

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth



Virginia Greenways and Trails Task Force – Final Report

Prepared by the Virginia Greenways and Trails Task Force

October 21, 2009

Virginia’s Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

Preface.....	4
I. Introduction	6
A. Purpose of the Plan	6
B. Trail Definition: What is a Trail?.....	6
C. Greenways and Trails Task Force.....	8
D. Virginia’s Trail Network Goals	8
E. Description of Trail Users	8
F. Study Limitations.....	9
II. Planning Process	12
A. Trail Inventory and Needs Assessment.....	12
B. Trails Vision and Mapping Workshop, October 2008	13
C. Regional Community Input Meetings and Other Events	14
D. Completion of Trails Action Strategy and Next Steps.....	14
III. Assessment of Existing Conditions	15
A. Trail Development Needs, Issues and Opportunities.....	15
1. Partnerships and Funding.....	15
2. Outreach and Education.....	16
3. Local Planning and Land Use Policy.....	16
4. Technical Resources for Trail Design and Management.....	16
B. Inventory and Status of Trail Segments	17
1. Description of Trail Facility Types.....	18
2. Status of Virginia’s Long-distance Trail System.....	19
IV. Long-distance Trails Findings and Recommendations.....	19
A. Appalachian National Scenic Trail	19
B. Beaches to Bluegrass Trail.....	21
C. East Coast Greenway	22
D. Great Eastern Trail.....	23
E. James River Heritage Trail.....	24
F. Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail	25
V. Implementation	29
A. Long-distance Trails Action Strategy	29
B. Partnership Roles in Completing the Long-distance Trails	30
Conclusion	32
Long-Distance Trail Network Map.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
ATTACHMENTS.....	34
Attachment A. Excerpt from the 2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey and.....	35
2006 DCR Trail Survey of Local and Regional Governments	35
Attachment B. List of Meetings, Workshop, and Outreach Events.....	40
Attachment C. Potential Long-distance Trail Planning Partners and Web sites.....	41
Attachment D. List of Resources	44
Attachment E. Statewide Trail Organization and Funding in Nearby States	45
Attachment F. Existing Recreation Opportunities as of September 1, 2009	49
Attachment G. Long-distance Trail Action Plan Template	52

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

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Virginia Greenways and Trails Task Force

Sally Aungier, Virginia Horse Council
Laura Belleville, Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Steve Bevington, East Coast Greenway Alliance
David Brickley, East Coast Greenway Alliance
Don Briggs, Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail
Tom Johnson, Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, Great Eastern Trail Association
Ursula Lemanski, National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program
Nathan Lott, Virginia Conservation Network
Stephen Murray, Vice Chair, DCR Board
Jack Noll, Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Kimberly Perry, BikeWalk Virginia
Doug Pickford, Conservation Concepts, LLC
Sandra Tanner, Virginia Tourism Corp.
Allen Turnbull, Virginia Odysseys, LLC
Aimee Vosper and Debbie Spiliotopoulos, Northern Virginia Regional Commission
Ginny Williams and Peter Irvine, US Forest Service

Commonwealth of Virginia, Agency Representatives

Russ Baxter, Deputy Director, Department of Conservation and Recreation
John Davy, Director, Planning and Recreation Resources, DCR
Theresa Layman, Environmental Program Manager, State Parks Division, DCR
Robert Munson, Planning Bureau Manager, DCR
Jennifer Wampler, Trails Coordinator, DCR
Janit Llewellyn, Environmental Program Planner (Blueways), DCR
Synthia Waymack, Grants Administrator, DCR
Gary Waugh, Public Relations Manager, DCR

David Whitehurst, Jeff Trollinger and Lou Verner, Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Paul Revell, Department of Forestry
Jakob Helmboldt, Department of Transportation

Preface

Over the past decade, community-driven trail projects have become more numerous and sophisticated, as local awareness of the value of trails has grown. Across Virginia, local governments have acknowledged the need for trails to help combat sedentary lifestyles, to provide the infrastructure for non-motorized transportation, to attract tourism and sustainable economic development, and to strengthen communities. Regional governments have also made great strides in connecting these local trails into regional systems. Emerging technologies have increased both the ability to map a statewide network of trails and the responsibility to ensure that these facilities are geographically dispersed and available to all.

The 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan called for the establishment of six major trunkline trails that would provide a framework of long-distance trails across the Commonwealth. The concept of an interconnected long-distance trail system was first recognized in the 1974 Virginia Outdoor Plan, which stated "the objective of state trails is to connect historic areas, parks and recreational areas, scenic spots, wildlife areas and natural areas, as well as to provide exercise, satisfy wanderlust and maintain metropolitan open space."

As transportation costs increase and concern for public health continues to grow, the demand for trails has exploded, along with the need for inexpensive, "close to home" family recreation. The 2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey (VOS) confirmed that walking for pleasure is the most popular recreational pursuit in the state. In addition, the survey found that one-quarter of the 20 most popular recreational activities in Virginia take place on trails. State and local governments reported that completion of a statewide trail system was one of the most pressing outdoor recreation needs in Virginia (Appendix A).

In recent years, trail interests are working more closely with health professionals and other non-traditional partners, to address the complex challenge of cardiovascular disease and the youth-obesity epidemic. Mission Readiness, a newly formed group spearheaded by retired military leaders, has raised concern over a recent Pentagon study that found 27 percent of young Americans are too overweight to join the military. The report states:

"Nearly a third (32 percent) of all young people have health problems - other than their weight - that will keep them from serving. When weight problems are added in with the other health problems, over half of young adults cannot join because of health issues.¹"

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, are more important than ever.

Advances have also been made in the past several years to better understand the relationship between landscape connectivity and the sustainability of human and natural systems. Connectivity strategies, including trails and greenways as components of green infrastructure networks, have become more important to state and federal decision-makers particularly in relationship to climate change and energy development policies. This trend suggests that support for trails may grow in future years, in response to national concerns regarding long-term ecological health and investment in public health infrastructure. In addition, studies indicate that

¹ Ready, Willing and Unable to Serve: 75 Percent of Young Adults Cannot Join the Military; Early Ed in Pennsylvania is Needed to Ensure National Security. © 2009 Mission: Readiness

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

trails have large, long-term economic benefits in both rural and urban areas through increased tourism and economic leveraging opportunities.

In January 2008, the Department of Conservation and Recreation established the Greenways and Trails Task Force (GTTF) to develop an overall strategy for the creation of an interconnected system of long-distance trails in Virginia. This report describes the findings and recommendations of the Task Force. The plan includes an inventory of existing conditions, a vision for the network, and a focused list of nine actions needed to accomplish the vision and link regional and community trail systems throughout the Commonwealth. The report was developed in collaboration with numerous regional governments, local planners and trail interest groups.

Several issues raised by the Task Force will need to be addressed in order to successfully establish a long-distance trail system in Virginia. For example, the current responsibility for creating Virginia's trunkline trails does not rest with any one agency or entity. An improved structure for coordination and communication among the various local governments, state and federal programs, non-profit groups, and private partners is needed. The contribution of volunteers to the work of constructing and maintaining trails is critical to the success of this plan. Additional resources should be secured to expand, empower, and advance these volunteer efforts.

A recognized constraint in implementing this plan is the lack of a dedicated funding source for trail development. The Federal Highway Administration's Recreational Trails Program is the only source of funding for recreational trails in Virginia. This 80/20 matching grant program, administered by DCR, is tied to the federal transportation appropriation and is subject to congressional allocations. Although a systems approach to trails in Virginia is clearly needed, there is currently no state funding available to develop the system. Successful approaches implemented in other states include support through lottery funds, real estate transfer taxes or other means (Attachment E).

Finally, the Virginia Greenway and Trails Task Force is encouraged by the enthusiasm, commitment and dedication of trail planners throughout the state. The Task Force is also appreciative of the time, energy, and thoughtful suggestions supplied by citizens in meetings and other forums, and the assistance they provided to research, map, brainstorm ideas, and compile information. The Task Force is anxious to present its findings to the Department of Conservation and Recreation Directorate, and its sister agencies, and to advance the dialogue regarding future needs and opportunities. It is also available for further discussion on how best to address coordination and funding needs to realize the multiple benefits that a long-distance trail system could provide to Virginia's communities. The Task Force members on behalf of their organizations and constituencies stand ready to work together to secure the resources needed and successfully achieve the goal of – *“Connecting Our Commonwealth”*.

I. Introduction

“A trail is a linear corridor, on land or water, with protected status and public access for recreation or transportation. Trails can be used to preserve open space, provide a natural respite in urban areas, limit soil erosion in rural areas, and buffer wetlands and wildlife habitat along waterways. Trails may be surfaced with soil, asphalt, sand and clay, clam shells, rock, gravel or wood chips. Trails may follow a river, a ridge line, a mountain game trail, an abandoned logging road, a state highway. They may link historic landmarks within a city. Trails may be maintained by a federal, state or local agency, a local trails coalition, or a utility company.” (Trails for All Americans, 1990)

A. Purpose of the Plan

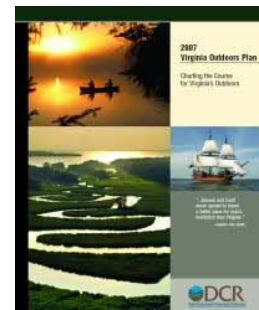
The purpose of this plan is to assess progress to-date and develop a strategy to connect local and regional systems into a statewide trail network reaching to all areas of the Commonwealth. The plan focuses on the long distance “trunkline trails” that will provide the framework for this system, and was developed in collaboration with numerous local planners and trail interest groups. Included in the plan is an inventory of existing conditions, a vision for the network, and recommended actions needed to advance the vision and complete an interconnected system of long-distance trails that connect Virginia’s communities.

B. Trail Definition: What is a Trail?

There are numerous definitions or descriptions for what defines a trail. The definition above was taken from “Trails for All Americans, Report of the National Trails Agenda Project” completed by American Trails in Summer 1990. More recently the National Trail Training Partnership defined a trail as: “A designated route on land or water with public access for recreation or transportation purposes such as walking, jogging, motorcycling, hiking, bicycling, ATVing, horseback riding, mountain biking, canoeing, kayaking, and backpacking.” (National Trail Training Partnership Website, 2008)

The Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP) designates the following hierarchy of trail types found in Virginia:

1. Local Trail: a trail entirely contained within one jurisdiction
2. Regional Trail: any trail that crosses several jurisdictional boundaries
3. Statewide Trail: a trail that has received special designation from the General Assembly or is recognized as a statewide trail in the *Virginia Outdoors Plan*.
4. National Trail: trails that are designated by Congress (national scenic trails and national historic trails) or by a federal departmental secretary (national recreation trails) as components of the National Trails System.




The VOP further defines a system of long distance corridors that will serve as the framework for linking the various communities and regions in Virginia. This “trunkline trail system” is made up of the following national and statewide trails:

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

1. Appalachian National Scenic Trail
2. Beaches to Bluegrass Trail (formerly known as the Trans-Virginia Southern Trail)
3. East Coast Greenway
4. Great Eastern Trail
5. James River Heritage Trail
6. Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

Although all trail types -- local, regional, statewide, and national -- are important to a functioning system in Virginia, the focus of this report will be on the subset of “trunkline trails” recognized in the VOP. The analysis will include off-road pathways for non-motorized uses (i.e. walking, hiking, biking, and horseback riding), as well as on-road connecting routes and some discussion of water trails, or paddle routes located within the trail corridor. The terms “long-distance trails” and “trunkline trails” will be used interchangeably in this document.

In addition to the trunkline trails recognized in the VOP, there are several other nationally designated trails that will enhance Virginia's overall trail network. Coordination between and among these programs will be critical in the future evolution of the system. They include:

1. Designated U.S. Bike Routes, US Bike Route 1 running north-south and US Route 76, extending east-west through central and southwestern Virginia. These routes consist primarily of on-road routes with some non-roadway segments. These routes are complete, and some portions may be used by the James River Heritage Trail, Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail and East Coast Greenway to connect off-road trail segments. 
2. The Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (CAJO), designated in 2006, is the first water trail to achieve national designation. (www.nps.gov/cajo) A comprehensive trail planning process is currently underway by the National Park Service. Future collaboration with the CAJO planning effort will be important since the route coincides with portions of the James River Heritage Trail and the Potomac Heritage NST. (For information and updates visit: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/parkHome.cfm?parkID=466>)
3. The Washington-Rochambeau National Historic Trail designated in 2009; which follows the route of the Continental Army to their victory at Yorktown, and may coincide with portions of the East Coast Greenway and the Potomac Heritage NST.
4. The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail in southwestern Virginia, which retraces the route of patriot militia during the Revolutionary War, ending in the victory at the battle of Kings Mountain. The trail may provide connecting routes for the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail.
5. The Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail designated in 2008, which follows the route taken by British marines when they invaded the region in the summer of 1814, and coincides with water trail portions of the Potomac Heritage NST and the Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT.

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Greenways and Trails Task Force

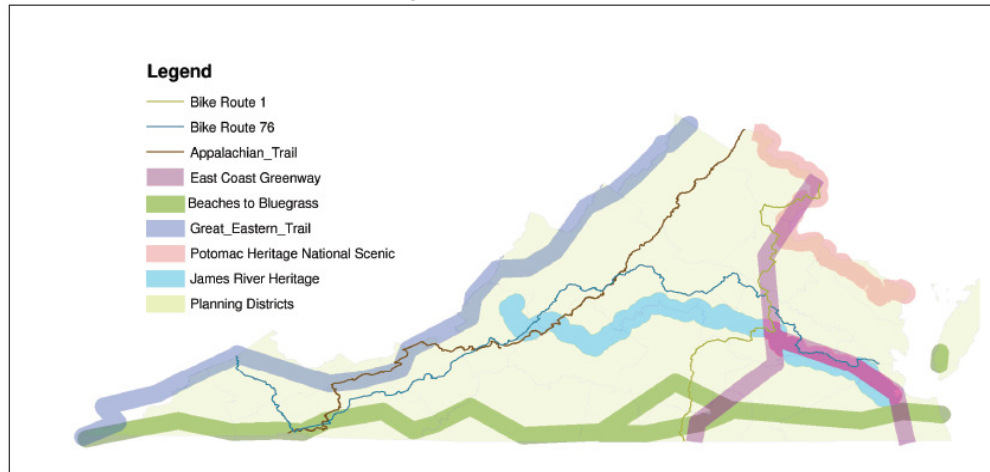


Figure 1. Statewide trails as reflected in the 2007 *Virginia Outdoors Plan*. Existing (thin lines) and proposed (thick lines) depict long-distance trails and bicycle routes.

