

WISE COUNTY

- Wise County currently features the only “legal” OHV trail system in SW Virginia. It is strongly encouraged that the Mountainview Trail System become part of the Spearhead Trail system and that connector trails be developed connecting the Town of Haysi and the Town of Dante to these trails to increase the economic impact these trails have on the region.
- There is tremendous opportunity for developing the Town of Appalachia as an “OHV-Friendly” community. The researchers would strongly recommend this. The Town of Appalachia is starting off with a much stronger infrastructure base and could far exceed the results experienced by Gilbert WV if properly developed and marketed. Strong support has been shown by the community in “making this happen”. A detailed plan needs to be developed immediately to obtain optimum results. Obtaining permission to develop a looped stacked trail system on PennVA property is a first priority because without this, developing a trail system in this area would be extremely difficult.
- Developing a connecting trail from the Town of Appalachia to the proposed trailhead near the Country Cabin is highly recommended.
- It would also be encouraged to develop connecting trails from Dante into Coeburn and St. Paul from the Mountainview Trails.
- There are plans underway to develop a 1.8 mile trail which parallels Business 23 and connects the Town of Big Stone Gap to the Town of Appalachia following the railroad once owned by L&N although Southern Pacific now owns the track. PennVA Land Company owns 138,000 acres on both sides of the highway. Unique features along the proposed trail route is the shortest tunnel and virgin hemlock forest. The researcher sees this rail-to-trail as becoming a major tourism draw connecting two communities, each with their own unique personality and flavor. They strongly encourage its completion and would seriously consider the possibility of making the rail-trail a multi-use trail allowing both nonmotorized and motorized users. A “park your OHV and take a ride on a bike or golf cart” feature could be added at one end of the trail if the Town of Big Stone Gap chooses not to become “OHV-friendly” which could lean itself to further differentiate between the two communities making each its own unique experience.
- If not too late, the old depot in the Town of Appalachia should be reconstructed in its entirety at the trailhead site of the rail-to-trail, duplicating its architectural structure and design and utilizing any materials salvageable in its construction.
- Just north of Big Stone Gap, the Stone Mountain Trail starts at Roaring Branch Road in Wise County and travels east into Lee county ending at Cave Spring Recreation area. This trail needs to be marketed.
- Coal Town- Coal Heritage- Talk to Randy Rose with Virginia State Tourism.
- There is potential to develop a horse trail from Dungannon to High Point, a 28 miles distance.
- There is potential for trails to be developed along Hwy 68 to Keokee Lake Road. Horse trails to the south. ATV trails to the north.
- Proposed “Round the Mountain” Artisan Trail similar to North Carolina’s “Handmade in America” initiative. Primary goal of the initiative is to encourage visitors to follow a trail to the artisans and crafters locations along the route. Town of Big Stone Gap should embrace this initiative and encourage artisan growth in their community.
- Completing the greenway around the community of Big Stone Gap and encouraging bicycle and possibly golf cart use within the town limits would be highly encouraged.

Tazewell County - RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview (Continued)

- The Town of Big Stone Gap has numerous museums and tourism offerings including, but not limited to a coal museum, the Southwest Virginia Museum. They also offer an outdoor theater and a rich literary history all within close proximity to each other. The Town needs to capitalize on this and encourage people to get out of their cars by developing a number of themed walking, bicycle and possibly golf cart or trolley car tours throughout the community. Carriage rides and tours might also be a possibility.
- Developing a rail-to-trail in St. Paul is recommended. It is also recommended that the town become more “bicycle-friendly” by developing bicycle routes throughout the community for easier access from the trails into the community.
- It is also recommended that St. Paul establish itself as a “river town” and capitalize on the fact that the Clinch River is so close to their doorstep. Establishing and marketing the St. Paul to Dungannon river trip is strongly encouraged. Further expansion and marketing of this “river trail” could bring large number of boaters to the area. Working together with Scott County, the Clinch River could become a major destination for both canoeists and kayakers if properly developed and marketed. *See Vol 2: Economic Impact of Blueways as well as A Review of Rivers in Appendix A for more information.*
- Wise County needs to market and promote the Virginia Birding and Wildlife trails that go through their communities and connect worthwhile viewing areas to each other.

Wise County - SITE VISIT



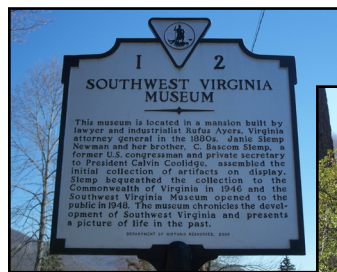
SITE VISITS TO WISE COUNTY

On March 19, 2009, toured portions of Wise County with Jack McClanahan. A follow-up tour was taken with Michael Wampler on April 6, 2009. Jason Hill & Mike Lintz joined us for a portion of the trip.

Wise County has a population of over 41,000 and is made up of the towns of Appalachia, Big Stone Gap, Coeburn, Pound, Wise and St. Paul. *(Please Note: Although the City of Norton lies within its boundaries, it is not part of the county.)*

BIG STONE GAP

Big Stone Gap has a population of 4,680. It has numerous museums and offerings for visitors. . .



Visited Southwest Virginia Museum - impressive!



A few historic homes in Big Stone Gap near the Southwest Virginia Museum.

Harry W. Meador Jr. Coal Museum

Tour location #7 on the Virginia Coal Trail



Wonderful coal museum although the coal equipment outside needs to be displayed differently to encourage greater visitation.

Wise County - SITE VISIT

Big Stone Gap is also the hometown of author John Fox who wrote “Trail of Lonesome Pine” which was later made into a movie. In 1960, an outdoor drama based on the story was started in Big Stone Gap and continues today. Next door to the playhouse is the Tolliver House, a historic home that now serves as both a gift shop and is open for tours.



Home of John Fox, Jr. - Author of “Trail of Lonesome Pine”



June Tolliver House & Gift Shop with playhouse next door.



The Old Schoolhouse



Two of the “characters” in the play.

There is also a wonderful inventory of historic photos of the area in the building just down the street from the Playhouse as well as Jessie Lea’s RV Park. www.jessielearv.com

“Home to Big Stone Gap” by Adriana Trigiani has also helped put Big Stone Gap on the map as the place to stop. Many of the sties and characters in the book can be visited.

RECOMMENDATION: Need to continued to capitalize and promote this. Develop walking tour downtown with intrepreative signs.



Mutual Drug Store is one of the noted sites in the book and contains many historic photos of the area.



Mutual Drug Store



June Tolliver House



Lonesome Pine Playhouse



Main Street in downtown Big Stone Gap gives one a clear view of the gap where it gets its name.

Wise County - SITE VISIT



More photos of Big Stone Gap including war memorial and old depot that will soon be torn down.



Leaving Big Stone Gap, we then headed towards Lee County east on Hwy 23.



RAILS TO TRAILS - POTENTIAL

Rails to Trails from Big Stone to Appalachian Trails, formerly L & N Railroad. Now Southern owns it and wants rail. 1.8 mile Rails to Trails once completed. Roaring Branch needs path to access Virgin Hemlocks. Follows Business 23? National Forest on each side.



Requesting single track on right side of road. Has shortest tunnel (49' 10") visible from road.

- A trailhead is proposed next to bridge crossing. Funding for trailhead will come from funds originally to rehab Depot that is now landlocked.
- Penn VA Land Company owns 138,000 acres.

Wise County - SITE VISIT

STONE MOUNTAIN TRAIL

Just north of Big Stone Gap, the Stone Mountain Trail starts at Roaring Branch Road in Wise County (parking limited) and travels east into Lee Co. ending at Cave Spring Recreation Area. This 14.3 mile hiking trail is rated by hikers as strenuous primarily due to the one mile of stairs that one must climb. It currently gets light use.

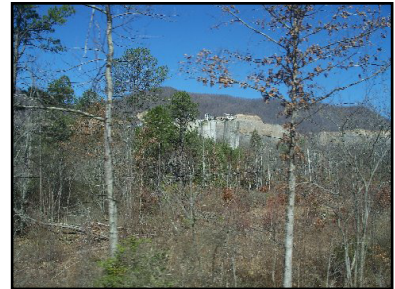
Coal Town - Coal Heritage - Talk to Randy Rose with Virginia State Tourism.



Coal town along RR tracks.



Active Coal Mining Site



55,000 acres - Forest Land Group. Contact Craig Kaderavek

- Another access through Pennington Gap may be possible
- TVA (Clinch & Powell Rivers) and Corps (Buchanan and Big Sandy)

POTENTIAL TRAILS: Dungannon to High Point - 28 miles for horses.

Concern of damage to Hemlock and Rhododendron due to invasive species.

POTENTIAL TRAILS: Along Hwy 68 to Keokee Lake Road

Horse trails to the south. ATV trails to the north.

A FEW NOTABLE BUILDINGS WE PASSED WHILE TOURING



WPA Building

Coal Elevator



Older house across from gas station



Continuing South on Business 23



Drive-in Theater

Wise County - SITE VISIT



St. Paul is located in both Russell and Wise counties. With a population in 2000 of approximately 1,000 people, the community offers lodging, numerous places to eat and a car wash. It also is home to the Oxbow Center, a multi-agency human services consortium serving a seven-county area. For more on the center, visit www.oxbowcenter.org.

