



HKRI

HIGH KNOB
REGIONAL INITIATIVE
MASTER PLAN



JUNE 14, 2019



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special “thank you” to all who participated in the High Knob Regional Initiative. We appreciate your input and support.

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Town of Clinchport
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A NOTE TO THE READER

This large-format print of the High Knob Regional Master Plan is meant as an introduction and coordination document representing a rich archive of information about the High Knob Region. We call it a launchpad. Online resources can be accessed through <http://friendsofswva.org/>

The chapters of this book provide a glimpse into this abundant archive. Much of the archive is interactive, including the Google Map database (Chapter 4) as well as an inventory of historic and natural resources. The photo archive and inventories will continue to be updated and expanded. Also included in the digital archive are appendices, such as a brand touch manual and detailed projections of certain capital costs.

This is our first printing, so if you see something that should be changed, feel free to bring it to our attention. Email any comments to davidhill@hillstudio.com.

We hope you enjoy this new launchpad format. Your High Knob adventure awaits...

Scan to learn more
about the High Knob
Regional Initiative (HKRI)



PHOTO CREDITS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Standing at 4,200 feet, High Knob is the highest point in the Cumberland Mountains. The summit, part of Stone Mountain and the Jefferson National Forests, affords views of five states on a clear day and boasts one of the greatest natural areas in the eastern United States. At 13 miles wide and 26 miles long, this dominant landscape feature is a nationally-significant asset shared between several communities in far Southwest Virginia. High Knob is more than a mountaintop to the communities in its shadow; the peak represents a common link and is a mutual point of pride.

The High Knob Region comprises parts of three counties, one city, and nine towns that surround High Knob. The region is one of eight anchor areas identified by the Southwest Virginia Outdoors Initiative, which formed to develop an outdoor recreation industry in Southwest Virginia. The goal of Southwest Virginia Outdoors is to connect natural and recreational anchors to surrounding communities, and to each other, to develop an aggregation of unparalleled outdoor assets, establishing Southwest Virginia as a national outdoor recreation destination.

A shared history of coal extraction and a tradition of dependence on the coal economy also bonds the High Knob Region. As the coal industry has been in steady decline over the past few decades, leaders in the region are working together to find additional economic development strategies. Collaboration between leaders, community members, and business owners in Lee, Scott, and Wise counties and the City of Norton led to the High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI).

HKRI aims to promote and enhance the rich natural resources of the region and connect its diverse and vibrant communities to increase tourism based on outdoor recreation while growing local economies. This will in turn attract talent and investment. Building on the Southwest Virginia Outdoors Initiative, the HKRI mission is to establish a collective regional identity by recognizing and developing the High Knob Region as a destination for visitors through the creation of an interconnected system of outdoor recreation activities. Central to this initiative are the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, which serve as the natural host to the region's communities. The communities, each with its own diverse assets, will connect to this regional system of outdoor recreation opportunities, driving economic development through increased tourism while attracting new businesses and increasing quality of life. HKRI envisions this undiscovered region becoming the destination for an unrivaled outdoor experience: the "High Knob Experience."

The *High Knob Regional Master Plan* provides a unified vision and guiding principles for HKRI. The plan outlines strategic recommendations for outreach, branding, marketing, wayfinding, capital improvements, and policy to drive sustainable growth in the region. Leaders in the region can use the plan as a tool to prioritize projects and facilitate their successful implementation.

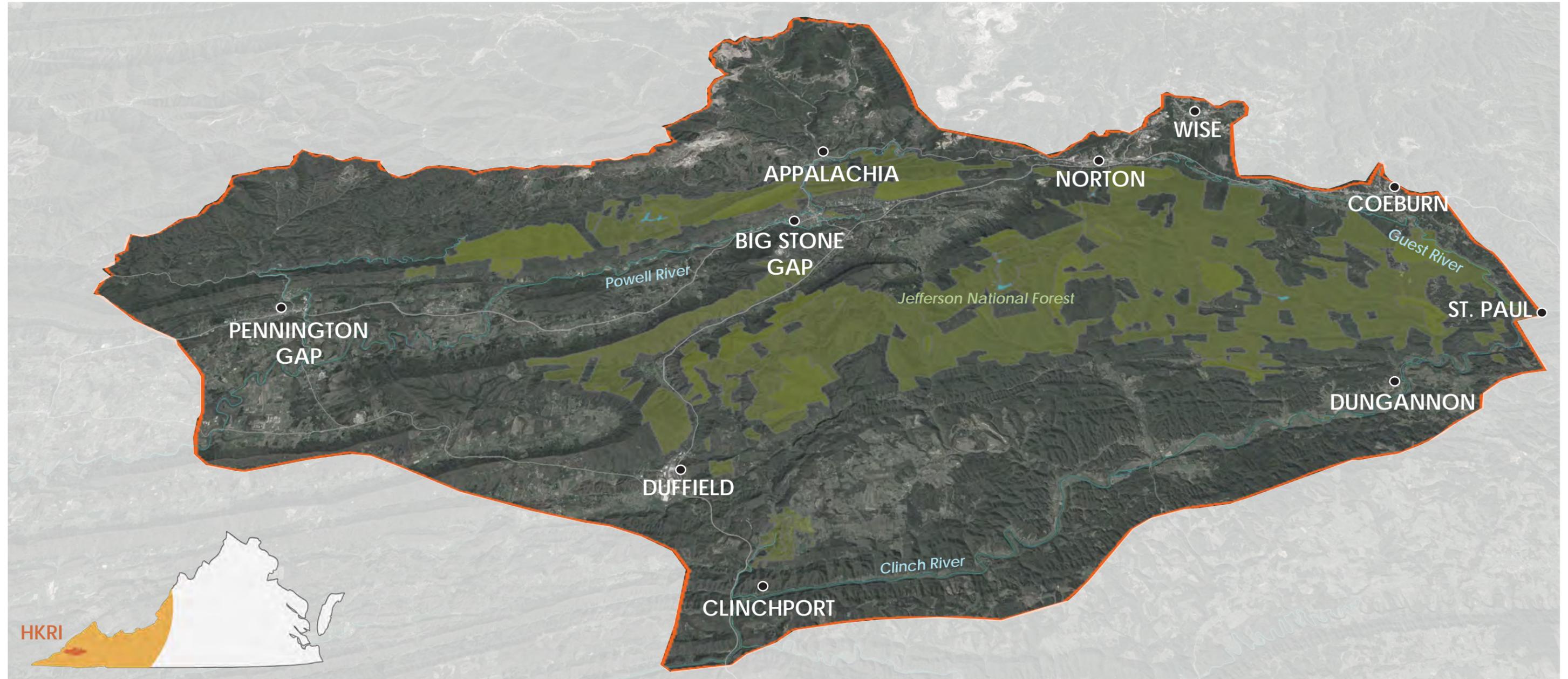
THE HIGH KNOB REGION

Extraordinary natural and cultural landscapes are central to the High Knob Experience. Over millions of years, the Powell and Clinch Rivers carved scenic valleys through the mountains, forming a striking natural landscape that is rich with biodiversity. As the frontier of European settlement in the eighteenth century and later the center of the nation's coal boom, the region boasts a wealth of cultural heritage made tangible by its charming historic towns.

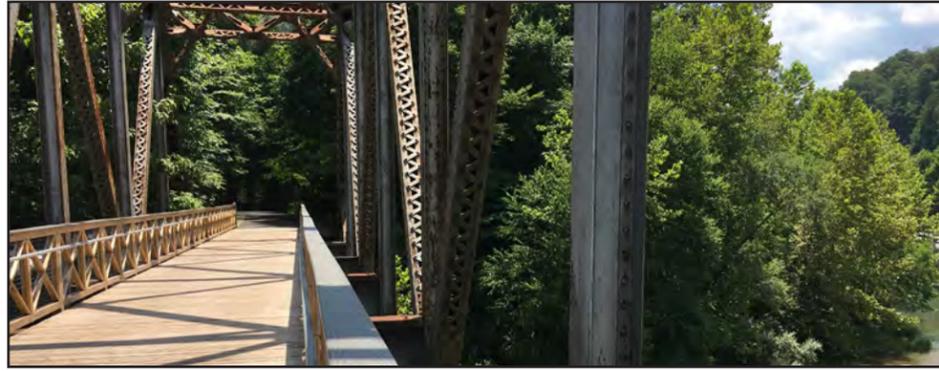
The map of the region shows the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests in green, wooded mountainsides in dark gray, and settled lands in light gray. As the region transitions away from a coal economy, it is capitalizing on its unparalleled

natural and cultural assets, inviting outdoor adventure tourism to stimulate economic development.

The High Knob Region encompasses parts of Lee, Scott, and Wise counties and the city of Norton. Nine incorporated towns in the region include Appalachia, Big Stone Gap, Clinchport, Coeburn, Duffield, Dungannon, Pennington Gap, St. Paul, and Wise. In addition, many smaller unincorporated settlements abound. Together these communities act as gateways to the High Knob Region, each offering its own distinct character and assets, providing a unique experience to visitors.



GATEWAY COMMUNITY PROFILES



Town of Appalachia

Appalachia, located in Wise County, was a coal and coke boomtown in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Situated between eight coal camps, the town and surrounding area presents an opportunity to interpret the rich coal heritage of the region. The coal camps were often like small towns themselves, with running water, electricity, schools, houses, and shops. Many of these nearby camps, such as Derby, Andover, and Stonega, remain intact, along with much of the coal mining equipment. The trailhead of the scenic Powell River Trail, a rails-to-trails project, is also proximate to Appalachia. The Appalachian Cultural Arts Center is centered in downtown.



Town of Big Stone Gap

Once touted as the “Pittsburgh of the South” for its untapped reserves of iron and coal, Big Stone Gap in Wise County grew quickly after its incorporation in 1882, as developers rushed to take advantage of the rich natural resources of the region. Today, a range of cultural attractions celebrating the town’s resource-rich past draws visitors to the town. One of the biggest local draws is the outdoor play, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, which has been performed every summer since 1964. Adapted from the 1908 novel written by Big Stone Gap resident John Fox, Jr., it is the longest continually running outdoor drama in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and is now the official Outdoor Drama of Virginia. The town boasts numerous museums, including the Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park, Meador Coal Museum, June Tolliver House, and the Lonesome Pine School and Heritage Museum. Native Adriana Trigiani continues the literary tradition about Big Stone Gap in her best-selling novels.

HIGH KNOB REGIONAL INITIATIVE



Town of Clinchport

The town of Clinchport, located in Scott County, is named for its location on the Clinch River. Like Duffield, Natural Tunnel State Park is a major area attraction, with the town located only five miles away. Clinchport is also a stop on the Daniel Boone Birding Trail, where bird watchers can observe a variety of native birds. Adventurous visitors can travel to the town on the Clinch River Highway, a popular biking route known for its turns and inclines.



Town of Coeburn

The town of Coeburn in southeastern Wise County is conveniently located off Route 58. Incorporated in 1894, Coeburn boasts a historic downtown. The Lays Hardware Center for the Arts, in the heart of downtown, focuses on preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of the region. A few miles south of town is the Guest River Gorge trailhead. The 5.3-mile trail follows the path of a former rail line that historically hauled coal and timber. Paralleling the Guest River, the trail offers views of the scenic Guest River Gorge. In addition to hiking or biking the trail, visitors can fish, kayak, and canoe the river.



Town of Duffield

Located in Scott County, a major tourist draw to Duffield is nearby Natural Tunnel State Park. Naturally carved through a limestone ridge over thousands of years, the tunnel is over 850 feet long and as tall as a 10-story building. The park offers swimming, picnicking, camping, and hiking. The Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail, which connects sites with strong ties to the early frontier, takes you through Natural Tunnel State Park. The original site of the Anderson Blockhouse, a fortified structure built in the late 1700s to protect European settlers from attacks, is located along the trail. Visitors can learn more about the structure and early life on the frontier by visiting a replica of the blockhouse at Natural Tunnel State Park. The Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Interpretive Center in Duffield offers changing exhibits about Boone and the region.



Town of Dungannon

The town of Dungannon in Scott County is a quiet crossroads community located along the banks of the Clinch River. Named for the Irish birthplace of the town’s founder, the local economy was historically rooted in timber and logging. Today, Dungannon has become a hub for equestrian activities with the growing Scott County Regional Horse Park and horse trails developing throughout town.



City of Norton

Norton, nestled beneath the summit of High Knob, is the commercial, professional, and medical hub of the High Knob Region. In recent years, the city has capitalized on its mountains, lakes, streams, and trails to become a destination for outdoor adventure. Activities like fishing, biking, and hiking can all be found within minutes of downtown. Flag Rock Recreation Area, which provides sweeping views of downtown, and the Country Cabin, one of eight major venues on “The Crooked Road,” are popular area attractions. The city also possesses an innovative and creative spirit that will be vital to this economic center as it adapts to the new regional economy.



Town of St. Paul

St. Paul is located in eastern Wise County, along the Clinch River. One of the first to optimize its great outdoors assets, the town offers a variety of outdoor study and recreation opportunities. Wetlands Estonia is a unique student-initiated, place-based learning center which teaches environmental education. The Town has a number of trails that connect along the Clinch River, several unique dining and nightlife destinations and unique lodging experiences, including the recently-renovated Western Front downtown hotel. A Virginia Main Street community, St. Paul is always reinventing downtown places, including the new Farmers Market and the upcoming Lyric redevelopment project.



Town of Wise

Home to the University of Virginia’s College at Wise (UVA Wise), the town of Wise in Wise County serves as the knowledge base for the region. Wise is uniquely positioned to flourish as a college town, with the growth in student enrollment at the public liberal arts college in recent years. Main Street maintains a small-town atmosphere, complete with shops, restaurants, and an impressive collection of historic buildings. Pro-Art, Appalachian Children’s Theatre, and UVA Wise bring exceptional concerts, performances, and lectures to town for the enjoyment of students and residents alike.



Town of Pennington Gap

Pennington Gap is the most populous town in Lee County. The town offers a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities, such as organized sports and off-roading. Located at the gateway to Spearhead’s Stone Mountain Trail, the area continues to gain recognition as an ATV destination. Pennington Gap also boasts Leeman Field Park, which hosts a series of fairs in the summer, and Lee Theater, a local performing arts venue.



HOW VISITORS DESCRIBE THEIR EXPERIENCE IN THE HIGH KNOB REGION



2. PLANNING PROCESS

There has been a long history of independently planning for great outdoors assets in the region, stretching back at least to 1888, with Big Stone Gap was envisioned to host a large resort hotel in the middle and a series of greenway trails around the river. More recently, in the 1960s, a group of Norton businessmen proposed a ski lodge and resort on the north slopes of High Knob. The Forest Service has been planning and implementing beaches, trails, and visitor facilities in the region for decades.

The vision for the High Knob Region crystalized a decade before the start of the *High Knob Regional Master Plan* when arsonists burned the High Knob Observation Tower to the ground in October 2007. The unfortunate event unified the communities surrounding High Knob by highlighting its importance as a shared asset. A non-profit, the High Knob Enhancement Corporation (HKEC), formed in the aftermath of the tower's burning. This dedicated group of residents from communities surrounding High Knob raised funds to rebuild the observation tower. The new tower was unveiled in August 2014. The HKEC later expanded its mission to include promoting the enhancement and use of High Knob and the communities within its footprint to create a destination for visitors seeking outdoor recreational and educational experiences. By establishing this shared vision for the region, the group laid the foundation for the High Knob Regional Initiative and the High Knob Regional Master Plan.

The *High Knob Regional Master Plan* is the product of a comprehensive and transparent community engagement process led by the steering committee and the consultant team of Hill Studio, Arnett Muldrow & Associates, and Thompson & Litton. This steering committee includes representatives from Friends of Southwest Virginia, the Lenowisco Planning District Commission, Wise County Tourism, Scott County Economic Development, UVA Wise, The Nature Conservancy, Spearhead Trails, the U.S. Forest Service, and the nine communities in Wise, Lee, and Scott counties. The steering committee met periodically during the 2 year master planning process. Steering committee members were assigned to action teams responsible for specific tasks relating to the planning process and implementation.

To engage the public in the visioning process, the Community Participation and Marketing team developed a community outreach plan to maximize involvement from leaders and residents of major communities in the region. Workshops and forums were held in multiple communities to garner input from a variety of stakeholders. Two online surveys allowed those unable to participate in person to take part in the planning effort. The community engagement process identified perceptions of the region's character and identity of the region from residents, outdoor recreation users, and other stakeholders. These insights helped establish the vision and principles of the High Knob Regional Initiative and informed decisions about capital improvements that will advance regional goals.



TIMELINE OF EVENTS

High Knob Enhancement Corporation

April 2008: Following arsonists' destruction of the High Knob Tower in 2007, the High Knob Enhancement Corporation forms to rebuild the tower. The non-profit, comprised of a dedicated group of High Knob residents, launches a fundraising campaign to rebuild the tower. The U.S. Forest Service contracts with Hill Studio to design and build a new tower.

High Knob Observation Tower Opens

August 2014: The new High Knob Observation Tower opens to the public, providing a vehicle for interpreting the historic and cultural assets of the area.

High Knob Regional Initiative Kick-off

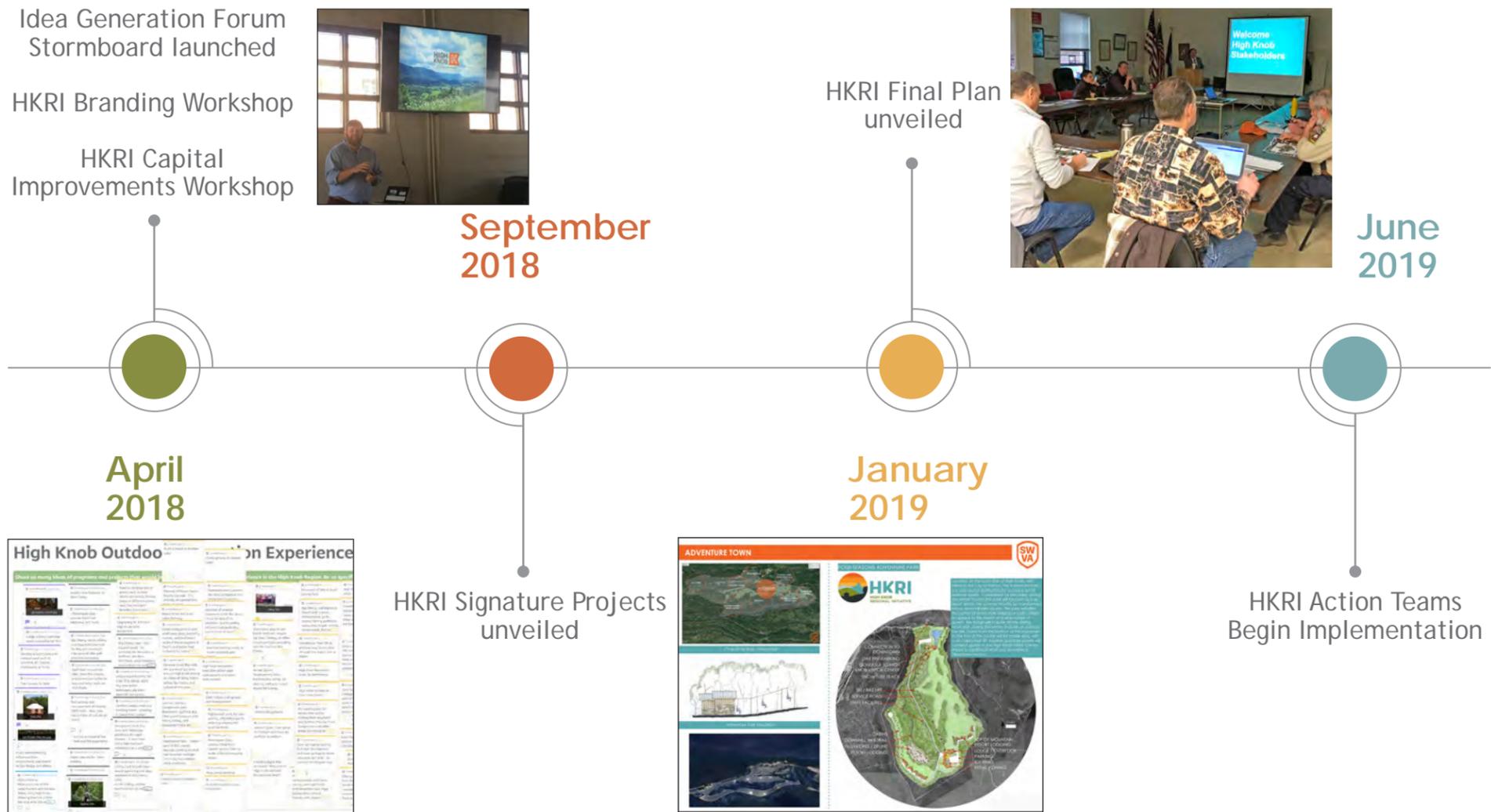
January 2018: The consultant team and steering committee meet to launch the project. Sixty-eight steering committee members are assigned to action teams. These action teams continue meeting on a monthly basis to discuss progress, review completed work, and provide direction regarding priority projects.

User Experience Survey

February 2018: An online survey is created to understand perceptions about the High Knob region's character and to collect data on outdoor recreation user experiences. Intercept surveys are concurrently conducted by members of the Community Participation & Marketing action team.

Idea Generation Forum: Stormboard

April 2018: The Capital Improvements Action Team launches an online collaboration forum "Stormboard" at the beginning of April. The purpose of this forum is to collect ideas from the public about projects, initiatives, and programs that could improve the High Knob Region's outdoor recreation experience. Over 100 ideas are collected through Stormboard. More than 100 ideas are added during a live forum held in Big Stone Gap during the Branding Workshop. This input helps the consultant team identify and prioritize proposed capital improvement projects.



Branding Workshop

April 9-11, 2018: Arnett Muldrow & Associates hold a three-day Branding Workshop to develop a new brand identity to market the High Knob Region. The project team gathers initial input from themed focus groups over the course of two days before presenting the branding recommendations at the final presentation.

A live forum is held in Big Stone Gap during the Branding Workshop, where additional ideas are added to Stormboard. This input helps the consultant team identify and prioritize proposed capital improvement projects.

Capital Improvements Workshop

April 12-13, 2018: Hill Studio and Thompson & Litton host a two-day Capital Improvements workshop to sketch several initiatives considered by the Capital Improvements action team. The workshop moves between multiple locations in the region. Products of the workshop include site plans, perspective sketches, and general cost estimates.

HKRI Action Teams

Steering committee members are assigned to action teams. Each action team is responsible for specific tasks related to the master planning process. The action teams are accountable for implementing the master plan after the completion of the planning process.

Assets Team:

Identifies public and private regional assets and determines asset gaps. Compiles and maintains a digital catalogue with asset descriptions and locations on a continuous basis.

Community Participation, Branding & Marketing Team:

Develops a plan to involve all major communities and stakeholders in the planning process, while tracking support for the HKRI. Conducts an online and intercept survey to better gauge regional outdoor recreation needs. Implements regional branding and marketing plan. Identifies unique attributes and economic needs of participating communities to generate targeted activities and marketing opportunities specific to the region's strength.

Mapping & Wayfinding Team: Assists with the creation of and manages a shared mapping tool that all communities in the region can use to create customizable maps. Works with consultant team to map wayfinding signage systems. Develops a visitor map to be used by communities.

Capital Improvements Team: Assesses and prioritizes the most impactful and practical capital improvements for the region that enhance existing and emerging assets. Creates a list of projects to be developed over the long term to make the region more prominent and attractive to visitors.

Incentives Team: Assists in advising a set of implementation tools, especially as they relate to incentives and land use.

PROCESS HIGHLIGHTS

The Community Engagement Team used a variety of techniques to make public engagement fun and memorable. On the right, photos of sessions demonstrate open and workshop-oriented public engagement. Below, a poster was produced and placed around the region encouraging people to complete the survey which was available online.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The High Knob Regional Initiative is a collaborative that aims to showcase and enhance the outdoor recreation opportunities and connect the diverse and vibrant communities within the High Knob region by growing local economies and natural opportunities in a way that benefits both residents and visitors.

Through a 6-month planning process, a steering committee and planning team will engage community members in conversations about the future of the High Knob region. The outcome of these discussions, and additional analysis, will help generate recommendations that will guide planning and design of strategic initiatives for economic development.

Please take a few minutes to complete the planning survey at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/highknob>

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HIGH KNOB

REGIONAL INITIATIVE

HIGH KNOB COMMUNITIES:

APPALACHIA ST. CHARLES WISE DUFFIELD

WISE COEBURN BIG STONE GAP DUNGANNON

NORTON PENNINGTON GAP CLINCHPORT

“ HIGH KNOB IS PART OF THE JEFFERSON NATIONAL FOREST AND ONE OF SWVA 8 ANCHOR AREAS. FRIENDS OF SWVA IS WORKING THROUGHOUT A 19 COUNTY REGION TO CONNECT ANCHOR AREAS TO NATURAL ASSETS FOR TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. ”

INITIATIVE ACTION TEAMS:

- Assets
- Mapping & Wayfinding
- Capital Improvements
- Real Estate Pull Sheets
- Community Participation & Marketing

FUNDED BY:

- Appalachian Regional Commission
- Local Community Match
- Department of Housing and Community Development (Building Collaborative Communities)

#HKNFORWARD



HIGH KNOB STAKEHOLDERS



LOCAL ARTISAN AT HIGH KNOB OUTDOOR FEST



HIGH KNOB COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

HIGH KNOB REGIONAL INITIATIVE

3. VISION, GUIDING PRINCIPLES & MASTER PLAN

VISION STATEMENT

From the Tower of Virginia's High Knob to the Natural Tunnel State Park, from our Horse Park along the Clinch, to the Spearhead Trails along the Powell, this region is an amazing collection of all of the Best of Southwest Virginia. We are the home of Virginia's Official Outdoor Drama, classic drive-in movies, old times jam sessions, hundreds of miles of trails, unmatched bio-diversity and a warmth that can only be found nestled in these hills.

We are a collection of hometowns in the shadow of High Knob, connected not through identity, but through the similarity of our challenges. In the past, we have felt abandoned, ignored, and overlooked.

But opportunity has knocked, and we have proudly answered. And we have realized we don't just share challenges, but a core set of values. We are loyal, hardworking, and deeply connected to this land.

These scenic surroundings are our home and our future. They are the place where we relax. They are the place where we exhale. This is the place that we are the most comfortable. And we would like to invite others to experience this amazing place. Relax, slow down, get out, and be transformed.

Explore the nation's first frontier, the place where the wilderness began, the high point of the Cumberlands.

Whether you love riding, hiking, floating, paddling, racing, cruising, or pickin', you owe it to yourself to discover this place we call ...

High Knob. Virginia's Backyard.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES & GOALS

The mission of the High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI), as it relates to potential development and proposed initiatives, centers on the following principles and goals:

PRINCIPLE 1

Respect and preserve High Knob's natural assets and recreational resources.

- Goal #1: Establish the High Knob Entity
- Goal #2: Establish High Knob as a National Recreation Area
- Goal #3: Protect Wildlife
- Goal #4: Maintain Recreational Destinations

PRINCIPLE 2

Promote environmental stewardship and quality of life.

- Goal #1: Protect Existing Assets

PRINCIPLE 3

Enhance the regional economy.

- Goal #1: Establish a Tourism Readiness Program
- Goal #2: Cultivate a Business Culture of Success
- Goal #3: Connect Outdoor Recreation and Business Opportunity

PRINCIPLE 4

Make your worst place into your best place.

- Goal #1: Restore Vacant Buildings
- Goal #2: Fill Vacant Buildings and Make a Vibrant Downtown

PRINCIPLE 5

Contribute to a spectrum of ability levels.

- Goal #1: Make Region a place all people can enjoy
- Goal #2: Improve Favorite Facilities for all

PRINCIPLE 6

Prioritize on initiatives that allow a sustainable mix of year-round activities and businesses.

- Goal #1: Create / Enhance Destinations
- Goal #2: Improve Access to Regional Destinations

PRINCIPLE 7

Fill the gaps of needed services and activities within the region.

- Goal #1: Promote Businesses that Retain and Attract Visitors
- Goal #2: Expand Lodging Options Throughout the Region
- Goal #3: Promote Activities Desired in the Region

PRINCIPLE 8

Improve connectivity between destinations.

- Goal #1: Enhance Jefferson Scenic Byway
- Goal #2: Identify High Knob Regional Gateways, Parkways
- Goal #3: Incorporate High Knob Regional Brand into Wayfinding
- Goal #4: Expand High Knob Trails
- Goal #5: Support Current Initiatives

PRINCIPLE 9:

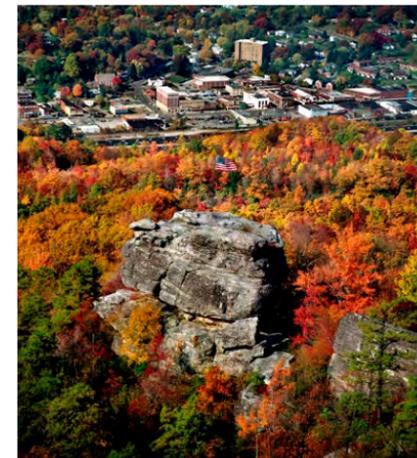
Complement and enhance the cultural landscape of the High Knob region (local materials, appropriate scale).

- Goal #1: Expand Cultural Venues
- Goal #2: Maintain and Preserve Historic Resources

PRINCIPLE 10:

Align with the unique identity of each town while contributing to the High Knob regional vision.

