

APPENDIX H: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
Series of Meetings - Lee County
Jonesville Meeting



APPENDIX H: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – SERIES OF MEETINGS

Virginia Coal Heritage Trail Corridor Management Plan Meeting
 in Jonesville on the Lee County portion of the Norton Loop
 September 20th 2010 at 9 am

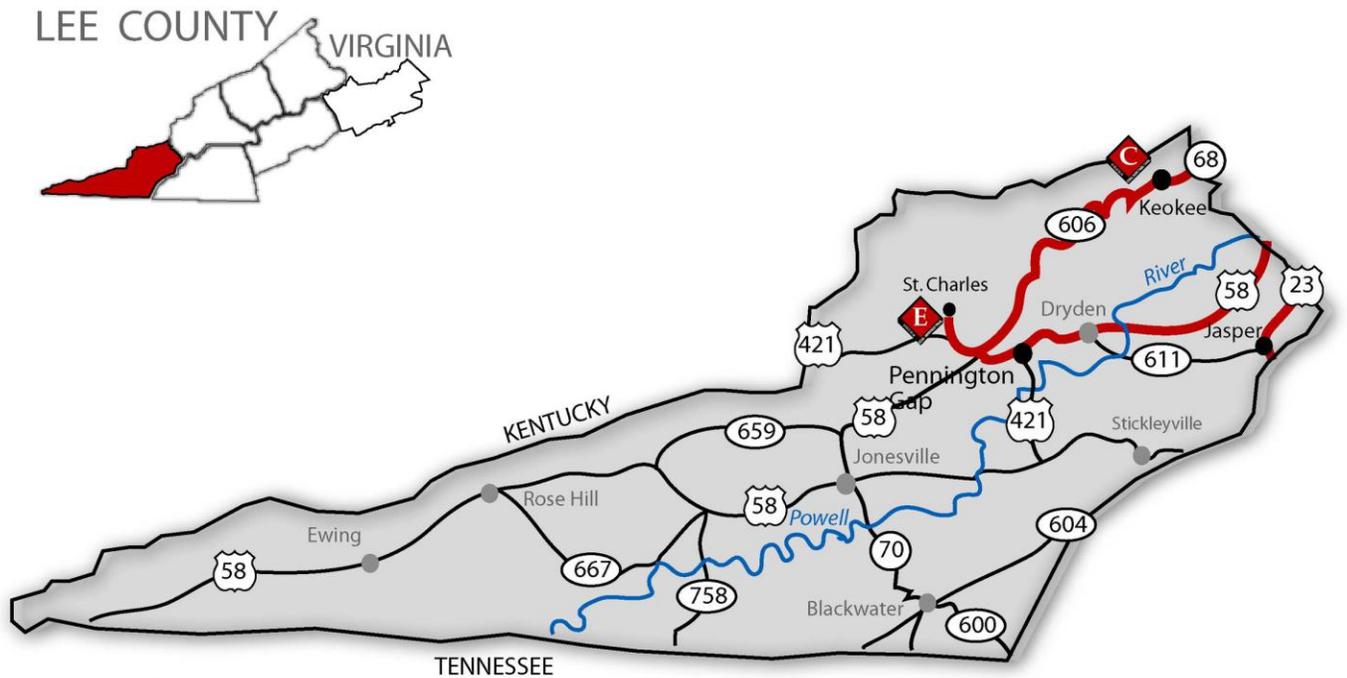
Those present:

- Dane Poe, Lee County Administrator
- Tim Long, Lee County representative on the Coal Heritage Trail Advisory Committee
- Paul Bobrosky and his wife, Historians



Two of the attendees at the Lee County Meeting

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



— VA Coal Heritage Trail
 Map created by WMTH Corp
 trailsrus.com

NORTON LOOP
 SECTION OF THE
 VIRGINIA COAL HERITAGE TRAIL

I	INFO	M	COAL MUSEUMS
C	COAL CAMP/ MINE	S	COAL STATUES/ MEMORIALS
IC	INTERPRETED COAL CAMP	VC	VISITOR CENTER
D	COAL DISPLAYS	A	ACTIVE COAL SITE
E	COAL EQUIPMENT	O	OTHER NOTABLE SITES



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The Lee County section of the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail is 34 miles long primarily along Hwy 606, 421 and 58 through the communities of Keokee, Calvin, Robbin’s Chapel, and Pennington Gap with a side trip to St. Charles. One also passes by active mining at the Keokee Mine, very visible from the road as well as the entrance to Sigmon, another active mine site.

Keokee:

Over 200 coke ovens once fired up in Keokee. A few coke ovens still remain but are not accessible by the travelers. But what does remain is the old power plant which was connected to these coke ovens. It was later converted into a theater but this too has closed. Keokee still has the old Commissary which is in excellent condition having been converted into a gymnasium years ago. The exterior looks much like it did years ago. The elementary school stands where the old hotel once stood. Other towns that eventually became part of Keokee included Uptown, Mohawk, Darnell, Shepherds Hill and Rawhide.



*Power plant & coke ovens at Keokee.
Power plant still stands today.*

Two Buildings from the Coal days that still stand today



*Keokee Commissary
now a gymnasium*



*Keokee Coal Power Plant
later became a theater*

Recommendation: Interpretive signs need to be placed at the old power plant/theater and at the commissary providing information on how the community once looked, the jobs it created and all it once had to offer.



