

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park is preparing a Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment to evaluate conceptual design alternatives for facilities that will better meet visitor needs. A public meeting will be held to answer any questions you may have and to obtain your comments on the conceptual design alternatives.

| Place | Date and Time | Location |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Oconaluftee Visitor Center | Thursday, July 19 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. | Rt. 441 Cherokee, NC |

Welcome

Welcome to tonight's meeting for the Oconaluftee Visitor Center Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment for new visitor facilities.

The purpose of tonight's meeting is to provide an opportunity to review information on the proposed project and to provide input on the alternative design concept for new visitor facilities. You will have a chance to speak with the project team members and submit comments.

Your Input is Important

Learn About the Project

Project displays and project team members are available to help you learn about the project and to answer any questions you may have.

Provide Your Input

The back of this sheet contains questions concerning the project to obtain your input. The information that you provide will help identify key concerns and issues regarding the proposed project. Please submit your comments tonight in the comment box, or mail your comments to the address below postmarked by August 19, 2007.

Visit Us By the Web or Mail

The project web site provides detailed information on the proposed project in a downloadable and printable format. The web site also contains a comment submission form to submit your comments.

Go to: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>

Choose a park: select **Great Smoky Mountains NP**
 Under Current Projects: select **Oconaluftee Visitor Center**

Oconaluftee Visitor Center Planning
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
 107 Park Headquarters Road
 Gatlinburg, TN 37738

The Proposed Alternatives

Alternative A - No Action

Existing visitor facilities would not change. Problems associated with the current facilities would remain:

Visitors would continue to have difficulty locating and accessing rest rooms.

Poor vehicular access and circulation.

Limited interpretive / educational space.

Sales area would continue to encroach on a portion of the visitor center.

Mountain Farm Museum disconnected from informational area.

Alternative B - Build Action

New 6500 sq. ft. visitor center building with museum, information desk, and sales area.

New 1000 sq. ft. rest room/vending building.

New 400 sq. ft. information kiosk.

Enhanced visitor experience.

Improved connection to the Mountain Farm Museum.

Existing visitor center building to remain as administrative space.

Reconfigured parking.

Oconaluftee Visitor Center Public Scoping Meeting.

Turn Over →
July 19, 2007

Comments

1) To help Park staff plan for the future of the Oconaluftee Visitor Center, please list the issues important to you and how you would resolve them.

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2) Which proposed alternative do you most prefer? Please explain what you like about this alternative and add any suggestions you may have to improve it.

.....

3) Do you have any suggestions for a new or modified alternative? If so please explain.

.....

4) Do you have any comments on the proposed impact topics? Please identify cultural or natural resources that are important to you.

.....

Before providing your name, address, or other personal information in your comment, please be aware that your comment and personal information may be made publicly available at anytime. You can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal information from public review, although we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Name: Organization:
 Street Address:
 City and State:
 Zip Code:
 How did you hear about the meeting? Newspaper Mailing Friend/Family Radio
 Other:

Thank you for your comments.



PROPOSED VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS

VISITORS WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO:

- ❖ Easily access orientation information that will allow them to choose from a range of safe and satisfying experiences that have minimal impact on the Park's resources.
- ❖ Gain an understanding of the natural and cultural significance of the Smokies.
- ❖ Learn how the Cherokee culture has historical and contemporary ties to the Park's resources.
- ❖ Learn the history of the Mountain Farm Museum and other Cultural sites in the area.
- ❖ Participate in a variety of interpretive programs to learn more about the Park's resources and to appreciate the many values those resources represent.
- ❖ Receive information on Park highlights and activities.
- ❖ Purchase educational items that are thematic and complement Park purpose and significance.



PROPOSED PROJECT PURPOSE

THE PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT IS:

- ❖ To provide facilities that better meet visitor needs.
- ❖ Orient visitors to the Park.
- ❖ Tell the Park's cultural and natural history stories.
- ❖ To fulfill the 1982 General Management Plan proposal for a new visitor center.

