

"To Preserve rail corridors and promote Rail-Trails"

Little Toot

The Newsletter of North Carolina Rail-Trails

NCRT
Suite 124
703 9th Street
Durham, NC 27705

Vol.1 No.3, January, 1990

1989 in Review - Where N.C. Rail Trails has been (and where we are going!!)

Our group has completed a lot of groundwork in the past year and we have grown from a small core of volunteers to a membership of over 200. Our steering committee represents a variety of trail users and a number of local rail trail projects and initiatives. To summarize our group's efforts and accomplishments, we proudly offer the following summary:

CONSULTATIONS

- * We attained representation before the Governor's Citizens Planning and Advisory Board clarifying some of the rail trail opportunities and issues.
- * Co-Chair, Al Capehart, made a presentation to the Governor's Rail Passenger Task Force elucidating the need to preserve rail corridors.
- * NCRT provided consultation to Chatham County Commissioners regarding the potential Gulf to Cumnock rail corridor preservation.
- * NCRT also provided consultation to the Dan River Bio-Region group as they gather momentum. Their goal is the creation of the Dan River Trail starting in Caswell County, N.C. and continuing on (potentially) from Danville, Va. to Suffolk, Va. (Editor's note: This trail proposal has wonderful potential for both N.C. & Va. Keep your eyes on this trail effort!)

LIASONS

- * Two NCRT steering committee members are on the board of the North Carolina Trails Association. We have made specific recommendations for rail trail development to NCTA. We are developing a strong alliance with NCTA on all trails and recreation matters.

ACTIONS

- * The Triangle Rail Trail Conservancy was incorporated this year and has opened an office on 9th Street in Durham. They are pursuing several potential rail trails, including the former Hope Valley Railroad from Durham to Bonsal. Of particular interest to them is the portion of this line from Durham to Woodcroft - also known as the American Tobacco Spur.
- * Five Tarheels- Al Capehart, Chuck Flink, Vonda Frantz, James Mackay and Carol Vilas- attended the 2nd National Rails to Trails "Trailblazing for Tomorrow" conference in Dayton, Ohio. Al and James met with Chuck Montagne, attorney for the Rails to Trails Conservancy, about the recently passed N.C. Rail Corridor Preservation Act GA-136-44. Montagne, arguably the most knowledgeable attorney for rail trail issues, commented favorably on the 'interim compatible use' opportunities that the legislation provided. (Editor's note: a typewritten transcript of our conversation with Chuck is available - send a SASE for a free copy.) We attended workshops, met with other rail trail groups, met Virginia Young - an attorney for the Norfolk Southern Railroad, and obtained detailed user profile analyses of rail trails that are approaching twenty-five years of use. We also had a Southern States caucus with Marianne Fowler, Southern States Coordinator of the Rails to Trails Conservancy, where we set a goal of two rail trails completed in N.C. by the next national conference in 1991.
- * NCRT members participated in the Lincolnton Corridor Coalition's field trip to visit the nearly completed New River Trail State Park. The park, stretching over 50 miles from Galax to Pulaski in western Virginia, was donated to the State of Virginia by the Norfolk Southern Railroad. The field trip, sponsored by many local Lincoln County businesses, provided free motorcoach transportation along with picnic lunches. Many of the attendees had never seen a rail trail before. Park Superintendent Scott Flickinger and his staff led tours of the park for the more than seventy visitors and explained how much of the trail construction and bridge decking was being done by state park forces working in partnership with local user group

volunteers. The park has recently received \$880,000 from the Virginia State Lottery for trail construction and completion is set for September of 1990. (Editors note: I predict that this trail will be attracting thousands of visitors within two years of completion.)

* 1989 also saw the first two issues of our newsletter "Little Toot" (named after "The Little Engine That Could") distributed statewide to trails enthusiasts, potential supporters, business leaders and government officials.

