

# CHAPTER SIX: Recommendations

The following Recommendations are to be drawn upon for the development of an Action Plan.

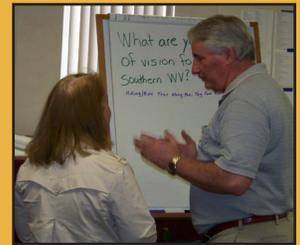
The Recommendations in this chapter are based on the 2006-2008 Public Input Workshops, the 2008 Trail Surveys, review of Regional Plans, and 2002 WV Trail Plan, and the 2009 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Survey (SCORP). The Recommendations are very grassroots driven, reflecting the input of "the people who showed up". A few additional recommendations are provided in both Chapters Two and Four.

The Recommendations listed below are ideas, and are not aimed solely at the National Coal Heritage Area Authority and their staff for implementation. The ideas can be used by the entire community, which includes individuals, local, state and federal governments, nonprofit organizations and civic groups. **The highlighted recommendations are identified as priorities for the first two years and are included in the Executive Summary.**

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

### ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- **Expand the reach of the NCHA by establishing and staffing 1-2 Field Offices scattered throughout the region. These offices would provide technical assistance related to trails, heritage/sustainable tourism & community development.**
- **Form an NCHA Trails Committee:**
  - The Trails Committee shall be made up of representatives from throughout the region. The Trail Plan Steering Committee and Advisory Committee may be tapped to serve. County governments may be asked to appoint a representative who will agree to be an active participant.
  - Staff this committee with a paid NCHA employee, to serve as NCHA Trails Coordinator.
  - Assist with the organization and coordination of local trail-focused groups within NCHA, focused on their smaller piece of the bigger vision.
  - Use VISTA volunteers to organize & work with Trail Committees in region.
  - Identify the Vision, Mission, Goals of the Trails Committee.
  - Develop an action plan based on the trail plan. What do you want to accomplish and how will you accomplish it?
- Create local chapters of existing organizations rather than forming a new nonprofit each time. It is often more efficient, powerful & sustainable to tag onto an existing structure than to create a new one, and there are only a limited number of people to go around. These local groups would focus on local on-the-ground projects. *One example is the Big Creek District Development Corporation (BCDDC) in War, WV who have active committees working on trail and tourism projects.*
- Consider the development of a staffed, centralized trail organization for the NCHA Region that can act as an umbrella to support local groups, and to bring in grants, coordinate volunteers, manage multi-municipality trail systems, provide liability insurance for volunteer-managed trails and other needed roles.



**"The world is run by the people who show up."**  
- Benjamin Franklin



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### COMMUNICATIONS

- **Create a comprehensive stakeholder contacts database.**
  - Include people at federal, state, county and local levels.
  - Include all trail-related user groups, recreation departments and facilities, planners, tourism groups, economic development entities, chambers of commerce, civic groups, churches, youth groups, senior centers, heritage groups, environmental groups, volunteer groups (ie VISTA, Americorps, RSVP, SCORE), coordination groups (ie WV Hub), schools, school clubs that have an outdoors/sports/environmental focus, colleges, libraries, health departments, hospitals, community medicine offices/programs, health & fitness clubs, elected officials, media, consultants (designers, engineers, landscape architects), large landowners, natural resources & extraction industry, ecotourism & trail-related businesses (ie bike/gear shops, lodging), funders, etc.
  - Start with the database created by this planning process. It includes over 800 names of individuals interested in trails. *A list is available upon request.*
  - Keep the contacts database updated regularly, yearly at a minimum.
- **Create a workable and sustainable communication system. Consider interactive websites, blogs, popular social networking sites, e-newsletters, phone trees, face-to-face meetings, conference calls, webinars, etc.**
- Send out quarterly e-blasts with updates about trail-related projects.
- **Take an active role in encouraging and assisting communities to apply for trail grants.**
  - Address local meetings of existing groups to get the message out and get people informed and involved. Don't expect them to attend your meetings.
    - Attend a Watershed Association's existing meeting.
    - Attend the WV-DNR annual Sportsmen meetings in the Spring.
  - Invite County Commissioners and other elected officials to visit your project site. Conduct "familiarization tours" for them, answer their questions, and ask for their support.
  - Give examples of successful local projects and "lessons learned". Collect various case studies from within the NCHA or very close by.
  - Be sure to get trail user input at the beginning of the trail planning process.
- **Coordinate with WV State Trail Coordinator.**
- **Coordinate with WV Scenic Trail Association (WVSTA) and other regional trail groups.**
- **Host quarterly progress meetings of all trail-related groups and efforts, to share information, provide opportunities for mentoring, & cultivating working relationships.**
- **Host a Regional Trails Summit or Annual Meeting every year, open to the public. This is an opportunity to share successes, solve problems, network, and get needed training on trail related topics.**



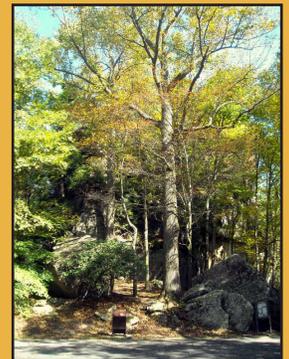
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### COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE & CAPACITY BUILDING

