear jams are there other interest/motives behind the drive to implement mass transit? Don't go to the other extreme and lose the uniqueness of the Cove experience.

Why are fences going up? It is like a prison can't you use signs? And fences mean no pull off areas and wasted expense and more work if they are moved.

The fence project budget was 80,000 dollars. This replaced posts in-kind. There has been no change in the location or and there is 6,500 feet less fence than there was four years ago (30,000 feet). Amount of fence in the Cove. There were some fences removed or flattened that have been down for the last four years. These have been replaced. There have been some minor adjustments to allow for pedestrian access areas and logical beginning and end points for fences. The slick wire was selected to let folks enter fields on foot.

Acquisition of land in Townsend? - But it did not work out - Park tried to respond to opportunity.

Interpretative time period is problematic - how will this be determined? What is time period? How interpret the Cove?

How to balance wildlife with tourism and economics - Need to sustain wildlife in native grass restoration. But concern is that deer cannot be supported by natives, will eat desirable species and will move out of the Cove.

Could we create better ways for the public to report problems? - Such as instituting a "Park watch program"?

**Notice of Public Scoping Meetings on
Draft Alternatives for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan
Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

The National Park Service and Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization will hold three public scoping meetings to seek public input regarding draft long range management alternatives for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan (Development Concept and Transportation Management Plan) on the following dates: Monday, March 31, 2003 in Maryville, TN at Heritage High School (3741 E. Lamar Hwy); Tuesday, April 1, 2003 in Knoxville, TN at the University of Tennessee Conference Center (600 Henley Drive); and Thursday, April 3, 2003 in Pigeon Forge, TN at Pigeon Forge High School (414 Tiger Drive). All meetings will be held from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend and provide comments. Public comment forms and the information presented at the meetings will be available through www.cadescoveopp.com starting April 1. Comments not submitted through the web site should be mailed or hand delivered to the attention of Cades Cove Opportunities Plan, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg TN 37738. Comments can be submitted through April 30, 2003. For additional information, contact the Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park (865) 436-1207.



CADES COVE OPPORTUNITIES PLAN – PUBLIC MEETINGS ON DRAFT LONG-RANGE MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

The National Park Service and the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization will hold three public scoping meetings for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan on March 31st, April 1st and April 3rd. The public is asked to provide input on draft alternatives regarding long-range management for Cades Cove that have been developed through a planning process which began last May.

Cades Cove is one of the most visited areas of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Millions of people visit each year. As more people visit the Cove, it has become more difficult to maintain the Cove's special character and resources. The Cades Cove Opportunities Plan has been undertaken to identify long-range management strategies that will ensure that the resources of the Cove continue to be enjoyed by this and future generations.

To date, the planning process has included three rounds of public meetings. Public comments have been received by mail and the project web site. The process has identified a large number of issues and concerns, as well as many ideas on how to address the issues.

Based on that process, since last fall the National Park Service and its partners have begun to identify viable long-range management alternatives that address visitation, resources, education and other activities in Cades Cove.

Descriptions of Draft Long-range Management Alternatives

Five draft long-range management alternatives will be presented at the public meetings on March 31st, April 1st and April 3. These include one "no action" alternative and four "action" alternatives that envision various forms of access management and visitor orientation. Each alternative addresses visitor experience (including access), resource protection, education, and facilities and safety.

In general, the four action alternatives add increasing levels of access management and visitor amenities, each alternative building upon the ideas in the previous one.

A brief description of each of the transportation elements of the draft alternatives follows. Additional detail will be presented at the public meetings. All action alternatives call for development of an "exceptions" program to maintain cemetery access for descendants of former Cove residents.

Draft Alternative 1, the “no action” alternative, is a continuation of existing management policies and facilities within the Cove. This includes no change in vehicle access, visitor contact, or facilities and utilities.

Draft Alternative 2 recommends improving roadways by formalizing pull-out and parking areas along the Loop Road as well as Sparks and Hyatt Lanes. The second alternative also calls for creating a visitor communication program (such as variable message signs, a telephone “hotline” and web site information) and expanding bicycle- and pedestrian-only hours.

Draft Alternative 3 incorporates concepts found in Alternative 2 and recommends establishment of a reservation system for private vehicles to drive the Loop Road during peak visitation periods. Such a system would be similar to the way campground reservations are handled currently. During non-peak times, private vehicle access would remain as it is now. No reservation would be needed to access the picnic area, campground or horse concession.

Draft Alternatives 3, 4 and 5 envision a separate pathway for bicycles and pedestrians in the Cove, rather than closures of the Loop Road for exclusive use. This path would be independent of the Loop Road to provide a different Cove experience.

Draft Alternative 4 incorporates the same elements found in Alternative 3 and adds voluntary transit as an option for visitors. Again, visitors would gain private vehicle access to the Loop Road during peak visitation by reservation only. Visitors without reservations could still visit the Cove by parking at a proposed visitor center outside the Park and riding a transit vehicle into the Cove. A second visitor center at the beginning of the Loop Road would be the transfer point to a Loop Road Shuttle. The Loop Road Shuttle would allow visitors to view the Cove at their own pace, getting off and on at various places around the Loop.

Draft Alternative 5 continues to build on the concepts of the previous alternatives. The major new element envisioned in this alternative is that during peak visitation periods, visitors would be obliged to park their cars at a visitor center located outside the Park and ride transit vehicles to the Cove. Once there, visitors would transfer to a Loop Road Shuttle. Again, visitors could enjoy the Cove at their own pace, stopping for various lengths of time at cabins, trailheads and other sites.

Two other important issues faced in Cades Cove are field management and visitor orientation. All draft action alternatives call for a field management plan that maintains the current open character of the Cove for wildlife viewing. Views and vistas, native grass and wetland restoration, and fence and field maintenance would all be addressed as under this plan. Alternative 5 offers the additional option of a small agricultural demonstration area.

Each draft action alternative includes a visitor center at the beginning of the Loop Road. Alternatives 3, 4 and 5 also propose a visitor center outside the Park to assist the visitor in making reservations or as the starting point for transit. The amenities proposed for these visitor centers range from simply providing basic information and restrooms, to including a bookstore and workspace, to also including space for programs and a museum.

Public Meetings to Review the Draft Alternatives

The meeting on March 31st will be held in Maryville at Heritage High School, 3741 East Lamar Alexander Parkway. The meeting on April 1st will be held in Knoxville at the University of Tennessee Conference Center, 600 Henley Drive. The meeting on April 3rd will be held in Pigeon Forge at Pigeon Forge High School, 414 Tiger Drive. All three meetings will begin at 6:00 p.m. and end at 8:30 p.m.

Each public meeting will begin with a short presentation outlining the features of each draft alternative, followed by small group discussion sessions to allow participants to review each alternative in greater detail. After the small groups reassemble and report the highlights of their discussions to the audience as a whole, park managers and planning team members will be available for questions and further discussion. In addition, a court reporter will be available to record comments, and comment forms for written submission will be available.

Future Steps in the Planning Process

The next step in the planning process is to revise and further develop the draft alternatives, addressing comments received during the meetings and the 30-day comment period ending April 30, 2003. Revised alternatives will be released in June, with additional public meetings taking place at that time.

Selection of a preferred long-range management alternative from among these five choices cannot be made until they undergo the formal environmental impact review process required of federal agencies under the National Environmental Policy Act. At that time, additional public comment will be sought.

Web Access


The project web site www.cadescoveopp.com announces the dates of future meetings, provides project information, including information presented at previous meetings, and accepts public comment. The information displays created for this round of meetings will be posted on March 31.

For additional information, contact the Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, (865) 436-1207.

<p>Tuesday, June 3, 2003 Knoxville, TN 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church 2931 Kingston Pike</p>	<p>Tuesday, June 3, 2003 Maryville, TN 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Heritage High School 3741 E. Lamar Alexander Parkway</p>	<p>Tuesday, June 3, 2003 Knoxville, TN 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church 2931 Kingston Pike</p>	<p>Tuesday, June 3, 2003 Maryville, TN 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Heritage High School 3741 E. Lamar Alexander Parkway</p>
<p align="center">CADES COVE OPPORTUNITIES PLAN <i>"Looking back, moving forward"</i> Public Scoping Meetings on Draft Final Alternatives The National Park Service and Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization will hold a series of open house meetings at the four locations noted on this post card. The meetings will showcase revisions based on public input and provide additional detail for the draft "action" and "no-action" alternatives for Cades Cove.</p>		<p align="center">CADES COVE OPPORTUNITIES PLAN <i>"Looking back, moving forward"</i> Public Scoping Meetings on Draft Final Alternatives The National Park Service and Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization will hold a series of open house meetings at the four locations noted on this post card. The meetings will showcase revisions based on public input and provide additional detail for the draft "action" and "no-action" alternatives for Cades Cove.</p>	
<p>Wednesday, June 4, 2003 Sevierville, TN 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Sevierville Civic Center 200 Gary Wade Blvd.</p>	<p>Thursday, June 5, 2003 Cherokee, NC 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Holiday Inn Cherokee Highway 19 South</p>	<p>Wednesday, June 4, 2003 Sevierville, TN 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Sevierville Civic Center 200 Gary Wade Blvd.</p>	<p>Thursday, June 5, 2003 Cherokee, NC 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Holiday Inn Cherokee Highway 19 South</p>
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Knox County TPO
400 Main Street
Suite 403 City County Bldg.
Knoxville, TN 37902-2476

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For more information, go to www.cadescoveopp.com, or contact:
 *Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park*
107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg, TN 37738
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Knoxville, TN 37902-2476




For more information, go to www.cadescoveopp.com, or contact:
 *Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park*
107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg, TN 37738
(865) 436-1207

Knox County TPO
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Cades Cove Opportunities Plan

"Looking Back - Moving Forward"

Draft Long-Range Management Alternatives

Cades Cove is one of the most visited areas of the Great Smoky Mountains. Over the years millions of people have visited and fallen in love with the Cove. Unfortunately as more people come to the Cove it becomes more difficult to maintain. The Cades Cove Opportunities Plan has been undertaken to identify long-range management alternatives that will ensure that the resources of the Cove continue to be enjoyed by this and future generations.

Throughout the process, the public has played an important role in identifying issues and concerns, determining goals and objectives, and developing ideas to resolve resource and visitation issues in Cades Cove. This newsletter provides descriptions and illustrations of the draft alternatives. The purpose is to provide a vision of how the Cove might be operated in the future and to obtain your comments on these ideas. A comment form that can be mailed to the Park has been included in this newsletter. Comments may also be submitted via email through the www.cadescoveopp.com website. Comments should be received by April 30, 2003.

Draft Alternative 1 – No Action

This alternative reflects the continuation of existing National Park Service management policies and actions within Cades Cove. For example, there would be no changes in private vehicle or bicycle/pedestrian access to the Loop Road. In addition, the existing visitor

orientation facilities would remain unchanged. Existing field maintenance, resource education operations and ranger activities would also remain at current levels.

Draft Alternative 2 – Roadway Improvements

The second alternative proposes to undertake a series of minor improvements to the Loop Road, Sparks Lane, and Hyatt Lane. These improvements would be based on an adopted master circulation plan for the Cove. This plan would identify appropriate locations for formalized visitor pull-offs and roadside parking for scenic vistas and cultural attractions. Private vehicle access would continue as it is today. Also bicycle-only and pedestrian-only periods on Wednesdays and Saturdays would continue.

