

Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI)

For the use of
Otter Creek, Rocky Knob Cabins, and Bluffs Lodge
Along the
Blue Ridge Parkway



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Southeast Region

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (RFEI) ONLY. This RFEI is issued solely for information and planning purposes and does not constitute a Request for Proposal (RFP) or a promise to issue a RFP in the future. This RFEI does not commit the Government to contract for any supply or service whatsoever. Further, the National Park Service (NPS) is not at this time seeking proposals and will not accept unsolicited proposals. Responders are advised that the U.S. Government will not pay for any information or administrative costs incurred in response to this RFEI. All costs associated with responding to this RFEI will be solely at the interested party's expense. Not responding to this RFEI does not preclude participation in any future RFP, if any is issued. If a solicitation is released, it will be synopsized on the System for Award Management website (www.sam.gov). It is the responsibility of the potential offerors to monitor this site for additional information pertaining to this requirement.

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

America's National Park Service was created by Congress to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." Additionally, Congress has declared that the NPS areas should be "preserved and managed for the benefit and inspiration of all the people of the United States."

To learn more about the NPS, visit our website at www.nps.gov. This site includes information about who we are, our mission, NPS policies, and individual park information.

THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

Located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and North Carolina, the Blue Ridge Parkway (Parkway) is a 469-mile recreational motor road that connects Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks while protecting the cultural and natural features of the region. Encompassing over 92,000 acres with more than 1,000 miles of boundary, the Parkway provides the visiting public with a variety of recreational activities. Visitors are drawn to this area to experience the stunning scenery and close-up looks at the natural and cultural history of the mountains.

The Parkway is dedicated to enhancing the outstanding scenic and recreational qualities of the corridor that it traverses; conserving unimpaired its significant natural and cultural resources, and promoting in perpetuity the public enjoyment and appreciation of the central and southern Appalachian Mountains. Additional information regarding the Parkway can be found at www.nps.gov/blri.

FACILITIES INCLUDED

BRP Milepost	Building(s)	Square Footage	Description
60.8	Otter Creek Restaurant and Gift Shop	3,190	57-seat restaurant and gift shop
165	Rocky Knob Cabins	4,678	7 rustic cabins, managers house, and shower house
241.1	Bluffs Lodge (Units A & B)	7,953	24 rooms for guests, plus additional room in basement

The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking expressions of interest for the use of three separate facilities along the Blue Ridge Parkway: Otter Creek Restaurant and Gift Shop; Rocky Knob Cabins; and Bluffs Lodge. The sites are at Blue Ridge Parkway Mileposts 60.8, 165, and 241.1 respectively. The NPS will consider the responses to this Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) to plan for the use of these facilities starting in 2025 or 2026. Interested parties may respond with ideas for one or more facilities; there is no requirement or expectation for an interested party to offer responses for multiple locations.

The RFEI allows interested parties an opportunity to review the property, facilities, and park area and to submit their concept(s) of potential future use of the facilities, taking into account the park's purpose. The NPS may choose all or part of the content of one or more responses to the RFEI for further consideration and possible development into a public solicitation that the NPS then would advertise to the public, inviting all qualified candidates to submit proposals for the operation. There are very limited circumstances under which the building may be used by a non-NPS entity without a public solicitation. The precise process for soliciting and selecting proposals will depend on the nature of the business opportunity and the legal instrument under which the proposal is issued.

The two instruments most commonly used by the NPS for facilities such as those under consideration in this RFEI are a concession contract or a lease, with a lease being the more likely instrument for each of these offerings. These instruments are governed by 36 CFR 51 (concession contracts) and 36 CFR 18 (leasing). The NPS may consider issuing leases, concessions contracts, or temporary concessions contracts for some or all of the facilities. For more information on the NPS Commercial Services Program, please see <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/concessions/index.htm>.

