

Tazewell County – SITE VISIT

SITE VISIT

On April 5th, consultants toured Tazewell County with Jack McClanahan and David Kinder. A follow-up visit to Tazewell County took place on May 6th 2009 when one of the consultants met with Ed Flick, Amy Flick and Ernie Collins at the Coal Museum in Pocahontas and discussed the potential for that area. Amy then provided a tour of the community.

Tazewell County has a population of approximately 44,500 people. It is part of the Bluefield, WV-VA micropolitan area which has a population of 107,578. The county seat is the town of Tazewell. Incorporated towns include: Bluefield, Cedar Bluff, Pocahontas, Richlands and Tazewell. There are also 20 unincorporated communities which include: Abbey Valley, Baptist Valley, Bishop, Boissevain, Burkes Garden, Claypool Hill, Frog Level, Hidden Valley, Jewell Ridge, Liberty, North Tazewell, Paintlick, Pisgah, Pounding Mill, Raven, Springville, Tannersville, Tip Top, Thompson Valley, and Wardell.

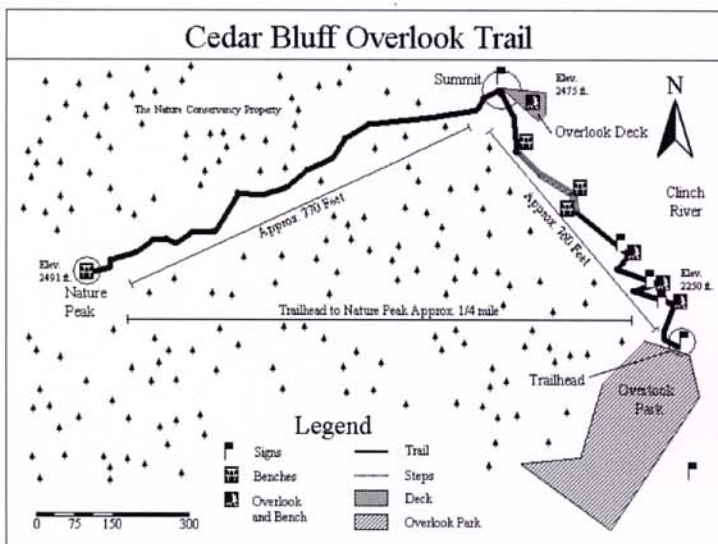
CEDAR BLUFF (One of the stops on the Virginia Coal Trail)



First Stop was the Cedar Bluff Overlook Park

The Cedar Bluff Overlook Park and Trail provides a great opportunity to both observe and interact with a very unique environment. The trail follows a Virginia Department of Transportation constructed road cut where you encounter benches en-route to an observation deck at the summit. Along the way you will find interpretive signs which showcase the uniqueness of The Clinch River, the 1998 Chemical Spill, the Geology of the route 460 Road Cut and the adjoining Nature Conservancy Property.

http://www.cedarbluffva.org/discover/overlook_park.aspx



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RICHLAND <http://town.richlands.va.us/>

The community of Richland offers the Clinch River Walking Trail, a picturesque one-mile walking trail meandering along the beautiful Clinch River. For more information, contact 276)963-2285. There is also the Richlands Historic Walking Tour which allows one to step back in time to explore the historic places in beautiful downtown Richlands. Self-guided. Contact (276) 963-3385 for more information.

Richland also offers an excellent fine dining restaurant downtown, a few other restaurants, shopping opportunities and is just minutes from the Appalachian Artisan Center located just outside of Clay Pool.



VA 67 to Cedar Bluff, Richland and Jewell Ridge is excellent road to travel.

http://www.sherpaguides.com/virginia/mountains/valley_ridge_l/clinch_river_valley.html#River

Potential: If one follows Tiller Mine Road out of Cedar Bluff, it will lead to ATV trails. Tiller Mine Road is not surfaced.

There is also a large tract of land north and west of Richland and south of Sandy Ridge which has one owner who might consider allowing ATV trails to be developed in this area that could then connect to trails in Buchanan County.

JEWELL RIDGE (Another stop on the Virginia Coal Trail)

Our next stop was the community of Jewell Ridge, once a thriving coal camp with numerous stores, gas stations, schools, etc. it still has mining going on in the area just not in the capacity it once did.



There are numerous ATV trails around the Jewell Ridge area, many of which connect to ATV trails in Buchanan County and the Hatfield & McCoy Trails in West Virginia.



