



NORTH CAROLINA MOUNTAIN TOWNS OF CASHIERS,
CHEROKEE, DILLSBORO AND SYLVA

To: Jackson County Board of Commissioners Chairman Brian McMahan
Jackson County Commissioners
Jackson County Manager Don Adams

From: Jackson County Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors
Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

Date: August 27, 2020

Subject: Request for safety study and communication with NCDOT/USFS

During peak usage in summer and fall, both the TDA and the Cashiers Chamber of Commerce field numerous complaints and safety concerns along NC 107 and U.S. 64 in Cashiers. The two areas that continually come up in complaints are Silver Run Falls and Rhodes Big View Overlook.

For many years now, we've seen increased usage, and as a result, we frequently hear concerns from people in our community.

Both the TDA Board of Directors and Cashiers Area Chamber Board of Directors would like the County to request the appropriate parties to examine both of these sites and conduct a safety study and examine any long-term improvements that can be made.

The Silver Run Falls site falls under the U.S. Forest Service jurisdiction, but some of the issues would also need to be conveyed to the NCDOT, so a joint letter might be appropriate.

Attached to this letter, please find the most recent complaint we received from a county resident, which reflects the context of the complaints we often hear about Silver Run Falls – lack of parking, difficulty backing out with oncoming traffic speeding around a blind curve, etc.

Since these studies are often years out and the implementation of strategies from the studies take planning and funding, we think now is an opportune time to look toward the future and begin these discussions.

As seen in the news article below from this week's Smoky Mountain News, Silver Run Falls is closed for maintenance. We understand gravel is being added to the parking lot, which will help but won't eliminate the lack of adequate parking and the blind curve that people often face when backing out.

Silver Run Falls closed for maintenance

The Silver Run Falls Trail in the Nantahala Ranger District of the Nantahala National Forest closed for maintenance Aug. 24 and is expected to reopen Sept. 5.

A crew from the Conservation Corps North Carolina is completing maintenance on the trail. There is no public access during the closure, and the pullout off of N.C. 107 south of Cashiers is closed.

Nantahala Ranger District, 828.524.6441.



In a similar request, we (the JCTDA and Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce) would request that Commissioners engage the NCDOT and inquire about a study and potential long-term fix of Rhodes Big View Overlook where 'Shadow of the Bear' occurs annually. It is not just an attraction for Jackson County but also Macon County as well, and we believe leaders in Highlands and Macon County would have a vested interest in this fix. We are concerned about pedestrian safety, with no shoulder for people to stand in line while observing the phenomenon in October and February. Even while Shadow of the Bear only occurs during those two months, people often pull over at this location for a photo of the iconic Whiteside Mountain, considered by most to be one of the world's oldest mountains.

Attached to this letter, please find photos of the congested conditions during fall at Shadow of the Bear.

Sincerely,

Ann Self

Jackson County TDA Board of Directors
Chair Ann Self

Mary Lanning

Mary Lanning, President
Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

E-MAIL REGARDING SILVER RUN FALLS

...I hope the enclosed photos and videos help illustrate the safety issue of the lack of accessible parking for the number of daily Silver Run falls visitors.

The parking provided by the Forest Service on the side of the falls near the entrance has a deep drop off from the pavement to the crushed rock. Also, people often get stuck parking on the slope at the trail head.

There is clearly not adequate parking for the number of visitors that frequent these highly accessible falls.

People are using the 'pull off' opposite the trailhead, across 107 for parking. They often park over the white line, and I have seen people get stuck on this side also.

My main concern is that I see elderly and toddlers being walked across a blind curve on a 55MPH highway. Additionally, there are FOUR grading/ excavating companies whose dumps are beyond this point on 107south. This means that about 20 dump trucks are hauling heavy loads back and forth on this road all day 6 days a week.

We would like to see the pull off across the road filled in with vegetation, extended shoulders in the road in this area so there is room for adjustment if necessary, and drastically increased parking provided by the forest service that is accessible and safe so that people are no longer regularly getting stuck here.

Thank you so much for bringing this terrifying safety issue to the people who can help.



