

SCOTT COUNTY

There is tremendous interest in Scott County to develop horseback riding trails. A detailed list of proposed trails is provided in the “Potential for Horseback Riding Trails” section in the Scott County Site Visit section of this report.

- Most of these proposed trails are located within or connecting to trails within the Jefferson National Forest. We urge that meetings be set up between the Forest Service and the community to explore these possibilities.
- There is the potential to use the Scott County Horse Park as a trailhead. Primary landowners surrounding the Horse Park have been identified so that communications can be opened to explore their interest in possibly allowing horse trails across portions of their property. There is also the potential to connect these trails with trails already in existence within the Jefferson National Forest.

The researchers would highly recommended that a group of interested citizens from Scott County take a fact seeking trip to both Fentress and Scott Counties in Tennessee and McCreary County in Kentucky. Entrepreneurs in these three counties have fully capitalized on the horse trails in the Big South Fork Recreational Area by developing riding stables, campgrounds and other facilities on private lands outside the park area. We encourage those in Scott County VA to do the same in their area. Visit <http://bigsouthforkcountry.com/equestrian.html> for a list of many of these facilities and their contact information.

Scott County also has huge potential in further developing and marketing a canoe trail on the Clinch River. A preliminary review indicates tremendous opportunities for canoe outfitters, shuttle services, campgrounds, cabins and other concessions along the entire route. See *Appendix A: Review of Rivers* for more on this.

Other potential trails:

- Potential Horseback Riding Trail although the exact location is not clear in the researcher’s memory. Photos of the proposed road is provided in the Scott County Site Visit document. All weather surfaced for horseback riding or for wagons. Scenic farms and old rock wall add interest to one’s ride.
- Potential Bike Route-starts at Carter Family Fold then follows Holston River and loops back 6.5 miles. (Hwy 691) scenic road.
- Potential Canoe Trail on the Holston River where the river parallels Hwy 691. Potential for a canoe launch and livery service.
- Potential for Themed Trail- The railroad played a major role in SW Virginia and could become the focus for a themed “trail” connecting important railroad sites throughout Scott County including the depot in Duffield, the railroad engine display at Natural Tunnel, and the Copper Creek Railroad Trestles.

Observation: The proposed Rails to Trails designated for hiking and biking following the old Norfolk Southern Line connecting Bristol to Carter Family Fold could become a tremendous asset for the area. Further research needs to be done to determine actual ownership of the rail.



Scott County - SITE VISIT

SITE VISIT

On April 4, 2009, the consultants and Jack McClanahan toured Scott County.

Background: The county was formed by an act of the general assembly on November 24, 1814 from parts of Washington, Lee, and Russell Counties and was named for General Winfield Scott. The county seat is Gate City with a population of approximately 2,200. The county has a population of 24,000. Other towns include Clinchport, Duffield, Dungannon, Nickelsville and Weber City.

Our first stop on our tour of Scott County was at the overlook along U.S. 58/421



Jack McClanahan pointed out the Knobs and Clinch Mountain Range.



Pap Paws Cabin is also located along U.S. 58/421 and has an excellent view of the mountain ranges. It has a full kitchen, loft area, living room and a unique covered outdoor eating area shown below. This cabin is an excellent example of one type of lodging needed along the trails and at trailheads.



RECOMMENDATION: Similar cabins to be developed throughout the Spearhead Trails region.

TOWN OF DUFFIELD



Duffield is a small community with a population of less than 70. At the intersection of U.S. 58/421 and U.S. 23 enroute to Natural Tunnel State Park, the old Duffield Depot still stands. Next to it is a caboose and other railroad artifacts.

(Left) Old Duffield Depot

Natural Tunnel State Park http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/nat.shtml

Amenities include:



Natural Tunnel is an impressive park. Park offerings include a chair lift to the top, a scenic boardwalk, visitor center/gift shop, a railroad engine display, picnic shelters, overnight campground facilities, swimming pool, amphitheater, fishing and biking.

Hiking, mountain bike and self-guided trails at Natural Tunnel State Park

Natural Tunnel State Park offers seven walking trails, the longest one being 1.1 miles long. These trails lead to the unique features of the park: the tunnel floor, Lover’s Leap, Tunnel Hill and Gorge Ridge. A 500-foot boardwalk and observation deck provide accessibility to guests with disabilities. Visitors may also take a chairlift to the mouth of the tunnel via chairlift when it’s operational. Most trails are open to mountain bikes with bike rentals available at the campground host campsite.



