

INVENTORY OF EXISTING AND PROPOSED TRAILS

INVENTORY OF EXISTING AND PROPOSED TRAILS WITHIN THE SPEARHEAD TRAILS REGION

At the very start of the five month study, an inventory of all existing and proposed trails was compiled in order to obtain a better understanding of trail needs. Information came from the Department of Conservation Resources (DCR), communities, websites and individuals. What was discovered is that Southwest Virginia is blessed with a multitude of trails. Within this volume of the study, the research team have attempted to provide a complete listing of all existing and proposed trails and, when possible, corresponding maps for each of the trails.

Below is an overview of our findings of existing trails currently open to the public within the Spearhead Trails region:

EXISTING TRAILS THROUGH THE SPEARHEAD TRAILS REGION

COUNTIES/ CITY	Mtn. Bike	Canoe	Hiking/ Walking	Hike/ Bike	Multi-Use	Rail to Trail	OHV	Horse
Buchanan		Whitewater	.5 miles/1	1.9 miles/1				
Dickenson	13 miles/1	20+ miles/5						
Lee			71 miles/9	5+ miles/2	14+ miles/3			
Russell			6+ miles/1					
Scott		60+ miles/8	50+ miles/11	10 miles/5	24.7 miles/3			
Tazewell			26 miles/5	45.5 miles		1.8 miles		
Wise		20+ miles/6	100+ miles/16	6 miles/2		5.8 miles	100+ miles/1	30 miles/2
City of Norton					12.2 miles/4			
TOTAL MILES	13	100+	253+	62.9+	50.9+	7.6+	100+	30

HIKING

There are over 250 miles of hiking trails within the seven county region primarily located with the Jefferson National Forest, Cumberland Gap National Forest and Breaks Interstate Park. Add in trails shared by both hikers and bikers plus multi-use non-motorized trails, one finds nearly 400 miles of trails for those who like to walk or hike.

Recommendation: We would strongly suggest not to develop more hiking trails but to concentrate on maintaining the ones already established, add additional signage as needed, and develop better maps and marketing materials to better inform the public of the trails including, but not limited to, a detailed website featuring maps and descriptions all of the publicly-accessible hiking trails within Southwest Virginia.

INVENTORY OF EXISTING AND PROPOSED TRAILS

CANOEING/KAYAKING

The Spearhead Trail Region has some excellent waterways which they have not even begun to capitalize on. The researchers encourage greater use of the rivers as an asset to attract more visitors. The Clinch River has the greatest potential at this time due to its year-round flow, easy access, and the flow of the water. *See Volume 3 – Site Visits and Recommendations for more on this.*

HORSEBACK RIDING

There are a very limited number of trails dedicated specifically for horseback riding. In fact, through our research, only two trails were found. One is the 26 mile trail from Pound Gap in Wise County to Potter's Flats in the Breaks Interstate Park which is still "in the works". Limited signage at this time requires the rider to obtain a map prior to entering the trail. Once completed, it would be recommended to add adequate signage to help riders keep on the trails. New equestrian trailheads have also recently opened in Jefferson National Forests although the trails themselves are multi-use and camping overnight with horses is discouraged.

As noted in the 2008 study by the Virginia Horse Council, riders need longer trails to encourage them to come to the area to ride and stay multiple days. Our recommendation would be to develop camps outside the park and establish trails that are longer than five miles long to encourage riders from outside the region to come use the trails creating greater economic impact for the region. *See Volume 2 – Economic Impact of Horse Trails for more on this.*

MOUNTAIN BIKING

During the research phase of the study, numerous mountain bike riders expressed strong interest in helping to develop mountain bike trails. Currently there are only 13 miles of dedicated mountain biking trails within the Spearhead Trails region and all are part of one looped trail system located within Breaks Interstate Park.

It is our recommendation that SRRA 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. It is also recommended that any new trails developed use a looped stacked trail system similar to what has been used in designing the trails at Breaks Interstate Park, Warrior Path Trails near Bristol Tennessee and the Allegrippis Trail System in Huntingdon Pennsylvania. *See Volume 2 – Economic Impact of Bike Trails for more on this.*

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLES

There are a tremendous number of existing trails leading into and through the mountains of SW Virginia. Many of the trails were once roads used by those in the coal, gas and timber industries and some are still used today. A number of these "old roads" are also being used by individuals riding off-road vehicles such as ATV's, side-by-sides and dirt bikes. In most cases, these riders are trespassing onto private property. In fact, within the Spearhead Trail region, there is only one "legal" multi-use trail system that allows motorized vehicles and it is located in the northeast corner of Wise County and is managed by the Mountainview ATV Club out of Dickenson County. The Town of Pennington Gap received funding to develop a 10 mile multi-use trails for both nonmotorized and motorized but progress has currently been halted until funding is found to pay for an environmental study.

INVENTORY OF EXISTING AND PROPOSED TRAILS

The only other areas to ride legally in Virginia are located within the Jefferson Forest although none of those trails are within the Spearhead Trail Region. But due to the sheer volume of riders using these trails, steps have been taken within the Forest Service to actually close trails. *See Volume 1: Comprehensive Plan for more on this.*

The researchers see tremendous potential for economic growth in the region if motorized trails were developed using the stacked looped system (see Volume 2: Economic Impact of ATV Trails for more on this) designed for safety on property in which public access is allowed. For greatest economic gain, the researchers recommend trailheads be set up within communities and access through the streets of these towns be allowed. *See Volume 3: Site Visits and Recommendations for suggested locations.*

THEMED DRIVING & BIKE ROUTES

Southwest Virginia is also blessed with a number of themed driving and bike routes including, but not limited to, the Heart of the Appalachia Bike Route, the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail, Fincastle/Cumberland Turnpike, the Crooked Road Music Trail, the U.S. Bicentennial Bike Route and the Coal Heritage Trail. There are also nine Virginia Birding & Wildlife Driving Tours which connect wildlife viewing areas in all seven counties. *See individual maps for details.*

EXISTING DRIVING AND BIKING TOURS THROUGH THE SPEARHEAD TRAILS REGION

COUNTIES/ CITY	HEART OF APPALACHIA TOUR	DANIEL BOONE WILDERNESS TRAIL	FINCASTLE/ CUMBERLAND TURNPIKE	CROOKED ROAD MUSIC TRAIL	US 76 BIKE ROUTE	COAL HERITAGE TRAIL
Buchanan					30 mi-road	120 mi-road
Dickenson					31 mi-road	60 mi-road
Lee		50 mi-road				
Russell	41 mil-road		40 mi-road		31 mi-road	
Scott			41 mi-road			
Tazewell	30 mi-road (16 off-road)					
Wise	(12 mi-off-road)			30 mi-road	30 mi-road	45 mi-road
City of Norton				10 mi-road		10 mi-road
TOTAL MILES	71 - Road 28 Off-Road	50 - Road	81 - Road	40 - Road	122 - Road	235 - Road

It is recommended that SRRA market these existing Driving and Bike Tour Routes through both publications as well as an in-depth website that provides printable maps. The website should then be linked to other websites that may include additional information on each of the route. It would also be recommended that one, two and three-day itineraries be developed to assist visitors in making their travel arrangements and encouraging them to allow the time to stop along the way and possibly entice them to stay multiple days in the area.

INVENTORY LISTING OF EXISTING AND PROPOSED TRAILS

In the following section is an inventory of existing and proposed trails within the Spearhead Trails region. Each trail is listed under the county and/or city in which the trail is located. Also included are individual county maps showing the location of these trails along with more detailed maps of specific trails.