

Rivanna Trails Foundation

Strategic Plan

2005-2008

1. Preamble

The Rivanna Trails Foundation was formed in 1992 to develop a network of walking trails that would eventually encircle the City of Charlottesville and extend into Albemarle County to connect with existing trails and historic sites.

This overall trail system was envisioned as having many smaller loops or segments with easy exits and entrances so that short as well as longer hikes would be available.

Adopting Appalachian Trail standards, the trails were conceptualized as primarily rustic pedestrian paths that emphasized natural routes and the preservation of flora and fauna.

This document sets forth the mission, goals, actions, roles and responsibilities that will guide the activities of the Foundation over the 2005-2008 planning period. This document will be reviewed annually and revised by the Board of Directors of the Foundation to reflect changing priorities and circumstances.

2. Statement of Mission

To create and protect natural footpaths, which follow the Rivanna River and its tributaries, for the enjoyment of all.

3. Emerging Themes

The Board of Directors participated in a strategic planning activity in the spring of 2005 entitled “**Beyond the Loop**”. One of the products of this planning process was a list of seven (7) themes that emerged as those to be emphasized by the organization over the next three years. Those themes are (in order of priority):

1. Ensure the permanent protection of the trail corridor
2. Develop partners and allies to help maintain and preserve the trails
3. Maintain and improve the current trail system while keeping the rustic nature of the current unpaved trail
4. Create a master plan for an integrated, regional trail system
5. Promote the trails as a community resource
6. Provide trail enjoyment opportunities for citizens of all abilities
7. Seek and secure the funding necessary to maintain a high quality trail system

4. Goals and Actions

Working with the themes listed above, and using other materials developed in the visioning and planning activities, the Board of Directors of the Rivanna Trails Foundation sets forth the following Goals and Action Plans to focus our energy and our service to the community over the next three years.

Ensure the Completion and Permanent Protection of the Loop

- Action 1:** Promote establishing permanent easements along the trail corridor to be held either by the RTF, or by other public or non-profit organizations in cooperation with the RTF.
- Action 2:** Create a mechanism and structure whereby the RTF could purchase and hold property or easements along the trail corridor.
- Action 3:** Create a complete file of information and set of property maps for landowners across whose property our trails traverse.
- Action 4:** Identify, track and develop plans to counter potential threats to the preservation of the trail corridor.
- Action 5:** Research and incorporate best practices in trail protection.

Develop Partnerships and Alliances to Facilitate Trail Expansion and Preservation

- Action 6:** Create, with other trail friendly groups, a long range master plan for an integrated, regional trail system.
- Action 7:** Develop and implement a program for promoting the Rivanna Trails as both a community resource and a community responsibility.
- Action 8:** Foster mutually beneficial ties with local environmental, conservation, neighborhood, and outdoor recreation organizations.
- Action 9:** Seek and secure financial and in-kind support from the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County.
- Action 10:** Create a mechanism whereby other trail friendly organizations can benefit from an association with the RTF as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

Continuously Maintain and Improve the Rivanna Trail Network

- Action 11:** Build new trails, including some with improved access for people with physical limitations, to achieve an integrated, regional trail system.
- Action 12:** Continue to work with state and local governmental bodies and other public and private entities to develop crossing solutions that will allow us to close the loop.
- Action 13:** Add new (and improve existing) public access points and trailheads.
- Action 14:** Add new (and improve existing) stream and wet land crossings by constructing key bridges, rock hops and boardwalks, and by repairing and replacing existing bridges, tread ways, stairs, rock hops and boardwalks.
- Action 15:** Design and publish detailed trail maps that include major physical and natural landmarks.
- Action 16:** Develop and implement standards for improved trail signage.
- Action 17:** Continue to promote footpaths through wooded natural surroundings, highlighting the ecological beauty and balance along the Rivanna and its tributaries.
- Action 18:** Create and implement a financial and development plan that provides the resources to meet our goals.

5. Plan of Organization

In order to effectively implement the strategic goals outlined above, the Board has established, effective October 1, 2005, the following organizational structure.

- As stipulated in the bylaws, the officers of the Foundation shall consist of President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- As stipulated in the bylaws (amended), an Executive Committee will be constituted consisting of the four officers and two non-officer members. The Executive Committee will meet monthly approximately two weeks before the full board meeting to plan the board meeting and conduct other business as necessary.
- As stipulated in the bylaws, the Executive Committee will exercise its option to constitute a Community Advisory Committee to serve as a resource for advice, counsel and expertise to the Board. This committee will consist of trail advocates, community leaders, past Board members, and technical specialists. This committee will meet at least quarterly with either the Executive Committee or the full Board, as appropriate.
- Due to the increasing complexity of RTF activities and associations, the Board approves the creation of several sub-committees. These sub-committees may be comprised of both members and non-members of the Board as a means for increasing RTF member involvement in activities of the Foundation beyond trail building and maintenance. These sub-committees include (but are not limited to): Planning and Partnering; Protection and Preservation; Trail Construction and Maintenance; Public Relations and Communications; Finance and Development; Special Events; Nominating; and Community Advisory.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Under the Plan of Organization outlined above, the officers and committees of the Foundation will have the following roles and responsibilities:

- **President**
 - Set agenda for meetings
 - Conduct Executive Committee and full Board meetings
 - Represent RTF with public officials and legal counsel
 - Communicate with police regarding Trail issues
 - Respond to “emergencies” – trail closures, vandalism, trespassers, landowner complaints
 - Coordinate RTF representation on transportation study committees, road-planning projects, development projects (e.g. Hillsdale Drive Extension and Meadow Creek Parkway steering committees)
 - Maintain RTF records: by-laws, nonprofit status documentation, permission agreements, insurance
 - Speak at or attend regional, state, multi-state trails conferences
 - Serve as primary contact for the media
 - Prepare semi-annual membership newsletters, annual giving letters, RTFriends notes
 - Prepare special articles upon request

- **Vice President**
 - Answer voicemail and respond
 - Respond to inquiries that come to us through website – info@rivannatrails.org
 - Maintain spreadsheet of Board members' contact information
 - Maintain RTF materials: publications, large display boards with photos and maps, archived maps, wooden easels
 - Speak at or attend regional, state, multi-state trails conferences

- **Secretary**
 - Keep written records of board business
 - Produce monthly records of board meetings
 - Photograph RTF work day activities
 - Produce captioned copies of selected photos

- **Treasurer**
 - Prepare annual budget and financial statements
 - Record and deposit dues, donations and grant income
 - Write acknowledgement letters
 - Pay bills
 - Track and report expenditures (including tracking restricted grants)
 - Prepare and file SCC reports and tax returns
 - Collect RTF mail, sort, and distribute as necessary

- **Committee Chairs**
 - Schedule and conduct committee meetings
 - Recruit committee members (both Board and non-Board members)
 - Coordinate projects and activities through Executive Committee
 - Speak for committee at Executive Committee and full Board meetings

- **Planning and Partnering Committee** - This committee will focus on trail expansion, new trail location, planning major structural projects, and partnering and collaborating with other trail-building organizations. Specific responsibilities include:
 - Evaluate and recommend new trail locations, connections and partnerships
 - Plan and execute large building projects (e.g. major bridges and stream crossings)
 - Serve as primary contact to City, County, Region on common greenways issues
 - Attend City, County, Regional, and University meetings and conferences
 - Evaluate alternative transportation planning routes

- **Protection and Preservation Committee** - This committee will focus on landowner and governmental relations, legal issues such as agreements, easements and purchase, and other trail protection strategies. Specific responsibilities include:
 - Produce lists of land-owners and maps of properties crossed by RTF trails
 - Research conservation easements and tax credits – develop policies and procedures for managing
 - Negotiate legal permissions for new trail segments and maintain insurance policy with list of insured landowners
 - Work with City and County departments, staff, and officials for partnering and support
 - Meet with developers regarding potential impact on trail corridor

- Maintain RTF records: records of contacts with landowners, easements, etc.
- **Trail Construction and Maintenance Committee** - This committee will focus on designing, constructing and maintaining the trail system. Specific responsibilities include:
 - Organize work parties and supervise volunteers
 - Administer Trail Adopter program
 - Develop and maintain list of projects
 - Organize projects for outside groups (e.g., eagle scouts, Madison House)
 - Organize and maintain hand tools, power tools and equipment shed
 - Maintain inventory of building materials
- **Public Relations and Communications Committee** - This committee will focus on building community support and a sense of community responsibility for the trails. Specific responsibilities include:
 - Maintain web site and RTFriends email list
 - Publicize work parties in local media
 - Maintain membership database
 - Actively solicit memberships around the city and county
 - Cultivate and nurture relationships with appropriate environmental organizations, neighborhood associations, etc.
 - Promote environmental education
 - Write applications for recognitions (NRT, VA Bird and Wildlife)
 - Produce and distribute Trail Guides, Newsletters, Invitations, etc.
 - Maintain RTF records: lists of volunteers, trail adopters, graphics, logo
- **Finance and Development Committee** - This committee will focus on the financial affairs of the Foundation including promoting annual giving, special gifts, writing proposals and securing grants, and managing investments. Specific responsibilities include:
 - Monitor financial operations
 - Develop annual budget and spending plan
 - Develop and administer capital development campaigns
 - Seek, apply for, and administer grants and cultivate major donors
 - Coordinate tax filings, investments, and annual financial reporting
- **Special Events Committee** - This committee will convene as necessary to plan and coordinate special activities. Specific responsibilities include:
 - Coordinate National Trails Day and Natural History Day
 - Coordinate annual Trail Adopter lunch
 - Coordinate awards for retiring board members
- **Nominating Committee** - This committee will convene in the spring of each year for the purpose of seeking out and recommending new board members and officers.
- **Community Advisory Committee** - This committee will be composed of former board members and interested citizens. Its primary purpose will be to provide advice and counsel on construction projects and trail locations, and on political negotiations and neighborhood relations.