

# **NORRIS FREEWAY CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Prepared by the City of Norris, Tennessee**

**June 2020**



## **SECTION 1: ESSENTIAL INFORMATION**

### **Location.**

Norris Freeway is located in the heart of the eastern portion of the Tennessee Valley. The Freeway passes over Norris Dam, whose location was selected to control the flooding caused by heavy rains in the Clinch and Powell River watershed. Beside flood control, there were a range of conditions that were to be addressed: the near absence of electrical service in rural areas, erosion and

landscape restoration, and a new modern road leading to Knoxville (as opposed to the dusty dirt and gravel roads that characterized this part of East Tennessee).

The Freeway starts at US 25W in Rocky Top (once known as Coal Creek) and heads southeast to the unincorporated community of Halls. Along the way, it crosses Norris Dam, runs by several miles of Norris Dam State Park, skirts the City of Norris and that town's watershed and greenbelt. Parts of Anderson County, Campbell County and Knox County are traversed along the route.

### **Date of Local Designation**

In 1984, Norris Freeway was designated as a Tennessee Scenic Highway by the Tennessee Department of Transportation. Some folks just call such routes "Mockingbird Highways," as the Tennessee State Bird is the image on the signs designating these Scenic Byways.

### **Intrinsic Qualities**

Virtually all the intrinsic qualities come into play along Norris Freeway, particularly Historic and Recreational. In fact, those two characteristics are intertwined in this case. For instance, Norris Dam and the east side of Norris Dam State Park are on the National Register of Historic Places.

The dam is associated with incredible water-based recreation, including boating, swimming, and fishing. The original portion of the park has a heritage of lodging in its 1930s cabins, picnicking and hiking.

Regardless, this document contains a focus on recreation. However, it is also kept in mind that many Americans see visiting historic places as recreation.

The recreational activities found along Norris Freeway include:

- Lake boating and jet skiing
- Fishing
- Swimming
- Camping
- Seasonal programs, like concerts and ranger-led wildlife hikes
- Hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding
- Birdwatching and photography

- Canoeing and kayaking on the Clinch River
- Traditional recreation, such as soccer on the Norris Commons and ball games at Halls Community Park
- Sight seeing

### **Primary Photo**



*This early photo depicts Norris Freeway, crossing the dam. Although dating from the mid-1930s, it captures the boating on the lake, sightseeing and Norris Park.*

### **Alternative Text:**

*This historic photo was originally a postcard of the 1930s that captures the face of the massive concrete Norris Dam, and the lake with its motorboats and sail boats. The forested hills along the lake form the background. Finally, Norris Freeway is a centerpiece, running across the top of the dam with cars that would be antiques now.*

## **SECTION 2: STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATION**

Background: The year was 1933, the Tennessee Valley Authority and their model projects, Norris Dam, Norris Freeway, the Town of Norris and Norris Park were born. The aims were flood control, rural development and electrification, landscape preservation and restoration, park and recreation development and model town building. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the father of this big deal in the New Deal.



*FDR signing the bill to create the Tennessee Valley Authority in May 1933, just a few months into his presidency. Senator George Norris, standing to the right, saw the merit of creating river management systems and sponsored the TVA legislation.*

The control of the Powell and Clinch Rivers would change life in the upper Tennessee River Valley. Those two tributaries originate in southwest Virginia and join together just upstream from Norris Dam. The rivers cross through hundreds of miles of landscape before reaching the Tennessee River. Massive downstream

flooding was a curse to cities and farmers in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The location of a dam at Cove Creek (where Norris Dam came to be situated) had been viewed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as the point to harness the rivers.

The Corps of Engineers had actually designed a dam near the mouth of Cove Creek, but failed to receive Congressional or President Hoover's support. That changed when FDR was elected. TVA was created during the first few months of his administration. The Norris Dam and its associated projects were the first to be undertaken. Roosevelt's TVA chairman, Arthur Morgan, was experienced in dam building and reservoir containment projects in Ohio. As the President's first TVA employee, Morgan set to work within weeks after the TVA legislation was passed and set to work with a team of engineers on the Freeway's and dam's designs. TVA felt that additional dam construction experience would be an asset. The new agency took into account the Army Corps' original design, and received ample consulting assistance from the U.S Bureau of Reclamation. TVA's Roland Wank, a Hungarian-American architect with a penchant for cutting edge design, revised the Bureau's plans gave the poured-concrete dam a modernistic style that proved to be controversial but the result would eventually succeed as it was applauded by the renowned, cutting edge architect Albert Kahn. Wank was elevated to the position of TVA's Chief Architect and oversaw the architectural design of TVA's dam building projects through 1944.



*The modernistic style of Roland Wank is reflected in this tower atop the Dam.*

Norris Dam enabled the containment of runoff from a 29,000 square-mile area, starting in southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee. The dam is 260 feet high and spans 1,860 feet atop the Clinch. At full pool, an elevation 1,023 feet above sea level, the dam creates a lake that is 129 miles long, provides 809 miles of shoreline,

and creates almost 34,000 acres of water surface. That shoreline length and acreage of the lake were foreseen as the means to create marinas, new parks, lodging, and boat launching areas. With the capacity of 830 billion gallons of water, flood control and hydroelectric power were enabled as the gates closed in 1936.



*The Norris Dam construction on the Clinch River in 1934.*

The dam was named in honor of Nebraska Senator George Norris, who saw the merit of river system management and created the legislation to make TVA a reality. Norris Dam provided the electrification to the countryside and its homes, towns and industries. Rural residents soon had electric ovens, refrigerators and heaters. TVA also programmed reforestation, soil erosion control, and agricultural resource development from its on-start.

While the landscaping and livelihoods of the Valley's population improved in the late-1930s, the dam with its hydroelectric power enabled another major endeavor, the Manhattan Project in nearby Oak Ridge. Why? Because the atomic research and development, which revolved around the uranium enrichment for a nuclear weapon, required a substantial source of electricity. Norris Dam's hydroelectric generation was a key to that WWII project's success.

## **Intrinsic Recreational Values**

Norris Lake is the obvious place to start talking about recreation values. When the gates of the dam were closed in 1936, a 39,000- acre lake was created. By 1937,



over 700 boats were on its waters. Over years those figures rose exponentially as motorboats, sailboats, canoes, kayaks and jet skis took to the lake. Almost two dozen marinas can be found on the lake. The earliest, the Norris Dam Marina, can be reached at the west side of the dam.



*The Norris Marina, located right behind the dam, opened in 1933.*

As to this Scenic Byway's intrinsic recreation value and natural beauty, TVA also maintained natural landscapes and recreational facilities along many miles of the lake shores, on the Clinch River, and along Norris Freeway.



*The Songbird Trail is a two and one-half mile loop that can be seen from Norris Freeway.*

Norris Park, the original name for the east side of Norris Dam State Park, was created through the able hands of the young men of the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC). They followed the design concepts of the U.S. National Park Service, which was on hand to oversee their fine stonework and construction of the clapboard-sided cabins and Tearoom. A goal was to mimic rustic-looking facilities that were being built in National Parks in the early 20th century. The CCC men also built the amphitheater. Today, you'll also find a kid's playground and picnic areas. As a tribute to those who created and maintain this park, it has deservedly been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.



*The Bridal Cabin in “Norris Park.”*

Recreation aside, this park played an ancillary role during the Second World War. Because of the desperate need for housing in Oak Ridge, the cabins and Tea Room were taken over at the onset of the Manhattan Project to house personnel involved in the research and engineering to prepare the atomic bomb.

Downstream of the dam, on and along its tail waters, recreation opportunities abound. Trout fishers are provided parking and river access. At TVA’s Millers Island Boat Ramp, just off the Freeway on River Road, there are boat ramps, fishing platforms for the disabled, places for fly fishers to enter the river and public restrooms. Disabled persons can also find fishing access to concrete platforms at the upstream entrance to the Songbird Trail, Clear Creek, and the Weir Dam. The Clinch River is recognized for having some the best Rainbow and Brown fishing in the eastern states. In fact, the Tennessee state record Brown Trout, 28 pounds and 12 ounces, was landed here.



*A fishing couple watch kayakers take off from Miller's Island.*

The City of Norris maintains its 2,300- acre watershed, where hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking routes can be found. In the pleasant town, you can't miss its centerpiece, Norris Commons and the original 1934 school. The open space is used for soccer, festivals and summer concerts.



*One the Watershed's dams, created by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the mid-1930s.*

At Halls Crossroads, Clayton Park has a very nice, paved walking trail, a picnic area, children's playground and open play areas. Halls Community Park is larger and has ballfields, a community center and a senior center. One entrance to its greenway trail is next to the Halls Community Library.

### **SECTION 3: ROUTE INFORMATION**

Byway length: Norris Freeway is 21 miles long—a relatively short length, but one that contains significant recreational and cultural features. With its scenery and well-engineered, curvilinear design, it is a pleasure to drive. The Freeway started In Coal Creek (later named Lake City and now Rocky Top). The first segment ran from the railroad in Coal Creek to the Clinch River where Norris Dam was to rise. That length of 5 miles was constructed with reinforced concrete, enabling loads of concrete mix, the dam's turbines and other heavy loads to be carried by massive trucks. Another early segment was southward from the east side of the Clinch to

the Town of Norris and onward to Hall's Crossroads. There, TN Highway 33 led to Knoxville, the location of TVA's administrative offices. Those two segments were in place by 1934. The final link over the dam was opened in 1936.



*Norris Freeway grading was underway in 1934 south of the town of Coal Creek.*

Because Norris Dam has ties to other recreation areas, cultural sites and links to other National Scenic Byways (namely East Tennessee Crossing, and the pending Cumberland Scenic Byway). “Side Trips,” leading to those byways and other sites associated with TVA and Norris Freeway history and recreation opportunities are discussed in a final section (see the Appendix).



*The landscape along TN 170, which leads toward the East Tennessee Crossing Byway.*

Route description: the original southbound entrance to the Freeway was from US Highway 25W in Coal Creek. Interstate 75 and its overpass changed the setting of the first, quarter mile. The continuous park-like setting of the freeway starts just east of Interstate 75 and runs to TN Highway 61. At that point the original route of the freeway was diverted for about 250 yards when the intersection of the Freeway and Highway 61 were reconfigured. Thereafter, Norris Freeway continues in its original right-of-way to Hall's Crossroads.

Turning south from TN 61 onto Norris Freeway, there is a natural landscape for almost all of the remaining miles. The exceptions are a public solid waste convenience center and business park which both sit back over 100 yards from the Freeway. About six miles south an old quarry has been reused as an RV storage facility.

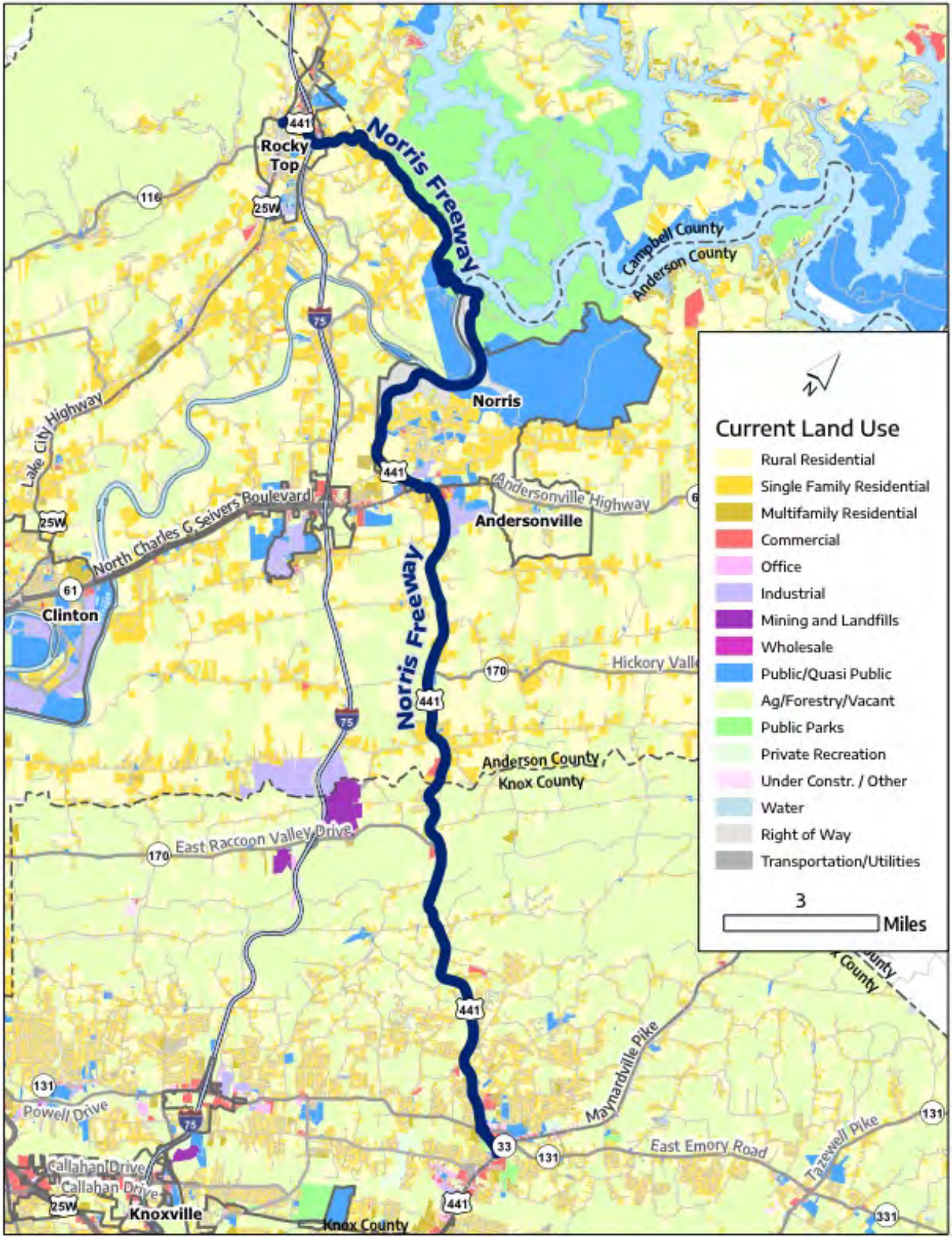
Ten miles farther south, near Emory Road and Maynardville Highway, two shopping centers have been created over the years. Because all these changes are set back and beyond the freeway's wide right-of-way, ample room exists for more landscaping.

