

A photograph of a person in a light blue kayak paddling down a river. The person is wearing a white shirt, dark pants, and a tan hat. The river is surrounded by dense green trees and tall grasses. The image is partially obscured by a dark blue diagonal overlay on the right side.

VIRGINIA: THE OUTDOOR DOMINION

*A PLAN TO GROW VIRGINIA'S
\$21.9 BILLION OUTDOOR
INDUSTRY*

PAID FOR AND AUTHORIZED BY ED GILLESPIE FOR GOVERNOR



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*Virginia is blessed with beautiful beaches, soaring mountains, scenic rivers and waterways, and breathtaking valleys. No other state in the nation combines such natural beauty with all four seasons, deep history, the variety of recreation, and our signature warm hospitality. **Virginia should be a national leader in outdoor recreation, and with the right leadership, we can be.***
”

Ed Gillespie

SUMMARY

Virginians are incredibly fortunate to live in a state resplendent in natural beauty. From our beaches, bay and ocean in the east, to the mountains, trails, rivers, and valleys in the west and everywhere in between, Virginia is a haven for those who love the outdoors from both within and outside the Commonwealth. As governor, Ed will advocate for outdoor recreation in Virginia as a viable growth industry, including the many benefits associated with recreating in the Commonwealth's outdoor spaces.

Virginia's outdoor recreation industry is a sleeping giant, already employing thousands of our citizens, with the potential for employing thousands more if we recognize it as a significant industry and promote it like our other great industries. Providing more access and opportunities to recreate in the Commonwealth is not only good for business, but it provides an outstanding quality of life for our citizens and a draw for businesses looking to locate in a place where employees and their families can enjoy outdoor opportunities.

Virginia's diverse outdoor recreational activities include camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, cycling, trail riding, kayaking and wildlife viewing. Our abundant landscapes, plentiful waterways and varied terrain and topography are ideal locations for residents and visitors to have unforgettable experiences. These experiences contribute to the quality of life and the economic vitality of the Commonwealth.

Outdoor recreation is a significant economic driver in Virginia, with the potential for significant growth. The Outdoor Industry Association's 2017 Economic Development Report states that outdoor recreation in Virginia creates \$21.9 billion in annual consumer spending, and is directly responsible for 197,000 jobs and \$6.5 billion in wages and salaries.¹ This industry generates \$1.2 billion in state and local revenue in Virginia.²

Ed Gillespie knows we can do even better, considering that in our neighboring state of North Carolina, outdoor recreation generates \$28.0 billion in annual consumer spending, creates and sustains 260,000 jobs and \$8.3 billion in wages and salaries and generates \$1.3 billion in state and local revenue.³

In addition to the economic benefits, spending time outdoors is good for one's overall well-being. Promoting outdoor recreation with youth often sets the stage for lifelong enjoyment and respect for the outdoors.

Outdoor recreation further provides an excellent opportunity for environmental education. Residents and visitors who spend time in the outdoors have a much greater appreciation of nature and natural resources, inspiring them to be better stewards of our outdoor spaces.

1. <https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2017-outdoor-recreation-economy-report/>
2. <https://outdoorindustry.org/state/virginia/>
3. https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/OIA_RecEcoState_NC.pdf

ACTION PLAN

To advance Virginia's diverse outdoor recreation economy requires an enterprise approach, as opposed to promoting the various activities in silos. Suppose you are planning an outdoor family adventure on the East Coast of the United States. To evaluate Virginia's opportunities, you would have to check numerous websites, consult multiple databases and you still couldn't be sure that you have explored all of Virginia's many outdoor options. Our state can and should be a top destination for families and individuals across the country, and we must market ourselves with that goal in mind.

Ed will launch a major initiative to make Virginia the outdoor recreation leader of the East Coast. This initiative, "The Outdoor Dominion," will recognize and promote Virginia's outdoor recreation industry in the following ways:

➔ **OUTDOOR 'SUMMIT ON THE SUMMIT'**
Convene Virginia's first "Summit on the Summit" as an annual day for Virginians to get outside to reach the summit of their chosen mountain.⁴ Ed and Cathy will summit Bluff Mountain near Buena Vista!

➔ **ESTABLISH THEOUTDOORDOMINION.COM**
It is important to market Virginia in a coordinated fashion that promotes our public and private assets. Colorado launched a website - the Outdoor Recreation Information Center (ORIC.org). This site is a public-private partnership that is an easy to search catalog of outdoor recreation activities available in Colorado including those hosted by local governments (parks and trails), the Federal Government (parks, forests), state government (parks, fishing, hunting) and private sites (camping, rafting).⁵ Visitors can search by activity, area of interest and type of interest.

As governor, Ed will establish TheOutdoorDominion.com modeled after Colorado's ORIC. The site would be administered by the Virginia Tourism Corporation to display links to maps, costs and sign ups as applicable. For fishing and hunting activities, the site will link to online license applications. The OutdoorDominion.com will provide a comprehensive outdoor recreation website that will serve as a one-stop public information hub for outdoor recreational opportunities and resources in Virginia.

