

# INVENTORY OF EXISTING AND PROPOSED TRAILS

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## AN OVERVIEW OF EXISTING AND PROPOSED TRAILS IN AND NEAR THE CITY OF NORTON

**ATV Trails:** Exist and Potential (302)

City of Norton

Potential for developing a trailhead for motorized trails possibly similar to WV Hatfield & McCoy Trail System and connecting with both existing and potential trails leading into and connecting with trails in Kentucky. There is currently a small parcel of land being used as a park & ride area just west of the Country Cabin II.

**Recommendation:** Identify landowners in this area and map trails. Potential to connect with proposed trails coming out of the Town of Appalachia.

**Bicycle Route:** **Benge's Revenge - ¼ Century Ride** Exists

City of Norton/Wise [http://www.wisecountychamber.org/benge's\\_revenge.htm](http://www.wisecountychamber.org/benge's_revenge.htm)

This 25 mile route starts at J.I. Burton High School in the City of Norton then proceeds to The Town of Appalachia and then through Big Stone Gap then loops back toward Norton ending back at J.I. Burton High School.

**Bicycle Route:** **Benge's Revenge - Century Ride** Exists

City of Norton/Wise/Lee [http://www.wisecountychamber.org/benge's\\_revenge.htm](http://www.wisecountychamber.org/benge's_revenge.htm)

This 100 mile route starts at J.I. Burton High School in the City of Norton then proceeds to The Town of Appalachia and then through Big Stone Gap then proceeds towards Pennington Gap traveling through several of the original coal camps onto Keokee then back to Appalachia and again through Big Stone Gap heading up to the head of Powell Valley back to the City of Norton then the steep climb up High Knob Mountain past "Benge's Rock". The ride ends at Flag Rock Recreation Area.

**Hiking Trails:** **High Knob Hiking Trails** Exists

City of Norton/ Wise <http://www.virginia.org/site/description.asp?AttrID=15313>

Currently closed due to arson but worth noting: High Knob Observation Tower, at an elevation of 4,162 feet, offers a spectacular panoramic view of the mountains of Southwest Virginia, Kentucky, West Virginia and North Carolina. The octagonal tower, built in a clearing atop the mountain, has a fieldstone base level and two wooden levels circled by observation decks. Mountain ranges in the distance are visible for miles. There are discussions of rebuilding the structure in the near future.

**Description:** Two trails are marked with yellow paint at the tower entrance. A 1.3 mile trail leads to High Knob Lake at the Recreation Area. Or for the more adventuresome, a 19.2 mile trail leads to Hanging Rock Recreational area on the Mountain Fork Trail. Found note in publication of choice of hiking trails from 1.5 miles to 22 miles long. Might need to research further to see if there are additional trails.

**Hiking Trails:** **Lake Shore Trail at Bark Camp Lake** Exists (VA Web)

County: Wise between City of Norton and Coeburn

[http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/clinch/recreation/hiking/bark\\_camp\\_trail.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/clinch/recreation/hiking/bark_camp_trail.shtml)

Lake Shore Trail is a 3.7 mile easy trail that begins at the boat launch ramp at Bark Camp Lake, turn toward the dam, following the foot trail. The trail takes one across the dam and around the lake and ends in the Bark Camp Lake parking lot (a loop trail). Intersects with Chief Benge Scout Trail. Heavy use around the recreational area. Light use on rest of trail.

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**Hiking Trails:**            **Chief Benge Trail**                            Exists (VA Web)

City of Norton/Wise

[http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/clinch/recreation/hiking/chief\\_benge\\_trail.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/clinch/recreation/hiking/chief_benge_trail.shtml)

The 15.7 mile Chief Benge Scout Trail starts at High Knob Observation Tower follow signs and ends at Little Stony National Recreation Trail which continues 3 miles further to Hanging Rock Picnic Area at Dungannon, VA. It tends to follow the meandering Mountain Fork and Little Stony Creek as it threads its way through the mountains of Wise and Scott counties. The trail links the cool waters of High Knob Lake with 30-foot falls, rapids, and small pools on the Little Stony. The trail follows old railroad grades at river level but makes several steep climbs. Trail heads with parking are located at each end of trail. Trail is noted as difficult due to steep terrains on portions of the trail. Another description from a different source:

[http://www.sherpaguides.com/virginia/mountains/app\\_plateau/north\\_end\\_st\\_mountain.html](http://www.sherpaguides.com/virginia/mountains/app_plateau/north_end_st_mountain.html)

[http://www.sherpaguides.com/virginia/mountains/maps/stone\\_mountain.html](http://www.sherpaguides.com/virginia/mountains/maps/stone_mountain.html)

*Taken directly from website: The Chief Benge Scout Trail is a fairly difficult and mountainous 19.6 miles, but it offers more than ample rewards. It takes off from the High Knob observation tower through lush, waist-high carpets of jewelweed. The Scout Trail winds across knobs and through hollows, beside rushing streams and along canopied paths of Catawba rhododendron and mountain laurel. The lower end connects with Little Stony National Recreation Trail and continues 3 miles to Hanging Rock at Dungannon. The trail provides an excellent opportunity for a two- or three-day backpacking trip. Anglers should pack a rod if they would like to catch stocked trout from Mountain Fork or Little Stony Creek. Or hikers can approach the trail in sections by leaving a second car at one of several access roads.*

Chief Benge was a fierce Indian leader who terrorized southwest Virginia's early white settlers. He took savage umbrage at those who wanted to shove his people from their ancestral mountains west into flat, hot Oklahoma territory.

- Trail: 19.6-mile winding path.
- Elevation: 4,200 feet at High Knob to 2,350 feet at lower trailhead.
- Degree of difficulty: Difficult because of length and uneven terrain.

**Hiking Trails:**            **Devils Fork Trail System**                            Exists (Website below)

County:                    Wise

[http://www.sherpaguides.com/virginia/mountains/app\\_plateau/north\\_end\\_st\\_mountain.html](http://www.sherpaguides.com/virginia/mountains/app_plateau/north_end_st_mountain.html)

*Taken directly from website: [Fig. 12(21)] The soothing sound of water cascading over rocks. Quiet pools beneath virgin hemlocks. Expansive vistas from remote overlooks on Little Mountain. Rewards such as these await those who tackle the tough hikes of this trail system southwest of High Knob.*

The Devils Bathtub Trail goes up Devils Fork along an old railroad grade once used for carrying logs and coal from the slopes of Little Mountain. As hikers cross back and forth across the stream, they pass through old growth hemlock stands, see a rusting, abandoned railroad car, and watch water racing down rock chutes and swirling through the rock tub that gives the trail its name.

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After 1.5 miles, at the Devils Bathtub, the hiker can double back to the parking lot or continue westward, following the Devils Fork Loop Trail up Corder Hollow to a 20-foot waterfall, passing many hollows and beautiful views. After 4.2 miles (5.7 miles from the start), the loop trail connects with Straight Fork Ridge Trail. The hiker can go left on this trail for 1.8 miles up Little Mountain to the upper trailhead at FR 237, or go right 1.6 miles down the mountain to finish the loop at the parking lot.

The lack of facilities and the rugged terrain make this an ideal trail for those who like a more remote experience. Two primitive camping areas (no water) are available on the loop trail, one at the lower west end and one about .7 mile west of the connection with the Straight Fork Ridge Trail.

- **Directions:** From Fort Blackmore, in central Scott County, go north on VA 619 for 2.9 miles to junction with VA 653. Continue north on VA 619 for 1.1 miles and turn left on FR 619 at white house with fenced yard and go .3 mile to trailhead parking. To access northern trailhead for Straight Fork Ridge Trail from VA 619 at High Knob, go southwest on FR 237 for 4 miles to trailhead.
- **Trails:** Devils Bathtub Trail is 1.5-mile (one-way) path along old railroad grade, with 10 crossings of Devil Fork. Devils Loop combines Devils Bathtub Trail with 6-mile rigorous climb and descent on Little Mountain back to trailhead at parking lot. Straight Fork Ridge Trail leads from northeast point of Devils Fork Loop 2 miles up scenic ridge to FR 237 on Little Mountain.
- **Elevation:** Lower trailhead is at 1,550 feet. Highest points are 2,000 feet on Devils Bathtub Trail, 2,800 feet on Devils Loop Trail, and 3,350 feet where Straight Fork Ridge Trail connects with FR 237.
- **Degree of difficulty:** Moderate, with many stream crossings (which may be treacherous) on Devils Bathtub Trail, and moderate to difficult (because of steep sections) on Devils Loop and Straight Fork Ridge trails.
- **Surface:** Natural forest floor with many stream crossings.