### **Federal Lands**

Norris Freeway is recognized as US Highway 441. It is maintained by the Tennessee Department of Transportation, including the segment which runs across the dam. On either side of the dam, the Freeway runs by Tennessee Valley Authority land.

*Following page: Norris Freeway corridor is depicted in relation to the backdrop of land uses along the route.*





**Continuity of the Route:** To reach Norris Freeway from the southbound, Interstate 75 exit at Rocky Top, one travels by a typical commercial strip before reaching US 441 (Norris Freeway). After heading under I-75, the nicely forested edge of scenic Norris Freeway is seen a stone's throw away. Recently, Rocky Top created a Tree Committee, which could work with property owners, the City and State to create and implement a tree planting plan to enhance US 25W and the first part of US 441.

At TN 61 (Andersonville Pike), where the Freeway jig-jogs before heading south again, is another short area of intrusions. Old state rights-of way and a few businesses can be landscaped to improve the setting. Norris and its Tree Commission and the State can play a role in this endeavor.

Moving down the Freeway from TN 61, the grassy expanse of almost 100 yards lies in front of the County's recycling center and business park. A tree planting plan should be created and implemented as an attractive setting for these uses.



*Attractive rural residential uses on the west side of the Freeway, just south of TN61.*

In Halls, a similar landscaping program should be established in the Freeway's large right-of-way to enhance the foreground in front of the relatively short stretches of commercial development.

## **SECTION 4: ROUTE CONDITIONS**

### **Vehicle accommodation**

Two-wheel drive passenger vehicles and motorcycles are safely accommodated along the entire length of the route. The freeway is entirely paved. Its spiral design, reportedly the first in Tennessee, clearly unfolds before the driver. This “spiraling” is a result of engineering that provides a series of banked segments, tipping slightly with the slope as one comes into a curve.

Bicycle and pedestrian travel: Well-accomplished, touring cyclists can ride the freeway and it is not unusual to see bicyclists between the Town of Norris and Norris Dam State Park. The Norris Watershed has almost 30 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails. Norris State Park (including both the east and west sides) has 22 miles of trails. Trails are designated for hiking, mountain bicycling and equestrian uses. TVA’s River Bluff Small Wild Area, approximately 125 acres, contains a 2.7- mile loop called the River Bluff Trail, which runs along the Clinch River. Its forested hillsides explode with array of springtime flowers, which brings dozens of hikers and wildflower aficionados there in late March and April. This trail is recognized as a National Recreation Trail and Tennessee Scenic Trail. On the east side of the Clinch below the dam, you’ll find the Songbird Trail, a lovely, level loop, which follows the river from the dam to Clear Creek.



*A bicyclist passing by the early Spring landscape of Norris Dam State Park.*

The Town of Norris has over 5 miles of pathways and sidewalks, running aside its road system. The Norris Watershed, also a part of the Town, has 30 miles of hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding trails.

Near Halls Crossroads, Clayton Park and Halls Community Park have trail systems running along Beaver Creek. Knox County has an adopted park and greenway plan, which calls for trails along Beaver and Bull Run Creek and ridge trails.



*The Knox County Park and Greenway Plan for Halls and along Norris Freeway, depicting Clayton Park and Halls Community Park, the proposed greenway trails along Beaver and Bull Run Creeks and ridge top trails.*

## **Travel restrictions**

1. Types of vehicle restrictions: None. Because Interstate 75 runs parallel to the Freeway, large tractor-trailer rigs are rarely seen along the route with the exception of an occasional truck heading the short distance from the business park to TN 61, which meets I-75 a mile to the west.
2. Seasonal closures: there are none.

## Seasons

Each season has its own merits as you can see from the following:

**Spring:** the blossoms of the dogwood, redbuds and fruit trees mark the rebirth of the forested valleys and woodland. Visitors come out of hibernation to enjoy the trails, water recreation and historic resources, such as the cabins and the Dam's visitor center.



**Summer:** the lush forests attract hikers and mountain bikers. The Norris Lake and marina come into their heydays of boating activity. Boats and jet skis are launched. The lodging (cabins and campgrounds) at the Park are often full. More folks head to the Norris Dam overlook and the trout fishers don their waders and into the Clinch with their fly rods.



**Fall:** the leaves of the deciduous forest slowly change from a rich green to a pallet of red, orange, yellow and burgundy. Day trip travelers arrive for the pleasure drives that the Freeway offers. However, the traffic is very reasonable.



**Winter:** the naked forest areas reveals several powerful views, such as the Clinch River that runs parallel to the Freeway below the dam and the Cumberland Mountains to the northwest. Rare snowfalls enhance the landscape but rarely impede travelers.





## **Safety**

The Freeways design was selected in 1933-34 by TVA engineers. Safety measures were pronounced. The Freeway was Tennessee's first limited access road. Easy grades and smooth curves facilitated high-speed traffic. Limited access was created by allowing continuation of the existing widely spaced side roads. The only two-way intersections are found at Andersonville Pike (TN 61), and Emory Road (TN Highway 131). These intersections are controlled with traffic lights. The freeway's 250 to 350- foot right-of-way originally contained two, 10-foot wide concrete lanes between Coal Creek (now Rocky Top) and Norris Dam. The concrete was needed to support the heavy materials and equipment that were being transported by trucks to the dam construction site. Asphalt was used southward to Halls Crossroads. Billboards and roadside stands were prohibited and still are, maintaining the Freeway's beauty.



*The TVA construction crew laying the concrete for the Freeway in 1934.*

Today those characteristics are largely intact. Speed limits vary, depending on the terrain and points of interest. Guard rails are used on curves, particularly on outside lanes where steep, side slopes emerge. The Tennessee Department of Transportation reported that the Freeway, for the years 2017 through 2019, had a crash rate 80% lower than the Statewide Average for similar type roadways.

## SECTION 5: TRAVELER EXPERIENCE

### Getting to the Byway

While this Byway, Norris Freeway, is not the longest, it is a spine that links the American public and other visitors to sites that are a legacy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's TVA. An objective in creating this byway is to link it with and other Tennessee National Scenic Byways, namely the East Tennessee Crossing and the soon-to-be-recognized, Cumberland Crossing Byway. In doing so, the links provide a glimpse or two into the frontier days Tennessee valley settlement, tragic chapters in America's coal mining history, and to an understanding of the onset of the nuclear age with visits to Oak Ridge and its museums. Those sites will enable an understanding of the Manhattan Project and the City's role in ending WWII.



*Here you see the recently completed Coal Creek Miners Museum (a reuse of a former bank) and the Main Street (US 25W), which was the original departing point to head onto the Freeway.*

The major links to Norris Freeway are the Interstate 75 interchanges at Rocky Top, Tennessee (following the signs to Norris Dam), the Interstate 75 interchanges at Raccoon Valley Road (TN Highway 170, and the Clinton/Norris exit to TN Highway 61, and US Highway 441/TN33, out of Knoxville.

***Distance and average driving time information is as follows:***

*Knoxville (downtown): 9 miles, average driving time is 15 minutes.*

*Cumberland Gap, KY: 49 miles, 1 hour, 5 minutes*

*Chattanooga: 121 miles, average driving time, 1 hour, 52 minutes*

*Asheville, NC: 126 miles, average driving time is 2 hours, 10 minutes*

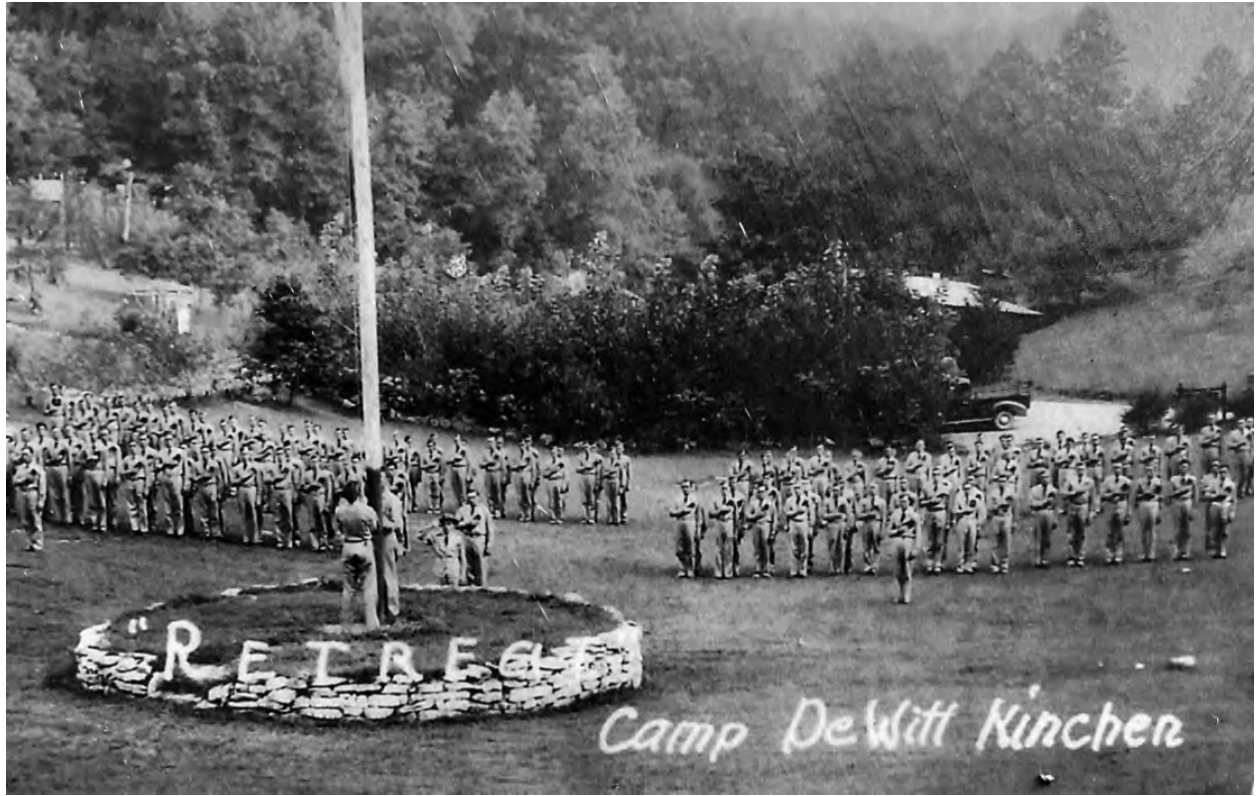
**Travelers Service**

**Public visitors and related facilities:**

Norris Dam State Park (East and West sections): the west side is more modern with its newer camping facilities (including those for RVs and tents), chalet-like cabins, and bathhouses. A lovely swimming pool overlooks the Cumberland Mountains.



The park's east side has an entrance near the top of Norris Dam. This is the historic section of the park, dating from the years when TVA operated this resource, simply known as Norris Park.



*The CCC camp as it appeared in its heyday.*



*Stone foundations and the flag circle can still be found at the Camp Kinchen site.*

TVA, the National Parks Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps collaborated in building the 14 cabins and the Tea Room (once a restaurant and gift shop, now a pleasant meeting room). These facilities are on the National Register of Historic Places.



*The Tearoom, built by the CCC young men, is on the National Register of Historic Places.*

Most of the buildings as well as the pool are accessible to disabled persons. A cabin on the east side and Tearoom are accessible to the disabled.

**Norris Dam Visitors Center:** this facility is open from April through November. Its displays provide an overview of the Tennessee Valley River system, including the dam locations, navigation and history. Its restrooms are open year-round, as are the picnic areas. A small cell phone charging station is next to the center. From the Center, visitors can see the face of the dam and the immense electrical distribution facilities. The center is accessible to the disabled. Many picnic tables are available near the parking lots.





*The bronze bust of Senator George Norris, one of the exhibits at the Norris Dam Visitors Center.*

You can also park here and walk across the dam, a distance of about 1,800 feet and enjoy the release of lake waters into the Clinch River. By strolling across the road to the north side of the dam, you will be viewing the immense Norris Lake, its marina and the Cove Creek Wildlife Management Area.

**Clinch River Brewing, Lenoir Museum Cultural Center and the Weir**

**Dam:** About 1.5 miles south of the dam, there are three sites that may be of interest. On the left is the Clinch River Brewing, once a TVA aquatic laboratory. It prepares a variety of dishes and about a dozen types of crafted beer (open: Wednesday thru Sunday). Call for hours 865 266 7282.



