

**Blue Ridge Parkway  
Environmental Assessment Information Guide  
For Right-of-Ways**



**August 1, 2003**

**Prepared by**

**Suzette Molling, Environmental Protection Specialist  
David Anderson, Landscape Architect/Right-of-Way Specialist  
Allen Hess, Cultural Resources Management Specialist**

**Division of Resource Planning and Professional Services, Blue Ridge Parkway**

# **Blue Ridge Parkway Environmental Assessment Information Guide For Rights-of-Way**

## **BACKGROUND**

The Blue Ridge Parkway has the legal authority under 16 U.S.C. 5 and 16 U.S.C. 79, as delegated, to grant an easement for a right-of-way to cross Blue Ridge Parkway administered lands for a period not exceeding 50 years provided that the right-of-way is not inconsistent with the use of such lands for Parkway purposes.

Each right-of-way application must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470[f]) (NHPA), and National Park Service Management Policies and Guidelines. Although many right-of-way proposals can be categorically excluded from NEPA, many still require the development of an environmental assessment. National Park Service guidelines for compliance with NEPA recommend that an environmental assessment be prepared in certain situations, including projects that involve a high level of public interest or controversy. This analysis further serves to fulfill NPS responsibilities for coordination under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Lastly, and perhaps most important of all, this environmental assessment process is intended to facilitate a sound and reasoned decision, based upon consideration of all relevant known factors.

Rights-of-way are categorically excluded from NEPA if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

*...overhead utility lines to an individual building or well from an existing line where installation will not result in significant visual intrusion and will involve no clearance of vegetation other than for placement of poles,*

*...minor overhead utility lines not involving placement of poles or towers and not involving vegetation management or significant visual intrusion in an NPS-administered area,*

*...underground utilities in areas showing clear evidence of recent human disturbance or areas within an existing road prism or within an existing overhead utility right-of-way, and*

*if ground disturbing activities do not impact archeological resources.*

The purpose of the environmental assessment is to evaluate the environmental consequences of granting rights-of-way for utility lines, including water, sewer, electric, phone, TV cable, and wireless communication facilities when they do not meet the categorical exclusions listed above. There is a list of mandatory criteria that must be looked at to determine the effects of the proposed project and must be included in the EA as an appendix. (Appendix 1-Blue Ridge Parkway Environmental Screening Form)

## GENERAL

To prepare an environmental assessment that addresses the right-of-way application when categorical exclusions are not appropriate, the applicant is required to:

- (1) to conduct biological and cultural surveys using NPS approved professionals,**
- (2) to consult with state and federal regulatory agencies to determine impacts,**
- (3) to obtain necessary Archeological Resource Protection Act (ARPA) permit if the applicant is not working under the authority of the federal government, and**
- (4) to provide proof of all consultations, and**
- (5) to make EA available to public for review and comment.**

An EA should briefly provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or an Environmental Impact Statement.

The length of an EA will depend on the number of alternatives being presented, complexity of issues being addressed, and consequences being analyzed. The discussion of resources that would be affected should be kept brief, and the length of all other discussion proportionate to the seriousness of the impact. The document should normally vary from a few pages on a simple project, to no more than 20 – 30 pages on complex projects. The use of maps, graphics, tables, comparative summaries, and incorporation of reference of other documents, when appropriate, should substantially reduce the need for lengthy descriptions. A well-done environmental assessment offers several reasonable options for resolving problems or fulfilling needs, which gave, rise to the proposal initially, yet minimize or mitigate impacts to environmental resources.

The applicant/consultants will be expected to meet with appropriate Blue Ridge Parkway Resource Planning and Natural Resource Staff during the project scoping phase on-site, before initiating the preparation of the EA, and to gain approval of the proposed range of alternatives to be presented and evaluated by the applicant. You must record evidence of the site visit and agency communication in your assessment. The park staff will review the document, work with the applicant to revise, and periodically confirm consultations.

If you have any questions in regard to the right-of-way application, or are ready to meet on the preparation of the EA, please contact David Anderson, Landscape Architect/ROW Specialist at 828/271-4779 ext. 217 or Suzette Molling, Environmental Protection Specialist at 828/271-4779 ext. 219.

The purpose of this document is to set forth the guidelines and procedures by which the applicant will comply with NEPA, NPS and BLRI requirements. NEPA requires all federal agencies to prepare in-depth studies of the impacts of and alternatives to a proposal with the potential to affect the environment, use the information contained in such studies in deciding whether to proceed with the actions, and diligently attempt to involve the interested and affected public before any decision is made. NPS management decisions will be based on full and proper technical and scientific studies appropriate to the decisions made.

## OVERVIEW OF REQUIRED EA

### CONTENT

The following discussion provides an overview of the required content for each of the major sections comprising the document (see outline in Appendix 2). The information presented below serves as the minimum content for an acceptable submittal.

#### **A. Purpose Of and Need for Action**

The applicant will begin by briefly summarizing the NPS proposed action (see wording in next paragraph), followed by a concise explanation of the project's purpose and need. The "purpose" of the project is a statement of goals and/or objectives that the NPS intends to fulfill by taking action (not the reason for preparing the EA). The "need" describes the conditions prompting the NPS to consider action and explains why the park is proposing the action at this time. Appropriate maps showing the project area and vicinity shall be included.

This section shall begin with the statement "The National Park Service (NPS) is considering (proposed action) at (park, county, state). This action is needed because..."

The section should end with the following paragraph: "An environmental assessment (EA) analyzes the alternatives for the proposed action and their impacts on the environment. This EA has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9), and the National Park Service's Director's Order (DO) -12 (*Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-making*)." A preview of the content of subsequent chapters of the EA should then follow if appropriate.