- **Assign an NCHA staff member to help communities, upon request, to create trails.** This may include building local interest and support for the trail, finding funding, inventorying existing trails to determine maintenance needs, improving trailheads, developing maps, providing recommendations for signage, and coordinating the building of new or extended trails.
- Use the NPS-RTCA as a model of technical assistance. Assist the group for 1-2 years to develop their project concept and to become self-sustaining, and then move on to other needy projects.
- Apply for staff help from the National Park Service's Rivers & Trails Program (NPS-RTCA). Applications are due August 1. [www.nps.gov/rtca](http://www.nps.gov/rtca).
- **Participate with existing organizational structures in your community or region.** These could include: EZEC, WV Hub, RC & D, Chambers of Commerce, CVB's, Regional Planning & Development Councils, Family Resource Networks (FRN) and watershed associations.
- Participate in your county Family Resource Network (FRN).
  - FRN's provide a networking forum to bring your trail idea forward in the community.
  - While providing a focus on social services, physical activity and quality of life amenities such as access to trails & paths are important aspects to a wholesome family lifestyle, FRN's can help with planning walking events, to help get families moving together.
  - Initially, Family Resource Networks grew out of The Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families, which was formed out of Senate Bill 1 (SB1) in 1990 with the charge of developing family-centered structures throughout the state. Most are funded by grants from the WV Department of Health and Human Resources (WVDHHR).
  - FRN's are a one-stop for planning and coordinating of resources in the area. They can assist with needs assessment, surveys and strategic planning.
  - FRN's are meant to provide:
    - A planning body that assists to coordinate services and minimize duplication of services.
    - A way to share information about resources in the community.
    - An avenue to critically review the community's needs and what can be done to meet those needs and address service gaps.
    - A body to collaborate with other agencies and citizens to help improve services for recipients.
    - A way to bring recipients of services and providers together to review what works and what doesn't and look at changes in the delivery system.
- Participate in the WV Community Development Hub.
  - The Hub came about as the result of a September 2008 merger of two similar statewide nonprofit organizations, Community Collaborative Inc. (CCI) and the Community Development Partnership of West Virginia (CDP).



*The possibilities are endless when people come together, services are combined, and communities collaborate.*



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NCHA communities involved in the Hub include the cities of Huntington, Beckley, Bluefield; the smaller communities of Ansted, Mullens, Williamson and Winding Gulf; and the Fayette County group.



- Hub officials are currently working with leaders in 20 communities who were previously involved with either the CCI or the CDP through the Sustainable Communities Training Program (SCTP) of the Federal Home Loan Bank's Blueprint Communities Program.
  - The Hub is not a direct provider of funds or services but rather the connector between various stakeholders in the network. Hub organizers said their model ultimately will help communities develop strategies for improvement and connect them with the tools and support necessary to see projects through to completion.
- Get help from, and participate with, your regional RC & D.
    - The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) was established by Congress as a unique program to ultimately empower rural people to help themselves. These organizations are set up by local citizens to help people improve the quality of life in rural communities through development of human and natural resources.
    - RC & D's are self-directed, locally led regional grassroots rural development organizations. It is important to note that such a group is not a unit of government.
      - The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service supports the RC&D with personnel, office space and equipment, and sometimes financial and technical assistance for projects.
      - Each location is governed by a local council which defines problems and set priorities for assistance.
      - These councils provide direction, planning and implementation of selected projects within their boundaries. In southern WV, RC & D's provide small grants of \$500 - \$1000 to help a project.
  - Request the planning assistance of the WV Office of Coalfield Community Development (OCCD).
    - As of July 1, 2009, counties with surface-mined properties are required to produce a Land Use Master Plan for coal operators to use for post-mine development within their mining permits. The legislation requires the OCCD to assist in the creation of these plans and to review them to ensure they meet certain criteria. Trails and recreation are possible post-mine land uses to include in the Plan.
    - The OCCD office will provide assistance in the following four ways:
      - The office has gathered information for each coalfield county that will help initiate this partnership. Upon request, the office will provide a representative to assist in evaluating this information.
      - Upon request, the office will assist with research, study and information gathering.
      - A partnership between the Office and the Brownfields Assistance Centers at Marshall and West Virginia universities is another benefit provided to county development officials for Land Use Master Planning as well as for evaluating uses for individual surface mines.
      - The OCCD website will be the repository for information helpful in the planning process.

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- Ask for help from the Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities (EZEC) programs in upper Kanawha, Fayette, McDowell Counties.
  - In the Upper Kanawha EC, the strategic plan includes: "Recreation, Entertainment & Tourism-create great regional entertainment, outdoor recreational, meeting and conference center complex for year-round use, develop the Deepwater site, develop "vest-pocket" and linear parks, trails, and greenways".

### TRAIL CLUBS - USER GROUPS

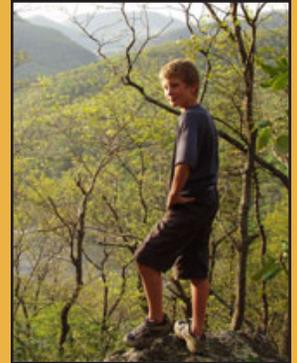
- **Inventory the trail clubs and trail user groups.**
  - Create an interactive online database of trail clubs in the NCHA and support ongoing updating.  
Identify areas that are not served by a local group.
- **Support the development of Trail Clubs, to help keep the momentum going.** Members can organize social events, use the trail together, help with the maintenance, promotion, and fundraising.
- Cooperate and collaborate between groups. Get to know each other and find common ground to work together.

### VOLUNTEERS

- Make it fun and get things done. Volunteers don't want to participate in a project that is full of strife or infighting. They are giving of their leisure time, and to keep them, the project needs to be enjoyable and have small successes that build up over time.
- **Utilize National Service programs.**
  - Apply for AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers through the intermediary organizations Coal Heritage Highway Authority or the Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team.
  - Apply for AmeriCorps members through the WV Commission for National & Community Service
  - Apply for AmeriCorps NCCC crew (National Civilian Conservation Corps) to maintain trails, working 4-8 week stints. NCCC is a full-time, team-based residential program for men and women age 18-24. For our region, members are assigned to a campus in Maryland, and trained teams of 8-12 are then assigned to projects over an intensive 10-month period.  
<http://www.americorps.gov/about/programs/nccc.asp>.
  - The programs are a bit confusing, so just give it a quick look to get the general basic understanding. Then, save some time and talk directly with the Program Coordinator. They will guide you to the right program and paperwork.



