



June 30, 2017

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

**Dale Neal**

**828-298-5330, Ext. 308**

**[dale.neal@blueridgeheritage.com](mailto:dale.neal@blueridgeheritage.com)**

## **Blue Ridge Craft Trails Project Plans Listening Sessions**

People committed to Western North Carolina's rich craft heritage can help create a new craft trail across our mountains. The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area seeks ideas and suggestions to develop the Blue Ridge Craft Trails over the next few years.

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area's latest trail initiative will encourage cultural tourism and strengthen rural economies by promoting the region's many craft artists, craft schools, local arts businesses and venues. The online project promises to link traditional and contemporary artisans with more visitors to studios and galleries.

Seven listening sessions have been scheduled across the region. Craft artists, gallery owners, arts groups, businesses and anyone interested are invited to attend and offer their comments. Meetings will be held 2-4 p.m. on the following dates and locations:

- July 13 - Blowing Rock Art & History Museum; Blowing Rock
- July 18 - Museum of the Cherokee Indian, Cherokee
- August 1 - Tryon Arts & Crafts, Tryon
- August 3 - Yadkin Valley Cultural Arts Center, Yadkinville
- August 8 - John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown
- August 24 - Penland School of Crafts, Penland
- August 31 - Southern Highland Craft Guild, Folk Art Center, Asheville

"We envision the Blue Ridge Craft Trails of Western North Carolina as an online roadmap to guide visitors through our rich craft heritage and connect personally with artisans in our mountain communities," said Angie Chandler, executive director of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area.

"We're building on the pioneering work of HandMade In America in the 1990s, which started the original Craft Heritage Trails of WNC. We want to update that guide for the Internet age and provide new opportunities for the next generation of crafters, collectors and visitors," Chandler said.

The professional craft industry generates more than \$206 million in annual business across 25 Western North Carolina counties, according to a 2008 economic study.

195 Hemphill Knob Road • Asheville, NC 28803  
Phone: (828) 298-5330 • Fax: (828) 298-9507  
[www.BlueRidgeHeritage.com](http://www.BlueRidgeHeritage.com)  
[www.BlueRidgeMusicNC.com](http://www.BlueRidgeMusicNC.com)

The Blue Ridge Craft Trails project is funded with a \$90,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission and contributions from the North Carolina Arts Council and WNC Community Foundation.

To register for specific meetings, go to the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area website at [www.blueridgeheritage.com](http://www.blueridgeheritage.com) and click on the link on the homepage or call Amy Hollifield at 298-5330, ext. 303.

Authorized by Congress in 2003, the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area covers 25 Western North Carolina counties, and remains the only regional organization dedicated to the stewardship of five Appalachian cultural legacies - craft, music, natural beauty, agriculture and Cherokee heritage.

*National Heritage Areas are locally-governed institutions that encourage residents, non-profit groups, government agencies, and private partners to work together in planning and implementing programs that preserve and celebrate America's defining landscapes. The views and conclusions contained in this news release are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the U.S. Government. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the U.S. Government.*

**-End-**