

Appendix C



Interpretive Plan

Executive Summary

To assist in the completion of the Highland Scenic Highway Corridor Management Plan, this Interpretive Plan guides our managers on how and what stories and concepts to tell visitors of the Monongahela National Forest as they travel across the Highland Scenic Highway. The foundations of this plan were developed from partner, public, and USDA Forest Service input. Through the implementation of the thematic approach to interpretation, the Forest hopes to reach out to both local communities and visitors to encourage a greater understanding and appreciation of the land's history and current management.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Tables.....	iv
List of Figures.....	iv
Section 1 Introduction.....	1
Section 2 Interpretive Planning and Goals.....	2
Section 3 Audience Analysis	4
Section 4 Existing Interpretive Sites.....	6
Interpretive Trails.....	6
Signs and Kiosks	6
Overlooks.....	6
Gauley Ranger District Office.....	7
Cranberry Mountain Nature Center	7
Section 5 Interpretive Theme and Subthemes	12
Section 6 Interpretive Site Prioritization and Recommendations.....	14
Prioritization	14
Site Recommendations	15
Scenic Byway Signage.....	42
Additional brochures, maps, and electronic media	43
Section 7 Evaluating success of interpretation	45
Informal Methods.....	45
Formal Methods	45
Addressing Issues.....	45
Section 8 References	46
Literature Cited	46
Other sources	46
Section 9 Additional Considerations	47
Comprehensive Site Recommendations and Prioritization.....	47
Accessibility Considerations and Suggestions.....	50
General Rules on Updating and Design.....	51

List of Tables

Table 1. Existing Interpretive Sites	9
Table 2. Priority 1 Sites	15
Table 3. Priority 2 Sites	24
Table 4. Priority 3 Sites	31
Table 5. Priority 4 Trailhead Sites.....	38
Table 6. List of Recommended Interpretive Sites.....	47

List of Figures

Figure 1. Highland Scenic Highway Map	3
Figure 2. Fall foliage along the HSH.....	4
Figure 3. HSH portal sign at WV 39	5
Figure 4. Tea Creek Meadow Interpretive Trail	6
Figure 5. Theme and subthemes	12
Figure 6. Geographic Location of Priority 1 Sites.....	16
Figure 7. Falls of Hills Creek Scenic Area	18
Figure 8. National Park Service's National Natural Landmark logo.....	19
Figure 9. Williams River Valley Overlook.....	21
Figure 10. Tea Creek Meadow Interpretive Trail	24
Figure 11. Geographic Locations of Priority 2 Sites	25
Figure 12. Summit Lake.....	26
Figure 13. Williams River at the Fishing Pier.....	28
Figure 14. Williams River Deadwaters	29
Figure 15. Beaver Pond on Tea Creek Interpretive Trail 2002	30
Figure 16. Black Cherry Sign along the Cranberry Mountain Nature Trail	31
Figure 17. Geographic Locations of Priority 3 Sites	32
Figure 18. Installed interpretation along the Mill Point Interpretive Trail.....	33
Figure 19. Mill Point Prison Site	33
Figure 20. Interpretive Signs at Honeycomb Rocks.....	36
Figure 21. Geographic Locations of Trailheads.	39
Figure 22. Thomas Reserve Trailhead can serve other area trails.....	40



Section I Introduction

As a jewel of the Monongahela National Forest, the Highland Scenic Highway draws visitors from around the country to enjoy the beautiful mountain vistas, clear water streams, and a wide array of recreational opportunities. Winding through the rugged terrain of the Allegheny highlands, the Highland Scenic Highway provides a glimpse into the past in one of the last areas to be timbered in the logging boom of the early half of the 1900s. This area is rich in history and folklore. The Forest tells the story of a vast, untouched wilderness, once destroyed by the axe, that has recovered to provide wildlife habitat, water, timber, forest products, as well as a place to escape everyday life.

The Highland Scenic Highway is a 43-mile route that traverses the southern portion of the Monongahela National Forest. It is located on both the Marlinton and Gauley Ranger Districts, primarily on Forest Service land (Figure 1). From Richwood, West Virginia, it follows WV 39/55 for 21 miles through the narrow valley along the North Fork of the Cherry River, climbs to the top of Kennison Mountain and continues onto the Cranberry Mountain Nature Center. From the Nature Center, the Highland Scenic Highway turns onto WV 150 and meanders across 22 miles of the area's highest ridges and plateaus before connecting with US 219, just 7 miles north of Marlinton, West Virginia.

Visitors can explore scenic areas, such as the Fall of Hills Creek and the Cranberry Glades Botanical Area. The Cranberry Glades Botanical Area is also listed as a National Natural Landmark. Fishing access is available on the streams and rivers that parallel the roadway. Other fishing opportunities are just off Highway at Summit Lake and the Williams River. As the eastern boundary of the Cranberry Wilderness, the Highland Scenic Highway provides several access points for those seeking solitude and adventure. Front country hiking and mountain biking are also found along the way. Scenic overlooks offer picnicking and broad views into picturesque, rural valleys below. Camping is offered at developed and dispersed recreation areas within a few minutes from the Highland Scenic Highway.

Additional recreation opportunities are available as the seasons change. The fall leaf season is one of the busiest times of the year, as the maple, yellow poplar, oak, and hickory showcase their vivid hues of reds, oranges, and yellows. It is also a very popular corridor to access favorite hunting spots. Unmaintained during the winter, the WV 150 section of the Highland Scenic Highway is the only place on the Monongahela National Forest where snowmobiles are allowed. Along with the snow-covered roadway, a modest trail system offer cross-country skiing and snow shoeing opportunities. There is also a significant amount of cross-country skiing on trails near the Cranberry Mountain Nature Center and Cranberry Glades Botanical Area.



Section 2 Interpretive Planning and Goals

Interpretation is...

'an educational activity which aims to reveal meaning and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information (Tilden, 1957)'.

The goal of any interpretive material is to foster a connection between the land and the people use it. Through talks and presentations, signs and handouts, the goal remains the same—to help the public create an appreciation of the resource they use and a greater understand of its value to both the natural environment and society.

