

Ninth Annual FMST Conference Of Task Force Leaders

**Presented Saturday, February 3, 2007
Bur-Mil Park
Greensboro, North Carolina**

2006 FMST President's Report

January 1, 2007

In accordance with the Friends of the Mountains to Sea Trail (FMST) By-Laws under Article IV, Section 5, an annual report shall be made on the status of the FMST as it works on the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST).

The year of 2006 was another successful year for the FMST as we continued to support the MST with existing task forces and the formation of new ones. The year of 2006 brought another thru-hike across the state on the MST by Bryan Huntsinger of Shelby, NC. Others continued to section hike the MST across the state. As each day goes by, the FMST grows stronger in membership and its dedication to the MST. There were more financial contributions made by corporations in 2006 than ever before.

Calendar Year of 2006: The FMST hosted five (5) statewide trail days on March 4, April 1, June 3 – National Trails Day, September 30 – National Public Lands Day, and November 4 to construct, maintain, or research the MST. The FMST hosted the Annual Conference of Task Force Leaders on February 4, 2006 to continue our organized support of the MST. The FMST Board of Directors held three (3) meetings to address the administrative needs of the MST. Each task force continued to host additional workdays for citizens wanting to assist the MST. Almost every weekend in 2006, work was taking place on the MST somewhere in the state.

2006 Trail Projects with Government Agencies (west to east):

The Carolina Mountain Club (CMC) continued its diligent work from Balsam Gap (south) to Soco Gap, working under the guidelines of the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP).

On May 6, 2006 the FMST and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) celebrated with a trail dedication ceremony for the bridge over the North Fork of the Catawba river. Total price for the bridge was more than \$250,000.00, and the structure is the longest foot bridge (200 feet) along the MST. This day also marked another trail designation of the MST from the North Fork of the Catawba river bridge to the Pinnacles at the entrance to Linville Gorge Wilderness. Minor tread work along some switchbacks will resume in spring 2007 to the top of Bald Knob.

Through a grant from the FMST the Blue Ridge Parkway staff was able to complete MST sign blazing from Beacon Heights to US-321 near Blowing Rock in winter 2006.

The South Ashe Task Force continued to flag the MST from NC-16 heading south along the BRP. In October 2006 the BRP continued archeological studies from the Northwest Trading Post past NC-16 to BRP milepost 265.2 at Calloway Gap.

The North Ashe Task Force continued trail construction from NC-18 to the Northwest Trading Post in March 2006. From September 9 to September 16, 2006, the FMST hosted its first American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacation along this section. Volunteers from all across the United States came to participate in this week-long trail building event. This was also the first Volunteer Vacation held in NC since this program started in 1976.

In July 2006 the Division of Parks and Recreation with other government agencies released the MST trail options from Greensboro to Hillsborough, North Carolina. The full color tri-fold brochure shows potential routes on a map of the existing counties. This was the end result of several workshops that took place on this topic with local government agencies and volunteers.

Eno River State Park has officially designated a section of the MST from Pump Station to Guess Road (3 miles). The designation papers were approved by the North Carolina Trails Committee and Secretary Bill Ross of the Department of Natural Resources (DENR).

In August 2006 the FMST was contacted by the City of Durham to assist in trail construction of the Eno River Greenway from West Point on the Eno towards Penny's Bend Nature Preserve (total of 3 miles). The first mile was completed in mid December 2006 by FMST volunteers.

In August 2006 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed to extend the MST from NC-50 to Penny's Bend Nature Preserve (approximately 30 miles). This document outlines how each agency will work on this extension of the Falls Lake Trail. Extensive flagging was done along this route in 2006 and the first six miles from NC-50 to Boyce Mill Road was approved for trail construction in early 2007.

On June 3, 2006, the FMST received notification that the Falls Lake sections of the MST are now recognized as a National Recreation Trail. This designation puts the MST one step closer to applying for National Scenic Trail status.

From February 2006 to October 2006 the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation created a trail master plan for Johnston County from the Wake County line to the I-95 corridor. This document is under review by the local governments that encompass that area. The FMST supports using the Little River Corridor from the I-95 corridor to Goldsboro as a potential MST trail route.

The FMST assisted the Carteret County Wildlife Club and the USFS in the Croatan Forest by hosting workdays on the Neusiok Trail/MST in November. Approximately 1,000 yards of boardwalk were installed along with regular trail maintenance on this 21 mile section.

During November 2006 white MST blazes were installed from the Frisco Campground to the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse through the Buxton Woods to help assist MST hikers in this area.

