



Braiding the Way for Outdoor Recreation in the Rockbridge Area

Rockbridge Area Outdoor Recreation and Trail Plan



Prepared by the

Rockbridge Area Outdoors "Braiding the Way" Steering Committee
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Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary	1
II. Introduction.....	3
Purpose of the Plan	3
Partners	4
Vision and Goals.....	4
Planning Process and Community Engagement	5
Issues and Opportunities	7
III. Background and Planning Context	8
Regional Greenways, Water Trails, and Bicycle Plans	8
Compatibility with Local Comprehensive Plans	9
Rockbridge Area Community Health Reports	11
Regional Tourism Trails	12
IV. Assessment of Recreational Trends and Community Needs	14
National Trends in Outdoor Recreation and Wellness	14
Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey, 2011	14
Virginia Outdoors Plan, 2013	16
Rockbridge Area Outdoor Recreation Survey, 2017	17
V. Existing Recreational Resources in the Rockbridge Area	19
Inventory and Mapping Overview	21
Summary of Existing Recreational Resources.....	22
VI. Trail and Water Trail System Planning.....	23
Corridor Gap Analysis, Preliminary Screening	23
Description of Priority Projects	28
Secondary Projects Ideas for Further Study.....	30
Trail Design and Accessibility.....	31
Recommendations	31
VII. Youth Engagement, Education, and Stewardship	35
Reconnecting with the Outdoors: Experiential Learning and Future Stewardship	35
Education and Stewardship Programs in the Rockbridge Area	36
State Partners and Resources	37
Federal Partners and National Programs.....	37
Recommendations	39
VIII. Community Health and Wellness	41
Virginia’s Health Profile	41
Health and Wellness Planning in the Rockbridge Area.....	42
Partnering with the Local Health Community	45
Additional Resource and Strategies to Promote Health.....	46
Recommendations	47

IX. Outdoor Recreation and Heritage Tourism Promotion.....	49
Background and Existing Tourism Programs	49
Regional Tourism and Economic Impacts	50
“Braiding the Way” Outdoor Recreation Marketing and Promotion.....	51
Recommendations.....	52
 X. Organizational Structure for Implementation	54
Assessment of Organizational Options	54
Rockbridge Area Outdoors Partnership	55
Volunteers and Friends	56
Liability.....	57
Funding Trail Development and Operations.....	58
 XI. Conclusion and Next Steps	59

Attachments

- A. Braiding the Way Multi-Level Approach to Public Participation
- B. Recommendations from the Central Shenandoah Valley Greenway Plan, July 2004
- C. Summary of Economic Impact Analysis and Survey Collection
- D. Rockbridge Area Outdoor Assets; Quadrant Map Series
- E. Public Lands, Trails, Boating Access and Bike Routes
- F. Physical Activity and Health Resources
- G. Rockbridge Area Outdoors, “Braiding the Way” Fact Sheet
- H. Rockbridge Area Outdoors Partnership, Long-Term Organizational Options
- I. Rockbridge Area Outdoors Partnership, Partner Profile Agreement

List of Figures

Figure 1, Partner Organizations.....	4
Figure 2, Planning Process Overview	6
Figure 3, Brushy Blue Greenway Master Plan, Land Planning and Design, 2004...	9
Figure 4, Most Popular Outdoor Activities in the United States, 2016.....	14
Figure 5, Central Shenandoah; Participation in Outdoor Recreation.....	15
Figure 6, Central Shenandoah; Most Needed Outdoor Recreation Facilities	15
Figure 7, Rockbridge Area Parks and Outdoor Recreation Sites.....	20
Figure 8, Bike Routes (From Bike the Valley)	22
Figure 9, Rockbridge Area Outdoors “Braiding the Way” Priority Projects	25
Figure 10, Rockbridge Area Outdoors “Braiding the Way” Focus Areas.....	28
Figure 11, Rockbridge Area Outdoors Project Tasks and Phasing Plan.....	31
Figure 12, Rockbridge Area Outdoors Project Locations.....	34

Braiding the Way for Outdoor Recreation in the Rockbridge Area

Rockbridge Area Outdoor Recreation and Trail Plan

Executive Summary

Located in the scenic Shenandoah Valley, the Rockbridge area is blessed with a diverse array of recreational assets. With over 100,000 acres of public forests, parks and recreation areas, there are numerous opportunities to camp, hike, bike, float, fish and hunt. The area also has hundreds of miles of designated bike routes for bike touring, and access to navigable waterways for river-based recreation. Complementing the region's natural and recreational features are historic sites and cultural experiences that showcase local crafts, music, art, and food.

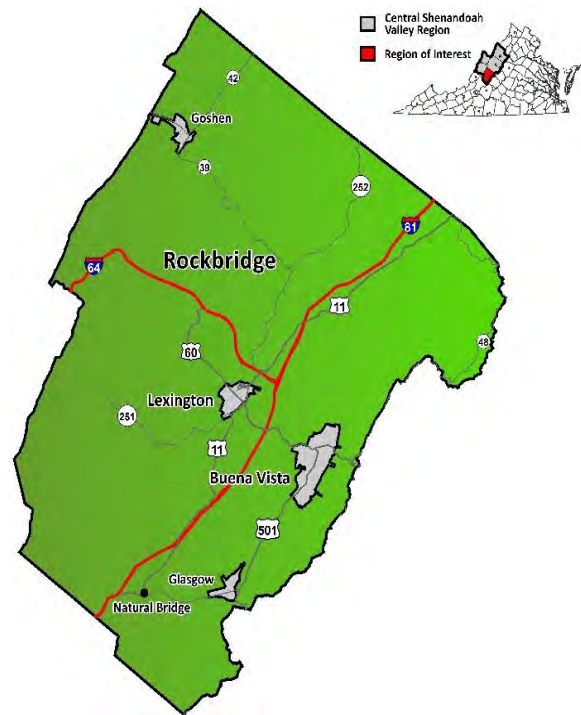


Outdoor recreation and heritage tourism are popular in Virginia. Each year over 45 million people visit the Commonwealth, to enjoy its history, culture, natural areas, and outdoor attractions. Statewide, \$21.9 billion is spent in Virginia on outdoor recreation, annually, including gear, supplies, and travel related expenses, which supported 197,000 jobs and generates tax revenues to help drive local economies.¹ However, many travelers in Virginia and even local residents are unaware of what the parks and open space in the Rockbridge area have to offer. Various surveys have noted the need for improved wayfinding signage, maps,

and support infrastructure to improve access to outdoor recreation sites.

In addition to their economic potential, parks, trails, and water trails can help address concerns related to cardiovascular disease and other health-related problems due to inactivity. Parks and recreation providers play a critical role in addressing these public health issues by providing the “health infrastructure” that enables people to be physically active outdoors. With over 32% of residents in Rockbridge County reporting high blood pressure, promoting the health benefits of outdoor recreation, along with cultivating a healthy active lifestyle, is critically important.²

In response to evolving community trends, needs, and interests, Rockbridge County, the Cities of Lexington and Buena Vista, and the Towns of Glasgow and Goshen decided to work together to advance outdoor recreation opportunities. The



¹ [The Outdoor Recreation Economy, Virginia State Report](#), Outdoor Industry Associates, 2017

² Rockbridge Area Community Health Improvement Plan, 2012, p.13

goal was to craft a vision and strategies that “braided together” various trail, water trail and greenway efforts into an interconnected network.

In December 2015, a Steering Committee was formed and the ***“Braiding the Way for Outdoor Recreation”*** project was initiated. This Plan is the result of that collaborative effort that engaged public and non-profit interests, key community leaders, agency staff, businesses, economic development and tourism, health, universities, and technical advisors.



The Plan incorporates and expands upon the various regional, local, and trail-specific plans completed over the past 15 years, providing a comprehensive approach to outdoor recreation planning and promotion. The Plan highlights existing conditions, as well as opportunities for new trail connections, and prioritizes actions to establish a phased approach to filling in “gaps” in the trail network. Nineteen projects were identified by the Committee to improve trail connectivity and/or expand river access for water trail development, as well as next steps needed to implement the projects.

The Plan also recommends a more coordinated approach to implementation that focuses on partnerships and improved communication among the various jurisdictions, interest groups and land managers in the region. In addition, the Plan recommends greater coordination among recreation, education, youth and community health partners, improved branding and wayfinding and other marketing and outreach activities to promote current offerings.

Finally, after review of several models, the Committee recommends that the Rockbridge Area Outdoors Partnership be established to pursue both trail development and promotion recommendations. It is intended that this Plan serve as a decision-making tool to help guide the Partnership, citizens, community leaders and agency staff in making wise capital and operating investment decisions related to recreational facilities over the next 10-20 years.

Working together, by identifying projects, establishing an expectation and culture of cooperation and initiating the Partnership, this Plan establishes the pathway forward in the creation of a first-class “braided” trail and water trail network. Full development of an interconnected network offers the potential of many new economic opportunities as well as positively impacting community health in the Rockbridge area.

Braiding the Way for Outdoor Recreation in the Rockbridge Area
Rockbridge Area Outdoor Recreation and Trail Plan

II. Introduction

Purpose of the Plan

Over the past several years, numerous outdoor recreation plans and studies have been completed for the Rockbridge area, including regional greenway and bicycle plans, economic impact studies, water trail plans, and specific park/trail master plans. Although each of these documents individually provide important data and guidance, there is currently no comprehensive framework that ties the area's planning efforts together, either physically (missing trail links) or organizationally. The focus of this Plan is to synthesize and integrate previous planning efforts, to better understand current conditions, and to identify priority actions to develop and market a regional system of outdoor recreation opportunities. A second focus is to recommend a structure and process for effective and sustainable regional collaboration.

This project seeks to:

- Advance the concept of an integrated trail system for paddling, hiking, equestrian, and bicycling that connects to historic and natural areas, to create a destination for outdoor enthusiasts.
- Introduce new visitors from outside the region to the diversity of outdoor recreation venues in the region, through easily accessible information and on-line media.
- Expand awareness of close-by parks, open space, rivers, and forest to local citizens and promote active recreation as a way to address chronic health concerns.
- Improve coordination among local, state, federal, non-profit, and commercial partners that manage outdoor recreation areas and facilities in the Rockbridge area.

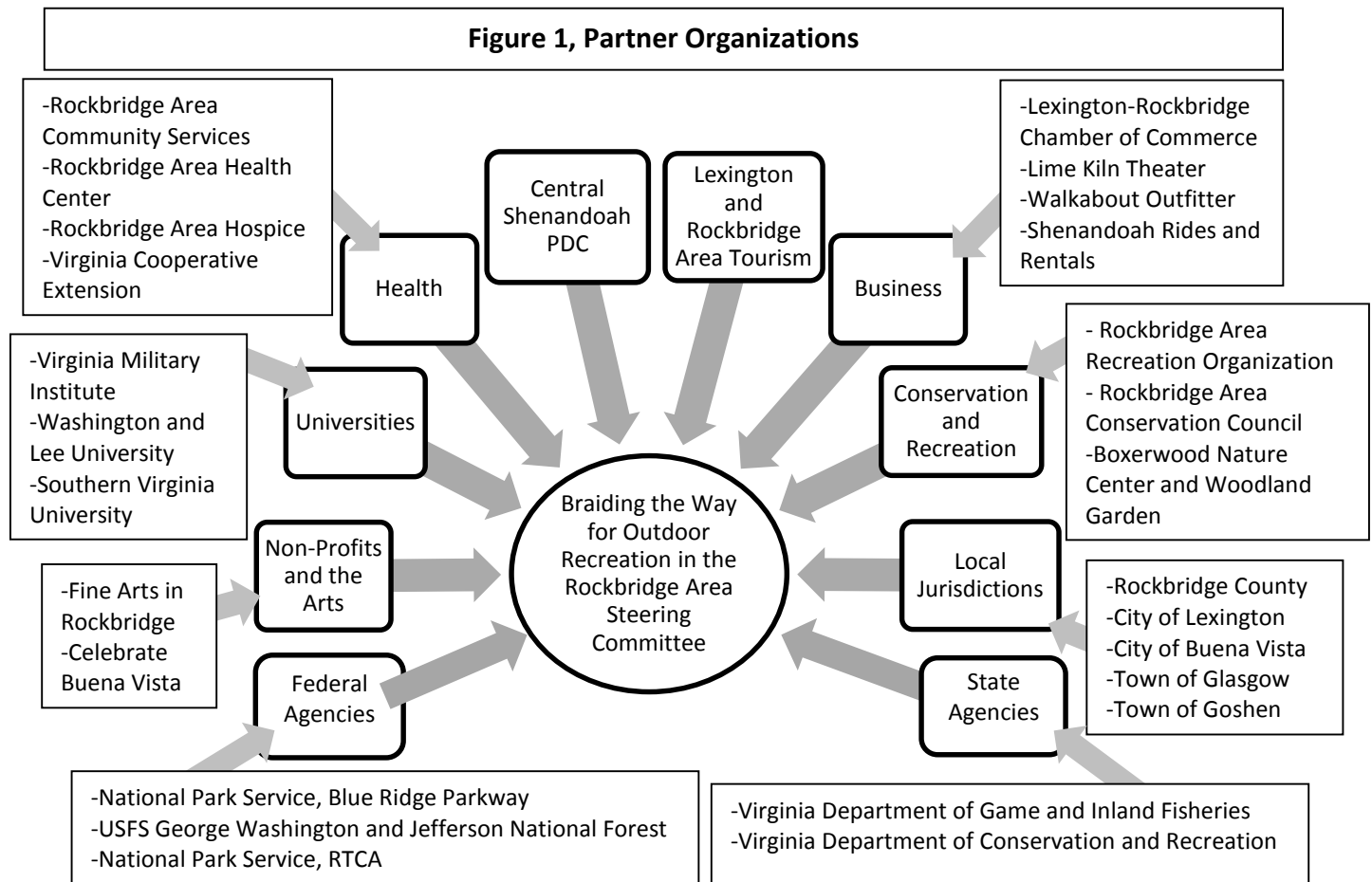


Specific tasks included:

- Conduct an inventory and assessment of existing outdoor recreational opportunities, evaluate needs and trends, and develop recommendations for an integrated “braided” trail system that connects the region.
- Document the economic impact of outdoor recreation to the region through an internet-based survey and economic modeling using IMPLAN.
- Develop an effective way to communicate outdoor recreation opportunities to both local citizens and visitors through internet-based and/or other media.
- Identify potential long-term regional coordination options and the recommended entity to oversee long-term management and growth of the network.

Partners

This Plan is a collaborative effort of more than 25 organizations that served on the project Steering Committee. They are as shown in the diagram below:



Vision and Goals

One of the first tasks of the Steering Committee was to develop an overall vision and goals for outdoor recreation in the Rockbridge area to serve as the foundation for assessing and prioritizing future actions.

***VISION:** We envision the Rockbridge area as a place of natural beauty, rich history, and economic vitality. A place where residents and visitors value, enjoy, and benefit from its unique and beckoning landscapes, diverse communities, and scenic waterways; where land and water-based recreational opportunities are abundant and easy to access.*

Goal #1: Economic Vitality: Support local businesses and regional economic development efforts by creating a network of pathways, bike routes, and water trails that showcase area attractions, and link visitors to nearby lodging, restaurants, and other visitor services.

Goal #2: Community Wellness: Provide opportunities and encouragement for the area's residents from the youth to the elderly, and those with disabilities, to walk, bicycle, run, and gain the health benefits of incorporating physical activity in natural settings into their daily lives.

Goal #3: Outdoor Tourism Promotion: Create easily accessible information, guides, and internet-based media that introduce visitors from outside the region to the diversity of outdoor opportunities, from long-distance touring to short walks or exploratory bike rides.

Goal #4: Network Management and Operations: Improve coordination among local, state, federal, non-profit, and commercial partners through the establishment of a partnership entity that works collaboratively to maintain and promote outdoor recreation in the Rockbridge area.

Goal #5: Civic Pride and Community-Building: Utilize the trail network as a vehicle for social interactions, civic pride, youth service projects and outdoor learning for all ages and members of the community.

A key focus of the Committee's work was to advance an easily accessible, connected and coordinated network of on-road bicycle routes, off-road pathways, and water trails linking destinations, and providing multiple opportunities to explore and learn about the heritage of the region, sample local food, and visit local attractions. A system that is well managed and maintained through cooperative efforts of federal, state, local, or non-profit entities, and an extensive stewardship network involving citizens, clubs, schools, businesses and civic organizations.

Long-term it is the Committee's hope that the project helps to establish a community culture that strives for health and wellness for all its members through accessible close-to-home recreation that support an active lifestyle. A place where families spend time together, and where all generations from elderly to youth can find inspiration, peace and tranquility in the outdoors. Where a technology-based society can unwind and unplug and enjoy the simple beauty of the region's bucolic landscapes, working farms and easy to access to rivers and trails.



Planning Process and Community Engagement

In 2015, the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC) applied for and received assistance from the National Park Service, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program. A Committee was formed, chaired by Lexington and Rockbridge Area Tourism. The following steps highlight the process used by the Committee:

1. Getting Organized: Project Start-Up and Formation of Steering Committee: An interdisciplinary project team was established with expertise in various aspects of outdoor recreation planning, river access and trail development, marketing and tourism promotion. The goal of the group was to assess existing conditions, identify gaps in the system and develop an overall conceptual master plan including early action pilot projects. The Committee also evaluated various implementation options and developed recommendations on next steps.

2. **Information Gathering: Data Collection and Field Analysis:** In December 2015, a kick off meeting was convened, and in January 2016, a second, more intensive meeting was organized to reach consensus on the mission of the committee, and start to craft a vision and goals statement. Subcommittees were formed consistent with project tasks including: Trail/Outdoor Recreation Assessment and Mapping; Community Outreach; Economic Impacts, and Marketing and Promotion. Monthly meetings with additional subcommittee meetings and site visits were held throughout 2016 to gain a better understanding of corridor features and to develop initial recommendations on future needs. CSPDC provided geographic information system (GIS) mapping support.


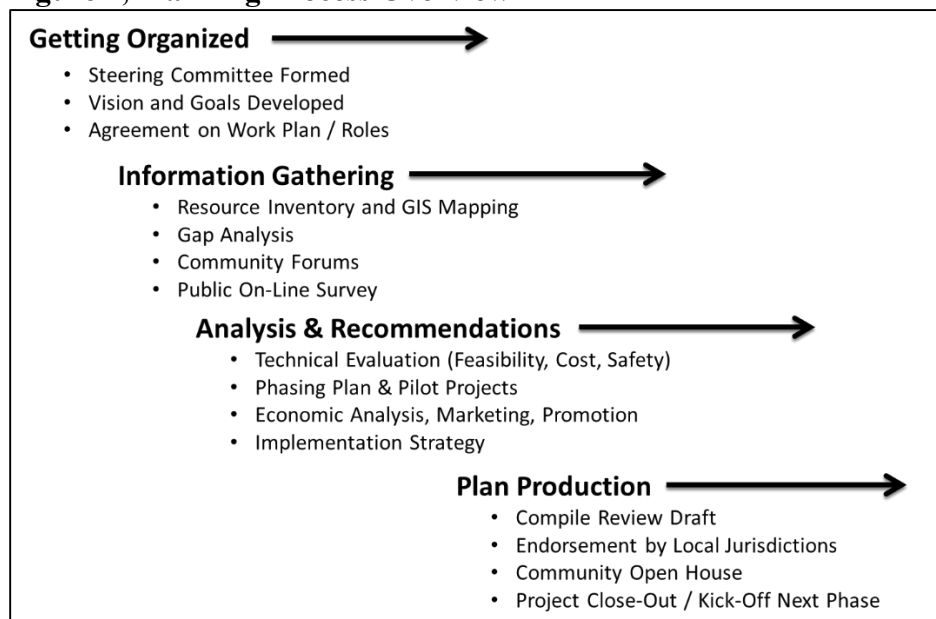
 3. **Analysis and Recommendations: Community Engagement Workshops:** A series of nine community forums were held between November 2016 and April 2017 to generate ideas on trails and water trail priorities, and document issues, opportunities, and potential linkages. Each forum included a presentation on the value and benefits of outdoor recreation and market trends, and an interactive mapping exercise to assess interest and rank the 20 potential trail and water trail projects identified by the Committee. Additional information on the community participation strategy can be found in Attachment A.
- 
4. **Plan Production: Concept Plan Development, Review, and Refinement**
A draft concept plan was compiled that provided a vision and action strategy to advance a regional system of trails and water trails, taking into account both technical analysis and citizen comments. In September 2017, an update was provided to elected officials and agency staff at an Intergovernmental Meeting held at Natural Bridge State Park. The final plan was then presented to local elected officials for endorsement in Fall 2017.

Figure 2, Planning Process Overview



Issues and Opportunities

In addition to collecting information on recreational assets, the Committee discussed issues that need to be addressed in order to successfully achieve a first-class system of parks connected through water and land-based trails (February 17, 2016 Committee Meeting). Their findings were reinforced by comments from the public, received through the community forum series. The five primary challenges are listed below:

1. Multi-Jurisdictional Coordination

- Network Cohesiveness: Multiple outdoor recreation sites can be found in the Rockbridge area, but they need to be connected into a more comprehensive system.
- Fragmentation (efforts are not unified): Leveraging resources and achieving cumulative benefits of outdoor recreation could be improved with greater cooperation between and among localities and various land managers.

2. Funding, Operational Capacity and Maintenance

- Funding: A multi-level funding strategy is needed that combines public grants and private sources for facility development and ensures a dedicated source for management.
- Staff Limitations: A sustainable group, focused on outdoor nature-based recreation is needed to assist local jurisdictions with long-term implementation efforts.
- Maintenance: There needs to be a mechanism in place to assist land managers with maintenance, to allow volunteers, civic organization, and clubs interested in service projects to supplement agency resources.

3. Liability Concerns and Private Property

- There needs to be better information regarding landowner liability to address concerns of private property owners.
- A greater effort needs to be made, to better understand the concerns of private property issues.

4. Marketing and Branding

- Promotion: The “Braiding the Way” concept needs a recognizable, unified brand to help promote a cohesive image of the Rockbridge area’s outdoor recreation system.
- Wayfinding Signage: There is currently no signage plan or wayfinding system to direct people to outdoor recreation sites.

5. Community and Political Support

- There is a need to continue to demonstrate and promote community benefits and relevance on an on-going basis to maintain momentum.
- To be effective with outreach, there is a need to engage private champions.
- A strategy is needed to keep new community leaders informed as there are regular changes in local elected leaders and staff.



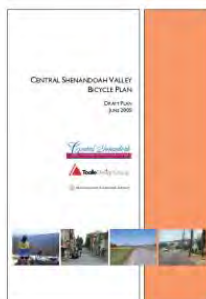
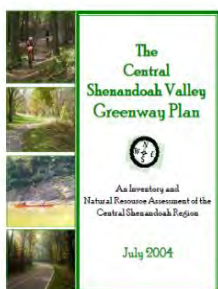
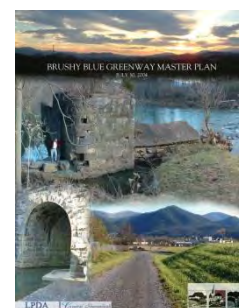
III. Background and Planning Context

Outdoor recreation takes place in all types of settings including: local neighborhood parks, county, state and federal parks, forests, and wildlife preserves. For the purposes of this Plan, the focus will be on both active and passive recreation that is nature-based, i.e. takes place in a park, river or trail setting, rather than on a ball field or stadium. This section provides an overview of existing recreation-related plans and programs at the state, regional and local level.

Regional Greenways, Water Trails, and Bicycle Plans

The 2004 Central Shenandoah Valley Greenway Plan was the first regional effort to inventory outdoor recreation assets and identify future connections (see recommendations in Attachment B). Also in 2004, the Brushy Blue Greenway Master Plan was completed by consultant, Land Planning & Design. Regional bike planning and water trail planning followed. Some of the most noteworthy regional and multi-jurisdictional planning efforts are listed below:

- [Brushy Blue Greenway Master Plan, 2004](#)
- [The Central Shenandoah Valley Greenway Plan, July 2004](#)
- [Central Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Plan, June 2005](#)
- [James River Heritage Trail Conceptual Plan, August 2011](#)
- [Upper James River Water Trail Plan, 2008, rev 2016](#)
- [Virginia Outdoors Plan, 2013](#)



Status of Plan Implementation

Since 2004, much progress has been made in advancing the recommendations of these plans. For example, on September 24, 2016, Natural Bridge, a National Historic Landmark, became Natural Bridge State Park, the 37th unit of the Virginia State Parks system. In October 2011, the City of Buena Vista and the Town of Glasgow were designated Appalachian Trail Communities by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

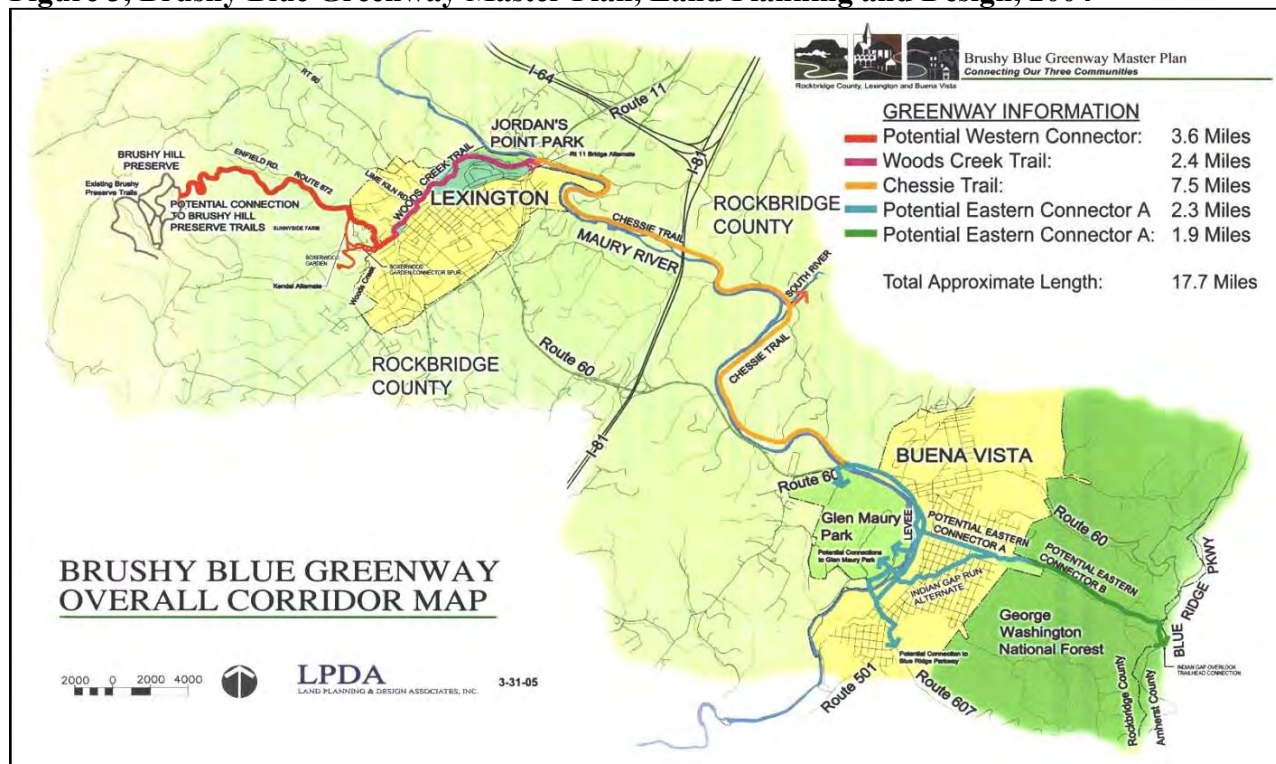
The James River Scenic Waterway Assessment was completed in 2016, and the Scenic River designation was extended from the confluence of the Jackson and Cowpasture Rivers to the Snowden boat access ramp, a distance of approximately 49 miles. When added to the previously designated 14 mile section from below Eagle Rock to the Springwood boat access/Route 630 bridge, the total length is approximately 63 miles.

