

## Tourism Grants Back Two Trail Proposals

Two new rural rail-trail projects that NCRT helped initiate have been approved for state Travel and Tourism Development Grants. The two projects are a 32-mile corridor in Warren and Halifax counties, and a 12.5-mile trail in Anson County.

The grant program is geared toward stimulating tourism development in rural North Carolina, with the most economically disadvantaged counties eligible for a 4-1 state to local funding match.

The proposed Roanoke Valley Trail in Warren and Halifax counties parallels Highway 158 between Norlina and Roanoke Rapids on a section of the historic Raleigh and Gaston Railroad. The present corridor owner, CSX Transportation, discontinued rail service in 1987 and has removed the tracks. The line passes through the Warren County towns of Macon and Vaughan, and Littleton on the line between the two counties.

The Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce is the lead agency for the project. NCRT will serve as coordinator for conducting a project feasibility study, which will also utilize the services of the NCSU School of Design.

The yet-to-be-named Anson County trail project extends from Wadesboro south to Morven and McFarlan on the South Carolina state line. The former CSX corridor extends another 15 miles to Cheraw, SC. The tracks were removed when service ended in 1980.

The Anson Economic Development Corporation is the lead agency, with support from Anson County Government, Anson County Chamber of Commerce,



### Ready To Develop

The classic wooden depot at Morven is the subject of great interest to the Anson County Task Force, which has launched a rail-trail feasibility study.

Wadesboro Rotary Club and Yadkin/Pee Dee Lakes Project. NCRT will provide technical assistance to the project.

Anson County is one of the six counties participating in the Yadkin/Pee Dee project, a regional economic program with strong emphasis on eco-tourism development. Tourism attractions and facilities will be marketed under the Uwharrie Lakes Region identity.

Housing, dining and conference sessions will all be at the Brown Summit Episcopal Conference Center northeast of Greensboro. A conference registration form is inside this newsletter. For additional information, contact Al Capchart, 919-493-6394. ---

## Corridor Conclave Looking To Future

What do transportation options, resources conservation, public recreation, historic preservation, infrastructure enhancement, urban planning, rural tourism and environmental protection all have in common?

You're right: Rail Corridors.

The future of the state's rail corridors will be the focus of a statewide conference, March 19-21, at Brown Summit near Greensboro. This examination of state rail corridor issues is open to all who have a stake in the fate of this neglected and often forgotten resource.

The official title is A Future Search Conference on Rail Corridor Use in North Carolina. The sponsors are DEHNR Parks and Recreation, National Park Service, NC Center for Rural Economic Development, North Carolina Rail-Trails, and Strategic Development, Inc.

The format is an open examination of past, present and future rail corridor uses and potentials. There are no scheduled speakers; the emphasis will be on participation.

North Carolina once had 5,200 miles of railroad corridors that connected virtually every hamlet, town and city. Nearly 2,500 miles of the system have fallen into disuse during the last 50 years.

Efforts to preserve and protect the public's interest in these corridors has been a hodgepodge of local, state, federal and private efforts, all greatly complicated by conflicts between railroad laws, property laws and unarticulated public interest.

The conference purpose is to identify common interests and to arrive at a future vision for state rail corridors.

## Trailbuilder Notebook

What, many new advocates ask themselves, is the first thing to do about turning that corridor into a rail-trail after it has been "abandoned" by the railroad?

The answer is: Find out who owns the corridor property.

But, the advocate may ask, isn't it abandoned?

The answer is: No!

The railroad has obtained permission from the Interstate Commerce Commission to *abandon railroad service*, but the *property* is never abandoned; it always belongs to someone. The term "abandoned" creates public confusion.

Okay, the new advocate will say, then who does own the corridor property?

The answer: It depends.

Huh?

Property ownership depends upon how the corridor was established and what happened to it from the time the railroad was built and up to the present. It is not a simple matter.

Let's look at the ways rail corridors were established in North Carolina.