## **Mountain Biking:**

City of Norton/Wise

Trails exist but may need to be GPS mapped and signs added.

Contact Philip Prince for more information on trails.

## **Public Fishing Lakes: High Knob Lake**

City of Norton/ Wise

Stocked lake. Fishing is permitted with a Virginia license and a Forest Service Stamp.

## **Recreation Area: Clear Creek Park**

City of Norton

Clear Creek Park is a four acre Park and includes a playground, a basketball court, a shelter, walking track and softball field. The shelter is available for use on a first-come, first serve basis. The softball field was built courtesy of the Norton Lions Club.

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**Recreation Area: Flag Rock Recreation Area** Exists

County: City of Norton

<http://www.virginia.org/site/description.asp?AttrID=13597>

From the City of Norton, Flag Rock can be seen as a rock outcrop capped with an American Flag, thus the name “Flag Rock”. The recreation site sits over 1,000 feet above the City’s elevation of 2,350 ft. The site offers twenty-five acres of recreation area with spectacular views, hiking trails, a fishing area, playground equipment and 18 camping slots. Bath houses have hot and cold water. Two large shelters and several smaller ones are available for picnicking. There are over 50 picnic tables with grills. Primitive camping is also available. The large shelters are available by reservation only, for a fee of \$40.00 per shelter. Camping sites with electricity are \$12.00 per site, per night. Camping site without electricity are \$10.00 per site, per night.

**Recreation Area: High Knob Recreation Area** Exists

County: City of Norton/Wise

<http://www.virginia.org/site/description.asp?AttrID=15201>

At an elevation of 3,800 feet, High Knob Recreation Area is the highest campground in the Clinch Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest. The main attraction at the site is High Knob Lake, a 4 acre cold water lake with a 300 ft. sand swimming beach. A small amphitheater is located on a hillside behind the beach house. The lake is stocked and fishing is permitted with a Virginia license and a Forest Service Stamp. Several trails can be accessed from the campground. Which trails? Camping area includes 14 sites for tents and recreational vehicles (up to 16 feet long) with picnic tables, bath house with showers, and flush toilets.

*Note: the observation tower burned down recently and is inaccessible to visitors at this time (updated 12/19/08).*

**Recreation Area: Legion Park**

City of Norton

Located along the road to High Knob, Legion Park features a picnic shelter and access to a 30 yard interpretive trail with kiosks, giving information on local history and various regional tourist attractions. The park also contains picnic tables and grills and a water fountain. The shelter at the park is available by reservations only for groups. Legion Park is designated as a official Birding Trail site.

**Recreation Area: Norton City Park**

City of Norton

The Norton Community Center and swimming pool are located on East Park Avenue. A variety of recreational programs and classes are offered as well as meeting rooms available for gatherings and social events.

**Statewide trunkline trails: Great Eastern Trail** In the works (288)

Counties: Wise/Lee/Dickenson/Buchanan

Great Eastern Trail - Major trunk line trail traverses the northern border of Virginia and connect with trails in both Alabama and New York. Anticipated to use the Cumberland Mountain Trail which comes out of Tennessee at the Cumberland Gap, cuts west to connect with the Pine Mountain Trail on its way to Breaks Interstate Park then continues northeast across the state.

*Note: Decision has not been finalized as to the route through Virginia.*

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**Thematic Trail: Crooked Road** Exists (290)  
City of Norton/Wise/Lee/Scott/Dickenson <http://www.thecrookedroad.org/>  
250 mile Virginia's Heritage Music Trail Map: <http://www.virginia.org/images/CRmap2big.gif>  
Bike across Virginia Event: <http://www.bikevirginia.org/2008/>  
The Country Cabin is one of the stops along the route.

