



Chessie Nature Trail

Open Meeting
12 November 2013

Tonight's Program

- Introduction to Advisory Committee
- Trail Background
- Near Term Projects
- Future Initiatives
- Keeping in Touch
- Q&A

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Advisory Committee

- Established June 2013
- Advises the Superintendent of VMI with respect to establishment and implementation of guidelines for trail design, construction, use, maintenance and promotion
- Provides a balanced approach between and among various trail users' and private land owners' interests
- Forum for continued community input in the safe and sustainable use of the trail's natural and cultural resources

Advisory Committee

Groups Represented:

- Virginia Military Institute (VMI)
- Rockbridge Area Conservation Council (RACC)
- Rockbridge County
- City of Lexington
- City of Buena Vista
- Private land owner

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Brief History

- Pre-1850's to 1870's canal system
- 1880's to 1960's C&O Railroad
- 1978 deeded to Nature Conservancy
- 1979 deeded to VMI Foundation, became rail trail
- 2009 deeded to VMI
 - “shall forever be used solely for recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes”
 - “shall forever be kept and maintained entirely in its natural state”

Acquisition Activities

- Trail clean up
- Environmental Site Assessment
- Recreational Trails Program grant
 - Approved for funding
 - Funding to be released upon successful environmental screening

Trail Maintenance

- VMI, with the VMI Foundation, maintains a small endowment for maintenance:
 - Annual routine maintenance
 - Storm recovery
 - Summer mowing contract

Trail Use Guidelines



The trail passes through and along private property. Please respect the rights of the property owners by remaining on the trail at all times.

- Trail is open dawn to dusk
- Pets must remain on a leash at all times
- Clean up after your pets
- Do not litter
- No Firearms

www.vmi.edu/chessie



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CHESSIE NATURE TRAIL

Chessie Nature Trail

The Chessie Nature Trail is a seven-mile, year-round public access walking trail between Lexington and Buena Vista, located along the former Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad right of way. The trail has a relatively flat grade with a gravel and dirt surface. There are currently no consistent mile markers or facilities on the trail, so plan a visit accordingly. Ticks are also fairly common in this area during warmer months; be sure to wear appropriate clothing and check thoroughly for ticks after returning from the trail.

Visit our trail listing at AllTrails.com, where you can download their smartphone app to rate the trail, log your trip with GPS, and upload photos for other visitors to see! Hikers may also want to bring along a copy of the *Field Guide to the Chessie Nature Trail* (published in 2009 by the Rockbridge Area Conservation Council) to learn more about the history and environment in the area of the trail.

Contact Information

P: (540) 464-7357



Acknowledgements and References

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Laura Neale, Rockbridge Bird Club

Dr. Michael Pelton, University of Tennessee Department of Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries

Wendy Richards, Rockbridge Bird Club

Col. Richard Rowe, Virginia Military Institute biology department

Rockbridge Historical Society

Alexia Smith, Rockbridge Bird Club

Dr. Edgar Spencer, Washington and Lee geology department

Lisa Tracy, Chair, Chessie Trail Committee, Rockbridge Area Conservation Council

Dr. William Trout III, Virginia Canals and Navigations Society

Virginia Canals and Navigations Society

Washington and Lee archaeology department

Tom Kastner

Steve Harrington

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Near Term Improvements

- Improve mile markers
- Improve/new signs at trail heads
- Replace gates
- Develop official parking areas (2)

Design Concepts

- Mile markers



Design Concepts

- Trailhead signs



Chessie Nature Trail

POINTS OF INTEREST

Canal boat
A canal boat is the Chesapeake, a 1986, an early boat of the U.S. 11 bridge, in the background was Bruce Manning on the left and the right of Virginia Wilson on the right. The boat was built by Green Island, Clark Island in 1986.

Reid's Lock and Dam
The site of the 1880 Reid Lock and Dam, an excellent example of early construction in the 19th century. The Chesapeake Trail follows the alignment.

Zimmerman's Lock
Zimmerman's Lock had a water lift system for the canal. It was built in 1880, with the water lift and the canal in the background. Zimmerman's Lock is the last lock on the canal.

South River detour
The South River detour is a 1.5-mile detour from the main trail. It follows the South River and is a good example of the early canal construction. The detour is a good example of the early canal construction.

