

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2015 SESSION

CHAPTER 461

An Act to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 10.1-204.1, relating to the establishment of the State Trails Advisory Committee; report.

[H 1542]

Approved March 23, 2015

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 10.1-204.1 as follows:

§ 10.1-204.1. State Trails Advisory Committee established; report.

A. The State Trails Advisory Committee (the Committee) is hereby established as an advisory committee of the Department of Conservation and Recreation to assist the Commonwealth in developing and implementing a statewide system of attractive, sustainable, connected, and enduring trails for the perpetual use and enjoyment of the citizens of the Commonwealth and future generations. The Committee shall be appointed by the Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation and shall be composed of a representative from the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. National Park Service; the Virginia Director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission; and nonlegislative citizen members, including representatives from the Virginia Outdoors Plan Technical Advisory Committee and the Recreational Trails Advisory Committee and other individuals with technical expertise in trail creation, construction, maintenance, use, and management. The Committee shall meet at least twice each calendar year.

B. The Advisory Committee shall examine and provide recommendations regarding (i) options to close the gaps in a statewide system of trails as described in § 10.1-204; (ii) creative public and private funding strategies and partnerships to leverage resources to fund the development of trails; (iii) integrated approaches to promote and market trail values and benefits; (iv) the development of specialty trails, including concepts related to old-growth forest trails across the Commonwealth; (v) strategies to encourage and create linkages between communities and open space; (vi) strategies to foster communication and networking among trail stakeholders; (vii) strategies to increase tourism and commercial activities associated with a statewide trail system; (viii) strategies to enhance the involvement of organizations that promote outdoor youth activities, including the Boy Scouts of the U.S.A. and Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. and the 4-H program of the Virginia Cooperative Extension; and (ix) other practices, standards, statutes, and guidelines that the Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation determines may enhance the effectiveness of trail planning across the Commonwealth, including methods for receiving input regarding potential trail impacts upon owners of underlying or neighboring properties.

C. No later than October 1 of each year, the Director shall provide a status report on the work of the Committee to the Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources; the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources; and the Chairman and members of the Virginia delegation to the Chesapeake Bay Commission. The report shall include, (i) current and future plans for a statewide system of attractive, sustainable, connected, and enduring trails across the Commonwealth and (ii) any recommendations from the Committee that will be incorporated into the Virginia Outdoors Plan, which plan shall serve as the repository for recommendations from the Committee. The Virginia Outdoors Plan updates shall be used to capture and advance the concepts developed by the Committee.

D. Members of the Committee shall receive no compensation for their service and shall not be entitled to reimbursement for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

E. For the purposes of this section, "old-growth forest" means a forest ecosystem distinguished by trees older than 150 years and tree-related structures that naturally contribute to biodiversity of the forested ecosystems and provide habitat to native Virginia wildlife species, including wildlife species that have been approved for introduction by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

2. That the provisions of this act shall expire on January 1, 2021.