

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants 2011 - Submit Final Programmatic Report (Activities)

Grantee Organization: Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust, Inc.

Project Title: Healing the Waters Initiative (WV)

Project Period 09/01/2011 - 10/31/2013
Award Amount \$100,000.00
Matching Contributions \$205,000.00
Project Location Description (from Proposal) Cacapon and Lost River watershed is located in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia in the counties of Hampshire, Hardy and Morgan.

Project Summary (from Proposal) Permanently protect ecologically critical private lands in the Cacapon and Lost Rivers watershed. Project will expand existing green infrastructure hubs and corridors by 2,000 acres and promote land protection incentives through parcel aggregation, carbon sequestration, and other emerging ecosystem credit opportunities.

Summary of Accomplishments 1,632 total acres were permanently protected by the Trust, during this project. These projects represent 8 conservation easements and approximately 648 acres of forest lands, 984 acres of important agricultural lands, 3.7 miles of frontage along the Cacapon and Lost Rivers, 1.5 miles of native trout streams and a mile of frontage along the North River, the largest tributary of the Cacapon River. These protection efforts put over \$2,776,000.00 dollars in the hands of local watershed landowners. These conservation funds allowed landowners to invest back into the local agricultural economy and the community. The Cacapon River Water Trail was developed and officially designated by the State of West Virginia. This designation raises the profile of the Cacapon and Lost River Valley as an important recreational destination for the region and provides a user friendly paper and online guide to the resources. Our book, Listening to the Land: Stories from the Cacapon and Lost River Valley, was published and is now an important tool for the Trust to share our successes and educate and inspire other watershed landowners and organizations.

Lessons Learned We found that discontinuing the sale of Carbon Sequestration and Ecosystem Service Credits did not slow the rate of land protection in the Lost/Cacapon River watershed. We have also learned that covering closing costs associate with private land protection can bring forward numerous stalled conservation easements. These funds have also helped us develop better relationships with local farmland protection boards. When we are bringing money to the table as well, it allows everyone involved to stretch their land protection dollars further. We learned that in order to accomplish this unprecedented rate of land protection in West Virginia, we must be willing to stick our necks out, bring as many land protection partners to the table as possible, and help cover the transaction costs for landowners that are willing and passionate but lack the funds to take the land protection step. Landowner relationship building also takes time, sometimes many years. Having something new to bring to their table (such as the closing cost payments) gave us a "reason" to re-contact landowners associated with many stalled projects and certainly reopened doors that were once closed. The Water Trail project helped us realize that watershed landowners are more open now to projects like this, than we anticipated.

Conservation Activities	land preserved in conservation easement
Progress Measures	Acres of land preserved in conservation easement
Value at Grant Completion	1632

Conservation Activities	targeted conservation easement outreach
Progress Measures	# of landowners targeted by program
Value at Grant Completion	35
Conservation Activities	Water Trail Map - stakeholder input and comments
Progress Measures	Other Activity Metric (# of individual meetings about the map)
Value at Grant Completion	9
Conservation Activities	Cacapon Voices book
Progress Measures	Other Activity Metric (# books distributed by end of grant)
Value at Grant Completion	500
Conservation Activities	Cacapon Voices Book
Progress Measures	Other Activity Metric (# books printed)
Value at Grant Completion	5000



Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund Final Programmatic Report Narrative

Instructions: Save this document on your computer and complete the narrative in the format provided. The final narrative should not exceed ten (10) pages; do not delete the text provided below. Once complete, upload this document into the on-line final programmatic report task as instructed.

1. Project Description.

Briefly describe your project, including a description of the problem your project is trying to address, the project's objectives and strategies, as well as the project location, and a characterization of the watershed and the relevant characteristics of the community's natural resources, population, and economy.

The Cacapon & Lost Rivers Land Trust (the Trust) was awarded \$100,000 over two years to implement our ***Healing the Waters Project***. Objectives of this project included the following;

- permanently protect and enhance forests, farmlands, wetlands, and riparian corridors by incentivizing strategic conservation of the most ecologically important private lands in the Cacapon and Lost River watershed; and
- engage citizens and build community stewardship ethic through the development of the Cacapon and Lost River Water Trail and through the publication and dissemination of “Cacapon Voices” (ultimately titled “Listening to the Land, Stories of the Cacapon and Lost River Valley”, a book which captures in text and images the heartfelt stories of watershed landowners, their stewardship ethic, and their connection to their land.

The Cacapon and Lost River watershed located in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia is the most bio-diverse of the Potomac River tributaries and has been identified as having some of the highest ecological values of the entire Bay watershed. Its high percentage of forested land is not only important for water quality but preserves important habitats that are both resilient in the face of climate change and geographically connected. The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources' State Wildlife Action Plan has targeted this region for protection due to the critical wildlife and its habitat that could be lost with inappropriate development

Through the implementation of our *Healing Waters Land Protection Prioritization and Green Infrastructure Plan* we have targeted for protection, specific parcels within the watershed that maintain wildlife corridors, farm- and forest-lands, water quality, and watershed ecological functions. Land protection is a crucial but often unrecognized benefit in state watershed implementation plans. Because conservation easements lessen future development and reduce the potential for polluted runoff, land protection provides reasonable assurance that we will stay within watershed Total Maximum Daily Load caps. In recent years, this watershed's water quality, farmlands, forested lands, and rural heritage have been increasingly threatened by major highway construction, natural gas drilling, and power line development. Poor economic times threaten the watershed's economic vitality, which can negatively impact landowner capacity for stewardship and permanent land protection.

