



Wilderness Gateway State Trail

Catawba County Legislative Breakfast

Moretz Mills

January 27, 2023



North Carolina Division of Parks and
Recreation



State Trails in North Carolina

State trails are linear corridors on land or water, protected from vehicular traffic, providing public access for non-motorized recreation or transportation. All State Trails must be authorized by the General Assembly and are units of the State Parks system.

Dan River State Trail

Deep River State Trail

East Coast Greenway State Trail

Fonta Flora State Trail

French Broad River State Trail

Hickory Nut Gorge State Trail

Mountains to Sea State Trail

Northern Peaks State Trail

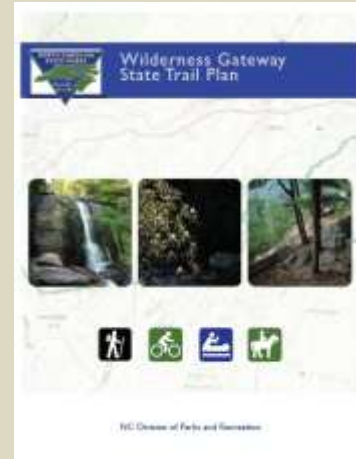
Overmountain Victory State Trail

Roanoke River State Trail

Wilderness Gateway State Trail

Yadkin River State Trail

- ✚ Authorization: General Assembly
- ✚ Planning: State Parks
- ✚ Construction: Segment Sponsor
- ✚ Designation: State Parks
- ✚ Signage: Segment Sponsor
- ✚ Management: Segment Sponsor



