

VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS<sup>®</sup>  
PARTNERSHIP MARKETING INITIATIVES  
2017 - 2019



# MAXIMIZING THE TOURISM POTENTIAL FOR VIRGINIA COMMUNITIES

## **PARTNERSHIP MARKETING DIVISION**

### **Who are we?**

Partnership Marketing is focused on helping Virginia's tourism industry partners maximize their tourism potential. We assist in developing Strategic Tourism Plans, providing financial assistance in building products to eliminate voids in communities as well as administering a Marketing Leverage Grant program to help promote an area's tourism assets. From planning to building to advising to financing, we cover a lot of territory in our mission of helping grow Virginia's tourism industry.





**HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?**



## How can we help you?

Each calendar year, Partnership Marketing identifies on-going programs as well as new initiatives to benefit industry partners. In 2017 and through 2019, Partnership Marketing will assist with the following:

### Strategic Community Tourism Planning

With traditional industries and economies changing, more and more communities are looking to tourism as a part of their economic engine. Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) assists communities in tourism planning to grow traveler expenditures as well as developing competitive products, businesses and experiences.

Over the past 10 years, the tourism development team has assisted more than 60 communities and organizations with creating and implementing tourism strategic plans, with an estimated value of more than \$900,000 in services provided (valuing each planning project at a conservative \$15,000 each).

### Success is:

- Plan implementation by all 60 organizations/localities that we have assisted.
- Revisited/new plans for all 60 organizations/localities (ongoing planning).
- Plans developed for Virginia localities counties/cities that don't currently have plans.

<p><b>YOU SHOULD NOT BE WORKING.</b></p> 	<p><b>YOU SHOULD BE AT THE RIVER, POUNDING OYSTERS WITH AN OTTER.</b></p>		<p><b>LEARN HOW TO CRUSH FRIDAY</b> <a href="#">GO ▶</a></p> <p><b>VIRGINIA IS FOR OYSTER LOVERS</b></p>
<p><b>YOU SHOULD NOT BE WORKING.</b></p> 	<p><b>YOU SHOULD BE ON A MOUNTAINTOP, FIST-BUMPING A BALD EAGLE.</b></p>		<p><b>LEARN HOW TO CRUSH FRIDAY</b> <a href="#">GO ▶</a></p> <p><b>VIRGINIA IS FOR MOUNTAIN LOVERS</b></p>
<p><b>YOU SHOULD NOT BE WORKING.</b></p> 	<p><b>YOU SHOULD BE AT A BREWERY, HITTING THE HOPS LIKE A BULLFROG.</b></p>		<p><b>LEARN HOW TO CRUSH FRIDAY</b> <a href="#">GO ▶</a></p> <p><b>VIRGINIA IS FOR CRAFT BEER LOVERS</b></p>

## Project Time-Off Initiative / CRUSH FRIDAY

Americans are leaving unused paid vacation days on the table at an alarming rate. Last year 662 million vacation days were unused. For Virginia, this loss equates to \$3 Billion in lost spending potential. So why are American workers—especially Millennials—so bad at taking a break? Blame it on the fact that many are just starting their careers and are eager to impress.

The Virginia Tourism Corporation, along with our industry partners, is launching a year-long campaign aimed at getting Millennials to take the time they need. If we can get Millennials to take just one day off and spend it in Virginia, then maybe, shift their mindset and save vacation for posterity.

Visit [vatc.org/crushfriday](http://vatc.org/crushfriday) for more information. The CRUSH FRIDAY campaign is a partnership with U.S. Travel Association's Project: Time Off. CRUSH FRIDAY will launch in January 2018, around National Plan for Vacation Day.

### Success is:

- 20 communities (Destination Marketing Offices/Convention Visitor Bureaus) participating in the umbrella campaign as part of their strategy to attract travelers.
- At least 5 businesses in each community will partner with the DMO/CVB, resulting in a minimum of 100 partners.
- Partner with at least one national corporate sponsor.



## DRIVE Tourism 2.0

Five years ago, VTC and the Tourism Industry worked together to create the first Statewide Tourism Development Plan. This plan highlighted key areas driving the future of tourism from the industry's perspective. Think of it as a blueprint on what segments of the tourism industry Virginia should focus on to succeed in an over-competitive market.

The result: Twenty-five communities now have a 5-year Product Development Plan to make their regions more competitive in attracting travelers.

However, it is time to update this plan again with the industry's input. We will focus DRIVE Tourism 2.0 on two critical questions for your region:

1. What should we be promoting?
2. What should we be building?

DRIVE Tourism 2.0 will be based on three core components: **Authenticity, Connectivity and Visitor Experience.**

What will set Virginia apart from its competitors will be its ability to focus and prioritize its development on key lures in a deliberate consumer-oriented approach. Getting it right means doing the fundamentals exceptionally well.

Key to this is Virginia's ability to satisfy visitors through building quality, authentic experiences, exceeding expectations, building essential infrastructure, and connecting with communities that host those visitors.

For Virginia to win, all Virginia travel partners must look at the big picture of what is at stake: The whole of the Virginia travel industry plays a crucial role in delivering this ambitious strategy and achieving the outcomes you want for your region – for your communities – for your future.

### Success is:

- RFP issued and awarded in 2018
- Input from more than 1,000 stakeholders
- Clear direction of development and promotional needs for Virginia's tourism regions
- Plan must encompass simple execution for industry partners
- At least 30 communities develop updated product development plans



## Tourism Development Financing Program (TDFP)

Virginia's Statewide Tourism Plan identifies new product development as a key to staying competitive. And across the Commonwealth, Virginia communities have identified deficiencies (voids) in their mix of local tourism businesses and visitor experiences. The TDFP closes that gap by leveraging local, developer and state investments to complete these projects that, otherwise, cannot find 100 percent sufficient lending.

With the TDFP program, a locality identifies the deficiency. Then, a developer (with 70 percent secured project funding that fills that void), the state and the locality all share matching contributions to finance the 30 percent resulting gap, drawn from one percent of the project's new, quarterly revenue.

### Success is:

- Secure one or two TDFP certified projects, annually.
- Engage at least 25 Virginia municipalities on potential TDFP projects (e.g. EDA, IDA, PDC, DMOs and community development organizations).
- Educate at least 300 industry partners via TDFP presentations at tourism meetings and symposiums (e.g. VTC orientation, state agency partners, PDCs, associations and community speaking engagements).
- Maintain a growing statewide database of TDFP required Tourism Zones, to share with localities, developers and other state agencies.
- Establish five or more sustained contacts with commercial lending institutions on TDFP availability and process.



## Assistance with Local, Regional and Federal Funding Resources

A newly formed partnership among state agencies – Virginia Partner Agencies for Community and Economic Development (PACED) – will focus on connecting Virginia businesses and communities to resources including technical assistance and funding. This partnership will focus on small business growth, tourism development and downtown development projects.

(Current partner agencies include Virginia Community Capital, Virginia Tourism Corporation; Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development; Virginia Tobacco Commission; Virginia Housing Development Authority; Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; and Virginia Resource Authority)

### Success is:

Identify and engage with seven collaborative projects with focus on technical assistance, funding assistance, job creation and workforce training. The initial goal will be the creation of 100 jobs, and private-sector investment of \$10 million.



## Marketing Leverage Grant Program

Small businesses comprise 90 percent of the Virginia tourism industry. One of the biggest needs of a small business is to partner with like-minded companies to leverage their marketing dollars. VTC offers a Marketing Leverage Program grant that reimburses partnerships in the amounts up to \$10,000 and \$50,000. In the past two years, this program has assisted over 750 Virginia tourism industry partners, resulting in an estimated total economic impact of more than \$86 million. Marketing campaigns receiving VTC funds have shown a boost in visitor volume of 15 percent.

### Success is:

Grow the available funding to \$2 million annually and leverage the VTC dollars at a minimum of 3:1. A \$2 million grant program would generate an estimated \$32 million in direct visitor spending and total visitor spending of \$52 million. The program will impact at least 350 industry partners who leverage VTC funds with a minimum of \$6 million in partner dollars.

## Music Festival Sponsorship Program

Music festivals have fast become an instant revenue generator for communities with some festivals providing millions of dollars of economic impact over an extended weekend. To grow this lucrative market, VTC offers an annual Music Festival Sponsorship program to multi-day festivals featuring major entertainment.

### Success is:

Leverage \$250,000 investment into an estimated \$47 million economic impact by partnering with 32 music festivals.



## VTC Orientation Program

VTC offers Quarterly Orientation Sessions to new members of our industry, as well as a refresher course to anyone who needs to be updated on VTC services. The two-day session educates industry partners on how to better market their businesses and destinations and to fully use VTC programs and services.

### Success is:

- Continuing interest and demand with a minimum of 20 industry partners per orientation session, with a satisfaction rating of 90 percent or higher from all attendees.
- Regular follow-up surveys showing that 90 percent of past participants are now using at least three VTC services within six months of attending Orientation.

## Industry Benchmarking Trip

The Statewide Tourism Plan identifies outdoor recreation as one of Virginia's top areas to develop over the next five years. PM will lead a pilot trip with industry partners to Fayetteville, West Virginia to talk with industry professionals who transformed a small whitewater rafting area into one of the East Coast's best outdoor recreation communities.

### Success is:

- 10 industry leaders attend trip and come back with three action points to grow Virginia's outdoor recreation efforts.
- Each partner will begin a process of initiating action points learned from trip that will result in 30 new projects to improve community and traveler experience within one year of trip.



**WHERE ARE WE?**

# VTC Partnership Marketing - Tourism Development Team

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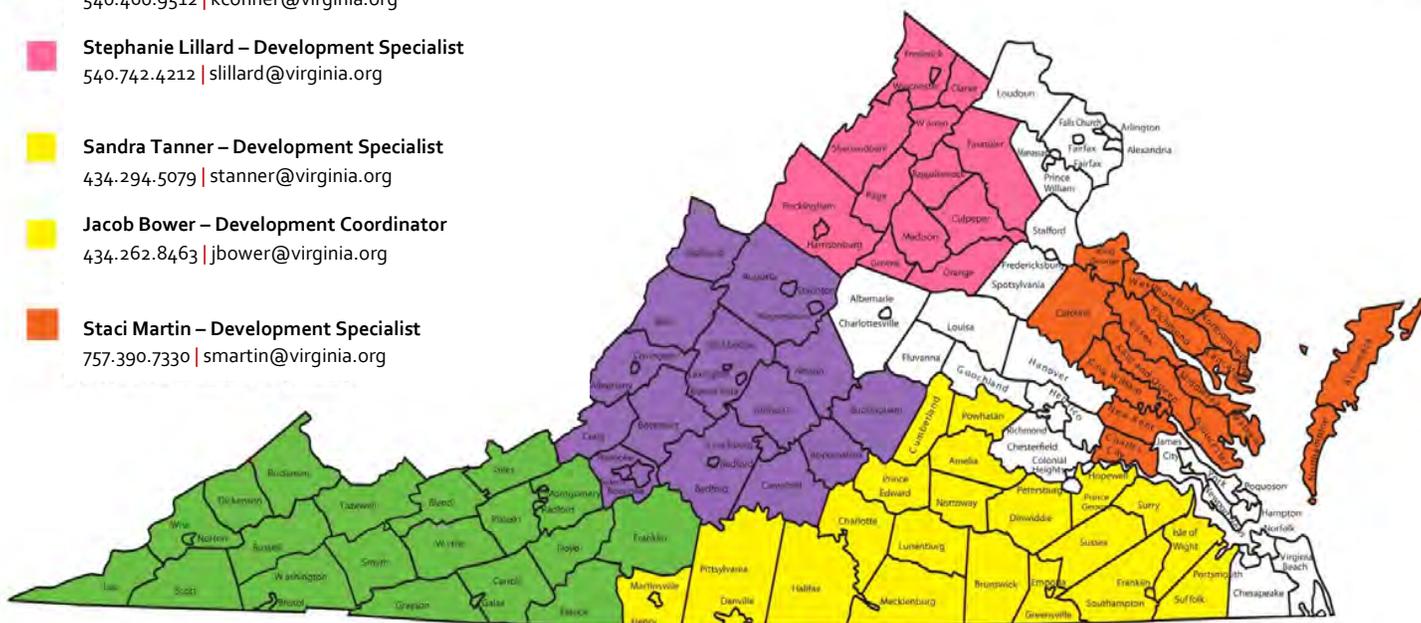
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# VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS

Virginia Tourism Corporation

Contact the VTC Tourism Development Team member in your area for strategic planning, marketing leveraging and other community development assistance and resources



## Partnership Marketing 2018 Development Priorities

### **Chesapeake Bay, Coastal Virginia – Eastern Shore, and parts of Coastal Virginia:**

- Virginia Oyster Trail
- Coastal Virginia Beer Trail
- Middle Peninsula Artisan Trail Start Up

### **Southern Virginia and parts of Central Virginia:**

- South Boston and Clarksville Downtown Development
- Salty Southern Route Trail Development
- The COVE project - Mecklenburg's Drive Tourism Five-Year Plan
- Community Leadership Program modeled after Rally SWVA

### **Shenandoah Valley; Virginia Mountains; parts of Central Virginia:**

- Field of Gold/Bike the Valley – Tour de Farm program
- Lewis and Clark Eastern Legacy Trail
- Virginia Rail Heritage Region

### **Southwest Virginia - Heart of Appalachia and Southwest Virginia - Blue Ridge Highlands:**

- Spearhead Trails
- Clinch River Valley Initiative
- Rally SWVA
- Appalachian Spring
- Southwestern Virginia Brew Trail



# MAJOR INITIATIVES VTC DEVELOPMENT

# Clinch River Valley Initiative (CRVI)

**Becky Nave / Michelle Workman**

[www.clinchriverva.com](http://www.clinchriverva.com)

## Region/Localities Impacted

Southwest Virginia/Heart of Appalachia, Scott, Russell, Wise, and Tazewell Counties

## Summary

The Clinch River Valley Initiative (CRVI) is a collaborative effort in Southwest Virginia, focusing on the Clinch River Valley—one of the most biodiverse river systems in North America. Working at a watershed scale with local partners, this grassroots effort has developed significant momentum with applicability for communities in Appalachia and beyond. The effort builds upon the unique cultural and ecological assets of the Clinch River to create new possibilities in communities along the Clinch, particularly around environmental education, economic development and entrepreneurship.

