

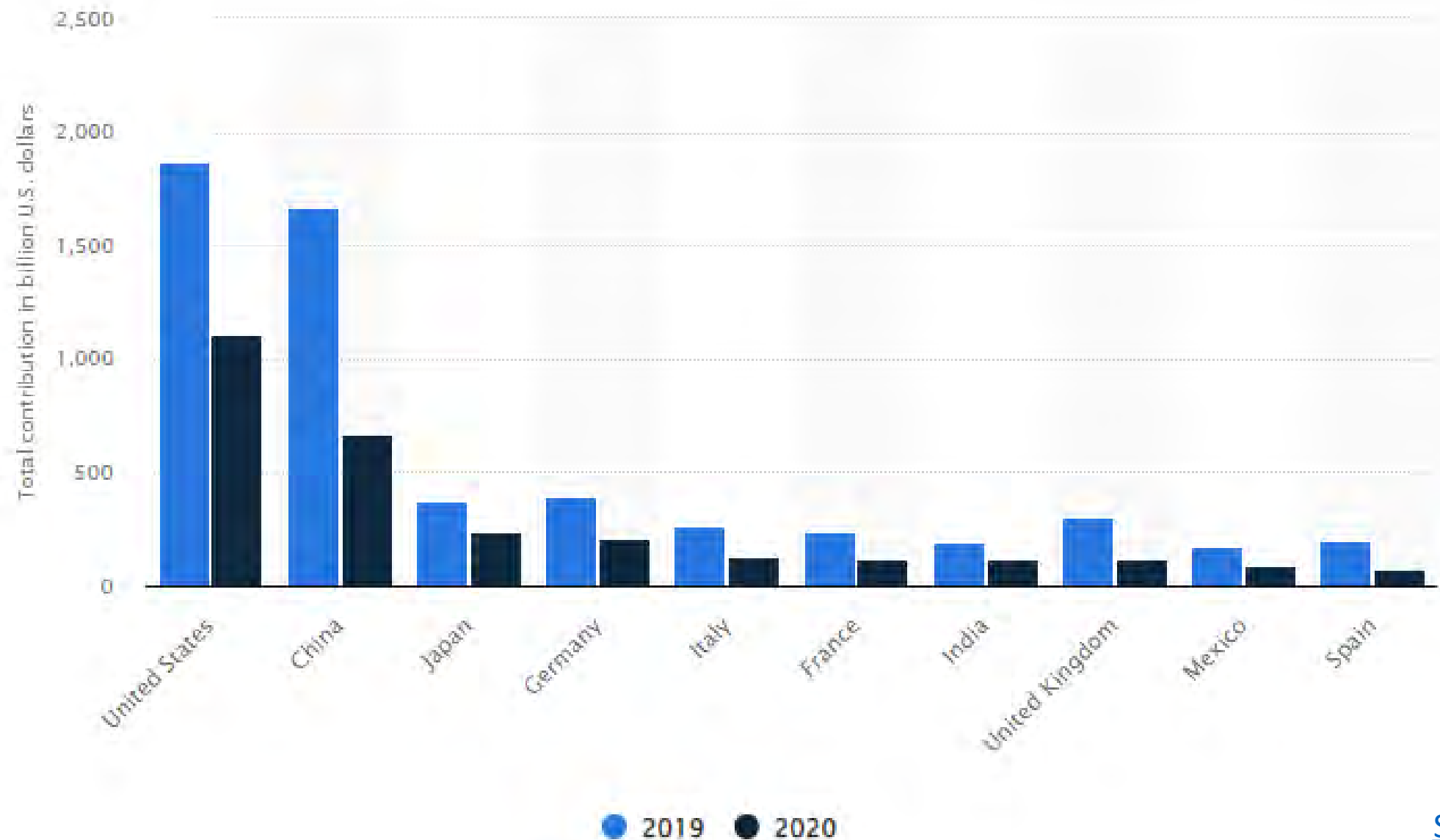
Mon Forest Towns Partnership

A Review

“Overall, the United States' travel and tourism industries contributed, in total, the largest amount to GDP out of any countries worldwide, with a total contribution of 1.1 trillion U.S. dollars in 2020. China placed second in the ranking, with a contribution of 667 billion U.S. dollars.”

