

# OVERHILL SKYWAY

National Forest Scenic Byway Management Guide December 1993



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## INTRODUCTION

The Overhill Skyway leads visitors over a gently winding pathway into the heart of historic Cherokee Indian ancestral territories. Magnificent and seldom seen portions of the Southern Appalachian National Forests will be easily accessible for the general population for the first time in history. The Overhill Skyway corridor contributes a unique opportunity to experience and learn about our

cultural heritage in one of the most spectacular forest environments in the world.

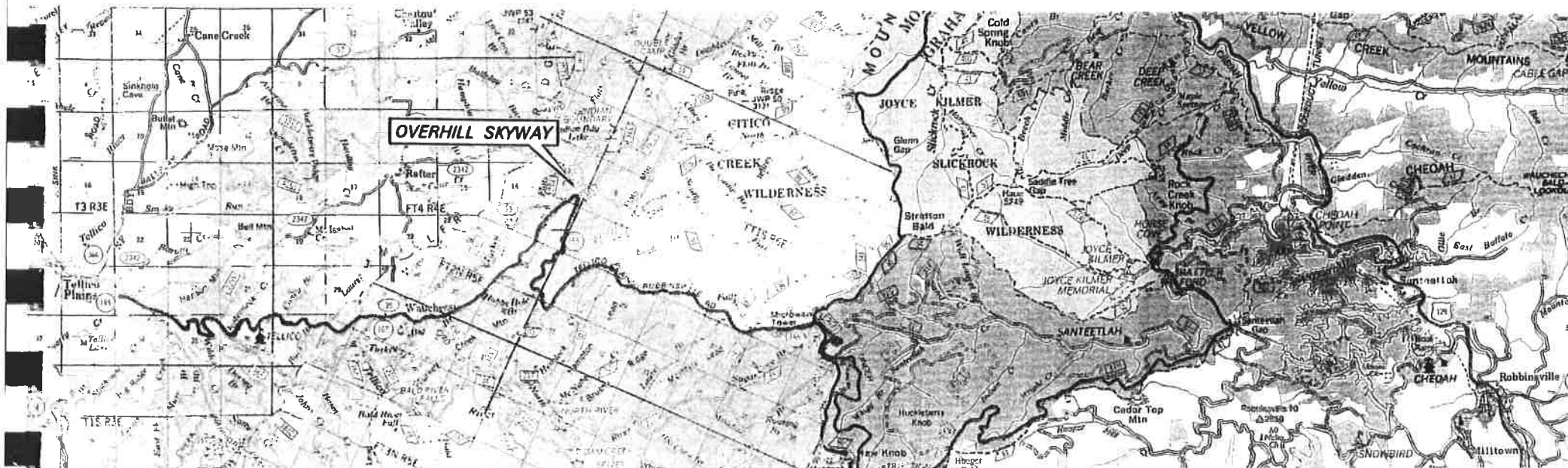
The Skyway is located in Tennessee and North Carolina. The Skyway will promote a wide range of tourist related economic and economic growth activities that will benefit both states. Visitors will be attracted to a diverse panorama of unique opportunities relating to Cherokee and Early Settler historical sites.

The Overhill Skyway is located within the proclamation boundaries of the Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests. Forty-three and one-half miles are on National Forest lands and only one half mile passes through private land. The scenic, cultural, and historic resources found along the Skyway will be carefully maintained and enhanced. The Forest

Service will manage the Skyway by utilizing the updated Scenery Management System to model, create, maintain and orchestrate a carefully crafted sequence of spectacular vistas for the enjoyment of the forest visitor.

The Forest Service will provide interpretive materials and signage at the rock walled overlooks and beyond, on loop trails.

These short easily accessible loop trails will range in length from a half mile to three miles. These loop trails will provide visitors an opportunity to experience a variety of forest environments found along the border of the Overhill Skyway. Other longer trails will give visitors access to even more of the adjacent forest land.



# HISTORY

## HISTORY OF THE ROAD

Portions of ancient Cherokee trading routes underlie the roadbed of the spectacular and panoramic Overhill Skyway. Since these lands were first inhabited there has been a desire to bridge the "Over the Hills Mountains", the "White/Smoky" or "Enemy" Mountains". The Cherokee Indians and early settlers had a desire to establish a route from the town of Great Tellico to the area near Robbinsville and to the territories lying beyond. This is the location of the Overhill Skyway which will be completed in 1997 after

almost thirty-five years of planning, negotiation and construction.

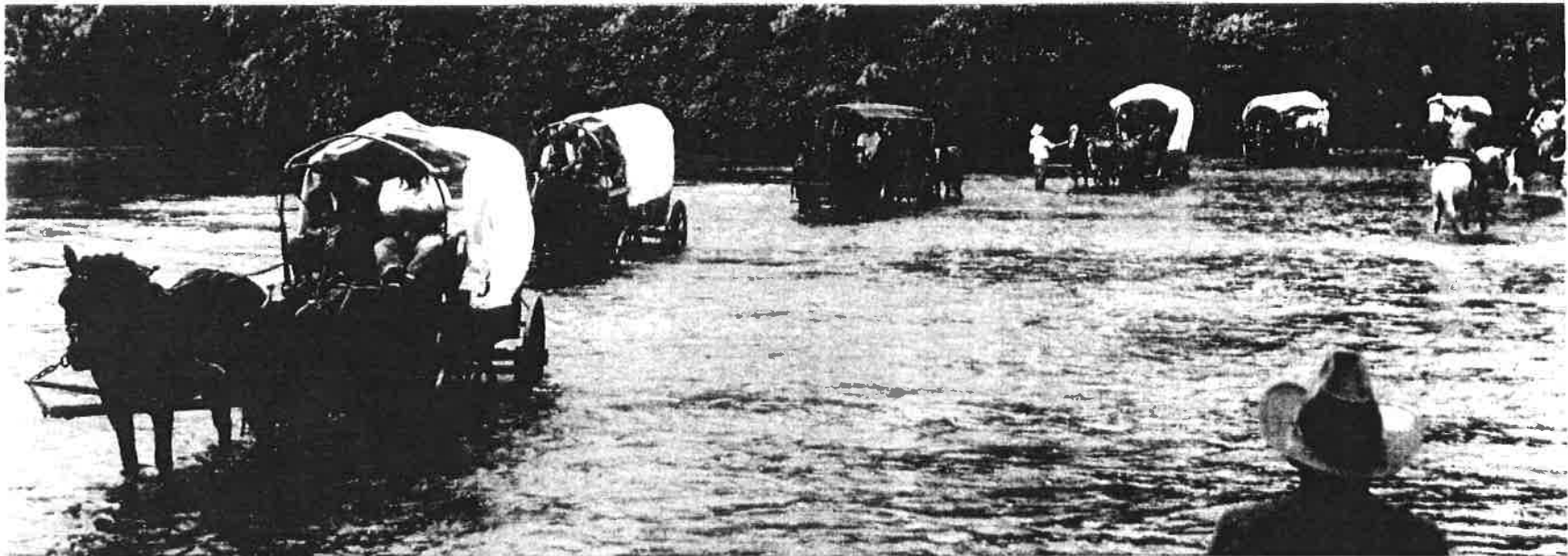
In the 1950's, the legislatures of Tennessee and North Carolina endorsed the construction of a road that would open up development of recreation areas in the Southern Appalachian region. Economic development committees from Monroe County, Tennessee and the Graham County, North Carolina area began actively promoting a "Wagon Train" to dramatize the need to unify

efforts and turn national attention to this unique mountain region. In the early 1960's, Senators Kefauver, Gore, Ervin and Jordan enthusiastically supported a proposal to improve the east-west travel routes from Tennessee to North Carolina, to stimulate the area's economy. In 1962, under the Federal Highway Act, the public lands highway, that would eventually become the Overhill Skyway, was authorized.

Construction of the Skyway has been controversial from

the very beginning. The original route in North Carolina was planned to skirt the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest. A strong public lobby opposed this part of the roadway and planning for the alternative "Santeetlah Crest Route" was begun in 1977. Design approval for the "Santeetlah Creek Route" was received in June, 1982. Also in 1977, an acid leaching problem was discovered in the vicinity of the last completed section of the road in Tennessee. Natural formations of Anakeesta rock exposed by road

excavation and used as fill material were leaching acid downstream into the watershed. Experts realized that this naturally occurring acid leaching phenomena would cause considerable damage to trout fishing and water quality. A contract for implementing remedial measures to counteract the acid problem was awarded in July 1978. Further studies were undertaken to avoid the same problem on the remaining uncompleted sections of the road.



## LAND USE HISTORY

The lands that border the Skyway, like the different peoples that have interacted with them, have evolved significantly through diverse cycles of prosperity and abject destruction. The magnificent Great Valley of Tennessee was in fact much modified by the early Indian populations as soon as an agricultural economy

became dominant (circa A.D. 1000).

The mountains and valleys were venerated as sacred by the Indians. These same sacred lands were sold for less than a dollar an acre after the Cherokee were removed to lands set aside for them west of the Mississippi. Following the Civil War, large

lumber companies moved in and the forests were systematically cut. The mountains were cleared so thoroughly that "*barely a match stick remained*", as one report states. This accelerated the process of environmental degradation wrought by massive erosion through unsound agricultural practices, and the institutionalized burning of the forest to

reveal mast and to provide grass lands to upland "open range" grazing of livestock. In order to address these deteriorating environmental conditions, the federal government in 1911 authorized the Federal acquisition of these lands, beginning with the large cut-over timber holdings. The bulk of these lands were acquired for public ownership through the 1920's to the

1950's. The Forest Service began a long and careful process of forest restoration. This venture was given a considerable boost by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s and early 1940s. Since that time the value of the forest as a magnificent public green space has increased each year.



The Southern Appalachians were extensively logged in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Logs were transported out of the forest primarily by rail.

## EARLY SETTLER HISTORY

On May 18, 1539, Hernando DeSoto set sail from Havana with an army of 600 men, and landed at Tampa Bay. DeSoto immediately made his way northward where he crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains in May of 1540. DeSoto's expedition made its way north to the Hiwassee River before they turned southward.

After DeSoto (AD. 1540), came a series of travelers and explorers who traded

and lived with the Indians. Some of the personal journals from those times give insight into the rites and customs that developed between the two peoples. James Adair, an 18th century colonial trader, lived for thirty years among the southern Indians. He wrote of their many interesting myths, legends, and beliefs. Just before the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1776, the botanist William Bartram made an extended

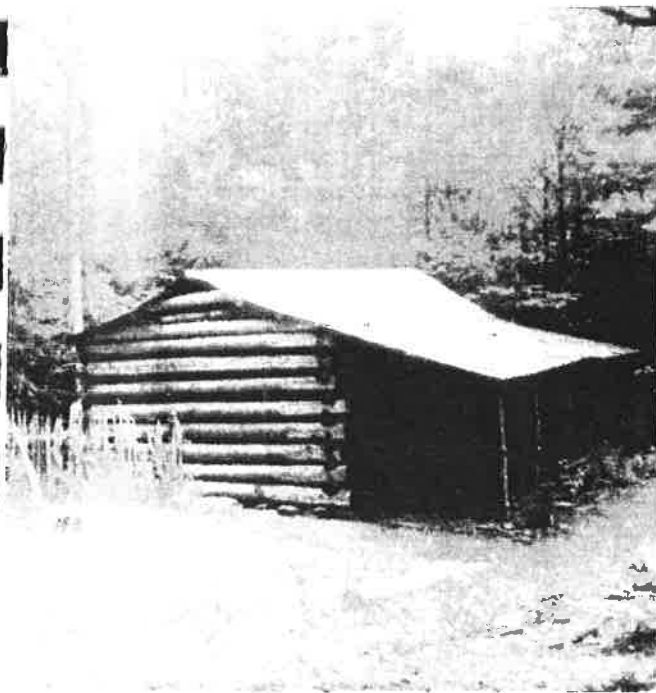
tour of the Cherokee country and left a pleasant account of the hospitable character and friendly disposition of the Indians. He visited forty-three towns that were inhabited by the tribe and made extensive reports of many aspects of the land and its vegetation.

After the Revolution, treaties and white settlement rapidly reduced the Cherokee land holdings. Although many of the Cherokees

assimilated practices of the white settler culture, the pressure for more land forced the Cherokees out in 1838. Most of the tribe was marched west to Oklahoma under military guard, along the "*Trail of Tears*".

Early European settlement took its own peculiar form in the Southern Appalachians, being somewhat removed from the mainstream of the nation's economy. Small

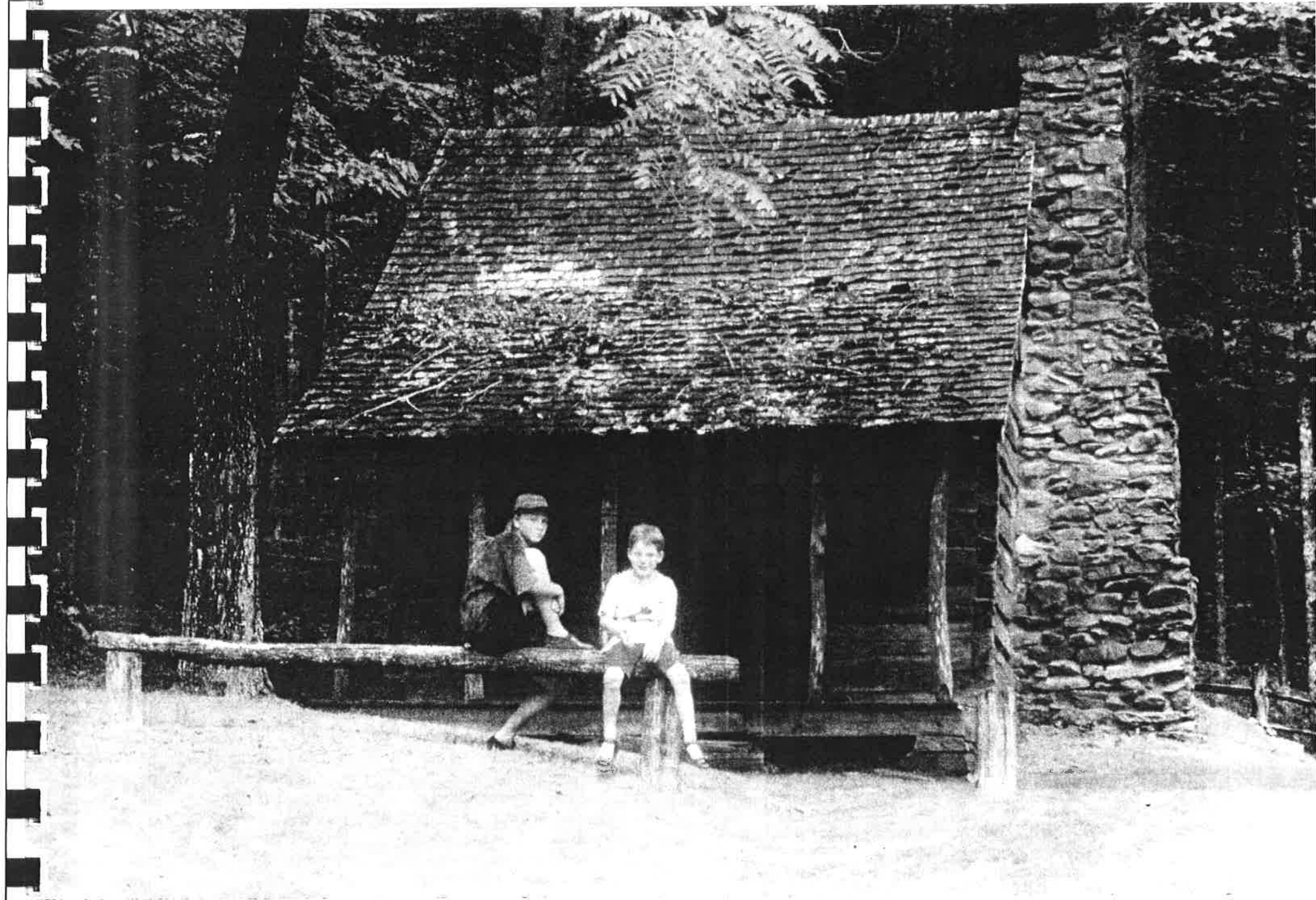
farms were the norm and large towns were rare. Railroads were not available to haul goods to and from larger cities until the late 1800's, except in the main section of the Tennessee Valley. People developed a strong self reliant lifestyle that survives to this day. Early settlement patterns, lifestyles, and major events such as the "timber boom" will be revealed through interpretation along the Skyway.