C. Greenways and Trails Task Force

In January 2008, the Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation established the Greenways and Trails Task Force (GTTF) to develop an overall strategy for the creation of an interconnected system of long-distance trails in Virginia. The long-distance network will serve as the framework of “trunkline trails” in Virginia’s four-tiered trail system consisting of national, state, regional, and community trails. The GTTF was also charged with developing communication tools and outreach strategies to increase awareness and understanding of the benefits of trails to communities in Virginia.

Primary GTTF tasks include:

1. Convene meetings and assist with research and mapping to identify existing and proposed segments of trunkline trails, as well as gaps in the overall network.
2. Provide overall guidance in the development of an action plan that specifies actions needed to complete Virginia’s six trunkline trails.
3. Support communication and networking by serving as a liaison between state agencies, trail managers, and bike-ped-trail organizations and interests groups involved in the development of the trunkline trail system.

Task Force members were appointed for a two-year term by the Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Representatives from each of the six long-distance trails were asked to serve on the Task Force, as well as state agencies and statewide organizations involved in trail development including the following:

Appalachian Trail Conservancy
BikeWalk Virginia
East Coast Greenway Alliance
Great Eastern Trail Association
Potomac Appalachian Trail Club
Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail
Virginia Conservation Network
Virginia Tourism Corporation

Virginia Horse Council
Virginia DCR Board and staff
Virginia Dept. of Forestry
Virginia Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries
Virginia Department of Transportation
U.S. Forest Service
National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance.

D. Virginia's Trail Network Goals

One of the first tasks of the GTTF was to gain consensus on the purpose of Virginia's trail network through the articulation of trail-network design goals. The following goals, adopted by the GTTF in September 2007, will serve as a foundation for future actions, and provide overall guidance in the development of the system.

Virginia's Trail Network will:

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 stimuli 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."

Completion of the trunkline trail system supports and advances Virginia's Trail Program Vision of -- "*active communities and open space linked by trails and greenways that connect individuals, children and their families to nature and to each other.*"

E. Description of Trail Users

It is anticipated that Virginia's long-distance trail network will attract hundreds of thousands of users annually. Identifying various trail users and audiences, along with their unique needs, will help determine and prioritize the development of trail amenities, as well as the extent and type of interpretation or educational programs. Discussions with trail interests over the past 10 years have identified and documented the following anticipated users to the trail network.

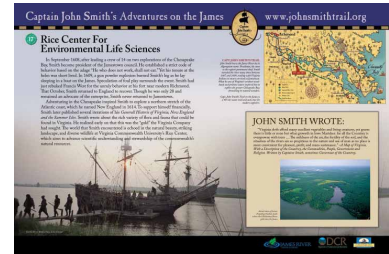
1. Tourists and Out-of-Town Trail Users: The identified long-distance trail corridors will serve as vital inter-jurisdictional links, providing access to key destinations and attractions throughout the Commonwealth. The trails will enhance current opportunities for heritage tourism and outdoor recreation visits, providing access to numerous historic sites, natural areas, cultural features and area attractions.

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

2. **Local Recreation and Wellness:** As a community asset, one category of visitors will be walkers, joggers, bicyclists, equestrians, and others from the surrounding community that will use trail segments for fitness. Trails also provide children with a critical link to nature, connecting them to natural landscapes, and allowing them access to unstructured play in the outdoors. Bicyclists at various skill levels i.e. youth, beginners, families, will be attracted to off-road trail segments, whereas more advanced riders will utilize on-road routes.

3. **Transportation:** Since some trails provide easy access and connections to neighborhoods, schools, community facilities, transit stops, and on-road facilities, these trail systems will attract commuters and students looking for an alternative way to get to key destinations such as work and school.

4. **Education:** The potential for educational groups to use the trail network to learn about Virginia's history and natural heritage will be a vital part of future interpretive or educational activities. Outdoor classrooms featuring curriculum-based learning, as well as informal after-school activities and programs could provide students with the opportunity to visit, explore, and learn about the landscapes and historic events that helped shape our nation.



5. **Research and Monitoring:** Preserving lands for recreational purposes also provides opportunities for scientists to continue to do research on resources contained within these corridors. The ability to continue environmental monitoring will provide important data as our climate changes.

F. Study Limitations

Comprehensive studies of the following popular recreation activities were beyond the scope of this report. Further analysis and discussion of these topics will occur in the next phase of trail planning, where detailed action plans will be developed for each long-distance trail.

1. **River Recreation:** Water trails or blueways have gained in significance over the past several years, and are important components of Virginia's trunkline trail corridors. Although a detailed analysis of statewide water trail opportunities is beyond the scope of this report, recreational use of the rivers adjacent to the trunkline trails are recognized as a critical component of the overall trail vision. Boaters, fishermen, swimmers, tubers, waders and wildlife watchers are important audiences for those trails that have water trail components. In addition, some of the trails in the trunkline system may provide a stable route to the water's edge for volunteers who monitor water quality and participate in river clean-ups. The 2009 Great Outdoors Report recommends that the Secretary of the Interior establish a new nationwide network of blueways and water trails along rivers and coastal waterways, so there will be more emphasis on water trail development in future plans.

2. **On-Road Bike and Pedestrian Facilities:** Similar to water trails, this plan does not attempt to comprehensively address on-road bike and pedestrian accommodations. VDOT has recently initiated a statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning initiative, which will provide detailed analysis and recommendations for on-road bicycle and pedestrian facilities. However, several of the long-distance trails include on-road routes, as segments of a "braided trail system," that offer multiple experiences both on- and off-road. In the future, it will be important that DCR and

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

VDOT work collaboratively to address specific technical and policy recommendations related to the long-distance trails so there is consistency between the two planning initiatives.

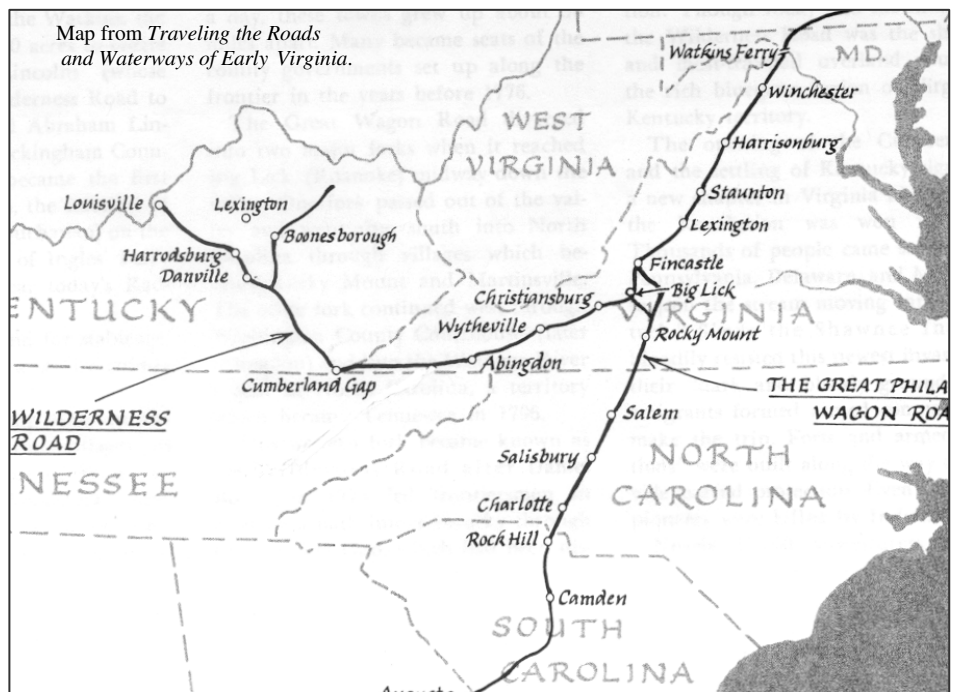
3. **Motorized Trails:** Although motorized trail sports are important recreational activities in Virginia, this report does not address the specific trail needs and facility requirements of motorized users. Several other planning activities are underway to address this need, including the work undertaken by the Southwest Regional Recreation Authority of Virginia, established by the General Assembly to oversee the possible development of the Southwest Virginia Multi-Use Trail Project <http://www.bigstonegap.org/spearhead.pdf>. The U.S. Forest Service also provides a number of popular OHV trails (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/recreation/ohv/index.shtml>).

In addition, the Virginia Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition (www.vohvc.org) is actively working to improve OHV opportunities in Virginia through education, responsible land use, environmental sustainability, and the promotion of safe, friendly, family-oriented recreation.

4. **Virginia's Heritage Corridors:** This report does not provide a detailed analysis of several significant heritage corridors that are under development including:

a) The Great Valley Trail/
Wilderness Road:

Considered by some to be the most important Indian trail in Virginia, the Great Valley Trail, located between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains was used by northern tribes on their periodic raids of smaller tribes in Virginia and the Carolinas. Also called the Great Wagon Road, this route was used by migrating Germanic and Scotch Irish settlers until nearly 1900. Peter Jefferson depicted the route on his 1752 map



and cited its distance from Philadelphia to the Yadkin River in North Carolina as 465 miles. At Big Lick (Roanoke) the road diverged. One spur, called the Wilderness Road, continued west through Abingdon and followed the route taken by Daniel Boone into Kentucky through the Cumberland Gap. The other fork passed through Rocky Mount and Martinsville. Linking cities and towns along its route, this trail could enhance community development in a scenic and historic corridor.²

² Parke Rouse, Jr. Traveling the Roads and Waterways of Early Virginia. Reprint from the Iron Worker Quarterly publication of Lynchburg Foundry. 1973.

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

b) Journey Through Hallowed Ground/ Route 15 Bike Route: With more than 10,000 listings on the National Register of Historic Places, the JTHG Natural Heritage Area covers the 175-mile corridor from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania to Monticello, Virginia. The Route 15 corridor was also known as the Carolina Road, and beginning in the 1740s, was the primary corridor funneling settlers from Pennsylvania to the settlements in the Carolina backcountry. It is estimated that by the 1760s, some 1,000 wagons a day were traveling the Carolina Road, which entered VA at Noland's Ferry (on the Potomac River) and continued east of the Blue Ridge to its southern terminus at the Indian trading post on Occoneechee Island (on the Roanoke River) where it connected to other "wilderness roads" in the system. The road was favored by Colonists, as it had been earlier by the Algonquin and Iroquois Indians, because of numerous springs along its route, milder temperatures east of the mountains and relatively safe fords across major rivers and streams.

Now a national scenic byway, The Journey, along with other heritage trails, could play important roles in the Civil War Sesquicentennial, celebrating the 150th anniversary of events across Virginia from 2011-2015.

The General Assembly has authorized the issuance of special license plates marking the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War to support programs and activities in Virginia.

c) Three-Notch'd Road: The integrity of this old Indian Trail connecting Richmond to Charlottesville and Afton Mountain has been disturbed by Route 250; however, many sections of this road, also called "Three-Chopt" still exist. Of particular interest is the segment west of Charlottesville that would link the City to Crozet and the Blue Ridge Mountains.³

d) The Occoneechee Trail: This major Indian route connected Bermuda Hundred to Bugg's Island through Petersburg. From the Roanoke River, the path led southward into the Carolinas. The proposed path of the East Coast Greenway south of Petersburg will closely follow this corridor and offer an opportunity to interpret this important trade route.⁴

Additional study should be undertaken to determine if these trails or other heritage corridors should be added as components of the long-distance trail system.

³ Nathaniel Mason Raulett and K. Edward Lay. Historic Roads of Virginia Early Road Location: Key to Discovering Historic Resources. Virginia Highway and Transportation Research Council. 1980, p. 4.

⁴ Parke Rouse, Jr. Traveling the Roads and Waterways of Early Virginia. Reprint from the Iron Worker Quarterly publication of Lynchburg Foundry. 1973.

II. Planning Process

At the April 22, 2008 meeting of the Greenways and Trails Task Force (GTTF), the committee approved a four step process for the development of a long-distance trails needs assessment and action strategy.

1. Complete a needs assessment that identifies current and proposed trail segments, highlights gaps, and analyzes potential connections. The assessment will incorporate ideas and suggestions from communities along the trail through meetings, workshops or other venues to identify trail development issues and opportunities.
2. Present findings to the broader trails community at the Governor's Conference on Greenways, Blueways, and Trails in October 2008. Convene a work session to review and revise the trail corridor working maps and expand the discussion on trail issues, priority needs, and potential connections.
3. Compile data and comments received, and develop draft recommendations for further review and discussion by regional trail management entities, PDC planners, local governments, and trails interests across Virginia.
4. Develop a final composite map of the network as well as individual segment maps, and finalize and distribute action plan recommendations.

