

Mendota Trail Newsletter

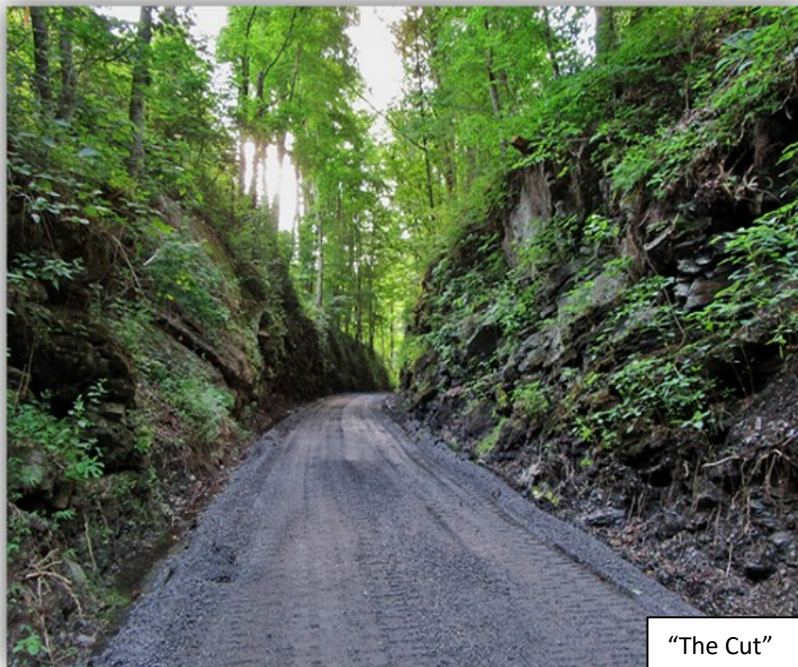
Another milestone for the Mendota Trail...

**Benhams Crossing Trestle dedicated
along with trail extension to mile marker 6.1**



July 16th was another special day for the Mendota Trail! Over 100 people celebrated the ribbon cutting marking the official opening of Benhams Crossing Trestle. This trestle was generously sponsored by Rick and Doreen Heppert, who fondly recall riding their bikes under this trestle many times over the years. This trestle is unique in several respects: it is the most visible of all the 17 trestles along the trail corridor, it has a beautiful curve spanning its length and its stringers are partly comprised of steel.

Several elected officials joined in the celebration and offered recognition of this accomplishment, occurring just eight months after nearby Trestle 3 was opened to the public in Benhams.



The day formally extended the trail to mile marker 6.1. This beautiful section of the trail traverses an area known locally as "the Cut," a 900 foot section with rock walls on each side. Funding for maintenance on this section of the trail was generously provided by Laura and Jerry Grantham, the latter a geologist who was awestruck by the beauty of the exposed rock formations. This area is notably "cool" in another way.... there is a perceptible drop of 10 degrees or so within its confines.

The parking area in Benhams was also upgraded to accommodate additional visitors and vehicles. Bob and Ellen Mueller sponsored this part of the project.

Our Donors!



Doreen and Rick Heppert,
sponsors of Benhams
Crossing Trestle



Jerry and Laura Grantham enjoying a restful spot in the Cut with their dogs, Fletcher and Rowan.



A special day...Ribbon Cutting



Del. Will Wampler, Supervisor Saul Hernandez, Rick & Doreen Heppert, Neal Kilgore, Del. Israel O'Quinn, Cody Mumpower for Congressman Morgan Griffith, and Tyler Lester for Sen. Todd Pillion

Our Distinguished Guests and Speakers



Saul Hernandez, Tyler
District Supervisor for
Washington County



Our Distinguished Guests and Speakers continued...

Delegate Will Wampler,
Virginia House of
Delegates, 4th District



Delegate Israel O'Quinn,
Virginia House of Delegates,
5th District



Our Distinguished Guests and Speakers continued...