"The club that has fun, gets stuff done."  
- Collins, IMBA Trail Care Crew



"Which came first - the great trails or the great clubs? It kind of weaves in together."  
- Collins, IMBA Trail Care Crew, Fayetteville Social

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*"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."*  
- Confucius

- Apply to become an AmeriCorps member or VISTA volunteer. You could stay right in your community to do the service, or you could relocate. Members do get living stipends, and an education award at the end of their term.
  - AmeriCorps State and National is for anyone over age 17, who want to work with local communities on education, environment, public health and safety, or disaster response.
  - AmeriCorps VISTA is for anyone at least 18 who is a self-starter and organizer and wants to stay a full year to help a low-income community establish a new program or enhance an existing program, and may not see immediate results.
  - AmeriCorps NCCC is for people between 18-24 years old, who want hands-on work in a close-knit team, doing a variety of projects in many different locations.
- **Develop/expand a Volun"tour"ism/Volunteer Vacations Initiative.**
  - An ever-increasing number of tourists are environmentally and socially conscious, and would be willing to volunteer as part of their vacation. Make it easy for them, and provide opportunities for them to assist your trail.
  - American Hiking Society has Volunteer Vacations.  
<http://www.americanhiking.org/Get-Involved/Volunteer-Vacations/>
  - Ace Adventure Resort has a volunteer vacation option called "Trail Maintenance Weekends", in exchange for trailwork, you will receive 2 nights free lodging in a cabin with a private hot tub.
- Volunteer at one of the local National Parks and learn by doing. The National Park Service has a volunteer program, often paying stipends.  
<http://www.nps.gov/getinvolved/volunteer.htm>

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- **Recruit volunteers.** Examples of volunteer jobs and descriptions are provided below from the website. <http://www.nps.gov/neri/supportyourpark/volunteer-opportunities.htm>. Use [Volunteerwv.org](http://Volunteerwv.org) to post notices.
  - Park Ambassador requires a commitment of two to six months of volunteer service providing interpretive and educational services to park visitors at our visitor centers, day use areas, and while roving trails.
  - Adopt-A-Trail requires a commitment to hike adopted trail a minimum of 4 times/year to perform waterbar and drainage maintenance, trail trimming, to report on hazards/conditions, and provide hikers with information and promote Leave No Trace skills/ethics.
    - Trail Patroller
    - Trail Maintenance
  - Adopt-A-Stream requires a commitment to visit adopted stream area 4 times/year to pick up and remove litter and trash from stream/river banks and riparian zone.
  - Information Assistant provides orientation, information, and interpretation to visitors on a one-to-one or group basis that will facilitate a safe and informed visit.
  - Oral History Interviewer contacts park neighbors to set up oral history interviews and conducts interviews following the park Oral History Standard Operating Procedures.
  - River Patrol volunteers assist the river patrol rangers with river operations within New River Gorge National River, Gauley River National Recreation Area, and the Bluestone National Scenic River.
  - Education Program Presenter serves as a member of the park's education program helping with developing, coordinating, and presenting pre-, on-, and post-site educational activities related to park themes.
  - Natural Resource Management Intern performs various technical and non-technical tasks in natural resource management including monitoring and data collection, recording of data collected, and supporting the Long Term Ecological Monitoring System project.
  - Cultural Resource Management Assistant works out of the Glen Jean office performing a variety of duties including organizing of cultural records, maps, reports, and files, cataloging museum artifacts, and conducting archeological site reconnaissance.



*Adopt-a-Stream  
work on New River*



*Education Program  
Presenter NPS*



*Adopt-A-Trail  
Sign*



*Information Assistant  
- NPS*



*Natural Resource  
Mgt. Intern - NPS*

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### TRAINING

- Participate in Trails Conferences.
  - Attend the WV Trail Conferences, organized by the WV Trails Program
  - Attend the National Trails Symposium held every other year.
  - Attend the annual American Volkssport Association Conference, which includes daily walks. <http://www.ava.org/clubs/ava2011convention/index.asp>
- **Participate in trail building training opportunities.**
  - Bring the Sustainable Trail Building training to the region, in return for a commitment of volunteer hours. This program is under development now by the WV Trails Program.
  - Bring the IMBA Trail Care Crew to each county for 3-4 day hands-on trail building workshops.
  - Learn by doing. The Fayetteville FreeRide Park is being built, and calling for volunteer help. Check out: <http://www.marathonbikes.com> for details.
- Conduct fund-raising training.
  - Provide hands-on training for trail grant applications. Apply general training to a specific and real application. Help communities understand all the steps involved, and provide hand-holding support for them at the beginning
  - Provide training to volunteers on grant-writing and funding, including cycles, time frames, etc.
- Provide environmental ethics training. Teach Outdoors Ethics in the public school system, such as "Leave No Trace", or "Tread Lightly".
- Train local people to be travel and trail writers for your local resources.
- Make available educational videos about how to handle emergencies while out on the trail (ie "this is what you do if you cross paths with a bear, snake...").
- Provide local training for GPS uses - such as safety and navigation while on the trail.



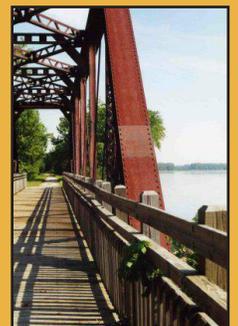
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### ADVOCACY

- Create and maintain an active and strong organization to get the support of elected officials at all levels. Political leaders will not want to stick their necks out to help a project unless there is strong grassroots community support.
- Support trail proposals and participate in their process.
- Help support the continuation or establishment of government funding programs that assist communities or trail development. Grassroots efforts can make this happen.
  - The US Department of Housing & Urban Development: Empowerment Zone and Renewal Community (EZ/RC) programs were almost cut, but due to grassroots support, the Obama administration extended the program through fiscal year 2010.
  - The federal Surface Transportation Bill is passed every 6 years, and funds the Bike/Ped, Rec Trails, TE, and other grant programs. Grassroots support is needed to ensure funding for these important community-based programs.
- Participate in Hike the Hill Trail Advocacy Week.
  - Sponsored annually by American Hiking Society, this is a good opportunity to get trained on how to talk with your legislators, and then set up appointments to meet with them, to tell them about your trail project in their district.  
<http://www.americanhiking.org/Our-Work/Policy-Advocacy/Hike-the-Hill/>
- Most trail and environmental non-profits now have Action Alert programs to inform the public. Sign up and take action.
  - American Trails
  - Rails to Trails Conservancy
  - International Mountain Bike Association
  - WV Rivers Coalition
  - WV Cycling Foundation
- Participate in the Context Sensitive Solutions National Dialog regarding Transportation design. For details, visit <http://www.cssnationaldialog.org/>
- Consider zoning and legislation to encourage or require development and walkability in communities.
- Participate in the DOT planning process and “watchdog” to ensure new roads & bridges have shoulders or other appropriate bike/ped accommodations.