During the development of the Highland Scenic Highway Corridor Management Plan (HSH CMP), the Monongahela National Forest (the Forest) realized a need to revisit, improve, and expand interpretive opportunities offered to the public. While several educational and interpretive opportunities exist along the Highland Scenic Highway (HSH), there are many stories to be told to connect visitors to the land they have come to explore and enjoy.

This interpretive plan will lay the framework for the improvement and development of historical and environmental education opportunities along the HSH. It will assist Ranger Districts to develop interpretive materials with consistent storylines, visual appearance, as well as accessibility. Visitors and local citizens alike will form a better appreciation for the Forest, its management, and the communities connected to it. By offering high-quality, appealing interpretive materials, there may be an increase in visitors to the area, improving tourism and economic development in nearby communities of Richwood, Hillsboro, and Marlinton, WV.

Goals of Interpretive plan:

- Use a thematic approach along the HSH to help create a 'brand' or identity for the route, allowing it to stand out among the surrounding landscape.
- Improve visitor understanding of plant biology, forestry, wildlife, geography, ecology, geology, and other natural sciences.
- Connect visitors to the land by telling stories of the Forest's past, how it has recovered, and the multitude of services it provides to society.
- Foster an understanding of safety concerns, forest regulations, and outdoor ethics through clear and consistent information.
- Improve marketing of area attractions, as well as services available on the HSH and in nearby communities.
- Provide a variety of high-quality education opportunities to visitors regardless of age or ability.

Highland Scenic Highway Corridor Management Plan

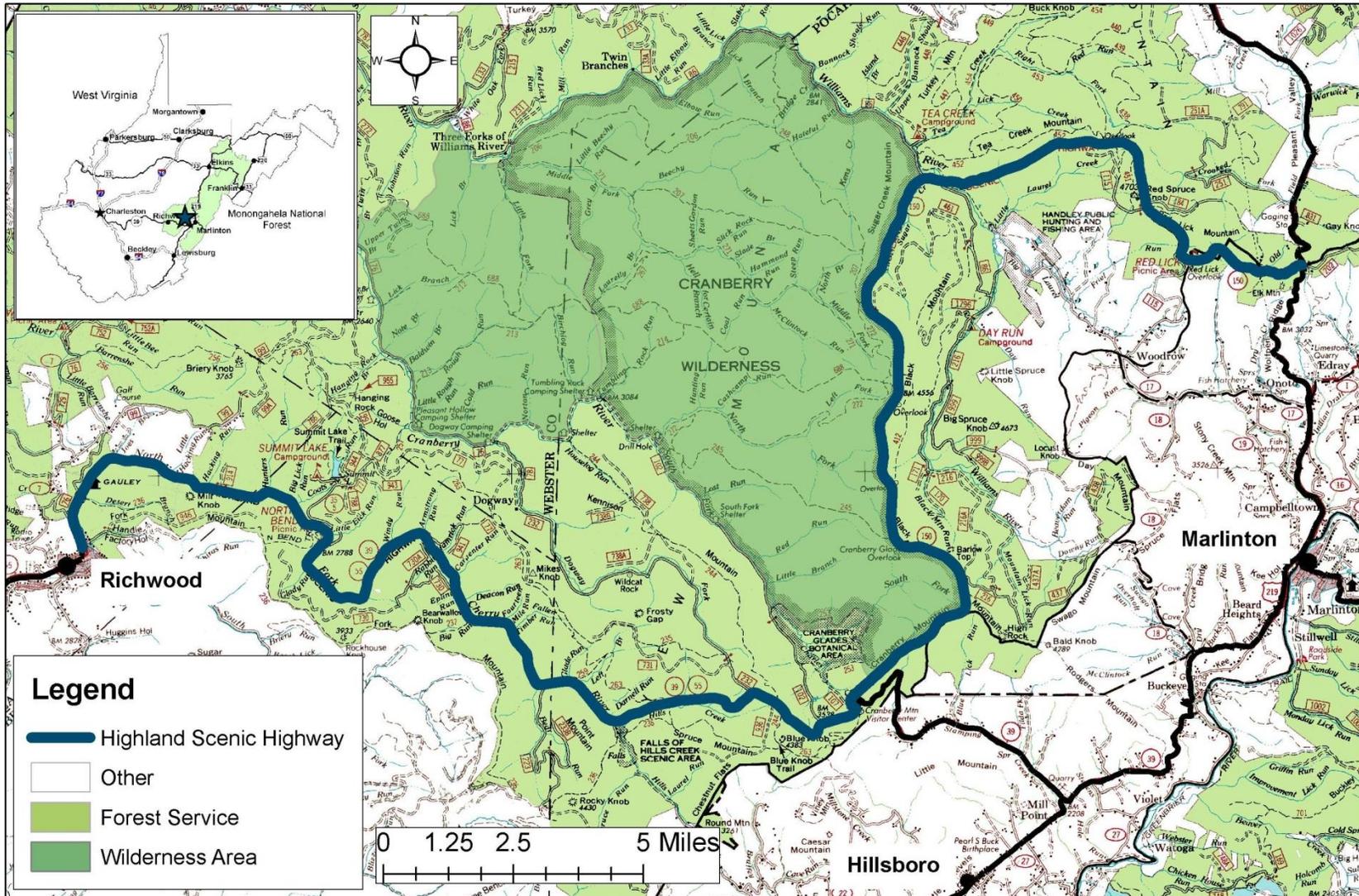


Figure I. Highland Scenic Highway Map



Section 3 Audience Analysis

Little data has been collected specifically for visitors of the HSH, though visitor logs are kept at the Cranberry Mountain Nature Center which is located on the HSH. Almost 3,500 visitors signed in during the 2012 season, which ran from mid-April through mid-October.

Approximately 63% of the visitors were from West Virginia, with the neighboring states of Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania having the next highest number of visitors signed in. Visitors also came from California, Colorado, and South Dakota, and from as far as Canada, and Denmark. The reasons people stated for visiting the area were primarily for sightseeing and recreation.



