

State Trails Advisory Committee

Thu, Sep 17, 2020 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (EDT)

Attendees:

Andrew Downs, ATC	Jim Lynch, DHRT	Tom Smith, DCR
Adrienne Kotula, CBF	Julie Buchanan, DCR	Ursula Lemanski, NPS
Alister Perkinson, JCC	Justin Doyle, JRA	Alan Day, PATC, GET
Bethany McCunn, VDH	Katie Guerin, MS	Jennifer Wampler, DCR
Brittney Beazley, LCC	Kelly McClary, DCR	Tom Gilmore, ABT
Cat Anthony, VCTF, VTA	Kirk Millikan, VDOT	Steve Lambert, HRTPO
Champe Burnley, VBF	Kristal McKelvey, DCR	Sally Aungier, VHC, VTA
Cathy Sutphin, VA Tech CE	Liz Belcher, RVG	Nikki Rovner, TNC
Daniel Jordan, DCR	Megan Lopes, VDH	Rick Barton, OAC
Shawn Lindsey, Spearhead	Mike Fletcher, DCR	Natalia Sanchez, NPS
Dan Mahon, AC	Matthew Viverito, ESRI	Ellen Shepard, VAULT
Don Hindman, SVP	Paul Gilbert, NOVA Parks	Cora Gnegy, GC
Forrest Atwood, DCR	Peter Krebs, PEC	Matthew Helt, USFS
Chris Gensic, CC	Sarah Sanford, ECG	Nathan Hilbert, NPS
Jim Thompson, USFS	Shane Sawyer, VDOT	Tee Clarkson, FE
John Bolecek, VDOT	Stephanie Piperno, CTC,	Bob & Ellen Mueller, MH
John Kirk, DGIF	WABA	Heather Barrar, FOLAR

Welcome by Tom Smith, DCR Deputy Director of Operations

I appreciate you taking the time to attend today. Virtual meetings bring better attendance despite the challenge of not seeing each other face-to-face. I am well aware through the pandemic that people love our outdoor recreational opportunities and in some DCR parks and preserves use was overwhelming. In some cases, like at Leesylvania State Park, 400-900 cars a day were turned around due to capacity issues. We have all done our best to keep facilities open – that is important for physical and mental health. Thank you to everyone in your efforts to keep recreation opportunities available during these times.

The General Assembly is still meeting – there is no resolution on the Budget yet. Legislators may keep meeting through the 2021 session. The good news is DCR is not experiencing significant budget cuts.

There is \$4.5 million in existing the existing budget and a proposal for \$5.5 million for the Virginia Land Conservation Fund. There will be a VLCF meeting September 22nd regarding the grant round. Link to information regarding the meeting: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/virginia-land-conservation-foundation/#meeting>

The Great American Outdoors Act passed—thanks to everyone for their support of that bill. The stateside funding allotment is not still unknown.

Introductions New faces, roles and enthusiasms

- **Nathan Burrell (DCR)** – Nathan is occupied with the Governor’s office during this call, but he has joined DCR as the Deputy Director of Government and Community Relations. He also serves on the Council on Environmental Justice and is helping with outreach to community groups across the state
- **Kelly McClary (DCR)** – Kelly is the new Division Director of Planning & Recreation Resources, although she has been with DCR for 24 years. She formerly served as the Design & Construction Director. She welcomed everyone and expressed her excitement to participate and hear updates
- **Kristal McKelvey (DCR)** – Kristal has joined the Division of Planning and Recreation Resources as the grants administrator for the Recreational Trails Program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund
- **Nathan Hilbert (National Park Service)** – Nathan started in January and serves as the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program partner for West Virginia and Southwest Virginia.
- **Natalia Sanchez Hernandez (National Park Service)** Natalia serves as the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program partner for Washington DC/Northern VA/Maryland and the Eastern Shore. She is based in DC.
- **Stephanie Piperno (Capital Trails Coalition)** – Stephanie is the executive director of the Capital Trails Coalition and also a member of the Washington Area Bicycling Association.
- **Jim Thompson (US Forest Service)** – Jim has taken Ted Coffman’s place at the Recreation Office within the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. Based in Roanoke, he serves as the Staff Officer for Recreation, Engineering, and Lands.
- **Matthew Helt (US Forest Service)** – Also based in Roanoke, Matt started a couple of months ago and serves as the Dispersed Recreation Program Manager for the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests

Legislative report-.Virginia initiatives related to greenways, trails and bike routes

Cat Anthony, president, provided an update for the Virginia Trails Alliance activities. This coalition of people and organizations advocating for trails has delivered a letter to the Governor, the Office of Outdoor Recreation, and the Secretary of Natural Resources (see letter at this [link](#)). They co-authored a white paper on access to the outdoors and related funding needs; and published an article in the Williamsburg Daily. Next steps include meeting with Secretary Strickler to discuss the importance of trails. If you want to join the Virginia Trails Alliance, use this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VirginiaTrails>

To read the article, use this link: <https://wydaily.com/local-news/2020/08/24/virginia-cycling-organization-asks-for-trail-improvements-as-more-people-look-toward-outdoor-activities/>

The Virginia Conservation Network papers will be out soon, probably September, but they are not posted yet. Cat will send a link to the group once it is posted.

