

Virginia Horse Council Report
Trail Related Activities in Virginia from July 2007 – June 2008

A. Measuring Economic Impact

The Virginia 2006 Equine Survey Report (VASS-VDACS) was released in December 2007. This survey indicated there were an estimated 215,000 horses, ponies, and mules in Virginia on November 1, 2006, up 26 percent from the 170,000 on hand June 1, 2001. Equine related expenditures were approximately \$783 million in 2006. The survey also included the following information: "Trail Riding/pleasure riding is the primary use of horse and involves at least 75,700 horses/riders or about 48% of the horses in state (this does not include out of state visitors using Va trails.)."

Trail riding participants identified the places they ride as follows (most utilize more than one type of location):

- | | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| – 22% | State, National, or Regional Park | 19% | State or National Forest Lands |
| – 10% | Wildlife Management Areas | 54% | Private Lands |
| – 5% | Other | | |

This survey will be complimented by the results of the ongoing Virginia Trail Riding Survey that is being conducted by Dr. Carol Kline, Assistant Professor of Hospitality and Tourism Administration at North Carolina Central University in conjunction with the VHC. Dr. Kline was asked to make a presentation on horses and tourism at the October Governor's Conference on Greenways, Blueways and Trails. She worked with Sally Aungier, who has been involved with the program planning for the conference, to develop and conduct a survey of Virginia trail riders so that she could present Virginia, rather than North Carolina based information.

On August 22, the survey containing 50 questions was released on the Internet, using www.surveymonkey.com. As of September 8, 568 responses have been received. The survey will conclude on September 22. While responses are confidential, any participant who enters their contact information at the end of the survey is eligible for a drawing for an Annual State Parks Horse Trailer Pass (\$79 value), which has been donated by the State Parks. A preliminary review of the responses does not hold any surprises. Most respondents are woman in the 51-60 age group. They report that the rising cost of gas has influenced their choices about where to ride "quite a bit" and they are staying closer to home. Most trail riders estimated that they ride more than 30 miles monthly and >500 annually. People who trail ride are into a lot of other outdoor based sports and the potential for packaging riding trips with other activities is something that they are interested in. Riders are commenting on various aspects of trail riding but across the board water access for horses, maps, and well marked trails were named as their main concerns. Dr. Kline will be analyzing the responses at the close of the survey and will make them available to the VHC to publish on its website and to use in planning how the VHC can further support its members.

B. The 2002 State Parks Bond Referendum:

\$4.45 million was allocated for new or improved horse camping facilities and trail improvements in several state parks. Grant funds for trail facilities have exceeded \$1.5 million

Completed Projects:

Pocahontas State Park.

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/poc.shtml#generalinfo

The funding allocation was \$1,500,000 over 2007/2008.

- Multi-use trails and forest roads provide about 9 miles of riding on 7,600 acres in Chesterfield Co.
- Equestrian facilities include:
 - about 1 mile of new road way and water, power and sewer.
 - a comfort station
 - a 200X100 ft show ring with a warm up area suitable for clinics and small shows.
 - a 29 horse trailer parking area and a 30 car parking area
 - manure storage area; and an open field that could be used for future development.
 - This area can be reserved for use through the state parks system and is a good location for small shows and clinics.

Occoneechee State Park, Clarksville, VA

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/occ.shtml

- The campground has 11 campsites and 11 12'x12' covered stalls.
- 75' exercise ring, wash rack and centralized water.
- Each camp site has a 24'x100' parking area.
- This facility supports the 8.5 mile multi-use trail - (17 mi roundtrip)
- Its proximity to major highways will make it a safe choice for layovers when traveling in Virginia.
- The funding allocation was \$600,000 over 2007/2008.
- A connector trail to the Tobacco Heritage Trail near Jeffress is being planned.
- Camping is available early March through early December.

Under Development:

James River State Park

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/jam.shtml

- The funding allocation is \$500,000.
 - 1442 acres in Buckingham County on the James River.
 - Nearly 20 miles of beautiful riding on single track trails and forest roads.
 - Construction is underway on 12 equestrian campsites and the project should be completed by end of 2008.

