

Chapter 4 OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SRRA

The Southwest Regional Recreation Authority should immediately seek funding to hire the necessary staff to carry out the directives laid out in the legislation creating the Authority. A detailed operations budget for SRRA is provided in *Appendix E* of this document.

The Southwest Regional Recreation Authority needs to request all abandoned railways within the seven county area become a part of the Spearhead Trails initiative. This may need to be accomplished through legislation.

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE TRAILS (*for ATV and dirt bike*)

Southwest Region Recreational Authority should work with the Mountainview ATV Club and Hatfield & McCoy to establish publicly-accessible ATV trails within southwest Virginia specifically for off-road vehicles.

- SRRA should work with the Mountainview ATV Club to make this part of the Spearhead Trail System thus providing the Authority with 120 miles of trails immediately in which permits may be sold.
- The Mountainview ATV Club should be further marketed and their trails expanded into the northwest corner of Russell County and allow the community of Dante to serve as a trailhead community. An access trail should also be developed in the southern portion of Dickenson County to allow access into the Town of Haysi.
- The Towns of Pocahontas, Haysi, Appalachia and Dante should become “OHV-friendly” and pass ordinances in each of the communities to allow off highway vehicles to ride on their roads within the town limits. Both the Town of Appalachia and the Town of Haysi have expressed interest in establishing themselves as “ATV-Friendly” and developing off-road vehicle trailheads within their communities and are moving forward to “make it happen”.
- It is also highly recommended that the Town of Vansant (Buchanan County) should also consider becoming a trailhead community for off highway vehicles.
- A trailhead should also be established at Poplar Gap Park (Buchanan County). As a previous site for county ball fields, there is plenty of area for camping and parking and excellent roads to the site. There is also an existing building with kitchen facilities and restrooms. Also a pavilion, small storage facility and electricity to the site. Discussions are underway of actually reestablishing the baseball complex at that site. It would be suggested that a trailhead also be established in close proximity to utilize the existing facilities.

HORSEBACK RIDING TRAILS

The SRRA should work with the Virginia Horse Council, Cumberland-Pine Mountain Trail Riders, Scott County Horse Association, Dickenson 4-H Saddle Club and other interested organizations, groups and individuals to:

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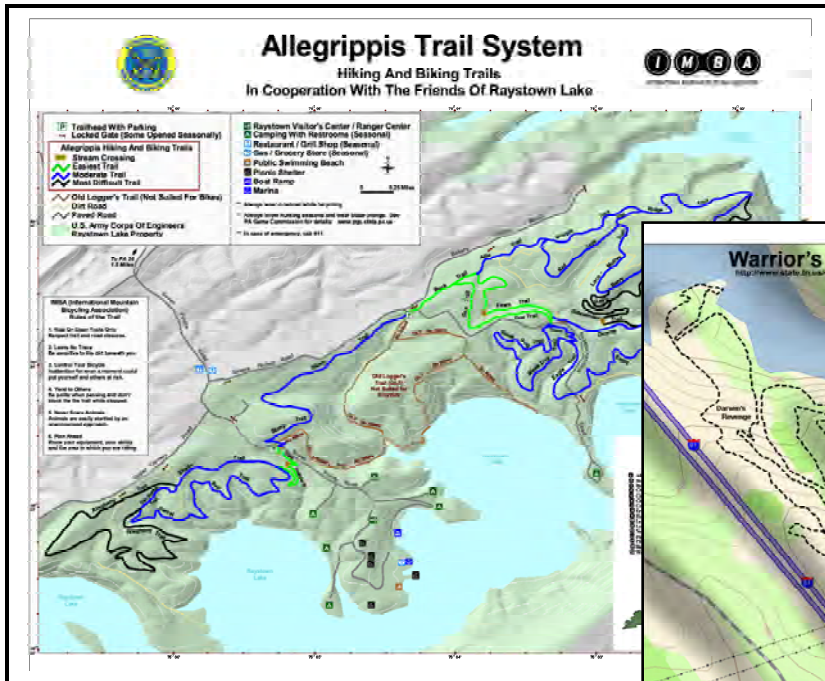
- Develop and maintain public horseback riding trails within the Spearhead Trails Study area.
- Increase the total number of trails.
- Encourage looped trails.
- Develop trails that are 5 to 15 miles long for day use and 15 to 30 miles long for multi-day use.
- Provide detailed information and maps of the trails that are printable from a website.
- Provide the above information to the Virginia Horse Council for inclusion in their inventory of trails.
- Properly mark both the trailheads and trails
- And encourage good stewardship while on the trails.

There is a recently published study by the Virginia Horse Council (VHC). It would be strongly recommended that the entire study be reviewed as there is some excellent information contained in the report that may be useful as more equestrian trails are developed in the Spearhead Trails project area which is highly recommended.

MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL RECOMMENDATIONS:



The SRRA should contact the Northeast Tennessee Mountain Bike Association, the Appalachian Cycling Association and other mountain bike organizations and groups to ask for assistance in identifying and developing bike trails in southwest Virginia for public use. Greatest interest has been shown to develop trails in Wise, Russell, Scott and Lee counties.



It is also strongly recommended that stacked looped trails be developed creating more concentrated areas for biking for greatest economic impact for “trail towns” nearby.