Also in 2016 a new river access site was developed in Glasgow funded through a Watershed Roundtable Grant, and the Upper James River Water Trail was extended to include the lower

Maury River, from Buena Vista to Glasgow. The project also resulted in an updated website, maps, brochure, and kiosk design for access points.

In spite of these accomplishments, there are several projects that have not been completed, such as the Brushy Blue Greenway, a joint project of all three jurisdictions to connect Brushy Hill Preserve to Buena Vista and eventually to U.S. Forest Service lands. The Brushy Blue Greenway Master Plan, completed in 2004 provides an in-depth and comprehensive inventory and analysis of the corridor, cost estimates, design guidelines, and detailed mapping of plan concepts.

Figure 3, Brushy Blue Greenway Master Plan, Land Planning and Design, 2004



Compatibility with Local Comprehensive Plans

Rockbridge County and the Cities of Lexington and Buena Vista, all have local Comprehensive Plans that support trails, greenways and water trails, as described below.

1. County of Rockbridge Virginia, Comprehensive Plan, 2016-2036

References to trails and water trails can be found in several chapters of the Rockbridge County Comprehensive Plan, including: Economy, Transportation, and Community Facilities.

Chapter 5, Economy: recognizes the economic value of outdoor recreation, stating:

“Outdoor recreation is a fundamental aspect of economic development. They are interrelated in that outdoor recreation can improve economic health, reduce crime and support overall quality of life all while protecting the environment and parks and open space.”³

³ [Rockbridge County Virginia Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 5](#), Economy, p.151

Chapter 7, Transportation: recognizes the Brushy Blue Trail project, as well as the overall need for a multi-modal system that addresses both transportation and recreation needs.

A stated transportation goal is:

Goal: Transportation Options: Rockbridge County will provide a variety of transportation options for residents, employers, workers and visitors. Rockbridge County will improve connectivity and mobility to enhance its existing grid network of interconnected streets, sidewalks and trails.⁴

Finally, parks and open space is recognized as vital components to overall quality of life in Chapter 8, Community Facilities. This section describes the County's management approach and highlights its numerous developed areas, natural areas and historic/cultural sites, offering a diverse array of recreational opportunities.

Three strategies of note include:

1. *The County should develop a system of bicycle trails, where feasible and appropriate.*
2. *The County should consider acquisition of abandoned rail rights-of-ways to expand hiking and biking trails and access to the rivers, if it becomes economically feasible.*
10. *The County should work to preserve rivers and streams to maximize recreation potential.⁵*



2. City of Lexington Comprehensive Plan; adopted June 15, 1995, revised 2007

The City of Lexington Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 8, Transportation Chapter, references several trail and greenway projects of interest to the City in the Parks and Trails Section including the Brushy Hill Preserve Trails, Woods Creek Trail, Chessie Trail, and campus trail systems, as well as the Brushy Blue Greenway.

The plan states:

“The City already has a partial trail system that could be integrated with other pedestrian and bicycle facilities and connected to popular destinations including Lexington’s parks, schools, colleges, and commercial areas. If connected with regional trails outside the City, a coherent trail system would allow visitors and residents to move in and out of town easily, providing easy access to the area’s natural resources. Lexington has the potential to become a walking and cycling destination, without incurring significant costs.”⁶

In addition, the plan recommends the following:

Goal: Explore possibilities for expanding the City’s local trail network

Recommendation: Working with Rockbridge County, the Planning and Public Works Departments should complete the City’s trail system by linking it with other walkways and bikeways and with trails in the County.⁷

⁴ [Rockbridge County Virginia Comprehensive Plan](#), Chapter 7, Transportation, p. 202-203

⁵ [Rockbridge County Virginia Comprehensive Plan](#), Chapter 8, p. 232-233

⁶ [City of Lexington Virginia, Comprehensive Plan](#), Chapter 8, p. 8-17 to 8-21

⁷ [City of Lexington Virginia, Comprehensive Plan](#), Chapter 8, p. 8-21

3. Viewpoints - Buena Vista Comprehensive Plan, November 2011

Similar to Rockbridge County, Buena Vista's Comprehensive Plan recognizes the value of open space, parks, and trails, in several chapters including Natural Resources, Transportation, and Community Facilities.

Chapter 3, Natural Resources states:

*"Emphasis should be given to activities such as hiking and biking trails, water access and blueways, and community parks. Integrating these activities into community planning, makes walkable, livable communities a reality."*⁸

The Brushy Blue Greenway was recognized as a critical connection between Buena Vista, Lexington and Rockbridge County, with the potential to create a 17-mile trail for recreation, transportation, and educational purposes.

Chapter 5, Economy: recognizes outdoor recreation as an economic opportunity that can support tourism, events, and business attraction/retention. The City has defined two Tourism Zones to attract travel and tourism related business to 1) the downtown area and 2) the Glen Maury Park/Hill Top area. In addition, designating the City of Buena Vista as an Appalachian Trail Community will help serve as a catalyst for enhancing economic development.

Chapter 7, Transportation: The Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities section in this chapter recognizes the Chessie Trail, Levee Trail, and Glen Maury Park Trail as important components of an overall multi-modal system. A stated goal is:

*Goal 2: Transportation Options. The City of Buena Vista will provide a variety of transportation options for residents, employers, workers, and visitors. The City of Buena Vista will improve connectivity and mobility to enhance its existing grid network of interconnected streets, sidewalks and trails.*⁹

Chapter 8, Communities Facilities: includes a section on Recreation that highlights city parks and trail facilities. Under the "Strategies for Action," the plan calls for the development of a comprehensive recreation,



open space, and greenway plan, the implementation of the Brushy Blue Greenway Plan, and the need to seek funding to support development of recreation and greenway facilities.¹⁰

Rockbridge Area Community Health Reports

In 2015, the latest Rockbridge Area Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) was completed which documents community health, identifies issues and concerns, and tracks ongoing progress in key areas. In terms of health risk factors, the CHNA found that 32% of Lexington residents reported high blood pressure which was slightly higher than the state

⁸ Viewpoints, Buena Vista Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 3, p.3-16

⁹ Viewpoints, Buena Vista Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 7, p.7-29

¹⁰ Viewpoints, Buena Vista Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 8, p.8-14

average of 30%. In addition, 36% of adults in Rockbridge County reported high cholesterol, compared to 35% statewide. Between 2011 and 2013, the mortality rate from heart disease and diabetes went down in both Buena Vista and Rockbridge County, but increased in the City of Lexington. Although Buena Vista has shown improvements in mortality rates from heart disease and diabetes, they are still higher than the state average.¹¹

The CHNA also serves as the foundation for the Health Improvement Implementation Strategy, which documents the greatest needs, and develops goals, key actions, responsible parties, and timelines to address those needs. Based on primary and secondary data collected, the CHNA found that the top four greatest needs in the Rockbridge area are: 1) Need for urgent care services; 2) Value not placed on preventive care and chronic disease management; 3) High prevalence of obesity / overweight individuals; and 4) Lack of exercise / physical activity.¹²

[Live Healthy Rockbridge Kids](#), a Healthy Communities Action Team housed at Rockbridge Area Community Services, is working to reduce obesity in children through healthy eating and physical activity. In fiscal year 2017, the initiative will be particularly focused on connecting families with outdoor recreation opportunities in the Rockbridge Area.



Development of a network of trails, parks, and water trails can help support these community health goals by increasing access to healthy outdoor recreation venues that promote physical activity for all ages and abilities. Data has been collected for several years that document trail benefits. For example, a county-level study of Oregon communities was undertaken in 2009 that documented the importance of trails in providing opportunities for people to be physically active. The study showed that counties with higher densities of hiking and trail miles were associated with lower obesity rates, and higher proportions of adults meeting the Center for Disease Control's physical activity recommendations.¹³

Regional Tourism Trails

Three tour routes are located in the Rockbridge area, two coordinated by the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (Bike the Valley and Fields of Gold Farm Trail) and one by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (Virginia Wildlife and Birding Trail). All three are described below:

[Bike the Valley](#) encourages bicycling in the Central Shenandoah Valley, by providing on-line resources with both on-and off-road cycling routes located in the five-county area. Five routes are located in the Rockbridge area. The website also includes information on safety, commuting, and local resources.



[Fields of Gold Farm Trail](#) is a regional agri-tourism program designed to collectively market and promote the Shenandoah Valley's agri-tourism sites and activities. In addition to marketing, the program supports the start-up and growth of agriculture-related businesses by offering educational workshops and



¹¹ Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2013; cited in the [Rockbridge Area Community Health Needs Assessment](#), Final Report, September 28, 2015, p.121-122, 131

¹² Rockbridge Area Health Needs Assessment, [Health Improvement Implementation Strategy](#) 2016-2018

¹³ Rosenberger, R.S.; Bergerson, T.R.; Kline, J.D. 2009; [Macro-Linkages Between Health and Outdoor Recreation: The Role of Parks and Recreation Providers](#), Journal of Park and Recreation Administration. 27(3): 8-20.

providing business tools and resources to its members. The Rockbridge area has over 30 participating sites including farms, farm stands, markets, greenhouses, nurseries, breweries and wineries, farm-to-table restaurants, and on-farm lodging.

[Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail](#) began in 2001 with the goal of promoting wildlife viewing as a vital recreational, economic, and stewardship activity. Since then, the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail has been completed, that links over 650 wildlife viewing sites throughout the state. The Rockbridge River and Ridge Loop, and parts of the Alleghany Highlands Loop and Peaks of Otter Loop are located in the Rockbridge area. The newly launched “[Find Wildlife VA](#)” serves as the electronic, interactive version of the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail Guide.



IV. Assessment of Recreational Trends and Community Needs

National Trends in Outdoor Recreation and Wellness

Outdoor recreation is essential to the American economy. In 2016, based on data collected by the Outdoor Foundation, nearly half of all Americans (48%) participated in at least one outdoor activity, which equates to 144 million participants.¹⁴ Outdoor recreation consumers spent \$887 billion on gear, supplies, and travel related expenses, which supported 7.6 million jobs, and generated over \$79 billion in federal, state, and tax revenue in 2016.¹⁵ The top activities in terms of participation were running/jogging, followed by fishing and hiking, as seen in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4; Most Popular Outdoor Activities in the United States, 2016

	% of adults (ages 25+)	Participants (million)
Running, Jogging and Trail Running	14.8%	32.0
Fishing (Fresh, Salt and Fly)	14.6%	31.5
Hiking	13.7%	29.7
Bicycling (Road, Mountain and BMX)	12.8%	27.7
Camping (Car, Backpacking and RV)	11.7%	25.2

Source: [Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report 2017](#)

In addition to trail-related activities, the 2015 Special Report on Paddlesports by the Outdoor Foundation showed that water-based recreation is also on the rise. In 2014, 21.7 million Americans or 7.4% of the population, enjoyed paddling, an increase of more than 3 million participants since 2010. Kayaking is the most popular form of paddling, increasing from 3% participating in 2010 to 4.4% in 2014. Canoeing participation slightly decreased in 2014, but the sport remains the second most popular paddle sport.¹⁶

Finally, there is growing evidence supporting the value of outdoor recreation to general health and wellness. In 2015, according to the Surgeon General almost 50% of U.S. adults, or 117 million people, were living with a chronic disease. Data collected in 43 separate studies conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), showed that exercise significantly reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, and yet less than half of Americans are getting the recommended daily amount of physical activity.¹⁷ Parks and trails can help address this issue, serving as “health infrastructure” to promote and encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyles.



Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey, 2011

Every five years, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) conduct the Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey (VOS) to estimate participation and assess demand for a wide

¹⁴ [Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report, 2017](#), Outdoor Foundation, 2017

¹⁵ [The Outdoor Recreation Economy](#), Outdoor Industry Associates, 2017

¹⁶ [2015 Special Report on Paddlesports](#), Outdoor Foundation, 2015

¹⁷ [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Facts About Physical Activity](#), updated May 2014

variety of outdoor recreation activities. The study is conducted by the University of Virginia, Center for Survey Research, at the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. The data collected serves as a foundation for the Virginia Outdoors Plan. Over the last 16 years, walking has remained the number one activity; visiting historic areas and natural areas also ranks high.¹⁸

2011 VOS, Central Shenandoah Region Participation in Outdoor Recreation

The DCR website hosts an on-line searchable database that can be queried by region to aggregate responses for a specific planning district. The following tables show the responses received by residents of the Central Shenandoah Region when asked if their household participates in a particular outdoor activity. The highest response rate was “walking” with 83% of households participating. (see Figure 5)

Figure 5; Central Shenandoah; Participation in Outdoor Recreation	
Activity	% Households
Walking	83%
Historic sites	67%
Natural area, preserve or refuge	63%
Canoeing/kayaking/ rowing	52%
Swimming/pool	44%
Sunbathing/relaxing on a beach	43%
Swimming/beach	42%
Visited historical areas	42%
Picnicking away from home	40%

Source: <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/vop-participation-activities>

2011 VOS, Central Shenandoah Region – Most Needed Facilities

When asked what is needed most, in terms of outdoor recreation facilities, residents of the Central Shenandoah Region responded that public access to state waters was the greatest need, followed by trails for hiking and walking. (see Figure 6)

Figure 6; Central Shenandoah; Most Needed Outdoor Recreation Facilities			
Rank	Recreational Activity	% Households	
		Region	State
1	Public access to state waters for fishing, swimming and beach use	68	60
2	Trails for hiking and walking	67	68
3	Natural areas	57	55
4	Trails for wildlife watching and nature study	52	45
5	Historic areas	51	51
6	Public access to state waters for non-motorized boating (canoeing, kayaking)	42	46
7	Trails for bicycling	42	54
8	Public pools	35	38
9	Playing fields for outdoor sports (softball, baseball, football, soccer)	24	40
10	Trails for motorized off-road vehicles	23	17
11	Trails for horseback riding	22	22
12	Public access to state waters for motorized boating	21	22
13	Outdoor playing courts for tennis and basketball	14	32

Source: <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/vop-needed-facilities>

¹⁸ [Virginia Outdoor Demand Survey](#), 2011

Virginia Outdoors Plan, 2013

The Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP) is the state's comprehensive plan for land conservation, outdoor recreation and open-space planning. Produced by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the plan is updated every five years. The most recent VOP was completed in 2013, and identifies Virginia's long-range outdoor recreation and land conservation trends and needs, as well as statewide and regional implementation strategies.¹⁹

2013 Virginia Outdoors Plan, Central Shenandoah PDC Public Meeting²⁰

DCR held a series of public meetings in each planning district in 2011-2012 to hear from citizens about what was most important to their communities in terms of outdoor recreation. The following recommendations came from the public meeting held in Central Shenandoah, and are consistent with the committee's observations and recommendations:

- Health: Encourage outdoor recreation as part of healthy living strategies. Teach outdoor recreation safety and provide safe biking opportunities.
- Youth: Ensure opportunities for natural resource and land stewardship education in the schools. Encourage youth volunteerism in outdoor recreation and conservation.
- Trails: Education and information on trail etiquette is needed especially for multiuse trails. Longer equestrian trails are desired. Appalachian Trail Communities include Waynesboro, Harrisonburg, Buena Vista and Glasgow. Public agencies should work together to connect trail systems. Beginner mountain bike trails are needed.
- Water Access: During the public meetings, the need for river access for paddlers was mentioned.
- Land Conservation: Scenic areas should be identified and appropriate protection strategies developed. Protection of scenic areas for driving pleasure was cited as an interest.



2013, Virginia Outdoors Plan, Regional Recommendations, Central Shenandoah PDC²¹

The VOP provides regional recommendations for each planning region in Virginia, including a list of featured projects that must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Has statewide or regional significance
- Addresses top statewide or regional needs identified by the VOS
- Has involvement and support from multiple jurisdictions in the region
- Is able to be initiated within the next five years.

Featured projects in the Central Shenandoah planning region include:

- Blue Ridge Tunnel (also known as Crozet Tunnel)
- The Brushy Blue Greenway
- Chessie Nature Trail, connecting Lexington and Buena Vista.
- Linville Creek Greenway in the town of Broadway
- South River Greenway in Waynesboro

¹⁹ [2013 Virginia Outdoors Plan](#), Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, 2013

²⁰ [Virginia Outdoors Plan, Central Shenandoah Planning District](#), Chapter 10, Region 6, p.64

²¹ [2013, Virginia Outdoors Plan, Central Shenandoah Planning District](#), Chapter 20, Region 6, p.67-72

- Glasgow Landing boat launch, located at the confluence of the James and Maury rivers
- Improve safety for bicyclists along U.S. Bicycle Route 76 and replace missing signs along the route.

Other recommendations provided in the Plan include:

- Rockbridge County organizations should consider additional public water-access opportunities on the Maury River, especially between Goshen Pass to Glasgow
- Develop trails connecting George Washington and Jefferson National Forests through the Lexington Reservoir site to Lexington.
- Develop trails that connect George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, the Shenandoah National Park and the Appalachian Trail to their neighboring communities, including Elkton, Grottoes, Waynesboro and Buena Vista
- Expand multiuse trails and linkages to include: Maury River Trail-greenway-blueway system connecting Glen Maury Park with Buena Vista
- The following river segments have been evaluated and found worthy of Virginia Scenic Rivers of designation: Calfpasture River (Marble Valley to Maury River); James River (Springwood to Glasgow in Rockbridge County); Maury River (Limekiln/Bottom Bridge to Lexington)

Rockbridge Area Outdoor Recreation Survey, 2017

In early 2017, the Steering Committee with support from the Washington and Lee University Venture Club, initiated a web-based community survey to better understand perspectives and needs related to outdoor recreation. Information was collected from January 20, 2017 to July 31, 2017, on topics such as: the type and frequency of outdoor activities, length of outings, trip expenditures, and outdoor recreation needs and priorities. Two survey instruments were administered: one for local residents, and one for visitors to the area.

Although the survey was anecdotal (i.e. respondents were self-selected, rather than through a random-sample methodology), the responses were informative and supports previous findings related to outdoor recreation priorities. Both residents and visitors identified walking, day hiking/trail running, and nature/wildlife viewing as top outdoor recreation pursuits. Residents also noted the importance of water/paddle sports; and visitors noted the importance of cultural/historical sites. Both residents and visitors recommended expansion of existing recreational offerings, as well as easier access, and improvements in directional and wayfinding signage. Almost half of those surveyed learned about outdoor recreation opportunities from family and friends. When asked about the quality of the experience, 67% rated their experience as good or excellent.



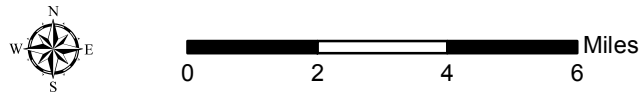
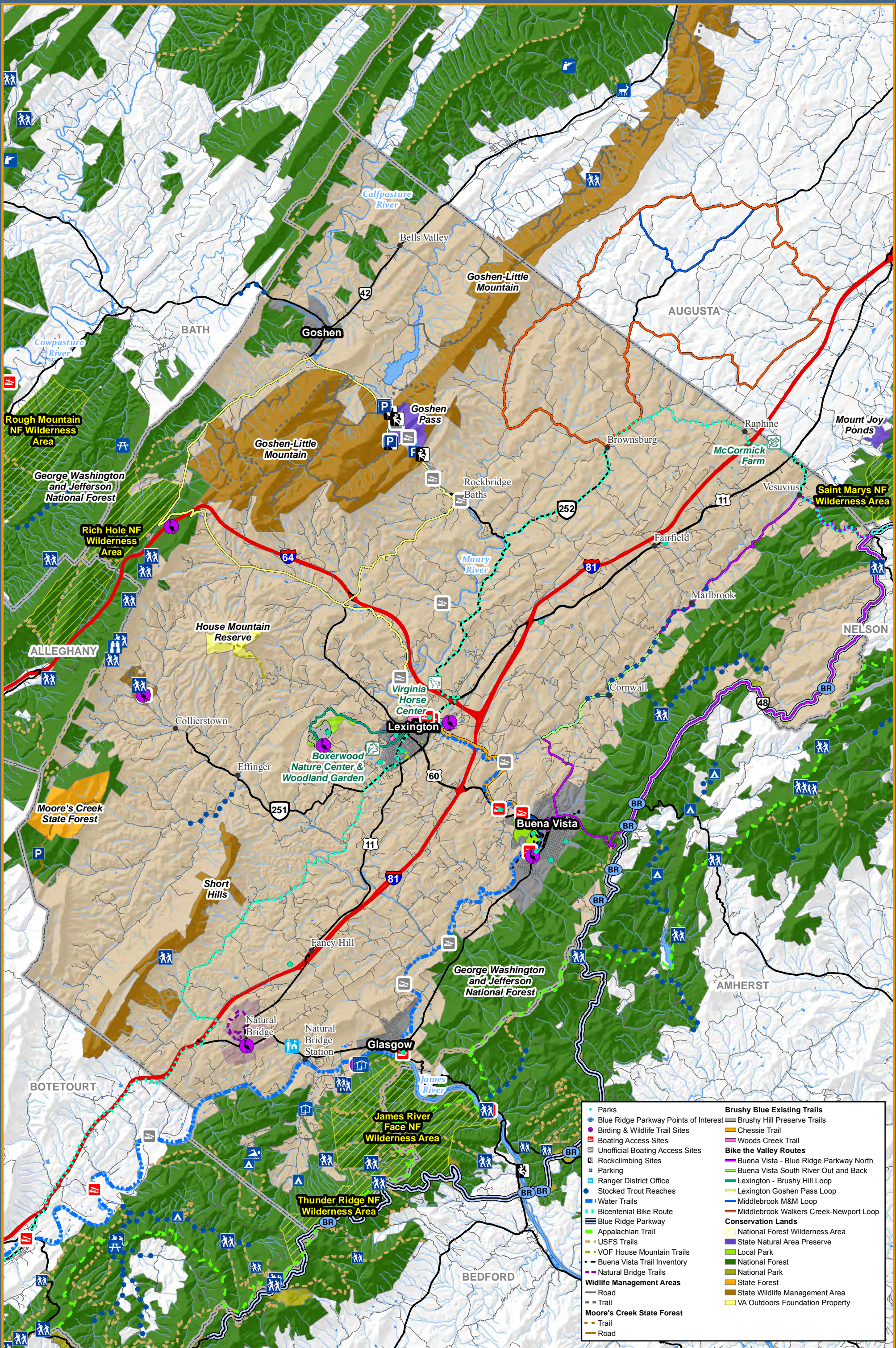
The second step in the process was to assess the economic impact of outdoor recreation to the Rockbridge area economy. A total of 384 individuals completed the economic portion of the survey (328 residents; 56 visitors). The survey results showed that residents spent, on average, \$292 for equipment, \$134 for transportation, \$49 for event fees and \$82 for other expenses

during 2016. Data on visitor expenditures including food, lodging, transportation and supplies, was forwarded to the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission, who used IMPLAN (Impact Analysis for PLANning) software to estimate the amount of economic activity. Resident spending was not included in this analysis since it is not “new money” coming into the local economy.

In 2016, an estimated 31,286 overnight visitor parties travelled to the region with the primary purpose of outdoor recreation activities. Each overnight party was estimated to have spent \$577 on various services and products, resulting in \$10.7 million in direct spending, which supported 209 jobs. Overall, the economic impact of these overnight visitors including direct, indirect, and induced spending, resulted in \$14.8 million in economic output and supported 245 jobs. A summary of the economic impact analysis and survey collection can be found in Attachment C.

V. Existing Recreation Resources in the Rockbridge Area

The following section identifies existing facilities available for both passive and active nature-based outdoor recreation. Passive recreation is considered low impact and is generally human-powered with minimal impact or effect on resources; activities include walking, hiking, picnicking, wildlife watching, viewing scenic vistas and some forms of environmental education. Active recreation is considered more intense, often involves a skill and typically has higher levels of impact on the resource. Forms of active recreation include biking, boating, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and motorized sports. Recreation assets in the Rockbridge area are shown in **Figure 7, Rockbridge Area Parks and Outdoor Recreation Sites** on the map on the following page.



Rockbridge Area Outdoor Recreation Plan

Sources:
Rockbridge County, Buena Vista, Lexington, Rockbridge Area
Recreation Organization, CSPDC, Census, VA-DCR, VDOT,
VGIN, USGS, USFS, NPS, VA-DGIF

Prepared by:
Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC)
Date: July 18, 2017



Inventory and Mapping Overview

The Central Shenandoah Valley Greenway Plan provided an excellent starting point for the Braiding the Way initiative, with a comprehensive list of parks and recreational facilities, but detailed GIS data files of facilities did not exist. To address this need, the Committee worked with CSPDC regional planners to develop a GIS database with updated information for the Rockbridge area. Regional data sources were supplemented with data layers from local and state agencies. The information collected included the following:

Public Lands

- Name
- Owner
- Activities
- Facilities
- Fee
- ADA accessible

Trail Data:

- Name
- Length
- Difficulty
- Type of use
- Fees
- Info kiosk
- Owner

Boat Access Data:

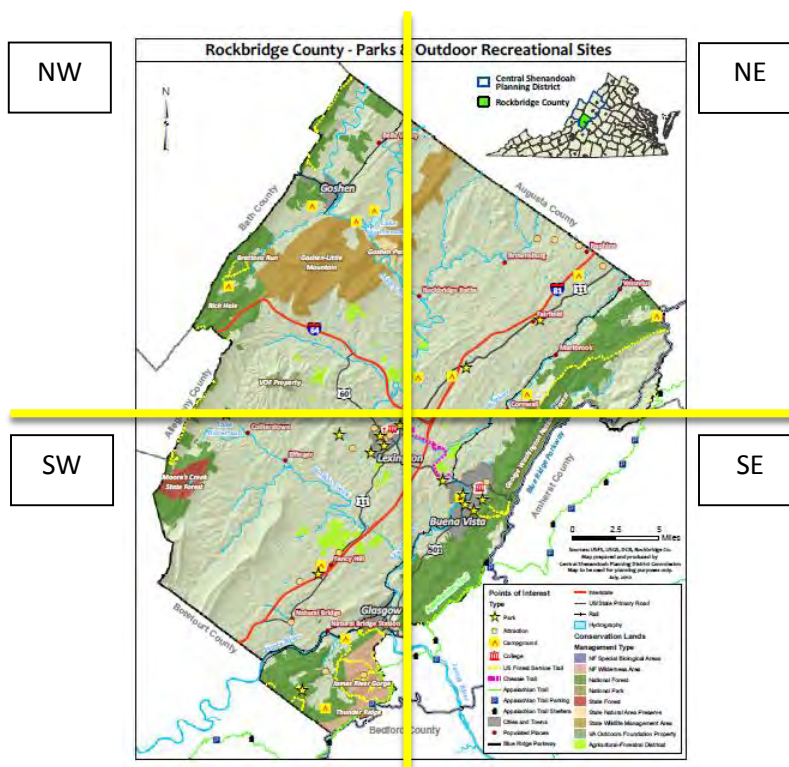
- Name
- Water Body
- Signage
- Type of Boat Ramp
- Parking Area
- Parking for Trailers

Bike Route Data

- Name
- Elevation Change
- Distance

After a revised data set was completed, two sets of maps were developed by the Committee to better understand the spatial distribution of recreational opportunities:

- 1) a series of county-wide maps classified by type of facility (i.e. each map showing one theme; public lands, on-road bike routes, existing trails, or recreation areas); and
- 2) a series of composite maps showing all activities available in each of the four county quadrants (NE, NW, SE, SW).



