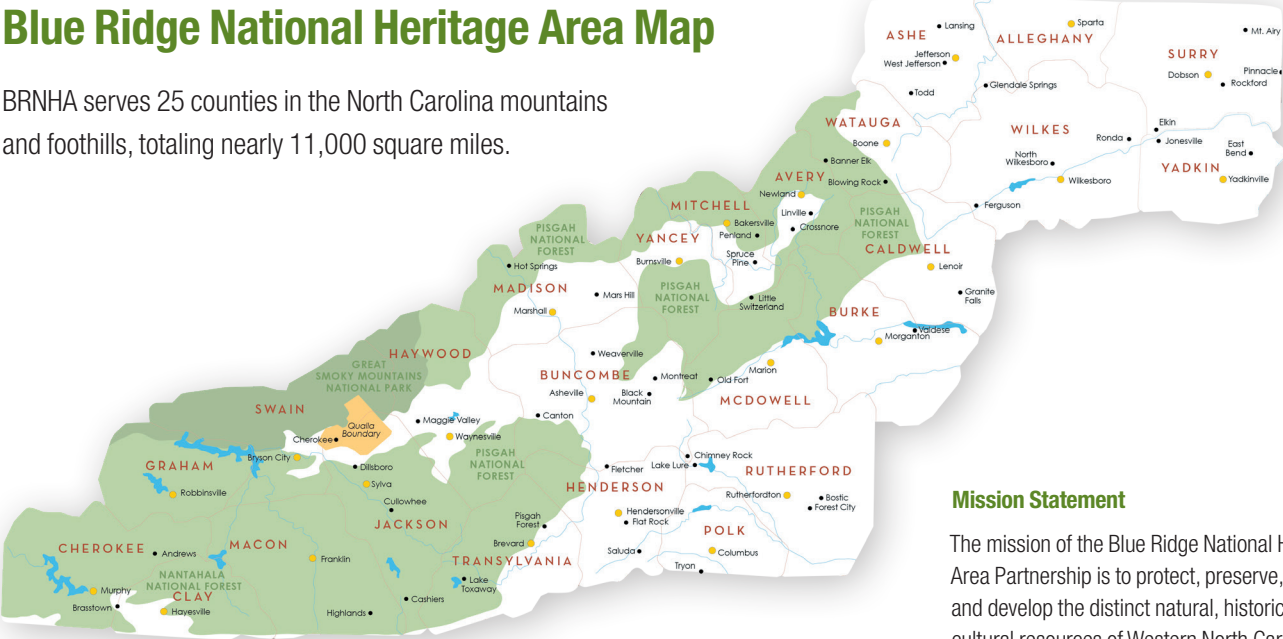


# Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Map

BRNHA serves 25 counties in the North Carolina mountains and foothills, totaling nearly 11,000 square miles.



The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership would like to thank the following for their support in 2022:

### Funders

Appalachian Regional Commission  
ArtsAVL  
Cherokee Preservation Foundation  
Come Hear NC  
Community Foundation of Henderson County - Perry N. Rudnick Fund  
Community Foundation of Western North Carolina  
Dogwood Health Trust  
Forever Mountain  
Mountain Bizworks  
North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources  
North Carolina Arts Council  
WNC Bridge Foundation

### Marketing Partners

Alleghany County Tourism Development Authority  
Ashe County Chamber of Commerce  
First Peak of the Blue Ridge – Polk County Tourism

Haywood County Tourism Development Authority  
Henderson County Tourism Development Authority  
Jackson County Tourism Development Authority  
Jackson County Arts Council  
Lenoir Tourism Development Authority  
Mount Airy Tourism Development Authority  
Tourism Partnership of Surry County  
West Jefferson Tourism Development Authority  
Wilkesboro Tourism Development Authority

### Media Partners

Smoky Mountain News  
WNCW Public Radio

With sincere gratitude we thank our 90 individual donors who supported BRNHA in 2022. A special thank you to our advertisers for Down the Road Magazine, the Asheville Map and the Western North Carolina Regional Map, and the River Arts District Map. Special thanks to the Blue Ridge Parkway and America's National Parks for their partnership and support.

### Mission Statement

The mission of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership is to protect, preserve, interpret and develop the distinct natural, historical and cultural resources of Western North Carolina for the benefit of present and future generations, and in so doing, sustain our heritage and stimulate improved economic opportunity in our region.

### BRNHA Board of Directors

A nine-member board of directors provides oversight of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area programs and initiatives.

**Becky Anderson** (Board Treasurer)  
Community Leader, Asheville, NC

**Grayson Barnette**  
Foothills Conservancy, Morganton, NC

**Shana Bushyhead Condill**  
Museum of the Cherokee Indian, Cherokee, NC

**Dr. Connie M. Haire**  
Community Leader, Sylva, NC

**Barbara Halsey** (Board Chair)  
Community Leader, Sparta, NC

**Karen Paar** (Past Board Chair)  
Mars Hill University, Mars Hill, NC

**Jesse Pope** (Board Vice Chair)  
Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, Linville, NC

**Bobby Raines**  
Cherokee Preservation Foundation, Cherokee, NC

**Cathy Robbins** (Board Secretary)  
Tweetsie Railroad, Blowing Rock, NC



## A Steward of Western NC's Natural and Cultural Heritage

Congress designated the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area in November 2003, recognizing the distinct character, culture and natural beauty of North Carolina's mountains and foothills.

