



Friends of the Chessie Trail

2021 Annual Report

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PO Box 1261, Lexington, VA. 24450

About the Friends of the Chessie Trail

The Friends of the Chessie Trail is a network of groups and individuals interested in maintaining and promoting the health of the Trail and its surroundings. Our mission is to foster strong communication among Chessie Trail stakeholders, to advocate for the community's vision for the Trail, and to organize citizen support for a well-maintained and safe Trail.

Board of Directors

Eric Sheffield, Chair
Dirk van Assendelft, Vice Chair
Becky McKenzie, Treasurer
Jane Millot-Rouse, Secretary
Deb Weddle
Emma Patrick
Robbie Faulkner
Tom Hackman
Cliff Kiracofe
Dave Walsh
Chris Wise

Outgoing:

Jordan Arnold
Scott Centorino

Incoming:

Colleen Arnold
Susan Rivers

2022 Committee Chairs

Board Development Committee:
Becky McKenzie

Communications Committee:
Colleen Arnold

Maintenance Committee:
Chris Wise

Outreach Committee:
Deb Weddle

Race Committee:
Tom Hackman

Recreation Committee:
Emma Patrick

2021 Memberships

- 9 Individual (\$10)
- 19 Family (\$25)
- 11 Lockkeeper (\$50)
- 17 Batteau captain (\$100)
- 3 Locomotive (\$300)

To become a member or renew your membership: sign up on our website and pay with PayPal, credit, or debit card, or print out a membership form (available on the FOTC website) and mail it with your check to FOCT, PO Box 1261, Lexington, VA 24450.

Committee Reports

Maintenance

More than 1200 feet of new trail just upriver from the Buena Vista boat launch parking lot was graded and graveled so that users no longer had to slosh through mud and weedy undergrowth to head toward Lexington. Funds for the project came from both the “Run the Chessie” fundraiser and donations by members; FOCT volunteers did all the physical work. Trail counter data suggests use at that end of the trail has doubled as people discover the improvements.

Although that huge project was visible, most of the committee’s work goes on behind the scenes. Removing brush and debris, picking up litter, cutting back overgrowth, clearing ditches, prepping for the race – all this goes on regularly to make sure the trail is safe and pleasant.

Chris Wise, Chair

Race

This year saw the most successful Chessie trail race since its inception in 2016. Over 400 registrants signed up for the marathon, half, 5k, and the first marathon relay, assisted by nearly 50 volunteers. The youngest participant was 8; the oldest was 84. Runners came from 23 different states, and the winners of both the full and half marathons broke trail records. Little did the runners know, but volunteers spent countless hours preparing for the race, including last-minute tasks like clearing cow piles and giant black walnuts from their route. Even the weather was cooperative, and although predicted to be rainy, turned out to dry with pleasant autumn temperatures.

The race raised \$9500, bringing the total money raised by the race since 2016 to almost 40,000 dollars. All this money is used for maintenance and improvements on the trail.

Tom Hackman, Chair

Committee Reports

Recreation

Despite the difficulties created by the pandemic, the Recreation Committee put together multiple events, including monthly bike rides, a dog walk, a bird watch walk, and a popular geology walk. We collaborated with the Upper James River Chapter of the Virginia Native plant society to offer self-guided wildflower walks.

The data from our trail counters continues to indicate that the Chessie Trail is a valuable resource for community members, especially as the Covid pandemic has forced people to rely more heavily on outdoor recreational opportunities (see next page).