LEGEND
• Chesapeake area
• Chesapeake trail route

About the trail ...
The Chessie Nature Trail follows the right of way of the old Chesapeake & Ohio Railway line between Lexington and Buena Vista. The line dates from 1887 and was built along the route of the earlier James River and Kanawha Canal Co. following the North Cove (Mary) River. In 1989, funding provided by the National Park Service (NPS) allowed the trail to be built. The trail was built by the NPS and the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway. The trail is a good example of the early canal construction.

This trail passes through and along private property. Please respect the rights of the property owners by remaining on the trail at all times.

Please follow these rules:

- Trail is open dawn to dusk
- Pets must remain on a leash at all times
- Clean up after your pets
- Do not litter
- No firearms
- Stay on the trail

Accessibility
Trail length: 7.2 miles
Segment length: 1.8 miles
Surface: Fine crushed stone
Typical width: 10 feet
Minimum width: 36 inches
Typical running slope: less than 1%
Maximum running slope: 1%
Typical cross slope: less than 1%
Maximum cross slope: 1%

This trail is maintained by the National Park Service, the National Conservation and the Piedmont Area Conservation Council.

Design Concepts

- Interpretive signs



CANAL NAVIGATION AND THE IRON INDUSTRY

Before railroads, a watery highway for goods

Rockbridge County has been a center of the iron industry since Grant's Furnace, the first iron furnace west of the Blue Ridge, was built in 1780. The county's rivers had a lot to do with the development of the iron industry. Water power worked the bellows that fanned the flames at foundries to melt the iron ore to make pig iron. Water power also powered the tilt hammers that shaped the pig iron into wrought iron bars at forges.

Ironmasters promoted the development of river navigation and canals to bring raw materials and supplies and take their products to market. Iron from Rockbridge was taken down the North (now Maury) River and the James River as far away as Richmond. The North River Navigation Co. was chartered in 1840 to improve the North River from its confluence with the James upstream to Lexington. Construction began in 1851, and in 1857 the faltering North River Navigation Co. was taken over by the James River & Kanawha Co. The system was completed as far north as Lexington by 1860 and continued to operate during the Civil War, when the remains of Stonewall Jackson were brought home on the system for burial in Lexington.

Two floods in 1870 and 1877 extensively damaged the canal system and in 1881, the Richmond and Allegheny Railroad Co. purchased the real estate and facilities of the James River and Kanawha Co. on the North River.

The blue line shows the course of the North (Maury) River from its confluence with the James River at Balcony Falls to the head of navigation at Cedar Grove.

Credits: Text adapted from "The Maury River Area," (1982) W.E. Trout III, Virginia Canals & Navigations Society and Lindebaugh, Donald W., "North River Canal System," (1982), Historic American Engineering Record, HAER No. VA-81. Pictures courtesy HAER. Map adapted from USGS 30-minute map, Lexington, Va., quadrangle 1884.

- Iron furnace
- Lock or dam



The remains of the Glenwood Furnace can still be seen beside Virginia 750 in Amold's Valley near Natural Bridge. It is typical of the foundries which once dotted the region.



A nineteenth century engraving showing a canal on the James River near the mouth of the North River.

This marker sponsored by Virginia Military Institute, the Nature Conservancy, the Rockbridge Area Conservation Council and the Virginia Canals & Navigations Society.

Design Concepts

- Gates (at edges of pasture)





Images: Clark Nexsen

Design Concepts

- Bollards (to impede motor vehicles)

Figure 15
Option 1 is a padlock-operable folding bollard. It folds to within five inches of the top of the concrete base. Photo by TrafficGuard Direct.



Vehicles can drive over collapsible bollards without completely removing the bollard from the ground. Courtesy of Roanoke Valley Greenways.