Sarah Sanford with the East Coast Greenway Alliance provided an update on federal initiatives.

- FAST Act expires September 30th – likely for a one year extension to September 30th, 2021 (some CARES act funds supported trails which was good news)
- Senate - America's Transportation Infrastructure Act – as proposed it provides 0.4% towards biking
- House – INVEST Act (HR2) – Transportation Infrastructure Committee – large scale infrastructure package with – larger funding
- Neither ACT exactly lays out how the infrastructure will be paid for and does not specify the full programmatic process
- Therefore FAST Act will probably be extended
- [Greenway Stimulus Campaign](#) –Thank you for signing on to this letter to Congress requesting a \$10 billion stimulus package for active transportation to provide safe bike and ped infrastructure. This package would offer a big return and increase equitable access
- Presidential election results could likely have large impacts to infrastructure (greenway) funding and support

Other legislative topics mentioned by the committee

[Pipeline Fairness and Transparency Act](#)

[Scenic Trail Viewshed Protection Act](#)

East Coast Greenway Virginia initiatives

Virginia is a gem along the East Coast Greenway – (i.e. Mount Vernon, Tobacco Heritage, Capital Trail) – but wayfinding signage is needed. A state-agency-led agreement for signage would be better than a piecemeal approach in each jurisdiction, because local governments often have more pressing needs. The current initiative to get a formal signage agreement for the East Coast and other long distance trails asks for state involvement. Some progress has been made (i.e. US Bike Routes). What agency and staff member is responsible and for what? –is there a helpful document on a way to move forward?

DCR Updates

Kristal McKelvey provided information on the current LWCF grant round and an update on the Rec Trails Program. The LWCF grant round is open until December 15. There are 25 active RTP 25 active. The Virginia Land Conservation Fund Board will be meeting on Sept. 22 to discuss their grant round. They are still waiting for information on General Assembly appropriations. To access the application, go to <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/lwcf>

Jennifer Wampler provided information on the James River Heritage Corridor planning efforts.

- River mileage – The Corps of Engineers has provided mileage information for the tidal James and volunteer Gary Kappesser has extended the mileage to Irongate. Now a sign plan can be submitted to VDOT to request that signs be added to bridges/overpasses – A huge thank you to Gary, who also developed mileage for the Appomattox, Maury, Rivanna, Slate, and Willis rivers within the watershed – loosely based on river atlases developed by the Virginia Canals and Navigations Society. Mileage points based on other river atlases around the state are also available.

- From chat log-Cora Gnegy: Giles County has implemented river mileage on the New River Water Trail through Giles... users are really liking it, as well as emergency responders... Win win
- From chat log, Justin Doyle-A river mileage system was implemented on the Upper James River Water Trail this summer. Signs were installed in the river corridor in Botetourt County. The Rockbridge County section is in progress. New safety signs are going in at Glasgow, just above Balcony Falls.
- Story maps – Thank you to VCU Intern Patrick Schwenkler, who has developed story maps on “What to do near Bear Creek Lake State Park” and “What to do near Powhatan State Park.” This helps promote attractions within the Middle James.
- The draft [Middle James Segment Plan](#) is available for comment until Nov. 24. Jennifer provided an overview of the importance, methodology, interpretive themes, focus areas and major takeaways. Link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZNsG-h_t24QXpoCmQCEJGOYVMKAqvefL/view?usp=sharing
- Hub site – There is an opportunity to collaborate on a community engagement platform for the James River Heritage Corridor using ESRI Software. A Hub site could provide links to websites, maps and apps from a variety of organizations and agencies who have access to the software. This could provide a “one-stop shop” for people looking for information on outdoor recreation, historic/scenic resources, river safety, resource protection, environmental education, etc. within the watershed. It also has a robust events/calendar feature. If there is interest in this platform, a team effort will be needed to make it happen.
- The draft [James River Heritage Corridor Strategic Plan](#) is available for comment until Nov. 24. The plan includes an updated vision and 10 goals with objectives. Link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1boxZCiERup_lthBhD8MubadVeTcYnS4/view?usp=sharing