Neal Kilgore, Project Manager, Conservation Easements & Recreational Access Grants, Virginia Outdoors Foundation

Tyler Lester, Office of Senator Todd Pillion
Virginia Senate, 40th District



Our Distinguished Guests and Speakers continued...

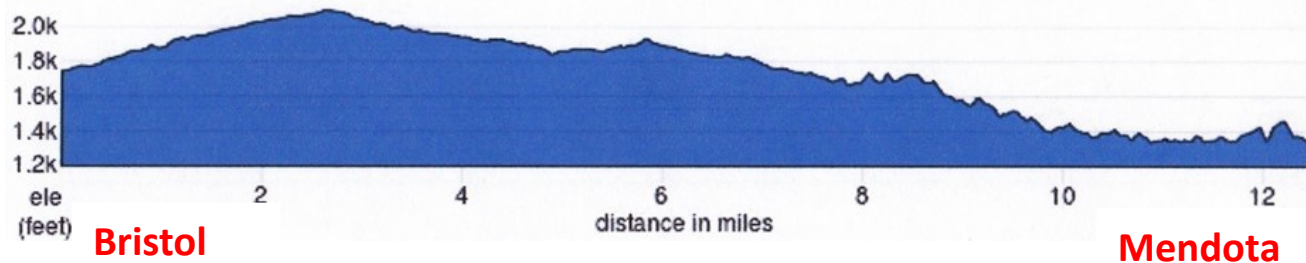


Cody Mumpower,
Office of U.S. Congress-
man Morgan Griffith,
Virginia 9th District

Special thanks to **Jack Dunham, Cheryl LeBlanc, Addison Smith & Ellen Mueller** for sharing their photographic talents



Trail Profile





Meet the Tindalls...

Bill and Judy Tindall have been long time trail supporters. Bill, a retired chemist from Eastman, and Judy are committed lovers of the outdoors and avid hikers.



The Tindalls...Bill, Judy and granddaughter, Samantha

Earlier this summer they enjoyed a hiking trip in Provence, France. From the beginning, they have been engaged in trail work-days. In 2018, they sponsored the restoration of trestle 1, Tindall Trestle. More recently, they committed to sponsoring the restoration of the bridge crossing the North Fork of the Holston River. This is a special project for them, as it is the gateway to the most spectacular section of our trail, Wolf Run Gorge. It is also notable for being the longest bridge on the trail.

The engineering for this bridge is being done by Tysinger, Hampton & Partners, Inc. and Inland Construction, Inc. is our contractor. A special feature of the design will be a spacious overlook area at the mid-point of the bridge where trail users can get out of traffic and enjoy the view. We expect this project will be completed soon so all may enjoy this tranquil section of the trail and watch the river flow by beneath them.

As sponsors, the Tindalls were given naming rights for this bridge. The name **Sunny Side** was ultimately chosen, after obtaining input from members of the Mendota community and others. This is in part a recognition of the music heritage of the area, with the Carter Fold being just 6.5 miles away from the Mendota Trailhead on Mendota Rd./A.P. Carter Hwy. The name also reflects the positivity and resurgence that will increasingly be experienced as the trail brings more visitors to Mendota.

Bill is an active member of the Board of Directors for the Mendota Trail Conservancy, Inc. and has been extremely valuable in helping with design ideas and the procurement of specialized materials for our restoration projects.





Mendota Trail to Benefit from Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) Award

The Mendota Trail is pleased to announce a \$24,000.00 award from VOF for improvements at the trailhead along Island Road. These funds will complement public, civic and private grants and donations already earmarked for the project.

“These funds will be a significant benefit for furthering this project,” says Bob Mueller, Manager for the Bristol Trailhead Project. “We are grateful for the support from VOF and for their recognition that our project was deemed worthy among multiple proposals in a competitive field.”

Brett Glymph, the Executive Director of VOF shared “We are excited to support the Mendota Trail as both a resource for local families, as well as a showcase for the region’s world-class natural resources and destination for visitors.”