Figure 1. Fall foliage along the HSH

Activities that fall under sightseeing include viewing fall foliage, scenic drives, and visiting the Cranberry Glades Botanical Area. Recreational purposes include, but are not limited to, hiking, backpacking, camping, biking, birding, and fishing.

Reports from the Forest-wide National Visitor Use Monitoring (Kocis et al., 2004) study shed some additional light as to who is visiting the Forest. An understanding of who uses the area must be established to effectively communicate the thematic

storylines. Considerations of age ranges, group sizes, and amount of time spent are just a few examples of information needed to gauge when, how, and where interpretive displays should be developed.

Based on findings in the 2004 NVUM report, there were over 1 million national forest visits in FY2003. A 'National Forest Visit' is defined as: *the entry of one person upon a national forest to participate in recreation activities for an unspecified period of time. A National Forest Visit can be composed of multiple Site Visits.* Nearly three-quarters of visitors to the Forest were male (71%) and the majority of visitors were white (96%). Average group size was 2.43. Age was fairly evenly distributed, with about 40 percent reporting they were between the ages of 40 and 59. Persons under 16 represented another 16 percent.

The average visit duration was 20.9 hours on the Forest. Just below one-fifth of visitors reported staying overnight on the Forest. Visitors reported viewing natural features, viewing wildlife, relaxing, hiking/walking, and driving for pleasure as the top five activities they participated in during their National Forest visit. Fishing and participating in nature center activities were also notable activities reported by visitors. The most common 'facilities and specially designated areas' visited were forest roads, forest trails, scenic byways, wilderness, and



museums. Over three-quarters of visitors to the Forest reported that recreating on the Forest was the primary goal of their trip. When asked how many times they visit to participate in all the activities specified, the average visitor comes to the Forest 20.7 times over a 12 month period.

When asked about how important a variety of items were and their satisfaction with what they encountered during their time on the Forest, visitors were specifically asked about interpretive displays and the availability of recreation information. Visitors to developed day use areas rated interpretive displays as ‘important’ on a 5-point Likert scale, and 94 percent reported ‘good’ to ‘very good’ satisfaction levels. Similarly, these visitors rated recreation information availability as ‘important’ with 85 percent reporting ‘good’ to ‘very good’ satisfaction levels. Visitors at developed overnight sites placed these items at ‘moderate importance’ and just over three-quarters reported ‘good’ to ‘very good’ satisfaction levels.

Overall, this information tells us that there is significant use on the Forest by small groups of people that come to the Monongahela to enjoy the outdoors in a variety of settings. When they have an opportunity to learn through interpretation, they feel that what they encounter is satisfactory. The development of updated and improved interpretation can help visitors learn more, while forming a greater appreciation of the land that they return to time and time again. It can help lengthen visitors’ stay by offering more to see and learn on the HSH, at developed recreation sites along the way, as well as in nearby communities.



Figure 2. HSH portal sign at WV 39



Section 4 Existing Interpretive Sites

To understand what interpretation needs exist along the HSH, a brief history and description of opportunities currently offered is included here (Table 1).

Interpretive Trails

Several interpretive trails are located at scenic areas across the HSH. Conceptualized as part of the “Wayside Exhibit Plan for the Highland Scenic Highway” in 1993, the Black Mountain Fire Trail was completed in 1996. Other trails have developed over time, and include:

- Falls of Hills Creek
- Cranberry Glade Boardwalk
- Cranberry Mountain Nature Trail
- Mill Point Prison Site
- Black Mountain Fire Boardwalk
- Honeycomb Rocks Trail
- Tea Creek Meadow Interpretive Trail



Figure 3. Tea Creek Meadow Interpretive Trail

Signs and Kiosks

Although primarily for regulations and trail information, trailhead signs along the HSH often include some interpretive information about the trail or the area it traverses. Recently designed and installed trailhead displays at Red Spruce Knob Trail, Gauley Mountain Trail, and Williams River Trail include historical information related to the logging and post-logging era. High Rocks Trailhead is a dated sign that provides some interpretation about the geology of the rock formation and some avian species that may be seen along the trail. Other trailheads do not have an established trailhead sign at this time.

There is a three-panel kiosk at the US 219/WV 150 gateway to the HSH. One panel is dedicated to seasonal information (wildflowers, winter recreation). The main panel displays an overview map of the HSH, highlighted recreational areas, and stopping points. The Pocahontas County Convention and Visitors Bureau (PCCVB) update the final panel with local events and tourist information.

Overlooks

Three of the four overlooks along the WV 150 section of the HSH have panoramic signs with interpretive information about the landscape and resources seen from their vistas. These signs were designed and implemented in 1994 based on the guidance provided in the “Wayside Exhibit Plan for the Highland Scenic Highway”, 1993.



Gauley Ranger District Office

At the Gauley Ranger District Office there is a three-panel kiosk that offers District recreation information, notices, area maps, and various brochures. The lobby area has a historical interpretation area developed in 2001. It includes many historical photos of Richwood during the early timber days, loggers, historic railroads, as well as New Deal era photos of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). USDA Forest Service-owned artifacts are on display. For a short time, additional items on loan from the Smithsonian were included in the display, but have been returned. There is also a large ‘Bear Aware’ display that educates visitors about proper food storage and practices to avoid negative encounters with black bears that frequent recreation sites.

Cranberry Mountain Nature Center

As the primary visitor center along the HSH, the Cranberry Mountain Nature Center (CMNC) offers a variety of interpretive services ranging from presentations, interactive displays, live animals, and self-guided exhibits. It is located near the mid-point of the HSH and is seasonally open from April to October.

Talks and Events

‘Snakes of West Virginia’ and guided tours of the Cranberry Glades Botanical Area are regular weekend programs. The CMNC also holds free events such as the Conservation Day/Kids’ Night and the Cranberry Shindig. During these events, local artisans setup demonstrations: blacksmithing, wood carving, wood turning/lathing, spinning thread, soap making, making apple cider, quilting, and many other traditional trades. Traditional music and dance is another highlight of the Shindig. Native orchids and backyard medicine programs have become annual events as well.

