



Elkmont Historic District

EIS Process: Opportunities for Input

Invitation to March 8 and 9, 2004 Public Meetings

Great Smoky Mountains National Park has scheduled a set of public meetings as the first opportunity for public input to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. The first meeting is **Monday, March 8, 2004, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.** at the **Glenstone Lodge, 504 Historic Nature Trail, in Gatlinburg.** Driving directions are available at http://www.glenstonelodge.com/driving_directions.shtml. The second meeting will be held from **6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.** on **March 9, 2004,** at the **Hilton Hotel, 501 West Church Street, Knoxville** (865-523-2300). A map to the hotel can be accessed through MapQuest at <http://www.mapquest.com>

Both meetings will follow the same format and have the same content. The project team will explain the EIS process, summarize the activities undertaken to date, and present the full range of detailed alternatives. Key dates in the project schedule will be explained. After the presentation, the audience will have an opportunity to ask questions of the project team and to review the alternatives at stations in the meeting room. Forms for written public comment will be available to complete at the meeting or can be mailed within the 30-day comment period. The comment form will also be available on the project website.

I look forward to seeing you at this workshop and appreciate your support as we develop management strategies for the Elkmont Historic District.

Sincerely,
Philip A. Francis Jr., Acting Superintendent
Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Project Background (From EA to EIS)

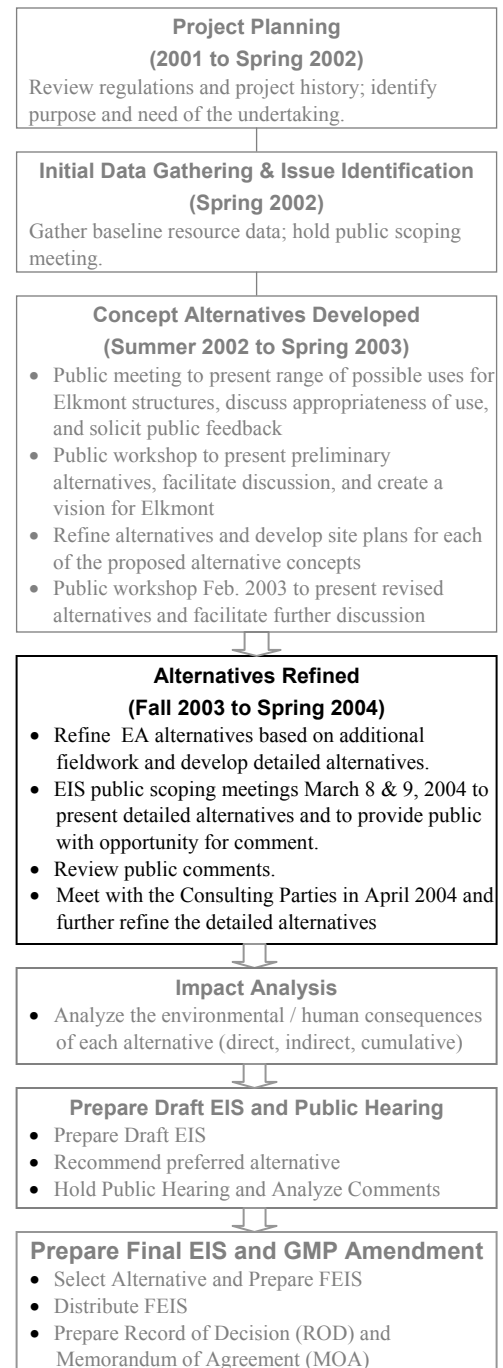
The 1982 Park General Management Plan (GMP) calls for all structures in Elkmont to be removed at the close of private leases that ended in 1992 for most and 2001 for the remaining four.

In 1994, Elkmont was listed as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places thus affording the district special status and new consideration regarding the GMP. The Park and Tennessee Historic Commission discussed several options regarding future management of Elkmont between 1994 and 1999, but failed to come to an agreement.

