estled along the banks of the Catawba River in Chester County, South Carolina, lies the small town of Great Falls. The tranquil water landscape lends itself to hawks circling overhead while bass and catfish swim below. This historic community is on the verge of a renaissance thanks to several large outdoor recreation projects.

The Great Falls Rail Trail is set to open along the river in the spring of 2023 and will connect to the existing 1.6-mile Rocky Creek Trail as part of the Carolina Thread Trail network. According to Thread Trail Director Bret Baronak, the 3.5-mile crushed gravel trail that was formerly a CSX railbed will begin in downtown Great Falls and wind gently toward the Nitrolee Access Area to the north. “The trail will offer wonderful views of the Catawba River and protected conservation lands, as well as rock outcroppings and Fishing Creek Dam,” Baronak said.

In the summer of 2021, the Catawba Lands Conservancy helped the town close on a $190,000 land deal for the new trail. The Thread Trail contributed $100,000, while Chester County provided $75,000 and Great Falls the additional $15,000. Trail construction funds will come from a $100,000 grant from the South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT)’s Recreation Trails Program, as well as a grant from Great Falls and the Thread Trail of $25,000.

A PARK OF DREAMS

The Great Falls Rail Trail will also create biking and pedestrian access to a future state park on Dearborn Island, which should open by 2024. The island has long been home to the Mount Dearborn Armory and Arsenal, a military facility built in 1803 under President Thomas Jefferson’s orders. President George Washington initially selected the location to be one of America’s three arsenal-armories tasked with storing ammunition and making weapons for the South. In the early 1800s, most of its troops transitioned south to defend Charleston, and the position was officially abandoned by 1825. Now this area will transform into a historic interpretation site for hikers and campers to enjoy.

The timing for the project is ideal as in 2021 South Carolina state park revenue increased 47 percent over the previous fiscal year and COVID-19 also brought more people to Chester County for outdoor recreation. “Ever since COVID-19 hit, we immediately saw an influx of people from Columbia and Charlotte walking the Rocky Creek Trail,” Chester County Commissioner Mike Vaughn said. “Folks are looking for outdoor recreation where they’re able to be in the fresh air. Nature-based tourism has boomed across the board. We’re opening up a previously inaccessible area that’s gorgeous.”

GET READY FOR WHITETRACK

To add to the excitement, Duke Energy is introducing water flows on previously dammed stretches of river to recreate the stunning rapids that gave the town its name. This will offer an opportunity for outdoor enthusiasts to kayak and whitewater raft. S2O Design, the company that envisioned Charlotte’s U.S. National Whitewater Center, and HDR Engineering will create two bypass channels for public access. The long bypass will run roughly 1.5 miles and contain Class II and III rapids. The shorter, three-quarter-mile bypass farther south will boast quicker-moving Class III and IV rapids for advanced paddlers. The re-engineered dams to

Dearborn Island State Park is being financed by Duke Energy as part of its 2015 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing agreement for the Catawba-Wateree Project. The license requires the power company to enhance the water quality, recreation opportunities, land conservation and wildlife habitats of the areas where it operates. It also will build a pedestrian bridge to the island from the Lower Great Falls canoe and kayak launch and develop a trail to the bridge. Moreover, it has committed to forming trails through the island’s mature forests and past its enormous rock formations.

“The elevations are dramatic on the island, so there will be everything from easy walking trails to difficult trails,” said Glinda Coleman, Great Falls Home Town Association Executive Director. “There will be three observation areas, two where you’ll see the whitewater areas. There will also be a yurt village for campers on the south side of Dearborn Island.”

County Commissioner Mike Vaughn said. “Folks are looking for outdoor recreation where they’re able to be in the fresh air. Nature-based tourism has boomed across the board. We’re opening up a previously inaccessible area that’s gorgeous.”
provide controlled flow on the rapids are under construction and should be flowing by the spring of 2023. A canoe and kayak launch at Nitrolee Access Area will serve as the primary location for reaching Great Falls Reservoir and the bypass channels.

Additionally, Duke Energy will construct the Nitrolee Interpretive Center on the ruins of a nearby nitrogen-processing plant from the early 1900s that was known as the Nitrolee facility.

“Those projects together will make Great Falls a nature-based tourism magnet for the Southeast,” Vaughn said. “Because of the level of difficulty of the whitewater runs, the whitewater community will begin coming to the area. We’re opening up sections of the river that have been closed for 100-plus years. These are wild and scenic places that will be a draw for their difficulty and won’t cost people a dime to experience.”

