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Organization: OVNCST-Friends (Overmountain Victory North Carolina State Trail--Friends)

Title: Inaugural President

Comments: THE "OVERMOUNTAIN BARN" STANDS VERY, VERY CLOSE TO THE "HIGHEST POINT OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION". The Overmountain Barn stands beside the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail (OVNHT) as well as beside the "new" Overmountain Victory (North Carolina) State Trail (OVNCST). The Highest Point of the American Revolution is where these two trails intersect with the Appalachian Trail (AT) at the state borders of Tennessee and North Carolina (EN1).

Clearly, something needs to be done with and about this beautiful, evocative, but aging "Overmountain Barn(EN2) "-but, despite the very thoughtful efforts of very capable professionals, we have not reached a satisfying conclusion, in our opinion.

What is proposed, thus far, is not nearly enough to honor this site we hope you will agree after further consideration.

Arguably, what USFS and partners do at this site needs to be deeply informed - not only by its potential impact on folks who care deeply about the Appalachian Trail (EN3) but also by folks who care deeply about the OVNHT/OVNCST and even more particularly by folks who are working all across the USA to properly celebrate "America250 (EN4) " - our America's Semiquincentennial Celebration.

WE ARE NOT READY FOR JULY 4, 2026 AT THE "OVERMOUNTAIN BARN". July 4, 2026 will be the 250th anniversary of the signing of America's Declaration of Independence, of course. That's only a little more than 2 ½ years from now.

I'm honored to be the inaugural President of OVNCST-Friends (EN5) , which is the official North Carolina State Trails Friends Group for the Overmountain Victory (North Carolina) State Trail (EN6).

WE-OVNCST-Friends-ARE DIRECT STAKEHOLDERS. We--thus far--see no provisions in your proposal about what can and should be the best outcomes for OVNHT/OVNCST going into the 250th anniversary of September 27, 1780 (EN7) and October 7, 1780 (EN8) with, at, or near to the "Overmountain Barn" so, I will address what I, personally, hope both national and state elected officials will be willing to consider for the "Overmountain Barn" site and nearby.

WE-OVNCST-Friends-HAVE A DIRECT INTEREST IN COLLABORATING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE "REPLACEMENT" PROPOSAL.

Furthermore, I hope you will concur that OVNCST-Friends has sufficient "standing" so that you and the USFS are allowed to have further-and more-direct interaction-with OVNCST-Friends regarding what might be best to happen at this site. On behalf of OVNCST-Friends, I'm requesting this more-direct interaction. The "Highest Point of the American Revolution" in Avery County is one of the most important locations for OVNCST-Friends in terms of expenditure of our both (a) our planning funds -- allocated by North Carolina - as well as (b) our "Complete-The-Trail" funds.

And, of course, you also will have federal-federal contact with NPS representatives for OVNHT (EN9) - which OVNCST-Friends applauds and with which OVNCST-Friends hopes to be involved.

The Overmountain Barn site (EN10) needs to become much more of a destination-by-design (EN11) than it already is-if local (EN12) North Carolina and other North Carolina stakeholders are agreeable to this (EN13) .

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL AND AT THE STATE-OF-NORTH-CAROLINA LEVEL, I PRESENTLY BELIEVE THAT TWO (2) IMPORTANT THINGS NEED TO HAPPEN (AT THE SAME TIME THAT USFS IS DELIBERATING WITH PARTNERS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS WITH AND AT THE IMMEDIATE "OVERMOUNTAIN BARN" SITE).

#1 STARTING TO UPDATE COMPREHENSIVE PLANS. Those of us who are at liberty to advocate with U.S. Congressional Representatives and U. S. Senators from North Carolina need to consider advocating to begin an immediate update of the 1982 Comprehensive Management Plan for the OVNHT

([https://www.nps.gov/ovvi/getinvolved/upload/CompPlan\\_With-Amendment\\_2018.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/ovvi/getinvolved/upload/CompPlan_With-Amendment_2018.pdf)); and, obviously, such an update needs to involve key elected leaders (EN14) in North Carolina as well as leaders in Avery and Mitchell Counties. Arguably, this could begin as early as this year's (2023) "Hike the Hill" this month. Updates to

comprehensive plans for the Appalachian Trail may also be in order; unfortunately, OVNCST-Friends is, as of the deadline for this comment, not informed as to the update status of AT comprehensive plans.

#2 MONEY. Those of us who are at liberty to advocate with U. S. Congressional Representatives and Senators from North Carolina need to consider advocating for (perhaps) \$25 million or more (EN15) to design and develop "Highest Point Of The American Revolution" facilities and trail so that these can be part of the America250 celebrations in Avery County, Mitchell County, and nearby counties-before American 250th celebrations are over and nobody is able to focus effectively on what should be at the "Highest Point Of The American Revolution" for another 50 years.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF OVNCST-Friends. THE COURTESY OF A REPLY IS REQUESTED.

