

Mendota Trail Newsletter



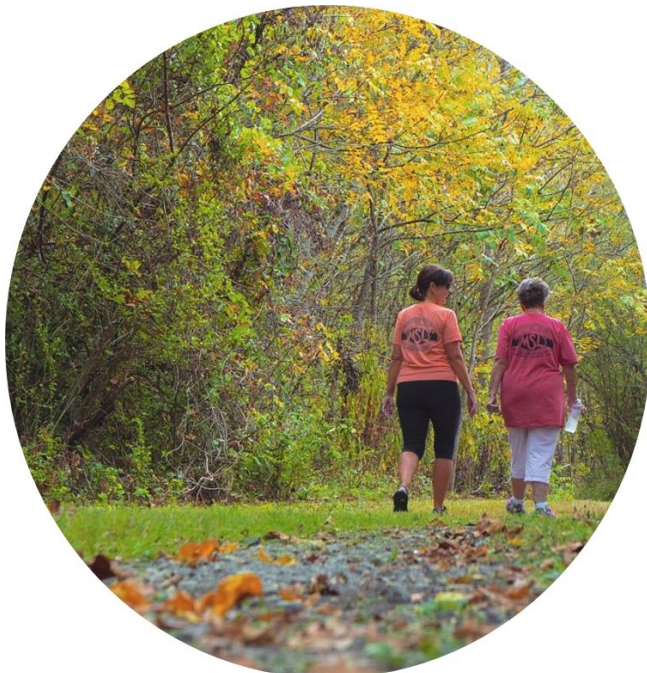
FIRST MILE IS OPEN!

On Saturday, October 7, 2017 supporters of the trail gathered at the Mendota Trailhead for the official grand opening of the first mile.

A few well-placed words, a ribbon cutting and a celebratory walking and biking of the trail took place with a backdrop of perfect weather.

In the days following the official opening, the momentum continued with folks walking, biking and enjoying the Mendota Trail.

The dream becomes a reality.



Folks began using the trail immediately. As one resident exclaimed, "it's like having a park right here in Mendota!"

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REMEMBERING THE PAST...LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



Photo Courtesy of Ken Fleenor

Above Photo: Benham Station Master & Telegraph Operator Cliff Sproles holds a message for the approaching train.



Below Photo: The train and tobacco patch are long gone; yet the railbed left behind provides an opportunity for the future.



Above Photo: This Mendota Trailhead will be replaced with a more permanent one as part of a future Eagle Scout Project.





ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Are you impatient for the entire length of the Mendota Trail to open? We are! However, as we “keep our eye on the prize,” we are working on pieces that must be addressed before that time occurs. Here’s a bit of what we’ve been up to:

- Surveying and engineering studies
- Repair work on trestles
- Obtaining necessary permits
- Erecting signage for the trail
- Legal research
- Opening the first mile in Mendota
- Doing substantial work in readying the first five-mile segment leading from Bristol to Benhams.
- Fundraising
- Clearing the trail (as pictured below)



Volunteers pictured taking a break from clearing the first mile of the Mendota trail. August, 2017.

WHO OWNS THE MENDOTA TRAIL?

Ownership was transferred to Mountain Heritage, Inc. by the City of Bristol, Virginia in the spring of 2016. Attorney Frank Kilgore is Project Manager and General Counsel for Mountain Heritage. Mountain Heritage, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) organization:

“Dedicated to the improvement of education, health and natural resource conservation in the Appalachian Mountains.”

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We need enthusiastic people to aid in our efforts. Areas needing volunteers are:

- Grant writing
- Trail clearing and maintenance
- Newsletter & correspondence
- Publicity/marketing
- Fundraising
- Event planning

If you have an interest in volunteering, please call:

PHONE: 276-762-7500

FUNDING NEEDS

Our accomplishments and work on the Mendota Trail have been exclusively supported by private donations. We strive to be diligent stewards of these gifts.

However, much remains to be done as we work to make the Mendota Trail dream a reality. We are continuing to raise funds for:

- Surveying and engineering studies
- Materials and labor costs for trestle repair
- Developing adjoining parking areas
- Website development
- Grant writing to access private and public funding
- Trail maintenance

If you wish to donate to the Mendota Trail, make your check to Mountain Heritage, Inc. and write "Mendota Trail" in the memo space. You may mail your tax-exempt donation to:

Mountain Heritage, Inc.
PO Box 1259
St. Paul, VA 24283

Or, if more convenient, drop off at:

Mountain Sports, Ltd.
1021 Commonwealth Ave.
Bristol, VA 24201

Gifts of stock, land, vehicles, and other items of value are also welcome. **Contributions can be made as a memorial donation or in someone's name.** Thank you...we are grateful for your support.



TRAIL BENEFITS

Upon completion, the Mendota Trail will improve the quality of life in our community and be a potential driver of local economic development.

The 2017 Virginia Outdoor Plan discusses the benefits of trails:

They attract tourists and tourists' revenue. They have historical, scenic and cultural appeal. Trails provide a transportation alternative and play a vital role in physical, mental and spiritual well-being. They appeal to a wide variety of demographic groups, become community showplaces, and are important in protecting our environments and landscapes. But most important are the joy, fun and recreational value they bring to local residents.

The Mendota Trail will make Bristol an even better place to live and will revitalize the communities of Benhams and Mendota.

RULES FOR TRAIL USE

Only officially announced portions of the trail are open to the public. The rest of the corridor is closed due to dangerous conditions; non-permitted usage is solely at the user's own risk.

Additional rules are:

- The trail is open dawn to dusk
- No trespassing on adjacent private property
- No motorized vehicles
- No hunting or discharge of firearms
- No animals other than leashed, non-vicious dogs; 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 MOUNTAIN HERITAGE, INC., ITS AGENTS, VOLUNTEERS, EMPLOYEES, CONTRACTORS, BOARD MEMBERS AND REPRESENTATIVES.

THE FIRST NEWSLETTER

We hope you have enjoyed our first newsletter. As we plan for future newsletters, we are seeking photographs and history appropriate for future editions. If you have something that you feel might be of interest, we'd love to speak with you. Please call:

PHONE: 276-762-7500



MAKING HISTORY

Nine-year old Arianna Hernandez is pictured cutting the ribbon on October 7 at the Mendota Trail Grand Opening.

TRAILS GENERATE REVENUE

A Virginia Tech study of New River Trail State Park and the Virginia Creeper Trail reports that the total tax revenue attributed to the trail in Galax was more than \$238,000, or 2 percent of the city's total 2010 tax revenue. Average expenditures for each group of trail users were approximately \$133 for lodging, \$44 at restaurants and another \$32 for food and drinks. In addition, trail users spent approximately \$43 on gasoline, oil and repairs and \$3 for trail use, entry and parking fees.

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoor Plan