Cocke County boasts tremendous natural assets, 40% of which is comprised of state and federally protected lands. It serves as the eastern gateway into Tennessee and the Great Smoky Mountains for interstate-40 travelers, but is also one of the fifteen most impoverished counties in Tennessee.

With direct access to recommended travel routes into neighboring Sevier County (which hosts approximately 15 million visitors per year), adventure and nature-based tourism revenues offer the greatest opportunity for economic growth.

A federal grant was awarded to Cocke County from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to construct 50-75 miles of mountain bike, hiking, and equestrian trails in Cocke County. A recent grant amendment has allowed for design and environmental analysis of up to 100 miles of trails.

The project builds on multiple convenings of collaborating entities, including the Cocke County Partnership and Cherokee National Forest. These convenings resulted in the identification of Hall’s Top as the optimal area to develop outdoor recreational trails and associated assets to enhance outdoor recreational opportunities and associated tourism development.

“One of Tennessee’s treasured assets is the environment that we have. We are here in one of the most beautiful spots in America, and we know we have the responsibility to steward those resources for the next generation.” - Senator Lamar Alexander

“This investment will benefit the people of Cocke County, and all Americans who hope to experience the beauty and majesty of East Tennessee’s rugged mountain landscapes for themselves.” - Tim Thomas, ARC Federal Co-Chairman
Includes completion of standard Forest Service forms, once this is accepted the formal NEPA process is initiated.

Wildlife
Botany
Hydrology
Archaeology
Architectural/Historic
Tribal Consultation
Socio Economics
Scenery
Recreation
Soils
Environmental Justice Analysis

A Notice of Activity will be prepared and a public meeting held.

A Notice of Activity will be prepared and a public meeting held.

GIS/Mapping/ Alternatives Development
Current Being Developed
Duration 16 Weeks

Pre-Scoping
Duration 4 Weeks

Prepare EA and Draft Decision Notice
Duration 27 Weeks

Fieldwork, Data Collection, Data Analysis

Scoping
Duration 10 Weeks

Final Decision Notice Prepared for Concurrence and Signature
Duration 11 Weeks

NEPA PROCESS JANUARY 2022
**ECONOMIC IMPACT**

**January 2022**

### Visitor Spending Estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations</td>
<td>$261,558</td>
<td>$11,894,455</td>
<td>$18,852,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food/Restaurants</td>
<td>$1,941,085</td>
<td>$12,471,132</td>
<td>$19,068,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groceries</td>
<td>$1,609,681</td>
<td>$10,341,914</td>
<td>$15,812,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>$473,435</td>
<td>$3,041,739</td>
<td>$4,650,874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>$615,466</td>
<td>$3,954,261</td>
<td>$6,046,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas/Fuel</td>
<td>$899,527</td>
<td>$5,779,305</td>
<td>$8,836,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biking Expenses</td>
<td>$124,445</td>
<td>$354,240</td>
<td>$755,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Recreation</td>
<td>$1,342,970</td>
<td>$9,073,502</td>
<td>$13,659,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaming</td>
<td>$ 47,344</td>
<td>$304,174</td>
<td>$465,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$284,061</td>
<td>$1,825,044</td>
<td>$2,790,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>$7,599,573</td>
<td>$59,039,766</td>
<td>$90,938,452</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Spending budgets of Tennessee tourists and mountain biking participants at their destinations
- Potential spending volume is shown by category per day

### Tax Revenue Estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market Drive Time (Minutes)</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-60</td>
<td>$216,835</td>
<td>$1,980,427</td>
<td>$3,066,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-120</td>
<td>$1,549,875</td>
<td>$12,471,132</td>
<td>$19,068,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-240</td>
<td>$44,656</td>
<td>$172,243</td>
<td>$261,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>$3,346,476</td>
<td>$254,707</td>
<td>$373,806</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Tax revenue is shown for sales and lodging taxes
- Potential tax revenue benefit for Cocke County and Tennessee are based on current tax rates

