



APPALACHIAN FOREST HERITAGE AREA

Exploring the Future for AFHA

by Phyllis Baxter

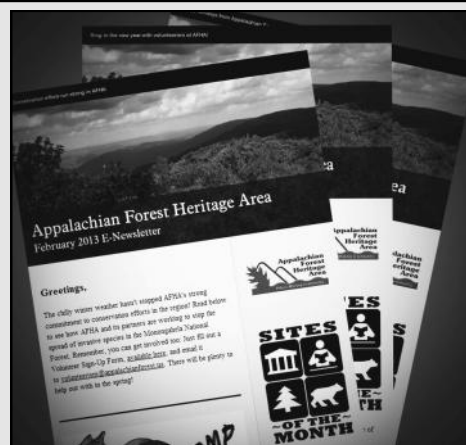
Appalachian Forest Heritage Area is embarking on a planning process to explore future directions and priorities for the organization. An essential part of the planning process will be input from community stakeholders. At the AFHA Stakeholders Meeting, April 12 in Richwood (see below), we will hold the first in a series of public meetings to gather feedback about what the public would like to see AFHA focus on in the future.

One of the possibilities for AFHA is to be designated as a National Heritage Area. Designation would bring the prestige of our forest heritage being publically declared as nationally significant, as well as the possibility of support through the Na-

tional Park Service. AFHA hopes that the planning process can help to raise awareness about this option, and build support to help achieve NHA designation.

All are encouraged to attend one of the public meetings, and/or to submit any comments directly to AFHA. Watch the e-newsletter (see right) and web site over the next few months for dates and locations of additional meetings, and for comment form opportunities.

The management planning process is coordinated with help from students enrolled in the Concord University Recreation Management Department, under leadership of Dr. Susan Williams, an expert on heritage areas. This service learning opportunity is made possible by a Campus-Community Link grant from Campus Compact.



AFHA e-Newsletter

Are you receiving AFHA's e-newsletter in your inbox? It's a great way to stay updated each month on AFHA projects, volunteer opportunities, and news! To sign up, send your contact info to: info@appalachianforest.us

Stakeholder Meeting Agenda

9:00 am - guided tour at Collins Hardwood

10:00 am - AFHA news and AmeriCorps team reports in Richwood City Hall

11:30 am -panel discussion led by Blueprint Communities in Richwood City Hall

CATERED LUNCH

12:30 pm - public meeting, discussion of AFHA accomplishments and future directions in Richwood City Hall

2013 AFHA Spring Stakeholders Meeting

- **Friday, April 12, 2013**
- **Richwood, Nicholas County, WV**

Richwood has a real sense of history and tradition based in the timber industry, which is still running strong today. The city's rich forest heritage provides a perfect backdrop for AFHA's Spring Stakeholders Meeting. Come share in the exciting work going on with AFHA projects, and learn how to get involved!

RSVP: Please e-mail info@appalachianforest.us or call **304-636-6182**

Lodging: Four Seasons Lodge / (304) 846 - 4605 or Toll Free (800) 829 - 4605

Collins Hardwood:
108 E Main Street
Richwood, WV 26261
304.846.2504

Richwood City Hall:
6 White Avenue
Richwood, WV 26261
304.846.2596

Discovering a Sense of Place in Aurora



Peeking through the trees are a few of the Aurora Project's historic buildings, many of which are being restored.

By Audrey Stefenson

Six months ago, I signed on as an AFHA AmeriCorps volunteer with the Aurora Project, the only multidisciplinary Artists' Residency and Education Center in West Virginia. The Aurora Project has been working to revitalize rural historic properties, once part of a 19th-Century mountain resort, and convert them into art studios and lodging for the organization. Surrounded by high plateau farmland and forested hills, the buildings are situated in the community of Aurora across a rural, two-lane road from Cathedral State Park, a protected old growth forest and a National Natural Landmark.

Driving west across Route 50 on my first trip to Aurora, I was struck by the incredible beauty of the region and was

eager to hear its story. And what an amazing story it has. For nearly 150 years, the inspiring landscape of Aurora has attracted visitors from around the region and the world to explore and appreciate what the region has to offer. Its background as a 19th-Century resort destination, a land grant farming district, and a Depression era location for visiting artists has informed much of this community's narratives and identity.

