

## UCI Legacy: Accessible Trails & the Richmond Regional Ride Center

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Dr. Dan Muldoon rides a handcycle on one of the Gateway Trails at Pocahontas State Park, part of the UCI 2015 Legacy Project to expand bike infrastructure in the region. (Photo courtesy of the Richmond Regional Ride Center.)

The UCI World Championships in Richmond have ended, but the event helped bring lasting improvements to the region. Bike lanes are growing and the 50 mile Capital Trail is complete. Another initiative expanded off-road bike trails and created some of the first in the country designed for people with disabilities. Catherine Komp has more for **Virginia Currents**.

**Learn More:** Find info and trail maps at the [Richmond Regional Ride Center](#). Learn about the volunteers behind [Friends of Pocahontas](#) and [RVA More](#). And see a video of the [new handcycle optimized trails](#) at [Pocahontas State Park](#).

### Transcript:

Five years ago, avid mountain biker Wayne Goodman had an accident.

*Wayne Goodman: I was only doing about nine miles an hour, I was on grass, the trail was about 30 feet in front of me. I had only one hand on the handlebars and I hit that hole and I tried to recover and I wasn't able to recover and I slid into a granite wall.*

The accident caused a spinal cord injury, says Goodman, a veteran and founding member of RVA More, the mountain bike advocacy group. But he knew he'd get back on a bike.

*Goodman: I was at the VA and my recreational therapist, I told her all the things I competed in and did. She said the VA will buy you a trike and I said "If you get me a trike, I think I get you some trails for hand cycles built out at Pocahontas." It's been five years, but we're here, it's done.*



Goodman's determination to bike off-road again coincided with enthusiasm for a "Legacy Project" connected to the UCI 2015 bike races. The goal: to develop more off-road trails and win designation as a "Ride Center" by the International Mountain Biking Association. Some of those new trails at Pocahontas State Park are Goodman's dream come true, "purpose built" for

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adaptive bikes, often called handcycles or trikes. These are powered with a user's hands or legs, depending on the disability. They're built lower to ground and with three wheels.

Kenneth Holman: *I started cycling on recumbents and handcycles in 2013.*

Meeting me to try out the accessible trails is Kenneth Holman, a member of the Paralyzed Veterans racing team. Always athletic, he was in a training accident while on active duty in the Marines.

Holman: *It was a humvee accident that rolled over on me and then dropped me 35 feet over an embankment, breaking my C4, C5, C6, L5, left index finger.*

Rehab took about six years, but now he bikes, swims, golfs and plays wheelchair basketball and tennis.



The trails are optimized for handcycles. (Photo RRRC)

Holman: *I train about four days a week and I compete at least twice a month.*

We set off on the first trail called Gateway 1. It's one-way, wide, with smooth, hard-packed clay. There's banked turns and a succession of mounds called rollers that thrust you forward.

Komp: *So, we just did one of the Gateway trails. Kenneth, what do you think?*

Holman: *I think I'm at King's Dominion. It's like a roller coaster ride that you have control over.*

We cross over to Gateway 2, which adds another ½ mile to the trail. This one has more twists and turns and slightly bigger elevation changes.



Wide trails are made with hard packed clay. (Photo RRRC)

Holman: *That one's a little more challenging, but it brings a level of excitement and anticipation along with it. If you notice I wasn't doing a whole lot of pedaling going up the hill so there's enough thrust going down to propel you up the next one with very little effort put behind it. Which is good because those with different disabilities, that could be a little bit of a strain trying to maneuver up and down the hills. So you have enough pitch in each one going down and coming up the next one, where it doesn't take a*

*lot of effort.*

Both Holman and Goodman value the peacefulness out here under the tall canopy of trees, a much different experience than riding on the road.

Goodman *It's very relaxing, it's good for the soul. People are going to love it out here.*

Holman: *This is what nature's all about. It's designed to relax us. You can come out here and you can relax while you ride, leave the office back at the building and come out here and be one with nature.*



Dan Muldoon and Clark Jones. (Photo RRRC)

More trails are in the works. The initiative aims to add 13 miles at Pocahontas in the next three years. Trail Manager Clark Jones is already seeing an impact.

*Clark Jones: I've seen some of the most beautiful parent kid interactions that I think I've ever seen. That's the reward to it, the handcycle guys, the kids. There are tons of experienced mountain bikers that are using this thing and loving it, but really the big story is the accessibility to the true beginner, to the handcycle guy or*

*gal, those are the things that we feel like we opened a whole new world.*

For more than a decade, outdoor advocacy groups Friends of Pocahontas and RVA More have been mobilizing donors and volunteers to expand off-road trails. Their labor of love is paying off. In August, the International Mountain Biking Association awarded "bronze" designation for the Richmond Regional Ride Center. Eventually, there will be more than 70 miles of off-road trails in the region, including those at Pocahontas and in the James River System.

*Craig Seaver: Three-hundred-sixty-five days a year, there are people on these trails and I've been by the park this winter when it was cold and snowy and there are people out here on a Sunday morning mountain biking...*

Virginia State Parks Director Craig Seaver says on top of a big economic impact, the initiative promotes a healthy lifestyle.



Jones, Seaver, Purser and Walker at the trail head.

*Seaver: I really like the aspect for young people, it's getting them off the couch, off the video games and experiencing nature first-hand, exercising, increasing health and that helps our country address issues like childhood obesity and diabetes.*

It takes a lot of dedicated hands to build these trails. President of Friends of Pocahontas Phil Walker estimates the seven miles of new trails cost about \$200,000 and took 1800 hours of volunteer labor.

*Phil Walker: It takes a great deal of time, it took months and months and months of building to get it done. But what's really interesting is all those people who participated in building it or in fundraising, come out and they feel it's their trail and it really is in a very meaningful way and that sense of ownership is what makes it easy to keep the trails in good shape and build more.*



Holman chats with a cyclist on the Gateway 1 Trail.

Walker and Jones say these trails are on the leading edge when it comes to accessibility. Along with Paralyzed Veterans of America's Jen Purser, they hope Richmond's "adaptive ride center" will serve as a model for other states and communities.

*Jen Purser: It shows people who have misconceptions about other people who have with disabilities, that they can do anything. It brings awareness, it shows them how to support someone with a disability, it shows how the community can step in and do things*

*that have a whole nother level of including everybody in the community and that's the importance of the handcycle trails here.*

The International Mountain Bicycling Association believes the Gateway trails at Pocahontas State Park are the first "purpose-built" optimized trails for hand-cycles in the country. For **Virginia Currents**, this is Catherine Komp, WCVE News.

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Great story Catherine. I've known Wayne and the hard-working people of RVA MORE for years. Very happy for their success and grateful to them for working so hard to make our trails continue to grow.

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