

# CATAWBA LANDS CONSERVANCY

2012 SUMMER / FALL NEWSLETTER ❖ VOLUME XXIII ❖ NUMBER 2

## LONG CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

*This conserved land will permanently protect clean water and wildlife habitat and now hosts a segment of The Thread*

Great things are taking place on and around Catawba Lands Conservancy's (CLC) Long Creek Conservation Area, including a new 2.1-mile segment of the Carolina Thread Trail that opened this summer! Our Long Creek Conservation Area now permanently protects 175 acres of land in southwestern Mecklenburg County along Long Creek (a tributary of the Catawba River) near the U.S. National Whitewater Center. In December of 2011, CLC conserved this prime property within an area experiencing residential and industrial development.

The new trail that opened this summer, available for walking, hiking, running and biking, weaves through CLC's conserved area and connects with existing trails at the U.S. National Whitewater Center. This protected area also provides significant watershed protection that helps keep our

waterways clean and improves surface water quality, including more than four miles (23,311 feet) of stream/river frontage and 153 acres of floodplains.

Additionally, this area protects significant wildlife habitat. There are a variety of hardwood forests consisting of sycamore, sweetgum, American beech, and tulip poplar trees. However, the oak forest is the most dominate with a mix of hardwoods and pines, including eastern red cedars, loblolly pines, and Virginia pines. A flock of Rusty Blackbirds and a Gulf Coast spiny softshell turtle have been observed within the forest wetlands - both of which are species on North Carolina's conservation watch lists.

Clariant Corporation and ReVenture Park™, corporate partners with CLC, have been instrumental in conserving the area and supporting environmental

and conservation stewardship efforts. Land adjacent to the conservation area is a brownfield redevelopment site that was recently delisted from the Federal Superfund National Priorities List. The developer of the site, Forsite Development Inc.,



*Long Creek Conservation Area permanently conserves 175 acres of land in southwest Mecklenburg County and protects the riparian buffers of the Catawba River.*

is committed to continuing extensive efforts to clean up the area while providing environmental benefits to the community.

“Environmental responsibility is a core element of the ReVenture Eco-Industrial Park development plan. This easement will ensure the substantial water frontage areas are protected and parts of it will be able to be enjoyed by the public,” said Tom McKittrick, president of Forsite Development, Inc.

Clariant Corporation has supported local land conservation through past generous donations to CLC,

including a 1997 conservation easement donation involving 17 acres at Long Creek Bluff.

“We are committed to conservation efforts near our sites and throughout the region,” said Ken Golder, head of Clariant's North American region. “We understand the importance of preserving our waterways and conserving the lands that will benefit our communities now and in the future.” Go to [carolinathreadtrail.org](http://carolinathreadtrail.org) and select the “Find a Trail” or “Map” links to get more information and the location of Long Creek and other trails. ■



*A new 2-mile segment of the Carolina Thread Trail opened this summer at the Long Creek Conservation Area. This trail connects to other trails at the U.S. National Whitewater Center.*

### WHAT'S A QR CODE?

A QR Code, or Quick Response Code, is a matrix barcode that contains electronic information. You'll notice there are a few of them in this newsletter to direct you to more information on the CLC's or other websites. To use

the codes, you must have access to the internet and download a QR code reader to your smartphone, tablet or hand-held device from any of the major app markets. Once you've installed and opened the app, place the box that appears over the

printed QR code. The app will activate your device's camera to scan the code. You'll see a webpage or a link to a page appear on your device. You now have quick access to more information on the story or topic via the Internet! ■



*Try It Now! Scan this QR code to check out the new Catawba Lands Conservancy website*

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# WORKING HARD TO MAXIMIZE DONATIONS AND SUPPORT



*CLC Executive Director Tom Okel (right) and CLC Board Member Reed Perkins on a recent site visit at Aderholt Preserve in Gaston County.*

For the past several months, you've heard the CLC Board of Directors and I talk about the unique window of opportunity to maximize local land conservation efforts in our current economy and real estate market.

We've put thought and effort into making the case for why conservation is a smart, viable option for banks and real estate developers which may have large amounts of distressed properties and/or undeveloped or underutilized land. We're having conversations with some of the top 25 banks in our region on how they can leverage slower-than-normal development and distressed properties into a conservation benefit that's economically viable.