## Status

Building on a shared vision for the Clinch River Valley, five active action groups are currently making substantial efforts around five goals as part of the initiative:

- **Goal 1:** Develop a Clinch River State Park.
- **Goal 2:** Develop and integrate access points, trails and campgrounds along the Clinch River.
- **Goal 3:** Enhance water quality in the Clinch River.
- **Goal 4:** Develop/enhance environmental education opportunities for community members in the Clinch River watershed.
- **Goal 5:** Connect/expand downtown revitalization, marketing and entrepreneurial development opportunities in the Clinch River Valley.

## What's next?

Funding from the General Assembly was approved in March 2016 and plans are underway to establish the Clinch River State Park. Planning underway for Clinch Ecological campus in St. Paul.

## VTC Involvement/Support

Becky and Michelle serve on the steering committee and some action groups of the initiative (Downtown Revitalization, Access Points, Taste of the Clinch). VTC involvement includes technical assistance and guidance, integration of VTC's services and marketing opportunities, and general partner involvement in various activities of the initiative.

## Assistance from VTC

- The new Clinch River State Park will increase eco and heritage tourism. Continue collaboration with CRVI partners to assist with communication and marketing strategies for the park and communities.
- Specific ways to assist:
  - PR – assist with distribution of press release leading up to and as park opens
  - Social Media- share post when the park opens through Instagram, Facebook and Twitter
  - Digital- featured blog post

## Success is:

- Clinch River State Park opened.
- River access points at approximate two-hour increments along the entire river to accommodate visitors.
- Revitalization of all downtowns along the Clinch.
- Adequate amenities along river (outfitters, guides, breweries, etc.).
- Scenic River designation.
- Clinch River Valley organization formed/determined.
- Hometowns of the Clinch designation for all towns along the Clinch.

# Spearhead Trails

**Becky Nave / Michelle Workman**

[www.spearheadtrails.com](http://www.spearheadtrails.com)

## Region/localities impacted:

Southwest Virginia - Heart of Appalachia Region including St. Paul (Wise & Russell Counties), Grundy (Buchanan), Pennington Gap (Lee), Pocahontas (Tazewell), Haysi (Dickenson County)

## Summary

Spearhead Trails is currently a system of five all-terrain/off-highway vehicle (ATV) trails that wind through the mountains of Southwest Virginia.

## Status

Open/expanding

Marketing in development, working in partnership with Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority, partnered on a recent MLP grant application.

## What's next?

Opening of Scott County Horse Trail – Clinch River Equestrian Trail, and continued expansion on current open trails.

## VTC Involvement

- Facilitation since the beginning of the initiative since 2006 (lead facilitator entity).
- Led initial funding efforts for the feasibility study, implementation plan and other foundational efforts.
- Assisted with the formation of the state authority that oversees the trail system.
- Funding meeting space and other needs during the planning and start-up phases.
- Serve in a technical assistance capacity on the board – along with other board committees.
- Involvement in design and implementation of the community readiness program for trail communities.
- VTC staff have visited the system to trigger marketing and promotion of the trails, including video/photography, public relations efforts, etc.
- Marketing Leverage Program funds provided to promote the trails.
- VTGF funding for the Western Front hotel in St. Paul, a trailhead town.
- Supporting applicable entrepreneur/business development programs and efforts including but not limited to business consultations, workshops, support letters for businesses, etc.

## Assistance from VTC

- Year-round marketing with emphasis on new trail openings and peak riding seasons.
- When the Western Front hotel opens, coordinate a travel writer FAM for trailhead towns to showcase assets.

## Success is:

- Trails in all counties in the Spearhead Trails region.
- Equestrian, mountain biking, and ATV trails available (all types) within system.
- All trailhead downtowns revitalized.
- Sustained operation funding for Spearhead Trails (\$1,000,000 annually).
- Annual economic impact study completed/shared.
- Guided ATV rides offered on each trail.
- 20 or more new/expanded businesses in the next two years (attributed to trails).
- 500+ miles of connected trails.

# Appalachian Spring

**Becky Nave / Michelle Workman**

[www.myswva.org/outdoors](http://www.myswva.org/outdoors)

## Region/Localities Impacted

Southwest Virginia – entire 19 county region

## Summary

Appalachian Spring is a partnership of community and regional development, tourism, environmental stewardship, outdoor recreation and entrepreneurial assistance for stakeholders to develop and promote Southwest Virginia as a world class destination of natural and recreational assets for visitation and enjoyment.

## Status

Continued work within in the region with staffing through the Friends of Southwest Virginia.

## What's next?

Continuing to connect eight anchor recreation destinations to surrounding communities and developing an outdoor recreation industry in Southwest Virginia

## VTC Involvement

- Involvement and facilitation in asset/partners meetings.
- Financial support for entrepreneur challenges.
- Involved in technical assistance for master planning.
- Continued support for their marketing efforts.
- Sponsor for SWVA Outdoor Expo.
- Serve on steering committee.
- Partners to offer adventure tourism workshops across the region.

## Assistance from VTC

- Continued development team involvement/assistance.
- Market the eight anchor destinations & gateway communities.
- Continued support of the Southwest Virginia Outdoor Expo.
- Include Southwest Virginia, Southwest Virginia Outdoors, #swva in our content/editorial.

## Success is:

- SWVA outdoors marketing campaign/plan implemented, including website, social media, etc.
- Visitor enhancements (access, bathrooms, trails, etc.) completed for all eight anchor areas.
- All downtowns adjacent to anchor areas revitalized.
- SWVA recognized nationally as an outdoor recreation destination.
- Continued tourism expenditure growth in region.

# Mountain Brew Trail

**Becky Nave / Michelle Workman**

[www.mountainbrewtrail.com](http://www.mountainbrewtrail.com)

## Region/localities impacted:

Southwest Virginia region - entire 19 county area.

## Summary

The Southwest Virginia Craft Beer Trail is a marketing initiative to market the craft breweries in the region.

## Status

Launched with website and app.

## What's next?

SWVA Mountain Brew Bash in June 2018.

## VTC Involvement

- Partnered with agencies and organizations to offer the Southwest Virginia Craft Beer Summit, which triggered the trail concept.
- Involved in initial and current efforts to develop the trail.
- Involvement in planning of unveiling event at Studio Brew with Rita McClenny speaking.
- MLP Recipient.
- Encourage sub-brand use: Virginia is for Craft Beer Lovers.

## Assistance from VTC

- Assistance with DMOs as the project moves forward.
- Promotion on Virginia.org of the trail once website and marketing materials are created.

## Success is:

- Marketing campaign designed and implemented.
- 10 new craft breweries in the region in the next three years.
- Craft beer agriculture industry study completed for region.
- 20 farms in the region successfully growing craft beer ingredients in three years.
- Continued tourism expenditure growth in trail region.

# Town of South Boston Downtown Development

**Sandra Tanner / Jacob Bower**

[www.southboston.com](http://www.southboston.com)

## Region/localities impacted:

Southern – South Boston

## Summary

Working with the town to assist with implementation of its master plan for downtown redevelopment/economic restructuring. Involves renovations of the John Randolph into a boutique hotel; trail development to connect the Tobacco Heritage Trail to the downtown area; and development of Blue-way, greenspace and downtown businesses. Developing city/town centers to be competitive with the NC border communities is part of the Southern Region Tourism Plan.

## Status

Planning phase

## What's next?

- Continue to assist with technical assistance for acquisition of property for greenspace and park.
- Support the development of trails leading from the Tobacco Heritage Trail to the downtown area.
- Assist with developers as liaison for VTC services.
- Provide assistance for business development, including workshops, business consults, etc.
- VTC will hold workshops to assist the entrepreneurs in the region.

## VTC Involvement

- Member of the downtown master plan committee.
- Helped fund the downtown master planning for the town.
- Ongoing technical assistance and liaison to other resources.
- VTC assisted as a judge in the Community Business Launch program. Businesses have opened in the downtown as a result and one business has already expanded into the town of Halifax.

## Assistance from VTC

Assistance for developers through the Tourism Development Financing Program if applicable, ongoing marketing of the town/region, and ongoing technical assistance.

## Success is:

- Connection to the Tobacco Heritage Trail completed.
- Hotel/lodging project completed.
- Primary tourism amenities available in town (brewery, lodging, coffee shop, etc.).
- Annual tourism expenditure growth in town.

# Salty Southern Route

## Sandra Tanner / Jacob Bower

No website at this point

### Region/localities impacted:

Southern-Southampton, Franklin, Suffolk, Surry, Sussex, Smithfield, Isle of Wight. Others may join in the future.

### Summary

Development of a marketing campaign promoting peanuts and pork, including restaurants that serve these items as signature dishes on the "trail". The ultimate objective is to develop a trail connecting farms, restaurants and other attractions centered around peanuts and pork. Connecting these assets was a goal of the Statewide Tourism Plan.

### Status

Exploratory phase completed and shifting to the planning phase. General criteria for the trail has been set and partners are visiting each site to determine inclusion in the trail.

### What's next?

- Development of the trail
- One-on-one contact with each partner site to gain interest
- Educational workshops

### VTC Involvement

- TA & Support
- Facilitation of meetings

### Assistance from VTC

- Mini workshops in the region for social media, writing a press release, etc.
- Assistance with marketing, website splash page, assistance with PR, etc.

### Success is:

- Trail developed and implemented
- Marketing campaign designed and implemented
- Steady visitation growth to social media channels and website
- Five new/expanded businesses triggered by the trail
- Tourism expenditure growth in region

# Southern Virginia Wild Blueway

**Sandra Tanner / Jacob Bower**

[www.sovawildblueway.com](http://www.sovawildblueway.com)

## Region/localities impacted:

Southern Virginia - Halifax County and Mecklenburg County and other areas in the region.

## Summary

Working with the Southern Virginia Wild Blueway committee to expand their foot print and add rivers/ lakes in the surrounding area to enhance the paddling experience of the visitors.

## Status

The Southern Virginia Wild Blueway marketing campaign is up and running. The committee sees the need to add launch sites to the existing trail and to increase their footprint by expanding the marketing effort to other localities in the Southern VA region. Further development of outdoor activities and connectivity to the assets in the town and area are part of the Southern VA tourism plan.

## What's next?

- The committee will add other launch sites to the existing trail, highlight the businesses (lodging, restaurants, etc.).
- The committee is also in the exploratory phase of adding to their footprint by looking at other communities in Southern VA along the water ways. Once they have explored and have other localities on board, they will expand the marketing effort to include other localities.
- Plans are to apply for grants and seek funding assistance with launch site development for this regional initiative.

## VTC Involvement

- Member of the steering committee.
- Assisting with planning for the opening of the trail.
- Ongoing technical assistance and facilitation.

## Assistance from VTC

- VTC can continue to promote the Southern Virginia Wild Blueway.
- Social media push will be important.

## Success is:

- Funding for and completion of all targeted launch sites.
- Expanded marketing efforts to include new towns/launch sites.
- Increased outfitter/guide activity on the river.
- Tourism expenditure growth in region.

