

APPENDIX A: SELECTED TRAIL TYPES, USES & BENEFITS

SELECTED TRAIL TYPES

West Virginia's trails are as diverse as the activities enjoyed on or near them. The following trail classifications indicate the types of trails found in West Virginia.

- **LONG DISTANCE**

Several excellent long-distance trails traverse the state, running north-south and east-west. This category generally includes trails at least 75 miles in length and may consist of trails or trail segments that provide a route from one part of the state to another. These trails are typically better known and publicized and often serve as magnets for out-of-state users. Trails in this category include the Greenbrier River Trail, the Allegheny Trail and the North Bend Rail Trail, which includes a considerable portion of the route of the American Discovery Trail in West Virginia.

- **RECREATIONAL**

Recreational trails, the most common form, provide day-use or extended trail opportunities. They may be appropriate for a variety of motorized and non-motorized uses including hiking, off-highway vehicles, horseback riding, camping, hiking, backpacking, cross-country skiing, bicycling and many other activities, although not all trail activities generally occur on the same trail. Recreational trails can be found throughout the state. Examples include most of the trails in West Virginia state parks and the Monongahela National Forest, as well as many of the smaller trails throughout the state. Long distance trails are also often considered recreational trails.

- **INTERPRETIVE/EDUCATIONAL**

A trail used for educational or interpretive purposes often has a theme. While any trail can be an educational experience if approached in an appropriate manner, these trails usually provide education or interpretation through signage, brochures and living history. Examples include the Core Arboretum Trail in Morgantown, which provides green space in the middle of Morgantown and offers interpretation of local flora and fauna through signage and brochures, and the C&O Canal National Historic Park, which provides interpretation of the historically significant sites along the park's trails.

- **HISTORICAL**

The original use of a historical trail had an impact on West Virginia's culture with respect to the state's historic or prehistoric past, including trade, industry, commerce, migration, settlement and politics. This designation refers to the trail itself and not to historic features on or near the trail. Examples include the Midland Trail, a historic

migratory route through the state, and the Mary Draper Ingles Trail, which roughly follows the route of Mary Ingles' famous 18th century escape from Shawnee captors during the French and Indian War and her arduous trek back to her home in present-day Virginia.

- **RAIL TRAILS**

Abandoned railroad lines provide excellent opportunities for trail installation, particularly in areas with little public land holdings. Trails constructed along abandoned railroad routes feature minimal uphill gradients, providing excellent trail use opportunities for individuals of all physical abilities. Rail trails can be in urban or remote areas and may extend for long distances. As the coal industry in West Virginia contracts, significant amounts of excess railroad right of way will be abandoned. These abandoned rights of way will provide ready-made opportunities for significant expansion of the West Virginia trail system.

SELECTED TRAIL USES & ACTIVITIES

The West Virginia trail system includes multiple types of trails, providing the visitor various rewarding activities. At the 12 workshops held throughout West Virginia to provide public input for this plan, participants listed the trail activities they most enjoyed. Below are the most popular forms of recreation:

- **WALKING, HIKING**

In a 1995 survey conducted by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health, state residents listed walking as their favorite recreational activity. Many senior citizens in the state use indoor facilities to exercise. While this is often a function of inclement weather, many times the cause is the lack of outdoor facilities for walking or the deterioration of these facilities. Efforts must be made to increase the amount and safety of local walking areas, not only for seniors, but for all citizens.

Trails also provide walkers with alternative transportation opportunities, particularly in urban settings. Metropolitan areas of the state must strive to increase the ability of citizens to travel without the use of automobiles.

Hiking is simply walking done in a natural setting, often at a more strenuous pace. Hikers covet state and national forests in West Virginia for the serenity of their settings and the challenge of their terrain. With the diversity of the state's trails and geography, West Virginia has something to offer the novice and the dedicated long-distance hiker. From a simple loop of a few miles in a nearby state forest to a hundreds-mile trek along the Allegheny Trail, the possibilities West Virginia offers hikers are endless.

- **BACKPACKING**

Backpacking is an extended hike requiring the trail visitor to carry additional equipment, such as a tent, sleeping bag, cook stove, food and personal items. West Virginia has many exceptional areas for backpackers. Long trail loops can be found in the

Dolly Sods Wilderness Area, the Cranberry Wilderness Area, the Otter Creek Wilderness Area, Laurel Fork Wilderness Areas (North and South), the Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area and other areas throughout the Monongahela National Forest as well as state parks and forests. The 300-mile Allegheny Trail provides a north-south hiking path extending from the West Virginia-Pennsylvania boundary in Preston County to the West Virginia-Virginia border along Peters Mountain in Monroe County. The American Discovery Trail is an east-west hiking route from Green Spring to Parkersburg. These routes are favorites of backpackers from West Virginia and the eastern United States.

