

Appalachian Gateway Communities Initiative
An Assessment and Recommendations Report
for
Natural and Cultural Heritage Tourism Development
in Haysi, Virginia



Funded by the



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**Appalachian Regional
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The Appalachian Regional Commission's mission is to be a strategic partner and advocate for sustainable community and economic development in Appalachia.

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is a regional economic development agency that represents a partnership of federal, state, and local government. Established by an act of Congress in 1965, ARC is composed of the governors of the 13 Appalachian states and a federal co-chair, who is appointed by the president. ARC funds projects that address the four goals identified in the Commission's strategic plan:

1. Increase job opportunities and per capita income in Appalachia to reach parity with the nation.
2. Strengthen the capacity of the people of Appalachia to compete in the global economy.
3. Develop and improve Appalachia's infrastructure to make the Region economically competitive.
4. Build the Appalachian Development Highway System to reduce Appalachia's isolation.

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The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. www.nea.gov.

Cover photos of downtown Haysi by Carolyn Brackett

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Introduction

In March 2007, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) announced a new program to promote asset-based economic development in Appalachia's gateway communities: *The Appalachian Gateway Initiative: Natural and Cultural Heritage Tourism Development*. Gateway communities are defined as towns that border national and state parks, wildlife refuges, forests, historic sites, wilderness areas and other public lands. The initiative's intent is to assist communities in enhancing natural, recreational, arts and historic assets in order to create sustainable tourism programs.

In the 2010 application period, an application requesting an assessment visit and recommendations report was submitted by the Town of Haysi, Virginia, located in Dickenson County in southwest Virginia. The application requested assistance to *"identify the assets of the town and surrounding area, determine how each asset complements the competencies of other organizations and develop a planning strategy that will effectively bring each stakeholder together in a comprehensive natural and cultural tourism effort. Receiving an assessment would allow the Town of Haysi to receive professional guidance on how to maximize current opportunities and leverage new partnerships in expanding the utilization of Breaks Interstate Park in promoting tourism for the town."*

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Heritage Tourism Program and The Conservation Fund were retained by the ARC and NEA to conduct the site visit and to prepare the assessment and recommendations report. Services were provided by Carolyn Brackett, Senior Program Associate, National Trust for Historic Preservation Heritage Tourism Program; Kendra Briechele, Senior Training Associate, Conservation Leadership Network, The Conservation Fund and Katie Allen, Conservation Leadership Network, The Conservation Fund.



A mural brightens downtown Haysi.
Photo by Carolyn Brackett

The assessment visit was conducted May 11-13, 2011. The itinerary was developed by the local planning team and included touring Haysi, Breaks Interstate Park and other cultural, historic, recreational and natural resources in the region as well as opportunities to talk with community stakeholders to gather information about cultural, historic and natural resources and to discuss ideas, challenges and opportunities for tourism development and promotion. The assessment team was also provided materials to familiarize them with the area's resources as well as current studies and plans. (The itinerary and a list of background materials provided to the assessment team are included in the Appendix of this report.)

We would like to thank the planning committee and all stakeholders who assisted with this assessment to plan the site visit and to provide tours, information and insights about the area:

Larry D. Yates - Mayor of Haysi

Betty J. Yates

Rita Surratt - Chamber President/CEO and Tourism Director, Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce

Matthew O'Quinn – Superintendent, Breaks Interstate Park

Jenny O'Quinn – Marketing Director, Breaks Interstate Park

Austin Bradley - Director of Visitor Services, Breaks Interstate Park

Carl Mullins – Park Historian, Breaks Interstate Park

Jim Baldwin – Executive Director, Cumberland Plateau Planning District

Billy Counts – Haysi Partners

Joy Rumley – Community Representative, Project Management Office, Virginia Dept. of Housing and Community Development

Michael Wampler – Interim Executive Director, Southwest Regional Recreation Authority of Virginia, Spearhead Trails

Charlotte Mullins – Economic Development Director, Dickenson County Industrial Development Authority

Todd Christiansen – Executive Director, Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission, Heartwood Artisan Gateway

Sue Scanlon – Round the Mountain Artisan Trail; Haysi Floral

Sheila Bailey – Chair, Haysi Partners

Pam and Rich Morris - Ralph Stanley Museum

Denise Ambrose – Associate Director, Project Management Office, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development

Harold "Chip" Miller – Park Manager, US Army Corps of Engineers – Flannagan Dam and Reservoir

Marty Davis – US Army Corps of Engineers – Flannagan Dam and Reservoir

Bernetta Marchand – AmeriCorps Vista, Friends of Russell Fork

Gene Counts – Friends of Russell Fork

Eddie Hannah – Director, Booth Center, Southwest Virginia Community College

Gateway Assessment Goal

Conference calls were held in January, February, March and April with the local planning committee, Carolyn Brackett, Kendra Briechele and Katie Allen to discuss goals and make plans for the assessment visit. Goals set for the assessment visit and recommendations report included providing:

- Data (information) to help with potential funding
- Recommendations on how to link more strongly with Breaks Interstate Park
- Recommendations on linking to other initiatives (such as the Downtown Master Plan, Artisan Center, trail initiatives)
- Ideas on how to maximize the economic “bang for the buck”
- Recommendations on marketing to bring in more tourists



Stateline Overlook provides a beautiful view at Breaks Interstate Park.
Photo by Carolyn Brackett

Summary of Findings

Haysi, Virginia is a small town with big plans as its local government leaders and residents implement a vision to transform the town as a gateway to Breaks Interstate Park and nearby attractions and to become a destination for travelers who will enjoy Haysi’s culture, heritage, scenic beauty and outdoor recreation.

Located in the mountains of Southwest Virginia in Dickenson County, Haysi has a population of about 300. As noted in the county’s Gateway Communities Initiative application for a tourism assessment, “Of Virginia’s 23 counties that are part of the Appalachian Regional Commission, only Dickenson County was designated as ‘distressed’ in the ARC’s *Four Year Development Plan for the Appalachian Region of Virginia*.” Southwest Virginia has struggled economically in recent years as its traditional economic base, particularly the coal industry, has declined. Haysi’s assessment application describes the effect this has had on Haysi – almost 11% of residents live below the poverty line, and the median household income is less than half of the state’s average (1999 U.S. Census).

These challenges have been met with relentless determination. As stated in the assessment application “Haysi (residents and leadership) is working tirelessly to revitalize their town.” Developing sustainable tourism that capitalizes on Haysi’s authentic culture and heritage, its beautiful mountain setting and its proximity to Breaks Interstate Park is an important part of Haysi’s revitalization strategy.

Haysi has the opportunity to be a true gateway to Breaks Interstate Park and other attractions—not just a town to pass through but a destination that offers visitors a welcome, a jumping-off point to enjoy adventures and attractions and an experience visitors will remember and seek out again.

The ARC-NEA Gateway Communities Initiative assessment came at a time when there are many plans in various stages of development and implementation. Haysi and the surrounding region have put impressive thought and effort into improving the region’s economic strength through sustainable tourism and revitalization. The assessment team was struck by the wealth of plans outlining opportunities for the arts, musical traditions, coal heritage, downtown revitalization and outdoor recreation. This was surpassed only by the energy and commitment of people involved in the initiatives. Not only was the local planning committee incredibly welcoming but also very savvy and active in numerous efforts to make Haysi and Dickenson County an even more beautiful and welcoming place for residents and visitors.



Haysi’s development plans include building strong partnerships with Breaks Interstate Park and nearby attractions like the Ralph Stanley Museum in Clintwood.

Photos by Kendra Briechele and Carolyn Brackett

Haysi has wisely reached out to be a partner in successful sustainable tourism endeavors including The Crooked Road, Round the Mountain Artisan Network, Rivers to Ridges Artisan Trail and the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail. Haysi is also involved in new plans including the development of Spearhead Trails and maximizing the opportunity from the TransAmerica Bicycle Trail. Additionally, Haysi offers nearby wildlife and bird watching, hiking, biking (mountain and road riding), horseback riding, kayaking and other recreational pursuits.

Most important is the *Haysi Downtown Revitalization Master Plan*, funded by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and completed by Hill Studio, PC in February 2010. The process for developing the plan included engaging residents to determine a vision for Haysi, reviewing economic data, preparing schematics and plans for downtown streetscaping and renovation of buildings and developing an economic restructuring plan. In June 2010, Haysi was awarded a Community Improvement Grant and plans called for beginning work on downtown streetscaping in the summer of 2011.

The *Haysi Downtown Revitalization Master Plan* includes a statement by Haysi residents of their vision for the community as one that:

...uses its assets of natural beauty, cultural heritage and history to build a vibrant and sustainable economy.

....serves the needs of outdoor enthusiasts as a staging ground for recreational adventures, as a place to refuel, to rest and spend time consuming the cultural and heritage offerings of the community.

...is a place for local residents to showcase the area's arts and crafts heritage, using entrepreneurial skill to make a living from their craft.

...is a place for residents and visitors to celebrate at various special events throughout the year.

The Gateway assessment application notes the intent to incorporate recommendations from this report into the downtown revitalization project. As a result, this recommendations report references the revitalization master plan in several areas as well as looking at ways to develop and enhance Haysi as a gateway to Breaks Interstate Park and to the surrounding region to generate economic impact, improve quality of life for residents and preserve the unique culture, heritage and natural resources of Haysi.

Sustainable Tourism Includes Many Types of Tourism

Tourism is the world's largest industry. According to the World Tourism Organization, tourism accounts for 10 percent of the worldwide gross domestic product. More people earn wages from tourism than any other employment sector. (Source: United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2006.)

Tourism is very important to Virginia's economy. As one of Virginia's biggest industries, tourism supports 210,000 jobs and annually provides \$1.28 billion in state and local taxes. In 2008, 60 million visitors came to Virginia, generating \$19.2 billion in economic impact. Investment for tourism is immediate and proven. For every \$1 spent on tourism the Commonwealth receives \$5 in additional state and local tax revenue. Every \$90,000 in tourism spending creates one new job. Virginia currently ranks 8th in domestic visitation spending and 14th in international visitation. (Source: Governor's Commission on Economic Development and Job Creation, *Tourism Subgroup Interim Report*, 2011, [Virginia Tourism Report](#))

Tourism—an ever-changing industry—spans many experiences. The fastest-growing segments focus on experiencing unique and authentic places and cultures while being sensitive to maintain or enhance the qualities that originally attracted visitors and contribute to a good quality of life for residents. Called *sustainable tourism*, such tourism encompasses many categories including cultural heritage, nature-based, community-based, outdoor recreation, agritourism and even “voluntourism” or vacation-based philanthropy. In contrast to mass-market tourism, such as cruise ships and theme parks, sustainable tourism stresses quality over quantity, favors unique experiences based on a place's resources (such as distinctive destinations, unspoiled landscapes and historic sites), and relies on locally-owned businesses that circulate money in the local economy.

According to the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC), five of the 15 localities with the greatest increase in tourism expenditures from 2005 to 2006 were in Southwest Virginia along The Crooked Road, Virginia's Heritage Music Trail. Tazewell, Smyth, Russell, Dickenson counties and the City of Norton posted an 8.9 percent increase in tourism, compared to the state's 7.2 percent increase. The VTC attributes the change to a new "creative economy" that is replacing the manufacturing economy in Southwest Virginia, capitalizing on synergies between music, crafts, agriculture, the arts and downtown revitalization. (Heartwood Center press release: “Governor to address attendees at Creative Economies conference,” May 6, 2008. [Heartwood press announcement](#)).

These synergies are the core of opportunities for sustainable tourism. In a February 2011 interview, Todd Christensen, executive director of the Southwest Virginia Cultural Commission, noted the economic impact of tourism in southwestern Virginia. The creation of The Crooked Road, which Christensen helped develop, boosted regional revenues by 60 percent and contributed to the start of 150 new businesses. A \$1 million marketing campaign is underway to brand Southwest Virginia as a tourist destination. The region, Christensen said, is already ranked third as a tourist destination in Virginia, behind Virginia Beach and Williamsburg. (Source: Amanda Evans. “Creative Economy Spurred,” *SWVA Today*, February 1, 2011. [Economy Spurred](#))

Southwest Virginia, including Haysi and surrounding attractions within Dickenson County, is poised to capitalize on the interest in sustainable tourism. In the words of former Virginia governor Tim Kaine: "As more travelers seek authentic, enriching destinations that are unique and offer experiences you can't find anywhere else they are looking toward Southwest Virginia."

Ecotourism

- The 35 Virginia state parks enjoyed record attendance in 2010 topping 8 million for the first time with 8,065,558 visitors, a 7% increase over 2009. 2010 also marked the first time Virginia state parks hosted more than one million overnight guests with 1,022,698 people staying in cabins and campsites. In 2011, the state park system celebrated its 75th anniversary.
[State Parks attendance](#)
- Increases in state park attendance directly impact local economies across the Commonwealth. Based on studies of past park users and their spending patterns, 2010 saw an increase in the economic impact of Virginia's state parks to \$189 million, up from \$175 million in 2009.
[Attendance](#)
- According to the World Tourism Organization, ecotourism is the fastest growing segment of the tourism market, with a 5 percent annual growth rate.
- Nationwide, in 2007, visitors spent \$11.79 billion in local regions surrounding national parks, supporting 244,400 jobs in gateway regions. National parks received 275.6 million visits in 2007, while the Forest Service had 204 million visitors.
- There is a continued upswing in heritage and ecotourism among all demographic groups. (James H. Gramann, *Trends In Demographics and Information Technology Affecting Visitor Center Use: Focus Group Report*, National Park Service, 2003. [Trends Report](#))

Agritourism

- There are 476 farms in Virginia participating in agritourism providing services valued at \$12,909,000 in 2007, a \$10 million+ increase since 2002.
- The Dickenson County Virginia Cooperative Extension ([Dickenson VA Cooperative Extension](#)) and the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center ([Agricultural Marketing Resource Center](#)) provide resources for information about building agritourism in the county.
- In addition to serving as an additional source of income, agritourism can benefit farmers and ranchers by 1) creating name recognition for agricultural products, 2) educating consumers about rural heritage and farming and ranching traditions, 3) generating financial incentives for the protection and enhancement of natural resources and natural amenities, and 4) generating economic development opportunities in neighboring communities by bringing tourists into town who may shop, eat, and lodge locally. (Agritourism Online Resources, 2007, [Agritourism Online Resources](#))
- According to the 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 23,350 farms indicated they provided agritourism and recreation services valued at \$566 million. Of the total farms, 3,637 farms indicated gross farm receipts of \$25,000 or more. [Ag Census Report](#)
- Examples of agritourism include equine agritourism, fee and lease pond fishing, game bird and hunting leases, farm tours and hands-on chores, rural weddings and wine tours. (Source: Agricultural Marketing Resource Center. Agritourism Profile.)

Outdoor Recreation

- The *2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan* ranks the state's most popular outdoor recreational activities according to percentage of households participating. The top ten activities include: 1) walking for pleasure (72%); visiting historic sites (56%); driving for pleasure (55%); swimming (44%); visiting natural areas/parks (44%); sunbathing on beach (36%); fishing (26%); picnicking (26%); using a playground (25%); and boating (24%).
- The *2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan* found that trails and greenways rank alongside water access as equally important to Virginia citizens' desire for outdoor recreation. Some 49 percent of those surveyed indicated a high need for walking and hiking facilities. Forty percent of Virginians felt more bicycling trails were needed.

- According to the Outdoor Foundation's *2010 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report*, 137.8 million Americans participated in outdoor recreation in 2009 totaling 48.9 percent of Americans age six or older. Of this audience, the majority agree that preserving undeveloped land for outdoor recreation is important. A large percentage of outdoor participants also believe that developing local parks and hiking and walking trails is important and that there should be more outdoor education and activities during the school day.



- Nationally, 45 percent of outdoor participants are from households with incomes of \$75,000 or greater. With these higher incomes, outdoor participants are able to spend more, stay longer and make more frequent trips to enjoy recreational activities.

Hiking is one of many popular outdoor recreation activities. Daniel Boone National Forest, McCreary County, Kentucky
Photo by Carolyn Brackett

- Nationwide, participation in team sports and higher cost destination activities was generally down in 2009, while participation in human-powered outdoor activities, in many cases, increased significantly. Adventure racing, bow hunting, triathlon and whitewater kayaking all showed double-digit increases in participation. In response to a need for more cost-effective vacations, increasing numbers of Americans took to the outdoors for hiking, trail running and camping vacations. Particularly of interest to Haysi, kayaking increased by 10.2 percent, and road/hard trail biking increased by 5.3 percent.

Cultural Heritage Travel

While the economic recession of recent years has had a tremendous impact on the travel industry, a major study shows that heritage travel continues to be a strong industry segment. *The Cultural and Heritage Traveler, 2009 Edition* found that 78 percent of all U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural and/or heritage activities while traveling. This translates to 118.3 million adults each year. According to the study, cultural heritage travelers say they want:

- **Travel experiences where the destination, its buildings and surroundings have retained their character.**
- **Travel to be “educational” – they make an effort to explore and learn about local arts, culture, environment and history.**

Cultural heritage travelers spend an average of \$994 per trip compared to \$611 for other leisure travelers, making this a highly desirable travel industry segment. Cultural heritage travelers take an average of five trips per year vs. less than four trips for other travelers.

CULTURAL AND HERITAGE ACTIVITIES	% of Travelers Engaged
Attend a fair or festival	68%
Visit historic buildings	67%
Visit historic sites	66%
Visit Native American sites	64%
Attend a re-enactment	64%
Visit history museums	61%
Visit living history museums	60%
Take a tour of local history	59%
Visit a natural history museum	59%
Visit an art museum or gallery	54%
Shop for local arts and crafts	51%
Take an architecture tour	49%
Experienced local or regional cuisine	40%
Visit state/national parks	41%
Explore small towns	40%
Take a self-guided walking tour	32%
Visit farms and ranches	32%
Explore an urban neighborhood	30%
Visit a farmers’ market	27%
Take a scenic drive	24%

Source: *The Cultural and Heritage Traveler, 2009 Edition*, conducted by Mandala Research, LLC for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the U.S. Cultural and Heritage Tourism Marketing Council, and the U.S. Department of Commerce

Sustainable Ecotourism Principles

According to ecotourism development expert Ed McMahon (founder of Scenic America, past vice president of The Conservation Fund and currently Senior Resident Fellow for Sustainable Development at the Urban Land Institute), sustainable tourism focuses on authentic experiences that are unique and specialized to the place's resources (its culture, heritage and natural resources). Sustainable tourism is a strong component of gateway communities. According to *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities* by Jim Howe, Ed McMahon and Luther Propst (The Conservation Fund, 1997), successful gateway communities:

- Develop a widely shared vision
- Create an inventory of local resources
- Build on local assets
- Use education, voluntary initiatives and incentives as well as regulations
- Meet the needs of both landowners and communities
- Partner with public land managers
- Recognize the role of nongovernmental organizations
- Provide opportunities for leaders to step forward
- Pay attention to aesthetics

Additionally, the *Rural Ecotourism Assessment Project* by Gail Y.B. Lash and Alison Austin lists three components of community-based tourism:

- Understand and meet the needs of the community
- Realistically deliver a long-term quality tourism product
- Make specific efforts to connect these products to international and local markets

(Source: Gail Y. B. Lash and Alison D. Austin. *Rural Ecotourism Assessment Program (REAP): A Guide to Community Assessment of Ecotourism as a Tool for Sustainable Development*, EplerWood International, p. 8. October 2003. [Guide to Community Assessment of Ecotourism](#))

Sustainable tourism is particularly attractive for communities interested in maintaining or enhancing their community's character and sense of place. In addition to economic development and job creation, sustainable tourism increases the area's attractiveness to outside industries and people seeking to relocate to locales rich in natural amenities, which results in more civic pride, and offers residents more shops, activities and entertainment offerings the local market alone might not be able to



Heritage sites like the Ralph Stanley Museum in Clintwood help preserve their community's history, offer a place for resident involvement and generate local impact economic by attracting visitors.