#### **B. Background**

The "Background" section will include appropriate information necessary for the reader to understand the context of the project. Such information may include project history and background, park purpose and significance, relationship of the project to other planning projects, or project scope.

The applicant will write a brief description of issues and impact topics for the EA. CEQ regulations indicate that agencies are responsible for a clear and efficient definition of issues. They should be described as potential environmental effects if the action is taken, (not an activity or a solution). Based on the issues, the applicant will select relevant impact topics to help focus the affected environment and environmental consequences sections of the EA.

Potential impact topics shall be evaluated and classified as either "Impact Topics Selected for Detailed Analysis," or "Impact Topics Dismissed from Detailed Analysis." The applicant will present a brief discussion for each impact topic, justifying the topic's placement under one of these two headings. Impact topics selected for detailed analysis will be addressed in the

subsequent affected environment and environmental consequences chapters, and should track through the document and be consistent among chapters. Those impact topics dismissed from detailed analysis will not be addressed further in the EA.

Issues and impact topics will be derived in collaboration with the NPS. As described in the NPS DO-12 NEPA Handbook and other agency guidance, EA's must highlight the potential impacts (or lack thereof) to wetlands, floodplains, threatened or endangered species, prime and unique farmlands, cultural resources, and low income or minority populations (as per Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice). Other potential impact topics are presented in Appendix 4, EA Topic Questions.

### **C. Proposal and Alternatives**

The applicant will write a description of the proposal and alternatives, including a no action alternative. (Note that the proposal may be as general as "Provide for Extended Visitor Experience at Doughton Park." The alternatives may follow then as: Rehab Old Maintenance Building into Lodge; Campground; Expand Hotel; Build New Hotel, etc., with one of these being "preferred" by the NPS in the EA that goes out for public comment). Additional alternatives may be developed and described if necessary to ensure consideration of a reasonable range of alternatives. NPS shall provide the applicant with the information necessary to describe the no action alternative, as well as actions (including mitigation measures) comprising the proposal and additional action alternatives as appropriate. The applicant will be responsible for integrating details into a clear and concise written description.

The alternatives discussion will also include identification of the "environmentally preferred" alternative, per NPS Handbook, Section 2-7(D) and (E), for comment during the EA public review. The environmentally preferred alternative is determined by applying the criteria suggested in NEPA, which is guided by CEQ. The CEQ provides direction that "[t]he environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in Section 101 and 102(1) of NEPA, which considers:

- fulfilling the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- assuring for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
- attaining the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
- preserving important historic, cultural and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintaining, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice;
- achieving a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and
- enhancing the quality of renewable resources and approaching the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources (NEPA, section 101(b)).

Generally, these criteria mean the environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and that best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources (Federal Register, 1981). Justification for the environmentally preferred alternative shall focus on how the environmentally preferred alternative best meets these criteria relative to the other alternatives.

In addition, the applicant will include a description of alternatives considered but dismissed. The narrative will (a) identify any such alternatives, and (b) present supporting narrative describing why each alternative is being dismissed. Justification for eliminating such alternatives from further analysis should be based primarily on factors relating to the alternative's feasibility; inability to meet the project's purpose and need; duplication with other less environmentally damaging or less expensive alternatives; conflict with an up-to-date park plan, statement of purpose and significance, or other policy; severe environmental impact; or, as a secondary, supporting reason, economic infeasibility. Simply identifying agency preference is not defensible rationale for dismissing an alternative.

#### **D. Affected Environment**

The affected environment chapter of the EA will describe the existing environment potentially affected by the project alternatives, or that would affect the alternatives if they were implemented. Consistent with CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.15), this chapter should present a concise and focused description of the environment for the project area (not the park or region as a whole). Description of the affected environment is intended to be descriptive/informative of the resources potentially affected and not encyclopedic of the entire park. Information presented should particularly focus on sensitive or controversial resources and/or those resources anticipated to incur project-related impacts. Detailed background or support material should be incorporated by reference or placed in an appendix.

The applicant will consult with the park and other agencies (i.e., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, State Historic Preservation Officer, etc.) to obtain resource and visitor use information necessary to prepare the affected environment section. Information or data included in this or other chapters should include appropriate reference citations (author and date) in the text, with data sources summarized in the bibliography.

The applicant will also perform required agency consultations relating to compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state natural resource management agencies, and state natural heritage inventories), sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (State Historic Preservation Officer and Advisory Council for Historic Preservation), and other relevant regulations.

#### **E. Environmental Consequences**

The environmental consequences section provides the reader with an analytic evaluation of the potential effects or impacts of each of the alternatives on the resources describe in the affected environment section. The objective analysis and disclosure of potential environmental impacts of

the proposed action and alternatives facilitates informed decision-making. This analysis and disclosure of impacts will be provided in this section, with the applicant presenting the effects of each alternative on the various components of the affected environment.

CEQ regulations require that impact analyses include discussions of adverse and beneficial effects, short- and long-term effects (duration), direct and indirect effects, impact intensity (magnitude), context (site-specific, local, regional, or national effects, etc.), impairment of park resources or values, and cumulative effects. The applicant will identify and characterize all such effects of each alternative. Conclusions on impacts should not be presented without supporting analysis; the rationale for the conclusion must be provided.

The applicant will utilize the impact analysis to determine the potential for impairment to park resources from each of the alternatives on each relevant resource (See DO-55 and NPS Management Policies). Impairment findings are included in the conclusions statements per above paragraph and in the FONSI.

