

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



DISCOVER THE APPALACHIAN FOREST

Dear AFNHA Stakeholders,

It is with pleasure that I share the progress evidenced in our 2020 Annual Report.

Over the last 17 years since our founding, we have become a reliable presence in the 18-counties region (16 in West Virginia and two in western Maryland) which we serve.

Of course, achieving national designation through Congressional action during March 2019 became a touchstone of our efforts. With that designation we have undertaken a multi-year process of strategic Management Planning in order to better fulfill our mission of advancing the perception of what it means to be a resident of, or visitor to, our catchments area of Appalachia.

As an organization, it is now more important than ever for AFNHA to assist and sometimes lead like-minded entities in our region, to become the vehicle for preservation of our history and culture; and to set our sights on progressive, adequately-funded leadership.

We ask your continuing assistance in this development work.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,



Robert C. 'Bob' Johnson
Board President

Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Robert Johnson - President

David McGill - Vice President

Anne Beardslee - Treasurer

Travis Miller - Secretary

Kent Walker

Susan Williams

Eric Carlson

Erica Marks

Deidra Ritchie

Jackie Burns

JoLynn Powers

Josh Spiker

Terry Hackney

STAFF AND AMERICORPS

Staff:

Phyllis Baxter - Executive Director

Logan Smith - Deputy Director

Chrissy Hall - AmeriCorps Program Manager

Lukas Ray - Communications Manager

AmeriCorps directly with AFNHA:

Moira Gasior (until Sept. 2020)

Sarah Rosenkrans (until Sept. 2020)

Willie Weems (until Sept. 2020)

Lindsay Dobrovolny (since Sept. 2020)

MANAGEMENT PLANNING



In March 2019, Appalachian Forest Heritage Area was designated a National Heritage Area with 3 years to develop our Management Plan. The first year was spent getting funding in place, and selecting our consultant team, Point Heritage Development Consultants. The plan will need extensive public input to shape how we best serve our 18-county region in West Virginia and western Maryland. We planned to start in the Spring of 2020 with two public meetings and extensive travel with our consultants.



Then the coronavirus pandemic hit, and along with the rest of the world, AFNHA had to adapt. We cancelled our in-person meetings scheduled for May and moved fully online to avoid person-to-person contact. We held our first public meeting in June hosted on Zoom. Even though we had to adjust our expectations of how this first meeting would operate virtually, it was a resounding success, with over 75 individuals participating. Screen sharing from the hosts' computers and different widgets like emoji selection and hand raising allowed us to interact with the attendees more easily. Breakout rooms worked just as small groups would have in a public meeting, with video recordings of each room giving us access to information we would not have before.



Zoom tools allowed a phone alternative for those without internet, and a pre-registration link for the participant contact list. We were able to include many who otherwise couldn't attend due to long travel times, increasing attendance from more remote stakeholders. We followed up the public meeting by moving our three task groups to the online platform to continue progress with less travel and no in-person exposure. AFNHA succeeded in 2020 with Zoom, and we will continue to host virtual meetings until the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.





Consultant team from Point Heritage Development Consultants touring the region

In 2020, AFNHA:

- Hosted over 160 participants in virtual public meetings in 2020
- Hosted one public meeting, and four task group meetings through 2020
- Spent almost 300 hours planning and conducting Management Planning
- Point Heritage Development Consultants visited our region three times to explore our National Heritage Area



TASK GROUP UPDATES

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT

The Organization Structure and Management group met this year and completed their broad survey to get feedback about AFNHA internal management and the region's capacity to work with us on various aspects of the National Heritage Area. This survey yielded better than 50% participation rate. The planning consultants from Point Heritage Development Consulting then scheduled one-on-one interviews with some selected stakeholders representing a broad range of partners. 2021 will see this task group meet to take the next steps necessary with all the constructive feedback and analysis we received.

INTERPRETATION AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The Interpretation & Visitor Experience group met twice in 2020 and discussed development of primary theme statements that encapsulate the important topics of Forest Heritage interactions, Forest Ecology & Management, and History & Culture. As this effort continues, the group will propose theme statements that showcase the specific significance of these areas for AFNHA. From the Visitor Experience section, a survey was circulated to CVBs and tourism providers to learn more about current messaging and marketing efforts. Afterwards our consultants will follow up with some of them to talk about next steps for coordinating tourism efforts across AFNHA. We look forward to this groups accomplishments in 2021!

