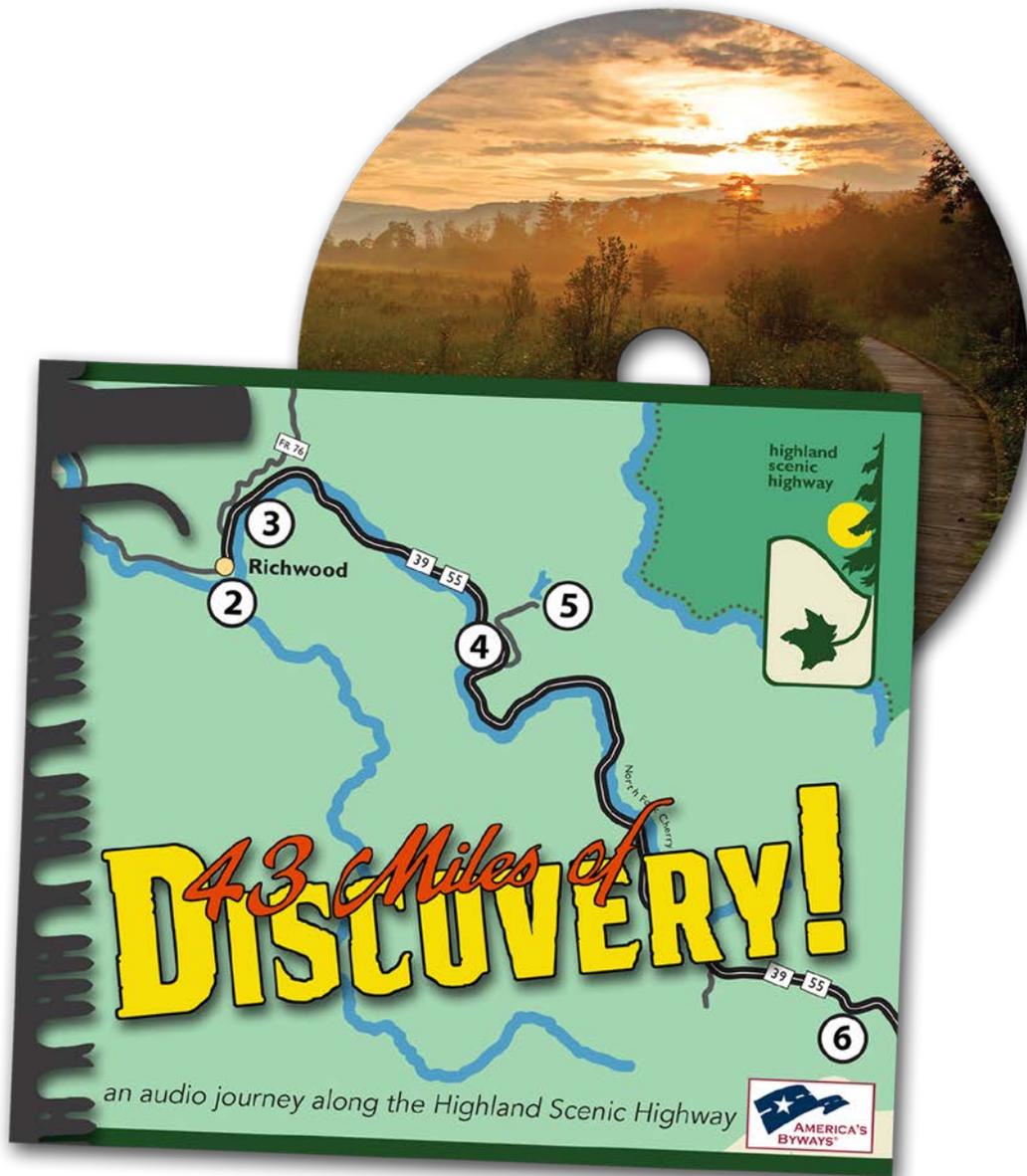


Transcript of
Highland Scenic Highway
Audio Tour



Monongahela National Forest

TRACK 1 – Introduction

Jodi: The Highland Scenic Highway audio tour was produced in partnership between the USDA Forest Service, Monongahela National Forest and West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways. Funding was made available through the Federal Highway Administration’s National Scenic Byway Program, administered by the West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways. USDA is an equal-opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Music: *Cherry River Line* [banjo, guitar, fiddle, and vocals]

“It’s lonesome here, and it’s lonesome all the time.

Lonesome on that Cherry, Cherry River Line...”

Rondi: For a lot of people, when they think of the Monongahela National Forest, they think of the Highland Scenic Highway. It is such an iconic part of the forest.

Cara: I don’t think you would find a more beautiful road to travel.

Solly: There’s so many unique things about the scenic highway. I mean, it’s absolutely the most gorgeous drive in West Virginia and the views are fantastic. My favorite view is the southern end where it’s overlooking the levels—the Hillsboro area.

Cheryl: I do like to hike up there, but also it’s just really nice to just drive it. It’s, you know, just the whole stretch is just beautiful, it’s different than it is down here in town, it’s almost like another world. [laughing] I think it’s because of the spruce and the openness.

Cindy: I just love the highway in full because it’s probably the most spectacular place in the entire state when it comes to fall colors. And so just driving along the highway or pulling off on some of the little pull-offs and looking at that vista, and seeing a carpet of reds, and yellows, and oranges, and some greens too, is just spectacular.

Jodi: Welcome to the Highland Scenic Highway! This National Scenic Byway has plenty to offer. So, join us for 43 miles of discovery!

Music: *Cherry River Line* [banjo, guitar, fiddle, and vocals]

“...It’s lonesome here, and it’s lonesome all the time.

Lonesome on that Cherry, Cherry River Line.”

TRACK 2 – Richwood

Music: *Hard Times* [mountain dulcimer instrumental]

Roger: Growing up in Richwood was a lot like Mayberry.

Roy: And, at that time there were plenty of jobs, and there was a good economy, and many, many people who just enjoyed the out of doors and helped each other. There’s still, there’s still many good people like that.

