



2021  
ANNUAL REPORT

# IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

Outdoor recreation to revitalize town of Great Falls

Great Falls Rail Trail

Photo by: Grant Baldwin

**N**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.



New access area for flatwater and whitewater kayaking and the new Dearborn State Park.

“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.”

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 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 WHITewater

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





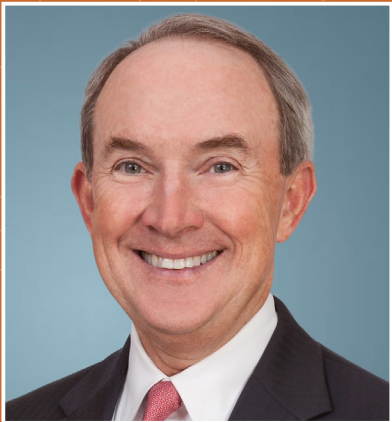
# LETTER FROM THE CLC BOARD CHAIR

Who would have thought three years ago that we would have suffered through two years of pandemic by now? Everyone’s life has been turned upside down for a while, but some things remain the same. Just like 31 years ago when CLC was founded, our mission to conserve land and connect lives to nature remains the same. In fact, the pandemic highlighted the health benefits, both mental and physical, of nearby green spaces for recreation and respite.

CLC passed its 30th birthday and our mission is more important than ever. We will never be without the need for clean air and water. We will never replace the calming effects of a walk in the woods. We will never fail to appreciate a magnolia in full flower or the bright plumage of a cardinal.

All these things are a part of our mission. With or without COVID, we have a need for natural spaces, for the beauty of nature and for a reminder of our heritage. We also want to retain our wonderful quality of life. Because of the dramatic and successful growth of our region, we are pressed to preserve as much land as possible so that the very thing that attracts people to our region is not lost.

Thank you for the important part that you play to help us on this great journey.



**JIM HOVIS**  
ATTORNEY AT LAW,  
MOORE & VAN ALLEN, PLLC

*continued from Cover*

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.

“These 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.

“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 railbed 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 Katawba 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.”

## CLC/CTT STAFF

Danielle Andrews, Land Conservation Associate  
Bret Baronak, Carolina Thread Trail Director  
Sean Bloom, GIS Director and Biologist  
Brittnay Brown, Land Conservation and Trail Projects Coordinator  
Amanda Byrum, Land Conservation Director  
Jennifer Clark, Communications and Marketing Manager  
Becca Cohler, Trail and Volunteer Manager  
Alesia DiCosola, Marketing and Development Director  
Raul Galvan, Davidson Impact Fellow  
Fran Henderson, Payroll and Accounting Clerk  
Andy Kane, Land and Trail Stewardship Associate  
Mark Kincaid, Community Coordinator  
Casey Kuglar, Development Associate  
Ashton Lamb, Community Coordinator  
Bart Landess, Executive Director  
Jane Love, Community Coordinator  
Gail Olsen, Finance Director  
Jessica Otto, Carolina Thread Trail Capital Campaign Manager  
Will Ruark, Conservation Preserve Manager  
Sharon Wilson, Land Stewardship Director

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## LETTER FROM THE CTT BOARD CHAIR

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

## WELCOME NEW CLC BOARD MEMBER!

**JANET HANSON**, *Diversity and Inclusion Leader, Deloitte Consulting*

# WELCOME NEW STAFF



**BECCA COHLER**  
*Trail and Volunteer Manager*

Becca previously managed the trails at Anne Springs Close Greenway and brings a wealth of knowledge from that experience over to the Thread Trail. She is already diving into managing volunteers and improving trails for both organizations.



**BRITTNEY BROWN**  
*Land Conservation and Trail Projects Coordinator*

Previously having served as the Executive Director at Nations Ford Land Trust, Brittney knows all the ins and outs of conservation and trails. She is currently spearheading the Thread Trail's sign initiative which will rebrand all trails with fresh and consistent signage.





