



Welcome

to the

Linville Falls Site Plan

Open House



Linville Falls is one of the Blue Ridge Parkway's most iconic and well-loved destinations. It is known for its dramatic waterfalls, scenic trails, and opportunities for hiking, picnicking, and camping. In response to extensive damage to visitor and administrative facilities from Hurricane Helene in 2024, the National Park Service is now undertaking a planning effort to guide disaster recovery investments into Linville Falls.

Work included in this recovery effort encompasses:

- improvements to the Linville Falls visitor access area;
- rehabilitation of the campground and upgrades to septic and water systems;
- repairs to the picnic area and surrounding grounds; and
- repairs to the Linville Gorge Trail system.

The National Park Service is presenting a series of draft concepts to restore visitor access, rebuild storm-damaged facilities, and ensure the area's long-term resilience. Your input is critical to shaping the future of Linville Falls.

To learn more and submit a public comment online, please visit

www.parkplanning.nps.gov/LinvilleFalls.



Project Website QR Code

You may also mail comments to:
Blue Ridge Parkway
Attn: Linville Falls Recovery Project
199 Hemphill Knob Rd.
Asheville, NC 28803



Site Background and Cultural Landscape

Linville Falls has long been one of the most visited recreation areas on the Blue Ridge Parkway, offering majestic waterfall views, scenic trails, and access to the Linville Gorge Wilderness. The Cherokee, the area’s first known inhabitants, called the river Ees-ee-ogh, meaning the “River of Cliffs,” but later settlers named the river after Thomas and William Linville, fur traders killed by Shawnee hunters in 1766. Although mining and logging reshaped much of the surrounding region, the falls tract remained largely intact when the federal government acquired it in the mid-20th century.

In 1952, the National Park Service began developing trails, overlooks, and visitor facilities that helped make Linville Falls one of the parkway’s most popular recreation destinations. One year earlier, in 1951, the adjacent gorge, managed by the US Forest Service, became the first designated Wilderness Area in the eastern United States.

The Blue Ridge Parkway was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2024, celebrated as the nation’s premier scenic and recreational motor road. Wayside recreation areas like Linville Falls are essential features of its historic design and appear along the parkway at regular intervals, offering visitors opportunities to step out of their cars and experience the landscape through picnicking, camping, hiking, and more.

Today, the Linville Falls Site Plan seeks to reinvest in this culturally significant landscape following damage caused by Hurricane Helene in September 2024. The plan aims to preserve its historic character while also responding to today’s environmental realities and visitor needs, ensuring that visitors can continue to enjoy Linville Falls for years to come.





Speak the Lingo: Your Guide to Linville Falls Planning Terms

Floodplains are low-lying areas next to rivers or streams that naturally fill with water during heavy rains or high-water events.

500-year Flood is a flood event that has a .2% chance of occurring in any given year. 500-year floods do not necessarily occur once every 500 years, and communities may experience multiple 500-year floods within a short timeframe.

Cultural landscapes are historically significant areas that show evidence of human interaction with the physical environment.

National Historic Landmark is a building, district, object, site, or structure that is officially recognized by the United States government for its outstanding historical significance. A National Historic Landmark is the highest level of historic recognition conferred by the National Park Service.

Management zones divide parks into different areas based on what each place needs and how people should experience it. Each zone has its own desired conditions which guide decisions on what type of activities, facilities, or level of use are appropriate in each area.

Resilient infrastructure refers to systems and structures designed to withstand and recover from natural disasters and environmental changes.

Invasive species management includes monitoring for and removing non-native plants that harm native habitats. Without active management, invasive species can easily take hold where there has been heavy disturbance, such as a hurricane.



Blue Ridge Parkway

North Carolina, Virginia

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Purpose and Need

The purpose of this plan is to restore access to safe, high-quality recreational experiences at the Linville Falls site, supported by resilient infrastructure that complements the parkway and its surrounding natural environment. This plan will guide the repair and enhancement of visitor and administrative facilities damaged by Hurricane Helene and address long-standing infrastructure deficiencies, while protecting the parkway's cultural, natural, and scenic resources within a National Historic Landmark landscape. Additionally, the plan aims to strengthen recreational connectivity with adjacent US Forest Service lands and to revitalize an important destination that contributes to the economic vitality of surrounding gateway communities.

The plan is needed to:

- Repair extensive damage resulting from Hurricane Helene in September 2024 and improve aging facilities to restore and enhance recreational access and support safe, resilient infrastructure.
- Repair storm-damaged campground, picnic, and visitor amenities with consideration for current visitor expectations, accessibility standards, and evolving patterns of recreation and use.
- Improve the resilience of infrastructure in flood-prone areas by reducing exposure to erosion, landslides, and other natural hazards to maintain reliable recreation and administrative access.
- Enhance emergency response capabilities by improving radio communication coverage to better support incident management and visitor safety.
- Provide reliable visitor information and services by identifying solutions that support wayfinding, orientation, and safe circulation when facilities are unstaffed.
- Enhance coordination with the US Forest Service to support shared stewardship, recreational connectivity, and partnership opportunities through coordinated access, services, emergency response, and resource protection across adjoining public lands.
- Protect cultural, natural, and scenic resources through targeted investments that preserve and reinforce the integrity of the Blue Ridge Parkway as a National Historic Landmark.





