

GROWTH RINGS

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area Newsletter

www.appalachianforest.us

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Cass Hosts Fall Stakeholders Meeting

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area stakeholders participated in a fun and educational meeting at Cass Scenic Railroad State Park, October 21, 2004. Highlights of the meeting featured educational presentations highlighting forestry and forest management themes.

Jim Armstrong, with West Virginia University Division of Forestry, presented "Resources of the Oak-Chestnut Forest of Appalachia." Dr. Armstrong discussed the evolution of Appalachian forests from the last great ice age through today. Peoples' relationship with the forest is part of that evolution, since we have been instrumental in both the destruction and resurrection of our forests. While the growth of a new nation and the onset of industrialization helped decimate our forests, organizations such as the US Forest Service have helped West Virginia experience a regeneration of forest land: from 30% in 1930 to 80% today, making West Virginia, Maine and New Hampshire the 3 most heavily forested states in the nation.

Barb Breshock, with the West Virginia Division of Forestry, provided examples of organizations with demonstration forests. The Fernow Experimental Forest in the Monongahela National Forest, The West Virginia University Research Forest on the north side of Coopers Rock State Forest, West Virginia State Forests, and Bill Slagle's tree farm on Walnut Meadows Farm are sites within the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area. Demonstration forests offer the public an opportunity to see forestry and forest management practices in action. Visitors learn about watersheds, forest history, various regeneration cuts, sustainable management, ecology, and multiple-use management practices through interpretive signage and tours.

The meeting also included active breakout sessions giving the opportunity for "interest groups" focusing on tourism, natural resources, culture/history, and forestry to work on AFHA projects relating to their interest area. In the afternoon session, Scott Gerloff, of Potomac Heritage Partnership, held a brainstorming session to elicit feedback relating to AFHA branding themes. Deb Keddie of the Walkabout Company, presented some preliminary drafts of an AFHA brochure and logo and elicited spirited feedback. The brochure is slated to be completed this winter.

(See Cass p 2)

Governing Council Meets

The AFHA Governing Council met in conjunction with the Fall Stakeholders Meeting in Cass, October 21, 2004. The one-year terms of the original Governing Council were up, and members for those terms were elected for a new 3-year term. The Council confirmed Deb Clatterbuck as AFHA President, and re-elected Steve Selin, VP, Ben Randolph, Secretary, and Eleanor Palko Treasurer. The Council discussed their role in building community support for AFHA, and approved the drafts of the Transition Plan documents. (see related story, p 2).

Future Meetings Focus on AFHA Themes

The Fall 2004 Stakeholders' meeting highlighted forestry and forest management. The Spring 2005 Stakeholders' meeting, tentatively scheduled for Petersburg, will take an in-depth look at ecology and the environment. Each Stakeholders' meeting will be planned not only with educational and enjoyable tours showcasing the local area and AFHA themes, but will also include presentations focusing on at least one of the themes. Suggestions for agenda, speakers and topics should be forwarded to AFHA staff.

Future Stakeholders' meetings will usually be planned with tours on Thursday afternoon, and meetings daytime Friday.

Tentative dates were discussed for 2005 meetings.

- ◆ BOARD January 7, 2005 Morgantown (conference call option available.)
- ◆ GOVERNING COUNCIL and Stakeholders meet. Petersburg, either April 1 or April 7.
- ◆ BOARD July 8, possibly at Flatwoods.
- ◆ GOVERNING COUNCIL and Stakeholders meet. Probably either September 29 or October 21. Location not yet decided.

Confirmation and details will be in future newsletters, on the web site, and sent by email. *If you are interested in attending meetings and do not have email, please let us know so we can make sure you get notification by phone or mail.*

President's Message

I would like to thank the Governing Council and Stakeholders for electing me president of the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area. It is a very exciting moment to be involved with this group. It is time for us to gather our legislators and convince them that we should be the very first nationally designated forest heritage area. We are the most beautiful and unspoiled portion of the Allegheny Highlands and this designation will help us to preserve our strong history and Appalachian Heritage.

