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Virginia's Mount Vernon Trail Receives Rails to Trails Conservancy's Top Honor, Named 2026 Hall of Fame Trail

This year's annual Hall of Fame selection honors America's early roots and represents the joyful transformation connected trail networks deliver for the nation

WASHINGTON—Rails to Trails Conservancy, the country's largest trails, walking and bicycling advocacy organization, today announced that Virginia's [Mount Vernon Trail](#) will be the newest member of the organization's Hall of Fame after receiving 58% of the public vote.

"RTC's Hall of Fame trails are more than outstanding destinations. These trails are anchors in the communities they serve, and the Mount Vernon Trail is no exception," said Ryan Chao, RTC's president. "At a moment when we are taking stock of RTC's impact over the past 40 years, and we reflect on America's 250th birthday, the Mount Vernon Trail brings to life both the story of the country's founding and the community organizing and volunteerism at the heart of the trails movement. It is a symbol of what is possible for communities nationwide."

Inspired by the persistent efforts of two women from Alexandria, Virginia, Ellen Pickering and Barbara Lynch, in the early 1970s, [the trail got its start](#) in the environmental movement and the desire to provide a safe space for people to walk and bike. The trail's origin story is one of community activism and volunteerism, which carries forward to the present, with thousands of volunteers working year-round to steward, promote and activate the trail—all of which are essential ingredients for a world-class trail and a valued community asset.

"The Hall of Fame designation is a testament to the impact individuals have when they show up for trails. The Mount Vernon Trail exists because of the efforts of countless community members and volunteers who built the first segment of trail and advocated for continued expansion and investment," said Judd Isbell, president of the Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail. "The Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail is honored to continue that legacy of trail stewardship with weekly Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail volunteer events and donors supporting continuous upgrades to trail amenities."

Today, the Mount Vernon Trail is a key segment in the developing [Capital Trails Network](#), which will connect more than 1,000 miles of trails across D.C., Maryland and Virginia, making it safer and easier for residents across the region to navigate their communities and be active. To

date, nearly 53% of the network is completed. The Mount Vernon Trail and the Capital Trails Network are examples of the impact and opportunity that trail systems deliver to the nation, spurring strong regional cooperation, accelerating economic opportunity and transforming quality of life for residents across the greater Washington, D.C., metro area.

For example, the trail is marketed by the region's business improvement districts as a major amenity in efforts to attract businesses and development, and contributes to the potential \$1 billion in economic activity the completed trail network will deliver to the region annually. Arlington, Virginia, which hosts a portion of the trail, has been named the "Fittest City in the U.S." multiple times by the [American College of Sports Medicine](#), with easy access to walking and biking cited as a main reason.

Winding 18.5 miles just outside our nation's capital, the [Mount Vernon Trail](#) offers a unique combination of American history, iconic scenery and wildlife, on a path that links together [Theodore Roosevelt Island](#) and George Washington's estate, [Mount Vernon](#).

From sweeping views of the Washington Monument to the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials, the trail connects many of the nation's most significant historic and ecological sites, including the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, one of the largest remaining freshwater tidal marshes in the National Park System. The trail passes through Old Town Alexandria, one of the country's best-preserved 18th-century waterfront districts; Jones Point Park, the oldest remaining original boundary marker of the District of Columbia and the only remaining riverine lighthouse in Virginia; and a peaceful 17-acre memorial dedicated to President Lyndon B. Johnson.

The trail was among three nominees voted on by the public between Aug. 5 and Aug. 16, 2026. The other nominees were the [Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail](#) and the [Historic Battlefield Trail](#) in Texas.

RTC has been honoring America's preeminent multiuse trails through the [Hall of Fame](#) since 2007. Inductees are evaluated on merits such as scenic value, high use, trail and trailside amenities, historical significance, accessibility, excellence in management and maintenance, and community benefit, plus connectivity locally and to regional trail and active transportation systems. For more information about RTC's Hall of Fame, visit [RailsToTrails.org/HallOfFame](https://railsdottrails.org/HallOfFame).

Rails to Trails Conservancy is the nation's largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to building a nation connected by trails, reimagining public spaces to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors. RTC's flagship initiatives, the [Great American Rail-Trail®](#), [TrailNation™](#), and [TrailLink](#) make possible a future where trails connect everyone, everywhere by advocating, building infrastructure, securing investments, and telling the story of America's trails. Connect with RTC at railsdottrails.org and @railsdottrails on social media. Use TrailLink, RTC's trail-finder website and app, to get maps, guides, photos, reviews and navigation for more than 40,000 miles of multiuse trails.