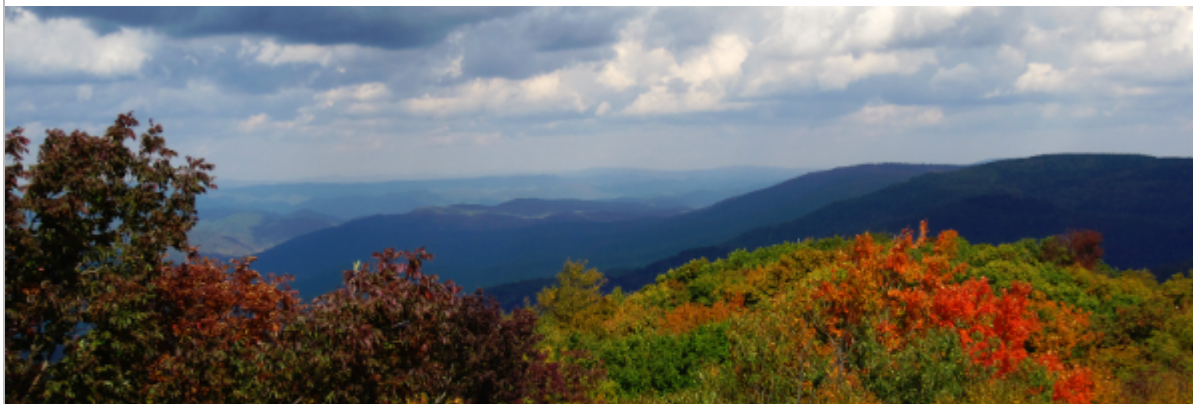


Telling the story of our region



# Appalachian Forest Heritage Area July 2013 E-Newsletter

## Greetings,

In the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, we realize that there is much to learn from our rich regional history, especially moving forward. Storytelling is a wonderful way to pass on tradition and to help recall the lessons of the past. Through murals, audio recordings, dances, exhibits, or even e-newsletters, AFHA AmeriCorps members are helping to tell the stories of our region for future generations to enjoy. Read below to see how two members are sharing what they have learned.

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## AFHA Position Opportunity

AFHA is seeking a part time consultant for a project management position. Email [phyllisb@appalachianforest.us](mailto:phyllisb@appalachianforest.us) for more information.

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## Saving Appalachia's Stories

By Jessie Wright-Mendoza



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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*Wright-Mendoza spent much of the last year documenting stories along Route 219, including a reenactment of the [Battle of Droop Mountain](#), pictured above. Photo: Jessie Wright-Mendoza*

Iâ€™m not a West Virginian by birth, nor am I a transplant. Iâ€™m really just passing through.

I came to West Virginia in mid-September of last year. I left my job in New York working in public radio to come here and produce radio and multimedia stories for a project called Traveling 219. Maybe youâ€™ve heard some of my pieces on Inside Appalachia on West Virginia Public Radio. My job, basically, is this: travel up and down Route 219, talk to people, find out what is important to them, what binds them to this land, and help them tell the stories of this place that they call home.

Home is a funny word for me. Like I said earlier, Iâ€™m just passing through. Itâ€™s what I do â€“ a year in New York, six months in Maine, a couple years in New Orleans. I donâ€™t stay places for long, so I might seem an odd choice for this particular endeavor.

But Iâ€™ve seen a lot of versions of home, and though the scenery changes, the ties that bind are always the same. The fisherman trying to make a living on the same island his family has lived on for 300 years. The Latino ex-gang member trying to protect his Brooklyn neighborhood from encroaching gentrification. When the history of a place collides with oneâ€™s personal history â€“ thatâ€™s home.

## FORESTRY SITE

[Cass Scenic Railroad State Park](#) is celebrating its 50th anniversary as a West Virginia state park. Here, visitors have the opportunity to experience a historic logging town and the only railroad that remains from a vast network of rails built in 1900 to reach Cheat and Back Allegheny mountains. Today, Shay steam engines, built between 1905 and 1945, pull riders up 2,300 feet past the ghost town of Spruce to the top of Bald Knob, the third highest point in the state. The town of Cass has been restored and guided tours of the town are offered. Company houses, cabins, and cabooses are available for rent.

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## HISTORIC SITE

[Bulltown Historic Area](#) commemorates a battle that occurred in Braxton County in 1863. Confederate forces tried to overtake Federal fortifications that overlooked a key bridge that once crossed the Little Kanawha River along the Weston-Gauley Bridge Turnpike. Today, visitors to the site will find Union



*Stories are often told more clearly when multiple forms of media are used. Wright-Mendoza also spent time capturing Appalachia through her camera lens.*

West Virginia is a place with a strong sense of identity. It's not a place where people just pass through- people either have history here, or they want to have history here.

In the small towns I work in there is a sense of "Keep it going, keep it real, keep it ours." And along with that is an understanding that in order to do so, the history of this place, of the buildings that have stood, and the lives that have been lived, have to be preserved. There is no new beginning, only the latest chapter in a very long story.

