

# Mendota Trail Newsletter

## The Gorge is now Open!

A celebration took place at the Mendota Trailhead on October 14<sup>th</sup> to officially open 2.5 more miles of trail on our northern end. This was made possible by the restoration of five trestles located in the section known as “the gorge.” This has been long anticipated as it is an especially scenic and tranquil section of the trail as it meanders over creek crossings and is hugged by steep wooded hillsides. Trestles 11 – 15 were challenging projects as they were quite remote and had suffered extensive damage from years of neglect. Two of the trestles, 13 & 14, had been targeted in our 2020 “Save the Trestles” campaign as they were close to being lost from the ravages of erosion and nature’s power of rushing water flowing below them in Wolf Run Creek.

Professional engineering services for the project were provided by **Tysinger, Hampton & Partners, Inc.** based out of Johnson City, TN. This was largely funded by a generous private donor. **Inland Construction, Inc.** from Abingdon, VA completed the restoration work. Our dedicated volunteer team played an instrumental role in advancing the project as well, especially our on site project managers, **Brian Penley** and **Bill Tindall**.



Trestle 15, before & after



Trestle 14, before & after



## Opening the Gorge Celebration...continued

The construction was largely funded by a 2022 DCR appropriation for \$350,000 sponsored by Delegate Terry Kilgore and supported by other members of our Southwest Virginia legislative delegation including Senator Todd Pillion, Delegate Israel O'Quinn and Delegate Will Wampler. Washington County funded costs related to the administration of the appropriation.



Trestle 13, before & after



Trestle 12, before & after



Trestle 11, before & after

It was a beautiful sunny day with autumn colors on full display on Clinch Mountain. The event was attended by over 100 supporters and well-wishers. Speakers included Tyler District Supervisor Saul Hernandez, members of our Southwest Virginia delegation (noted above), Cody Mumpower from Congressman Griffith's office and Governor Glenn Youngkin.



## Opening the Gorge Celebration...continued



Supervisor Saul Hernandez



Delegate Will Wampler



Delegate Israel O'Quinn



Delegate Terry Kilgore



Cody Mumpower



Senator Todd Pillion



Governor Glenn Youngkin



Ribbon Cutting

## Opening the Gorge Celebration...continued

Mendota has been special for its role in being central to the development of our trail. In October 2017 we celebrated the opening of our first mile at this same location. This effort was spearheaded by Mountain Heritage, Inc. under the leadership of Mr. Frank Kilgore. The Mendota Trail Conservancy, Inc. opened almost one more mile here in October 2021 following the restoration of trestles 17-19.

We now have four more trestles awaiting restoration to allow for the opening of the remaining 1.5 miles of trail. Some of this work is currently underway. We anticipate the trail will be fully connected from Bristol to Mendota in mid-2023. We thank all our donors, volunteers, elected officials and governmental agencies for their support!

### Bristol Trailhead Update

Major construction has now been completed related to storm water management, expanding the parking area and constructing an access ramp to the trail that is ADA compliant. The project also included building a 0.5 mile section of trail that also conforms to ADA guidelines. This effort was completed in late June thanks to a Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Grant sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration and administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. Our general contractor for the project was **King General Contractors, Inc.**, based in Bristol, VA.



**We thank everyone for their patience while this project was underway!** We have already witnessed a significant increase in trail usage. A port-a-potty, picnic table and a trash receptacle have since been added as on-site amenities.



In October, we erected a pavilion at the trailhead. This was funded by the Rotary Club of Bristol, VA-TN. (See article next page). Picnic tables for the pavilion have been ordered and are due to arrive by early December. We planted sixteen trees in November and plan to do additional landscaping soon. A permanent restroom facility will be installed in late spring/early summer of 2023. This will be followed with a full asphalted entrance drive and additional landscaping and hard-scaping.



