

The Planning Process

| 2 |

Topics Discussed

- Project Management
- Public Involvement Process
- Website
- Media Outreach
- Conclusion





THE PLANNING PROCESS

As work on the existing conditions reports (summarized in Chapter 1) continued, the project team launched a three-phase public involvement program:

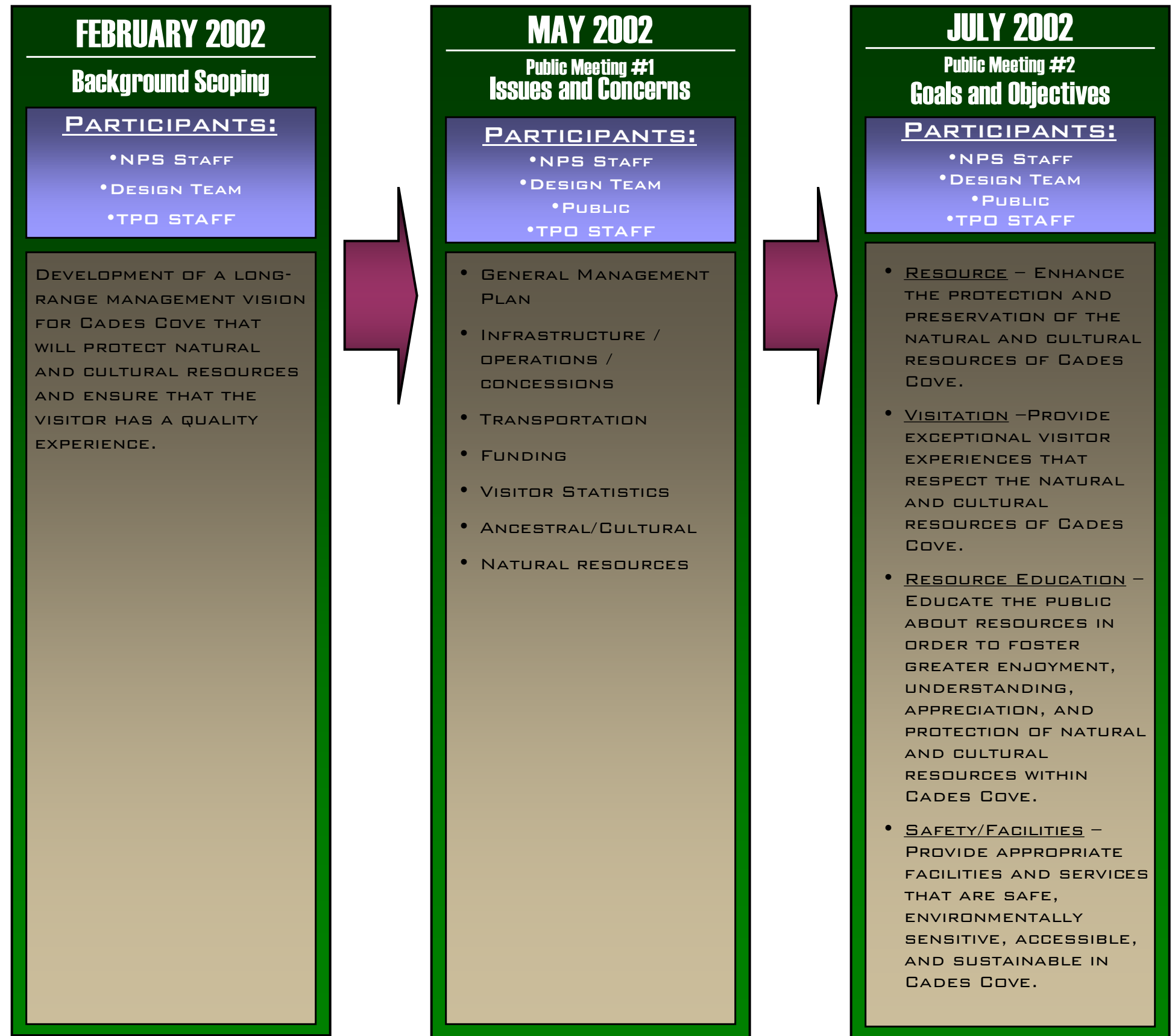
- Phase I identified issues and concerns
- Phase II established goals and objectives
- Phase III involved the development and refinement of alternatives

