



Little Toot

Vol 3 No 2

Summer 1991

Annual Meeting Sept. 6 & 7

North Carolina Rail-Trails, Inc. will hold its annual meeting and conference Friday and Saturday, Sept. 6 and 7 in Chapel Hill.

The location is the Carolina Inn at the intersection of Columbia and Cameron.

The \$50 registration fee includes the Friday reception, Saturday breakfast and lunch, and NCRT individual membership. A registration form is in this newsletter.

For overnight accommodations at the Carolina Inn call 800-962-8519. Rates range from \$54 to \$74 single and \$64 to \$80 double. Some lower rates may be available upon request. When you call, state your affiliation with NCRT and group number 684-1.

Friday, September 6

- 6:30 pm -- Registration, light buffet, cash bar
- 8:00 pm -- Local project presentations
- 9:00 pm -- History of North Carolina Railroad Development "Where we've come from" - Tony Reeve

Saturday, September 7

- 8:00 am -- Breakfast and Welcome
- 8:45 am -- Key Note: "Trails as transportation" - North Carolina Rep. Paul Luebke
- 9:30 am -- Workshop: Legal language of rail-road preservation
- 10:15 am -- Break
- 10:30 am -- Workshops:
 - Getting started on corridor preservation
 - Rail-trail user group benefits
- 11:30 am -- Business Meetings:
 - North Carolina Rail-Trails, Inc.
 - Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
- 12:30 pm -- Lunch
 - "Interstate rail-trail connections"
- 1:30 pm -- Outing: Libba Cotton Trail

National Rail-Trail Box Score

Number of completed U.S. rail-trails: 415
Completed U.S. rail-trail mileage: 4,559
Number of rail-trail projects underway: 400 (est.)
Uncompleted rail-trail mileage: 5,000 (est.)

Leading states by number of trails:

Pennsylvania	42
Iowa	40
Michigan	39
Wisconsin	36
California	30
Washington	24

Leading states by rail-trail mileage:

Wisconsin	693
Michigan	622
Iowa	409
Minnesota	372
Washington	363

Railbanking agreements with railroads: 28
Total railbanking agreement mileage: 487
Average users per year per mile: 12,805
Total estimated users in 1990: 54 million

Compiled by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, June 1991.

Southern Rail-Trail Advocates Caucus

The first Southern Rail-Trail Caucus was held June 22 in Baltimore, following the national Rails-to-Trail Conservancy conference. The caucus discussed reasons for the lag in southern rail-trail building and decided to move toward a more formal association to express southern interests.

States represented were Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina and Texas. Taking part in the caucus were NCRT Vice-Chair Dan Arrasmith and NCDPR Rail-Trail Specialist Tom Potter.

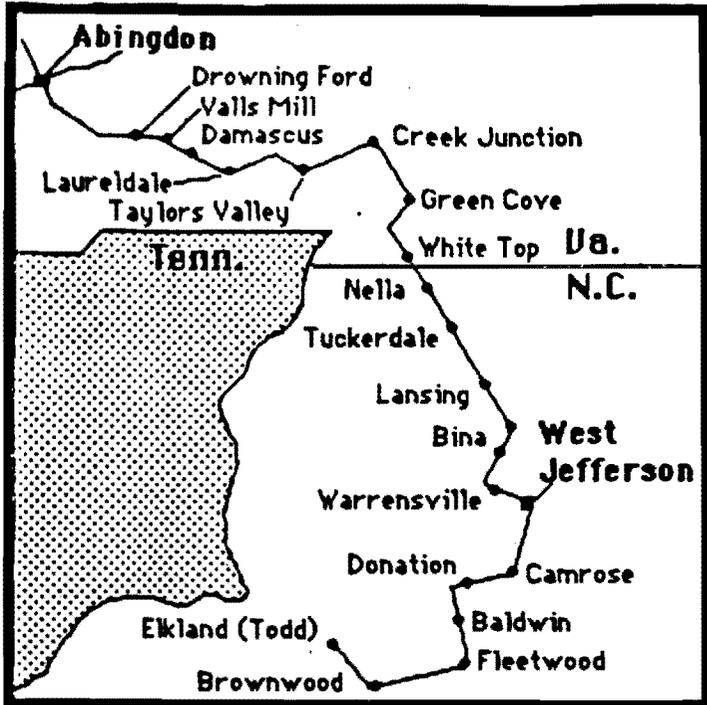
Since the initial meeting, a Southern Rail-Trail Conference has been scheduled Nov. 2 and 3 at Savannah, GA, which will lead into a joint conference with the Georgia Recreation and Parks Association and the National Park Service's Rivers and Trail Conservation Program. For more information call 704-495-4472.