We sincerely thank Virginia Outdoors Foundation for this significant award.

Update on the Bristol Trailhead on Island Rd.

Preliminary engineering has now been completed. A request for bids was posted in July and a local contractor has been awarded the project.

The work will include excavation and grading for the purposes of building an improved parking area, an ADA compliant access ramp to the starting point of the trail and a detention basin for management of storm water, a DEQ requirement.

Asphalt will be placed on the first segment of the trail, so it will be easier to navigate for those with mobility challenges.

We anticipate work will be completed by late spring of next year. A portion of the project was covered by a grant administered by the VA Department of Conservation and Recreation. However, nonbudgeted expenses were incurred related to the storm water management mitigation and rising construction costs, in general.

We need your support to help us fully fund our trailhead project!

Please send your donations (include Bristol Trailhead on memo line) to:

Mendota Trail Conservancy, Inc.

PO Box 1322

Bristol, VA 24203

A trail donor will match all donations, dollar for dollar, up to \$25,000.00.

Thank you, Virginia!

The Mendota Trail was recently notified it received a \$350,000 appropriation from the Commonwealth of Virginia for the purpose of restoring additional trestles. This will, in turn, allow the opening of additional miles of trail for public use.

Delegates Terry Kilgore, Will Wampler and Israel O'Quinn were instrumental in advancing the effort, along with the full support of **Senator Todd Pillion**.

This will be a huge benefit for the trail as it will likely cover the restoration costs of four or five more trestles. As a consequence, more trail miles will be made available for the public to enjoy in the area of the "Gorge"....a pristine trail section enshrouded with steep hillsides above Wolf Run Creek. On first exposure, people are truly awestruck. The quiet solitude soothes one soul.

Work will begin on this section later this fall. Two trestles have already benefited from emergency repairs that were done earlier this year thanks to support from multiple generous donors. The trail will work in concert with Washington County in executing the full requirements of the appropriation.

Our board members **Brian Penley, Jim Lapis and Eva Beaulé** deserve special recognition for facilitating this appropriation as they worked collaboratively with our elected officials in advancing the legislation.

Thank you to all....this will be a huge benefit for the trail!



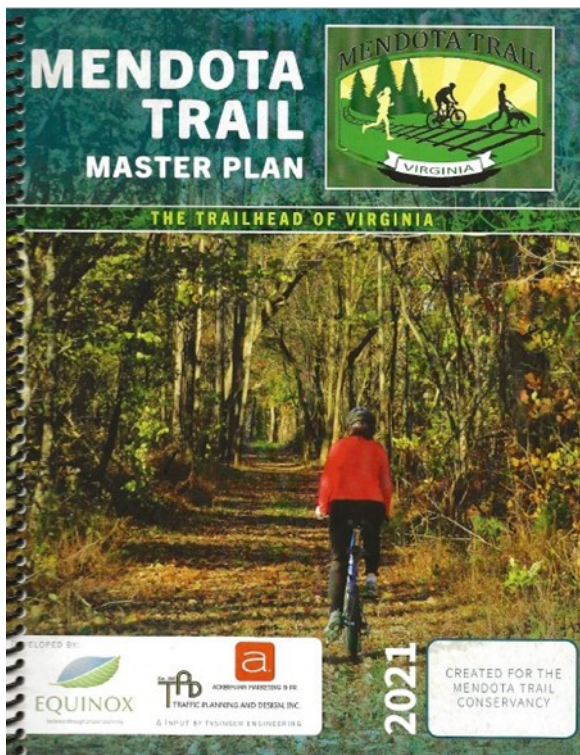
One of several trestles scheduled for restoration from the \$350,000 appropriation.



