



## Adopt an Overlook Blue Ridge Parkway

### THANK YOU

Thank You for volunteering to maintain an overlook under the Adopt-an-Overlook (AaO) program of the Blue Ridge Parkway in cooperation with FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Your dedicated attention and your gifts of time are greatly appreciated. You are helping to keep the BRP overlooks clean and attractive for public use and enjoyment by thousands of appreciative travelers.

By diligently maintaining your overlook, you stand as one of its most important advocates and protectors. Without your vigilant attention, your overlook might soon be overrun with unsightly litter and dangerous debris. The Blue Ridge Parkway experience wouldn't be the same without you!

### BACKGROUND AND PURPOSES

The National Park Service, Blue Ridge Parkway, manages and maintains 272 overlooks. These overlooks range in use from scenic pull-offs to regularly-used trailheads. The BRP maintenance staff is officially tasked with cleaning overlooks as their schedules permit, however, the Parkway seeks help from volunteers willing to take on the task.

Therefore, the purposes of the AaO program include (1) decreasing the backlog of overlook maintenance needs, (2) improving the function and appearance of overlooks for visitor enjoyment, (3) releasing Park Service maintenance employees to accomplish other tasks requiring higher skills, (4) developing community partnerships which instill a sense of pride in public ownership of the Parkway, (5) and expanding the National Park Service presence on the Parkway and its overlooks and trails.

### HOW THE AaO PROGRAM WORKS

Adoption by Individuals or Groups. An overlook may be adopted by a single individual, family or other group. Each AaO-adoption by a group or family needs to have a group leader who coordinates efforts and ensures that all forms are completed and procedures followed. Volunteer hours are recorded by our office, please log hours online or with the Overlook Maintenance Report Form.

Length of Commitment. An adopting individual, family, club, organization or group must be willing to commit to their overlook for a period of at least one year. Unless FRIENDS/BRP receives notice otherwise, it is assumed that the commitment will continue from year to year. You will receive reminders from our office occasionally to remind you to check on your overlook.

Limited Authorization. While FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway (FRIENDS/BRP) actively helps to recruit and manage volunteers in the AaO program, the Blue Ridge Parkway is a federal agency and the overlooks belong to National Park Service. Remember that when you are at your overlook, you represent the National Park Service, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway. **Be helpful, be courteous, be careful, and be proud!** At the same time, volunteer individuals, clubs and organizations are not considered to be Federal employees for any purposes other than tort claims and injury compensation.

## **REQUIRED FORMS**

AaO Adoption Application. This application form is to be completed and sent to FRIENDS as the first step in the process of adopting an overlook.

Volunteer Services Agreement (VSA) Form. Each volunteer who works on the Parkway must complete and sign a Volunteer Services Agreement (VSA) form. Because volunteer contact information and emergency contact information often changes you will be asked to verify your information once a year. Additionally, the VSA of any child or youth (18 or younger) must be signed by a parent or guardian. All original VSAs should be mailed for further processing to FRIENDS/BRP, PO Box 20986, Roanoke VA 24018.

Overlook Maintenance Activity (OMA) Report Form.\* An OMA form should be completed and mailed to FRIENDS immediately following each service event. These reports show the time invested in service as well as round-trip travel time. OMAs also indicate the kinds of work you performed and alerts the FRIENDS Office of any matters that may need special attention. OMA information is also used by the Parkway to assess volunteer activity and assist in long-range planning. The mailing address for each completed OMA is FRIENDS/BRP, PO Box 20986, Roanoke VA 24018.

**\*Volunteers registered in the Better Impact system may log information directly into the system, see directions below.**

## **MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE**

Visit your overlook as often as possible. Submit an OMA report following each visit, even if no other work was performed; record your travel time and briefly describe the condition of your overlook.

Monthly. Plan to care for your adopted overlook at least once a month from April through October.

Spring. Spring maintenance is best done at the end of winter, before the spring rainy season, by the end of April at the latest, and before the overlook receives a lot of visitor traffic. Assessment of work that will need to be done in the future is an important function of the spring visit.

Summer. The overlook is most obscured and in need of attention during the summer, due to normally heavier visitor traffic.

