

# 2021 Annual Report



*Discover the Appalachian Forest!*

Dear AFNHA Stakeholders,

Our 2021 Annual Report follows in several sections. Please review it thoroughly for its content. On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are delighted to share our organizational progress.

This year was a productive time for Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area [AFNHA], as elements of our Management Plan were assembled for eventual review by the National Park Service. The Management Plan is a statutory obligation of our 2019 Congressional designation as a National Heritage Area.

I would also like to list some of the highlights of the work undertaken this year for your consideration. Our relationship with partner, Eastern Community and Technical College, grew into formation of the Potomac Highlands Creative Economy initiative—a forum of information sharing, convened regularly by AFNHA—to elevate sustained and appropriate economic development in a large segment of our 18-counties catchment area in West Virginia and western Maryland.

Yet another key happening was the gracious award of a substantial grant for economic development in the region by the Benedum Foundation.

The continuing and increasingly productive working relationship with our consulting firm, Point Heritage Development Consulting, has helped focus our organizational goals and methods, to be implemented over the next several years.

Whether visitor or resident, we strive to provide the best-of-the-best experience in the extensive boundaries of AFNHA.

We invite YOU to join us in our work!

Sincerely,



Robert C. 'Bob' Johnson  
Board President  
Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area



## Board of Directors

**Robert Johnson - President**  
**David McGill - Vice President**  
**Anne Beardslee - Treasurer**  
**Travis Miller - Secretary**

**Kent Walker**  
**Susan Williams**  
**Eric Carlson**  
**Deidra Ritchie**  
**Jackie Burns**  
**JoLynn Powers**  
**Josh Spiker**



## Staff and AmeriCorps

### Staff:

**Phyllis Baxter** *Executive Director*  
**Logan Smith** *Deputy Director*  
**Chrissy Hall** *AmeriCorps Program Manager*  
**Lukas Ray** *Communications Manager*

### AmeriCorps:

**Lindsay Dobrovolny** *(until July 2021)*  
**Dayla Woller** *(Apr. 2021-Aug. 2021)*  
**Haley Shreve** *(since Aug. 2021)*  
**Maria Bray** *(since Aug. 2021)*  
**Lydia Plescher** *(since Aug. 2021)*  
**Steven DeVita** *(since Dec. 2021)*

# Management Planning



In March 2019, Appalachian Forest Heritage Area was designated a National Heritage Area with 3 years to develop our Management Plan. The plan will need extensive public input to shape how we best serve our 18-county region in West Virginia and western Maryland. The first year was spent getting funding in place, and selecting our consultant team, Point Heritage Development Consultants. The second year focused on extensive virtual public and task group meetings, along with extensive travel with our consultant team and 2021 would see the actual drafting of our the completed Management Plan for designation, to be turned in to the NPS my mid- 2022.

2021 was a big year for AFNHA Management Planning, led by our consultant team Point Heritage Development Consultants, working in partnership with AFNHA staff and board. The team conducted interviews, research, and 10 planning meeting events, most virtually, including public meeting and stakeholder task groups. We completed a situational analysis, revision of themes and mission, and received input towards goals and priorities. New goals were drafted to better fit the newly revised mission of AFNHA, all with extensive public input from task groups and public meetings.



All these tasks came to fruition at the public, in-person Exchange Camp held at 4H Camp Pioneer in late July. Here, over 75 community partners, stakeholders, and participants gave feedback in 8 different sessions created to touch base on all topics important to the future work of AFNHA. These topics were: Arts, Culture and Traditions, Historic Preservation, Visitor Experience, Natural Resources, Outdoor Recreation, Community Development, Interpretation and Education, and the Partnerships/Communications Network.

Using these notes and feedback, we hosted a final group of public meetings to present findings and garner feedback on consultant suggestions. Now the plan goes to the Point Hertiage team, to craft the Management Plan that will be presented to the NPS and Congress. Then the Point Heritage team started work on drafting the plan that will be submitted mid-2022.