FROM TEXTILES TO TOURISM

More than a century ago, Great Falls was founded by J.B. Duke, who built hydroelectric power plants along the Catawba River and developed three Republic Cotton Mills. When the textile mills left in the 1980s, the town became economically depressed. Two decades ago, Coleman began dreaming up ways to make her home prosperous and vital once more. Two decades ago, Coleman began dreaming up ways to make her home prosperous and vital once more.

“My organization started a nature-based tourism initiative over 20 years ago,” she said. “Part of that from the very beginning was to turn an old railroad into a trail. The whole idea was to use this type of ecotourism as an economic engine to revitalize Great Falls. The idea for whitewater opportunities came about later as the Duke relicensing agreement was coming into focus. Duke has to provide recreation opportunities to help communities as part of it, so we found a way we could enhance the river.”

In the heyday of textiles, workers could visit the Republic Mills Company Store to buy sugar, coffee, blankets and anything else they might need. Soon, after a $2.6 million renovation project, the space will become the Great Falls Whitewater, Trails and State Park Visitors Center thanks to a 2020 Chester County capital projects bond referendum. The visitors center will pay homage to the textile industry and have a feel of its former glory.

“We’re confident once the whitewater area opens up, people will come,” Smith said. “It’s not a recreation opportunity that’s available anywhere else for about 100 miles or so. Our challenge as a town is to make it an enjoyable place to spend time and money, to make it a destination. We’ve already had developers interested in opening new restaurants in the area.”

Revitalized economic interest in the community is beginning to unfold, added Vaughn.

“We’ve already seen a lot of interest in the real estate on Main Street in Great Falls with people buying properties for use in the future,” he said. “We plan for real estate in Great Falls to boom because of the quality-of-life factor. It will be a place young people want to come raise their families. And because of the conservation of land in this area due to the Catawba Valley Land Trust, the scenic environment is not going to change.”

Coleman said those who visit Great Falls relish its natural beauty and quaint, small-town feel.

“Our whole goal is to hang onto that, so visitors will love Great Falls as much as the people who live here,” she said. “The rail trail is going to be essential for making everything connect to Great Falls.”
We have big plans! The Carolina Thread Trail Board and staff are in Year One of a five-year plan to add 200 miles of trails to the 400 already in place. During that time, we’ll also place 5,500 new signs on the trails to help with wayfinding and branding this distinctive network of trails that weave throughout our region. The success of our capital campaign, with $11.1 million committed to date, and an extension of our original goal of $10 million to $13 million, has made these plans possible.

One of CTT’s original goals was to connect the people, communities and exciting places of our region. As we began, it was difficult to see that happening. Now, we have trails that connect communities, such as Cramerton and McAdenville or Cornelius and Davidson, and we have trails to fun places like Freedom Park, Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden and Kings Mountain.

And we also have trails that now cover significant distances. For instance, the Little Sugar Creek Greenway will, within a few months, span 22 miles and connect Pineville, Starmount, South End, Uptown Charlotte, Wesley Heights, Lakeview and other points along the way.

Working with our 88 municipal partners in 15 counties, we are connecting people to nature, to places of interest and to each other. When complete, our 1,600-mile network of trails will be the second largest in the country and one of the things for which our region is known. Can’t wait!

JARRED COCHRAN
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
WELLS FARGO SECURITIES
GAINING GROUND
New conservation projects are laying the groundwork for critical projects to protect water and connect communities

SPEARS CONSERVATION EASEMENT, CHARLOTTE, N.C.
More than 19 acres of forest off West Sugar Creek Road in Charlotte will be protected from development, thanks to a partnership between the Catawba Lands Conservancy and the City of Charlotte’s Tree Canopy Protection Program (TCP). The City recently donated a conservation easement on the property to the Conservancy, ensuring that the property will remain undeveloped in perpetuity. This large tract of forestland is located in a part of Charlotte with low tree canopy. The property will support air quality, wildlife habitat and water quality in the Mallard Creek watershed and surrounding areas.

CROSS-STATE TRAIL CONNECTION
LANCASTER COUNTY, S.C.
Earlier this year, the Conservancy closed on two acres of land in Lancaster, which will play an important role in facilitating a cross-state trail connection. The small but critical piece of property will provide access for 1.25 miles of future Carolina Thread Trail, connecting Lancaster to the Cross-Charlotte Trail, Anne Springs Close Greenway and Fort Mill. Ultimately, this trail corridor will provide over 30 miles of connected trail for Carolinians to enjoy!

