



Highlands Creative Economy Council
Monthly Meeting
June 22nd, 2023, at 10 am
[Link to recording](#)

Thursday, June 22nd at 10 am (ZOOM)

Agenda:

- Welcome!
- Eastern updates
 - Meat Processors HACCP Training – for kitchens designed for food processing - July 12 & 13
 - Lodging Panel: [Legislative Update](#) - June 26 - Register [here](#)
 - Farm to Table Dinner SOLD OUT
 - Non-profit governance training – July 12
- AFNHA updates
 - Tourism Summit - August 3rd - [Evergreen Heritage Center](#)
 - Programming Wednesday, 2nd and main meeting 9:30-4 Thursday, 3rd
 - Keynote by Dr. Susan Williams (Concord University)
 - Register or see draft agenda at appalachianforestnha.org/tourism-summit
 - Grant applications open NOW!
 - Applications are due July 31, see info and application on [our website](#)
- Guest Speaker - Mike Jones - [West Virginia Rivers Coalition](#)
 - View copy of presentation slides available [here](#)
 - Public lands are essential to West Virginia's recreation economy.
 - In 2021- there were 11 million hits on WV State Parks website, 81,000 fishing licenses, and 2/3 of public lands visitors were West Virginians. Revenues and rentals are going up. Economic impact in 2016 was at least \$160 million from state parks alone.
 - 60% of Americans are within day's drive of Mon Forest. In 2021 there 3 million visitors to the Mon Forest. Overall outdoor recreation economy added \$1.6 billion and 18,700 jobs in 2021.
 - What do Mon Forest users tell us? See full Report [here](#)

- Concerns include promoting non-motorized rec, trail maintenance and generational knowledge of trails, funding, invasive species, access and mapping, and more.
 - Other things to think about? Promoting/advertising public lands can lead to overuse and should emphasize lands throughout the state. WVians overwhelmingly like public lands the way they are (70% in a 2021 poll said nothing new needed).
 - Headwaters – virtually all participants recognized the importance of our Mon Forest headwaters, but were concerned about future management. 9% of people in US can trace drinking water to Mon Forest headwaters via Chesapeake and Ohio rivers.
 - What’s being done- USFS has designated 12 rivers as eligible for Wild & Scenic status. What can be done- continue, status quo, presidential designation, or congressional designation. WV Rivers considers this a conversation.
 - Will host “Conversation on Headwaters” event in Elkins Town Square 8/1 5:30
 - Conclusions- public lands are critical to our \$1.6 billion recreation economy. Cautions to spread out tourism and assure that public lands remain as WVians want them to be. Headwaters are critical to provide clean water and recreation.

- Attendee Discussion / Extended Networking –
 - Anne Beardslee (Elkins-Randolph County Tourism) – Free concerts are going well. Elkins will be hosting National Speleological Convention next week, 4th of July Car Show & Fireworks next weekend. National Christmas Tree will be starting its journey in Elkins November 4th and travelling around the state.
 - Amber Nesselrodt (Pendleton County CVB) – Will be in Pendleton Co mid-November. Also making ornaments. Working with Swilled Dog to host Christmas themed event. Future Generations will helping with children’s crafts.
 - Sam Felton (Town of Marlinton) - Who is transporting the tree?
 - Jessica Waldo (Tucker County CVB) - The same company is contracted with the federal government every year. The tree will be staying two nights in Tucker County.
 - You can follow the tree at <https://www.capitoltreetracker.com/>
 - Amber Nesselrodt – There is a new multi-use trail center, Sweetwater Farm trail center. Spruce Knob Kite festival is this weekend, and T&K Barbecue Cookoff for volunteer fire department.
 - Michele Moure Reeves (Hardy County CVB) – WV Poultry Festival in mid-July, an educational event for poultry industry but will also have community activities like parade and carnival (7/19/22). Lost River Classic gravel race will be held August 12th. CVB completed its 1-year strategic plan.
 - Jessica Waldo (Tucker County CVB) - Mountaineer days, 4th of July fireworks, Pickin’ in Parsons festival coming up. We had a successful mountain bike

festival. [Governor's Conference on Tourism](#) will be at Canaan Valley Resort in September. CVB will be sponsoring the welcome reception that Sunday. Looking for new visitor center location.

- Cara Rose (Pocahontas County CVB) – since 2017 the tourism economy in Pocahontas Co has grown 54%
- Amber Higgins (Barbour County Development Authority) – Governor Justice attended Blue & Grey Reunion and dedication ceremony for new Birdeye Bend driving tour. Growing music scene thanks to Mountaintop Music Shop. Belington Sweet Treats Festival this Saturday.
- Save The Date! The next meeting is **July 27th, 2023**, at 10 AM on Zoom (pre-register at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86099367281>).