



APPENDIX H: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
Series of Town Meetings - Wise County
Big Stone Gap meeting

APPENDIX H: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – SERIES OF MEETINGS

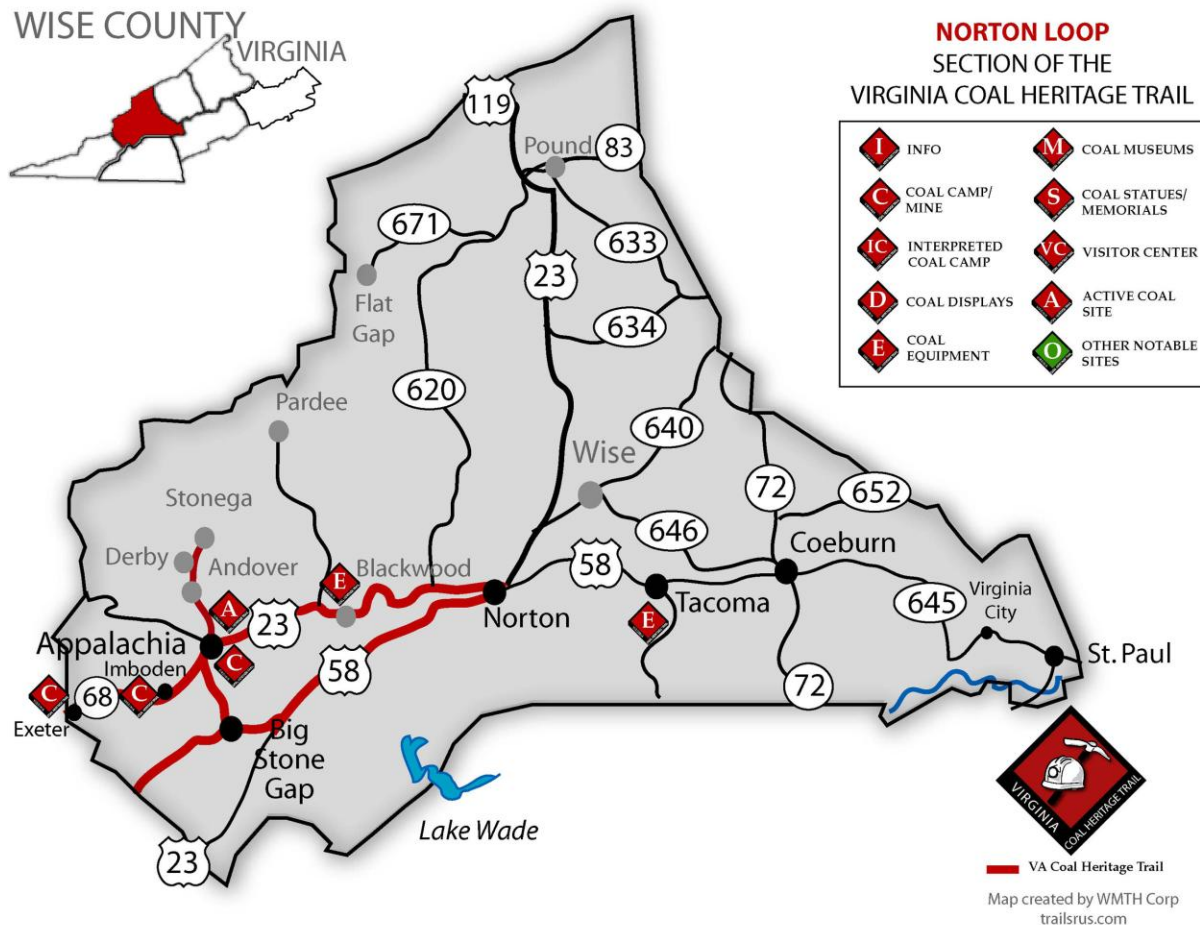
Virginia Coal Heritage Trail Corridor Management Plan Meeting
 In Big Stone Gap on the Wise County portion of the Norton Loop
 September 20th 2010 at 6 pm

Attendees:

- Paul Kuczko, Lonesome Pine Office on Youth
- Freddy Ellins, Harry W. Meador Jr. Coal Museum
- Chris Clark, Intern
- Jack McClanahan, Chairman of SW Regional Recreation Authority & Litter Control officer for Wise County
- Tammy Dotson, Spearhead Trails
- Elaine Swiney, Appalachia
- Garnett Gilliam, Historian
- Stan Botts Jr. , Chairman of Wise County Tourism
- Glenn Gannaway, The Post newspaper
- Ernie Benko, ARC Television



Below is the section of the Byway discussed in the Wise County meeting. Primary coal sites are noted on the map.