A concessions contract is awarded through a prospectus process and issued to provide necessary and appropriate visitor services within a park area. Concessioners pay a franchise fee to the NPS for privileges granted under the contract. The franchise fee is determined through a franchise fee analysis. Consideration of revenue to the NPS is subordinate to protecting park resources and providing services to the park visitors. The franchise fee also takes into consideration that the Concessioner has a reasonable opportunity for profit related to the obligations of the contract. Concession contracts are generally 10 years or less, but may be awarded for a term up to 20 years. Temporary concession contracts may be issued non-competitively for a maximum of 3 years.

A lease is typically awarded through a Request for Proposal (RFP). Leased property can be used for any lawful purpose with some required determinations identified in 36 CFR 18 § 18.4. Fair market value rent is required for leases, but the lease rate may be offset by investments to restore, rehabilitate, or otherwise improve the property. A lease term may be issued for a maximum of 60 years.

OTTER CREEK

Otter Creek Area Overview



Situated near the James River and at the Parkway's lowest elevation, the James River/Otter Creek Recreation Area (Milepost 60-65) offers a variety of activities, attractions, and services for Parkway visitors. Mountain biking, boating, hiking, and fishing are all popular recreational activities. An accessible fishing pier on Otter Lake provides visitors opportunities to fish. A bridge and pedestrian walkway across James River connect the seasonally open visitor contact station with the restored Battery Creek canal lock. The Otter Creek Trail and the Otter Lake Loop Trail provide recreational and scenic viewing opportunities.

Other nearby Parkway attractions include the only Parkway tunnel in Virginia where the Parkway passes through Bluff Mountain (Milepost 53). Another scenic attraction, Natural Bridge, is between I-81 and the Parkway. The towns of Glasgow on the west side of the Parkway and Lynchburg on the east side are nearby.



Otter Creek Facilities Overview

The Otter Creek Restaurant, Gift Shop, and Campground (Milepost 60.8) are located on Otter Creek, approximately 20 miles from Lynchburg, VA. The former restaurant and gift shop facility at Otter Creek was designed as a modern board-and-batten frame building with traditional Southern Appalachian features such as a long porch across the front, a jerkinhead or clipped gable roof, and a stone chimney. The facility opened for business in May 1960. Site stabilization of an area just behind the restaurant was also accomplished as a part of the restaurant building improvements that occurred during the spring of 1999. A montane oak-hickory forest is the principal plant community surrounding the restaurant.

Historically, the 3,190 square foot facility was operated as a restaurant and gift shop. The facility was open from May through October, serving breakfast and lunch. As it was configured, the dining room seated 57. The gift shop sold gifts, souvenirs, sundries, and firewood. The facility has been closed since the end of 2010. The campground is operated seasonally by the National Park Service, but the NPS may consider expressions of interest that include campground operations at this location.

Exterior Conditions

The exterior of the building is in good to fair condition. The exterior has wood siding and other wood features with a shingled roof of moderate age. Needed exterior repairs will include, but are not limited to, repairs or replacement of the wood siding, windows, doors, porch and rails, ramps, decks, fencing. The roof requires maintenance to remove vegetation growth and to restore gutters and downspouts to working order. There has been no significant work performed on the exterior of the building since its closing in 2010.

Interior Conditions

The interior of the building is in overall good to fair condition. The interior of the building has remained generally unimproved since closing in 2010. The materials used internally remain in a range from fair to good condition. The tile flooring throughout is generally in good condition, with a few localized damaged areas. The flooring in the room that was previously the gift shop is carpeted, considered to be in poor condition. The room previously used as a kitchen contains no equipment and any built-in kitchen systems should be considered outdated and in need of

replacement. Within the kitchen area, the wall and floor finishes are in poor condition.

Any major reconstruction of the building or change in use of the building would trigger requirements to bring building systems up to current building code for electrical, plumbing, accessibility, fire suppression, etc.

Adaptive Uses

Under a historic lease contract, there is no requirement to provide visitor services in the same way as they were carried out historically at the site. Operators are not required to maintain public access to leased structures, but any interested party should understand that historic structures are located within a National Park Service boundary and may therefore invite visitor interest. The NPS is open to creative ideas of what Otter Creek buildings could be used for under a lease, as long as they are not inconsistent with the purpose and mission of Blue Ridge Parkway. The following are prohibited uses for the buildings:

- Gambling;
- Adult entertainment; and
- Private Residence.

