



# Inaugural *Mountains-to-Sea Trail Town Conference*

September 4-5, 2014  
Hillsborough, NC



# Thanks to our sponsors

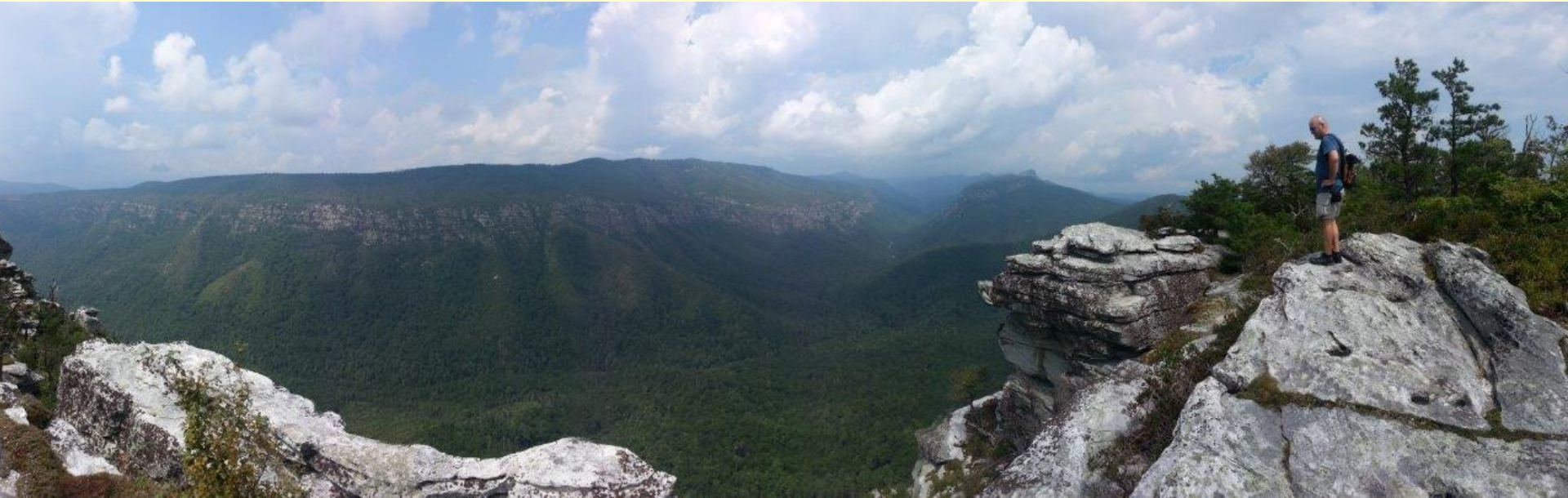
Z. Smith Reynolds  
FOUNDATION



*and the*  
**Hillsborough  
Tourism Development Authority  
and Tourism Board**

**What do people experience when  
they hike the MST?**

1,150 miles from the mountains...



*Adam Warwick, On Shortoff Mountain overlooking Linville Gorge*



To the sea.



*Danny Bernstein, Sharon on the Beach*



# MST travelers experience wildness...

*Matt Mutel, Relaxing at lunch  
after a long climb near Mt.  
Mitchell 2008*





## Wildlife...

*Jim Hallsey, Green Tree frog  
on MST Sign*





# Small towns in the West...



*Downtown Sylva NC*



And small  
towns in  
the East...





# Historic sites...



*NC Culture, Bentonville Battle reenactment.*



# Places to learn about nature & history...



Douglas Prouty NPS Volunteer



And  
people  
who call  
North  
Carolina  
home.



**THIS IS NOT  
BURGER KING  
YOU DON'T GET IT  
YOUR WAY.  
YOU TAKE IT MY WAY,  
OR YOU DON'T GET  
THE DAMN THING.**



*Lora Arrington,  
Doug's Grocery &  
Grill.*



**The MST is primarily a  
footpath built and  
maintained by volunteers**



2011

***Margaret Lillard, Volunteers at Falls Lake.***



**It follows back roads to connect trail segments.**



***Glenn Strouhal, Road in Coastal Plain.***





**The route goes through 37  
counties and 41 towns.**

# Our Vision





**The MST as a tourist destination that draws millions of visitors per year.**



*Left: Chris Johnson, MST in Smithfield; Right: William Dunn, OFHC starts Wednesday morning hike*



Most will be day-hikers or weekend travelers out to explore new parts of North Carolina...