Self-guided, interactive exhibits

Throughout the CMNC, visitors can learn about wildlife, habitats, and many other topics related to the Forest. Exhibits found there are as follows:

Geography

- Relief map of the Gauley Ranger District centered on the Cranberry Wilderness and surrounding area (HSH included).
- Hand-made wall quilt displays a map of the entire forest.

Geology

- West Virginia’s Gemstone: Fossil Coral. Hands-on exploration of fossils.
- Sample of Forest soil, along with profile diagram.

Forest Health

- Forest pests. Panels describing forest health issues related to invasive pests: Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and Emerald Ash Borer.



Wildlife

- Artificial animal scat display.
- Animal tracks: Visitors can make prints in the sand for many wildlife species found in the area.
- Twenty-one mounted wildlife species displayed in habitat scenery. Associated flip-books teach visitors about common species and their habitat.
- Fourteen birds of prey, a loon, a hummingbird, and red crossbill are on display.
- Live snake exhibit: Venomous and non-venomous snakes of West Virginia.
- Trout of West Virginia: Includes aquarium with live brook trout and an interpretive panel.
- Bear exhibit: Full-scale cutouts of polar, grizzly, and black bear with associated skulls.

Vegetation

- Wildflowers in bloom by season.
- Wildflower identification window clings of native species that can be found in gardens around the CMNC.

Miscellaneous

- Mystery boxes: Visitors reach inside box and try to guess the object they find.

Films

A variety of interpretive films are available for viewing at the Center. Topics include: wildflowers, Smokey Bear, Cranberry Glades Botanical Area, Snakes, Hummingbirds, Civilian Conservation Corps., and Mount Saint Helens.

Outdoor Interpretive Opportunities

The Cranberry Mountain Nature Trail is located steps away from the CMNC. It introduces visitors to many of the local tree species as it leads to a picnic spot at an overlook into the Stamping Creek watershed. The Virginian mountains are visible in the distance.

There is also a four-sided kiosk that offers area maps, information about forest notices, regulations, and upcoming local events. Native wildflower gardens around the complex teach visitors how to identify species on-site and the importance of planting native species.



Table I. Existing Interpretive Sites

Location	Site Description	Interpretive themes or goals
Gauley Ranger District Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bear Aware Kiosk • Small display area with interpretive information related to historic logging, railroads, and their impact on industry and the development of Richwood. Also stories about Civilian Conservation Corp. Also includes many artifacts from CCC and logging camps (2001). • Three-panel kiosk with general area information, maps, notices, and various brochures (2003). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ General area information and visitor safety ○ Wildlife ○ Logging ○ Post-logging
Summit Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single routed plastic sign, describing lake, stocking, a few basic regulations for lake use (2006). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ General area information ○ Recreation
Falls of Hills Creek Scenic Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single routed cedar sign with short description of waterfalls and trail, as well as site map (mid-1990s). • Single-paneled sign describing the geology of waterfall formation (2007). • Single-panel laminate sign mounted in metal frame describing NNIS, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (~2008). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ General area information ○ Forest health (NNIS)
Cranberry Glades Botanical Area Boardwalk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newer routed cedar sign at entrance with area history and description. • Large single-paneled kiosk with five inserts with boardwalk map, area plants, and ways to help protect the area. Seven small signs mounted in aluminum frame with glass located along 0.5 mile boardwalk (1990). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ General area information ○ Ecological interpretation: wildlife, unique habitat, botany, history
Cranberry Mountain Nature Center (outdoor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four-sided information kiosk with maps, forest information, Nature Center events, Notices from USFS and WVDNR (2003). • Short, looping interpretive trail with introductions to thirteen tree/plant species, as well as historical description of the forest and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ General area information ○ Natural resource management



Location	Site Description	Interpretive themes or goals
	a pictorial diagram of the Stamping Creek overlook (2007).	
Mill Point Prison Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretive trail (0.5 miles) created on an existing trail. Ten signs tell the story of the Mill Point Prison (2010). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Post-logging
High Rocks Trailhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trailhead display with trail information, the story of High Rocks, and birds to see along the way. Emergency contact information and area map (1990s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ General area information ○ Geology ○ Wildlife
Williams River Valley Overlook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-paneled panoramic view of the Williams River Valley. Diagram of places in view shed, establishment of MNF, and lineage of the Williams River to the Gulf (1994). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Geography ○ Natural resource management ○ Water resources
Big Spruce Overlook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-paneled sign describing red spruce logging history. Also introduces the Black Mountain Fire and leads visitors to the interpretive trail (1994). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Logging ○ Post-logging (fire) Forest resiliency
Black Mountain Fire Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretive trail (600' boardwalk) with 7 small signs describing the logging history of the area, the Black Mountain fire (soil loss), and a recovering forest (1996). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Logging ○ Post-logging (fire) ○ Influences on forest health
Williams River Trailhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trailhead display with trail information and story about the splash dam located there during the logging era. Emergency contact information and area map (2010). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ General area information ○ Logging
Honeycomb Rocks Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretive trail (0.25 miles) with 11 signs teaching visitors about the unique geology of the Honeycomb Rocks (2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Geology
Little Laurel Overlook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-paneled panoramic view of the valley, pointing out places in view shed. Also describes the MNF as a 'working' forest with forest management and grazing while providing wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities (1994). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Geography ○ Current timber practices, forest resiliency



Location	Site Description	Interpretive themes or goals
Tea Creek Meadow Interpretive Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretive trail (0.6 miles) with 6 signs describing the history of the meadow, habitat diversity, and wildlife. Two wildlife blinds are located along the boardwalk portion of the trail (2005). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Wildlife, water/wetlands, habitat
Gauley Mountain Trailhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trailhead display with trail information and historic railroad logging. Emergency contact information and area map (2012). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ General area information ◦ Logging
Red Spruce Knob Trailhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trailhead display with trail information and a historic account about the fire tower staffed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (2010). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ General area information ◦ Post-logging: Fire tower and CCC
US-219 Gateway Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three-paneled kiosk with seasonal forest information (winter recreation, wildflowers), a map of the HSH and area information, and local Convention and Visitors Bureau information (2002). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ General area information ◦ Wildflowers



Section 5 Interpretive Theme and Subthemes

During the development of the HSH CMP, public meetings and letters to the public, area partners and businesses called for ideas pertaining to interpretive opportunities along the HSH. This input, as well as discussions during on-forest meetings, was used to establish the overall theme and subthemes for interpretation in this plan (HSH CMP, 2012).