TURTLE HAVEN CONSERVATION EASEMENT
WAXHAW, N.C.
A serene piece of property along Waxhaw Creek in Mecklenburg County will now remain a haven for native wildlife, thanks to the foresight of owners Mary Ann and Terry Gaddy, who placed the land under a conservation easement with the Conservancy. The Gaddys, who have lived in the area for 42 years, previously purchased the property from a developer who had planned to build houses on the site up until Hurricane Hugo. During their 20 years of owning the property, the Gaddys felt a strong connection to the land and wished to keep the property in its natural state. When pressure arose in 2020 to clear-cut the parcel, they decided the time was right to work with the Conservancy to protect it.

GREAT FALLS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
GREAT FALLS, S.C.
The Conservancy team assisted the Town of Great Falls in closing on a property that was previously used by CSX as a rail corridor. This property will allow for a 3.5-mile rail trail project that will be part of the Carolina Thread Trail and will provide bicycle and pedestrian access to the future Dearborn Island State Park. The corridor is surrounded by conserved properties that are permanently protected by our partner, Katawba Valley Land Trust.

The Town of Great Falls received a South Carolina Recreational Trails Program grant for $100,000, plus an additional $25,000 from other funding sources, including the Thread Trail, for the first phase of trail construction. This will include basic repairs to the corridor so the public can safely access the trail and will be followed with additional trail enhancements over time.

In addition, the Thread Trail awarded the Town of Great Falls an implementation grant to study how to connect the existing 1.5-mile Rocky Creek Trail with this new rail trail. When that connection is made, residents and visitors will have 5 miles of connected trail to explore.

Catawba River near Great Falls, S.C.
n December, the Carolina Thread Trail officially launched a $13 million dollar fundraising campaign to build the next nearly 200 miles of trail. Over $11.1 million has already been raised towards that goal. A $1 million lead gift from the David Belk Cannon Foundation and significant contributions from Bank of America, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Community Foundation, Spangler Foundation, Duke Energy and Wells Fargo, plus many others, led to early success.

The campaign will help fund an additional 191 miles of Thread Trail, which has raised $11.1 million to date, achieving at least five miles of contiguous trail in each of its 15 counties within the next five years. These miles will produce outsized returns by closing system gaps and improving access.

Lat W. Purser III, Thread Trail Governing Board Chair and Capital Campaign Co-Chair, notes, “Greenways are wildly popular, and communities can’t seem to get them opened fast enough. The pandemic accelerated this shift, as so many of us turned to nature and outdoor recreation as one of the few safe activities remaining for us. On some of our trails we’ve seen usage increasing as much as 200 percent.”

The David Belk Cannon Foundation gift of $1 million to the campaign will be used to develop the South Fork Corridor of the Thread Trail in Gaston County. Foundation President Gene R. Matthews II said, “this will be a huge win for all of us. We see it as a great way for people to get outside, create a positive buzz for the county, increase connectivity among Gaston County communities, and even be an economic driver.”

The Thread Trail works in partnership with 15 counties and 88 municipalities. “In fact, our private dollars are matched at a rate of as much as 20-to-1 by dollars committed by local governments. Having private investment catalyzes trail projects, helping get trail and greenway projects completed more quickly,” said Executive Director Bart Landess. “The Carolina Thread Trail is a gift to our children and grandchildren,” said Capital Campaign Co-Chair Tim Belk. “Ensuring that everyone who lives here can have access to our beautiful landscapes and waterways is crucial to making sure the Charlotte area remains a great place to live, for generations to come.”

**FIELD NOTES**

**INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING?**
Visit carolinathreadtrail.org/blazingnewtrails to make a gift today!

**TRAIL COUNTERS WILL GIVE DATA ON TRAIL USAGE**

Ever wondered how many people use the Carolina Thread Trail? The Thread Trail is monitoring traffic by installing counters on 10 trails, including Seven Oaks Preserve Trail, Lake Welchel Trail and Riverlink Greenway. The counters that are already in place have started collecting foot (and bike) traffic data, but we are looking forward to seeing the long-term trends once we have all counters installed. Stay tuned to our future newsletters to see how many fellow trail users are out exploring the Thread Trail alongside you!

**AERIAL MONITORING OF CONSERVED PROPERTIES**

With over 200 protected properties, encompassing 17,000 acres to monitor every year, the Conservancy’s Stewardship team has its hands full. The team was able to take advantage of a chance to do some aerial monitoring this winter, which allowed them to review the condition of several properties by helicopter.

**NEW PARKING LOT AT FORNEY CREEK TRAIL**

If you have recently visited Forney Creek Trail in Denver, N.C., you may have noticed the brand-new parking facilities, which increase accessibility for the trailhead. We were able to construct the new parking lot thanks to the support of several generous donors. Delane Clark, Lincoln County resident and longtime supporter of and volunteer with the Carolina Thread Trail and Catawba Lands Conservancy, said having the parking lot is “a great enhancement for the trail and an asset for the YMCA, our youth and the entire community. It’s also wonderful that this parking lot honors the memory of Bishop Franklin Lowery, whose compassionate service to his fellow man helped many people in Lincoln County and beyond.” Take a trip out to Forney Creek and see it for yourself!