# Tobacco Heritage Trail

**Sandra Tanner / Jacob Bower**

[tobaccoheritagetrail.org](http://tobaccoheritagetrail.org)

## Region/Localities Impacted

Southern Virginia Region - Halifax/South Boston, Mecklenburg-Boydton, Clarksville, South Hill, La Crosse, Chase City, Brunswick-Brodnax, Lawrenceville, Alberta.

## Summary

Development of a 140-mile multi-use, non-motorized linear park/trail, including some on-road segments for connectivity. The trail construction is being done in phases around the towns so these towns can benefit from the economic impact of trail users. The final phase of the trail will be developed and connected as funds are available.

## Status

This is an ongoing multifaceted project. The project is the construction phase of some portions, the marketing/ business development phase in other open sections, and in the land acquisition phase of segments for connectivity in other areas.

## What's next?

Completion of acquisition of property in Lawrenceville and Halifax County, then on to other phases to complete the system.

## VTC Involvement/Support

- Active involvement in the Roanoke River Rails to Trails.
- Primary facilitator of all phases of the trail.
- Funding a position through the Planning District Commission (PDC) for a trail coordinator to support development of the trails.
- Marketing Leverage Program funding invested.
- Supporting negotiations of contracts with NS.
- VTC staff have visited and provided marketing and development recommendations.
- Marketing the trail.

## Assistance from VTC

- Continue marketing the trail, especially the portions where towns are ready for visitors.
- Continue to support trail coordinator position until that position is sustained locally.

## Success is:

- Funding for and completion of all trails and connectors, as identified in the master planning.
- Downtowns revitalized in all trailhead/access areas.
- Increase outfitter/guide activity on the trail system.
- Continued tourism expenditure growth in region.

# Bike The Valley – Tour de Farm

## Katie Conner / Stephanie Lillard

Website underdevelopment at present

### Region/Localities Impacted

Localities within the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission are the impacted area at present, with the potential to expand to entire Fields of Gold footprint. Rockbridge, Augusta, Rockingham, Highland and Bath.

### Summary

Creating cycling trails that connect Fields of Gold stakeholders/sites with the cycling community, making Fields of Gold more than just a motorized trail to enjoy. Partners intend to include services similar to a farmer's market/delivery program where local products could either be mailed or taken to lodging property later in the day.

### Status

Planning phase – Bike the Valley is working through mission, vision and next steps with the website. Rebranding is also being considered by partners overall.

### What's next?

On behalf of the Fields of Gold region, Rockingham County has applied for a Community Development Block Grant - Local Innovation Grant to develop a Tour de Farm program in the Fields of Gold region.

### VTC Involvement/Support

Serving as a supporting partner presently, but intend to serve in facilitative and technical assistance roles as needed. Will assist as needed for RFP's for website development and to obtain research from VTC regarding applicable areas of interest for cycling, agritourism, etc.

### Assistance from VTC

- Fields of Gold program would like some type of initiative recognition similar to the Oyster Trail recognition, which may require assistance.
- With the marriage of Bike the Valley to this agritourism product with Virginia's First Farm Trail, a VTC staff familiarization tour of some trails may be of interest to partners.
- Linking travel writers to the initiative for cycling magazines, bloggers, etc. is a priority.

### Success is:

- All bike routes developed/promoted (website, social media, etc.).
- One premier event each year.
- Five new destination sites/businesses in three years.
- Tourism expenditure growth in region.

# Eastern Legacy Trail extension to include the Lewis & Clark Heritage Trail in Virginia

**Katie Conner / Michelle Workman / Stephanie Lillard**

No website at this point

## Region/Localities Impacted

Statewide through 10 localities, Albemarle to Bristol

## Summary

Extension of the Western Legacy Trail eastward to form the Eastern Legacy Trail portion of the Lewis and Clark Heritage Trail in Virginia.

## Status

Planning phase; applicable state legislation passed through House and Senate legislative session in 2015; Initially there were plans for the initiative to be funded through the National Park Service, but partners are considering other options.

## What's next?

Partners are seeking funds to support signage development and marketing efforts, but realize ultimately the local jurisdictions will have to push initiative forward in their own communities.

## VTC Involvement/Support

Involved in a supporting role as needed and appropriate.

## Assistance from VTC

- Continued support/facilitation as needed and appropriate.
- Once established, a VTC staff familiarization tour of the locations to learn and promote the new trail.
- Provide guidance on marketing and applicable opportunities once established.

## Success is:

- Extension accepted at the local level and completed.
- Marketing plan developed/implemented.
- Tourism expenditure growth in region.

# Virginia's Rail Heritage Region

**Katie Conner**

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

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## Region/Localities Impacted

The region officially (state recognized) includes Alleghany, Amherst, Bedford, Botetourt, Campbell, Franklin and Roanoke Counties, and the cities of Bedford, Covington, Lynchburg, Roanoke and Salem as well as towns in the region.

## Summary

Establishing a stronger awareness of Virginia's Rail Heritage Region through a strengthened website, a consumer brochure and marketing overall. Partners are identifying opportunities for visitors to interact with Virginia's Rail Heritage is a way to strengthen existing product like the C&O Railway Heritage Center in Clifton Forge and the Virginia Museum of Transportation in Roanoke, as well as potentially uncovering a demand for new or expanded Product.

## Status

Planning and development phase – small group meeting to determine content for consumer brochure, as well as inquiring into budget needs to accommodate new website, marketing, etc.

## What's next?

Work with the C&O Historical Society, Covington Welcome Center, Virginia Museum of Transportation and other current partners to identify additional partners and work towards securing funds to implement marketing plan, etc.

## VTC Involvement/Support

Continue to serve in an advisory capacity and work with VTC staff to expand rail heritage marketing as appropriate. Introduce impacted DMOs to effort, etc. at the appropriate time in the project.

## Assistance from VTC

Assistance with digital marketing, PR, Marketing Leverage Program and Virginia Welcome Centers.

## Success is:

- Marketing campaign underway.
- Completed and distributed brochure.
- Responsive website launched.
- One new business or expanded rail-related attraction in the region.
- Tourism expenditure growth in region.

# Coastal Virginia Beer Trail “Where Water & Craft Beer Meet”

**Staci Martin**

[www.covabeertrail.com](http://www.covabeertrail.com)

**Virginia Craft Beer Magazine**

[www.virginiacraftbeer.com](http://www.virginiacraftbeer.com)

## Region/Localities Impacted

The COVA Beer Trail impacts Coastal Virginia region (based out of Norfolk, impacts all of Hampton Roads, Middle Peninsula, Northern Neck as breweries come online in those regions).

Virginia Craft Beer Magazine is a statewide magazine with statewide distribution and some border state distribution published by Jeff Maisey, a former editor with the Virginian Pilot.

## Summary

Similar to the Virginia Oyster Trail, the Coastal Virginia Beer Trail promotes breweries, craft beer destinations, secondary recreational activities that appeal to brewery aficionados. The site also lists overnight accommodations, suggested itineraries, and brewery editorial. The second phase of the website will be an industry-only page for brewers, homebrewers, and other industry people to have a one-stop site for craft beer information.

## Status

The Coastal Virginia Beer Trail site has been created by a private sector company, but is anticipated to be supported by various tourism partners in the trail region. Funding and support is being sought to fully develop the trail and marketing of the trail.

## What's next?

A mini-conference is planned to engage stakeholders and potential partners.

## VTC Involvement/Support

- Assisting trail developer and assisting partners, including planned participation in the programming during the upcoming mini-conference.
- Connecting the trail developer to our services, including key marketing opportunities that VTC offers.
- Ongoing technical assistance and facilitation as requested and needed.

## Assistance from VTC

- Assist with promotion of the covabeertrail.com website.
- Potentially promote the opportunity through our industry outreach.
- Possible co-branding (with Virginia is for Lovers) of T-shirts, glassware, etc.
- LoveWorks with a craft beer theme in the region or along trail.
- Consider any applicable Marketing Leverage Program application.
- Support community development in trail towns.

## Success is:

- Trail fully designed/implemented.
- Marketing plan/campaign implemented.
- Merchandise plan implemented.
- Five new craft breweries in the region in the next three years.
- Tourism expenditure growth in region.

# Virginia Oyster Trail

**Staci Martin**

[www.virginiaoystertrail.com](http://www.virginiaoystertrail.com)

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## Region/Localities Impacted

Statewide, but focused on the rural coastal Virginia region that is relying on revitalization of oyster tourism/aquaculture as an economic engine.

## Summary

The Virginia Oyster Trail is a membership-driven trail managed by the non-profit Artisan Center of Virginia. The trail promotes aquaculture tours, culinary, recreation and craft beverages. Website development is in phases with three main initiatives: marketing including the “White Boot Blog,” product development including new aquaculture tours and oyster related experiences, and sponsorship development focused on large corporate support of the trail concept.

## Status

The Oyster Trail experienced a surge in marketing with the addition of the eighth oyster region and the support of the Governor and senior staff in promoting the trail as an economic engine for rural coastal revitalization. This surge in marketing has brought into focus the need to jumpstart oyster-related tourism product development over the next year. A membership campaign to recruit more sites and tourism product offerings began in mid-2017. New partnerships are being explored to help support the trail and develop product including the inclusion of Accomac-Northampton Planning District Commission and NOAA Coastal Zone Management representatives on the Oyster Trail Management Board. A series of facilitated planning sessions are underway to focus on the vision and mission of the trail against the backdrop of rural community needs and capacity.

## What’s next?

- Quarterly Virginia Oyster Trail Management Meetings.
- Creation of subcommittees under the Virginia Oyster Trail Management set up to focus on marketing, economic development, and fundraising.
- Promotion of oyster roasts and oyster related tourism product through the “White Boot” blog.

## VTC Involvement/Support

Actively involved in the Virginia Oyster Trail management team and on the Economic Development/Entrepreneurial Development subcommittee. Providing ongoing facilitation and support, as needed.

## Assistance from VTC

- Education/outreach in terms of assisting legislators, communities, etc. understand the trail and its connection to tourism and tourism product development.
- Membership information sharing during ongoing business assistance appointments and workshops.
- Education of communities and businesses about the trail as a marketing tool.
- A special Virginia.org digital page with all the oyster-themed festivals listed or applicable exposure on Virginia.org.
- Creation of the “Virginia Is for Oyster Lovers” brand and opportunities for co-marketing, consignment and promotion of the iconic brand as it connects to oysters.

## Success is:

- Permanent/capable organization overseeing trail program.
- Full marketing plan designed/implemented, with trails and visitor amenities highlighted.
- Consistent growth in Virginia’s oyster industry as a whole; development of new oyster related tourism product.
- Increased recognition of Virginia as an oyster destination/supplier.
- Five new/expanded businesses in three years, directly attributed.

# Staci Martin

## Eastern Shore Artisan Trail

[www.artisanscenterofvirginia.org/index.php/home/artisan\\_trail/C11](http://www.artisanscenterofvirginia.org/index.php/home/artisan_trail/C11)

### Region/Localities Impacted

Eastern Shore, including Accomack and Northampton counties

### Summary

Marketable tourism/visitor trail that features premier arts and crafts destinations (galleries, studios, shops, etc.) in Virginia's Eastern Shore. The trail is modeled after a statewide system of artisan trails in development.

### Status

Trail is undergoing revitalization in terms of events and product development. Partners are working together to create arts tourism in key downtowns and surrounding areas. The Onancock School, a high school retrofitted into artist studios, supports the Artisan Trail and artisan initiatives in the region. Evaluation on how trail fits into PDC's entrepreneurial initiation is ongoing.

### What's next?

Revitalization of the management team and facilitated sessions to narrow roles and responsibilities of tourism support organizations and individual trail members is anticipated. Creation of annual marketing and event plan that will allow the artisans to join in/piggyback on existing events (like the Eastern Shore Birding and Wildlife Festival) is being discussed.

### VTC Involvement/support

- Active involvement on the Eastern Shore Artisan Trail Management Team.
- Facilitation of trail development, when requested.
- Sharing of trail membership opportunities, when appropriate.
- Coordinate applicable VTC marketing activities when needed.
- Coordinate potential partnerships between ACV, the Eastern Shore Artisan Trail and other local entities and event managers to increase visitation to artisan trail sites.
- Workshops/training on trail.

### Assistance from VTC:

- Marketing of the trail through marketing leverage program.
- Continued facilitation of trail development.

### Success is

- Sustainable program/organization to ensure ongoing promotions, programing, etc.
- Consistent artisan related events open the public such as Open Door Studio Tours, Arts and Wine events, and Artisans & Anchors events partnering marinas with artisans in the coastal region.
- New artisan business and organizations added in the region.
- Steady tourism expenditure growth in the trail region.