2. Summary of Accomplishments

In four to five sentences, provide a brief summary of the project's key accomplishments and outcomes that were observed or measured.

1,632 total acres were permanently protected by the Trust, during this project. These protection efforts put over **\$2,776,000.00 dollars in the hands of local watershed landowners.** These conservation funds allowed landowners to invest back into the local agricultural economy and the community. **The Cacapon River Water Trail was developed and officially designated by the State of West Virginia.** This designation raises the profile of the Cacapon and Lost River Valley as an important recreational destination for the region and provides a user friendly paper and online guide to the resources. Our book, *Listening to the Land: Stories from the Cacapon and Lost River Valley*, was published and is

now an important tool for the Trust to share our successes and educate and inspire other watershed landowners and organizations.

3. Project Activities & Outcomes

Activities

- Describe and quantify (using the approved metrics referenced in your grant agreement) the primary activities conducted during this grant.
- Briefly explain discrepancies between the activities conducted during the grant and the activities agreed upon in your grant agreement.

Protecting Land with Conservation Easements:

Through this project the Trust has closed **8 conservation easements which protect 1,632 acres**. These projects represent approximately 648 acres of forest lands, 984 acres of important agricultural lands, 3.7 miles of frontage along the Cacapon and Lost Rivers, 1.5 miles of native trout streams and a mile of frontage along the North River, the largest tributary of the Cacapon River. These projects leveraged over \$2.7 million in conservation dollars that were paid directly to the landowners placing conservation restrictions on their properties. In addition work completed under this project has led to the development of additional conservation easement projects that are expected to close before the end of the year. In September, 2013, we received notification that a grant in the amount of **\$250,000** was awarded from the West Virginia Outdoor Heritage Conservation Fund (OHCF) (our first grant from them) to purchase a conservation easement on the **328-acre “Slonaker”** parcel which “closed the gap” by connecting a 498-acre parcel to a 4,750-acre conservation hub of private, permanently protected land held by the Trust. Additionally, in October, 2013 we received a grant in the amount of \$210,000 from Open Space Conservancy and Doris Duke Charitable Trust, to purchase a conservation easement on a 745-acre “Seldom Seen Hunting Club” parcel that adjoins Cacapon State Park and links over 500 acres of our protected land together in Morgan County. These funds helped leverage an additional **\$30,000 grant** from the WV Land Trust and utilizes \$60,000 of the EPA funds for a **\$300,000** bargain purchase of this conservation easement. These funds will then be used by the landowners to purchase an adjacent 168-acre parcel (See Northern Section “Like-Kind Exchange”, attached), and a conservation easement will be donated (the same day) on this parcel permanently protecting **913 acres total**. A closing date for this project is set for December 19, 2013.

Citizen Engagement and Community Stewardship:

Cacapon and Lost River Valley Guide; Cacapon River Water Trail:

We completed the design and development of the Cacapon and Lost River Valley Guide and Cacapon River Water Trail Map and launched a related website (see www.cacaponguide.com). Funds to create the website and design the map and guide were received from a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation \$13,000 Technical Support Grant. Two public comment meetings were conducted in Hardy/Hampshire and in Morgan Counties where citizens favorably reacted to map drafts and official Water Trail designation. Seven separate meetings occurred with local government officials, partners, business owners, and landowners and gained helpful, favorable input. Once publically approved, 1,000 waterproof maps were printed and are being sold through our new website and directly by the Trust. As planned, official Water Trail Designation was granted by the State of West Virginia for the Cacapon River. This project now serves as a model for other West Virginia watersheds looking to navigate the process and develop their own water trails.

Listening to the Land, Stories from the Cacapon and Lost River Valley, the Trust’s book, published by West Virginia University Press, is now available for purchase from the Trust, West Virginia University Press’ fall catalogue, and through Amazon: *West Virginia University Press; October 2013; 224 pp; PB978-1-935978-40-4; \$25.99*. Book release events were held in the watershed, DC area, and Charlottesville VA. A mailing that includes a book flyer has been sent to every watershed property owner. We are very proud of this publication and know the heartfelt, local landowner stories will inspire additional land protection and stewardship, and become a model for land protection discussions throughout the Northeast. The Book’s foreword was written by Peter Forbes, with promotional quotes from Rand Wentworth (President of Land Trust Alliance) and Pat Noonan (founder American Farmland Trust & The Conservation Fund). The National Park Service provided \$3,000 and the WV Stream Partners Program \$4,000 toward the cost of the colored image printing, of which there are 100. The remaining publishing costs were paid by WVU Press.