**PRESCRIBED FIRE BENEFITS BUFFALO CREEK PRESERVE**

Weather conditions aligned to give the Conservancy the opportunity to perform a prescribed burn at Buffalo Creek Preserve in February. The parcel that was burned is a previously farmed field that the Conservancy is working to restore to a native grassland to provide habitat for pollinators and ground-nesting birds. The burn was part of the Conservancy’s larger Catawba Grasslands Project, which is an initiative to manage and revive grasslands on nine properties across our footprint.

**田间笔记**

**感兴趣的捐赠吗？**
访问carolinathreadtrail.org/blazingnewtrails来赠送礼物。

**小径计数器将提供有关小径使用数据**

是否曾经想过有多少人使用Carolina Thread Trail？Thread Trail通过在10条小径上安装计数器来监测交通流量。这些计数器已经启动了脚（和自行车）交通数据收集，但我们期待在所有计数器都安装后看到长期趋势。请关注我们未来的通讯以了解有多少个好同事在小径上与你同行！

**航空监测的保存的财产**

拥有超过200个受保护的财产，总面积为17,000英亩，每年都要监测的情况，Conservancy的Stewardship团队手中总是满的。该团队能够利用机载航空摄影机的优势，为小径和资产的YMCA，我们的青年和整个社区。它也非常神奇的

**新的停车设施在Forney Creek Trail**

如果你最近访问了Denver的Forney Creek Trail，你可能已经注意到了新的停车场设施，这增加了小径的可达性。我们能够建造新的停车场要感谢几家慷慨的捐赠者。Delane Clark是Lincoln County的居民，也是Carolina Thread Trail和Catawba Lands Conservancy的长期支持者和志愿者，他说拥有停车场“是对小径和资产的YMCA，我们的青年和整个社区的极大增强。这是非常棒的，因为它纪念了主教Franklin Lowery，他的同情服务帮助了林肯县和超过一百万的人。”到Forney Creek去吧，并看看它对你自己！

**指定的火灾益处Buffalo Creek Preserve**

天气条件允许给Conservancy提供机会进行一次指定的烧荒在Buffalo Creek Preserve在二月。被烧的地块是一个以前耕作过的领域，Conservancy正在努力将其恢复为一个本土草地，为授粉者和地面筑巢鸟类提供栖息地。这次烧荒是Conservancy更大的Catawba Grasslands Project的一部分，它是一个管理并恢复九个财产的草地的倡议。
As mentioned on the previous page, the Thread Trail is entering a new era for trail development, and the newly opened trails below are only the beginning. We anticipate nearly 200 miles of new trail to open in the next five years, connecting communities to nature in new and exciting ways!

**NEWLY OPENED TRAILS**

**Little Sugar Creek Greenway**
I-485 to Polk Historic Site • Mecklenburg County, N.C. • A new 1.8-mile greenway segment along the Little Sugar Creek corridor from I-485 to Polk Historic Site in Pineville

**Irish Buffalo Creek Greenway Extension**
Cabarrus County, N.C. • A new 2.4-mile paved greenway along Irish Buffalo Creek, linking Vietnam Veterans Park to Rodgers Lake Road in Kannapolis

**Rock Hill River Park Connector**
York County, S.C. • A new 0.25-mile segment connecting River Park in Rock Hill to the Catawba River Trail

**River Hawk Greenway**
Dutchman’s Creek Segment • Gaston County, N.C. • A paved greenway connection spanning 0.6 miles from CaroMont Regional Medical Center to River Street Park in Mount Holly

**Rocky Branch Trail**
Gaston County, N.C. • This 1.25-mile natural surface trail provides mountain bike trails and an important connection from Cramerton into downtown Belmont

**McDowell Creek Greenway**
Mecklenburg County, N.C. • 1.4-mile paved greenway through West Moreland Regional Park in Cornelius

**Avon-Catawba Creeks Greenway Extension**
Gaston County, N.C. • A 0.5-mile extension of the Avon Catawba Trail, linking Lineburger Park to East 2nd Ave. in Gastonia

**The Vine Downtown Connector**
Mecklenburg County, N.C. • Part of a growing network of greenways in Huntersville, the Vine adds 0.6 miles of paved greenways and boardwalks to the Huntersville area
or Wayne Mitchem, farming is a way of life and an important aspect of his family’s history. He is part of the fifth generation to maintain several hundred acres of farmland in Lincoln County near Vale, a legacy that stretches back 150 years to the days of his great-great-grandfather.

