

Haywood County Tourism Development Authority



*Where the Sun Rises
on the Smokies*

**MAGGIE VALLEY · WAYNESVILLE
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NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT:

Scotty Medford Ellis
Executive Director
(828) 452-0152

Haywood County Tourism Agency Donates \$15,000 to Blue Ridge Parkway *Money to Help Improve Overlook Vistas Along Area's Popular Tourist Attraction*

HAYWOOD COUNTY, N.C. (April 30, 2007)—Scotty Medford Ellis, executive director of the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority, presented Blue Ridge Parkway Superintendent Philip Francis with a \$15,000 check Monday afternoon at the Cold Mountain Overlook.

The Cold Mountain Overlook, located at Milepost 412 near the Parkway entrance at U.S. 276, perfectly illustrates why the money donated by the TDA is needed and how it will be used, Francis said.

A few minutes before accepting the check, Francis said, a driver pulled into the overlook parking area and desperately wanted to take a photograph of Cold Mountain, popularized by Charles Frazier's best-selling novel and its silver screen adaptation. Because of overgrown flora blocking the vista, the tourist had to stand atop his vehicle, Francis added.

Due to budget constraints, Parkway officials have lacked the necessary resources to dedicate to trimming plants and trees blocking the views from the overlooks. But the \$15,000 donated by the TDA board of directors this week will aid in restoring the spectacular views available to motorists from many of the 20 overlooks along the 46 miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway in Haywood County.

"The Blue Ridge Parkway is one of Haywood County's top attraction," Ellis said. "It appeals to a wide array of people, from families to motorcyclists to outdoor enthusiasts. But it's hard to see the vistas these days. Hopefully, our contribution will enable visitors to enjoy the wonderful views and take photos more easily."

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Francis said that the funds will permit Parkway staff to spend time reducing the height of plants and trees at the overlooks as well as installing more low-growing flora that require less maintenance in the future.

“The Parkway attracts 21 million visitors every year, and the number one thing they come for is the views,” Francis said. “And this will result in a lot more beautiful sights at the end of the day.”

Francis said he hopes the TDA’s initiative spurs tourism agencies in the 29 other counties along the 469-mile Blue Ridge Parkway to take similar measures.

“The Haywood County TDA has really set a good model,” he said.

Ellis agreed: “We’re excited that we are able to do this for the visitors to our county and the section of the Parkway that runs through it, but we hope other counties follow our lead and do the same for the Parkway in their areas.”

The TDA board has budgeted another \$15,000—generated from occupancy taxes collected by lodging accommodations in Haywood County—for the Blue Ridge Parkway and its Haywood County overlooks in the 2007-08 fiscal year.

Haywood County, “Where the Sun Rises on the Smokies,” was established in 1808 and is located in Western North Carolina. The county consists of four towns—Canton, Clyde, Maggie Valley, and Waynesville. The county’s southern border meets the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Great Smoky Mountains. It is bordered by the Pisgah National Forest to the north and the Nantahala National Forest to the west. Known for its 19 mountain peaks and rich Appalachian heritage, Haywood County boasts the most peaks over 5,000 feet east of the Rockies.

For more information about Haywood County, please call (800) 334-9036 or visit www.smokeymountains.net.

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