

**REPORT OF THE STATE TRAILS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**CURRENT AND FUTURE PLANS FOR A  
STATEWIDE SYSTEM OF ATTRACTIVE,  
SUSTAINABLE AND ENDURING TRAILS  
ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH**

**TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
AGRICULTURE, CHESAPEAKE AND NATURAL RESOURCES;  
THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES;  
AND THE VIRGINIA DELEGATE TO THE CHESAPEAKE BAY  
COMMISSION**



**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
RICHMOND  
OCTOBER 2018**

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## PREFACE

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This report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of § 10.1-204.1 of the Code of Virginia established by the 2015 Virginia Acts of Assembly (House Bill 1542; Delegate Lingamfelter). Enactment Section A of § 10.1-204.1 stipulates “that the Committee shall be appointed by the Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation and shall be composed of a representative from the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. National Park Service; the Virginia Director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission; and nonlegislative citizen members, including representatives from the Virginia Outdoors Plan Technical Advisory Committee and the Recreational Trails Advisory Committee and other individuals with technical expertise in trail creation, construction, maintenance, use, and management.”

The Advisory Committee shall examine and provide recommendations regarding:

- options to close the gaps in a statewide system of trails as described in § 10.1-204;
- creative public and private funding strategies and partnerships to leverage resources to fund the development of trails;
- integrated approaches to promote and market trail values and benefits;
- the development of specialty trails, including concepts related to old-growth forest trails across the Commonwealth;
- strategies to encourage and create linkages between communities and open space;
- strategies to foster communication and networking among trail stakeholders;
- strategies to increase tourism and commercial activities associated with a State trail system;
- strategies to enhance the involvement of organizations that promote outdoor youth activities, including the Boy Scouts of the U.S.A. and Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. and the 4-H program of the Virginia Cooperative Extension; and
- other practices, standards, statutes, and guidelines that the Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation determines may enhance the effectiveness of trail planning across the Commonwealth, including methods for receiving input regarding potential trail impacts upon owners of underlying or neighboring properties.

The following pages present the findings and recommendations of the State Trails Advisory Committee that was assembled in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

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# INTRODUCTION

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The State Trails Advisory Committee (STAC) met twice over Fiscal Year 2017-18. This report conveys the highlights from these two committee meetings and outlines important issues discussed beyond those defined in the legislative mandate, including the future of the STAC.

The committee meeting discussions and feedback received from a survey conducted to help to chart the course for future meetings, identified two primary challenges affecting the mission of the advisory committee. These concerns will be further addressed in this report.

The first challenge identified is the capacity of the group to affect change, due to its advisory nature, and the lack of funding and staff resources to support trails and the committee's efforts. It is the hope that the General Assembly will direct resources to implement the state trail system.

The second challenge is the absence of a statewide advocacy group like the former Virginia Trails Association [outlined below]. An advocacy group can unite urban, rural, flatland and mountain voices on behalf of trails and with a strong base of support, can influence how limited funds are allocated.

## **History of the Virginia Trails Association:**

On June 14, 1969, interested organizations and trails clubs met at Peaks of Otter Lodge to form the Virginia Trails Association. This association focused on trail clubs, service groups, organizations such as the Boy Scouts of America, and interested individuals and their efforts in providing a system of connected statewide trails for Virginia, not restricted to the mountain areas.

Under the leadership of William Bolger, William White, Larry Wood, Ed Page, Jeanette Fitzwilliams, Angela LaCombe, Barbara Nelson and others, this association provided leadership for systematic development of a statewide trails network. A preliminary list of goals and objectives were provided for group discussion at the Virginia Trails Association meeting in 1969, and by-laws were adopted on October 2, 1976.