“I would like for this land to continue to be agricultural land,” he said. “I think it’s important we have this type of land available to those who want to farm in the future. There will be more pressure to develop land as time goes along, and we’re going to protect ours from that happening to it.”

To that end, Wayne and his brother, Carrol, decided to preserve 103 acres of their farm through a conservation easement with Catawba Lands Conservancy in 2019. They are currently working with the Conservancy to protect an additional 138 acres of land about a mile and a half away from the first portion. These agricultural conservation easements are being funded by the U.S. and N.C. Departments of Agriculture.

The initial tract was a part of old family farmland that is mostly pasture and used as grazing space for beef cattle. The second parcel consists primarily of open cropland for growing soybeans and grain. The family also grows blackberries, blueberries and grapes on their property. The blackberries are sold wholesale through Naturipe Farms across the country and in Canada via large retailers such as Publix, Aldi, Food Lion, Costco and Sam’s Club. If they are overripe, they are sold to wineries. Meanwhile, the blueberries and grapes are sold wholesale at a farmer’s market in Asheville.

Wayne received a bachelor’s in agronomy and master’s degree in crop science from N.C. State University. He currently serves as the Extension Associate and Southern Region Small Fruit Consortium Coordinator for the university and specializes in weed management in tree fruit and vine crops in North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

Carrol opened an American-style restaurant in the mid-1990s called Mitchem’s Kitchen a few miles from the farm. The fruit from the family farm often makes an appearance in tasty desserts.

Wayne’s two daughters are interested in expanding the beef cattle herd to include market bulls and heifers that are registered Hereford cattle.

Considering Wayne would like to keep the farm operational for years to come and eventually pass it on to his daughters, conservation seemed like the right choice.

“I knew Catawba Lands Conservancy had done that kind of work, and I was familiar that there was money available through federal and state agencies for conservation,” he said. “But we didn’t have a good way to facilitate the paperwork process or understand the hoops you’d have to jump through.”

“IT IS IMPORTANT TO OUR ORGANIZATION TO PRESERVE WORKING FARMS AND THE HISTORICAL AGRICULTURAL CHARACTER OF OUR REGION AS WELL AS...”
One of our accomplishments of 2021 was being able to safely bring back in-person special events. After hosting our annual Trail Forum virtually in 2020, we were thrilled to be back in person at the Charles Mack Citizen Center in Mooresville last December. The approximately 200 attendees who joined us at the event were able to expand their knowledge of trails through 11 educational sessions, including a lunch keynote by renowned urban planner Mitchell Silver, FAICP. Silver is a Principal and Vice President of Urban Planning at McAdams but has previously served as Commissioner for New York City’s Parks Department and was the City of Raleigh’s Planning Director for many years.

Attendees were rapt as Silver shared his perspective on outdoor recreation and what he sees as the future of open space, parks and trails. He spoke about racial equity in the outdoors and broke it down to the concept of fairness. Are we in the outdoor recreation industry providing fair access and opportunity for all people? How can we do better?

In addition to the educational sessions and keynote, Trail Forum is renowned as an opportunity for professionals in the trails and parks space to network with peers. It helps serve the Thread Trail’s true purpose: connecting people and communities.

SAXBY CHAPLIN
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR:
LARRY HUMBERT

The Conservancy and Thread Trail were proud to honor Larry Humbert as our 2021 Saxby Chaplin Volunteer of the Year! The past two years have been challenging in terms of volunteer efforts, specifically the decision as to whether we should provide opportunities for folks to gather during the pandemic. At the beginning of 2020, we asked our Trail Masters whether they would be willing to take on projects solo. As we know, volunteering isn’t just about giving back to your community, but also about socializing with like-minded people. The pandemic significantly limited that social aspect, but nevertheless several Trail Masters stepped up to the plate and adopted a handful of trails. They worked countless hours, often alone, to clear flood debris, remove fallen trees, repair damaged bridges and even bench cut trail reroutes.

Larry was one of those who stepped up. Over the past year, he stood out as the Trail Master who donated the most time to our trails. For Larry, serving his community comes as second nature. Before relocating to North Carolina, he led several not-for-profit organizations in Indiana, advocating for maternal, child and infant health. After arriving in N.C., he switched his focus to his passion for the outdoors and trail management. He joined us as a Trail Master, assisting Tarheel Trailblazers and supporting multiple projects in the Linville Gorge Wilderness. He took it upon himself to “adopt” the South Fork Trail in McAdenville. He has gifted countless hours of labor on this trail and assisted efforts on a variety of other trails throughout the Thread Trail footprint. He has made a major difference to the communities he serves.

