

Briefing Statement

Bureau: National Park Service
Issue: Future Management of Elkmont Historic District
Park Site: Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Date: July 26, 2005

Key Points:

- The Park is engaged in an Environmental Impact Statement/General Management Plan Amendment process to determine the future management of some 74 vacant buildings in the Elkmont Historic District.
- Currently seven alternatives are being evaluated. Cost estimates of implementing the actions range from \$1.3 million to over \$37 million.
- An internal Park-preferred environmental alternative has been presented to NPS Southeast Regional and Washington officials for consideration. Pending their concurrence a preferred alternative will be presented to the public for review in a DEIS, expected in fall 2005.
- The final EIS/GMP amendment and a Record of Decision are expected by the end of 2005.

Background:

- A total of 74 cottages, outbuildings and a hotel are located in the Elkmont section of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which were purchased in the 1920's and 30's when lands were acquired to create the Park.
- They were occupied until December 1992 through a series of leases.
- The current Park's General Management Plan (GMP), approved in 1982, documents a decision that upon expiration of the leases (in 1992) the buildings should be removed and the land restored to a natural state.
- In early 1994, the Elkmont District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Of the 74 buildings, 49 were identified as contributing to the Historic District.
- After the lessees vacated the cottages when the leases expired in 1992, the Park's intentions were to remove the structures as stated in the Park's General Management Plan, but the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) rejected the plan.
- The National Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP) was asked to work with the NPS and SHPO to implement a process that would ultimately result in a management plan.
- In 1999 the NPS, the ACHP, the SHPO, agreed to work together to implement a public process to generate a management plan for the Elkmont District that would meet three requirements: 1) comply with the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act, 2) comply with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, and 3) become an amendment to the Park's General Management Plan.

Current Status:

- Seven alternatives for preservation and use of the buildings has been studied.
- Range from full removal of buildings to preservation of all contributing and non-contributing buildings for operation as a restaurant and lodging by a concessioner.
- Public opinion expressed at a series of meetings has been polarized at two ends of the management spectrum. One group favors preservation of the minimum number of buildings and restricting their use to a combination of public day-use. The other group favors preservation of the maximum number of buildings for commercial use.
- Information on the decision process is at: www.elkmont-gmpa-ea.com.

Funding Status:

- FY 04 Construction Funding for EIS: \$106,000 remains available.

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