

**Graham County  
Heritage Development Initiative  
Produced for the Blue Ridge  
National Heritage Area  
And Citizens of Graham County**

**Completed in Partnership with:  
AdvantageWest  
NC Department of Commerce  
Partnership for the Future  
Smoky Mountain Host  
Graham County  
Western Carolina University**

# Graham County Heritage Development Plan

## I. Description of the Project

### *Overview of Graham County History and Heritage*

Graham County, one of the last State of North Carolina County entities formulated in the early 1870's, lies in the midst of one of the most difficult areas of Southern Appalachia and its birth has a long and tumultuous history. The population of the new State of North Carolina was a diverse and colorful mixture. The mixture included early English Colonists, indentured people from the Spring Courts in England, German Baptists who had been extracted from the Palatine Region in Germany by William Penn from 1715 to 1720, Dutch immigrants escaping religious prosecution, and French Huguenots. The ever-increasing population caused the state to expand its land holdings to the west, continually decreasing the amount of Indian lands. As the population of the state increased more government was needed and new counties were created.

Formulation of County's continued, ever Westward and Northward. Rutherford County was formed, and from it, Burke was formed and eventually Buncombe, the last huge County to exist, which was formed in 1791. It then from it came Haywood County in 1808, thus to Macon County in 1828, Cherokee Count in 1839, and from this last County would be established, in 1871, the County's of Graham, Swain and Clay.

Graham County, established by act of the State Legislature in 1871, has the town of Robbinsville as its county seat. A unique property of this County seat is that it is closer to the capitals of six other States than it is to Raleigh.

Graham County lies in a bowl, ringed by four mountain ranges and the Little Tennessee River. The rugged, and at places, inaccessible nature of the County has been a major impediment to development since its earliest days. Even today, it is the only county in North Carolina without a four-lane highway. This isolation and rugged surroundings has generated a strong sense of community and a well-developed trait of independence and family bonding.

The economy of Graham County has never been robust, and in those early days the manufacture of whiskey was a source of small income and harvesting of hides continued until the late 1920s. Mineral extraction was never a positive task here in spite of storied mines here and there. The discovery of the vast virgin forests by timber barons began an uncontrolled harvest of timber that would run from 1915 to the present day. The advent of railroads affiliated with timber harvesting opened the County to outside influences in ever increasing volume and frequency and created industry in the County, namely a large band-mill, one of several which would operate in the County over the next couple of decades.

There are three dams located in the County impounding waters of the Little Tennessee River and one of its tributary, the Cheoah River. Fontana Dam, the highest such structure ever built east of the Mississippi River, was erected by the Tennessee Valley Authority, a major player in the economic and cultural affairs of the County. The other two, Santeetlah and Cheoah, were erected by the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA). ALCOA has the largest holdings of real estate in the County except for the Federal Government. Over 80-percent of the land belongs to these two entities and, regrettably, the tax rate is fixed from the early 1900's and revenue from their holdings is small.

## **Graham County Heritage Development Plan**

Tourism is touted as an economic engine for the County, but development of facilities and infrastructure to attract and tempt tourism require capital outlay, a resource not available to the County. However, large numbers of tourists are now beginning to find the attractions in the County: the primal Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest with its tremendously large virgin stands of timber: the three dams: Big Santeetlah Creek - a primary trout water in the USA; dirt biking and horse-back riding at Tsali; and the most challenging, the 11-mile stretch of US Highway 129 known as “The Tail of the Dragon” which has become a lure to motorcyclist all over the Nation. The completion of the Cherohala Skyway, connecting North Carolina and Tennessee, adds attractions to motorcyclist, camper and hikers. Reaching altitudes exceeding 5000 feet, the range of vision is astounding!