## Rotary Pavilion at the Bristol Trailhead

Site preparation for the pavilion was completed by **Inland Construction** based out of Abingdon, VA in September. This included grading and pouring of the colored concrete pad and then applying sealer after the concrete had cured. The pavilion arrived in early October from our Amish country vendor, **Country Lane Gazebos**, based in New Holland, PA. We encountered some challenges unloading the 4,800 pound bundle from the trailer, but were able to do so after we rallied multiple members of our volunteer team on short notice.

We started erecting the structure on site the next day. The effort was largely supported by our volunteers, complemented by two associates, **David Villanueva** and **Stanley Couch**, from Inland Construction. The project proved to be more daunting than anticipated, but we prevailed with the excellent crew we had assembled. The result was equal to what we hoped to accomplish!

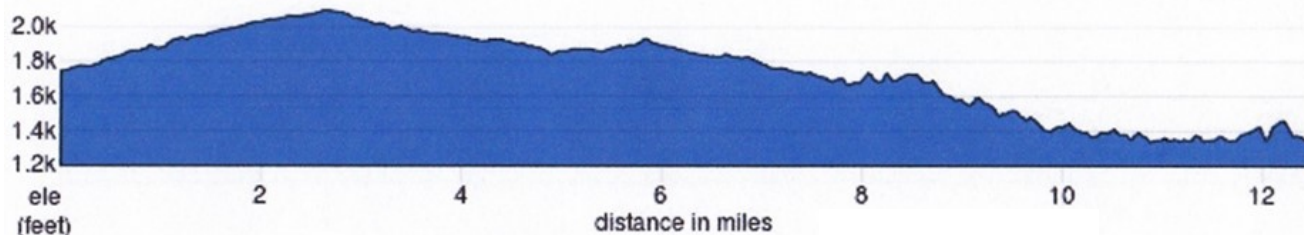


Primary volunteers included: **Brian Penley, Phil Young, Randy Olson & Ben Cowan.** Others also pitched in including **Jim Lapis, John Lapis, Bob & Ellen Mueller.**

We are extremely grateful to the **Rotary Club of Bristol, VA-TN** for their funding support of the pavilion. We are also appreciative to **Virginia Outdoors Foundation** for other funding used in support of the pavilion.

Picnic tables for the pavilion should be arriving by mid-December.

## Trail Profile



**Bristol**



**Mendota**





## 2022 Cut to the Chase event a big success!

The Mendota Trail hosted its second 1 mile & 5K run/walk in Benhams on October 22nd. With 208 people registered, it was a much larger event than 2021. The participants on this chilly but sunny morning enjoyed being on a beautiful section of the trail, crossing trestles and viewing the Cut. **WeRunEvents** timed the 5K. A plinko game for prizes, oversized chair for photos and seasonal tastings were provided by **Mountain Dew**.

It was organized by **Jerry Grantham** and **Ellen Mueller**. Trail volunteers who helped included **Ben Cowan, Darin & Amy Denton, Garry Eades, Ken Fleenor, Rick & Doreen Heppert, Bob Mueller, Brian Penley** and **Phil Young**. Photography was provided by **Rick Hamm**.

Thank you to all for supporting the trail!



Photos by  
Rick Hamm





## 5K & 1 Mile Sponsors

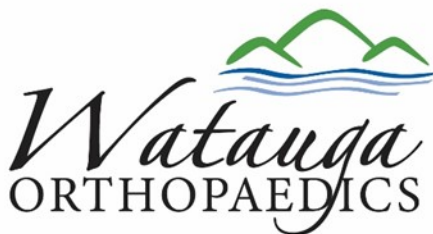
### Platinum Level



### Gold Level



### Silver Level



### Bronze Level





## Eagle Scout Project

Trash receptacles were recently installed at the trailheads in Bristol and Mendota, thanks to an Eagle Scout Project led by **Jasper Cheers**. These are welcome additions to our trail amenities at these two locations! We thank the scouts from Troop 8 for these improvements to our trail.