Five Principles of Successful and Sustainable Cultural Heritage Tourism

Five Principles

Through its work with communities across the country, the National Trust for Historic Preservation Heritage Tourism Program has developed five principles to help guide successful and sustainable cultural heritage tourism development:

Principle One: Collaborate

By its very nature, cultural heritage tourism requires effective partnerships. Much more can be accomplished by working together than by working alone.

Principle Two: Find the Fit between the Community and Tourism

Cultural heritage tourism should make a community a better place to live as well as a better place to visit. Respect carrying capacity so everyone benefits.

Principle Three: Make Sites and Programs Come Alive

Look for ways to make visitor experiences exciting, engaging and interactive.

Principle Four: Focus on Quality and Authenticity

Today's cultural heritage traveler is more sophisticated and will expect a high level of quality and an authentic experience.

Principle Five: Preserve and Protect Resources

Many of your community's cultural, historic and natural resources are irreplaceable. Take good care of them, if they are lost you can never get them back.



Showcasing regional arts and cultural traditions at Heartwood in Abingdon and demonstrations by Park Historian Carl Mullins at Breaks Interstate Park are two ways Southwest Virginia is preserving and sharing its rich history with visitors.

Photos by Carolyn Brackett

Additional Key Travel Trends

A January 2011 survey found expectations for travel on the rise with 31.6% expecting to take more leisure trips, up from 27.6% in July 2010. *The State of the American Traveler*, a quarterly survey produced by Destination Analysts, Inc. ([Destination Analysts](#)) finds among travelers who cut back on travel in the previous 12 months, “personal financial reasons” is the top reason – 54.6%. Other reasons include: gas was too expensive (39.3%), airfare was too expensive (34.9%), too busy at work (24.1%) and not enough vacation time (20.5%). The January 2011 study shows travelers are not giving up on travel but are adopting strategies to make it more affordable:

Travel Plans	Percentage
Look for travel discounts or bargains	59.6%
Visit generally less expensive destinations	27%
Reduce the number of leisure trips	22.3%
Reduce total days spent on leisure trips	19.1%
Take at least one staycation	17.5%
Shorten distance of trips or reduce side trips	17.2%
Select less expensive modes of transportation	13.8%
Cancel a trip that is already planned	3%

Staycations

Traveling close to home may not really be a new phenomenon, but with an economic recession in full swing by late 2008, the buzzword for travel quickly became “staycation.” Matt Wixon, author of *The Great American Staycation*, defines a staycation as “a vacation in which the vacationer stays at home or near home while creating the environment of a traditional vacation.” Near home usually refers to destinations or activities within a 100-mile range. Rising gas prices, overall economic concerns and lack of time (41% of Americans say they experience “time poverty” according to the YPartnership 2008 *Travel Monitor* and Expedia survey) are all frequently cited reasons for not traveling. The good news is studies show people still want to travel and are finding ways to compensate: 17.5% say they will take at least one staycation a year. (Source: Destination Analysts, *State of the American Traveler Survey*, January 2011.)

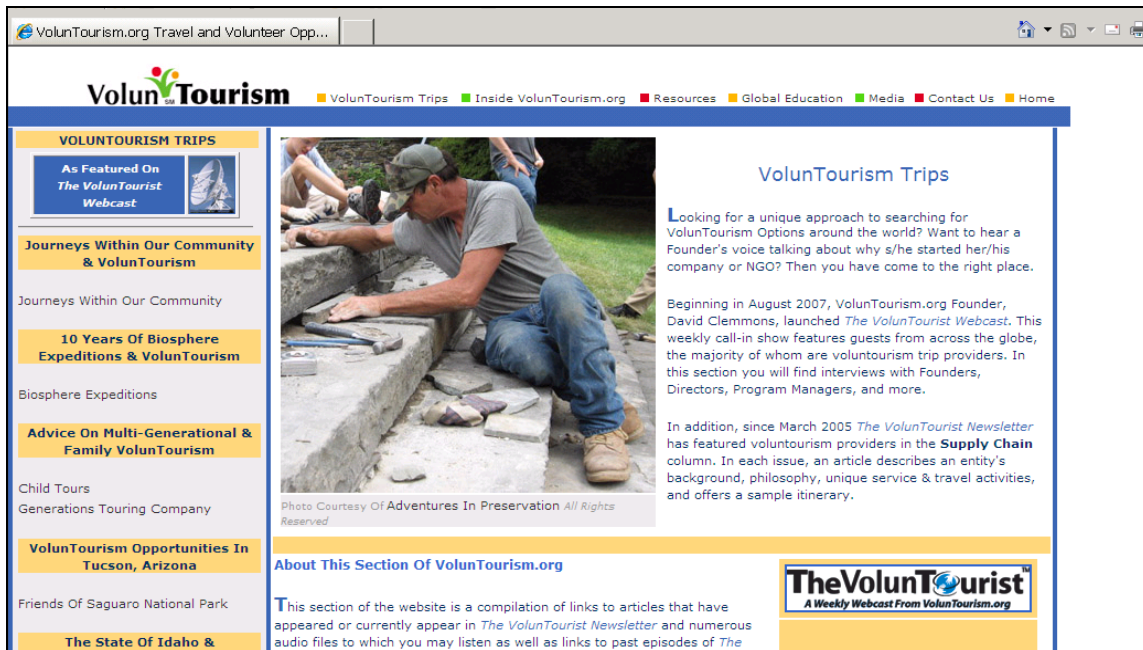
Spotting this trend, tourism bureaus across the country are promoting staycations in their communities. Campaigns often use themes such as “Be a Tourist in Your Own Hometown” and offer special events, tours or activities for residents in the community or state.

A January 2011 study showed that 65.4% of travelers listed “visiting friends and relatives” as their primary reason for travel. (Source: Destination Analysts, *State of the American Traveler Survey*, January 2011) Educating residents about their hometowns through a staycation can transform them into ambassadors when they host guests or make travel recommendations to friends and family.



Volunteer Vacations

According to Julie Leones, tourism researcher, Arizona Cooperative Extension, University of Arizona, within the tourism industry, more travelers are also giving back to destinations they visit by donating time, money, talent and their repeat business to protect and positively impact the cultures and environments they visit. More people are participating in voluntourism, a form of travel philanthropy in which travelers visit a destination and take part in projects within the local community. Projects are commonly nature-based, people-based or involve such activities as restoration or construction of buildings, removal of invasive species and planting trees.



The screenshot shows the VolunTourism.org website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: VolunTourism Trips, Inside VolunTourism.org, Resources, Global Education, Media, Contact Us, and Home. The main content area is titled 'VOLUNTOURISM TRIPS' and features a sidebar with categories like 'As Featured On The VolunTourist Webcast', 'Journeys Within Our Community & VolunTourism', '10 Years Of Biosphere Expeditions & VolunTourism', 'Advice On Multi-Generational & Family VolunTourism', 'VolunTourism Opportunities In Tucson, Arizona', and 'The State Of Idaho &'. The main content area has a photo of a man working on a stone wall, with text describing 'VolunTourism Trips' and mentioning 'The VolunTourist' newsletter.

Websites like www.voluntourism.org help travelers find vacation and volunteer opportunities.

Green Tourism

In addition to giving back, travelers are increasingly interested in *green* tourism, lessening their environmental impact through lodging choices, using transit or bicycles or offsetting their carbon emissions. (Sources: Laura Bly, "Top Travel Trends for 2010", *USA Today*, January 8, 2010; Brian Mullis, "Trends in Sustainable Travel and Tourism," *Green Money Journal*, Spring 2010, [Sustainable Tourism Article](#); Rossitza Ohridska-Olson, *Cultural Realms* blog, [Cultural Realms](#) and *Trend Tracker* newsletter: Tourism Industry, [Slide Share](#) ; Lisa Wolfe, *Heritage Traveler* blog, [Hot Travel Trends](#))

Baby Boomer Travel

With 78 million baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) entering retirement in the coming years, this population segment is very important to the travel industry. A 2007 study by the AARP found that half of all baby boomers state that the desire to travel and explore new destinations is one of their "life goals." The study found that baby boomers make at least two trips each year.

Priority Recommendations

Following are summaries of priority recommendations that are discussed in detail in this report:

1. **Position Haysi as Trail Central for the Area.** The assessment team concurs with the recommendations of the *Downtown Revitalization Master Plan* and the town’s articulated vision to “serve the needs of outdoor enthusiasts as a staging ground for their recreational adventures, as well as a place to refuel, to rest and spend time consuming the cultural and heritage offerings of the community.” Haysi should provide a visitor information and interpretive center to serve as a stepping-off point and way station for accessing the area’s recreational and heritage trails and learning about Haysi’s culture and history. Haysi should be a resource for learning about nearby trails, as well as securing gear and supplies, enjoying a meal, having repairs made and providing overnight accommodations for trail users.
2. **Think Regionally, Act Locally: Focus on Haysi but consider how Haysi relates to Dickenson and surrounding counties and other partners.** Maximum impact is achievable by this two-pronged approach. Haysi should focus on improving its role as a gateway to Breaks Interstate Park. At the same time, Haysi can capitalize on its connections to other regional tourism and economic development opportunities and evaluate possibilities for working together. As tourism researcher Julie Leones notes, “To convince a visitor to make an extended trip to an area, there have to be enough activities or places to visit. In rural communities there may not be enough to do in a single community to keep a visitor in the area for more than a few hours. If a group of communities work together and promote their whole region, they may be much more successful in both attracting visitors and convincing them to stay more than just for a day.”

Haysi has the benefit of proximity to numerous attractions. The Crooked Road Heritage Music Trail crosses 10 counties, and Breaks Interstate Park spans three counties of Virginia and Kentucky. The Virginia Coal Heritage Trail, Rivers to Ridges Artisan Trail, Round the Mountain Artisan Network, Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority, 76 Bicycle Route and Great Eastern Trail all link to Haysi as well as many other communities. The Corridor Management Plan for the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail notes the potential for increasing visitation through joint marketing between Virginia’s Coal Heritage Trail, the Spearhead Trails Initiative and The Crooked Road Heritage Music Trail plus railroad heritage. This list hints at the opportunity to put Haysi on many maps through regional initiatives and partnerships.



Close-by examples of similar partnerships illustrate how to capitalize locally on these opportunities. Cumberland Gap National Historic Park provides a great example of a park that embraces communities in three states and three counties (Lee County, Virginia, Bell County, Kentucky and Claiborne County, Tennessee) and the cross-regional partnerships that generate shared revenues and coordinate planning, programming and promotion. Also, the nearby trail towns of Abingdon and Damascus (see box on Bike-Friendly Communities) have realized tremendous profits from welcoming hikers from the Appalachian Trail, cross-country cyclists from the 76 Bike Route and artisans from across the region.

Haysi should also nurture partnership possibilities with other regional agencies and organizations such as the U.S. Forest Service. Time did not allow a specific meeting during the assessment visit with the USFS or an assessment of the Jefferson National Forest lands in Dickenson County but given the wealth of hiking trails on Forest Service lands, Haysi should consider the connections. Likewise, the Spearhead Trail Initiative and Friends of Russell Fork are two groups working on nearby trail initiatives that can be partners in Haysi's efforts.

- 3. *Realize that Sustainable Tourism is Experiential Tourism.*** Sustainable tourism is distinguished from mass-market tourism by visitors' desire to experience the unique and authentic attributes of a place. Visitors' memories are created from the activities available, the roads and trails that lead travelers to your door, plus the food, music, interpretation, crafts, buildings and towns that are offered once they arrive. The various subsets of sustainable tourism often attract visitors who enjoy a variety of activities. The same visitor might be an adventure tourist one day, enjoying shooting the rapids, and a heritage tourist, exploring The Crooked Road, the next day; or one family member might pursue the Quilt Trail while another seeks out farm-fresh products. Recognition of the overlap of different experiences is important to define offerings, to package and market the area's attractions and to lead visitors from one experience to the next.
- 4. *Improve Roadways and Access.*** Chip Miller characterized Flannagan Dam and Reservoir as "off the beaten path but worth the trip." Winding roads are part of the appeal; however, road conditions and access limit visitors from experiencing the county. Road improvements, including maintenance and more secure shoulders, are needed to ease motorized and non-motorized access. Careful consideration should be given to improvements, ensuring safety and enhancing the journey for all users through context-sensitive solutions (CSS). CSS is a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves stakeholders in providing a transportation system that fits its setting. It is an approach that leads to preserving and enhancing scenic, aesthetic, historic, community and environmental resources while improving or maintaining safety, mobility and infrastructure conditions.

Case Study

Context-Sensitive Solutions: Paris Pike, Kentucky

The Context-Sensitive Solutions website ([Context Sensitive Solutions](#)) provides numerous case studies and tools. An example is the improvements along Paris Pike (US Route 27/68 between Lexington and Paris, Kentucky). Paris Pike became recognized for its safety and capacity problems. Although the overall accident rate was not greater than the average for all two-lane roads, the fatal accident rate was significantly higher due to relatively narrow lane widths, lack of adequate shoulders, inadequate clear zones, steep ditches and side slopes, insufficient passing sight distances, fixed objects along the roadside and various scenic distractions.

While Paris Pike was widened from two lanes to a four-lane highway (which is not suggested for Haysi), specific care was taken to engage stakeholders and address their desire to maintain rural character and aesthetics, protect historic and environmental features, and improve safety. The full case study is available at [Paris Pike Kentucky](#).



Turf shoulders, steel-reinforced timber guardrails and maintenance of existing trees make US Route 27/68 safer and more attractive for travelers.

Photo courtesy of Kentucky Transportation Cabinet

5. Pursue Product Development First, then Market the Product: The assessment team emphasizes the importance of first improving the product and then marketing it. For example, the recent recognition of Frank Newsome of Haysi, Virginia, a singer of Old Regular Baptist hymns, as a 2011 NEA Heritage Fellow, can draw more people to visit or to experience this unique spiritual singing style. Haysi should use this recognition as an opportunity to expose visitors with interpretation along The Crooked Road, at the visitor/interpretive center, using the stage at Breaks and honoring this unique art form and its history in Appalachia with opportunities to listen to Mr. Newsome's music (live and through recordings such as those offered by The Crooked Road Trail) and other practitioners of the singing style. This "product development first, marketing second" approach is emphasized also in the *Haysi Downtown Revitalization Master Plan*. Once product development is in place, Haysi can implement marketing and outreach strategies to effectively communicate, educate and promote the town.

6. Expand the Range of Promotion Beyond the Area. Most of the area’s attractions draw visitors from Dickenson and surrounding counties with some from Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia. Haysi and Dickenson can expand the market by promoting the region’s “off the beaten path but worth the trip” feeling. Part of marketing the region may be brochures and signs in nearby well-traveled corridors. (Chip Miller suggested signs on Route 19--Bluefield-Abingdon exit to market to broader area.) The Heartwood Center provides additional possibilities for marketing Haysi and the attractions of Dickenson County through the videos, visitor information and word-of-mouth.

As Haysi embarks on implementation, new technologies including social media outlets, web-based material and access to handheld devices (“Smartphones”) should be used. Trends in media and technology show increased access to the Internet, and many people are bringing that information with them as they travel. There is an opportunity to integrate these new technologies and communications into strategies to reach these “plugged-in” populations as they search for destinations. Jenny O’Quinn, marketing director at Breaks Interstate Park, has seen great results from her social media efforts. She would be a great resource as well as a partner for joint marketing as discussed in this report.

The *Haysi Downtown Revitalization Master Plan* also provides solid recommendations for tapping into regional marketing and tourism efforts and materials and coordinating with other partners that can guide and supplement Haysi’s promotion efforts.

7. Enhance Community Entrance Points. The routes - highways, roads, bike paths, hiking trails, waterways - into a community provide a first impression. *Better Models for Commercial Development* emphasizes, “The gateway into a community is like its front door. It provides the introduction to a community. It can either express a community’s pride and sense of place or it can give a community a poor public image.”

Gateways provide information by directing visitors to areas of interest and providing clues to the historical, cultural and economic foundation of a community. Visitors assess the landscape (Is it scenic or trash-strewn? Are there sprawling subdivisions or rolling hills?), vegetation (Are there trees or is it barren?), and the overall welcome (Is there a sign or not? Is it attractive or falling apart? Is it distinctive or standard?)

The entrance to Dickenson County is marked by wide brick signs welcoming visitors at the county line. However, the dark signs are difficult to read, and the introduction to the county is lessened by the background of construction equipment and weeds along the roadway. Haysi’s gateways are marked by white-on-green rectangular highway signs.



Colorful signs like this one in Unicoi, Tennessee welcome travelers to the community.

Photo by Kendra Briechele

8. **Consider opportunities for conservation.** According to the local planning team, 72 percent of the county's land base, including land in the viewshed of the Breaks Interstate Park, is owned by The Forestland Group (TFG) ([Forest Land Group](#)). TFG, the largest landowner in Dickenson County, is an independent timberland investment management organization (TIMO) which emphasizes naturally regenerating hardwood and some softwood forests. The company's land management is recognized as a Certified Resource Manager by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). TFG's general business practice is to build value and grade then, generally after 10 years or a similar set term, to sell and realize gains for investors. Most likely, even if the land changes hands, the current land use would continue. However, Haysi and the county should discuss future plans with TFG to be aware of possible changes and to better coordinate land use in the county. Breaks Park, the Corps and the county should evaluate Forestland's land holdings and determine if any property would be a priority for acquisition or other protection to maintain the beautiful mountain views that are a highlight of Breaks and the county.

Evaluation and Recommendations for Haysi

Located about eight miles from Breaks Interstate Park, Haysi is a gateway community for visitors traveling Highway 80 who come directly through town on their way to the park. Although the park draws 100,000 overnight and 250,000 day use visitors annually, Haysi is currently not reaping economical benefits from these visitors or other visitors who are coming to the region to enjoy recreation or cultural and heritage attractions. Community leaders see a great opportunity to develop and implement plans to position the town as a true gateway – introducing visitors to the region, enhancing the visitor experience with new activities to enjoy and providing visitor services in the downtown.