Millie: See, we had the paper company, the tannery, the Cherry River Lumber Company, the hub factory, the handle factory. Always said Richwood was a field of dreams—“Build it and they will come!” When these five big plants built here, people came from all over.

Jane: One thing that I always thought when I first came here was that they cut every tree, and that this was just one huge clear cut around Richwood. Well, that’s really not true.

Bob: People from around the nation and around the world visit us. And the starting point in Richwood is delightful to us to be that spot!

Diana: The area around here is just full of ramps.

Kelly: A ramp is somewhat like a green onion, but it has a very pungent odor, and it has a very distinct taste. But they’re very good served with potatoes, bacon, and usually a nice big piece of cornbread.

Diana: Ramps are a delicacy in New York, but they're a staple in West Virginia in a lot of households.

Kelly: Every spring, people from the community go out and dig ramps in the hillsides of Richwood and bring them back and volunteers clean them at the Richwood Volunteer Fire Department. And then more volunteers go to the high school and continue to cook the ramps and other items. People from around the world attend this festival—The Feast of the Ramson.

Roger: Oh yeah, if you're from here, you have to like ramps, almost. [laughing] You have to!

Music: *Hard Times* [mountain dulcimer instrumental]

TRACK 3 – Gauley Ranger Station

Music: *Sally Ann* [banjo and vocals]

“Sift the meal and save the bran, I'm goin' fishin' with Sally Ann.

I'm goin' fishin' with Sally Ann, I'm goin' fishin' with Sally Ann...”

Bill: It was almost always some of the better part of my day, just, it was just a beautiful drive the whole way, but when especially it got to that point you're coming down, there's just nothing there but trees and the river and an occasional car on the way. There's a good chance of seeing a deer cross, or a bear. Better chance, I've seen more bear crossing the highway than I did deer. Just that drive up the river through the, along the scenic highway was just always very relaxing for me and just when I got home, I was ready to just enjoy the evening at home and go from there. So I kind of like the whole way. I have favorite spots but that's, I just kind of like the driving part.

Kelly: Here at the Gauley Ranger District office, we have a couple of displays. One would be different birds of the area. We have them on display here. We also have a front area that has

many historic pictures of Richwood, of logging camps, and of different newspaper articles that go along with some of the local pictures.

Diane: Going in the Cranberry Backcountry area will usually get you away from the crowd. During spring and fall fishing season and stocking, sometimes it can be more folks back in there, so to speak. But you definitely are away from it all. There's seven Adirondack-type shelters along that 16-mile stretch of what we call the backcountry now, which is administrative road gated on both ends, gated just beside Cranberry Campground and then from the glades end.

Cheryl: We do have a healthy black bear population, and it's not very uncommon to see one along the scenic highway, or maybe running across the road. It's always a treat when you see a black bear!

Mike: The Cranberry River is very unique for West Virginia. It's relatively remote. Although there is camping available in certain areas, but much of the Cranberry River is gated. And so access is either by foot, by bicycle, although there is areas of the Cranberry that you can pull your car off the side of the road, drop over the bank and start fishing. A lot of people you talk to, they went there as kids with their parents or their grandparents or uncles and they continue to go back with their kids. It's just, it's a neat experience, you can camp behind the gates along the Cranberry River. And anybody that's ever camped along a river certainly knows what that's like and it's a very enjoyable experience.

Jane: And the species that people think of most that are very scarce now because we have so few young forests are grouse and woodcock. They really love young forests and we have so few of them that you won't see as many grouse or woodcock as you once did. And that is one reason that our forest plan has put in a goal to create young forests and that's what we do when we do timber harvests.

Rondi: A lot of people don't know this, but the forest does sell Christmas tree permits. We have been harvesting Christmas trees up there for ten years now. You have to get off away from the main road—you can't just cut them right along the highway. You have to hike in a ways. But that's all part of the experience, is hiking, in and finding your perfect tree, and cutting it down and dragging it out of the woods, and tying it onto your car, and driving away. There's usually hot cocoa involved and Christmas carols on the radio. [laughing] It's a lot of fun. It's a good tradition!

Jodi: Here at the Gauley Ranger Station, you'll find maps and information about hiking, camping, and fishing in the area. You can also get directions to places like the Cranberry Wilderness, Falls of Hills Creek, and the Cranberry Mountain Nature Center. Before you get back on the highway, take a few minutes to enjoy the exhibits!

Music: *Sally Ann* [banjo and vocals]

“Sally Ann, Sally Ann, I'm goin' fishin' with Sally Ann.

I'm goin' fishin' with Sally Ann. I'm goin' fishin' with Sally Ann.”

TRACK 4 – North Bend Picnic Area

Music: *Reuben's Train* [guitar, banjo and vocals]

“Oh, Reuben made the train, ran from Richwood to Spain. You could hear that whistle blow a hundred miles.”

[Steam train clanking on tracks with steam whistle]

Jodi: In the early 1900s, North Bend was a logging camp. The Cherry River Boom and Lumber Company had one of its main log yards here. Steam trains hauled logs to the big mill in Richwood.

Iva: When we moved there, they put us two boxcars, out on, from the railroad, brought the railroad train and had two boxcars and set them off as far over as they could get them. They set one on one end, and one on another, but in between, they give us lumber and we built us a little living room in the middle of it.

Jane: People don't realize that there was actually a boarding house. I think there was a hospital or a doctor that located there, because people have stopped by the office and said that they were born at North Bend.

Iva: My sister-in-law cooked for the men and there'd be about 25 or 30 men come in every day at noon to eat. And, I went up to help them, and sometimes then, I'd go in the mornings and help them.

Jane: There were quite a few people who lived there. That was a place on the railroad that was more or less a major stop in the logging railroads. And, it lasted a lot longer than the logging too, because there was actually a coal mine nearby, and they shipped the coal back to the mill and to the town.

Diane: North Bend is just a quaint little picnic area really right off of 39, and it's right on the river. And, there is a great bridge that goes across the river, and takes you onto the trail that you can hike that trail all the way up to the top of Fork Mountain. And, you continue on your way all the way to the Nature Center, if you [laughing] are so inclined.

