

**State Trails Advisory Committee
DoubleTree by Hilton, Williamsburg, Virginia
April 26, 2017**

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the State Trails Advisory Committee was held at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, April 26, 2017 at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Williamsburg, 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
Harvey Darden, Department of Forestry
Anthony Duncan, IMBA
Emily Harper, Nelson County
Kristin Jones, Virginia Outdoors Foundation
Ursula Lemanski, National Park Service
Shawn Lindsey, Spearhead Trails
Amanda McGee, Roanoke Valley Greenway
Carol Steele, Gloucester County
Sandra Tanner, Virginia Tourism Corporation
Wayne Wilcox, City of Virginia Beach
Kathryn Zeringue, East Coast Greenway

DCR STAFF PRESENT

Clyde Cristman, DCR Director
Janit Llewellyn Allen, Environmental Programs Planner
Julie Buchanan, Public Relations Specialist
Bill Conkle, Park Planner
Lynn Crump, Environmental Programs Planner
Theresa Duffy, Natural and Cultural Resources Manager
Michael Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison
Melissa Jackson, Budget Manager
Danette Poole, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
Jennifer Wampler, Trails Coordinator

OTHERS PRESENT

Andrew Alli, City of Richmond
Martin Burton, City of Richmond
Amy Camp, Cycle Forward
Susan Chicetto, Woodstock Rails-to-Trails Committee
Katie Conner, Virginia Tourism Corporation
Liz Cronauer, Fairfax County
Ryan Delaney, Prince William County
Craig Della Penna, Northeast Greenway Solutions

Chuck Flink, Greenways, Inc.
Helen Gabriel, City of Suffolk
Chris Gensic, City of Charlottesville
Don Hindman, Woodstock Rails-to-Trails Committee
Cliff Kiracofe, Rockbridge Conservation Council
Martin Johnson, Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District
Steve Lambert, Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization
Dan Mahon, Albemarle County
Jim McGowan, The Nature Conservancy
Corey Miles, Northern Virginia Regional Commission
Jacob Pastwik, Spotsylvania County
Phil Riggan, Richmond Regional Planning District Commission
Shane Sawyer, VDOT
Debbie Spiliotopoulos, Northern Virginia Regional Commission
Allison Tillett, VCU
Kirby Walker, New River Land Trust
Michelle Workman, Virginia Tourism Corporation
Xiaoxiao Wu, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Poole welcomed members. She noted that this was the fifth meeting of the State Trails Advisory Committee and the first joint conference presented with the Virginia United Land Trusts (VaULT). She reminded committee members that the committee had presented two reports to the General Assembly since the authorizing legislation was passed in 2015.

Ms. Poole advised that over the summer DCR would be writing the Virginia Outdoors Plan. Much of what this committee does is critical to the development of the plan.

Ms. Poole introduced Director Cristman for remarks.

Director Cristman thanked members for attending. He recognized Nathan Burrell from the City of Richmond and noted his work on the T. Tyler Potterfield Memorial Bridge across the James River.

He reported that, as promised, Governor and Mrs. McAuliffe had just completed visiting all 37 Virginia State Parks. He acknowledged the Governor's commitment to sound planning and his interest in hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding.

Director Cristman commended Ms. Poole and Ms. Sarah Richardson for the successful work in combining the conferences on land conservation and trails.

Ms. Poole advised the committee that one of DCR's goals is to continue to have the Virginia Outdoors Plan be presented in electronic format. In addition, staff is looking to condense the document from around 400 pages down to around a hundred while still providing all the necessary information.

PARTNERSHIPS THAT ADVANCE TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Lemanski introduced a session of presentations taking a look at what is happening with regard to trails outside of Virginia's borders.

Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition – Amy Camp

<http://ihearttrails.org/>

Ms. Camp gave an overview of the work of I Heart Trails.

I Heart Trails (Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition) covers four states, forty-eight counties, and has over 1,400 miles of trails.

The Tri-State Trail Initiative was formed in 2000. The coalition was formally launched in 2014.

The Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition focuses on:

- Common Industrial Heritage
- Strong Sense of Place
- Past to Present
- Trail Towns

I Heart Trails works with:

- NPS RTCA, PEC, RTC
- Signed Coalition Members
- Corridor Working Groups

Over 117 groups have participated in the process.

The I Heart Trails plan involves:

- Building a Network of Partners and Supporters
- Collaborative GIS tools
- Economic impact analysis and trail tourism initiatives
- Marketing, branding, and communication
- Innovative funding and financing to build the network.