A renewed planning process was reinitiated in 2000 by Park planners to develop a management plan for the Elkmont Historic District (EHD) that follows guidelines in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The results of this study will enable Park management to effectively make a decision at the close of this planning process.

Environmental Compliance was begun initially as an Environmental Assessment (EA) but elevated to an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in Spring 2003 when it was recognized that a successful management strategy could not be selected until a more detailed investigation was undertaken. An EA and EIS follow an almost identical process, but an EIS is more comprehensive and detailed than an EA. This decision was made due to the sensitivity of resources and the growing controversial nature of this project.

The chart to the right outlines the history of the planning process and how it will proceed in the EIS phase. The highlighted box indicates where we are now in the process.





Summary of Alternatives

Overview: In February 2003, six concept alternatives were presented at a public workshop in Sevierville. These alternatives were developed based on project goals and objectives and public comment received up to that time. As part of the EIS process (see page 1), a seventh alternative has been added in order to present a full range of options. Details of all alternatives will be presented at public meetings scheduled for March 8 and 9, 2004. In keeping with the Park's Comprehensive Resource Education Plan, all alternatives except the No Action, propose a strong visitor education component. The alternatives as described below, from No Action through Alternative F, are designed to present the full range of options that address concerns expressed by the public.

No Action: The No Action Alternative is implementation of the Park's General Management Plan (GMP) developed in 1982. The GMP was written prior to the creation of the EHD and calls for the removal of privately leased structures in Elkmont upon termination of leases and building sites returned to a natural state. Some of the structure foundations and stonework could remain, allowing a visual link to the past. Once the structures are removed, visitors would continue to experience traditional recreation such as hiking, fishing and camping. The existing roadways would be repaired if damage occurred during building demolition; however, no physical infrastructure improvements are proposed.

Alternative A: This alternative calls for active forest restoration and vegetation management. Like the No Action Alternative, all structures would be removed. Active restoration of native plant communities and removal of invasive and/or exotic plant species will occur. Where buildings are removed, native species would be planted to aid forest regeneration. Active management would tier to park-wide hemlock protection strategies. Man-made drainage ditches would be restored to their natural state.

Visitor education will be provided by wayside exhibits in addition to existing ranger-led programs. Central trailhead parking would be provided. Existing roads beyond the relocated trailheads would only be maintained for Park vehicular use and would become pedestrian paths for public use.

Alternative B: This alternative proposes restoration of the exterior of the Appalachian Clubhouse and rehabilitation of the interior for general public day use. Water and sewer service would be provided as well as restroom facilities. Interior exhibits would include photos and outside wayside exhibits would focus on the history of the clubhouse, architecture of the "set-off" cabins, and on the historic train station near Daisy Town.

Existing ranger programs would continue. A wayside exhibit would also be constructed near the existing mailboxes at the top of the loop road.

To portray the historic Daisy Town community, 11 of the 15 significant historic cabins and one non-contributing cabin in Daisy Town would be retained, in addition to historic landscape features. Cabins along Jake's Creek or along Millionaire's Row would be removed. A wayside exhibit focusing on the synchronous firefly is planned to appropriately guide pedestrian traffic out of sensitive habitat areas.

The Wonderland Hotel cannot be restored due to its advanced deterioration. As a result, the remains of the existing building are proposed to be removed. One option being considered is reconstructing the porch with a "ghosted" façade of the hotel front wall so that the visitor could experience what it might have been like to sit on the porch. The nearby Annex and cabins in the Wonderland Club would be removed. Parking behind the hotel, as well as across Little River Road, would be provided. A handicap accessible path would be constructed leading to the hotel, similar to the historic path that led from the road to the hotel. A kiosk with exhibit panels and a brochure box would be located at the parking area across the street from the hotel so that visitors to Elkmont could park and obtain information on the District.