*Outdoor dining at Clinch River.*

Nearby is the Lenoir Museum, which has visitor’s facilities and is accessible to the disabled. It features an array of historical artifacts, offering an understanding of Tennessee Valley settlement. Nearby are a well preserved gristmill and threshing barn.

Across the Freeway is the Weir Dam, built in 1984 to oxygenate the river to enhance the habitat of invertebrates and trout, there are restrooms, ample parking and fishing platforms—all are accessible to disabled persons.



*Kayaking downstream of the weir dam.*

**The Town of Norris:** this quaint town is on the National Register. You'll find restaurants, a grocery, and post office. The library and a small museum are nearby (call for hours: 865 494 6800. All of these locations are accessible to the disabled.



*The Town's original shopping center.*

**Hall Crossroads:** Clayton Park and Halls Community Park, and Halls Library have restrooms and accessible to the disabled.

**3. Gaps where there are no traveler services:** not applicable. There are lodging opportunities at Rocky Top on US 25W, near I-75 Exit 122 at Clinton/Norris and in the State Park. Fuel can be purchased at the same locations, and near TN 170 west, and near Emory Road.

**4. Alternative fuel corridor:** not applicable.

### **Wayfinding:**

1. Presently, the Heritage/Recreational (brown) Interstate exit signs are mounted at southbound and northbound Interstate 75 exits, noting the route to Norris Dam (via U.S. Highway 441 as that route). Norris Freeway was

designated as a Tennessee Scenic Byway years ago. “Mockingbird Signs,” designating this distinction are seen along the Freeway.

2. Norris Freeway and US 441 signs are found along the route. At the Freeway’s intersections, TN Highway 61 (Andersonville Pike) and TN Highway 170 (Raccoon Valley Road), directional signs to I-75 are provided.
3. At the end of the Freeway in Hall’s Crossroads, directional signs are displayed to Knoxville and Maynardville.



*Interstate 75 “Norris Dam State Park” sign, just shy of the Rocky Top exit.*

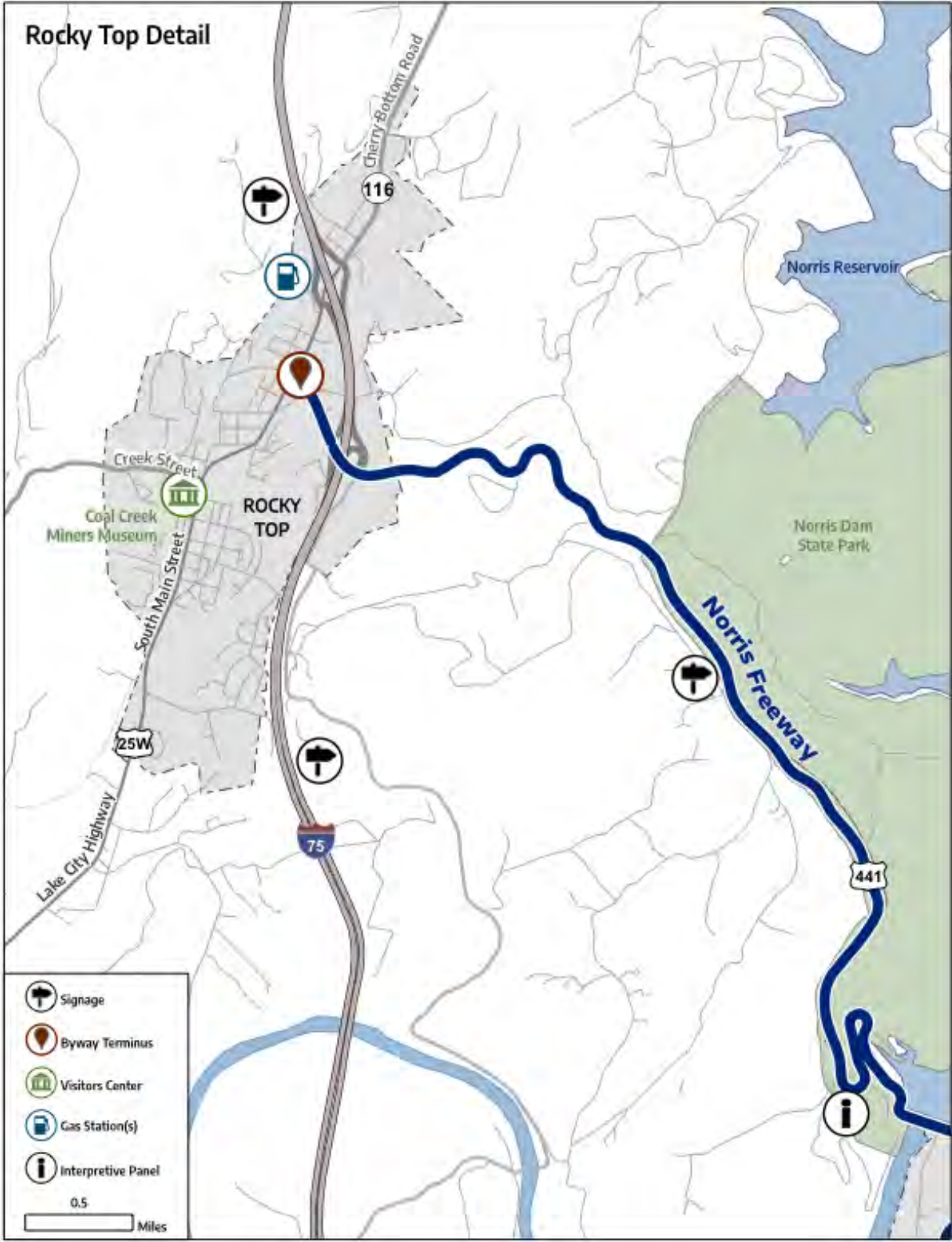
## **Evidence of Intrinsic Qualities:**

The following features are listed in sequential order, from north to south. Norris Freeway was created from 1933 to 1936, linking the railroad at Coal Creek, now called Rocky Top, as a supply route for heavy truck loads to the construction site of Norris Dam. The other leg of the Freeway, developed from the east side of the dam, went southward to Halls Crossroads, providing the means to reach downtown Knoxville. The freeway branches off highway US 25W, once a major route that travelers took from the Midwest to the Sunbelt. Norris Freeway became a side trip that many Midwest families took to the dam, lake, park, river, historic sites and town.



*The scenic portion of Norris Freeway starts here at the edge of Rocky Top, just south of I-75.*

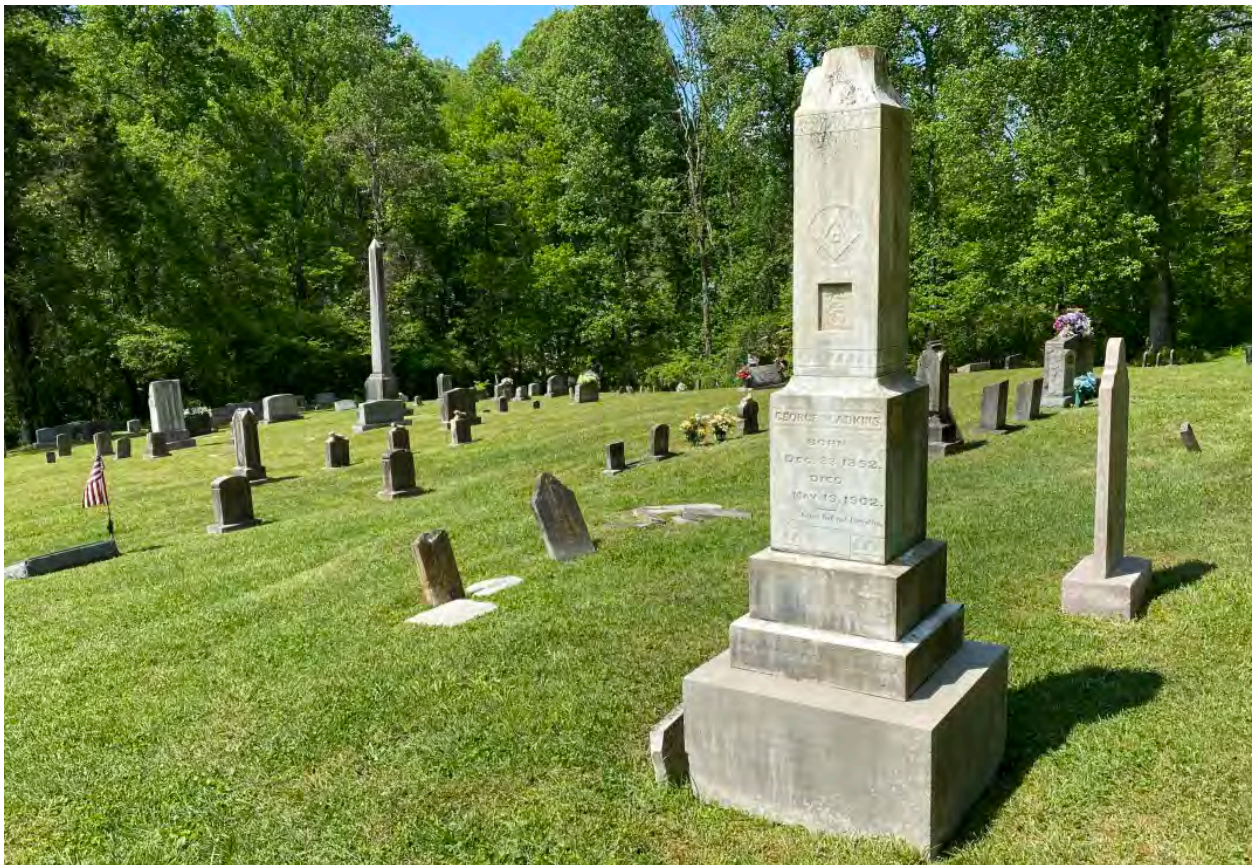
This description starts on the east side of Interstate 75 interchanges, heading south on US 441, where forested areas that are a signature of Norris Freeway emerge. While the focus is on recreational activities, it is also important that the historic visitation points be recognized as visits to such places are a desired form of recreation to many Americans.



Recreational and cultural features (with distances from the east side ramp of I-75) are:

### **Longfield Cemetery (Mile 0.2)**

The graves here date from the late 1800s. A particular section contains 36 graves and headstones of the Fraterville coal miners who died in the horrible 1902 mine explosion. The epitaphs on some stones are sobering reminders of the tragedy. This disaster led to child labor laws that curtailed the use of young miners.



*Monument headstone, marking the grave of one the Fraterville miners.*

### **Norris Dam State Park (west side entrance: Mile 1.3)**

This park, whose northern edge stretches along the shores of Norris Lake, contains 4,038 acres lying to either side of the dam. The west side, which was developed in the 1970s, is the newer component of this recreation resource. The western portion



contains both a contemporary campground capable of handling RV's, and a primitive, tent camping site. Modern cabins are also available as are picnic sites.



*Two of the rental cabins in the west side of Norris Dam State Park.*

The administrative offices and large meeting rooms are found in the center of the park as is the attractive swimming pool with its views of the Cumberland Mountains. Miles of hiking and mountain biking trails slice through its ridges and hollows.

### **Norris Dam Overlook (Mile 3.8)**

This site was originally the location of a concrete staging area to deliver the massive amount of materials for dam construction. The views of this prominence are centered on the dam, lake and the tail waters, continuing the flow of the beautiful Clinch River. On rare occasions, the lake reaches full pool and its waters cascade down the face of the huge dam—a sight that draws hundreds of visitors to the dam.



*At this spot on the overlook one can see a metal panel, depicting the dams and lakes of the Tennessee River system, the dam and Norris Lake. The Cove Creek Wildlife Management Area is a peninsula that can be seen between the couple on the overlook.*

### **Norris Marina (Mile 4.1)**

The Norris Dam Marina is located on the cove to the west side of the dam, this marina provides year-round services: boat rentals, and dry and wet boat storage. More than a hundred watercraft are found here. Summer-time recreation seekers can launch their boats here via public ramps. The marina is framed by a rock quarry, a major source of the dolomite used in the dam's construction.



*The launching area of the marina.*

### **Norris Dam (Mile 4.5)**

Seeing this dam is a highlight along the Freeway. French-speaking visitors could understand that it's the *raison d'être*—the reason for the Freeway's existence.



*This view of the face of the dam and the release of the lake water, turn off Norris Freeway onto Powerhouse Way.*

The location of Norris Dam had been viewed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as the point to harness the Clinch and Powell Rivers. Those two tributaries of the Tennessee River came together not far upstream from the dam site. They were major sources of runoff and high waters that contributed to massive floods like the ones that played havoc in Chattanooga for decades.

In the 1920s the Corps of Engineers recognized this location, once known as Cove Creek, as the obvious starting point for Tennessee valley river control. In fact, that agency had actually designed a dam for this location but failed to receive President Hoover's support. That changed when President Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected in 1932. The Tennessee Valley Authority was created during the first few months of his presidency. Roosevelt selected Arthur Morgan as TVA's first employee and Chairman. He was experienced in Ohio dam building projects. Morgan set to work immediately to tackle the Norris project. Engineers were on the job by the summer of 1933, working with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in designing the dam and quickly moving toward construction.