Outcomes

- *Describe and quantify progress towards achieving the project outcomes described in your grant agreement. (Quantify using the approved metrics referenced in your grant agreement or by using more relevant metrics not included in the application.)*
 - *Briefly explain discrepancies between what actually happened compared to what was anticipated to happen.*
 - *Provide any further information (such as unexpected outcomes) important for understanding project activities and outcome results.*
- **1632 acres protected** with an additional 1241 acres closing by end of the year. We are pleased to report that this number exceeded our projections.
- **35 landowners targeted** – We completed a mailing with information packets regarding carbon sequestration to at least 35 targeted large landowners in the watershed. We met with 25 landowners to discuss permanent land projection and distributed a mailing to 8,000 watershed landowners which informed landowners we were seeking to explore carbon sequestration projects with those interested in learning more. These numbers exceed expectations.
- **500 Listening to the Land books distributed** in the first month. Though we are thrilled that approximately 500 copies of the book were sold in the first month, this number is lower than projected in our grant because we were hoping for the release date to be earlier. At the time of this report our distribution goal of 600 has been exceeded.
- **5000 Listening to the Land books printed.** This number exceeded expectations.

4. Challenges and Lessons Learned

Describe any specific challenges that have arisen during the course of the project and how they have been addressed. Also describe the key lessons learned from this project, such as the least and most effective conservation practices or notable aspects of the project's methods, monitoring, or results. How could other conservation organizations adapt their projects to build upon some of these key lessons about what worked best and what did not?

The Trust's challenges in meeting our goals and objectives, in spite of our hard work, existed in two categories: Carbon Sequestration and Ecosystem Service Credits.

Carbon Sequestration

During the course of the project the Trust reached out to over 8,000 watershed landowners regarding interest in carbon sequestration projects. Landowners were invited to contact the Trust if they wanted to discuss participation. This invitation was not accepted by a single landowner in spite of more detailed mailings, repeated calls to, and discussions with 35 larger-acre watershed landowners. This lack of initial interest was quite a surprising development for Trust staff. During the project period, Trust staff had the opportunity to participate in a week-long Yale University *Conservation Finance Boot Camp* where several hours were dedicated to carbon sequestration projects. We found that our watershed landowner concerns mimicked many of the issues discussed at the Boot Camp and included the following:

- uncertainty of the stability and future of the California Carbon Exchange and other carbon markets;
- there are significant regulatory risks to the landowner;
- parcel size and forest productivity matter – Boot Camp participants and those with significant experience selling carbon sequestration credits recommended that, in the East, a project must contain no less than 20,000 acres to cover costs and generate a financial return – and that's only if the Trust is acting as the aggregator. If the Trust and landowner were to go through an aggregator, it becomes even more costly and risky in guaranteeing a positive return; and
- carbon contracts obligate the landowner to 100 years of participation and continued carbon evaluation, adding to a landowner's financial risk; carbon quantification is difficult and very expensive, leaving us and the landowner wondering who will pay for the required carbon evaluation during the 100 years, especially if a landowner can't sell their credits?

Based on the above legitimate concerns, Trust staff decided not to continue promoting carbon sequestration credits as a viable incentive for land protection in the watershed.

Ecosystem Service Credits

Trust staff coordinated and participated in Ecosystem Service Credit evaluation, the foundation funding workshop, drafting of conservation easement/credit agreements, and directly reached out to potential funders. Trust staff also worked with the WV Division of Natural Resources (DNR) to apply for Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) funds, where DNR would purchase and hold the ecosystem service credits. DNR eventually pulled out of the application due to the liability of holding Ecosystem Service Credits. Their concerns among many others included:

- Who would pay the on-the-ground costs to maintain a healthy old-growth forest and prevent well-known and locally established invasive species?
- Who is responsible if the native trout stream is contaminated upstream of the project site and the stream can no longer support native brook trout?
- What happens if a natural event destroys the old-growth forest?
- Shale Barrens are old established communities – yet ephemeral if not maintained. Who will pay to maintain these communities?
- Who will bare the liability, if the assets we protect are no longer viable?

Unfortunately, we found these concerns mirrored by other potential buyers. If the Trust were to agree to hold these credits and defend the signed easement agreement, we too would face the same concerns and issues. We were also unable to find buyers who, once they understood the above issues, were willing to invest in this project.

Lessons Learned

We are very proud of the money we have leveraged and the acres protected as a result of your grant. We found that discontinuing the sale of Carbon Sequestration and Ecosystem Service Credits did not slow the rate of land protection in the Lost/Cacapon River watershed. We have also learned that covering closing costs associate with private land protection can bring forward numerous stalled conservation easements. These funds have also helped us develop better relationships with local farmland protection boards. When we are bringing money to the table as well, it allows everyone involved to stretch their land protection dollars further. We learned that in order to accomplish this unprecedented rate of land protection in West Virginia, we must be willing to stick our necks out, bring as many land protection partners to the table as possible, and help cover the transaction costs for landowners that are willing and passionate but lack the funds to take the land protection step. Landowner relationship building also takes time, sometimes many years. Having something new to bring to their table (such as the closing cost payments) gave us a “reason” to re-contact landowners associated with many stalled projects and certainly reopened doors that were once closed.

