

NORTH CAROLINA RAIL TRAILS

Little Toot

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Course Set For Gaining State Rail-Trail System

A four-step program leading to a state rail-trail network has been adopted by the North Carolina Trails Committee, the group which advises DEHNR Division of Parks and Recreation on policy matters. The committee sees rail-trails as an important new element in the mission of the North Carolina Trails System Act, which was first adopted in 1973.

Phase One calls for increased technical assistance to local rail-trail initiatives as outlined by State Parks Director Dr. Phil McKnelly at NCRT's annual meeting.

Phase Two involves making an inventory of railroad abandonments throughout the state and setting priorities for rail-trail corridors.

Phase Three aims at DPR acquiring and preserving abandoned rail corridors.

Phase Four looks ahead to DPR developing and managing a state rail-trails network as part of the state parks system.

Timing of the program depends almost entirely upon the availability of funding. The parks and recreation division is feeling the state's present budget crunch and is struggling to meet commitments to the first phase of the policy. The division

has four trail specialist, who also have other duties, scattered throughout the state.

The first phase of implementation depends heavily upon local governments and rail-trail advocates to take the lead, with liaison and technical support from DPR. The division is working to become a clearinghouse for information on abandonments, NCDOT railbanking activity, and rail-trail funding, acquisition, development and management techniques.

The committee's policy statement also calls for creating a rail corridor acquisition trust fund, with an initial \$1 million investment, to assist local governments with acquisitions and rail-trail developments.

The DEHNR parks and recreation division has drafted a joint working agreement with NCDOT, which has rail corridor preservation authority under the 1989 Railbanking Act.

Subsequent phases of the rail-trails policy call for DEHNR to identify corridors and to directly participate in acquisitions through purchases, leases and railbanking agreements with railroad companies. That authority would require legislative approval.



Yes, it's a rail-trail in North Carolina, the Winston-Salem Strollway which starts in the business district, winds past Old Salem and ends near the NC School of The Arts. NCRT will be there for the quarterly meeting on June 15. (See details inside.) Everyone with an interest in rail-trails is welcome to the meeting and to take an afternoon stroll.

Love & Money In North Carolina

Yes, we are unpaid volunteers working to make rail-trails a reality throughout North Carolina. We do it for love. But we still need your money.

If you already are a North Carolina Rail-Trails member, watch your mail for a renewal notice. And, please, remit your renewal promptly.

If you are a bicycle shop or other recreation business, please dip into the cash drawer and join now. You stand to benefit from our volunteer efforts.

If are one of the conservation-minded citizens on our mailing list, please send what you can. Memberships and donations are NCRT's only way of supporting this newsletter.

If you are one of several hundred national Rail-to-Trails Conservancy members who receives this newsletter and you have not yet joined NCRT, please think about what you're NOT doing. NCRT is working to save corridors and put trails on the ground in NORTH CAROLINA.

"To Preserve Rail Corridors and Promote Rail - Trails"

American Tobacco Trail Gains Regional Planning Attention

The Durham-to-Bonsal American Tobacco Trail moved closer to reality when government representatives from three counties, several cities, state and federal agencies, plus interest groups and the public met April 19 at the Jordan Lake Management Center to begin defining the regional rail-trail project. Another meeting was scheduled for the end of May.

The Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy took the lead in organizing the gathering and in presenting a history of the abandoned line, detailing its transportation and recreation benefits to the region and outlining a master plan study for acquisition, development and management of the 36-mile corridor.

Following the presentation by John Goebel and Robert Payne, the 60 attendees broke into three work groups: To identify key participants for a trail conversion management team, to define master plan steps, and to identify additional sources of master plan funding. The state DEHNR has funded the initial \$2,500 through an Adopt-a-Trail Grant to NCRT. An additional \$3,500 is needed from other sources.

The corridor has unusually composition, having been abandoned by Norfolk Southern in the early 1980's after a new



Putting their heads together, one of three work groups discusses the plan of attack for developing an American Tobacco Trail master plan during the first regional meeting on the proposed project.

corridor was built by the U.S. Corps of Engineers along the Wake-Chatham county line when Jordan Lake was impounded in the early 1970's.

