

Sharing Our Region with Visitors

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area operates a regional information desk in the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center in Asheville as part of our partnership with the Parkway. Since the Visitor Center opened in 2008, we have served almost half a million travelers, helping them to not only enjoy the Parkway and its natural scenic beauty, but also to discover the quaint small towns and communities nearby.



The BRNHA also installed a state-of-the-art "I-Wall" in the Visitor Center, a 22-foot long map of the entire Parkway, over which a large plasma screen rolls and reveals what there is to see and do along the way. This is one of the most popular exhibits in the building.



Since Opening the Visitor Center in 2008

468,946

Visitors
Served

7,556

Volunteer Hours
Logged

300,000+

Partner Brochures
Given to Visitors

Making A Difference Together

"**Together**" is the key word to describe what it takes to achieve success in the work of the BRNHA and our partners throughout the region. Many have joined in support of the work of the BRNHA Partnership, and we are grateful for the grants, sponsorships and gifts provided to the organization to help in this region-wide effort.

GRANTS

Cherokee Preservation Foundation
Federal Highway Administration
Golden LEAF Foundation
National Endowment for the Arts
National Park Service
North Carolina Arts Council
North Carolina Department of Commerce
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
North Carolina Department of Transportation
North Carolina Division of Tourism
North Carolina General Assembly
Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

SPONSORSHIPS / IN KIND

AdvantageWest
Allegra Printing
Biltmore Company
Black Mountain Digital Media
Burke County Tourism
Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy
Casablanca Digital Media
Conservation Trust for NC
Crowne Plaza Resort
David Holt
Equinox Environmental
Friends of Mountain History
High Country Host
Ingles Markets

John Blehrud
Magellan Strategy Group
McGill Associates, PA
Morganton Main Street Program
Nantahala Outdoor Center
National Parks Conservation Association
The Nature Conservancy
New River Community Partners
Outdoor Alliance
Outdoor Industry Association
Polk County Economic Development
Progress Energy
Smart Destinations, Inc.
Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
Tweetsie Railroad
Western Carolina University
White Oak Golf & Equestrian Community
Wilderness Society
Linda Wilkerson
Yadkin Arts Council

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Millie Barbee
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Ray Bratsch
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Barbara Vinson Chandler
Angie Chandler

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Drew Hines, *Communications Assistant*
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CONTRACTED SUPPORT

Dale Bartlett, *Blue Ridge Music Trails Coordinator*
Laura Boosinger, *Blue Ridge Music Trails Consultant*
Melinda Young, *Signage Coordinator*



195 Hemphill Knob Road
Asheville, NC 28803

BlueRidgeHeritage.com



10th Anniversary, 2003-2013



To see the difference working together can make, we only need to look to our history and see how far we've come—together—over the past decade.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

IN THE BEGINNING...

Based upon earlier groundwork laid by organizations such as the North Carolina Arts Council, HandMade in America, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, AdvantageWest and the leadership of the Blue Ridge Parkway, in 2003 a proposal was put before the US Congress to designate the 25 westernmost counties and the Qualla Boundary as a National Heritage Area.

This honor was signed into law on November 10, 2003.

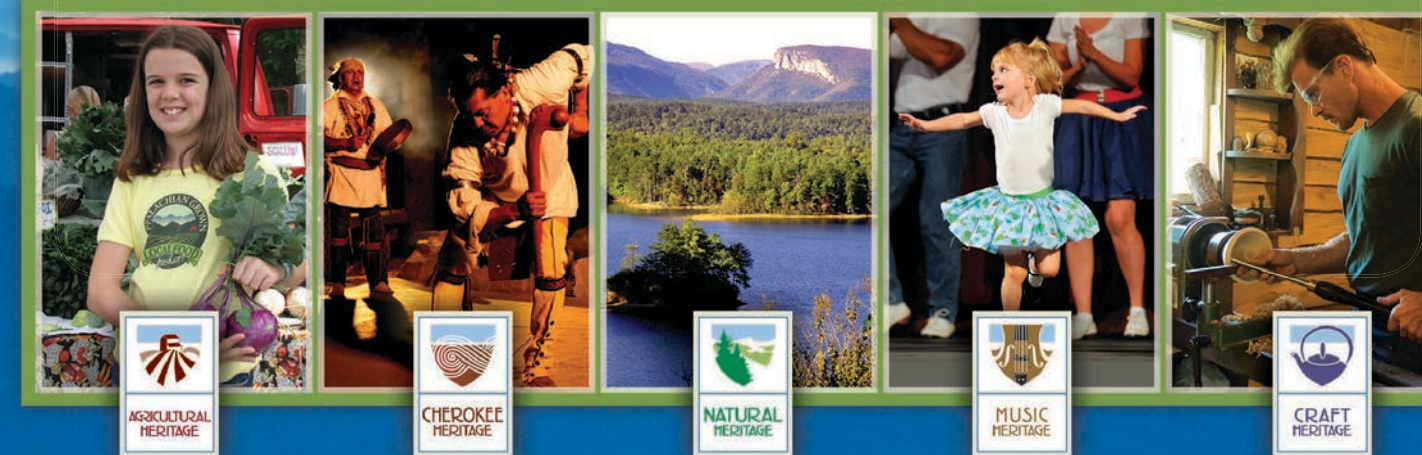
AN HONOR FOR ALL WHO LIVE AND WORK IN AND VISIT THIS REGION...