# GAINING GROUND

New conservation projects are laying the groundwork for critical projects to protect water and connect communities



Spears Conservation Easement

## 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 (TCPP). 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!



Cross-State Trail Connection



Turtle Haven Conservation Easement

## 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.





# CAPITAL CAMPAIGN LAUNCH

Nearly 200 miles of trail to be funded by campaign

In 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.”

Interested in contributing?  
Visit [carolinathreadtrail.org/blazingnewtrails](https://carolinathreadtrail.org/blazingnewtrails)  
to make a gift today!

## FIELD NOTES

### 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.

### 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!



Photo by Jane Love

### 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.

### 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 Welch 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!



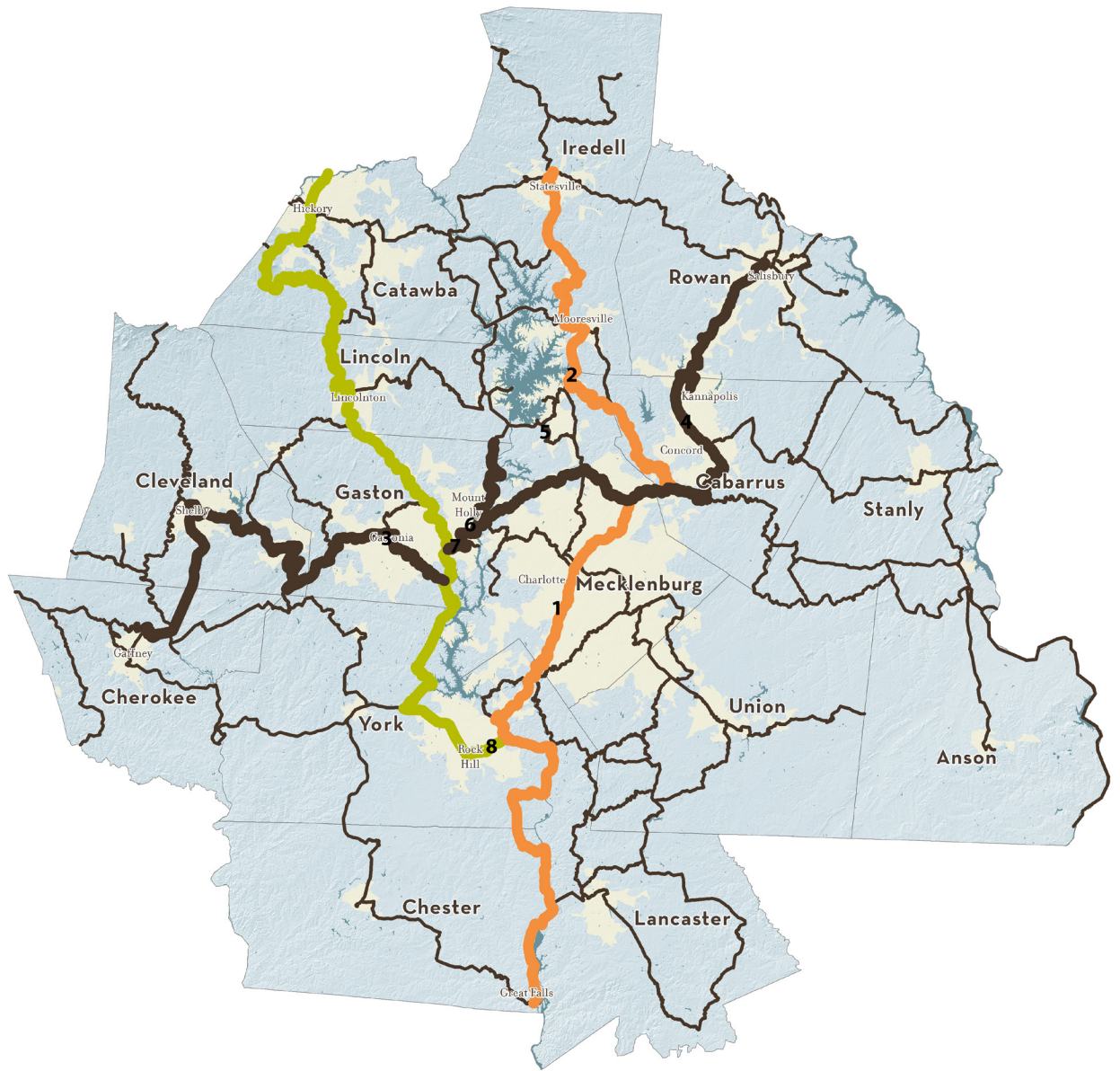




# - GROWING - THE THREAD TRAIL

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!

-  **Primary East - West Corridor**  
Salisbury to Shelby  
174.7 Miles
-  **North - South Spine**  
Statesville to Great Falls  
138.1 Miles
-  **Western Spine**  
Hickory to Rock Hill  
117.9 Miles
-  **Carolina Thread Trail**



Rocky Branch Trail, Belmont, N.C.



Little Sugar Creek Greenway, Pineville, N.C.



The Vine Downtown Connector, Huntersville, N.C.

## 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





# KEEPING HISTORY ALIVE

Mitchem family preserves farmland through two conservation easements

**F**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

**"WE KNEW THE CONSERVANCY HAD DONE THIS WORK IN OUR COUNTY, AND SO WE GAVE THEM A CALL TO TALK TO THEM ABOUT IT. AND THE PARTNERSHIP HAS WORKED."**

the opportunities for relatively low development green space that these farm properties represent,” said Amanda Byrum, Land Conservation Director for the Conservancy.

“The Mitchem Farm property is an example of a farm operation with prime soils, including soils of statewide importance, enhanced by a current conservation plan for farm operations and adjacent to a park and near other conserved property.”