The Cacapon and Lost River Valley Guide has sold well and received rave reviews: beautiful, much needed, and very useful. Maps are being sold through local businesses and online through our website. We have found that the majority of the maps sold online have gone to metropolitan area addresses rather than to local addresses. We’re not surprised by that and hope it will encourage more recreational tourism in the area. Certainly meetings with local officials, county commissioners and planning authorities brought our work to these groups in a very positive way. All meeting participants met us with open arms. The main public concern with the “official” Designation was that river users would violate private property rights. We remedied this concern by color-coding private parcels, so recreational users could clearly distinguish between private and public lands along the River. The Water Trail Designation provides visibility and funding opportunities not available before. A “Water Trail Logo” was designed as part of the project. We hope in the future to place these logos as directional indicators for the public River access sites. This project helped us realize that watershed landowners are more open now to projects like this, than we anticipated. In the late 1980’s watershed landowners literally ran the National Park Service out of the watershed when discussions opened regarding the designation of the Cacapon River as a “Wild and Scenic” River. Consequently, we were unsure of local response to the Water Trail designation.

Listening to the Land was a very intense project, but we are indeed very proud of the results. Only time will tell if it has the impact we hope it will in making Valley landowners even more proud of this watershed, and in bringing more land protection to our table. We also hope that other land trusts throughout the Bay Watershed and the Appalachian Corridor will realize the value of capturing local, heart-felt stories about what owning land means, and how tapping into these emotional connections might help folks think differently about the long-term future of their land and the places they love.

5. Dissemination

Briefly identify any dissemination of lessons learned or other project results to external audiences, such as the public or other conservation organizations.

The Trust has employed a variety of methods to disseminate lessons learned and project results. We created a website specifically for the Cacapon River Valley Guide and have distributed the maps at various Trust and community events. In addition and as a part of our community outreach efforts we have developed a network of local business and organizations that are helping to distribute the maps locally. The water trail project has been covered by local media and our own social media outlets and we have been contacted by a few organizations already asking for advice and information on how to develop their own water trail. Land protection successes have been disseminated through our newsletters, our website and through presentations to other conservation organizations and area landowners. Information on our book "Listening to the Land" has been widely distributed both by West Virginia University Press and the Trust. We have had great coverage on West Virginia NPR with a three part series about the book airing on the program Inside Appalachia. In addition to radio coverage we have had numerous articles run in local and regional news publications. We have made presentations at 3 book release events, a meeting of the West Virginia Rivers Coalition and it has been highlighted at the recent meeting of the Chesapeake Large Landscape Conservation Partnership meeting. A mailing has also recently gone out to over 8,000 watershed landowners highlighting the book and providing ordering information. We have had a number of conversations with staff at Maryland Environmental Trust on the book, which they hope to replicate, and have given a presentation at a landowner meeting that they organized. As the book has only recently been released, we expect to continue promoting the book and giving presentations about the development of the project.

6. Project Documents

Include in your final programmatic report, via the Uploads section of this task, the following:

- 2-10 representative photos from the project. Photos need to have a minimum resolution of 300 dpi;
- report publications, GIS data, brochures, videos, outreach tools, press releases, media coverage;
- any project deliverables per the terms of your grant agreement.

POSTING OF FINAL REPORT: *This report and attached project documents may be shared by the Foundation and any Funding Source for the Project via their respective websites. In the event that the Recipient intends to claim that its final report or project documents contains material that does not have to be posted on such websites because it is protected from disclosure by statutory or regulatory provisions, the Recipient shall clearly mark all such potentially protected materials as "PROTECTED" and provide an explanation and complete citation to the statutory or regulatory source for such protection.*

November 9, 2013

New book underscores emotion behind land trust movement

by **Douglas Imbrogno**

Staff writer

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- A quote from Rand Wentworth, president of the Land Trust Alliance, pretty well sums up the book "Listening to the Land: Stories from the Cacapon and Lost River Valley":

"Stories about the why of saving the land, not just the how."

The handsome softcover book of photos, stories and quotes -- text by Jamie S. Ross and photos by Tom Cogill -- is newly out under the banner of the West Virginia University Press, and at one level the book is that rarity: a positive and hopeful publication about West Virginia.

At a subtler level, the book is also a well-put-together argument for the efficacy and power of land trusts at a time when development, from subdivisions to Interstates and power line corridors threaten the land. Nancy Ailes, executive director of the Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust since 2000, helped to spur the book project on to underscore that it is the connection to the very land itself that makes land conservation work.

"Nearly every time we sit down to sign a conservation easement in an attorney's office, the landowners who are protecting their land burst into tears -- and I don't mean quiet tears. I mean sobbing out loud," Ailes said.

"It took me off-guard. It was that deep feeling for what they had done for their land and what it meant for them that gave me the idea about this book. I wanted to capture the stories behind those tears."