## **Goals and Objectives:**

- To encourage and assist development of a Virginia Trails System;
- To encourage hiking and walking, and related interests such as photography, birdwatching, and plant study, among citizens not now enjoying these healthful forms of outdoor recreation;
- To encourage and assist in the formation of trail clubs;
- To speak on Commonwealth trail matters for all trail organizations' interest;
- To communicate with other state associations, such as the Conservation Council, and the government agencies at all levels to coordinate statewide and regional development of trails;
- To review and suggest legislative needs at all levels of government to develop a state trails network;
- To accept or transfer gifts, easements, and agreements for rights-of-way;

- To coordinate trail design, layout, standards, and maintenance efforts;
- To establish workshops on trail construction and maintenance for novices and local project crews;
- To document historic and cultural information on state trails;
- To prepare and distribute news, maps and other useful and necessary material for the information and stimulation of trail users; and
- To encourage interpretive programs related to trail use.

The Virginia Trails Association eventually merged with BikeWalk Virginia in 2005, when executive director Allen Turnbull assumed leadership. Effective January 2012, BikeWalk Virginia became Bike Virginia and dropped the Virginia Trails Association work to focus on bike tours and bicycling advocacy. Bike Virginia’s current executive director, Kim Perry, explained that “over the years we learned that advocating for bicycle and pedestrian issues often led us down different paths and there simply was not as much synergy in addressing both interests as we originally thought.” (Virginia Bicycling Federation online article, 1.14.12)

Although a higher level of advocacy may be needed for trails in Virginia, the accelerating pace of life, increased specialization of interests and lack of a common news feed challenge the most adept organizers. It is time to reexamine the tradition of expecting volunteers to carry the weight of trail development and maintenance. It is also time to determine if the value of active transportation within the linear corridors of a green infrastructure system is enough to warrant mainstreamed public investment.

## PROGRESS REPORT

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**Meeting Date: November 30, 2017**

**Location: Virginia State Capitol**

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The primary focus of the meeting was to discuss ways to become advocates for statewide trails. Staff from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (Department) opened the meeting with a review of the Department’s Division of Planning and Recreation Resources.

### **Outdoor Recreation Planning (in summary)**

- Development of the Virginia Outdoors Plan [the Commonwealth’s comprehensive outdoor recreation and land conservation plan] reports that according to the 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey:
  - 43% of Virginians ranked trails as the most needed recreational opportunity. The top four reasons for using trails are:
    - Pleasure and Relaxation 88.2%
    - Experience Scenery and Natural Environment 70.6%
    - Health and Physical Training 64.8%
    - Family and Social Outings 50%

- 70% considered it “very important” to have access to outdoor recreation opportunities. This is an increase of 15% since the 2011 survey.
  - 74% support state funding for outdoor recreation and 44% of those, support an increase in funding.
  - 96% ranked protection of Virginia’s Natural Areas and Open Space resources as “important” or “very important”.
- Master Plans: continued master planning for 42 state parks, currently 37 state parks are open to the public, two are under construction and three are awaiting development funding.
  - Statewide Trails: staff coordinates with partners/stakeholders in development of six statewide trails, connecting trails, and trail news.
  - Staffing: the Planning Section has a staff of 8.5 FTEs [full-time equivalent], however current appropriation is insufficient to cover existing staff and operations.

### **Design and Construction (in summary)**

- Design and Construction covers the facilities in state parks, natural area preserves, and conservation district-owned dams.
- During FY17, 25 projects were complete with total budgets of \$11 million.
- Staffing: the Design and Construction Section has a staff of eight FTEs, two vacancies that are unfunded, and current appropriation is insufficient to cover existing staff operations.

### **Virginia Tourism Corporation**

The Virginia Tourism Corporation provided a presentation on the use of trails to promote tourism in Virginia. The presentation showed that communities see trails as a resource to bring visitors into the community and considered the economic impacts that are associated with promoting state trails.

- Outdoor recreation generates \$21.9 million in consumer spending;
- 197,000 Virginia jobs;
- \$6.5 billion in wages and salaries; and
- \$1.2 billion in state and local tax revenues.

### **Trail Advocacy Panel Discussion**

The committee participated in a panel discussion moderated by the Department. The discussion provided helpful information on working effectively with the legislative branch for trail advocacy. The panel offered observations to assist the committee with the best approach for advocacy with organization, relationship building, and sound policy recommendations.