- **EQUESTRIAN USE**

Although not heavily marketed, West Virginia has numerous trails available for horseback riding. The North Bend Rail-Trail and the Greenbrier River Rail-Trail are examples. A large number of stables scattered throughout the state local horseback riding trail systems. Additionally, several saddle clubs throughout the state maintain or are working on creating equestrian trails. The expanding Hatfield-McCoy Trail system also will contain many miles of trails for equestrian and pack animal use.

- **BICYCLING**

West Virginia's abundant back roads, scenic highways and mountain trails await the bicycle adventurer. Pocahontas County is home to some of the finest mountain biking in the East. Snowshoe Resort is expanding its own bicycle trail system to induce year-round activities and employment. The Northern Panhandle has a bicycle trail that eventually will be connected to Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C. West Virginia sits astride the American Discovery Trail (ADT), an east-west spine of the National Trails System. The 6,340-mile ADT permits the bicycle rider to travel the United States from Cape Henlopen, Delaware, to Point Reyes, California. Additionally, many local communities are installing their own bicycle routes for health purposes and as alternative transportation.

- **FISHING, HUNTING ACCESS**

Trails fulfill a vital role in West Virginia by providing access to the abundant game and fish. West Virginia hunters and anglers benefit and so does West Virginia's economy, as out-of-state visitors use these resources.

The fishing pier the Lower Paint Creek Watershed Association recently built in southern Kanawha County provides fishing access to area residents and further spurs the cleanup effort of that watershed. This pier provides accessible fishing for local residents with disabilities and is reached by a modest trail to the site. Without this trail and others like it around the state many hunters and anglers would have no access to enjoy their pastimes. Almost any area of the state abounds with local trails used by hunters and anglers to reach their favorite spots. These trails sometimes become problematic when they are not officially designated. One goal of the Statewide Trail Plan is to create official designations for important connector trails like the ones discussed above. By doing so we provide safe and legal access and cut down on the trespassing and illegal trail use.

- **OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE USE**

Due to the rugged nature of West Virginia's topography, off-highway vehicles (OHV) are used for work around often precipitous farmsteads and for recreation. West Virginia has one of the highest per capita ownership rates for OHVs in the nation. To meet the recreational needs of state and out-of-state OHV users, a new and extensive multi-county trail network is being developed in southwestern West Virginia. The Hatfield-McCoy Trail System will be a multi-use trail network employing a unique trail development approach through partnerships with corporate landowners. The system will eventually grow to more than 2,000 miles and will expand to include areas of Kentucky and Virginia. The system, in addition to providing OHV access, will allow mountain bikers, equestrians, hikers and other trail users opportunities to enjoy their favorite trail activities over a vast trail network.

- **CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING**

Several of the state parks and forests offer cross-country skiing when conditions allow. In addition, the state has several private ski resorts with cross-country skiing trails. West Virginia has gained a reputation during the last decade as one of the best downhill ski areas in the east. This reputation is now being extended to include cross-country skiing.

- **CAMPING**

With 35 state parks and forests, and numerous private camping facilities, West Virginia is a camper's paradise. Whether you prefer the isolation of the Cranberry Wilderness or are looking for social activities to enjoy when you camp, West Virginia provides a wide variety of camping settings and environments that should satisfy any camper's desires. With the great variety of settings in West Virginia, it is no wonder that camping ranked high on the activities that trail plan workshop participants indicated they enjoyed on the state's trails.

- **EDUCATIONAL AND AESTHETIC ACTIVITIES**

Trails provide an ideal setting for learning about the many aspects of the natural world that are so rich and varied in West Virginia. From outdoor classrooms for secondary schools to bird watching in the lush forests of the state, trails get people to the places where they can experience and learn the importance of preserving and enjoying our natural environment. Any time spent on a trail can be a learning experience if approached with the eyes and mind open. However, some trails in the state are particularly suited to teaching users about various natural, historical and cultural topics. These include the Greenbrier River Trail, allowing study of the watershed of one of the few free-flowing, non-channeled rivers in the East and the newly created Trace Fork Canyon Trail system in the Kanawha Valley. The Canyon Trail system is a unique oasis of rare flora and fauna tucked into the heart of the Charleston-South Charleston Metro area.