...

"This place IS my mom and dad. The moment I drive into the lane I feel their presence. They're that much a part of this place." -- Becky Rudolph, from the book

...

Land trusts work to put legal limits on how a piece of land may be used in the future in order to protect its status. The Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust is by far the largest independent land trust in West Virginia. And -- with 13,000 acres projected to be protected by the end of the year -- is one of the top eight trusts (by acreage) protected in the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed.

"This is the most biologically diverse watershed in the Chesapeake Bay drainage," Ailes said. "It's the most biodiverse watershed in the whole Potomac River drainage. It's because people have taken care of it. It didn't happen accidentally."

There's also another reason for a book of stories about what the land means to people who've lived on it for generations, just like Ailes, an eighth-generation Hampshire County resident.

"I also wanted this book to help other land trusts understand that, I think, to be an effective land protection leader, you have to be able to empathize with the people that you're working with and understand where they're coming from."

The stories about the land and family homesteads are important "in that, land protection relies on neighbors talking to neighbors," Ailes said. "And that's how we get our work done. It's not me going out there and trying to sell land protection. It's about me getting to know a person who wants to do it and then having that person knock on their neighbor's door."

Hence, a book that recounts the Rudolph family's generations of fine-tuned haymaking. And Josh Frye's challenge of running the family farm near Wardensville, explaining in the book one reason why he turned down a career elsewhere to return home: "I'm so sick of seeing farmland developed. It scares me, too, because God doesn't make any more land. Once it's gone, it's gone."

For Frye, such tales paint a welcome portrait.

"The books I see about West Virginia are the poor, toothless people that everybody pities. I don't think we recognize sometimes what we have. I think we need to be proud of what we have and what we've protected and how we've stewarded our land.

"That's important to land protection. Sometimes we don't have that comparison to know we've got something to be proud of. I want this book to say, 'I matter' -- not me personally, but that this watershed matters and that the people who have stewarded this land for so many generations matter."

• • •

"My mother and father both sacrificed and worked to get this place. My dad was a plumbing contractor, but my mother raised chickens and turkeys and pigs and anything to make a dollar. I've worked like hell, too, ever since I was a little kid. And if you work for something hard enough, you're going to take care of it, whatever you get. And I want it to remain just like it is. That means remaining as a haven for wildlife, and a source of community and renewal for all the hunters who have been coming for decades." -- Butch Mills, from the book

• • •

Ailes has a straightforward philosophy when looking for supporters of land trusts.

"When a person comes to me and asks about this, I ask them: 'Does protecting your land pull at your heartstrings?' If they say, 'No, it doesn't, I just want the tax write-off or you're gonna have to convince me,' I just say, 'Next!' It's not my job to convince someone to do it. It's my job to help someone who wants to do it because it pulls at their heartstrings."

Which gets back to her overall philosophy of managing a land trust.

"It's a people project -- it's not just a land project when you're working for a land trust. It's all people and those stories, which translates into emotional connections."

"Listening to the Land: Stories from the Cacapon and Lost River Valley" can be purchased through the Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust web site at cacapon.org.

Want to know more? The Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust is one of several local, statewide and national land trusts operating across West Virginia. Founded in 1995, the West Virginia Land Trust, for instance, has been working statewide with landowners for nearly 20 years to try to preserve land through conservation easements and purchases. To see other land trusts working in the state, visit the Land Trust Alliance web site, findalandtrust.org.

Reach Douglas Imbrogno at doug...@cnpapers.com or 304-348-3017.

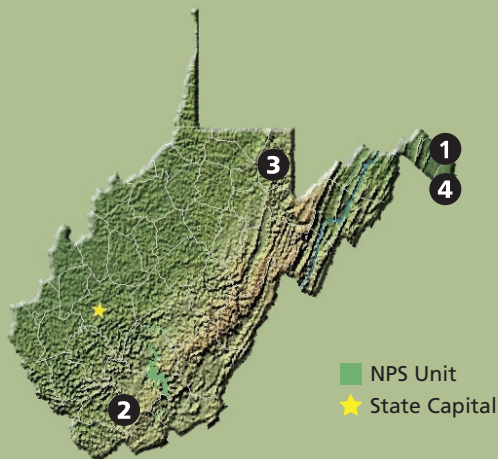


West Virginia News



Someone is having way too much fun on the Upper Cheat River Water Trail! Photo: Amanda Pitzer

PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2013



CURRENT PROJECTS

- 1. Canal Towns Heritage Tourism**
Canal Town Partnership, Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Trust, Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park
- 2. Great Eastern Trail - West Virginia Section**
Great Eastern Trail Association
- 3. Preston County Trail Development**
Friends of the Cheat
- 4. Ranson-Harpers Ferry Trail Loop**
Eastern Panhandle Trailblazers, Inc.

Find out more about each project starting on page 2.

Recent Successes

Meadow River Rail-Trail: Acquired!

