

GROWTH RINGS

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area Newsletter



Vol 1 No 4

Third Stakeholders Meeting, September 5

Forest Heritage Area had a good, productive stakeholders meeting on September 5 in Morgantown. Thanks to all who participated, and to those who braved the parking hassles of the “big city” to be there!

The meeting featured task group sessions and reports, whole group discussions on strategic plan, and an introductory unveiling of the project web page.

“How to engage the communities” was one of the main topics addressed by the task groups and the discussion. A number of suggestions were made, and will be addressed—along with the lessons learned from experiences so far in the pilot communities—in a “community protocol” being worked on now by the project team. In the meantime, if any of the other communities are eager to begin with asset mapping and getting more directly active with the project, please contact Jeremy or Phyllis. (304-293-2941 ext 2456)

The meeting also featured Jerry Kappel, development director for American Association of Museums, as our evening speaker. Jerry gave an excellent and useful talk on how to develop a Heritage Area organization. A summary of that talk is included in this newsletter, and the full transcript will be posted on the web page—required reading for all Organization TG members who missed it, and interesting for all of us.

Pilot Communities Reports

Webster Springs – A community team lead by Mike Hall, Cathy Schrader and Geary Weir has begun asset-mapping work, involving stakeholders and organizations in the area. The Northern Webster County Improvement Council has already mapped a lot of assets.

Elkins – The Elkins community meeting started this summer with their input for the strategic plan. The next meeting on October 16 organized the Elkins Task Group, and made plans for proceeding with asset mapping for the community.

Oakland – Has formed a broad stakeholder committee; bringing together, local, county, state and industrial representatives. Mike Mullan of the Tri-County Council was selected chairperson. They will begin some initial asset inventory in November.

Our New Name!

In response to stakeholder input to make the project name broader and more inclusive, we changed the original project title from Forestry Heritage Trail to Forest Heritage Area. We also discussed the need to add a geographic identifier to that -- “what forest?” “forest where?” The Marketing Task Group took on this challenge, and received feedback from the stakeholders at the April meeting and in emails, as well as doing pilot market surveys with visitors to see what names appealed most. As a result of this input they recommended, and the stakeholders agreed to market the project as the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area.

Discussion of this decision included some concern about the image of “Appalachia” and whether that would be seen as negative. Interestingly, in the market testing of visitors, the term Appalachian was considered more consistently positive than in the initial feedback from stakeholders (where it received a lot of positives, but also a few negatives). Other discussion included the intent to have a name that specifically identified our area, but that could also expand; as well difficulties with the other alternatives were also discussed. Some folks wanted to pursue more testing with larger numbers, while most thought it more important to get a decision made now and to stick with it.

Following this discussion, the stakeholders present unanimously voted in favor of naming the project the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area.

Web Page

The draft web page for the AFHA is now up and running at:

<http://www.ahc.caf.wvu.edu/heritage/>

A full outline report of the September 5 meeting, and detailed reports from the Task Groups, will be posted on the web page. Check it out, and send your comments back in.

Thanks to our intern Joel Newbraugh, with help from the Communications Task Group, for getting us this far!

Task Groups

Asset Mapping – This task group has developed the inventory form, and is starting with the pilots to find the information in each community. They want all possible assets and tourist destinations to be included, then staff and group will prioritize once the assets are collected and collated. They are working towards community maps that can be posted on-line, then combined into an area-wide map.

Business & Infrastructure – A survey of tourism and forestry industry business is a project of this group, aiming to identify what is currently available and what their needs are. Other goals for the group include developing a system to help those businesses, and developing a mechanism to educate the small businesses about the area and the project as a whole.

Communication & Networking – Goals are to create a network of communications for the Project group and the stakeholder group as a whole. Currently they are working on creating a web page, developing listserves, and identifying contact people in each area. We have already completed an initial informational brochure, and a presentation board display.

Interpretation and Product Development – This group has been working on a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan for the project, and have developed four proposed theme statements relating to forestry, history, natural resources, and culture, with related subthemes under each. (posted on the web page) They are starting work on region-wide interpretive tours that will focus on each theme. In working with communities, they will start work on some model interpretive projects in the pilot areas, and will also be available to help local groups in developing and improving their own interpretation.

