Trail Under Fire:
Case Study of Weed Patch Mountain Trail
Overcoming Long Odds via Partnerships

Town of Lake Lure, Conserving Carolina, Chimney Rock State Park
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Peter Barr
Trails Coordinator

Sustainable Trail Development with emphasis on Natural Resource Protection: Design & Layout, Construction, Stewardship, Project Management

Conserving Carolina
Non-profit land trust in Hendersonville/Asheville, NC

• Dedicated to protecting and stewarding land and water resources vital to our natural heritage and quality of life and to fostering appreciation and understanding of the natural world.

• Protected 35,000+ acres in western North Carolina along Blue Ridge Escarpment, French Broad River watershed, and the Hickory Nut Gorge.

• Constructed & manages 25 miles of SUSTAINABLE public recreational trails
Tim Johnson
Director – Duke Energy TRAILS at Rockingham Community College

Development of continuing education classes and curriculum courses in sustainable trail planning, design and layout, construction, maintenance, and management.

Formerly Regional Trails Specialist for the NC Division of Park and Recreation

• Provided professional consulting services and technical assistance to government and non-profit agencies, private stakeholders, landowners, and trail user groups to assist with land acquisition, construction, and management of trails and greenways for multiple purposes.

• Assisted in the annual preparation, review and administration of applications for the federally funded Recreational Trails Program.
Learning Objectives

1. Building Strong Public & Private Partnerships
2. Satisfying Multiple Stakeholders with Competing Goals
4. Overcoming Physical, Financial, and Managerial Obstacles
5. Sustainable Trails Principals Enhances Resource Protection, User Enjoyment, and Management Burden
Project Summary:

• Town of Lake Lure received Recreational Trails Program grant (RTP) for 1st Phase of trail development in their Buffalo Creek Park to construct 5-mile mountain biking & hiking loop trail on conservation easement (protected) land in 2012

• Phase 1 trail development demonstrated significant sustainability issues and negative natural resource impacts

• Town of Lake Lure received 2nd RTP grant for Phase 2 of trail development: 7 miles of trail to connect Buffalo Creek Park to Chimney Rock State Park, across conserved land owned by local land trust (Conserving Carolina) in 2015

• Project does not make progress for 2 years; Town realizes they are short on time (<1 year till grant deadline), funding ($100K shortfall), and expertise to prevent repeating shortcomings in Phase 1

• Multiple additional obstacles ensue
END OF TRAIL
(FOR NOW)

Future trail will reach
Eagle Rock in Chimney
Rock State Park, 5 miles
Overcoming Obstacles:

• Out of Time (9 months before grant deadline)
• Out of Money ($100,000 shortfall)
• Lack of Expertise (major sustainability & natural resource issues on Phase 1)
• Remote, Rugged, Difficult to Access Terrain
• Multiple Stakeholders & Landowners, Private Property
• 7,000 acre forest fire
• Short- & long-term management concerns from Town (managing/owning agency)
Multiple Stakeholders w/ Competing Goals:

1. Grant Recipient & Landowner: Town of Lake Lure
2. Grant Funder: Recreational Trails Program & State Trails Program
3. Landowner: Conserving Carolina
4. Landowner: Chimney Rock State Park
5. Conservation Easement Holder: Clean Water Management Trust Fund
6. Trail Easement Holders: Private Landowners (x3)
7. Erosion & Sedimentation Control: NC Dept. of Land Quality
8. Outdoor Users: Hikers, Mountain Bikers, Rock Climbers
9. Funder: Private Donor
10. Emergency Personnel
Sustainable Trails Principals Enhance Resource Protection, User Enjoyment, & Management Burden:

- Sustainably designed & constructed trail reduces impact to the natural resource
- Increases trust among conservation partners
- Reduces long-term management input & capacity need
- Enhances quality of user experience
Sustainable Trails Principals Enhance Resource Protection, User Enjoyment, & Management Burden:

- Trail was constructed using curvilinear design with rolling grade dips and grade reversals to effectively and frequently manage water.
- Trail width was narrowed (from 5 feet in Phase 1 to 2.5 feet in Phase 2) to reduce total quantity of excavated soil and depth of cut into side slope of mountain.
- Trail surfaces were armored with rock/stone in wet areas such as stream crossings, drainages, seeps.
Building Strong Public & Private Partnerships:

- Town of Lake Lure (municipality)
- Conserving Carolina (local land trust)
- North Carolina State Parks
- Grey Rock Community Association (POA)
- Carolina Climbers Coalition
- Private Landowners/Neighbors to Trail
- Community Volunteers
- Trailbuilding Service Agencies: American Conservation Experience (ACE), AmeriCorps Project Conserve
Weed Patch Mountain Trail Management Plan

- General information about sustainable trail design, construction, maintenance, and management
- Assessment of Weed Patch Mountain Trail
- Specific maintenance requirements for the trail
- Proposed monitoring and maintenance methodology for the trail
Discussion / Questions?

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