Alternative 2 would institute a communications program that would include Variable Message Signs, FM radio, phone-in and website information. Visitors would be able to get up-to-date traffic conditions and other information about Cades Cove.

Draft Alternative #2 would include a minor visitor center developed at the entrance to the Cove. The function of this visitor center would be the primary visitor contact point for visitors to the Cove. In addition, all other existing contact points would continue as they are today.

Alternative 2 would require a low-level increase in the operations staff (rangers, etc.) and equipment for managing visitors and maintaining the Cove.

Steps in the Process

Project Initiation
Review existing data, studies and relevant information

Issues Identification
Public scoping, gathering new data
Open house held May 23, 2002

Goals and Objectives
Define desired conditions for visitor experience and resources
Open house sessions July 22 & 23, 2002

Alternatives Development
Develop a range of reasonable alternatives based on agency objectives and public interests
Public meetings September 2002 and Spring 2003

Future Phases
Preparation of EIS, preferred alternative identification, public meetings, etc.



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Draft Alternative 3 – Managing Demand through Peak Visitation Reservations

Draft Alternative 3 would institute a reservation system for private vehicle access to the Loop Road during peak visitation periods. Access to the picnic area, campground and horse concession would not be restricted. Access provisions would be made for "occasions" such as Old Timers Day, Decoration Day and pre-arranged events.

During off peak visitation periods, visitors continue to have unrestricted private vehicle access. This alternative would include the communications program described in Alternative 2. In addition, a separate pathway for bicycles and pedestrians would provide an alternate visitor experience.

Draft Alternative 3 includes a moderate visitor center at the entry to the Loop Road providing reservations, visitor contact and orientation, the bookstore (relocated from Cable Mill), and staff work space. A minor visitor center located outside the Park would also provide visitors an opportunity to make reservations (along with phone-in and web-based reservations), as well as providing the visitor with basic information about the Cove.

Draft Alternative 3 would have a low-to-moderate increase in the Cades Cove operations staff and equipment.

Draft Alternative 4 – Managing Demand through Peak Visitation Reservation and Voluntary Transit

Draft Alternative 4 utilizes the reservation system developed in Alternative 3 and combines it with a voluntary transit system during peak visitation periods. Access to the picnic area, campground and horse concession would not be restricted. Alternative 4 would include the communications program described in Alternative 2. Access provisions for "occasions" and special events would be handled as described in Alternative 3.

The voluntary transit system would be based outside the Park. Visitors would

ride transit vehicles into the Cove and arrive at the Cove visitor center. This would be a moderate-size visitor center providing visitor contact and orientation materials as described in Alternative 3. Visitors then board tram-style transit vehicles that travel the Loop Road. The transit service may have different options available to visitors, including vehicles that provide interpretive programs and vehicles that simply provide Loop Road transportation or access to trailheads. The system is envisioned to be visitor friendly, including easy on/off at many stops along the Loop Road and frequent service allowing the visitor to tour the Cove at their own pace.

A moderate visitor center would also be developed outside the Park to function as the primary access point for the voluntary transit system. It would also provide reservations and other information about Cades Cove.

Alternative 4 will require a moderate-to-high increase in the level of the operations staff and equipment for the Cove.

Draft Alternative 5 – Visitor Management through Peak Visitation Transit Access

Draft Alternative 5 reflects the greatest change in visitation to the Cove. During peak visitation, this alternative allows for only transit access to the Loop Road. Access provisions for "occasions" and special events would be handled in the same manner as described in Alternative 3. Access to the campground, picnic area and horse concession would not be restricted. During non-peak visitation periods there would be unrestricted private vehicle access in combination with the communications program described in Alternative 2.

The transit system for this alternative would operate in the same manner describe in Alternative 4.

The visitor center at the entrance to the Cove would be larger than with Alternative 4. It would serve as the transfer center for the transit system as well as provide visitor orientation, information, amphitheater, bike concession,

museum, restrooms, snack shop and bookstore. The visitor center outside the Park would be as described in Alternative 4.

Alternative 5 would require a moderate-to-high level of operations staff and equipment over current conditions.

OTHER ALTERNATIVE ELEMENTS



RESOURCES & EDUCATION

Alternatives 2 – 5:

- Maintain valley floor as open grassland with small woodlots, and fencerows allowing for good wildlife and scenery viewing opportunities along the Loop Road.
- Develop and implement a field management plan to guide yearly maintenance and long-term management of the valley floor in a manner consistent with the 1800 – 1920 cultural/historic era of the Cove including:
 - Define interior fence locations from historic field plots
 - Re-establish native grasses
 - Re-establish wetlands and meandering streams
 - Establish a schedule of field maintenance and appropriate management techniques such as mowing, burning, etc.

Options that could be included in any alternative:

- Demonstrate 1800 – 1920 era agricultural tools and plants on a small demonstration area



CAMPGROUND

All Alternatives:

- Future rehabilitation would comply with current ADA standards for the campsites, parking, and comfort stations

Options that could be included in any alternative:

- Additional parking for campsites
- Electric hook-ups for campsites
- Expanded water and sewer capacity for campground
- Concession-operated showers in campground



CAMPSTORE

Options included in any alternative:

- Undertake a small expansion of the Campstore
- Increase parking for Campstore

Alternative 5

- Relocate Campstore to major visitor center

OTHER ALTERNATIVE ELEMENTS



PICNIC AREA

Alternative 5:

- Add a group picnic area in the vicinity of the Campstore/ Amphitheater



HORSE OPERATIONS

Options that could be included in any alternative:

- Relocate horse concession facilities within the developed area of the Cove
- Define and sign an area to serve as day-use horse trailer parking
- Improve the Anthony Creek Horse Camp area including potable water, improved toilets, and meet ADA standards
- Relocate Anthony Creek Horse Camp access away from the picnic area
- Collocate day-use and horse camp (overnight) facilities at Turkeypen Gap include potable water, toilets, and mounting block



UTILITIES/VISITOR COMFORT

Options that could be included in any alternative:

Developed area of the Cove

- Extend utilities to the visitor center
- Expand water and sewer to provide showers in the campground

Cable Mill

- Extend electric and telephone
- Add call boxes
- Add beverage vending machines
- Improve water and sewer service
- Increase restroom facilities
- Increase trash receptacles

Loop Road

- Add primitive (composting) toilets at up-to four locations along the Loop Road

Communications

- Ensure that existing electric and telecommunications lines along Park Roads are capable of handling the proposed communications program

Draft ALTERNATIVE # 1

DESCRIPTION

- No Action
- Existing Conditions
- On-going maintenance

MOTORIZED VISITATION

- Maintain existing roads
- Access by private vehicles remains as is currently
- Cove open from sunrise to sunset, except for bike/pedestrian closures
- Existing parking and pull-off spaces continue
- Continue existing traffic management

NON-MOTORIZED VISITATION

- Bicycles and pedestrians share the road with private vehicles
- Issues with bicycle/pedestrian conflicts with private vehicles continue
- Continue closures for bicycle/pedestrian use only

VISITOR ORIENTATION

- Maintain existing visitor contact station at Cades Cove entrance
- Maintain visitor facilities, contact and orientation at Cable Mill
- Maintain existing level of ranger-led programs



Draft ALTERNATIVE # 2

DESCRIPTION

- Communication Program
- Improved roadway features – pull-out and parking areas

MOTORIZED VISITATION

- Motorized visitation elements from Alternative 1 are continued
- Develop and implement a plan for minor roadway improvements, including pull-outs and parking areas, based on carrying capacity studies

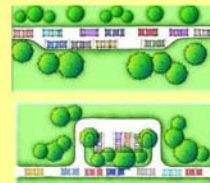
NON MOTORIZED VISITATION

- Extend bicycle- and pedestrian-only hours
- Add bicycle racks at more locations along the Loop Road

VISITOR ORIENTATION

- Communicate information on traffic and other Cove activities/events
- Variable Message Signs, FM radio, phone-in service, and web service
- Develop a minor visitor center at the entry to the Loop Road
- Maintain visitor facilities, contact and orientation at Cable Mill and other contact points

Parallel Pull-off:
Dimensions of 5 spaces:
140' x 10'
Area: 1,270 sq. ft.
Use: Ideal where depth of intrusion into resource areas is limited and requires a widening of the road to accommodate vehicle width



MINOR VISITOR CENTER (AT THE ENTRY TO THE LOOP ROAD)

- VISITOR CONTACT SPACE
- MINIMAL INTERPRETIVE MATERIALS AVAILABLE
- RESTROOMS



Draft ALTERNATIVE # 3

DESCRIPTION

- During peak visitation periods, private vehicle access to the Loop Road will be by reservation only
- Access to picnic area, horse concession, campground and visitor center is not restricted
- Communications program and improved roadway features as in Alternative 2

MOTORIZED VISITATION

- Peak visitation periods will require visitors to have a reservation for private vehicle access to the Loop Road
- Access provisions would be made for occasions such as Old Timers Day, Decoration Day and pre-arranged events

- Unrestricted private vehicle access during non-peak visitation periods

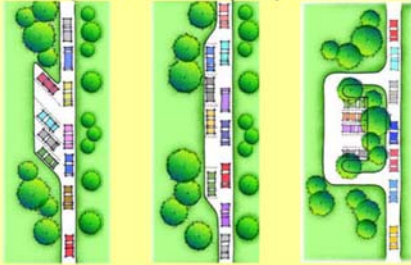
NON-MOTORIZED VISITATION

- Add a separate bicycle/pedestrian path in the Cove
- Optional concession-operated shuttle service from the gateway communities for pedestrian and bicycle access
- Add bicycle racks at more locations along the Loop Road

VISITOR ORIENTATION

- Develop a moderate visitor center at the entry to the Loop Road
- Develop a minor visitor center outside the Park
- Maintain existing visitor facilities, contact and orientation at Cable Mill (bookstore relocated) and other contact points

Examples of roadway improvements



Example of a variable message sign

DRAFT ALT 3 MODERATE VISITOR CENTER (AT THE ENTRY TO THE LOOP ROAD)

Functions include:

- Reservations
- Visitor contact & orientation
- Bookstore
- Restrooms
- Staff work/prep. Room
- Parking

DRAFT ALT 3 MINOR VISITOR CENTER (OUTSIDE THE PARK)

Functions include:

- Reservations
- Visitor contact space
- Restrooms
- Parking

Draft ALTERNATIVE # 4

DESCRIPTION

- During peak visitation periods, private vehicle access to the Loop Road will be by reservation only
- Voluntary transit system developed as an alternative visitor experience
- Communications program and improved roadway features per as in Alternative 2

MOTORIZED VISITATION

Private vehicle access:

- Same as Alternative 3 (peak period reservation system)
- Access provisions would be made for occasions such as Old Timers Day, Decoration Day, and pre-arranged events
- Continue to allow use by private vehicles during non-peak visitation

Transit service:

- During peak visitation period, voluntary transit service (from visitor center outside the Park to the Cove visitor center with transfer to a tram service for Loop Road)

Options that could be included:

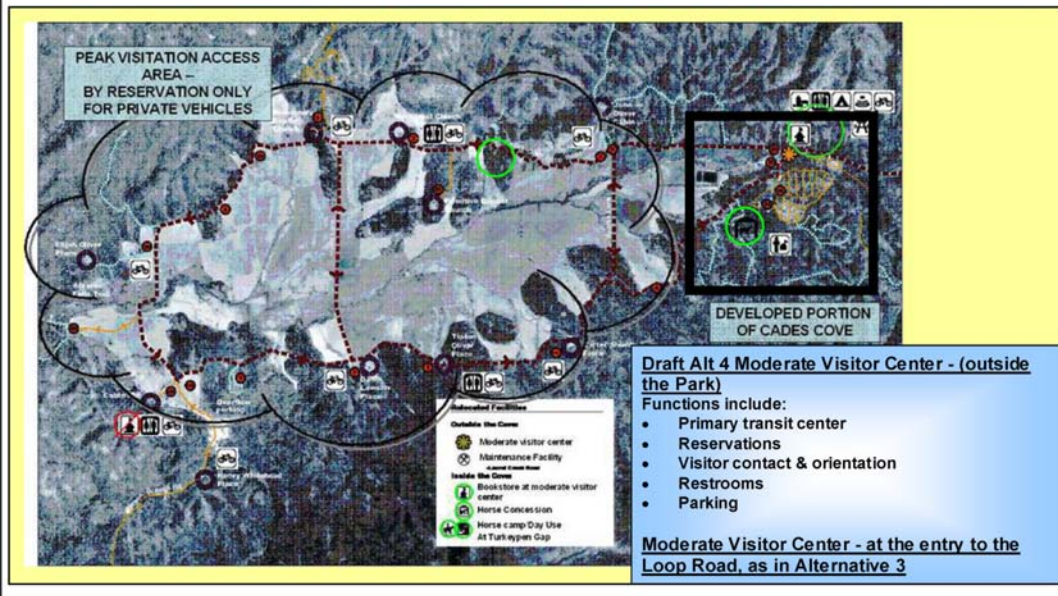
- Operate voluntary transit system year-round
- Encourage transit system use by limiting private vehicle access to an alternative loop via Sparks or Hyatt Lane during peak visitation periods

NON-MOTORIZED VISITATION

- Same elements as in Alternative 3

VISITOR ORIENTATION

- Develop a moderate visitor center at the entry to the Cove
 - Functions include functions listed in Alternative 3 and transit transfer point
- Develop a moderate visitor center outside the Park
 - Functions include providing the primary transit operations center along with the functions listed in Alternative 3
- Maintain visitor facilities, contact and orientation at Cable Mill (relocated bookstore) and other contact points



Draft ALTERNATIVE # 5

DESCRIPTION

- During peak visitation periods, visitor access to the Loop Road would be by transit system only
- Non-peak visitation periods would continue to have unrestricted private vehicle access
- Communications program and improved roadway features as in Alternative 2

MOTORIZED VISITATION

Private vehicle access

- During peak visitation periods, private vehicles not allowed on the Loop Road
- Public access to the picnic area, campground, horse concession and visitor center will not be restricted
- Access provisions would be made for occasions such as Old Timers Day, Decoration Day and pre-arranged events

Transit service

- Visitors park at visitor center outside the Park

- Transit service from outside the Park to the Cove visitor center
- Visitors transfer to Cove tram system for Loop Road

Option that could be included:

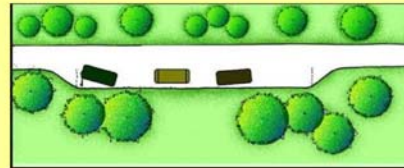
- During non-peak visitation periods, voluntary transit service

NON-MOTORIZED VISITATION

- Same elements as in Alternative 4

VISITOR ORIENTATION

- Develop a major visitor center at the entry to the Loop Road
- Develop a moderate visitor center outside the Park
- Maintain visitor facilities, contact and orientation at Cable Mill (bookstore has been relocated) and other contact points

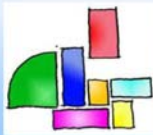


Draft Alt 5

Major Visitor Center (At the entry to the Cove)

Functions include:

- Transit system transfer point
- Museum
- Display and interpretation
- Amphitheater
- Bookstore
- Campstore/gift/snackshop
- Bike concession
- Resource education
- Restrooms
- Offices/workspace
- Parking

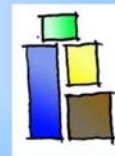


DRAFT ALT 5

MODERATE VISITOR CENTER (OUTSIDE THE PARK)

Functions include:

- Primary transit operations center
- Visitor information and orientation
- Restrooms
- Parking



INPUT VIA THE WEB

As always, we seek your input. This includes comments through the web site: www.cadescoveopp.com. The web site provides access to the public input material described in this report as well as comment forms.



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

March/April, 2003

March 31 – Heritage High School – Maryville, TN

Group 1

Facilitator: John Boyle

Reporter: Rebecca Vial (NPS)

This group choose to discuss what they felt was missing and what they felt was good as it relates to all alternatives.

Comments related to elements that are missing from the alternatives

Two-way Loop Road (with resource concern about this – change in landscape]

Two lane road (4) (2 people expressed concern about “old trees”)

Maintain traffic on loop through NPS enforcement w/ tickets for violations

Preserve historic structures and cemeteries (6)

Historic structures – The sense of the group was that this was missing from the alternatives.

The historic structures are one of the main reasons people come to visit and they are not being maintained

Enforcement (9) put up signs about enforcement

What the group liked best:

The group consensus was that Alternative 2 was the best of the five, although they felt that some modifications would be required, such as revising the field management plan to keep it open and more as it is today (fescue)

Other likes (numbers indicate how many people stated the idea):

Combined tram system and park access by private vehicles (2)

Bike/walking trail(s) separate (6) (with horses “side by side” – 1)

Pullouts – keep existing wildlife (1)

Private vehicle access (1)

Variable message signs (2)

Pastures returned (4)

Pave Sparks & Hyatt

Keep it primitive

Reservations

Restrooms (1)

No two lanes

Incentive to ride tram – make it free and charge for cars

Build a road down the middle for cars and bicycles

Reverse the direction of the road
Keep the campground primitive (no showers)
Maintain Park Service structures for research, staff, etc.

Create different places for different activities
Pasture, cattle, hay lease, fences
Picnics & access to pastures
Air quality – not cars
Accessibility (ADA)
Descendants involved in the decisions meetings

Group 2

Facilitator: Perry Palmer
Reporter: Teresa Cantrell

Alternative # 1 –

Cons:

Not doing something/anything is a liability
Pollution will continue to increase
Don't want long traffic lines to continue
Lack of information
Continued pedestrian/vehicle conflict

Alternative # 2 –

Con:

Would like to have the separate pedestrian/bike path in this alternative

Pro:

Like the bike racks

Con:

If you pave Sparks & Hyatt you'll create a "speedway"

This alternative leaves the one-lane road, long delays, and pollution

Not too much of a different experience

Not much better than Alternative 1, not much safer

Alternative # 3 –

Pro:

Separate pedestrian/bike path

Con:

RV or larger vehicles [still allowed?]

Don't like the reservation system

Tends to favor "locals" (local residents would know the system better than outside visitors)
Need two lanes one-way and more parking
Added expense and staff to institute reservations this may take away from staff for field management

Alternative # 4 –

The group indicated that the changes to the Cove should be taken in "baby steps"

Pro:

Voluntary transit

Con:

Increase cost and staffing

Cost of transit

No 2-lane-safety issues [please expand this statement – does this mean this alternative does not address safety issues?]

Alternative # 5 –

Con:

Don't want camp store relocated away from the campground

Don't like the double shuttle system

Peak season dictate transit day [please expand this statement]

Group 3

Facilitator: Bill Byrne

Reporter: Dianne Flaugh

Alternative # 1 –

"There needs to be change"

Continuous management (Concern that the Park is not consistent in managing the Cove)

Alternative # 2 –

Plans to relax and "wait and see what happens" [please expand this statement]

Pullouts need to be constructed on the left-hand side – require people to stay with their vehicles at pullouts

Come to relax, see wildlife – more pullouts give the opportunity to relax, etc.

Pullouts – parallel parking – make long and use only for short term parking; create angle parking for longer term use (e.g., hiking)

Add the separate bike/pedestrian path to alternative 2

Add restrooms to parking/pullout areas

Add benches to parking/pullout areas

Add trash receptacles at restroom locations

Bike path could be used for emergency access

Bike path should be hidden from the main road

Use old roadbeds

Engineer for users (bike/pedestrian)

Could eliminate the periods when the Cove is closed to cars

Add: voluntary transportation for hikers (to help them get back to their cars), perhaps use open wagons similar to what is used in Dollywood, could use the bike/pedestrian path for this form of transportation

Alternative # 3 –

Don't create anything that involves bus parking in Townsend – this is a problem for Townsend

Reservation system “abhorrent” “cold water” (terms used by some group members to describe how they felt about the reservation system)

Pollution – Little River [please expand this statement]

More development [please expand this statement]

Parking inside the Park, inside the loop road [please expand this statement – is this what the group is suggesting, or not liking?]

Rather than limit by reservation, use first-come, first-serve – let people in as others are leaving

Alternative # 4 –

Don't like the creation of parking outside the Cove

Feeling is that the reservation system will strand the locals – Locals will not be able to get reservations while tourists will get them.

Want to be certain that restoration & maintenance of cultural sites (cabins, etc.) does happen

Put the tram system along a separate route – perhaps the bike/pedestrian path

Rangers should use bikes/horses to move people along (bikes and horses will provide better mobility for Rangers allowing them to get to and break-up wildlife jams and keep people from parking in the middle of the roadway – this may relate to alternatives 2 and 3 as well)

Problem is auto parking – need to park somewhere – concentration of autos – Would there be a fee to park in Townsend, and then be free in Park?

The reservation system breaks the volume of autos out – without huge parking lots

Problem: travelers may not know about reservation & will not get in

Develop a “short route” at the start of the loop that can be seen without a reservation – have to keep traffic moving

Impacts to Smoky Mountain Field School, etc. – how will they get in?

If the other alternatives work then do not consider Alternative 5

Provide safe ways to cross the road

This group likes the visitor center at the head of the Cove because of the views (that is, that the V.C. could frame the view for visitors inside/at the center)

Group 4

Facilitator: John Hall

Reporter: Kelley Segars

Alternative # 1 –

Is “no action” what’s happening today?

Alternative # 2 –

How would the master circulation plan be developed – is it determined by the number of cars? What is the basis for setting the limit on visitation?

Response – this would relate to NPS management capacity, road capacity, resource capacity and the quality of the visitor experience.

Don’t want to make a parking lot of the whole Cove

Would voluntary transit in Alternative 2 be possible?

There need to be special exceptions (for local residents, descendants, special events)

What is peak season? How is it defined?

Why are you looking at alternative transportation? Do you have numbers to back it up? Is this information on the website?

Communication about traffic conditions is the best idea.

Alternative # 3 –

How would a reservation system function?

Regardless of the transportation elements, the field management component is important for the visitor experience

Would like a compromise on management agendas [that is, objectives] that doesn’t go back to pre-European

Why all the focus on burning and tall grasses when the buildings are in disrepair?

This plan does need to preserve historic buildings.