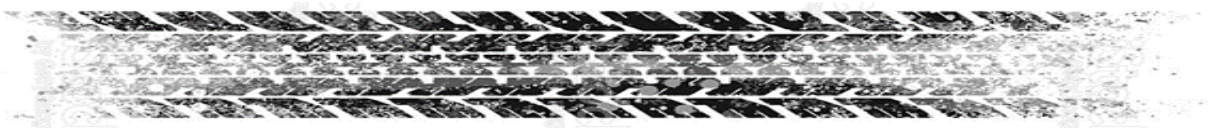


Master Plan Developed for the Mendota Trail

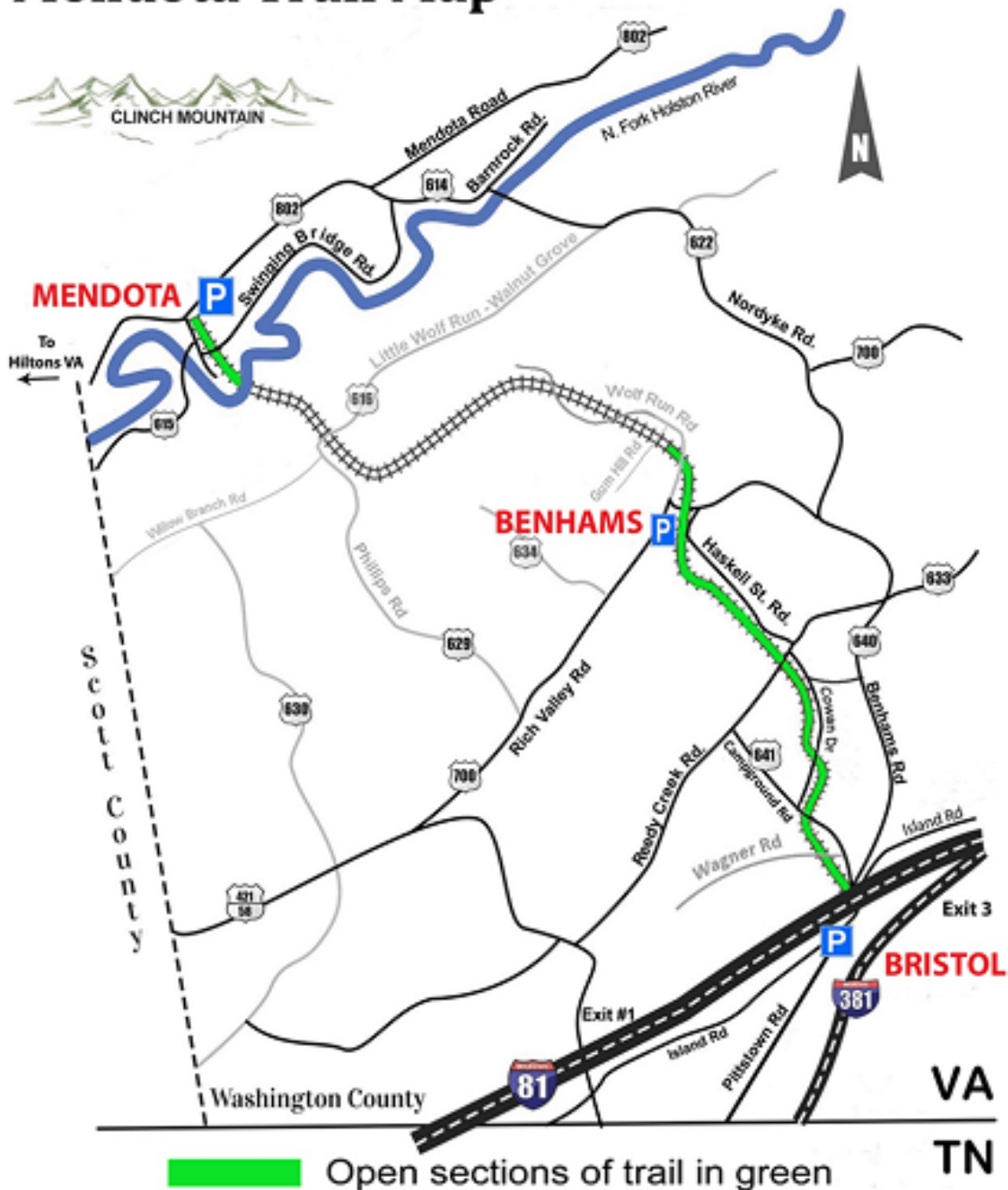
A Master Strategic Plan was completed in June by **Equinox**, an Asheville, NC firm. The 240 page document includes detailed information on restoration of our remaining trestles, design ideas related to parking areas and our trailheads, suggestions related to branding and marketing and safety recommendations for road crossings and signage. The process was steered by **Friends of Southwest Virginia**, using funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Tobacco Commission. In all, the process from the initial grant submission to finalized document delivery, took more than two years.