- Goal #1: Launch the High Knob Region Brand
- Goal #2: Improve Communication and Coordination Between Regional Assets and Stakeholders





GATEWAY COMMUNITY THEMES

- Adventure Town
- Dark Sky
- Cultural Center
- Guest River Gorge
- College Town
- River Experience/Horse Town
- ATV Town
- Coal Heritage
- Natural Tunnel/Daniel Boone

MASTER PLAN VISION

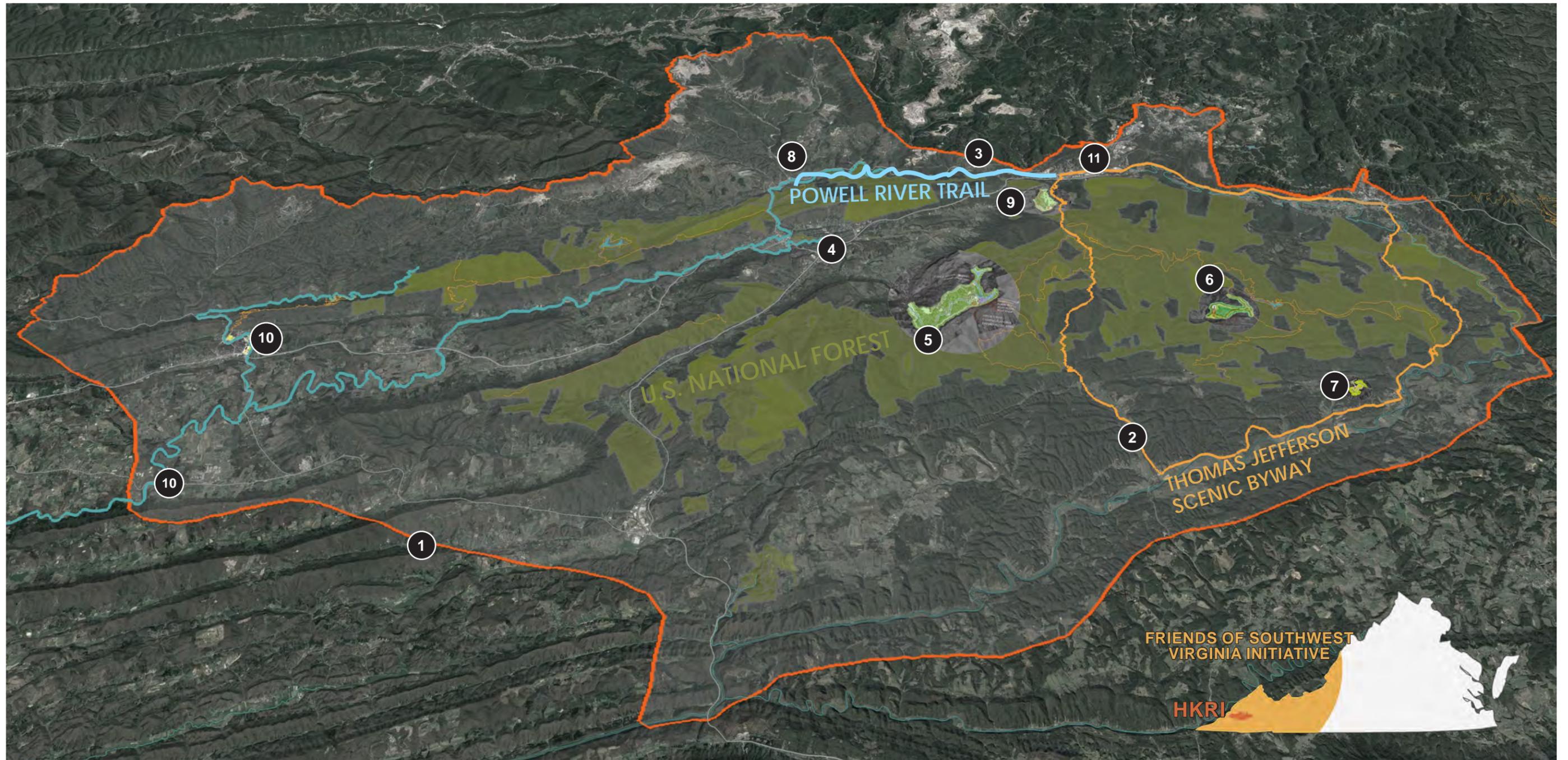
High Knob is one of the eight Southwest Virginia Outdoors initiatives of Friends of Southwest Virginia. The *High Knob Regional Master Plan* supports the vision and the guiding principles of the High Knob Regional Initiative. The master plan considers the individual communities of the High Knob Region as a singular economic unit, connected by a common theme of outdoor recreation. Together, the communities and their surrounding natural areas will become the destination for an unrivaled outdoor experience: the “High Knob Experience.”

Chapter 1 identifies gateway communities, each with its own distinct set of recreational activities, cultural resources, and economic assets. Each gateway community will serve as the regional destination for its outdoor experience, or theme, developing targeted recreational activities, lodging, and businesses that will uniquely enhance the High Knob Experience. While certain gateway communities are inclined to feature certain activities due to existing asset aggregations, the plan does not preclude similar activities from happening in other communities.

The master plan proposes several capital improvement projects that will enhance identified gateway community themes. These signature projects will serve as inspiration to entrepreneurs, and should be catalysts for economic development; encouraging private sector investment and providing leverage for future grant funding by attracting visitors to the region.

Broader regional initiatives, such as branding, cohesive wayfinding, and physical connections between gateway communities will augment these signature projects. The master plan provides the High Knob Regional Initiative and its partner agencies with a blueprint for the prioritization and successful implementation of these projects over time.

The illustrative map graphic above illustrates general theme areas for great outdoors activities, built on the economic strengths of the nearby gateway towns (see Chapter 6).



KEY INITIATIVES (PROPOSED)

HIGH KNOB REGIONAL INITIATIVES

- 1 High Knob National Recreation Area Designation
- 2 Thomas Jefferson Scenic Byway
- 3 Powell River Trail
- 4 Wayfinding Signage

HIGH KNOB SIGNATURE PROJECTS

- 5 Cultural Center: Big Cherry Reservoir
- 6 Dark Sky: Dark Sky Lodge and Telescope
- 7 Horse Town: Equestrian Resort

- 8 Coal Heritage: National Register District & Interpretive Exhibits
- 9 Adventure Town: Four Seasons Adventure Park
- 10 ATV Town: Leeman Field Park Improvements & ATV Training Center
- 11 High Knob Outdoors Incubators: North Side & South Side



4. REGIONAL ASSETS

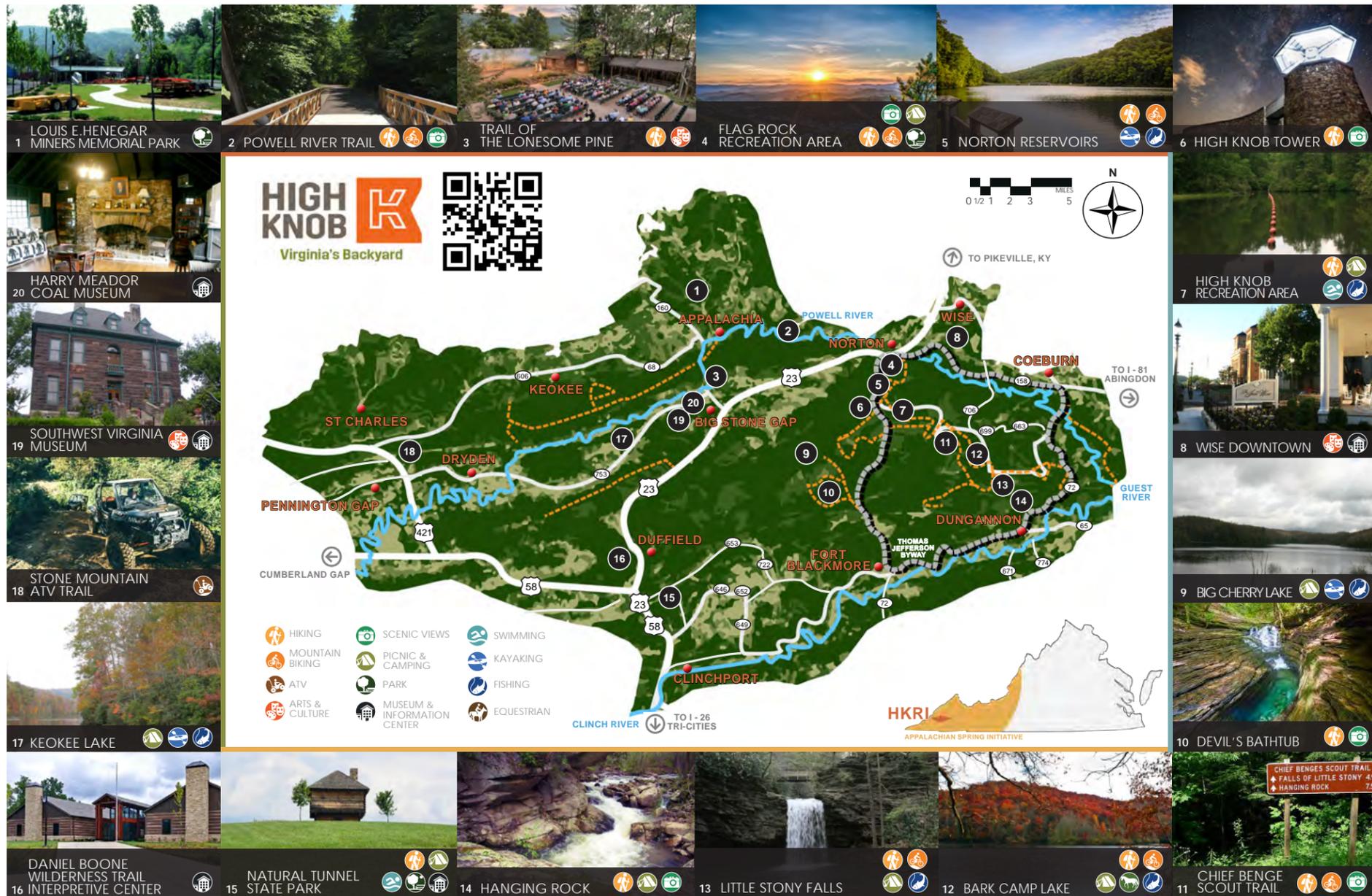
The High Knob Region boasts a wealth of natural, cultural, and economic assets. From the peak of High Knob to the bedrock of Natural Tunnel State Park, the region encompasses unparalleled geologic resources and landscapes. The highest point in the Cumberland Mountains, High Knob is characterized by undulating terrain, numerous streams, rivers, and lush forests. The region, which includes the Clinch and Powell Rivers and the Jefferson National Forest, abounds with a vast array of flora and fauna. Native plants and animals flourish due to a climate of abundant rain and snowfall. Some species are even rare and protected. Spectacular underground caves and dramatic karst landscapes that formed as water eroded soluble rock over the course of centuries are also natural features that distinguish this region.

Looking beyond the evident scenic beauty, the careful observer will uncover a rich American history that dates back centuries to the frontier of European settlement in the eighteenth century, then as an agrarian community, and later as the center of America's coal-fired growth spurt in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Visitors can take advantage of the numerous cultural attractions the region has to offer, such as the Appalachian coal camps or Norton's Country Cabin, one of the major venues on The Crooked Road.

Located in the coalfields of Virginia, the region contains large mineral deposits, including the Coeburn Gas Field. A strong timber economy supports multiple saw timber mills, pulpwood processors, and biomass utilization, including a power plant that converts green biomass to offset coal use. While natural resource extraction and processing are the historic underpinnings of the regional economy, new economic assets are emerging to support the growing tourism and outdoor recreation industry. Restaurants, hotels, and small businesses are examples of these assets. These new assets also complement and support existing regional economic drivers, such as the University of Virginia's College at Wise, Norton Community Hospital, and Mountain View Regional Hospital.

The Assets Archive is available at:
<http://friendsofswva.org/>

EXAMPLE RESOURCES MAP TO BE PROVIDED TO TOURISTS- CONTACT BUSINESSES



Within a day, visitors can canoe the most biodiverse riverine ecosystem in North America; walk in the footsteps of Daniel Boone, where he and his fellow frontiersmen blazed the Wilderness Road through Cumberland Gap; and visit the home of the novelist John Fox, Jr., who wrote the best-selling novel, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* – one of several novels set in the High Knob Region.

JEFFERSON NATIONAL FOREST

In 1936, the Jefferson National Forest was established and dedicated in a ceremony on High Knob. Under-Secretary of Agriculture M.W. Wilson described the value of the Jefferson National Forest in his dedication speech: “to control erosion and floods...as sources of inspiration and recreation, they foster spiritual, cultural and other values essential to mankind. As a living resource they can be renewed...producing continuous crops for harvest. Forests help stabilize industries and communities and add to man’s physical welfare...(providing)...the greatest good to the greatest number in the long run.”

Since the establishment of the Jefferson National Forest, Congress has directed the USDA Forest Service to broaden its management scope to include multiple uses and benefits and for the sustained yield of renewable resources such as water, forage, wildlife, wood, and recreation. Today, the Clinch Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest continues to be managed by the Forest Service with a mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

CLINCH RANGER DISTRICT

The Clinch Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest is located in both the Cumberland Mountains of the Appalachian Plateau physiographic province and the Valley and Ridge physiographic province in Southwest Virginia. It covers more than 92,300 acres primarily in Wise, Scott, Lee, and Dickenson Counties, Virginia, with some lands in Pike and Letcher Counties, Kentucky. The Nature Conservancy and NatureServe recognize the District as a hotspot for biodiversity and species richness. The District coincides with the High Knob Region. Mountainous terrain—with elevations of over 4,200 feet—and deep valleys, numerous streams and rivers, and Virginia’s highest average annual snowfall characterize the lands within the District.

ASSET CATALOGUE

The Assets Action Team collected and cataloged the abundant natural, cultural, and economic resources of the High Knob Region. This catalogue will continue to grow as new outdoor recreation destinations and businesses emerge out of High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI). In addition, the many historic, cultural, and natural resources related stories and images will continue to grow in the HKRI archive to be openly shared with those living within or visiting the region. Dive into the resources by visiting the following website:
<http://friendsofswva.org/>

GOOGLE EARTH MAPPING

The Forest Service, Wise County, Lee County, Scott County, and other jurisdictions each have their own GIS data systems, which do not share the same platform. The lack of a consistent mapping system has limited the ability to relate multi-jurisdictional data, often creating challenges for past regional projects.

The Assets Action Team developed a Google Earth mapping tool that compiles and integrates the numerous data layers for natural, cultural, and economic assets in the High Knob Region. This user-friendly tool graphically shows the locations of all existing assets and their spatial relationships to each other. Users can easily manipulate the map, turning on and off certain data layers as needed.

Decision makers can use this tool to identify future outdoor recreation projects, assess potential environmental impacts, and strengthen connections between existing assets. Likewise, visitors can use the tool to create trail maps to help plan their trip to the region. The mapping tool can be updated as new assets are identified, creating a comprehensive catalogue that can be used for creating marketing materials and visitor maps, building connections, and encouraging private-public partnerships around shared assets.

The Asset Action Team must annually check for updates through collaboration with the multitude of stakeholders involved. This includes the addition or relocation of businesses, hotels, restaurants, etc. as well as new trails, river access points, scenic routes, etc. The layers can be edited using geographic information systems to convert shapefiles into KMZ files which can be viewed and easily shared using Google Earth.

Two versions of this Google Earth mapping tool will cater to two different user groups: stewards and visitors. The tool will be populated with different data layers that will appeal to each distinct set of users.

MAPPING FOR STEWARDS

The Google Earth mapping tool for stewards and economic developers will include the full complement of data layers including environmental resources, tourism resources, and tax map lines (where available) providing the capability to create a wide array of maps. Due to the size of the region and the amount of data collected, the data layers are large and may require a powerful computer. Data layers consist of land use, management, and ownership as well as block group level population, traffic patterns, political boundaries, buildings, roads, water bodies, and floodplains. The layers can be turned on and off as needed and can be paired with other tourism-based data as highlighted in the following section. The layers exist as KMZ files, which can be obtained by requesting them from the Friends of Southwest Virginia (SWVA) webpage contact form or by email at info@friendsofswva.org to obtain login information to the digital asset management system.

MAPPING FOR VISITORS

The Google Earth mapping tool for visitors includes a reduced, more streamlined version of data layers that cater to the interests of tourists. This includes points of interest such as trailheads, river access points, campgrounds, scenic locations such as birdwatching or scenic routes, and other tourism assets such as the Spearhead Trails. These data layers can be opened on any computer or device with the free Google Earth application which automatically zooms to the extent of the data layers. Each point, line, or polygon can be clicked to view more attributes of the data layer being utilized. To use the mapping tool for visitors, click to the following website and locate the High Knob webpage:
<http://friendsofswva.org/>

In addition to the digital map links, a simple user-friendly map has been created, highlighting some of the more-frequently visited sites in the region. This map is available at hotels, libraries and town halls.

NOTE: There are more than 280 points of interest that encompass the High Knob Area which includes: Historical Sites, Museums, Campgrounds, Boating, ATV Trails, Hiking, Birdwatching, Dining, Cultural Heritage, Horse Trails, Lodging, Shopping, and more. The chart to the right shows data layers (KMZ layers) available on the Friends of SWVA Website.

INTERACTIVE LAYERS ON GOOGLE EARTH

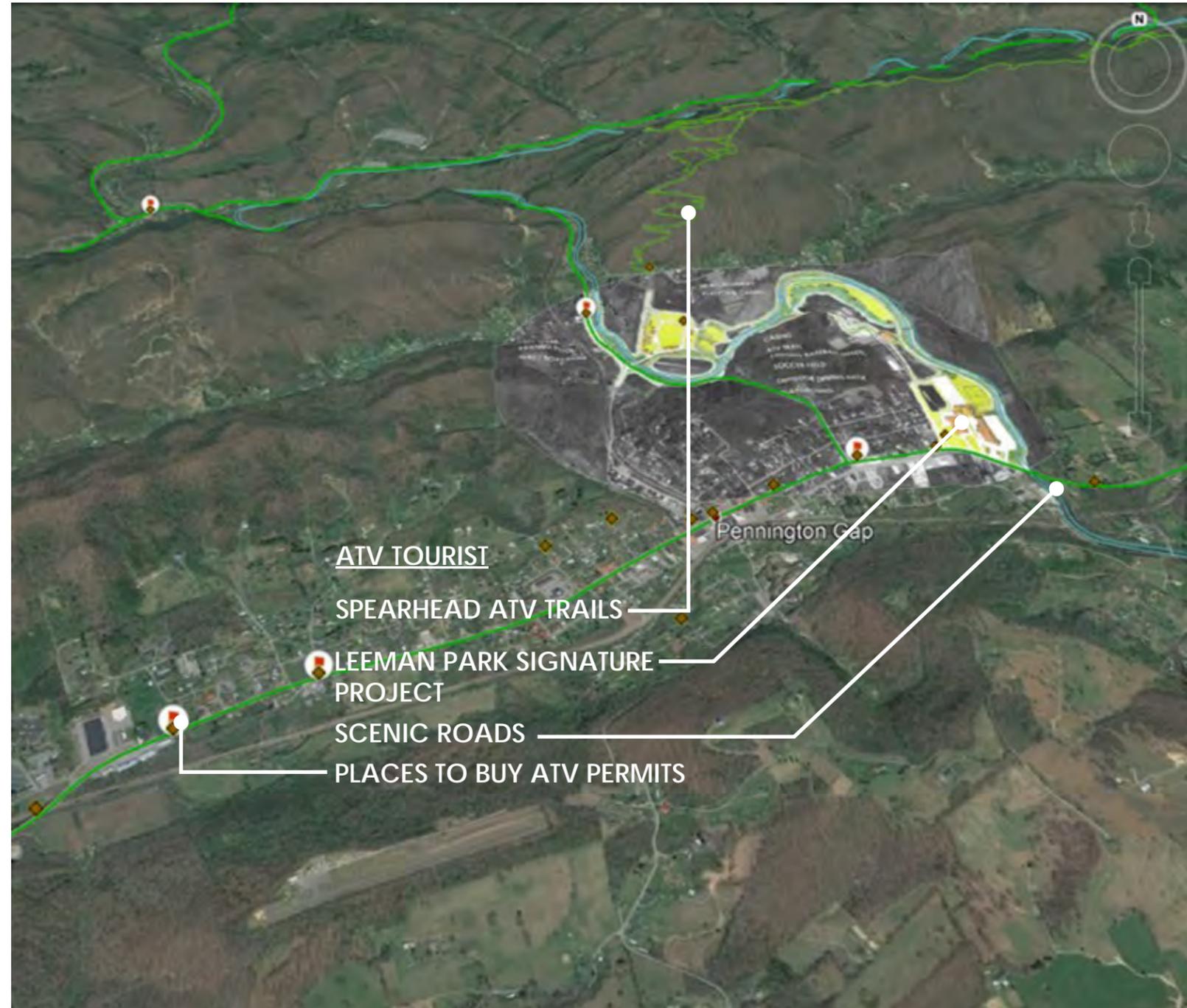
Points of Interest
Historic Resources
High Knob Recreation Boundary
Counties*/Norton*/Towns*
Streets*/Highways*
Hydrography (Rivers*, streams*, lakes*, and other water bodies*)
Bridges/Culverts
Railroads
Buildings
Surface Pavement type
Birding Areas
ATV Trails
National Forest
Conservation Areas
Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)
Jefferson National Forest Scenic Class - Scenery Management System (SMS)
Public Land
Hiking Trails
Scenic Roads
KY160 Benham to Appalachia
Birding Trails
Natural Tunnel State Park Trails
Wilderness Areas
Stocked Trout
Coal Heritage Tour
Crooked Road
Jefferson Scenic Byway
Ecoregions

Mapping Tool

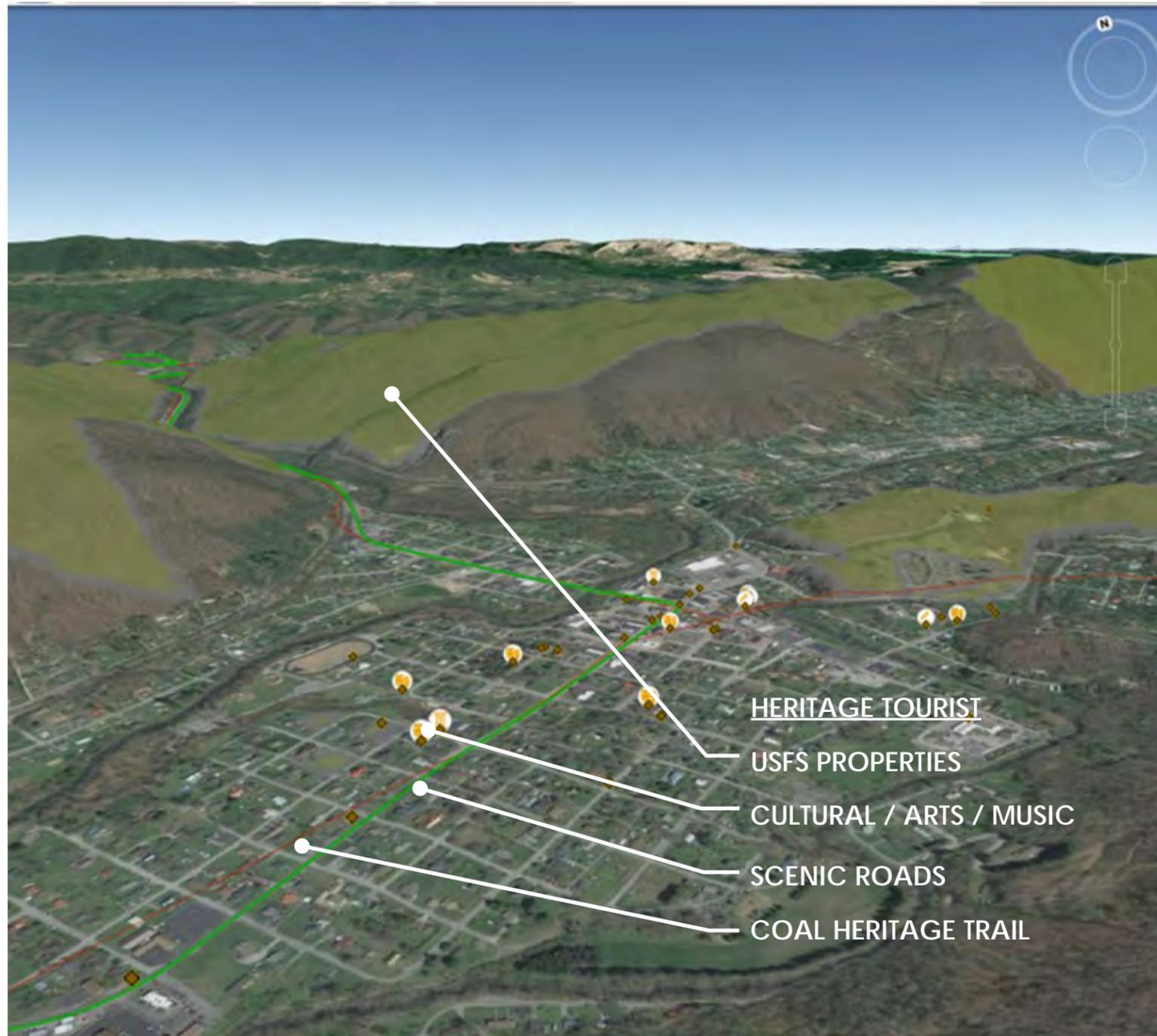
Interactive layers allow users to generate customized maps in Google Earth. Below are some examples on how to use the Google Earth Database



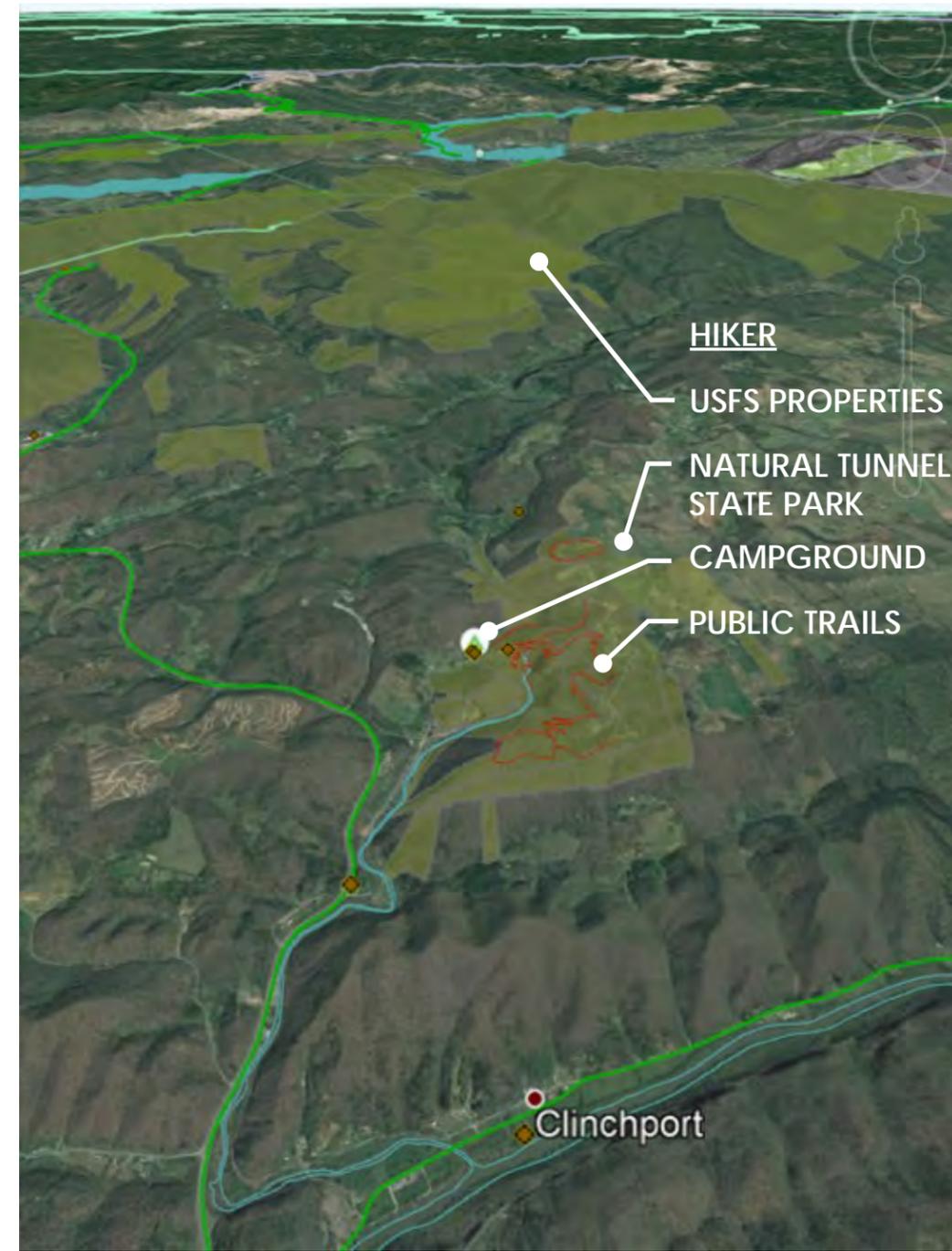
Drag and drop the KMZ files into your Google Earth Browser and tour the resources of High Knob. This first screenshot shows the view taken 862' above Downtown Norton, highlighting the relationship of scenic roads and the proposed signature winter park development on High Knob.



This scene shows KMZ files considered by the ATV Tourist. All the Spearhead Trails can be seen in place on the mountain behind Leeman Park in Pennington Gap. The Leeman Park Signature Project is shown as are scenic roads, and places where ATV permits can be obtained.



This scene shows KMZ files considered by the Heritage Tourist. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) properties appear in dark green on the mountains, and Cultural, Arts and Music venues are shown in downtown Big Stone Gap. The National Register historic district shows a grey boundary, scenic roads appear in bright green, and the Coal Heritage Trail appears over the scenic roads in red.



The final scene shows KMZ files considered by a hiker. The USFS and State Park properties are shown in dark green. The campground is highlighted, and public trails appear in red. Using Google Earth, the prospective tourist can zoom in for a closer look at the difficulty of terrain for individual trails.

PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT USING THE ASSET CATALOGUE & MAPPING TOOL

Regional leaders and private developers can use the asset catalogue and mapping tool to identify and create economic development opportunities. The compilation of regional assets into an accessible database and the visualization of these assets through mapping allows for the strategic selection of future projects. Recommendations for initiatives related to the asset catalogue and mapping tool include:

- 1. Online Asset Catalogue and Mapping Tool-** Make the asset catalogue and mapping tool available online through the Friends of SWVA website on the High Knob webpage. Visit <http://friendsofswva.org/> for more information.
- 2. Guide for Stewards & Project Managers-** Develop a guide for stewards and project managers outlining various considerations to take into account when planning future projects. Considerations might range from developmental impacts on sensitive environmental resources and scenic viewsheds to engaging property owners and managing agencies early in the development process. A draft guide is in the Appendix.
- 3. Stories of High Knob-** Interpret regional history and folklore through storytelling. The asset catalogue contains an archive of stories based in the region. Establish a program to train tour guides or develop a series of self-guided tours using QR codes.
- 4. Visitor Maps-** Create visitor maps specific to various outdoor attractions and activities using the mapping tool. User-friendly maps are instrumental to helping visitors navigate the region.
- 5. Private-Public Partnerships-** Use the asset catalogue and mapping tool to facilitate private-public partnerships (PPPs). PPPs play an important role in regional development. PPPs allow local governments to lead the development of outdoor recreation assets in accordance with the regional priorities established in this master plan, while channeling the efficiency and creativity of the private sector. By providing the supporting infrastructure—such as water, sewer, transportation networks, and services—local governments lay the groundwork for private development. The High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI) can use the mapping tool to plan for future shared infrastructure improvements to promote economic development across the region.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR STEWARDS AND PROJECT MANAGERS

The aforementioned mapping tools will provide an easily-accessible digital home for viewing the various natural, environmental, and cultural assets of High Knob. However, since so much of the High Knob project area contains an abnormally high concentration of rare and/or sensitive species and habitats - some found nowhere else on Earth - some special considerations may apply for projects targeted towards parts of the project area. **This is especially true for higher-elevation (3000 feet above sea level and higher) portions of the project area, areas containing cliffs, bluffs, or cave systems, and locations along the Clinch and Powell Rivers and their tributaries.** These areas are especially susceptible to high-impact development activities, particularly those that involve forest clearing and/or ground disturbance, and are critical areas for ensuring the preservation of the unique natural resources of High Knob.

Specifically, stewards and planners should consider not only accounting for resources shown in the mapping tool but also consulting with a broad range of stakeholders at the outset of developing a project to ensure that potential impacts to sensitive environmental resources are identified and minimized as much as is possible. These stakeholders should ideally include representatives of state (Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF), Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and federal (USDA Forest Service) agencies, as well as nonprofits such as The Nature Conservancy. Each of these groups is a key partner in the High Knob Regional Initiative and works with the conservation of natural resources on properties under their management on and around High Knob.

Although these agencies and organizations may not have regulatory jurisdiction over lands that they do not own or manage, they may be able to provide valuable guidance on what sensitive resources may occur within the project area, as well as advice on how impacts to those resources can be minimized. These groups may also have insight into any applicable regulatory considerations or permitting with other agencies related to sensitive resources that may be legally required as part of any planning or project development processes.