Sam Houston, photograph by Mathew Brady  
By courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



*Indian agent Return J. Meigs lived with the Cherokees for 22 years while he helped institute the government's "civilization" policy.*



The Stewart cabin on Santeetlah Creek Road.

# CHEROKEE HISTORY



Sequoah, who invented the Cherokee alphabet, lived nearby.

The Indians of North Carolina and Tennessee have a history that reaches back in time over 11,000 years. The first people to roam the Tennessee River Valley were small bands of nomadic Ice Age hunters who ventured across the land bridge connecting Alaska and Siberia. Their descendants were the Paleo Indians, who eventually occupied most of North and South America. The Archaic Period began when the Ice Age

gradually came to an end. As the earth warmed, forests grew, and deer, elk and moose thrived. Beginning around 8,000 B.C., a new Indian way of life began to emerge as they began to exploit more well defined territories. Settlements began to be used seasonally and the people began to depend on the rivers for their subsistence. They fished and collected mollusks along the Tennessee and Tellico rivers. By 1,000 BC, a new era, the *Woodland Period*, was underway.

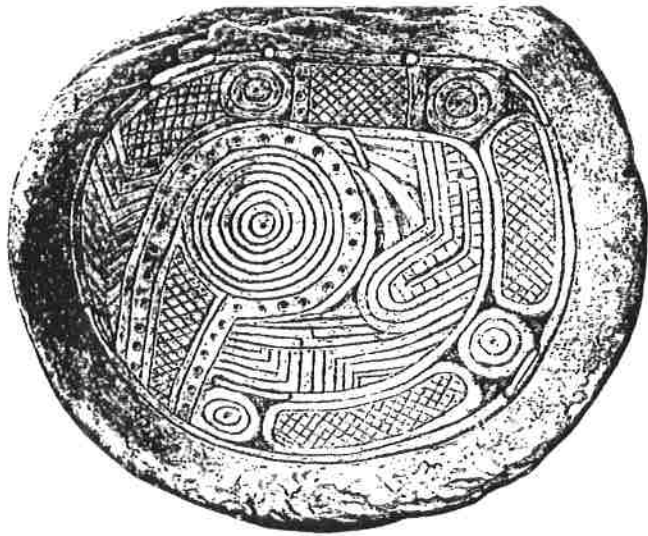
The Woodland Indians made pottery and developed a horticultural tradition. Their ancestors, the Archaic people, had grown simple crops such as squash, gourds, and sunflowers. The Woodland Indians continued to refine these agricultural practices. They were the first

Indians to build mounds and to develop complex social and religious structures.

The Mississippi period, starting around A.D. 1000, saw the growth of agricultural economies based on corn, squash and beans. Large villages were settled and sophisticated social and political systems developed.



Osteneco, one of the Cherokees who visited London in 1762



Rattlesnake gorget. McMahan Mound, Tennessee.

From William H. Holmes. "Art in Shell of the Ancient Americans."

Second Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology. Washington, D.C., 1883. plate LXIII

Late in this period (AD. 1600), the Cherokee was the largest Indian tribe in the entire South, numbering about 22,000 people. They were settled in about 80 towns in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. The Cherokee settlements were divided into four regions, each with its own dialect. The heart of the Cherokee nation revolved around the Overhill settlements in present-day Tennessee located on the west slope of the Appalachians; the "Over the Hills Mountains" the "White or Smoky Mountains" or the Overhill Towns of east Tennessee. The Overhill was the most remote, independent and dynamic region of the early Cherokees. Their capitol, Chota, was the most ancient and revered of all the towns. A 1765 text written by John Hammerer refers to

the Cherokee settlements and their isolation from one another. *"These settlements are separated from one another by such craggy mountains and bad roads that it will ever be impracticable to make any communication by wagon-roads from one to another"*.

Great Tellico, located at the beginning of the Skyway, was an entry point and a destination for many early European explorers. Louis Phillippe, Duke of Orleans and later King of France, traveled with his two brothers by horseback to Chota in 1797, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. During their sojourn through Great Tellico a game of ball was played for them by some six hundred Indians. The annual ball-game of the Cherokees resulted in that ion,

area on the west side of the Tellico River, being named Ball Play. Ball Play Creek, a tributary of the Tellico River, afforded a natural amphitheater for hundreds of spectators. James Mooney, the famous Cherokee scholar, says that it was a game common to all the Indian tribes of this country. With the cruder features eliminated, it became the famous national game of Canada, "la crosse". It was an exciting and rough game--a combination of baseball, football and the old-fashioned shinny.

Serious accidents were common. The visitors were escorted to the game by the drums of the garrison and a large number of Indians. Louis Philippe described his visit to "the Cherokee village of Toqua (Chota) where he went inside the temple, a hexagonal

*pyramid of logs," and saw the war-shield of the three tribes, on which were painted a serpent, a turtle and a lizard. He noted that the dresses of the squaws were made entirely of European materials. He smoked a great diversity of pipes and tobacco and ate many unique dishes. The Cherokee Indians made a deep impression on the young tourists, even more so than the Falls of Niagara. A letter written home to his sister, Princess Adelaide, by Montpensier, August 14, 1797 said: "We have seen many Indians, and we remained several days in their country. They received us with great kindness and our national character contributed not a little to this good reception, for they love the French. After them, we found the Falls of Niagara the most interesting object of our journey."*



The Infamous "Trail of Tears."



## CURRENT SETTING

### CURRENT STATUS OF THE SKYWAY

The design and construction on the Overhill Skyway has been managed by the Federal Highway Administration's, Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division Office in Sterling, Virginia, at the request of the states of North Carolina and Tennessee.

Funding for the road has been provided through the Public Lands Highways Program as currently authorized under 23 U.S.C. 202 and 204. The 21.5-mile Tennessee portion of the Skyway was completed in January 1987. The unfinished portion of the road from Huckleberry Knob to Seven Springs Gap in North Carolina will be completed in early 1997.

The Overhill Skyway is scheduled for completion in 1997. The addition of this long-awaited, superbly constructed Scenic Byway into the magnificent National Forest lands shared by two states, will be a cause for celebration.



Recent construction on the North Carolina portion of the Skyway.

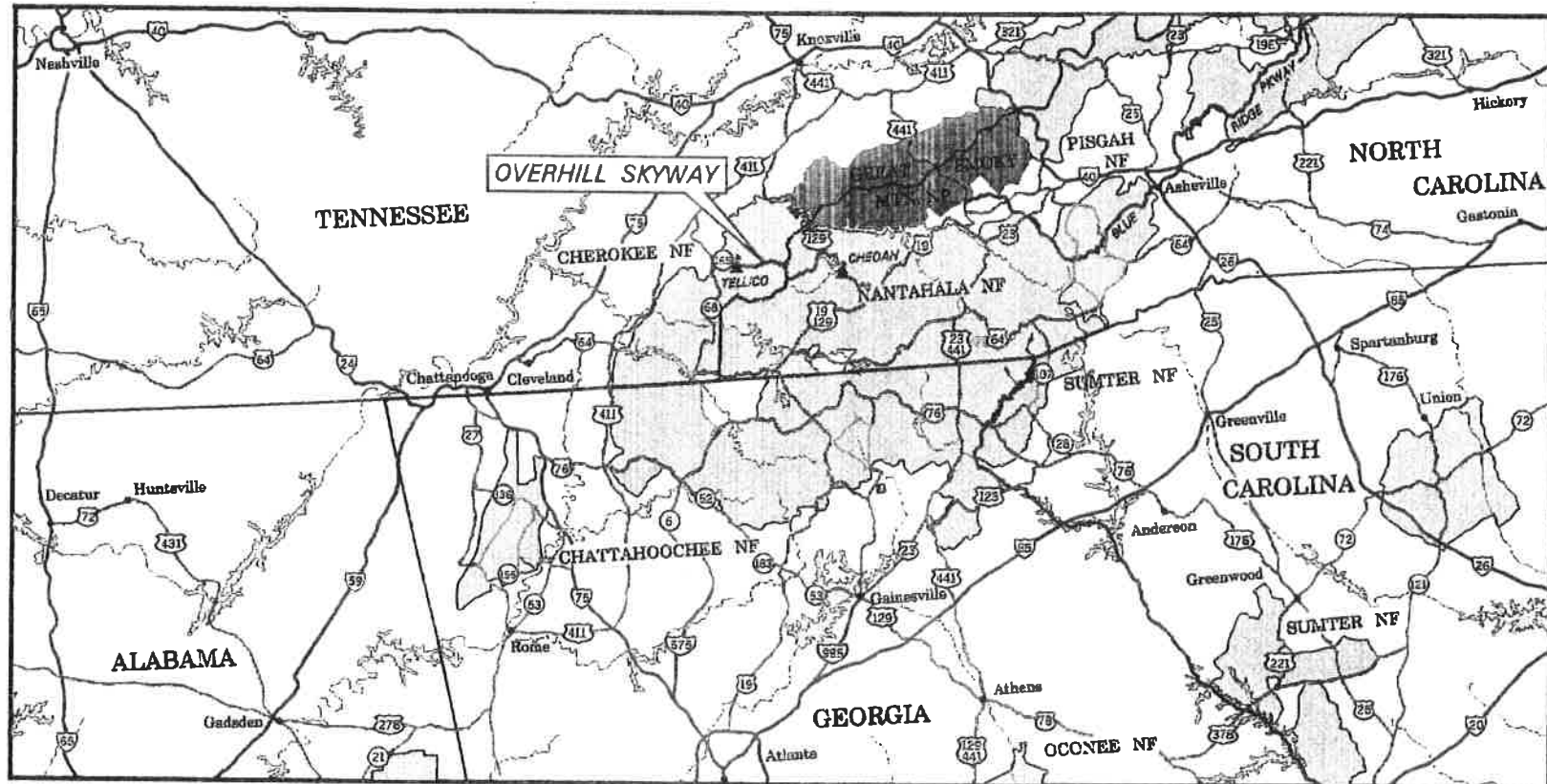


# RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS

## PHYSICAL SETTING

### Area of Analysis

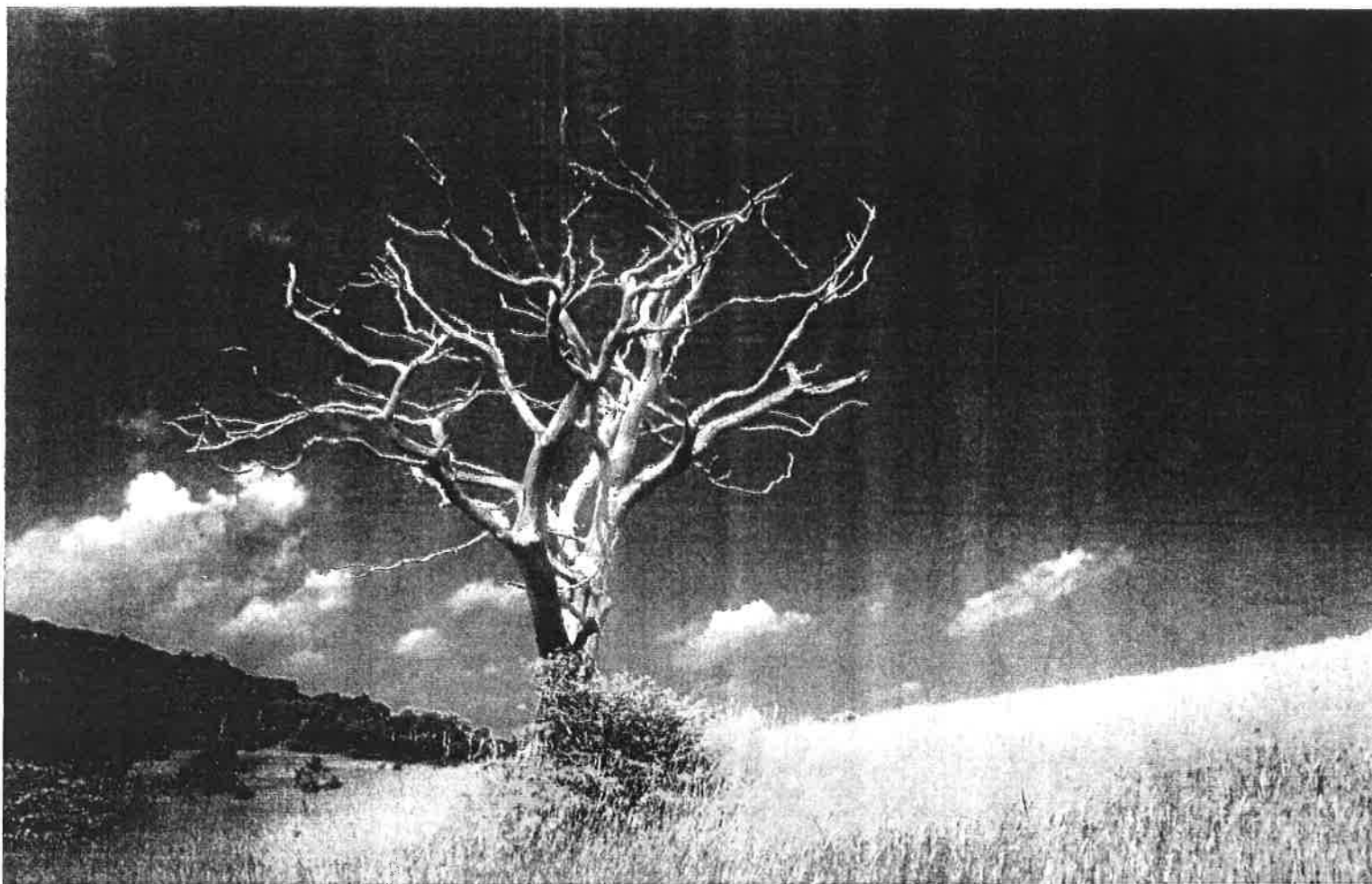
The Skyway extends from the Great Valley of Tennessee across the Unicoi Mountain Range to the mountain plateau of Western North Carolina. The Great Valley of Tennessee is a fertile rolling valley bounded by the Cumberland Plateau on the west and the Unicoi Range on the east. It extends from northern Georgia to southern Virginia. The mountain plateaus of western North Carolina are interspersed with a series of high mountain ranges, the Unicoi Range being the westernmost. Water flows into the Tennessee River system from both sides of the mountain. Differences in micro-climate, vegetation, and geology are dramatic due to the 4500 foot change in elevation from the valley to the apex of the Unicoi Range. On the west, the Tennessee Valley is one of the nation's most important north-south transportation routes. Interstate 75, one of the U.S.'s most highly traveled interstate highways, runs north from Florida, through Atlanta, Chattanooga and Knoxville, to the midwest. I-75 is thirty miles from the Skyway, with an excellent connection on State Route 68. In North Carolina, the Skyway connects to numerous routes that bring considerable recreation and tourist traffic into western North Carolina.