Staunton River State Park

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/sta.shtml

- \$750,000 Bond funding has been provided for a new equestrian campground
 - A revision of the master plan to include the new park land was adopted this year.
 - The park was recently expanded by 1000 acres.
 - The new plan calls for many miles of new trails, day-use horse trailer parking and trailhead facilities, and a new equestrian campground.
 - Project is under design and construction. Should be open in 2009.
 - Plans for a connector trail between Staunton River State Park and Staunton River Battlefield State Park have been under consideration for a number of years.
 - This proposed trail traverses land largely held by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Fairy Stone State Park

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/fai.shtml

- 4537 acre property with 9 miles of trail accessible to equestrian use. Adjacent to 5321-acre Fairystone Farms WMA
- Land for equestrian area has been acquired. Equestrian Campground design delayed while funding is found.
- The funding allocation is \$300,000 over 2008/2009. Road costs will consume much of these funds.
- Proposed additions to the trail system should complement the campground.

Douthat State Park

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/dou.shtml

- Equestrian trails being expanded and will connect to National Forest trails
- Funding for equestrian campground appropriated in 2002 Bond (\$700,000).
- Park has acquired new campground property (Whispering Pines)
- Will move campground B to new property and convert Campground B to equestrian campground
- Will open both campgrounds simultaneously

C. Other State Parks Projects:

High Bridge Trail State Park (new park)

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/hig.shtml

- 33.5 Mile Multi-use Rail-Trail
- Location: South Central Virginia - The rail-trail will connect Pamplin City to Burkeville and run through Prospect, Farmville, and Rice. Counties involved: Appomattox, Cumberland, Nottoway, and Prince Edward counties.
- Trail will be asphalt in town with parallel stone dust horse trail. The remainder of the trail will be stone dust. Bridges will be decked.
- August 22, 2008 – first 4-mile section (High Bridge to Farmville) was opened.
- A Park Manager is on site and an office has been established in Farmville.
- Funding being proposed to complete next phases of development from Rice to Pamplin City. (28 miles)
- Private sector anxious to provide equestrian camping, parking.
- Additional miles of trail will open in 2009.

Seven Bends State Park (new park)

- In Shenandoah County near Woodstock
- 1100 acres with miles of shared border with National Forest land.
- Integrated trail system will be extensive.
- Trailhead facilities proposed in phase 2
- No funding yet appropriated

Widewater State Park (new park)

- 1500-acres located in Stafford County on Widewater Peninsula.
- Extensive multi-use trail system
- Equestrian day-use parking and trailhead facilities
- No funding yet appropriated

Powhatan State Park (new park) in Central Va.

- 1564 Acres on the James River with 2.5 miles of frontage on the James River
- Master Planning Process Completed
- Funding for development needed from the General Assembly
- Friends of the Park group is in the process of forming.
- Plan includes equestrian trails and campground

D. Statewide Trails Initiatives

Tobacco Heritage Trail - Length – 340 Miles

- Location: South central Virginia, From Martinsville to Virginia Beach. The Tobacco Heritage Trail system will be developed in Southside Virginia.
- There are over 340-miles of abandoned railroads in Southside. The long range goal is to acquire all of these corridors and convert them to trails. The majority of these will be designated components of the Tobacco Heritage Trail. The trail would begin in Martinsville and go through Danville on its way to Virginia Beach.
- The trail system will be open to non-motorized use.
- Funding from the Virginia Works program and the cooperative spirit of Norfolk Southern Corporation enabled the purchase of the first 40 miles of abandoned NF&D rail corridor. Construction of this first phase, anticipated to begin in the Fall, consists of two segments — a two-mile section near the town of Lawrenceville; and the other section will upgrade approximately 4 miles of the currently active Tobacco Heritage Trail, connecting the towns of La Crosse and Brodnax. Recently Enhancement funds were approved to begin development of the Richmond & Danville Greenway of the Trail at South Boston.

