

APPENDIX H: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Series of Meetings - Buchanan County Grundy Meeting



APPENDIX H: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – SERIES OF MEETINGS

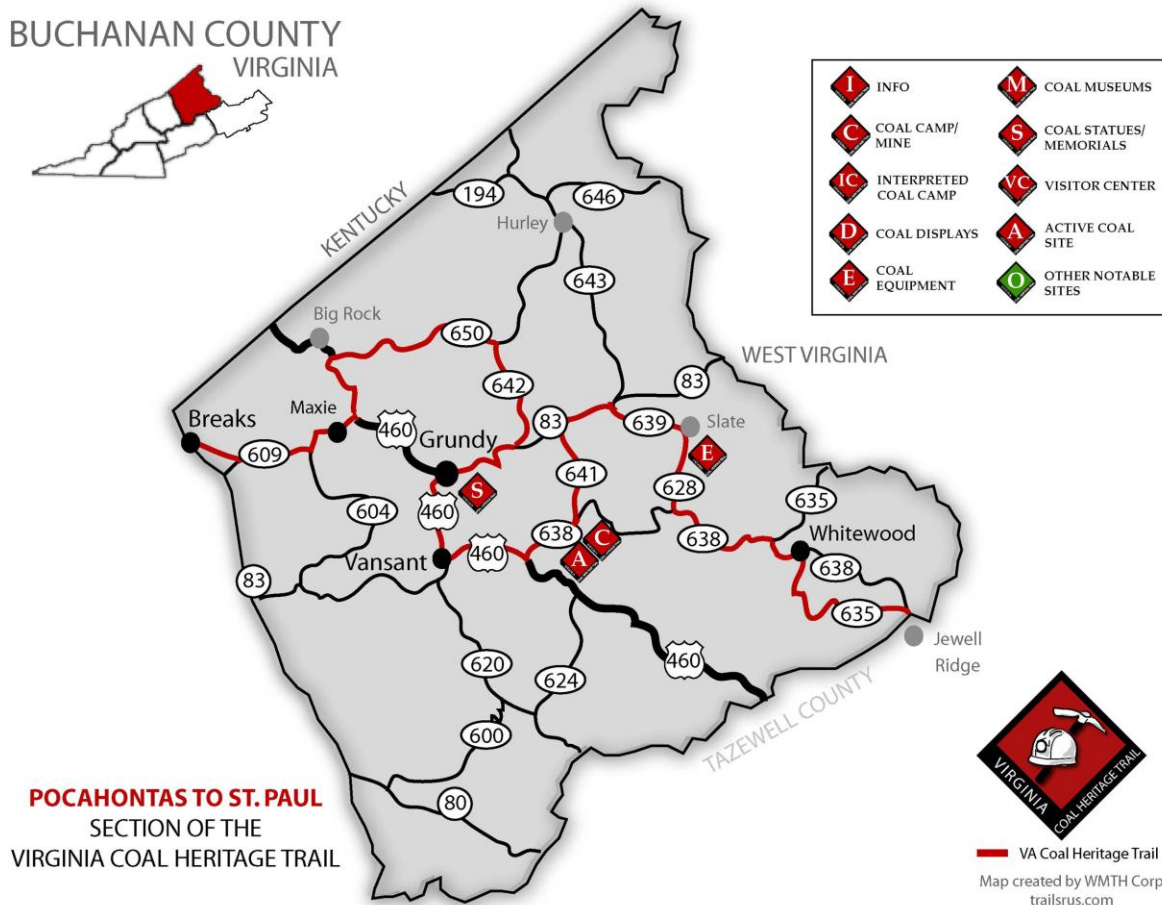
Virginia Coal Heritage Trail Corridor Management Plan Meeting
in Grundy on the Buchanan County portion of the Trail
October 21st 2010

Attendees:

- Mary Belcher, Buchanan Co. Chamber of Commerce
- Sandy Stiltner, Buchanan County Administrator Office and Tourism
- Sherry Bright, Buchanan County Public Library
- Lyle Mutter, Buchanan County Planning Commission
- Wade McGeorge, Town of Grundy
- Cathy St. Clair, Consol & Buchanan Chamber of Commerce
- Scotty Wampler, Virginia Mountaineer
- Becky Stevenson, Town of Grundy
- J. Carroll Branham, Buchanan County Supervisor
- Don Layne, Buchanan County Planning Commission
- Nathan Brown, Graham Landscape Architecture
- Berlin Viars, Buchanan County Supervisor
- Linda Tate, Russell County Chamber of Commerce and chairman of the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail Advisory Committee.