Hours Worked in 2006: As in the past, volunteers have shown an impressive record of work on the MST during the year of 2006. Some of the examples are:

Carolina Mountain Club: **4,199.0 hours**

Sauratown Trails Association: **2,524.0 hours**

North Ashe and Alleghany Task Forces: **1,862.0 hours**

Central Blue Ridge Task Force: **761.0 hours**

West Point on the Eno Task Force: **397.5 hours**

Falls Lake Task Forces: **1,034.0 hours**

Greensboro Task Forces: **171.0 hours**

Croatan Task Force: **528.0 hours**

Others: **168.0 hours**

Grand Total: **11,644.5 hours** of documented work on the MST

In the report to the National Recreation Trails Funding Program managed by the North Carolina Division of Park and Recreation, the FMST gave **11,644.5** total recorded hours of service from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2006 which represents **\$ 128,089.50** wage value.

Corporate Support in 2006:

On November 25, 2006, Allen de Hart, FMST Project Director, was the recipient of REI Stewardship for the Environment Award. He was one of eight people in the United States to receive this prestigious award. REI gave Allen a \$500.00 dollar gift card and the FMST received a check for \$20,000 to further the vision of the MST. This is the largest corporate donation received since the FMST was created.

Great Outdoor Provision Company supported the FMST in 2006 by assisting us in a dollar-for-dollar fund raising campaign for the Volunteer Vacation along the Blue Ridge Parkway. Great Outdoor Provision Company also sells FMST Coolmax T-shirts and returns the profit to the FMST.

News/Press:

Both Allen de Hart and Bob Benner were recipients of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine from the State of North Carolina. This honor is for 30 or more years of service to the state, and the highest civilian honor that a citizen can be awarded by the Governor of North Carolina.

In late February 2006 Bob Getchell of Goldsboro, NC attended "Hike the Hill" in Washington, DC an annual event hosted by American Hiking Society. This week-long advocacy week allowed us to share the MST needs with North Carolina Senators and Representatives. After Bob's return, the FMST launched another letter writing campaign to show North Carolina Senators and Representatives the strong support that North Carolinians have for the MST.

The MST received considerable press in several land trust association newsletters. The Eno River Association has been purchasing land along the Eno River in Durham and Orange Counties, and the association often reported that the land will be used in the future corridor of the MST. With the recent trail construction in Durham the local media has successfully brought in new volunteer support.

The MST has received considerable press in the American Hiking Society Magazine and Backpacker Magazine. Backpacker's publication has introduced a calendar of events page which has allow the FMST to post some work trips on the MST.

The FMST continued its support as an Alliance Member of American Hiking Society's Southeastern Trails Coalition by attending the May 2006 Leadership Summit Meeting in Florida. We are also assisting in the planning for the 2007 American Hiking Society – Southeast Trail's Festival Conference in Black Mountain, North Carolina at the Montreat Conference Center.

The FMST now is a member of the Land Trust Alliance on a national level. We know that in order to complete the MST we must engage in the Land Trust community.

The FMST web site (www.ncmst.org) has proven to be an effective way to inform the general public about the MST, and the physical web site doubled its size in 2006. An average of 2,500 people visit the MST web site on a daily basis. Several hikers have listed their MST adventures on the Trails Journals web site (www.trailjournals.com), which has also raised public awareness of the MST. An example is the journal that Johnny Massey kept on his recent thru-hiker on the MST. His journal was full of MST trail conditions and photos of his adventure across North Carolina. The FMST e-mail distribution list of approximately 950 people is a quick and cost-effective communication tool.

Support by Local City and Town Governments

Due to the excitement of the MST East Plan, the Towns of Selma, Goldsboro, and Pine Level passed resolutions in support of the MST through their towns along the Little River corridor. See enclosed letters of support.

The City of Durham passed a resolution in support of the MST on March 15, 2006. This assisted the MST trail construction with the City of Durham in fall 2006 from West Point on the Eno to River Forest Park. See enclosed letter.

Support by the N.C. Department of Parks and Recreation and other Government Agencies: An application for the MST to be a National Recreation Trail was submitted to officials in Washington, DC for the Falls Lake sections. The application was very time consuming and required several letters of support from the various land agencies. Plans are to apply for the USFS sections of the MST to be designated as a National Recreation Trail.

The Division of Parks and Recreation (DENR) has led the effort for planning the MST route from Guilford County to Durham County, which follows in the footsteps of the on-going MST East Plan. DENR also contracted Greenways Inc. to show potential MST routes from the Wake County line to the I-95 Corridor. The FMST was also the recipient of Adopt-a-Trail and RTP grants in 2006.

The MST is an on-going project that relies on volunteer efforts to move it forward as the flagship trail across North Carolina.

Submitted by: _____

Jeff D. Brewer, FMST President

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2006 Letters Concerning the MST

