Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

NOTE: GPWTrails.org website remains under construction.

Drone photo courtesy Brodie Freer.

New Pump Track Opens

The new pump track, funded with $300,000 raised by the **Prince William Parks Foundation**, is a hit.

As reported in ***Prince William Times*** on November 12, riders were stoked about the new track. It was designed to recruit new users, as well as for those with experience: "*All levels of bike riders can do this, and you don't need a special kind of bike. Any kind of bicycle will work, even scooters and skateboards.*"
The **InsideNOVA** article on November 18 included this comment by a 12-year old biker: "*And then the big track, it was a little scary at first, because everyone else is going so fast – but I noticed*

how everyone else was messing up and falling over, so I felt a little more like if I mess up, it's not gonna be that bad.

Nick Mayhugh was at the ribbon cutting. From 1:00-4:00pm on December 7 at Patriot High School, he will offer a free sports clinic. He is a world-record breaking Team USA Paralympian (3x gold medalist) in soccer and track, a powerful speaker - and a graduate of Patriot High School. No registration required for this event, sponsored by Prince William County Parks & Recreation.

*The **Featherstone segment** of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail is intended to swerve in order to limit environmental impacts.*

Updates From Meetings of Advisory Committees to the Board of County Supervisors

At the November 18 Trails and Blueways Council (TBC) meeting:
- NOVA Parks has written letter of support for **Rail With Trail project** and its use of the trail along Bull Run in Fairfax County
- If you see a tree across a trail, or a safety issue in Prince William County, contact the **PWC 311** service. It will direct reports and questions to the appropriate department. (Use the Virginia Department of Transportation **myVDOT** system to report a need for service on a roadside Shared Use Path.)
- Over 80 people participated in Planning Office meeting on **Vint Hill Small Area Plan**. The need for well-connected bike/pedestrian infrastructure was highlighted at almost every table.

At the TBC's Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) Subcommittee meeting:
- The **Gordon Boulevard interchange project** will produce a shared use path on the north side of Route 123 stretching over I-95, from Sea Ray Lane to Annapolis Way
- **Townes at Occoquan** rezoning proposal is in third round of submissions to Planning Office.

Proposal still does not offer a realistic option to create a public trail along Occoquan River and meet county objective to "activate the waterfront."

- **Belmont Bay rezoning/proffer amendment** is expected to be heard by Planning Commission on December 10. Proposal is expected to finalize transfer of land for county park, including route of PHNST to from railroad to Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge.
- Prince William Transportation Department may release a preliminary design for Jefferson Park Connector trail in December.
- Completion of **Featherstone segment** of PHNST may be delayed by restrictions on disturbing eagle nests between December-July. A change order for the deeper helical piles to support the boardwalk has been submitted to Virginia Department of Transportation in compliance with grant requirements.
- Procurement and permitting processes for extending Neabsco Boardwalk south are still underway. An Invitation for Bid (IFB) is likely to be issued in 2026. Project will involve 600' extension of existing 12' wide boardwalk into Metz Wetland. Further extension to Leesylvania State Park is estimated to cost $4 million.
- Leesylvania State Park is expected to continue to close access to PHNST when park closes access to vehicles, limiting access to Powells Creek Crossing. Initial version of that crossing will not include all designed components, since construction costs have climbed since $9 million was approved in 2019 bond issue. Trailhead parking will be in garage at Virginia Railway Express (VRE) station in Potomac Shores.
- PHNST spurs will connect to Cockpit Point Park, new parkland around fly ash disposal site at Possum Point, and Quantico Creek. Specific routes of connections to trails **planned by Dumfries** will be identified when **Trails Master Plan** is released.
- **National Museum of the Marine Corps** is supportive of PHNST passing through its property

At the November 19 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting:

- Janet Bartnik will be moving from the Prince William Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to the **Transformation Management Office** on December 8, for a two year appointment. An "acting" deputy will be chosen from within Parks and Recreation.
- Starting July 1, trail construction projects (including public outreach) will be managed by the new Department of Transportation and Capital Construction. Master plans, conceptual designs, and projects that don't require a site plan (such as constructing and maintaining natural surface trails) or certificate of occupancy, will remain in the Department of Parks and Recreation. Construction of bridges (including Powells Creek Crossing) and detailed design for trails in greenways will be handled by the new office. Two staff people now in DPR will transfer.
- Placer.ai has identified **James S. Long Regional Park** as the most popular park in Prince William County.