Pictured: Jasper Cheers, Steve Cheers, Dusty Branson, Joe Hall and Phil Young

## 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



We are always looking for opportunities for sharing updates on the trail with our broader community. **Ellen Mueller** has done so by providing PowerPoint presentations to the following groups since May....

- Rotary Club of Bristol, VA-TN 05/24
- Bristol Regional Medical Center administrative staff leadership on 07/14
- Bristol Regional Medical Center medical staff leadership on 09/08



07/14 at Bristol Regional Medical Center

Ellen's talks were supported by **Randy Olson** and **Bob Mueller**.





## Thank you to our Southwest Virginia Legislative Delegation



The Mendota Trail has been extremely fortunate to receive support from multiple sources over the years.... individual private donors, foundations, grants, corporations, nonprofit organizations and public dollars from our county, state, and federal government. This has been complemented by thousands of hours of volunteer effort and in-kind support from numerous quarters.

Our Virginia **Senator, Dr. Todd Pillion**, has stepped forward three times to support funding on behalf of the Mendota Trail. His efforts have been enthusiastically endorsed by our entire Southwest Virginia legislative team, including **Delegates Terry Kilgore, Israel O'Quinn and Will Wampler**.

The most recent appropriation for FY 2023 will be especially impactful as it will allow us to complete restorations of the final four trestles. This will enable us to open the *ENTIRE* 12.5 mile trail to the public some time in 2023.

These elected officials recognize the enormity of the trail's potential for the citizenry of our broader community of Washington County and Southwest Virginia. Trail usage and entrepreneurial initiatives are growing regularly. More and more individuals are taking advantage of the trail for the benefit of their physical and mental health. The trail is serving as an additional outdoor recreational attraction for tourists visiting our area. The full slate of the numerous benefits of the trail is now becoming a reality.

We are sincerely grateful to the entire Southwest Virginia legislative delegation for their vision and support of this regional asset.

## Welcome to TRI !

How about this as a welcome home? How about this for helping to steer visitors to our ever-growing trail? We thank **Explore Bristol** for this recognition!

Bristol, along with the surrounding region, is increasingly being recognized as a center for outdoor recreation, a quickly expanding area of our tourism economy. The Mendota Trail plays a central role in being part of that.







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

In memory of **Rex & Justine Eades**

In memory of **Herman Eller**

In memory of **Ron Crockett**

In memory of **John Iskra**

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

Healing Hands  
Cheers to **25** Years!  
Health Center



Thank you for your service to our community.  
Together we are helping Bristol become a  
better & healthier place to live!



Rx: Take time for yourself.  
Enjoy a dose of nature.



[www.MendotaTrail.org](http://www.MendotaTrail.org)

## Walking Groups on the Trail?



Are you interested in starting or participating in a social walking group on the trail? It would be a great way to socialize and get some exercise! Meeting points could be in Mendota, Benhams or Bristol. Hours would be flexible, and price of admission is very reasonable....FREE!

Please let us know if you form such a group.





Special thanks to **Johnnie Keene** and our friends at Virginia Highlands Community College for machining metal signage for the memorial bench for Dr. John Iskra. This connection was facilitated by volunteer **Karen Cheers** who is an employee at VHCC.

We also want to share special thanks with **Dick Olson** and the staff at the Meadowview Research Farms of The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) for American Chestnut and black oak seedlings planted at our Bristol and Mendota trailheads. **Vasiliy Lakoba**, Director of Research at the Farms, coordinated providing the seedlings.

Thanks, too, to **Dwayne Ball** for donating an old railroad switch from the spur in Saltville that led to the former chemical plant. It is now located in Benhams.

We also thank our vendors who have supported us with discounted pricing or special assistance, including:

**Ready Mix USA**

**Inland Construction**

**Tri-State Sign**

**Blue Water Gravel**

**Dwayne Miller of Miller & Miller Construction**

**World Printing**

**Trailhead Designs**

**Eric Fields and The Summit Companies**



On November 4<sup>th</sup>, **Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine** recognized Top Adventure Towns in their publication. Finalists were selected from 100 towns in the Southeast for being 'the best places to live, visit, and recreate.' Bristol was awarded top spot in the medium size town category!