Today, Graham County is a viable entity in the State. The beauty of its natural geography and pleasant weather is beginning to be noticed. Its educational system has garnered many honors. Its youth are hardy, inquisitive, intelligent and athletic. The most important asset of the County is its people, and the stereotypical image of a lanky, tobacco chewing “hillbilly” has been replaced by well-dressed and well-spoken persons who have a great deal of knowledge about their World, their culture and heritage, and where they “fit” in the solution. The population is representative of Southern Appalachia, being of sturdy, honest hard-working Scotch-Irish stock with good portions of Germanic bloodlines. Soft-spoken, ever courteous and helpful, they represent the remnants of the only undiluted culture in the Nation, one of fierce independence, resourcefulness and faith in their God. Given the resources and guidance, they can (and would) make a Paradise of this area, and they have faith that (one day), it will come to pass.

### *Mission Statement of the Graham County Heritage Development Plan*

***To create a plan that will recognize and document the unique heritage of Graham County and that will provide for the careful preservation of this heritage while also providing responsible growth and development opportunities for public appreciation and participation in this heritage.***

### *Overarching Objectives of the Graham County Heritage Development Plan*

The overarching objectives of the Graham County Heritage Development Plan are:

- To *preserve* the cultural heritage, historic structures and natural sites of the County.
- To *educate* both local and visiting youth and adults about the importance of this heritage.
- To *promote* the cultural heritage, historic structures and natural sites of the County through appropriate programs and activities consistent with the preservation objective.
- To *encourage and support* programs that are designed to attract heritage tourists to the area and provide a high quality, authentic, historic or recreational experience while simultaneously protecting the natural and cultural environment.
- To *improve* the economic condition of the county by providing a sustainable source of revenue and employment opportunities through heritage tourism.
- To *form* a cohesive group that can plan, implement, evaluate and modify as appropriate the programs/activities to accomplish the overarching objectives.

# Graham County Heritage Development Plan

## *Partners in Planning and Achieving Success*

Partners in making the Graham County Heritage Plan a success include representatives from a wide range of county organizations and interests including, among others:

ALL CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS OF GRAHAM COUNTY

GREAT – Graham Revitalization and Economic Action Team

### OTHER PARTNERS:

Alcoa Inc. (APGI & Fdn)

Artisans & Crafters Rep.

Duke Power

Eastern Band of Cherokee

Indians & Junaluska Museum

Fontana Village Resort

Friends of JK/Slickrock Wilderness

Graham Cty Govt & Schools

Graham Cty Historical Society

Graham Cty Travel & Tourism

Lodging & Accomodations Rep.

NC Arts Council

NC Division of Tourism

NC Cooperative Extension Service

Smoky Mountain Native Plant Assoc.

Snowbird Mountain Lodge

Stecoah Valley Center

Surrounding Far West Counties

Town of Robbinsville

Tri-County Community College

TVA

US Forest Service

US Park Service

Wildcrafters

## *Challenges to be Addressed*

The challenges to be met for the successful implementation of this plan include:

- To overcome long-standing divisions within the county, i.e. to bridge the gap of conflicting interests between governing agencies, businesses, other organizations, communities and individuals so that all will work together for the common good of Graham County.
- To bring together and keep together a cohesive leadership organization to keep lines of communication open, to coordinate efforts and to oversee the implementation of the plan.
- To locate adequate funding to bring projects to fruition.

## *Priorities*

The priorities of the Graham County Heritage Plan are:

- Organization - To form a cohesive leadership organization to keep the lines of communication open among all parties, to coordinate efforts with other agencies and to oversee the implementation of the plan.
- Marketing - To plan and initiate marketing efforts that promote heritage tourism in Graham County. Immediate projects may include production of collateral marketing materials such as thematic maps while the major long-range effort includes a new Visitor Welcome Center.
- Education - To provide cultural heritage and natural resource educational opportunities for youth and adults in a variety of venues and formats. Such opportunities may include school and community based classes, programs, workshops, camps and other experiential learning opportunities.
- Attractions - To expand existing and add new events and/or facilities that interpret Graham County heritage in a manner that will attract and educate the local community as well as visitors.