Many of us love the Cove for a variety of reasons – don’t need the dichotomy between views of non-native vs. native grasses

Alternatives # 4 & 5 –

Alternative 5 will commercialize the Cove – electricity and new facilities

Campground should stay as it is

Need to consider historic resources – they are the most important

The visitor center would be a large impact

The NPS won’t let a family reunion location be built

It is wrong to put the same limitations on descendants as the national audience

The visitor center at the entry would be beneficial – for education and orientation – get people to use pullouts and learn about history

We need bathrooms – primitive is good

1800-1920 is a long time – covers a lot of periods, a lot of views

Scenery, wildlife structures [please expand this statement]
Put the visitor center at the Wye, not the entry to the Cove – able to turn people back before they get to the Cove
Signs asking people to be courteous, use pullouts would help [does this apply to this alternative in some way?]
Concerned about hazing and the impact on wildlife

Group 5

Facilitator: Debra Perkins-Davis
Reporter: Jeff Welch

Alternative # 1 –

Bring the cows back (but someone else said, isn't there negatives to grazing of cows?)
Question: current management practices "as the way it is" – choice here is the current general management plans vs. other management plans?
Leave it like it is
Pastoral setting (with the cows)
Maintaining trail access
Cove is an open space and allows people to see things – protect the views
Parking is being extended by ad hoc actions [by visitors]
Fencing has been added, which will not allow for "additional parking"
Some people think the congestion is ok – those who don't like congestion avoid the park

Alternative # 2 –

Cows can generate money and reduce maintenance
How many spaces for parking?
What is a "minor" visitor center and how much parking is needed for it?
Roadway needs improvements
If the road is widened to two lanes then may not need additional parking
Use VMS for information on how long it takes to travel the Cove
Sage grass needs to be controlled or it will grow too tall

Alternative # 3 –

Air pollution due to idling
More people on larger vehicles
This group likes the voluntary transit system (Alternative 4)
Con: reservation system (difficult to communicate)
However: Back country reservation system works
Con: "big visitor center in the Cove"
Need some additional information/interpretation facilities
Restrooms are at capacity and need to expand

Reservations are “just another restriction”
Visitor center should be at the Wye to tell about Tremont

Alternative # 4 –

If the road is widened, should not have to worry about additional bike facilities
Concern: bus system will restrict hiking access
In June, keep Parsons Branch Road open for visitors to view flowers blooming
Reservation system with voluntary [please expand this statement]
Low-cost alternative to bike facilities [bike/pedestrian path] would be “minor realignment in unsafe areas”
Expanding hours of bike usage is a good idea
Voluntary transit is a good idea to some people in this group

Alternative # 5 –

Who operates the system? Should be operated by the park
Major construction costs and operating cost are concerns for mandatory transit
Major impact on the land – from parking, maintenance facility
“Foolish concept” – but alternative view is expressed that “Mass transit is an option that should not be dismissed”
Roadbed will not support mass transit
Utility expansion is not a good idea

Group 6

Facilitator & reporter: Elizabeth Watson

Alternative # 1 –

Too much traffic to leave it as it is
They like the idea of “minimum change” as a principle
This alternative allows visitors to choose their own pace
Self-limiting in terms of how many cars can get in
Will there be enough enforcement & maintenance under “no action”?

Alternative # 2 –

This would improve traffic flow – yet allow visitor choice
Could we set a minimum speed? (Or: would slow drivers stop if there were more parking, so there would be no need to encourage all drivers to keep up a pace?)
Improved signage about driver courtesy is still needed in this option
Visitors should still expect to BE slow
Provide better paths (improved/paved/location chosen with more care) to the most popular sites
Need to step up enforcement and increase the fines

Like the “minor” visitor center (“little”) – don’t ruin that simple beauty; don’t let this be too commercial

What’s the bike/pedestrian demand now? If there’s an adjustment needed for the bike/pedestrian exclusive use, look at peak times only

Messaging about traffic conditions is a “great idea”

Alternative # 3 –

Group does not like the reservation system (although one person, a Cove descendant, remarked that people got used to the campground reservation requirement – that “reservation system’s kinks” got worked out – there’s a potential for balance between visitation and resource protection through use of reservations because it reduces the numbers of people at peak times)

Keep the visitor center “small” (“low profile”)

Creation of the bike path should mean that bikes are excluded from motorized traffic lanes

The cost of this means that we’re not going to see this overnight!

How would first-time visitors know they need a reservation – don’t disappoint the visitor

How far in advance could you make a reservation?

A reservation system will still require traffic management and enforcement

Reservation restricts visitor choice – give the information (VMS techniques) and spend the money (for reservation system) on enforcement instead

However: It would be a “nightmare” to emphasize enforcement, would spoil the visitor experience

Some in this group suggested the use of signage over the use of a visitor center outside the Cove to help visitors get information and orientation – but others said a visitor center at the right location could function as Sugarlands does in relation to U.S. 441 (Newfound Gap Road) – visitors turn around there if they don’t like the traffic, but still can have an enjoyable experience because Sugarlands is there

A moderate visitor center would be ok if it’s not too big, not too much visual impact (one speaker in the group used that phrase, not EW) – ok to move the bookstore to this location – accommodates the visitor who doesn’t want to go around the Loop

With the bike/pedestrian path, you’re adding users - the option to take a shuttle is good, but don’t require it

Alternative # 4 –

Can the NPS charge for transit? Yes, may or may not actually decide to do that

Shuttle service – what is this? If instituted, group wants to be sure it will be on/off more or less “at will”

Eliminate the reservations feature, but give us voluntary transit – and a fee charged for the transit would be ok

It will still be KEY to have traffic management – the bus will have to keep to some kind of schedule

Enforcing the “half loop” option [i.e., to encourage people to leave their cars in order to get a “full loop” experience] creates an enforcement problem of its own – people parking to

catch the shuttle when they realize the difference in the two experiences – the problems could be worked out however – just watch out for shifting the problem around on the landscape
With the requirement to create two kinds of buses, would visitors be able to get on/off along the entrance road? There are places nice to visit there, too
Parking is a tough issue! Realization about how much space could be required for buses and cars
Zion's system works (one participant has gone there, enjoyed the experience), but geography here is more difficult (the entrance road)

Alternative # 5 –

"Small city" at the entrance is not desirable

Parking for such a facility would be empty much of the year and "ugly all the time"

The mandatory aspect of transit: most of group totally opposed

Utility, sewer system would have to be huge, all the way to Sparks Lane in the case of the lagoon!

If we have to have transit, be sure it reduces the impact on the Cove – peak transit requirements is ok [this was after I described what is "peak" – weekends in July & October, weekdays in July, possibly some other times] and good to be able to use this as an option all the other times

Pressure is feared – once the transit system is in place, there will be pressure to enlarge the mandatory times (to get more money to recoup the investment and provide funding for maintenance)

The bus needs to be free

This COULD work, some agree - !

General Comments & Questions Session

Is the electricity in the Cove sufficient for more improvements?

Response - No

With reservations – could you create a block for local use?

Alternative 4 is too much – can we mix & match

Response - Yes

Please keep Rich Mountain Road and Parson's Branch Road primitive

Would the reservation system be restricted to HOV?

Why is the Park currently hazing wildlife? (Phil's ans. – trial policy, to keep visitors and wildlife apart for safety reasons – this is an operational decision, not a planning decision)

We need more routine citizen representation in meetings that happen outside these public meetings

We need more feedback on comments coming in via the Web and the court reporter

We want to be sure our comments are being heard

Why are animals coming closer to the road? (this was Tommy Kirkland stating the question because he wanted an answer from the Park – general discussion between TK & Phil that mowing the tall grass close the road is changing deer behavior, Phil stated that visitors are feeding animals close to the road and reinforcing. TK continued his remarks by saying that land management should provide food for wildlife but that the NPS is against this; NPS scientist responded that the park is trying to increase native clovers and also that the deer may be drawn to salts beside the road; TK said that deer may also be seeking nitrogen in certain soils near the road)

Is the NPS considering cattle? (Phil: part of the planning process)

Why is NPS not addressing vandalism?

One commenter (Leland) is looking for more details beyond the summary – when can we see the full text? What does "moderate" mean? This needs to be clarified so we're all on the same page. The summary is not helpful. For example, the MPO study suggests that 18 acres would be needed for parking at the level required for Alternative 5 – why are we not being given this background?

Please add PowerPoint to the website

The Cades Cove campground is already full – why improve it if there's demand now for it as it is? Improving it would work against what we're trying to accomplish here (reducing crowding & managing demand)

What is the effort nationally to get comments?

What is the timeframe for accomplishing our goals (meaning timeframe for implementation)?

Where does the money go from the donation boxes – is it dedicated to Cades Cove?

Response – No, the money goes to friends group, to distribute to needed projects throughout the park – visitors to Cades Cove visit elsewhere in the park as well.

April 1 – University of Tennessee Conference Center – Knoxville, TN

Group 1

Bill Byrne and Dianne Flaugh

Alternative # 1 –

Don't like traffic and time involved not

No construction is good

Only bad traffic is on weekends

Alternative # 2 –

Would not address the number of cars or auto jams related to animal sightings or the impacts of cars on hikers/bikers or environment

The additional info to visitors will be helpful

Kinds of information – Some idea of the time required to tour the Loop Road. Information about non motorized transportation like bike/pedestrian times

Problem – non motorized and motorized on same road could have bike trail on old road beds

Bike hours need to be expanded to improve biker experience - - but increased hours will impact congestion

Alternative # 3 –

2 separate paths one for bikes and one for walkers – may want walker trails to be shorter
ADA accessible trails

Make trails to historic sites ADA accessible

Want to be able to get to hiking trails under reservation or transit alternatives

Would like to see as little motorized traffic – air quality and visual impact of cars is an issue.

Adding a separate bike path could eliminate closures on Wed and Sat which adds capacity to the roadway – but do we want to?

Alternative # 4 –

Plans should include triggers as to what is peak

Reservation used coded card and gate

Public reaction to gate and not a ranger could be negative

Have a fee for reservation and free transit to encourage use of transit

If transit starts in Cove then is the problem addressed?

Parking in Cove – will there be big parking lots?

Outside the Park – land not owned by the NPS would they rent for parking?

With reservation system – there is not way to make people leave in a timely manner – again build in trigger points.

Will reservations be for an entire day? Or just a one time trip around?

Transit – need clean fuel, not diesel, LP gas, electric, alcohol, ethanol, methane, etc. would be okay.

Good to be able to get off and on the transit service more or less at will, this will enhance the experience

Have trams with open sides with the ability to close them during bad weather

Comfort of the transit system will be important

Interpretation as a part of the transit service could be good but also could get annoying for frequent visitors.

Could be a headphone system

Provide a numbered brochure

Visitor center is reasonable to have in the Cove – give visitation numbers to the public

Utilize the old Cable Mill visitor center for Rangers or on-demand video

Alternative # 5 –

Parking for transit is an issue. Are we just moving the problem or solving it?

Problem with drivers that work 2days and have 5 days off

What will be the number of buses?

Don't want to accommodate number of visitors who are coming through now.

Bus on Laural Creek Road will be a problem because it will mix with other traffic.

It will be important to have an information point outside the Park to provide early information and help people avoid a jam up at the head of the Loop Road.

Hiking off Parsons Branch road- how will people get to trail heads? Need to accommodate hiker access

Need for reservation to get on bus???

Or information regarding time/delay related to getting on the bus.

Alternative # 4 continued discussion –

Encourage use with advance information in hotels, etc

Good idea to limit access to Cable Mill area to encourage transit use

Problem with mixing transit and private autos with bear jams

Charge for parking to cover the cost of transit operations

The group was in favor of limiting vehicular access to the Cove to improve the conditions of the Cove.