A. Trail Inventory and Needs Assessment

The first step in the process was to complete a needs assessment for each long-distance trail. The GTTF worked with representatives from local and regional trail groups to build upon existing information sources (i.e. trails inventory underway by DCR and VDOT), and conducted meetings with interests throughout each trail corridor to share information and gain insights on local needs and priorities. The following meetings were convened:

February 11, 2008: Potomac Heritage NST quarterly meeting, Fairfax, VA

February 29, 2008: Potomac Heritage NST, Northern Neck PDC, VA

July 2, 2008: James River Heritage Trail, Richmond, VA

July 29, 2008: DCR Director's Forum/agency discussion of statewide network

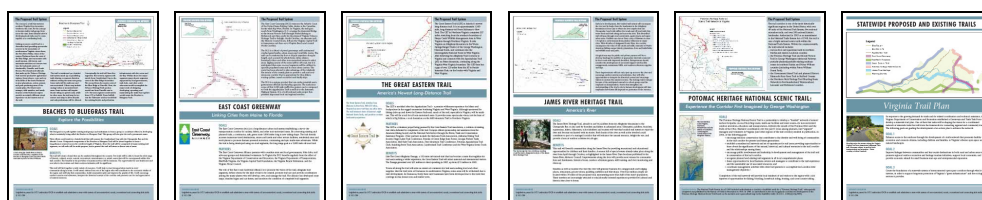
August 7, 2008: Beaches to Bluegrass and East Coast Greenway, Hampton Roads, VA

August 13, 2008, Beaches to Bluegrass and East Coast Greenway, South Hill, VA

August 20, 2008: James River Heritage Trail, Powhatan, VA

August 26, 2008, Beaches to Bluegrass and Great Eastern Trail, Marion, VA

August 27, 2008: GET and Beaches to Bluegrass, LENOWISCO PDC 1, VA



The products developed included a base map of existing and planned trails, as well as a two-page fact sheet that described each long-distance trail “at a glance.” [Fact sheet series available for download at: http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/trails.shtml#trfcshs]

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth Greenways and Trails Task Force



Break-out groups meet to discuss the statewide trails at the visioning session in Richmond.

B. Trails Vision and Mapping Workshop, October 2008

The GTTF worked with DCR and the National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) to coordinate a two-part trails visioning and mapping workshop, in conjunction with the Governor's Conference on Greenways, Blueways, and Trails. The overall goal of the workshop was to increase awareness of the benefits of trails and greenways, and efforts underway by the GTTF to expand and link trail corridors in Virginia. A second goal was to review and update GTTF draft maps of trail opportunities, and create a draft vision map that illustrated an interconnected system of long-distance trails. Finally, the workshop provided an opportunity to brainstorm and document trail development challenges and opportunities, and collect ideas on trail development priorities.

In November 2008, a summary report was compiled, "*Virginia Trails Vision and Mapping Session Summary Report, from the 2008 Governor's Conference on Greenways, Blueways, and Trails October 4, 2008.*" The report was distributed to the GTTF for review and comment, and a revised version was forwarded to workshop participants in December 2008. It was also sent as an attachment to approximately 300 subscribers to the DCR Trails and Greenways program E-Newsletter in December, 2008.



Local government representatives suggest improvements to the interim East Coast Greenway on-road route at a regional meeting in Fredericksburg.

C. Regional Community Input Meetings and Other Events

From October 2008 through June 2009, additional meetings or other venues were utilized to expand the trail development discussion with local and regional planners and trails interests across Virginia. Utilizing the data collected through the trail inventory and issues identified by workshop participants, GTTF members began to prioritize trail development needs for each of the long-distance trails. (See Attachment B for a list of the 22 follow-up meetings).

D. Completion of Trails Action Strategy and Next Steps

The information collected, comments received, and findings from the planning process, served as a foundation for the GTTF to develop this report which provides a baseline of current conditions and a concise list of priority actions. The plan was developed to serve as a tool for citizens, local governments, and trail organizations, and a foundation for the development of detailed work plans that address site specific needs, expand local partnerships, and advance the vision of an interconnected system of long-distance trails. (See Attachment C for a list of potential partners and websites).

In addition, it is intended that this plan serves as a springboard for initiating a larger, more comprehensive trail planning effort to assist local and regional trails throughout Virginia, and effectively address the needs and concerns of the entire trail system. Finally, it is important to note that this report is only a first step. The plan is not a static document, but is dynamic in nature, and will continue to mature and change over time as new information and ideas become available.

III. Assessment of Existing Conditions

The following section provides an overview of current conditions, including a summary of trail development issues that will need to be addressed in order to complete the network, and summary statistics for existing trail corridor miles, as well as miles completed by trail type (i.e. off-road trails and on-road routes).

A. Trail Development Needs, Issues and Opportunities

The development of the long-distance trail framework is dependent on linking existing community and regional trail networks into a connected and continuous network across the Commonwealth. In order to accomplish this task, issues confronting local and regional trail builders must be addressed. Participants at the Trails Vision Workshop and regional meetings identified various obstacles to trail development as well as actions to overcome these barriers.

The following section summarizes the common themes that arose from discussions with trail interests across the state. They have been organized into four primary categories: partnerships and funding; education and outreach; local planning and land use policy; and trail design and management. These findings are consistent with other trail research and survey work conducted in Virginia and throughout the country. (See Attachment D, List of References).

1. Partnerships and Funding: Expanding partnerships to new or non-traditional partners is vital for future efforts in order to leverage scarce resources, address trail development challenges and gain community support.

- a. Many projects have been successful at utilizing VDOT Enhancement grants and DCR Recreational Trail grants, but additional strategies are needed to expand both private and public sources of funding.
- b. Trail advocates and agencies need to work together to make the case fiscally, that trails are a good community investment.
- c. A more robust program is needed for engaging and empowering volunteers.
- d. New partnerships with the health community should be explored to capitalize on the energy and enthusiasm around the “Children and Nature” movement. In addition, eleven federal programs have pledged to promote uses and benefits of the nation's public lands and water resources to enhance the physical and psychological health and well being of the American people. These agencies recognize that developing, using, and promoting resources such as trail systems will increase access to physical activity opportunities for our communities to help combat the obesity epidemic in both children and adults. A similar partnership at the state level is needed.
- e. Community trail initiatives need funding support to make trails happen; trail development will not be effective if local jurisdictions have to rely solely on local funding streams. (See Attachment E, Statewide Trail Organization and Funding in Nearby States).
- f. Partnerships with utility companies should be considered. For example, the *2009 Great Outdoors Plan* states that complementary opportunities may exist to create trails along the right-of-way of new underground transmission corridors to expand the network of recreational trails across America (see <http://www.orrgroup.org/>).
- g. Public interest in trails and greenways could help support green infrastructure and other resource management goals. Statewide trail groups should consider establishing

strategic partnerships with land trusts in order to advance both trail corridor protection and larger land conservation goals.

2. Outreach and Education: Although progress has been made in growing community support for trails and greenways, there is still a critical need to increase education and outreach on the social, economic, health, and ecological value and benefits of trails.

- a. Trails professionals need to provide local decision-makers with better tools and arguments to address the public's concerns regarding crime and safety; and develop and enlist the help of local champions to advance local projects.
- b. An effort should be made to better understand landowner concerns and offer solutions that address these issues. The lack of knowledge regarding the value of trails to a community can lead to negative reactions to proposed trails.
- c. Many landowners are not familiar with the Landowner Liability Law, which offers broad protection to landowners who allow recreational use of their property § 29.1-509. When an easement is granted to a government entity for recreational use, the government agency with which the agreement is made is responsible for providing all reasonable legal services required arising out of a use of land covered by this section. Once landowners are aware of these broad protections, they are much more willing to share use of their land for public benefit.
- d. A consistent and comprehensive statewide messaging system needs to be developed that clearly and effectively communicates the benefits of trails to communities.

3. Local Planning and Land Use Policy: Trail interests should be engaged in local and state land use policies and plans as they are developed to ensure that trails are incorporated as public health infrastructure in both new and existing developed areas.

- a. Although there have been increased efforts over the past several years by local governments and non-profits to establish trail networks, there is still a need to work collaboratively to get trails included in every local comprehensive plan and corresponding language that preserves the rights-of-way of the identified corridors in each jurisdiction.
- b. The capacity of county planning departments needs to be expanded. It was noted that local governments are often under-staffed and under-resourced and/or do not have the organizational structure in place to coordinate trail development.
- c. There is a continuing need for citizens to take ownership and advocate for trails so they remain in the forefront of local agendas, where they compete against other pressing needs.
- d. It is necessary to revise and/or strengthen the VA code related to local planning requirements for trail corridors and bicycle/pedestrian accommodations. Identifying corridors at the local level is critical to ensure connectivity before development and redevelopment occurs, but this has been a major shortfall in the past. The Code of Virginia does not require local trail and bike-ped plans. Rather, language in the Code states that the comprehensive plan "shall include, as appropriate, but not be limited to, roadways, bicycle accommodations, pedestrian accommodations, railways, bridges, waterways, airports, ports, and public transportation facilities..." § [15.2-2223](#).

4. Technical Resources for Trail Design and Management: Trail developers need access to the best information available in order to solve trail design issues such as barriers created by major highways, railroads, rivers and bridge crossings.

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

- a. A clearinghouse of state agencies resources needs to be created, maintained, and available to assist local trail planners with various technical, design and operational issues.
- b. Improved coordination is needed among the various agencies involved in transportation, parks, forest, and natural resource management.
- c. Across the state, trail advocates are confronted by challenging design issues created by barriers such as roads, waterways and railroad/ utility corridors that block access to the trail right-of-way; a unified approach needs to be taken at the state level to address this issue.
- d. Long-distance trails that cross over multiple jurisdictions present difficult management challenges due to varying standards and operational support across jurisdictions. .

B. Inventory and Status of Trail Segments

Over the past several years, much progress has been made in establishing trails in Virginia, and the skeleton of an interconnected system is beginning to take shape. This system has been formalized through a database developed by Virginia Tech's Center for Geospatial Information Technology. This database and the associated manager's application (see figure 2) is in the initial stage of development. The next phase will depend on the cooperation of local jurisdictions to correct existing data and complete missing data. Since trail planners are understaffed at the local level, and maintaining trail data has not been a priority, it may be necessary to require local updates of trail data before state and federal grants for trail facilities are approved.

In addition to helping manage the system and make regional connections, an improved database can be used to promote tourism and public health. The data can help to identify gaps in the systems for each user group and identify where networks need to be diversified to accommodate all skill levels. The database could also prove valuable for emergency management personnel, as trails can provide temporary access when roads are blocked or congested.

Greenway corridors are also an integral part of any green infrastructure system, as landscape corridors connect isolated patches of habitat and can benefit both plant and animal species. Opportunities to measure performance related to climate, health and community vitality will be possible once the spatial data is accurately represented. Other applications and uses will evolve as the data is populated.

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth Greenways and Trails Task Force

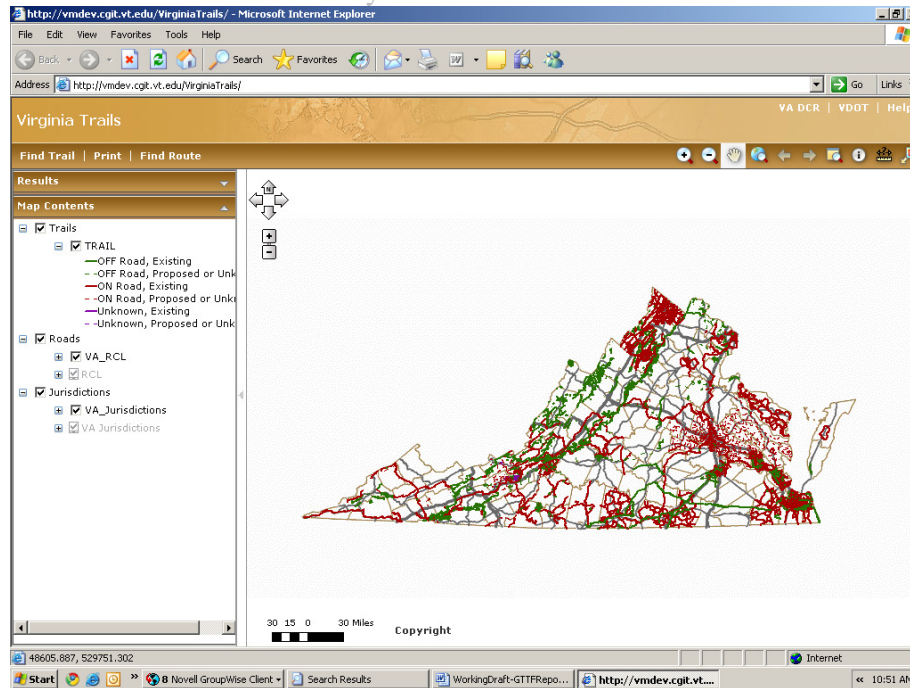


Figure 2: Manager's Application for the Virginia Trails inventory

The inventory will prove vital to the development of each long-distance trail. Work is underway to incorporate proposed and existing trail segments into the database, so that planners can easily integrate the trails into local plans.

The following section describes the status of the Virginia's long-distance trail system, including the miles of facilities actually on the ground, the extent of planning underway, and the work remaining to complete each trail.

1. Description of Trail Facility Types

For the purposes of this plan, the following terms will be used to describe trail facility types:

- a) **Trail:** An off-road paved (asphalt or concrete) or crushed stone dust tread or a natural surface treadway (single or double track) for non-motorized use. The ultimate goal of the long-distance trail system is to provide safe and enjoyable off-road walking, biking, and equestrian opportunities that showcase the variety of landscapes found throughout the Commonwealth. Some segments of the system, like the AT, provide a remote natural setting for exploration by foot; while others will be designed for shared use experiences between walkers, bikers, and equestrians.
- b) **On-Road Bike Route:** A designated and signed bike route on the roadway, or a designated and signed sidewalk and bike lane or paved shoulder within VDOT right-of-way. A road route is a designated component in a "braided trail network" and designed to provide an on-road experience for bicycle touring and to provide regional connectivity for non-motorized transportation.
- c) **Water Trail:** A water route along a river or shoreline connected by a series of public access sites for launching boats, camping, resting, wildlife viewing and fishing.