**Below is the section of the Byway discussed in the Buchanan meeting.
Primary coal sites are noted on the map.**

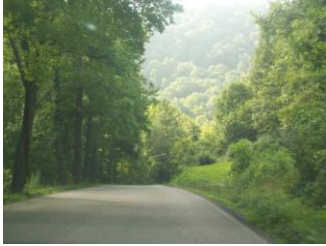




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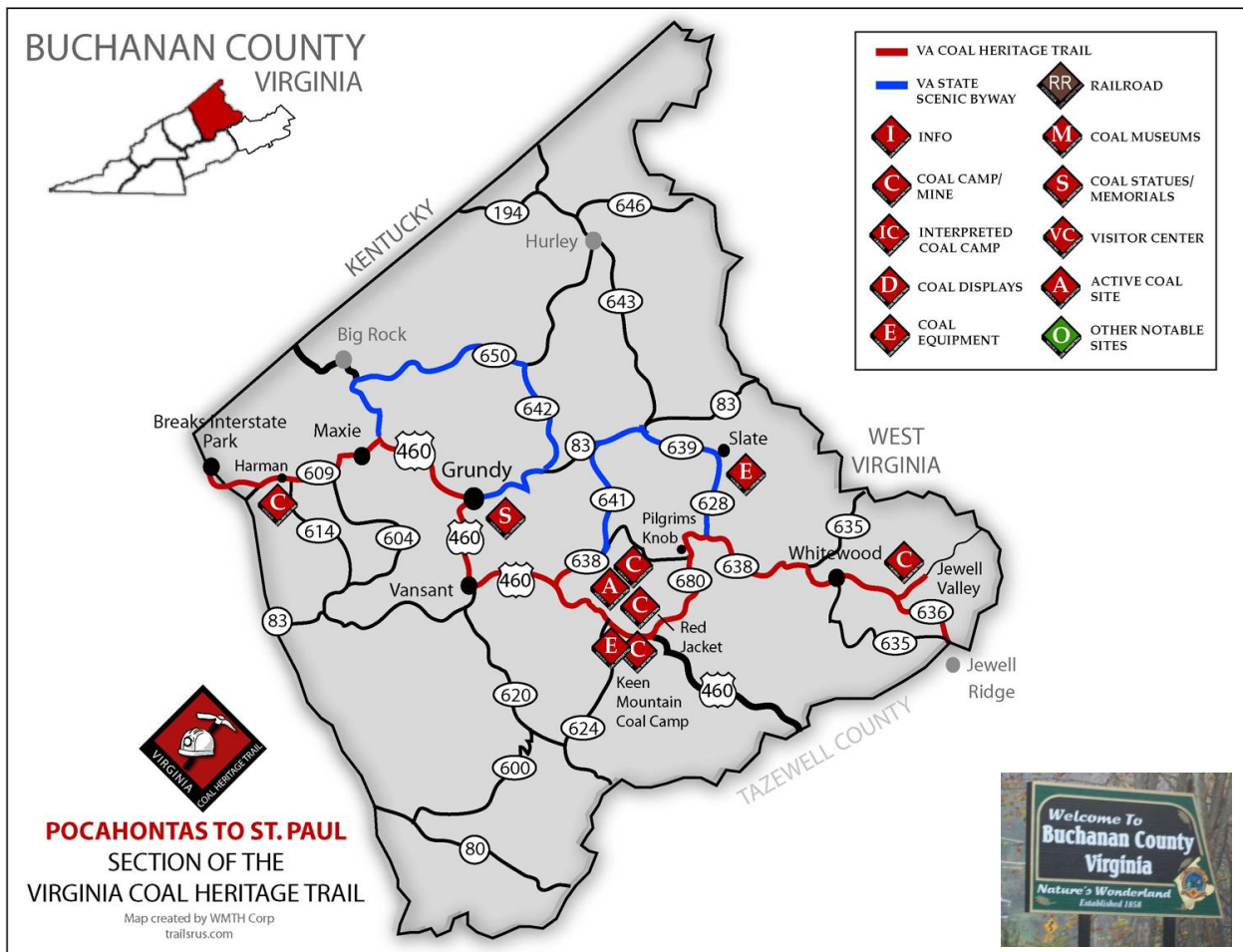
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Buchanan County has so much to offer in regards to both historic and active mining visible on the road but not necessarily on the actual proposed route. Currently the route meanders through the mountains along Highways 635, 638, 628, 639, 641, 642, 650 and 609. Breathtaking views can be seen along this route and, for the scenic beauty, this is truly one of the most scenic routes one experiences along the byway.



