

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Blue Ridge Parkway

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: BLRI

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

The Blue Ridge Parkway, in linking the Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks, is dedicated to enhancing the outstanding scenic and recreational qualities of the corridor that it traverses; conserving unimpaired its significant natural and cultural resources, and promoting in perpetuity the public enjoyment and appreciation of the Central and Southern Appalachian Mountains.

The Blue Ridge Parkway is a primary catalyst for promoting regional travel, tourism and recreation, serving as a unifying element for 29 counties through which it passes, engendering a shared regional identity, providing a common link of interest, and being a major contributor to regional recreation, education and economic vitality.

As the highest and longest continuous route in the Appalachian area, along its 469-mile length the Blue Ridge Parkway provides inspiring and safe access to view scenic rural farm lands and naturally important crests and ridges of five major ranges within the central and southern Appalachian Mountains, encompassing geographic and vegetative zones that range from 649 feet at James River in Virginia to 6,047 feet at Richland Balsam in North Carolina.

The park's uninterrupted corridor facilitates the protection of a diverse range of flora and fauna, including rare and endangered plant and animal species and globally imperiled natural communities and preserves and displays cultural landscapes and historic architecture characteristic of the Central and Southern Appalachian highlands.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Philip A. Francis, Jr., Superintendent, Blue Ridge Parkway

Site: BLRI

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

Rehabilitate high-priority historic buildings to good condition, and help communities to preserve their history through programs like Preserve America.

The Blue Ridge Parkway preserves and maintains the 3500 acre Moses H. Cone Memorial Park. With over 225,000 visitors annually, it is an important example of the `country era` estate philosophy popular with wealthy industrialists at the turn of the century. Preservation of this landmark provides a vital link to understanding the industrial movement of the early 1900s and the way the industrial development has influenced the southeast of today. Further, the Cone Manor House is considered an architecturally significant example of the Beaux Arts approach to design with strong Classical and Colonial Revival influences. The structure has a high degree of integrity and the wealth of archival materials detailing its construction and maintenance during its period of significance makes this an extremely well-documented historic building.

With Eastern National, the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, and the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, staff completes a variety of preservation and rehabilitation projects annually. With the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation and Appalachian State University, the park plan to construct a comfort station located at a popular day use area on the Estate.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Improve high-priority assets to acceptable condition, as measured by the Facility Condition Index.

The Blue Ridge Parkway has one of the most complex asset inventories in the NPS. The current assets listed in the Facility Management Software System (FMSS), includes: 525 miles of paved roads, 169 vehicle bridges (14% of NPS inventory), 26 tunnels (43% of NPS inventory), 350 miles of trails, 847 scenic vistas, 123 miles of wooden rail fences, 246 public use buildings, and 90 historic structures.

The Park is in the final phase of developing a Park Asset Management Plan (PAMP), which is being completed by a contract vendor. Upon completion of this plan the Park will be able to effectively identify deficiencies, fund rehabilitation projects, and complete work on high priority assets.

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Site: BLRI

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The Parkway, in partnership with the United States Forest Service and the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation is presently studying the construction of a comfort station and related improvements at Graveyard Fields Overlook on the Parkway. This heavily visited area is remote and provides a trailhead for access to an extensive trail system and primitive camping on USFS lands. The proposed project would alleviate sanitation issues and improve conditions for a large number of parkway and USFS visitors. Related improvements will eliminate illegal, unsafe parking and will serve to improve and better manage the use of the existing trail system. The project would implement a development concept plan that is currently underway with a completion date targeted for late FY 2007.

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Site: BLRI

STEWARDSHIP

Encourage children to be future conservationists.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The Blue Ridge Parkway and its partners, The FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation propose to increase the awareness of local and visiting Youth for the need of conservation and stewardship through existing and new programs. The Parks-As-Classrooms program reaches Youth in 29 counties along the Blue Ridge Parkway. These hands-on programs are curriculum based and are related to current subject matter and the Blue Ridge Parkway as well as other NPS units.

The Young Volunteers-In-Parks (YVIP) program is in the early stages of development and implementation. Participants in this program may experience a wide variety of opportunities from planting trees to being an Interpreter for a day.

Through the Jr. Ranger program and Jr. Ranger camps youth are given a wide variety of park experiences from a three day consecutive learning Day Camp setting to the more traditional park experience with family and Park Interpretive programming.

The programs are hands-on and take place in the park. From these experiences youth gain a greater knowledge of the Park and feel more connected to it.

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Site: BLRI

ENVIRONMENT

Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans.

Serve as a model for energy efficiency, under Executive Order 13423, by ensuring Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

The Blue Ridge Parkway is committed to practicing environmental stewardship and demonstrating environmental leadership to our visitors and our community. The Parkway conducts its operations in an environmentally responsible manner and fosters the sustainable use of natural resources by promoting pollution prevention, by reducing waste generation, by purchasing environmentally preferable products, and by recycling and reusing materials. The Parkway has implemented and is committed to utilizing an environmental management system (EMS). Through the use of the environmental management system, the Parkway has established and measures environmental performance, establishes accountability, continually strives to improve the system, and expects every employee to take ownership and responsibility for environmental stewardship. In FY08 the Parkway will begin operation of a newly constructed gold standard LEED certified Visitor Center and Education facility. The facility will showcase sustainable and energy conservation features interpreted by Parkway and partner staff. The facility will be operated in partnership with Eastern National and the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area staff.

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Site: BLRI

RECREATION

Expand partnerships with schools and boys and girls associations to show how national park experiences can improve children's lives.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Healthy Children/Healthy Parks will increase opportunities for youth to become involved in outdoor activities along the Blue Ridge Parkway. These activities will concentrate on helping children lead healthier lives by learning more about the natural environment and the NPS role as a primary steward of natural resources. Topics such as nutrition, outdoor activities and proper exercise will be intertwined to park interpretive themes.

According to Richard Louv(author of Last Child in the Woods, as children's connections to nature diminish and the social, psychological, and spiritual implications become apparent, new research shows that nature can offer powerful therapy for maladies such as depression, obesity and attention deficit-disorder. This project offers the opportunity to address two challenges of this new century: combating the childhood obesity epidemic while engaging children in activities to keep parks relevant to future generations.

As part of a multi-dimensional program involving partners outside the park, children will have the opportunity for outdoor experiences that will connect them to the natural world while engaging in physical exercise.

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Site: BLRI

PROFESSIONALISM

Promote a safety and health culture for all employees and visitors.

Reduce the number of employee lost-time incidents and serious visitor injuries by 20 percent.

The Blue Ridge Parkway is the most visited unit in the System and the most frequent source of injury is motor vehicle collisions. High traffic volume on a mountain roadway that showcases outstanding viewscales contributes to collisions and injuries.

Enhancing the motoring experience has required an interdisciplinary mitigation program. Early phases of this program have shown significant success but changing use patterns present growing challenges. Combining educational outreach with a sustainable enforcement program has become part of a Centennial vision that offers increased safety for visitors.

The Parkway and our partner, Eastern National, propose to offer educational and theme related materials through a variety of mediums on and off site. These materials and contacts will engage the visitor in a safer park experience, to reduce serious visitor accidents by 10 %.

Our staff provides a wide range of services to our visitors. Employee injuries adversely impact the individual, work group and service to visitors. With our partner, the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, we would develop a safety program promoting the best in operational safety practices and employee wellness.

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