*Official White House Photo of Day.*



**And thousands will complete  
the inspiring, challenging trek  
across the state each year.**



*Charlie Peek, Trevor and Tennille 10 miles from Jockey's Ridge*

# What completers say about the MST



**Thousands of people should be completing this trail. You just need to market it.** – Jim Walters, completed MST in 2009

***Hiking through small communities gave us some of the most rewarding experiences on the trip.*** – Ben Banick, completed in 2014

**The roadwalking sections of this hike make it unique. They allow you to experience the hospitable communities and people that characterize North Carolina.** – Hannah Krueger, completed in 2014

***I had an amazing experience walking across North Carolina. The natural wonder, rich history, and southern hospitality all contributed to the experience. I cannot think of a better way to experience a land than to walk across it, and I fell in love with North Carolina.*** – Ian Fraher, completed in 2010

**The Mountains-to-Sea Trail is a people experience. When you hike the MST, you really know North Carolina. The mountain culture, the farming culture, the city culture, the Coastal Plain, the swamp people, the beach, and all that wonderful terrain. It's not just looking at a pine tree over here and an oak tree over there.** – Scot Ward, completed five times



# MST has great economic potential if partners can...

- ❖ **Raise national (international) awareness**
- ❖ **Provide information to make it easy for people to plan their trip**
- ❖ **Local people and businesses provide services**
  - Lodging and camping
  - Shuttles
  - Restaurants and food
  - Supplies
- ❖ **Keep trail safe and in great condition**
- ❖ **Continue to build and open new trail**





# Mountains-to-Sea Trail – FAQ

- ❖ 1,150 miles from the Great Smokies to the Outer Banks.
- ❖ Proposed in 1977.
- ❖ Added to State Park system in 2000.
- ❖ More than 620 miles of trail now built.
- ❖ With temporary connectors on back roads, people walk across the state.

# Recent Progress

- ❖ **140 miles opened in last six years**
- ❖ **Increases in**
  - Visibility
  - Number of hikers
  - Individual and corporate support
- ❖ **Strong, effective volunteer corps –  
More than 25,000 hours in 2013**
- ❖ **“Trail Town” program to encourage  
businesses and towns to support hikers**



# MST is a public-private partnership

- ❖ **State Parks**
- ❖ **Segment Manager (Landowner) – often federal, state or local government**
- ❖ **Friends of Mountains-to-Sea Trail (FMST)**

# State Park Role

- ❖ **Helps communities plan route**
- ❖ **Designates trail as MST when it is complete**
- ❖ **No dedicated funding or staffing**
- ❖ **MST has priority within grant programs**
- ❖ **New MST Master Plan is underway.**



# Segment Manager (Landowner) Role

- ❖ **Determines users and type of trail**
- ❖ **May build/maintain or ask FMST volunteers to do it**

# Friends of MST Role

## ❖ What is FMST

- 501(c)3 nonprofit
- Volunteer board of 13
- Two full-time staff
- 1000 volunteers
- \$350,000 annual budget

