

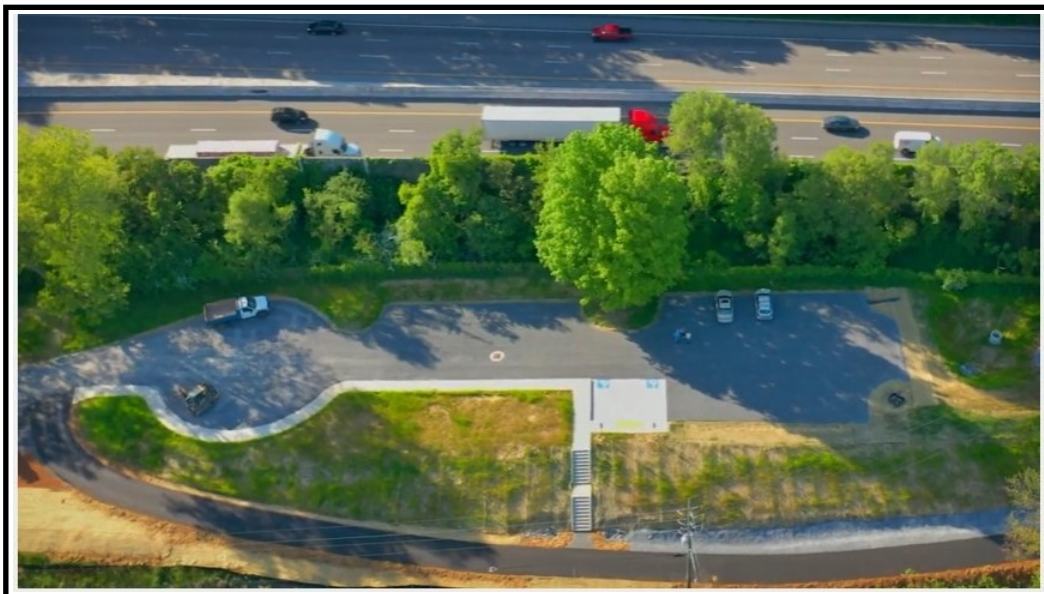
# Mendota Trail Newsletter

## The Bristol Trailhead is Open Again!

The construction vehicles have vacated after the 'Big Dig' was completed during the last week of May and safety fencing was installed in early June. We officially opened the gate along Island Road on Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup>. It was gratifying to witness all the activity in the parking area over the course of the weekend, including many first-time users and folks at both ends of the age spectrum (including a 90-year-old gentleman using a cane). We also saw individuals in wheelchairs accompanied by family members.

This undertaking began in July 2018 when we applied for a federal grant, the Recreational Trails Program, with in-kind support from Bristol, VA. The grant was awarded to us in January 2019 and was administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. We completed the Preliminary Engineering Phase in spring 2021 and began the Construction Phase shortly thereafter. The latter phase required almost seven months on site.

Site improvements included parking area expansion, installation of a storm water management system and construction of an access ramp leading to the start of the trail. The ramp and first 0.4 miles of the trail were paved with asphalt so they would be fully compliant with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) guidelines



Our engineering firm was Tysinger, Hampton & Partners, Inc. out of Johnson City, TN. Special appreciation is shared with Gary and Nathan for their long hours and professional guidance. Construction was performed by King General Contractors, Inc. based in Bristol, VA. We appreciate the expertise shared by Jeff, Ben & Wes. Finally, big thanks to Kristal and Kellie with Virginia DCR in helping us navigate the intricacies of a federal grant project.



## Bristol Trailhead continued ...



Paved section of trail leading out of Bristol

Future improvements will include the construction of a covered pavilion later this summer. This project will be generously supported by Noon Rotary of Bristol, VA-TN. An Eagle Scout candidate is building a trash can receptacle for the site. Longer term, we will add landscaping and erect a permanent restroom facility.

Like the rest of the trail, the trailhead is closed at dusk. Our friends at the Bristol Virginia Police Department will patrol the area periodically at night.

Please come out and enjoy our trail!