Virginia’s Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

Blueways or water trails are managed systems of access points and support facilities that allow trail users to plan multi-day trips with launch sites, camping, and rest stops clearly identified on maps and on signs visible from the water.

2. Status of Virginia’s Long-distance Trail System

Collectively the six long-distance trails will provide an interconnected system of over 2000 miles of off-road land trails, over 1000 miles of on-road bicycle routes, and hundreds of miles of paddle routes for public use. The miles of land trail completed are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Status of the Long-distance Trails in Virginia in Miles

	Estimated Corridor Length As the Crow Flies	On-Road Bike Rt		Off-Road Trail	
		Potential	Complete	Potential	Complete
Appalachian Trail	550	n/a	n/a	550	549
Beaches to Bluegrass	600	177	125	710	224+
East Coast Greenway	300	60	**0	240+	63
Great Eastern Trail	249	67	67	249	148
James River Heritage	250	*720	0	tbd	96+
Potomac Heritage	287	287	167	287	75
Total	2,245	1,314	304	2,385	1,164

*Assumes on-road route along both the north and south sides of the James River

**Although the final route has not been determined, the interim on-road route of the East Coast Greenway is mapped.

Refer to Attachment F for a breakdown of existing recreational opportunities by trail user type for each of the statewide trails.

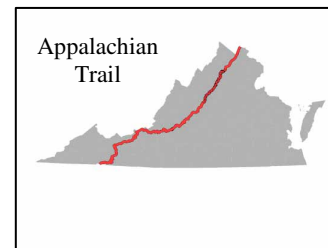
IV. Long-distance Trails Findings and Recommendations

Each of Virginia’s long-distance trails is in varying phases of development. For example the Beaches to Bluegrass and James River Heritage Trail are currently at the conceptual stage, whereas the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail and Great Eastern Trail have significant segments on the ground. The East Coast Greenway has limited off-road trail segments completed, but is close to completing an on-road interim bicycling route. The priority needs, therefore, for each trail vary, depending on local conditions and phase of development. The following section provides an overview of each trail, a discussion of trail development issues, and a list of specific priorities for each long-distance trail.

A. Appalachian National Scenic Trail

www.nps.gov/appa, www.appalachiantrail.org

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT) is a 2,175-mile long footpath stretching through 14 states from Maine to Georgia. Conceived in 1921, the AT traverses the scenic terrain and culturally significant lands of the Appalachian Mountains. The trail was designed and constructed in the 1920s and 1930s by volunteer hiking clubs brought together by the non-profit Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), the congressionally recognized private-sector management partner of the AT. In 1968 the National Trails System Act was adopted, and the



Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

AT received formal designation as the country's first national scenic trail. The designation also authorized funds for its long term protection and management. One-quarter of the entire trail, 550 miles, runs through western Virginia. Except for three small segments (less than one mile total), the trail is complete in Virginia. The trail is further along in its development than any of the other long distance trails.

Discussion:

The Appalachian Trail (AT) is a natural surface footpath that offers a variety of opportunities for trail users, from short walks and day hikes, to long-distance backpacking journeys. The trail is for pedestrian use, and does not allow mountain biking or horseback riding. The AT is much further along than any of the other long-distance trails in Virginia, and has a strong partnership of public and non-profit interests, coordinated through the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). For more than 75 years, the ATC has worked with federal, state and local governments, local trail clubs and the public to design, build, and maintain the trail.

Although the majority of the AT in Virginia has been completed as an off road trail, there are still a few small sections of paved road walks. The first is the 200-yard crossing of the Shenandoah River at Harpers Ferry. The second is a short segment at Rockfish Gap where the trail crosses over I-64 and US 250 and continues up the side of Skyline Drive (approximately 300 yards). There are currently no feasible alternatives to move these segments off road.

The third site is a very short walk (approximately ½ mile) on Rt. 52 in Bland County where re-alignment is recommended to divert the trail off the paved road right-of-way. Land needed to relocate the trail has been acquired, but construction of a pedestrian bridge over I-77 is needed. The project is in the preliminary scoping phase, with ATC working in consultation with VDOT and an engineering firm to identify design alternatives. Funds have not yet been secured for detailed engineering plans or construction (approximately \$750K total).

In neighboring Giles County, seven miles of trail is under construction to relocate a road walk in Pearisburg onto permanently protected lands.

With over 549 of its 550 miles in Virginia now complete, ATC and agency partners are shifting the primary focus of their work towards protecting the AT experience through viewshed and corridor protection. In the future, the primary emphasis will be on developing partnerships with local communities to promote stewardship and promote trail values and benefits including outdoor recreation, environmental education, youth engagement, health, and economic development. A new initiative begun by ATC in southwestern Virginia is a "Trail Town" recognition program. The program will focus on collaboration with communities along the trail to evaluate, improve, and promote local assets, reinforce marketing efforts, and learn about and share design tools and options for Gateway Communities.

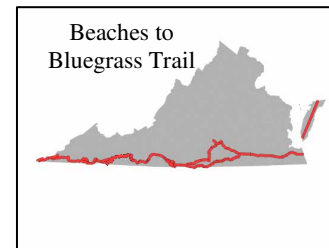
The issue of "relevance" to future generations is another priority concern of the ATC. A new "Trails to Every Classroom" Initiative was launched in 2007 with 174 school districts throughout the AT corridor. The goal of the program is to engage students, teachers, and trail managers using a service-learning model that combines elements of experiential education with community service. The program has been successful at helping trail managers engage children and build a sense of stewardship, while completing on-the-ground trail projects that utilize student volunteers within local communities.

Appalachian Trail Priorities:

1. Complete land acquisition project near the New River crossing and complete final alignment of the Trail in the area.
2. Complete realignment of AT off Route 52 in Bland County.
3. Expand partnerships with Trail communities and Trails to Every Classroom initiatives.
4. Continue to monitor impacts to the trail corridor and address issues related to encroachment from new development.

B. Beaches to Bluegrass Trail

The Beaches to Bluegrass Trail is in its conceptual phase with the goal of linking existing trail systems into a network across southern Virginia, connecting the Cumberland Gap to the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean. Some trail segments will be multi-use and non-motorized. Others may include carriage riders or motorized trail users. Some sections will require bicycle riding on paved roads, while in other cases, the trail may be too narrow and steep to allow bicycles and only pedestrians will be allowed.



Discussion:

The Beaches to Bluegrass Trail is an ambitious 600-mile trail concept that will require the cooperation of multiple jurisdictions and trail interests in southern Virginia. Conceptually the trail will have six segments.

- Segment 1: from Cumberland Gap to the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains
- Segment 2. from the eastern crest of the Blue Ridge to Danville
- Segment 3. the Tobacco Heritage Trail from Danville east to I-95
- Segment 4. from I-95 to Suffolk
- Segment 5. from Suffolk east to the Chesapeake Bay
- Segment 6. from Kiptopeke State Park on the Eastern Shore to Maryland

Within these six major segments, many shorter segments will be developed and maintained by local governments, trail clubs, and other active advocates, that together would create the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail. It is assumed that 20 percent of the route will be on-road to provide connections for the existing off-road segments. Potential complementary water trails could be developed along sections of the Clinch, Powell, Dan, Nottoway, Blackwater, Meherrin, Banister, Staunton, Smith, and Mayo Rivers to compliment the existing water trail along the New River.

One of the priority needs of the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail is the development of an organizational structure either through a non-private entity or roundtable that could coordinate and oversee trail development. The entity should include existing trail managers and representatives from local jurisdictions within the corridor. Ideally, a sponsoring organization or coalition could provide guidance and advice in trail planning, design, management and outreach, and promote a consistent identity throughout the corridor. Inclusion in county comprehensive plans is also needed to aid in implementation, and due to its extensive length, pilot projects should be initiated in each jurisdiction to build local support. The following tasks would be initiated by this sponsoring organization.

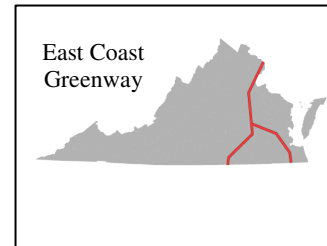
Beaches to Bluegrass Trail Priorities:

1. Develop a trail brand or identity and promote existing segments on the DCR Web site and in partnership with Virginia Tourism.
2. Complete a trail corridor assessment for the entire 600-mile corridor, conducted in segments to identify land trail route alternatives to link existing trail networks, parks, trailheads and other visitor service areas along the corridor.
3. Analyze potential water trail segments and potential access points for complementary paddling trips along the land trail route.
4. Assist in the development of a management structure that specifies process, inter-jurisdictional roles, and guidelines for developing and maintaining the trail.
5. Map on-road routes to connect existing trails as needed and work with VDOT to have these routes incorporated in the state bicycle plan.

C. East Coast Greenway

www.greenway.org/

The East Coast Greenway (ECG) is a proposed 3600-mile, off-road multi-use trail, stretching from Maine to Florida, often referred to as an urban equivalent to the Appalachian Trail. In Virginia, the East Coast Greenway corridor includes two legs (see map), totaling 300 miles in length, and traversing 25 local jurisdictions. From Washington D.C., the trail travels south to



Richmond, where it splits into two routes: 1) an historic coastal route that will utilize the Virginia Capital Trail to connect Richmond to Virginia Beach and Wilmington, NC; and 2) an interior route that extends south from Richmond to the North Carolina line via a section of the Tobacco Heritage Trail. Approximately 60 miles (up to 20 percent of the trail) may have to be developed on-road, particularly through urban centers.

Discussion:

Currently, 29%, or 69 miles of the trail's 240+ off-road trail miles in Virginia are complete. The East Coast Greenway Alliance is currently working to link these segments through an identified bike route utilizing existing roadways. During Winter 2008 and Spring 2009, the ECG Alliance convened six community meetings throughout the corridor to explain the concept and seek input from local elected leaders, planners, tourism groups, and cyclists. The meetings identified a continuous bike route for both the spine and Historic Coastal Route through Virginia, which can be viewed online at: <http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&hl=en&sll=37.0625,-95.677068&sspn=73.963864,94.746094&q=http://greenway.org/maps/googlemapdata/ECG-VA1.kml&ie=UTF8>.

The East Coast Greenway Alliance is currently working with DCR and VDOT to publish a detailed route guide and cue sheet, which is scheduled for completion in 2010. The next task will be to work with local jurisdictions and VDOT to sign the route. In addition, an environmental impact study to locate a trail along the high-speed rail line from south of Petersburg to Raleigh, NC is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2010.

East Coast Greenway Priorities:

1. Complete on-road trail alignment study and publish a bike route guide and cue sheet.



Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

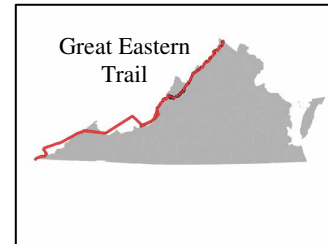
2. Sign existing components as a high priority, in order to aid in recognition.
3. Continue to work with local groups to identify off-road trail opportunities and pursue funding and support for design and construction of future segments.

D. Great Eastern Trail

www.greateastertrail.net/

The Great Eastern Trail (GET) is America's newest long-distance trail, a proposed 1,800-mile trail stretching from Florida to New York that intersects three of America's eight National Scenic Trails..

Envisioned as a natural surface off-road pathway, the trail provides a unique backcountry experience for hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians in the rugged mountains bordering Virginia and West Virginia. It is a volunteer project being pursued by the Great Eastern Trail Association, a coalition of existing trail clubs dedicated to completion of the trail.



Discussion:

In Virginia, the GET is a work in progress, with approximately 50% complete. The trail uses significant portions of US Forest Service lands and links existing trails including: the Tuscarora, Mill Mountain, Tibbett Knob, North River, and Shenandoah Mountain trails. The trail in Northern Virginia comprises 207 miles, stretching from the southern boundary of Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area in West Virginia to a link with the Allegheny Trail in West Virginia, exiting Virginia on Allegheny Mountain in the George Washington National Forest, where it continues into West Virginia in the Monongahela National Forest. The trail returns to Virginia on Peters Mountain in Giles County, where the Allegheny Trail joins the Appalachian Trail. At this point the route of the Great Eastern is still in the planning stages. It may co-align with the Appalachian Trail for a short distance (maximum of 16 miles) in Virginia, and the plan is then to diverge back into West Virginia, using existing trails along the New and Bluestone rivers.

In late June of 2009 a planning conference at Breaks Interstate Park selected a route across West Virginia and Kentucky to Elkhorn City, Kentucky, where it uses the path of the Pine Mountain Trail, which is a designated section of the Great Eastern. The Pine Mountain segment runs along the Virginia-West Virginia border for approximately 20 miles before it exits into Kentucky.

In addition to the gaps listed above, there are two unbuilt sections totaling 6 miles. The first, Carr Mountain, is a 6-mile trail that has been marked and blazed and (one mile has been built), in the North River Ranger District. PATC is committed to completing this segment. The second is a one-mile extension of the Muddy Run Trail in the Warm Springs Ranger District. It has been flagged by US Forest Service staff.

Great Eastern Trail Priorities:

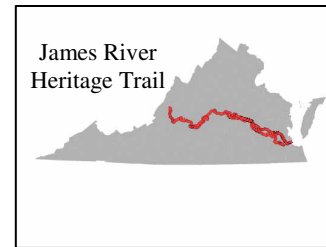
1. Although most of the trail is on public lands, 15% is currently on-road which needs to be moved to an off road location.
2. The route from Peters Mountain down through Giles County and into West Virginia on the New River needs to be assessed and selected.
3. Great Eastern Trail Association will be working with USFS and local interests to develop a "friends group" to assist with on-going trail maintenance needs.

