

**NORTH CAROLINA TRAILS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

April 16, 2010
Jordan Lake State Recreation Area
Apex, North Carolina

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Mary Henderson – Representing Greenways
Mr. John Jaskolka – Representing Hiking Interests
Mr. Rodney Johnson – Representing Paddle Trail Interests
Ms. Claudia Nix – Representing Bicycling Interests
Ms. Barbara Oslund, Acting Chair – Representing Equestrian Interests
Mr. Brian Sears – Representing Off-Highway Vehicle User Interests
Mr. Mike Simpson – Member at Large

DENR, DPR: Mr. Lewis Ledford, Director
Ms. Carol Tingley, Chief of Planning and Natural Resources
Mr. Darrell McBane, State Trails Program Manager
Mr. Vincent T. Newman-Brooks, Grants Manager
Ms. Ann Coughlin, Coastal Region Trails Specialist
Mr. Tim Johnson, Mountain Region Trails Specialist

GUESTS: Ms. Kate Dixon, Friends of the Mountains to Sea Trail
Mr. Jesse Day, Piedmont Triad Council of Governments
Ms. Malinda Ford, Piedmont Triad Council of Governments

I. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Acting Chair Barbara Oslund called the meeting to order and welcomed all attendees. The conference call meeting began at 9:00 a.m.

II. Approval of Minutes from the September 18, 2009 Meeting

Motion - A motion was made by Claudia Nix to accept the April 17, 2009 minutes with the correction noted above. Mike Simpson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

III. Reports

North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation

Lewis Ledford, Director of the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation welcomed all attendees to the Jordan Lake State Recreation Area and thanked committee members for attending this important meeting where federal Recreational Trails Program and Adopt-A-Trail grant applications would be reviewed and funding recommendations made to Tom Freeman, Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Lewis talked about the challenges of managing the Division of Parks and Recreation through these tight budget times. He noted that all divisions have been ordered to cut existing budgets by five percent across the board. These are difficult cuts when the division has just taken over management of new park areas including Chimney Rock State Park, Grand Father Mountain State Park and others. Lewis noted that in last year's budget, the division lost 39 positions, some of which were to serve in these new state parks.

Lewis noted that on the positive side, the division has opened two visitor centers at Fort Macon State Park and at Merchants Mill Pond State Park, and that the Merchants Mill Pond Visitors Center may be the first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification for any new State facility. Lewis noted significant land acquisitions at the Dismal Swamp State Park and Cove Swamp State Natural Area. Lewis also noted that NC State Parks had record visitation in 2009 with over 14.2 million visitors.

Lewis talked about efforts on the national level to encourage significant funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a significant source of funding for federal, state and local government to acquire and build parks and recreation areas.

Lewis concluded his remarks by thanking John Jaskolka and Rodney Johnson for their service to the North Carolina Trails Committee. John and Rodney have asked not to be considered for reappointment. Lewis also thanked Ann Coughlin, Coastal Region Trails Specialist for her 10.8 years of service to the division and the State Trails Program. Ann retires on June 1, 2010. Lewis also noted that Mary Henderson, Director of the Town of Cary's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources plans to retire in June of 2010. Lewis thanked Mary for all that she has done for Cary, the North Carolina Recreation and Parks Association and for the State Trails Program. And, Lewis thanked all North Carolina Trails Committee members for their efforts, energy and time as we all work to plan, build and manage more trails and greenways for the citizens and visitors to North Carolina.

Committee Member Reports

John Jaskolka, represents the hiking community on this committee and stated that as board member of the Friends of the MST he has worked on a variety of projects including rebuilding board walks and bridges on the Neusiok Trail which were destroyed by storms. He met with Croatan FS to discuss the MST East plan, flagged and mapped a section of proposed MST route. He met with David Smith Havelock P&R to discuss routes through Havelock and with Annette Stone New Bern Planning to reroute the MST through the New Bern area.