Examples of compatible uses may include, but are not limited to:

- Restaurant, coffee shop, grab and go food, and/or retail;
- Outfitter or tour guide services;
- Classroom or training space;
- General commercial use;
- General office use; and
- Hospitality services.

Uses of federal assets under NPS management must meet certain criteria. For the Otter Creek building, this means that the proposed use must:

- not degrade or unduly impair the park's resources and values;
- be compatible with the programs of the NPS;
- be consistent with the purposes established by law for the park in which it is located; and
- ensure the preservation of any historic property involved with the proposed use.

Additionally, the proposed use must follow all applicable local, state, and federal laws, such as health, safety, food handling, and labor and employment law. Proposed uses may, if implemented, be subject to compliance with environmental and historical laws.

The adjacent 69-site Otter Creek campground, opened in 1960 with a small amphitheater established in 1962, is operated by the NPS, but was offered as a concession operation in the 2012 prospectus. Interested parties could propose to include campground operations as part of their response and/or have the opportunity to rent camping gear.

The National Park Service supplies water and wastewater at Otter Creek buildings. In 2010, Otter Creek Restaurant used 146,100 gallons. Appalachian Power supplies electricity to Otter Creek. Water and wastewater rates are calculated annually and can be provided upon request.

HISTORICAL OTTER CREEK RESTAURANT GROSS RECEIPTS

Department	2008	2009	2010
Food and Beverage	\$154,447	\$142,921	\$138,362
Retail	\$73,328	\$78,784	\$100,368
Total Gross Receipts	\$227,775	\$221,705	\$238,730

2022 OTTER CREEK CAMPGROUND OVERNIGHT STAYS BY MONTH

	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	2022 Total
Tents	1,164	1,460	2,051	2,572	3,070	3,630	1,568	15,515
RVs	743	856	1,134	1,438	1,645	1,967	909	8,692
Total	1,907	2,316	3,185	4,010	4,715	5,597	2,477	24,207

ROCKY KNOB CABINS

Rocky Knob Area Overview



The Rocky Knob recreation area, centered at Milepost 174, has more than 3,500 acres of mostly rugged, forested terrain, including Rock Castle Gorge. The NPS owns and administers the entire watershed of Rock Castle Gorge and provides opportunities for natural resource monitoring and comparative study. There are many overlooks and vistas along the Parkway of the dramatic Gorge, making it an important scenic focal point. An extensive trail system in Rock Castle Gorge, including the Rock Castle Gorge Loop Trail, a designated National Scenic Trail, provides excellent hiking and access to backcountry camping opportunities.

The Rocky Knob Cabins (Milepost 165), situated off of the parkway near the junction of SR 726 and SR 758, have direct access to the southern entrance to Rock Castle Gorge and are close to several natural, cultural and historical sites including the Gorge's hiking trails, the historic Mabry Mill, and Fairy Stone State Park. Mabry Mill, one of the Parkway's most visited attractions, is two miles from the Rock Knob Cabins. Rocky Knob is 27 miles from Fairy Stone State Park. Also near the Cabins are a campground, picnic area, and a visitor contact station housed in a converted historic gas station.



Rocky Knob Cabins Facilities Overview

The Rocky Knob Cabins, a small, secluded complex of seven housekeeping cabins, a manager's house and a shower/bath house is located near Floyd, VA. These historic structures were constructed in 1941 by the Civilian Conservation Corps. First developed as "trail lodges", the Cabins were remodeled for use as family housekeeping units in 1950. Six of the cabins include a bedroom and kitchen. The seventh cabin is ADA accessible and includes private bathroom in addition to a kitchen. Each cabin is 418 square feet. The 960 square foot manager's house includes a bedroom, living area, kitchen, bathroom and office. The 792 square foot shower house has men's and women's bathrooms and showers, and a laundry room. The cabins were historically available for rental May through October. The cabins have been closed since the end of 2012.