POTENTIAL HORSEBACK RIDING ROUTE



This was a wonderful all weather surfaced road in Scott County that would be excellent for both horseback riding or for wagons.

The road did not appear to get much traffic yet had some wonderful farms and an old rock wall along a major portion of the route.

Scott County - SITE VISIT

Carter Family Fold - Tourist Attraction for the area



Located just a few miles U.S. 58/421, The Carter Family Fold and home museum includes the homeplace of A.P. Carter. Officially opening in 1979, the Center's objective is to promote old-time music and pay tribute to the Original Carter Family (A.P. Sara, and Maybelle Carter).



Museum



Old home place of A.P. Carter



Other outbuildings

Concerts are held every Saturday night in the auditorium located next door to the museum. The concerts highlight the musical style made popular by the Carter Family, considered by many as country music's first family.



The Carter Family Fold, located just off Hwy 709 in Hiltons VA on A.P. Carter Memorial Highway, is one of a number of stops on "The Crooked Road", Virginia's Heritage Music Trail.

Scott County - SITE VISIT

POTENTIAL BIKE ROUTE

There is an excellent road that starts at The Carter Family Fold then follows the Holston River and eventually ends back at Carter Family Fold creating a 6.5 mile loop. Very scenic and the roads are excellent for bicycling.



Route Description: Just turn right onto Hwy 691 across from Carter Family Fold. There is a large parking area to the left right on Hwy 691 which could be turned into a park & ride area. The ride is 6 1/2 miles long and creates a loop right back at The Carter Family Fold.

Features along the route:



The route takes one past the old Holston Grist mill.



Across the river from the mill is a new dock and covered pavilion.

POTENTIAL CANOE TRAIL

The Holston River has been designated a scenic river. It would also seem to be an excellent river to possibly launch a canoe livery service as an added amenity of the offerings at Carter Family Fold. See end of this chapter for canoeing opportunities throughout Scott County.

POTENTIAL RAILS TO TRAILS

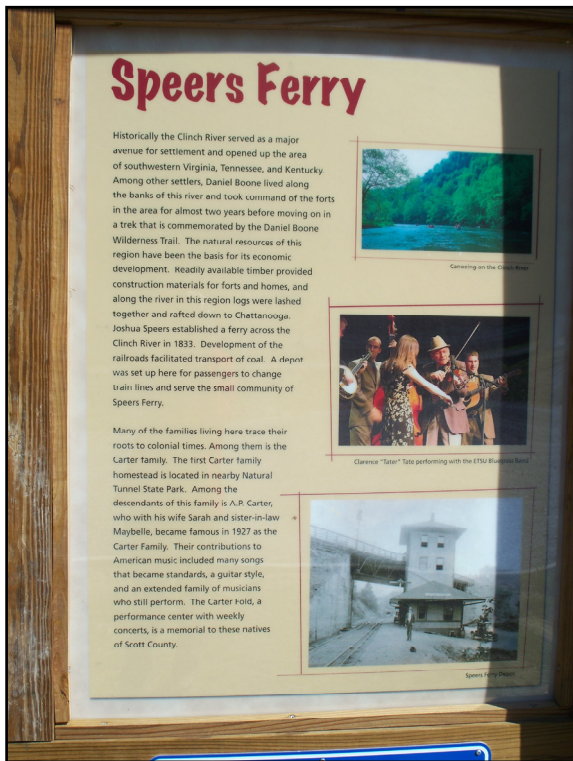
It has been proposed to develop a hiking and biking trail similar to the Creeper Trail. This trail would follow the old Norfolk Southern line. If fully developed, it would connect Bristol to Carter Family Fold. In 2000, Washington County purchased 12 miles of the Southern Railway with this in mind but there has been tremendous controversy over these efforts. Much of the rail bed has been removed and some of the property has been returned to the original property owners. In fact, a few homes have actually been built right where the track once ran. It would appear this particular project may have a difficult time coming to fruition.

POTENTIAL FOR THEMED TRAIL

The railroad played a major role in SW Virginia and could become the focus for a themed “trail” connecting important railroad sites throughout Scott County including the depot in Duffield, the railroad engine display at Natural Tunnel, and the Copper Creek Railroad Trestles featured below.



