



APPALACHIAN FOREST HERITAGE AREA

Wilderness Stewardship Challenge

AFHA has completed our one-year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge grant from the National Forest Foundation. Under this grant, we provided surveys of wilderness area trails that identified impacts and conditions within several Monongahela Wilderness Areas. We surveyed information in Cranberry, Laurel Hill and Big Draft Wildernesses using AFHA AmeriCorps, VISTA and volunteer assistance. The information collected has been mapped with our new GIS system, with GPS receivers and software purchased with grant funds. This

information is provided to the Monongahela National Forest to assist them with meeting the required standards for wilderness management, and helping to provide the newest and most accurate maps of some of the wilderness trails. The project also included a new brochure to provide education about visiting these wilderness areas. There are still a few trails remaining to be surveyed. Don't miss your chance to take part in this awesome outdoor opportunity! For more information contact: volunteerism@appalachianforest.us



AFHA Holds Planning Retreat

On November 2, 2009, a group of AFHA Board members, Council members and stakeholders to review past accomplishments and look to future goals. The full-day retreat was held at Saranam Retreat Center outside Montrose, and facilitated by Christy Bailey of

the National Coal Heritage Area. We started with our previous Strategic Plan from 2005, and discussed how to update goals and priorities. Following the retreat, staff and board members worked to compile the notes into a new Strategic Plan, which was approved at the March

Board meeting. Anyone interested in reviewing the plan, or in participating in future planning activities, please let us know. Of course, we are also hoping you will volunteer to help DO some of the plan tasks. Sign up to help with AFHA volunteer opportunities!

2010 Garlic Mustard Challenge!



Appalachian Forest Heritage Area and the Monongahela National Forest are teaming up again to challenge you to do your part to keep West Virginia wild and weed free. Garlic Mustard rapidly invades wooded habitats from disturbed areas. The invasive garlic mustard plant threatens wildflowers and diverse forest ecosystem of West Virginia and much of the United States.

Last year we removed of 11,722 pounds of garlic mustard and this year we are increasing our goal to 15,000 pounds!

You can participate in one of the planned events, or pull and report on your own. For details, see:

www.appalachianforest.us/garlic_mustard/index.html

The Garlic Mustard Challenge is one of the opportunities to help with the **MVP - Monongahela Volunteer Program**. Watch our web site for additional volunteer service days.

Garlic Mustard Pull Dates:

- Big Bend Campground : April 24, 2010
- Davis & Elkins College : May 1, 2010
- Blackwater Falls State Park : May 15, 2010
- Seneca Rocks : May 1, 2010
- Summit Lake : May 22, 2010
- Pocahontas County 4-H Camp : May 29, 2010
- Greenbrier State Forest : TBA

Perceptions of AFHA Tourism

By Dr. Jinyang Deng

The Appalachian Forest Heritage Area (AFHA) is made up of 18 counties which are located in the central Appalachia, a region that is rich in natural, historic and heritage resources that have great potentials for tourism development. In order to know more about tourism development in the area, a study to understand AFHA community leaders and residents' perceptions of tourism opportunities, issues, and potentials was conducted by a research team consisting of Dr. Jinyang Deng, Dr. Dave McGill, Phyllis Baxter and Georgy Plaucher. This study was funded by a WVU Extension Service seed grant with assistance from AFHA. The questionnaire survey was carried out between April 23 and June 10, 2009. Of 1136 valid addresses, 407 (233 leaders and 174 residents) returned their questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 35.8%.

The study found that a large number of residents (75.19%) have not heard about the AFHA as opposed to 39.45% for leaders. The most frequently partici-

pated AFHA activity was reading newsletters (48.2% for leaders vs. 14.8% for residents). In addition, leaders knew more about the AFHA than did residents with the majority of resident participants being not sure about most of the 11 statements concerning the AFHA. Despite these differences, both groups had achieved a high level of consensus in their perceptions of tourism resources/assets, tourism development benefits/costs, and tourism development challenges/opportunities. Specifically, they considered that people, natural resources, and historical/heritage resources are among the most valued assets that their communities can use for tourism development. They were also very positive about the impacts of tourism on their communities and believed that tourists are valuable; tourism development can bring more jobs for local people, provide more cultural events and broaden local availability of local restaurants and activities; and long-term planning can control the negative impacts of tourism on the environment.