Buffalo Creek Preserve, a 393-acre natural area in Cabarrus County

that was donated to us last year by one of our region's largest banks, is a successful example of how the community and nature can benefit when these types of properties are reutilized and maximized for conservation. The bank, which had this property on its books for a while, made the donation thanks to a management team that understands the land's value as a conserved property.

The majority of this wonderful property is currently a working farm with prime agricultural soils and thousands of linear feet of stream frontage on Adams Creek and Dutch Buffalo Creek. With wide open spaces, some forested and grassland, the preserve makes an ideal setting and breeding ground for nesting birds and other wildlife. We're also currently building a 1.2-mile segment of the Carolina Thread Trail at this preserve, providing a future connection to this natural area for everyone to enjoy.

The CLC team worked with the bank to structure a transaction that allowed the bank to recover a substantial portion of the appraised value through state and federal tax benefits. For the bank, it was a fiscally prudent and responsible transaction, and one that resulted in a significant conservation gift to the region.

It's good news that we're now seeing signs of an economic recovery - so it might be unlikely that we'll experience another Buffalo Creek Preserve success story from these targeted

efforts. But it has been extremely beneficial to sit at the table with bank executives to communicate the importance and benefits of conservation while building relationships and partnerships. Because whether we're in a slowing economy or in an upswing, we want our region's biggest industry and the real estate sector to always consider conservation as a viable option in any successful land transaction or development plan.

Your donations and corporate support is always greatly appreciated. You are all essential to our success, and it's because of your support and commitment that we're able to maintain and support land donations like Buffalo Creek Preserve. Whether from the \$50,000 Duke Energy Challenge Grant, \$30,000 commitment from Piedmont Natural Gas, or your \$100 gifts of support, every dollar raised makes a difference and supports our efforts. The Board, staff and I are committed to using your dollars wisely to maintain the 12,453 acres we already conserve and seek additional land that will continue to make our region a cleaner and healthier place to live, work and play. Thanks for your steady support as we look forward to ending another successful year. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Okel'.

*Tom Okel  
CLC Executive Director*

## BUFFALO CREEK PRESERVE: A CONSERVATION GEM AND GIFT FOR THE REGION



You'll soon get a chance to see and experience the many areas of Buffalo Creek Preserve, a natural area that is a great example of our four areas of conservation focus: clean water, wildlife habitat, local farmland

and a connection to nature via the Carolina Thread Trail.

This 393-acre property is located in Mt. Pleasant in northern Cabarrus County. It's outside of our six-county land protection area, so we granted a conservation easement to and are working in partnership with the Land Trust for Central N.C. (LTCNC) to ensure that the conservation benefits of this property remain

forever. This property was donated to us in 2011 by one of our region's largest banks.

Although the land holds rich soils for farming, CLC is exploring efforts to improve the land by creating a piedmont oak savannah. CLC staff and other experts are pursuing efforts to create this savannah via a prescribed burn to

*Continued on Page 4*



# DANYO HAGANS PRESERVES THE LAND HE CALLS HOME

By Holly Knox, CLC Outreach and Education Committee Member

The beautiful open views and woody landscape near Crowders and Kings mountains are part of the view most Charlotteans hike or drive miles to see, and one that visitors to our area adore. But for Danyo Hagans, it's more than just a great view... it's his home.

"I just grew up here in the woods," he said about the land passed down from his father and grandfather. Hunting squirrels, roaming the shady hillsides, and catching fish in the creek were everyday occurrences.

So when he learned of the benefits of permanently conserving the land he loves, he jumped at the opportunity to work with CLC to save his forest - while protecting one of our area's most spectacular views and natural rural land.

His family ties to North and South Carolina run deep, dating back to the mid-1800s when his great-grandfather fought in the Civil War. In the early 1900s, Danyo's grandfather, Robert Hagans, moved from South Carolina to rural Gaston



*Photo by CLC Supporter Karen McMillan*  
Danyo Hagans proudly stands next to one of "his trees" at Hagans Forest in Gaston County.

