

PRESS RELEASE

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APPALACHIAN FOREST NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA HOUSE BILL INTRODUCED

Congressman David McKinley (R-W.Va.) has introduced H.R. 3142 - the Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area Act of 2017 - in the U.S. House of Representatives, bringing national recognition for Appalachian Forest Heritage Area one step closer to reality. Introduced with co-sponsorship by Rep. Evan Jenkins (R-W.Va) and Rep. John Delaney (D-Md.), the bill will designate the 18-county region in the highlands of West Virginia and western Maryland as a National Heritage Area.

“West Virginia’s mountains and forests give our state an unmatched natural beauty,” said Congressman McKinley. “We must celebrate and promote the beauty of our state, preserve our heritage, and plan for the future. Creating a National Heritage Area will ensure that the people who live, work, and visit our beautiful state can enjoy our natural splendor.”

The previously introduced Senate Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area bill was combined with other National Heritage Area designation bills into S. 713, and has been approved out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

“We are incredibly excited to have our designation bill introduced in the House for this Congressional session, thanks to Congressman McKinley,” said Phyllis Baxter, Executive Director of Appalachian Forest Heritage Area. “With the bill now in both Houses, and recommended by the Senate committee, this is the most progress we’ve ever had toward achieving this important designation.”

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area (AFHA) has been seeking National Heritage Area designation since approval of their Feasibility Study by the National Park Service in 2006. Designation as a National Heritage Area will bring national recognition of the importance of the Appalachian Forest Heritage story, as well as technical assistance through the National Park Service and funding for local projects. AFHA works only with willing partners, and designation as a National Heritage Area does not change any land management and does not add any new regulations.

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area (AFHA) has been working for over 15 years to promote rural community development through heritage tourism and forest conservation. As a heritage area, AFHA works across county and state lines with communities, agencies and non-profit groups. AFHA builds partnerships with a wide variety of interest groups, including forest industry, public lands agencies, and environmental groups, historic and cultural sites, and tourism and community development efforts. Recent accomplishments include the Appalachian Forest Discovery Center in downtown Elkins, new on-line thematic story map tours, and conservation awareness outreach. AFHA sponsors a 38 member AmeriCorps program which provides assistance to local site partners on conservation, community development, heritage tourism, and historic preservation projects. For more information about Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, see www.appalachianforest.us , call 304-636-6182 or email afha@appalachianforest.us.

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