

# Luray-Hawksbill Greenway awarded for environmental excellence

By RYAN CORNELL

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**LURAY** — The Hawksbill Greenway in Luray has been honored with a 2016 Governor's Environmental Excellence Award.

The awards, sponsored by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, were presented at the 27th Environment Virginia Symposium in Lexington on Thursday. They recognize the significant contributions of environmental and conservation leaders in the four categories of sustainability, environmental projects, land conservation and implementation of the Virginia Outdoors Plan, according to the DEQ's website.

The Virginia Outdoors Plan is the state's comprehensive plan for land conservation, outdoor recreation and open-space planning. The document spells out the state's recreational priorities, which in turn helps guide how the department spends state and federal funds.

The Hawksbill Greenway is a 2-mile walking and biking trail that runs through Luray and borders the Hawksbill Creek, connecting neighborhoods and parking areas with the downtown district. Kenneth Beyer, president of the nonprofit Hawksbill Greenway Foundation, attended Thursday's symposium. He credited the community's support and generosity for the success of the greenway, and said he felt honored to receive the award.

"It affirms our commitment," Beyer said. "When you start doing something like this you wonder if it's worth putting in the effort."

The greenway uses riparian buffers and clean-up events to protect water quality and signage to educate users on history and native species. Last year, funds raised through the Hawksbill Greenway Foundation paid for new fishing platforms along the trail.

The trail was recognized for implementing the Virginia Outdoors Plan by connecting the community to the natural environment, a news release about the award says.

Gold medals also were awarded to the city of Richmond and the Virginia Green Travel Alliance for green practices at the 2015 UCI Road World Championships in cycling and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation for its leadership in land conservation and protection, the release says.

Award winners were chosen based on criteria including environmental benefit, stakeholder involvement, public outreach, transferability and innovativeness, according to the release.

Two silver medals, three bronze medals and three honorable mentions were awarded at the symposium.

James Madison University received an honorable mention for its strategies to reduce energy consumption in its residence halls.

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