

**THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS PARK COMMISSION
and
THE WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC LANDS COUNCIL**

**JOINT MEETING SUMMARY
July 30, 2010
Twin Creeks Science Center, Gatlinburg, TN**

*NC Members in Attendance: Maxine Dalton, Nelda Holder, Delos Monteith
Staff Present: Judy Francis, AICP*

11:30-Noon The members of both North Carolina and Tennessee Councils enjoyed social conversation and a lunch that was provided by the Great Smoky Mountains Association

The meeting was called to order at noon. Kevin Fitzgerald, Deputy Superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park began the meeting by thanking the Great Smoky Mountains Association for hosting the lunch. Each person present then introduced himself to the others present. After introductions were completed, Kevin provided the Councils with an extensive update regarding the following activities and issues associated with the park:

New Clingmans Dome Contact Station: Will serve as the Great Smoky Mountains Association Visitor Contact Station and sales outlet. New restroom facilities are also part of the improvements.

Oconaluftee Visitor Center – the \$2.5 million 6300 s/f building will include exhibits, visitor information, new restrooms and backcountry permit office. It will be LEED certified at the silver level or higher. Estimated completion date is November, 2010.

Stimulus Projects Status Report – The park received almost \$80 million in stimulus funds to address infrastructure needs, such as roads, trails, cemeteries, and restrooms. One large portion is a \$25 million bridge design and construction project on the Foothills Parkway.

Development Plans for the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont – EA has been completed for the proposed development plan for the institute project at Tremont. The EA concluded by issuing a FONSI (finding of no significant impact) for the proposed renovations and new construction that will cost an estimated \$5.9 – 7 million. The funds will come from a variety of public / private sources.

Elk Program Management Plan – The elk herd project is now moving out of the “experiment” stage and moving into the “management” stage – and an elk management plan will be undertaken now that the herd size has a sustainable population.

Elkmont Stabilization/Restoration – The clubhouse building at Elkmont is currently undergoing major restoration work and will soon be available for groups to rent out through a reservation system for special events and gatherings.

Exotic Pests – Treatment for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid continues and now there are signs that predator beetles are reproducing in the field. Chemical treatment still continues on over 132,000 trees in the park. Results are mixed, but newer products are coming out that are more effective so result should improve. Emerald Ash Borer, another potentially devastating insect, has previously been found in forests further north than the park, but were found in a load of logs in nearby Knox County in July. This will result in a number of quarantines and other restrictions, but the spread of the insect will occur at some point and pose a new set of problems for the park.

Acidification of high elevation streams – Acid deposition continues to be a problem for forests in the park and throughout the region. Data indicates that 12 of the park's streams in Tennessee are listed as impaired. Data now being collected is expected to indicate a similar problem on the North Carolina side of the park. Studies are now underway to analyse the buffering capacity of streams in the park and investigate the acidification process to be used in developing more effective environmental policy to protect the park's resources.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 1:50 PM.