In Fayette County, the National Park Service is looking for public input for a proposed trail network at New River Gorge National River, one of the premier recreational areas in the Mid-Atlantic. The proposal includes the construction of two new stacked-looped mountain bike trail systems and the reclassification of certain existing trails to be open to bicycles. This has the potential of creating a network of more than 100 miles of trails in the region.



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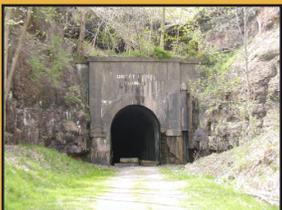
### PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT: Going from Ideas & Visions to Open for Business

#### MAPPING

- **Buy GPS units, equip and train a group of volunteers to gather GPS coordinates for the trails.**
  - Contract with CCCWV, Mercer County VoTech, Regional Planning Councils or RTI to provide the GPS training.
  - Acquire and use the WV Dept of Transportation worksheet for inventory of trail facilities.
  - Work with the local community to identify trails.
  - Organize a “Hike Your Community” or “Hike Your County” day -- Do inventory, collect GPS points, ID gaps/links.
  - Invite agency and elected officials to ride the trail with locals during GPS mapping.
  - Expand the existing NCHA trail map, by GPSing all the existing trails in the region, formal and informal. All trails need GPS points for wayfinding, rescue, and accurate mapping.
    - Volunteers can do some mapping, if it is coordinated with quality control.
    - Contract some mapping out if there is no volunteer group.
  - Inventory public lands digitally. Contract with Rahall Transportation Institute (RTI).
  - Create all maps using GIS as the base layers. Maps are easier to update this way.
- Share ongoing GPS/GIS digital information freely with WV-DOH Trail Coordinator,
- NCHA, other public agencies and rescue organizations.

- **Make all GPS and GIS data accessible to the general public and the maps themselves posted on the [www.coalheritage.org](http://www.coalheritage.org) website.**

- Migrate existing trail data to an online Interactive Map Site similar to the one
- Cornerstone GIS designed for Mercer County CVB. In an effort to continue this trail project, there is value in contracting the migration of all trail data from its existing format in GIS and hard copy maps to an online interactive map site for use by visitors and patrons of the trails. Interactive online mapping is a resource that provides information to users including the length, difficulty, and trail use. As new trail data becomes available or data becomes obsolete, online interactive maps can be quickly updated. More information is available at [http://cornerstonegis.net/inter\\_map.html](http://cornerstonegis.net/inter_map.html).

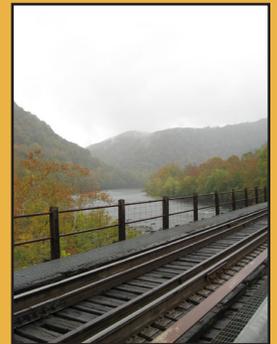


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### PRIVATE LANDS

#### Guide for “How to Start Working with Private Landowners.”

- **Develop a plan / methodology to develop & maintain new trails on private land.**
- Identify the location of the trail route that you are envisioning, and document the landowners, You will have to get permission from any landowner that your trail will cross over.
- Gain local and political interest, support and buy-in for the trail project before knocking on landowner's doors. Approach the project as an established organization, not as a single individual.
- Develop fact sheets that document the benefits of trails to individuals and landowners. Be prepared to discuss the facts, and provide case examples of successful projects.
- **Develop working relationships with members of the WV Land & Mineral Owners Association, WV Surface Owners Rights Organization, and any other land ownership groups.** These organizations can help you understand common concerns, and allows an opportunity to develop social ties with this critical community.
- Identify the right messenger, and the right person in the land company to work together. Perhaps there is someone who likes to hike with their kids. Good communication starts with a common ground. Be amenable and friendly.
- Approach landowners with “Here to help” not “I need a favor” strategy. Take time to build trust cultivate relationships, and understand the concerns of landowners before asking for use of their land. Every land owner or manager has their goals, issues, concerns. If you want to build a trail across someone's land, you need to be able to respond to their concerns.
- Ask landowners what their trail routing concerns are, and what trail route would be most acceptable to them. Provide an overview of the trail project, and what end points you are trying to connect. Do not draw a firm line. Ask the landowner to guide the route to the best option.
- Provide boundary and trail corridor survey work to the landowner as part of your negotiating efforts for a legal agreement.
- Ask the landowner what level of land agreement they are amenable to. Attempt to get a trail easement agreement that attaches to the deed, or an outright purchase of the land. If that is not possible, a license agreement with as long of a termination/relocation notice as possible (ie 6 months is better than 30 days). A handshake agreement has nothing written down, and is the last resort, but is one way to start.
- Landowners may want to retain the right to change the route in order to appease future Lessee operations. This would make them much more comfortable.
- Work with WV Land Trust to work toward the consideration of conservation easements as an option for tax advantages. [www.wvlandtrust.org](http://www.wvlandtrust.org)



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- With license agreements or handshake agreements, be prepared to offer in writing what your group will do to address landowner concerns, such as protecting the landowner from liability, managing and maintaining the trail. A good track record and management practices may satisfy any fear of lawsuits.
- Provide a copy of the Recreational Use Statute, when negotiating with the landowners about liability. They will need to see the actual law, not just your interpretation of it, and be able to understand who it protects. The Statute is found in the WV Code, Chapter 19, Article 25. "Limiting Liability of Landowners" available online at <http://www.legis.state.wv.us/WVCODE/ChapterEntire.cfm?chap=19&art=25>.
- Make it clear the position of your group regarding condemnation. For example, the Great Eastern Trail Association (GETA) & WV Scenic Trails Association (WVSTA) do not support condemnation of private property now and will not support it in the future.
- The county/state should purchase private property already being used for trails informally.
- Work with railroad companies, logging companies, coal companies & land companies.

### ACCESSIBILITY

- **Develop 1-2 mile long handicapped accessible trails in every community. This is a high priority need.**
- Review, and consider adopting, the design principles recently drafted by the U.S. Access Board for outdoor areas, with adjustments to fit the southern WV terrain. The Draft Final Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Area is available at <http://www.access-board.gov/outdoor/draft-final.htm>
- **Engage the disabled community in your trail planning work. The Center for Excellence in Disabilities is a good place to start.**
- Participate in the WV Therapeutic Recreation Association. Most people will have some kind of injury or disability at some point in their lives, and this group helps the transition back to physical activity.