# Onancock School Revitalization

**Staci Martin**

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

## Region/Localities Impacted

Eastern Shore (Accomack County)

## Summary

Described by some as “Heartwood meets Norfolk Kroc Center.” The concept for the repurposing of the school includes space for artists, incubator space for entrepreneurial initiatives, office space for government and NGO’s (Co-op Extension; SNAP/WIC), tourism marketplace, farmers market, community commercial kitchen and summer camp programs. It has potential to be a regional tourism driver.

## Status

An advisory board has been formed, in which VTC is involved and assists as needed. Engineering and environmental studies are completed. Possible industrial revitalization fund site if locality match can be allocated.

## What’s next?

- Develop fundraising plan, renovation plan, business plan, etc.

## VTC Involvement/support

- Ongoing support, including technical assistance and facilitation.

## Assistance from VTC:

- Serve as a liaison to potential funding sources.
- Continue ongoing facilitation and development support.

## Success is

- Feasibility and revenue plans completed.
- Funding secured for renovation.
- Implementation, business and marketing plans completed.
- Application for Marketing Leverage Program to market the facility.
- Renovation and opening.
- Visitation projections met.

# Middle Peninsula Artisan Trail

## Staci Martin

[http://www.artisanscenterofvirginia.org/index.php/home/artisan\\_trail/C212/middle-peninsula-artisan-trail](http://www.artisanscenterofvirginia.org/index.php/home/artisan_trail/C212/middle-peninsula-artisan-trail)

### Region/Localities Impacted

Chesapeake Bay - Mathews, Middlesex, Gloucester and Essex counties

### Summary

Marketable tourism/visitor trail that features premier arts and crafts destinations (galleries, studios, shops, etc.) in Virginia's Middle Peninsula region. The trail is modeled after a statewide system of artisan trails in development.

### Status

Trail is in early stages in terms of events and product development. A membership campaign has just begun. Events are scheduled to continue membership recruitment and community involvement. The Bay School, an arts-related non-profit, headquartered in Mathews County, is the main driver of the trail development.

### What's next?

Naming ceremony for the trail will be held in 2018. First set of trail events will begin in fall 2017 with Open Door Studio Tours.

### VTC Involvement/support

- Serve actively on the Middle Peninsula Artisan Trail Management Team.
- Facilitation of trail development, when requested.
- Sharing of trail membership opportunities, when appropriate.
- Coordinate applicable VTC marketing activities when needed.
- Coordinate potential partnerships between key partners and other local entities and event managers to increase visitation to artisan trail sites.
- Workshops/training on trail.

### Assistance from VTC:

- Marketing of the trail through our programs.
- Consider any Marketing Leverage Program requests.
- Continued facilitation of trail development.

### Success is

- Strong private sector partner involvement (memberships) and sustained effort.
- Developed tours during busy season that are marketed through Virginia.org.
- Hosting quarterly artisan related events open to the public such as Open Door Studio Tours, Arts and Wine events, and Artisans & Anchors events partnering marinas with artisans in the coastal region.
- Steady tourism expenditure growth in the trail region.

