



July 29, 2015

Mr. Bill Lane  
Atlanta Federal Center  
National Park Service – RTCA Program  
100 Alabama Street, SW – 1924 Building  
Atlanta, GA 30303

Dear Mr. Lane,

The Highlands Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is pleased to support the Smoky Mountain Host organization's grant application for technical assistance from the National Park Service. Highlands, North Carolina is encircled by the Nantahala National Forest and home to some of North Carolina's most popular scenic waterfalls along State Highway 64. Our organization agrees that the Technical Assistance Program would be critical in the coordination and designation of the Smoky Mountain Blueways as a National Water Trail. Your assistance is critical in helping them develop a "wayfinding signage program" and developing a strong conservation education component for the regional effort.

The five rivers in the system all flowing into Lake Fontana are some of the most treasured waterways in the nation and are critical to our local economy. The entire Southwest Region of North Carolina will benefit economically from this designation and your assistance will solidify the extensive work that has already been done by the Advisory Council and their many collaborative partners in the Little Tennessee Watershed.

Since 1875, hospitality and tourism has been Highlands' economic engine and is key to a vibrant local economy. The water sports industry is leading the way to further economic development in the southern Blue Ridge region. We believe if we can foster conservation of our natural resources through public education while marketing our "competitive advantage" it will serve our residents as well as our visitors.

Smoky Mountain Host has a long history of partnering with public and private organizations to carry out initiatives such as the Smoky Mountain Blueways. We believe that the designation of the Smoky Mountain Blueways by the National Park Service as a National Blueways Trail System will be a huge step in securing our place in the global market and making our region's natural resources stronger through collaboration and conservation.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Kielyka  
Executive Director

HIGHLANDS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
POST OFFICE BOX 62 HIGHLANDS, NC 28741  
TEL (828) 526-5841 FAX (828) 526-5803  
EMAIL [president@highlandschamber.org](mailto:president@highlandschamber.org)

ELEVATION 4118 FEET

[www.highlandschamber.org](http://www.highlandschamber.org)

HIGHLANDS VISITOR CENTER  
POST OFFICE BOX 404 HIGHLANDS, NC 28741  
TEL (828) 526-2112 FAX (828) 526-5803  
EMAIL [visitor@highlandschamber.org](mailto:visitor@highlandschamber.org)