

Friends of the Chessie Trail

2023 Annual Report

www.friendsofthechessietrtrail.org
email: chessietrail@gmail.com
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 Chessie Trail and its surroundings. Our mission is to foster strong communication among Chessie Trail stakeholders, advocate for the community's vision for the Trail, and organize citizen support for a well-maintained and safe Trail. [Click here to join!](#)

2023 Board of Directors

Eric Sheffield, Chair	Fran Elrod	Susan Rivers
Dirk van Assendelft, Vice Chair	Robbie Faulkner	Dann Stupp
Becky McKenzie, Treasurer	Mike Friski	Dave Walsh
Jane Millott Rouse, Secretary	Tom Hackman	Deb Weddle
Colleen Arnold	Becky McKenzie	Chris Wise
Deb Weddle	Emma Patrick	

2023 Committee Chairs

<i>Board Development Committee:</i> Dirk van Assendelft	<i>Outreach Committee:</i> Deb Weddle
<i>Communications Committee:</i> Colleen Arnold	<i>Race Committee:</i> Tom Hackman
<i>Maintenance Committee:</i> Chris Wise	<i>Recreation Committee:</i> Emma Patrick

2024 Proposed Officers

Dirk van Assendelft, Chair	Dave Walsh, Treasurer
Deb Weddle, Vice Chair	Jane Millot Rouse, Secretary

The Friends of the Chessie Trail owe a debt of gratitude to Becky McKenzie and Eric Sheffield for their years of service as Treasurer and Chair, respectively. Thank you both!

Committee Reports

Maintenance

The work of the maintenance committee is behind the scenes: putting down gravel, managing dead brush and vegetation, bush hogging the growth that gradually impinges on the trail, and keep the trail safe and pleasant. Washington & Lee student volunteers spread 8 tons of gravel as part of W&L Nabors Day in March. In May, cadets helped weed, clear brush, and add even more gravel to the Trail. We partnered with the Virginia Native Plants Society's Upper James River chapter to help maintain the vegetation in the wildflower section of the Trail. Our new bike station is in place, and quite a few bicyclists have made use of it. The Buena Vista kiosk is now up and finished, as is the information sign at Reid's lock. The old "W" marker was recovered and reinstalled after being lost for decade. Two owners whose property adjoins the trail are working with the Friends to do maintenance and make improvements to their sections of the Trail. If your property or neighborhood abuts the trail, we would love to have you work with us, too!

- *Chris Wise, Chair*



Photos courtesy of Eric Sheffield

Committee Reports

Membership

This year has been a record year for Friends of the Chessie, and our membership has reached an all-time high of 71 dedicated individuals. Their love for the trail has fueled our mission and propelled us forward. As we reflect on this achievement, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every member who has contributed to our success. The Friends are making a lasting impact on the Chessie Trail. We look forward to continuing this journey together.

- Dirk van Assendelft, Chair



Photo courtesy of Dann Stupp

Race

The Chessie Trail Marathon gets more successful every year, and 2023 proved to be our biggest race yet. There were 663 registrants from 25 different states for a remarkable total of 6450 miles run. The youngest participant was 5, the oldest was 80, and the most interesting runner juggled three balls for the whole race! Volunteers spent countless hours filling race packets, monitoring registrations, ordering food and supplies, and performing last-minute tasks like clearing cow piles and giant black walnuts from the route. More than \$10,000 was spent on local businesses and vendors, and the race netted \$16,181 for maintenance and improvements on the trail.

- Tom Hackman, Chair



Photo courtesy of Eric Sheffield

Committee Reports, Continued

Recreation

This year, the Recreation Committee hosted several fun events. The Kid's Fun Run attracted 30 children across four different races. Also popular were the wildflower and geology walks, bird club outing, and Second Annual Old Time Dance Hall. Several dedicated trail walkers have started weekly group walks. Watch our Facebook page for details!

- *Emma Patrick, Chair*

Outreach

Between March and November, the Outreach Committee participated in 15 community events, including community festivals, student and employee wellness fairs, wildflower walks, and trail scavenger hunts. We worked with W&L, VMI, Southern Virginia University, the Outdoor Adaptive Recreation group, Historic Lexington Foundation, Virginia Native Plant Society, Celebrate Rockbridge, Rockbridge Community Festival, and Downtown Buena Vista. We also taped a short video for the Community Foundation Annual Meeting. This accounted for 45 extra volunteer hours by ten board members and 1 Friends member. In 2024, we plan to get more general members involved in our community outreach activities to spread the word about this great resource.

