

Blue Ridge Heritage Area Federal Designation

In 2003 Congress designated 25 counties in Western North Carolina as the Blue Ridge Heritage Area. A National Heritage Area is a region in which residents, businesses, and local governments have joined together to conserve and celebrate heritage and special landscapes. Projects and programs in tourism, education, and economic development will be focused around the region's distinctive agri-heritage, craft, music, and Cherokee culture.

In 2002 Heritage Area legislation was introduced in The U.S. House and Senate. The Bill was in June 2002 by representatives of HandMade in America and Advantage West, a regional economic development agency. Passage of H.B. 1759 in November 2003 gave designation to The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area and provision of \$500,000 for first year funding.