



Project Scoping

April 2006

Proposal for Blue Ridge Parkway (BLRI) Exotic Plant Management Plan/Environmental Assessment

The presence and spread of exotic plant species is a significant concern to park management. Many exotic plants are ecologically harmful. They can alter the natural and/or historic scene and impair the natural function of many native plant communities.

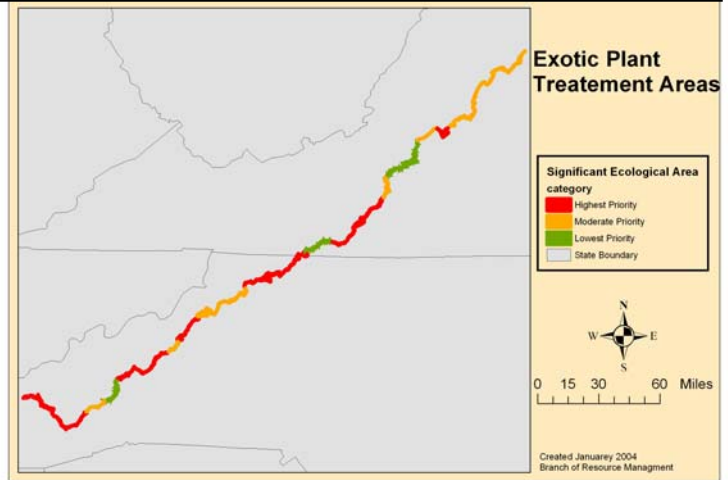
During the past 20 years, only incidental attention has been given to control and eradicate exotic plant species within the BLRI. Several species have spread vigorously due to this lack of attention.

Dense mats of exotic vegetation have invaded many disturbed sites, including cut and fill slopes formed during Parkway construction and perpetuated through vista clearing and maintenance activities. The Draft Blue Ridge Parkway Exotic Plant Management Plan is being developed following NPS guidelines for natural resource management and integrated pest management (IPM) procedures.

The purpose of the analysis is twofold: 1) carry out compliance responsibilities under various statutes including the National Environmental Policy Act, and 2) establish park guidelines to be used to determine when to control exotic plants and whether to use mechanical, physical, chemical, cultural, or biological means, or a combination of these.

As the Superintendent of the Blue Ridge Parkway, I invite you to participate in this scoping process.

*Sincerely,
Phillip A. Francis, Jr.*



Resources and Concerns

Initial internal project scoping identified the following resources and other concerns for consideration in the EA:

Soils	Invertebrate Fauna
Vegetation	Water Quality
Wildlife	Cultural Resources
Migratory Birds	Recreational/Visual Resources
Wetlands	Human Health & Safety
Species of management concern	

What does the scoping period mean? Scoping is done in the initial phase of a project to seek input from a variety of sources. The input is used to identify issues, areas requiring additional study, and topics that will be analyzed in the EA process. This is an opportunity for you to provide us with your suggestions, comments, and concerns regarding this management plan for the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Is scoping my only opportunity to comment on the project?

No, once the EA is developed, the document will be made available for public review for a 30-day period.

Overview of the Process

Project milestones include:

- Public scoping period (closes May 15, 2006)
- Preparation of Exotic Plant Management Plan / Environmental Assessment (EA)
- Public review of environmental assessment
- Analysis of public comment
- Preparation of decision document
- Announcement of decision

Alternatives

The preliminary alternatives, including the proposed action, to be evaluated in the environmental assessment are:

- 1) No-Action Alternative. This alternative represents the baseline or benchmark from which to compare the impacts of initiating the proposed management plan. In this case, "No-Action" means that invasive exotic plants will be allowed to spread and grow unchecked by any human intervention;
- 2) Proposed Action. Under the proposed action, the BLRI would develop and implement an Exotic Plant Management Plan.

Please let us know by May 15, 2006:

1. Do you have any ideas to share about issues/concerns, or are there any issues/concerns about the project that you think we should consider?
2. Are there any other alternatives that you think should be considered?
3. Do you have other comments and suggestions for us to consider in the environmental assessment?

We want to hear from you so that we can make the most informed decisions concerning the alternatives on this project. We appreciate your input into this process and would like your feedback by *May 15, 2006*. You are welcome to write to us at the address below, but our preference would be for you to provide your comments on the National Park Service Planning, Environment & Public Comment (PEPC) web site. Comments can be made directly online by going to the following link: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/documentsAndLinks.cfm?projectId=10198>.

Written comments may also be submitted to:

Superintendent
Blue Ridge Parkway
Attn: Suzette Molling
199 Hemphill Knob Road
Asheville, North Carolina 28803-8686

If you wish to be added to the park's mailing list for this and other announcements, please be sure to indicate that in PEPC or in your response.

It is the practice of the NPS to make all comments, including the names and addresses of respondents who provide the comments, available for public review following the conclusion of the scoping process. Individuals may request that the NPS withhold their name and/or address from public disclosure. If you wish to do this, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. Commentators using the PEPC website can make such a request by checking the box "keep my contact information private." The NPS will honor such requests to the extent allowable by law, but you should be aware that the NPS may still be required to disclose your name and address pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act.