

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area

Darden Mill Schedules Grand Opening

By Molly Swailes

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area's doors at the historic Darden Mill will soon be open to the public for scheduled hours. On Friday, April 25th from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. the Darden Mill will host a Grand Opening. Festivities will include appetizers, beverages, a ribbon cutting ceremony, and live music. The event is free and open to the public.

For several years, AFHA has been working with building-owner C-HOPE (Citizens for Historical Opportunity, Preservation, and Education) to restore the Darden Mill. More recently, the West Virginia Railroad Museum has also shown interest in occupying the space. The Grand Opening will feature a new exhibit from the West Virginia Railroad Museum, "Innovation and Impact: Railroads in the Mountain State." An exhibit by AFHA, "Discovering the Appalachian Forest," is also on permanent display in the building.

The Darden Mill is one of only two original buildings left standing on the Elkins rail yard, 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. C-HOPE board member Deborah Farrell anticipates the building's debut. "We're really looking forward to the Grand Opening. A great deal of work has been put into the restoration and renovation of the Mill and we are finally ready to show it off to the public," stated Farrell.



The Darden Mill, at First St. and Railroad Ave. in Elkins, WV

AFHA's projects have a positive impact on thousands of visitors and residents. Besides playing a role in the Darden Mill's restoration, AFHA has repaired forest trails, designed interpretive materials, and assisted in heritage development throughout the region. AFHA is making our area's forest heritage more accessible, and the opening of the Darden Mill will further expand AFHA's capacity for telling the story of our forest.

2014 AFHA Spring Stakeholders Meet

- **Oakland, Garrett County, MD**
- **See centerfold for full schedule**

Are you interested in learning more about the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area (AFHA) and how you, your business, and your community can get involved? Attend our annual Spring Stakeholders Meet, Wednesday, April 30th through Thursday, May 1st, to find out how you can become a part of this regional asset. Join us in Maryland for the entire two-day meet, or come whenever your

schedule allows. Just don't miss the Stakeholders Meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday! Call Phyllis (304) 642-7427 or Dawn (240) 321-1146 at any point if you have trouble meeting up the group.

Your RSVP is requested to help with planning. Please let us know which tours you plan to attend on Wednesday, and/or if you plan on attending the meeting on Thursday. Send your RSVP to info@appalachianforest.us or call 304-636-6182. Note the reservation cut-off date of April 23rd for room block price at Wisp. Turn the page for full Stakeholders Meet agenda.

2014 Spring Stakeholders Meet Agenda

Wednesday, April 30

1:00 pm - Museum Tours: Meet in the parking lot of the Oakland B&O Museum (117 East Liberty Street). From there, tour the Garrett County Historical Museum, the Garrett County Museum of Transportation, and the Oakland B&O Museum.

2:15 pm - State Forest Tour: Caravan to the Kindness Demonstration Area, located in Garrett State Forest.

3:30 pm - Eco-Tourism Site Tour: Caravan to Blue Moon Rising, an eco-friendly vacation village (89 Blue Moon Rising Way, McHenry, MD).

Dinner Recommendations: Cost on your own. Moonshadow Cafe (110 S Main St, Accident MD) or Mountain State Brewing Company (6690 Sang Run Road, McHenry, MD).

Lodging: Wisp Resort (296 Marsh Hill Rd, McHenry MD). A room block has been reserved at a rate of \$74 + tax for a double room. Make your reservations by April 23 to receive this rate, and don't forget to mention "Appalachian Forest Heritage Area." Call 301-387-4000 to reserve today.

Thursday, May 1

8:30 - 9:45 am - Networking Breakfast: Cost on your own. DC's Bar & Restaurant located at Wisp Resort.

10:00 am - AFHA 2014 Stakeholder Meeting: Learn about the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area and how you can become involved. Hear from AFHA AmeriCorps members working on improvement projects throughout the region. Meet the AFHA Board of Directors and staff.

12:00 pm - Sandwich Lunch: Provided at meeting site.

1:00 pm - Welcome to Western Maryland: What's going on in Garrett and Allegany Counties?

2:00 pm - Heritage Areas Panel Discussion: What are heritage areas and how can they benefit your community? Panel will consist of Dawn Hein (*Mountain Maryland Gateway to the West Heritage Area*), Deidra Ritchie (*Canal Place Heritage Area*), Phyllis Baxter (*Appalachian Forest Heritage Area*), and Jeremy Morris (*Wheeling National Heritage Area*).

3:00 pm - AFHA Board Meeting: To follow after larger meeting adjournment.

Planning Ahead: Regional Events

Ramps & Rail Festival

When: April 26, 2014
Where: Elkins, WV

The festival features food vendors offering delectable ramp-inspired dishes and treats. There will also be raft vendors, and live music throughout the day. The Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad will be running two one-hour train rides at 12:30pm and 3:00pm. Tickets are \$10. Call 1-877-686-7245 to reserve a spot!

Discover Nature Day

When: May 3, 2014
Where: Seneca Rocks Discovery Center

Rediscover your appreciation for the outdoors and pass that appreciation along to your kids! This free event features a garlic mustard pull, free lunch, and a presentation with live bats! There are activities for the whole family including an inflatable cave, live snakes, and much more! Don't miss this family-friendly event.