Recently the Brookside Historic District - which includes Cathedral State Park, Brookside Inn, Brookside Farm, the Red Horse Tavern, and the resort's extant cottages and cabins now owned by the Aurora Project - was approved for listing in the National Register. An important step in honoring Aurora's past, we hope this designation will open more avenues for the Aurora Project property and programs.

With these historical and natural assets in mind, I have been helping to coordinate a series of educational programs that will bring together community residents and visitors with the regions' artists and scholars. Through exploring the cultural and natural contexts of the landscape, and using Cathedral State Park as the main lens and venue, the workshops, films, lectures, after-school activities, and other events in our program will focus on the community's relationship to the land and, more generally, the relationship of art to nature.

In one of the documentaries for our summer film series, Rivers and Tides, artist Andy Goldsworthy tells us: "Art for me is a form of nourishment. [I seek] the energy that is running through, flowing through the landscape. You feel as if you've touched the heart of the place." The Aurora Project's educational programs are about this kind of discovery and showcasing a side of our region that is worth celebrating. We hope folks across the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area and beyond will join us in this exciting journey!



AFHA Spring Volunteer Opportunities

Want to receive up-to-date volunteer opportunities? Email your name and contact info to volunteerism@appalachianforest.us

Red Spruce Planting

The Greenbrier Ranger District watershed team has 6,000 seedlings to plant on Cheat Mountain and along the Upper Greenbrier North watershed. Many of these areas are former mining sites or decommissioned roads. Plantings are on **April 22-26** and **April 29-May 3**. Please sign up ahead of time. Contact:

Woodie Walker
304-456-3335 Ext.128
wlwalker@fs.fed.us

Riparian Zone Planting

Help create spawning habitat for native trout by increasing shade along stream banks (riparian zone). Work involves planting willow branches along the Abe's Run stream. Volunteers are needed **March 28, 29 & 30**, and **April 1-6**. Don't forget boots, as the ground will be wet! Please sign up ahead of time. Contact:

Woodie Walker
304-456-3335 Ext.128
wlwalker@fs.fed.us

Tygart Valley River Clean-up

The City of Elkins hosts a Tygart Valley River Clean-up at **9:00a.m.** on **Saturday, April 13, 2013**. Please meet at the Elkins City Street Dept. Garage. T-shirts, trash bags, gloves, and boots are provided while supplies last. Lunch will be served for volunteers at noon. Please sign up ahead of time. Contact:

Peggy Young
304-635-7021
pblosser@cityofelkinswv.com

AFHA Museum Moves Forward

By Molly Swailes

AFHA projects have a positive impact on thousands of visitors and forest-goers within the region. From making trail improvements, to designing interpretive material, to assisting with cultural programming and heritage development, AFHA is making our area's forest heritage more accessible and visible to visitors. Soon AFHA plans to open a visitor center and exhibit at the historic Darden Mill in Elkins, further expanding capacity for telling the forest heritage story of Appalachia.

For several years, AFHA has been working with C-HOPE (Citizens for Historical Opportunity, Preservation, and

Education) to restore and rehabilitate the Darden Mill. Aiming for first floor occupancy and a grand opening this summer, the building will house C-HOPE, AFHA, and the West Virginia Railroad Museum.

Further moving AFHA exhibit planning forward, the West Virginia Humanities Council has approved mini grant funding for the design and production of an exhibit titled "Discovering the Appalachian Forest". The exhibit will explore the forest's role and influence in society, economy, and politics, both historically and today. It will tell the story of how the forest has shaped people's lives and how people have shaped the forest

throughout history. This exhibit will also serve as a hub, directing visitors to forest heritage sites throughout the entire region.

Today, the Darden Mill is one of only two original Elkins rail yard buildings still standing, a testament to local industrial history. AFHA's partner organizations, volunteers, and everyone else involved in the Darden Mill project are excited to see this former flour mill repurposed and reinvigorated. C-HOPE board member Deborah Farrell eagerly anticipates the building's debut. "We are looking forward to the opening of the first floor of the Darden Mill early this summer. A great deal of work has been put into the restoration and renovation of the Mill and we are just about ready to show it off to the public," stated Farrell.

Join the 2013 Garlic Mustard Challenge!

By Rebecca Urbanczyk

Are you looking for an opportunity to get the family outside for a day of fun? The Garlic Mustard Challenge is a series of events that seeks to provide your family with a day of free, outdoor fun while working to protect the beautiful public lands that we all love. This year, help us attain our goal of removing 50,000 pounds of garlic mustard to help protect our native forests, wildflowers, and wildlife.