The next step in the process (Phase IV) will be the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The process included six major tasks and five public scoping sessions. The six major tasks included:

- Internal and external scoping
- Issues and concerns
- Goals and objectives
- Problems and needs
- Development of alternatives
- Refined alternatives

Figure 8: Process Diagram

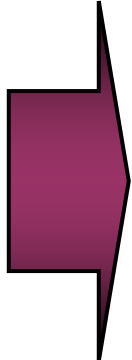


SEPTEMBER 2002
Public Meeting #3
Problems and Needs

PARTICIPANTS:

- NPS STAFF
- DESIGN TEAM
- PUBLIC
- TPO STAFF

- VISITOR FACILITIES
 - RESTROOMS
 - CAMPGROUND
 - PICNIC AREA
- CULTURAL RESOURCES
 - CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
- NATURAL RESOURCES
 - LAND/FIELD MANAGEMENT PLAN
- RESOURCE EDUCATION
 - VISITOR EDUCATION REGARDING WILDLIFE VIEWING AND APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES
 - EDUCATION PROGRAMS
 - RANGER PRESENCE AND CONTACT
 - ESTABLISH AN ERA FOR THE COVE
 - DEVELOP THE CONTINUUM OF HUMAN ACTIVITY FOR THE COVE
- FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS
 - MAINTENANCE



MARCH 2003
Public Meeting #4
Range of Alternatives

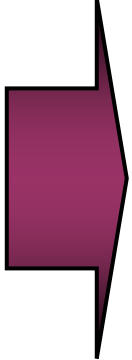
PARTICIPANTS:

- NPS STAFF
- DESIGN TEAM
- PUBLIC
- TPO STAFF

- DISCUSS THE DRAFT DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALTERNATIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT AND VISITOR MANAGEMENT PLAN.

ALTERNATIVES:

- IMPROVE PULL OUT AND/OR PARKING SYSTEM
- SEASONAL MANDATORY RESERVATION SYSTEM
- SEASONAL MANDATORY RESERVATION SYSTEM AND VOLUNTARY TRANSIT ALL YEAR (TRANSIT FACILITY OUTSIDE PARK)
- SEASONAL MANDATORY MASS TRANSIT (TRANSIT FACILITY OUTSIDE PARK)
- NO CHANGE



JUNE 2003
Public Meeting #5
Alternatives

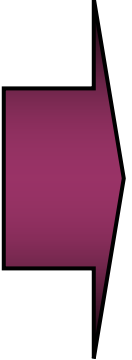
PARTICIPANTS:

- NPS STAFF
- DESIGN TEAM
- PUBLIC
- TPO STAFF

- DISCUSS THE DETAILS RELATED TO THE RESERVATION SYSTEM, VARIABLE MESSAGE SIGNS, MASS TRANSIT ALTERNATIVES, AND VISITOR ORIENTATION FACILITIES.

ALTERNATIVES:

- OPERATING TIME FRAMES
- RESERVATION SIZING
- SHUTTLE SIZING/ CAPACITY
- RANGE OF COST ESTIMATES RELATED TO EACH ALTERNATIVE

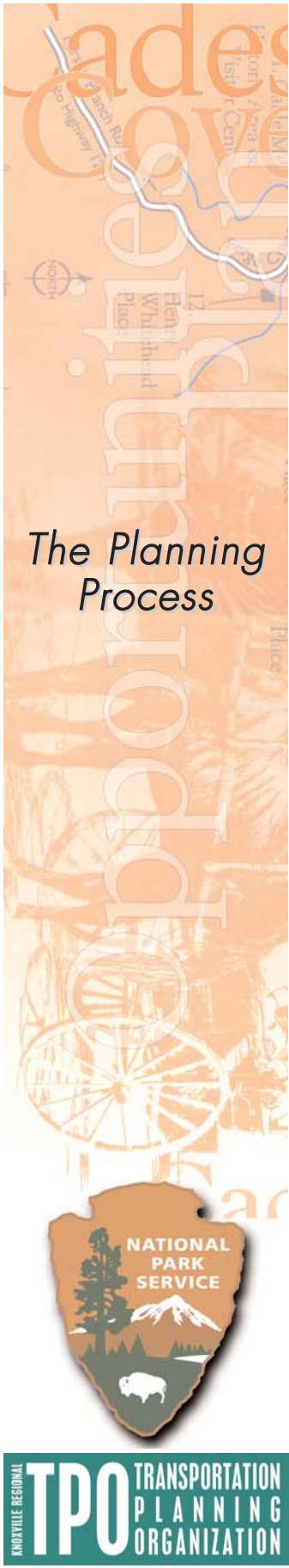


FUTURE PHASE
E.I.S.