We thank all who participated with boots on the ground and engaged in multiple Zoom meetings. Special kudos to **Brian Penley, Bob & Ellen Mueller** for their contribution of untold hours for the benefit of the end product. We are extremely grateful to Equinox.... they were a perfect fit for helping us develop strategies and a timeline for advancing our trail dream. In addition, they completed the work in less than the 8 months we requested. Our friends on the Creeper Trail are currently using the same firm to benefit their efforts going forward.....we expect they will be pleased with Equinox as well.



Mendota Trail Map



Parking Locations:

Bristol Trailhead: beside 1788 Island Rd

Benhams: across from 7741 Rich Valley Rd

Mendota Trailhead: across from 2421 Mendota Rd



Cut to the Chase 5 K and One Mile Run/Walk

The Mendota Trail will host our first 5 K event on **Saturday, October 23rd**. The route will cover some of the most beautiful sections of the trail currently open to the public, including the Cut. Pre-register at werunevents.com. Onsite registration will take place in our parking area in Benhams.

A one mile run/walk will be at 8:30 AM followed by the timed 5 K at 9:15 AM. A unique feature of the run is that there won't be any required road crossings.

This will be a fundraising event for the benefit of the trail. We are seeking corporate sponsors and request volunteers contact us if they are interested in helping with the event (parking, registration, route monitoring, etc.).

Our 5 K committee currently includes **Ellen Mueller, Jerry Grantham, Randi Goodman** and **John Iskra**.

Contact us at info@mendotatrail.org for more information.

Litter Cleanup Day on May 8th



Volunteers from the Mendota Trail Conservancy joined several members of the Mendota community in a trash pick-up project along Nurdyke Rd. on Saturday, May 8th. The effort was organized by **Eva Beaule**. VDOT and Washington County Sheriff's Office provided supplies and safety signage. We left 26 orange bags filled with trash along the road shoulder for removal by VDOT on May 10th.



Our recent business and corporate sponsors...

TheStore@Mendota



YouthCare Pediatrics



We thank you!

Chafin Bench

In the spring a beautiful stone bench was placed on the trail at mile marker 4.2, in a serene site overlooking a creek. This is a memorial tribute to Senator Ben Chafin. The inscription reads.....

In Memory of Senator Ben Chafin

A True Friend of Southwest Virginia

May 18, 1960—January 1, 2021



The setting was selected by Teresa Chafin, sister of the late Senator. The stone and delivery to its new home were donated by **Boulder Look Stone Co.** from Bristol. The final placement was aided by **Inland Construction, Inc.** from Abingdon. This was challenging as it weighed 2 ½ tons! The inscription cost was covered by the Board of the **Mendota Trail Conservancy, Inc.**

*In
Loving
Memory*

Please give thought to joining other donors who have recently made special gifts to our trail effort in memory of those no longer with us:

- In memory of **Steve Waller**
- In memory of **Johnny Mann**
- In memory of **Dr. Sarfraz Zaidi**

We will notify a loved one of your remembrance if you choose to supply us with their contact information.





Online shopping can now benefit our Trail!

