Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

September 14: Second Sunday Hike at Locust Shade Park

We will hike about 3 miles on the trails in the north end of the park, including the connection to the Marine Corps Museum and a short loop on the Museum grounds. The hike is mostly on natural surface trails and includes some hills.

Hike is 1:00-3:00pm. Well-behaved dogs on a leash are welcome. **Please register** in case weather forces a postponement.

September Events at Leopold's Preserve

There are **7 miles of trails** in the 380-acre **Leopold's Preserve**. Access to the Preserve is free, and it is open to the public every day from dawn until dusk.

September 3 10:00am-noon: **Hike With a Naturalist**
September 20, 10:00am-2:00pm: **Fall Festival**
September 21, 10:00am-noon: **Naturalist Walk: Fall Birds & Blooms**

*progress on Occoquan Greenway **Segment 2 bridge** between August 21-29*

Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) Roundtable With Four Meetings

September 5 STATE OF THE TRAIL *(virtual Teams webinar)*
A virtual gathering on September 5, 2025, from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM uniting partners, stakeholders, and trail enthusiasts from across the 900-mile corridor. This event will spotlight lightning talks from trail partners, updates on trail development and volunteer efforts, and engaging sessions covering new legislation, regional partnerships, and the future of trail certification. With a focus on collaboration, innovation, and celebration, the roundtable will offer a

unique opportunity to align visions, share expertise, and shape the future of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. Whether you're a long-time partner or a new voice, your attendance will help strengthen this vibrant trail community.

October 9 Help Build the Future of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail *(virtual Teams webinar)*

This virtual meeting on October 9, 2025, from 9:30 AM to 3:00 PM will bring together federal employees, nonprofit leaders, and trail advocates to discuss ideas for developing a sustainable organizational framework for the Trail. This event features educational sessions, expert panels, and interactive discussions aimed at identifying ways to build coordination and capacity across three states and the District of Columbia. Attendees will hear about successful cooperative models from across the country along with shared insights on partnership dynamics. Consensus-building activities will help to chart a path forward with the ultimate goal of fostering a strong, unified voice for the 900-mile trail corridor. The event should also serve as a platform to inspire and empower public servants, laying the groundwork for future regional partnership initiatives aimed at advancing the Trail.

October 10 Crow's Nest Walk and Talk *(limited to 30 participants)*

The Potomac Heritage Trail Roundtable Walk and Talk, scheduled for October 10, 2025, from 9 AM to noon, is a unique, half-day walking meeting at Crow’s Nest Natural Area Preserve. Hosted by the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, this 3-mile hike brings together regional, state, and federal partners to explore collaboration opportunities, share grant resources, and discuss trail planning - all while enjoying the fall landscape. Designed to foster informal yet impactful conversations, the event promotes wellness, networking, and strategic alignment for future trail development and conservation efforts in Northern and Coastal Virginia.

October 15 Southern Maryland Community Meeting *(in person only)*

The Potomac Heritage Trail Community Meeting, scheduled for October 15, 2025 from 9 AM to 4 PM, at the Leonardtown Library, brings together stakeholders from across Southern Maryland to shape the future of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail in Prince George's, Charles and St. Mary's counties. This full-day event will foster collaboration among tourism advocates, transportation planners, and community leaders to align visions, explore trail improvements, and strengthen regional connectivity. With a focus on ecotourism, placemaking, and advocacy, the meeting features educational sessions, interactive mapping, and strategic discussions aimed at enhancing trail safety, visibility, and community engagement. Open to the public, the event promises to be a pivotal step in advancing sustainable outdoor recreation and heritage tourism in the region.

*For more details, contact **Jennifer Wampler**.*

Walk and Talk Wellness Trails

Five trails will be highlighted for **Walk and Talk Wellness** campaign between September 13-October 12, together with Suicide Prevention Month and Public Lands Day campaign between September 13-October 12, together with Suicide Prevention Month.