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership (BRNHA), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, serves as the management entity charged with preserving and promoting the region's natural and agricultural heritage, music, craft and Cherokee culture. Based in Asheville, BRNHA serves 25 counties with a high concentration of rural communities. It functions as a public-private partnership through the National Park Service, which provides federal matching funds, support and oversight.

Since its creation, BRNHA has reinvested its federal appropriations into communities by awarding 188 grants totaling \$2.5 million, with matching contributions leveraging another \$5.9 million. The grants are awarded to deserving educational, environmental, cultural and historical organizations in Western NC.

The organization works with more than 600 community, state and national partners annually and is known as a regional convener and resource. Through these partnerships, BRNHA has created initiatives like the Blue Ridge Music Trails (supporting more than 200 traditional music venues) and the Blue Ridge Craft Trails (highlighting 340 artists, galleries and arts organizations). Also, the organization has helped serve more than 1.4 million visitors as a partner at the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center in Asheville.



Craft artist Billy Welch in Robbinsville, NC

**“The annual economic impact of BRNHA and its heritage tourism partners totals \$2.39 billion for Western NC, with \$176.5 million generated in state and local taxes, and 30,000 jobs supported.”**

— Economic and Community Impact of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area conducted by Primm Research and Magellan Strategy Group.

### By the Numbers

- 2.39 billion.** BRNHA and its heritage tourism partners annual economic impact in Western NC.
- 3 million.** Viewers/readers reached in 2022 through a public relations campaign for the new Blue Ridge Craft Trails.
- More than 2:1.** Grant matches for nine BRNHA grants completed in 2022, including funding for an Eastern Band of Cherokee Aviary, improvements to traditional music venue spaces, and an exhibit focusing on African American contributions to Appalachian culture.
- 55,000.** Viewers of three Blue Ridge Craft Trails traveling exhibits highlighting craft makers in 25 counties of Western NC.
- 33,800.** Email subscriptions to BRNHA Visitor and Blue Ridge Music Trails e-newsletters.
- 500.** Western NC craft artisans, musicians, dancers and storytellers in the Traditional Artist Directory.
- 340.** Craft artists, local galleries and arts organizations on the Blue Ridge Craft Trails.
- 227.** Traditional music venues on the Blue Ridge Music Trails.





# Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Achieves Reauthorization for 15 Years in 2022

Thanks to a bipartisan vote in the U.S. House of Representatives and unanimous support from the U.S. Senate, the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area (BRNHA) has been reauthorized to serve Western North Carolina for another 15 years. The 20-year-old organization is one of 55 National Heritage Areas reauthorized under the National Heritage Act (S. 1942). As one of the last bills passed in the 117th Congress, the bill was signed into law by President Biden on January 5, 2023. The Act also provides for a standardized system for designating new National Heritage Areas and will strengthen an evaluation system for existing sites.

“This reauthorization will end the inconsistent and burdensome stop-gap reauthorizations for years to come,” said BRNHA Executive Director Angie Chandler. “We will continue to work with Congress every year to ensure

that our authorized funding is included in appropriations, but we are energized by the groundswell of support from congressional leaders and community partners. We’re eager to continue our mission of investing in rural communities for the benefit of present and future generations.”

The bipartisan U.S. House vote was championed by Representative Patrick McHenry and supported by Representative Virginia Foxx of Western North Carolina and the congressional leadership in nine other districts in the state of North Carolina. This action followed the unusual vote of “unanimous consent” by the U.S. Senate requiring no objections from any of the 100 Senators. Senators Richard Burr and Thom Tillis championed the effort on behalf of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area.



Photo credit Murray Lee

Photo credit VisiNCsnakes.com

Photo credit VisiNCsnakes.com

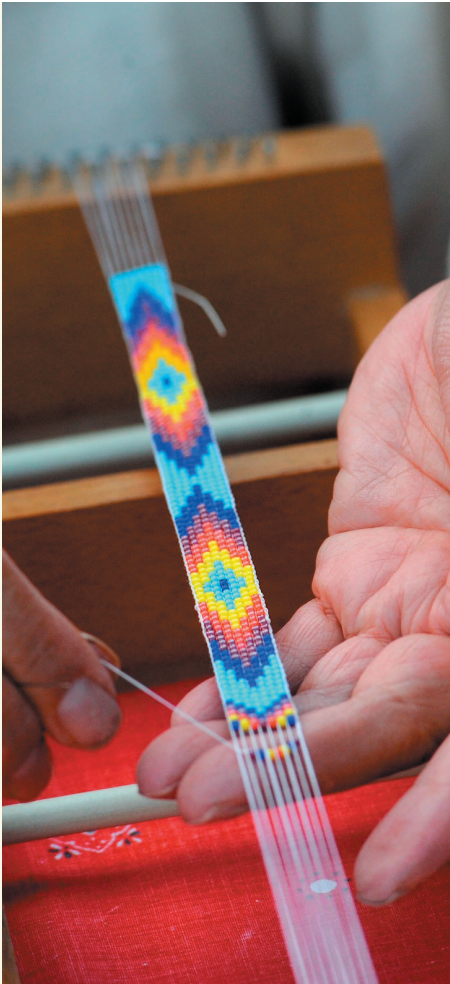
## New Blue Ridge Craft Trails Launches

On March 3, 2022, BRNHA announced the new Blue Ridge Craft Trails at a virtual press conference. The news highlighted the curation of 340 destinations, including artist studios, galleries and arts organizations in 25 Western North Carolina counties and the Qualla Boundary, home of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

