W46

January 29, 2010

Memorandum

To: Superintendent

From: Chief Ranger

Subject: Temporary public use closure

In accordance with 36 CFR 1.5, the following closures and public use limits are imposed:

Unless otherwise noted, "all public use" is meant to prohibit the use of an area by members of the public.

Recreation activities such as auto touring, walking and hiking, bicycling, skiing, camping, and horseback riding are included in the list of prohibited uses. Normal restrictions, e.g. no horseback riding on the Clingmans Dome road, remain in place unless exceptions are noted herein.

For the purposes of this document, a trailhead is considered as the intersection of a trail and the road listed in the closure. Trailheads provide for access to the trail and generally provide for nearby parking. Access from the listed roads to trailheads mentioned herein, and access to the listed roads from the trailheads mentioned herein, is prohibited. Access to other trailheads, e.g. the Sugarland Mountain trailhead at the Little River Road, is not affected. Unless otherwise noted, all listed trails are open to public use – only the access to and from the adjacent road is closed to public use.

All dates are in 2010.

The closures or public use limits affect the following areas and/or activities:

Cades Cove: March 1 through May 21: The Cades Cove Loop Road (Loop Road), all land inside the Loop Road, the Forge Creek Road and all land within ¼ mile outside the Loop Road is closed to all public use. Trailhead access via the Loop Road for the following trails will be closed to all public use: Cooper Road, Abrams Falls, Rabbit Creek, Gregory Ridge and Wet Bottoms. The following roads, accessed from the Loop Road, will be closed to all vehicle traffic but open to pedestrian, equestrian and bicycle traffic: Rich Mountain Road from Rich Mountain Gap and Parsons Branch Road from Highway 129.

Clingmans Dome Road, February 15 through May 28: The Clingmans Dome Road is closed to all public use. Trailhead access via the Clingmans Dome Road for the following trails will be closed to all public use: Road Prong, Sugarland Mountain, Fork Ridge, Forney Ridge, Forney Creek and the "bypass trail" at the Clingmans Dome parking area. Use of the Appalachian Trail is permitted but access to and from the Clingmans Dome road is prohibited.

The Sinks, January 4 through May 25: The Sinks parking area and the Meigs Creek trailhead are closed to all public use. This includes those adjacent areas used by swimmers, divers and tubers. The adjacent portion of the Little River is open to boating recreation, except for access to the Sinks parking lot.

Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail, February 15 – May 28: The Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail (RFMNT) will be closed to all public use. Trailhead access via RFMNT for the following trails will be closed to all public use: Grotto Falls, Baskins Creek, and Grapeyard Ridge. That portion of the Trillium Gap Trail which runs parallel to the RFMNT and is accessible from the Rainbow Falls parking lot/trailhead will remain open to public use. Specific exceptions will be made for the Le Conte Lodge llama train.

Cherokee Orchard Road, February 15 through May 28: The one way portion of the Cherokee Orchard Road, i.e. beyond the Noah Bud Ogle parking lot as well as the Rainbow Falls, Bullhead, Trillium Gap (at Rainbow Falls trail) and Old Sugarlands trailheads, will be closed to all public use from February 15 through March 19. Between March 20 and May 28, the road will be open but managed under construction to facilitate access to the Rainbow Falls trailhead. When a portion of the road is closed to motor vehicles, it is also closed to all public use. The two-way portion of the Cherokee Orchard Road is open to public use but will be subject to lane closures.

Gatlinburg bypass, May 1 through May 15: The Gatlinburg Bypass, from the junction with the Spur to the junction with the Newfound Gap Road (aka U.S. 441) and including access to and from Campbell Lead Road, will be closed to all public use. These dates are approximate and may be adjusted as construction schedules are finalized.