Group 2

John Hall and Kelley Segars

Alternative # 1 –

Likes:

Narrowness of road is important; this is part of the experience and character of Cades Cove

Like closures for bike/pedestrian use

Dislikes

Traffic flow is too slow

Too many cars

Traffic flows the wrong way, should reverse the direction of the Loop Road (many disagreed with this idea)

Why does it matter that traffic is slow for average visitor – what about people who want to hike a long day – it is frustrating to be stuck in traffic at the end of the hike

Traffic detracts from all visitors' experience

Air pollution from cars is a problem

In summer cars stopped in traffic can overheat

Need enforcement

If 4 hours is too long what is the magic number that the Park wants? The Visitor survey in 1998 showed that visitors are happy. Have heard many out of state visitors complain about traffic. The locals know to allow for time or avoid.

Is the park doing this because of visitor complaints?

What percentage of visitor? Need documentation of the problems

Alternative # 2 –

Campsite improvements, showers etc would have water quality impacts (make them a part of alt 3-5)

Relocation of horse camp should be a part of this alternative

Like that this includes pull outs people need to use pull outs – Concerned about adding more pull outs, water quality issues – more pavement may also encourage more traffic.

Need more enforcement – minimum speed limit

Bike/pedestrian hours should be maintained not extended.

Alternative # 3 –

Likes

Bike/pedestrian path (yes and no)

Don't think bikes and pedestrians work together. Also concerned about environmental impacts of separate pathway.

Why not a horse trail? Don't want one but see where horse riders would want it – environmental problems were noted

Maintenance – if the bike groups maintain it then it is ok

Road has to be widened for transit right? – Response: Not necessarily

Would like to see reservation system be HOV have 3 or more people to each vehicle.

Alternative # 4 –

Voluntary transit would be underutilized – don't think voluntary system would work

How do fees work?

What would be the acres required for transit facility?

Park not funded sufficiently now; how can we afford Alts 3 – 5?

With no entrance fee what are the rules? Can you require a fee for cars? How can we get funding?

Alternative # 5 –

Like mandatory transit in peak so people can still drive in non peak

Resources – 1800-1920 could part of it be kept like today and part of the cove look like 1800-1920?

Like mandatory transit – have visited the Cove a lot appears to be proposing more –dislike more commercial (vending machines at Cable Mill)

Gregory Ridge trail head – how would hikers get access to trailhead?

ADA – provides enhanced opportunities through transit vehicles

New or re-design of buildings need to be ADA accessible

Don't see why the amphitheater would be moved

Concerned about conflict between bikes and buses

Concerned that there would not be closures for bike/pedestrian use

Concerned that peak period could expand to all year

Picnic will be difficult – hard to carry baskets on the bus

GMP says that can't carry picnic baskets on the bus?

Mandatory transit does not comply with the GMP

If transit, less congestion with bikes and vehicles so it would help bikes

Don't need separate path if mandatory transit

Good to have voluntary transit but have to accept reservation system to get it.

Fully support transit as long as it doesn't change the rural character of the road

Transit would be very expensive

Group 3

Elizabeth Watson and Perry Palmer

Alternative # 1 –

Planning is 20 years behind the times

Intolerable conditions

Leave as is, add reservations

Too many people in the Cove – keeps people away.

Simplicity of the plan has its appeal

Alternative 2 –

Doesn't go far enough to address problems

Resources – removing white clover would remove the deer

Stronger education of visitors regarding wildlife viewing

Field management plan needs a lot of research work

Doesn't address problems with traffic

Add voluntary transit with Cars – provide options of transit
Likes additional pull offs
Add bike/pedestrian trail
Keep bike/pedestrian times and add additional trail
Need enforcement by rangers to keep traffic moving
Add more staff/funding
Add times for locals to view the Cove similar to bike/pedestrian only times

Alternative # 3 –

Need to communicate reservation system rules to the public – trip planning and payment
Need to add voluntary transit system with reservation
Reservation system for bike/pedestrian???
Keep pedestrian/bike times on the Loop Road on alternatives 2 – 5
Like minor vs. moderate visitor center at entrance to Loop Road
Keep bookstore at Cable Mill
Need to preserve resources now!
Reservation system – how is it controlled, not abused – blocked out times
There would be no reservation system with voluntary mass transit

Alternative # 4 –

Reservation system does not allow for flexibility in the visitors schedule
Transit would lower emissions
Transit concessionaire makes money off of public lands
Mass transit at peak times is favorable
Least environmental impact is favorable
Visitor center at entry to Loop Road is a good feature
Mass transit should utilize alternative fuels

This group did not get to alt 5

General Comments & Questions Session

The Park cannot fund its current needs
Will there be the political will to make changes
Resource and experiential benefits but also education is possible component of mass transit operations
Education is not NPS mission
Gatlinburg and Elkmont shuttles are not being used by NPS personnel – because they are not convenient
Need to share details on numbers of buses needed, acres paved for parking.

The NPS study only looked at motorized options therefore rubber tire solutions are supported by the NPS – Response: The study referred to was a conceptual study regarding reasonable options for transportation.

NPS mission is education

Parks have carrying capacity – hypothetical curve of increasing visitation isn't infinite – Let's imagine the best (ditto endorser)

Will the NPS shut the Cove down when it reaches capacity? – Is this part of the reservation system?

What are the reasons for not including "lot full" shut down?

Response: Carrying capacity and road capacity are different. There is also management capacity (e.g. response to emergency) and there is capacity related to the visitor experience. All of these are factors to be weighed in the decision process.

Solving traffic congestion via wildlife management – adverse conditioning for animals that are not "pan handling"

Response: The NPS is trying to provide for the safety of people from wildlife. Adverse conditioning is a process to cause wildlife to fear and avoid humans.

Excessive numbers of vehicles is a problem in Cades Cove and merits restriction – not a new practice for other resource management problems – "it is not unreasonable to impose restrictions"

HNTB contract and other studies done for this area add up to multiple hundreds of thousands of dollars.

April 3 – Pigeon Forge High School – Pigeon Forge, TN

Group 1

Elizabeth Watson and Perry Palmer

Alternative # 1 –

For the increase in bike/pedestrian times

Present operation is grinding Cades Cove into the dust

There is too much traffic – this alt does not address these issues

Alternative # 2 –

Extending bike times

VMS – orientation and communication is good but needs to be aesthetically pleasing.

Pull-off areas are desirable – but probably won't solve the problem, bears don't go to pull off areas.

More law enforcement

Pull-offs could cause traffic problems with people trying to work their way back into Loop Road traffic flow.

Lon/Short term signage at parking lots

More parking at trail heads

Alternative # 3 –

Is there a cost for staffing of reservations?

The reservation system will restrict access to Cades Cove – this is bad

The reservation system will cost families money

How do you deal with Parsons/Rich Mt Road with reservations systems?

Will tour buses be handled on the Loop Road?

How will reservations system be enforced?

Bike/Pedestrian portion of alternative is good

Why reflect the period from 1800 – 1920 there is more history to be told than this period.

The dates seem arbitrary.

Alternative # 4 –

Is alternative the first step in a transition for mandatory mass transit?

Don't like a double bus system

Where are we parking all the cars?

Buses will be part of the congestion

There is a lot of congestion at the end of the day with hikers in the woods.

What is the number of complaints?

Widen the road

Bears will not be at areas where pull offs are developed.

Back country hiking permits are free – how will this be handled with a reservation system?

There is a desire to keep the campsite primitive no electric hook-ups
Drainage from campground goes through Abrams Creek – upgrades to campground will have a negative affect on water quality in Abrams Creek.

Alternative # 5 –

Does not go far enough, suggest an alternative 6 –

Public transit (go for it)

Mandatory

Major visitor center in Townsend

Minor at Loop Road

Ride bus from gateway

Parking fee pays for buses

Can get off bus along Laurel Rd

Accommodates the most amount of people with least amount of impact to the resources

How much exhaust does a bus produce?

Double bus allows for ranger contact/education

Queue for waiting for the bus

ADA accessibility?

Eroding trails and deteriorating structures – these need to be fixed

Mass transit system needs to be universal in design

Visitor education is important

Group 2

John Hall and Kelley Segars

Alternative # 1 –

Dislikes –

Most things need to be changed – Loop Road, Transit, Visitor Center moved to front of Loop Road

Only one bathroom at Cable Mill – bathrooms are inadequate

Facilities too spread out – would like bike concession, restrooms, visitor center, etc. in one place – centralized.

Need more pull outs

Informal pull outs need to be maintained and improved

Better bike conditions – ADA accessible bike/pedestrian path separate so it can be used year round.

Alternative # 2 –

Likes

Improved pull outs

Minor visitor center for information prior to getting on the Loop Road will eliminate bottlenecks by giving information ahead of time. A lot of visitors don't really know what the Cove is about

Need information on restrooms

The minor visitor center should be at the "Wye"

People who have problem with traffic and get upset aren't going to go in the visitor center – message signs would help

How many more cars are trying to get into the Cove than it can handle?

If you have 1,500 cars in the Cove, can facilities, etc. handle that many people?

Traffic gets held up because of wildlife – people stopping – so it is not too many cars it is that people stop and the people at the back of the line don't get to see anything. Need pull outs. More signs telling people not to stop is not going to help.

Need a consolidated visitor center – place to educate people so they know that there are different uses of cove not just bears also hiking.

Alternative # 3 –

What prompted this study?

Need structure preservation included in all alternatives – that is what the Cove is all about

Like the relaxing non commercialized nature of the Cove

This study is being done to control traffic and improve air quality

What does a reservation mean? How will the public find out about the reservation system?

What about someone who didn't know about the system? – Need information about the reservation system in Townsend, Pigeon Forge, and Gatlinburg – VMS

Would environmental impact analysis be done to see what effects would be of wetlands, native grass restoration etc???

Need to explain the reservation system.

Alternative # 4 –

Would be expensive – what are costs? Who would pay them?

Dollywood bus – open air – could work well for hikers

Restrooms in strategic locations should be part of all alternatives.

Alternative # 5 –

Like showers in campground but concerned about sewer treatment capacity

Like idea of mandatory transit

Dislike idea of mandatory transit (group was divided)

Like idea of demonstration agricultural area

Group 3

Bill Byrne and Debra Perkins Smith

Put more pull-outs in
If people can't take time to go around the Loop they should not come
Don't need improvements at the campground
Leave it like it is (except pull-out improvements)
Paving keeps dust down

Alternative # 1 –

Can't modernize history
Cove brings people back to their roots
People come to see animals – keep it mown
Fences keep people from pulling off the road – need the ability to pull-off and stop when you see animals
What does "no-action" mean?

Alternative # 2 –

Communication – need better information, this is a good idea and should include signs, maps, and brochures
No opportunity now to talk to people about what the Cove is all about
Cellular phones don't work in the Cove if they did this would help improve safety through better communication
Should have telephone at Cable Mill
More biking is good, but not at the expense of driving. More hours on Saturday not a good idea.
How many bikers currently use the Cove?
Response – 4% of the total traffic
There are not many other good places to ride bikes
What is the visitor center?
Visitor center is a "no-brainer" huge visitation requires better orientation and interpretation
What is the problem? – Too many people, too many cars, too much impact??
Need a good definition of the problem
Time required going around the Loop Road during peak hours
Pull-offs and Ranger enforcement of "no stopping in the road"
Only Park without fees

Alternative # 3 –

If bike path follows general path of the road it would be more popular
Cost of a new bike path might not be cost effective given current use by bikes.
Bike use might go up and the Park will need parking for bike users
Would there be a charge for reservations?
Convenience of getting reservations will be critical to success of the program – it has to be easy

What if a person does not have a computer (concern related to computer based reservation system)

Bike path (separate) is a good idea Make it a bike/nature trail

Don't restrict bikes on the road

Pedestrians on the road is not a problem

Where does the funding for improvements come from?