The project surpassed expectations:

- 69 stories/ebcasts/social posts by media used themes embracing the key messages.
- Almost 3 million viewers/readers were reached by July 20, 2022 (doesn't include social media numbers).
- Website traffic increased 61% from Dec. 2021 to July 2022, compared to previous year.
- In partnership with our public relations consultant, DK Communications, the project received an award from Public Relations Society of America, Charlotte, NC Chapter.

Visit [BlueRidgeCraftTrails.com](https://www.blueridgecrafttrails.com) for more information.



## Blue Ridge Music Trails

Traditional music is part of the region’s community life, whether it is old-time, Cherokee, bluegrass, blues, ballad singing or gospel. The Blue Ridge Music Trails, an early BRNHA initiative, is nearly 10 years old and celebrates the musical traditions of NC’s mountains and foothills. The project offers a website featuring music listings and stories, 12 annual bi-weekly podcasts broadcast on local public radio, a bi-weekly e-newsletter sent to 14,685 subscribers, a Facebook page with 4,600 followers, and an annual magazine highlighting local musicians and venues (30,000 distributed).

Learn more at [BlueRidgeMusicNC.com](https://www.blueridgemusicnc.com).



## Fine Tuned Project Nurtures Future of Area Music

BRNHA's new initiative, Fine Tuned, connects seasoned musicians with a select group of emerging artists in Western North Carolina, and encourages unexpected collaborations. The aim is to nurture a new generation of talent, while paving the way for future musicians who will keep the musical traditions of Western North Carolina alive.

“Fine Tuned participants represent a wide range of musical styles,” said Brandon Johnson, Blue Ridge National Heritage Area program manager. “This is a group of musicians that gives a fuller voice to the musical landscape of Western North Carolina.”

The fresh initiative includes podcasts, three regional concerts and a professionally recorded vinyl album scheduled for release in 2023.

See details at [FineTunedNC.com](https://www.finetunednc.com).



## Grants

In the 2020-2022 grant cycle, BRNHA awarded 15 grants totaling \$185,000 to fund projects across the North Carolina mountains and foothills. The grants support craft, music, natural heritage, Cherokee culture and agricultural traditions. Grants included:

**Alleghany Junior Appalachian Musicians:** \$16,000 to build an outdoor stage in downtown Sparta for community concerts.

**Altapass Foundation:** \$12,820 to convert an outdoor pavilion at the Historic Orchard at Altapass to a venue for music performances.

**Appalachian Barn Alliance:** \$1,735 for interpretive signs for a planned heritage farmstead in Mars Hill.

**Asheville Art Museum Association:** \$16,000 for an exhibition highlighting the Cherokee syllabary in contemporary art. The exhibition was developed in partnership with the Museum of the Cherokee Indian and presented at both museums.

**Asheville GreenWorks:** \$9,009 for the creation of demonstration pollinator meadows along the Wilma Dykeman Riverway.

**Blowing Rock Art & History Museum:** \$7,100 for an exhibition highlighting African American craft, music and dance in Western North Carolina.

**Center for Cultural Preservation:** \$16,000 for the production of a documentary film on the history of moonshining in the region and its contribution to economic resilience.

**Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians–Department of Natural Resources:** \$16,000 to develop a master plan for a tribal eagle aviary in Macon County that will protect rescued birds, provide shed feathers for ceremonial use and offer educational activities.

**Lost Province Center for the Cultural Arts:** \$14,637 for a market analysis and feasibility study to assess the potential for a proposed Appalachian arts center at the Historic Lansing School in Ashe County.

**Madison County Arts Council:** \$16,000 for renovations and repairs to its music classroom and gallery space at the Madison County Arts Center in downtown Marshall.

**Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University:** \$6,779 for the development of a traveling exhibit on the importance of rivercane in preservation of Cherokee cultural traditions.

**Nikwasi Initiative:** \$14,920 to establish five educational mini-orchards of Cherokee apple trees along the Little Tennessee Greenway in Franklin.

**North Carolina Folklife Institute:** \$16,000 to expand its “Folklife from Home” video series by commissioning demonstration, performance and instruction videos from traditional artists in Western North Carolina.

**Will & Deni McIntyre Foundation:** \$16,000 for the expansion of its “Pandemic Arts” video and audio series which explores how musicians and other artists in the region worked to weather the global pandemic.

**Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor Partnership:** \$6,000 for the creation of a “blueway” brochure showcasing canoeing, kayaking and fishing opportunities in Caldwell, Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin counties.