### **Outdoor Recreation Caucus**

Missy Neff, Director of the Government Relations for the Nature Conservancy, provided an overview of the Outdoor Recreation Caucus, established in 2016. The Outdoor Recreation Caucus is a non-partisan group for legislators and others who are interested in more passive forms of recreation.

### **Chesapeake Bay Commission**

Ann Jennings, Director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission, provided the STAC with the history of the commission. The Chesapeake Bay Commission is a tristate legislative commission involving Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, established by state law in 1980 and 1985. Ms. Jennings highlighted the intended purpose and the goals of the commission are to preserve, educate, and advocate for the present and future inhabitants of the Chesapeake Bay region.

### **Trails Chapter – 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan**

Janit Llewellyn Allen, Environmental Programs Planner with the Department, provided an update regarding the *Trails Chapter* as submitted for the 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan. The *Trails Chapter* will include:

- Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey Trails Statistics
- Statewide Trails Advisory Committee [HB 1542]
- Statewide and Connecting Trail Criteria
- Assets and Opportunities
- Challenges
- Recommendations

### **Trails Map**

The committee reviewed a Proposed and Existing State Connecting Trails Map developed by the Department for inclusion in the 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan (see map in Appendix A). While the effort to make trail connections is ongoing, the committee feels that this map may help in planning for future connections across regional boundaries.

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**Meeting Date: April 24, 2018**

**Location: Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center**

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The STAC meeting was held in conjunction with the Virginia Land Conservation and Greenways Conference in Roanoke. Almost 200 people attended the conference as it celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Trails System and offered a pre-conference workshop on Trail Towns. The conference hosted numerous keynote speakers to include: Charles Brown with the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, sponsored by the Virginia Department of Health, a new sponsor to the conference; Joan Maloof with the Old Growth Forest Network; Mike Passo with American Trails; Laura Belleville with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy; and Pete Eshelman with the Roanoke Regional Partnership.

The following is a summary of the STAC meeting held during the conference:

### **Forest Trails**

Pete Irvine with the US Forest Service, the largest public land manager in Virginia, opened with an update to forest trails. Mr. Irvine noted that it was the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Trails System Act and that the Forest Service continues to carry out their mission: “To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of the present and future generations.”



### **Train the Trainer**

Amy Camp with Cycle Forward and committee member, Ursula Lemanski, provided an overview of the Trail Towns “Train the Trainer” workshop conducted the day prior to the start of the conference. Program content was based on a review of trail town programs in other states along with work that is being done by other state agencies like Virginia Tourism and the Department of Housing and Community Development. The idea is to help towns welcome trail users, provide the services and facilities they need, encourage ecotourism and generate revenue in unexpected places.

The Trail Towns workshop is an example of a STAC recommendation that the Department has been able to fulfill with partner support. Although the Department has limited means to respond to STAC’s calls for funding, staff continue to pursue other means to advance the statewide trail system through STAC recommendations.

### **Legislative Update:**

Members, Sally Aungier and Champe Burnley, informed the committee of recent legislative successes and initiatives. The legislative successes involved the Virginia Horse Council and the Virginia Bicycling Federation. Mr. Burnley noted that these two groups may not always seem like logical partners and advised that it is more beneficial to look at the larger picture and consider common ground in order to achieve legislative success.

### **Future of Committee:**

Bill Conkle, representing the Department’s Division of Planning and Recreation Resources, led an interactive session for members to participate in discussions regarding the future of the STAC, as the legislation for the STAC has a sunset clause of January 1, 2021. It was suggested that the STAC devote the next meeting to strategic planning to address the committee’s future. Feedback at the session indicated that a potential outcome could be to split into a technical advisory committee made up of members who cannot lobby and an advocacy group that represents statewide interests.

### **2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan Recommendations**

In closing, the STAC members prioritized the list of recommendations (goals and objectives) they prepared for the 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan (Appendix B). The top two recommendations are to: (1) seek sources of funding for trail renovation and maintenance, and (2) obtain funding for a statewide study on the economic and other benefits of trails.

