

Durham Will Host Annual Meeting, Workshops

Rail-trail supporters and government leaders will meet in Durham Sept. 7 and 8 for the North Carolina Rail Trails annual meeting. The event will be held from 7 to 10 pm Friday, Sept. 7, and from 9 am to 2 pm Sept. 8 at the downtown Durham Arts Center. The agenda will focus on North Carolina rail-trail initiatives with slide presentations, workshops and panel discussions.

The annual meeting has been expanded to allow ample time for rail-trail supporters from throughout the state to network and to be updated on state and

national issues.

Incorporation as a non-profit organization earlier this year means that NCRT will be electing its first board of directors and also expanding its committee assignments to handle a growing number of activities. Since formation in 1988, NCRT has operated under the guidance of a steering committee.

Scheduled to make the keynote address is Phil K. McKnelly, Director of the Division of Parks and Recreation, Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources.

Preregistration for the full meeting, including Friday dinner and Saturday breakfast and lunch, is \$40. The Saturday-only preregistration is \$30. Both registrations will be \$10 higher on site or after Aug. 31. All registration fees include 1991 NCRT individual membership. See the registration/membership form elsewhere in this issue of *Little Toot*.

For lodging information, call Carolyn Townsend at 919-542-5422.

For camping assistance, call Al Capehart at 919-493-6394 or John Stratton at 919-383-5371.

ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

Friday, September 7

- 7:00 pm -- Registration and Dinner
- 8:00 pm -- Rail-trail presentations from local initiatives
- 9:30 pm -- Adjourn

Saturday, September 8

- 8:30 am -- Registration and Continental Breakfast
- 9:00 am -- Keynote address: Phil K. McKnelly,
N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
- 10:00 am -- Workshops:
 - Funding Sources
 - Technical Assistance
 - Building Community Coalitions
 - Rail-Trail Development Benefits
- 11:45 am -- Business Meeting
- 12:30 pm -- Lunch
- 1:30 pm -- Panel: Building Rail-Trails Together
- 3:00 pm -- Walk on Durham Rail Corridor

Fall Ride On Creeper Oct. 13

NCRT will be holding a fall color rail-trail outing Saturday, Oct. 13, on The Virginia Creeper Trail in southwestern Virginia, just across the North Carolina state line. The rail-trail is located in the Jefferson National Recreation Area between White Top and Abingdon. Bicyclists will meet at 10 am in Grayson Highlands State Park at Volney on Virginia 362, off U.S. 58.

A van shuttle will be available for those who want to bicycle the 15-mile downhill from White Top to Damascus. The trip is being organized by State Parks Trails Specialist Tom Potter, 919-778-6234.

Trail Sampling: New New River

Carolyn Townsend provides this impression of bicycling the New River Trail, Galax to Pulaski, in southern Virginia, which is still under development. From her account you can conclude that the way to sample this trail is on foot, horseback or fat-tired bicycle. — Ed.

The rail-trail surface is cinders interspersed with patches of large gravel. It is a bumpy uneven trail with horseshoe indentations...bump and pedal.

Birds are our companions - brown thrasher, bluejay, dove, sparrow - flying ahead from bush to tree under the green canopy...bump and pedal.

The trail offers a profusion of wild flowers - tall mullens, sweet peas, daisies, black-eyed susans, queen anne's lace...bump and pedal.

The New River winds its way under bridge and trestle as we pedal north from Galax...bump and pedal.

History is present - pastures of grass and rye, old homes, county crossroads and a 1931 stone bridge...bump and pedal.

New small business opportunities are emerging - a tack shop and country store near completion...bump and pedal.



SMR Corporation Joins NCRT

Strategic Management Resources of Chapel Hill has become the first NCRT Corporate Member. President George Smarts says his organization is "looking forward to being a part of the NCRT organization." He will be presenting a workshop on volunteer development at the NCRT annual meeting in September.

Whistle Stops:

Roadblocks Lead To Nowhere

An obstacle North Carolina rail-to-trail development confronts is the issue of responsibility: Who will assume the public liability of managing and operating public-use trails. This is an issue which also hinders other trail developments as well.

In this litigation-happy society, railroads want to rid themselves of responsibility for abandoned rights-of-way while governmental units want to avoid the responsibility. As part of the private sector, the railroads' concerns are understandable. Government concerns are less understandable.

Legislation can define and set limits on public trail liabilities to put them in line with other public-administered facilities. Even without such legislation, the actual liability exposure is very small when compared to miles of public streets, roads, highways, plus buildings, existing parks and, yes, sidewalks. In other states, even local governments have assumed responsibility for rail-trails with little or no extra cost under blanket liability coverage.