ASSET STEWARDSHIP AND ENHANCEMENT

The Stewardship and Enhancement group met in the fall to talk about strategies to preserve, conserve, and enhance our natural and heritage assets across the region. The group began collecting information on existing community plans that talk about what is already being done or prioritized for action. This includes comprehensive plans, organization strategic plans, conservation plans, partnership or project plans, and more. By understanding what these existing efforts are, AFNHA can better plan for our roles to support and enhance community priorities. This task group is also helping the planning team adding to our database of assets across the region. 2021 tasks include targeted meetings of natural resource/outdoor recreation, and culture/heritage/community development sub-groups. All of this will feed into analysis of strategies AFNHA may take to be good stewards of our assets and enhance them for conservation, and enjoyment by residents and visitors.



Photo by Cassidy Attansio

AMERICORPS PROGRAM

2020 was a successful year for the AmeriCorps program! All the members had to navigate a world shook by COVID-19 but still found ways to succeed! 38 members continued to serve from January to August 2020. We welcomed 19 new members in September with 7 returning members!

Conservation Members improved 793 acres of land through tree plantings, removing invasive species, and restoring watersheds, plus monitored conditions on 9,208 acres. Environmental outreach and education reached over 1,200 youth and 2,000 adults.

Community Development Members accomplished local community projects and enhanced cultural heritage tourism exhibits, programs, and events for museums, historic sites, and arts organizations. Members provided services to around 50,000 members through public (15%) and online outreach (85%). (Online engagement was heavy in 2020 due to the pandemic.)

Check out more ways you can engage in the AFNHA AmeriCorps program by visiting our website: www.afnha.org/ameriCorps



Camp Pioneer

Upshur County Historical Society

2020 PARTNER SITES





**593
VOLUNTEERS
SUPPORTED**



**60 TOTAL
MEMBERS**



**OVER
91,800
TOTAL
HOURS**



**31 SITES
SERVED**

"I recently accepted an official job offer to join the Forest Service at the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forest as a Fish Biologist! This is a full-time permanent position in Fort Collins, Colorado. After my experience with AFNHA and the Monongahela National Forests' watershed program I received multiple interviews with the Forest Service and I am excited to take this next step. Both my outreach experience with the program and the Public Land Corps certificate that I received made me very competitive. Thank you for supporting me and my work over the past year!"

**-Rachel Geiger, 2019-2020 Member
Served with the Bartow Watershed, USFWS**



"My AmeriCorps term with AFNHA and the USFS has been exceptional. This position is an excellent post-college opportunity for me that I am beyond grateful to have. I wanted to serve with AFNHA and the USFS because of the dual cultural and environmental mission, and it's been everything I wanted it to be. I'm working on environmental projects like coal mine restoration and pollinator gardens but also holding lessons with local school kids and getting to know my AFNHA co-members who work in museums and have a special connection with Appalachian History. By being in this position, I've learned that I value my connection with my community over a lot of things, and the fact that I get to have that connection via the environment (my personal passion) is just amazing. Now I know that I want to do work like this in the future too. After my term with AFNHA, I'm hoping to go to grad school for environmental science and continue doing extensive outreach to spread the word about how amazing the outdoors are, and that we all have a cultural connection with nature!"

-Julia Derringer, 2020-2021 member, Serving with the USFS-Marlinton



"My time serving with AmeriCorps has been all about expanding my horizons. Moving to a new community always presents some challenges- but it also offers many opportunities for growth. I have made new friends, developed valuable skills, and nurtured an appreciation for the natural world that will follow me wherever I go next. I have long hoped to make a career out of environmental education and conservation, and being able to hone my communication skills as well as my understanding of conservation at a local level has been invaluable."