The maps served two purposes: 1) to provide an up-to-date base map of existing facilities to use in identifying gaps/needs, and 2) to provide a framework for a future online interactive map of outdoor recreation opportunities to serve as a trip planning tool. The map series can be viewed in more detail in Attachment D and on the CSPDC website at: <http://www.cspdc.org/maps/>

Summary of Existing Recreational Resources

Multiple entities in the Rockbridge area manage park and recreational lands including the US Forest Service, National Park Service, Virginia state agencies and local jurisdictions (for a list of sites see Attachment E). Cumulatively public lands account for over 100,000 acres, offering camping, fishing, hunting, boating, and trail-based recreation. Public parkland is supplemented by privately owned operations, or those co-managed with non-profits or universities, such as the Chessie Trail which is owned and operated by Virginia Military Institute with the support of the Friends of the Chessie Trail. In order to assess connectivity of recreational assets, a detailed inventory of trails, water trails/boating access, and bike routes were developed. A summary is provided below, with additional information provided in Attachment E.

1. Trails: For the purposes of this Plan, the term “trail” is being used broadly to describe several types of facilities that accommodate multiple types of uses. Specifically, trails include natural surface pathways for walking, horseback riding, or mountain biking; hardened surface shared-use pathways, crushed stone or asphalt surface that accommodate wheelchairs, strollers, and skaters; and packed gravel or natural surface roads and old road grades. The Committee inventoried 90 separate trails totaling over 340 miles of trail in the Rockbridge area, located in various parks, forests, and wildlife management areas (see Attachment E). In addition, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, a 2,200 mile trail extending from Maine to Georgia is located along the ridges to the east of Rockbridge. On-road accommodations such as road shoulders or shared roadways were not included in this inventory but are recognized as a different category of trail and referred to as bike routes.



2. Water Trails: There are currently 21 public access sites for boating; 5 on the James River and 15 on the Maury River, as well as 1 site at Lake Robertson. Most of the sites are primitive with natural shoreline launch areas and minimal parking; 5 of the sites are more developed with larger parking areas and space for trailers (see Attachment E) for list of existing sites. Many of the sites on the Maury River are currently used informally, but require additional work to provide adequate parking, secure easements from property owners, install signage, etc., so that river users do not impact adjacent properties.

3. Bike Routes: There are currently five recognized bike routes on the [Bike the Valley](#) website for on-road riding. Additional routes were identified in the Central Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Plan and work is currently underway to revise and expand the network. Bike the Valley routes as well as other local rides can be found on [RideWithGPS.com](#) which provides detailed route information, cue sheets, route maps and smartphone application. Site users must create an account with RideWithGPS.com to access. Free and fee-based accounts are available.

Figure 8, Bike Routes (From Bike the Valley)			
Name	Distance(Miles)	Elevation(ft)	Quad Location
Lexington - Brushy Hill Loop	9	925	NW, SW
Lexington Goshen Pass Loop	48.8	2639	NW, NE, SE, SW
Buena Vista South River Out and Back	12.2	198	NE, SE
Buena Vista - Blue Ridge Parkway north	45.2	4052	NE
Middlebrook Walkers Creek-Newport Loop	41.3	2765	NE

VI. Trail and Water Trail System Planning

In order to realize the vision of a regional system of trails, water trails, and bike routes, the Trail and Outdoor Recreational Facility Assessment and Mapping Subcommittee was formed early in the process, and tasked with addressing the following:

1. Is the existing system of trails, water trails and bike routes adequate or are there gaps in the current system, i.e. places that lack connectivity?
2. Are improvements needed to existing facilities?

Subcommittee members included land managers from various agencies as well as businesses and non-profit organizations that were familiar with the Rockbridge area. Utilizing the GIS map and inventory data, supplemented by their knowledge of the area and past studies, the group worked throughout 2016 to assess opportunities and develop recommendations regarding future needs. A series of community forums were held from November 2016 to April 2017, to receive input from the community on a preliminary list of project ideas. The following section highlights the findings of the committee.



Corridor Gap Analysis, Preliminary Screening

Using the quadrant maps for finer grain analysis, the Subcommittee discussed site conditions and identified gaps based on digital information as well as field knowledge of specific locations. Factors they considered included:

- Connectivity: to what extent does the project support a regional system; does the project connect two or more existing trails or water trails?
- Feasibility/Site Constraints: are there environmental or land use constraints?
- Corridor Assets: would the project result in improved access to historic or natural assets?
- Safety /Accessibility: does the project address a safety concern or improve accessibility?
- Community Support: does the neighborhood and larger community support the project?
- Project Readiness: is the project on existing public lands or would land need to be acquired; is the project in a local plan?
- Cost and Funding Availability: has funding been secured for the project; are there partners that support the project through monetary or in-kind resources?

The preliminary screening led to a list of 19 trail and water trail projects that were then grouped into the following four priority focus areas:

1. Southwestern Trail System
2. Brushy Blue Greenway
3. James River Corridor
4. Maury River Corridor

There were a few projects that didn't fit neatly into one of the four focus area and were listed as "Other Projects." In addition to trail and water trail projects, the Subcommittee listed bike routes as a separate category (project #20) and noted that expansion of the current Bike the Valley

network is underway by other groups. A description of the projects and map of the focus areas is provided in Figure 9 and Figure 10 below:

Figure 9, Rockbridge Area Outdoors “Braiding the Way” Priority Projects

	Map ID#	Project Name	Description	Location	Quad Map	Public Forums Ranking	Type of Activity
Southwestern Trail System	1	Moore's Creek	Increase public access and awareness for horse travel, mountain biking and hiking with multi-use trail development at Moore's Creek State Forest. Investigate reestablishing connection to North Mountain trail network. Gain public access and parking from Moore's Creek Road.	Collierstown	SW	8 tie	TRAILS: Hiking/Walking, Biking, Equestrian
	2	Lake Robertson	Increase public awareness and multi-use trail development within Lake Robertson Recreation Area.	Collierstown	NW	9	TRAILS: Hiking/Walking, Biking, Equestrian
	3	North Mountain to Blacks Creek	Explore trail head parking area and extend existing forest service road/trail connection from Blacks Creek Road (VA 655) to North Mountain Trail.	Collierstown	NW, SW	7 tie	TRAILS: Hiking/Walking, Biking; Connectivity
	4	Short Hills Wildlife Management Area	Explore outdoor recreation opportunities for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking.	Collierstown	SW	10 tie	Various/ Development
Brushy Blue Greenway	5	Chessie Trail to Buena Vista Flood Wall	Improved trail connection from the last Chessie Trail gate at Stuartsburg Road under Rt60 bridge, to the upstream end of the flood wall.	Buena Vista	SE	7 tie	TRAILS: Hiking/Walking; Connectivity
	6	Brushy Hill Connector Trail	New trail to connect the upstream end of Woods Creek Trail to Brushy Hills (city-county cooperative project).	Lexington	NW, SW, SE	1	TRAILS: Hiking/Walking; Connectivity
	7	Chessie Trail South River Bridge	A bridge across the South River to replace the old railroad bridge that was destroyed in a flood.	Lexington/ Buena Vista	SE	3	TRAILS: Hiking/Walking; Connectivity
	8	Chessie Trail-Woods Creek Trail Connection	Currently funded project. VMI, Lexington, and Rockbridge County working on this.	Lexington	NW, SW, SE	5 tie	TRAILS: Hiking/Walking

Brushy Blue Greenway	9	Elephant Mountain Trail	Restore Elephant Mountain Trail. <i>[Note this project was dropped after further analysis]</i>	Buena Vista	SE	12	TRAILS: Hiking/Walking; Development
	10	Buena Vista-USFS Connector Trail	Explore new trail opportunities on USFS lands east of Buena Vista to create a connection to the Blue Ridge Parkway and hiking/biking loop trail opportunities with Reservoir Hollow Trail (FT #509).	Buena Vista	SE	10 tie	TRAILS: Hiking/Walking
Maury River Corridor	11	Rockbridge Baths	Explore formalizing boating access at this traditional put in/take out. Establish signage, parking and kiosk information for users.	Rockbridge Baths	NE, NW	4 tie	WATER TRAIL/ River Access
	12	Alone Mill	Explore formalizing boating access at this traditional put in/take out. Establish signage, parking and kiosk information for users. Expand parking /pull out for pick up or drop off and clarify any property boundaries.	North of Lexington	NE, NW	4 tie	WATER TRAIL/ River Access
	13	Bean's Bottom	Establish signage, parking and kiosk information for users.	Lexington	NW	10 tie	WATER TRAIL/ River Access
	14	Millers Dam	Explore formalizing boating access at this traditional put in/take out. Establish signage, parking and kiosk information for users.	Buena Vista	SE, SW	5 tie	WATER TRAIL/ River Access
	15	Quarry Falls	Explore formalizing boating access at this traditional put in/take out. Establish signage, parking and kiosk information for users.	Glasgow	SE, SW	8 tie	WATER TRAIL/ River Access

James River Corridor	16	Ruritan Tract-James River	USFS proposed river access site. Needs partnership agreement for maintenance.	Glasgow	SW	8 tie	WATER TRAIL/ River Access
Other Projects	17	Virginia Horse Center River Trail	Could expand trail system with a public trail down to the Maury River at Horseshoe Bend.	Lexington	NE, NW	2	TRAILS: Hiking/Walking
	18	Natural Bridge State Park Trail System	The new Natural Bridge State Park will offer access to hiking and possibly horseback riding and mountain biking in the future.	Natural Bridge	SW	7 tie	TRAILS: Hiking/Walking; Various/ Development
	19	Cornwall; South River Flood Mitigation Park	The County should consider the possibility of developing some of their properties in the floodplain along South River.	Various/ South River	NE	6	Development of property, multiple uses
Road Biking	20	Additions to Bike the Valley	Expand Bike the Valley (www.bikethevalley.org): Lexington-Brushy Hill Loop Route; Lexington-Goshen Loop Route; Buena Vista-South River Out & Back Route; Buena Vista-Blue Ridge Parkway North Route.	Various	Various	11	Bike routes on road and bike trails

Color coding

Green = trails for walking/hiking

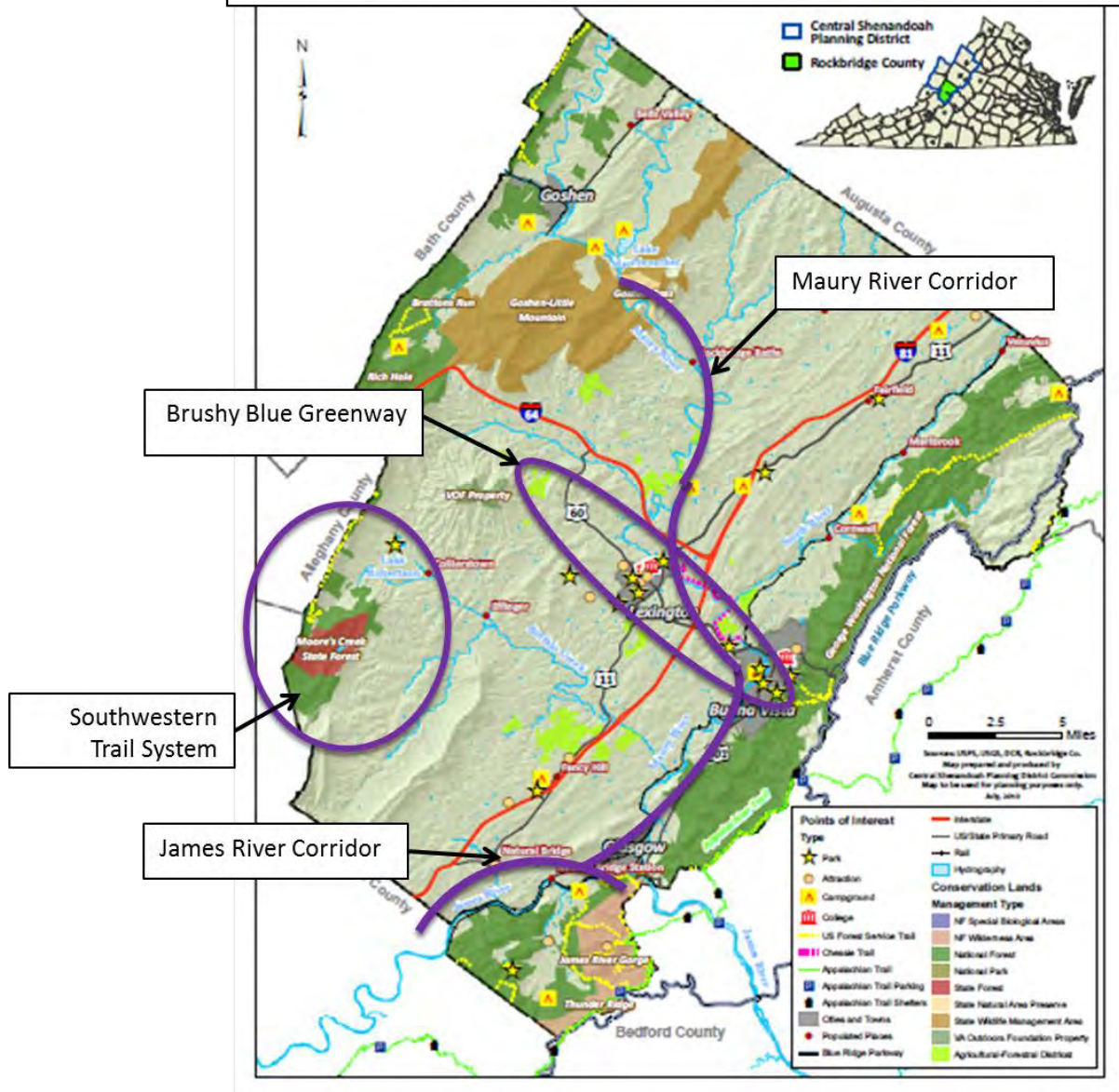
Purple = trail for walking/hiking, equestrian and mountain biking

Blue = water trail access sites

Orange = multiple uses/activities

Grey = On-road biking

Figure 10; Rockbridge Area Outdoors “Braiding the Way” Focus Areas



Description of Priority Projects

1. Proposed Land Trail Network Projects

Perhaps the most important priority identified by the Committee is connecting Lexington and Buena Vista; and connecting Lexington west to Brushy Hills, and Buena Vista east to U.S. Forest Service lands and the Blue Ridge Parkway. This concept, the Brushy Blue Greenway, has been on the books for over 10 years. The section from Lexington to Buena Vista is proposed as a multi-use hard-surface or crushed stone trail that is universally accessible. Completion of this trail would require engineering design, environmental compliance, parking/trailhead and infrastructure improvements that would most likely require a mix of private, foundation, state and federal funding.

Connecting west to Brushy Hills and east to Buena Vista would be developed using a mix of trail surfaces, including natural surface footpaths on U.S. Forest Service lands. Initially the Committee looked at a former trail located in the Indian Gap drainage, the suggested alignment in the Brushy Blue Greenway Master Plan. Further review revealed that it is in poor condition, and poorly aligned, essentially located in a stream bed that



often washes out the trail tread. The US Forest Service determined in 1996 after several flood events, that the trail was unsustainable and it was officially abandoned. The existing Reservoir Hollow Trail (FT #509) was identified as a potential alternative; portions of the trail could be used, along with future new construction to reach an overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

A second project to re-design the Elephant Mountain Trail, a former spur trail from the Reservoir Hollow Trail was also assessed initially and later dropped due to sustainability and maintenance concerns. While the Indian Gap Run Trail and the Elephant Mountain Trail are not identified as feasible projects in this plan, the U.S. Forest Service lands adjacent to Buena Vista represent a potential location for new or realigned trails in the future.

Five gaps were identified in the Brushy Blue corridor:

- Brushy Hills Connector Trail
- Chessie Trail Woods Creek Trail Connection
- Chessie Trail South River Bridge
- Chessie Trail to Buena Vista Flood Wall Connection
- Buena Vista to Blue Ridge Parkway

Another priority focus area is connecting trails at Lake Robertson, North Mountain, and Moore's Creek State Forest, as well as expanding Short Hill Wildlife Management Area trails. This area is referred to as the Southwestern Trail System. Trail design would be natural surface pathways for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking, creating an excellent, advanced cross country trail connecting multiple developed sites. Development of this trail system could be accomplished with a natural surface trail designer and the support of volunteers.

2. Proposed Water Trail Network Projects

Water trails and river access provide river-related recreation throughout the project area. Five sites are identified on the Maury River:

- Alone Mill
- Bean's Bottom
- Millers Dam
- Quarry Falls
- Rockbridge Baths

All of these sites are traditional put in/take out that are experiencing some informal usage by boaters, but there is a need to formalize the sites as public access areas by clarifying property boundaries and securing easements from property owners as needed. In addition there is a need

to establish signage, parking and kiosk information for river users and in some cases expand parking for boat pick up or drop off.

The James River which serves as the County's southern boundary is a segment of the larger Upper James River Water Trail, extending 64 miles from Iron Gate to Snowden. The Ruritan Tract in Glasgow is on US Forest Service land and could provide an additional river access site, but needs a partnering entity to assist with maintenance.

3. Other Multi-Use Projects

Several sites were identified that offer the opportunity for expanding existing trail system such as the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington, and Natural Bridge State Park Trail System. A Master Plan for Natural Bridge State Park is under development, and in the future will offer access to hiking and possibly horseback riding and mountain biking trails. The County-owned land acquired through FEMA flood mitigation funds on the South River also offers an opportunity to explore future access. Of special interest is the Cornwall site that could include river access for fishing, trails, picnicking, and possibly camping.



4. Existing Bike Routes and Proposed Improvements

Additions to current bike routes were also discussed, however another regional bike committee is undertaking this task. The Subcommittee did suggest that consideration be given to blending of two established regional programs, Fields of Gold and Bike the Valley into a "Tour de Farm" tour route. The program could work to develop bike-to-farm tourism routes linking agri-tourism destinations in the Shenandoah Valley, provide business support and technical assistance for agri-tourism businesses to market their business to the bicycling community, and branding and promotion of the bike-to-farm routes and events.

Secondary Project Ideas for Further Study

Several other suggestions were considered but determined not to be feasible at this time. These sites may offer opportunities in the future with further study, but were ranked as a lower priority:

- Buena Vista to Glasgow Trail: a natural surface trail from Buena Vista to Glasgow mostly on US Forest Service land on the east side of Route 501.
- Rockbridge County High School-Chessie Trail: a connecting trail from the high school to the Chessie entrance at the Route 11 bridge through VMI land.
- Lincoln Road / Mill Creek and along Valley Pike north until it intersects Route 11.
- The Fairfield Pool Blue Ridge Recreation Area could be developed and the possibility of a trail from there to the elementary school considered.
- South River access: The County should consider the possibility of developing some of their properties along the river purchased through flood mitigation program.
- School property opportunities: connect the various athletic fields (Effinger, Rockbridge Middle School, etc.) to neighborhoods and/or trail opportunities.
- Steeles Tavern to Lexington Bike Route, along Route 11

- The Lyle property on the Maury River has been available for purchase in recent years, and could offer parking and river access.

Trail Design and Accessibility

The trail system will be designed with consideration given to the various levels and abilities of trail visitors. Accessibility standards for federal agencies can be found in the 1968 Architectural Barriers Act (ABA). The guidelines were amended in 2013 to add new provisions for [Outdoor Developed Area](#) including trails, picnic and camping facilities, viewing areas, and beach access routes on federal lands. The 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its guidelines and standards (ADA Accessible Design Standards of 2010) apply to state and local governments and to private businesses open to the public. Additional information on ABA and ADA can be found on the [U.S. Access Board website](#).



Recommendations

The following section identifies next steps and target dates for completion of the 19 proposed projects identified by the committee (see Figure 11 below). Ten have been identified as Early Action “Phase 1” projects to be initiated in the next 1-2 years. They are smaller, less complex projects that could be undertaken with volunteers, or are already underway by project partners. Nine are listed as “Phase 2” projects that will require additional research, coordination, negotiation for access, cost/funding analysis, design and engineering. These projects are targeted for the next 3-10 years. One trail project was dropped (#9, Elephant Mountain). A map of the project locations follows the list (Figure 12).

Figure 11, Rockbridge Area Outdoors Project Tasks and Phasing Plan

Early Action, Water Trail Projects (Phase 1)			
MAP#	Name	Action	Next Steps
#11	Rockbridge Baths	Explore formalizing boating access at this traditional put in/take out	-Research ownership at current put in, negotiate access agreement -Improve existing access, signage, parking
#12	Alone Mill	Explore formalizing boating access at this traditional put in/take out	-Research ownership at current put in, negotiate access agreement -Improve existing access, signage, kiosk -Explore options for expanded parking /pull out for pick up or drop off and clarify any property boundaries
#13	Bean’s Bottom	Improve existing access	-Establish signage, parking, and informational kiosk
#14	Millers Lock	Explore formalizing boating access at this traditional put in/take out	-Improve existing access, existing parking, install signage

Next steps for all four projects:

- Communicate with agencies and groups that will be partners in developing, managing and benefitting from sites: Rockbridge County, Buena Vista, Lexington, VDOT, DGIF, James River Association, VMI, Coastal Canoeists, Friends of Chessie Trail, etc.
- Develop a strategy for working collaboratively with land managers and property owners; and for each site, develop a concept plan with partners (including ownership & maintenance plans)
- Develop a plan to brand and promote the “Maury River Water Trail” - river miles, logo, signs, maps and outreach materials

Mid-Long Term, Water Trail Projects (Phase2)

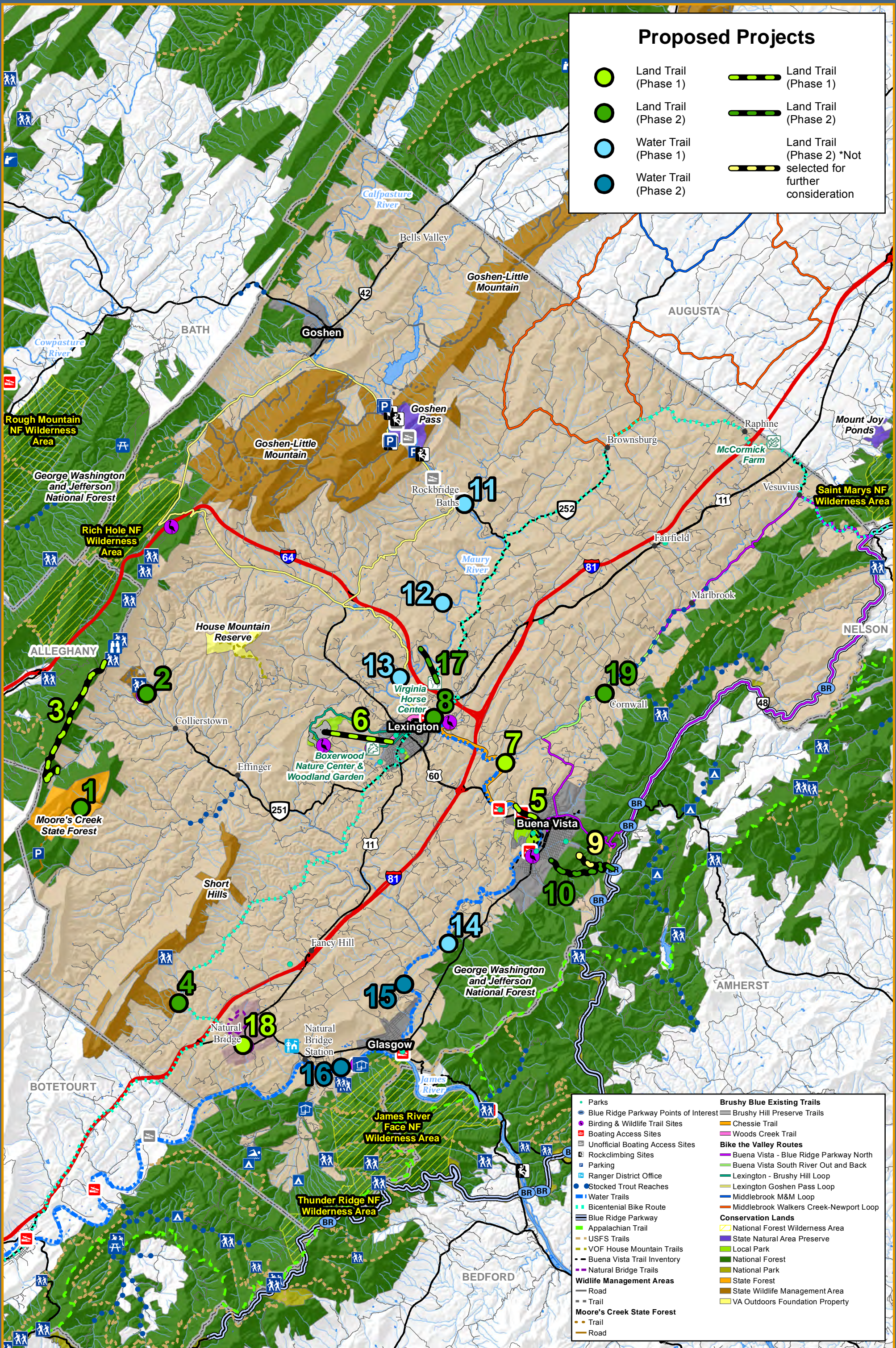
MAP#	Name	Action	Next Steps
#15	Quarry Falls– Maury River Access	Explore formalizing boating access at this traditional put in/take out	-tbd
#16	Ruritan Tract– James River	Explore options for USFS proposed river access site	-Coordinate with USFS (lead) -Assess parking improvements, research sanitation and maintenance -Need funding and long term special use agreement with a partner in order to develop - Explore creation of “Friends of...” group to assist with maintenance -Include on James River Water Trail signage and maps

Early Action, Land Trail Projects (Phase 1)

MAP#	Name	Action	Next Steps
#3	North Mountain to Blacks Creek	Explore trail head parking area and extend existing forest service road/trail connection from Blacks Creek Road (VA 655) to North Mountain Trail	- Coordinate with USFS - Identify existing routes/roads, evaluate trail connection alternatives - Note: Minimal funding required
#5	Chessie Trail to Buena Vista Floodwall	Improved trail connection from the Chessie Trail gate at Stuartsburg Road, under Route 60 bridge, to the upstream end of the flood wall	-TAP funding awarded for this project; support Buena Vista and VDOT with trail development efforts -Assess on-road options, signage, road painting -Explore Burger King parking access with connector lot/trail
#6	Brushy Hill connector to Chessie Trail	New trail to connect the upstream end of Woods Creek Trail to Brushy Hills (city-county cooperative project)	-Work with property owners; explore easement and possible route options -Identify grant possibilities -Coordinate with non-profit partners
#7	Chessie Trail, South River Bridge	Design and construct a bridge across the South River to replace the old railroad bridge	-VMI leading ongoing project, awaiting grant approval -Support VMI and project team efforts

		that was destroyed in a flood	-Include Maury River access; research ownership, options for river access, parking
#18	Natural Bridge State Park Trail System	Work with DCR to increase hiking and possibly horseback riding and mountain biking opportunities in the future	-Ongoing projects underway -Support creation of a “Friends of...” group, to assist in maintenance, promotion
#20	Additions to Bike the Valley	Expand on-road cycling opportunities	-Assist CSPDC and local cyclists with research needs -Update and cross-promote Bike the Valley and other bike touring websites