Mike Simpson, representing the greenway interests on this committee provided the following written report:

1. For those interested there will be a *Stewardship, Recreation and Liability* workshop offered by Biltmore Forest School, Cradle of Forestry in America Woodland Steward Series. The workshop will be Friday and Saturday May 21 and 22nd at Montgomery Community College in Troy, NC. The two day class will provide classroom and field information for planning trails and other topics. For more information please go to: <http://web.eenorthcarolina.org/net/calendar/details.aspx?s=81865.0.0.37430&c=3280379>
2. Guilford County: A public meeting was held February 16th at Northern Guilford High School concerning the Morton and Richardson family tracts of land purchased to protect, preserve and expand the Mountains to Sea Trail northward from Greensboro's Watershed Trail System to Haw River State Park. The meeting was well attended by concerned citizens, neighbors, Darrell McBane - State of NC Trails Coordinator, Kate Dixon - FMST, Guilford County Parks and Open Space Committee, Guilford County Planning Department and Greensboro Trails and Greenways Staff. The purpose of the meeting was to gather public input for the future use of the property. Notable requests were for hiking, wildlife observation, biking and equestrian trail opportunities. A request was received by Alex Ashton, Guilford County Planning from the Morton family to refer to the property in the future as the Morton/Taylor tract to recognize a prominent family member.
3. Friends of the Mountains to Sea Trail Executive Director Kate Dixon, staff from Guilford County Planning Department and Greensboro Parks and Recreation are planning a "Trail Building Class" to be held in August to facilitate building of the Morton-Taylor MST extension.
4. An addition to the Watershed Trail System in Guilford County is being constructed. The new trail, called the Blue Heron Trail will offer quality mountain biking and hiking along the north shore of Lake Townsend. Construction is approximately 50% complete.

5. The first phase of Greensboro's "Downtown Greenway" was officially opened March 24th. The Downtown Greenway will be a 4.2 mile, twelve foot wide loop around Greensboro's downtown core. The project is the only one like it at the time of this writing and will be unique throughout America. The estimated cost is \$26 million dollars but is expected to bring in \$250 million in new, mixed-use development.
6. March 16th FMST Executive Director Kate Dixon, community supporters, Guilford County Planning Department staff, Town of Summerfield staff, Town of Stokesdale staff, Greensboro Trails and greenways staff all met to discuss extending the off road possibilities for the Mountains to Sea Trail from Greensboro's Watershed Trail System to the Guilford and Stokes County line. The portion of trail in question currently utilizes the roadway shoulder so news of a collaboration to bring additional off road possibilities for the MST is exciting.
7. The Town of Summerfield and Greensboro Department of Transportation have secured a future pedestrian underpass to be located at Highway 220 and Summerfield Road when construction takes place in 2011. The underpass will offer safe pedestrian accommodations for the Mountains to Sea Trail and future Piedmont Greenway.
8. A new 1.51 mile segment of the Atlantic and Yadkin Greenway will open July 1st in Greensboro weather permitting. The A & Y is a former railroad corridor that ran from Wilmington to Mount Airy through Greensboro. The 1.51 stretch of trail will have a 114 foot tunnel under Cone Boulevard that will have art murals designed and created by college students from NC Agricultural and Technical University and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Claudia Nix, representing bicycle trail users on this committee provided the following written report:

The Buncombe County Greenways Commission, which I am sitting on has identified two areas to develop greenways and gotten local funding from our MPO to do a comprehensive plan for each. One greenway will connect the city of Asheville to Black Mtn and the Point Lookout Trail (the old Hwy 70) just beyond Ridgecrest. We have hired a consultant who has begun work. The other greenway is along the French Broad River and would join the Wilma Dykeman Riverway in Asheville through Woodfin to the Buncombe County line going north. We again received funding for this plan from the MPO and have hired our consultant and one of the 2010 RTP grant applications is from the city of Woodfin would tie into this plan. We are excited about getting started on this process and hope to be able to find funding to begin developing these greenways after the plans are finished. The Commission has also been working on a brochure and program to educate the general public on greenways and how they can enhance our community.

