



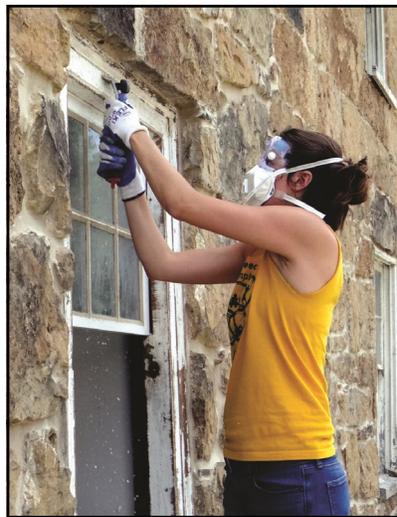
Appalachian Forest Heritage Area

Accomplishments 2015

AFHA promotes rural community development through heritage tourism development and forest conservation.

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area celebrates the central Appalachian forest — its history, culture, natural history, forest management and products. This grassroots partnership works in West Virginia and western Maryland to explore the relationship between the Appalachian highlands forest and the people who live within it.

- ◆ **Appalachian Forest Discovery Center** - Over 1700 visitors to our new museum in Elkins, WV. Visitors explored the Discover AFHA exhibit and rotating exhibit “Homespun and Handmade: Culture in the AFHA”, and enjoyed a traditional music concert series.
- ◆ **Partnerships** -- Strengthened partnerships with forest industry, public lands managers, environmentalists, historic and cultural sites, CVBs and tourism businesses, and community development groups.
- ◆ **Interpretation** - Cultural heritage tourism development included new interpretive signage at Rothkugel Plantation and the Highland Scenic Highway.
- ◆ **Conservation** -- Activities included non-native invasive species awareness and control, and support of native species ecosystems.
- ◆ **National Recognition** -- *Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area Bill* introduced in House of Representatives (*HR 693*). National Heritage Area designation will bring us national recognition and increased capacity to support local communities. While working towards National recognition, AFHA continues to operate as a heritage area, including partner membership in the Alliance of National Heritage Areas.



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APPALACHIAN FOREST HERITAGE AREA AMERICORPS PROGRAMS



AFHA AmeriCorps programs benefit West Virginia communities.

In the most recent program year, 38 AFHA AmeriCorps members served over 65,000 hours benefiting local communities. They improved over 1700 acres and managed over 1,000 volunteers. Each member completes at least one substantial project that would not otherwise get done, while providing direct community service.

CONSERVATION:

- ◆ Improving public lands and stewardship through tree plantings, trail improvements, and native species propagation.
- ◆ Non-native invasive species removal and habitat restoration.
- ◆ Raising conservation and stewardship awareness through interpretive displays and outreach programs.
- ◆ Conducting science education programs in public schools.
- ◆ Research and monitoring for wildlife, watershed, ecosystem and wilderness management.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- ◆ Rehabilitating historic structures including needs assessments, energy efficiency, façade and structural projects.
- ◆ Helping save iconic community structures through adaptive reuse.
- ◆ Reducing dilapidated buildings to support community revitalization.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Revitalizing communities with Main Street, ON TRAC, and other community development groups.
- ◆ Networking and supporting arts, cultural and heritage opportunities.
- ◆ Building capacity for community organizations through improving volunteerism.

HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Encouraging tourist visitation by improving visitor experience.
- ◆ Developing Interpretive exhibits, signs, and brochures about local heritage.
- ◆ Saving community history through archives, collections, and oral history.
- ◆ Creating and growing community events.

AFHA AmeriCorps projects included Bat Week environmental awareness event, *Paint the Town* downtown Parsons volunteer cleanup, replacement of deteriorated cedar shake roof on CCC pavilion, and a new downtown business brochure for Elkins tourists.

Members provide one year of service to their sites. Through this they gain professional experience and an education award. The AFHA AmeriCorps program instills volunteer ethic in our members, which they then take with them and share with others throughout their lives.