E. Other Trail Related Activities in Virginia:

- The Virginia Horse Council (VHC) hosted its Annual Meeting and Educational Seminar in March 2008. A special trails track was offered and well attended. Sessions highlighted trail achievements and future projects, Leave No Trace, Virginia Outdoors Plan, and Envirohorse studies.
- A new VA BCH affiliate has been formed: Iron Mountain Back Country Horsemen of VA. Members come primarily from the area of Mt. Rogers, VA Highlands Horse Trail, and Grayson Highlands.
- A Virginia Horse Industry Board educational grant has been awarded to the Golden Horseshoe Back Country Horsemen of VA in the amount of \$2,700 to spread the Leave No Trace message to trail riders across VA. A grant was also awarded that funded expenses for several members of the Virginia Horse Council Trails Committee, to attend the Southeastern Equestrian Trails Conference in July/August.
- Horseman assisted by packing in supplies for the Order of the Arrow Boy Scouts on the Alleghany Highlands Horse Trail project in June. This Boy Scouts Project on George Washington & Jefferson National Forests was conducted over June 23-27. The Boy Scouts of America's National Honor Society, the Order of the Arrow, in partnership with the James River and Warm Springs Ranger Districts of the George Washington & Jefferson National Forests (GW Jeff) in Virginia, conducted one of the 5 biggest service projects on national forests since the Civilian Conservation Corps. Approximately 685 members of the Order of the Arrow successfully completed the construction of 6 walk-in campsites at Lake Moomaw and over 8.2 miles of new trails on the James River District. Over 71,300 hours of service worth more than 1.3 million dollars were provided by the Scouts.
- Dinwiddie County: The National Park Service broke ground in March for a new visitor's center at Five Forks Battlefield. The park is also adding 8 miles of new multi-use trails. The park is at Courthouse Road and White Oak Road. Volunteers have already been involved in many aspects of the trail system. A working map of the trail can be viewed at the Petersburg office at 1835 Hickory Hill. For more information contact Dave Shockley, Chief, Resource Management, at 804-783-0171 ext. 304.
Dave_Shockley@nps.gov
- Shenandoah River State Park – Trails are closed in this park during cabin construction work which is expected to last into 2009. Some of the trails will need to be rerouted.
- National Forest Camping Fees: Camping fees were increased on April 1, 2008, in several National Forest Camp sites. These increases should help offset the costs for keeping these sites open to equestrians.

Hussy Mountain Horse Camp	Increased overnight camping fee to \$7 per vehicle per night.
Collins Cove Horse Camp	Increased overnight camping fee to \$5 per vehicle per night.
Old Virginia Group Horse Camp	Increased group camping fee to \$50 per night

- The review of the George Washington National Forest plan is again under way. Public meetings have been held throughout the summer to gather input and additional workshop will be held in September to discuss with the issues surrounding management of wilderness and roadless areas. The workshops will be held:

Thursday September 11 from 6:30 pm until 9:00 pm
Turner Ashby High School, 800 North Main Street, Bridgewater, Virginia

And

Saturday, September 13 from Noon until 4:00 pm
Rockbridge High School, 143 Greenhouse Road, Lexington, Virginia

The purpose of the workshops will be to further conversations on what areas should be recommended for wilderness designation and how other roadless areas and potential wilderness areas on the Forest should be managed. The meetings will start with a short presentation on wilderness and roadless areas and then they will have discussion groups about the areas under consideration.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/forestplan/revision/meetings.shtml>

- The George Washington and Jefferson National Forests was considering expanding the special recreation permit fee to include equestrian and mountain bike riders and solicited comments on this proposal.
- Jan Hancock's long awaited book on Equestrian camp and trail design is now out. You can access it on the Internet using the following link and passwords: United States Department of Agriculture--Forest Service, [Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads, and Campgrounds.](#)
This Forest Service website will prompt you for a **User name** and **Password**. Type **t-d** for both.

F. Governor's Conference

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is including several sessions on equestrian trails during its Annual Governor's Conference on Greenways and Blueways, which will be held in Richmond in October 2008. This conference will be held in conjunction with the Virginia Recreation and Park Society conference so a large offering of sessions is available. A summary of the trail related sessions follows, however, the details and registration information can be found on the DCR website at http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/rpconf.shtml.

Greenways Educational Sessions

Saturday

- Mechanized Trail-building Workshop (Mike Riter)
- Stonework Techniques Workshop
- Making Your Community Bicycle Friendly
- Shaping Better Trails on Any Budget
- Getting to YES on the Idea of a Trail or Greenway in Your Community

Sunday

- Trails and Health: Developing Partnerships to Advance Active Living
- Marketing Your Trail with Special Programs
- Planning Community Bicycle Events
- Rails with Trails
- Trail Surfaces
- Tips on Managing High Use Natural Surface Trails in Suburban and Urban Areas
- *Sunday Afternoon Special Sessions:*
 - Trailshaping: Take Charge of Your Natural Surface Trails (sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service and the Virginia Department of Forestry)
 - Health Promotion Through Outdoor Recreation (sponsored by the National Park Service)