PARTICIPANTS:

- NPS STAFF
- DESIGN TEAM
- PUBLIC
- TPO

DISCUSS THE VISITATION STUDIES, FIELD MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION, BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT REPORT, NOISE ANALYSIS, AIR QUALITY, DETAILED SOCIAL ECONOMIC ANALYSIS (OFF-SITE FACILITIES), ARCHEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW (INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT), VIEWSHED ANALYSIS, WATER/WATER QUALITY, AND FLOODPLAIN.





Project Management

The Opportunities Plan was created in the context of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA requires that all federal projects follow established environmental procedures (fully considering the environmental costs and benefits of proposed actions) and that interested and affected members of the public be involved in the process before decisions are made.

The NEPA process seeks to conserve and protect the nation's resources for the benefit of future generations.ⁱ The mechanisms in place to achieve NEPA's intent require federal agencies to undertake a careful, complete and analytic study of the impacts of any proposal that may affect the environment — and alternatives to that proposal — well before decisions are made.

The National Park Service has a strong commitment to the NEPA process. The National Park Service Director's Order 12 (DO-12) document guides the NPS in fulfilling NEPA requirements. DO-12 requires that any action undertaken by the NPS that may cause a significant adverse effect on a park resource must be accompanied by an administrative record that reflects how these impacts and their alternatives have been evaluated. Projects that lack proper NEPA documentation are not implemented.

The Need for an Environmental Impact Statement

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required whenever a proposed action may have significant impacts on the human environment. The criteria used to determine impacts include:

- The degree to which public health and safety are affected.
- Unique characteristics of the area (proximity to historic or cultural resources, wild and scenic rivers, ecologically critical areas, wetlands, etc.).
- The degree to which the potential impacts are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

- The degree to which impacts are likely to be highly controversial.
- Whether the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects.
- Whether the action is related to other actions that may have individual insignificant impacts but cumulatively significant effects.
- The degree to which the action may adversely affect historic properties in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or affect other significant scientific, archeological, or cultural resources.
- The degree to which an action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species and its habitat.
- Whether the action threatens to violate federal, state or local law or similar requirements established to protect the environment.

An EIS includes documentation of the purpose and need for action, the alternatives, the environment affected by a decision and the impacts of such a decision.

Opportunities Plan planning activities have been undertaken mindful of requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act. The Tennessee State Historic Preservation Officer and Tribal Preservation Officers from the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian and the Chickasaw Nation are consulting parties to the planning effort. This consultation will continue throughout the EIS process.

Information on the latter topic will be expanded in future phases of the project to include a series of topics, such as:

- Possible conflicts between the proposal and land use plans, policies, or controls for the study area
- Energy requirements and the potential to conserve energy through the proposal
- Natural and depletable resource requirements and the potential to conserve these resources
- Urban quality historic and cultural resources, and design of the built environment
- Socially or economically disadvantaged populations in the affected area
- Wetlands and floodplains
- Prime and unique agricultural lands

- Endangered or threatened plants and animals and their habitats
- Important scientific, archeological, and other cultural resources, including historic properties listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- Ecologically critical areas; wilds and scenic rivers and other unique natural resources
- Public health and safety
- Sacred sites
- Indian Trust resources.

The National Historic Preservation Act authorizes the preservation of historic sites and properties throughout the nation. The legislation stresses the importance of preserving the nation's historic heritage and establishes policies to preserve these features in partnership with states, local governments, American Indian tribes and private organizations and individuals.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires the head of any federal agency having direct or indirect jurisdiction over a proposed federal or federally assisted project and the head of any federal department or independent agency having authority to license any such project to examine the impacts of a proposed project on any district, site, building, structure or object that is included in or is eligible for inclusion in the National Register.ⁱⁱ

The Opportunities Plan is consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act with the completion of the Cultural Resources Report (Appendix E) and a Cultural Landscape Report in early 2004. The State Historic Preservation Office also served as a consulting party to the planning process. These efforts will continue as the EIS is developed in Phase IV of the process.