Emma Patrick, Chair

Outreach

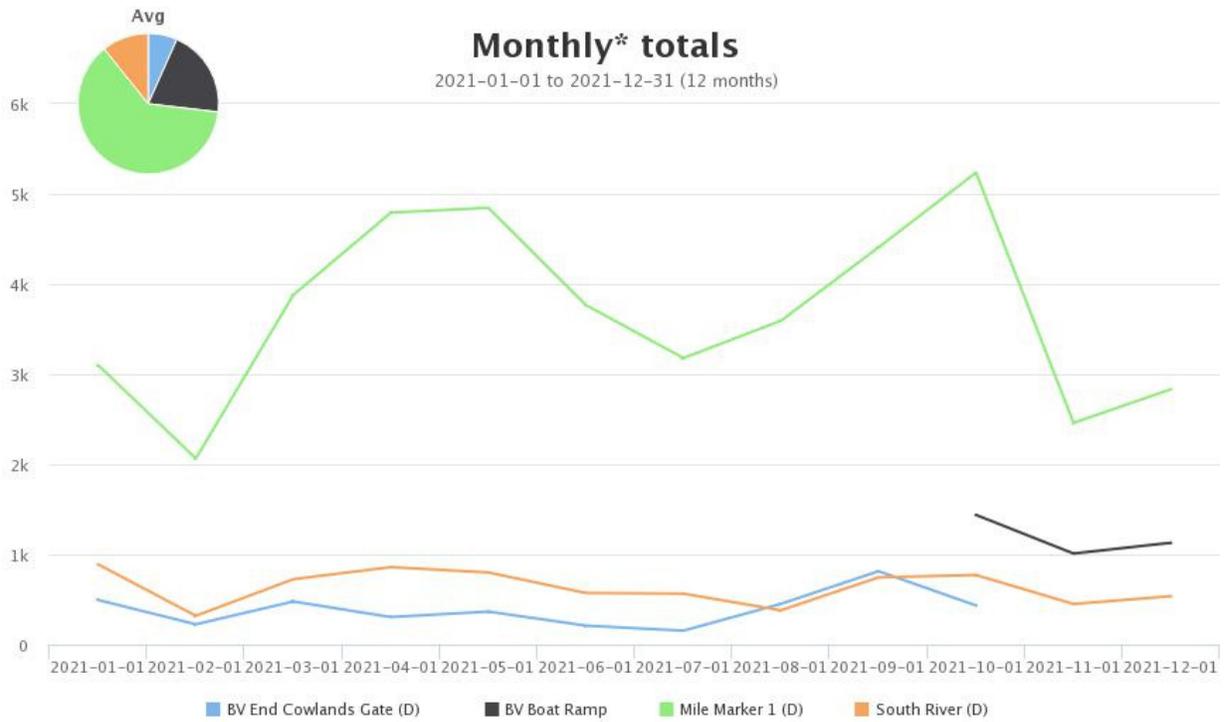
Like everyone else, our committee's work was relatively limited during the first half of 2021. We were involved with planning the January 2021 annual membership meeting held via Zoom, during which guest speaker Seth McCormick-Goodhart gave a presentation on the early history of the Chessie Trail. We continued our presence on Facebook, revamped our website, and in summer 2021, board member Jordan Arnold published a newsletter for the membership and community at large.

The Rockbridge Community Festival in August marked the return to our in-person sharing about FOCT and the Chessie. We followed that up with tables at the Washington and Lee Employee Wellness Fair, the Washington and Lee Law School Wellness Fair, and Buena Vista Mountain Day.

In November, the committee decided to split into two overlapping committees. Outreach will focus on the events in which we talk about the Chessie and FOCT in public venues, both in-person and online. Communications will manage written information via the website, social media, newsletters, and annual reports.