LAND OWNERSHIP CONSIDERATIONS

The High Knob project area is also unique in that it contains a diverse blend of properties with respect to ownership types spanning private lands to publicly-owned lands managed by state or federal agencies. Since each type of property may have differing constraints with respect to future development, it is crucial to contact relevant managing agencies prior to developing a project and consulting with them on considerations relative to their respective properties. Specific considerations for landownership types are described below:

- 1. USDA Forest Service Lands (Jefferson National Forest)-** Consult with the Clinch Ranger District Office in Norton prior to the onset of planning activities. The Clinch Ranger District is governed by numerous laws, policies and regulations, including a Forest Plan which outlines the development and management of activities on national forest lands that occur within the project area. District staff will be able to consult on how or if individual projects fit within the existing Forest Plan. In addition, special events and commercial activities taking place on national forest lands require prior consultation and permitting. Consult with District Office staff prior to planning such events to determine how such considerations may apply.

2. Commonwealth of Virginia Properties (State Parks)- Consult with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. Particularly managing staff at local state parks, prior to the onset of planning activities. Virginia State Parks have management plans that guide activities on park lands and the development of future projects. Special events taking place on park lands may require prior consultation and permitting depending on the nature and scope of the event. Consult with park staff prior to planning such events to determine if and how such considerations may apply. Components of the Virginia State Parks system overlapping with the project area are as follows.

Natural Tunnel State Park

1420 Natural Tunnel Parkway, Duffield, VA 24244
276-940-2674

Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park

10 West 1st Street North, Big Stone Gap, VA 24219
276-523-1322

Clinch River State Park

Currently under development, although components of this new state park may be developed within the High Knob project area. Park officials should be brought into planning discussions surrounding the High Knob Regional Initiative once property acquisition is completed and this new park begins its own master planning process.

3. Privately-Owned and Local Government Properties- While some state and federal agencies may not have direct jurisdiction over development activities on private lands or those owned and managed by local governments, consultation with these agencies may help to ensure that sensitive environmental resources are fully accounted for and impacts to such resources are minimized during the planning process. Specifically, the USDA Forest Service, Virginia DGIF and DCR, and The Nature Conservancy may be valuable partners in the development of such projects, particularly when the parcel(s) being targeted for a project lie adjacent to public lands managed by these agencies. These agencies may also have valuable information on considerations related to regulatory guidelines or permitting associated with rare and protected species or habitats that may occur on private lands.

SCENIC RESOURCES/VIEWSHEDS

In order to continue to enhance the experience of the great outdoors for tourists and residents, the existing scenery of HKRI can be managed carefully as a visual resource with high economic value for business development. Education and land use management will be essential to the success of improvements and redevelopment. Communication with property owners about the role of the views along scenic corridors in terms of business development and investment is the first step in furthering the vision for entrance corridor improvements. Other steps include consideration of various incentives for land conservation, as well as potential regulatory approaches. All of these can be beneficial in preserving and enhancing the quality of scenic vistas.

Many high-elevation (3000 feet and higher) portions of the HKRI project area overlap with scenic viewsheds visible from areas such as Powell Valley, the US-23 and US-58 corridors, and communities such as Wise, Norton, Coeburn, Dungannon, and Big Stone Gap. Throughout the master planning process, the natural (forested) and undisturbed character of these viewsheds was stressed by various stakeholders as crucial to current and future economic development and tourism efforts. As a result, development activities that alter these viewsheds may unintentionally impede other economic development efforts in communities located miles away from the actual location of an individual project.

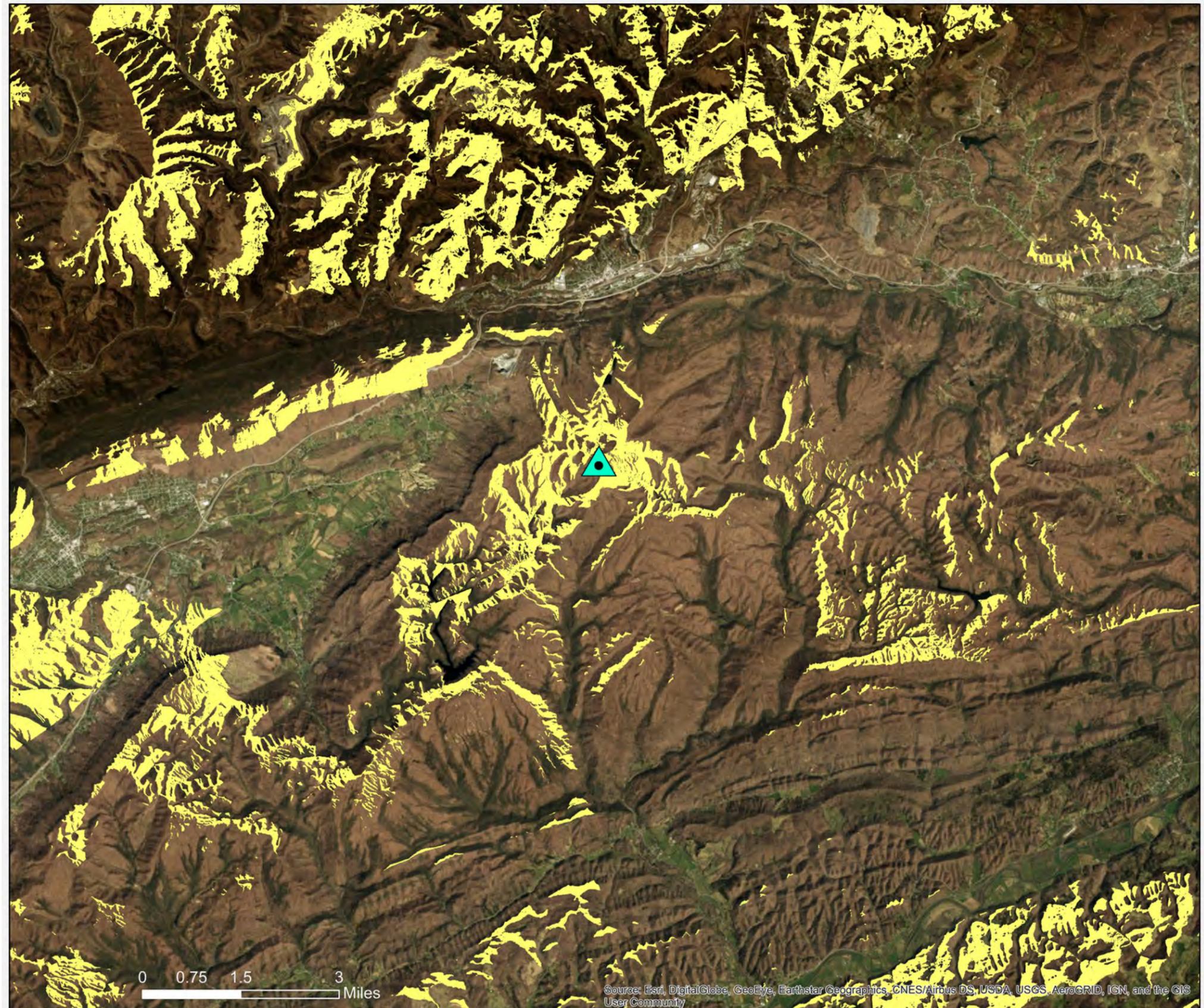
A detailed viewshed analysis (performed in an applicable GIS software program) and subsequent consultation with communities whose viewsheds may be impacted by a project should therefore be considered at the outset of planning for any development in activities in such areas, particularly those in or near high-elevation portions of the project area.

The Implementation Chapter provides ways that HKRI can strategically position itself to sustain the natural viewsheds that are so important to future economic well-being. These suggested methods include a viewshed analysis followed by an Action Committee-developed resource management plan, entrance corridor guidelines, and incentives, all of which could be developed collaboratively with both public and private stakeholders. An example of this viewshed analysis is provided on the following page for the High Knob project area.

VIEWSHED ANALYSIS

HIGH KNOB LOOKOUT TOWER NORTON, VIRGINIA

In this example, Hill Studio conducted a topographic viewshed analysis within a 300 square mile area immediately surrounding the High Knob Tower (blue triangle) to determine the most visible tracts of land from the overlook. From this point, the computer program scanned to generate a viewshed map after manually entering the height of the tower and average height of viewer. As shown, the areas in yellow are the areas visible from the tower, while areas that have no yellow color are not visible from the lookout tower. This type of analysis can contribute to thoughtful decisions on where to locate new development with minimum intrusion into the scenery for future projects.





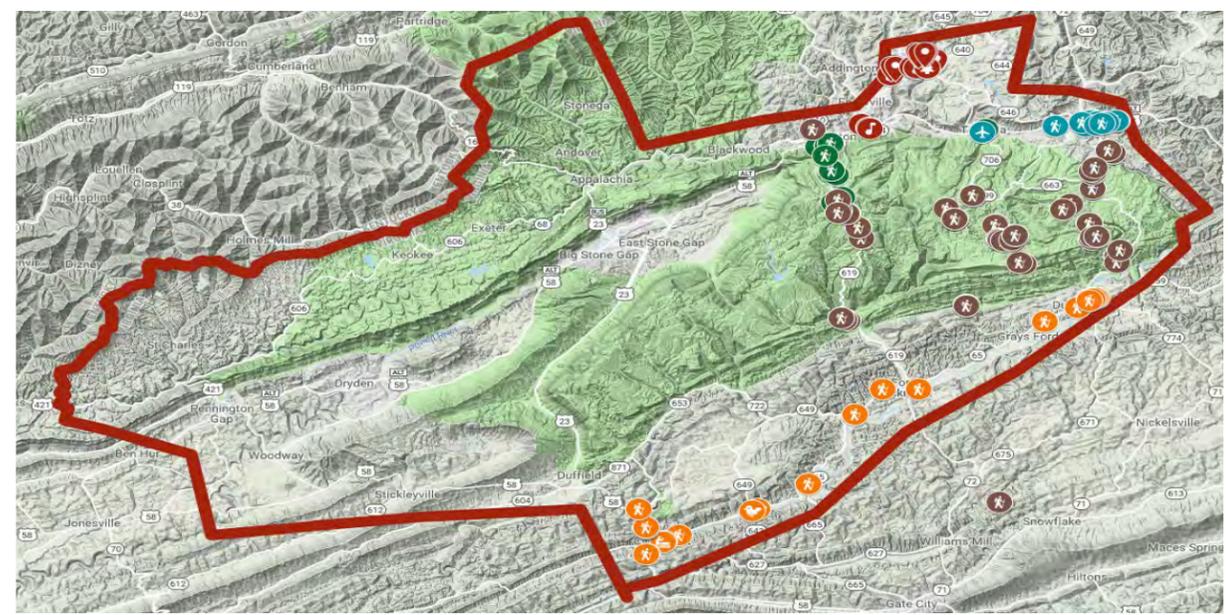
5. WAYFINDING

As part of the High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI) planning process, a review of existing conditions of the region’s wayfinding signs was performed in order to provide guidance on wayfinding destination inclusion criteria, present concepts, and recommend implementation and management strategies.

ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING WAYFINDING

A number of images and documentation regarding assets and destinations within the High Knob Region have been collected through efforts from the HKRI Action Teams. The goal of this effort is to assess existing conditions and the efficiency of current wayfinding and signage systems. At the time of this plan, approximately 138 signs were inventoried in the eastern portion of the High Knob study area. The committee is continuing to work on inventories in the western portion of the High Knob region.

Existing signage systems in the High Knob Region are comprised of 5 basic categories: Green Department of Transportation (DOT) signs directing motorists to municipalities or alternate routes, Brown DOT signs pointing toward recreational assets or destinations, Historic Byway & Trail signs, community & destination gateways, and State Route & traffic signs. Outside of brown signs, there are no destination wayfinding signs in the region, communities, or their downtowns.



Wayfinding in the region that directs visitors to the High Knob Recreation Area. See Chapter 8 for enlarged versions.

STRENGTHS

- > Municipalities and communities are well represented with the current distribution of Green DOT signs. These signs are not part of a wayfinding system, but do contribute to locational information to and within each community. They are traffic signs as opposed to wayfinding and communicate turns, mileage to community, or both.
- > Similarly, Brown DOT signs are prominent throughout the region, directing motorists to various destinations such as Natural Tunnel State Park, High Knob Tower, etc. Destination gateways such as those for the State Park or National Forest are branded to reflect that destination, and designed to the approved signage standards of the overseeing organization (USFS, VA State Parks, VDGIF, etc).
- > Many communities and recreational destinations have attractive gateway signs. These range from traditional gateway signs with multiple civic club icons (Town of Wise) to branded pole-mounted gateways with both local and regional branding (Dungannon). Other destinations such as the Flag Rock Overlook are well designed with local stone or other materials. These signs present the unique identity of the destination or locale, and are extremely effective.
- > Regional trails, such as the Crooked Road, Spearhead Trails, Coal Heritage Trail, etc., are well represented with signage. These signs are well designed, are branded based on the respective trail identity, and are easily seen throughout the region.
- > Some specialty signage exists in the form of roadside kiosks for the Crooked Road, trail maps at Flag Rock or Stone Mountain OHV trails, and even branded banners near UVA Wise. Each of these signs are well-branded, deliver content, and are relatively new and in great condition.
- > Many signs utilize distances to inform motorists how far certain destinations are from their current location, reassuring them they're heading in the correct direction.
- > Most signs are in relatively good physical condition.



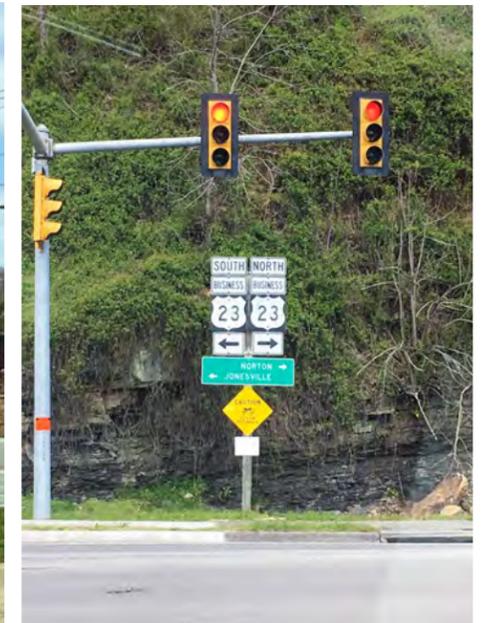
Lee County Gateway Sign



Existing Wayfinding Sign



Example of Sign clutter and design inconsistencies



Example of sign placed beyond recommended decision point for motorist

WEAKNESSES

- > Some existing Green DOT signage are placed beyond the typical decision point for motorists.
- > Destinations are treated differently and use a different sign system and methodology based on whether they are a community destination or recreational destination.
- > Recreational assets are listed on Brown DOT signs only near key decision points with very few, if any, distances used or directional confirmation signs prior to those decision points reassuring motorists they are heading in the proper direction.
- > Sign clutter is a problem as well as inconsistencies in sign sizes, arrows, content, mounting hardware and location. This is very common in communities that have not done wayfinding plans so is not unique to the High Knob region.
- > Some community gateway signs are out of date, need maintenance, or do not utilize the most current branding for that community.
- > Some trail signage on publicly managed properties show significant signs of weathering and disrepair and need to be replaced. These signs, however, are not part of a regional wayfinding system but instead are internal to that respective destination or property.
- > Much of the signage for property managed by the U.S. Forest Service and Virginia State Parks are based on agency design and guidelines and cannot be modified to be part of a regional system.
- > There is no branding or personality to the current signage, which are limited to Green and Brown DOT signs.
- > No community-branded wayfinding signage has been implemented in any community or their respective downtowns.
- > Localized branding is limited to gateway signage, kiosks, trail signage, and banners.
- > While most signage is in good condition, some signs have faded or peeling paint, have been hit by vehicles and not repaired, or are covered by weeds and vegetation.

EXISTING GUIDELINES

Existing guidelines are also considered as part of the wayfinding assessment. Any new wayfinding signage needs to meet local, state and federal guidelines. Existing guidance include:

The Manual for Universal Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) is the federal guideline for a safe and functional wayfinding system. In relation to this report, these recommendations cover sign placement, materials, content, and design considerations as well as many other factors.

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has its own sign guidelines that reinforce the MUTCD as well as stipulate recommendations for specific "Standard Highway Signs."

The US Forest Service guidelines for directional signs, gateways, and trail signage are designed to cover all the assets within their defined territories.

Other destinations and localities may also have their own wayfinding and branding standards that would need to be met for any wayfinding within their jurisdictions.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DESTINATIONS

Based on the stipulations in the Manual for Universal Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), proposed wayfinding concepts seek to determine various types of public destinations to be included in the wayfinding system. A partial list below identifies various types of destinations. The Asset Action Team is currently developing a full list of regional assets and destinations to be used to build a complete wayfinding system. Private and for-profit businesses are not eligible for inclusion in a wayfinding system.

There are a number of other transportation systems that exist in the region such as bike lanes on public roads or share-lane strategies that may have their own dedicated signage. While this infrastructure is very important, it is part of transportation and traffic management, so was not addressed in this destination-based signage strategy. Similarly, green and white VDOT and Federal signage are not part of a destination-based wayfinding system.

Potential destinations should go through a ranking process in order to establish a hierarchy of importance. The criteria upon which these destinations will be measured include: Number of Employees, Ease of Access, Parking Resources, Seasonality, Hours of Operation, and Regional Significance.

An implementation tool was developed as part of the High Knob Master Plan. This spreadsheet will assist the High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI) in ranking destinations based on the criteria above. While this spreadsheet should be used as a guide, it is important that local knowledge be used to determine which destinations to be signed. (Chapter 10)



Guest River Gorge. Example of a destination that would be included in a regional wayfinding system

TYPES OF DESTINATIONS IN THE HIGH KNOB REGION

LOCAL COMMUNITIES/DOWNTOWNS:	RECREATIONAL DESTINATIONS:	REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEMS:
Appalachia	Flag Rock	Spearhead
Big Stone Gap	High Knob Recreation Area	Crooked Road
Clinchport	Natural Tunnel State Park	VA Scenic Byways
Coeburn	Boat Landings/Kayak Access	Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail
Dryden	Camping Areas	VA Coal Heritage Trail
Duffield		
Dungannon		LOCAL TRAILS:
Fort Blackmore		Hiking
Norton		Bicycle Routes
Pennington Gap		Mountain Bike Trails
Wise		Water
		Birding
		ATV

Examples of destinations that may be included in a wayfinding system. Once a complete list of destinations is created by the HKRI Asset Action Team, it will use the 'Wayfinding Destination Scoring Criteria' spreadsheet tool developed as part of this plan

EXISTING BRAND SYSTEMS

The High Knob Region includes many communities and assets that have unique, individual identities. Where appropriate, these identities can be incorporated into the sign panels of the wayfinding system. Incorporating these brands into the system will help establish a sense of place for the visitor. It will also reinforce the understanding that this region contains many varied destinations.

COORDINATED WAYFINDING

Based on the aforementioned criteria, the following examples demonstrate how various destinations can be included on signs that are designed to incorporate the brands or identities of the communities in the High Knob Region. These design concepts use the High Knob brand as the basis for the color palette, which also takes inspiration from the physical attributes of their natural surroundings.

INCORPORATING EXISTING BRAND SYSTEMS

Community identities should be incorporated when appropriate. Some communities may also utilize destination icons to provide a simple visual reference to motorists about what relevant destination is in their area. This “open source” concept provides a number of benefits:

- > Allows communities with existing branding to have unique identity take precedent. Several communities like Norton, Dungannon and Big Stone Gap have created unique brand identities that can be used in their signage systems within the respective communities.
- > Allows communities without branding to use the standard High Knob wayfinding system. Places like Coeburn and Clinchport do not have established brands, and could use the High Knob branding on local signage to connect to the region. The open source nature of this is very similar to the way the Southwest Virginia (SWVA) brand has been implemented throughout the region, whereby communities would be allowed to choose to use the High Knob branding if they don't have their own.
- > Has High Knob brand take prominence outside of community, with community modifier. Ultimately, a comprehensive system across the region will tie each community and destination to the High Knob Region, as well as to each other.

- > Allows each community to connect to other anchor destinations where relevant. For example, Dungannon exists in the High Knob Region, but is also one of the Clinch River Valley communities. High Knob and the Clinch are two of the eight anchor destinations within the SWVA region. In Dungannon, the branded sign topper of each trailblazer sign could use both the High Knob and Clinch River Valley brands, should the community wish to do so. Others like Duffield may feel a stronger connection to the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail and may choose to exclude the High Knob logo. This concept is very similar to existing marketing and promotional efforts that already exist in the region, whether it is branding at trailheads, asset maps, or even external advertising that uses multiple identities.

The system has been designed to be open source in that each community would ultimately choose for itself what regional identities to use. However, it is important that when the High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI) is working with the communities and destination, these communities follow the design parameters of this report in order to keep a consistent design and visual continuity throughout the region. In order to do this, the HKRI needs to be the manager of the wayfinding system, working with localities and partners to implement the system.



Examples of Regional Identities

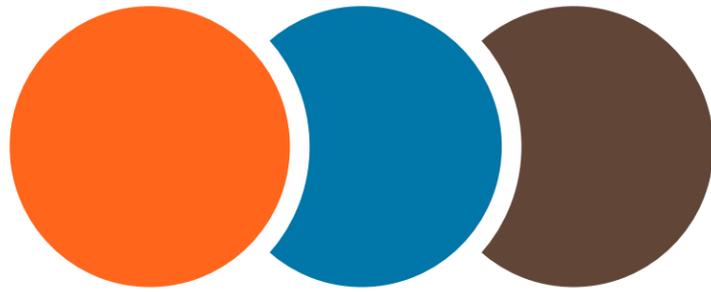


Destination Icons

SIGN DESIGN

Color Palette

The High Knob brand serves as the primary inspiration for the color palette used in these wayfinding designs. As communities adopt these design strategies, their brand colors can be incorporated into the accent panels as demonstrated.



Wayfinding Base Color Palette

Typography

The wayfinding system for the High Knob region features two typefaces. The first typeface is Highway Gothic, approved for use in vehicular wayfinding by the MUTCD. This typeface should be utilized for vehicular signage, which is intended for viewing by people in motorized vehicles along public roadways.

The second typeface is Trim, which should be utilized for community names when they don't have an established typeface or logo. Trim should also be utilized for parking signage and destination markers, which are on-site signs that identify specific destinations included in the wayfinding system.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Highway Gothic

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Trim SemiBold

Approved Fonts for Wayfinding Signs

Directional Arrows

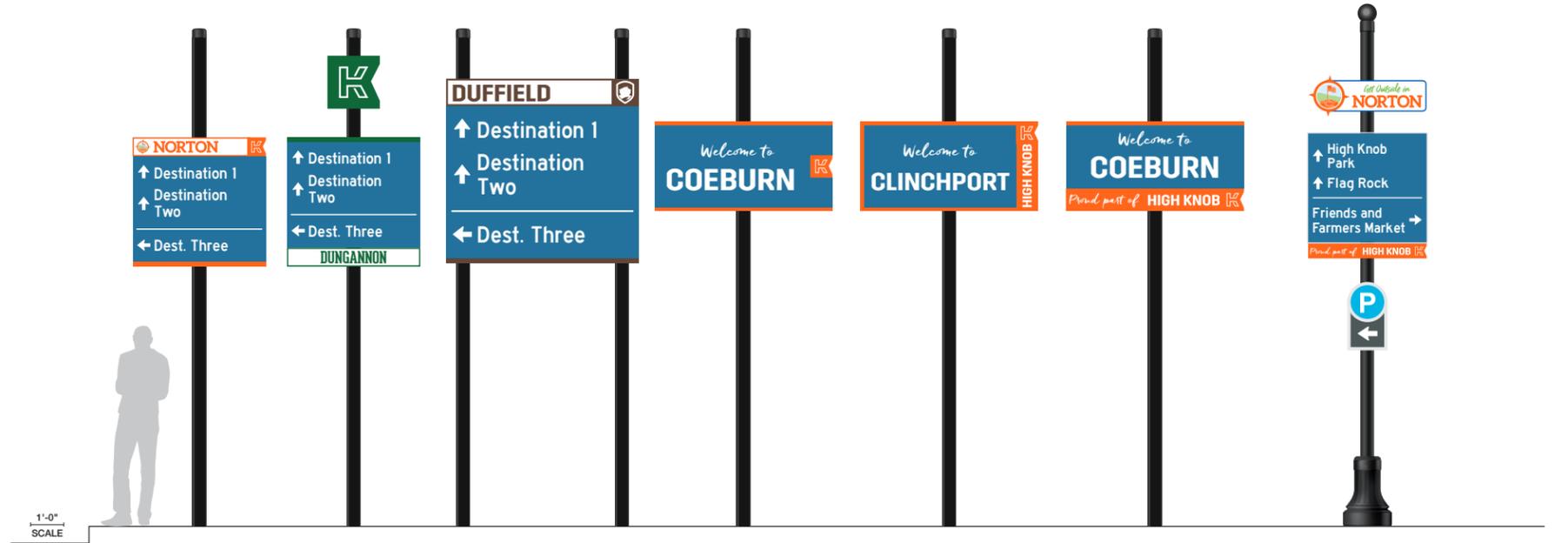
It is recommended MUTCD-Type D arrows be used in all motorist-oriented signage in the wayfinding system. MUTCD Standards for vehicular directional signage require destinations to be listed in order of direction first:

- > Straight ahead
- > Left (veer)
- > Left (turn)
- > Right (veer)
- > Right (turn)

Destinations sharing the same directional arrows should be listed from top to bottom in order of distance from sign location.



Vehicular Directional Arrows



ILLUSTRATIVE SIGN TYPOLOGY

These are the basic types of signs illustrated on the following pages:

- > Vehicular Trailblazers: These signs provide directional information for motorists at key decision points.
 - » High Speed
 - » Low Speed
- > Gateway Signs: These signs are located at the entryway to communities or other destinations to notify the motorist of their arrival.

- » Pole-Mounted
- » Monument
- » Destination

- > Trail Marker: Used at trailheads outside of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) system, these markers provide a highly visible indicator of a trail's location and include important icons to convey types of permitted uses on the trail. It should be noted that USFS has its own standards for trail and vehicular signage with the properties that it oversees. Any new signage on USFS property will therefore be required to follow those standards. However, for trails that currently exist or are developed **outside** of the USFS property, it is recommended that they be branded with the HKRI identity in order to connect into the larger region.



Wayfinding Design Concepts

High Speed Vehicular Directional Trailblazers

- > Should be placed on roads where the speed limit exceeds 25 mph.
- > Should not have more than 3 destinations listed per sign.
- > A letter cap height of 6" should be used for all destination text.
- > Panel height may vary based on number of destinations, directional changes, and brand inclusion.
- > The base of the sign panel should be no less than 8' from ground level.
- > May include community or destination brand.
 - » Local branding takes precedence in town.
 - » Communities that choose to do so may utilize one of the destination icons to demonstrate a strong connection to the region.
 - » Regional branding to be used outside of town limits.

Low Speed Vehicular Directional Trailblazers

- > Should be placed on roads where the speed limit is 25 mph or below.
- > Should not have more than 3 destinations listed per sign.
- > A letter cap height of 4" should be used for all destination text.
- > Panel height may vary based on number of destinations, directional changes, and brand inclusion.
- > The base of the sign panel should be no less than 8' from ground level.
- > May include community or destination brand.
 - » Local branding takes precedence in town.
 - » Communities that choose to do so may utilize one of the destination icons to demonstrate a strong connection to the region.
 - » Regional branding to be used outside of town limits.

Gateway Signs

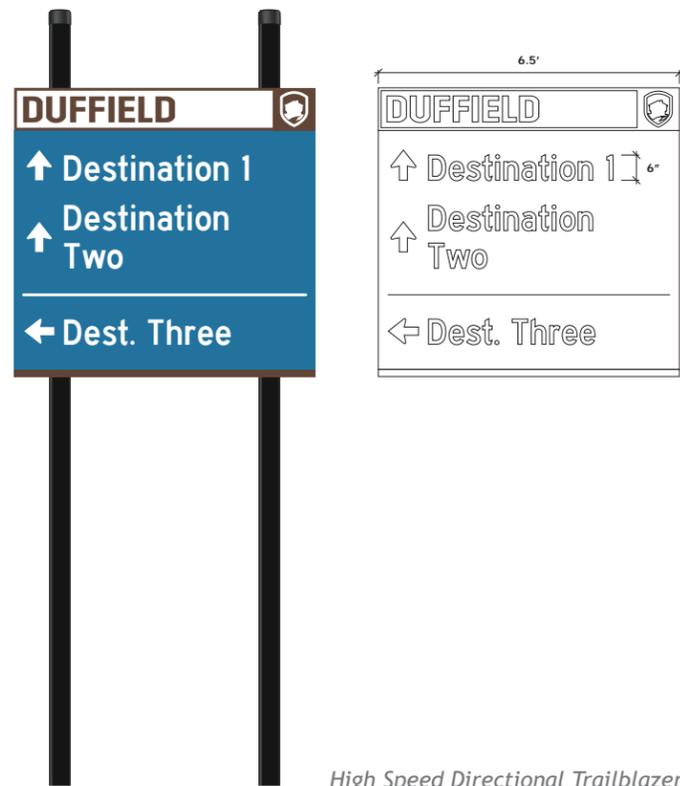
Gateway signs create a clear demarcation of where a community or destination asset starts. Depending on the physical or budgetary constraints, either a pole-mounted sign or a monumental gateway can be erected.



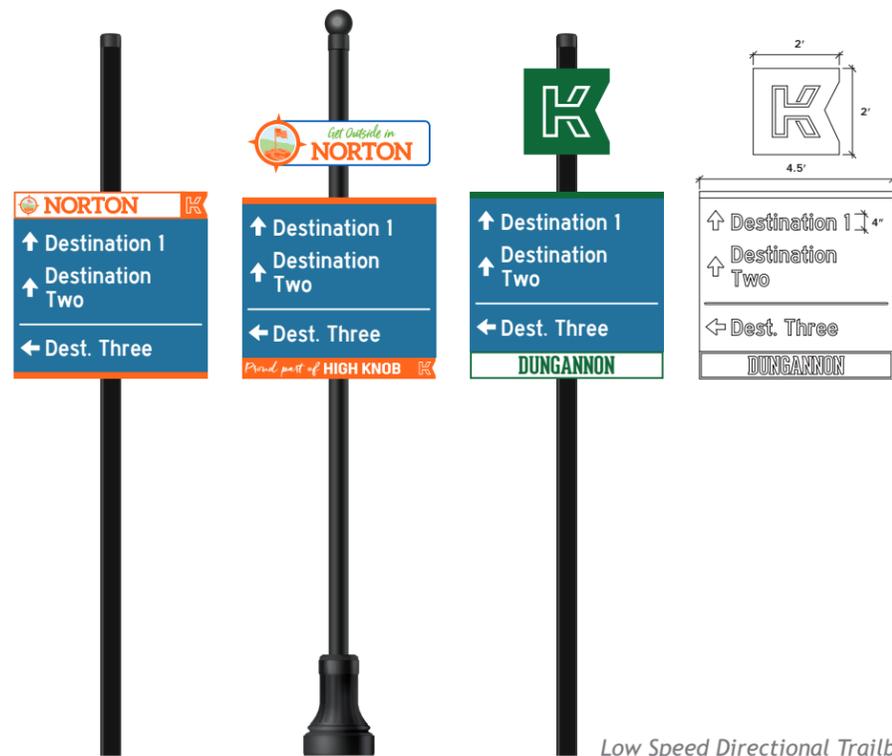
Gateway Sign Concepts

Trail Markers

These signs can be used on trail assets that fall outside the purview of the USFS system.