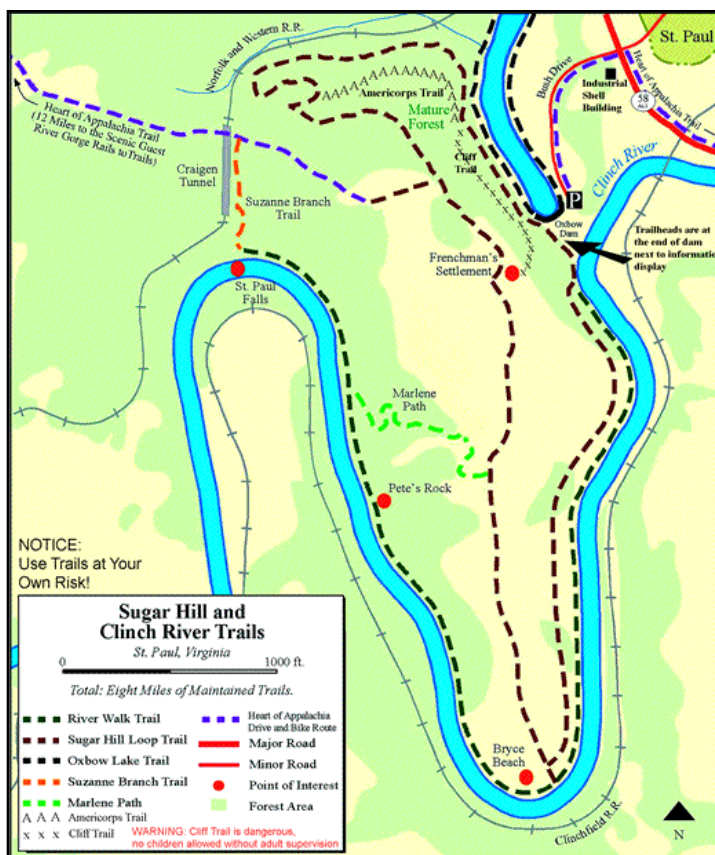


SUGAR HILL & CLINCH RIVER MULTI-USE TRAILS

Maps and information on Sugar Hill and Clinch River trails in Saint Paul/Wise County can be found at: www.sugarhillclinch.com.

In one of our preliminary site visits to the area, a few mountain bikers mentioned that a middle section of the trail system might need some work but follow-up visits have determined that all trails appear to be in good condition.

Please Note: The Cliffside Trail is a very difficult trail and appropriately signed indicating riders should expect rough terrain. Due to the steepness of one particular side hill, passage is tricky in sections and caution needs to be taken when using this trail.



Wise County - SITE VISIT

Hiking and biking opportunities are accessible along the Sugar Hill/Clinch River Trails just off of ALT Rt. 58 at St. Paul. Trails are included on the Virginia Birding & Wildlife Trail System. Also excellent area to fish. Canoe ramp, two parking area, restrooms and tourist information kiosk at site.



Part of VBWT Trail System



Information Kiosk



Canoe ramp accessing Clinch River



Trailhead Crossing



Directional and on site informational signage

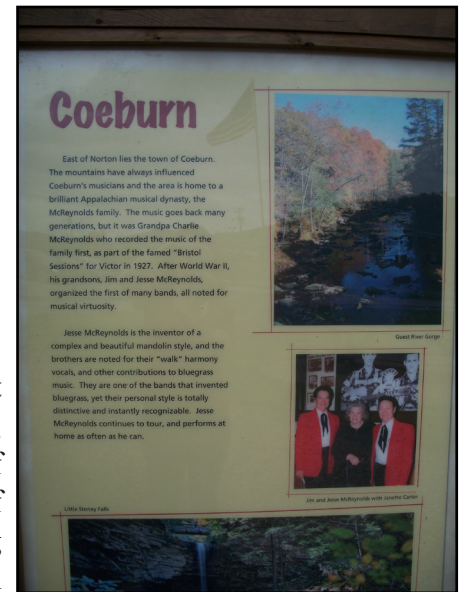
TOWN OF COEBURN



Coeburn has approximately 2,000 residents and the Mayor is G. Lynn Wells. It is on the Crooked Road Tour and is the hometown of Appalachian musical dynasty, the McReynolds, including both Jim and Jesse, who are noted for their “walk” harmony vocals and their contributions to Bluegrass.

Coeburn is also home of Ralph Stanley II and offers many music venues at historic Lays Hardware Store. The downtown area offers brick sidewalks, antique lamps and pedestrian bridges. Loretta Mays, town manager of Coeburn, has expressed interest in developing trails leading into and out of Coeburn, but the community is landlocked by railroads. Railroad crossing will need to be addressed. There is an active line that goes to St. Paul which could someday offer a scenic train ride.

