



Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: The Mountains-To-Sea Trail in Lenoir County

By CED Program Interns & Students

Article: <https://ced.sog.unc.edu/the-mountains-to-sea-trail-in-lenoir-county/>

This entry was posted on October 07, 2009 and is filed under Community Development, Community-Campus Partnership, Lenoir County, Natural Assets

The Mountains-To-Sea Trail (MST) is a nearly 1000 mile trail, which was designated as a North Carolina State Park in 2000. With the exception of the Outer Banks, nearly all of the eastern trail section is along roadways, which presents a great opportunity for Kinston and Lenoir County to serve as a major hub for the trail.

For many years, residents of the City of Kinston have expressed interest in capitalizing on one of their greatest natural assets, proximity to the Neuse River. Creating a trail along the river to be designated as part of the MST would have health, recreation, transportation, and economic benefits, with the added benefit of a statewide coalition of volunteers and support.

I worked as an intern this past summer in Kinston and Lenoir County through the Community Campus Partnership. As an intern during the academic year, I will work towards what will ultimately be roughly 12 miles of off-road foot paths through Kinston, designated as a part of the MST. The scope of work for the year will be specifically focused on the initial steps of trail implementation. This will include community forums and local input, land appraisal, land/right-of-way acquisition, surveying, and grant applications.

Initial work has included conversations with Kate Dixon, Director of the Friends of the MST; Bill Ellis, Director of Lenoir County Parks and Recreation Department; and Jennie Matkins, Grants Coordinator for Alamance County Recreation and Parks. Alamance County was awarded a PARTF grant last year for use in acquiring land for a 7-mile stretch of trail to be designated as part of the MST. The PARTF grant, along with the Recreational Trails Program and Fit Communities grants will be pursued as funding avenues for the initial steps previously discussed. Attendance at the PARTF grant-writing workshop on the morning of October 7th proved to be fruitful, as the scoring breakdown for priority projects was discussed in detail. One element of the PARTF grant application that is new this year is a section that specifically addresses greenways and trails, showing an increasing shift towards approval of trails projects for funding.

Upcoming tasks will include further discussions with Jennie Matkins and Brian Baker of Alamance County Recreation and Parks Department to obtain further insight into their PARTF application success. Discussions with Trust for Public Land will be initiated to seek their assistance in acquiring easement agreements from property owners. A "first hike" of the proposed trail route with Kate Dixon will highlight any major trouble areas for the trail that may need to be further evaluated.