

**WASHINGTON**, June 4, 2007—The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) this week announced the winners of a grants competition to promote natural and cultural heritage tourism development in Appalachia’s “gateway communities,” or communities that border national and state parks, wildlife refuges, forests, historic sites, wilderness areas, and other public lands.

The competition, called the Appalachian Gateway Initiative: Natural and Cultural Heritage Tourism Development, is part of ARC’s effort to promote asset-based economic development in Appalachia. The initiative emphasizes the inclusion of the arts in tourism development projects. ARC contributed \$60,000, and the NEA contributed \$30,000, to the competition.

Thirty-six proposals requesting \$390,000 in grant funds were submitted by communities and organizations located in eight Appalachian states. The winning applications are:

- Freeport, Leechburg, and Apollo, Pennsylvania’s joint proposal to coordinate a planning workshop to provide inspiration and instruction about the use of design, creative expression, and the arts to showcase the communities’ natural and heritage assets.
- The Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association’s plan to identify area artists and connect them to sponsors of cultural programs and community events, and strengthen cultural heritage tourism in three counties that overlap with the Cherokee National Forest.
- An effort by the Downtown Boone Development Association (North Carolina) to create a heritage-based artwork site.
- A proposal from the Smyth County Tourism Association (Virginia) for a community-wide natural and cultural heritage tourism assessment.
- A plan from the Connellsville Cultural Trust (Pennsylvania) to showcase the area’s unique industrial heritage through a walking tour.
- A proposal from the Caldwell Arts Council (Lenoir, North Carolina) to produce an audio-based driving tour of the Scenic Byway 268 that features voices of local farmers, storytellers, and musicians.
- A proposal from the Delaware County Chamber of Commerce (New York) for a tourism assessment to help local communities surrounding the Catskill Park understand the area’s growth potential and create a shared vision for the future.
- The Stecoah Valley Arts, Crafts and Educational Center’s proposal to develop classes in traditional Appalachian arts and nature-based culture and to partner with area lodging venues in Graham County, North Carolina, to offer programs to heritage tourists.

Training and technical assistance for the winning applications will be provided by the Conservation Fund and the National Trust for Historic Preservation Heritage Tourism Program.

For additional information about the above projects or the Appalachian Gateway Initiative, please contact Kristin Peppel at the Conservation Fund, 828-232-6834, [kpeppel@conservationfund.org](mailto:kpeppel@conservationfund.org), or Molly Theobald at the Appalachian Regional Commission, (202) 884-7767, [mtheobald@arc.gov](mailto:mtheobald@arc.gov). ARC's Web site is at <http://www.arc.gov>.