

# GROWTH RINGS

## Appalachian Forest Heritage Area Newsletter

[www.appalachianforest.us](http://www.appalachianforest.us)

Vol 2 No 3



### *Examining National Heritage Area?*

A "National Heritage Area" is a place designated by the United States Congress, where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography.

Congress has established 23 National Heritage Areas around the country, in which interpretation, conservation, heritage tourism and other activities are managed by partnerships among federal, state, and local governments and the private sector. There are currently two nationally designated heritage areas in West Virginia – Wheeling National Heritage Area and National Coal Heritage Area. Heritage areas provide educational and inspirational support for a region's heritage, while retaining traditional local control over, and use of, the landscape.

The National Park Service provides technical assistance as well as financial assistance for a limited number of years to NHAs. Up to \$1,000,000 a year for ten years may be made available as matching grants. The Heritage Area program is a grants and outreach program for the National Park Service, it is NOT a land management program. There are NO new regulations or management controls associated with designation.

While each Heritage Area is different, the key features emphasized by the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area are economic development based on heritage tourism, appreciation of our forest-related assets, community development based on partnerships across geographic lines and diverse interest groups, and supporting the forestry industry through education and interpretation. If nationally designated, the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area will be managed by a non-profit organization with representatives from all counties and interest groups.

### **Answering Stakeholder Questions**

At the April '03 stakeholder meeting, we were asked to research impact of existing heritage areas in light of some stakeholder questions and concerns. We found that each NHA is unique so it is difficult to find "one size fits all" definitive answers. Here are some of the comments the staff found in seeking answers to the stakeholder questions.

Everyone we talked to agreed that National Heritage Area designation had no impact on private property rights. That is not in the nature of the program – the program is a partnership between the Heritage Area management entity (the non-profit organization), the National Park Service, and volunteer participants in the program. There is no land management authority.

Once designated, the National Park Service provides technical assistance to the Heritage Area management entity. The funding that is appropriated along with the designation bill is used directly by the management entity for planning, operations or projects other than acquisition, or may be distributed as project grants within the heritage area. The funding will need to be matched, and there are the usual requirements to follow the rules associated with that funding.

NPS assistance can help with "jumping boundaries" and jurisdictions, such as our situation of an area that includes parts of two states. There is significant visibility, credibility, and branding associated with being a National Heritage Area.

Some comments from other areas:

"We have had no local opposition to national designation, either before or after. The biggest impact to private property owners has been the revitalization resulting from the project investment, which has led to significant private spin-off investment." Hydie Friend, Wheeling National Heritage Area.

"The Heritage Area was the best thing to happen to our region in 50 years" Steve Broderick, Connecticut state extension forester, Quinebaug and Shetucket National Heritage Corridor.

"We have a very active landowners rights association that has opposed "wild & scenic rivers" and several other federal initiatives. They are supporting National Heritage Area designation." Marilyn Black, Oil Heritage Region (Pennsylvania Heritage Area for ten years, currently seeking National designation.)

"We only work with willing partners." Suemarie Pride, NPS.

For more information about National Heritage Areas:  
[www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas/](http://www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas/)

## Next Steps

The AFHA Steering Committee and AFHA non-profit Interim Board at their July meeting directed moving forward with a Feasibility Study. This study will examine the alternatives for long-term sustainability for the AFHA including but not limited to National Heritage Area designation. If stakeholders decide to move forward with the NHA alternative, the Feasibility Study is the first step in that process. If we select an alternative route, the Feasibility Study will be useful in supplementing our strategic plan. Funding for phase one of the Feasibility Study has been secured from the EDA University Center at WVU Tech.

Heritage tourism consultant Scott Gerloff, in partnership with AFHA staff and stakeholders, is gathering input and information and will present a draft document to the AFHA Stakeholders in November. This draft will outline how AFHA fits the NHA criteria including the level of public support, and will compare the NHA option with other alternatives. Based on this draft, the Stakeholders and Council at the November 21 meeting can decide on future directions for the AFHA.

