



Photo by Perry Conner

The Deep River Rail-Trail Steering Committee is soliciting information about what is possibly a fish weir in Deep River near Franklinville. Contact committee member Harvey Harman at [hpharman@alltel.net](mailto:hpharman@alltel.net)

## Charlotte area plans 15-county trail system

An initiative to build connecting trails and greenways in 15 counties around Charlotte in North and South Carolina kicked off in early November. The planned "interstate greenway" in the 2.3 million population area hinges on volunteerism, local autonomy and local governments matching private seed money.

The Carolina Thread Trail is the brainchild of Catawba Lands Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land, Foundation For the Carolinas and Duke Energy, who are spearheading the \$30 million fundraising effort. Trail location, design and maintenance will be determined locally in the 10 to 15-year project.

"This is really exciting news," said Carolyn Townsend, chair of North Carolina Rail-Trails Inc. "There are several abandoned railroad rights of way in the area and opportunities for rail with trail. We want to help CTT develop that potential."

**Carolina Thread** *Continued on page 3*

## Board focuses on future

North Carolina Rail-Trails Inc. began fine tuning its mission at a Sept. 8 work session in High Point that identified four major priorities: development of a business plan; determining NCRT's focus (narrow vs. broad); enhancement of communication; and funding for staff.

"The evaluation of our current efforts and future direction is really vital for our continued health and effectiveness," Board Chair Carolyn Townsend said of the day-long gathering facilitated by Margaret Henderson of UNC-CH School of Government and attended by 13 of the 15 board members. "As growth continues it is crucial that we move with speed and discipline to maximize our potential and resources."

**Business plan:** The board is in the process of selecting from among five consultants interested in developing a business plan that will: ask stakeholders how NCRT can help them; inventory existing resources; draft a preliminary budget; assess the feasibility of future funding sources; compare NCRT to rail-trail orga-

nizations in other states; and solicit models of other nonprofit business plans.

**Focus, narrow (rail-trails) or broad (rail-trails, trails and greenways):** With the decrease in abandoned rail corridors, should NCRT continue to focus on rail-trails or expand to trails and greenways?

**Enhance communications:** Develop a strong interactive, regularly updated Web site that lists links of interest and has maps that can be downloaded. Develop two tracks on the Web site: one for expert information that helps planners, volunteers and policy wonks interested in technical questions; a second track for general information.

Develop database and communication infrastructure that can rally grassroots advocates and NCRT members for policy purposes. Consolidate all the information in a library.

**Staff:** Hire at least one staff person.

The four priorities top a list of 12, which includes political advocacy, diversification of the board membership, acquisition of funding for digital mapping of the state's railroad infrastructure and influencing the state Department of Transportation's rail banking policy.

## E-mail addresses

Readers wishing to be alerted via e-mail when "Little Toot" is posted quarterly on the North Carolina Rail-Trails Web site — [www.ncrail-trails.org](http://www.ncrail-trails.org) — should send their e-mail address to Dave Connelly, NCRT's vice chair, at [connelly@duke.edu](mailto:connelly@duke.edu)

In your e-mail please respond to the following questions: Send "Little Toot," Electronically ( ) USPS ( ) Both ( ) ? Send occasional e-mail alerts on critical issues such as rail abandonments, Yes ( ) No ( ) ?

E-mail addresses will be shared only with your consent. Electronically accessing "Little Toot" streamlines its delivery as the NCRT board examines the annual estimated bill of \$2,100 for printing 1,000 copies each quarter and mailing 840.

<http://www.NCRail-Trails.org>

# Annual board changes

A Charlotte photographer and trails advocate has joined North Carolina Rail-Trails Inc.'s board as part of the annual rotation of board members and election of officers.

Nancy Pierce, a Minnesota native and former staff photographer for the Charlotte *Observer*, has owned her own photography business



**Nancy Pierce**

([www.nancypiercephoto.com](http://www.nancypiercephoto.com)) since 1981. She emphasizes environmental sustainability and social justice in her work.

A member of the nationwide Rail-Trails Conservancy since 1994 -- about the time she joined NCRT -- the avid bicyclist has served on greenway advisory groups in the Charlotte area.

"I believe trails are one of the best ways to build a sense of community," she says. "I also believe that trails are the most egalitarian form of recreation since

they are accessible to all, regardless of age, ability or socioeconomic status."

The mother of a son at N.C. State and a son at UNC-Chapel Hill puts that belief on her bicycle seat. She, her husband and sons have pedaled on rail-trails in Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Missouri, Illinois, Colorado, Wisconsin, Iowa, Oregon, Minnesota and Quebec.

"To me, there's no better way to spend a day than on a long bicycle trail ride followed by a swim in cool, clear water," she says. "I want to help future generations in North Carolina have that opportunity."

