

---

National Park Service  
Cultural Landscapes Inventory

2014

Peaks of Otter Visitor Center  
Blue Ridge Parkway

---

## **Table of Contents**

Inventory Unit Summary & Site Plan

Concurrence Status

Geographic Information and Location Map

Management Information

National Register Information

Chronology & Physical History

Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

Condition

Treatment

Bibliography & Supplemental Information

---

## Cultural Landscape Summary & Site Plan

### Cultural Landscapes in the Cultural Resources Inventory System:

#### The Cultural Resources Information System (CRIS)

CRIS is the National Park Service's database of cultural resources on its lands, consisting of archeological sites, historic structures, ethnographic resources and cultural landscapes. The set of CRIS records for cultural landscapes is referred to as CRIS-CL. CRIS-CL records conform to a standardized data structure known as the Cultural

Landscapes Inventory (CLI).

The legislative, regulatory and policy directions for conducting and maintaining the CRIS are: Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, NPS Management Policies (2006), Director's Order 28 (Cultural Resources) and Director's Order 28a (Archeology).

#### The Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI)

The CLI is the data structure within CRIS used to document and evaluate all potentially significant cultural landscapes in which NPS has, or plans to acquire any enforceable legal interest.

Each CRIS-CL record is certified complete when the landscape is determined to meet one of the following:

- Landscape individually meets the National Register of Historic Places criteria for evaluation; or,
- Landscape is a contributing element of a property that is eligible for the National Register; or,
- Landscape does not meet the National Register criteria, but is managed as cultural resources because of law, policy or decisions reached through the park planning process.

Cultural landscapes vary from historic sites, historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes to historic ethnographic landscapes, but may also fit within more than one type. Those eligible for the National Register have significance in the nation's history on a national, state or local level, as well as integrity or authenticity.

The legislative, regulatory and policy directions for conducting and maintaining the CLI within CRIS are: *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 USC 470h-2(a)(1)). Each Federal agency shall establish...a preservation program for the identification, evaluation, and nomination to the National Register of Historic Places...of historic properties...*

*Executive Order 13287: Preserve America, 2003. Sec. 3(a)...Each agency with real property management responsibilities shall prepare an assessment of the current status of its inventory of historic properties required by section 110(a)(2) of the NHPA...No later than September 30, 2004, each covered agency shall complete a report of the assessment and make it available to the Chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Secretary of the Interior...*

*Executive Order 13287: Preserve America, 2003. Sec. 3(c) Each agency with real property management responsibilities shall, by September 30, 2005, and every third year thereafter, prepare a report on its progress in identifying... historic properties in its ownership and make the report available to the Council and the Secretary...*

*The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Federal Agency Historic Preservation Programs Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, 1998. Standard 2: An agency provides for the timely identification and evaluation of historic properties under agency jurisdiction or control and/or subject to effect by agency actions (Sec. 110 (a)(2)(A) Management Policies 2006. 5.1.3.1 Inventories: The Park Service will (1) maintain and expand the following inventories...about cultural resources in units of the national park system...Cultural Landscape Inventory of historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes,... and historic sites...*

*Cultural Resource Management Guideline, 1997, Release No. 5, page 22 issued pursuant to Director's Order #28. As cultural resources are identified and evaluated, they should also be listed in the appropriate Service-wide inventories of cultural resources.*

**Inventory Unit Description:**

The Peaks of Otter Visitor Center component landscape, one of eight component landscapes of the Peaks of Otter developed area, is located at the junction of State Route 43 and the Blue Ridge Parkway in the state of Virginia. While construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway through the Peaks of Otter began in 1939, the Visitor Center component landscape was primarily constructed between 1951 and 1957, with additions in 1960 (amphitheater), 1965 (restroom wing of the Visitor Center) and the early 1970s (trails and additional parking).

The Peaks of Otter Visitor Center component landscape forms the heart of the Peaks of Otter developed area, and provides visitors with a point of contact and orientation. The component landscape features the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center, the Peaks of Otter Country Store, an outdoor amphitheater, associated parking, and several trailheads. The Visitor Center houses a bookstore, museum exhibits, and ranger offices, while the Country Store—a former filling station—houses a small gift/snack shop and also sells tickets for the Sharp Top bus tour.

This component landscape is significant under Criteria A, C, and potentially D. The period of significance identified for the parent landscape—Peaks of Otter developed area—is 1939–1965, which encompasses initial parkway construction through completion of proposed developments consistent with early master plans for the site. Parkway design principles are conveyed throughout the developed area, including the Visitor Center component landscape, tying it to the broader 469-mile linear historic landscape. In addition, Peaks of Otter affords several of the key components that early designers considered important for motorists to experience when traveling the corridor, including opportunities for visitors to connect more deeply with the region through recreation and education, and to avail themselves of food, lodging, and other amenities.



## Property Level and CLI Numbers

|                                   |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Inventory Unit Name:</b>       | Peaks of Otter Visitor Center |
| <b>Property Level:</b>            | Landscape                     |
| <b>CLI Identification Number:</b> | 550211                        |
| <b>Parent Landscape:</b>          | 550239                        |

## Park Information

|                                  |                                                           |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Park Name and Alpha Code:</b> | Blue Ridge Parkway - Peaks of Otter Visitor Center - BLRI |
| <b>Park Organization Code:</b>   | 5140                                                      |
| <b>Park Administrative Unit:</b> | Blue Ridge Parkway                                        |

## CLI Hierarchy Description

The Peaks of Otter parent landscape –Peaks of Otter Developed Area – contains eight component landscapes: Peaks of Otter Campground, Peaks of Otter Lodge and Abbott Lake, Peaks of Otter Picnic Area, Peaks of Otter Visitor Center, Sharp Top and Nature Center, Flat Top and Fallingwater Cascades Trailheads, Henry A. Johnson Farm, and Saunders Farm.

The Sharp Top and Nature Center component landscape has been a tourist destination since the mid-1800s, with the nature center originally built in 1948 as a bus terminal at the foot of Sharp Top; it was converted to a nature center likely in the 1990s. Henry A. Johnson Farm was incorporated into the Blue Ridge Parkway in 1943, and today is a historically interpreted Appalachian farm northwest of the visitor center. The Saunders Farm was occupied until 1947 and is another historically interpreted vernacular farm east of the campground. Peaks of Otter Picnic Area was built between 1950 and 1955 east of the present location of Abbott Lake.

The Peaks of Otter Visitor Center was constructed in 1957, adjacent to a gas station that was constructed in 1951, at the intersection of the Blue Ridge Parkway and State Route 43. The prominent siting in an opening in the eastern deciduous hardwood forest on the base of Harkening Hill emphasized the function of the Visitor Center as a primary point of orientation for visitors to the developed area. The Peaks of Otter Campground was developed between 1954 and 1964 within a preexisting successional native hardwood forest. The Flat Top Trailhead was developed circa 1957, while the Fallingwater Cascades Trailhead was developed later, circa 1965. Peaks of Otter Lodge and Abbott Lake were both constructed in 1964 in a depression north of Sharp Top.

**Concurrence Status**

**Inventory Status:** Complete

**Completion Status Explanatory Narrative:**

Field work was conducted for all the landscapes and component landscapes at Peaks of Otter during Summer 2001 by David Hasty, Lucy Lawliss and summer interns Patrick Beasley, Tom Gibney and Lindsey Heller. The park contacts are: Al Hess, Historian, and Gary Johnson, Chief of Planning.

**Concurrence Status:**

|                                                 |                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>Park Superintendent Concurrence:</b>         | Yes                                      |
| <b>Park Superintendent Date of Concurrence:</b> | 03/24/2014                               |
| <b>National Register Concurrence:</b>           | Eligible -- SHPO Consensus Determination |
| <b>Date of Concurrence Determination:</b>       | 09/29/2014                               |

**National Register Concurrence Narrative:**

**Concurrence Graphic Information:**

Attachment File Path



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Southeast Regional Office  
Atlanta Federal Center  
1924 Building  
100 Alabama St., SW.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303



IN REPLY REFER TO:  
H22 (SERO-CRD)

5 September 2013

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Blue Ridge Parkway

From: Chief, Cultural Resource Division, Southeast Region

Subject: Cultural Landscapes Inventory – Peaks of Otter

We are pleased to transmit Cultural Landscape Inventories (CLI) for six component cultural landscapes at Peaks of Otter Developed Area: the Campground, Picnic Area, Visitor Center, Lodge, Flat Top and Fallingwater Cascades Trailheads, and Sharp Top and Nature Center. These CLIs were produced through a CESU agreement with the University of Georgia, using data from the Cultural Landscape Report treatment document that was recently completed and approved by the Parkway superintendent.

The CLI is an evaluated list of landscape properties in the National Park System eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NR) or that contribute to an existing historic property. In order for the CLIs to be certified, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) or Keeper of the NR needs to concur on the eligibility of the property for listing. David Hasty, CLI Coordinator for the Southeast Region, will send a request to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources for concurrence on the CLI findings.

The Park Superintendent also needs to concur on CLIs, including the condition assessment and management category provided within the inventory. A signature page is enclosed for Park Superintendent approval. The assessment form needs to be signed and returned to the Regional Office for final certification. If the findings of the CLIs, including condition assessment and management category are agreed upon, please sign the attached approval forms and return to our office to the attention of David Hasty.

Attachments



*Memo to Superintendent*

**CULTURAL LANDSCAPE INVENTORY  
CONDITION ASSESSMENT CONCURRENCE SHEET – 5 September 2013**

**Park Information**

**Park:** Blue Ridge Parkway  
**District:** Ridge  
**State:** Virginia  
**Counties:** Bedford and Botetourt

**Cultural Landscape Information**

| Inventory Name                                   | CLI Id # | Condition |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Peaks of Otter Lodge<br>and Abbott Lake          | 550209   | Good      |
| Peaks of Otter Picnic Area                       | 550212   | Fair      |
| Peaks of Otter Campground                        | 550215   | Fair      |
| Peaks of Otter Visitor Center                    | 550208   | Fair      |
| Flat Top and Fallingwater<br>Cascades Trailheads | 975832   | Good      |
| Sharp Top and Nature Center                      | 550210   | Fair      |

**Cultural Landscape Management Category**

Must Be Preserved and Maintained

**Park Superintendent Concurrence**

Concur ☒

Do Not Concur ☐

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent

3-24-14  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Superintendent Signature*



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Southeast Regional Office  
Atlanta Federal Center  
1924 Building  
100 Alabama St., SW.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
H22 (SERO-CRD)

26 September 2014

Ethel R. Eaton, Ph.D.  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
2801 Kensington Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23221

Dear Dr. Eaton:

Enclosed please find two paper copies and a digital file of the Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI) for the Peaks of Otter Developed Area of Blue Ridge Parkway (DHR NO. 2013-1145) near Bedford, VA. With the exception of Brinegar Cabin and the Moses Cone Estate, no Blue Ridge Parkway property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. A National Historic Landmark Nomination is underway, however, and this CLI will provide information for that effort. We seek your concurrence that the Peaks of Otter Developed Area is potentially eligible for listing in the National Register as a contributing element of an overall Blue Ridge Parkway Historic District.