### *Stakeholders Meeting November 21*

The fall stakeholder meeting has been rescheduled for Friday, November 21, at Elkins. Since the meeting is so late in the season, this will be a take-care-of-business meeting with no tours, and we will reschedule an Oakland meeting at a later date when we can participate in tours and see the area.

We will have important business to take care of! The phase 1 outline of the Feasibility Study will be done, and Scott Gerloff will present the results of this work. The AFHA Stakeholders will be asked to make a decision whether to move forward with seeking National Heritage Area designation, or to look at alternative long-term directions.

The meeting will be held at the Graceland Inn and Conference Center, D&E Campus, Elkins. Tentative agenda:

- 9:00 Registration
- 9:30 Welcome and updates
- 10:00 Presentation on Feasibility Study for AFHA
- 11:45 Luncheon in the Mingo Room
- 1:00 Discussion and decisions – NHA for AFHA?
- 2:30 Wrap up and next steps
- 3:00 Governing Council meeting

We MUST have a guaranteed meal count, so please RSVP your attendance at this meeting. RSVPs will also give us a way to contact you if there is a meeting cancellation or change is needed.

*Lodging is available at Graceland Conference Center 637-1600. We did not reserve a block, so make your reservations soon, and mention that you are with AFHA. Or see [www.randolphcountywv.com](http://www.randolphcountywv.com) for other lodging in the area.*

## *Museum Grant Project*

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area has been awarded a highly competitive \$10,000 Consultation grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The grant will bring scholarly review and input to the interpretive themes for the AFHA. It will also begin planning for presenting those themes in future museums and exhibits in the AFHA. The project will start with a workshop in Elkins on November 19. Please contact Phyllis if you would like to participate.

### *First AFHA Mini Grants Awarded*

The AFHA awarded the first three mini-grants over the summer. The first cycle of grants ended in May with applications from C-HOPE organization in Elkins, Helvetia Revitalization and Development Corporation, and Webster County Development Authority. All three applicants were granted the funds requested.

The C-HOPE funds will help to assist with the cost of engineering feasibility study for a historic structure in Elkins that the group wants to develop into a forest heritage museum. Helvetia will use their funds to create postcards from historic photos that exemplify AFHA themes and to assist with materials needed for the library collection.

Webster County will put the funds towards the development of an Artisans Website that will allow forest artisans to showcase their wares. A more detailed description will be available at the AFHA website in the near future.

The proposals for the second cycle of the mini-grant program are now being reviewed. Applicants will receive notification of an award in the coming weeks. All communities are encouraged to apply. To learn more about the mini-grant program, visit the AFHA website at [www.afha.us](http://www.afha.us) or contact staff Jeremy Morris <[jeremy.morris@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:jeremy.morris@mail.wvu.edu)> or Phyllis Baxter <[phyllisb@meer.net](mailto:phyllisb@meer.net)>

### *New Web Addresses*

The AFHA is now easier to find on the World Wide Web! While the old address remains the home of the AFHA website, there are three new addresses that are much easier to remember and will directly link someone to our web server here at the University.

- [www.afha.us](http://www.afha.us)
- [www.appalachianforest.us](http://www.appalachianforest.us)
- [www.forestheritage.us](http://www.forestheritage.us)

Remember the extension on these is .US, not the more familiar .ORG. Please make note of these helpful changes and let your colleagues know as well.

## ***Appalachian Forest Heritage Area Feasibility Study Schedule***

The Appalachian Forest Heritage Area (AFHA) will hold public input meetings for its feasibility study to examine the long-term future of the effort. The public meetings will take place in four communities throughout the projected 18 county area. The West Virginia meetings will take place in Richwood, Elkins, and Petersburg with the final meeting taking place in Oakland, MD.

