



AFHA Electronic Newsletter

March 2010

E-Bulletins. Appalachian Forest Heritage Area is pleased to initiate our on-line newsletter bulletins. These periodic news bulletins will be announce to you by email, and always available on our web site www.appalachianforest.us. We will continue to mail printed newsletters twice a year – these are also available on the web site. To sign up for our email list or our print mailing list, see the web-site's volunteer page at: appalachianforest.us/volunteerism/index.html

Spring Stakeholders Meeting!

AFHA is returning to western Maryland for our 2010 Spring Stakeholders meeting. Mark your calendar now for April 29 and 30 for an exciting program of tours and activities in Allegany County, Maryland, with interesting presentations about forest heritage and AFHA activities. Watch www.appalachianforest.us for more information as details are confirmed.

Greenridge State Forest (right) will be a featured destination for the Spring Stakeholders meeting in Allegany County.



Volunteer!!!

Wilderness Stewardship Challenge

There are still Wilderness trails that need to be surveyed this spring. Volunteers walk trails through the forest and identify existing camp sites and other features. Your data is then entered into a GIS database for use by the Forest Service in taking care of the Wilderness Areas. Soon, we will have the newest and most accurate maps for the Cranberry and Laurel Fork Wilderness Areas of the Mon! There are still a few trails remaining to be surveyed!!! Don't miss your chance to take part in this awesome outdoor opportunity! Single day and overnight camping opportunities will begin in March as soon as the snow melts. Please email volunteerism@appalachianforest.us or call 304-636-6182 if you would like to help.

MVP -- Monongahela Volunteer Program

The MVP will offer conservation volunteer opportunities for the upcoming seasons. These events will include garlic mustard challenge and other non-native invasive species

identification and removal, trail maintenance, tree plantings, and conservation education. Contact us to be notified of these exciting and beneficial volunteer opportunities. Be sure to check our website or contact us for more information volunteerism@appalachianforest.us



MVP volunteers will help with trail building and repair

AmeriCorps Corner

After an overwhelmingly successful year of service by our last AmeriCorps team who finished in August, AFHA AmeriCorps third year team of 17 members started in September 2009. Watch our upcoming print newsletter for a report on these members and the exciting work they are doing for their sponsor organizations.

In addition to sponsor work, AmeriCorps members participate in a variety of National Service Days. **National Service Days** are opportunities for citizens nationwide to come together for projects to benefit their communities. AmeriCorps members have been taking the lead in our area in participating in national service day activities.

September 11 Day of Service and Remembrance –

For this first time service day in 2009 we helped participate in a statewide food drive.

National Public Lands Day -- Conifer Tree Reforestation

On September 26th AFHA AmeriCorps members worked with the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Monongahela National Forest, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Central Appalachia Spruce Restoration Initiative (CASRI), and WV Highland Conservancy to plant native red spruce seedlings on the Monongahela National Forest and the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge helping restore a functioning red spruce-northern hardwood forest ecosystem, protect high elevation streams, and connect spruce in the higher elevations to the floor of Canaan Valley. Over 150 volunteers from Davis & Elkins College, West Virginia University, and Boy Scouts of America took part in this amazingly successful event.

Make a Difference Day

On October 24th AFHA AmeriCorps members volunteered once again to put themselves in the trenches of the Monongahela National Forest Pink Helictite Cave entrance. After years of illegal dumping, of both household and commercial waste, this is no small task. The continued efforts of AFHA AmeriCorps bring us one step closer to preserving a valuable environmental asset.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

AFHA AmeriCorps and local VISTAs joined with local organizations to promote national service through celebrating the life and service of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. On January 17th, the Cultural Awareness and Enrichment Group led a walk through Elkins from the Randolph County Community Arts center to the Old Brick Playhouse. On January 18th,

AFHA AmeriCorps members offered children's diversity activities at the Old Brick, spreading inspiration to the next generation of national and community service.

Upcoming National Service Days will include National Volunteer Week on April 14-24 and National Get Outdoors Day on June 12.

Partner Showcase

Partnerships and collaboration are an AFHA priority. In our newsletters we want to occasionally feature some of the exciting efforts by our partners that we are privileged to be able to help with.

“Sprucing up” the Forest with CASRI

Long-gone are the days of Max Rothkugel and Guilford Pinchot, and their pioneering work in forestry; however, their legacy lives on! The Central Appalachia Spruce Restoration Initiative or “CASRI” is poised to do “ground breaking” new work in tree planting and ecosystem restoration. CASRI began in 2006 as a USDA US Forest Service partnership initiative in response to the 4.1 forest management prescription and a growing desire for collaboration between government, non-profits, and private individuals for the purpose of restoring red spruce forests. The group's focus: the restoration of the red spruce ecosystem for the purpose of connecting habitat corridors on a landscape level. This ecosystem is home to the West Virginia flying squirrel, the Cheat Mountain salamander, as well as many other plant and animal species; but, it was devastated during the logging era at the turn of the century. Red Spruce forests were reduced to about 10 percent of original coverage. Much of the remaining spruce forests are fragmented making it difficult for species migration.

Although much of the former logging and mining land has been reclaimed, due to soil compaction much of the land suitable for spruce habitat on reclaimed mines remains in a state of “arrested succession.” Arrested succession is the state when ecosystems cannot mature because they are stuck in a certain stage of development. Barton Bench is an example of an area in arrested succession. At the top of Cheat Mountain, this location is prime spruce habitat, but little has grown since the mine closed in the early 80's. The USFS has planned to deep-rip the soil with heavy equipment. After the de-compaction process, CASRI and other partners will begin planting early successional species like Aspen and Alder. These species are great for grouse and turkey habitat and will provide a high amount of woody debris to enrich the soil and jump start the spruce reforestation process. The deep ripping is set to take place this fall with plantings planned for spring 2011.

CASRI also has red spruce volunteer planting days in April. On April 10th and 11th those interested in planting should meet at the Canaan Valley Refuge Visitor Center at 10 am. Wear sturdy shoes and clothes that can get dirty. Lunch will be provided. These plantings will help shade important trout streams on the Refuge and restore spruce to old strip mines around Blackwater Falls.

For more information on these plantings and other CASRI volunteer opportunities please contact CASRI Coordinator, Evan Burks at 304-637-0160. We hope to see you at the spring plantings!