



**Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Division of Resource Education**

# **Comprehensive Resource Education Plan**

**January 2001**

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*Giving the resource a voice since 1935*

## What's in a Name?

In 1999, Great Smoky Mountains National Park's (GRSM's) management team changed the name of the "Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services" to the Division of Resource Education. This name change was made because it more accurately describes the work Division staff perform for the Park. More importantly, this new name allows most visitors and partners to easily understand the purpose of this important park function.

In keeping with this name change, the name of this document, for Great Smoky Mountains only, has been renamed the **Comprehensive Resource Education Plan** instead of the traditionally-called Comprehensive Interpretive Plan. Therefore, throughout this document, the word "interpretation" and "interpretive" have been, for the most part, replaced by the words "resource education."

It should be noted that, with the above name change, GRSM staff are not abandoning the traditional word "interpretation." For most employees in this profession, the word "interpretation" has a long history, great significance, and a profound meaning. However, it is recognized that, aside from us, the word "interpretation" usually means something entirely different, i.e., translation of a foreign language, to most people.

GRSM staff freely interchange the words "resource education" for "interpretation," but still use the word "interpretation" among each other and other park professionals, especially those who work at other locations. In fact, it will probably take some time for other park professionals to accept the Division name change that GRSM's management team made in 1999.

# APPROVALS

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**Approved:**

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**Date**

## Three Documents in One

The **Comprehensive Resource Education Plan (CREP)** that follows is divided into three sections.

**Section I** is the **Long-Range Resource Education Plan (LRREP)**. The LRREP is presented for the years 2001 to 2010; however, it is meant to be a dynamic document —changes can be made to this Plan anytime Park management and staff agree there is a need to do so.

**Section II** is the **Annual Implementation Plan (AIP)**. The AIP is completed by Division of Resource Education staff on an annual basis to coincide with GRSM's overall budget process. The AIP serves as the Division's annual goals.

**Section III** is the **Resource Education Database (RED)**, comprised of a media inventory, and other informational resources that staff use to help plan, develop, implement, and evaluate the overall Division program.

The CREP analyzes resource education needs in a comprehensive manner and recommends an array of facilities, services, and programs to effectively communicate Great Smoky Mountains National Park's purpose, significance, themes, and values to the public and to Park partners. The CREP identifies a level of resource education activities that contribute to the accomplishment of the Park's mission as identified in response to the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). The Plan also establishes a balance of services based on visitor use, critical resource issues, and Servicewide initiatives.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks go to many individuals for their input into the development of Great Smoky Mountains National Park's **Comprehensive Resource Education Plan**. This planning process began in 1995 when (then) Superintendent Karen P. Wade and Assistant Superintendent Philip A. Francis, Jr. initiated one of the first attempts in the National Park Service to complete a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan (CIP). To begin the planning process, Gene Cox, GRSM's former Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services, formed a CIP team comprised of Park staff and partners. Several planning meetings took place in 1995/96, and a draft CIP was developed by Park staff in accordance with NPS-6, Chapter III, Interpretive Planning Guidelines.

In January 2001, GRSM's final CIP, now called **Comprehensive Resource Education Plan** was completed and approved for implementation. This plan can be changed and improved upon as new information and resources (financial and human) become available, and when management and staff have new ideas or priorities.

The following people are acknowledged for their thoughtful contributions.

Ellis S. Bacon, Karen Ballentine, Suzanne Barrett, Sue Bennett, Tyrone Brandyburg, Glenn Cardwell, Dave Carney, Kent Cave, Anita Clark, Nancy Condon, Eugene Cox, Tim Cruze, Don DeFoe, Wanda DeWaard, Phillip A. Francis Jr., Doug Goode, Annette Hartigan, Dr. Larry Hartmann, Ed Henry, Jeanie Hilten, Jason Houck, Toni Huskey, Carey Jones, Steve Kemp, Rich Klima, Don Kodak, J. Brooks Laymon, Terry Maddox, Kitty Manscill, Charles Maynard, Michael Maslona, Sue McGill, Dean Mihelich, LaTonya Miller, Steven McCoy, Sue Moynihan, Danyelle Nelson, Jennifer Pierce, Tom Robbins, Susan Sachs, Jack Spinnler, Heather Stehle, Chris Stein, Anna-Catherine Super, Paul Super, Florie Takaki, Rebecca Vial, Ken Voorhis, Karen Wade, and Elden Wanrow.

Additional thanks and acknowledgement go to the members of the Interpretive Program Evaluation Team who, led by team captain Dr. Jean Haskell, came to Great Smoky Mountains National Park in July 1995 to make suggestions for an improved resource education offering. In addition to Dr. Haskell, team members included: Diane Chalfant, Bernie Goodman, Cheryl LaBerge, Rick LoBello, Barbara Maynes, Patti Reilly, and Ron Thoman.

Undoubtedly, others also contributed to the draft and final Plans. If a name has been inadvertently unrecognized, please realize thanks go to these people as well.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Division of Resource Education

# COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCE EDUCATION PLAN

## Section 1: Long-Range Resource Education Plan Years 2001 to 2010

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Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Division of Resource Education

# Long Range Resource Education Plan

**Years 2001-2010**

# **Part 1: Background for Resource Education Planning**

## **Park Enabling Legislation**

When title to lands within the areas hereinafter referred to shall have been vested in the United States in fee simple there are established, dedicated, and set apart as public parks for the benefit and enjoyment of the people, the tract of land in the Blue Ridge, in the State of Virginia, being approximately five hundred and twenty-one thousand acres recommended by the Secretary of the Interior in his report of April 14, 1926, which area, or any part or parts thereof as may be accepted on behalf of the United States in accordance with the provisions hereof, shall be known as the Shenandoah National Park; and the tract of land in the Great Smoky Mountains in the States of North Carolina and Tennessee being approximately seven hundred and four thousand acres, recommended by the Secretary of the Interior in his report of April 14, 1926, which area, or any part or parts thereof as may be accepted on behalf of the United States in accordance with the provisions hereof, shall be known as the Great Smoky Mountains National Park: Provided, That the United States shall not purchase by appropriation of public moneys any land within the aforesaid areas, but that such lands shall be secured by the United States only by public or private donation.

—16 USC 403

An area of four hundred thousand acres within the minimum boundaries of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, acquired one-half by the peoples and States of North Carolina and Tennessee, and the United States, and one-half by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial in memory of Laura Spelman Rockefeller, is established as a completed park for administration, protection, and development by the United States.

—16 USC 403g

# Park Purpose

As short and non-specific as its enabling legislation is, the purpose of Great Smoky Mountains National Park is initially derived from the aforementioned (which is based upon the National Park Service “Organic Act” of 1916). In addition, various reports and statements clearly expressed the intent of the original founders of the Park. As further refined in the Park’s 1998 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) 5-year Strategic Plan Mission Statement, the purpose of Great Smoky Mountains National Park is to preserve its exceptionally diverse natural and cultural resources, and to provide for public benefit from and enjoyment of those resources in ways that will leave them basically unaltered by modern human influences.

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## **Purpose Statement History:**

The genesis and purpose of Great Smoky Mountains National Park is described in a 1924 report by the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission to Interior Secretary Hubert Work. The Commission sought to create a Southern Appalachian National Park because:

*Nature calls us all, and the response of the American people has been expressed in the creation, so far, of 19 national parks. All but one are west of the Mississippi River. The two-thirds of our population living east of the Mississippi has contented itself with a few state parks, not knowing that in the southern Appalachian Ranges there are several areas which fill the definition of a national park, because of beauty and grandeur of scenery, presence of a wonderful variety of trees and plant life, and possibilities of harboring and developing the animal life common in the precolonial days but now nearly extinct.*

The Southern Appalachian National Park Commission further defined its vision of the lands it was seeking for national park designation with six criteria:

- 1) *Mountain scenery with inspiring perspectives and delightful details.*
- 2) *Areas sufficiently extensive and adaptable so that annually millions of visitors might enjoy the benefits of outdoor life and communion with nature without the confusion of overcrowding.*

- 3) *A substantial part to contain forests, shrubs, and flowers, and mountain streams, with picturesque cascades and waterfalls overhung with foliage, all untouched by the hand of man.*
- 4) *Abundant springs and streams available for camps and fishing.*
- 5) *Opportunities for protecting and developing the wild life of the area, and the whole to be a natural museum, preserving outstanding features of the southern Appalachians as they appeared in the early pioneer days.*
- 6) *Accessibility by rail and road.*

On May 22, 1926, Congress authorized the Secretary of Interior to accept lands for eventual establishment of a park "...for the benefit and enjoyment of the people," and specified that management of the lands would be subject to provisions of 39 Stat. 535 which created the National Park Service on August 25, 1916 and stated that the fundamental purpose of national parks was to "...conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein..." for the enjoyment of future generations. In essence, the 1916 Act broadened the purpose of the Park to include protection of its cultural as well as natural values.

On February 6, 1930, North Carolina Governor O. Max Gardner presented Interior Secretary Ray Lyman Wilbur with deeds to almost 159,000 acres of land to form the nucleus of what would become Great Smoky Mountains National Park. In presenting the lands, Gardner described the parcel as follows:

*We are presenting to you "the most massive uplift" in the east, containing 18 peaks (i.e., within the tract originally proposed) towering about 6,000 feet. This particular area, lying in almost equal portions in North Carolina and Tennessee, is unsurpassed for natural beauty and grandeur and contains 1,000,000 acres (i.e., originally proposed) of virgin forests, some of which were full grown when Columbus discovered America.*

*The Great Smoky Mountains National Park, when established, will create in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains a permanent sanctuary for animal and bird life and a botanical garden and arboretum which scientists say will be unequaled in the world.*

*This great undertaking, when accomplished, will preserve the last remnant of the American wilderness of any considerable size east of the Mississippi River, and a great tract of virgin timber which will be allowed to stand in its natural grandeur, safe forever from the usual forces of devastation.*

Secretary Wilbur accepted the lands and acknowledged that they met the six criteria established by the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission. He said that:

*In what is now the Great Smoky Mountains National Park area was found an area measuring up to the requirements of a national park area, because of the "height of mountains, depth of valleys, ruggedness of the area, and the unexampled variety of trees, shrubs, and plants. The region includes Mount Guyot, Mount LeConte, Clingmans Dome, and Gregory Bald and may be extended in several directions to include other splendid mountain regions adjacent thereto."*

In summary, the Park's purpose is to preserve its exceptionally diverse natural and cultural resources, and to provide for public benefit from and enjoyment of those resources in ways which will leave them basically unaltered by modern human influences.



"I beheld with rapture and astonishment a sublimely awful scene of power and magnificence, a world of mountains piled up on mountains."

—William Bartram  
(1776)

# Park Significance

These significance statements summarize the essence of Great Smoky Mountains National Park's importance to national and global natural and cultural resources:

- 1) The Great Smoky Mountains are world-renowned for the diversity of plant and animal species found here. This great variety makes the Park an exemplary outdoor laboratory for the study of the relatively undisturbed native flora, fauna, physical environs and processes of the southern Appalachians.
- 2) The Great Smoky Mountains exhibit the finest example of the ruggedness, magnitude, height, and scenic grandeur of the southern Appalachian Mountains.
- 3) The Park is the largest federally preserved and protected upland area east of the Mississippi River, within easy driving distance for two-thirds of the United States population, offering Park visitors a refuge from the stresses of everyday life.
- 4) Humans have lived in the vicinity of these mountains and used the resources found here for approximately 11,000 to 12,000 years, leaving behind an archeological record that supports this history. Significant human stories include the periods of prehistoric and non-recorded Native American groups, the Cherokee Indians, early European settlement, traditional Southern Appalachian lifestyles, commercial logging, early tourism development, and the park preservation movement and associated consequences (e.g., gateway community development, regional and local transportation issues, etc.).
- 5) The Park preserves an outstanding collection of 19<sup>th</sup> century log structures unparalleled anywhere in the United States.

# Resource Education Themes

The three primary resource education themes listed below are based upon Congressional legislation and the historical actions of the respective state commissions which established Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

**Diversity and Abundance.** The Park's fundamental significance is that it is a sanctuary for a remarkably diverse array of native plants and animals. Today, a large part of Great Smoky Mountains National Park is a relatively undisturbed ecosystem, in sharp contrast to nearly every other land area of the Eastern United States. These undisturbed ecosystem values include natural communities with endemic gene pools providing opportunities for scientific research and education. These natural systems can be used as a barometer of change occurring locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.



**A Continuum of Human Activity.** Great Smoky Mountains National Park offers a unique opportunity to witness the panorama of Southern Appalachian history and culture. Inextricably tied to a sense of place, this history is embodied in a wide array of preserved historic structures, cultural landscapes, cemeteries, archeological sites, museum objects, and archival documents. The Park is the keeper of intangible resources as well; folklore, literature, and music contribute to tell the stories of both Native American and Euro-American peoples. These treasures enable us to connect one generation to another.



Human values placed on this land have changed over time. At first utilitarian and extractive in nature, they have yielded to preservation, recreation, education, and science. Before Euro-American settlement, Native Americans used these mountains for subsistence. Later settlers cleared farms and grazed livestock. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, timber companies held



and logged about three-quarters of this land. By the time the Park was authorized in the 1920s, preservation and recreation values won out over extractive industry and development. In our own day, we have come to recognize the importance of this diverse and relatively undisturbed ecosystem for furthering scientific study and education. The changing landscape embodied in the history of Great Smoky Mountains National Park is central to understanding not only local and regional history, but also the growth of a national environmental awareness.

**A Refuge of Scenic Beauty.** The Park's

800 square miles of massive mountain ridges, deep-cleft valleys, unspoiled streams, endemic life forms, and unique cultural components provide visitors with profound visual and sensory pleasure. The Park provides opportunities for

an increasingly urbanized people to experience sanctuary, wilderness, solitude and respite from the impacts of modern technological society.



# Resource Education Goals

## GPRA 5-year Strategic Plan Goals

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) directs all federal agencies to join the "performance management revolution" that has already been embraced by private industry and many state and international governments. GPRA requires all federal agencies to develop long-term strategic plans and annual performance goals for all major programs, then to measure and report on actual performance, focusing primarily on results, not effort. By tying strategic planning to performance measurement, GPRA creates a framework for linking Servicewide goals with the particular needs and priorities of individual parks and partnership programs. A basic goal of GPRA is to provide more direct links between budget allocations and the actual accomplishment of goals to ensure a greater accountability of funds. GPRA places new management expectations and requirements on federal agencies by creating a framework for more effective planning, budgeting, program evaluation, and fiscal accountability. Establishing an interpretive framework for meeting park goals set under GPRA is central to this planning process.

Park staff and management have identified the following long-term GPRA goals to guide an effective resource education program:

**Park Long-term Goal:** By September 30, 2005, 97% of visitors to GRSM are satisfied with appropriate Park facilities, services, and recreational opportunities.

**Park Long-term Goal:** By September 30, 2005, 86% of GRSM visitors understand the significance of the Park.

**Park Long-term Goal:** By September 30, 2005, 70% of 1000 students participating in NPS formal education programs understand America's cultural and natural heritage as preserved by the National Park Service and its programs.