County. He operated a sawmill with a steam engine, and in 1909 built the house where Danyo lives today. In his grandfather's wood stove, fast-burning pine meant heat in the winter and food on the table. Danyo still cooks on it today. "If you can't cook it in a frying pan, it's not worth

fixing," he says.

Sawmilling wood from the forest, both pine and hardwood, has long been a cherished family talent and financial resource. Danyo's father Clarence sawed lumber for the Navy in World War II and bought his own sawmill soon after. By the 1950s, Danyo's father bought more land, adding wooded acreage to the forest known today as Hagans Forest. Danyo's uncles also had sawmills, and two of his cousins still mill today. Now retired, Danyo worked 16 years for Wix Filters in Gastonia and was also in the family milling business. He still cuts firewood for sale. And when Danyo's daughter - a veterinarian in Stanley County - needed a horse barn, he cut the trees that provided the lumber.

With sawmilling practically in his blood, it might seem strange that Danyo was horrified at the prospect of cutting down his trees and was motivated to seek a conservation easement. North Carolina law acknowledges the public benefit of a conservation easement, which allows rural landowners to pay a lower agricultural tax for land with a forest management plan while offering landowners various options for cutting select trees and land preservation. Without a conservation easement, large sections of Hagans Forest would have been slated for clearcutting.

"I don't want to clear out my land," Danyo says. "You go through with all the skidders and cutters now, and don't leave anything but brush...you get in there and tear it up, and it's gone. It'll never be back the way it was."

In 2011, Danyo preserved 202 wooded acres of his land through a conservation easement with CLC - ensuring that the forest he loves will continue to provide wildlife and plant habitats, as well as the buffer zones that help to protect the water quality of the South

Fork Crowders Creek.

Danyo's decision to save his forest offers many benefits to the region:

- Just a mile south of Crowders Mountain State Park, the land is part of the dramatic view from the park's Kings Pinnacle. Keeping the land forested and undeveloped helps to preserve this breathtaking view.



*NC State Parks photo by Ken Cole*

*The next time you're at the Pinnacle at Crowders Mt. State Park know that this view will forever be protected, thanks to Danyo Hagans whose conserved property is adjacent to this park and complements this amazing view.*

- Most of the protected land - 185 acres - is part of a North Carolina state-designated Significant Natural Heritage Area (SNHA). According to the state, SNHA areas represent "the rarest and most outstanding elements of the natural diversity of our state" - that biodiversity "makes North Carolina an attractive place to live and visit." CLC found a variety of rich soils and ecosystems that provide great habitats for rare plants and wildlife - like the pigmy rattlesnakes to the spectacular Rough Blazingstar flower - which are listed on state conservation watch lists.

- Hagans Forest, now mostly hardwood, is one of the best in the Southern Piedmont, says Sean Bloom, CLC's GIS Director. What makes it unusual is its size - 202 contiguous acres - and its integrity.

Towering hardwoods, left in their natural state for more than half a century, pepper the leafy landscape.

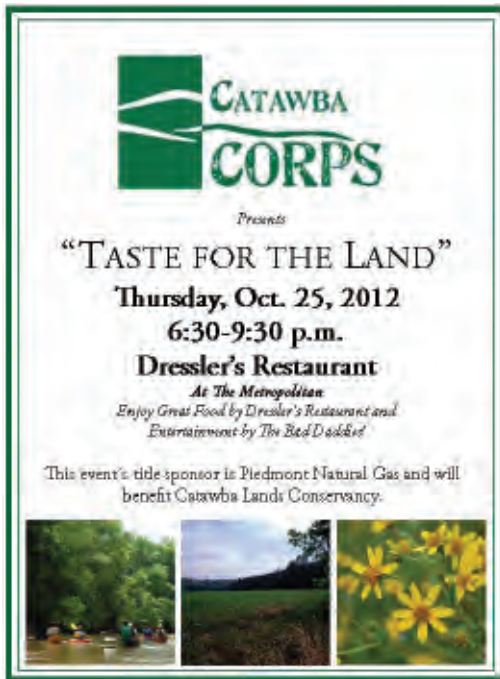
There is a history of what was once on the land as well. There are remnants of the old wagon trail - used as the local roadway, Danyo says, before Lewis Road (the existing road through the area) was built. Along it, children once walked for miles from farmhouses to the one-room school-

house that stood by the creek. Narrow, rough dirt roads are entrenched throughout the forest as pathways for culled pine and hardwoods. A creek bed lined with hard rock that settlers used to build chimneys and foundations, and an unusual rock outcropping known as Goose Nest Rock remains intact.

