



“Protecting rail corridors for trails and rail-with-trail use”  
www.ncrailtrails.org

## **A FACT SHEET ON RAIL-TRAILS IN NORTH CAROLINA**

What’s a rail-trail?

A rail-trail is the public transportation use (a bikeway, walking trail or greenway) of a preserved railroad right of way no longer required by the private railroad industry. Railroads established rights of way by various means including the powers granted them by the North Carolina General Assembly for the purposes of transportation, commerce, communication, all of which reflect the state’s priority public interest in unused rail corridors.

A rail-trail is a preserved part of the transportation infrastructure built by our great grandparents being used today as a man made natural resource in greenbelts, utility lanes, bicycle and pedestrian commuter routes, recreation and horseback trails, tourism development, historic preservation, nature study, business and public health opportunities, and an aid in planned land use development offering a future public transit option. Rail-Trails provide for green and open space in urban areas and have proven to enhance the ambience of their neighborhoods. Shared use of the corridor is Rail With Trail.

Who is North Carolina Rail-Trails, Inc.?

North Carolina Rail-Trails (NCRT) is a statewide non-profit land trust, “Protecting rail corridors for trails and rail with trail use.” NCRT began as a Steering Committee in 1988 and was incorporated in 1990. NCRT is a member of Earth Share of North Carolina, the North Carolina Center for Non-Profits, the Conservation Council of North Carolina, the Land Trust Council, and the Land Trust Alliance. NCRT became a railbanking land trust in 1995. In 1999 the Dunn-Erwin Railway was railbanked with NCRT under federal regulations. The converted railway opened to the public in June 2002 as the Dunn-Erwin Trail. NCRT monitors the state’s rail system, pursues rail corridor preservation and retrieval while encouraging protection of the corridor’s public purpose. NCRT fosters local leadership and acts to support corridor preservation and rail-trail initiatives throughout the state. NCRT shares knowledge about rail corridor statutes, acquisitions methods, development resources and coordinates between local, state and federal agencies. Current projects include the Deep River Rail-Trail, Washington-Greenville Greenway, and West Pender Rail-Trail Alliance.

What About Rail-Trails in North Carolina?

All rail-trails in North Carolina are the result of local vision and initiative. Unlike other states, NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) does not have a rails to trails program. NC DOT Rail Division has a state railbanking program with about 100 miles in the bank, but current interpretation of the state law does not allow public use of those corridors. Therefore, rail-trails in North Carolina are short and without statewide standards. Some have been neglected, some are growing and others are emerging. Nearly 100 miles of rail-trails are open to the public in North Carolina. Another 40 miles are under development. See location map on NCRT’s Web site <http://www.ncrailtrails.org>