Organization and Sustainability – This group is working towards developing a non-profit organization for the project to evolve into, as well as discussing how to transition from the WVU grant project to the non-profit. They are looking at how to increase involvement in all geographic areas, and with the full range of stakeholders. They also will be looking at resources for additional funding, both for the whole project, and to suggest resources that can be accessed by local groups.

Marketing and Promotion – As mentioned previously, Marketing group is working on tourist surveys to determine what people want to see, where they are from and other characteristics that will help prepare a marketing plan and track results. The survey has been piloted and redrafted, and will be used throughout the region in the coming year. The group will also be working on developing a logo and slogan for the AFHA.

The evening program of the AFHA September meeting featured a very informative and thought-provoking talk by Jerry Kappel, Director of Development of the American Association of Museums. He shared his experience about building organizational capacity, and how to nurture, select, and inspire the volunteers, leaders and philanthropists for an organization. He emphasized that people participate in an organization because they believe in its mission, and because they see it being effective in fulfilling the needs of their communities.

The talk gave useful overview of board development, responsibilities and benefits, as well as an overview of fundraising development. The power-point outline of Jerry's talk will be posted to the web page, for those who did not have the opportunity to hear him. This will be useful not only to all those involved in the Organization Task Group working on formulating the future structure and sustainability of our effort, but also for the board development and fundraising suggestions for all of those who are involved with non-profit partners in our effort.

WV Statewide Heritage Tourism Program

The AFHA September meeting was held in partnership with the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia "Heritage Tourism in West Virginia" annual conference. The Friday afternoon presentation of the conference featured an introduction to the proposed statewide heritage tourism program for the state.

This program, planned to be housed in the WV Development Office alongside the Main Street program, will offer assistance and support for heritage tourism development, coordination with related state efforts such as marketing from Division of Tourism, and establishment of a system to designate, develop, and support Heritage Areas. Maryland, along with many other states, already has such a program – it is past time that West Virginia catch up and offer the support it can to developing such an important avenue of economic development.

The Heritage Tourism conference also featured nationally known preservationist Tom Moriarity as keynote speaker discussing current trends in heritage tourism, a showcase of heritage area efforts in the state, and a day of informative workshops on heritage tourism, preservation, and interpretation. One of the goals of the statewide heritage tourism program will be to offer training opportunities such as these to heritage areas and local efforts, in order to assist them in developing heritage tourism products across the state.

Stakeholder Meeting Guest Speaker

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area -- Themes and Subthemes

Forestry & Forest Management Theme

Forestry is the science, art and practice of managing, creating, using and conserving forests for human benefit in a manner that sustains the natural forest systems and will allow future generations to meet their needs.

Forestry & Forest Management Sub-Themes

- As a result of the extensive logging and frequent fires that occurred in the late 1800's and early 1900's, the need for conservation measures lead to the introduction of the science of forestry and the funding of forest stewardship programs.
- National, state and industry forests and nurseries in the AFHA were established and continue to serve as demonstration and research areas for forest management techniques, resource conservation and reforestation.
- Depression Era federal programs were important in the mountains, especially the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) (1933-1942) used by the state and the US Forest Service to employ and train America's youth to protect forest resources and develop and improved forest recreation areas.
- The abundant natural resources in the AFHA have and continue to support a wide variety of forest resource based businesses.
- National and international markets, trends, and public policy impact forest industries and practices in the AFHA.

History Theme

The forested mountain terrain of the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area influenced the way people lived and how life changed and developed over time.

History Sub-themes

- Native Americans have been living in and manipulating the forest in this region for at least 12,000 years.
- The Allegheny Mountains formed a natural barrier that impacted transportation and settlement patterns of the westward migration.
- The difficult mountain and forest terrain strongly impacted the Civil War in this region; it affected public sentiments, the campaigns and type of actions fought and resulted in a new state.
- The highland forests which covered the AFHA region were systematically cut by an army of workers using the primitive tools of the day, then shipped out to help build the cities and industries of the rest of the country.
- The social and economic fabric of the region changed with the coming of the lumber boom, as small farming communities and new lumber mill towns became boom towns-many of whom declined or disappeared once the boom was past.
- The mountain terrain of the AFHA limited access to the state's timber and minerals until the railroads penetrated the mountains in the 1880's allowing extraction of the rich and varied timber of this area, as well as removal of coal on a monumental scale.
- Twentieth Century national events such as the Great Depression and WWII reached into the Appalachian Forest region, bringing changed economies, government programs, and resulting impact on people and landscapes.