2005 has the look of a rewarding year. We have been blessed with a wonderful staff, enthusiastic stakeholders and interested elected officials. New forest heritage sites, festivals and stories are surfacing everyday. Let's continue to move forward in the realization of our forest heritage dream.

-- Deb Clatterbuck

AFHA Looks at the Future

The Feasibility Study recommending National Heritage Area designation for AFHA was completed this summer and mailed to our Congressional offices and the National Park Service. The study included a separate booklet of over 80 support letters from governments, organizations, and businesses throughout the region. While printed copies of the study are limited, it can be seen on the AFHA web site at www.appalachianforest.us.

Next steps on the NHA effort will be to meet with our Congressional contacts this winter to work towards getting legislation introduced. While this effort will greatly expand AFHA capacity when successful, it is likely to be several years before such designation is achieved.

In the meantime, AFHA is looking at transition strategies for completion of the original grant, sustainability, and forward momentum of the AFHA non-profit organization until NHA designation can be achieved.

Utilizing a grant from the EDA University Center at WVU Tech, AFHA moved forward this fall with planning for our future sustainability. Scott Gerloff continued his work as consultant for AFHA through this process, with particular emphasis on the funding and branding portions of the project. This project includes several elements:

- ◆ Development of funding recommendations and a database of grant possibilities for AFHA sustainability. This includes looking at long-term earned income possibilities.
- ◆ Working on writing, editing, and printing of an Executive Summary of the Feasibility Study – this will also serve as a promotional piece for use with potential stakeholders, partners, and funders.
- ◆ Update of Strategic Plan and Action Plan
- ◆ Transition Plan discussion of priority issues for AFHA to work on in the next year.
- ◆ Development of branding strategies for AFHA.

Please review drafts of the Transition Plan documents on the AFHA web site, available by mid-December.

September Mini-grant awards

In September the AFHA mini-grant committee convened to review grants. Awards were made for the following projects.

“Forest Products Tour,” by Teachers for the Forest, Inc. Teachers for the Forest promotes science-based messages about forest utilization and sustainability. Funds will support the development and delivery of tours to forest-related production facilities and forests within the AFHA region. Professional forester and production managers will lead tours made available for public officials, civic leaders, tourist groups, and educators.

“CCC Interpretive Film and DVD Project,” by Historic Beverly Preservation, Inc and Robert C. Whetsell. This project is designed to interpret the history and legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps in West Virginia from 1933-1942. The final product will be a two disc DVD with 20-minute film and interactive DVD beneficial to teachers, scholars, and tourists. Major additional financial support for this project has been contributed by the West Virginia Humanities Council.

“Appalachian Forest Heritage in Morgan County Brochure,” by Morgan County Ecology Association and Potomac Headwaters RC&D. The project will create a high-quality promotional device to educate tourists about the forest heritage of Morgan County and agro-forestry development in the area. This brochure will highlight George Washington’s endeavors in the local region, numerous tanneries, and several state parks.

“Greenbrier State Forest Wildlife Viewing and Forest Regeneration Area,” by WV Division of Forestry and the WV Forestry Association. This project will create an interpretive area at a recently harvested stand of timber. An interpretive display and viewing towers at a recent clear cut harvest will provide an excellent opportunity to allow people to observe the regrowth of a forest and observe wildlife.

“Common Forestry Myths—Debunked,” by West Virginia Forestry Association. This project will bring together a diverse group of individuals to create accurate and factual accounts of forest historical events and management.

Remember that the next round of mini-grant proposals are due January 15th. This will most likely be the last round of mini-grants provided by the original USDA grant funds, with only limited funds available. The staff is continuing to search for additional funding for mini-grants - if any stakeholders have possible avenues for garnering more funding for these types of projects please contact the AFHA staff with your suggestions. Anyone needing information concerning mini-grant guidelines should contact Jeremy Morris at 304-293-2941 ext 2456 jeremy.morris@mail.wvu.edu

AFHA Staff Gains New Knowledge at National Conferences

This fall, AFHA staff members Phyllis Baxter, Jeremy Morris and Susan Martin attended several conferences. These trips provided opportunities to network and promote AFHA, and to expand knowledge on national trends, rural economic development, community development, historic preservation, marketing, funding, and much more.