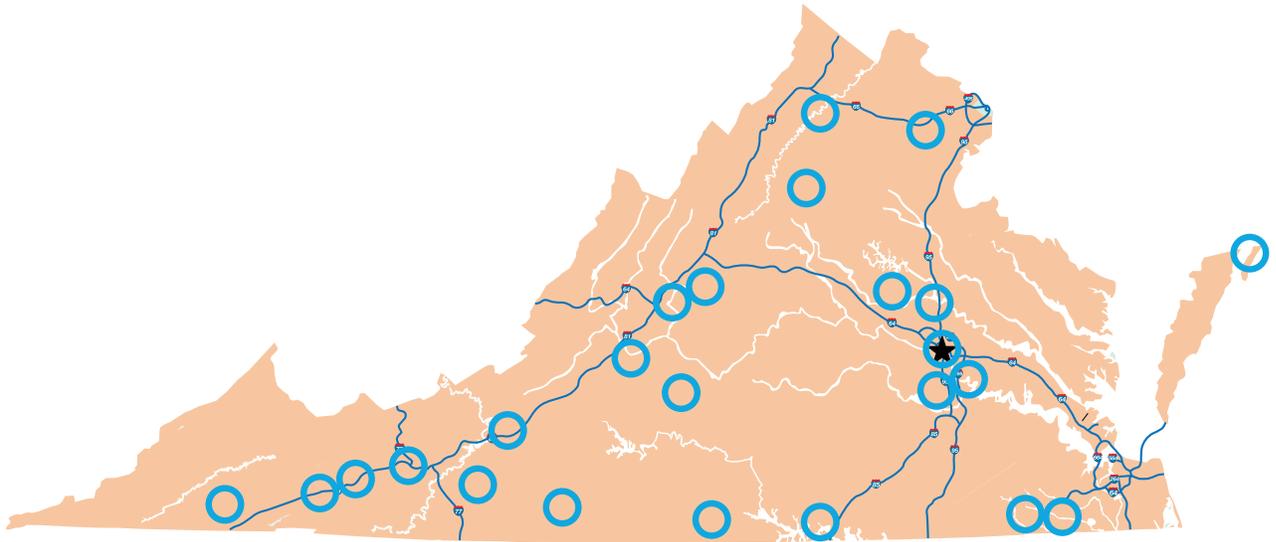


# THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP MARKETING



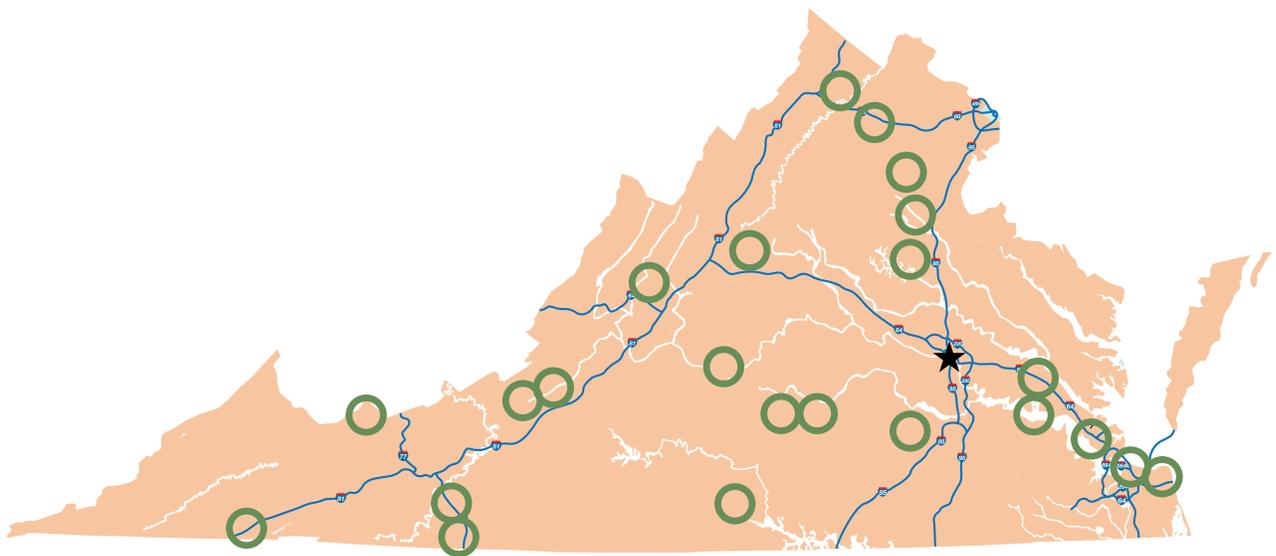
## PARTNERSHIP MARKETING REACH

 DRIVE TOURISM COMMUNITIES



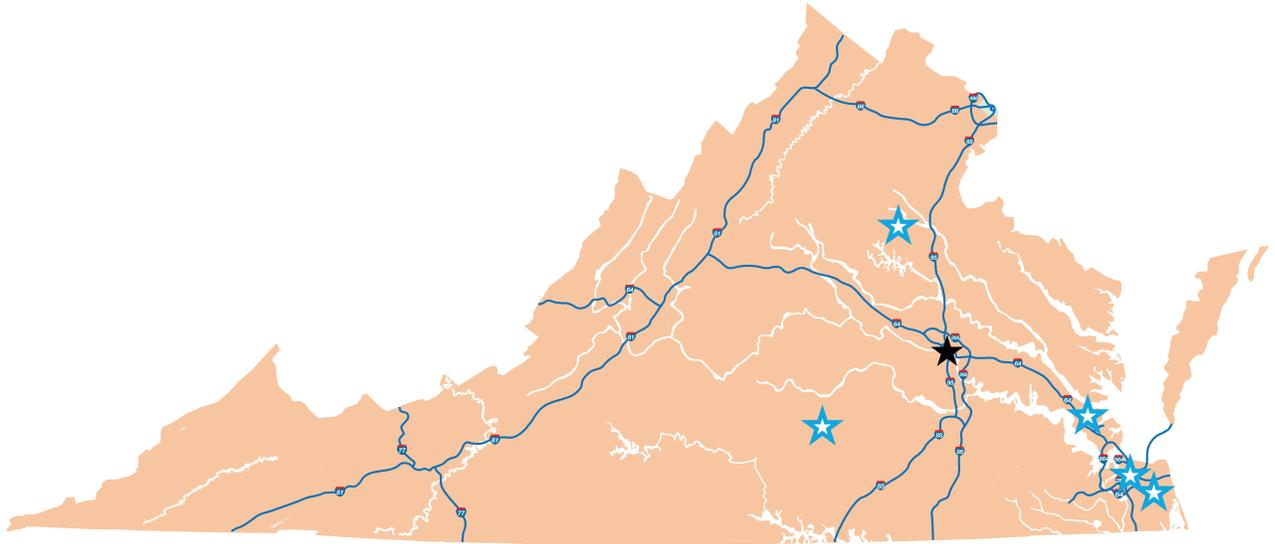
## PARTNERSHIP MARKETING REACH

 TOURISM ZONES



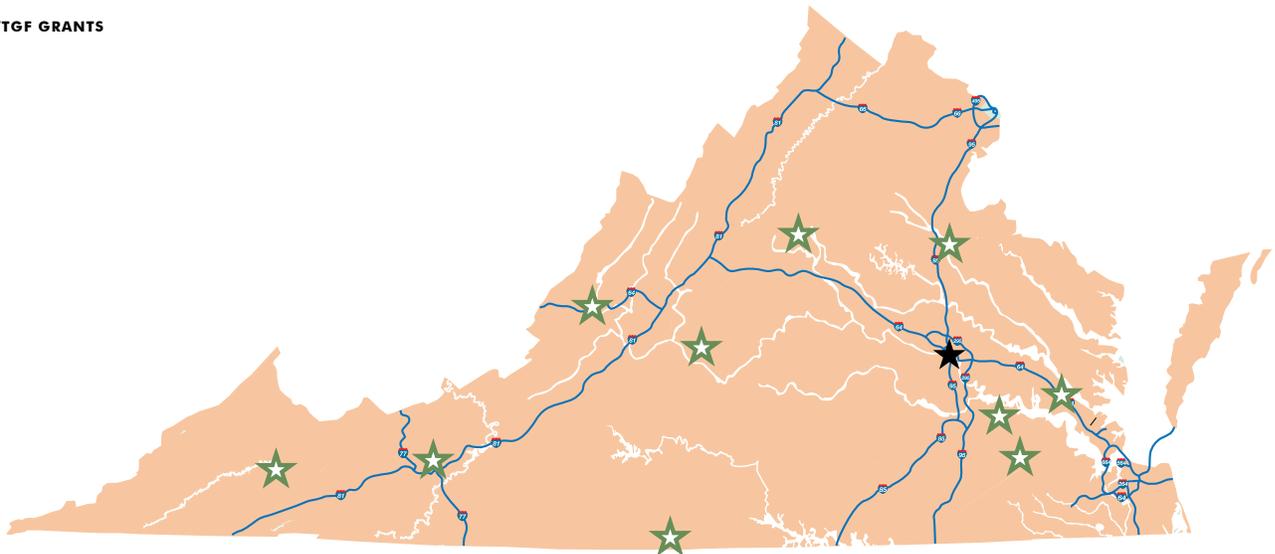
# PARTNERSHIP MARKETING REACH

 TDFP GRANTS



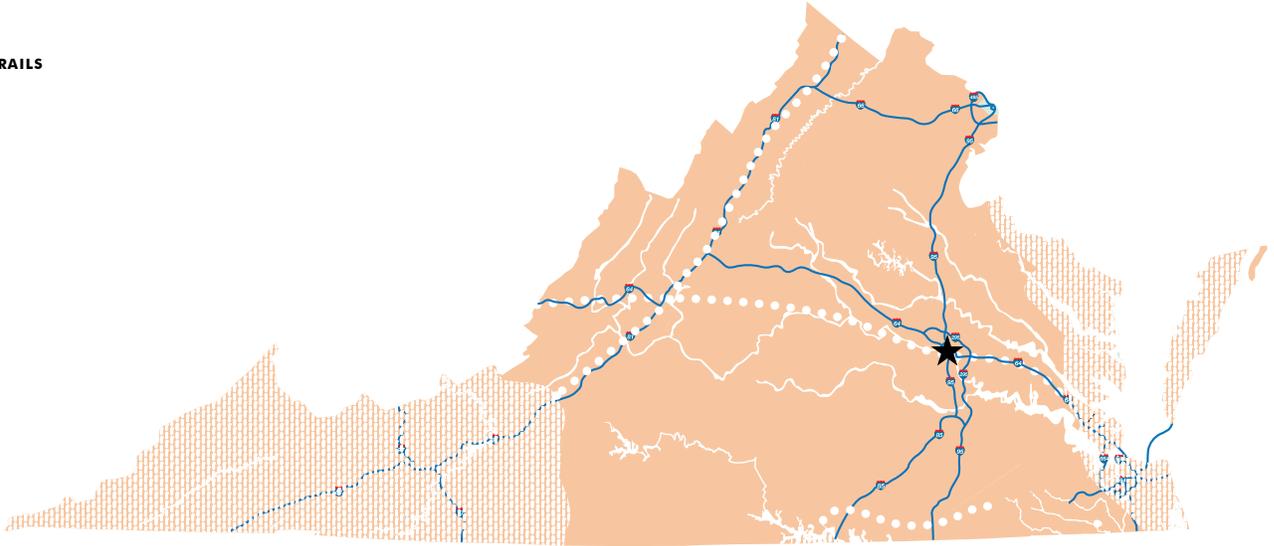
# PARTNERSHIP MARKETING REACH

 VTGF GRANTS



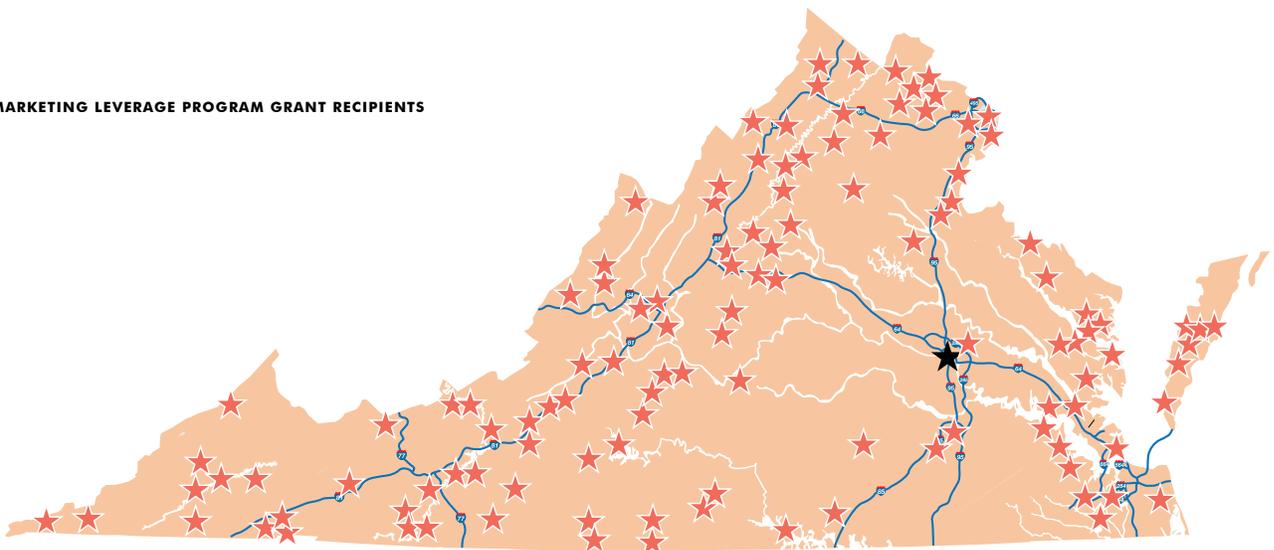
# PARTNERSHIP MARKETING REACH

 TRAILS



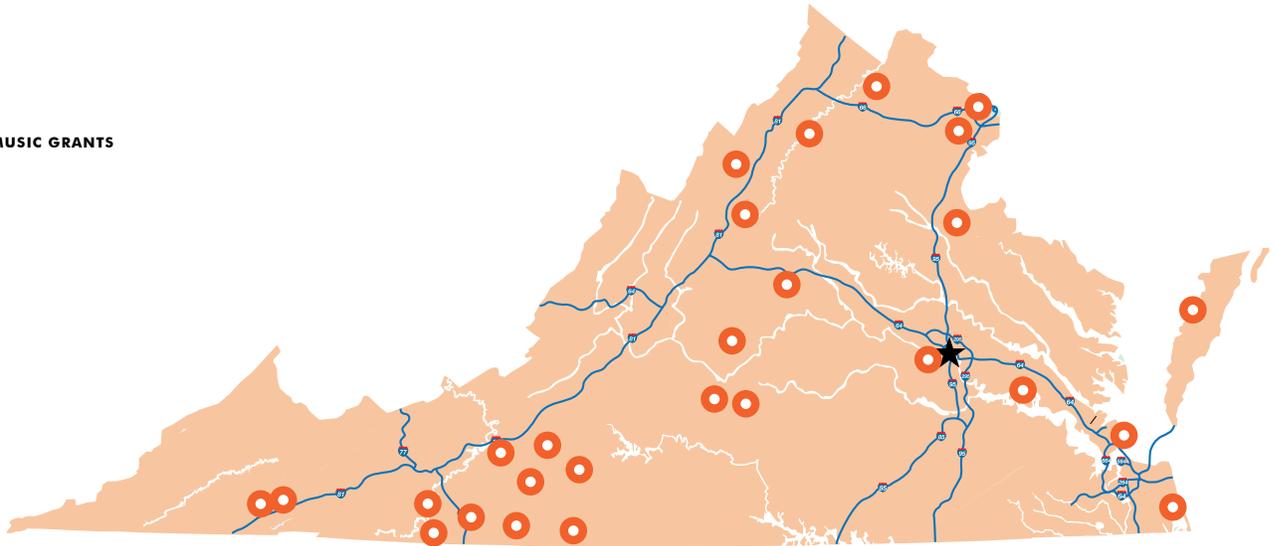
# PARTNERSHIP MARKETING REACH

 MARKETING LEVERAGE PROGRAM GRANT RECIPIENTS



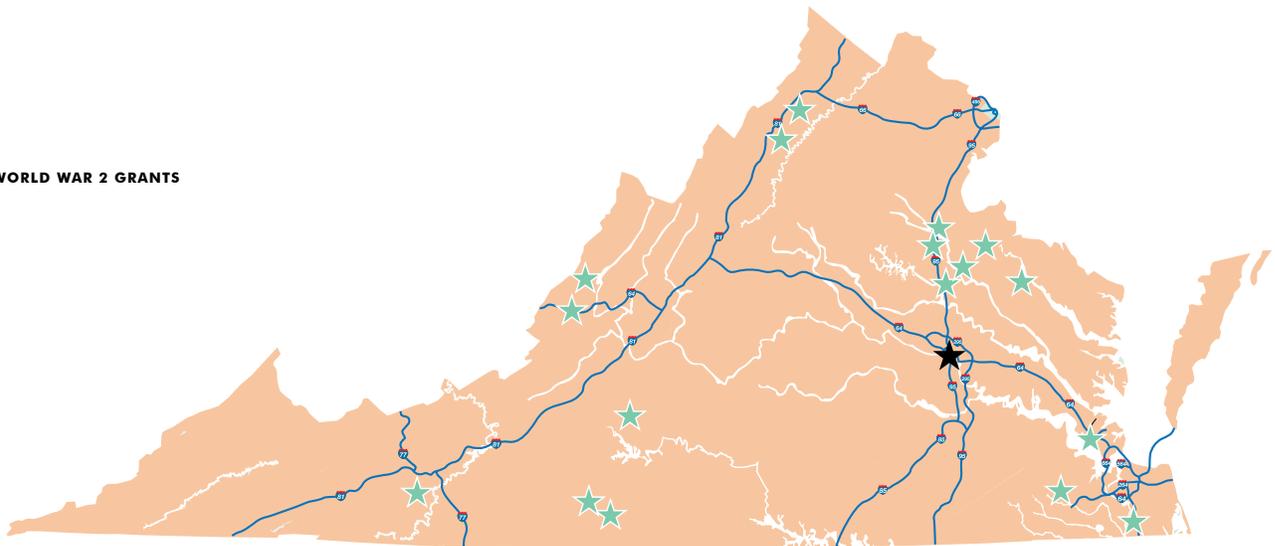
## PARTNERSHIP MARKETING REACH

 MUSIC GRANTS



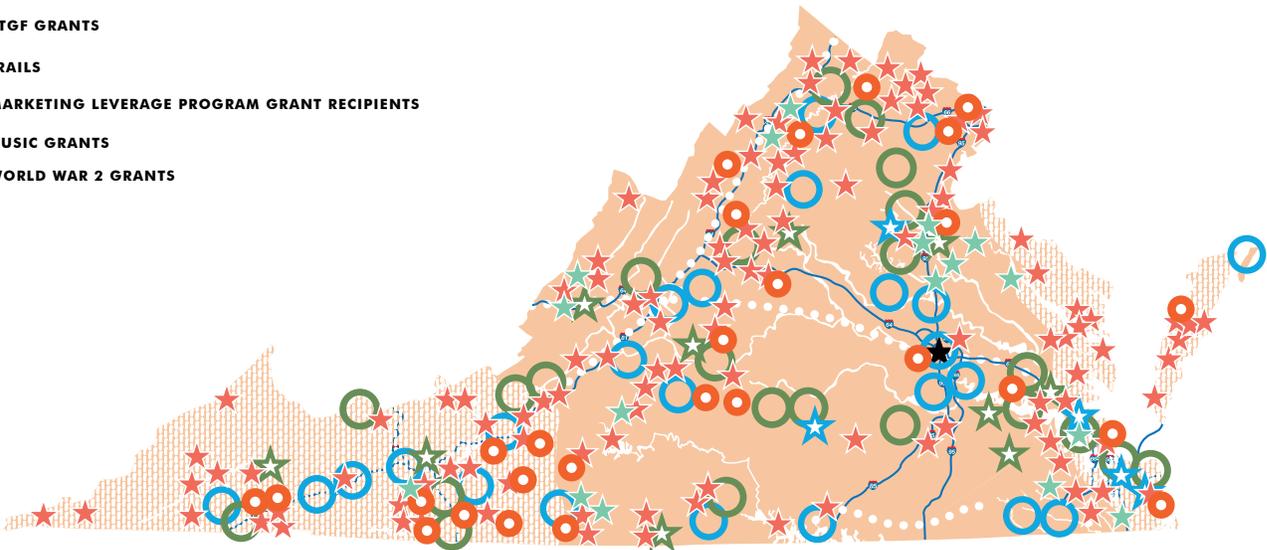
## PARTNERSHIP MARKETING REACH

 WORLD WAR 2 GRANTS



### PARTNERSHIP MARKETING REACH

- DRIVE TOURISM COMMUNITIES
- TOURISM ZONES
- ★ TDFP GRANTS
- ★ VTGF GRANTS
- TRAILS
- ★ MARKETING LEVERAGE PROGRAM GRANT RECIPIENTS
- MUSIC GRANTS
- ★ WORLD WAR 2 GRANTS



A photograph taken from inside a tent, looking out through a large arched opening. A man and a woman are sitting on a sandy beach, facing each other and talking. The man is wearing a white tank top and a cap, and the woman is wearing a blue top. The beach is wide, with waves breaking in the distance under a clear blue sky. The tent's interior is visible in the foreground, framing the scene.