Shopping on Amazon can now help the Mendota Trail. All you have to do is sign into smile.amazon.com using your existing Amazon account. Select Mendota Trail Conservancy as your charitable organization and start shopping. It's that easy! You only need to select Mendota Trail once. The site will remember us as your selected charitable organization on all future shopping visits you may have.

You keep the same account, shopping cart, wish lists and other settings that you already have on Amazon.com, but using smile.amazon.com allows Amazon to make charitable contributions to non-profit organizations.

There is no extra cost to you and AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to the Mendota Trail every quarter. It may not sound like a lot as an individual donation, but collectively it can make a huge difference for our trail.

Please notify family and friends who may choose to also support our trail.

Thank you for helping!



501 (c)(3) Status

Mendota Trail Conservancy, Inc. was recognized as a tax-exempt organization by the IRS on April 7, 2021. The effective date of our exemption is July 20, 2020.



From Benhams Crossing Trestle to the Cut, you may spot rocks decoratively painted & placed along the trail by JoAnne Ricci McCusker.



Gift from Eastman Credit Union



The Mendota Trail Conservancy, Inc. is excited to announce the receipt of a \$5,000 donation from **Eastman Credit Union**. This gift will be of significant help in furthering our mission of opening more miles of the trail and will also help with regular trail maintenance needs.

ECU has a well-recognized history of advancing worthy efforts in our area. Kelly Price, President/CEO of Eastman Credit Union, said “ECU believes in supporting the communities we serve by giving back to organizations and projects that help make our region a better place to live and raise families. Our contribution to help the Mendota Trail dream become a reality is an investment in our region’s natural beauty, as well as the quality of life for our communities.”

Two members of our current Board, **Brian Penley** and **Bill Tindall**, were former Eastman employees and have lengthy ties to ECU. Our Board is very appreciative of this support from Eastman Credit Union!



We are greatly appreciative of the following for their in-kind support of our trail effort:

Dustin Davis with Blue Water Ind. Abingdon, VA (help with gravel needs)

Dwayne Ball with Boulder Look Stone Co. Bristol, VA (help with stonework)

Christopher Perrin with Bristol C of C Bristol, TN/VA (podium for our opening)

Greer Pendley with Godsey Supply Bristol, TN (help with material needs)

Jack Dunham with Dunham Productions Bristol, TN (videography help)

Jan Long with Bart Long & Associates Bristol, TN (sound equipment for our opening)

Dean Wilkerson with Star Construction Bristol, TN (salvaged utility poles for trestle repairs and retainer walls)

Eric Fields with The Summit Companies Bristol, TN (consulting and meeting space)

John Taff with Taff & Frye Bristol, VA (salvaged timbers for various needs and their transport)

Jeff Rice with Tri-City Tent & Event Bristol, VA (tent for our opening)



Meet our Contractor

Inland Construction, Inc. from Abingdon, VA is spearheading our efforts to open more trail. Founded in 2002, they have restored numerous trestles in the area, including some on the Creeper Trail and the Tweetsie Trail. For the Mendota Trail they have restored Trestles 3 & 4, completed urgent repairs on Trestles 13 & 14 and are now helping us advance the trail from Mendota, working on Trestles 17, 18, & 19.