My company has also embarked on a fund raising program to help Asheville be able to purchase a tract of land that will increase the ability for Asheville to extend the present

greenway along the French Broad at Carrier park into West Asheville proper. We are committing to donate our own money by getting customers to record their mileage and then donating \$.01 per mile that they ride. We have gotten local bicycle clubs and our manufacturers to help us by getting them to also donate funds toward this program. We hope to generate or kick off fundraising efforts to come up with 20% of the funds needed to purchase the land and then get the city and county to make up the rest. This was a project that my staff came up with to celebrate our 30 years of being in business.

I have also been involved in educating 8th graders in one of our county schools in safe bicycling practices.

Barbara Oslund, representing equestrian trail riders on this committee provided the following written report:

1. We continue to be involved in trail planning for equestrian trails in the Piney Woods park, managed by Wake County Parks and Recreation near Harris Lake. NCHC representatives met in January with Wake County staff and other trail users to discuss trail planning. The park is going to rely on volunteer support to develop and maintain trails; we are re-energizing the Jordan Lake Trails Conservation Association.
2. We continue to be involved with the planning for horse trails in the Brunswick County Nature Park. Brunswick County will also be relying heavily upon the efforts of equestrian volunteers to plan, develop and maintain the trails.
3. The NCHC submitted formal comments on the revision of the Falls Lake Master Plan, requesting the development of horse trails. We thank the Eno River Trail Riders and the Durham County Open Space and Trails for also submitting comments regarding the need for equestrian trails.
4. We plan to work with the Pisgah Trail Blazers to develop a weekend educational event that will focus on safe trail riding & camping in backcountry, and backcountry trail maintenance.

Other Organizations or Guest Reports

Kate Dixon, Executive Director of the Friends of the Mountains to Sea Trail (FMST) organization, provided the following written report:

We're making progress in many areas of the state. Here are some highlights:

Camping on the Blue Ridge Parkway Tim Johnson, Don Walton of the Carolina Mountain Club and FMST Board, and I are serving on a committee to help the Blue Ridge Parkway identify campsites that could be used by thru- and section-hikers on the

MST in areas with no available camping now. We hope to have recommendations by the end of this calendar year.

Ice Storm Damage in the Mountains We don't have a total picture of ice storm damage on the trail because long stretches of the Blue Ridge Parkway were closed and prevented volunteers from getting in to assess the damage. However, we believe the worst damage is in Watauga and South Ashe counties where we have been building new trail for the last few years. Those two task forces have started work again, and thanks to NCTC providing an RTP Education grant last year for a chainsaw class, we have many more certified sawyers able to help out. We will probably organize two big workdays for volunteers from all over the state to go up there to help this summer. We still hope to officially dedicate these two sections of trail this October.

Guilford County The Town of Stokesdale has just appointed a volunteer committee to work on getting the trail in place through Stokesdale. Greensboro's DOT is pulling together a committee to develop a conceptual plan for the trail that is to follow the abandoned Atlantic & Yadkin Railroad line through Stokesdale and Summerfield to Greensboro's watershed lakes. In addition, Guilford County and Greensboro Parks & Recreation are developing a master plan for the 440 acres acquired by the state and county between the watershed lakes and Haw River State Park. FMST is helping them organize and train volunteers to build trail once the master plan is in place.

Alamance County continues to acquire land for the trail, and FMST has now recruited a volunteer task force leader to help them build trail. Their first workday is scheduled for Saturday, May 8th. Congressman Brad Miller is also scheduled to tour two sections of the trail in Alamance on Monday, April 19.

Orange County The Board of Commissioners is scheduled to officially approve the MST route through the county on April 20. The Orange Water & Sewer Authority voted several months ago to let FMST build trail through their Cane Creek Reservoir once the county approves the route. FMST has recruited two experienced volunteers to lead that effort.

Eno River State Park FMST has been building trail there since October, and we expect to complete enough connecting segments to already existing trail that we'll have a continuous seven mile trail in place later this month.

Falls Lake We're awaiting approval from the Natural Heritage Program of the routing for the final three miles of trail at Falls Lake. We expect to complete construction of the trail this year. Last weekend, we organized the 1st annual MST 12-Mile Challenge @ Falls Lake. It went very well – we had 176 runners, many of whom had never been on the trail. We heard many compliments on the beauty of the trail and how well maintained it is.