This large portion of the line was never utilized and tracks were not laid on the new roadbed.

However, a 4.5-mile section north of Bonsal is owned and operated by the East Carolina Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, which runs excursions for children. The group has expressed interest in cooperating with the trail project.

The two Jordan Lake accesses are "spurs", actually portions of the original railbed, one north of Bonsal and the second near the

Durham was once an important rail hub; six lines operated by five different railroads. The American Tobacco Trail follows the newest of the routes, the former Norfolk Southern Durham branch, which once ran 41 miles from Duncan to Durham.

The Durham branch began as an independent short line of the Durham & South Carolina Railroad. Originally named the New Hope Valley Railroad, the line was completed in 1905 and connected with Seaboard Air Line at Bonsal.

After the old Norfolk Southern main line was completed from Raleigh to Charlotte, the D&SC built an extension south from Bonsal to Duncan, where it met the Norfolk Southern.

Norfolk Southern leased the D&SC in 1920 and purchased it in 1957. A 1929 timetable lists one Duncan-to-Durham round trip each day.

Always fifth fiddle to the other railroads serving Durham, the Durham branch never prospered. The old Norfolk Southern suffered through a depression-era bankruptcy and was later acquired by Southern railway in 1974. Since then, Southern merged with Norfolk & Western to form the present Norfolk Southern Corporation, which ironically took on the name of the smaller acquisition.

It was the 1974 merger that made the new corridor around rising Jordan Lake redundant. Today, much of the original roadway is under water. The Bonsal-to-Duncan segment also is abandoned.

The tracks survive in Durham and on a 4.5-mile segment at Bonsal, over which the New Hope Valley Railway runs historical excursions. -- Tony Reeve, NCRT Historian

Durham-Chatham county line at the north end of the lake. One of these spurs has been maintained in part by the Corps and is being used as a public trail.

In addition to determining ownership of the various corridor segments, the Triangle R-T Conservancy is putting a major effort into identifying all adjacent property owners and informing them of the trail development program.

NEXT MEETING JUNE 15

The NCRT quarterly meeting will be held 10 a.m. Saturday, June 15, in the offices of the Northwest Piedmont Council of Governments. The address is Room 280, South Liberty, next to the Strollway in downtown Winston Salem.

The NCRT annual meeting is scheduled for Sept. 6-7 at the Carolina Inn in Chapel Hill.

Wilmington will be host to the quarterly meeting in December.

Whistle Stops: Lift Here For Rail-Trails

The North Carolina Trails Committee has set the course toward building a state rail-trails network. The four-step program is clear and logical: Set the goal, then start working toward that goal with what resources are immediately available.

The under-funded Division of Parks and Recreation can do hardly more than steer the course at present. Citizen trail advocates and local governments will have to do the heavy lifting during the early going.

So, if you want rail-trails in North Carolina, you will have to work for them. Get involved in your local or regional rail-trail initiative. (See project contacts on back page.) Or start your own. NCRT and DPR can help you get started on the right foot.

You can also influence the timetable for attaining a state rail-trail network. Communicate rail-trail support to your state senators, representatives and NCDOT district boardmembers. (Your library, Chamber of Commerce or Regional Council of Governments can give you the names, addresses and phone numbers.) Better yet, organize a local lobby to multiply your voice.

Don't sit there wishing. Put on your Nikes and "Just Do It!" That's the only way rails get converted to trails. -- DA

Happy Trails, James

James Mackay, we'll be missing you, lad. Good luck at steering the Denver, Colorado, bicycle and pedestrian program.

James supplied much of the glue and gumption during the formation of NCRT, first as co-chair of the steering committee, then as board secretary after incorporation.

We'll also miss the experience he brought to North Carolina as past chairman of the Illinois Rail-Trail Conservancy. And his enthusiasm for the rail-trail movement.

James gave NCRT his best efforts for two and a half years while he was employed as an engineer with the NCDOT Bicycle Program.