Thanks to their partnership with the Conservancy, the Mitchem family can rest assured that its peaceful pastures will remain as they have looked and functioned for well over a century.



Brothers Wayne and Carrol Mitchem  
Photo by: Nancy Pierce







# TRAIL FORUM HIGHLIGHTS

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!



### THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



## GIVING TUESDAY

Thank you to everyone who donated during our annual #GivingTuesday campaign. Because of generous support from our donors, we were able to exceed our matches for both the Conservancy and Thread Trail!

We are especially grateful to Bragg Financial Advisors and an anonymous donor who matched the gifts made on #GivingTuesday. In total we were able to raise over **\$75,000** for the Conservancy and **\$27,000** for the Thread Trail!

**BRAGG**  
— FINANCIAL —

### THANK YOU TO THE SPONSORS WHO HELPED MAKE OUR 2021 PUBLIC PROGRAMS A REALITY!

PUBLIC PROGRAMS  
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PADDLE PROGRAMS  
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**E**very 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

OrthoCarolina



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](http://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

### BIKE ORGANIZATIONS WORTH CHECKING OUT

TARHEEL TRAILBLAZERS  
TRIPS FOR KIDS/  
CHARLOTTE RECYCLERY  
CHARLOTTE JOYRIDES  
BIKIN' DADS ADVENTURES

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.



250 miles of trails.  
Expert orthopedic care  
every step of your journey.

Interactive Thread Trail Map  
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# 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.

### BESSEMER 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-85.

### CATAWBA LANDS CONSERVANCY

**\$5,000** To assist in the construction of the Catawba Creek Greenway extension within the City of Gastonia, extending the Avon-Catawba Greenway by ½ mile, resulting in a total length of nearly three miles.

### CONCORD, N.C.

**\$30,000** To design an extension of Irish 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 Slopes Park and Greenbriar 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.