The main theme that will be used to tie interpretation across the HSH is ***The Forest is Our Future*** (Figure 5). Many stories and ideas important to those who participated in the development of the theme and subthemes were related to the historical use and settlement of the area, how the forest has recovered and what resulted from historical use of the land, and what is being done now to shape what it will look like in the future, as well as the ecological benefits it will provide as time passes. Subthemes are outlined below (adapted from HSH CMP, 2012). Refer to this outline when reviewing the recommended themes.

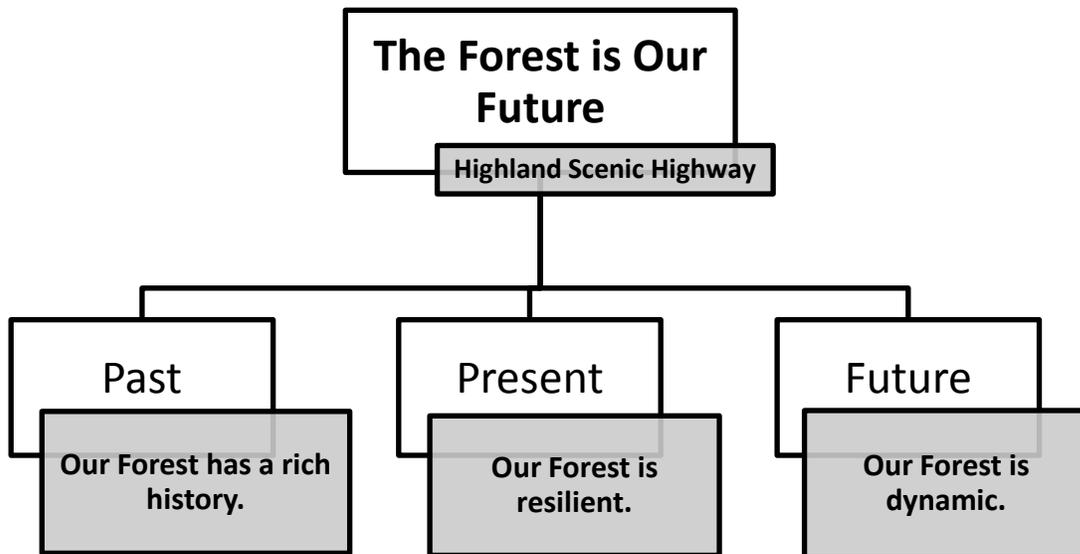


Figure 4. Theme and subthemes



1. Past: Our Forest has a rich history.

Storylines explore past uses and historic settlement in the area and how they were shaped by the surrounding forests and mountains.

- a) Historic Settlement: Subsistence farming, pastimes, and daily life in a remote mountainous area.
- b) Logging Era: Railroad logging, timber-based industry and manufacturing, logging camps and towns.
- c) Post-logging: Wildfire, fire suppression efforts, forest restoration, Mill Point Prison, and Civilian Conservation Corps.

2. Present: Our Forest is resilient.

Storylines explore how the forest is comprised of recovering ecosystems, subject to a variety of influences and management strategies.

- a) Influences: Environmental factors that can impact the forest such as weather, acid rain, natural succession, and elevation.
- b) Natural Resource Management: Current management practices for wildlife habitat improvement, managing for sensitive species, non-native invasive species, recreation, timber and more.
- c) Ecosystem Benefits: Benefits to environment and people such as air and water filtration, carbon sequestration, biodiversity, a variety of recreation opportunities/settings, quality of life, sensitive species, common wildlife, wildflowers, and tree identification.

3. Future: Our Forest is dynamic.

Storylines explore current forest trends and how they may shape our forests in the future, along with the challenges and benefits of change.

- a) Ecosystem Health: Issues that are impacting specific tree species, invasive pests and plants, as well as management strategies to address them.
- b) Water: Origins of several rivers are found in this high elevation area, provides habitat, fisheries, and water source for local communities.
- c) Geology: Site specific interpretation where appropriate, such as Falls of Hills Creek, Cranberry Glades Botanical Area, and Honeycomb Rocks.



Section 6 Interpretive Site Prioritization and Recommendations

The variety of storylines developed around the HSH allows managers to use a range of interpretive methods. Some storylines may be better suited for an audio tour or a brochure dedicated to that topic, while others should be shared through site-specific interpretive displays. To reach the greatest number of visitors, these stories should be offered through multiple media types. Accessible materials, such as large print and audio formats, should be available upon request.

In addition to prioritization of interpretation development at key sites along the HSH, high importance should be placed on the development of other materials, such as a HSH-dedicated website and audio tour built around subthemes. The website will be important not only for an additional outlet for interpretation, it will help market the intrinsic, scenic, and historical qualities of the HSH.

The recommendations within the CMP are locations and concepts that have been identified within the Forest Service, and from public meetings, for improving and enhancing interpretive opportunities associated with the HSH. The themes and subthemes provide a framework for future opportunities to be developed, yet be connected to a more comprehensive interpretive theme and visitor experience.

Prioritization

Existing site conditions, use patterns, proximity to other points of interest, and benefit to visitor experience were considered when determining the desired level of on-site interpretation. Priorities were established as 1, 2, or 3.

Priority 1: These are high profile sites with a well-developed infrastructure in place. They serve as portals or key destinations along the HSH.

Priority 2: These sites receive a substantial amount of use and have some infrastructure in place to support the development of more in-depth interpretation.

