

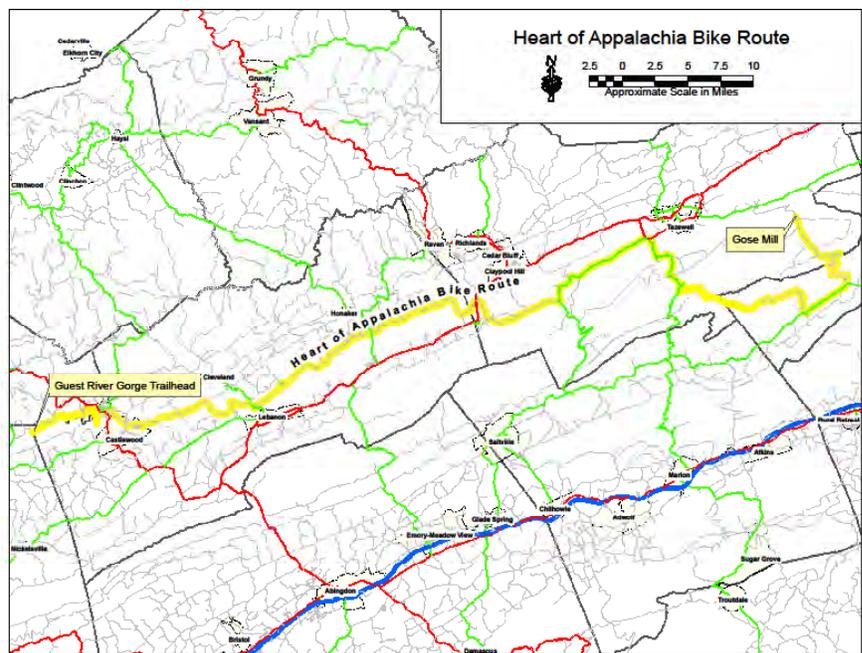
# THEMED DRIVING TOURS

## THEMED DRIVING TOURS

There are four themed driving tours within the SRRA study area southwest Virginia. They include the Heart of the Appalachia Bike Trail & Driving Tour, the Crooked Road Music Heritage Trail, the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail, and the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail.

### HEART OF THE APPALACHIA TRAIL

As noted in the section entitled “Economic Impact of Biking”, the Heart of the Appalachia Trail starts at the Guest River parking lot in Wise County. This 127 mile trail continues through both Russell and Tazewell counties and ends at Gose’s Mill in Burkes Garden. It is an excellent, scenic drive for both bikes and motor vehicles that communities along the route should capitalize on further to entice visitors coming into the state to travel offering a number of unique features along its corridor.



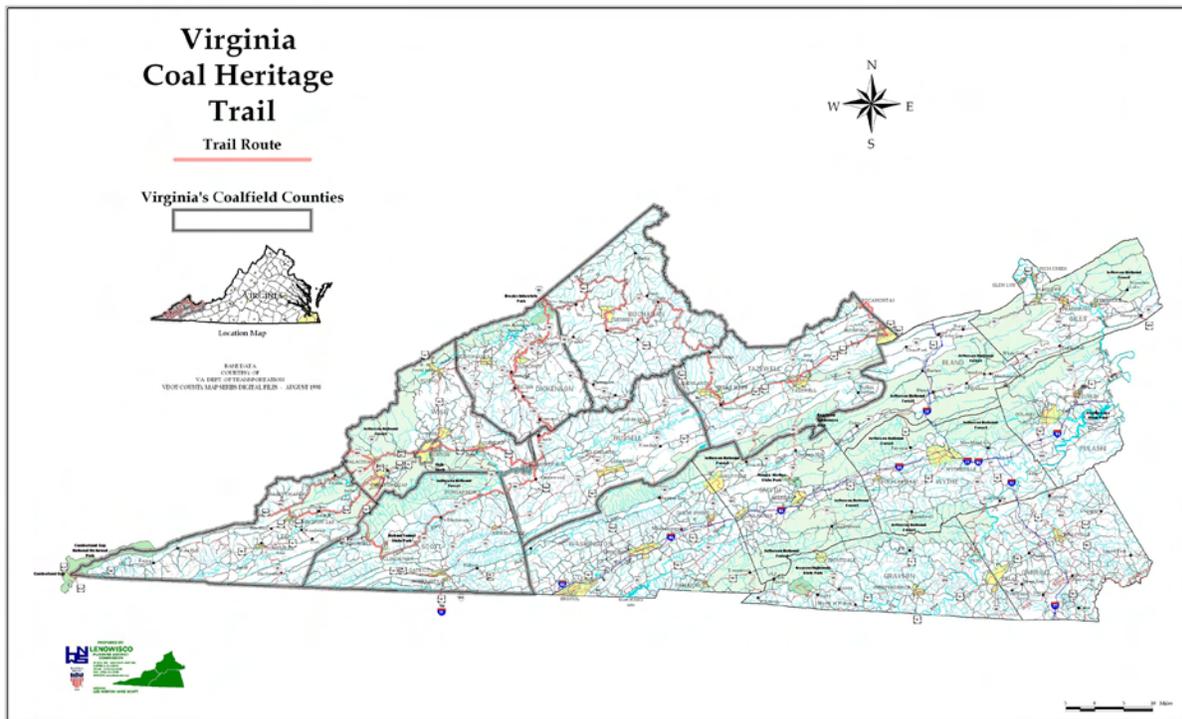
Developing scenic side trips along the way to encourage people to stay in the area longer and explore some of the sites and communities along the way should be encouraged. A few side trips are noted under “Site Visit” to Russell County. A more thorough inventory of the route needs to be taken and consideration made of developing the entire route into a national scenic byway which will open the doors for grant money to pay for interpretive signs along the route and other marketing materials.

