



REGION **3**  
*Mount Rogers*

### Introduction

The Mount Rogers Recreational Planning Region includes the counties of Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Washington and Wythe, and the cities of Bristol and Galax. The region is in the Ridge and Valley Province and stretches from the Appalachian Plateau to the Blue Ridge and from West Virginia to the North Carolina and Tennessee lines. Large tracts of national forest lands, including Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, offer developed campgrounds, picnic areas, miles of hiking, bicycling and horseback riding trails, fishing lakes, trout streams and wilderness. Mount Rogers and Whitetop Mountain are the highest peaks in Virginia, with terrain and habitat features uncommon to other parts of the state and the East Coast.

### Regional Focus

**Table 3.1 Most-Needed Outdoor Recreation Opportunities**

Mount Rogers Recreational Planning Region

activity	% of households in	
	region	state
Natural areas	50	54
Parks	47	49
Water access	46	43
Historic areas	42	39
Trails	36	43
Scenic drives (driving for pleasure)	34	29
Playing fields, sports and golf facilities	19	22

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.

**Table 3.2 Top 10 Outdoor Recreation Activities By Participation**

Mount Rogers Recreational Planning Region

activity	% household
Driving for pleasure	76
Visiting natural areas	68
Walking for pleasure	62
Visiting parks (local, state & national)	48
Freshwater fishing	44
Sunbathing/relaxing on a beach	36
Swimming/outdoor pool	36
Music festivals	36
Outdoor festivals (music festivals, outdoor-themed festivals, extreme sports festivals, etc.)	34
Viewing scenery	34

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.

Visit [www.dcr.virginia.gov/vop](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/vop) to view regional participation rates for more than 100 activities.

### Regional Featured Projects

To be considered a regional featured project, a project must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Has statewide or regional significance.
- Addresses top statewide or regional needs identified by the Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.
- Has involvement and support from multiple jurisdictions in the region.
- Able to be initiated within the next five years.

Featured projects for the Mount Rogers region:

- Continue expansion of the Rocky Gap Greenway in Bland County.
- Expand the Farmers Market Trail in Carroll County.
- Expand and fill in gaps along the Salt Trail.
- Develop and manage the Mendota Trail.

### Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact

**Table 3.3 Per-Capita Spending on Parks and Recreation**

Mount Rogers Recreational Planning Region

locality	dollars
Bland County	17.65
Carroll County	29.74
Grayson County	11.84
Washington County	11.37
Smyth County	1.02
Wythe County	8.36
Town of Abingdon	321.11
Town of Marion	166.27
Town of Wytheville	190.54
City of Bristol	135.22
City of Galax	206.53
Statewide	71.09

Source: Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, "Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures," 2016.



New River Trail State Park | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

**Table 3.4 Virginia State Parks 2017 Attendance and Economic Impact**

Mount Rogers Recreational Planning Region

state park	location	overnight visitors	day-use visitors	total visitors	economic impact
Grayson Highlands	Grayson County	43,970	163,300	207,270	\$5.7M
Hungry Mother	Smyth County	72,754	187,475	260,229	\$7.1M
New River Trail	Carroll, Grayson, Pulaski, Wythe counties; town of Galax	8,100	1,189,127	1,197,227	\$29.2M

Source: Virginia State Parks

## Regional Health

**Table 3.5 Health Trends**

Mount Rogers Recreational Planning Region

locality	adult smoking (% of adults)	adult obesity (% of adults with BMI over 30)	physical inactivity (% of adults age 20 or over reporting no leisure time/physical activity)	access to exercise opportunities (% population with adequate access to locations for physical activity)	air pollution – particulate matter (micrograms per cubic meter)
Bland County	15.00	31	25	100	8.4
Carroll County	19.00	29	25	43	8.6
Grayson County	19.00	30	32	45	8.4
Washington County	18.00	30	27	67	9.4
Smyth County	19.00	30	28	76	8.6
Wythe County	17.00	31	27	66	8.6
City of Bristol	19.00	27	25	97	9.3
City of Galax	19.00	26	25	90	8.3
Statewide	17.00	27	21	81	8.7

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

## Outdoor Recreation Interface with Virginia Tourism

The Virginia State Tourism Plan was completed by Virginia Tourism Corp. in March 2013. In 2017, Virginia Tourism compiled “Nature & Outdoors” recommendations in Appendix 13 for each recreation planning region.