In addition, they did not support gambling as a tourism activity for their communities.

In terms of perceptions of the challenges and opportunities associated with tourism development, community leaders and residents were also quite similar in most statements. Both groups identified community beautification, community leadership, and marketing as the top three challenges facing their communities. Top priorities should be placed on five areas: strengthen collaboration and partnership with surrounding communities; strengthen collaboration and partnership with the AFHA; strengthen community leadership; increase financial investment; and promote marketing.

In summary, this study found that the AFHA communities were very supportive of tourism development as a means for local economic diversification and growth and most participants were interested to know more about the AFHA and wanted to be involved in the AFHA activities.

Meet the New AFHA AmeriCorps Team

The 2009 - 2010 AFHA AmeriCorps team is 17 strong, with 5 members who returned from the previous year.

Our conservation team is greatly expanded with eight full-time project assignments with agencies, with projects including non-native invasive species control, wilderness survey, trail building, tree planting, fire education, developing interpretive signs and exhibits, and visitor services. Chris Dudek & Darrell Barlow in Elkins, Sarah Foster at Seneca Rocks, and Anna Sexton, Amanda Taylor, and Ben Lamb in Marlinton are all assigned with the Monongahela National Forest. Linda James is with US Fish & Wildlife Service in Elkins, and Helen Yurchenco is working with WV Division of Forestry out of Lewisburg.



This historic preservation team of Russell Honderd, Anna Harrod, Tom Kendall, and Alex Kavouklis are working on new projects at Elkins City Hall and Riverside School, and continuing work at the Darden Mill in Elkins and Collett House in Beverly.



The heritage development team are all multi-tasking, with most serving at Beverly

Heritage Center part of the time, and also doing projects for additional sponsors. Linda McCauley is assisting with Kump House and Elkins Friends of Trees, Jessica Serrao is doing archive development, Megan Grisolano is working on Elkins Historic Landmark Resource Library, and Kristina Gaddy is working with Upshur County Historical Society.

In addition, Donna Smith is splitting her time between the Randolph County Community Arts Center and Old Brick Playhouse.

As the field season for 2010 gets started, these members will be organizing lots of opportunities for volunteers to get involved and help with projects. Watch our web site for dates that you can help!

And already we are looking forward to next term that will start in September. Organizations who may wish to sponsor a member, or anyone who would like to apply to serve as an AmeriCorps, will find information at :

www.appalachianforest.us/ameri-corps

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area 2010 Spring Stakeholders Meeting

Allegany County, Maryland
Forest Heritage in Outdoor Recreation Tourism



Planned Agenda:

Thursday, April 29, AFHA Tours for 2010

- 9:30-10:00** Meet at Canal Place Visitor Center/Train Station, Cumberland MD
10:00-10:45 Welcome and walking tour of Canal Place Visitor Center lead by Rita Knox, Director of C&O Canal National Park.
10:45-11:00 Discussion on "The Importance of the Great Allegany Passage"
11:00-12:00 Individual participants choice of:
(A) short bike ride on the Great Allegany Passage Trail from Canal Place to the Narrows and back. (Bikes Provided) *OR*
(B) Trolley Ride/History Tour of Historic Cumberland, narrated by Ansell Shircliff.
12:00-12:30 Boxed lunches (\$10 donation) and board vans for travel to Green Ridge State Forest (GRSF).
12:30-4:30 Van tour of scenic and remote GRSF to explore nature, heritage, and adventure tourism assets of the forest. Topics will include forest management, natural and cultural heritage, Maryland Big Tree Program, and adventure tourism. Mark Beals, Green Ridge Forest Manager and AFHA Board member, will lead the tour.

Spend **Thursday evening** enjoying Canal Place and downtown Cumberland Area and/or Frostburg. (Dinner on own.)

