

**Statewide Trails Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, November 30, 2017
House Room 1, Virginia State Capitol, Richmond, Virginia**

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the State Trails Advisory Committee was held at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, November 30, 2017 in House Room One in the State Capital, Richmond, Virginia.

STATE TRAILS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Sally Aungier, Virginia Horse Council
John Bolecek, VDOT
Vince Burgess, Board of Conservation and Recreation
Champe Burnley, Virginia Bicycling Federation
Nathan Burrell, City of Richmond James River Park System
Ursula Lemanski, National Park Service
Sandra Tanner, Virginia Tourism Corporation
Wayne Wilcox, City of Virginia Beach
Bruce Wingo, Board of Conservation and Recreation
Kathryn Zeringue, East Coast Greenway Alliance
Cat Anthony, (replacing Beth Weisbrod), Virginia Capital Trail Foundation
James Beamer, Dominion Energy
Robert Campbell, James River Association
Matt Crane, Richmond Cycling Corp
Ann Jennings, Chesapeake Bay Commission
Emily Harper, Nelson County Parks and Recreation
Bruce Wingo, Board of Conservation and Recreation

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING BY PHONE

Liz Belcher, Roanoke Valley Greenway
Pete Irvine, US Forest Service
Andrew Downs, Appalachian Trail Conservancy

DCR STAFF PRESENT

Rochelle Altholz, Deputy Director of Administration and Finance
Janit Llewellyn Allen, Environmental Programs Planner
Lynn Crump, Environmental Programs Planner
Michael Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison
Danette Poole, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
Jennifer Wampler, Trails Coordinator
Forrest Atwood, Virginia State Parks District Resource Specialist

OTHERS PRESENT

Michael Burton, City of Richmond James River Park System
Alan Day, sub for Tom Johnson, Great Eastern Trail Association
Chris Gensic, City of Charlottesville
Jim Lynch, Potomac Heritage Trail Association
Dan Mahon, Albemarle County

Missy Neff, The Nature Conservancy
Greg Rollins, Richmond Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts
Carol Steele, sub for Jim Stutts, Virginia Recreation and Parks Society
Shane Sawyer, VDOT

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Poole called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and thanked attendees for their participation. She noted that the focus of the meeting would be to discuss ways to become advocates for trails.

Ms. Poole reviewed the following information from DCR's Division of Planning and Recreation Resources:

"Planning, Designing, and Constructing the future of Outdoor Recreation in Virginia" through:

Outdoor Recreation Planning

- **Development of the Virginia Outdoors Plan**, the commonwealth's comprehensive outdoor recreation and land conservation plan. According to the 2017 Virginia Outdoors Survey:
 - 70% considered it "very important" to have access to outdoor recreation opportunities (an increase of 15% since the 2011 survey).
 - 74% support state funding for outdoor recreation (44% of those support an increase in funding)
 - 96% ranked protection of Virginia's Natural Areas & Open Space resources as "important" or "very important".
- **Master planning for 42 state parks**, 37 of which are currently open to the public. Two are under construction and 3 (Biscuit Run, Mayo River, Middle Peninsula) are awaiting funding to develop.
- **Statewide Trails**—Staff coordinates with partners/ stakeholders in development of 6 statewide trails, connecting trails, and trail news.
- **Scenic Resources**—33 Scenic River designations span over 860 river miles
 - DCR & Scenic Virginia are partnering to map scenic views of Virginia & develop a registry of scenic information for the public
- **Recreational Grants**—One staff member administers 2 federal recreational grant programs (LWCF and RTP) for the commonwealth, with 45 active grant projects averaging over \$10 million.
 - DCR also serves as the government sponsor for LWCF/ American Battlefield Protection Program pass-through grants.
- **Provide Technical Support to Localities** in Outdoor Recreation Planning
- **Staffing:** The Planning section has a staff of 8.5 FTEs. Current appropriation is insufficient to cover existing staff and operations.

Design and Construction of facilities in state parks, natural area preserves, and conservation district-owned dams.

- The current workload far exceeds staff capacity. Four project managers are currently managing 40 active capital projects totaling \$48 million.

