



APPALACHIAN FOREST NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

2022 Annual Report



Dear AFNHA Stakeholders, Partners and Friends,

Our 2022 Annual Report follows. On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are delighted to share our organizational progress.

This year was again a productive time for Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area (AFNHA). Our Management Plan—following over three years of development—was submitted for review by the National Park Service. The Management Plan is a statutory obligation of our 2019 Congressional designation as a National Heritage Area.

I would also like to list some of the highlights of the work undertaken this year for your consideration.

In the 2021-2022 AmeriCorps program year we supported 33 members at 18 conservation, heritage, and community development organizations to benefit local communities, assets, and landscapes.

Our relationship with partner, Eastern Community and Technical College, grew into formation of the Highlands Creative Economy initiative—a forum of information sharing, convened regularly by AFNHA—to elevate sustained and appropriate economic development in a large segment of our 18-counties catchment area in West Virginia and western Maryland. This initiative was funded in part by a generous grant by the Benedum Foundation.

We created a volunteer program and hiking challenge to engage our partners and stakeholders. Please review our website at afnha.org for details.

We proudly provide unmatched experiences for visitors and residents in our 18-county region in West Virginia and western Maryland. We invite you to join us in our work.

Sincerely,

Bob Johnson

Robert C. 'Bob' Johnson, President

Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area

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Danny Helmick - AmeriCorps Member

MANAGEMENT PLAN SUBMITTED

Completing over three years of work and outreach, the AFNHA Management Plan was finalized and submitted to the National Park Service for approval on August 16, 2022. This plan will guide AFNHA activities moving forward as a National Heritage Area, based on five main goals. As the draft plan was developed, feedback was solicited from task group participants, partners, and NPS, and their comments were incorporated. The review draft management plan was released for public input on June 24, 2022. Public review included an in-person workshop at historic Adalund Mansion in Philippi, West Virginia, a virtual information and feedback session the following day, and distribution of the plan digitally and in print at public libraries, all publicized by press releases and social media. The submitted plan includes 47 letters of support or comment from federal, state, and local government representatives and organizations, educational partners, tourism entities, and other natural resource, cultural, heritage, and community based organizations.

Read the full Management Plan at <https://www.appalachianforestnha.org/management-planning>



MANAGEMENT PLAN SUBMITTED

Through the management planning process we engaged over **300** individuals and **120** organizational partners in planning meetings and input. Read what some of our respondents had to say:

"Great and diverse group of people. Good opportunity to share input. Enjoyed enthusiasm and passion for our forest area and how to promote and preserve it."

"What's important about AFNHA? Networking - building bridges between geographic and interest groups, and working together to grow the pie instead of compete."

"I know the framework is good because I can drop every single thing I'm doing in this realm into one of the themes, and I can use the framework to influence how I craft the stories I tell in the activities we do."

"We have history, arts, nature, recreation... there is so much to draw people into the area, and AFNHA is another benefit to us that we can utilize to bring in people that may not have been here before."

"Community vibrancy, stopping the brain drain, and achieving work that is of great public service - this is having a profound impact on the community."

"AFNHA can help address challenges most entities face - funding, technical assistance, and unified messaging."



APPALACHIAN FOREST
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

MANAGEMENT PLAN AUGUST 2022



AMERICORPS PROGRAM

AFNHA AmeriCorps in the 2021-2022 program year supported **33 members** at **18** conservation, heritage, and community development **organizations** to benefit local communities, assets, and landscapes. These members supervised **422 volunteers** who provided **7832 hours** of service, improved **618 acres** of public lands and maintained or preserved **6** historic properties, maintained **53 miles** of trails, provided environmental stewardship education to **4638 individuals**, and served **51,631 visitors** to our region!

Since September 2022 we have welcomed **31 new members** for the 2023-2022 program year! Our AmeriCorps Stories remain the most popular pages on our website, receiving over **5,000** out of **35,000 views** in 2022!



2021-2022 AMERICORPS SPONSOR SITES



HIGHLANDS CREATIVE ECONOMY

Our Highlands Creative Economy program continues to grow. AFNHA partners with Eastern WV Community & Technical College to host monthly networking meetings for businesses and tourism organizations. We offered additional online trainings and in-person workshops on marketing, hospitality, agri-business, and other skills. Meetings in 2022 were attended by over **200 people**. Our Tourism Summit event brought together a diverse group of over **70 participants** from **15 counties** representing many tourism and business development organizations. Speakers presented on topics including Tourism Marketing, Creating Marketable Trails, Hospitality and Lodging, Interpretive and Themed Trails, State Tourism Resources, and Tourism Business Development.



HIGHLANDS CREATIVE ECONOMY

We piloted a mini-grant program which awarded **\$60,000** to support **18** local tourism development projects. Projects supported by these grants included:

- A repurposed 3,200 sq. ft. outdoor event space at Arthurdale Heritage
- A quilting symposium and bed-turning workshop at Adaland Mansion
- An expanded Christmas light Display at the Elkins Depot Welcome Center
- Signage for self-guided tours at Evergreen Heritage Center



For our ongoing Highlands Creative Economy program we garnered the 2022 APEX Award from Eastern WV Community & Technical College, which honors organizations engaged with the College in extraordinary service to the community.