## Regional Historic Resources

The Mount Rogers region is named for the highest peak in Virginia, and contains a wide range of historic resources associated with its agricultural, transportation and resource extraction histories. Properties associated with the American Revolution and the Civil War can be found in this region, as can sites representative of thousands of years of occupation prior to the arrival of European immigrants. Population centers such as Bristol and Abingdon contain historic hotels, theaters, shops and courthouses reflective of their status as business headquarters as well as travel destinations. Rural areas contain historic farmsteads, grist mills, barns and bridges.

Appropriate conservation activities may include installation of highway markers to commemorate historic locations and events, placement of historic properties on the Virginia Landmarks Register or National Register of Historic Places and placement of historic preservation and open space easements. Conservation targets include: 19th century farmsteads, dwellings and commercial

buildings/districts; late 19th and early 20th century company towns and coal camps; and significant prehistoric habitation sites. Information about historic buildings, structures and archaeological sites is maintained in the permanent files of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and is available to local planners.

**Table 3.6 Regional Historic Resources**

Mount Rogers Recreational Planning Region

resource	location
Lincoln Theater	Smyth County
White’s Mill	Washington
Muster Ground and Retirement	Town of Abingdon
Grayson County Courthouse	Grayson County
Saltville Battlefields Historic District	Wythe and Washington Counties

Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources



Winter Wonder Land, Hungry Mother State Park | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

## Land Conservation

**Table 3.7 Conserved Lands**

Mount Rogers Recreational Planning Region

locality	easement acres	ownership acres
Bland County	3,639.90	76,769.56
Carroll County	5,616.50	14,946.48
City of Bristol	0.00	10.00
City of Galax	50.00	5.38
Grayson County	11,282.87	40,692.52
Smyth County	15,119.32	89,518.82
Warren County	8,556.23	23,744.47
Wythe County	11,646.30	66,819.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>368,418.21</b>	

Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Protected Lands Inventory

## Natural Area Preserves and Natural Heritage Resources

The Mount Rogers region is a very biologically diverse area of the state. The six highest peaks in Virginia are located in the district and support a variety of plants, animals and communities typical of much more northern parts of the continent. The three forks of the Holston River are home to many rare fishes, mussels and other animals found only in the upper Tennessee watershed. Much of the northern half of the region is underlain by limestone, which is interlaced with caves harboring an assortment of rare animals. The lowlands of Grayson and Carroll counties are dotted with unusual wetlands, which are home to a variety of rare plants and the imperiled bog turtle.

DCR recommends that conservation activities and land protection efforts in the region focus on unprotected Essential Conservation Sites and all unprotected portions of Natural Area Preserve resiliency areas. Secondly, strategic land conservation should expand upon existing managed areas and seek connectivity via protecting and/or managing intact ecological cores and natural vegetation cover between currently protected lands. Finally, attention on remaining unprotected natural heritage resources within the region should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The appropriate conservation activities and methods of protection will vary with each site but may include placing the site on Virginia’s Registry of Natural Areas; developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner; securing a

conservation easement through a local land trust; acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust; dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner; or acquiring the site as a state-owned natural area preserve.

Conservation targets include:

- Significant caves and karst areas.
- Improving water quality for globally rare aquatic communities.
- Protection of significant seepage wetlands in Grayson and Carroll counties.
- Establishment of segments of the Virginia Karst Trail on public lands with significant karst areas.

Information about the location of conservation sites and the natural heritage resources they contain, as well as management assistance, is available to local planners from DCR’s Natural Heritage Program. For more on the Natural Heritage Program, see Chapter 11 and Appendix 11.

**Table 3.8 Natural Area Preserves**

Mount Rogers Recreational Planning Region

preserve name	owner	locality
Big Spring Bog	DCR	Grayson County
Grayson Glades	DCR	Grayson County
Red Rock Mountain	DCR	Smyth County
The Channels	DOF	Washington County (part)

**Table 3.9 Natural Heritage Resources**

Mount Rogers Recreational Planning Region

Number of occurrences of rare species and significant natural communities	861
Number of different rare species and significant community types (natural heritage elements)	302
Number of globally rare natural heritage elements	92
Number of species listed as federally endangered or threatened	26
Number of species listed as state endangered or threatened	35
Number of terrestrial conservation sites identified by DCR	95
Number of conservation sites with little or no protection	55
Number of partially protected conservation sites	32
Number of well protected conservation sites	8

Information as of Feb. 28, 2018. Source: Virginia Natural Heritage Program



Spring Bike Ride | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation