



July 30, 2015

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

Dear Mr. Lane,

Duke Energy Carolinas is pleased to support the Smoky Mountain Host organization's grant application for technical assistance from the National Park Service. The Technical Assistance Program would be critical in the coordination and designation of the Smoky Mountain Blueways as a National Water Trail. In addition, your assistance is critical in helping develop a "wayfinding signage program" and developing a strong conservation education component for the regional effort.

Duke Energy has hydroelectric Projects on five rivers in Western North Carolina and recently received new operating licenses from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for each Project. Duke Energy has enhanced seven existing access areas on five reservoirs and added eight new access areas to six reservoirs. Added five new access areas on the Nantahala River. Enhanced two existing access areas and added seven new access areas on the main stem of the Tuckasegee River, making it one of the most accessible rivers in the Southeast. The new licenses provides scheduled generation releases on both the Nantahala and Tuckasegee Rivers supporting paddling opportunities and enhance use of these two highly popular fishing rivers.

The region is also home to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park of which 60% is located in North Carolina, and the Blue Ridge Parkway, America's favorite scenic drive. In addition, our region is an integral part of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area, the 24th in America.

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.

Travel and tourism is a major engine that drives our region's economy. The water sports industry is leading the way to further economic development through its supply chain. 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. They operate the Smoky Mountain Visitor's Center through a long-standing agreement with the NC Department of Transportation that is located near the border of Georgia. They conduct regional co-op marketing since their inception in 1987. They also work closely with the Southwestern Commission, the region's Council of Governments in various community and economic development initiatives such as this one that provides connectivity between towns, counties, private industry and local governments.

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 regions natural resources stronger through collaboration and conservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Leatherman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lisa Leatherman
Duke Energy District Manager-Nantahala Area
Government and Community Relations