Kelly's Convenience



School at site of old hotel



Residential homes



Keokee Post Office

Other businesses in Keokee include a convenience store, a post office, the school house and some homes. Kelly’s Convenience store located next to the old Power Plant could benefit from visitors stopping in but could use better indoor lighting and some interior reorganization to make it more appealing to tourists.

St. Charles:

St. Charles once was a thriving community with a depot, hotels, restaurants and more. In fact, at one time over 70 taxi cabs were operating in the community. See a description of St. Charles in the 40’s written by Walter H. Wilson in Chapter IX – Oral & Written History. Today there is very little still remaining. Primarily a school, the post office, a few other buildings including The United Mine Workers of America building which still has its name boldly written on its brick walls.



There is a memorial to the miners near the RR tracks where one turns to go towards the remains of the Bonny Blue Mining Camp.



Miner Memorial next to railroad

It is recommended that interpretive signs be placed in this location which describes and shows photos of St. Charles and all it had to offer during the coal days. Paul Bobrosky, retired U.S. Department of the Interior – Bureau of Mines manager and Dane Poe, Lee County Administrator have agreed to help put together the information and photos for this display and some of the others noted which are location within the Lee County portion of the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail.

The Bonny Blue Mining camp was called the Mayflower by those with the railroad but they were one and the same. What remains of the camp and mining area is primary behind the gates of ICG. *Discussions are underway to provide an interpretive sign at the entrance to ICG which shows the camp as it once was.*

North of St. Charles, in what was once the Darbyville Coal Camp, the small commissary has now been converted into a private home. Further yet is the Monarch mining camp which is currently not accessible. It at one time employed hundreds of people. *Recommendation: An interpretive sign should be added at the Mining Memorial in St. Charles describing Monarch in its heyday.*

Calvin:

There also needs an interpretive sign with information about the community of Calvin which has all but disappeared. As late as the mid 60's, the entire town was still intact and included a barber shop, ice cream parlor, a hospital, a high school, a theater the Carter's family once performed in, Bess's store and the Pennington store, even one or two buildings had elevators. *Recommendation: A sign needs to be erected showing where the Community of Calvin once was. Placement of an actual interpretive sign providing both information and past photos of the community in its heyday needs to be determined.*

It is strongly recommended that taped interviews be done with Paul Bobrosky to capture the oral history of the area and in particularly, the Calvin community in which he grew up and the depth of knowledge he has on coke ovens. He can also talk about the large tipple at Calvin which had the ability to store three days worth of coal and the "saw tooth" checks that were handed out to the miners to keep them all working even in slow times.

There is a pull off area just as one crosses into Lee County from Wise County on Hwy 68 where it suddenly turns into Hwy 606. This would be a good location to provide a map highlighting some of the sites one should look for along this portion of the route but more importantly, the proposed site is very close to the currently active Keokee Mine Site which is quite visible along the route of the byway. This could be an excellent opportunity to talk about how coal is mined today providing a person a better understanding of what they as they head down the mountain.



Keokee Mine Site



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Along the route coming into Pennington Gap from this direction, one only has to look up to see the Stone Face in the Mountain.



Recommendation: *An ideal location for both a photo op and interpretive information is at the old Stone Face Mart which is now closed.*

Traveling this route, one passes over a railroad trestle still in operation. Visible too along this route is one of three tunnels coming out of the mountain.



Recommend the interpretive sign also include information about the tunnels, where they lead to and include a map of the route they took.



A few other sites along this route include a tippie, a popular watering hole and scenic views.

Pennington Gap:

In Pennington Gap, it is recommended that the old Southern Caboose, strategically located right on the Virginia Coal Heritage trail on Hwy 58, be used as an interpretive information center for the Lee County portion of the byway. It is highly visible, easily accessed and offers ample parking. This would be an excellent location to provide maps, information on the Byway as well as historic photos of some of the mining communities which once thrived in this area. This would also be an excellent venue to talk about the importance the railroad played and the uniqueness of the area in the fact that there was hardly any coal found south of Stone Mountain due to a geological fault line.





ACTION TO TAKE:

- Contact Mayor Danny Carter (276)546-1177 about the Southern Caboose becoming an interpretive center for the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail. *Note: Action taken and permission given.*
- Contact Doug McConnell with ICG about placing a sign near their entrance to describe the Bonny Blue Mining Camp and what all once existed.
- Need to determine owner and ask permission to offer a public pull off and interpretive display at the Stoneface Mart.
- Find individuals, groups or organizations will to volunteer to drive the route periodically to make sure the signs are all up and there is no litter or vandalism.
- Conduct periodic Virginia Coal Heritage Byway clean-ups along the route so it is always ready for “company”.
- Find individuals willing to be responsible for the maintenance around any interpretive displays. Suggested locations for interpretive signs include at the Miner’s Memorial in St. Charles, at the entrance to ICG, at the Caboose, and at the Stoneface Mart.
- The St. Paul Loop of the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail which travels Rt. 65 to 23N to 58A crosses into Lee County from Scott County for about 4.8 miles before coming back into Wise County. There are very few if any notable sites in this short section of road through Lee County but might be an opportunity to mention other offerings within the county.