

CHAPTER FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION

The Boone Area possesses the resources and the visionary people needed to emerge as the number one outdoor recreation destination in eastern America. As we implement this plan, we must have a clear understanding of the state and federal agencies that can assist with funding this effort. We must also address the long-term sustainability of new recreation facilities. Finally, we must narrow our focus and begin to realize this plan piece by piece.

Accordingly, this chapter is comprised of three major sections, including: 1) Grant Opportunities, 2) Stewardship and Maintenance, and 3) Five-Year Action Plan.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

As stated in the introduction of this plan, the greater challenge for the WCTDA is not determining how best to spend one-third of our revenue on recreation improvements, but how we leverage and multiply our dollars by winning grant support from organizations sympathetic to our mission. The purpose of this section is to briefly outline several of the core existing recreation and environmental grant programs that the WCTDA should aggressively solicit to assist with the implementation of this plan. These organizations include: 1) Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, 2) Clean Water Management Trust Fund, 3) State Trails Program, and 4) NCDOT.

Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF)

PARTF is the State of North Carolina's primary mechanism for funding local community recreation efforts. PARTF grants are highly competitive and require a 50% cash match from the applicant. In 2010, PARTF provided \$6.6 million in funding across the State; Watauga County was the recipient of a \$500,000 PARTF award for Rocky Knob Park.

Watauga County and the WCTDA will need to complete the obligations of the current PARTF grant prior to submitting for additional PARTF funding. Thus, there should be a sense of urgency to complete the obligations for Rocky Knob Park, which, according to the current work schedule, should be fulfilled FY2011-12. Watauga County and the WCTDA should make preparations during FY2011-12 to submit another PARTF grant in January 2013.

Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF)

CWMTF was created in the late 90s "with a mandate to develop a grant program to clean up impaired waters and to protect remaining pristine water of the state."²⁴ Among conservation

organizations and land trusts across NC, CWMTF is recognized as a key ingredient for fulfilling their mission. Throughout most of the Fund's life, the NC General Assembly has provided \$100 million annually to support the CWMTF mission.

The economic downturn in 2008 has placed the Fund on less firm foundation, but the NC General Assembly seems well aware of the importance of CWMTF monies to local conservation efforts. There are three programs managed by CWMTF that are particularly important for the implementation of this plan, including: 1) Acquisition of Riparian Greenway Corridors, 2) Restoration and Stormwater Projects, and 3) Planning (for Acquisition, Greenways, Restoration, Stormwater, or Wastewater Infrastructure projects).

Acquisition of Riparian Greenway Corridors

This plan proposes five multi-use greenway projects across Watauga County. Watauga County and the WCTDA will work with private landowners that are willing to donate (for tax credits) or sell property to implement these efforts. This CWMTF program serves as a major funding source whereby the WCTDA can leverage their funds to purchase these greenway corridors when landowners are amenable.

Restoration and Stormwater Projects

There are waterways throughout Watauga County that are in need of restoration or enhancement to prevent erosion and the loss of land. At its core, this plan depends on clean rivers and streams. This CWMTF program provides funding to ensure the stability of our riverbanks.

Planning

The planning and engineering of greenway projects can be costly. This program supports the efforts of local communities to explore, identify, and develop opportunities for new greenway development. In 2010, Watauga County received a CWMTF planning grant to explore opportunities for the proposed South Fork New River Greenway.

State Trails Program

The State Trails Program is facilitated through the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NCDENR) by the State Trails Program Coordinator. This office manages two trail grant programs, including: 1) Recreation Trails Program and 2) Adopt-a-Trail.

²⁴ This statement was derived from the CWMTF website: www.cwmtf.net.

Recreation Trails Program (RTP)

RTP is a federal trails grant program that is managed by NCDENR. Grant awards are issued in an amount up to \$75,000, but require a 20% match. This grant program offers a good tool for Watauga County and the WCTDA to implement foot trails, biking trails, multi-use greenways, and paddle trails. In 2010, the WCTDA was awarded \$75,000 by RTP to construct the Upper Gorge Access, which is part of the Watauga River Paddle Trail.

Adopt-a-Trail

Adopt-a-Trail is small grant program, which is allocated funds each year by the NC General Assembly, that offers up to \$5,000 for trail construction projects. Although small, the grant application process is simple and matching funds are not required. In 2010, Rocky Knob Park received \$5,000 from this fund for phase II trail development.

NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT)

NCDOT has a significant interest in the development of alternative transportation infrastructure. Thus, NCDOT serves as a particularly good source of funds for developing multi-use greenways projects. NCDOT funds can either be issued at the district level via discretionary funds or local governments can request to place their bike and pedestrian projects on the NCDOT State Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP).

