

PRESS RELEASE

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APPALACHIAN FOREST NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA SENATE BILL INTRODUCED

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area is one step closer to national recognition, thanks to the introduction in the Senate of the S. 401 Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area Act of 2017. Introduced by U.S. Senators Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), Ben Cardin (D-Md.) and Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), the bill would designate the 18 county region in the highlands of West Virginia and western Maryland as a National Heritage Area.

“We are incredibly excited to have our designation bill introduced in the Senate this early in the Congressional session,” said Phyllis Baxter, Executive Director of Appalachian Forest Heritage Area. “We thank all four of our Senators for their support and look forward to movement on our bill as the session progresses.”

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.