Mid-Long Term, Land Trail Projects (Phase 2)			
MAP#	Name	Action	Next Steps
#1	Moore’s Creek	Increase public access and multi-use trail development at Moore's Creek State Forest	-Evaluate options and design public access and parking from Moore's Creek Road -Investigate reestablishing connection to North Mountain trail network -Support multi-use trail development for horse travel, mountain biking and hiking
#2	Lake Robertson	Increase public awareness and multi-use trail development within Lake Robertson Recreation Area	-Coordinate with DGIF and Rockbridge County on PR/Marketing and outreach to increase public awareness -Assess options for improving existing trails -Explore options for “Friends of...” group
#4	Short Hills Wildlife Management Area	Explore outdoor recreation opportunities for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking	-Coordinate with DGIF; access options to improve/build trail system -Identify costs and research funding opportunities
#8	Chessie Trail - Woods Creek Trail Connection	Support efforts by VMI, Lexington, and Rockbridge County to complete this connection	-Currently funded project in progress -Support on-going effort to maintain the trail
#10	Buena Vista – USFS Connector Trail	Explore new trail link on USFS lands east of Buena Vista to connect to the Blue Ridge Parkway	-Work with City of Buena Vista and coordinate with USFS on trail route options -Assess option for route using Reservoir Hollow Trail
#17	Virginia Horse Center River Trail	Expand trail system with a publicly accessible trail down to the Maury River at Horseshoe Bend	-Coordinate with Virginia Horse Center to assess interest in the project
#19	Cornwall; South River Flood Mitigation Park	Work with the County to support public recreational use of the site	-Assess options for park development with Rockbridge County -Research potential funding or in-kind support



Proposed Projects

	Land Trail (Phase 1)		Land Trail (Phase 1)
	Land Trail (Phase 2)		Land Trail (Phase 2)
	Water Trail (Phase 1)		Land Trail (Phase 2) *Not selected for further consideration
	Water Trail (Phase 2)		

	Parks		Brushy Blue Existing Trails
	Blue Ridge Parkway Points of Interest		Brushy Hill Preserve Trails
	Birding & Wildlife Trail Sites		Chessie Trail
	Boating Access Sites		Woods Creek Trail
	Unofficial Boating Access Sites		Bike the Valley Routes
	Rockclimbing Sites		Buena Vista - Blue Ridge Parkway North
	Parking		Buena Vista South River Out and Back
	Ranger District Office		Lexington - Brushy Hill Loop
	Stocked Trout Reaches		Lexington Goshen Pass Loop
	Water Trails		Middlebrook M&M Loop
	Bicentennial Bike Route		Middlebrook Walkers Creek-Newport Loop
	Blue Ridge Parkway		Conservation Lands
	Appalachian Trail		National Forest Wilderness Area
	USFS Trails		State Natural Area Preserve
	VOF House Mountain Trails		Local Park
	Buena Vista Trail Inventory		National Forest
	Natural Bridge Trails		National Park
	Wildlife Management Areas		State Forest
	Road		State Wildlife Management Area
	Trail		VA Outdoors Foundation Property
	Moore's Creek State Forest		
	Trail		
	Road		



Rockbridge Area Outdoor Recreation Plan

Sources:
Rockbridge County, Buena Vista, Lexington, Rockbridge Area Recreation Organization, CSPDC, Census, VA-DCR, VDOT, VGIN, USGS, USFS, NPS, VA-DGIF

Prepared by:
Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC)

Date: July 18, 2017



VII. Youth Engagement, Education, and Stewardship

In addition to physical improvements in the trail network, the Steering Committee realized the importance of enhancing awareness of and access to outdoor opportunities through partnerships and programming. Specifically the Committee focused on initiatives that engage youth and support community health and wellness. Youth engagement is discussed in this chapter, with community health addressed in Chapter VIII. The following section highlights some of the region's current programs to inspire youth experiences in the outdoors through education, healthy nature-based recreation, and/or stewardship activities. Also included is information on additional resources and opportunities, and recommended future actions.

Reconnecting with the Outdoors: Experiential Learning and Future Stewardship

Over the past few decades, Americans have been spending less time in parks and outdoor spaces, and more time in front of computers and television screens. Various studies have shown that the average adult spends as much as ten hours a day connected to electronic media, and on average youth spend three hours per day watching television and five to seven hours per day of total screen time.²²

At the same time, participation in outdoor recreation by youth has fallen off in recent years. These trends have been associated with multiple factors such as a lack of time, interest, and/or competing activities; preference to be connected to the Internet and their social networks rather than spend time outdoors; lack of equipment; and/or limited transportation to park sites. In some instances, parents don't have the time or skills to take children camping, hiking, paddling, or bicycling, or are concerned about potential safety hazards such as mosquito and tick-borne illness (West Nile and Lyme's Disease), poison ivy, wildlife attacks, allergies and sunburn.²³

Various local, regional, and national programs are working to overcome these barriers, and re-engage both families and youth in outdoor exploration. Research has also shown that spending time outdoors has direct mental and physical benefits. Academic performance and the potential for memorable learning, increases when youth are introduced to learning venues beyond the classroom, such as historic sites or outdoor classrooms where learning is grounded in real places and people.²⁴ The following section highlights programs that advance environmental education and youth stewardship in the Rockbridge area.



²² US National Library of Medicine, Medline Plus, [Screen time and children](#), reviewed 2015

²³ [A Special Report on Youth, The Future of the Outdoors](#); The Outdoor Foundation, 2010

²⁴ Bourne, Barbara, [Taking Inquiry Outdoors: Reading, Writing, and Science Beyond the Classroom Walls](#). 2000

Education and Stewardship Programs in the Rockbridge Area

[Boxerwood Nature Center and Woodland Garden](#): Boxerwood's mission is to *"lead people of all ages in the discovery of their connection to the natural world and inspire them to meet the challenges to building a healthy environment."* Established as a 501(c)3 non-profit in 2004, Boxerwood offers a multi-faceted program of workshops, classes, and conferences for adults, school-based programming, camps, a play trail for younger children, and activities for scout and youth groups. Its environmental education programs have provided hands-on, project-based learning to thousands of Rockbridge County pre-K through 12th grade students and have been recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia as a Center for Environmental Education Excellence. Boxerwood also hosts popular community cultural events, such as Music in the Park and other festivals.

[Trail to Every Classroom](#) (TTEC), is a professional development program for K-12 teachers that provides educators with the tools and training for place-based service learning on the Appalachian Trail (AT). Established by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in partnership with the National Park Service, the program offers resources and instruction to engage students in learning about natural and historic resources in their community, while exploring the outdoors. In July 2017, a workshop was held with local educators from the Rockbridge area to provide an overview of the program, brief them on resources available, and discuss options for establishing a program in the Rockbridge area.

[Jon Jarvis Legacy Fund](#) was established in 2016 to support environmental outreach programs that connect Rockbridge area youth to their public lands and instill a stewardship ethic. An early success was supporting the Trails to Every Classroom workshop held in July 2017. In the coming years, small grants will be available to teachers to support field trips to the AT or other locations that use parks and natural areas as living classroom.



[Rockbridge Area Conservation Council](#) (RACC) has been a community leader in advocating and promoting the wise use and stewardship of the region's natural and cultural resources since 1976. With a membership of nearly four hundred families and businesses, RACC has been a key voice in numerous community initiatives including the establishment and management of House Mountain and the transformation of the old C&O Railroad right-of-way into the Chessie Trail. RACC also undertakes studies of environmental concerns, monitors local streams, coordinates roadside trash clean-ups, and offers educational programs for the general public. Youth-focused efforts include: funding a scholarship for local students to attend Nature Camp; and development of a slide show on conservation topics for use in local schools.

[Washington and Lee University](#) and [Southern Virginia University](#) have Outdoors Clubs that offer students the opportunity to explore, learn new skills, and participate in nature-based outings. Equipment is available for free or at a low cost and activity calendars provide opportunities to connect with other students to hike, bike, paddle, rock climb and camp. Washington and Lee University also manages a trail crew with skills in clearing and maintaining trails.

State Partners and Resources

[Virginia Environmental Endowment \(VEE\)](#) celebrated its 40th Anniversary in 2017, with 1,400 grants made to nearly 500 organizations since its inception in 1977. Current grant-making priorities are focused on improvement of local rivers and protection of water quality, restoration of the Chesapeake Bay, innovative land conservation and sustainable land use practices, environmental literacy and public awareness, and emerging issues of concern. One of the 2017 grant recipients was the [Virginia Association of Soil and Water Districts](#), to support and expand the Youth Conservation Leadership Institute, which mentors high school students interested in conservation and community service. Applications are accepted biannually, with deadlines of June 15th and December 1st.

[Virginia Association for Environmental Education](#) (VAEE) is a network of over 135 environmental education professionals working collaboratively to advance Environmental and Sustainability Education through professional development, networking, and training. VAEE also serves as an advocate for environmental education through policy and legislation, and is the state affiliate member to the North American Association for Environmental Education. In May 2017, VAEE assumed publishing of the *Virginia Naturally* newsletter, a resource for teachers with information on trainings, the annual conference and grant opportunities. Information about VAEE and a place to sign up for *Virginia Naturally* is available on the VAEE website.

[Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries \(DGIF\)](#) offers fishing, hunting and boating safety education programs as well as skills workshops and events. Information and resources are available to teachers on watersheds, wildlife, biodiversity, and other natural resource topics. DGIF's Youth Fishing Program includes Kids Fishing Days and a youth-only Stocked Trout Program. DGIF also manages the Virginia Naturally School Recognition Program to increase environmental awareness and youth stewardship. There are currently 66 schools recognized including Maury River Middle School, Mountain View Elementary, Central Elementary, and Natural Bridge Elementary Schools in Rockbridge County.



[Virginia State Parks](#) offers opportunities for volunteering, internships and service-learning projects. Parks also have extensive educational and interpretive programs aimed at various age groups from adult to youth. [Natural Bridge State Park](#), Virginia's newest state park showcases the area's karst terrain, and offers six miles of hiking trails with vistas of surrounding mountains. The bridge itself is one of the oldest geologic features on the East Coast. The Cedar Creek Trail leads from the bridge to the Monacan Indian Village. For additional information on living history programs, guided hikes and other group programs contact the park.

Federal Partners and National Programs

[National Park Service](#) and its non-profit partners offer numerous opportunities for America's youth to connect with the outdoors. The agencies under the Department of Interior, including the

National Park Service (NPS) use a 4-part framework for youth engagement that integrates recreation, learning, service, and professional development, as described below:

- Play: create sustainable opportunities for outdoor recreation through partnerships that develop or enhance access to public lands
- Learn: provide educational opportunities to the nation's K-12 student population through programming on public lands as well as leveraging technology, including the recently launched National Park Service teacher portal, to bring public lands into the classroom
- Serve: expand volunteer opportunities on public lands, with increased investment in volunteer management and coordination to ensure anyone who has an interest in devoting their time and talents to public lands has an opportunity to serve
- Work: provide skill development and training opportunities to young people and veterans interested in career paths with public land agencies

[National Park Foundation \(NPF\)](#), NPS's non-profit partner has extensive programming aimed at connecting families and children with the outdoors, and inspiring the next generation of park stewards. One example is the Every Kid in a Park initiative that provides free park passes to 4th graders and their families. Transportation grants are available, with a special focus on underserved and urban communities, to address the issue of cutbacks in school funding for field trips. Additional examples, grant opportunities, and case studies can be found on the organization's website.



[US Forest Service](#) and the George Washington and Jefferson Forests in the Rockbridge area, offers numerous stewardship and volunteer programs. The “[Forest Service Kids](#)” website provides students, parents and teachers with youth-oriented information and resources related to natural resources and the environment. Internships and service-learning opportunities through Youth Conservation Corps are also available.

[National Forest Foundation Youth Programs](#) get youth out into the National Forests to connect with the natural world. NFF achieves this goal in a number of ways, such as:

- creating innovative curriculums that connects youth to the outdoors through both field-based and web-based resources
- working with partners to organize single-day or multi-day service projects such as tree-plantings or stream cleanups,
- implementing 6-week long, summer work crews to provide at-risk high school youth with paid work training and conservation mentoring

Additional information on youth initiatives and grant programs to encourage youth volunteerism can be found on the NFF website.

[Children and Nature Network \(C&NN\)](#) established in 2006, was created to encourage and support the organizations working to reconnect children with nature. Richard Louv, author of “Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder” was one of the

co-founders, with the vision of connecting children, families and communities to nature through evidence-based resources and tools, and support to grassroots leadership. In 2014, C&NN supported 369 grassroots campaigns worldwide that collectively connected more than 3.5 million children to nature experiences in 48 states and 12 nations. C&NN houses an on-line resource library, and offers conferences, on-line training and Legacy Camps to support youth leadership development.

[Transforming Youth Outdoors](#) (TYO) is an online learning community, created to support those working to connect youth to the outdoors. Those interested can sign-up at no cost on the website, which allows access to research documents, videos, templates, and tools, from thought leaders across the outdoor and education industries via a searchable database. The site also provides a venue for networking, peer to peer learning and sharing information and best practices. In addition, TYO members have access to individualized support and coaching, donated or discounted products and services, and announcements on training and funding opportunities.

[Outdoors Alliance for Kids \(OAK\)](#) is a national strategic partnership of organizations from diverse sectors with a common interest in connecting children, youth and families with the outdoors. The organization's philosophy is based on the following three pillars:

- Education: All children and youth have regular, safe, and varied opportunities to learn in and about the natural world.
- Community Health and Wellness: All children and youth have increased access to safe places outdoors and initiatives to improve their physical and mental health.
- Environmental Stewardship: America's natural areas are protected and maintained and youth are engaged in their stewardship.



OAK currently has over 100 member organizations representing more than 60 million individuals with the goal of ensuring all youth and families have safe and easily accessible opportunities to connect with the outdoors.

Recommendations:

1. Collaborate with local university outdoor clubs to explore opportunities for outdoor nature-base recreation that engages the community and provides leadership development opportunities for college students, such as organizing field trips and outings, local stream clean-ups, or other service-learning projects.
2. Initiate dialogue with K-12 teachers to discuss club or classroom projects or research related to the region's natural or historic resources. High school students, required to complete community service hours, could be enlisted for riparian buffer plantings, stream clean-ups, and other conservation work.

3. Explore opportunities with scouts or other youth programs to support trail development projects such as installing trailhead signs, building benches or other recreational amenities, assisting with maintenance tasks.
4. Work with local schools through the Jon Jarvis Legacy Fund to support development of Trails to Every Classroom Programs in the Rockbridge area.
5. Work with local partners such as the James River Association, to engage youth in healthy outdoor recreation that connects them to the stories and heritage resources of the James River watershed.

VIII. Community Health and Wellness

Although progress has been made in some areas, the United States continues to struggle with several community health challenges.

- 75 million people suffer from high blood pressure in the United States. Coronary heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women, and costs the nation \$46 billion each year in health care services, medications to treat high blood pressure, and missed days of work.²⁵
- 29 million in the United States have diabetes, which increases risk of heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney failure and lower limb amputation.²⁶
- 6 million children or 11% of children age 4-17 have been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).²⁷
- 70.2 percent of adults are considered to be overweight or obese; 7.7 percent have extreme obesity.²⁸ The medical care costs of obesity in the United States, was estimated to be \$147 billion in 2008 dollars.²⁹

Numerous studies have shown that access to the outdoors improves both mental and physical wellbeing. Time spent in parks, on trails, and paddling rivers, results in higher levels of physical activity which translates to improved mental health and reduced cardiovascular, respiratory, neurological, and digestive diseases.³⁰ Spending time in nature is also associated with better cognitive development in school children; and youth with ADHD show improved focus when walking in parks and natural areas.³¹



The following chapter provides an overview of state and local health indicators, summarizes past community health planning efforts, highlights various programs initiated across the country to expand recreation and health partnerships, and provides recommendations to support local efforts to increase physical activity and wellness in the Rockbridge area.

Virginia's Health Profile

According to "The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America" released in September 2016, Virginia has the 29th highest adult obesity rate in the nation. Virginia's adult obesity rate has increased from 11.3 percent in 1990, to its current rate of 29 percent. The report, compiled by the Trust for America's Health (TFAH) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

²⁵ CDC Blood Pressure Fact Sheet: www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/facts.htm

²⁶ CDC Diabetes Fact Sheet: <https://www.cdc.gov/features/diabetesfactsheet/>

²⁷ CDC ADHD Fact Sheet: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/data.html>

²⁸ NIH Obesity Statistics: <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-statistics/overweight-obesity>

²⁹ CDC Obesity Fact Sheet: <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/adult/causes.html>

³⁰ Bowler DE, Buyung-Ali LM, Knight TM, Pullin AS; "A systematic review of evidence for the added benefits to health of exposure to natural environments" *BMC Public Health*. 2010; 10:456

³¹ Taylor AF, Kuo FE. "Children with attention deficits concentrate better after walk in the park;" *Journal of Attention Disorders*, Mar 2009; 12(5):402-409

(RWJF), showed that nationally, more than 33 percent of adults and 17 percent of youth 5 to 19 year olds are obese. West Virginia had the highest adult obesity rate at 37.7 percent and Colorado had the lowest at 22.3 percent.³²

The County Health Rankings and Roadmaps project, undertaken by RWJF in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin, provides a web-based source of health-related data that provides a snapshot of community health. The data shows positive outcomes statewide in Virginia for some criteria, such as low rates of violent crime rate, children living in poverty, and infectious disease. In other measures, Virginia has not done as well, such as health disparity based on educational attainment, smoking prevalence, per capita health funding, and controlled substance use. Smoking among adults and drug deaths have both climbed in recent years. In terms of health outcomes (such as health behaviors, socio-economic factors and physical environment) Rockbridge ranks 36, Lexington ranks 37, and Buena Vista ranks 77 of the 133 areas ranked.³³

Improving Virginia's overall health requires a clear understanding of regional variations. To address this need, from 2012-2015, Virginia's hospitals and health systems, and some health departments completed 73 individual Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNAs). These studies are undertaken to ensure that hospitals and public health agencies have the local data needed to address a given community's health issues and efficiently allocate resources. In addition, development of CHNAs and implementation strategies are required by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act for tax-exempt hospitals. CNHAs were conducted in the Rockbridge area in 2012 and again in 2015, with the next one planned for 2018.

Health and Wellness Planning in the Rockbridge Area

Several milestones have occurred over the past twenty years that illustrate the dedication of Rockbridge area health providers in addressing community health needs in the Rockbridge area.



In 1995, Rockbridge 2020 was founded by the Stonewall Jackson Hospital, bringing together health care providers and related services to identify and address community health needs. Through self-survey, needs were identified and prioritized, and sub-groups were formed to work on areas of special concern. In 1999, Rockbridge 2020 undertook a community health assessment consisting of two surveys: an adult survey, and a youth risk behavior survey. In 2006, Stonewall Jackson Hospital became part of the Carilion Health System.

In 2011, the Rockbridge Area Free Clinic, (now the Rockbridge Area Health Center) received a grant from the United States Department of Health and Human Services, to further develop a sustainable system of care for the medically underserved in the Rockbridge area. Working in

³² [The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America](#), Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, September 2016

³³ [County Health Rankings and Roadmaps](#), 2017; University of Wisconsin, Population Health Institute, with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

partnership with Carilion Stonewall Jackson Hospital (CSJH), the Central Shenandoah Valley Health District, and local partners, a 12-month community-based visioning, assessment, and planning process, referred to as “Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships” (MAPP) was conducted. The goal of the MAPP initiative was to assess the health of the Rockbridge area and identify public health needs; develop a community health improvement plan; and design a collaborative health service delivery model for underserved residents.

[Rockbridge Area Community Health Needs Assessment, 2012 \(CHNA\)](#): The first step in the MAPP process was to compile data through various methods to gain a snapshot of community health. The final report included basic socio-economic data; trends in employment, poverty, and educational attainment; access to health care, leading causes of death and behavioral risk factors. The CHNA documents community health indicators and compares them to state data. For example, high blood pressure was reported in 50.9 percent of Rockbridge County residents, compared to 27.5 percent in Virginia. In addition, 31 percent of adults in Rockbridge County were reported as obese compared to 26.3 percent in Virginia. The age-adjusted diabetes prevalence rates for all three localities exceeded both the state level and the national benchmark.³⁴

In January 2012, a Visioning Event was held as part of the MAPP initiative that brought together 175 individuals representing community residents, leaders, providers and other stakeholders. During the event, a “Community Themes and Strengths Assessment” was conducted to identify factors that impact the health of those who live, work, and play in the Rockbridge area. When asked what contributed most to a healthy Rockbridge, the top category of responses was “Wellness” (38.9%) followed by “Community” (25.0%); and “Healthcare” (17.6%). Responses in the “Wellness” category included: culture of wellness, physical activity, health and wellness education, expanding parks and recreation opportunities, access to affordable healthy foods, community outreach, and wellness services (i.e. exercise classes).³⁵



[Rockbridge Area Community Health Improvement Plan 2012 \(CHIP\)](#): This report built upon the work undertaken in the assessment phase, to expand awareness of priority health issues and engage the community in the common goal of improved health. The plan established four priority areas:

1. Access to Health Services
2. Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity
3. Oral Health
4. Mental Health

Goals, objectives and strategies were developed for each of the priority areas and resources were identified that could support implementation. The final step was an Action Cycle, in which

³⁴ Virginia Dept. of Health, Office of Family Services, Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System, cited in the [Rockbridge Area Community Health Needs Assessment](#) 2012

³⁵ [Rockbridge Area Community Health Needs Assessment](#), 2012, Visioning Report, Appendix A

partners agreed to work together to implement strategies, evaluate progress, and refine the program over time to advance the goal of a healthier Rockbridge.³⁶

[Rockbridge Area Community Health Needs Assessment, September 2015 \(CHNA\)](#): In 2015, the latest Rockbridge Area Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) was undertaken by Carilion Stonewall Jackson Hospital (CSJH) in collaboration with a 27-member Community Health Assessment Team (CHAT). The assessment was the first step in a five-step process: 1) CHNA; 2) Strategic Planning; 3) Implementation Strategy; 4) Program Implementation and 5) Evaluation.

The CHNA documented community health indicators and identified issues and concerns. In terms of health risk factors, the study found that 32 percent of Lexington residents reported high blood pressure which was slightly higher than the state average of 30 percent. In addition, 36 percent of adults in Rockbridge County reported high cholesterol, compared to 35 percent statewide. Between 2011 and 2013, the mortality rate from heart disease and diabetes went down in both Buena Vista and Rockbridge County, but increased in the City of Lexington. Although Buena Vista has shown improvements in mortality rates from heart disease and diabetes, they are still higher than the state average.³⁷

[Rockbridge Area Health Improvement Implementation Strategy, 2016-2018](#): The CHNA served as the foundation for the Health Improvement Implementation Strategy, an initiative led by CSJH in collaboration with Rockbridge 2020, to develop goals, key actions, timelines and responsible parties to address the greatest community health needs. The specific target audience for the implementation strategy was low-income, uninsured and under-insured individuals, and those that faced barriers to accessing care and available resources.

In June 2015, the CHAT participated in a prioritization activity to determine the greatest needs in the service area based on primary and secondary data collected, and found that the top four greatest needs are:

1. Need for urgent care services
2. Value not placed on preventive care and chronic disease management
3. High prevalence of obesity / overweight individuals
4. Lack of exercise / physical activity

To address these needs, goals, objectives, and key actions were developed for three key areas: General Wellness, Coordination of Services, and Mental Health.

Several actions under General Wellness are directly related to increased physical activity through infrastructure improvement and programming, such as:

- building or improving fitness trails so that more children and families have access to physical activity opportunities
- improving sidewalks to provide safe access to area schools such as Rockbridge County High School to promote walking

³⁶ [Rockbridge Area Community Health Improvement Plan](#), 2012, p.8-9

³⁷ Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2013; cited in the [Rockbridge Area Community Health Needs Assessment](#), Final Report, September 28, 2015, p.121-122, 131

- working with the schools to coordinate Healthy Youth Days ³⁸

Partnering with the Local Health Community

One of the goals of the Rockbridge Area Outdoor Recreation “Braiding the Way” initiative is to provide opportunities and encouragement for the area's residents from the youth to the elderly, and those with disabilities, to walk, bicycle, run, and gain the health benefits of incorporating physical activity in natural settings into their daily lives. The Committee recognizes the value of working collaboratively with health partners to support existing programs, such as Rockbridge Area Healthy Communities Action Team (Live Healthy Rockbridge Kids) discussed below.

[Live Healthy Rockbridge Kids](#): In July 2014, the Rockbridge Area Healthy Communities Action Team (HCAT) was formed, providing a forum for collaborative action to reduce and prevent childhood obesity. The program was funded through a grant from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth (VFHY). In 2016, a second grant was awarded to fund operations through June 30, 2018. Supplemental funding was also received from Stonewall Jackson Hospital Community Health Foundation and Share Our Strength. Also in 2016, HCAT adopted the name “Live Healthy Rockbridge Kids” to serve as the public name for the Team.



In 2017 the Team adopted a One-Year Strategic Plan to address the health issues confronting area youth. In regards to physical activity the plan established as a goal “*to prevent and reduce childhood obesity through physical activity.*” Several actions were identified to advance this goal including:

- Promoting other forms of recreational activity, such as expanding afterschool activities, and programming during summer months, such as Happy Hearts programming
- Promoting other forms of recreational activity, such as Healthy Youth Days, and YMCA Summer Camp Programming at Boxerwood Nature Center
- Rehabilitation of Fit Trails at two elementary schools: Natural Bridge Elementary (southern location) and Fairfield Elementary (northern location), to include community access, and possibly geocaching sites
- Recreational Resource Mapping to provide information on outdoor recreation opportunities, parks, and playgrounds ³⁹

In fiscal year 2017, the Action Team will be particularly focused on connecting families to outdoor recreation opportunities in the Rockbridge Area. Outdoor recreation partners and agencies can help support these tasks through volunteers, and pro bono technical advice.

³⁸ Rockbridge Area Health Needs Assessment 2015, [Health Improvement Implementation Strategy](#) 2016-2018

³⁹ Rockbridge Area Healthy Communities Action Team (HCAT), 2017-2018

Additional Resource and Strategies to Promote Health

Increasing physical activity and improving community health is a multi-objective undertaking. Comprehensive planning and site design that encourages multi-modal transportation options is one tool available that can support safe walking and biking trails and improve access to parks. Other strategies include: environmental and policy changes, behavioral and social approaches, or simply providing information to the public about places to recreate.

Concerns over obesity and associated health impacts have also prompted partnerships between the medical community and recreation providers. One program that is gaining popularity is “Park Prescriptions” where physicians write “prescriptions” for regular physical activity. Over thirty Prescription Program models have been implemented in locations such as Portland, OR, Albuquerque and Santa Fe, NM, and Washington DC. Other strategies include incentive programs or other mechanisms to make physical activity fun and rewarding. A few of these programs are described below. For additional programs, case studies and research see Attachment F.