After four years, with RTCA assistance, the 17-mile Meadow River Rail-Trail property has been acquired and railbanked by the Fayette & Greenbrier County Commissions. The former rail line runs along the scenic Class III+ whitewater Meadow River between Rainelle and Nallen, WV. It also links to a 15-mile long previously abandoned section of rail line to the west, within the Gauley River National Recreation Area boundary, some of which is still in private ownership. The RTCA role was to assist the project leadership team with guidance on the acquisition process, fund-finding, and community involvement strategies early on to assist with the appraisal and mapping of the rail right-of-way. A \$4,500 NPS Challenge Cost Share grant helped early on to finance the appraisal and mapping. The WV Department of Transportation has been managing the \$330,000 ARRA Stimulus grant and a \$80,000 Rec Trails grant, matched with \$86,000 in local funding, used to used to purchase the line for \$128,400 and conducting a Soil

continued on page 3

ABOUT US

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. RTCA staff provides technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate.

Current Projects

1. Canal Towns Heritage Tourism

Project Partners: Canal Town Partnership, Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal Trust, C&O Canal National Historical Park
RTCA Contact: Beth Porter
Location: Communities along the C&O Canal National Historical Park, including: Hancock, MD; Sharpsburg, MD; Cumberland, MD; Williamsport, MD; Point of Rocks, MD; Brunswick, MD; Shepherdstown, WV; Harpers Ferry, WV
Congressional Districts: MD - 6, WV - 2

Project Goal

For the 184-mile C&O Canal and its historic Canal Towns to serve as a nationally recognized and promoted network linking park users with scenic, historic, and recreational resources and high quality visitor services in the towns.

NPS Role

Provide organizing, planning, and technical assistance to the Canal Towns and their partners as they build an independent, high-functioning organization that promotes heritage tourism programs and activities in relation to the C&O Canal and towpath.

2. Great Eastern Trail - WV Section

Project Partner: Great Eastern Trail Association
RTCA Contact: Peggy Pings
Location: Mercer, Mingo, Raleigh, Summers, and Wyoming Counties
Congressional District: WV - 2

Project Goal

Develop a 1900-mile long-distance hiking trail from Florida to New York state, paralleling the Appalachian Trail, and filling the 245-mile gap in the WV region.

“RTCA has helped our rail-trail and water trail committees focus on vision and actions, and has encouraged individuals to take on new endeavors for the project.”

- Amanda Pitzer, Executive Director, Friends of the Cheat

NPS Role:

Assist with building trail support in WV by holding town meetings; develop strategies for building partnerships with state agencies and landowners.

3. Preston County Trail Development

Project Partner: Friends of the Cheat
RTCA Contact: Peggy Pings
Location: Kingwood, Tunnelton, Rowlesburg, Parsons in Preston County
Congressional District: WV - 1

Project Goal

Complete 2 rail-trails and 1 water trail project: Cheat River Rail-Trail (7 miles), Kingwood Northern Rail-Trail (10 miles), Upper Cheat River Blueway (38 miles).

NPS Role

Assist with public involvement and designation strategies for Cheat River

Water Trail, guidance on water trail development and rail-trail acquisition.

4. Ranson-Lower Harpers Ferry Loop Trail

Project Partner: Eastern Panhandle Trailblazers Association
RTCA Contact: Anne O’Neill
Location: Ranson and Jefferson County
Congressional District: WV - 2

Project Goal

Develop a regional trail system connecting communities, parks and natural resources, and advocate for the protection of natural and cultural resources.

NPS Role

Facilitate stakeholder and partner involvement, build community support, and develop organizational capacity building.



Walkers enjoy the Kingwood Northern Rail-Trail corridor during a Preston Rambles hike.
Photo: Teresa Neel

We're Here For You.

Could your project benefit from RTCA Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.



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Wink Hastings
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2012 Nationwide Partnership Success

2,154 Miles of Trail Developed

1,074 Miles of River Conserved

70,385 Acres of Open Space and Parkland Protected

94% Percentage of Community Partners Satisfied

Find more information online at
www.nps.gov/rtca



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

Recent Successes cont.

Analysis, leaving about \$317,600 to construct the first phase starting in Russellville. An additional \$412,500 was awarded in January 2013, through Recreation Trails and Transportation Enhancement grants, and local match, to be used for trail construction. Excitement is mounting, as the communities are gearing up to develop volunteer programs, including the involvement of the Boy Scouts of America while they attend camp programs at The Summit, the new National Scout Jamboree site nearby. Local businesses are being encouraged to develop services for trail users and local communities, creating a great new destination in southern WV.

Cacapon River Water Trail

The Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust completed a map and guide for the Cacapon River Water Trail extending 65 miles to the river's confluence with the Potomac River. Along the Cacapon River Water Trail, paddlers will travel through the most biologically-diverse area in the Potomac watershed, a major tributary to the Chesapeake Bay. Experiencing the Cacapon's abundant wildlife, bucolic farmland, and large tracts of mature forests, users will become more active stewards of the region's natural resources. Beyond building a strong community stewardship ethic, the water trail will bolster local economies and support the conservation of important aquatic and riparian habitats. The Cacapon River Water Trail has recently been designated as a state water trail by the West Virginia Recreational Trail Advisory Board. Development of the trail was supported by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, West Virginia Stream Partners Program, blue moon fund, Friends of the Cacapon River, and the National Park Service RTCA.

