



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Appalachian National Scenic Trail
P.O. Box 50 (31 High Street)
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425

IN REPLY REFER TO:

June 26, 2009

Town of Dover, New York
The Town Board
126 East Duncan Hill Road
Dover Plains, NY 12522

Ref: Knolls of Dover Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Board Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Knolls of Dover, Dover Plains, NY. In general, the National Park Service, Appalachian Trail Park Office (ATPO) has concerns regarding the proposal and its impact on the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT).

The A.T. is a continuous, marked, 85-year-old footpath that traverses the Appalachian Mountain chain through 14 states from central Maine to northern Georgia, for a distance of 2,175 miles. In 1968, the National Trails System Act designated the AT as the first national scenic trail and authorized federal land acquisition to establish a permanent route and protective corridor surrounding the footpath. Today, the vast majority of the AT is protected by some form of state or federal ownership. Millions of visitors come to the Trail each year, for hikes as short as an afternoon's walk and as long as a five-month trek from Georgia to Maine, to enjoy and experience the countless scenic, natural, and culturally significant wonders of the Appalachian Trail environment.

The Appalachian Trail is managed under a unique cooperative management system comprised of more than 100 public agencies and private organizations. Since 1921, when volunteer citizens conceived and began construction of the initial route of the Trail, volunteers affiliated with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and 30 of ATC's affiliated trail clubs have constructed, reconstructed, and maintained the footpath, as well as a system of more than 250 shelters and many other associated facilities.

NPS does retain certain responsibilities, including over-all administration of the Trail and compliance required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). In 2003, the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) recognized the AT as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The NPS has particular concerns with the proposed Dover Knolls project in that the visual impacts from the AT, particularly at Cat Rocks in Dutchess County are not fully examined in the DEIS. The visual analysis conducted and presented in the DEIS is with full leaf-on. The analysis should include the views of four seasons, or at least when tree cover is minimized during the winter and early spring. Preservation of mature trees should be

ensured as well as reducing development along the far slope of the project. These measures would help protect the views from this nationally significant trail.

In addition, the NPS is concerned about the developer's assumption that an easement or right-of-way would be granted to cross the AT. To date, this office has not received any specific information about the proposed re-opening of the existing impassible road. Please have the maps revised to eliminate any proposed crossing of the AT as a crossing would not be in keeping with the primitive nature of the trail and would cause adverse effects to cultural and natural resources.

We also are concerned about the proposal and the potential for ATV access to the AT. In similar situations such as this, ATC and this office have worked closely with developers to design and install effective barriers to deter ATV access. We have design specifications available and would like to see these included in any final plans.

If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact Sarah Bransom of my staff at (304) 535-4003.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pamela Underhill". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Pamela Underhill
Superintendent

CC: ATC, Miller
NY SHPO
James Haggett