[National ParkRx Initiative](#) is a national organization of practitioners that are working to expand Park Prescription programs as a key strategy for improving public health. A few of the early programs are listed below (additional case studies can be found on the [National ParkRx website](#)).

[Prescription Trails New Mexico](#) began in Albuquerque and Bernalillo County, and has expanded to a statewide program. Designed as a tool for health care practitioners to encourage their patients to get outside for active recreation, the program provides prescriptions for walking and a walking guide that suggests routes in the community.

[DC Park Rx](#) was launched in 2010 to help physicians “prescribe” nature to patients in an effort to increase physical activity, prevent chronic disease and obesity among youth, and create a generation of environmental stewards through outdoor exploration. For ease of use, a searchable park database is provided to practitioners and to track progress the program is linked to the patient’s electronic health record.

[Hyde Park Walkabout](#) is an incentive program to encourage healthy physical activity by walking. The Hyde Park Trail System includes nearly 16 miles of trails linking parks and historic sites in the Town of Hyde Park. Incentives include earning a free sew-on patch for completing various trails. (For example, walk at least five trails on the map, turn in the completed checklist and receive a patch.)

[TRACK Trails](#) is a program designed to get youth and families active outdoors, through self-guided adventures that can be tracked online. The program website provides informational brochures, trip planning advice, and an interactive website to keep youth engaged. Activities such as the number of trails visited and miles walked can be tracked online via a nature journal with prizes awarded upon reaching certain benchmarks. TRACK Trails, also referred to as “Kids

in Parks” was initiated in 2008, as an incentive/health promotion program, developed by the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation in collaboration with Blue Cross Blue Shield. Today the network includes over 130 sites in ten states and the District of Columbia.

Virginia Conferences and Networking

In 2011, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) initiated Virginia’s [Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Collaborative](#), to align the health and wellness goals and activities of internal and external stakeholders. A shared agenda was produced with key indicators identified for active living. Ongoing conversation about health is encouraged through an online community, the Virginia Chronic Disease Prevention Collaborative Network. Additional



contacts, resources and data are provided on the VDH website

In 2017, Virginia's fifth “[Weight of the State” Conference](#) was held in Richmond, to share information and showcase latest approaches to address childhood obesity and create healthier communities. Sponsored by Prevention Connections and Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, physical activity and nutrition were highlighted as complementary strategies to improve health outcomes.

Also in 2017, the “[Movement Makers” National Active Living Summit](#) was convened in Richmond that brought together public, private, and non-profit groups working to improve community health through programs, policy changes, and infrastructure improvements. The conference took place the same week as [Dominion Riverrock](#), the nation’s largest outdoor sports and music festival held at Brown’s Island for a three-day celebration of Richmond’s urban riverfront.

Recommendations

The Committee suggests that actions be taken to support and expand opportunities for physical activity, social wellness, fun, and health promotion in parks and on trails, including:

1. Work with health professionals to conduct an analysis of current offerings and service providers, and identify potential programs needed within the Rockbridge area, including programs that can expand park and trail use to a wider audience.
2. Collaborate with Live Healthy Rockbridge Kids, local schools and youth organizations to host outdoor classes or activities for students during or after school in a park or on a trail.
3. Evaluate the potential for initiating a Park Prescription program in which local physicians prescribe outdoor activity in parks and on trails.
4. Work with private and public organizations that promote physical fitness to schedule fitness classes (by age and ability), walking clubs or other fitness programs that could take place in a park or on a trail.
5. Expand use of parks and trails to a larger audience through art in the park events, musical performances, festivals, theater in a park or on a trail.

6. Organize events, walks, bike rides, health festivals, or other community events in partnership with philanthropic, local business, and/or health promotion organizations that utilize a park or trail.
7. Consider incentive programs such as prizes for youth and/or family outdoor adventures in a park or on a trail.

IX. Outdoor Recreation and Heritage Tourism Promotion

The Virginia travel industry is the fifth largest private employer in Virginia. In 2015, it generated \$22.9 billion in domestic visitor spending, which supported 223,100 jobs, and provided \$1.6 billion in state and local taxes.⁴⁰ According to industry experts, three key concepts that are driving the future of tourism are: authenticity, connectivity and visitor experience.

The Rockbridge area, with its abundant outdoor recreation and heritage resources is poised to capitalize on these emerging market trends, providing authentic, connected, place-based travel experiences. This section will provide a brief overview of tourism in the Rockbridge area, assess progress to-date in expanding outdoor recreation markets, and provide recommendations to build the region's outdoors "brand" so that it becomes a place sought after by outdoor enthusiasts.

Background and Existing Tourism Programs

The Rockbridge area is host to over 30 attractions, 20 hotels and motels, 55 bed & breakfasts, country inns, cabins or cottages, 9 campgrounds, 77 restaurants, and over 75 retail shops.⁴¹ In the past, much of the region's tourism promotion efforts have focused on its historically significant sites. Over the past several years there has been interest in the concept of an integrated approach to tourism that



leverages the area's natural, historic, cultural, recreation and scenic resources to promote a robust tourism economy. Some recent successes include the following.

Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership: In May 2017, thirteen counties in the Shenandoah Valley from Winchester to Lexington launched a new marketing partnership with the mission "to promote the Shenandoah Valley as an outstanding year-round destination for visitors from around the world." The Partnership will be working together to leverage resources and form a regional brand. One of the initial efforts was the launch of a new website with information, events, attractions and happenings throughout the valley (<https://virginiasshenandoahvalley.com>)

Virginia DRIVE Tourism Workshops: In 2015, Lexington and Rockbridge Area Tourism convened a three-part DRIVE Tourism workshop series, facilitated by Virginia Tourism Corporation.⁴² Approximately 20 community stakeholders from the Lexington-Buena Vista-Rockbridge area participated. The group developed a strategic plan based on authentic visitor experiences, and building essential infrastructure to connect communities and visitors. The team is developing an implementation strategy for a 5-year growth product idea, renovating Buena Vista's Bontex industrial site to a mixed-use gateway project with a trail/outdoor center.

⁴⁰ 2015 Economic Impact of Domestic Travel on Virginia Counties, 2015, prepared by the U.S. Travel Association for Virginia Tourism Corporation, August 2016

⁴¹ 2012 Marketing Plan, by Southeastern Institute of Research

⁴² Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan, March 2013, [DRIVE Tourism video](#)

Appalachian Gateway Communities Regional Workshop, 2014: The focus of this three-day workshop was to expand skills and capitalize on opportunities related to cultural heritage and natural resource tourism (recreation, traditional music, arts promotion, farm-to-table restaurants, etc.). A team from the Rockbridge area participated, resulting in a preliminary asset inventory of natural, cultural, and recreational features, for use in print materials and website development.

Appalachian Trail Community Designations, 2012: The City of Buena Vista and Town of Glasgow received designation as “AT Communities” from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in 2012. The program recognizes communities that promote and protect the AT, and provide support to assist communities with sustainable economic development through tourism and outdoor recreation.

Regional Tourism and Economic Impacts

In 2012, Lexington and Rockbridge Area Tourism completed a Tourism Marketing Plan based on research conducted by the Southeast Institute of Research. The data showed that 45% of the visitors to the area are baby boomers who like to visit areas of natural beauty and historic significance.

Millennials also showed to be a growth market and were interested in pairing outdoor experiences with winery visits, festivals, and shopping. Locally, the City of Buena Vista saw a 20% increase in meals and lodging receipts during typical trail months after being designated as an AT Community.⁴³

Additional data on the economic impact of the Bike the Valley and Fields of Gold Agritourism Programs have been documented by the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission. The two studies are summarized below:



[The Economic Impact of Bicycling in the Central Shenandoah Valley -August 2016](#)

According to data collected in 2015, regional bicycle tourism in the Central Shenandoah Valley region is estimated to have generated \$8.6 million in direct sales activity. The total economic impact of bicycle tourism, including multiplier effects, is estimated to have been \$13.6 million that supported 184 jobs in the region in 2015. The study documented characteristics of both visiting cyclists and those living in the area.

Visitors to the region were: 80% male, highly educated, 55% had annual incomes over \$100,000, 63% considered themselves serious riders, 62% were from Virginia, 71% stayed overnight, and average spending was \$155.

⁴³ Lexington Tourism Marketing Plan, 2012

Resident of the area were: 64% male, highly educated, 52% had annual incomes over \$100,000, 60% considered themselves intermediate/recreational riders, 62% were from Virginia, average local cyclist spent \$937 on bikes or related equipment.

The study also asked what upgrades they would recommend to improve the system:

Recommendations from Visitors	Recommendations from Residents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – better signage, bike maps and route sheets – better marketing of trail – more bike-friendly businesses, i.e. biker discounts at stores, open bike shops on Sundays – offering a hostel and hut-to-hut trips – having shuttles from town to forest areas – food trucks at popular locations – directions from biking routes to accommodations and services, and more places to ride 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – educate both vehicle drivers and cyclists on sharing the road – expand opportunities for riders of all skill levels – wider bike networks and delineated space – improved maintenance of roadways and shoulders – better marketing and identification of recommended routes

[The Economic Impact of Agritourism in Virginia's Fields of Gold Region, 2012](#): This study of the region's agritourism activities, showed total direct sales of \$22.4 million in 2011 based on ten categories: ag-venues, experience the farm, farm stand, farmer's market, local foods restaurant, local grocery/store, on-farm lodging, pick-your-own, trout farm/aquaculture, and winery/brewery. The total economic impact of agribusiness activity, including multiplier effects, is estimated to have been \$34.8 million that supported 811 total jobs in 2011. Local tax revenue is estimated at \$700,000, and state tax revenue at \$1.2 million.

In terms of visitor characteristics, the study found that 46% of visitors were from Virginia, 80% traveled with at least one other person, 50% participated in cultural activities, and that the average visitor spent \$359 per trip. The study also projected a total market potential of 6.7 million visitors which would result in annual tourist spending of \$950 million.

“Braiding the Way” Outdoor Recreation Marketing and Promotion

The Marketing Subcommittee, led by Lexington and Rockbridge Area Tourism, initiated efforts to begin branding the Rockbridge area as an outdoor destination. The long-term goal is to promote outdoor recreation, link natural resource-based tourism with history, the arts, traditional music, and agricultural assets, and to support new entrepreneurs as well as existing businesses with expanded markets.

[Website and Brochure](#): In 2016, a new website was launched by Lexington and Rockbridge Area Tourism to market existing outdoor recreation opportunities in the region: www.RockbridgeOutdoors.com. The website provides information on local biking, hiking, fishing, paddling, and climbing sites, and was funded through a Virginia Tourism Marketing Leverage Program Grant.

Also in 2016, Tourism published the “[Get Outside!](#)” guide and distributed it



to community centers, outfitters, and other outlets in the Rockbridge area. The guide is also included in fulfillment of all information requests and wedding/reunion/meeting/event packages. Both the website and guide were officially launched during National Tourism Week, May 1-7, 2016.

Facebook and Social Media: SOAR – [Supporting Outdoor Activities in Rockbridge](#), was launched in 2016 as a site for people in the Rockbridge area interested in outdoor recreation activities. The page will transition into a marketing tool for the Braiding the Way program. As of August 2017, the page has generated: 251 “likes” and 246 followers.



Logo/Branding: As a first step in developing an outdoor brand for the area, the Committee developed a logo depicting the concept of a braided network of trails, water trails, historic sites and cultural attractions. The “green” in the logo represents the parks, open space and greenway corridors, the “blue” represents the rivers and water trails and the “orange” represents the cities/towns, culture, architecture, and history found in the area. The logo is in the shape of the County.

Community Outreach Materials: Early in the process, the Committee developed a one-page fact sheet (see Attachment G) and power point presentation to provide an overview of the vision, benefits and values of outdoor recreation, and the status of the Braiding the Way initiative. The presentation has been used in community outreach forums, conference presentations, and other meetings in 2016-2017.

Recommendations

1. Brand Strategy: Develop a brand strategy that unifies the Rockbridge area as a connected, regional asset, helping to support further outdoor recreation investment, tourism, entrepreneurship, and community building.
2. Signage and Wayfinding: Develop a Signage and Wayfinding Plan that helps to advance the brand and ensures sites are easily accessible to visitors.
3. Communication:
 - a. On-line Communication: Update and expand website to include additional activities and venues, a map and a blog. Include information in eNewsletters and via online calendars. Utilize social media platforms to raise public awareness and program messages.
 - b. Public Relations: Distribute press releases to media outlets.
4. Partnership Development and Event Promotion
 - a. Facilitate relationships between event organizers and venues.
 - b. Promote festivals and wellness events such as healthy recreation walks and bike rides; elderly/senior and workplace wellness initiative; and youth and community service projects.

- c. Promote events associated with national, regional and local outdoor recreation, conservation, and stewardship programs (for example: Bike My Park Day, National River Cleanup Day, and/or National Trails Day).

X. Organizational Structure for Implementation

In Fall 2017, the first phase of the Braiding the Way Initiative will draw to a close, and the program focus will transition from planning and resource assessment to project implementation and programming. The County, Cities and Towns, have all expressed the desire to continue to collaborate as a way to leverage existing resources and identify collaborative opportunities (for example the Federal Lands Access Program grant submitted for the Chessie Trail bridge).

Although Lexington-Rockbridge Area Tourism will continue to support the initiative with staff time and logistics, a new structure is needed for long-term coordination. A leader is also needed to coordinate trail-related service projects and group walks/hikes. The following section highlights the evaluation process undertaken by the Committee to assess organizational options and the rationale for the recommendations provided.

Assessment of Organizational Options

The Committee began studying various long-term coordination options in July 2016, when a work session was convened with guest speakers representing various models. Participants included an authority, commission, foundation, and trails non-profit (see Attachment H). Speakers provided information and answered questions on topics such as start-up; time commitments; economic benefits; type of grants applied for and obtained; maintenance and up-keep challenges; example of funding contributions from localities; and advice on moving between the planning and execution phases.

Following the session, a work team was assembled to flesh out options for long term coordination, and reported their findings back to the full Committee. Regarding the primary role and function of the new entity, there was consensus on the following:

- One of the primary benefits of the Steering Committee has been to link people and organizations, to network and learn about opportunities, leverage resources, and coordinate projects. At a minimum, this function is needed on an on-going basis.
- In order to be successful at promoting a braided system of trails, water trails, and bike routes in the Rockbridge area, there needs to be adequate maintenance. Establishing a “Friends of” group could address this need.
- A more coordinated approach to communication, i.e. website, social media, as well as outreach materials and event planning is needed to “brand” the system.

Other key tasks include:

- Local advocacy and partnership development to expand engagement and support from the community.
- Coordination and hosting service projects, community events, walks, bike rides, etc.
- Implementation of pilot projects to show on-the-ground success.

There was recognition of the following constraints:

- Due to budget limitations, there is no funding at the local level for jurisdictions to support a new program; although there may be the possibility of staff support.
- There is limited capacity for on-going maintenance of new trail facilities.
- There is no existing organization currently undertaking these actions as core mission.

The Committee discussed three strategies:

- 1) establish a new organization (commission, authority, foundation, non-profit);
- 2) establish a program under an existing organization like Rockbridge Area Recreation Organization (RARO) or Rockbridge Area Conservation Council (RACC);
- 3) continue the Steering Committee with some modifications

There was agreement that a new organization would be difficult to establish at this time, given capacity limitation, and it didn't seem like a good fit under existing organizations. The closest fit was RARO, but their mission is youth athletics, not multi-age, and not outdoor recreation i.e. trails and water trails. The group believes a volunteer coordinating entity similar to the Steering Committee is the most feasible at this time. In the future it may expand into a regional recreation authority, serving as a sister organization to RARO.

Rockbridge Area Outdoors Partnership

The Committee reached consensus that the current format be continued as a partnership of like-minded organizations that support the vision, with some minor adjustments in leadership. Guidance on organizational structure is provided below:



Mission: The mission of the Rockbridge Area Outdoors Partnership is to work collaboratively to advance a network of trails, parks, water trails, bikeways and other outdoor recreational activities for the Rockbridge Area that supports economic, stewardship, and community health and wellness goals. The Partnership will serve as a forum for sharing information, coordination, and supporting the promotion and maintenance of the network.

Potential Functions / Tasks:

- multi-jurisdictional coordination and planning
- project development and implementation support (including fundraising)
- marketing and communication
- maintenance and service projects
- programming (education and recreation)

Leadership: The Partnership will identify a leader (or co-leaders) to serve as chair, with the responsibility of setting policy and convening meetings. The Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC) will provide staff support and technical assistance as appropriate. This may include assistance with scheduling meetings, taking meeting notes, and sending out follow-up summaries, identifying funding opportunities and grant support.

Decision-Making: Decisions of the Partnership will be made by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, the Chair may call for a vote and it will be noted in the meeting notes that consensus was not reached. In addition, members are free to take positions individually on specific issues, or as representatives of their specific organizations, but all communication that represents the

position of the Partnership must have been discussed and agreed upon by the Partnership, prior to release.

Meetings: The Partnership will meet, at a minimum, on a quarterly basis. Agenda topics will be developed with the input of partners to ensure they are productive and efficient in meeting partner's needs. Scheduling of meetings (i.e. date, time, and location) will be made by consensus of the group.

Membership: The Partnership will serve as a forum for coordination and information sharing among public, private, and non-profit organizations, with an interest in or expertise in trails, park planning, river stewardship, tourism, outdoor recreation marketing, and resource management topics. The geographic area of focus is Rockbridge County, the Cities of Lexington and Buena Vista, and the Towns of Glasgow and Goshen. The Partnership is open to all and new members can join at any time upon completion of "Partnership Profile Agreement" form (Attachment I) which documents their interest and commitments.

Member Roles and Responsibilities: Primary duties include:

1. Serve as a liaison to their respective board, council, organization or jurisdiction to keep them apprised of the work of the Partnership and to give them information and updates on progress.
2. Provide guidance in evaluating and identifying future trail, water trail, and recreational facility needs, and work jointly to develop recommendations to address issues and concerns.
3. Convene and/or participate in outreach tasks, walks/paddles, workshops, events and other activities, to increase awareness and understanding of the benefits and values of outdoor recreation.
4. Assist in expanding partnerships, identifying implementation options and resources and support the work of other partner organizations related to project development and implementation.
5. Support joint-marketing efforts, including posting organizational events on the RockbridgeOutdoors.com website and participating in social media initiatives.
6. Support the work of a Friends Group to maintain a network of trails and river access.

Volunteers and Friends

Volunteers bring a wealth of skills, enthusiasm and commitment to assist land managers with various tasks, such as routine trail maintenance, clean up, and visitor service function. The Committee has noted the need for a more coordinated approach to utilizing volunteer programs, both to support limited park staff and to provide the best level of service and safety to users of the trail. The Rockbridge Area Outdoors Partnership will work with park managing entities to assess the best structure for coordinating, organizing, and managing volunteers in the future. Potential volunteer projects may include:



Trail Maintenance and Enhancements

- Trail clearing and construction
- Routine maintenance, mowing and trash clean-up
- Landscaping and weed control
- Amenity construction and installation (i.e. signs, trail markers, benches, etc.)

Trail Programs

- Trail patrols
- Youth liaison/programs
- Organizing trail events and interpretive programs
- Serving as field trip leader

Office / Administrative Projects

- Research/data collecting
- Contributions to and maintenance of the website
- Outreach, partnership development and promotion
- Fundraising and grant writing

Liability

A number of laws come into play when considering liability, due to the variety of entities that own and manage lands in the project area. Lands owned and managed by private individuals, non-profits, or private landowners who enter into a lease agreement with agencies of the Commonwealth to allow public use of their property for recreation are covered by Virginia's Recreational Use Statute, also known as the Landowner Liability Law. Trails on local and state government lands are covered by the Virginia Tort Claims Act. Trails located on federal lands are covered by the Federal Tort Claim Act.



Virginia's Recreational Use Statute (Code of Virginia § 29.1-509): This legislation provides that *"a landowner shall owe no duty of care to keep land or premises safe for entry or use by others..."* for a variety of recreational uses, including and not limited to hiking, horseback riding, and bicycle riding. It limits landowner liability with the exception of *"gross negligence or willful or malicious failure to guard or warn against a dangerous condition, use, structure or activity."* In 1994, the Code was amended to include easements for access to public parks, historic sites or other public recreation areas. A landowner who receives a fee for the use of their property would not be exempt from liability, as outlined in the Code.

Furthermore, the statute limits the landowner's liability when private individuals voluntarily offer trails or public access to water through their property. They may give an easement on a portion of their land or may allow access through an agreement with a governmental agency.

Additional language, exemptions, and requirements are found in the full text of the law located at <http://leg1.state.va.us/lis.htm>

In spite of the above discussion on Virginia Recreational Use Statute, which limits landowner liability, it is highly recommended that local and non-profit partners carry liability insurance. It is also recommended that volunteers have their own personal coverage.

Virginia's Tort Claims Act (Code of Virginia § 8.01-195.1) This law defines the scope of governmental liability and limits liability for Local and State governments. Because the Virginia Tort Claims Act limits the liability and caps the dollar amounts awarded in cases of negligence, the Act offers a degree of protection to municipalities such as towns or cities who choose to build trails. Additional language, exemptions, and requirements are found in the full text of the law located at <http://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/8.01-195.1/>

Funding Trail Development and Operations

The Partnership could serve as a forum for exploring innovative approaches to trail development and assist in identifying sources of funding for planning, construction and maintenance, and/or serve as a vehicle for developing joint-funding proposals. Ultimately, each management entity or locality will be responsible for ensuring adequate management of the trails they own and operate, with the support of volunteers and/or other sponsors. Due to the diversity of project types, specific recommendations on funding need to be project-specific. A list of federal and state grant programs is available on the CSPDC website at: <http://www.cspdc.org/grant-resource-guide/>

XI. Conclusion and Next Steps

Over the past several years, numerous groups in the Rockbridge area have worked to expand outdoor recreation and heritage tourism opportunities to benefit both citizens and visitors to the region. By incorporating and coordinating these efforts, the Rockbridge Area Outdoor Recreation and Trail Plan is the next step in expanding outdoor recreation opportunities. The Plan provides an overall strategy for public and private partners to leverage resources by working collaboratively on trail and water trail development projects. Incorporating past efforts provides a more comprehensive approach to trail development, which simultaneously simplifies and enhances efforts to brand the area as a recreation destination.

The transition of the current Steering Committee into an on-going Partnership will provide a venue for creative problem solving and entrepreneurship, a forum for collaborative plans to develop, and a more focused way to communicate the needs, status and goals of the trail network and its partners. The Partnership and Plan can maintain the vision of the expanded trail network as well as assist in the marketing of current outdoor assets. This approach will support local staff in their efforts to provide quality services and effectively manage budgets to meet growing needs and evolving interests with limited resources.

Utilizing the trail development, youth engagement, community health, and marketing recommendations, as outlined in this Plan, as well as establishing a collaborative framework will have long-term benefits to Rockbridge County, the Cities of Lexington and Buena Vista and the area's Towns, positioning the region as a quality place for people to live, work, and play.

Next Steps

In order to continue to make progress in developing a sustainable regional system of trails, water trails, and bike routes that link the region's history, natural areas, and cultural resources, the Rockbridge Area Outdoors "Braiding the Way" Steering Committee recommends the following actions be taken:

- 1) That the Steering Committee transition to the "Rockbridge Area Outdoors Partnership" which will serve as a coordinating entity and forum for continued collaboration, networking, project development and promotion.
- 2) That the "Recommendations" identified in the Plan serve as a framework for future actions to continue to expand outdoor recreation opportunities, specifically recommendations found in:
 - Chapter VI. Trail and Water Trail System Planning
 - Chapter VII. Youth Engagement, Education, and Stewardship
 - Chapter VIII. Community Health and Wellness
 - Chapter IX. Outdoor Recreation and Heritage Tourism Promotion
- 3) That the local jurisdictions in the project area endorse the Plan through a Resolution of Support, and work with the Partnership to increase economic, conservation, and community wellness benefits for all Rockbridge area residents.

Attachments

Attachment A. Braiding the Way Multi-Level Approach to Public Participation

The Mission of the Braiding the Way Steering Committee is to develop an Outdoor Recreation Plan and Implementation Strategy for the Rockbridge Area that supports economic, stewardship, and community health and wellness goals. The Committee will also serve as an open forum for sharing information, building networks, and increasing awareness and understanding of resource management issues.

Committee Mission and Structure: To kick the project off, a Steering Committee was formed to provide overall guidance in the development of the plan. A diverse array of partners represented local jurisdictions, universities, health professionals, recreation and conservation interest groups, and businesses. Committee members served as liaisons to their respective boards and organizations, providing updates and keeping them apprised of the work of the Committee. Updates were also provided through organization's newsletters and the Lexington and Rockbridge Tourism website (www.RockbridgeOutdoors.com)

Community Forum Series

In addition to communication through the Steering Committee, a series of community forums were held in each magisterial district, towns and cities, to inform the community of the project and receive input on potential project priorities. The forum schedule was as follows:

11-21-16	Rockbridge County Forum #1, Rockbridge County School Board Office
11-28-16	Rockbridge County Forum #2, BARC Electric
12-5-16	Rockbridge County Forum #3, Fairfield Elementary School
1-23-17	Rockbridge County Forum #4, Rockbridge Baths Fire Department
1-30-17	Rockbridge County Forum #5, Natural Bridge Fire Department
3-14-17	Glasgow Town Council, Community Meeting #6, Glasgow Library
3-27-17	City of Lexington Community Forum #7, Old Courthouse, Lexington
4-4-17	Goshen Town Council, Community Meeting #8, Goshen Town Hall
4-12-17	Buena Vista Community Meeting #9, Southern Virginia University Library

Web-Based Outdoor Recreation Survey

With the support of the Washington and Lee University Venture Club, the Committee developed a Community Survey to assess priorities and interest in outdoor recreation activities. Hosted by the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission, the survey "***Braiding the Way for Outdoor Recreation in Rockbridge***" was initiated on January 20, 2017, and remained open until July 31, 2017. In order to provide an incentive, those that completed the survey were entered into a drawing for prizes such as outfitter gift cards, and admission to area attractions like Natural Bridge and Glen Maury Park, Friday in the Park Series.

Coordination with Elected Leaders

County and City staff that served on the Committee kept elected leaders updated on progress. In addition a briefing was provided at the Mayors and Chairs Intergovernmental Leaders on July 19, 2016, regarding the project scope, role of the Committee and tasks planned for 2017. A status report was provided to elected leaders at the CSPDC Annual Meeting on August 21, 2017; and again at the September 22, 2017 Intergovernmental Meeting, to update them on completion of the plan and proposed formation of the Rockbridge Area Outdoors Partnership.

Community Forum Ranking of Project Proposals

At the community forums, participants were asked to identify their top trail and water trail priorities which resulted in the following rankings.