Thank you to all who participated in the Organization Structure/Management, Interpretation/Visitor Experience, and the Asset Stewardship/Enhancement task groups, along with all the sub-groups! The input we received from YOU was vital in revising our mission statement, goals for the organization, our interpretive themes, and much more! We owe you a debt of gratitude, and hope you continue to stay involved in AFNHA and our bright future.

Thank you!

AFNHA, with help from the Mission Task Group, rewrote our organizations mission to more concisely reflect the purpose of our organization! Take a look:



**Old Mission:**

The AFNHA mission is to work locally to conserve, develop, interpret, and promote a regional network of forest-based resources and experiences in the highlands of West Virginia and Maryland for the enjoyment and appreciation of residents and visitors in order to enhance economic and community development.

**New Mission:**

The Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area conserves, interprets and promotes forest heritage to enhance landscapes and communities in the highlands of West Virginia and Maryland.

Top: Sites Homestead, US Forest Service  
Right: Spruce Knob View, USFS



**In 2021, AFNHA....**

- Hosted over 200 participants in:
  - 2 virtual public meeting.
  - 7 virtual Task Group meetings.
  - 1 Partners Roundtable with community and organizational leaders.
  - 1 in-person public “Community Exchange” meeting to gather feedback on specific goals and actions to go into the management plan.
- Spent almost 500 hours planning and conducting Management Planning.
- Point Heritage Development Consultants returned to our region with more on-the-ground planning.
- Reached over 500 people through outreach events.



# 2020-2021 AmeriCorps Cohort



**AmeriCorps**  
West Virginia

- Cassidy Attanasio *MNF Seneca Rocks*
- Ben Bafaloukos *Green Bank Observatory*
- Jessica Black *Beverly Heritage Center*
- Adam Brinson *Beverly Heritage Center*
- Alex Brown *MNF Heritage Programs*
- Sydney Calton *MNF Bartow Watershed*
- Thomas Claffey *US Fish and Wildlife Service*
- Emily Culp *MNF Marlinton*
- Diana DeLuca *Parsons Pro OnTrac*
- Julia Derringer *MNF Marlinton*
- Kaitlyn Deskins *WV Div. of Forestry*
- Lindsay Dobrovolny *AFNHA Discovery Center*
- Hannah Fuller *Augusta Heritage Center*
- Morgan Glup *Elkins Welcome Depot*
- Patrick Hecht *The Nature Conservancy*
- Spencer Kuchle *Randolph/Upshur Historical Society*
- Emily Langer *Canaan Valley Wildlife Refuge*
- Kalee Paxton *MNF Marlinton*
- Emma Pringle *WV Railroad Museum*
- Eric Schwartz *Elkins Tree Board/Main Street*
- Hannah Scrafford *MNF Marlinton*
- Abi Smith *Greenbrier Historical Society*
- Kristen Stafford *MNF MonForest Towns*
- Hannah Studdard *Canaan Valley Wildlife Refuge*
- Claire Tryon *Arthurdale Heritage*
- Sam Urban *US Fish and Wildlife Service*
- Dayla Woller *AFNHA/WVU Biochar/Pollinator*



# AmeriCorps Program



Over 93,000 total  
Hours Served

31 Sites Served



Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE**



**AmeriCorps**  
West Virginia

## 2021 Partner Site Sub-Sponsors





# AmeriCorps Member Spotlights!



I am so thankful for the year that I spent serving as an AmeriCorps through AFNHA with the USFS. I met so many incredible people and genuinely felt welcomed and supported throughout my time in West Virginia. The bulk of my service year was spent working with the Mon Forest Towns partnership - a coalition of ten Monongahela National Forest gateway towns working together to develop strong recreational economies. It was inspiring to work alongside folks who care so deeply about the places they call home, and it was the passion of community members that made my work so fulfilling. In addition to my work furthering MFT initiatives, I was also able to further my knowledge and skills in the environmental science realm by assisting USFS professionals. I recently accepted a job as Watershed Outreach Coordinator with an environmental non-profit called WaterWays in Chattanooga, TN. I apply the field and outreach skills that I gained during my AmeriCorps year frequently in my new position, and I continue to try to make a difference in my local community at a grassroots level. I will always treasure the relationships I made and the beautiful places that I was able to explore whilst living in Marlinton, WV. Many thanks to AFNHA for providing such wonderful opportunities for AmeriCorps members, their sites, and their communities! **-Emily Culp, MNF**