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### FUNDING

There never seems to be enough readily available money. WVDOH says that very few trail applications are received from southern WV counties. Your project will never get funded if you don't apply for the grants. Be aware that when the grants are received, that's when your work and record-keeping really ramps up, so be ready to handle the pressure, and know that you will learn-on-the-job.

- **Develop a resource guide for funding trail projects.** It should include a comprehensive database of grants and other funding that can be used for trail-related projects.
- Apply for grants found on the WVDOT State Trail Program website, such as Recreational Trails Program, Transportation Enhancement Program, Safe Routes to School Program, and others. [http://www.transportation.wv.gov/highways/programplanning/grant\\_administration/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.transportation.wv.gov/highways/programplanning/grant_administration/Pages/default.aspx)
- **Create the "NCHA Trail Partners Program," a small grants program to seed community trail projects and clubs.**
  - The program should be structured similar to the WV Stream Partners Program.
    - Each year, there is \$100,000 to divide up in \$5,000 maximum grants. The applications/reporting requirements are simple. <http://www.wvca.us/stream.cfm>
  - Connect with the nine (9) agencies in the WV Department of Commerce, for help with your trail and community-based planning and development projects. These are: Development Office; Energy; Forestry; Geological & Economic Survey; Miners' Health, Safety & Training; Labor; Natural Resources; Tourism; Workforce WV; [www.wvcommerce.org](http://www.wvcommerce.org).
  - Get help from and participate with your regional RC & D.
    - The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) was established by Congress as a unique program to ultimately empower rural people to help themselves. These organizations are set up by local citizens to help people improve the quality of life in rural communities through development of human and natural resources.
    - RC & D's are self-directed, locally led regional grassroots rural development organizations. It is important to note that such a group is not a unit of government. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service supports the RC&D with personnel, office space and equipment, and sometimes financial and technical assistance for projects.
    - Each location is governed by a local council which defines problems and sets priorities for assistance. These councils provide direction, planning, and implementation of selected projects within their boundaries.
    - In southern WV, RC&D's provide small grants of \$500-\$1000 to help a project.
  - Apply for WV On the Move's "Schools on the Move" mini-grants of up to \$5,000.
    - Since 2005, WVOM has awarded 35 SOM grants in 18 WV counties.
      - Awarded projects have included school walking tracks, a climbing wall, bicycling club activities, and family fun and exercise nights.

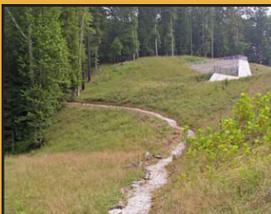


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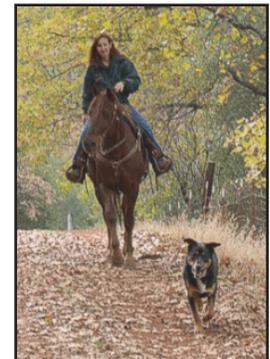


In Derry PA, an annual "Race for A Cause" fundraiser for the American Association for Lost Children (AALC) is held on National Missing Children's Day, near the home town of the organization's founder. In 2009, there were 66 finishers, age 15-62, and the information was posted online.

You can find out more by going to [www.aafic.org](http://www.aafic.org) or [www.iPlayOutside.com](http://www.iPlayOutside.com).



- Host fundraising trail-related events. Fun Runs/Walks are a good way to engage a broad cross-section of the community.
- Apply for a grant from the Bikes Belong Foundation to help with your advocacy work. <http://bikesbelong.org/foundation>
- Seek to use mitigation fees, or in lieu fee mitigation where development occurs. Explore the opportunities for using this funding, for wetland restoration, possibly river access, and green infrastructure measures. Mitigation banks, consultants, and state agencies are resources for more information. <http://www.russellresourcesolutions.com/Articles/mitigation.pdf>.
- WV State could create a Development Tax (like Georgia) which can be used for trails and walkable communities. Research good models in Appalachian states to emulate in WV.
- Use Natural Resources Taxes (Coal & Gas) on trails & property purchases.
- Utilize the Land & Water Conservation Fund, through the WV Development Office.
- Create a special license plate for public trails. Use those proceeds for matching funds to federal grants.
- Engage your legislators about your trail project, and ask them to help you find funds for it. This funding could come through an earmark in a federal agency's budget. In the past few years, our WV Senators and Congressmen have been successful in agency earmarks for trails (ie USACOE planning/development, FHWA \$300K Cheat River Rail-Trail & \$980K PawPaw Trail).
- Use local funds from the Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) for brochures and websites. These funds can be acquired from the hotel/motel taxes.
- Develop public-private partnerships, and get business sponsorships for trail projects.
- Start an NCHA Trails Fund. This fund will be able to accept private donations that are tax-exempt. The fund could be used for matching federal or state grants.



## CHAPTER SIX: Recommendations

### TRAIL & GREENWAY DEVELOPMENT

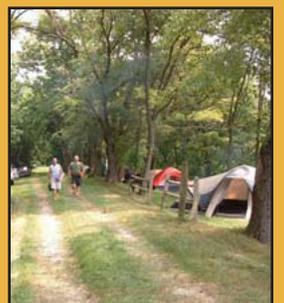
How does a person get trails started and maintained in areas and communities without them? How do you get your trail idea to rise to the local and regional priority list? Much of the NCHA is a rural, poverty area. Trails are often considered lesser priority to traditional infrastructure and economic initiatives such as water/sewer/roads/jobs. There is a huge need for close-to-home and/or community based trails/paths/tracks for walking, running, cycling (people-powered physical activity) to help attack the obesity/overweight crisis, and to improve community and personal health and wellness.