Long Distance Trail Updates

Status of potential long-distance Trails

- VDOT planning studies (John Bolecek) Bicycle and Pedestrian –
 - Completed long distance trail focused studies –
 - Ashland to Petersburg Trail
 - Southeast High Speed Rail Trail study
 - Beaches to Bluegrass
 - Birthplace of American Trail
 - Appomattox River Trail to Capital Trail connection
 - Studies underway
 - Valley to Valley Trail Study
 - Eastern Shore Rail to Trail Study
 - Potential future long-distance study
 - Connecting Crozet Tunnel to Charlottesville
 - Completed but not long distance – Nine Mile Road STARS Study, US Bike Route 1 Northern Virginia Reroute, Community Trail Development Guide

- Planning studies commonalities – requested by MPOs or PDCs – or from Virginia Tourism such as Beaches to Bluegrass Master Plan
 - Requirements – must be approved by VDOT District Administrator and Transportation Mobility Planning Administrator – must prep a project to go into 6-year improvement plan therefore it can qualify for VDOT funding, must demonstrate local support and local government participation
 - Many examples of deliverables (see slides)
 - Eastern Shore Rail to Trail Study – 49-mile abandoned rail line – study evaluating cost estimates, amenity placement, management structure, phasing. Champe Burnley expressed his appreciation for everything VDOT is doing to move this project forward.
- Birthplace of America Trail (BOAT) (update from chat log)- Newport News, Hampton and the Tidewater Trail Alliance (BOAT Foundation) has been working hard to update the route. This includes a loop on the peninsula that will also help in connecting Christopher Newport University with the Trail. There are also some minor changes in Newport News. The City of Newport News is planning on sending a letter to the HRTPO Executive Director requesting this change to the route as the official proposed route, which the HRTPO staff support. Surry is still working hard on getting the shared use path along the route coming from the Ferry (since the SMART Scale Project was only for bike improvements). They are looking at alternative solutions with the county staff with maybe looking at the new HRSD (Hampton Roads Sanitation District - Water/Sewer line) along the route
 - Shen Valley Rail Trail (Don Hindman) Project Director – Exploratory Partnership – vision of 38 mile Broadway to Strasburg – 16 member partnership (2 counties, 8 towns, 2 PDS, 4 local non-profits) – commissioned an Economic Impact Analysis very supportive of return on investment – NPS extended RTCA grant – NPS also funded a short introductory video for Town Hall meetings – Norfolk Southern just recently decided they are interested in selling up to 48 total miles up to Riverton – local Legislators introduced an amendment that would direct DCR to do a feasibility study over the next year. For more information on the [Shenandoah Valley Partnership](http://www.shenandoahrailtrail.org): www.shenandoahrailtrail.org info@shenandoahrailtrail.com. or don.hindman@gmail.com
 - Three Notched Trail (Chris Gensic) – Virginia Central Trail – idea is to stretch Capitol Trail through Charlottesville and then West through the Crozet/Afton tunnel – still evaluating the routes from Richmond to Charlottesville perhaps the rural roads, some may be even low passage routes – to create a full mountain to sea trail in central Virginia
 - First success – old route rehabilitated from road relocations –
 - Reaching out to the public Fall/Winter 2020 – hope to get feedback, build relationships, maybe fundraise
 - From chat log-Peter Krebs: The 250 RoW between the west end of the tunnel and Waynesboro is pretty wide but it does have a RR crossing pinch point
 - The Capital Trails Coalition (Stephanie Piperno) – The Capital Trails Coalition is working to complete a nearly 900-mile network of multi-use trails across DC, VA, and MD.
 - The Coalition is made up of 60-members from non-profits, agencies, clubs, and business improvement districts (to name a few).