- **JOGGING, TRAIL RUNNING**

Many communities are developing trails as a healthy facility for their citizens, used for a variety of purposes including jogging and running. Huntington has done well in this effort with the Ritter Park trail network.

Morgantown is developing the Caperton Trail as a riverfront facility for walkers and joggers. Other locations, such as Kanawha State Forest, near Charleston, are coveted by their users for the trail running opportunities they provide. These trails often require a minimum investment but have a high payoff in health benefits. Abandoned railroad spur lines provide local communities with an opportunity to recycle relics of the industrial age into beneficial facilities for today, providing joggers with level terrain and variety to their usually mundane urban surroundings.

Trail runners are often urban joggers who enjoy the challenge and diversity that an occasional run on a rural trail provides. Others are dedicated runners who spend little time on paved, urban surfaces. These runners often can become a volunteer resource, as they are more than willing to improve trails that are their recreational resource.

- **WATER TRAIL ACTIVITIES**

West Virginia has more than 20,000 miles of streams to provide recreation for its citizens and visitors. Water trails provide for canoeing, whitewater rafting, kayaking, tubing, swimming, wading, fishing, photography and just plain meditating. Streams permit canoeists to admire the beauty of local flora and fauna as they glide effortlessly along a meandering stream. Abundant waterfalls are a pleasure to the eye and ear. Water trails were normally the first trails across an unbroken wilderness and once again they reach into the sanctuaries of the wilderness.

- **CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL ACTIVITIES**

Participants in the trail plan workshops frequently mentioned the importance of identifying and interpreting historical and cultural attractions along or in close proximity to trails. This cross development and promotion is important for providing a rich and multi-layered trail experience for state residents and to create the necessary draws for increasing non-resident trail use.

Results of a statewide heritage assessment conducted in 1990 underscore the multiplicity and diversity of the state's historical and cultural offerings. The assessment was conducted by a West Virginia Heritage Task Force composed of members of the West Virginia Department of Culture and History, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Commerce, Division of Highways, the National Park Service and the West Virginia University Institute for the History of Technology and Industrial Archaeology. The assessment identified hundreds of historical, natural, cultural or recreational resources in West Virginia that are highly significant to the state or nation. The most significant of these include:

- Fifty sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places associated with events or figures of national significance. These resources provide vital insight into the historical and cultural foundations of the nation.
- Ten National Historic Landmarks recognized among the nation's most important historical and cultural resources and designated for their significance to all Americans. Landmarks in West Virginia include Blennerhassett Island, where Aaron Burr planned his insurrection against the fledgling power of the federal government; and Wheeling's Independence Hall, where the state of West Virginia was created out of the bloody divisions of our Civil War.
- Two National Historic Parks: Harpers Ferry and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal are both located along the Potomac in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia. Both historical complexes contain extensive resources of national significance. Currently, there are tentative plans to create a Great Potomac Loop Trail that would include portions of the C&O Canal and would connect with the Washington, D.C., area.
- Portions of three national forests. These largely undeveloped areas contain extensive land and water trail networks and many highly significant cultural, natural and recreational resources. Particularly important national forest areas include:
 - Four federally designated wilderness areas
 - Spruce Knob/Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area
 - Six national natural landmarks
- Fourteen National Natural Landmarks that recognize nationally significant cave systems, wetlands and unique forest ecosystems. These landmarks are all laced with land and water trail networks and provide some of the most unique and challenging outdoor recreational opportunities in the East.
- The recently designated Coal Heritage Trail traversing the southern counties of the state. This project provides abundant opportunity for historical interpretation of the nationally significant development of the coal industry over the last century. Additional opportunities include the potential for developing significant numbers of trails using the Coal Heritage Trail as an access point or trailhead.
- Twenty-five rivers listed on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory as potential candidates for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. These rivers include the federally designated Gauley River National Recreation Area, Bluestone National Scenic River and Meadow National Wild River. These three rivers provide water and land trail opportunities with the assurance that they will remain protected in the future. The Gauley River is a

nationally recognized, high-quality whitewater resource. During its short release season in the fall, the Gauley attracts rafters who generate almost \$20 million in economic activity in the region. Every \$1 spent per visitor day generates \$2.27 of sales in the state.