**-Ben Bafaloukos, 2020-2021 member
Serving with the Green Bank Observatory**



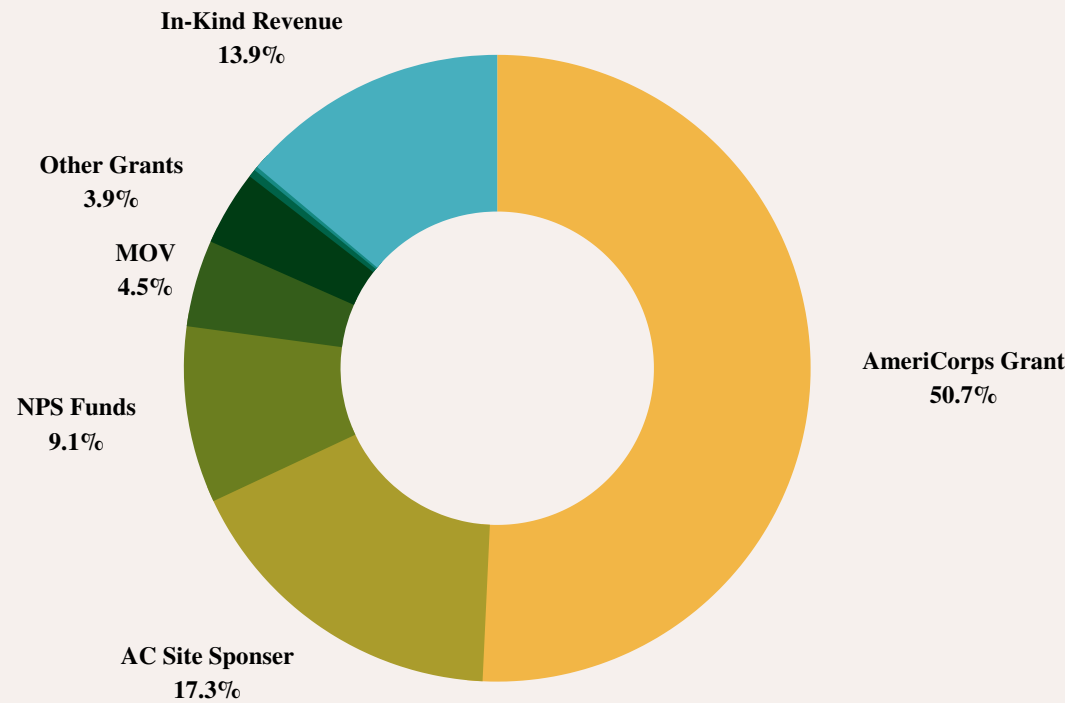
FINANCIALS



FORMAL PARTNERS

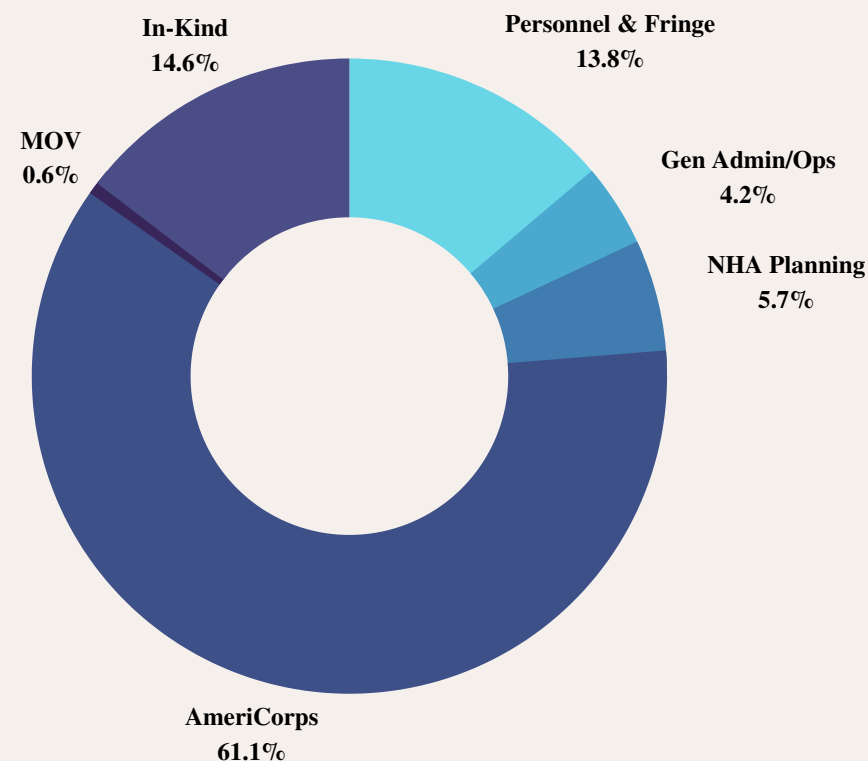
- Appalachian Regional Commission
- Arthurdale Heritage Inc.
- Artspring
- Augusta Heritage Center
- Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation
- Beverly Heritage Center
- C-HOPE
- Camp Pioneer
- Cass Scenic Railroad State Park
- City of Elkins, WV
- Corporation for National and Community Service
- Elkins Main Streets
- Elkins-Randolph County Tourism CVB
- Eastern WVCTC
- Friends of the 500th
- Green Bank Observatory
- Greenbrier Historical Society
- Kump Education Center
- Mineral County Historical Foundation
- North American Native Fishes Association
- National Park Service
- Parson ON-TRAC
- Pocahontas County Historic Landmarks Commission
- Point Heritage Development Consultants
- Potomac Highlands & Rivers and Gorges - Cooperative Weed & Pest Management Areas
- Randolph County Historical Society
- Snowshoe Foundation
- The Nature Conservancy
- Trout Unlimited
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Upshur County Historical Society
- USDA Forest Service - Monongahela National Forest
- Volunteer West Virginia
- Woodlands Development Group
- WV Division of Forestry
- WV Humanities Council
- WV Railroad Museum