**\$14,500** 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 the 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 Wil-Cox Bridge to Davidson 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 Wateree 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





# CATAWBA LANDS CONSERVANCY FINANCIAL REPORT

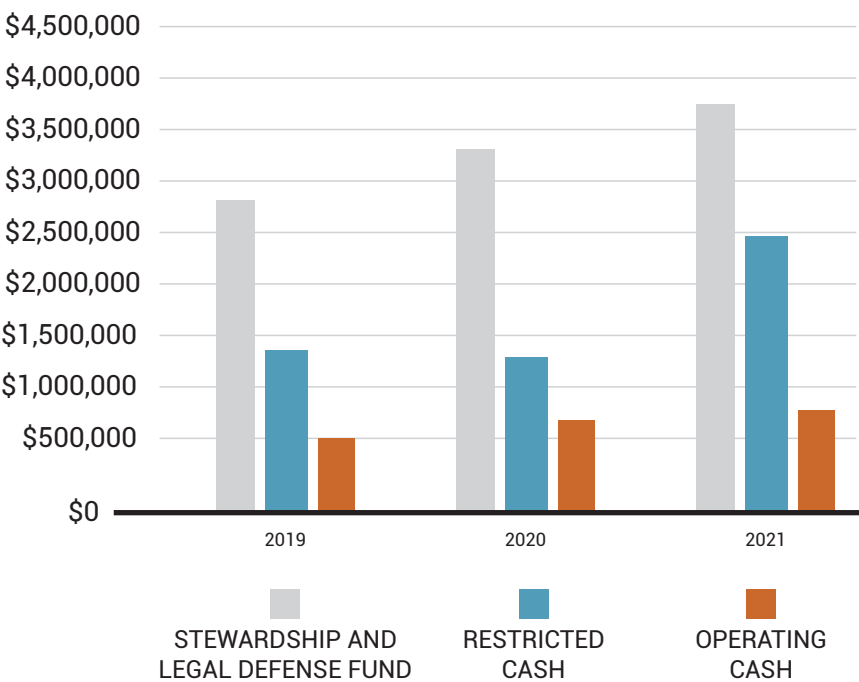
In 2021, Catawba Lands Conservancy acquired approximately 67 acres in donated conservation easements and approximately 178 acres in donated land. Catwaba Lands Conservancy also acquired by purchase two residential lots in order to facilitate trail connections.

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.

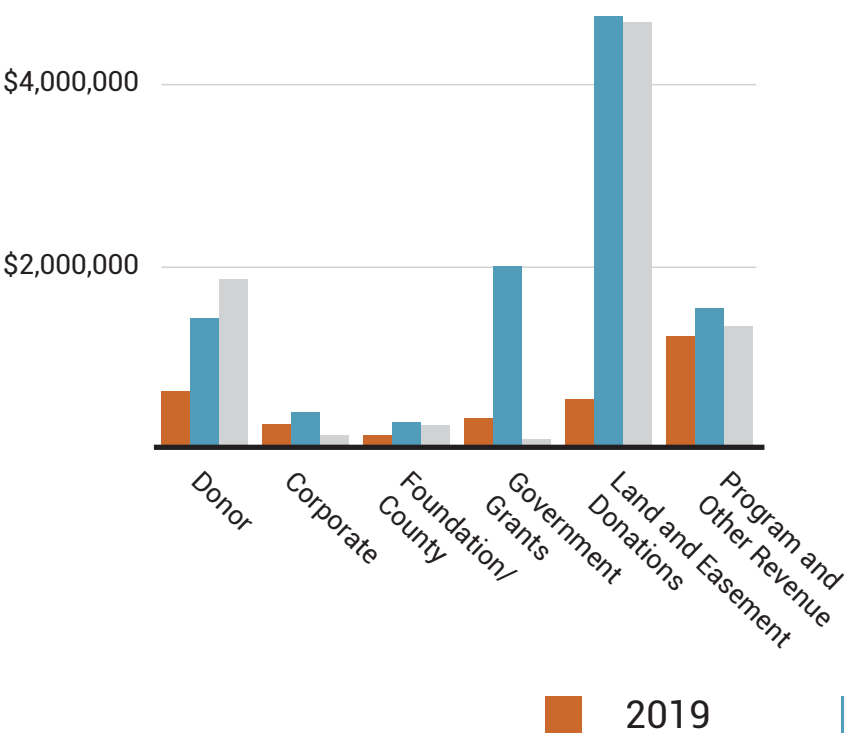
## OPERATING BUDGET SUMMARY 2020-2021 GENERAL FUND