Hungarian-American architect Roland Wank revised the initial Neo-classical plans of Corps of Engineers. In doing so, he gave the poured-concrete dam a modernistic design, which was controversial in that era. However, Albert Kahn, a renowned architect who endorsed Modern architectural styles, acclaimed his work to be outstanding. Eventually, Wank became the Chief Architect for TVA.



*The construction site along the Clinch River, 1934.*

Construction began on October 1, 1933. The dam was named in honor of U.S. Senator George W. Norris, who saw the wisdom of river management systems and sponsored the legislation to create TVA.

When completed in 1936, the dam rose 260 feet above the Clinch. The top of the dam spans 1,860 feet. At full pool, its elevation is 1,020 feet above sea level. The dam creates a lake that is 129 miles long, provides 809 miles of shoreline, and creates almost 34,000 acres of water surface. With the capacity of holding 830 billion gallons of water, flood control and hydroelectric power were enabled as its gates were closed in 1936.

Its lake provided an immediate recreational impact as the use motor boats, sail boats and other craft could be seen on the lake—over 300 in 1936 and about 700 in 1937. Over years those figures rose exponentially as motorboats, sailboats, canoes, kayaks and jet skis are launched each year. There are 22 marinas along the expansive shoreline and several thousand boats are docked or carried by trailers to the lake each year.



Norris Dam provided electrification to the countryside and its homes, towns and industries. Rural residents soon had electric ovens, refrigerators and heaters. TVA also programmed forestry, erosion control, and agricultural resource development from its on-start.

While the landscape and livelihoods of the valley's population improved in the late 1930s, the dam with its hydroelectric power was instrumental in ending World War II. How so? The Manhattan Project, enabling the atom bomb, proceeded in nearby Oak Ridge in a substantial measure because of the electricity that was provided by Norris Dam.

### **Cove Creek Management Area**

Looking north across the lake, you'll see, the Cove Creek Management Area, a natural 2,450 acre preserve that looks like an island. It is actually a peninsula that can be reached by boat or vehicles. Birdlife is abundant and includes not-often-seen varieties such as tanagers, Acadian Flycatchers, Ruffed Grouse, and Wild Turkey. Deer hunting is allowed via permit in the Fall.

### **Norris Dam State Park (east side entrance: Mile 4.9)**

This side was developed and managed by TVA from the mid-1930s until 1954. It was simply called Norris Park. The Civilian Conservation Corps, working with

architectural advisors of the National Park Service, created the Tea Room, the guest cottages and the amphitheater. Fittingly, the park was placed on the National Register of Historic Places a few years ago. The CCC men stayed at Camp Kinchen. Such remnants as stone foundations and stairs can still be seen within the Park.



*Two of the original cabins, the CCC crews created the stone chimneys and steps. US National Parks Service architects provided the designs.*

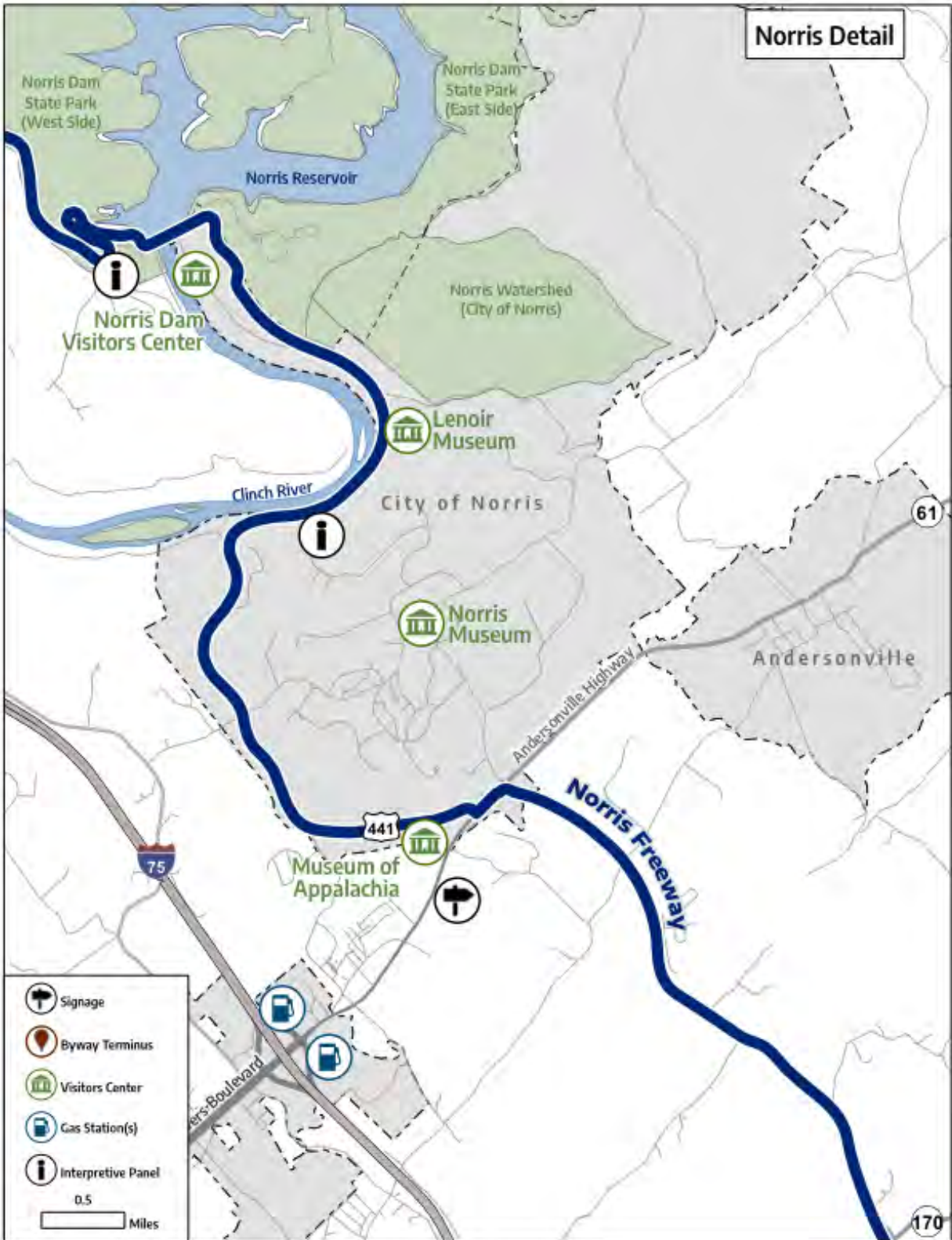
There are designated trails for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking. The Norris Watershed with its extensive trail system connects to the State Park.



*This multi-purpose trail leads to Camp Kinchen, the site where the CCC crews were housed.*



## **TVA's Recreational Facilities Downstream of the Dam**



TVA continues to control several recreational resources along the Clinch River, including:

**River Bluff Small Wild Area (Mile 3.6, turn off from Dabney Lane):**

located on the east side of the Clinch, you will find the River Bluff Trail, a loop of 2.7 miles that offers outstanding views of the river, dam and surrounding ridges. Each Spring, a magnificent display of wildflowers unfolds as Trillium, Trout Lilies, Yellow Flower, Foam Flower, jack-in-the-pulpit and Dutchman's britches provide beautiful carpets along the trail. The trail head can be reached from Dabney Lane, located uphill of the Overlook.



*The River Bluff Trail.*

**Songbird Trail** (Mile points to trail heads, 5.75., 5.9 and 6.2): this level, crushed gravel trail is enjoyed by walkers, joggers, and parents with strollers. Its 2.5 mile loop can be reached by several parking areas: one just south of the dam, another across from Clinch River Brewing, and another at the mouth of Clear Creek. Its scenery includes the Clinch and decades-old tree nurseries.



*Early Spring, the Songbird Trail.*

Yes, binoculars can help in viewing the numerous birds of forest, field and river shore. Herons, Canada geese and various ducks are year-round residents. The bird boxes come alive each Spring as Purple Martins and Bluebirds return.



*Fishing on the edge of a pier, downstream from the dam.*

### **The Lenoir Museum Complex (Mile 6.2)**

This complex includes the Lenoir Museum, the Rice Grist Mill and the Crosby Threshing Barn. The Museum was created to preserve the artifacts that were collected by Will and Helen Lenoir. Multiple exhibits provide an understanding of Native American cultures, early pioneer settlement, and the lifestyles of 19th and early 20th century Tennessee valley residents. Displays include antique furnishings within life-sized models of typical living quarters, a bedroom and kitchen as well as a general store.



*One of the displays at the Lenoir Museum, depicting a bedroom of the late-1800s.*

The Museum is open Wednesday thru Sunday. If you would like to hear live Old Time Music (a legacy of an Appalachian yesteryear), stop by on Sunday afternoons as the sounds of the mandolin, banjo, bass, guitar and fiddle come to life...and you needn't spend a dime.







*The Rice Gristmill and the Crosby Threshing Barn.*

The gristmill was originally constructed by James Rice in 1798. The mill sat along Lost Creek in Union County and would have been lost to the waters of Norris Lake, had it not been moved in the mid-1930s. The National Park Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps worked with TVA to preserve the structure. With the expertise of the Park service, all the components of the mill were marked, dismantled and reconstructed here along Clear Creek. After its relocation, its mill wheel and gears turned. Each summer corn meal was created by lovely older ladies who were garbed in traditionally long dresses and bonnets—a thoroughly enjoyable family experience with kids dabbling in the creek and parents partaking of the gift shop. Plans are in the works to re-establish the milling operation.



*The Rice Gristmill.*

Nearby is the Crosby threshing barn, which is also set saved from inundation (Cherokee Lake). Its components were designed to mill wheat. Bryant and Powell Crosby, grandsons of the original builder, Caleb, donated the structure to the National Park Service. In turn, it was given to the State Park for reconstruction here along Clear Creek.

### **Miller's Island Boat Access and Fishing Access Facility (Mile 7.4 at River Road)**

Turn right on River Road and 200 yards away you'll the entrance to this site. Its substantial parking area has spaces for boat trailers and vehicles. A concrete boat

launch and fishing platform for disabled persons form the centerpiece along the river. Trout fishers can don their waders to fly fish when the Clinch is low enough. Toilet facilities are available. The shoreline of Miller’s Island and river offer terrific places to see herons, Canada Geese and other waterfowl.



*Fly fishing below Miller’s Island on the Clinch.*

### **Norris Watershed and Greenbelt (Mile 5.7 to 9.7)**

During the 1930s, there were various federal programs to develop new towns which were created in the spirit of blending the countryside and towns together. Norris was fortunate to have Earle Draper and Tracy Augur, two of nation’s best city planners, leading this endeavor to create this early “greenbelt town.”

*On the following page: a view of Norris Dam and the Clinch River valley from Observation Point in the Norris Watershed (Photo by Norris resident Kim Byrd)*



TVA maintained open space around the Town's edges. In driving the freeway, you'll pass a largely forested band that surrounds the west side of the town.

However, you may want to explore the Norris watershed, a 3,000-acre forest preserve that offers almost 30 miles of hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding trails. The hiking trails range from moderate-to-strenuous in difficulty. This system joins with the trails of Norris Dam State Park.



*Clear Creek.*

Clear Creek Road, which runs by the Rice Grist Mill, provides vehicle access. You will meander along Clear Creek, pass by two lovely stone dams, built in mid-1930s by the CCC boys whose camp was in the heart of this forest. If you want a backdoor entrance to the Town follow this gravel road to its intersection with Reservoir Road and turn right: the Norris Commons and Town Square are about a mile westward.

## **Island Home Baptist Church and Cemetery (Mile 7.5)**

This quaint, picturesque church rests on the east side the Freeway just south of the Town of Norris. The clapboard-covered edifice features a striking tower with stained glass window above its entrance. A handsome cupola crowns that bell tower. Amazingly, this church was moved here to save it from the waters of Norris Dam and Clinch River. Graves were also moved to the pleasant cemetery that can found on the hill above the church.



*Island Home Baptist Church.*

## **The Town of Norris (Mile 8.2)**

From the freeway, turn right on West Norris Road to enter the Town. The pleasant, small city is on the National Register of Historic Places and is the State's first recognized Tree City USA. TVA's first Chairman, Arthur Morgan, hired Earle Draper and Tracy Augur to lead the development of this model community. In the heart of the Town, you will see the neoclassical architecture of the first school. In the early years, all children (elementary through high schoolers) were educated here. Today, it is the middle school.



*Norris Middle School.*

Across the street you will see the Norris Commons, a multipurpose recreational space, dotted by season with soccer players, kite flyers and festivals. Around the corner is the small, town center with its grocery, Post Office, restaurant and professional offices. The original houses are within walking distance of this shopping center with a pathway system that runs for miles along the Town's roadways. During the summer the school grounds and commons are home to free Friday evening concerts and a popular Fourth of July Festival.



*The Norris Commons.*

After setting on the Clinch River site for Norris Dam, the concept for this model town was approved during TVA's first board meeting, June 16, 1933. Morgan set out the proposed concepts for the development of town, whose initial purpose was the house construction workers. Because of the need to rapidly create the town, a general concept for street layouts was established and pavement went into place. Homes were built as each road was established.

On virtually every road, clusters of houses emerged in the form of small quadrangles or semicircular “eyebrows.” The quads are marked by three or four dwellings facing each other over common front yards. The eyebrows are formed by a semi-circle of houses facing large, grassy open spaces.