Published by [Statista Research Department](#), Oct 8, 2021

Total Contribution of Travel and Tourism Industry to Global GDP



About Mon Forest Towns

Today, an approximate 1.3 million visitors come to the Monongahela National Forest each year. It is a place where visitors can enjoy breathtaking vistas, peaceful country roads, gently flowing streams, and glimpses of many plants and animals. The MNF was established in 1920 and encompasses one of the most ecologically diverse areas in the United States, with elevations from just under 1,000 feet to 4,863 feet above sea level.

Dispersed recreation opportunities abound for hiking, backpacking, fishing, hunting, mountain biking, climbing, and kayaking. The IMBA Ride Center in Marlinton brings mountain bike riders from all over America to its international events. See our interactive map for the types of activities you love the most. Our towns wait to welcome you as you need rest, lodging or a cool drink and invite you to special events you can find at the county visitors bureaus such as those at Randolph, Pendleton, Tucker, Pocahontas and Greenbrier County.

For media inquiries, contact Cara Rose at crose@pocahontascountywv.com



The Monongahela National Forest, in partnership with West Virginia University and USDA Rural Development, is bringing diverse stakeholders together to create a shared recreation vision for the region.

Source: [Rural Development Process | Public Interest Design | West Virginia University \(wvu.edu\)](#)



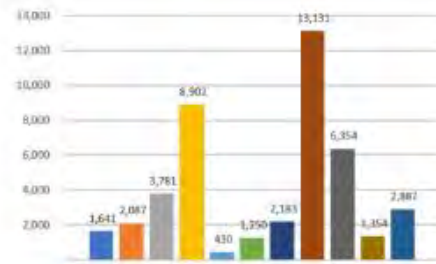
Establishing a Shared Vision for Change

Our vision is to help community stakeholders invest in a shared recreation resource to generate positive outcomes for the health and vitality of this region.



Mapping the Landscape

Analysis of baseline data to identify key issues and gaps, through completion of a community assessment report and recreation economies asset map.



Participatory Research

Identifying indicators applicable to recreation economies, measuring performance indicators, and sharing an approach to success.

Regional Branding & Identity

A regional identity system and style guide were developed that allow residents an opportunity to be part of the forest story.

Business and Entrepreneurial Development

The Mon Forest Business Initiative offers business advice and funding assistance for professional services to any businesses located within the 10 counties of the MNF.



○ Recreation Infrastructure Development

Creating resources and new opportunities in support of the state's recreation economy.



○ What's Next

Looking to the future: defining goals, strategy, and an action plan

LINKING UP FOR QUALITY OF LIFE

Across the million-acre Monongahela National Forest collaborative partnerships with gateway communities are improving communications and jumpstarting recreation economies.



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COMMUNITY ASSESSMENTS

Goals for your community that you would hope to achieve through participation in the MNF Recreation Economies initiative

- Identify assets
- Improve community access to MNF
- Improved branding and wayfinding
- Improved local knowledge of area resources
- Improved signage to key recreation areas
- Collaborative CVB marketing across the region
- Identifying barriers
- Change mentality and be more open to working in a positive direction and allowing change
- Improved networking and communication with Forest Service personnel
- **Move forward together to improve**



COMMUNITY ASSESSMENTS

- **Tourism Management**
- Community Interaction
- **Transportation and Signage**
- **Community Information**
- **Hospitality**
- Aesthetics
- Tourism Assets
- Environment
- **Tourist Education**
- **Services**
- Accessibility
- Visitor Motives
- Main Downtown Business Area
- **Target Market(s)**
- Strengths, **Challenges, Opportunities**, and Goals

Tables

1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Somewhat Disagree	4= Somewhat Agree	5= Agree	6 = Strongly Agree
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Overall Mean (below 3 indicates collective challenge)
Standard Dev. (low indicates similar responses, high indicates varied responses)