Priority 3: These sites include replacing interpretive information that was more recently installed and creating new interpretive opportunities at less prominent sites or locations.

Priority 4 Trailheads: Numerous trailheads are located in the HSH area. These represent additional opportunities to tie recreation to the HSH and incorporate interpretive material into trailhead signs.



The priorities are organized as such, that if funding were received for interpretation along the HSH, implementing recommendations for a Priority 1 site would be desirable before Priorities 2, 3, or Priority 4 Trailheads.

The site numbers are in sequential order starting from the western end of WV 39 travelling to the junction of WV 150 and US 219.

Site Recommendations

Priority 1

These are high profile sites with well-developed infrastructure in place. These sites serve as either a portal for visitor orientation to the HSH or key destination along the way. These priority sites should also include audio tour linked to the website.

The most important places to help develop the identity of the HSH are at the portal sites: *Gauley RD Office Kiosk, the Cranberry Mountain Nature Center, and the US-219 Gateway*. Visitors need to know where they are going, what they are travelling on, and why it will be memorable to them and their companions (Table 2).

Focus should then be turned to the high profile and key sites along the HSH: *Falls of Hills Creek Scenic Area, Cranberry Glades Botanical Area, and the four scenic overlooks*. These sites are well-defined, offer amenities, and showcase a wide variety of scenic viewing opportunities. Already drawn to these areas for their spectacular beauty, interpretation needs to be updated to help visitors form a greater appreciation of the site, develop place attachment, and stir their curiosity about the development of the landscapes they are enjoying. For more detail regarding their existing condition information, see Table 1 Existing Interpretive Sites

Table 2. Priority 1 Sites

#	Site Name
1	Gateway Trailhead
2	Gauley Ranger District Office
8	Falls of Hills Creek Scenic Area
11	Cranberry Glades Botanical Area
13	Cranberry Mountain Nature Center
19	Williams River Valley Overlook
22	Big Spruce Overlook
34	Little Laurel Overlook
39	Red Lick Overlook
41	US-219 Gateway

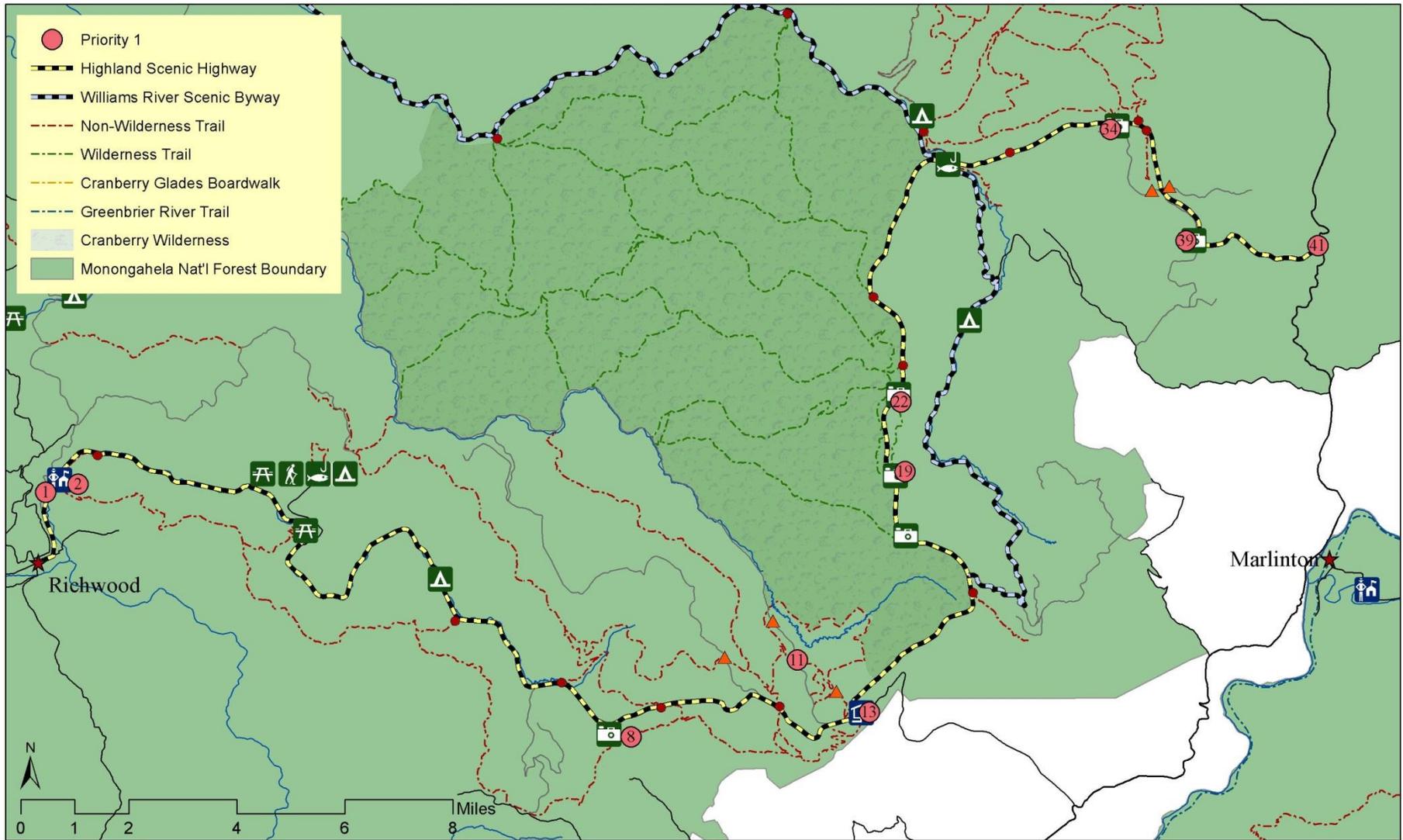


Figure 6. Geographic Location of Priority I Sites



Site 1: Gateway Trailhead

Topic: Recreation management is geared towards the safety and health/wellness of local residents/families that enjoy recreating close to home. A forest in recovery provides social and environmental benefits.