The first step in the application process is to apply for discretionary funds from the National Scenic Byway to develop a detailed corridor management plan (CMP). It is our understanding that an application has been submitted. Once awarded, a plan can be devised to both protect and market the route. A sample *CMP can be found at [trailsrus.com/sc46](http://trailsrus.com/sc46)*. Once the CMP is written and adopted by the communities along the route, a formal application for national designation may be submitted. For more on this, visit the website [bywaysonline.com](http://bywaysonline.com). Establishing the Heart of the Appalachian Bike & Driving Tour as a national scenic byway would be an excellent idea and would give those promoting the route access to marketing funds that would not otherwise be available.

# THEMED DRIVING TOURS

## VIRGINIA COAL HERITAGE TRAIL

During the 2007 legislative session, **HB 3094** was introduced designating certain highway segments as the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail, an official Virginia Byway. This 325 mile route meanders through the heart of Virginia's coalfield region including: Buchanan County, Dickenson County, Lee County, City of Norton, Russell County, Scott County, Tazewell County, and Wise County before connecting with the West Virginia Coal Heritage Trail at Mercer County.



**Project Goal:** To have the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail designated a National Scenic Byway as an extension of the Coal Heritage Trail National Byway of West Virginia. Project Partners include the Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority (and all localities within the region), Virginia Tourism Corporation, Lenowisco PDC, Cumberland Plateau PDC.

### Strong potential for positive economic impact:

- National Byway designation provides grant opportunities for various enhancement and preservation projects.
- Majority of heritage/culture tourists to Virginia stay multiple nights. Over half stay 4-10 nights.
- 76% of Virginia's heritage/culture tourists travel in their personal car on pleasure trips.
- Over 80% (118 million) of traveling U.S. adults are considered cultural heritage travelers.
- In 2005, over 68 million people visited National Heritage Areas.

The National Coal Heritage Area in West Virginia

- Directly generated 94 jobs.
- Generates \$3.4 million in tourist spending.
- Added \$2.4 million in total value to the economy.

A timeline has been set to obtain funding for the Corridor Management Plan in 2009, complete the CMP in 2010/11 and in 2012 submit an application to designate the entire route as a National Scenic Byway and an extension of the National Coal Heritage Trail. We encourage SRRA to assist the counties in achieving this goal.

# THEMED DRIVING TOURS

## CROOKED ROAD HERITAGE MUSIC TRAIL

**The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail** is a driving trail through Southwest Virginia that takes the traveler through one of the most scenic and culturally unique regions of the United States. It also takes one past some of the most musically significant areas in the U.S. for Bluegrass and Old-time Country Music. Here the traveling public will find the roots of American music.



Along the Trail, there are opportunities to listen to and learn about the rich culture that gave us this unique style of music as well as enjoy a wonderfully scenic region of the U.S. and true southern hospitality.



Established in 2003 as an economic stimulus project to encourage people to travel the route and stop in these small communities throughout SW Virginia and discover the rich heritage in each, this scenic route is quickly gaining in popularity. More and more people are coming to SW Virginia to travel the Crooked Road.



*The region in which the Crooked Road travels is home to the World's Capital of Old Time Mountain Music and the Birthplace of Country Music. Anchored by eight major music venues – the Blue Ridge Institute; the Floyd Country Store and County Records; the Rex Theatre and Old Fiddlers Convention; the Blue Ridge Music Center; the Birthplace of Country Music; the Carter Family Fold; the Country Cabin; and the Ralph Stanley Museum/Traditional Mountain Music Center – the Crooked Road is rich with talent.*

*Excellent website, marketing materials and informative wayside exhibits along the route have helped to make it the success it is today.*

# THEMED DRIVING TOURS

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## THE CROOKED ROAD IS MAKING AN ECONOMIC IMPACT IN SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA!

In 2008, an Economic Impact Assessment of the Crooked Road<sup>1</sup> was conducted through intercept surveys at five major venues in three communities along the route. One of these venues was the Ralph Stanley Museum in Clintwood (Dickenson County). Below are some of the findings:

- Visitations at the major venues along the route in 2008 was estimated at 109,450. If one includes all venues, this number more than doubles to 264,000.
- Direct spending in the region from visitation is estimated at \$12.9 million.
- Total economic impact to the region is estimated at \$23 million per year.
- Total full-time equivalent job creation is 445.
- Wages and sales tax benefits are greater than \$400,000 per year to the Commonwealth.

It was also noted that accommodations increased by 90% in the surveyed communities of Floyd and Galax from 2004-2007. There was no mention of lodging increases in Clinton. Upon further research, it does not appear that Dickenson County is capitalizing on these overnight stays as much as the other counties. It would be recommended that further analysis be done by Dickenson County to determine why this might be and what they can do to entice more to spend the night in the area. One suggestion has been to open up the upstairs of the Ralph Stanley Museum (*see photo below*).