Our neighbors in Abingdon and Damascus were awarded top spots in the small town category and tiny town category, respectively. Asheville won in the large town category. We feel we're in good company!

Bristol and Washington County, VA are increasingly being recognized as a hub for outdoor recreation whether it be hiking, biking, fishing, camping, water activities, rock climbing, among others. Recreational tourism is a growing segment of our local economy. We know the Mendota Trail is increasingly contributing to that dynamic, as witnessed by the growing number of out-of-state license plates we are noticing in the parking lots of our trailheads.

Here is a link to the full article in Blue Ridge Outdoors:

[https://www.blueridgeoutdoors.com/go-outside/top-adventure-towns-2/?goal=0\\_2f4e1e8384-83828c0216-245539060&mc\\_cid=83828c0216&mc\\_eid=688ab58e6f](https://www.blueridgeoutdoors.com/go-outside/top-adventure-towns-2/?goal=0_2f4e1e8384-83828c0216-245539060&mc_cid=83828c0216&mc_eid=688ab58e6f)



## Trail Merchandise

Is Santa stumped this year? Stop by Mountain Sports, Ltd. in Bristol, VA to purchase a tee shirt, hat, trail calendar or other merchandise in support of the trail!



### 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](https://www.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!

### Support the Trail While Shopping at Amazon!



1. Go to [www.amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) & register to be a customer.
2. Go to [www.smile.amazon.com](https://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!





## SAVE THE DATE

Troublesome Hollow 50 K Yeti Run

04/29/23

Cut to the Chase 5 K & 1 mile run/walk

10/21/23

## Trail Etiquette

**Courtesy is Contagious!**

- You don't make a good hood ornament. Please stop at all road crossings.
- This is a trail, not a speedway. If riding a bike, keep it under 20 mph when around others.
- The trail is not a silent disco. Please keep one ear open.
- Bikers defer to walkers, runners, and dog walkers for right of way.
- Stay to the right side of the trail. Practice Southern hospitality by saying "on your left" or using your bell when passing.
- Please carry out your trash.
- Please clean up after your dog.

Thanks to Greenville County, SC  
Parks Recreation & Tourism

Notify us at [info@mendotatrail.org](mailto:info@mendotatrail.org) if you see any issues or trail maintenance needs.

## 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 ELEVEN MILES OF TRAIL THAT ARE CURRENTLY OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. DO NOT TRESPASS ON UNOPENED SECTIONS OR POSTED SEGMENTS UNDER CONSTRUCTION.**



## Thank You, Ballad Health!



**Ballad Health** recently provided support to our Bristol Trailhead effort with a significant gift to further develop the property and to partially fund permanent restrooms at the site. It is fully expected that this will help grow our trail usage.

Some of the funding has already been used for the purchase and installation of trail counters so we can better quantitate current and future usage.

Ballad Health designated the trail as a Community Health Improvement Site (CHI) for the population health of the Appalachian Highlands. We have been tasked to help address issues related to overweight/obese youth in our area. In addition, we will be partnering with Ballad Health to 'create a regional culture where organizations work across sectors and geographies to support educational, economic and health outcomes through Collective Impact.' We have explored several programming options in support of this objective.

We thank Ballad Health for their support and for their commitment to improving the health and well-being of the broader Bristol community.



## King University Community Service Day



On August 20th, several students from King University helped with trail maintenance as a community service project. The focus was on trimming back summer growth from trees and shrubs to widen the trail. Volunteers who assisted in the effort were **Phil Young** and **Bob & Ellen Mueller**.