Monday

- Innovative Urban Trails
- Crossing Boundaries: The Special Challenges of Multi-jurisdictional Trails
- Managing Long Distance Trails and Trail Systems
- The Conundrum of Safety and Solitude in Trail Design
- Legislation and Getting People Walking
- Inside City Hall: Partnering for Trail Development
- Protecting the Environment as We Build Trails
- OHV Trails: Designing and Managing for Sustainability
- **Trails Planning, Stewardship and Equestrian Trails on Forest Service Lands (Debbie Caffin)**
- Sustainable Trails: The Role of Volunteers

Tuesday

- Adaptive Equipment for Universal Access to Trails
- Confident City Cycling

- GIS and GPS for Trail Route Identification in Wild-land Settings
- Statewide Bicycle Trail Inventory
- Trail Towns (sponsored by the Virginia Tourism Corp.)
- Cashing in on Cycling
- **Horses and Dollars (Carol Kline)**
- Trail Developers Forum:
 - Strategic Tools for Influencing Policy
 - Developing Community Trails in the Private Sector
 - Advanced Trail Financing Concepts

Super **Saturday** features special training for *Boards and Commissions* including:

- Friends and Foundations, Increasing Citizen Support and Involvement
- What Holds Us Together? An Assessment of Community Life from the Old Neighborhood to the Metropolis
- The Roles and Responsibilities of Recreation and Park Boards
- Strategic Planning for Increased Organizational Effectiveness
- How to Conduct Productive Meetings

Additionally there will be a session on Sunday for Recreational staff about developing Rec programs and opportunities for people and their dogs and horses.

G. Regional Reports

Blue Ridge Report

Submitted by Deb Sensabaugh

Welcome to the Blue Ridge Rough Riders, who are officially becoming the Blue Ridge Rough Riders Back Country Horsemen of VA!! The entire trail-minded club voted enmasse to join BCH, and are in the process of getting their paperwork in order. And what a wonderful group of folks they are-- riding out of Bedford County and real fans of the Glenwood Trail (along others). We're looking for great things from this bunch. So glad to have you aboard!!!

The fall Deerfield Trail Ride has been canceled because suddenly, after all these years, the FS is requiring this non-profit community fundraiser to come in under commercial enterprises for a special use permit for the ride, effectively killing it because what non-profit can afford the insurance that is required. Our watchdog affiliate, No Man's Land, is looking into the issue, courtesy of Diane Adams. We will let you all know if your help is needed, but we think this is an issue that just needs clarification.

Got a good report of the activity from our other new affiliate, Iron Mountain BCH of VA, which is in the southwest. Kenny and Leah Lovell (Golden Horseshoe BCH) were on a week-long pack trip in the Mt. Rogers area and noticed trail markers placed by the Iron Mountain BCH. They were so excited, and this is a good way to spread the word that specific trail projects or areas are being monitored and worked on by BCH members. Way to Go, Iron Mountain!

With four affiliates now in VA, we're going to have to get serious about establishing a VA State Chapter. This winter will, hopefully, see that happen.

Alleghany Highlands Horse Trail Project is moving right along. June saw BCH'ers packing in water and other items for the Boy Scout Order of the Arrow project. Nearly 1,000 Scouts and affiliated personnel were in the forest for a week to work on connector trails, re-open old trails and do general trail work. They stayed at Goshen Scout Camp and bussed back and forth. The ones we met were great young guys--enthusiastic, hard-working. Our unit consisted of Nancy Johnson, Tracey Kingery, Cheryl Waltz, Stuart Matthias and 5-year-old Cub Scout Frahley Berry who rode atop the pack horse and received an honorary

Order of the Arrow pin from the "big guys." Fun for all! Under Stuart's expert knotsmanship, we also packed two six-foot FS trail signs in on Woodrow the Mule.

Last month saw Nancy, Stuart and two of my LNT youth-- Bryna Butt and Emily Brooks, back to mark/blaze some of the new and refurbished trails on the Bath County side. Ask us sometime about the snakes and bears over there. Hah! Too much wildlife. And then there was the bright yellow paint can incident, and the massive thunderstorm and cloudburst. But we had a blast and got lots of work done. Thanx to Dawn Coulson for her patience and help. For the future-- a creek crossing needs rebuilding this fall, and the rest of those trail signs need packing in!