We thank the following for their support of the trail in special ways...

- Wade Massie of PennStuart, Abingdon, VA, for numerous hours of legal assistance
- Eric Fields and the Summit Companies, Bristol, TN, for providing meeting space and assistance with updating our website
- Dennis Leonard with Tri-State Sign, Inc., Bristol, TN, for help with signage designs for our trail
- Washington County Master Gardeners for assistance with the Bristol Trailhead
- Friends of Steele Creek, Bristol, TN, for providing plantings for erosion control
- Blue Water Industries, Abingdon, VA, for providing discounted gravel pricing

## Free Little Library in Benhams



**Becky Hobbs** has contributed a Free Little Library to the Benhams Community. It is located adjacent to the trail, near the bottom of the driveway entrance for the parking area.

As a former teacher in the Washington County School System and nearby resident, Becky felt this would be a great addition for Benhams. Becky said she did so because she loves to read and she loves her community and the Mendota Trail. Thank you, Becky!

The library was erected on April 19<sup>th</sup>, a colder than expected day, with the help of **Phil Young, Bob & Ellen Mueller**.

Please stop by and exchange a book!



Phil, Ellen & Becky

## Who Found the Golden Egg?



Our trail treated the Benhams Child Development Center (Head Start) to an Easter Egg hunt on April 13<sup>th</sup>. Great spring weather helped make the event an overwhelming success. It was amazing to watch the 25 or so kiddos scurry about, filling their buckets with eggs. Big smiles and laughter accompanied their energy. The plastic eggs were complemented with goodies, including crayons and stickers. The volunteer team included **Terry & Kiku Harvey** and **Bob & Ellen Mueller**. The teachers were very appreciative and shared they use the trail several times a week to help burn off some of the energy their charges seem to always have!



## Did you know?

**Q:** Why isn't there a Trestle 2 or Trestle 16?

**A:** Both were removed years ago when VDOT did roadway improvements at these locations. Replacement of these trestles is currently well beyond the scope of our budget. However, we have developed bypass routes to allow continuity of the trail.



Two views of Trestle 2, known as Doriot's Trestle

Does anyone have an old photo of Trestle 16 that formerly crossed Little Wolf Run Rd. (616)? Please submit other questions you may have to: [info@mendotatrail.org](mailto:info@mendotatrail.org)

## Support the Trail While Shopping at Amazon!

1. Go to [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) & register to be a customer.
2. Go to [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com) & sign in with your amazon email & password.
3. In the space for the name of the charitable organization, type Mendota Trail Conservancy. You only need to do this once. The site will remember the trail as your charity.
4. Start Shopping.

Amazon will make a quarterly donation to the trail. A win – win for everyone!

## 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!

## Meet Tom and Vickie Mitoraj

The Mitorajs have been ardent supporters of the Mendota Trail since they built a home in 1995 in Washington County that has about 0.4 miles of frontage on the trail. Vickie regularly adorns a portion of the trail with creative outdoor decorations (see her talents in photo below). Tom is a Bristol pediatrician who joined Dr. Marion Murray in 1991.



He hails from Louisville, KY. Vickie is from Glade Spring, VA. Several years ago, they committed to sponsoring restoration of Trestle 10. That work is currently in progress. This trestle is nicknamed the 'baby' since it is only 14 feet long. How fitting for a pediatrician! The trestle will be called "GiGi's Crossing" in honor of Grandma Vickie and the eleven people who call her by that name!

Tom & Vickie recently gave back to Bristol in another way.... they lovingly restored the I. C. Fowler House at 417 Spencer St., Bristol, VA. This home was built in 1867. Several years were devoted to the project. Their attention to preserving its past complemented the inclusion of modern conveniences and amenities. Vickie's eye for décor is reflected throughout. They showcased the result of their efforts at an open house in May 2021. Vickie serves on the Executive Committee of the Bristol Historical Society.



