

Virginia Creeper Trail Club Meeting
March 30, 2016
Washington County Public Library

Present: Buddy Albro, John Brenner, Patty Brenner, Jane Caldwell, Kevin Costello, Gerry Davis, Jennifer Davis, I.B. Dent, Janice Donovan, Myrl Dunham, Lawrence Dye, Gary Greer, Margaret Gregg, Gerry Henninger, Phillip Hoffer, Bob Horsch, George Kelley, Chris Lindeman, Anne Maio, Bunny Medeiros, Wayne Miller, Bill Myers, Debbie Myers, Lisa Quigley, Kelly Read, Paul Read, Jim Read, Roger Reynolds, Debbie Stern, Chris Sullivan, Jeff VanCleaf

Guests: Sara Abbott, Doug Goss

VCTC President Wayne Miller called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

President's Report—Wayne Miller

- The VCTC project to replace the Green Cove Station porch, flooring, and cargo deck is in the phase of assessing, planning, and securing the materials. A huge challenge is to economically acquire kiln dried white oak lumber, size 2" x 8" x 8'.
- The VCTC will assure that all of the outfitters have our audio CD regarding safety on the VCT. As part of the contract between the outfitters and the USFS, the outfitters must provide their clients with safety awareness on the VCT.
- Wayne provided an overview and noted highlights for upcoming VCTC Events for 2016, many of which are great opportunities for volunteers. Help is needed. A list of Events was provided to attendees.
- The Virginia Creeper Trail Welcome Center, located at the Abingdon trail head, opened for the season on March 17. "Opening Day for Trails" is a Rails-to-Trails nationwide event that the VCTC will participate in on Saturday, April 16. The second floor is the VCTC clubhouse headquarters.
- Bottles of VCTC branded water is available at the Virginia Creeper Trail Welcome Center or at Food City.
- Compliments of Lisa Quigley, VCTC merchandise was available for purchase before and after the meeting.
- The VCTC volunteers need to collect their volunteer hours and report to Lisa Quigley. This helps the club get credit and maintain visibility for the work.
- Kevin Costello will reach out to Belle Avery regarding the status of the plans for a museum at Alvarado Station.
- Construction of the new website is proceeding and is expected to be completed soon. The anticipated cost is \$15,000 and a \$10,000 maximum grant from Virginia Tourist Corporation will provide eventual funding reimbursement. The website will include features such as membership registration and merchandise purchases.
- The VCTC membership roster is 192.
- We have applied for the Doppelt Family Trail Development Grant, administered through the Rails To Trails Conservancy, for an engineering study of the trestles and a trail capacity usage study. The grant winner will be announced in June.
- VCTC Board member elections is during the May meeting. Three Directors positions (Lawrence Dye, Chris Lindeman, and Belle Avery) are up for election. Lawrence and Chris volunteered to run again.
- The Town of Abingdon ("TOA") is installing a water fountain for dogs and humans. It is located at the golf course at Meade Drive.
- There are a few large rocks that have fallen and are encroaching the trail. Wayne will investigate with the TOA.
- The next VCT Advisory Board meeting is May 25th.
- As requested by a club member, Wayne will discuss at the Trail Advisory Board locating some flower beds along the trail to assist pollinators in their critical work.
- Safety on the trail remains a goal of the VCTC and is a discussion topic at the VCT Advisory Board. For example, there were two incidents of heart attacks last year. The VCTC is working to secure additional Automated External Defibrillators ("AED") for locations along the trail: Whitetop Station, Green Cove, Alvarado Station, and the VCT Welcome Center. Johnston Memorial Hospital has donated AEDs for two locations, VCTC member Mary Davis donated an AED, and the TOA will provide the fourth AED. Look for a press release in the near future regarding the AEDs and the VCTC. Also, the Washington County Safety Director attended the previous VCT Advisory Board meeting to discuss access points along the trail for emergency responders.
- The next VCTC meeting is April 27, 2016.
- Lawrence has ridden his bicycle 188,700 miles on the VCT.

Treasurers Report—Gerry Henninger

- There have been very few transactions over the previous three months. That is expected to change as the season begins.
- We need the ability to receive credit card point of sales and are looking into obtaining these capabilities. Credit card capabilities will also be a part of our new website.
- The latest financial statements were emailed to the VCTC Board and also available in hardcopy for attendees. The balance remains healthy (\$34,067.16 as of March 29, 2016).

USFS—Sara Abbott

- Green Cove Station will open April 1st and Whitetop Station will open April 2nd.. Both stations will be open Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, until Memorial Day weekend, after which the hours will be extended.
- Doug Goss is a major volunteer trail patrol and has already started patrols.
- A presentation "Are You Bear Aware" at the Damascus Library, April 14, 5:00PM, is free and open to the public.

Other—Various

- The TOA efforts to purchase property at Watauga for a new larger parking lot and to build restrooms is stalled due to appraisal and financial conflicts.
- Appalachian Electric Power ("AEP") is assessing paths for transmission lines from a future substation south of I-81 near the stockyard and water treatment plant to the Arrowhead substation near Highway 58. The VCTC has recommended to use this existing right-of-way in order to minimize impact to the viewshed. The Virginia State Corporation Commission has not made the final decision. The transmission line work is slated to begin in 2017.

Program – Sara Abbott, USFS Recreation Program Manager: The USFS, Mount Rogers Recreation Area, and Volunteers!

Sara provided a brief slideshow overview of the USFS, comprised of nine Regions that oversee the 154 National Forests. The USFS has three branches that support a vast array of services: State and Private Forestry, Research and Products. For example, consumption of railroad ties has been cut by 75% due to the USFS research and development of preservatives while increasing the yield per log. Locally, the Mount Rogers National Recreational Area ("MRNRA") manages over 400 miles of trails, which includes 17 miles of the VCT. Volunteers and partners play a huge role in helping the USFS to manage the trails with support functions such as maintenance, patrols, grant funding and many other extremely vital functions. The MRNRA volunteers worked over 25,000 hours in 2015, an equivalent to over 12 full time people that team with the USFS current yearly staff of 18.

VCT future and recent projects include (i) deck replacement at Green Cove, (ii) grading and resurfacing, starting from the top at White Top, (iii) bike patrols throughout the season providing visitor information, emergency assistance, trail maintenance, etc, (iv) parking lot retaining wall repair at Green Cove, (v) replace the base of the White Top signage, and (vi) clear log jams from the trestle bents.

MRNRA was established May 31, 1966. The 50th Anniversary Celebration will continue throughout the year but especially during the week surrounding May 31st. Details are available here: <http://www.mountrogersfifty.org/> Sara had various handouts available for attendees. Her slideshow presentation concluded with a Questions and Answer segment, providing the phone number to report VCT issues on the USFS section: 1-800-628-7202

The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff VanCleaf, VCTC secretary