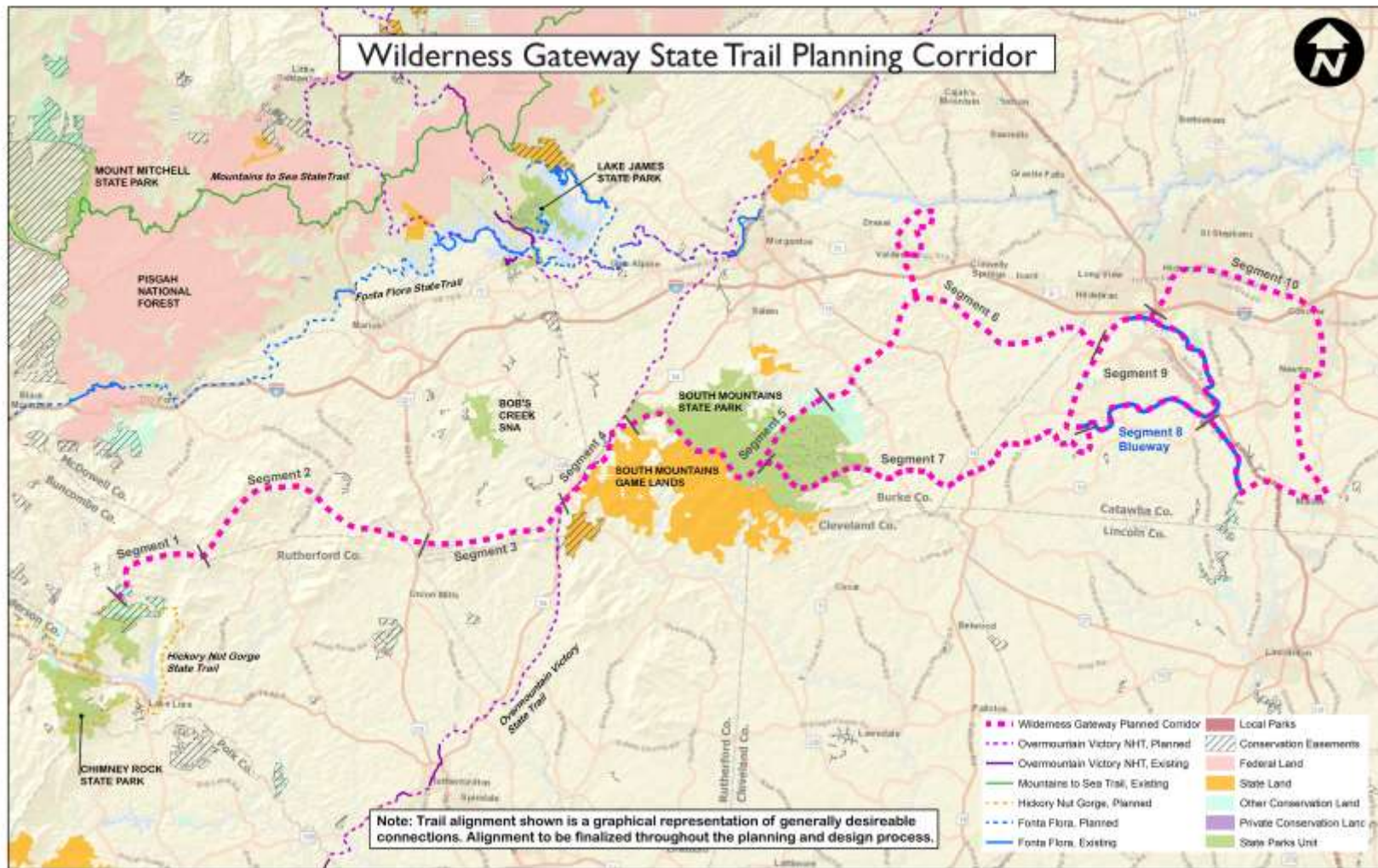


Partners

- Work with State Parks to develop state trail priorities
- Manage funds from the Complete the Trails Fund
- Leverage funds from budget with other grant opportunities to amplify impact
- Recruit and organize volunteers
- Coordinate all efforts with Segment Sponsor
- Signed MOU with State Parks that defines roles
- Coordination by State Trail Planner



Wilderness Gateway State Trail Planning Corridor



Note: Trail alignment shown is a graphical representation of generally desirable connections. Alignment to be finalized throughout the planning and design process.



Benefits of Regional Trails

- Increased property values
- Promote healthy living
- Protect water quality
- Provide recreational opportunities
- Provide wildlife corridors and habitats
- Encourage economic development
- Contribute to a community's identity
- Provide alternative transportation opportunities
- Boost ecotourism





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OF NORTH CAROLINA

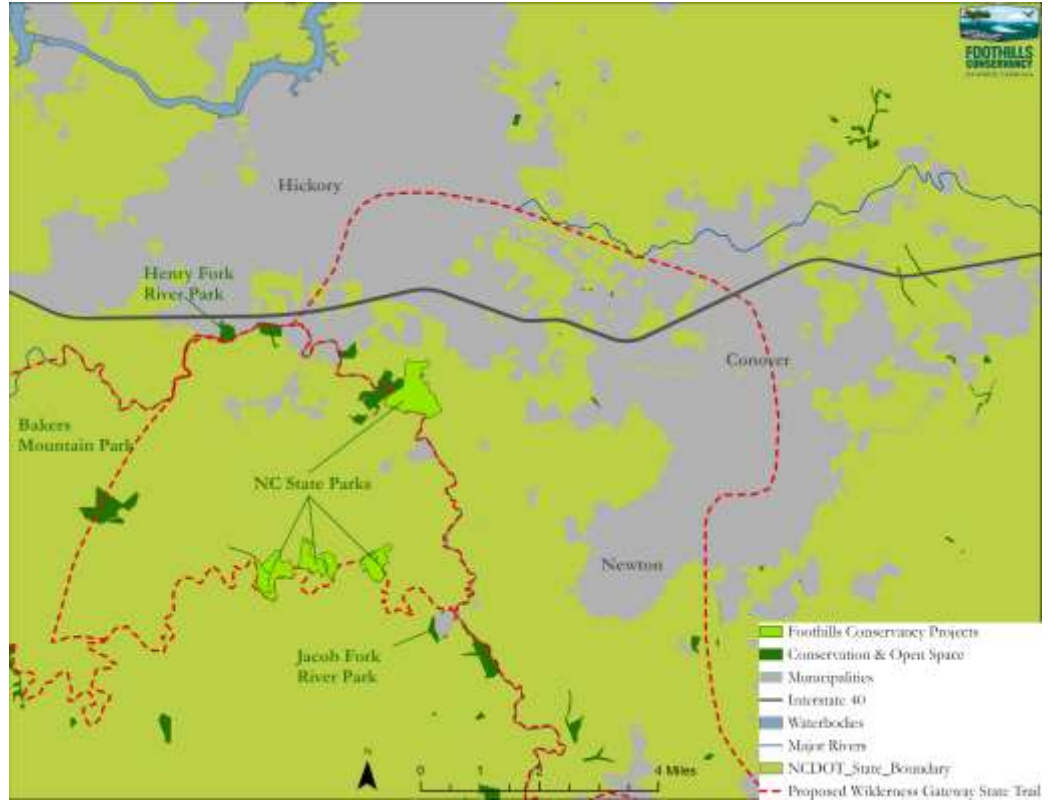
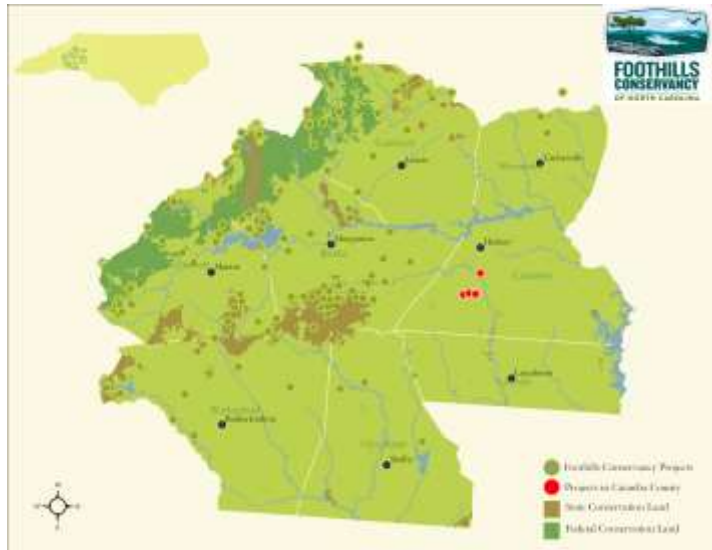
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**Designated Lead
Partner and Trail
Sponsor**