Gathering community advice on how the program should proceed is critical. The heart of the program lies within the communities, it is theirs to guide and direct. Public input will be invaluable to the AFHA staff and volunteers as the program continues building the partnerships necessary to make the program a successful community and economic development initiative. The public meeting will offer a chance for the citizens to learn more about the project, discuss significant forest themes that have been defined by stakeholder groups, discuss how the project may impact community and economic development.

**Richwood** -- Friday, October 24, 7:00 pm -- Richwood Municipal Auditorium

**Elkins** -- Monday, October 27, 7:00 pm -- Elkins Depot Caboose Room

**Petersburg** -- Wednesday, October 29, 7:00 pm -- Grant County Commission Chamber

**Oakland, MD** -- Thursday, October 30, 7:00 pm -- Garrett County Health Department

### **Focus Groups**

The following focus groups will be meeting in the next two weeks. Focus groups will give a more in-depth opportunity to share your ideas, opinions, issues, and concerns. No preparation is necessary, and we welcome folks who have no previous knowledge of AFHA, as well as those who have been active. Please RSVP to <phyllisb@meer.net> 304-637-7424 or <jeremy.morris@mail.wvu.edu> 304-293-2941 x2456

#### ***Forestry & forest industry:***

- Monday, October 27, 1:30 pm Larry's Steakhouse, Flatwoods

#### ***Tourism, marketing, business interests:***

- Friday, October 24, 10:00 am Greenbrier Co CVB, Lewisburg
- Tuesday, October 28, 9:30 am Railroad Depot, Elkins
- Wednesday, October 29, 9:00 am Public Library, Petersburg

#### ***Conservation, preservation, and sites/attractions interests:***

- Friday, October 24, 2:00 pm Greenbrier Co CVB, Lewisburg
- Tuesday, October 28, 4:00 pm Railroad Depot, Elkins

#### ***All interests:***

- Wednesday, October 30, 3:00 pm -- Deep Creek Lake Discovery Center, Garrett Co, MD

### **AFHA Group Meetings**

**Interpretation Task Group** -- Thursday, Oct 23, 10 am, Flatwoods (Larry's Steakhouse)

**Steering Committee / Governing Council** -- Monday Oct 27, 9 am Flatwoods (Larry's)

**AFHA Stakeholders Meeting** to assess results of the first phase of the Feasibility Study will be held Friday, November 21, at Graceland Conference Center, Elkins.

***We want to hear from you!*** Please attend one of the focus group or public meetings if you can. If you are unable to attend any of the meetings, but would like to share your input, either send comments to us directly, or we can send you a list of the research questions to respond to.

For questions, directions, more info, or to RSVP (requested for all except public meetings) please contact:

Phyllis Baxter <phyllisb@meer.net> 304-637-7424 OR

Jeremy Morris <jeremy.morris@mail.wvu.edu> 304.293.2941 x2456

**AFHA FALL FEASIBILITY STUDY CALENDAR**

				<b>October</b> 23	24	25
				Interpretation Task Group 10 am Flatwoods	Market/Biz Focus Grp 10 am Lewisburg  Attraxtion/Conservation 2 pm Lewisburg  Public meeting 7 pm Richwood	Heritage Tourism Workshop 9-12 Richwood
26	27	28	29	30		
Steering Committee 9:30 am Flatwoods 11:30 Governing Council  Forestry Focus Group 1:30 pm Flatwoods  Elkins Public Meeting 7:00 pm	Marketing/Business Focus Group 9:30 am Elkins  Attractions/Conservat. Focus Group 4:00 pm Elkins	Marketing/Business Focus Group 9:00 Petersburg  Petersburg Public Meeting 7:00 pm	Maryland Focus Group 3:00 pm Deep Creek  Oakland Public meeting 7:00 pm			
				<b>November</b> 19	20	21
				AFHA Museum Workshop  10-4 Elkins		AFHA Fall Stakeholder Meeting Presentation of draft Feasibility Study  9:30am – 3:00 pm Elkins

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