Evaluation

- Haysi's leaders and residents have seriously planned for the revitalization of their town and attained many resources (Virginia Community Block Grant - \$1 million for downtown revitalization, ARC-NEA Gateway Communities Initiative assessment).
- The town has been successful in attracting three new businesses since the start of 2011 (auto parts, gift shop, remodeling of old hardware store). The town presented the first small business loan from their revolving loan pool (up to \$350,000 in the pool) to the gift shop.
- The *Downtown Revitalization Plan* is a great resource that provides recommendations for the improvement of the town in many areas. The assessment team supports the implementation of this plan.
- Mayor Larry Yates is conscious of how downtown's business development can provide services for park visitors and coordinates with the Breaks Park superintendent on this issue.
- Mayor Yates attributes the high-speed Internet and telecommunications program (funded by the ARC) as a major reason businesses have located in Haysi (especially the insurance firm, computer store and banks). The Community Library will be a Wi-Fi hotspot that can benefit the community and visitors.

Challenges

- Physical infrastructure poses difficulties
 - Buildings need facade restoration.
 - There are many vacant buildings and lots throughout the downtown.
 - The extremely narrow, curving downtown main street seems to limit visitation. Any increase in traffic volume to downtown will likely create congestion and/or parking issues.
- Need for lodging
 - There are only three Bed & Breakfasts in the area.
 - Lodging is also an issue for the neighboring town of Clintwood. Tour groups are often directed to lodging at Breaks Interstate Park.
- Very few services for visitors in the downtown
 - The downtown has two restaurants and a gas station.
 - There are no recreation outfitters, tour guides, visitor information centers, etc. in the downtown area.
- Most of Haysi's initiatives are funded by non-profit, national or state programs. As budgets are cut, these resources might be decreased.

Defining the Partnership Opportunity with Breaks Interstate Park

One of the assessment goal statements is to find “ways to link more strongly to Breaks Interstate Park.” A good place to start to consider ways to achieve this goal is to examine visitor information for Breaks Interstate Park. The recently completed *Breaks Interstate Park: Marketing Plan 2011-2015* is an outstanding, in-depth explanation of park visitor demographics provided in the context of the park’s product and national trends in leisure travel and outdoor recreation. Target audiences are identified with strategies for attracting these markets.



Understanding who is coming, how they are choosing the park as a destination and what activities they enjoy while at the park will give insights to Haysi’s leaders on how to develop the town to complement the park’s offerings and to further enhance the visitor experience outside of the park. The following charts provide information visitor demographics and offerings at the park.

2010 Visitation to Breaks Interstate Park			
Length of Stay	Top Origin of Visitors	Secondary Origin of Visitors	Total
Overnight	Eastern KY (to Lexington), Virginia, Ohio	Michigan, Florida, Indiana	100,000
Day Use	Eastern KY, Southwest Virginia region (Pike County, KY, Buchanan County, VA, Dickenson County, VA)		229,502
			329,502



Park historian Carl Mullins shares stories about the region’s agricultural history with visitors to Breaks Interstate Park. The park is a key partner for Haysi’s tourism development plans.

On the left, photo by Carolyn Brackett

On the right, photo by Kendra Briechele

Breaks Interstate Park – Visitor Experience	
Accommodations	
	Lodge (82 rooms)
	Five luxury cabins, four cottages
	138-site campground – varying site accommodations
Visitor Services	
	Full service restaurant; picnic shelters
	Conference center
	Campground store; gift shop
	Visitor Center with museum
	Amphitheater
	Free Wi-Fi
	Restrooms (in the park)
Activities	
	Boating (pedal boat, canoe, etc.)
	Horseback riding
	Golf
	Visitor Center - museum, interpretive programs
	Swimming pool; playgrounds
	Whitewater rafting
	Hiking/biking trails; geocaching; guided hikes
	Picnicking
Park Events	
	Seasonal Themed – Valentine’s Retreat, Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween Weekends, Haunted House
	Camper Appreciation Week
	Farmers Market (Tuesdays – June and July)
	Motorcycle Event
	Teacher Appreciation Week
	Molasses Stir-Off
	Appalachian Heritage Festival
Event Venue (hosted by other groups – partial list)	
	Gospel Events – Memorial Day, Father’s Day, Labor Day
	5-K Run; car show; Pike Extension Crafting Event

The marketing plan’s SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) notes several current conditions that create opportunities for Haysi. A key “strength” of the park is having a large number of loyal visitors – offering a base of return visitors who may be interested in exploring the surrounding region, including Haysi, and finding new things to see and do. The plan notes two “weaknesses” that could be addressed by Haysi – “poor infrastructure leading to the park” and “lack of interpretive programming” (although the plan also notes the intention to broaden the park’s programming in 2011). Two identified “opportunities” confirm the prospect of building a strong link between Haysi and the park: “Partnerships with local groups to provide additional park-related programming geared toward target markets,” and “Promote local festivals and events to boost park lodging.”

The visitors’ center at Breaks Interstate Park offers visitors an orientation to the park and surrounding region. From the left, Kendra Briechele, The Conservation Fund; Matthew O’Quinn, park superintendent; Carl Mullins, park historian; Katie Allen, The Conservation Fund.
Photo by Carolyn Brackett



The Opportunity: Making Haysi’s Downtown a Visitor Destination

As part of the economic restructuring plan included in the downtown revitalization plan, a zip code survey of customers to downtown businesses was conducted in July 2009. The survey found that only 4% of customers could be considered visitors. A visitor was defined as a customer coming from outside the region of Dickenson, Buchanan, Russell, Pike and Wise counties. The survey found these visitors primarily dined in downtown restaurants with a few shopping in general merchandise and specialty shops.

As noted previously, Breaks Interstate Park draws more than 300,000 visitors annually. Since traveling through Haysi is the primary route to reach the park, it is clear that most park visitors are not including Haysi as part of their travel experience.

Positioning Haysi as the gateway to Breaks Interstate Park and other attractions in the surrounding region and as a “don’t miss” destination for visitors to the region will require developing the downtown to serve two roles with each reinforcing the other to create an outstanding visitor experience and to provide needed visitor services. This section explores the purpose of these roles, gives recommended action steps and provides examples of success stories from other communities. This section also references specific plans in the *Downtown Revitalization Master Plan* which connect to creating a visitor destination.



Downtown Haysi has a Veterans’ Memorial Park, a picnic shelter and a gazebo for special events. Plans call for revitalizing the downtown with new streetscaping and recruitment of businesses that will appeal to residents and visitors.

Photos by Carolyn Brackett

Role #1 – Position Downtown Haysi as a Cultural Heritage Attraction and a Setting for Activities

Downtowns of all sizes and in locations across the country have become vibrant tourism destinations which draw travelers to enjoy an authentic visitor experience, learn the community’s story (past and present), enjoy local cultural programs and events and to shop and dine – making downtowns an important economic driver for the communities.

In the mid 1970s, concerned about the economic decline in downtowns across the country – and the subsequent deterioration or loss of many communities’ historic building infrastructure – the National Trust for Historic Preservation launched the Main Street Project. This pilot program was intended to study the reasons for the decline of downtowns and to develop a comprehensive revitalization strategy to save these historic town centers. In the past 3½ decades, the National Trust Main Street Center has worked with more than 1,600 communities to revitalize their downtowns.

The intertwined approach seeks to restore historic buildings and find new, economically viable uses for these structures. By the mid-1980s, as many communities successfully brought their downtowns back to life, another – perhaps unforeseen – outcome began to be observed: visitors were finding their way to these charming, inviting downtowns. As many downtown advocates discovered, downtowns can be a destination if they offer an experience that enhances a visitor’s travels.

An important distinction must be made between making a downtown a *sustainable tourism destination* and what is often referred to as a *tourist town*. A *sustainable tourism destination* offers a vibrant downtown that is a living part of the community including places where residents can live, work, shop and dine and that reflects residents’ pride in preserving their community’s historic resources and cultural heritage. These attributes will attract visitors to experience a place that is authentic. Conversely, a *tourist town* is developed for tourists’ entertainment without regard to the community’s character and heritage. It is often a place that attracts tourists to shop but is not considered an integral part of the community by residents.

A sustainable tourism destination offers a vibrant downtown that is a living part of the community including places where residents can live, work, shop and dine and that reflects residents’ pride in preserving their community’s historic resources and cultural heritage. These attributes will attract visitors to experience a place that is authentic.

A *sustainable tourism destination*, in addition to being a place that appeals to both residents and visitors, is one that can welcome and orient visitors and share the stories of the community and surrounding region in the setting of a downtown that has been preserved and revitalized. This should be the goal for Haysi.

Recommendations

1. **Enhance entrances into town** – Travelers arriving in Haysi find themselves deposited into the downtown with no sense of having arrived at a destination. Sustainable tourism expert Ed McMahon notes in *Better Models for Community*

Development:

“One road that deserves special consideration is a community’s gateway or main entry artery. Gateways are communities’ welcome mats – their front doors. Most people remember the first time they saw a place. That image becomes indelibly imprinted on the mind. Just as with meeting people, a good first impression is important, a bad first impression is hard to change. Through zoning overlays, scenic easements, sign controls and design standards, we must do more to protect the gateways to our communities, to our downtowns and to our historic sites and districts.”



Gateway to Haysi
Photo by Carolyn Brackett

To create a sense of arrival, the entrances into Haysi need to be landscaped and appropriate signage should be installed. The design should reflect the branding design and signage in the downtown. Wording on the entrance signage should include “Historic Downtown” to reflect the visitor’s arrival at a destination and “Gateway to Breaks Interstate Park” to emphasize the connection to the park. Signs should also indicate where the core of downtown lies to ensure that travelers do not bypass it when they turn right toward Breaks.

2. **Develop a Visitor Center/Interpretive Center** – The *Downtown Revitalization Master Plan* addresses the opportunity to create a visitor center either in the old theater building (as part of an artisans’ center) or the Rock House. A feasibility study is needed to determine the best location for a visitor center/interpretive center. Plans call for a feasibility study for the old theater. If possible, this should incorporate a study of the Rock House to answer this question. However, given the condition of both buildings and the investment of time and resources needed for their restoration (as well as the development of business plans to make the buildings’ operation feasible), it is recommended that plans be made in the interim for another location. It is recommended that consideration be given to using a space in the recently renovated Old Hardware building on Main Street. The building has been beautifully renovated and is in a visible location to attract visitors. One of the available business spaces could be used for the visitor/interpretive center. Additionally, the spacious hallway could be used to display large photographs of historic scenes in Haysi and interpretive signage could be placed outside to attract visitors to the building. Plans also call for adding a restaurant or diner which would make this an ideal stopping place for visitors. Sharing uses also minimizes the financial needs for creating a visitors’ center, making it more secure.

The Old Hardware Store could provide a location for a visitor information and interpretive center.

Photo by Carolyn Brackett



A visitor center can encompass many elements including:

- **Information** – Brochures, maps, guidebooks and electronic kiosks with videos and printable maps. Staff (paid or volunteer) can provide planning assistance, sell tickets or make reservations.
- **Programming**— Offering interpretation or demonstrations may draw visitors and introduce them to the center’s resources.
- **Gift Shop** – Sales of souvenirs, box lunches, snacks.
- **Rentals** – Bicycles, canoes, kayaks. (Lease space to concessionaire.)
- **Visitor Surveys** – Collect data on visitor demographics.
- **Seating/Reading Corner** – An inviting space for visitors to relax, enjoy a snack and read about things to see and do in the area.
- **Public restrooms**



What is interpretation?

Interpretation is telling the story of a site or destination within the context of the broader historical, architectural or cultural themes to help visitors make a meaningful personal connection.

The visitor center should go beyond just providing maps and brochures to also be an interpretive center which will introduce Haysi and the surrounding region to visitors. Key stories about Haysi should be identified in the context of connections to the region, state and national history.

In thinking about what should be interpreted and how the center can stimulate visitation in the area, the following questions should be answered:

- What were the major influences in settling and developing the area?
- Are there sites in the area where visitors can explore the topic in more depth?
- Will the center’s interpretation fill in the gaps of untold stories and give visitors a complete picture of the area?
- Do the topics lend themselves to interpretation in this setting (i.e. photos, text, video and/or audio)?
- Is accurate information available for developing exhibit content?
- Can additional resources be developed as funds become available to enhance the exhibit? (i.e. audio, guidebooks, wayside exhibits)
- Will the topics engage and educate target audiences and encourage them to explore Haysi, the state park and the surrounding area?

The visitor/interpretive center should be a place to introduce visitors to all the region has to offer and to help them organize their visit. Topics for interpretation could include:

- **Haysi History** – How was the town founded? What are the legends about the town’s name?
- **Coal Industry** – As part of the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail, Haysi has a great opportunity to tell the story of the Clinchfield Coal Company, once the major provider of employment for the town.
- **Lumber, Railroads and Other Businesses** – The story of the Yellow Poplar Lumber Company, construction of the Clinchfield Railroad to transport coal and lumber and the growth of businesses in Haysi in the early 20th Century reflects and connects to similar stories throughout this region.
- **Great Depression** – Haysi was incorporated in 1936 in the middle of the Depression. An interesting story could be told of how Haysi thrived during these years with businesses lining Main Street.
- **Floods and Fire** - With many floods, fires and other natural disasters throughout the United States in recent years, the story of how Haysi persevered through a fire in 1934 that almost destroyed the town and floods in 1957 and 1977 is one of determination that will be of interest to visitors.
- **Cultural Traditions** – Haysi’s location on the Round the Mountain Artisan Trail and The Crooked Road reflects the town’s connection to the region’s cultural traditions.
- **Natural Beauty and Recreation** – Haysi can attract visitors to this tranquil mountain setting and to enjoy many recreational opportunities ranging from hiking on one of the many trails to biking along the TransAmerica Bike Trail and canoeing the river.

Haysi’s Frank Newsome Awarded National Heritage Fellowship by the NEA

In 2011, Haysi’s Frank Newsome was honored with a National Heritage Fellowship award from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The awards honor master folk and traditional artists and encourage preservation of our nation’s diverse cultural heritage. Mr. Newsome’s award and his contributions to the preservation of lined-out hymn singing should be showcased in the visitor/interpretive center. The website [NEA](#) features information about Mr. Newsome:



An elder in the Old Baptist Church, Frank Newsome is a proponent of lined-out singing, one of the deepest and oldest musical traditions in Virginia. Newsome was born in 1942 in Pike County, Kentucky where his father worked as a coal miner. One of 22 children, Newsome began attending Old Regular Baptist church services as a child with his mother. He settled in Virginia around the age of 20 and worked in the coal mines. After more than 17 years, Newsome contracted black lung disease and left the mine but took up new responsibilities at his church, using his vocal prowess to lead his congregation as a preacher and in the singing of hymns. Currently he preaches at Little David Old Regular Baptist Church in Buchanan County.

Primarily located in Appalachian rural locations, Old Regular Baptists maintain the tradition of no musical accompaniment in their services. Instead, the congregation sings a capella with a preacher or elder singing a line of a hymn and the congregation repeating the same line in a mournful blend of voices. Due to the small geographic area where Old Regular Baptist churches remain, this musical genre is not well known and recordings made at Little David Church featuring Newsome’s a cappella voice is one of the few times that a leader of this singing style has ever been recorded.

Staffing the Visitor/Interpretive Center

An interpretive/visitor center manager should be employed as a paid staff position. Volunteers can be recruited as visitor assistants. Responsibilities for visitor assistants include:

- Assist visitors with maps, brochures, directions and suggestions of places to visit, eat, shop and stay in the area
- Respond to inquiries by phone, email or mail
- Stock brochures, maps, guidebooks
- Maintain visitor center counts
- Invite visitors to participate in visitor surveys
- Handle souvenir sales
- Restock souvenirs and maintain inventory

Case Study

Harpers Ferry Appalachian Trail Visitor Center, West Virginia

Located just off the Appalachian Trail in historic Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, the visitor center is at the "psychological halfway point" for many Appalachian Trail hikers. The building houses the visitor center on the first floor and administrative offices on the upper floors.

The Visitor Center includes:

- An **information desk** where a volunteer or staff member is available to answer questions about hiking the Trail.
- **Printed information resources**, such as brochures, hand-outs, and local hiking maps.
- A **shop** where visitors can become a member of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, purchase Appalachian Trail maps, guidebooks, hike preparation books, and other items.



- The [Appalachian Trail Museum Society's MacKaye/Avery exhibit](#), featuring the typewriter of Benton MacKaye (who proposed the Appalachian Trail in 1921) and a measuring wheel belonging to Myron Avery who championed the project and oversaw much of the construction of the trail.
- A one-of-a-kind, 10-foot-long, **raised-relief map** of the entire Appalachian Trail.
- A **lounge for hikers and trail volunteers**, with a sign-in register book and albums containing photos of thousands of prospective 2,000-Milers that have visited since 1979. Lounge also provides a phone and Internet access for hikers.
- **Passport To Your National Parks® Cancellation Station.**

Photos courtesy Appalachian Trail Museum Society

Case Study

South Carolina National Heritage Corridor Discovery Centers

The South Carolina National Heritage Corridor, bound at one end by the ancient port city of Charleston and at the other by the mountains of the Blue Ridge, contains historic, cultural, and natural resources that tell the vibrant story of South Carolina’s centuries-long evolution and culture. Visitors can begin a journey of the Corridor at one of the regional Discovery Centers in Edgefield and Blackville. [SC Heritage Corridor](#)



Photo courtesy SC National Heritage Corridor

Each Discovery Center serves as a gateway to the area and starts visitors on a self-guided journey through the rural communities and historic back roads of South Carolina. The centers showcase exhibits and unique gift shops.

Visitor assistants help visitors plan a trip and help select stops for lodging, dining and shopping.

Case Study:

Blending Interpretation with Orientation in Lowell, Massachusetts

The first Visitor Center at Lowell National Historical Park in Lowell, Massachusetts, opened in 1982, introduced visitors to the park’s interpretive themes. The addition of a new array of park sites and cultural institutions throughout the city over the course of 20 years diminished the need for interpretation at the Visitor Center but increased the need for orientation. The park redesigned its Visitor Center to emphasize the big stories about Lowell and inform visitors about where to go to learn about them in the park and the city.



Photo courtesy Lowell National Historical Park

- Investigate the Opportunity for an Artisan Center in Downtown Haysi** – The downtown revitalization plan identifies restoring the old theater building for use as an artisans’ center as a top priority. Recommendations include creating space for art displays, special events and musical performances as well as workshop and studio space for artists. The plan also recommends that the Crooked Road Quilters’ Guild be a key tenant as well as managing and operating the center. The building offers 7,000 square feet of space, and local leaders would also like to consider renovating space upstairs for offices or housing.



The city is interested in purchasing the building, and funding has been obtained for a feasibility study which will be conducted in the near future. The feasibility study should answer questions about the best use for the building to benefit both residents and tourists.

The old theater building is being considered for development as an artisans’ center in downtown Haysi.