Nowadays, most places look the same. West Virginia, and Appalachia generally, is struggling to retain a sense of identity as the old and the new awkwardly circle each other. But a place lives in its stories "they preserve the past for the future. So pick up a recorder, a notebook, a camera, and save a story today.

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## Painting the Forest

By Kaitlyn Baligush  
AFHA AmeriCorps Conservation Volunteer

intact sections of the Weston-Gauley Turnpike. There are also interpretive trails with historic buildings, including the restored Cunningham farm, which was built in the early nineteenth century and stood during the Civil War. The Bultown Historic Center features artifacts from the battle.



[The Aurora Project](#) is tucked in the Allegheny Mountains of West Virginia, and provides the opportunity for artists and scholars from across the country and around the world to live and work in an environment supportive of the creative process. The restored historic buildings that comprise the Aurora Project were once part of a 19th Century mountain resort, but have been converted into private studios and lodging. Here, artists and scholars are welcome to explore and exchange new ideas. The Aurora Project also holds several community events throughout the year, including a barn dance, film festival, BBQ, and more.

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*Baligush's mural will demonstrate the many uses of the Monongahela National Forest, and the importance of each one. Photo: Tommy Caggiano*

Just a typical day at the Marlinton ranger station. One of the employees is giving the front office wall a fresh coat of paint. I jokingly tell him that I'll paint him a whole mural on the wall. "Wait," he says, "can you actually do that?" "I didn't think they would really let me, but for the last two months I have been drawing and painting on our office wall.

The theme of the mural is "Wood, Water, Forage, Wildlife, Recreation." During the early days of the Forest Service, timber was the top priority. However as people started visiting and utilizing the forest and its resources more, the Forest Service changed its focus to multiple use. The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 officially recognized the five major uses of the forest as: timber, range, water, wildlife, and recreation. These five uses have been designated as equally important. Each one can be seen taking place within the Monongahela National Forest, and each is reflected in the mural.

**Wood:** Approximately seven to ten million trees are harvested each year on the Monongahela. Major tree species harvested include red and white oak, cherry, poplars, maples, and basswood. Timber is harvested sustainably through a variety of techniques depending on the vegetation type and needs of other resources. Additional activities to commercial timber sales consist of site preparation for natural regeneration of hardwood trees, planting tree seedlings, timber stand improvement, and firewood sales.

**Water:** In Pocahontas County, where Marlinton is located, is nicknamed "The Birthplace of Rivers." Monitoring

[Seneca Caverns](#) were formed over 460 million years ago when the region laid beneath an inland sea, forming limestone. The namesake for the cave came from the Seneca Indians, who first used the cave in the 1400's. Then, the Caverns were located on a great Seneca Indian trading route through the Appalachian Mountains. Today, the caverns feature unique and stunning geological formations. Guides lead visitors through tours, pointing out areas of special interest, reaching depths of 165 feet below the cave entrance.

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

Email us at:

[info@appalachianforest.us](mailto:info@appalachianforest.us)

and let us know your favorite sites throughout AFHA!

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Department of Natural Resources that involves liming streams. Prolonged exposure to acid rain has made the streams too acidic for fish to thrive; therefore, liming lowers the water's pH levels making it more habitable.

**Forage:** About forty-five grazing allotments lie within the hills and meadows of the forest. On the Marlinton- White Sulphur District about 216 stock animals, a mixture of cattle and horses, enjoy grazing on these lands. The allotments are also managed as wildlife openings, providing habitat and forage for a number of different species.



*Baligush in the early phases of her mural, located at the Marlinton District Ranger office. Photo: Tommy Caggiano*

**Wildlife:** This spring I've seen many deer, birds, salamanders, even a black bear! Wildlife is abundant all over the forest. Not only does the forest provide space for wildlife to live, but it protects key habitat types for sensitive and endangered species such as red spruce forest for northern flying squirrels and old-growth, interior forests for cerulean warblers. The Forest Service also strives to create wildlife habitat. Currently, the Monongahela has a partnership with the Wild Turkey Federation to make several savannas for turkey habitat on Middle Mountain. Additionally, hunting and fishing are popular wildlife activities on the forest. Common game animals include wild turkey, deer, black bear, and native trout.

**Recreation:** The forest has thirty-seven recreation sites and hosts approximately one million visitors each year. Some of the many recreation opportunities include: hiking, mountain biking, fishing, camping, kayaking, and wildlife viewing. Currently, AmeriCorps member Tommy Caggiano is creating a visitor's guide for the White Sulphur trail system so that visitors to the office can easily pick out which trails they want to hike. Furthermore, some sites have been given national

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AmeriCorps member Kate Nietling completed creating an accessible, interpretive pathway and native planting at the Red Lick Overlook on the highway. Stop by next spring to see which flowers come up!

The Monongahela is a shining example of multiple-use sustained-yield. It's difficult to describe each major use individually because they're all so interconnected, just like the forest ecosystem itself. An important thing to remember is that we are also a part of that system. In his famous book *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold writes, "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

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