Not a lot of cost to the bike pedestrian path once it is built – should allow bikes on some existing paths

Alternative # 4 –

Maybe put small cultural museum at Cable Mill bookstore site

Makes sense for infrastructure (moving bookstore)

Voluntary transit is slippery slope, foot in the door, first step to mandatory transit

Nobody will use voluntary transit

Would reservations be reduced (to promote use of voluntary transit?)

Would buses stop for animal sightings?

What would it cost to ride the bus?

Somebody will make money on this (commercial operation)

Mixing cars and buses is a concern – cars will stop if they see animals and hold up buses

No carry-on items on buses? Such as backpacks, coolers, etc.

Response – This would be allowed

Don't like idea of restrictions on part of the Cove road – let cars drive along the full length of the Loop Road

Again – bike path should follow the general route of the Loop Road

No shelters at bus stops – what if it rains?

Concern about impacts of shelters on animals/resources – development in the Park (like shelters) is not wanted

Alternative # 5 –

What is the peak? Peak will expand in order to fill buses

Response – Whole month of June and July, first two weeks of August and all of October

Should be able to drive the Cove if staying at the campground

Mass transit is most expensive and major of the alternatives

Try everything else, BUT mass transit first to PROVE they are not adequate

GROUP DID NOT LIKE ALT 5

Notes some value to a large visitor center – opportunity to display cultural artifacts for public education and enjoyment

Keep the Campstore near the campground

Need more signs – More orientation – More services

Improve maps and publications

Need holistic approach to management
Horse visitors are being shortchanged
There is no information in the natural history facility
There is no advocacy group for Park users

General Comments & Questions Session

Instead of mass transit create a rail pull system for cars similar to a car wash. Use one side of the road. This will not require parking for cars and keeps the cars at proper speed and spacing. It also keeps families and their gear together in their car.

Field management – reintroduce full complement of native fauna – elk and bison

Drivers don't enjoy the scenery – only passengers

Is alternative number 5 designed to follow number 4?

Response - this idea has been expressed but the 2 are conceived as independent.

There is no advocacy group to represent the "users of the Park" and their views. This is an inadequacy in the process and in the way the NPS relates to its public.

What is the problem? What has been identified as the problem? Autos? People? Their impacts? What is the proper time for people to spend there? If 4 hours is too long, how are you going to reduce this time under this plan? Ticket booths, lines, bad facilities will be a part of the visitor experience.

The problem is that the resources are suffering we need to reduce human impact by spreading out the use or reducing the use.

How is problem identification being incorporated into the process?

Answer – The purpose and need statement for this project is available – we need to understand visitor experience and resource impacts.

Mass transit will increase the number of people in the Cove – what is the magic number?

Couldn't we go to HOV requirements?

You are trying to solve several problems that are at loggerheads with one another

To get to Cades Cove I drive 42 miles – I don't want to get there and find out all the tickets are given out. What about people on a fixed income? God did not make Cades Cove for the rich.

We need to do something

NPS people are bringing ideas from other parks – Cades Cove needs to be managed to reflect local conditions. This is the only national park without an entrance fee (GSMNP is one of 56 national parks).

Where is the money coming from to pay for these studies and this plan?

Transportation funding

This is taxpayer money

My kids are in Gatlinburg schools and they monitor pollution in Cades Cove. It is horrendous how are buses going to solve this problem?

Was light rail ever considered?

Response – the technology assessment did look at other transit options. The expense was prohibitive.

Follow on comment – This would be like having the Jetsons showing you around the Flintstone's house.

Where will we park all the cars?

April 5 – Holiday Inn Conference Center – Cherokee, NC

Attendance at this meeting allowed for a general group discussion. The following are the notes from this discussion:

May not need to extend utilities to Cable Mill under ALT # 5 – managing visitors through the transit system and adding restrooms at the beginning of the Loop Road may provide enough facilities for visitors.

NPS – Even if there was a major visitor center at the entry to the Loop Road Cable Mill will still have a high concentration of visitors and will need restroom expansion. The existing infrastructure is restricted under current visitation.

Will still need visitor contact at Cable Mill (Ranger/VIP) to answer questions

Roving contact or base contact in small facility shared with restroom

May not need electric/phone

What is the process? Who makes the decisions?

The process is the development of an Environmental Impact Statement.

The park Superintendent will make recommendations to the NPS southeast regional office and/or Washington DC. Everyone who wants to will have a voice in the process.

What transportation programs exist in other parks?

Doesn't the decision depend on where you want the Cove to go/be in line with the (1800-1920 era)?

Why not use wagon rides as transport around the Loop Road?

Comment - Against transit and reservations – this is a private experience and an opportunity to picnic.

Comment – would like mountain biking in the Park

Comment – Peak season (5 months) is the best time to go – something has to be done about bear jams.

Comment – There is a family tradition of going to the Park – they are worried that they won't be able to get in.

Transit does not fit the historic era for the Cove

Need to figure out how many people you are going to accommodate to see what solution will work – 1920's number of visitors to give a sense of "era". The current number of visitors would require transit.

Do you want to accommodate seven million people? Don't want to make it Disneyland.
The Cove area can accommodate visitors without making it Disneyland

Can't limit access to a National Park

Limits of transit because of off-season – Open air trams would not be useful for off-season use so the transit concessionaire would not be able to use the vehicles for other purposes.
Thus the transit option would not be viable.

Some areas and parks have year round service where the vehicles convert for winter service or the system operator parks the vehicles.

Know that there is a problem but afraid if you change something it will mess it up.

ALT # 2 Likes

Bike/Pedestrian pathway – follow old

**Notice of Public Scoping Meetings on
Draft Final Alternatives for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan
Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

The National Park Service and Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization will hold four public scoping meetings to seek public input regarding draft long range management alternatives for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan (Development Concept and Transportation Management Plan) on the following dates: Tuesday June 3, 2003 in Knoxville, TN from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church located on 2931 Kingston Pike; Tuesday June 3, 2003 in Maryville, TN from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Heritage High School located on 3741 E. Lamar Alexander Parkway; Wednesday June 4, in Sevierville, TN from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Sevierville Civic Center located on 200 Gary Wade Blvd; and on Thursday June 5, 2003 in Cherokee North Carolina from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Cherokee on Highway 19 South. The meetings will be open house style meetings and everyone is invited to attend and provide comments. Public comment forms and the information presented at the meetings will be available through www.cadescoveopp.com starting June 1. Comments not submitted through the web site should be mailed or hand delivered to the attention of Cades Cove Opportunities Plan, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg TN 37738. Comments can be submitted through June 30, 2003. For additional information, contact the Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park (865) 436-1207.



CADES COVE OPPORTUNITIES PLAN – PUBLIC MEETINGS ON ALTERNATIVES

The National Park Service and the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization will hold four public open house meetings for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan. The meetings will show revised long-range management alternatives identified for Cades Cove through a planning process that began in May of 2002. The revisions incorporate public comments received during the previous round of meetings held March 31-April 7, 2003, and provided via letters and e-mail. Materials that deal with the relationship between the alternatives and visitation trends will also be available.

The following is a listing of these meeting dates, locations and times:

Tuesday June 3, 2003 – Knoxville, TN 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church; 2931 Kingston Pike

Tuesday June 3, 2003 – Maryville, TN 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Heritage High School; 3741 E. Lamar Alexander Parkway

Wednesday June 4, 2003 – Sevierville, TN 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. Sevierville Civic Center; 200 Gary Wade Blvd.

Thursday June 5, 2003 – Cherokee, NC 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Holiday Inn Cherokee; Highway 19 S.

Each of the meetings will be an open house forum that allows citizens to “drop in” at any time during the two-hour session to review displays of planning material related to the revised alternatives. The meeting format allows participants to ask individual questions of the consulting team and staff members from the National Park Service and the Transportation Planning Organization. In addition, a court reporter will be on hand throughout the event to record comments, and comment forms for written submission will be available.

The Cades Cove Opportunities Plan has identified five alternatives to move forward into the next phase of the project, to undergo additional study and completion of the environmental impact statement. These alternatives include the “No Action” alternative along with a range of alternatives that address visitor demand, management and operation facilities, transportation system improvements, and infrastructure development. During the next phase of the project each alternative will be studied to determine the environmental advantages and disadvantages of each alternative. Under federal rules, this work must be completed

before selection of a preferred alternative can be made. Additional opportunities for public comment will be a part of this process.

Web Access

The project web site www.cades Coveopp.com provides project information, including information presented at previous meetings, and accepts public comment. The information displays created this round of meetings will be posted by June 1. "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ) will also be a part of the new information posted.

For additional information, contact the Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park (865) 436-1207.

<p>Tuesday, June 3, 2003 Knoxville, TN 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church 2931 Kingston Pike</p>	<p>Tuesday, June 3, 2003 Maryville, TN 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Heritage High School 3741 E. Lamar Alexander Parkway</p>	<p>Tuesday, June 3, 2003 Knoxville, TN 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church 2931 Kingston Pike</p>	<p>Tuesday, June 3, 2003 Maryville, TN 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Heritage High School 3741 E. Lamar Alexander Parkway</p>
<p>CADES COVE OPPORTUNITIES PLAN <i>"Looking back, moving forward"</i> Public Scoping Meetings on Draft Final Alternatives The National Park Service and Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization will hold a series of open house meetings at the four locations noted on this post card. The meetings will showcase revisions based on public input and provide additional detail for the draft "action" and "no-action" alternatives for Cades Cove.</p>		<p>CADES COVE OPPORTUNITIES PLAN <i>"Looking back, moving forward"</i> Public Scoping Meetings on Draft Final Alternatives The National Park Service and Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization will hold a series of open house meetings at the four locations noted on this post card. The meetings will showcase revisions based on public input and provide additional detail for the draft "action" and "no-action" alternatives for Cades Cove.</p>	
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400 Main Street
Suite 403 City County Bldg.
Knoxville, TN 37902-2476

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For more information, go to www.cadescoveopp.com, or contact:
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INPUT VIA THE WEB

As always, we seek your input. This includes comments through the web site : www.cadescoveopp.com. The web site provides access to the public input material described in this report as well as comment forms.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



If you are interested in additional information or would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact us at:

Superintendent
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
107 Park Headquarters Road
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

Website
www.cadescoveopp.com
Boards from the first public meeting are available on the website

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

June, 2003

Project News Issue No. 5

Great Smoky Mountains National Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



PURPOSE & NEED FOR THE PROJECT

The purpose for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan is to develop a long-range management vision for Cades Cove that will protect natural and cultural resources and ensure that the visitor has a quality experience.

The identified need to undertake this project is based on the findings that Park resources and the visitor experience are being negatively impacted by growing visitation to Cades Cove. A management prescription is needed to address these issues.

Based on the purpose and need statement and public input the following goals have been established for the project:

RESOURCE GOAL

Enhance the protection and preservation of the natural and cultural resources of Cades Cove.

VISITATION GOAL

Provide exceptional visitor experiences that respect the natural and cultural resources of Cades Cove.

RESOURCE EDUCATION GOAL

Educate the public about resources in order to foster greater enjoyment, understanding, appreciation, and protection of natural and cultural resources within Cades Cove.

FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOAL

Provide appropriate facilities and services that are safe, environmentally sensitive, accessible, and sustainable in Cades Cove.