Themes: 2b Natural Resource Management, 2c Ecosystem Benefits, general orientation

Objective: As a result of this exhibit, visitors will

- Be oriented and will know basic trail and emergency information,
- Discover nearby recreational opportunities on the National Forest
- Understand how the forest has recovered from past industrial logging practices and provides for continued economic, as well as social and environmental, benefits today

Existing condition: Existing undeveloped trailhead and trail access.

Desired condition: Trailhead sign orients visitors. Trailhead information includes a brief trail description, area map, emergency contact information, and Gauley District contact information.

Interpretive method recommendations: A double-panel, vertical trailhead display

List of graphic needs: Area map, photos of then and now.

Notes: While this site is not yet well-developed, funding is secured for the desired improvements. Once developed this will be a high profile site due to its location.

Site 2: Gauley Ranger District Office

Topic: The Gauley Ranger Station is a portal for visitors to the HSH. Outdoor information is available to orient visitors to the HSH, seasonal information and opportunities regarding the National Forest, and nearby attractions.

Themes: All, general orientation

Objective: As a result of this exhibit, visitors will

- Be oriented with the HSH and attractions along the way
- Gain a greater understanding of National Forest regulations
- Inform visitors about local events and opportunities on the Forest and in nearby communities
- Appreciate the year-round opportunities on the National Forest

Existing condition: Extensive indoor interpretive displays. Existing outdoor three-panel kiosk is in need of replacement and is outdated.



Desired condition: No recommendations for indoor interpretation. The outdoor three panel kiosk is replaced with a tri-fold design and has updated orientation and interpretive information. The center panel should be developed to offer visitors an overview map of the HSH, attractions along the way, as well as general information/regulations (currently being developed). One panel should offer an introduction to the themes and subthemes that will tie their scenic drive together. One panel should be dedicated to information about local events/festivals, special notices, and seasonal changes across the Forest (winter recreation, fall colors, wildflowers, wildlife, and so on).

Interpretive method recommendations: Three signs needed for the three panel kiosk.

List of graphic needs: HSH map and nearby attractions, photos relevant to themes/subthemes, seasonal images/information.

Notes: Orientation signs should be consistent with CMNC and the 219 Gateway. Coordinate with Richwood Chamber of Commerce for local event information. These panels should be created for the dimensions of the tri-fold information board at the CMNC, as well as the US-219 Gateway.

Site 8: Falls of Hills Creek Scenic Area

Topic: A series of interpretive signs focus on geology, the unique vegetation that thrive near the falls, and the movement of surface and subsurface water. Hemlock wooly adelgid threatens the health of nearby eastern hemlock trees.

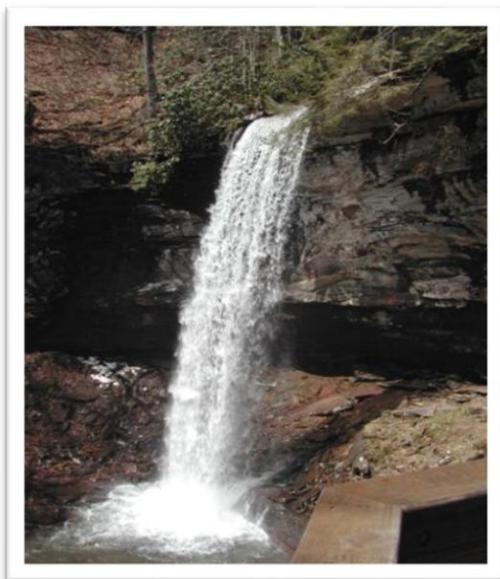


Figure 7. Falls of Hills Creek Scenic Area

Themes: 3a Ecosystem Health, 3b Water, 3c Geology

Objective: As a result of this exhibit, visitors will

- Learn how geologic forces created and shaped the Falls
- Gain an understanding of surface and subsurface water flow, and how the water from the Falls travels to the Greenbrier River
- Understand the importance of the eastern hemlock and the threat of the hemlock wooly adelgid
- Appreciate the unique vegetation that grows near the Falls

Existing condition: Some of the signs are outdated

Desired condition: Updated information is accurate



and signs meet media design guidelines.

Interpretive method recommendation: Interpretive trail, three panel kiosk, brochure, and audio tour

List of graphic needs: Some existing graphics can be used, some need to be replaced

Notes: Hemlock wooly adelgid sign replacement should be in partnership with USDA Forest Service Northeastern Area

Site 11: Cranberry Glades Botanical Area

Topic: Cranberry Glades Botanical Area and National Natural Landmark protect the largest area of bogs in West Virginia. Because of its unique conditions, some unusual plants grow in fens (commonly called bogs), including carnivorous or insect-eating plants.

Themes: 2a Influences, 2b Natural Resource Management, 3c Geology

Objective: As a result of this exhibit, visitors will

- Learn what a bog is and how it formed
- Gain an understanding of the hydrology and geology of the area
- Appreciate the unique vegetation that grows in the Cranberry Glades

Existing condition: Existing trailhead information board and interpretive trail signs are outdated and in poor condition.

Desired condition: Updated information is accurate and signs meet media and architectural guidelines.

Interpretive method recommendation: Interpretive trail, trailhead information board, brochure, and audio tour

List of graphic needs: Incorporate existing graphics with new as appropriate

Notes: As a National Natural Landmark, the associated logo should be incorporated on the entrance information board (Figure 11). Ensure consistency across media types. The trailhead information board should be replaced with a two-panel kiosk shown in Figure 23 of the HSH CMP. Individual interpretive sign at stops along the boardwalk should be replaced with small angled interpretive displays of similar dimensions.