The Copper Creek Railroad Trestles are still visible today.



In 1833, a ferry was established to enable the crossing of the Clinch River. Soon the town of Speers Ferry was established. Timber became a major industry and were tied together and floated down river to Chattanooga. Later a rail line and depot was built in this small community transport both timber and coal out of the region. This stop too could be included on the Rail Trail.

Scott County has a wonderful display set up in front of the Copper Creek Railroad Trestles providing interpretive information on each of the sites mentioned above.

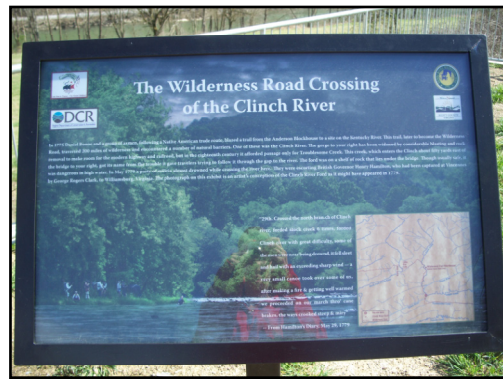


Scott County - SITE VISIT

Excellent Visitor Display



The display also includes information on the Crooked Road and the Wilderness Road Crossing.



A solar operated transmitter allows travelers to tune into 100.1 FM on their car radio to learn more.

Scott County - SITE VISIT

POTENTIAL FOR HORSE TRAILS

Scott County has a very active equestrian organization called the Scott County Trail Riders. It is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization working to promote and encourage the development of the horse industry in Scott County, Virginia and the surrounding region by offering community activities and educational and youth programs. Its mission is to *“To promote and provide equine activities in Scott County and the surrounding region for our youth and fellow horsemen, while encouraging sportsmanship, family values and lasting friendships with our community and members through dedication and public involvement. We promote all breeds and activities pertaining to each breed”*. They hold numerous horse shows and special events throughout the year and have a 150' x 250' riding ring located in Dungannon VA where many of the events are held.

At one of the preliminary map meetings, Eugene McClellan provided the following list of potential locations for equestrian trails throughout Scott County and beyond. He also recommended that Sherry Hilton be contacted. Ms. Hilton is the current president of the Scott County Trail Riders.

Horse Trail Ride Possibilities (provided by Charlie Green: cdgreen@mounet.com via Eugene McClellan: hemcclellan@earthlink.net)

- Jasper to Kane Gap: 5 hrs on Forest Services road and logging trails. See gap in Powell Mtn where Daniel Boone led settlers west. Meet @ Daniel Boone Travel center in Duffield. Reasonable parking. Travel north on US 23 from Duffield. Turn left on Lovelady Gap Rd. After crossing railroad tracks, immediately turn left on Tito Lane. Travel approximately one mile, turn right, continue to parking area. Trail is FS 642.
- Mabe to sawmill, Flannery Ridge and Pick Breeches Ridge. Approx 7 hrs.. Limited parking. Good fall colors ride. From Duffield, take rt 871, Nat Tunnel Pkwy. To Sunbright. Turn left on rt 653, Mabe Stanleytown Rd. Turn left on 725 Stock Creek Way. Turn left on FS Maple Gap. Continue to FS property line. Parking along roadway.
- Stanleytown to Maple Gap, Flannery Ridge and back. Several options for time and distance. Good parking and primitive camping. From Duffield, take rt 871, Nat Tunnel Pkwy. To Sunbright. Turn left on rt 653, Mabe Stanleytown Rd. Turn left on 722 Cove Creek Mine Lane. Continue to FS property line.
- Devils Fork up Straight Fork Ridge and Devils Fork Loop Trail. Can make a circle and back down 619. 8 hrs. Or up and back 5 hrs. Limited parking. From Fort Blackmore, take 619 Big Stony Creek Rd. Park along the road after crossing Big Stony Creek Rd. @ Devils Fork Cabin.
- Devils Fork up 619 to 704 and back. Time and distance at your discretion. Limited parking. From Fort Blackmore, take 619 Big Stony Creek Rd. Park along the road after crossing Big Stony Creek Rd. @ Devils Fork Cabin.
- Devils Fork up 619 to 704 to Big Flat Top. Up and back Approx 25 mi. Limited Parking. From Fort Blackmore, take 619 Big Stony Creek rd. Park along the road after crossing Big Stony Creek Rd. @ Devils Fork Cabin.
- Hagan Hall/Branham Road to Mahogany Hollow. Up and Back. Nice views. Approx 5 hrs. Gravel and Forest Service gated roads. Reasonable parking. From the horse park, take 680 Cassels Chapel Rd. to 653 Hunters Valley Rd. Turn left and continue to 776 FS McGhee Creek Rd. Parking area is on the rt.