For each impact topic under each alternative, the applicant will analyze cumulative effects by adding the incremental impact of the alternative actions to impacts resulting from “other” actions. “Cumulative impact” is defined as “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions” (40 CFR 1508.7). The preparation of legally defensible cumulative impact analyses is a key element of the environmental consequences chapter. The applicant will analyze potential cumulative effects of each alternative using the following steps:

- In collaboration with NPS, the applicant will first identify those “other” actions comprising the cumulative impact scenario. For example, these actions may include projects within the park but outside the scope of the project and/or projects or activities on adjacent lands by other entities.
- The applicant will collect basic information regarding these “other actions” for use in assessing their effects on the project area.
- The applicant will evaluate potential cumulative effects of each alternative by adding the incremental impact of the alternative’s actions to impacts resulting from “other” actions comprising the cumulative impact scenario. The resulting cumulative impacts will be identified and characterized.

#### **F. Impact Comparison Matrix (Summary of Environmental Consequences)**

The applicant will prepare a matrix of impacts for comparison purposes among the various project alternatives (including no action). The matrix shall present a concise summary of each alternative’s potential effects by impact topic. This matrix will be presented at the end of the Proposed Action and Alternatives chapter.

## **G. Mitigations**

Resource mitigation actions to protect or restore Parkway resources that would be impacted, including natural, cultural and visual, must be addressed in the EA including the discussion of the likelihood of the long-term success of the proposed mitigation. Identify monitoring activities that would be necessary to ensure that the mitigation measures are implemented and effective.

Even if it appears no impacts to resources analyzed in the EA have the potential to be significant, there still may be mitigation measures that the National Park Service would like to adopt to reduce impacts. (See Appendix 3 – Preliminary Replanting List)

The applicant will be expected at a minimum to follow construction guidelines specific to their project and utilize all mitigating measures suggested by state and federal regulatory agencies to alleviate the impact caused by construction within the ROW. All mitigating measures recommended by the archeologist or SHPO will be incorporated into the project.

## **H. Consultation and Coordination**

The applicant will present an overview of public involvement activities (scoping) implemented as part of the environmental assessment process. This may include distribution of press releases or newsletters, public meetings, workshops, or other methods used to obtain public input. In addition, persons, organizations, and agencies contacted for information and assisting in identifying important issues, developing alternatives or analyzing impacts should be listed in this section.

## **I. Compliance with Federal or State Regulations**

The applicant will identify future regulatory compliance activities necessary to implement the project, including the potential need for permits and other agency approvals or coordination. This should be a focused description of project-related compliance requirements, and not an encyclopedic description of state and federal regulations.

## **J. List of Preparers**

A list of preparers and their qualifications is required in the EA.

## **K. Bibliography**

A bibliography, glossary of terms and acronyms and appendixes should be part of the EA.

## **L. Appendices as required, i.e., Scoping Letters**

Provide copies of any scoping letter that were sent out in regards to the proposed action.



## **Maps/Photos/Drawings**

Provide any drawings, maps, photographs, exhibits, etc. in the EA. These should be of the overall area (USGS Quad Sheet), proposed project area, proposed site plans, surveys and construction documents. Any detailed plan that is required before actual work may begin should be included, such as an erosion and sedimentation control plan, environmental protection and impact monitoring plan, etc. The permittee will be required to provide an AutoCAD plat and legal description for inclusion in the ROW permit.

## **EA REVIEW**

After the applicant has prepared the Environmental Assessment, it should be sent in to the Landscape Architect/ROW Specialist for review/comment by the Blue Ridge Parkway Resource Planning Staff. The planning staff will review the entire document for content and to determine whether or not all impacts, alternatives or mitigation measures, etc., are adequately discussed in the environmental assessment. If there are any changes, missing information/documentation or new alternatives presented by the planning staff, the applicant will need to amend the EA or incorporate them into the final document.

## **PUBLIC REVIEW**

A 30-day public review is required of all environmental assessments for projects planned on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Once the EA is complete and meets NPS standards, the applicant will work with Parkway Planning Staff to initiate public review of the document in the following ways:

- News release sent to local newspapers, radio and television stations, and posted on Parkway Internet Web Page to announce the availability of EA for public review and comment, or,
- News release distribution same as above with public meeting(s) to be conducted by applicant to discuss proposed project and environmental analysis/impacts.

## **FINAL EA/FONSI**

After the Environmental Assessment has been approved and it is determined that all substantive issues are covered adequately, and that there will be no potential for significant impacts if the proposed action is initiated, then the Blue Ridge Parkway Environmental Protection Specialist will prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The Environmental Protection Specialist will then send the FONSI and Final EA to the NPS Southeast Field Office for approval by the Regional Director. This approval **must** be granted before any NPS permit will be issued. The timeframe for approval can range from 45 days – 90 days.

After the park receives the Letter of Concurrence approving the FONSI, the Landscape Architect/ROW Specialist will notify the applicant and begin the process of issuing the Right-of-Way permit.

## **COMPLIANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

Because of a potential for archeological resources in the areas of new rights-of-way, the applicant must have a professional archeologist field survey the proposed site. This archeologist must obtain, complete and submit to the National Park Service authorities listed below an ARPA permit application before any work can begin. This permit application will detail the plan of survey to be used and those reporting requirements called for by the National Park Service. The Blue Ridge Parkway will send a copy of this permit application to the appropriate State Historic

Preservation Officer to determine any cultural properties listed in or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or any other concerns they may have.

