

## **6. Public Involvement**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The North Shore Road Project has over a 60-year history related to the construction of the Fontana Dam in western North Carolina. For decades prior to the onset of the EIS and official start of the public involvement program, the public and media have commented on issues surrounding the North Shore Road and the land that is now included in the EIS study area. This has included petitions and letters written to the NPS and other government agencies. As demonstrated through previous and current public participation, there is a strong interest in this project among numerous people with various viewpoints, both locally and nationwide.

Public involvement is an essential component of the EIS, supporting the informed decision-making process. It is integral in selecting appropriate study alternatives, analyzing potential impacts, and fulfilling NEPA requirements. In accordance with NEPA, the NPS and the FHWA developed an extensive public involvement program for the North Shore Road EIS to keep the public informed and to collect public input for the duration of the project.

The North Shore Road Public Involvement Program is open and inclusive. Key public involvement points included the following:

- The proposed North Shore Road has been a divisive factor for too long and needs resolution.
- The public decision-making process associated with NEPA will provide a framework to evaluate all reasonable alternatives for resolving the government's obligation in the 1943 Agreement.
- The program is committed to keeping the public and interested parties as informed as possible throughout the process.
- Flexible, open, and continuous public involvement will be conducted in accordance with NEPA and NPS policies.

The North Shore Road Public Involvement Program included a variety of media to inform the public on the status of the EIS planning process and to solicit and incorporate public feedback. It included numerous public meetings at multiple locations, social advertisements in local newspapers, national press releases, a comprehensive mailing list for project newsletters, and an interactive project website.

This chapter provides a summation of the public involvement activities that occurred during the North Shore Road Public Involvement Program.

Refer to Impacts to the Human Environment, Section 4.2, (specifically in Community, Section 4.2.2; Visitor Use and Experience, Section 4.2.5; and Cultural Resources, Section 4.2.8), for more information regarding impacts to the publics associated with this project.

### **6.2 Media Strategies**

A variety of media strategies were developed to update the public on the status of the EIS planning process and to collect public input. The wide range of local and national interest required disseminating information