Photo by Carolyn Brackett

In addition to the potential uses already identified – an artisans’ center, office space and housing -- it is recommended that the feasibility study examine closely the opportunity to focus on the workshop/ class aspect of an artisans’ center. If regional artists can be recruited to offer classes in all types of artistic media, this creates an ongoing product that can be promoted to attract groups or individuals on an ongoing basis. Offering workshops and classes is also likely to increase sales of the artists’ own works by bringing in people who are interested in making and acquiring art.

If an artisan center is determined to be the best use and plans move ahead to purchase the building and develop plans for the center, it recommended that local leaders investigate a partnership connection to the newly opened Heartwood Artisan Gateway in Abingdon. The center might be named something like “Haysi Center for Arts, Music and Crafts” and Heartwood could partner on reciprocal promotions as well as promoting the Round the Mountain Artisan Network and The Crooked Road.

Case Study

Chestnut Creek School of the Arts – City of Galax, counties of Carroll and Grayson, Virginia

[Chestnut Creek Arts](#)

The region had experienced a steady decline in furniture manufacturing jobs with more than 1,100 jobs lost since January 2006. In 2003, the city began working with the local arts council to develop the Chestnut Creek School of the Arts. With a combination of local funding and grants (including the Appalachian Regional Commission), an old bank building was purchased by the city and renovated using historic tax credits. In 2008, staff was hired and classes were offered on a small scale. A grant received from the Appalachian Regional Commission funded the school’s partnership programs with the Matthews Living History Farm Museum and the adjacent Matthews State Forest along with many other local businesses. The program, titled Appalachian Heritage Classes, was targeted specifically to vacationing families. In 2009, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Appalachian Regional Commission awarded a Gateway Initiative grant to purchase looms, spinning wheels, quilting frames and to conduct class sessions.



Photo courtesy of Chestnut Creek School of the Arts

Case Study:

Blue Ridge Mountain Arts Association – Blue Ridge, Georgia

[Blue Ridge Arts](#)

The Blue Ridge Mountains Arts Association (The Art Center) began 30 years ago with the mission of providing art for personal growth and to serve as an economic engine for the community. Over the years, the center has grown to serve an audience of 30,000 annually with programming that includes art and music classes for youth and adults, exhibit galleries to showcase and sell local artists’ work. The center hosts several popular festivals including Arts in the Park, the Plein Air Festival (both juried arts events) and the Wildlife and Nature Art Festival and Expo which showcases wildlife and nature artists and also offers outdoor activities including hiking, fishing, camping and boating.

4. Seek Additional Ways to Promote Local Artisans - The creation of Heartwood Center provides a first-class outlet for artists across the region. The Abingdon-based artisan center should be supplemented with opportunities for visitors to experience the arts within Haysi and Dickenson County.

- **Feature rotating art displays in town hall and the library as well as in vacant storefronts to highlight local artists.**
- **Create a virtual center for Haysi/Dickenson artists.** With the loss (at least temporarily) of Mountain Art Works, Haysi should seek to promote its local arts by creating a website highlighting local artists and arts including events, information and opportunities to purchase art. The Rivers to Ridges Artisan Trail maps the location of some artisans, but doesn't provide online sales. A website should embrace the wide range of arts from instrument crafters to quilt makers, woodworkers, painters, musical performers and those involved in the building arts. Given the Internet's worldwide reach, Haysi's artists need to think beyond in-store sales and beyond the town or county's borders. Creating an online marketplace communicates the mountain heritage and tells the story of the town and community as well as the artist in order to sell the local crafts and creations.
- **Consider branding local products.** The Pennsylvania Wilds Artisan Trail has successfully branded their products, using specific standards to indicate that the artwork is locally made. Artisans have discovered that using the brand increases sales and the sale price of their products. [PA Wilds Resources](#)
- **Encourage the sale of local foods, products, crafts and arts at the Breaks gift store.** Cumberland Gap National Historical Park's Cumberland Crafts gift store is located in the park's visitor center and is part of the Southern Highland Craft Guild. The shop features a wide range of high-quality local arts and crafts at a variety of price points and also features demonstrations by local artisans. Demonstrations are videotaped and rebroadcast on video screens within the center.



Kendra Briechele talks with Lynn Stanley of the Southern Highland Craft Guild. The guild manages the gift store at Cumberland Gap National Historical Park.
Photo by Carolyn Brackett

5. **Capitalize on Haysi's Downtown Revitalization** - Implementation of the *Downtown Revitalization Master Plan* was slated to begin in the summer of 2011 with a construction of new sidewalks and other landscaping features. This will make the downtown a walkable, inviting destination for visitors and residents. Fundraising will continue (\$1 million of the total \$3 million has already been raised), and the master plan's recommendations will be implemented as funds are available.

Haysi's leaders are to be commended for their proactive approach to beautify and enhance the downtown. In addition to streetscaping, Haysi's leaders are also actively working on business recruitment and building restoration. A new business – an auto parts store which will also service RVs – was recently recruited and will result in construction of a new building downtown. The old hardware store has been renovated with space for six retail businesses. A feasibility study is also planned to determine the best use for the theater building with top consideration given to use as an artisans' center with the upstairs renovated for offices or housing. As the downtown continues to be revitalized, recruitment of additional new businesses will be a priority to fill currently empty buildings.

The implementation of these ambitious plans, in addition to the eventual transformation of downtown Haysi, creates an excellent opportunity to generate interest in Haysi from a historic preservation perspective. Action steps to capitalize on this opportunity include:

- **Apply for National Register of Historic Places and Virginia Landmarks Listings** – Surprisingly, the only structure in the county listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register is the Dickenson County Courthouse in Clintwood.

The registers are administered by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources ([Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources](#)) which is the state's historic preservation office. The department's website explains the purpose of the registers:

The National Register, established in 1966 and managed by the National Park Service, is the official list of structures, sites, objects and districts that embody the historical and cultural foundations of the nation. The National Register of Historic Places already includes more than 2,000 properties in Virginia.

The Virginia Landmarks Register, also established in 1966 and managed by the Department of Historic Resources, is the state's official list of properties important to Virginia's history. The same criteria are used to evaluate resources for inclusion in the state register as are used for the National Register.

Designation is honorific and does not carry restrictions on the designated historic building. However, receiving designation creates an opportunity for celebration, programming and publicity. If downtown Haysi achieves designation on these registers, town leaders could implement activities such as an unveiling ceremony, special behind-the-scenes tours of downtown and issuing press releases to local, state and regional media.

Assistance in determining Haysi's eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places and Virginia Landmarks Register can be obtained through the Virginia Department of Historic Resources Western Regional Preservation Office, 962 Kime Lane, Salem, Virginia; Contact Michael Pulice – 540-387-5443; Michael.Pulice@dhr.virginia.gov

Case Study

Chelsea, Michigan Celebrates National Register Designation

Chelsea, located in southern Michigan, is a town of about 4,000 residents. In 2010, the community rallied around saving a historic block of buildings in the downtown district. As part of the effort two



Photo by Kendra Briechele

groups, the Chelsea Area Historical Society and Preservation Chelsea, worked together to nominate the downtown commercial historic district to the National Register of Historic Places. Success was celebrated in June 2011 with a community picnic and National Register ceremony. The day's events included a ceremony to unveil a commemorative

plaque with local and state dignitaries as speakers, walking tours of the historic downtown and a picnic on the lawn of the Museum of the Chelsea Historical Society. Michigan's State Historic Preservation Officer Brian Conway noted: "Chelsea's downtown has a fantastic stock of historic buildings for a small town that already attracts people to the community. Chelsea has the ability to market itself as a heritage tourism destination and to take advantage of economic incentives for rehabilitating historic buildings."



- **Continue to Promote Downtown Haysi's Revitalization** – Revitalization efforts are likely to take place over several years. The revitalization process and achievement of milestones can be showcased to build community pride and to appeal to visitors. Visitors often enjoy going behind the scenes to see places and learn stories about a site or a community that may not always be part of the visitor experience. Haysi can create these behind-the-scenes opportunities to show visitors how preservation and revitalization projects are undertaken. Activities could include:

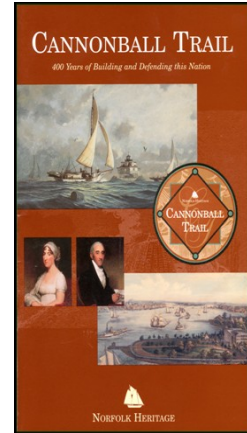
- ◇ Create an exhibit of photos showing Haysi through the years (including pictures of the floods of 1957 and 1977) and artist renderings of how the town will look in the future after being revitalized.
- ◇ Offer walking tours of downtown led by a preservationist and/or historian who can tell visitors about Haysi's history and explain how buildings are restored.
- ◇ Offer special photo op tours to amateur photographers who would welcome the chance to photograph both unrestored and restored buildings up close.
- ◇ Haysi's mural in the town's center depicts Haysi's past. This could be the start of a broader mural project with art on the side of buildings throughout the town showing Haysi through the years.
- ◇ Follow the example of Crystal City in Arlington, Virginia which puts up reusable canvas window coverings that depict shops and a vibrant sidewalk scene on vacant buildings to hint at the possibility of a new store.



Crystal City in Arlington, Virginia
Photo by Kendra Briechele

Case Study
Norfolk, Virginia Encourages Visitors to Explore

Norfolk, Virginia has created two ways for visitors to learn about the city’s history. *Windows on History* is a series of display windows depicting four centuries of historic people, places and events located along the exterior of the MacArthur Center mall in downtown Norfolk. *The Journey to Freedom - Cannonball Trail and the Underground Railroad* is a self-guided walking tour through downtown historic Norfolk which connects the historic sites through storytelling. Visitors listen to stories about each site in order to form their own interpretation of Norfolk’s rich and multi-faceted history.



Case Study
Silverton, Oregon Murals Attract Tourists

Citizens in Silverton, Oregon painted artistic and interpretive murals on blank walls, tempting visitors to nearby attractions, restaurants and stores and visually telling the town’s stories about its lumber heritage, the native son who became an astronaut and a lost dog who traveled thousands of miles back to his family in Silverton. The town murals have become a tourist attraction, cared for by the local Mural Society.



Murals in downtown Silverton, Oregon have become a popular tourist attraction.
Photos by Kendra Briechle

- 6. **Create a front door to the river** - Just as people love opportunities to people-watch from cafes, they also love to be spectators to action, even when they are unable to participate. Haysi can provide inviting spots that welcome people to view paddlers on the scenic Russell Fork. By mapping a walking trail through town, along the river and to overlooks, Haysi can attract residents and visitors to enjoy a meal and a stroll. This could also be an opportunity to highlight other venues for watching paddlers throughout the county - at the Breaks through video feed, in downtown Haysi and at other spots downstream from Flannagan during the October dam release weekends.

7. **Increase promotion of the Russell Fork Autumn Fest** – This event is held the first weekend in October and includes bluegrass and mountain music, local arts and crafts, flat foot dancing, food and other entertainment. With the popularity of The Crooked Road (featured in the Sunday edition of the *New York Times* in June 2011), interest in this type of event is increasing. An Internet search found only a few references to the festival – on websites for Haysi city government, Breaks Interstate Park and Mountain Arts Facebook page as well as articles in local papers. This event should be posted on the state and region’s websites including [Virginia](#) (Virginia Tourism Corporation), [Southwest Virginia](#), [The Crooked Road](#), [Round the Mountain](#) and [Heartwood](#).

8. **Aggressively pursue additional funding opportunities for downtown revitalization** - The Virginia Community Block Grant provides loans for small businesses, facade improvement and infrastructure revitalization. Future success relies on making business owners and the public aware of the available funding. These resources can also be targeted towards better services such as visitor information kiosks, recreational outfitters and retail (paddling rentals, bike shop, hiking gear), tour guides, artisan studios, grocers, restaurants and lodging.

9. **Consider improvements to town hall** - At one time, the courthouse, library and town offices were the most beautiful buildings in American downtowns. Public buildings set a standard for the town’s sense of place and civic pride. Public investments also make good business sense by sending the message that this place cares about itself and its future. As capital improvements are undertaken, Haysi should consider improving the appearance of the town hall to create a welcome to this Appalachian mountain town.



The dramatic change of Town Hall in Port Royal, South Carolina from its appearance on the left to its stately new appearance, above, illustrates the positive impression that town halls have on their downtowns.
Photos by Ed McMahon

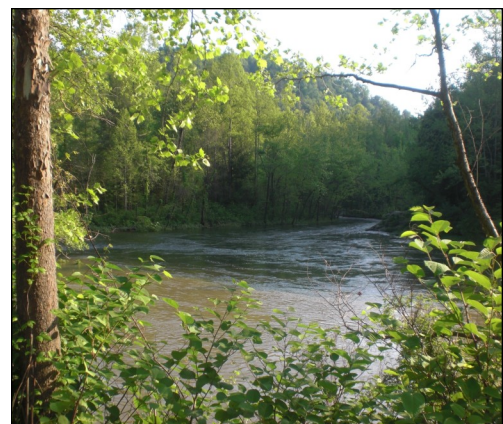
10. **Develop voluntary or mandatory design guidelines for developers to achieve complementary building styles for new buildings** - The publication, *Better Models for Commercial Development*, [Better Models](#) provides examples of how communities have engaged prospective businesses to locate in their towns and voluntarily design their buildings to respect and enhance the existing streetscape and downtown fabric. Other design guides for rural areas and small towns include the Pennsylvania Wilds design guide [PA Wilds](#) and Carroll County (Md.) Design Expectations [Carroll County MD Design](#).

11. **Offer Photography Tours** - A 2008 study by the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE), the most comprehensive survey of recreation in the nation, shows a 4.4% increase in participation in outdoor activities from 2000 to 2007 – from 208 million to 217 million. The total number of times per year that respondents participated in nature activities jumped 32 percent during the study period. The report showed that of the 17 fastest-growing nature-based activities from 2000 to 2007, viewing or photographing flowers and trees was at the top. The number of people engaged in this activity climbed 25.8 percent, and the number of times over the last year people participated surged 77.8 percent during the study period. Second on the list is viewing or photographing natural scenery. This activity saw a 14 percent increase in number of people, with a 60 percent increase in times participated.

The scenic beauty of Haysi, Breaks Interstate Park and the surrounding region make it an ideal setting to attract photographers. In addition to photographing natural scenery, photographers will also be interested in finding interesting structures such as the historic buildings in downtown Haysi. These buildings could be especially appealing to photographers while they are undergoing restoration.

To attract photographers, the following steps should be implemented:

- **Set up a Flickr™ site** – Flickr™ is an image and video hosting website managed by Yahoo! and available to users at no charge. There is a site for Dickenson County with photos posted by several photographers. There are also sites for Breaks Interstate Park and for Southwest Virginia. A new site could be set up for Haysi or any of the existing sites could be used to add new photos. When promoting Haysi and the region to photographers, make sure they know about the Flickr™ sites and invite them to post their photos.
- **Identify appealing locations and develop a photographers' guide** – Residents can be engaged to help identify locations in Haysi, at Breaks Interstate Park and in the surrounding area that would appeal to photographers. From these suggestions, a guide can be created to offer suggestions for photographers on great places to photograph buildings, natural scenery, festivals and people such as artisans at work or musicians performing. The guide could be posted on websites for Haysi, the Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce and Breaks Interstate Park.
- **Promote photo opportunities through photography clubs** – There are many photography clubs in Virginia and surrounding states that have websites to share ideas on great locations with their members. Additionally, many clubs coordinate field trips for their members. Examples in Virginia include the Camera Club of Richmond, [Camera Club](#); Northern Virginia Photographic Society, [NVPS](#); and the Virginia Photography Club at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, [UVA Photo Club](#). Field trip itineraries could include lodging at Breaks Interstate Park with meals offered in downtown Haysi's restaurants or picnics from a local caterer.



Top photo by Carolyn Brackett
Bottom photo by Kendra Briechle

Case Study

Flickr™ Promotes Baker County, Oregon

Timothy Bishop, tourism and marketing director for Baker County, Oregon, created a Flickr™ page for the county, which markets under the brand “Base Camp Baker.” The home page states that the site includes photos “showcasing the magnificent scenery, beautiful vistas, festivals, events, attractions, landscapes and communities of Baker County Oregon and people enjoying this eastern Oregon county.”

In addition to posting his own photos, Bishop began soliciting images from other photographers. The result has been tremendous – almost 700 photos capture the region’s beauty, history and activities for visitors.

“Flickr™ is a social network,” Bishop notes. “Once you have a Flickr page, you can join other groups and share photos. We submit photos to other groups we think are relevant. For example, Travel Oregon (the state’s travel office) has a photo page, and we make sure we are represented.”

The Flickr™ site has been a great help to many of the county’s attractions. “We have small museums that have taken very few photos,” Bishop says. “For example, one site has hosted a ‘historic Christmas parlor tour’ for 26 years but doesn’t have any photos. I can create a page for those kinds of events. We can say to our Facebook and friends ‘we are looking for photos of this event...if you have them please send.’ They get excited to post their photos, and they become part of the sales force.”

The site is also getting lots of use by travel publications, websites and other promotional outlets. “People pull photos off to use on blogs or websites,” Bishop says. “Our photos are also used in *American West Lifestyle* and other magazines.”



This photo of cowboys cooking during the annual Durkee Steak Feed is one of hundreds on the Flickr website promoting travel to Baker County, Oregon.

Photo courtesy Baker County Oregon Basecamp

For more information, contact Timothy Bishop at info@basecampbaker.com; 541-523-1589; or visit www.flickr.com/people//basecampbaker or Base Camp Baker.

Role #2 – Make Haysi the “Go To” Place for Visitor Services – Shopping, Restaurants and Accommodations

Although travelers may enjoy visiting a historic downtown – taking a walking tour or viewing exhibits in a local museum or interpretive center – the economic impact of tourism is seen when visitors spend money on lodging, dining and making purchases. Additionally, visitors must feel comfortable at their destination. An important part of this comfort level is making it easy for visitors to find what they need. By developing these visitor services, Haysi can offer a small-town, walkable destination that appeals to visitors. This section looks at current opportunities to access visitor services and outlines considerations for new lodging, dining, retail development and wayfinding signage to enhance the visitor experience.

- **Lodging** – Breaks Interstate Park is the primary provider of lodging in the immediate region with an 82-room lodge, four cottages, five luxury cabins and 138 campsites. In nearby Clintwood, construction is set to begin on a 55-room Sleep Inn hotel on the edge of the downtown. The Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce website lists additional lodging in Clintwood – the Southern Heritage Inn (22 rooms), Southern Heritage Lodge (a remodeled home with two suites), Ralph Stanley Museum (a two bedroom suite), Misty Mountain Cottage, Hometown Lodging and End of the Trail Lodging. The only lodging in Haysi, The Red Caboose B&B, recently closed. Options proposed for lodging in Haysi include construction of a boutique hotel next to the Pizza Factory and development of B&B-type lodging in the upper story of one or more downtown buildings. A bike-hike hostel and country inn are lodging options without comparables in the county. With fewer than 200 rooms in the county (including all types of accommodations except campsites), there is likely to be a need for more lodging as Haysi becomes a destination and attracts more visitors.

