

## **Waterrock Knob Vision**

The National Park Service (NPS) proposes to consider and manage the newly acquired and associated properties that come under NPS ownership as part of a large-landscape ecosystem collaborative. The lands, while under NPS ownership and management, will be part of a collaborative approach between local, state, federal, and private entities that own lands in and around the Plott Balsam Mountains and Waterrock Knob. The NPS will work with these partners on shared management objectives for the region, seeking to preserve resources on an ecosystem scale.

Management of NPS lands will be subject to NPS law and policy, but this collaborative, coordinated approach to larger scale protection of resources, research and education, and visitor opportunities will ensure the protection and enjoyment of the region as a whole. Opportunities include working in partnership on resource protection, visitor use and recreation, land conservation, creating a regional identity, and providing interpretation and educational opportunities.

### **What is this open house about?**

- This open house is an opportunity for partners, stakeholders, and the public in and around Waterrock Knob and the Plott Balsam Mountains to share their ideas, visions, goals and concerns about how this large collection of protected lands should look in the future.

### **Why there is a “vision plan” and what is it?**

- In 2016, a group of landowners and stakeholders in the region had an informal meeting to talk about the patchwork of protected lands in the Plott Balsam Mountains, Waterrock Knob, and Maggie Valley watershed. There was consensus around the need for a collective vision for the region and interest in working together to create a regional vision. The Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation agreed to fund a process to create a community vision, this workshop is part of that process.
- The *Waterrock Knob Regional Vision Plan* is the end product of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation’s effort. The vision plan is being created in partnership with regional stakeholders at the local, state, and federal level – including the NPS and US Forest Service. The plan reflects community interest, input, and ideas for the lands in the Plott Balsam Mountains and Waterrock Knob area.
- The *Waterrock Knob Regional Vision Plan* is an idea of possibilities for the region, not an NPS plan for the newly acquired/soon to be transferred 5000 ac +/- of NPS land.

### **What is the role of the NPS/Blue Ridge Parkway in this process?**

- The community vision put forward by the collaborative effort in the *Waterrock Knob Regional Vision Plan* is one of several components that go into decision-making for the newly acquired NPS lands. NPS laws, policy – as well as guidance like the proposed Cultural Landscape Report for the area - provide the framework for decision-making and management on NPS lands.
- The Parkway is soliciting input on the idea of being part of a larger landscape management collaborative focusing beyond borders on shared management goals. This “scoping” will provide ideas and input on direction on issues of concern and
- Public input is being gathered through our Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) system, as well as through this open house.

- Any action – such as reintroduction of elk, introducing new uses, considering trail connections will be subject to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) review and compliance.
- The NPS looks forward to being part of a large-landscape cooperative, working in partnership with local, state, federal and private owners to preserve resources and provide visitor opportunities where appropriate.