## Graham County Heritage Development Planning Team

Facilitator:	Ron Ruehl, North Carolina Div. of Tourism
Leaders:	Teresa Garland, NC Cooperative Extension Service Lynn Shields, Stecoah Valley Center
Team Members:	
Accommodations:	David Kerr, Fontana Village
Agri-tourism:	Ransom Cornett, Smoky Mountain Native Plants Assn.
Arts & Crafts:	Karen Mickler, Yellow Branch Cheese & Pottery
Cherokee Heritage:	T.J. Holland, Junaluska Museum
Education:	Brenda Williams, Robbinsville High School
Festivals:	Opal Long, Retired Teacher
GC Historical Soc.:	Carolyn Stewart, Graham County Historical Society
Local Govt.:	Dirk Cody, Graham County Commissioners & Travel & Tourism Auth. Judy Jones, Graham County Travel & Tourism Authority Claudie Burchfield, Graham County Economic Development Director Teresa Lewis, Town of Robbinsville
Nature Studies & Recreation:	Frank Findley, US Forest Service Curtis Griggs, Duke Energy (Ret.)
Service Industries:	Yvette Carringer, First Citizens Bank

This team of community representatives from the major segments of the heritage tourism and development area came together to address the needs and opportunities presented by the newly established *Blue Ridge National Heritage Area*. The plan was developed from community input gathered at a series of public information gathering sessions held in January/February 2004 and public comment sessions in March, 2004.

The plan is far-reaching and far-sighted into the future. It includes many initiatives for which funding is not available at this time. Such lack of current funding should not be viewed as a weakness nor affect the viability of the plan. Rather, the plan should be viewed as a roadmap to begin the search for funding and the implementation of projects identified by the community.

*Graham County Heritage Development Plan  
Summary of Initiatives*

<u><b>Description</b></u>	<u><b>Est. Cost</b></u>
1. Visitor & Welcome Center	\$1,000,000
2. Arts & Crafts	
Graham County Arts Council	\$ 4,000
Arts/Crafts Registry: Web Site	1,300
Graham County Artisan Drive About	4,000
Stecoah Valley Weavers	29,910
Fine Arts Gallery/Studio – Stecoah Valley Center	160,000
Heritage Arts and Crafts Interactive Workshops	45,000
Arts and Crafts Sales/Visitor Center Initiative (See Marketing)	650,000
3. Festivals	
Improve planning/coordination of events throughout the county	\$ 5,000
Expand existing festivals	25,000
Introduce new festivals	50,000
4. Stecoah Valley Arts, Crafts & Educational Center	
Gymnasium Renovation	\$ 500,000
Expand existing festivals/events	58,000
Expand Center& Educational Programs	98,000
Strategic Marketing Plan Implementation	50,000
5. Nature Studies & Outdoor Recreation	
Educational Programs	\$ 10,000
Rehabilitation & Protection of Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest	350,000
Santeetlah Fed. Energy Reg. Commission relicensing	2,000,000
Tsali Campground & Cheoah Point Beach	410,000
Heritage Sports - Black-powder, Bow Hunting and others	5,000
6. Agriculture & Agri-Tourism	
Educational Programs	\$ 15,000
Agri-Tourism Programs	20,000
Value-Added Agricultural Products	10,000
7. Education	
Expanded Youth and Community Educational Programs	\$ 25,000
New Youth and Community Educational Programs	25,000
8. Marketing	
Create a marketing plan	\$ 15,000
Develop marketing theme	15,000
Partner with neighbors	50,000
Work with other committees	10,000

Study the effectiveness	10,000
9. Cherokee Heritage & Junaluska Museum	
General Building Improvements	\$ 20,000
Building expansion	100,000
Exhibit Renovations	40,000
“Fading Voices” Festival	10,000
Protection of Tatum Gap Road Area	50,000
10. Graham County Museum & Oral History Project	
Facility to house Graham County Museum	\$ 750,000
Education and training	25,000
Compile local history	7,000

**Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET**

Initiative Title:	Visitor and Welcome Center
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost to Implement:	Estimated Time to Complete:
Committee Chair: Judy Jones	\$1,000,000	