- **Based on the Trail Survey and Workshop results, identify those individuals or communities that are interested in getting started with trails of any kind. Make contact and start the project.**
- Prove you can do small projects. Get something started - in the ground.
- Make linkages. Think regionally, work locally. Start small with a focus on making future linkages. Create branches from rural or mountain trails into communities.
- Talk to trail users at the trail to identify & map trails, and link up a system.
- Distinguish yourselves from Hatfield-McCoy trails - make a distinct niche.
- Create intermodal transportation systems. Work with the Bike/Ped planners of the Regional Planning & Development Councils to develop alternative transportation systems. For example, Beckley is planning an Intermodal Transportation Center.
- Coordinate trail development with other development projects, such as utilities, highway construction, housing and commercial development construction, post-mine land use planning.
- Share utility corridors (water, sewer, gas, electric) with trails.
- For towns & counties having subdivision regulations, require mandatory design for, and construction of, sidewalks or paths for pedestrians & bicycles.
- Develop sustainable trail development and management principles, based on existing policies in other regions and found in various trail manuals.
  - Tell people how to access the trail standards online.
- Develop a trail strategy for more rural areas.
- Develop more "urban" trails in the populated areas. People want close-to-home access to trails.
- **Develop trails that link communities and natural and cultural resources.**



Somehow the message needs to get out - that getting trails IN a community - makes the community more attractive for investment/development and to attract people to move there or continue to live there.

Trail infrastructure & promotion builds momentum for attractive community development. We can learn from the more urban, trail-friendly towns such as Fayetteville, WV, a gateway community to the New River Gorge National River and Gauley River National Recreation Area. With more access to trails in this area, physically active people are attracted to move into the community. This results in more people with more energy for creating more trails & activities/events around the trails. A vibrant community results with vibrant leadership.



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Ashland Company Store & KOA Campground in McDowell County are serving the Hatfield-McCoy Trail users.



Engage with your Economic Development Corporations, and see how they can participate in your trail project and how businesses might benefit.



Mon River Trails Conservancy hosts an annual Half-Marathon on the Deckers Creek Rails-Trails, with a party at the end at Riverfront Park. The event has grown to over 200 people, and is a fine fundraiser for the organization.  
<http://montrails.org/events10dcthm.shtml>



- Provide regional training sessions for developing walkable communities.
- Plan for destination points and points of interest associated with trails.
- Connect small communities with bike/walking paths.
- **Locate trailheads so they are more obvious and easy to find.**
- **Plan for amenities at the trailheads: trash cans, bathroom facilities, parking, signage.**
- Conduct Green Infrastructure planning and identify hub/spoke opportunities for green spaces and ecosystem benefits.
- Learn about and participate in the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SSI).  
<http://www.sustainablesites.org/report> or [www.sustainablesites.org/faqs](http://www.sustainablesites.org/faqs)
  - SSI is an interdisciplinary partnership of the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, and the US Botanic Garden.
  - The services people enjoy from health ecosystems are the unobtrusive foundation of daily life. Yet people often underestimate or simply ignore the values from these “ecosystem services” when making land-use decisions - only to realize later how difficult, expensive, and sometimes impossible it is to replicate services once they are lost.
  - The central message of the SSI is that any landscape—whether the site of a large subdivision, a shopping mall, a park, an abandoned rail yard, or even one home—holds the potential both to improve and to regenerate the natural benefits and services provided by ecosystems in their undeveloped state.
  - SSI has developed guidelines for sustainable land practices that are grounded in rigorous science and can be applied on a site-by-site basis nationwide.
  - The impetus for creating the guidelines came from the recognition that although buildings have national standards for “green” construction, little existed for the space beyond the building skin. Modeled after the LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System™ of the U.S. Green Building Council, the Initiative’s rating system gives credits for the sustainable use of water, the conservation of soils, wise choices of vegetation and materials, and design that supports human health and well-being.
  - Pilot Projects will test the guidelines over the next 2 years (thru March 2012).



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### PROMOTING AND USING THE TRAILS

Once a trail is established, it is important to let people know that it exists, and how to get to it. If the trail is community-based, it will likely be used immediately by numerous walkers and fitness/wellness advocates.

- The sure-fire way to ensure that people know and care about the trail is to involve a broad sector of the community or trail groups in the creation of the trail.
- Encourage a sense of ownership by the individuals and their families, businesses, and civic organizations. The rest will happen organically.

### PUBLIC RELATIONS & MARKETING

- Develop website and marketing tools.
- **Identify your marketable trail-related facilities and trailheads & make information about them accessible to the general public in a variety of ways.**
- Identify all the ways that a project or event could be marketed, and develop a site-specific marketing plan.
- Promote NCHA - what it is and is not, and what it does and does not do. More people need to learn that they live within a National Heritage Area, and what they can do to improve their community.
- Coordinate trail marketing with other tourism marketing.
- **Create and maintain an active website and social networking sites about trails and trail-related events.**
  - Create a currently online events calendar for NCHA website.
  - Use web "links" to each other's projects. Don't "re-invent" a trail network. Local websites should link to trails information.
  - Make trail information accessible via web-based GIS application. Mercer County CVB and [traillink.com](http://traillink.com) are two good sources.
- **Update the NCHA website to include a map of the region, documents and publications, news stories, funding information, updates on numerous projects underway, etc. Post the Trail Plan and Maps.**
- Do "Guerilla Marketing" (cheap/free PR) to attract public attention to your project or event.
  - Promote your trails with travel and trail writers. Find writers at various conferences, or through your Division of Tourism or CVB's. Acquire copies of the books and stories for distribution.
  - Create a poster to hang in public places.



Boy Scouts of America selects West Virginia as site for the National Scouting Center. The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) announced plans to build a multimillion dollar high adventure base in southern West Virginia. After reviewing 80 proposals from 28 states, the BSA has entered into an agreement with Meadow Creek Coal Corporation to purchase more than 10,000 acres in Fayette County. In its press release, BSA said West Virginia offers Scouts unique opportunities to experience some of the best whitewater rafting, rappelling, mountain biking, and other activities not found anywhere else. Source: Governor Joe Manchin's August 2009 "Open for Business" Report, page 2.



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Mercer County's CVB contracted with Cornerstone GIS, LLC to develop the state's first interactive map site featuring local trail systems, which can be viewed at [visitmercercounty.com/map](http://visitmercercounty.com/map).



This website is an excellent example of what can be designed for the NCHA's trail inventory data to provide an outlet for getting the trail information to the public in an online format while also serving as the basis for a statewide comprehensive interactive map system.