- The New River Gorge National River. The gorge, administered by the National Park Service, offers a variety of highly significant cultural, recreational and natural resources. The gorge presents one of the most unique natural/historical sites in the state. The juxtaposition of the beautiful and rugged natural landscapes dotted with the remains of significant coal and industrial sites and coal boomtowns such as Kaymoor provides a perfect opportunity for combining recreation with historical and cultural interpretation.
- A segment of the Appalachian Trail, a designated National Scenic Trail. The Appalachian Trail is perhaps the oldest, best known and most treasured of the nation's trail networks. Currently, efforts are continuing to link the Allegheny Trail in West Virginia with the Appalachian Trail along Peters Mountain in Virginia.
- Thirty-five state parks and forests; four wildlife management areas and two rail trails, which comprise the West Virginia State Park System. Included in this system are significant historical and cultural resources, natural settings and developed recreational facilities, managed for public use and enjoyment. The parks run the gamut of settings from the locomotive-based history of the Cass Scenic Railroad State Park to the rugged beauty and stunning viewsheds of Blackwater Falls State Park.

With such a rich variety of culturally and historically significant sites, West Virginia is indeed a treasure waiting to be discovered. The unique factor that sets West Virginia apart from many other states with historical and cultural attractions is that, due to its rural nature, most of these sites are in absolutely stunning natural settings with ample recreational options. It is vital for increasing the number of visitors to the state that these sites and settings be tied together to create a tapestry of attractions. Not only will this increase the number of visitors to the state, but it will increase the length of their stays and the amount of money they spend here. This contention is supported by current research, which shows that one of the fastest growing areas of tourism includes cultural and historical tourism. A study released in 1997 by the Travel Industry Association of America found that the cultural and historical traveler spent an average of \$615 per trip compared to \$425 for all U.S. travelers. The study also found that the average nights away per trip was 4.7 for the historical/cultural traveler compared to 3.3 nights for all U.S. travelers. This growth and strength in historical/cultural tourism could serve as a boon to community-based tourism and trails can serve as a link between sites to increase this growth. Preservation of historic sites and their interconnection with other attractions can serve as a real economic boost to communities.

SELECTED TRAIL BENEFITS

The development of a cohesive trail system can have positive effects on resources, communities and trail users. The following section describes some of these benefits.

- **ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION**

An important benefit of comprehensive trail development is reduced dependence on motorized transportation. Benefits of alternative transportation include decreased auto emissions, improved traffic flow, fewer auto crashes and improved health.

- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The vast number of trails and the variety of settings in West Virginia provide the basis for an outstanding statewide trail system. However, enhanced efforts to link individual facilities into a cohesive trail network are needed. When coupled with an aggressive marketing campaign, there can be little doubt that the state can substantially increase the number of out-of-state visitors drawn to a well-planned trail system.

In addition to the general financial gains resulting from increased tourist visitation, other economic benefits associated with trail development include enhanced property values and increased local and state tax revenues. Studies conducted in recent years include the following relevant examples:

- *The Impact of Rail Trails*; Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service, Washington D.C., 1992. This study of users on three rail-trail projects found that users spent an average of \$3.97 to \$11.02 per day, generating an annual impact of \$1.2 million or more on each trail. The survey documented that local users and visitors also spend as much as \$250 per year on trail-related equipment, clothing, books and accessories. The trails attracted spending by non-county residents ranging from \$294,000 to \$630,000 each year.
- *A Look at Visitors on Wisconsin's Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail*; University of Wisconsin Extension Service, Madison Wisconsin, 1988. Semi-primitive and rural trails with historic or natural characteristics that encourage "vacation-style" trips were found to generate more revenue per mile than urban and suburban trails used for light recreation and commuting. The study by the University of Wisconsin's Extension Service found that spending by out-of-state visitors for lodging, bike rentals, bus shuttle service and restaurant meals was twice as high as for in-state visitors. A survey of trail users in Minnesota found that users who traveled 25 miles or less to the trail spent an average of just \$.61 to \$2.68 per day, while those traveling 25 miles or more spent up to \$53.20 per day on average.

- *The Effect of the Burke-Gilman Trail Upon Property Values of Adjacent and Nearby Properties and Upon the Property Crime Rate in the Vicinity of the Trail*; The Seattle Engineering Department, Seattle Washington, 1986. A survey of real estate agents conducted for this study revealed that properties located within two blocks of the trail were easier to sell and carried a price premium of about 6.2%. A survey of homeowners found that 75% of owners along the trail felt their homes would be easier to sell and 48% expected a value premium. Only 4% of homeowners felt their homes would sell for less. Crime and other problems along the trail were reported to be minimal to nonexistent. No respondents felt the trail should be closed.