## ❖ Primary source of information about trail

## ❖ Develops backroad route to allow hikers to complete trail across state

## ❖ Volunteers build & maintain 530 miles

## ❖ Raises private \$ and advocates for trail



**“Ultimate Trail”**

**VS**

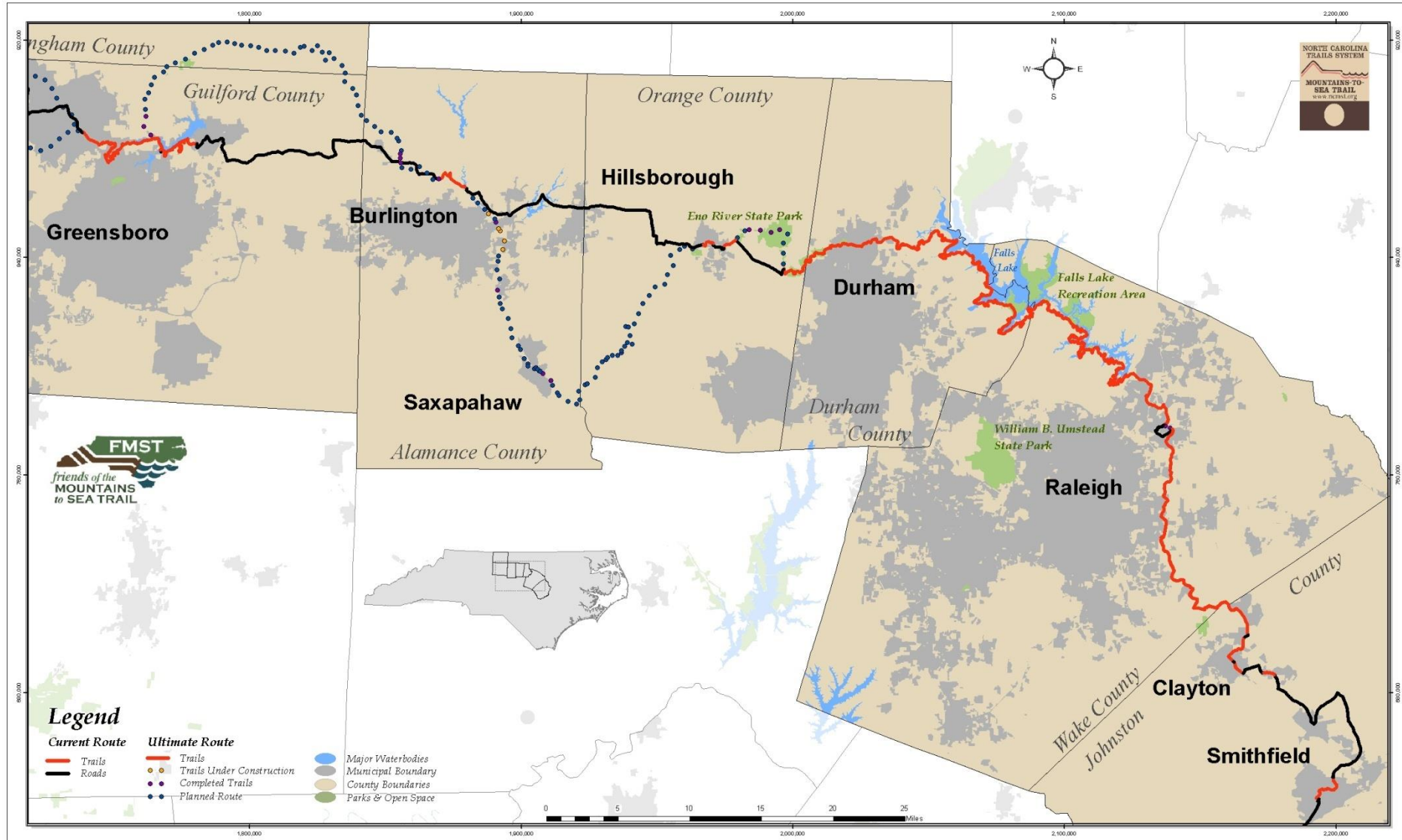
**“Current Trail”**

**What’ s the difference?**

# NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail - Greensboro to Smithfield

*Current Trail/Road Route and Future All Trail Route*

*September 04, 2014*





# Issues that discourage people from hiking MST

- ❖ People don't know where it is
- ❖ People think it isn't "complete"
- ❖ Logistics difficult
  - Finding the trail
  - Camping/lodging
  - Shuttles for one-way hike

# FMST has projects underway to improve:

- Hiking directions
- Lodging/camping
- MST signs
- State support for trail




# Hiking Directions – new trail guides to provide detailed hiking directions for entire trail in 16 segments

## First 3 available on website now



2 | Mountains-to-Sea Trail 1/15/14

Bryan Park to Eno River State Park | 3



*The trail along the Eno River at the Occaneechee Speedway in Hillsborough  
Laverne Zachary, Historic Speedway Group*

## REVOLUTION AND TEXTILES

### BRYAN PARK IN GREENSBORO TO ENO RIVER STATE PARK AT PLEASANT GREEN ROAD IN ORANGE COUNTY

by Greg & Germaine Yahn and Kate Dixon

This 56-mile segment of the MST allows travelers to explore an area central to North Carolina's history leading up to and through the Revolutionary War and as a leader in the textile industry.