E. James River Heritage Trail

The James River Heritage Trail (JRHT) is a proposed long-distance multi-use trail, extending from the Chesapeake Bay to the headwaters of the James formed by the Jackson and Cowpasture Rivers. The trail will connect existing parks, trails, scenic roadways and urban riverfronts, including segments of the old Kanawha Canal towpath.

The trail is being designed as a “braided” network with segments

available for walking, horseback riding, mountain bicycling, paddling, and on-road riding.



In addition, the JRHT will include an on-water component providing a unique opportunity to experience and explore the diversity of landscapes through which the river passes. A paddling route, the James River Water Trail, was completed by the James River Association and extends from Lynchburg to the Chesapeake Bay. Botetourt County has developed a blueway plan, leaving a gap through Amherst and part of Bedford County.

Discussion:

The JRHT will serve as a showcase venue for central Virginia, promoting outdoor exercise, adventure, and interpretation of heritage resources. The total number of off-road trail miles has not yet been determined. Further discussion is needed with local public and private interests located throughout the corridor, to determine if the trail should be routed continuously on both sides of the river. Until trail routing preferences are established, a total corridor distance can not yet be calculated.

To-date, completed off-road segments include: 15 miles of the proposed 55-mile Virginia Capital Trail (also a segment of the East Coast Greenway); 20 miles of soft-surfaced trails in the James River Trail system in Richmond; 15 miles of soft-surface trail at James River State Park; and some river side segments of Lynchburg's trail system (7 miles of multi-use bikeways and 4 miles of soft-surfaced footpaths).

Over the past year there has been renewed interest, in connecting off-road segments with on-road routes. There are fewer gaps in the on-road route, which has been mapped, and is ready to be vetted at the regional level. On-road route would link the corridors numerous historic, cultural, and scenic resources. With road safety improvements along scenic byways and other roads that parallel the river, this bicycle route could be a continuous ride that would promote economic development in historic towns that flank the river on both sides.

No formal organization exists to coordinate or develop the James River Heritage Trail, although the capacity exists. The Virginia Canal and Navigation Society, the James River Association, the James River Advisory Council and the James River Partnership are regional or statewide groups already heavily invested in the river. A sponsoring organization or coalition is needed to provide coordination and communication between the various interest groups and jurisdictions throughout the corridor in areas of trail planning, design, and outreach. Some priorities that need to be considered follow:

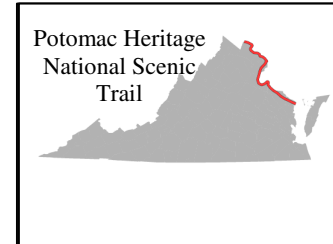
James River Heritage Trail Priorities:

1. Outreach to local decision makers to increase awareness of the trail's potential positive impact and collaborate on potential on-road or off-road links
2. Complete the on-road route study currently underway by examining barriers, constraints, and potential on-road bicycle touring options, and linking potential park sites, water access points, trailheads and other visitor service areas along the corridor.
3. Include on-road and off-road routes in all county comprehensive plans to aid in implementation. Road construction funds from VDOT and development proffers could play a role in trail implementation if the trail was well defined in local plans.
4. Develop a trail brand or identity and promote existing segments on the DCR Web site and in partnership with Virginia Tourism and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

F. Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

www.nps.gov/pohe

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) is a “braided” network of natural surface footpaths, on-road bicycling routes, multi-use facilities and water routes between the mouth of the Potomac River and the Allegheny Highlands. Authorized in 1983 as an amendment to the National Trails System Act of 1968, the PHNST is one of 11 national scenic trails within the National Trails System. The trail corridor is one of the most historically significant and ecologically diverse regions in the United States, with over 100 national historic landmarks, over 40 units of the National Park System, and eight national recreation trails, including the 300-mile Potomac River Water Trail. The tidal Potomac River is also recognized as part of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network and the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Water Trail.

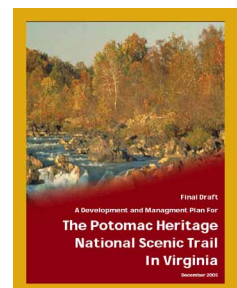


The PHNST network in Virginia, as of early 2009, includes 242 miles of footpaths, multi-use trails and bicycling routes, of which approximately 191 miles are being used for non-motorized outdoor recreation and transportation and for learning about the significance of places in the Trail corridor. Over 45 agencies and organizations are involved in various aspects of trail planning, construction, maintenance, interpretation and marketing. Volunteers have contributed significantly to the development and management of PHNST segments, creating a remarkable legacy for future generations. The National Park Service is responsible for recognition of Trail segments, management of the official Trail markers, coordination among Trail management partners, and some project assistance.

Discussion

The PHNST corridor in Virginia-- between the Blue Ridge in western Loudoun County and Smith Point at the mouth of the Potomac on the Chesapeake Bay-- includes portions of three regional planning districts and ten local jurisdictions. Trail segments have been the focus of many plans over the past ten years, marked by publications that include:

- various local plans (e.g., “concept” and “implementation” plans for counties in Northern Virginia);



Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

- *A Development and Management Plan for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail in Virginia*, completed in February 2006 by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission for a Virginia *ad hoc* Trail committee;
- *A Concept Plan for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail in Virginia's Lower Potomac Region*, completed in 2005.

In addition, a series of water trail maps is underway, including *Potomac River Water Trail: DC to the Chesapeake Bay*, completed through a collaborative effort between the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and Maryland Department of Natural Resources to provide users with information on public access, safety, services, history and ecology.

As of summer 2009, segments of the Trail network in Virginia include:

- Alexandria Heritage Trail (23 miles) in Alexandria, VA;
- routes in Prince William Forest Park (6 miles) and a 1.5-mile Potomac Heritage Trail route between Belmont Bay and Potomac Heritage Trail in Leesylvania State Park in Prince William County (total of 7.5 miles existing)
- a linear park system and trail routes in eastern Loudoun County, VA from Goose Creek to the Fairfax Border (13 miles);
- Mount Vernon Trail (18.5 miles) and the Potomac Heritage Trail (10 miles) along the George Washington Memorial Parkway, trails within Riverbend Park (2.5 miles), Great Falls Park (2.5 miles), Scott's Run Nature Preserve (2 miles) and the Seneca Tract in northern Fairfax County (6 miles) and a partially constructed 10-mile route in southern Fairfax County (total of 48 miles existing);
- Government Island Trail (2 miles existing) and two planned trails in Stafford County (the Aquia Creek Water Trail between Aquia Landing and Government Landing and the five-mile Historic Falmouth-Ferry Farm Trail (.5 miles existing); and
- Northern Neck Heritage Trail Bicycling Route Network, approximately 86 miles still to be signed in the Northern Neck counties of Northumberland, Westmoreland, Lancaster and Richmond
- Monroe Creek Water Trail between Colonial Beach and James Monroe Birthplace in Westmoreland County.

The National Park Service receives an annual appropriation of federal funds to administer the federal interest in development and management of the Trail as a component of the National Trails System to provide coordination among Trail management partners, and to provide some project assistance, especially with interpretation and marketing.

As a continuous network of routes on land, the Trail contains two kinds of gaps:

- a) Temporary gaps--planned segments of the Trail network yet to be constructed and signed; and
- b) Planning gaps--places where local jurisdictions have not identified existing or planned trails or routes as potential segments of the Trail network.

Planning gaps are the focus of state and local planning efforts, building on resident's desires for increased outdoor recreation opportunities, heritage tourism and/or transportation options.

Examples of the first kind of gap include adequate facilities for bicyclists along certain sections of the Northern Neck Heritage Trail Bicycling Route, and corridors between:

- White's Ferry and Goose Creek in Loudoun County (miles tbd);

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Greenways and Trails Task Force

- An east entrance to Great Falls Park and the west entrance of Scott's Run Nature Preserve (3 miles);
- Mount Vernon and the Richmond Highway/Lorton Road intersection (~10 miles);
- The Town of Occoquan and Belmont Bay; and
- Rippon Community Park and Metz Wetlands Bank (miles tbd).

Examples of the second kind of gap include:

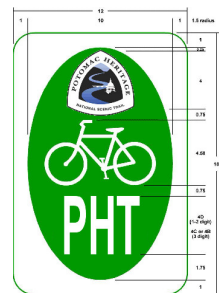
- the corridor between a portion of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park in Loudoun County and White's Ferry (miles tbd);
- the corridor between Leesylvania State Park/Prince William Forest Park and Colonial Beach, including portions of Prince William, Stafford and King George County (including recognized Trail segments on Government Island (2 miles) and the planned five-mile trail connecting Belmont, Chatham and George Washington's Ferry Farm in Stafford County).

In some places with gaps, the Trail corridor might best be experienced as a water trail: Prominent opportunities include the corridor between Harpers Ferry and River Bend Park; and areas along the tidal Potomac River-- places recognized within the geographic scope of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

Potomac Heritage Trail Priorities:

1. With a substantial number of Trail segments either existing or being designed or constructed, additional multi-jurisdictional coordination is necessary to develop agreement on the kinds of experiences supported by various management entities. This would include some basic level of interpretation to recognize the significance of local resources while continuing to market the national significance of the trail encompassing the entire corridor.
2. Establish a graphic identity for the Trail network, building upon Trail marking and exhibit design plans developed for portions of the northern Neck and Northern Virginia.
3. Formally adopt a standard route marking system, consistent between on-road and off-road segments, to provide a coherent and consistent experience for users throughout the Trail network. Staff at VDOT began to explore this need in early 2009, but multiple agencies need to complete this task.
4. Identify specific steps necessary to complete designated PHNST segments in Northern Virginia (i.e. construct and sign trail segments that have already been designated) to connect gaps in on-the-ground facilities.

	land routes completed	gaps (estimate)	corridor length (estimate)
Northern Virginia Planning District (08):			
Loudoun County	13	31	45
Fairfax County	48	12	60
City of Alexandria	23	0	23
Prince William County	7.5	18.5	26
George Washington Planning District (16)			
Stafford County:	2.5	18	20
King George County	0	19	19
Northern Neck Planning District (17)			
Northumberland, Lancaster, Westmoreland, Richmond	86	8	94
Total	180	107	287



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Greenways and Trails Task Force

5. Coordinate with Maryland Department of Natural Resources on a new set of middle Potomac River Water Trail maps so that the final product includes accurate and up-to-date Virginia information and site data.
6. Explore benefits to communities and stakeholders interest in the development of and recognition for Trail segments in southern Prince William, Stafford and King George counties.

V. Implementation

The final section of this plan identifies implementation steps that should be taken by various entities to ensure that the vision of an interconnected system of long-distance trails becomes a reality.

A. Long-distance Trails Action Strategy

The six long-distance trails that make up Virginia's trunkline trail system are unique in terms of their location and physical setting, history, organizational capacity, design, trail users, and the extent of planning to-date. Specific priorities were identified in the previous section for each trail; however, there are certain common needs for all trails in the system. In order to address these needs, nine specific priority actions have been articulated. These 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 inter-agency work group to ensure effective and efficient coordination between agencies for the planning, construction and maintenance of Virginia's multi-modal corridors, which include, but are not limited to, the long-distance trail corridors referenced herein. Potential corridors include those that have been dedicated for rail and roadways. This committee will also serve as a central clearinghouse of resources and contacts. This includes working with VDOT to implement on-road bike and pedestrian projects, and other agencies involved in statewide water trails and water-based recreation initiatives.

Action 2. Identify funding strategies that incorporate creative ways to leverage resources to fund the development of trails, including public-private sector partnerships, incentives and entrepreneurial initiatives. Local, regional, state and federal stakeholders should recognize the value of these major trail corridors and should prioritize funding to plan, build and maintain these trails as a primary component of Virginia's infrastructure, with no less emphasis than other public investments. Sound fiscal policy will be important to market and fund trail development. This will be especially important in the next few years, due to broader economic conditions and constraints.

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. This step is essential for all six trails, and in particular, for those that are at the conceptual stage in their development.

Action 4: Establish a trail coordination entity for each trail (or support efforts of existing coordinator, if one exists) to ensure effective communication among local and regional agencies, land trusts, friends groups, and other private and non-profits interests, in the development and management of trunkline trails.

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. This benchmarking will be essential to evaluate effectiveness of current programs and chart success.

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, and make the information available through the Virginia DCR web site with links to additional resources and information. This action is essential to facilitate the flow of information and technical guidance to trail developers throughout the state in a cost-effective manner.

Action 7: Develop an integrated approach for promoting and marketing the value and benefits of trails and greenways by identifying various audiences and developing appropriate strategies and outreach tools to engage each target audience.

Action 8. Develop sign standards for the long-distance trail system to assist with wayfinding and to ensure a consistent brand for the network; disseminate standards and guidelines and work in partnership with key agencies and trail managers to implement.

Action 9. Convene statewide conferences, regional workshops and targeted trainings as appropriate to expand expertise, disseminate information on standards and best practices, and foster communication and networking among trail interests. Forums, resources and advice should also be focused on promoting a more robust program for engaging and empowering volunteers.

The next step will be to develop specific work plans for each of these nine actions that identify the lead entity, cooperating organizations, specific tasks, and timelines for each of the trunkline trails (See Attachment G, Long-Distance Trail Action Plan Template).

B. Partnership Roles in Completing the Long-distance Trails

Establishment of a long-distance trail network in Virginia will require the collaborative efforts of numerous entities including: state and federal agencies, tourism organizations, trail managers, regional and local governments, health professionals, conservation organizations, and friends groups. In order to move forward in completing the list of nine actions identified in the trails action agenda, and accomplish the trails vision outlined in this report, the GTTF recommends the following:

DCR should:

1. Continue to serve as lead in the development of the long-distance trail system, monitor and report on progress, provide coordination and facilitation assistance, and facilitate communication between and among trail managers.
2. Continue to provide technical assistance to trail planners at the local and regional level and provide information on grant funding, as available, to build and connect the system.
3. Work with local governments to complete a state trails inventory, and establish a program for updating, training, and sharing information with local and regional trail developers.
4. Adopt and disseminate a uniform trail assessment system and signage standards and guidelines for long-distance trails.

Local and Regional Governments should:

1. Determine the final alignment of long-distance trails in their jurisdiction and define corridors and connecting trails that tie into the long-distance network.
2. Coordinate plans and implementation with adjacent jurisdictions within and outside the state to ensure that trail networks are linked together and marked consistently.
3. Complete a trail and greenway component in all county and town comprehensive plans.
4. Work with DCR to update and complete information in the statewide trail inventory.
5. Adopt a bicycle and pedestrian transportation plan, and support bike and pedestrian facilities in road construction and re-development projects.
6. Include funds for trails in annual capital and operating budgets and develop local and regional priorities consistent with statewide implementation plans.

Trail advocates and friends groups should

1. Assist in developing marketing tools, and promoting the economic, social, health, and ecological value and benefits of trails to various audiences.
2. Work with trail managers to expand or establish trail maintenance programs, and assist with coordination and oversight of volunteers.
3. Organize walks, bike rides, educational programs, and interpretive events to engage local leaders and decision-makers, and demonstrate the value of the trail network to local communities.
4. Assist in the planning, construction, and maintenance of trails in cooperation with local land managers.

Government agencies, non-profit organizations and friends groups should work collaboratively to:

1. Strengthen the public's understanding of the relationship between trails and public health.
2. Facilitate communication between trail providers, users, policy makers, and the private sector to resolve challenges and promote the long-distance trail system.
3. Seek creative ways to leverage resources to fund and complete the six "trunkline" trails, including public-private sector partnerships, incentives and entrepreneurial initiatives.

DCR Greenways and Trails Task Force (GTTF)

The work of the Greenways and Trails Task Force should continue as an informal group of collaborators to expand upon the issues identified in this report. A coordinated message is needed among trail users and other stakeholders for a statewide trail system to be successful.

The Task Force believes the establishment of the trunkline trail system is a critical step to advancing trails in Virginia, but it is only a first step. Policy recommendations and specific funding requests are beyond the scope of this report.

Conclusion











Progress in realizing the health, community livability, and environmental benefits associated with long-distance trails will require actions on many different fronts. Public, private and non-profit entities involved in trail development will need to work collaboratively, in order to elevate the status of trails in future public policy agendas and public budgets. Local and regional cooperation is needed to keep the inventory updated, plan and implement local and multi-jurisdictional trails, and acquire land or easements. Expanded programs are needed to teach skills to new trail developers and trail users, and nurture volunteer support groups. State leadership is needed to develop cohesive policies, to provide resources that aid and inform local efforts, and encourage or possibly leverage private-sector contributions. All partners need to work collaboratively to promote and reward best practices, and to improve coordination, planning and priority setting for multi-jurisdictional and long distance trails.

The work undertaken by the Greenways and Trails Task Force is a critical step to advancing trails in Virginia, but it is only a first step. In order to adequately implement the issues identified in this report and realize the benefits of an interconnected trail system throughout the Commonwealth, a statewide forum for continued discussion and problem solving and implementation will need to be established. The data collection, analysis, recommendations, and relationships established through the Task Force will serve as a solid foundation for continuing this dialogue and building partnerships to knit together the system.

Virginians of all backgrounds and political views are united in their concern about the quality of life for future generations—Virginia's long-distance trail system is an opportunity to create a legacy that will offer new choices, new destinations, renewed communities, and opportunities for personal fulfillment in the out-of-doors.

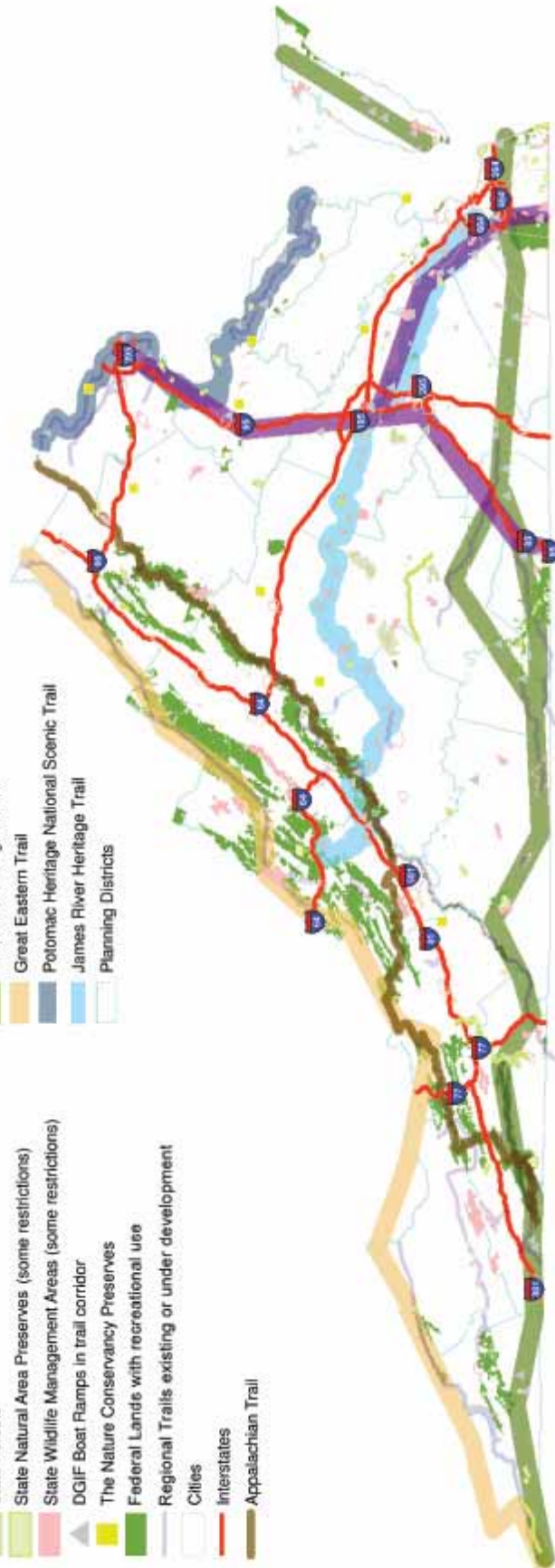
Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network

Legend

-  State Parks
-  State Forests
-  State Natural Area Preserves (some restrictions)
-  State Wildlife Management Areas (some restrictions)
-  DGIIF 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 Corridors

-  East Coast Greenway
-  Beaches to Bluegrass Trail
-  Great Eastern Trail
-  Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail
-  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_areas_preserves/index.shtml
 State Forests--www.doi.virginia.gov/forests/index.htm
 State Wildlife Management Areas-- www.dgif.virginia.gov/wmas/

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/r6/gw/
 National Fish and Wildlife Refuges--www.fws.gov/refuges/refugeLocator/Maps/Virginia.html
 For other federal recreation areas, search www.recreation.gov

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.

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

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A. Excerpt from the 2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey and 2006 DCR Trail Survey of Local and Regional Governments	35
Attachment B. List of Meetings, Workshop, and Outreach Events	40
Attachment C. Potential Long-distance Trail Planning Partners and Web sites	41
Attachment D. List of Resources	44
Attachment E. Statewide Trail Organization and Funding in Nearby States	45
Attachment F. Existing Recreation Opportunities	49
Attachment G. Long-distance Trail Action Plan Template	52

**Attachment A. Excerpt from the 2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey and
2006 DCR Trail Survey of Local and Regional Governments**

**2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey
Top 20 Ranking of Outdoor Recreation Activities
Based on Percent of Households Participating**

<u>2006 Rank</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>% of pop. 2006</u>
1	Walking for pleasure	72
2	Visiting historic sites	56
3	Driving for pleasure	55
4	Swimming	44
5	Visiting nat. areas, parks	44
6	Sunbathing on beach	36
7	Fishing	26
8	Picnicking	26
9	Using a playground	25
10	Boating	24
11	Jogging	24
12	Visiting gardens, arboretums	21
13	Bicycling	21
14	Camping	18
15	Hiking, backpacking	16
16	Golf	14
17	Basketball	12
18	Fitness trail	10
19	Soccer	9
20	Snow skiing, boarding	9

Other Trail-based activities outside of the top 20:

Off-road motorized 7%

Horseback riding 6%

In-Line Skating 5%

2006 Trail Survey of Local and Regional Governments

Purpose

In February of 2006, a survey was sent to local governments to obtain feedback on trails from the perspective of users, managers and planners. A similar survey was sent to planning district commissions with questions for regional planners. The goal was to determine the most significant problems faced by trail planners, users, and managers and to learn what assistance local governments and regional planners expected from the state.

Methodology

A one-page questionnaire was sent to the parks and recreation director at each local government asking them to rank the top three responses to a series of questions. Sixty-nine Virginia counties have full-time parks and recreation departments, as do 21 incorporated towns and 38 cities. Responses were received from 14 cities, 38 counties, 2 towns, and 2 trail management entities — a response rate of about 44 percent. Local government responses were evaluated based on whether a locality reported itself as urban, rural, or mixed (transitioning from rural to urban).

A similar questionnaire was sent to each planning district commission (PDC). Responses were received from all.

Responses

Regional planners reported that trails most benefit the region by promoting active living with healthier options for everyday

routines. Trail users who get to places on their own power not only reduce their risk for chronic disease, they have less impact on air and water quality, use less fuel reserves, and make lighter demand on congested traffic routes than automobile users. Regional planners also valued trails because they provide recreation alternatives for all ages, incomes and abilities. Other important benefits included attracting businesses; separating hiker, joggers, and bicyclists from roadway traffic and road shoulders; enhancing quality-of-life indicators that serve to attract and keep families/young people in the area; and creating outdoor environmental educational opportunities (see Table A-8).

Trail services to regional and local governments

Survey respondents were also asked to rank the most important way the state can assist with trail-related efforts (outside of funding) through the Trails and Greenways Program. Regional planners ranked providing a clearinghouse for technical documents and other trails-related information at the top, along with maintaining an up-to-date statewide trail inventory and Web site for trail promotion. Respondents also valued on-site trail evaluation and assessment and educational workshops and conferences. Areas of assistance requested in the "other" category include sharing equipment, providing grant writing and environmental compliance workshops, sharing stories and technical assistance at local trail meetings promoting trails to businesses and citizens, and assisting local planners with public relation/educational campaigns and materials on the benefits of trails, greenways, bikeways, etc.

Table A-8. Top Three Ways Trails Benefit the Region

Ranking	Benefit
1	Provide recreation alternatives for all ages, incomes and abilities
2	Promote active living with healthier options for everyday routines
3	Attract businesses and ecotourists

Table A-9. Top Four Ways DCR Can Assist with Trail-related Efforts

PDC Ranking	Local Government Ranking	DCR Assistance
1	1	Provide a clearinghouse for technical documents and other trails-related information and contact data for trail professionals and volunteer groups
2	4	Maintain an up-to-date statewide trail inventory and Web site for trail promotion
3	2	Provide on-site trail evaluation and assessment
4	3	Provide educational workshops and conferences

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Greenways and Trails Task Force

Table A-10. Top Four Needs for Trails

PDC Ranking	Local Government Ranking	Trail Needs
1	1	Connected regional trail systems (trunkline)
2	4	Trails in residential neighborhoods (spur)
3	2	Upgrade and maintenance of existing trails
4	3	Trails in parks

Table A-11. Top Three Challenges for Trail Planners

PDC Ranking	Local Government Ranking	Challenges
1	1	Lack of funding for trail planning
2	2	Acquiring trail corridors
3	3	Lack of political support

Table A-12. Top Four Challenges for Trail Users

PDC Ranking	Local Government Ranking	Challenges
1	2	No trails close to home or work
2	1	Lack of information on existing trails
3	4	Concerns about their safety on the trail
4	3	Poorly maintained trails

For local governments, providing a clearinghouse was again ranked the top way the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) could help, but on-site evaluation and assessment ranked second, followed by educational workshops and conferences. An up-to-date inventory is probably less important to local governments because they are not as involved with trail linkages across jurisdictional lines. Local governments would also like DCR to host public meetings about trail benefits and liabilities and provide developers with economic justification for making private trails accessible to the public (see Table A-9).

Connecting through regional trail systems

Asked to rank their organization's top need for trails, both regional planners and local governments responded that connected regional trail systems (trunkline trails) were most important (see Table A-10).

Challenges for trail planners

Regional planners and local governments agree that a lack of funding and difficulty in acquiring a trail corridor are the two major problems for trail planners. Rural and transitioning localities were more likely to report that regulatory hurdles were a problem, which may reflect a lack of experience dealing with regulatory agencies on trail projects. Urban localities were more likely to rank lack of information as a problem. All local governments responding reported a lack of political support for trails (see Table A-11).

Challenges for trail users

Regional planners identified the need for more trails close to home as foremost in response to the survey (see Table A-12). Communities built after the advent of the automobile often lack bike/pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks or roads with speeds conducive to bicycling. Trails and greenways on public lands may not be easily accessible to local communities. Easy access to trails depends both on proximity and awareness of the trail. Many communities do not have the funds to properly sign and promote existing trails. In fact, lack of information about trails was ranked the number one problem for trail users by local governments. In rural areas with smaller tax bases, the need for marketing is more acute. Respondents to a 2006 survey by BikeWalk Virginia also reported that there was inadequate sharing of trail-related information, and the most sought-after user information was trail maps.