Project Team

The Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) led the **project team** under contract to and in partnership with Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The project team included staff from the TPO and GRSM/NPS. The project manager for the consultant team also served

i National Park Service Director's Order 12 - NEPA Process.

ii Section 106 (16 U.S.C. 470f).

as a member of the project team. This group met frequently and was responsible for coordinating information gathering, monitoring the progress of the process and preparing for public meetings.

Staff from HNTB led the **consultant team**. HNTB was responsible for overall project management, development concept planning, transportation analysis, public involvement and the creation of the final plan document. David Evans & Associates provided expertise in environmental and alternative transportation planning as well as assisting in facilitating public meetings. Watson Heritage Strategies coordinated public involvement and facilitated public meetings. John Milner & Associates undertook the development of the Cultural Resource Summary Report and the Cultural Landscape Report. EA Engineering provided expertise on air quality and alternative fuels.

The **core team** included staff from the TPO and resource specialists and staff from the Park. This team provided input in the development of project goals and objectives and reviewed elements of the alternatives.

The **NPS management team** included the Park superintendent, assistant superintendent, division heads for resource management and science, resource and visitor protection, resource education, maintenance, and administration and other key Park staff. This group provided early review of public input presentation material and participated in the internal scoping sessions that were held prior to each public scoping session.

For projects of this type, government agencies are routinely given background information as well as the opportunity to comment on the project's progress and findings. Some agencies ask to be designated as formal **consulting agencies**, a status that indicates their special interest in the plan or project.

Consulting agencies, once designated, are invited to scoping meetings at key points during the process so that they may communicate directly, in this case, with the National Park Service staff and the consultant team.

Consulting agencies for the Opportunities Plan included the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office, the Chickasaw Nation, and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians. These agencies, and others, were given newsletters and invited to attend a consulting agency scoping meeting to discuss the alternatives. As the project moves into the EIS phase, additional scoping meetings with these consulting agencies and others will be scheduled.

Public Involvement Process

The planning process officially began with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) on April 11, 2002 (see Appendix G). Additionally, as part of the NEPA process, an Environmental Screening Form was required (included here as Appendix H).

Public involvement was important throughout the planning process. The project team recognized from the beginning that the local residents felt an "ownership" of the Cove. Many residents had relatives who lived in the Cove or who are buried in the Cove. Therefore, input from local residents was a very important element of the public involvement process.

But Cades Cove is not merely a local resource. People throughout the nation and the world visit the Park. Therefore, the public involvement process needed to balance local and national input.

The public involvement process was based on the principles that public outreach must be:

- Held early and often
- Carefully planned from the outset
- Imbued with respect for the community's contributions
- Designed to "level the playing field" between professional and lay participants (avoiding jargon and made understandable for all participants)
- Integrated into all aspects of the planning process
- Designed with varied formats to recognize different ways people communicate

- Planned carefully to avoid "meeting burnout" and generating various opportunities for people to participate (through selection of times, dates, locations, and meeting formats)
- Reliant on clear, brief, and attractive publications as well as face-to-face meetings

At each public meeting, presentation materials, newsletters and comment forms were available and a court reporter recorded comments from the public. Table 2 lists relevant information on the public meetings held in 2002 and 2003 (see Appendix I for complete public meeting materials).

Phase I

Public involvement during Phase I focused on providing community members and interested parties with the ability to identify issues and areas of concern for the project. A meeting was held in Townsend, Tenn., on May 23, 2002. The open house featured a question-and-answer session at the end of the meeting.

Phase II

Round One

In this phase, the draft goals and objectives were presented to the public. Meetings were held in Knoxville (July 22, 2002) and Townsend (July 23, 2002). The meetings included a general presentation, discussion in breakout groups and



Public involvement is critical to the planning process





“reporting out” by the groups. Facilitators (two per group) were assigned from the planning team, NPS and the TPO. The output from these meetings included public input on goals, objectives and measures, and preliminary ideas for concepts to be included in the sketch alternatives.