- Create user-friendly trail maps and place them in display racks or info centers.
- Ensure your trails are reflected accurately in regional and statewide marketing efforts.
- Post information about trails & points of interest can be posted on the Public Interest Channel on TV.
- Register your events.
  - Register your tourism/trail-related facility and events in WV Division of Tourism's "Travel Planner" online database. The easy fill-in form is online at <http://tourism.listings@wv.gov> <http://www.wvcommerce.org/travel/industryinformation> or call 1-800-call-wv.
  - Submit events and stories to WVDOT's State Trail Coordinator for their website at: [http://www.transportation.wv.gov/highways/programplanning/grant\\_administration/wvtrails/](http://www.transportation.wv.gov/highways/programplanning/grant_administration/wvtrails/)
  - Market your events on iPlayOutside website. <http://www.iplayoutside.com>
  - Contribute information to AASHTO's e-news, about your bike/ped/byway transportation campaigns, events or other activities. Contact Sherry Conway Appel, AASHTO's national transportation campaign marketing manager at <http://sappel@ashto.org>
- Ensure that each NCHA county is covered by a Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), or some kind of local marketing team. McDowell County needs one.
- Create a new Visitor Center in Kimball.

Talk to your CVBs to share information.
- Conduct honest marketing. Make sure your marketing materials make clear to the visitor what they should expect when visiting the facility. For example, on the Coal Heritage Trail or Paint Creek Scenic Trail publications, the front cover should clearly state that this is a Driving Route or Scenic Byway, so they do not get the impression that it is a hiking or biking trail.
- Improve and expand the signage for trails.
  - Create and install trail signage that gives the trail user interesting information about the region.
  - Provide better wayfinding signage on trails. People are afraid of getting lost.
- **Apply for National Recreation Trail designation**, for trails with quality design and management. This designation provides national marketing benefits. In the NCHA, only 2 trail systems have been designated: the Hatfield-McCoy Trail System (2004) and the Huntington Museum of Art Trail (1984). Updates to the online database need to be made. Applications are due Nov 1. <http://www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails/>
- Develop a "one-stop shop" for NCHA trails, through an online Interactive Map Site that includes all trail data for the NCHA, similar to the one created for Mercer County CVB by Cornerstone GIS.

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### ECONOMIC BENEFITS - TRAIL RELATED BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- Use trails as an economic development tool.
- **Establish a Trail Towns program.** <http://www.trailtowns.org/>
- Build the "Trails Economy" in WV by encouraging entrepreneurship for trail-related businesses.
- EDC's work to attract and retain businesses in their region. They can assist trail-related business development. Trails provide an important quality of life aspect, and should be part of the economic development program of the business community.
- Establish additional trail guide services where needed.
- Plan ahead to develop partnerships with businesses to provide facilities & services to trail users.
- Encourage the development of a local walking adventures business in the NCHA, based on the model of this family business. <http://www.walkingadventures.com/>
- **Provide business information and maps at trailhead kiosks, attractively designed, to let trail users know about what is nearby, such as restaurants, gas, lodging, stores.**
- Create an inventory of all trail-related businesses in the NCHA.

### PROGRAM - EVENTS - INTERPRETATION

- **Create additional events to promote local use of trails, and to tell the story of our region.**
- **Create a directory of local trail-related events in southern WV, and keep it updated and accessible to the public. Locate the Professor at Southern Community College that already created an event inventory, and work off that list. Include: bike races, running races, such as half marathon, marathon, triathlons, fun run/walks, paddling trips, fundraising walks/runs, trail festivals.**
- **Combine heritage tourism events** with trail events. (Have fun runs/walks at events.)
- **Host an event for National Trails Day, always the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in June, with trail events happening the entire month.** Support is provided by American Hiking Society. <http://www.americanhiking.org/NTD.aspx>



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In 2008, an event called "Ride, Hike and Bike the Park Day!" was held at Twin Falls State Park in Wyoming County. Hikers and bikers shared and enjoyed the trails on Twin Falls State Park. Both the hikes and bike rides had guides. The mountain bike rides were arranged by riders' abilities and skill levels.



Fayetteville New River Gorge Heritage Festival



- Support National Trails Day events through a sponsor or underwriter (ie General Mills provided "Trail Mix" to students)
- Create geocaching sites, and promote them online.
- Work with health care providers to create "Prescription Walking" – walk two miles /day and see me in a month.
- **Encourage walking programs, in partnership with County Health Departments and other groups.**
- **Expand the Volksmarching program in the NCHA region, and encourage membership.** Develop the youth program "Walk Together". Walk with the clubs and walkers of the American Volkssport Association for fun, fitness, and friendship. There is only one AVA Club in WV, and it could easily be expanded. [www.ava.org](http://www.ava.org)
- Create an Irish Road Bowling event (as a fun event on a trail). Irish Road Bowling is ideal for young athletes or seniors who are looking to enjoy a scenic walk on a country road, combined with an ancient and exciting, but not overly strenuous, sport! <http://www.wvirishroadbowling.com/>
- **Explore opportunities for adding interpretation that tells the coal heritage story along existing trails and in developing new trails.**
- Provide opportunities for self-guided learning along trails. Historic sites should be interpreted, such as the Statesbury Community Church, old coal tipples.

Create "podcasts" (MP3 audio downloads) for hikers that will "read" to them oral histories of that area's residents and provide a history of trails (like Mary Ingles).

### TRAIL MANAGEMENT/MAINTENANCE & SAFETY

- Ensure that each trail has a coordinator or steward to manage it.
- **Create an Adopt-a-Trail Program.**
  - Recruit youth groups (such as Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Church Groups), civil clubs, businesses, etc.
- Use best management practices in designing and building the trail for the use intended.
- Promote trail usage. It results in safer trail, because there are more eyes on the trail.
- Prepare educational kiosks/bulletin boards at the trailheads, on trail ethics.
- **Adopt and teach the "Leave No Trace" and "Tread Lightly!" concepts.**
- Educate people on ATV safety.

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- Educate people on individual safety and responsibility. Ensure that trail users are provided information on trail conditions at the trailhead kiosks.
- Provide access to loaner/rental GPS units for trail users, with pre-loaded map of the trails, and an easy-to-use system. Some people are afraid of getting lost on the trails.
- Track and rescue lost people on trails with a cell signal (or radio transmitter).