		2020	2021
REVENUE	Donors	\$1,412,445	\$1,840,687
	Corp. Partners	\$370,791	\$115,785
	Foundations and Government	\$259,645	\$233,608
	Government Grants	\$1,989,146	\$44,450
	Land and Easement Donations	\$4,742,066	\$4,669,300
	Program and Other Revenue	\$1,511,969	\$1,308,503
	Total Revenue	\$10,286,062	\$8,212,333
EXPENSES	Compensation	\$1,216,768	\$1,397,176
	Office and Administrative	\$104,440	\$490,463
	Outreach and Development	\$109,562	\$190,097
	Operations	\$77,098	\$125,005
	Conservation Easements	\$1,521,500	\$579,050
	Total Expenses	\$3,029,368	\$2,781,791
Operating Net		\$7,256,694	\$ 5,430,542

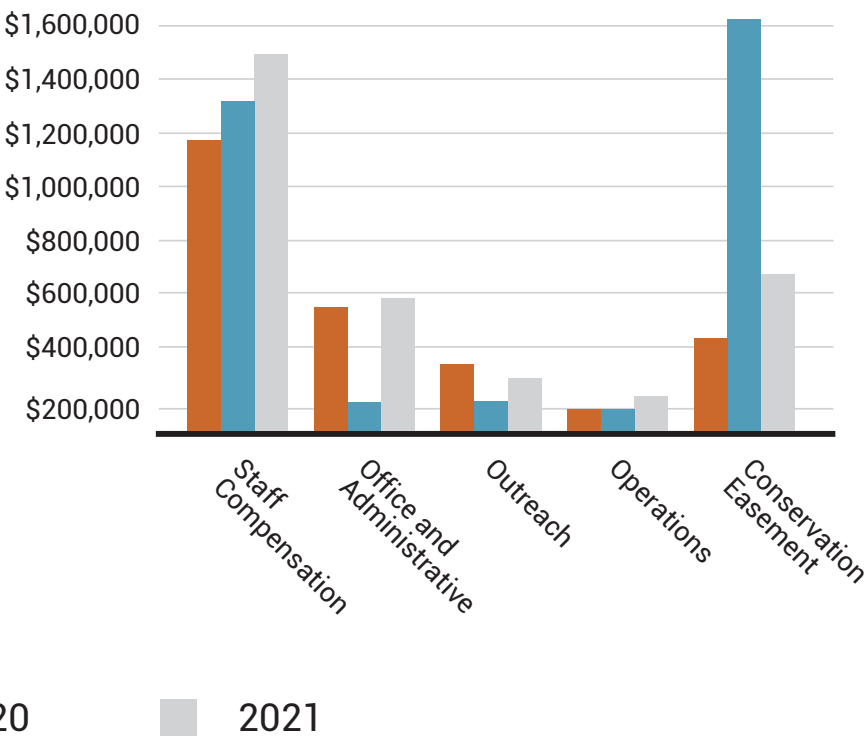
## CASH BALANCES



## THREE-YEAR SUPPORT AND REVENUE



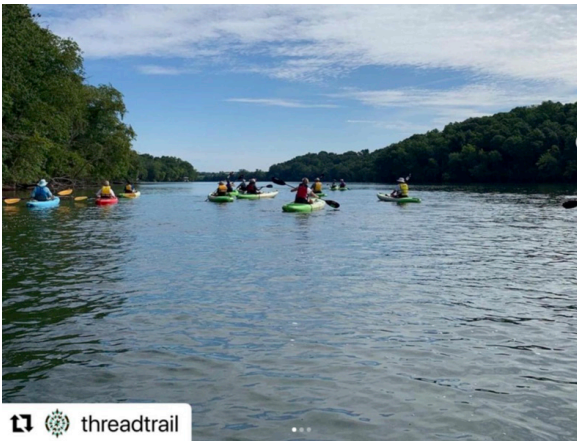
## THREE-YEAR EXPENSES



laurelhillfarm



clc\_biologist



threadtrail





# 2021 CATAWBA LANDS CONSERVANCY AND CAROLINA THREAD TRAIL DONORS

Our donors' generous support each year enables us to pursue our mission of saving land and connecting lives to nature. This list reflects combined gifts to both organizations that were made during the 2021 calendar year.

