



The NEW Virginia Green Travel Certification Program



Background

- The Virginia Green program was officially announced in the Fall of 2007 as a unique partnership between the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ), the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) and the Virginia Restaurant Lodging & Travel Association (VRLTA).
- Since that time, the program has recognized more than 1600 tourism operations that have self-certified their environment practices. The program provides recognition and resources for all sectors of the industry -- hotels, B&B's, attractions, conference centers, restaurants, breweries, wineries, festivals and events.



The Virginia Green Travel Alliance



- The VGTA is a 501c3 non-profit organization that was created in 2015 to support and expand the outreach activities and effectiveness of the Virginia Green program.
- The VGTA engages in hands-on, grassroots efforts that help to more actively brand the program, promote its partners, and provide additional services and opportunities for Virginia Green participants.
- The VGTA is managed by a Board of Directors consisting of tourism leaders and Virginia Green participants, including the VTC, VDEQ, and VRLTA.
- In 2016, the VGTA Board decided that the Virginia Green Travel Alliance should assume primary responsibility for administering the Virginia Green Certification program.

The New Virginia Green Program

While direct program responsibilities will shift somewhat, all 3 of the original program partners will continue to support the program in the following way.

- Virginia DEQ will:
 - Continue to provide technical resources and oversight of the Virginia Green Certification content.
 - Maintain the Virginia Green website and resources until new website development is complete.
 - Shift into role of providing technical assistance to individual tourism businesses when possible.
 - Continue to support the annual awards and conference.
- Virginia Tourism will:
 - Continue to recognize the Virginia Green program members on their listings
 - Maintain the consumer interface – VirginiaGreenTravel.org.
 - Periodically feature Virginia Green partners and initiatives statewide.
- Virginia Restaurant Lodging & Travel Association will:
 - Continue to promote Virginia Green to its partners and in its printed and on-line publications.
 - Shift the administration of the Virginia Green Suppliers Network to the VGTA.
 - Seek to partner with VGTA on future conferences and educational programs.



- The VGTA will:



- Receive and approve all Virginia Green Certification applications.
- Post the certified partners on its website and share with program partners and consumers via social media, newsletters, etc.
- Administer a certification program that must be renewed every 2 years.
- Continue to administer all outreach efforts including the annual awards and conference.

The Application / Certification Process

- The program will involve 1 single application for all tourism operations (instead of different applications for each sector).
 - The requirements will generally be the same; however, certain requirements may be increased.
 - Tracking / Reporting of annual environmental data/progress will be required for at least trash generation, and water and energy use.
 - The new process will involve a “desk-audit” to include/require pictures of certain activities.
 - Partners will be required to recertify every 2 years and report their progress.
- There will be options for on-site verification of green practices and assistance if desired by the applicants and higher levels of certification will be given for fully “verified” partners.

Rules of Engagement

- The new certification requirement and changes will be officially announced launched on April 1st.
- If you already are in the program, you can continue to be recognized as a Virginia Green member. However, to become **Virginia Green Travel Certified**, you must go through the new certification process.
- Recognition as a “partner” will disappear by January, 2018 unless you are Virginia Green certified.

Will the New Certification Program Still Be FREE?

No, the new program will involve “Administrative Fees For Processing Your Virginia Green Application” so that the program can continue to exist.

New Administrative Fees (required every 2 years)

Hotels: \$175

Convention / Conference Centers: \$250

B&B's / Restaurants / Wineries / Breweries / Smaller Attractions: \$50

Larger Attractions: \$100

Events / Festivals: \$50 certification for each event

Additional Optional Services:

- 3rd-Party, On-Site Verification (\$200+ depending upon size & travel)
- Green event planning assistance, staffing, and volunteer recruitment and management (hours).
- Green team management (hours)

What Do Certified Virginia Green Travel Partners Get?

- Immediate social media recognition
- Name / link on VGTA website and Newsletter highlight
- Mailed certificate, window decals, placard, and rack cards (additional available for discounted purchase only for certified partners)
- Logo use and recognition on Virginia Tourism / Virginia Green website.
- Logo use in printed VRLTA travel guide and VRLTA mobile app. Discounted registration for conference & workshops
- Staff education opportunities & Webinars
- Increased customer patronage
- Media Kit