Friday, April 30, 2010 AFHA Stakeholders Meeting

Fairfield Inn & Suites Conference Room

- 9:00-9:30** Coffee and light refreshments.
9:30-10:00 Introductions and *What is AFHA?* (Phyllis Baxter, AFHA Executive Director)
10:00-12:30 Presentations & panel discussion - *Outdoor Recreation Tourism in Allegany County*
The Canal Place State Heritage Area Experience. (Renee Bone)
Allegany County Tourism, (Barbara Buehl, Director of Tourism.)
Nature Tourism/Resource Based Recreation - *Making Nature Your Business!* (Patricia Manown Mash, MD DNR)
Adventure Race! Mountain Maryland (Mark Beals, Green Ridge State Forest)
12:30-1:30 Lunch (\$10 donation)
1:30-2:30 AFHA Updates and activities
2:30-3:00 AFHA Council Meeting

Accommodations:

A block of rooms is being held until April 15 at \$79/room in the name of AFHA.
Make your reservations now!

Fairfield Inn & Suites
21 North Wineow Street
Cumberland, MD 21502
301-722-0340
www.fairfieldcumberland.com

Directions to hotel:

From west: Take exit 43B ramp. Turn right onto Winston St, which turns left and becomes Wineow St. Destination will be on the right

From east: Take exit 43C ramp. Turn left onto W Harrison St; immediately turn left onto S. Mechanic St. Turn right onto Winston St, which becomes Wineow St.

For other accommodation and for restaurant options see:
www.mdmountaininside.com

Directions to Canal Place:

From the west – I-68 East to Cumberland. Take the Downtown Exit (43C). Make a left at the bottom of exit ramp. Go left at the next traffic light (across from the Holiday Inn.) Go straight ahead through traffic light into the Western Maryland Station Square parking lot.

From the east – Take I-70 West to I-68 West to Cumberland. Take the Downtown Exit (43C) and turn left at the bottom of ramp (stop sign). Go straight ahead through traffic light into the Western Maryland Station Square parking lot. The entrance to the lot is at corner of Harrison Street and South Mechanic Street.

Parking is free for customers of the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad and Shops At Canal Place using tokens available at these businesses.

RSVP

RSVP – We need to know who is attending so we can make reservations and order lunches. Please let us know if you plan to attend any or all of the following:

Thursday ___ lunch ___ bike ride *OR* ___ trolley tour ___ Green Ridge tour
Friday ___ lunch

RSVP to afha@appalachianforest.us OR phyllisb@meer.net OR 304-636-6182

RSVP



See AFHA on Facebook! 

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area
Dave McGill
PO Box 6125
Morgantown, WV 26505

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Coming Up....

- **April 22** – Earth Day Red Spruce Planting near Sinks of Gandy. The Nature Conservancy / CASRI
- **April 29-30** – AFHA Stakeholders meeting, Cumberland: see details in this newsletter
- **June 5** – MVP Non-Native Invasive Species (NNIS) Identification
- **June 12** – National “Get Outdoors Day,” MVP Trail Maintenance
- **June 26** – Adventure Race! Mountain Maryland, at Green Ridge State Forest: www.adventureracemountainmd.org

Watch www.appalachianforest.us for dates and details.

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.



Appalachian Forest Heritage Area

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Free Invasive Species Workshops

Free admittance~Free buffet dinner~Free tree seedlings~Door prizes~Lots of good information — RSVP required

The Potomac Highlands Cooperative Weed and Pest Management Area (CWPMA), a partnership of private landowners, non-profits, and government agencies, invites you to participate in a workshop on the impact of non-native invasive plants such as Autumn Olive, Japanese Stiltgrass, and Japanese Knotweed, and on ways to control these species. We will also offer information on technical and financial assistance that may be available to help you manage these plants on your lands.

The CWPMA is hosting workshops from 6 to 8:30 pm in two counties as follows:

Grant County, Tuesday, April 20th, at the Landes Ruritan Building on Route 220, Landes, WV and
Pendleton County, Thursday, April 22nd at the Community Building, 200 Confederate Rd., Franklin, WV

Everyone interested in learning about the impacts of invasive plant species is welcome to attend these workshops. For information or to RSVP, please contact Lin James at 1-304-636-6586 Ext. 22 or by email at Linda_James@fws.gov by Friday, the 16th of April. Thank you and hope to see you there!

You Could Be An MVP!

Sign up for the Monongahela Volunteer Program at any Garlic Mustard Challenge to receive a free reusable MVP sports water bottle! Reusable water bottles help reduce the environmental threat posed by disposable water bottles. Volunteer at any Garlic Mustard Challenge or MVP event for a chance to win great prizes! For MVP activities, dates, and more information visit us online at www.appalachianforest.us/mvp