## **Park Visitor Goals**

Based on the Park's legislation, purpose, significance, themes, Statement for Management, General Management Plan, Interpretive Prospectus, and GPRA 5-year Strategic Plan's goals, both before and during their visit to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, visitors will have opportunities, through signing, facilities, resource education media, and personal services, to:

1. Have a safe and enjoyable recreational visit, being adequately informed of potential safety hazards, without impairing the natural and cultural values of the Park.
2. Understand their role in the preservation of Park resources and respect the natural processes at work in the Park and at home.
3. Access Park facilities and programs without encountering barriers.
4. Receive adequate orientation and information regarding Park resources, facilities, activities, and services, as well as the same for other nearby sites.
5. Receive resource education messages about the Park through a variety of quality services, and appropriate well-maintained media that accommodate diverse learning styles and cultural traditions.
6. Talk with a ranger, volunteer, or cooperating association employee in a visitor center.
7. Participate in seasonal resource education (including environmental education) programs led by park rangers, volunteers, other Park staff, or cooperators.
8. Purchase a wide range of quality, park-related educational items at fair market value sold in well-managed and maintained bookstores.
9. Recognize that Great Smoky Mountains is a unit of the National Park System and gain an appreciation for the NPS and its mission.
10. Learn information and stories associated with major resource education themes to the depth they choose, and through a variety of media.
11. Be inspired to protect Park resources and become better stewards of the Earth.
12. Recognize that their behavior (both inside and outside the Park) can have positive or negative impacts on Park resources.

13. Receive a high level of service from National Park Service employees, volunteers, and cooperators.
14. Gain an understanding of the Park's ecosystem and biotic communities, and their constituent elements, and the interrelatedness of such systems through the Park's resource education programs.
15. Understand the significance of the Park's resources and resource management programs, support the need for preservation and research, and appreciate the relevance of the Park story to the world today.
16. Have experiences that challenge them to consider their land use values.
17. Learn how different cultures have interacted with the Park's resources.
18. Participate in a continuum of educational opportunities, which include elementary and secondary school programs (both day-use and residential), public programs, and university-sponsored programs.

# Park Visitor Experience Statement

During the course of their visit to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, it is expected that visitors – through interacting with non-personal media and/or participating in personal services programs – will experience the following:

*By visiting Great Smoky Mountains National Park, visitors will realize that GRSM is part of the US National Park System and understand the reasons why this System was established. Visitors will become aware of the rules and regulations that govern the Park and have a safe and enjoyable visit by learning about the educational and recreational opportunities that exist here. Through resource education programs, Park visitors will gain knowledge of the resource issues facing the Park and gain an understanding of the Park's significance and resource education themes. Resource education programs and media will help Park visitors develop a sense of stewardship and protection for the Park's resources. This sense of stewardship will be translated into these visitors' everyday actions at home, including support for management actions affecting the Park.*

## Issues and Influences on Resource Education

Issues and influences affecting the resource education program fall into four categories:

- **Servicewide Initiatives**
- **External Influences**
- **Resource-based Issues**
- **Internal Issues**

Resource education planning and implementation must have the flexibility to respond to changing paradigms within the Park and NPS, and to encompass new and positive contributions from cooperators on an opportunity basis which include established themes and goals. The resource education program at Great Smoky Mountains National Park will be a proactive, management tool for dealing with critical issues and promoting public understanding of Park policies.

## **Servicewide Initiatives**

The National Park Service's 1997 Strategic Plan, mandated by the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), established a number of long term Mission Goals to be achieved by September 30, 2002. Among its goals and initiatives, the National Park Service emphasized the following areas of Servicewide priorities:

- Preservation of Natural and Cultural Resources (the Natural and Cultural Resource Challenges)
- Natural and Cultural Resource Inventories
- Visitor Safety and Satisfaction with Park Facilities
- Visitor Understanding and Appreciation of Park Resources
- Visitor Demographics
- Workforce Diversity
- Employee Competencies Training / Certification
- Employee Safety
- Cost-Effectiveness
- Partnerships (including Community Groups, Non-Profit Organizations, Other Government Agencies, Corporate Sponsors, and Academic Institutions)
- Education Outreach
- Scientific and Historical Research
- International Assistance

In addition, the Director's 1999 Natural Resources Challenge is a Servicewide initiative with implications for resource education, including learning center money.

## **External Influences**

The National Park Service faces numerous challenges from outside the agency in reaching its goals. Likewise, Great Smoky Mountains National Park must deal with influences outside park boundaries that affect the Park's ability to accomplish its goals, including:

- Air quality: air pollution sources located both near the Park and great distances away.
- Tourism growth, urban sprawl, and other developments in gateway communities.
- Traffic congestion on roads leading into and within the Park.
- Political pressure on the management of certain aspects of Park operations (e.g., Newfound Gap Road, entrance fees, Elkmont, the Road to Nowhere).
- Complex relations with other governments (i.e., Eastern Band of the Cherokee) and gateway communities adjoining and/or near the Park such as Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, Townsend, Cosby, Cherokee, and Bryson City.
- Potential introduction of exotic plant and animal species from sources outside the Park.
- Public pressure for management actions which may not be in the best interests of the Park's resources.
- Agreements with educational institutions (such as the Smoky Mountain Field School of the University of Tennessee).

## **Resource-based Issues**

The Park faces continual resource protection issues. Park management relies on scientific research to make informed decisions in accordance with National Park Service policies.

As research information becomes available, GRSM's resource education staff can help the public understand these issues and garner support for Park management actions that affect:

- Air quality.

- Plant/animal-related issues (such as black bear, brook trout, introduction of extirpated species).
- Exotic plant/animal-related issues (such as feral hogs, balsam woolly adelgid, rainbow and brown trout, 300 non-native plant species).
- Cultural resource issues (such as historic structures in Elkmont, Cataloochee, and Cades Cove, archeological surveys).
- Law enforcement and maintenance issues (such as poaching, unsafe recreational activities, road and trail closures).

### **Internal Issues**

These issues include all those related to the internal workings of the Park, and the NPS Southeast Regional Office, NPS Washington Office, and other federal and state offices as they relate to the Park.

- Inter- and Intra-Divisional Cooperation/Competition and the prioritization of limited fiscal and human resources.
- Public Affairs and the role resource education plays in providing information to Park constituencies.
- Paperwork required by the Park, NPS Southeast Regional Office, and NPS Washington Office.
- Interpretive training requirements from the Mather Training Center.
- Work of the Federal Highway Administration, EPA, TVA, USGS, USFWS, BIA, NOAA, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and other similar agencies.



## **Park Visitor Profiles**

Great Smoky Mountains National Park is the most heavily visited National Park in the National Park System, annually receiving approximately 10 million visitors. The results of a 1996 survey conducted by the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho, covering both summer and fall visitation described the Great Smoky Mountains National Park visitor profile. (See the Resource Education Database)

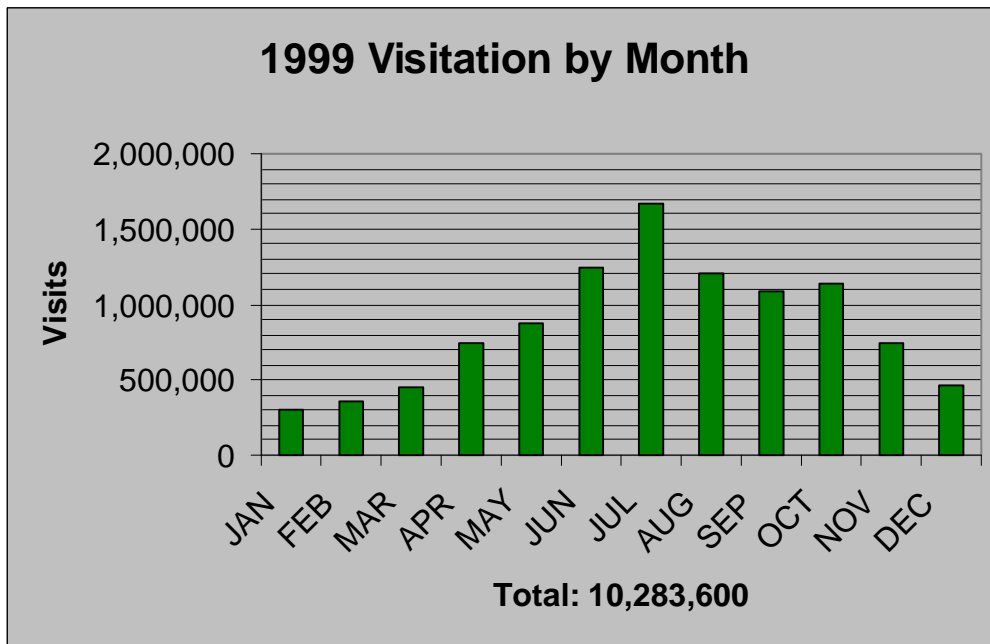
### **Park Visitor Groups: Demographics, Destinations and Length of Stay**

The following is a summary of the 1996 survey. Tennessee and North Carolina provide 24% of the Park's visitors. International visitors comprise only 2% of the total. Cades Cove is the most popular destination, visited by 52% of respondents. Sugarlands Visitor Center and Newfound Gap were next at 36% and 35% respectively. About two-thirds of summer visitors spend one day in the Park, while 30% spend one to five days in the Park. Family groups comprise 77% of summer visitation and 70% of fall visitors. Over half of the visitors chose the Park as their primary destination. Over the five years preceding the survey, 65% were repeat summer visitors compared to 79% of fall visitors. Almost half of the summer visitors (49%) stayed in the area from two to four days.

### **Perceived Value of Resource Education Services**

A total of 1,191 questionnaires were distributed in the 1996 survey. Visitors returned 919 questionnaires for an overall response rate of 77%. According to the survey, the most used information services were the Park brochure/map (669 respondents out of 919 returned questionnaires, or 74%), visitor center information desk (46%), and Park newspaper (38%). Visitors stated that the most important services were ranger-led walks/talks (94% of 37 respondents) and self-guided trails (91% of 221 respondents). The best quality services were ranger-led walks/talks (97% of 36 respondents) and visitor center staff (92% of 191 respondents).

## Park Visitation Statistics



**The visitor experience is affected by overcrowding in some areas.**



## RECREATIONAL VISITS BY MONTH (PEOPLE)

|        | 1988*     | 1989**    | 1990      | 1991      | 1992      | 1993      |
|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| JAN    | 169,020   | 213,529   | 189,278   | 192,460   | 284,355   | 339,368   |
| FEB    | 175,550   | 199,584   | 234,866   | 233,412   | 300,251   | 295,074   |
| MAR    | 309,014   | 340,842   | 373,267   | 347,276   | 372,618   | 293,778   |
| APR    | 504,296   | 506,690   | 596,641   | 585,688   | 645,468   | 595,500   |
| MAY    | 664,326   | 812,193   | 626,377   | 734,033   | 761,708   | 771,472   |
| JUN    | 1,245,652 | 1,195,096 | 1,061,642 | 1,035,972 | 1,028,665 | 1,081,371 |
| JUL    | 1,669,578 | 1,339,906 | 1,394,539 | 1,409,216 | 1,442,585 | 1,558,223 |
| AUG    | 1,470,611 | 1,230,564 | 1,157,840 | 1,311,019 | 1,169,735 | 1,335,131 |
| SEP    | 986,914   | 809,478   | 913,993   | 905,908   | 923,424   | 1,004,463 |
| OCT    | 969,400   | 1,076,715 | 888,411   | 1,141,505 | 1,184,533 | 1,165,569 |
| NOV    | 389,500   | 418,785   | 467,715   | 454,762   | 471,507   | 500,087   |
| DEC    | 215,300   | 190,171   | 247,200   | 303,208   | 346,841   | 343,812   |
| TOTALS | 8,786,147 | 8,336,922 | 8,151,769 | 8,654,459 | 8,931,690 | 9,283,848 |
|        | (-14%)    | (-5%)     | (-2%)     | (+6%)     | (+3%)     | (+4%)     |

|        | 1994      | 1995      | 1996      | 1997      | 1998        | 1999       |
|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| JAN    | 238,675   | 264,477   | 230,200   | 238,794   | 263,019     | 302,467    |
| FEB    | 301,158   | 277,225   | 380,652   | 338,694   | 325,268     | 352,912    |
| MAR    | 413,675   | 445,804   | 387,653   | 483,392   | 472,838     | 454,227    |
| APR    | 617,357   | 678,827   | 651,175   | 652,728   | 696,321     | 745,755    |
| MAY    | 709,572   | 691,175   | 774,384   | 764,022   | 847,434     | 877,679    |
| JUN    | 958,633   | 1,165,049 | 1,137,719 | 1,091,996 | 1,145,571   | 1,250,891  |
| JUL    | 1,311,959 | 1,351,579 | 1,394,781 | 1,743,996 | 1,672,298   | 1,674,268  |
| AUG    | 1,211,814 | 1,171,837 | 1,156,115 | 1,362,373 | 1,184,421   | 1,206,176  |
| SEP    | 873,884   | 953,804   | 970,448   | 1,029,760 | 1,047,939   | 1,081,556  |
| OCT    | 1,069,146 | 1,070,438 | 1,182,350 | 1,181,685 | 1,179,433   | 1,136,548  |
| NOV    | 489,308   | 532,510   | 552,780   | 624,029   | 729,488     | 741,325    |
| DEC    | 423,191   | 477,697   | 447,413   | 453,605   | 425,366     | 459,796    |
| TOTALS | 8,618,462 | 9,080,422 | 9,265,670 | 9,965,074 | 9,989,396   | 10,283,600 |
|        | (-7%)     | (+5%)     | (+2%)     | (+8%)     | (no change) | (+3%)      |

## RECREATIONAL ROAD USE BY YEAR (CARS)

|        | 1988*     | 1989**    | 1990      | 1991      | 1992      | 1993      |
|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| TOTALS | 3,078,375 | 3,240,749 | 3,470,988 | 3,599,491 | 3,740,021 | 3,884,410 |
|        | (+5%)     | (+7%)     | (+7%)     | (-3%)     | (+4%)     | (+4%)     |

|        | 1994      | 1995      | 1996      | 1997      | 1998        | 1999      |
|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| TOTALS | 3,666,135 | 3,820,827 | 3,904,876 | 4,192,958 | 4,211,551   | 4,339,178 |
|        | (-6%)     | (+5%)     | (+2%)     | (+7%)     | (no change) | (+3%)     |

\*Starting on January 1, 1988, the method for computing recreational visits to the Park was changed. The multiplier used to determine the estimated number of visitors per car was changed from the previously used 3.1/3.5 persons year round (weekdays/weekends) to seasonal adjustments of 3.5 during June-Sept.; and 2.44, October-May. \*\*Then again on January 1, 1989, the multiplier was readjusted to 2.81, June-September; and 2.5, October-May. The Park also began to deduct a factor for the number of visitors who leave the Park and re-enter the same day.