## Natural Features

The area is famous for its rivers, waterfalls, lakes, mountains, and picturesque valleys. The geologic history of the area sets the stage for its many natural features. The Southern Appalachian Mountains are believed to be of the late Precambrian age. Precambrian is the earliest time span--from the earth's beginning, about 4.5 billion years ago, to about 500 million years ago. The majority of the rock in the Appalachian mountains is Precambrian and about ten per cent is Paleozoic. Paleozoic means "*ancient life*". The collision of continents which formed these mountains is known among geological scientists as the *Appalachian orogeny* (mountain building episode). This "orogeny" event took place approximately 200 million years ago at the end of the Paleozoic time , thus making these mountains the oldest in the world.

There are many spectacular geological features along the Skyway. Visitors will enjoy viewing the massive boulders, sheer rock cliffs, striking prominences and layered stratas of rock that majestically shelter the road. Below the Southern Appalachian Mountains, there is a fascinating history of geologic upheaval. Over millions of years, tremendous pressures have formed rocks and minerals while oceans have deposited sediments. Winds and waters have eroded and etched the surfaces to form the fabric of these mountain faces while giving them soft edges and horizon lines .



Southern Appalachian Mountains are characterized by steep slopes, abundant rainfall, and a unique and diverse variety of forest canopies. Forests vary from transitional stages of Virginia Pine to climax northern hardwoods and coniferous forests. Diversity of micro climate, slope, elevation, forest canopy, and rainfall combine in myriad ways to produce a plethora of botanical regions. Over thirty-one commercial forest trees occur in the Southern Appalachian region, resulting in a heterogeneous forest canopy which in turn influences the variety and abundance of wildflowers found in the understory. Species such as Turk's-cap Lily, Large Flowered Trillium, Showy Orchid, and Squirrel-corn can be found in the road corridor of the Skyway. The cool mountain bogs may harbor Swamp pink and Pitcher Plant. In the high mountain ridges, rhododendron thickets shelter Smalls Twayblade, endemic to the area. Many rare plants grow in scattered locations. Another rare endemic species, perhaps more generally known but having a restricted natural distribution, is Oconee Bells, or *Shortia*, which was found by Andre Michaux in 1778, and lost to the botanical world for nearly a century. Other endemics such as Umbrella-leaf occur along the wet, cool, spring-fed rivulets in high, north-facing coves.

Along the high ridges and mountain tops are treeless areas known as "*balds*", On the *balds* and in adjacent coniferous forests are found representatives of sub alpine floras which are relics of a greater range that existed during the cooler climate of the last glaciation. Mountain rains and snow falls sometimes exceeding 100 inches a year produce a cool humid climate which supports northern species such as Clinton's Lily and Three-toothed Cinquefoil. The same diversity of habitat also supports many wildlife species including bear, wild boar, deer, and a wide variety of birds. The northern flying squirrel, found at high elevations along the Skyway, is Federally listed as a threatened species.

Natural features such as the Tellico River, Bald River Falls, and Hooper Bald, attract a large number of visitors. The Tellico River is very popular for trout fishing, canoeing, and kayaking and is generally considered one of the most picturesque rivers in the southeast. It is currently being studied for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System.

Falls near the Skyway



The Tellico River



## SOCIAL SETTING

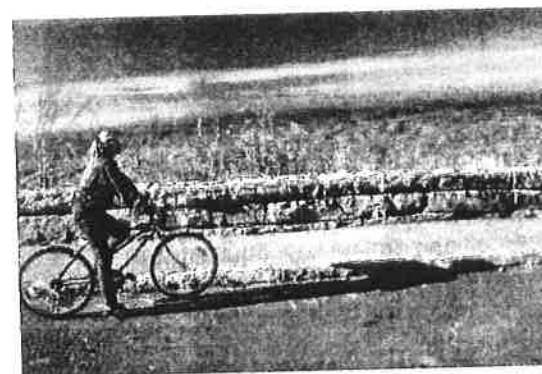
Recreation in the vicinity of the Skyway is heaviest along the Tellico River. The greater capacity for use along the Skyway should be the primary focus for channeling visitors into the Forests from the Tennessee and North Carolina sides. The Skyway is not planned to have facilities such as restrooms, directed signage, interpretive signage, and a complete linkage of recreational features. Short loop trails connected closely to overlook parking areas will provide an ideal recreation feature for visitors to enjoy the forests natural resources and to investigate the many unique and picturesque historic sites found along the Skyway.

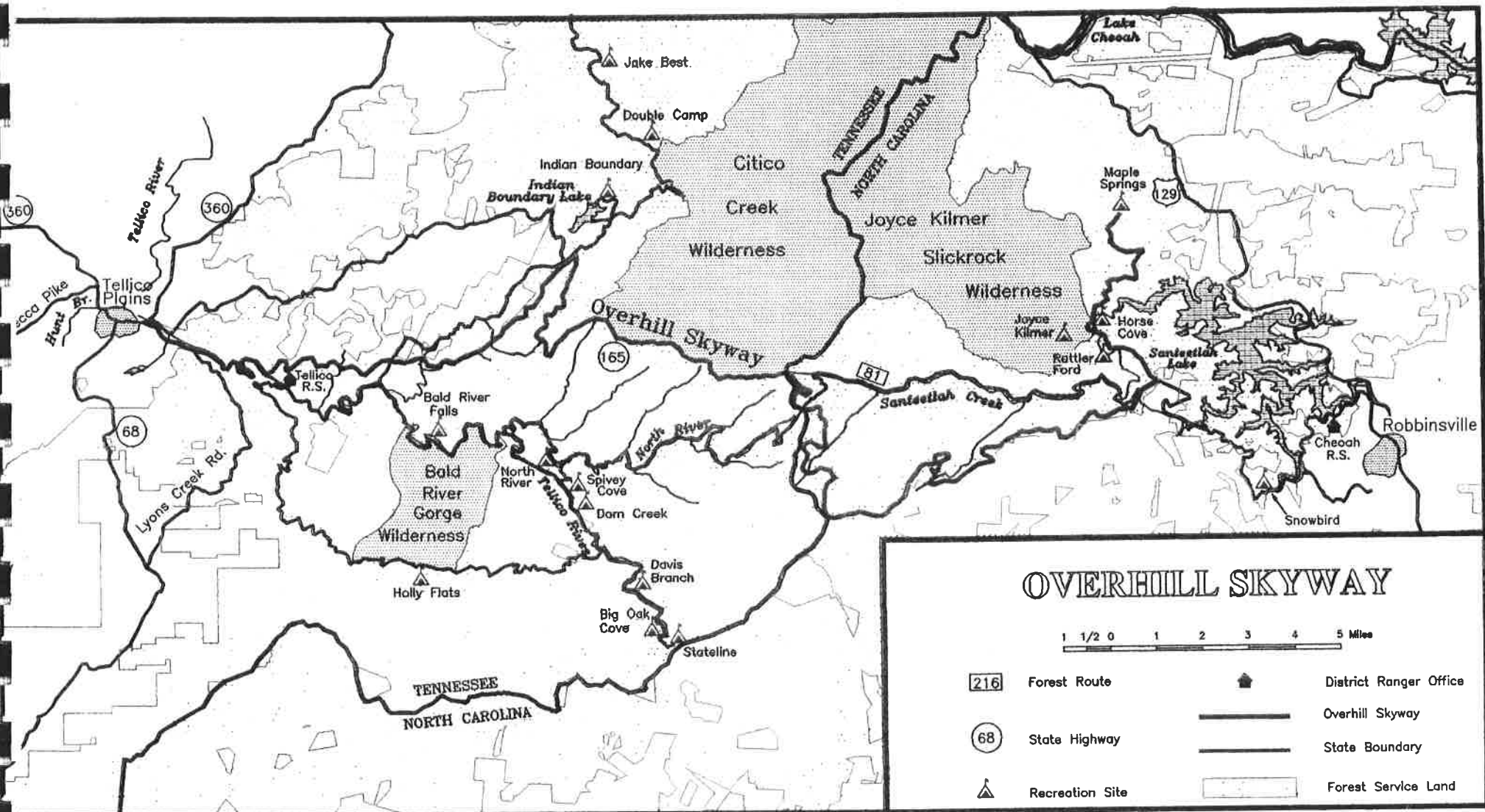
The Tellico River is a heavily impacted area on weekends in the spring, summer, and fall. The river corridor is operating at or near capacity since little if any parking can be added. Dispersed camping along the river has been eliminated to significantly improve the condition of the riparian area.

Recreation is also popular along the lower section of the Skyway, up to the Indian Boundary Recreation Area. Indian Boundary has plans to expand its capacity, and when the Skyway opens, this beautiful lakeside campground will be better utilized by Skyway visitors. The capacity for use is much higher along the Skyway than along the Tellico River Road. The Skyway should be the primary conduit for channeling visitors into the Forest. The Skyway will serve a wide market area and extensive population.

### Recreation Facilities








A variety of recreation opportunities exist adjacent to the Skyway, hiking, hunting, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, swimming, and camping. Three campgrounds are located along the Skyway including Indian Boundary (120 campsites, picnic area, ninety acre lake, swimming area, three-mile bicycle trail), Horse Cove Campground (13 campsites), and Rattler Ford Group Camp. All three campgrounds are in need of major rehabilitation. Other opportunities for visitors along the Skyway include the Tellico Ranger Station (oldest Civilian Conservation Corps camp in Tennessee), 20 hiking trails, several scenic overlooks, and access to the Tellico River for fishing, canoeing, and kayaking. There are other recreation facilities along roads connecting to the Skyway. Among these are Bald River Falls Picnic Area -- a popular scenic site at a spectacular waterfall along the Tellico River Road; North River Campground -- a 12-unit campground along the North River Road; Joyce Kilmer Picnic Area -- a small picnic area at the entrance to the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest; and Oosterneck -- a canoe and kayak take-out point for the Tellico River.





# OVERHILL SKYWAY



- |  |                 |   |                        |
|--|-----------------|---|------------------------|
|  <b>216</b> | Forest Route    |  | District Ranger Office |
|  <b>68</b>  | State Highway   |  | Overhill Skyway        |
|             | Recreation Site |  | State Boundary         |
|  |                 |  | Forest Service Land    |

## MANAGERIAL SETTING

Lands adjacent to the Skyway are managed by the Forest Service. Twenty-two and a half miles of the Skyway traverse the Cherokee National Forest and twenty and a half miles traverse the Nantahala National Forest. Potential recreation opportunities are available across a variety of Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes from Rural to Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (see Appendix). However, these opportunities are not well developed or easily accessible to the public. Most of the present trail access to the Forests is very steep and linear in design. Many of the existing trails are very difficult to use and not appropriately designed for the general public. These trails run from the high ridges to the valleys and are used primarily by hunters.

The strong partnership involving the states of Tennessee and North Carolina, the Forest Service, the communities of Robbinsville and Tellico Plains, and local citizens was the primary impetus for the construction of the road. Since 19..... an annual event between the two communities has been celebrated. Local citizens have joined in a week long wagon train trek between Tennessee and North Carolina to emphasize their need for a permanent connection between states. There has been a recent resurgence in interest in the promotion of high quality tourism through groups such as the *Tennessee Overhill Experience* (a consortium of Monroe, Polk, and McMinn counties), and there are plans to organize a complimentary Overhill group in North Carolina. There is a potential for involvement from the Cradle of Forestry Interpretive Association for operation of existing and future facilities.

Several key tracts along the Skyway should be acquired or protected visually from encroachment on the route in order to maintain the corridor management necessary for National Forest Scenic Byway status.



Visitor at the Tellico Ranger Station



The Tellico Ranger station is going to be restored to its original CCC condition.