Second Sunday Hike on December 14

We will walk along the Broad Run Greenway, where the county now owns property (within red lines, above) which could be used for a trail. We'll see the impact of adjacent data centers and explore how a electricity transmission line might impact the stream valley.

Hike should be about two miles total, with some walking being on a hillside where no trail has been constructed yet. Well-behaved dogs on a leash are welcome.

Please register, in case weather forces a postponement.

construction of a trail is underway at Lake Ridge Park and Marina
*to provide safe access at **Cotton Mill Road***

Getting State Funding for Building the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail in Prince William County

The **legislative agenda** of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors (BOCS) for the 2026 General Assembly includes:

Designation of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail as a General Assembly Prioritized Trail

Prince William County requests the General Assembly designate the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail as a prioritized trail. The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail and the Washington-Rochambeau Route National Historic Trail are two units of the National Park System that cross through the county. Currently, there are six designated General Assembly Prioritized Trails, but none are located in Northern Virginia.

Funding Two Segments of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (Between Dumfries and Locust Shade Park)

Prince William County requests approximately $9 million to complete two segments of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, paralleling the Washington-Rochambeau route between Dumfries and Locust Shade Park in the county.

Roadway safety part of legislative agenda also includes request for "*New program for high-cost pedestrian and bicycle crossings (such as pedestrian bridges and multiuse trails).*"

Ideally, local trail advocates could partner with others across Virginia to support expansion of trails funding. The statewide trails coalition in North Carolina is marketing the **Great Trails State** - check out the **How Trails Are Transforming NC's Communities & Economy** video. The Director of the North Carolina Department of Transportation **Integrated Mobility Division** summarized benefits in 10 words: "*Trails improve mobility, promote healthy lifestyles, and boost local economies.*"

The closest to a statewide trails organization is the Virginia Trails Alliance. It is a loosely organized group of experienced and effective individuals associated with a variety of organizations that is now going through a **change in leadership**.

The legislative vehicle for increasing funding is the **Virginia's Great Outdoors Act**, which is championed by Our Virginia Outdoors. If passed by the General Assembly, the bill would provide $25 million/year for recreational trails and $25 million/year for multi-purpose trails.

Most trails advocacy at the 2026 General Assembly will focus on providing funding for trails to be based on a data-driven review process. That would be unlike the mechanism used in 2022 to create a State Trails Office and provide **$89 million** in trails funding to five Genal Assembly-identified trails. Since then, a sixth trail was added to that list.

The BOCS is requesting that the PHNST be added as a seventh trail, in part because no Northern Virginia trail has received earmarked funding.

If additional funding is dedicated by the 2026 legislature to expand recreational and multi-use trails, the State Trails Office may be **rechartered** and tasked to develop criteria to allocate funding

based on the State Trails Plan rather than geography. The State Trails Office maintains the **State Trails Office Trail Data Viewer Dashboard**.

PARK TYPE	WALK/BIKE SERVICE AREA	DRIVE TIME SERVICE AREA
Neighborhood	5 to 10-minute walk/bike time; bus stop within ¼-mile, preferred	Less than 10 minutes
Community	10 to 15-minute walk/bike time	10 to 20-minute drive time
Regional	Greater than 15-minute walk/bike time	20 to 30-minute drive time
School/Community-Use	5 to 10-minute walk/bike time	Less than 10 minutes

Walkability Index

America Walks notes in **How Many Americans Live in Walkable Neighborhoods?** (September 11) that adding housing to walkable neighborhoods *and* making streets more walkable allow more people to live in places with bike/pedestrian routes to the places they want to go.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has an **interactive map** based on the **National Walkability Index**. McCoart Administrative Center (where the Prince William Transportation Department is located) and Hellwig Park (home of the Department of Parks and Recreation) are mapped as being in a “least walkable” area.