**ACTIVITIES & PROJECTS BASED UPON VTC OPERATING  
PLAN, MISSION AND STATE PLAN**

## Chesapeake Bay Region

### Staci Martin

- Northern Neck is branding itself as the Northern Neck Heritage Area, but also still pursuing National Heritage area recognition.
- Dahlgren, VA Rails to Trail Project in development: 16 miles private permit access only, multi-use hike/bike trail.
- Creation of River Realm & Ambassador program (Lancaster County, Middlesex County and Town of Kilmarnock) branding initiative on river tourism. Investment approximately \$25,000.
- Town of West Point, King William County and King and Queen County creating partnership to brand and market existing water access points as a water trail system. Initial investment may be up to \$25,000 in 2017.
- Middle Peninsula State Park is being developed.
- Mattaponi Water Trail—brand new initiative between King William, King and Queen, and West Point. Again, assets are in place, but have never been packaged and marketed. Goal is to begin marketing existing assets. West Point has a kayak launch on Main Street, which is a unique opportunity. Plan is to develop itineraries and encourage an outfitter to offer programs. Future goal is to open more areas to public use, improve public access, and apply for Go Virginia funding to develop an eco-tourism center and/or salt-water training center for mixed use—military, coastal state agencies, general public.

# VA Mountains Region/Shenandoah Valley

Katie Conner / Stephanie Lillard

- Upper James River Water Trail – continued development and promotion
- **What's New:**
  - The trail is being extended from Alpine to Snowden
  - The trail is being extended 18 miles (from 45 miles to 63 miles)
  - New trailheads installed at Glasgow Landing and Snowden this week
  - 11+ access sites serving the extended trail
  - Virginia Scenic River designation for full length of the trail anticipated
- Initiative in Rockbridge County, known as Braiding the Way for Outdoor Recreation, includes outdoor recreation workshops focusing on entrepreneurs having a direct link or impact on outdoor rec in the area; both existing and potential businesses.
- Bike The Valley – Tour de Farm: TBD – this initiative is a cooperation between Bike The Valley and Fields of Gold, both housed at the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission. Bike the Valley has applied for MLP funding to refresh and redesign Bike the Valley. Other rebranding, marketing, etc. efforts are underway and funding is being sought.
- Roanoke Valley Greenway Systems: We're working now to get a seat at the table for the Roanoke Valley Greenways organization now. Greenway expansion to Deschutes Brewery is anticipated, and an extension of the Tinker Creek Greenway into Botetourt County, connecting to Daleville Town Center and Greenfield is anticipated (where Ballast Point will be located). Additionally, Deschutes Brewery will be installing two cycle-cross courses on their campus. Whether these will be open to the public is TBD. In general, mountain biking trails opened and enhanced throughout Roanoke, including Carvin's Cove, Roanoke Mountain and a bike trail design by RedBull opened at Nelson County Preserve. Partners in the Roanoke area continue to grow a strong IMBA partnership/relationship with plans of developing additional certified trails and working toward applicable designation(s).
- Waynesboro Water Trail developed (four miles and a portion of the South River Water Trail).
- Natural Bridge State Park – Trails: Master planning process underway for trails system. Working with DCR/state parks, we've provided recommendations based on STP findings and observations from other key partners.
- Explore Park: Locality plans for concessionaires to provide outfitting, dining, lodging, etc. amenities for the nearly 40,000 visitors the Blue Ridge Parkway welcomes each year and others. Concept is to become a destination outdoor rec park/location.
- **Overall park details:**
  - 114 Parcels - noncontiguous
  - Two Counties 700 +/- acres in Roanoke County 400 +/- acres in County
  - One River (1.87 miles along Explore Park)
  - 12,100 Acres
  - Five-mile trail system – 5.2 walking trails, 7.3 biking trails

# Southern Region

Sandra Tanner / Jacob Bower

## Tobacco Heritage Trail (THT)

- THT owns approximately 120 miles of trail corridor purchased from Norfolk Southern or easements from towns
- Purchasing property now from Norfolk Southern to connect the town of Lawrenceville to the trail for \$300K
- Areas currently impacted by the trail: South Boston, Halifax County, Boydton, Mecklenburg County, LaCrosse, Brodnax, Brunswick County, Lawrenceville, Victoria, Lunenburg County
- Future areas to be impacted: Alberta, Brunswick County, Kenbridge, Lunenburg County, Clarksville Mecklenburg County, Drakes Branch, Charlotte County
- **Access points:**
  1. Town of South Boston, Cotton Mill Park
  2. Town of Boydton and Prison Road, Mecklenburg County
  3. Town of La Crosse - two access points
  4. Town of Brodnax
  5. Airport Road, Mecklenburg County
  6. Town of Lawrenceville
  7. Evans Creek Road, Brunswick County
  8. Town of Victoria Railroad Park
- Amount number of investment through grants, county, etc. \$12,520,377
- Martinsville/Henry Parks and Recreation are adding trails that will connect with the Smith River Recreation Complex in Henry County.
- South Boston, working on blueway trail development and development of a boutique hotel to enhance downtown and outdoor recreation and city centers in the Southern Region. This hotel can be an anchor for the downtown. The town is participating in the Community Business Launch to assist with the small business development to fill the downtown buildings.
- City of Suffolk Parks and Recreation added a trail in the town of Driver since the plan was written.

## SoVA Wild Blueway Trail

- Over 100 miles of navigable river, leading to 1,200 miles of lake shoreline.
- Blueway's three rivers — the Dan, the Staunton (or Roanoke) and the Banister.
- 80 miles designated as Scenic Rivers.
- Two Lakes: Kerr Lake (Buggs Island), and Lake Gaston.
- Connects State Parks-Staunton River, Occaneechee and North Bend Park camping, John H. Kerr Dam.
- This is a marketing effort for Mecklenburg and Halifax counties. They are exploring expanding to add all rivers and lakes in Southern VA.
- Access sites: Staunton River State Park, Bannister River, Occaneechee State Park, several Corp of Engineer sites, North Bend Park, Clarksville Town Dock, they are building new launch sites.
- Investment so far for this project: \$111,844, including \$23,750 from VTC MLP grants.

# Blue Ridge Highlands/Southwest Virginia

## Becky Nave / Michelle Workman

- New River Center - development of a river center that will co-locate with a new hotel. Center will serve as the gateway to recreation offered by the New River, Appalachian Trail and National Forests.
- Damascus, "Trail Town USA," working on development of the Appalachian Trail Center, which can make Damascus a main destination in the South for the AT.
- New River Water Trail being developed.
  - Marketing initiative for the New River out of Giles county with plans for trail to example to expand into other counties in the NRV region
  - Currently 37 miles of river in Giles County with eight public boat landings, and three private access points
  - Ripplemead & Bluff City boat launches designated Virginia Treasures
  - POWER funding from Friends of Southwest Virginia will create four additional access points along with a destination center in Pembroke
- Mountain Brew Trail (BRH & HOA)
  - 19 counties in SWVA
  - Launched in August 2017 with website and app
  - Received a \$10,000 MLP grant
- Appalachian Spring (BRH & HOA) initiative continues to focus on the development and marketing in eight anchor recreation destinations. The eight anchor areas are: Blue Ridge Parkway, New River, Mount Rogers, Appalachian Trail, Clinch River, Breaks Interstate Park, High Knob and Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail.
- Current BRH projects funded from \$3M POWER funding:
  - Damascus – funding received for the Appalachian Trail Center which will be hub for the AT in the South.
  - New River Water Trail (Giles County) – funding for four new access points and Destination Center in Pembroke.

# Heart of Appalachia/Southwest Virginia

Becky Nave / Michelle Workman

## Spearhead Trails

- Currently, five trails open and one connector trail over 300 miles: Mountain View, Original Pocahontas, Coal Canyon, Stone Mountain, Haysi's Ridgeview Trail.
- Additional trails scheduled to open in 2018 – Haysi's Ridgeview Equestrian Trails.
- Trails are now open to mountain biking with the purchase of a separate permit.
- Southern Gap Outdoor Adventures (Buchanan) opened in spring 2017, which will feature cabins, campground, outdoor activities, etc. Visitor Center will open late 2017/early 2018.
- Western Front boutique hotel is scheduled to open in St. Paul in fall 2017.
- Total private investment since trails opening in communities is more than \$15.5 million.
  - Buchanan County - \$1.5M in private investment & \$1M county
  - Pocahontas - \$2.5M+ (first private investment in almost half a century)
  - St. Paul - over \$10.5M – 12 new businesses
  - Pennington Gap – Five new businesses & increase in food & lodging taxes

Investment by the Commonwealth, DHCD, ARC, Tobacco Commission, VTC and other state/federal sources in the multiple millions of dollars.

## Clinch River Valley Initiative (CRVI)

- Received \$2.5M from the Commonwealth for Clinch River State Park
- Three to five new access points expected
- Four "Hometowns of the Clinch" designated with more in process.
- "Tastes of the Clinch" marketing strategy in the works for local eateries in the region
- \$100,000 in funding for Ecological Center feasibility study secured
- Received an MLP grant
- CDBG grants of over \$1M for the Clinch Communities of Dungannon & Cleveland

## Mountain Brew Trail - SWVA Untapped (BRH & HOA)

- 19 counties in SWVA
- Plans to launch this Spring with a kick-off event with Senator Warner
- Received a \$10,000 MLP grant

## Appalachian Spring

- Eight anchor areas: Blue Ridge Parkway, New River, Mount Rogers, Appalachian Trail, Clinch River, Breaks Interstate Park, High Knob, Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail.
- Current HOA region projects funded for the anchors from \$3M POWER funding: Breaks - Haysi to Pine Mountain Trail – hiking, biking, walking trail connecting Breaks and Haysi.
- Norton - received funding for Outdoor Recreation Center for High Knob and Flag Rock.

### Chesapeake Bay Region

#### Staci Martin

- Dahlgren Rails-to-Trail Project: 16 miles private permit, access only multi-use hike/bike trail.
- Northern Neck Artisan Trail. More than 100 members. Initial investment over \$50,000.
- Virginia Oyster Trail. More than 150 members on statewide site. Membership campaign beginning in early 2018.
- Middle Peninsula Artisan Trail concept launched late 2016. Initial investment will be approximately \$50,000.
- Town of West Point, King William County, and King and Queen County creating partnership to brand and marketing existing water access points into a water trail system.

### Eastern Shore Region

#### Staci Martin

- Eastern Shore Artisan Trail with over 100 participants. Initial investment approximately \$50,000.
- Virginia Oyster Trail with over 150 members. Membership campaign beginning in early 2018.
- 100 mile Seaside Water Trail designated. Creation of 501c3 Water Trail Board is completed. Accomac Northampton PDC pursuing Coastal Zone Management funding in early 2017 to begin implementation, branding, and marketing.

### VA Mountains, Shenandoah Valley, Central

#### Katie Conner / Stephanie Lillard

- Virginia Mountains partners, Shenandoah Valley partners have formed informal partnerships to market regionally.
- Mountain biking trails opened and enhanced throughout Roanoke, including Carvin's Cove, Roanoke Mountain and a bike trail design by RedBull opened at Nelson County Preserve.
- Alleghany Highlands Blueway (water trail) established: highlights the paddling, fishing and boating opportunities along the Jackson River (30 miles), Cowpasture River (10 miles), Lake Moomaw (43 miles of shoreline) and Douthat State Park (50 acre lake).
- Waynesboro Water Trail developed (four miles and a portion of the South River Water Trail).
- Virginia's Blue Ridge Beerway, Brew Ridge Trail, Shenandoah Beerworks, Shenandoah Spirits Trail are in place, with expansion of new businesses all along the trails.
- Roanoke Food Tours now in place (includes wine, beer, history/culture tours).
- Fields of Gold farm trail in the Shenandoah Valley allows visitors to discover the home-grown side of Virginia.
- Wilderness Road promotion continues. A press kit most recently developed with MLP funds is being shared at motorcoach marketplace/shows. Overall membership meeting is being discussed for the spring.
- Amherst County opened new visitor center in a renovated train depot, relocated just off of Route 29 and VTC is providing planning assistance.
- Virginia Mountains Region DMO partners developed a consumer map of the region.
- The Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership was established, includes DMO's from 13 tourism-forward communities.

## Southern Virginia

### Sandra Tanner / Jacob Bower

- Martinsville/Henry Parks and Recreation are adding trails that will connect with the Smith River Recreation Complex in Henry County.
- South Boston, working on blueway trail development and development of a boutique hotel to enhance downtown and outdoor recreation and city centers in the Southern Region. This hotel can be an anchor for their downtown. The town is participating in the Community Business Launch to assist with the small business development to fill their downtown buildings.
- City of Danville is continuing to develop their “river district” in the downtown area with restaurants and a winery/brewery. This district has offices, living spaces, trails, river access and a university which is strengthening the city center.
- The Salty Southern Route is a new marketing initiative that will connect authentic product based on peanuts and pork in parts of **Coastal and Central regions**.
- City of Suffolk (Coastal) is working with a committee to explore a five-year plan of developing a peanut museum. They are in the information gathering phase at this time. This could become a hub for the Burlap Trail (working title) when that product is added to the plan. They are also exploring the development of an African American Trail.
- City of Suffolk Parks and Recreation added a trail in the town of Driver since the plan was written.