* A working relationship with the North Carolina Railroad Corporation was initiated as a result of our identified mutual interest in the preservation of railroad corridors. The preservation of rail corridors for future transportation purposes and the various, proven, "Rails with Trails" agreements between trail management authorities and railroads present symbiotic opportunities that we intend to pursue further.

* Coordination with the North Carolina Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources has also been developed this past year. Al, James, and NCTA President Suzanne Riley have highlighted rail trail topics in conversations with newly appointed State Parks Director, Phil McKnelly. DEHNR has designated Tom Potter as the state Rail Trail Specialist (see profile below) and we anticipate that DEHNR will further emerge as a resource agency for regional trail development.

* A Legislative Action Committee was formed last year to examine the impacts and opportunities created by existing North Carolina Statutes. The most recent meeting was held in a law library, where NCRT attorney Brian Lessley was able to supply the Committee with copies of existing NC railroad corridor preservation, abandonment and reversionary interest legislation for further committee review. This committee will be meeting in the future to determine if there are any changes or additions to the NC statutes that the trails community may wish to pursue.

* NCRT is being incorporated so that we can formally acquire not-for-profit status, our own bulk mailing permit, and other organizational benefits. This designation will enhance our credibility and public recognition. Getting our act together is a great way to greet the 1990's!

Editors Whistlestop, by James Mackay, P.E.

While the above accomplishments for our fledgling group are the inspiring result of a dedicated group of trail visionaries, we still have a long way to go. The Iowa Trails Council recently dedicated their thirty-fourth rail trail, bringing their total state mileage to over 430 miles! Although we have several local groups supporting rail trail projects across the state, the fact remains that the total mileage of North Carolina rail trails is still zero.

We are gaining recognition here in the Tarheel State as the rails to trails movement sweeps the nation. Thirty-four states now have rail trails, and thousands of miles of rail corridor are programmed for trail conversion. However, our organization needs to grow and evolve into a strong, diverse, but unified voice promoting rail trails to government, businesses, community organizations and trail user groups. The organizational and legislative examples have been set. Without a doubt, we certainly have the raw materials required - miles of rail corridors connecting towns with countryside, wilderness, scenic rivers, wildlife habitat and historic sites. Let's preserve the heritage of rail corridors and not let them become just another industrial wasteland. Please get involved with North Carolina Rail Trails!

Profile on Tom Potter, Trails Specialist, North Carolina State Parks

Tom Potter is a recent addition to the North Carolina State Parks staff and fills both the Eastern Regional Trails Specialist and newly created Rails to Trails Specialist position. Stationed at Cliffs of the Neuse State Park near Goldsboro, Tom is able to oversee the development of the Neuse River and Cape Fear trails. He also monitors the evolution of the Mountains to Sea Multi-Use Trail spanning from Clingman's Dome to Jockey's Ridge and the Neusiok hiking trail in the Croatan National Forest near New Bern. Recently, he has been providing technical assistance to the City of Greenville in the development (please turn to page #4)

NORTH CAROLINA RAILS TO TRAILS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone Numbers Home(_____) _____ - _____ Work(_____) _____ - _____

Areas of interest in trails and rail corridor preservation: _____

Mail to: North Carolina Rail Trails, Suite 124, 703 9th St., Durham N.C. 27705. NCRT Membership Annual Dues: Individual — \$15 Family — \$20 Corporate— \$100

SPECIAL NOTE TO NATIONAL RAILS TO TRAILS CONSERVANCY MEMBERS: Please take a moment to consider joining NCRT. There are over 850 members of the RTC here in the Tarheel state and many of you have seen successful rail trails elsewhere. Your support, enthusiasm, and time is needed right here in North Carolina. Let's work together and make the dream of a NC rail trail a reality!!!!

NCRT Meeting Schedule: Deep River Park Association Steering Committee meeting Saturday, February 8th at 6:30 PM at the Bethany Church in Gulf adjacent to the junction of US 421 and the RR tracks. Contact Carolyn Townsend w(919)542-8220 h(919)542-5422.