The western end of this segment is at Bryan Park at the end of a continuous 20-mile segment of the MST that follows Greensboro's watershed lakes. The eastern end is the MST trailhead at Pleasant Green Road in the Eno River State Park, which leads east-bound hikers to 105 continuous miles of trail along the Eno and Neuse rivers to Clayton.

#### HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE

- Approximately 3.4 miles of trail along the Haw River, a beautiful river with rocks and rapids and abundant wildlife. Those rapids provided power to a vibrant textile industry from the 1850s to the 1980s. Hikers on this segment of trail walk through the heart of Glencoe, an 1880s mill village where almost all the historic mill buildings and homes have found new owners and modern uses. The village is complete with a guest house in the old barbershop and a Textile Heritage Museum, showcasing life in Carolina mill towns from the early 1800s.
- Approximately 1.1 miles of trail in the Town of Hillsborough, which was at the heart of the Regulator uprising against the British leading up to the Revolutionary War and was later home to the North Carolina Legislature during the war itself. The MST takes hikers through the center of town – past beautiful historic homes, over the Eno River, and past the Occaneechee Speedway, one of the first two NASCAR racetracks to open in the inaugural 1949 season. The town, with its shops and restaurants is a great place for resupply.
- The route passes by several parks: Guilford County's Northeast Park, Alamance County's Shallow Ford Natural Area, Mebane's Lake Michael Park, and Hillsborough's Gold Park.

Alamance County and its municipalities have made completion of the MST along the Haw River a priority, and they are regularly acquiring land for the trail. In Hillsborough, construction of the MST along the Eno River is underway. Orange County and N.C. State Parks are also working to extend the trail to the west and east of Hillsborough. FMST will update these directions to incorporate new sections of trail as they open.

# Progress on Camping/Lodging

- ❖ Northern Blue Ridge Parkway  
(Blowing Rock to Sparta)
- ❖ Falls Lake and Raleigh Greenway
- ❖ Short-term camping at churches, fire houses and private museums
- ❖ Trail guides list hotels and other lodging on or near trail route



# Improved signage

- ❖ **The NC Legislature directed NCDOT to recommend ways to improve highway signage to:**
  - Make travelers aware of the location of major MST trail heads
  - Inform travelers that roads are part of the “current route” of the MST



# North Carolina Trails

*A Path Forward for Economic Growth and Job Creation in NC*

North Carolina Trail Coalition (NCTC)

Summer 2014



# Meeting Purpose / Agenda

Explore how the State of NC and the three largest trail non-profits can partner to make trails an element of the overall strategy to grow the economy and create jobs.

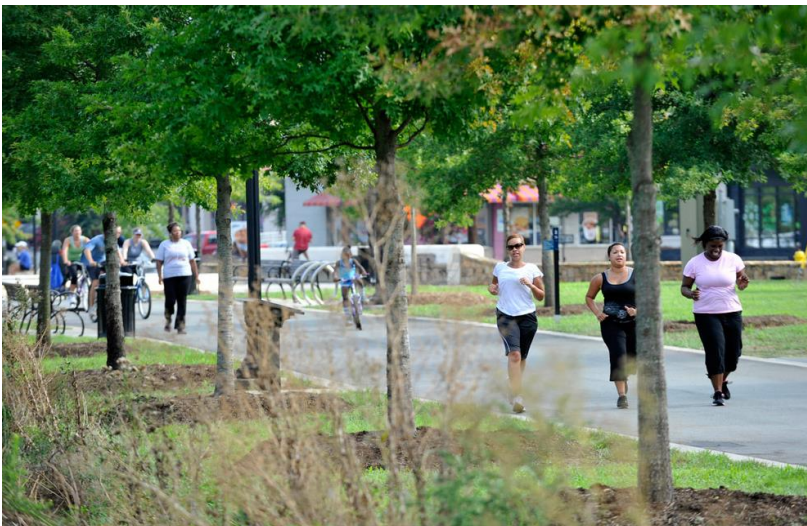
## Agenda:

- Mutual Goals
- Who we are
- Economic Impact of Trails
- Discussion



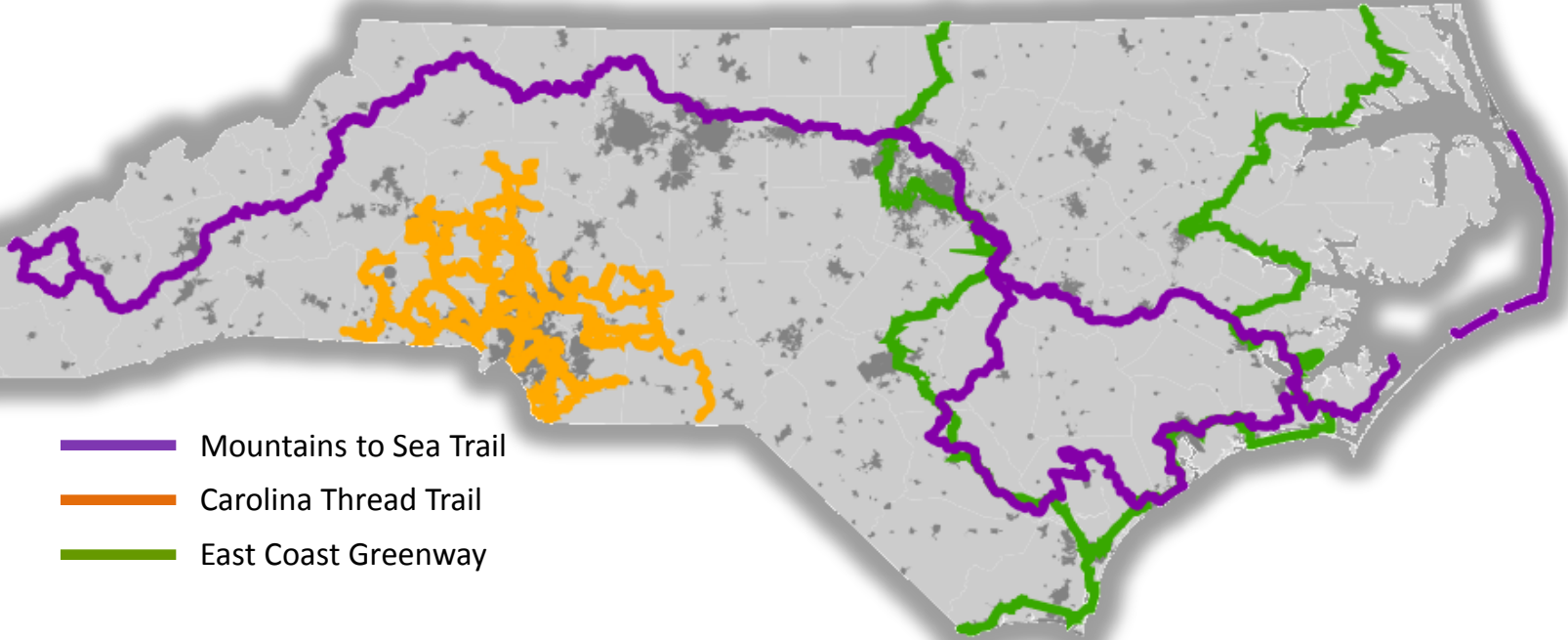
# Our Goal

Make North Carolina the **Great Trails State**





# We Connect North Carolina



- Mountains to Sea Trail
- Carolina Thread Trail
- East Coast Greenway

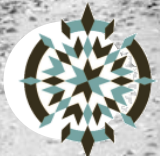
Our combined trail networks will connect over  
**5.4 Million residents**, span more than **2,800 miles** and touch **64 counties**.