WV Trailblazers: The City of Ranson-Lower Town of Harpers Ferry Loop Trail

RTCA staff participated as a member of Harpers Ferry National Historic Park's Alternative Transportation Study, representing interests and ideas connected with community-park trail connections. RTCA also planned a series of walks with community stakeholders to scope potential loops for the Eastern Panhandle Recreational Trail with community stakeholders. As a result, Harpers Ferry NHP, the Eastern Panhandle Trailblazers, and other community stakeholders are working to create phased trail enhancements.



The undeveloped Meadow River Rail-Trail is fine for horseback riding, and affords great views of the river. Photo: Skip Heater

Cacapon and Lost Rivers land trust offers new guide

Hampshire
Review
4/17/13

JULIE LANDIS Review Staff

The Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust has developed a new guide to aid residents and visitors in exploring these rivers and the watershed. The Cacapon and Lost River Guide is the first resource of its kind for the watershed.

"It's the first map that shows the entire watershed and all of the recreation areas available there," assistant director of the trust Kelly Watkinson said.

The Guide can be used by anyone exploring the area. It maps public river paddling and fishing access points, public recreational lands, hiking trails and major roads. The resource also highlights natural and historic resources, gives important safety tips and information

on local services, restaurants and stocked trout streams.

"It's a good resource for everyone, not just paddlers," Watkinson said.

The guide was developed with feedback from landowners and community members through a series of public meetings. Hampshire, Hardy and Morgan county planning departments, the Friends of the Cacapon River, West Virginia Department of Natural Resources and the National Parks Service Rails Trails and Conservation Assistance Program provided additional input on the guide.

"It was about 6 to 8 months of gathering all of the information," Watkinson said.

Funding was provided by

the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, blue moon fund, Friends of the Cacapon and West Virginia's Stream Partners Program.

"It is our hope that this guide will not only foster stronger connections to the natural resources the Cacapon and Lost River watershed has to offer but will help bolster tourism dollars for our local businesses," Watkinson said.

To view the guide or download a copy visit www.cacaponguide.com.

Waterproof guides are available for \$10 each online or by calling Watkinson at 540-740-3083.

Kelly Watkinson contributed to this article.





LISTENING *to the* LAND

— STORIES FROM THE CACAPON AND LOST RIVER VALLEY —

text by JAMIE S. ROSS ✦ *photos by* TOM COGILL

Foreword by Mike Clark

“lungs” of the East, providing oxygen, regulating the water cycle, sequestering greenhouse gases, and moderating climate.

The variety of geology, landforms, and elevation in the Central and Southern Appalachians is much greater than in most of eastern North America. They combine in many different ways, creating an array of environmental settings, which in turn can support myriad plants and animals. Because the Pleistocene glaciers 13,000 years ago never reached farther south than central Pennsylvania, life here

magnifying features provides fewer ready means of invasion.