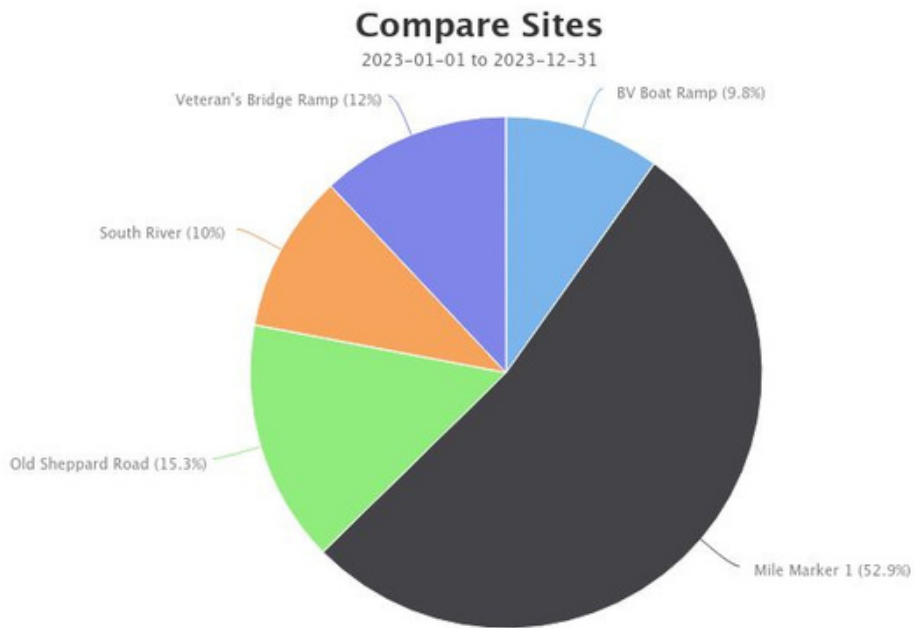
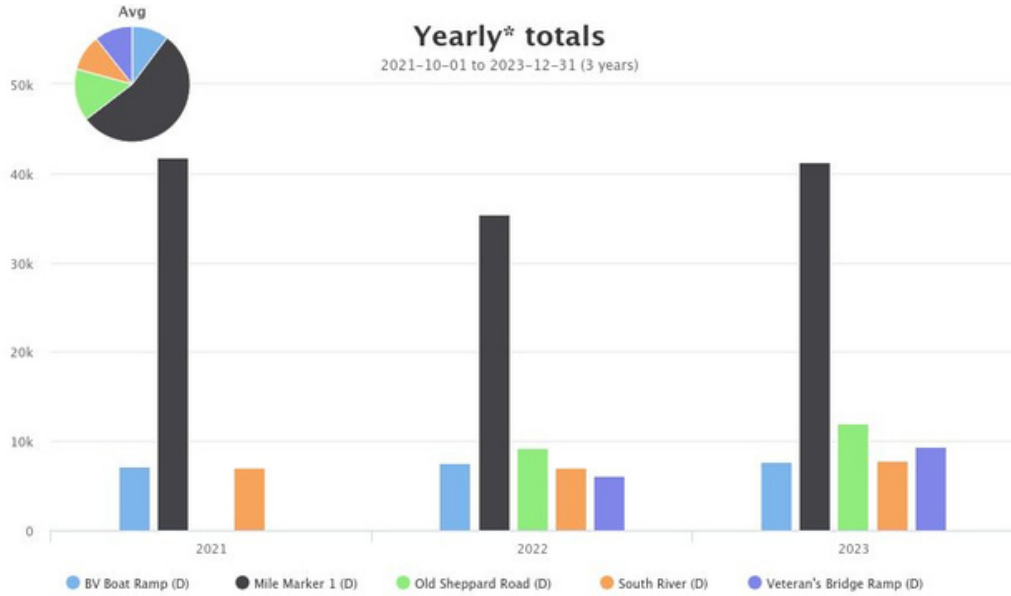
- *Deb Weddle, Chair*

Board Development

The Friends of the Chessie Trail continues to have an active and engaged Board. The Board Development Committee's primary objective is to ensure the seamless functioning of all Board operations. We added two fantastic new board members for 2023, Mike Friski and Fran Elrod. Mike brings a wealth of experience and many personal connections to VMI. Fran brings high energy and great connections to W&L and the community. This past summer, we hosted a potluck dinner for past and present board members. The event fostered camaraderie, an exchange of ideas, and a sense of community within the board. The committee also unanimously approved a change to the by-laws, increasing the number of board members from fifteen to twenty.