Ranking by Community	Project Name	Project Map ID#
1	Brushy Hills Connector	6
2	Virginia Horse Center River Trail	17
3	Chessie Trail, South River Bridge	7
4 tie	Rockbridge Baths (river access)	11
	Alone Mill (river access)	12
5 tie	Chessie Trail-Woods Creek Connection	8
	Millers Dam (river access)	14
6	Cornwall/South River Flood Mitigation Park	19
7 tie	Chessie Trail to Buena Vista Floodwall	5
	Natural Bridge State Park Trail System	18
	North Mountain. to Blacks Creek	3
8 tie	Ruritan Tract-James (river access)	16
	Quarry Falls-Maury (river access)	15
	Moore's Creek State Forest	1
9	Lake Robertson Recreation Area	2
10 tie	Bean's Bottom (river access)	13
	Short Hills Wildlife Management Area	4
	Buena Vista-USFS Connector Trail	10
11	Bike the Valley additions	20
12	Elephant Mountain Trail	9

Attachment B

Recommendations from the Central Shenandoah Valley Greenway Plan, July 2004

Recommendations for the Region, p.11-12

In order to protect, preserve, and enhance the area's vast natural resources and contribute to the Region's open space and recreational opportunities, the following recommendations are suggested:

- 1) Strengthen local comprehensive plans and create special land use regulations that protect and preserve unique scenic resources in the area. Develop a trail and greenway plan as part of each local government's comprehensive planning process.
- 2) Encourage local governments and adjacent landowners to develop scenic overlay zones adjacent to and within the viewshed of the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive.
- 3) Support the aspects of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests revised Land and Resource Management Plan which calls for additional facilities within the national forests including trails, camping, water access, natural resource interpretation and environmental education.
- 4) Evaluate the following river segments to determine suitability for designation to the Virginia Scenic River program:
 - Maury River from its origin west of Goshen Pass to the James River.
 - Back Creek and Jackson River in Bath County above Lake Moomaw.
 - Cowpasture River in Highland and Bath counties.
 - Calfpasture and Little Calfpasture Rivers from Marble Valley to Goshen Pass.
 - South Fork of the Shenandoah River in Rockingham County.
 - Laurel Fork in Highland County.
 - James River in southeastern Rockbridge County.
- 5) Support development of equestrian trails in the region, where appropriate.
- 6) Support the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Birding and Wildlife Trail program that designates trails/tours for bird and wildlife viewing.
- 7) Identify and develop appropriate access to the public waters and free-flowing water systems in the region.
- 8) Determine appropriate roads for bicycle routes and develop and adopt local pedestrian and bikeway plans to include in VDOT's transportation plans.
- 9) Support appropriate alternatives to large-scale expansion of Interstate 81 such as rail transportation improvements.
- 10) Create tourist-friendly road and trail maps for cycling, hiking, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, and scenic driving.
- 11) Support state efforts to include Grand Caverns and Natural Chimneys Regional Parks in the state park system.
- 12) Support a multi-regional effort to develop a bicycle/trail system that connects the 10 Civil War Battlefields in the western part of the state.

Recommendations for Rockbridge-Buena Vista-Lexington, p.27-28

- 1) Support plans to develop a 10-mile river/trail system that would link Brushy Hills, Woods Creek Trail, Jordan's Point Park, the Chessie Nature Trail, Maury River Walk, Glen Maury Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway.
- 2) Improve access and maintenance to the Chessie Nature Trail to increase utilization. Consider multi-use travel, i.e. mountain biking, horseback riding.
- 3) Support plans to extend Brushy Hill trail system west to the national forest lands.
- 4) Support plans to develop a trail/greenway system along the Maury River.
- 5) Connect Chessie Nature Trail to Glen Maury Park and extend the connection in conjunction with the North River Branch of the Kanawha Canal and railroad to the James River at Glasgow.
- 6) Develop a heritage trail system to commemorate the founding of Jamestown as part of the Jamestown 2007 celebration; include the canal system and the Chessie Nature Trail.
- 7) Support proposed pedestrian bridge over the Maury River to connect Glen Maury Park with downtown Buena Vista along existing riverwalk trails.
- 8) Assess the potential to develop the 600 acres of open space contained on the Cyrus McCormick Farm for greenway/recreational purposes.
- 9) Refine the location of Interstate Bike Route 76 and improve route signage.
- 10) Recommend the following roadways for scenic by-way designation:
 - Rt. 11 – Raphine to Lexington
 - Rt. 608 – Natural Bridge to Buena Vista
 - Rt. 60 – Lexington to Buena Vista to the Blue Ridge Parkway
 - Rt. 252 – Brownsburg to Rt. 39
 - Rt. 780 – Goshen to I-64
 - Rt. 251 – Lexington to Colliertown
- 11) Consider expanding the services in the Little North Mountain Wildlife Management Area to include other forms of recreation such as hiking and nature study trails.
- 12) Assess the potential to extend trails to and into the 60 acres of undeveloped open space known as the Lackey Farm owned by Virginia Military Institute (VMI) located behind Rockbridge County High School for greenways/recreational purposes.
- 13) Develop greenway from Glasgow Landing (confluence of Maury and James Rivers) to Glasgow Park.
- 14) Develop pocket park between 16th Street and Magnolia Avenue in Buena Vista where houses were removed from the floodplain.
- 15) Support plans to build community recreation center in the Rockbridge area.
- 16) Complete construction of pedestrian bridge over the Maury River at Jordan's Point Park.
- 17) Improve bicycle/pedestrian access along Route 11 in Lexington to serve high school students and guests of the hotels and restaurants in the area.
- 18) Support plans for the development of the Mountain Waters Byway, promoting scenic Route 39 in Virginia from Lexington to Summersville, West Virginia.

ROCKBRIDGE AREA OUTDOOR RECREATION SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS AND SURVEY COLLECTION



October 2017

This report was prepared for the
Braiding the Way Steering Committee by the
Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission



ROCKBRIDGE AREA OUTDOOR RECREATION Summary of Economic Impact Analysis and Survey Collection

The Rockbridge Area Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact Analysis (EIA) estimated the economic activity generated by spending on outdoor recreation activities in the region. The study was prepared for a regional initiative called *Braiding the Way for Outdoor Recreation in the Rockbridge Area*. The Braiding the Way initiative brings together federal, state, and local partners to create a coordinated, comprehensive, and regional approach to outdoor recreation planning, programming, and promotion.

Led by the Braiding the Way Steering Committee, the result of this initiative is a plan and implementation strategy for a braided network of trails, blueways, bikeways, and parks that link with the region's cultural, historic, and natural features. This planning and implementation process is a collaborative effort of public and non-profit interests, key community leaders, agency staff, businesses, economic development and tourism, health, university, and technical advisors.

The Braiding the Way initiative covers the following localities listed below and shown on the map. Together they comprise the Rockbridge Area.

- Rockbridge County
- City of Buena Vista
- City of Lexington
- Town of Glasgow
- Town of Goshen

Outdoor recreation has long been recognized as an important feature and economic driver in the Rockbridge Area. The Braiding the Way partners, therefore, were interested in better measuring the influence of outdoor recreation on their region's economy by conducting an economic impact study. Furthermore, the data gathered from the study will be used to strengthen the region's ability to grow this tourism sector by identifying needs and priorities.

The first step of the economic impact analysis was to conduct a survey. In early 2017, the Braiding the Way Steering Committee with support from the Washington and Lee University Venture Club initiated a web-based community survey. The survey was conducted from January 2017 to July 2017. The survey targeted all outdoor recreation participants in the region, both residents and visitors. This was accomplished by directing the survey taker to the applicable set of questions based on their place of residence. If they identified with a locality in the study area



or as a local college student, they were considered a local resident. Otherwise, they were considered a visitor. A copy of the survey questions has been included in Appendix A.

Survey responses were used to compute average expenditures for food, lodging, and retail purchases made in the region per person per day. The IMPLAN (Impact Analysis for PLANning) economic impact model was used to estimate the amount of regional activity from outdoor recreation tourism. The Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission, which provided technical support to the Braiding the Way Steering Committee, contracted with the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC) to model the survey responses to determine the economic impact of outdoor recreation. Using the IMPLAN model, RVARC estimated the direct, indirect, and induced impacts of outdoor recreation in the Rockbridge Area. The full economic impact report may be found in Appendix B.

Additionally, the survey asked those participating in the region's outdoor recreation activities for information about the type and frequency of their outdoor activities, details of their visit, socio-economic characteristics, and outdoor recreation needs and priorities. The survey was completed by a total of 384 respondents of which 328 were residents and 56 were visitors to the region. Highlights from the survey and portions of the IMPLAN are listed below:

Based on the survey conducted in 2017 for the economic impact study, *residents* in the study area had the following characteristics:

- Most local residents (56%) considered themselves to have an intermediate or moderate participation in outdoor activities.
- Typically, local residents learn about outdoor recreation opportunities through friends and family members (47%), but social media (12%) and simply living in the area (12%) were next in popularity.
- Similar to visitors, the top three activities that were most important to local residents were: walking/day hiking/trail running, water/paddle sports, and nature/wildlife viewing.
- Suggestions for activities that could be done better for residents' #1 preferred activity include: more/better facilities, more/better directional/wayfinding signage, and easier access/public access.
- Local residents spent on average, \$529 for equipment (total \$173,488), \$289 for transportation (total \$94,795), \$65 for event fees (total \$21,377), and \$3,130 for other expenses.
- Most residents who traveled outside of the area for outdoor recreation stayed in Virginia. While outside the region, most reported doing so for access to trails, river put-ins, etc. (71%).

Based on the survey conducted in 2017 for the economic impact study, *visitors* in the study area had the following characteristics:

- The majority of visitors were from other parts of Virginia (75%). Pennsylvania, Florida, and Georgia rounded out the top 4 states.

- Those traveling to the Rockbridge area generally did so in May (46%) and June (64%) and had on average three people in their travel party.
- 95% of visitors have visited the area before and most visitors learned about outdoor recreation in the area due to a previous visit (38%) or an event (34%).
- Most visitors, 68%, stayed overnight in the area. They stayed an average of 5 nights with the most popular accommodations being hotels/motels and campgrounds.
- For overnight visitors, the estimated spending by travel party was \$578 with the majority of that amount being spent on lodging, dining, and fuel.
- Spending by day visitors was considerably less with the estimated spending by travel party being \$123.
- 39% of visitors said outdoor recreation was their primary reason for the visit. The top three activities that visitors participated in were: walking/day hiking/trail running, cultural/historical sightseeing, and nature/wildlife viewing. A large percentage, 96%, indicated that they would return to the area to do the activity again.
- When asked how they would rate the quality of infrastructure and facilities of their number 1 preferred activity, visitors responded with 50% rating it as excellent, 45% good, 5% fair, and 0% as poor.
- Visitors were interested in more/better directional/wayfinding signage and easier access/public access.

Demographic representation of outdoor recreationists in the Rockbridge area:

- The majority of outdoor recreationists were women, (59%).
- The number of recreationists in the 5-year age groups between the ages of 36 and 55 was fairly evenly distributed. The age group with the highest percentage was the 56-60 year old (14%).
- 64% of survey responders were parents and of those parents, 63% participate in outdoor activities with their children. The average number of children participating in outdoor activities with their parents was 2.28.
- Outdoor recreationists tended to have higher education levels; 82% held a degree with 36% holding a graduate degree.
- The household income of recreationists in the Rockbridge area was fairly evenly distributed among four of the seven income ranges. These four income ranges, \$25,000-\$50,000, \$50,001-\$75,000, \$75,001-\$100,000, and \$100,001-\$150,000, each had about 20% of respondents.

The outdoor recreation tourism industry by visitors in the Rockbridge area had a total economic impact of \$15.4 million and supported 257 jobs in 2016.

- Visitor spending had a *direct* economic impact of approximately \$10.7 million that supported 209 jobs.
- Visitor spending had an *indirect* economic impact of approximately \$2 million that supported 18 jobs.
- The top sectors impacted by outdoor recreational tourism are hotels/motels, restaurants, and retail establishments.

Appendix A

Braiding the Way for Outdoor Recreation in the Rockbridge Area Survey Questions

Introduction

Outdoor recreation has long been recognized as an important feature and economic driver in Rockbridge County and its cities and towns. Please fill out this survey in order to help us increase outdoor recreation in our beautiful and active area. The survey results will be used to conduct an economic analysis report, which will help us increase opportunities for outdoor recreation activities. All responses are confidential.

If you are interested in being entered into a drawing to win some cool prizes, please include your email address! Prizes include:

- Introduction to Fly Fishing, John Roberts Fishing Guide
- Admission for two, Natural Bridge State Park
- Southern Inn gift cards
- Walkabout Outfitter gift cards
- Twin River Outfitter gift cards
- Free admission to Fridays in the Park series, Glen Maury Park

Click on the link below for more information about our initiative.

Braiding the Way for Outdoor Recreation in the Rockbridge Area

* 1. Where is your permanent address?

- ☐ City of Lexington, Virginia
- ☐ City of Buena Vista, Virginia
- ☐ Rockbridge County, Virginia
- ☐ Town of Glasgow, Virginia
- ☐ Town of Goshen, Virginia
- ☐ Other (Local College Student)
- ☐ Other (Visitor)

Resident Survey

* 2. Please rate your level of participation in outdoor recreation activities in the Lexington-Buena Vista-Rockbridge area.

- ☐ Novice/Infrequent Participation
- ☐ Intermediate/Moderate Participation
- ☐ Advanced/Frequent Participation

* 3. How did you hear and learn about outdoor recreation in our area?

- ☐ Friend/Family members
- ☐ Social media (Facebook, Twitter)
- ☐ Website/Blog
- ☐ Magazine
- ☐ Event
- ☐ Other (please specify)

* 4. Please indicate all outdoor recreation activities in which you participate in the area.

☐ Walking/Day Hiking/Trail Running

☐ Backpacking/Overnight Camping

☐ Road Biking/Mountain Biking

☐ Water/Paddle Sports

☐ Rock Climbing/Bouldering

☐ Hunting

☐ Fishing

☐ RV Camping/Scenic Driving

☐ Nature/Wildlife Viewing

☐ Horseback Riding

☐ Cultural/Historical Sightseeing

☐ None

☐ Other (please specify)

5. If you chose more than one above, of these selections, please rank the three activities that are most important to you. (ONLY SELECT THREE ACTIVITIES.)

	#1 Activity	#2 Activity	#3 Activity
Walking/Day Hiking/Trail Running	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Backpacking/Overnight Camping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Road Biking/Mountain Biking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water/Paddle Sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rock Climbing/Bouldering	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hunting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fishing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
RV Camping/Scenic Driving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nature/Wildlife Viewing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Horseback Riding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural/Historical Sightseeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

* 6. How often do you partake in your #1 preferred outdoor activity?

- ☐ Less than once/week
- ☐ 1-2 days/week
- ☐ 3-5 days/week
- ☐ 6-7 days/week

* 7. How would you rate the overall quality of your #1 preferred activity, including infrastructure and facilities, in the area? Infrastructure/facilities can include trailhead and river accesses, bike lanes, local outdoor guide services, rock gyms, parking, signage, outdoor clubs/interest groups, etc.

- ☐ 1 (Poor) ☐ 2 (Fair) ☐ 3 (Good) ☐ 4 (Excellent)

* 8. What additional infrastructure or facilities should be built in the area that would make this activity more practical and enjoyable or allow you to do this activity more frequently?

* 9. Please enter the amount that you spent LOCALLY on expenses related to this activity during the past year.

Equipment

Transportation

Event Fees

Other

* 10. Did you travel outside the area for this activity within the last year?

☐ Yes

☐ No

11. If you did travel outside the area:

Where did you go?

About how much did you spend?

* 12. What draws you to other places you like to visit for outdoor recreation? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Available equipment rentals
- ☐ Knowledge of territory
- ☐ Availability of activity-specific information
- ☐ Outdoor guide services
- ☐ Access to trails, river put-ins, etc.
- ☐ Types of lodging
- ☐ Types of campgrounds
- ☐ Food/Beverage festivals
- ☐ Restaurant/Bar scene
- ☐ Other (please specify)

* 13. Which of the following suggestions are activities that we could do better for your #1 preferred activity?

Please check all that apply.

- ☐ More/better facilities/infrastructure
- ☐ More accessibility
- ☐ Easier access/public access
- ☐ More/better directional/wayfinding signage
- ☐ More printed materials (maps, brochures, etc.)
- ☐ More lodging/accommodations
- ☐ More businesses that cater to preferred activity
- ☐ Availability of outfitters/guides
- ☐ Please specify

Visitor

* 14. Where is your permanent address?

City/Town

State/Province

ZIP Code

* 15. How did you hear about outdoor recreation in our area?

☐

Friend/family member

☐

Social media (Facebook, Twitter)

☐

Website/blog

☐

Magazine

☐

Previous visit to the area

☐

Event or Other (please specify)

* 16. Have you visited the area before?

☐

Yes

☐

No

17. Approximately how many times have you visited the area in the past year?

* 18. How many people were in your travel party?

Adults

Children (under 18)

* 19. What month did you visit? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ January
- ☐ February
- ☐ March
- ☐ April
- ☐ May
- ☐ June
- ☐ July
- ☐ August
- ☐ September
- ☐ October
- ☐ November
- ☐ December

* 20. Did you stay overnight?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, how many nights?

* 21. Where did you stay?

- ☐ City of Lexington, Virginia
- ☐ City of Buena Vista, Virginia
- ☐ Rockbridge County, Virginia
- ☐ Didn't stay overnight
- ☐ Other (please specify)

* 22. What type of accommodations?

- ☐ Hotel/Motel
- ☐ Condo/Timeshare
- ☐ Resort
- ☐ Rental home
- ☐ Home of friends and/or family
- ☐ Bed and Breakfast
- ☐ Campsite
- ☐ Didn't stay overnight
- ☐ Other (please specify)

* 23. What was the primary reason for your visit?

- ☐ Work
- ☐ School
- ☐ Outdoor recreation
- ☐ Cultural/Historical sightseeing
- ☐ Visiting family and/or friends
- ☐ Other (please specify)

* 24. Which outdoor recreation activities did you partake in during your visit?

☐ Walking/Day Hiking/Trail Running

☐ Backpacking/Overnight Camping

☐ Road Biking/Mountain Biking

☐ Water/Paddle Sports

☐ Rock Climbing/Bouldering

☐ Hunting

☐ Fishing

☐ RV Camping/Scenic Driving

☐ Nature/Wildlife Viewing

☐ Horseback Riding

☐ Cultural/Historical Sightseeing

☐ None

☐ Other (please specify)

25. If you selected more than one of the outdoor activities you indicated that you did during your visit, which are your top three in order of preference?(ONLY SELECT THREE ACTIVITIES.)

	#1 Activity	#2 Activity	#3 Activity
Walking/Day Hiking/Trail Running	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Backpacking/Overnight Camping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Road Biking/Mountain Biking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water/Paddle Sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rock Climbing/Bouldering	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hunting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fishing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
RV Camping/Scenic Driving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nature/Wildlife Viewing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Horseback Riding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural/Historical Sightseeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

* 26. Please enter the average amount you spent PER DAY on the following goods and services for your #1 preferred activity. For the last category enter the number of persons included in your spending estimate.

Your #1 Preferred Activity
(from above)

Total Outdoor Activity-
Related Goods/Services

Accommodations

Restaurant/Meals/Fast
Food/Bars

Groceries/Beverages/Sna
cks

Retail/Shopping

Recreation/Entertainment

Car/Transportation/Fuel

Access & Admission
Fees/Permits

Spending is for how many
people?

* 27. How often did you partake in your #1 preferred outdoor activity while visiting the area?

☐ Less than 1 day

☐ 1-2 days

☐ 3-5 days

☐ 6-7 days or more

* 28. How would you rate the overall quality of your #1 preferred activity experience, including infrastructure and facilities, in the area? Infrastructure/facilities can include trail head and river accesses, bike lanes, local equipment shops, local outdoor guide services, rock gyms, etc.

☐ 1 (Poor) ☐ 2 (Fair) ☐ 3 (Good) ☐ 4 (Excellent)

* 29. What additional infrastructure or facilities should be built in the area that would make this activity more enjoyable and practical or allow you to do this activity more frequently?

* 30. Would you come back to the area to do this activity again?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, please specify.

* 31. What draws you to other places you like to visit for outdoor recreation? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Available equipment rentals
- ☐ Knowledge of territory
- ☐ Availability of activity-specific information
- ☐ Outdoor guide services
- ☐ Access to trails, river put-ins, etc.
- ☐ Type of lodging
- ☐ Type of campgrounds
- ☐ Food/Beverage festivals
- ☐ Restaurant/Bar Scene
- ☐ Other (please specify)

* 32. Of all the outdoor recreation opportunities in the Rockbridge area, what do you see as the best asset?

* 33. What outdoor recreation opportunities/suggestions would encourage you to visit the area in the future?

Please check all that apply.

- ☐ More/better facilities/infrastructure
- ☐ More accessibility
- ☐ Easier access/public access
- ☐ More/better directional/wayfinding signage
- ☐ More printed materials (maps, brochures, etc.)
- ☐ More lodging/accommodations
- ☐ More businesses that cater to preferred activity
- ☐ Availability of outfitters/guides
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Demographic Questions

All responses will be kept confidential.

* 34. What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18 to 25
- ☐ 26 to 30
- ☐ 31 to 35
- ☐ 36 to 40
- ☐ 41 to 45
- ☐ 46 to 50
- ☐ 51 to 55
- ☐ 56 to 60
- ☐ 61 to 65
- ☐ 66 to 70
- ☐ Over 70

* 35. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Decline to Answer

* 36. Are you a parent?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

37. If you are a parent:

How many children do you have?

Do your children participate in outdoor activities with you?

38. What is your household income?

- ☐ Less than \$25,000
- ☐ \$25,000 to \$50,000
- ☐ \$50,001 to \$75,000
- ☐ \$75,001 to \$100,000
- ☐ \$100,001 to \$150,000
- ☐ \$150,001 to \$200,000
- ☐ Over \$200,000

*** 39. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

- ☐ Less than High School Diploma
- ☐ High School Diploma (or its equivalent)
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ Associate's Degree
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Doctoral/Professional Degree

40. Enter your email address to be entered into a raffle for a variety of prizes.

Appendix B

Economic Impact Analysis Report

September 27, 2017

The economic impact analysis provided in this report was generated using an economic impact model (IMPLAN) calibrated for a specific study area using standard regional data sets. The results are to be interpreted as a best estimate of economic impact based on the assumptions and/or data provided by the client.

The Roanoke Valley – Alleghany Regional Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of data or assumptions supplied by the client or of any other source, nor does it advocate or guarantee the success of any particular policy change, course of action, or any decision that may be ultimately based on the information in this report

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Introduction

In 2017, the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission conducted a survey of outdoor tourism in Rockbridge County, the City of Buena Vista, the City of Lexington, and the Towns of Glasgow and Goshen. While the survey collected a broad amount of data, the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission conducted an analysis of the economic impacts of tourism related expenditures based on the study data.

Methodology

The survey was conducted over a six-month period in early 2017. The survey was advertised to residents and to visitors through several distribution methods. Announcements were posted through online websites, social media, emails, e-newsletters and in a press release. Survey flyers and 5,000 survey business cards were printed with survey information and distributed in the community. Survey flyers or business cards were posted at Lexington-Rockbridge Area Tourism visitor centers, area businesses, area hotels, and included within participant registration packets for special events. Survey participants could voluntarily submit their email address for a chance to win one of six prizes.

The survey received 668 responses. The survey design included questions directed towards residents and questions directed towards visitors. Local college students were directed towards questions for residents. Of the 668 individuals that initially began the survey, 558 were residents and 110 were visitors. There were 384 individuals (328 residents and 58 visitors) that continued and completed the economic survey portion. It was difficult to estimate the number of actual visitors to the region and several estimation methods were examined. Estimates for visitation and the economic impact analysis were made for the calendar year of 2016.

Staff utilized specialized software called IMPLAN which was developed by IMPLAN Group LLC. This software is designed to model complex economic interactions to measure the financial impact of specified activities or events.

How does IMPLAN Work?

At the heart of the IMPLAN model is a national input-output dollar flow table called the Social Accounting Matrix (SAM). Unlike other static input-output models, which just measure the purchasing relationships between industry and household sectors, SAM also measures the economic relationships between government, industry, and household sectors.

The model uses actual economic and employment data to model 440 industries to determine how industry dollars are spent to produce commodities. National level and county level production data sets are then combined to produce a series of multipliers.

Multipliers measure the amount of total economic activity that results from an industry or household spending money in the local economy. IMPLAN uses the national and county-level data multipliers to estimate economic impacts of various activities. Once all input data has been entered into the model, IMPLAN then generates a series of summary output tables to show the direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts.

- **Direct impacts** are those that result from the direct infusion of money in the economy as a result of an economic event. These impacts consist of permanent jobs, wages, and output of economic events.
- **Indirect impacts** are the jobs, wages, and output created by businesses, which provide goods and services essential to an economic activity (construction, tourism, etc.). Indirect impacts represent a cumulative total of several cycles of spending that work their way through the local economic supply chain until all remaining money from the initial stimulus leaks from the study area economy. For example, a series of restaurants making purchases of goods from local suppliers as a result of participant spending on meals would be an example of a portion of indirect impacts as defined in this analysis.
- **Induced impacts** are those impacts that result from household spending by those impacted by the direct and indirect phases of economic activities. The spending of wages earned by employees working for industries impacted by economic events represents the largest portion of induced impacts. This spending creates induced employment, especially in the service sectors.

The summary output tables also show the direct, indirect, and induced effects of labor income, value added, and output.

- **Labor income** equals employee compensation plus proprietor income. Employee compensation in the IMPLAN model is the total payroll cost of the employees paid by the employer. This includes wage and salary, all benefits, and employers paid payroll taxes (social security, unemployment, etc.) Proprietor Income consists of payments received by self-employed individuals and unincorporated business owners.
- **Value added** is defined as the difference between an industry's total output and the cost of any intermediate inputs. Value added is the total income generated by the event in the local economy. Value added includes employee compensation, taxes, and operating surplus. Value added is best understood as the contribution made to gross domestic product or, more simply, as new wealth in the region.

- **Output** can generally be understood as regional sales activity. Output is more precisely defined as the value of industry production.
- **Employment** is estimated by the model as all jobs, including part-time and seasonal workers. Employment numbers can be changed to full-time equivalency (FTE), but the ratio varies by industry sector.

What Can IMPLAN Analyses Reveal

An IMPLAN analysis seeks to quantify the economic benefit that expenditures for a project (construction) or an activity (general tourism or special events) have on a local or regional economy. For example, expenditures spent on the construction of a building or the purchase of items on a trip such as lodging and gasoline create additional purchases in various sectors of the economy. Money spent on landscaping for a newly constructed building or the purchase of hotel furniture both create numerous opportunities for those receiving the money to make additional consumer and business purchases. This process creates jobs and expands the economy. Typically, the total economic impact should measure the increase or decrease of an activity when new money is injected into an economy or a business closes. The economic impact is not a measure of the relative size of particular sector or business within the local economy, but rather a measure of the impact that business has on increasing or decreasing funds circulating in the local economy.

Resident Population

The 2016 Population of the region was 36,044 people. The 2016 Outdoor Participation Report, published by the Outdoor Foundation estimates that 48% of the population participated at least once in an outdoor activity in 2015. Virginia is in the South Atlantic Region which had a participation rate of 46%. Using these numbers, one could assume that 16,580 people that live in the region participated in outdoor recreation at some time.

The survey instrument for this study had 558 responses from local residents, with 328 people completing the economic portion of the survey. Because the survey was open only 6 months, data represents only half a year. Adjusting for a full year of data, the survey may have received 1,116 responses from the local population. The outdoor participation report includes people that participated in an activity “at least once” in the year. The regional survey indicated that 234 people participate in an activity from 1-7 days per week. Thus, the activity level of the participants would appear to be higher than those in the Outdoor Foundation report, and/or

that the survey was not filled out by those that had more limited outdoor experiences. As a result, the survey is not representative of the total population of the region.

