

Heart of the Highlands Trail System

Stakeholder News



Heart of the Highlands Partnerships & Progress

Volume 2
September 2011

Annual Stakeholders Meeting
October 19,
7:00 p.m. at
Blackwater Falls State Park Lodge

Everyone is welcome.



Retired smokejumpers work on Davis Trail



WV Mountain Bike Festival participants build bridge across Devil's Run



View along Splash Dam South Trail

Mission

The Heart of the Highlands Trails System will connect the non-motorized trail systems of five land management agencies in Tucker County, West Virginia (CVNWR, CVI, CVSP, BWFS, MNF) into a comprehensive, landscape oriented, environmentally sustainable, multi-use trail system that is accessible to the public. Ultimately, the Heart of the Highlands will provide access to and from significant regional and national trail systems.

Goals

- 1. Trails will connect property to property and trail to trail.**
- 2. Trails will be marked consistently and presented on one map for ease of use.**
- 3. Trails will allow visitors to safely travel between towns, properties and visitor services by bike or foot without traveling on roadways.**

2011 Accomplishments

- ◆ Tucker Community Foundation serves as Fiscal Agent
- ◆ Board of Directors and Advisory Council fully expanded
 - ◆ Trail System goals and objectives determined
 - ◆ General trail construction guidelines adopted
 - ◆ Project Administrator hired
 - ◆ Website developed
- ◆ Work begins on 23 mile Core Loop Trail
- ◆ Volunteer "smokejumper" crew works on Davis Trail segment completing several drainage repairs and turnpikes
- ◆ USFS Title II Funds awarded to support Davis Trail work
- ◆ WV Mountain Bike Festival participants volunteer on Splash Dam South Trail segment completing bridge across Devil's Run
- ◆ AmeriCorps members work on Splash Dam South Trail segment completing several bridges, rock crossing and a switchback
- ◆ Bridge at Camp 70 is replaced (anticipated October 2011 completion)
- ◆ Connecting route through Canaan Valley State Park to CVNWR is proposed

Annual Stakeholders Meeting

Join us on October 19 at 7:00 p.m. at the Blackwater Falls State Park Lodge to learn more information about these accomplishments and upcoming plans. Light refreshments will be served.

Everyone is welcome.

Please RSVP to info@heartofthehighlandstrail.org

Board of Directors & Advisory Council

Roger Lilly
Tucker County Trails

Tom Carr
County Commission Representative

Jonathan Schafler
Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Rob Gilligan
Blackwater Falls & Canaan Valley State Parks

Jason Reed
Monongahela National Forest

Ken Dzaack
Canaan Valley Institute

Andy Blackwood
National Youth Science Foundation

Andy Dalton
Friends of the 500th Representative

Jim Good
Community Representative

Annie Snyder
Community Representative

Jay Hamric
Community Representative

Julie Dzaack
Project Administrator



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**Connecting trails.
Connecting people.**

Connectivity is at the Heart

Of the Splash Dam South Trail & Camp 70 Bridge

The first phase of the Heart of the Highlands Trail System is a 23-mile core loop that will connect the partner properties: Blackwater Falls State Park, Canaan Valley Institute, Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Canaan Valley State Park, Monongahela National Forest, and National Youth Science Foundation. Connecting trails will be established and existing trails improved to link the public lands in and around Canaan Valley to each other and to the Town of Davis. About half of this 23-mile core loop trail is already on the ground as existing trails.

The "Splash Dam South Segment" is the first new segment of the Heart of the Highlands Trail to be constructed. When completed, this trail will follow the south side of the Blackwater River from Route 32 near Davis, through Canaan Valley Institute and National Youth Science Foundation properties, upstream to connect with the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Though a final route has not been determined, the Refuge will be building a new trail to link the trails on these properties and provide access into the heart of Canaan Valley.

While many organizations and agencies are partnering to make the trail system a success, the volunteers in the community have made a huge impact in the labor needed to build trails. Tucker County Trails, a Heart of the Highlands partner, is a nonprofit, volunteer organization dedicated to the service, access, and promotion of trails for the health and well-being of Tucker County. They serve a crucial role in the area by organizing work days for trail construction and maintenance. On a Sunday morning in May, following the Canaan Mountain Bike Festival, about 20 folks showed up for a volunteer work day on the Splash Dam South segment to construct a bridge across Devils Run and complete a nice section of trail that followed it with rock bridges, bench cutting, and raking. The show of force was great and Ken Dzaack, land manager at Canaan Valley Institute (CVI) where the work site was for this day, was very pleased with the progress. "I would have been ecstatic just to get the bridge in place today, so all the extra work is a real bonus," Dzaack said.

This 3.1 mile trail is a key connector for the Heart of the Highlands Trail System 23-mile Core Loop. It will provide uninterrupted access from Blackwater Falls State Park's River Road Trail near the Town of Davis, through Canaan Valley Institute and National Youth Science Foundation properties on the south side of the Blackwater River and onto Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge property.

When the Camp 70 Bridge across the Blackwater River is replaced this fall, it will reconnect the properties and trails of CVI and the Refuge. The Camp 70 Bridge and Splash Dam South Trail will then provide trail linking choices on CVI's north and south trail system and on the Refuge's Brown Mountain trail network.

The Heart of the Highlands Trail System board of directors is excited to see Tucker County Trails and the mountain biking community giving so generously of their time and talents to these volunteer trail building work days. We are thrilled to see the joint accomplishments of the Heart of the Highlands partnerships.

HoH Background in Brief

October 2008: Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge hosts a stakeholder meeting where over 30 Tucker County businesses, organizations, residents and land managers meet to address a long standing community idea of developing an interconnected trail system on the public lands of Tucker County.

October 2009: 2nd annual stakeholder meeting focuses vision and goals. Committee formed to create structure for the Heart of the Highlands Trail System.

2010: Board of Directors, Fiscal Agent and Bylaws are established. HoH Core Trail concept defined. Base funding of \$500,000 is secured through a grant from USFWS. Work begins on the Splash Dam South Trail, the first new connecting trail segment. Three miles through Canaan Valley Institute and National Youth Science Foundation properties, funded by a WVDOH Recreational Trails Program award, will connect the Town of Davis and Blackwater Falls State Park trails to CVI South & Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge trails near the Camp 70 Bridge. 3rd annual stakeholder meeting held.

2011: Project administrator contracted. Board of Directors expanded to eleven. Volunteer "smokejumper" crew works on Davis Trail in the Monongahela National Forest, part of the Core Trail, funded in part by an HoH Secure Rural Schools grant. Camp 70 Bridge is replaced funded by a Federal Appropriation. Route for Headwaters Trail, to connect the CVNWR Visitor Center to trails in Canaan Valley State Park and the Allegheny Trail, is proposed.