

Your Input Is Needed to Preserve The Great Smoky Mountains National Park!

The National Park Service has issued the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the North Shore Road through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The road would cut a swath 8 to 33 miles along the north shore of Fontana Lake. It would cause severe environmental damage to the largest unbroken tract of mountain forest on federal land in the East. Also, it would destroy a section of the AT, the Benton MacKaye Trail, 28 miles of the Lakeshore Trail, and many other trails. The CMC Council supports a Monetary Settlement for Swain County instead of a road.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement identifies a long list of severe impacts to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, if the road is built. These include negative impacts to wetlands, aquatic life, air quality, archeological and historical resources, vegetation, terrestrial wildlife, black bears and migratory birds. In particular, the DEIS says *“The baseline Northern Shore Corridor would have major, adverse, and long-term impacts to hiking.”* *“Over time, the loss of this backcountry area and the displacement of visitors to other areas would deteriorate resources, causing some active users to no longer recreate in GSMNP.”* *“While the loss of some resources could be mitigated, the intangible values and experiences that some Park visitors desire during their visit could not. Overall, visitor experience would be adversely impacted as a result.”*

Yet, the DEIS concludes *“none of the alternatives would harm the integrity of GSMNP or AT resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise would be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values. . . The Northern Shore Corridor is not anticipated to cause impairment to either GSMNP or the AT based on the information obtained to date.”* Your voice is important to point out this unfounded conclusion.

Send your comments in support of the Monetary Settlement/No Road Alternative.

Your feelings and opinions, in your words, are important. You do not need to be an expert. Written comments must be received or postmarked by **March 20**.

Include your name and address in your letter. Send your comments to:

North Shore Road Project
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
P.O. Box 30185
Raleigh, NC 27622

You can also submit your comments electronically at:

www.NorthShoreRoad.info/comments.htm

It's also important to send copies of comments to our legislators. The quote from the DEIS, above, shows that citizen input will be important in the final decision. Messages to our legislators on paper are preferable to electronic messages.

Senator Richard Burr
151 Patton Avenue
Suite 204
Asheville, NC 28801

Senator Elizabeth Dole
401 North Main Street
Suite 200
Hendersonville, NC 28792

Rep. Charles Taylor
22 South Pack Square
Suite 330
Asheville, NC 28801

Some issues that you might consider including in your comments are listed below. Explain your comments and be specific.

1. Include your name and address.
2. Mention that the Appalachian Trail, a unit of the National Park System, will be degraded and views along the AT would be impacted for many miles.
3. The road would destroy over 28 miles of the Lakeshore Trail, which is part of the long-distance Benton MacKaye Trail, and impact many other trails.
4. Express your feelings on loss of trails, backcountry campsites, and the primitive hiking experience.
5. Road construction will cause the loss of potential wilderness in the park. Most of the lake shore area is currently managed as wilderness due to the high quality and remoteness of that part of the park. Both the road corridor and the strip between the road and the lake will be removed from wilderness consideration
6. Talk about the flowers, vegetation, streams, scenery.
7. Tell a personal story about hiking or camping in the North Shore area and how a road would impact your experience.
8. The National Park Service has publicly acknowledged that the highway would serve no transportation need, and would jeopardize the agency's mission to protect the rich biological and cultural resources of the Park.
9. Support the monetary settlement. A cash settlement with Swain County meets the purposes of the study, and avoids all adverse impacts to the Park. It's the only alternative that will satisfy the Swain County Commissioners and the Governor of North Carolina.
10. Oppose all road alternatives, both the partial build and the full build. The Park Service has determined that all construction alternatives will have major, adverse impacts on Park resources.
11. Stress the permanent, ugly, high impact to the physical and natural environment of any road construction.
12. Expose the giant boondoggle involved in spending at least \$590, when the whole project can be ended by paying the much smaller sum of \$52 million to Swain County, NC. The \$590 figure includes some mitigation costs, but most mitigation costs are not estimated. Maintenance costs during the construction are also not included.
13. Mention that after spending all that money and 15 years of construction, the \$590 million will create only 223 new jobs. That's \$2.6 million per job.

The DEIS is available to download at <http://www.northshoreroad.info/documentsd.htm>. Section 4.2.5, Visitor Use and Experience, addresses hiking.

North Shore Road Background

In 1943, TVA, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the State of North Carolina and Swain County, NC signed a contract so that TVA could build Fontana Dam, flooding NC 288 in Swain County. TVA would acquire and transfer 44,400 acres of land to the Park. The Interior Department agreed to build a new road. North Carolina agreed to donate \$100,000 toward the acquisition costs of the land. Swain County agreed to accept the new road instead of monetary compensation.

By 1962, Interior had built about 7 miles of road, but worried about the damage caused by the construction. A panel of experts determined that additional roadway would be indefensible, and construction ended.

A rider was added to the Department of Transportation Appropriations Act for 2001, appropriating \$16 million for further construction of this road. After several phases of evaluation, Interior recently released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on further road construction. The purpose and need of the DEIS is “to discharge and satisfy any obligations on the part of the United States that presently exist as a result of the 1943 Agreement.”

The DEIS evaluated five alternatives.

1. No Action
2. A monetary settlement with Swain County of \$52 million
3. Building a Laurel Branch Picnic Area
4. Partial build of a road to Bushnell with day use area (8 miles)
5. Full build of a road to the vicinity of Fontana Dam (34.3 miles)

The Commissioners of Swain County, by a vote of 4-1, have asked for the cash settlement in lieu of any further construction.

Thank you for your support.

The CMC Conservation Committee

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