Total Revenue



AmeriCorps Grant	\$463,023.00
AC Site-Sponsor Match	\$157,697.00
NPS Partnership Funds	\$83,169.00
Mon Outdoor Volunteers	\$40,863.00
Other Grants	\$35,317.00
Contributions	\$3,707.00
Sales/Reimbursements	\$1,857.00
In-Kind Revenue	\$126,794.00
TOTAL:	\$912,427.00

Total Expenses



Personnel and Fringe	\$119,883.00
General Admin/Operations	\$36,636.00
NHA Planning	\$49,214.00
AmeriCorps Program	\$530,061.00
Mon Outdoor Volunteers	\$5,272.00
In-Kind	\$126,794.00
Total:	\$867,860.00

The Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area is a 501(c)(3) organizations with EIN: 20-0815517
Please contact Logan Smith at logan@afnha.org if you would like more financial information including a copy of our 990

About

The Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area works with willing partners in 16 West Virginia counties and 2 counties in western Maryland to explore and enhance the relationship between the forested mountains and the people who live here. With the overall theme of forest heritage, we focus on conservation, forestry, cultural heritage, asset-based tourism, and community development.

Mission

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 National Heritage Area

P.O. Box 1206

Elkins, WV 26241

(304) 636-6182

afnha@afnha.org

www.appalachianforestnha.org



Photo by Emily Langer



Photo By David Ede

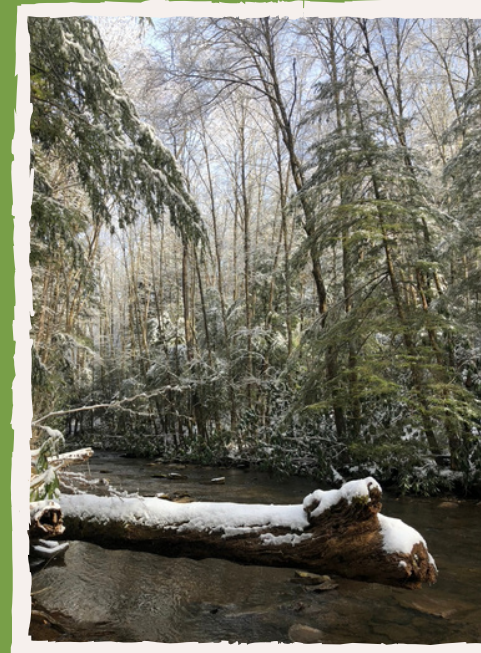


Photo by Emily Culp



Photo by David Ede



Photo by Lukas Ray



Thank you for a wonderful year!

We hope that you will continue to engage with us in 2021 as AFNHA moves closer to completing the Management Plan.

Contact us at planning@afnha.org if you would like more information on how to get involved with Task Groups and/or Management Planning. We would love to have you!