Project Goal and Narrative	<p>The number one identified need in Graham County heritage tourism as identified by community groups is a visitor and welcome center. The existing facility does not meet the needs of a county that has increasing numbers of tourists. A new facility should be large enough to meet a variety of community needs such as a crafts shop and meeting space. It should be centrally located, visible, and have adequate parking and facilities to comfortably meet the needs of visitors.</p> <p>Graham County has many attractions to offer its visitors. A new visitor and welcome center would provide a central location at which to obtain the information necessary to plan a vacation in the area. The need for such a facility has strong community support.</p>
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**Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET**

Initiative Title:	Arts and Crafts
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Project Narrative:	<p>While Stecoah Valley Center is a key player in teaching traditional skills, informing the public about Appalachian traditions, displaying local crafts, and providing crafters a place to sell their wares, more can be done. The first step identified by local crafters is the formation of a Graham County Arts Council. The Arts Council could act as a magnet for individual artists and agencies, linking artists with arts opportunities. Additionally, it could provide the link between the school and the arts in the community increasing resources and opportunities for youth. The Council would then provide a vehicle through which to establish an arts and crafts registry and begin marketing local crafts via a website. Local artisans would like a place to sell their creations within the county as well, for example, a shop at the Graham County Visitor's Center. The Arts Council would support other arts initiative such as the Artisan Drive About, Stecoah Valley Weavers, Fine Arts Studio at Stecoah Valley Center, and Heritage Arts and Crafts Interactive Workshops. The ultimate goal would be to enable residents and visitors to enjoy a variety of cultural activities in Graham County.</p>
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost
Karen Mickler	\$894,210

Action Items:	Resources Required:
Graham County Arts Council.	4,000
Arts/Crafts Registry: Web Site	1,300
Graham County Artisan Drive About	4,000
Stecoah Valley Weavers	29,910
Fine Arts Gallery/Studio – Stecoah Valley Center	160,000
Heritage Arts and Crafts Interactive Workshops	45,000
Arts and Crafts Sales/Visitor Center Initiative (*See Marketing)	650,000

**Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET**

Initiative Title:	Festivals
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Project Narrative:	<p>Graham County is host to several festivals throughout the year. These include: Ramp Festival, Fading Voices Festival, Mountain Music Fiddle n’ Feast Festival, Graham County Heritage Festival and the Harvest Festival &amp; Antique auto Show. There is a need to improve the coordination of existing activities and improve county-wide planning in order to optimize visitor choices and opportunities during festivals. The formation of a Festivals Committee to help organize events is seen as one way to facilitate cooperation and improve planning.</p> <p>The Festivals Committee would also be able to provide direction for the expansion of existing festivals. In 2004, members will survey current visitors to determine visitor profiles and obtain ideas for potential activities that would encourage visitors to lengthen their visit to the area. Committee members will use this information as the basis for expanding attractions offered to visitors during existing festivals. Expanding the duration and number of offerings at existing festivals has great potential for increasing income from tourism in the near future.</p> <p>Finally, the Committee will explore opportunities for establishing new festivals in the area. New festivals will be targeted at a variety of audiences. A Scots-Irish Heritage Festival has potential for 2005. Other festival and activity ideas not directly related to Heritage Tourism are being explored as well. These include activities for motor enthusiasts who operate recreational vehicles, motorcycles, Mini-Coupers, Miatas and other sports cars.</p>
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost
Opal Long	\$80,000

Action Items:	Resources Required:
Improve planning of events/Coordinate activities throughout the county	5,000
Expand existing festivals	25,000
Survey visitors to 2004 events to determine ways to expand	
Introduce new festivals	50,000
Ideas include:           Scots-Irish Heritage Pioneer Days Will Thomas Festival	

**Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET**

Initiative Title:	Stecoah Valley Arts, Crafts & Educational Center
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Project Narrative:	<p>Stecoah Valley Arts, Crafts &amp; Educational Center is committed to continuing mountain cultural traditions, especially those related to the arts. Their continuing successes make the center a viable place to begin the expansion of heritage programs in Graham County. The Center is the site of two local festivals, and with some assistance, is ready to expand those events. In fact, plans for 2004 expansions are already in the works. New programs may include: a barbecue cook-off, band competition, sheep to shawl demonstration, expanded Civil War encampment and living history demonstration, gospel singing, new advertising, additional staff, revival of the Graham County Jamboree, storytelling events, arts/crafts classes and expanding the use of the grounds, nature trail and azalea garden.</p> <p>Throughout the year the Center provides programs of mountain music and dance through the <i>Appalachian Evening</i> series, the Mountain Music Championship, and the Harvest Festival. In addition, they perpetuate these traditional talents by teaching skills to youth through the Junior Appalachian Musician (JAM) and Appalachian Arts programs. JAM provides school age youth the opportunity to learn traditional mountain music, while the Appalachian Arts program offers lessons in other art forms such as weaving, pottery and dance. Over 200 local youth have participated in these programs during the past three years and they are now often asked to display their clogging and musical talents at local festivals and events.</p> <p>The Center provides training in traditional crafts as well. One of the best known examples of this is Stecoah Valley Weavers, which is housed at the Center. Stecoah Valley Weavers provides training classes for both adults and youth. The long term goal of the group is to provide local citizens alternative ways to earn additional income. The items produced by students in the Stecoah Weavers project are beginning to be sold throughout the region. In the upcoming months, the Center plans to begin the gymnasium renovation. When complete, the renovation will provide a certified kitchen available for entrepreneurs throughout the region to prepare their local delicacies for public sale, as well as for educational purposes, particularly to address the current obesity and diabetes nutritional needs of the community. In addition, the renovated multi-purpose facility will be available for more arts programs. Future plans include barn dances, dance lessons and competitions, dinner theater, and theater in the round. The facility will also provide meeting space for larger community events and events targeted to improved economic development such as auctions, craft shows, antique shows, agricultural shows, sporting events, and much more.</p>
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost
Lynn Shields	\$656,000

Action Items:	Resources Required:
Gymnasium Renovation Multi-purpose facility Certified Kitchen Fine Arts Projects Meeting and Show Facility	\$500,000
Expand existing festivals/events	\$58,000

Appalachian Evening Mountain Music Championship Artisan's Drive About Harvest Festival Craft Shop & Visitor Center Youth Programs & Events Nature Trail and Azalea Garden	
-Add New Programs Entertainment Programs Educational Programs Museum Exhibits Living History & Demonstrations Wildcrafting Events Classes and Demonstrations Interpretive buildings & facilities	\$98,000

**Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET**

<b>Initiative Title:</b>	Stecoah Valley Arts, Crafts & Educational Center - Strategic Marketing Plan Implementation
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<b>Project Narrative:</b>	In 2007 a Strategic Marketing Plan was developed for the Center by Magellan Strategy Group. The plan was partially implemented in early 2008 with outstanding results. This project seeks to implement the full plan to provide increased awareness of the many programs offered by Stecoah Valley Cultural Arts Center.
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<b>Goal:</b>	To create a sustainable position in the marketplace through both short and long-term marketing tactics that will drive increased visitation to the Center.
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<b>Person/Organization Responsible:</b>	<b>Cost to Implement:</b>	<b>Estimated Time to Complete:</b>
Lynn L. Shields	\$50,000	On-going

<b>Action Items:</b>	<b>Resources Required:</b>	<b>Who's Responsible:</b>
Implementation of the Strategic Marketing Plan.	Organization staff and outside consultants; collateral advertising materials, etc. \$50,000	SVC Ex. Director Lynn Shields and Program Director Beth Fields

<b>Performance Measures:</b>	Number of media contacts and placements. Number of meetings with collaborators and stakeholders. Increase in event attendance, gallery sales, etc.
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<b>Status:</b>	Initial implementation begun in 2008. Full implementation pending receipt of adequate funding.
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**Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET**

