



## *Coming, ready on not*

As development continues, a growing number of users have taken to Rutherford County's new Thermal Belt Rail-Trail throughout the summer. A groomed crushed rock surface is in place on six of the eight miles between Spindale and Gilkey. Trail surfacing will be completed next spring. Other coming improvements are a trail access parking lot on donated property across from the Tanner Factory Store and a multi-station exercise course that will be sponsored by two local medical practices.

## **Broadcast company will help Triangle trail bloom**

Capitol Broadcasting Co. announced plans to donate thousands of azaleas and \$50,000 to the American Tobacco Trail project in the Triangle.

Jim Goodman, president and chief executive officer of Capitol, said the company will give 5,000 azaleas each year for next five years to help develop the trail.

The company, which owns WRAL-TV and the Durham Bulls, also will contribute \$10,000 a year for five years to a new endowment fund for the care and maintenance of the trail.

During a ceremony, officials took azalea

cuttings from plants in the WRAL Gardens behind the TV studios. Those clippings, officials said, should be ready to plant on the trail by January 2003.

The 23-mile trail eventually will run from downtown Durham near the Durham Bulls Athletic Park to New Hill Road in western Wake County. The first segment of the trail, 3.2 miles from downtown Durham to Hillside High School, opened last year.

The trail would wind through the center of the American Tobacco complex, which Capitol hopes to turn into a mix of shops, homes and offices.

## **Coastal Carolina earns state planning award for trail homework**

The Coastal Carolina Trail Committee of Beaufort, Martin and Pitt counties has earned the Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Planning Award from the North Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association. The award was presented to the trails group at the state APA conference in Charlotte.

The proposed Coast Carolina Trail is a long-term project on a 30-mile section of the former Wilmington & Weldon line, which was abandoned in 1982. It involves securing new easements from adjacent property owners.

The CCT committee secured a 1998 NC Rural Development Tourism grant to secure the services of a design consultant and to print master plan, phase one feasibility study, executive summary and project brochure. Instead, the regional committee itself - without outside consultant assistance - divided the tasks among its members and completed the documents in September 1999.

CCT organizer Crystal Baity received NCRT's Golden Spike Award last year.



Accepting the NC APA award on behalf of the Coastal Carolina Trail Committee were Ruth Leggett (left), James Rhodes and Alice Keene.



Dedication day hikers stop at one of the trailside markers that relate the 19th Century mining history of Gold Hill. The village and surrounding woods are laced with mine shafts and digs, former metal processing plant sites and historic buildings.

## Gold Hill starts down historic rail-trail

Historic Gold Hill took another step toward building a future on a rich historical foundation when it dedicated the first half-mile of a two-mile rail-trail that winds through the Rowan County village and old mine digs. The dedication took place during The LandTrust for Central North Carolina's sixth annual meeting at the Historic Gold Hill Foundation Park.

While researching Gold Hill property titles, a land trust attorney discovered that a long-abandoned rail spur was owned by New Yorker Martin Birmingham, a descendant of early Gold Hill investors. The heir was persuaded to donate the spur to the land trust.

The Gold Hill Foundation, sparked by individual effort on the part of life-long resident and historian John Yelton, took on trail development. Yelton is lining up donations to replace a missing rail trestle with a pedestrian bridge. That will make it possible to continue the trail to a historic copper recovery plant site at the Cabarrus County line.

Gold Hill was among the first gold

mines in the country during the first half of the 19th Century and at one time had 5,000 resident. In recent years, two general stores, a post office and several homes have been restored by individuals who are reinvesting in Gold Hill. A new restaurant and a bakery were added this year to serve visitors.

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## State, fed funds aid Dunn-Erwin project

Plans for development of the federally-railbanked Dunn Erwin Connector Rail-Trail are being aided by new grants from state and federal sources.

A NC Trails Program Adopt-A-Trail grant is being used to finance a development master plan being prepared by NC State landscape architecture graduate students under the direction of Dr. Shishir Raval.

NCRT has been notified it is eligible for a \$50,000 state-administered National Recreation Trails Program grant for traffic control bollards, bridge railings, safety fencing, signage, mileage markers and benches.

As a first step, railroad ballast was crushed in place after tracks and ties were salvaged from the 5.3-mile corridor last winter.