Rode a few weeks ago in Highland County with BCH'ers Nelson Hoy and his mule Cassie and Lizzie Biggs and her Rocky Mountain Leeta, and family. Nelson and Lizzie are meeting with forresters responsible for the Highland WMA, and are promoting a solid relationship between trail riders and these WMA guys. Way to go BCH'ers in Highland!

Future dates/events to keep in mind:

November 1-2 weekend-- Leave No Trace Train to Trainers weekend at Lost Creek Farm (15 minutes from Lexington). This will include an all LNT training, Packing mules clinic, overnight campout with dinner on the trail, and LNT rehab of the campsite. (Since it is late in the year, attendees can set up camp, and leave for warmer quarters overnight if the weather is unbearably cold). Participants will be "certified" LNT Trainers with pack and saddle stock. Arrive Friday p.m. and leave Sunday late afternoon. Cost is a donation as Golden Horseshoe BCH has received grant monies to cover some of the expenses. Open to 10 individuals interested in learning how to ride, travel and camp with horses leaving a minimal impact. Just bring yourself and your gear-- your horse can take the weekend off. Let Deb know if you want to attend and for more info-- email me at <deborasensaba@gmail.com> or call me at 540-570-1910.

Late November or early December: One-day seminar on How to Speak at Public Meetings; How to Relate to Public Officials; How to Apply Critical Thinking and Argument in Public Sessions with other Trail Users, etc. BCH members who were present at the recent GW planning sessions have requested this seminar to be ready to address issues at upcoming meetings. More info will be coming on this important session.

Spring 2009: We really need to think seriously about helping to sponsor a Trail Riders' Rendevous in late March or early April-- seminars, judged trail ride, bring your horse, trainers, Leave No Trace, Trail Issues, FS and other public lands reps on hand, for the whole state and to help bring together and educate/share/network with trail riders from all over. I was thinking Slate Lick on the North River District as having the biggest field area in which to stage this. Any ideas? Anyone want to be on the committee to explore and begin to set this up? I would like to see this as a beginning for VA's trail riders to begin to come together into a more cohesive unit. This can be a project of our new State BCH Chapter!

Southwest Virginia

Update Provided by Amanda Bourne

- The same challenges still exist with Crooked Creek here in Carroll we have meet with Bob Ducan, Director of DGIF in Richmond and are scheduled to meet with him again regarding the use of the Fee Fishing area parking for the trail head later in July. A pilot program for parking will hopefully be set up.
- Kanawha Valley Arena needs to be listed as a recreational equine venue. The website is www.virginiarodeo.com. They host numerous events including wagon trains and trail rides throughout the year.
- The C.C. Camp in the Independence Elk Creek area underwent some road repairs last year and was closed but is now re-opened and staying packed. The Iron Mountain Horse Camp is still doing well.

Report from the Eastern Shore

Submitted by Melody Scalley

I have great news to report from Northampton County. I have been talking to various members of the Board of Supervisors over the last year in regard to establishing multi-use trails in Northampton County. While their response had been positive it was also somewhat noncommittal. At the BOS meeting last week I provided the Board with information in regard to the upcoming Governor's conference on Blueways, Greenways and Trails and again requested they officially appoint a trails committee for Northampton County. I would like to attend this conference and also have the Northampton County Long Range Planner/GIS Mapper attend. Unfortunately, the county has no funds available to cover the expenses associated with sending anyone to the conference. I am now seeking funding assistance, if anyone has any ideas please let me know!

The Planning Commission did, however, appoint a trails committee. I was asked to Chair this Committee which currently consists of myself (I am on the Planning Commission for the County), Supervisor Dave Burden, Bob Leffel from the Refuge and Barbara Schwenk from the A- NPDC.

At some point we will hold a public hearing to get input on what folks want from multi-use trails in the county. In a perfect world I would love to see a trail that started from Fisherman's Island to the south and extended all the way to Delaware! Multi-use ~ to me ~ means non-motorized.

We will need the full support of the Equestrian community when this does go to hearing to be sure that we are not excluded from such a trail!

From the Website of Congressman Rick Boucher

**Groundbreaking
High Knob Horse Trails**

Scott County Horse Park, Dungannon, Virginia

11:30 AM, Monday, April 7, 2008

It is my pleasure to visit the Scott County Horse Park today for a long anticipated groundbreaking of immediate significance to one of our region's most valuable assets. For years, many of us here today have recognized the outstanding opportunity that High Knob presents our region. It is my goal that High Knob become a major tourist destination for visitors who are seeking a premier outdoor experience, and today's event is a significant step in advancing this goal.