# VISION

*The reason I have such confidence in the potential economic and recreational benefits of the proposed road is that it would provide access into the largest area of National Forests east of the Mississippi, an area that is largely undeveloped, inaccessible, and unvisited by America's tourists, campers, and outdoor recreation seekers."*

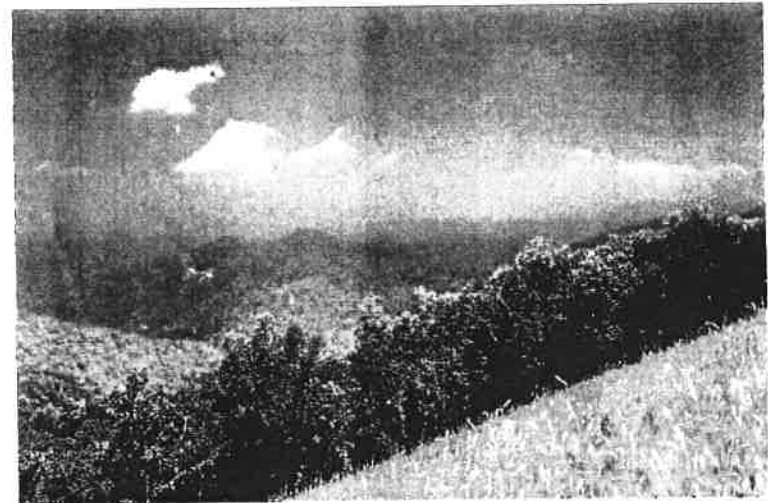
*Senator Estes Kefauver, Tennessee, August 7, 1962*

The Overhill Skyway will provide visitors with easy access into the heart of one of the most magnificent forest environments found anywhere on the earth. The Skyway will provide the public with spectacular scenery and with outstanding views.. The Forest Service and its partners must see that the excellence of future amenities holds firmly to the high standards of existing highway construction.

## PHYSICAL SETTING

The optimum border area to be managed by the Forest Service as a part of the National Forest Scenic Byway will vary as to the setting, and as to the recreation and cultural opportunities found along the Skyway corridor. The Skyway corridor may be considered as a special area that bisects different ROS settings. For example, where the Skyway borders the Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Wilderness Area there may be no interpretation and the access to the Wilderness trails will not be emphasized. Visitors will be encouraged to make the Indian Boundary Recreation Area a destination for their travel in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. A Visitor Interpretation Center at the entrance to Indian Boundary will be the primary source of information about the different historic, cultural and recreation features found along the Skyway. Secondary sources of visitor information will be located at the Cherokee National Forest boundary and at Santeetlah Gap, where visitor entranceways will be located to direct travelers to features, recreation, and historic sites along the Skyway.

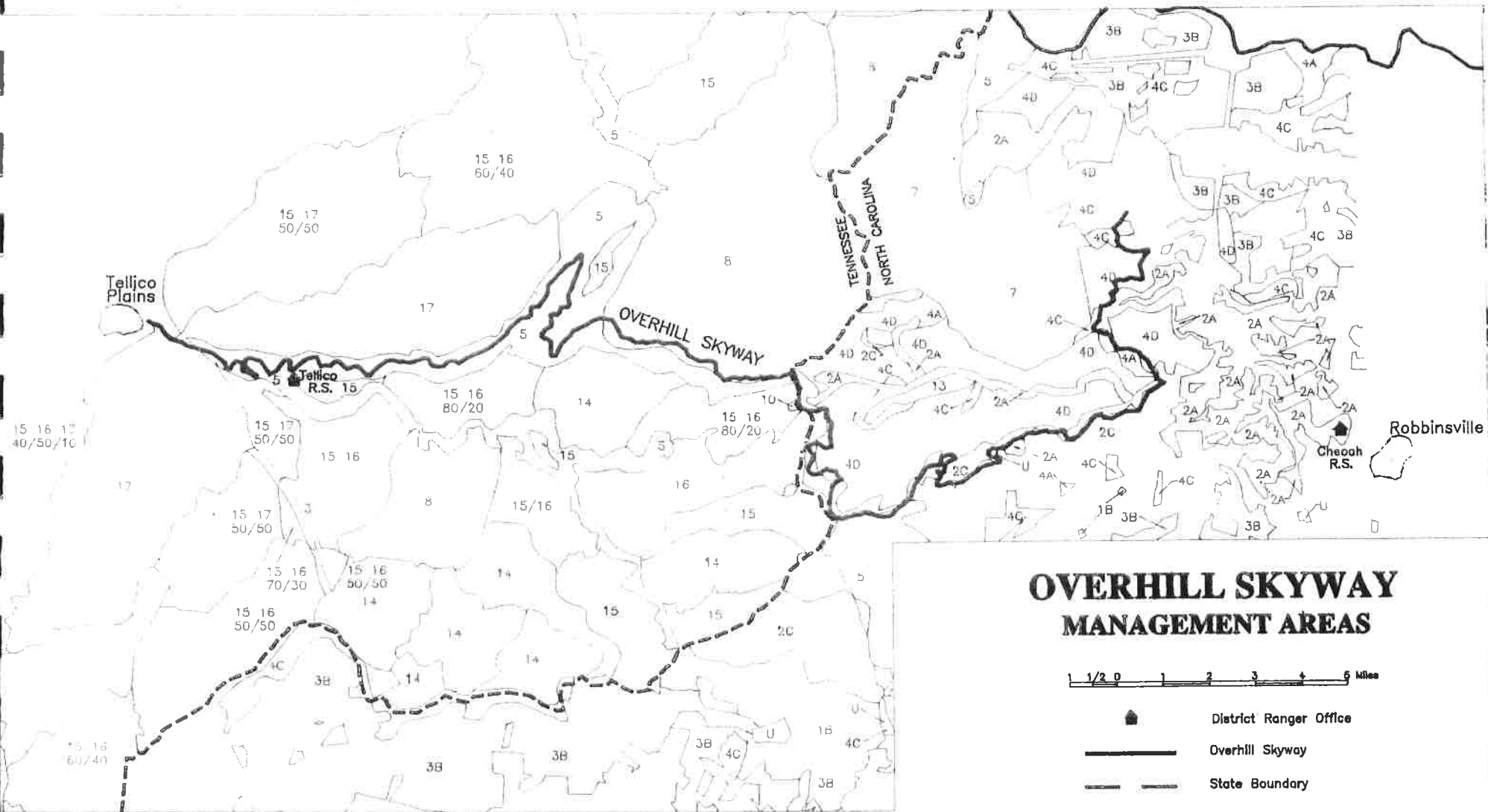
In the National Forests, where advocating a conservation ethic for the lands is a primary mission, every proposed modification of the natural landscape deserves to be thoughtfully and carefully considered. The basic objective for all construction along the corridor of the Skyway is to enhance the resources and features of the Skyway.



View from the Skyway







Tellico  
Plains

15 17  
50/50

15 16  
60/40

15 17  
50/50

15 16 17  
40/50/10

15 17  
50/50

15 16

15 17  
50/50

15 16  
70/30

15 16  
50/50

15 16  
50/50

15 16  
60/40

OVERHILL SKYWAY

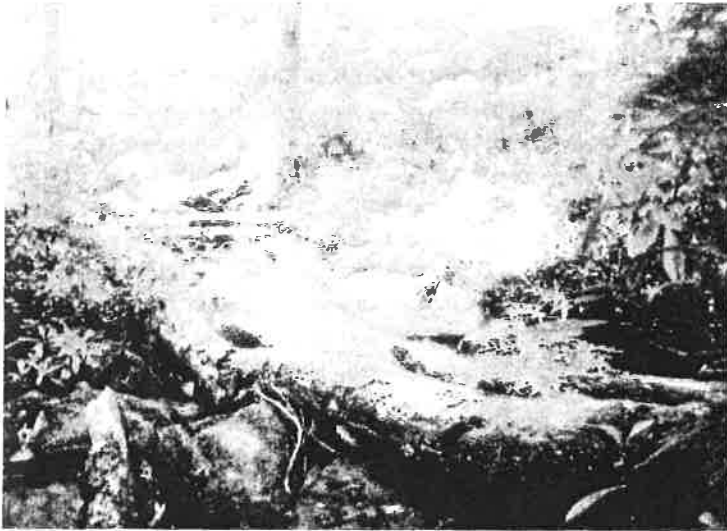
TENNESSEE  
NORTH CAROLINA

Cheoah  
R.S.

Robbinsville

## NATIONAL FORESTS in NORTH CAROLINA

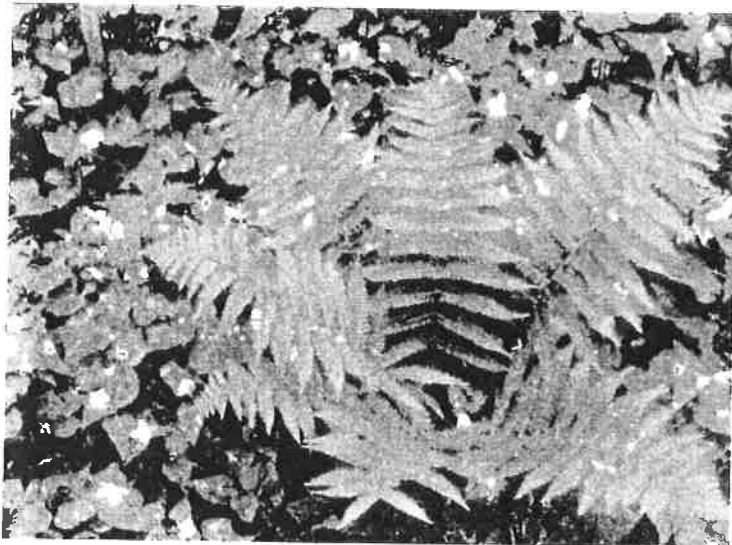
The North Carolina segment of the Skyway generally follows the rim of the 6800-acre Santeetlah Creek drainage. Presently the Skyway is primarily within two Management Areas.



**Management Area 2C** and **Management Area 4D** are adjacent to the Skyway in the Nantahala National Forest adjacent to Management Area 4D in the Forest. The lands in Management Area 2C are managed for Roaded Natural recreation experiences and to maintain a high level of scenic quality. They are not suitable for timber production. Management Area 4D also provides for a high degree of scenic quality, but with some timber management. The management emphasis for this area is to provide high quality habitats for wildlife and protection of older forests from **disturbances from motorized vehicles**.

**Grassy Balds** on the high elevation ridges are special management areas in both Forest Plans. They are managed for scenic beauty, ecological diversity, wildlife habitat and low-impact recreation. These balds include Stratton Meadows, Whigg Meadows, Haw Knob, Grassy Gap, Hooper Bald, Huckleberry Knob, and Little Huckleberry and Oak Knobs.

The Skyway will have a major influence on land use patterns and levels of use within the Santeetlah Creek and Little Santeetlah Creek drainage areas in North Carolina. Issues including use on the Santeetlah Creek Road (FS-81) and in the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest ( a part of the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness) and the relationship of the Skyway to the state road (NC-1134) along Santeetlah Lake will be addressed in the Overhill Skyway Management Guide.



## Management Areas

The Skyway passes through the 123,3000-acre Tellico Ranger District in Tennessee, and the 12,400 acre Cheoah Ranger District in North Carolina. The Skyway bisects or parallels nine different management areas in two states as defined by the Land Management Plans for both Forests. The high elevation balds in both states are special management areas for both forests.

### CHEROKEE NATIONAL FOREST



**Management Area 5** is bisected by Tennessee Route 165. . The Overhill Skyway entry corridor begins at the Forest boundary on the Tellico River (mile 0) and ending at the Tennessee segment of the route at Beech Gap (mile 22.5). This management area consists of lands and waters with high visual sensitivity. These lands are managed for Roaded Natural recreation experiences and to protect their high scenic quality.

**Management Area 8** consists of the Citico Creek Wilderness. This Wilderness is located adjacent to the Skyway on its north side, stretching from Eagles Gap (mile 17) to Beech Gap (mile 21.70). This Wilderness comprises 15,891 acres and is adjacent to the North Carolina/Tennessee Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness (17,013 acres).

**Management Area 14** is located on the south side of the Skyway from approximately mile 3 to Beech Gap. These lands are managed as Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and for late succession forest vegetative species and associated

**Management Area 15** is managed for Roaded natural recreation experiences and late succession forest vegetative species and associated wildlife. Visual Quality Objectives will be compatible with scenic corridor management.

**Management Area 16** is managed for Roaded Natural recreation experiences and early/mid succession forest vegetative species and associated wildlife. Visual Quality Objectives will be compatible with scenic corridor management.



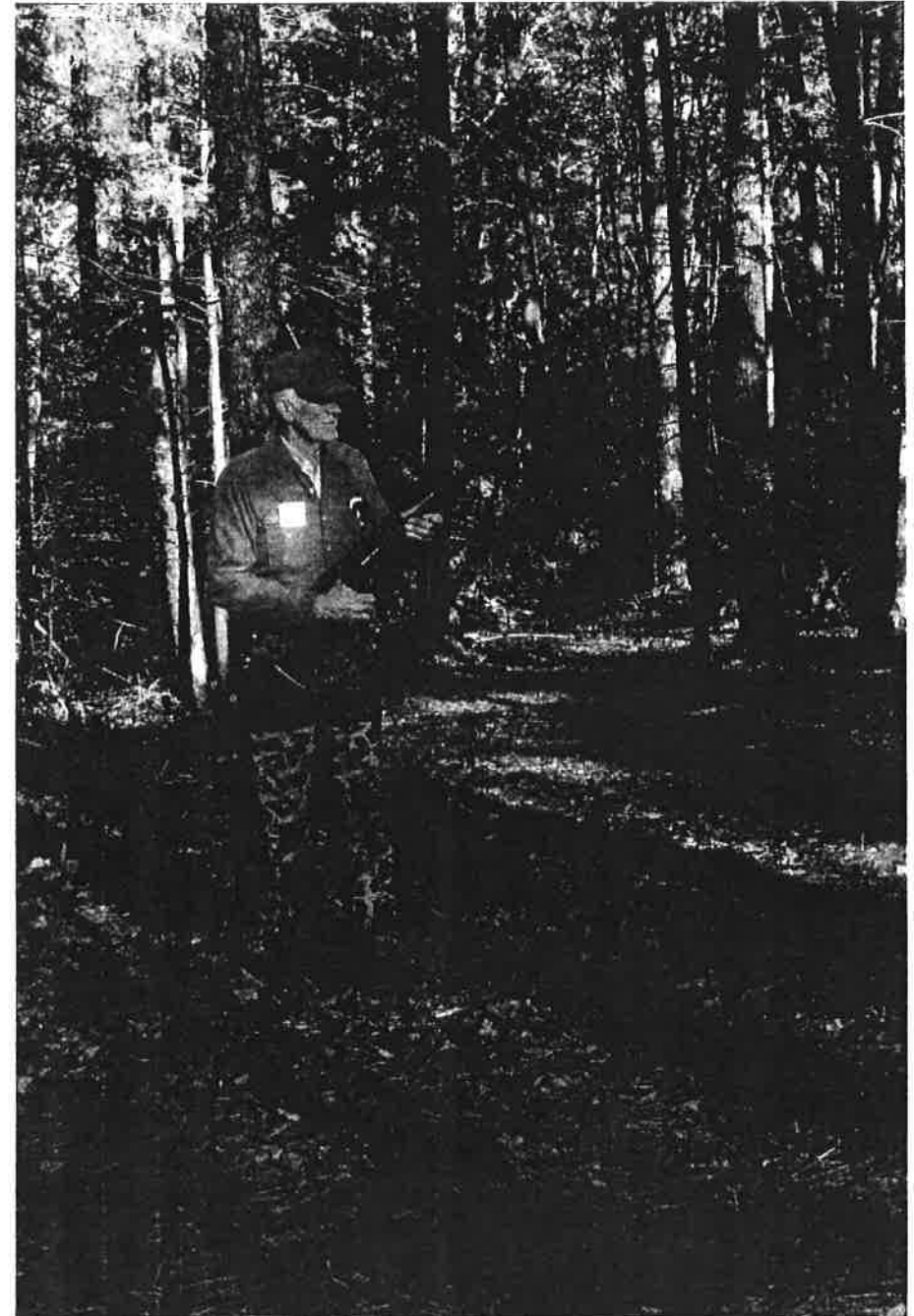
# STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

## RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Recreation on National Forest lands adjacent to the Skyway includes opportunities for sightseeing, picnicking, camping, backpacking, hiking, bicycling, hunting, and many water related activities, and cross-country skiing. Much of this recreation use takes place in the natural forest environment; woodlands, streams, rivers, mountains, and valley glades. The Skyway will also provide developed facilities for the enjoyment and convenience of visitors.



Fly fishing for trout on the Tellico River.



Wild boar hunter at Indian Boundary

## SOCIAL SETTING

Potential partnerships for managing the Skyway as a major recreation and heritage resource destination are many and varied. Geographic information systems can be developed to promote information for visitors to utilize at the two entry stations and the Visitor Interpretive Center. These systems will allow visitors to access all the recreation and heritage resource information pertinent to the Skyway and if they wished further information about facilities in nearby Robbinsville and Tellico Plains. A third component of this system will allow visitors to investigate all the other scenic byways in the Southern Region for further travel opportunities. Representatives of the Cherokee Nation were consulted on using the historic name "*Overhill*" for the Skyway and several possibilities for including the Cherokee in future plans were discussed at that time. Bike groups in North Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia will help develop a safe experience for bicyclists on the mixed traffic Skyway.

## MANAGERIAL SETTING

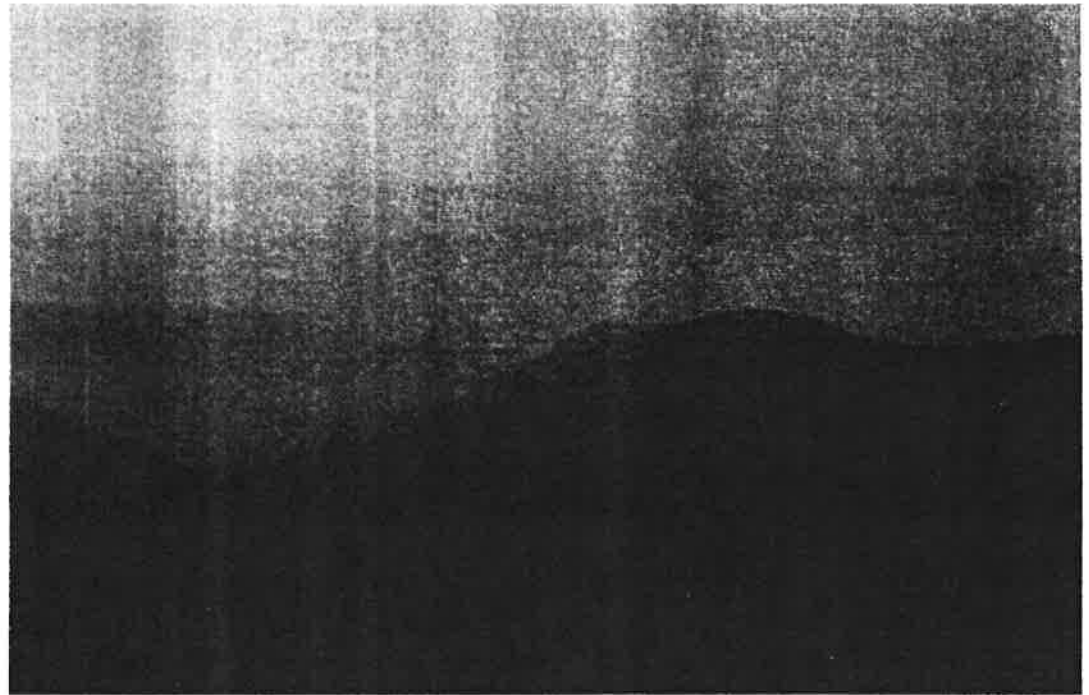
The protection of the resources of the Skyway will depend on the Scenery Management Plan, cooperation with the North Carolina and Tennessee State Departments of Transportation, State Highway Patrols in North Carolina and Tennessee and the Forest Service officials from the Cheoah and Tellico Ranger Districts. When the Federal Highway Administration completes all work on the Skyway, it will then be the responsibility of the two States to provide maintenance for the road. The high scenic value of the Skyway is dependent on the maintenance of the vegetative corridor, the overlooks and architectural features and the roadway,

guardrails, and signage. To ensure that the corridor management of the Skyway is the highest quality possible, standards must be clearly provided.

The Forest Service is interested in creating a pilot model for a computer based maintenance system for enhancing and protecting the wealth of resources found on the Skyway. Such a tool could significantly aid the management of the maintenance program, in agreement with the States and the Forest Service.



Scarlet monarda growing on the border of the Skyway



View from the Overhill Skyway

## HIKING BIKING AND WATER RECREATION

There are many diverse hiking opportunities along the Skyway. Opportunities will be enhanced by the addition of barrier-free interpretive loop trails and improving the existing trails by connecting some of them into loop or "spider web" patterns. There are twelve existing trailheads located adjacent to the parking overlooks on the Skyway. Trails leading from these overlooks are rated by various levels of difficulty ranging from easy to strenuous. They range from three to eight miles in length and traverse some of the most beautiful forest land found in the Southern Appalachian region.

Many hiking trails follow aboriginal and Overhill Cherokee trade routes thousands of years old. The Unicoi Turnpike began at the point where the Great Indian Warpath leaves the Little Tennessee River. It passes south near Belltown and Tellico Plains to the junction point of Monroe and Polk counties in Tennessee with Cherokee County, North Carolina. This route parallels and intersects the Skyway at certain points.



Hiker enjoying a trail near the Skyway

Wilderness borders the Skyway and creates an opportunity to educate the public about the ethics and skills necessary to enjoy a Wilderness experience. Integrating the Interpretive Wilderness Ethics signage into areas that border Wilderness will be a helpful and innovative informative tool. Wilderness trails are accessible from the Skyway. Some trails enter the unique and beautiful Citico Creek Wilderness in eastern Tennessee. Wilderness trails are not appropriate for everyone and are generally kept primitive, rugged and are often steep.

Interpretive trails will be designed to benefit the Skyway traveler by revealing the history and natural resources associated with surrounding lands. Interpretive loop trails are the ideal recreation experience for a Scenic Byway traveler to utilize. Visitors can make short stops in the parking overlooks and enjoy easy walks into the National Forest where they can learn about both natural and heritage resources. Overlook parking areas will be designed with appropriate interpretive graphic and verbal materials. Loop trails will provide the more adventurous visitor with a further opportunity to explore the National Forest. Two fully accessible trails equipped with accessible overlook decks and picnic facilities will be provided along the Skyway.

### Biking

Mountain bike trails will be added in five settings along the Skyway. At Indian Boundary, a family bike trail will be improved and connected to the Ketoowah Interpretive Center. The center will also rent bikes to visitors. Road bikers will be able to use the entire length of the Skyway. Bike groups will use the special group campgrounds provided at Horse Cove and Fleming Meadows.

Bicyclist and pedestrian uses will be allowed on the Skyway. Although separate bicycle lanes or paths are not specifically designated the design of the paved travel way and grassed shoulders is sufficient for bicyclists and hikers. The Skyway has low traffic volumes and speeds which will allow mixed uses within the roadway.

### Water Recreation

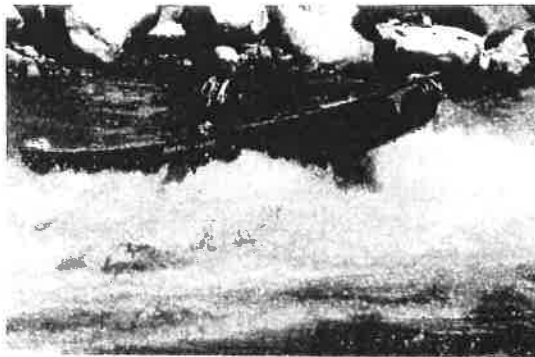
The Overhill Skyway provides access for a wide range of water-related activities including; canoeing, kayaking, fishing, swimming, and hiking along trails bordering the Tellico River, Citico Creek and Santeetlah Creek.

The Tellico River provides Class III and IV whitewater opportunities for canoeists and kayakers. Water recreation is found at both portals of the Skyway. Santeetlah Lake is located on the border of the Skyway in North Carolina and the Tellico River runs parallel to the road at its beginning in Tennessee. At Oosterneck, there are plans to improve and add to the facilities for canoe and kayak put in.

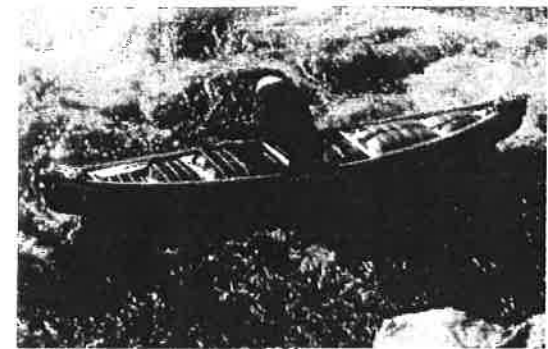
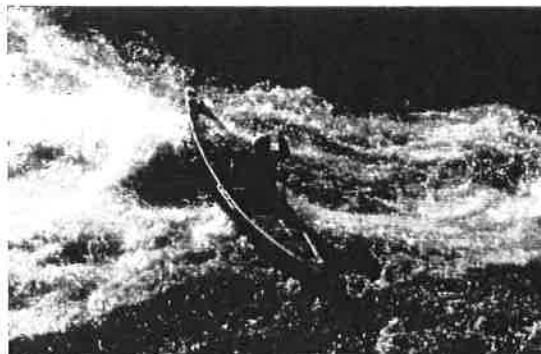
Trout fishing in the Tellico River is an extremely popular activity. The Pheasant Field Trout Rearing Pool facility for raising a large variety of trout is located on the Tellico River. The 90-acre Indian Boundary lake provides outstanding opportunities for fishing and swimming adjacent to the Skyway. Citico Creek cascades down miles of rugged Wilderness terrain, with elevations ranging from 5,120 to 1400 feet. Some drops of up to 80 feet provide spectacular vistas for the adventurous watershed hiker. Santeetlah Creek is a favorite haven with fishing and primitive camping enthusiasts.



The Tellico River offers excellent kayaking and canoeing in the Spring.



Tellico River water recreation



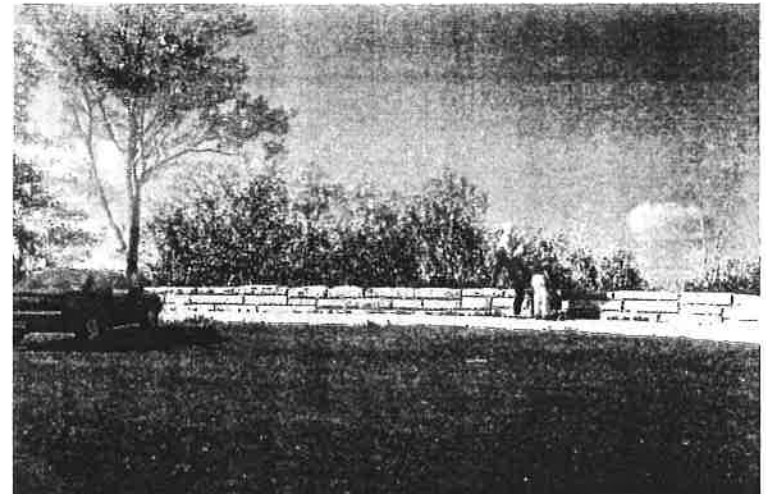
## SKYWAY FACILITY STANDARDS

The objectives for all amenities built along the corridor of the Skyway are dual: to hold the modifications to a minimum, and to carefully design facilities so they appear to be a part of the natural setting.

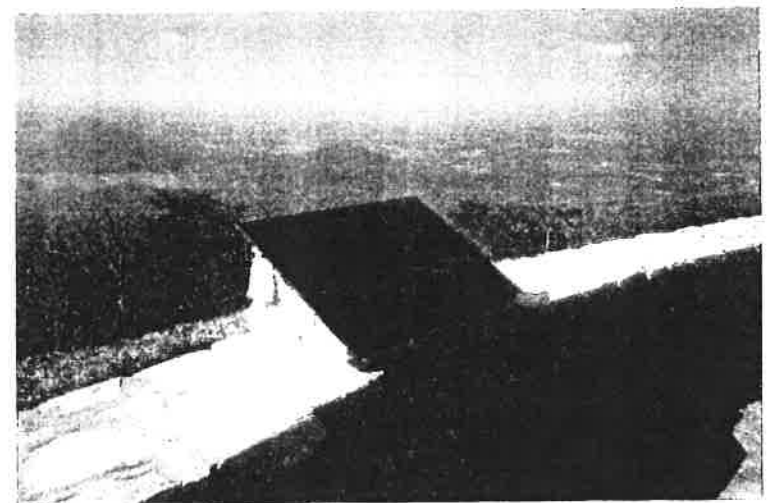
The Skyway will adopt a consistent family of signs for the corridor that will compliment the existing walls and planned facilities. The goal is to provide easily understood directional information with a minimum of visual distraction. The signage will be minimal, but it will comply with Tennessee and North Carolina and Forest Service standards.

All structures along the Skyway will be constructed using the same massive stone as the existing overlook walls. Structures in the National Forest are less obtrusive if they are reasonably unified by one style of architecture, if one material predominates. Structures on the Skyway should adhere to a massive sense of scale that compliments the dramatic topography and rock outcroppings that border the road. The existing stonework at overlooks achieves the "feeling of permanence" that National Forest structures should emulate. These magnificent stone walls will serve well as the benchmark standard for all future construction along the Skyway.

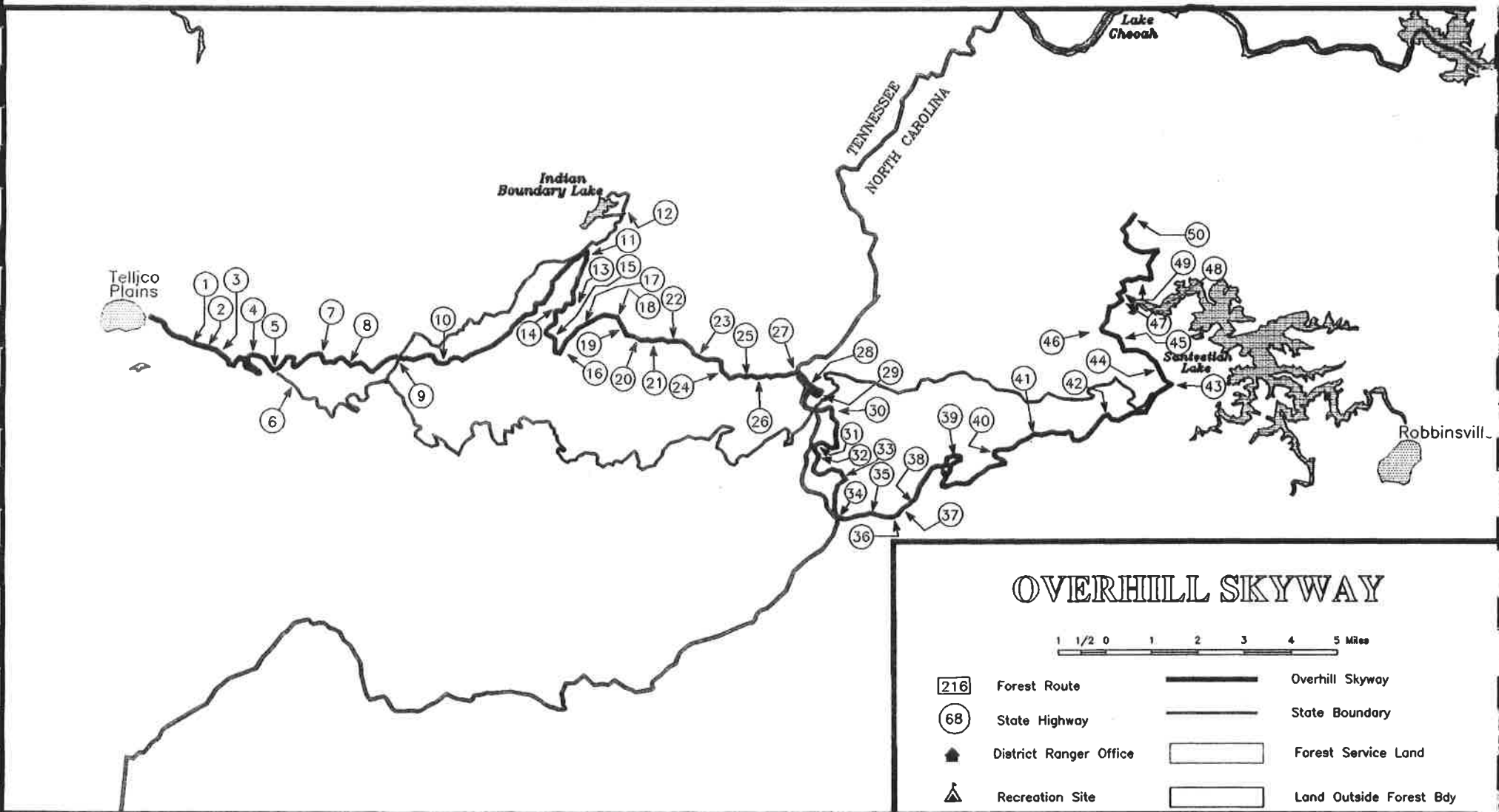
Future overlook sites will maintain the same materials and construction. Any modification of existing sites will continue with the standard granite curbs, rock walls and asphalt sidewalks. Some existing pull-offs will be amended by the addition of planted medians. All comfort stations, trash receptacles, picnic shelters, and tables will be constructed utilizing this same standard stone detailing of the original walls augmented by heavy timbered wood construction techniques. Interpretive signage on the Skyway will meet the same material and proportional standards. Parking areas adjacent to the Wilderness will be scaled down in size to protect the Wilderness from overuse.



Massive stone walls that enclose the overlooks on the Skyway.



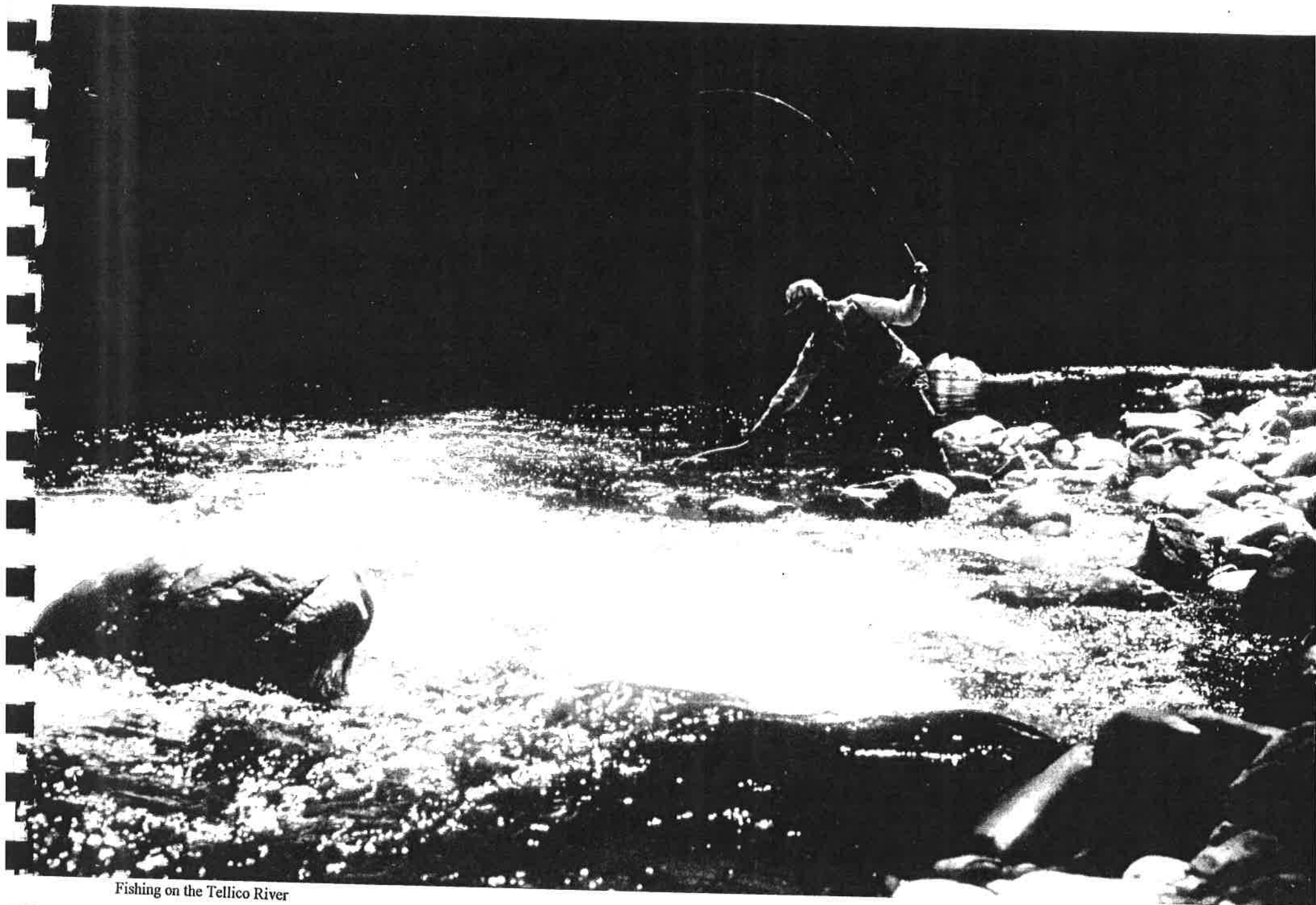




# OVERHILL SKYWAY

1 1/2 0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles

- |  |                        |  |                         |
|--|------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">216</span>                    | Forest Route           |  | Overhill Skyway         |
| <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">68</span> | State Highway          |  | State Boundary          |
|  | District Ranger Office |  | Forest Service Land     |
|  | Recreation Site        |  | Land Outside Forest Bdy |



Fishing on the Tellico River

# SKYWAY STATIONS

STATION	INFO.	RESTROOM	PICNICKING	TRAIL	ACCESSIBLE TRAIL	FISHING	PHOTO-GRAPHY	INTERPRETATION	BIRD WATCHING	ANIMAL VIEWING	CAMPING	FEATURE
1. IRON FOREMANS MANSION						*	*	EARLY SETTLER	*			TELICO RIVER
2. CHEROKEE NATIONAL FOREST ENTRY STATION	*	*			*	*	*	CHEROKEE EARLY SETTLER NATURAL				
3. TELICO RIVER OVERLOOK							*	CHEROKEE NATURAL	*	*		TELICO RIVER
4. TELICO RIVER OVERLOOK							*	CHEROKEE NATURAL	*	*		TELICO RIVER
5. OOSTERNECK		*	*	*	*	*	*	NATURAL	*			TELICO RIVER
6. CCC TELICO RANGER STATION		*	*	*	*	*	*	CULTURAL CCC		*		
7. FLEMING MEADOWS			*	*	*	*			*	*	*	*
8. CANEY BRANCH			*	*	*	*		NATURAL	*	*	*	*
9. MILLER MINE			*	*	*	*	*	EARLY SETTLER	*	*	*	*
10. BABCOCK LUMBER								EARLY SETTLER NATURAL	*	*	*	*
11. BUCKTHORN CREEK				*				CHEROKEE				
12. KETOOWAH CENTER	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*CHEROKEE EARLY SETTLER NATURAL	*	*	*	
13. INDIAN BOUNDARY	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*NATURAL	*	*	*	
14. JOHN ROSS							*	CHEROKEE				
15. TURKEY CREEK			*	*			*	CHEROKEE	*	*		
16. TURKEY GOBBLE			*	*		*						
17. BUCK KNOB												
18. LAKE VIEW			*					NATURAL	*			
19. EAGLES GAP												
20. ANAKEESTA I							*	NATURAL				GEOLOGY
21. ANAKEESTA II							*	NATURAL				GEOLOGY
22. GRASSY GAP												
23. BRUSHY RIDGE							*	NATURAL				
24. LAUREL BRANCH												
25. WEST RATTLE-SNAKE ROCK												
26. EAST RATTLE-SNAKE ROCK			*				*	CHEROKEE NATURAL	*	*		VIEW

\* DENOTES OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITY

# SKYWAY STATIONS

STATION	INFO.	RESTROOM	PICNICKING	TRAIL	ACCESSIBLE TRAIL	FISHING	PHOTO-GRAPHY	INTERPRETATION	BIRD WATCHING	ANIMAL VIEWING	CAMPING	FEATURE
27. BEECH GAP				*			*	NATURAL	*	*	PRIMITIVE	SCENIC TRAILS
28. GATUTI YI			*				*	CHEROKEE	*			VIEW
29. STRATTON MEADOWS				LOOP			*	EARLY SETTLER	*			SCENIC TRAIL
30. BORROW AREA		*	*	LOOP			*	CHEROKEE	*			VIEW
31. MUDD GAPP/ WHIGG MEADOWS			*	LOOP			*	NATURAL	*			SCENIC TRAIL
32. SWIMMER							*	CHEROKEE	*			VIEW
33. NANTHALA							*	CHEROKEE	*			VIEW
34. BIG JUNCTION							*	EARLY SETTLER	*			VIEW
35. TSUKILUNNUN				LOOP			*	EARLY SETTLER	*			VIEW
36. MCGUIRES				LOOP			*	NATURAL	*			SCENIC TRAIL
37. HOOPER BALD			*	LOOP			*	CHEROKEE	*			SCENIC TRAIL
38. LITTLE HUCKLEBERRY			*	LOOP	*		*	EARLY SETTLER	*			SCENIC TRAIL
39. SPIRIT RIDGE			*				*	EARLY SETTLER	*			SCENIC TRAIL
40. WRIGHT CREEK								EARLY SETTLER	*			VIEW
41. SHUTE COVE								CHEROKEE	*			VIEW
42. HOOPER COVE			*					CHEROKEE	*			VIEW
43. SANTEETLAH GAP	*	*	*	*					*			SCENIC TRAIL
44. RATTLER							*		*			VIEW
45. RATTLER FORD CAMPGROUND		*						CHEROKEE	*			
46. HORSE COVE CAMPGROUND		*						CHEROKEE	*			
47 TSUNDA'NILTI YI			*					CHEROKEE	*			VIEW
48. AVEY CREEK								NATURAL	*			VIEW
49. LAKE SANTEETLAH									*			VIEW
50. MAPLE SPRINGS		*	*	*	*				*			VIEW

\* DENOTES OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITY

## INTERPRETATION

Interpretive materials will be available along the Skyway for the National Forest visitor. The Overhill Skyway will provide Interpretive facilities, materials and signage for the visitor to enjoy in beautiful and historic settings. The Skyway is a major corridor for access into the heart of the historic Cherokee Indian Nation. The Southern Appalachian Mountain range that borders this road combines spectacular views and a large number of unique heritage resource sites and features.

The Overhill Skyway Interpretive Plan will address several major aspects of natural and cultural history. The objective of the interpretive program for the Overhill Skyway is to tell the story of the natural resources and cultural heritage of the Southern Appalachian region. The Overhill Skyway traverses the heartland of the ancient Cherokee Indian Nation. The lands that surround the Skyway were the last Cherokee territories that were ceded to the United States, in 1835. A major component of this proposal is the Ketoowah Interpretive Center, which will be located at the entrance to Indian Boundary. The center is named after a Cherokee secret society that was prominent in its championship of Cherokee autonomy.

The interpretive theme for the Skyway is "*Human Interaction with the Southern Appalachians Over Time*". Humans have interacted with the natural environment over thousands of years in this portion of the Southern Appalachians.

A detailed interpretive program of signage, exhibits, and loop trails is proposed to enhance the visitor's experience by providing information about the Cherokee, early settlers, and land-use history.

The Ketoowah Interpretive Center will be located at the entrance to Indian Boundary. This facility will assist the Overhill Skyway visitor in choosing recreation and heritage resource sites that they wish to visit. There will be exhibit space and interpretive materials. The facility will also highlight an Early Cherokee Homestead with appropriate outbuildings, animals, and plants. An interpretive loop trail will lead the visitor up to Indian Boundary Lake and the Recreation Center. Wilderness ethics will be a primary theme of the trail.

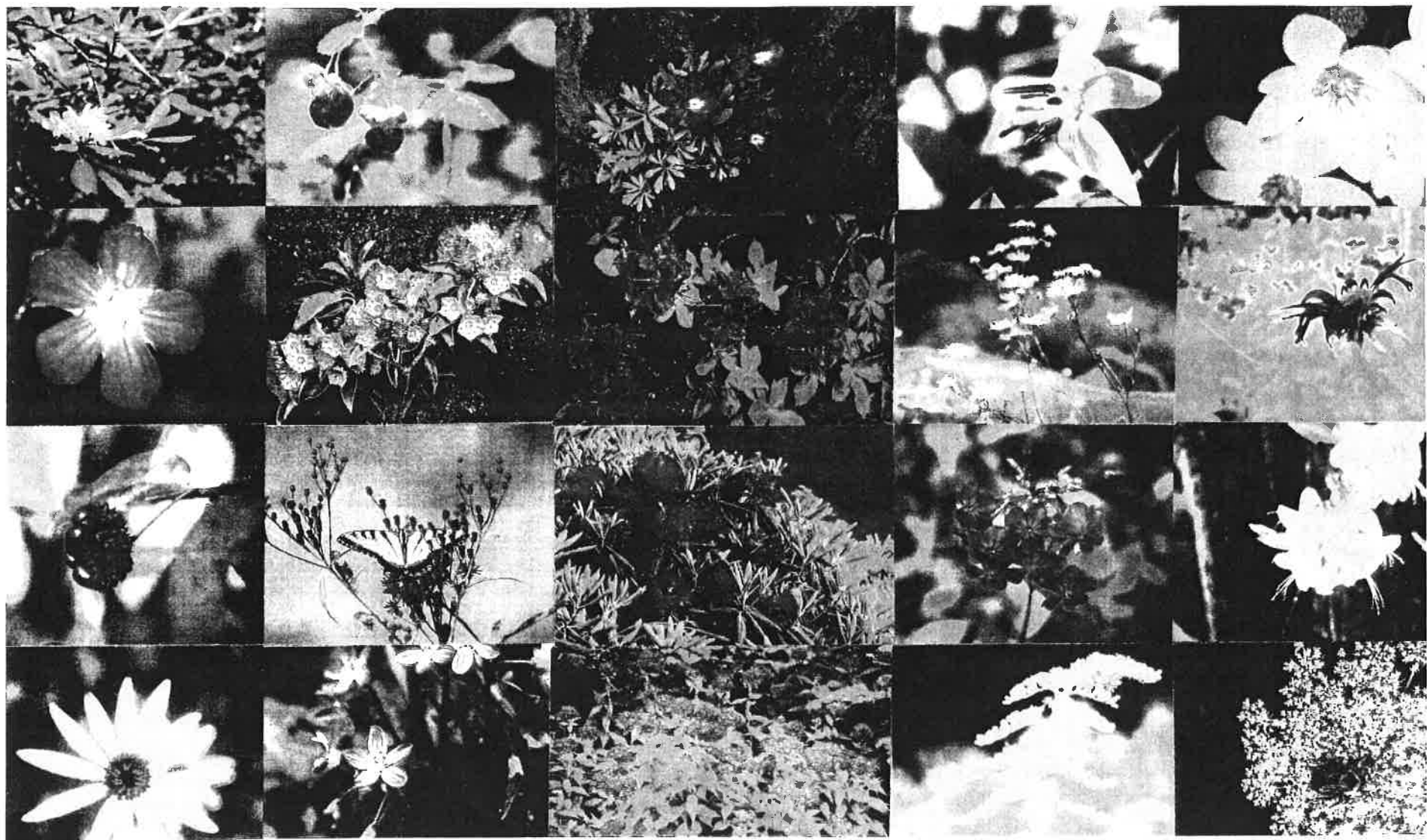
Two small interpretive facilities on the Skyway will be located at the two entry points: Santeetlah Gap in North Carolina and State Route 165 in Tennessee at the boundary of the Cherokee National Forest.

The purpose of adding these amenities to the Skyway is to present historical, ecological, and geographic information about the road's environs—past and present. The interpretive program for the Skyway will relate information about Early Indian and Settler life on these lands, including native Cherokee vegetation; differences in low and high altitude ecosystems; and site specific historically documented Cherokee myths and legends. Described in detail later in this proposal, the new interpretive overlooks will be constructed with the same quality of construction of those already existing.

A Heritage Preservation Master Plan will be developed (by themes and associated sites) which will become a component of the Forest Interpretive Master Plan and site inventory. A Memorandum of Agreement with the State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council of the National Trust for Historic Preservation will insure clarity of purpose within the state and the region. The National Forest will continue to interface with the Cherokee Tribal Council and the Tennessee Overhill Experience as well as other local heritage groups. It will be necessary to inventory and evaluate the cultural resources in the vicinity of the Skyway corridor. The Forest Service will continue partnerships with University groups for assistance with research and inventory. Guidelines for resource protection will be provided by the Forest Archeologist.



The Skyway is already popular with bicyclists.



# SKYWAY INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES BY STATION

## 1. Iron Foreman's Mansion

This 1840's English Cottage-style mansion is located near the Forest Service boundary. This mansion is located adjacent to the site of an extensive iron mining and smelting industry during the 1800s. Elevation 840

## 2. Cherokee National Forest Entry Station

This is an information destination point and a kiosk will be provided. This display will locate all the interpretive opportunities on the Skyway with a computer enhanced information display for the Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests, and at the Overhill communities of Tellico Plains and Robbinsville. A map of the Skyway will be available for all visitors. Elevation 860

## 3. Tellico River Overlook

The Tellico River was the site for many settlements. The Tellico River has a fascinating historical context to interpret the Cherokee and Early Settlers who lived on these lands. Elevation 850

## 4. Tellico River Overlook

The Tellico River bounded the historic settlement of "Great Tellico", a historic Cherokee Indian village located where two major trails crossed. Elevation 850

## 5. Oosterneck

The watershed of the Tellico River will be graphically located and explained as well as highlighting the Osprey and other water birds that live in this river habitat. Elevation 1000

## 6. Civilian Conservation Corps / Tellico River Ranger Station

This historic structure will be interpreted with the front of the office as a museum for visitors and an extensive loop trail to show different artifacts of the CCC work and history. The museum will collect and display artifacts of this interesting era, pertaining to the Forest Service. Elevation 1000

## 7. Fleming Meadows

This stop will be used for group camping and will also be a crossroads for an extensive loop trail network that will lead visitors to different sites selected for historic as well as scenic interest (old iron mines, views of the river, CCC camp, etc.). Elevation 1300

## 8. Caney Branch Observation Site

The lower elevation ecosystem of the Southern Appalachian Valley will be addressed as well as how the different watersheds are integrated into the system. This stop will be integrated into the extensive loop trail system that will be developed between the Skyway and Tellico River Road. Elevation 1400

## 9. Miller Mine

Early iron mining and smelting practices will be addressed by a display and informational graphics at this stop. A trail will lead to the old mine site located nearby. Elevation 1450

## 10. Babcock Lumber

The logging of the Tellico River corridor from the 1890s to the late 1920s will be addressed at this site, including splash dams, old logging beds and the old Babcock railroad logging bed which is the present Tellico River Road. The logging and its consequences to the ecosystem will be discussed. Elevation 1600

## 11. Buckthorn Creek

The four different settlements of the Overhill Cherokee will be addressed and shown on a map. The Overhill Cherokee and their desire to cross the "*Enemy Mountains*" will be shown on the Adair map. The new Overhill Skyway is located, in part, along this same Indian trail. Elevation 2040

## 12. Ketoowah Interpretive Center

The center is named for the Cherokee secret organization that was pledged to the defense of Cherokee autonomy. The interpretation for this site will be displays of Early Settler and Cherokee home sites inclusive of the gardens and orchards. Bicycle and pedestrian trails will be linked to the campground at Indian Boundary. Elevation 1900

## 13. Indian Boundary Lake / Recreation Area

In 1819, the final boundary for Cherokee lands was established before the Cherokee removal in 1838. This boundary line divided the Tellico River corridor. All the land east of this line remained Cherokee land, whereas all land west of the line was opened to white settlement. The interpretation for this site will address the interesting land use patterns in the area. Elevation 2100

## 14. John Ross

John Ross, the great chief of the Cherokee, was but one-eighth Indian descent, but dedicated his life's work in efforts on behalf of the Cherokee. Elevation 2400

## 15. Turkey Creek

High Appalachian valleys were centers for settlement. This area is tied into the history of settlement patterns and the Cherokee removal. The view to Indian Boundary can be tied to a graphic key encoded with the territorial lines. The last territory to be removed was this district. A map of the *Trail of Tears* is another appropriate graphic for this stop. Elevation 2500

## 16. Turkey Gobble / Indian Myth / "How the Turkey Got His Beard"

The Cherokee myths concerning the turkey can be graphically displayed. Elevation 2800

### 17. Buck Knob

High ridges of the Southern Appalachians are a natural feature of the ecosystem that have unique value in revealing how vegetation adapts to the land use over time, both culturally and physiologically. These high ridges were used for the earliest Cherokee Indians as trails. The vegetation is unique and fragile. These special ridge environments are fascinating areas to learn more about how the Southern Appalachian mountain ecosystems are organized. Elevation 2650

### 18. Lake View

The interaction between watersheds, timber management practices, and the ecosystem of these lands will be addressed. How the silt from the eroded logged out lands filled the streams and killed the trout, is a good example of how these lands were affected in the past. Elevation 3000

### 19. Eagles Gap / Wilderness

There is no interpretation in Wilderness. Elevation 3500

### 20. Anakeesta Formation

Anakeesta rock formations will be identified and located at this site. These naturally occurring rock formations when exposed by the road construction caused the watershed to become high in acid content. Anakeesta rock is sulfuric in content and can cause harm to the watershed marine life and to the ecosystem. Elevation 3600

### 21. Anakeesta Formation

When the anakeesta rock was found to be causing damage to the watershed, all construction on the road was halted. A solution was to encapsulate the rock in a way that mirrored the naturally occurring rock formations themselves. Elevation 3600

### 22. Grassy Gap / Wilderness

There is no interpretation in Wilderness. Elevation 3400

### 23. Brushy Ridge

The Cherokee called this ridge the "*Enemy Mountains*", because the mountains lined up like a group of warriors standing together to fight an enemy. This is the same ridge that divided the two "*Overhill Cherokee*" from one another. The Overhill Skyway follows that same ancient Cherokee Indian path that connected the two communities. Elevation 3800

### 24. Laurel Branch

Mountain Laurel has adapted to the ridge environment of the Southern Appalachian Mountains very well. It sits high on the ridge and lives at the beginning of the watershed. How these high ridges fit into the watershed and how the different parts of the watershed work will be graphically illustrated at this station. Elevation 3600

### 25. West Rattlesnake Rock / Wilderness

There is no interpretation in Wilderness. Elevation 3700

### 26. East Rattlesnake / *Utsa Nnti Yi* (Rattlesnake Place)

The Cherokee myth of "*Agan-uni Tsi's Search for the Ukenta*" is an appropriate legend to relate at rattlesnake rock. A graphic presentation of all the snakes that are common to the Skyway will be a secondary theme, as well as all the plants of the area. Elevation 3785

### 27. Beech Gap

The Skyway borders two Wildernesses. The Citico Creek Wilderness and the Joyce Kilmer / Slickrock Wilderness. The Snowbird Creek Wilderness Study Area also borders the Skyway. It is important for the public to understand both the philosophy, ethics and fundamental precepts of Wilderness. This interpretive display will clearly explain the history, ideas, and guidelines necessary for a successful Wilderness experience. Elevation 4400

### 28. *Gatuti Yi* / Town-Building Place

This overlook provides the ideal view of a monumental rock bench located high on a mountain located close to Stratton Bald. The Cherokees once started to build a settlement there, but a strange noise frightened them away which they thought was made by a Ukenta, which is a mythic great horned serpent with a talismanic diadem. "The Ukenta is a great snake, as large around as a tree trunk, with horns on its head, and a bright, blazing crest like a diamond on its forehead, and scales glittering like sparks of fire. It has rings or spots of color along its whole length, and can not be wounded except by shooting in the seventh spot from the head, because under this spot are its heart and its life". Elevation 4200

### 29. Stratton Meadows / Stratton Gap

The Early Settler history of this site will be explained through graphic images and the ghosted foundations of the settlement. The buildings will be ghosted in and a one mile loop trail will wind its way through this interesting site, highlighting the grave that deliberately straddles two states. Elevation 4200

### 30. Borrow Area / *Degal Gun Yi* (Where They Are Piled Up)

These cairns were on the trail south of Santeetlah Creek nearly to the Tennessee line. The cairns were said to mark the site of an ancient battle. According to Mooney, "*Every passing Indian throws an additional stone upon each heap, believing that some misfortune will befall him should he neglect this duty.*" Archeologists will reconstruct some of these cairns from photographs of existing cairns in the area. Elevation 4670

### 31. Mudd Gap / Whigg Meadows

The loop trail to Whigg Meadows will portray the early history of the site and graphically illustrate the evolution of a "*bald*". Elevation 4650



### 32. Swimmer

Swimmer, the great Cherokee Shaman, gave a copy of his book of Cherokee prayers, songs, and prescriptions for the cure of all kinds of diseases to James Mooney. This book contained a large portion of the Overhill Cherokee ritual and pharmacopoeia. Swimmer identified certain myths and legends that applied to actual sites along the Overhill Skyway. His life was dedicated to preserving the traditions and knowledge of his western Cherokee band although he served as a second sergeant in the Cherokee Company A, Sixty-Ninth North Carolina Confederate Infantry. His life and his contribution to the preservation of the Cherokee traditions will be graphically interpreted here. Elevation 4600

### 33. Nantahala

The derivation of the Cherokee word for Nantahala, is *Nun'daye'*, a former Cherokee settlement called "*land of the noonday sun*" because it was located in a valley where the high cliffs shut out the view of the sun until nearly noon. The Cherokee have a legend that also involves the Ukenta sitting on top of these cliffs and crossing over from morning in the east to afternoon in the west. Elevation 5000

### 34. Big Junction

In 1927, Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company purchased the Big Snowbird watershed and began extending its standard gauge railroad up Snowbird Creek. A log yard was developed at Big Junction and a narrow gauge railroad and incline tracks were extended into the upper watershed. As the logging progressed, there were 240 men working out of two camps. From 1928 to 1942 more than 100 million board feet of timber were hauled out over the Buffalo-Snowbird Railroad. The Federal government acquired Snowbird in 1942. Elevation 5320

### 35. *Tsukilunnun'Yi / Where He Alighted*

"Where he alighted," are two small bald spots on the side of the mountain at the head of Little Snowbird Creek, southwest of Robbinsville, in Graham County. A mysterious being, having the form of a giant, with head blazing like the sun, was once seen to fly through the air, alight at this place, and stand for some time looking out over the landscape. It then flew away, and when the people came afterward to look, they found the herbage burned from the ground where it had stood. They do not know what it was, but some think it may have been the Sun. Elevation 5250

### 36. McGuires

In 1908 George Mitchell built a wagon road, now Mitchell Lick Trail, across the head of Snowbird Creek into Tennessee. A lodge and caretaker's house were built below Hooper Bald. Shipments of buffalo, Russian wild boar, elk, Colorado mule deer, native and Russian brown bear, and wild turkeys began arriving in 1912. Within a short time the animals had escaped from the impoundments or were poached. Mr. Moore became disenchanted with his project and gave the preserve to Garland "*Cotton*" McGuire. Mr. McGuire and his family remained at the lodge until the 1940's. Elevation 5300

### 37. Hooper Bald

This station is the highest elevation along the Skyway, 5429 feet. This station was part of the lands that made up the 1908 hunting preserve. Earlier in 1901 General Hooper settled his family close by at King Meadows, where they remained until 1906. A trail leading to Hooper Bald will be provided from the overlook with appropriate interpretive signage. In a cleft of rock found on the bald some interesting historic carvings have been located. A spectacular view of the surrounding areas is available to the more adventurous hiking visitor. Elevation 5300

### 38. Little Huckleberry

A loop trail out to Little Huckleberry will give visitors a view of four other balds. There will be interpretive materials all along the loop trail to explain the theories of how the balds were created. Goats or buffalo will be utilized to maintain the bald environments along the Skyway. Elevation 5250

### 39. Spirit Ridge

This overlook gives the National Forest visitor one of the most spectacular panoramic vistas found anywhere in the Southern Appalachian mountains. From this overlook different mountain ranges, ridges and special areas can be seen. Telescopes will be located along the rock wall. Elevation 4880

### 40. Wright Creek

When the first settlers arrived in the 1830's, there was not a single road in Graham County. To create homesteads, the settlers followed Indian paths and game trails into the Wilderness. Cattle herders were among the first settlers to camp and live in these lands. Elevation 4200

### 41. Shute Cove

This overlook is located close to the Stewart Cabin. A graphic display of early settler homestead activity would be appropriate for this site, as a depiction of the early land use of the area. Elevation 3800

### 42. Hooper Cove

Hooper Cove was named after General Hooper who settled his family at King Meadows from 1901 through 1906. Hooper Cove was first inhabited by the Cherokee who hunted in this area for centuries. Because these lands were so rugged, they were one of the last areas of western Carolina to be settled by white men. Elevation 2750

### 43. Santeetlah Gap

Santeetlah Gap will be the location of the entry station for the Skyway and will direct visitors to the different recreation and interpretive opportunities available along the Skyway. A small display area of changing exhibits and materials describing other interesting places to visit in the vicinity will be open to the public. Santeetlah Creek is commonly known as *Ndyu' hi geyun i* "Sand place stream" from *Nuyu' hi* "Sand place" (*nayu*, sand), a former settlement just above the junction of the two creeks. Elevation 2750

**44. Rattler/ Utaa'Nati**

The Cherokee name for the rattlesnake is *Utaa'Nati* which is translated as "he has a bell". According to Swimmer, the Cherokee Shaman, the rattlesnake was once a man and was transformed to his present shape in order to save the human race from being exterminated by the Sun. This legend and others about the rattlesnake will be graphically illustrated at this station. Elevation 2500

**45. Rattler Ford Campground**

Elevation 2000

**46. Horse Cove Campground**

Elevation 2000

**47. Tsunda'Nilti Yi (Where they demanded the debt from him)**

According to Mooney, this site is near to "*a fine camping ground, on the north side of Little Santeetlah Creek, about half way up*". Here a hunter once killed a deer, which the others in the party demanded in payment of a debt due to them. The Cherokee commonly gave the creek the same name. Elevation 2400

**48. Avey Creek**

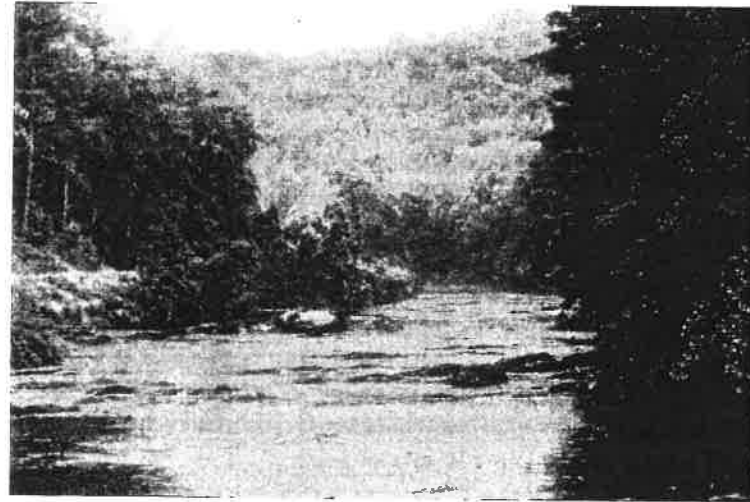
There is an Indian myth about a small spring lizard (*Duwe' Ga*), which lives in springs and is supposed to cause rain whenever it crawls out of the spring. Another spring lizard, red, with black spots, is called *dagann' tu or aniganti' ski* "the rain maker," because its cry is supposed to bring rain. This lizard is probably the Spring Salamander which is rather large (4.5-8.5 in.) and fits the description. These Spring Salamanders inhabit springs and other small, cold, rocky streams, and caves in the mountains of North Carolina. By day, they hide under stones near the edge of streams. Elevation 2500

**49. Lake Santeetlah**

The overlook to Lake Santeetlah reveals a beautiful panoramic vista. Lake Santeetlah was formed by damming the Cheoah River and is located on an ancient Cherokee settlement. The historic Cherokee land use patterns of the area will be an interesting graphic depiction for visitors. Elevation 2600

**50. Maple Springs**

Maple Springs is an accessible overlook which faces on the beautiful Joyce Kilmer / Slickrock Wilderness. The history of this Wilderness and Wilderness Ethics is an appropriate topic. Elevation 3400



## SCENIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Scenic conservation and enhancement of the aesthetic and visual resources found on National Forest land bordering the Skyway will provide visitors with an improved experience. Extensive planting and prudent clearing will stabilize road banks with fall color and spring flowering native species. It is important to maintain the continuous sequence of magnificent visual panoramas for the enjoyment and inspiration of visitors.

The Scenic Resource Management System, utilized by the Forest Service, provides the framework for the inventory, analysis, and management of scenic resources. This system can be utilized on a wide scope of projects, including broad integrated land and resource management planning. It will be useful for the management of the Overhill Skyway.

## ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

The Skyway vegetation will be managed for its diverse character and distinctive features to enhance the attributes of the road corridor. Sound stewardship of the Vegetation will be the paramount concern of the Vegetative Management Plan.

The desired future condition for the vegetative management on the Overhill Skyway is to manage the panorama of vistas to enthrall the visitor. The Skyway will be gradually cleared of foreign non-native plant materials. The vegetative corridor will be enhanced to provide the visitor with a spectacular fall color display unparalleled in the area. Where road banks need vegetative cover, the optimum in bright and dramatic fall color displays will be planted. For example, the flame red of Sumac might be an appropriate choice for the entry area at Santeetlah Gap. Sumac would be low enough to not block the view and at the same time bright enough to give visitors a breathtaking fall color display.

Vegetative management will incorporate four important components:

Return of the road environs to the original native plant communities

Protection of the habitat of the Northern Flying Squirrel;

Enhancement of the visual experience of the visitor by heightening access and perception of views.

Development of a long range maintenance plan for the future.

This proposal includes returning the Skyway corridor vegetation to the original, historical, native plant community. As the road was constructed, many invasive non-native plants were introduced for a variety of reasons. Now that the road is nearing completion, it is important to return the scenic views to their original state. For example, the grasses used on the "balds" and the recently excavated roadbeds for erosion control are invasive non-native plants and should be eliminated and replaced with native plants.

Replacing these non-native species with selections from the proper plant community will stabilize these areas within the context of the ecosystem. The special qualities of the Skyway would be appreciably enhanced. Native plants that would better serve as erosion control in the same situations will be identified.

The Northern Flying Squirrel is at the boundary of its habitat on a portion of the Skyway crossing from Tennessee to North Carolina, close to Whigg Meadow. In this area any selective removal or pruning of encroaching vegetation to frame and enhance visual panoramas, will be carefully done to ensure that the squirrel's southern habitat border is not significantly disturbed.

A corridor viewshed analysis and plan will be developed to choose which views will be enhanced by selective pruning, thinning, or planting. This will be fully coordinated with any special needs for plant and animal species that may be affected.

A maintenance plan will also be developed that schedules these changes to the vegetative corridor and ensures the integrity of a native plant community within the ecosystem.



## WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT

*"...to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of Wilderness." (The Wilderness Act, 1964)*

The Overhill Skyway is an excellent arena to stress Wilderness ethics and Wilderness education. The Skyway is unique in enjoying proximity to two Wildernesses and one Wilderness study area. The close proximity of Wilderness to the Scenic Byway will require careful management to control the access and impact on these lands. In Tennessee, 4.7 miles of the Skyway are bounded by the 15,891 acre Citico Creek Wilderness. On the North Carolina side, the Skyway runs parallel to and borders the Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Wilderness for half a mile. Wilderness differs from other National Forest lands in that it retains its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvement or human habitation. Wilderness is protected and managed to preserve its natural condition and generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with human influence substantially unnoticeable. Wilderness offers outstanding opportunities for solitude or for a primitive and unconfined recreation experience. To prevent overuse of the Wilderness bordering the Skyway, parking adjacent to the Wilderness will be extremely limited.

## WILDLIFE VIEWING

Wildlife viewing will be an important feature of the Skyway. There will be numerous opportunities for viewing many species of birds, mammals, and reptiles. Deer, bear, and wild boar are common in the area. Several special viewing stations will be established along interpretive trails to make it easier to see and identify various species. The area along the Skyway is featured in the Tennessee Wildlife Viewing Guide, published in 1993. The area is renowned for the abundance of neo-tropical migrant bird species.

Human interaction with wildlife and wildlife habitat will be a major feature for interpretation. How human influences have changed dramatically from prehistoric times to the present can be clearly illustrated along the Skyway.



Raccoon in wood near the Skyway



Wild Turkey photographed near Turkey Creek

## **TOURISM / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

There is a growing interest in tourism in Southeast Tennessee and Western North Carolina. The area is rich in scenic beauty, and natural and historic resources. Other industries, such as mining and timber are diminishing. Quality oriented tourism can produce many economic benefits for local businesses. One of the objectives for the Overhill Skyway is to establish new partners and cooperators for compatible recreation-support facilities and information near the Skyway corridor. The Forest Service will encourage development and marketing of new facilities near the Skyway corridor to meet the needs of the traveling public. Tourist related traffic will generate eating establishments, lodging, markets and service stations. The Forest Service will coordinate with partners and cooperators to insure high visual quality by providing information and guidelines for colors, materials, workmanship for facilities near the Skyway.

Polk County, adjoining Monroe County, Tennessee is the site of the 1996 Olympics Whitewater Venue. It is expected to greatly increase the notoriety of the area as a destination for many kinds of high quality recreation including boating, sightseeing, hiking, nature study, and horseback riding. Economic studies have projected millions of dollars in benefits to adjacent areas. Improved access, inter-connecting routes and a general influx of travelers to Southeast Tennessee will make the Skyway a prime tourist conduit in the Southern Appalachians.

A survey conducted in 1990 in an adjoining Polk county, Tennessee County clearly pointed out the public's need for much more emphasis on interpretation and recreation on the Cherokee National Forest. A post operational study will be conducted to help frame proper long term management of the Skyway and to better enable this project to serve as an example for other scenic byways.

## **MAINTENANCE**

Maintenance of the road surface and vegetation immediately adjacent to the road, and facilities such as overlooks and guard rails will generally be the responsibility of the States of Tennessee and North Carolina. The Forest Service will maintain facilities directly under its jurisdiction. An operation and Maintenance Plan will have to be prepared by the respective Departments of Transportation and the Forest Service.

Vandalism will be discouraged through appropriate educational outreach and signage, as well as by law enforcement. Graffiti will be removed promptly to discourage its accumulation.

## **SAFETY**

Sightseers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and even some commercial traffic will be present along the Skyway. To safely accommodate these various modes of transportation, speed limits must be strictly enforced. Law enforcement patrols must take place on a prescribed schedule. Telephones should be placed at the major facilities along the Skyway.



## ADJACENT LANDS

It will be important to work with other adjacent landowners, and local and state governments to develop compatible goals and objectives for future management. The Skyway corridor is owned primarily by the Federal government, under administration of the Forest Service. The Forest Service should consider purchasing the few remaining pieces that are in private ownership to ensure that the integrity of the corridor is kept at the highest levels. Presently there are no buildable sites on National Forest land at the two entrances that are large or flat enough to locate entrance facilities. Therefore, the purchase of suitable sites would provide more successful administration. Effective corridor management of the Overhill Skyway will ensure that this magnificent scenic byway becomes a primary focus for tourism and will help to provide for optimal development opportunities in the communities of Robbinsville and Tellico Plains.

The high point of the Skyway (Hooper Bald), is privately owned. Public ownership of this tract should be considered to provide better and more effective management of the entire corridor.



"Cotton McGuire and friend hunting on Hooper Bald in the 1920's



Hooper Bald as it appeared in 1910



"Cotton" McGuire's lodge located near Hooper Bald