### Visitor Estimates by Market Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market Drive Time (Minutes)</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-60</td>
<td>5,986</td>
<td>23,123</td>
<td>28,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-120</td>
<td>12,904</td>
<td>59,841</td>
<td>83,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-240</td>
<td>44,656</td>
<td>172,243</td>
<td>261,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>63,546</td>
<td>254,707</td>
<td>373,806</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Potential tax revenue benefit for Cocke County and Tennessee are based on current tax rates

### Existing Visitation

**Large Metro Areas within 4-Hour Drive Time**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market Drive Time (Minutes)</th>
<th>MTB Participants</th>
<th>Annual Participation Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-60</td>
<td>10,169</td>
<td>128,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-120</td>
<td>42,546</td>
<td>539,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-240</td>
<td>318,954</td>
<td>4,044,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>371,669</td>
<td>4,712,764</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Roughly 370,000 mountain bikers live within a 4-hour drive from Hartford
- Combined they participate 4.7 million days in mountain biking annually
- On average each mountain biker in market area participates 13 days annually

### Existing Mountain Bike Trail Systems

- 41 trail systems in East Tennessee, most of them in urban areas
  - (Windrock Bike Park, Urban Wilderness Corridor, Chattanooga, Racoon Mountain, Volkswagen Trails, Johnson City, and Tweetsie Trail Systems, etc)
- 9 in Northwest North Carolina
  - (Jack Rabbit Trails, Brevard / Pisgah, Dupont State Forest, Tsali Trails, Old Fort, Asheville, Bent Creek, Fires Creek, Kanuga Bike Park, etc)
- 11 in Northeast Georgia
  - (Bull and Jake Mountain, Lake Russell, Chicopee Woods, Payne Creek, Cool Springs, Suches, Toccoa, etc)

### Trail Networks with the Highest Rider Count:

- are located in or near urban areas (daily use)
- have a mix of easy, moderate, and expert-level trails that open the trail system up to a much wider range of riders
- have the park/trail system managed by a local MTB club or association
- are designation as an “IMBA Hall of Fame Epic Ride”
- Most trail systems do not offer dedicated MTB trails. Riders have to share the trails with hikers, runners or horseback riders.
RECREATION AND AMENITIES
ENTRY MONUMENT & SIGNAGE
ENTRY MONUMENT
TRAILHEAD KIOSK
TRAILHEAD KIOSK
DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE
DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE
DIRECTIONAL & ARRIVAL SIGNAGE
DIRECTIONAL BLAZES & SIGNAGE
BILLBOARD SIGNAGE

WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE
NOTES

• Approx. 112.12 Total Miles of Conceptual Trails:
  BEGINNER: 25.79 MI (23%)
  INTERMEDIATE: 48.53 MI (44%)
  EXPERT: 38.35 MI (33%)
  GREENWAY: 5.44 MI (NOT INCLUDED IN MTB MILEAGE)

Advantages:
• Complete mileage offering for all the non-motorized activities in the forest.
• Multiple loop options for long or short outings.
• Shuttle road to top of Halls Top Mountain.
• Multiple points of access throughout the forest into the trail system.

Disadvantages:
• Trail corridor width impacts several previously un-impacted or lightly impacted sections of forest.
• The construction budget likely will not cover this amount of mileage.
• Trails create a porous forest service boundary with multiple points of access.
• Most trails will need long-term maintenance.
• Shuttle roads will require significant amounts of construction and administration to be completed.
CONCEPTUAL TRAIL NETWORK  OPTION B

HALL'S TOP TRAIL MASTER PLAN  JANUARY 2022

LEGEND
- Interstate
- Road
- Beginner MTB Trail
- Intermediate MTB Trail
- Expert MTB Trail
- Beginner Hiking Trail
- Intermediate Hiking Trail
- Expert Hiking Trail
- Beginner Equestrian Trail
- Intermediate Equestrian Trail
- Expert Equestrian Trail
- Potential Shuttle Road
- Greenway / Bike Lane
- CNF Area
- 12.8 Roadless Area

NOTES
- Approx. 89.83 Total Miles of Conceptual Trails:
  - BEGINNER: 20.55 MI (23%)
  - INTERMEDIATE: 42.23 MI (46%)
  - EXPERT: 27.6 MI (31%)
  - GREENWAY: 5.44 MI (NOT INCLUDED IN MTB MILEAGE)

Advantages:
- Well rounded mileage offering for all non-motorized forest activities.
- Several loop options for long or short outings which utilize trails and existing roads.
- Shuttle road to continue down to the bottom of Stone Mountain Trail.
- Multiple access points to the trail system throughout the forest.