This smiling volunteer, carrying an arm-full of garlic mustard, was part of last year's challenge in Petersburg, WV.

Garlic Mustard is a particularly nasty, non-native invasive species. It rapidly spreads, often using waterways, into wooded habitats, and is making its way throughout the beautiful and diverse forest ecosystem of West Virginia. Garlic mustard can quickly take over an area by pushing out native plants. Many wildlife species, including species of wild game, depend on spring native plants for their pollen, nectar, fruits, seeds, and roots. Garlic mustard deprives wildlife of these important food sources when it becomes established.

Join the 2013 Garlic Mustard Challenge and together we can stop the spread of one of the most invasive species found in our state! The Garlic Mustard Challenge is brought to you by the Monongahela National Forest, Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, and the Potomac Highlands Cooperative Weed and Pest Management Area. For more information, please check out our website at: www.phcwpma.org/GarlicMustard.cfm or contact Rebecca Urbanczyk at (304) 636-6182 or rrurbanczyk@fs.fed.us.

Garlic Mustard Challenge events:

All events run from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (except for the Davis and Elkins College event which is from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.)

- April 20th-Greenbrier State Forest
- April 24th- Davis and Elkins College
- April 25th- Fernow Experimental Forest
- April 27th - Seneca Rocks Discovery Center
- April 27th - Greenbrier State Forest
- May 11th-12th - Blue Bend Campground*
- May 18th - Pocahontas 4-H Camp

*Free camping available for volunteers

Thanks to the Garlic Mustard Challenge partners and sponsors!

- All Creatures Great and Small • American Mountain Theatre •
- Applebee's - Elkins • Brewstel: Microbrewery and Hostel •
- CJ Maggie's • Good Energy Foods • Judy's Drug •
- Kroger - Elkins • MeeMee's Café and Cakes •
- Peebles - Elkins • Seneca Caverns • Sheetz - Petersburg •
- Smokehole Caverns • South Branch Valley Liquidators •
- Southside Depot • The Greenbrier Resort •
- The Wellness Center - Parsons • Theatre West Virginia •
- Timberline Resort • Tri-County Honda •
- Walmart - Elkins • YMCA - Elkins •



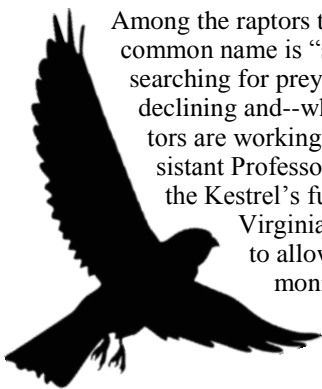
AFHA is on Facebook!



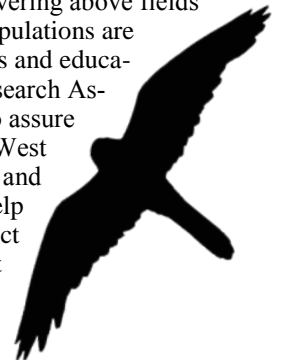
Appalachian Forest Heritage Area
Dave McGill
PO Box 6125
Morgantown, WV 26505

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Looking for Landowners to Help Kestrels



Among the raptors that inhabit North America, American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) are the smallest. In fact, an unofficial common name is “sparrow hawk.” These are birds one might see sitting on telephone wires or hovering above fields searching for prey. They are only about 7-8 inches long. Bird surveys have found that Kestrel populations are declining and--while not listed as threatened-- there are several nationwide groups of researchers and educators are working to maintain the small falcon’s population. Here locally, Dr. Todd Katzner, Research Assistant Professor at West Virginia University is leading a project to study Kestrel’s behavior to assure the Kestrel’s future. In collaboration with the Avian Conservation Centre of Appalachia and West Virginia DNR, Dr. Katzner is asking landowners to be part of a “citizen science” team and to allow the team to install nest boxes on their properties. Selected landowners will help monitor the nest boxes as part of their team effort. If you are interested in this project and have land and the willingness to participate, contact Dr. Todd Katzner at 304-293-7473 or todd.katzner@mail.wvu.edu.



GROWTH RINGS is the periodic newsletter of the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, Inc., in partnership with West Virginia University Division of Forestry and Extension Services. Our 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.



Appalachian Forest Heritage Area

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