*One of the “eyebrows,” a semicircle of original houses, frame a common play area for residents.*

Norris Dam construction workers were housed in barracks near the northwest corner of the town, not far from the Freeway, enabling a few-minute bus trip to the dam construction site. The barracks were put to new uses and still exist there. A community center was the centerpiece of this area with its dining hall, recreation facilities and library. Portions of the center became the town’s offices. The building was lost to fire in the 1970s. In turn, this site became a park and playground. The laborers, who were housed in this area, worked six-hour days, allowing four construction shifts each day. Chairman Morgan wanted the workers to have the short workdays to enable extra time for them to learn another trade. Interestingly, U.S. Bureau of Mines personnel work taught many of them how to create ceramics. This facility, with its recently discovered kiln, is located off Pine Road and preservation work continues. Not surprisingly, the creator of Pigeon Forge Pottery learned his craft here.

Writing in 1939, the authors of the architecture chapter in the WPA Guide to Tennessee sang the praises of the town. "The future architecture of the Tennessee Valley is indicated by the city of Norris, where a new standard for rural existence is being set." Those writers went on to describe the various types of houses, noting that most were constructed with the materials found in the region: clapboard, brick, cedar shingle, and native stone.

**The Museum of Appalachia and Appalachian Art and Craft Center  
(Mile 9.7 and two hundred yards on TN 61):**



*A cantilevered barn and shed on the Museum's grounds.*

Before proceeding south on the Freeway, consider taking some time to visit The Museum of Appalachia, only 1/4 mile west of the Highway 61 intersection. This museum's farm landscape is like a glimpse back into the early pioneering days of East Tennessee.



*Two-story, early 19<sup>th</sup> century log house on the Museum's grounds*

Founded by educator, John Rice Irwin in 1969, its landscape includes log cabins, a cantilevered barn, and outbuildings. Farm animals that dot the pastures within the split rail fencing. The two-story brick, Hall of Fame contains a large collection of antique furniture, musical instruments and tools. Displays honor several individuals who have contributed to East Tennessee history, such as Alvin York, the World War I hero. Its entrance hall has a large gift shop and dining area. Classic home cooked meals are served each day (11 AM to 2 PM).

About 200 yards away on the left is the Appalachian Art and Craft Center. This gallery of homemade crafts comes to view as you step in the front door. Local artists' pottery, weaving, quilts, woodwork, and photography are nicely displayed and are for sale. Classrooms and studio space is provided for arts and crafts lessons.

### **Heading South on Norris Freeway/ US 441 (Mile 9.9)**

The drive to the terminus at Halls Crossroads is largely very scenic and some of the side trips are especially nice (see side trips section). About 1/2 mile south of Norris, the forested landscape returns, edging down to the Freeway. This stretch of highway is a fine example of the ridge and valley landscape of East Tennessee.



*A small valley between ridges forms the setting of an early house.*

### **Fairview and TN Route 170 (Mile 12.9)**

Fairview was a 19th century settlement that was reached by Hickory Valley Road (TN Route 170). That road leads to Andersonville Pike, New Loyston, Tazewell and Cumberland Gap). A small, Baptist church, a smattering of houses and a school were the prominent features in the 1930s. Those uses are largely the same. A new Fairview Elementary School sits on a hill crest off the Freeway. Hines Creek, with its very broad, grassy floodplain is at the southern edge of Fairview. Its pastures are still grazed by livestock.



*The valley near Fairview.*

### **Halls Crossroads (Mile 20.9 at Emory Road)**

Thomas Hall, like many revolutionary war veterans, received a land grant for military service. Hall fought in the Battle of Charleston and was captured by the British, imprisoned and released at the War's end. His land grant was on the north side of Black Oak Ridge. Other early settlers and include Lafayette Brown, Franklin Crippen, and the Mynatt and Tindell families.

Pulaski Hall, grandson of Thomas, provided the basis for the community's namesake. Around 1860, after returning from the California gold rush, he chose the cross-section of roads to develop a general store.

So what are the crossroads? Emory Road (once called Avery Trace and Emery Pike) was created with North Carolina funding in 1887 as a westward wagon and horseback route to Nashborough (later called Nashville). A second intersection is Maynardsville Pike (not its original name), that road was part of longer route that ran from Cumberland Gap to Knoxville. A third crossroad is Anderson Pike, which led northward in a twisty way to Wallace's Crossroads, later named Andersonville (see the Side Trips section).



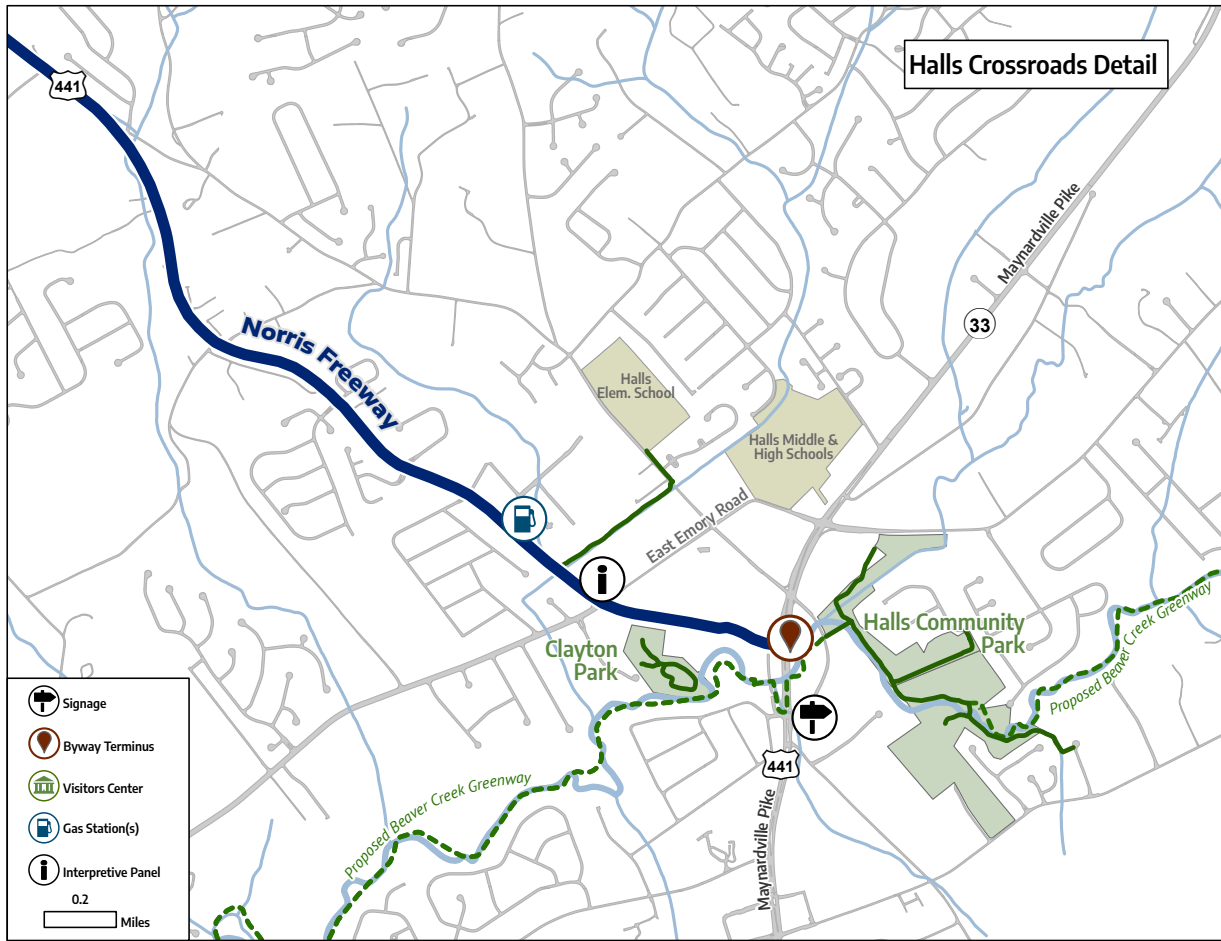
*An air photograph of the Avondale Dairy operation in the 1940s, well before suburban growth.*

At the Crossroads, the original landmarks of the 19th and early 20th centuries are gone. However, the institutions are very much the same. When Norris Freeway was finished in 1936, a two-story, brick Halls Elementary School stood prominently near the intersection as did the old Beaver Dam Baptist Church, and there were a few retail establishments. The church was lost to fire in 1948.

Bam! Starting in the 1950s with the Baby Boom, suburban expansion took over.

Still, the Halls Elementary, Middle and High School are there as anchors of the community. Beaver Dam Baptist is a larger landmark along Emory Road. Pulaski Hall's general store is long gone, but the signs of retail development are everywhere.

Thanks to TVA’s foresight the wide right-of-way still lines the Freeway and affords the means to landscape and better beautify this section of the Freeway (see the Management Plan concepts).



At Maynardville Pike two parks can be found, Clayton Park, with its play field and walking trail loop, sits west of the Freeway. Across the Pike, off Emory Road, an entrance to the 35-acre Halls Community Park can be found to the side of Halls Community Library. Its facilities include walking trails and natural areas.



*Clayton Park.*

Besides the physical connection to Norris Freeway, Halls also has a link to Clinch River families, such as those of Loyston, who had to relocate because of the creation of Norris Lake. Quite a few of those families resettled in Halls and contributed to the development of this locale. In a 1947 history of Hall's Crossroads, Norris Freeway was described as the link to major recreational resources, including Norris Lake, Norris Park and Big Ridge Park.

## **Telling the Story**

### ***Maps of recreation areas:***

Norris Dam State Park Map is an excellent resource depicting: the east and west sections of the park, the campgrounds, the pool and recreation area, the cabins, picnic areas, Norris Dam with its Marina and Visitor Center, and the park's hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding trails. Historic resources are also identified, including the original cabins and Tea Room, the CCC's Camp Kitchen, the



Lenoir Museum Cultural Complex with the gristmill and threshing barn. The map also depicts TVA's River Bluff Trail and Songbird Trail.

Norris Water Shed Trail Map and City Map (front and back sides). The watershed map provides a guide to the 30 miles of hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking trails, and historic sites. The City map depicts the roads, the Norris Commons and other parks, schools, library/history center, and the nearby communities of Andersonville and Bethel.



*The Norris Watershed Map.*

Knox County Park Maps. Google: Find a Park— Parks & Recreation Knox County, TN. You will a county-wide map and individual maps of all the parks in the system.

Norris Lake maps. Google: Norris Lake maps and find at least a half-dozen maps of various themes such as fishing sites, parks and trails.

### ***Web sites:***

Norris. [www.tva.gov](http://www.tva.gov) > [Our-Power-System](#) > [Hydroelectric](#) > [Norris-Reservoir](#) This site provides an over of the Norris' resources and has links to specific attractions like Norris Dam, and Tailwater recreation.

Anderson County Visitors Brochure. Google: [adventureanderson.com](http://adventureanderson.com) This publication covers a host of things to do that are directed related to freeway's intrinsic values, like Norris Dam and Lake recreation and the museums. It also provides overviews of places on the side trips, like the Miner's Museum in Rocky Top and Atomic Energy museums in Oak Ridge.

Coal Creek Miners Museum brochure.

<https://www.coalcreekminersmuseum.com> There'll see an overview of the exhibits and a fine video of mining history.

### ***DVD***

Built for the People: the Story of TVA. This video provides an overview of TVA history. Its moderator is Beau Bridges. Patricia Ezzell, TVA Historian, was a major contributor.

## **SECTION 6: PLANNING/SUSTAINABILITY**

### **1. Key Participants and Organizations**

Each of these individuals or organization have a role and have been or will be contacted.

- Campbell County, Mayor E.L. Morton
- Rocky Top, Mayor Michael Foster
- Coal Creek Miners Museum, Mary McCamey
- Coal Creek Watershed Association, Barry Thacker
- Anderson County Mayor, Terry Frank
- Anderson County Commissioner, Joshua Anderson
- Emily Wallace Havercamp, Anderson County Historical Society
- Norris Dam State Park Director, Veronica Greear
- City of Norris, Mayor, Chris Mitchell
- City Manager, Scott Hackler

- Friends of Norris Dam State Park, Chairman
- Norris Watershed Board, Chairman
- Norris Historical Society, Bob Gregory and Dr. Wendy Hall
- Museum of Appalachia, Board Member H. Peter Clausen
- Knox County Commissioner, Richie Beeler
- Knox County Commissioner, Charles Butler
- Knox County, Mayor Glenn Jacobs
- Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization, Director, Jeff Welch
- East Tennessee Development District, Dan Hawk
- Halls Crossroads Women’s League, Janis Crye

Federal and State Senators

- United States Senate, Senator Lamar Alexander, Tennessee
- Tennessee State Senate, Senator Randy McNally

Tennessee Valley Authority

- Historian, Pat Ezzell

Tennessee Department of Transportation

- Regional Director, Steve Borden

**2. Significant Objections:** None.

**3. Control of Outdoor Advertising and View Shed Protection**

**Absence of outdoor advertising:** An original goal of TVA was to ensure that Norris Freeway would be a scenic corridor. Billboards and roadside stands were prohibited from the onset of its development. Consequently, there have never been billboards along the length of the Freeway. A sizable 250 to 350-foot wide right-of-way was set aside and generally has been left as forested slopes or pastureland. In a few other areas, the Tennessee Department of Transportation maintains a grassy space. Major segments of the Freeway traverse natural areas managed by TVA, Norris Dam State Park and the City of Norris (its Watershed and greenbelt).

