

August 1, 2019

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Virginia's Pathways for Success
From the Virginia Trails Alliance

Dear Governor Northam,

The Virginia Trails Alliance is a coalition of 34 trail-focused organizations from across the Commonwealth speaking with one voice to identify gaps in Virginia's trail stewardship system and advocate for solutions. As you know, good trail systems drive strong economies and improved quality of life for all Virginians. We provide the following suggestions to assist you and the Legislature in supporting Virginia's vibrant system of Trails.

- **Necessary funding for DCR** – Currently, funding for the Department of Conservation and Recreation does not fully support the diversity of trail work occurring in the Commonwealth. We support an annual budget of 1.25 million for DCR to fully implement their important work serving the public.
- **Establishing an Office of Outdoor Recreation** – An Outdoor Recreation office would serve to coordinate outdoor recreation, economic development, tourism, natural resource protection and commercial development to better amplify shared asset values across multiple priorities. Multiple states, including North Carolina have instituted similar offices with success.
- **State Trails Grant** – Create a competitive state grant source to promote trail development across the Commonwealth. A grant program will bring together local and state partners to dream big and create amazing trail systems, leveraging local and federal funds (like Recreational Trail Program), with this new state grant source.
- **State Trails Conference** – Reinstate the Governor's Conference on Trails and Greenways to focus on the development and promotion of trail systems in Virginia. We would be happy to partner with your administration in the creation of a conference to highlight and focus Trail development, management, and stewardship.
- **Signature Projects** – There are trail systems in the planning and development stages in every region of the Commonwealth that could benefit from direct action and promotion by your administration. A few examples include the East Coast Greenway running

through Virginia along the north/south rail corridor and the Dahlgren Railroad Heritage rail-trail that could be added to the State Park System. These and other projects are shovel-ready and could be championed by you for rapid advancement.

Equestrians, mountain bikers, hikers, road bikers, and commuting cyclists are all looking for high-quality experiences and opportunities to support their communities work protecting and developing trails. In fact, “70 percent of respondents to the 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey (VODS) believe that access to outdoor recreation is very important” (2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan).

As an alliance of different trail-focused organizations, we stand ready to assist you and your administration in building a better Virginia by connecting our citizens with trails.

Sincerely,

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