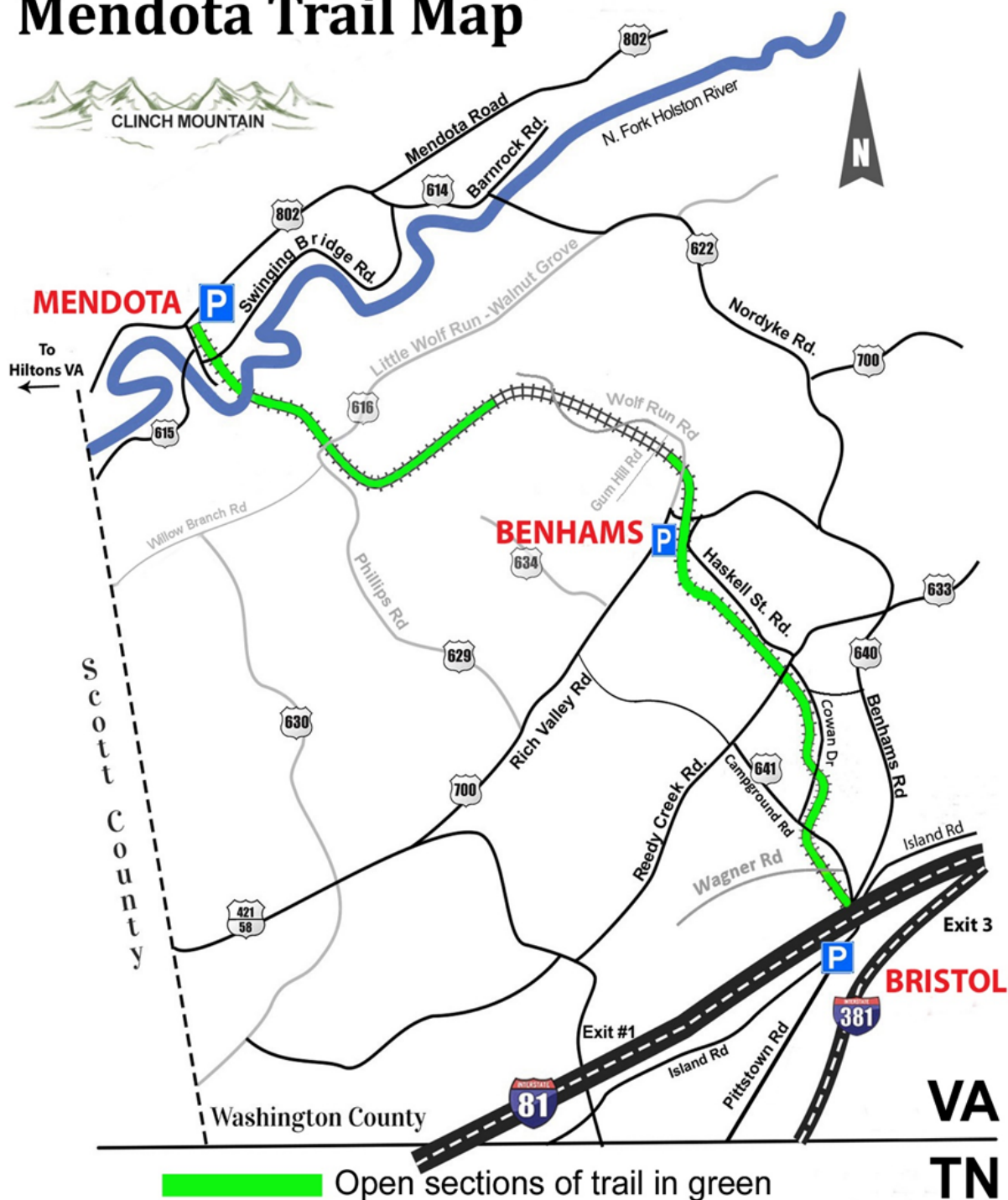
Thank you to these students for giving their time and assistance to enhance the trail experience for everyone.







# Mendota Trail Map



## Parking Locations:

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

**Benhams:** 7720 Rich Valley Rd.

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