Goals For Planning At Linville Falls

The following goals describe what this planning effort aspires to achieve and maintain for visitor experience, resources, facilities, and services at Linville Falls:

Visitor Safety and Emergency Response	Visitors have reliable ways to access help and communicate during an emergency throughout Linville Falls.
A Staffed, Partner-Supported Presence	Visitors are welcomed by a consistent National Park Service and partner presence at Linville Falls, with staff and partners working together to provide a range of services available to them.
Strong Partnerships	Visitors experience Linville Falls as one seamless destination, with the National Park Service, US Forest Service, and other partner organizations coordinating trails, access, and care across the site’s shared boundaries.
Honoring Tribal Significance	The significance of Linville Falls to Tribal Nations guides how the site is planned and cared for, now and into the future.
Information and Orientation, Anytime	Visitors have access to essential orientation, wayfinding, and safety information at Linville Falls at any time, day or night.
Building Outside the Floodplain	New facilities at Linville Falls are located outside the floodplain, keeping visitors and infrastructure safer from the kind of flooding caused by Hurricane Helene.
Expanding Accessibility	Accessibility is built into improvements at Linville Falls wherever possible, expanding opportunities for visitors of all abilities to enjoy the site.
Honoring Historic Character	The historic character and features that make the Blue Ridge Parkway a National Historic Landmark are preserved throughout Linville Falls.
A Place for Every Kind of Visitor	Visitors of all kinds—hikers, anglers, campers, picnickers, and more—all find a place suited to how they want to experience Linville Falls.
Protecting and Growing Visitor Opportunities	Visitors continue to enjoy a wide variety of high-quality experiences at Linville Falls, from easy river access to backcountry hiking.
Visitor-Friendly Retail	Visitors have access to convenient retail options, such as maps, field guides, and outdoor gear, in appropriate areas of the site.
A Protected Linville River	The Linville River’s outstanding natural, scenic, and recreational qualities are protected, reflecting its eligibility for Wild and Scenic River designation.
Built to Last	Linville Falls is planned and managed to be resilient to changing conditions over time, including flooding, wildfire, and severe weather.
Working Within the Land	Linville Falls is a compact site, bounded by the Linville River, North Carolina Highway 183, and the parkway itself; new facilities thoughtfully fit within the landscape.