Although attaining this designation was the work of a dedicated, passionate few, it was achieved because of the living traditions that are carried on by the people in the region—

- People who care deeply about preserving the beauty and majesty of these ancient mountains
- Farmers who are committed to continuing the agricultural traditions that have been carried on for generations

Artisans who have preserved the handcraft traditions of the Cherokee and European immigrants, turning items once created for practical, daily use into works of art prized worldwide

- Musicians who have created a style that is purely American, music that has evolved over two centuries
- And the Cherokee, who continue to sustain their ancient cultural traditions.



The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area unites 25 counties in Western North Carolina in a regional partnership that preserves and promotes our natural, historical and cultural resources. We strive to keep our region's traditions alive, enhance the quality of life, and grow the local economy.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership is to protect, preserve, interpret and develop the unique 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.

VISION STATEMENT

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership is respected and recognized for its leadership in sustaining one of the world's most cherished and protected cultures and landscapes.

Building A Foundation

Many challenges lay ahead in fulfilling the promise of the National Heritage Area. The Blue Ridge National Area (BRNHA) comprises 11,000 square miles, a huge geographical area, much of it rural and public land. In 2003, broadband had not reached many parts of Western North Carolina, making communications difficult. Bringing the people of Western North Carolina together in a cohesive effort to improve, protect, and market the region was a daunting task. It took partnerships—working together from the beginning with key partners—to get the conversations started.

COUNTY HERITAGE COUNCILS

Almost immediately after the designation was signed, partners from AdvantageWest and the North Carolina Department of Commerce, organizers from Western Carolina University, and other partners began to shape the dialogue. Public meetings were called in each county, bringing together volunteers from many disparate groups who rolled up their sleeves and began to see new possibilities in collaborative efforts.

Combined, these Heritage Councils identified hundreds of potential projects for preserving, interpreting and developing the cultural and heritage assets in their respective counties to enhance tourism and overall economic development. Over the past 10 years, many of these projects have come to fruition, some with the help of a BRNHA grant, others as a result of new collaborations self-determined by local communities.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

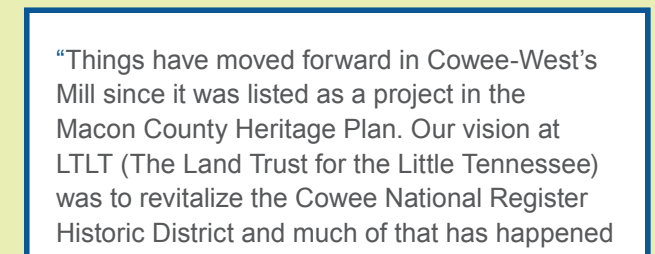
These County Heritage Plans provided the foundation for the creation of an overarching ten-year Management Plan for the BRNHA, a document required by the Department of the Interior. The projects and visions set forth in the county plans pointed to three key areas that would direct the work of the BRNHA:

- Preservation—conserving and protecting the natural environment and cultural traditions
- Interpretation—telling our story and educating people about the natural and cultural heritage of the region
- Development—creating new heritage tourism attractions and encouraging increased visitation to the area.



"Of McDowell County's 15 heritage projects, four are complete with seven partially complete. The 2008 Heritage Development Plan served as a catalyst, guiding us through the process of identifying and preserving McDowell County's natural and cultural heritage."

— Carol Price, *Executive Director*
McDowell County Tourism Development Authority



"Things have moved forward in Cowee-West's Mill since it was listed as a project in the Macon County Heritage Plan. Our vision at LTLT (The Land Trust for the Little Tennessee) was to revitalize the Cowee National Register Historic District and much of that has happened thanks to Cherokee, Macon County, and LTLT investments. The planning process of the BRNHA helped to get things moving in the right direction."

