



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PROJECT LEADER & SPONSOR

Christy Bailey, Executive Director, National Coal Heritage Area Authority

STEERING COMMITTEE

Brittany Bauer, AmeriCorps VISTA program Coordinator,
Coal Heritage Highway Authority

Teresa Buckland, Project Coordinator, Southern WV Brownfields Assistance Center

George Carico, Program Coordinator, Southern WV Brownfields Assistance Center

Steve Clark, Extension Agent, WV State University Extension Service

Trish Clay, Tire On the Mountain; Southern WV Community & Technical College

Justin Gaull, Marketing Specialist, WV Division of Tourism

Tom Hatcher, Mayor of War, McDowell County

Candi Keasler, VISTA volunteer for McDowell County

Connie Lupardus, WV Horse Council, Central Appalachia Enterprise Community

Jeff Lusk, Director, Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreation Authority

Mike McGraw, Mountain Bike Association

Gary Morefield, Raleigh County Cycling Club; Ride N Slide Sports

Lewis Payne, WV Land & Mineral Owners Association

Jim Reed, Special Assistant to the Director, WV Division of Natural Resources

Bill Richardson, Extension Agent, WVU Extension Service

Kasey Russell, Owner, Russell Resource Solutions

Dwight Siemiaczko, Lower Paint Creek Watershed Association

Doug Wood, Secretary, WV Scenic Trails Association

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Bill Currey, President, Coal River Group

Debbie Darden, Deputy Superintendent, New River Gorge National River

Jamie Fields, Outdoor Recreation Planner, NPS-Rivers & Trails Program

Jim Hudson, Grants Manager, WV Division of Highways

John McGarrity, Community Development Specialist, WV Development Office

Kelly Pack, Manager of Trail Development, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Jason Roberts, GIS Director, Region One Planning & Development Council

Bill Robinson, WV State Trails Coordinator, Bike/Ped Coordinator,
WV Division of Highways

Lorrie Sprague, Community Planner, New River Gorge National River

Andy Steel, GIS Analyst, New River Gorge National River

Don Striker, Superintendent, New River Gorge National River

PUBLIC PARTICIPANTS

Much appreciation and congratulations goes out to all the Workshop attendees and Survey participants, for making the Plan your own! Thank you!



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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Candice & Joshua Chastain, Owners,
Cornerstone GIS

Dan Castellucci, Undergrad Student,
WVU Division of Forestry, Forest Resources Management, summer VISTA volunteer

Andrea Irland, Outdoor Recreation Planner,
National Park Service – Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)

David Lange, Program Leader,
National Park Service – Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)

Candice Riley, Graduate Student,
WVU Division of Forestry, Recreation Parks & Tourism Resources Program (RPTR)

Rory Robinson, Outdoor Recreation Planner,
National Park Service – Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)

Peggy Pings, Outdoor Recreation Planner,
National Park Service – Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)

Debby Spencer and Judy Ross, Principals
We Make Things Happen Corporation (WMTH)

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The complete Plan can be found online at www.trailsrus.com/nchatrails or
www.CoalHeritage.org



National Coal Heritage Area



Rivers & Trails
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INTRODUCTION

NATIONAL COAL HERITAGE AREA AND TRAILS

From 1927 until 1973, West Virginia led the nation in coal production. In 1996, Congress passed the National Coal Heritage Area Act which recognizes southern West Virginia as a unique cultural region “where coal mining has played a significant role in our nation’s history”.

The mission of the National Coal Heritage Area (NCHA) is to preserve, protect, and interpret lands, structures and communities associated with the coal mining heritage of West Virginia within the counties of Boone, Cabell, Fayette, Logan, Lincoln, McDowell, Mercer, Mingo, Raleigh, Summers, Wayne, Wyoming and the Paint Creek and Cabin Creek Watersheds of Kanawha County.

In 2002, the West Virginia Legislature created the National Coal Heritage Area Authority and Coal Heritage Highway Authority as economic development entities to help build the tourism industry in southern West Virginia. To accomplish this, the two entities depend on a strong network of partner organizations at the local, state and federal level.

One of the goals of NCHA is to identify opportunities for community and regional linkages via hiking, biking, equestrian, all terrain vehicles (ATV) trails, recreation areas, and scenic byways. To this end, in 2008, an in-depth study was conducted to identify both existing and potential trails throughout southern West Virginia which included an in-depth user survey, public land manager’s survey and six workshops. See CHAPTERS TWO & THREE for surveys and workshop results. Based on this information and information obtained from a 2002 statewide trail plan as well as other sources, a trail plan was developed for the 13 county National Coal Heritage Area (NCHA). See CHAPTER SIX: Recommendations. There is also a publication featuring maps of both proposed and existing trails that serves as a companion component of this study featured in APPENDIX C.

Why a trails plan for the NCHA?

Trails offer a host of tourism opportunities including, but not limited to, nature-based tourism, sustainable tourism, adventure tourism, ecotourism, and heritage tourism. The National Trust for Historic Preservation lists the following as benefits of heritage and cultural tourism for the local communities involved:

- Builds closer, stronger communities;
- Protects historic, cultural, and natural resources in communities, towns, and cities;
- Educates residents and visitors about local/regional history and traditions; and
- Promotes economic and civic vitality of a community or region.

Developing a trail plan can assist NCHA in achieving its goal of creating linkages. Trails are one way we can experience our natural and cultural heritage. Trails provide an outdoor venue for people to recreate and exercise with family and friends, resulting in improved health and wellness. Trails can also connect people and places, providing a safe alternative mode of transportation. Trails make communities more desirable places to live, help to attract and retain businesses, and improve the quality of life.

ARTICLE 28 - §29-27-3 NATIONAL COAL HERITAGE AREA AUTHORITY

There is hereby created the “National Coal Heritage Area Authority” which is a public corporation and a government instrumentality existing for the purposes of providing direction to and assistance with state and federal historic preservation, economic development, and tourism projects in the national coal heritage area and aiding in the development and implementation of integrated cultural, historical, and land resource management policies and programs in order to retain, enhance, and interpret the significant values of the lands, waters and structures in the national coal heritage area

ARTICLE 28 - §29-27-3 COAL HERITAGE HIGHWAY AUTHORITY

There is hereby created the “Coal Heritage Highway Authority” which is a public corporation and a government instrumentality to promote economic development and tourism in areas along the national scenic byway, designated the coal heritage trail, and aid in the development, preservation, restoration or enhancement of roads, trails, lands and structures, including areas or structures associated with surface transportation, which have unique and significant historic, architectural or cultural importance associated with the area’s heritage of coal production and which are located in one or more of the counties of Fayette, Mercer, McDowell, Raleigh and Wyoming.