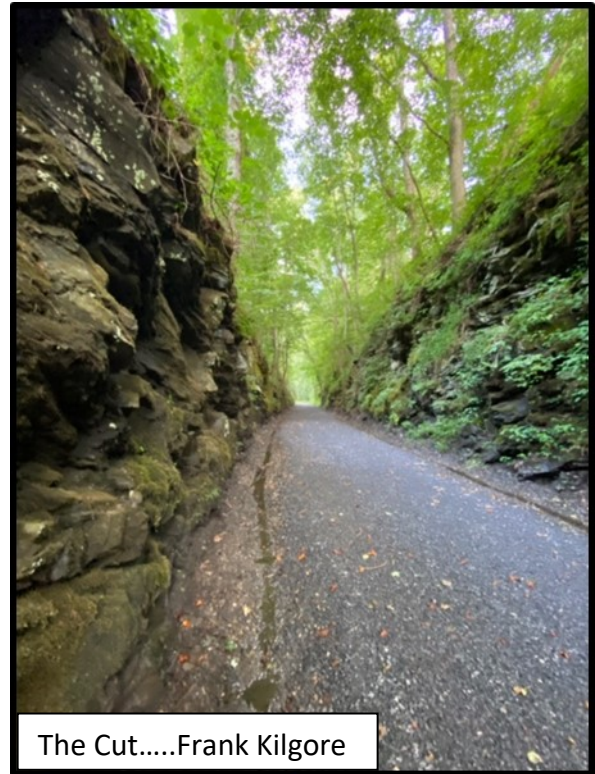
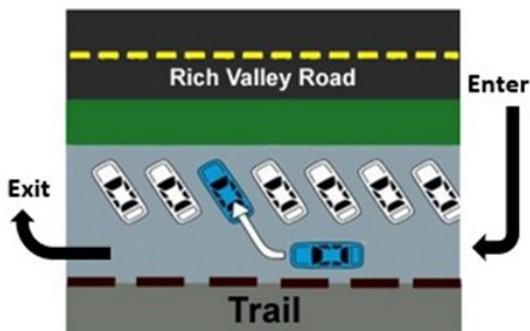
Cullen Barker, Vice President of Inland and a native of Washington County, has been doing this work for 16 years and feels the Mendota Trail is unique. He states, "I've never seen so many people freely give their time and money towards a common goal to better the community. It truly has been an inspiration to myself and my crew." He and his team recognize the full potential of the trail with its blessings of the beautiful scenery it traverses. He adds, "We are grateful to be included in this project and look forward to helping the Mendota Trail Conservancy bring it to completion."

Our Board is equally appreciative to be working with this hardworking and talented team. It has been a great partnership.



Benhams Parking Area

The Parking Area in Benhams was beautified this spring by Inland Construction after they completed work on the Benhams Crossing Trestle. Our volunteer team subsequently seeded grass in the bordering areas and then placed old railroad cross ties to separate the trail path from vehicle traffic. The entrance to the parking area is on the east end off Rich Valley Rd. and the exit is on the west end opposite Benhams Mall. Traffic is one way to maximize safety and the available space. For the same reason, we ask that people park at an angle, at the bottom of the bank facing Rich Valley Rd. We have also placed a port-a-potty at the eastern end for your convenience.



The Cut.....Frank Kilgore

KROGER REWARDS



Shopping at Kroger with a Rewards Plus Card can now earn money for the Mendota Trail!!

Link your Kroger rewards card to the trail and Kroger will make a donation to us every three months.

1. Go to Kroger.com and sign in.
2. From the menu at the top, click on Save, then Kroger Community Rewards.
3. Scroll down and click I'm a customer.
4. Type Mendota Trail in the organization search box then click Save.

The more people that register, the more money we receive!



Cathedral of trees.....Frank Kilgore



Save the Date!



Saturday, October 2nd

Rails to River...Ride for Taylor!

The Virginia Creeper Trail

<http://bit.ly/RideforTaylor>

Saturday, October 23rd

Cut to the Chase... 5 K and one mile walk/run on the Mendota Trail starting in Benhams

April, 2022

Yeti Run (details to follow)

Check out our most recent video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mBgHd3_9RI&t=21s

Thank you, **Jack Dunham!**

Did you know?

The high point of the entire trail (2095 feet elevation) is located at....

- Mile marker 2.7 along Haskell Station Rd.

Elevation in Bristol at the start of the trail is....

- 1740 feet

Elevation in Mendota at the trail-head is....

- 1340 feet

Average cost of trestle restoration (engineering, permits, materials and labor)

- Runs \$800 - \$1,000 per linear foot

Number of trestles in our 12.5 mile trail....

- 17
- 2 were removed by VDOT years ago for roadway reconfigurations

Do you have other items of interest or questions? Submit them to:

info@mendotatrail.org.