- The CTC has a criteria for network inclusion that can be found [here](#).
 - [Equitable trail development](#) guides the coalition's work.
 - [Interactive trail map](#) developed to show planned and existing trails across the region.
 - \$1.1 billion cost estimate to complete the remaining 408 miles of multi-use trails
 - Virginia costs \$325 million (Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax)
 - Long Bridge Project – expanding rail capacity but has environmental mitigation portion with bike and pedestrian including transfer of land from NPS.
 - I-66 [Expansion project](#) is moving along
 - W&OD Trail widening in Arlington and Falls Church. [The Falls Church portion](#) just recently broke ground.
 - Supported NPS applying for SmartScale program – widening and paving 6.5 miles of Mount Vernon Trail;
 - Joined Virginia Conservation Network's Land Use and Transportation Working Group
 - How can we work to make trail projects more competitive for SmartScale funding?
 - WABA's Vision Zero Summit – September 24th session 2:30-3:30 – Inclusive and Equitable Trails –You can register for the Vision Zero Summit here: <https://waba.org/blog/2019/10/washington-region-vision-zero-summit/> and my email is stephanie.piperno@waba.org
- Spearhead Trails (Shawn Lindsey) – over 600 miles of motorized trails – adding an 8th system in a couple years to approach 700 miles; building a lot of new equestrian and non-motorized systems; partnering with USDA/Forestry helping in Clinch Ranger District, Cade Springs Recreation Area, Devils Bathtub; noticed that wayfinding and camping facilities need improvement; partnering with private property owners to build camping or equestrian trails; Big Stone Gap 6,000 acres; connecting dirt roads and gravel roads; Nicklesville, Big Cherry, etc to mark; Scott County alone has over 200 miles of gravel roads also Lee and Wise County; 7 systems called Back Roads of Cumberland; thank you for all the efforts and expertise.
 - Lake to Lake Trail (Rick Barton)- This anchor trail goes through three counties with lots of infrastructure and includes southwest assets that are developable. It will consist of two donations valued at \$5 million each. The first is a 1,000-foot-wide-corridor into Laurel Bed Lake; and the second donation continues on to Hidden Valley Lake. Property acquisition is complete on the first section – cattle company; hiking trail; Central Appalachian Climbers Coalition; goes through Channels Natural Area Preserve.
 - Mendota Trail (Bob & Ellen Mueller) – 4 year effort underway for a 12.5 mile trail – 17 trestles to restore – railroad last ran in 1970 – Bristol to Mendota – a private non-profit obtained ownership in 2016, opened first mile in 2017; restored first trestle in 2018; the all-volunteer organization has found funding to be a challenge; 90% has come from private donors; 4 miles of trail currently open to the public; RTP Grant has been a huge help with the Bristol Trailhead; as well as a combined Appalachian Regional Commission / Tobacco Commission Grant for development of a master strategic plan; other challenges are with DEQ – the 12.5 mile linear trail is all in Washington County but when combined with the trailhead in Bristol, VA the threshold was exceeded for requiring a Stormwater Management Plan with associated increases in permitting and engineering expenses; large trestle restoration of \$150 K currently in progress, allowing for addition of 2.1 trail miles later this year; long term goal....explore options to

transfer trail to another entity – very difficult to develop and administer this trail project as a stand alone non-profit

- TriWay Trail (Katie Guerin) – worked at Rails to Trails Conservancy previously; Northern Neck TriWay Trail to connect Kilmarnock, White Stone, and Irvington – 1 mile open in private golf course, connect this route through private property through easements and county MOU's; beginning stages; interest from private funders; hope to create a partnership with localities and a feasibility study in 2021; may be a spur/extension of Potomac Scenic Heritage Trail (Anne O'Neill is acting superintendent of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail)

Future Conferences and post-COVID best practices for networking Jennifer

- [VAULT's Land Conservation and Greenways](#) – Virtual – Spring 2021
- [River Management Society Symposium](#) – May 2021
- Fall 2021 – Agritourism/Trails/Farmers Markets
- From chat log, Cathy Sutphin- The Inn at VT has upgraded technology so a hybrid would work fantastically there, VA Cooperative Extension could help with programming
- From chat log, Peter Krebs- It would be unequitable to host two-tiered meetings where those with fewer health concerns have better experiences.
- Feedback welcome about ideas and best practices for networking/conferences

Trails Collaboration Hub Matt Viverito <https://trails-vdcr.hub.arcgis.com/>

- Solution Engineer at ESRI – on the State team –
- User friendly; live data
- Allows a place for people to add data themselves
- The idea is to provide this website to partners (data collaborators) to sign up for an account and fill out a survey – DCR approved account users
- Can upload data to then be integrated into the main data set; no developer needed (out of the box)
- Then the data can be shared with the public and other agencies can download data sets
- Concept site at this time; lots of flexibility and endless users
- Link to beta Hub site: <https://trails-vdcr.hub.arcgis.com/>
- From chat log, Sarah Sanford- Please make sure nonprofits who maintain GIS data can also submit data (in addition to the government agencies).
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Future topics and meetings

Next virtual meeting (Tuesday Nov. 17 from 10-noon) Jennifer will send appointment

Future topics

Comments and suggested future topics from this meeting will be addressed at next meeting. Please send your suggested topics for the next meeting to Jennifer.wampler@dcr.virginia.gov

One future topic will be addressing Equity and diversity in state trail initiatives as well as advisory groups. If you have suggestions for new committee members that will help us reflect

the demographics of the Commonwealth, please send them to
Jennifer.wampler@dcr.virginia.gov

Look for a survey on what you think we should include in the E-newsletter in the next few weeks
(latest e-news available at <https://conta.cc/2FAJ55Z>)

Other comments from chat log

Ellen Shepard-I wanted to say a huge thank you to all the people who spoke as part of the Land Conservation & Greenways Conference in July! Presentations were outstanding! Thanks, Ellen Shepard, Virginia's United Land Trust

Champe Burnley Any thoughts on how we can translate the new appreciation of our parks and trails into more funding?

Noon Adjourn