Music: *Reuben's Train* [banjo, fiddle, and stand-up bass]

TRACK 5 – Summit Lake

[Sounds of waves splashing onshore and the call of a common raven]

Diana: Summit Lake is my favorite place to camp. It's my favorite fall color spot. And, I would almost rather be there than home most of the summer.

Roy: Summit Lake has a campground with two sections for tent camping or you can take your trailers in. The lake itself is just full of trout, just completely full of trout—it's loaded! It's a beautiful place to fish. It also has a boardwalk and a wharf so that it's handicap accessible and practically one whole side of the lake has that walkway built onto it, so you can fish from it or you can walk around the trail around the lake and fish from the trail. Or you can take a boat out. No gasoline motors are permitted, but electric motors are. Any of those options will probably give you plenty of fish, more than you want, more than you need. [laughing]

Solly: In front of the dam, when we changed the road around and it was swampy in there, we pulled logs out, poplar logs that were notched, that had been in a trestle of some type or maybe corduroy for the trains. And, they looked like they'd been put in there the day before.

Diana: If you can catch a clear day with blue skies and the fall color, full fall color, the reflections on the water, you can't tell the water from the trees. Some of the most beautiful shots I've taken have been at Summit Lake.

Cindy: As you come into Summit Lake along the road, we have an invasive species that's called garlic mustard that's growing there and is doing very, very well. And so, a non-native invasive species is some sort of an animal or a flower that doesn't belong in an area. It's not native, so it wasn't here originally. And, what that means is something else isn't there that should be. So that comes into the invasive part. So an invasive species is something that is really aggressive, it grows very quickly, and it takes over an area. It pushes out our native species, and so things like

maybe Dutchman's breeches or spring beauties or some of those early spring wildflowers that people really love to see, they're not growing there anymore because garlic mustard's there and it's taking over. Garlic mustard actually produces chemicals through its roots that keep other plants from growing, and so if you like ramps, or if you like morel hunting, garlic mustard's a threat to those because it's going to take over the habitat and they're not going to be able to grow. So you have this wonderful resource Summit Lake, where lots and lots of people like to come, and they like to spend their time and recreate, and part of that is being out in the woods and enjoying the scenic beauty but all of that's kind of being threatened by this non-native invasive plant that's moving in and taking over.

[Sounds of waves splashing onshore and a ruffed grouse drumming]

TRACK 6 – Falls of Hills Creek Scenic Area

[Sound of water falling over rocks]

Diana: I've been going to Falls of Hills Creek since before there was any stairs or, it was mostly a path. [laughs]

Kent: The tree canopy in this area is composed of hemlocks and hardwoods, which creates a very dense shade that helps to keep the area cool and moist year-round.

Cindy: I love that area! To me, as you're hiking back, even though you're on a developed trail, you feel like you're in the middle of nowhere, and it's just, so, it feels ancient, you know, so, you're walking along and you feel like you're in this area that maybe man's not supposed to be in and you're almost going to places that other people haven't gone before, and so just from a recreation, vista perspective, I think Falls of Hills Creek is just spectacular.

Amy: My favorite spot on the whole forest is the Falls of Hills Creek. I've been, we were talking, I've made how many trips up there trying to catch the ice 'cause I'm like "*This is the coldest winter we've had—it's gotta be frozen!*" I heard it was four feet from the top!

Rondi: I go to the falls because I like to be right along those rock cliffs and seeing the vegetation, the variety of vegetation, that's right along the cliff. For me, it really is about the hike up to the falls and the vegetation that you see along the way.

Kent: And the humidity level is high and fairly constant because of the spray from the waterfalls. This creates a unique plant community that's dominated by mosses and liverworts, both of which are non-vascular plants, so they're primitive forms of plants.

Cara: Hills Creek falls down the mountain, all the way down to the Lobelia valley where it eventually sinks into the base of Droop Mountain.

Bill: Every time I go, I try to count steps, and I never can keep track of them long enough to [laughing] remember how many there are.

Diana: The falls is a unique area because of the way that you get to it. A lot of falls you drive up, you look at the falls. In this case, you start at the top and you work your way down to the bottom of the gorge. And, there's a series of three waterfalls down through there. And they're beautiful any time of year but it's really spectacular after we've had a nice rain in the middle of summer, and the falls are full, and you can hear them before you even get there.

[Sound of water falling over rocks]

TRACK 7 – Cranberry Glades Botanical Area

Music: *Liza Jane* [banjo and guitar]

Diana: It is peaceful in the glades. If it's quiet, you can spot birds that you don't see them anywhere else. You can spot bears. I've often walked up on a bear—sometimes with cubs. In the distance, you can see the Scenic Highway. It's in a bowl-shaped area where there are mountains surrounding all the way around it.

Cindy: I love the cranberry bogs in the spring because skunk cabbage is coming up, which is one of the earliest plants that comes up, and you start to feel like winter is finally going to end because you're seeing these plants come up through the snow. And, bears come out, and they love it! And so, you get to just look out and you're starting to see green popping up through the snow and you're starting to see the bears come out and feed and again you just know that you're going to make it through another West Virginia winter. [laughing]

Bill: It's neat to see, when you go through two glade areas that you can see up and close and just the unique vegetation in each one is interesting and at different times of the year, different things are in bloom. So every time you go out, there's always something small that's changed in the way of the vegetation.

Cindy: You've got amazing orchids. You've actually got cranberries growing, and because of that you've got a lot of wildlife.

Kent: The reason you find northern plants and animals here at Cranberry Glades traces back to the height of the Pleistocene ice age 15,000 years ago. At that time, most of Canada and the Northern US was covered by a large continental glacier, and no life could exist there. So, all of the northern plants and animals had migrated to the mid-Atlantic and the southeast so the entire

landscape at that time was populated with northern plants, such as the red spruce that you see growing here in Cranberry Glades.