I.C. Fowler House



Tom and Vickie are very active in their church, Beech Grove UMC, where they both teach Sunday School, sing in the choir, and serve on the Church Administrative Board, as chairs of several committees. They are both very involved in Bible Study Fellowship, a non-denominational, international organization with the mission to produce passionate commitment to Christ, His Word, and His Church, with a vision to magnify God and mature His people. Tom is Children's Director and Vickie serves as a Group Leader for the Tri-Cities area classes.

Tom & Vickie with Preservation Award

## Spreading the Word....

We continue to tell our story to all who want to hear it! **Ellen Mueller** offered a few brief comments at the opening celebration for TVA's New Trail System at South Holston on April 5<sup>th</sup>. (see article page 11). She also shared our video and a PowerPoint presentation with the **Alive 55** group at the Mendota Community Center on May 10<sup>th</sup> with about fifteen in attendance. Bob and Ellen provided an update to a well-attended meeting of the **Noon Rotary Club of Bristol, VA-TN** on May 24<sup>th</sup>. We last spoke to this group in January 2018.... quite a bit has happened on the trail since then! The Rotary group will be our sponsor for the pavilion that will be erected later this summer at the Bristol Trailhead.



Rotary Meeting at the Bristol Train Station  
(a most fitting venue...!)



Mendota Community Center



### STAY CONNECTED!

Please visit our website!  
Our brochure, video and prior newsletters are available for viewing.  
[www.mendotatrail.org](http://www.mendotatrail.org)



[www.facebook.com/mendotatrailblazer](http://www.facebook.com/mendotatrailblazer)



Instagram @mendota\_trail



Twitter @MendotaTrail

#mendotatrail



## Save the Date

07/03	Grand Opening Virginia Creeper Trail Visitor Center Caboose, Damascus Town Park
TBD, likely late summer	Groundbreaking for Rotary Pavilion, Bristol Trailhead Bristol, VA
10/01	Rails to River Ride for Taylor Virginia Creeper Trail, Abingdon, VA
10/22	5 K run / 1 mile walk "Cut to the Chase" Mendota Trail, Benhams, VA
TBD, late October	Trick or Treat for Benhams Head Start School
04/29/23	Yeti Run Mendota Trail with extensions, Benhams, VA



We are updating our volunteer list. Our need for help continues to grow as we open more sections of the trail.

Needs include:

- mowing, especially if you have access to a riding mower and a trailer
- weed eating
- cutting vines from trees adjacent to the trail
- trimming back vegetative growth along sides of the trail
- root removal from the trail surface
- spraying weed growth where needed
- cleaning trail signage with soap and water
- sowing grass adjacent to the trail

Our philosophy is that volunteers support the trail at their pleasure. There is no obligation. Help when you can, even if it is just for an hour or two at a time. We typically work Saturday mornings from 8:30 AM - 11:00 AM or so. Weekdays are available as an alternative for those who don't otherwise have obligations during that time.

As a second option, several volunteers have "adopted" short trail segments for regular maintenance needs, primarily mowing and cutting back adjacent vegetative overgrowth. This work is performed independently as needed.

Contact [info@mendotatrail.org](mailto:info@mendotatrail.org) if you are interested in being of help. We thank you!

## Wildlife along the Trail



The Winking Ogre



Bear paw (or Yeti print ?)  
on unopened section of trail



Otter dens and slides along Abrams Creek



Red Salamander sunning on a rock in  
the 'Cut'

## Update on Trestle Restorations in the Gorge

Work continues on several trestle projects in the area known as the “Gorge.” The focus is on Trestles 11 through 15. When completed, this will add about 3 more miles of trail. This remote section of trail is particularly spectacular, as it meanders back and forth along Little Wolf Run Creek. It is bordered by steep wooded hillsides. Each season offers something entirely different to behold!

This work is being funded by a DCR Appropriation from the Commonwealth of Virginia supported by our amazing local legislative delegation:

**Senator Todd Pillion**

**Delegate Israel O’Quinn**

**Delegate Terry Kilgore**

**Delegate Will Wampler**

**Brian Penley**, Vice President of the Mendota Trail Conservancy Board, is our project manager. Our engineering firm is Tysinger, Hampton & Partners, Inc. out of Johnson City. We have contracted with Inland Construction out of Abingdon for construction services. Administration of the Appropriation is overseen by Mount Rogers Planning District.