As new lodging is developed, use it to enhance the community by asking business owners to fit with existing development pattern and traditional character. An example of a hotel chain that has adapted their design to local community character is included here. The publication, *Better Models for Commercial Development* ([Conservation Fund Better Models](#)) provides additional examples.



At left is the typical design of a Hampton Inn. Pictured center is a Hampton Inn in Truckee, California and on the right is a Hampton Inn in Leesburg, Virginia. Both are designed to complement their community’s character.

Photos by Ed McMahon (left) and Kendra Briechele (center and right)

Two organizations which can be helpful in researching what is involved in developing and managing a B&B are the Professional Association of Innkeepers International ([PAII](#)) and the Bed and Breakfast Association of Virginia ([Inn Virginia](#)). The B&B Association of Virginia offers a seminar for aspiring innkeepers to provide guidance on starting and managing a successful bed and breakfast.

According to PAII's 2009 *Industry Study of Innkeeping Operations and Finance*, occupancy rates, room prices and revenues continue to increase for B&Bs nationally, due to the popularity of these unique accommodations. Median occupancy grew from 35% in 2005 to 44% in 2008. The median "average daily rate" for B&Bs nationally is \$150. B&Bs are known for offering many amenities which add value for the guest. The study showed that 93% offer free high speed Internet access and a majority provide luxury bedding and linens, toiletries and televisions. Private bathrooms are offered by 94% of B&Bs.

- **Dining** – The revitalization master plan notes that Haysi is losing a lot of potential dining business to nearby towns. There are currently two restaurants in downtown Haysi – the Pizza Factory and MiFinca Mexican Grill, and the master plan notes at least two new restaurants could be supported.

There is interest in adding a restaurant/coffee shop at the newly renovated hardware store building. This would be an ideal addition to the building's retail businesses and would be an enhancement to the recommended visitor/interpretive center use. As recruitment gets under way for more dining facilities, considerations should include:

- ◇ Open a restaurant serving simple fare – sandwiches, salads, etc. – that will appeal to visitors who are enjoying outdoor recreation on the hiking trails and river.
- ◇ Make sure new restaurants offer vegetarian and healthy menu options. A 2008 study by *Vegetarian Times* found there are over 7 million vegetarians in the U.S. and the number continues to increase. There are also more than 22 million "part-time" vegetarians. Additionally, there is increased emphasis on healthy eating. Providing menu choices will undoubtedly appeal to these visitors and generate recommendations to other like-minded travelers.
- ◇ Ask restaurant owners if they can provide picnic basket lunches for visitors to take along on their hikes.



MiFinca Mexican Grill is one of two restaurants in downtown Haysi.

Photo by Carolyn Brackett

- **Retail** – The economic impact of increased visitation to a destination can be tremendously affected by offering goods that travelers want to buy. Visitors can make a wide range of purchases:

- ◇ Necessities – such as aspirin, sunblock or bandaids
- ◇ Activity-related – sporting goods, camping and hiking gear, clothing, downloadable audio tours, etc.
- ◇ Souvenirs or collectibles – locally made arts and crafts, antiques, books, commemorative t-shirts, hats or other clothing, etc.

The economic restructuring plan (part of the downtown master plan) includes an in depth analysis of the current retail situation in Haysi and assesses consumer expenditures and retail sales. The plan also documents the amount of sales that are lost because certain products are not available.

Although the analysis and restructuring plan focuses on serving residents, the plan notes “Haysi should continue to capitalize on visitor traffic from Breaks Interstate Park....As the recreation and visitor market expands, Haysi should look to promote existing or recruit new destination-based businesses that tie into this theme.”

To determine what retail businesses are desired by visitors, a research study focusing on visitors could be conducted to supplement the downtown plan’s retail analysis which focuses primarily on residents. The study could include a survey of visitors both in Haysi and at Breaks Interstate Park and would result in a prioritized list of businesses that would appeal to visitors. The study will also be a value business recruitment tool to show entrepreneurs the potential for operating a successful business in downtown Haysi.

- **Wayfinding Signage** - Creating an outstanding visitor experience depends on making the visitor feel comfortable and at-ease in unfamiliar surroundings. Even with the availability of GPS systems, Mapquest and printed maps (all of which can fail or have incorrect information!) there is no substitute for the reassurance of seeing signs leading to the destination.

As the downtown streetscaping plan is implemented, Haysi will offer an inviting, walkable atmosphere. Wayfinding signage should be a part of this development to direct visitors to existing retail stores and restaurants. Designs for a wayfinding system are included in the downtown revitalization plan. To be cost effective, signage could be designed to allow for additions as more retail businesses open in the downtown



Wayfinding signage is an important aspect of making visitors feel welcome.
Photo courtesy of Augie Carlino

Continue to Engage Residents in Revitalization and Planning

Haysi's leaders have done an outstanding job of engaging residents in creating a vision for the community and in soliciting their support and involvement in sustainable tourism development. Following are recommendations to continue to build on these efforts.

1. **Be sure that decisions benefit residents as well as tourists** - According to Mayor Yates, residents want opportunities for everyday shopping (groceries and basic needs), family restaurants and parks for family activities. The extension of wireless infrastructure, cell service and sewer service are examples of decisions that benefit visitors as well as invest in the health of the community. The initiative of the Friends of Russell Fork to update in-home wastewater facilities from "straight pipes" discharging into the river ensures cleaner drinking water and better water quality for recreationalist and resident alike. Likewise, The Crooked Road's efforts to develop music curriculum connected to Virginia's Standards of Learning provides a way to "save the seed corn" of local music heritage while providing economic and educational opportunities for Dickenson County's youth.
2. **Raise public awareness and pride in place for sustainable tourism and preservation of town character** - Haysi's revitalization plan outlines a thorough set of actions for improving the downtown. Events such as street clean-ups, building painting, art walks, street festivals, farmers' markets, workshops, etc. involve local residents and businesses in the downtown and create a lively atmosphere to make changes to the Main Street while enhancing local pride. There is an opportunity for Haysi to create buzz through traditional newspaper articles and press releases—and especially websites and social media tools—to provide the sense of momentum and recognition of accomplishments.
 - ◇ ***Celebrate success with the community and engage residents in the changes for the better.*** Community leaders and organizations may consider creating a regular blog, newspaper column or radio feature and podcast to keep the local community aware of progress and the opportunities to support initiatives.
 - ◇ ***Strengthen resident awareness of attractions in the area.*** Some communities have special days – "tourist in your downtown" or hometown day to invite residents to come to local attractions. Not only do these events support local businesses but they also may expose residents to the wealth of attractions in the area. The awareness strengthens pride for their community and makes them better spokespeople for the area's attractions.
 - ◇ ***Consider developing "Blitz" events*** - "Blitz" events could engage residents and spur fast change to the downtown streetscape. An ArtBlitz could solicit local artists - professional, amateur and school age - in creating public art on downtown walls and buildings in a one-day or weekend festival setting. Participation could be guided through applications and prior identification of key cleanup sites. Musicians could provide entertainment at the gazebo. Even the youngest citizens could help paint or even participate by creating chalk drawings on sidewalks or by painting on a roll of paper rolled down the closed-off street. The city of Curitiba, Brazil, for example, holds a weekly children's art program by unfurling a large paper roll down the pedestrian zone and providing paint and brushes for whomever would like to create. Similarly, a GardenBlitz could gather local gardeners and landscapers to build and plant downtown container gardens. These low-cost events would rely on sponsorships, sweat equity and contributions by residents, artists and other professionals and could also engage visitors to participate.

Promoting Downtown Haysi through Internet and Social Media

As noted previously, the recently completed *Breaks Interstate Park: Marketing Plan 2011-2015* is an outstanding, in-depth explanation of park visitor demographics provided in the context of the park's product and national trends in leisure travel and outdoor recreation. Target audiences are identified with strategies for attracting these markets.

The Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism promotes the entire county through its website, [Dickenson Chamber](#), brochures, a visitor information center (located in the chamber office in Clintwood) and participation in the development of new tourism products such as the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail. Plans for website for newly opened Heartwood in Abingdon include links to sites and destination throughout the region with more than 200 videos and a trip planner. Additionally, the downtown revitalization plan includes numerous recommendations for marketing including brochure development, participation in regional tourism marketing activities and creating a new brand for Haysi.

Clearly there are many opportunities for marketing partnerships and many options for marketing activities to reach the desired visitor markets. This section looks in particular at one area of tourism marketing that is growing rapidly and emerging as a predominant means of reaching visitors – the use of Internet websites and social media.

Current national travel research confirms the importance of an Internet-based marketing strategy:

- The U.S. Travel Association's 2010 study *Travelers' Use of the Internet* shows over 93 million U.S. travelers using the Internet for travel planning. Of these, 76% are planning leisure trips on line. This planning includes making decisions about lodging, travel routes and places to visit.
- The January 2011 edition of *The State of the American Traveler*, (Destination Analysts, tracks traveler use of technology resources and services to plan travel in the past 12 months:
 - ◇ 43.5% used user-generated content – hotel reviews (27.4%), destination reviews (20.4%), restaurant reviews (18.8%) and travel blogs (18.2%)
 - ◇ 25.8% used social media for travel planning ; destination page on a social media site (14.1%), friend/fan of destination (8.8%), Twitter (6.9%), photo sharing site (6.5%) and social bookmarking websites (3.3%)
 - ◇ 33.9% visited a Destination Marketing Organization website
 - ◇ 28% used a mobile device to access travel information
 - ◇ 14.7% read a travel-related e-newsletter



In 2011, The Outdoor Foundation provided results from a survey of outdoor enthusiasts (referred to as “outsiders” in the report) based on technology and media. Highlights include:

- Youth believe social media makes event planning and news gathering much easier. They also feel it can turn into a time-consuming and addictive habit that replaces face-to-face interaction.
- Outsiders believe the concept of social media is here to stay and older generations should become familiar with the social media space.
- GPS, iPods and MP3 players and mobile phones both enhance and worsen the outdoor experience by providing practical benefits that also act as distractions.
- Outsiders believe in the potential of mobile apps for initiating rewarding outdoor challenges. They also believe active Twitter and Facebook groups can be efficient tools for mobilizing outdoor activities. [Outdoor Foundation report](#)

State and local tourism agencies are increasingly using not only websites but also social media including Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Flickr, You Tube and QR codes to reach visitors. Social media allows the development of an ongoing relationship with previous visitors and a dialogue with people who are considering where they want to travel. This extends the reach of marketing far beyond simply accessing information on a website.

As noted by Becky McCray and Sheila Scarborough, owners of Tourism Currents – an online resource for using social media for tourism – the job of DMOs used to be “show, tell and persuade” tourists to visit and travel industry gatekeepers to recommend a destination. With the advent of social media, DMOs now must know how to “facilitate, orchestrate and enable” tourists and travel industry gatekeepers. ([Tourism Currents](#)). Three key benefits of using social media are: (Source: [Common Craft](#))

- Social media allows learning directly from customers.
- Free customer reviews are more valuable than purchased advertisements (the coveted “word of mouth” recommendation).
- Customers can find exactly what they want.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will allow Haysi to capitalize on existing Internet marketing venues in a cost effective way. As Haysi’s downtown is further developed for tourism, additions can be made to expand these venues and to find new ways to reach visitors through the Internet.

1. **Create a Haysi Tab for Breaks Interstate Park’s Facebook Site** – Breaks Interstate Park has a very active Facebook site with almost 10,000 friends. Rather than creating a separate site for Haysi, it is recommended that a Haysi Tab Page be added to the park’s Facebook site. The Tab Page can include information on upcoming events, new stores or other attractions. Tabs are clickable links to different parts of a Facebook page. This strategy has several benefits:
 - Gives Haysi access to almost 10,000 people who are coming to the park and could be interested in stopping in Haysi.
 - A Tab Page offers an interactive venue to build connections to visitors.
 - Emphasizes Haysi as a gateway to the park and a partner in offering a visitor experience.

- The Tab Page will be easy to keep updated.
- As Haysi expands promotions in the future, the Facebook Tab Page provides a place to direct visitors for additional information on Haysi.
- Although there will be a cost involved in creating the page, it will be more cost effective than creating an entire website.

Case Study

North Dakota RU Legendary Campaign

Visit the [North Dakota Tourism Page](#). On the left-hand side are tabs like Wall, Info and Events. Most of these are standard tabs that come with any page and do not cost anything to use their standard setup. Click the "RU Legendary" tab to see a custom-built tab that links back to the website for more information.



2. **Create an Interactive Web Map** - An interactive map of Haysi can include all of the information to help a visitor decide to spend time (and money) in Haysi. After the map is designed, it can be posted on the Haysi government website, Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce website, the Breaks Interstate Park website (or a link) and a link can be added to the Facebook Tab Page. This map could also be developed in partnership with Breaks Interstate Park to create one map showing both the park and Haysi and making it easy for visitors to see the connection between the two locations. Information can include:

- Downloadable directions to Haysi
- Pop up pictures including links to Flickr™
- Pop ups with information on retail stores, restaurants and other attractions including discount coupons
- Pop ups on accommodations with links to reservations
- Marker showing the location of Breaks Interstate Park
- Routes for the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail and Crooked Road
- Pop ups on upcoming events
- Information on the weather in Haysi and the surrounding area
- Downloadable information on Haysi's history

Case Study

Asheville, North Carolina Interactive Map

Asheville, North Carolina’s tourism website features an interactive map that allows visitors to plan all aspects of their trip: [Explore Asheville](#). Visitors can choose the general area of interest – day trips, general information, historic attractions/museums, shopping, the arts, etc. – as well as the type of restaurants and lodging they are interested in and even the mileage radius. Clicking “Get Results” provides a personalized trip for the visitor including specifics on directions, days/hours of operation and descriptions of all selected sites.

3. **Consider Additional Ways to Use Social Media** - Though there are pros and cons to every new technology, trends show that social media will continue to be a popular information sharing destination for diverse users. Options for incorporating into an online communication strategy that are popular include:

- Theme-based guides (music, coal heritage, hiking), rather than focused on specific regions
- Mini-guides—great for quick trips, provides essential information on particular destinations, fewer pages and smaller for easy travel and can be sold in box sets or downloaded on the web
- E-Guides that can provide exclusive online information and email news alerts
- Guidebooks that move beyond the basics (lodging, dining, etc.) and include more historical and cultural information
- Top-ten lists and “best of” roundups, provide shortcuts to the ultimate travel experiences

(Source: Ted Eubanks, founder, Fermata, Inc., presentation “National Balancing Nature and Commerce Course,” Shepherdstown, WV, 2011.)

4. **Create “Ask a Local” Features** – Engaging residents in promoting Haysi and the surrounding region offers an opportunity to create advocates for the local tourism industry and to reach out to visitors by letting them “get to know” the locals even before they arrive in Haysi. Residents can be invited to share what they love about Haysi, Breaks Interstate Park and the surrounding region such as festivals, music, history and outdoor recreation. Their stories can be shared through written “testimonies” or through video. As new stories are created, they can be promoted through the Facebook Tab page and other venues with links directing readers to more trip planning information.

Case Study:

Lake Champlain National Scenic Byway, Vermont

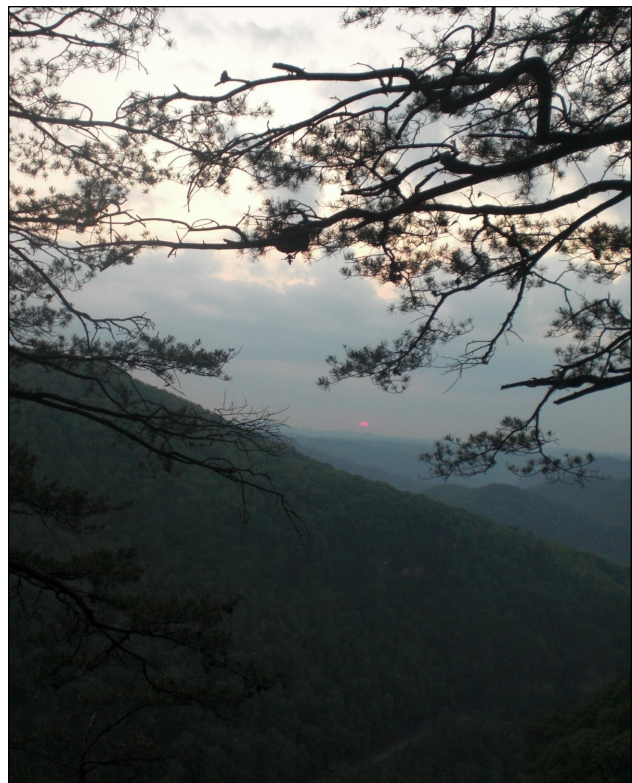
The Lake Champlain National Scenic Byway created an “Ask a Local” section on its website, [Lake Champlain NSB](#). Topics include hiking, biking, farms, wineries, winter sports, culture, architecture and museums. Each “local favorite” feature discusses places to experience the activity and offers recommendations on how to have the best experience when visiting.

5. **Develop good tourism communications.** The Virginia Tourism website: [Virginia](#) has limited information on Haysi and does not have any photos of Haysi. Haysi, Dickenson County, and the Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce websites have limited tourism information. [Dickenson Chamber](#) has only a few paragraphs of information on tourism attractions including Flannagan Dam, Breaks Interstate Park and Haysi. The Ralph Stanley Museum is featured but the link to the Coal Mining Memorial is inactive. Visitors are asked to call the tourism director for more information. All websites that provide information about Haysi and Dickenson County should have complete information on attractions, lodging and services and include themes such as mountain heritage, music, food, outdoor recreation, festivals and events, shopping, nature and others.

Breaks Interstate Park

Known as the “Grand Canyon of the South,” Breaks Interstate Park is blessed with a beautiful setting and a bounty of activities and options. This 4,600-acre park drapes across the border of Virginia and Kentucky, with entry points from both states along State Route 80. The developed side of the park sits astride the Virginia mountaintop on the edge of a five-mile gorge carved by the Russell Fork River below. The undeveloped Kentucky side features verdant forestland.

The team was particularly impressed with views from the edge of the gorge, the range of options for hiking trails and the possibilities for many different visitor experiences based on interests. Equally impressive is the park’s leadership in sustaining operational revenue, given the limited budget support appropriated by Kentucky and Virginia. The *Breaks Interstate Park Marketing Plan 2011-15* also reflects a solid understanding of park visitors and a guide for opportunities based on demographics, interests and trends.



Sunset at the Breaks
Photo by Kendra Briechle

Evaluation

- Breaks has 13 miles of hiking trails in moderate condition that follow the gorge ridge and provide river views.
- Paddle boats, canoes and other watercraft are available for rent to use on the 12-acre park lake.
- Newly constructed cabins have air conditioning, kitchens, TVs and hot tubs and sit on the lake’s edge.