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- Hagan Hall/Branham Road to Bark Camp Lake. Up and back Gravel road. Approx 5 hrs. Reasonable parking. From the horse park, take 680 Cassels Chapel Rd. to 653 Hunters Valley Rd. Turn left and continue to 776 FS McGhee Creek Rd. Parking area is on the rt.
- Hagan Hall/Branham Road to Little Stony Falls. Up and Back. Approx 8 hrs. Gravel Rd. Reasonable parking. From the horse park, take 680 Cassels Chapel Rd. to 653 Hunters Valley Rd. Turn left and continue to 776 FS McGhee Creek Rd. Parking area is on the rt.

Scott County and the Scott County Regional Horse Association by far showed the strongest interest in developing more opportunities for equestrian activities in their area. Through a \$600,000 grant from Congressman Boucher in 2005, the Association was able to construct the High Knob Trails and also began work on the Scott County Horse Park. Currently there are two structures on site with plans for stalls and permanent restroom facilities with showers. It is hoped that a grant from the Tobacco Settlement Funds will provide the funding necessary to continue moving forward on this worthwhile project.

The grant could also provide funding for approximately 2.5 miles of new trails where trails had not previously existed and 5 miles of major trail reconstruction, including placement of new culverts and new trail tread. Restrooms are now being constructed at the High Knob and Little Stony Falls. ¹

- Three new trail heads are being developed, each with its own parking lot - one near High Knob, one near the existing Little Stony Falls parking area, and one above this facility near Hagan Hall.
- Two additional trail heads have been planned, one at Hanging Rock and one in Hunters Valley (both are located close to the park) which will connect to the Chief Bengé Scout Trail on High Knob and should be nearing completion soon. An article released by Congressman Boucher's office highlighting these developments can be found at:

http://www.boucher.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1352&Itemid=

Note: Sherry Hilton, current president of Scott County Trail Riders (276) 479-2048 lives in Buchanan.

Scott County - SITE VISIT

CAPITALIZING ON CANOEING COULD BECOME A MAJOR DRAW TO THE AREA

More so than many of the other counties, Scott County has tremendous opportunity to capitalize on the many tributaries that flow through its county which includes the Clinch River, Guest River, Little Stoney Creek, Big Stoney Creek and Big Moccasin Creek for both paddling and fishing. A recent initiative has been started which focuses on developing a fishing trail within the Spearhead Trails region (*see Volume 2: Appendix B for more on this*) yet tourism-related paddling is a relatively untapped market in Southwest Virginia. The river with the greatest potential for establishing itself as a destination river for the mid-range paddling market is the Clinch which flows through breathtaking scenic gorges and has sweeping mountain views.

Mid-range boaters are those wanting more than a flat-water opportunity but do not seek the Class IV-V whitewater experience. The Clinch River provides this. It has good current and can be challenging at times offering Class I up to Class III rapids along particular sections of the river while at the same time offering unique and wonderful features such as waterfalls and wildlife along the route. The Clinch currently offers canoeing, kayaking and fishing for smallmouth and muskies but is not heavily marketed. This river has the potential to rival areas such as the Meramac River in Missouri which can attract as many as 8,000 boaters on a given weekend.

An ideal section of the Clinch to be considered for tourism development and livery operation is the section from St. Paul to Dungannon (*see evaluation of this river in: The Clinch River from St. Paul to Dungannon segment of this study*). The Town of St. Paul as well as Dungannon are natural locations for developing commercial attractions to cater to the canoe/kayak clientele.

For paddling to become a financial benefit, marketing and livery operation must be developed. In order for this 20+ mile section to be effectively developed for tourism, a livery/ access should also be established near the halfway point for shorter trip options. At the put-in access for the aforementioned section of the Clinch River, boating stores, recreation outdoor outfitters, lodging, and food services could/should all be developed to enhance these river towns creating even greater economic impact potential.