Due to the sale of farm and timberlands and other development pressures, existing trails on private lands are disappearing. This was ranked the number one problem for trail users in Hanover, Lancaster, Rappahannock and Buchanan counties. Five out of six respondents in rural southwestern Virginia were also concerned about this issue. In rural areas, the public relies on the use of large farms or timberlands to walk, bicycle, hunt or ride horses. Unless the state or federal government has significant land holdings, there is often little public land available.

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Greenways and Trails Task Force

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Table A-13. Top Four Challenges for Trail Managers

Local Government Ranking	Challenges
1	Lack of funding for trail maintenance
2	Conflicts between different kinds of users
3	Lack of user etiquette/environmental ethics
4	Decreasing volunteer support

Local governments ranked safety as less of a problem for users than the maintenance of trails. Localities that were transitioning from rural to urban communities were more likely to express concerns about safety. This may reflect a problem with perception as these areas make this transition or reflect that trails in urban areas seem safer because they get more use. In urban areas, trail maintenance becomes more of an issue, presumably because activity on the trail increases the wear-and-tear. This may also be a reflection of a larger pool of users reporting maintenance problems.

Conflicts between user groups was ranked a significant problem for trail managers in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads, where there is more demand on existing trails. User conflict was also an issue in rural areas like the Shenandoah Valley and Southwest Virginia, where trails in National Forests serve hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians.

Maintenance of trails was ranked a problem in five out of seven responses from the Shenandoah Valley region, and in two-thirds of the responses from Northern Virginia. At least

half of the responses from Central Virginia, the Roanoke Valley and Southwest Virginia ranked maintenance as a problem for users and managers.

Challenges for trail managers

In urban areas where trails get the most use, localities report that maintenance of existing trails is more important than new trail construction. Half of these urban respondents felt that upgrading and maintenance of existing trails outranked the need for new trails. Lack of funding for trail maintenance was clearly the number one problem for trail managers across the state (see Table A-13).

Rural localities report that decreasing volunteer support is a problem for trail managers. Many trail user groups report a lack of younger, newer members. This could be the result of an aging population and also indicative of a less active younger generation. As these new members replace retiring ranks of volunteers, there is a growing concern that their numbers may be lower in future years.

Attachment B. List of Meetings, Workshop, and Outreach Events

October 30, 2008, Scenic Rivers Advisory Board, presentation
November 13, 2008, **PHNST** Caucus, Loudoun Co., VA
November 24, 2008, **GET**, WV-VA partners conf call
December 1-3, 2008, **JRHT** Corridor Analysis, bicycle tour route
Jan. 9, 2009, **GET**, Bluefield
Jan. 22, 2009, **JRHT**, Lynchburg
Feb TBD **GET**, Buchanan/Dickenson meeting
Feb 12, 2009 **ECG**, Mecklenburg County
Feb 19, 2009 **ECG**, Brunswick County
Feb 19, 2009 **JRHT** (Middle James group), Lynchburg
Feb 26, 2009 **ECG**, Dinwiddie County
Feb 25 2009 **ECG**, Southside PDC
March 2009 **PHNST**, Northern Virginia Regional Commission Design Charette
March 7, 2009, Virginia Horse Council, Statewide Trails presentation
March 9, 2009, Virginia Bike Summit, Statewide Trails presentation
March 10, 2009 **ECG**, Hampton Roads PDC
March 25, 2009 **ECG**, Crater PDC
April 10-11, **GET** gap meeting and scoping, Hinton WV and Narrows, VA
April 22 2009 **ECG**, George Washington Regional Commission
April 29, 2009 **ECG**, Richmond Regional PDC
May 8-10, 2009 **ECG**, South Eastern Foothills Coalition Conf., Cumberland Gap NHP
May 13, 2009 **ECG**, Northern Virginia Regional Commission
June 27-29, 2009 **GET**, Regional Summit- Breaks Interstate Park

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Attachment C. Potential Long-distance Trail Planning Partners and Web sites

The next step in developing detailed strategies for each long distance trail will require functioning planning teams that would engage partners and assist in trail planning tasks at the local level. The following table is a starting point for development of these Trunkline Trail Planning Teams.

Trail	Coordinating Entity	Primary Partners
Appalachian National Scenic Trail	NPS-Appalachian Trail Park Office Appalachian Trail Conservancy	Potomac Appalachian Trail Club Natural Bridge AT Club Piedmont AT Hikers (PATH) Tidewater AT Club Old Dominion AT Club Roanoke AT Club Outdoor Club at Virginia Tech Mt Rogers AT Club George Washington and Jefferson National Forests National Park Service – Shenandoah NP DCR – Sky Meadows, Grayson Highlands State Parks DGIF-G R Thompson wildlife management area PDCs Local Governments
Beaches to Bluegrass Trail	- TBD -	Roanoke River Rails-To-Trails Virginia Horse Council Activate Martinsville Virginia Creeper Trail Club Mt Rogers AT Club Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Association Mendota Trail Association Dan River Basin Association Richmond & Danville Trail Association Southern Appalachian Greenway Alliance Southwestern Virginia Trail Authority George Washington and Jefferson National Forests NPS – Blue Ridge Parkway NPS – Overmountain Victory Trail COE – Kerr Reservoir DCR – First Landing, Occoneechee, Staunton River, Staunton Battlefield, Fairystone, Grayson Highlands, Natural Tunnel, New River Trail and Wilderness Road state parks DGIF-Turkeycock, Fairystone Farms, Dick Cross wildlife management areas PDCs Local governments Community Design Assistance Center-VA Tech
East Coast Greenway	East Coast Greenway Alliance	Roanoke River Rails-To-Trails Virginia Capital Trail Foundation Chester Linear Trail Group Friends of the Lower Appomattox River National Park Service (multiple units) Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

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Greenways and Trails Task Force

		<p>DCR-Mason Neck, Leesylvania, Pocahontas, Occoneechee, and Chippokes state parks DGIF-Chickahominy, Cavalier (Dismal Swamp tract) wildlife management areas VA Dept. of Rail and Public Transportation VA Dept. of Transportation PDCs Local governments</p>
Great Eastern Trail	<p>Great Eastern Trail Association</p> <p>Potomac Appalachian Trail Club</p>	<p>George Washington and Jefferson National Forests National Park Service Appalachian Trail Conservancy American Hiking Society IMBA – Great Eastern Mountain Trail Virginia Horse Council DCR-Breaks Interstate Park DGIF-T.M. Gathright wildlife management area PDCs Local governments Community Design Assistance Center-VA Tech</p>
James River Heritage Trail	- TBD -	<p>James River Association Virginia Canal and Navigation Society Virginia Council on Indians Virginia Bicycling Federation Bike Walk Virginia Virginia Odyssey, Inc. East Coast Greenway Alliance Virginia Capital Trail Foundation Virginia Horse Council Sierra Club, Virginia Chapter Lynchburg / Central Virginia Greenways National Park Service – multiple units DCR – Chippokes, Powhatan, James River and Douthat state parks DGIF-Hardware River, James River, Ragged Island, Hog Island, Chickahominy wildlife management areas George Washington and Jefferson National Forests VA Dept. of Historic Resources VA Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services VA Dept. of Transportation Natural Bridge AT Club PDCs Local governments</p>
Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail	NPS-Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail Office	<p>BikeWalk Virginia Potomac Heritage Trail Association Fairfax Trails and Streams Assoc Prince William County Trails and Streams Virginia Horse Council Washington Area Bicyclist Association Virginia Bicycling Federation Northern Virginia Park Authority National Park Service – multiple park units Fort Belvoir and Quantico Military Base DCR – Mason Neck, Leesylvania, Widewater, Caledon and Westmoreland state parks PDCs Local governments</p>

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

Greenway Organization Web Sites

National Organization Websites:

American Canoe Association	www.americancanoe.org
American Hiking Society	www.americanhiking.org
American Recreation Coalition	www.tools4outdoors.us
American Trails	www.americantrails.org
Bicycling and Walking Information Center	www.walkinginfo.org
Bikes Belong Coalition	www.bikesbelong.org
Equestrian Land Conservation Resource	www.elcr.org
Friends of the Capt John Smith Chesapeake NHT	www.friendsofthejohnsmithtrail.org
League of American Bicyclists	www.bikeleague.org
International Mountain Biking Assoc	www.imba.com
National Center for Bicycling & Walking	www.bikewalk.org
Partnership for the National Trails System	http://www.nationaltrailspartnership.org/
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy	www.railtrails.org
Trails and Greenways Clearinghouse	www.trailsandgreenways.org

Virginia Trunkline Trails:

Appalachian Trail Conservancy	www.appalachiantrail.org
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

Virginia Organizations:

BikeWalk Virginia	www.bikewalkvirginia.org
Virginia Bicycling Federation	www.vabike.org
Virginia Conservation Network	www.vcnva.org
Virginia Canals and Navigations Society	vacanals.org
Virginia Horse Council	www.virginiahorsecouncil.org
Virginia Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition	www.vohvc.org

Virginia State Agencies or Affiliates

Dept. Of Conservation and Recreation	www.dcr.virginia.gov
Dept. Of Game and Inland Fisheries	www.dgif.virginia.gov
Dept. Of Forestry	www.dof.virginia.gov
Dept. Of Transportation	www.vdot.virginia.gov
Virginia Tourism Corporation	www.virginia.org
Community Design Assistance Center (VA Tech)	www.cdac.arch.vt.edu

Federal Agencies

U.S. Forest Service	www.fs.fed.us
U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service	www.fws.gov
Chesapeake Bay Gateways Program	www.baygateways.net
National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program	www.nps.gov/rtca
Potomac Heritage NST	www.npg.gov/pohe
Appalachian NST	www.nps.gov/appa
John Smith Chesapeake NHT	www.nps.gov/cajo

Attachment D. List of Resources

Bowker, J.M., John C. Bergstrom, and Joshua Gill. 2004. *The Virginia Creeper, Washington and Old Dominion, and New River Trail: An Assessment of User Demographics, Preferences, and Economics*. Virginia DCR, USDA Forest Service and University of Georgia.

Exploring Policy Change in the Development of Community Trails, from the Centers for Disease Control funded Physical Activity Policy Research Network (PAPRN)
http://prc.slu.edu/Documents/PreventionWorks/Community_Trail_Policy_Brief-Final_11_29_06.pdf (PDF-270k)

Nathaniel Mason Raulett and K. Edward Lay. *Historic Roads of Virginia Early Road Location: Key to Discovering Historic Resources*. Virginia Highway and Transportation Research Council. 1980.

Parke Rouse, Jr. *Traveling the Roads and Waterways of Early Virginia*. Reprint from the Iron Worker Quarterly publication of Lynchburg Foundry. 1973.

Rails to Trails Conservancy's Trail Funding Grid. 2008.
www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/resource_docs/RTCTrailFundingSourceListing.xls

Virginia Outdoors Plan-2007. www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/vop.shtml

Water Trail Toolbox: How to Plan Build and Manage a Water Trail.
www.baygateways.net/watertrailtools.com

Trail Design and Construction Resources

Birchard, Jr., William and Robert Proudman. 2000. *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance*. Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Harpers Ferry, WV.

Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads, and Campgrounds
www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/fspubs/07232816/index.htm

Rails-to-trails conservancy's Trail Building Toolbox
www.railstotrails.org/whatwedo/trailbuilding/technicalassistance/toolbox/toolbox_index.html

The Federal Highway Administration www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/manuals.htm

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center www.walkinginfo.org/engineering
www.bicyclinginfo.org/engineering

The Professional Trailbuilders Association www.trailbuilders.org

The U.S. Forest Service www.fs.fed.us/eng/pubs/#prog_area

Trail Solutions: IMBA's Guide to Building Sweet Singletrack
www.imba.com/resources/trail_building/trail_solutions.html

Attachment E. Statewide Trail Organization and Funding in Nearby States

This section discusses the underlying organizational structure and funding sources for some other states that have a statewide trail system. While many states utilize a portion of the real estate transfer tax for trail development, other sources of funding include a property tax surcharge, bond funds, trust funds, lottery proceeds, registration fees from motorized vehicles, the sale of annual passes or permits, or general fund appropriations. Many states leverage funding by providing a 50 percent match for local government projects.

Types of organizations overseeing trail development range from governor-appointed commissions to department-appointed councils or committees. In other states, land trusts are taking an active role in trail development. For example, the Boxford Trail Association/Boxford Open Land Trust is “preserving and protecting natural and aesthetically important land and wildlife habitat, including fields, forests, wetlands, and trails to preserve the nature of Boxford Massachusetts.” BTA/BOLT’s membership includes an active group of horse people and friends. The Nevada County Land Trust, also very active in trail development “exists to create a balance between nature and the needs of the people who make a life and a livelihood here.” Their mission is to “enrich the deep community connection with our land — today, tomorrow, and forever.” All options should be explored to determine the best long-term approach for Virginia.

Florida

In 2008, the Florida Greenways and Trails Act established a statewide system of greenways. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), together with other agencies, was authorized to spend public funds and accept gifts for such purposes. The 1400-mile Florida National Scenic Trail was recognized as the statewide non-motorized trail. This recognition encouraged state land-buying agencies to consider the trail a single project with multiple phases, with assistance provided by the Florida Trail Association and DEP’s Office of Greenways and Trails.

In addition to a portion of the real estate transfer tax, the Internal Improvement Trust Fund, the Land Acquisition Trust Fund, and the Florida Preservation 2000 Trust Fund (bond) support land conservation and trail development.

The Greenways and Trails Council is composed of 21 members as follows: appointed by the Governor (5), appointed by the President of the Senate (3), appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives (3), secretaries or representatives from related state agencies or commissions (8), planning districts (1) and local governments (1). The Council facilitates a statewide system of interconnected landscape linkages including conservation corridors, greenbelts, recreational corridors and trails, scenic corridors, utilitarian corridors, reserves, regional parks and preserves, ecological sites, and cultural/historic recreational sites.