"To Preserve Rail Corridors and Promote Rail - Trails"

Can Carolina Put The Virginia Creeper Back Together Again?

Ashe County trail advocates are again looking at the possibility of bringing the Virginia Creeper back to North Carolina by extending the popular trail from Southwest Virginia into West Jefferson, NC.

The last train made the 56-mile run from West Jefferson to Abingdon, VA, in March, 1977. The following year the U.S.



Forest Service began acquiring the pieces that would assure connections through the Jefferson National Forest and Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area.

The original intent, to extend the rail-trail to West Jefferson, was thwarted by North Carolina property reversion laws. At the other end of the line, Abingdon and Damascus acquired the 14 miles between the two towns to provide Virginians with a total of 32 miles of continuous trail. People who would like to help put the Creeper back together again can contact Al Wheeler in West Jefferson for more information.

NCRT Historian Tony Reevy has provided an historical sidebar on the colorful local railroad once shared by North Carolina and Virginia.

Creeper Color Outing

Put Saturday, Oct. 12, on your calendar so that you won't miss the spectacular color show put on by Mother Nature along the Virginia Creeper Trail. Join other NCRT members for the fall outing by gathering at the Damascus, VA, City Park at 10 am. For those wishing to stay over for a second day on the trail, camping is available at the nearby Grayson Highlands State Park.

The Virginia Creeper National Recreation Trail follows the route of one of the South's most beloved rail lines.

The line was organized as the Virginia-Carolina Railway in 1898, and was completed from Abingdon to Damascus, VA, by 1900. It was extended to a terminus at Konnarock, VA, several years later. The line's Abingdon connection, the Norfolk & Western Railway, purchased a majority of the Virginia-Carolina's stock in 1912 and gained full control by 1914.

Under new ownership, the Virginia-Carolina expanded even further, from a point known as Creek Junction, VA, through West Jefferson, NC, to a terminus at Elkland (now Todd), NC in 1914. In 1919 the Virginia-Carolina became an integral part of the N&W, which renamed it the Abingdon Branch. These were busy times for the line, which was running up to eight trains a day.

The line's decline began when the Great Depression coincided with the exhaustion of the area's timber. As a result, the West Jefferson-Elkland and the Creek Junction-Konnarock sections were abandoned in 1933. Amazingly, in spite of tremendous grades and many bridges, the rest of the line survived as a sleepy rural branch known as the Virginia Creeper.

The line was famous for its mixed passenger train, which attracted rail fans from all over the U.S. It was also well known for the box lunches provided by the Buchanan family, who ran the train station/Western Union office/post office/general store in Green Cove, VA. The building still survives along the trail.

Also popular in those days was the "Candy Man," Conductor Ralph White, who tossed candy to children who lived along the line.

Time finally caught up with the Virginia Creeper. The passenger train was discontinued in the early 1960s and the service was completely abandoned in 1977. Only the rail-trail and several surviving station buildings remain.

If you are interested in learning more about the Virginia Creeper, look for a copy of O. Winston Link's photo book, "Steel, Steam & Stars," which contains a history of the line along with Link's amazing photos of Green Cove, Creek Junction and other Abingdon Branch locations. -- Tony Reevy, NCRT Historian

LIABILITY SOLUTION

Although public liability is seldom an expensive burden to government rail-trail managers, it can be intimidating for private organizations. Now there is a solution at reasonable cost.

A rail-trail and trail riding advocate in the insurance business is writing liability policies. For more information contact Markel/Rhulen Underwriters, 217 Broadway, Monticello, NY, 12701. Telephone 800-431-1270 or 914-794-8000.



Whistle Stops: Forward To The Past

What if the present backbone of this country's transportation system, our interstate, primary and secondary highways, fell into disuse during the 21st Century? The oil shocks of the past two decades make the question not too hypothetical. But just suppose.

What would be the fate of those cross-country corridors? Today they are essential to the economic and social fabric of the country. Tomorrow, weed-choked eyesores falling into neglect. And certainly no plans for their future use because several generations will be scrambling to make a different transportation system work.

But if we go back a hundred years, to the 1890's, a similar situation existed. Our growing railroad system was our essential transportation backbone. There were no paved roads to speak of. The practical automobile was but the gleam in inventors' eyes.

Railroads were every community's main street. When railroads wanted to extend lines to more cities, towns and hamlets they were given eminent domain, the right to push across private property at will for the "public good." And often uncontested because those rail corridors meant future growth and prosperity for communities.

An extended train trip with an open eye makes it obvious, even today, how our communities grew up and then, in many cases, faded with the railroads. The front doors became the neglected back doors as our transportation system drastically changed.