The Clinch currently offers a number of sites for primitive camping on portions of this section. However, proximity to the railroad may make this a less than desirable option. What is noticeably lacking is riverside access for commercial camping. Commercial camping is another area which could be developed to enhance tourism and commercial appeal.

During the research phase, there was talk of a canoe livery service opening soon in Dungannon. This would be strongly encouraged by the researchers as an excellent next step to enticing more people to utilize the river. A canoe trip from Dungannon to Fort Blackamore or Clinchport would also make excellent trips from the literature reviewed although the researchers did not get the opportunity to run this section of the river. There was also discussions about an access near the school although the researchers never located it in their exploratory research.

During the preliminary research phase of this study, the only canoe livery service the researchers found along the entire riverway was offered through Natural Tunnel State Park which had canoes to rent, primarily using the river accesses above Clinchport and below the bridge at Hwy 23/58. **Further research and an action plan would be highly recommended to move forward in establishing “river towns” along the Clinch potentially starting at St. Paul in Wise County and Dungannon in Scott County and expanding further down river. Other sections may also be feasible but further research would be needed to make this determination.**

TAZEWELL COUNTY

The northern portion of Tazewell County is ideal for off-road vehicle riding. Already there is a large network of trails leading from Tazewell County into Buchanan County and into both McDowell and Wyoming WV. Tazewell County should take full advantage to this by identifying landowners willing to allow public trails to be developed on their property. Developing looped, stacked trail systems that lead directly into communities will provide the greatest return on ones investment.

- The Town of Pocahontas has huge potential for becoming a tourism destination due to its strategic location between those traveling from North Carolina and portions of Virginia to access the OHV trails in West Virginia.
- The high school near Pocahontas recently closed. The school parking lot would be an ideal location for a trailhead accessing hundreds of miles of OHV trails already in existence. The school itself could easily be converted into small shops and overnight lodging facilities similar to what has been done in Benham and in Edmonson County Kentucky with their two schools. (*See Appendix B - Reuse of Old Schools*). The school cafeteria could be converted into a restaurant with minimal costs incurred.
- Tazewell County owns 233 acres of land next to the Town of Pocahontas which could become a part of a publicly accessible OHV looped stacked trail system
- The Town of Pocahontas needs to pass an ordinance and declare itself OHV-friendly. A trailhead near the Coal Museum needs to be developed. Potential for a campground to be developed nearby.
- The Tiller mine Road out of Cedar Bluff leads to a network of trails. Tiller Mine Road is not surfaced and could possibly become the connector road for OHV riders to access trails.
- There is a large tract of land north and west of Richland and south of Sandy Ridge which has one owner who might consider allowing ATV trails to be developed in this area that could then connect to trails in Buchanan County. If Richlands would become an OHV-friendly community, trailhead could be developed leading directly into the town.
- There are a number of vacant buildings near the Jewell Ridge area that could be converted into housing for OHV riders coming into the area.
- The now vacant gas station could become an ATV repair center and primary trailhead for the Jewell Ridge area.
- Jewell Ridge area also has a number of standard breed horses so developing horseback riding trails in this area might be a consideration.
- One potential location for a trailhead is where the highway actually ends at the location of two trails. One leads into Buchanan County. The other crosses into Wyoming Co. WV.
- There is potential for a trailhead and campground in BANDY.
- There is also potential to develop a trailhead near BISHOP.
- There is the potential to access the proposed Great Eastern Trail from Tazewell County. *From Tazewell County- follow Dismal Whitewood Creek and railroad west near 613 then north on Horse Ridge up to Pea Patch to State Line and into McDowell County.* The Great Eastern Trail is a linear multi-use trail from Alabama to New York similar in concept to the Appalachian Trail except that the section of the trail through Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia will be both a motorized and nonmotorized multi-use trail.

Due to time constraints, the primary focus in Tazewell County was of the northern portion of the county, therefore very little has been discussed pertaining to the southern portion of the county. It too has great potential but due to the differing terrain, scenic bike routes, bike trails, and an emphasis on developing and marketing agritourism offerings may better serve this area. It would be highly recommended that a further study be conducted specifically on the southern portion of the county to determine how best to market this area.