High Speed Directional Trailblazer



Low Speed Directional Trailblazer



Trail Marker

IMPLEMENTATION

The sign concepts above are intended to be the platform for the larger system to be implemented over time by the HKRI, local communities, and other partners. The implementation recommendations below are listed in order of priority, and are covered in more detail in the implementation matrix portion of this report.

In order to create an effective system, the following steps should be executed:

1. **Form a HKRI Wayfinding Technical Committee:** This would be the planning and implementation committee to guide wayfinding throughout the region. It could potentially include the wayfinding subcommittee established in this High Knob Master Plan, but also needs representatives from key destination partners, transportation or civil engineers, and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). This committee should be small and technical, and understand mapping, signage, and signage standards. While technical in nature, it will also need to be able to communicate the system and its designs to High Knob communities, including, at times, advocating for these communities to implement the system.
2. **Complete Asset Inventory and Qualify Destinations:** The HKRI wayfinding technical committee will first complete a list of all potential destinations to be signed within the region. These destinations would be qualified and ranked based on the criteria mentioned above and detailed on the destination ranking spreadsheet provided as part of this plan. Ultimately, Tier 1, 2 and 3 destinations will be established, which will prioritize those destinations that would receive signage, as well as inclusion and position on individual signs. As the High Knob Region grows, this list will need to be updated and maintained.
3. **Destination Mapping:** The destinations included on the qualified destinations list should be added to a map. This map will be the tool which will serve as the basis for the sign schedule. Depending on the committee's access to mapping software, this map could be established in ArcGIS mapping systems, or even part of a simple online tool such as Google Maps. It should be noted that the map would be a planning tool for the purposes of wayfinding, as opposed to a tool for marketing and communication.
4. **Establish Routes:** Travel routes should be identified and mapped along with the destinations within the committee's mapping system. There are three types of routes to consider when designing a wayfinding system:
 - » **Primary Routes:** These are the highest trafficked roads into a community or regional destination.
 - » **Circulator Routes:** These roads are most often used to get to and from major highways or interstates into communities, but are also used often by local traffic and commuters.
 - » **Destination Routes:** Primarily used to get from Primary or Circulator Route to a specific destination.
5. **Sign Locations:** Using guidance from the wayfinding assessment, the committee should identify sign locations for wayfinding within the High Knob Region. Signs need to be located per MUTCD and other relevant specifications at key decision points where motorists need to be notified to make a turn. Signs can also be placed on long stretches of road to reassure the motorist they are headed in the correct direction.
6. **Create Sign Schedule:** Once sign locations have been mapped, a sign schedule spreadsheet should be created.
 - » Schedule will be based on location of destination, primary routes and circulation patterns, and can be determined based on system design, placement criteria, such as proximity from intersections, existing access points, etc.
 - » Sign schedule would include high and low speed trailblazers, gateway signage, and potentially trail signage, as conceptually designed as part of this plan.
 - » **NOTE:** All sign locations, designs, permitting and installation will require approval and coordination with VDOT.

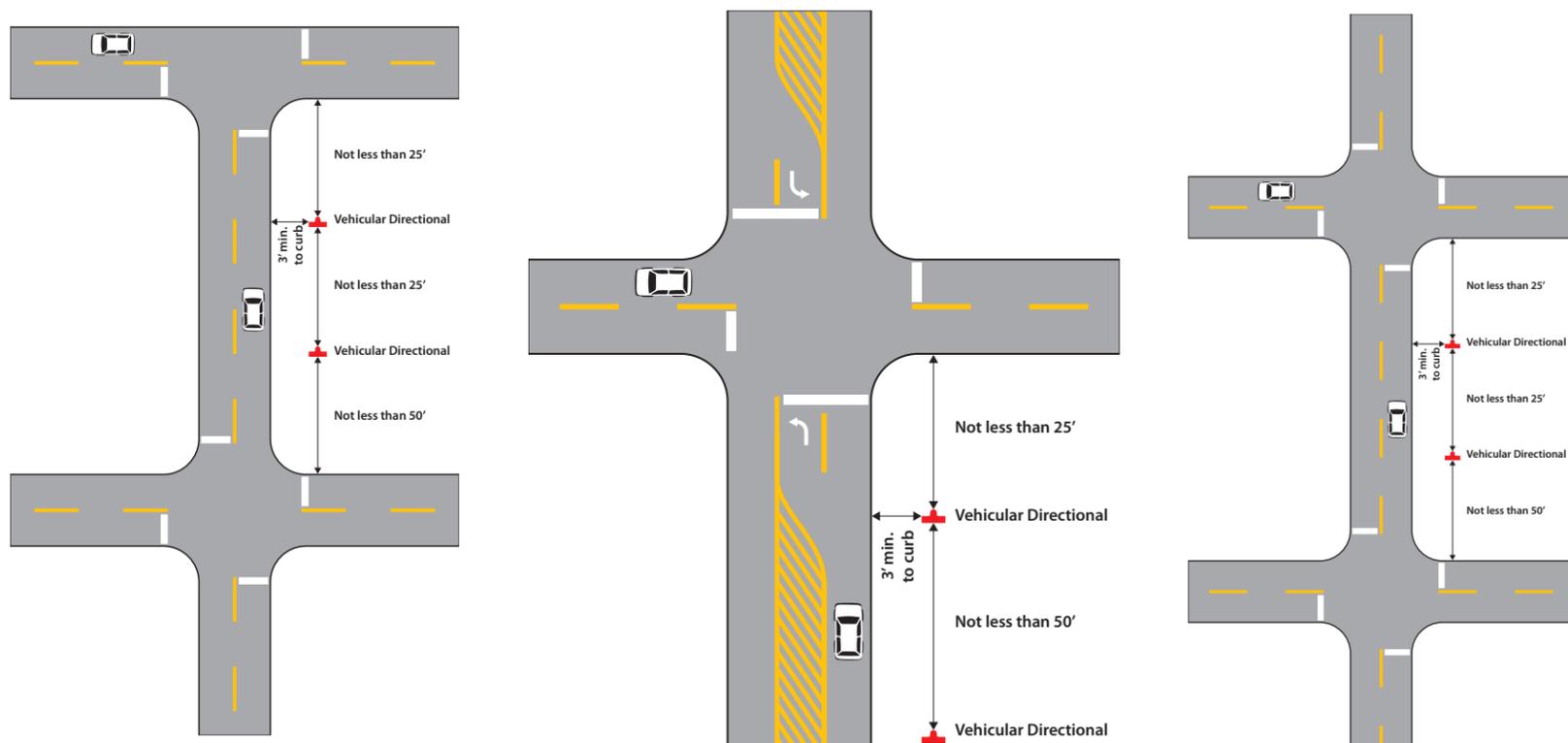
7. Coordinate with High Knob Communities: Ultimately, the wayfinding system would be coordinated by the HKRI in conjunction with the region's localities. As mentioned previously in this section, this system was designed to strategically reflect the various hierarchy of identities (Communities -> Anchor Destinations -> Sub-Regions -> SWVA Region). It is an open source design that allows the localities to determine how the High Knob identity is incorporated into their signage. It is recommended that the technical committee coordinate with each community to advocate for the regional system, determine how the High Knob identity is used, and design individual signage based on the sign schedule above. Final sign designs must meet all MUTCD standards and be approved by VDOT.

8. Establish Cost Estimates and Phasing Strategy: This report is a tool to guide the design of wayfinding signs as well as basic location selection and placement based on MUTCD standards. Upon the determination of sign locations and creation of a sign schedule:

- » Based on total number and type of signage in sign schedule, estimate costs of the total wayfinding system.
- » Identify potential local funding streams for wayfinding implementation - planning, design, fabrication, installation, maintenance.

9. Create Implementation Strategy for Fabrication and Installation: HKRI will need to engage a vendor to make specific material and location recommendations. It will be the responsibility of that contracted vendor to verify that all engineering drawings meet local, state, and federal guidelines and secure permits for each individual sign location.

- » Create phased strategy for wayfinding implementation. Most wayfinding systems are implemented over multiple fiscal years. In High Knobs case, this phased strategy would likely be based on the individual communities and local funding.
- » Implementation would include: Adoption of plan, coordination with VDOT, approval of management/maintenance policy, preparation of bid packages, RFQ/RFP, permitting, fabrication and installation.
- » Depending on sign locations, jurisdictions, and phasing, intergovernmental agreements between the counties, towns, and city within the region may be necessary.
- » Final permitting, fabrication and installation must be approved by VDOT based on MUTCD standards.



Typical Intersection Types

WAYFINDING MANAGEMENT

Wayfinding will be a key initiative of the HKRI. A primary method for planning and implementation would be to create a technical committee made up of representatives from HKRI, Friends of Southwest Virginia, communities, and partners (i.e., Spearhead Trails). That committee will be responsible for maintaining a current list of all destinations, destination mapping, determining sign location, managing the sign schedule, creating a phasing strategy, and securing financing for implementation and long-term maintenance.



6. ECONOMICS

An economic snapshot was conducted for the High Knob master plan to determine potential business opportunities for the gateway communities within the region. The assessment looked at existing market research, previous downtown master plans, and a region-wide gap analysis for the current year.

EXISTING RESEARCH

Several recent regional market studies were reviewed during this plan, and their relevant findings are included below:

- > Virginia Outdoors Plan for LENOWISCO Region - DCR 2013
- > Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey – DCR 2017
- > Spearhead Trails Economic Impact – Spearhead Trails 2017
- > Southwest Virginia Annual Report & Economic Impact – Friends of Southwest Virginia 2017
- > Crooked Road Economic Impact – Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development 2016
- > SWVA Region Travel Profile 2016

KEY FINDINGS

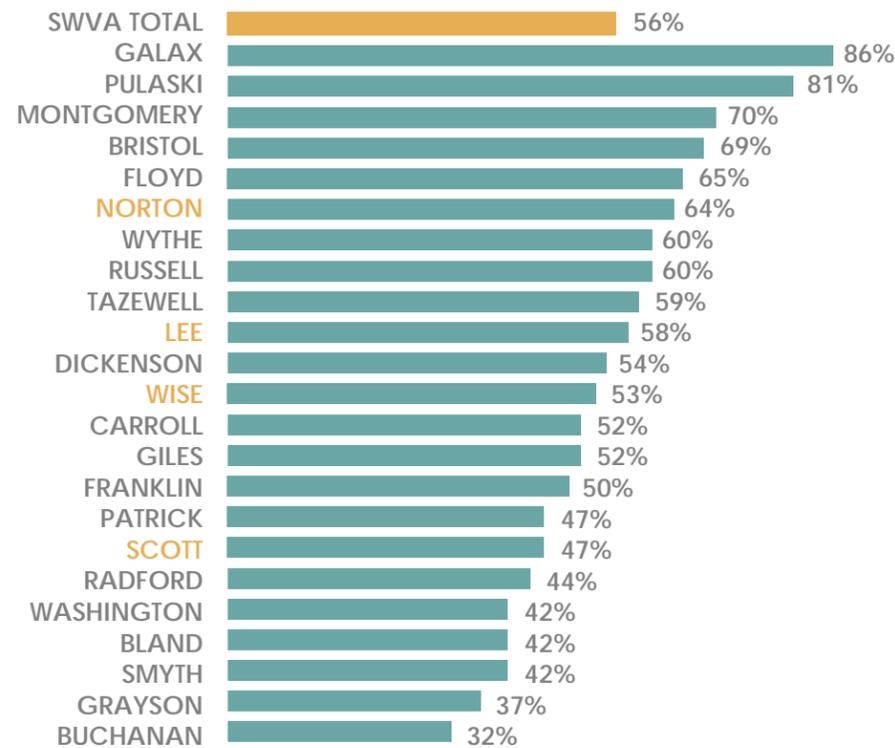
There has been a changing economy in Southwest Virginia (SWVA) noted by a shift in jobs from 1990-2010. During this time, manufacturing jobs decreased by 46%, mining by 29%, and farming by 26%. This represented a 2.3% decrease in all jobs in SWVA during these years.

However, while these traditional employment sectors have seen continued decline, travel and tourism indicators have shown significant growth:

- > 14% growth in leisure and hospitality job sectors between 1990-2010
- > 56% increase in travel expenditures between 2004-16
- > \$1 billion in travel expenditures in Southwest Virginia region in 2016 alone
- > \$27 million economic impact of Spearhead Trails between 2013-17
- > \$9.2 million annual impact of Crooked Road to SWVA.

Overall indicators show a stabilization of the economy in the region, which is being led by significant growth in travel and tourism sectors.

PERCENT CHANGE IN TRAVEL EXPENDITURES 2004-2016



Travel Expenditure Change in SWVA Region. Source: Friends of SWVA Annual Report 2017

According to the SWVA Region Travel Profile, 14% of visitors come to the region for outdoor recreation. The profile also shows:

- > Washington DC, Roanoke and the Tri-Cities are the top places of origin for regional visitors.
- > The Median Household Income of the traveler to SWVA is \$100,000, significantly higher than that of residents of the LENOWISCO region, \$33,335.
- > Crooked Road visitors spend between \$192-272 per person/per trip.
- > Similarly, Spearhead Trails visitors who stay in the region overnight spend \$214 per person/per trip.



PROFILE OF VISITORS COMING TO THE REGION FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION

ROANOKE
TRI-CITIES
WASHINGTON D.C
ARE THE TOP PLACES OF ORIGIN FOR REGIONAL VISITORS

THE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF THE TRAVELER TO SWVA IS:



TRAVEL & TOURISM

Finally, each of the previous studies identified opportunities for new business or development of travel and tourism products, including:

Outdoor Recreation Business

- > Outfitters and outdoor retail
- > Local guides with certification
- > Shuttle services for bikes, kayaks, etc.

Service Businesses

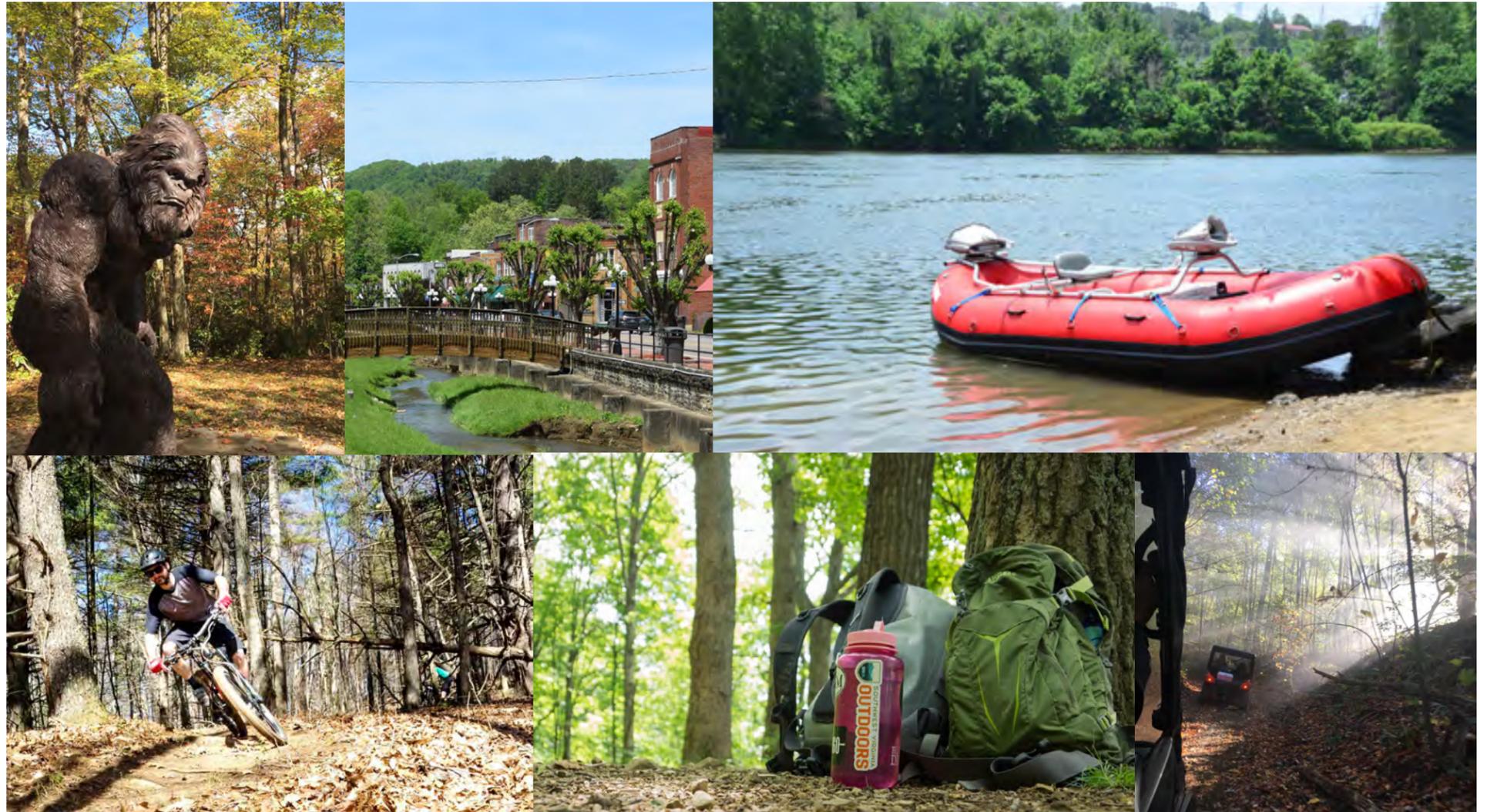
- > More lodging establishments with a variety of products and types
- > Restaurants
- > Visitor information services

Marketing

- > Planned itineraries for visitors staying one or more nights
- > Informational and interpretive kiosks
- > Dedicated tourism studies to identify target markets as well as recreation-based industries to recruit

Partnerships

- > Need for better and more data collection on outdoor recreation and visitor resources
- > Need for hospitality training across the region
- > Opportunity to do more cooperative marketing in both the private and public sectors
- > Need for a lodging study to determine needs



Recreation opportunities in Southwest Virginia



Flag Rock and Downtown Norton



Clinch River in Dungannon



Big Stone Gap Visitor Center

NEEDS/GAPS IN GATEWAY COMMUNITIES

Over the past decade, downtown plans have been conducted in several of the gateway communities within the High Knob Region. Each of these community plans came to specific findings for business growth and opportunities within that community.

NORTON DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN - 2016

Norton has a large regional draw and is a commercial magnet for this part of rural Southwest Virginia. Much of this comes from the geographic pull of the Walmart shopping center and its businesses.

A zip code survey of customers showed Norton had customers from 20 unique states.

The retail market study conducted in Norton's downtown plan showed potential for up to 169,212 square feet of new retail, with opportunities including new restaurants, brew pub or microbrewery, and additional outdoor recreation businesses.

DUNGANNON DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN - 2014

Dungannon had a demand of \$17 million for various retail within a fifteen-minute drive time from downtown. However, with such a small population in the trade area, much of this demand was absorbed within a thirty-minute drive (Norton, St. Paul, Gate City).

Most demand was for local needs, such as grocery, general merchandising, and restaurants.

Opportunities included general mercantile-type retail that would appeal to both locals and visitors. Lodging was listed as a need, while improved access to the Clinch River, promotion of river activity, and guide businesses were also needed.

BIG STONE GAP DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN - 2009

At the time of this study, there was \$123 million in leakage from Big Stone Gap's local trade areas.

There was demand for restaurants, local services, and retail such as clothing, hardware, and various specialty retail.

Opportunities for Big Stone Gap include positioning the town as a cultural center, building off of its literary history and destinations such as the Southwest Virginia Museum, the Harry W. Meador Jr. Coal Museum, and Trail of the Lonesome Pine Outdoor Drama. There was also a desire to grow the town's active recreation resources on the Greenbelt, within its parks, and at Big Cherry Reservoir.

WISE DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN - 2008

The Wise study showed that the town had a localized market, but that the Wise/Norton retail cluster was a huge regional draw from the Coalfields of Virginia and Kentucky.

The study showed about 66,000 square feet of demand for new retail space, primarily in the categories of restaurant, hardware, and clothing.

Key opportunities included preserving the vacant Wise Inn, as well as making a stronger connection to UVA Wise as a market. Since the study was completed, the Wise Inn has been fully restored as a boutique hotel, and UVA Wise has expanded with numerous facilities upgrades on its campus.

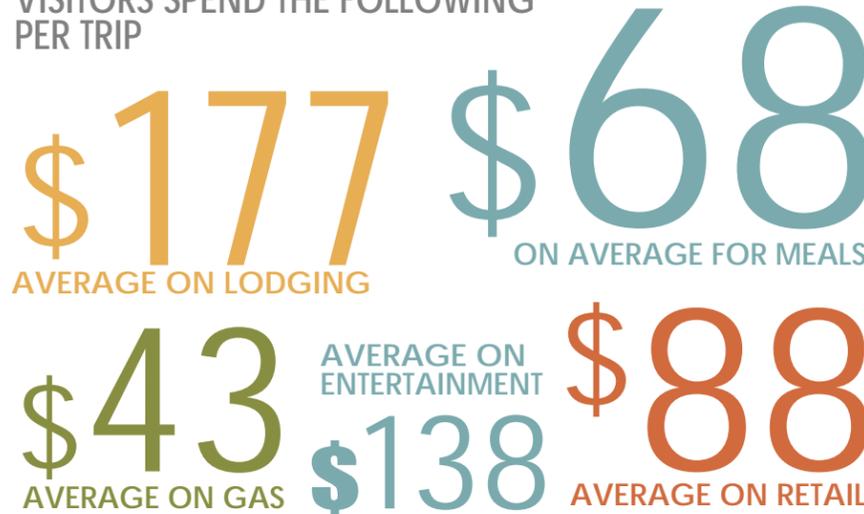
2018 REGIONAL GAP ANALYSIS

As part of this master plan, a retail gap analysis and online survey were conducted to identify opportunities for new businesses within the High Knob Region. The retail gap study compares expenditures of residents who live in a certain geography to the amount of sales by stores in the same geography. If residents are spending more than stores are selling, then dollars are “leaking” and residents are going to nearby markets for certain goods. The study area looked at the entire LENOWISCO region, including the High Knob area.

- > The LENOWISCO area (Lee County, Norton, Wise County, Scott County) is a \$1.2 billion retail market.
- > Within the entire area there is approximately \$29.8 million in demand based off of the needs of the local consumers who live in the region.
- > While this is minimal local demand given the size of the market, there is a case for growing visitor-based retail related to outdoor recreation and tourism. Key opportunities are shown on the 2018 Retail Demand in Lenowisco bar graph of this page.
- > The online survey of High Knob visitors conducted as part of the master Plan showed that visitors, on average, spend the following per trip:

- » \$68 for meals
- » \$177 on lodging
- » \$43 on gas
- » \$88 on retail
- » \$138 on entertainment

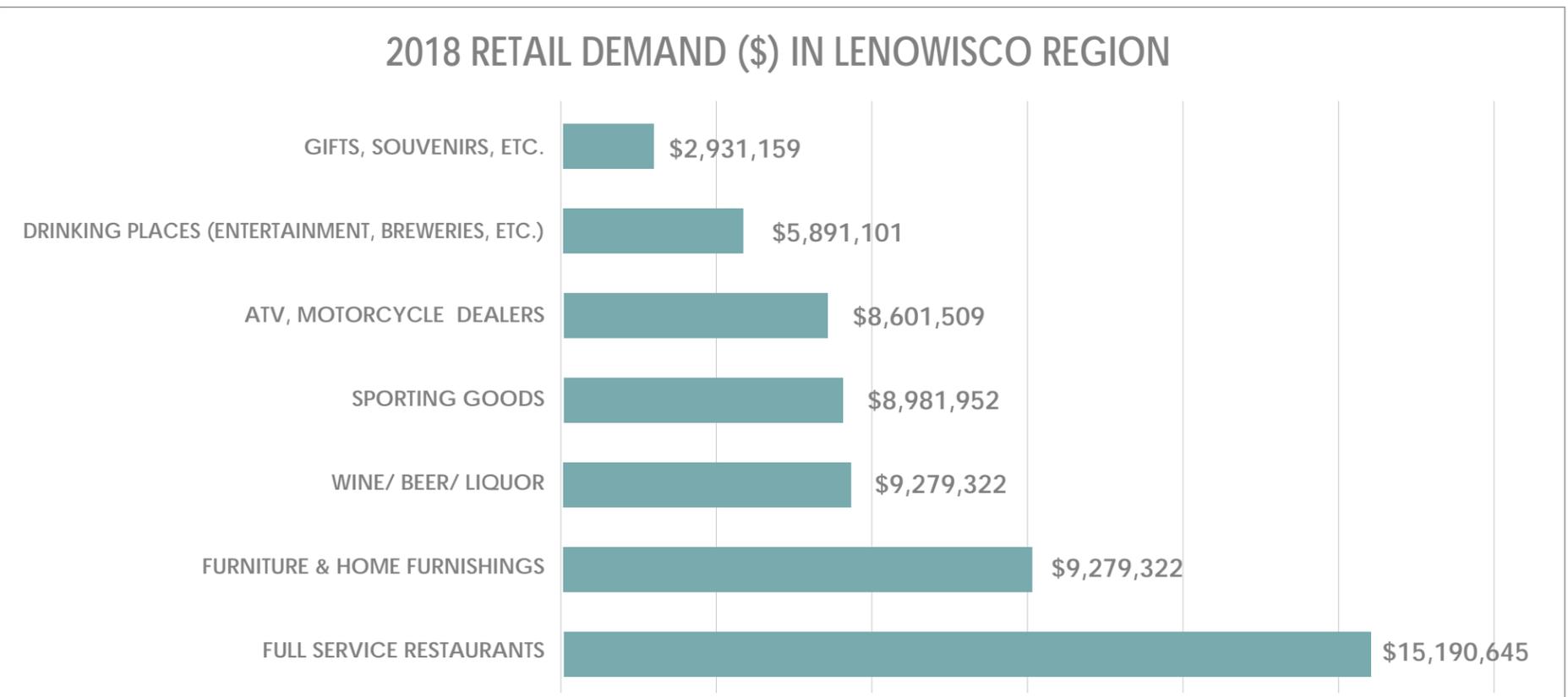
VISITORS SPEND THE FOLLOWING PER TRIP



> Survey respondents were also asked what types of visitor services and businesses were needed in the High Knob region. Key needs included:

- » Restaurants
- » Entertainment
- » Retail, particularly outdoor outfitters and specialty
- » Lodging, including B&Bs, camping, and hotels
- » Kid and family-friendly activities
- » Locally sourced food and grocers
- » Craft brewery or cidery
- » Activities for college student-aged people

2018 RETAIL DEMAND (\$) IN LENOWISCO REGION



2018 Retail Demand in LENOWISCO Region (selected categories)
 This chart shows retail leakage in 2018 within the LENOWISCO region (including High Knob). These categories show the highest amount of leakage (demand) in key categories based on existing consumer patterns. For example, in 2018, residents who live in the LENOWISCO region spent \$15 million more than what existing restaurants sold that year. In other words, \$15 million is “leaking” outside of the region because current offerings are not meeting demand.

GATEWAY COMMUNITY IDENTITIES

Overall, the High Knob Region and the communities within it represent a relatively small local market. The LENOWISCO region itself is only 90,000 people and has seen a slight decline in population since 2000. Each individual community must look to meet the business and activity needs of its local population, but the High Knob Region as a whole should look at how its offerings collectively connect to the visitor market. Each community therefore should look at its unique assets, and how it contributes to the High Knob Outdoor Experience.

By considering the region as a singular economic unit, each community can then develop targeted visitor and outdoor recreation businesses to uniquely enhance the High Knob experience. The opportunities below are based on the foundation of each community's current economic strategy or downtown plan, and how those strategies may be shaped to capitalize on the region's economic potential.

Norton has been labeled a "Top Adventure Town" by Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine. The city has developed more active recreation trails and parks than any other community in the High Knob area. It is also one of the main entrances to the High Knob Recreation Area. Its opportunity lies in solidifying its place as a trail destination, connecting visitors to High Knob while growing recreation-based businesses, dining and entertainment options. This includes attracting businesses such as outfitters and bike shops, as well as restaurants and brew pubs.

Big Stone Gap is the "cultural center" of the High Knob region with a unique history tied to American literature. It also interprets the coalfield heritage in its museums and the Trail of the Lonesome Pine Outdoor Drama. Big Stone can contribute to the High Knob experience by providing activities for the heritage tourist, which will attract visitors and an expanded customer base for local businesses. This could include attracting businesses connected to the regional culture, including galleries, crafts and art.

Wise is the area's "college town" as the location of University of Virginia's College at Wise. The college has been expanding in recent years, and the town has an opportunity to capture the recreation and business needs of students. It can also target knowledge-based businesses and industry that manufacture recreation products, particularly those businesses that may rely on the resources that an institution of higher education provides.

Dungannon is High Knob's "river town" and sits on the banks of the Clinch River. It is the location of the Scott County Horse Park and is developing additional horse trails in town. Dungannon's opportunities lie in targeting recreation businesses such as river guides and kayak rentals, or retail and businesses that cater to the river and horse markets.

Pennington Gap is an "ATV Town" as the Spearhead Trails initiative has developed the 32-mile Stone Mountain Trail in the hills above town. The trail is multi-use and permitted uses include ATVs, dirt bikes, mountain bikes, and hiking. The town has the opportunity to capture businesses that cater to this unique market including ATV and motorcycle dealers and services, lodging, restaurants, etc.

Appalachia not only has distinctive coal heritage but is also partnering to develop a multi-use rail trail that would connect Appalachia to Big Stone Gap and later to Norton. Overall, Appalachia has an engaged citizenry that is actively working to build off of their outdoor assets. As one of the smallest communities in the region, its opportunities lie in providing a strong business environment that caters to the needs of the local community, while looking to continue to expand assets that will attract outdoor enthusiasts.

Coeburn is the home of some of the most unique destinations within the High Knob Region, including Guest River Gorge and Lays Hardware Center for the Arts. The Center for the Arts is focused on preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of the region from arts and craft, to music and food. As an arts center, the town provides the High Knob user a unique cultural experience, and it should continue to attract creative businesses such as galleries, arts and craft, and ventures.

Duffield is in the distinctive position of not only being within the High Knob Region, but also being along the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail, another of Friend of Southwest Virginia's outdoor recreation anchors. It is also the closest community to Natural Tunnel State Park. The state park captures the largest number of annual visitors out of any other destination in the High Knob Region. Duffield has the potential to be a basecamp for both regions by providing lodging, dining and associated visitor services.

St. Paul is the gateway to the USFS Guest River Gorge and a regional center for ecological studies.

This snapshot provides both regional and localized data that present economic potential. It also describes themed opportunities for each community to contribute to the High Knob Experience. It is not intended to supplant any community's existing economic development efforts, nor should it be considered an economic strategy for the High Knob Region. However, the next section does provide some strategic direction for regional asset development in context with the economic potential and identity of the region.





7. THE HIGH KNOB BRAND

The High Knob Regional Master Plan is intended to identify priorities and organizational strategies for the High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI) and its partner agencies to implement over time. Therefore, the branding recommendations in this chapter are tightly aligned with the evolving organizational mission of the HKRI.