# Existing Conditions

## Resource Education Facilities

In Great Smoky Mountains National Park there are a variety of existing facilities and services that are devoted to providing resource education services. In addition, there are a variety of facilities outside the Park that serve a similar function.

| Facility/Service           | Comments  |
|----------------------------|---|
| Oconaluftee Visitor Center | Information, resource education, orientation services, school programs, exhibits, bookstore. Staffed by National Park Rangers and GSM Natural History Association employees, and NPS volunteers. Built in 1940. Receives .5 million visitors annually. Staff rating: poor exhibits (as of this writing), excellent programs and information. NOTE: a new Discovery Center is scheduled for completion and installation in this facility by 2001. There exists an opportunity for the GSM Natural History Association to expand its operations in this facility. A new Oconaluftee Visitor Center has been on the drawing boards for the past decade. Potential line-item funding in FY2004. |
| Sugarlands Visitor Center  | Information, resource education, orientation services, school programs, exhibits, theatre with Park movie, bookstore. Staffed by National Park Rangers and GSM Natural History Association employees, and NPS volunteers. Dedicated in 1960. Exhibits completed in 1985. Receives .8 million visitors annually. New film debuted in November 1999. National Park Exhibit called "Experience Your America" and All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory Exhibit scheduled for completion and installation by 2001. Staff rating: excellent, both facility and programs.   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Cades Cove Visitor Center (at Cable Mill)                            | Limited information/orientation services, school programs, bookstore, museum exhibits. Staffed by GSM Natural History Association employees and NPS volunteers (with occasional National Park Rangers). Location half-way around the Cades Cove Loop Road. Receives .4 million visitors annually. Staff rating: Inadequate facility to meet visitor demand, location should be before the Loop Road. Excellent programs offered in the Cable Mill area. |
| Other NHA Bookstores in and outside Park                             | Gatlinburg Welcome Center (includes exhibits) staffed part-time by National Park Rangers and full-time by GSM Natural History Association employees. The following facilities are staffed by GSMNHA: Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont located in the Park; the Townsend (TN) Visitors Center; Smoky Mountain Visitor Center at the Tennessee Smokies baseball stadium, Sevierville, TN.   |
| Great Smoky Mountains Institute (Tremont). New Board formed in 2000. | Residential (3-11 days) environmental education center New Board took complete control of the facility on January 1, 2001. Staff rating: facilities need improvement and expansion, excellent programs.   |
| Palmer House in Cataloochee Valley                                   | Seasonal film and year-round exhibits. Staff rating: fair.  |
| Amphitheaters/Campfire Circles                                       | Evening programs presented by National Park Rangers at six of the Park's ten developed campgrounds (i.e., Elkmont, Cades Cove, Smokemont, Cosby, Deep Creek, and Balsam Mountain). Staff rating: facilities in need of repair or replacement, excellent programs.   |
| Historic Mingus Mill and Cable Mill                                  | Operable gristmills used for resource education demonstrations, sales and exhibits. Staffed by GSM Natural History Association employees (millers). Used by NPS for Parks as Classrooms programs. Staff rating: mills in continuous need of maintenance and repair, excellent opportunity for visitors to interact with staff.  |
| Auto Tours   | 5 self-guided auto driving tours with accompanying sales publications (Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail; Cades Cove Loop Road; Newfound Gap Road; Cataloochee and Tremont). Staff rating: very good.   |

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Wayside Exhibits                  | 35 existing fiberglass embedded exhibits, several new porcelain enamel exhibits installed at Newfound Gap in 1999/2000. Parkwide wayside exhibit plan calls for 155 new porcelain enamel exhibits (plan approved in 1994). Staff rating: new exhibits are excellent, old exhibits need to be enhanced and/or replaced. Old exhibits are in poor to good condition.   |
| Bulletin Boards                   | At a variety of locations. Designed to provide after-hours information, safety messages, and for used at remote locations. Bulletin Board system revised in new wayside exhibit plan. Staff rating: very good.   |
| Self-guided Nature/History Trails | 12 trails interpreted by GSM Natural History Association produced folders. Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail is fully accessible. Staff rating: very good.  |
| Mountain Farm Museum              | Collection of 19th century Appalachian farm buildings interpreted with wayside exhibits, a self-guiding brochure, cultural demonstrations, school group programs, and National Park Ranger talks. Staff rating: very good.   |
| Cades Cove Historic Structures    | Collection of historic farm buildings, houses and churches interpreted with publications, ranger/VIP talks, demonstrations, and school programs. Staff rating: very good, but need more personal services interpretation.  |
| Park Library and Archives         | 6,750 books, 300 oral history tapes, over 70 linear feet of archival materials, and 6,000 slides. Staffed by National Park Curator and GSM Natural History Association funded librarian. Staff rating: excellent resource, but limited space.  |
| Gateway Regional Visitor Center   | Partnership visitor center located in Knoxville, TN, operated for the City of Knoxville by the Knoxville Convention and Visitors Bureau. Contains natural and cultural exhibits and orientation information on GRSM and other regional NPS areas. Staff rating: excellent facility that is underutilized by a multitude of audiences ranging from the local population to school and community groups to the regional visitor. |
| Internet Website                  | One of the most visited in the National Park Service. Provides basic Park information, as well as in-depth treatment of critical issues. In 1999, a National Park Ranger from the Division of Resource Education was dedicated to the development of the Park's website. A new website was developed by a private contractor which is updated on a regular basis by this park ranger. Staff rating: good.                      |

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Travelers Information System (TIS) | A system of radio transmitters broadcasting local information on facilities, hazards and road conditions located at park entrances, along the Foothills Parkway, and heavily used areas. Staff rating: poor, needs to be updated with new equipment and messages. |
|------------------------------------|---|

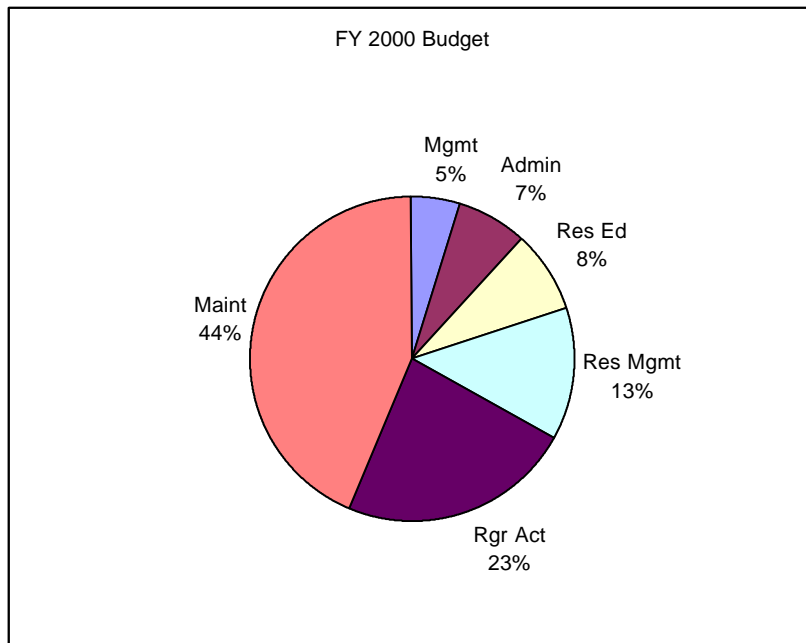
## Resource Education Facility and Media Conditions

Overall, most visitors to Great Smoky Mountains National Park are satisfied with the Park's facilities (reported by GPRA Visitor Survey Card response, 2000: 93% satisfaction).

The Visitor Survey Card responses are valuable in giving Park management a snapshot of how Park visitors perceive facility conditions. However, it is important to keep in mind that Park professionals are trained to look at facilities in a somewhat different light than many of the Park's visitors.

A condition assessment of facilities (as related to structures) is recommended at this time. There has been no in-depth assessment of structures since the early 1980s when the Maintenance Management System was implemented, and those assessments are questionable today.

## Park Budget Percentages, by Division





**Current Resource Education Staffing Levels** (as of October 2000)

| <b>Position Title/Location</b>             | <b>Status</b> | <b>Grade</b> | <b>FTE</b> |
|--|---------------|--------------|------------|
| <b>Headquarters</b>                        |               |              |            |
| Chief, Resource Education                  | Permanent     | GS-14        | 1.0        |
| Secretary (office Automation)              | Permanent     | GS-06        | 1.0        |
| Staff Park Ranger (Non-Personal Services)  | Permanent     | GS-12        | 1.0        |
| Park Ranger (Non-Personal Services)        | Permanent     | GS-11        | 1.0        |
| Park Ranger (Non-Personal Services)        | Permanent     | GS-09        | 1.0        |
| <b>North District (Sugarlands)</b>         |               |              |            |
| Supervisory Park Ranger                    | Permanent     | GS-11        | 1.0        |
| Park Ranger                                | Permanent     | GS-09        | 1.0        |
| Park Ranger                                | Perm., STF    | GS-7/9       | 0.8        |
| Park Guide                                 | Perm., STF    | GS-3/4       | 0.8        |
| Park Ranger                                | Seasonal      | GS-05        | 0.5        |
| Park Ranger                                | Seasonal      | GS-05        | 0.5        |
| Park Ranger                                | Seasonal      | GS-05        | 0.5        |
| Park Ranger                                | Seasonal      | GS-05        | 0.5        |
| Park Ranger                                | Seasonal      | GS-05        | 0.5        |
| <b>South District (Oconaluftee)</b>        |               |              |            |
| Supervisory Park Ranger                    | Permanent     | GS-11        | 1.0        |
| Park Ranger                                | Permanent     | GS-09        | 1.0        |
| Park Ranger                                | Permanent     | GS-09        | 1.0        |
| Park Ranger                                | Perm., STF    | GS-09        | 0.8        |
| Park Ranger                                | Perm., STF    | GS-5/7/9     | 0.8        |
| Park Ranger                                | Seasonal      | GS-05        | 0.5        |
| Park Ranger                                | Seasonal      | GS-05        | 0.5        |
| <b>Cades Cove District</b>                 |               |              |            |
| Supervisory Park Ranger                    | Permanent     | GS-11        | 1.0        |
| Park Ranger                                | Permanent     | GS-7/9       | 1.0        |
| Park Ranger                                | Perm., STF    | GS-09        | 0.8        |
| Park Ranger (Vacant)                       | Perm., STF    | GS-5/7/9     | 0.5        |
| Park Ranger                                | Seasonal      | GS-05        | 0.5        |
| <b>Education (Parks As Classrooms)</b>     |               |              |            |
| Supervisory Park Ranger                    | Permanent     | GS-12        | 1.0        |
| Park Ranger (North District, RM&S liaison) | Permanent     | GS-09        | 1.0        |
| Park Ranger (North District, Coordinator)  | Permanent     | GS-09        | 1.0        |
| Park Ranger (North District)               | Permanent     | GS-09        | 1.0        |
| Park Ranger (North District)               | Seasonal      | GS-05        | 0.5        |
| Park Ranger (South District)               | Perm., STF    | GS-09        | 0.8        |

## Part II. Resource Education Program Description

Part II describes the mix of both: A. Personal Services, and B. Non-Personal Services, which are needed to achieve the Park's management objectives and resource education goals. This part outlines the *existing condition* for various resource education media AND meets the requirements of NPS policy by identifying the "...level of interpretation that is **core** to the mission of the Park." In addition to identifying the **core** elements of the Park's resource education program, this section also builds upon the *visitor experience statement* described in Part I by identifying a "*Vision*" for the Division of Resource Education at Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

"The National Park Service will provide opportunities for all segments of the population to have memorable experiences through interpretation and education programs in all parks. The experiences will instill an understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of the significance of the parks and their resources. They will also encourage the development of personal stewardship ethics and public support for preserving park resources."  
— *National Park Service Management Policies*, 1988.

In this part, the most effective resource education media and methods to achieve established goals are identified together with any improvements needed to meet the desired level. The role of partners in providing resource education services is also described under each appropriate program description. In addition, a condition assessment is presented under each resource education program description.

### A. Personal Services

Personal services, such as staffed information desks, guided walks, evening campground programs, cultural demonstrations, and environmental education programs often provide direct contact with some of the most vocal and supportive segments of the visiting public. The National Park Service tradition of providing personal resource



education services is the foundation of the public perception of parks and the “ranger image.” While the single most effective communicator of the Park's compelling stories has traditionally been the uniformed park ranger sharing "the Park story" at the actual site of the story, partners are playing an increasingly important role, directly or indirectly, in providing **core** resource education services throughout the Park.

In FY 1999, the Division of Resource Education presented 1,098 personal services programs to 61,122 visitors. Personal services are the focus of GRSM's Long-term GPRA Goal which states “By September 30, 2005, 86% of GRSM visitors will understand the significance of the Park.” Personal services are also closely tied to GPRA goals for customer satisfaction and visitor safety.

Personal services have traditionally been directed to those segments of the visiting public who take advantage of recreational facilities such as campgrounds and picnic areas, visitor centers, and museum exhibits. Here visitors may participate in ranger or volunteer-led walks and talks, view demonstrations, and obtain information not available elsewhere. These facilities attract large numbers of visitors, many of whom seek in-depth knowledge about specific aspects of the Park. However, an even larger number of visitors are not aware of, or do not take advantage of, these facilities and either drive through the Park without stopping, or head directly for scenic spots such as Clingmans Dome, Newfound Gap or Cades Cove. This situation is compounded by the absence of entrance stations where, in many parks, visitors first receive a map and basic orientation information. The scenic spots listed above often lend themselves to informal resource education services by a uniformed park ranger or volunteer who can talk about critical resource issues such as bear-human interactions, cultural resource preservation, air quality, and native/exotic species management. The use of uniformed rangers or volunteers at attended stations or on roving assignments in heavily used areas such as scenic overlooks provides an additional opportunity to convey mission-oriented messages to new audiences.

## Personal Services - Existing Conditions and Core Program

Categories A.1 through A.6 (below) describe the **existing conditions** and **core program** for each of the respective personal services programs. The partnerships involved in each category are identified, as well as **planning and research needs** and a ***vision for the future***.

### A.1. Visitor Centers – Existing Conditions



Three visitor centers operate within the Park: Sugarlands and Oconaluftee at major entrances, and Cades Cove, half-way around the 11-mile loop road in the Park's most heavily visited area. Daily operation of these three visitor centers (with the concomitant presentation of formal and informal personal services programs from them) forms the basis of GRSM's **core** resource education program (see below). In addition, there is also a staffed National Park Service information desk at the Gatlinburg Welcome Center located outside the Park along the Spur (U.S. Highway 441/321) between Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge.

The Gateway Regional Visitor Center is a cooperative effort with other national parks (located in the Knoxville region), Knoxville City Government, Knoxville Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the U.S. Department of Energy. It contains exhibits and other media highlighting area NPS sites and other attractions. By providing information about alternative recreational opportunities on regional public lands, the Gateway Regional Visitor Center may help ease pressure on GRSM resources from overcrowding and incompatible uses.

The Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association (GSMNHA) also operates bookstores at the visitor center in Townsend, TN; and at the Smoky Mountain Visitor Center at the Tennessee Smokies (minor league baseball) Stadium in Sevierville. While no NPS staff are assigned to these locations, the GSMNHA employees operating these bookstores provide personal services orientation and information as well as contribute to non-personal services by the sale and distribution of Park publications. In the future (perhaps as early as 2001), it is anticipated that the Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association will seek out a location in North Carolina (e.g., Bryson City, Dillsboro, Asheville, etc.) where they can collaborate on a joint bookstore/office.

