



FAQs about the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area

What is a National Heritage Area?

A National Heritage Area is a place designated by the United States Congress where the land, culture, history and recreational activities combine to create a nationally distinctive “personality” for the region. This personality allows a National Heritage Area to represent the experiences of all Americans through its traditions and the way its people relate to the landscape. Congress identified five elements that make this area so special: Cherokee heritage, handmade crafts (traditional and contemporary), mountain music, agricultural heritage, and the natural landscape.

National Heritage Areas, as organizations, are locally governed institutions that encourage residents, government agencies, non-profit groups, and private partners *to join together* in planning and implementing programs that preserve and celebrate America’s defining landscapes. A National Heritage Area designation does not affect ownership or use of land. Programs and projects are created through voluntary efforts coordinated by the local National Heritage Area organization.

Who is in the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area (BRNHA)?

Everyone who is in the 25 westernmost counties in North Carolina and the Qualla Boundary.

When did we become the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area?

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area was designated by Congress by a federal law that was signed into effect by the President in November, 2003.

What does the BRNHA do?

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area works to protect, preserve, interpret, and develop the unique natural, historical, and cultural resources of Western North Carolina for the benefit of present and future generations, and in so doing to stimulate improved economic opportunity in the region.

How does the BRNHA meet these goals?

The BRNHA accomplishes its mission, and helps partners in the region to accomplish theirs, in many ways. Among these are by assisting in heritage development planning; providing educational programs and grants; and offering the support of five Heritage Officers from the NC Dept. of Commerce Division of Tourism who are assigned to work with the BRNHA.

In addition, the BRNHA can support economic development by serving as a marketing umbrella for promoting heritage tourism to the region, especially in our five core thematic areas of Cherokee, craft, music, agricultural and natural heritage.

For a more detailed look at what we do, visit our website at www.blueridgeheritage.com. While you’re there you can review our Ten-Year Management Plan.

Who are the staff members at the BRNHA?

Penn Dameron, Executive Director

Rob Bell, Program Director

Amy Hollifield, Volunteer Services and Events Coordinator

Beth Coleman, Office Manager

Eric Jones (part time), Field Representative in the Ambassador Program

Jill Jones (no relation to Eric) (part time), Communications and Marketing

Where are the offices of the BRNHA?

In the new Blue Ridge Parkway Destination Center at Milepost 384 on the Parkway near Asheville.

What is the relationship between the BRNHA, the National Park Service and the Blue Ridge Parkway?

The National Park Service oversees the National Heritage Area program and is the vehicle for federal funding. The Blue Ridge Parkway is the nation's most visited National Park unit, and is a primary partner in the BRNHA. In addition to being a tenant of the Parkway in the Destination Center, the BRNHA provides volunteer staffing for the Information Desk, owns and operates the state-of-the-art I-Wall exhibit in the building, and operates informational and sales kiosks there. The BRNHA also partners with the Parkway on events and publicity, especially the promotion of the Destination Center.

What is the Go Blue Ridge Card?

It is a multi-attraction discount pass that admits purchasers to over 25 top attractions in the North Carolina mountains. The Go Blue Ridge Card was developed by the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area in partnership with Smart Destinations, Inc. of Boston to stimulate visitation in the region. It is available online and at a number of outlets in the BRNHA.

What is the Traditional Artist Directory?

This is an online directory of traditional musicians, dancers, crafters, storytellers, and wildcrafters from the North Carolina mountains who are available for performances and demonstrations of their craft. The directory was compiled in partnership with the NC Folklife Institute through a juried process. The directory serves three primary purposes: (1) to provide a resource for event planners and educators who want to include traditional artists in their programs; (2) to be an educational resource for those wanting to learn more about the region; and (3) to assist traditional artists who are interested in participating in public programs.