Cheat River Festival

When: May 3, 2014
Where: Albright, WV

The Cheat River Festival is a haven for boaters, music lovers, and families. Bands from all over Appalachia entertain crowds with live music all day. Festival-goers can browse the Art Market, bid on silent auction goods, purchase food and merchandise from a variety of vendors, and help support Friends of the Cheat. Tickets \$15 advance, \$20 at the gate.

ArtSpring Festival

When: May 23-26, 2014
Where: Tucker County, WV

ArtSpring works to promote and cultivate the arts in public life. The ArtSpring Festival during Memorial Day weekend brings gallery owners, artists, performers, and musicians together for a four-day celebration of the local arts scene. Visitors can participate in craft demonstrations, a square dance, and much more! Info at: www.artspringwv.com/

National Heritage Area Bill Introduced

By Phyllis Baxter

U.S. Sens. Jay Rockefeller and Joe Manchin have joined U.S. Sens. Ben Cardin and Barbara Mikulski of Maryland in a push to secure federal designation for Appalachian Forest Heritage Area.

In November, the senators introduced the West Virginia National Heritage Area Act of 2013, which would designate AFHA as a National Heritage Area. The new Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area would include 16 counties in the West Virginia highlands and 2 counties of western Maryland. In addition, the bill extends funding eligibility for the existing National Coal Heritage Area and Wheeling National Heritage Area, also in West Virginia.



Historically, the Appalachian forests sustained local settlers and provided raw materials for America's economic expansion. Photo: USDA / Forest Service.

Heritage areas encourage networking and collaboration across interest groups and county lines – and in the case of AFHA across state lines. AFHA connects areas with common history of forest heritage, and common interests for forest industry, sustainability, conservation, and heritage tourism development. Designation of a national heritage area could bring federal funding for cooperative projects involving willing partners from organizations, communities, and agencies. Designation does not bring any new regulations or restrictions, or impact management of public or private land.

“Tourism is such an important part of West Virginia’s economy, creating jobs and enriching people’s lives,” Rockefeller said. “... These historic, cultural and natural treasures need to be preserved for — and enjoyed by — future generations of West Virginians.”

“West Virginia is one of the most beautiful states in our



Today the forests remain an inspiration to locals and visitors alike, offering natural beauty, economic opportunity, and recreation. Photo: David Ede.

nation and we must preserve our many natural wonders for the next generation of West Virginians and for the visitors from all over the world who visit our great state each year,” Manchin said.

Congress designates national heritage areas as places where “natural, cultural and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape.” So far, Congress has established 49 National Heritage Areas.

Next steps on the path toward National Heritage Area designation include seeking introduction of a companion bill in the House of Representatives, and then moving the bills forward to be passed. Support letters or messages of support to your Senators and Representatives will help demonstrate the importance of this effort to local communities.


Heritage Areas will be a discussion topic at the upcoming AFHA stakeholders meeting on May 1. Panels will discuss structure, benefits, similarities and differences between ad hoc heritage areas like AFHA currently is, state heritage areas in the Maryland program, and National Heritage Areas. Stakeholders are encouraged to attend this meeting to learn more. Or visit.

For more information about the AFHA, visit www.appalachianforest.us. Follow news link to learn more about the AFHA National Heritage Area effort.

Visit www.govtrack.us and search for “S. 1641” to read the full bill. Consider supporting the bill by writing to a senator on the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, where the bill currently resides.

Govtrack.us



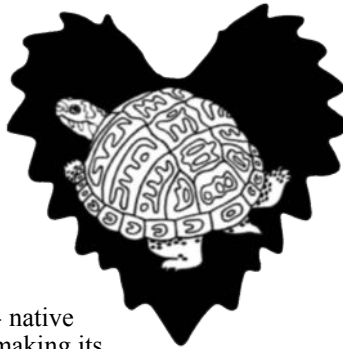
AFHA is on Facebook! 

U.S. POSTAGE PAID
NON-PROFIT ORG
PERMIT #4
BEVERLY, WV 26253

Return Service Requested

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area
c/o RMBF
PO Box 227
Beverly WV 26253

Join the 2014 Garlic Mustard Challenge!



Garlic Mustard is an aggressive non- native invasive species. It spreads rapidly and is making its way throughout the diverse forest ecosystem of West Virginia. Garlic mustard can quickly take over an area by pushing out native plants, depriving wildlife, including species of wild game, of pollen, nectar, fruits, seeds, and roots that they depend on for food.

Join the 2014 Garlic Mustard Challenge and together we can stop the spread of one of the most invasive species found in our state! For a list of scheduled events, visit <http://www.phcwpma.org/GarlicMustard.cfm>.



*You're
invited
to the:*

AFHA 2014 Spring Stakeholder Meet

Details Inside!

GROWTH RINGS is the periodic newsletter of the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area. 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

PO Box 1206 / 401 Davis Avenue
Elkins WV 26241
304-636-6182

afha@appalachianforest.us
Website: www.appalachianforest.us