NCRT & Dan River group, Saturday, February 17th, 10 AM in Yanceyville at the Gunn Memorial Public Library on NC Route 86. Contact Forrest Altman (919)-234-8556.

NCRT & Lincolnton Corridor Coalition, Saturday, ~~June 9th~~ ^{June 9th} at 10 AM in Lincolnton Citizens Center on West Main Street on the west side of the Lincoln County Courthouse. Contact Milton Dellinger (704)-732-0785.

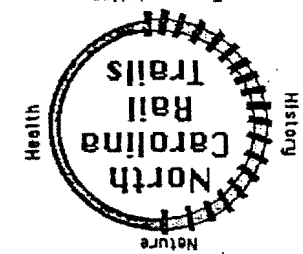
Please Attend! You are important in the volunteer effort - we need help with membership, recruitment, advocacy, letter writing, land title research and other issues.

NORTH CAROLINA RAIL TRAILS STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Co-Chair	Dr. Al Capehart	(919) 493-6394
Co-Chair & Consulting Engr.	James Mackay, P.E.	(919) 851-5017
Legal Consultant	Bryan Lessley, Atty.	(704) 274-2992
Membership/Treasurer	John Stratton	(919) 383-5371
Durham County	Jon Parker	(919) 286-1455
Chatham County	Carolyn Townsend	(919) 542-5422
Lincolnton County	Chafin Rhyne	(704) 735-1746
Caswell County	Forrest Altman	(919) 234-8556

NOTEWORTHY RESOURCE PEOPLE

NCDOT Rail Planner	Mark Sullivan	(919) 733-2806
NC State Park Trail Spclst.	Tom Potter	(919) 778-9488
RTC. Southern States Coord.	Marianne Fowler	(202) 797-5400
US Nat. Park Svc. Outdoor Rec. Planner	Wink Hastings	(404) 331-5838



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Tom Potter (continued) of their master greenway plan. Currently, Tom is developing proposals for a uniform signing system for NC State Trails. He is also coordinating with the U.S. Forest Service and a local citizens group of wheelchair trail users to establish a handicapped accessible trail in the Croatan National Forest.

Tom enjoys his work as a direct liason between the State Parks and local and county government trail planners. He experiences a lot of satisfaction in being assigned to work with people in the trails community and in working outdoors. Prior to joining the State Parks, he received a degree in Forestry from Wayne Community College in Goldsboro. After graduation, he worked for eleven years for the North Carolina Forest Service, where he provided timberland management advice and assistance to private landowners.

Tom is interested in working with trail user groups on trail development topics. He is also involved with the formulation of policy and funding recommendations for a state trail system. The most recent potential rail trail initiative he has been involved with is a 1.7 mile long route in Brevard. Tom's technical assistance to the Transylvania County Economic Development Commissioner on this proposed rail trail could prove instrumental in providing a trail linking the county hospital to the community center, elementary school, residential areas, an industrial park, and the central business district of Brevard.

Tom is working with NC State Parks staff to develop a state park rail trail policy and specific program recommendations. One tangible result of Tom's efforts is the inclusion of a million dollar trust fund for rail trail acquisition and development in the upcoming State Parks and Recreation budget. This budget request will be forwarded to the short session of the state legislature for approval. (Editor's note: Grassroots support for this request is needed due to the current state revenue forecasts.)

The N.C. State Parks has available "Adopt a Trail" funds totalling \$25,000. These funds are available to trails groups for trail construction and maintenance, purchasing tools, trails signing, and the production of maps and brochures. Interested applicants can contact Tom at (919) 778-9488 for assistance and followup with the "Adopt a Trail" program. (You can be certain that NCRT will be applying for some of this funding!)

Rail Trail Materials Available: Copies of our conversation with Chuck Montange about NC Rail Corridor preservation (free), typewritten notes of the '89 RTC conference (free), and a video of the '87 RTC conference - complete with video overdubs of popular Illinois rail trails (\$10pp) are available. Contact "Little Toot" newsletter editor James Mackay for more details!!