- Each project manager is handling 9-10 projects in various stages of construction; according to the Bureau of Capital Outlay Management, a reasonable workload is 6-7 projects/ project manager.
- During FY17, 25 projects were completed with total budgets of \$11 million.
- Staffing: DAC has a staff of 8 FTEs plus 2 vacancies that are unfunded. Current appropriation is insufficient to cover existing staff and operations.

Budget and Staffing

The PRR Division has two components: Outdoor Recreation Planning, and Design and Construction (DAC). 95% of the Division’s budget is personnel costs. Since 2009, staffing has been downsized by approx. 30%, with 16.5 FTEs remaining. Currently, the Division’s general fund appropriation is \$165,343 below what is needed to fund existing staff and operating costs (without filling vacancies). Additional funding is needed to fill vacancies and fully meet requirements as directed by §10.1-200 of the Code of Virginia.

Immediate Funding Needs for FY19

General Funding Levels	FY18 approved	Minimum Needed	Difference
Planning*	\$728,830*	\$893,308	(164,478)
Design and Construction	825,518	826, 383	(865)
Total	\$1,554,348	\$1,719,691	(165,343)

* Does not include \$275,000 pass-through appropriation for Breaks Interstate Park.

Additional Funding Needed to Fill Vacancies/Fund Positions

2 DAC Project Managers – 1 vacant position (plus 1 restricted)	\$105,000
1 DAC AutoCad Operator – vacant position	75,000
1 Wage Grants Program Assistant	50,000
2 Planners	192,000
1 Planning Manager (to reduce number of direct reports to Div. Director)	105,000
TOTAL	\$527,000

USING TRAILS TO PROMOTE TOURISM IN VIRGINIA

Sandra Tanner, Virginia Tourism Corporation

Ms. Tanner gave a presentation regarding the use of trails to promote tourism in Virginia. She noted that communities see trails as a resource to bring visitors to their communities.

In Virginia, outdoor recreation generates \$21.9 million in consumer spending, 197,000 direct Virginia jobs, \$6.5 billion in wages and salaries, and \$1.2 billion in state and local tax revenue.

Several YouTube videos on the economic impacts of trails referenced in the presentation are available at these links:

- Virginia Creeper Trail: <http://www.wcyb.com/news/virginia/washington-county-va/virginia-creeper-trail-blazing-the-path-for-economic-growth-in-damascus/642277286>

- Spearhead Trails: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUiifgKGzxY>

PANEL – WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Ms. Wampler moderated a panel discussion regarding working with the legislative branch for trail advocacy. Panel members were:

- Jim Beamer, Dominion Energy
- Bruce Wingo, Norfolk Southern (retired), Chair, Board of Conservation and Recreation
- Missy Neff, The Nature Conservancy
- Ann Jennings, Chesapeake Bay Commission

Panel members gave the following observations:

- Build a relationship—trust is most important.
- Get to know their interests/passions and listen and respond to their needs, too.
- Remember that legislators are part-time but they do want to hear from constituents.
- It is important to listen as well as advocate. Know what is important to the legislator.
- Building trust is important, but that does not happen overnight.
- Make sure you have your facts correct and correct errors.
- Know and understand the opposition to your particular issue.
- Become a resource for the legislator.
- You serve an important role as educator/expert--be available to answer questions.
- Take the opportunity to have legislators visit you in the field. Help immerse them in the resources.
- Be respectful of their time and focus on your key messages
- Have your policy recommendations based in science and fact.
- Work to build coalitions of unlikely partners and emphasize their broad reach.
- Bring working people and industry to the table.
- Be cognizant of the time to bring a proposal to a legislator (November and December is too late for the upcoming session).
- Organize in the summer and make contacts in administration. Get project in Governor's packet.
- Don't ask for something from a legislator the first time you meet them.
- Thank them with a hand-written note.
- Get to know someone on your committee of interest (Del. Emmett Hanger is co-chair of finance committee)
- If a project gets into the Governor's budget, it is easier to keep it there than adding something later.
- Give legislators a project they can get excited about in their district—so they can bring a win to their district
- All proposals must have key points in writing, and third-party validation is useful (national or economic study)

