

DECEMBER 2023

GROWTH RINGS

APPALACHIAN FOREST NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA NEWSLETTER

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Page 1: Intro
- Page 2: Staff Updates
- Page 3: New Stories
- Page 4: AmeriCorps
- Page 5: Regional Events

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.



Big news!

Since our designation as a National Heritage Area in 2019, our organization has grown from a small staff of three to a strong team of seven. In August 2023 our Management Plan was approved, providing direction for the future. Now, we are preparing for another big change. Our longtime leader, Phyllis Baxter, will step down in 2024, and Logan Smith will step up to become our new Executive Director.

Read more on the next page...

As 2023 comes to a close, we invite you to have a look at some of our accomplishments this year and consider making a gift to AFNHA! Learn more by clicking [HERE!](#)



Phyllis received a gift from our Board to recognize her years of leadership

Celebrate with AFNHA!

Phyllis has been involved with the Appalachian National Heritage Area (AFNHA) since the beginning. For over 20 years, she has helped achieve all our important milestones. She has provided excellent vision and leadership at every step. She was there for the initial stakeholder meetings that helped establish the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area (AFHA) as a non-profit organization. Phyllis was instrumental in starting our long-running AmeriCorps program and advocating for the congressional legislation that established our National Heritage Area, creating AFNHA.

Logan has been involved since 2008 and, as Deputy Director, has supported much of the day-to-day operations of our organization. Now he will take on a larger role of leadership in managing and planning our programs.

To assist with the long-term development of our organization we have also brought on Larry Jent as Fiscal Sustainability Director. Larry brings deep connections to Appalachian culture and a wealth of experience in nonprofit management. He will help us begin our next chapter as we plan for our future.

Help us recognize these accomplishments and welcome this new era at our upcoming celebration: Friday, January 26, 4:30 - 6:30 p.m. Appalachian Forest Discovery Center 101 Railroad Ave, Elkins. Come and go as you please. Presentation at 5:30. Light refreshments will be served. Virtual attendance will be available.



Larry Jent (left); Logan Smith and Phyllis Baxter (right)



New Stories

Forest Abundance StoryMap

The Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area contains some of the most vitally important habitats to protect on this planet. Not only is it one of the most heavily re-forested regions east of the Rockies, but it is also a crucial bridge between Northern and Southern climates due to the vast range of altitudes it provides and the legacy of the last Ice Age. Explore this StoryMap tour to see highland evergreen forests with snowshoe hares, wetlands and grasslands with rare migrating birds, and pristine waterfalls stained by fallen tree needles!

View our new Forest Abundance map [HERE!](#)

America250 in the Appalachian Forest

The First Arthurdale Christmas

“First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was deeply involved in all aspects of the Arthurdale homestead. She watched over the process as the federal government began turning the Arthurdale farm into a community for the long-term unemployed. Mrs. Roosevelt visited Arthurdale in December of 1934 and announced the plans for the homesteaders' first Christmas to the newspapers. Their first Christmas allowed the homesteaders to work together for a joyous occasion.”

Read our latest story by Jeanne Goodman [HERE!](#)



Arthurdale Homestead (Library of Congress)

AmeriCorps

Haikus from the Monongahela National Forest

By Eden Gervasio

Golden light through trees
Highlights of Red and Orange
Sun sinks behind hills



This year AFNHA is assisting the forest service in completing the National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey. Being a surveyor provides a wonderful opportunity to travel around the state and enjoy the beauty of our forest, as well as write a few haikus!

Read more of Eden's haikus [HERE!](#)

Service Projects

Each winter, our AmeriCorps members coordinate community service projects to celebrate the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Day of Service. Some of this year's projects will include:

Food Drive

Collecting non-perishable food items for Blackwater Ministerial Food Pantry. Accepting donations until December 20th. Drop off Wednesday-Saturday 10 am-4 pm at Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center (6263 Appalachian Highway, Davis, WV 26260)

Dardenfest

Concert to benefit Arts Bank Inc. and the Nourishing Feasts & Farmacy project Saturday, January 20th at the Darden Mill (101 Railroad Ave, Elkins).

Featuring performances by: Fair Play, Gerry Milnes, Born Old, Val Mindel & Mike Miller, and The Flying Kimura Brothers (Josh Wanstreet & Chris Lovejoy). Ticket info and more details TBA.

Events

Click links for more info

- Dec 15-23 | [North Pole Express](#) | Romney
- Dec 16 | [Cocoa Crawl](#) | Oakland
- Dec 16 | [Christmas at Cass Cookie Bake-off & Bingo](#) | Cass Scenic Railroad
- Dec 16 | [Hacker Valley Christmas Program](#)
- Dec 16 | [Christmas Music](#) | Elk River Hotel & Cafe
- Dec 16 | [Craft Sale & Concert](#) | Berkeley Springs
- Dec 17 | [Petersburg Christmas Parade](#)
- Dec 17 | [Joy to Lewisburg Holiday Concert](#) | Carnegie Hall
- Dec 18 | [Monthly Mingle & Coat Drive](#) | The Oakford Pool Hall
- Dec 19 | [A Taste of Civility](#) | LaVale Library
- Dec 21 | [Christmas Stroll](#) | Philippi
- Dec 21 | "Out of the Woods" Webinar: [Successful Season Prep Panel](#)
- Dec 31 | [Elkins Barn Dance Collective Winter Dance](#) | YMCA
- Jan 1 | [First Day Hike](#) | Blackwater Falls State Park
- Jan 13 | [Winter Hiking Series](#) | Upshur County Trails Recreational Complex
- Jan 16 | [Appalachian Book Club](#) | Arthurdale Heritage

Regional News

WV Department of Tourism announces [West Virginia Culinary Trail](#), and [Train Your Team program](#) to provide free and low-cost professional development and training to tourism and hospitality businesses

Outdoor Recreational Institute Opens at [Frostburg State University](#)

The Nature Conservancy and partners announce [grant program](#) for farmers to expand agroforestry plantings



Follow Us On Facebook & Instagram!

