

ASHEVILLE CITIZEN-TIMES

Published February 6, 2007 12:15 am

Bush's budget would help parkway

by [Lindsay Nash](#), LNASH@CITIZEN-TIMES.com

ASHEVILLE — The Blue Ridge Parkway and Great Smoky Mountains National Park would get more money for visitor services, upkeep and law enforcement under President Bush's federal budget proposal.

The proposal calls for giving the National Park Service \$2.4 billion, its largest ever for operations and largest funding increase.

The amount is \$230 million more than the president requested last year. The proposal calls for sending \$1.5 million to the parkway, an 11 percent increase, parkway Superintendent Phil Francis said.

The parkway could add 47 additional seasonal employees, including 24 maintenance workers, 14 visitor center workers and nine law enforcement officers, Francis said.

The parkway faces a \$3 million deficit, Francis said. The Smokies also faces shortfalls in staff and law enforcement.

The Smokies would get \$1.9 million, also an 11 percent increase.

House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Rep. Nick Rahall, D-W.Va., panned Bush's proposal, calling the plan to leverage private donations "an illusion conjured by this administration."

The new funding is largely the result of shifting funds from existing important park programs, such as construction, into a new budget column with a new label, Rahall said.

The Associated Press contributed to this article.

Contact Lindsay Nash at 828-232-5953, via e-mail at lnash@gannett.com