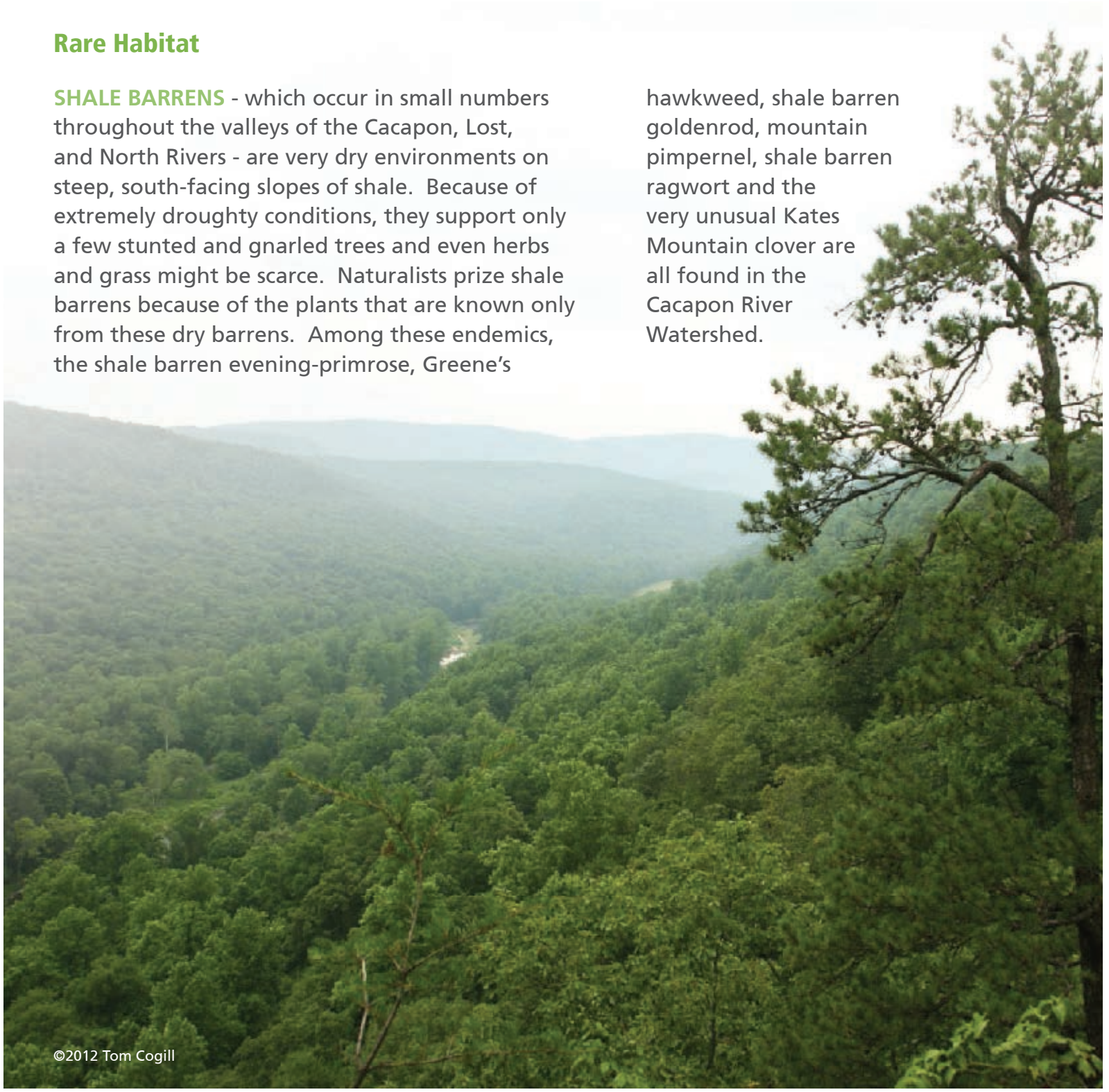
Among the benefits forests provide are their influence on stream health. Forests provide nutrients, help maintain water quality, and regulate water quantity and temperature. For example, significant shading of forested streams has helped brook trout, the Appalachian’s only native trout, survive in some of the Cacapon River Watershed’s smaller streams.

(Source: Rodney Bartgis, State of West Virginia Chapter The Nature Conservancy)

Rare Habitat

SHALE BARRENS - which occur in small numbers throughout the valleys of the Cacapon, Lost, and North Rivers - are very dry environments on steep, south-facing slopes of shale. Because of extremely droughty conditions, they support only a few stunted and gnarled trees and even herbs and grass might be scarce. Naturalists prize shale barrens because of the plants that are known only from these dry barrens. Among these endemics, the shale barren evening-primrose, Greene’s

hawkweed, shale barren goldenrod, mountain pimpernel, shale barren ragwort and the very unusual Kates Mountain clover are all found in the Cacapon River Watershed.



sites:

- Consumption or open container of alcoholic beverages
- Swimming or bathing
- Camping
- Open fires
- Trash disposal
- Discharge of firearms, fireworks or explosives
- Leaving unattended watercraft
- Parking that obstructs ingress or egress, except when launching

Useful Phone Numbers

- Report Stream Pollution or Fish Kills 800-642-3074
- Trout Stocking Hotline 304-558-3399
- Eagle and Osprey Sightings 304-637-0245
- Hunting and Fishing License Info 304-558-2758

Practice Leave No Trace Principles

Respect wildlife

- View wildlife from an appropriate distance
- Stay clear of nests and dens
- Do not touch or feed wild animals
- Do not allow pets to interact with wild animals

Dispose of waste properly

- Pack it in and pack it out (food, litter, solid human waste)

Leave what you find

- Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them

Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species

Be considerate of private landowners and other visitors

and return time

- Do not depend on cell phone service as it is not reliable on the river
- Always wear a life jacket
- Be prepared for inclement weather
- Wear close-toed protective footwear
- Portage around obstacles if necessary
- If capsized, stay on the upstream side of the boat and float feet first while maneuvering to safety
- Never tie a rope to yourself or another person, especially a child

Urgent Care/Hospital Information

For emergencies, call 911

Emergency Rooms

Hampshire Memorial Hospital/Emergency Room:
363 Sunrise Blvd. Romney, WV 26757
304-822-4561 (Emergency dispatch 911)

Grant Memorial Hospital/Emergency Room:
Route 55 PO Box 1019 Petersburg, WV 26847
304-257-1026

Winchester Medical Center

1840 Amherst Street Winchester, VA 22601

- Level II Trauma Center 540-536-8000
- Minor Emergency Care (everyday 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.)
540-536-6040

War Memorial Hospital/Emergency Room
1 Healthy Way Berkeley Springs, WV 25411
304-258-1234

Disclaimer Safety is everyone's responsibility. There is risk involved in paddling, as weather and water conditions can change quickly. It is up you to obtain adequate skills and use prudent judgment. Learn the appropriate techniques needed to properly use kayaks or canoes, and review safety guidelines.