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Major points brought forth in meeting:

- Connector road from Big Stone Gap to Appalachia has a lot to offer the visitor:
 - Tunnels visible from road. One tunnel is noted as the shortest tunnel.
 - 4 railroad trestles along this route.



Hike up mountain – Rock steps to top.
 Noted as state wildlife viewing site



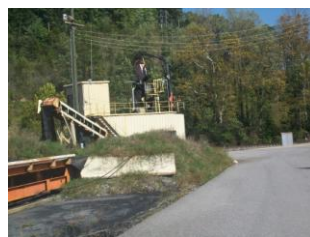
Recommendation: Excellent location for interpretive information just after the fourth trestle at the old gas station site.

Potential for walking area to view tunnel. Picnic tables could also be added. Plenty of parking and display space.

- There were once 2,300 coke ovens in Wise County
- Wise County had over 50,000 residents and was once the largest and fastest growing county in the state
- Remains of the old Blackwood Coal Camp is located on the south side of Business 23 between Norton and Appalachia is now an industrial park built on the “strip job”.



A few houses and buildings at Blackwood remain although many have fallen in or are beyond repair.



The front section of Blackwood is now an industrial park built on the “old strip job” with access to rail.

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- Turn right onto Dunbar and Pardy Road – This road and the Pardy Coal Camp were the location where they filmed “Coal Miner’s Daughter”.
- Behind the Appalachia Elementary School, is Kelly View One Room School House – One of the few remaining of the 122 which once were operating in Wise County.
- Westmoreland area (in Appalachia area) – Bullitt Mine Processing Plant – Brought coal from all over to process during the early 70’s to mid 80’s.



Just after one turn onto Hwy 68 from Business 23, excellent pull off area to provide both interpretive information about the Bullitt Mine Processing Plant as well as a map of the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail and what all will see on this leg of the Norton loop through the coal towns of Imboden, Exeter, Keokee and St. Charles.

- Tom’s Creek – Had the longest row of coke ovens anywhere in the world? Rule was “no smoke on Sundays” so women could do their wash. (2 miles north of Coeburn on Hwy 72)
 - See *Wise County - St. Paul Loop* for more on this.
- Cranesnest – Slate dump burned for years.

The Town of Appalachia has some wonderful brick buildings, reminiscent of its days as the “metropolis” for eight coal camps once located nearby.



All floors in this building open on the ground floor and was noted in “Ripley’s Believe or Not”.

Appalachia also has a strong railroad history which needs to be preserved and interpreted.



Freight depot (far left)

Passenger depot (center)

View of Passenger depot from Byway (right)

Both the freight depot and passenger depot still exists although the passenger depot will soon be past repair if something is not done soon. *Recommendation: There should be a way to address the live rail line to allow renovation to take place.*



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One of the sites which needs to be better utilized is the Appalachia Cultural Center. It would be a great building to house information about Appalachia in its “hey day”, and the numerous coal camps throughout Wise County. It could display maps, and share the stories of days past. Already it has an excellent model train display in its basement which would provide a perfect venue in which to tell about the role railroad played in the “industrialization” of Southwest Virginia. The Appalachia Cultural Center needs to be included as a “must stop” on the coal trail.



- Route 600 from Appalachia to Stonega and Derby needs to be added to the route: *Strongly recommend this route be added to the Coal Heritage Trail as more than just a side trip. All new maps will reflect this.*

- A war memorial is on one’s left as one takes the spur.



- One of the most elaborate Miner’s Memorial Parks is located on this spur. It is lighted and includes a number of monuments, mining equipment, and covered pavilion.



There is also a monument to Louis E. Hanager for mine rescue efforts and another monument to Brownie Polly for his heroism in saving 77 miners during the 1934 explosion at the Derby Mine.



As one travels along Route 600 to Stonega and Derby, they will pass by the Central Supplies United Office owned by Westmoreland which provided supplies for all the coal camps in the area.

The business and building was later sold to United Coal Company and is still in operation today.

Possible side trip to the site of the coal camps of Roda and Osaka. Not much remains of either except for the Church at Roda. From this site, an active coal mining site is visible.