Comments



Examples from Community Assessment Report

Tourism Management

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Please answer on a scale of

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Somewhat Disagree

4 = Somewhat Agree

5 = Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

Location	1. Our community has a shared vision for tourism	2. An organization exists with a primary mission to market tourism	3. Our community effectively markets its tourism assets	4. An organization exists with a primary mission to manage tourism development	5. Our community has a tourism development plan in place	6. Our community understands its visitors' needs and preferences	7. Partnerships exist in the community to support tourism development strategies	8. Our community partners with organizations outside of our community to develop regional tourism opportunities	9. Our community supports entrepreneurship and small business development	10. Our community encourages entrepreneurship and small business development
Thomas	4.00	5.00	5.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Davis	2.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	6.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	5.00	5.00
Parsons	4.00	2.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	4.00
Elkins	5.00	6.00	3.00	6.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Petersburg	2.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	3.00
Franklin	2.00	5.00	2.00	5.00	4.00	1.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	4.00
Marlinton	5.00	6.00	6.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	6.00	5.00	4.00	4.00
White Sulphur	6.00	6.00	6.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00
Cowen	4.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	2.00	4.00	1.00	4.00	5.00	5.00
Richwood	3.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Total	Mean	3.70	4.30	3.70	3.40	2.90	3.40	4.00	4.60	4.80
	Std. Deviation	1.418	2.111	1.636	2.119	1.729	1.265	1.491	0.966	0.632

Examples from Community Assessment Report

Community Interaction

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Please answer on a scale of

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Somewhat Disagree

4 = Somewhat Agree

5 = Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

	1. Local residents support tourism	2. There is a segment of the local population that doesn't support tourism	3. Local residents are actively involved in tourism	4. Tourism benefits the community	5. Local residents value and want to preserve their unique identity	6. Sites of local importance are preserved for locals and not overrun with visitors	7. Local craftspeople produce and sell items	8. Local craftspeople teach their skills to interested visitors	9. Resorts support local businesses	
Location										
Thomas	4	6	5	5	6	5	6	2	2	
Davis	5	6	5	6	5	5	5	5	5	
Parsons	4	5	4	5	6	4	4	3	1	
Elkins	5		5	6	5	4	6	4	4	
Petersburg	2	6	4	6	6	5	5	2	5	
Franklin	2	6	1	5	2	5	3	2	4	
Marlinton	5	5	5	6	6	5	6	4	4	
White Sulphur	4	1	3	6	6	5	5	4	3	
Cowen	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	2	
Richwood	4	4	1	6	6	5	5	2		
Total	Mean	4.00	4.89	3.70	5.60	5.30	4.80	5.00	3.20	3.33
	Std. Dev.	1.155	1.616	1.567	0.516	1.252	0.422	0.943	1.135	1.414

Examples from Community Assessment Report

Transportation and Signage

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Please answer on a scale of

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Somewhat Disagree

4 = Somewhat Agree

5 = Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

Location		1. The area destinations are easily accessible	2. A forest/ community gateway exists	3. Directional signs are properly located to get you to points of interest	4. Wayfinding signage exists	5. Street signs are well placed	6. Visitors would feel compelled to stop if they were randomly passing through a community	7. GPS and online directions are accurate	8. Public transportation or shuttle service options are available to get to activities/ services	9. Pedestrian travel (walking & biking) is encouraged
Thomas		4.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	5.00	2.00	1.00	5.00
Davis		6.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	1.00	3.00
Parsons		5.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	6.00
Elkins		2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	3.00
Petersburg		5.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	2.00
Franklin		1.00	1.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	4.00
Marlinton		5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	1.00	4.00	3.00
White Sulphur		1.00	6.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	6.00	1.00	5.00	5.00
Cowen		2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	2.00
Richwood		2.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	4.00
Total	Mean	3.30	3.30	3.10	3.10	3.20	3.20	2.10	1.90	3.70
	Std. Deviation	1.889	1.767	1.595	1.524	1.229	1.619	0.994	1.449	1.337

