

Conservation efforts run strong in AFHA



Appalachian Forest Heritage Area

February 2013 E-Newsletter

Greetings,

The chilly winter weather hasn't stopped AFHA's strong commitment to conservation efforts in the region! Read below to see how AFHA and its partners are working to stop the spread of invasive species in the Monongahela National Forest. Remember, you can get involved too: Just fill out a Volunteer Sign-Up Form, [available here](#), and email it to volunteerism@appalachianforest.us. There will be plenty to help out with in the spring!



Experience the heritage of your area! *Sites of the Month* spotlights events and locations within the region, based on AFHA's four themes: forestry, history, culture, and nature.

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Nonnative invasive species (NNIS) are one of the greatest and most pervasive threats to the quality of economy and environmental health in West Virginia, a state that relies heavily on forest products, agriculture, and natural resource-based tourism. Additionally, these pests are an immense threat to the forest and recreational opportunities available on the Monongahela National Forest.

STOMP (Slow the Onward Movement of Pests) is a large-scale effort designed to inform travelers about the steps they can take to prevent the spread of invasive species. STOMP's partners include the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, Monongahela National Forest, The Nature Conservancy, Division of Forestry, Potomac Highlands Cooperative Weed and Pest Management Area, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife. The project, which has received \$35,000 in grant funding, includes a variety of outreach techniques including highway billboards, educational displays, public service announcements, and citizen scientist training workshops.

AFHA AmeriCorps member Rebecca Urbanczyk has worked on outreach for the project, promoting and planning NNIS educational exhibits at state parks and forests. "It's been a great experience to go across the state and find out which invasive species are problems, and to become part of the solution by spreading the word," stated Urbanczyk.

The Monongahela National Forest is the largest expanse of public land in West Virginia, and is the fourth largest National Forest in the 20 northeastern states. Because of its proximity to major population centers, including Washington D.C. and Pittsburgh, many travel routes to the Forest are high-risk locations for the introduction of invasive species. Remember, you can help battle the spread of invasive species by:

- Learning how to identify and recognize the different invasive species in your area
- Planting only native species on your land
- Removing dirt and seeds from clothing and equipment before entering public lands
- Volunteering for the 2013 Garlic Mustard Challenge
- Buying local firewood and burning it where you buy it



[Cathedral State Park](#)

One of the last old-growth forests in the Appalachian highlands and the last virgin hemlock-mixed hardwood stand left in West Virginia, this forest is a remnant of a time when massive hemlocks still covered the area.



[Arthurdale, WV](#)

Established in 1933 by the U.S. government, Arthurdale is the nation's first New Deal Homestead Community. Created through President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal legislation, the community provided a new life for those suffering from the Great Depression. Today, the National Historic District features 160 of the 165 original homesteads.



[Spruce Forest Artisan Village](#)

Spruce Forest Artisan Village is an arts and heritage center in the

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A Year is Not Enough

By Kristopher Hennig

AFHA Conservation AmeriCorps Volunteer

Last summer, I was walking the beaches of Lake Sakakawea in North Dakota, working for the United States Geological Survey on a threatened and endangered shorebird nesting study, when I received a phone call from the Greenbrier Ranger District in Bartow, West Virginia. In the interview, Shane Jones (Greenbrier Wildlife Biologist) and Jack Tribble (Greenbrier Ranger) revealed only a glimmer of the great work that I could be doing out here in Appalachia. How could they possibly tell me about everything I would be doing in the coming year in a brief phone interview?

In the seemingly short span of 5 months since I took up my AmeriCorps position, my weeks have been full of new experiences and opportunities. I've assisted in collecting native plant seed and in planting high priority restoration sites with a variety of native species (red spruce, balsam fir, elderberry, wild raisin, etc.). I've been a part of West Virginia northern flying squirrel and golden eagle surveys. I've assisted with loads of outreach at community events and schools. Moreover, we're preparing for a huge mined land restoration project which will take place in the spring and summer. The project will focus on improving various soil, biological, and hydrological issues on previously mined land. We hope to set these sites on a trajectory to become thriving red spruce ecosystems. While planning this project, I have been interacting with various government agencies and nonprofits throughout the Central Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative, otherwise known as CASRI. The next 6 months are going to be a whirlwind of awesomeness.

Beyond the work that I'm doing with the U.S. Forest Service, I am loving West Virginia, a state to which I'd never been. The

provides a unique glimpse into the life of a working artist, many of whom are award winning in their medium. Each artist has a working studio, as well as a small gallery to display their work.



[Organ Cave](#)

For centuries Native Americans harvested flint from the walls and ceilings of this cave to make tools. During the Civil War, 1,100 Confederate soldiers mined the cave for nitre, a key constituent of gunpowder. A 90-minute tour leads through 2.2 miles of the passageways and past the 90-foot calcite formation resembling a pipe organ.

Do you have a suggestion for *Sites of the Month*?

Email us at:

info@appalachianforest.us

and let us know your favorite sites throughout AFHA!

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snowshoeing and skiing, and a barrage of festivals and events that don't seem to end. There is no shortage of things to do and I'm not sure I'll experience all that I want in one short year of AFHA AmeriCorps. I guess I can always sign up for one more year...

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