

Winter Greetings!

National Heritage Area Bill

By Phyllis Baxter
AFHA Executive Director

A bill to designate the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on February 3, 2015. HR 693 was introduced by Congressman David MCKinley (WV-1) with co-sponsorship from Congressmen Evan Jenkins (WV-3), Alex Mooney (WV-2), and John Delaney (MD-6). The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources. This is the first time that the AFHA bill has been introduced in the House. A Senate bill was introduced in 2013, and is expected to be re-introduced in the coming months.

Designation as a National Heritage Area will bring recognition of the national significance of the area, marketing and technical assistance from the National Park Service, and potential matching funds for Heritage Area local projects. There are currently 49 other National Heritage Areas across the country, each designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape. National Heritage Areas provide a grassroots, community-driven approach to heritage conservation and economic development.

AFHA supporters are encouraged to thank your Congressman for his support for this bill. For more information on how you can help, watch our website at www.appalachianforest.us/heritagearea.htm



Don't forget out next concert: Jesse Milnes & Emily Miller with Gerry Milnes on Wednesday February 25th at 7:30pm Darden Mill in Elkins <http://tinyurl.com/pw2h5p> for more info.

SITES



~OF THE~ MONTH

Experience the heritage of your area! *Sites of the Month* spotlights events and locations within the region, based on AFHA's four themes: forestry, history, culture, and nature.

Canaan Valley Wildlife Refuge

By Miriam Gunderson

AFHA AmeriCorps Conservation Team Member



Snapping turtle hatchling at the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Rachel Fedders.

I started as an AmeriCorps in September serving at the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge and my favorite part of the experience so far has been exploring the Refuge. I grew up on the West Coast and was inspired to move to West Virginia because I wanted to learn about a completely different landscape. Since coming here, I've seen newly hatched snapping turtles, red spruce saplings, a beaver dam, wood frogs, and a lot of other amazing wildlife. I've always been fascinated by plants; in kindergarten I told my teacher that I wanted to grow up to be a tree. Unfortunately, I haven't managed to reach that goal, but getting out into the woods and serving at a national wildlife refuge has been a pretty good alternative.

Exploring isn't the only thing I've been up to. Part of my position is facilitating the start of a volunteer run phenology program that monitors plant species on the Refuge. Phenology is known as the science of the

At a peak elevation of 3,930 feet, [Kumbrabow State Forest](#) in Randolph County is the highest state forest in West Virginia. Acquired by the state from Midland Corporation at the end of 1934, the land that makes up the forest had passed through the hands of a total of four timber companies prior to that time. Since the end of the logging boom, forestry management practices have resulted in phenomenal growth. Previously covered by red spruce and damaged by fires after the logging boom, the Forest is now home to impressive stands of black cherry and oak-hickory in addition to some reestablished red spruce. Recreational opportunities include camping, picnic areas, and fully furnished pioneer cabins (five of which were built by the CCC in the 1930s) for rent.

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year. These changes, called phenophases, include flowering, emergence of insects and bird migration. Phenology is becoming an increasingly important and recognized science because it is one of the best methods to monitor biological responses to climate change. Any and all volunteers who are interested in joining or learning more about phenology are welcome!



L-R: Alex Hodges & Mimi Gunderson leading a Snowshoe Discovery Tour. Photo by Emily Peters.

Another one of my projects has been creating a tour as part of the Discovery Snowshoe Tours that are given at Whitegrass Touring Ski area. I've co-lead two tours with other AmeriCorps, one focused on winter tree identification with Alex Hodges, who is serving at the

The [Sites Homestead](#) is part of the [Seneca Rocks Discovery Center](#), with the original single cabin having been built by German settler Jacob Sites in 1839 and occupied by four generations of the family over 100 years. Around the 1860s the house was expanded to two stories. It was later abandoned in the middle of the 20th century and then purchased by the Forest Service in 1968, falling into further disrepair until rehabilitation and reopening took place in 1991. It now stands as a window to the time when the region was settled with events featuring interpreters in period dress, old-time music, and craft demonstrations.

The grounds also contain heirloom gardens featuring vegetables, herbs, and flowers that were common in the late 19th century.



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serving at the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge. There are snowshoe discovery tours almost every Sunday from January to March and they are a great opportunity to check out Whitegrass and the Refuge while learning more about Canaan Valley!

If anyone is interested in either of these programs, please email marian_gunderson@fws.gov

Eastern Hemlock Restoration

By Hannah Devine

AFHA AmeriCorps Conservation Team Member

The Forest Service and Trout Unlimited initiated a partnership in 2013 to restore the resiliency of declining Eastern Hemlock stands throughout the Monongahela National Forest. Over the past decade, the spread of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, an invasive insect pest native to Asia, has crippled the Hemlock population across the Northeast.



An Eastern Hemlock shading Otter Creek. Hemlocks limit temperature fluctuations and keep streams cool.

[The Garrett County Arts Council](#), based in Oakland, MD, promotes community arts development in Western Maryland through a variety of means including its [Gallery Shop](#) that displays the work of more than 150 artists and artisans and hosts workshops and demonstrations. The organization maintains a [calendar of events](#) and publishes an annual literary journal, *Ginseng*. It also organizes an annual Heritage Craft Festival during the Autumn Glory Festival and awards grants to local organizations and schools to fund arts activities.



[Barnum Whitewater Area](#) lies along the North Branch of the Potomac River in Mineral County. Located below Jennings Randolph Lake, there are seven miles of whitewater rafting, four miles of rail trail, and excellent trout fishing

I assisted the Trout Unlimited crew this past fall with the second year of pesticide treatment to combat the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid infestation. We trekked out to one of the 41 designated Hemlock Conservation Areas on the Forest carrying all the gear and pesticide we would need for the day. We donned chest waders to ensure we could cross any streams since the locations were off-trail. The pesticide we used is a liquid that is injected directly into trunk of the tree. This requires drilling holes in the base of the trunk and hammering plugs in the holes. The pesticide is then poured into a pressurized canister and secured with a lid attached to a set of tubes and needles. The needle-like ends are then inserted in to the plugs and the valves are opened to feed the pesticide into the vascular tissue of the tree. Once set up, the system looked like elaborate science experiment with tubes jutting out in every direction. The tree is essentially on life support. Then the waiting game began. The rate at which the tree takes up pesticide is dependent on several factors, including time of day, temperature, and humidity. Some trees can take up to 45 minutes to absorb all the pesticide if transpiration is slowed due to weather. All in all, treating the hemlocks is a boom and bust cycle depending on how finicky the trees were feeling that day.

Helping out the Trout Unlimited crew opened my eyes to the pesticide methods used in the Forest and significance it has for my major project. Pesticide use on natural lands is a controversial issue that may harbor unforeseen negative consequences, one of which is pesticide leaching into nearby streams. In the spring, I will be monitoring stream macroinvertebrates in treated areas to determine if the current pesticide application methods are safe enough for continued use in riparian zones. Hopefully, these findings will allow

place between April and June each year and provide Class I, II, and III rapids, provided there is enough water from the lake.

Do you have a suggestion for *Sites of the Month*?

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info@appalachianforest.us

and let us know your favorite sites throughout AFHA!

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efforts, these trees will survive future decades or even centuries.

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