- There is a large hotel and lodge with a restaurant and conference center. Internet connections are available in lodge rooms with free Wi-Fi at the lodge and visitor center. Major use of the conference center is for weddings, reunions and more recently, company retreats (such as the mining industry and banks).
- The Visitor Center has had renovations recently, and park managers are seeking funding to complete heritage and nature exhibits in the museum.
- The Visitor Center's computer kiosk provides information on the park, trails, lodging, surrounding areas, shopping and has the capability to print. The kiosk currently does not have information on Haysi but this was noted for attention.
- Park managers are currently in discussions with a company that can set up a HD camera at the gorge's bottom to live-stream video of river paddlers on the rapids.
- The Visitor Center also houses an operating stone grist where an interpreter provides demonstrations and tells the history of cornmeal, molasses and moonshine production.
- The Southern Gospel Music Festival is the largest event of the year at the park. More than 34,000 visitors utilize the facilities over Labor Day weekend.
- Additional events: Appalachian Heritage Festival, Fall Crafter Event, Civil War Reenactments, Easter Egg Hunt, Molasses Stir, Car Show and others.
- Friends of Breaks State Park have been successful in raising funds for conservation and enhancement, school programming and outreach. In 2011, the Friends group planned to run a farmer's market on Tuesdays in June and July and to invite local farmers and crafters to participate and to target both residents and park visitors.
- Horse-back trail rides provided by park concessionaire follow designated trails.
- A new mountain bike trail system provides five miles of stacked loops.
- The Breaks has the only swimming pool in the county. The pool is in disrepair and leaks thousands of gallons of water each season. Plans are underway to replace the pool next year with a \$4 million water park.



Images from the Breaks
 Photos by
 Carolyn Brackett and
 Kendra Briechle

Challenges

- Park Superintendent Matthew O’Quinn says not having high-speed Internet across the park is preventing an expansion of tourism business—especially with RVers who would stay longer knowing they have reliable Internet to connect with work or children.
- Currently, there are no facilities for private horse trailers and their riders.
- The Pine Mountain Trail runs along the Kentucky border of the park; however, due to landscape confines, no connection between Breaks and this trail can be made without a bridge.
- The park has had limited success in attracting more businesses and groups to utilize the facilities (conference center, restaurant, motel, cabins) during the weekdays.

Recommendations

1. **Create experiential recreation activities that link natural and cultural history.** Some visitors are ready to test their mettle on the thrilling Class 5 rapids in the gorge. Others may want to pursue tamer activities. Visitors of varied backgrounds and interests are increasingly seeking “experiential tourism” which allows them to touch, smell, taste and feel the uniqueness of a place. Experiential tourism might include a “frontier hike” for families that recreates what Daniel Boone and other early frontier settlers saw, how they traveled, what they carried and what they ate. Park staff can also provide a range of programs to introduce and interpret natural resources by weaving in cultural or heritage themes and encouraging visitors to explore.

The park already features some experiential activities such as demonstrations of corn grinding at the mill, moonshine making and molasses festival. These demonstrations can be expanded to involve visitors even more by, for example, allowing them to push a plow or taste the molasses, even if bottled for sale. The park could offer a Crooked Road instrument “petting zoo” so kids can touch and try the instruments at the heart of mountain music. Or have “Birds and Blues at the Breaks” that couples live music with exposure to songbirds. These interpretive, experiential activities are great ways to introduce people to the broader resources in the park or area.



Demonstrations of moonshining by park historian Carl Mullins are a popular experiential activity at Breaks Interstate Park.
Photo by Kendra Briechle

2. **Enhance interpretive signage to incorporate history and culture.** For those visitors unable to attend a demonstration or coming at off-hours, use interpretive signs or art to tell the story of a place, including the natural and cultural heritage. Signage is especially needed at the gristmill and moonshine stills.

3. **Offer more local products - food, arts and crafts in the gift shop and visitor center.** Build on the experiential aspect of visiting the Breaks by offering locally grown and crafted products in the gift shop. Products should reflect the authentic natural, cultural and agricultural heritage of the area including the music of The Crooked Road, the natural beauty of the Breaks Gorge, the local molasses and cornmeal. The newly opened Heartwood Center adopted this policy, ensuring that all products--from fine arts to t-shirts--are made in Southwest Virginia.

4. **Integrate local food and fresh produce into the restaurant offerings and incorporate healthy and vegetarian options.** The restaurant provides a great destination for local families and visitors to enjoy a tasty down-home meal. Given the major national push for local and fresh food, we suggest the Breaks restaurant review their food options and try to source food locally and provide healthier meal choices. Local food has the potential to provide new markets for locally grown products and simultaneously enhance the visitor experience by connecting consumers to the area's culture and heritage. This is also a logical extension of the farmers' market at Breaks. In addition to providing locally-grown, healthy foods, the park has an opportunity to make a broader impact on public health. The Dickenson County rate of obesity is estimated to be 29% (2008), 3% higher than the rate of the state, and the county has a rate of diagnosed diabetes of 9.2% (2010) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [CDC Report.](#)) These trends demonstrate a need for healthier food options and increased physical activity, and Breaks can provide both. By providing healthy options at the restaurant, Breaks will make the statement that they are invested in the health and well-being of their visitors as well as the quality of life of the area's residents, many of whom come regularly to the restaurant.

5. **Update the visitors' center.** The center provides no surprises. Both outside and in, the visitors' center is what one would expect from a park visitors' center. The information is worthwhile but the static displays are dated, and the facility is dark. The center should be the central source to educate visitors about the park and its purpose and serve as a focus for regional tourism. The visitors' center can be supplemented with information in the lodge, restaurant and at the swimming bathhouse.

Case Study

Wilderness Road State Park

The LEED-compliant, state-of-the-art visitor center at Wilderness Road State Park in Lee County, Virginia has a movie theater, interpretive area and the Powder Horn Gift Shop. The theatre showcases *Spirit of a Nation*, which depicts the history of the Wilderness Road. Many 18th century replica items, as well as art, snacks and refreshments, can be bought in the gift shop. Exhibits feature posed figures of frontier settlers and Native Americans and give voice to this history. Re-enactors also enliven the experience of life at a frontier fort and demonstrate the skirmishes between settlers and natives.

[Wilderness Road](#)

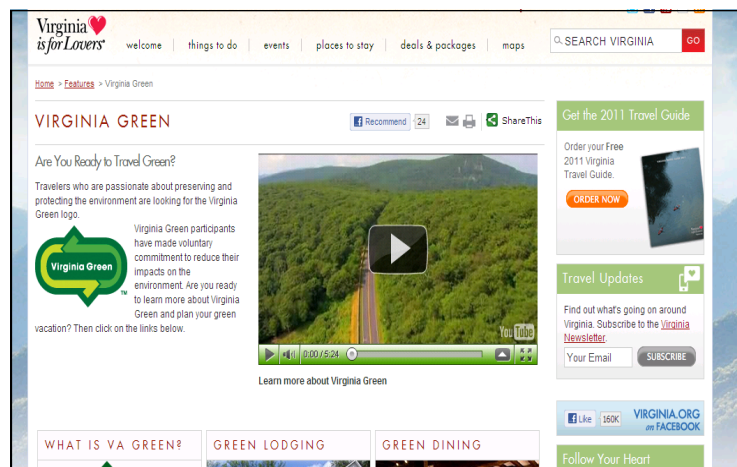
Wilderness Road State Park
 Visitor Center
 Photos by
 Carolyn Brackett



6. **Build park employees' awareness of the surrounding area's amenities.** Provide hospitality training so park employees are ambassadors to the park and the surrounding region. Provide information about Haysi's visitor services, restaurants, local crafts and artisans, heritage and recreational trails, events, etc.
7. **Market the conference center as a site for events.** For families visiting Breaks, offer the conference center as a site for reunions, parties or other events. Additionally, reach out to recreational user groups, so they are aware of the facility as a conference and meeting site.
7. **Enhance virtual as well as real park visits.** The proposed closed-circuit TV camera at the base of the gorge would allow park visitors, friends, and family members of kayakers or other paddlers to experience some of the thrill of riding the Class 5 rapids. It would also be a great online site to "visit the Breaks today." This is but one opportunity to reach beyond the visitors in the park as well as enhance the experience for on-site visitors.
8. **Develop and introduce a "green" program at Breaks.** According to a study by National Geographic Society and the U.S. Travel Association, the majority of the traveling public (71%) indicates it is important that their visits to a destination not damage its environment. The *Breaks Marketing Plan 2011-15* also indicates park visitors in general chose to make more environmentally friendly and active lifestyle choices, and 61 percent make buying decisions based on a product/company's environmental impact (versus 23 percent in the general population). Breaks should support this interest by "greening" its facilities, programs and operations.

Case Study: Green Lodging in Virginia

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) runs Virginia Green Lodging as part of the state's overall Virginia Green program. The DEQ requires hospitality participants to join in "Core Activities" such as optional linen service, recycling, water conservation, energy conservation and green meeting planning. The voluntary program is self-policing with no on-site audits. In 2007, fifteen facilities had been certified as Virginia Green Lodging facilities.



[Virginia Green](#) helps travelers find green locations when they travel in Virginia.

Green Hotels Association (GHA) brings hotels together who are interested in becoming environmentally friendly. The three main tenets of the association are saving water, saving energy and reducing solid waste while saving money. Member hotels take myriad actions to meet the goals, including posting signs that say "Drinking water served on request only" to the hotels' restaurant menus, offering towel rack hangers and sheeting changing cards asking guests to consider using bed linens more than one time.

Flannagan Dam and Reservoir

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers website, the USACE hosts more than 370 million visits annually at its 422 lake and river projects in 43 states, making it the largest federal provider of outdoor recreational use. Visitation has steadily increased in recent years resulting in increased demands on USACE resources and facilities, and this upward trend is forecasted to continue. Despite increasing demand, recreation program budgets nationwide have steadily declined. This trend is seen at Flannagan Dam and Reservoir.

The Flannagan Dam and Reservoir is an excellent asset for visitors, with boating, camping, fishing and other river recreational activities. Flannagan attracts approximately 450,000 visitors each year, with the majority (around 75 percent) coming from within a 30 to 50 mile radius and out-of-area visitors usually drawn by nearby relatives. An exception is the particularly diverse backgrounds of whitewater enthusiasts during rafting weekends in October and the anglers and hunters year-round. Most of the anglers and hunters stay in Kentucky.



Flannagan Dam Spillway
Photo by Kendra Briechle

In May 2011, the ACE released its national *Recreation Strategic Plan* to provide guidance to ensure the USACE continues to provide safe, quality outdoor recreation in light of current and future budget realities. Water-based recreation is the major attraction of most USACE recreation areas such as Flannagan. Recognizing this fact, the plan provides field managers with flexibility and options to make the changes necessary to implement sound fiscal operations, pursue new partnerships and leases, promote environmentally sustainable behaviors and strengthen the workforce. To the benefit of Flannagan, the plan recommends consideration of visitor input and national and regional trends to determine visitors' needs, as well as enhanced asset management by evaluating facilities and programs, and to respond to these needs in staffing and programming. The plan also promotes strengthened marketing and communications of recreational assets at the national and local level. (The need for both increased marketing and partnerships was noted during the Haysi assessment visit.) Finally, the plan suggests increased latitude to allocate funds to the most efficient parks. Flannagan ranks as extremely efficient but is struggling with aging infrastructure and the need to improve amenities and waterlines.

The assessment team noted the USACE's limits to promote and further develop its recreational opportunities, underscoring the need for partnerships to realize the recreational potential at Flannagan. Last year, Flannagan collected \$40,000 in use fees. Currently, all use fees (for camping, shelter rental, boating) go to the U.S. Treasury, not back to Flannagan's coffers.

Flannagan's staff is limited to serving in advisory capacity and as ad hoc members on local committees. The Corps staff is also not allowed to spend money outside the property, such as on advertising the Reservoir. Instead, Flannagan relies on Dickenson County Chamber's tourism efforts and marketing from the Friends of Flannagan group.

Flannagan's unofficial Friends group supports the recreational functions surrounding the reservoir. The volunteers involved in Friends of Flannagan help with lake clean up, rally citizen involvement, serve as 24-hour campground hosts and organize the annual Youth Fishing Day and other events. However, the group's effectiveness is limited by the lack of 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.

The county has also partnered with Flannagan on specific facilities. For example, Dickenson County provides funding for facilities within Flannagan, including the floating docks, stage and picnic shelter. The Corps manages and maintains the facilities, and the county makes physical improvements as needed.

The Haysi-Breaks Trail is another example of partnership with the county. The planned trail extends 500 feet onto Flannagan land, and the trailhead will be established within Flannagan. As the county plans construction of Phase 1, the USACE is completing the environmental and construction permitting process. The county will maintain the trailhead, and the USACE will provide the easement for trail maintenance.

Evaluation

- John W. Flannagan Dam and Reservoir is a part of the Big Sandy flood protection system. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers designed and supervised construction of the dam and now operates it for public benefit. The dam is 250 feet high and 916 feet long. A 1,145-acre lake is formed behind the dam with almost 40 miles of shoreline. South of the dam is the emergency spillway. The spillway gates are used to control high water and prevent the lake from flowing over the top of the dam. Built primarily for flood control, the lake surface is kept at an elevation of 1,396 feet above sea level for recreation during the summer. During the fall, the lake is lowered 16 feet to hold additional water from winter and spring runoff. Opening the gates is coordinated with other dams on the Big Sandy and Ohio Rivers as a part of a larger flood control system. The dam has prevented millions of dollars of damage in excess of the \$20 million it cost to build.
- During the first four full weekends in October, Flannagan has whitewater releases to achieve winter pool. From the dam, the first two miles are Class II rapids which progresses downstream reaching Class V + rapids. Some of the most challenging rapids in the eastern U.S. can be found while traveling through Breaks Interstate Park with names like 20 Stitches, Broken Nose and Triple Drop. In October 2010, more than 1,700 paddlers in kayaks, canoes and rafts experienced the whitewater from Flannagan to the Breaks.
- Bicycles are permitted on main roads and campground areas. There are no mountain biking or hiking trails. ATVs are strictly prohibited on Corps property under Title 36.
- Launch ramps for boating enthusiasts and fishermen are located at the Spillway Launch Area, Junction Area and Cranesnest Area. Fees are charged at the Junction. Campers have launch ramps at Pound River and Lower Twin Camping Areas.
- John W. Flannagan Reservoir has three campgrounds: Lower Twin, Cranesnest Areas #1 and #3 and Pound River Area. These three campgrounds offer a total of 93 sites, with electrical hook-ups available for RV pads. Water tank filling and sewage dump stations are available at all campgrounds. Camping fees are charged at all sites. Camping is available from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Camping at John W. Flannagan Reservoir is prohibited outside of the developed campgrounds.

- John W. Flannagan Pound River Area offers a horse show ring which is managed by the Cumberland Mountain Trail Riders. Shows are scheduled the second of the month, June through August. Trail ride outings are in May and September.
- Fishing and hunting are allowed on Corps property.
- Rangers have made a food plot of wild grasses and other foods for wild animals to eat. There is no visitor viewing area.
- There are no significant historical/cultural sites at John W. Flannagan Dam and Reservoir.
- John W. Flannagan Boat Dock is located at the Junction Area and provides visitors with docking facilities, a gas station, fishing supplies and a snack bar.
- John W. Flannagan Reservoir has no developed swimming area. Swimming around the lake is at the visitor's own risk.
- The community baseball fields at Flannagan Dam are the best in the county.
- Virginia 611 Scenic Byway runs through the Corps property to the dam.
- The John W. Flannagan visitor center is located at the project office and has a variety of animal mounts of local species. Rangers are available to visitors on weekdays from 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- Boy Scouts are working with the Corps to turn the Upper Twin Campsite into a primitive camping area as part of a badge project.
- Rangers have focused recently on youth outreach initiatives and water safety programs in classrooms. Flannagan holds an annual Youth Fishing Day that brought 650 children and 1,800 adults to the lake in early May 2011. The event was organized by Flannagan's volunteer community group and is a successful fundraising event for the group.
- Since 2003, the Dam has been operating on a fixed budget. The main funding expenditures are for operation and management only. With the exception of upgrades to electrical power in campgrounds, there are no plans to expand or improve recreational facilities.

Challenges

- **Funding.** With no increase in funding, Flannagan's staff members are unable to make upgrades (hiking, mountain biking trails, etc.).
- **Mission.** As an USACE project, Flannagan's number one priority is flood control, not recreation. In addition, USACE staff can only serve as ad hoc members of local committees.
- **Publicity.** USACE policy prohibits Flannagan from publicizing or marketing recreational amenities directly with advertising and press releases (news stories that include the Dam are acceptable).

The whitewater release each October is very popular with rafters and kayakers.
Photo courtesy of Marty Davis, US ACE



Recommendations

1. **Consider programming at stage area.** There is ample parking and facilities (music stage, picnic shelters and restrooms) around the spillway for events. A music stage was built with the intention to have performers and community events at the Dam, but it has yet to be used. The stage could be used for performances during the summer camping or whitewater season.
2. **Given the demand for paddling during the October dam releases, consider opening the campgrounds for these weekends.** Currently, paddlers need to lodge at Breaks.
3. **Support the plan for construction of the proposed Haysi-Breaks trail to the Flannagan Dam.** The Haysi-Breaks trail is planned to reach Flannagan Dam, connecting the public lands of Breaks and Flannagan and the town of Haysi. The trail has the potential to increase visitors on horseback, bike and foot, a prospect which offers possibilities for expanding tourist attractions but also requiring attention to facilities, services and programming.
4. **Encourage the unofficial Friends group to pursue formal recognition as a 501(c)(3) to help with operation and maintenance of recreational facilities as well as marketing and partnerships.** The group currently provides more than \$200,000 in annual support to Flannagan. By securing formal nonprofit status, the group could pursue grants and other partnerships to enhance the recreational area.
5. **Develop a partnership between the Haysi and the Corps staff to promote their events and advertise their campgrounds and recreational offerings.**
6. **Haysi and Dickenson County officials should contact legislative representatives to communicate support for the return of Flannagan’s user fees to the county lease area.** Fees from camping, boating and shelter use currently go to the U.S. Treasury. Some of these funds should come back to support the operations and enhancements of recreational facilities.

How does this tie to Haysi?

As stated in the Haysi section of this report: “Make Haysi the ‘go to’ place for visitor services.” Haysi can capitalize on proximity to Flannagan by:

- Promoting Flannagan’s events and offerings
- Improving downtown Haysi so that Flannagan’s campers, boaters and paddlers know Haysi as a place to stop when they want an alternative to the campfire and a warm welcome following a wet river run.

Russell Fork River

The Russell Fork River is a free-flowing stream with 16 miles of whitewater between Haysi, Virginia and Elkhorn City, Kentucky. The gorge section is usually runnable 9-10 months of the year.