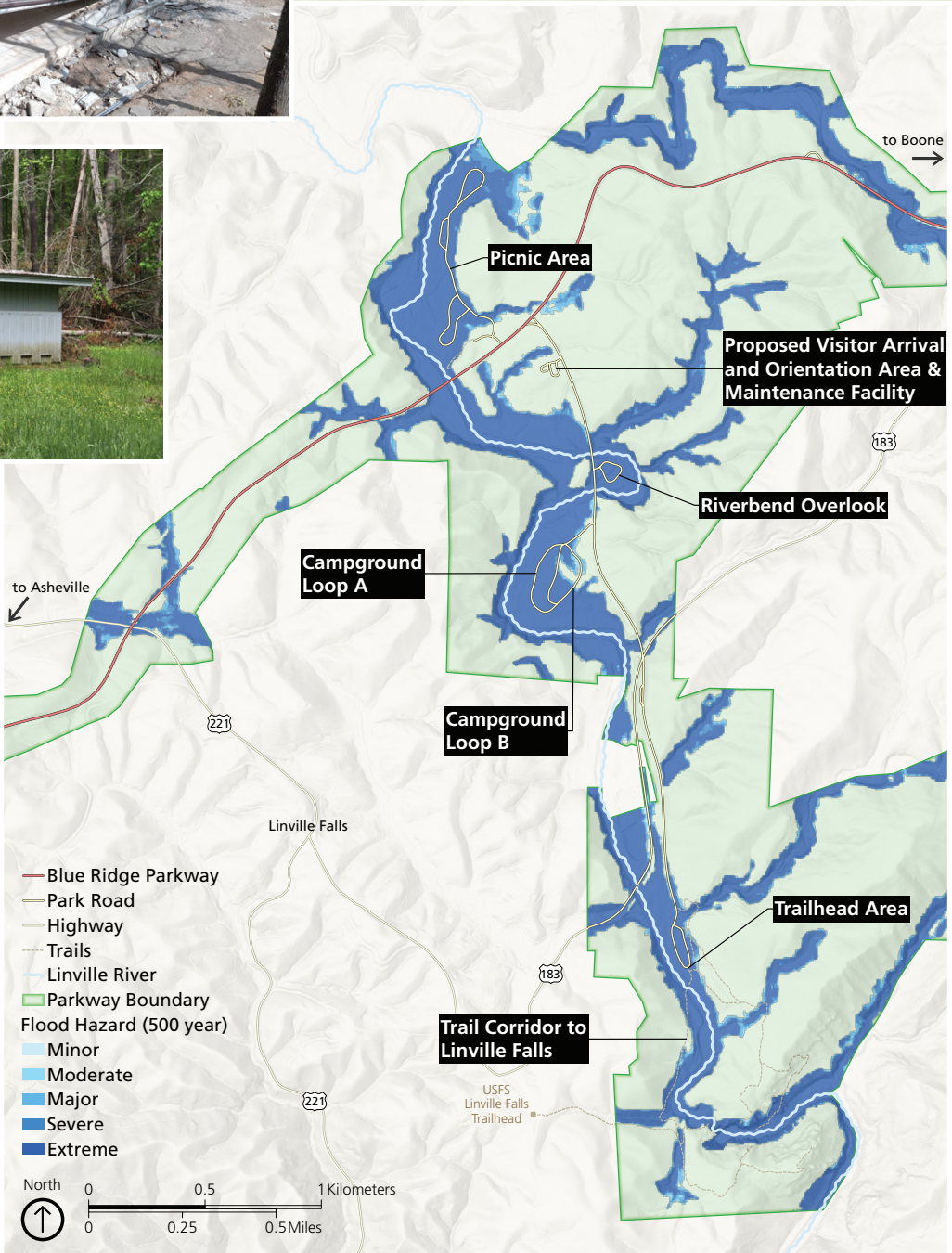


Planning for Long-Term Resilience

The Linville Falls area is a flood-prone landscape and the National Park Service may not recommend that some structures return to their former sites if they face ongoing flood risk. Floodplain analysis helps identify the safest, most sustainable locations for future facilities, protecting long-term investments by avoiding areas prone to repeat damage.



Recent field assessments indicate that actual flood risk in several areas is likely less extensive than shown here, due to the resolution and age of the data used to produce this flood map. The National Park Service is acquiring higher-resolution flood data and will incorporate new information into the final alternatives developed.



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Draft concepts are early ideas under evaluation and do not represent final decisions. Public feedback on these concepts will help guide the development of alternatives. An additional opportunity to comment on a draft site plan will occur in 2027.

- Site-Wide**
- » Establish a multi-use (pedestrian and bike) trail that connects all area destinations, from the picnic area to the trailhead area.
 - » Develop site-wide wayfinding and visitor orientation with interpretive media that withstands extreme weather and flooding.
 - » Improve emergency communications infrastructure across all areas.
 - » Monitor and manage invasive plant species.

- Picnic Area**
- » Construct a new picnic shelter and toilet facility outside the floodplain.
 - » Improve the existing pedestrian trail from the elevated parking area to the picnic area.
 - » Improve and formalize an existing river access point.
 - » Maintain and replace fixed grills and picnic tables.
 - » Restore wetland and floodplain areas along the Linville River shoreline.

- Campground Loop A**
- » Maintain primitive park-and-walk and hike-in campsites.
 - » Reconstruct Campfire Circle in previous footprint.
 - » Expand the camping season from its current May through October window to begin April 1, coinciding with the start of fishing season.
 - » Implement habitat improvements.

- Campground Loop B**
- » Enhance amenities to support a more fully serviced campground experience.

- Trail Corridor to Linville Falls**
- » Improve the existing trail on the western side of Linville River to provide accessible opportunities to view the upper falls.
 - » Enhance sustainability of the trail corridor through trail hardening, drainage improvements, erosion management, and potential trail realignments.
 - » Evaluate existing infrastructure within the trail corridor for restoration or removal.
 - » Evaluate and address existing unauthorized social trails.
 - » Add and improve wayfinding and interpretive signage.

- Proposed Visitor Arrival and Orientation Area**
- » Develop a new visitor center at the site of the existing maintenance facility to serve as the primary arrival and orientation hub for the area.
- Maintenance Facility**
- » Construct a new maintenance complex adjacent to the visitor center with space for National Park Service offices and emergency equipment.
 - » Establish RV pads for volunteers assisting with operations and programming.

- Riverbend Overlook**
- » Formalize the existing river access point for anglers.
 - » Install interpretive wayside about the geology of the landscape.
 - » Establish a geological fault line interpretive trail using the path of an existing roadbed where possible.

- Trailhead Area**
- » Replace the former visitor center within the floodplain with a trailhead shade structure containing orientation maps, interpretive panels, benches, and a small, enclosed storage area for emergency supplies.
 - » Designate one primary visitor use trail to Linville Falls loop to enhance ease of navigation.
 - » Improve Duggar's Creek Trail to provide accessible opportunities to view the falls.
 - » Reestablish buffer and stabilization vegetation that filter runoff and hold soil in place to reduce erosion and build long-term storm resilience.