**Virginia Birding & Wildlife Trail: Appalachian Wonders Loop VBWT** Exists  
City of Norton/Wise/Scott <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt/loop.asp?trail=2&loop=MAW>

*Below was taken directly from website which includes a map:*

*Located within the Cumberland Plateau, the Appalachian Wonders Loop is a haven for naturalists, and in particular, birders. With 24 species of breeding warblers, Wise County can be a phenomenal venue for bird-watching. It's not just the warblers that make this area a birding treasure. There are many other nesting bird species that make this region their summering home. Places like High Knob Lake can offer an evening serenade of four species of thrushes! Maturing forests juxtaposed to early succession growth of reclaimed strip mines at high elevations are likely to attract a large number of habitat-specific breeding migrants. Look for unusual species or rarities, such as Kirtland's warbler at Wise Reservoir, during spring migration. In addition to a rich bird life, these areas are home to a diversity of flora, salamanders, insects, and mammals, including foxes and even black bear. The Appalachian Wonders Loop will lead you to discover an area rich with history, cultural expression and outdoor recreation.*

## OTHER NOTED INFORMATION OR ATTRACTIONS

**Archaeological Survey** Exists (132)  
City of Norton - Portions are fair to good.

**Architectural Survey** Exists (132)  
Rated excellent for City of Norton

**Attractions: Benge's Rock** Exists  
City of Norton

**Attractions: Flag Rock Overlook** Exists  
City of Norton (*See description under Recreation Areas*)

### **Attraction: High Knob Observation Tower Trail**

City of Norton/Wise

Currently closed due to arson but worth noting: "High Knob Observation Tower, at an elevation of 4,162 feet, offers a spectacular panoramic view of the mountains of Southwest Virginia, Kentucky, West Virginia and North Carolina. The octagonal tower, built in a clearing atop the mountain, has a fieldstone base level and two wooden levels circled by observation decks. Mountain ranges in the distance are visible for miles." There are discussions of rebuilding the structure in the near future.



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**Full time parks & recreation directors**

City of Norton (Yes)