He helped us pedal uphill. We hope he finds many long, smooth downhills at his new Rocky Mountain base. --DA et al

Modified Bill Sets Conditions On Leasing Railbanked Lines

The North Carolina House has sent to the Senate a bill to regulate the interim recreation leasing of corridors that are railbanked by NCDOT.

When originally introduced by Rep. John Gamble of Lincolnton, House Bill 601 sought to prohibit railbanked corridor leasing for interim trail use when easements were used by a railroad to establish the right-of-way.

As passed to the Senate, House 601 sets a number of conditions on interim leasing: Required public hearings, notification to adjoining landowners, voting rights in development and management matters for abutting landowners, and assumption of development costs, management, security and liability by the leaseholder.

The bill also stipulates that the corridor will not be needed for resumed rail service within 10 years and that trail use will not interfere with the ultimate transportation use of the corridor.

Over in the Senate, Bill 131 has been introduced to preserve rail corridors that were originally established by easements. The bill would allow the railroad or NCDOT to file an affidavit stating a future transportation need.

Also in the Senate, Bill 132 seeks to establish an appointed Park Authority to create and administer a separate fund for state parks acquisition and development. The fund could accept donations and issue bonds.

NCRT BRIEFS PLANNERS ON TRAILS

NCRT and project chapters exposed community planners to the rail-trail concept at the North Carolina Greenways Conference, May 3, in Durham.

Following a NCRT slide presentation, Al Capehart related what can go wrong in a talk entitled "Derailment at Roxboro," a project that lost out to shortsighted industrial development.

John Goebel and Robert Payne of the Triangle Rails-to-Trail Conservancy reported on the American Tobacco Trail project. Dan Arrasmith and Deborah Ryan papered the hall with design sketches for the Lincolnton rail-trail greenway project.

NORTH CAROLINA RAIL TRAILS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone: Home _____ Work _____ Best Time _____

Reason for interest in rail-trails _____

Member of other conservation/recreation/historical group? _____

NCRT annual memberships: Individual - \$15, Family - \$20, Corporate - \$100

Mail to North Carolina Rail Trails, Suite 124, 703 9th St., Durham, NC 27705

THANK YOU FOR JOINING NCRT

"To Preserve Rail Corridors and Promote Rail - Trails"

Get With It. Get Into An NCRT T-Shirt

A revised NCRT logo, imprinted in black on a silver-gray T-shirt with green theme line for the year: "Trails Are Transportation."

Available in adults S-M-L-XL.

Send \$10.00 per shirt, plus \$2.00 for packaging and shipping to: North Carolina Rail-Trails

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NORTH CAROLINA



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Project Reports

CLEVELAND STUDIES TRAIL

Cleveland County Commissioners have appointed a study committee headed by landscape architect Fred Blackley to explore the feasibility of a rail-trail from Shelby west to the Rutherford County line. The Deep River Sierra Club has expressed support for the project and is working to assist the study.

Interest is centered on a Norfolk Southern abandonment from Shelby west and north to Marion in McDowell County. The Thermal Belt Railroad has run a shortline operation on part of the line through Bostic, Forest City, Spindale, Rutherfordton and Gilkey in Rutherford County for the past two years.

DAN RIVER RENEWS EFFORTS

Under a new president, Forrest Altman, the Dan River Trail Association renewed its efforts to establish rail-trails in eight counties, four each in Virginia and North Carolina.

The group has published a comprehensive brochure which focuses on the abandoned Norfolk, Franklin & Danville line that weaves back and forth across the state line east from Danville, Virginia. The association is working toward developing a short segment to demonstrate a "trial trail."

CATAWBA GOES FOR RAILBANK

While the Lincolnton Corridor Coalition is waiting for the railroad to react to a purchase offer on two miles in that city, the north end of the abandoned line in Catawba County has been approved for NCDOT railbanking with \$120,000 earmarked for that purpose.

The section slated for railbanking extends from Newton to where new construction on Highway 321 crosses the corridor near Maiden. Catawba County wants to retain the rail option for future industrial development and a NCDOT study has cited light rail possibilities for the future.

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