

**Request for Expression of Interest****A Concession Business Opportunity to operate Bluffs Restaurant and Gift Shop at Doughton Park along the Blue Ridge Parkway**

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 request for expressions of interest does not commit the Government to contract for any supply or service whatsoever. Further, the NPS is not at this time seeking proposals and will not accept unsolicited proposals.

The NPS is soliciting an expression of interest to a proposal to operate Bluffs Restaurant and Gift Shop in the Doughton Park area of the Blue Ridge Parkway at Milepost 241, between Laurel Springs and Sparta, NC. The NPS asks that you provide your expression no later than the date written at the bottom of this document.

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 synopsisized on the Federal Business Opportunities website (Federal Business Opportunities website). It is the responsibility of the potential offerors to monitor this site for additional information pertaining to this requirement.

The term "Concessioner" as used in this RFEI refers to the entity that would be the Concessioner under a Draft Contract, if a Concessions Prospectus were issued and a Concessioner was selected.

The term "Leaseholder" as used in the RFEI refers to the entity that would be the Leaseholder under a Lease, if a Request for Proposal were issued and a lease was issued.

In the event of any inconsistency between the terms of this RFEI and 36 C.F.R. Part 51, 36 C.F.R. Part 51 will control.

The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking expressions of interest for the use of Bluffs Restaurant & Gift Shop at Milepost 241 along the Blue Ridge Parkway. The NPS will consider the responses to this RFEI to plan for the use of these facilities starting in 2019 or 2020. Bluffs Restaurant was built in 1949 and was used as a restaurant and gift shop until 2010. Proposals for alternative uses will be considered. The NPS encourages creative consideration of the historic use to provide visitor services at this location.

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 reused 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 and a lease. 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 [NPS Commercial Services website](#)

A concessions contract is awarded through a prospectus process and issued to provide necessary and appropriate visitor services within a park area. Concessioners pay to the NPS a franchise fee 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. 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. However, requirements under the lease for the lessee to restore, rehabilitate, or otherwise improve the property are taken into consideration when determining the fair market value rent, as well as possible restrictions on the use of the property. A lease term may be up to 60 years.

### **BLUFFS RESTAURANT AND GIFT SHOP AT DOUGHTON PARK (MP 241)**

Doughton Park is a highland recreation area of the Blue Ridge Parkway made up of a landscape of open meadows, numerous wooden fences and pioneer cabins, a place to view wildlife and get a feel for the lives of those who lived here long ago. This recreation area of more than 5,000 acres contains a popular picnic area and more than 30 miles of backcountry hiking trails that access Basin Cove. NPS rangers offer interpretive programs at the nearby historic Brinegar Cabin and Caudill Family Homestead. Additionally, Doughton Park is contiguous with the Thurman-Chatham Game Lands and Stone Mountain State Park (NC State parks website).

The Bluffs Restaurant at Doughton Park consists of a 5,253 square foot building, made up of a 73 seat dining room with a retail area and a commercial kitchen on the main level. On the lower level, the basement has eight rooms which can be used for offices or storage. The facility is typically open from May to October. Some shoulder seasonality or off-peak weekend operations may be feasible on a limited basis.

Completed in 1949, Bluffs Lodge and Restaurant concession facilities were the first to provide meals and lodging on the Parkway. Bluffs Lodge and Restaurant closed at the end of 2010. In 2016, the National Park Service and Eastern National opened a visitor center and gift shop in the former service station next to the Bluffs Restaurant, which will continue to serve visitors.

While the NPS is committed to preserving the cultural and historical significance of the concession operation, we are also open to suggestions concerning adjustments to the services offered in order to take advantage of the many nearby recreational opportunities and begin attracting the next generation of Doughton Park visitors.

### **BLUFFS RESTAURANT FACILITIES**

Description	Area	Units of Measure	Year Built or Installed	Historically Significant?
Bluffs Restaurant (main level)	5,253	SF	1949	Yes

**BLUFFS RESTAURANT GROSS REVENUE**

Department	2008	2009	2010
Bluffs Restaurant F&B	\$482,086	\$474,459	\$498,112
Gift Shop in Restaurant	\$64,818	\$66,988	\$78,652
Total	\$546,904	\$541,447	\$576,754

**BLUFFS RESTAURANT FOOD AND BEVERAGE**

Historically, the Bluffs Restaurant has been known for its fried chicken, country ham and homemade biscuits. As previously configured, it could seat up to 73 guests and featured mid-century décor including many original fixtures.

The following table presents data on the number of covers and average check over the last three years the Bluffs Restaurant was operating (2008-2010). The former concessioner reported combined operating statistics for the Mabry Mill and Bluffs Lodge restaurants in 2008 and 2009, so utilization data for those years are estimates based on the historical breakdown in number of covers between the two sites (55% of total covers reported allocated to Bluffs, and 45% of total covers allocated to Mabry Mill).

**BLUFFS RESTAURANT FOOD AND BEVERAGE SUMMARY STATISTICS, 2008-2010**

	2008	2009	2010
Revenue	\$482,086	\$474,459	\$498,112
Number of Covers	50,763	52,160	53,587
Average Check	\$9.50	\$9.10	\$9.30

**BLUFFS RESTAURANT GIFT SHOP**

Inside the Bluffs Restaurant, a 450 square foot area was used for retail sales. The following table presents revenue data for the Bluffs Restaurant retail space from 2008 to 2010.

**BLUFFS RESTAURANT GIFT SHOP SUMMARY STATISTICS, 2008-2010**

	2008	2009	2010
Revenue	\$64,818	\$66,988	\$78,652
Square Feet	450	450	450

Through 2010, Bluffs Restaurant was operated by Forever NPC Resorts, L.L.C. an authorized concessioner of the Blue Ridge Parkway (a unit of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior).

**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, the 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](http://www.nps.gov). This site includes information about the NPS, its mission, policies, and individual park information.

### ***THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY***

Located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and North Carolina, the 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, 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. Additional information regarding the Parkway can be found at Blue Ridge Parkway website

### ***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).

### ***SITE VISIT***

A site visits is scheduled for the facilities on April 4, 2018. All parties intending to attend scheduled site visit must RSVP via an email message to Laura S. Nelson at the email address listed below by March 30, 2018.

### ***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 2019 or 2020.

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

More information on the NPS commercial services program can be found at: [NPS Commercial Services website](#)

A market area overview and is available on request.

### ***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 in use of facility;
- 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 May 4, 2018. In addition, respondents are encouraged to submit an electronic copy of their response in any format.

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.

### ***FOR RESPONSES, QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS PLEASE CONTACT:***

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