— Paul Carlson,
Executive Director,
The Land Trust for
the Little Tennessee

A Process for Progress for the Heritage Councils

- Inventory** of heritage and cultural assets
- Evaluation** of potential development of these assets
- Creation** of a County Heritage plan to guide community leaders
- Selection** of projects and initiatives

Strengthening Partners & Products through Grants

Over the past ten years, the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership has awarded 111 grants totaling over \$1.8 million to projects that preserve, interpret, and develop the heritage resources of Western North Carolina. These awards in turn have:

- Provided engaging and authentic heritage experiences to thousands of visitors and residents
- Raised the profile of the region's distinctive heritage assets
- Leveraged over \$3.5 million in state, local, and private investment
- Stimulated improved economic opportunity
- Fostered partnerships and collaboration among diverse organizations
- Accomplished key objectives of BRNHA's ten-year Management Plan.

Grants
111 Grants Awarded
\$1.8 Million in Grants Funding
\$3.5 Million Matched
\$5.1 Million Leveraged in WNC

HandMade in America

BRNHA grants to HandMade in America have been redistributed to many small towns and to projects that have promoted the craft industry in Western North Carolina and helped educate crafters.

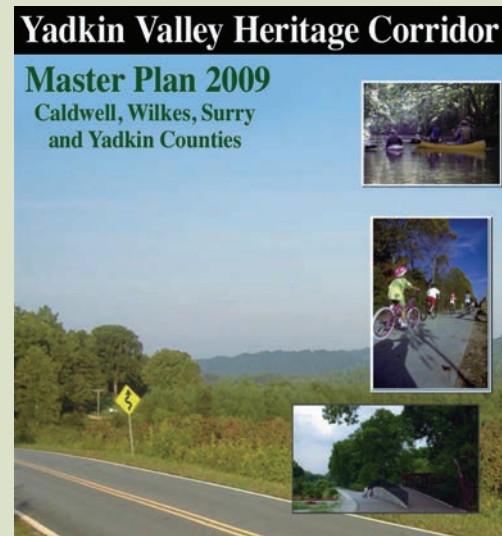


"The BRNHA grant to HandMade in America got us started on the development of the Quilt Trails of Western North Carolina in Madison, Ashe, Yancey, Mitchell, Avery and Watauga counties. Today there are hundreds of painted quilt patterns adorning barns and selected buildings in small communities in counties throughout our region."

Barbara Webster,
Quilt Trails of Western North Carolina

Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor

Grants from the BRNHA supported the development of a new four-county initiative to promote the Yadkin Valley as a destination for outdoor recreation, cultural heritage, and local foods and wines.



"Your support has been crucial in the development of the Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor. A BRNHA grant in 2007 for an economic impact study served as the catalyst to move the project forward, and a second grant enabled the partnership to print and distribute 15,000 brochures."

Edward G. Barnes, Chair,
Yadkin Valley Corridor Partnership

Appalachian Sustainable Agricultural Project

Through grants to this regional organization, the BRNHA has helped to support family farmers, develop new farmers markets, and provide educational programs for new and experienced farmers alike.



"With early support from the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area, the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) has been able to help our local farmers and farmers markets through the ASAP Local Food Guide, our annual Farm Tour, and our annual Business of Farming conferences among other services."

Charlie Jackson, Executive Director,
Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project

Junior Appalachian Musicians Programs

BRNHA grants have helped organize and sustain Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) after school classes, where master musicians teach younger generations about their rich musical heritage.



"JAM programs at the Black Mountain Center for the Arts, the Madison County Arts Council and the Toe River Arts Council are now sustainable programs, and hundreds of kids have developed a lifelong love of our music and learned the skills to enjoy making music themselves."

Gale Jackson, Executive Director,
Black Mountain Center for the Arts

Cherokee Heritage Exhibit

Although the heritage of the Cherokee people is primarily preserved on the Qualla Boundary in Cherokee, NC, grants from BRNHA have helped interpret their story at sites throughout a larger region of Western North Carolina.



"Our goals in creating the Cherokee Heritage Exhibit were to provide a destination for travelers, hands-on education for local and regional students, and to increase awareness of our rich Cherokee heritage and culture. The project has been hugely successful, and we are now completing a connector trail from the exhibit to the Historic Spike Buck Mound and Quanassee village site."