The CLI is an evaluated list of landscape properties in the National Park System considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or that contribute to an existing historic property. In order for CLI data to become certified, National Park Service regulations require concurrence from the SHPO on the eligibility of these properties (please see attached memo).

Some sections of the CLI are written for park management and other NPS functions, but we ask that you look particularly at the Landscape Description, History, National Register and Analysis and Evaluation chapters, as they contain information more pertinent to your review. This CLI is comprised primarily of data from the Peaks of Otter Cultural Landscape Report (CLR). The CLR was completed in 2012 and approved by the Parkway superintendent and Southeast Regional Director.



*Virginia SHPO Signature page 1*

The Statement of Significance in the CLI proposes that the Peaks of Otter is nationally significant under National Register Criteria A and C as a designed historic landscape that met the physical needs of travelers as they traversed through the Blue Ridge Mountains. Peaks of Otter is nationally significant under Criterion A as a recreational node, a key design feature of the Blue Ridge Parkway; and Criterion C for the areas of Landscape Architecture and Engineering. The property is also potentially significant under Criterion D for the areas of prehistoric and historic archeology. For its association with travelers and its ability to provide them with a deeper connection to the area through recreation and education, the CLI considers the Peaks of Otter significant in the areas of Architecture, Conservation, Entertainment/Recreation, Landscape Architecture, and Transportation. The CLI defines the Period of Significance for Peaks of Otter as 1939 - 1965 AD, in order to encompass Parkway development at Peaks of Otter.

The CLI goes on to propose a list of contributing and noncontributing features for various landscape characteristics. Landscape characteristics include such categories as views and vistas, vegetation, spatial organization, circulation, buildings and structures, and small-scale features. These landscape features are found in the Analysis and Evaluation chapter, but for ease of review, these landscape features are also compiled separately as an attachment to this letter. The landscape characteristics of buildings & structures, circulation, and small-scale features correlate with National Register property types; we seek your concurrence that these particular features may be listed as contributing and noncontributing buildings, structures and objects in the forthcoming nomination. Other landscape characteristics, like views and vistas and spatial organization, do not fit so neatly into National Register property types, but the information provided for them in the CLI becomes useful when describing a property's integrity. We ask that you concur with these landscape characteristics as a potential portion of an integrity assessment, particularly for the aspects of setting and feeling.

In summary, we seek your concurrence on the following:

- The Peaks of Otter Developed Area contributes to the significance of a potential Blue Ridge Parkway Historic District.
- The Peaks of Otter is nationally significant under Criteria A and C, and possibly D.
- The Areas of Significance for Peaks of Otter are Architecture, Conservation, Entertainment/Recreation, Landscape Architecture, and Transportation.
- The cultural landscape retains integrity to the Period of Significance of 1939 - 1965 AD.
- Peaks of Otter retains landscape features that contribute to the property's historic character, and also contains noncontributing and undetermined landscape features (see attached table). These may be incorporated into a future nomination's list of buildings, structures and objects, as well as a description of the property's integrity.

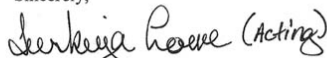
It should be stressed that these elements may be further updated and refined as they are incorporated into the ongoing National Historic Landmark nomination.

*Virginia SHPO Signature page 2*

With written concurrence from your office, these findings become certified in the CLI database. Your concurrence also gives us justification to use this cultural landscape information in the development of the NHL nomination. If you have any questions about these documents, please contact David Hasty, CLI Coordinator, Southeast Region (SER), at (404) 507.5780 or by e-mail at [david\\_hasty@nps.gov](mailto:david_hasty@nps.gov). If you do concur with the findings of this inventory, then written confirmation of that can be returned by fax at (404) 562-3202, or e-mail ([david\\_hasty@nps.gov](mailto:david_hasty@nps.gov)).

We greatly appreciate your office's assistance with the project.

Sincerely,



Dan Scheidt  
Chief, Cultural Resource Division  
Southeast Region

Attachments

I concur that the Peaks of Otter Developed Area is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing portion of a potential Blue Ridge Parkway Historic District, and also with the categorization of Peaks of Otter landscape features, as contributing, noncontributing, and undetermined.

  
Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer

29 September 2014  
Date

Virginia SHPO Signature page 3

Geographic Information

Geographic Information & Location Map

State and County:

|        |                 |
|--------|-----------------|
| State: | North Carolina  |
| County | Buncombe County |

Size (Acres)            4.46

Land Tract Number(s)

11-120

Inventory Unit Boundary Description:

The Peaks of Otter developed area encompasses the approximately 4,500-acre recreation area reservation that falls between mileposts 83.1 and 89.1 of the Blue Ridge Parkway. The developed area straddles the boundary between Botetourt County to the west and Bedford County to the east. Within the developed area, the parkway expands from a narrow road corridor edged by a narrow buffer that varies from 200 to 1,000 feet in width, to a large park-like land bay encompassing portions of the three mountain landforms that comprise the Peaks of Otter.

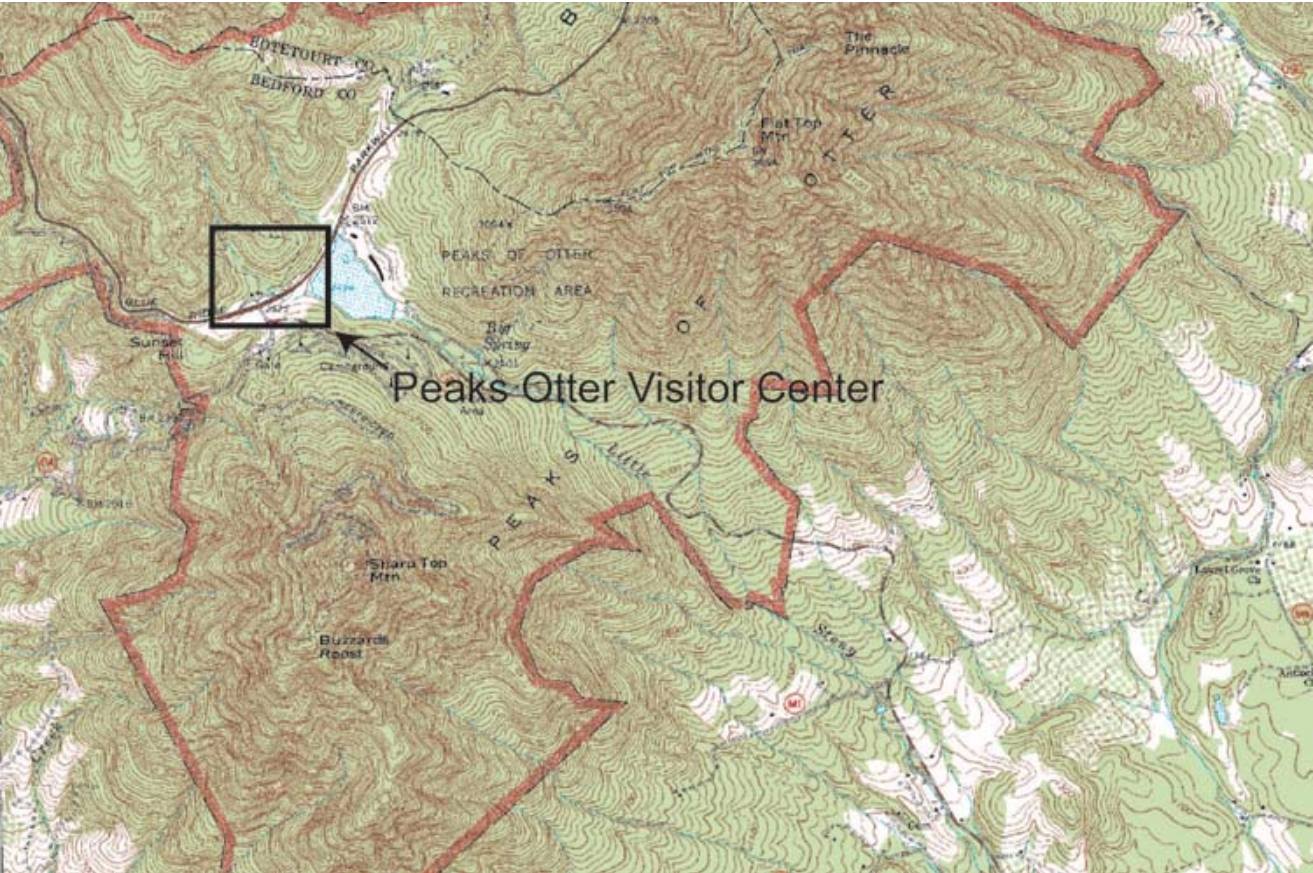
Within this six-mile segment of the parkway, the boundary begins to expand near milepost 82.3 at Wilkerson Gap, which is also the site of the trailheads for the Flat Top and Fallingwater Cascades trails. Near milepost 84, the boundary also expands to the east and west to encompass much of Flat Top and Sharp Top mountains and the southern slopes of Harkening Hill. The Parkway boundary pinches down again to a narrow corridor beyond Buzzard’s Roost and Sharp Top Mountain near Sunset Hill west of Abbott Lake, continuing thus for the remainder of the developed area.

The boundary of the developed area does not appear to follow any specific cultural or natural regulating lines. Land administered by the U.S. Forest Service as part of the Thomas Jefferson National Forest surrounds the parkway on all sides.

Within the developed area there are several concentrations of cultural resources, visitor services, and park administration and operations features that are the focus of the information contained in this report. These concentrations include the Fallingwater Cascades and Flat Top trailheads at mileposts 83.1 and 83.5, the Peaks of Otter Lodge and Abbott Lake, at milepost 85.6, and the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center, picnic area, campgrounds, and Sharp Top complex at milepost 85.9.

The Peaks of Otter Visitor Center component landscape, located at milepost 85.9, is bounded by Harkening Hill and successional forest on the north, east and west, and the Blue Ridge Parkway on the south. The Visitor Center sits at the junction of the Blue Ridge Parkway and State Route 43.