There are two short segments where appropriate trees, particularly a blend of native deciduous, evergreen and flowering species, could enhance the views from the Freeway. Heading south of TN 61, the first one would be a better buffer on the east of the freeway along the adjoining land of the new convenience center and industrial park.

The other areas, which would be enhanced with landscaping are the rights-of-way, between the Freeway and commercial properties in Halls.

**Control and placement of highway signs along the Freeway:** The Tennessee Department of Transportation has been prudent in placing signs only where they are needed: at the few intersections of State highways, speed limit signs in areas where there are more visitors (for example, near Norris Dam) and more curvy sections of the highway.

This plan calls for only a couple of new signs: (a.) at River Road, noting directional signs to TVA Miller's Island Boating/ Fishing Facility, and (b) the placement of Interstate 75 directional signs at Emory Road.

From casual observations of I-75 travel, vehicle license plates suggest that significant numbers of Canadian travelers from Ontario pass the area, especially as "snowbirds" in winter and they speak English. According to a museum official, foreign visitors, who do not speak English, travel with someone who does.

#### **4. Development of this byway nomination**

Scott Hackler, Norris City Manager, presented a concept to the Norris Planning Commission that the National Scenic Byway program had opened a window for nomination. The Commission voted unanimously to pursue the designation. City Council also voted unanimously to support the endeavor. Michael Carberry, AICP, a planning commissioner with over 30 years of land use, recreation and historic preservation planning experience accepted the challenge to draft the nomination. Norris Museum, with TVA documents and TVA-related books, was a terrific source of information as were TVA websites. Several other museum directors and were helpful. The Campbell and Anderson County mayors were very encouraging.

**5. Documentation of support from road management authorities and Federal land management agencies:**

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) is the road management authority for the Norris Freeway (US 441). Both the State's staff in Nashville and Region 1 staff in Knoxville were very supportive and helpful. Michael McClanahan, TDOT's State Scenic Byway Coordinator, has been quick to be of assistance by answering questions and offering encouragement for the past five months. Region 1 Director, Steve Borden, expressed his knowledge of the Freeway's history and recreational assets, and his support of pursuing the nomination earlier this year. Several of the Region 1 TDOT staff were also helpful. Andy Padgett, in particular, in that he was quick to call and email the TRIMS crash data and overall safety evaluation.

Knoxville-Knox County Transportation Planning Organization, a multi-county and city organization, has been very supportive. Jeff Welch, their Director, agreed to serve on the Byway Organization. The agency also assisted in preparing the Freeway maps in this nomination.

Tennessee Valley Authority: their documents, dating back to the 1930s, and more recently, the more topical web articles were very helpful. As to current staff, kudos are extended to Pat Ezell, TVA Historian, who offered comments on an early draft, and has agreed to serve on the Byway Organization.

**6. Actions by the Norris Freeway Byway Organization:** while Tennessee has had a Scenic Byway program since 1984, a byway organization was not required. During the last few months, a Norris Freeway Byway Organization was formed. Due to COVID-19 concerns, their meeting was conducted via a computer and phone generation. The Byway Organization agreed to meet again, following recognition of Norris Freeway as a National Scenic Byway. The plan is two-fold: (a) continuing to meet on at least a semi-annual basis; and (b) engaging the county and local governments by serving in an advisory capacity on issues that could affect the Freeway, such as landscaping, zoning cases near the byway, and proposed improvement programs.

**7. Anomalous intrusions on the visitor's experience:** Such intrusions have been discussed in other sections of this plan. Those primarily include short distances where landscaping and tree buffering are the solutions, including the Norris Freeway/TN 61 intersection area, the Anderson County Solid Waste Facility area, the RV storage site at Andersonville Pike, and the shopping centers

near Emory Road. Added together, these areas comprise only several hundred yards.

Also, better attention needs to be given to the vehicle pull-off sites. Many of them look like an after-thought. As noted previously, some could be eliminated and the rest could be better defined with landscaping and plantings.

Finally, the other anomalies include:

- The first few hundred yards south of US 25W to either side of I-75: while the landscape is largely barren here, the wide 250-foot plus Freeway right-of-way and the yards of the businesses offer ample room for native tree planting, providing a more fitting entrance to the forested section of the Freeway.
- Heading toward Norris Dam, the anomaly of anomalies appears on the right, the Norris Dam Motel, dating from 1955. You can't miss its classic sign. Originally, the motel included a separate restaurant and office with a wing of multi-story, motel rooms. The current owner is interested in preserving the motel.



*The classic 1955 sign of the Norris Dam Motel.*



*Some of the old motel rooms at the Norris Dam Motel.*

## **Goals for Norris Freeway, National Scenic Byway**

### **Preserve the region’s recreational assets of parks, lakes, rivers and trails**

Tennesseans and its visitors are blessed to have so many “outdoor recreation opportunities” along or near this Freeway. The conservation of the forest lands, streams and lake waters are foremost in maintaining hiking, boating and fishing that dearly loved. Long-term support for the land and water management agencies (TVA, Tennessee State Parks, and the City of Norris) are critically important.

### **Conserve and enhance, where necessary, the beauty along Norris Freeway**

Only slightly more than a mile of the Freeway has lost its natural beauty. These spots have been discussed in this plan. Fortunately, public and, in some cases, private cooperation can address enhancement. The wide right-of-way is an asset for landscaping.



### **Maintain the high-quality of Norris Lake, the Clinch River and its tributaries**

This goal goes hand in glove with the first goal. TVA is key maintaining the good water quality that exists. Such programs as oxygenation at Norris Dam and the Weir Dam will continue the excellent fishing opportunities. The Norris Watershed board has prepared a Management Plan to protect Clear Creek, the City's water supply source.

### **Build upon regional cooperation between Campbell, Anderson and Knox Counties, and the cities of Rocky Top, Norris and Knoxville**

The Byway Organization can be an asset to such cooperation. The Knoxville Regional Transportation Association was created to foster multi-jurisdictional transportation planning. While the East Tennessee Development District provides local and regional land use planning assistance. Both these agencies are represented on the Byway Organization.

### **Obtain National Scenic Byway designation and provide linkages to the Cumberland Scenic and the East Tennessee Crossing Scenic Byways**

These goals are critical to this regional corridor enhancement program. The designation is key to the long-term success of the Byway Organization and fostering the connections between the three Scenic Byways.

### **Expand tourism by promoting and enhancing visits to nearby recreational and historic sites, including points along Norris lake, coal mining historic sites, and other historic towns and cities in the region**

This plan calls for the creation of hard copy brochures and on-line guides to the Byway and side trips. The Byway Organization includes representatives of the county tourism boards. The side trips are keys to enhance tourism and providing a network of recreational opportunities and cultural site appreciation.

### **Specific Programs for this Management Plan**

1. Create an information brochure for website use of the Campbell, Anderson and Knox County tourism boards. Also, a simple brochure for distribution at Interstate welcome centers. Their focus should be on tourist-oriented sites that outlines the various recreational and historic opportunities along the Freeway.

2. Add I-75 exits signs at the Rocky Top interchanges to include the Federal standard brown, tourist-oriented sign, reading "Norris Freeway: National Scenic Byway."
3. The City of Rocky Top recently created a Tree Committee. That advisory board should create and work with the City, State and Byway Organization to implement a tree and landscaping plan for US 25W, especially from the southbound I-75 exit through the small downtown area and the first few hundred yards of the Freeway.



*The Byway Organization should support Rocky Top and that City's Tree and Downtown Improvement Boards to foster their economic revitalization.*

4. Longfield Cemetery: recreate the information board that was created years ago as an Eagle Scout project. That information was well presented and told a meaningful story of the miners and others who are buried here. Improvements to the small parking area would also be helpful.



*Longfield Cemetery.*

5. Preserve the lands of Norris Dam State Park, TVA, and the Norris Watershed and greenbelt as they currently exist. Those scenic resources are foremost assets of this scenic byway.



*The Norris Watershed and Clear Creek Road.*

6. Conserve the Norris Greenbelt from River Road to TN 61.



*The Greenbelt runs along both sides of the Freeway from the Norris Watershed to TN 61. Maintaining the management principles, including access and forestry practices of the City, State and the few private land owners are keys to retaining the beauty.*

7. Create and implement a landscaping and buffering plan for the land uses along the Norris Freeway and Andersonville Pike (TN 61).

This was the most altered intersection from the original ones along the Freeway.



*A public-private landscaping plan should be implemented along this stretch of Norris Freeway/TN 61. The City of Norris can take the lead as they consider a new Land Use Plan and design standards.*

8. Enhance the landscape buffering by planting evergreen trees, east of the Freeway near the County's Waste Disposal and Recycling Center, and also near the David Jones Business Park. The following two photographs are illustrative of what can be accomplished. Both shots are of the grounds of the Norris Academy.

*Photo 1 is the Academy's well landscaped entrance and front yard, which face the David Jones Park's "Main Street" --- an outstanding example of commercial or industrial landscaping.*

*Photo 2 is the side of the development facing the Freeway; similar plantings as Photo 1 should be implemented*



*Photo 1: this should be the model for buildings facing the Freeway.*



*Photo 2: the current setting of Norris Academy, facing Norris Freeway.*

9. Create and implement an evergreen tree planting plan for the Freeway's right-of-way, south of Mountain Road. Also reexamine the future land use for this rolling landscape whose current zoning is for business park uses or create design standards for the site's development (for example, landscaping and lighting standards).
10. Miller Road intersection and Andersonville Pike area: this short section needs buffer landscaping. Create a site plan for a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees.
11. At the old quarry at the Andersonville Pike turnoff, extract the asphalt and other debris next to the Freeway and plant evergreens there for a year-round buffer to the RV storage area.



*The outdoor storage yard in Halls.*

- 12. Tindell’s is one the oldest businesses in Halls. This site was developed starting in 1950. The sawmill and lumbering operation were located “across the road” in the early 1900s. In order to have the current buildings better blend with the surrounding landscape, tree plantings in the right-of-way and around the building would be appropriate.
  
- 13. Commercial development near Emory Road: a landscaped buffering plan should be created for both the Freeway right-of-way and yard space of commercial properties. The buffering should include a blend of deciduous and evergreen trees for year-round enhancement.





*Norris Freeway at the corner of Maynardville Pike. An area that was not landscaped with its development.*



*This stretch of Norris Freeway is about one-third of a mile north of that shopping center. Evergreen and deciduous trees provide an attractive visually screen along the Freeway.*

14. Implement the Knox County Park and Greenway Plan for this Norris Freeway area, which would include greenway trails along Beaver and Bull Run Creeks and ridge top preservation corridor with walking trails.



*Halls Greenway.*

**Overall improvements:**

1. Remove the occasional gravel pads that were created along the Freeway, which should be restored to a natural landscape. Alternatively, if these are needed for vehicle breakdown sites, improve configuration and surround with natural landscaping.



*One of the pull-offs along the Freeway.*

2. Minor improvements should be made to provide directional signs to recreation sites, particularly in Knox County (for example, the entrance to Clayton Park).
  
3. Further develop the volunteer litter pick-up programs along the Freeway. St. Francis Episcopal Church and Trout Unlimited have done exemplary clean-ups along the Freeway around Norris and up to the Dam. Such efforts are warranted south of TN 61 toward Halls. Given the terrain along some areas in this stretch, brief lane closures should be coordinated with traffic enforcement officials so that volunteers are clear of the travel lanes.



*The area along the Freeway where Trout Unlimited maintains a litter pick-up program.*

## **APPENDIX REGARDING SIDE TRIPS**

### **NORRIS FREEWAY NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY NOMINATION**

#### **SIDE TRIPS**

Why side trips?

First, each of the following side trips has a connection to the creation of Norris Freeway, Norris Dam and Norris Lake. Perhaps, the most demonstrable is the side trip to Oak Ridge. Norris Dam's massive hydroelectric-generating capacity was a key factor in selecting the site for the Manhattan Project, the massively secret project and its success.

And even Coal Creek, the start of the Freeway has a connection in that had coal not been mined there, a railroad would not necessarily have been built to the locale. However, the coal industry resulted in two rail connections. In turn, the rail lines enabled supply trains to carry the construction materials for transport from Coal Creek to the Norris Dam construction site.

So, those who like a blend of historic and recreational sites in their travels, these side trips will likely provide an interesting, scenic means to explore East Tennessee.

Second, there is an economic reason. In the nomination of East Tennessee Crossing Byway, a goal was presented that side trips should be provided so that travelers could explore more places in the region. Perfect sense. Side trips can extend the length of stay, but more importantly can provide connections to other recreation sites. In the case of Norris Freeway, such connections as TVA's Loyston Point and Big Ridge State Park resulted from the creation of Norris Lake. Downtown Knoxville, is also a connection. There TVA's original headquarters were located and an original site, the New Sprinkle Building has been restored. As has Market Square and Gay Street which are venues for shopping, concerts and festivals.

Onto the side trips.