As our population increases regionally and statewide, it's essential to save ecologically rich and plentiful lands that once were the homes, heritage and the way of life for many settlers. Thanks to Danyo Hagans, Hagans Forest will remain a forest in its natural state - preserving the beautiful viewscape and its precious wildlife there - for many generations to come. ■

# CATAWBA LANDS CONSERVANCY LAUNCHES NEW AFFILIATE GROUP AND “TASTE FOR THE LAND” EVENT

*Catawba Corps will promote awareness, volunteerism and support for CLC*



for the Land,” will be held on Thursday, Oct. 25, 2012, from 6:30-9:30 p.m., at Dressler’s Restaurant which is located at 1100 Metropolitan Ave., in Charlotte. The event, title sponsored by Piedmont Natural Gas, will benefit CLC.

Catawba Corps is dedicated to promoting awareness, volunteerism, interest and support for CLC. Members will help guide

and advise conservation initiatives while volunteering and helping to increase support. Corps leadership will also use this fundraiser to attract new members.

“This is a great opportunity for people to come out and get involved in an effort that is helping to sustain and enrich our region by protecting our local preserves, trails, rivers and farms,” said Jenny Ward, CLC board member and event steering committee co-chair. “Conservation is positively shaping the landscape, health and sustainability for the future of our region, and Catawba Corps members can play an immediate integral role in developing and sustaining these efforts.” Ward is also the sustainability engagement manager for Duke Energy.

One-year memberships to the Catawba Corps can be purchased at three different giving levels - \$250, \$500 and \$1,000 - to support the event and CLC’s local conservation initiatives. Tickets to “Taste for the Land” and other member benefits will be provided to those who purchase memberships and sponsorships. The price for

individual or couples event tickets is \$75 or \$130 respectively.

The event will feature food from local farms prepared by the chefs at Dressler’s Restaurant, which is locally owned by restaurateurs Jon and Kim Dressler. Entertainment will be provided by The Bad Daddies. More information about the Catawba Corps and “Taste for the Land” tickets and memberships, go to our website, [catawbalands.org](http://catawbalands.org); use the associated QR code; or contact CLC Development Director Margaret Brantley at [margaret@catawbalands.org](mailto:margaret@catawbalands.org) or 704.342.3330, ext. 218. ■

Catawba Corps, a new affiliate group of CLC, will host its first annual fundraising event to increase support for local land conservation. The event, “Taste



## PLEASE CONSIDER MAKING A CONTRIBUTION

### YOUR GIFT WILL...

- Preserve our natural lands for you, your children and grandchildren to enjoy.
- Protect clean water, wildlife, working farms, and trails and recreation areas.
- Be put to efficient use – every \$1 donation is leveraged into \$10 of conserved land.



- Help keep our community healthy and growing.

Please make a gift today to permanently conserve natural lands!

Thank you for your tax deductible gift. To learn more or donate, use this QR code, visit us at [catawbalands.org](http://catawbalands.org), or call 704.342.3330 x218. Thank you. ■





# THREAD TRAIL UPDATE: CAROLINATHREADTRAIL.ORG

The Carolina Thread Trail (The Thread) continues to gain momentum. The Thread recently added new trail miles, with 98 total miles complete to date. On August 7, Anson became the 13th county - out of 15 - to adopt its Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan. The Thread is also approaching its fifth anniversary this fall and 100 miles of trail on the ground! Stay tuned for more information and details on these milestones.

## NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Three regional leaders joined the Carolina Thread Trail Governing Board, bringing great leadership and expertise to The Thread. Randy Kelley, President & CEO at CaroMont Health System, is an industry leader highly focused on healthy lifestyles as an integral component of healthcare. Angela Bower is a community leader who has been a driving force for many non-profit initiatives in Union County and across the region. Greg Wolf of Duke Energy serves as president of Duke Energy Renewables, which provides wind and solar energy solutions for customers throughout the U.S. We're excited to welcome them to the Carolina Thread Trail Governing Board.