- *Dirk van Assendelft, Chair*

Trail Usage 2023



Site Name	Daily Average
BV Boat Ramp	21 (9.8%)
Mile Marker 1	113.2 (52.9%)
Old Sheppard Road	32.8 (15.3%)
South River	21.4 (10.0%)
Veteran's Bridge Ramp	25.7 (12.0%)

(D) = divide by 2 applied

Treasurer's Report 1/1/23- 12/31/23

Submitted by Dave Walsh

Beginning Balance	30,756.93
Income	
Memberships	5120.00
Donations	2690.95
Race	35189.00
Merchandise sales	165.00
Petty cash	50.00
Total:	43,164.95

Expenses	
Membership Committee	51.39
Race	18,878.39
Maintenance Committee	388.00
Recreation Committee	553.56
Signs	211.95
Outreach Committee	354.26
Brochures	349.20
Communications	22.17
Website	240.00
PO Box rental	176.00
Board Development Committee	52.50
Electronic fund transfer Fees	70.46
Insurance	431.00
Chamber of Commerce	100.00
Capital expense	2915.54
Porta john	1141.66
Miscellaneous	101.78
Petty cash	50.00
Total:	26,087.86

Ending Balance: **47,834.02**



Photos by Eric Sheffield

On the Chessie

Trail Thoughts

This year, USA Today named the Chessie as the third top recreational trail in the nation. What a great affirmation of the Friends' efforts! Work like clearing debris and dead brush, building kiosks, benches, and interpretive signs, spreading gravel, establishing parking, maintaining a porta john, building a bike repair station, running an amazing marathon fundraiser, and generally looking out for the needs of trail users helps make the Chessie special. Data shows that in 2023, 77,576 folks visited the trail. More and more people are using it each year, and it will take all of us to keep it special.

So, join the Friends of the Chessie Trail if you haven't already. Volunteer to help on any of our projects. Check out the educational and recreational events that happen and come out to support them. Pick up trash if you see it. Ride or run slowly past walkers so you don't startle them; nod your head and say hello. And most of all, enjoy this beautiful natural gift!

- *Colleen Arnold*



Photos courtesy of Deb Weddle

Members, Donors, and Sponsors

2023 Members

William Abell
Colleen Arnold
Helene Baker
Annette Bedell
Bonnie Bernstein and Hank Dobin
Brownie Troop 442
Jerry and Patty Brost
Deb Bodner and David Lusk
Elsa and Ted Burrowes
Cindy and Freddie Capps
Ronald Cash
Sam and Meg Collins
Sara Cunningham
Amy Dehart and Morris Trimmer
Christophehr Duckworth
Bruce and Linda Dwyer
Fran and Josh Elrod
Roy and Claudia Fauber
Roy and Roberta Fauber
Robbie Faulkner
Mike and Susan Friski
Shelby Friml and Dan Easley
Debbie Funkhouser and John Driscoll
Tom Hackman

Mary Hall
Chris and David Howison
Jim Jones
Emily King
Trudy Kirkland
John Knapp
Margaret Kirkby
Margaret Kirkby
Ruth Kitchen
Cliff Kiracofe
Dede Lunt
Suzanne Lodge
Michael Ann Lynn
Becky McKenzie and Marie
Humiston
Lorrie Nicholson
Sarah Nunneley
Emma Patrick
Bob Pingry
Skip Ravenhorst
Susan Rivers
Suzanne Rice
Siegfried and Hannelore Roscher
Jane Millot Rouse

Eric and Elise Sheffield
Dann Stupp and Lindsay Petri
David Smith
Karen Smith
Alexa Smith
Jan Smith and Bob Biersack
Wirt Shinault
Joe Skovira
Don Sachey
Bernadette Stephenson
Marge Thorpe
Susie Trimble and Scott Rochelle
Lisa Tracy
TJ Tremmel
Dirk and Chrissy van Assendelft
Dave and Tasha Walsh
Bob Williams and Connie
Dreusicke
Chris Wise & Laura Neale
Bill and Deb Weddle
Toni and Andy Williams
Sarah Williams

2023 Race Sponsors

Augusta Health
Blue Ridge Eye Care of Rockbridge County
Lex Running Shop
Rockbridge Regional Tourism
Walkabout Outfitter

Center of Gravity Yoga and Pilates
Charles W. Barger and Son, Inc.
CornerStone Bank
Flex Fitness
Great Valley Farm Brewery
Heliotrope Brewery
Ragged Mountain Running and Walking Shop
Rockbridge Area Health Center
Rockbridge Vineyard and Brewery



Our Thanks

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