To reach the 2033 goal, the coalition needs to add an average of 33 miles of trails annually.

Trailside Companies – Craig Della Penna

<http://www.trailsidecompanies.com/>

Mr. Della Penna gave an overview of his work in Massachusetts. He told the committee that he had become involved in trail development after attending a public meeting and seeing a major trail project voted down because one adjacent landowner objected.

Mr. Della Penna focuses on a special niche: the sale of houses near rail trails, greenways or other conservation lands. Through his land acquisition company he works to find ways to preserve railroad corridors.

North Carolina Greenways – Chuck Flink

<http://www.greenways.com/about-chuck-flink>

Mr. Flink gave an overview of what was happening with trails in North Carolina. Current focus includes:

- NC Mountains to Sea Trail
- East Coast Greenway
- The Great Trails State
- North Carolina Trails Committee
- Hurricane Matthew Recovery

Mr. Flink noted that he had worked with Ms. Wampler on the development of the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail in Virginia.

The East Coast Greenway is one of the longest contiguous sections of trail. Greenways, Inc. is building an urban segment in the Triangle area. North Carolina just profiled three major regions with examples of trails in each in “The Great Trails State.”

The North Carolina Trails Committee is a seven-member citizen committee appointed by the secretary of the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources. Members advise the State Trails Program on funding recommendations for the Recreational Trails Program Grants (RTP) and Adopt-a-Trail Grants. Committee members are also a resource that ensures information flow between constituents and the program. The members represent various communities across the state including: hiking, cycling, paddling, equestrian, and off highway vehicles.

Greenways, Inc. is currently working with six communities on recovery from Hurricane Matthew. Localities were surprised by the impact. The goal is to find ways to use greenways and trails to bring communities back to life.

The staff of the NC Trails Program, along with the North Carolina Trails Committee, work together to enable volunteers, nonprofit organizations and government agencies to develop trail plans, preserve land, develop and manage trails for all trail users. The program includes three regional trails specialists and a state trails planner.

VIRGINIA TRAIL SYSTEM PLANNING

Ms. Wampler introduced three speakers to review what is happening in Virginia.

Northern Virginia Region – Debbie Spiliotopoulos

Ms. Spiliotopoulos gave an overview of Regional Partnerships in Northern Virginia.

- NRVC has been working with NPS regarding the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.

- Support for projects has come through a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service.
- Coordination with land managers, including local staff, regional, and state park staff, and other public land managers.
- Host webinars, conferences calls, and meetings
- Currently performing viewshed inventories, hosting a few topic based webinars and VOP meeting, and planning for familiarity tours to promote existing segments in Northern Virginia.
- From earlier years: corridor analyses, grant support, coordination, sponsorship of earmark project managed through VDOT.

Ms. Spiliotopoulos noted that Northern Virginia is very crowded and that there is a huge amount of pressure to get more open space and park land.

Roanoke-Allegheny Region - Shane Sawyer

Mr. Sawyer noted that he currently works with VDOT but was previously with the Roanoke Valley Regional Commission. He gave an overview of the partnerships involved in the Roanoke Valley system, and talked about VDOT funding as the primary source of trail funding in the region. The region has had a successful regional greenway plan in place for over twenty years, which enabled Roanoke to compete successfully for transportation funding. A regional panel agreed to award more than \$14 million in federal funding to several greenway projects. More than \$12 million of that will go toward finishing a 21-mile stretch of the Roanoke River Greenway, connecting Green Hill Park to the Blue Ridge Parkway, and finishing in just seven years what might have taken four decades.

Spearhead Trails – Shawn Lindsey

Mr. Lindsey, the new executive director for Spearhead Trails, gave an overview of progress on the trail system since the Southwest Regional Recreation Authority was established in 2008. He said hundreds of miles of trail have been developed in the past few years through partnerships with private landowners, leading to business growth and development. Many more miles of trail are underway, including equestrian and mountain biking trails. He is concerned about competition from West Virginia and Kentucky, states whose OHV trail systems are better funded. The three-state OHV system is attracting OHV enthusiasts from across the Mid-Atlantic and beyond, but his vision extends to an international market.

Spearhead Trails is working to develop partnerships in Appalachia and with Virginia Tourism.