In terms of scheduling, the following dates were mentioned:

September—Deadline for cabinet members (agencies)
December 4- All requests for drafts of legislation to be prefiled to Legislative Services
December 18-Budget requests must be in
Simple calendar on legislative service website: http://dls.virginia.gov/pubs_calendar.html

OUTDOOR RECREATION CAUCUS

Missy Neff, The Nature Conservancy

Ms. Neff gave an overview of the Outdoor Recreation Caucus. Two years ago she worked with Mr. Beamer and Jason Eige to establish the Outdoor Recreation Caucus. This is a non-partisan group for legislators and others who are interested in more passive forms of recreation. Senator Emmet Hanger and Delegate David Bulova serve as the bipartisan co-chairs of the Caucus. “Left side, right side, we are all united outside.”

A key goal was to showcase what Virginia has to offer in terms of outdoor recreational opportunities and to highlight the associated economic opportunities.

CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION

Ann Jennings, Chesapeake Bay Commission

The Chesapeake Bay Commission is a Tri-state legislative commission from Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, established by state law in 1980 and 1985 (federal government not involved).

There are seven members from each state:

- Senate (2)
- House of Delegates (3)
- Governor (Secretary of Natural Resources)
- Citizen Representative

The purposes of the Chesapeake Bay Commission are:

- To educate the legislatures of Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania and assist them in evaluating and responding to problems of mutual concern relating to the Chesapeake Bay;
- To promote intergovernmental cooperation;
- To encourage cooperative coordinated resource planning and action by the signatories and their agencies;
- To provide, where appropriate, through recommendation to the respective legislature, uniformity of legislative application;
- To preserve and enhance the functions, powers, and duties of existing offices and agencies of government, and
- To recommend improvements in the existing management system for the benefit of the present and future inhabitants of the Chesapeake Bay region.

VIRGINIA OUTDOORS PLAN UPDATE

Janit Llewellyn Allen, DCR

Ms. Llewellyn Allen gave an update regarding the Trails Chapter in the 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan.

The Trails Chapter will include:

- Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey Trails Statistics
- Statewide Trails Advisory Committee (HB1542)
- Statewide and connecting trail criteria
- Assets and Opportunities
- Challenges
- Recommendations

Recommendations include:

1. Strategies to enhance trails in communities and close the gaps in the statewide system of trails as described in Code 10.1-204
2. Develop creative public and private funding strategies and partnerships to leverage resources for funding trails development.
3. Integrated approaches to promote and market trail values and benefits.
4. Strategies to foster communications and networking among trail stakeholders.
5. Strategies to increase tourism and commercial activities associated with the statewide trail system.
6. Update the Greenways and Trails Toolbox and Trails Program Website to provide practices, standards, statutes and guidelines that enhance the effectiveness of trail planning across the Commonwealth.

CONNECTING TRAILS DRAFT MAP

Jennifer Wampler, DCR

Ms. Wampler noted that at the April meeting the STAC had asked for a map to show connecting trails across the Commonwealth. She provided a draft of that map for review.

The immediate goal is to include a map of the Connecting Trails Network in the next version of the Virginia Outdoors Plan. The draft will be sent to Planning Districts for comment. The next phase of development will be to work to connect trails into neighborhoods and parks at the local level.

Ms. Wampler asked for committee members to review the map and to submit their recommendations.

APRIL LAND CONSERVATION AND GREENWAYS CONFERENCE

Jennifer Wampler, DCR

The Land Conservation and Greenways Conference will be held April 23-25, 2018 at The Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center in Roanoke, Virginia. The State Trails Advisory Committee will meet in conjunction with that meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Burnley expressed concern regarding the proposal to significantly increase the fees for National Parks. He moved that the Committee express concerns to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and that these concerns be shared with the Secretary of Natural Resources and the Governor.

The motion carried with DCR staff, Ms. Lemanski, Mr. Irvine, and Ms. Jennings abstaining.

There was no further business and the meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.