

GROWTH RINGS

Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area News



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Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area promotes and supports a network of partnerships based around our unique Forest Heritage. We work in 16 West Virginia counties and 2 counties in Western Maryland.

To learn more about us and the work we do, including our AmeriCorps program, visit www.afnha.org.



Management Planning Update

AFNHA has been busy with Management Planning since our November Newsletter, with a-lot of help from our stakeholders like you! We are looking forward to continuing planning efforts through Zoom virtual meetings during the winter. It is not too late to get involved! Contact us at planning@afnha.org for more information.

Task Group Updates:

The Organization group has completed their broad survey to get feedback about AFNHA issues, with better than 50% participation rate. The planning consultants are now scheduling one-on-one interviews with some selected stakeholders representing a broad range of partners.

The Interpretation group has met twice, with subcommittee now working on some suggested language for themes and significance. Drafts will go back to the group early in the new year. A survey for tourism partners is looking for information about tourism efforts and marketing, and will be followed with a meeting specifically to talk about tourism marketing efforts, and what roles AFNHA might be able to contribute to those efforts.

The Stewardship and Enhancement group met in November, and is collecting information on existing community plans – comprehensive plans, organization strategic plans, conservation plans, partnership or project plans, etc – that talk about what is already being done or prioritized for action. By understanding what these existing efforts are, AFNHA can better plan for our roles to support and enhance community priorities. Follow-up meetings are planned to discuss historic, cultural, and community efforts on **January 13, 1:30 pm** and to discuss natural, conservation, and outdoor recreation efforts on **January 27, at 1:30 pm**. Find the Zoom information on our [website](#).





MONONGAHELA OUTDOOR VOLUNTEERS



Monongahela Outdoor Volunteers is a new organization working in partnership with Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area to help communities around the Monongahela National Forest in WV transition to trails-based recreational tourism economies. The project is for initially 1-year and funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and Benedum Foundation

These communities have been challenged economically since the decline of the coal industry. But they all have in their backyards something that tourists are increasingly seeking but having trouble finding: enjoyable and diverse trail experiences in areas that offer unique beauty and solitude close to home. In particular, the Gauley Ranger District in the MNF offers excellent opportunities for single track mountain biking, gravel riding on beautiful forest roads, hiking in the vast Cranberry Wilderness, and bird watching in the unique Cranberry Glades.



Photo By USDA-USFS

MOV recognizes that success with our mission requires that we deliver good user experiences, sustainably. The key to this is development of a highly motivated and skilled volunteer force coupled with effective marketing of our unique offerings and high-quality trail conditions. We will be working to engage local youth and community members through tailored incentive programs and professional volunteer management. We will provide training in trail maintenance and leadership to support MOV activities as well as to provide skills that can be applied to future employment in the recreation industry. Our long-term goal is to serve as a model and resource for other trails-based groups across the MNF to support continued improvement of trails through volunteerism and collaboration. We aim to make the MNF a recreation destination that has a reputation for delivering consistently high-quality trail experiences.

Check out the MOV website and Facebook page below for more information on this program!



AmeriCorps Stories

Check out these stories from three of our AmeriCorps working in the field. Click on the links to take you to each story.

Enjoy!



Emily Culp is serving with the MNF-Marlinton in Community Outreach

One of Emily Culp's main goals for this year and serving with AmeriCorps has been to advocate for blurring the lines between community goals and conservation goals. In order for conservation to work, the community must be supportive and advocate for the lands that need to be preserved. Public lands can be great spaces for recreation, however, they are also simultaneously lands that are meant to be protected and preserved for the sake of wildlife and general ecosystem health. Serving in an outreach position with the US Forest Service is a perfect place to put these ideals into practice, and Emily has been happy to be able to assist with conservation minded community initiatives.

Click [HERE](#) to read her story!

This has been a very challenging task in the time of Covid-19. Without being able to go to all the schools and festivals, Kaitlyn has found new ways to communicate and educate kids and the public about our impacts on the forest. Most days are about thinking and creating new ways to educate without being there in person. This gives her the opportunity to use online knowledge and continue to gain more insight about new online platforms.

Click [HERE](#) to read her story!



Kaitlyn Deskens is serving with the WV Dept. of Forestry in Community Outreach

AFNHA AmeriCorps member Emma Pringle reflects on the opportunity to explore a few of her career options while getting a stipend for it, offering hands-on experience in her potential field, and letting her network with other professionals with her work at the West Virginia Railroad Museum in Elkins, WV.

Click [HERE](#) to read her story!



Emma Pringle is serving with Serving with the West Virginia Railroad Museum!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE AFNHA STAFF! STAY SAFE! SEE YOU IN 2021.