PROBLEM STATEMENTS

The problem statements have been developed through input received

related to issues and concerns during the May public scoping sessions. Some of the key problems are listed below:

RESOURCES

- Deteriorating natural and cultural resources (includes field management)

VISITOR/VISITOR FACILITIES

- Congestion in Cades Cove
- Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized vehicles.
- The roadway is in poor condition.
- Inadequate parking
- Lack of accessible (ADA) facilities
- Restrooms (lack of and location of)
- Inadequate visitor orientation/contact for Cades Cove.
- Picnic facilities are over capacity.

OPERATIONS/FACILITIES

- Incident response time impacts visitor safety
- Inadequate infrastructure and lack of amenities
- Insufficient ranger patrols
- Need better signs and way finding.

RESOURCE EDUCATION

- There is little resource education/interpretation.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The alternatives were developed from a list of options, ideas, and/or elements that have been gathered through public and internal scoping sessions. These elements were evaluated to identify a group of "reasonable options" that can either on their own or in combination with other options be developed into alternatives. Three categories of

levels of evaluation criteria were used to evaluate the options or ideas. These categories were provided to the public in September 2002 for review and comment. The categories were:

- Evaluation against existing NPS policies, mandates, and goals
- Evaluation against the goals and objectives established for the Cades Cove project
- Screen options for NEPA related fatal flaws (reasonableness and appropriateness) based on available data and information.



Frequently Asked Questions

- Q. Why is this project being undertaken?
- A. It has become increasingly difficult for the National Park Service to maintain intact the rural, pastoral and cultural setting in Cades Cove that attracts nearly 2 million annual visitors. This large volume of visitors to the Cove is putting a stress on the natural, cultural and historic resources of Cades Cove. While some visitors have come to accept and expect long travel times and congestion in the Cove, for other visitors these conditions now overshadow their desired Cove visit. The purpose of this planning study is to identify long range management alternatives that will ensure the Cove can continue to be enjoyed by this and future generations without impairment of the visitor experience, cultural or natural resources.
- Q. What are the peak visitation periods in Cades Cove?
- A. Currently the peak visitation period in Cades Cove are everyday in the months of July and August plus weekends during the months of June, September and October. This constitutes a period of approximately 87 days during the year. It is important to understand that because visitation numbers and patterns do change, a peak visitation period in the future may be different from what is seen now. Over the 10-year period from 1990 to 2000, visitation to the Park as a whole grew significantly during the off-peak months of November through March. In 1990, approximately 1.51 million visitors came to the Park during these winter months. By 2000, this number had grown to over 2.36 million visitors. This trend is likely to continue as more visitors elect to come to the Park during less busy periods, or are attracted to Gateway community events planned to bolster visitation, and changes such as the implementation of year round schools.
- Q. Will descendants still be able to visit family grave plots in the Cove?
- A. Each of the alternatives will include a provision for descendant access to family cemeteries located within the Cove. In addition special activity days or events such as Decoration Day and Old Timers Day will be provided for in each alternative.
- Q. Will cars no longer be allowed into the Cove?
- A. The objective of this project is to identify a range of long-term management alternatives that will preserve the natural and cultural resources of the Cove while providing a quality visitor experience. Each alternative provides for continued private vehicle access to Cades Cove during off peak visitation periods. Currently off peak is defined as November through May. During peak visitation periods private vehicles will be allowed to access the Loop Road in all alternatives except Alternative 5. Alternatives 3 and 4 require that vehicles have a reservation to drive the Loop Road but private vehicles are not prohibited.
- Q. How will I get to trailheads?
- A. Trailhead access will be considered under each alternative. For much of the year there would be no change in trailhead access with the reservation and transit options under consideration only being mandatory during peak season. Under alternatives 3 through 5, hikers coming to the Cove during peak season would follow the same procedures as other visitors to the Cove and obtain a reservation or ride transit. It is possible that reservation and/or transit systems would not be required during early morning hours. In this case, hikers starting out early in the morning could simply drive into the Cove to their selected trailhead prior to the start time for reservations or transit. Transit alternatives will consider the feasibility of a special shuttle or van from Cable Mill to the Gregory Bald trailhead.
- Q. How will I be able to bring my picnic lunch and lawn chairs, and other material for a day in the Cove if I have to ride a transit bus?
- A. Picnicking within the Loop Road area is an important visitor activity that will be accommodated within each alternative. The design of the transit vehicle that could be used in the Cove will include capacity for accommodating picnic baskets, lawn chairs, strollers, etc. The intent is to provide visitor friendly transit designed to enhance the visitor experience.
- Q. Will people still be able to come in and picnic at the picnic grounds?
- A. Yes. None of the alternatives place restrictions on access to the Cades Cove picnic area, (under current visitation conditions)

How much traffic is on the Loop Road? (based on year 2000 data)		
Average Summer Weekend	4,100	vehicles/day
Average number of vehicles entering the Cove during the peak season		
Average Fall Weekend	4,450	vehicles/day
Average number of vehicles entering the Cove during the peak season		
Highest Hourly Entering Volume	650	vehicles/hour
Highest hourly volume entering the Cove during the peak season		
Average Vehicle Occupancy	2.3 - 2.8	people/vehicle
Average number of people riding in each vehicle on the Loop Road		
What is the vehicle capacity of the Loop Road?		
Loop Road Capacity - Vehicles at One Time	800	vehicles
The approximate number of vehicles on the Loop before queues begin to form		
Loop Road Capacity - Entering Vehicles per Hour	330	vehicles/hour
Hourly volume to maintain in order to avoid queues		
Average Daily Volume	3,000 - 3,500	vehicles/day
Daily volume to maintain in order to avoid queues, depending on how arrivals are spread over the day		

AIR QUALITY

EMISSION IMPACTS COMPARISON

	Emission Factors (grams/vehicle)				Bus Capacity	Cars Displaced	Equivalent Car Pollution Displaced by One Bus
	NOx	CO	VOC	PM ₁₀			
Passenger Car	0.955	10.530	0.970	0.074	35	*15	11
Bus	7.960	5.840	1.300	1.135	60	*21	16
					70	*29	22

Definitions:

NOx = nitrogen oxide
CO = carbon monoxide
VOC = volatile organic compounds
PM₁₀ = particulate matter (Combined emission factors)

Note:

* Assumes 2.4 passengers per car
Bus Capacity = The number of passengers per bus
Cars Displaced = The average number of vehicles reduced per bus
Equivalent Car Pollution = Based on the number of displaced cars multiplied by emissions
Bus = Heavy duty diesel vehicle truck (Emission factors are constant for bus capacities)

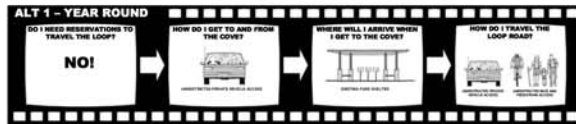


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- Public Meeting Materials

OVERVIEW OF VISITATION

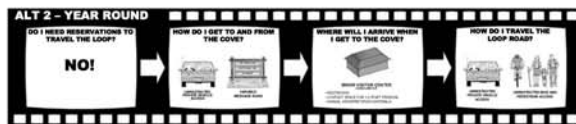
ALTERNATIVE 1



The visitor experience would continue as it exists today.



ALTERNATIVE 2



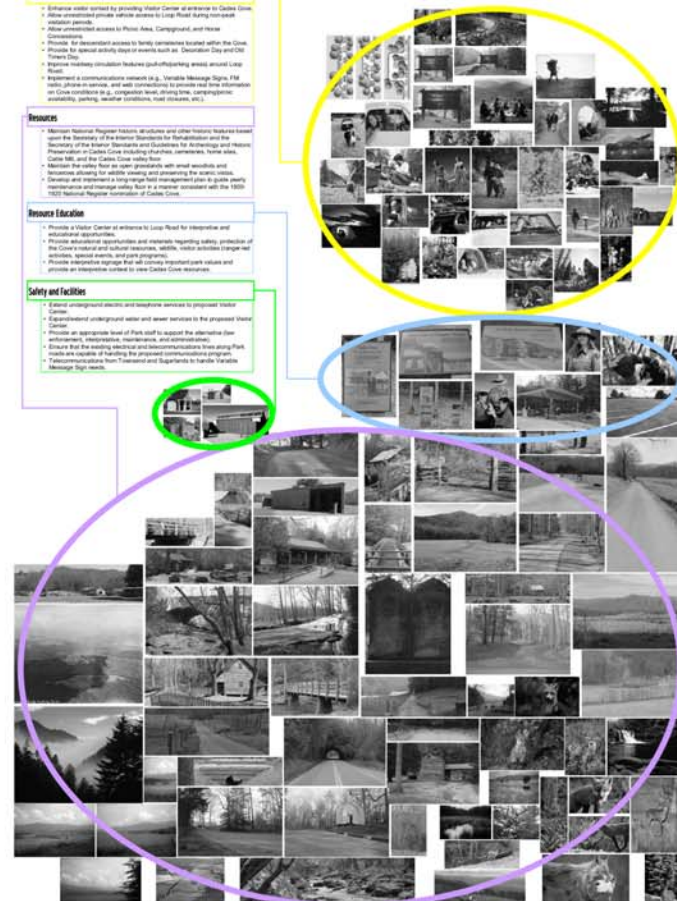
Under Alternative 2 the visitor experience would continue as it exists today with the addition of a communications system that will monitor traffic conditions along the Loop Road. This information will be distributed to Variable Message Signs outside Cades Cove and outside the Park, as well as to the NPS website and visitor centers. The objective is to inform visitors of both traffic conditions and activities within the Cove prior to their arrival in the Cove.

ESTIMATED PROBABLE COST OF ALTERNATIVE 2 - \$6.0 - 8.0 MILLION

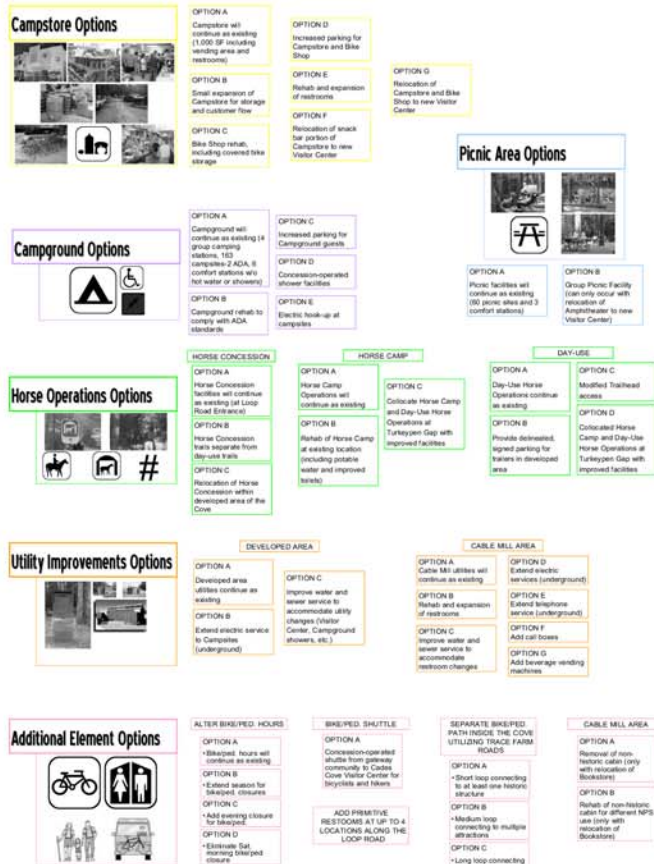
NOTE: Estimated costs do not include optional elements, yearly operational costs, upgrades to sewage treatment/containment facilities and possible land acquisition. Figures are based on 2003 construction.