PROPOSED PROJECT NEED

THE NEED OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT IS:

- ❖ To provide adequate space to properly tell the cultural and natural histories of the Park.
- ❖ To better serve visitor information, access and orientation needs.
- ❖ Improve vehicle entry, circulation and parking.
- ❖ To facilitate the connection and relationship of the Mountain Farm Museum with the proposed facilities.



PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A - No Action

- ❖ Existing visitor facilities would not change.
- ❖ Visitors would continue to have difficulty locating/accessing rest rooms.
- ❖ Vehicle entry and parking would remain confusing.
- ❖ Space for education would still be limited.
- ❖ Sales area would continue to encroach on a portion of the visitor center.
- ❖ Mountain Farm Museum would be disconnected from the visitor center.



Alternative B - Build Action

- ❖ New 6500 sq. ft. visitor center building with museum, information desk, and sales area.
- ❖ New 1000 sq. ft. rest room/vending building.
- ❖ New 400 sq. ft. information kiosk.
- ❖ Enhanced visitor experience.
- ❖ Improved connection to the Mountain Farm Museum.
- ❖ Existing visitor center building to remain as administrative space.
- ❖ Reconfigured Parking.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

BUILDING ISSUES

- ❖ Not designed to be a visitor center
- ❖ Small visitor orientation area
- ❖ Limited space for exhibits
- ❖ Sales area inadequate
- ❖ Difficult to access rest rooms
- ❖ No area for interpreter talks

SITE ISSUES

- ❖ No sense of arrival for visitor
- ❖ Poor pedestrian circulation and way finding
- ❖ Poor vehicle access and parking





Proposed Impact Topics

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Natural Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Air Quality Geologic Resource/Soil Prime and Unique Farmlands Paleontological Resources Water Quality Water Flow/Quantity Wetlands Floodplains Vegetation Wildlife Fisheries/Aquatic Life Species of Special Concern Protected Species Exotic/Nonnative Species Soundscapes Scenic/Visual Resources/Viewsheds Night Sky Research Natural Areas Wilderness Wild and Scenic Rivers Ecologically Critical Areas | <p>Cultural Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archaeological Resources Prehistoric and Historic Structures Cultural Landscapes Ethnographic Resources Sacred Sites Museum Collections | <p>Socioeconomic Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land Use Changes Adjacent Landowners Population Density and Growth Economy Employment Income Local Businesses Community Services Public Services and Utilities Environmental Justice Transportation Hazardous Materials Operations Staffing Maintenance Facilities/Infrastructure |
| <p>Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building Waste Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Impacts on Natural Resources Stormwater Runoff Wastewater Discharge Solid Waste Disposal | <p>Visitor Use and Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor Uses Education Regional and Park Recreation Opportunities Museum Interpretation Access to Visitor Facilities | |

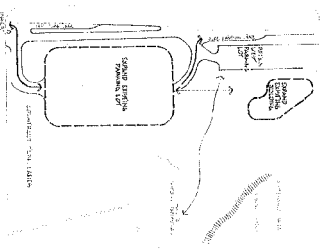


PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED CONCEPTS DISMISSED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION

1986 Development Concept Plan / Environmental Assessment

Concept A - Expand Existing Visitor Center dismissed because:

- ❖ Expansion difficult due to extensive masonry construction.
- ❖ Cost to renovate existing building 25% more than new construction.
- ❖ Southern and western building facades cannot be altered per state Historic Commission.
- ❖ Any addition would alter the aesthetic quality of the building.
- ❖ Existing large Hemlock Trees would be removed.



Concept B - Relocate Visitor Center to Park Boundary dismissed because:

- ❖ Greater natural disturbance.
- ❖ Limited parking area.
- ❖ Difficult vehicle circulation.
- ❖ Separate the Mountain Farm Museum from the visitor center requiring additional Park staff.
- ❖ Would require extensive utility infrastructure.