Survey Sample of Regional Residents

- **Assumption:** The estimated responses for an entire year would be 1,116, which may represent the 46% of the population that participate in outdoor activities. Thus, the survey represents about 6.7% of the population that participated in outdoor activities, or about 3% of the total population. For economic analysis, spending is attributed to 16,580 people, or 46% of the population.
- **Sources:** 2016 total population of the region, regional survey data and the Outdoor Foundation-Outdoor Participation Report.

The survey also asked for information on outdoor recreation spending by residents; however only about half of residents answered the questions. The results are below.

Local Purchases by Residents

Type	Amount
Equipment	\$ 292
Transportation	\$ 134
Event Fees	\$ 49
Other	\$ 82

Economic Impact modeling identifies the impact of outside money to the region. While spending by the local population does support the economy, it is not an added impact because new money is not being added to the local economy. For example, if the person didn't buy a bicycle for outdoor recreation, they might go to the movies or buy a new TV instead. Their money will get spent one way or another, hopefully within the region. In general terms, outdoor recreation spending by residents helps sustain about \$5.2 million of the regional economy and support 100 full and part time, existing jobs. Again, this is not considered new "impact", but just a part of the existing economy.

Visitors

Collecting accurate survey data on outdoor recreation and expenditures for a small region can be difficult for a variety of reasons. Beyond incomplete responses and low response rates, survey data must be supplemented from other data sources.

Understanding visitor data is more difficult because the survey indicated 110 visitors, but not all visitors completed the survey. Data indicated that 38 spent the night and 18 were day visitors. Few of the visitors provided accurate spending data.

It is also difficult to ascertain group size and length of visit and trip frequency (repeat visits) from the survey data. Likewise, some people come specifically for outdoor activities, while some may visit the region for another primary purpose, but participate in an outdoor activity while they are visiting. Fifty-six people provided data on group size and after removing one large anomaly, it is estimated that the average group size is 3, which is similar to 2.6 people as estimated by the Virginia Tourism Corporation in their 2015 survey for the Shenandoah Valley. The VTC data also indicates an average trip length of 3.6 days, which does seem reasonable based on the limited data in the regional survey. However, day trips to the region from neighboring jurisdictions are likely underestimated in the survey data because day trip visitors likely did not know about the survey. It is important to note, that day trips will also have less of an impact than overnight visitors. Accurately estimating the number of visitors by trip purpose is critical to achieving a reasonable estimation of economic impact. Several methods were evaluated for estimating visitation and the following methodology was deemed reasonable.

Visitor Estimates

Visitation data was obtained from the local visitor centers within the region and used as a measure to estimate total visitation.

Total Number of Visitors

- Assumption: Only 5 percent of visitors go to visitor centers. In 2016, 55,793 visitors signed the guestbooks at area visitor centers. Therefore, the total number of potential visitors to the Rockbridge Area are 1,115,860 people annually.
- Source: Bicycling in the Central Shenandoah Valley Economic Impact Analysis uses an assumption that only 5 percent of visitors stop at a visitor's centers.

Outdoor Recreation- Primary Purpose of Trip

- Assumption: Outdoor recreation was the primary purpose of a trip to the Rockbridge Area for 9 percent of visitors, or 100,427 people.
- Source: Based on the 2015 Shenandoah Valley Region Travel Profile, the primary purpose of the trip to the Shenandoah Valley was outdoor recreation for 9 percent of visitors.

Based on these assumptions. We can make the following assumptions about those that visited the region with outdoor recreation as their primary purpose:

Estimated Visitors

Number	Visitor Type
38,625	travel parties
2.6	people per party
100,427	individual visitors
31,286	overnight guest parties
7,339	day visitor parties

Visitor Spending

Because only about 37 people provided spending data in the survey, data from the Virginia Tourism Corporation for the Shenandoah Valley was used for visitor spending. Numbers were adjusted to create a profile for a day visitor party. Since State estimates also including day visitors, a more reasonable number was substituted to represent spending on lodging by only overnight visitors.

Spending by Travel Party

Overnight Visitors

Type	Dollars
Lodging	\$ 100*
Dining	\$ 98.67
Groceries	\$ 46.74
Entertainment	\$ 36.35
Shopping	\$ 46.74
Fuel	\$ 98.67
Other	\$ 150.60

Source: Virginia Tourism Corporation

**adjusted amount*

Spending by Travel Party

Day Visitors

Type	Dollars
Dining	\$ 25.30
Groceries	\$ 11.98
Entertainment	\$ 9.32
Shopping	\$ 11.98
Fuel	\$ 25.30
Other	\$ 38.61

Economic Impact Results

The economic impact analysis focused on visitors who had outdoor recreation as their primary purpose. No attempt was made to include outdoor activity spending by those visitors who may have visited for another primary purpose. Three models were created for day visitors, overnight visitors, and total visitors.

Impact Summary -7,339 Day Visitor Parties

Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Total Output
Direct Effect	10.7	\$ 198,717	\$ 237,200	\$ 457,101
Indirect Effect	0.7	\$ 24,639	\$ 40,788	\$ 85,541
Induced Effect	0.8	\$ 26,881	\$ 53,120	\$ 93,581
Total Effect	12.2	\$ 250,237	\$ 331,109	\$ 636,224

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Assuming 7,229 day-visitor parties came to the region in 2016 with the primary purpose of outdoor recreation, their spending supported 12 jobs and contributed \$636,224 to the regional economy. The survey instrument likely underestimated day visitors because they were probably not aware of the survey. Spending of day visitors is obviously less because they have less of a need to purchase goods and services on their trip, especially if it is focused on outdoor recreation which of has little or no cost to participate.

Impact Summary -31,286 Overnight Parties

Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Total Output
Direct Effect	209	\$ 4,158,831	\$ 5,702,644	\$ 10,728,869
Indirect Effect	18	\$ 623,200	\$ 968,198	\$ 2,058,418
Induced Effect	18	\$ 575,062	\$ 1,136,403	\$ 2,002,018
Total Effect	245	\$ 5,357,093	\$ 7,807,245	\$ 14,789,305

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An estimated 31,286 visitor parties travelled to the region with the primary purpose of outdoor recreation activities in 2016. Each overnight party was estimated to have spent \$577 on various services and products in the region. (*Retail purchases were margined in the IMPLAN economic model*). These visitors directly supported 209 jobs in the region and directly contributed to over \$10.7 million in economic impact. Overall, the economic impact of these visitors supported 245 jobs and resulted in \$14.8 million in economic output in 2016.

Impact Summary -All Visitors

Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
Direct Effect	220	\$ 4,357,548	\$ 5,939,844	\$ 11,185,970
Indirect Effect	19	\$ 647,839	\$ 1,008,986	\$ 2,143,960
Induced Effect	19	\$ 601,943	\$ 1,189,524	\$ 2,095,599
Total Effect	257	\$ 5,607,330	\$ 8,138,354	\$ 15,425,529

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Combined, day and overnight visitors directly supported 220 jobs in the region and directly contributed to over \$11.2 million in economic impact. Overall, the economic impact of these visitors supported 257 jobs and resulted in \$15.4 million in economic output in 2016. The estimated impact on sectors of the economy are listed below.

Top Employment Sectors-All Visitors

Description	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Total Output
Retail - Miscellaneous store retailers	79	\$ 1,029,326	\$ 1,296,217	\$ 2,371,214
Full-service restaurants	76	\$ 1,566,033	\$ 1,694,471	\$ 3,345,625
Hotels and motels, including casino hotels	32	\$ 859,748	\$ 1,768,936	\$ 3,146,898
Museums, historical sites, zoos, and parks	17	\$ 431,806	\$ 449,883	\$ 1,210,373
Retail - Food and beverage stores	8	\$ 202,016	\$ 302,699	\$ 465,333
Retail - General merchandise stores	7	\$ 209,651	\$ 337,203	\$ 507,546
Retail - Gasoline stores	6	\$ 172,233	\$ 250,354	\$ 407,123
Real estate	2	\$ 23,230	\$ 211,707	\$ 326,161
All other food and drinking places	2	\$ 51,366	\$ 39,958	\$ 67,888
Limited-service restaurants	2	\$ 28,720	\$ 66,889	\$ 126,338

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While each activity would have a different spending pattern, the survey did not have enough data to identify actual spending and impact by activity. However, if we assume spending to be equal across activities, we can use data on the participation on each activity to divide the total impact.

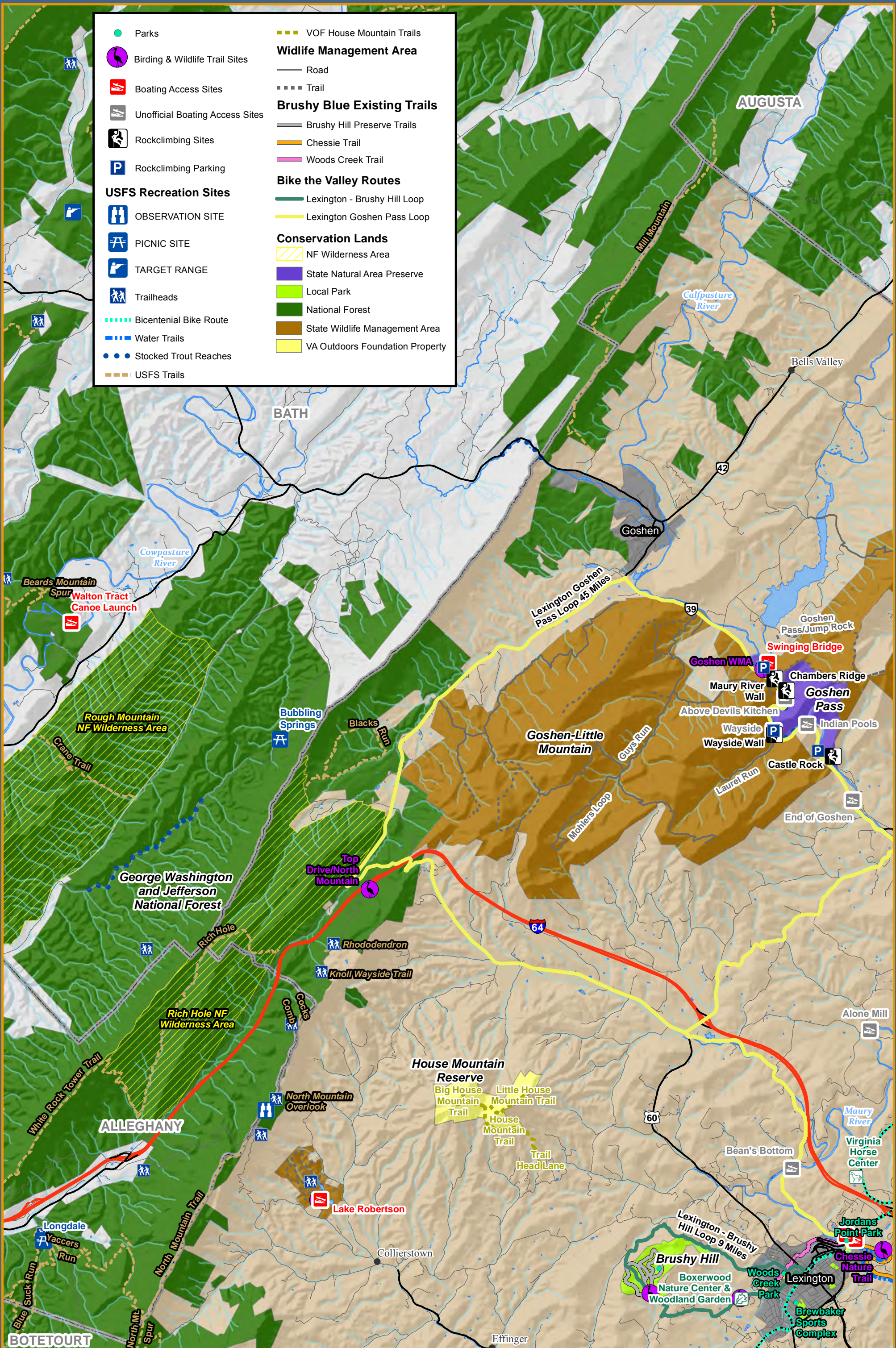
Impact By Activity

Activity	Total Impact
Walking/Day Hiking/Trail Running	\$ 3,085,105.80
Backpacking/Overnight Camping	\$ 1,388,297.61
Road Biking/Mountain Biking	\$ 1,079,787.03
Water/Paddle Sports	\$ 2,005,318.77
Rock Climbing/Bouldering	\$ 308,510.58
Hunting	\$ 617,021.16
Fishing	\$ 1,388,297.61
RV Camping/Scenic Driving	\$ 1,079,787.03
Nature/Wildlife Viewing	\$ 1,851,063.48
Horseback Riding	\$ 462,765.87
Cultural/Historical Sightseeing	\$ 1,696,808.19
Other	\$ 462,765.87
Total Impact	\$ 15,425,529

Assumptions and Errors

As with any modelling of a real situation, the results can be influenced by errors and assumptions in the modelling process. Errors can be introduced by not separating local spending from visitor spending, using incorrect spending data, and incorrectly using the input-output model. In the case of this analysis the greatest potential for error is introduced in the assumptions made about the number of visitors. It was difficult to ascertain the total number of visitors to the region and what percentage came primarily for recreation. This one variable has the greatest potential to influence the results.

Attachment D. Rockbridge Area Outdoor Assets; Quadrant Map Series



Parks

Birding & Wildlife Trail Sites

Boating Access Sites

Unofficial Boating Access Sites

Rockclimbing Sites

Rockclimbing Parking

USFS Recreation Sites

OBSERVATION SITE

PICNIC SITE

TARGET RANGE

Trailheads

Bicentennial Bike Route

Water Trails

Stocked Trout Reaches

USFS Trails

VOF House Mountain Trails

Wildlife Management Area

Road

Trail

Brushy Hill Preserve Trails

Chessie Trail

Woods Creek Trail

Bike the Valley Routes

Lexington - Brushy Hill Loop

Lexington Goshen Pass Loop

Conservation Lands

NF Wilderness Area

State Natural Area Preserve

Local Park

National Forest

State Wildlife Management Area

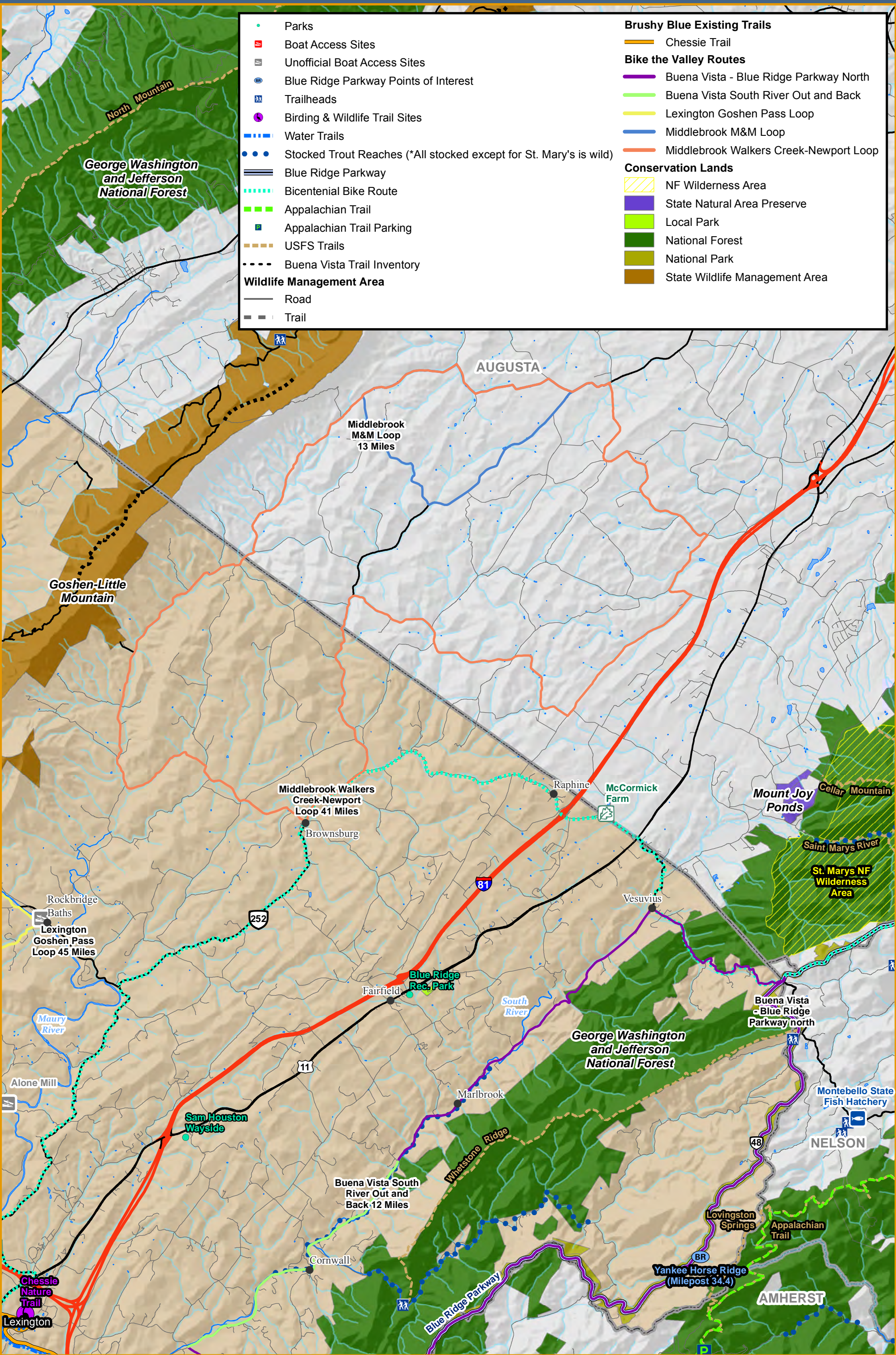
VA Outdoors Foundation Property

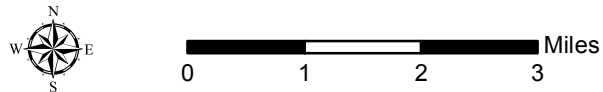
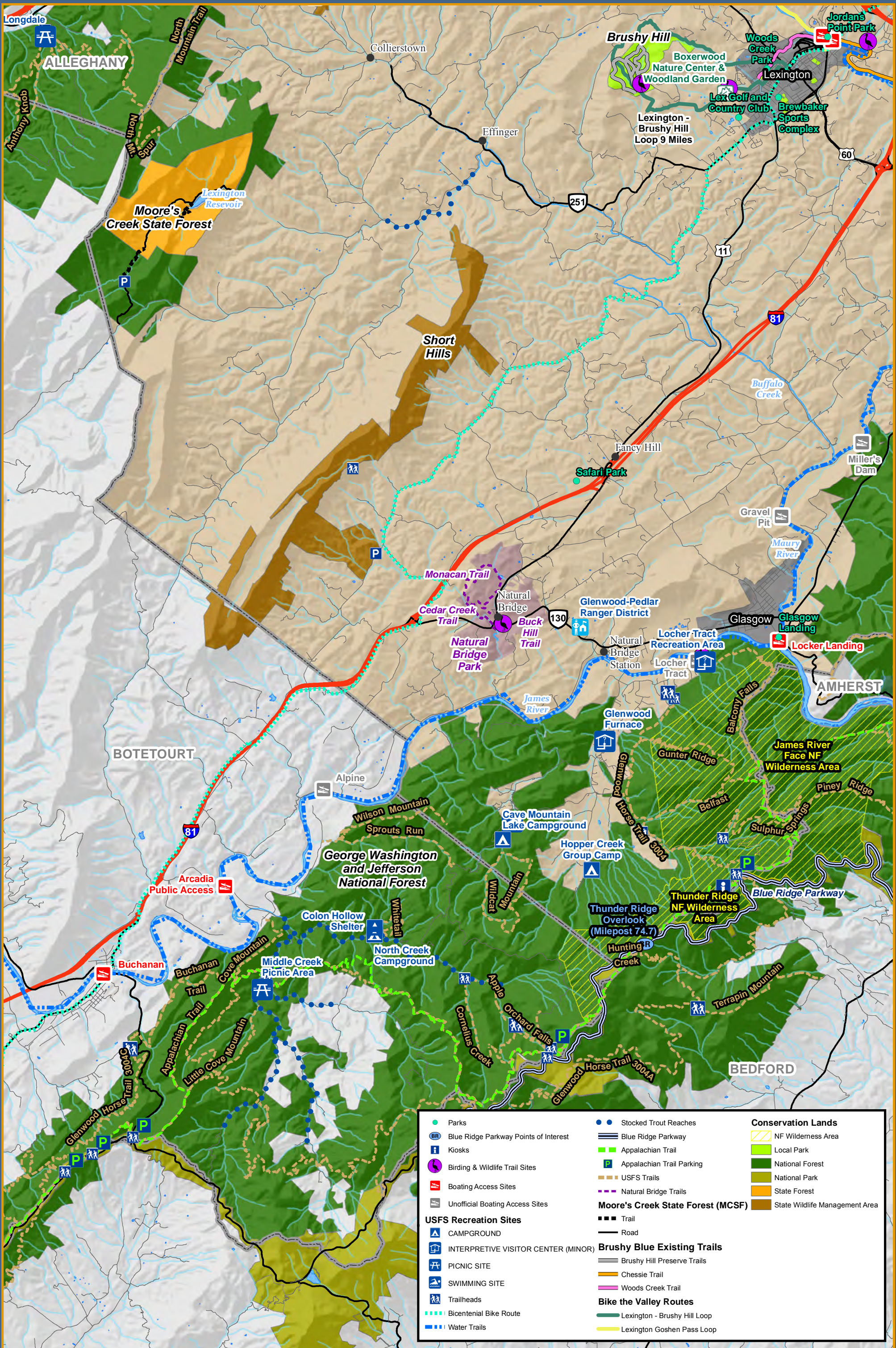
A north arrow pointing upwards and a scale bar showing distances in miles (0, 1.5, 3).

Northwest Quadrant

Sources:
Rockbridge County, Buena Vista, Lexington, Rockbridge Area
Recreation Organization, CSPDC, Census, VA-DCR, VDOT,
VGIN, USGS, USFS, NPS, VA-DGIF
Prepared by:
Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC)
Date: July 18, 2017

The logo for the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC), featuring a stylized mountain and water scene.

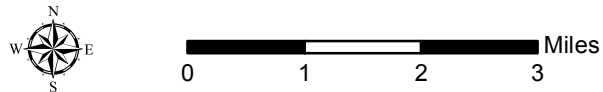
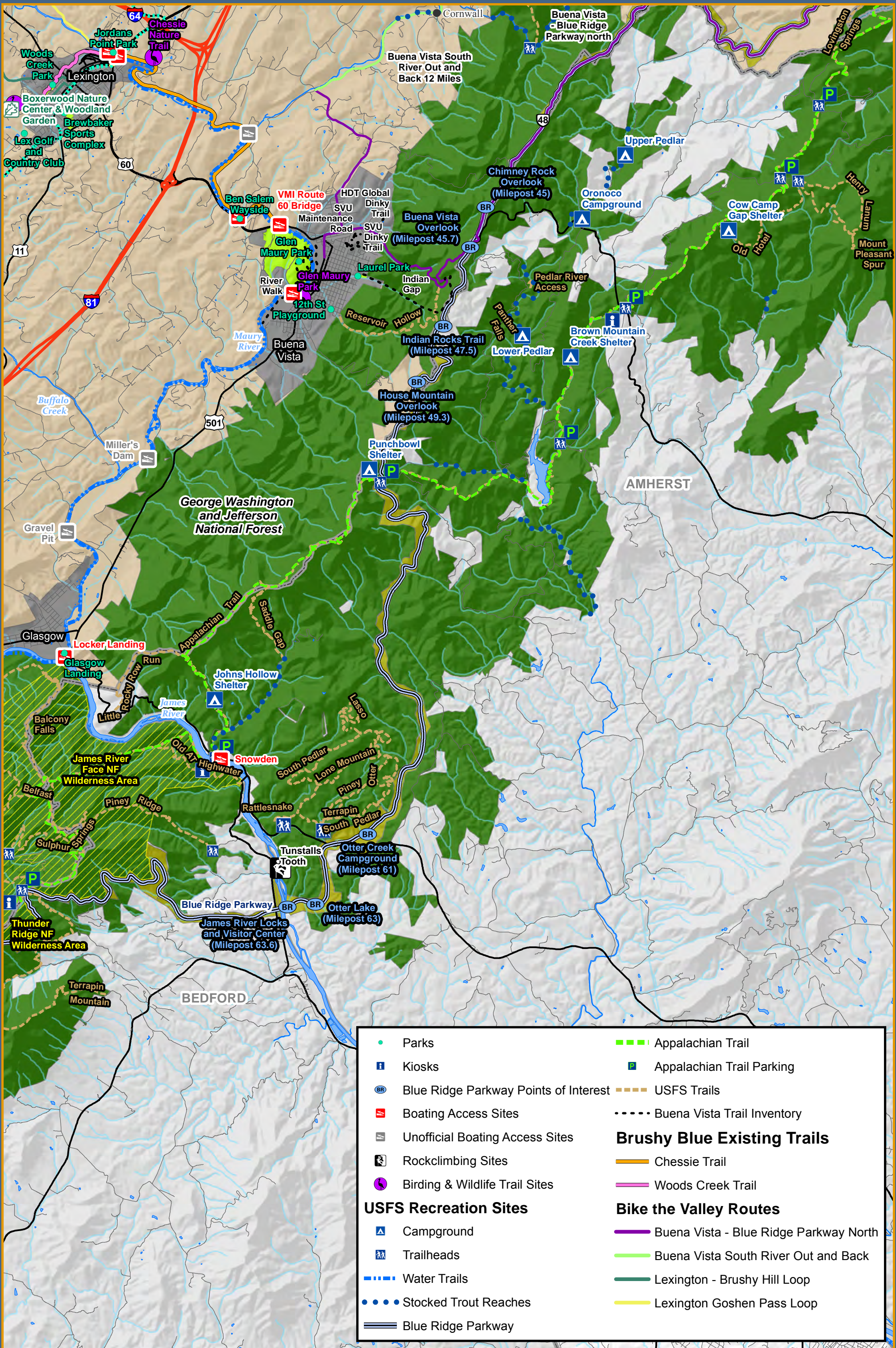




Southwest Quadrant

Sources:
Rockbridge County, Buena Vista, Lexington, Rockbridge Area
Recreation Organization, CSPDC, Census, VA-DCR, VDOT,
VGIN, USGS, USFS, NPS, VA-DGIF
Prepared by:
Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC)
Date: July 18, 2017





Southeast Quadrant

Sources:
Rockbridge County, Buena Vista, Lexington, Rockbridge Area
Recreation Organization, CSPDC, Census, VA-DCR, VDOT,
VGIN, USGS, USFS, NPS, VA-DGIF
Prepared by:
Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC)
Date: July 18, 2017