Examples from Community Assessment Report

Community Information

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Please answer on a scale of

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Somewhat Disagree

4= Somewhat Agree

5= Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

Location		1. It is easy to find a visitor center	2. Visitor center hours are conducive to visitors	3. It is easy to find a community/ regional tourist brochure	4. It is easy to find a map of the town or community	5. Information booths/kiosks exist to help tourists locate attractions and services	6. A community/ regional tourism website exists to help visitors find information	7. Social media is utilized to help visitors find information about attractions and services	8. the destination has a mobile application that is downloadable to help travelers navigate the area	9. the destination has a strong brand
Thomas		1.00	5.00	2.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	5.00	1.00	4.00
Davis		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	6.00	5.00	3.00	6.00
Parsons		2.00	2.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	1.00	3.00
Elkins		4.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	2.00	5.00	4.00	2.00	4.00
Petersburg		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	6.00	1.00	3.00
Franklin		4.00	2.00	6.00	2.00	2.00	4.00	6.00	1.00	4.00
Marlinton		6.00	5.00	5.00	2.00	3.00	6.00	6.00	1.00	6.00
White Sulphur		6.00	6.00	5.00	3.00	2.00	6.00	6.00	1.00	5.00
Cowen		1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	4.00	5.00	1.00	2.00
Richwood		3.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	4.00	1.00	1.00
Total	Mean	3.70	3.70	4.00	3.30	2.60	4.70	5.10	1.30	3.80
	Std. Deviation	1.889	1.947	1.700	1.337	1.430	1.252	0.876	0.675	1.619