Throughout the engagement with the HKRI steering committee, this mission, as it relates to branding and communication, centers on:

- > **Achieving nationwide recognition as a destination for outdoor recreation** – Promote the HKRI region as a destination for an unrivaled outdoor experience – the “High Knob Experience.”
- > **Increasing outdoor access** – Continue to grow and promote outdoor recreation activities and destinations within the HKRI region.
- > **Cultivating a successful business culture** – Create economic opportunity by leveraging the region’s recreation resources and outdoor businesses.
- > **Building local pride** – Connect the gateway communities and their residents to the HKRI region and its outdoor destinations.
- > **Growing regional relationships to leverage assets** – Utilize the HKRI as a conduit to bring the communities, stakeholders, and partner agencies together to achieve common goals.

COMMUNITY INPUT

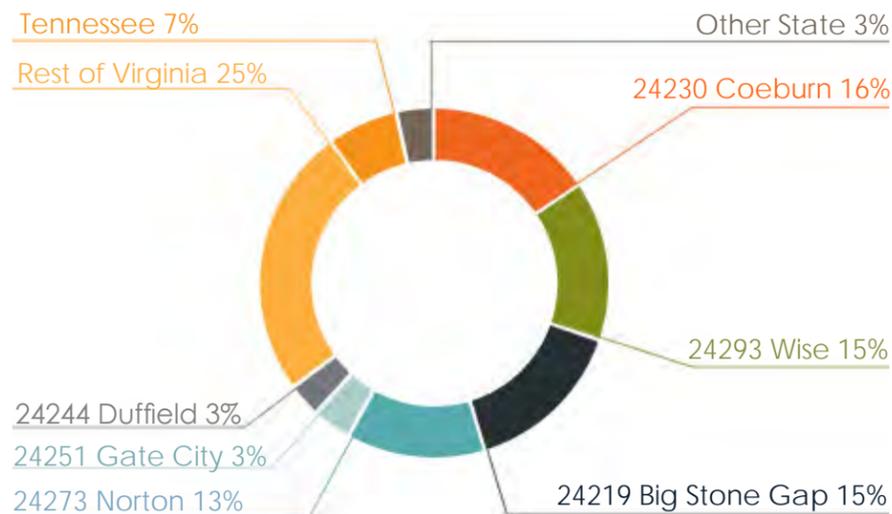
The branding process included ongoing engagement to identify residents, users, and stakeholder perceptions on the character and identity of the High Knob Region.

USER SURVEY

A SurveyMonkey survey was conducted to collect information on regional character, as well as to determine specific user data. It was facilitated online as well as with intercept surveys conducted by members of the community engagement action team.

The survey gauged users' reason for being in the region, what activities they participate in, and destinations they visit most. It also attempted to determine users' understanding of "High Knob" as a region and what communities and destinations make it up. One of the biggest findings of the survey was that locals connected more to "High Knob" as the High Knob Recreation Area, High Knob Observation Tower, and Flag Rock, rather than the larger regional footprint.

- > Conducted February 15th – April 9th
- > 19 questions
- > 683 respondents
- > 103 zip codes represented
- > 15 states represented



Participant's place of residence

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In addition to the survey, stakeholder input was gathered during a branding workshop held April 9th -11th. The workshop involved a series of focus groups beginning with the Branding & Marketing Action Team. Additional participants included representatives from outdoor recreation destinations, recreation and tourism business owners, gateway community leaders, tourism marketing partners, and members of High Knob area user groups. Participants discussed their perception of the High Knob region, how they used its resources, and what they felt defined the character of the High Knob Experience.

USER SURVEY



BRAND DEVELOPMENT

Brand development began during a workshop in downtown Big Stone Gap, culminating with a draft brand presented to stakeholders and the High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI) at the end of the week. This included input on the draft from various stakeholders, the Branding Action Team, and the public in an open meeting. A YouTube video of the presentation was provided to HKRI and its partners for further review and input. The resulting brand for the High Knob Region included a number of key elements:

MARKET POSITIONING

A brand statement is an "elevator speech" of sorts that provides a concise narrative connecting all the assets that define the region and the High Knob Experience. The statement is intended to lay out the various market positions based on the HKRI mission on page 41 of this report, presenting High Knob as a unique destination for the great outdoors.

From the Tower of Virginia's High Knob to the Natural Tunnel State Park, from our Horse Park along the Clinch, to the Spearhead Trails along the Powell, this region is an amazing collection of all of the Best of Southwest Virginia. We are the home of Virginia's Official Outdoor Drama, classic drive-in movies, old-time jam sessions, hundreds of miles of trails, unmatched biodiversity and a warmth that can only be found nestled in these hills.

We are a collection of hometowns in the shadow of High Knob, connected not through identity, but through the similarity of our challenges. In the past, we have felt abandoned, ignored, and overlooked. But opportunity has knocked, and we have proudly answered. We have realized we don't just share challenges, but a core set of values. We are loyal, hardworking, and deeply connected to this land.

These scenic surroundings are our home and our future. They are the place where we relax. They are the place where we exhale. This is the place that we are the most comfortable. And we would like to invite others to experience this amazing place. Relax, slow down, get out, and be transformed.

Explore the nation's first frontier, the place where the wilderness began, the high point of the Cumberlands.

Whether you love riding, hiking, floating, paddling, racing, cruising, or pickin', you owe it to yourself to discover this place we call ...

High Knob. Virginia's Backyard.

HIGH KNOB REGIONAL BRAND IDENTITY

The High Knob brand focuses on a proactive active outdoor lifestyle. It is intended to present the collection and depth of the regional assets and connect them to other identities such as the High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI), Southwest Virginia brand, and local community brands.

The “Virginia’s Backyard” messaging presents the region in context with all that the state has to offer, as well as a personal space for locals and visitors. It is a place where they can play, greet their neighbors, and have fun – all in Virginia’s playground.

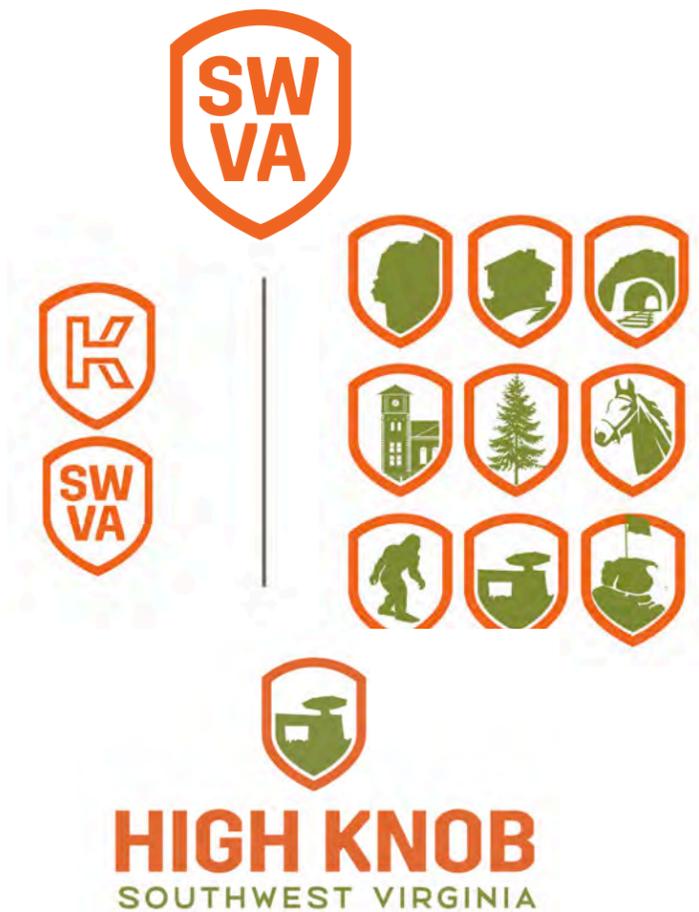
The simple icon with the interlocking HK focuses on outdoor activity as a platform. It is designed for the consumer and presents the High Knob area in a manner that can be replicated easily on outdoor products and marketing.

More importantly, the brand identity nests in the regional identity of Southwest Virginia and gateway communities. It incorporates colors and similar typefaces that have been used in brands such as the Southwest Virginia brand, Norton, Big Stone Gap, etc. It is important that there be a connection to these other brands, rather than creating silos and confusion from residents and users.

This is part of the larger strategic nature of marketing the High Knob Region as a destination. Partners like Friends of Southwest Virginia and Heart of Appalachia will continue to do the heavy lifting for marketing. This brand system not only allows them to expand their narrative to include High Knob from a top-down approach, but also allows each gateway community or destination to plug into the system while maintaining their own, unique identity.



The High Knob Regional Brand



Regional Integration of the High Knob Brand



Icon



Wordtype



High Knob Basecamps: Local Integration

HIGH KNOB REGIONAL INITIATIVE IDENTITY

The High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI) brand serves to represent the organization and initiative moving forward. As the *organization* that is growing and developing recreational assets and tourism in the area, the HKRI's communication goal would be to connect local partners to the regional vision and its implementation. On the other hand, the High Knob Brand presented on the preceding page, is a *destination* identity and would be used to market the destination and connect to the user. Therefore, while it is important that the HKRI organizational brand visually connects to the High Knob destination brand, it should stand alone as a unique identity to reflect the official functions of the organization as it carries out its mission.

The graphic is a singular HKRI icon that incorporates various regional assets: High Knob Tower, Flag Rock, Stone Face Rock, and the Daniel Boone Trail. The use of Stone Face Rock and the Daniel Boone Trail, in particular, is a direct result of the need to connect other regional assets that may not initially be considered part of High Knob.



High Knob Regional Initiative Brand

REGIONAL BRAND IMPLEMENTATION

The High Knob brand identity was created as part of a collaborative and open process with representatives from each community, partner agency, and recreation destination within the region. It is a community brand created through community participation, with a strategic connection to existing brand identities within the community and region. The brand identity package has been developed for the High Knob Regional Initiative to represent the region and the organization.

It is recommended that the implementation of the brand be conducted in the same manner to the Southwest Virginia (SWVA) brand that has been so successfully realized throughout the region, or the similar regional brand developed for Clinch River Valley. In each case, the lead partner organization is the steward of the brand and allows it to be used by brand partners.

For example, for the SWVA brand, Friends of Southwest Virginia first held regional brand reveals throughout the nineteen-county region to present the brand system. Rather than have each community “adopt” the brand that represents the entire region, it allowed each community, destination and business to become a brand partner and utilize the branding tools in their own marketing. Much like the signage system presented in this master plan, this allows the communities to present themselves as being part of the High Knob Region, while still retaining their own unique brand identity, connecting them to other communities in the region, and building brand equity to each place.

STRATEGIC MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The HKRI brand identity and messaging has been based on the initiative's strategic mission. Marketing recommendations and strategic implementation strategies are built on a tactical, four-themed approach to what the High Knob Regional Initiative can and should achieve.

MARKETING & PRIDE

These recommendations focus on integrating the High Knob brand into both external and internal marketing for regional and local partners.

1. **Adopt the High Knob Brand-** The first step is for the HKRI to adopt the brand and style guide. The HKRI will be the owner and steward of the brand and will work with local community and destination partners to deploy the brand and its messaging.
2. **Share the Brand with Brand Partners-** The Heart of Appalachia, Southwest Regional Recreation Authority, Crooked Road and others currently market the region to tourists and should be encouraged to incorporate the High Knob brand and messaging into their regional marketing. The HKRI should meet with each of these organizations to share the brand system, and discuss potential methods for inclusion.
3. **Coordinate Marketing with SWVA-** High Knob is one of eight anchor destinations promoted by Friends of Southwest Virginia in its marketing for all of Southwest Virginia. Like similar regional brands, such as the Clinch River, the High Knob icon should be integrated into SWVA regional marketing.
4. **Deploy “Virginia’s Backyard” External Marketing Strategy-** Working with its regional marketing partners, the HKRI should explore strategies to collectively position the High Knob area as “Virginia’s Backyard” in all external visitor marketing.
5. **Deploy “Discover Your Own Backyard” Internal Marketing Strategy-** The High Knob region’s “basecamps” are the local communities and destinations within the region. Working with these local partners, regional assets should be marketed directly to residents in a “Discover Your Own Backyard” campaign. HKRI can present the brand identity to community partners and explore collaborative methods to reintroduce the area’s assets to its citizenry.

6. **Create Merchandising & Marketing Collateral-** HKRI can coordinate with the Friends of Southwest Virginia to identify a local vendor to produce High Knob branded collateral such as T-shirts, hats, water bottles, etc. The organization can produce the materials and provide them to local communities and businesses at cost, allowing these partners to sell the branded material and retain profits. The Friends of SWVA currently has a partnership with the Winze Company out of Wise, VA for the development of SWVA merchandise.



Discover
Your Own
Backyard
Local
Campaign



We've made looking at a **bath**tub interesting.



DISCOVER
YOUR OWN BACKYARD

APPALACHIA • BIG STONE GAP • COEBURN • CLINCHPORT • DUFFIELD • DUNGANNON • NORTON • PENNINGTON GAP • ST. CHARLES • WISE



Find what you are looking for at the **Gap**



DISCOVER
YOUR OWN BACKYARD

APPALACHIA • BIG STONE GAP • COEBURN • CLINCHPORT • DUFFIELD • DUNGANNON • NORTON • PENNINGTON GAP • ST. CHARLES • WISE

REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

These strategies look to the High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI) to bring regional assets and stakeholders together for marketing and communication.

1. **Establish a Communication Council to Identify and Implement Regional Initiatives-** This could be a continuation of the HKRI Community Participation and Marketing committee with marketing partners that represent area communities and destinations. The committee would establish an internal work plan to implement branding and communication strategies, including identifying cooperative funding strategies for regional marketing.
2. **Create a HKRI Facebook User Group-** This should connect to social media platforms of partner groups and businesses in order to grow awareness of the Initiative and its efforts to leverage outdoor assets to grow local economies. The page should be managed to promote regional events, activities and businesses to local residents. Similarly, a visitor Facebook page could be created from the existing HKRI Facebook page. Multiple administrators, perhaps one from each county, can be used to create content and upload events.
3. **Create a High Knob Region Internal Website-** Partner with Friends of Southwest Virginia (SWVA) to incorporate the regional brand into the existing High Knob presence. Consider using www.virginiasbackyard.com in any promotional advertising for High Knob to direct people to the SWVA site (<http://www.opportunityswva.org/>).
4. **Establish a Partner Communication Strategy-** Working with the HKRI community participation committee, establish communication strategies, goals and benchmarks for various partners, including government, public, property owners, volunteers, and funders. Branded strategy worksheets were created as part of this master plan.
5. **Coordinate a "PARKing Day" Placemaking Strategy-** Build local awareness of High Knob regional assets by bringing activity into the communities through tactical placemaking. This would be branded as PARKing Day whereby events would be coordinated in various High Knob downtowns to highlight destinations (Flag Rock Recreation Area, etc) by creating "parklets" in parking spaces to market and promote the destination.

6. **Coordinate a "Backyard Proud" Initiative-** Create a program to build community pride, foster volunteerism, and organize community cleanup days. The program would be branded based on "Backyard Proud" internal messaging and would focus on engagement and public service.

7. **Establish a "Backyard Party" Effort-** Celebrate successful projects, new start-up businesses and other achievements by connecting them to the regional identity, reinforcing the importance of community efforts. The branded "Backyard Party" would be promoted through social media, ribbon cuttings, and other events to highlight these achievements.

government		HIGH KNOB REGIONAL INITIATIVE	
WHY?			
HOW?			
WHAT?			
GOAL	TARGETS		
METRICS			

public		HIGH KNOB REGIONAL INITIATIVE	
WHY?			
HOW?			
WHAT?			
GOAL	TARGETS		
METRICS			

PARKing Day
Parklet Idea in
Downtown



Internal Communication Sheets

Backyard Proud
Community
Pride Initiative

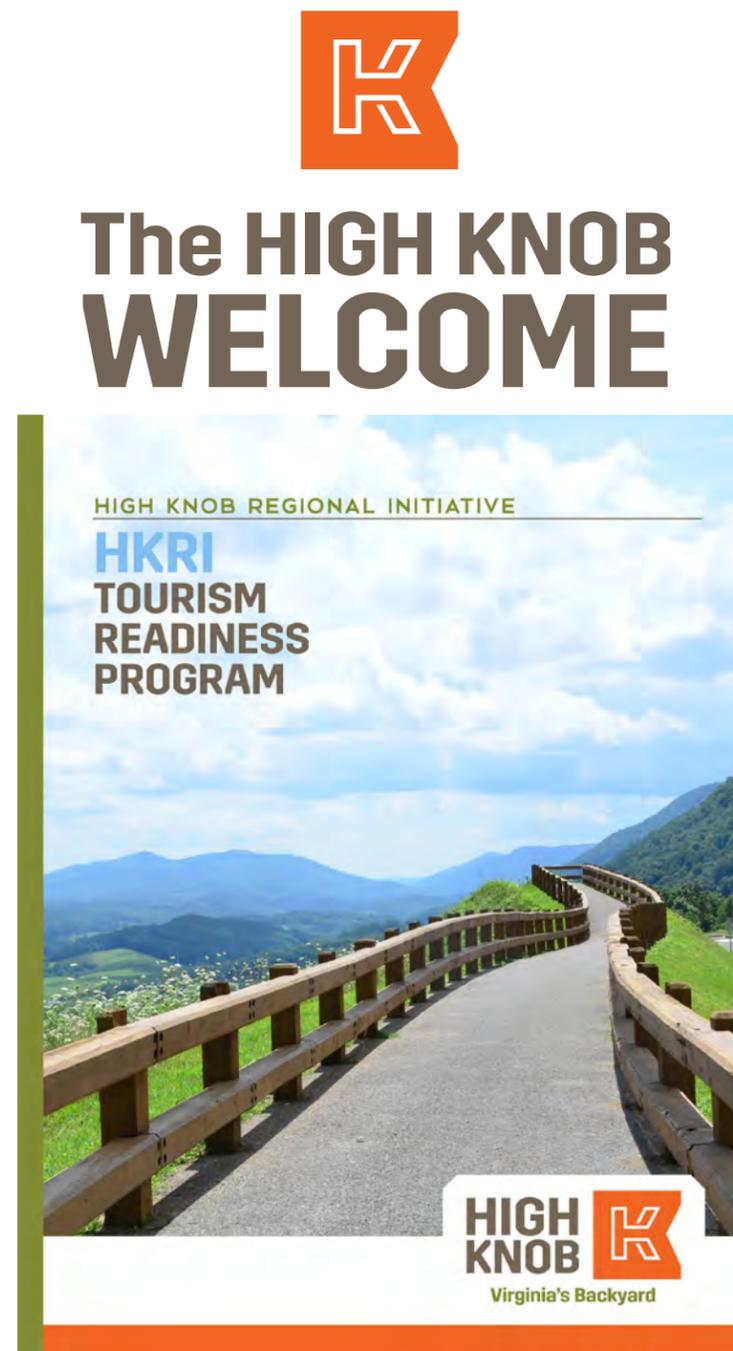


ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Establish strategies to leverage regional outdoor resources for business and economic development by connecting to Friends of Southwest Virginia, Opportunity SWVA, local communities and other partner agencies.

1. **Compile a Regional Business Wishlist-** Use the updated market research to identify region-wide businesses opportunities. This would be part of a coordinated development strategy to help recruit target businesses to the appropriate gateway communities, limit competition between towns, and connect regional offerings that better meet the needs of the market.
2. **Expand Lodging Offerings Throughout Region-** Coordinate efforts among communities, businesses and property owners to collectively market non-traditional lodging opportunities on sharing platforms like HomeAway and Airbnb. Create start-up manuals and management guidance to encourage the private sector to develop lodging product.
3. **Consider Pitch Lodging Incubation-** Create a strategy to grow pop-up lodging solutions. Similar to pop-up retail, establish lodging infrastructure that could be mobile through multiple communities. Identify grants through High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI) and Opportunity SWVA to purchase mobile lodging such as trailers, shastas, yurts, etc. to share across the region.
4. **Develop a Hospitality Training Program-** Brand a unified hospitality strategy called the “High Knob Welcome” to build customer service programming and tourism readiness tools. Model this tourism readiness assessment similar to Abingdon CVB’s method of identifying destination and business needs based on staffing, signage, seasonality, pricing, etc.
5. **Consider “Venture-UP” Entrepreneurial Challenge-** Partner to implement an outdoor entrepreneur challenge geared towards recreation-based businesses. The effort could be modeled after other programs such as Rally SWVA, with a focus on business planning and training for outdoor businesses. It could be coordinated through UVA Wise and Mountain Empire Community College.
6. **Pursue Funding and Risk Mitigation-** HKRI could also partner with Opportunity SWVA to provide business training and startup funding strategies through its Rally SWVA and KIVA programs.

7. **Establish Tourism Zones-** Consider opportunities to establish tourism business development zones in localities within the region as allowed by state statutes, offering business tax credits and deductions to tourism-related and outdoor businesses. Communities establishing tourism zones would need to adopt a Tourism Zone ordinance.



High Knob Welcome
Hospitality & Tourism
Readiness

VENTURE
UP

OUTDOOR
ENTREPRENEUR
PROGRAM

Venture UP
Outdoor Entrepreneur
Program

PITCH
POP-UP LODGING

PITCH Pop-up Lodging

OUTDOOR ACCESS

These strategies focus on collectivity managing and growing access to outdoor recreation across the region.

1. **Complete and Manage the Asset Inventory-** Work with the Asset Committee to inventory and map all outdoor recreation destinations and businesses, creating a catalogue that can be used for developing marketing materials and linking assets through digital tools. Update the inventory and digital marketing tools on an annual basis.
2. **Continue to Engage User Groups-** Target regional outdoor recreation user groups to promote HKRI, help grow volunteerism, and encourage initiatives such as Leave No Trace, trail development and clean up, etc. This would include establishing the “Trail Boogers” volunteer trail cleanup program.
3. **Implement Regional Wayfinding-** Coordinate with community and destination partners to plan and implement a regional wayfinding program incorporating the High Knob Regional Brand, as outlined in Chapter 5 of this report. The HKRI would manage the wayfinding system and work with localities to implement.
4. **Establish Trail Management Program with Local Higher Education Institute-** Approach educational partner to discuss feasibility of establishing a Trail Management Major or trail management curriculum to train people for trail design, development and management. The program could be a partnership with the City of Norton using its trails as an outdoor classroom. For example, while not currently a major, Southwest Virginia Community College currently has classes in trail management and design.

High Knob
Volunteer
Trail
Cleanup
Program



Trail
Boogers



Trail
Management
Degree at
UVA Wise



Branded
Wayfinding
System

8. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI) public outreach process generated hundreds of ideas for projects, initiatives, and programs to benefit the region. Benefiting from a Stormboard data gathering process, the Capital Improvements Action Team strategically chose a handful of these ideas for the consultant team to design and develop in detail. Capital improvement projects are categorized as **Regional Initiatives, Signature Projects, and Local Projects**. While Regional Initiatives will span multiple jurisdictions and have broad regional impacts, Local Projects will complete the system of infrastructure necessary to sustain High Knob as an outdoor tourism destination. The HKRI envisions the identified capital improvement projects encouraging economic development around existing assets through public-private partnerships.

Capitalizing on the unique outdoor recreation themes identified in the High Knob Region, eight Signature Projects are planned to enhance local economies and promote the region as a whole. These projects seamlessly blend business development with outdoor recreation, providing diverse activities that are accessible to all.

Signature projects emerged as the result of the public engagement process described in Chapter 2. The Stormboard process proposed hundreds of potential projects, large and small. Using a delphi winnowing technique, citizens who attended the Big Stone Gap in April 2018 narrowed the projects down to the eight visionary programs. With the support of market research and potential land available at the time, the design team set out to show the kind of designed projects that would launch High Knob substantially into the great outdoors economy. Most importantly, all the signature projects show potential developers and land managers examples of how to incorporate the High Knob Guiding Principles and Goals, shown in Chapter 3.

All of the Stormboard projects that were not incorporated into the Signature projects are incorporated and listed in the local projects list at the end of this chapter. A coordinated slate of local projects is planned to imbue the HKRI brand throughout the towns and reach every citizen as part of the regional effort.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

- > High Knob National Recreation Area
- > Thomas Jefferson Scenic Byway
- > Powell River Trail

SIGNATURE PROJECTS

- > Cultural Center: Big Cherry Reservoir
- > Dark Sky: Dark Sky Lodge and Telescope
- > Horse Town: Equestrian Resort
- > Coal Heritage: Coal Heritage Interpretive Exhibit
- > Adventure Town: Four Seasons Adventure Park
- > ATV Town: Leeman Field Park
- > High Knob Outdoors Incubators: North Side

LOCAL PROJECTS

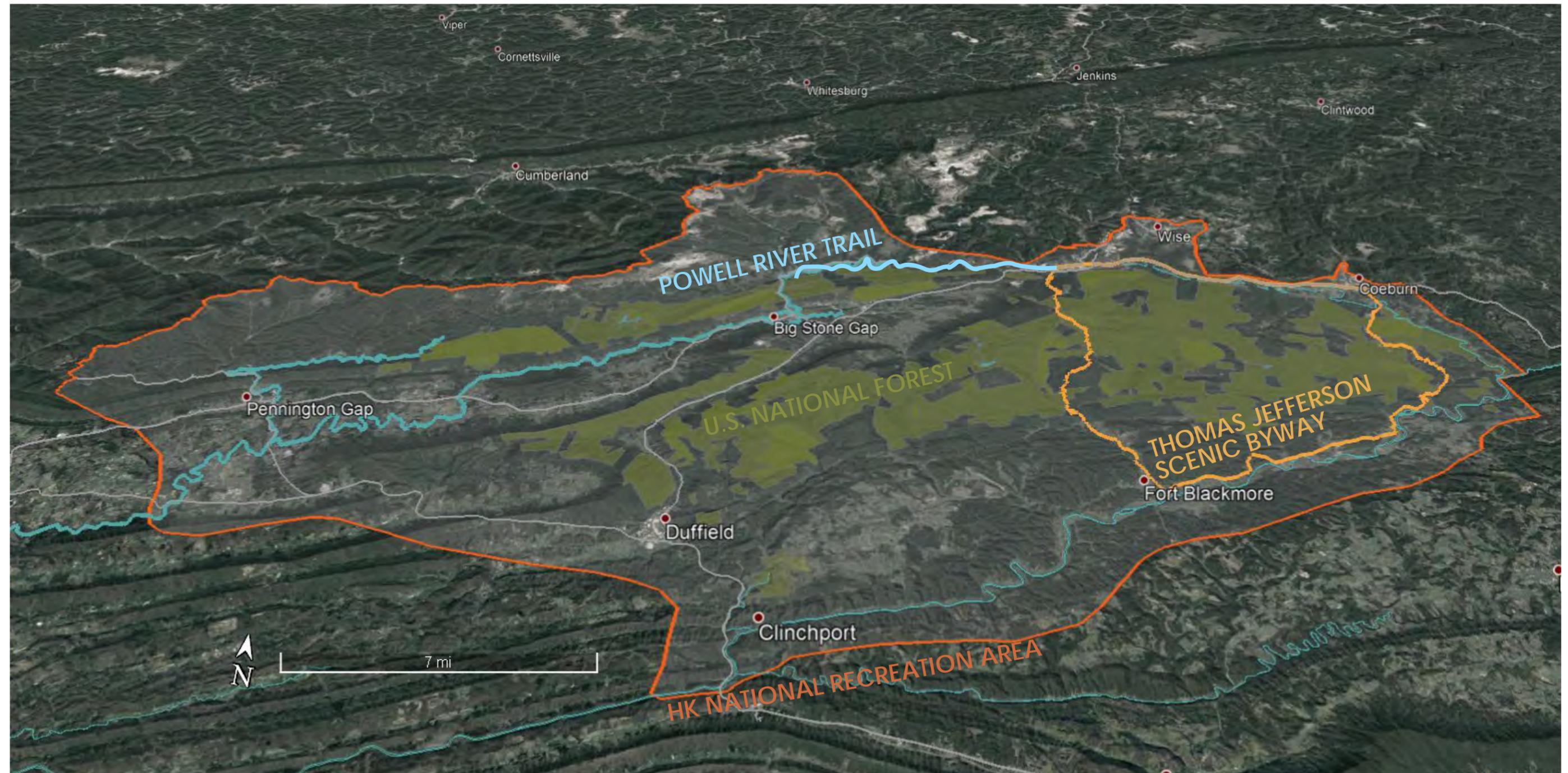
- > See page 72



REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Three Regional Initiatives—the High Knob National Recreation Area, Thomas Jefferson Scenic Byway, and the Powell River Trail—span multiple jurisdictions and will have broad regional impacts. Establishing the potential High Knob National Recreation Area will recognize and protect the natural assets of the region, supporting the outdoor recreation tourism goals of this initiative. Likewise, two initiatives already in progress, the Jefferson Scenic Byway and Powell River Trail will create

networks linking outdoor destinations, improving the physical and symbolic connection between localities. Each capital improvement project described in this chapter reinforces the HKRI brand and will contribute to the long-term economic vitality of the High Knob Region.





HIGH KNOB NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

Establishing the potential High Knob National Recreation Area will acknowledge regional efforts to prioritize and promote outdoor recreation. A National Recreation Area (NRA) is a federal designation bestowed on lands recognized for their exceptional outdoor resources. These areas combine outdoor recreation opportunities and natural scenic beauty, while being within easy driving distance to population centers. The President’s Recreation Advisory Council, established in 1963, requires National Recreation Areas to be established by acts of the United States Congress. These areas are managed by various federal agencies, most of which are part of the Department of the Interior or the Department of Agriculture. For example, Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, located in Southwest Virginia near the border with Tennessee and North Carolina is under the jurisdiction of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. Similarly, in the High Knob region, The US Forest Service could potentially manage the US Forest Service lands of the High Knob National Recreation Area. To address capacity issues, the he USFS may study partnerships for management of the NRA. This distinction as a National Recreation Area will formally recognize the efforts made to date by High Knob Region communities, help promote stewardship of natural resources, and continue positive momentum into the future.

NEXT STEPS

1. Working with coordinated materials from the Entity, embark on an educational campaign to all High Knob communities, explaining benefits of recognized National Recreational Areas , and reasons for considering High Knob.
2. Once there is significant local business and citizen support, work with local and state leaders. Have designation requested by local municipal boards.
3. Work with local congressional staff (both US Representative and US Senators) to demonstrate local support and make a formal request.
4. With local congressional staff support, make a formal request to Congressional representative and Senators to designate the High Knob National Recreational Area.
5. Support USFS in their subsequent studies to verify that the High Knob Region can meet this distinction.

National Recreation Areas are recognized places with significant outdoor recreation opportunities, natural aesthetic attractions, and cultural resource potential.



THOMAS JEFFERSON SCENIC BYWAY LOOP

In 2016, the General Assembly designated portions of Virginia Route 72, Virginia Route 619, and US Route 58 Alternate in Scott and Wise counties and the city of Norton as the “Thomas Jefferson Scenic Byway Loop.” The approximately 46-mile route passes through a variety of scenic and culturally rich landscapes as it crosses over High Knob and around its flanks. The Virginia Byway designation intends to attract visitors and support economic development by offering an alternative route, away from high-traffic corridors, which links various interesting destinations. To enhance the byway experience, proposed improvements include a wayfinding system and a series of interpretive waysides.

NEXT STEPS

1. Working with coordinated materials from the Entity, write a TAP21 Grant to VDOT for a coordinated wayfinding and signage package. Request \$200,000 for design and installation.
2. Once grant is awarded, procure design and then construction services.
3. Work with local landowners to secure permission to locate waysides and signage, if outside ROW. Work with VDOT to locate signs within ROW.
4. Working with the Entity, High Knob Enhancement Corporation, Wise and Scott Counties, and VDOT, study opportunity to pave parts of Route 619.



