



North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Pat McCrory
Governor

John E. Skvarla, III
Secretary

May 15, 2013

Secretary Sally Jewell
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

First, let me congratulate you on your recent confirmation as the 51st Secretary of the US Department of Interior. I am writing you today in support of the initiative underway in the Southwestern region of North Carolina to recognize the Little Tennessee River and its tributaries, the Nantahala, the Oconaluftee and the Tuckaseegee Rivers as the “National Blueway Trails of the North Carolina Smokies.”

Those rivers and their watersheds encompass the Nantahala National Forest and the two most visited National Park units in the nation, the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which creates the “infrastructure” for the largest and most visited outdoor recreation area in the Southeastern United States.

This region’s economy is highly dependent on tourism with outdoor recreation being the cornerstone of economic activity in almost all of the region’s rural counties. The opportunity to be recognized by the US Department of Interior in your National Blueway Program would bring new marketing opportunities to the region for their already outstanding outdoor recreation resources and would support their brand as one of the best watersport recreation areas in the Southeast. Your support and that of your participating federal partners could help this region create additional jobs in their most important industry sector.

Our Department stands ready to support the efforts of Smoky Mountain Host, the seven-county, public-private partnership that is leading this initiative. Smoky Mountain Host has been instrumental in leading marketing, conservation and responsible product development efforts in this region since 1987, and they are well-respected by their private members, elected officials and state government partners in North Carolina. They helped establish and operate the Smoky Mountain Visitor Center on US Highway 441 near the North Carolina and Georgia border, through a public-private partnership with the North Carolina Department of Transportation. This Center and the Smoky Mountain Host organization are often recognized as a good model for “public-private collaboration” in North Carolina.

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Secretary Sally Jewell

Page 2

May 15, 2013

We look forward to working with you, the Department of Interior and your federal partners, Smoky Mountain Host and the numerous community non-profits that will work together in this initiative to achieve the recognition that the Little Tennessee and its tributaries deserve.

Sincerely,



John E. Skvarla, III

cc: Betty Huskins
Smoky Mountain Host