**Location Map:**



*Peaks of Otter Visitor Center*

**Regional Context:**

**Type of Context:** Cultural

**Description:**

The Peaks of Otter area has many features favoring human settlement. Its location at the edge of the Piedmont and the Appalachian Mountains made the area especially attractive, because the natural resources of each zone were within reach. The area is also important because it features a gap between the mountains, which provides a natural corridor for transportation. Finally, the Peaks area features the Mons Valley, a rare flat area in the mountains with permanent springs and streams. Archeological evidence from the Mons Valley demonstrates that prehistoric Native Americans repeatedly visited the area for thousands of years. Paleo-Indian, Archaic, and Woodland cultures used the area. In historic times, Monahassanoes, Monacans, Tutelo, and Saponi were some of the tribes known to have lived nearby.

Beginning in the 1730s white settlers began moving into the mountains of Virginia. Many of these people were of Scots-Irish or German ancestry. The earliest references to settlers in the Peaks area are from the 1760s. This area remained a predominantly agricultural region until the coming of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

**Type of Context:** Physiographic

**Description:**

The Peaks of Otter lies within the Ridge geomorphic province. This province is characterized by a rugged, steep, and narrow topography of moderate to low elevations. Vegetation at these elevations is an oak-hickory forest, with the dominant tree species being the yellow poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) or chestnut oak (*Quercus prinus*). Locally, magnolias and rhododendrons are present in great numbers. The Peaks of Otter lie very near where the Appalachian Mountains meet the Piedmont. Sharp Top, Flat Top, and Harkening Hill are three main mountains/hills of the area. The historic Mons Valley lies between the Flat Top and Sharp Top. Today it is partially filled by Abbott Lake. Little Stoney Creek flows from the dam impounding the lake, through a gap to the Piedmont. Eventually it flows into the Otter River and James River network.

**Type of Context:** Political

**Description:**

The Peaks of Otter straddles two Virginia counties, Botetourt and Bedford. Today the Peaks of Otter Recreation Area is one of the largest recreation areas on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

**Management Information**

**General Management Information**

**Management Category:** Must be Preserved and Maintained

**Management Category Date:** 03/24/2014

**Management Category Explanatory Narrative:**

## Agreements, Legal Interest, and Access

### Management Agreement:

**Type of Agreement:** Concession Contract/Permit

**Type of Context:**

#### Management Agreement Explanatory Narrative:

CC-BLRI004-13, from June 17 – 2013 to June 16, 2023, awarded to Delaware North Companies Parks and Resorts at Peaks of Otter Inc.

CC-BLRI004-88 (Former) From April 1, 1988 to November 30, 2012, operated by Virginia Peaks of Otter Company, a subsidiary of Weatherly Investments.

**Type of Agreement:** Special Use Permit

**Type of Context:**

#### Management Agreement Explanatory Narrative:

The Peaks of Otter developed area offers one-day special-use permits for certain approved events and activities.

### NPS Legal Interest:

**Type of Interest:** Fee Simple

**Narrative:**

**Located in managed wilderness?:** Unknown

**Public Access:**

**Type of Interest:** Unrestricted

**Explanatory Narrative:**

**Adjacent Lands Information**

**Do Adjacent Lands Contribute?** No

**Adjacent Land Narrative:**

## **National Register Information**

### **Documentation Status:**

Undocumented

### **National Register Explanatory Narrative:**

Neither the Blue Ridge Parkway nor any of its constituent component landscapes—with the exception of Brinegar Cabin at Doughton Park—are currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places. National Register nomination is currently pending for Flat Top Manor, part of the Moses Cone Estate.

However some documentation has occurred for the Blue Ridge Parkway including draft Historic Resource Studies crafted in 1993 and 2005, and a draft National Historic Landmark (NHL) nomination prepared in 2005. All of these cultural resource documents were prepared by Ian Firth, Professor Emeritus in the College of Environment and Design at the University of Georgia. The 2005 draft NHL nomination suggests the likely areas, aspects, and period of significance for the road corridor and associated resources. Whereas Firth's findings did not include Mission 66 era features, the 2012 CLR conclusions do find the Mission 66 era features contributing, hence they Mission 66 features within the Peaks of Otter developed area are considered significant.

There currently are two contracts in place to complete the NHL nomination: the first being a contract for an inventory of all buildings, structures, bridges, tunnels and overlooks, to support section 7 of the NHL nomination. The inventory project started in the Fall of 2012 and preparation of the National Historic Landmark nomination is scheduled to begin in the Fall of 2013.

### **Concurrence Narrative:**

**National Register Eligibility**

|                                          |                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>National Register Concurrence:</b>    | Eligible -- SHPO Consensus Determination                                               |
| <b>Contributing/Individual:</b>          | Contributing                                                                           |
| <b>National Register Classification:</b> | District                                                                               |
| <b>Significance Level:</b>               | National                                                                               |
| <b>Significance Criteria:</b>            | A - Associated with events significant to broad patterns of our history                |
| <b>Significance Criteria:</b>            | C - Embodies distinctive construction, work of master, or high artistic values         |
| <b>Significance Criteria:</b>            | D - Has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history |

**Period of Significance:**

|                                |                                            |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <b>Time Period:</b>            | CE 1939 - 1965                             |
| <b>Historic Context Theme:</b> | Creating Social Institutions and Movements |
| <b>Subtheme:</b>               | Recreation                                 |
| <b>Facet:</b>                  | Tourism                                    |
| <b>Other Facet:</b>            | None                                       |
| <b>Time Period:</b>            | CE 1939 - 1965                             |
| <b>Historic Context Theme:</b> | Creating Social Institutions and Movements |
| <b>Subtheme:</b>               | Social and Humanitarian Movements          |
| <b>Facet:</b>                  | Historic Preservation Movement             |
| <b>Other Facet:</b>            | None                                       |

**Time Period:** CE 1939 - 1965

**Historic Context Theme:** Developing the American Economy

**Subtheme:** Transportation by Land and Air

**Facet:** Carriage Roads, Touring Roads and Parkways

**Other Facet:** None

**Time Period:** CE 1939 - 1965

**Historic Context Theme:** Expressing Cultural Values

**Subtheme:** Architecture

**Facet:** NPS Mission 66

**Other Facet:** None

**Time Period:** CE 1939 - 1965

**Historic Context Theme:** Expressing Cultural Values

**Subtheme:** Architecture

**Facet:** Rustic Architecture

**Other Facet:** None

**Time Period:** CE 1939 - 1965

**Historic Context Theme:** Expressing Cultural Values

**Subtheme:** Landscape Architecture

**Facet:** NPS Mission 66--Landscape Architecture

**Other Facet:** None

**Time Period:** CE 1939 - 1965

**Historic Context Theme:** Expressing Cultural Values

**Subtheme:** Landscape Architecture

**Facet:** Protection Of Natural And Cultural Resources

**Other Facet:** None

|                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Time Period:</b>            | CE 1939 - 1965                    |
| <b>Historic Context Theme:</b> | Transforming the Environment      |
| <b>Subtheme:</b>               | Conservation of Natural Resources |
| <b>Facet:</b>                  | Scenic Preservation               |
| <b>Other Facet:</b>            | None                              |

**Area of Significance:**

**Area of Significance Category:** Landscape Architecture

**Explanatory Narrative:**

**Area of Significance Category:** Conservation

**Explanatory Narrative:**

**Area of Significance Category:** Transportation

**Explanatory Narrative:**

**Area of Significance Category:** Architecture

**Explanatory Narrative:**

**Area of Significance Category:** Entertainment - Recreation

**Explanatory Narrative:**

**Statement of Significance:**

As one of fifteen developed areas along the Blue Ridge Parkway, and one of just eight in the state of Virginia, the Peaks of Otter developed area is historically significant because its historic structures and cultural landscapes physically represent the full range of National Park Service recreational design from its inception along the Blue Ridge Parkway in the late 1930s through the height of Mission 66 development in the mid-1960s. Consideration of those historic events and associations of the Peaks of Otter developed area suggests an overall period of significance for the developed area from 1939 to 1965. This period extends from initial parkway construction to the completion of the majority of the recreation area resources as originally proposed by early parkway designers.

As a representative example of recreational development areas along the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center component landscape includes elements from the post-World War II era recreational design palette—the rustic Country Store and associated site features such as stone paving—as well as elements showing the influence of the Mission 66 modifications to this palette—the modified-rustic style Visitor Center and the blending of natural and machine made parts as seen in the wood slab benches mounted on

concrete block supports near the entry to the building.

The Peaks of Otter developed area, as well as the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center component landscape, is significant under Criteria A, C, and potentially D. The Peaks of Otter Visitor Center component landscape is significant under Criterion A as a recreation area along the Blue Ridge Parkway and as a destination for travel and tourism. The Peaks of Otter developed area was one of several recreation areas identified in the 1934 master plan for the Blue Ridge Parkway as key properties to be located along the parkway, and one of eight recreation areas proposed for the Virginia segment of the parkway. Over decades the Peaks of Otter developed area would grow to include the amenities first envisioned by parkway designers: food, lodging, and fuel, as well as trails, exhibits, and other recreational facilities.

Additionally, the Johnson Farm at the Peaks of Otter is significant as an example of living history interpretation by the National Park Service. Development of the Johnson Farm exhibit at Peaks of Otter was a part of the extensive efforts by the National Park Service in the 1960s to develop a living historical farm program. The Johnson Farm at Peaks of Otter was identified as part of the 1953 master plan for the parkway as a location where the recreational use of the parkway could be supplemented with educational experiences to enhance visitors' appreciation of the region, its history, and historic resources. Thus, the Johnson Farm is a significant and early example of a new type of interpretation and public education developed by the National Park Service for its historic sites.

The Visitor Center component landscape serves as an example of the historic significance of the Peaks of Otter developed area, representative of recreational themes such as providing visitor services and supplies, as well as Mission 66 landscape design and architecture. The gas station was constructed in 1951 to provide fuel, refreshments and supplies to visitors. The addition of the Visitor Center in 1957 and associated site features such as the parking bays, walkways, signage, site furnishings and interpretive information helped identify the site as a unit of the National Park Service on the Blue Ridge Parkway, which provided visitor services associated with the recreation area as initially envisioned along the parkway. The addition of the Amphitheater in 1960 further strengthened this embodiment of the Blue Ridge Parkway recreation node landscape typology. In summary, the Visitor Center component landscape exemplifies the principles of parkway design and recreational tourism planning and development through its landscape design, architecture, recreational and interpretive functions within the Peaks of Otter developed area.