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### **Future STAC Meetings and Conferences**

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In response to the STAC feedback received in the April 2018 meeting, an effort to create a strategic planning retreat is underway. This task, guided by a STAC subcommittee and outside facilitators, is scheduled for early November 2018.

In April 2019, another STAC meeting will be held in Richmond during the Virginia Land Conservation and Greenways Conference hosted by Virginia’s United Land Trusts (VAULT) and the STAC. Although some STAC members would prefer a conference devoted entirely to greenways, much

like the series of Governor’s conferences held every few years from 1999 to 2008, no advocacy group like VAULT has offered to coordinate the effort. The East Coast Greenway Alliance has expressed interest in partnering with the STAC to host a joint conference in 2021, and the River Management Society is partnering with the Department to host a conference in 2020 that will focus on water trails and celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Virginia’s Scenic Rivers program.

## COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

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### May 2018 STAC Survey

Following up on ideas generated at the April 2018 meeting, the Department conducted a survey of STAC members to assist in charting the course for future meetings. A summary of the survey responses are as follows:

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***“If you were in charge of this group, what next steps would you initiate?”***

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- Some responses centered on how STAC should be organized and how often meetings should be held.
- There was interest in establishing a “wider net” to include convention and visitors bureaus, corporations, key municipalities and other partners to share the responsibility of advocating for funding and identifying barriers to trail development and construction.
- The establishment of an executive subcommittee to plan meetings and evaluate progress would be especially important if new members are added. This subcommittee and other small work groups should teleconference more often, as STAC may be too large and meet too seldom to drive change. The strategic planning retreat, guided by a skilled facilitator, will help define the roles and expectations of STAC members and DCR staff.
- Others would initiate more outreach and education through workshops and contact with legislators. Annual to quarterly one-day workshops are needed to provide training on design, maintenance, funding sources and other topics of concern for trail developers. Co-sponsoring workshops with national groups like the Professional Trail Builders Association would offer information on the latest and greatest tools and techniques from across the country.
- For advocates, more training on working with legislators and field trips to learn about successful projects is needed. Exposing elected officials at the highest levels, even the governor, to the level of trail infrastructure investment in other states would draw attention to the deficits here in the Commonwealth.
- Other next steps focused on the need for data on trails and trail volunteers to support advocacy efforts. Improvements to the trail and trailhead geospatial databases should focus on accuracy, accessibility and ease of use. Statewide dashboards to record and display volunteer hours and user counts could provide information for investors, planners, entrepreneurs and grant writers.
- Other respondents focused on identifying and closing gaps in state trail networks. A state plan that identifies gaps and includes a phased development plan for closing them should categorize the incremental funding needed to move forward. This work would

start at the local level, with reports from localities on their priorities and the funding sources they have targeted for implementation. Their reports should include all planning efforts completed regarding long distance trails. The effectiveness of the state plan could be measured by annual reports on planning and development projects funded and built.

- Other ideas focused in on funding trail development. In an effort to build political good will around funding for state trails, explore tax incentives for property owners who share a portion of their property with trail users, especially in economically distressed areas. Some committee members think an outdoor recreation bond that includes funding for state parks and regional trail and conservation “featured” projects (as identified in the Virginia Outdoors Plan) is long overdue.
- For some respondents, initiating expanded marketing efforts would provide ongoing positive publicity for trails. The development of a communication plan that utilizes multiple channels (i.e. social media and community presentations) would consistently reinforce the benefits of an active transportation network. Staff should measure the plan’s effectiveness in reaching both policy makers and the general public to keep it up to date.
- Partner with Virginia Tourism to launch a marketing campaign focused on group packages to increase trail tourism (i.e. mountain biking packages with lodging, hiking packages with dining, equestrian trail packages with winery tours, water trail packages with craft beer tasting, OHV packages with family fun, etc.) Since many trail users enjoy diverse opportunities, cross packages for longer stays could involve multiple trail-based excursions.