The archeological survey may begin only when the approved ARPA permit is received and a copy sent to the Blue Ridge Parkway Cultural Resource Specialist, Allen Hess and can be reached at 828/271-4779 ext. 211. The address for information on an ARPA permit is:

Chief John Ehrenhard  
Southeast Archeological Center  
Post Office Box 2416  
Tallahassee, Florida 32316

The applicant will be responsible for funding the archeological survey and evaluation. If cultural resources are identified and determined significant, then mitigation measures such as project realignment or data recovery will be funded and conducted with the approval of the NPS and SHPO.

All mitigating measures recommended by the archeologist or SHPO will be incorporated into the project. Thus, no archeological resources or cultural properties should be impacted by ROW development. If, however, cultural elements are discovered during construction activities, the applicant will be required to stop activities and contact the Superintendent, Blue Ridge Parkway, so that appropriate compliance measures can be taken.

All new rights-of-way will be surveyed by a qualified biologist for rare and endangered plants and animals. In accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended, the ROW applicant will consult with the appropriate U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Endangered Species Field Office to determine the project's effect to federally listed plants and animals.

Should rare species occur at or in close proximity to the proposed project area, the ROW route location will be selected in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In keeping with NPS policy, ROW's will also be placed to avoid impact to state-listed plants or animals. The applicant will need to contact the state Natural Heritage Program to determine if any state listed species were affected by the proposed ROW development, and if so, then the state Natural Heritage Program would be consulted and asked for guidance on route selection.

In accordance with Executive Order 11988 and 11990 (Floodplain Management and Wetland Protection), the applicant will be required to consult with the appropriate U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Field Office to determine if the proposed project has an effect on lands classified as wetlands.

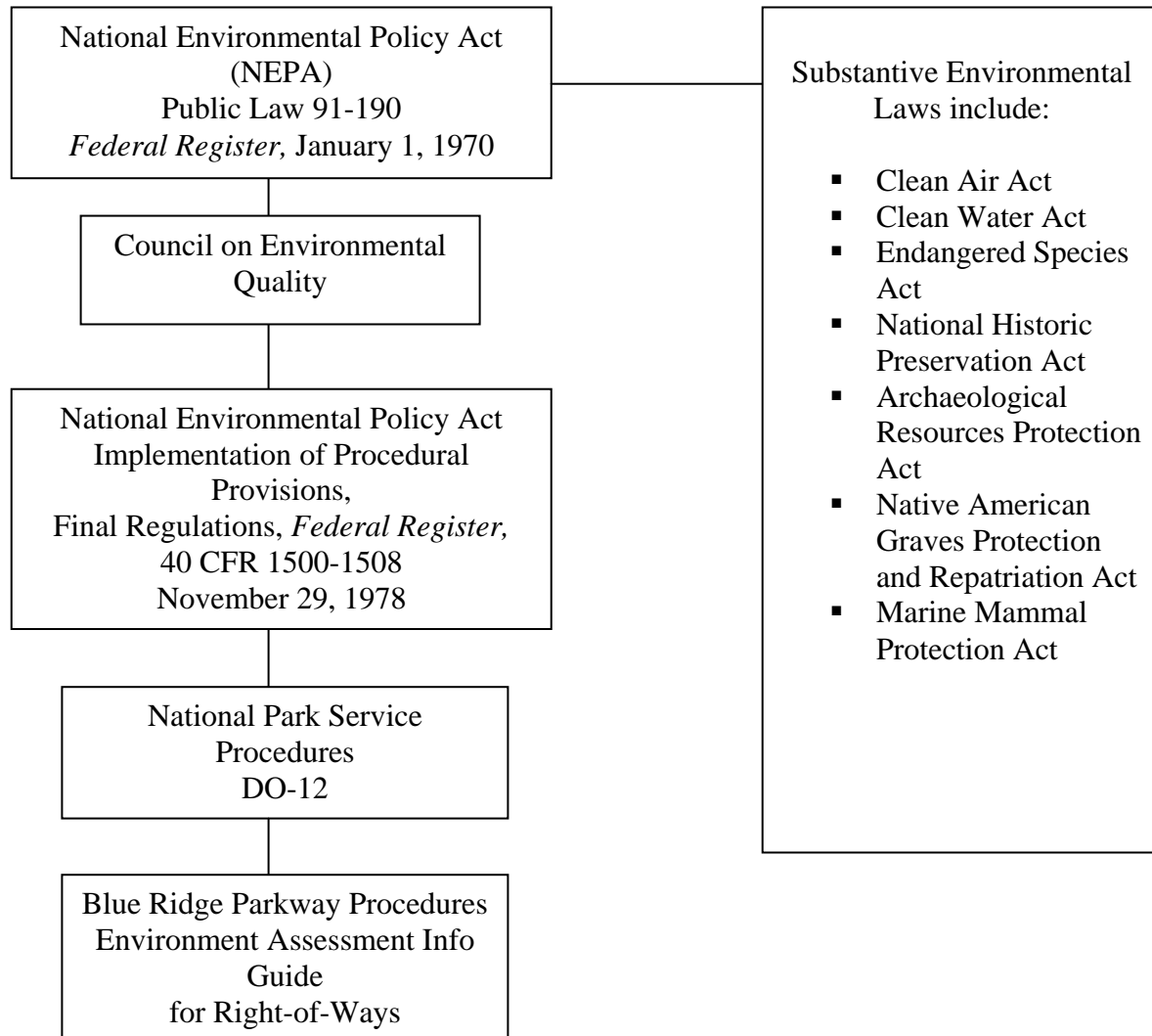
In keeping with the intent of the Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1984, the Natural Resource Conservation Service in the county in which the project will occur should be contacted to determine if any agricultural lands may be involved in the construction of the ROW, to determine the effect of important (prime or unique) farmland soils.