The Peaks of Otter cultural landscape is significant under Criterion C in the areas of Landscape Architecture and Engineering. A character-defining feature of the parkway is the inclusion of more intensely developed locations for recreation and interpretation, of which Peaks of Otter is one. The Blue Ridge Parkway, including the Peaks of Otter developed area, was developed in phases that included the New Deal era period of planning and design and early construction, post-World War II continuation of work initiated during the New Deal era, and the completion of many outstanding components of the original plan during the Mission 66 initiative, which provided much needed funding. New Deal programs, including the CCC, contributed to the constructed features of the Peaks of Otter site. The Peaks of Otter developed area contributes to the significance of the Blue Ridge Parkway, a designed historic landscape that is currently being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as a NHL district. The Visitor Center component landscape has representative landscape features typical of the range of NPS recreation node design, including the rustic style Country Store, the non-operational but extant stone drinking fountain at the Country Store, and the stone culverts and drive edging in the landscape that represent the continuation of the initial parkway design style begun during the New Deal era and continued post-World War II; and the modified-rustic style Visitor Center and associated site features such as the wood slab benches on concrete block supports near the entry to the Visitor Center that are characteristic of the less ornamented, more streamlined, Modern design of the Mission 66 initiative.

Finally, the Peaks of Otter cultural landscape appears significant under Criterion D in the areas of prehistoric and historic archeology. Based on the discovery of American Indian artifacts within the Peaks of Otter developed area that can be linked to occupation and use of the area over thousands of years, the site appears significant for its prehistoric archeological information potential. The prehistoric archeological significance dates to at least the Archaic period, based on archeological studies conducted at the base of the Abbott Lake dam (Steven Kidd, "Trip Report on Archeological Field Work," 1-14, and David I. Bushnell, Jr., "Evidence of Early Indian Occupation near the Peaks of Otter, Bedford County, Virginia" [Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections 99, no. 15]). Additionally, the sites of historic farmstead settlement and hotel construction likely have historic information potential, which may range from the early eighteenth century through the 1930s. Further

archeological study is warranted to support additional evaluation of the Criterion D significance of the developed area.

While limited archeological investigations have been conducted within the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center component landscape, prehistoric artifacts were discovered during a planting project associated with the Visitor Center, and a former residence associated with the Mons community, known as the Agee Cabin, once stood in the area behind the Visitor Center and Country Store. Additionally, a small burial ground is located north of the Elk Hill Trail. Archeological evidence of the cabin, burial ground and any associated landscape features may exist within the component landscape, as well as additional evidence of prehistoric occupation. Further archaeological investigations will potentially yield both prehistoric and historic period information from the layering of multiple occupations at this site over time.

**State Register Information:**

**Identification Number:** DHR File NO. 2013-1145

**Name:**

**Chronology & Physical History**

**Cultural Landscape Type and Use**

**Cultural Landscape Type:** Historic Designed Landscape

**Current and Historic Use/Function:**

**Primary Historic Function:** Outdoor Recreation

**Primary Current Use:** Outdoor Recreation

**Other Use/Function** **Other Type of Use or Function**

**Current and Historic Names:**

| Name                                          | Type Of Name              |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Peaks of Otter Visitor Center and Gas Station | Both Current And Historic |

**Chronology:**

| <b>Year</b>    | <b>Event</b> | <b>Annotation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CE 1934        | Designed     | Final plan for Blue Ridge Parkway route drafted and approved. The master plan included the Peaks of Otter as one of eighteen proposed recreation areas ...Thomas Vint, Stanley Abbott, Gilmore Clarke (Landscape Architects) Jay Downer, William Austin (Engineers) |
| CE 1935        | Built        | Initial construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway began on a twelve-mile stretch of the road just south of the North Carolina/Virginia border near Low Gap, North Carolina                                                                                             |
| CE 1936        | Designed     | Blue Ridge Parkway Master Plan Update, including Peaks of Otter as a recreation area...Thomas Vint, Stanley Abbott, Gilmore Clarke (Landscape Architects) Jay Downer, William Austin (Engineers)                                                                    |
| CE 1939        | Demolished   | The Hotel Mons and surrounding structures were razed as construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway through the Peaks of Otter began                                                                                                                                     |
| CE 1939        | Designed     | General Development Plan for Peaks of Otter Park...Thomas Vint, Stanley Abbott (Landscape Architects)                                                                                                                                                               |
| CE 1943        | Designed     | Peaks of Otter Recreational Area plans...Thomas Vint, Stanley Abbott (Landscape Architects)                                                                                                                                                                         |
| CE 1944        | Designed     | Peaks of Otter Developed Area plans...Thomas Vint, Stanley Abbott (Landscape Architects)                                                                                                                                                                            |
| CE 1951 - *    | Built        | The gas station was constructed adjacent to the parkway                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| CE 1956        | Designed     | Site Development plans for Visitor Center... Charles Grossman, George Skillman (Architects)                                                                                                                                                                         |
| CE 1957        | Built        | The Peaks of Otter Visitor Center was constructed adjacent to the gas station.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| CE 1959        | Designed     | Amphitheater plans                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| CE 1960        | Built        | An amphitheater was constructed behind the Visitor Center.                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| CE 1961        | Designed     | Blue Ridge Parkway Master Plan Update, including Peaks of Otter alterations...Thomas Vint, Stanley Abbott, Gilmore Clarke (Landscape Architects) Jay Downer, William Austin (Engineers)                                                                             |
| CE 1964        | Designed     | Plans for restroom addition to the Visitor Center                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| CE 1965        | Built        | Restroom addition was made to the Visitor Center.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| CE 1970 - 1979 | Built        | Two additional parking bays and an accessible parking space added at Visitor Center in the 1970s.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| CE 2000 - 2005 | Abandoned    | The gas station at the Peaks of Otter was closed in the early 2000s.                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| CE 2004        | Altered      | The former gas station was reopened as a Country Store. The parking lot was repaved at this time.                                                                                                                                                                   |

## Physical History:

### The Peaks of Otter Visitor Center Component Landscape Site History

This physical history has been adapted from the 2012 Peaks of Otter Cultural Landscape Report Site History. The citations were converted from footnotes in the CLR to parenthetical citations in this CLI. As this physical history only covers the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center, for an overarching physical history of the Peaks of Otter Developed Area, refer to that parent landscape physical history.

In 1951 a gas station was constructed directly adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway at milepost 85.9 in the mountainous valley formerly known as the Mons community. The one-story structure with a wide covered porch was built of fieldstone and wood with a gable roof; gas pumps were built on the south face of the building on a raised stone island. A small parking area with spaces for four cars was built east of the gas station.

After World War II, the National Park Service increasingly emphasized interpretation within its parks. Visitor contact facilities staffed by park rangers that could provide information about the cultural and natural history of an area were conceived for several recreation areas including Humpback Rock, James River, Mabry Mill, the Museum of North Carolina Minerals at Spruce Pine, North Carolina, Craggy Gardens; Peaks of Otter Visitor Center was one of the six established along the parkway (Jolley 1969, 132-133). The first such facility constructed along the Blue Ridge Parkway was developed in the Manor House at the Moses H. Cone Memorial Park in 1951, while the fourth was constructed at Peaks of Otter in 1957. These buildings were typically designed in the modified NPS rustic style and one of the few building types intended to be seen from the road. The Peaks of Otter Visitor Center, a one-story structure designed by architects Charles Grossman and George Skillman, was constructed of wood and stone similar in style to the adjacent gas station. A parking area with spaces for nineteen cars was constructed southeast of the Visitor Center with an asphalt sidewalk connecting it to the flagstone terrace at the building entry.

Located in an ecologically diverse area, the original interpretive goal of the facility was to educate visitors about the delicate relationship between plants and animals (Jolley 1969, 132-133). Plantings proposed for the Blue Ridge Parkway corridor and the developed areas, such as the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center, focused on native species found locally, which would both tie the road to the natural environment and serve as the basis for education and interpretation. An outdoor amphitheater was constructed behind the Visitor Center in 1960 (Quin 1997, 199). The Elk Run Trail, which starts near the Visitor Center, was first developed in the early 1960s. A restroom addition to the Visitor Center was completed by 1965. Additional parking bays south of the Visitor Center and gas station and an accessible parking space west of the gas station were added sometime after 1973. In 1979, the restrooms at the Visitor Center were modified to accommodate for universal access. The gas station at the Peaks of Otter was closed in the early 2000s. In April 2004, the underground gas tanks were removed, the parking lot was repaved and new curbs were installed. A Country Store opened in the former gas station in May 2004.

## Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

### Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity Narrative Summary:

The Peaks of Otter Visitor Center component landscape, within the Peaks of Otter developed area, contains landscape features related to the landscape characteristics of Natural Systems and Features, Spatial Organization, Land Use, Cluster Arrangement, Topography, Vegetation, Circulation, Buildings and Structures, Views and Vistas, Small-Scale Features and Archaeological Sites. This section provides an overview of these existing features, as well as a discussion of their integrity related to the historic significance of the parent landscape, Peaks of Otter developed area.

### Landscape Characteristics

The Peaks of Otter Visitor Center component landscape exists within the natural systems and features as defined by three peaks—Sharp Top Mountain, Flat Top Mountain, and Harkening Hill—and the valley formed by their topography. Further, an eastern deciduous hardwood forest, and named and unnamed creeks and waterways associated with area have been present since the 1939-1965 historic period of significance. Although the forested area just north of the Visitor Center does not contribute to the significance of the historic landscape, the overall integrity of the natural systems and features in the Visitor Center component landscape remains intact and contributes to its significance.

The Peaks of Otter Visitor Center component landscape is spatially organized parallel to the parkway road corridor with parking directly adjacent to the parkway and visitor services located to the north beyond the parking. The entire Visitor Center component landscape is edged by eastern deciduous hardwood forest. The spatial organization and design has integrity to the original 1934 Blue Ridge Parkway Master Plan and the 1939-1965 construction of elements within the Visitor Center component landscape.

Associated with spatial organization is cluster arrangement. The clustering of landscape features around the Visitor Center is character-defining for the period of significance. The arrangement of the amphitheater in close proximity to the Visitor Center aided interpretive function of the two facilities, while the clustering of small scale features, such signs at vehicular entry points, and benches, a flagpole and signage at the entry to the Visitor Center, all of which are characteristic of other Visitor Centers along the parkway. The cluster arrangement has integrity to the 1939-1965 construction of the elements of the Visitor Center component landscape

Several topographic modifications are character-defining for the parkway period of significance and can be seen in the Visitor Center component landscape. These include the design of the roads, trails, and buildings to carefully fit into the landform and terrain, the use of level plateaus and mountain gaps to site developed-area features, and the sensitive use of site engineering, retaining walls, paving, and graded earth to minimize cut and fill, and dramatic changes to natural landform and topography. These kinds of topographic modifications are evident within the Visitor Center component landscape, and survive with integrity from the period of significance, hence they contribute to the significance of the historic landscape.

The majority of land uses present within the Peaks of Otter developed area today were established during the Blue Ridge Parkway period of significance and continue to function as designed providing visitors with services such as interpretation, parking, and the provision of restroom and refreshment facilities. Hence, land use contributes to the significance of the site.