My experience with AFNHA and the Beverly Heritage Center was beyond phenomenal. With my first year as an AmeriCorps, it helped me grow into a more confident person. Through my service I have learned that I have a passion for serving communities and helping others. I have also learned that as an AmeriCorps you have to be passionate about change in big and small ways. This program is a wonderful opportunity to gain one-on-one hands-on experience from museum professionals. You will continuously work on resume builders throughout your service. With the combined experience of my first and second year as an AmeriCorps, I was accepted into George Washington University's Museum Education Graduate Program! The AFNHA AmeriCorps program gets you out of your comfort zone and helps you grow as an individual. You have to experience the beautiful scenery of the wild and wonderful state! Come see what AFNHA and West Virginia has to offer! **-Jessica Black, Beverly Heritage Center**



"During my time on AFNHA's Pollinator Initiative, I had the opportunity to create and run the first pollinator conservation conference in the Appalachian Forest Region, bring on eight official Pollinator Initiative partners, and plan and install a native pollinator garden with interpretive signage in a community park. This position gave me the opportunity to take the lead on a range of projects and bring my own vision for pollinator conservation to life, something I would not have been able to do elsewhere. Additionally, AFNHA's AmeriCorps program provides the unique chance to receive service hours assisting other AmeriCorps members in the program. This became a highlight for me during my time at AFNHA because I was able to explore what it was like to work in the Forest Service and work on a team with other members in the program." **-Dayla Woller, AFNHA Pollinator Initiative**



2021 was a successful year for the AmeriCorps program! All the members continued to navigate a world shook by COVID-19 but still found ways to succeed! Outdoor projects and community development returned in full force! 27 members continued to serve from January to August 2021. We welcomed 24 new members in September 2021 with 12 returning members for a total 36 members !



Conservation Members improved 695 acres of land through tree plantings, removing invasive species, and restoring watersheds, plus monitored conditions on 9,208 acres.

Environmental outreach and education reached over 1,930 youth and 8,550 adults.

Community Development Members accomplished local community projects and enhanced cultural heritage tourism exhibits, programs, and events for museums, historic sites, and arts organizations. Members provided services to around 50,035 community members through public (25%) and online outreach (75%).

(Online engagement was heavy in 2021 due to the pandemic.)



**AmeriCorps**  
West Virginia

Visit our website to learn more about the AmeriCorps program!  
[www.afnha.org/ameriCorps](http://www.afnha.org/ameriCorps)

In 2021, project staff continued work to develop Monongahela Outdoor Volunteers under the ARC technical assistance grant “Creating a Sustainable Volunteer Trail Maintenance Program: A Key Requirement for Achieving Economic Development through Recreational Tourism”. Accomplishments for the year included completion of a business plan detailing programs designed to help communities around the Monongahela National Forest (MNF) transition to and sustainably support a trail-based recreation economy, with an initial focus on the Gauley Ranger District. The plan covers both startup and sustainability phases with two interdependent programs aimed at both preparing trail infrastructure for visitors (the trail maintenance program) and preparing local communities for success in a trail-based recreation economy (the “Volunteers-to-Careers” program). Additionally, staff completed trail work inventories to inform future projects and organized several pilot volunteer outings to identify lessons learned as well as cross-cutting themes to guide development of the volunteer component of the trail maintenance program during implementation. Through SRS RAC support, MOV obtained a sawyer and assistant and maintained 60 miles of trails in the Gauley Ranger District, with a special emphasis on clearing and restoring two popular trails that had not received significant maintenance over the past several years (Cowpasture and Kennison Mountain Trails). The group additionally secured funding for tools and equipment to support future volunteer trail work.



