



Adopt an Overlook Blue Ridge Parkway



THANK YOU

Thank You for volunteering to maintain an overlook under the Adopt-an-Overlook (AaO) program of the Blue Ridge Parkway in cooperation with FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Your dedicated attention and your gifts of time are greatly appreciated. You are helping to keep the BRP overlooks clean and attractive for public use and enjoyment by thousands of appreciative travelers.

By diligently maintaining your overlook, you stand as one of its most important advocates and protectors. Without your vigilant attention, your overlook might soon be overrun with unsightly litter and dangerous debris. You are the eyes and ears of your overlook. The Blue Ridge Parkway experience wouldn't be the same without you!

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSES

The Blue Ridge Parkway manages and maintains 267 overlooks. These overlooks range in use from scenic pull-offs to regularly-used trailheads. The BRP maintenance staff is officially tasked with cleaning overlooks as their schedules permit, however, over the past ten years, the Parkway has seen a decline in funding for the maintenance division. At this time, the Parkway is only able to perform approximately 10% of the needed maintenance and repair on overlooks, and the backlog of identified overlook maintenance projects increases every year.

Therefore, the purposes of the AaO program include (1) decreasing the backlog of overlook maintenance needs, (2) improving the function and appearance of overlooks for visitor enjoyment, (3) releasing Park Service maintenance employees to accomplish other tasks requiring higher skills, (4) developing community partnerships which instill a sense of pride in public ownership of the Parkway, (5) and expanding the National Park Service presence on the Parkway and its overlooks and trails.

HOW THE AaO PROGRAM WORKS

Adoption by Individuals or Groups. An overlook may be adopted by a single individual, family or other group. Each AaO-adoption by a group or family needs to have a group leader who coordinates efforts and ensures that all forms are completed and procedures followed.

Length of Commitment. An adopting individual, family, club, organization or group must be willing to commit to their overlook for a period of at least one year. Unless FRIENDS/BRP receives notice otherwise, it is assumed that the commitment will continue from year to year.

Limited Authorization. While FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway (FRIENDS/BRP) actively helps to recruit and manage volunteers in the AaO program, the Blue Ridge Parkway is the only agency ultimately authorized to approve the adoption and maintenance of its overlooks. Remember that when you are at your overlook, you represent the National Park Service, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Be helpful, be courteous, be careful, and be proud! At the same time, volunteer individuals, clubs and organizations are not considered to be Federal employees for any purposes other than tort claims and injury compensation.

Maintenance Supervisor. Once you have applied to adopt an overlook and FRIENDS/BRP has communicated to you the Parkway's approval, you will be given contact information for the maintenance supervisor in that area of the Parkway. Establish contact, introduce yourself, and ask any questions you may have about maintaining your overlook. Once you have established a relationship with the maintenance supervisor, your volunteer efforts will normally proceed without on-site supervision. Your OMA (see below) will be the primary way that you communicate information about the status of your overlook. You should only contact the maintenance supervisor directly about significant obstructions or other matters that pose an immediate danger to the public.

REQUIRED FORMS

AaO Adoption Application. This application form is to be completed and sent to FRIENDS as the first step in the process of adopting an overlook.

Volunteer Services Agreement (VSA) Form. Each volunteer who works on the Parkway must complete and sign a Volunteer Services Agreement (VSA) form. Because volunteer contact information and emergency contact information often changes, a new VSA must be completed on or after October 1 for each new NPS fiscal year. Additionally, the VSA of any child or youth (18 or younger) must be signed by a parent or guardian. After copying VSAs for local records, all original VSAs should be mailed for further processing to FRIENDS/BRP, PO Box 20986, Roanoke VA 24018.

Overlook Maintenance Activity (OMA) Report Form. An OMA form should be completed and mailed to FRIENDS immediately following each service event. These reports show the time invested in service as well as round-trip travel time. OMAs also indicate the kinds of work you performed and alert the maintenance supervisor of any matters that may need special attention. OMA information is also used by the Parkway to assess volunteer activity and assist in long-range planning. The mailing address for each completed OMA is FRIENDS/BRP, PO Box 20986, Roanoke VA 24018.

MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

Visit your overlook as often as possible. Submit an OMA report following each visit, even if no other work was performed; record your travel time and briefly describe the condition of your overlook.

Monthly. Plan to care for your adopted overlook at least once a month from April through October.

Spring. Spring maintenance is best done at the end of winter, before the spring rainy season, by the end of April at the latest, and before the overlook receives a lot of visitor traffic. Assessment of work that will need to be done in the future is an important function of the spring visit.

Summer. The overlook is most obscured and in need of attention during the summer, due to normally heavier visitor traffic.

Fall. One of the best times of the year to clean your overlook is before the leaves have dropped from the trees. This ensures there is no litter under leaf debris during Winter months and is good preparation for heavy Spring water run-off. The cool weather makes Fall an excellent time for maintaining overlooks.

Winter. Your particular overlook may or may not be accessible during the winter months, November through March. Be careful if you travel on the Parkway. No extraordinary efforts are required during these months. Schedule your Spring visit just as soon as it is safe and reasonable to expect more travel and use of Parkway overlooks.

MAINTENANCE LEVELS

Level 1 Maintenance Tasks

- Pick up and dispose of litter
- Clear and dispose of leaves, twigs, branches and other debris on grassy area
- Clear leaves, twigs and branches and other debris from ditches and drainage channels
- Clean overlook signs and any nearby mile markers with soapy water
- Sweep sidewalks and parking area
- Clean picnic table(s) where applicable

Level 2 Maintenance Tasks

- All Level 1 duties
- Level any surface material
- Pick up or sweep cigarette butts from parking area, grassy areas, surrounding trailheads and sidewalks
- Trim overhanging or overgrown weeds and brush at the outer perimeter of overlook and around nearby "Overlook Ahead" signs.

Level 3 Maintenance Tasks

- All Level 1 and 2 duties
- Remove trees that have fallen on the overlook, within its perimeter, and on the parking lot. Move them to the shoulder, if possible, or notify maintenance manager as needed.
- Other tasks may include applying more gravel

SAFETY FIRST

Safety is the most important consideration while maintaining overlooks. NPS power-saw training is required to operate power saws on Parkway. Talk to your maintenance manager if interested in receiving this training. The use of other motorized equipment is NOT authorized.

There is always the potential for accidents while working near heavy traffic areas. You need to be constantly aware of these dangers. The best way to work safely is simple -- use common sense. The following is a good common-sense checklist:

1. Let someone know when you plan to maintain your overlook.
2. Carry a small first aid kit.
3. Wear a good pair of work gloves.
4. Wear long pants when working in brush, even in the summer.
5. Be sure to carry trash bags with you.
6. Wear sturdy shoes for walking on uneven terrain.
7. Carry any tools safely.
8. Wear blaze orange or bright green vest at all times when maintaining the overlook.