OPTIONAL ELEMENTS

- Visitation**
 - Enhance visitor options by providing Visitor Center at entrance to Cades Cove.
 - Allow unrestricted private vehicle access to Loop Road during non-peak visitation periods.
 - Allow unrestricted access to Picnic Area, Campground, and other facilities.
 - Provide for unrestricted access to family campers located within the Cove.
 - Provide for special activity days or events such as: Decoration Day and Old Towners Day.
 - Improve roadway circulation (reduce queueing/parking areas around Loop Road).
 - Improve a communications network (e.g., Variable Message Signs, FM radio, phone in service, and web connections) to provide real time information on Cades Cove conditions (e.g., congestion level, closing time, campgrounds, availability, parking, weather conditions, road closures, etc.).
- Resources**
 - Maintain National Register historic structures and other historic resources based upon the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Secretary of the Interior Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation on Cades Cove including churches, cemeteries, home sites, Cades Mill, and the Cades Cove valley floor.
 - Maintain the valley floor as open prairie with small meadows and pastures.
 - Develop and implement a long-range land management plan to guide priority preservation and management. There is a review associated with the 1992 1992 National Register nomination of Cades Cove.
- Resource Education**
 - Provide a Visitor Center at entrance to Loop Road for interpretive and educational opportunities.
 - Provide educational opportunities and materials regarding safety, protection of the Cove's natural and cultural resources, wildlife, visitor activities, camp use, activities, special events, and park programs.
 - Provide interpretive signage that will convey important park values and provide an interpretive context to other Cades Cove resources.
- Safety and Facilities**
 - Extend underground electric and telephone service to proposed Visitor Center.
 - Expand/extend underground water and sewer services to the proposed Visitor Center.
 - Provide an appropriate level of Park staff to support the alternative (i.e., enforcement, interpretive, maintenance, and administrative).
 - Ensure that the existing electrical and telecommunications wiring (Park roads are capable of handling the proposed communications program).
 - Telecommunications from Tennessee and Georgia to handle Variable Message Sign needs.



ELEMENTS COMMON TO ALL ACTION ALTERNATIVES (2-5)



ALTERNATIVE 3 OFF SEASON



During non-peak visitation periods the visitor experience would continue as it exists today. Non-peak visitation under current conditions is weekdays in September and October and everyday from November through July.

ALTERNATIVE 3 PEAK SEASON



The major theme of Alternative 3 is "Reservations". A visitor reservation system would be implemented along with the elements from Alternative 2. Reservations would be taken via telephone, email/fax, and through the internet. The reservation system would operate in peak periods enabling visitors to schedule dates for visiting the Cove. Peak time periods (under current visitation) are everyday in July and August and Weekends in June, September, and October. There would also be a limited number of walk-up reservations each day. Reservations for the campground (including Horse camp) would include provisions for Loop Road auto touring during the campers stay. Access to the Visitor Center, Campground, Picnic area, and Horse concession area would continue to be open to the public without reservations (first come first served basis). Provisions would be made for special group and event access on a permit basis.

ESTIMATED PROBABLE COST OF ALTERNATIVE 3 - \$9.0 - 11.0 MILLION

NOTE: Estimated costs do not include optional elements, yearly operational costs, upgrades to sewage treatment/containment facilities and possible land acquisition. Figures are based on 2003 construction.

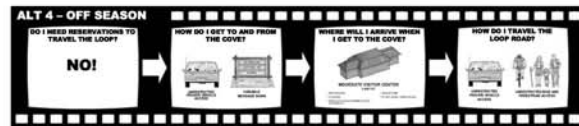
RESERVATIONS

The following chart compares 4 Parks and the reservation fees associated with them. (Included is a range that may be associated with Cades Cove).

Park	Fee Structure
Alcatraz	\$2.25
Mesa Verde N.P.	\$2.50
Washington Monument	\$2.00
Frederick Douglas National Historic Site	\$2.00
Cades Cove	\$2.00-\$8.00

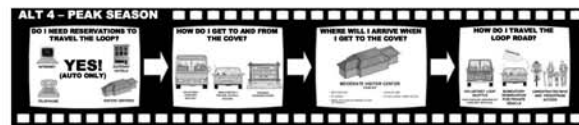
Alternative # 3 & 4							
	Peak mandatory reservation system and off peak unrestricted access						
	JUNE WEEKENDS	JULY WEEKDAYS	JULY WEEKENDS	AUGUST WEEKDAYS	AUGUST WEEKENDS	SEPTEMBER WEEKENDS	OCTOBER WEEKENDS
Months and days reservations would be required (based on current peak season, may change based on visitation trends)							
Number of days for reservation operations	8	23	8	23	8	8	8
Estimate of vehicles per day	3,500	3,150	4,145	2,965	3,940	3,410	4,795
Recommended number of vehicle reservations per day (to maintain capacity of road) - reserved in advance of travel day	2,760	2,440	2,880	2,400	2,850	2,650	3,025
Recommended number of vehicle reservations held for same day access - purchased at visitor center ("walk-ups")	500	500	500	500	500	500	500
Total number of vehicle reservations issued per day (advance order + same day purchase) - 10:00 am to 5:00 pm	3,260	2,940	3,380	2,900	3,350	3,150	3,525
Parking at new Cove visitor center	290 spaces						
Time reservation operations would begin	10:00 a.m.						
Time reservation operations would end	5:00 p.m.						
NOTE: Visitors can gain entry to the Cove from sunrise to 10:00 a.m. and from 5:00 p.m. to sunset without reservations							

ALTERNATIVE 4 OFF SEASON



Visitor experience would continue as it exists today.

ALTERNATIVE 4 PEAK SEASON



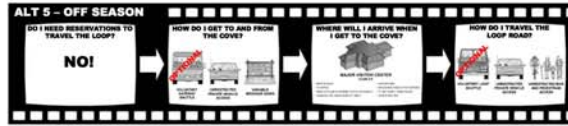
The visitor experience under Alternative 4 would be similar to that of Alternative 3. The communications system would be an element of this alternative (Variable Message Signs, radio, website, etc.) and the reservation system would operate during peak visitation periods. In addition to these elements Alternative 4 introduces a voluntary transit system that would operate from the gateway community providing service to the Cades Cove visitor center. This system would be an option for those visitors unable to get a reservation for driving the Loop Road, or for those visitors who prefer to ride the shuttle. Passengers would then board a Loop Shuttle that would provide access to the Loop Road. The Shuttle could have interpretive headsets, or special ranger-led tours. Visitors wishing to walk or bike the Loop Road or gain access to trail-heads would also utilize this system. Shuttle stops would be frequent with easy on/off design. Vehicles utilized for this system would be low emission such as propane or electric propulsion.

ESTIMATED PROBABLE COST OF ALTERNATIVE 4 - \$30.0 - 36.0 MILLION

NOTE: Estimated costs do not include optional elements, yearly operational costs, upgrades to sewage treatment/containment facilities and possible land acquisition. Figures are based on 2003 construction.

Alternative # 4																				
Peak season mandatory reservation or voluntary shuttle (Gateway, Loop Road) and off peak unrestricted access																				
ROUTE	SHUTTLE TYPE		SHUTTLE CAPACITY (number of people per bus)		NUMBER OF BUSES NEEDED (includes spares)		BUS TRIPS PER HOUR		MINUTES BETWEEN BUSES ON ROUTE		NUMBER OF SHUTTLE STOPS	NUMBER OF VISITOR PARKING SPACES								
	WEEKDAY	WEEKEND	WEEKDAY	WEEKEND	WEEKDAY	WEEKEND	WEEKDAY	WEEKEND	WEEKDAY	WEEKEND										
	JULY AUGUST	JULY AUGUST OCTOBER	JULY AUGUST	JULY AUGUST OCTOBER	JULY AUGUST	JULY AUGUST OCTOBER	JULY AUGUST	JULY AUGUST OCTOBER	JULY AUGUST	JULY AUGUST OCTOBER										
COVE LOOP	BUS	LOOP ROAD SHUTTLE	35	35	70	70	10	6	11	17	5	3	6	8	12	20	10	6.67	16	290 spaces (visitor center parking)
TOWNSEND	BUS	BUS W/ TRAILER	35	35	70	70	9	5	10	15	5	3	6	8	12	20	10	6.67	14	770 total (520 existing spaces and 250 new dispersed spaces)
GATLINBURG	none	none	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	Total buses required for alternative													32						

ALTERNATIVE 5 OFF SEASON



Visitor experience remains the same as it is today with the addition of a year round voluntary transit system. This system would operate in the same manner as described in Alternative 4.

ALTERNATIVE 5 PEAK SEASON



The theme of Alternative 5 is the operation of a mandatory transit system that would operate during peak visitation periods. The system would provide service from the gateway community to the Cades Cove visitor center. Passengers would then board a Loop Road Shuttle that would provide access to the Loop Road. The Shuttles may have interpretive headsets, or special ranger-led tours. Visitors wishing to walk or bike the Loop Road or gain access to trail heads would utilize this system. Shuttle stops would be frequent with easy on/off design. Vehicles utilized for this system would be low emission such as propane or electric propulsion.

ESTIMATED PROBABLE COST OF ALTERNATIVE 5 - \$66.0 - 72.0 MILLION

NOTE: Estimated costs do not include optional elements, yearly operational costs, upgrades to sewage treatment/containment facilities and possible land acquisition. Figures are based on 2003 construction.

Alternative # 5																				
Peak season mandatory shuttle (Gateway, Loop Road) and off peak unrestricted access																				
ROUTE	SHUTTLE TYPE		SHUTTLE CAPACITY (number of people per bus)		NUMBER OF BUSES NEEDED (includes spares)		BUS TRIPS PER HOUR		MINUTES BETWEEN BUSES ON ROUTE		NUMBER OF SHUTTLE STOPS	NUMBER OF VISITOR PARKING SPACES								
	WEEKDAY	WEEKEND	WEEKDAY	WEEKEND	WEEKDAY	WEEKEND	WEEKDAY	WEEKEND	WEEKDAY	WEEKEND										
	JULY AUGUST	JULY AUGUST OCTOBER	JULY AUGUST	JULY AUGUST OCTOBER	JULY AUGUST	JULY AUGUST OCTOBER	JULY AUGUST	JULY AUGUST OCTOBER	JULY AUGUST	JULY AUGUST OCTOBER										
COVE LOOP	BUS W/ TRAILER	LOOP ROAD SHUTTLE	70	70	70	70	28	26	35	41	15	14	19	22	4	4.3	3.16	2.73	16	330 spaces (visitor center parking)
TOWNSEND	BUS W/ TRAILER	BUS W/ TRAILER	70	70	70	70	20	20	27	32	12	12	16	19	5	5	3.75	3.16	14	1,500 total (800 existing spaces and 700 new dispersed spaces)
GATLINBURG	BUS W/ TRAILER	BUS W/ TRAILER	50	50	50	50	10	10	14	17	3	3	4	5	20	20	15	12	2	
TOTAL	Total buses required for alternative													90						

Comments received through June 30, 2003

☐ Draft Alternatives Comments -

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☐ Draft Alternatives Comments -

e-mail comments to:
comments@cadescoveopp.com

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June, 2003

Stamp

**Superintendent
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
107 Park Headquarters Road
Gatlinburg, TN 37738**

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June, 2003