Anyone involved in tourism in our 18 county region is invited to join our monthly meetings which typically take place on the 4th Thursday of each month. Learn more about our program and get involved at <https://www.appalachianforestnha.org/creative-economy>

APPALACHIAN FOREST DISCOVERY CENTER

Our 2022 exhibit "**Plants and People**" explored wild plant traditions in the Appalachian Forest, and was visited by **2706 people** from May through October. We hosted a popular "Night at the Museum" event which featured hands-on activities, folklife demonstrations, and forest product tastings.

Didn't get a chance to visit the exhibit? You can view the exhibit panels [on our website!](#)



APPALACHIAN FOREST VOLUNTEERS

This fall we debuted our new Volunteer Program. AFV allows individuals to find volunteer opportunities in our area and gives organizations the opportunity to list ongoing needs or upcoming projects and recruit volunteers. Benefits of membership include access to our Volunteer Management Handbook, volunteer tracking tools, eligibility for the President's Volunteer Service Award, and more. Stay tuned as we expand our network this year to include more organizations and volunteer opportunities.

Register now at <https://afnha.galaxydigital.com>

AFNHA sponsored programs recorded a total of **8499 volunteer hours** in 2022 at a value of **\$186,978!**



OTHER AFNHA PROGRAMS

Monongahela Outdoor Volunteers

The MOV project was completed utilizing funding through the USDA Secure Rural Schools RAC Grant, Appalachian Regional Commission POWER Grant, Benedum Foundation Grant and AFNHA as Fiscal Partner. The project deliverables included a Business Plan for developing a Volunteer Center in the Gauley Ranger District for trail maintenance, a Readiness Report addressing challenges to implementation, an Outdoor Volunteer Pilot Program, and multiple trail enhancements and planning projects. In addition to funders, representatives of the Monongahela National Forest were key partners in this endeavor. Ongoing maintenance of 60 miles of trails in the region was accomplished throughout the project period.

Hiking Challenge

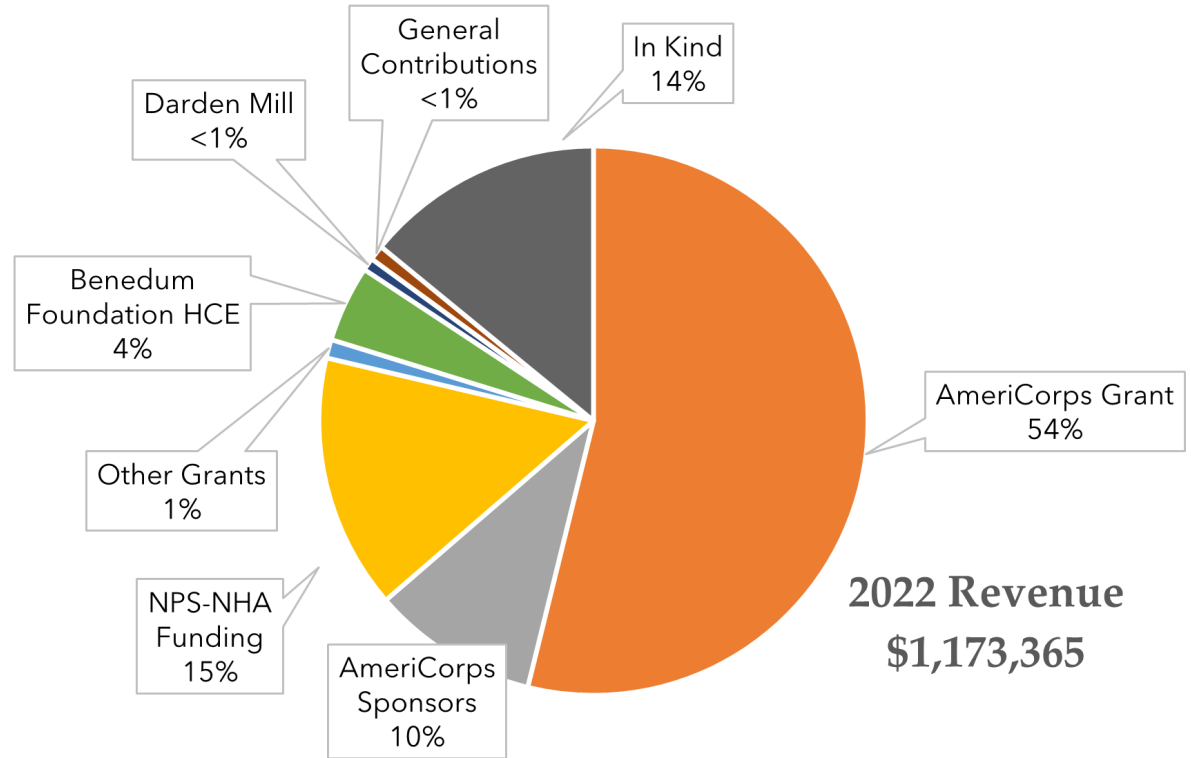
This promotion is designed to encourage hikers of all experience levels to experience the many recreational assets in our area. Participants are encouraged to hike any 5 trails in any of our NHA counties to receive a free embroidered patch. We developed a GIS story map of trails recommended for beginners, in addition to our existing map of many other trails in the area. Learn more and view some suggested trails [on our website!](#)