## **Rocky Top to Briceville and onward to Brushy Mountain Penitentiary (Petros, TN)**

This side trip can be found as follows. If you are southbound on I-75, take the Rocky Top exit to Norris Dam (US 441, Norris Freeway). If you are northbound on the Freeway, turn right at US 25W. Rocky Top, was long known as Coal Creek and you'll quickly see why. Your first stop should be the Coal Creek Miners Museum, 201 Main Street (phone: 865 340 3269). Website: [www.coalcreekminersmuseum.com](http://www.coalcreekminersmuseum.com)

The mountains here became mining country in the 1860s. The museum tells the stories of the Welsh men who came to these hills and hollows to eke out a coal mining livelihood. You'll learn about the State's use of convict labor and the tragedies of coal mine explosions and the resulting Federal legislation on child labor and mine safety.

The convict labor saga started in 1877 when convicts were first leased to mine owners near Briceville. A strike unfolded but was not effective as the miners found work at other mines in the area. By 1891, there was a major disagreement on how coal carloads were being weighed, essentially undercutting the miner's wages. A strike ensued and Tennessee Governor, Buck Buchanan, sent in a small cadre of troops to Briceville to oversee the stockade of the convict workers. Over that year the stockade was commandeered on three occasions by the miners and the convicts were marched down to the Coal Creek depot and transported back to Knoxville. In response, Buchanan sent in a militia, which established Fort Anderson on Militia Hill, where their cannons had the capability of firing on the town.



*The miners at their nest on Walden's Ridge (from an illustration in Harper's Weekly in the early 1890s.*

The striking miners countered by establishing the “Miner’s Nest” across the valley on Walden Ridge. Neither the militia nor miners had a conclusive attack on each other’s strong hold. The episode ended with the election of November 1892. Buchanan’s use of convict labor was unpopular among Tennesseans and he was defeated by Peter Turney who, in turn, abolished the convict labor system. Fort Anderson, now on the National Register of Historic Places, can be visited via TN 116, right on Beech Grove Lane, a quick left on Sharp Lane and then a quick a right onto Vowell Mountain Road. The Fort is located on Militia Hill, a gravel parking lot is provided there.



*The recently restored Militia Hill site includes a canon from the Coal Mine era. Here you can see how it was trained on Coal Creek (now Rocky Top). Imagine the paint canisters shot into the town, warning miners and residents of potential serious damage, if shells were launched.*



The other chapters of Coal Creek and Briceville history ended in mining tragedies. In 1902 the miners at Fraterville entered the mine early one Monday morning. The downtime over the weekend is thought to have allowed methane to build up. It is believed a miner's gas-lit lamp caused the explosion, resulting in the loss of 216 men and teenagers who were trapped inside. The tragedy is horrifically described by miners who were trapped for several hours in small enclaves of the mine.

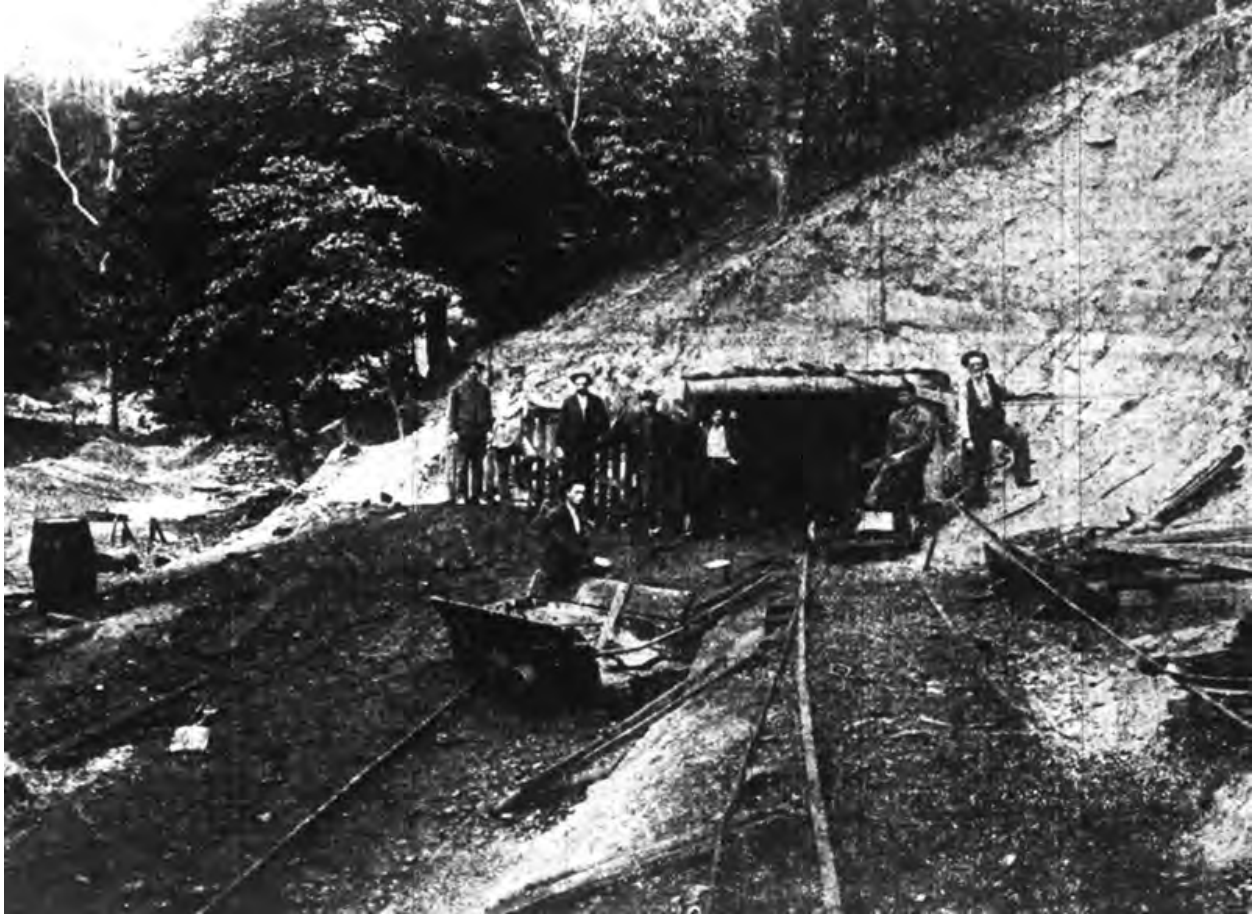
One was written for himself and his brother:

*“Ellen, darling, goodbye from us both. Elbert said the Lord has saved him. We are all praying for air to support us, but it is getting so bad without any air. Ellen I want you to live right and come to heaven. Raise the children the best you can. Oh how I wish to be with you, goodbye. Bury me and Elbert in the same grave by little Eddie. Goodbye Ellen, goodbye Lily, goodbye Jemmie, goodbye Horace. We are together. Its 25 minutes after two. There is a few of us alive yet.*

*Oh God for one more breath. Ellen remember me as long as you live. Goodbye darling.*

*Jake and Elbert”*

The Cross Mountain Disaster occurred in the early hours of December 11, 1912. By then, canaries were used to detect mine gases. What happened then? Apparently, a roof in a passage had fallen down, releasing methane. As miner with a lantern approached the site to examine the damage, the gas exploded, resulting in the catastrophe, which caused the deaths of 84 miners.



*The Cross Mountain Mine.*

Two years earlier, the U.S. Bureau of Mines had been created to develop mine standards and assist in such terrible episodes. The Bureau's Knoxville team traveled the railroad, reaching the mine within hours. Working with other mine personnel, an exhaust fan was replaced, a water source was piped in to extinguish fires and the recovery process began. Donning oxygen masks, the Bureau team searched the shafts and rescued five miners.

Those tragedies resulted in two significant burial sites etched in Welsh tradition, marking the hilly landscape with a circle of headstones centered on a monumental obelisk. The families buried many of their fathers and sons in a Welsh tradition of a circle of gravestones set around an obelisk, a practice whose origins go back several thousand years (Stonehenge being an example).

The memorial, dedicated to the Fraterville miners, can found at the Leach Cemetery off US 25W on Clear Branch Road. Cross Mountain miners were laid to rest at Circle Cemetery, off Circle Cemetery Road in Briceville.



*Circle Cemetery near Briceville where many of the Cross Mountain Mine Disaster.*

In the middle of each burial circle, you'll see a large obelisk, inscribed with the names of the miners and poignant words of the tragedies. Both miner's circles are on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Briceville Community Church, dating from 1887, rests prominently on a hill overlooking the town. Two slightly different sized, Gothic Revival-style towers, each with its own door, are prominent at corners of the facade. Like many country 19th century churches in the South, men entered through one door, and women through the other, before settling into their pews on opposite sides of the sanctuary.



*Briceville Community Church*

The church was used for jailing some of the striking miners for a short time near the end of the Coal Creek War. Following the Fraterville disaster, the church was filled with grieving families. Memorial services led by local doctor and pastor, E. S. Dickson, who spoke words of consolation and celebrated the lives of the husbands and sons who had so sorrowfully been lost. Some of Fraterville and Cross Mountain Miners are interred in the nearby cemetery.

End of this side trip? Depends on your sense of adventure. You have three alternatives:

1. If you immediately want to go back and set off for Norris Freeway, head back to Rocky Top, turn left on US 25W and then right onto US 441, the beautiful section of the Freeway emerges just beyond the underpass of I-75.
2. If driving a mountainous road has intrigue, you can continue up TN 116, which twists its way up to the edge of Windrock Mountain and back down to Petros. The route is nicknamed “The Devil’s Triangle”—providing an idea of the curvy driving adventure. At Petros, you will immediately come across Brushy Mountain State Prison, which is now an historic site and museum (see below).
3. Another route follows Frost Bottom Road to Oliver Springs, the town that, you might recall, was featured in the movie, “October Sky.” To get there, follow TN 116 northwest from Briceville and turn onto TN Highway 330, and follow that valley until you merge onto Spring Street to the heart of this small town.



*TN 330 runs between Walden Ridge and Wind Rock Mountain.*

## **Oliver Springs**

**Downtown:** If you're familiar with *October Sky*, Knox Street may look familiar to you with its brick store fronts that were featured in the movie. Several Oliver Springs buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places, including: the Oliver Springs Banking Company, 410 Knox Street: this two-story bank with corner entrance was built in 1901 (it was the Union Hall in the movie). Toward the railroad tracks, at 430 Knox Street you'll see the two-story Sienknecht Company Department Store, dating from 1901. Look for its sign, Olga Coal Company—a vestige of the movie—on its brick facade.



*The Sienknecht Company Department Store and the Oliver Springs Banking Company.*

The Abston Garage, 505 Winter Gap Avenue, with its stepped gable facade, was built by Sienknecht in 1915. In recent years it has been transformed into the Oliver Springs Historic Museum. The Dr. Fred Stone Hospital, 101 Roane Street, is an eccentric collection of various wings. The two-story, store-like facade that faces Roane Street, was built in 1920 by Dr. Jesse Thaxton Stage as a clinic. Dr. Stone set up his practice here in 1943. The structure expanded as wings and the observation tower were added. He delivered over 5,000 babies here...what an east Tennessee baby boom! Stone served in WWI as a medical aide and during WWII as a medical examiner for the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge.

**Colonial Hall** is the oldest structure by far and sits a block from downtown at the corner of Spring and Knox Streets. The attractive, imposing house was originally built as a two-story, log house in 1799 by Major Moses C. Winters. He had come to the area shortly before then and the settlement became known as Winter's Springs. The log house was eventually covered with clapboard. Another notable owner was George Estabrook, who served as president of East Tennessee

University (later renamed University of Tennessee), who bought the house in 1852. The front porch was added in 1898.



*Colonial Hall.*

### **Options for continuing this side trips.**

From Oliver Springs, you have two options on continuing to a side trip. The first alternative is to head south on TN Highway 62. You'll drive up a ridge and quickly reach the "Atomic City." See side trip in this section for the details on places to visit.

The second alternative will lead northward on TN Highway 62, heading to Brushy Mountain State Prison visitor's site and Frozen Head State Park, and continue to



the Cumberland Scenic Byway, which spans the beautiful terrain of the Cumberland Plateau and such unique towns as Rugby.

Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary was conceived as a new way to engage convicts in the coal industry. After the Coal Creek War, the state abolished the convict lease system; however, an alternative, using prison labor, was soon created and a wooden prison was constructed here in 1896. The State realized that this penitentiary could house inmates and put them to work— mining coal, operating coke ovens and farming. This formula became a sustaining and profitable operation, lasting until 1938. In 1970 James Earl Ray was imprisoned here after being convicted of killing Dr. Martin Luther King in Memphis in 1968. He escaped for a brief three days in 1977. His last days here were in the late 1990s. Because of kidney disease he was transferred to Columbia Nashville Memorial Hospital where he passed away in 1998. The castle-like penitentiary was built by the prisoners in the early 1920s and continued its operation until 2009.



*Brushy Mountain Prison in earlier years.*

In the last few years the former prison has been transformed into history center. This was accomplished through the vision of Brian May and Pete Waddington who worked with the Morgan County Economic Development Board to transform former penal institution as a visitor's attraction. The relationship has been splendid. Visitors can purchase a ticket and tour various parts of the prison—maximum security, standard cells, “the hole,” cafeteria (with its murals by the prisoners) and large prison yard. You can view a short movie about the prison's history and examine various artifacts and photographs of yesteryear.

If you would like a bite to eat, The Warden's Table restaurant has good ribs and other southern fare. Nearby are a gift shop and the End of the Line Distillery, which sells multiple varieties of moonshine. Finally, check their outdoor concerts and special events calendar...you may find something to liking. It's open April to December. Address: 9182 TN- 116, Petros, TN 37845 Phone: 423 324 8687.