Raleigh broke ground to construct eight miles of trail downstream of the Falls Lake dam. This trail is partly funded through federal stimulus money and will connect directly to the other trail on Falls Lake.

Clayton and DOT acquiring land and easements for four miles of trail that will follow the Neuse River from the Wake County line to Sam's Branch, a creek that flows out of Clayton. They plan to begin construction soon with DOT funding including some federal stimulus money.

Smithfield opened a 3-mile section of trail that runs along Buffalo Creek from a town park to the Neuse River in the heart of downtown earlier this month.

Other News: Scot Ward, a hiker who has completed the MST three times, has written new guidebooks for hiking the trail – one version is east to west; the other west to east. It is the most up-to-date hiking guide available, and hikers are understandably eager to buy it. Unfortunately, the book lists illegal campsites and does not even identify them as such. FMST is urging people who buy the book not to camp illegally.

IV. Business

2010 Recreational Trails Program Grant Application Review and Recommendations

Darrell McBane began discussions of North Carolina's 2010 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants by reviewing the amount of funding available for consideration:

\$ 474,9954	2010 RTP Allocation
\$ - 33,250	7% Administrative Allocation
\$ 441,745	Total Available for All Grants
\$ 132,524	30% OHV Allocation – Available for OHV Grants
\$+ 309,962	in un-appropriated 2005 RTP OHV Funds
\$+ 400,651	in un-appropriated 2006 RTP OHV Funds
\$ 843,137	Total Available for Award to OHV Projects
\$ 309,221	For all Non-OHV Grants
\$+ 97,780	in un-appropriated 2005 RTP Grant Funds
\$+988,341	in un-appropriated 2006 RTP Grant Funds
\$1,395,343	Total Available for Award to Non-OHV Projects

Darrell McBane then asked the committee members to consider the 43 applications received for the 2010 RTP funding totaling over \$2.6 million in requests.

After much discussion, the committee recommended funding for a total of 26 grant applicants: 24 non-motorized trail projects totaling \$1,395,343; and, 2 off-highway vehicle trails applications totaling \$150,000.

Motion – Brian Sears made a motion to forward to the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources a list of 26 applications for funding through the 2010 Recreational Trails Program. Barb Oslund seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. A list of the 2010 RTP grant-funding recommendations is included as an attachment.

Review of Applications Received for the 2010-2011 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program

Darrell McBane then asked the committee members to consider the 39 applications received for the 2010-2011 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program. Darrell stated that the requests totaled over \$187,000 for the \$108,000 available through this program. After much discussion, the committee recommended funding 23 applications for a total of \$108,000, the funds available for fiscal year 2010-2011 fiscal year.

Motion – Mike Simpson made a motion to forward to the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources a list of 23 applicants for the 2010-2011 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program funding. Brian Sears seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. A list of the 2009-2010 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program funding recommendations is attached.

Piedmont Triad Council of Governments 12 County Regional Trail Planning Efforts

Jesse Day and Malinda Ford, planner and GIS specialist with the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments (PTCOG) reported on their efforts to develop a conceptual 12 county regional trails plan for Surry, Stokes, Rockingham, Caswell, Yadkin, Forsyth, Guilford, Alamance, Davie, Davidson, Randolph and Montgomery counties. PTCOG was contracted to develop this plan by the Division of Parks and Recreation and was funded by Federal Recreational Trails Program – administrative funding.

Jesse and Malinda provided a draft map depicting existing and proposed state, regional and local trails – information collected from governmental agencies and participants in 6 trail planning meetings held over the past 6 months.

Jesse and Malinda invited all to attend the public reveal of their planning efforts to be held at the Greensboro Coliseum on April 21st, starting at 2:00 p.m.

These regional trails planning effort is one more step in developing a true State Trails Plan for North Carolina.