Round Two

A public meeting on “problems, options and evaluation criteria” was held in two locations: Maryville (September 18, 2002) and Knoxville (September 19, 2002). A listening session for this project (and others) was held in Asheville on October 21, 2002. The meetings included a brief presentation, breakout discussions, a question-and-answer session and a wrap-up. The listening session included a presentation on the project and a public comment session.

Phase III

Round One

After receiving public input in Phases One and Two, the project team developed a set of preliminary draft alternatives. These draft alternatives were presented at public scoping meetings in the spring of 2003. All four sessions included newsletter handouts, a presentation of the draft alternatives and facilitated break-out sessions to seek input in a small group format. The meeting concluded with reports from the small groups and a question and comment session.

The meetings were held at Maryville (March 31, 2003), Knoxville (April 1, 2003), Pigeon Forge (April 3, 2003) and Cherokee (April 4, 2003).

Round Two

After reviewing the comments from Round One, the project team developed a final set of alternatives. The alternatives were presented at public scoping meetings in June 2003. These meetings were presented as open houses, with presentation boards available for the public to view and the project team available to answer questions and accept comments.

Participants also received newsletters and comment forms.

The meetings were held at Knoxville (June 3, 2003), Maryville (June 3, 2003), Sevierville (June 4, 2003) and Cherokee (June 5, 2003).

Public Scoping Meeting Summary

The following is a summary of the date, location, approximate attendance and comments received during the course of the public scoping process for the Opportunities Plan (see Table 2).

In addition to comments received at meetings and through the project website, letters and e-mails were sent to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. These comments were included in the scoping process as well.

Website

A website (www.cadescoveopp.com) was launched shortly after the first public meeting in June 2002, to gather national and local input. Sample screen shots from the website are shown on subsequent pages. The website was designed to be easy to use and to provide a wide range of information. It included a list of public meetings, resource materials (including newsletters and comment forms), and the ability to sign up for the mailing list.

The site received 992,000 “hits” and 90,050 “visits” between June 5, 2002 (the first day the website was active) and September 15, 2003. (A hit indicates that someone has viewed the homepage. A visit indicates that a visitor to the website navigated between pages spending time to view information on the website.)

Table 2: Public Meetings

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Number of Attendees	Comments Received
May 2002	Townsend	150	221 (May - June 2002)
July 2002	Townsend	110	527 (July - August 2002)
	Knoxville	75	
September - October 2002	Maryville	50	259 (September - October 2002)
	Knoxville	80	
	Asheville	25	
Winter 2002 - 2003	No Meetings		245 (November 2002 - March 2003)
March - April 2003	Knoxville	55	145 (April - May 2003)
	Maryville	65	
	Pigeon Forge	45	
	Cherokee	8	
June 2003	Knoxville	30	432 (June - August 2003)
	Maryville	50	
	Sevierville	35	
	Cherokee	5	
Total	14 Meetings	763 Attendees	1,829 Comments Received

A total of 373 comments were received through an e-mail application on the website from May 2002 to January 2003, and 399 messages were e-mailed directly to comments@cadescoveopp.com (for a total of 782 e-mail comments). This was an average of 65 comments per month, with heavy volumes occurring before and after the public meetings (for example, 121 comments were received in July 2002).

Comments were received from across the country, with the majority coming from 26 states: Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Missouri, Georgia, Texas, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Oregon, Oklahoma, New Hampshire, Minnesota, Michigan, Louisiana, California, Alaska, Massachusetts, Maryland and Mississippi.

Media Outreach

Local media were notified of all public meetings. Coverage was generally fair and substantive and reporters were well versed in the issues.

Conclusion

The public involvement program developed for the Plan process provided detailed strategies for seeking input from the Park employees, the TPO, consulting agencies, visitors and the public at large. The strategies defined in the plan focused on early and continuous outreach to the public, utilizing a variety of public involvement methodologies as outlined above. The implementation of this plan allowed the planning team to develop a lengthy listing of issues and concerns related to the park at an early stage in the planning process. The public involvement plan (See Appendix J for the full report) also insured that the goals and objectives that would guide the plan were developed with citizen input. This became the stepping-stone for the development of alternatives.