## Blue Ridge Highlands

### Becky Nave & Michelle Workman

- Back of the Dragon/Claw of the Dragon/Jagged Edge premier motorcycle/sports car trails and scenic drives developed.
- New River Water Trail developed - 37 miles in Giles with hopes to expand into other counties in Virginia. Eight public boat landings, three private access points, with four more coming in 2017. Giles County alone will have 15 access points
- Mountain Brew Trail (SWVA Craft Beer Trail) being developed.
- Damascus, “Trail Town USA”, working on development of the Appalachian Trail Center, which can make Damascus a main designation in the south for the Appalachian Trail.
- Region continues to develop and utilize the Southwest Virginia brand. Crooked Road and Round the Mountain organizations continue to promote music and artisan trails.
- Blue Ridge Travel Association continues to do marketing for members in region.
- Cycle Floyd bike trails launched.
- Mountains of Music Homecoming Festival now a premier event to promote the Crooked Road: Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail.
- Southwest Virginia Mountain Brew Bash coming in June 2018.
- A Taste of Southwest Virginia event showcasing craft food and craft beer.

# Heart of Appalachia

## Becky Nave & Michelle Workman

- Mountain Brew Trail launched.
- Spearhead Trails - Currently, five trails open with 250 miles: Mountain View, Original Pocahontas, Coal Canyon, Stone Mountain, Ridgeview. Additional trails scheduled to open in 2017 include a Coeburn Connector Trail, and 10-12 miles of equestrian trails. Trails are now open to mountain biking with the purchase of a separate permit.
- Southern Gap Outdoor Adventures (Buchanan county) opened spring 2017, which will feature cabins, campground, outdoor activities, etc. Visitor Center will probably not open until fall 2017.
- Western Front boutique hotel is scheduled to open in St. Paul in fall 2017.
- Total private investment since trails opening in communities is over \$15.5 million.
  - Buchanan County - \$1.5M in private investment & \$1M county
  - Pocahontas - \$2.5M+ (first private investment in almost half-a-century)
  - St. Paul - over \$10.5M and 12 new businesses
  - Pennington Gap – five new businesses & increase in food & lodging taxesInvestment by the other state/federal sources in the multiple millions of dollars.
- Appalachian Backroads & Back of the Dragon motorcycle/sports car routes established/growing in popularity.
- Mountains of Music Homecoming now premier event to promote the Crooked Road music trail.
- Cranes Nest Trail in Dickenson County developed.
- Mountain Bike Trails in Norton, VA area and surrounding National forest being developed.
- Route 80 designated scenic byway.
- 30-mile, multi-use trail connecting Breaks Interstate Park directly to downtown Haysi's business district being developed.
- Hometowns of the Clinch program connecting Clinch towns together, Tastes of the Clinch doing the same (as potential driving tours).
- Region continues to develop and utilize the Southwest Virginia brand. Crooked Road and Round the Mountain organizations continue to promote music and artisan trails.
- Heart of Appalachia Tourism authority continues to do marketing for members in region.
- High Knob Recreation Area approved funding for construction of a Visitor Center.



**DRIVE TOURISM & REGIONAL UPDATES  
OF STATE TOURISM PLAN**

# DRIVE Tourism

The Statewide Tourism Plan (STP) highlights key areas driving the future of tourism from the industry’s perspective. The DRIVE Tourism workshops used the STP to focus on helping communities create a five-year game plan of tourism products they need to develop in order to stay competitive and attract travelers. Through this workshop, 24 communities identified two products to improve, one product to create in two years and one product that will be a game changer for the area, resulting in more than 90 new tourism products for the Commonwealth.



## Locality





# Abingdon

Abingdon plans to move forward with the year-round farmers market located in the old train station in summer 2017.





# Ashland

Ashland is working on designing an outdoor entertainment pavilion to meet its two- year product idea goal. The town is also working on a Trolley Line Trail. The Ashland portion of the line will begin spring 2017.





# Bedford

The group, Bedford/Franklin Regional Rail Initiative (BRFFI) which is comprised of representatives of Bedford County Board of Supervisors, Franklin County Board of Supervisors, Bedford Town Council, Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce, Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and private citizens is dedicated to securing a Bedford passenger rail station. A small portion of the grant funding has already been used to educate the public about the Bedford Rail Initiative; and in support of the effort to secure a Bedford passenger rail station, the plan was to use the remaining funds for the following purposes:

- On-going technical support provided by Wendel, an engineering firm that completed the Bedford Passenger Rail Station Feasibility Study and Conceptual Plan in March 2015;
- Creating and hosting a website containing studies, surveys, video and other information pertaining to the Bedford passenger rail station;
- Filming and editing an informational video highlighting the positive economic development and tourism impacts of a Bedford passenger rail station.





# Bristol

The Drive Virginia initiative has helped focus the Bristol community to make great strides in establishing passenger rail (Amtrak) to Bristol by 2020-21. It also enabled the Bristol Chamber/CVB to leverage a \$500,000 Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) Technical Assistance grant and feasibility plan to determine the actual cost of extending passenger rail from Roanoke to Bristol, VA. This is a critical study that will show the impact of Amtrak extending to Bristol and Southwest Virginia, which will greatly increase tourism to the region.





# Chesapeake

Chesapeake is working on signage and sidewalks for shops along the waterways. The city is also completing an inventory of signs, mapping out needs, placement and design. The city wants to install the signs and sidewalks in 2017.





# Chincoteague

Chincoteague is working with Duffield Associates to do a feasibility study of a central sewer system of the Maddox & Main corridor. This will support the town's five-year product idea to enhance the downtown shops and storefronts. Before adding more stores or shops to this area, the infrastructure and sewage systems need to be enhanced. A proposal was generated and shared with Virginia Department of Environmental Quality for approval. Town council is on board and waiting for approval before moving forward in 2017.





# Christiansburg

Christiansburg has ordered signage to be installed in its downtown as part of the downtown enhancement and two-year product idea. Signage for the Farmers Market will also be ordered in 2017. Wayfinding signage is also being designed in 2017 to further enhance the downtown.





# Floyd

To enhance its agritourism and county fair, Floyd created a midway that will add a broader county fair element to the traditional agriculture components. Local civic organizations created a carnival midway, which was very popular. Ten Floyd County non-profits participated in the community-based Midway at the Fair. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Floyd Historical Society and numerous groups ran game booths. This effort has not only added a fun midway element to the event, but has resulted in diverse non-profits and community members participating in the event. The Cycle Floyd team is also working toward creating Cycle Floyd brochures with maps to create a Bike Trail with Cycle Floyd as part of its five -year product idea in addition to continuing to stage the Tour de Floyd annual event. Signage should be installed in 2017 encouraging cyclists to bike the trail.





# Front Royal

The Town of Front Royal is currently applying for a Community Development Block Grant. Part of the request is wayfinding improvements that would include Warren County. Community leaders are currently in the process of rebranding, which would be used in the county as well. Their plan, if they receive the funds, is to use the Drive Tourism Grant funds that are slated for wayfinding and combine them with the block grant funds. This project is projected to begin in the spring of 2018.





# Halifax/South Boston

Halifax has completed its plan to improve transportation and connectivity of the area. The Halifax County Tour bus allows access to rural attractions by both locals and visitors taking tours. They have used the bus to shuttle visitors for the state Agri-tourism Conference April 2016 and for their state park's Dark Sky Star Party (public celestial viewing nights through high-powered telescopes, curated by astronomers from across the country and world), and a tour during their inaugural restaurant week. They are in the process of scheduling the slate of tours for the spring and summer 2017 to agri-tourism attractions and developing specific tours for various incoming groups. Halifax's partners, Virginia International Raceway and South Boston Speedway, take great pride in the bus and when not in use, they rotate its parked location to showcase each partner.





# Hopewell

Hopewell is on track with keeping the FOLAR Trails and Eco Tours as two of its best tourism products. Leaders are also working on the riverside development and downtown revitalization.





# Lynchburg

Lynchburg expects to finish the Academy of the Arts Restoration by the end of September 2017.





# Marion

Marion is working with Frazier Associates to put the final touches on the signage design to connect and cross market the area. The locality hopes to have the signage installed spring/summer 2017.





# Martinsville

Construction for the new section of the Dick and Willie Passage Rail Trail is going to bid in spring 2017. This connection will enhance and connect the trails in the area. The signage and enhancements to the Smith River Sports Complex has been completed, however they will remain in storage until the construction is complete and they can be installed.





# Mecklenburg

Mecklenburg has secured a series of events for the summer called Lake Life LIVE Summer Series as part of its enhanced product idea.





# Nelson County

Nelson County has completed its two-year product idea of improving signage for Nelson 151. The new signage can be seen along I-64 and Route 29.





# Northern Neck

The Dahlgren Heritage Museum is now a visitor center. Northern Neck is now working on signage for the visitor center and should be installed early 2017. Tourism officials are now working on their two-year product idea to increase visibility of the Virginia Oyster Trail.





# Orange

Orange is in the final stages of implementing a visitor wayfinding signage program for tourism-related businesses. The Tourism Advisory Committee is nearing completion of the program, and will follow through with implementation upon the hire of a Tourism Director.





# Petersburg

The city of Petersburg is using the results from its Drive Tourism sessions, and the accompanying grant, to help fund a new study on local infrastructure and development. With several new lodging, signage and transportation development projects in its near future, more data is needed to coordinate these efforts.





# Richmond

Richmond is in the midst of obtaining results from a feasibility study for a possible headquarter hotel adjacent to the Convention Center.





# Rockbridge Regional

Rockbridge is working on a contract with an architectural/engineering firm to do a feasibility study and phased approach to redeveloping the Bontex site for outdoor recreation and mixed-use development. The project will be under contract by May 2017 with work finished by the end of August 2017. Additional brownfield testing will also take place with another firm.





# Stafford

Stafford is working on benchmarking tourism numbers with a third party. The next steps are to develop a strategic tourism and marketing plan to help achieve the goal of developing a town center and visitor center.





# Suffolk

Suffolk has scheduled lunch-and-learn workshops for the locality and has meetings planned with a downtown consultant to address signage and connectivity concerns. Suffolk is also working with VTC Development Specialist, Sandra Tanner, to create an incubator team for the game-changer of creating a Mr. Peanut Museum.





# Wytheville

Wytheville expects to obtain the results of a feasibility study for a downtown theater renovation in May 2017. Wytheville will then be able to obtain the property and begin renovation for its game-changer.





**VTC MARKETING LEVERAGE PROGRAM  
IMPACT SUMMARY**

The VTC Marketing Leverage Program (MLP) provides marketing grants to leverage local dollars and to support new tourism marketing programs and partnerships designed to increase visitor spending in Virginia. Grants are used for marketing such as broadcast, print and digital advertising, and to promote events, attractions and destinations across Virginia. Many of these marketing initiatives would not exist without the MLP grants.

Projects funded by the MLP market the authentic assets and major lures of the recipients region. The partnerships that are formed as a result of the MLP application process establishes new opportunities for connecting visitor experiences. Partners leverage their limited marketing budgets on average 3:1 with VTC funds. This leveraging results in increased visitation and increased visitor spending.

**For every dollar VTC provides in MLP funding, the result is \$16.10 in direct visitor spending and \$26.30 in total economic impact. Marketing campaigns receiving VTC funds have shown a boost in visitor volume of 15%.**

### The Funding Story

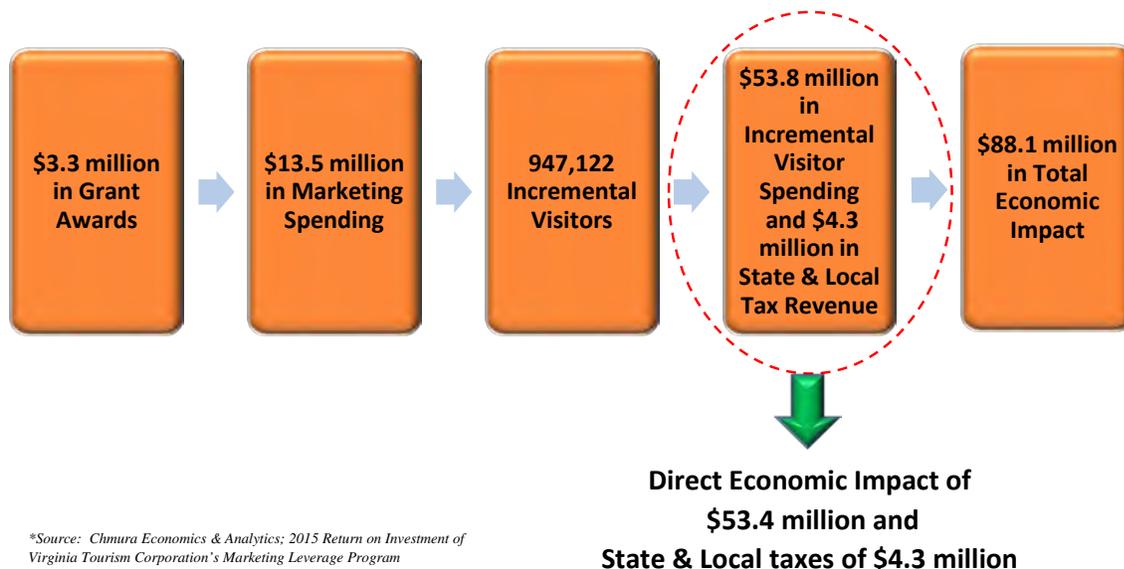
- \$1.7 million is appropriated annually for the MLP. This is divided into spring and fall funding cycles.
- More than 70 percent of Virginia tourism industry partners have annual marketing budgets of less than \$10,000.
- The amount of funding requests exceeds available funding; therefore, some qualifying applications are funded at a reduced amount.