4. <https://blog.virginia.org/2017/05/virginia-summit-hikes/>

5. <http://www.oriconline.org/>

ACTION PLAN

-  **OPEN CLINCH RIVER STATE PARK**

Virginia is blessed to be home to many state and national parks that provide activities for Virginians and our guests. As governor, Ed will advance and open Clinch River State Park in Southwest Virginia, further advancing a major tourism and outdoor economy initiative taking root in the region.
-  **50 NEW STREAM AND WATER ACCESS POINTS**

Virginians and our guests enjoy our rivers and streams and frequently request new water access points to make the experience more enjoyable. As governor, Ed will work to add 50 new river, stream and water access points on government owned lands.
-  **OUTDOOR ASSET REPORT**

As governor, Ed will direct the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Virginia State Park System to provide a comprehensive report of our award winning state parks, including maintenance needs, recommendations for the development of new and expansion of existing programs that enhance outdoor recreation and access (including infrastructure needs such as trails, campsites, boat launches, etc.), an assessment of developing new parks and the appropriate resources necessary to implement these objectives. This will be a focused expansion of DCR's overall strategic report that includes state parks. This report will utilize various resources including the individual state park's decennial master plans, DCR's 2015 Capital Request document and Virginia Tech's 2016 State Parks Economic Impact Study.
-  **IDENTIFY JOB AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW THE OUTDOOR ECONOMY**

While tourism is a large component of this industry, outdoor recreation is not exclusively a tourism economy. In addition to the many vital local retail stores, we also have national outdoor retail companies establishing a presence in Virginia. This includes Backcountry.com, the largest online outdoor retail store that built its East Coast distribution center in Montgomery County, further highlighting the logistical advantage Virginia enjoys over other states.

As governor, Ed will direct the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) to actively search for economic development opportunities related to outdoor recreation and to include consideration for this industry and its benefits for recruiting prospective employers.

ACTION PLAN

→ PARTNER WITH THE OUTDOOR RECREATION CAUCUS TO ADVANCE ECO-TOURISM AND ECO-EDUCATION

Ed will engage with the Virginia Outdoor Recreation Caucus, comprised of state legislators, executive branch officials and private sector stakeholders to advance eco-tourism and eco-education.

→ OUTDOOR ECONOMY EXECUTIVE ORDER

Ed will issue an executive order recognizing outdoor recreation as a significant industry in Virginia. The executive order will direct the Secretary of Commerce and Trade and the Secretary of Natural Resources to convene an Outdoor Recreation Advisory Panel of relevant state officials and stakeholders for the purpose of developing a comprehensive strategy to market and support the outdoor recreation industry in Virginia. This advisory panel will utilize and provide recommendations regarding the statutorily required five-year Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP) and other related tools, including the VOP Mapper system and the Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.

A photograph of a person sitting on a large rock on a mountain peak, looking out over a vast mountain range under a hazy, sunset sky. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt and shorts. The landscape is filled with rolling green hills and distant mountain peaks.

The Outdoor Dominion initiative will ensure outdoor recreation is fully recognized as a significant Virginia economic driver and will expand on those successes, ensuring that all Virginians and our guests can enjoy the natural wonders and opportunities our great Commonwealth has to offer.

SUPPORTERS

“As governor, Susan and I championed Virginia’s outdoor attractions including hallowed battlefields, parks, rivers, mountains, caverns and coast. From hiking, biking, canoeing, horseback riding and camping to celebrating our beautiful, historic outdoor activities-we enjoyed memorable experiences from the ocean to the Virginia Creeper Trail to the Cumberland Gap. We’re glad to see Ed Gillespie announce his invigorating plan for our outdoor economy. He will advance good policy to help grow this important area of tourism to the benefit of Virginians and our guests from around the world!”

GOVERNOR GEORGE ALLEN

“Virginia is blessed with natural beauty that attracts thousands of visitors every single year to every region of our Commonwealth. From the private and public providers, to the local and federal partners, we are fortunate to be home to a thriving outdoor economy. We can do more and as governor, Ed will grow our outdoor dominion and help make Virginia a true destination for adventurers and explorers from across the world.”

SPEAKER BILL HOWELL

“Virginia is rich with history, beauty, and adventure. Ed’s plan to propel our outdoor economy to the next level is exactly the type of creative leadership we need in our next governor. I look forward to joining Ed and Cathy for the first ‘Summit on the Summit’ in 2018.”

SPEAKER-DESIGNEE KIRK COX

“As a resident of the Shenandoah Valley, a region that relies heavily on tourism, I am glad to see Ed Gillespie advance plans to grow our outdoor economy. Virginians should be impressed with his creative ideas to grow our tourism and adventure economy!”

SENATOR MARK OBENSHAIN

“It is fitting that Ed Gillespie makes his outdoor economy announcement in Southwest Virginia. He is dedicated to the people of this region and will be a champion for our economy as governor. I am glad to see Ed support the establishment of Clinch River State Park. I look forward to joining him for the grand opening when he is governor!”

DELEGATE TERRY KILGORE

“Ed Gillespie is dedicated to advancing opportunity and growth in Southwest Virginia. Today’s announcement is good for Virginia and good for our region. I’ve worked hard in support of our outdoor economy and look forward to partnering with Ed as governor to advance these proposals.”

DELEGATE ISRAEL O’QUINN

“As co-founder of the Outdoor Recreation Caucus, I’m pleased to see Ed advance our outdoor economy. The Commonwealth’s outdoor recreation industry includes many small businesses, and spans several segments of our economy. Through this proposal, Ed has demonstrated his creative and thoughtful approach to economic development. I look forward to partnering with Ed to advance these proposals.”

SENATOR EMMETT HANGER, CO-CHAIR OF THE OUTDOOR RECREATION CAUCUS

“My husband and I are proud to be small business owners in the outdoor economy, I am glad to see Ed Gillespie announce a plan to grow this important part of our economy. From our business in Gloucester to our favorite camping site in Southern Virginia, Virginians far and wide should appreciate the beauty and adventure of our great Commonwealth. I’m proud to support Ed’s vision for the outdoor economy.”

KATRINA JENKINS, OAK TREE OUTFITTERS