POWELL RIVER TRAIL

The first leg of the Powell River Trail, which officially opened in October 2017, connects Big Stone Gap to Appalachia. The popular trail stretches 1.2 miles and follows a former railroad line, passing through tunnels and over bridges. The proposed second phase of the trail system will add 17 miles to the existing trail, extending Appalachia to Norton and the High Knob Destination Visitor Center. A future leg ties the trail into the Big Stone Gap Greenbelt system. This regional initiative will serve as the hiking and biking counterpart to the Thomas Jefferson Scenic Byway Loop, connecting various communities and attractions throughout the High Knob Region.

CURRENT PROGRESS

1. Planning and Design is underway for the 17 miles between Appalachia and Norton
2. Work with design team to make sure the trail connects to appropriate features, including the new High Knob Destination Center.

NEXT STEPS

1. Assist LENOWISCO in fund-raising and interpretive efforts.

WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

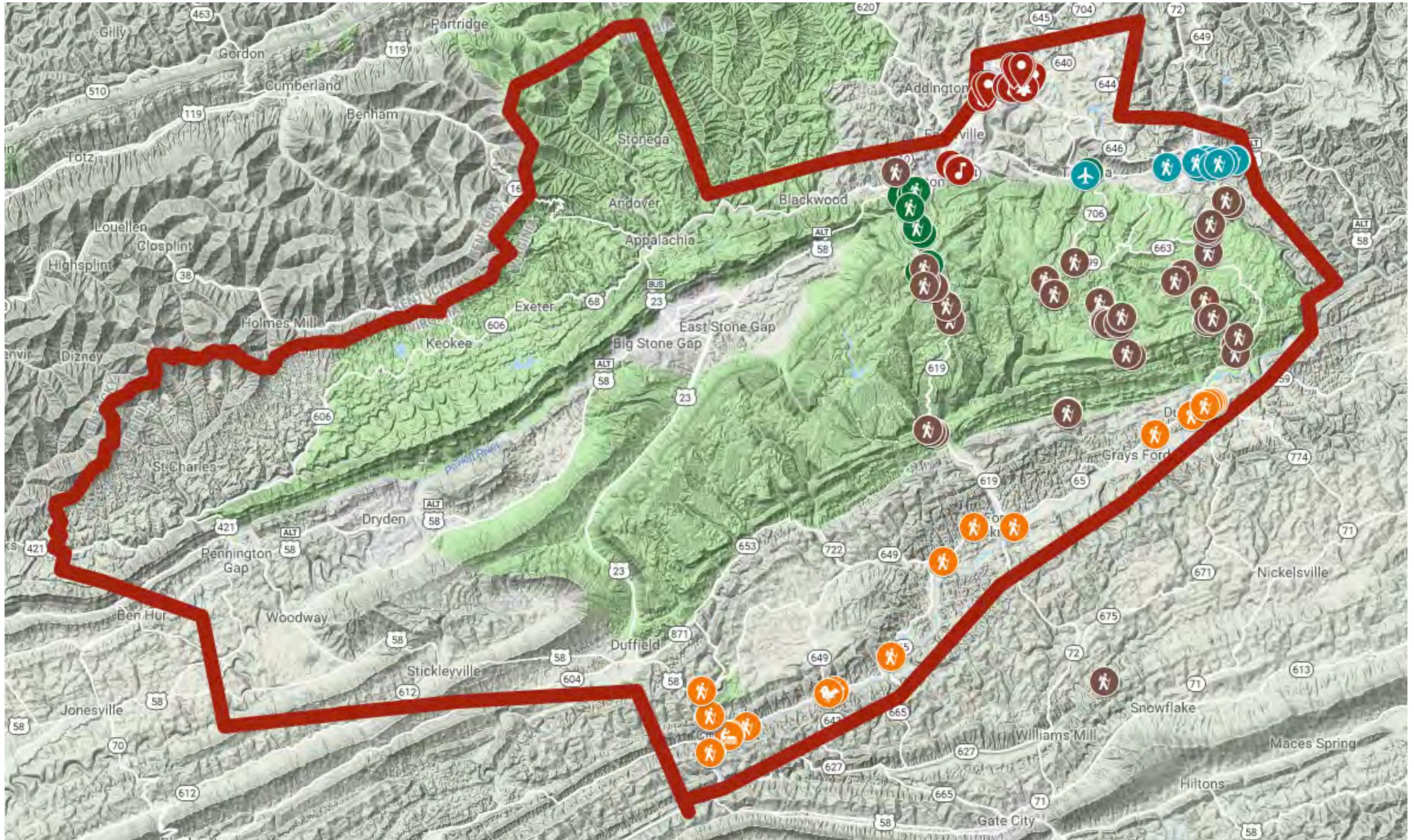
This wayfinding assessment done as part of the High Knob Master Plan has laid the foundation for a larger, focused collaborative wayfinding program for the region. Details for next steps in this program are summarized on this page.

The complexities, due to the size of the region, multiple jurisdictions, independent destinations, post-implementation management, and etc., will make a regional wayfinding program a challenge. It is therefore critical that the HKRI take the lead in a top-down collaborative process and implementation strategy. The High Knob Master Plan creates a foundation for a region-wide wayfinding strategy, and the report lays out the steps to take moving forward to create a collaborative system.

While this could be led by the HKRI Wayfinding Technical Committee, it is highly recommended that the HKRI conduct a Signage Master Plan (steps 3-11 at right) led by a wayfinding consultant. Similar plans have cost in the range of \$30,000 or more and generally take around six months to complete. Wayfinding plans are highly technical studies that ultimately result in the potential for significant capital expenditures, so proper planning will be required.

NEXT STEPS

1. **Form a HKRI Wayfinding Technical Committee** to lead the regional collaboration between communities, destinations and partners, as well as managing the implementation of the system.
2. **Complete the inventory of signs.** Working with the consulting team during the High Knob Master Plan, the wayfinding subcommittee began an inventory of existing signage. That inventory was used for the assessment in the wayfinding section of this report. It currently logs around 138 signs, primarily in the Eastern portion of the study area. Areas around Big Stone Gap, Duffield, Pennington Gap, Appalachia, and others should be added to the inventory. Once complete, it can be evaluated next to the new wayfinding signs to be detailed in the regional plan to be completed. This can help determine signs that need to be replaced, removed, or redesigned.
3. **Complete the inventory of destinations** to lead the regional collaboration between communities, destinations and partners, as well as managing the implementation of the system.
4. **Establish Travel Routes** on the planning map identifying Primary, Circulator, and Destination routes to the qualifying destinations.
5. **Identify Locations for New Signage** on the planning map based on the guidance of this wayfinding assessment, in addition to Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) standards.
6. **Create a Sign Schedule** in spreadsheet format that provides location, content, arrows, etc. of each new sign, including signs that could potentially be removed or consolidated based on new signage.
7. **Share Final Proposed Signage** with municipalities and destination partners to determine partnership opportunities, management, and cost sharing.
8. **Establish Cost Estimates and Phasing Strategy** for the implementation of the sign system.
9. **Determine and Secure Funding** sources for manufacturing and implementation of this capital project.
10. **Create an Implementation Work Plan** for fabrication and implementation of the signage system.
11. **Create a Sign Schedule** in spreadsheet format that provides location, content, arrows, etc. of each new sign, including signs that could potentially be removed or consolidated based on new signage.
12. **Manufacture and Install Signage** based on MUTCD and VDOT standards, including required permitting.



Wayfinding in the region that directs visitors to the High Knob Recreation Area

HKRI ENTITY

When capacity for coordination exceeds the ability of the management team, speed of projects needs to be increased, and when there is a more pressing desire for formal structure, it is recommended HKRI seek status as a more formal HKRI Entity. The Entity is potentially structured as a non-profit corporation. As an example, a model non-profit entity working in a similar rural region is Pennsylvania Wilds. It is positioned to work with state agencies (such as tourism and state parks) already in place. In the HKRI Region, several very effective state agencies exist within the project area already, including Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation, Southwest Regional Recreation Authority (Spearhead), Virginia Coalfields Economic Development Authority (VCEDA) and Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority. These authorities provide:

- > Status of a State Agency
- > Since they are independent, can foster the political support of all towns and counties
- > Can receive capital and operating funding from the state

Because the area is saturated with these authorities, a likely status for HKRI is a cooperative non-profit corporation. HKRI Entity, will be able to operate in concert with the existing state agencies. The non-profit has these advantages:

- > Status of a charitable organization
- > Public Trust generally associated with non-profits
- > Can receive certain grants and donations
- > Can undertake voluntary efforts and community organizing efforts

Several very successful entities have this structure. For its ultimate success, HKRI must resist the urge to be housed with other non-profit agencies, state agencies, or member towns. It needs to remain visibly independent to convey independence for trust.

REGIONAL GATEWAYS & PARKWAYS

One of the first projects of the Authority, and to solidify the brand recognition when all enter or leave the High Knob Region, a system of welcome signs and gateway signs, with landscaping, is proposed at major and minor roadway entrances into the region. A parkway style of landscape is proposed on the major travel routes, which could serve to screen objective views, frame selected views, and provide a cost-share program to design signage, commercial facades, safe parking lots and other amenities with HKRI design guidelines.

USFS DIRECTION RELATED TO PUBLICLY MANAGED SITES

The USFS Forest Service Manual will apply to changes to USFS properties:

2330.2 - Objectives

1. Maximize opportunities for visitors to know and experience nature while engaging in outdoor recreation.
2. Develop and manage sites consistent with the available natural resources to provide, to the extent practicable, a safe, healthful, esthetic, non-urban atmosphere.
3. Provide a maximum contrast with urbanization at National Forest System sites.
4. Evaluate and mitigate, as appropriate and practicable, natural hazards at developed recreation sites.

2330.3 - Policy

The recreation policies in FSM 2303 and the following supplementary policies govern the development and administration of recreation sites and facilities. Where it is not possible to achieve the objectives of this chapter, consider closing sites and facilities to public use.

1. Use recreation opportunity spectrum guidelines (FSM 2310) when developing recreation sites.
2. Develop recreation sites and facilities that will provide recreation experiences toward the primitive end of the spectrum. Do not provide urban-class facilities. See exhibit 01 in this section for the classes of recreation, the development scale, and level of site modification associated with each class.
3. Use the land management planning process (36 CFR part 219 and FSM 1920 and FSM 2310) to reach decisions to develop recreation sites.
4. Develop recreation sites and facilities to enhance natural resource-based activities typically associated with a natural environment.
5. Consider cost efficiency when developing and operating recreation sites and facilities.
6. Establish priorities for the development and management of recreation sites in the following order:
 - a. Addressing public health and safety concerns.
 - b. Protecting the natural environment of the site.
 - c. Managing and maintaining sites and facilities to enhance users' interaction with the natural environment.
 - d. Providing new development that conforms to the role of recreation opportunities on National Forest System lands.
7. Allow concession operation of Forest Service campgrounds and related recreation facilities (FSM 2340).
8. Ensure that all new or rehabilitated facilities, sites, and programs comply with Federal and Forest Service accessibility guidelines and standards (FSM 2330.12, para. 1 through para. 6). Facilities, sites, or programs are to utilize universal design (FSM 2330.5) to meet the needs of people of all abilities, to the greatest extent possible.
9. Prepare site designs and environmental assessments for all sites before undertaking construction or major rehabilitation efforts.
10. Utilize risk management assessment and management tools to make informed decisions and provide information about potential natural hazards to employees and visitors.

HIGH KNOB REGIONAL BRANDING

Another initial and continuing project of HKRI Entity, and to solidify the brand recognition, is a system HKRI marketing campaign. Initially, this campaign may be oriented especially toward the target market of Tri-cities, whose 500,000 citizens are only about an hour away. The campaign may include multi-media impressions especially for outdoors-oriented visitors.



PLANT LIFE IN THE AREA

A comprehensive inventory of plant life in the area will serve research, planning, and eventually tourism-oriented purposes.



CERTIFIED GUIDES

Modelled on a program at Hocking College, the HKRI Entity will work with a local college or community college to create and implement a curriculum for certified outdoors guides, and another in great outdoors hospitality, whose graduates will receive preference in local hiring.



SIGNATURE PROJECTS

BIG CHERRY LAKE

Situated high in the mountains, Big Cherry Reservoir currently provides recreational activities, such as fishing and hunting. The master plan proposes transforming the reservoir into Big Cherry Regional Park, with expanded opportunities for water-oriented recreation. An improved boat launch and a new boathouse will allow visitors to journey onto the reservoir in a canoe, kayak, or shell boat. The boathouse can even host competitions for regional rowing teams.

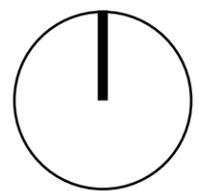
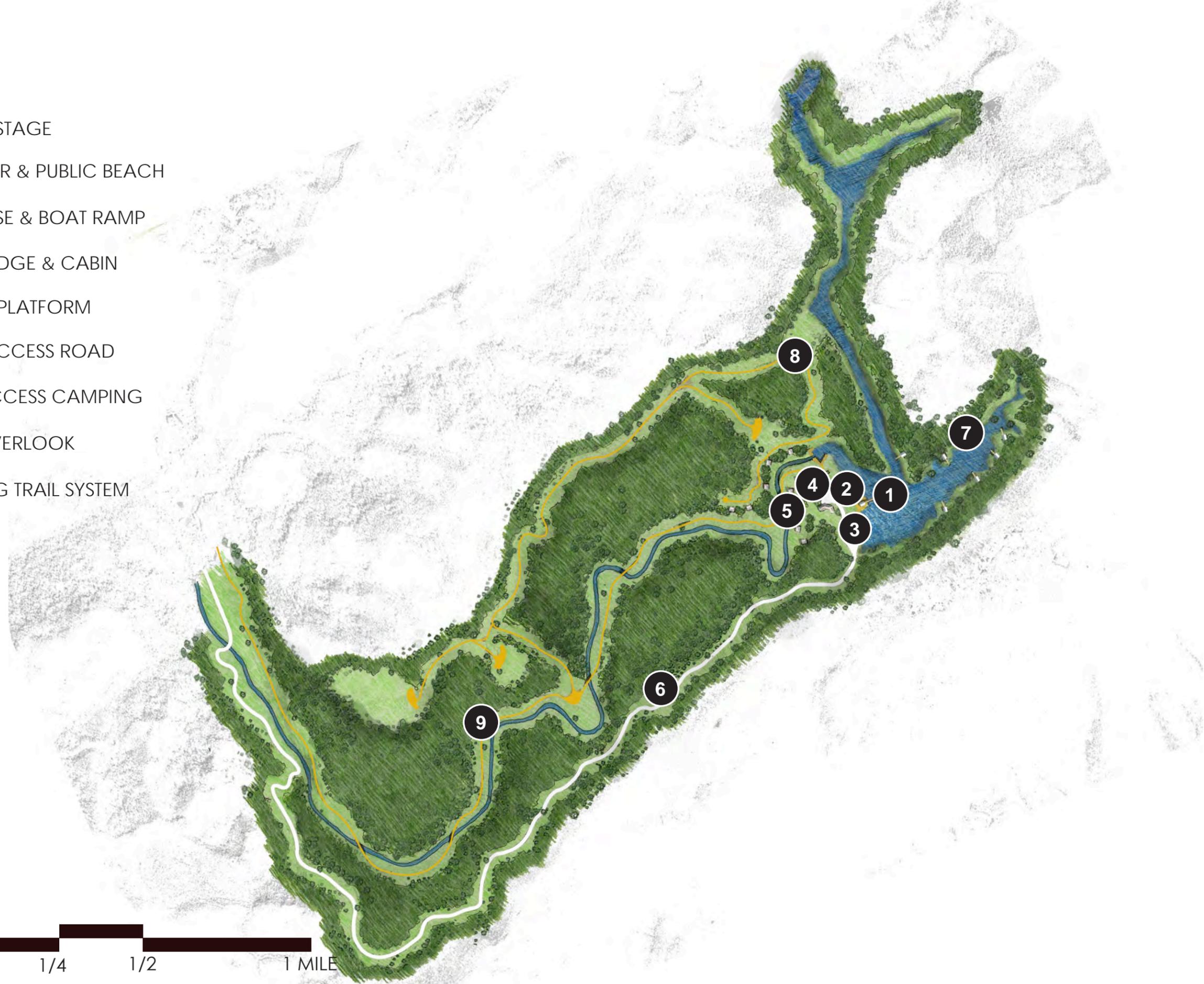
Building on the numerous cultural offerings of Big Stone Gap, the plan proposes a floating performance stage, which can be viewed from the fishing pier and public beach. When not in use, the stage can be stored in the boathouse. Visitors will enjoy breathtaking views of the reservoir and surrounding mountains from multiple overlooks along the trail system throughout the park. Big Cherry Regional Park will also offer tent camping and lakefront cabins accessible via canoe. A visitor lodge will direct guests to a variety of recreation options this park will offer.

NEXT STEPS

1. Work with Town of Big Stone Gap to update the Big Cherry Master Plan, coordinating it with HKRI initiatives.
2. Work with Big Stone Gap to compose a developer RFP, which includes incentives for master plan compliance. Seek and evaluate competitive development proposals, based on the updated Big Cherry Master Plan and HKRI Master Plan
3. Phase and Build improvements. Some improvements may be undertaken by BSG Parks and Recreation.
4. Brand and market the facility as part of HKRI brand.



- 1 FLOATING STAGE
- 2 FISHING PIER & PUBLIC BEACH
- 3 BOAT HOUSE & BOAT RAMP
- 4 VISITOR LODGE & CABIN
- 5 CAMPING PLATFORM
- 6 EXISTING ACCESS ROAD
- 7 CANOE ACCESS CAMPING
- 8 SCENIC OVERLOOK
- 9 NEW HIKING TRAIL SYSTEM



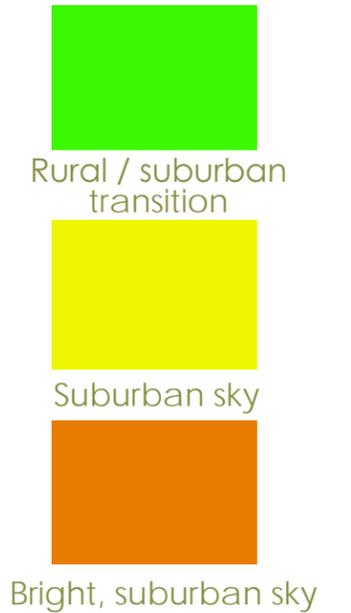
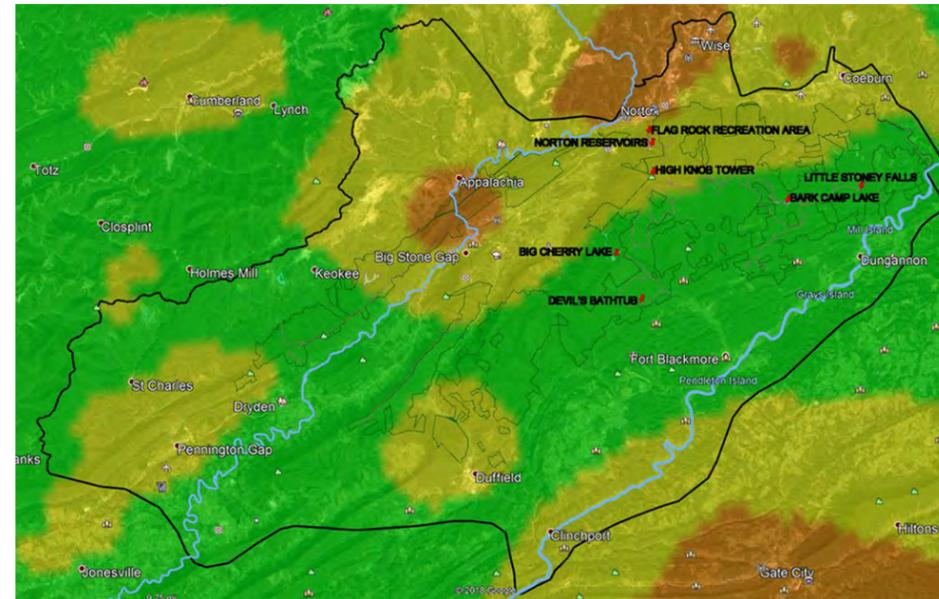
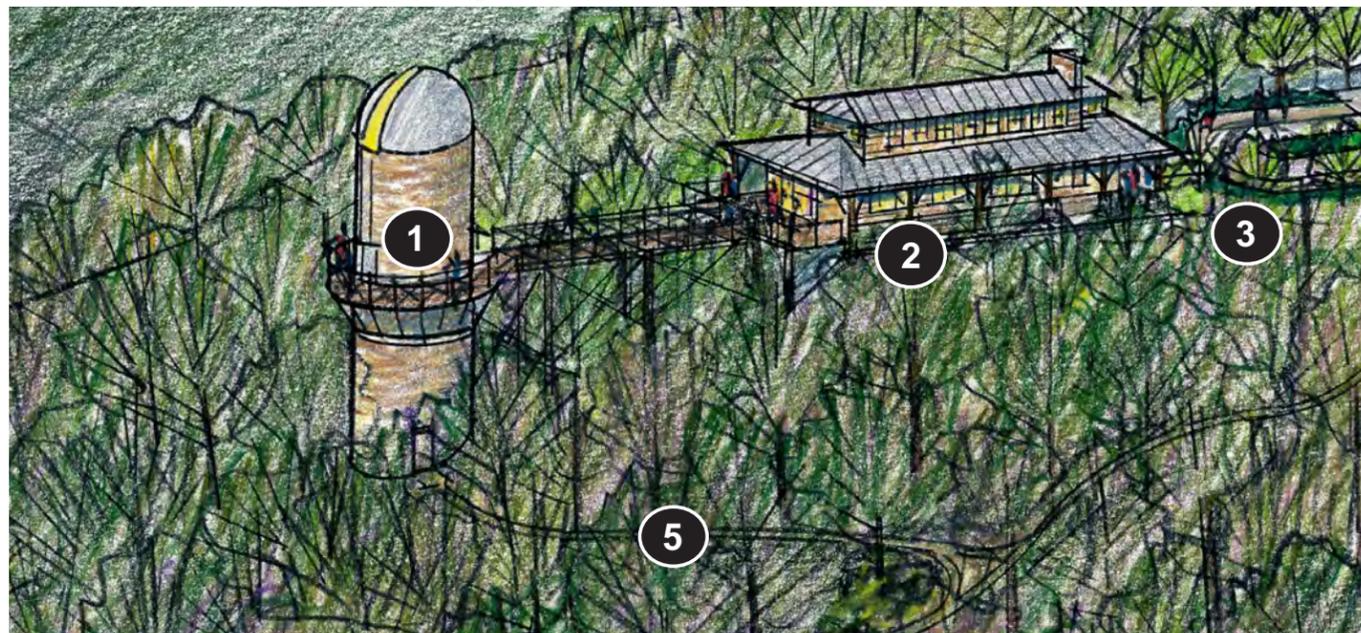
DARK SKY LODGE AND TELESCOPE

Taking advantage of forest immersion, nearby collegiate educational facilities, and lack of similar facilities in the local market, the Dark Sky Lodge and Telescope is proposed on the south slope of High Knob Mountain. Surrounded by National Forest lands, this is one of the best dark sky locations in the region, and because of its location, is highly likely to remain in that condition. Thoughtful protections can help preserve this superior night sky darkness far into the future.

Proposed facilities include a small lodge with a telescope and trails that connect to surrounding amenities. Situated on a promontory above a forested valley, the lodge is an ideal location for stargazing. Outdoor platforms and terraces will orient stargazers to the night skies. The site planning and architecture of the lodge is designed to preserve the quality of the night sky. The lodge will attract all interest and skill levels, with the telescope's view projected and explained by professional astronomers. The lodge may also serve as a teaching facility for visitors or students who want to learn more about outer space.

NEXT STEPS

1. Working with Scott County EDA, seek an option on current lands for sale that fit the dark-sky criteria, and are immersed in the Forest.
2. Work with Scott County EDA to compose a developer RFP, which includes a package of incentives for the development project. This package may include significant incentives for rural jobs creation. Seek and evaluate competitive development proposals, based on criteria including the HKRI Master Plan.
3. Phase and Build improvements.
4. Brand and market the facility as part of HKRI brand.



LEADERSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS: BOARD RECOGNIZES EAGLE SCOUT, DARK SKIES PROJECT

Coalfield Progress
Jenay Tate, Editor and Publisher
March 15, 2019



With fellow Boy Scout troop members watching, new Eagle Scout Daniel Rose shakes hands with county schools Superintendent Greg Mullins.

Wise County School Board Tuesday recognized Daniel Rose of Coeburn for attaining the prestigious rank of Eagle Scout. "Eagle Scout is a big deal, I mean a real big deal," observed District 2's John Graham as board members provided their end-of-meeting comments. District 4's Mark Raymond noted the hard work and effort required while District 1's Martha Jett remarked at how impressed she was by the two-and-a-half-year effort on his Eagle project. Rose explained to the board that he and Jack Kennedy had come up with the idea of trying to earn International Dark Sky Park designation for the Bark Camp Lake area. They began by making an application to the official organization in Arizona. They set about making the improvements required to earn the designation, shielding lights and taking light readings to determine that the skies were dark enough to see the stars. They did what was required but still couldn't obtain the official designation, he explained. So, since they already had done the work and determined that the light readings were low enough to see the stars and get certification, they shifted focus, he said. They kind of created their own designation, he said, and called their project Dark Skies over Bark Camp Lake, and it still can be used to promote tourism. Rose built a panel at Bark Camp with information on what they had done, light readings, light pollution and showed the importance of protecting our night skies. He finished the project in December 2018 and had board review in January to become an Eagle Scout. Board Chair Larry Greear of District 4 noted his love of astronomy and the night skies. Greear said he planned to go up to Bark Camp "when it gets a lot warmer." Commending Rose's work. District 3's Donnese Kern said she and her husband were campers and now they would need to camp out under the dark skies at Bark Camp.

- 1 OBSERVATION TOWER
- 2 HOTEL
- 3 PARKING
- 4 POOL & SPA COMPLEX
- 5 CONNECTOR TRAIL BARK CAMP LAKE



EQUESTRIAN RESORT

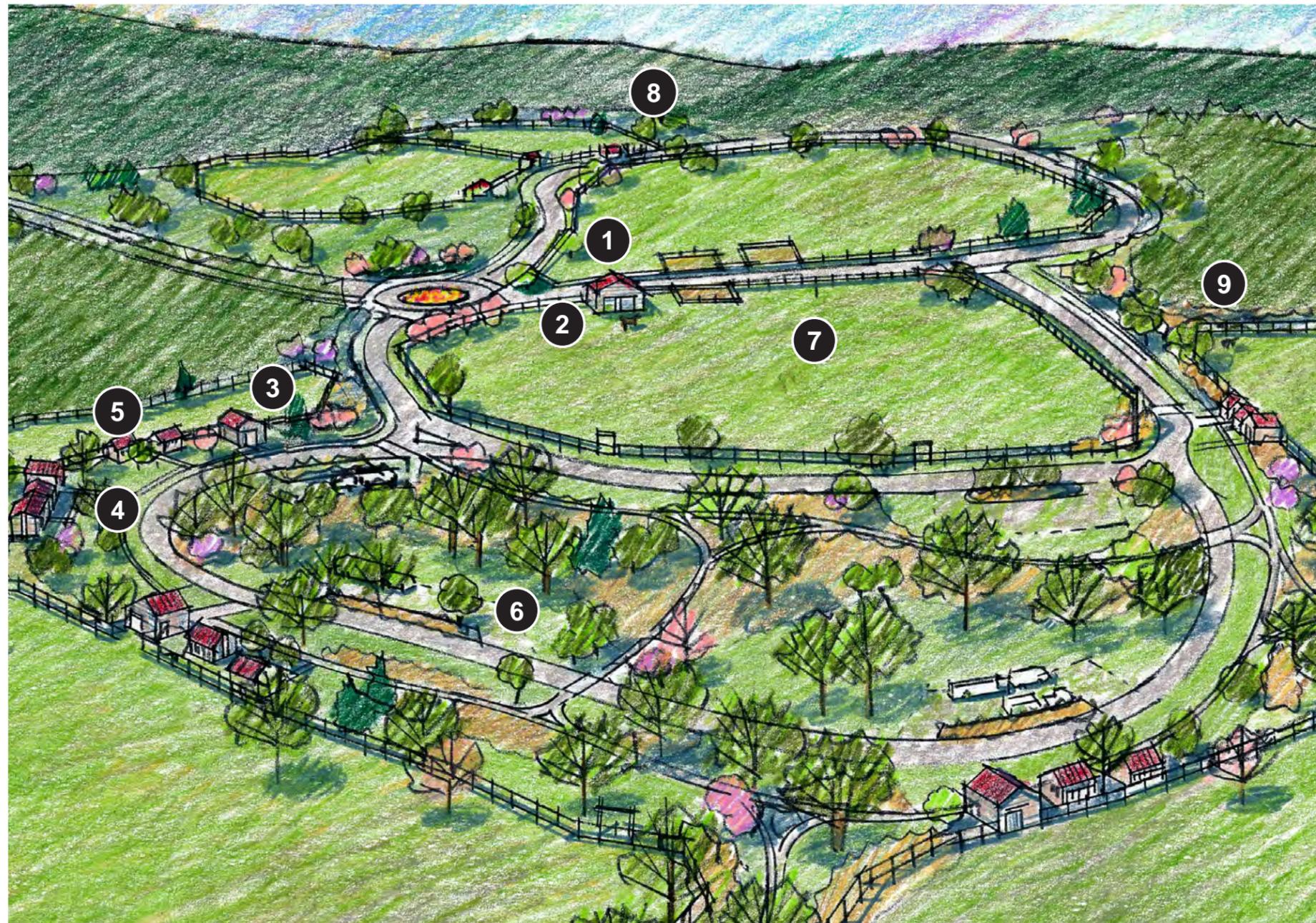
An Equestrian Resort Complex, positioned near the entrance to the Jefferson National Forest, will enhance this growing horse culture around the town of Dungannon. The resort will serve as an overnight destination for riders attending shows and events at the nearby Scott County Horse Park.

Individual stable and pasture areas will accompany cabins so that visitors can stable their horses. Resort guests will also have access to a series of arenas. These arenas may serve to supplement the Scott County Horse Park facilities, extending the season for shows. Stabilized turf parking spaces will accommodate small and large crowds in all weather conditions.

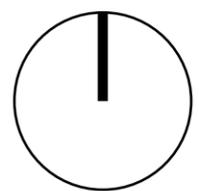


NEXT STEPS

1. Working with Scott County EDA, seek an option on current lands for sale that fit the site program, nearby to USFS horse trails.
2. Work with Scott County Horse Park, and Spearhead Trails, to finalize the desired site program, to coordinate with future Horse Park strategic plan. Work with Town of Dungannon to coordinate with future horse connector trail.
3. Work with Scott County EDA to compose a developer RFP, which includes a package of incentives for the development project. Seek and evaluate competitive development proposals, based on criteria including the HKRI Master Plan.
4. Phase and Build improvements.
5. Brand and market the facility as part of HKRI brand.