FINANCIALS

Revenue

AmeriCorps Grant	\$631,884
AmeriCorps Sponsors	\$115,069
NPS-NHA Funding	\$176,248
Other Grants	\$12,840
Benedum Foundation HCE	\$52,881
Darden Mill	\$8,794
General Contributions	\$10,449
In Kind	\$165,200
Total	\$1,173,365

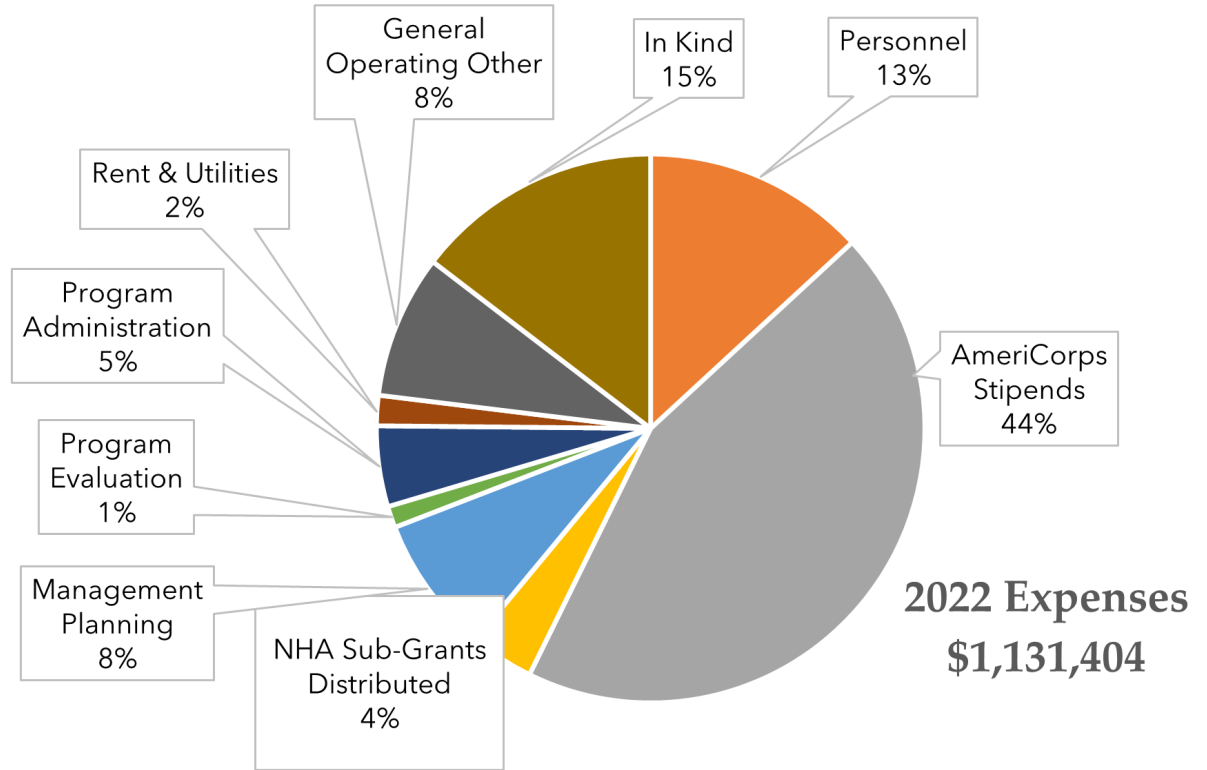


2022 proved to be a productive year for AFNHA despite a downturn in the economy and COVID recovery. Funding from strong partners supported completion of our management plan and accomplishments for ongoing and new programs. Funding partners include AmeriCorps, the National Park Service - National Heritage Area Program, the Benedum Foundation for the Highlands Creative Economy program, the Appalachian Regional Commission, Dominion Energy Foundation, First Energy Foundation, as well as contributions of cash and in-kind goods and services provided by our AmeriCorps sites and other sponsors across our region.

FINANCIALS

Expenses

Personnel	\$148,716
AmeriCorps Stipends	\$499,401
NHA Sub-Grants Distributed	\$42,320
Management Planning	\$91,702
Program Evaluation	\$14,375
Program Administration	\$53,775
Rent & Utilities	\$20,171
General Operating Other	\$95,744
In Kind	\$165,200
Total	\$1,131,404



The Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area is a 501(c)(3) organizations with EIN: 20-0815517. Please contact Logan Smith at logan@afnha.org if you would like more financial information including a copy of our 990.



APPALACHIAN FOREST NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA



Mission

The Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area conserves, interprets, and promotes forest heritage to enhance landscapes and communities in the highlands of West Virginia and Maryland.

Contact Info

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