In summary, the buildings considered part of the Rocky Knob Cabins facility include:

- Building 016: Office & Storage
- Building 017/018: Duplex Cabin
- Building 019: Cabin
- Building 020: Cabin
- Building 021: Cabin
- Building 022/023: Duplex Cabin
- Building 024 Bathhouse/Bathrooms

Water/Wastewater Utility NOTE: Previously the National Park Service operated both water and wastewater utilities for the site and the concession paid appropriate rates to the NPS for usage. Since that time the NPS has not operated nor maintained the water or wastewater systems and has no plans to make future investments into the systems nor resume the operation of the systems. Future proposals for use of the Rocky Knob Cabins Facility must consider water and wastewater utility operations in the proposal. Operations for consideration include: A) operating the site without permanent water/wastewater utilities, B) anticipate making the necessary investments

to restore the water/wastewater systems operation and take on the operation of the systems as the sole operator, C) other options to meet objectives.

HISTORICAL ROCKY KNOB GROSS RECEIPTS

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
\$64,320	\$64,334	\$72,037	\$51,263	\$50,645

Exterior Conditions

The buildings within the Rocky Knob Cabin complex are generally in good to fair condition. The exterior has wood siding and other wood features with a shingled roof of moderate age. Needed exterior repairs will include, but are not limited to, repairs or replacement of the wood siding, windows, doors, exterior lighting. The roof requires maintenance to remove vegetation growth and to restore gutters and downspouts to working order. There has been no significant work performed on the exterior of the building since closing in 2012.

Interior Conditions

The interiors of the buildings are in fair condition with no maintenance or improvements made to them since the facilities closing in 2012. Any major reconstruction of the building or change in use of the building would trigger requirements to bring building systems up to current building code for electrical, plumbing, accessibility, fire suppression, etc.

Site Conditions & Utilities

The site consists of maintained lawns, driveways, sidewalks, staircases, and incidental features. Needed repair work includes, but is not limited to, addressing overgrown vegetation, reestablishment of edges along roads, driveways and pathways, repointing staircases and other stoned/masonry features, restoration of site lighting, repointing various flagstone patios and approaches adjacent to the buildings on the site.

The complex was previously provided potable water from a well located on site. The potable water system, including the well, storage tank, water mains and service lines, and fire hydrants have not been operated since 2012 and are assumed to be in disrepair, requiring its full replacement if it is the intention to provide potable water in any proposed use of the site. Wastewater was treated by localized septic tanks adjacent or nearby to the buildings.

Adaptive Uses

Under a historic lease contract, there is no requirement to provide visitor services in the same way as they were carried out historically at the site. Operators are not required to maintain public access to leased structures, but any interested party should understand that historic structures are located within a National Park Service boundary and may therefore invite visitor interest. The NPS is open to creative ideas of what Rocky Knob cabins could be used for under a lease, as long as they are not inconsistent with the purpose and mission of Blue Ridge Parkway. The following are prohibited uses for the buildings:

- Gambling;
- Adult entertainment; and
- Private Residence.

Examples of compatible uses may include, but are not limited to:

- Cabins or hostel;
- Youth group campsite;
- Event space;
- Outfitter or tour guide services;
- General commercial use; and
- Hospitality services.

Uses of federal assets under NPS management must meet certain criteria. For the Rocky Knob cabins, this means that the proposed use must:

- not degrade or unduly impair the park's resources and values;
- be compatible with the programs of the NPS;
- be consistent with the purposes established by law for the park in which it is located; and
- ensure the preservation of any historic property involved with the proposed use.

Additionally, the proposed use must follow all applicable local, state, and federal laws, such as health, safety, food handling, and labor and employment law. Proposed uses may, if implemented, be subject to compliance with environmental and historical laws.

BLUFFS LODGE

Bluffs Lodge Area Overview



Bluffs Lodge (Milepost 241.1) opened to visitors in September 1950. It was the first motor lodge constructed on the Blue Ridge Parkway. In the same year, it was renamed Doughton Park after North Carolina Representative Robert L. Doughton. Although the name of the recreational area changed, the name of the property remained Bluffs Lodge.