Some of the vacant buildings could be converted into housing for riders coming into the area.

The Jewell Ridge Learning Center to the left was once an elementary school.

The now vacant gas station

(above right) could become an ATV repair center and primary trailhead for the area. (Seth Gilford Altizer owns the gas station. Alan Morfield owns the warehouse.)

Potential: Jewell Ridge area has a number of standard breed horses so developing horseback riding trails in this area might be a consideration.

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We then traveled into Buchanan County to review some of their trails and potential trailheads in the southeast corner of the county which could connect with trails coming out of the Jewell Ridge area (see *Buchanan County – Site Visit*).



We then crossed back into Tazewell County and followed Panther Branch Road where there were breathtaking views and numerous trails ATV'ers are already using .



Potential :

One location which might be ideal for a trailhead is where highway actually ends at the location of two trails. One leads into Buchanan County. The other crosses into Wyoming Co. WV.



BANDY

Bandy would be another community that might benefit if they became known as being ATV Friendly. Whitaker Ridge Road* (Hwy 627) leads to Burwin Lake and ATV trails in West Virginia.

Note: Whitaker Ridge Road is an "all weather surface" road.

Note: Potential for trailhead and campground in BANDY.



The old Bandy Trading Post at one time also offered gas and supplies. It now appears to be a private residence.



This vacant store could become a trailhead and check-in station to ATV trails in the area.

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A pretty view of the church in Bandy



A building that has been vacant for years could find new use.



Property owned by the Town of Bundy could become a campground & parking area for ATV riders.



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BISHOP

The two prominent buildings in the Town of Bishop is the church and the headquarters for New Beginning World Outreach Inc. Many people ride ATV's from this area over to Berwind Lake Public Park Area and over to Anawalt public fishing area, both located in McDowell County, WV.

Potential to develop a trailhead near BISHOP.



New Beginnings World Outreach Inc. is housed in a 17,000 square foot complex on Crockett's Cove Road.

(Note: The building was once a school.)

TAZWELL

Tazewell is the county seat and is geographically located in the center of Tazewell County and is easily accessible via U.S Route 19/460 and intersects with VA 16.



The Town of Tazewell offers a number of lodging facilities, restaurants, gas stations and stores primarily along 460/19 and in the downtown area.

It is also home to Crab Orchard Museum and Pioneer Park which opened in 1982. The museum offers fourteen log cabins from the 1800s show what daily life was once like in the "wild, wild west." Horse-drawn carriages, hearse, McCormick farm equipment and Model T are featured in the Red Barn.

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A “must stop” while in Tazewell is Cuz’s Restaurant , a unique dining experience in an old barn. The locals declare it to be the best and lines out the door during operating hours would attest to this.



Cuz’s Restaurant – “A Unique Dining Experience”.

Potential Access to ATV Trails from TAZEWEEL:

Follow Dismal Whitewood Creek and railroad west near 613 then north on Horse Ridge up to Pea Patch to State Line and into McDowell County. 98 Mile Trails (276)462-9151 Swingbridge.com at Paint Bank Virginia



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Witten Lake Recreation Area



Witten Lake offers fishing, boating, picnicking nature hikes, RV camping, shower house and office/store.



Enroute to Witten lake, one passes Big Daddy's Family Restaurant.

Big Daddy's is another well known restaurant in Tazewell County. They serve home-cooking, buffet style.

POCAHONTAS



The Town of Pocahontas is steeped in rich history and has one of the greatest potentials for success for both trail development and becoming a major tourism destination within the State of Virginia. It also is one of the communities most at risk due to the fact that many of the buildings that make it such an amazing place to visit are on the verge of falling into such disrepair that it may already be too late to save a few of their greatest treasures.

See Chapter XX – A Treasure about to be Lost.

A few years ago, Norfolk Southern donated a 1.8 mile portion of rail line which extends from the Town of Pocahontas to Blue Stone Junction in Mercer County, West Virginia. In addition to the rail line, the rail yard and the old train station were also donated by the company.

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In 2005, \$400,000 was awarded through Congress to construct a 1.8 mile pedestrian/bicycle trail adjacent to the rail track. Upon announcing that the federal funding had been awarded for the development and construction of the Pocahontas Trail, Congressman Boucher stated, *"This federal funding represents another success in our efforts to transform Pocahontas into a major tourist attraction."*

At Laurel Meadows Park in downtown Pocahontas, there is 7 acres of land which offers a wonderful ½ mile walking/bicycle trail beside the old tracks. The original tracks still remain underneath a layer of gravel in case there comes a time when the line might be reactivated.



