

Heart of the Highlands Trail System

Stakeholder News



Heart of the Highlands: Partnerships & Progress

2014 Accomplishments

- Secured agreements with First Energy Corporation to construct critical 1/4 mile of new trail near Davis connecting the Splash Dam South and River Road Trails
- HoH Project Administrator and Trail Crew Leader attended the Professional Trail Builders Association Conference at Stonewall Jackson State Park
- Returning Trail Crew Leader, Zachary Adams, completed the S212 chainsaw certification and mechanized trail building training, then logged over 600 hours of trail maintenance and new trail construction during the 2014 field season
- Lyndon State College Adventure Program students spent Spring Break performing trail maintenance projects on the HoH Core Loop, then enjoying our outstanding mountain biking trails
- Partnered with The Nature Conservancy to host a team of LEAF interns who assisted with trail tread improvements on the Splash Dam South Trail
- Hardworking volunteers joined in work days to complete improvements on Plantation Trail in the Canaan Mountain area
- Appalachian Forest Heritage Area AmeriCorps volunteers provided over 600 hours of trail building and trail maintenance assistance
- Partnered with CCCWV-Citizens Conservation Corps of West Virginia-to provide a local work program and field our trail crew
- Tucker County Trails loaned their mechanized wheelbarrow for 8 weeks of rock moving on the First Energy Connector and River Road Trail improvements
- Attended Tucker County Day at the Capitol and the Highland Sky Run to promote Heart of the Highlands Trail System
- Attended Tucker County Planning Commission meetings as they focus on transportation issues - including trails - within Tucker County
- Attended WV Division of Tourism Trails meeting where Mapping the Mountain State's WV Trail Inventory was unveiled: <http://www.mapwv.gov/trails/#>
- Concept Map and project brochures have been revised, produced and readied for 2015 distribution
- Eleven HoH team members participated in the Run For It event raising \$1390
- Thirty-five community members attended the seventh Annual Heart of the Highlands Trail System Stakeholders Meeting
- Board of Directors and Advisory Council members consistently attend meetings and remain dedicated to project success
- Tucker Community Foundation continues as Fiscal Agent

Looking Forward to 2015

The HoH Board of Directors was glad to welcome Ron Hollis as Manager of Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Ron has embraced the CVNWR planning guidance to work with Heart of the Highlands to create key trail connections. We are hopeful to be moving dirt to complete some long awaited connections from the Camp 70 Bridge area to Cortland Road and within the Beall Trails area.

Our 2015 field season will start with a spring sweep of the current ~14 miles of Core Loop Trail. Then Fire Trail #6 will receive some major water management and tread improvement, and we will improve access to the Camping Shelter at the Plantation-Davis Trail intersection.

So much of our trail plan depends on "pieces falling into place" as we work with a variety of funding sources and multiple land owners and management agencies. With the benefit of some good timing, we will also be constructing a connecting trail from the future Tucker County Boulder Park in Davis to the planned Allegheny Highlands Rail Trail extension along Corridor H/Route 48.

And many of you are familiar with the Canaan Valley Adventure or Explorer trail maps. Work is underway to revise and update these popular trail maps. HoH will have a new comprehensive Tucker County Trail map incorporating the best features of those earlier maps, the Heart of the Highlands Core and more, available for sale by late summer 2015.

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Friends of the 500th

Andy Blackwood

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Blackwater Falls &
Canaan Valley State Parks

Julie Fosbender

Monongahela National
Forest

Project Administrator

Julie Dzaack

Trail Crew Leader

Zachary Adams

First Energy Connector Trail

It took well over a year, but License Agreements and Right-of-Way Encroachment Permits were finalized to construct a critical 1/4 mile connecting trail through a partnership with First Energy, known to many as Mon Power. THANKS go out to First Energy's Paul Vilella and Allen Staggers, the WVDOH, and the WVDNR for their cooperation and support in this venture.