In the upcoming year, MOV staff will continue its efforts to grow local volunteerism and increase trail use to improve the level of readiness for implementation. The group will continue progress on improving the user experience on the 60 miles of trails currently advertised for mountain biking and hiking and will work to improve marketing of gravel biking resources. To inform future improvements in the Cranberry Wilderness area, they will complete additional trail work inventories. Additionally, MOV leadership will work to increase stakeholder understanding of requirements for sustaining trail-based recreation, informed by a readiness assessment completed as part of planning activities.



Cranberry Glades by Backpacker Magazine



# Highlands Creative Economy



**EASTERN**  
West Virginia Community & Technical College



**Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area**

An AFNHA and Eastern-WVCTC Partnership



**Potomac Highlands**  
WEST VIRGINIA


AFNHA received a grant award from the Benedum Foundation for \$150,000 to continue and expand the Highlands Creative Economy group to the entirety of the 18-county AFNHA region in West Virginia and eastern Maryland. In partnership with Eastern WV Community and Technical College, this project works to grow tourism and improve communities in the region and grow networking opportunities' for all!

In 2021 we hosted 8 Highlands Creative Economy Meetings, and our average attendance was 35, with 144 individuals and organizations on our mailing list. The 2021 Tourism Summit, hosted virtually, attracted over 75 attendees. AFNHA launched the first ever Tourism Development mini-Grant, spearheaded and funded from the creative economy efforts. Awards for the grant will come in 2022!

The Highlands Creative Economy group meets monthly and is open to tourism attractions, businesses, and service providers. For more information or to get involved, contact us at [afnha@afnha.org](mailto:afnha@afnha.org) or 304-636-6182. Visit [www.afnha.org/creative-economy](http://www.afnha.org/creative-economy) to learn more!

The AFNHA Pollinator Initiative went full-speed in 2021! AFNHA was able to hire an AmeriCorps member to spearhead the initiative in the region. Dayla Woller served in the position from April-August 2021 and Haley Shreve has served in the position since September 2021.

Due to the severity of declines in pollinator species abundance, it is critical to expand efforts and take new steps to reverse local pollinator losses, restore populations, and improve habitats. In 2021, AFNHA received 10 new pledges to support pollinators in our region! These came from the City of Elkins, Appalachian Headwaters, the City of Frostburg, the City of Philippi, the Town of Cowen, the City of Oakland, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Beverly Heritage Center, Green Forest Works, and the Town of Mountain Lake Park. Thank you to these partners!



**POLLINATOR INITIATIVE**  
Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area

**BUILD YOUR OWN POLLINATOR GARDEN!**

- site location**  
somewhere with lots of sunlight
- site preparation**  
remove grass, weeds and any other potential competition
- plant selection**  
native plants with a variety of bloom times and colors
- maintenance**  
for the first few years, you'll need to keep a close eye on any unwanted plants creeping in

For more information, visit the Pollinator Initiative tab on the AFNHA website, or email [pollinator@afnha.org](mailto:pollinator@afnha.org)!

**Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area**  
Where History is Growing

Pollinators produce one in every three bites of food that we eat, and are crucial for supporting the plants and ecosystems in the Appalachian forest region. Unfortunately, pollinators are in trouble because of habitat loss, increased pesticide use, disease and climate change. The good news is that YOU can help make a difference!



Sign the pledge today! Email us at [pollinator@afnha.org](mailto:pollinator@afnha.org) to find out how!



