



Virginia Trail Networking

Goals and Strategies



2009 Greenways and Trails Task Force Summary

Connecting our Commonwealth

Virginia is blessed with a wealth of scenic landscapes unmatched anywhere else on the East Coast. Trails woven throughout these landscapes may well be the best way to experience and explore our commonwealth.

Trails allow access in many forms – by foot, bicycle, horseback or even canoe, kayak or boat. Each allows the user to enjoy his surroundings at his or her own pace. It has been said that trails are the front porch of the 21st century.

Over the past decade, the number and sophistication of community-driven trail projects has grown as has local awareness of the value of trails. Planners and enthusiasts will tout many assets and attributes of trails – their role in attracting tourists and the revenue they bring; their appeal in connecting historical, scenic and cultural resources; their utility as alternate transportation; their health value – promoting physical, mental and spiritual well-being. They appeal to a wide variety of demographic groups, become community showplaces, and are important in protecting our environments and landscapes. But most important – and interestingly enough, among their most overlooked attributes – are the joy, the fun and the recreational value they bring to local residents.

In January 2008, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation established the Greenways and Trails Task Force to develop a strategy for an interconnected system of long-distance trails in the state. Its strategy focuses on the 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan's call for the establishment of six major "trunkline," or long-distance trails. One of these trails, the Appalachian Trail, is complete, and several are under development. Developed with

numerous regional governments, local planners and trail interest groups, the strategy includes an inventory of existing conditions, a vision for the network and nine action items.



**A copy of the full strategy can be found at:
www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/documents/trailstrat.pdf.**

Virginia's Trail Network Goals

Here are the five goals that will drive future actions and provide overall guidance for development of the system.

Goal 1: Enhance access to the outdoors through the development of a trails network that promotes healthy recreation and connects citizens, including children and families, to Virginia's diverse open space and natural landscapes.

Goal 2: Improve linkages between communities and key tourist destinations in both rural and urban areas to promote regional outdoor recreation and heritage tourism initiatives, support local economies, and provide economic stimulus for small-business start-ups and entrepreneurial expansion.

Goal 3: Create the foundation of a statewide system of interconnected open-space corridors through which trails traverse in order to support long-term protection of Virginia's "green infrastructure" and the ecological services it provides.

Goal 4: Integrate trails as a critical component in Virginia's transportation infrastructure in order to provide efficient and convenient non-motorized connections to neighborhoods, schools, community facilities and employment centers.

Goal 5: Educate citizens about the trail network's social, ecological, transportation and wellness benefits, and foster educational pursuits through environmental research, multi-cultural programs and "outdoor classrooms."



Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network

Legend

- State Parks
- State Forests
- State Natural Area Preserves (some restrictions)
- State Wildlife Management Areas (some restrictions)
- DGIF Boat Ramps in trail corridor
- The Nature Conservancy Preserves
- Federal Lands with recreational use
- Regional Trails existing or under development
- Cities
- Interstates
- Appalachian Trail

Proposed Trail Corridor

- East Coast Greenway
- Beaches to Bluegrass Trail
- Great Eastern Trail
- Potomac Heritage National
- James River Heritage Trail
- Planning Districts



For more information on state resources, visit the following Web sites:
 State Parks--www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/
 State Natural Area Preserves--www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/natural_area_preserves/index.shtml
 State Forests--www.dof.virginia.gov/stforest/index.htm
 State Wildlife Management Areas-- www.dgif.virginia.gov/wmas/

Today, as population growth and development patterns continue to change Virginia's landscape, the need for places to walk, bicycle, horseback ride and be physically active is more important than ever.

S
il
l Scenic Trail
l



For more information on federal resources in Virginia, visit these Web sites:
National Parks--home.nps.gov/applications/parksearch/state.cfm?st=va
National Forests--www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/
National Fish and Wildlife Refuges--www.fws.gov/refuges/refugeLocatorMaps/Virginia.html
For other federal recreation areas, search www.recreation.gov/

Trail locations, as of fall 2009 on this map are not exact or to scale. This map should not be used for navigation or trip planning.
http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/documents/trailstrat.pdf

Long-distance Trails Action Strategy

While each of the six long-distance trails is unique, there are certain common needs. The following nine actions provide a focused strategy to address existing challenges and support development of each trail, as well as the system as a whole.

Action 1 Establish an interagency work group to coordinate between agencies for the planning, construction and maintenance of Virginia's multi-use corridors. This committee will also be a clearinghouse of resources and contacts.

Action 2. Identify creative funding strategies that leverage resources to fund the development of trails, including public-private partnerships, incentives and entrepreneurial initiatives.

Action 3. Complete detailed trail alignment studies for each long-distance trail, including an assessment of alternatives to close the gaps, and cost estimates for trail design and construction.

Action 4. Establish a coordination entity for each trail, or enhance the efforts of an already existing coordinator, to ensure effective communication among existing and potential partners.



Action 5. Develop a trail inventory process, and database maintenance protocol, to maintain up-to-date information on trail development, and work with local agencies to build the database and monitor progress.

Action 6. Update the DCR Greenways and Trails Toolbox with the most current trail development standards and guidelines, best management practices, and case studies of successful methods and approaches. Make this available on the DCR website.

Action 7. Develop an integrated approach to promote and market trail and greenway values and benefits.

Action 8. Develop system wide sign standards to assist with way finding and to ensure a consistent brand for the network.

Action 9. Convene statewide conferences, regional workshops and targeted training to expand expertise, disseminate information on standards and best practices, and foster communication and networking among trail interests.



How Do I Participate?

**Listed below are the contacts or
Web sites for each of the long-distance trails.**

Virginia Trunkline Trails:

Appalachian Trail Conservancy	www.appalachiantrail.org
Appalachian NST	www.nps.gov/appa
East Coast Greenway Alliance	www.greenway.org
Great Eastern Trail Association	www.greateastertrail.net
Potomac Appalachian Trail Club	www.patc.net
Potomac Heritage Trail Association	www.potomactrail.org
Potomac Heritage NST	www.npg.gov/pohe
James River Heritage Trail	www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/trailjrh.shtml
Beaches to Bluegrass	www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/trailb2b.shtml

The Task Force gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. www.nps.gov/rtca.

Funding for the printing of this brochure was provided by the USDA Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program through the Virginia Department of Forestry.



Support provided by