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***“Has the State Trails Advisory Committee been fulfilling its purpose to assist the Commonwealth in developing and implementing a statewide system of attractive, sustainable, connected, and enduring trails for the perpetual use and enjoyment of the citizens of the Commonwealth and future generations?”***

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The following responses indicate that the members are not completely satisfied with the work that the committee has completed thus far, and additional strategic planning is needed in order to be successful in the future.

- The group needs to take a more proactive role to steer statewide policy, funding, and direction.
- We have put a framework and groundwork in place; however, it is important to have an organization/committee in place with a mission and vision to work toward advocacy and trail development.
- Some of that is happening on the ground independently of STAC or DCR.
- A missing need is coordinating funding applications to VDOT with top priority statewide trail needs.
- Trails are really developed and funded at a local or regional level. This committee helps think about the state policy issues, but actually implementing a statewide trail system is done at a different level.

- The committee has been in the early stages of getting organized. It is unclear how the committee's work has changed anything "on the ground" yet.
- No-- the committee has not targeted and reached its audience -- policymakers and the general public. More can and should be done there.
- With limited resources, DCR is doing the minimum needed to meet the requirements of the law; however, this is not adequate to make STAC effective. Two-hour meetings twice a year are not adequate.

## CONCLUSION

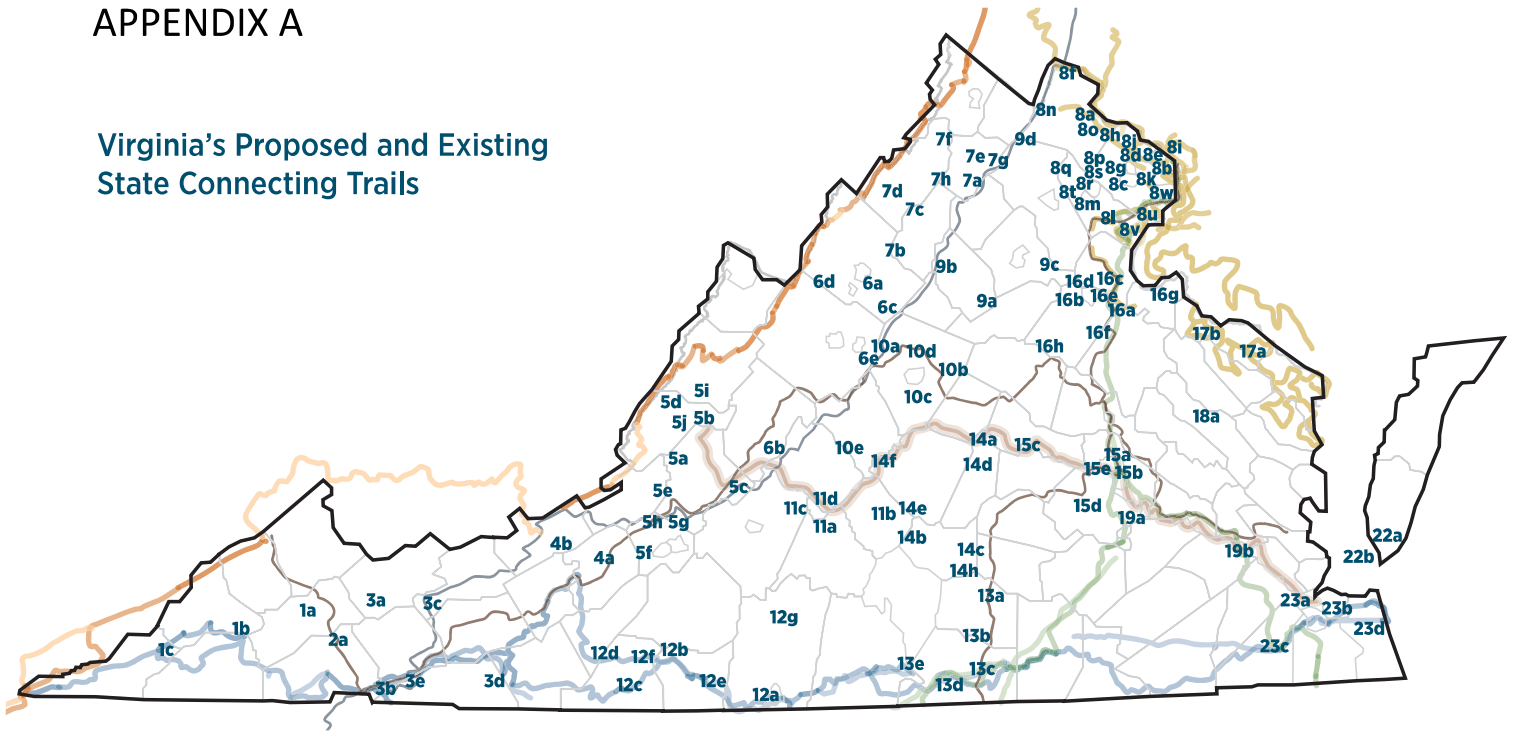
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Cumulative demand for trails across the state led the General Assembly to craft legislation in 2015 directing the Department of Conservation and Recreation to establish a State Trails Advisory Committee. The STAC is in the middle of a six-year legislative mandate; however, according to committee member feedback from a recent survey, they are not pleased with the committee's accomplishments thus far. A primary concern is that requests for increased funding and staff resources to support the STAC efforts have been unsuccessful. Moving forward, and now that the committee's recommendations addressing the General Assembly's specific tasks have been captured in the draft 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan, the committee's focus can shift to capacity building and strategic planning for a more impactful future.