In accordance with the Clean Water Act (Sections 401 and 404), the applicant will be required to consult with the appropriate U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Field Office to determine the effects of the proposed project on water resources.

In accordance with Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations), the applicant must specifically analyze and evaluate the impact of the proposal on minority and low-income populations and communities.

Addresses for state, local and federal agencies within your project area can be found on the Internet or in the phone book (see Appendix 5). All consultation must be documented as an appendix in the EA.

# Understanding the National Environmental Policy Act



## **Appendix 1**

### **Blue Ridge Parkway Environmental Screening Form**

# Environmental Screening Form

**Project Description/Project ID/Location:**

Project ID: \_\_\_\_\_ MP: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_ Section: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mandatory Criteria (A-N). Would the proposal, if implemented:**

	Yes	No	Data Needed To Determine
<p>A. Have material adverse effects on public health or safety?</p> <p>B. Have adverse effects on such unique characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; floodplains; or ecological significant or critical areas, including those listed on the National Register of Natural Landmarks?</p> <p>C. Have highly controversial environmental effects?</p> <p>D. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?</p> <p>E. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?</p> <p>F. Be directly related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?</p> <p>G. Have adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places?</p> <p>H. Have adverse effects on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have adverse effects on designated Critical Habitat for these species?</p>			

	Yes	No	Data Needed To Determine
<p>I. Require compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11900 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act?</p> <p>J. Threaten to violate a federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?</p> <p>K. Involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA sec. 102(2) (E))?</p> <p>L. Have a disproportionate, significant adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EO 12898)?</p> <p>M. Restrict access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 130007)?</p> <p>N. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of federally listed noxious weeds (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act)?</p> <p>O. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of non-native invasive species, or actions that may promote the introduction, growth or expansion of the range of non-native invasive species (EO 13112)?</p> <p>P. Require a permit from a federal, state or local agency to proceed, unless the agency from whom the permit is required agrees a CE is appropriate?</p> <p>Q. Have the potential for significant impact as indicated by a federal, state or local agency or Indian Tribe?</p> <p>R. Have the potential to be controversial because of disagreement over possible environmental effects?</p> <p>S. Have the potential to violate the NPS Organic Act by impairing park resources or values?</p>			



**Tailor the following to meet individual park unit/project needs. Are any measurable impacts possible on the following categories relating to physical, natural, or cultural resources?**

	Yes	No	Data Needed To Determine
<p>A. Geological resources- soils, bedrock, streambeds, etc.?</p> <p>B. From geohazards?</p> <p>C. Air quality, traffic, or from noise?</p> <p>D. Water quality or quantity?</p> <p>E. Streamflow characteristics?</p> <p>F. Marine or estuarine resources?</p> <p>G. Floodplains or wetlands?</p> <p>H. Land use, including occupancy, income, values, ownership, type of use?</p> <p>I. Rare or unusual vegetation – old growth timber, riparian, alpine?</p> <p>J. Species of special concern (plant or animal; state or federal listed or proposed for listing) or their habitat?</p> <p>K. Unique ecosystems, biosphere reserves, World Heritage sites?</p> <p>L. Unique or important wildlife or wildlife habitat?</p> <p>M. Unique or important fish or fish habitat?</p> <p>N. Introduce or promote non-native species (plant or animal)?</p> <p>O. Recreation resources, including supply, demand, visitation, activities, etc.?</p> <p>P. Visitor experience, aesthetic resources?</p> <p>Q. Cultural resources, cultural landscape, sacred sites, etc.?</p>			

	Yes	No	Data Needed To Determine
R. Socioeconomics, including employment, occupation income changes, tax base, infrastructure, etc.?			
S. Minority and low-income populations, ethnography, size, migration patterns, etc.?			
T. Energy Resources?			
U. Other agency or tribal land use plans or policies?			
V. Resource, including energy, conservation potential?			
W. Urban quality, gateway communities, etc.?			
X. Long-term management of resources or land/resource productivity?			
Y. Other important environmental resources?			

**Please answer the following questions:**

1. Are the personnel preparing this form familiar with the site, and/or has a site visit been conducted? (Attach additional pages noting when site visit took place, staff attending, etc.)
  
2. Has consultation with all affected agencies or tribes been completed? (Attach additional pages detailing the consultation, including the name, date and summary of comments from other agency or tribal contacts).

**Instructions**

When you have completed a site visit (or if staff are familiar with the specifics of the site) and consultation with affected agencies and/or tribes, and if the answers in the checklist above are all “no,” you may proceed to the categorical exclusion form if the action is described in section 3-4 of DO-12. If any answers in the checklist are “yes” or “data needed to determine,” or if the action is not described in section 3-4, prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Attach maps, notes of site visits, agency consultation, relevant data or reports, the categorical exclusion form or other relevant information to this form to begin the statutory/administrative record file.

Signatory

In signing this form, you are saying you have completed a site visit or are familiar with the specifics of the site, have consulted with affected agencies and tribes, and that the answers to the questions posed in the checklist are, to the best of your knowledge, correct.

---

Environmental Protection Specialist

---

Date

---

Chief, Resource Planning and Professional Services

---

Date

## **Appendix 2**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OUTLINE**

## **SUMMARY**

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **PURPOSE AND NEED**

### **BACKGROUND**

Project Background and Scope  
Relationship to Other Planning Projects  
Issues and Objectives  
Impact Topics Identified for Analysis

#### Natural Resources

-potential impact topics include topography, geology, soils, prime and unique farmlands, air quality, water resources, vegetation, wildlife and aquatic life, threatened and endangered species, etc.