# Pollinator Initiative





# Financials



## Formal Partners

Appalachian Regional Commission  
 Arthurdale Heritage Inc.  
 Artspring Inc.  
 Augusta Heritage Center  
 Benedum Foundation  
 Beverly Heritage Center  
 Camp Pioneer

Cass Scenic Railroad State Park  
 City of Elkins, WV  
 Corporation for National and Community Service  
 Elkins Depot Welcome Center  
 Elkins Main Street  
 Eastern WVCTC  
 Friends of the 500th  
 Green Bank Observatory  
 Greenbrier Historical Society  
 Kump Education Center  
 Mineral County Historical Foundation  
 North American National Forestry Association  
 National Park Service  
 Parsons ON-TRAC  
 Pocahontas County Historic Land Commission  
 Point Heritage Development Consultants  
 Potomac Highlands and R&G CWPMA  
 Randolph County Historical Society  
 Snowshoe Foundation  
 The Nature Conservancy  
 Trout Unlimited  
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
 Upshur County Historical Society  
 USDA Monongahela National Forest  
 Volunteer West Virginia  
 Woodlands Development Group  
 WV Division of Forestry  
 WV Humanities Council  
 WV Railroad Museum



Proud Partner of the  
 National Park Service

### Total Revenue

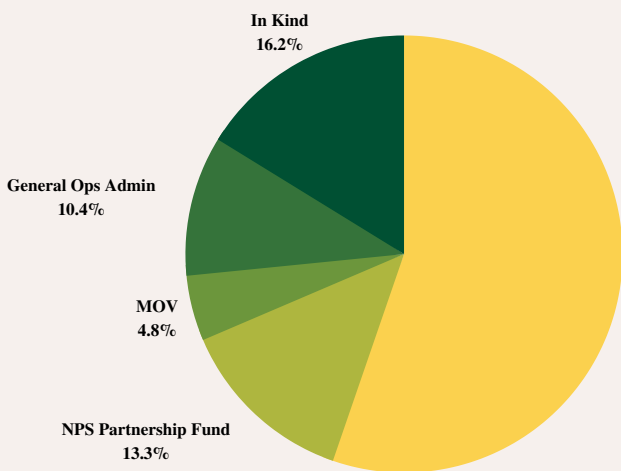
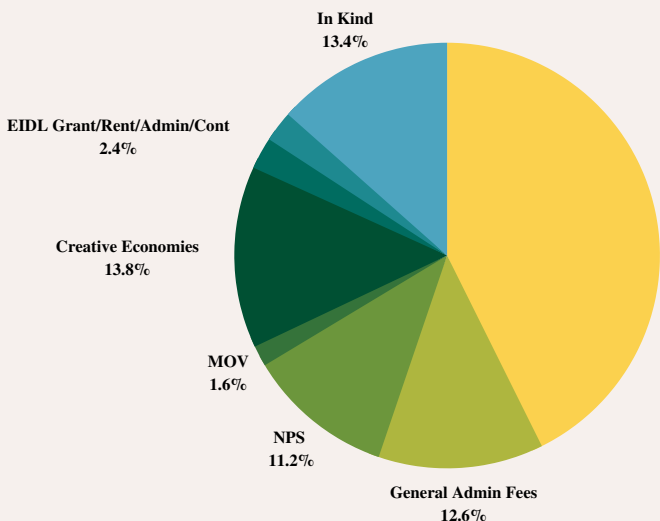
AmeriCorps Grant  
 42.7%

AmeriCorps Grant	\$329,251.00
General Administrative Fees	\$136,341.00
NPS Partnership Funds	\$121,167.00
Mon Outdoor Volunteers	\$17,211.00
Highlands Creative Economy	\$150,000.00
EIDL Grant	\$10,000.00
Rent	\$3,105.00
Admin Services	\$5,414.00
Contributions	\$7,821.00
Other Income	\$25,471.00
In Kind	\$146,001.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$951,782.00</b>

### Total Expenses

AmeriCorps Program  
 55.3%

AmeriCorps Program	\$497,633.00
NPS Partnership Fund	\$119,685.00
Mon Outdoor Volunteers	\$43,628.00
General Admin and Operations	\$93,328.00
In-Kind Direct Expenses	\$146,001.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$900,275.00</b>



The Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area is a 501(c)(3) organizations with EIN: 20-0815517

Please contact Logan Smith at [logan@afnha.org](mailto:logan@afnha.org) if you would like more financial information including a copy of our 990