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# APPENDIX A

## Virginia's Proposed and Existing State Connecting Trails



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|--|--|---|
| 1a Clinch River Trail                          | 8e Custis Trail                                    | 13a Tobacco Heritage -High Bridge Connector                     |
| 1b Guest River Gorge Trail                     | 8f Hill, Hops and Vine Bike Route                  | 13b Tobacco Heritage Road Routes                                |
| 1c Wallen Ridge Trail                          | 8g I-66 Bikeway                                    | 13c Tobacco Heritage Future Off-road Trails                     |
|  | 8h Northern Broad Run                              | 13d Occoneechee State Park Trails                               |
| 2a Clinch Mtn/Channels/Hidden Valley Connector | 8i Pentagon Memorial Circuit Trail (911 Trail)     | 13e Staunton River State Park Trails                            |
| 2b Cranesnest Equestrian Trail                 | 8j Pimmit Run Stream Valley Trail                  |   |
|  | 8k Pohick Stream Valley Trail                      | 14a Willis River Trail/Cumberland State Forest Roads and Trails |
| 3a Heart of Appalachia Bike Route              | 8l Route 234 Bicycle and Running Trail             | 14b High Bridge Trail   |
| 3b Virginia Creeper Trail (part)               | 8m Southern Broad Run                              | 14c Prince Edward State Forest Roads and Trails                 |
| 3c Walker Mountain Trail                       | 8n W&OD Connector                                  | 14d Bear Creek Lake State Park Trails                           |
| 3d Matthews State Forest Roads and Trails      | 8o W&OD Trail                                      | 14e Holliday Lake State Park Trails                             |
| 3e Grayson Highlands State Park Trails         | 8p West County Trail                               | 14f James River State Park Trails                               |
|  | 8q Mill to Mill Trail                              | 14h Twin Lakes State Park Trails                                |
| 4a Valley to Valley Trail                      | 8r Catharpin Greenway                              |   |
| 4b Poverty Creek/Huckleberry Connector         | 8s Manassas Bridle Trails                          | 15a Gillie's Creek Greenway                                     |
|  | 8t Conway-Robinson State Forest Roads and Trails   | 15b Cannon Creek Greenway                                       |
| 5a Craig Valley Scenic Trail                   | 8u Mason Neck State Park Trails                    | 15c Powhatan State Park Trails                                  |
| 5b Fore Mountain Trail                         | 8v Leesylvania State Park Trails                   | 15d Pocahontas State Park Trails                                |
| 5c Glenwood Horse Trail                        | 8w Capital Trail Coalition trail network           | 15e James River Park Trail System                               |
| 5d Jackson River Trail                         |  |   |
| 5e North Price/Broad Mountain Trails           | 9a Rapidan River Trail                             | 16a Dahlgren Connector  |
| 5f Roanoke River Greenway Network              | 9b Rapidan horse/hiking trail                      | 16b Virginia Central Rail Trail                                 |
| 5g Tinker Creek Greenway                       | 9c Rappahannock River Trail                        | 16c Canal Path  |