Several circulation features located within the Peaks of Otter developed area were established during, and survive from, the period of significance and hence contribute to the significance of the historic landscape. The pedestrian and vehicular circulation patterns and materials throughout the Visitor Center component landscape, with the exception of the amphitheater, survive from the period of significance with integrity and contribute to the significance of the historic landscape. The amphitheater was rehabilitated and repaved with changes implemented up to and including electrical work in 1987 or 1988. While much of the layout of amphitheater circulation remains, the area has lost integrity and does not contribute to the significance of the historic landscape.

Vegetation within the Visitor Center component landscape that remains intact from the historic period includes the roadside hardwood forest and likely some of the median trees based on comparison of period photographs and plans. Additionally some trees around the Visitor Center and Country Store may remain from the 1957 Blue Ridge Parkway Landscape and Maintenance Plan. However, much of the original native plantings of sour gum, scarlet oak, pagoda dogwood, scarlet elder, huckleberry, common winterberry, spicebush, lowbush blueberry, azalea, sweet fern, virginia creeper and galax throughout the landscape appear to have been replaced after the period of significance

Regarding buildings and structures in the Visitor Center component landscape, other than the construction of the amphitheater in 1960 and the restroom addition in 1965, the Visitor Center is little changed, hence survives with integrity from the period of significance and contributes to the historic significance of the developed area. Although the roofline of the Country Store and the use of the building have been altered, the building continues to convey its historic character, and as one of the remaining gas stations along the parkway, it contributes to the

significance of the historic landscape. The culvert beneath the parkway northeast of the Visitor Center retains integrity and contributes to the significance of the historic landscape. The changes to the amphitheater, in addition to the increase in the amount of woodland around it, have resulted in the loss of integrity of that structure, hence it does not contribute to the significance of the historic landscape.

The siting of the cultural features within the Peaks of Otter recreation area was predicated in part on their visual connection to the summit of Sharp Top. Within the Visitor Center component landscape, views of Sharp Top and the nature center continue to be available from the porches of the Visitor Center and Country Store. Additionally, while views of Flat Top are no longer available from the buildings, these features can still be viewed from the parking islands and parkway median. These views generally survive with integrity and contribute to the significance of the historic landscape.

Small-scale features that are character-defining for the Peaks of Otter developed area are consistent with either the rustic design principles employed during the early years of parkway development, or the more streamlined unornamented machine-made features and materials representative of the modified rustic, or the Modernist design principles of the Mission 66 period. These small-scale features either address visitor needs, such as site furnishings; or are related to roadway use, including signage and utilities; or define space and place, such as the flagpole. Several small-scale features located within the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center component landscape survive from the period of significance with integrity, and contribute to the significance of the historic landscape. These features include stone curbing, two benches near the entry to the Visitor Center, stone-faced culvert headwalls, parkway milepost markers, and the flagpole at the Visitor Center.

Limited archeological investigations have been conducted within the Peaks of Otter developed area landscape. It is unknown if archaeological sites contribute to the significance of the historic landscape at the Visitor Center component landscape at this time. However, archeological evidence of the former Agee cabin, the Elk Hill Trail burial ground and any associated landscape features may exist within the component landscape, as well as artifacts from prehistoric occupation such as those already uncovered during a planting project at the Visitor Center.

#### Aspects of Integrity

Based on the comparative analysis of historic and existing conditions noted in the 2012 Peaks of Otter Cultural Landscape Report, the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center component landscape possesses integrity to contribute to the overall Peaks of Otter developed area 1939-1965 period of significance conveying its important historical associations. The provision of food and vehicle services, as well as the availability of interpretive exhibits and access to trails at the Visitor Center makes this component landscape an example of the realized intent of parkway designers. As a recreation area, the characteristics most critical to the integrity of the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center component landscape are those that support uses intended for inclusion by early designers—land use, circulation and buildings and structures.

1. Location: The Visitor Center component landscape possesses integrity of location based on the content of the 1934 Blue Ridge Parkway Master Plan, the subsequent Master Plan updates, and the 1939 General Development Plan Peaks of Otter Park Blue Ridge Parkway, and its subsequent updates. Its placement within and in relationship to the mountainous terrain and the landmark forms of Sharp Top, Flat Top and Harkening Hill remains as designed, as does its relationship to the intersection of the Blue Ridge Parkway and State Route 43.

2. Setting: The Visitor Center component landscape possesses integrity of setting based on the content of the 1934 Blue Ridge Parkway Master Plan, the subsequent Master Plan updates, and the 1939 General Development Plan Peaks of Otter Park Blue Ridge Parkway, and its subsequent updates due to the continued association with native woodland plant communities and the mountainous terrain of Sharp Top, Flat Top and Harkening Hill, the continuing relationship to the Blue Ridge Parkway corridor, and the continuing function of the site as a demarcation of the intersection of the parkway and State Route 43. The changes to the Country Store and amphitheater, the increased amount of woodland on the north side of the Visitor Center going up the slope of Harkening Hill and to a lesser extent the expansion on the east and west sides of the Visitor Center, and the changes to signs and site lighting, have somewhat diminished the integrity of setting.

3. Design: The Visitor Center component landscape possesses integrity of design based on the content of the 1934 Blue Ridge Parkway Master Plan, the subsequent Master Plan updates, the 1939 General Development Plan Peaks of Otter Park Blue Ridge Parkway and its subsequent updates, the 1956 Site Plan for the Visitor

Center and the 1964 plans for the addition of the restroom to the Visitor Center. The rustic style 1951 gas station (later converted to a Country Store) remains, although with some changes to the roofline which diminishes integrity of design. Site features associated with the post-World War II gas station/Country Store, such as the four-car parking bay east of the building and the flagstone entry paving remains as designed. The 1957 modified-rustic Visitor Center building remains, with a restroom addition added in 1965 within the period of significance. Site features associated with the Mission 66 influenced Visitor Center, such as the nineteen-car parking area east of the building, the vehicular circulation associated with the parking area and access to the parkway, the pedestrian circulation associated with the parking and access to the building entry, the flagstone entry paving and flagstone paving in the breezeway between the Visitor Center and the restroom, and small-scale features such as benches and the flagpole all remain as designed. The materials of all these landscape features is as designed, with the exception of the replacement of fieldstone curbing with granite curbing, as is seen throughout the parkway corridor in response to maintenance concerns. Even those changes do not significantly influence the integrity of the design. The changing styles and materials of the signage and site lighting, the changes to the amphitheater, the changes to the planting design at the Visitor Center, and the increase in the amount of woodland on the north side of the Visitor Center have somewhat diminished the integrity of design.

4. Materials: The Visitor Center component landscape possesses integrity of materials based on the material descriptions noted on the 1934 Blue Ridge Parkway Master Plan, the subsequent Master Plan updates, the 1939 General Development Plan Peaks of Otter Park Blue Ridge Parkway and its subsequent updates, the 1956 Site Plan for the Visitor Center and the 1964 plans for the addition of the restroom to the Visitor Center. The component landscape possesses integrity of materials primarily due to the continued existence of the Country Store and Visitor Center buildings with minimal changes to construction materials, as well as their associated site features such as the flagstone paving at both buildings, the benches and flagpole at the entry to the Visitor Center, the stone drinking fountain at the Country Store, the stone culverts throughout the landscape, the asphalt gutter west of the Country Store, and the parkway milepost marker. Changes to the Country Store roofline, the amphitheater, changes to the planting design at the Visitor Center, and the signs and site lighting have somewhat diminished the integrity of materials.

5. Workmanship: The Visitor Center component landscape possesses integrity of workmanship primarily due to the continued existence of the Country Store and Visitor Center and associated site features. The stone construction, as seen in the facades of both buildings, in the flagstone entry paving at both buildings, in the breezeway between the Visitor Center and the restroom addition, and in the stone culverts remains as installed and represents the construction techniques used throughout the Blue Ridge Parkway corridor. Additionally, the sculpting of topography in the component landscape continues to exist as an example of the methods used throughout the parkway corridor to accommodate buildings and parking returning quickly to surrounding grades with minimal changes to the natural terrain. Changes to the Country Store roofline and amphitheater seating, as well as to the planting design at the Visitor Center have somewhat diminished integrity of workmanship.

6. Feeling: The Visitor Center component landscape possesses integrity of feeling primarily due to the continued existence of the Country Store, Visitor Center and associated site features, the relationship with the surrounding eastern deciduous woodlands, the visual connections to the mountainous terrain and Sharp Top, Flat Top and Harkening Hill, and the activity of the Blue Ridge Parkway corridor and State Route 43 intersection. Taken together these elements and functions maintain the Visitor Center component landscape in a condition very similar to that present during the period of significance. The integrity of location, setting, design, materials and workmanship creates the integrity of feeling in the component landscape. The changes to the Country Store function and the amphitheater, signage and site lighting design and materials have somewhat diminished integrity of feeling.

7. Association: As with feeling, the Visitor Center component landscape possesses integrity of association due in large part to the integrity of location, setting, design, materials and workmanship exhibited by the Country Store and Visitor Center with their associated landscape features, in addition to the relationship with the activity of the Blue Ridge Parkway corridor and State Route 43 intersection, that all together create the historic association with the design of—and events happening within—the component landscape during the period of significance. The changes to the Country Store function and the amphitheater, signage and site lighting design and materials have somewhat diminished integrity of association.

**Landscape Characteristic:**  
**Natural Systems and Features -**

**Historic Condition:**The Visitor Center component landscape and associated features were built at the base of Harkening Hill between 1951 and 1957. While much of the component landscape was developed as a building and parking area complex, eastern deciduous hardwood forest, typical to the area, surrounded the development on the west and east sides. The north side of the development was open toward Harkening Hill while the south side opened to the parkway. The area north of the Visitor Center was allowed to reforest after the time of construction. An unnamed perennial stream ran along the eastern edge of the area, and was conveyed via a ditch beneath the parkway through a stone-faced culvert; east of the parkway, the stream joined with others into a marshy meadow, eventually joining Little Stony Creek. In 1964 Abbott Lake was constructed where the marshy meadow formerly existed, hence the stream has emptied into Abbott lake since its construction.

**Existing Condition:**The Visitor Center component landscape and its associated features, such as the amphitheater, continue to be located at the base of Harkening Hill, just north of the intersection of the Blue Ridge Parkway and State Route 43. The eastern deciduous hardwood forest continues to surround the building and parking area complex on three sides, with the south side open to the parkway. An unnamed perennial stream runs along the eastern edge of the development and is conveyed via a ditch beneath the parkway through a stone-faced culvert and east of the parkway empties into Abbott Lake. The summit of Harkening Hill and a prominent rock formation known as Balance Rock exist nearby outside the boundary of this component landscape. Hence the natural systems and features of the Visitor Center component landscape largely reflect the period of significance.