<b>Initiative Title:</b>	Nature Studies & Outdoor Recreation
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<b>Project Narrative:</b>	<p>The greatest attraction in Graham County is its natural beauty. With over seventy percent of the land being owned by federal entities, it is likely that the undeveloped forests, hiking trails, streams, and lakes will continue to be the county's most valued attribute. This being the case, it is critical that the community maintain the purity of the area, while planning and preparing our natural resources (the land, forests, mountains, lakes and streams) for the impact of increasing numbers of tourists.</p> <p>One way to prepare is by providing education about tourism, conservation, and preservation to local citizens. In turn, these trained citizen guides can share their knowledge with tourists, which will convey the respect and understanding of our interdependent and interactive relationship between the environment and our culture.</p> <p>Preparing local citizens to interface with tourists and helping citizens develop skills to provide additional income for families will be important strategies to make tourism economically successful in the coming years. Emphasis should be given to developing tourism related businesses to meet the needs of area visitors and help conserve the natural beauty of the region.</p> <p>Preserving the natural sites that attract visitors and locals will be of supreme importance as well. Sites must be kept in good condition to attract tourists. As more visitors use the property, more maintenance is required. Keeping properties well-maintained and teaching the public how to help maintain the properties will be critical in the future.</p>
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<b>Person/Organization Responsible:</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Frank Findley	2,775,000

<b>Action Items:</b>	<b>Resources Required:</b>
Adult & Youth Educational Programs	10,000
Rehabilitation of Joyce Kilmer Memorial Loop Trail	250,000
Protection of Joyce Kilmer and recreation site hemlocks from attack by hemlock wooly adelgid	100,000
Santeetlah Federal Energy Regulating Commission relicensing projects Put-in/Take-out on U.S. 129 sites River Trail Campground reconstruction	2,000,000
Tsali Campground (shower house, restrooms & septic system)	400,000
Cheoah Point Beach – Sand Addition	10,000
Heritage Sports - Black-powder, Bow Hunting and others	5,000
Opportunity in transition at this time: Fontana Village & Dam	

**Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET**

<b>Initiative Title:</b>	Agriculture & Agri-Tourism
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<b>Project Narrative:</b>	<p>Our mountain way of life is based upon is the very thing that attracts visitors to Graham County - our natural resources. The landscape is filled with high mountains, deep valleys, swift streams, beautiful lakes and small family farms. The land and what it produces holds us all in common. The history of agriculture is the history of human development. As people learned how to grow food, they were empowered to end their nomadic way of life, remain in one place and form towns. Agri-tourism is a way to allow people to understand where food comes from, and to meet the farmers who grow the things that we all need, i.e. food, fiber and medicines.</p> <p>Agri- tourism is a way to add more opportunities for visitors to lengthen their stay in Graham County and to increase revenue to our local population. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, U-Pick, farm visits, tours, native/medicinal plant and wildflower walks, and the ever-improving farmers market. The Graham County Farmers Market provides a place for local farmers/growers, home gardeners, crafters, artists, and youth to sell their home grown and handmade things directly to visitors. Programs and demonstrations could be added about Appalachian farm, food and craft traditions.</p> <p>In 2004 an inventory of farmers/growers who are willing to open their farms to the public for special occasions, throughout the growing season or all year long will be established. Other needed support for farmer/growers plans include: assistance with planning and coordination of events to compliment local festivals, creating marketing brochures, maps, flyers and a media network for Agri-tourism events and establishing a website to market local growers' products and activities.</p> <p>Additionally, a partnership with the school and farmers/growers to educate youth about our mountain agricultural and native plant heritage is already in existence. The long-term goals are to preserve our agricultural heritage through our youth, to provide local farmers/growers alternative ways to earn income and to provide heritage tourists with a unique experience in the mountains. Currently our home grown and handmade items are being sold locally, throughout the region, state and shipped to other states.</p>
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<b>Person/Organization Responsible:</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Ransom Cornett	35,000

Action Items:	Resources Required:
Educational Programs Educational Speakers/Storytellers: Adult Programs Youth Programs: 4 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> grades, Earth Sciences, etc. Wildflower Walks: Ramp Festival, Heritage Festival, etc. Attractions: Native Plants, Farm Photography, Mazes Maps to thematically designated locations	15,000
Agricultural and Agri-tourism Programs Agricultural Corridor: Map, Farm tours, U-pick, etc. Farmers Market Blue Ridge Food Ventures, Shared-use kitchen (see SVC) Value Added Product Production Annual Pioneer Wagon Train from Tennessee	20,000

**Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET**

<b>Initiative Title:</b>	Value-Added Agricultural Products
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<b>Project Narrative:</b>	The production of value-added agricultural products is recognized as a valuable asset in helping farmers and food entrepreneurs subsidize their income so that they may continue their agricultural lifestyle and heritage. In addition, it is recognized that value-added agricultural products are often sought by cultural heritage tourists as a tangible element/representation of their experience in the area. This plan recognizes the importance of the development of such home-grown and/or handmade items to Graham County entrepreneurs and tourists alike. The plan also recognizes the importance of branding, packaging and marketing to making value-added agricultural products a profitable and successful endeavor.
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<b>Goal:</b>	Develop, brand, package and market value-added agricultural products
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<b>Person/Organization Responsible:</b>	<b>Cost to Implement:</b>	<b>Estimated Time to Complete:</b>
Smoky Mountain Native Plants Association, Stecoah Valley food Ventures & Others	\$10,000 – initial SMNPA project; others to be determined	One year - SMNPA On-going as new products are developed

<b>Action Items:</b>	<b>Resources Required:</b>	<b>Who's Responsible:</b>
SMNPA Cornmeal & Ramp Products Steocoah Valley Food Ventures & Others	\$10,000 Unknown at this time	Beverly Whitehead Lynn Shields & Others

<b>Performance Measures:</b>	Development of products Development of recognizable brands Development of packaging and labels Development of marketing plan Implementation of marketing plan
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<b>Status:</b>	SMNPA Cornmeal & Ramp Products – Products developed, all other aspects in process at this time. Steocoah Valley Food Ventures – One product developed, others being tested; all other aspects in initial stages at this time. Others – Unknown at this time.
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**Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET**

<b>Initiative Title:</b>	Education
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<b>Project Narrative:</b>	<p>The importance of education is clear throughout this plan. Education has been noted as a priority of the plan and is integral to many, if not all of the initiatives. In fact, due to its importance, education is now being shown as a separate initiative while the individual educational elements remain imbedded in the separate initiative statements.</p> <p>With the goals of preserving our heritage, perpetuating the traditional skills and training local citizens to interact with the visiting public, both youth and adult educational opportunities are important.</p> <p>With education about tourism, conservation, and preservation, our local citizens can reclaim their proud heritage. Both youth and adults may then share their knowledge with tourists, conveying the respect and understanding of the interdependent and interactive relationship between the environment and our culture.</p> <p>A variety of venues and formats will be considered to provide both cultural heritage and natural resource educational opportunities in the future. They may include school and community based classes, programs, workshops, camps and other experiential learning opportunities. Current school based programs include 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade North Carolina history classes, the High school Appalachian Arts program and the Native American Studies Program. Future plans include the expansion of these existing heritage education programs in the school curriculum for youth, as well as expansion of those programs into the adult community - or alternatively, to bring the adults into the schools. Further, we hope to have more local community input into the cultural arts curriculum.</p> <p>Other interesting learning opportunities include a youth internship program and an adult apprenticeship program for the cultural arts. In addition, Stecoah Valley Center perpetuates the traditional talents by teaching skills to youth through the Junior Appalachian Musician (JAM) and Appalachian Arts programs. JAM provides school age youth the opportunity to learn traditional mountain music, while the Appalachian Arts program offers lessons in other art forms such as weaving, pottery and dance. And, adult classes are currently offered in art and weaving.</p> <p>Please refer to the separate initiatives for more detailed explanation of educational opportunities.</p>
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<b>Person/Organization Responsible:</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Brenda Williams	50,000

<b>Action Items:</b>	<b>Resources Required:</b>
Expanded Youth and Community Educational Programs	25,000
New Youth and Community Educational Programs	25,000

**Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET**

<b>Initiative Title:</b>	Marketing
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<b>Project Narrative:</b>	<p>Much support exists for improving the marketing of Graham County as a tourist destination. Citizens would like to create a coordinated marketing effort that expands current sources for marketing and studies the effectiveness of current marketing strategies. In addition, there is a need for a logo or theme that is visible, easily recognized, and that promotes heritage tourism.</p> <p>The first step in this process is the creation of a marketing committee that will work with Travel and Tourism to study existing marketing programs and expand advertising efforts. Selecting an overall theme for heritage tourism must include study as to its appeal to potential visitors and its effectiveness as a marketing tool. Designating a person to work with tourism offices in surrounding counties and states will be important for regional marketing as well. All these initiatives will require the approval and support of the Travel and Tourism board.</p>
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<b>Person/Organization Responsible:</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Claude Burchfield	100,000

Action Items:	Resources Required:
Create a plan to expand marketing efforts	15,000
Develop marketing theme for the county and/or region	15,000
Partner with neighbors to improve and expand marketing efforts	50,000
Work with other committees to add new venues	10,000
Study the effectiveness of current marketing procedures	10,000

**Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET**

Initiative Title:	Cherokee Heritage & Junaluska Museum
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Project Narrative:	<p>Currently, the Junaluska Museum is Graham County's only existing museum. The museum contains information about the history of the Cherokee Nation, the Trail of Tears, biographical information on Junaluska, and information about Cherokee families. The museum does an outstanding job of interpreting the history of the Cherokee people. It has become an important attraction for visitors and locals. As the museum continues to grow and flourish, the need for expansion grows. Funding from the Eastern Band of the Cherokee provides for education and interpretation programs, however, money is needed to fund physical improvements at the museum and grounds.</p>
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Person/Organization Responsible:	Cost
T.J. Holland	220,000

Action Items:	Resources Required:
General Building Improvements Central Heat and Air Conditioning (\$8,000) Electrical Upgrade (\$4,000) and Other project (\$8,000)	20,000
Building expansion to include conference room and lobby	100,000
Exhibit Renovations	40,000
"Fading Voices" Festival	10,000
Protection of Tatum Gap Road Area	50,000

**Blue Ridge National Heritage Area  
PRIORITY INITIATIVE WORKSHEET**

<b>Initiative Title:</b>	Graham County Museum (Local history)
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<b>Project Narrative:</b>	<p>Community members have reported a desire for another museum as well. This museum would depict the history of the area and its people – both Cherokee and those of European descent. Obtaining land and a building to tell the community’s story and house local artifacts and photographs is a priority for the Heritage Society. Until this is accomplished, there is no place to store and protect county treasures. Therefore, developing a plan for establishing a museum, locating potential sites for the museum, securing funding to support the project, and obtaining the education needed to ensure the projects success are of critical importance.</p> <p>The committee recognized the need for further training and education. At this time, there are very few people available within the county who can identify, date, and explain items of interest. Even fewer are available who know the proper procedures for the care and maintenance of museum pieces. Society members need training on how to identify historically valuable pieces and how to care for the items that would eventually be placed in the museum.</p> <p>Compiling local history is another major concern for the group. Collecting items of importance and family heirlooms is important because many are being lost forever. Some older citizens are even asking if there is a safe and secure place for their valued property.</p> <p>Collecting local stories and legends before they are lost is goal for the group as well. One method for obtaining information about the old ways and recording stories is through oral history. In this project, elders are interviewed and their responses are videotaped. Copies of the video are kept in storage and one copy is provided to the family. It is hoped that the information from these interviews will eventually be used for educational purposes. Raising funds to support the initiative, increasing the number of volunteers, and locating a consultant with the expertise to edit the collection in meaningful ways are top priorities.</p> <p>Although Graham County does not currently have a museum of its own, some old photographs, artifacts, and museum displays pertaining to the community can be seen at Stecoah Valley Center. The Center has a display on Tsali, a Cherokee who was martyred for his people, and on the Cherokee Indians. Future plans include a display on the Scots-Irish in the mountains of western North Carolina. The Center plans to add displays that interpret the area, its culture, and its people for visitors.</p>
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<b>Person/Organization Responsible:</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Carolyn Stewart	782,000

<b>Action Items:</b>	<b>Resources Required:</b>
Secure facility to house Graham County Museum and artifacts to display	750,000
Obtain training and education about identifying and preserving historic objects	25,000
Compile local history	7,000