Forest Ecology Theme

The Appalachian Forest Heritage Area's scenic waterways and mountain landscapes provide a haven for unique and varied flora and fauna that people experience and enjoy.

Forest Ecology Sub-themes

- Geology is the foundation of the area's rugged terrain, unique landscapes, scenery, waterways and environments that support the area's diverse flora and fauna.
- Waterways, mountain landscapes, flora and fauna draw people to experience outdoor recreation of central Appalachia.
- From the careful eye of the bird-watcher to the steady hand of the scientist, the scenic waterways and mountain landscapes of the AFHA provide limitless opportunities for observation and study.
- The biodiversity and varied ecology creates the splendor of the AFHA.

Forest & People/Culture Theme

The wide range of ethnic groups that settled in West Virginia and Western Maryland contributed to the rich culture of Central Appalachia.

Forest & People/Culture Sub-themes

- The AFHA lies within an area that is very proud of their rich culture; this pride is celebrated through the area's many fairs and festivals.
- Diverse traditions, brought by settlers are the origin of the unique music and dance styles that have developed and are celebrated throughout the AFHA.
- The rich forest resources provided sustenance for an area isolated by rugged terrain resulting in a self-sufficient culture.
- Folklore, superstitions, oral history, and other stories passed from generation to generation provide entertainment and shared memory throughout the area.
- Settlers from many races and ethnic groups each added their own flavor to form the diverse culture of the AFHA.
- The special culture of the AFHA creates a strong connection to the land and sense of place.
- The terrain of the AFHA led to an agriculture based on small family farms, with a diversity including high-pasture grazing, forest-based products, specialty farming and foods.
- The area's mineral resources have been and continue to be economically important materials for buildings, roads and fuels.
- The history of the ethnic groups in logging history and settlement of this area reflects the story of the potential achievement of the American dream through hard work and perseverance.
- Changing economies in the post-war period included adding more producers of end products from the forest industry, plus diversity of economies such as small manufacturing, service jobs, tourism and growing high-tech opportunities.

News Briefs

National Extension Tourism Conference

In September, Dave McGill, WVU Forest Resources Extension Specialist, presented “Developing Forest Heritage from Grassroots: Lessons Emerging from a West Virginia-Maryland Heritage Tourism Initiative” at the National Extension Tourism Conference in Traverse City, Michigan. The talk, developed by Dave and Steve Selin (WVU RPTR) was well received and has opened dialogue with a University of Maine Faculty member who participates in the Maine Highlands tourism effort. The conference featured speakers from around the nation, each discussing specific projects or information on the state of the tourism industry.

Task Group visits Truss Joist

Interpretation Task Group toured the Truss Joist MacMillan facility in Buckhannon as part of their most recent meeting. The AFHA hopes to incorporate forestry and wood products industry as part of its program

Upcoming Meetings

Elkins TG meeting
Monday Jan. 13 Elkins

Steering Committee
Wednesday Feb. 12 Weston

Organization & Sustainability TG
Wednesday Feb. 12 Weston

Spring Stakeholders meeting will be the week of April 7-12 at Camp Caesar, Webster County

WV Forestry Association Board Discusses AFHA Project

Barbara Breshock (WV Division of Forestry), Cinda Francis (WV Forestry Association), and Dave McGill (WVU Appalachian Hardwood Center) briefed the West Virginia Forestry Association Board of Directors on the status and future plans of the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area project. Several board members have participated in past AFHA meetings.

AFHA gets national and local newspaper coverage

Our September 5th meeting was covered by the Morgantown Associated Press and was distributed nationally over their news wire. Our project appeared in several newspapers around the country including the Asheville-Citizen Times (NC) and the Tampa Tribune (FL).

The articles generated interest in our project from several marketing firms and a landscape architectural planning and design firm.

Closer to home, a Sunday feature article in the Elkins InterMountain about the project, was written by AFHA participant and InterMountain reporter Karen Carper. The article featured quotes from a number of AFHA participants, with the forest industry well represented.

Both articles will be posted our new web page (see page 1)

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area

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