### TRAIL TYPES

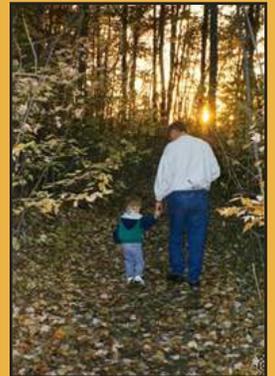
This section lists some actions to take for specific trail types.

#### LAND TRAILS: Motorized

- **Support the creation of additional miles of sustainably-designed public motorized trails.** This should relieve some of the pressure from illegal ATV riding, an so that the riders will hopefully then stay off non-motorized trails.
- Balance the number of motorized trails in your community with safe non-motorized opportunities such as walking.
- Develop educational / training programs for all ATV/dirt bike riders. This should cut down on the accidents.

#### LAND TRAILS: Non-Motorized

- **Create trails/paths around new developments such as a subdivision or a shopping center.**
  - There are already “Walmart walkers” indoors. This will give them an outdoor walking area for the nice days. This kind of initiative is currently taking place at the Highlands Business Park (Cabellas) in Wheeling.
- Create & distribute walking trail maps for communities.
- Contact Washington & Lee University about building horse trails on their land in War.
- Create a Through-the-Park Trail at New River Gorge, which would establish a large segment of the proposed Mary Draper Ingles Trail system.
- **Support the establishment of long-distance hiking trails through the NCHA region. These include the Great Eastern Trail and Mary Draper Ingles Trail.**



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### RAIL-TRAILS

- Use more abandoned rail lines for trails, and create a system of rail-trails. This is land recycling.
- **Inventory, map, and analyze the abandoned or unused rail corridors in the NCHA Region for possible conversion for trail.**
  - Complete a Railroad Right-of-Way inventory for identifying candidate rail-trails.
  - Consult the 1948 Railroad maps – there were branch lines up many forgotten hollows, most are grown up now with vegetation and hard to see.
  - Verify rail corridor status (active, unused, abandoned) - ask WVDOT State Rail Authority.
  - Consult, update, and digitize the 1992 WV Abandoned Rail Assessment, conducted by WV Rails to Trails Council and Rails to Trails Conservancy using an ISTEA grant. A hard copy may be available from RTC or WV Trails Coordinator.
- Develop a strategy to acquire and convert the corridors to handicapped-accessible trails.
- Expand contact list for the Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC) Early Warnings alerts, to include trail users / groups / advocates.
- Respond to Early Notice Alerts from RTC.
- **Partner with the WV Brownfields Program for rail-trail projects. There could be toxins on the corridor.**
- Consider Rail With Trail opportunities.
- Create Paint Creek Rail-Trail without federal grant funds (because it is also used as driveway and Oil/Gas access road)
- Extend the Lewis McManus Memorial Honor Trail in Beckley north to Cranberry/Bradley and south to Raleigh/Beaver.



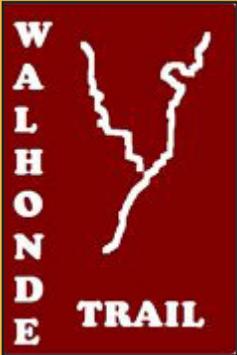
## CHAPTER SIX: Recommendations

### ROADSIDE TRAILS

- Road bikers and walkers need improvements along roadways.
- Install "Share The Road" signs along appropriate roads.
- **Work with the WV Cycling Foundation to identify and map popular road routes in the NCHA.**
- **Participate on the "WV Bicycle Pedestrian Network" of the WV Trail Coordinator**
  - This is an e-mail list group formed in December 2008 by the WV Trail Program Coordinator / Bike Ped Coordinator in the WVDOH. The purpose is to provide local information on bicycle/pedestrian usage as it pertains to West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) projects, such as roadway and bridge development/maintenance, and ensure that bike/ped is included where needed now or in the foreseeable future. The WVDOH is tasked by the Federal Highway Administration to consider bike/ped on Federal Aid projects.
- Participate on your Regional Planning & Development Council, or Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to ensure that bike/ped projects are included in their Transportation Improvement Plans (TIP). These TIPs are incorporated into the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) every year, and are referred to when determining priorities of funding resources.
- Learn about alternative transportation and transportation design, and encourage its use in WV. For example, Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) is an approach to the process and outcomes of transportation decision making. Key aspects of CSS include:
  - Addressing a purpose and need that is agreed to by a full range of stakeholders
  - Open, honest, early and continuous communication with stakeholders and meaningful opportunities for stakeholders to shape outcomes
  - A flexible approach to design that preserves and enhances natural and community resources.
  - Only one WV project is listed on their website as a case study, and it pertains to accessible pedestrian signals in Morgantown. CSS projects can include other bike/ped accommodation. Learn more at: [www.contextsensitivesolutions.org](http://www.contextsensitivesolutions.org)



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### WATER TRAILS

- Consult the Water Trail designation guidelines, available on the WV DOH State Trail Program website.
- Identify rivers that can be water trails (ie Guyandotte, Tug, Coal, Big Sandy).
- **Support community efforts to create water trails.**
- Create Little Beaver Lake Water Trail.
- **Provide more public access points along the rivers, for both fishing and paddling.**
- Participate in the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) annual fishing & boating committee meetings (forum to discuss possible changes in no-wake zones).

### SCENIC BYWAYS

- Conduct more marketing of the Coal Heritage Trail Byway.
- Develop a support structure for Paint Creek Scenic Trail Byway to be sustainable and conduct grant-writing for future development.
- **Support the development of additional Byways and Backways.** Possible candidates include the Guyandotte Byway in Wyoming County, and the Coal River Backway in Lincoln & Boone Counties.
- Develop recommendations regarding the naming of Byways and Backways to distinguish them from hiking/biking trails.
  - Name any new Byways or Backways using one of these words at the end. Do not use the word "Trail" – a "trail" should be reserved for off-road alternative transportation.
  - Consider renaming the Byways that are using the word "Trail." It is confusing to the visitor. Replace the word "Trail" with "Byway" or "Backway."
- Apply for National Scenic Byways Program funds for projects related to officially designated Byways and Backways. This is an 80% federal, 20% local reimbursement grant program that may recognize "in-kind" matches for the local share.  
[http://www.transportation.wv.gov/highways/programplanning/grant\\_administration/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.transportation.wv.gov/highways/programplanning/grant_administration/Pages/default.aspx)