In 2010, NCDOT, through the District 11 office, provided Watauga County with \$135,000 in discretionary funds to assist with engineering and planning of the South Fork New River Greenway near Brookshire Park.

The NCDOT TIP allows local governments to submit for funding for large and/or expensive bike and pedestrian initiatives. For example, the greenway underpass planned at Highway 421 for the South Fork Greenway will cost \$300,000 to complete. This cost is beyond the capacity of local discretionary funds and must be solicited from NCDOT in Raleigh. Watauga County and the WCTDA should be aggressive in issuing TIP requests for major greenway projects.

STEWARDSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Outdoor recreation pursuits are passive, in that unlike team sports played on county recreation fields, a dedicated staff is not necessary to orchestrate the recreation setting. Post-construction costs of a passive park or access area are primarily related to trash pick up and mowing. While the WCTDA is charged with funding the creation of recreation facilities, our mission is to also eliminate or minimize the long-term cost of these new facilities for the county. The WCTDA envisions a variety of ways to pursue the stewardship of new facilities, largely through the

economic input and volunteer contribution of users. The WCTDA recommends exploring the following options:

1. A Facility Sponsorship Program through which private businesses can place "adopted by" signs at various parks, trails, and greenways in return for a financial contribution.
2. A Commercial Permit System requiring commercial outfitters to purchase a permit to utilize public facilities for commercial guiding.
3. A Stewardship Fund, which includes funds from Facility Sponsorship and Commercial Permit System, to be utilized by both the WCTDA and Watauga County to maintain outdoor recreation facilities across the county.
4. Continue to forge strong relationships with community partners that provide a volunteer base for addressing ongoing facility stewardship needs.

FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

The preceding pages document that Watauga County is blessed with world-class natural and outdoor recreational resources. The goal of the WCTDA Recreation Plan is to coordinate and expand that infrastructure, to move the Boone Area beyond being "an accidental destination" for outdoor enthusiasts, to become one of the nation's top tourism magnets for outdoor recreation. By investing a portion of its visitor funded occupancy taxes, the WCTDA intends to leverage further outside funding to give the Boone Area a competitive edge in the enrichment of Watauga County's tourism-based economy. The following 5-year timeline outlines that effort.

Initiative	Project/Objectives	FY 2010 - 2011	FY 2011 - 2012	FY 2012 - 2013	FY 2013 - 2014	FY 2014 - 2014	On-Going	> FY 2015	Implementation Partners
MULTI-USE GREENWAYS (pg. 17)	South Fork New River								
	Construct 3000' Brookshire Park Segment								Watauga County, WCTDA, BAC
	Engineer/Permit Hwy. 421 Pedestrian Underpass w/ consideration of Rocky Knob Connector								Watauga County, WCTDA
	Place Hwy. 421 Underpass on NCDOT TIP (explore Rocky Knob Park Connector for TIP)								Watauga County, WCTDA
	Construct Hwy. 421 Pedestrian Underpass							X	Watauga County, WCTDA
	Develop Long-Range Greenway Plan								WCTDA, Town of Boone
	Secure easements and develop Boone Greenway, Hospitality House Greenway Connector							X	WCTDA, Town of Boone
	Middle Fork New River								
	Transfer MFGA controlled properties to Watauga County								Watauga County
	Engineer Hwy. 321 Underpass at Mystery Hill								WCTDA
	Construct Tweetsie, Mystery Hill, Sterling Creek Connector								WCTDA
	Assist MFGA to secure additional trail easements							X	MFGA, WCTDA
	Valle Crucis								
	Work with landowners to secure trail easements							X	WCTDA, Valle Crucis Park Committee
Cove Creek Greenway									
Secure conservation/trail easement on Mast property								BR Conservancy, WCTDA	
Work with landowners to secure trail easements							X	WCTDA, Cove Creek Preservation	
Grandfather Valley Greenway									
Work with landowners to secure trail easements							X	WCTDA	
HIKING (pg. 23)	Mountains-to-Sea Trail								
	Assist MTS in completion of the new 18-mile section						X		WCTDA, FMST
	Explore new camping areas along route						X		WCTDA, FMST
	MOU with NPS for Holloway Mtn./Shulls Mill Improvements								WCTDA, NPS
	Construct Holloway Mtn. Improvements								WCTDA, NPS
	Construct Shulls Mill Improvements							X	WCTDA, NPS
	Northern Peaks Trail								
	Develop Northern Peak Trail Plan/Feasibility Study								Blue Ridge Conservancy, WCTDA
	Begin Improvements of Howard Knob Park								WCTDA, Watauga County
	Bear Paw State Natural Area								
Assist in Trail Planning								NC State Parks, BR Conservancy, WCTDA	
Begin Trail Construction								NC State Parks, BR Conservancy, WCTDA	
MOUNTAIN BIKING (pg. 27)	Rocky Knob Park								
	Construct access road, parking, and phase I and II of trail development								WCTDA, Watauga County, BAC
	Construct shelter, adventure plygrd, signage]								
	Construct bike skills area								WCTDA, Watauga County, BAC
	Road Paving								
	Construct bathroom facilities and other shelters							X	WCTDA, Watauga County, BAC
	Elk Knob								
	Request bike trails when State begins the park planning process						X	X	WCTDA, Watauga County, BAC
	If ameanable, assist in trail development and construction							X	WCTDA, BAC
	Price Park								
	Encourage NPS officials to consider mountain biking around Price Park						X		WCTDA, Watauga County, BAC, NPS
	If ameanable, assist in trail development and construction							X	WCTDA, BAC
	Pisgah National Forest								
	Work with USFS to develop trailhead and signage plan for Wilson Creek Area								BAC
Develop a trail plan for the Boone Fork Area								BAC, Caldwell County Pathways	
Construct new trail at the Boone Fork Area							X	X	
Beech Mountain									
Assit with Trail Development and Enhancement							X	Town of Beech Mtn., BAC, WCTDA	

Initiative	Project/Objectives	FY 2010 - 2011	FY 2011 - 2012	FY 2012 - 2013	FY 2013 - 2014	FY 2014 - 2015	On-Going	> FY 2015	Implementation Partners
NEW RIVER PADDLE TRAIL (pg. 32)	Boone Access								
	Install signage, kiosk, and landscaping								WCTDA, Town of Boone
	Roby Greene Access								
	Assist NCDOT with facility design								WCTDA, NCWRC, NCDOT
	Secure ROW								WCTDA, NCWRC, NCDOT
	Construct Access: parking, signage, kiosk, river launch, landscaping								WCTDA, NCWRC, NCDOT
	Pine Run Access								
	Finalize Plans, Permitting, and ROW agreement with NCDOT								WCTDA, NCWRC, NCDOT
	Construct Access: parking, signage, kiosk, river launch, landscaping								WCTDA, NCWRC, NCDOT
	Milton Moretz Access								
	Explore and secure location for paddle access							X	WCTDA
	Construct Access								X
Green Valley Park Access									
Install new parking, signage, kiosk, river launch, and landscaping								Green Valley Park Committee, WCTDA	
Todd Island									
Identify and install improvement								Todd Preservation, NCDOT	
WATAUGA RIVER PADDLE TRAIL (pg. 35)	Highway 105 Access								
	Explore location for paddle access						X		WCTDA, NCWRC
	Construct Access							X	WCTDA, NCWRC
	Broadstone Road								
	Explore and secure location for paddle access						X		WCTDA, NCWRC
	Construct Access							X	WCTDA, NCWRC
	Valle Crucis								
	Finalize Plans and ROW agreement								WCTDA, NCWRC
	Construct Access								X
	Old Watauga River Road Access								
	Explore location for paddle access						X		WCTDA, NCWRC
	Construct Access							X	WCTDA, NCWRC
	Upper Gorge Access								
	Finalize donation of 3-acre access								WCTDA, Watauga County, NCWRC
	Construct access according to site plan (pg. 39)								WCTDA, Watauga County, NCWRC
Lower Gorge Access									
Explore location for paddle access							X	WCTDA	
Construct Access								X	
ROAD CYCLING (pg. 31)	Road Cycling Routes and Events								
	Develop and publish the Boone Area Cycling Map								WCTDA, BAC
	Install route identification signage to complement map								WCTDA
	Support major cycling events						X		
	Develop designated parking areas for cyclists						X		WCTDA, BAC
FISHING (pg. 41)	Enhance fishing opportunities throughout the Boone Area								
	Develop and publish the Boone Area Fly Fishing Trail Map								WCTDA
	Create Delayed Harvest adjacent to Brookshire Park along SF New River								WCTDA
	Explore Delayed Harvest opportunities near Boone Greenway along SF New River								WCTDA, NCWRC, Town of Boone, ASU
	Explore NCWRC stocking opportunities at Winkler Creek Reservoir								WCTDA, NCWRC, Town of Boone
CLIMBING (pg. 42)	Acquisition								
	Howard Knob Boulders						X		BCC, Blue Ridge Conservancy, WCTDA
	Facility Improvement								
	Blowing Rock Boulders: trail improvement and kiosk								BCC and WCTDA
General objectives: all other climbing areas						X		BCC and WCTDA	
DISC GOLF (pg. 45)	Explore Winkler Creek Reservoir feasibility for disc golf						X		Town of Boone, WCTDA, HCDGA