Visitor Center operations are critical to achieving Park management goals. Each year over 850,000 visitors stop at Sugarlands, one of the most visited NPS visitor centers in the United States, if not the world. The visitation statistics at the other Park visitor centers are: Oconaluftee, 500,000 visitors; and Cades Cove, 400,000 visitors. The Gatlinburg Welcome Center receives about 340,000 visitors annually.

During its first year of operation in 1999, the Gateway Regional Visitor Center received over 35,000 visitors. Although this new visitor center has the potential to reach a large number of people, it has not been successful at attracting visitors because of lack of directional signs on main roads. (It should be noted that until such time that adequate directional signs are put in place, it is anticipated that the Gateway Regional Visitor Center will continue to operate below its potential visitor capacity.)

The three existing visitor centers located within GRSM form the *core* of a “visitor center personal services” program at the Park. These visitor centers provide current and reliable information, orientation, and resource education services in response to customer needs. Park staff, volunteers, and GSMNHA employees are able to take advantage of even brief visitor contacts by imparting messages of resource appreciation, preservation and safe use. They also serve as the Park’s primary contact point for nearby communities, and perform a

vital role in interpreting Park and Servicewide programs and policies to local individuals, businesses and organizations. The centers are a source of assistance to Park visitors who need help with emergency situations including medical emergencies, disabled vehicles, accidents and other incidents. Visitor centers are recognized nationally by the visiting public and, in many ways, serve as our corporate identity. They represent a major financial and staff investment by management, and are the most effective way to orient, inform, and educate the visiting public about the resources that parks protect and preserve for future generations. Traditionally, these centers also contain museum exhibits, audiovisual programs, publications, and bookstores (each of these functions will be discussed under Non-Personal Services – below).

Park visitor centers are operated using a combination of NPS and GSMNHA staff, and volunteers. Uniformed park rangers usually maintain a presence during all hours of operation at both Sugarlands and Oconaluftee. NHA sales personnel staff the Cades Cove Visitor Center, with rangers and volunteers helping out when available. (It is noted that this center has limited effectiveness for visitor orientation because it is located halfway around the Cades Cove Loop Road. Most visitors know where they are going before they reach this center. Further, it is not of sufficient size to contain cultural and/or natural history exhibits that help visitors appreciate site values. Although *core* to GRSM's visitor center operations, this center's size and location are woefully inadequate to meet current and projected visitor needs).

The Gatlinburg Welcome Center's NPS desk has a uniformed park ranger on duty from June through October, five days a week, eight hours a day, under a partnership funding agreement with the City of Gatlinburg. It is also staffed year round by the GSMNHA.



Volunteers in Parks (VIPs) continue to provide much needed basic information and orientation services for visitors throughout the Park. They also provide the only staffing available to visitors seeking to plan backcountry trips in the Park (note: the backcountry function is managed by Ranger Activities staff). In the

winter of 1999, the Division of Resource Education implemented an aggressive VIP recruitment effort to seek out qualified volunteers to work in the Park's visitor centers. Today, these volunteers are key to the proper staffing and functioning of these facilities. In two years, the program has reduced NPS costs for staffing information desks by 60%, thus allowing paid staff to work on other priority projects.

## **A.1 Visitor Centers – Core Program**

GRSM's three (3) visitor centers (i.e., Sugarlands, Oconaluftee, and Cades Cove) are *core* to the resource education program at the Park. These centers currently serve approximately two million visitors each year (or, one-fifth of the visitors to the Park). However, there are several problems associated with their size and location. The Oconaluftee Visitor Center is too small to adequately accommodate visitation and exhibit needs. The Cades Cove Visitor Center, which functions as a bookstore rather than a visitor center, is too small for visitation and exhibit needs. It is also located in the wrong place, half way around the Loop Road, instead of at the beginning of the Loop Road or before the Loop (including the possibility of somewhere outside the Park in Townsend, Tennessee). Any discussion about transportation alternatives for Cades Cove should also include this glaring visitor services deficiency.

As already stated, GRSM's visitor centers are expensive to operate because they are staff-intensive, require daily and long-term maintenance, and utility costs. However, daily, year-round-operation of these facilities clearly demonstrates Park management's commitment to provide basic information/orientation/resource education services from these facilities. Due to the high numbers of Park visitors that frequent these centers, and the fact that GRSM's visitor season is now a year-round season, it is necessary to staff the Park's three (3) facilities with permanent, year-round park rangers/resource educators. At present, permanent staffing levels (see above) in the North, South, and Cades Cove Districts are inadequate to provide visitor center coverage year-round and still provide personal service programs and/or perform work on non-personal service media projects. Staffing assistance provided by GSMNHA and volunteers allows park rangers to work sporadically on special projects and present a minimal

personal services program of walks, talks, outreach, and school programs throughout most of the year.

To allow permanent park rangers to get out into the Park where the actual Park resources are located, and where visitors generally want to be, GRSM hires seasonal park rangers/park guides to perform many similar functions during the busiest times of the year (summer and fall). Although the actual number of seasonal park rangers/park guides vary slightly from year to year based on the Division's budget and ability to hire qualified employees, the present number of seasonal employees hired (see above) represents the *core* number needed to adequately supplement the permanent workforce in visitor center operations alone. Personal services programming is another matter altogether and is discussed below. With permanent and seasonal employees combined, GRSM is currently able to carry out a *core* operation for visitor centers.

### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ For much of the year, the Oconaluftee Visitor Center is inadequate for visitor needs primarily because of space limitations. More space is needed for orientation, exhibits, an AV experience, and supportive GSMNHA sales items. Ten years ago, planning for a new Oconaluftee Visitor Center occurred, but was never implemented. Changes in compliance requirements, visitation, and tribal relations have impacts on this decade-old planning effort. Configuration and location should be reconsidered. Construction of a new Oconaluftee Visitor Center is currently listed in line item construction for 2004.
- ◆ Lack of a year-round visitor center in an appropriate location within/near Cades Cove. A Development Concept Plan (or amended General Management Plan) should be completed for Cades Cove. To date, the Park has been successful in obtaining some funds to plan for improvements in traffic circulation and address other problems including visitor safety and resource protection. An appropriately located visitor center would provide a means to tell the Cades Cove story, increase safety awareness, and



promote resource stewardship to the two million annual visitors to Cades Cove. The Park has made a request to amend the General Management Plan to reflect this need.

- ◆ Lack of adequate space in existing Park visitor centers to optimize the presentation and sale of educational materials specific to Park themes. At the Sugarlands Visitor Center, this problem has been solved. In the fall of 1999 the current bookstore location was moved into the former theatre location, providing a five-fold increase in sales space and a more comfortable browsing experience for Park visitors.

### ***Vision for the Future***

- ◆ Develop a short-range and long-range media plan for the Oconaluftee Visitor Center. By 2001, install a Biodiversity Discovery Center in this facility.
- ◆ Continue to request funds for a new visitor center at Oconaluftee (long-range).
- ◆ Ensure that funding requests are consistent with fiscal realities and reflective of any partnership opportunities.
- ◆ In close coordination with other Park divisions (especially maintenance), develop a strategy for funding and preparation of an amendment to the Park's General Management Plan for Cades Cove, with appropriate public input.
- ◆ Continue to request City of Gatlinburg funding for the seasonal uniformed ranger assigned to the Gatlinburg Welcome Center.
- ◆ Expansion of partner-staffed contact points in surrounding North Carolina communities, potentially extending as far away as Asheville. This expansion will be similar to what has occurred in Tennessee.

- ◆ Lack of orientation and plan for visitor use in Cataloochee. Some of this has been addressed in the approved Cataloochee DCP, but no funding has been obtained at this point. In coordination with other Park divisions, develop funding strategy for DCP implementation.
- ◆ Insure accessibility for all audiences.

## **A.2. Ranger-led Walks and Talks – Existing Conditions**

Ranger-led walks, provided seasonally on several trails, are traditional resource education activities, which the visiting public has come to anticipate when visiting the Park. Person-to-person interaction, at the site of the story, can be one of the most powerful forms of resource education. Providing uniformed visibility in heavily used areas, even among non-participating visitors can increase interest in what parks represent and also promote safe, non-impacting visits. Those conducting guided walks can best highlight examples of the biological and cultural diversity of the Park, while promoting the activity which best showcases such examples. In FY 1998, 77 different types of walks and talks were offered to 50,500 visitors. Due to a greater emphasis placed on roving contacts in FY 1999, fewer visitors (32,670) attended what was still a wide variety of walks and talks. These included new (FY'97) ranger-led hayrides in Cades Cove, a fee demonstration project which is GRSM's first venture into pay-as-you-go resource education programs.

## **A.2 Ranger-led Walks and Talks – Core Program**

Like many national parks, GRSM's *core* ranger-led walks and talks program consists of rangers/volunteers presenting regularly scheduled programs at the most heavily visited, developed areas of the Park (generally centering around the Park's visitor centers, three (3) most popular campgrounds, and Cades Cove). Schedules vary according to season, ranger/volunteer availability, and visitation. Although it would be desirable to be able to

present ranger-led walks and talks in all developed areas of the Park, and even into some of the backcountry areas, this is neither practical, fiscally responsible, or *core*. If available, additional resource education rangers could easily be deployed to other developed and/or heavily used backcountry areas of the Park (e.g., Balsam Mountain, Deep Creek, Twentymile, Greenbrier, Cataloochee, The Chimneys, Alum Cave Bluffs, Grotto and Laurel Falls, etc.) to provide visitor services in these areas.

While it is true that visitors have come to expect ranger-led walks when they visit national parks throughout the Nation, at GRSM, the numbers of visitors who actually participate on ranger-led walks, while comparable to statistics reported at other parks, is very small (approximately 0.5%) compared to the total number of Park visitors (i.e., approximately 50,000 out of 10,000,000 visitors attend personal services programs). Presenting ranger-led walks is a large investment of staff time and financial resources.

For practical purposes ranger-led walks and talks are folded into visitor center operations, inasmuch as the same park rangers and volunteers who operate the Visitor Centers also present the programs. At a minimum, popular ranger or volunteer-led walks and talks should always be offered to Park visitors because, indeed, nothing can replace the personal touch of a ranger or volunteer engaging visitors in conversation about the Park's resources. However, the number of these activities presented throughout the seasons should be based on available visitor center staff (see above), visitation, and professional assessments of past participation and effectiveness.

### **Research/Planning Needed**

Like other resource education services, ranger-led walks and talks are largely based on established knowledge of the resource, knowledge of the visitor, mastery of interpretive techniques, and knowledge of resource management strategies. Close cooperation and information sharing between Park divisions is critical to the accuracy and currency of these programs. At GRSM, the Division of Resource Education and the Division of Resource

Management and Science need to continue to explore ways in which each division's staff can work more closely with, and learn from, one another. This is also true for the Maintenance Division's historic preservation crew. The establishment of a resource education/resource management and science liaison (in 1999) is one way to help achieve this. As much as the Park's resource education rangers and volunteers need to understand the work of the Park's resource management specialists and scientists, maintenance workers, administrators, and law enforcement rangers, so too do these other Park division employees need to understand the work of the resource educators.

### ***Vision for the Future***

- ◆ Continue to improve the level of integration of resource management and historic preservation information into educational programming to take better advantage of strategic learning opportunities.
- ◆ Based on professional opinion and public program feedback, identify research needs of the Division of Resource Education and communicate these needs to the Division of Resource Management and Science.
- ◆ Broaden the information base used in educational program development to include information resources found outside of the Park such as those available at local universities, regional agencies and businesses.
- ◆ Ensure that resource educators are informed about trends and findings in current scholarship and that this information finds its way into public programs.
- ◆ Determine, using a combination of program statistics and program quality, which programs are essential to provide to Park visitors.

- ◆ Present "on the spot" interpretation at sites where resource management activities, such as prescribed fires, are visible to the passing public.

### **A.3. Evening Programs – Existing Conditions**

The opportunity to attend an evening program (generally presented in campground amphitheaters) is almost a sacred event for many park visitors. These visitors often expect evening programs as part of their traditional park experience. However, most visitors do not fully understand the planning, scheduling, and choices that need to be made by park managers and staff to be able to successfully present evening programs.

"What I would do to help the park is to make everyone go to a one hour ranger talk to learn how to behave. Like no feeding animals. Because this is my park and I want to keep it pretty."

—Heather Vischoric, Age 7  
(from *Junior Ranger Booklet*)

Currently, park rangers present 45-minute to one-hour long evening campground programs several nights a week during the summer and fall seasons. These programs are presented regularly at the Park's most popular campgrounds – Elkmont, Smokemont, and Cades Cove campgrounds, and on a much more limited basis at Cosby, Deep Creek, and Balsam Mountain campgrounds. Scheduling of these programs generally on alternate nights of the week, and on weekends, is based on the premise that the greatest number of visitors can be reached by utilizing this alternating-day strategy. Program content varies depending on Park needs and the particular interests of the ranger presenting the program; however, most programs do (at least in part) address critical natural and cultural resource issues of the Park.

### **A.3 Evening Programs – Core Program**

Perhaps no other resource education service or activity epitomizes the overnight park experience more than the evening campground program. Illustrated and non-illustrated talks are given in campgrounds from June through October. While GRSM relies primarily on

uniformed park rangers to present these programs, volunteers, Student Conservation Assistants (SCA's), and special guests also conduct evening activities, such as storytelling sessions, music programs, and talks on special topics.

Traditional evening programs primarily target campers who have an established relationship with the Park's resources and recreational opportunities. They are in many cases the audience most likely to appreciate in-depth discussion of mission topics. It is important that we continue to reach this group with evening programs. Alternately, many other Park users lack the kind of preservation ethic upon which these programs focus. It is a continuous challenge how to reach out and deliver important resource-related messages to these Park users.

### **Research/Planning Needed**

Same as above, under Ranger-led Walks and Talks

### ***Vision for the Future***

- ◆ Make sure campgrounds are fully accessible, safe, and have appropriate support technology.
- ◆ Increase evening programs at GRSM's big three campgrounds (i.e., Elkmont, Cades Cove, and Smokemont) by utilizing volunteers and employees from other Park divisions.
- ◆ Obtain funds to pay special guests (i.e., musicians, storytellers, etc.) for special evening programs.
- ◆ Publicize evening programs in the Park's gateway communities to attract participation by a greater diversity of users, not only campers.

- ◆ Experiment with providing more evening programs in several of the Park's other campgrounds (such as Cosby, Balsam Mountain, Look Rock, and Deep Creek).
- ◆ Experiment with current presentation technologies such as computerized PowerPoint® programs to add to the traditional slide shows.