Music: *Liza Jane* [banjo and guitar]

Elizabeth: But in Cranberry Glades we actually have out in the middle of the largest glade there is a true bog. We call it ombrotrophic, which means '*fed by clouds*' so that the food comes from the clouds. And that is because the only nutrient source that the plants in that bog get is what is dissolved in rainwater, and I can tell you that's not very much.

Diana: My favorite feature of the glades are the orchids. We've got several species of orchids in there and in the summertime, sometimes it's a blanket of purple in the field sections where the orchids are blooming in profusion.

Kent: The northern waterthrush is a small songbird that breeds in wetlands in Canada and the Northern US. [call of the northern waterthrush] It also occurs here in Cranberry Glades because of the northern vegetation that's found here. If you listen closely as you walk through the shrub thicket along the boardwalk, you might hear the northern waterthrush sing. If you're here during May and June, it is likely that this bird will be present here.

Bill: You can walk the Cowpasture trail, you can bike the Cowpasture trail, you can horse on the Cowpasture trail, but the boardwalk itself is just for foot traffic only, and getting off that boardwalk or off the other trails into the botanical area is what the closure order is about, and that's why it's there.

Music: *Liza Jane* [banjo and guitar]

TRACK 8 – Cranberry Mountain Nature Center

Music: *Come by the Hills* [mountain dulcimer instrumental]

Diana: Well, the nature center's been a very popular place for people to stop since it opened in 1967. We've got a lot of displays from wildflowers, wildlife, murals of the Cranberry Glades and the Falls of Hills Creek, but we also have interactive displays for the kids—animal tracks, mystery box. But by far, the most popular thing that we have is our live snake display.

Roy: We maintain a collection at the nature center of as many species of West Virginia snakes as we can capture. And then, those snakes are used in demonstration at the nature center on a regular basis.

Diana: In fact, the timber rattler is the state reptile. A group of school children in the eastern panhandle, I believe after a visit from Mr. Moose and his snakes, petitioned the state to make that the state reptile.

Roy: We try to gear our program to factual information. We don't try to dramatize. We try to make sure that everybody understands the facts about snakes, and we try to dispel myths about them.

Diana: We have a small auditorium, and we show a lot of nature-related films in there. We also have a lot of Smokey Bear educational films—a lot of kid's movies that they enjoy. And, we use the auditorium also for musical performances and interpretive programs.

Roy: It's a participatory thing, so the audience actually handles the snakes if they want to, and we try to send them away feeling a lot better about snakes than they were when they came in.

Cara: Cranberry Mountain Nature Center is another spot that everybody should visit while they're traveling the Highland Scenic Highway. A wonderful presentation about the history of the area, the logging. Also just the natural surroundings of the area, including wildlife.

Diana: From the nature center parking lot, you can go a lot of different ways if you want to hike trails. You can cross the street and hit the Cowpasture trail which goes around the Mill Point Prison area. You can hike, the Pocahontas trail turns into Fork Mountain, you can hike it for 23 miles all the way back to Richwood. And, you can also access some of the wilderness trails from there.

Cara: Nice hiking trails extend out from the nature center. And, they have a terrific gift shop!

Music: *Come by the Hills* [mountain dulcimer instrumental]

TRACK 9 – Mill Point Federal Prison Camp

Music: *Young Collins* [fiddle and guitar instrumental]

Diana: The Mill Point Federal Prison was named for the nearest town. That was a minimum-security prison that was on National Forest property back in the 30s. Mill Point had conscientious objectors, moonshiners.

Solly: But they mostly had conscientious objectors in World War II and moonshiners and they had several white-collar prisoners, you know, from different things, I'm not sure what all they were. But, there was a lot of moonshiners there, from what they said.

Diana: It did not have any walls. It only had signs around there posted that said "*Keep Inside.*" And, this was effective, because this is close to the Cranberry Wilderness area. The area is very isolated and it's high elevation, so there's lots of snow in the winter, and there were not many roads into the area at that time. So, escape usually wasn't an option. If you ended up getting loose, you usually tried to find somebody to take you back, because you couldn't get out of there. It was too far from civilization for most people.

Ed: My first memory of that was one evening, it was probably midnight, who knows, you know I was seven or eight years old. And I woke up and I heard mom and dad out in the living room. So I went out, you know, an impressionable little guy. And there was my dad—combat boots, pants tucked down in them, handgun around his waist, just like my old cowboy heroes, and he had a rifle. And he was telling mom that he was gonna be gone for maybe a day or two. So I thought, *“Man, my old man, this is real, that’s a real gun!”* But the school bus picked all the kids up one morning, and we came down and right up here at Mill Point, where the big intersection is, there was my old man parked in a car, just sitting, waiting. And what they did, they would send officers, they wouldn’t send them out into the woods, necessarily, they’d just scatter them around, you know, down 219 and down towards Richwood, and they would sit there, and eventually after three or four days, those inmates would come dragging out, eaten up with bugs, cold, you know begging to be taken back!

Bill H: The company had a coal mine up there at Windy Run. And course I was working there and I had on an old jacket, you know, and had my name on it. And the tool house was locked and I said *“Well, I’ll just hang it up here on the door and leave it.”* And when I come back my jacket was gone. And there was a prisoner got loose, and they got him over around somewhere and he had my jacket on. He got my jacket! [laughing]

Ed: Well, in the evenings, my brother and I would go down to where the inmates would be laying around under trees after supper. They were behind the cable, of course! And we’d take comic books [laughing] down and trade with them. And, you know they would bring their comics over. Most of them were fairly young. They were 18 to in their 30s. There were some older trustees that came up to the apartments and maintained flower beds, mowed the yards.

Agnes: My dad was in charge of the logging operation—Eddie’s dad was in charge of the sawmill. So, my dad would every morning pick up a crew of 20 inmates and they would head out into the woods, and they would log all day.