\*Donor for 10 or more consecutive years    ^ Nature Sustainers – monthly supporters

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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.

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ESTATE GIFTS

Mary McDaniel Society:  
Catawba Lands  
Conservancy received two major bequests in 2021.

The Estate of  
Doris Anne Bradley  
A loyal donor to Catawba Lands Conservancy since 1997, Doris Anne Bradley (February 21, 1930 - November 27, 2020) enjoyed a fulfilling career as a librarian and was a lifelong learner, avid traveler and volunteer.

A Charlotte couple also generously left their entire estate to Catawba Lands Conservancy including 178 acres of land in northeast Charlotte near Reedy Creek Nature Preserve.

Planned Giving  
If you have included us in your estate planning, please let us know.





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# CAROLINA THREAD TRAIL FINANCIAL REPORT

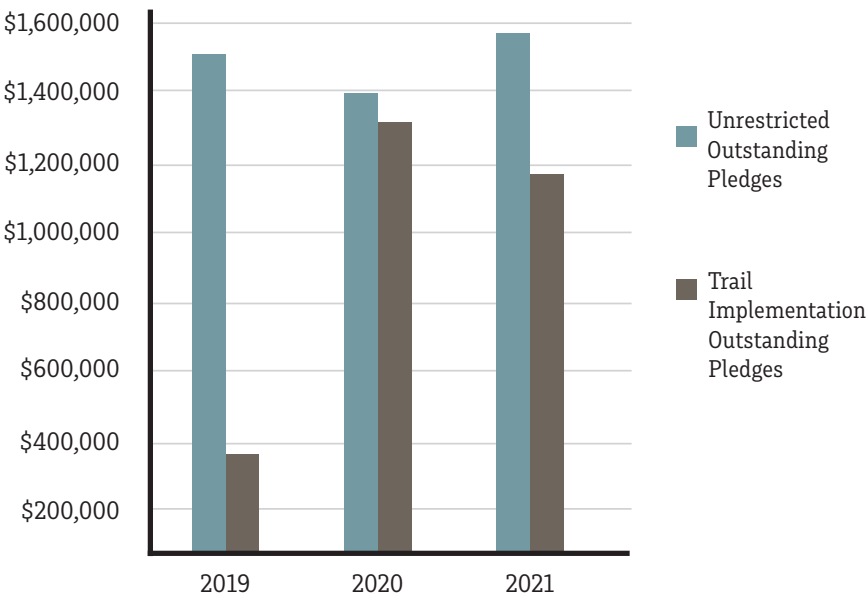
## OPERATING EXPENSE BY PROGRAM

	2019	2020	2021
Personnel Cost	\$516,000	\$613,000	\$773,000
Office and Admin	\$89,000	\$89,000	\$112,000
Outreach & Development	\$92,000	\$46,000	\$108,000
Operations	\$36,000	\$27,000	\$27,000
<b>Total Operating Expense</b>	<b>\$733,000</b>	<b>\$775,00</b>	<b>\$1,020,000</b>

## FUND BALANCES

ASSETS	2019	2020	2021
Cash	\$869,000	\$1,360,000	\$1,797,000
Net Restricted Cash for Trail Implementation	\$950,000	\$915,000	\$1,370,000
Endowment Fund	\$3,243,000	\$3,424,000	\$3,838,000
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$5,062,000</b>	<b>\$5,699,000</b>	<b>\$7,005,000</b>