**Caution:** This area of the trail is an active construction zone. It is gated and closed to the public. Please be patient and enjoy this section when it is opened later this year.



Trestle 11, November 2020



Trestle 12, September 2021

**Stay tuned for photos of the 5 fully restored trestles in the next newsletter!**

## Mendota Trail Now Using Virginia Outdoors Foundation Award

*Funds being used to support the further development of the Bristol Trailhead*



The Mendota Trail Conservancy is using funding previously awarded by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation for site improvements and amenities at the trailhead. So far, the funding has helped cover the deposit for the pavilion which will be delivered later in the summer and allowed us to purchase a picnic table. We have noticed the table, located in the shade under a big maple tree, is a popular resting spot for our trail users. Thank you, Virginia Outdoors Foundation!



## Enjoying the Outdoors!



Washington Co. Parks and Recreation organized a group hike for youth on the Mendota Trail on June 10<sup>th</sup>. As **Eva Beale** shared...a little "stop texting, start living" time. We are always glad to witness how the trail benefits our community by getting people outdoors to enjoy nature and have physical activity.





## Check out Mendota Expeditions...



### Go Tubing on The North Fork of the Holston River!

Open 1-5 pm most days. Call ahead (276) 696-2742 to guarantee a launch time. Please arrive early to read and sign liability waiver, pay, and get life jacket fitted. Walk ups are definitely allowed, but there are no guarantees that tubes will be available. Groups are encouraged to call ahead. Located off of Appaloosa Rd. in Mendota. Visit the website:

<https://mendotaexpeditions.godaddysites.com/home%2Fcontact%2F2022-blog>



<https://www.onlyinyourstate.com/virginia/mendota-trail-swinging-bridge-va/>

## TVA's New Trail System at South Holston

The Mendota Trail fully supports other trail attractions in our area. We hope our region will increasingly be recognized as a premier destination for outdoor recreation. Accordingly, we want to give a BIG shout out to 6 miles of multi-use trails that were opened by TVA in early April in the South Holston Dam Area. These trails will provide fun and excitement for all ages and skill levels.

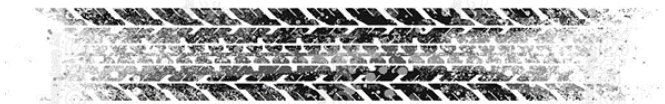


The four trails are located just six miles from downtown Bristol at 364 South Holston Dam Rd. (across from the wastewater treatment plant). TVA is making outstanding efforts to make our area one of the best in the country to live, work and PLAY.

Here is a link for more information from the Northeast TN Tourism Association:

<https://northeasttennessee.org/bike-mountains-along-south-holston-in-bristol/>

We recommend you stop by for a visit!



**PLEASE DONATE!  
THANK YOU**

Please donate to support our mission of fully opening our 12.5 mile trail. Your past support has resulted in the measurable outcome of opening eight miles of trail to date!

Our appropriations and grants are specifically earmarked for various projects. The trail has other needs that are best served with private funding. We humbly ask that you consider doing so. We thank you!

Please visit us on PayPal or mail your contribution to:

**Mendota Trail Conservancy, Inc.**

P O Box 1322

Bristol, VA 24203

Donations may also be dropped off at Mountain Sports, Ltd. on Commonwealth Avenue

Mendota Trail Conservancy, Inc. is a qualified 501 (c)(3) organization.

Gifts are tax deductible.



