

SEPTEMBER 2022

# 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 [afnha.org](http://afnha.org).



## New Faces at AFNHA

### Welcome AmeriCorps Members

Earlier this week we welcomed 25 new and returning AmeriCorps members. Keep an eye out for our future newsletters as we introduce our members and tell stories about their service.



### New Staff

AFNHA started two new staff members this month.

**Ben Duvall-Irwin**  
Communications Manager

**Maria Bray**  
Operations Manager





# Meet our new staff members

## **Ben Duvall-Irwin** **Communications Manager**

Ben grew up in North Carolina and Arkansas and has been living in Elkins for nearly four years. He is a former AmeriCorps member with AFNHA who served two years at the Elkins Depot Welcome Center and recently worked at the Beverly Heritage Center where he helped organize events and promote local heritage tourism. He enjoys hiking in our many public lands and is currently learning to play the banjo. He is excited to get to explore our region and promote our unique cultural traditions.

Ben will be responsible for our newsletter, social media accounts, website, and partner outreach. You can reach him at [ben@afnha.org](mailto:ben@afnha.org) or 304-636-6182 ext 2. He would love to hear about your favorite local traditions or favorite hiking spot.



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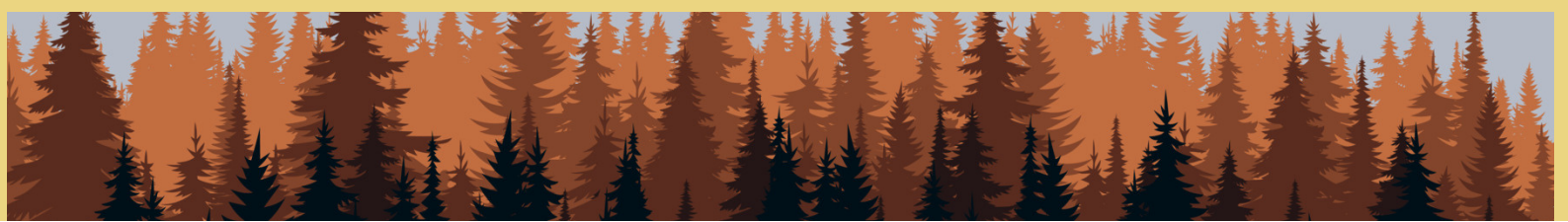
## **Maria Bray** **Operations Manager**

After serving with AFNHA as the AmeriCorps Heritage Tourism Associate at the Darden Mill in Elkins, Maria joined the team in a new role as the Operations Manager. In this role, Maria will be supporting our programs in the areas of bookkeeping, data management, facilities operations, and program administration support – a taste of everything!

Originally from Manhattan, Maria and her family moved to West Virginia in 1991. Most of her background is in Business Administration and Finance; however, she has always been involved in building up her community through volunteering. Maria enjoys working with committed people who share a common belief that we can overcome obstacles and bring about good changes. She feels she found her tribe here at AFNHA. In her “free” time, she enjoys reading, writing, photography, and long walks with her high-energy rescue dog, Jasmine. She's looking forward to learning more about the culture and history of the Highlands of West Virginia and Maryland while exchanging ideas with this brilliant and enthusiastic team.



You can reach Maria at [maria@afnha.org](mailto:maria@afnha.org) or 304-636-6182 Ext 6



# Creative Economy Tourism Summit

The Tourism Summit organized by the Highlands Creative Economy networking group, was held on August 24th at Canaan Valley Resort State Park. The Summit brought together a diverse group of participants from across the region representing many tourism and business development organizations.

The Summit offered a variety of topical discussions including Tourism Marketing, Creating Marketable Trails, Hospitality, and Lodging, Connecting with Heritage Trails, State Resources, and Tourism Business Development. Keynote speaker, Dr. Dee Singh-Knights, Ph.D. offered insights about Growing Sustainable Tourism in a Post-Pandemic Economy. Singh-Knights is an associate professor in the Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design at West Virginia University. She is also an extension specialist with the WVU Extension Service and an expert on agribusiness economics and management.