East Coast



Greenway

FMST



CAROLINA  
THREAD  
TRAIL



# Trails Support Stronger Economy

## Jobs Created or Supported

*Fred Smith Company has been honored to provide construction services associated with the expansion of North Carolina's trail systems, which has **stimulated our economy by more than \$23,000,000** and provided work for **hundreds of employees and subcontractors**.*

~Fred Smith, Founder  
The Fred Smith Company

## Reliable Tourist Spending

*Direct spending in Mount Airy by visitors who use the greenways is estimated to be **\$578,585**. The number of visitors along with their spending makes the greenway system an **important part of the overall tourism offerings in Mount Airy**.*

~Erick T Byrd, PhD. , UNCG  
Bryan School of Business and Economics

## Increase Property Values

*Builders say having a project on the Katy Trail has become money in the bank. There is a **25% premium** for having their product back up to the trail.*

~Dallas Morning News

## Recruit & Keep Businesses

*Building our network of **trails is an essential investment that enables the Research Triangle Park to remain globally competitive** by allowing us to **attract the type of workers that companies want with amenities professional workers demand**.*

~Liz Rooks, Vice President  
Research Triangle Park



# The Bigger Picture

*When we consider all types of trails North Carolina is even better positioned to attract trail tourism.*



15 Fantastic Bike Trails	
Trail	Mile
Paseo del Bosque Trail, NM	35
Mohonk Preserve Trails, NY	30
Bear Creek Greenway, OR	26
Mid-Mountain Trail, UT	26
The Wild Azalea Trail, LA	26
Rock Creek Park, DC	25
Hockhocking Adena Bikeway, OH	20
Shining Sea Bikeway, MA	11
Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, AK	11
Skyline Wilderness Park Trails, CA	10
Mammoth Cave Railroad Trail, KY	9
Discovery Trail, WA	8.5
Animas River Trail, CO	7
High Bridge Park Trail, NY	3
Memorial Park Trails, TX	3