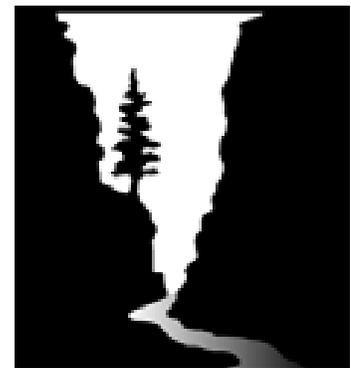


Figure 8. National Park Service's National Natural Landmark logo



Site 13: Cranberry Mountain Nature Center

Topic: This portal site welcomes people to the HSH. Information and opportunities along the HSH and the surrounding National Forest, general Forest regulations and information, nearby attractions, and local events are provided.

Themes: All, general orientation

Objective: As a result of this exhibit, visitors will

- Be oriented with the HSH and attractions along the way
- Gain a greater understanding of National Forest regulations
- Inform visitors about local events and opportunities on the Forest and in nearby communities
- Appreciate the year-round opportunities on the National Forest
- Discover the extent of trails that are in the vicinity, both within walking distance and nearby

Existing condition: Extensive indoor interpretive displays. Existing outdoor four-sided information board is in poor condition and outdated.

Desired condition: No recommendations for indoor interpretation at this time. A tri-fold design should be used to replace the existing information board. Orientation signs should be consistent with Gauley Ranger District Office and the 219 Gateway.

Interpretive method recommendation: Signs needed for the kiosk.

List of graphic needs: HSH map and nearby attractions, photos relevant to themes/subthemes, seasonal images/information

Notes: Coordinate with PCCVB for local event information. Kiosk panels should be created for the dimensions of information board at the Gauley Ranger District Office, as well as the US-219 Gateway. Three panels will be dedicated to HSH, the other side of which will pertain to CMNC.

Site 19: Williams River Valley Overlook

Topic: Looking over the Williams River Valley is looking into the foundation of rivers.

Themes: 2c Ecosystem Benefits, 3b Water

Objective: As a result of this exhibit, visitors will

- Understand how forest management practices affect streams and rivers
- Gain a greater understanding of how fisheries and wildlife depend on forest management
- Be informed of the distances (bird's flight) to features/mountains in the viewshed



Figure 9. Williams River Valley Overlook

- Appreciate how forest management actions can influence what happens downstream, including providing recreation and water source for communities

Existing condition: Single interpretive panel sign and parking access for the Black Mountain Trail.

Desired condition: Single sign is updated and meets media and architectural guidelines.

Interpretive method recommendation: Single angled interpretive panoramic sign.

List of graphic needs: Incorporate existing graphics

Notes: Because this site is also an access point to the Black Mountain Trail (TR 412) that loops along the ridge to the Big Spruce Scenic Overlook, a separate interpretive display about differences in managing wilderness and non-wilderness areas will be included on-site. Refer to the Trailheads section for more detailed information.

Site 22: Big Spruce Overlook

Topic: History and restoration of the red spruce ecosystem and contrast between past and current resource management.

Themes: 1b Logging Era, 1c Post-logging, 2b Natural Resource Management

Objective: As a result of this exhibit, visitors will

- Understand how USDA Forest Service ownership and management has shaped the forest they see today
- Gain a greater understanding of the red spruce ecosystem and its historic distribution
- Learn about the wildlife whose habitat includes or relies on the red spruce ecosystem

Existing condition: Single angled interpretive panel sign.



Desired condition: Single sign is updated and meets media and architectural guidelines.

Interpretive method recommendation: Single angled interpretive panoramic sign.

List of graphic needs: Incorporate existing graphics

Notes:

Site 34: Little Laurel Overlook

Topic: The patchwork landscape provides diverse vegetation and wildlife habitat.

Themes: 2b Natural Resource Management

Objective: As a result of this exhibit, visitors will

- Have a greater understanding of the forest patterns they are viewing
- Learn about how forest diversity provides a variety of wildlife habitat

Existing condition: Single angled interpretive panel sign.

Desired condition: Single sign is updated and meets media and architectural guidelines.

Interpretive method recommendation: Single angled interpretive panoramic sign.

List of graphic needs: Incorporate existing graphics

Notes: A choropleth map developed in ArcGIS could depict this idea well. Refer visitors to the Tea Creek Meadow Trail for a closer look at two very different habitats and how they are linked.

Site 39: Red Lick Overlook

Topic: Natural influences on forest development.

Themes: 2a Influences, 2c Ecosystem Benefits

Objective: As a result of this exhibit, visitors will

- Learn about the viewshed, feature names and distances
- Understand how natural factors such as aspect, weather, elevation and geology influence forest development and species composition

Existing condition: No sign.

Desired condition: Single angled panoramic interpretive sign meets media and architectural guidelines.

Interpretive method recommendation: Single angled interpretive panoramic sign.



List of graphic needs: Panorama of viewshed

Notes: Consistent with other overlook signs.

Site 41: US-219 Gateway

Topic: Outdoor information orients visitors to the HSH, the surrounding National Forest, and nearby attractions.

Themes: All, general orientation

Objective: As a result of this exhibit, visitors will

- Be oriented with the HSH and attractions along the way
- Gain a greater understanding of National Forest regulations
- Inform visitors about local events and opportunities on the Forest and in nearby communities
- Appreciate the year-round opportunities on the National Forest
- Realize the extent of trails that are in the vicinity
- Winter visitors will be informed of the variety of snow-based recreation along the HSH

Existing condition: Existing kiosk is in good condition. Center panel and PCCVB panel need to be updated.

Desired condition: The center panel provides an overview map of the HSH, attractions along the way, as well as general information/regulations (currently being developed). PCCVB provides one panel of information about local events/festivals, lodging information, and nearby attractions. One panel provides seasonal information relating to the Forest (winter recreation, fall colors, wildflowers, wildlife, and so on), special notices, and Wilderness. Orientation signs should be consistent with Gauley Ranger District Office and the Cranberry Mountain Nature Center.

Interpretive method recommendation: Signs needed for the kiosk.

List of graphic needs: HSH map and nearby attractions, photos relevant to themes/subthemes, seasonal images/information

Notes: Coordinate with PCCVB for local event information. Kiosk panels should be created for the dimensions of the four-sided information board at the CMNC, as well as the Gauley Ranger District Office.