Rob Tiger and Sandy Nicolette, Clay County
Community Revitalization Association

GRANT PROFILES

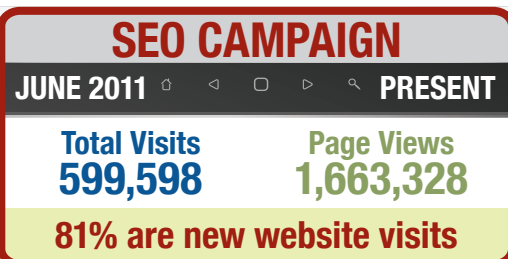
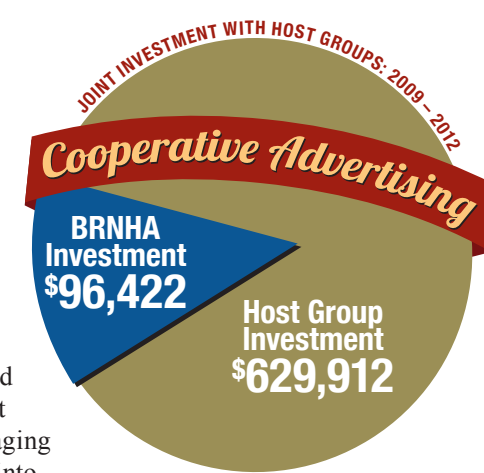
Sharing Special Stories & Experiences

The programs of the BRNHA Partnership have reached deeply into all counties in the region, offering not only grant support, but also marketing, research, workshops, and the new Blue Ridge Music Trails of North Carolina Initiative as a means of strengthening our partners and their heritage products, showcasing special stories and experiences, and building welcoming communities.

MARKETING

Since the brand was developed in 2005, the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership has sustained a comprehensive marketing campaign to complement and support the marketing efforts of our partners, including:

- Advertising purchased in NC Travel Guides, Asheville Travel Guides, Blue Ridge Parkway Association publications, and the accompanying online presence
- Communicating monthly to more than 7,000 subscribers via two separate e-newsletters, one for visitors that promotes events and attractions in the region, a second to provide partners with the latest information about pertinent and beneficial programs and services
- Developing and continually upgrading a comprehensive website: www.blueridgeheritage.com, that includes information for visitors and partners, a Traditional Artist Directory with information on more than 500 musicians, crafters, storytellers, and more, and a robust events calendar for our partners
- Supporting the cooperative advertising campaigns of Smoky Mountain Host, Blue Ridge Mountain Host, and High Country Host groups, thus leveraging marketing dollars into the region
- Creating and distributing more than 300,000 visitor map brochures about the region
- Developing a PR campaign, "Living Traditions," that generated stories in local, regional and national publications
- Partnering with WNCW 88.7 FM public radio and *WNC Magazine* to create and air 52 "Living Traditions Moments" radio spots
- Maintaining an active, vibrant presence on Facebook.



WNC Traditional Music Events Visitor Spending

Direct Impact
\$18.6 million

Attendees who travel specifically for the event spend 1.8 times more than visitors in the area for other reasons

Total Economic Impact
\$20.7 million

Not holding these events would be a loss of more than \$13.5 million in spending in the region



A signature program of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership was launched in March 2013—the Blue Ridge Music Trails of North Carolina. Working in partnership with the North Carolina Arts Council, the BRNHA held 13 listening sessions throughout the region, attended by over 180 partners who are interested in moving the musical heritage of the mountains into the spotlight of the nation and the world. A new website, BlueRidgeMusicNC.com, will debut in early 2014, offering residents and visitors an insider's guide to the great variety of musical experiences found across the region.



Supporting Our Partners & Communities

3,365 Attendees

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

To support our partners and facilitate networking, the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership has offered numerous workshops and seminars that provide both training and information on best practices. These programs, led by experts in various fields, have included training about grant writing, managing a nonprofit, financial reporting, marketing, media buying, public relations, and working with the group tour business.