Design Concepts

- Official parking areas

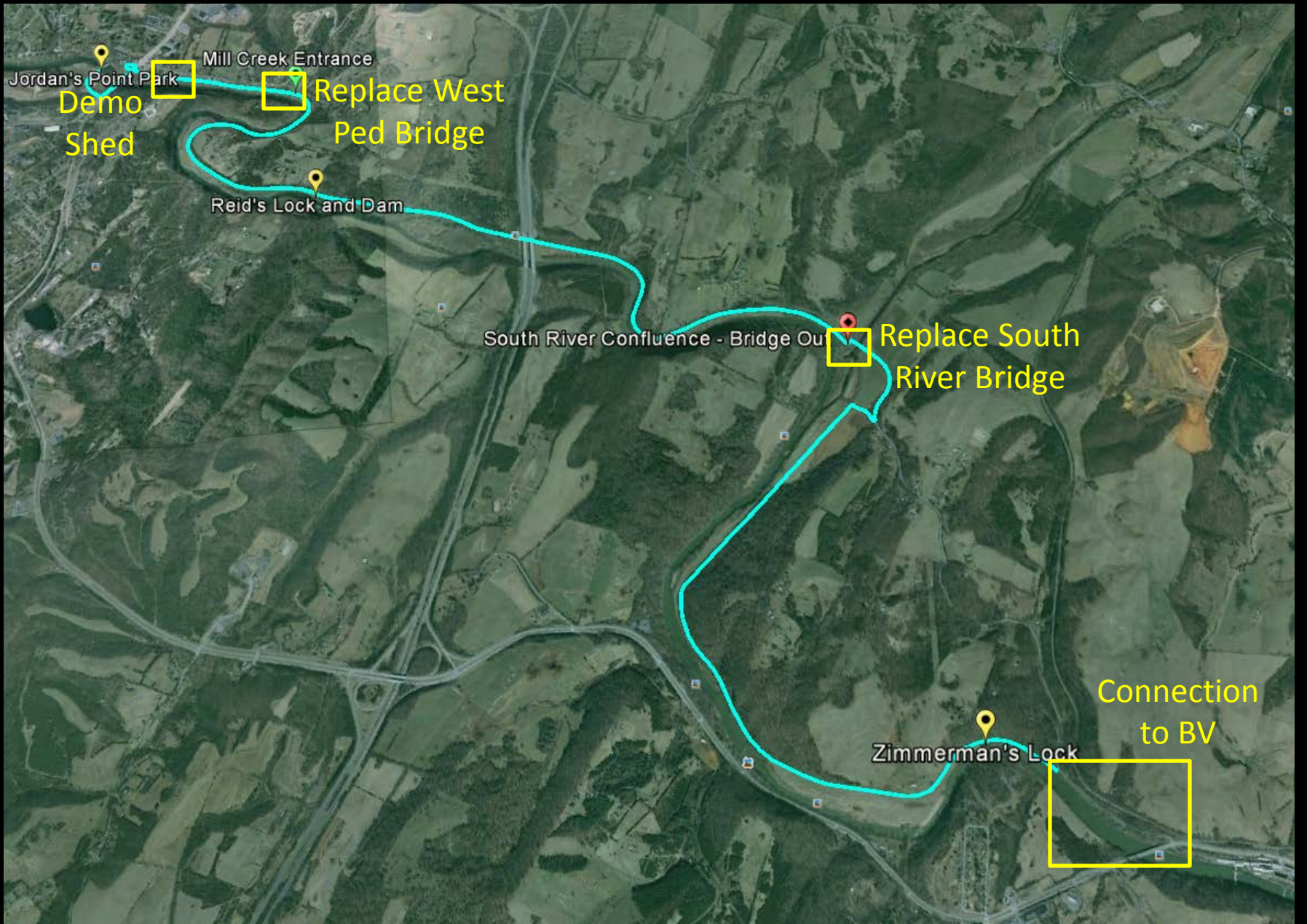


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Future Initiatives

- Demolish storage shed
- Replace West Pedestrian Bridge
- Replace South River Bridge
- Finish connection to Buena Vista



Jordan's Point Park
Demo
Shed

Mill Creek Entrance

Replace West
Ped Bridge

Reid's Lock and Dam

South River Confluence - Bridge Out

Replace South
River Bridge

Zimmerman's Lock

Connection
to BV

West Pedestrian Bridge



West Pedestrian Bridge



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Calendaring

- Walks: provide heads-up as a courtesy
- Large events: contact us to deconflict with marches
 - Portable toilets may be required

Communication

- Funnel ideas and questions through representative group
 - Check list for accuracy of contact information
- Web site form



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Trail Visitor Comments

Submit comments/ questions in box below.

If you are accessing this page from a QR code on the trail and reporting damages, please allow the QR code to record your GPS location for our reference.

Submit Form

Contact Information

P: (540) 464-7357

Physical Plant
Virginia Military Institute
Lexington, VA 24450

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