Thank you, Larry for your time, energy and continued support of the Thread Trail and Conservancy!
Every May, the League of American Cyclists recognizes National Bike Month, and since we at the Thread Trail are such huge supporters of cycling, we reached out to our partner OrthoCarolina to help put together a toolkit of tips on how to get started biking, where to ride and what you can expect of your body during your cycling activities.

**GETTING STARTED**

The most important step before performing any physical activity is to make sure you have the right equipment to support your efforts. OrthoCarolina’s experts recommend finding a good bike shop and getting fitted for a bicycle. Just like finding the right pair of running shoes, having a bike that is fitted to you can make all the difference in the world. Plus, finding a local shop where you can get to know the staff can help you connect with the cycling community in your area!

**WHERE TO RIDE**

The Thread Trail has over 350 miles of trails open to the public, any of which are accessible by bicycle. If you are looking for a trail specifically geared towards mountain biking or trail riding, we recommend Rocky Branch Trail in Belmont, N.C., Lake Welchel Trail in Gaffney, S.C., or the Falcon Trail in Misenheimer and Richfield, N.C. Or if you want a smoother ride on a paved greenway, check out Piedmont Medical Center Trail in Rock Hill, S.C., or RiverHawk Greenway – Catawba Riverfront Greenway in Mount Holly, N.C. You can find info about all of our trails at carolinathreadtrailmap.org.

**YOUR BODY WHEN CYCLING**

We all know that cycling is not only a great way to experience nature, but also one of the best ways to stay fit. In fact, according to OrthoCarolina, it only takes 10 minutes to start seeing the physical effects of biking. You will feel your muscles loosen up as they begin to activate and your blood starts pumping. Within 20 to 45 minutes your body begins to reduce stress hormones and pump out endorphins and serotonin, which help boost mood and support good mental health. Know that while you can push yourself through tougher rides, even a short ride of 20 minutes a day can reduce your risk of heart disease by half!

Whether biking to work, as a workout or just for pure enjoyment, we hope National Bike Month helps you experience the outdoors, however you choose to roll.
CAROLINA THREAD TRAIL
2021 GRANTS TO THE COMMUNITY

Carolina Thread Trail awards $755,500 for trail projects to 16 partners

More spaces to safely access and enjoy nature will soon be on the way, thanks to the Carolina Thread Trail. The Governing Board of the Thread Trail recently approved distribution of $755,500 in grant funding for expanding and advancing public trails across the Thread Trail’s 15-county footprint. The Thread Trail’s Implementation Grant Program provides funding to communities and nonprofit organizations to support projects in trail construction, design, land acquisition and corridor planning. Over the past 11 years, the Thread Trail has awarded nearly $8 million in catalytic grants to communities. Currently, 350 miles of greenways and trails, as well as 170 miles of blueways, are open to the public within the Thread Trail system.

The grant award amount, community information and the use of the grants follow:

BELMONT, N.C.
$30,000 To help with land acquisition for the construction of Abbey Creek Greenway, which runs parallel to Wilkinson Blvd., and will connect to Loftin Park on the Catawba River.

BESEMER CITY, N.C.
$15,000 To conduct a trail corridor study to determine the best alignment for a trail extension at the South-Ridge Parkway Industrial Park that will serve residents and employees, and approach the western side of Gastonia with an eventual connection underneath I-485.

CATAWBA LANDS CONSERVANCY
$5,000 To assist in the construction of the Catawba Creek Greenway extension within the City of Gastonia, extending the Aven-Catasba Greenway by ½ mile, resulting in a total length of nearly three miles.

CONCORD, N.C.
$30,000 To design an extension of the Irahi Buffalo Creek Greenway, connecting Caldwell Park to Lincoln Street and Melrose Drive.

CRAMERTON, N.C.
$86,000 To improve the Rocky Branch Trail at Stuart Cramer High School, which provides a critical trail connection between Cramerton and Belmont.

GREAT FALLS, S.C.
$30,000 To design the 3.5-mile Great Falls Rail Trail along the Catawba River, which will provide important pedestrian and bicycle access to the future Dearborn Island State Park and its recreational opportunities.

IREDELL COUNTY, N.C.
$30,000 To design a 1.4-mile extension of Fourth Creek Greenway, between Big Leaf Sloper Park and Greenbrier Road, where it will connect to the future extension of the Broad Street segment of the Statesville Greenway, resulting in 7 miles of continuous trail.