Debra Frank, a hospitality management specialist, was not only a panelist but, will be teaching a series of free Creative Economy training sessions on hospitality and customer service. The next session is set for October 17th at Canaan Valley Resort State Park. Information about this opportunity can be found at <https://easternwv.edu/workforce-education/hospitality/>

This was the first in-person Tourism Summit since 2019 and provided the opportunity to network with like-minded professionals sharing ideas and solutions to some of the tourism and business challenges our region is working to overcome.

The Highlands Creative Economy program is a partnership between AFNHA and Eastern WV Community and Technical College, funded in part by the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation.

The Highlands Creative Economy networking group meets on the fourth Thursday of every month on Zoom. The attendees include tourism businesses and attractions, tourism and community organizations, marketing and hospitality specialists, higher education and many others who are invested in the future of regional tourism. For more information and to join the peer group see <https://www.appalachianforestnha.org/creative-economy>



## National Heritage Area Events

September 16-18 | Treasure Mountain Festival | Franklin  
September 18 | Belington City Park Cleanup | Meet at 12:30 at the pavilion  
September 13-25 | Capon Bridge Founders Day  
September 24-25 | Hardy County Heritage Weekend  
September 24 | WV Roadkill Cookoff and Autumn Harvest Festival | Marlinton  
Sept 23-25 Leaf Peeper's Festival Davis WV  
September 30-October 2 | Mineral County Heritage Weekend  
September 30-October 2 | ARTOber Fest | Timberline Mountain  
October 1 | Sutton Fall Festival  
October 1-9 | Mountain State Forest Festival | Elkins  
October 8th | Taste of Our Town Festival | Lewisburg  
October 8-9 | Apple Butter Festival | Berkeley Springs  
October 8-9 | Thunder in the Mountains Powwow | Parsons  
Oct 12 - 16 Autumn Glory Festival, Oakland



# AmeriCorps Recruitment - Apply Today!



## AFNHA AmeriCorps



**Gain valuable experience while making a difference in WV communities!** ☆☆☆

AFNHA is seeking AmeriCorps members for conservation and/or cultural heritage-related positions for the program year beginning now.

- ✓ Positions are one year with a living stipend provided (\$16,502).
- ✓ The Segal Education Award (\$6,495) is granted to those that successfully complete the full year - use towards your Federal student loans or continuing your education at certain institutions.
- ✓ Most members qualify for SNAP assistance.
- ✓ Professional development and training opportunities to strengthen skills.
- ✓ WV Tuition Waiver available for AmeriCorps members who complete a minimum of 600+ hours in West Virginia

Contact **Chrissy Hall**, Program Manager at [chrissyh@afnha.org](mailto:chrissyh@afnha.org) with questions

## AmeriCorps Conservation Opportunities

**Interested in a career in Conservation work?**

Help improve public lands, monitor environmental conditions, and/or educate about environmental stewardship. ☆☆☆

Available Positions include:

- ✓ Yew Mountain Center
- ✓ Monongahela National Forest: Mon Forest Towns
- ✓ WV Highlands Conservancy
- ✓ AFNHA Pollinator and Partnerships
- ✓ Mon Forest Public Affairs - Communications
- ✓ AND MORE

To learn more about our conservation positions visit our website

<https://www.appalachianforestnha.org/conservation>

## AmeriCorps Cultural Heritage Opportunities

**Interested in a career in Cultural & Community Heritage work?**

Help care for museum collections, design exhibits, manage events, and support cultural heritage tourism. ☆☆☆

Available Positions include:

- ✓ AFNHA Museum & Heritage Tourism
- ✓ Arthurdale Heritage Inc.
- ✓ Beverly Heritage Center
- ✓ Upshur County Historical Society
- ✓ Tourism Positions in Keyser & Richwood
- ✓ WV Railroad Museum-Railroad Exhibit & Education
- ✓ AND MORE

To learn more about our AmeriCorps positions visit our website

<https://www.appalachianforestnha.org/heritage-community-development>



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