RESEARCH

Periodically, the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership commissions research to help inform planning and decision-making across the region. We have supported:

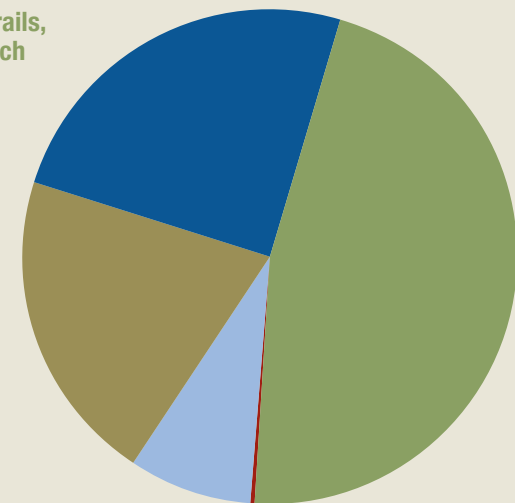
- Tourism research with both Appalachian State University and Western Carolina University
- The Western North Carolina Vitality Index, an online tool that reports on 27 counties of Western North Carolina through the perspectives of the region's natural, social, built, and economic environments
- Research on visitation to Cherokee and the far western counties in partnership with the Cherokee Preservation Foundation
- Visitor surveys at the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center
- Research on the economic impact of visitation to the region's traditional music venues, in partnership with the North Carolina Arts Council
- Partner surveys to gather community feedback and evaluate the effectiveness of the work of the BRNHA Partnership.

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership has received federal funding annually through the Heritage Partnership Program of the National Park Service since 2003. For 10 years, the organization, a 501 (c) (3) private nonprofit, has demonstrated responsible, conservative fiscal stewardship of these funds, and has re-granted a significant portion of it to qualifying nonprofit organizations, state and local governments, and academic institutions throughout the region.

A strength of the National Heritage Area program is that it leverages federal grants with non-federal funds through a match program. Every federal dollar received must be matched, thus developing local and regional partnerships and funds to preserve, interpret and promote the region's heritage assets.

Total FY13 Expenditures: \$888,919

Grants, Music Trails, Signage, Research
\$414,330
Administration & Operations
\$220,082
Marketing
\$181,779
Visitor Services & Events
\$71,261
Fundraising
\$1,467



★ ★ ★ **Thank You** ★ ★ ★

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership would like to thank the following North Carolina Congressional leaders and their staff members for their tremendous support and assistance:

US Senator Richard Burr ★ US Senator Kay Hagan
US Congressman Patrick McHenry ★ US Congressman Mark Meadows ★ US Congresswoman Virginia Fox
Former US Congressman Charles Taylor ★ Former US Congressman Heath Shuler

Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Grant Recipients Since 2004

Alleghany County Schools Altapass Foundation (2)
Appalachian State University
Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (3)
Ashe Civic Center
Asheville Art Museum (3)
Bethel Rural Community Organization
Black Mountain Center for the Arts (2)
Blue Ridge Parkway 75th Anniversary
Blue Ridge Forever
Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy
Center for Craft, Creativity and Design (2)
Cherokee County
City Seeds, Inc.

Clay County Communities Revitalization Association (2)
Cradle of Forestry in America
Interpretive Association (2)
Crossnore School
Cullowhee Revitalization Endeavor
Cultural Arts Council of Wilkes
Exploring Joara Foundation
Forest History Society
Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Friends of Mountain History (2)
Friends of W. Kerr Scott Lake
Friends of the WNC Nature Center
Graham County Cooperative Extension

Great Smoky Mountains Association
Grove Arcade Public Market Foundation
HandMade in America (8)
Haywood Community College Foundation
High Country Council of Governments
Historic Carson House
Historic Johnson Farm
John C. Campbell Folk School (2)
Junior Appalachian Musicians, Inc.
Land-of-Sky Regional Council (2)
Land Trust for the Little Tennessee
Macon County
Mars Hill University

McDowell County Tourism Development Authority
The Media Arts Project
Miles J.O.B. Fund
Mitchell County Development Foundation (2)
Mitchell High School
Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University
Mount Airy Museum of Regional History (2)
Museum of the Cherokee Indian
North Carolina Arboretum Society
North Carolina Bartram Trail Society
North Carolina Folklife Institute (5)
Old Wilkes, Inc.

One Dozen Who Care (2)
Parkway Playhouse
Penland School of Crafts (3)
Polk County
Rutherford County
Smoky Mountain Native Plants Association
Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre
Southern Highland Craft Guild
Stecoah Valley Arts, Crafts & Educational Center (4)
Surry Arts Council (4)
Swain County
Toe River Arts Council
Town of Dillsboro

Town of Marshall
Transylvania Youth Strings
Tryon Arts & Crafts
University of North Carolina at Asheville Foundation
University of North Carolina at Asheville
Western Carolina University Hunter Library
Western North Carolina History Association
Western Piedmont Community College
Wilkes Community College Endowment Corporation
Wilkes County
Wilkes County Schools
Wilkes Heritage Museum
Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor Partnership