#### **A.4. Demonstrations – Existing Conditions**

Resource education demonstrations are periodically provided to enhance visitor enjoyment and understanding of the Park's rich cultural history. Demonstrations are generally connected with historic structures and landscapes at Oconaluftee and Cades Cove. While many of these demonstrations are performed in conjunction with special events, others are part of the seasonal resource education program. Demonstrations of milling are



conducted from April through October at Mingus Mill and Cable Mill. Special demonstrations at Cades Cove and Oconaluftee's Mountain Farm Museum attract visitors and generate interest in the Park's cultural story. Two-and-one-half million people visit these two areas, perhaps more than any two sites of similar cultural themes in the National Park Service. Ideally, these sites should be the showcases of the Park and Service in telling the rich cultural stories of the Southern Appalachians.

#### **A.4. Demonstrations – Core Program**

A *core* demonstration program at GRSM includes the NHA-funded millers at the Cable Mill (in Cades Cove) and at the Mingus Mill at Oconaluftee. The operation of mills is intriguing to most visitors, and these millers provide an essential visitor service. In addition, the volunteers (in period clothing) at the Mountain Farm Museum animate an otherwise static exhibit. As funding allows, the Park should capitalize on other demonstration

opportunities (like the 1999 NPF/Friends/Aurora Foods/Log Cabin Syrup grant that provided a log cabin making demonstrator at the Cable Mill area); however, these are not *core* to the overall resource education program.

### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ Ongoing research is needed in order to ensure accuracy in both costume and demonstration techniques.
- ◆ Develop standard operating procedures for mill operations.
- ◆ Develop standard operating procedures for costumed interpretation.
- ◆ Provide training to the GSMNHA-funded Millers at Mingus Mill and Cable Mill on historical accuracy, as well as NPS mission, interpretive techniques, safety, etc. This training should also be provided to other volunteer demonstrators.

### ***Vision for the Future***

Park visitors enjoy seeing cultural demonstrations and interacting with the demonstrators. Although there is no plan to dedicate NPS operations money for additional future demonstrations, GRSM's Division of Resource Education will take advantage of any private sector money donated for demonstration purposes and/or utilize volunteers who want to provide this service.

### **A.5. Special Events – Existing Conditions**

The Park, with assistance from Park partners, has traditionally hosted major parkwide special events such as the Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage, and several cultural-related activities, like the Mountain Life Festival and Women's Work event at Oconaluftee, and the Festival of Christmas Past at Sugarlands. Park staff also participate in special events held/hosted in Gateway Communities such as Wilderness Wildlife Week in Pigeon Forge and Heritage Day in Bryson City. These events attract and build local constituencies that may not be reached



by mainstream resource education programming. They also build partnerships and increase networking with local communities and individuals, as well as provide opportunities for the visiting public to see fast-disappearing cultural activities that may be unfamiliar to them. Many of these activities are regional in nature and help preserve the cultural and traditional folkways of the southern Appalachians. To take full advantage of the educational opportunities these events provide, resource preservation messages are incorporated into event activities.

### **A.5. Special Events – Core Program**

The special events that GRSM staff currently coordinate and/or participate in are the Park's *core* program. It is essential that the Park maintain good relationships with adjoining communities. Without question, special events that GRSM staff coordinate and/or participate in help foster positive relations with local constituents.

#### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ Annually assess which outside the Park events in which GRSM resource education rangers will participate. Case-by-case assessments will be made by determining whether events are relevant to resource education themes and/or are politically important to attend.
- ◆ Continue to plan for and assess effectiveness of in-Park events.
- ◆ Assess needs for future special events.

#### ***Vision for the Future***

GRSM staff do not plan to significantly increase in-Park special events in the foreseeable future. However, staff will always remain open to participate in appropriate cultural or

natural resource-related events planned by the Park's adjoining communities. These outside events provide GRSM the type of positive exposure that is hard to measure, but anyone who attends them can clearly observe the good will that is built by staff participation in them.

## **A.6. Informal Contacts – Existing Conditions**

Informal contacts, also known as "roving," are an effective means for park rangers and volunteers to interact with large numbers of people. These contacts also allow staff to maintain a visible National Park Service presence around the Park. During these contacts, staff can inform visitors about critical resource issues, safety, provide orientation, and give directions. The presence of a uniformed person at parking lots also helps reduce vandalism and theft.

Renewed emphasis was placed on informal contacts during the 1999 spring, summer, and fall seasons. This decision was made because formal programs only reach a small percentage of the *total* number of visitors who come to GRSM. Although informal contacts also only reach a small percentage of the total number of Park visitors, these contacts are generally made in highly visible areas (i.e., many more people actually see a uniformed ranger or volunteer than the actual number that this person talks to), and provide much greater scheduling flexibility.

## **A.6. Informal Contacts – Core Program**

Under current management, continued emphasis will be placed on informal contacts versus formal programs. Formal programs will always be maintained at a *core* level; however, these programs will only be expanded with the help of volunteers or employees from other divisions. Additional resource education staff will not be assigned to present additional formal programs in the Park. In addition, a *core* informal contact program will be achieved only when uniformed rangers and/or volunteers are present at the Park's most heavily used

areas (e.g., Newfound Gap, Clingmans Dome, Laurel Falls, Gatlinburg Entrance Sign, and Cades Cove) during the busiest times of day and the busiest months of the year. The Park is not yet approaching a *core* level of informal contacts.

Areas of day use visitor concentration, such as popular trailheads, Clingmans Dome, Cades Cove and Newfound Gap provide an opportunity to educate the many types of users that visit GRSM.

Although staffing these locations requires considerable travel time, a secondary benefit of this travel is uniformed presence on roads to report and assist with accidents, bear jams, etc. Talks given in these areas target the so-called "windshield visitor," who may not otherwise come in contact with a uniformed Park employee and receive interpretation of critical Park issues. For example, Clingmans Dome is one of the best locations to address Park critical resource issues due to the high visitation and questions concerning air quality, reduced visibility, and the dying spruce-fir forest.

### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ Visitor surveys should be conducted to measure the effectiveness of informal contacts.
- ◆ Volunteers need to be recruited and trained to expand informal contacts at heavily used areas of the Park.

### ***Vision for the Future***

In the years ahead, renewed and increased emphasis will be placed on the importance of informal contacts. Since GRSM will never have enough ranger staff to adequately cover our informal contact needs, qualified volunteers will be recruited and trained to provide informal contacts at the Park's most heavily used areas. In addition, supervisors will be encouraged to be creative in their scheduling of uniformed staff and/or volunteers at these locations. The

use of staff from other Park divisions for informal contacts will also be explored as a possible way to maintain a uniformed NPS presence throughout the Park.

### **A.7 Outreach Programs – Existing Condition**

GRSM's formal Outreach Program was initiated as an experiment in 1999, although outreach programs have been presented long before this time. This new program is designed to make contact with, and deliver Park messages to, area organizations and businesses, and Park visitors, that may not have the opportunity to have a formal or informal contact with a uniformed Park employee. A primary focus of the program is the education of employees who can help communicate accurate Park stories to visitors, such as tour group leaders, and employees who work at area accommodations.

The Outreach Program is offered both inside and outside the Park. It is a free service to any interested organization or group, although donations are accepted. In fiscal year 1999, 26 groups participated in Outreach Programs with a total of 1513 contacts. The Outreach Program received \$1611 in donations during this experimental phase. During 2000, 96 groups participated. The number of contacts grew to 9,312, and donations increased significantly to \$2,684.

### **A.7. Outreach Programs – Core Program**

In fiscal year 2000, GRSM staff continued to experiment with the Outreach Program on an as available basis. The Outreach Program will never replace existing programs (such as Parks as Classrooms), but will continue to be offered during non-conflicting time periods since its programs provide a valuable service by connecting and improving Park relations with community members and local businesses surrounding the Park, as well as with tour groups. The overall goal of the Outreach Program is to make these groups aware of the critical resource issues facing the Park so they can become informed stewards of the Park.

### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ Determine need for expansion of the existing Outreach Program.
- ◆ Increase utilization of trained staff and volunteers for the program.
- ◆ Continually evaluate effectiveness of the outreach programs offered.
- ◆ Complete the standard operating procedures for the program.

### ***Vision for the Future***

- ◆ Expansion of the Outreach Program into GRSM's three districts.
- ◆ Establishment of the Outreach Program as a viable program (as much so as Parks as Classrooms programs, or public programs such as evening campground programs, walks, and talks).
- ◆ Creation of a demand for the programs in the surrounding communities.
- ◆ Establishment of positive working relationships with businesses, civic groups, and local governments in the Park's gateway communities.
- ◆ Continue to work closely with staff of the Division of Resource Management and Science in the development of new programs based on critical issues facing the Park.
- ◆ Expand cooperative work with other Park divisions in the presentation of outreach programs.

## B. Non-personal Services and Media

The Park reaches a broad audience through a diverse program of non-personal resource education services. These services include publications, exhibits (both indoor and outdoor), pre-trip planning tools, the Travelers Information System (TIS), the Internet, and the Park's film and other audio/visual programs. All non-personal services are closely tied to GPRA goals for visitor understanding and appreciation of the resource, as well as for customer satisfaction and visitor safety.

Given current staffing levels, many visitors never have the opportunity to learn about the Park from a park ranger or volunteer. In fact many, if not most, visitors never even see a uniformed employee/volunteer. In addition, those visitors that do stop at one or more of the Park's three visitor centers often just ask staff basic directional questions. Even during roving assignments, interacting with a ranger/volunteer is a hit or miss proposition. These facts highlight the importance of GRSM's non-personal services program. Often, seeing the Park's film or reading a wayside exhibit, for example, are the only ways many visitors learn about the significance of the Park, safety concerns, and critical resource issues. Also, many non-personal services are available at times convenient to the Park visitor, and are not dependent upon the availability of uniformed personnel.

"Non-personal interpretive services, which can reach large audiences, will maintain a consistent quality of presentation over time. In conjunction with personal services, they will provide opportunities for visitor information, orientation, and understanding of park resources."

—*National Park Service  
2000 Management Policies  
(draft)*

### Non-Personal Services – Existing Conditions and Core Program

Categories B.1 through B.6 (below) describe the existing conditions and *core* program for each of the respective non-personal services programs. The partnerships involved in each category are identified, as well as planning and research needs, and a *vision for the future* .

## B.1. Publications – Existing Conditions

The Publications program provides a variety of items, which are directed toward specific audiences. At the center of the publications program is the Harpers Ferry Center designed Map and Guide (Unigrid brochure), most often referred to as the Park folder. An essential piece of literature for any park, this free publication enjoys the widest circulation (over 400,000 per year) among visitors. The information provided through this medium conveys important resource preservation messages, as well as equips visitors with a powerful orientation tool for the safe enjoyment of the Park. A new, expanded version of the folder was finalized in 1999 and is proving to be quite popular with Park visitors. The GSMNHA-produced Park newspaper called the *Smokies Guide* (published quarterly) and *Smokies Trip Planner* provides information on basic orientation, specific resource management and safety messages, and seasonal resource education programs and events.



A number of issue-specific folios have been developed and published by GSMNHA to inform both visitors and park neighbors about critical resource management concerns such as bear/human interaction, fire management and air quality. Trail maps target backpackers and day-hikers with an easy-to-read map and a strong resource protection message. Free informational literature is printed in partnership with the GSMNHA and distributed by the Division. These include short leaflets (called site bulletins) on selected natural and cultural resource topics (such as Park geology, the Cherokee, and wild hogs). Most of these leaflets are used primarily for mail responses to requests for specific information. For a small fee, GSMNHA-produced nature trail leaflets and auto tour guides offer visitors site-based facts and resource education perspectives throughout the Park. Complete books, ranging in topics from children's stories to natural history field guides are published by the GSMNHA when a recognizable need has been established.

## **B.1. Publications – Core Program**

Same as "Existing Conditions" (above). In addition, GRSM staff recognize that with 10 million annual visitors, publications are one of the most effective and efficient means of communicating critical information about the Park and its resources to the public. The Division of Resource Education will continue to look for new ways to reach an even wider audience through its publications program.

### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ Publications produced for the Park, whether by HFC or GSMNHA, must be based on the most current, peer-reviewed research available. Needs vary considerably from year to year and depend upon the nature of each publication. The entire program will be carefully planned annually and tracked periodically to ensure that management concerns and critical issues are being adequately addressed.
- ◆ Information on critical resource issues, management concerns and recreational opportunities will be made available to the visitor through an annually-planned publications program which will take advantage of strategic opportunities (e.g., experimental release of elk).
- ◆ The annual planning process will be effected by the Publications Committee, with interdivisional input and representation.
- ◆ The Park will regularly evaluate whether charging for the Park's newspaper, the *Smokies Guide*, helps or hinders the accomplishment of our resource education, as well as inseparable management and protection objectives. Efforts will be made to expand the circulation of the newspaper in order to reach a wider local and regional audience. Perhaps experiment with producing two newspapers (one for inside the Park, and one



for outside the Park) that contain the same orientation and resource information, except the one for outside the Park would contain paid advertising so it could be widely distributed in hotels, restaurants, at other area attractions, etc.

- ◆ Existing and proposed publications will be edited and reviewed by subject matter experts in order to ensure effectiveness and appropriateness as tools for accomplishing Park goals. Due to the expense involved in researching, editing and publishing, care will be taken to ensure that only the most essential publications are produced with significant involvement of the Park staff.

### ***Vision for the future***

Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association and GRSM staff will continue to stretch our ability to reach existing and new audiences by: 1) providing appropriate publications (free and/or for sale) and other types of educational and theme-related items, 2) interpretive product development, and 3) continuing to look for appropriate and remunerative sales and store opportunities outside the Park.

## **B.2. Bookstores and Sales Outlets – Existing Conditions**



The Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association (GSMNHA) operates bookstores in the three Park visitor centers (i.e., Sugarlands, Oconaluftee and Cades Cove), as well as at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont, the Gatlinburg Welcome Center, the Smoky Mountain Visitor Center (Smokies Stadium) and the Townsend

Visitor Center. These stores sell a wide selection of books and educational materials related to the Park. The Park benefits from these operations in several ways. Not only is a percentage of the sales returned to the Park in the form of cash donations each year, but Park education/orientation efforts are supplemented and enhanced by the availability of high

quality publications and other items. The presence of trained NHA staff also provides supplemental personal services. Such benefits are essential to the accomplishment of Park goals, ensuring optimum levels of customer service.

## **B.2. Bookstores and Sales Outlets – Core Program**

The *core* program consists of the bookstores at the three Park visitor centers and at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont. The books and other items sold at these stores function as an arm of the Park's overall resource education effort. Stores at locations outside the Park are not an essential part of the resource education program; however, these stores do provide a needed service by providing resource education materials to Park visitors before and after their Park visit. These stores also enhance the Park's external involvement in local community life and business. Where and when possible, GRSM will work with GSMNHA to expand existing bookstore facilities to increase resource education opportunities, as well as cash donations to the Park.

### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ Conduct annual review of proposed products provided through the GSMNHA to assure quality, accuracy, and relevancy of all items sold.
- ◆ Provide appropriate information to GSMNHA Board of Directors and staff to assure that they are a full partner in deciding appropriate items for sale.
- ◆ Coordinate and provide training to GSMNHA staff (and concession employees) so they are knowledgeable about the Park and can provide quality visitor services.