**Landscape Characteristic:**  
**Spatial Organization -**

**Historic Condition:**Spatial organization of the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center during the period of significance was influenced by the T-intersection of the Blue Ridge Parkway and State Route 43; the development was sited opposite the intersection as a focal point for visitors arriving from the east. The complex was designed parallel to the parkway, with the parking abutting the parkway, and the Visitor Center, a service station and restroom aligned parallel to the parking. An amphitheater, composed of a graded, tilted, ground plane facing a stage was located behind and adjacent to the Visitor Center and restroom building. The entire complex was bounded on three sides by woods, which formed a strong spatial edge behind the amphitheater and created a natural backdrop. There were scatters of small trees along the parkway frontage and an open area north of the Visitor Center between forested areas on the northwest and northeast sides of the area. **Existing Condition:**The spatial organization of the Visitor Center component landscape remains similar to its historic condition with a parking area parallel to the Blue Ridge Parkway and a series of buildings parallel to the parking area, including the Visitor Center, Country Store (conversion of the former service station in 2004) and restroom. Behind the Visitor Center is the amphitheater, a sculptural space composed of an evenly graded, tilted, ground plane facing a stage located adjacent to the building. Woodland frames the space, and the Visitor Center provides a modicum of privacy for outdoor orientation events and reduces the amount of road noise reaching the site. The entire complex is bounded on three sides by woods. Although a few scattered trees provide shade, planting in front of the buildings is minimal, and much of the complex is edged by mown grass. This allows for a clear view of the Visitor Center, which is intended as a primary site orientation destination. Because of the retention of the features noted above, the spatial organization of the visitor center component landscape maintains that of the period of significance.

**Landscape Characteristic:  
Cluster Arrangement -**

Historic Condition: Cluster arrangement during the historic period occurred in the grouping of the amphitheater with the Visitor Center, and the arrangement of small scale features. The amphitheater was added immediately north of the Visitor Center in 1960, three years after the Visitor Center was constructed, to provide a place for group gathering for presentations and other interpretive activities. Two benches, a flagpole and a sign were clustered at the entry to the Visitor Center, providing for visitor needs and aiding in identification of the Visitor Center as a component of the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Peaks of Otter developed area. Signs were also grouped on either side of the center vehicular access drive to the Visitor Center component landscape, providing direction and information for visitors. Existing Condition: Cluster arrangement remains largely as it was during the historic period. The relationship between the amphitheater and Visitor Center continues to exist, as does the clustering of small scale features near the entry to the building, with the addition of an informational kiosk to the group. The materials and design of signs throughout the component landscape has changed, but the cluster remains at the central vehicular access drive. Overall the cluster arrangement of the Visitor Center component landscape largely reflects the period of significance.

**Landscape Characteristic:  
Topography -**

Historic Condition: During construction of the parkway corridor in the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center area (1939-1941), topographic modifications included rock removal and grading of the road corridor and shoulders to create smooth connections to the natural contour of the land, and creating ditches to address storm water management. Construction of the Visitor Center complex further resulted in changes to topography, including grading to accommodate the parking areas, evenly-pitched sidewalks, level building sites, and the tilted plane of the amphitheater. Existing Condition: Historic topographic modifications continue to be evident within the Visitor Center component landscape include the parking areas, sidewalk, level building site, tilted planes of the amphitheater and storm water ditches that convey water beneath paths and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Because of the retention of those modifications, the topography maintains that of the period of significance.

**Landscape Characteristic:  
Circulation -**

**Historic Condition:**Roads developed during the period of significance include: the Blue Ridge Parkway constructed through this area circa 1939–1941 as a divided highway; the access roads and parking area associated with the Visitor Center; and State Route 43 which was relocated to accommodate construction of Abbott Lake in 1964. A small parking area was constructed between the Visitor Center and service station in 1951. The Visitor Center access road and parking areas southeast of the Visitor Center were completed in conjunction with the building by 1957. Like other parking areas along the parkway, the Visitor Center parking area was edged by stone curbing and asphalt walks that led to the front of the building. Flagstone terraces edged the front of the Visitor Center and the service station as a part of the original design. Walks linked the parking area with the entrances to the Visitor Center and service station, walks led through the Visitor Center to the amphitheater, and stepping stones led to the Visitor Center entrance from the access road, as well as to a flagpole in front of the building, all of which appear to have been built with the building in 1957. The asphalt walk leading from the Visitor Center to the nature center likely was built at this time as well. A universally-accessible parking space along the exit drive southwest of the service station and parking areas on the south side of the access drive incised in each of the parking islands were constructed sometime after 1973. The original fieldstone curbing was replaced in front of the Visitor Center with granite at an unknown date.

**Existing Condition:**Circulation features within the Visitor Center component landscape remain intact from the historic period, with the exception of parking additions made in the 1970s. The Blue Ridge Parkway runs generally east/west to the south of the Visitor Center component landscape. As it passes the Visitor Center, the parkway is configured as a four lane divided asphalt-paved road. Two 20-footwide travelways are separated by a grassy median planted with trees. This configuration is atypical of the parkway, which usually occurs as an undivided two-lane road. The additional lanes and median were part of the original design of the parkway to ensure that traffic moved smoothly through the intersection with State Route 43. Arising from the parkway near the T intersection is a two-way asphalt road that provides access to five parking bays associated with the Visitor Center and Country Store. The parkway is separated from the access route by mown-grass parking islands. A universally-accessible parking space exists along the exit drive southwest of the Country Store. The parking bays south of the Visitor Center are bordered by a mortared granite curb, while the others are bordered by curbs of mortared fieldstone. An asphalt ramp in the large bay just south of the Visitor Center connects a universally-accessible parking space to the Visitor Center breezeway. A mortared flagstone walk leads to the Visitor Center entrance. The walk connects the flagstone entrance porch and the breezeway, where it widens to about 18 feet. A small bump-out at the eastern end is composed of a lighter flagstone and accommodates an information kiosk. Two flagstone footpaths, composed of individual flagstones set in the mown grass, connect to the flagstone walk. One leads to the base of the flagpole, while the other leads toward the parking lot, where it connects to a narrow asphalt walk that cuts across one of the parking islands, eventually leading toward the nature center and Sharp Top Trail. The mortared flagstone base is in fair condition as the mortar is cracked in places and there is slight heaving of a few of the stones. A second mortared flagstone walk fronts the Country Store. The walk, which is level with the parking area, wraps around the south and west sides of the building. A narrow spur of the patio connects to an asphalt walk on the east side of the building. Asphalt sidewalks continue east and west from the end of the mortared flagstone walk in front of the Visitor Center and from the north end of the breezeway. The eastern walk edges the large parking bay to its north. A stone curb separates the sidewalk and the parking area. The Johnson Farm Trail, a hard-packed earth path, leads east from this walk, providing access to the Johnson Farm exhibit and the Peaks of Otter Lodge. The western walk connects to the mortared flagstone area in front of the Country Store; an asphalt ramp associated with the universally-accessible parking space in front of the Visitor Center also connects to this walk. A large maple tree is currently growing into the sidewalk, disrupting the asphalt surface. Another asphalt walk leads north from the Visitor Center breezeway before splitting into two paths. One leads into the woods and becomes the Elk Run Trail; the other leads into the amphitheater. The amphitheater is entirely paved in asphalt inset with benches. The Harkening Hill Trail begins at the northwest corner of the amphitheater; beyond the boundary of this component landscape is the summit of Harkening Hill and a prominent rock formation known as Balance Rock which are both accessible from the Harkening Hill Trail.

**Landscape Characteristic:  
Vegetation -**

**Historic Condition:**Deciduous hardwood forest existed on the east and west sides of the Visitor Center complex during the period of significance. On the 1957 Landscape and Maintenance Plan, several trees are shown scattered between the buildings and the parkway, and within the median of the parkway. Young deciduous trees, visible in 1965 and 1971 photographs in the parkway median, match the locations of many of the trees shown on the 1957 plan. The 1956 Planting Plan for the Visitor Center and amphitheater included sour gum, scarlet oak, pagoda dogwood, scarlet elder, huckleberry, common winterberry, spicebush, lowbush blueberry, azalea, sweet fern, virginia creeper and galax. Plantings proposed for the Blue Ridge Parkway corridor, and the developed area features such as the Visitor Center, focused on native species found locally, which would both tie the road to the natural environment and serve as the basis for education and interpretation. **Existing Condition:**Vegetation in the Visitor Center component landscape is characterized by deciduous hardwood specimen trees planted over mown grass in the parkway medians and parking islands, with smaller specimen trees and ornamental vegetation adjacent to the buildings and amphitheater. Several of the large hardwood specimen trees include red maple (*Acer rubra*), tulip poplar, and black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), many of which date to the period of significance. Small trees, such as flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*), are planted closer to the buildings. Native and ornamental shrubs are planted in wood-lined beds at the foundation of the Visitor Center and around the amphitheater, with species including pinxterbloom azalea (*Rhododendron periclymenoides*), rose (*Rosa* sp.), rhododendron (*Rhododendron* sp.), and mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*). Native vegetation is composed of the deciduous hardwood forest which surrounds the area to the north. Forest species observed in the field include the following: river birch (*Betula nigra*), cohosh (*Actaea racemosa*), huckleberry (*Vaccinium* sp.), American chestnut, dogwood, hickory, tulip poplar, red maple, beech, black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), chestnut oak, pin oak (*Q. palustris*), sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), post oak (*Q. stellata*), white pine (*Pinus strobus*), mountain laurel, deciduous azalea (*Rhododendron* sp.), deciduous magnolia (*Magnolia* sp.), spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), and several species of fern. Non-native, invasive species, including Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) and periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) were also observed in the area. Vegetation features within the Visitor Center component landscape that remain intact from the historic period includes the roadside vegetative conditions and likely some of the median trees. Some trees around the Visitor Center and Country Store may remain from the historic period, but the ornamental plantings throughout the landscape are more recent additions.