Wilderness Gateway State Trail Acquisitions



Why are trails important for communities?

Trails and greenways provide numerous benefits to communities, not only recreational and environmental benefits, but also significant economic development, health, and transportation benefits.

Trails also help create positive community pride and identity, with financial returns that far exceed public investments.

Overall, outdoor recreation is a \$28 billion industry in North Carolina.



What are the known economic benefits of trails?

With a high rate of return, investments in trails contribute significantly to local economies and tourism, particularly in rural areas, by creating desirable places for people to visit, live and work. Trails also create more attractive, safer communities, increase property values and tax revenues, enhance marketability, and increase home sales or leases faster than conventional development.

Every \$1.00 of trail construction returns \$1.72 annually from local businesses. The U.S. Department of Transportation estimates that for every \$98,000 in transportation related construction spending, there is one short-term job created (short-term defined as lasting for one year).



2023 Year of the Trail

On August 18, 2021, the NC Legislature declared **2023 North Carolina Year of the Trail**, highlighting an opportunity to showcase, promote, and celebrate our state's extensive trail systems. NC Year of the Trail is the largest statewide celebration of trails and outdoor recreation in North Carolina history.

Key goals of the Year of the Trail:

- Inspire people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to try trails
- Demonstrate the importance of trails to elected officials
- Boost outdoor recreation tourism across the state through events in all 100 counties
- Promote safe and responsible use of trails, with the Outdoor NC Principles
- Advance diversity and inclusion on trails
- Acknowledge the role of volunteers in building and maintaining trails



Wilderness Gateway State Trail in Hickory

Why?

PROJECT CONTEXT

This section of the Wilderness Gateway State Trail connects the more urban areas of Hickory along Henry Fork to the more rural town of Newton. It connects to important properties owned by the Town of Hickory and Foothills Conservancy that will eventually become publicly accessible for trails and river access, becoming key destination along the trail.

KEY DESTINATIONS

- Henry Fork River Park
- Bear Disc Golf Club
- Future Nature Park (owned by Foothills Conservancy)
- Jacob Fork Park

SUPPORT IN PREVIOUS PLANS

NC State Parks developed the Wilderness Gateway State Trail Plan. This plan designated this section as part of the Cambarus Loop that connects Hickory and Newton to Bakers Mountain park to the west.

PUBLIC INPUT

The Wilderness Gateway State Trail Plan indicated there is public support for this section.



CATAWBA COUNTY

How?

JURISDICTION(S)

City of Hickory, Catawba County, Town of Newton

OTHER POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Foothills Conservancy
- City of Hickory
- Town of Newton
- Carolina Thread Trail/Catawba Conservancy
- Adjacent property owners

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Clean Water Management Trust Fund, NC Water Resources, Recreational Trails Program, Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, NCDOT bicycle and pedestrian funding.

PLANNING-LEVEL COST ESTIMATES

The project cost is estimated to be around \$4.7 million total. Some of the costs include a natural surface trail south of the Foothills-owned property to Jacob Fork Park, a 10-12 foot paved trail north from the Foothills property to S Center Street, and a 10-12 foot crushed stone greenway from there to Henry Fork River Park. For a detailed breakout of planning level costs, see Appendix A.

ROW NEEDS

The majority of corridor ROW needs to be secured.

DESIGN OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The trail could be a 3-4 foot natural surface trail in the majority of the rural area, with some crushed stone and paved areas. See cost estimate section above for more details.



Thank you!

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