



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Sussex

Program Title: Jackson's Walking Trail and Dog Play Area

Program Category: Parks & Recreation

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Richard Douglas

Title: County Administrator

Department: _____

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Richard Douglas

Title: County Administrator

Signature: *Richard Douglas*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sussex County has limited public recreational facilities and no formal parks and recreation program, while considered one of the unhealthiest and fiscally stressed counties in Virginia. The county maintains an approximate 40-acre closed sanitary landfill site in the central part of the county, and staff decided to utilize this property for a walking trail around its perimeter. Modeled on a similar walking trail in a park in the City of Waynesboro, Jackson's Walking Trail, approximately 1 mile in length and 7 feet in width utilizes a mowed path with no other needed physical improvements, and was completed with no additional cost to the county nor requiring any additional staffing. The walking trail is located adjacent to the county's animal shelter and has become a great enhancement for the facility and resulted in a successful "Walk the Shelter" monthly event.

JACKSON'S WALKING TRAIL AND DOG PLAY AREA

SUSSEX COUNTY

PROBLEM:

- Limited public recreational amenities and no formal parks and recreation program in Sussex County
- Fiscally stressed rural county with limited resources to develop needed public recreational amenities
- Considered one of the most unhealthy counties in Virginia (ranked 124/133 in health factors in 2022 County Health Rankings)
- County animal shelter provided little outdoor opportunities for its dogs in custody, provided limited opportunities for interaction with the public, and had low adoption rates

OPPORTUNITY:

Sussex County maintains an approximate 40-acre closed sanitary landfill site in the central part of the county, adjacent to the Sussex County Animal Shelter. Located on Robinson Road less than one mile from Route 40, the primary east-west road in the county, the site is rural in nature, vegetated, surrounded in large part by trees, and contains a pond/wetlands. In keeping with landfill closure requirements, the county mowed the site multiple times during the year with either county staff or contractors, and the site had little public value.

Realizing a need for public recreational amenities but restricted by limited operating and capital budgets, county staff was aware of the City of Waynesboro maintaining a well-used mowed walking path located in a large park adjacent to I-64. Using the Waynesboro facility as a model, Sussex County administrative, planning, and public work staff worked together to identify the location of a potential

walking path and adjacent play area, along the perimeter of the Robinson Road landfill site (see map). The identified path is approximately one mile in length and seven feet in width, and is immediately adjacent to an existing tree line for much of the site, as well as a pond/wetlands that provides viewing opportunities for wildlife/water fowl. Effort was taken to avoid existing or potentially wet areas that could affect use of the walking trail. County staff keep the path mowed during warmer weather months, while not maintaining the vegetation immediately adjacent, providing for a well-defined trail boundary. With the trail being grassed or dirt with no other physical improvements, staff can modify its exact location if needed.

This project was completed by county staff with no additional funding needed (a banner was purchased), nor any additional county positions. It is anticipated that the county may make some limited parking and signage improvements in the future at minimal cost. Public works staff use existing mowing equipment to maintain the path, spending approximately two hours per week during warm weather months.

County staff coordinated with the County Attorney and VACORP staff to develop a set of rules for use of the property. While meeting the goal of providing a one-mile walking trail in a rural setting for the county residents, this trail is unique in that well-behaved dogs are allowed to be off-leash with their owners (as mentioned, an off-leash adjacent play area was also included in this project).

Jackson's Walking Trail and Dog Play Area opened to the public in Summer 2022 and has steadily seen an increase in residents using this new amenity and providing a much needed place for residents to walk, with or without dogs. County staff developed a video for the trail, which can be viewed on the county's website (sussexcountyva.gov). For those curious about the naming of the trail, it is named after Jackson, a Jack Russell Terrier adopted from the county animal shelter by the County Administrator. Jackson was hit by a car in Spring 2022, and the trail is named in his memory.

The county's public animal shelter is located immediately adjacent to the closed Robinson Road landfill, and has undergone extensive renovation and improvements since 2020. The shelter provided limited opportunities to engage with the public, negatively impacting the adoption rate for dogs. With the development of Jackson's Walking Trail, shelter staff and volunteers are now able to walk shelter dogs, which has been extremely beneficial for the well-being and adoptability of these animals. Furthermore, in Fall 2023, shelter staff decided to begin holding a monthly event called Walk-the-Shelter. Each event, even during the winter months, has drawn dozens of residents to walk all shelter dogs around the trail—providing exercise for both residents and shelter dogs, increasing public awareness of the animal shelter, and significantly increasing animal adoption and transports.

Jackson's Walking Trail and Dog Play Area



LEGEND

--- Walking Trail

↔ Walk-A-Dog Initiative

WALK THE SHELTER

WITH SUSSEX COUNTY
ANIMAL SERVICES OF VA

ON SATURDAY, JANUARY
27TH
BETWEEN 12-4PM

CONTACT

+1(757)758-2062