Music: *Young Collins* [fiddle and guitar instrumental]

Roger: This fella, he was from Richwood. He grew up back in the 50s and the Richwood boys would go up there and play baseball with the Mill Point Federal Prison, and he laughed, he said that all the prisoners rooted against their own team, of course. These boys got in trouble cause they, there was ended up being liquor getting passed around. [laughing]

Solly: I can remember when I was a kid, them prisoners, bring them through Hillsboro, and on the Caesar Mountain Road, there was a, we called it the snake den and it’s just a mountain of rocks and boulders that’d been loose, I mean big boulders. I can remember going by there and seeing the prisoners out there knapping those rocks. And that’s where all the rock came from, for the rock work up around the prison. But I can remember seeing them lined up through there, knapping rocks by hand.

Diana: They took advantage of whatever skills the prisoners had, I suppose, whether it was road building, or if they were particularly good at working in the sawmill, or teaching other prisoners how to read. A lot of different talents that they had were used there.

Solly: I remember going up there when I was younger. And every little town around had a softball team, a men’s softball team, and sometimes the guys would gather up and go up and play the prisoners. And I didn’t see this but I was, when they were playing there at Hillsboro, I was always out there with my ball glove wanting to play and stuff. I remember them laughing and talking about, the week before they’d been up playing the prisoners. One of the local, I’ll just say

drunk, was there and got passed out, and they actually used him for third base. [laughing] And, I assume that's true.

Diana: There aren't a whole lot of things left that you can see from the prison, but with the interpretive signage you can sort of transport yourself back, see the actual photos of the buildings, and picture where things were.

Music: *Young Collins* [fiddle and guitar instrumental]

TRACK 10 – Cranberry Glades Overlook Trail

Music: *West Virginia Hills* [mountain dulcimer instrumental]

Solly: I used to go down, we used to backpack in the spring, and then we'd turkey hunt in the mornings and fish in the afternoons.

Kent: At this overlook you get a good view of the natural bowl that contains the Cranberry Glades wetlands. You can see the outlet where the Cranberry River flows out. This is the area where a natural sandstone dam controls the water levels in the Cranberry Glades wetlands. Also, you get a good view of why this area pools and holds cold air—this is termed a frost-pocket effect. On clear calm nights, cold air sinks so it settles down the mountain slopes into this bowl and is held there by the surrounding ridges. And this can cause temperatures to be quite a bit colder down in the bottom of this bowl than they are up on the ridges. And it's because of this frost-pocket effect that the Cranberry Glades has such a short growing season and can have frost anytime from September to June.

Robert: That first field trip that we went on as freshmen, we came to Cranberry. And we parked where the parking area is down there at the gate, below the glades. And, we set tents out in the brush there and everything. Along about 4 o'clock in the morning, I talked my roommate into

getting up. We walked down Cranberry, mile and a half down in there, to a little native stream that I had visited before. We were back up at the campsite at Dr. Gordon's wife's fire, and he was setting there, and it was fall, it was probably 40 degrees or something like that. But we walked in there, and I told Mrs. Gordon, I said "*I'll give you fish to fix for breakfast, ya know, if you fix half for us and half for you all.*" She said "*Okay, what kind are they?*" And I said "*They're native brook.*" She started frying them, and every time the skillet would get a little bit empty I'd fill the skillet again. [laughing] And we had an awful good breakfast. I think there was 12 of us on the field trip. Every one of them got to eat trout. [laughing]

Bill H: Another thing, Dogway, now you know where Dogway's at. You know how it got its name? Never did hear that? Well, Jimmy Roberts, he was a brother to my great, to my grandmother. He settled there in the head of, down at the visitor center, on the right. They come down the Cranberry fishing, in the spring in April and they said there come a big snow. And they was at Dogway, where the town of Dogway is now. And they said that they's wondering how's the quickest way to go home. And they said well, they had a dog, said they had a dog tied up and said "*We'll turn the dog loose and said the way the dog goes, that's the way we'll go.*" And that's how Dogway got its name.

Roy: I was spring turkey hunting one time up in the, along there, and it started to rain, so I decided I was going to seek shelter. And I found a rock about three or four feet high and about six or eight feet long. And, I decided I was going to get under that and lay down until the rain relaxed and then I would go on. And as I got up to that rock and looked under it, I realized that it was really, there was no light under there, it was really dark. And I waited for my eyes to adjust a little bit and during that time I heard a [clicks teeth together several times] clicking noise, and as my eyes adjusted I could see the inside of a bear's mouth [laughing] as it opened its mouth and

stuck out its tongue and snapped its teeth at me. And, I came within two feet of crawling under that rock with a bear to get out of the rain. And, as I backed away, I didn't want to turn around because I thought if that bear comes out of there, it's gonna run over top of me. There was only one way out and I was there. I was in the way! And so I backed away, and as I backed away the bear just came out like a drowsy cat or something and looked at me and watched me walk away and went back under. Got out of the rain. I thanked the Lord and went my way! (*laughing*)

Diana: It's always worth a trip, it doesn't matter when you visit any of these sites along the Highland Scenic Highway, it's different every time you go. I could go once a week into the Cranberry Glades and never see the same thing twice. Or see something new every time.

Music: *West Virginia Hills* [mountain dulcimer instrumental]

TRACK 11 – Williams River Valley Scenic Overlook

Music: *Warfield* [fiddle and bass instrumental]

Cindy: And so we, you know, we are the headwaters of a lot of streams. You know, I think many people don't know where their water comes from, and I think they'd be really surprised if they tracked the route.

Jodi: Pocahontas County is known as the Birthplace of Rivers. The headwaters of eight rivers flow from here, including the Williams, Gauley, Cranberry, Elk, Cherry, Tygart, Greenbrier, and Shavers Fork of the Cheat. The Monongahela National Forest protects much of the headwaters, helping to improve downstream water quality.

Cindy: The route from the headwaters down to the Gulf of Mexico is 1,700 miles. It does go through a lot of land before it sort of reaches its final destination, but you want that journey to be a healthy journey, and so especially in the headwaters you want to have a healthy stream.

Bob: Those kind of places are rare in this country, and frankly in this world. To see the evolution of the seasons from those vantage points are just remarkable.