Endnotes (EN1-EN15):

(EN1) And nearby. The interactive map, [go.ncsu.edu/ovvi](http://go.ncsu.edu/ovvi), with all its layers activated, can serve as a valuable (and evolving) tool in discussions of what needs to happen at and near to our iconic "Overmountain Barn". This map is maintained by North Carolina State University.

(EN2) However, if a "new" version of the iconic barn is funded and approved for this site by various stakeholders, I presently believe I will advocate that it be "branded" as the new "Overmountain Barn". And, I don't think I would mind, personally, if it looked a great deal like the present "Overmountain Barn" in terms of salient architectural features. Furthermore, it might be helpful if, in addition to sleeping facilities, it also had some interpretive features.

(EN3) I suspect that almost all AT "through hikers" know about the OVNHT because of the iconic "Overmountain Barn" - even if almost none of them may know this is "at" the "Highest Point" of the American Revolution.

(EN4) <https://www.america250.org/discover/what-is-america-250/> as well as a number of other American Semiquincentennial (250) groups.

(EN5) Our new OVNCST-Friends Executive Director, incidentally, is Starli McDowell who has lived and worked in both Avery and Mitchell Counties for many years. Hopefully, you already know Starli so that I need not include her resume here. If you need it, obviously we will be delighted to provide it along with her job description and our current 5-year North Carolina state-trail plan.

(EN6) And which is being funded by the State Of North Carolina to help "complete" OVNCST along the 67.5% of the total OVNHT which can exist in North Carolina (211 miles) in comparison with the 45 miles (14.5%) of the OVNHT which can exist in Tennessee and the 45 miles (14.5%) of the OVNHT which can exist in South Carolina and the 11.5 miles (3.7%) which can exist in Virginia.

(EN7) Overmountain Men's crossing at Yellow Mountain Gap prior to the Battle Of Kings Mountain.

(EN8) Patriot Victory at Battle of Kings Mountain.

(EN9) Including new OVNHT Trail Administrator, Jeffrey J. Ellison.

(EN10) As well as the surrounding area including the Toe River Valley in Avery County and Mitchell County

(EN11) I hope that I'm not violating any trademarks by using the term "destination by design"; but, if so, I apologize.

(EN12) I would note here that the Vice President of OVNST-Friends is Dr. David Burleson -- who grew up on Roaring Creek Road close to the site of the Overmountain Barn. During at least one of the early years of the Annual OVNHT March, he marched all the way from his home near the barn into Spruce Pine with OVNHT marchers. He's the former Superintendent of Avery County Schools, too. I think he and his family still own property "almost at" the Overmountain Barn. My hope is the USFS will allow him to be deeply involved with us in discussions about the best ways to move forward with respect to the Highest Point Of the American Revolution.

(EN13) My hope is that local Tennessee and other Tennessee stakeholders are agreeable to this as well although I have no official standing even to try to speak for them as President of OVNCST-Friends. Nevertheless, I am a board member of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association (OVTA), which includes members in all four (4) states of the OVNHT, and I will, if and as able within OVTA, advocate for destination-by-design trail and site characteristics all the way from the Highest Point of the American Revolution down to the Hampton Creek OVNHT Trailhead (TN), to Roan Mountain (TN) State Park, to "Shelving Rock", and to the town of Roan Mountain, Tennessee, etc.

(EN14) Interestingly, both of North Carolina's two U. S. Senators served in the North Carolina Legislature; and, all of North Carolina's U. S. Congresspersons who have OVNHT/OVNCST in their districts, served in the North Carolina Legislature prior to their election to their federal offices. (IF WE HAVE TIME BEFORE THE PERIOD FOR COMMENTS "CLOSES", WE WILL SUBMIT AN ADDITIONAL COMMENT PERTAINING TO NORTH CAROLINA STATE LEGISLATORS, ETC.)

(EN15) One consideration in making this request is that the 9th Superintendent of the National Park Service, Gary Everhardt from Lenoir, North Carolina, was not only the NPS Director who worked with U. S. Senator James Broyhill (also from Lenoir) in creating the OVNHT - additionally, "as Director (1975-77), he led the NPS through the implementation of the United States Bicentennial observance. The NPS conducted activities at 250 sites coast-to-coast. Everhardt pushed wilderness designation and hailed a Presidential proposal for a \$1.5 billion Bicentennial Land Heritage Program". (This quote is from his Wikipedia entry: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary\\_Everhardt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary_Everhardt)). In my opinion, he and Senator Broyhill need to be honored during the 250th Commemorative Celebrations. And, although not discussed at length here, there may be opportunities to do so with trail and facilities at the Highest Point as well as in his home county, Caldwell, along the Yadkin River as well as in or near Lenoir.