

GROWTH RINGS



Appalachian Forest Heritage Area Newsletter

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Spring Stakeholders Meeting at Berkeley Springs

The spring stakeholder's meeting was held in on April 6th and 7th in Morgan County at the Inn and Spa in downtown Berkeley Springs. A historic spa, and the original in the town, it was a wonderful place to meet, dine and relax.

The event began with an informative tour of nearby Green Ridge State Forest in Maryland. Francis Zumbrun, presenting in the role of the father of Maryland forestry Fred Besley, told of the history of the forest, with a driving tour to various forest management sites around the forest led by Francis, Mark Beals, and Rob Jones. 23 people attended the tour, and learned a bit about AFHA as well as about Green Ridge State Forest.

Thursday evening activities in Berkeley Springs began with a self-guided walking tour of the historic district. Only a few businesses were open by the time we arrived, so several members patronized a coffee shop on the square after a turn around the town. Afterwards the Board held a dinner meeting and the hotel was gracious enough to serve dinner to the group in the dining room, which was closed to the public, so the board could conduct their meeting while enjoying the fine cuisine offered on the menu.

Friday's Stakeholders meeting featured updates on AFHA and partner activities, and presentations on heritage tourism development activities in Morgan County by Jeanne Mozier of Travel Berkeley Springs and AFHA representative Abby Chapple. In a special presentation, folklorists Michael and Carrie Kline shared about their work collecting and utilizing oral history to develop connections and tourism products in heritage areas. Executive Director Phyllis Baxter presented a powerpoint presentation on development of driving tours and discussed the AFHA efforts to develop both "hub" tours based around a specific community, and thematic tours that cross the larger AFHA area.

Brochures are Done!

The long awaited AFHA promotional brochures have arrived from the printers. Some were distributed at the Berkeley Springs meeting. If you or your county need brochures, contact the AFHA office in Elkins and we will send them to you.

Many thanks to The Walkabout Company for their beautiful design and patience working with us – and to all of the AFHA partners who helped with photos, edits and responses.

NHA Designation Update

AFHA is making real progress now in our National Heritage Area designation efforts. We are working with Sen. Rockefeller's office towards getting our designation bill introduced in the Senate, hopefully this year.

The National Park Service has been reviewing our Feasibility Study, and has reported back a favorable result. They have asked for more information to answer two of the criteria questions, and staff and Council members are working now to satisfy their request. Once the added information has been received and reviewed, the National Park Service will report that AFHA is qualified to be designated as a National Heritage Area. This is one important step forward in our quest for designation.

This summer we need new support letters to our Congresspeople – even if you have sent a letter supporting AFHA before. Letters to Senator Rockefeller would be particularly timely, although letters to any of our Representatives from constituents in their district would be helpful. Also, for organizations, businesses or individuals who have not previously sent us a general support letter, we will be updating our list this summer and can include new letters. For more information on what to include and where to send support letters, see our web site www.appalachianforest.us under "Participate".

AFHA Grant Update

The original grant that launched the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, a USDA Fund for Rural America grant through WVU Division of Forestry and Extension Services, will be ending as of our extended date of September 30, 2006. We will be working through the summer to complete the products and to spend the remaining funds under this grant. Plans include completing at least one "hub tour" product for pilot community Webster Springs, completing at least one "thematic tour" for Forestry sites, completing all mini-grant projects, and printing more promotional pieces, including the Feasibility Study and its Executive Summary.

All mini-grant recipients with uncompleted projects should have received an email from Phyllis this month about next steps. We are trying to get final reports submitted from all projects that will give us good information not only on what the project was, but what lessons you learned doing the project. Financial invoices especially need to be submitted in July in order to get them processed and the funds drawn down before the end of the parent grant. From the final reports, the staff will compile a report notebook of the mini-grant projects. Thanks to everyone who has completed such wonderful AFHA projects!

Heritage Tourism Demo Projects

Preservation Alliance of West Virginia, in partnership with AFHA, has been moving forward with heritage tourism development in selected communities as a part of their HUD Rural Housing and Economic Development grant. Mitzi Miller, of the statewide Cultural Heritage Development program, has been working with the communities of Lewisburg, Webster Springs/Richwood, and Elkins/Beverly. The demonstration program is looking at techniques for organizing community workplans and technical assistance to help each community move to the "next step" that is appropriate for their own heritage tourism efforts.

Lewisburg has completed an interpretation resource team visit, led by WVU interpretation professor Dr. Dave Smaldone, which looked at interpretive theme for the community, and met with a number of sites, businesses and activity organizers to offer suggestions on improving their attractions.

Webster Springs and Elkins held thematic planning sessions this spring to develop the historic themes of their community, and are working on walking tour products for the historic districts that will make use of these themes. The hub driving tours for weekend visitors to these communities, as well as improved visitor information, are also included in their workplans. Beverly is also working on a thematic walking tour, and on improved promotion of special events.