Signs on trails at Blooms Park, Winters Branch, Silver Lake, Andrew Leitch, and the Neabsco Boardwalk are a partnership between the **Community Healthcare Coalition of Greater Prince William County**, the **Prevention Coalition of Greater Prince William County**, and the **Greater Prince William Trails Coalition**. (*Ain't Prince William "great"?*)

Trails are health care infrastructure. They offer a free place to exercise, to reduce stress and clear one's head, and to absorb peace from natural surroundings. The three groups will gather to hike together on September 26, 2:00pm at Neabsco Boardwalk. Dogs on leash are welcome.

Active Prince William Update

Prince William County is preparing a **grant application** to the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) for a dedicated bus/HOV-3 lane on Minnieville Road between Dale City commuter lot and Caton Hill Road.

One challenge for the proposed **Rail With Trail** connection between the Manassas and Manassas Park train depots is getting across Liberia Avenue. Physically it is not realistic to go underneath, alongside the railroad tracks. An at-grade crossing at Quarry Road is proposed. The draft feasibility study proposes a 10' wide paved trail between the two train depots. A mixture of stone dust and asphalt trail segments (with boardwalk sections) is proposed from the Manassas Park depot through Blooms Park to Fairfax County.

Prince William County has just one dedicated bike/pedestrian bridge. As with the **Washington and Old (W&OD) Dominion Trail**, it may be decades before more are built across busy highways like Roure 28 and Liberia Avenue. The next one might be at Innovation Town Center, where the county has requested $45 million for a new trail that would include a bridge across Prince William Parkway/Route 234 at Discovery Boulevard.

"Walk With a Doc" at Chinn Recreation Center on August 21

Trails and Blueways Council (TBC) Update

From the August 26 meeting:
- TBC approved a letter of support for using up to $200,000 in Transient Occupancy Tax to facilitate routing the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) through Prince William Forest Park. Tourism Office has accumulated that funding from RV camp in the park. Funding would help complete archeological and cultural resource studies so trail construction could be completed before SemiQuincentennial of Washington and Rochambeau marching on that route to Yorktown in 1781.
- A **Maritime Study** by the county's Economic Development staff to "activate" the waterfront could address the benefits and needs for expanding blueways.
-The **Countywide Trails Master Plan** will include ballpark cost estimates for constructing trail segments recommended in the plan. Those estimates can be used to proposed funding projects in upcoming budget discussions. Board of County Supervisors will approve FY27-32 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) in April, 2026. One more public charette for the plan is anticipated in October.
- In preparation for FY27 budget, TBC members are now identifying highest priority projects in each magisterial district.
- The Jefferson Park Connector, the first project using $1 million in annual trails funding added by BOCS in FY25 budget, will be a 10-foot wide stone dust trail from new public playground at Jefferson Plaza Apartments on Route 1 to Veterans Park. Project should reach 60% design by December. FY26 funding will be used for sidewalk connection on Horner Road to close existing gap with heavily-used "goat path" from Horner Road parking lot to Summerland over I--95. Gap was to be closed by Rays Regard proffer but that project is stalled. FY27 $$ could expand trail network at Catharpin Creek and Route 15, connecting new trail underneath highway to Catharpin Greenway on north side of the creek.
- Agendas and minutes of TBC meetings are posted, along with **a link for watching meetings**, on county website.

Chinn Park Trails Closed Temporarily

Construction of a **stream restoration project at Chinn Park** has forced a short-term closure of some trail segments (*red lines, above*). Most of the parking lot on Trowbridge Drive is fenced off, but some spaces remain open at the trailhead. Trails should reopen in about a year.

New Parkland, New Trails

On August 27, on the 163rd anniversary of an 1862 Civil War battle, Prince William County Department of Parks and Recreation led a special tour of 22 acres of new parkland just acquired for the **Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park**. Free **guided tours** on the existing Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park are offered on the second and fourth weekends through October.

