



CHEROKEE ORCHARD ROAD ROARING FORK MOTOR NATURE TRAIL

Roadway Improvements / Environmental Assessment

December 2006

Introduction

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is providing this newsletter to keep you informed about the proposed improvements to Cherokee Orchard Road and Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail. This project is located in the Gatlinburg area of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Sevier County, Tennessee.

Project Overview

Cherokee Orchard Road is a 3.7-mile paved road that includes both a one-way roadway section and a two-way roadway section, open year-round. Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail is a 5.3-mile one-way roadway, with eight bridges, open from mid-March through October. Both roads are deteriorating due to age, weather conditions, and poor drainage. Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail has sections of very steep grade, sharp and narrow curves, and no shoulder in many locations. One 1,500-foot section of Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail is in need of widening. The bridges along Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail are over 25 years old, and are in need of repair and/or replacement. Improvements to the roads are needed to better accommodate Park visitors and protect existing resources within the Park.



Public Contact / Comment Information:

Superintendent
Great Smoky Mountains
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107 Park Headquarters Road
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

Email:
grsmcomments@nps.gov

Website:
[www.nps.gov/grsm/parkmgmt/
index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/grsm/parkmgmt/index.htm)

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Project Activities

Public meetings were held in September 2004 to solicit input from community members and interested citizens on the proposed project. Meetings were held in both Gatlinburg, Tennessee and Cherokee, North Carolina over two days. At the meetings, interested citizens had an opportunity to learn about the project, express their concerns, discuss the project with the study team, and submit written comments for the project record. An Existing Conditions Report was prepared in March 2005, and a Conceptual Alternatives Report was prepared in January 2006, documenting baseline conditions in the study area and fully assessing the options available to accomplish the Park's goals for this project. These studies, in conjunction with public involvement activities, helped to ensure an informed decision-making process.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.



Widening area, Roaring Fork

Preferred Alternative Selection

An Environmental Assessment (EA) that addresses the plans of the NPS to rehabilitate Cherokee Orchard Road and Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail has been prepared and a Preferred Alternative has been selected.

The EA is a document that has been prepared in compliance with a federal law called the National Environmental Policy Act. The EA explains that the project is needed to improve safety, repair deteriorating infrastructure, and protect resources along Cherokee Orchard Road and Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail. The EA also tells how the different alternatives were developed, what impacts they would have on people and resources, and why the "Full-Build" Alternative is recommended for construction. The EA includes proposed steps to further reduce project impacts (known as mitigation measures) and ways to make the project more pleasing to visitors (known as enhancements).



Cabin at Jim Bales homestead.

The Preferred Alternative (the Full-Build Alternative) calls for milling and resurfacing both roads, replacement of all eight bridge superstructures, realignment of two bridge approaches, the widening of one bridge, the widening of 1,500 feet of the motor nature trail, and associated miscellaneous work.

In addition, gravel pullouts would be paved or removed, masonry walls would be repaired or replaced, and miscellaneous safety improvements would be made.



Status of the Project and Schedule

If you would like to review the EA for this project, copies are available for your viewing at the Sugarlands Visitor Center and Oconaluftee Visitor Center in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and also at the Anna Porter Public Library in Gatlinburg. Electronic copies are available for viewing online at www.nps.gov/grsm/parkmgmt/index.htm. Your participation ensures that the NPS fully understands and considers the public's interests relating to their national heritage, cultural traditions, and community surroundings. You may submit comments on this project by writing the Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg, TN 37738. Electronic comments can be sent to grsmcomments@nps.gov. To ensure that the comments can be integrated into the planning process, all comments for this phase of the work must be received by February 5, 2007. Your comments will then be addressed in the decision document. Currently, this project is programmed for funding in Fiscal Years 2009 and 2010. If funding is made available, construction would begin in 2009 at the earliest.

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