#### Cultural Resources

-potential impact topics include historic, archeological, and ethnographic resources and cultural landscapes; properties eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places should be identified/described

#### Visual Resources

-potential impact topics include visual/scenic resources, view area landscape characterization, viewshed/scenic quality, visual intrusions

#### Visitor Use and Experience

-potential impact topics include visitation patterns, visitor experience and activities, interpretation, etc.

#### Socioeconomic Environment

-potential impact topics include population and economy, housing, community services and infrastructure, transportation, land use, social conditions, recreation, environmental justice (low income and minority populations), hazardous materials, and noise

### **PROPOSAL AND ALTERNATIVES**

No Action  
Alternative A (Preferred Alternative)  
Alternative B (Environmentally Preferred Alternative)  
Alternatives Considered but Dismissed  
Impact Comparison Matrix

## **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

(Tracks with Impact Topics Identified in Background Section)

- Natural Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Visual Resources
- Visitor Use and Experience
- Socioeconomic Environment

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

(Note, see SOW for Impact Analysis Requirements, Including Impairment Findings)

No Action

- Natural Resources
  - see potential impact topics above

- Cultural Resources
  - see potential impact topics above

- Visual Resources
  - see potential impact topics above

- Visitor Use and Experience
  - see potential impact topics above

- Socioeconomic Environment
  - see potential impact topics above

Alternative A

- Subheadings same as above

Alternative B

- Subheadings same as above

## **MITIGATION MEASURES**

## **CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

## **COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL AND STATE REGULATIONS**

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## **LIST OF PREPARERS**

## **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix 3**

### **Preliminary Replanting List**

## **Preliminary Replanting List**

This draft document contains a list of suggested plant material for the entire 469-mile length of the Blue Ridge Parkway and should not be considered complete or specific to all planting locations and elevations. All species of vegetation that may be recommended for planting on park lands should be native to the area they are to be planted. Consult with local Landscape Architects or Horticulturists, or a Biologist for specific species and cultivars and their suitability for consideration at a specific site.

### **Trees To Consider:**

#### **Deciduous**

Oaks (*Quercus* sp.)- Chestnut, White, and Red Oaks  
Hickory (*Carya* sp.)  
Maples (*Acer* sp.) - Red Maple  
Sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*)  
White Ash (*Fraxinus Americana*)  
Birch (*Betula* sp.)  
Sycamore (*Platanus* sp.).  
Redbud (*Cercis Canadensis*)  
Dogwood (*Cornus* sp.)

#### **Evergreen**

Hemlock (*Tsuga* sp.)  
Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)  
Virginia Pine (*Pinus Virginiana*)

### **Shrubs To Consider**

Rhododendron (*Rhododendron* sp.)  
Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*)  
Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*)  
Flame Azalea (*Rhododendron calendulaceum*)  
Pinxter Azalea (*Rhododendron periclymenoides*)  
Arrow wood Viburnum (*Viburnum dentatum*)

Native Grasses And Wildflowers



## **Appendix 4**

### **Environmental Assessment Topic Questions**

## **Environmental Assessment Topic Questions**

The following issues should be considered in detail:

### **Land Disturbance**

- How much surface area will be cleared and denuded of vegetation?
- How much excavation will be necessary for utilities, footings, bore pits, etc.?
- Will there be any cut and fill? If so, how many cubic yards are required to construct a standard cross section; would proposed cut/fill slopes be conducive to allowing natural regeneration?
- Where will cut materials be deposited (both temporarily and permanently)?
- Where will fill materials be collected? How will they be “stored?”

### **Land Use**

- What changes will occur in land use?
- Do prime and unique farmlands occur within the project area?
- How will the project site be accessed for construction, maintenance, and repair activities? What frequency is maintenance required?
- Will a staging area be required within NPS boundaries? What type materials/equipment will be stored and for how long?

### **Soils**

- Is an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan required by the State? What erosion control actions will be taken?
- Will disturbance be of highly erodible soils, bedrock, streambeds, or geologic hazards?
- How will stormwater runoff be changed? (Increased/Directed)

### **Vegetation**

- How many trees and what species over six (6) inches diameter at breast height (DBH) are to be impacted? Describe plans for regeneration/replanting the site (include tree/shrub species and grass mixes).
- Does the project impact any areas in, adjacent to habitat, or within migratory routes for rare, threatened, or endangered plants (including State-listed species or State species of concern in this category)?
- What potential is there for the establishment of exotic plant species within disturbed areas created by this project (e.g., what exotics occur outside the project area that may move into the site)?
- Is the project site a unique plant community or Natural Heritage Area (e.g., highland bald, spruce/fir, old growth, hemlock forest, etc.)?

- Is this project located in an area where restoration of exact genetic material is required?
- Does the project impact current or future biodiversity or species composition?

### **Wildlife**

- Does the project impact habitat for existing wildlife?
- Does the project impact any areas in, adjacent to, or within migratory routes for rare, threatened, or endangered animals (including State-listed species or State species of concern in this category)?
- Are trees used for nesting being removed?
- Is the percentage of forest canopy changing?
- Is forest fragmentation occurring?
- How are small animals, such as salamanders impacted? Are openings being created through which salamanders or other small mammals cannot pass (e.g., meadows, road widening, etc.)?
- Does the project impact current or future biodiversity or species composition?