Other Regional Trails Planning Efforts

Tim Johnson, Mountain Region Trails Specialist provided the following information:

Isothermal Planning and Development Commission

The State Trails Program has contracted with the Isothermal Planning and Development Commission to complete a regional mapping project of the existing, planned, and possible connector trails in their four county service area (McDowell, Polk, Rutherford, Cleveland).

Public meetings were held in all four counties in the Fall/Winter to collect data and receive feedback on these trails and possible connections. A total of approximately 50 people attended the first round of meetings.

A second public meeting will be held in late April at IPDC offices in Rutherfordton to review the draft regional trails map and brochure and to prioritize the trail connections that were identified during the first round of public meetings.

The outcome of this regional mapping effort will be a regional trails map and brochure that will be distributed to local governments and stakeholders in the region. Implementation strategies for new trail development will also be identified in the brochure.

Western Piedmont Council of Governments

The State Trails Program has also contracted with the Western Piedmont Council of Governments to do the same work in their four county service area (Burke, Alexander, Caldwell, and Catawba).

The first public meeting was held at WPCOG offices in northwest Hickory. A total of approximately 20 people attended.

A second public meeting will be held in late summer to review the draft regional trails map and brochure and to prioritize the trail connections that were identified during the first public meeting.

Carolina Thread Trail

The Carolina Thread Trail is a regional network of greenways and conserved lands and corridors that links 15 counties in North and South Carolina. The Catawba Lands Conservancy is the lead agency for the project, and The Trust for Public Land is serving

as a key consultant. State Trails Program staff has served on the steering committees and technical advisory teams for three of the 15 counties involved with this project.

Chimney Rock State Park Master Plan

Tim Johnson stated that the State Trails Program is currently assisting Greenways, Inc., with the trails component of the Chimney Rock Master Plan. This park has very difficult terrain and a network of old logging roads that present many challenges and constraints to trail development in this area. We hope to be able to connect important areas of interest in the park through sustainable trail development. Local and regional trail connections to areas outside of the park are also being explored.

Camping Along the MST on NPS and BRP Lands

Tim Johnson stated that the State Trails Program is serving on a committee to assist the Blue Ridge Parkway to evaluate the possibility of providing camping on BRP lands along the MST. Kate Dixon, with the Friends of The Mountains to Sea Trail organization and Don Walton, with the Carolina Mountain Club also assisting with this effort. The committee will develop a report that recommends specific details and actions for this project. Initial efforts so far have focused on gathering mapping data and identifying gaps along the trail where legal camping does not exist. The target date for completion of this project is early fall.

Trail Construction and Maintenance Training for State Park Maintenance Staff

Tim Johnson reported that the State Trails Program provide training on construction of sustainable trails and maintenance of existing trails to the Division of Parks and Recreation's maintenance staff at their two day annual conference held in late March. The training incorporated a half day of classroom instruction and a day and a half of field work building new trails and rehabbing old trails at Haw River State Park in Guilford County. Trail construction was completed with mechanized equipment that was brought in from a number of different parks. Approximately 60 people attended the training.

The trails program will present the same program in early May at Elk Knob State Park. This program will incorporate a half day of classroom instruction and half day of field work. The program is being offered for interested Park Rangers. All trail construction for this training will be done by hand. Approximately 15 people plan to attend the training.

Friends of Mountains to Sea Trail's Application for Federal Recreational Trails Program Safety/Education Grant for Trail Construction Training for Alamance County and Surrounding Areas

Darrell McBane distributed copies of the Friends of Mountains to Sea Trail's application requesting \$2000 from the Federal Recreational Trails Program Safety/Education Grant

Program to conduct trail building classes for new volunteers willing to help build the Mountains-to-Sea Trail in Alamance and Guilford counties.

Motion – Mary Henderson made a motion to recommend funding for the FMST's Federal Recreational Trails Program's Safety/Education Grant to the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for consideration. Rodney Johnson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VI. **Date And Place for Next Meeting**

August 27, 2010 was set at the date for the next meeting of this committee. A meeting location will be determined at a later date.

VII. **Adjourn Meeting**

Motion – Claudia Nix made a motion to end the meeting at 3:00 p.m. Rodney Johnson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.