SMALL GROUP BREAKOUTS

Ms. Wampler asked the group to divide by regions to participate in a mapping exercise. The following results were reported by staff:

Northern Virginia Breakout Group, DCR staff facilitator: Jennifer Wampler

Proposed Connecting Trails

- Shenandoah Town and County Rail Trail to Shenandoah Valley Trail (how to connect to existing statewide system?)

- Royal Shenandoah Greenway (connects to Appalachian Trail)
- W&OD Extension (from Purcellville to the Appalachian Trail or new state park)
- Catharpin Creek Greenway (The Catharpin Creek Trail System is planned to connect Silver Lake Park, James Long Park, Conway Robinson State Park, and the Manassas National Battlefield with an equestrian friendly path along the Catharpin Creek.)
- Goose Creek Trail extension (connects Potomac Heritage Trail to W&OD Trail)
- Broad Run Trail in Loudoun-connects the Potomac Heritage Trail to the Broad Run Tollhouse
- Broad Run Scenic Trail in Prince William (connects communities along the Broad Run with a pedestrian and bicycle trail from Nokesville Rd./Rollins Ford Park to Bristow Battlefield, Brentsville Historic Courthouse and Doves Landing Park)
- Route 234 Trail (connects Prince William Forest Park to Manassas Battlefield along the Prince William Parkway)
- Occoquan Greenway (connects Bull Run Occoquan Trail to Manassas)

Existing Connecting Trails (to Potomac Heritage or East Coast Greenway)

- Fairfax Cross County Trail
- West County Trail (connects to Fairfax Cross County Trail)
- Pimmit Run Trail
- Four Mile Run
- Pohick Stream Valley Trail
- Bull Run Occoquan Trail

Eastern Virginia Breakout Group, DCR staff facilitator: Danette Poole

A greenway along the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor could connect Petersburg to Lake Gaston. This is currently a proposed section of the East Coast Greenway that would connect to the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail.

Proposed connections to Beaches to Bluegrass Trail (which will connect Purdy to Virginia Beach along the Lake Gaston pipeline and connect South Boston to Danville)

- From Driver (in Suffolk) to Nansemond River High School)
- Moore Avenue to Nansemond (two train trestles)
- Victoria/Meherrin/High Bridge Trail
- A Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Bicycle Service could connect Cape Charles Bike/Hike Trail and Tangier Ferries, with future connections to Onley-Onancock Trail, Assateague National Seashore Trail and the Chincoteague Bridge Trail along the Eastern Shore Rail Trail
-

Proposed connections to East Coast Greenway

- Birthplace of America Trail (connects the Virginia Capital Trail east to Fort Monroe and southeast across the ferry to Suffolk)-could be part of James River Heritage Trail
- South Hampton Roads Trail (part of Beaches to Bluegrass)

Western Virginia Breakout Group, DCR staff facilitator: Lynn Crump

Connections to Great Eastern Trail

- Mary Ingles Trail

- Pound to Pine Ridge Trail
Connection to Beaches to Bluegrass
- Scott County Horse Trails-Duffield to Dungannon to Big Cherry Reservoir

Central Virginia Breakout Group, DCR staff facilitator: Janit Llewellyn Allen

Existing trails

- Roanoke Valley Greenways
- Carvin's Cove
- Appalachian Trail
- Bike Route 76
- Blue Ridge Parkway Trails (some existing)
- Glenwood Horse Trail
- Roanoke River Blueway
- James River Water Trail

Proposed trails & new trail connections

- Grayson Highlands State Park to Natural Bridge State Park
- Glenwood Trail to New River Trail to Grayson Highlands State Park
- Buchanan to Blue Ridge Parkway
- Blue Ridge Parkway to Afton (Blue Ridge Tunnel opens in 2018) to Jarman's Gap to Crozet, Waynesboro and Staunton via Three Notch'd Trail from Charlottesville and via Three Chopt Trail to Richmond
- Craig Valley Scenic Trail (Craig County) to Botetourt (Eagle Rock)
- Virginia Highlands Horse Trail is built and connects Iron Mountain Trail to New River Trail—want connection to Glenwood Horse Trail
- Clifton Forge connection to Botetourt
- Harrisonburg Mountain Bike Trail connecting to Central Shenandoah Planning district Commission
- Lexington to Buena Vista (Chessie Trail) to Appalachian Trail to Blue Ridge Parkway

VIRGINIA OUTDOORS PLAN TOPICS

Ms. Poole advised that staff would present an overview of topics for the Virginia Outdoors Plan. Following that the committee would divide into groups to review specific areas of interest.