Bluffs Lodge Facilities Overview

Bluffs Lodge consists of two buildings, Unit A which is approximately 3,553 square feet and Unit B which is approximately 4,400 square feet. These two buildings are set at an angle with a patio between them. The layout consists of 24 individual rooms, two of which meet ADA accessibility requirements. Each room can be accessed from the parking lot, consistent with a historic “motor court” or motel layout. The patio or paved courtyard features a stone fireplace that encourages engagement and activities amongst visitors. Steps from the courtyard lead to the lower levels of the lodge and a stone retaining wall with a parapet on the west side of the court to take advantage of views of the sunset. Rooms on the rear side of the lodge have views of the adjacent meadow, while those on the front face the single bay loop parking lot.

Original plans for Bluffs Lodge show a double-bay parking lot for future expansion and the development of a “Future Lodge Dining Room and Lounge,” with an access walk to Wildcat Rocks Overlook and a 24-car parking area.

Historically, the Bluffs Lodge was operated as a concession contract in conjunction with the Bluffs Coffee Shop and Gas Station until 2010 when the prior contract expired and mold was discovered in the facilities. The associated Bluffs Coffee Shop was renovated and leased to a non-profit partner under a separate historic lease agreement in 2020, and the former gas station building is now a visitor contact station and America’s National Parks bookstore. The Bluffs Lodge has remained vacant since 2010.

Historic Gross Receipts for Bluffs Coffee Shop, Lodge, and Gift Shop 2008-2010:

Department	2008	2009	2010
Food and Beverage	\$482,086	\$474,459	\$498,112
Lodging	\$310,638	\$327,033	\$321,666
Retail	\$89,949	\$96,117	\$109,280
Total Revenue	\$882,673	\$897,609	\$929,058

Exterior Conditions

The Bluffs Lodge consists of two lodge structures linked by a covered walkway and is considered in poor condition. Typical exterior features include vertical wood siding, concrete shingle roof with wood gutters, wood windows and doors, stone paving, and wood decking. Needed exterior repairs will include, but are not limited to, repairs or replacement of the wood siding, windows, doors, exterior lighting, gutters, stone paving and masonry repairs on foundation, staircases, and patios. There has been no work performed on the exterior of the building since closing in 2010.

Interior Conditions

The interior of the buildings is in fair to poor condition with no maintenance or improvements made to them since the facilities' closing in 2010. Typical construction of the interior includes carpet flooring, plaster wall and ceilings with wood wainscot in the bedrooms. At the time of its closure in 2010, it was reported that there were areas where excessive moisture had generated unacceptable mold growth in sections of the building, requiring cleanup and remediation. All utility systems including HVAC, water, electrical and plumbing have not been in service since 2010. Needed interior repairs will include plaster wall and ceiling repairs, painting, flooring replacement, water and mold remediation and assessments/replacement of all support systems as necessary (electrical, plumbing, HVAC, etc.). Any major reconstruction of the building or change in use of the building would trigger requirements to bring building systems up to current building code for electrical, plumbing, accessibility, fire suppression, etc.

Site Conditions & Utilities

The site consists of maintained lawns, driveways and parking lots, sidewalks, staircases, and incidental features such as site lighting. Much of the constructed sidewalks and patios is of stone surfacing and need of repair/repointing/resetting. Needed repair work will include, but is not limited to, addressing overgrown vegetation, reestablishment of edges along roads, driveways, and pathways, repointing/repairing stoned walking surfaces, staircases and walls including other stoned/masonry features, restoration of site lighting, repointing various flagstone patios and approaches adjacent to the buildings on the site.

The complex was previously provided potable water from a well located on site. The potable water system, including the well, storage tank, water mains and service lines, and fire hydrants have not been fully operated since 2010 and may require full or partial replacement if it is the intention to provide potable water in any proposed use of the site. Wastewater was treated by localized septic tanks adjacent or nearby to the buildings.