The holder of a bachelor's in journalism and a master's in psychology is currently working on the Carolina Thread Trail, a 15-county network of trails and greenways straddling the North Carolina-South Carolina line around Charlotte. (See story on page 1.) She has served on the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department Greenway Advisory Council and the Catawba Lands Conservancy, which named her Volunteer of the Year in 2003 for photography of conservancy projects.

In other NCRT board news, David Coats, an attorney with the Raleigh firm of Bailey & Dixon, has resigned from the board citing family responsibilities. He joined the board in 1993 and will remain as general counsel for NCRT.

"I love NCRT and its mission and accomplishments, as well as some of its board members, and it has been a privilege to serve on the board," Coats wrote in his August resignation.

"I will always preach the gospel of rail corridor preservation and trail creation," he wrote in accepting the position of general counsel. "Thank you all for all that you do - it is impressive, important and inspirational."

Legal work by Coats and Mike Domonkos, a board member and attorney, resulted in a 2006 court victory that could be legal leverage to build more rail-trails. The N.C. Court of Appeals upheld an earlier Superior Court ruling that rejected sub-surface and aerial claims on the Thermal Belt Rail-Trail, an 8-mile abandoned rail corridor between Ruth and Gilkey in the western part of the state.

Coats has been instrumental in Bailey & Dixon's sponsorship of the quarterly meeting of N.C. Rail Corridor Round Table, which will continue. He represented NCRT on the executive committee of Earth Share North Carolina where he remains as treasurer.

"Your love for NCRT and support of its mission and vision has borne fruit in the preservation and conversion of old railroad corridors in the state," NCRT's chair, Carolyn Townsend, wrote to Coats in response to his resignation. "It was you who coined the mission statement of RCRT: 'The Best Use of the State's Rail Corridor Assets.' So every time you see a person on a rail-trail in North Carolina, I want you to also feel a pat on the back from us."

Jean Middleton resigned from the board in September after serving seven years. The Durham resident was treasurer from 2004-06 and will continue as membership coordinator handling the unending inquiries and mailings that position entails.

"Jean's unflagging energy and uncompromising attention to detail in many important tasks are really what make an organization like NCRT go," said Townsend. "Add to that her interest in natural resources and dedication to rail-trails and you have a very powerful combination. We are indebted to her."

In the annual election at the board meeting Oct. 13 in Durham, the following officers were elected to 1-year terms: chair, Carolyn Townsend; vice-chair, Dave Connelly; secretary, Charles Farley; and treasurer, Bob Segal.

**North Carolina Rail-Trails**  
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## Resource Contacts

NC Parks Trails Program  
NC DOT Rail Planner  
NC DOT Bike-Ped. Div.  
NPS Field Office, RTCA  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Darrell McBane  
Pam Davis  
Tom Norman  
Deirdre Hewitt  
Kelly Pack

919-715-8699  
919-733-7245 x-274  
919-715-2342  
828-271-4779 x-272  
202-974-5148

# Briefs

The **Dunn-Erwin Trail** is now for the birds and birders, who can enjoy the song-birds, chimney swifts, easter bluebirds and many more species who call the 5-mile trail home.

Dunn was named a "Birder Friendly Community" this summer after Brandy Hall, community marketing director of the Dunn Area Tourism Authority, completed a day of training about the North Carolina Birding Trail and its potential as a tool for economic development. The birding trail identifies prime birding sites and alerts birders to cultural and educational attractions of communities.

Development of the birding trail began in October 2003. The coastal plain section of the trail is completed. The piedmont is currently under development with the mountain region to follow. The Web site is: [www.ncbirdingtrail.org/coast.asp](http://www.ncbirdingtrail.org/coast.asp)

**New Hope Valley Railway** is offering double-locomotive fun the first two weekends of November as a Flagg Coal #75 steam locomotive joins with the railway's #17 engine to pull passenger cars along the 8-mile, 45-minute roundtrip through the piney woods near Bonsal.

The special excursions run Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 3, 4 and Nov. 10, 11 and are at the usual departure times of 11 a.m., 12:15 p.m., 1:30 p.m., 2:45 p.m. and 4 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$6 for children, ages 2-12.

The holiday Santa train with the Old Elf himself aboard runs the weekends of Dec. 1, 2 and Dec. 8, 9 at the usual times. Adult tickets are \$9. Normally the railway operates the first Sunday of each month, May through December. The train station and museum are located outside of Bonsal, a crossroads town 20 miles southeast of Raleigh on old U.S. 1. The Web site is:

[www.hvry.org](http://www.hvry.org)

## Carolina Thread

*Continued from page 1*

"North Carolina Rail-Trails is a key partner for the CTT and we want to do all that we can to work together," said Dave Cable, executive director of Catawba Lands Conservancy, the lead agency for the CTT.

The fundraising campaign is now underway. York County, S.C., and Gaston County, N.C., have been selected for pilot programs and hope to begin trail construction in late 2008 or early 2009.

Estimates on trail construction costs vary from \$100,000 to \$600,000 per mile with a total bill ranging from \$100 to \$150 million. Preliminary studies indicate the trail would have an economic impact of about \$250 million, including \$42 to \$84 million in tourism dollars.