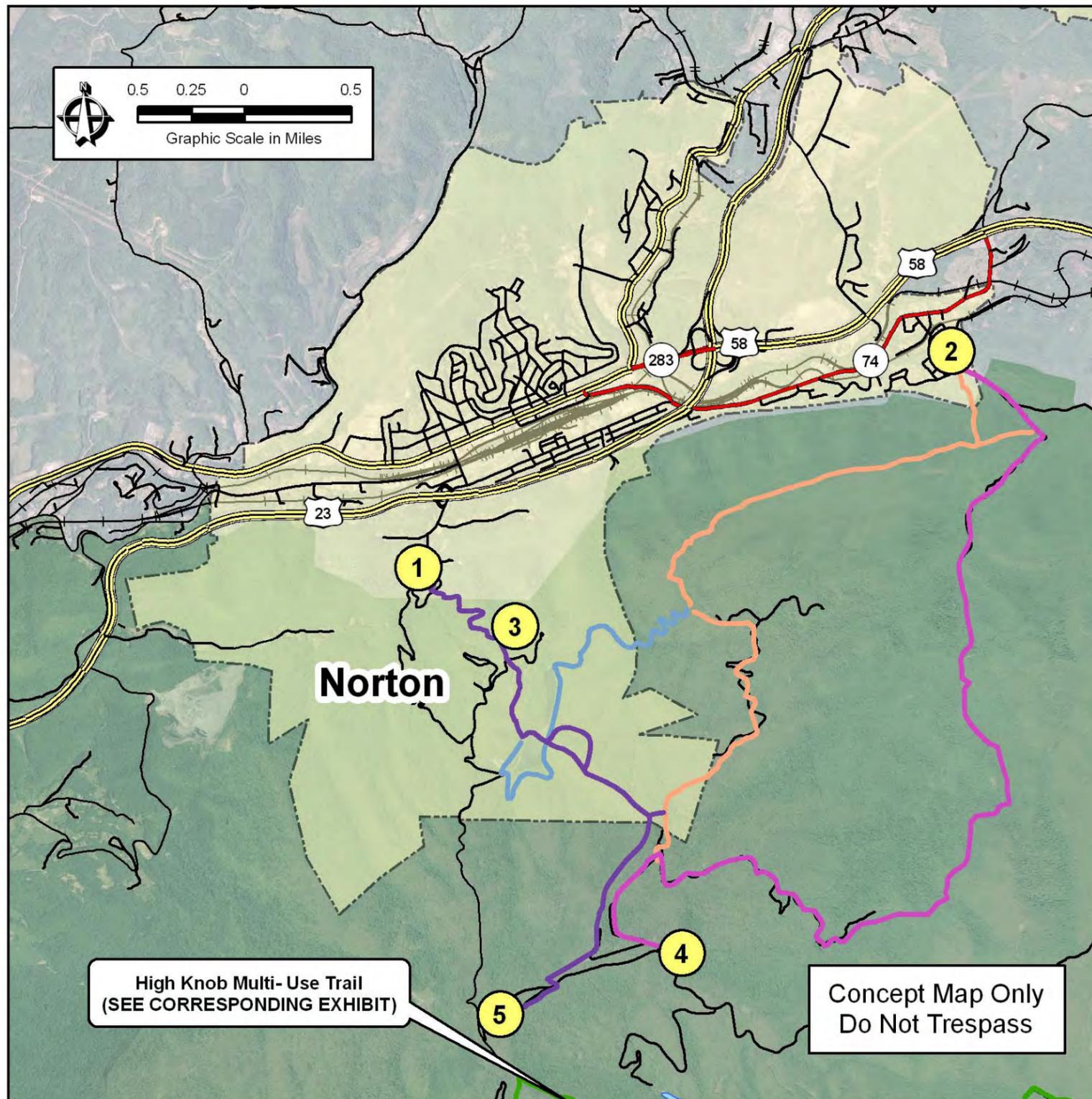
**National Forest: George Washington & Jefferson National Park**

Exists (212)

City of Norton/ Scott/Lee/Wise/Dickenson

**Recreational Planning Regions: Lenowisco - Region 1** (286)

City of Norton/Lee/Wise/Scott



1) Legion Park Trailhead



2) Clear Creek Trailhead



3) Flag Rock Recreation Area



4) GSC Trailhead

**DESCRIPTION:**

The development of the High Knob Tower Trail, in addition to the existing trails shown on the map, from the High Knob Tower to the Norton Legion Park Trailhead is essential to the City of Norton in order to link the City's Outdoor Recreation Facilities and business communities to the High Knob Recreation Area and Tower. It will be the thread that ties the City's Downtown Revitalization Plan and Outdoor Recreation Plan to its Eco and Adventure Tourism Plan.

Combined, these ventures hold the promise of providing an unprecedented economic, recreation, and health benefit to the citizens of the City of Norton and the surrounding area, while opening up miles of pristine trails, one of a kind scenic views, and recreational opportunities for thousands of potential visitors.

**LENGTH/TYPE OF TRAIL:**

The City of Norton Trail System is a 15.81 mile long trail system that consists of the proposed High Knob Tower Trail. These trails are maintained for the use of hiking or mountain biking

**CONNECTIVITY:**

The trail system connects the City of Norton's Recreation Facilities and the downtown area to the High Knob Tower. These trails also serve as a Gateway to the Jefferson National Forest and High Knob System.



5) High Knob Tower and Chief Benge Scout Trail Trailhead

**Legend**

- City of Norton Trail System**
- Trail Names**
- FS 238C GSC to Clear Creek (Clear Creek Trail)
  - High Knob Tower Trail
  - Norton Reservoir Trail
  - Pickem Trail
- Public Roads**
- Route Type**
- Other
  - US
  - VA
  - Local
  - Public Fishing Lakes
  - City Boundary
  - Railroad
  - National Forest