Disadvantages:
- Trail corridor width will impact several previously un-impacted or lightly impacted sections of forest.
- The construction budget may not cover this amount of mileage.
- The trails create a porous forest service boundary with multiple points of access.
- Most trails will require long-term maintenance.
**LEGEND**
- Interstate
- Road
- Beginner MTB Trail
- Intermediate MTB Trail
- Expert MTB Trail
- Beginner Hiking Trail
- Intermediate Hiking Trail
- Expert Hiking Trail
- Beginner Equestrian Trail
- Intermediate Equestrian Trail
- Expert Equestrian Trail
- Greenway / Bike Lane
- Potential Shuttle Road
- CNF Area
- 12.8 Roadless Area

**NOTES**
- Approx. 82.34 Total Miles of Conceptual Trails:
  - BEGINNER: 19.32 MI (23%)
  - INTERMEDIATE: 37.98 MI (46%)
  - EXPERT: 25.04 MI (31%)
  - GREENWAY: 5.44 MI (NOT INCLUDED IN MTB MILEAGE)

Advantages:
- Minimum mileage offering for all non-motorized forest activities.
- Several loop options to utilize new trails and existing roads.
- Shuttle access road to reach first main descending trail.
- Several points of access to the trail system throughout the forest.
- The construction budget will likely cover this mileage amount.

Disadvantages:
- Trail corridor width will impact several previously un-impacted or lightly impacted sections of forest.
- Few trail experiences throughout the trail system.
- Creates a porous forest service boundary with multiple points of access.
- The system is dependent on roads to create loop opportunities and access points.
The presence of the 12.B Roadless Area around the Devil’s Backbone area is an opportunity to add a unique backcountry feeling trail system immediately adjacent to the town of Hartford. The intent and assumptions in proposing conceptual mileage in this zone is to increase the existing trail mileage from 3.02 miles to a potential 34.75 miles for Option A, 26.85 miles for Option B, and 20.87 miles for Option C.

For Options A, B, and C the intent was to create a larger hiking optimized trail system immediately adjacent to town with connection to backcountry zones. The mileage does assume replacing the existing trails with more sustainable and user-friendly alignments. There would be a net gain of trail miles including the replacement of the popular social route from the Pigeon River up to Buzzards Roost.

The goal was to create multiple loop options originating from the Mill Creek Road area as well as high connectivity from Pigeon River to Buzzards Roost. The intent was to create more beginner experiences and loops off of Mill Creek Road (FS 110) with connections higher up the mountain. More intermediate experiences are farther up the mountain. It would be possible and plausible to create some shorter backpacking routes in this 12B trail system.

Trails were intentionally kept out of the north side of Halls Top to keep a larger area un-impacted. The trails between the Stone Mountain Trail and Mill Creek Road (FS 110) it is assumed that the current and recreation uses would be the same as the current uses listed in the Cherokee National Forest Environmental Impact Statement Roadless Area Evaluations Appendix C Devil’s Backbone, ID Number: 04036.
- Flood damage led to widespread damage and rendered the site unusable in 2019
- Prior to the flood damage, Houston Valley Rec Area served as a popular overnight camping location in Cocke County
- Adjacent to Meadow Creek Fire Tower. ~ 10 min drive
- ERFO remediation work on the flood damage associated with the road and accessway is slated to begin in 2022/23.
- Popular equestrian destination, Burnette Gap Trailhead is only a minute away and offers some of the best horseback riding in the area on the Unaka Ranger District.
- Possibility to connect into the Weaver’s Bend, Meadow Creek and Paint Creek trail systems
- Forest Service is committed to working with our community partners on the future of Houston Valley and how it will serve as a quality recreation experience for generations to come
- Houston Valley Working Group meetings are scheduled to begin late February/ early March 2022