Each of these studies indicates that substantial economic benefits result from trail development. From increasing revenue in rural communities to boosting property values, trails are a proven economic resource.

- **HEALTH AND FITNESS**

Active use of a river, trail or greenway by state residents can help improve their physical fitness and health. Savings from reduced health care costs can be dramatic. For example:

- According to the December 23, 1991, *U.S. News and World Report*, American families paid nearly 12% of annual income for health care. Improving physical fitness will substantially reduce this percentage.
- A Corporate Wellness Study conducted for the city of San Jose, California, in 1988 found people who exercise regularly had 14% lower claims against their medical insurance, spend 30% fewer days in the hospital and had 41% fewer claims greater than \$5,000.
- Results from a theoretical model developed by the Rand Corporation and published in *Men's Fitness* magazine in 1992 showed that for every mile a person walks they will save society 24 cents in medical and other costs.

Efforts are under way in West Virginia to address and correct the unhealthy lifestyles practiced by many state residents. The West Virginia Bureau for Public Health is focusing efforts on creating physically active walkable communities. The Bureau has published *A Community Guide to Developing Walking Trails*, a booklet intended to provide communities with the resources to create environments conducive to exercise. In addition, the bureau has received a \$590,000 grant from the Centers for Disease Control to address disease control and prevention by focusing on physical activity and nutrition policy. The Statewide Trail Plan promotes several actions geared toward educating and encouraging trail use for good health.

- **ACCESS AND LINKAGES**

Trails in West Virginia serve a vital function in providing access to outdoor recreation facilities and attractions. In primitive settings, trails provide access to the more remote areas of national forests and state parks, including the state's four federally designated wilderness areas. Land trails provide access to many of West Virginia's stream-based water trails, which include some of the most breathtaking scenery and challenging whitewater in the nation. Trails provide hunters and anglers access to public hunting and fishing areas. Urban trails such as the Wheeling Heritage Trail provide routes between attractions and facilities, including sites of historical and cultural significance. Long distance trails may connect West Virginia's trail network with trails in other states, providing extended hiking opportunities for in-state and out-of-state residents alike. Motorized trails provide ATV users with a managed setting appropriate for enjoying their activities. In short, trails represent a vital link in providing residents and visitors access to the state's vast array of natural, recreational and cultural attractions.

- **RESOURCE PROTECTION**

Trails and trail-related projects also provide a great benefit by protecting the state's natural environment and resources. Trails can protect wildlife habitat by providing visitors access to habitats in specific areas only and limiting cross-country travel. Interpretive signage along a trail can educate the public about the sensitivity of wilderness areas and raise awareness of the importance of protecting vulnerable resources. Teaching appropriate trail ethics can encourage responsible behavior in any outdoor setting.

Even more vital than their role in preventing overuse and encouraging appropriate practices in the outdoors, trails and trail networks serve a vital role in helping to preserve natural areas. For example, on the North Branch of the Potomac River, protection of a nine-mile greenway corridor in West Virginia and western Maryland is expected to bring tourism and small business development to one of the most depressed areas of Maryland. By capitalizing on the miraculous turn around in water quality in this section of the Potomac, protection of this corridor and promotion of its excellent trout fishery are expected to lure anglers from around the country. This trail project will allow Maryland's Garrett County, whose largest industry is tourism, to increase visitation while maintaining its rural character and preserving its pristine natural resources. Other projects, such as the West Virginia Trails Coalition effort to preserve some of the land along Trace Fork near the rapid development of Corridor G in the Charleston area, also seek to preserve river and stream corridors and encourage trail development while capitalizing on the historic and cultural components of the region. This blend of preservation and economic development is a departure from traditional roles of economic development professionals and conservationists. This new emphasis points the way to economic development through trails that seeks to preserve an area's unique character while building a tourism industry that emphasizes its natural, cultural and historical assets. Trails do much to preserve our rich natural resources for future generations while still providing communities with an economic asset.

- **EDUCATION**

The West Virginia trail system offers a multitude of environmental, historical and cultural educational opportunities. Trails may provide students with unique living laboratories to increase understanding of scientific, environmental and historical issues. Hampshire High School teacher Bill Moore utilizes such outdoor classrooms during field trips along the American Discovery Trail in West Virginia's eastern panhandle. The students prepare oral histories with area residents, perform site mapping, conduct stream and soil quality testing and study resource protection and land use issues.

Trails also can provide outdoor clubs with venues for informational hikes and workshops. By linking natural, historical and cultural resources in both rural and urban settings, trails provide users - individually and collectively - with a rich learning environment.