| 5h Carvin's Cove Trails                        | 9c Sky Meadows State Park Trail                    | 16d Fall Hill Avenue Trail                                      |
| 5i Douthat State Park Trails                   |  | 16e Rappahannock River Heritage Trail                           |
| 5j Dry Run Trail                               | 10a Crozet Tunnel Trail                            | 16f Spotsylvania Greenways                                      |
|  | 10b Rivanna River Trail                            | 16g Lake Anna State Park Trails                                 |
| 6a Bike the Valley Bike Route                  | 10c Route 20 Sidepath                              | 16h Caledon State Park Trails                                   |
| 6b Chessie/Brushy/Buena Vista Connector        | 10d Three-Notched Trail                            |   |
| 6c Madison Run horse/hiking trail              | 10e Route 29 sidepath                              | 17a Northern Neck Heritage Bike Route                           |
| 6d Wild Oak NRT                                |  | 17b Westmoreland State Park Trails                              |
| 6e South River Greenway                        | 11a James River Heritage/Poplar Forest Connector   | 18a Middle Peninsula Bike Route                                 |
|  | 11b Appomattox Heritage/State Forest Connector     | 19a Appomattox River Trail                                      |
| 7a Dickey Ridge Trail                          | 11c Lynchburg Trail System and Riverside extension | 19b Chippokes Plantation State Park Trails                      |
| 7b Massanuttan Mountain South                  | 11d Lynchburg Bike Loops                           |   |
| 7c Massanuttan Mountain Trail                  |  | 22a Southern Tip Bike & Hike Trail                              |
| 7d Shenandoah Town and County Rail Trail       | 12a Angler's Ridge Trail System                    | 22b Kiptopeke State Park Trails                                 |
| 7e Royal Shenandoah Greenway                   | 12b Philpott Reservoir Trails                      |   |
| 7f Tuscarora Trail                             | 12c Mayo River/Dehart Trail System                 | 23a Birthplace of America Trail                                 |
| 7g Route 522 pedestrian path                   | 12d Rocky Knob/Rock Castle Gorge                   | 23b Elizabeth River Trail                                       |
| 7h Shenandoah State Park Trails                | 12e Smith River Sports Complex Connector           | 23c Dismal Swamp Trails   |
|  | 12f Fairy Stone State Park Trails                  | 23d First Landing State Park Trails                             |
| 8a Goose Creek Trail                           | 12g Route 29 bike route                            |   |
| 8b Alexandria Heritage Trail                   |  |   |
| 8c Bull Run-Occoquan Trail                     |  |   |
| 8d Cross County Trail                          |  |   |

# APPENDIX B

## Virginia Outdoor Plan

### State Trail Advisory Committee Recommendations

Advocacy is essential in developing a statewide trails network. The STAC met annually, since its founding in 2015, to provide input for the 2018 VOP and annual reports to the General Assembly. Goals and objectives developed during these meetings are listed below, each with an agency or partnering organization identified for implementation. The STAC, along with staff from DCR, will track implementation.

