

## **VMI Chessie Nature Trail Advisory Committee Meeting, August 12, 2014**

The Chessie Nature Trail Advisory Committee met at 4:00 p.m. on August 12, 2014, at the VMI Physical Plant, Hinty Hall conference room.

Attending committee members were MAJ Jennifer deHart, chair; Keith Holland; Chris Slaydon (representing Rockbridge County for Sam Crickenberger); Chris Wise; Lisa Tracy, Terry Harrington and Jay Scudder.

**RECENT EVENTS:** MAJ deHart reported that people were seen camping, sometimes with fires and tents, along the trail near Renegade Art Glass. A police report was made. Signs at the South River parking area were damaged by gun shot. A police report was made and VMI replaced the signs.

**TRAIL MAINTENANCE:** MAJ deHart provided an update on trail maintenance. Land-owner Andy Rogers requested that VMI not trim trees over the grassy area behind Renegade Art Glass. VMI will comply. The erosion on the river side of the trail at the first river bend has drawn attention from trail users. VMI installed green safety fencing around the area. MAJ deHart reported that VMI purchased three pairs of recycling and trash containers, and two sets of pet waste stations. Lisa Tracy suggested installing these at South River sooner rather than later. Chris Wise reminded the group that VMI could mow the shoulder at South River for safety (see Safety section below). MAJ deHart will follow up to confirm this is being done.

**SAFETY:** MAJ deHart reported that VDOT (according to Susan Hammond after her site visit) is not able to provide a pedestrian crossing at Mill Creek nor stripe the bridge for pedestrians at South River. VDOT can and will ensure there are pedestrian warning signs prior to the bridge on both directions.

**BOY SCOUTS:** MAJ deHart provided an update on the Eagle Scout project to replace mile markers along the first half of the trail. The posts had to be re-made by VMI carpenters and are scheduled to be placed in the holes in September.

**GRANTS:** MAJ deHart provided an update on progress on the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant. All state and federal agencies have approved the grant. MAJ deHart shared a version of the complete application that she proposed sharing with the public during a comment period. A few bulky items were omitted to save space. The Advisors agreed with the content of the document, which will be posted online and in hard copy at the Preston Library. Public comment period will be end of August through end of September, with a public meeting 9 September. MAJ deHart noted that technically, VMI needs easements from all the property owners along the "industrial corridor" in order to apply surface improvements and maintain the trail. She plans to meet with a state attorney to get more information about what would be required.

**FRIENDS GROUP:** Lisa Tracy provided an update on the Friends of the Chessie Trail. A steering committee has been formed, comprising 8 people, and has already met once. Tracy will inform the entire group about the 9 September meeting regarding the grant. Lisa shared a brochure that they created, which will be shared at the RACC booth during the festival. The Friends group plans to

communicate using Google Drive. There are several subcommittees being formed: mission/vision, trail maintenance (which plans to have invasive plant removal and mapping, trash pick-ups), public walks, and investigating non-profit status. They may develop a web site, reach out to high schools. Tracy will send Jenny information to post on the official Chessie web site (VMI-hosted). Rick Jones volunteered to talk to land owners. Robert Faulkner is a new land owner and seems to be a fan of the trail.

**NEXT MEETING:** MAJ deHart noted that the November meeting is intended to be open to the public. She suggested that this meeting be a normal business meeting for one hour, which can be observed by the public, followed by 30 minutes of Q&A with the public. The advisors agreed with this approach, and advised that the two parts of the meeting be made explicit in the newspaper ad.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00pm.