The challenge is that we are marketing the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail as more of a historic tour and due to the route chosen through Buchanan, much of the historic sections of the route are missed entirely. During the Town Meeting at Grundy, it was recommended that the byway be rerouted to include Keen Mountain Coal Camp off Hwy 460.

New Route Recommendation:



Revised recommended route:

- Starting at Jewell Ridge in Tazewell County, Turn right onto VA 616/Bearwallow Road (.9 miles) which changes into Hwy 636/Chicken Ridge Road (4.1)



WORTHWHILE SIDE TRIP:

- Turn Right onto Jewell Valley Road 1 mile to Dominion Coal Corporation Mine #36
Include interpretive information about this mine site or the mining technique used.



Dominion Coal Corporation Mine # 36

- Come back 1 mile to Hwy 636.
- Turn right onto VA 638/Dismal River Road towards Whitewood.

Instead of continuing west on VA 638 to Whitewood then right on VA 628 to Slate then left on VA 639 then left on VA 83 then left on 641 back to VA 638,

Recommendation:

- From VA 638, turn left onto Contrary Creek Road for 4.8 miles
- Turn right onto U.S. 460/Riverside Drive for 2.2 miles
- Turn left onto Keen Mountain Camp Road and the proposed “Keen Mountain Company Store Interpretive Center & Museum” for the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail Byway.

KEEN MOUNTAIN

Island Creek Coal Company's Keen Mountain is one of our most intact coal camps in the entire route and one of the very few that still has its company store in excellent condition. The Coal Camp includes a company store, two office buildings and numerous coal camp homes.

Due to its strategic location right on Hwy 460, with easy accessible, high visibility and ample parking, it is highly recommended that the Company Store become the staging area to inform and educate all who come into the region about the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail, the sites one will see along the route through Buchanan and the history and the stories of the coal camps and mines in this area.



Keen Mountain Company Store

Keen Mountain Coal Camp



Company Store



Coal Company Offices



Homes of the management for the Coal Company





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More buildings at Keen Mountain Coal Camp



Church



A few more upper management homes



*A few of the smaller company houses for miners and other workers in the mines.
 There are many other homes, all in excellent condition and privately owned.*

Recommendation: The Keen Mountain Company Store will be used as the staging area for the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail through Buchanan County and central information center for all tourism offerings and coal-related sites and history in Buchanan County to provide:

- ✓ *Brochures, maps and information about the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail.*
- ✓ *A walking/driving tour through Keen Mountain Coal Camp noting both what was there and what still remains through interpretive signs and displays
 (See Chapter VIII – Developing Walking & Driving tours for more on this)*
- ✓ *More specific information about the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail through Buchanan with details and possible vignettes and displays on specific coal camps that once existed.*
- ✓ *Information on the Virginia State Scenic Byway which meanders through the mountains in Buchanan County and some of the sites one will see along this route.*
- ✓ *Provide interpretive information about mine rescue as well as provide information about the Red Jacket Coal Camp and the mining accident that occurred in 1938.*
 - *Also include information on the CONSOL Energy's Central Appalachian Operations Mine Rescue Facility, located just a few miles up the road from Keen Mountain Coal Camp and information on modern rescue techniques and equipment.*
- ✓ *Might also be an excellent location for the concrete marker from the Red Jacket disaster to be placed.*



CONSOL Mine Rescue & Training Facility

- Leaving this site, turn left and continue west on U.S.460/Riverside Drive
- On the right, one will soon see the Jewell Ridge Smokeless Coke Ovens.
- Turn right onto VA 638 and go ¼ mile to pull-off area.

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Recommendation: Make this an official pull-off where photos can be taken and interpretive wayside exhibits can be displayed discussing the process.



- Continue ¼ mile further and the Island Creek Coal Company VA/Pocahontas Mine #1

Recommendation: Provide pull-off at bridge and include interpretive wayside exhibits at this site.



