A

Volunteers Spend Saturday Repairing Mountain Biking Trail

Over a dozen volunteers with the Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition hiked for over 40 minutes Saturday morning to clear and fix parts of the Wolf Ridge Mountain Bike Trail, which runs from Reddish Knob to Tilghman Road.

- Ian Munro / DN-R

Dale Dobroth, of McGaheysville, helps repair parts of Wolf Ridge Mountain Bike Trail on Saturday morning.

- Ian Munro / DN-R

Dale Dobroth, right, and other volunteers clear parts of the Wolf Ridge Mountain Bike Trail of leaves to reduce water pooling and trail damage Saturday morning.

- Ian Munro / DN-R

The sound of the volunteers' tools rang out in the otherwise near silence of the still, crisp Saturday morning air in the George Washington National Forest.

Over a dozen volunteers with the Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition were fixing a portion of the Wolf Ridge Mountain Bike Trail — a roughly 9-mile path from Reddish

Knob down to a parking lot off of Tilghman Road, west of Briery Branch.

"This is one of our signature trails because people can shuttle up to Reddish [Knob] and come all the way down," said Scottie Pendleton, chair of the coalition's board of directors who was part of the Saturday repair crew.

Since the bike trail goes downhill, it is known as a fall line, he said.

"The problem with that is it erodes a lot," Pendleton said. "It pretty much just channels water and becomes a rut."

The crew, carrying their tools, hiked roughly 2 miles uphill to get to their objective. At one point, the volunteers had to use two fallen trees to cross a river with shin-high cold water.

The central Shenandoah Valley is a nationally recognized destination for bicycling, according to Bike The Valley, a program of the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission.

Tourism is a major economic driver for the Shenandoah Valley, according to data from the Virginia Tourism Corp.

Tourism expenditures in Rockingham County reached nearly $245 million in 2019 — an increase of 5.7% from the year prior, according to the most recent data available from the Virginia Tourism Corp.

In 2019, over $6.3 million in Rockingham County tax revenue was generated by tourism — a 5.6% increase from 2018, according to the most recent data available from the Virginia Tourism Corp.

Nearly 2,200 people were employed in tourism jobs in the county in 2019, according to the Virginia Tourism Corp.

Since 2010, $200,000 of grant money has been allocated to maintaining and rerouting local trails such as the Wolf Ridge Mountain Bike Trail, according to Pendleton.

So far, crews have rerouted 4 miles of the trail's entire 9-mile length, he said.

In 2010, using grant money from the Recreational Trails Program, SVBC volunteers were able to reroute about the first 2 miles of the Wolf Ridge Mountain Bike Trail, according to Pendleton. The Recreational Trails Program is a federal assistance program of the Federal Highway Administration.

SVBC got another grant in 2016 that it used to reroute another 2 miles of the trail, Pendleton said.

While crews were doing reroutes, they also added measures to the trail to mitigate damage from water movement, according to Pendleton.

"Over the last four years since that last reroute, a lot of those drains get clogged with leaves, the dirt will pile up through usage and some of them you don't know how they'll work till they have water running on them for four years," he said.

Over the past weeks as well, other crews have been doing the similar work to Saturday's crew to keep the trail rideable, including "rock armoring," Pendleton said.

Rock armoring is using rocks in areas where water consistently pools so that riders will go over stones with water pooling between instead of a slippery mud patch, he said.

On Saturday, the crews were able get about a mile and a half of the trail fixed between 9:45 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., Pendleton said.

He said winter is a better time for the repairs than the summer because "it's easier to stay warm digging than riding."

Contact Ian Munro at 574-6278 or imunro@dnronline.com. Follow Ian on Twitter @iamIanMunro