Many of the state's early railroads, before 1886, were established by a *state charter grant*. A charter granted the railroad the right to establish a right-of-way from one point to another, almost at will, even across private lands. But that is exactly what it was, a *right-of-way*, which the law now treats as an easement dedicated exclusively to railroad operations. All property rights revert to the adjoining properties when rail service ceases.

After 1885, railroads had to negotiate or condemn dedicated right-of-way easements, or to purchase the land in *fee simple*.

So, what about land that the railroads purchased?

The answer: It depends.

Not again!

Well, sometimes railroads bought land in fee simple, but the deed had a determinable clause that said that the land would be returned if the corridor was ever used for anything other than railroad purposes. So - you guessed it - it reverts.

But, the advocate asks, didn't the railroads ever own any property for keeps?

The answer: Yes.

Railroads, like anyone else, could buy land in *fee simple absolute*. Unfortunately, railroads purchased very little corridor property in fee simple absolute.

A future issue will explain how many railroad corridors became a mix of rights-of-way and titled fee simple land.

*Remember, trails  
are transportation!*



## NCRT Takes Corridor Issues To Travel and Tourism Summit

NCRT made the case for non-motorized utilization of past and present transportation corridors to bolster the state's second largest industry at the Governor's Summit on Travel and Tourism, held Feb. 6 and 7 in Raleigh.

**1: North Carolina has 2,500 miles of unused railroad corridors that could become a network for off-road recreational touring if the state would forge a policy for preserving and utilizing this asset, NCRT's Al Capehart told the conference.**

So far, only nine miles of these rail corridors have been turned into non-motorized paths in three urban areas. And, because the state does not have a coherent policy, even the 70 miles of corridors that the NCDOT has railbanked cannot be put to interim use because of conflicting state laws and restrictive interpretations. The state is passing up millions of dollars by not opening these corridors to the tourism, Capehart concluded.

**2: Speaking to NCRT's state bicycling interests, Dan Arrasmith called for priority improvements to the nearly 3,000 miles of designated State Bicycle Highways. North Carolina's favorable climate and geographic diversity should make the state ideal for a bustling, year-round bicycle touring industry, he reasoned.**

However, putting up signs does not make narrow roads and highways safe for bicycle touring, he said. Tourists, especially from other states and countries where they are accustomed to safer bicycling conditions, will not risk life, limb or family to North Carolina's touring routes. Upgrading State Bicycle Highways and other state-designated bicycle routes with wide, protected shoulders would be a sound tourism investment for North Carolina, Arrasmith contended.

Strategies for the state's long-range tourism development will be drawn from summit inputs and presented to the governor, secretary of commerce and economic development board. They will also be used as position papers for the White House Conference on Travel and Tourism in October.

## Environmental Federation Meets April 6

The Environmental Federation of North Carolina, of which NCRT is a charter member, will hold its third annual meeting from 1:15 to 6:30 p.m. Thursday, April 6, at Glen Eden Pilot Park in Raleigh. The meeting is open all who are interested in the state's environmental issues.

EFNC now represents 22 member organizations that cooperatively participate in state and local funding drives, including all 10 Combined Federal Campaigns for government employees.

## Whistle Stops:

### Old Alarm Has Familiar Ring

File this under "what goes around stays around." More than a century and a half ago, Martin Van Buren, then New York governor, wrote to Pres. Andrew Jackson.

Gov. Van Buren was alarmed that canals were being threatened by a new form of transportation, known as railroads. The spread of railroads, he reasoned, would make canal boat builders, captains, cooks, drivers, hostlers, repairmen, lock tenders, hay farmers, whip braiders and harness makers all destitute.

The governor's solution was to call for formation of an interstate commerce commission which, by the way, quickly climbed into bed with the railroads. In closing, he wrote:

"As you may well know, Mr. President, 'railroad' carriages are pulled at the enormous speed of 15 miles per hour by 'engines' which, in addition to endangering life and limb of passengers, roar and snort their way through the countryside, setting fire to crops, scaring the livestock and frightening women and children."

Rail-trail advocates frequently hear very similar nonsense voiced against recycling railroads for new forms of transportation and recreation. Such alarms remain the desperate resource of vested interests.