The original depot is located next to the tracks. It is currently covered in vinyl but the original structure is still intact underneath.



A portion of the trail creates a loop and is made of asphalt material. It is lighted and has restroom facilities available.



A Norfolk-Western caboose has been placed along the track and serves as a historic reminder of days gone by.

There is also pavilions and playground equipment nearby.

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Historic Walking Tour

The Caboose is also the starting location for a self-guided walking tour of Historic Pocahontas which also includes:



Silver Dollar Saloon (c. 1884) known as Cricket which was just one of the twenty-three saloons that once operated in Old Pocahontas.



Opera House and "City Hall" (c. 1895)
Many first-run Broadway shows were
Featured in the Opera House.



Saint Elizabeth's Catholic Church (c. 1896) with ten life-size murals painted on the ceiling and walls of the church.



Jewish Synagogue (c. early 1900's)
reflects the rich European culture
found throughout the coal fields.



Old Company Store (c. 1883)
Original coal mining company store
where miners purchased all supplies



Butt & Co Coffins has an interesting
and tragic story of how a master
carpenter became the undertaker.

A few other sites on the tour include the first Schoolhouse log cabin(c. 1884), Masonic Lodge (c. 1883), Emma Yates Memorial Library and previous home (c. 1887), Pocahontas Exhibition Mine and Museum (featured below) and many others that could be added. The Town of Pocahontas has numerous historic sites to see and visit.

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The Pocahontas Exhibition Mine and Museum

Designated as a National Historic Landmark, the Pocahontas Portal #3 opened in 1882 and was the first mine in the Pocahontas Coalfield. With a 13 foot tall coal seam, the mine operated for 73, producing more than 44 million tons of coal. The portal is now open for public tours and is located next door to Virginia's official coal heritage museum.



Pedestrian/Bicycle Trail

A 5-mile pedestrian/bicycle trail starts at Pocahontas Exhibition Mine and Museum is currently being constructed in which one will go through two railroad tunnels and past a number of coke ovens and other sites remnant of the “coal days”. At one time, Pocahontas was home to over 100 coke ovens.



Three of the roads leading to the West Virginia/Virginia state line where many people cross and ride existing trails that lead to the Hatfield and McCoy Trail System.

POCAHONTAS wants to become a ATV Friendly Community

Hwy 52 out of North Carolina is a major route ATV'ers are using as they head to the “Wagon Wheel”, a very popular area to ride in West Virginia. The townspeople of Pocahontas want to redirect these riders into their community where there are trails leading from the town to the Wagon Wheel and other trail systems.

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Pocahontas is exploring the possibility of making their entire town ATV Friendly. It currently has an ordinance allowing golf carts on any of their roads as long as they stay within the 25 mile speed limit. They would like to do the same for all terrain vehicles and become a major staging area for those individuals crossing over from Virginia and North Carolina to ride the trails in West Virginia.

A few of the trails include:

Boissevain Road is a paved road running east to west from Downtown Pocahontas. It runs into Belcher Road which eventually runs into Laurel Creek Road (which passes by Portal #6). Laurel Creek Road turns to gravel when it crosses into West Virginia. Laurel Creek Road leads to Jenkins Jones (an old mining camp) and on into Welch WV.

People also like to ride the state line into the Laurel Area (also known as Portal #7 area). Trails in this area tend to be rough and steep in some area and are for the more experienced riders.

People also go on out Abbs Valley Road to Portal #8 site (gas station is located along this route) then head north on Franklin Road which will also lead into Jenkins Jones.

Note: Tank Hill road heads north, turns to gravel then deadends. No trails leading off of it at this time
http://www.pocahontas-high-school-indians.com/pocahontas_va_historical_pictures.htm

OTHER NOTES TAKEN WHILE TOURING TAZWELL COUNTY:

- Paintlick Petroglyphs
- Pinnacle area – Limited activities allowed
- Perhaps Tazewell County's most well-known place to visit, Burke's Garden — an agricultural paradise atop a mountain

Please Note:

Focus of both trips was the northern portion of the county addressing the potential for ATV's and some horseback riding. It is our suggestion that the southern portion of the county, especially around the Burke's Garden area, should focus primarily on agritourism and continue to market existing bicycle routes and trails. We would also encourage the development of additional trails dedicated for hiking, biking, mountain biking and horseback riding.

Recommendation: A site visit to southern portion of county to further explore the opportunities.