All agencies of the state, and regional and local governments through their comprehensive plans, are required to recognize the special character of publicly owned lands and waters designated by the state as greenways and trails and to avoid any action which will impair their use as designated.

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

Maryland

This program began in earnest with a Governor's Greenways Commission back in the 80's. The program benefited from the real estate transfer tax, as well as other state-level funding programs under Smart Growth initiatives. The Governor recently announced his new initiative "Smart, Green, and Growing (SGG)" promoting sustainable development while protecting MD's ecological resources. A component of SGG is a new interactive GreenPrint (new term for green infrastructure) mapping tool and website, www.greenprint.maryland.gov

The state is also placing a renewed emphasis on trails in connection to health and is working on a state-level trail plan focused on transportation. An executive order established the Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature to promote outdoor experiential and learning activities including the creation of trails to connect communities, parks and schools.

North Carolina

North Carolina's Recreation and Park Association helped convince the General Assembly to establish the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) in 1994 to fund improvements in the state's park system, to fund grants for local governments and to increase the public's access to the state's beaches. About 15 percent of these funds, generated by a portion of the real estate transfer tax, help with trail development. The Parks and Recreation Authority, an eleven-member appointed board, was also created to allocate funds from PARTF to the state parks (65 percent) and to the grants program for local governments (30 percent). PARTF is the primary source of funding to build and renovate facilities as well as to buy land for new and existing parks.

The Authority reports each year to the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations, the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Natural and Economic Resources, the Fiscal Research Division, and the Environmental Review Commission.

North Carolina has set the goal of creating the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST) that, when complete, will link Clingman's Dome along the western edge of the state in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Jockey's Ridge State Park on the Outer Banks – a distance of over 900 miles.

Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Greenways Partnership Commission, established by Governor Ridge in 1998, consists of 22 individuals all appointed by the Governor. The Commission is chaired by the Secretaries of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT).

The Greenways Partnership Advisory Committee (AC) was also established as an interest group of approximately 120 individuals from around the state representing public and private sector greenways-related organizations.

The Partnership Commission and AC were charged with developing a vision and action plan for greenways in PA. As a result, in June 2001, "The Pennsylvania Greenways: An Action Agenda for Creating Connections" was published. The Plan for Creating Connections sets the ambitious goal of a statewide network of greenways, and a greenway in every local community by 2020.

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

The Plan also set the direction for a new greenways program to be established, organized around four goals:

- Plan and Build Greenway Connections
- Create a Greenways Organizational Framework
- Provide Greenways Funding
- Provide Greenways Technical Assistance and Outreach

In August 2001, Governor Ridge's Executive Order 1998-3, was amended, and charged the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the Department of Transportation (PennDOT), assisted by the Pennsylvania Greenways Partnership Commission, to implement the plan. It designated DCNR as lead, and established an inter-agency work group and tasked them with working together to implement the program.

Tennessee

In 1994, the Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association successfully campaigned for legislation that would create a stable funding source for Local Parks and Recreation that was targeted at Cities and Counties. These funds were generated through a real estate recordation tax of \$01.75 cents per one hundred dollars of value. Since that legislation was passed, there has been over \$60 million given in 50%/50% matching grants to cities and counties across Tennessee to acquire new land for parks and to develop new and additional facilities at existing parks. A similar fund was created with that legislation for a state lands acquisition program and \$50 million dollars in state funds have leveraged a similar amount to add/create new state Natural Areas and add land to existing state parks, forest and wildlife management areas.

The state's first Greenways and Trails Planning Committee was established in 1993 with the creation of the National Recreational Trails Program and additionally, a Foundation was formed to create a statewide system of greenways that was endorsed by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, the Tennessee Municipal League and the Conservation Fund. This foundation has conserved more than 7,500 acres through private donations and awarded more than 150 small grants to encourage trail development.

The Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund (\$10 million annually), created by the Governor in 2005, has invested \$30 million dollars in grants to leverage funds for a total of \$57,609,000 in conservation purchases that protect approximately 42,600 acres of priority land in Tennessee. In 2006, an additional \$20 million in funding was allocated for the special purchase of significant Bowaters Southern Paper Corporation land, which was being placed on the open market. Another significant purchase of 122,000 acres of property in the northern Cumberland Mountain area was accomplished through a partnership of the State of Tennessee (\$85,000,000), the Tennessee Nature Conservancy (\$17,000,000) and two private timber investment companies. This partnership acquired fee simple ownership of 20,000 acres, outstanding timber rights to 60,000 acres of the Sundquist Wildlife Management area and access to timber rights on the remaining 42,000 acres of land.

The Tennessee Wetlands Acquisition Fund was created in 1986. A portion of the 1994 real estate transfer tax is used to fund wetland acquisition, legislation supported by a coalition of hunters, hikers and paddlers.

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

The Cumberland Trail (CT), a Tennessee State Scenic Hiking Trail, became Tennessee's 53rd state park in 1998. The Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Park will contain a core corridor of 22,000 acres which contains 170 miles of the 300+ miles of trail. The Cumberland Trail begins at the tri-state corner of Tennessee-Kentucky and Virginia in the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park and stretches south to Signal Point Park in the Chickamauga Chattanooga National Military Park and Prentice Cooper State Forest and Wildlife Management Area just outside Chattanooga.

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) has provided over \$8 million dollars in grants to cities, counties, state and federal agencies along with private, non-profit trail user organizations building and rehabilitating trails on publicly owned lands in Tennessee. The RTP grants have been matched with over \$2 million of cash, volunteer labor, and donations of land, materials and equipment to accomplish projects that otherwise would not have been accomplished.

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

Attachment F. Existing Recreation Opportunities as of September 1, 2009

Please note: There are gaps or existing roads between many of these trails.

Beaches to Bluegrass

Existing Trail Segments	Length in Miles	Users		
		Hikers	Bicyclists	Horses
First Landing State Park	19	X		
Occoneechee State Park Trails	15	X	X	X
Buggs Island Lake Trails-COE		X		
Lacrosse to Brodnax-Tobacco Heritage	4	X	X	X
Staunton River State Park Trails	6	X	X	X
Staunton River Battlefield State Park Trails		X	X	
Danville Riverwalk	6	X	X	X
Ringold to Pittsylvania Trail	6	X		
Smith River/Fieldale Trail	7	X	X	
Philpott Reservoir Trail System	25	X	X	4.5
Blue Ridge Parkway (on-road) & parallel trails	55	X	X	
New River Trail State Park segment	16	X	X	X
Virginia Highlands Horse Trail	63	X	*X (portions)	X
Iron Mountain Trail	19	X	X	X
Virginia Creeper Trail	12	X	X	X
Grayson Highlands State Park	26	X	X	X
South Holston Reservoir Trails				
Overmountain Victory Trail	1	X		
Cumberland Gap National Historical Park Trails				
Daniel Boone Heritage Trail route (on-road)	70		X	
Wilderness Road Trail	10	X	X	X

*includes some sections in Wilderness not open to bicyclists

Great Eastern Trail

Existing Trail Segments	Length In Miles	Users		
		Hikers	Bicyclists	Horses
Tuscarora Trail (in VA)	57	X		
Tuscarora Trail (on USFS lands in VA)		X	X	X
Mill Mountain Trail	5	X	X	X
Tibbett Knob Trail	2.4	X		
<i>Halfmoon Trail*</i>	1.8	X		X
<i>Bucktail Connector*</i>	2.7	X		X
<i>Bucktail Trail*</i>	.4	X	X	X
<i>Long Mountain Trail*</i>	8.8	X	X	X
North Mountain Trail	13	X	X	X
Snyder Trail	1.3	X	X	X
Shenandoah Mt Trail	6.5	X	X	X
North River Trail	4	X	X	X
Tearjacket Trail	3.2	X		X
Shenandoah Mt Trail	27.5	X	X (portion)	
<i>Benson Run Trail</i>	1.75	X	X	X

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

Piney Mt Trail	3.5	X	X	X
Warm Springs Mt Trail	.5	X	X	X
Muddy Run Trail	1.2	X	X	X
Hidden Valley Trail	1.75	X	X	X
Bogan Run Trail	5.5	X	X	X
Total	147.8			

**The trails in italics are alternates to the main route on the Mill Mountain and Tibbett Knob trails, and hikers can elect to take this route in order to replenish water and to stay overnight at Trout Pond Recreation Area.*

East Coast Greenway

Existing Off-Road Trail Segments	Length In Miles	Users		
		Hikers	Bicyclists	Horses
Arlington Memorial Bridge	.4	X	X	
Mount Vernon Trail	17	X	X	
Silverbrook & Ox Road Multi-Use Trails (Fairfax)	2	X	X	
Richmond Hwy & Telegraph Multi-Use Trails	2.3	X	X	
Fairfax County Pkwy Multi-Use Trail	1.4	X	X	
Grist Mill Park Multi-Use Trail	.4	X	X	
Lower Appomattox River Greenway	11	X	X	
Lacrosse to Brodnax-Tobacco Heritage	4	X	X	X
Virginia Capital Trail	16	X	X	
Dismal Swamp Canal Trail	8.5	X	X	X
Total	63			

James River Heritage Trail

Existing Off-Road Trail Segments	Length In Miles	Users		
		Hikers	Bicyclists	Horses
Fort Boykin and Fort Huger Trails		X		
Chippokes Plantation State Park Trails	3.5	X	X	10 X
Hog Island Wildlife Management Area Trails		X		
Brandon Plantation		X		
James River Wildlife Management Area Trails		X		
Historic Jamestowne Trails and Roads	8	X	X	
Huntington Park Trails		X	X	
Mariner Museum Trails	5	X		
Westover Plantation		X		
Lawrence Lewis Jr. Park		X		
Virginia Capital Trail	16	X	X	
Osborne Park	.75	X		
Presquile National Wildlife Refuge		X		
City Point Trails		X		
Dutch Gap Conservation Area	4	X	X	
Drewry's Bluff		X		
James River Park System Trails	20	X	X	
Richmond Historic Canals and Riverfront		X		
Robious Landing Park	3	X		
Hardware River Wildlife Management Area Trails		X		
Totier Creek Park Trails		X		
James River State Park Trails	15	X	X	X
Lynchburg Trail System	21	X	X (portions)	

Virginia's Long-Distance Trail Network: Connecting Our Commonwealth
Greenways and Trails Task Force

Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

Existing Trail Segments	Length In Miles	Users		
		Hikers	Bicyclists	Horses
Loudoun Co. Linear Park (Fairfax to KLB Park)	13	X		X (portion)
Northern Fairfax (Upper Potomac Properties/Seneca)	6	X		X
PHNST route in Riverbend Park	2.5	X	X	X
PHNST route in Great Falls Park	2.5	X		X
PHNST route in Scott's Run Nature Preserve	2	X		
Potomac Heritage Trail (GW Memorial Parkway)	10	X		
Mt Vernon Trail (GW Memorial Parkway)	18.5	X	X	
PHNST route in So Fairfax (Mt Vernon – Occoquan)	6	X	X	
Alexandria Heritage Trail	23	X	X	
Potomac Heritage Trail (Belmont Bay-Leesylvania S.P)	1.5	X	X	
PHNST route in Prince William Forest Park	6	X	X	
Government Island (Stafford Co)	2	X		
Historic Falmouth-Ferry Farm Trail	.5	X	X	
<i>Northern Neck Heritage Trail</i>	86		X	
Total	179.5			

Items in italics are principally on-road routes

Appalachian National Scenic Trail (taken from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy site at www.appalachiantrail.org/site/c.mqLTIYOwGIF/b.4805443/k.81BB/Explore_the_Trail_Virginia.htm)

Foot traffic only

One-fourth of the Appalachian Trail (550 miles) lies in Virginia. It varies from easy hiking to very difficult rock scrambling, from busy national parks to isolated wilderness areas. The northern Virginia section stretches 54 miles from the Virginia/West Virginia state line south to Shenandoah National Park. Shenandoah National Park, with 104 miles of well-graded and well-maintained Trail and climbs rarely exceeding 500 or 1,000 feet, is excellent for beginning hikers and is noted for its many vistas and abundant wildlife. South of Shenandoah, the A.T. parallels the Blue Ridge Parkway. The farther south it goes, the more difficult the hiking becomes; the treadway is well-graded, but includes a number of 2,000- and 3,000-foot climbs. The Central Virginia section covers 226 miles from the southern end of Shenandoah National Park south to Pearisburg. The Southwest Virginia section of the Trail covers 166 miles from Pearisburg south to Damascus. For more information on each section, consult the following guidebooks:

[*Appalachian Trail Guide to Maryland and Northern Virginia with Side Trails*](#)

[*Appalachian Trail Guide to Shenandoah National Park with Side Trails*](#)

[*Appalachian Trail Guide to Central Virginia*](#)

[*Appalachian Trail Guide to Southwest Virginia*](#)

Attachment G. Long-distance Trail Action Plan Template (Next step for each trail work group)

	Project Tasks	Product/ Result	Lead Entity	Supporting Orgs	Target Date
Action #1:					
1-1	<i>Task:</i>				
1-2	<i>Task:</i>				
1-3	<i>Task:</i>				
1-4	<i>Task:</i>				

	Project Tasks	Product/ Result	Lead Entity	Supporting Orgs	Target Date
Action #2:					
2-1	<i>Task:</i>				
2-2	<i>Task:</i>				
2-3	<i>Task:</i>				
2-4	<i>Task:</i>				

	Project Tasks	Product/ Result	Lead Entity	Supporting Orgs	Target Date
Action #3:					
3-1	<i>Task:</i>				
3-2	<i>Task:</i>				
3-3	<i>Task:</i>				
3-4	<i>Task:</i>				