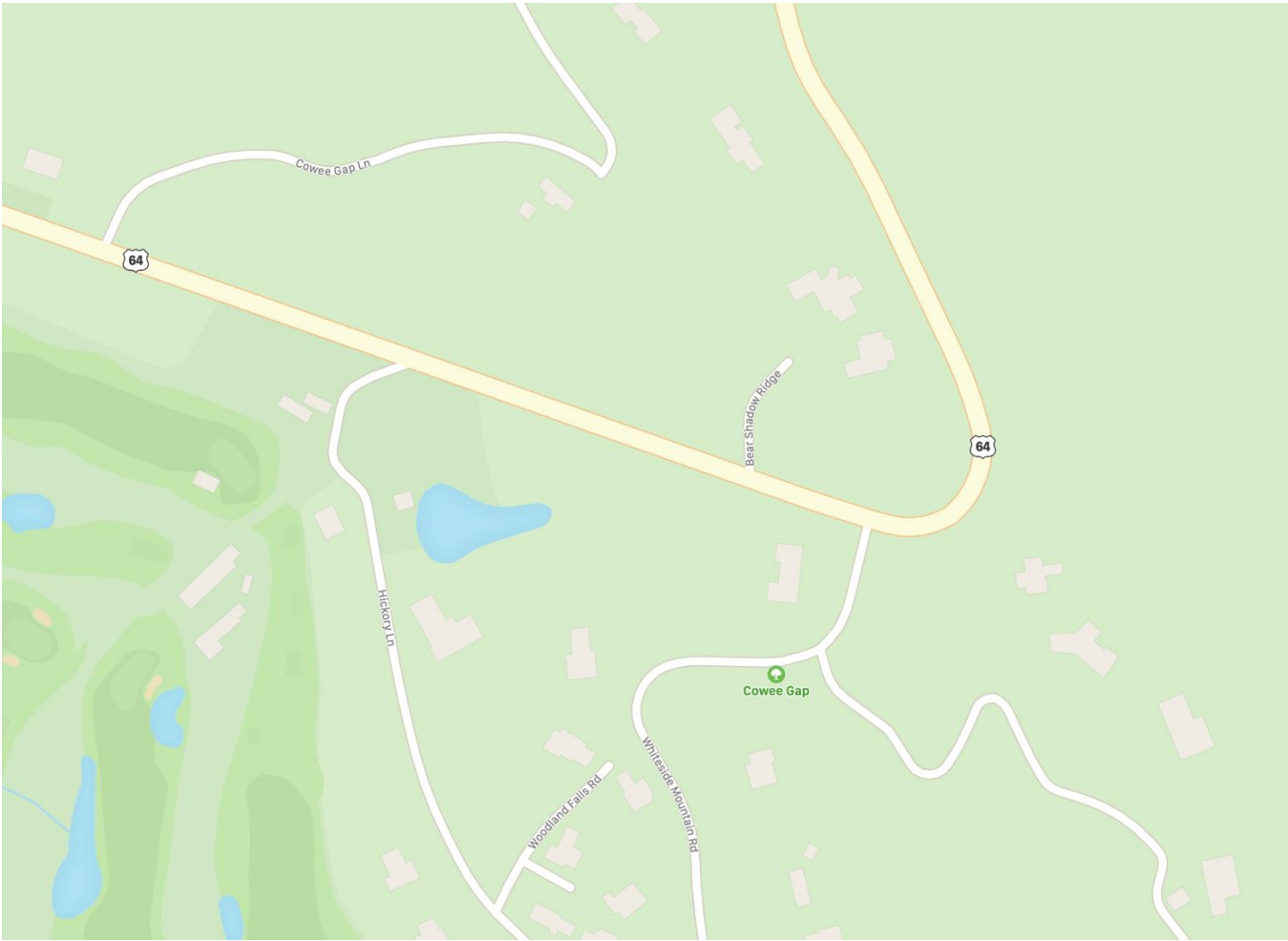


SHADOW OF THE BEAR INFORMATION

Each fall, the side of Highway 64 near Cashiers in southwestern North Carolina becomes a location for one of the most unique leaf-looking experiences in the country – the Shadow of the Bear. This naturally occurring phenomenon makes an appearance for just 30 minutes on sunny days at 5:30 p.m. mid-October through early November. It starts with a small dark shadow at the bottom of the valley, and grows until it finally evolves into the bear.



RHODES BIG VIEW OVERLOOK LOCATION



RHODES BIG VIEW STREET VIEW PHOTOS



RHODES BIG VIEW CONGESTION