Music: *Warfield* [fiddle and bass instrumental]

TRACK 12 – Big Spruce Scenic Overlook

Music: *Back to the Yew Piney Mountains* [guitar and vocals]

“This nine-pound hammer, oh, it killed John Henry.

But, it won’t kill me babe. No, it won’t kill me.

‘Cause I’m goin’ back to those Yew Piney Mountains.

Oh, that’s my home babe. Baby, that’s my home!”

Gerry: Course, yew pines, which give the mountains their name, are actually red spruce. And the old timers called them yew pines. They occur in West Virginia, usually around 4,000 feet.

There’s a lot of tunes and songs about the Yew Pine Mountains, *I’m Going Back to the Yew Pine Mountains* and *Yew Piney Mountain*, the fiddle tune.

“‘Cause I’m goin’ back to those Yew Piney Mountains.”

Jane: West Virginia had a tremendous amount of red spruce before the widespread exploitation of the forest at the high elevations.

Cindy: It was one of the first species that were really targeted in the 1800s-1900s with all of the logging that occurred. And so, we estimate that it probably exists on about five percent of the places that it used to exist. So, we’ve really lost a big portion of our red spruce.

Elizabeth: West Virginia has essentially a responsibility to steward these areas in order to preserve the species and the habitats that occur there—many of which occur nowhere else in the world.

Kent: The national forest is working on restoring this ecosystem by selectively releasing red spruce seedlings within the understory of the northern hardwoods forest. This red spruce restoration has benefits for a number of rare species that are associated with this forest, including the West Virginia northern flying squirrel.

Cindy: Sometimes, we have animals that we want to protect and we want to get the public interested in, but they're not all that appealing and so it's kind of tough to get the public behind them, but the West Virginia flying squirrel is one of those really charismatic, furry, cute, little animals that everybody loves.

Cheryl: Well, the flying squirrel is a cute little critter. It's a nocturnal animal, so you know you're not gonna see it in the daytime. It was recently delisted from the endangered species list, but we are still monitoring it.

Kent: Another potential threat to the species in the future is climate change, which threatens to literally push the spruce forest off the top of the mountain and take the squirrel with it.

Cheryl: The red spruce is its main habitat, and it's a high-elevation species, so the scenic highway is prime habitat.

"...to those Yew Piney Mountains.

Oh, that's my home babe. Baby, that's my home!"

Gerry: But I think it just illustrates how people like to identify with the natural world where they live and so they make tunes and songs about places like Yew Pine Mountains to celebrate those places.

Music: *Back to the Yew Piney Mountains* [guitar and vocals]

"I'm goin' back to those Yew Piney Mountains.

Oh, that's my home babe. Baby, that's my home!"

TRACK 13 – Black Mountain Fire Interpretive Trail

[Sound of cross-cut saw cutting tree, sound of cracking wood, then a tree crashes to the ground]

Kent: As you drive by Black Mountain, notice the forest of stunted, small red spruce trees growing amidst a jumble of boulders. This area was impacted by a large fire back during the railroad logging era. This fire burned so intensely that it burned away the organic layer of the soil, which prior to the disturbance may have been as much as a couple of feet thick.

[Crackling of a wildfire]

Frank: Louise McNeill, a Pocahontas County native and West Virginia poet laureate, described the effects of those fires in her memoir *Milkweed Ladies*.

Music: [guitar instrumental plays in the background]

Female (as Louise McNeill, West Virginia poet laureate): *“The great forest fire of 1930 raged from the headwaters of Gauley to Panther Creek and then swept up the valley and almost over the Elk. All week down at the village, a smoke pall hung over the school yard, and our cow spring up the holler tasted of smoke. In the wind that fed it, the black charred leaf scraps sifted down over our fields and pastures. After the rains came, Warden Jess went over and walked it, all day through the black and ashes. They saw the roots of the great stumps sticking up, three feet above the burned out topsoil, as though they still tried to clutch the Earth.”*

Music: [guitar instrumental fades into crackling wildfire]

Connie: I’m not sure how he found out about the three Cs. I just know that he had told me that, you know he had been at Black Mountain.

Jodi: President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933. The work of the 'CC Boys here at Black Mountain consisted of fire control, road construction, and

forest management activities on the new Monongahela National Forest. Camp Black Mountain was open between 1935 and 1941.

Roger: The way I understand it, it was just a variety of woods-related work. They did forest fire patrols, they built roads, course they disbanded after when World War II started. They were probably only in full swing for five or six years.

Connie: My dad was a hard worker, and he was grateful for the opportunity I'm sure. 'Cause that was during the depression, and he had a tough time. I remember him singing some songs to me that he had sung there. It seemed like he enjoyed it, he enjoyed the work and the camaraderie that he had with the other workers.

Music: [folk song, guitar and vocals, young man singing of his time with the CCC]

“There’s a place for which I’m yearning, and my heart is made a-burning.

Just the thought of home sweet home is dear to me.

Well, I thought my head was level, but I see I played the devil.

And I touched the pen and signed my name in ink.

Thought I’d like to leave my mother, dear old dad, my sis and brother.

Spent six months away from home in the CCC.”

As for me, it’s been a lesson, and it’s also been a blessin’.

For it proves just what a fool a boy can be.”

TRACK 14 – Williams River Valley

Music: *Cranberry Rock* [fiddle and guitar instrumental]

Gerry: Burl Hammons played the fiddle tune *Cranberry Rock*. I know people have gone up there. Sherman Hammons took a few people up to that rock on the headwater of Cranberry River.

Adam: The first time I ever went native brook trout fishing, we parked, there's a field, it's close to the Black Mountain overlook and it's off on the Cranberry side. We parked the truck there and walked down off into Cranberry and I think it was on the head of the North Fork of the Cranberry, and that's the first time I ever went native brook trout fishing, and I caught some little bitty ones and fished all the way down to a big beaver pond and then hiked on out of there. That was a big day!