NCRT's Santa found out during the December board meeting at Littleton that what this little girl wanted for Christmas was paving to be extended on the Sabina Gould Walkway, seen in the background. Thanks to a state Adopt-a-Trail Grant, Santa will be able to fulfill that wish. The Walkway could become part of a 32-mile Roanoke Valley Trail, which is the subject of a Travel and Tourism Development Grant feasibility study.

### Durham Concerned About Trail Delay

The Durham Open Space and Trail Commission recently moved to express its concern to Gov. Jim Hunt over a two-year delay in acquisition and development of the American Tobacco Trail, which has been stalled in NCDOT by Federal Highway Administration regulations.

NCDOT and the Durham Metropolitan Planning Organization have three years of federal Transportation Enhancements funding committed to the rail-trail project. The northern end of the trail will provide a bicycle commuting option between Durham and Research Triangle Park.

### State Programs Boost Trail Projects

The NC Adopt-a-Trail Program has again recognized NCRT through continued support for this newsletter, co-sponsorship of the up-coming Statewide Conference on Rail Corridors, and development funding for two rail-trail initiatives

The grants program, which is administered by the Parks and Recreation Division Trails Program, has been essential to initiating several rail-trail projects throughout the state. This year's development grants are \$3,000 applied to signs and bridge improvements on the Virginia Creeper National Trail extension into Ashe County, and \$1,500 for signs and paving extension of the Sabina Gould Walkway at Littleton.

### Registration: Future Search Conference on Rail Corridor Use in North Carolina

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Agency/Org./Co. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Badge First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Special Diet \_\_\_\_\_

Visa or Mastercard \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_

Conference Registration: \$220 per person double occupancy, \$250 single, \$160 commuters

Make checks payable to: North Carolina Rail-Trails Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to North Carolina Rail Trails, Drawer 124, 703 9th St., Durham, NC 27705  
For more information: Al Capehart @ 919-493-6394 Voice & Fax

## Dan River Takes New Course

The Dan River Trail Association has taken a different track, a track that could lead to yet another rail-trail along the southern tier of Virginia counties.

The six-year-old group first organized in North Carolina with the intent of making trail on the Norfolk, Franklin and Danville Railroad segment in Caswell and Person counties. Like the rail line, which crosses back and forth into Virginia, interest was evident on both sides of the state line. That led to formation of a sister chapter in Virginia, which grew into a non-profit organization.

After years of wrestling the complexities of a multi-county, interstate project, the Dan River advocates last year turned their full attention to the Richmond and Danville line, east of Danville to South Boston, VA, and beyond. The tracks have been removed as far northeast as Keysville in Charlotte County.

The association is preparing to enter negotiations with Norfolk Southern and has submitted a \$600,000 ISTEA Transportation Enhancement request to the State of Virginia for Phase One development.

Phase One of the proposed project is five miles from the historic Ringgold Depot, located four miles east of Danville, to the Halifax County line. Phase Two of the proposed project is from the Halifax County line to South Boston, with potential for trail connections to Staunton River State Park on the eastern edge of the county.

For more information, contact DRTA Chair Dorothy Ciekowski, 804-793-2062, or Sec. Norma Howard, 804-822-5725.

Don't just sit there!



NATIONAL TRAILS DAY IS COMING JUNE 3, 1995

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### PROJECT CONTACTS

Ashe County	Priscilla Brown	910-384-3506
Caswell County	Forrest Altman	910-234-8556
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Wake County	Leslie Kennedy	919-362-4011

### RESOURCE CONTACTS

NCDOT Rail Planner	Paul Worley	919-733-4713
NC Govt. Trail Spec.	Tom Potter	919-778-9488
Rails-to-Trails Cons.	Marianne Fowler	202-797-5400
National Park Service	Tom Iuriono	202-343-3709

### NEXT MEETING MARCH 11

The NCRT quarterly meeting will be held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, March 11 at the Anson County Library on South Green Street in Wadesboro. NCRT board meetings are open to the public.



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