Ms. Poole reviewed a handout that listed recommendations of the committee from previous meetings. DCR staff wants to make sure the thoughts of the committee are captured. Specific considerations concern thematic trails and what the role is in the VOP. Currently driving trails are listed in regional chapters.

Ms. Poole noted that the Virginia Outdoors Plan is required for DCR to receive funding from the National Parks Service. It is also specified in the Code of Virginia. She advised that DCR staff was looking for help with the following questions.

- Are the recommendations clear?
- Do they cover the necessary areas?
- Who will complete the work of the recommendations?
- Who will fund the projects?

Trails Chapter – Janit Llewellyn Allen

Ms. Llewellyn Allen gave an overview of the Trails Chapter. There are six topical areas. She noted that recommendations will go to the VOP Technical Advisory Committee. The six topical areas are:

1. Strategies to enhance trails in communities and close the gaps in the statewide system of trails as described in Code of Virginia § 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 communication 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.

Design Considerations and Criteria for Statewide Connecting Trails – Jennifer Wampler

This group will review the design considerations document and discuss the evaluation process for identifying statewide connecting trails.

Thematic driving tours – Lynn Crump

Ms. Crump noted that the Committee received a presentation regarding the Lewis and Clark Trail at the last meeting. Thematic driving tours were classified in the last Virginia Outdoors Plan as heritage, product or nature-based tours. The question is where do driving tours like this fit in the VOP and the STAC committee's work?

Ms. Wampler asked the committee to select which group they would like to participate in. She advised that after a break members would be allowed to participate in a second group.

Time constraints did not allow for groups to report out, but the following notes were taken in by each discussion group.

Draft Design Considerations and Criteria for Statewide Connecting Trails Breakout Group, Staff facilitator-Jennifer Wampler

For *Design Considerations* sheet, add Amtrak as partner to "Connections to Transit"
Simple Screening Elements for Statewide Connecting Trails (all may not apply)

Note: Keep human judgement in evaluation process

- Marketable to out-of-state residents

- Provides year-round, public access
- Crosses boundaries or jurisdictions
- Provides a key connection to communities
- Connects to natural assets (places with natural, cultural or historic significance)
- Has a large service area (potential for use)
- Non-motorized (by state code)

Additional Screening for Existing Trails

- Trail has an established management entity
- Trail is identified on local and regional plans

Additional Screening for Proposed Trails

- Grassroots/local support
- Identified on maps as study area or corridor with flexibility to adjust as needed
- Meets identified need

Thematic Driving Tours Breakout Group, Staff facilitator-Lynn Crump

Thematic driving tours should only be under Tourism and not part of the State Trails Advisory Committee's work. The focus of STAC should be on human-powered trails. Until there are plans in place for on-the-ground trails, these tours are more suitable for promotion through marketing and tourism outlets. Since Virginia Tourism resources can be used to help develop these trails, it seems like a good match.

Trails should only be listed as "statewide" recreation or scenic trails if 1) they are designated as such by the General Assembly, or 2) they are a non-motorized trail that reaches across the state or into other states. These trails must also be recognized in the Virginia Outdoors Plan.

Since the number one outdoor recreation activity continues to be walking for pleasure, STAC should focus on getting walking trails on the ground. Although automobile touring has been among the top three recreational activities, STAC should remain focused on getting visitors to places where they can experience nature, if only for a little while.

IF thematic driving tours need to be included in the statewide trails chapter and effort – they should be a very low priority and only should be included if the tour incorporates some walking trails.

Final Recommendations for VOP, Staff facilitator-Danette Poole

Statewide trails advocacy is essential to grow a statewide trails network. To achieve the trails goals and objectives outlined below, the State Trails Advisory Committee (STAC), appointed by the Governor, should advocate for state funding, staff support and a statewide non-profit advocacy organization.

Goal 1-Enhance trails in communities and close the gaps in the statewide system of trails as described in Code 10.1-204.