The Carolina Thread Trail, whose name is symbolic of the area's textile heritage, will connect historic, natural, sports and entertainment sites. The idea for the trail evolved in the 1990's. The Catawba Lands Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land and the Foundation For



the Carolinas have been working with governments and communities for two years to create a footprint for the trail network.

The 11 North Carolina counties targeted for trails are Anson, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly and Union. CTT's Web site is:

[www.carolinathreadtrail.org](http://www.carolinathreadtrail.org)

**Emily Eve Weinstein**, a Durham artist known for her outdoor murals and art books with pet and nature themes in a semi-impressionistic style, has two scenes from the American Tobacco Trail in her latest book, "Saving Magic Places." The book arrives in independent bookstores in December.

One painting looks up at the Apex Street bridge in Durham. The second painting depicts the ATT winding through a wooded area. North Carolina Rail-Trails is mentioned in the book.

A release terms the book "a nail-biting suspense" about saving a part of Duke Forest. The adventure of heroes and villains stretches to Holland and includes Durham leaders. The 104-page book has 98 color plates.

Weinstein will sign copies of her book at her ninth annual open studio, Dec. 8, 9, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. at 8 Blue Bottle Lane, Durham. Her Web site is: [www.WeinsteinArt.com](http://www.WeinsteinArt.com)

A study by the **American Journal of Preventive Medicine** shows that trails encourage exercise and are often a factor when a frequent trail user chooses a place to live.

The 2006 study found support for more trails among non-trail users. About 44 percent of the non-trail users interviewed supported expanded public spaces and more than 36 percent of non-trail users were willing to pay more taxes to build more parks and trails.

Additional research is needed to determine whether newly built trails promote physical activity in previously inactive people, the study said.

The bibliographical citation for the study in the Journal is 2006;31(5):399-405. A good source for information and studies about trail usage, weight of users and fitness levels is the Active Living Research Web site: [www.activelivingresearch.org/](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/)

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Reason for interest in rail-trails \_\_\_\_\_

**NCRT annual memberships: Individual - \$25, Corporate - \$100**  
**Mail to North Carolina Rail-Trails, PO Box 61348, Durham, NC 27715-1348**

NCRT is a 501-c(3) public non-profit tax exempt organization founded in 1990.  
 All contributions and donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

# 2009 completion in Chatham

Thanks to teamwork by Cary, the state Department of Transportation and Chatham County, planners project a January 2009 completion date for the 4.67-mile portion of the American Tobacco Trail in Chatham County.

The 20-foot wide section will have dual trails: a 6-foot wide screened granite trail for equestrian use and a parallel 10-foot wide paved surface for walkers and bicyclists. Today's skeleton-like trestles over Panther and Northeast creeks will become bridges with planking and rails. Under discussion is a tunnel or bridge where the trail crosses the future Yates Store Road extension.

At North Carolina Rail-Trails Inc.'s October board meeting, Doug McRainey, Cary's parks and planning manager, termed the cooperation between the three governmental units "unique."

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Division of DOT designed the segment. DOT requested that Cary manage construction of the trail due to its experience. Chatham County contributed funding toward the future trailhead park located on the ATT. DOT provided approximately \$2.3 million for the project.

The growth in western Wake and northeastern Chatham counties – 10,000 housing units in the last several years – motivated Cary to get involved in order to provide recreational opportunities for its residents, McRainey said.

Flattening the raised rail bed to build the 20-foot dual trail will reduce the tree canopy on either side of the trail and was a "point of discussion during design," McRainey said. Construction should begin in May or June.

Planners project a summer 2010 completion date for the entire 22-mile ATT that began as a dream by volunteers in 1989. Still in the works is a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over I-40 and a 1.8-mile stretch around the Streets at Southpoint mall.

The ATT runs from the Durham Bulls Athletic Park through Chatham and Wake counties to New Hill. The 6.6-mile Wake County section had 22,716 users the first year in 2003-04. Last year 61,000 used the trail.

## NCRT Winter Board Meeting

Saturday, Jan. 12, 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
Fellowship Hall  
Franklinville United Methodist Church  
227 W. Main St. (Hwy 22)  
Franklinville, NC 27248

## NORTH CAROLINA RAIL-TRAILS INC. BOARD

Chair	Carolyn Townsend, RN, MPH	919-542-5422
Vice Chair	Dave Connelly	919-544-6372
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\*Primary information contacts

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Rockingham County	Katherine Mull	336-627-6270
Stanly County	Lindsey Dunavent	704-984-9560
Stokes County	David Simpson	336-969-6121
Transylvania County	Mike Domonkos	828-884-7648
Wake County	Leslie Kennedy	919-362-4011
Halifax County	Christina Gordon	1-800-522-4282

Newsletter: David Newton 919-416-9499 [dnewtonis@verizon.net](mailto:dnewtonis@verizon.net)



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