

Position Announcement – August 2021
Executive Director
Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea-Trail
Raleigh, NC



Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea-Trail (MST) seeks an experienced Executive Director with a demonstrated commitment to organizational excellence to lead the organization and build on its mission to bring together communities and volunteers to build a simple footpath connecting North Carolina's natural treasures for the enjoyment and education of people.

The State

When people think of North Carolina, the word that comes to mind first is 'beautiful.' From the Appalachian Mountains to the rolling land of the Piedmont to 300 miles of white sandy beaches, scenic beauty, a culture rich in history and the arts, and world-class sports and recreational opportunities make North Carolina an exceptional place to live. There are 10 national parks and 34 state parks. NC is home to more than 10 Million people.

The Trail

The Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST), North Carolina's flagship trail, was first proposed in 1977 as a walking route to showcase North Carolina's outstanding and diverse regional topography, natural areas, and culture. The trail traverses mountains, forests, public lands, historic sites, towns, roadways, and waterways. It is a collaborative effort between federal, state, and local land management authorities; private landowners; and nonprofit trail organizations.

The MST extends 1,175 miles across North Carolina from Clingmans Dome in the Smokies to Jockey's Ridge on the Outer Banks. It passes through 37 counties, 4 national parks, 2 national wildlife refuges, 10 state parks, 3 national forests and passes near 3 lighthouses. Approximately 720 miles is off-road path, a mix of footpath, greenway, unpaved forest roads, beach and waterways; about 455 miles of connector roads link these trail segments. Each year, Friends of the MST and its partners press toward the goal of a continuous linear trail that encompasses natural wonders, history, culture, industry, agriculture, and people while spanning North Carolina.

The Organization

The Mountains-to-Sea Trail was first proposed in a speech by Howard Lee in 1977 and the Friends organization was founded by Allen DeHart and Jeff Brewer twenty years later when focus and commitment to the trail appeared to be lagging. Friends immediately got to work coordinating volunteers to build and maintain the trail and to galvanize support by State Parks. In 2000, the NC General Assembly voted to make the MST an official unit of the State Park System.

Friends of MST is governed by a committed Board of Directors, has 5 experienced and dedicated staff, and an annual budget of ~\$500,000. Friends of MST operates out of an office in Raleigh, NC. More than 700 volunteers worked a total of +27,000 hours in 2020. Friends of MST is actively assessing and embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion in all parts of its

organizational culture. More detailed information about Friends of MST can be found at mountainstoseatrail.org

The Strategies

Our 3 core strategies include:

Trail Building and Maintenance

Hundreds of volunteers build and maintain trail across the state. We work to improve the hiking experience – identifying and opening campsites, providing interesting routes on quiet backroads to connect sections of completed trail, recruiting “trail angels” who can help thru-hikers on their statewide treks. We work with State Parks, local governments and nonprofit land trusts to help them acquire more land to build new sections of trail.

Helping People Enjoy the Trail

We spread the word to people who love trails and North Carolina and help them find ways to use, care for and extend the trail. We are the primary source of information about how to hike the trail through our website and printed trail guides. Hiking the trail promotes the learning of NC history and culture.

Advocacy

We help elected officials – local, state and federal – understand the value of the trail for recreation, quality of life, the economy and environment. We explain how our governments can help make it happen.

The Position

Friends of MST seeks a creative individual who is well prepared to provide the inspired external and internal leadership required of this role. The new Executive Director must have proven, significant, and successful organizational leadership experience and the ability to oversee fundraising, programs, and overall operations while working effectively with both the staff, the board, and the volunteers to guide the organization. The Executive Director must also possess the talent to listen and communicate effectively and to build relationships with multiple constituencies, including the Board, staff, volunteers, donors, and agency partners such as elected and government officials.

The Executive Director reports directly to the Board of Directors and supervises all staff except for any interns.

The incoming Executive Director will succeed Kate Dixon who has effectively led the organization since 2008 and who will retire in March 2021.

Priorities

Friends of MST envisions all communities and residents enjoying NC’s natural beauty via a fully off-road MST. Toward that end, the new leader will lead the organization in focusing on the following priorities within the first 12-18 months of their tenure:

- Reach out to current and new trail users by communicating what and where it is
- Secure lands for new sections of trail via partnerships
- Maintain the off-road sections of trail so that they are safe, accessible, and have minimal impact on the surrounding natural environment
- Ensure that the trail itself serves all communities, fulfilling our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Continue fundraising efforts, with an immediate focus on major donors, and
- Recruit and engage a wide range of volunteers.

Position Summary

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director will provide leadership to the organization and manage its ongoing affairs. The Executive Director is responsible for directing and formulating the plan for achieving the organization's mission and annual goals; fundraising from diverse sources; budgeting and fiscal management; operations and human resource management; marketing and communications; board management; and strategic planning.

Key Responsibilities

- Serves as agency spokesperson. Supports marketing and public relations and advocacy efforts, acts as liaison with partner organizations and government agencies, and nurtures and expands the organization's key external relationships.
- Leads organizational fundraising efforts in partnership with the board.
- Cultivates a strong, supportive, cohesive staff culture.
- Leads long range planning and visioning, in partnership with the Board and staff.
- Manages budget development, financial forecasting, and oversight in partnership with the Operations Manager and Board of Directors.
- Provides advice, counsel, and support to the Board of Directors, and helps maintain and leverage an engaged, powerful board.

Qualifications

- Commitment to Friends of MST's vision, mission, and values.
- Professional and personal style consistent with the supportive, collaborative team-oriented culture of Friends of MST.
- A proven track record of visionary leadership with at least five years of senior management experience - including administration, staff supervision, strategic planning, evaluation, budgeting, and organizational innovation.
- A record of successful and innovative fundraising with proven experience with individual donors and major gifts.
- Exceptional ability to cultivate leadership-level relationships.
- Extraordinary communicator with a wide variety of stakeholders, including being familiar with current communication trends and practices.
- Demonstrated cross-cultural competency and track record in prioritizing and implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies.
- Demonstrated ability to manage organizational operations effectively and efficiently.

- High level of emotional intelligence – i.e., accurately perceive and express yourself, personal humility, develop and maintain social relationships, cope and adapt to challenges, and use emotions in an effective way.
- Strong financial skills - including budgeting, fiscal management, and analysis.

Additional Desired Qualifications:

- Prior experience partnering with a nonprofit board of directors
- An extensive network of environmental and government contacts in North Carolina
- Prior experience working with a trail organization or equivalent.

Compensation

- Salary - \$75,000
- Benefits - Health insurance, HRA, paid time off, and 3% retirement
- Moving allowance

Application Process

To apply, please send a letter of interest and resume in one pdf file using the following naming convention: "Your Last Name-Your First Name.pdf", *via email only* to:

Friends of MST Search Committee

EDsearch@mountainstoseatrail.org

Please, no phone calls, faxes, or snail mail.

Application deadline: September 20, 2021

Friends of MST is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to recruiting a broadly diverse pool of qualified candidates for the position.