



**National Park Service**  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Great Smoky Mountains  
National Park

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## Great Smoky Mountains News Release

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### **Park Invites Public Comment on Cades Cove Solar Energy Project**

Great Smoky Mountains National Park officials invite the public to comment on a proposed sustainable energy project through March 20, 2017. The National Park Service is proposing a solar power system to support the electrical power needs of the Cable Mill area in Cades Cove. This project would reduce usage of traditional fossil fuels and provide opportunities for park visitors to learn about solar power and clean energy sources.

Cades Cove receives approximately 1.8 million visitors per year. Many of these visitors stop at the Cable Mill area to visit the exhibit of historic structures assembled there. This area also provides access to a small visitor center, bookstore, and comfort station with flush toilets and potable water. Given its remote location at the west end of Cades Cove, the Cable Mill area is off the commercial power grid and all power must be generated on site. The existing power system consists of a propane-fueled generator and battery system, which is costly and labor-intensive to operate. The existing system also generates air pollutant emissions and noise.

The proposed location for the solar array is southeast of the Cable Mill comfort station in an open field. This location maximizes solar exposure and is close to areas requiring power, but is separated from the Cable Mill historic exhibits. The array would consist of 80 panels and would occupy a 40 by 65-foot area. Several proposed design features are intended to minimize visual intrusions to the historic setting and cultural landscape of Cades Cove. The array's three foot high, low-profile design coupled with the site's natural slope, selective grading, and use of native vegetation would help the array blend into the landscape.

Park staff have initiated the National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act and other compliance processes to evaluate potential adverse and beneficial impacts of the proposed project on the natural, cultural, and human environment. Staff invite the public to comment on the proposed project using the National Park Service's Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website and following the link titled "Cable Mill Sustainable Energy Project" at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/grsm> or by US Mail to Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg, TN 37738.

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