Becky Mckenzie, Outgoing Outreach Chair

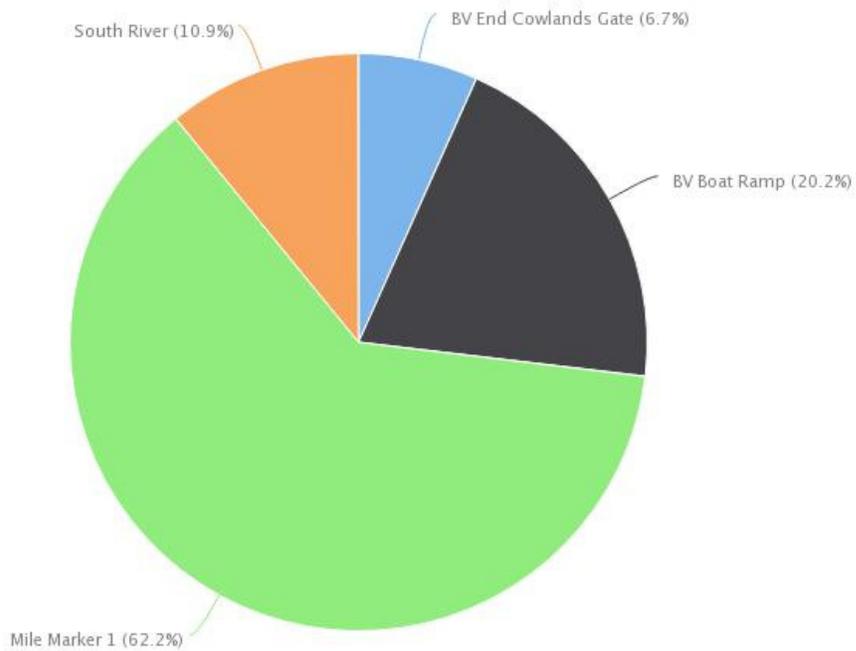
Trail Usage 2021



(Note: The trail counter was moved from the BV cowlands gate to the boat ramp in October to better reflect usage at that end of the trail.)

Compare Sites

2021-01-01 to 2021-12-31



Site Name	Daily Average
BV End Cowlands Gate	12.9 (6.7%)
BV Boat Ramp	38.7 (20.2%)
Mile Marker 1	119.4 (62.2%)
South River	20.9 (10.9%)

(D) = divide by 2 applied

Treasurer's Report

ANNUAL TREASURER'S REPORT: BECKY MACKENZIE

JANUARY 1, 2021-DECEMBER 31, 2021

BEGINNING BALANCE **\$23,828.17**

INCOME RECEIVED:

MEMBERSHIPS	4210.00
DONATIONS	3210.00
MERCHANDISE SALES	83.00
RACE	21,153.00

TOTAL INCOME **\$28,656.00**

EXPENSES PAID:

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE	0.00
FUNDRAISING	0.00
MERCHANDISE SALES EXPENSES	0.00
RACE	11,132.05
MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE	10.51
STONE	36.28
RECREATION COMMITTEE	247.70
SIGNS	36.82
OUTREACH COMMITTEE	115.33
BROCHURES	0.00
NEWSLETTER	0.00
WEBSITE	681.17
P O BOX RENTAL	134.00
PAYPAL FEES	115.70
INSURANCE	396.00
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	100.00
CAPITAL EXPENSE	4899.59
(INCLUDING PET WASTE STATION \$205.65 AND BOAT LAUNCH CONNECTOR \$4,693.94)	
MISCELLANEOUS	180.67

TOTAL EXPENSES **\$18,085.82**

ENDING BALANCE **\$34,398.35**

Year in Review: 2021

Looking Back

FOCT committees have been hard at work, but several other exciting events happened along the Chessie this year. One of the most obvious is the reestablishment of the pedestrian bridge over the South River. For almost 20 years, trail users have had to detour a quarter-mile up onto Stuartsburg Road after hurricane Isabel destroyed the previous bridge. Created in pieces over the past year and transported to the site, the bridge was completed in December. A new parking area now serves this part of the trail.

Most people know the Chessie Trail lies along the old rail bed of the C&O between Lexington and Buena Vista, which served as a link from Balcony Falls on the James River. “BF” markers can still be seen along the trail, and BF 15 was unearthed during the preparation of the bridge. Interestingly, it disappeared for a short while but has since made its way back to its home on the Lexington end of the bridge.



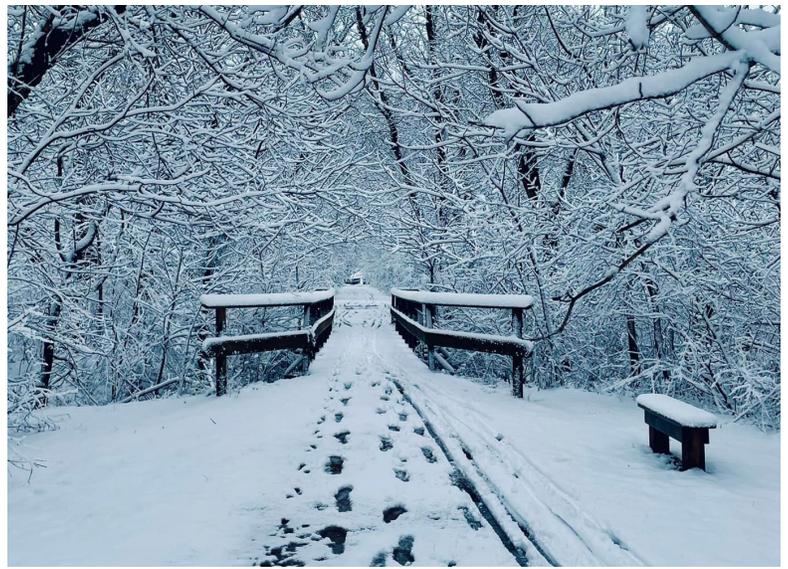
*Left: The new South River pedestrian bridge;
above: the "BF" marker, restored!*