The Allegrippis Trail System in Huntingdon Pennsylvania and the mountain bike trails at Warriors Path State Park in Tennessee are excellent models of stacked loop trail systems.

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Southwest Virginia is blessed with a number of very scenic bike routes that need greater marketing to those who will come great distances to use them. This too should be addressed and promoted as part of the mission of the Spearhead Trails initiative. Other potential bike routes are noted in the Site Visit section of this document under specific counties.

Also keep in mind the potential for organizing long distance or looped bicycle rides which would encourage people to come to southwest Virginia and stay multiple days if properly planned. RAGBRAI which is an annual ride across the State of Iowa attracts over 20,000 bicyclists into their state to ride nearly 500 miles in seven days. The economic impact in those small communities in which they travel and to the state as a whole is phenomenal. Virginia has begun their own “Ride across Virginia” event. SRRA should meet with the planners and see how best to ensure the route goes through southwest Virginia.



RECOMMENDATION As part of the Spearhead Trails initiative, similar maps should be created for all biking routes and trails in the seven counties of Southwest Virginia and posted online. The SSRA needs to designate a committee to work with local bike clubs, groups and organizations in accomplishing this goal. There may also be opportunities for SW Virginia routes and trails to be included on www.bikeguy.net, www.greenway.org, www.more-mtb.org, www.exploresingletrack.com and other biking websites.



Serious consideration needs to be made to reroute the 76 Bicentennial Bike Route off of Hwy 80 once one exits Breaks Interstate Park. Due to increased traffic, Highway 80 is no longer safe for bicyclists. Turning off at Haysi and taking either Highway 83 or 63 through Clincho and eventually connecting back with Hwy 80 somewhere in Russell County would be highly recommended. **Immediate Action:** A Spearhead Trails Committee needs to be formed to work on this route.

RIVER TRAIL RECOMMENDATIONS:

There is currently excellent information on river access on waterways throughout Southwest Virginia. Establishing and promoting blueways along rivers such as the Clinch River through Wise, Scott & Russell counties and the Powell River through Lee County into Tennessee is recommended. Creating greater river access along the Cranes Nest, Russell Fork and Prater into communities such as Haysi should also be encouraged and could become the first step to developing an opportunity for an entrepreneur to open a campground or start a canoe livery service.

The SSRA should work with river communities to encourage the development of campsites, signage, and portage trails, as well as to promote the trail in the media. At the same time, local communities and SSRA must work together to proactively plan and implement strategies to minimize the negative social and environmental impacts of increased visitation, which may include the spread of invasive aquatic species, wildlife disturbance, increased traffic, overcrowding of waterways, and land degradation at campsites. (See *Volume 2 – BLUEWAYS and APPENDIX B: Rivers & River Accesses for more on this subject*)

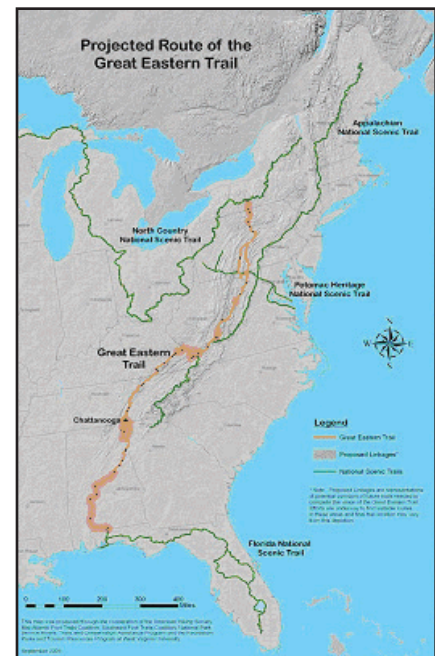
LONG DISTANCE TRAIL RECOMMENDATIONS:



Southwest Virginia has an opportunity to be part of The Great Eastern Trail (GET), America’s newest long distance trail. Modeled after the Appalachian Trail known as a premier wilderness experience for hikers and backpackers, it will be approximately 1,800-mile, long-distance trail from Alabama to New York.

Although sponsored by hiking clubs up and down the Eastern Seaboard, much of the GET, especially across Virginia, will be multi-use. It has been recommended that there be both a southern and northern route. The proposed “southern route” through Dickenson, Buchanan and possibly into Tazewell will require a proposal be submitted this Fall.

The Heart of the Appalachia Authority has expressed interest in becoming the local chapter for Virginia. A committee, made up of representatives from Buchanan, Dickenson, and possibly Tazewell counties as well as representatives from West Virginia where the trail will travel, needs to be created. Letters of support are needed from all the communities along the proposed southern route and a formal proposal should be submitted to the GET Board of Directors as soon as possible



To this end, the research consultants on this study have GPS’d the entire route through Virginia. They have also met with representatives in Virginia and West Virginia for confirmation of their support for the southern route and have asked for both letters of support and assistance in putting a two-state proposal together. See *Vol: 2 – Long Distance Trails for more on this.*

GET TRAIL

Please Note: There are no chain hotels or restaurants in Damascus VA where the Virginia Creeper trail is located and just a few chain fast food restaurants in Gilbert WV, a trailhead for the Hatfield-McCoy Trail System. Most are Mom & Pop businesses. This is great for the small entrepreneurs and insures that the money made within the community actually stays in the community, something those in the Spearhead Trails region may want to keep in mind as their areas begin to develop.