



CHAPTER IX: ACTION PLAN
Sustaining the Initiative for Years to Come

From its inception, the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail initiative has had tremendous support. Initially, individuals representing major tourism groups, economic development organizations, state legislators and representatives from each of the participating seven counties served on a 28-member project planning team under the auspices of **Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority** (HOATA). HOATA is the regional tourism organization charged by the Commonwealth of Virginia to represent the coalfield region which covers all seven counties and the City of Norton in which the 325 mile byway runs through.

Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority was created in 1999 by the Virginia Legislators under Chapter 33.3 Section 15-1399.18 of the Code of Virginia as a regional tourism development authority for the purpose of promoting, expanding and developing “as a whole the tourism industries of the seven counties and one city” within the Planning Districts of Lenowisco and Cumberland Plateau. The legislation and by-laws in their entirety is provided in APPENDIX “G”. This Authority, under the name of **Virginia Coalfield Regional Tourism Development Authority**, is a tax-exempt organization under Section 115 of the Internal Revenue Service Code, which states that income of states, their agencies and their instrumentality’s are not subject to Federal taxation. Gifts made to the Authority are treated as charitable contributions in the same manner as if the Authority were a 501 (3) (c) nonprofit corporation, under provisions of the IRS Code pertinent to instrumentality’s of state governments.

Through an unanimous vote of its Board of Directors, the Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority became the lead tourism authority and fiscal agent for the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail. An advisory committee was then created with representation from the counties of Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Tazewell, Wise and the City of Norton as well as representation from the Eastern Coal Council and the Virginia Tourism Corporation. A list of its members and contact information are provided below:

VIRGINIA COAL HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BUCHANAN COUNTY	Sandy Stiltner sandy.stiltner@buchanancounty-va.gov	(276) 935-6508
CITY OF NORTON	Shelly Knox micheleknox@comcast.net	(276) 679-0754
DICKENSON COUNTY	Rita Surratt rsurratt@dcwinn.org	(276) 926-6074
LEE COUNTY	Tim Long tlong@co.lee.state.va.us	(276) 346-7766
RUSSELL COUNTY	Linda Tate Marshall lindatate@bvunet.net	(276) 889-8041
SCOTT COUNTY	Jennifer Puckett jpuckett@scottcountyva.com	(276) 386-6521
TAZEWELL COUNTY	Margie Douglass mdouglass@tazewellcounty.org	(276) 988-1270



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WISE COUNTY	Sarah Love McReynolds	(276)762-9383
	Stan Botts stanbottsjr@yahoo.com	(276) 523-2319
VIRGINIA TOURISM CORPORATION	Randy Rose Rose@virginia.org	(276) 322-2044
EASTERN COAL COUNCIL	Barbara Altizer barb@easterncoalcouncil.net	(276) 964-6363
RICHLANDS AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	Ginger H. Branton richlandschamber@roadrunner.com	(276) 963-3385

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that this advisory committee become a standing committee for the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail under the auspices of the Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority with the power to oversee and guide the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail project forward.
- Upon adoption of the Corridor Management Plan by the Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority, it will be the mission of the committee to immediately seek adoption of the plan by all seven counties and the City of Norton and seek support in the form of both letters and petitions from public officials, businesses, legislators and citizens along the route for both the plan and eventual certification of the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail as a national byway.
- It will also be the mission of this standing committee to aid and assist communities and organizations along the route in the implementation of the recommendations established in this corridor management plan to reach the goals set forth within understanding and recognizing the fact that this standing committee is made up of volunteers so assistance will be limited. Therefore, it is recommended that Samantha Landingham, staff member for the Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority assist in this endeavor.
- And that each county create its own committee to work with Samantha and with the standing committee to implement the recommendations laid out in the Corridor Management Plan, in particularly those recommendations pertaining to the section of the trail going through their area.
- At such time, when funding is available, a full-time person should be hired by the Standing Committee to oversee, manage, and further market the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail Byway under the auspices of the Heart of the Appalachia Tourism Authority. It will be this individual's responsibility to continue to engage those along the route to implement the recommendations within the plan, seek out necessary funding to "make it happen" and, where needed, provide assistance in writing both grants and proposals to obtain the goals.