

CHAPTER ONE: Creating the Plan

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A 19-member Steering Committee and 11-member Advisory Committee were created to help guide the Trail Plan process, to provide input to the content of the Trail Plan, and to extend the reach of the project to the general public through their extensive contacts. The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program (NPS-RTCA) provided staff time to coordinate the project, to plan and facilitate the workshops, and to assist and guide the outcomes of the student workers and contractors.

Six (6) Public Input & Trail Mapping Workshops were held between October 2006 and August 2008 in which over 80 people attended representing nearly all 13 NCHA counties plus trail representatives from Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee. Results from these workshops are provided in *CHAPTER THREE* of this document.



Over 200 people also participated in an online trail survey and sixteen public elected officials representing nine of the thirteen NCHA counties were interviewed by telephone during the Summer of 2008. Telephone interviews were also conducted with managers of eleven public parks within the NCHA subject area while eight additional park managers completed online survey to obtain their input on what they would like to see included in a master trail plan for the region. In the following chapter is an overview obtained from the online-and/or telephone surveys. Samples of the survey instruments are provided in *APPENDIX A* with survey results provided in *APPENDIX B*.

OUTCOMES

The information obtained from both the workshops and surveys was a vital component for the recommendations brought forth in this study. From this information, a companion publication was created featuring a map of both existing and potential trails within the NCHA 13-county region.

In December 2009, WMTH Corporation was hired to assist NPS RTCA in providing an overview of the findings and, from that information, helping to create a trail plan for the National Coal Heritage Area. For this plan, all types of trails were examined including both motorized and non-motorized on land and water.



May, 2008 Meeting

WHAT IS A PUBLIC TRAIL?

A public trail is a linear corridor on land or water with public access for recreation or transportation. Trails can be used to preserve open space, provide a natural respite in urban areas, limit soil erosion in rural areas, and buffer wetlands and wildlife habitat along waterways.

Trails may be natural or surfaced with soil, asphalt, sand, clay, clam shells, rock, gravel or wood chips. Trails may follow a river, a ridgeline, a mountain game trail, an abandoned logging road, a state highway. They may link historic landmarks within a city. Public trails may be maintained by a federal, state or local agency, a local trails coalition or a utility company.



July, 2008 Workshop in Huntington, WV

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EXISTING VERSES PROPOSED TRAILS

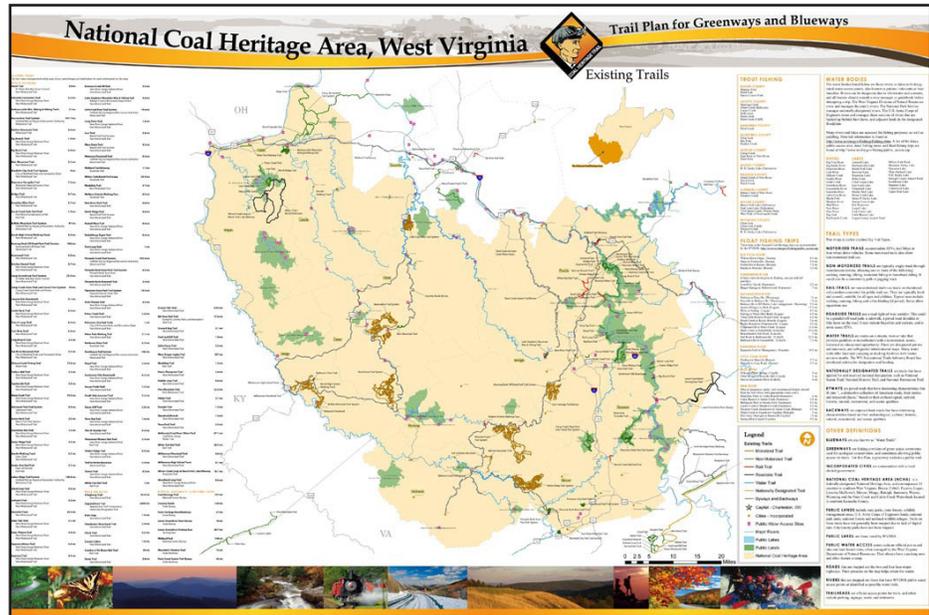
Existing trails are corridors that have been acquired for public use. Some sections may be officially open to the public, while other sections may be under construction.