Adaptive Uses

Under a historic lease contract, there is no requirement to provide visitor services in the same way as they were carried out historically at the site. Operators are not required to maintain public access to leased structures, but any interested party should understand that historic structures are located within a National Park Service boundary and may therefore invite visitor interest. The NPS is open to creative ideas of what the Bluffs Lodge building could be used for under a lease, as long as they are not inconsistent with the purpose and mission of Blue Ridge Parkway. The following are prohibited uses for the buildings:

- Gambling;
- Adult entertainment; and
- Private Residence.

Examples of compatible uses may include, but are not limited to:

- Lodging;

- Event Space;
- Outfitter or tour guide services;
- General commercial use; and
- Hospitality services.

Uses of federal assets under NPS management must meet certain criteria. For the Bluffs Lodge building, this means that the proposed use must:

- not degrade or unduly impair the park's resources and values;
- be compatible with the programs of the NPS;
- be consistent with the purposes established by law for the park in which it is located; and
- ensure the preservation of any historic property involved with the proposed use.

Additionally, the proposed use must follow all applicable local, state, and federal laws, such as health, safety, food handling, and labor and employment law. Proposed uses may, if implemented, be subject to compliance with environmental and historical laws.

FINANCIAL REQUIREMENT

Financial requirements vary based on the legal instrument under which the proposal is issued and may be based on fair market lease value or a financial analysis of the business opportunity. In general, the financial requirements for use of one of these facilities would include investing in the operation and maintenance of the facility to the NPS standards.

TERM LENGTH

Term length will be determined by the NPS. Depending upon the instrument used, the shortest term may be a 3-year temporary contract and the longest could be up to a 60-year lease. If temporary concession operators are used, they will have the opportunity to bid on a full-term contract (10 years).

Q&A SESSIONS AND SITE VISITS

The park will host virtual Q&A sessions about Otter Creek on February 27, Rocky Knob Cabins on February 28, and for Bluffs Lodge on February 29, each at 2:00pm ET. To receive a link to join one or more meeting, please email Rachel Stasny at rachel_stasny@nps.gov. In-person site visits will be scheduled for each facility sometime in late March or early April, 2024. All parties intending to attend scheduled site visits must send an email message to Alexis Thompson at alexis_thompson@nps.gov by March 8, 2024.

CONSIDERATIONS

Uses of federal land must be authorized by law and comply with the law under which the use is authorized.

Uses of federal land under NPS management must meet certain criteria. For the Blue Ridge Parkway, this means that the use must:

- Not degrade or unduly impair the park's resources and values;
- Be compatible with the programs of the NPS;
- Be consistent with the purposes established by law for the park area in which it is located; and,
- Ensure the preservation of any historic property involved with the proposed use.

Additionally, the use must follow all applicable local, state and federal laws, such as health, safety, food handling, and labor and employment law. Uses must be compliant with environmental and historic preservation policy.

The NPS will consider the responses to this RFEI to plan for the use of these facilities starting the spring of 2025.

The pertinent laws, regulations and policies, can be found at:

<http://home.nps.gov/applications/npspolicy/index.cfm>

More information on the NPS commercial services program can be found at:

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/concessions/index.htm>

Information specific to Blue Ridge Parkway is available at:

www.nps.gov/blri

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Respondents are encouraged to provide input that demonstrates how their concept will support the park's purpose. Responses should not exceed 15 pages total. Any viable option will be considered. Please submit:

- A description of your interest to use the facility(ies) and which facility(ies) you are interested in;
- A transmittal letter indicating your name, company or organization, legal structure, and contact information for representative(s) including email address;
- Previous hospitality management experience, if any;
- Previous NPS Concessions or Leasing operation experience, if any; and,
- Any other pertinent points or conditions.

Please indicate in your submission whether you would like the NPS to retain your contact information and notify you of future business opportunities.

Please submit your response by April 30, 2024. In addition, respondents are encouraged to submit an electronic copy of their response in any format.

FOR RESPONSES, QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS PLEASE CONTACT:

Alexis Thompson
Realty Specialist
National Park Service 1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
email: alexis_thompson@nps.gov
mobile: 202.441.2195

The NPS will acknowledge your submission after receipt. Within 60 days of the submission date, the NPS will provide a publically available description of the next steps in the process and notify all respondents by email.