We are here today to break ground for the construction of a network of horse trails and associated facilities on High Knob. In 2005 Congress agreed to my request to provide \$600,000 in federal funding for the horse trails and facilities, and soon thereafter local groups and the Forest Service began planning for the project. The planning, design and environmental reviews are now complete, and construction is set to begin in May. Approximately 2.5 miles of new trails will be built where trails have not previously existed. Almost 5 miles of major trail reconstruction, including placement of new culverts and new trail tread, will also be undertaken. Restrooms will be constructed at the High Knob and Little Stony Falls. Three new trail heads will be created, each with its own parking lot - one near High Knob, one near the existing Little Stony Falls parking area, and one above this facility near Hagan Hall.

We are holding today's groundbreaking at the Scott County Horse Park because at the present time there is inadequate parking for such an event at any of the parking facilities to be constructed. I anticipate that our ribbon cutting in September, when completion of the construction is anticipated, will take place at one of the new facilities. In the meantime, the Scott County Horse Park is a most appropriate location for a symbolic groundbreaking. The Park is attracting growing numbers of horse enthusiasts to the Dungannon area for equine events and is proving to be a valuable asset for Scott County.

The new network of trails, trail heads, parking lots and restrooms will encourage horse enthusiasts from throughout our region and beyond to visit High Knob. Completion of the horse trails, in conjunction with two additional projects now underway at High Knob, will assure that the area increases its visitation and realizes its great potential as a tourist destination for our region.

The first of these additional projects is the reconstruction of the High Knob Observation Tower, which for decades had been a favorite feature for visitors. We are all acutely aware that the Tower was destroyed by fire on October 31 of last year, and its destruction represented a great loss for the history and heritage of our region. Early this

year I assembled a Task Force of interested local citizens with the goal of rebuilding a viewing structure on the site of the original tower and determining what additional facilities could be undertaken to enhance the visitor's experience at High Knob. The various subcommittees of the Task Force have met numerous times and have made great progress. The Task Force members are committed to capturing the local enthusiasm that exists for rebuilding the tower and will be providing a full report on the progress of their efforts in the weeks ahead.

A second additional project that will add value to the experience of visitors to High Knob is the rehabilitation of Chief Bengé's Scout Trail from High Knob to Little Stony Falls in Scott County. In December of last year I announced that the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation was providing \$40,000 in federal funding from its Virginia Recreational Trails Fund Program to this project. With these funds and with labor donated by the Forest Service, the Clinch Coalition and other partners, Chief Bengé's Scout Trail, which has become degraded due to its age, will be repaired. The 24-mile trail is available for use by hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders and will connect with the new horse trails we are breaking ground for today, providing additional recreational opportunities for horse riding enthusiasts who visit High Knob.

There are several individuals who deserve our thanks for their efforts that have made today's event possible. First, the Scott County Horse Association and its members are to be commended for their vision and commitment to enhancing horse facilities in Scott County. I want to thank especially Sherry Hilton and Judith Babb for their help and advice in initiating this project and Charlie Green for his work with the Forest Service on designing the trails and facilities.

I also want to thank Danny Parks, David Redwine, Buck Kinkead and the Members of the Scott County Board of Supervisors for their encouragement in our efforts to make High Knob a key tourism destination for the region. Their support has been essential in our work to increase and enhance the attractions on High Knob, and their partnership with our office is greatly appreciated.

Forest Service personnel in the Roanoke Headquarters Office and in the Clinch Ranger District in Wise have enthusiastically worked to move the design and environmental review process for the trails and associated facilities forward, and I want to express my appreciation to District Ranger Ron Bush and the Forest Service Staff for all their hard work on the project.

Finally, my Senior Advisor for Policy, Becky Coleman, has contributed greatly to the process of developing new visitor amenities for High Knob over the past several years, and I want to thank her for her efforts in coordinating the various projects that I have described and assuring that funding for the projects has been provided.

Let me now introduce in turn Ron Bush, Clinch District Ranger with the Forest Service, Sherry Hilton with the Scott County Horse Association and Buck Kinkead with the Scott County Board of Supervisors for their comments, after which we will hold the groundbreaking.