Evaluation

- Each October, the Corps of Engineers draws the Flanagan Reservoir down from summer to winter pool. The dam is on the Pound River, approximately 1 mile upstream from its confluence with the Russell Fork at Bartlick. These releases are scheduled over four weekends in October providing great whitewater.
- The Breaks gorge section of the Russell Fork above 500 cfs offers stiff Class V technical creek style whitewater. The run's unforgiving reputation is well earned. Four separate rapids have claimed lives, and serious injury is not uncommon in the gorge. Strong Class IV+ skills are necessary for full flows.
- Regional paddlers run the gorge year-round at much lower flows, as low as 100 cfs. At levels below 375-400 cfs, the river loses a lot of its teeth and becomes a good Class IV creek. Because of its pool/drop nature, solid Class III paddlers should have the skills to navigate the awesome gorge run at these lower levels.
- The upper section of the Russell Fork is a class II-IV run at release levels with plenty of play spots and technical rapids which are appropriate for less advanced paddlers. The lower section of the Russell Fork is a great training ground for beginner and intermediate paddlers.
- There are four put-in locations: Garden Hole, Bartlick, Haysi (Kiwanis Park), Flannagan Dam.
- Many put-in at the Dam and ride to Garden Hole before the major technical rapids at the Breaks.
- If you ride through the gorge, the take out is at Ratliff Hole near Elkhorn City, Kentucky.
- The Friends of the Russell Fork (FORF) provide environmental education programs for the high school. Major projects include trash clean ups, river trips, water quality monitoring and high school curriculum.
- Water quality testing is occurring monthly with assistance from the Resource Conservation and Development office in Clintwood. Overall, the water quality of the Russell Fork is good. A major issue is *e. coli* from straight pipes from homes. FORF is working with the Virginia Department of Health's septic tank program to upgrade housing sewerage infrastructure.
- FORF is working on a Google maps project for the public which will provide interactive web information about the river and historical information about the area ([Friends of Russell Fork](#))
- Rafting through Haysi is possible, but there can be a lot of trash which makes the ride unpleasant.
- U.S. Wildwater Team Trials are occurring on the Russell Fork River on October 15-16, 2011 in Elkhorn City, Kentucky.



The Russell Fork River winds through Haysi.
Photo by Kendra Briechle

Challenges

- The biggest draw for paddlers is during October when the Corps releases the dam.
- The river is often too technical and dangerous for rafting/paddling guides to take trips through the gorge. Some outfitters (based in Kentucky) put-in at the dam and ride to the Breaks, get out and put-in on the other side of the gorge and ride into Kentucky.
- There are no rental or gear services in the Haysi area for paddlers.

Recommendations

1. **Create larger dam release events at the dam on the weekends in October (music, food, crafts, paddling expos)**
2. **Develop put-ins in the Haysi area that are suitable for lower-skilled paddlers and family rafting and canoeing and are easy to shuttle between.**
3. **Continue to support the work of FORF and raise public awareness of the importance of the Russell Fork as an asset to the community through community trash clean-ups, river celebrations, etc.**
4. **Create opportunities for tourists to participate in conservation stewardship activities.**

Case Study

Northern Forest Canoe River Trail Combines Work with Vacation for Travelers

When the nonprofit Northern Forest Canoe River Trail (NFCT) was created in 2000, organizers set as the mission connecting people to the natural environment, human heritage and contemporary communities along the 740-mile inland paddling trail tracing historic travel routes across New York, Vermont, Québec, New Hampshire and Maine.

To meet the mission of stewardship, and to offer an opportunity to visitors who want to combine a little work with their vacation, NFCT created Waterway Work Trips. NFCT selects sites along the route that are in need of work and designs three-day trips that include trail maintenance along with paddling. Participants pay a small fee to cover the cost of food and bring their own camping and paddling gear. Interns prep the site and are on hand to supervise participants' work.



Checking a map route on the Saranac River, New York
Photo courtesy of Lisa Dyslin, Northern Forest Canoe River Trail

“This program has been well received,” says NFCT executive director Kate Williams. “It engages people who are willing to volunteer their time, roll up their sleeves, and help steward the trail.” For more information, visit [Northern Forest Canoe Trail](http://NorthernForestCanoeTrail.org) or contact Kate Williams at kate@northernforestcanoetrail.org, telephone: 802-496-2285.

Splashdam Park

Within a few years of the completion of the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railway in 1915, Splashdam, located near Haysi, was one of several coal mining towns that sprang up along the route. Eventually, the town was flooded, and residents moved away. Today, there are still some building foundations. The development of the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail, as well as the Haysi-Breaks Hike-Bike Trail which will extend to Splashdam, offers an opportunity to develop this site as a heritage attraction and recreation area. The town of Haysi owns the land and is developing plans to create a town park, picnic site and trailhead for the river and bike-hike trail. Plans include interpretation of the coal town through interpretive signage. Recording the stories of previous residents can help make the site come alive for visitors. Interpretation might also include a special event celebrating the coal town, inviting past residents, including costumed re-enactors and sharing the coal town's heritage with today's residents and visitors.

Case Study

Blue Heron Mining Camp, Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Kentucky

From the National Park Service website [Blue Heron](#):

Blue Heron, or Mine 18, is an abandoned coal mining town and was a part of the Stearns Coal and Lumber Company's past operation located in southeast Kentucky in the present-day Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area. The mines operated from 1937-1962. During that time, hundreds of people lived and worked in this isolated community on the banks of the Big South Fork River. When the mine closed in 1962, the buildings were either removed or lapsed into decay. Today, the site is interpreted as an outdoor museum with new structures that are open, metal shells of buildings, referred to as "ghost structures" built on the approximate site of the original buildings.

Each structure is themed around a different aspect of community life such as the school, church or woman's life. Stories are told by the former residents whose voices are heard in an audio program where they share their memories and feelings about life in Blue Heron. In addition to the audio program, each structure contains an exhibit case housing photographs and everyday items which are relevant to the building's theme. The site also includes a model of the town at its heyday in the 1950s and a model of the coal tippie and bridge.



Blue Heron Mining Camp tells the story of this Kentucky coal mining town through the voices of the people who lived there.

Photos by Carolyn Brackett

Southwest Virginia Region and Heartwood

The planning efforts of the 19-county Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission are impressive. The SWCHC promotes the character, culture, heritage and recreational amenities of the region through artisan trails, interpretive cultural trails and events, music, craft and food festivals. Opening in July 2011, Heartwood: Southwest Virginia’s Artisan Gateway provides a tremendous resource to highlight and market the region’s vast contributions to the arts and provides an outlet for area performers, craftspeople and a wide range of artisans. Heartwood Center also offers excellent interpretation of the role of arts in the heritage as well as the creative economy of southwest Virginia. The addition of local food, roasters, wineries and breweries complements the center’s physical form to provide a down-home, authentic welcome to the surrounding region. Located 60 miles from Haysi in Abingdon, Heartwood is designed to promote - not compete with - local businesses and to ensure all products, even t-shirts, are made locally. Haysi and Dickenson County can view the opening of Heartwood as a great opportunity to bolster the local economy and draw visitors to the area.



Photo by Kendra Briechle

Evaluation

- Haysi and Dickenson County are incorporated into all of the ongoing efforts of the region, and the potential of the area is recognized by regional planning leaders.
 - The Southwest Regional Council is targeting Haysi as an outdoor recreation center.
 - The non-profit organization, Appalachian Sustainable Development, works

throughout southwest Virginia connecting farmers and forest landowners to create products and promote farmer’s markets. There is a regional farmers’ market network throughout the area. Due to landscape challenges, Haysi and Dickenson County do not produce food, but there are several value-added products made in the area.



Challenges

- Drawing visitors by developing tangible experiences and tourism products to Haysi.
- Access to Haysi is on a long, winding mountain road—too far for some travelers who want to stay on or near the interstate.



Top photo: Todd Christensen gives a tour of Heartwood.
Bottom photo: Katie Allen views an exhibit at Heartwood.
Photos by Carolyn Brackett

Recommendations

1. Continue to work with the Southwest Regional Council and SVCHC to promote Haysi as a recreational and cultural destination.
2. As several regional trails (artisan, cultural, scenic) all converge in Haysi, promote Haysi as a “trailhead” and must-see attraction for those traveling through the area.
3. Develop opportunities to connect Haysi to visitors at Heartwood that will draw them from the highway to Haysi.
4. Be sure to have local (within Haysi and Dickenson County) outlets for the arts.



Heartwood: Southwest Virginia’s Artisan Gateway
Photo by Carolyn Brackett

Clintwood

Clintwood, located about 20 miles from Haysi, is the county seat of Dickenson County. Clintwood is currently the county’s primary community for tourists with the visitors’ center, lodging, dining and attractions all found in the downtown. As Haysi is further developed for tourists, the two communities can collaborate to have more to offer visitors, encouraging them to stay longer and generating a larger economic impact in the county.

Recommendations

1. **Look for opportunities to reuse existing buildings.** Encourage creative reuse of existing buildings--temporary and permanent. The gas station could be converted into a coffee shop (see Silverton, Oregon coffee shop). Vacant storefronts could be used to display information about the town’s history or post canvas with an image of a store and shoppers. (See Crystal City storefront example on page 37.) Such creativity enlivens the streetscape while telling the town’s story.



A vacant gas station in Clintwood could be converted into a coffee shop as this one was in Silverton, Oregon.
Photos by Kendra Briechele

2. **Share information about the surrounding region with visitors to the Ralph Stanley Museum and the Jettie Center** – Since opening in 2004, the Ralph Stanley Museum has hosted visitors from 30 countries. Located on Main Street in a 100-year-old mansion, the museum traces the history of mountain music and tells the story of Ralph Stanley and his impact on traditional bluegrass and country music in a series of state-of-the-art exhibits. Several events are held throughout the year including a birthday celebration for Stanley. The Jettie Center is located across the street from the museum and houses a 350-seat auditorium. Since January 2011, the center has been the setting for popular Friday night jam sessions showcasing gospel, bluegrass and traditional music. Both sites are part of The Crooked Road and are key destinations in Dickenson County. As more attractions and visitor services are developed in Haysi and the surrounding region, visitors who are already coming to these sites should be given information on additional things to see and do. Interpretive displays, information kiosks and brochures should be placed at both sites to share this information. Additionally, consider way to increase the use of the Jettie Center with programming to supplement live performances. The Center might consider hosting movie nights or movie festivals with a music theme that attract locals as well as visitors.



Pam and Richard Morris welcome visitors to the Ralph Stanley Museum in Clintwood.
Photo by Kendra Briechle

3. **Make information available at the visitors' center every day** – The Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center is located in a historic home on Main Street making it easily accessible for visitors. To ensure that visitors can get information at any time consider installing an information kiosk (such as the one at Breaks Interstate Park) in front of the building. In addition, the hours and days the center is open should be posted on the entrance sign.



The Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center provides a central location for visitors to gather information about the county.
Photos by Carolyn Brackett



Activity Recommendations

Given the recreational focus in the region, this assessment and recommendations report includes specific activity recommendations. Recommendations focus primarily on bicycling given the existence of bicycle visitors already coming through Haysi on the TransAmerica/Bike Route 76. Additional information on bicycling is including in the Appendix.

Bicycling

There is no doubt bicycling is a popular outdoor recreation activity. In 2010, 43.3 million Americans six years and older participated in bicycling, making bicycling (road biking, mountain biking and BMX) the fourth most popular outdoor activity in America (OIA, 2010). As a result, the bicycling industry is also one that generates billions in revenue and taxes, creates jobs and leads to expenditures in other recreational and service related industries.

In 2006, the bicycle industry was estimated to support 1.1 million jobs, generate nearly \$18 billion in federal, state, and local taxes and contribute \$133 billion annually to the U.S. economy. (Outdoor Industry Foundation, [Active Outdoor Recreation Economy](#), 2006.)

A recent study of the demographics of today's bicycle rider has found almost all growth in bicycling in the U.S. over the past two decades was among men between 25-64 years old. Although bicycling rates do not vary much by income level, bicycling purposes do. Low-income persons bike mainly for utilitarian purposes, and high-income persons bike more for recreation and exercise (Pucher, J., et al., "Bicycling Renaissance in North America?," *Transportation Research A*, Vol. 45, in press, 2011.)

Recreational bike riders with a higher income are able to stay longer, spend more money and contribute more to the overall economy of the areas they visit. In 2003, a study of mountain bike riders indicated that over 80 percent of respondents had taken at least one overnight trip to go mountain biking (Green, D., *Travel Patterns of Destination Mountain Bikers*, 2003). And not only do they generate dollars as part of the bicycling industry, their effect can be felt in other industries as well. Bicycling is characterized as a "gateway activity" as 78 percent of bikers participate in another outdoor activity (OIA, 2010) such as kayaking, rafting, hiking, climbing—many of the activities the Haysi area offers.

In rural areas, recreational bike riding accounts for 62 percent of all bike trips (Pucher, J.). This figure may be accurate for the Haysi area, if not higher, due to the popularity of the US Bike Route 76 that goes through the town of Haysi to Breaks Interstate Park. The ability this recreational user group has to support sustainable tourism and economic development presents an opportunity to develop facilities and services to increase bicycling use, improve safety and enhance the quality of life for residents.



Bicycling is a popular activity for all ages.
Photo courtesy Balance Bike Trainer.

Recommendations

1. **Make Haysi more welcoming to bicyclists.** Haysi and Dickenson County already have the benefit of the US Bike Route 76, the cross-country bike route that brings bicyclists to the area. The town and county can encourage cyclists to stop for awhile rather than riding through. The nearby communities of Abingdon and Damascus provide examples for Haysi on how to create an inviting atmosphere for cyclists.

2. **Improve the road condition of Bike Route 76.** Route 76 offers beautiful vistas but its tight curves and poor road conditions provide a perilous journey for cyclists. Route 76 should be improved following context-sensitive design for bicyclists to ensure safe riding for cars as well by repaving and resurfacing to improve road condition without losing the mountain feel. A redesign should also take into account environmental conditions, ensuring bike lanes or other improvements don't expand the footprint or impact on sensitive environmental resource areas. (See section on Context Sensitive Solutions on page 20).

3. **Improve driver awareness of cyclists along Bike Route 76.** While Route 76 is marked with route signs, drivers might not be aware of this designation. Encourage bike-friendly driving by posting signs that indicate caution for cyclists, especially around blind curves or hairpin mountain turns.



Bike Route 76
Photo by Kendra Briechle

4. **Complete the Breaks-Haysi Bike and Hike Trail.** The Haysi-Breaks Trail will provide a safe alternative path for resident riders, weekend peddlers and serious cross-country cyclists.

5. **Improve Bicycle Facilities.** (See Appendix for more information on Bicycle Facilities.) Developing adequate bicycle facilities and services can not only bolster the economy by providing outlets for visiting recreational bike users to stay longer, spend more money and return for additional visits, but the facilities also provide opportunities for local residents to get outdoors, become active and engage in their communities.

- **Forty-five percent of Americans say their communities lack enough places to bike.** (Belden Russonello and Stewart, *The 2011 Community Preference Survey: What Americans are looking for when deciding where to live*, conducted for the National Association of Realtors, March 2011.)
- According to a government survey, **almost half (47%) of Americans 16 and older say they would like to see more bike paths, lanes, and trails in their community.** (Royal, D., and D. Miller-Steiger, *National Survey of Bicyclist and Pedestrian Attitudes and Behavior*, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2008.)
- **People are less likely to bicycle where pavement quality is poor.** (Sener et al., *An analysis of bicyclists and bicycling characteristics: Who, why, and how much are they bicycling?*, 2008.)

6. **Create/Work with bicycle groups to identify areas for improvement.** Choosing the right bicycle facility is determined by the context of the roadway. In areas where there is the most possible conflict with automobiles, bike lanes should be designated to reduce risks of collision. One such area would be the downtown Haysi. Though roadways are narrow and speeds are slow, bikers can benefit from better distinguished travel areas and signage to educate bikers and drivers that this is a shared area. Enhancing bike facilities in and around the downtown Haysi area will make biking more attractive and safer for recreational bike users. A local bicycle group can be a great resource to identify these areas and can volunteer to help make improvements. The Southwest Virginia Cyclists, [SWVAC](#), is a good resource to contact for their events, group rides and input on cycling in the area.
7. **Develop and/or improve bicycle services.** Bicycle services and bike facilities work hand-in-hand to provide recreational opportunities that support economic development. As a bicycling destination, Haysi is poised to provide the bicycling services to meet the needs of cyclists. Services can include bicycle retail and repair shops, bicycle racks and lockers, bicycle hostels and additional goods and services that support other activities as well such as groceries and outdoor gear shops. (See Appendix for more information on Bicycle Services.)
8. **Consider launching a bike event, festival, rally or race.** Knowing bicycle services are available allows riders to feel more comfortable traveling to new destinations. Having services such as bicycle shop, safe and convenient bike parking and a bike hostel also opens the door to attracting visitors through organized events which can lead to greater visitor spending in a region.
9. **Pursue Funding Opportunities to Support Bicycling.** Although Congress has not approved a new federal transportation law, the Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) has demonstrated considerable support for bicycling and bicycle related projects. Between 2005 and 2009, SAFETEA-LU authorized \$4.5 billion for bicycling and walking. Several programs provide funding for a variety of projects, both on-road and off, and can be valuable resources to improve bicycle facilities in communities.
 - **Transportation Enhancements** – \$2.5 billion was authorized for new bike paths, lanes, and safe crossings.
 - **A New National Safe Routes to School Program** – \$612 million to help communities create safe ways for kids to pedal and walk to school.
 - **A New Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Program** – \$100 million to develop model bicycle/pedestrian communities in Columbia, Missouri; Sheboygan, Wisconsin; Marin County, California; and Minneapolis, Minnesota.
 - **High-Priority Projects** – \$1 billion in guaranteed funding for high-priority projects that benefit bicycling.
 - **Recreational Trails Program** – \$350 million for construction and repair of dirt trails.

Recreational road bicycling events are popular all across the United States. Participants are inspired by the opportunities to improve fitness, have fun and raise money and awareness for a variety of important causes. In 2008, Bikes Belong conducted a survey of U.S. recreational bike-event promoters in order to estimate the size, number and direct economic impact of these rides and also to learn more about how these events benefit communities and causes nationwide. The results indicate:

- More than 1,700 U.S. recreational road riding events were organized in 2008.
- More than 1 million Americans participated in recreational road riding events in 2008.
- Total 2008 revenue from recreational road riding events topped \$240 million.
- Two-thirds of these 2008 rides were tied to a cause, raising nearly \$200 million total.
- Riders spent nearly \$140 million on food, lodging and other purchases at these events.

For minimal investment, communities can benefit economically from recreational bicycling events of all sizes. The \$140 million in direct participant spending is only a portion of the greater economic impact these rides bring to host communities. One study estimated that each ride participant generates \$535 in direct economic impact, which would total \$572 million based on participation figures. (Gluskin Townley Group: *The Economic Power of the NBTDA*, NBTDA Annual Conference, November 7, 2008.)

