



**CHAPTER VIII: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**  
**Engaging the Public in the Process**

Community Participation is vital to developing an effective CMP

The development of the Corridor Management Plan (CMP) for the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail is a grassroots effort that involves many individuals, groups, organizations and agencies. In order to make the CMP an effective management tool, it is important to understand what local residents and business owners think about the road and what qualities they want to protect and enhance. It is also important to let those who live and work in the area express opinions and affect decisions about the goals, objectives and strategies outlined in the CMP. Grassroots development of management strategies ensures the continued interest of local individuals, groups, organizations and agencies in their implementation. The different methods for including community stakeholders in the development and implementation of the CMP are outlined in this chapter.

Community Involvement Strategies

- Public meetings
- Site visits with stakeholders
- Explanatory newspaper articles
- Networking via e-mail
- Inviting public participation through mailings
- Updating information through both press releases and the internet
- Meeting individually with corridor stakeholders, agencies, organizations and concerned citizens

Even before WMTH Corporation was hired and the first public meeting held, the communities had done considerable work. Between the Fall of 2007 and 2008, familiarization tours were conducted by stakeholders. Overviews of these tours are provided on the website [trailsrus.com/vacoaltrail](http://trailsrus.com/vacoaltrail) then click on a county. From these tours, information was gathered and in 2009 and 2010, six of the seven counties produced their own Virginia Coal Heritage Trail brochures for each of their counties highlighting what a visitor might see as they traveled through their counties along the trail.

With the creation of the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail Advisory Committee in 2008, each of the participating counties now has a dedicated person to represent them. It was this group that developed the RFP and, in the end, hired WMTH Corporation to develop the corridor management plan. It will also be this group, after the plan is completed and adopted, who will continue to see that each of the recommendations are addressed. *See Chapter IX for more on the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail Advisory Committee.*



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### *Pocahontas Exhibition Mine in Tazewell County*

Through public participation including twelve town meetings, a number of the FHWA requirements\* for a CMP were addressed including developing:

- A strategy for maintaining and enhancing each of the byway's intrinsic qualities (FHWA Requirement #4. Also addressed in Chapters VII and IX.)
- A strategy for how existing development along the corridor might be enhanced and how to accommodate new development while preserving the byway's intrinsic qualities. (FHWA Requirement #5. Also addressed in Chapter IX.)
- A plan to accommodate commercial traffic while ensuring the safety of sightseers in smaller vehicles, as well as bicyclists, joggers, and pedestrians. (Requirement #8. Also addressed in Chapters V & X.)
- A listing and discussion of efforts to minimize intrusions on the visitor's experience of the byway. (FHWA Requirement #9. This is further addressed in Appendice D, E, &F.)
- Documentation of compliance with all existing local, state, and federal laws about the control of outdoor advertising. (Requirement #10)
- A plan to make sure that the number and placement of highway signs will not get in the way of scenery, but still be sufficient to help tourists find their way. (FHWA Requirement #11. Also addressed in Chapter IX)
- Plans for how to market and publicize the byway. (FHWA Requirement #12. Also addressed in Chapters IX and X)
- Suggestions and idea to explain and interpret byway's significant resources to visitors. Interpretation can include visitor centers, leaflets, audio tours, information panels, and special events. In this category, creativity makes a big difference. (Requirement #14. Also addressed in Chapters IX and X.)

*\*See Chapter 2 for a list of all 14 FWHA Requirements and the chapter(s) in which each are addressed.*