“Island Creek Coal Co. bought the Red Jacket Coal Co. and built their coal camp at Keen Mountain, and it is the only surviving camp in the county. Their first shaft mine was started in the early '60's, just down the road from the camp, named Beatrice, which is now gone, followed by the Virginia Pocahontas mines. Consol, who bought out Pocahontas fuel, bought out Island Creek in 1993, and operated their Virginia Pocahontas mines, and their own, Buchanan No. 1. Island Creek ran a merchandise store at Vansant VA, up until the early 80's”.

Information above was provided by Mark Van Dyke from the website at:
<http://www.coalcampusa.com/swva/buchanan/buchanan.htm>

Please Note:

Buchanan No. 1 is still operating and is in fact, Virginia’s largest underground mine.



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It is recommended at this point to go back to U.S. 460, turn right and head to Vansant and Grundy for food, lodging and some shopping opportunities.

The visitor would turn right at the light onto Hwy 83 then immediately right again to see the Coal Miner’s monument in front of Buchanan County Courthouse.



*Coal Miner’s Memorial
 In front of Buchanan Co. Courthouse*

Recommendation:

Instead of continuing east on VA 83 then left on VA 642 then left on VA 650 which takes one back to U.S. 460, it is recommended that the Byway continue west on U.S. 460 for 6 miles turning left onto Bull Creek Road / VA 609 at Harman Junction (Byway sign needed at this turn)

Cross over railroad tracks and continue 4.3 miles on VA 609 past the community of Maxie (on left) and then the Harman community.

Turn right onto Breaks Park Road/VA 80 for .6 miles which brings one to the entrance to Breaks Interstate Park on the right.



RR crossing on VA 609



Small Loadout at Maxie



*Apollo Mine Coal operation
 at corner of VA 609 & Deel Rd.*



*Entrance to Breaks Interstate Park
 (Dickenson/Buchanan county line)*

It would be our recommendation that the byway route be changed in order for it to go past Keen Mountain Coal Camp and be more focused on historic coal related sites. **But** to do so will require the county requesting this to occur and then getting agreement from the other counties (which should not be an issue) but then we will probably need a legislator to make this request which could slow up the process a bit on national designation. But I firmly believe, in the long run, this would be much better for those traveling the route and would allow Buchanan County to have a staging area (Keen Mountain Company Store) in which to better share with the public the rich coal history of the county as well as other tourism offerings to see while they are in the area.

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Please Note:

If one would like to take the scenic route through Buchanan County, the original route could be retained as a Virginia Coal Heritage Trail State Scenic Byway, taking the visitor on a beautiful scenic drive through the mountains as originally proposed, utilizing the original state byway signage and noting it as “scenic”.



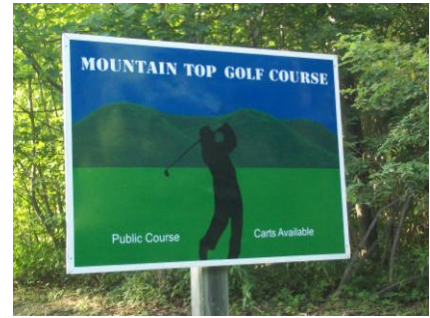
Some of the sites one will see along the way include:



Coles Chapel



Dismal River



Mountain Top Golf Course on reclaimed coal land



The old school, now privately owned. Birthplace of an infamous resident

Recommendations from the Buchanan County Town meeting included:

- Finalizing on negotiations to purchase the Keen Mountain Coal Camp from People's Inc.
- Moving the concrete marker at the site of the Red Jacket 1938 explosion to a more visible and accessible location and include interpretation about the disaster.
- Interpretation and information on the many coal camps in Buchanan County including, but not limited to Sycamore Coal Company's Patterson Coal Camp, Crystal Block Coal Company at Roth, and Jewell Valley Coal Camp in displays at Keen Mountain Company Store. Also include other coal, rail and historic memorabilia from the region.
- GPSing each of the sites and including geocaching as part of the experience.

Resources:

- Oral History: Peter Crow, Mae Broyels,
- Ruby Ratliff Hale on the history of Keen Mountain. She grew up at the coal camp.
- Geocaching and GPSing each of the sites: Chuck Ratliff
- Excellent review of Buchanan's rich coal history was in a special 75th Anniversary edition of Virginia Mountaineer. *Sherry Bright is e-mailing a copy from the library.*
- See article by Mark Van Dyke from the website below for more on Buchanan County's coal history: <http://www.coalcampusa.com/swva/buchanan/buchanan.htm>