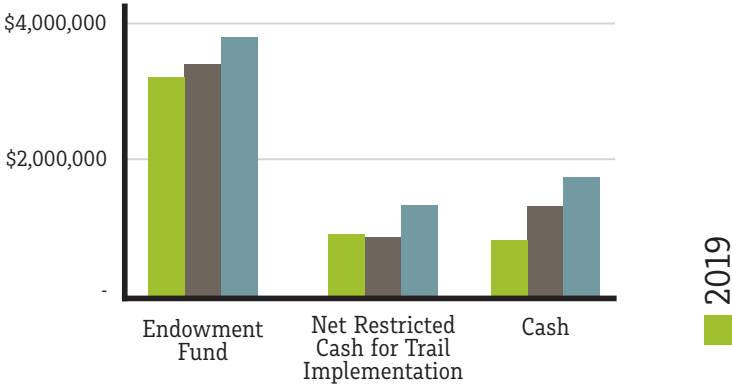
## OUTSTANDING PLEDGES



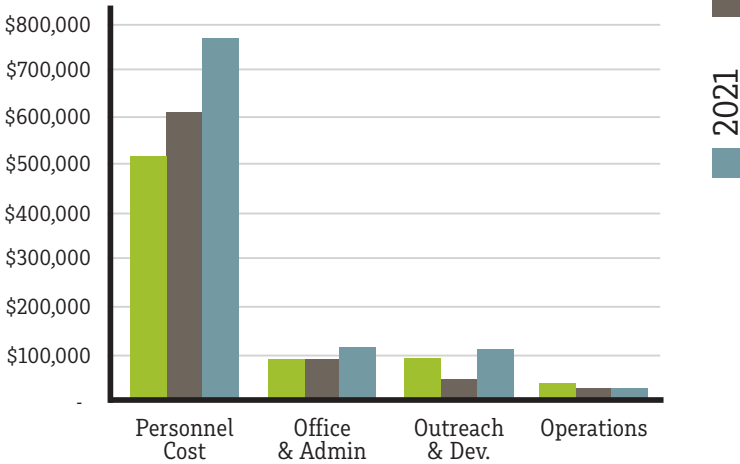
### OUTSTANDING PLEDGES

ASSETS	2019	2020	2021
Unrestricted Outstanding Pledges	\$1,451,000	\$1,327,000	\$1,494,000
Trail Implementation Outstanding Pledges	\$290,000	\$1,247,000	\$1,091,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,741,000</b>	<b>\$2,574,000</b>	<b>\$2,585,000</b>

## CASH RESTRICTED AND OPERATING



## OPERATING EXPENSES







**- CATAWBA -**  
LANDS CONSERVANCY  
LAND | WATER | FARMS | NATURE



**CAROLINA**  
THREAD TRAIL

4530 Park Road, Suite 420  
Charlotte, N.C. 28209

704.342.3330  
catawbalands.org  
carolinathreadtrail.org

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Charlotte, NC  
Permit No.  
1967C

Change Service  
Requested

North Carolina  
LAND TRUSTS  
*Saving the Places You Love*



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

11  
  
PADDLES

  
4  
SPECIAL  
EVENTS

  
334  
PROGRAM  
ATTENDEES

1  
  
REDESIGNED  
ONLINE  
TRAIL MAP

173  
  
VOLUNTEERS

9  
  
MILES  
OF TRAIL  
OPENED

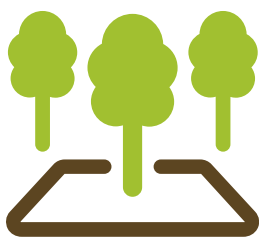
  
9  
BIKE  
RIDES

8  
  
TRAIL  
COUNTERS  
INSTALLED

  
11  
WORKDAYS

  
11  
HIKES

70+  
ACRES  
OF LAND  
PROTECTED



11  
COMMUNITY  
OUTREACH  
EVENTS  


800  
ENDANGERED  
SUNFLOWERS  
PLANTED  