### ***Vision for the Future***

GRSM is extremely fortunate to have partners willing to help us achieve the NPS mission by funding mission-related projects. An example of what can be achieved (as it relates to bookstore operations) is related in the following story.

In October 1999, GSMNHA achieved a three-year-old dream when it opened a new bookstore at the Sugarlands Visitor Center, replacing its existing store. This move was achieved by the NHA moving from a small, dedicated space at Sugarlands (which was the former location of the VC's restrooms) into the former visitor center auditorium. With this move, the NHA bookstore increased its floor space from 250 square feet to 1500 square feet. In addition, to accommodate Sugarlands' need for an auditorium, NHA built a new, 140-seat, state-of-the-art, surround-sound theatre addition onto the Sugarlands Visitor Center using NHA funds, then donated the theatre to GRSM. A new GRSM film (funded by the Friends of Great Smoky Mountains) is shown in this new theatre addition. Cooperation among the NHA, Friends, and the Park staff, significantly improved bookstore operations at the Park's major visitor center.

In June 2000, GSMNHA opened another bookstore outlet at the Smoky Mountain Visitor Center which is a part of the new Tennessee Smokies (minor league baseball team) Stadium in Sevierville, Tennessee. If proper signage is placed on I-40, it is anticipated that the Welcome Center will be successful.

The above successes in partnership demonstrate the potential for achievement through creative, cooperative efforts.

### **B.3. Audio and Audiovisual Media – Existing Condition**

Audio and audiovisual media are critically important tools in the Park's resource education program. In November 1999, a two-year dream was realized when a new 22-minute film

entitled *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* premiered in a new theatre at Sugarlands Visitor Center. This \$250,000 film, produced by Great Divide Pictures out of Denver, Colorado, was funded by the Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. An additional opportunity to develop and provide audiovisual media to Park visitors exists at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center.

At present, an outdated Traveler's Information System (TIS) broadcasts radio messages at several Park locations including the Gatlinburg Entrance, Oconaluftee Entrance, and Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail. These messages are site specific and convey important information to the traveling public, such as safety and seasonal road conditions.

### **B.3. Audio/Audiovisual Media – Core Program**

The *core* audio/audiovisual (AV) media program at GRSM consists of the new (1999) 22-minute film shown daily, every half-hour, at the Sugarlands Visitor Center. Also considered a part of the *core* program would be other, as yet unplanned and undeveloped, audiovisual media opportunities at Park visitor centers. For example, an AV program has the potential to reach several hundred thousand visitors each year at Oconaluftee. The Sugarlands film is the most comprehensive, easily accessible resource education offering available at the Park. All efforts should be made to attract Park visitors to view this film because it concisely delivers important Park messages that all visitors should understand during their trip to the Smokies.

At a heavily visited national park like GRSM, audio/audiovisual media, such as the film shown at Sugarlands Visitor Center, have the potential to reach out to many more visitors than formal, personal services programs do. In the years ahead, resource education staff will explore ways to deliver Park messages via an expanded audio/audiovisual media offering (such as Audio Tours of the Newfound Gap Road, Cades Cove, Little River Road, and Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail – see *Vision for the future*, below).

Other current AV media include: 1) a 15-minute slide/video program shown seasonally at the Palmer House in Cataloochee; 2) slide shows (on various resource education themes) shown during evening campground programs; 3) a Partners video (produced for the 1998 Association of Partners for Public Lands Conference held in Gatlinburg); 4) a Parks as Classrooms video; 5) a Black Bear video; 6) a *State-of-the-Park* PowerPoint® presentation (produced by GRSM's Public Affairs Office) which is shown to various community groups and others; and 7) numerous thematic-related slide/PowerPoint® programs produced and presented by employees of all Park divisions.

In addition, when an amended General Management Plan (GMP) and/or Development Concept Plan (DCP) is completed for Cades Cove, it will probably be determined that a visitor center-type facility needs to be constructed somewhere before (inside or outside the Park) the 11-mile loop road to maximize visitor understanding of the Cades Cove story. Undoubtedly, AV media will be an important component of that visitor center-type development.

### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ A site-specific resource education plan for the Oconaluftee Visitor Center should incorporate AV as a major component of that site's visitor experience.
- ◆ Brainstorm additional film possibilities for other locations throughout the Park since this form of media has the potential to reach numerous Park visitors. In addition, determine whether films are needed for other Park efforts (such as the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory, an updated Parks as Classrooms video, etc.).
- ◆ Research the potential effectiveness of an upgraded Travelers Information System. Experiment with portable, low-power FM transmitters.

- ◆ Obtain funding for, plan and develop audio tours for the locations listed above. Determine logistics for the distribution of audio tours.
- ◆ An amended General Management Plan (GMP) and/or Development Concept Plan (DCP) needs to be developed for Cades Cove to determine transportation, visitor facility, and resource education alternatives.

### ***Vision for the Future***

- ◆ Develop audio tours, in both cassette tape and compact disc (CD) formats, for the locations listed above. Since GRSM is a classic “windshield park” (i.e., many Park visitors only view the Park through their car’s windshield), audio tours are a natural for this Park. Not only will visitors learn more about the Park’s stories, many will also hear important resource messages for the first time. These tapes/CDs could be dispensed free to all interested visitors from GRSM’s three internal visitor centers. As visitors exit the Park, recycle boxes could collect the audio tours for future use by other visitors. A potential donation opportunity also exists with this media. A money collection envelope, administered by the Friends, should be attached to the packaging. Audio tour experiments were conducted April, June, July, September, and October 2000, to determine whether visitors would be willing to use, return, and donate money to the Friends after use. All five experiments yielded positive results. There is an opportunity to significantly expand this service.
- ◆ In cooperation with other divisions, use portable, low power FM radio transmitters to provide on-the-spot interpretation of resource management activities and road/construction status.
- ◆ Acquire and install new Travelers Information System (TIS) radio station upgrades.

- ◆ Determine feasibility of portable low power FM stations to provide a more or less continuous, area specific program, for Newfound Gap Road.
- ◆ Visitors to the Oconaluftee Visitor Center will have the opportunity to view an AV program (ideally a new production that complements the Sugarlands Visitor Center's movie).
- ◆ A new Cades Cove Visitor Center (potentially located before the loop road, maybe even outside the Park) could showcase the Cades Cove story using various resource education media, including AV.

#### **B.4. Exhibits – Existing Condition**

Park exhibits are represented in a variety of forms including wayside exhibits, bulletin boards, visitor center/museum exhibits, self-guiding nature trails, and historic structures. These exhibits provide an effective way to deliver consistent messages, provide continuous availability in unstaffed areas of the Park, and reach a greater audience than can be reached with staffing.



GRSM's approved wayside exhibit plan (1994) calls for the placement of some 155 new porcelain enamel exhibit panels and bulletin boards throughout the Park at carefully selected locations for the purpose of interpreting the cultural and natural history of the Park. Bulletin boards provide after-hours information at visitor centers and other select locations throughout the Park.

Wayside exhibits and trail brochures are used to provide self-guiding opportunities for visitors at various locations throughout the Park, such as the Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail.

One Park visitor center contains exhibits on cultural history at Cades Cove Visitor Center. Planning is currently underway to rethink Park themes interpreted at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center, as well as overall exhibit/bookstore layout. A natural history exhibit is in place at Sugarlands Visitor Center. A popular computer exhibit at Sugarlands Visitor Center provides real-time public access to air quality data from the Look Rock air quality monitoring station. A new Discovery Center exhibit (funded by a \$100,000 grant from Coca Cola) about Biodiversity is scheduled for completion and installation at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center by early 2001. (Note: the Discovery Center will remain at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center until such time as new permanent exhibits can be planned, designed, produced, and installed at this major visitor entry point.) An interactive air quality exhibit is also located in the visitor center at Oconaluftee.

Historic structures are located in Cades Cove, Roaring Fork, Little Greenbrier, Oconaluftee and Cataloochee, as well as several other individual sites. Some of these structures are furnished as interpretive exhibits; others are unfurnished but interpreted with publications. Collections of structures, such as the Mountain Farm Museum and the Cable Mill complex, offer the ability to interpret southern mountain culture in a more comprehensive manner, both as self-guided facilities and through personal services. A revised Historic Furnishings Plan is needed for the Becky Cable House in Cades Cove.

It should be noted that thematic museum-type exhibits are also located at several locations outside the Park to be able to educate prospective visitors about Park resources before they arrive and/or to divert them to similar, less crowded areas. Currently, the Gateway Regional Visitor Center in Knoxville and the Gatlinburg Welcome Center contain such exhibits. In addition, a new welcome center opened at the new Smokies Stadium (Route 66 Exit on I-40 in Sevierville, TN) in June 2000. Eventually, Park thematic exhibits will be located there as well.



## B.4. Exhibits – Core Program

GRSM's *core* exhibit program (in the Park) consists of everything described above under **Existing Conditions**, plus an expanded exhibit program for Cades Cove once an amended General Management Plan (GMP) and/or Development Concept Plan (DCP) is produced for that location.

In addition, Park staff will capitalize on the exhibit potential of the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI) project (10-15 year timeframe) currently underway at GRSM. A simple, regularly updated, exhibit about new discoveries related to the ATBI will be produced that informs Park visitors about the significance of this project and the rich diversity of life found at GRSM. This exhibit will be placed in the Sugarlands Visitor Center, the Park's most visited center. As well, a Discovery Center on the theme of biodiversity for the Oconaluftee Visitor Center is scheduled for completion by early 2001. It is also noted that there is great potential (funding dependent) to develop other exhibits on the Park's overall Resource Management and Science program.

With the opening (Fall 1999) of the new Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association bookstore and theatre at Sugarlands Visitor Center, came the need to separate functional space. The information desk and orientation map, the bookstore, the theatre, and the exhibit area are now physically distinguished from one another rather than merging into one another. To accomplish this, the Park's maintenance staff built a new wall between the information desk area and the exhibits. The free-standing air quality exhibit was incorporated directly into this wall.



An exhibit was also needed for the empty foyer space leading to the theatre. After exhibit planning discussions, it was recommended that this space be converted into a showcase of National Park System areas. It was suggested that a highly visited national park such as GRSM has an "obligation" to help educate Park visitors about the entire National Park System. The foyer to the theatre at Sugarlands Visitor Center has been designated to fill that role. Through GSMNHA funding, large 40" landscape photographs about other national parks (with similar themes to GRSM) have been hung in this room. This new exhibit (June 2000) is titled *Experience Your America*, in accordance with the new NPS slogan that developed from the NPS Message Project. Since the foyer is a space that people move through to be seated in the theatre, the national park photographs contain minimal text about overall significance and cultural importance to allow a quick transition from one space to the next.

### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ As described above, an exhibit plan is needed for the existing Oconaluftee Visitor Center that examines a change in that visitor center's focus from a narrow depiction of cultural resources to a facility more representative of all Park themes, resources, programs and issues.
- ◆ Additional in-park research will be necessary to complete the existing Wayside Exhibit Plan as funding becomes available for the production of each panel, including the Cataloochee DCP.
- ◆ Amend the Wayside Exhibit Plan to include the Elkmont cultural landscape.
- ◆ Research will be necessary during implementation of the Cades Cove DCP/amended GMP.

- ◆ Plan (FY 2000), design, and fabricate (FY 2001) a Sugarlands Visitor Center exhibit on the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory project.

### ***Vision for the Future***

- ◆ As strategic and funding opportunities present themselves, there is the continual need to remain flexible enough to modify GRSM's Wayside Exhibit Plan based on new ideas. For example, there is currently the need for Park staff to work with wayside planners from Harpers Ferry Center to add interpretation of the Elkmont story to the Wayside Exhibit Plan.
- ◆ All visitor facilities will incorporate exhibits that educate visitors about the Park's primary resource education themes. In accomplishing this goal, it is not necessary for all places to be all things to all people. The Park's primary resource education themes do not have to be incorporated into exhibits at every location in the Park. Collectively, however, the Park's facilities will showcase these themes to help visitors understand the significance of Great Smoky Mountains National Park.
- ◆ Exhibits will help visitors understand that Great Smoky Mountains National Park is a part of a much larger system of protected parklands across the nation.

## **B.5. Library and Archives – Existing Condition**

GRSM's Division of Resource Management and Science administers the Park's library and archives. Up until the fall of 1997, they were administered by GRSM's Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services (now called Division of Resource Education). They contain some 6,750 books, 300 oral history



tapes, and over 70 linear feet of archival material including documents and photographs encompassing both Park history and pre-history. The collection is used extensively for scientific and historic research. Division of Resource Education staff, and others, also utilize the facility to produce resource education programs. The collection preserves the institutional memory of the Park with books, photographs, maps, drawings, and documents, as well as video and audio tapes.

### **B.5. Library and Archives – Core Program**

As they currently exist, the Park's library and archives provide a vital link between the present and the past at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, as well as a repository for contemporary research. It is *core* to the achievement of the overall Park preservation mission to continually find ways to allow the library and archives to grow as opportunities for expansion become known.

#### **Research/Planning Needed (recommended)**

- ◆ An interdivisional committee should annually review and revise (as needed) the Library Operations Plan.
- ◆ Continuously search for and procure additional books, publications, maps, photographs, etc. that help tell the story of Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

#### ***Vision for the Future (recommended)***

- ◆ Provide the necessary resources to correct any deficiencies identified in the Library Operations Plan.
- ◆ Install computer equipment which provides for Internet access of the collections and modern electronic cataloging.

- ◆ Request NHA funding to support temporary staffing necessary to catalogue items using the Servicewide software standard.
- ◆ Work with NHA to ensure adequate funding support for routine library activities, such as book acquisition and periodical subscriptions.
- ◆ Consolidation of all of GRSM's library and archival needs into one facility.

### **B.6. Internet Website/Electronic Media – Existing Condition**

The Park's site on the World Wide Web (<http://www.nps.gov/grsm>) contains information on recreational opportunities, critical resource issues, and orientation. It also contains information about and links to our partners. In addition it provides some links to tourist-related services in gateway communities. The website also provides direct public access to the Park via e-mail. In 1999, a park ranger from the Division of Resource Education was devoted (almost full-time) to work on the enhancement of the Park's website. This enhancement was accomplished through the use of a private contractor paid for by the Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Other forms of electronic media have not been fully explored, such as distance learning through satellite downlinks to schoolrooms and public forums. These have the potential to expand audiences and involve a new set of partners.

### **B.6. Internet Website/Electronic Media – Core Program**

GRSM's website is *core* to the orientation/education/scientific missions of the Park. The website is one of the most visited in the entire park system (see [www.nps.gov/statistics](http://www.nps.gov/statistics)), consistently ranking among the top ten parks in total accesses. Due to the nature of

websites, there is a continual need to change/update the site on a regular basis; however, the Park has not yet fully come to terms with the need to provide a full-time webmaster to this assignment. In response to this critical need, the Resource Education Division has assigned website duties to a park ranger in North District operations. Even though more than 50 percent of this employee's time is devoted to these activities, this is considered only a temporary solution.