This connector links the ever popular Splash Dam South Trail and the River Road Trail at their junction in Davis and allows hikers and bikers to stay on a trail and off the highway berm as they continue on the HoH Core Loop. It is carefully designed to transition from the wide and level terrain of River Road Trail into the narrow and technical tread of Splash Dam South Trail.

Zach Adams, HoH Trail Crew Leader, designed and built this new trail segment as he trained and supervised a *green* trail crew provided through a partnership with the CCCWV (Citizens Conservation Corps of West Virginia). It took 6 weeks, 20 tons of stone, two different size excavators, and piles of patience and dedication to create this showcase trail.



HoH Core Loop: First Energy Connector Trail near Davis, WV

Project Update

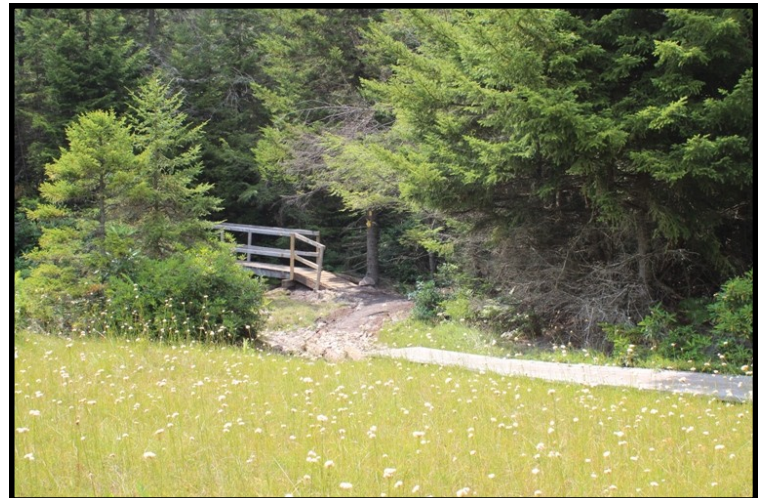
A major setback was experienced this fall when WVDNR's Canaan Valley State Park Superintendent and Natural Heritage Program Staff informed us that they would not support a constructed trail, the proposed *Headwaters Trail*, through the north end of Canaan Valley State Park to connect the Allegheny Trail segment of the HoH Core Loop to Route 32 near the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center.

Support for the HoH project was formalized with all partner properties - including Canaan Valley State park - in 2010 after our Concept Map, goals and objectives were developed and approved by the Board and Advisory Council. The State Parks did grant approval to HoH for major trail improvements to be completed on their existing portions of the identified Core Loop Trail. However, though we did complete those improvements and have worked diligently to meet the WVDNR requests to modify the proposed connecting route through CVSP, for review of alternative routes, and to give dedicated attention to best building practices, we have not been able to gain their approval for planning and constructing this new connecting trail segment.

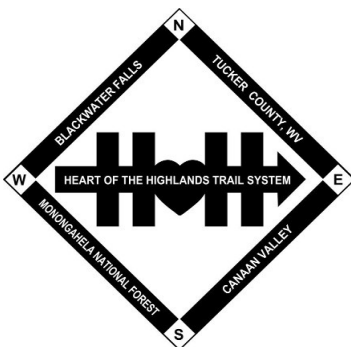
While extremely disappointed in this turn of events, HoH will continue to work diligently and explore alternatives for a Core Loop Trail connecting our partner properties' trails to meet our project goals and to provide safe connections for resident and visitor trail users.

Trail Bridge Re-Positioned

A poorly aligned footbridge on Yellow Birch Trail in Blackwater Falls State Park was re-positioned. Ingenuity and mechanical assists made light of the job. After carefully removing wooden steps and railing to reuse later, the bridge was jacked up and winched into a new alignment to improve the flow of the trail. Steps were removed on both ends of the bridge and smooth approaches constructed. The Yellow Birch Trail is part of the HoH Core Loop connecting the River Road Trail near the Town of Davis with the Allegheny/Davis Trail across Canaan Mountain through the Monongahela National Forest.



HoH Core Loop: Footbridge in Blackwater Falls State



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Connecting trails ♦ Connecting people