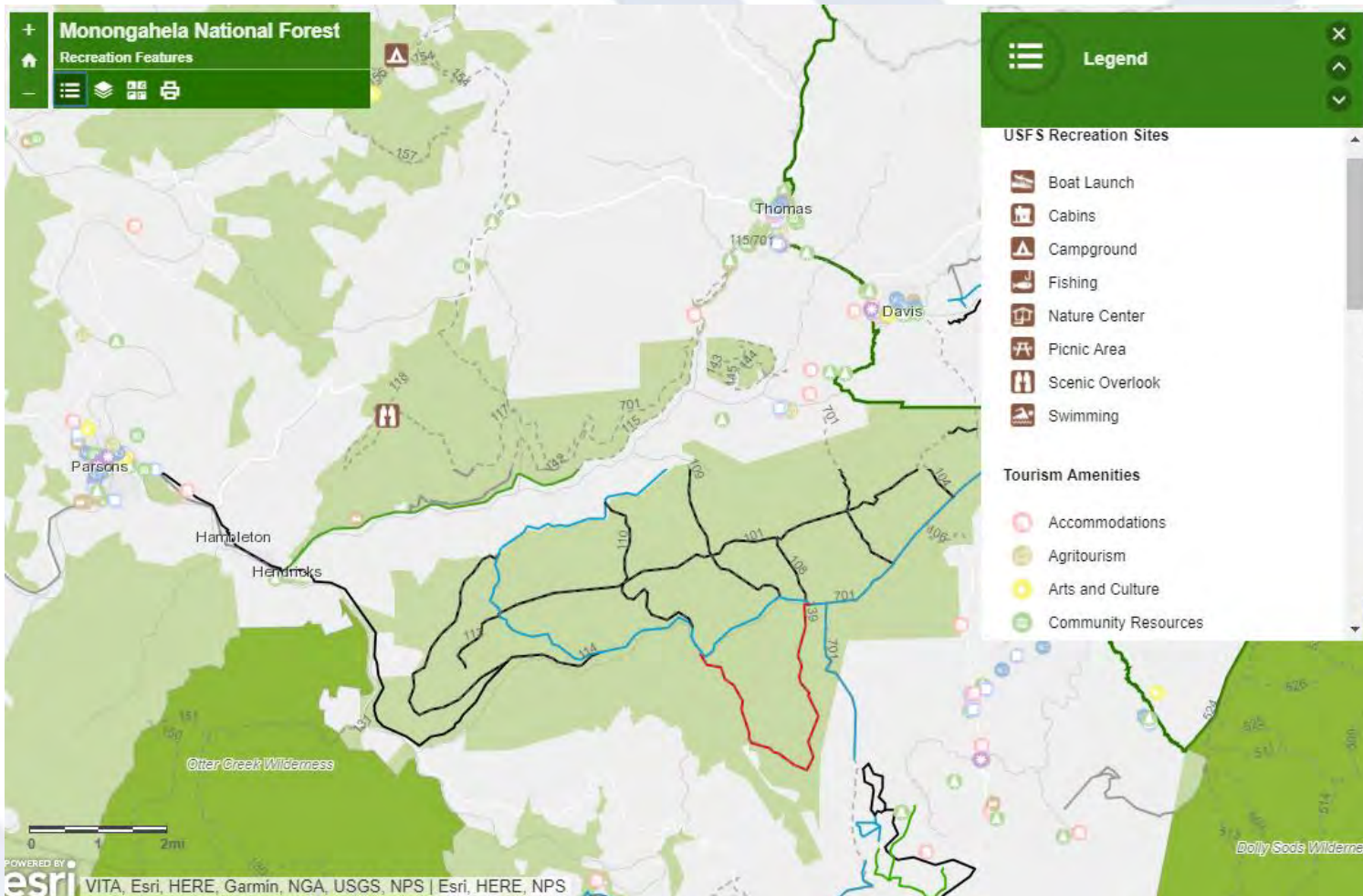
MFT ASSET MAP & WEBSITE

Tasks

1. Data development: tourism amenity points
2. Data development: recreational features
3. Web map development: create enhanced interactive online map to highlight tourism amenities and unique features
4. Web site development: complete user experience incorporating web map and related content



DRAFT WEB MAP APPLICATION (BASIC)



Current Layers:

Tourism amenities (incomplete)
USFS recreation sites
USFS trails
Biking, hiking, XC trails
Whitewater stream trails
Wilderness areas
Recreation areas
USFS Surface ownership

Functions:

Turn layers on/off
Click on feature; view popup
Print map
Change basemap layer

URL: <https://bit.ly/2KJoCfj>



TASK DETAILS: DATA DEVELOPMENT

- Tourism amenity development
 - Includes lodging, accommodations, recreation sites, restaurants, services etc.
 - Data includes address, phone, email, website, photos if available
 - Considered complete for some counties (Pocahontas, Tucker)
 - Incomplete for others (especially Nicholas, Preston, Randolph)
 - New funding will allow us to complete & verify existing data for Monongahela National Forest & surrounding counties
 - New funding will allow for website integration



MONFORESTTOWNS.COM

Home Page



Explore Page



Community Page



IMPACT INDICATORS

Economic and Quality of Life Indicators for Monongahela National Forest Communities

Daniel Eades and Doug Arbogast
Associate Professors and Extension Specialists

West Virginia University Extension Service
PO Box 6031, Morgantown, WV 26505-6031

March 2019



INDICATORS TO TRACK

- Employment and Industry (by sector)
- Travel expenditures
- Travel related tax revenue
- Hotel/motel tax collections
- Employment and earnings (by sector)
- Population change
- Educational attainment
- Income
- Second homes
- Business trends and impacts



MNF Rec Economies Business Development Initiative

Woodlands Development Group & Natural Capital Investment Fund – Nonprofit Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs)

Goal: diversify and advance the local economies of the Mon National Forest gateway communities by strengthening and capitalizing on the area's natural assets by providing **targeted business services, technical assistance, and access to capital.**

\$452,500 = Appalachian Regional Commission – WV State

\$452,500 = U.S. Economic Development Administration

\$300,000 = Benedum Foundation

\$50,000 = USDA Rural Business Development Grant

= \$1,255,000



**Woodlands
Development Group**



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DEVELOPING A COMMON IDENTITY

- Working with community and Forest Service, a brand would be **co-designed that residents could see as opportunities to be part of the forest story** and allow for **cooperation among communities** with a vision of offering a week of experiences for visitors that allow for towns who identify with nearby attractions to be **recognized as unique within a trail of linked opportunities.**
- <https://publicinterestdesign.sandbox.wvu.edu/mon-forest-towns/style-manual>



More Information:

- The Process - [Rural Development Process | Public Interest Design | West Virginia University \(wvu.edu\)](#)
- ALSO, check out the remaining documents to see how the Mon Forest Partnership completed their community assessment, determined impact indicators, and created a brand.