In addition to the trip planning information currently available on GRSM's website, opportunities for expansion include: 1) trip enhancement by providing in-depth information about all Park resources, 2) informing users about scientific research (past and present), 3) providing curriculum materials for school teachers who are interested in engaging their students with the stories of the Park, and 4) informing Park visitors about construction activities to roads, buildings, etc. This expanded information should eventually become **core** to the website.

Another **core** function of the Park's website allows users to direct e-mail questions to Park staff. These e-mail questions, which have shifted a time burden from the Division of Ranger Activities' Communications Center (which responds to written inquiries for general information by sending out the NHA-produced *Trip Planner*) to the Division of Resource Education, require a staff person to devote time out of each day to keep up with the inquiries. Indeed, the inquiry statistics compiled by the Communications Center indicate a sharp decrease in mailouts in response to both written and telephone information inquiries. Part of the decrease can arguably be attributed to the availability of web-based information. At the same time, e-mail inquiries are increasing. GRSM's Management Team should formally recognize this time burden shift and financially support the employee time necessary to maintain a world-class website for a world-class Park.

### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ Continuously evaluate GRSM's website to determine level of use and effectiveness. Annually review and evaluate GRSM's website using an interdisciplinary team.
- ◆ Research the benefits and costs associated with introducing more advanced features to the website, such as video and audio clips and live webcams.
- ◆ Park Management should demonstrate commitment to the website by dedicating resources to support it.

### ***Vision for the Future***

- ◆ Hire a visual information specialist to develop and continually update GRSM's website.
- ◆ Train additional Park and partner staff to assist this employee (above).
- ◆ Adapt the website to conform to the findings of the annual evaluation.
- ◆ Update the website as new technology becomes available.
- ◆ Secure the necessary additional funding OR re-prioritize existing resources to further develop electronic media capabilities.

## C. Formal Environmental Education

The umbrella for the Park's environmental education programs (both day use and residential) is the *Parks as Classrooms* initiative which provides a variety of opportunities for the public (at all ages) to become aware of the significant values of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and to enjoy in-depth, life enhancing experiences that foster the development of emotional, intellectual, and recreational ties with their natural and cultural heritage.

Through GRSM's environmental education programs, young visitors, their families, and educators relate to Park resources in an interactive way. An important element of the program includes natural and cultural resource issues education which targets audiences that could influence decision-making or lend support to new resource initiatives in years to come.

GRSM's environmental education programs will be guided by broad objectives established at the National Park Service Education Symposium held in Santa Fe, New Mexico in September, 1997. Staff will:

- 1) Promote personal connections to the many American experiences through objects, places, ideas, and values.
- 2) Develop an informed citizenry with collective civic responsibility and active stewardship of natural and cultural resources.
- 3) Help people understand the many landscapes (and life forms) and stories of America, and the relationship of the parks to the whole; the triumphs, tragedies, and conflicts; the diversity of perspectives.
- 4) Establish the National Park System as a distinct resource for the educational community.



- 5) Guarantee that all Americans have opportunities to learn from the National Park System whether or not they actually visit the parks.

### **C.1. Day Use Education Programs – Existing Conditions**

The Division of Resource Education's day use education program is known as *Smoky Mountain Classrooms*, which offers curriculum-based, interdisciplinary lessons that weave together resource management and protection messages while encouraging students to learn through hands-on, participatory activities. The ultimate goal of GRSM's *Smoky Mountain Classrooms* program is to instill in students an appreciation for Park resources which will, hopefully, lead to a lifelong sense of ownership and stewardship. The primary audience is made up of kindergarten through 8th grade students and teachers in the counties bordering the Park. A secondary audience is the greater Smokies region of eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina, including the Knoxville and Asheville metropolitan areas. Day use programming is offered September through November and

"The education rangers are wonderful. ... Watching the interest and motivation on the children's faces was the best part of the educational experience."  
—Sherry Barker  
(Teacher)



March through May, with special on-site and off-site activities in the winter and summer months. Over 10,000 students, parents and teachers participate in the *Smoky Mountain Classrooms* program every year. At present, more Tennessee students participate in GRSM's day use education programs than North Carolina students. In late 1999, a minor reorganization allowed the Division of Resource Education to hire a park ranger devoted solely to increasing formal education programs in North Carolina. The duties of this position also include the development of the Purchase Knob property into a formal NPS Learning Center. GRSM's North Carolina educational offerings will increase to parity with Tennessee in the future.

Notably, a unique partnership arrangement has been developed between the Park, the Pi Beta Phi Elementary School in Gatlinburg, the Gatlinburg School Board, and the Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The students and teachers at Pi Beta Phi help develop and test a comprehensive curriculum that will make them the most knowledgeable citizens about the significance of Park resources. A model for future *Parks as Classrooms* expansion, the partnership allows for resource-based curriculum development in all nine elementary grades. When this curriculum is published, it is hoped that additional schools in counties surrounding the Park will model their educational programs after the Pi Beta Phi model.

Another educational partnership includes cooperation with Sevier County Schools at the Eugene V. Huskey Environmental Education Center (located in Pittman Center). In 1999, an experimental summer high school program, in conjunction with the not-for-profit group Discover Life in America, was offered to Sevier County students at this Center, but was not presented due to lack of enrollment. In 2000, this experimental summer program was offered again and attracted a small group of interested high school students. This program will be evaluated for possible continuation in future years.

### **C.1. Day Use Education Programs – Core Program**

Of all the programs presented by GRSM's resource education staff, none have the potential to change lives as much as formal education programs (day use and residential). A *core* day use education program at GRSM is an expanded program from



what is currently being offered. Opportunities for growth in this area are almost limitless. At present only a small percentage of the total student population from the Park's surrounding counties fully participate in GRSM's *Smoky Mountain Classrooms* day use program. A Division of Resource Education initiative beginning in FY2000 was to expand our day use educational offerings in North Carolina. A *core* program in North Carolina

should mirror the one in Tennessee. The ranger hired in 1999 to devote time to enhancing North Carolina's *Parks As Classrooms* program has greatly increased the division's familiarity with North Carolina's educational system.

In addition, a Parkwide **core** program should incorporate an outreach component to the urban, student populations of the two major cities nearest the Park, which are Knoxville, Tennessee, and Asheville, North Carolina, as well as to all communities surrounding the Park.

Another division initiative in FY2000 was the expansion of GRSM's formal educational offering to inner city Knoxville students. To fund this expansion, the Division of Resource Education received grant money from the Haiman Foundation and various Knoxville foundations (e.g., Cornerstone and Lucille Thompson). It is a division goal to maintain this education expansion to urban areas as **core** to GRSM's educational effort by continuing to seek foundation support for this aspect of the program. In addition, all under-represented school groups surrounding the Park are a target for future expansion.

To make GRSM's formal education offering all it can and should be, Gatlinburg's Pi Beta Phi Elementary School partnership should be replicated throughout all counties surrounding the Park. To help this occur, a future emphasis on teacher workshops should be **core** to the day use educational programs.

### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ The division will continue to integrate the latest research on Park issues and expand the resource base of programs. Close communication with the Resource Management and Science Division will be maintained to assure critical resource education messages are communicated to students.
  
- ◆ Prepare annual proposals for expansion and funding of the program.

- ◆ Identify potential partner parks interested in participating in educational exchanges (could include field trips, Internet, etc.).
- ◆ Seek partnership opportunities to utilize interns and volunteers (such as retired teachers) for educational programming.
- ◆ Seek partnerships for teacher workshop training.
- ◆ Consider use of new electronic educational technologies in programming, such as distance learning.

***Vision for the Future***

- ◆ Resource education staff will seek ways (internally and externally) to expand GRSM's overall *Parks As Classrooms* (PAC) effort, both in Tennessee and North Carolina.
- ◆ GRSM will continue to pilot new curriculum-based PAC programs in both Tennessee and North Carolina.
- ◆ Resource education staff will explore ways to participate in classroom exchanges with partner parks (such as a recent effort in 1999 to partner with Shenandoah National Park and its school partners).
- ◆ Identify and capitalize on partnership opportunities that utilize interns and volunteers (such as retired teachers) to assist with PAC programs.

## C.2. Environmental Education Centers – Existing Condition

The Park's residential environmental education center located at Tremont was established in 1969 as one of the first environmental education centers in a national park. Since the mid-1980's, residential environmental education programs have been conducted in the Park through the Great

"If I can just get a child to Tremont, I know your staff will make a difference in their life."...  
—B. Price

Smoky Mountains Institute (GSMI) at Tremont (before January 2001 under the auspices of the Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association). This environmental education center uses the Park as an outdoor classroom. Physical facilities provided by the Park include a dormitory, dining hall, activity center, class and meeting rooms, recreation areas, and attendant administrative and maintenance buildings. Routine maintenance of these facilities is the Institute's responsibility.

The 3 to 11-day residential environmental education programs are directed toward a wide audience and include classes for school groups, summer youth programs, elderhostels, special workshops for educators, adults and college groups. User fees are charged, making the program largely self-sustaining.

The Great Smoky Mountains Institute's purpose, as defined in a general agreement between GRSM and GSMI, is to provide programs that meet goals and principles of environmental education in a fiscally responsible manner, as an extension of GRSM's Division of Resource Education. GSMI's revised mission statement (2000) states "Great Smoky Mountains Institute provides in-depth experiences through educational programs designed to nurture appreciation of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, celebrate diversity, and foster stewardship."

To meet GRSM's overall education goals, GSMI emphasizes youth programs during the school year, especially for those youth surrounding the Park. Teacher workshops and/or adult programs are provided during weekends and school vacation months. GSMI serves as

a training center for teachers in environmental awareness programs, and for individuals who wish to gain experience in environmental education.

In January 2001, the Great Smoky Mountains Institute (GSMI) separated from GSMNHA's administration (by vote of GSMNHA Board, December 1999). GSMI became its own separate entity under a General Agreement with the Park, signed in September 2000. This decision was made in order to allow a new GSMI Board to focus on providing high quality, residential environmental education experiences rather than internally compete for GSMNHA's resources (i.e., Board member and staff attention, priorities, etc.). For 2000 GSMNHA provided adequate fiscal and staff resources to ensure GSMI at Tremont did not founder. After 2000, GSMI will determine ways to remain sustainable through expansion of programs and services, assistance from other funders and partners, and a possible expanded endowment effort undertaken on behalf of the Institute by Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The new Board of GSMI will work closely with the Friends and the Park's other partners on all fundraising endeavors for the Institute.

In addition, GRSM acquired the final parcel of land and house at Purchase Knob in December 2000. This high elevation site (above 5,000 feet) along the Cataloochee Divide in Haywood County, North Carolina, will become a residential science and education center. Benefitting scientists, students, teachers, high school research assistants, and others, this facility will be connected to the massive scientific/education undertaking called the *All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory* (ATBI). Various partners will be involved in the development and implementation of programs at the Purchase Knob site.

In 2000, GRSM was informed that the Purchase Knob was selected as one of the first learning centers to be established in connection with the NPS Director's Natural Resource Challenge. Other learning center sites chosen in this pilot NPS initiative are Rocky Mountain and Kenai Fjords national parks, and Point Reyes and Cape Cod national seashores.



Starting in FY2001, the Park will receive an annually recurring \$225,000 base increase specifically for development and operation of the Purchase Knob science and education learning center. For the short-term, it is proposed for 2001 that the house at Purchase Knob be slightly modified to meet building codes to be able to house a small number of scientists connected with the ATBI. At the same time, GRSM staff will explore day use school programming opportunities, teacher training, etc. An architectural and engineering firm has been contracted to provide GRSM a list of the short-term infrastructure needs and design services for the Purchase Knob property in order to make it a satisfactory facility for its proposed scientific and educational purposes.

Longer term, a Development Concept Plan may be produced for the site that examines several public use alternatives, including an expanded Purchase Knob facility that can house scientists and students alike.

### **C.3 Environmental Education Centers – Core Program**

In the 1970's, the NPS, as an organization, decided that providing residential environmental education facilities in parks was a good way to help achieve the NPS education mission. Fortunately, at GRSM, a Park partner (Maryville College) took on this call at the former Jobs Corps Center at Tremont. In the mid-80's, the Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association took over this challenging responsibility. In 2000, as the Great Smoky Mountains Institute separates from GSMNHA, it is realized that providing for residential environmental education experiences at a Park like GRSM is *core* to the Park's overall environmental education responsibility. Long term, repeated exposure to nature and environmental education principles, such as that provided by centers like GSMI at Tremont, helps develop responsible Earth stewards. Centers, like GSMI at Tremont, are a *core* component of the overall resource education program at the Park. As we begin the new millennium, GRSM is looking to expand residential environmental education programs at other parts of the Park, notably the Purchase Knob property in the immediate future. It is

probable, and *core*, that as the Park and our partners continue to be successful in delivering residential environmental education programs to students and adults, additional centers should be considered as long as demand warrants. It should be noted, however, that future residential environmental education centers at GRSM do not necessarily have to be located within Park boundaries as long as these centers have easy access to Park resources.

### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ The Board of Directors for Great Smoky Mountains Institute (GSMI) should expand to a full complement of directors and develop strategic and operations plans for GSMI.
- ◆ Continue to work with an architectural and engineering firm to help Park staff and partners develop plans and identify funding partners for a residential science and education facility at Purchase Knob.
- ◆ Determine potential demand for residential environmental education centers at the Park.
- ◆ Explore the possibility of GSMI expanding its educational reach to the Purchase Knob.

### ***Vision for the Future***

- ◆ In January 2001, GSMI formally separated from the Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association. For 2000, GSMI at Tremont still relied on GSMNHA for financial and human resource support. The GSMNHA Board of Directors and staff facilitated a smooth transition. The Great Smoky Mountains Institute (GSMI) is now totally administered by its own separate Board of Directors. The Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park will explore the possibility of improving GSMI's capability (as well as all science and education efforts at GRSM) through a capital campaign.



- ◆ GSMI will align itself closer to GRSM's overall *Parks as Classrooms* program and will be considered, even more so than at present, as THE residential environmental education arm of the Park's resource education operation. GSMI and GRSM will consider GSMI's operational role at all future residential environmental education centers in the Park (such as the one proposed for Purchase Knob).
- ◆ In the summer of 2000, a team consisting of NPS personnel and an independent contractor (i.e., architectural and engineering firm) began the necessary planning for the Purchase Knob science and education facility and program. Eventually, as part of this planning effort, a full-fledged Development Concept Plan will be considered for the Purchase Knob site.
- ◆ The Purchase Knob becomes an operational NPS science and education learning center through its annual Congressional appropriation for that function.
- ◆ If demand warrants the provision of additional residential environmental education centers in the Park, aside from Tremont and Purchase Knob, GRSM staff and partners should explore the feasibility of developing and operating additional centers.

### **C.3. Smoky Mountain Field School – Existing Condition**

In partnership with the University of Tennessee, GRSM provides an outdoor classroom for adults and youth through the Smoky Mountain Field School. The stated mission of this educational



partnership effort is, "The Smoky Mountain Field School enhances public appreciation, understanding, and stewardship of the Smoky Mountains and the natural world while promoting the idea of learning as a joyful and enriching part of life." The Field School's education classes cover a variety of environmental, recreational and heritage topics. These programs supplement the Park's resource education program by providing in-depth

education on technical topics, as well as useful instruction in recreational pursuits such as hiking, camping and nature photography.