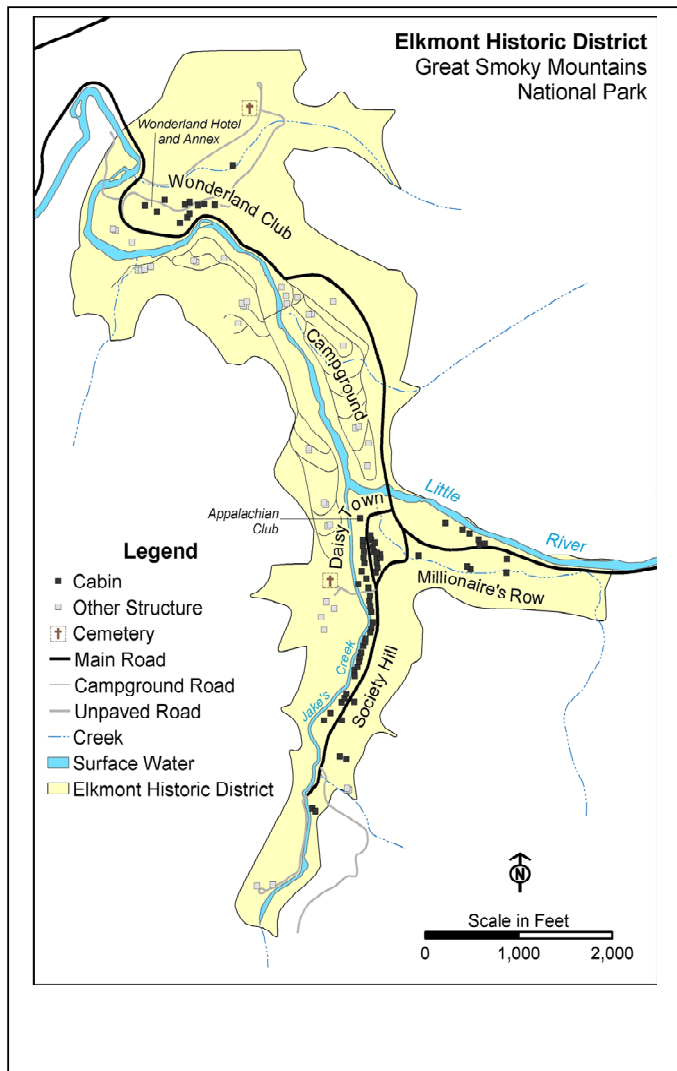
Forested areas would be allowed to naturally regenerate in areas where the buildings are removed.

Alternative C: In this alternative, the Appalachian Clubhouse and all 15 significant cabins in Daisy Town would be retained. One additional cabin would be restored to its historic configuration. The Chapman Cabin on Society Hill along Jake's Creek would also be retained. The treatment of the Appalachian Clubhouse as a day use facility is the same as in Alternative B. All other cabins and buildings in Daisy Town, Society Hill and Millionaire's Row would be removed, and natural revegetation would be allowed to occur.

The visitor experience in Alternative C is similar to that of Alternative B except for the retention of the historic cabins in Daisy Town and an additional wayside exhibit explaining Chapman's significance related to creation of the Park. Options for the Wonderland Hotel area remain the same as described for Alternative B.

Alternative D: This alternative proposes to retain more cabins and provides a Park library, a curatorial storage facility, and housing for visiting scientists. Most of the buildings in Daisy Town and the Appalachian Clubhouse would be retained as in Alternative C. In Society Hill, the Chapman Cabin would be retained, while all other cabins would be removed and the building sites allowed to naturally revegetate.

Along Millionaire's Row, the cabin built by the owner of the Little River Company would be restored on the exterior with interior exhibits installed. A handicapped accessible path to the cabin would be provided. All other buildings in Millionaire's Row would be removed and the building sites allowed to naturally revegetate.



