



Local family donates 95 acres for riverfront trail

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Just in time for Earth Day, the project to build a “green interstate system” of nature trails throughout the Carolinas is getting a 95-acre gift from one of Gaston County’s most well-known philanthropic families.

The Carstarphen family and Pharr Yarns have donated the land, which runs 3.45 miles in a narrow strip along the South Fork of the Catawba River. It includes 69 acres of wetlands and 18,000 feet of riparian corridor known as the Pharr Yarns Preserve, which will become part of the Carolina Thread Trail project. The preserve will serve as an important link in the South Fork area, according to Thread executives, who announced the Parr donation on Monday.

Dave Cable, executive director of the Catawba Lands Conservancy, says the 3.45-mile walking trail will be built this year.

“This project offers multiple benefits for the community,” said Cable. “It conserves land, provides public access and protects water quality and wildlife.”

Ann Browning, with the Carolina Thread Trail, said the Piedmont Singletrack Alliance is now organizing volunteer labor to start building the trail this summer. Josh Taylor, a resident of Stanley, is organizing a team of volunteers for the local Piedmont chapter. Those interested in being a part of the team should contact the Carolina Thread Trail office at 704-376-2556 or contact Taylor via e-mail at joshtaylor@mindspring.com.

Carstarphen and his wife, Carol, have been actively involved in the Carolina Thread Trail since the project’s launch in 2007.

“Gaston County has seen rapid growth over the last decade, making it critical that we act now to ensure that our children and grandchildren inherit a green and prosperous place to call home,” said Bill Carstarphen, the president of Pharr Yarns who also serves on the Thread Governing board of directors.

“The Conservancy is leading a regional effort to conserve important lands, protect our environment and help us connect with nature.”

His father, Pharr CEO J.M. “Bip” Carstarphen, was named “Person of the Year” by the Gazette in 2009 for his commitment to the community.

Gaston County was one of the first two counties to receive a \$50,000 Thread planning grant in December 2007. Overall, the total project cost has been estimated at between \$60 million and \$150 million over the next 15 years.

In March 2009, Gaston County adopted its Carolina Thread Trail master plan. The plan outlines the long-term course for greenway and trail development within the county and integrates local trails with regionally significant trail segments and conservation corridors.

Gaston's plan identified the South Fork Corridor, home of the Pharr Yarns Preserve, as a priority corridor for trail construction. Fueled by a \$74,484 Carolina Thread Trail implementation grant, an initial 3.5 miles of natural surface trail will be constructed along the river this summer.

This new trail segment will join the existing blueway, a paddling trail extending from the Spencer Mountain River Access downstream to the R.Y. McAden River Access, which opened in September 2009. Ultimately, The Thread's South Fork Corridor will offer 9.5 miles of multi-use trails for public enjoyment.

Gazette City Editor Leo Hohmann contributed to this report.

<http://www.gastongazette.com/articles/trail-46175-family-acres.html>