

GROWTH RINGS

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area Newsletter

www.appalachianforest.us

Vol 2 No 4



AFHA Votes For NHA!

AFHA Stakeholders at the fall stakeholder meeting November 21 voted unanimously to seek National Heritage Area designation for the AFHA.

Heritage Tourism Consultant Scott Gerloff presented the results of the Phase 1 Feasibility Study at the meeting at Graceland Conference Center, Elkins. Scott discussed the results of numerous interviews, seven focus groups, and four public meetings he conducted in October and November, and shared recommendations based on his research. (see the web page for full text of Study) He found that National Heritage Area status would give major benefits in national credibility and recognition, suitability for a two-state initiative, and significant funding that could be used for a wide range of purposes. The other alternatives he examined had drawbacks of less dependable funding and less likelihood of success for the broad range of effort the AFHA is attempting. The recommendations were to move forward in three areas:

1. Seek National Heritage Area Status with urgency. Seek demonstrations of local support for the effort, and take care to address stakeholder concerns.
2. Support efforts to establish a funded West Virginia Cultural Heritage Tourism Program that would have a state heritage area component, and work closely with the Maryland Heritage Area Program.
3. Put significant time and resources into active grant-seeking and pursuing other funding avenues, both to provide match funding if the NHA effort is successful, and to have alternative program funding if it is not.

After discussion facilitated by Chris Plein, the group reached consensus to pursue these recommendations. In an official meeting of the AFHA Governing Council following the stakeholders meeting, the Governing Council also voted unanimously in favor of the recommendations.

AFHA is moving forward immediately on the next steps toward National Heritage Area designation. Since the meeting, staff have initiated discussions with some of our Congressional delegation, as well as with the National Park Service. Perhaps the most important next task will be to secure support letters and resolutions from county leadership and organizations all of the AFHA counties. We will also be rewriting and adding to the Feasibility Study, with the goal of having a completed document that meets all of the National Park Service criteria by February.

How You Can Help!

As a participant in the AFHA you can help us collect support letters for the National Heritage Area effort. You can write a letter for yourself, get one for your organization, or help in collecting letters from organizations and leaders in your county or field of interest. Any letter that says the organization supports the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area being designated as a National Heritage Area is fine – you can include as much or as little as you like about the reasons or benefits for AFHA. Put letters on letterhead or with a personal address, and send them to AFHA, PO Box 1206, Elkins, WV 26241.

More information about this process, including information on the AFHA, on NHA, some talking points to use with different groups, and some sample letters will be posted on the web site . We can set up meetings in the counties to discuss the effort to seek NHA status, explain the program and assess concerns, and ask for support for the effort. In some cases, a local person and a staff member going together to make a presentation might be the most effective. If you would like a staff member to come address a group in your community, or have suggestions of who we should call or contact directly, please contact Phyllis or Jeremy. Let us know what you need to reach folks in your community.

Ideally we would like to show support from every county commission, many of the towns especially those with forest heritage or tourism significance, CVB, Development Authority, and Chamber of Commerce in those counties that have them, state and regional agencies, as well as local leaders, non-profit organizations, businesses and residents. The Governing Council representatives are working on this task, but can't do it alone. Obviously your help will be essential in reaching so many groups!

For more information:

On AFHA, to read feasibility study, or for support letters:
www.appalachianforest.us

On National Heritage Area: www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas/
NEW mailing address for AFHA non-profit organization:
AFHA, PO Box 1206, Elkins WV 26241

Phyllis Baxter (304) 636-2467 phyllisb@meer.net

Jeremy Morris 304/293-2941x2456

jeremy.morris@mail.wvu.edu

Museum Grant Project

The National Endowment for the Humanities Consultation Grant to discuss interpretive themes and museum development for AFHA got off to a great start at a well-attended workshop on November 19. Coming on the very day that the local group C-HOPE purchased the Elkins Mill Building that has been proposed for a museum, the group began planning for a forest heritage museum. The group will work in small groups over the next several months, and conclude the project with a second workshop in the spring. If you would like to participate but missed the first workshop, please let Phyllis know.

Second Round - AFHA Mini Grants

The AFHA has awarded three mini-grants for the September cycle. Proposals were accepted from *Central Appalachian Arts & Craft Cooperative* (Poplar Forest in Sutton, Shaver Fork Coalition in Elkins, and Webster County Watershed Association in Webster Springs.

The *Poplar Forest* funds will help to assist with efforts to promote forest artisans during the holiday and spring seasons. *Shavers Fork* funds will assist the organization in formatting a collection of oral history and photos from the watershed into book format. *Webster Watershed* will put the funds towards the development Buffalo Park project on Point Mountain, in particular development of an interpretive display. A more detailed description of each project will be available at the AFHA website in the near future.

The proposals for the third cycle of the mini-grant program are due on January 15th. All communities are encouraged to apply. To learn more about the mini-grant program, visit the AFHA website at www.afha.us or contact staff Jeremy Morris <jeremy.morris@mail.wvu.edu> or Phyllis Baxter <phyllisb@meer.net>

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area
Jeremy S. Morris
PO Box 6125
Morgantown, WV 26505

550183100002