Church at Roda

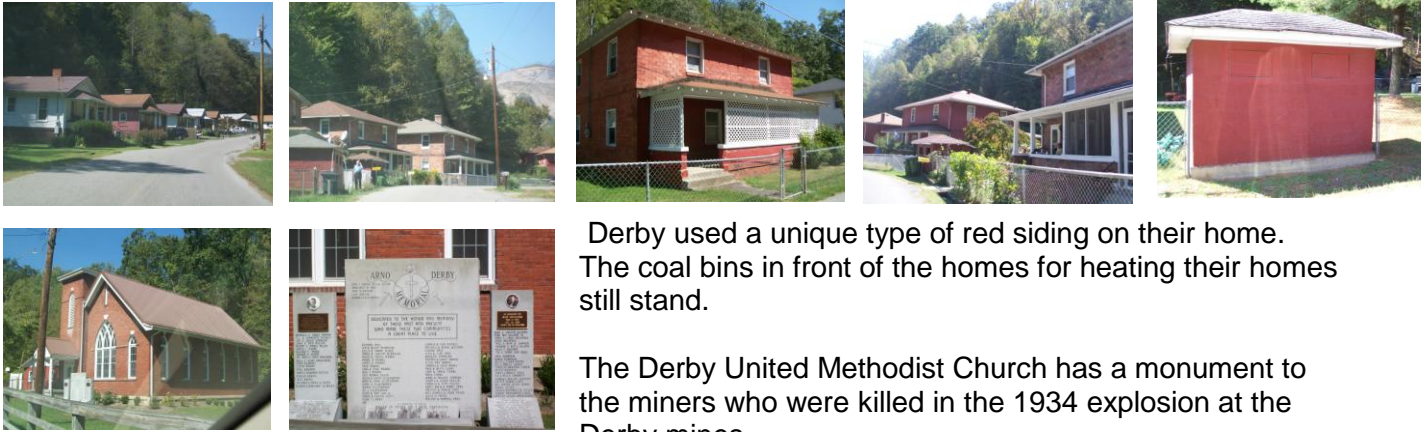


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The short trip to Stonega and Derby are well worth the drive as they are probably two of the most complete coal camps in the region.

Derby:



Derby used a unique type of red siding on their home. The coal bins in front of the homes for heating their homes still stand.

The Derby United Methodist Church has a monument to the miners who were killed in the 1934 explosion at the Derby mines.

Stonega:



In Stonega, the larger homes on Park Place were the homes of the doctor, the foreman, the superintendent. All the buildings mentioned above still stand today and are privately owned.

Interesting facts:

- Wise County's Mountain Rose Winery names its wine after seams of coal.
- Most of the coal rights belonged to investors from Pennsylvania
- Only 5% of Wise County can be privately bought and sold. The rest is owned by coal companies, federal, state or local government.
- There were many nationalities and camps were segregated. John L. Lewis published his newsletter in 22 different languages to unionize the coal workers.
- Different cultures were brought to the mountains which is evident in their music, crafts, architecture and food.
- Sports was also big in the mountains. Great minor league baseball sponsored by the coal camps and toured the south.
- Thomas and Betty Jones still reside in Wise County – She was the first woman coal miner. Worked the mines in Westmoreland. *Recommendation to interview her for oral history.*
- Famous people: (Paul is compiling this information)
 - Olan Castle went to the Olympics.
 - Willie Horton was from Appalachia.
 - Three congressmen from Seminary Ridge (1 mile past Lee County on 58)
 - Speech writer for Martin Luther King



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Big Stone Gap:



Big Stone Gap has a rich history in the coal mining industry with the offices of the Westmoreland Coal Company being located downtown.

It is home to the Southwest Virginia Museum which has an excellent coal display, the June Tolliver House/museum, and long running "Trail of the Lonesome Pine" Outdoor Drama, the Lonesome Pine School & Historical museum and the Harry W. Meador Coal Museum.

A few of the museums and attractions in Big Stone Gap



Big Stone Gap also offers a historic walking tour through their downtown area which has excellent signage. Recommendation: *The companion brochures/maps need to be reprinted and made available to visitors.*



Big Stone Gap has a Miner's Park which includes a memorial to miners, an amphitheater and picnic area on the site of the old Monte Vista Hotel which was a thriving popular lodging establishment during coal boom.



Recommendation: *This park is strategically located on main street through the town and would be an excellent location to provide a wayside exhibit on the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail and a map of the route.*

Westmoreland Coal Company offices are shown below along with a few of the coal company officers and top official homes also located in Big Stone Gap which are now privately owned.



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Other notable buildings include the old school house, Bullitt Park (now a football field but originally for polo), historic train car converted into a tourist information center plus a coal display at one of the five museums located within the community of Big Stone Gap.

