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## **Public invited to share input for Waterrock Knob Vision Plan**

(ASHEVILLE, N.C.) – The public is invited to share their ideas for the future of the larger Waterrock Knob and Plott Balsam region during an open house from 5 to 7 p.m., January 25, at the Folkmoot Friendship Center in Waynesville. The input session is hosted by the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation in collaboration with the National Park Service (NPS), and multiple local, state and federal land managers in the region. Light refreshments will be served.

The open house is an opportunity for members of the regional community to share their feedback on the future stewardship of this area's natural and cultural resources and its role in the broader landscape. Waynesville, Maggie Valley, Sylva, and Cherokee are among the neighboring communities.

The open house on January 25 will also serve as an opportunity for the public to comment on the NPS proposal to manage NPS owned lands at Waterrock Knob as part of a larger landscape collaborative focusing on shared management goals across the region.

In [2016, the Blue Ridge Parkway](#) announced plans to acquire 5,329 acres near Waterrock Knob, Milepost 451, for the largest expansion of the park in 60 years. The Waterrock Knob region of Western North Carolina is one of the highest points along the Blue Ridge Parkway, and is one of the most rare and biodiverse landscapes in the Eastern United States. Elk, rare salamanders, flying squirrels, and slowly disappearing high elevation spruce-fir forests all inhabit this breathtaking landscape also known as the Plott Balsams. The area is also home to rich Cherokee and Appalachian cultural history.

The attendees' feedback at the open house will help inform a collaborative visioning effort for the area that involves the NPS, Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, neighboring communities, land trusts, nonprofits and stakeholders. Additional comments specific to the NPS approach to large landscape collaborative management for lands at Waterrock Knob are also welcome via the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/waterrockknobvisionplan>. Sharing comments via the website is recommended; however, written comments may be submitted to: Blue Ridge Parkway, **ATTN: Suzette Molling**, 199 Hemphill Knob Road, Asheville, NC 28803. Public comments will be accepted through February 25, 2018.

The meeting and overall planning process are made possible by grants from the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership and the Pigeon River Fund at The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina.

### **Waterrock Knob Vision Plan Open House**

**When:** 5-7 p.m., Thursday, January 25

**Where:** Folkmoot Friendship Center, [112 Virginia Ave., Waynesville](#)

**More information:** [brpfoundation.org](http://brpfoundation.org)

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**About the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation**

The Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation is the primary nonprofit fundraising partner, 501(c)(3), of the Blue Ridge Parkway, helping ensure cultural and historical preservation, natural resource protection, educational outreach, and visitor enjoyment now and for future generations. Since its inception in 1997, the nonprofit has worked with donors to invest in critical projects along the scenic road. For more information, visit [www.brpfoundation.org](http://www.brpfoundation.org).

**About the Blue Ridge Parkway**

The 469-mile Blue Ridge Parkway connects Shenandoah National Park to the north with Great Smoky Mountains National Park to the south. The route travels the crests, ridges, and valleys of five major mountain ranges, encompassing several geographic and vegetative zones ranging from 600 to more than 6,000 feet above sea level. It provides visitors with many varied vistas of scenic Appalachian landscapes ranging from forested ridgetops and mountain slopes to rural farm lands and urban areas. The parkway offers a “ride-a-while, stop-a-while” experience that includes scenic pullouts, recreation areas, historic sites, and visitor contact stations. It is known nationally and internationally for its designed landscape as a scenic motorway. [www.nps.gov/blri](http://www.nps.gov/blri)

**About the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership**

The mission of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership is to protect, preserve, interpret, and develop the unique natural, historical, and cultural resources of Western North Carolina for the benefit of present and future generations, and in so doing to sustain our heritage and stimulate improved economic opportunity in our region. For more information, visit [www.blueridgeheritage.com](http://www.blueridgeheritage.com).

**About the Pigeon River Fund**

Through May 2016, more than \$5.8 million has been awarded in grants by the Pigeon River Fund to projects in Haywood, Buncombe and Madison counties. The Pigeon River Fund was established in 1996 through an agreement between Progress Energy and the State of North Carolina. The grant program is administered by The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, a nonprofit serving eighteen counties in Western North Carolina. The Foundation is a permanent regional resource that facilitated \$18 million in charitable giving last year. CFWNC inspires philanthropy and mobilizes resources to enrich lives and communities in Western North Carolina. More information can be found at [www.cfwnc.org](http://www.cfwnc.org).

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