KINGS MOUNTAIN, N.C.
$30,000 To conduct a design and feasibility study that explores future segments and connections of the Kings Mountain Gateway Trail between the Town of Kings Mountain and Crowders Mountain State Park.

LOWELL, N.C.
$8,000 To fund the design of a future extension of the South Fork Trail, which facilitates an eventual connection to Poston Park.

MARSHVILLE, N.C.
$34,500 To fund construction of the Town of Marshville Connector trail. Funding will improve the trail within the Municipal Park, improve crosswalks and expand the trail by connecting to nearby neighborhoods.

MOUNT PLEASANT, N.C.
$47,000 To expand an existing parking lot at Buffalo Creek Preserve, increasing access to the preserve and the existing Thread Trail.

ROCK HILL, S.C.
$30,000 To design a 0.2-mile extension of the Jack White Trail along Dave Lyle Blvd., which facilitates a connection of the Manchester Creek trail corridor from the Catawba River to downtown Rock Hill.

SHELBY, N.C.
$200,000 To construct a 0.8-mile segment of rail trail that will connect an existing Thread Trail to Uptown Shelby. This is the first phase of an eventual 11-mile rail trail connection from Shelby to the S.C. state line.

SPENCER, N.C.
$50,000 To construct the Yadkin River Park Trailhead and Greenway Connector, a first step toward providing a connection between Spencer and Salisbury, and later across the Wild- Fox Bridge to Davison County.

STANLY, N.C.
$100,000 To construct the 2.8-mile Tom Webb segment of the Falcon Trail, extending the existing trail from Richfield Park.

WAXHAW, N.C.
$50,000 To fund construction of the Waxhaw 12 Mile Creek Greenway, formerly a private trail that will be improved and made accessible to the public. The trail will expand the 12 Mile Creek Greenway, which crosses the N.C.-S.C. state line.

CATAWBA LANDS CONSERVANCY & CAROLINA THREAD TRAIL
2021 GRANTS RECEIVED

GOVERNMENT GRANTS
• Environmental Enhancement Grant from the N.C. Department of Justice - $50,000 for Forney Creek restoration
• N.C. Land and Water Fund - $150,000 for Forney Creek restoration
• UNC Charlotte Levine Scholars - $1,228 for improvements to Pharr Family Preserve Launch
• City of Charlotte - $12,200 towards Spears Conservation Easement

FOUNDATION GIFTS
• Gaston Community Foundation - $15,000 for Spencer Mountain Launch rebuild
• Duke Energy - $28,500 for grasslands initiative
• Duke Energy Habitat Enhancement Program - $13,500 for invasive control at Seven Oaks Preserve and Goat Island Preserve
• US Fish and Wildlife - $14,000 for endangered species restoration at Buffalo Creek Preserve
• Catawba Waterway Water Management Group - $20,000 for Forney Creek land acquisition
• Friendship Fund Foundation - $5,000 for South Fork Trail ongoing maintenance

Photo by: Nancy Pierce
In 2021, Catawba Lands Conservancy acquired approximately 67 acres in donated conservation easements and approximately 178 acres in donated land. Catawba Lands Conservancy also acquired by purchase two residential lots in order to facilitate trail connections.

Note: The three-year revenue and expense report is both restricted and unrestricted revenue. In the prior Annual Reports, we showed a chart with only operating revenue and expenses. We feel this is a better representation of the activity at Catawba Lands Conservancy.

### Operating Budget Summary 2020-2021 General Fund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donors</td>
<td>$1,412,445</td>
<td>$1,840,687</td>
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<td>Corp. Partners</td>
<td>$370,791</td>
<td>$115,785</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundations and Government Grants</td>
<td>$259,645</td>
<td>$233,308</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government Grants</td>
<td>$1,988,346</td>
<td>$44,450</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land and Easement Donations</td>
<td>$4,742,956</td>
<td>$4,669,300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program and Other Revenue</td>
<td>$1,511,969</td>
<td>$1,308,503</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue</strong></td>
<td>$10,286,062</td>
<td>$8,212,333</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
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<td>$1,397,176</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office and Administrative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outreach and Development</td>
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<td>$190,097</td>
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<td>Operations</td>
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<td>$125,005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservation Easements</td>
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<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td>$3,029,368</td>
<td>$2,781,791</td>
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**Operating Net** $7,256,694 $5,430,542

### Cash Balances

- **Stewardship and Legal Defense Fund**
- **Restricted Cash**
- **Operating Cash**