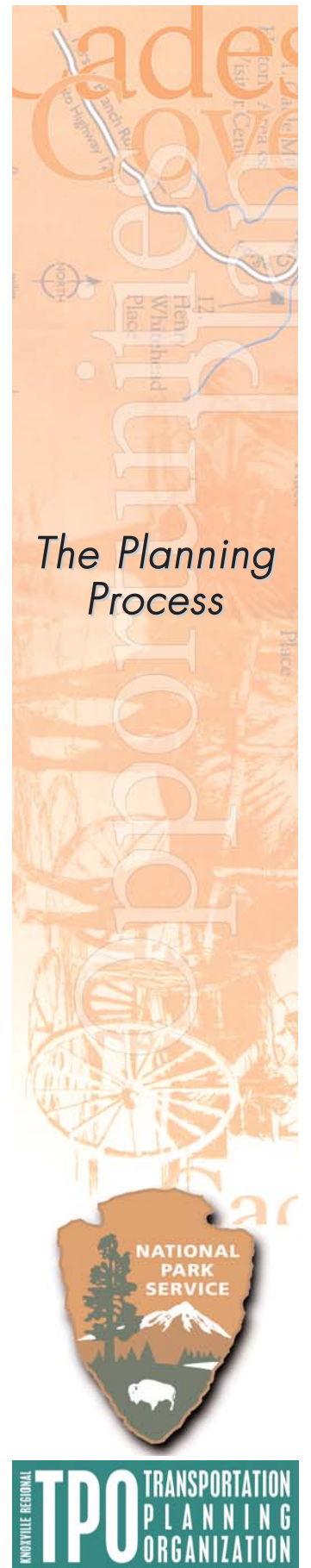


Figure 9: Current Cades Cove Opportunities Plan Website



Address  <http://www.cadescoveopp.com/>



Cades Cove

Cades Cove Opportunities Plan:
Looking back - Moving forward







Preserve and Protect

Nestled in Great Smoky Mountains National Park is Cades Cove. Home to abundant wildlife and rare plants, the Cove provides an unique blend of history, pioneer culture and natural scenic beauty that captures the hearts of millions of visitors every year.

Preserving the diverse mix of scenic, cultural, natural and recreational values presents many management challenges. A study is underway to assist the Park in developing a long-range management vision for Cades Cove that will enhance the quality of the visitor experience through protecting natural resources, preserving cultural heritage and managing traffic congestion.

You can help. Choose a link to begin learning about the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan.

[Background](#)

[Planning Process](#)

[Documents/Newsletters](#)

[Alternatives](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Your Comments](#)

[FAQs](#)

[Public Comments](#)

Background - This page describes the historic significance and current conditions of Cades Cove. It also describes access-related issues facing the Cove.

Planning Process - This section of the website describes the long-term vision for the park, as well as the steps being taken to implement that vision.

Documents/Newsletters - The National Park Service is committed to keeping the public informed about the progress of the Cades Cove study. As reports are generated, they are posted in this section.

Alternatives - The Cades Cove Opportunities Plan has identified five alternatives to move forward into the next phase of the project, which includes additional study and completion of the environmental impact statement. These alternatives include the "No Action" alternative and four action alternatives. Information related to these alternatives has been posted to this site.

Contact Us - This link on the website lists the contact information for the Superintendent of the Park and other related websites.

Your Comments - This portion of the website allows the user to send public comments via email.

FAQ - The Frequently Asked Questions document provides answers to some of the most common questions about the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan.

Public Comments - This link enables viewers to see the comments submitted via the web site and other media, as well as responses to surveys.

Figure 10: Public Involvement Website (used to announce meeting dates and locations)

Address <http://www.cadescopepp.com/index.jsp?content=involment&sub=menu4>



Cades Cove

Cades Cove Opportunities Plan: Looking back - Moving forward




- [Public Involvement](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Alternatives](#)
- [Your Comments](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Site Map](#)
- [Home](#)

Public Involvement



Public Meetings

The National Park Service encourages you to get involved with the development of the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan. Join us at one of the public meetings.

May 2002	Issues Identification Townsend Elementary School Townsend, Tennessee
	May 23, 2002 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

- Historically Speaking
- Access-Related Issues
- Opportunities
- [Public Meetings](#)
- Mailing List

This is the list of public meetings, including time, locations, and discussion topics. Notifications were posted and publicized two weeks prior to each meeting. A 30-day comment period was typically given after each public meeting.

