

Virginia Green Tourism Challenge to Honor 75 Years of the Blue Ridge Parkway

**-Sets goal of recruiting 75 more Virginia Green tourism businesses by September 10
Blue Ridge Parkway Anniversary Celebration-**

Richmond, Va. – For 75 years, the Blue Ridge Parkway has enabled Virginians and its visitors to immerse themselves in the scenic beauty and abundant natural resources of Virginia’s Blue Ridge Mountains. In an effort to promote continued conservation, the state has issued a challenge to the tourism industry to recruit 75 more Virginia Green certified tourism businesses to honor the Parkway’s 75th anniversary. The challenge was jumpstarted by the declaration that the Blue Ridge Parkway itself is now Virginia Green Certified attraction.

The *Virginia Green Challenge* will recruit 75 new tourism businesses from across the state prior to the 75th Anniversary Blue Ridge Parkway Celebration on September 10. The Virginia Tourism Corporation will work with statewide industry partners to encourage new participants.

Virginia Green is a statewide partnership between the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the Virginia Tourism Corporation and the Virginia Hospitality Travel Association that promotes environmentally friendly practices for tourism businesses such as lodging, restaurants, attractions and others. Virginia Green helps tourism sites minimize environmental impacts and also save money through reduced cost for waste generation, and energy and water use. Currently there are more than 700 Virginia Green certified participants statewide.

“Virginia continues to be a leader in efforts to raise awareness about the environment in our tourism industry,” said Alisa Bailey, president and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation. “The Virginia Green program has won national recognition as an effective, statewide effort to help preserve and protect the environment through improved practices by tourism businesses.”

Tourism businesses earn Virginia Green certification by voluntarily committing to reducing wastes, reducing water and energy use, and the use of eco-friendly products and practices. Virginia Green participants ‘self-certify’ that are meeting the program’s requirements. The program actively encourages consumer feedback to ensure that Virginia Green facilities live up to their commitments and become even ‘greener’ over time.

Visit www.viriniagreentravel.org for a complete listing of Virginia Green certified lodging properties, restaurants, attractions and more. The site also has convenient links to Virginia state parks, outdoor adventure programs, the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, eco-friendly events, green getaways and travel tips. Or call 1-800-VISITVA to request a free Virginia is for Lovers travel guide.

Tourism generates \$19.2 billion in revenue for Virginia, supports 210,000 jobs and provides \$1.28 billion in state and local taxes for communities.