- 1 HOST
- 2 ARENAS
- 3 CABINS
- 4 GUEST STABLE
- 5 GUEST PADDOCK
- 6 GUEST PARKING
- 7 EVENT PARKING
- 8 CONNECTOR TRAIL TO JEFFERSON NATIONAL FOREST
- 9 CONNECTOR TRAIL TO SCOTT COUNTY HORSE PARK



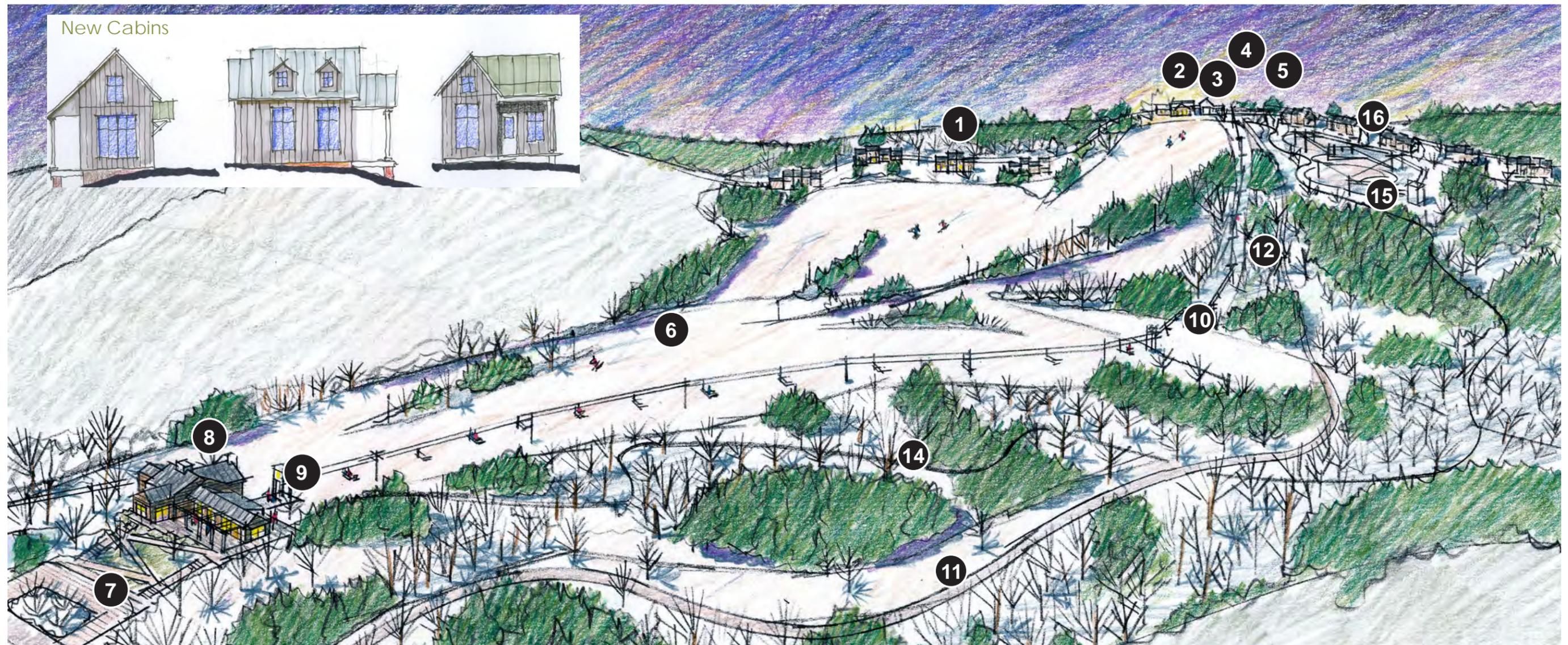
FOUR SEASONS ADVENTURE PARK

Located on the north side of High Knob, with views of the city of Norton, the proposed Adventure Park will be a year-round destination for a unique set of extreme sports. The park will function as a ski resort in the winter and transformed into a downhill bike course in the summer.

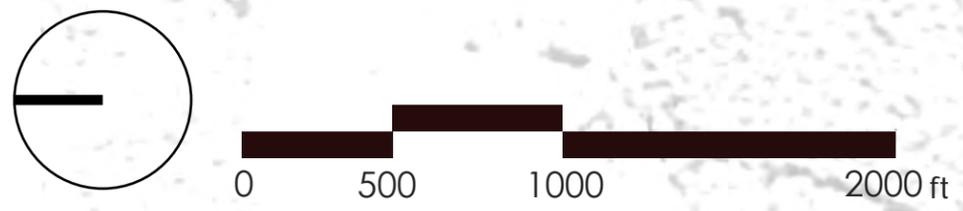
The park will offer the option of resort-style lodging or rustic cabins to appeal to the needs of a wide range of guests. The lodge will include on-site dining, retail, and an outdoor ice rink in the winter months. A ski/bike chairlift will allow easy travel from the bottom of the mountain to the top. Another gondola system will connect guests to the High Knob Visitor Center, as well as to additional retail and amenities in downtown Norton.

NEXT STEPS

1. Present this concept to the High Knob Corporation, who assembled this land to consider this venture decades ago.
2. Working with city officials, Norton IDA and Tourism Committee, perform an economic feasibility study, compose a development proforma analysis.
3. Gauge interest of High Knob Development Corporation in a PPP. There may be significant incentives available for jobs creation and other elements of this project. There could also be some grant-funded components. Seek and evaluate a development proposal, based on criteria including the HKRI Master Plan.
4. Phase and Build improvements.
5. Brand and market the facility as part of HKRI brand.



- 1 TOP OF MOUNTAIN RESORT LODGING
- 2 LODGE / OVERLOOK
- 3 PARKING
- 4 ICE RINK
- 5 RETAIL / DINING
- 6 SKI / BIKE SLOPES
- 7 DAY TRIP PARKING
- 8 GONDOLA TO HIGH KNOB VISITOR CENTER
- 9 SNOW TUBE TRACK
- 10 SKI / BIKE LIFT
- 11 SERVICE ROAD
- 12 STAFF FACILITIES
- 13 CABINS
- 14 DOWNHILL BIKE TRAIL
- 15 HIGH ROPES / ZIP-LINE
- 16 RESORT LODGING
- 17 CONNECTION TO DOWNTOWN



LEEMAN FIELD REGIONAL PARK

Located at the gateway to Spearhead's Stone Mountain Trail, the Pennington Gap area continues to gain recognition as an ATV destination. The improvements to Leeman Field Park and the new Wallen Creek Greenway will further the area's reputation as an outdoor recreation hub. Planned improvements under the master plan include a new playground and an observation deck for soccer fields, adjacent to existing restaurants.

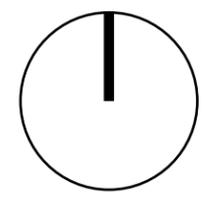
The park's swimming pool will be supplemented by a Wallen Creek tube launch, which can also serve as an access point for canoes and kayaks. The park will feature new cabins to extend visitors' stays, as well as ATV and dirt bike courses. All elements of the park system will be connected by the new Greenway.

NEXT STEPS

1. Update the Leeman Field master plan, coordinating it with the HKRI initiatives.
2. The ATV training course component may have significant components that may be grant-fundable. Work with planning professionals to compose grant strategy.
3. Work with Town or Lee County IDA to compose a developer RFP for the cabin component, which includes a package of incentives for the development project. Seek and evaluate competitive development proposals, based on criteria including the HKRI Master Plan.
3. Phase and Build improvements.
4. Brand and market the facility as part of HKRI brand.



- 1 LAZY RIVER
- 2 EXISTING POOL
- 3 TUBE / BOAT LAUNCH
- 4 NEW GREENWAY
- 5 PLATFORM CABINS
- 6 EXISTING BASEBALL FIELDS
- 7 CABINS
- 8 ATV TRAINING COURSE
- 9 SOCCER FIELD
- 10 OUTDOOR DINING DECK
- 11 PLAYGROUND



HIGH KNOB OUTDOORS INCUBATOR

The High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI) offers many growth opportunities for small businesses located in towns throughout the region. Because towns often serve as base camps for visitors, they are ideal locations for outfitters or leisure and travel service operators. Incubator spaces, such as the one proposed in the city of Norton, can help support this new outdoor tourism economy.

Modeled on traditional business incubators found in business parks, as well as modern co-working spaces, the proposed incubator provides temporary flex space complete with business amenities. Strategically locating this incubator and other future incubators in downtown areas will draw both visitors and residents to new local businesses. Outdoor plaza spaces near these incubators can serve the dual purpose of improving the streetscape and allowing businesses to showcase their products.

NEXT STEPS

1. Working in concert with Norton Downtown Revitalization master plan, and property owner, work to secure option on property, or alternatively work with current owner / developer.
2. Work with Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) to compose financial incentives for this package.
3. Design and Build improvements, in coordination with Norton Downtown Revitalization master plan and the HKRI master Plan.
4. Brand and market the facility as part of HKRI brand.



- 1 PLAZA
- 2 INCUBATOR SPACE
- 3 PARKING



COAL HERITAGE INTERPRETIVE EXHIBITS

The town of Appalachia and its nearby coal camps tell the story of coal mining in the region. As Appalachia emerged as a coal and coke boomtown in the early twentieth century, a compact commercial district developed to support these and associated industries. Today, this cohesive and intact collection of historic buildings that comprise the commercial core present an opportunity to interpret the rich coal history of the region.

The survey and nomination of the Appalachia Commercial Historic District and a series of interpretive signs are proposed as part of this master plan. These interpretive exhibits can serve as a destination for scholars and tourists alike. An extension of the Powell River Trail through town will also encourage hikers and cyclists to discover local coal history.

Historical Appalachia



Appalachia Today



NEXT STEPS

1. Complete Appalachia Commercial Historic District survey and nomination.
2. Compose a committee to write the interpretive program. Write a grant to Virginia Foundation for the Humanities for consultant to work with the committee and assist the creation of interpretive content.
3. Compose a MAP21 grant to VDOT to design and install a series of interpretive signs.
4. Phase and Build improvements.
5. Brand and market the program as part of HKRI brand.



HIGH KNOB DESTINATION CENTER

In 2014, the High Knob Enhancement Corporation (HKEC) completed the reconstruction of the High Knob Tower. Since that time, a group of stakeholders, including members of the HKEC, officials from Wise County, Lee County, Scott County, the City of Norton, and other nonprofits and community organizations, have worked to develop a plan for the next steps needed to make High Knob a prominent outdoor recreation destination.

One of the key aspects of this plan is establishing Norton as a gateway to High Knob through the development of a destination center. The center will offer maps and exhibits that highlight the recreational opportunities and ecological wealth of the region (e.g. High Knob is a nationally known habitat for rare and diverse salamander species). The long-term plan for this center is to partner with the U.S. Forest Service in its operation. The Norton Industrial Development Authority is purchasing the land that will be used for the center and will work jointly with the City Manager to administer this project component.



CURRENT PROGRESS

1. Planning and Design is just beginning on the first phase of the new facility.

NEXT STEPS

1. Assist Norton to find additional funding sources, so that a more complete facility can be designed and constructed. This may include additional grants, or a fundraising campaign.

2. Work with design team to make sure the High Knob Destination Center contains content consistent with HKRI brand.



"Make your Worst Place your Best Place" Norton will repurpose this slab from a previous factory into outdoor exhibit space with the new High Knob Destination Center. Route 23 is visible beyond.

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL RECREATION AUTHORITY HKRI INITIATIVES IN PROGRESS:

SRRA, or Spearhead Trails, has been working cooperatively with municipalities and USFS getting a jump start on a number of the HKRI Initiatives. These include:

1. SRRA has signed an agreement with USFS to assist with ongoing maintenance, including blazing trails, and maintaining trails on US Forest. Actions include winning a grant to reopen Cave Springs and improve Keokee Lake in partnership with USFS removed downed trees, improved the Stone Mountain Trail in parts, and worked on the Devils Fork and Chief Benge Trail. SRRA will be improving the road going to Devils Fork; and fixing issues on McGhee Creek.

2. SRRA is working on a grant for the Eastman Foundation to consider. Chief Benge trail lacks foot bridges for the many crossings.

3. SRRA pulled together a working group made up of jeep and dual sport bike enthusiasts, VDOT representatives, as well as representatives from Scott, Lee, Wise, and Norton and created six jeep/dual sport routes on VDOT and US Forest roads. These routes would also make great grinder trails for mountain bikes. They also connect several of the historical and cultural assets. This project brings together already existing assets into marketing routes for street legal SUV/Jeeps, dual sport bikes, and grinder type bicycles such as mountain bikes and e-bikes. Most of these routes have a portion in the High Knob area, but extend into Tennessee, Kentucky, and Russell and Washington Counties for short segments to round out the routes. The six routes they identified and are being better defined currently include the following:

1. **The Waters Edge** - The part of High Knob this trail includes is Clinchport and Copper Creek area with the remaining portions along the Clinch into Tennessee and back. Features four swinging bridges, several creeks, and examples of karst topography including limestone glades. Also features Kyles Ford in Tennessee, and see several old barns, schools, and churches, Daniel Boone Interpretive Center and Natural Tunnel.

2. **Tomahawk Trail** - This route features High Knob starting in Norton and traveling to Fort Blackmore and Dungannon and is entirely in the HK area.

3. **Lovelady Trail** - This includes mainly Lee County mostly in the service area as well as Cave Springs, Love Lady Gap, Keokee lake, and Klondike's. Starts at the Daniel Boone Interpretive Cen. with stops in Pennington Gap.

4. **Round the Clinch** - Only a small portion is in High Knob area and features Bush Mille, Creation Kingdom, starting in Weber City and going along the Clinch River on several routes around Dungannon and Nickelsville area with a view of Mendota Tower overlooking the Clinch Mountain, several scenic farms and the Clinch along with contributory creeks or springs.

5. **Wilderness Road Trail** - This route is mostly out of the HKRI are, connecting into remote areas of Lee County and features Wilderness State Park, Cumberland Gap, and Hensley Settlement.

6. **The High Knob Trail** - Big Stone Gap is featured on this route and the points of interest from Norton to St. Paul with loops into Pound area.

LOCAL PROJECTS

While regional and signature projects may take a lot of cooperation and a relatively long time to implement, it is the many local projects that can happen simultaneously. Described in more detail in chapters 9 and 10, these ongoing and proposed projects show daily progress through design and construction. While some projects have been supplied by local planning and public works professionals, others are the result of the Stormboard process, and recommended by citizens. This initial process of beyond-border public engagement will need further definition and research, which can be coordinated by the HKRI Entity, working in concert with local municipal administrations. Continuing and updating a coordinated slate of local projects is a critical component of the growing popularity and progress. These local projects are the community building blocks of the HKRI brand.

LOCAL PROJECTS, LISTED BY PRIORITY AT PUBLIC MEETINGS

ARTS CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

- > Keokee Gym Event Venue
- > Roof over Outdoor Drama in Big Stone Gap
- > Big Stone Gap National Historic District

BUSINESS

- > High End Bar: Cocktails, Cider, Craft Beer in basecamp towns
- > Scott County Tourism Incubator
- > Jeep Trek Rental Program

LODGING

- > Rental Cabins: Basic to Nice
- > Lodge and Cabins, RV Accessible Camping Areas
- > Tree Houses for Rent
- > Yurts
- > Pop-up Lodging
- > RV Camping at Bark Camp Lake

PROGRAMS

- > Litter Control Program
- > Trails Authority Coop
- > Maintain USFS Trails
- > Peak Grabbing (46 Program)
- > Keokee High School into B&B with ATVs
- > Dark Hollow Trail Upkeep and Management
- > Horse Camping
- > Loop Trail connecting Appalachia, Big Stone, Norton, Coeburn, Duffield
- > Simple Shelter accommodating through hikers - embrace Appalachian Trail strategies
- > Graffiti Cleanup on flag rock
- > Keep High Knob Open
- > Dark Sky Park

PROJECTS

- > Improve High Knob Beach
- > Trail from John Burton High School to Flag Rock
- > Signage along hiking trails
- > Shooting Range, Guns and Archery
- > Keokee Lake Shoreline Improvements
- > More Mountain Biking Trails
- > Thomas Jefferson Scenic Byway signage
- > Keokee Beach
- > A scenic railroad that goes through Pound, Wise, Norton, Big Stone and Appalachia
- > 12th Street / Route 619 Improvements
- > Upgrades to St. Paul Ecological Campus
- > Connect Guest River Gorge by Trail to St. Paul

RECREATION ACTIVITY

- > Zip-line
- > Consistent wayfinding system
- > Certified Designated Rock Climbing Areas - Guest River Gorge
- > Gravity Mountain Bike Trails
- > More Trails throughout High Knob
- > Telescope for visitors

ADDITIONAL LOCAL CAPITAL PROJECTS ADDED BY CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS ACTION TEAM

Upgrade Rt. 619 from High Knob Tower to Ft. Blackmore

Upgrade Sentry Road to Straight Fork Trail

Improve Access Road to Horse Trail Trailhead

Add more Power Hookups at the Bark Camp Campground

Create a Trailhead and Parking Area on Sentry Road for the Straight Fork that leads down to the Devils Fork Loop Trail and to Big Cherry. This provides an alternate route to the Devils Bathtub

Install permanent visual interpretation aids at the High Knob Tower to allow people to understand direction and key landmarks such as states, Black Mountain, Pine Mountain Range, Mount Rogers, etc. Link these to digital database maintained by UVA Wise (see: <https://southwestvirginiacsi.wixsite.com/highknob>)

Parking and overlook at Bear Rock

Develop a Regional Marketing Plan to attract people from the Tri-Cities to Explore High Knob

Develop a Plan to Fund a Trail Crew that would maintain all High Knob Trails. The plan could be part of a regional initiative that would allow the trail crew to split its time through the SRRA territory with the costs split between different trail areas

Trail connecting the new Visitor Center to the High Knob Tower/Chief Benge Trailhead

Consistent Wayfinding signage from access points (Norton, Tacoma, Coeburn, Flatwoods, Dungannon, Ft. Blackmore, Big Cherry)

Historical / Biodiversity Markers or Kiosks - History of the early days of Chief Benge, the Sec of agriculture Dedicating the Jefferson National Forest, High Knob Hotel, CCC/Girl Scout Camp, Settlements on the mountain, Trading Post, Hotels on the mountain

Mileage Markers along main roadways

Identify the feasibility of extending/looping the trail or add another trailhead parking lot at southern end of trail

Cave Springs Campground has a whole suite of needs: including 4 bridges; work on water system (which is new) to improve pressure in the bath-houses OR replacement of 3 in-accessible bathhouses with 1 accessible bathhouse centrally located, and have an SST elsewhere in the campground; repair of rock-work dam to stop leak

Trails Master Plan – the “big picture” plan for non-motorized (e.g., hiking, equestrian, biking) and motorized (e.g., atv, jeep, motorcycle) trail needs across the region. Include trails both inside and outside USFS Properties

Scenic Vista Opportunities Plan – there are opportunities to use forest management to maintain (e.g., High Knob Overlook) or create scenic overlooks (e.g., along roadways). The need is to have a collaborative group identify potential scenic overlooks and existing overlooks in need of maintenance

Repair/Upgrade of Existing Infrastructure at High Knob Recreation Area and Bark Camp Campground – this could include water and waste management systems, facilities and other structures including restrooms, bathhouses, historic cabin, amphitheaters, benches, picnic tables, kiosks, and road and parking lot maintenance

Extension of municipal water and sewer lines to High Knob Recreation Area and Bark Camp Campground

Restroom at High Knob Observation Tower

Explore use of an Interpretive Association Agreement – this would allow us to sell interpretive items (books, etc.) and FS merchandise and invest the money back into management of the Forests. The Mount Rogers NRA does this and it allows them to hire numerous summer hires to assist with trail maintenance and visitor information

Repair/maintain/improve infrastructure (buildings, picnic tables, water systems, roads, etc.) at existing USFS developed recreation sites and areas

Need to update/re-publish informational pamphlets about key USFS recreation sites/features

Create additional low-development scenic overlooks (maybe some of these are identified in the Jefferson Scenic Byway Plan)

High Knob Recreation Area Dam stand-pipe replacement and value replacement

Upgrade of sewage treatment at HK Rec Area

Develop Accessible Seating Area at HK Amphitheater

Repair of HK Rec Area cabin chimney

Create a defined walking path going straight up the slope to the HK Tower from its parking lot. Consider a defined pathway so that we can continue to have the “pollinator/wildlife viewing” area

Bark Camp Recreation Area needs 5 bear-resistant garbage cans

LOCAL INITIATIVES IN PROGRESS

Although the HKRI proposes a method for a concerted effort going forward, the HKRI communities have already made substantial progress through its formative years. Many of the ongoing initiatives in the gateway towns and counties were commenced and coordinated with the Management Team, and with funding from the same funding agencies that endowed the HKRI master plan. As of Spring 2019, a sampling of initiatives have begun. Planning, design, and construction stages include:

HKRI Region

> Spearhead: Rails to Trails Conversion (Economics and Planning)

> Spearhead: Cumberland Trail Proposal

Appalachia

> Inventory of Historic Buildings and potential National-register Historic District Nomination

> Powell River Trail Extension to Norton

Big Stone Gap

> Mutual Pharmacy Historic Renovation

> Greenbelt Trail Extension to tie into Powell River Trail

Dungannon

> Veterans Highway Connector Greenway

Norton

> High Knob Destination Center

> Expo Center upgrades

> Downtown Revitalization, including New Cidery

> Downtown to High Knob Destination Center connector trail

Lee County

> Spearhead: recently won a grant to get Cave Springs open

> Spearhead: Keokee horse gates, trails and signage improvements

Scott County

> Stony Creek Park and Devils Bathtub Parking Lot

George Washington and Jefferson National Forests

> USFS / Spearhead trail blazing agreement

> Stone Mountain trail blazing extension

> Updated mapping of HK and USFS trails, by Heart of Appalachia

> Spearhead: non-motorized ranger working on bettering USFS HK trails

> Spearhead: reflective blazers on Chief Benge's Trail and hand maintenance on Stone Mountain and Roaring Run trails



9. RESOURCES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This chapter includes outline explanations for various financial incentives, loan and grant programs, and economic development tools. These programs are available in Virginia for use by municipal governments—counties, cities and towns—to assist private development and public-private partnerships. Originally compiled by Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the list shows public sources, as well as some of the most-frequently sought local foundation sources. Municipalities can combine these incentives and tools to support business growth and encourage economic development. HKRI can leverage a variety of available funding sources and tools to implement the recommendations of the *High Knob Regional Master Plan*.

MEASURING PROGRESS

Municipalities must track local incentive programs to be effective. Programs with demonstrated success will attract more participants.

Track statistics to measure success:

- > Number of new businesses
- > Jobs created (net)
- > Retail tax collected
- > Property tax collected
- > Meals & lodging tax collected

Consider granting incentives at certain thresholds:

- > When business opens
- > Level of property investment
- > Number of jobs created
- > Type of business (and taxes derived from it)
 - » Restaurant
 - » Retail
 - » Arts/Culture/Tourism aligned

INCENTIVES & FINANCING TOOLS

PROGRAM / TOOL	AGENCY	FUNDING AVAILABLE	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY / REQUIREMENTS	USES	RESOURCE
GRANTS AND LOANS						
Visual Arts & Design Arts	National Endowment for the Arts	\$5,000 - \$100,000	Visual Art programs provides matching grants for art-in-public places. The Design Arts program provides architecture, planning, preservation, urban design, etc.	1:1 match	Arts & Urban Design	www.arts.gov
Community Development Block Grant	Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)	Planning grant: up to \$25,000 Improvement grant: up to \$2 million	For projects that benefit low-and moderate-income persons, prevent or eliminate of slums or blight, and address an urgent community need	Units of local government in non-entitlement localities. Localities may partner with planning district commissions, nonprofit organizations and other entities.	Planning Grants: project development Community Improvement Grants: project implementation	http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/community-partnerships-dhcd/downtown-revitalization/cdbg/10-community-development-block-grant-cdbg.html
Virginia Outdoors Fund	Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation	Varies	Provides matching grants for acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities	Varies	Design and construction or trails	http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/grants
Kodak American Greenways	Eastman Kodak Company The Conservation Fund National Geographic Society	\$500 - \$2,500	Provides small grants to stimulate the planning and design of greenways in communities throughout America	Non-profits (preferred) Public Agencies	Greenway planning and design	http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/grants
Rural Development	U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)	Varies	Provides loans, loans guarantees, grants, and technical assistance	Municipalities and nonprofits (population <50,000)	Small business creation, job retention / expansion, community facilities, housing	https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services
Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (STBG)	Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)	Up to 80% of project cost (Reimbursement)	Provides funds for projects meeting one or more of ten criteria	20% of project cost from local sources	Transportation alternatives, safe routes to school, recreational trails, and boulevards from divided highways.	http://www.virginia DOT.org/business/prehancegrants.asp
Urban & Community Forestry Assistance	Virginia Department of Forestry	\$1,000 - \$20,000 (matching)	Provides options for various grant programs and technical assistance / guidance to implement a tree ordinance	Non-profits, civic and community groups, local governments	Establishing a tree ordinance Perform a street tree assessment	http://www.dof.virginia.gov/forestry/community/index.htm

INCENTIVES & FINANCING TOOLS

PROGRAM / TOOL	AGENCY	FUNDING AVAILABLE	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY / REQUIREMENTS	USES	RESOURCE
Federal Brownfields	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Up to \$500,000	Provides direct funding for assessment, cleanup, revolving loans, environmental job training, technical assistance, training, and research. The program collaborates with other EPA programs, federal partners, and state agencies to identify and make available resources that can be used for brownfield activities.	Local government or non-profit organizations 20% match required	Site assessment, clean-up, and revitalization efforts	https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/types-brownfields-grant-funding
Virginia Brownfields Restoration and Economic Redevelopment Assistance Fund (VBAF)	Virginia Resources Authority (VRA) Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ)	Up to \$500,000	Provides grants or loans to local governments to promote restoration and redevelopment of brownfield sites and to address environmental problems or obstacles to reuse so these sites can be effectively marketed to new economic development prospects	Local government 1:1 match required	Planning, assessment & remediation	https://www.vedp.org/brownfields
Industrial Revitalization Fund (IRF)	Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)	Determined at the time of allocation	Leverages local and private resources to achieve market-driven redevelopment of vacant and deteriorated industrial and commercial properties.	Eligible properties: Formerly used for manufacturing, warehousing, mining, transportation and power production. Large-scale white elephant structures (department stores, theaters, hotels and shopping centers) Structures whose original intended use was solely residential are not eligible 1:1 match required	Revitalization of vacant non-residential structures whose poor condition creates physical and economic blight to the surrounding area in which the structure is located	http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/business-va-assistance/blighted-structures/industrial-revitalization-fund-irf.html

INCENTIVES & FINANCING TOOLS

PROGRAM / TOOL	AGENCY	FUNDING AVAILABLE	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY / REQUIREMENTS	USES	RESOURCE
Cost Share Program	Virginia Department of Historic Resources	Varies	Assists local governments and DHR in developing a cultural resource database of their respective localities. Also allows owners of historic properties to be eligible for substantial tax credits for rehabilitating their properties when historic districts and individual properties are successfully nominated to the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places.	Local government 1:1 match required Funding limited; competitive application process	Survey of historic properties, National Register nominations, and preservation plans.	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/survey-planning/frequently-asked-questions-survey-planning/
Community Business Launch (CBL)	VA Department of Housing and Community Development (VDHCD)	Varies	Provides the tools to effectively prepare multiple entrepreneurs to operate successful businesses in a downtown or neighborhood commercial district and allows them to compete for funding to start up their new endeavor.	Local government and non-profits	Help communities begin to develop a coordinated, comprehensive sustainable environment that identifies, launches and supports community-based entrepreneurs and small business at all levels of development.	http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/community-partnerships-dhcd/community-business-launch-cbl.html
TAX CREDITS						
Federal Investment Tax Credit for Certified Historic Rehabilitation	National Park Service (NPS)	20% eligible rehabilitation costs	Federal income tax credits are available for rehabilitating a historic structure listed on the National Register of Historic Places (individually or as a contributing structure in a historic district)	Available for income-producing properties. Credits can be carried forward 20 years and back one year. Claim 4% per year over 5 years. Substantial rehabilitation equal to 100% of adjusted gross basis. Ownership must be retained for 5 years after project completion.	Historic preservation and revitalization	https://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm

INCENTIVES & FINANCING TOOLS

PROGRAM / TOOL	AGENCY	FUNDING AVAILABLE	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY / REQUIREMENTS	USES	RESOURCE
State Tax Credit for Historic Rehabilitation	Virginia Department of Historic Resources	25% eligible rehabilitation costs	State income tax credit is available for rehabilitating a historic structure listed (or eligible for listing) on the Virginia Landmarks Register (individually or as a contributing structure in a historic district).	Available for income-producing properties and private residences. Can be carried forward for up to 10 years. Substantial rehabilitation equal to 50% (25% for residences) of assessed value of building for year prior to beginning work.	Historic preservation and revitalization	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/tax-credits/
Enterprise Zones	Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD)	Varies	Designates local districts within which businesses creating jobs and improving facilities can receive: > State tax credits on income and sales taxes for real property improvements > Grants for creating jobs > State and local incentives for job creation	Available to businesses and zone investors who create jobs and invest in real property within the boundaries of enterprise zones.	Varies	http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/business-va-assistance/startingexpanding-a-business/virginia-enterprise-zone-vez-business.html
Opportunity Zones	Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD)	Varies	An emerging program which provides for temporary tax deferral of capital gains reinvested into a Qualified Opportunity Zone Fund. The basis increases by 10 percent with a holding period of five years, and by an additional 5 percent if held for at least seven years, excluding up to 15 percent of the original gain from taxation. Permanent exclusion from taxable income of capital gains from the sale or exchange of an investment in an Opportunity Fund if the investment is held for at least 10 years.	The deferred gain must be recognized on the earlier of the disposition of the investment or Dec. 31, 2026. Step-up in basis, which the initial basis in a Qualified Opportunity Zone investment starts at zero. The basis of investment at the time of sale is increased to the fair market value.	Job creation, business development, revitalization	http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/opp-zones.html
New Markets Tax Credits	Community Development Financial Institutions Fund	39% of original investment amount claimed over seven years	Incentivizes community development and economic growth through the use of tax credits that attract private investment to distressed communities.	NMTC Program applicants must be certified as Community Development Entities by the CDFI Fund.	Job creation, business development, revitalization	https://www.cdfifund.gov/programs-training/Programs/new-markets-tax-credit/Pages/default.aspx

INCENTIVES & FINANCING TOOLS

PROGRAM / TOOL	AGENCY	FUNDING AVAILABLE	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY / REQUIREMENTS	USES	RESOURCE
Arts & Cultural Districts	Municipality	Varies	Under §15.2-1129.1 of the Code of Virginia, localities may establish arts and cultural districts for the purpose of increasing awareness and support for the arts and culture in the locality.	Criteria for what qualifies as an “arts” business is at the discretion of the locality. Incentives should be provided to businesses that positively contribute to the spectrum of arts and cultural activities and venues within the targeted area.	Administer incentives and provide certain regulatory flexibility to qualifying businesses or entities within the boundaries of the district	https://vacode.org/15.2-1129.1/
Technology Zones	Municipality	Varies	Encourage new and expanding technology businesses in a locality. Virginia cities, counties, and towns have the ability to establish, by ordinance, one or more Technology Zones to attract growth in targeted industries.	All localities to offer local incentives to qualified businesses locating or expanding operations in the zone. Localities design and administer program. Incentives may be provided for up to 10 years.	Incentives may include: Reduction of user and permit fees, local tax incentives, special zoning treatment, exemption from local ordinances or other incentives adopted by ordinance.	https://www.vedp.org/incentives
Tourism Zones	Municipality	Varies	Under § 58.1-3851 of the Code of Virginia, any city, county, or town may establish, by ordinance, one or more Tourism Zones to provide tax incentives and regulatory flexibility to encourage tourism related business development. They serve both new and existing businesses whose primary purpose is to establish desirable destinations to attract tourists from outside of the community.	Targeted businesses include attractions and entertainment, lodging, restaurants, and specialty retail.	Create an environment for visitors that will deliver a memorable experience or promote educational opportunities while increasing travel-related revenue	https://www.vatc.org/tdfp/applicationprocess/tourismzone/
Opportunity Zones	Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD)	Varies	Allow investors to receive tax benefits on unrealized capital gains by investing those gains in qualified census tracts (i.e. opportunity zones).	Qualification of Opportunity Investment Funds and Qualified Opportunity Investments must be written at the federal level and are expected to be formalized later this calendar year.	Promote revitalization through private sector investment	http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/opp-zones.html

INCENTIVES & FINANCING TOOLS

PROGRAM / TOOL	AGENCY	FUNDING AVAILABLE	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY / REQUIREMENTS	USES	RESOURCE
TAXATION & FINANCING						
Community Development Authorities	Municipality	Varies	Can be created to issue tax-exempt revenue bonds to develop and manage facilities and services including roads, parking, utilities, streetlights, landscaping, security, maintenance, recreation, schools, etc. A separate and additional tax on real estate may be assessed to pay the debt service on the bonds.	Local government	Improvement projects for revitalization, community and economic development.	https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title15.2/chapter51/section15.2-5158/
Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	Municipality	Varies	Can be created to stimulate private investment in development project areas. District boundaries are set and the current or “base assessed value” of tax revenue is determined. In the ensuing years, the base values continues to go to the locality’s general fund, but any increase in revenue due to redevelopment (the increment) is placed in a separate TIF fund.	Local government	Pay off debt incurred to provide redevelopment incentives such as land assembly and site preparation, infrastructure improvements, etc.	https://vacode.org/2016/58.1/III/32/4.1/
Real Estate Tax Abatement	Municipality	Up to 90% of the structure’s value after renovation	“Partial exemption from taxation of real estate on which a structure no less than 20 years of age has been substantially rehabilitated.”	Local government	Taxes are paid on the pre-rehab value of the building for up to 15 years on residential, commercial or industrial properties. Abatement up to 25 years is allowed for hotel/motel properties at least 35 years of age for residential use.	https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title58.1/chapter32/section58.1-3220.01/
SUPPLEMENTAL POLICY TOOLS						
Local Historic District	Municipality	N/A	Preservation ordinance is a local statute that provisions for designating historic resources, establishes a design review board (also called a preservation or historic district commission), and creates a design review process and guidelines.	Local government	Protect and increase property values, promote tourism and economic development.	https://savingplaces.org/stories/10-steps-to-establish-a-local-historic-district#.W83uU1VKhEZ
Virginia Main Street Program	Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)	Varies	A preservation-based economic and community development program that follows the Main Street Approach by the National Main Street Center. Offers a range of services and assistance to communities interested in revitalizing their historic commercial districts.	Local government	Promote downtown revitalization through targeted design, economic, organization, and promotional strategies and activities.	www.dhcd.virginia.gov/mainstreet



10. IMPLEMENTATION

The High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI) master plan serves as a vision and toolkit to guide future development in the High Knob region. In addition to serving as a tool to direct the HKRI Management Team, the Master Plan should be added to regulatory checklists in all the cooperating municipalities to ensure plans incorporate the recommendations in this document and help achieve the goals laid out within its chapters.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

ORGANIZATION

Formulating and growing for over a decade, the work of the High Knob Enhancement Corporation and the Management Team has been an astounding citizen-driven volunteer effort. The work of this master plan crystallizes the future vision of the working committees. Acknowledging the heroic efforts of volunteers over decades, the recommended work efforts described for the future are more than what can be accomplished by these extraordinary volunteers. To achieve progress with the desired expediency, an organized and funded structure must be put in place.