The **American Battlefield Trust** acquired and transferred the parcel to the county. Thanks to continued efforts by that organization, another 150 acre expansion of the county park between Brentsville Road and Broad Run is likely to be formalized in 2026. A Master Plan for the

expanded park will include an increase to the **existing trail network** so visitors can explore both history and nature.

high water this summer piled up debris at the Broad Run Trail

And In Other News…

- Mark your calendar - next Quarterly Meeting of Greater Prince William Trails Coalition with be October 23 at the GMU Potomac Science Center, 10:00-11:30am. You can **register now.**Meetings in 2026 will be on January 22, April 23, June 25, and October 22.
- The **Sierra Club Great Falls Group**, **Washington Area Bicyclist Association** (WABA), and other groups involved with the Washington and Old Dominion (W&OD) Trail are organizing a rally on September 6 to object to plans by Dominion Energy to clear-cut canopy trees along a 33-mile stretch of the trail. The **Rally for W & OD** will be on the Town Green in Vienna from 10:00-11:00am.
- **Full Moon Hike** on Neabsco Boardwalk, September 6, 7:00-9:00pm. There's also a **Twilight Trek** on October 11. Check the latest **Leisure** magazine for more opportunities.
- Northern Virginia Bird Alliance is leading a bird walk at **Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge** on September 7. This walk is geared toward beginners, but more experienced birders are welcome. Meet at the main parking lot. No registration is required.
- The September 14, 10:00am-3:00pm **open house** at JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary in Loudoun County will open several trails for the first time. There will be self-guided tours with information signs along the way, and roving volunteers to answer questions.
- **Former Alexandria Mayor Justin Wilson named NOVA Parks Executive Director** (ALX Now, August 15) NOVAParks manages the Bull Run-Occoquan Trail on the Fairfax County side of Bull Run/Occoquan River. Prince William County's Trails Master Plan may include new connections across the river to create a multi-jurisdictional trails network.
- **Why candidates should pay attention to outdoor recreation** (*Cardinal News*, August 19) "*Walk through Damascus, known as 'Trail Town USA,' and you will see what well-connected*

outdoor infrastructure can do for a local economy. Spend a day on the New River Trail in Pulaski or Galax, and it is clear how trails invite tourism, support small businesses and bring new energy into town."

- **Aerial Alanna or Mayor Mensing? Actually, it's both** (*Prince William Times*, August 20) Alanna has been on the Board of the Greater Prince William Trails Coalition since we got organized.
- **Roem, Thomas detail Gainesville road safety improvements at town hall** (*InsideNOVA*, August 25) "*Major improvements include three significant additions:*
  - *Median refuges for pedestrians and crosswalk relocation*
  - *New directional pedestrian curb ramps*
  - *High-visibility crosswalks"*
- **Step by step Regional walking and biking network progress is worth celebrating** (*The Virginian-Pilot*, August 22 [paywall]) "*With connections to other trails in the region, Trail757 is eventually supposed to make it possible for people to walk or bike all the way - or any part of the way - from Richmond to the Virginia Beach Oceanfront or to Fort Monroe in Hampton... On the Peninsula, the project is expected to cost between $240 million and $300 million."*
- Check out the latest **Dahlgren Trail newsletter**. If you follow the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail south into King George County, you'll end up on the Dahlgren Trail.
- **New Water Fountains On the Mount Vernon Trail** (Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail) Each of the 14 new fountains (including a dog bowl) cost approximately $66,000. They were funded in part by a $475,000 lead grant from the National Park Foundation.
- To support public health practitioners, the Safe Routes Partnership has published the **2024 Report Card** for Virginia's funding of sidewalks, crosswalks, and other supportive street infrastructure and programs that help people be more physically active.
- The Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve Guided Hikes Group has scheduled a **Mushroom and Mycology Hike** on September 13, 9:00am-1:00pm.
- **Strategizing for Transportation Trails** webinar by Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) will be September 4, 11:30am-1:00pm. MDOT will unveil the 2025 Maryland Statewide Transportation Trails Strategic Plan and interactive website.
- **Paddling Virginia's Water Trails** (*Virginia Living*, August) "*Beyond local enthusiasts, few people know about them.*" The **website** highlights kayaking and canoeing opportunities in a portion of Tidewater.

Feel free to forward this newsletter to others who may be interested. For more details about the Greater Prince William Trails Coalition, contact us at info@gpwtrails.org

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