But those back door corridors still offer a lot of opportunities to our communities. With a bit of applied imagination our neglected rail corridors can enhance our quality of life. They can again be part of your commuting system. As improved community greenways they can increase adjacent property values. Rail-trails attract tourists and new small businesses. The Winston-Salem Strollway demonstrates how these corridors can be avenues for community redevelopment.

If not the again the front door, they can be attractive and functional side doors at which we would be proud to meet the neighbors and welcome the world. -- DA

Triangle Gathers Additional Support For Durham-Bonsal

Follow-on meetings for the Durham-to-Bonsal rail-trail have moved to formulate master plan specifications and to identify additional funding sources for the study. The goal is to quickly complete the grant process, appoint a consultant, finish the title search and to have a master plan in hand by early spring.

Planning participants included the Durham Urban Trails & Greenways Commission, Durham County Commissioners, Division of State Parks and Recreation, U.S. Corps of Engineers, Town of Cary, Duke Power, Carolina Power & Light, Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and NCRT.

In related activity, TRTC Pres. John Goebel and Director Leslie Kennedy made a presentation to the Wake County Parks and Recreation Commission, seeking the commission's support for the master plan. TRTC was advised to apply to the commission for a matching grant, which has since been complete and submitted by TRTC Vice Pres. Robert Payne.

The TRTC representatives also asked the commission to back protection of the corridor-connecting bridge at the U.S. Highway 64 widening project.

On July 26, Gobel and Payne made a presentation to the Triangle J Council of Governments joint meeting of the Triangle Land Use Advisory and the Regional Transportation committees. Nearly 60 local government representatives gave the rail-trail project a favorable reception. The presentation was supported by remarks from Darrell McBane, State Trails Coordinator for NC Division of Parks and Recreation, and Mark Sullivan, NCDOT Rail Planner.

TRTC members also have made presentations to the state Sierra Club and Bicycle Association. Hikes and bike rides have been organized on portions of the Durham-Bonsal corridor.



NORTH CAROLINA RAIL TRAILS ANNUAL MEETING/MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone: Home _____ Work _____ Best Time _____

ANNUAL MEETING REGISTRATION FEE INCLUDES INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

Annual Meeting: ___ Sept. 6 & 7 (\$50); Sept. 7 only ___ (\$40); 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"

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 M-L-XL.

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

Suite 124 703 Ninth St.
Durham, NC 27705

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Director	Vonn Stone, MM	704-624-9248

NOTEWORTHY RESOURCE PEOPLE

NCDOT Rail Planner	Mark Sullivan	919-733-2806
NC Govt. Trail Spec.	Tom Potter	919-778-9488
Rails-to-Trails Cons.	Mariane Fowler	202-797-5400
National Park Service	Beth Dillion	202-343-3766

PROJECT CONTACTS

Ashe County	Al Wheeler	919-877-5225
Caswell County	Forrest Altman	919-324-8556
Chatham County	Margaret Jordan-Ellis	919-898-4814
Cleveland County	Fred Blackley	704-484-1731
Durham County	John Goebel	919-489-7063
Gulfford County	Terry Bellamy	919-373-2332
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Transylvania County	Artie Wilson	704-883-2450
Wake County	Leslie Kennedy	919-362-4011

Project Reports

SPEAKING OF PROJECTS!

An ambitious project was put before floor at this summer's Rails-to-Trails Conservancy national conference in Baltimore: A sea-to-sea, continent-spanning rail-trail.

With large maps taped together around the conference room, a route was proposed that started at Boston and ended in Seattle. The proposed route spanned Pennsylvania, then took advantage of the Upper Midwest's rail-trail wealth before running nearly dry at the high western plains and Rocky Mountains.

The proposed national trail dipped down at the Western Illinois border to take advantage of the 200-mile Katy trail under development west of St. Louis. Which, of course, sent Iowans to the map to tape on options that would keep that trail-rich state from being bypassed at the Mississippi and Missouri rivers.

Even with many existing large gaps, the nation-spanning goal is a sign of optimism growing in the rail-trail ranks. Now, ya'll, how 'bout a Sunbelt Trail?

DAN RIVER DOINGS

The Dan River Trail Association's eighth public event of the year is scheduled on Labor Day, Sept. 2., with trail riding, bicycling and hiking events. For more information, call 919-234-8556.

A canoe and walking trip is scheduled Sept. 7, a Purely-Park Springs trail ride on Sept. 21, a canoe float on the Dan River Oct. 19 and a history hike on Nov. 17.

The association is using the events to acquaint the public with the recreational opportunities on the Dan River and the parallel Norfolk, Franklin & Danville corridor.

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