Introduced in Chapter 8, an entity can be established with the purpose of fulfilling the vision of this master plan. This entity is proposed to be a non-profit corporation, and work strategically with the many State and local organizations already at work in the High Knob region. The structure of the current action teams can serve as the beginning structure within the Entity. The Entity may carefully consider membership of a governing board, with expert members to maximize regional penetration, fundraising, volunteer recruitment, government relations, and other issues that may face a non-profit interested in land stewardship.

HIGH KNOB ENTITY

OPERATION BUDGET

Initially, during start-up years, the Entity may seek operating funds from Commonwealth and other governmental sources. The budget should cover operating costs, including salary for an executive director, and other necessary small-scale expenditures (e.g. marketing, community outreach, etc.). Although funding is required for initial start-up operation, the long-range goal should be for increasing portions the operating budget to come from economic gains and results of Entity operations, similar in nature to a Special Revenue Source (SRS) Fund. For example, the State contribution could be provided at 100% level for the first five years, then reduced to 75% of the original amount for the next 3 years, then 50% of the amount for the final 2 years of a ten-year period. During the ten-year period, the contributions from the SRS District would replace the State contribution.

SPECIAL REVENUE SOURCE (SRS) FUND

In the case of the HKRI area, new great-outdoors projects would receive financial incentives for start-up and initial operations perhaps through a loan pool established by the Entity and funded by participating financial partners (e.g. State, IDAs, local banks, etc.). This pool would be structured as advantageous to starting outdoor businesses and loan repayments would renew the loan pool and interest paid go toward operating the Entity.

Another option would be to establish a special assessment district for Great Outdoors Businesses that provides additional incentives for growing these businesses within the municipalities. This would be like Arts and Cultural Districts already enabled in Virginia. This new district would provide local incentives to great outdoors businesses within the designated areas, thereby increasing the tax base and enabling future contributions in increased tax revenues back to the Entity in the form of an annual partner contribution.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS LIST

The Entity will create and maintain a master list of capital projects and will prioritize, and participation from other applicable sources, for prioritized capital projects. It is intended that a series of proposed improvements be included and updated in the annual HKRI Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) during future budget meetings in order to allocate funding for specific projects in the High Knob region. This chapter provides an Implementation Matrix Tool to help the Entity identify and prioritize potential capital improvement projects to carry through implementation.

Updating the capital budget and discussion each year will help this important region see continued improvement throughout forthcoming administration terms. The yearly budget discussion will help keep The High Knob Initiatives a priority with respect to state and local funding allocations.

REGIONAL COORDINATION

The Entity will need to coordinate between regional governmental stakeholders (like USFS, Spearhead, Heart of Appalachia, LENOWISCO and Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation) regarding regional initiatives and capital project administration. Many of these governmental agencies continue to take-on and manage capital projects. There may be some, however, that are more appropriate for a non-profit to undertake, and the non-profit status may provide an alternative path to fundraising not available to these governmental partners.

JOINT MUNICIPALITIES PROJECTS

The Entity would serve to induce, facilitate, and collaborate on economic development activities, particularly regarding joint-municipality projects, as well as future regional and signature projects. Projects should be coordinated among the Entity stakeholders and the municipalities.

ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

The Entity would be responsible for implementing the High Knob principles outlined in Chapter 3. Because the municipalities within the HKRI Master Plan area all have different zoning, and land use guidance regulations, and all three counties have independent zoning regulations, coordinated land use and development policies among stakeholder municipalities are critical. Current public interest trends away from imposing overarching regulations that affect an individual's use of their land. Thus, to be effective, voluntary land guidance policies beyond those in current comprehensive plans and zoning would work best when tied to incentives, provided by the High Knob Entity.

While enhancing economic development activity for the entire region, the Entity will need to capture additional monies generated to provide financing for some of the more challenging cooperative projects.

HKRI PARTNERING METHOD

The High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI) partnering method provides a win-win program for stimulating appropriate projects while initiating a pool of outdoor recreation businesses. Using the HKRI method, the High Knob Entity would facilitate and, in some cases, provide economic incentives, liaise to prioritize corresponding off-site capital improvements, provide planning and design consultation, and coordinate the project with regional and local stakeholders. In return, a developer would design and build the project in compliance with the Guiding Principles (Chapter 3) and in compliance with local comprehensive plan, zoning and the HKRI Master Plan. By joining the SRS Fund, the developer voluntarily provides an annual revenue contribution to the non-profit High Knob Entity.

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising activities could include accepting contributions, grant-writing and grant management from public and private foundations, and special fundraising events.

The money raised by the Entity could be directed to operating costs of the Entity, as well other designated capital projects or programs.

Several State and Federal programs, as well as private foundation programs, provide funding to support planning and implementation of projects that promote the development of the types of initiatives described in Chapter 8. As discussed in Chapter 9, funding is available for a variety of activities, including planning, technical assistance, research, and capital infrastructure investments. Acting as a recipient, the Entity can strategically raise and leverage funds from multiple programs in an effective way that maximizes local resources and secures regional investment.

Chapter 9 provides a list of potential funding sources for implementing the HKRI Master Plan. In addition, the matrix provides general information regarding financing tools, tax credits, loans, grants, and other incentives to foster economic development.

VOLUNTEER GROUP COORDINATION

Because of its boots-on-the-ground orientation, the Entity will be the wing of the organization that is best positioned to manage the described “volunteer corps in action”, such as the trail-maintenance brigade (Trailboogers) and clean-up corps (Earthboogers).

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In addition, the Entity is the group most likely to be involved in continuing public engagement activities during implementation. While the High Knob Entity is a leader in implementing the Master Plan and undertaking activities, it is important that the Entity be “grassroots” in nature with engaged private sector members (businesses, property owners, investors, and private citizens). There are several successful Foundation models throughout Virginia and other states (like Piedmont Environmental Council or Pennsylvania Wild); however, ultimately the structure needs to be what is “right” for The High Knob region. A well-defined, targeted strategy for public collaboration and continued financial stability is required to yield the desired outcomes set forth in this Master Plan. This strategy should include:

- Assembling an informal group of business and property owners to assist the Entity with the implementation of this Master Plan. This could begin with representatives of the management team, as well as other key stakeholders.
- Targeting additional volunteers with a desire to continue work of the Entity, expanding the group of stakeholders and building its “human capital.”
- Creating strategic goals of the volunteer stakeholder committee. This should be narrow in scope, focusing on fund-raising and promotion.

TWO NEW PLANS

The successful implementation of the HKRI Master Plan will depend on the Entity’s ability to leverage existing resources effectively. A strategic plan and a business plan are two very early next steps.

The HKRI Entity should seek for ways to align initiatives identified in the HKRI Master Plan with ongoing and upcoming local planning and budgeting efforts. Several current initiatives have been identified (see following section Initiatives in Progress).

PARTNERSHIPS

The HKRI Master Plan is broad, yet strategic, in vision and scope; its implementation will be dependent on the collective efforts not only of the Entity, but also its partner organizations, as well the private sector. The next task of this Management Team will be to share the Master Plan vision, goals and recommendations with partner agencies (e.g., regional municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, etc.). Partner discussions should include sharing the vision for the Entity and soliciting participation.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The matrix at the end of this chapter beginning on the next page serves as a tool for the High Knob Region in prioritizing and implementing future projects and capital improvements. It provides a summary of recommendations and initiatives designed to achieve the planning goals and principles identified in the plan, which were developed with substantial public input.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

	PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION TEAM	ACTION STEPS			PRIORITY	TIMELINE
				Year 1	Year 2-5	Years 5-10		
Principle #1: Respect & Preserve Natural Assets and Recreational Resources	Goal #1: Formalize a High Knob Entity							
	Transition the HKRI Steering Committee into an entity and a foundation that will lead the work set forth on the HKRI Master Plan	HKRI Committee HK Enhancement Committee Friends of SWVA	All Teams	> Organize a formal entity to implement Master Plan initiatives	> Implement initiatives	> Implement initiatives	High	
	Goal #2: Establish High Knob as a National Recreation Area							
	Work with other designated areas to gain traction	High Knob Entity LENOWISCO Friends of SWVA Localities USFS	Community Participation	> Compile case studies of other recreation areas > Actively seek partners interested in promoting Virginia Tourism > Ground laying Campaign: Telling Why	> Application	> Operation	High	
	Establish destination centers to complement the potential national recreation area	High Knob Entity LENOWISCO Friends of SWVA Localities USFS	Capital Improvements	>Capital Improvements Plan	>Seek Capital Funding	>Implementation	Medium	
	Goal #3: Protect Wildlife							
	Protect plant and wildlife of the region	High Knob Entity MECC UVA Wise	Assets	> Research and organize > See for grants	> Develop inventory of all plant life in the area	> Use inventory to prioritize special easements purchases, interpretation of wildlife	High	
	Goal #4: Maintain Recreational Destinations							
	Graffiti clean up on Flag Rock	City of Norton	Capital Improvements	> Update capital budget	> Implement initiative		Medium	
	Keep High Knob open	High Knob Entity LENOWISCO Friends of SWVA Localities USFS	Incentives	> Design campaign	> Secure funding > Secure partners	> Develop sustainable operation plan	Medium	
	Improve High Knob Beach	High Knob Entity USFS	Capital Improvements	> Develop program and budget	> Contract EIS and A/E services	> Implement initiative	Medium	
	Improve Keokee Lake	High Knob Entity, VDGIF, USFS	Capital Improvements	> Develop program and budget > Secure partners	> Contract EIS and A/E services	> Implement initiative	Low	

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Principle #2: Promote Environmental & Quality of Life	PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION TEAMS	ACTION STEPS			PRIORITY	TIMELINE
				Year 1	Year 2-5	Year 5-10		
	Goal #1: Protect Existing Assets							
	Trails Authority Coop	High Knob Entity Southwest Regional Recreation Authority (SRRA)	Community Participation	> Secure partners > Secure grants	> Establish Coop		High	
	Litter control program	High Knob Entity Localities USFS	Community Participation	> Secure partners > Secure grants	> Pilot program > Refine as needed	> Expand throughout the region	High	
	Peak Grabbing (46 program)	High Knob Entity	Assets	> Research and organize partners > Initial web entries	> Pilot program > Refine as needed	> Maintain sustainable operation	Medium	
	Maintain USFS Trails	High Knob Entity Southwest Regional Recreation Authority (SRRA) USFS	Community Participation	> Research and organize partners > Secure grants	> Pilot program > Refine as needed		Medium	

PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION TEAMS	ACTION STEPS			PRIORITY	TIMELINE
			Year 1	Year 2-5	Year 5-10		
Goal #1: Establish a Tourism Readiness Program							
Develop a certified guides program	High Knob Entity Friends of SWVA MECC or UVA Wise	Assets	> Establish pilot program in HK region to validate and grow businesses through SWVA “certified guide” program			Medium	
Develop a hospitality training program	High Knob Entity MECC or UVA Wise Private Businesses	Assets	> Promote hospitality through region by branding the “High Knob Welcome”. > Model tourism readiness assessment similar to Abingdon CVB’s method of identifying destination/ business needs based on staffing, signage, seasonality, pricing, etc.			Low	
Identify tourism business zones	Gateway Communities	Assets	> ID Tourism Zones in towns and counties within the region as allowed by statute statutes.	> Adopt Tourism Zone ordinance		High	
Goal #2: Cultivate a Business Culture of Success							
Compile a business wish list	High Knob Entity Gateway Communities Business Development Partners	Incentives	> Using Master Plan data as foundation, identify regional business needs and coordinate recruitment across gateway communities, limiting competition, and connecting regional offerings across entire region.			High	
Encourage promotions that help businesses be more successful	High Knob Entity Private Businesses	Incentives	> Organize “Backyard Thursdays” event to promote extended hours across communities. > Promote successes (new businesses, etc.) with “Backyard Parties” to connect success with regional identity.			Low	
Goal #3: Connect Outdoor Recreation and Business Opportunity							
Implement outdoor business incubators throughout the region	High Knob Entity Industrial Development	Capital Improvements	> Design and secure grants for North Side Incubator project > Design and secure grants for Scott Co. Tourism	> Construct North Side incubator > Construct Scott Co. incubator	> Assess opportunities / need for other incubators		
Create entrepreneurial development program for outdoor businesses	High Knob Entity UVA Wise Opportunity SWVA	Incentives	> Consider “Venture-UP” outdoor recreation entrepreneurial challenge and training geared towards rec-based businesses. Model after Rally SWVA and coordinate through UVA Wise	> Partner with Opportunity SWVA to promote its business development efforts including Rally SWVA and KIVA financing.		Medium	
Establish Trail Management Program	High Knob Entity UVA Wise	Assets	> Approach UVA Wise to discuss feasibility of establishing a Trail Management Major or trail management curriculum.	> Seek for partnerships (i.e. City of Norton) to help train people for trail design, development and management.	> Establish Trail Management program at UVA Wise	Low	
Market lodging offerings throughout region	High Knob Entity Heart of Appalachia Gateway Communities Private Sector Opportunity SWVA	Assets	> Coordinate collective marketing of non-traditional lodging through sharing platforms like HomeAway and Airbnb.	> Create startup manuals and management guidance to encourage private sector to develop product		Medium	

Principle 4: Make your worst place your best place	PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION TEAMS	ACTION STEPS			PRIORITY	TIMELINE
				Year 1	Year 2-5	Year 5-10		
	Goal #1: Restore Vacant Buildings							
Appalachia National Historic District	Town of Appalachia Virginia DHR	Assets	>Historic Inventory	>National Register Nomination			High	
Big Stone Gap National Historic District	Town of Big Stone Gap Virginia DHR	Assets	>Historic Inventory	>National Register Nomination			Medium	
Goal #2: Fill Vacant Buildings and Make a Vibrant Downtown								
Norton Great Outdoors Incubator	City of Norton EDA Private Developer	Capital Improvements	>Put Deal Together	>Design and Construction	>Operation		Medium	
Mutual Pharmacy	Town of Big Stone Gap Virginia DHR BSG Housing Authority	Capital Improvements	>Design and Construction	>Operation	>Operation		High	

Principle #5: Contribute to a Spectrum of Ability Levels	PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION TEAMS	ACTION STEPS			PRIORITY	TIMELINE
				Year 1	Year 2-5	Year 5-10		
	Goal #1: Make Region a Place All People Can Enjoy							
HKRI Accessibility Survey	HKRI Entity, VDGIF, USFS	Mapping	>Grant funding	>Inventory			High	
Recreation Access to Priority Sites	HKRI Entity, VDGIF, USFS	Mapping	>Grant funding	>Design Priority Projects	>Construction		High	
Certified designated rock climbing areas: Guest River Gorge	HKRI Entity USFS	Mapping	> Determine Safety of Rocks / EIS	> Secure partners > Secure grants > Develop signage plan	> Contract A/E services > Implement project		High	
Goal #2: Improve Favorite Facilities for All								
Improve High Knob Beach	HKRI Entity USFS	Capital Improvements	> Program and budget initiative	> Contract EIS and A/E services	>Construction		High	
Promote Bark Camp Lake	HKRI Entity, VDGIF, USFS	Assets	>Provide Marketing support showing ease of accessibility				High	

Principle #6: Prioritize on initiatives that allow a sustainable mix of year-round activities and businesses

PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION TEAMS	ACTION STEPS			PRIORITY	TIMELINE
			Year 1	Year 2-5	Year 5-10		
Goal #1: Create / Enhance Destinations							
Equestrian Resort	High Knob Entity Scott County Horse Park USFS	Capital Improvements	> Program / develop project > Seek partners	> Pursue / secure grants and partners > Contract A/E services	> Construct and operate project	High	
Dark Lodge	High Knob Entity Scott County EDA	Capital Improvements	> Program / develop project > Seek partners	> Pursue / secure grants and partners > Acquire land > Contract A/E services	> Construct and operate project	Medium	
Big Cherry Campground Resort	High Knob Entity Big Stone Gap	Capital Improvements	> Program / develop project > Seek partners	> Pursue / secure grants and partners > Contract EIS and A/E services	> Construct and operate project	Medium	
Winter Sports Development Area: back county skiing, ice skating, year-round tubing	High Knob Entity High Knob Development Corporation Norton	Capital Improvements	> Secure partners > Secure financing	> Contract A/E services	> Construct and operate project	Low	
Goal #2: Improve Access to Regional Destinations							
New Devil's Bathtub Parking Lot	Friends of SWVA Scott County USFS	Capital Improvements	> Secure grants > Phase 1: Program / design/ construct	> Secure grants > Next phase(s): Program / design/ construct		High	
High Knob Destination Center	Friends of SWVA Norton USFS	Capital Improvements	> Secure grants > Contract A/E services	> Construct project		High	

Principle #7: Fill the Gap of Needed Services and Activities within the Region

PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION TEAMS	ACTION STEPS			PRIORITY	TIMELINE
			Year 1	Year 2-5	Year 5-10		
Goal #1: Promote Businesses that Retain and Attract Visitors							
Craft Breweries	High Knob Entity		> Secure partners > Secure grants > Program	> Contract A/E services > Build project		High	
High End Bars	High Knob Entity		> Secure partners > Secure grants > Program	> Contract A/E services > Build project		High	
Jeep Trek Rental Program	High Knob Entity		> Secure partners > Secure grants > Program	> Contract A/E services > Build project		Low	
Goal #2: Expand Lodging Options Throughout the Region							
Rental Cabins: Basic to High End	High Knob Entity Gateway Communities Private Sector Opportunity SWVA	Incentives	> Secure partners > Secure grants > Program	> Contract A/E services > Build project		Medium	
RV Accessible Camping Areas	High Knob Entity Gateway Communities Private Sector Opportunity SWVA	Incentives	> Secure partners > Secure grants > Program	> Contract A/E services > Build project		High	
Yurts	High Knob Entity Gateway Communities Private Sector Opportunity SWVA	Incentives	> Secure partners > Secure grants > Program	> Contract A/E services > Build project		Medium	
Tree Houses for Rent	High Knob Entity Gateway Communities Private Sector Opportunity SWVA	Incentives	> Secure partners > Secure grants > Program	> Contract A/E services > Build project		Medium	
Keokee High School into B&B	High Knob Entity Lee County	Capital Improvements	> Seek partners > Program > Secure grants	> Secure partners > Contract A/E Services		High	
Pop-Up Lodging	High Knob Entity Gateway Communities Private Sector Opportunity SWVA	Incentives	> Secure partners > Secure grants > Program	> Establish "PITCH" pop-up lodging initiative. Identify grants through HKRI & Opportunity SWVA to purchase mobile lodging such as trailers, shastas, yurts, etc. to share across region.		Low	
Goal #3: Promote Activities Desired in the Region							
Shooting Range (guns and archery)	High Knob Entity Scott County EDA	Capital Improvements	> Secure partners > Acquire land > Program	> Contract A/E services > Construct project		Medium	
Zipline	High Knob Entity Private Sector	Capital Improvements	> Secure partners > Secure financing > Program	> Contract A/E services > Construct project		High	
Certified designated rock climbing areas: Guest River Gorge	High Knob Entity USFS	Assets	> Determine Safety of Rocks / EIS	> Secure partners > Secure grants > Develop signage plan	> Contract A/E services > Implement project	High	

PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION TEAMS	ACTION STEPS			PRIORITY	TIMELINE
			Year 1	Year 2-5	Year 5-10		
Goal #1: Jefferson Scenic Byway							
Promote Jefferson Scenic Byway	High Knob Entity LENOWISCO Friends of SWVA Localities, USFS	Capital Improvements	> Programming, Grants	> A/E Services, Signage	> Construction	Medium	
Goal #2: Identify High Knob Regional Gateways, Parkways							
Develop gateways and parkways	High Knob Entity	Capital Improvements	> Programming, Grants	> A/E Services, Signage	> Construction	High	
12th Street / Route 619 Improvements	High Knob Entity City of Norton USFS	Capital Improvements	> Secure grants > Contract A/E services	>Perform EIS	> Construction	High	
Goal #3: Incorporate High Knob Regional Brand into Wayfinding							
Complete Asset Inventory & Map Destinations	High Knob Authority	Mapping & Wayfinding	> Complete a map inventory of all recreation based destinations and businesses across the region.	> Use this as a basis for determining qualified destinations to be in the regional wayfinding system		High	
Form a HK region wayfinding technical committee	High Knob Entity VDOT Localities	Mapping & Wayfinding	>Compose a long-standing Committee that can update the Asset Maps and maintain the digital database	>Meet on a semi-annual basis to update the materials	>Meet on a semi-annual basis to update the materials	High	
Establish Hierarchy of Destinations for Wayfinding	High Knob Entity	Mapping & Wayfinding	> Using scoring spreadsheet delivered as part of this Master Plan, rank destinations based on specified criteria, establishing Tier 1, 2, and 3 destinations			High	
Create Sign Schedule	High Knob Entity	Mapping & Wayfinding	> Using guidance from the wayfinding assessment, identify sign locations for wayfinding signs within the HK Region.			High	
Work with communities to determine how HK identity is incorporated	High Knob Entity	Community Participation	>Develop a campaign to introduce HKRI to all Municipalities	>Implement the campaign at both the professional staff level and the Elected Official level		High	
Establish Cost Estimates and Phasing Strategy	High Knob Entity	Mapping & Wayfinding	> Based on total number and type of signage in sign schedule, estimate costs of the total wayfinding system.	> Identify potential local funding streams for wayfinding implementation - planning, design, fabrication, installation, maintenance		High	
Create Implementation Strategy	High Knob Entity	Mapping & Wayfinding	> Adoption of plan, coordination with VDOT, approval of management/maintenance policy, preparation of bid packages, RFQ/RFP, fabrication and installation.	> Final permitting, fabrication and installation must be approved by VDOT based on MUTCD standards		High	

Principle #8: Improve Connectivity between Destinations	PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION TEAMS	ACTION STEPS			PRIORITY	TIMELINE
				Year 1	Year 2-5	Year 5-10		
	Goal #4: Expand High Knob Trails							
	Trail from Josh I. Burton High School to Flag Rock	High Knob Entity, Norton	Capital Improvements	> Secure grants/partners > Contract A/E services	> Build project		High	
	Dark Hollow Trail Upkeep and Management	High Knob Entity, Southwest Regional Recreation Authority	Mapping & Wayfinding	> Complete a map inventory of all recreation based destinations and businesses across the region.	> Use this as a basis for determining qualified destinations to be in the regional wayfinding system.		Medium	
	Loop trail connecting Appalachia, Big Stone Gap, Norton, Coeburn, Duffield	High Knob Entity, Spearhead, USFS	Capital Improvements	> Organize partners > Seek grants	> Secure grants > Contract A/E services	>Build in Segments	Low	
	Signage along hiking trails	High Knob Entity, Southwest Regional Recreation Authority, USFS	Assets	> Secure grants	> Contract A/E services > Construct project		High	
	Increase number of mountain biking trails	High Knob Entity Spearhead, Localities, USFS	Capital Improvements	> Secure grants	> Contract A/E services > Construct project	>Build in Segments	High	
Goal #5: Supplement Current Initiatives								
	Chairlifts (gondolas) connecting towns and trailheads	High Knob Entity, Southwest Regional Recreation Authority, USFS	Capital Improvements	> Organize partners > Seek grants > Program	> Secure grants & partners > Contract EIS and A/E services	>Build in Segments	Low	
	Scenic railroad through Pound, Wise, Norton, Big Stone Gap, Appalachia	High Knob Entity, Southwest Regional Recreation Authority, Localities, USFS	Capital Improvements	> Organize partners > Program	> Secure grants & partners > Contract EIS and A/E services	>Build in Segments	Low	

Principle #9: Complement and Enhance Cultural Landscape of the Region	PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION TEAMS	ACTION STEPS			PRIORITY	TIMELINE
				Year 1	Year 2-5	Year 5-10		
	Goal #1: Expand Cultural Venues							
	Keokee Gym Event Venue	High Knob Entity Lee County	Capital Improvements	> Program and develop project > Seek for partners	> Pursue grants > Contract A/E Services	> Construct venue	Low	
	Amphitheater with stage for music and drama	High Knob Entity City of Norton	Capital Improvements	> Secure partners > Secure grants > Contract A/E Services	>Construct venue	>Operation	Low	
	Outdoor Drama Roof	High Knob Entity Trail of Lonesome Pine Outdoor Drama	Capital Improvements	> Program and develop project > Seek partners > Pursue grants	>A/E Services	> Construct venue	Medium	
Goal #2: Maintain and Preserve Historic Resources								
	Register downtown Appalachia in the National Historic District	Town of Appalachia Dept. of Historic Resources (DHR)	Assets	> Program and contract consultant services	> Pursue grants > Program interpretive signage	> Install interpretive signage	High	
	Register downtown Big Stone Gap in the National Historic District	Town of Big Stone Gap Dept. of Historic Resources (DHR)	Assets	> Program and contract consultant services	> Pursue grants > Program interpretive signage	> Install interpretive signage	Medium	

PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION TEAMS	ACTION STEPS			PRIORITY	TIMELINE
			Year 1	Year 2-5	Year 5-10		
Goal #1: Launch the High Knob Region Brand							
Begin using the High Knob Regional Brand Identity	All High Knob Municipalities	Community Participation &	> Adopt the brand and style guide			High	
“Virginia’s Backyard” - External Marketing Partner with regional marketing organizations to implement HK Brand	High Knob Entity Friends of SWVA Heart of Appalachia Southwest Regional Recreation Authority (SRRA)	Community Participation & Marketing	> Present brand identity and Virginia’s Backyard messaging to marketing partners	> Marketing partners begin incorporating the HK brand and messaging in their marketing whenever promoting assets in HK region.		High	
“Discover Your Own Backyard” - Partner with local gateway communities to implement HK Brand	High Knob Entity Gateway communities (Norton, Coeburn, Wise, etc)	Community Participation & Marketing	> Present brand identity and Discover Your Own Backyard messaging to community partners	> Communities begin incorporating the HK brand and messaging in their marketing whenever promoting		High	
Create Merchandising & Marketing Collateral	High Knob Entity Friends of SWVA	Community Participation & Marketing	> Coordinate with Friends of SWVA to identify vendor to produce HK branded collateral - T-shirts, hats, waterbottles	> Produce materials at cost for local communities and businesses to sell.		Medium	
Goal #2: Improve Communication and Coordination Between Regional Assets and Stakeholders							
Establish a regional marketing council that works to identify and implement regional initiatives	High Knob Entity Friends of SWVA Heart of Appalachia Southwest Regional Recreation Authority (SRRA) Gateway Communities	Community Participation & Marketing	> Committee establishes workplan to implement branding strategies. > Committee identifies cooperative funding strategies for marketing.			High	
Grow awareness of HKRI and its mission	High Knob Entity Friends of SWVA	Community Participation & Marketing	> Create and manage Facebook user group page to connect to partner agencies and business’ social media.	> Establish “Trail Boogers” volunteer trail cleanup program.		High	
Establish communication strategy	High Knob Entity	Community Participation & Marketing	> Use communication worksheets to establish strategies, goals & benchmarks for key targets (Government, Public, Volunteers, Business & property owners, Funders)			High	
Develop High Knob Region web presence	Friends of SWVA	Community Participation & Marketing	> Incorporate HK region brand identity and messaging into EXISTING myswva.org website. > Secure www.virginiasbackyard.com and have it direct to HK region on myswva.org website.		> Simply incorporate HK region brand identity and messaging into EXISTING http://www.opportunitieswva.org/ website. > Secure www.virginiasbackyard.com and have it direct to HK	Medium	
Create promotions to expand local awareness of HK region assets	High Knob Entity Gateway Communities Destination Partners	Community Participation & Marketing	> Coordinate “PARKing Day” across communities or within key events. Have Destinations (Flag Rock Recreation Area, etc) create “Parklets” in downtown parking spaces to market and promote destination.	> Create “Backyard Proud” initiative to foster volunteerism, pride, and community cleanups		Low	