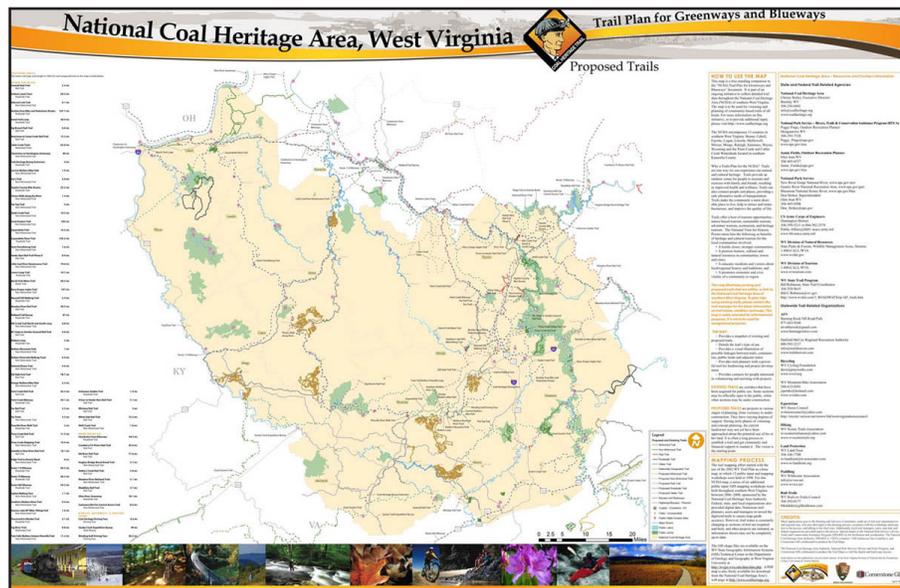
Proposed trails are projects in various stages of planning, from visionary to under construction. They have varying degrees of support. During early phases of visioning and concept planning, the current landowner may not yet have been approached about the potential use of his or her land. It is often a long process to establish a public trail and get community and financial support to sustain it. The vision is the starting point.

NCHA COMPANION PUBLICATION FEATURING A MAP OF BOTH EXISTING AND POTENTIAL TRAILS

Side 1 - Existing Trails side of publication (see APPENDIX C for larger version)



Side 2 - Other side of publication (see APPENDIX C for larger version)



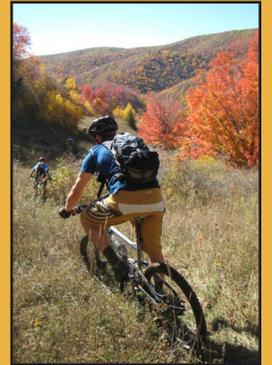
The above maps were created by Cornerstone GIS.
<http://www.cornerstonegis.net>

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TYPES OF TRAILS

The following are definitions and descriptions of trail types:

- **Motorized trails** accommodate off-highway vehicles (OHV's) including, but not limited to, all-terrain vehicles (ATV's), dirt bikes or four-wheel drive vehicles. Some motorized trails also allow non-motorized trail use.
- **Non-motorized trails** in southern West Virginia are typically single-track through mountainous terrain, allowing one or more of the following: walking, running, hiking, mountain biking, or horseback riding. It could also be a community path or jogging path.
- **Rails-Trails** tend to be non-motorized multi-use trails on abandoned rail corridors converted for public trail use. They are typically level and smooth, suitable for all ages and abilities. Typical uses include walking, running, biking, and roller-blading (if paved). Some allow equestrian use.
- **Roadside trails** use a road right-of-way corridor. This could be a parallel off-road path, a sidewalk, a paved road shoulder or bike lanes on the road itself. Users include bicyclists and walkers, and in some cases motorcycles, ATV's and/or equestrian use.
- **Water trails** are routes on a stream, river or lake that provides paddlers or motorboaters with a recreational, scenic, historical or educational opportunity. There are designated put-ins and take-outs, and self-guided informational maps. Many water trails offer land-side camping or docking facilities with visitor services nearby. The West Virginia Recreational Trails Advisory Board has developed criteria for designation and funding.
- **Nationally designated trails** are trails that have applied for and received national designation such as National Scenic Trail, National Historic Trail, and National Recreation Trail. There are also National Scenic Waterways and Wild & Scenic River designations.
- **Scenic Byways** are paved roads that have interesting characteristics that fit into "a distinctive collection of American roads, their stories and treasured places", based on their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic qualities.
- **Scenic Backways** are unpaved back roads that have interesting characteristics based on their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities.



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Other trail definitions include the following:

- **Blueways** are also known as “Water Trails”.
- **Greenways** are linking corridors of green space, sometimes used for ecological conservation and sometimes allowing public access via trails. For this plan, a greenway includes a public trail.
- **Incorporated** cities are communities with a local elected government.
- **National Coal Heritage Area (NCHA)** is a federally-designated National Heritage Area and encompasses 13 counties in southern West Virginia.
- **Public lands** include state parks, state forests, wildlife management areas, U.S. Army Corps of Engineer lands, national park systems, national forests and national wildlife refuges. Trails on these lands have not generally been mapped due to lack of digital data. Most city/county parks have also not been mapped.
- **Public water** access points indicate official put-in and take-out boat launch sites, often managed by the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources. They offer a parking area and often feature a ramp.
- **Trailheads** are official access points for trails and often include parking, signage, water and restrooms.



Example of a trailhead.