### **Water resources**

- Do ephemeral, non-ephemeral streams, wetlands, or riparian zones occur within the project area?
- Does the project propose altering stream courses, surface or ground water flow or quantity?
- Does the project propose filling wetlands or stream courses?
- What U.S. Army Corps of Engineer permits are required?
- Will there be eutrophication of existing waters?
- Will the project impact drinking water supplies?
- Will the project use water consumptively; is water needed for construction activities; is water needed to maintain constant temperatures for equipment or materials? If so, where will water be obtained?
- Will the project alter surface or ground water quality?
- Is the project located in an identified floodplain?
- Does the project involve structures, fill, or discharge of dredged materials into navigable waters?

### **Air Quality**

- What impacts will there be to air quality (temporary and permanent)?
- Is open burning needed during pre- or post construction?
- What permits are required?

### **Noise Levels**

- What increases in noise levels will the project bring (temporary and permanent)?

### **Visual Environment**

Visual resources are easy to talk about but difficult to define. For the purposes of looking at individual and cumulative effects, the following list should be used to begin examination:

- Is the project area visible from the Parkway?
- What affect will the proposal have on the historic scene?
- Will implementation of the project cause the area to be seen from the Parkway?
- Will improvements be seen from the Parkway?
- Will the project have a direct relationship of increasing development to lands in critical viewshed of the Parkway?
- Do improvements introduce new visual elements to the Parkway that are not in keeping with visual character of the Parkway; i.e., solid concrete headwalls, metal culvert headwalls, galvanized guardrail, etc.?
- Are there management strategies that will effect visual resources, such as striping, signing, vegetation clearing, etc.?

### **Socio-Economic Impacts**

- Will temporary or permanent jobs be created?
- Will temporary or permanent changes in standard of living occur?
- What safety or health issues are being addressed by this project?
- Change existing traffic flow/circulation
- Change the amount of waste disposal
- Affect minority or low income populations
- Involve or impact prime farmland, grazing
- Affect energy resources including conservation

### **Miscellaneous**

- Will any toxic substances or pesticides be introduced into the environment?
- What is the effect of bituminous materials? Is the current asphalt going to be reused, or will an additional layer be placed on existing asphalt?
- Does the project involve a wilderness or wilderness study area?
- Alter available visitor services or activities (parking, trails, recreation, or disabled access)
- Involve or affect wild or scenic rivers

- Change or add light sources or light pollution
- Involve the use, handling, storage, disposal, discharge of hazardous or toxic substances
- Add or remove safety or public health threats
- Involve American Indian Religious Use
- Require federal, state, or local permits
- Affect other agencies, tribal land use plans or policies

## **Appendix 5**

### **Useful and Interesting Websites**

## Useful and Interesting Websites

**National Park Service** ([www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov))

**Advisory Council on Historic Preservation** ([www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov))

- National Historic Preservation Program
  - Working with 106
  - Training and Education
  - News
  - Council Library
  - State and Tribal Programs and Links
  - Federal Agency Programs and Links

**Heritage Preservation Services** ([www2.cr.nps.gov](http://www2.cr.nps.gov))

- Planning and Preservation
  - Laws, Regulations, and Standards
  - American Battlefields
  - Historic Buildings
  - Historic Landmarks
  - Tribal Communities
- Tribal Websites
  - Tribal Historic Preservation Offices

**National Register of Historic Places** ([www.cr.nps.gov/nr](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr))

**National Historic Landmarks** ([www.cr.nps.gov/nhl](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nhl))

**Virtual Tour to National Historic Landmarks** ([www.cr.nps.gov/nhl/travel.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nhl/travel.htm))

**National Trust for Historic Preservation** ([www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org))

**Law, Regulations, Standards, and Conventions Related to Cultural Resources**  
([www.cr.nps.gov/linklaws.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/linklaws.htm))

**Council on Environmental Quality/NEPA net** (<http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/nepanet.htm>)

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** ([www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov))

**National Resources Conservation Service** ([www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov))

**Forest Service NEPA, NFMA and Appeals** (<http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/>)

**Public Involvement Links** ([www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/pubinv2.htm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/pubinv2.htm))

