



Allegheny Foundation Helps Forest Service Curb Nuisance Bear Problem

Each year, over 11,000 visitors flock to the Allegheny Highlands to enjoy the many recreational opportunities offered at Lake Moomaw, a 2530-acre lake surrounded on all sides by George Washington National Forest. Most visitors are welcome, but as the local bear population has become more and more habituated to the food trash generated by unsuspecting campers, boaters, and picnickers, the likelihood of dangerous bear-human conflict has increased dramatically. Fortunately, the U.S. Forest Service reports there is an immediate and permanent solution to this escalating problem.



A \$6000 matching grant awarded by the Allegheny Foundation has allowed for the installation of eight wildlife-resistant dumpsters, six at the Morris Hill campground and the Coles Point recreation area at Lake Moomaw, and two at the Longdale recreation area. The project is a collaboration between the U.S. Forest Service and the Adopt-a-Dumpster Program developed by Bear Trust International in Missoula, Montana, an organization founded in 1999 to help protect the wild bear population through conservation, education, and wild bear research and management.

“Solving the problem of nuisance bears and other wildlife on public lands will make an enormous difference in how bears are managed and how people enjoy living and recreating in the Allegheny Highlands,” said Melissa Reynolds-Hogland, executive director of Bear Trust International.

The Adopt-a-Dumpster program was implemented in 2007 to help rural recreation areas address the issue of habituated bear populations. Bears are resourceful animals with a keen sense of smell, and will quickly identify trash left behind by humans as an easily accessible food source. Bears that learn to associate humans with food lose their natural fear of people, and may begin breaking into tents, campers, and other vehicles. Because such destructive behavior poses a serious safety concern, most bears that become habituated to food trash are captured and euthanized.

“The slogan *A Fed Bear is a Dead Bear* is an unfortunate reality when bears have access to food trash,” said Reynolds-Hogland. “But the solution is simple: Remove the food source and the bears move on. Wildlife-resistant dumpsters aren’t glamorous, but they are very highly effective.”

Reynolds-Hogland credits Sharon Mohny of the U.S. Forest Service with helping to facilitate the Adopt-a-Dumpster program in the Alleghany Highlands, and with identifying compatible funding sources like The Alleghany Foundation.

“The Forest Service actually began the installation of wildlife-resistant dumpsters around Lake Moomaw in 2007, but the project stalled due to lack of funding,” said Mohny. “After learning about the Adopt-a-Dumpster program, we contacted Bear Trust International. Thanks to their partnership, we received \$3000 from a private donor to match the \$3000 pledged by the U.S. Forest Service, but it wasn’t enough. Bear Trust then helped us approach The Alleghany Foundation. It’s astonishing to me that we have an organization like The Alleghany Foundation committing resources to bettering our community. Their support has been absolutely critical to our ability to move this project forward.”

Grant money received from The Alleghany Foundation will also assist in the development of educational materials for Forest Service personnel and educators to use to raise public awareness of bear biology and our human responsibility to store trash properly. Reynolds-Hogland stated that Bear Trust International expects the combination of public education and wildlife-proof dumpsters to result in the Lake Moomaw recreational areas becoming completely bear resistant. “We hope to make it our showcase site.”

Beth Webb, executive director of The Alleghany Foundation, stated that safe recreational opportunities are an important part of the quality of life residents can expect to experience in a community. “Our quality of life in the Alleghany Highlands is closely tied to the land and natural resources like Lake Moomaw. The Alleghany Foundation is pleased to support an effort that not only respects the natural habitat of our black bear population, but helps to ensure the safety of our citizens.”

Since its inception, the foundation has granted over \$26 million to the following 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations with the purpose of improving the quality of life in the Alleghany Highlands:

- Alleghany County
- Alleghany County Parks and Recreation
- Alleghany County Public Schools
- Alleghany County Sheriff's Office
- Alleghany County United Fire and Rescue Association
- Alleghany Health District
- Alleghany Highlands Arts & Crafts Center
- Alleghany Highlands Arts Council
- Alleghany Highlands Community Services Board
- Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Authority
- Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation
- Alleghany Highlands Free Clinic
- Alleghany Highlands Genealogical Society
- Alleghany Highlands YMCA
- Alleghany Highlands Youth Soccer Association
- Alleghany Historical Society

Alleghany Humane Society
Alleghany Mountain Radio
American Diabetes Association
American Red Cross
Appalfoiks of America
Art Museum of Western Virginia
Bath County
Bath County Health Department
Bath County Historical Society
Bear Trust International
Blue Ridge Public Television
Boiling Springs Elementary School
Boiling Springs Fire Department
C.O.P.E.
C & O Historical Society
Callaghan Elementary School PTO
Charles P. Jones Memorial Library
City of Covington
Clifton Forge Little League
Clifton Forge Main Street
Clifton Forge Nursery School
Clifton Forge Public Library
Clifton Forge Volunteer Fire Department
Covington City Schools
Covington Fire Department
Covington Rescue Squad
Dabney S. Lancaster Community College
Diabetes Education Support Group
Falling Spring Elementary School PTO
Falling Spring Fire Department
Falling Spring Rescue Squad
Greater Alleghany Highlands School Health Consortium
Jackson River Enterprises
Jackson river Technical Center
League of Older Americans
Mill Mountain Theatre
Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District
Mountain View Elementary School PTO
Rockbridge Area Community Services Board
Safehome Systems
Science Museum of Western Virginia
Scott Hill Foundation, Inc.
Sharon Elementary School PTO
Sharon Volunteer Fire Department
Shenandoah Autism Center
Southwest Virginia AHEC
Southwest Virginia Second Harvest Foodbank
Special Olympics
Total Action Against Poverty
Town of Clifton
Forge
Town of Iron Gate
Unified Human Services Transportation System (RADAR)
West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine
Western Virginia Emergency Medical Service Council