

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area 2016

Promoting rural community development through heritage tourism and forest conservation.

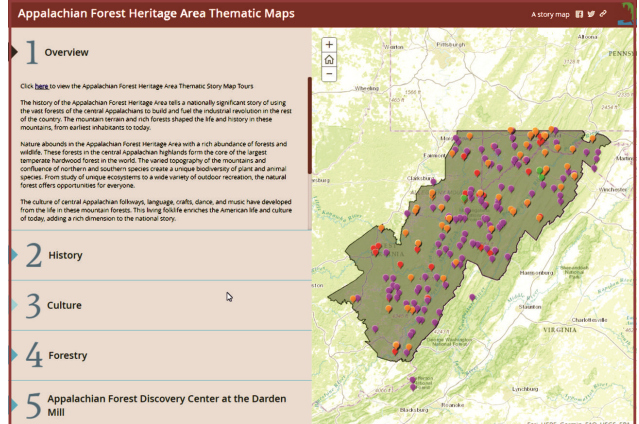
Appalachian Forest Heritage Area celebrates the central Appalachian forest: its history, culture, natural history, forest management and products. This grassroots partnership works in West Virginia and western Maryland to explore the relationship between the Appalachian highlands forest and the people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

- **Appalachian Forest Discovery Center** – AFHA Museum in downtown Elkins encourages visitors to explore sites all across our area. The Discover AFHA exhibit showcases Nature, History, Culture, and Forestry. The 2016 exhibit featured “Working in the Woods: Logging in the AFHA”
- **Tourism** – AFHA is developing new on-line Thematic Story Map Tours of AFHA sites. The first Tour on “Early Settlement” is at: www.appalachianforest.us/visit.htm
- **Interpretation** – AFHA partnered to complete new interpretive signs for the Highland Scenic Highway.
- **Conservation** – AFHA supported non-native invasive species awareness efforts, and endangered species training.
- **Partnerships** – AFHA expanded partnerships with forest industry, natural, historic, and cultural sites, and tourism and community development efforts. A new partnership this year was with the Mountain Music Trail
- **National Recognition** – National Heritage Area designation will bring national recognition and more capacity to help local communities. AFHA is active now as a grassroots heritage area, including membership in the Alliance of National Heritage Areas.



**Appalachian
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APPALACHIAN FOREST HERITAGE AREA
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Appalachian Forest Heritage Area AmeriCorps

Benefiting West Virginia Communities

In the most recent program year, 38 AFHA AmeriCorps members served over 64,700 hours helping 31 sites in local communities. They improved 2647 acres of public land and served over 37,870 people. Members complete projects that would not otherwise get done, while providing direct community service.

Conservation:

- Red spruce plantings and restoration activities on 567 acres.
- Controlled invasive species on 1575 acres with up to 97% kill rate; managed 269 volunteers to pull 2,930# of garlic mustard.
- Restored over 400 acres of wetland habitat that benefited 43 miles of streams with increased native trout.
- Environmental outreach programs reached over 3000 people.

Historic Preservation

- The AFHA Hands On Historic Preservation team partnered with 11 organizations to complete 15 rehabilitation projects.
- Roofed CCC pavilion, painted historic fire tower cabin, protected a Civil War site, restored windows and plaster for community historic buildings.
- The AFHA Hands On Team was nationally recognized for its partnership with the Monongahela National Forest Heritage Program, including a USDA radio blog:
<https://audioarchives.oc.usda.gov/node/649>

Heritage Tourism and Community Development

- 6 tourism sites assisted by AFHA AmeriCorps members reported 9.4% increase in visitation from previous year.
- AFHA AmeriCorps helped reuse historic buildings, created jobs in business incubators, and supported community events.
- Saved community history through archives and collections, and developed exhibits, signs, and brochures about local heritage.

Volunteer Capacity

- AFHA AmeriCorps members managed 1365 volunteers, and 16 sites reported improved volunteer management practices.
- A recent impact study of Volunteer Management for sites assisted by AFHA AmeriCorps found significantly higher volunteer capacity than sites without AmeriCorps members.
- All organizations receiving volunteer management support from AFHA AmeriCorps members reported that these volunteers helped the organizations be more effective.

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