### The Impact *(from the 2015 Return on Investment of Virginia Tourism Corporation’s Marketing Leverage Program Study\*)*

- During 2010–12, VTC approved 206 grants to more than 800 Virginia travel industry partners.\*
- VTC awarded over \$3.3 Million while the partners leveraged this with over \$10 Million in match.\*
- Every VTC dollar invested in grants resulted in \$16 of direct visitor spending.\*
- VTC leveraged \$3.3 million to an overall \$88 million total economic impact.\*
- Marketing campaigns receiving MLP grants increased visitation by 15%.\*
- The VTC MLP allowed for the equivalent of more than 47,000 days of new tourism marketing campaigns.\*

\*Source: Chmura Economics & Analytics

**Every dollar invested in VTC MLP grants resulted in \$16 of direct visitor spending and \$26 of total visitor spending \***



\*Source: Chmura Economics & Analytics; 2015 Return on Investment of Virginia Tourism Corporation’s Marketing Leverage Program



# REGIONAL UPDATES TO DRIVE TOURISM

## Chesapeake Bay Region

### Staci Martin

- Northern Neck is branding itself as Northern Neck Heritage Area, but also still pursuing National Heritage area recognition.
- Dahlgren Visitor Center on Route 301 under development.
- Middle Peninsula Public Access Authority established and has public use reservation system to use private lands.
- Dahlgren Rails to Trail Project: 16 miles private permit access only multiuse hike/bike trail.
- Creation of River Realm & Ambassador program (Lancaster County, Middlesex County, and Town of Kilmarnock) branding initiative on river tourism.
- Kilmarnock Towne Center Park: nine acres; \$2.76M investment, festival/event area, stage, public access, splash area, farmers market space.
- Middle Peninsula Economic Development Regional Organization has been formed. Initial investment approx. \$100K from DHCD and localities.
- Colonial Beach Downtown Revitalization Project.
- One new microbrewery in Montross, Westmoreland County.
- Northern Neck Artisan Trail. Over 100 members. Initial investment over \$50,000.
- Middle Peninsula Artisan Trail concept launched late 2016. Initial investment will be approximately \$50,000.
- Town of West Point, King William County and King and Queen County creating partnership to brand and marketing existing water access points into a water trail system. Initial investment may be up to \$25,000 in 2017.
- Creation of Virginia's Oyster Country (Gloucester, Middlesex, Lancaster, Town of Kilmarnock) on branding and marketing oyster related experiences in those localities. Investment approximately \$25,000.
- Middle Peninsula State Park, which brings the total to four state parks in the Chesapeake Bay region.
- Middlesex County using Scavigy app to refresh history at local museums; \$5,000 investment.

## Eastern Shore

### Staci Martin

- Completed Stronger Economies Together planning. Received Building Collaborative Communities grant.
- NASA \$600K grant to refresh exhibits.
- Received \$48,000 Governor's Grant to development Regional and Entrepreneurial Workforce Center in fall 2016.
- Eastern Shore Artisan Trail established with more than 100 participants. Initial investment approximately \$50,000.
- Chincoteague Beach issue resolved with National Wildlife Refuge.
- Tom's Cove Oysters investing in aquaculture tours.
- Two new breweries (Chincoteague & Cape Charles) opening in 2018.
- 100-mile Seaside Water Trail designated. Creation of 501c3 Water Trail Board is completed. Accomac Northampton PDC pursuing Coastal Zone Management funding in early 2017 to begin implementation, branding and marketing.
- New Sunset Beach RV Park. Multi-million dollar investment 25+ new jobs in Northampton County. Improved bayside access. Added 400 new RV sites. New public beach.
- Refurbishment of Maddox Family Campground to KOA branded campground in Chincoteague. Site improvements, water park. Multi-million dollar investment. 30+ new jobs Page 10 Nature & Outdoors.
- Kiptopeke State Park added four additional two-bedroom cabins. Investment of over \$1M.
- Pursuing Go Virginia funds for multi-million dollar build out of Wallops Island for Unmanned Submersible Vehicles and Mid Atlantic Spaceport improvements. Has space tourism potential.
- Pursuing Go Virginia funds for Aquaculture Education Center to support ongoing waterman culture, training and culinary tourism.
- \$200,000 wharf improvement in Town of Onancock via Port of Virginia grant program. Improved access, lighting and working waterfront improvements.
- Dept. of Housing & Community Development downtown strategic planning grant to Town of Parksley. Funding managed by Accomac Northampton Planning District Commission.
- Tangier Oysters—private aquaculture partnership operating out of Tangier. Multimillion private investment. 5+ new jobs.

## Shenandoah Valley Including VA Mountains

### Katie Connor / Stephanie Lillard

- Mountain biking trails opened and enhanced throughout Roanoke, including Carvin's Cove, Roanoke Mountain and a bike trail design by RedBull opened at Nelson County Preserve.
- Alleghany Highlands Blueway established: highlights the paddling, fishing and boating opportunities along the Jackson River (30 miles); Cowpasture River (10 miles); Lake Moomaw (43 miles of shoreline); and Douthat State Park (50 acre lake).
- Waynesboro Water Trail (four miles and a portion of the South River Water Trail).
- New cabins built at Douthat State Park.
- Luray-Page to hold 4th Annual Cabin Capital Summit; area recently designated as the Cabin Capital of Virginia with over 250 cabins.
- Lexington became a Virginia Main Street community in 2016.
- Partners within Virginia's Rail Heritage Region are working to update the website and create a brochure.
- The Historic Masonic Theatre in Clifton Forge received VTGF in 2016 and opened its doors after a six million renovation; property also features an amphitheater that hosts events throughout the spring, summer and fall (Virginia Mountains Region).
- The Wayne Theatre in Waynesboro was renovated and opened in 2016.
- GO Outside Festival in Roanoke continues to grow since its inception in 2011; the 2015 event had more than 25,000 attendees (25% growth over 2014), \$110,000 in food truck sales.
- Virginia's Blue Ridge Beerway, Brew Ridge Trail, Shenandoah Beerworks, Shenandoah Spirits Trail, expansion of new businesses along Nelson 151, Roanoke Food Tours (includes wine, beer, history/culture tours.)
- Fields of Gold farm trail in the Shenandoah Valley allows visitors to discover the home-grown side of Virginia.
- Hotel Madison and Shenandoah Valley Conference Center in Harrisonburg adjacent to JMU campus.
- Alleghany Sports Complex under development.
- Amtrak coming to Roanoke in 2017.
- Rockbridge County high schools teach tourism/hospitality courses as high school elective.
- Virginia Mountain Region DMO partners formed informal partnership group.
- Hotel Madison and Shenandoah Valley Conference Center in Harrisonburg, adjacent to JMU, campus began construction in 2016 with a target completion date of Spring 2018.
- The Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership was established, includes DMO's from 13 tourism-forward communities.

## Southern Virginia

### Sandra Tanner / Jacob Bower

- The Tobacco Heritage trail has been extended into Boydton, VA. Lawrenceville is acquiring property to extend the trail into the downtown. New segment additions in Alberta(Brunswick County) and new extensions to the South Boston existing trail are in the works. Since the plan was written the 17 mile extension from Brodnax to Lawrenceville has opened, which connects three towns and two counties.
- Martinsville/Henry Parks and Recreation are adding trails that will connect with the Smith River Recreation Complex in Henry County.
- South Boston is working on blueway trail development and development of a boutique hotel to enhance downtown/ city center and outdoor recreation in the Southern Region. This hotel can be an anchor for the downtown. The town is participating in the Community Business Launch to assist with the small business development to fill their downtown buildings.
- The City of Martinsville is enhancing its downtown with more restaurant offerings.
- Martinsville is also working to attract breweries.
- Southern Virginia Wild Blueway is a new tourism product that will connect visitors to three rivers and two lakes in Southern Virginia.
- Mecklenburg county has added a tourism department/program.
- Danville/Pittsylvania have added a tourism program to the Chamber of Commerce.
- City of Danville Is continuing to develop a “river district” in the downtown area with restaurants and a winery/ brewery. This district has offices, living spaces, trails, river access and a university which is strengthening the city center.
- Clarksville is working on promoting events, music and food to enhance downtowns in the Southern Region.
- Clarksville has created a downtown committee to explore development opportunities.
- The Southern Virginia Food Hub is beginning construction in South Hill to be a hub to enhance the authentic and regional culinary assets in Southern Virginia.
- Southern Region has added two Distilleries(Halifax and Chase City) and one brewery opening(Mecklenburg County). Danville is revitalizing the river district and has new restaurants, winery and breweries being developed.
- The Salty Southern Route is a new marketing initiative that will connect authentic product based on peanuts and pork in parts of Coastal and Central regions.
- Meetings are taking place to develop connection of authentic product via a thematic trails or marketing efforts. for Martinsville/Henry, Danville/Pittsylvania, Halifax and Mecklenburg.
- City of Suffolk is working to strengthen the downtown/city center in the Historic district by developing professional development workshops for entrepreneurs and small businesses.
- City of Suffolk is also working with a committee to explore a five-year plan of developing a peanut museum. They are in the information gathering phase at this time.
- City of Suffolk Parks and Recreation added a trail in the town of Driver.
- Discussions will be taking place with Martinsville/Henry, Danville/Pittsylvania, and South Boston/Halifax Tourism to resurrect the Motor Sports Alley marketing initiative.

## Blue Ridge Highlands

### Becky Nave & Michelle Workman

- The Southwest Virginia brand has been developed for the region (which include Blue Ridge Highlands and Heart of Appalachia).
- Completed Stronger Economies Together (SET) planning in Mount Rogers Planning District Region, with VTC and other local/state/federal agencies and organizations supporting.
- Harvester Performance Center in Rocky Mount open, on the Crooked Road.
- Wytheville now has National Main Street program.
- The New River Water Trail is a new marketing initiative out of Giles County - 37 miles in Giles with hopes to expand into other counties in Virginia. Eight public boat landings, three private access points, with four more coming in 2017. Giles County alone will have 15 access points.
- The Appalachian Spring initiative focuses on eight anchor recreation destinations in the region: Appalachian Trail, Blue Ridge Parkway, Breaks Interstate Park, Clinch River, Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail, High Knob, Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, and New River.
- Mountains of Music Homecoming Festival started in 2015, a multi-day music event, showcasing the music heritage across the region.
- Appalachian Trail Center project in progress which makes Damascus the main designation in the south for the Appalachian Trail.
- Development of the River Center in Giles County in progress. Center will co-locate with a new hotel and serve as the gateway to recreation offered by the New River, Appalachian Trail and National Forests.
- Additional businesses that feature cabins for overnight lodging have opened.
- Wayne Henderson School is now open in Marion.
- The Southwest Virginia Outdoor Expo (started in 2014) is an annual event showcasing the outdoor recreation opportunities available in the region.
- Mountains of Music Homecoming Festivals – farm to table, music and artisans from SWVA, along with other Farm to Table events in towns being held annually.
- The Southwest Virginia Craft Beer Trail and Wine Trail are both in development.
- Battle at Bristol took place at the Bristol Motor Speedway in 2016.
- Pinnacle Cottages at Primland are now open.
- City of Bristol, Town of Hillsville, Carroll County and Town of Blacksburg have tourism zones.
- Entrepreneur Challenges and Entrepreneur Express workshops continue in the region.
- Proposed Ag Expo Center in Wythe County VA.

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