

GROWTH RINGS

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area Newsletter

PO Box 1206, Elkins WV 26241

www.appalachianforest.us

Vol 4 No 2

AFHA Board Takes the Reins

The AFHA Governing Council / Board participated in the Board Development Retreat August 25 & 26 at Blackwater Falls. Ten Council members participated in the session facilitated by Barbara Wyckoff-Baird of Dynamica: Coaching and Organizational Change. The two primary focuses of the session were board roles and structure of the organization, and fundraising and sustainability strategies.

Discussion of the role of the board focused on the board's responsibilities for the non-profit organization. The Board needs to be the legal agent responsible for the governing and finances of the organization. Board members need to make the personal commitment to serve for the good of the AFHA, independent of their concurrent commitments to any other organization they work for or represent.

The Council (we decided it was neither a Governing Council, nor an Advisory Council, but something in between) will act as the voice of the Stakeholders in steering the mission of the organization. The Council will choose the Board and approve Bylaws changes. The biggest responsibility of Council members will be networking - to represent the stakeholders of their county or interest group, and to communicate the work of the AFHA to their constituents.

Changes to the Bylaws to reflect this organizational change will be voted on at the October 28 Council meeting, as well as election of new Council and Board members. Anyone not currently on the Council who might be interested in serving, please let Phyllis know.

Fundraising discussions included looking at the overall picture of the organization and where our funding expectations were short term and long term. We also worked on developing skills for effectively presenting the organization and how to ask for funds from potential donors.

Heritage Tourism Featured in Lewisburg

The Fall Stakeholder meeting will move south to Greenbrier County, October 27 & 28. Tours on Thursday will start with Greenbrier State Forest to see AFHA minigrant projects and learn about forest management for multiple purposes. Then to the historic logging community of Ronceverte to see their historic and modern lumber industry and tourism initiatives in the newly named Main Street community. Evening options include dinner, a play, or ghost tours in downtown Lewisburg. The meeting on Friday will be at Carnegie Hall in Lewisburg. Thanks to the Greenbrier County CVB and **Georgia Pacific Company** for co-sponsoring this event!

In keeping with our rotating topics – this Stakeholders meeting will feature Forest Heritage Tourism. Greenbrier County tourism leaders will share their experience and lessons with us; and our afternoon working session will focus on next steps for AFHA heritage tourism development. The meeting will also include presentations of AFHA mini-grant projects, and will be followed by AFHA Council meeting and Board meeting.

Mini-Grants Showcase

Many of the AFHA Mini-grant projects are completed, or will be completed this fall. We will feature these projects at the Fall Stakeholders Meeting in Lewisburg. All Mini-grants recipients are asked to bring or send a demonstration of your project's product or outcome – this can be example of your product, a poster or display, or a short oral presentation. We hope you can attend in person, but if not, contact us to arrange your project report.

In your presentation share your difficulties and lessons learned, as well as your successes. We all want to learn from, and celebrate, these projects.

All Mini-grant recipients - For financial questions contact Dave McGill dmcgill@wvu.edu 304-293-2941 x 2474. For content and final reports - Phyllis Baxter, phyllisb@meer.net 304-636-2467.

Webster Leads on Tour Development

In July, AFHA stakeholders teamed with local tourism and economic development officials from Webster and Nicholas Counties to begin work on developing cluster tours highlighting the region's forest heritage. The 1 ½-day workshop began with an overview of cultural/heritage tourism and examples of tour models. Participants assessed various existing trails to determine what would work best for us. In addition, sessions focused on criteria for inclusion as a heritage site, short and long term goals, seeing the region through the eyes of the visitor, and creating products within a realistic budget.

Participants worked in mixed teams of those from other areas and residents. Visitors shared their experiences as tourists and brainstormed with residents to catalog potential heritage stops. Two trails were proposed: one extending from Webster Springs south into Nicholas County and the Monongahela National Forest; the second trail stretched north from Webster Springs incorporating the Mountain Parkway.

Day two put participants' ideas to the test: teams test-drove the previous day's tours. Seeing the region as a visitor revealed strong points and areas for improvement. Teams also discovered other potential heritage sites they had overlooked during their brainstorming sessions.

The cluster tours continue to be developed as participants work to involve site owners, create site descriptions, measure drive times and distances, and solidify final products: a budget-friendly black and white trail map and a web page.

Any AFHA community or region wishing to develop tours based on this model can gather local participants for a planning session. AFHA staff will attend these meetings to discuss best practices and to offer suggestions or guidance.

Staff Updates

Jeremy Moves On

Jeremy Morris has left the AFHA project to take a full-time job with Wheeling National Heritage Area. He has remained in touch to complete tasks, and he assisted with the board development retreat since Susan was unable to attend. We are pleased he found this position, and that he is still in the state and can participate with us as a stakeholder. Jeremy can be reached at jmorris@wheelingheritage.org, 304-232-3087

Rosa Joins the Staff!

Susan Martin-Williams delivered a healthy girl, Rosa, on August 24. Susan is working from home in Princeton, with occasional travel north for meetings. She has completed her course work and orals for her PhD, is working on her dissertation this fall, and has accepted an offer to teach at Concord in the spring. Susan will continue as grad assistant for AFHA project through December.