- Develop strategies to enhance trails in communities and close the gaps in the statewide system of trails as described in [§10.1-204](#)
  - Complete a statewide trails plan to summarize the work of STAC and guide trails development and priorities for grant awards. (DCR, STAC)
  - Develop multi-state trails connectivity goals and strategies in the statewide trails plan. (DCR, STAC)
  - Encourage partnerships through Virginia Economic Development Partnership and local economic development initiatives for trails development. Assist local communities to promote trails as economic initiatives. (Virginia Tourism Corp.)
  - Identify and close the gaps in the statewide trails system and create linkages between communities and open space. Gather data from trail counters to support trails projects. (Regions, localities with the Departments of Transportation (VDOT), DCR, and State Tourism Corp.).
  - Create a central clearinghouse of information to close statewide trail system gaps. Consider an interagency Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate information sharing. (DCR )
  - Include recreation, scenic and connecting statewide trails in local and regional plans. (Local and regional governments)
  - Obtain funds for a statewide trails needs assessment showing costs for system development. (DCR , STAC, advocacy community)
  - Identify existing and potential old growth forests in each region that tie into the statewide trail system. (STAC)
  - Address maintenance and operations needs at the outset of trail development. (federal, state and local agencies)
  - Connect local and regional trail providers with health partners. (STAC, DCR, Virginia Department of Health, local health partners)
- Develop creative public and private funding strategies and partnerships to leverage resources for funding trail development
  - Seek sources of funding for trail renovation and maintenance. (STAC, DCR , advocacy community)
  - Leverage funding for trails with other infrastructure. (government agencies and business partners)
  - Educate localities about transportation funding for trails. (Departments of Transportation, DCR)
  - Facilitate partnership and outreach with business and the private sector to enhance and build trails. (STAC or friends of trails)

- Foster programs for recognizing businesses that support trails. (DCR)
- Develop strategies for the state to encourage trail agreements through partnerships, programs, and legislation. (DCR , STAC)
- Explore utility easements for trail connections. (DCR , planning districts and localities)
- Work with businesses to explore trail development through mitigation when impacts to resources are unavoidable. (local and state agencies and land managers)
- Integrate approaches to promote and market trail values and benefits
  - Obtain funding for a statewide study on the economic and other benefits of trails. (STAC)
  - Publicize and market trail use data and other positive impacts. (DCR , Virginia Tourism Corp., local and regional trail leaders, Virginia Health Department)
- Foster communication and networking among trail stakeholders
  - Develop a common vision for trails in Virginia. (STAC)
  - Develop a communications plan. (DCR, Virginia Tourism Corp., STAC)
  - Expand distribution of Greenways and Trails e-news. (DCR )
  - Establish a nonprofit statewide trails organization. (friends of trails, STAC)
  - Create a central place for trail stakeholders to share and learn, incorporating social media. (advocacy community and statewide trails organization)
  - Provide educational opportunities, e.g., trails workshops. (Regions and local governments with support from DCR and other state agencies)
- Increase tourism and commercial activities associated with statewide trail system
  - Develop tourism branding for trails in Virginia. (Virginia Tourism Corp.)
  - Develop community strategies to sustain and expand trails and supporting businesses. (Statewide trails organizations, Virginia Tourism Corp., local governments and chambers of commerce)
  - Identify trail service gaps in regions and localities that could support new and expanding businesses. (Local governments, chambers, Virginia Tourism Corp., Virginia Economic Development Partnership with input from trails advocacy community)
  - Install trail counters and collect other data needed to identify business opportunities. (local and regional governments, VDOT)
  - Develop an app for sharing trail data with users. (VDOT, DCR, Economic Development and Virginia Tourism Corp.)
  - Plan and conduct training to promote trail towns. Develop a “train the trainer” program for an annual greenway and land conservation conference to include towns along Virginia state trails and parks, Appalachian Trail, Tobacco Heritage Trail and Spearhead Trail communities. (DCR, public and private partners)
- Update the Greenways and Trails Toolbox and Trails Program webpage to provide practices, standards, statutes and guidelines that enhance the effectiveness of trail planning across the Commonwealth
  - Update the Greenways and Trails Toolbox to include a trail signage plan; OHV trail development guidelines; strategies for overcoming barriers like highways, railroads and waterways; defining the corridor to reduce trespass; and best management practices for meeting stormwater standards. (DCR)
  - Provide planners with resources needed to engage property owners. (DCR)