Foothills Parkway East: The Foothills Parkway East, i.e. between U.S. 321/TN 32 and I-40, will be closed to all public use for a four week period sometime between March 1 and August 31. The specific dates are to be determined

Foothills Parkway West: The Foothills Parkway West, i.e. between U.S. 321 in Walland and U.S. 129, will be subject to lane closures from May 1 through June 30 but no full public use closure is anticipated.

Heintooga Ridge Road, March 10 – May 27: The Heintooga Ridge Road (i.e. from Black Camp Gap to the Balsam Mountain Picnic Area) and the Balsam Mountain campground and picnic area will be closed to all public use. Access to and from the Balsam Mountain Road is also closed. Trailheads for the following trails will be closed to all public use: Hemphill Bald, Rough Fork and Flat Creek trailheads. That portion of the Heintooga Ridge Road from the Blue Ridge Parkway to Black Camp Gap will be open while under construction but subject to single lane closures.

Smokemont campground, March 10 through May 27: The Smokemont campground and group camp will be closed to all public use. Trailheads within Smokemont campground for the following trails will be closed to all public use: Bradley Fork, Smokemont Loop.

Access road to Little River and Jakes Creek trails, July 6 through August 31: The access road to the Little River and Jakes Creek trails, from its junction with the Elkmont campground road to the Little River trailhead and including the nearby one-way loop through Daisy Town, will be closed to all public use. Limited public access to the trails, via the Elkmont campground, will be accommodated via local signing. Rationale: Alternative parking areas are very limited and routine trail access through the Elkmont campground cannot be reasonably accommodated.

Local closures of various restrooms and campsites, March 12 through September 30: Rehabilitation work at various campground restrooms and campsites at Cades Cove (including the group 3 pavilion), Elkmont and Smokemont will result in localized closures during construction. When and where posted, these areas are closed to all public use.

The closure or public use limit will be in effect for the following time period:

See dates above. The dates listed are based on anticipated construction schedules. When possible, areas will be opened earlier and the public will be notified by the removal of closure signs and revisions to the Park web site. Unforeseen circumstances may also require that certain dates be extended and the public will be notified if that becomes necessary.

This closure is intended to:

Provide for the safety of the public during construction activities.

The following less restrictive closures/limits were considered but determined to be unsatisfactory:

Initial planning considered longer closures and/or closures of wider areas. Staggered closures over a series of dates and/or a provision for limited public use at some locations were also considered. The listed closures reflect the minimal interruption of public use that could be achieved in light of the need to separate the public from construction activities while accomplishing the construction in an efficient and rapid manner. Dates also reflect an effort have as many areas as possible open prior to and after the Memorial Day weekend.

With respect to Cades Cove, the areas inside the Loop Road have been closed because there are no existing routes for pedestrians, equestrians or bicyclists other than the road. Experience has shown that the majority of visitors is not accustomed to crosscountry hiking and would use the road for a significant portion of their travels, thus exposing themselves to construction hazards. The width of the road, coupled with the construction schedule, is not conducive to rotating partial closures.. The final decision was made in favor of a full closure for the shortest period of time.

Public notice, in accordance with 36 CFR 1.7, will be provided as follows:

Press releases have or will be issued.

Notices are posted at the Park's website and where relevant, on National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS) web pages.

Signs will be posted on roads and trails.

Notices will be posted in visitor centers.

Consultations have occurred with members of local governments and NGOs.

If construction is completed prior to the scheduled end date at specific areas, the area will reopened to normal public use and the public will be notified by one of more of the following: press releases, Internet postings and the removal of signs.

Prepared by:		
	Division Chief	date
Recommended by:	/s/ William J. Wright	2/2/2010
	Chief Ranger	date
Approved by:	/s/ Kevin FitzGerald	<u>2/2/2010</u>
	for Superintendent	date

Distribute copies as follows:

Original and digital copy to Chief Rangers Office. CRO will post to Intranet

Chief Ranger

Communications Center

District Ranger/s

Public Affairs

Division Chiefs

Visitor Centers