Phyllis Gets New Bosses

At the Board Meeting at Blackwater Falls, the Board unanimously appointed Phyllis Baxter as Executive Director for AFHA, Inc. This is a new title & formalization of responsibility so that Phyllis is now responsible to the Board. Previously, she had been coordinator of the AFHA project for WVU.

Cultural Heritage Tourism Project in AFHA

The WV Cultural Heritage Tourism Program, a partnership of Preservation Alliance of West Virginia and Main Street West Virginia, has been working on heritage tourism as economic development within rural counties of the AFHA region. This is funded by a HUD Rural Housing and Economic Development grant, with support from the Benedum Foundation.

Previous work included visitor surveys and five focus groups to determine what heritage tourists enjoy, how they plan their trips, and what they spend money on. A workshop series on "Engaging the Visitor" was held in June sharing lessons learned from the focus groups and tips on what heritage tourists want, plus the expertise of a nationally known tourism retail consultant on encouraging heritage tourists for your community or business.

The final phase of the RHED heritage tourism grant project will involve working intensively with three demonstration communities providing technical assistance (from Scott Gerloff and Mitzi Miller of the WV Cultural Heritage Tourism Program) on improving heritage tourism. The communities were chosen to offer a range of capacity and tourism readiness, so that the lessons learned will translate to a wide variety of situations. They are planned to be the AFHA pilot communities of Webster Co (just beginning) and Randolph Co (midrange) plus Greenbrier Co as being the third community that is already doing substantial heritage tourism. Initial meetings on this project are being held in September and October.

THE APPALACHIAN FOREST HERITAGE AREA

Stakeholders Meeting
October 27 & 28, 2005
Lewisburg, WV

Please RSVP if you plan to attend any portion of the meeting.

Thursday, October 27

Forest Heritage Tour of Greenbrier County

10:00 am – 5:00 pm

(please join tour when you arrive, at any of these locations)

10:30 Tour of US Fish Hatchery & White Sulphur Springs, meet at Mon Forest Ranger Station

12:00 Meet at Picnic Shelter, Greenbrier State Forest, for lunch and introduction. Bring your own lunch.

12:30 Tour of Greenbrier State Forest – forest management for multiple benefits. Barbara Breshock, WV Division of Forestry.

2:30 Meet at Ronceverte Train Depot. Walking tour of Ronceverte, historic logging community, followed by reception. Doug Hylton.

Evening options include (cost on own)

Dinner in historic downtown Lewisburg, “Proof” at Greenbrier Valley Theater, 645.3838 or Ghost Tours at Gen. Lewis Inn

Directions:

Greenbrier State Forest – Exit 175 off of I-64 at White Sulphur Springs. Go south, following signs, 1.5 mi. Picnic shelter is *directions to meeting place*

Ronceverte – take Rt 219 through Lewisburg, to Ronceverte. Go one block past stop sign at bottom of hill, turn right onto Edgar St., 2 blocks to Depot.

Lewisburg is located on Rt. 219 or just off I-64 Exit 169
Super 8: Just off Exit 169 on Rt. 219

General Lewis Inn: South on Rt. 219, turn east (left) on Rt. 60 (Washington St.). General Lewis is on the right at 301 Washington.

Carnegie Hall: South on Rt. 219, turn west (right) onto Washington St., go 2 blocks, left on Church St. Carnegie Hall is on the right at 105 Church St.

For assistance contact Greenbrier County CVB
1-800-833-2068

Friday, October 28

AFHA Stakeholders Meeting at Carnegie Hall

(meeting room sponsored by Greenbrier Co CVB)

9:00 am – 3:00 pm

8:00 Set-up open for displays

8:30 Registration, coffee

9:00 Interest Group / Task Group Breakouts

10:00 AFHA Progress Reports

11:00 Mini-grants -- Success Stories & Lessons Learned

11:45 Lunch (sponsored by Georgia Pacific Company)

12:30 Panel discussion –

Heritage/Cultural/Natural Tourism Success in Greenbrier Co.
Panelists include: Lewisburg Mayor John Manchester, Kim Cooper of Greenbrier County CVB, Doug Hylton, Ronceverte, and others.

1:45 Developing Forest Heritage Tourism
Working session on next steps for AFHA Heritage Tourism. Scott Gerloff and AFHA staff.

3:00 Closing and Next Steps

3:30 Council Meeting

4:30 Board Meeting

Lodging Suggestions:

Super 8 is holding a block of rooms in Lewisburg.

Mention “AFHA” for \$47.00 rate. 304-647-3188
The historic **General Lewis Inn** has offered a \$75.00 room rate which includes breakfast (mention “AFHA” – limited availability – make your reservations soon). 800-628-4454

If you need your lodging costs paid (double occupancy @ Super 8) email phyllisb@meer.net by 10/21 instead of making your own reservation.

RSVP! We need accurate numbers for meals, and contact info to notify you if there are last minute changes.

RSVP to: Phyllis Baxter phyllisb@meer.net (email preferred)

Phone: To leave message 304-637-7424 home 304-636-2467

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