Alternative D Continued:

If feasible per NPS policies on reconstruction, the Wonderland hotel would be reconstructed to its 1928 footprint, with removal only considered if reconstruction is not feasible. The reconstructed hotel, along with the Annex, would serve as curatorial space for Park historical collections that are currently housed in Oak Ridge and at the Sugarlands Visitor Center library. If not reconstructed, the porch and façade would be ghosted as described under Alternative B. Wayside exhibits are planned for the porch, as well as a kiosk exhibit with a brochure box located at the parking area. If the hotel and annex are retained, the Park would install exhibits in the lobby and provide resource education programs during the May to October season focusing on the EHD.

Six historically significant cabins at the Wonderland Club would be rehabilitated and reused for visiting scientist housing, fulfilling a Park need for housing for visiting scientists.

Alternative E: Alternative E introduces the concept of public overnight stays in the EHD structures. If reconstruction of the Wonderland hotel is feasible within NPS policies, the hotel along with the Annex would provide lodging and meeting rooms. A restaurant would be constructed in the Annex and would provide food service to hotel guests. Educational programs for interested visitors would be incorporated into hotel stays by the concessionaire. Contributing cabins in the Wonderland Club area would be rehabilitated for public rental. Parking would be expanded to include the area on the south side of Little River road. Visiting scientist lodging would be housed in the historically significant cabins along Millionaire's Row.

Daisy Town and Society Hill would be retained as described in Alternative D. Wayside exhibits would be constructed as described in Alternatives C and D.

Central trailhead parking would be provided at the Little River Trail. Additional exhibits on the Little River Railroad Company would be included in this alternative.

Alternative F: This alternative retains the maximum number of structures for overnight rental. Protection of natural resources will be dependent on operational procedures and visitor regulations required of the concessionaire. The Wonderland Hotel would be reconstructed under the same conditions as described in Alternative E, as would the Annex and cabins in the Wonderland Club area. Full-service dining for the general public would be added.

Daisy Town would be retained as in Alternatives C, D and E. The Appalachian Clubhouse would become a day use facility as in the previous alternatives; however, evening and night use would be reserved for exclusive use by a concessionaire for overnight guests, including food service. In the Society Hill area, the Chapman Cabin would be interpreted as described in Alternatives D and E, but all the remaining cabins would be rehabilitated for overnight rental.

Visiting scientist housing would not be included in this alternative in lieu of making cabins available to the general public for overnight rental.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

If you would like to provide input on the management of the Elkmont Historic District or receive email updates, contact us at:

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Alternatives Development Process and Upcoming Work

How Did We Get Here...Initially, the alternatives development stage of the planning process began in summer 2002 as an Environmental Assessment (EA). Potential uses for the Elkmont Historic District (EHD) were identified based on Park needs. The list was refined further during two public meetings in August 2002 and potential uses for the EHD were revised. Five concept alternatives (no action and four action alternatives) were developed and presented at a public workshop in September 2002. Public opinion was that there was not enough difference among the proposed alternatives. The alternatives were revised and an additional alternative was added. In February 2003, another public workshop was held and the public provided extensive input on the six revised alternatives. It was clear after this meeting that more comprehensive planning was going to be necessary to enable Park management to make a decision regarding an appropriate management plan for the EHD. In the spring of 2003, the Park made the decision to elevate the project to an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The contract was renewed in the fall of 2003 to

conduct an EIS and, since that time, additional field investigations have been undertaken and the conceptual alternatives re-examined. Currently, there are seven alternatives being examined, including the no action alternative (GMP), representing a full range of potential management actions.

Where Are We Going...Alternatives to be considered during impact analysis must meet several criteria. They must meet the goals and objectives of the project, as well as National Park Service policies and guidelines. A set of public meetings will be held March 8 (Gatlinburg) and 9 (Knoxville) 2004, to present the seven alternatives. Additional field studies will be conducted this spring, with the Draft EIS planned for public release in the fall. The public will have additional opportunities to comment at upcoming public hearings during the formal 30-day public comment period following these meetings and during a formal 60-day public comment period following release of the Draft EIS. These comments will be taken into account in the development of the Final EIS and the final selection of the management plan for Elkmont.

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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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**Announcing
Elkmont EIS
Public Information
Meeting**