In September, The Preservation Alliance of West Virginia held its annual conference in Parkersburg, WV. Preservation Alliance of West Virginia is the statewide grassroots organization dedicated to the support and promotion of historic preservation for West Virginia. Topics at this year's conference included non-profit management, West Virginia Byways, community planning and development, working with media, Main Street programs, and heritage tourism. Jeremy and Phyllis presented about AFHA in a session about collaboration.

Phyllis Baxter and Susan Martin also received \$500.00 grants from the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office to attend the National Trust for Historic Preservation's annual conference in Louisville, KY. This week-long conference stressed the importance of historic preservation and offered numerous sessions on heritage tourism and heritage area development. Sessions equipped attendees with the knowledge needed to manage organizations, deal with media, and plan for future growth. Following the conference, we visited nearby Starlight, Indiana to see working examples of agri-tourism at a cluster of sites: two farms with agriculture-based festivals, food products, shopping, and picking your own pumpkins, and The Forest Discovery Center, which offered an interpretative tour of a simulated forest, a museum, and a tour through a working wood-production center.

Phyllis and Susan also traveled to Abingdon, VA to participate in the Appalachian Regional Commission's Fall Conference that focused on building Appalachia's culture, heritage and natural resources as assets for development. Speakers, sponsors, and exhibits emphasized asset-based development strategies promoting sustainable growth, including heritage tourism.

During the conference, National Geographic Magazine unveiled their Appalachian Heritage map. The map highlights important cultural and heritage sites throughout Appalachia and will be published in the March 2005 edition of National Geographic Traveler magazine. AFHA will have a mention about Forest Heritage on the map. This magazine has a strong national and international distribution and will turn the world's eyes to our region.

Additionally, AFHA staff toured the Appalachian Sustainable Development Woods Processing Center, where a combination of a solar-heated and boiler-fired kiln is an integral part of the education and management strategies involved in working with small and locally-owned timbering efforts participating in the program.

December is Jeremy's turn, as he is currently in Colorado attending the National Forest Foundation conference on capacity building for emerging organizations. National Forest Foundation has given AFHA, Inc. a \$15,000 capacity-building grant to help build our organization, and this workshop is one of the services of that grant program.

For more information about any of these conferences, please contact AFHA staff.

Web Page Info Needed

The AFHA web page so far has concentrated mostly on information about the organization and development of the AFHA. We are working on adding information for tourists – what to see in the area, and how it is related to the AFHA themes. Before we can develop this presentation, we need the information on sites and themes for each county. Interpretation and Asset Mapping groups have gathered some of this info, but in order to be complete we need local people from each county to contribute.

Governing Council members and others familiar with the sites in your own locality are asked to help with providing this information. We need a brief introduction for the forest heritage of each county based on the four themes -- nature, culture, history, and forestry. Please also include sources of tourism information, key sites, and particularly web links to the sites within your county.

Please email this information to Susan Martin smart14@mix.wvu.edu. You can also contact Susan to see if someone else has already sent info on your county.

More Names!

Do you know of people who might be interested in AFHA? Have you missed receiving periodic AFHA email bulletins? Changed your name or address? Please send your new names or corrections to Susan Martin smart14@mix.wvu.edu or mail to Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, Jeremy S. Morris, PO Box 6125, Morgantown, WV 26505. Please include full name, organization if appropriate, mailing address, phone, and email address.

Cass cont.

After the meeting, John Glaab, of Mountain State Railroad and Logging Historical Society, conducted a lively walking tour of the Cass Historic District. Evening featured reception and dinner at John and Christine Glaab's restored Cass home. Meeting participants overnights in Cass cabins – renovated workers homes in the historic district. The next morning we took the Cass train ride to Whittaker Station, with an educational tour of the restored log camp at Whittaker. The program gave a wonderful overview of what Cass has to offer for forest heritage visits and interpretation, as well as some of its future potential as more work is done restoring the historic district.

Seasons Greetings

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

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