**Landscape Characteristic:  
Buildings and Structures -**

**Historic Condition:**The first building constructed in the Peaks of Otter developed area as part of the NPS Master Plan was the Peaks of Otter service station in 1951. In 1957 the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center, designed by architects Charles Grossman and George Skillman, was completed. The building was designed as a low, modest, stone-faced building in the modified rustic style that was used by the National Park Service in several post-World War II buildings. A concrete box culvert was installed circa 1957, in the southeast corner of the component landscape where the unnamed perennial creek passes beneath the parkway. Plans were developed in 1959 for an amphitheater behind the Visitor Center, which was constructed in 1960, and extensive changes have been made to the amphitheater at various times since its construction. In 1964, plans were developed for a restroom addition to the Visitor Center. The addition was constructed in 1965 on a separate foundation located northeast of the main Visitor Center and connected by a breezeway and an extended hip roof. A wooden footbridge was constructed north of this culvert sometime after 1971, where the Johnson Farm Trail crosses the creek. **Existing Condition:**The buildings located in the Visitor Center component landscape—the Visitor Center and Country Store, previously the service station—are only open to the public on a seasonal basis. The Peaks of Otter Visitor Center serves as a ranger office and exhibit hall. The Peaks of Otter Country Store is a gift shop and interpretive center. The Peaks of Otter Visitor Center houses a small museum and interpretive space,

restrooms, offices, and a lobby. The one-story, L-shaped concrete block structure is clad with fieldstone and wood board-and-batten siding. The main block is a gable-front, 29 foot by 36 foot rectangular structure. A stone chimney extends from the roof on the north side of the building. A fixed-glass wood-framed picture window with three wood-framed awning windows is located on the south facade of the gable-front portion of the structure. A wood door provides entrance at the setback covered main entryway. A 58 foot by 23 foot wing projects to the east. A covered breezeway extends north-south through the building, between the original building and the restroom addition. The gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles and the gable ends are clad with wood lap siding. Two groups of six wood-framed awning windows are situated on the north and south facades of the original portion of the structure. Two sets of two wood-framed awning windows are present on the north and south facades of the restroom addition. A metal door is centered on the west elevation of the original building, while two wood doors lead from the breezeway to the restrooms. Small wood signs with "men" and "women" carved in them are present on the doors. The gutters and downspouts on the building are wood. The Visitor Center is generally in good condition; however, there are instances where wood siding is detached. Organic growth is present on the wood siding near the base of the structure, particularly on the north side of the building. The wood gutters and downspouts show signs of water related decay. The Country Store is a one-story rectangular building, approximately 28 feet by 30 feet in plan, and has a covered porch that extends the length of the south side of the structure. Clad in fieldstone, the building has an asphalt shingle gable roof. Wood lap siding is present on the gable ends. A metal door is centered on the south elevation and flanked by operable wood windows. A similar window is centered on the east facade, while two metal doors lead to restrooms and a small window define the west facade. Painted wood lintels and stone sills are present at the windows. A stone chimney extends from the peak of the roof near the center of the structure. A small vending area, surrounded by wood fencing, is located on the southeast corner of the building. Structures located within the component landscape include the amphitheater behind the Visitor Center, a stone-faced culvert that runs beneath the Blue Ridge Parkway, and a wood footbridge that crosses the unnamed stream which runs along the eastern edge of the area. The amphitheater behind the Visitor Center contains a small projector stand, constructed of a stone-clad concrete base with a board-and-batten hood to protect the projector. The hood is painted grey to match the building, and has a hinged wood door on the front of the structure. A small wood board-and-batten extension containing a projecting screen for the adjacent amphitheater is situated on the north facade of the Visitor Center, flanked by a projecting wood fence. A concrete box culvert faced with rusticated stone and stone wing walls extends beneath both lanes of the parkway. The unnamed stream that edges the Elk Hill Trail is conveyed beneath the parkway through the culvert. The footpath that leads toward the Johnson Farm Trail crosses the unnamed creek via a wood pedestrian bridge. The 24 foot 7 inch long bridge, which measures 5 feet 6 inches wide, was built at grade and is a level plank structure with 3 foot 6 inch high wood plank handrails. Large flat stones are set at either end of the bridge as thresholds. The Visitor Center, Country Store and concrete box culvert structure all remain from the historic period and retain integrity. The amphitheater has been changed since the period of significance and does not contribute. The footbridges throughout the area have been installed since the period of significance; hence do not contribute to the integrity of the historic landscape.

**Landscape Characteristic:  
Views and Vistas -**

**Historic Condition:** The relatively level topography of the site and the open, mown character of the Visitor Center and Amphitheater allowed for views along and toward the parkway and the intersection with State Route 43. Views of Sharp Top and the nature center were designed to be seen from the porches of the Visitor Center and Country Store, framed and directed by the woodland vegetation enclosing the area to the north. Flat Top was also made visible from the parking islands and parkway median. **Existing Condition:** Views and vistas of the historic period are essentially the same today except that vegetation encroaching on the parkway in the west part of the Visitor Center component landscape blocks views of the mountain from the Visitor Center and Country Store; those views are still apparent from the parking area and parking medians. Encroaching successional forest in the filled in areas beyond those originally intended has also negatively impacted the originally designed views.

**Landscape Characteristic:  
Small Scale Features -**

**Historic Condition:** Several small scale features in the Visitor Center component landscape were installed during the period of significance including site furnishings, signs, and utilities. The flagpole at the Visitor Center was installed presumably as a component of the overall site work done in 1957. Two wood benches were installed adjacent to the east end of the mortared flagstone path in front of the Visitor Center during the period of significance, circa 1957. A Blue Ridge Parkway concrete milepost marker was built as a part of a system originally installed in 1947. A small metal interpretive sign was installed in the 1970s as a part of a self-guided trail system along the Elk Run nature trail. An asphalt gutter was installed along the west edge of the parking area southwest of the service station in 1957. Two piped culverts were constructed in addition to the larger culvert running under the parkway discussed in the buildings and structures section. One culvert with stone face was installed along Elk Run Trail, and one stone culvert was installed at the east end of the parking island. Stone curbing along the parking bays on the north side of the parking area was installed as a component of the overall site work done in 1957. **Existing Condition:** Although many of the original small-scale features associated with the Visitor Center component landscape are extant, several others have been added over time, collectively composed of site furnishings, fences and gates, signs, interpretive elements, lighting, and utilities. Several types of benches are located in this component landscape. Two 17-inch-high, backless wood benches are located adjacent to the east end of the mortared flagstone path in front of the Visitor Center, each constructed of a single plank, 1 foot wide and 7 feet long, with two concrete block supports. A similar bench is located on the flagstone patio at the Country Store; this backless bench is painted grey and is composed of two 2"x8" planks set on wood supports. Within the amphitheater, rows of backless benches set in concentric arcs face the flagstone stage area. The benches are composed of 7-foot sections of grey recycled plastic planks supported by two black-painted concrete blocks and arranged to form curved rows. A bear-proof trash receptacle is located along the asphalt walk adjacent to the largest parking bay east of the Visitor Center. It is a brown powder-coated steel box, approximately 3 feet square and 4 feet tall, with a chute that overhangs the unit by about 1 foot. Four wood whiskey-barrels, a single plastic trash receptacle, and a grey plastic Smokers' Outpost® urn stand in front of the Country Store for visitor use. An ash/trash receptacle with decorative aggregate panels is located in front of the main entrance of the Visitor Center. Other site furnishings in the component landscape include a flagpole and two wall-mounted stainless steel drinking fountains. One is a single-level fountain with a side push button mounted to the front of the Country Store; while the other is a bi-level fountain with front push buttons mounted between the restrooms in the Visitor Center breezeway. The aluminum flagpole stands in front of the Visitor Center within a circular mortared flagstone pad. The flagpole is painted grey and is in good condition, although there are a few spots of rust where the paint has chipped. The only fence located in the component landscape is a picket fence constructed on top of a low stone wall, located on the southeast corner of the Country Store building. The L-shaped fence measures 6 feet high, and was likely constructed as a screen for an ice or vending machine that stood on the concrete pad enclosed by the fence. It is painted grey and has two

small signs nailed to the front, one reading "Ice" and the other "Refreshments." The low stone wall at its base was once part of a stone drinking fountain. The fountain portion of the wall, measuring 4 feet high and 20 inches wide, is still in place, but has a large stone mortared over the top which renders it unusable. A variety of signs are located within the Visitor Center component landscape. These include identity, wayfinding, regulatory, and interpretive signs. The sign types and materials represented are consistent with signs found in other areas at the Peaks of Otter developed area and throughout the Blue Ridge Parkway. The identity signs are double-sided wood signs, located along the parkway, that indicate the Visitor Center and Country Store. These signs, one measuring 2 feet by 5 feet, the other 2 feet by 6-½ feet, are composed of two round-cornered boards (constructed of a particle board backed with plywood) mounted back to back on 6"x6" posts. The boards and support posts are painted grey, while letters on the signs, routed into the particle board in the standard Blue Ridge Parkway font, are painted white. The sign in front of the Country Store has the Blue Ridge Parkway emblem routed into the board in addition to the letters, but the emblem is painted "Parkway blue" (a dark blue intended to "simulate the deep blue of the mountains in the late evening") rather than white. The sign identifying the Visitor Center has the National Park Service shield bolted to the left portion of both panels. A similar doubled-sided sign stands adjacent to the flagpole. The boards of this sign are composed of a white vinyl sandwiched between outer layers of grey vinyl. Letters are routed out of the grey layer in the standard Blue Ridge Parkway font, exposing the white underneath. The vinyl signs are rectangular with rounded corners, and mounted back-to-back on two 6"x8" wood posts driven into the ground. Directional signs are found throughout the Peaks of Otter developed area. These are typically constructed of both wood and vinyl. They are located at trail intersections and along the parkway. Two single-sided vinyl signs are also located in the component landscape, both of which give the direction or distance to various points of interest within the developed area. One is located at the head of the Johnson Farm Trail, the other north of the Visitor Center breezeway. Each sign is mounted on a single 6"x6" wood post. There is also a double-sided NPS sign indicating the presence of a pay phone at the Visitor Center. Each mile of the Blue Ridge Parkway is identified with a concrete milepost marker. One of these is located near the western exit drive, denoting milepost 86. The marker is a 39-inch-high, triangular cast concrete column with 4-inch-high routed milepost numbers painted on two faces. The numbers are painted Parkway blue to be visible to visitors in passing vehicles. Several wayside exhibits are located within the component landscape. Adjacent to the Visitor Center breezeway is a three-sided upright triangular wood kiosk, composed of 42 inch by 54 inch panels, set within 7-foot-high wood posts. Two sides are panels with orientation information, while the third side is a glassed case, used to display seasonal and other rotating information. The case has a continuous-hinge door with a lock and clear front. Another interpretive panel stands alongside the asphalt path between the Visitor Center and Country Store. This low-profile sign is oriented to face the intersection of the parkway and State Route 43. The fiberglass panel contains text and images about the development of the Peaks of Otter site and is positioned at an angle in a brown powder-coated steel frame set in the ground within concrete footers. A third wayside panel stands behind the amphitheater at the Harkening Hill trailhead. This upright panel, supported between two grey-painted, 7 foot-high, 6"x6" wood posts, features a map of the Harkening Hill Loop and Elk Run Nature Trails, as well as trail connections to other parts of the Peaks of Otter developed area. The text is painted in white letters in the standard Blue Ridge Parkway fo

**Landscape Characteristic:  
Land Use -**

Historic Condition: Land use during the period of significance focused on visitor services offered through the Visitor Center, the restroom building, easy parking and a service station, as well as education and interpretation both in the Visitor Center and outside in the amphitheater. Located in an ecologically diverse area, the original interpretive goal of the facility was to educate visitors about the delicate relationship between plants and animals. Existing Condition: Current land use largely reflects the period of significance as core functions in the Visitor Center component landscape. The primary land uses associated with the component landscape include: interpretive/museum/education found in conjunction with the amphitheater and the orientation exhibits located at the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center; administrative offices located within the Visitor Center; and visitor services provided at the Visitor Center, including restroom facilities and drinking fountains. Commercial uses occur within the Peaks of Otter Country Store, a gift shop that sells snacks and a variety of souvenir items, as well as tickets for the Sharp Top bus tour. Recreational uses are associated with the pedestrian trails that begin in this area, including the Harkening Hill Trail and Elk Run Trail. A remnant family burial ground exists just outside this component landscape along Elk Hill Trail.