Preservation Trades Workshops

The other major task of the RHED grant of Preservation Alliance and AFHA are training workshops to assist homeowners and other historic buildings in preservation methods. They are also partnering with a related effort by Mountain Partners in Community Development in Elkins, who have a VISTA volunteer, Melvin Lester, working primarily to organize hands-on preservation training opportunities. Workshops held so far have included:

Plaster workshop in basic traditional plaster repair skills was taught by Sarel Ventner to a class of 12 in Beverly May 9, 10, 11. (MPCD)

Mortar repointing class taught by John Friedrichs was held May 19 & 20 in Ronceverte with 9 students participating. (PAWV)

Window repair class was held in Moorefield on June 9 & 10, taught by Duffy Hoffman. 14 people took part in this class. (PAWV)

The next scheduled PAWV workshop is an introduction to plaster repair, scheduled for the evening of July 7 and daytime July 8 in Sutton. Contact Dave Vago of Preservation Alliance 304-345-6005, davago@pawv.org, for more information.

Other possible workshops being planned will include interior woodworking by PAWV, and Mountain Partners workshops in mortar repointing hands-on, window repair and reconstruction, and advanced plaster repair. For more information contact PAWV or Melvin Lester, melvin.lester@att.net, 304-636-6182.

Randolph County Wildflower Walk

The Randolph County Wildflower Walk was held May 7 near Elkins at the Stuart Recreation Area and served as both a fundraiser and to raise awareness for AFHA. This event was the last in a series of promotional events for the minigrant project of the AFHA Randolph County committee.

The tour guide for the event was Elizabeth Byers, an ecologist with the West Virginia Natural Heritage Program. With degrees in geology and hydrology, she likes to explore the relationships between native plants and their environments. Prior to joining the Natural Heritage Program, Elizabeth was a senior program officer with The Mountain Institute. She has lived and worked in the Himalayas, East African rift, Alps, Andes, and Appalachian Mountains. She is currently completing a two-year conservation assessment of high elevation wetlands in the Allegheny Mountain region of the state. She is a frequent contributor of wildflower photographs to *West Virginia Wildlife Magazine*, and a regular leader at the annual Blackwater Falls Wildflower pilgrimage.

There were 43 enthusiastic participants at the event, aged 7 to 78. Diane Wade supervised the picnic, which featured several kinds of specialty cheeses, cold cuts, pasta salad, chips, vegetable tray and several varieties of home baked cookies, thanks to Eleanor Palko and Elaine Griesel. Thank you gifts for the participants included native wildflower seeds, small gardening tools and gloves, and a wildflower brochure with original artwork by Karl A. Badgley, along with the new AFHA brochure. Judging by the response to the wonderful tour, food, and the gifts that were distributed, we will plan for a similar event next year.

Upcoming Events Sampler

If there are upcoming events, festivals or important meetings in your area that are relevant to AFHA, this is your opportunity for free advertising to a willing audience - everyone on the AFHA mailing list. Prior to publication of each newsletter, contact Coral with information about your event: what, when, where, admittance fee, web site or contact info, a short description of what visitors can expect to see, hear or do at the event. We can also list events on the AFHA web site, or send them to the AFHA email list, if you send us the information!

Riders of the Flood Outdoor Drama

The Island Park Outdoor Amphitheater located on the banks of the Greenbrier River in Ronceverte, West Virginia will be the site for presentation of the drama "Riders of the Flood", a play written by Robert Tuckwiller based on the novel by Warren Blackhurst. The story follows the life of one young man whose adventures after joining a logging crew take him through the Greenbrier Valley, Droop Mountain and Pocahontas County in search of his fortune. Performance dates are September 7-9 and September 14-16. Tickets are available at the First National Bank in Ronceverte and the Tuckwiller Gallery in Lewisburg. You can also call (304)-645-2070 or (304)-647-4500, contact the Greenbrier County Convention and Visitor's Bureau at 1-800-833-2068 or www.greenbrierwv.com.

Family Adventure Bicycle Tour de Elkins

June 23 - 28 -- Riding loops of 35-45 miles from base at the Elkins-Randolph YMCA, daytime baby-sitting available. For info contact (304)-636-4515 or www.bicyclewestvirginia.com.

Durbin Days Carnival & Festival

July 19-22 -- The 19th Annual Durbin Days Carnival and Festival will be held in Durbin, Pocahontas County, including a pet show, greased pig contest, cake walk, fireman's parade, entertainment. <http://destinationdurbin.com/attract.html>

Beverly Heritage Day

July 22 - Biannual festival with historic home tours, textile fair, frontier and Civil War living history, period carpentry demos, food, music, and more. www.historicbeverly.org or 304-637-7424.

Augusta Heritage

Augusta Heritage Center hosts five weeks each summer of intensive workshops and performances in music, crafts, dance, folklore and heritage theme weeks. Immerse yourself for a week in learning a new interest or improving your skills, or come for your favorite concert or a mini-class. See www.augustaheritage.com or call 304-637-1209.

Forest Discovery Activities

For a listing of heritage and nature programs this season at the Seneca Rocks Discovery Center and Cranberry Mountain Nature Center, see www.fs.fed.us/r9/mnf/events/events_index.shtml

Growth Rings is the periodic newsletter of the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, Inc., in partnership with West Virginia University Division of Forestry and Extension Services. Our mission is to work locally to conserve, develop, interpret, and promote a regional network of forest-based resources and experiences in the highlands of West Virginia and Maryland for the enjoyment and appreciation of residents and visitors in order to enhance economic and community development.

For more information about AFHA, address corrections or additions, or to be added to our email announcement list, please contact:

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Forester "Fred Besley" gives
forest management tour of Green Ridge State Forest.