

**LINVILLE, N.C.** — Many visitors to Grandfather Mountain describe their experience as “energizing.” Those with electric vehicles can now take that literally.

As part of its continued efforts in environmental stewardship, Grandfather Mountain recently installed two ChargePoint electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.

With one located at the park’s entrance gate and the other near its nature museum, each able to service two vehicles at once, Grandfather Mountain now offers the first public EV charging stations in Avery County, N.C.

The stations come courtesy of a grant from the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality.

“Grandfather Mountain is always looking for ways to improve our park and reduce our carbon footprint,” said Jesse Pope, president and executive director of the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, the nonprofit organization that owns and operates the Linville, N.C., nature park. “We have wanted to add electric charging stations to the park for many years, but it wasn’t a feasible option until we were able to receive a grant from the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality to purchase and install two stations in the park.”

Pope said the stations are a perfect fit for the stewardship foundation’s mission of conservation.

“Our mission is to inspire conservation of the natural world by helping guests explore, understand and value the wonders of Grandfather Mountain and the unique mountain ecosystem like it across our region,” he said. “The charging stations will help us be better stewards of the mountain and provide our guests with the ability to also be good stewards by collectively reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.”

The in-park station will be free to park guests, while the entrance gate station will allow travelers on U.S. 221, the Blue Ridge Parkway and beyond an opportunity to recharge for an hourly fee.

“We are excited to be able to provide the first public charging stations in Avery County, and hopefully, we will be able to add more charging stations in the future as the need arises,” Pope said.

Pope learned of the opportunity in November 2019, when NCDEQ Secretary Michael S. Regan, who was nominated this past December by then President-elect Joe Biden to lead the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, visited Grandfather Mountain. The visit was part of a joint meeting and listening session with Audubon North Carolina and Grandfather Mountain, centered on climate change impacts on birds and bird habitats in places like Grandfather Mountain and across the state.

“During Secretary Regan’s visit, he introduced me to their grant program for supporting the increase of zero-emission vehicle infrastructure, which is supported in part by Volkswagen’s air-quality settlement funding,” Pope said. “We are incredibly grateful for this grant to help us further our mission toward a sustainable environment for future generations.”

The new stations are the latest additions to Grandfather Mountain’s mile-high stable of sustainability efforts, including:

Photovoltaic cells (solar panels) on the roofs of numerous buildings, which collectively generate

50,000 kWh and mitigate approximately 60,000 pounds of CO2 from entering the atmosphere annually

- An eco-friendly fudge shop, featuring solar thermal panels, bamboo flooring, skylights and rain barrels
- Green practices in Mildred's Grill restaurant, such as biodegradable plates, cups, takeout containers, etc.
- Refillable water bottle stations
- Energy-efficient HVAC system in the nature museum
- Educational initiatives and signage
- Adopt-a-Highway
- Zero-waste initiatives for employees

However, this isn't the first time guests have been able to "fill up" at Grandfather Mountain. In the early 1950s, the park's entrance gate was home to an Esso service station.

"It's quite a remarkable and encouraging juxtaposition, comparing our filling station from another century to this compact charging station of today," said Frank Ruggiero, Grandfather Mountain's director of marketing and communications. "We're excited — energized, if you will — to offer our guests another amenity, while furthering our mission of environmental stewardship."

To learn more about North Carolina's Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure, visit [deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/air-quality/motor-vehicles-and-air-quality/volkswagen-settlement/zero-emission](http://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/air-quality/motor-vehicles-and-air-quality/volkswagen-settlement/zero-emission). For more information on ChargePoint, visit [www.chargepoint.com](http://www.chargepoint.com).

For more information on Grandfather Mountain, or to book a visit, visit [www.grandfather.com](http://www.grandfather.com). To learn more about Grandfather Mountain's COVID-19 operating procedures, visit [grandfather.com/covid-19-update](http://grandfather.com/covid-19-update).

#### **About the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation :**

The nonprofit Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation strives to inspire conservation of the natural world by helping guests explore, understand and value the wonders of Grandfather Mountain. For more information, call (800) 468-7325, or visit [www.grandfather.com](http://www.grandfather.com).

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<https://media.visitnc.com/Grandfather-Mountain-Adds-EV-Charging-Stations-to-Sustainability-Efforts>