Gerry: The Hammons family are probably one of the better known traditional music families in all of America. And, the Library of Congress did a study on them back in the early 1970s. They had immigrated to the United States. For a long time, it was thought they were British in origin. A family member from Webster County had oral history that said they came from Northern Ireland. And the original family member was Edden Hammons. This would've been in probably the mid-18th century. Sherman Hammons was a contemporary, to me, member of the family. Lived about two miles from the scenic highway at a little place called Edray. I started visiting Sherman in 1972. He was a fiddle player, and a banjo player, and a ballad singer, and he knew an awful lot about the region there and the Yew Pine Mountain area. Where he had grown up and where his family had lived for, by his generation they'd been there for a couple of generations.

Music: *Yew Piney Mountain* [fiddle instrumental]

Bill H: And old Edden was married twice. His first wife, they married and divorced in a month's time. Now that was his first wife and said that, said "*Edden you're gonna have to go out there and get to, go to work or I'm gonna have to leave.*" And, he said "*Now you go ahead,*" said "*I wouldn't give my fiddle or my dog for no damn woman.*"

Gerry: There were two main musical families of Hammons who lived on the Williams River. Paris Hammons' family whose children that I knew were Maggie, and Burl, and Sherman who stayed in the Pocahontas County area. Another branch of the family were the children of Cornelius Hammons or "Neil" Hammons. They were born on the Williams River and moved over into the Tygart Valley and settle around Huttonsville. The man I knew from that family, Currence Hammons, was also a banjo player, and ballad singer, and storyteller. And Currence knew a lot about the early history on the Williams River. Growing up there, he knew that area before the timber had been cut. He used to say "*It was dark by day and dark by night.*"

Jodi: The Williams River also has a rich tradition of recreation. Enjoy camping at dispersed campsites along the Williams River as well as two campgrounds: Day Run and Tea Creek. The Williams River is a popular fishing and hunting destination. There's easy access to over 100 miles of hiking trails, including the Tea Creek trail system and the Cranberry Wilderness. Mountain biking is allowed on many of the hiking trails and forest roads. Visit your local ranger station for more information on fees, licenses, and regulations.

Music: *Cranberry Rock* [fiddle instrumental]

TRACK 15 – Honeycomb Rocks Interpretive Trail

Music: *Gettin' Upstairs* [banjo and guitar instrumental]

Jodi: The Honeycomb Rocks trail showcases interesting rock formations. Over time, the forces of mountain building and weathering created the honeycomb patterns in the sandstone. This trail is right along the Highland Scenic Highway and is well worth a visit!

Rondi: I also love the Honeycomb Rocks trail. It's just so unique and I especially love it in the springtime because there are a lot of wildflowers along the trail, trillium, wild geraniums and they're just right in your face when you're walking that trail.

Cheryl: I really think Honeycomb Rocks is just really neat and interesting. Even if you're not interested in geology, Honeycomb Rocks is just awesome. I just, I really like it. I took my parents there. [laughing] It's also a good site for somebody who can't walk very far. That's one of the reasons I took my parents, neither one of them could walk too far and the site is right off the road. It's a pretty flat walk, not very far and it's a really cool site!

Music: *Gettin' Upstairs* [banjo and guitar instrumental]

TRACK 16 – Little Laurel Scenic Overlook

Music: *Colored Aristocracy* [fiddle and banjo instrumental]

Rondi: I like Little Laurel Overlook because my youngest daughter's named Laurel and I used to take pictures of her all the time at the Little Laurel Overlook sign from the time she was about ten years old until as recently as last year, she was 20, and we took a picture of her at the Little Laurel overlook.

Stephanie: Those soils become very challenging from an operational aspect. They're great in the sense that they have the capacity to hold a lot of nutrients. There's a lot of calcium and other

macronutrients that plants need to have high productivity, and they also hold a lot of water and that makes those soils productive throughout the entire growing season. They don't get droughty so much. But what it does do, and this is one of the challenges actually in building the highway, they create a great engineering fete because they do not like to adhere to themselves. And, so they become slick as snot! And that's a common logger term, you know, you'll hear that "*These soils are as slick as snot out here. You know we're sliding off the hillside!*" And before you know it, you have a lot of sediment and erosion issues.

Kent: Helicopter logging is typically used in areas where either the slope is very steep or the soils are highly erosive or both.

[Sound of a helicopter flying overhead]

Amy: We had helicopter landings right beside the highway, one in the Tea Creek Meadow area. Had to shut the trails down and fueled the helicopter at the Little Laurel overlook. We'd set the helicopter down and actually refuel at that overlook. It was pretty exciting! [laughing]

Ken: So, just to give you an idea, a day, a hundred thousand board feet on a good day...

Amy: ...is what they average. They average about a hundred thousand board foot a day.

Ken: So if you see these log trucks, these tractor trailers on the road, that's 20 loads, a lot of timber!

Stephanie: When we want to do operations management on the landscape, and we have this geology, and we have these soils, we have to do a lot of special mitigations and designs in order to make sure that equipment is being as light on the landscape as possible, and that we're disturbing the soil the least amount possible to prevent erosion and sedimentation issues.

Bill: Our goal in doing it is manage it in a way that we're improving the land and providing a product and a service to people and opportunities. We wouldn't have the roads that we do have

through the forest, through the backcountry, along the Cranberry River. A lot of those things wouldn't be there at the level they are without managing the land and managing the timber.

Music: *Colored Aristocracy* [fiddle and banjo instrumental]

TRACK 17 – Tea Creek Meadow Interpretive Trail

Music: *The Bird Song* [fiddle and banjo instrumental]

Solly: I was the project inspector when we built the trail down to the beaver dam overlooks. So, that's pretty neat! A lot of people don't know that's there. And it was really neat when we first put it in because it had beaver in it. Beavers are gone now, but I think it's the food supply and stuff. If you'll go and look where there's multiple dams, there's old ones and new ones and old ones and new ones, you know, so they may be back one of these days!