TRAILS: The community offers a 3/8 mile race track. It also has a Suzuki and Polaris Sales Shop located off Hwy 72 South at Exit 1.



Wise County - SITE VISIT

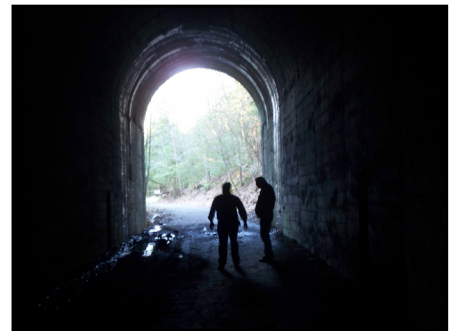
GUEST RIVER GORGE TRAIL (near Coeburn, VA)



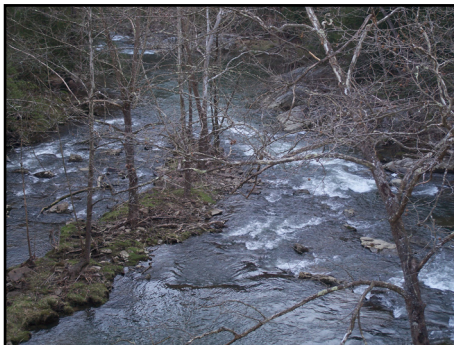
There is a one-mile walking and biking trail that goes through a tunnel and ends at a bridge overlooking the gorge. Those wanting a longer walk can continue along the trail 5.8 miles to the Clinch River.



This rails-to-trails project follows an old railroad right-of-way paralleling the Guest River, a Virginia Scenic River. Trout fishing is permitted in the river, as well as kayaking and canoeing. Features along the 6-mile trail includes an old railroad tunnel, bridges using the remaining railroad trestles, waterfalls and rock outcroppings.

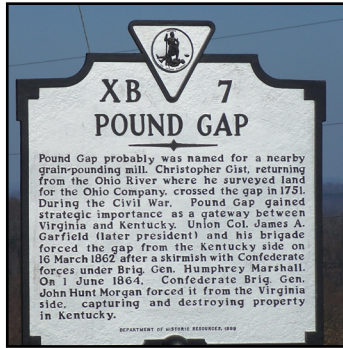


Both the Guest River Gorge Trail and the Clinch River Trail are included on the Heart of the Appalachia Trail System.



Wise County - SITE VISIT

POUND GAP



Pound Gap is at the crest of the Pine Mountain thrust on US 23, at the state borders of Virginia and Kentucky just south of the town of Jenkins, Kentucky.

CUMBERLAND MOUNTAIN TRAIL: Runs across the ridge at the state line along the counties of Letcher County, KY, Pike County, KY and Wise County, VA.



Two views of Pine Mountain from Pound Gap

AUSTIN GAP TRAIL: A 4-mile moderately difficult side trip from the Cumberland Gap Mountain Trail. http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gw/clinch/recreation/hiking/austin_gap_trail.shtml

RED FOX TRAIL: Just past the Pound Gap historical marker is the Red Fox Trail which follows an old railroad track. It is a 2-mile round-trip interpretive hike back to 1892, where a massacre at the site left several people dead.



NORTH FORK OF THE POUND RIVER



The North Fork of the Pound includes 5,000 acres of extensive lake and riverside habitat that can be enjoyed by nature enthusiasts. It offers ample parking, picnic areas, restroom facilities, a tourism information board and is handicapped accessible.

PHILLIPS CREEK LOOP TRAIL AT POUND RECREATION AREA

The Pound Recreation Area offers a 2-3 mile hiking trail along riparian woodlands that surround the river which is part of the Lonesome Pine Loop of the Virginia Birding & Wildlife Trail. Known as the Phillips Creek Loop Trail, the trail wanders through mature hemlock and hardwood forests, dense rhododendron thickets and uphill towards oak and hickory woodlands, with the occasional presence of shortleaf or pitch pine. The trail forms a loop, but also connects to the Pine Mountain Trail System for those who are interested in a longer hike.



JEFFERSON NATIONAL FOREST

35,924 acres of the Jefferson National Forest lie in Wise County, supporting a multitude of outdoor recreational opportunities: hiking, biking, swimming, canoeing, hunting, fishing, camping, boating, and picnicking. (See Vol 4: Inventory of Existing and Potential Trails for more information.)



Taylor's Country Store (right) provides breakfast and lunch for those in the area and could benefit greatly from the increase in trail users coming to the area.