**EPA Laws and Regulations** ([www.epa.gov/epahome/rules.html](http://www.epa.gov/epahome/rules.html))

**U.S. State/Local Gateway** ([www.statelocal.gov](http://www.statelocal.gov))

## LAWS, REGULATIONS, POLICIES, AND OTHER GUIDANCE

	PRIMARY SOURCES	WEBSITES
<p><b>Laws</b> Acts passed by the U.S. Congress and approved by the President; all laws must be consistent with the U.S. Constitution; federal laws have supremacy over state and local laws</p> <p>Legislative history (e.g., committee reports, transcripts of congressional debates) often helps to clarify the congressional intent in enacting a law</p> <p>Example: -Act of August 25, 1916 (NPS Organic Act), P.L. 64-235, 16 U.S.C. § 1 et seq., as amended</p> <p>-National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (P.L. 91-90, 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347, January 1, 1970, as amended by PL 94-52, July 3, 1975 and PL 94-83, August 9, 1975)</p>	<p><b><i>U.S. Statutes at Large</i></b>- contains record of laws, amendments, concurrent resolutions enacted by each session of Congress; organized chronologically; published annually</p> <p><b><i>U.S. Code (USC)</i></b> - the consolidation and codification of general and permanent federal laws; consists of 50 titles (subject areas); new edition published every six years with cumulative supplements following each session of Congress</p> <p><b><i>Congressional Record (CR.)</i></b> - contains proceedings and debates that make up legislative history; published daily with an index developed at the end of each congressional session</p>	<p>Search U.S. Code: <a href="http://uscode.house.gov/usc.htm">http://uscode.house.gov/usc.htm</a> <a href="http://www.gpoaccess.gov/uscode/index.html">www.gpoaccess.gov/uscode/index.html</a></p> <p>Search legislative history in the <i>Congressional Record</i>: <a href="http://thomas.loc.gov">http://thomas.loc.gov</a></p> <p>Other helpful law sites: <a href="http://laws.fws.gov/">http://laws.fws.gov/</a></p>
<p><b>Executive Orders</b> Directives from the President to departments and agencies of the executive branch</p> <p><b>Presidential Proclamations</b> Decrees by the President under the Constitution and other authorities (e.g., Antiquities Act)</p> <p>Examples: - E.O. 11990 Protection of Wetlands -Proclamation 6920— Establishment of the Grand Staircase-Escalante NM</p>	<p><b><i>Federal Register (FR)</i></b> contains executive orders, presidential proclamations, agency regulations and notices, and other public documents; published daily and indexed monthly</p> <p><b><i>Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)</i></b>- since 1976 Title 3 of CFR contains an annual compilation of executive orders and proclamations</p> <p><b><i>Codification of Presidential Proclamations and Executive Orders</i></b> (Most recent ed., 1945-1989)</p>	<p>Search recent <i>Federal Register</i>: <a href="http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html">www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html</a></p> <p>Search the CFR for executive orders/proclamations issued by the Bush administration: <a href="http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr">www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr</a></p>



<p><b>Regulations</b>  Rules for complying with a federal law developed by the authorized department or agency; also includes codification of agency policy</p> <p>36 CFR Part 1- 199 contains general and specific regulations for the management and use of the national park system (these regulations are augmented by the superintendent's compendium for each unit)</p> <p>Other examples:  -16 CFR Parts 1-199 Parks, Forest and Public Property [NPS general and specific regulations]  -40 CFR Parts 1500-1508 Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA  -44 CFR Part 9 FEMA Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands Regulations</p>	<p><b>Federal Register</b> - regulations are first published and revised in the register</p> <p><b>Code of Federal Regulations-</b> consolidation and codification of general and permanent rules and regulations of federal agencies and presidential documents; there are 50 titles</p>	<p>Search the CFR:  <a href="http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr">www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr</a></p>
<p><b>Policy</b>  Policies are guiding principles or procedures that set the framework and provide direction for management decisions; they may prescribe the process by which decisions are made, how an action is to be accomplished, or the results to be achieved</p> <p>The NPS has recently adopted the 3-tiered Directives System to express policy and provide instructions for its implementation; this approach is described below:</p>	<p><b>Federal Register</b> - Policies for most agencies are usually first published in the register, as well as published separately</p> <p>DOI policy is contained in the <i>Departmental Manual</i></p>	<p>See above</p> <p>Other helpful sites:  <a href="http://www.policyworks.gov">www.policyworks.gov</a>  <a href="http://elips.doi.gov">http://elips.doi.gov</a>  <a href="http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/nepanet.htm">http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/nepanet.htm</a></p>

<p><b>Level 1: NPS Management Policies</b>  The only level 1 policy statement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- provides a framework for making management decisions</li> <li>- approved by the Director after review by the WASO Office of Policy and the NLC</li> <li>- adherence is mandatory (unless waived by the SOI, Assist. SOI, or the Director)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Management Policies</i></p>	<p>New 2000 draft document</p> <p><a href="http://www.nps.gov/refdesk/mp/index.html">www.nps.gov/refdesk/mp/index.html</a></p> <p><a href="http://165.83.219.72/npspolicy/search.cfm">http://165.83.219.72/npspolicy/search.cfm</a></p>
<p><b>Level 2: Director's Orders</b>  NPS Director's instructions for Implementing management policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- may articulate new or revised policy</li> <li>- may provide specific instructions</li> <li>- may outline requirements or standards for NPS functions, programs and activities</li> <li>- approved by the Director after review by the WASO Office of Policy and the NLC</li> <li>- adherence is mandatory (unless waived by the SOI, Assist. SOI, or the Director)</li> </ul> <p>Example:  DO-12 Conservation Planning And Environmental Impact Analysis (NEPA compliance guidelines)</p>	<p>21 Director's Orders are approved as of 3/15/00</p> <p>42 guidelines still in effect are to be updated and incorporated into the Director's Orders system</p>	<p>Current list of DO:  <a href="http://www.nps.gov/refdesk/DOrders">www.nps.gov/refdesk/DOrders</a></p> <p>NPS Policy Place website:  <a href="http://165.83.219.72/npspolicy/index.cfm">http://165.83.219.72/npspolicy/index.cfm</a></p>
<p><b>Level 3:</b>  Handbooks, reference manuals, And other professional materials</p> <p>Example: DO-12 Handbook</p>	<p>There are seven new handbooks and reference manuals in effect</p> <p>There are 70 older special directives And 22 staff directives still in effect To be updated</p>	<p>See above</p>

## Preparers

---

**Blue Ridge Parkway  
199 Hemphill Knob Road  
Asheville, North Carolina 28803**

David Anderson, Landscape Architect/ROW Specialist  
(828) 271-4779 ext. 217 e-mail address: [J\\_David\\_Anderson@nps.gov](mailto:J_David_Anderson@nps.gov)

Suzette Molling, Environmental Protection Specialist  
(828) 271-4779 ext. 219 e-mail address: [Suzette\\_Molling@nps.gov](mailto:Suzette_Molling@nps.gov)

Allen Hess, Cultural Resources Management Specialist  
(828) 271-4779 ext. 211 e-mail address: [Al\\_Hess@nps.gov](mailto:Al_Hess@nps.gov)