Fall. One of the best times of the year to clean your overlook is before the leaves have dropped from the trees. This ensures there is no litter under leaf debris during Winter months and is good preparation for heavy Spring water run-off. The cool weather makes Fall an excellent time for maintaining overlooks.

Winter. Your particular overlook may or may not be accessible during the winter months, November through March. Be careful if you travel on the Parkway. No extraordinary efforts are required during these months. Schedule your Spring visit just as soon as it is safe and reasonable to expect more travel and use of Parkway overlooks.

## **MAINTENANCE TASKS**

- Pick up and dispose of litter
- Clear and dispose of leaves, twigs, branches and other debris on grassy area □
- Clear leaves, twigs and branches and other debris from ditches and drainage channels □
- Clean overlook signs and any nearby mile markers with soapy water
- Sweep sidewalks and parking area
- Clean picnic table(s) where applicable

### Optional Tasks \*

- Level any surface material
- Pick up or sweep cigarette butts from parking area, grassy areas, surrounding trailheads and sidewalks
- Clear overgrown weeds and brush at the outer perimeter of overlook and around nearby “Overlook Ahead” signs.
- Remove trees that have fallen on the overlook, within its perimeter, and on the parking lot. Move them to the shoulder, if possible, or notify maintenance manager as needed.

\*No power tools should be used on the Parkway unless proper NPS certification is obtained

## **SAFETY FIRST**

Safety is the most important consideration while maintaining overlooks. You must obtain NPS training to operate power equipment on the Parkway. This includes: weed eaters, blowers, and power-saws. Contact the FRIENDS Office or local FRIENDS Chapter if interested in obtaining training.

There is always the potential for accidents while working near heavy traffic areas. You need to be constantly aware of these dangers. The best way to work safely is simple -- use common sense. The following is a good common-sense checklist:

1. Let someone know when you plan to maintain your overlook.
2. Carry a small first aid kit.
3. Wear a good pair of work gloves.
4. Wear long pants when working in brush, even in the summer.
5. Be sure to carry trash bags with you.
6. Wear sturdy shoes for walking on uneven terrain.
7. Carry any tools safely.
8. Wear blaze orange or bright green vest at all times when maintaining the overlook.

\*The National Park Service may supply trash bags and gloves. If these items are needed, please contact the FRIENDS office or local FRIENDS Chapter who can direct you to the local district office.

## **BETTER IMPACT HOW VOLUNTEERS LOG IN AND INPUT HOURS**

- Better Impact is the on-line system that is used to track all volunteer hours
- Volunteers can log their own hours or they can continue to send their hours into the office and we will input their hours into Better Impact
- Travel time is considered part of your volunteer hours. Remember to include travel time in total hours
- A Volunteer Service Agreement (VSA) must also be completed, signed and sent into the FRIENDS office.

### **Sign On Procedure**

1. There are two ways to access the Volunteer Database in Better Impact
  - a. Use this link: <https://app.betterimpact.com/Login/>
  - b. From the FRIENDS website at: [www.FriendsBRP.org](http://www.FriendsBRP.org). Scroll down about ½ way and click on either:

**For new users:** Volunteers! Click here to sign up box.

**For existing users:** “Log your volunteer hours here” box.

***\*\*Note: Please contact the FRIENDS office at 540-772-2992 to determine if there is an existing User Name and password.***

2. If you are a new volunteer and have never completed any volunteer hours, create a Username and password. Once the application form is completed, click on Submit Application button. When application has been approved, use the MyVolunteerPage.com. Login at <https://app.betterimpact.com/Login/>
3. If you already have a Username and password set up, sign in as usual.

### **Logging Hours Procedure**

1. Click on the Hours tab
2. Click on the drop down arrow for Activity. Click on the activity that best describes the volunteer hours.
3. Click on date volunteered field – a calendar pops up. Click on the appropriate date.
4. Click on the Hours field and type in the total number of hours worked
5. Click on the Minutes field and type in the total number of minutes if applicable
6. In the Feedback section you can enter any additional information like a description of work, number of volunteers, etc.
7. Hit save to submit the hours, if there is a mistake in the information you can delete the record and record it again.