Elizabeth: There's still some open water. There's early pioneer plants coming in on the mud flats. You can see three-way sedge, and rice-cut grass and then along the linear meadows, bordering the creek, in late summer especially, is a wonderful time to look at wildflowers. You get these explosions of native goldenrod, the grass-leaf goldenrod, and wrinkle-leaf goldenrod, and the flat-topped asters. This is one of the best places to go looking for butterflies as well. Because there's this, just this solid bloom of yellow and white in the late summer. And, I've seen just swarms of monarchs come in where they cover the meadow, and the meadow goes from yellow to orange all of a sudden because it's full of butterflies! [laughing]

Rondi: It's really cool, because at the end there's some wildlife blinds. So, if you're quiet and sit still long enough, you're likely to see, especially in the summer, spring and summer, maybe some geese. Sometimes there's some beaver activity. You just never know what you're going to see in there.

Music: *The Bird Song* [fiddle, banjo, and vocals]

“Well, said the hummingbird sittin’ on a flower.

Once loved a pretty girl ‘bout a half an hour.

She never comes to hear me sing.

My voice is enough to charm a king.”

TRACK 18 – Red Spruce Knob Trail

Robert B: In 1907, the Monongahela River flooded. A lot of the early logging and fires had occurred on the watersheds there in Pocahontas County, Randolph, Tucker, those counties contributed to that flooding, there’s no doubt about it. And, it led to the creation of the Weeks Act of 1911. The Weeks Act allowed the federal government to buy property in the east to create National Forests.

Frank: America also turned to a new method of smoke and fire detection, a strategically placed network of lookout towers.

Music: [guitar and fiddle instrumental in the background]

Frank: The fire towers placed at 12-mile intervals throughout the forest differed greatly depending on when they were built or where they were located. So too did the conditions under which the tower men had to operate. Old Red Spruce, the ranger district’s only wooden lookout tower, demanded respect and protected the forest for a quarter of a century. Wade Rogers was fond of Old Red Spruce.

Wade Rogers: The tower was basically, the height was approximately 45 feet in height and it was constructed out of ponderosa pine. I understand it was shipped in here from out in the Pacific Northwest. The base of the legs were approximately 18 inches square, and they was

embedded in concrete with great big long bolts. All four legs had great big guy cables on them, and that cable went off out into the rocks that was embedded in among the spruce timber up there.

Music: [slow guitar instrumental in the background]

Frank: During his first fire season, Rogers got out pen and paper one day and wrote this tribute called *To Old Red Spruce Tower*.

Wade: *“Over this wide earth so far and near, here stands Red Spruce year after year. To those brave men who served so well, which in a place is almost like hell. Though she shakes and sways and does the twist, man oh man do we take a risk. To you Red Spruce, we all understand the service you’ve given throughout the land.”*

TRACK 19 – Red Lick Scenic Overlook

Music: *Before I Met You* [mountain dulcimer instrumental]

Rondi: I love it in the spring, like in May when all the trees are blooming—the red bud and the serviceberry. And you know, it’s just your first outing in springtime and it just shows beautiful scenery. And the fall of course is spectacular. Even in a year where people say it’s not a good color year, it’s still gorgeous.

Stephanie: The Highland Scenic Highway has views like you see nowhere else on the forest. It was created for that purpose—to be able to see the vast views looking out towards the ridge and valley over towards Virginia and the transition of how the Appalachia plateau transitions into the Appalachian highlands and then eventually over into the ridge and valley.

Cara: My favorite spot is the first overlook traveling in from the east. It’s a few miles in, and there’s a nice pull-off parking lot. There’s a shelter there.

Rondi: Once in a while you just need to get out and get some perspective and just make that drive and maybe just find one of the overlooks and sit there and contemplate for a while and clear my head.

Music: *Before I Met You* [mountain dulcimer instrumental]

TRACK 20 – Shearer Run and Elk Mountain

Music: *Elk River Blues* [fiddle and banjo instrumental]

Dave: Before the Highland Scenic Highway went through, there was actually one allotment there, and they just called it the Shearer allotment. It contained three pastures, and whenever the Highland Scenic Highway went through, it split one of the pastures. So it actually created two allotments with four pastures after that. To try to keep these areas open, we use grazing as a management tool to try to keep the woody vegetation from encroaching in from outside, so the main idea is to keep these areas open. They provide excellent habitat for wildlife, from songbirds to game species like deer and turkey. Very beneficial to wildlife!

Diana: The 150 section is the most beautiful section to drive. But it's also the highest elevation, so they get more snow than all the areas around. The lower your elevation, the more surprised you are at the amount of snow on the scenic highway in the wintertime. It's generally impassable most of the winter. But it's misleading—you can start out on it, looks fine, go several miles and then start to hit snow and more and more snow. If you're lucky enough to get to Black Mountain, might be six foot snow drifts across the road. We have lots of calls in the winter to rescue people off the scenic highway because they decided they could get out there and try it anyway. But it's also an attraction when there's that much snow. People come to look at snow, they can certainly find it there.

Dave: There's a warming hut up there that people can go to. It has a stove in it and everything to build a fire if they want. It's part of that trail system.

Rondi: It may look like the highway's crossable at the two ends. But, in reality as soon as you hit some elevation, you're gonna get into drifts and deep snow and ice and we definitely caution people from trying to do winter travel on the highway. We do put signs up, the "Road Closed" sign as well as some cautionary signs saying that the road is not treated for winter travel. The only traffic that we really encourage on the 150 portion of the Highland Scenic Highway in wintertime is recreational travel, and that includes snowmobiling and anything like cross-country skiing, snowshoeing. We have had dog sleds—that type of travel.

Music: *Elk River Blues* [fiddle and banjo instrumental]

TRACK 21 – Credits

Music: *Cherry River Rag* [fiddle and guitar instrumental]

Jodi: The Highland Scenic Highway audio tour was produced in partnership between the USDA Forest Service, Monongahela National Forest and West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways. Funding was made available through the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byway Program, administered by the West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways. USDA is an equal-opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

If you'd like to learn more about the Highland Scenic Highway, please visit the Gauley Ranger Station, the Cranberry Mountain Nature Center, or the Marlinton Ranger Station of the Monongahela National Forest.

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Thanks for joining us on our journey along the Highland Scenic Highway!