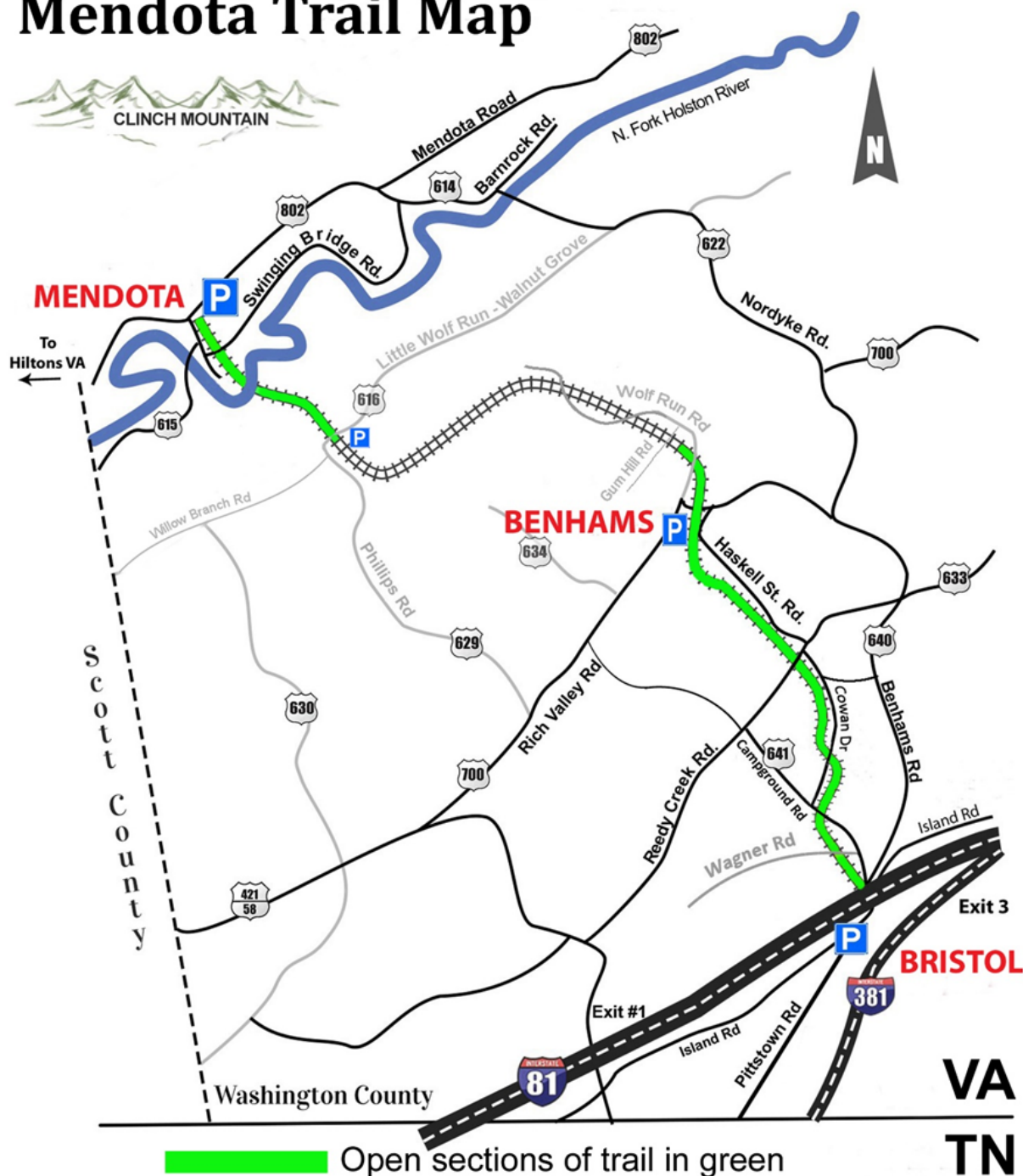
## TRAIL RULES

- Open dawn to dusk
- No trespassing on adjacent private property
- No motorized vehicles
- No littering, tobacco products, alcohol or drugs
- No hunting or discharge 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 EIGHT MILES OF TRAIL THAT ARE CURRENTLY OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. DO NOT TRESPASS ON UNOPENED SECTIONS OR POSTED SEGMENTS UNDER CONSTRUCTION.**

# Mendota Trail Map



## Parking Locations:

**Bristol Trailhead:** beside 1788 Island Rd.

**Benhams:** 7720 Rich Valley Rd.

**Mendota Trailhead:** across from 2421 Mendota Rd.