## NEW INTERACTIVE MAP LAUNCHES

Check out The Thread's new interactive map to help trail enthusiasts easily find and identify trails. The new map, located on the [carolinathreadtrail.org](http://carolinathreadtrail.org) website, indicates where trails are located throughout the 15-county



Find trails with The Thread's new interactive map at [carolinathreadtrailmap.org](http://carolinathreadtrailmap.org) or by scanning the QR code below.

Carolina Thread Trail region. You can search trails by name, vicinity, trail surface and learn more about the places, neighborhoods and attractions the trails connect to. Visit our new map on The Thread's website or via this QR code, and get outside on The Thread!

## GRANT AWARDS TOTAL MORE THAN \$74,000

The Thread recently received grants that will enhance several trail building and volunteer related initiatives. Grants from the Women's Impact Fund (\$52,600), Glenn Foundation (\$12,037) and REI (\$10,000) will provide important funding to support and advance The Thread. "We thank these funders for putting resources towards building trails and harnessing volunteers for The Thread. Their support will make an impact on our region's quality of life," said Ann Browning, project director for The Thread.

## WE WERE A DNC LEGACY PROJECT

The Thread was one of the

nonprofits featured as a legacy project during the Democratic National Convention (DNC). The Thread was highlighted in all four of the DNC Host Committee's legacy categories: economic inclusion; youth and civic engagement; healthy families, healthy children; and energy, technology and community sustainability. As

part of the celebration, The Thread had a booth at CarolinaFest 2012 and co-hosted tours with Mecklenburg County Park and Rec along Little Sugar Creek Greenway. Delegates and the public were invited to attend the learning experiences that highlighted the community and economic benefits of trails, trail building efforts, and the support and collaboration throughout the region that is creating The Thread.

## ANOTHER TRAIL MASTER PROGRAM COURSE BEGINS SOON

Trail Master Program applications are in and an amazing group of people have been selected to become the newest group of Trail Masters. The course will be held September 24-27, 2012, at the

U.S. National Whitewater Center and led by Trail Design Specialist Owner Mike Riter. These trained volunteers will learn the latest sustainable trail building and maintenance techniques and become certified to serve as volunteer leaders for The Thread, spearheading volunteer workdays and committing to 40 hours of service a year for the next three years. Thank you to the Women's Impact Fund for funding our Trail Master Program!

## SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER

Two volunteer workdays are coming up at our Buffalo Creek Preserve in Mt. Pleasant, Cabarrus County. These workdays will be held Sept. 29 and Oct. 27 (both are on Saturdays at the preserve). On Sept. 29, CLC and The Thread are co-hosting this trail workday in conjunction with National Public Lands Day! You can go to The Thread's website and sign up to volunteer. ■



Ann Browning, project director for The Thread, talking with one of thousands of attendees of the DNC Host Committee's CarolinaFest 2012 on Labor Day.

*Continued from Page 2*

help native grasses grow and create an ideal environment for grasshopper sparrows and populations of wild turkey, quail and other birds.

The prescribed burn will also help remove fuels from the soil and reduce the potential for wildfires. CLC, in conjunction with the North Carolina Forest Service, is

investigating the feasibility for a burn this fall.

There's also been great momentum from our corporate partners to allow their employees to volunteer and help us build a 1.2-mile trail that will be a segment of the Carolina Thread Trail. Bank of America, Duke Energy, Lowes, REI and Wells Fargo employ-

ees have already participated in several trail workdays so far this year. These volunteer opportunities help our corporate community learn more about The Thread, how to build and maintain trails, and the benefits of trails for the region. Husqarna employees will participate in a volunteer trail-

building workday on Saturday, Sept. 29, to help CLC and The Thread celebrate National Public Lands Day. We'll keep you informed of our ongoing conservation management efforts at Buffalo Creek Preserve and when the new trail will open. ■



Catawba Lands Conservancy is part of a network of land trusts that collectively have protected more than 311,000 acres of the places you love in North Carolina.

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