### **Frozen Head State Park**

This 24,000-acre natural area forms the backdrop to Brushy Mountain State penitentiary. In fact, the land was purchased in 1894 as part of the prisons land. In 1933 it had become the Morgan State Forest. Then in 1998 it was designated as a State Natural Area. Its name is derived from the 3,324-foot peak, Frozen Head Mountain, which is often snowcapped during Winter.

Its entrance is off TN 62, a few miles up the road from Petros. Its hardwood forests surround 80 miles of hiking trails, which wind pass streams and waterfalls as ascents are made from a valley to ridges. Several mountaintops, with their 3,000-foot elevations, afford magnificent views of the Smokies, Cumberland Mountain, and valleys of the region. A modern campground, backcountry campsites, picnic areas and recreation fields are available. Phone: 423 346 3318. Address: 3208, 964 Flat Fork Road, Wartburg, TN 37887. GPS: 36.125, -50485.

## **Side Trip: Andersonville via TN 61, returning to Norris Freeway via TN 170**

Head east on Highway 61 at the southern edge of Norris. After some glimpses of small farms, you will be entering Andersonville, which is located about a mile from the Freeway. One of the original settlers in this area was John Gibbs who came here in the early 1800s. His father had been Nicholas Gibbs, who had settled in what is now northeast Knox County in 1791, on land that was granted by his Revolutionary War service in the Battle of King's Mountain.



*The landscape of east Anderson County, not far from Andersonville.*

Also arriving in this early time frame. In the early 1800s, John Wallace, born in 1748 in Augusta County, Virginia, came down the Tennessee Valley to settle here about 1800 with eight of his children. One of his sons, James had 17 children, who stayed in the area. That clan was the source of the early name for the town, Wallace's Crossroads.

During the Civil War, the Union's Sixth Tennessee Regiment engaged Confederate Cavalry that was encamped at the Crossroads during the summer of 1862. Roughly 60 Confederates were wounded or killed and several more were taken prisoners before the regiment returned to its home base in Kentucky.

In 1888 Wallace's Crossroads was renamed Andersonville in honor of Joseph Anderson, who served as a judge of the Territory South of the River Ohio, 1792 to 1797, and when Tennessee became a State, he served in the U.S. Senate from 1797 to 1815. In traveling through the town, you will see various houses and commercial structures that date from the late 1800s and early 1900s. Near the center of town is a large Queen Anne style house that rises prominently behind a white, picket fence. It was a boy's boarding home, called Clinton Hall, for Andersonville Institute, created in 1898. In 1922 the boarding home served as the schoolhouse because the original wooden school was torn down. Its replacement served elementary and school students until 1935. That year high schoolers went to the new Norris School. Today Andersonville Elementary School sits on the former institute site. Clinton Hall—the old boys' boarding house—is the remaining legacy of the Institute.



*Clinton Hall was the boys' boarding house of Andersonville Institute.*

TVA created Loyston Point Park not far from Andersonville. It features a campground and beach. Similar facilities are available at Anderson County Park several miles farther up that peninsula.

After leaving Andersonville you will pass by picturesque farmhouses and barns dotting the pastureland of this valley. The Longmire Farm, dating from 1817, is along this beautiful landscape. The log structures and agricultural landscape are still in place. It is recognized as a Tennessee Legacy Farm. In entering Union County, Norris Lake and the Waterside Marina come to view. Thereafter, you'll climb Lone Mountain and Bluebird Ridge and head down rural landscape of Blue Mud Valley toward Big Ridge State Park. If you want a place to launch a boat, TVA's Blue Mud Boat Ramp (located just shy of the park) would be a good choice.

Big Ridge State Park was created through TVA, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the U.S. National Park Service in the mid-1930s. Its foremost feature is its 50-acre lake that was created by the CCC whose "boys" used their stone cutting skills to build the tall, rustic dam at the west end the park.



*One of Big Ridge Park's cabins, built by the CCC.*

Cabins, a sandy beach and dock were also created. Canoe and paddle boats are rented to visitors as no private craft are allowed on the lake.



*The kayak and boat rental dock.*

Rustic cabins and camping grounds are provided in forested settings. A playground, tennis and basketball courts and picnic sites are near the park's entrance. If hiking is of interest, there are over 15 miles of trails. The routes vary from easy to rigorous hikes. They are carved through the forested peninsula and a few run along Norris Lake.



*Big Ridge Lake and swimming area.*

Leaving the park, head east where you will climb Highway 61 over Chestnut Ridge. At Valley Grove Baptist Church, turn right onto TN Highway 170 back to Norris Freeway on Hickory Valley Road. An interesting feature along the route is the New Loyston Cemetery, where remains of 19th and early 20th century graves were moved to this knoll. Loyston was a town that was lost to lake waters that were created by Norris Dam. Some of its citizen took the option to resettle in this valley, its center is the intersection of TN 61 and TN 170.



*New Loyston Cemetery was created in the mid-1930s as a place to rebury former Loyston residents who had passed away before Norris Lake was created.*

Should you want to make a longer, multi-day journey, you could head up TN 170 to TN 33 and US 25E to Cumberland Gap. That piece of geography opened the trail from Virginia to Kentucky whereby Daniel Boone and others started settlement in that territory. The gap is also the start of East Tennessee Crossing National Scenic Byway, which runs southeast along US 25E to North Carolina.





*The New Loyston landscape along TN 170, which provides a connection to Cumberland Gap.*

### **Raccoon Valley Road to the “Atomic City”**

TN 170 heads west down Raccoon Valley, a rolling agricultural landscape for about three miles. At the I-75 interchange, you’ll quickly pass commercial sites and a rock quarry. Thereafter, the pastoral landscape is largely in place as you come to a tiny hamlet called Heiskell, which was once a railroad stop. After passing through the Clinton Highway intersection you’ll be on Edgemore Road, leading to Oak Ridge. On your right is Claxton Elementary school and continuing a few miles you will see a historic marker the left for the David Hall cabin. This two-story, log structure was built in 1799 by David Hall, a veteran of the Revolutionary War. This cabin served as a tavern and inn as its location was along old Emery Road, an early route that ended in what now is Nashville. The cabin and other log structures are open to the public.



*The David Hall cabin, one Anderson County's oldest houses.*

About a quarter mile away, you will see TVA's Bull Run Fossil Plant, a massive coal burning operation which was created in 1967, and due to hazards associated with coal burning will be closed in the next few years.

Nearby you'll be crossing Milton Hill Lake as you drive over Edgemore Bridge. After crossing over the bridge, you will be in Oak Ridge, the "Atomic City." Near the bridge is Haw Ridge Park with its 30 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails. Centennial Golf Course, a public 18-hole layout, is across from Haw Ridge.

This side trip continues northward on Melton Lake Drive. The lake and distant Cumberland Mountains come into view. Multiple recreation activities are offered here. As you head up the drive, an asphalt bike, jogging and walking trail runs alongside. Soon you'll be coming to the Oak Ridge Marina with its rowing facilities. The lake is among the best waterways in the Southeast for rowing events.



*Kayakers paddling along Melton Hill Lake at edge of Oak Ridge.*

Not far away is Calhoun's restaurant which sits next to the lake and is it worthwhile stop for Southern cuisine. Continuing, you'll soon reach the Oak Ridge Turnpike. Turn left and you'll be heading towards several museums and other sites that are linked to the Manhattan Project.

During World War II, Oak Ridge was a "Secret City." Its location was chosen because enemy planes couldn't reach a site that was so far inland and return to off-coast aircraft carriers. Also, Norris Dam, with his hydroelectric capacity, could supply much of the massive amount of power needed for Oak Ridge's industrial-research complex that was developing the atomic bomb. The nearby rivers and lakes provided water sources and the series of ridges were viewed as a means to absorb, if necessary, the shock of an inadvertent explosion.

As you head west on the turnpike, you will see the Louis Brannon house, a limestone dwelling on the left. This modest dwelling was used during WW II as the residence of General Leslie Groves. He was the commander of the Manhattan Project—the secret military endeavor which developed the atomic bomb.



*The electricity generated at Norris Dam enabled nearby Oak Ridge facilities, such as K-25, to complete the mission of the Manhattan Project.*

Before reaching the museums, a quick visit to the original shopping center, Jackson Square, is recommended. If you would like some of the best pizza in the region, head to **Big Ed's Pizza**, 101 Broadway Avenue. Phone: 865 482 4885. If you're staying in the area for a day or two, **Oak Ridge Playhouse** opens its stage for excellent, seasonal theater. Address: Also located in Jackson Square at 227 Broadway Avenue. Box office phone: 865 482 4877.

### **Onto the museums:**

**1. American Museum Science and Energy.** This museum offers displays centered upon Oak Ridge's role in the Manhattan Project. Other sections illustrate more recent advances in the use of nuclear energy. Interactive play stations are provided so kids can learn about science principles. The museum also sponsors bus tours of the Manhattan Project's National Historic Park, including the Y-12 National Security Complex, and the X-10 Graphite Reactor, a National Historic

Landmark. Location: 115 East Main Street on the northeast edge of the Main Street Shopping Center. Phone: 865 294 4531.

**2. Children's Museum of Oak Ridge.** Adults as well as kids can enjoy the sights and activities held within this original city school, Highland View Elementary. Adults will also be fascinated with the displays about Appalachian settlement, covering crafts and means of livelihood. The school's corridors are lined with exhibits of wildlife and a terrific photographic collection of life in the early Oak Ridge. Location: 461 West Outer Drive. Phone: 865 482 1074.

**3. Oak Ridge History Museum,** 102 Robertsville Road, facing Oak Ridge Turnpike. The story of day-to-day life of the city's residents of the World War II comes alive here. Artifacts, photographs, and interpretive layouts tell the story. Phone: 865 499 7083.

**4. K- 25 History Center.** This museum overlooks the site where an enormous nuclear research and production facility once stood. Here a gaseous diffusion process was used to enrich uranium. That enabled the development of the explosive component for "Little Boy," the nuclear weapon that was dropped on Hiroshima and led to the end of World War II. Its exhibits include technical equipment and early photographs of the facility and processes. Location: 652 Richmond Street, off the Turnpike at the west end Oak Ridge. Phone; 865 685 8050.

### **Side trip from Norris Freeway to Knoxville**

At the southern end of Norris Freeway, you can travel to Downtown Knoxville, not unlike early TVA employees did for many decades. Although strip commercial has changed the scenery, there are some worthwhile places along the way. After driving about three miles toward Downtown, you'll be entering Fountain City. Its foremost site is the "Duck Pond," which is its central park.

Nearby are two worthwhile spots. Savage Gardens, a 100-year old, privately-owned site, that contains a plethora of flowering plants and trees. Its walking trail is enhanced by native stone towers, stone walls and benches. Location: 3237 Garden Drive, Knoxville 37918—3319. Call before visiting (865 688 6776) to contact

Garden Montessori School, the Garden's next door neighbor. They may be able to arrange a visit.

Hungry? Litton's Restaurant at 2803 Essary Drive is locally re-known for its forty-year history of incredible burgers and pastries. Google: [littonsdirecttoyou.com](http://littonsdirecttoyou.com) for menus and history.

Continue south on Broadway (US 441) to Downtown. You'll be passing by two historic neighborhoods, Old North and Fourth & Gill. Downtown Knoxville is pleasantly walkable. The heart of this historic center revolve around Market Square and Gay Street.

Market Square was created as the center for farmers to sell produce in the 1850s. The shops and restaurants that frame the square are on the National Register. Seasonally, farmers markets continue here (Wednesdays and Saturdays, May into November). See:

[/https://www.visitknoxville.com/things-to-do/popular-spots/market-square/](https://www.visitknoxville.com/things-to-do/popular-spots/market-square/)

During the Winter Holidays, an ice skating rink and Christmas events are welcoming. Finally, there are weekend outdoor theatre productions in the Summer.



*Market Square.*

A block away on Gay Street there are multiple restaurants, brew pubs and shops. For entertainment, the Bijou Theatre and Tennessee Theatre offer concerts and musicals.

Contact information— Bijou: Google [knoxbijou.org](https://www.knoxbijou.org) or call 865 522 0832.

Tennessee Theatre:

Google [tennesseetheatre.com](https://www.tennesseetheatre.com) or call 865 684 1200.

For live noon hour music, the Blue-Plate Special features a variety of Tennessee Valley entertainers. The events are Monday to Thursday in the Knoxville, Visitors Center, 301 S. Gay Street. Google: <https://www.visitknoxville.com/event/wdvx-blue-plate-special/5287/> or call the Visitor's Center 865 523 7263.

Final recommended sites revolved around history. The Blount Mansion, 200 West Hill Avenue, was built for William Blount, Governor of the Southwest Territory, in 1792. The Tennessee Constitution is believed to have been drafted here as Statehood was on the horizon in 1796. Blount became one of Tennessee's initial US Senators that same year. The mansion has been exquisitely restored and in 1965 it was recognized as a National Historic Landmark. The Blount Mansion Visitor's Center is next door.



*The Blount Mansion is open to visitors.*

The East Tennessee History Center, 601 S. Gay Street, features three components. An outstanding museum of Tennessee Valley settlement and development covers much of the first floor. You'll see exhibits and hear stories ranging from pioneering days to the Atomic Age. Other sections of the center contain collections of historical documents and genealogical information about east Tennessee families.