The Parks, Recreation and Tourism chapter of the Prince William County 2040 Comprehensive Plan established **Level of Service objectives** for new development. The target is for a neighborhood park to be within a 5-10 minute walk or bike ride. The county will need to fund and build new trails to connect existing and new developments to parks and schools, in order to create live-work-play walkable communities.

New Powerline Proposals and Trails

Dominion Power has submitted proposals to PJM for construction of new/upgraded high-voltage electricity transmission lines. Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) has mapped locations of **proposed lines**.

Under Proposal 331, an existing powerline in the Coles, Neabsco, and Occoquan magisterial districts could be upgraded to 500kV. Construction would impact trails planned underneath the powerline (*see above*). No funding has been identified yet to acquire a public right-of-way to use the planned routes or to build the trails.

In the Brentsville magisterial district, Proposal 275 would use the existing right-of-way to cross Broad Run near Rocky Branch. It would then extend along Pageland Lane in the Gainesville

magisterial district.

In addition, one of three proposed routes for a new **Nokesville-Brentsville 230kV line** would carve a 100-foot wide path though the forested Broad Run Greenway between Linton Hall Road and Route 28. The December 14 **Second Sunday hike** will explore that area.

In Other News…

- The Holiday Walk of Lights at Neabsco Boardwalk starts December 4 and runs through December 28. Parking and shuttle buses are free. As noted on the **schedule**, Sensory Friendly Night is December 9.
- **International Mountain Bicycling Association** (IMBA) Trail Care School in Fairfax County is **accepting registrations**. December 13 classroom session will be at Sherwood Regional Library, 10:00am-6:00pm. December 14 trail work session will be at Mt Vernon District Park. 9:00am-5:00pm.
- **The deadliest roads in America** (*Washington Post*, November 19) "*Between 2010 and 2023, yearly deaths caused by cars and trucks striking pedestrians rose 70 percent…"* and *"Every statistic has a name behind it, a family member behind it, a loved one behind it.*"
- Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) volunteers **contributed hours** equivalent to 35 full-time positions.
- **Utah rolls forward on statewide freeway system for bikes** (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 31) The network would come within a mile of 95% of Utahns and over 96% of their workplaces. Governor Cox said "*We need to spend more time outside, more time connecting with people and more time exercising, and the way we do that is through our trail system*."
- **VCU, city of Richmond adjust four intersections in traffic safety pilot program** (Virginia Commonwealth University, November 17). "Quick-build" projects use modular

curbs and paint striping to reduce left-turning speeds and prevent corner-cutting by drivers.

- **Caledon State Park Completes $6.1 Million Expansion** (*News on the Neck*, November 13). The state park is now on both sides of the Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail, which is the route of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.
- Educational signs have been installed on the **Stormwater Trail** in Manassas, accessible from the **Winters Branch Trail**.
- **County Plans for 18-mile Eastern Loudoun Trail Advance** (*LoudounNOW*, November 17) The new trail, just endorsed by the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors finance committee, will help produce a 40-mile loop through eastern Loudoun.
- **Raise the Roof at Bears Den** a fundraiser, organized by Loudoun Appalachian Trail Association to repair the lodge, will be 2:00-5:00pm on December 6.
- The **Collaboration of Regional Trail Initiatives** (CRTI) and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) will offer a webinar on December 10, 3:00-4:00pm on the PEC's Trail Maintenance Toolkit (TMT), Trail Maintenance Assessment Guide and Field Guide, and TRAILS Certification. Contact **Jennifer Torman** to get the webinar link.
- **Naturalist Walk: Winter Survival** will be at Leopold's Preserve on December 13, 10:00am-noon. Learn what mammals do to survive winter on this guided walk led by a professional naturalist. Volunteers for trail maintenance are invited to join the **Friday Conservation Corps**, 9:00am-noon each week.

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