Events range from relaxed rides to high-energy races. In Missouri, the Katy Trail is an excellent rail-trail conversion offering a service-supported bike ride for the whole family. This 190-mile trail offers views of the Missouri River, historical stops on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and stops in many towns with attractions for all ages. [Adventure Cycling](#)

The 2009 USA Cycling National Cyclocross Championships brought more than \$1 million in direct spending to the Bend, Oregon region. The 2009 Road Nationals brought more than \$1.4 million to the area. (Lindberg, K., *Economic Impact Study: 2009 USA Cycling Cyclocross National Championships, 2010.*)

Case Study

Clarion-Little Toby Rail Trail, Pennsylvania

The Clarion-Little Toby Rail Trail. In 1992, residents in the town of Ridgway, Pennsylvania sought to use old lumber rail rights-of-way to create a bike path for the families and townspeople. Shortly after the 2003 opening of the 18-mile Clarion-Little Toby Rail Trail connecting Ridgway to the nearby town of Brockway, out-of-town visitors began appearing in town to ride the route. These cyclists frequented downtown cafes and shops and sought out in-town lodging, and an existing canoe outfitter expanded to provide bike gear and repairs. According to local business owners, the trail was the beginning of Ridgway's downtown revitalization of commercial and residential areas, as visitors supported local services and jobs were added.

The Clarion-Little Toby Rail Trail in Ridgway, Pennsylvania is popular with residents and visitors.
Photo by Kendra Briechle



Case Study

Fruita, Colorado—A Bike Friendly Town

In 1995, businessman Troy Rarick took a big chance and opened a bike shop in the struggling town of Fruita, Colorado. Over the Edge Sports was one of the few businesses in the mostly vacant downtown. But the shop encouraged the community to build mountain bike trails and organize an annual Fruita Fat Tire Festival. In the 15 years since, Fruita has earned a reputation as a world-class mountain biking destination that pumps \$25 million a year into the local economy with visitors spending money in hotels, grocery stores, restaurants, and the bike shops. [Fruita Fat Tire Festival](#)

Case Study

Abingdon to Damascus—The Virginia Creeper Trail

The Virginia Creeper Trail stretches 34 miles from Abingdon to Damascus along the Whitetop Laurel River and up to its highest point Whitetop Station near the North Carolina State Line at Whitetop, Virginia. The Virginia Creeper Trail is open to hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding. With the development of the trail, the towns realized the demand for visitor services. These towns and others along the trail offer bike rentals and shuttle services, food, lodging and specialty shops. They have also marketed their trail with additional recreational opportunities such as fly fishing, hiking, and horseback riding. [VA Creeper Trail](#) It was estimated that in 2004, the Virginia Creeper Trail generated \$1.59 million in annual spending, supporting 27 new full-time jobs. (*United States Department of Agriculture, Trails and Economic Development, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2007*)



Photo courtesy thefullwiki.org

Haysi-Breaks Trail

Phase 1 groundbreaking of the Haysi-Breaks Trail was potentially scheduled for the summer of 2011. Master planning was initiated in 1999 with TEA21 (federal transportation) funding. More recently, planning consultants at Hill Studio outlined a six-phase process to develop trail segments for the 13-mile trail including parking, trailheads, seven trail designs (depending on terrain and trail materials), interpretive signs, bridges, plantings and shelters for a total of \$10.2 million. Virginia Department of Transportation funding of \$2 million is in place. The funding specs require a 14-foot wide trail, a very wide base for a non-motorized trail. The Friends of Russell Fork (FORF) is currently working on sign design for the trail.

Recommendations

- 1. Design the trail for non-motorized use. The trail should be focused on non-motorized use with creation of separate trails for other user groups. Transportation Enhancement funds are limited to non-motorized uses. The combination of pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians can work well but the requirements for off-road vehicles (ATVs) are quite different. In addition to design challenges, trail users seek a different experience than a low-grade rail-trail. [see section on ATVs]**
- 2. Create other trail opportunities for equestrian users.** See Pine Mountain Trail in the following section.
- 3. Include nature and cultural heritage interpretation along trail.** Points along the trail provide opportunities for telling Haysi and Dickenson County's story including Appalachian heritage, coal mining, moonshining, the railroad and the natural heritage of the gorge and mountains and the diverse plants and animals found in the area.

Pine Mountain Horse Trail

The Pine Mountain Horse Trail follows the crest of the Cumberland Mountains dividing Virginia and Kentucky. Other equine attractions in the county include a horse show ring at Flannagan Dam & Reservoir and horse trails at Breaks Interstate Park.

Recommendation

- 1. Seek completion of the equestrian Pine Mountain Horse Trail between Cumberland Gap and the Breaks Park.** While this trail will be mostly across the state line in Kentucky, it will include sections in Wise and Dickenson County, with access planned for points along Virginia Routes 630 and 611, and will terminate at Breaks. Equestrians are seeking a mix of ride lengths. Many seek out multi-day rides.
- 2. Provide resources for riders and horses.** Regardless of trail length, equestrians need horse trailer parking and horse campgrounds with running water to care for their animals. The Pine Mountain Trail would provide a great attraction for horse enthusiasts to visit Haysi and Dickenson County.

Mountain Bike Trails

The area surrounding Haysi also provides opportunities for mountain biking. Mountain biking is a growing sport, with 7.1 million enthusiasts nationwide, according to the Outdoor Foundation. In 2010, bikers were second only to the 32.6 million hikers as users of backcountry trails in the United States. The *Wall Street Journal* noted the growth in mountain biking in a recent article focusing on flow trails: one-way, downhill trails that provide a well-designed path for bikers, an experience akin to skiing. (Carlton, Jim. "For Mountain Bikers, New Ways to Go Downhill Fast," WSJ. p. D1. July 27, 2011.) Flow trails are only in a few areas in the U.S. The two closest trails to Haysi are in Edgefield, South Carolina and Raystown Lake, Pennsylvania. Such a trail system might be part of a strategy to increase mountain biking in the region, especially given the lack of other nearby sites.

Recommendations

- 1. Evaluate mountain biking opportunities carefully to determine demand, user needs, facilities, impact and compatibility with other users.** The Haysi region and surrounding county should evaluate the demand for mountain biking in the region and, if promoting further, design trails carefully to minimize conflicts between downhill bike-only runs and shared-trail networks.
- 2. Recreational and road cycling should be the initial focus,** given the large number of cyclists already attracted to the US 76 Bike Route.

Water Trails

Water Trails, or blueways, offer opportunities to enjoy scenic and historical sites along a riverway by kayak, canoe or other water use. Water trails typically include points of interest, access locations, day-use sites and camping areas that are accompanied by a map or guide brochure.

The Russell Fork River provides an opportunity for a water trail that provides access to the river and the town of Haysi through an interpretive recreational activity incorporating lumber and coal heritage, distinct natural resources and physical activity. With the development of the Haysi-Breaks Trail, a complementary water trail can provide additional ways to experience the area on land and in the water.



Russell Fork River
Photo by Kendra Briechle

The Chesapeake Bay Gateway Network provides a Water Trail Toolkit to assist in the planning, development and management of water trails. [Bay Gateways](#) Another resource is the National Park Service's River and Trails Conservation Assistance Program. Their website provides a multitude of studies, surveys and technical assistance for the development of water trails. [NPS Water Trails](#)

Recommendations

- 1. Promote river access along Russell Fork in Haysi to allow people to view paddlers.**
- 2. Develop information on rafting and paddling opportunities for area**

Off-Road/All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs)

While interest exists in the county for ATV use, this use is not typically part of a sustainable tourism strategy. However, as with any tourism strategy, Haysi and Dickinson County should evaluate ATV tourism carefully to determine user needs, existing or possible facilities, impact on resources and compatibility for mixed-use facilities.

While some in Haysi are considering ATV use on local roads, Virginia law prohibits ATV use on public highways except to cross these roads, for agricultural purposes, or while in Buchanan County, subject to specific parameters. Most ATVs are, by their nature, not designed for street use and may require modifications in order to be ridden on roadways.

The 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan ([Recreational Planning](#)) suggests local governments look for opportunities to develop motorized trails on private lands in the region. Before pursuing such a venture, Haysi and the county should determine first whether the region can offer the experience ATV users want while considering the possible costs and benefits. Surveys done in Pennsylvania suggest that ATV users seek trails with frequent grade changes and longer-mileage rides. Guidance from Pennsylvania also indicates that ATVers are not typically interested in riding rail-trails with very low-grade changes and long curves. The shortest system in the West Virginia Hatfield-McCoy trail system is 50 miles. In addition, the region should also evaluate whether an opportunity exists to provide private ATV venues. The Hatfield-McCoy trail system is located on private and corporate timber lands and mining company lands. This land is made available to the public through an agreement with the State of West Virginia. The Virginia Outdoors Plan also notes that most users ride responsibly but a small percentage have left lasting impacts on the land. The region should consider how best to manage motorized vehicle use and ensure the protection of the area's natural beauty.

Recommendation

- 1. Evaluate ATV tourism carefully to determine demand, user needs, facilities, impact and compatibility with other users.**

Fundraising

Haysi and Dickinson County have done quite well in attracting state and federal funds. We have provided additional thoughts on traditional funding sources in other places within this assessment but also provide some ideas on creative fundraising ventures.

- A community in Pennsylvania held a log-cabin raising then auctioned the cabin online with proceeds going to the local redevelopment efforts.
- Gateway communities surrounding the Waterloo State Recreation Area in Michigan held a Gateway Groove concert and silent auction at the local vineyard and winery. The \$50 ticket price benefits the Gateway Communities Initiative, a group dedicated to marketing western Washtenaw County and eastern Jackson County recreation areas and surrounding communities.

Conclusion

Support grows with every success whether it be a small change such as an upgraded sign or a large success like the revitalization of the downtown. Haysi's initiative is focused on improving residents' quality of life, building a sustainable economy for the future and positioning Haysi to be a trailhead to the region's beautiful cultural heritage and natural assets. The recommendations of this report will help to support future sustainable tourism projects and lead Haysi to success. Haysi's leadership and residents should celebrate the hard work and great progress they have already made and look to the abundant opportunities with optimism and shared vision inspiring community pride each step along the way.



Assessment team at Stateline Overlook. From the left, Michael Wampler, Interim Executive Director, Southwest Regional Recreation Authority of Virginia, Spearhead Trails; Jenny O'Quinn, Marketing Director, Breaks Interstate Park; Austin Bradley, Breaks Interstate Park; Katie Allen, Training Associate, The Conservation Fund; Kendra Briechle, Senior Training Associate, Conservation Leadership Network, The Conservation Fund; Carolyn Brackett, Senior Program Associate, Heritage Tourism Program, National Trust for Historic Preservation; Larry Yates, Mayor of Haysi

Appendix

Bicycle Facilities

Providing adequate bike facilities that are clearly marked can mean easier, safer and more frequent trips made by bicyclists. Bicycle facilities include shared roadways, signed shared roadways, bike lanes and shared-use paths.

Shared Roadways

Shared roadways can include upgrades to existing roads to accommodate bicyclists. Upgrades can include paved shoulders, on-street parking and increased street-width. Smooth pavement quality and efficient drainage is necessary to allow for the comfort and safety of road bikers.

Signed Shared Roadways

Signed shared roadways, such as the US Bicycle Route 76, are those that have been identified by signage as preferred bike routes. Signing of shared roadways indicates to cyclists that there are particular advantages to using these routes compared to alternate routes. This means the responsible agencies have taken action to ensure these routes are suitable as shared routes and will be maintained.

Bike Lanes

Bike lanes can be incorporated into a roadway when it is desirable to delineate available road space for preferential use by bicyclists and motorists and to provide for more predictable movements by each. Bike lane markings can increase a bicyclist's confidence in motorists not straying into their path of travel. Likewise, passing motorists are less likely to swerve to the left out of their lane to avoid bicyclists on their right.

Shared-use Paths

Shared use paths are facilities on exclusive right-of-way and with minimal cross flow by motor vehicles. Users are non-motorized and may include but are not limited to bicyclists, in-line skaters, roller skaters, wheelchair users (both non-motorized and motorized) and pedestrians, including walkers, runners, people with baby strollers, people walking dogs, etc. These facilities are most commonly designed for two-way travel.

More information about bicycle facilities can be found in the *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, 3rd Edition, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), 1999. [Bookstore](#)

Bicycle Services

Bike Shops

During 2006, Bikes Belong conducted a nationwide online survey of nearly 100 U.S. bicycle retailers whose shops are near newly constructed bike paths and trails. A summary of results concluded:

- Nearly 60% of bike shop owners surveyed said the new bike paths and trails near their shops have had a positive impact on bike and equipment sales at their stores.
- Almost 20% of those respondents said their sales increased by 10–25% as a result of the new trails, and another 7% estimated that their sales have increased 50% or more since the trails or paths were completed.
- Speaking generally, 85% of retailers polled said they believe paths and trails increase bike and equipment sales at bike shops nationwide, and 45% believe sales increase dramatically in areas where new paths and trails are built.

A spring 2006 Harris survey commissioned by the A.C. Nielsen Center for Marketing Research (at Bikes Belong's request) polled 1,000 men and women in 14 U.S. cities where new bike paths and trails had been built during the previous four years. Half of the respondents own bikes and were familiar with their area trails. Highlights include:

- One third of trail users reported they bike more often since they have become aware of new trails in their area.
- 15% of the trail users surveyed said their spending on bikes and accessories has increased since the new trails were built.
- Survey respondents who purchased bikes after they became aware of new trails in their area spent on average \$100 more than people who bought bikes before the trails were built.

The average bicycle shop has six full-time employees. With approximately 4,200 specialty bicycle retailers in the U.S., this totals 25,620 people employed full-time by these retailers (*National Bicycle Dealer Association, 2009*). Bike shops provide services not just for visitors, but for residents as well. In a recreational destination such as Haysi, bicycle retailers can provide the goods and services that are associated with bicycling, act as information resources about bicycling in the area for visitors and new riders and can often attract and create biking enthusiasts in communities.

Bike Parking

Bicycle racks are a simple and easy way to make an area more accessible for bikers. Having these amenities allows bikers the opportunity to explore downtowns, shop, eat and feel safe knowing that there is a secure place to leave a bike. The cost to build parking for 75 bikes is the same as creating parking for four cars. (Tran, V., "Student Commuter Trends: More students are biking, less driving," *The Daily Vanguard Online*, February 5, 2010). Investments in bike racks and parking can be inexpensive and compact but can make a big difference when becoming a bike-friendly town.

Bike racks can also be opportunities to get creative. Pierce County, Washington, for example, invited artists to submit design concepts for original bicycle racks as part of a month-long bicycle celebration. ([Tacoma Culture](#))

Bike Hostels

Bike hostels can take many shapes and forms, from the formal to the informal, all providing the necessary needs for the traveling cyclist. June “The Cookie Lady” Curry Bike Hostel in Afton, Virginia is a well-known stop along the TransAmerica bike route where June Curry has hosted over 10,000 cyclists at her home since 1976. She provides a well-stocked kitchen with food, cold water shower and lots of floor space with great hospitality.

The Elk Garden United Methodist Church in Elk Garden, Virginia opens its doors to traveling bikers and provides a bathroom, well-stocked kitchen with common food, floor sleeping or camping for an open donation.

“Al’s Place” in Farmington, Missouri is an interesting stay for cross-country cyclists. Over 1,000 cyclists are estimated to pass through Farmington and now they can stay at this new hostel in a refurbished county jail. This is a great example of a small community using its existing resources to meet a demand for lodging. The hostel has 14 bunk beds, three bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen and laundry room.

[Biking](#)

Haysi, Virginia Assessment Visit
Background Materials Provided to the Assessment Team

1. Haysi Downtown Revitalization Master Plan
2. Haysi Breaks Trail Master Plan Costs
3. Brochures
 - ◇ Explore Dickenson County: Virginia's Baby (Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce)
 - ◇ Explore The Crooked Road
 - ◇ Rivers to Ridges Artisan Trail
 - ◇ Treasures and Traditions in Southwest Virginia (Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority)
 - ◇ Dickenson County Road Map
 - ◇ John W. Flannagan Dam and Reservoir (US Army Corps of Engineers)
 - ◇ Breaks Interstate Park and Conference Center
 - ◇ Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network (membership brochure)
 - ◇ Spearhead Trails Fact Sheet
4. Newspaper articles
Breaks Interstate Park economic impact
5. Breaks Interstate Park – Aquatic Center and Water Park Concept – powerpoint presentation
6. Haysi Demographic Information
7. Websites
 - ◇ Appalachian Coal Country Team - www.coalcountryteam.org
 - ◇ Coal Heritage Trail Corridor Management Plan – www.trailsrus.com/vacoaltrail
 - ◇ Heartwood – www.heartwoodvirginia.org
 - ◇ Spearhead Trails - www.trailsrus.com/swvirginia/
 - ◇ The Crooked Road – www.thecrookedroad.org (economic impact study)
 - ◇ Spearhead Trail - <http://www.trailsrus.com/swvirginia/finalreport/vol3.html>

Haysi Assessment Visit Itinerary

May 11-13, 2011

Assessment team:

Carolyn Brackett, National Trust for Historic Preservation

Kendra Briechele, The Conservation Fund

Katie Allen, The Conservation Fund

Wednesday, May 11

- 4:00 p.m. Arrive at Mayor Yates' office, Town Hall
- 5:00 p.m. Breaks Interstate Park—dinner with planning committee
Mayor Larry Yates, Matthew O'Quinn, Jenny O'Quinn, Austin Bradley, Todd Christensen, Jim Baldwin, Rita Surratt, Denise Ambrose, Eddie Hannah
- 8:00 p.m. Overnight at Breaks Interstate Park

Thursday, May 12

- 7:00 a.m. Breakfast and Introductory Session, Breaks Interstate Park
Mayor Larry Yates, Matthew O'Quinn, Jenny O'Quinn, Austin Bradley, Todd Christensen, Denise Ambrose
- 9:00 a.m. Tour Breaks Interstate Park
Mayor Larry Yates, Matthew O'Quinn, Jenny O'Quinn, Austin Bradley, Carl Mullins, Michael Wampler
- Noon Lunch, Pizza Factory, Haysi
Mayor Larry Yates, Sheila Bailey, Sue Scanlon, Charlotte Mullins, Joy Rumley, Michael Wampler
- 1:30 p.m. Tour Downtown Haysi (Carolyn)
Mayor Larry Yates, Joy Rumley, Sheila Bailey
- 1:30 p.m. Tour John Flannagan Dam (Kendra and Katie)
Chip Miller, Marty Davis
- 3:00 p.m. Tour Clintwood—Stanley Museum, Jettie Center
Mayor Larry Yates, Rita Surratt

Thursday, May 12 (continued)

6:00 p.m. Dinner at Breaks Interstate Park

8:00 p.m. Overnight at Breaks Interstate Park

Friday, May 13

8:30 a.m. Meet with Friends of Russell Fork
Mayor Larry Yates, Bernetta Marchand

10:30 a.m. Wrap Up Meeting—Town Hall
Mayor Larry Yates

Noon Tour Heartwood
Todd Christensen

1:00 p.m. Depart