### **C.3. Smoky Mountain Field School – Core Program**

The Field School is *core* to GRSM's resource education program because it provides in-depth educational experiences that are not practical, or financially responsible, to provide using taxpayer dollars. At a Park like GRSM, with 10 million visitors each year, the most the Park's resource educators can do is spend up to an hour with a group of visitors on a formal guided walk or talk. Beyond that, the return for our investment begins to significantly diminish just because of the sheer numbers of Park visitors that must be served with basic information. Therefore, in-depth educational programs like the Field School, that are relatively self-sufficient, provide a needed service that the Park cannot afford to provide with traditional resources.

However, as *core* as these programs are to the overall resource education effort of the Park, if the University of Tennessee ever decided to stop presenting these programs, the Park would not be able to provide them using Park staff. Instead, GRSM would look for another educational partner to provide these types of in-depth programs.

#### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ Every year, Park and Field School staff should evaluate the effectiveness of programs and plan the new year's calendar based on these evaluation results and visitor demand.

#### ***Vision for the Future***

The Smoky Mountain Field School will continue to provide in-depth educational experiences at GRSM that are not practical for Park staff to provide.

#### **C.4. Junior Ranger Program – Existing Condition**

The Junior Ranger Program targets children ages 5 to 12, as well as their families or chaperones. The program is popular throughout the National Park System and many visitors with children inquire about its availability. At GRSM, the program annually attracts about 4,000 participants and offers an activity workbook to complete along with attending a ranger-led event to encourage interaction between young visitors and Park resources. A stewardship component (i.e., collecting a bag of trash) is also part of the program. Containing lessons on biodiversity, cultural history, stewardship, threats to the Park, the role of park rangers, and the National Park System, this program seeks to instill a preservation ethic in the participants that will likely filter up to the adults who accompany the children.

#### **C.4. Junior Ranger Program – Core Program**

A *core* Junior Ranger Program at GRSM is one that is fully accessible to the diversity of Park visitors. In addition, park ranger participation is essential to the success of the program so young children have the opportunity to interact with a ranger who, hopefully, can serve as a model (of good stewardship) for them. A *core* program also accounts for the targeted age range of the audience. Self-guided activities for 5-8 year olds are different from those offered to 9-12 year olds, as is the final award for completing the program (i.e., 5-8 year olds receive a badge, 9-12 year olds receive a patch).

"What I would do to make the Smokies better is to be able to tell everyone not to feed the wildlife and not to carve their names into the historic buildings forever and it hurts the beauty of nature."

—Adam Ryan, Age 10 (from GRSM's *Junior Ranger Booklet*)

### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ Statistical information will be compiled on age group usage of the program to plan for future revisions to the Junior Ranger Workbook and to order necessary quantities of supplies and materials.
- ◆ Work with GSMNHA to determine whether the price of the Junior Ranger Workbook can be reduced to potentially attract more youth to the program.

### ***Vision for the Future***

- ◆ Continue to provide workbooks (for a minimal price or for free).
- ◆ Expand the use of personal services programming and the variety of available activities.
- ◆ Evaluate the program every two years.
- ◆ Evaluate the possibility of adding a Senior Ranger program.

### **C.5. Resource Education/Resource Management and Science Liaison – Existing Condition.**

In the past, a significant portion of staff time was devoted to working with natural resource managers in developing strategies for public education on critical issues and topics of management concern. These issues and topics have included air quality, bear management, and reintroduction of extirpated species. A variety of media have been used in the development of comprehensive information packages, including press releases, management folios, posters, television documentaries, educational trunks, and bumper



stickers. Target audiences have usually been local or regional, focusing on groups that may have direct influence on policy and public opinion. These strategic and multi-faceted efforts also present the opportunity to utilize funding and personnel from other government agencies and the private sector.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, GRSM was one of the first national parks to officially designate a park ranger to serve as a liaison between the Interpretation and Visitor Services Division, and Resource Management and Science Division. This was at a time before electronic mail allowed quick communication to a large number of people at the same time. At that time, the Park employee who was dedicated to this position compiled resource management notebooks for each of the three Park districts, presented personal services programs, and also worked on non-personal service projects and media campaigns that targeted a wide audience. However, as time went on and WASO initiatives changed, this person became GRSM's *Parks As Classrooms* Coordinator, and the Interpretation and Resource Management liaison function, while still very important, became secondary.



In the summer of 1999, the Resource Education Division's management team decided the Park needed an employee who could once again devote his/her time to the liaison function. Accordingly, a park ranger who was already working in the North District operation was assigned this important function. In January 2000, a Division-wide reorganization occurred that shifted this liaison into the Education Branch now supervised by the park ranger who was originally assigned to the liaison function. New energy has been placed into this reinvigorated position and electronic mail is now greatly facilitating the way resource management information is communicated to line employees.

## **C.5. Resource Education/Resource Management and Science Liaison – Core Program**

It is essential that current resource management information is transmitted to resource educators as quickly as possible so their programs can be accurate and up-to-date. To facilitate this transfer of information, one FTE in the Division of Resource Education is devoted to fill this role. This park ranger serves as the liaison between the Resource Education and Resource Management and Science Divisions. Key duties of this position include:

- ◆ Gathers and disseminates in a useable form, up-to-date resource information from RM&S Division to the resource education staff and the public.
- ◆ Coordinates opportunities for resource education staff to assist in RM&S field work.
- ◆ Serves as a natural history information source for resource education staff.
- ◆ Presents and coordinates programs for university and other groups as appropriate.
- ◆ Leads *Parks As Classrooms* programs for school groups, specializing in middle and high school levels.
- ◆ Works with RM&S and RE staffs to ensure quality control in the production of non-personal interpretive media, including audiovisual media, displays, brochures and other products.
- ◆ Prepares, or assists in preparing, grant proposals for interpretive components of RM&S activities and projects.

### **Research/Planning Needed**

- ◆ Continue to explore the best way to transmit resource management information to resource educators to maximize the use in innovative personal services programs and non-personal services products.

- ◆ Continue to develop multi-faceted media and programs which communicate to the general public, as well as specifically targeted audiences, information about critical resource management issues facing the Park.
- ◆ In cooperation with the Superintendent's Office and the Division of Resource Management and Science, participate in strategic planning to determine the priority of resource management issues that need to be communicated to targeted audiences.

### ***Vision for the Future***

- ◆ All resource educators will incorporate current resource management information into their programs.
- ◆ Resource educators will fully understand the significant impact their programs can have on helping to make Park visitors (and community neighbors) better Earth stewards.
- ◆ Resource Management and Science (RM&S) staff will fully understand the value of Resource Educators communicating RM&S stories to the public.
- ◆ RM&S staff will readily call upon Resource Educators to assist them in their communication efforts.
- ◆ A resource education component will be added to all appropriate RM&S grant proposals.
- ◆ Joint RM&S and Resource Education Division proposals will be developed for possible funding by outside sources.
- ◆ Cost share the liaison position with RM&S.
- ◆ Present gateway community programs to enhance community leader understanding of Park issues.

## D. Partnerships

Like most parks and park divisions, GRSM's Division of Resource Education works with numerous partners (both private for-profit, and private not-for-profit) to expand the reach of the Division by helping staff accomplish many of the goals and activities described in this Comprehensive Resource Education Plan. Many of these



Park partners have been described or referred to in sections above (e.g., Smoky Mountain Field School, Pi Beta Phi Elementary School, Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont, etc.). As the purchasing power of GRSM's fiscal resources decreases, primarily due to rising salary costs, the Division of Resource Education must rely more and more on Park partners to help us achieve desired results. Although money is a key factor in allowing Division staff to achieve work, it is much more than just money. Oftentimes, it is smarter to let Park partners perform resource education services for reasons such as: partners have greater expertise (in a particular area), they can do it cheaper, or they have the human resources to coordinate programs better than GRSM staff can.



In programmatic areas where it makes sense for GRSM's resource education staff to perform the work, but where NPS fiscal resources can not fund this work because of other priorities, staff will primarily turn to two Park partners to help achieve this work: the Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association and the Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Through the years, these two organizations have helped the Division of Resource Education maintain a comprehensive operation throughout the year (e.g., partner donation money has paid for seasonal park rangers versus paying for them with NPS dollars; partner money has paid for exhibits, etc.).



As much as we rely on Park partner staff and money to help maintain a comprehensive operation, resource educators believe that our relationship with our partners is mutualistic. Not only do we ask Park partners to help us, we are also willing to help our partners grow and become stronger in what they are capable of doing. We help our partners in several ways which include: teaming up with them on various projects, talking about the help they provide the Park, and providing staff support for their projects (e.g., GRSM's GSMNHA liaison works closely with GSMNHA staff on all new publications; GRSM's GSMIT liaison works closely with GSMIT board, director, and staff on developing their agreement, approving their programs, etc.). Resource education staff also recognize that the Division of Resource Education is probably the best poised Division in the Park to help our Park partners raise money for all Park operations.

In future years, as in the past, resource education staff will work to make both of the Park's primary partners stronger by planning, developing, and implementing projects that generate additional financial resources for these partners, hence the Park as a whole. Examples of these include an expanded GSMNHA bookstore operation at Oconaluftee Visitor Center, and experimentation with free audio tours produced by the GSMNHA and the Friends. Both projects will help resource educators deliver important Park messages, as well as generate revenue for the Park.

Inside the Park, in the future, resource education staff will also work closer with the Park's concessioners to help expand their ability to educate Park visitors through the programs they provide. Training to concessions and GSMNHA employees will be provided annually.

In addition to providing needed fiscal resources, Park partners also provide their time, expertise, and talent in helping GRSM's resource education staff deliver thematic messages. For example, GSMNHA serves as the publications arm of the Division of Resource Education. Without the help of this cooperating association, it would not be possible for GRSM staff to provide Park visitors with the high quality publications produced by GSMNHA. Another example is the work of the staff of the Great Smoky Mountains

Institute at Tremont. There, educators provide high quality residential environmental education experiences for young and old alike.

In effect, Park partners allow GRSM's Division of Resource Education to provide a comprehensive program by providing staff and funding for various programs, projects, and other activities. Without the needed assistance of these partners, the resource education program at GRSM would be much less than it currently is.

## Conclusion

It can be safely stated that in a park such as Great Smoky Mountains, visited by 10 million visitors each year, it is an awesome task to educate the visiting public and nearby communities about resources and critical issues. However, this is the primary function of the Division of Resource



Education, and our staff will continue to explore ways in which we can reach the most visitors in the most cost-effective manner. Resource education rangers fully understand the value placed on the ranger-led walk and talk. To allow these relatively expensive programs to continue in the future, park rangers will continually seek ways to effectively advertise their program offerings for greatest participation by the public. In addition, staff will continue to experiment with ways to reach more people. Only 20% of Park visitors actually stop at a Park visitor center, where they are most likely to receive some type of resource education experience (personal and/or non-personal). The other 80% of GRSM's visitors tour the Park from their automobile, either driving straight through the Park without stopping or stopping at overlooks/trailheads. At overlooks, visitors have the opportunity to learn about Park resources and issues through wayside exhibits. This high percentage of visitors who do not stop at visitor centers provokes the question of how best to teach/inform people about important Park messages.

In planning for the future of GRSM's Division of Resource Education, it is recognized that more visitors learn about the Great Smoky Mountains through the Park's non-personal services programs (e.g., film, exhibits, waysides, brochures, other publications, website, etc.) than through the Park's personal services program. However, currently the amount of staff dedicated to non-personal services (three as of January 2000; before that, it was only one) is small compared to the rest of the Division's staff (permanents, seasonals, student

conservation assistants, volunteers, etc.). It is not practical, nor should Park Management desire, to change the staff balance to any great extent because the fact remains that to personally serve the public with park rangers and volunteers is much more labor intensive than providing non-personal services. It should be recognized, however, that the Division of Resource Education can and does serve more visitors through non-personal services programs. At a park as large and complex as GRSM, employees are needed to be devoted solely to providing these non-personal services and, for the foreseeable future, staff will be provided to enhance this important park function. In addition, opportunities exist for all Division staff to become involved in non-personal services projects (for career development) if the choice is made to scale back on personal services program offerings and/or the Park relies more heavily on volunteers to provide personal services programs.

As the Park moves forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the Division of Resource Education has made the somewhat internally controversial choice of utilizing volunteers instead of paid staff at visitor center information desks. This remains the only way to expand the Park's personal services program offerings in an era of flat budgets. However, park rangers will never totally desert visitor center desks. Park visitors enjoy seeing park rangers in visitor centers, *and* only rangers can provide the professional knowledge needed in many circumstances. Therefore, rangers will always be available, even if they are working behind the scenes and only available when needed for a special cause. Rangers will always work in visitor centers by serving as facility managers; however, they will expand their capacity by relying upon volunteers. In addition, GRSM will increase the use of volunteers to present public programs. Already, a small corps of volunteers has taken this next step.

For the near future, two imminent resource education projects will significantly affect the Park's ability to deliver environmental education programs both in Tennessee and North Carolina. These are the potential development of a new facility for the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont and the development of the Purchase Knob Learning Center.

In 2001, Park staff will experiment with a new audio tape/compact disk tour of the Newfound Gap Road that will be available free of charge to Park visitors. Visitors will be given the opportunity to make a contribution to the Friends as they recycle the tapes/CDs. The objective of this experiment is to determine whether an audio tour is a good way to educate people about the Park. If this experiment proves financially sustainable, the loan program will become a significant addition to resource education offerings at GRSM. These audio tours will be given out first only at Sugarlands and Oconaluftee Visitor Centers, providing an educational opportunity for most of the 20% of the visiting public that stop at visitor centers. Someday we hope to reach the other 80% by similar means. To do so, it may be necessary to establish distribution stations at the Gatlinburg and Cherokee entrances. These stations could be formal Entrance Stations (with a ranger giving out a brochure, newspaper, and audio tour) without an entrance fee. This would be one way Park visitors could meet a ranger on each visit.

The tremendous success of the experimental *Experience Your Smokies* program in FY2000 (prototyped by the Division's Parks As Classrooms Branch and resource management and science/resource education liaison) will undoubtedly impact the future of resource education at GRSM. Already, for FY2001, both the South District and Cades Cove District, as well as the Parks As Classrooms Branch again, plan to present *Experience Your Smokies* programs. This model program has proved to be a good way to educate community leaders about the issues the Park faces, thus potentially expanding their support of Park management decisions.

By being creative in our approach to solving resource education challenges that confront Park staff, it is anticipated that, in the future, GRSM staff will actually increase our ability to deliver important messages to people both within and beyond Park boundaries. In doing so, we will also seek ways to make the Park's partners stronger so they can assist us in presenting resource education programs, as well as potentially provide funding for special NPS projects and programs. However, as much as GRSM staff must rely on Park partners to enhance the overall resource education program, we will continue to internally re-prioritize parts of the

program to make sure federal dollars pay for those programs we value most, like Parks As Classrooms. In addition, upon supervisory approval, resource education staff will continue to freely experiment with new ideas to seek ways to make GRSM's resource education program the best in the National Park Service.