Trail Merchandise

We are currently updating our list of volunteers interested in helping with trail maintenance. This can be done one of two ways:

Adopt a Trail Segment

Several volunteers (**Mike Spear, Phil Young, Dana Booher, Oscar Harris, Darin Denton, the Muellers, Jeff Fleming, Jim Lapis**) have adopted trail sections for doing regular maintenance. Other sections are available for TLC and are especially well suited for small groups.

Be available for "on call" workdays

These typically occur on a Saturday morning and last 2 - 4 hours.

Both options primarily entail mowing, weed eating, or trimming vegetation. Please contact us if you are interested in either of the above options.

We are also seeking volunteers who are interested in serving on the following committees:

- Finance
- Fundraising
- Newsletter

If interested in helping your trail become better for the enjoyment of all, please contact us at:

info@mendotatrail.org



Tee shirts and stickers are available at **Mountain Sports, Ltd.** and in Mendota at **TheStore@Mendota**. Please stop by and make a purchase in support of the trail. Please also share some love with these two business partners who do so much to support us. Thank you!





Your Donations Make a Difference!

We are an all-volunteer organization, so your entire contribution is used to help us work to open more trail and maintain currently opened sections.

Please mail your donations of support to:

Mendota Trail

P.O. Box 1322

Bristol, VA 24203

**Thank you so much.
We appreciate you!**

Note: Grant awards and appropriations are earmarked for specific purposes. We are unable to use those funds for our ongoing operational expenses such as regular trail maintenance, insurance premiums, professional services fees, etc. This is why your financial gifts are so important!



TRAIL RULES

- Open dawn to dusk
- No trespassing on adjacent private property
- No motorized vehicles
- No littering, tobacco products, alcohol, or drugs
- No hunting or discharging of firearms
- No animals other than leashed non-vicious dogs. Dog owners liable for injuries. Dog waste must be disposed of properly
- Minors must be accompanied by adults

TRAIL USERS DO SO AT THEIR OWN RISK AND BY USING THE TRAIL WAIVE ALL CLAIMS OF INJURY OR PROPERTY DAMAGE AGAINST TRAIL OWNER, ITS AGENTS, VOLUNTEERS, EMPLOYEES, CONTRACTORS, BOARD MEMBERS AND REPRESENTATIVES.

REMAIN ONLY ON THE SEVEN MILES OF TRAIL THAT ARE CURRENTLY OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. DO NOT TRESPASS ON POSTED SEGMENTS UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

Mendota Trailhead at dusk....Amy Larson



Recent News Articles About Our Trail



https://www.johnsoncitypress.com/living/mendota-trail-gets-help-from-the-state/article_7d5696d2-a11b-11eb-9870-dffe7af12cd6.html (JC Press, 04/25)

https://www.timesnews.net/living/outdoors/mendota-trail-gets-help-from-the-state/article_c1f0fd84-a9bb-11eb-8cf8-83af5a405307.html (Kpt Times-News, 04/30)

https://swvatoday.com/news/article_782dce63-d752-5c9d-92c3-5a2ab6643384.html (SW VA Today, 07/07)

https://heraldcourier.com/news/new-mile-long-section-of-mendota-trail-to-be-officially-opened-july-16/article_fbb2b387-a736-5de7-b478-cbe9f718b284.html (BHC, 07/10)

https://www.johnsoncitypress.com/living/mendota-trail-unveils-new-benhams-crossing/article_6b65ae82-ea49-11eb-8118-db7f16740b98.html (JC Press, 07/24)

https://heraldcourier.com/news/local/supervisor-proposes-outdoor-recreation-authority-to-oversee-county-s-rail-trails/article_184898a4-fa78-5112-9226-af1905bc8a9b.html (BHC 07/05)

STAY CONNECTED!

Please visit our website! Our brochure, video and prior newsletters are available for viewing.

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Twitter @MendotaTrail

#mendotatrail