While potential liability cannot be completely dismissed, governmental bodies would better serve constituents by also looking on the other side of the ledger: Assets.

Preserved rights-of-way retain future options for commuter rail service and utility corridors. Those are assets invested in future.

More near-term rail-trail benefits are a safe, non-motorized, multi-use recreation facility; a wildlife cover and study area; a new tourism attraction and accompanying small business opportunities.

When you draw up a balance sheet, weighing liabilities against assets, there are few things that a community can get a better return on for the relatively low investment involved.

And, remember, for any one rail line, opportunity knocks but once. Try to make sure that knock is heard and heeded. The risks of not acting are higher than being fearful of what might be on the other side of an unopened door.

**RECYCLE THIS NEWSLETTER:
Pass it along to other bright people**

Project Briefs

The Deep River trail project received a boost when the Chatham County Commissioners approved a \$5,000 budget request to be applied toward acquisition of the abandoned right-of-way. The funding represents continued local support for preservation of the rail corridor between Gulf and Cumnock.

The Deep River Park Association had earlier learned that it was to receive a \$500 state Adopt-A-Trail grant to research titles on the 2-mile section in Gulf. Association member Virginia Cardenas and Elsie Camp of the Triangle Land Conservancy have initiated the title searches, and the funds will be used for additional assistance from an attorney.

* * *

The Lincolnton Corridor Coalition has made a bid to the Norfolk Southern for approximately five miles of abandoned right-of-way in Lincoln County. To date, the railroad's response is that it will have to appraise the property before responding to the offer.

The Lincoln County section is part of a 15-mile abandonment passing through Lincolnton, Maiden and terminating south of Newton in Catawba County. The NCDOT has expressed an interest in railbanking the northern portion to preserve the option of incorporating the line into a light rail link with the Charlotte metro area.

The Corridor Coalition has proposed a plan to use the southern portion as a greenway project which would link city parks, schools and downtown Lincolnton.

Rail-Trails Gain Endorsements

NCRT is gathering rail-trail endorsements as the message is being spread across the state. In recent actions:

The North Carolina Bicycle Federation passed a resolution in support of rail corridor preservation.

The Bicycle Committee of the NCDOT passed a resolution supporting rail-trails and calling for coordination between NCDOT and NCDEHNR in preservation of rail corridors for both transportation and recreation.

Howard Clement III, chairman of the Governor's Rail Passenger Task Force, called for railbanking of abandoned rail corridors at a Durham Rails-to-Trails Committee meeting.

NCRT has compiled a slide presentation and has presented rail-trail information to the North Carolina Railroad Research Commission, Durham Open Space Commission, Raleigh Bicycle Committee, Transportation Subcommittee of the Raleigh Environmental Quality Advisory Board, Neuse River Valley Model Railroad Club, Deep River Park Trail and Lincolnton-to-Maiden Corridor Coalition.

Arrangements for group presentations can be made through the NCRT Steering Committee.

Trails Association Makes \$1,500 Grant

North Carolina Trails Association recently recognized NCRT efforts with a \$1,500 grant to assist in publishing Little Toot, production of a rail-trail general information brochure, and conducting the NCRT annual meeting.

NORTH CAROLINA RAIL TRAILS ANNUAL MEETING REGISTRATION/MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone: Home _____ Work _____ Best Time _____

Reason for interest in rail-trails _____

Annual Meeting: __ Sept. 7 & 8 (\$40); __ Sept. 8 only (\$30); __ Vegetarian Meals Request

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"

Fund Raisers Raise Commission Option

Florida fund raising consultants met with the Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy to outline how development funds are being gathered for the 35-mile Pinellas Trail. The trail, Tarpon Springs to St. Petersburg, is being built on a former CSX line which was purchased by the Florida DOT in 1985. The project strings together eight parks along the route.

Charitable Planning Associates of Clearwater has raised over \$300,000 while drawing more than 2,000 members to the cause. The 12-ft. wide asphalt trail is expected to cost \$2 million. The first 14-mile section is to be open this fall. For more information on this commissioned fund raising approach, call 813-585-8560.

Geographic Lauds Trail Efforts

The June issue of National Geographic features the successes and latent possibilities of rail-trails throughout the country. The efforts and triumphs of local citizen groups are featured, as well as the opposition and apathy they have experienced.

This article is a solid documentation and can be used to introduce the public and government officials to the benefits of rail-trails. A photo in the 24-page article shows Chuck Flink of Greenways Inc., Raleigh, working on the proposed French Board riverfront greenway in Ashville.

NOTICE TO NON-MEMBERS: This is the last free issue we can send to you. Please join NCRT and keep in touch with rail-trail issues and developments through "Little Toot".

NORTH CAROLINA RAIL TRAILS INC. STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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