**Condition**

**Assessment Interval (Years):** 8

**Next Assessment Due Date:** 03/24/2022

**Condition Assessment and Impacts**

**Condition Assessment:** Fair

**Assessment Date:** 03/24/2014

**Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:**

NOTE: CLI Assessment Interval extended in FY 20 to 8 yrs. Peaks of Otter landscapes are in stable condition, but deserving of a site visit to reassess condition and also to map in GIS. This visit would also include completion of other Peaks landscapes not yet in CRIS (Johnson & Saunders Farms, ...) A project for a time when SERO regains staffing to complete.

All resources are in good condition unless otherwise noted.

**Deferred Maintenance (Internal)**

There is damage to the mortar of the flagstone patio outside the Visitor Center.

The flagstone stepping stones leading to the Visitor Center are overgrown with and below the grade of the surrounding grass.

A large maple tree is currently growing into the asphalt sidewalk running west from the Visitor Center entrance to the Country Store, disrupting the asphalt surface.

The aluminum flagpole in front of the Visitor Center is painted grey and is in good condition, although there are a few spots of corrosion where the paint has chipped.

A mortared flagstone walk leads to the Visitor Center entrance. The base is in fair condition; the mortar is cracked in places and there is slight heaving at a few of the stones.

The trail that leads north from the parking area is in fair to poor condition.

There is some cracked and/or broken material associated with the asphalt gutter. Drop inlets and other storm water management features associated with parking spaces, lots and culverts have some obstructions.

There are some broken, dislodged, and damaged stones in the stone curbing edging the parking areas, as well as damaged, lost or inappropriately repaired mortar joints.

The benches at the entry to the Visitor Center are no longer level.

The bench along Elk Run Trail has a rotted wood support and is no longer level.

The interpretive sign along Elk Run Trail is missing a text panel.

#### Erosion (External)

There are erosion problems associated with the storm water management ditch north of the parking area, as well as the amphitheater area, where drainage is being funneled along the rear façade of the Visitor Center.

There is some erosion along Elk Run Trail, as well as at the base of the interpretive sign along the trail.

#### Exposure to Elements (External)

The Visitor Center is generally in good condition; however, there are instances where wood siding is detached. Organic growth is present on the wood siding near the base of the structure, particularly on the north side of the building. The wood gutters and downspouts show signs of water related decay.

The asphalt sidewalk edging the western parking bays that leads to the terrace in front of the Visitor Center is in fair to poor condition.

#### Improper Drainage (Internal)

Drainage is being funneled along the rear façade of the Visitor Center from the amphitheater. Some wood boards on the north side of the Visitor Center have rotted, and there is some damage to pavement mortar on the north side of the Visitor Center, due to this storm water flow from the amphitheater.

#### Inappropriate Maintenance (Internal)

The asphalt pavement of the access road and parking areas has become partially covered by successive layers of asphalt, raising the grade and altering the height of the stone curbing.

The stone drinking fountain at the Country Store has a large stone mortared over the top which renders it unusable.

#### Soil Compaction (Both Internal and External)

Social trails have been established in some areas of the component landscape.

### Stabilization Measures:

## Impacts

**Type of Impact:** Deferred Maintenance

**Other Impact:**

**External or Internal:** Internal

**Impact Description:** There is damage to the mortar of the flagstone patio outside the Visitor Center.

The flagstone stepping stones leading to the Visitor Center are overgrown with and below the grade of the surrounding grass.

A large maple tree is currently growing into the asphalt sidewalk running west from the Visitor Center entrance to the Country Store, disrupting the asphalt surface.

The aluminum flagpole in front of the Visitor Center is painted grey and is in good condition, although there are a few spots of corrosion where the paint has chipped.

A mortared flagstone walk leads to the Visitor Center entrance. The base is in fair condition; the mortar is cracked in places and there is slight heaving at a few of the stones.

The trail that leads north from the parking area is in fair to poor condition.

There is some cracked and/or broken material associated with the asphalt gutter. Drop inlets and other storm water management features associated with parking spaces, lots and culverts have some obstructions.

There are some broken, dislodged, and damaged stones in the stone curbing edging the parking areas, as well as damaged, lost or inappropriately repaired mortar joints.

The benches at the entry to the Visitor Center are no longer level.

The bench along Elk Run Trail has a rotted wood support and is no longer level.

The interpretive sign along Elk Run Trail is missing a text panel.

**Type of Impact:** Erosion

**Other Impact:**

**External or Internal:** External

**Impact Description:** There are erosion problems associated with the storm water management ditch north of the parking area, as well as the amphitheater area, where drainage is being funneled along the rear façade of the Visitor Center. There is some erosion along Elk Run Trail, as well as at the base of the interpretive sign along the trail.

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of Impact:       | Exposure to Elements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Other Impact:         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| External or Internal: | External                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Impact Description:   | The Visitor Center is generally in good condition; however, there are instances where wood siding is detached. Organic growth is present on the wood siding near the base of the structure, particularly on the north side of the building. The wood gutters and downspouts show signs of water related decay. The asphalt sidewalk edging the western parking bays that leads to the terrace in front of the Visitor Center is in fair to poor condition. |
| Type of Impact:       | Improper Drainage                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Other Impact:         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| External or Internal: | Internal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Impact Description:   | Drainage is being funneled along the rear façade of the Visitor Center from the amphitheater. Some wood boards on the north side of the Visitor Center have rotted, and there is some damage to pavement mortar on the north side of the Visitor Center, due to this storm water flow from the amphitheater.                                                                                                                                               |
| Type of Impact:       | Inappropriate Maintenance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Other Impact:         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| External or Internal: | Internal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Impact Description:   | The asphalt pavement of the access road and parking areas has become partially covered by successive layers of asphalt, raising the grade and altering the height of the stone curbing. The stone drinking fountain at the Country Store has a large stone mortared over the top which renders it unusable.                                                                                                                                                |
| Type of Impact:       | Soil Compaction                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Other Impact:         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| External or Internal: | Both Internal and External                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Impact Description:   | Social trails have been established in some areas of the component landscape.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

Stabilization Costs

Treatment

Treatment

|                              |                           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Approved Treatment:          | Rehabilitation            |
| Approved Treatment Document: | Cultural Landscape Report |

**Document Date:** 2013-01-18

**Approved Treatment Document Explanatory Narrative:**

According to the 2012 Peaks of Otter Cultural Landscape Report rehabilitation is recommended as the most appropriate overarching treatment approach for the Peaks of Otter developed area to assist the park's need to meet current and projected future interpretive, functional, and management goals. Because rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property, this approach allows for protection of the site's historic character and resources while carefully addressing the need for limited enhancement of interpretive opportunities and circulation routes, ecological maintenance and restoration, and the improvement of visitor amenities.

As part of rehabilitation, stabilization, protection, and preservation of historic and natural resources are assumed even when new uses are accommodated. Areas of the landscape that are particularly sensitive to change and disturbance, such as sites of known and potential archeological resources, should be treated with great care. In general, the CLR recommends preservation of archeological resources unless a compelling research question or informational need justifies disturbance or excavation, or mitigation to accommodate unavoidable change is necessary.

In considering the other treatment alternatives recognized by the Secretary of the Interior for the Peaks of Otter developed area cultural landscape, the CLR found them inappropriate for the following reasons:

Preservation is overly restrictive because it does not allow for the changes associated with interpretation and access currently proposed by the park.

Restoration and reconstruction are not practical because they assume, as a prerequisite, that sufficient documentation exists to accurately portray a lost historic condition. At this time, it does not appear that there are documentary sources detailed enough to support comprehensive restoration or reconstruction of the park's cultural landscape to a particular time period, and removal of some features that postdate the likely period of significance is not currently recommended.

**Approved Treatment Completed:** No

**Approved Treatment Costs**

**Landscape Approved Treatment Cost Explanatory Description:**

According to the 2012 Peaks of Otter Cultural Landscape Report rehabilitation is recommended as the most appropriate overarching treatment approach for the Peaks of Otter developed area to assist the park's need to meet current and projected future interpretive, functional, and management goals. Because rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property, this approach allows for protection of the site's historic character and resources while carefully addressing the need for limited enhancement of interpretive opportunities and circulation routes, ecological maintenance and restoration, and the improvement of visitor amenities.

As part of rehabilitation, stabilization, protection, and preservation of historic and natural resources are assumed even when new uses are accommodated. Areas of the landscape that are particularly sensitive to change and disturbance, such as sites of known and potential archeological resources, should be treated with great care. In general, the CLR recommends preservation of archeological resources unless a compelling research question or informational need justifies disturbance or excavation, or mitigation to accommodate unavoidable change is necessary.

In considering the other treatment alternatives recognized by the Secretary of the Interior for the Peaks of Otter developed area cultural landscape, the CLR found them inappropriate for the following reasons:

Preservation is overly restrictive because it does not allow for the changes associated with interpretation and access currently proposed by the park.

Restoration and reconstruction are not practical because they assume, as a prerequisite, that sufficient documentation exists to accurately portray a lost historic condition. At this time, it does not appear that there are documentary sources detailed enough to support comprehensive restoration or reconstruction of the park's cultural landscape to a particular time period, and removal of some features that postdate the likely period of significance is not currently recommended.

**Bibliography and Supplemental Information**

**Bibliography**

|                             |                                                                    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Citation Title:</b>      | See Peaks of Otter parent landscape for a full list of references. |
| <b>Year of Publication:</b> |                                                                    |