**MST Balsam Gap to Stone Mtn – 300 Miles**

**MST Eno to Clayton – 105 Miles**

**Appalachian Trail – 88 Miles**

**MST Pilot Mtn to Hanging Rock – 40 Miles**

**Neuse River Trail - 34 Miles**

Wake/Johnston Counties

**American Tobacco Trail - 23 Miles**

Durham/Wake/Johnston Counties

**Gary Shell Trail – 15 Miles**

Wilmington, NC

**Bicentennial Greenway - 14.5 miles**

Greensboro

**Black Creek/White Oak – 11.8 Miles**

Cary, NC

**Mallard Creek Trail – 7 Miles**

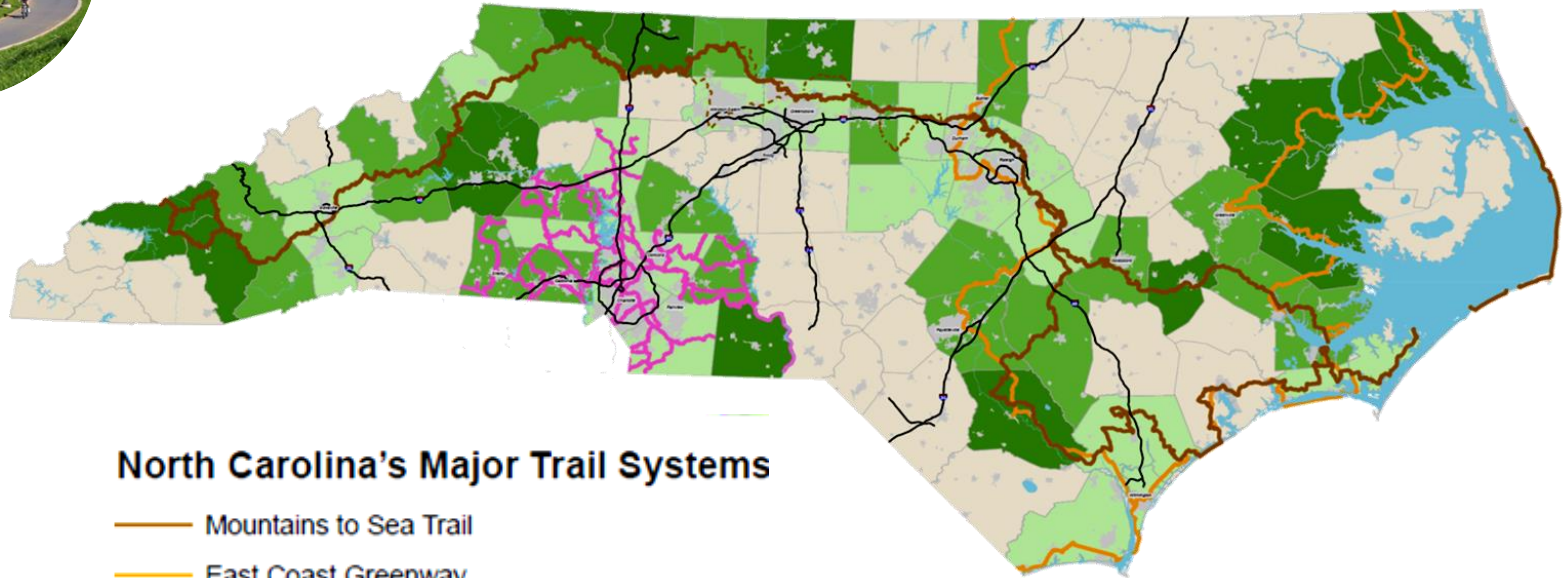
Mecklenburg County

**Cape Fear River Trail – 4 Miles**

Fayetteville, NC

# Benefits Both Urban and Rural Economies

- Three Trail Systems Connect 64 Counties
- Diverse Economic Challenges
- Long Distance Trails **Amplify** Economic Impact



## North Carolina's Major Trail Systems

- Mountains to Sea Trail
- East Coast Greenway
- Carolina Thread Trail
- Tier 1 County (19)
- Tier 2 County (26)
- Tier 3 County (23)





# Request to Secretaries

*Work with us to craft a plan that makes trails an integral part of North Carolina's economic and job creation strategy.*

- Market North Carolina's Trails
- Optimize existing trail programs
  - Streamline current programs
  - Preserve funding levels
  - Prioritize trails in existing programs
- Increase state funding in 2015 for long distance trails



July 17, 2014

Back Row - Deputy Secretary Karin Cochran – Cultural Resources, Assistant Secretary Brad Ives - Natural Resources, Ann Hayes-Browning - Carolina Thread Trail, Niles Barnes - East Coast Greenway, Jerry Barker - Friends of Mountains-to-Sea Trail, Tony Almeida - Duke Energy, Karl Froelich - Carolina Thread Trail, Lauren Blackburn, AICP - NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Director

Front Row – Cakey Worthington - Carolina Thread Trail, Secretary Sharon Decker – Commerce, Iona Thomas, AICP - East Coast Greenway/Stewart, Secretary Aldona Wos - DHHS, Secretary Tony Tata – NCDOT, Secretary Susan Klutz – Cultural Resources, Dennis Markatos-Soriano - East Coast Greenway, Kate Dixon – Friends of Mountains-to-Sea Trail

# *How You Can Help*

# You can help by...

## ❖ **Allocating funds and recruiting volunteers in your community to:**

- Market your part of the MST – through trail guides, signs and other programs
- Encourage local businesses along the route to become MST Business Partners as advertisers and donors
- Provide services for hikers – including lodging and shuttles
- If your community has little completed trail, work to build new sections
- If your community is on a completed section, help keep it beautifully maintained



# Another way you can help...

- ❖ **Participate in State Park master planning process and urge them to:**
  - Provide dedicated funding and staffing for the MST
  - Market the trail so that people know how they can hike it now
  - Develop strong partnerships with local communities to meet hiker needs and build a stronger economy

# A final, important way you can help.

## ❖ Become a member of FMST

- Building, protecting and promoting the MST are important, on-going jobs.
- Our members make this work possible.
- Take a brochure or visit our website [www.ncmst.org](http://www.ncmst.org) to become a member today.
- Urge your friends to become members too.

# Questions?



Kate Dixon  
Executive Director  
Friends of Mountains-to-Sea Trail

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