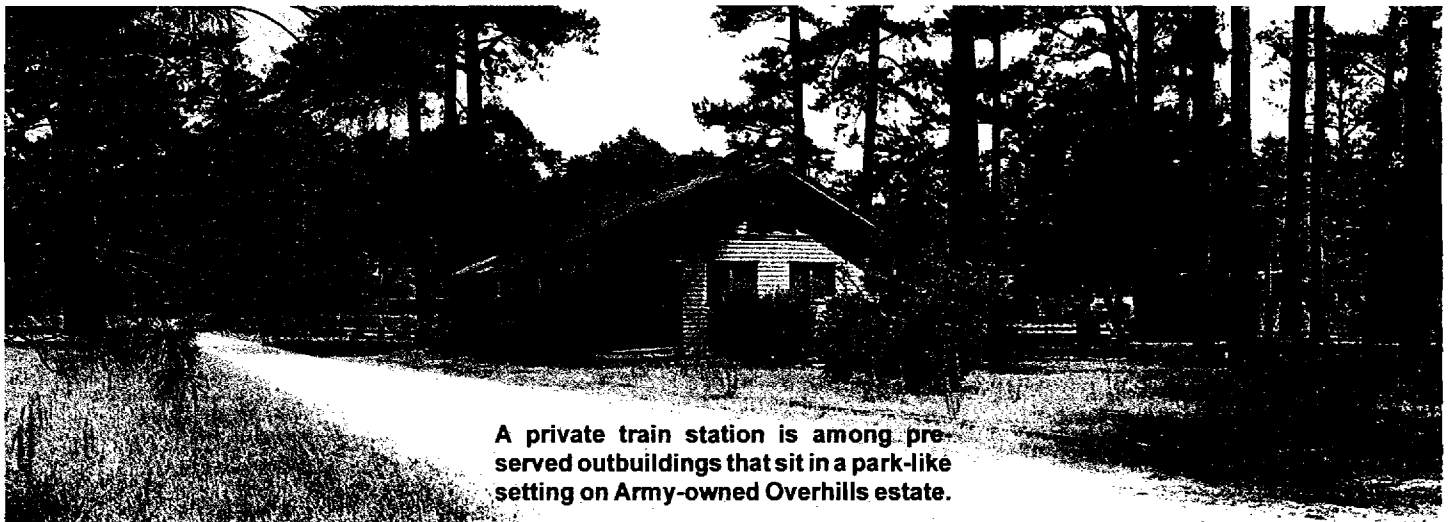
Currently, NCRT holds the donated property title and the federal Interim Trail Use Certificate. The goal is a county-owned, private foundation-maintained, paved trail in a linear park connecting Dunn and Erwin with a junction at the Black River nature corridor and wetlands greenway in Harnett County.

## Williamston receives deed, starts bidding

With a long-awaited deed in hand, Williamston in Martin County is moving through the bid process with the intent of paving the new Skewarkee Trail before cold weather sets in. The .93-mile rail-trail conversion connects downtown with the Roanoke River.

Williamston received a \$35,000 National Recreational Trails Program grant for purchasing the CSX right-of-way. NC DOT Pedestrian and Bicycle Division has allocated \$300,000 in Transportation Enhancement funds for the initial development.

The local trail committee has conducted an inventory of natural features, resources and community needs. Fund raising is underway for on-going improvements after the initial 10-ft. wide paving is in place.



A private train station is among preserved outbuildings that sit in a park-like setting on Army-owned Overhills estate.

## ***Army contemplates access to Rockefeller playground***

What to do with a former Rockefeller family playground? That is the issue before the U.S. Army at Fort Bragg. The possibilities include a youth golf program and four miles of rail-trail through the historic grounds.

In the early 1900s, some members of the second generation Rockefeller family purchased 40,000 acres in the Sandhills just north of Fayetteville. Over the years some of the land was sold to timber and farming interests, leaving over 10,000 acres in the Rockefeller name. The estate, named Overhills, was used as a hunting lodge/resort by the family and their guests, and included an 18-hole golf course designed by noted golf course architect Donald Ross.

Fort Bragg was established during World War I on land between Overhills and Fayetteville. As the Fort grew during World War II and the Vietnam era

it tended to expand westward, as Fayetteville was a barrier to the south and east. The sprawling Overhills estate occupied the north.

In the 1990s, Fort Bragg was running out of room and negotiations were begun with the Rockefeller family for the sale of the property to the Army. The deal was concluded in 1997. Since then, the undeveloped areas have been used for training exercises, but the core of the estate - the houses and cottages, the stables, the golf course and train station - have been put in mothballs pending the results of a federally-mandated study on the use of the historic property.

One of the key elements of the property that is of interest to the rails-to-trails movement is that the old Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railway right-of-way between Wilmington and Greensboro ran through

the estate, which even had its own station. CSX had sold the right-of-way back to the Rockefeller Family in 1969.

There are several places between Fort Bragg and Sanford where the right-of-way comes quite close to NC 87; unfortunately the sections north of Overhills have been encroached upon, most recently by the widening of NC 87.

The Army is conducting public input hearings, with a decision on uses expected sometime next year. Paul Wilson of Fayetteville, acting as NCRT's Cumberland County representative, has responded with documentation favoring public use of the rail right-of-way. Wilson, a Methodist College department head, has posted extensive Overhills project information and a photo gallery at <http://freepages.hobbies.rootsweb.com/~pfwilson/overhills.html>.

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## NCRT gives abandonment heads up

NCRT is asking county managers and planners to be alert for early indications of new rail abandonments in light of Norfolk Southern's announced "line rationalization program." The railroad company said in January that it would like to shed some 2,000 miles of its system to adjust to businesses concentrating in metros on Interstate corridors and away from rural areas.

More recently, N-S said that it was leasing 200 miles to four shortline operators. Leasing or selling unprofitable tracks are the railroad's obvious first choices.

The "rationalization" classifies lines as core, strategic or tactical. Core routes connect major gateways, markets and ports. Strategic lines serve secondary ports and regions that may be conceded to other carriers. Tactical lines are carload gathering and distribution.

The company cited the high reinvestment risk of maintaining and operating tactical lines that serve one or two customers.

The final option, abandonment, has been rare in recent years as N-S and CSX have been busy dividing up and absorbing Conrail's northeastern system. It now appears that the carriers are ready to fine-tune their systems.

### NCRT Fall Meeting

**10:30 a.m. Oct. 13. Erwin Manor, 301 North H Street in Erwin, Harnett County. The meeting site faces the Dunn-Erwin Rail-Trail corridor.**

#### RESOURCE CONTACTS

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