### Three-Year Support and Revenue

- **2019**
- **2020**
- **2021**

### Three-Year Expenses

- **2019**
- **2020**
- **2021**

[Images of Catawba Lands Conservancy trails and conservation areas]
Donors who make a five-year commitment to CLC annual fund are recognized as members of the Magnolia Society, named for the rare Bigleaf Magnolia, a majestic tree protected on Conservancy land. We gratefully acknowledge donors who are helping secure the long-term sustainability of our region.
CAROLINA THREAD TRAIL
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DONORS

$100,000+
- David Belk Cannon Foundation
- Bank of America
- C.D. Spangler Foundation
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Community Foundation
- The Dow Foundation
- Duke Energy Foundation
- Wells Fargo Foundation

$50,000+
- Truist Foundation
- The Cannon Foundation
- The Carstarphen Family Companies
- The Dickson Foundations, Inc.
- The Joan Irvine Foundations
- Kelly and Lot Powers
- Pam and Andy Warlick

$10,000+
- Bill and Sharon Allen
- The Benbow Foundation

Myra Aherns Foundation
- Brookfield Family Foundation
- Friends of Our Cats Grant
- Gates Community Foundation
- The George Foundation
- Paul and Molly Frankie
- Haywood
- Eugene and Vickie Johnson
- John and Dave Procter
- Ruth Simmons Cooper Gibb
- Edward Messinger, Jr. and Betty Fleming

$50,000+
- Bemis and Jon Aronstein
- Aztec Foundation
- Carol and Bill Cantafio
- Chair potato Finney Company
- Wolfe and Online Clack
- Nash and John Deliot
- Craig and Tiffany Crain
- Cato and Simone McHale
- Lowey
- Kathrynn Stock and Tom Webb
- George and Diane Henry
- Kelly Ketterer and Larry Shoakl

Jenic and Hunter McElhenny
- Greg and Jill Farnam
- Rock Hill C&O Cola Company
- Sponsorship
- The House Foundation
- The Allen 13 Foundation
- Gary and Peggy Williams

$25,000+
- Blanchard Partners
- Lynn and Barry Laid
- David Looper Family
- John McDill
- Jon McElroy
- Kathy and Colin Shaw
- Parker and Stephen Stafford
- Treadwell Trust

$10,000+
- Skull Paddles and Jim Aronstein
- Beaches Partners
- Demos
- Dodie and Salia Chow
- Sally and Michael Grady
- Alice and Kevin Doner
- Nancy and Ralph Fails

Dede and Clay Gould
- Debbie Hunt
- Raymond Family Foundation
- Ed and Rita Neil
- Steven F. Parker
- Hayley and Miled Patrick
- Alex and Sharon Reeker
- The Shannon Family Fund
- Keith Smith
- SRC
- United Bank
- Christopher and Tyson Whetzel

$5,000+
- Cato and Rosemary Atherstone
- Cherokee Trust
- Jennifer DeWitt
- Ken and Lynn Levine
- Meg Watson and Brad Laid
- Gordon and Catherine Neveaux
- Marshall Rogers
- Dedication Bank

UP TO $4,999
- Anonymous
- Kevin and Tammy Anderson
- Travis and Lisa Anderson

CAROLINA THREAD TRAIL
FINANCIAL REPORT

OPERATING EXPENSE BY PROGRAM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personnel Cost</td>
<td>$516,000</td>
<td>$613,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office &amp; Admin</td>
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<td>Outreach &amp; Dev.</td>
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<td>Operations</td>
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<td>Total Operating Expense</td>
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FUND BALANCES

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
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<th>2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
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<td>Net Restricted Cash for Trail Implementation</td>
<td>$956,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Endowment Fund</td>
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<td>Total Assets</td>
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CASH RESTRICTED AND OPERATING

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
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<tr>
<td>Endowment Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Restricted Cash for Trail Implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
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OPERATING EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Personnel Cost</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office &amp; Admin</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
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<td>Outreach &amp; Dev.</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
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<td>Operations</td>
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<td>Total Operating Expense</td>
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OUTSTANDING PLEDGES

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unrestricted Outstanding Pledges</th>
<th>Trail Implementation Outstanding Pledges</th>
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<td>Unrestricted Outstanding Pledges</td>
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<td>Trail Implementation Outstanding Pledges</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,751,000</td>
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Catawba Lands Conservancy is part of a network of land trusts that collectively have protected more than 400,000 acres of the places you love in North Carolina.

2021
BY THE NUMBERS

334
PROGRAM ATTENDEES

1
REDESIGNED ONLINE TRAIL MAP

173
VOLUNTEERS

9
BIKE RIDES

9
PADDLES

11
TRAIL COUNTERS INSTALLED

9
MILES OF TRAIL OPENED

11
HIKES

11
COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS

800
ENDANGERED SUNFLOWERS PLANTED

70+
ACRES OF LAND PROTECTED