Year in Review: 2021

Looking Back (continued)

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation recommended the Maury River along the trail for designation as a “Virginia Scenic River.” The proposal is now due to be approved by the Virginia General Assembly when it reconvenes.

These are big things, but there were many other “smaller” things: families spending time together in the fresh air, children laughing and riding bikes, dogs sniffing and exploring, neighbors meeting each other, and strangers making friends. This is what the Chessie is all about.



Left: Washington & Lee Professor Christopher Connors leads a geology walk; right: Chessie Trail in the snow, photo by Susan Rivers.

Looking to the Future

We are working with VMI to establish new parking lots at East Lexington and Old Sheppard Road, so people don't have to park on the road. We are planning more benches for people to sit and relax and better signs for mileage and distance tracking. Hopefully, all our efforts will keep the Chessie a safe, scenic, and enjoyable trail for years to come.

Members, Donors, and Sponsors

2021 Members

Family

Colleen Arnold
Helene Baker
Annette Bedell
Alison Bell
Rebecca Benefiel
Bonnie Bernstein & Hank Dobin
Elsa and Ted Burrowes
Joyce Cambron
Martha and Kennan Campbell
Amy DeHart and Morris Trimmer
Peggy Dyson-Cobb
Sarahjane Geen and Jonathan Walker
Tom Hackman
Emily King
James Phemister
Jane & Shep Rouse
Eric and Elise Sheffield
Nancy Sorrells
Susie Trimble and Scott Rochelle
Sarah Wilson

Individual

Jordan Arnold
Terri Bsullak
Scott Centorino
Catherine Daniel
Cliff Kiracofe
John Leland
Becky McKenzie
Emma Patrick
David Rosher

Lockkeeper:
Bruce Dwyer
Paul Gregory
Dexter Hurt
Margaret Kirkby
Amy Richwine & Daniel Walz
Hannelore & Siegfried Roscher
Alexia Smith
Jan Smith and Bob Biersack
Dirk Van Assendelft
Dave and Tasha Walsh
Chris Wise & Laura Neale

Batteau Captain

Cindy and Freddie Capps
Sam & Meg Collins
Debbie Funkhouser and John Driscoll
Mr and Mrs B C Grigsby
A. Joseph Guse
Margaret Haberman
John and Elizabeth Harralson
David and Chris Howison
Jim Jones
John Knapp
Bob Pingry
Suzanne Rice
Susan and Russ Rivers
Wirt Shinault
Lisa Tracy
Deb Weddle

Locomotive

Betty Besal
Robbie Faulkner
Adam Steinman

2021 Donors

Helene Baker
Jerry and Patty Brost
Blue Ridge Garden Club
Deb Weddle
Wirt Shinault
Elsa and Ted Burrowes
Sam and Meg Collins
Roy and Roberta Fauber, in honor of Rob and Claudia Fauber
Lynn Rainville and Baron Schwartz

*The Friends of the Chessie Trail
exists because of our dedicated
members, charitable donors and
generous sponsors.
Thank you all!*

2021 Race Sponsors

Major:

Walkabout Outfitter
Rockbridge Regional Tourism
Augusta Health

Regular:

Rockbridge Vineyard and Brewery
Ragged Mountain Running and Walking Shop
Great Valley Farm Brewery
Lex Running Shop
Red Newt Bikes
Sarah Centorino, Real Estate Agent
Sugar Maple Trading Company
Charles W. Barger and Son, Inc.
Southern Inn Restaurant
Rockbridge Area Health Center
Heliotrope Brewery
CornerStone Bank