

GROWTH RINGS

Newsletter of the Forest Heritage Area Project



Vol 1 No 3

Oakland Selected as Pilot Community for Western Maryland

The Forest Heritage Project Team visited Western Maryland in early June to discuss potential sites for the pilot community. The team and community members visited Oakland, Deep Creek Discovery Center, and Kitzmiller, and discussed other sites that could host pilot projects. After some deliberation they decided that Oakland as hub provided the most resources and capacity for this designation.

In late July the project staff again met with community members from both Maryland counties to begin formulating a strategy for developing the Forest Heritage Area in those counties; state and county agencies were represented as well as the municipalities of Oakland, Cumberland, and Frostburg. The group discussed the region's strengths, opportunities, and potential projects. At the close of the meeting a task group was formed to address Western Maryland's participation in the project. Mike Mullan from the Tri-County Council of Maryland volunteered to chair the group and to serve on the FHA Steering Committee. The W. Maryland task group will hold its first meeting on August 22, 1:30 pm at the Oakland Train Depot.

Steering Committee Holds Meetings

The Forest Heritage Area Steering Committee held its first meeting on June 3rd at the Elkins Depot. At the meeting, the committee discussed its purpose and who should be involved and encouraged to participate, each task group provided reports, and the strategic plan was discussed. The Committee met again on August 5th and worked on drafts of mission and vision statements, working towards the strategic plan draft for September 5 meeting.

What is the Forest Heritage Area Steering Committee?

The Forest Heritage Area Project Team, which consists of the grant PI's, project staff, and CVI partner staff, initiated the FHA Steering Committee to expand the participation in policy-level decisions and direction for the project. The purpose of the Steering Committee is to have more stakeholder involvement in project direction, in a format that is practical between the infrequent large-group stakeholder meetings. The Steering Committee is analogous to the policy board of the organization – with a likely possibility, if so recommended by the Organization Task Group – that this Steering Committee may at the appropriate time evolve into a policy board for the ongoing organization of the Forest Heritage Area.

What are the responsibilities of the Steering Committee?

- Provide mid-level leadership and decision-making (Project Team continues day-to-day leadership)
- Coordinate strategic planning
- Facilitate Task Group process -- feedback, coordination and interim reports
- Networking and liaison between partner organizations and communities
- Work on fundraising and grant-seeking at project level
- Keep momentum going
- Beginnings of long-term structure
- Investigate National Heritage Area designation
- Coordinate with other Forest-themed initiatives

Who is included on Steering Committee?

- Project team
- Task group representatives
- Active communities (including but not limited to pilot communities)
- County or multi-county area representatives
- Partner agencies
- Partner organizations

Any stakeholder organization who would like to participate on the Steering Committee, should contact the project staff.

Development of a Strategic Plan

During the first meeting of the Steering Committee, the need for defined mission and vision statements was very apparent with many folks still feeling unsure of how to describe and define the purpose of the project. The group agreed that while the stakeholder meetings had not formulated mission and vision statements per se, that there is enough information from the Forest Heritage definition and brainstorming exercises that such statements could be effectively extracted. At this meeting the project staff was charged with drafting concise mission and vision statements. A draft of the vision statement will be introduced at the September 5th meeting.

General Structure of the Strategic Plan:

- Vision
- Issues
 - Opportunities
 - Things that need to be changed
- Strategies
 - Broad statements about directions
- Projects
 - Doable specifics including short-term achievable
 - Do-list: who, what, when, where, with what

Task groups will be encouraged to address the issues and strategies for their focus area, and in their September report will include prioritized project suggestions and an outline for the management plan needed for their area.

Task Group News

Each task group will have 2 hours to meet and work on the morning of September 5th as part of the stakeholder meeting

Asset Mapping group met in April, May and June. The group has developed a protocol for conducting asset mapping in communities and has also developed an official inventory form for collecting data. Webster Springs is the first community to undertake the job of inventorying assets. Elkins and Maryland will be discussing how to proceed in mapping asset in their next community meeting.

Interpretation group in its last few meetings has conducted interpretive planning training and developed significance statements. At the May meeting they worked on developing themes, in June continued work on sub-themes, and August meeting will start looking at trails and interpretive products.

Business & Infrastructure group has been developing surveys that will target small business owner needs. In the month of August the staff will begin compiling the existing forest heritage related businesses in the three pilot communities.

Marketing group has continued its work on visitor interests/needs surveys. The first round of surveying will take place in early August. This survey will also test visitors' reactions to the proposed names for the heritage area.

Organization and Sustainability group met in early August and continued its work on defining the structure of the long-term organization of the project. Staff has continued compiling information on the structures of other heritage areas, and begun a list of possible grant sources.

Networking and communication staff has continued working on the development of the website. Listserves for each task group should be up and running in the coming weeks.

News from the Pilot Communities

Elkins— Many Elkins area folks have been involved with the project since its inception, as well many have participated in the Community Design Team visit in May. The first meeting of Elkins as a pilot community was held in July, and discussed input for the strategic plan. A community project group will follow up with identifying priorities for projects, as well as moving ahead with asset mapping and other project activities in the community.

