

Budget would give N.C. parks more

JOURNAL STAFF AND WIRE REPORT

ASHEVILLE, NC

Two national parks in North Carolina would get more money for upkeep, law enforcement and visitor services under President Bush's federal-budget proposal.

Bush has proposed a \$2.4 billion budget for the National Park Service, \$230 million more than he requested last year.

Under the plan, the Blue Ridge Parkway would get \$1.5 million, an 11 percent increase, parkway Superintendent Phil Francis said. The money would allow the parkway to add 47 seasonal employees, including 24 maintenance workers, 14 visitors-center workers and nine law-enforcement officers, he said.

The parkway faces a \$3 million deficit, Francis said.

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which also faces shortfalls in staff and law enforcement, would get \$1.9 million, also an 11 percent increase.

"It's the best news we've heard in a long time," said Bob Miller, a spokesman for the park.

Bush's \$2.9 trillion budget for the bud-get year that will begin Oct. 1 was released Monday.

On the Web:

National forest land tracts proposed for sale by the Bush administration budget:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/spd.html#Northcarolina>