Attachment E. Public Lands, Trails, Boating Access and Bike Routes

Public Lands in Rockbridge Area				
Manager	Site Name	Location/Quad	Trail-related	Other Activities
National Park Service (NPS)	Blue Ridge Parkway	NE,SE,SW	Hike	picnic, scenic drive
US Forest Service (USFS)	George Washington & Jefferson National Forest	NE,SE,NW	Hike, Mountain Bike, Equestrian, Paddle	camp, picnic, fish, hunt
	Mount Pleasant National Scenic Area	SE	Hike, Mountain Bike, Equestrian	picnic, camp
	James River Face Wilderness	SE	Hike	
	Thunder Ridge Wilderness Area	SW	Hike	
	Rich Hole Wilderness Area	NW	Hike	
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF)	Montebello State Fish Hatchery	NE		hatchery; education
	Goshen and Little North Mountain Wildlife Management Area	NE,NW	Hike, Mountain Bike, Equestrian	camp, fish, hunt, climb
	Lake Robertson State Wildlife Management Area	NW	Hike, Equestrian	camp, fish, hunt
	Short Hills Wildlife Management Area	SW	Hike, Mountain Bike	camp, hunt, trap
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)	Goshen Pass State Natural Area Preserve	NW	Hike	fish, hunt, climb
	Natural Bridge State Park	SE	Hike	picnic, lodge
Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF)	Moore's Creek State Forest	SW	Hike, Equestrian	fish, hunt
Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF)	House Mountain [VOF holding]	NW	Hike	
Rockbridge County	Goshen Pass Wayside	NW		picnic
	Lake Robertson Recreation Area	NW	Hike, Mountain Bike, Paddle	fish, camp, picnic, pool
	Ben Salem Wayside	SE		picnic
City of Lexington	Woods Creek& Lime Kiln Bridge Park	NW,NE,SW	Hike	
	Jordan's Point	NW,NE,SW	Hike, Paddle	picnic
	Hopkins Green	NW,NE,SW		picnic
	Brushy Hills	NW,SW	Hike, Mountain Bike	
City of Buena Vista	Glen Maury Park	SE	Hike, Bike	camp, picnic, fish
	Laurel Park	SE	Hike	
Town of Glasgow	Glasgow Landing	SE,SW	Paddle	

TRAILS								
	Name	Length (Miles)	Difficulty	Suitable Uses	Fees	Info Kiosk	Owner	Quad
Federal Agencies								
1	Anthony Knob	4.6	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW, SW
2	Apple Orchard Falls	3.2	Moderate	Hiking	No	Yes	USFS	SW
3	Apple Orchard Spur	1.0	?	Hiking	No	No	USFS	SW
4	Balcony Falls	5.4	Moderate	Hiking, Horseback riding	No	Yes	USFS	SE,SW
5	Beards Mountain Spur	1.8	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW
6	Belfast	2.5	Moderate	Hiking	No	Yes	USFS	SE,SW
7	Blacks Run	4.3	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW
8	Blue Suck Run	1.4	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW,SW
9	Buchanan Trail	1.1	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	No	USFS	SW
10	Cave Mountain Recreation Area	0.1	?	Hiking	No	?	USFS	SW
11	Cellar Mountain	3.3	Difficult	Hiking	No	Yes	USFS	NE
12	Cocks Comb	0.2	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW
13	Cornelius Creek	2.8	Moderate	Hiking	No	Yes	USFS	SW
14	Cornelius Creek Spur	1.2	Easy	Hiking	No	No	USFS	SW
15	Cove Mountain	5.5	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	No	USFS	SW
16	Crane Trail	2.9	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW
17	Elephant Mountain Spur Trail	1.0	?	Hiking	No	No	USFS	SE
18	Glenwood Horse Trail 3004	7.2	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	Yes	USFS	SE,SW
19	Glenwood Horse Trail 3004A	29.1	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	No	USFS	SE,SW
20	Glenwood Horse Trail 3004B	13.7	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	No	USFS	SW
21	Glenwood Horse Trail 3004C	8.8	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	No	USFS	SW
22	Gunter Ridge	3.3	Moderate	Hiking	No	No	USFS	SE,SW
23	Henry Lanum	4.7	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	Yes	USFS	SE
24	Hunting Creek	1.8	Moderate	Hiking	No	No	USFS	SW
25	Indian Gap	2.8	?	Hiking	No	?	USFS	SE

26	Knoll Wayside Trail	0.4	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW
27	Lasso	2.6	Easy	Hiking, Biking, ATV	Yes	Yes	USFS	SE
28	Little Cove Mountain	2.7	Moderate	Hiking	No	No	USFS	SW
29	Little Mare Mountain Trail	7.2	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW
30	Little Rocky Row Run	2.7	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	No	USFS	SE,SW
31	Locher Tract Area	0.6	Easy	Hiking	No	Yes	USFS	SW
32	Lone Mountain	1.8	Easy	Hiking, Biking, ATV	Yes	Yes	USFS	SE
33	Lovington Springs	3.3	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	No	USFS	NE,SE
34	Mill Mountain	14.3	Difficult	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW
35	Mount Pleasant Spur	0.6	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	Yes	USFS	SE
36	North Mountain	45.7	Difficult	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW
37	North Mountain Connector	0.4	?	Hiking, Biking	No	?	USFS	NW,SW
38	North Mountain Overlook	0.1	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW
39	North Mountain Trail	8.4	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW,SW
40	North Mountain Spur	1.6	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	SW
41	Old AT Highwater	2.4	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	No	USFS	SE,SW
42	Old Hotel	3.3	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	Yes	USFS	SE
43	Otter	1.0	Easy	Hiking, Biking, ATV	Yes	Yes	USFS	SE
44	Panther Falls	0.2	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	Yes	USFS	SE
45	Panther Knob	1.0	Easy	Hiking	No	No	USFS	SW
46	Pedlar River Access	0.3	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	SE
47	Piney	0.9	Easy	Hiking, Biking, ATV	Yes	Yes	USFS	SE
48	Piney Ridge	3.3	Moderate	Hiking, Horseback riding	No	No	USFS	SE,SW
49	Rattlesnake	0.9	Easy	Hiking, Biking, ATV	Yes	Yes	USFS	SE
50	Reservoir Hollow	3.6	Moderate	Hiking, Biking	No	No	USFS	SE
51	Rhododendron	0.1	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW

52	Rich Hole	5.7	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW
53	Saddle Gap	2.4	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	No	USFS	SE
54	Saint Marys River	6.6	Moderate	Hiking	No	Yes	USFS	NE
55	South Pedlar	10.4	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, ATV	Yes	Yes	USFS	SE
56	Sprouts Run	3.3	Moderate	Hiking	No	No	USFS	SW
57	Sulphur Springs	5.1	Moderate	Hiking, Horseback riding	No	Yes	USFS	SE,SW
58	Terrapin	0.7	Easy	Hiking, Biking, ATV	Yes	Yes	USFS	SE
59	Terrapin Mountain	3.3	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	Yes	USFS	SE,SW
60	Whetstone Ridge	11.3	Difficult	Hiking, Biking	No	Yes	USFS	NE, SE
61	White Rock Tower Trail	5.7	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW
62	Whitetail	2.1	Moderate	Hiking	No	No	USFS	SW
63	Wildcat Mountain	4.9	Moderate	Hiking	No	No	USFS	SW
64	Wilson Mountain	3.1	Moderate	Hiking	No	No	USFS	SW
65	Yaccers Run	3.1	?	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	?	USFS	NW,SW
66	Appalachian Trail [multistate_2200 total miles]	35	Moderate	Hiking	No	?	NPS	NW,NE, SE
State Agencies								
67	Moore's Creek State Forest Trails	?	?	Hiking, Horseback riding, Hunting	No except hunting	?	VDOF	SW
68	Buck Hill Trail	1.5	Moderate	Hiking	No	No	DCR-Natural Bridge SP	SW
69	Cedar Creek Trail	1	Easy	Hiking	Yes	Yes	DCR-Natural Bridge SP	SW
70	Monacan Trail	3+	Moderate	Hiking	Yes	Yes	DCR-Natural Bridge SP	SW
71	Lake Robertson Trails	1 – 1.7	?	Hiking	Yes	?	Lake Robertson WMA	NW
72	Guys Run	1.8	?	Hiking	Yes	?	Goshen - Little Mountain WMA	NW
73	Laurel Run	1.2	?	Hiking	Yes	?	Goshen - Little Mountain WMA	NW
74	Mohlers Loop	3	?	Hiking	Yes	?	Goshen - Little Mountain WMA	NW
75	Goshen Pass/Jump Rock	8.1	Difficult	Hiking	Yes	?	Goshen Pass Natural Area Preserve; Goshen & North Mountain WMA	NW

Local Jurisdictions								
76	Brushy Hill Preserve Trails	6.0	Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback riding	No	Yes	City of Lexington	NW,SW
77	Glen Maury Park	2.7	Easy	Hiking	No	?	City of Buena Vista	SE
78	River Walk	2.1	Easy	Hiking	No	?	City of Buena Vista	SE
79	Woods Creek Trail	2.0	Easy	Hiking	No	Yes	Lexington	NW, SW, SE
Other								
80	Big House Mountain Trail	0.9	?	Hiking	No	?	VOF	NW
81	House Mountain Trail	1.6	?	Hiking	No	?	VOF	NW
82	Little House Mountain Trail	1.2	?	Hiking	No	?	VOF	NW
83	Trail Head Lane	0.6	?	Hiking	No	?	VOF	NW
84	Chessie Trail	7.1	Easy	Hiking	No	?	VMI	NW,NE, SE,SW
85	McCormick Farm	?	Easy	Hiking	No	?	Virginia Tech	NE
86	Boxerwood Trails	0.6	Easy	Hiking	No	?	Boxerwood	NW,SE, SW
87	Southern Virginia University, Dinky Trail	1.4	?	Hiking	?	?	Southern Virginia University	SE
88	Southern Virginia University, Maintenance Road	0.4	?	Hiking	?	?	Southern Virginia University	SE

Boat Access						
Water Body	Site Name	Signage	Type of Boat Ramp	Parking Area Size	Parking for Trailers	Quad/ Location
Maury River	Above Devils Kitchen	none	Primitive	small	no	NW
	Alone Mill	none	Primitive	none	no	NW,NE
	Bean's Bottom	none	Primitive	small	no	NW
	End of Goshen	none	Primitive	small	no	NW
	Glen Maury Park	none	Developed	large	yes	SE
	Gravel Pit	none	Primitive	small	no	SW
	Indian Pools	none	Primitive	small	no	NW
	Jordan's Point	none	Developed	large	yes	NW,SE,SW
	Jordan's Point	none	Primitive	large	yes	NW,SE,SW
	Locker Landing	yes	concrete	large	yes	SW
	Miller's Dam	none	Primitive	small	yes	SW
	Rockbridge Baths	none	Primitive	medium	yes	NW,NE
	Swinging Bridge	none	Developed	large	yes	NW
	VMI Route 60 Bridge	yes	Primitive	large	yes	SE
	Wayside	none	Primitive	medium	no	NW
James River	Alpine	yes	Developed	medium	no	SW
	Arcadia Public Access	yes	Gravel	large	yes	SW
	Buchanan	yes	Concrete	large	yes	SW
	Locher Tract	none	Primitive	small	no	SW
	Snowden	yes	Developed	small	yes- difficult	SE
Other						
Lake Robertson	Robertson Lake	yes	Developed	large	yes	NW
Cowpasture River	Walton Tract Canoe Launch	?	Primitive	small	?	NW

Bike the Valley Routes				
Name	Distance (Miles)	Elevation (ft)	Quad	Description
Lexington - Brushy Hill Loop	9	925	NW, SW	A popular short loop, this nine-mile ride is good for when you are up for a challenge but don't have much time. There is a short meander through farmland and pasture, with pretty vistas along Union Run and Spring Valley.
Lexington Goshen Pass Loop	48.8	2639	NW, NE, SE, SW	This is an advanced ride due to the overall amount of climbing and the distance. This is a lollipop shaped route, riding out and returning along the stem. The loop segment can be ridden in either direction.
Buena Vista South River, Out and Back	12.2	198	NE, SE	This route runs alongside the South River, in a fairly flat and wide valley. This is a beginner's ride, with an easy grade. This route is an out-and-back - head up river and when you are ready, just turn around and roll back to the start.
Buena Vista - Blue Ridge Parkway North	45.2	4052	NE	This is a difficult and beautiful ride starting in Buena Vista. There is a long climb to the Blue Ridge Parkway, and a very steep descent down into the community of Vesuvius.
Middlebrook Walkers Creek-Newport Loop	41.3	2765	NE	Rural roads with beautiful views. Easy to moderate to challenging all on the same ride
Middlebrook M&M Loop	12.9	785	NE	A short, gentle ride on rural roads with stunning views of North Mountain.

NOTE: All rides are published on RideWithGPS.com.

Attachment F. Physical Activity and Health Resources

[The First National Study of Neighborhood Parks](#): The RAND Corporation recently conducted the first national study of neighborhood parks, with support from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health. The study team visited a representative sample of parks across the country to understand who is using parks, what features they are using and which factors contribute most to park use and physical activity. The research concluded that current investment in parks is relatively small, considering the potential health benefits they provide, and that neighborhood parks are especially challenged when it comes to funding. Offering more programming, using marketing tools and improving facilities may help to increase physical activity and associated health benefits. In addition, relatively modest investments like walking loops, may improve conditions to make them accessible for everyone, regardless of age, gender, or income level.

[Quantifying the Contribution of Public Parks to Physical Activity and Health, NRPA, 2014](#)

This publication from the National Recreation and Parks Association, introduces the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC), a scientifically valid tool for quantifying park use and park-based physical activity. The document includes a brief discussion of the evidence, describes ways that parks contribute to health through increased physical activity, and provides instructions and examples to assist park administrators in data collection and decision making related to park expenditures.

[Using Nature and Outdoor Activity to Improve Children's Health](#): A shift toward a sedentary lifestyle and lack of unstructured "active" time outside has contributed to a declining health profile for American youth. Obesity rates, diabetes, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder have all increased over the past few decades. This article reviews the current evidence of the mental and physical health benefits associated with unstructured, outdoor activities and time spent in a natural environment such as a park or other recreational area.

[Healthy Parks, Healthy People, Community Engagement eGuide](#): The first in a series to document and share the development of Healthy Parks Healthy People programs in parks and communities all across the country. The first edition shares how parks and partners are engaging diverse audiences and new partners to promote parks as places for healthy living including tolls, case studies, and resources.

[Parks, Trails, and Health Workbook](#): This workbook, published in 2015, was a collaborative effort by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Park Service, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) to provide an outline and quick guide for incorporating public health considerations in the development of a park or trail. Potential uses include helping to facilitate interagency and stakeholder discussion and collaboration related to parks, trails, and community health issues; finding data and information to engage and enlist new health partners and stakeholders; and assessing community needs and/or impacts of a new park/trail project.

[County Health Rankings & Roadmaps Program](#) is a collaboration between the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) and the [University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute](#), to measure the health of nearly all counties in the nation and rank them within states. The Rankings are

compiled using county-level measures from a variety of national and state data sources. These measures are standardized and combined using scientifically-informed weights.

[Active Living Research](#)- mission is to work with governments, the private sector, and advocacy groups to apply the lessons of research to building great communities. Since 2001, Active Living Research has been at the forefront of building evidence on how to create communities that increase opportunities for physical activity. Active Living Research is funded in part by the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) and administered by the [University of California, San Diego](#)

[Active Living by Design](#)- advances community-led action and proven, place-based strategies to ensure health and well-being for all. Its initial Community Action Model (CAM) and “5P” strategies (Preparation, Promotion, Programs, Policy, and Physical Projects) was developed as an evidence-informed framework for increasing active living and healthy eating in communities through comprehensive and integrated strategies. The Community Action Model has recently been updated to focus the action approach from the original 5Ps to a new 3P approach (Partner, Prepare, and Progress). Resources, case studies, and a description of services can be found on their website.

[America Walks](#): Established in 1996, America Walks is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit national organization providing leadership and advocacy for walking and walkable communities, training and technical assistance to statewide, regional, and local organizations, and serves as the convener of the national Every Body Walk! Collaborative. Together, America Walks and the Every Body Walk! Collaborative boast 700 allied organizations who across the nation are working to increase walking and make America a better place to walk.

[Healthy Aging in Parks](#) is National Recreation and Park Association's campaign to improve and maintain the health and wellbeing of older adults by increasing opportunities for physical activity through parks and recreation.

National Environmental Education Foundation Fact Sheets

- [Fact Sheet: Adult Health and Nature](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Children's Health and Nature](#)

Braiding the Way for Outdoor Recreation in the Rockbridge Area

FACT SHEET

Project Background

Outdoor recreation has long been recognized as an important feature and economic driver in Rockbridge County and its cities and towns. Local groups and government officials are well connected with federal partners that manage the National Forest and Blue Ridge Parkway; state partners that manage access to rivers, state parks, forests, and natural preserves; and nonprofit organizations that advocate on behalf of natural resources, historic preservation, and protection of public lands. Together, much has been accomplished by these partners that have moved the region forward in this effort. What has been lacking is a coordinated, comprehensive and regional approach to outdoor recreation planning, programming and promotion.

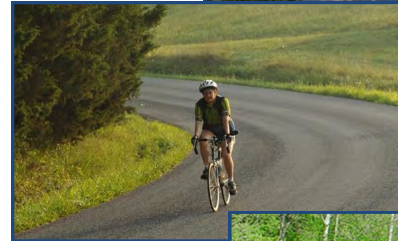
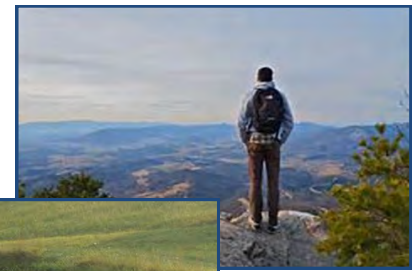
Project Description

Recently, a technical assistance grant was awarded and received from the National Park Service through its Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program. With Lexington and Rockbridge Area Tourism leading the effort, a plan is now in place to develop an Outdoor Recreation Plan and Implementation Strategy for the Rockbridge area. The goal of this project is to create a braided network of trails, blueways, bikeways, and parks that **supports community health and conservation goals, and links the region's** cultural, historic and natural attractions.

Technical assistance provided by the National Park Service and planning support from the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission will serve to organize the key stakeholders so they may work together, effectively, to achieve this goal. The development of a master plan, and establishment of an organization to oversee its implementation, are necessary to achieve the regional vision of outdoor recreation as an economic driver in the Rockbridge area. This project builds upon a number of existing plans, such as Brushy Blue Greenway Plan which envisions making a continuous 13-mile connection from Brushy Hills Preserve to the Blue Ridge Parkway through Woods Creek Trail, Jordan's Point Park, the Chessie Nature Trail and the Maury River Walk.

Project Elements

- Conduct a resource assessment, identify and evaluate trail and blueway opportunities and constraints, and complete an Outdoor Recreation Plan and Implementation Strategy for the Rockbridge area.
- Identify a long-term management entity to enhance coordination among local jurisdictions, non-profits and businesses in the Rockbridge area.
- Complete an Economic Impact Study for the Rockbridge Area to document benefits of outdoor recreation to the region.
- Develop a Marketing Strategy for Outdoor Recreation to enhance tourism and business development efforts, and support regional economic development goals.



Stakeholder Steering Committee

The Steering Group includes representatives from the following key stakeholders:

Lexington-Rockbridge Area Tourism
(Chair)
Rockbridge County
City of Lexington
City of Buena Vista
Rockbridge Area Recreation Organization
Rockbridge Area Conservation Council
Rockbridge Area Health Center
Lime Kiln Theater
Shenandoah Rides and Rentals
Celebrate BV
Fine Arts in Rockbridge
Virginia Military Institute
US Forest Service, Washington & Jefferson
National Forests
National Parks Service, Blue Ridge
Parkway
Washington and Lee Outing Club
Southern Virginia University Outdoor Club
Central Shenandoah Planning District
Commission
National Park Service, Rivers, Trails &
Conservation Assistance Program

Study Time Frame

It is anticipated that the 18-month project will be completed in March 2017.

For additional information please contact:

Jean Clark, Director of Tourism; Lexington and
Rockbridge Area Tourism
director@lexingtonvirginia.com 540-463-3777

Erin Yancey, Central Shenandoah Planning District
Commission
erin@cspdc.org 540-885-5174

Attachment H. Rockbridge Area Outdoors Partnership, Long-Term Organizational Options

OPTION A. NEW ORGANIZATION

Type	Description	Pros	Cons	Example	Funded by
Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Independent organization, recognized as a separate political subdivision of the Commonwealth -Acts independently of local jurisdictions (except for making appointments to serve on board) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -New authority would have as its core mission responsibility for developing outdoor rec assets; -Can apply for grants, acquire land, raise funds/has taxing authority -Could advocate for possible state appropriation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most complex option; significant time/legal expertise needed to establish a new authority; -Requires state legislative action to establish 	<p><i>Southwest Regional Recreation Authority; formed by state code: https://vacode.org/15.2/60.1/</i></p> <p><i>- board members appointed by localities (eight total) that serve as the decision making body. A "Friends Of" group was also formed</i></p>	<p><i>-SRRA was initially formed without funding; localities asked to contribute;</i></p> <p><i>-grew to staff of four, and mix of funding from localities and state</i></p>
Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Org established through agreement that must be adopted by member jurisdictions; the agreement formally established powers, memberships, financing, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -New commission would have as its core mission responsibility for developing outdoor rec assets; -Can apply for grants, accept donations/ does not have taxing authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Moderate amount of time/legal expertise needed to establish new organization -Financial support from member orgs expected 	<p><i>-Roanoke Valley Greenways Commission established by an Intergovernmental Agreement.</i></p> <p><i>- advisory body with appointed reps from the 4 Valley jurisdictions; greenways and trails are owned and operated by local jurisdictions.</i></p> <p><i>-Pathfinders Friends Group was also formed</i></p>	<p><i>-Cost share funded by localities, with support from PDC-MPO;</i></p> <p><i>-1 full time staff; in-kind contributions from localities and non-profit members</i></p>

Trails Non-Profit	Privately chartered, tax-exempt non-profit, under Sec 501(c)(3) of the US tax code; no taxing authority	-New trails non-profit would have as its core mission responsibility for developing outdoor rec assets; -Independent of government agencies and procedures -Can apply for grants, accept gifts, acquire land (based on by-laws)	-Somewhat less complex than commission or authority, but still requires time/legal expertise to establish -Must be incorporated for 5 years before accepting easements	- <i>Roanoke River Rails-To-Trails</i> received IRS tax-exempt status as 501 (c)3 in Dec 2004 -RRRT has coordination and advocacy roles, as well as plan, fund, construct, operate trail segments with partners	<i>Seventeen counties and towns are paying members, with dues differing among the different localities; also provide in-kind contribution ½ staff from PDC, paid through VDOT funding and other grants</i>
Foundation	A type of non-profit organized to support scientific, educational, cultural, religious, or other charitable purposes -Fundraising and grant-making is one of board's principle responsibilities (term "foundation" is often used loosely by non-profits)	-New foundation would have as its core mission, responsibility for developing outdoor rec assets; -Can act independent of government agencies -Can apply for grants, accept donations	-Moderate amount of time/legal expertise needed to establish new organization	-CCBRT: organized as a non-profit, 501(c)(3) -mission is to seek private and public investments in Tunnel restoration, and ensure implementation of the Master Plan	-No monetary contributions from member jurisdictions -No paid staff – County staff fill-in and help where necessary

Other Examples:

Prince William County Trails and Blueways Council is an advisory council established by the Prince William County Department of Parks & Recreation, to provide advice and coordination in the development of a County-wide trails and blueways system.

Prince William County Parks Foundation supports the Department of Parks & Recreation by raising private funds, obtaining grants and creating partnerships that supplement tax dollars to meet our community's needs for park land, facilities and services.

Virginia Capital Trail Foundation mission is to support and promote the public use, construction, and ongoing enhancement of the Virginia Capital Trail through educational and advocacy. The foundation is a 501(c)(3) eligible for tax deductible contributions, grants and gifts; it operates as a public-private partnership with the Governor's office and VDOT, but operating income is dependent on private funding.

Shenandoah Valley Cycling Coalition mission is to support, promote, and advocate for both mountain biking and road biking in the valley

OPTION B. EXISTING ORGANIZATION

Type	Description	Pros	Cons	Example	Funded by
RARO	Existing regional recreation authority focused primarily on youth sports	-Easier, less time to establish than new organization -Umbrella organization in place; could serve as fiscal agent	- RARO mission is complementary but does not have outdoor rec/trail development as primary mission -Would have to gain consensus on roles, responsibility, fiscal mgt	<u>Scenario:</u> Rockbridge Area Trails Council (as a program under RARO)	- Would need to develop consensus on a partnership agreement, staffing and funding strategy
Lexington-Rockbridge Area Tourism	LRAT- coordinates tourism development and marketing for Rockbridge area	-Easier, less time to establish than new org -Umbrella org in place; could serve as fiscal agent	- Primary mission is tourism, not outdoor rec development? -Would have to gain consensus on roles, responsibility, fiscal mgt	<u>Scenario:</u> Rockbridge Area Trails Council (under Lexington-Rockbridge Tourism)	-Would need to develop consensus on a partnership agreement, staffing and funding strategy
Rockbridge Area Health Center	RAHC –promotes high quality, comprehensive and affordable health care for citizens of the Rockbridge area	-Easier, less time to establish than new org -Umbrella org in place; could serve as fiscal agent	- Primary mission is health, not outdoor rec development? -Would have to gain consensus on roles, responsibility, fiscal mgt	Rockbridge Area Trails Council (under Rockbridge Area Health Center)	
Central Shen Foundation	Need additional info from CSPDC			Rockbridge Area Trails Council (under Central Shen Foundation)	
Committee (under existing county or regional government)	-Informal group that meets voluntarily due to common purpose -Self-identified leaders and members, decision-making by group	-Easy to establish -Flexible, simplest form of organizing -Good mechanism for generating ideas, networking, innovation	-No legal authority for implementation -Cannot hold easements or own property -Cannot raise funds on own (unless assigned to one of members)	Similar to existing county committee, such as Rockingham Bicycle Advisory Committee or regional committee such as BtW Steering Committee	-Would need to identify lead convener, members, work plan

Attachment I.

Braiding the Way for Outdoor Recreation in the Rockbridge Area

ROCKBRIDGE AREA OUTDOORS PARTNERSHIP PARTNER PROFILE AGREEMENT

This form must be completed and signed by each partner organization.
Once signed, scan and email to tracy@cspdc.org



Organization Name:			
Representative Name:			
Organization's Address:			
Contact Phone Number:			
Contact Email Address:			
Type of Organization:	<input type="checkbox"/> Business	<input type="checkbox"/> Marketing/Tourism	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Civic	<input type="checkbox"/> Recreation/Conservation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth and/or Education	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Health	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Describe the role of your organization in the Rockbridge Area Outdoors Partnership. Select or describe specific activities or tasks your organization is committing to support.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Serve as the liaison to your respective board, council, organization or jurisdiction to keep them apprised of the work the Partnership and to give them information and updates on the progress of the project.	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide guidance in evaluating and identifying future trail, water trail, and recreational facility needs, and work jointly to develop recommendations to address issues and concerns.	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Convene and/or participate in outreach tasks, walks/paddles, workshops, events and other activities, to increase awareness and understanding of the benefits and values of outdoor recreation.	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist in expanding partnerships, identifying implementation options and resources and support the work of other partner organizations related to project development and implementation.	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support joint-marketing efforts, including posting organization events on the website.	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support work of Friends Group to maintain a network of trails and river access.	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please describe):	
Signature			Date
Printed Name			

*Braiding together greenways, trails and water trails to expand outdoor recreation opportunities
in the Rockbridge Area*