Oakland—See article on front page

Webster Springs—WS has held numerous community meetings since the April and has begun the asset mapping process in early July. The project will map the assets for the entire county and has already received good feedback from N. Webster County, Hacker Valley. Project staff and members of the Webster Springs task group will meet with the communities of Camden-on-Gauley and Erbacon during the month of August to begin inventorying assets in those communities.

Stakeholder Meeting Guest Speaker

Jerry Kappel, Director of Development for the American Association of Museums will speak on the evening of September 5th at the Monongalia Arts Center as part of the Forest Heritage Area meeting. Mr. Kappel's discussion will focus on how to build a stronger organization, increasing philanthropy, and will share his experiences in working with cultural organizations across the country.

In his position as Development Director, Jerry Kappel has the responsibility of developing funding for field-wide programs, advocating for increased philanthropy for museums, and assisting in the identification and dissemination of information on funding opportunities, fund raising and development issues. As director, he not only develops funding and other requisites of a project, including content and logistics but also frequently provides overall project management

Making a Push for a Statewide Heritage Tourism Program

West Virginia currently has no official heritage tourism program. The Division of Tourism does an excellent job of marketing West Virginia tourism, and other state agencies have programs that are of help in some ways. But none of them have the mission of specifically **developing** the heritage tourism attractions. Projects like the Forest Heritage Area are figuring out how to do this development on their own, without a map of how to go about it. Many projects with even fewer resources than ours are struggling to develop their region, trying to reinvent the wheel, and resulting in frustrated and discouraged volunteers. We need a statewide cooperative program that will recognize, support, and assist the sites and communities; coordinate and encourage the regional Heritage Area initiatives, and help the existing agencies work together toward this common goal.

The heritage tourism initiative of Preservation Alliance of West Virginia, funded for two years by Benedum Foundation, has used a pilot region to demonstrate tools for heritage tourism development. The initiative has also included an informal steering committee of state agencies and non-profit and regional groups working out the best way to implement a statewide heritage tourism development program for our state.

The proposal they have recommended is for a state-supported staffed program within the WV Development Office, in partnership with the Main Street program, to provide programming and technical assistance, support for regional and grassroots efforts, and coordination of existing programs and delivery of services. Program guidance will come from an advisory council of state and non-profit representatives.

The outlines of this program will be presented at the Friday, Sept. 6, afternoon meeting of the Heritage Tourism conference. The goal is to have the permanent program from the Development Office approved by summer of 2003.

The Heritage Tourism conference will also showcase successful Heritage Tourism efforts, and offer educational programming in interpretation, heritage tourism development, and preservation. Please consider staying past the Forest Heritage Area meeting to participate in this conference. For more information see www.pawv.org.

THE FOREST HERITAGE AREA



Stakeholders meeting

Thursday September 5th 2002
Morgantown, WV



The Meeting:

The third stakeholders meeting for the Forest Heritage Area will be held at the Mountainlair on West Virginia University's downtown campus Thursday September 5th. This meeting will kick off a three-day Heritage Tourism weekend conference that is co-sponsored by the Forest Heritage Area and the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia.

On Thursday, there will be time for task group work, discussion about the strategic plan, and task group reports. In the evening, we will host a guest speaker, Jerry Kappel, Director of Development for the American Association of Museums; Jerry will discuss organizational development, fundraising, and sustainability.

On Friday, for those that can stay, the staff will offer a morning tour to some Forest Heritage sites in Western Preston County

Keep your eyes open for the Conference Brochure, which should have arrived in the mail previous to the newsletter.

The Agenda:

Thursday September 5

9:00 am- 9:30 am—*Welcome and Refreshments—Gluck Theatre—Mountainlair*

9:30am- 11:30 am—*Task Group Work Session*

11:30 am – 1:00 pm—*Lunch*

1:00 pm-4:30 pm—*Strategic Plan & Task Group Reports*

7:00 pm Guest Speaker Jerry Kappel—Director of Development American Association of Museums
At Monongalia Art Center, ?? High St.

Friday September 6

8:00 –11:30 am Tour of Forest Heritage sites and demonstrations in Western Preston County (leave from MAC)

The tour schedule will be announced in the next week

Heritage Tourism Conference – “member” rate for FHA participants (starting with Friday luncheon)

For more information and registration for conference see the Preservation Alliance web site – www.pawv.org or call 304-345-6005

Lodging:

For room reservations at Clarion Hotel Morgan, call 304-292-3400, specify PAWV conference, and reserve by Aug 20 for special rate.

For other lodging information: visit the Greater Morgantown Convention and Visitors Bureau web site:

<http://www.tourmorgantown.com/pages/lodging.html> or call 1-800-458-7373

RSVP:

Please RSVP before August 26th with Phyllis Baxter phyllisb@meer.net or Jeremy Morris: jmorris5@wvu.edu, 304/293-2941 ext2456.

yes, I plan to attend the FHA meeting Thursday Sept 5

yes, I plan to attend Thursday evening reception

yes, I plan to attend Friday morning tour

RSVP's may also be mailed to:
Jeremy Morris
Division of Forestry
PO Box 6125
Morgantown, WV 26506

Forest Heritage Area Newsletter

IMPORTANT MEETING INFORMATION
ENCLOSED

Please Take A Few Moments to
Read

Forest Heritage Area
Jeremy Morris
WVU Div. Of Forestry
PO Box 6125
Morgantown, WV 26506

550183100002