- Develop multi-state trail connectivity goals and strategies (DCR, STAC)
- Facilitate partnerships to encourage trail development through the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and local economic development initiatives (VTC)

- Identify gaps in the statewide trail system and create linkages between communities and open space. Gather data from trail counters to support trails projects (regions, localities with VDOT/DCR/VTC)
- Create a central clearing house of information on statewide trail system gaps. Consider an interagency MOU to facilitate information sharing (DCR-lead)
- Include recreation, scenic and connecting statewide trails in local and regional plans (local and regional governments)
- Obtain funds for a statewide trail needs assessment that includes cost estimates for trail development (DCR, STAC, advocacy community)
- Identify existing and potential old growth forests in each region that tie into the statewide trail system

Goal 2-Develop creative public and private funding strategies and partnerships to leverage resources for funding trails 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 (VDOT, DCR)
- Facilitate partnership/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 - e.g. FHWA Pedestrian Friendly Community and League of American Bicyclists Bike Friendly Business Program (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)

Goal 3-Promote and market trail values and benefits

- Obtain funding for a statewide study on economic impacts and other benefits of trails (STAC)
- Publicize and market trail use and positive impacts (DCR, Virginia Tourism, local and regional trail leaders)

Goal 4 - Foster communication and networking among trail stakeholders

- Develop a common vision for trails in Virginia (STAC)
- Develop a communications plan (DCR/Tourism/STAC)
- Expand distribution of Greenways and Trails e-news (DCR)
- Establish a non-profit statewide trails organization (Friends of Trails, STAC)
- Create a central place for trails stakeholders to share and learn through social media (advocacy community, statewide trails organization)
- Provide educational opportunities (e.g. trail workshops--regions and local governments with support from DCR and other state agencies)

Goal 5- Increase tourism and commercial activities associated with the statewide trail system

- Develop tourism branding for trails in Virginia (DCR, VTC)
- Develop community strategies to sustain and expand trails and supporting businesses (Statewide trails organizations, Virginia Tourism, 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, Virginia Economic Development Partnership with input from advocacy community)
- Install trail counters and collect other data needed to identify business opportunities (local/regional governments)

Goal 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

- Update the Greenways and Trails Toolbox (DCR)
 - (e. g. trail signage plan; sustainable OHV trail development guidelines; strategies for overcoming road and trail barriers; defining the corridor to reduce trespass; guidance for non-profit groups to support local trails (DCR)
- Update the trails program website. (DCR)
 - Develop a web-based trails toolkit for planners to use to engage landowners

Trail Chapter Outline, Staff facilitator-Janit Llewellyn Allen

Statistics

- Describe need for trails established by regional meeting input and survey results
- Describe work of Statewide Trails Advisory Committee to include requests for staffing and GA funding (surveys, recommendations in response to HB1542, other recommendations, desired outcomes)
- Include HB1542 charge from GA

Assets and Opportunities

- Connecting Trails description and map(s)
- Meeting stormwater standards

Challenges

- Getting trails on the ground —difficult grant process, meeting stormwater standards, lack of resources for trail development and maintenance in rural areas
- Providing guidance for prioritizing trail projects
- Balancing trail user needs
- Marketing outside Virginia

Case Studies

- Rails to Trails Concept – Example (Chessie Trail - Cliff Kiracofe)
- Roanoke River Greenway – FEMA Origin (Regional Commission - Amanda)
- Case study for utility crossings and trails
- National Trails (map of National Trails in Virginia) cooperative agreements, cost share funding
- Case study, Northern Virginia trail PHT gap analysis
- Leveraging trails with other infrastructure (Herndon)
- Attracting supporting businesses through regional cooperation (Roanoke-Alleghany region)
- Text box on types of Transportation funding with links to each
- Creating special tax district (Lexington)
- Encourage entrepreneurs (NSVRC gap analysis)
- Opening private lands to recreation (liability, Twin River Outfitters case study, Spearhead case study, openaccess.com)

- Meeting needs in rural areas

Other Comments

Case studies may not fall easily into two categories; therefore they will be incorporated throughout the trails chapter and VOP regional chapters.

Report on accomplishments from 2013 VOP.

Note: Definitions to go at end of VOP, youth engagement to go in youth engagement chapter

Additional Comments

- Consider a call-out box in the VOP for Mobile Apps, STRAVA
- Plan for a future STAC meeting to address talking points for meeting with legislators and local officials.
- How do you achieve a balance between demographic vs. geographic coverage for trail projects?
- Add funding to toolbox update
- Bring in speaker from Empire Trails in NY (webex?)
- Add a definition of braided trails to the VOP

NEXT STEPS

Ms. Wampler advised that staff would compile reports and get them out to committee members. There will be no committee meeting in August. The report to the General Assembly is due in October.

Ms. Wampler thanked attendees and the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.