

## Gift adds thread to trail network

Pharr Yarns donates riverfront land for Carolina Thread Trail, and volunteers will provide muscle

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MCADENVILLE Mountain-biker Josh Taylor knows what it will take to carve a new trail along the South Fork River in Gaston County.

"Ruthless manual labor," he said.

In the next few months, Taylor and other volunteers with the Piedmont Area Singletrack Alliance will begin building a 3 1/2-mile trail on 95 acres recently donated to the Catawba Lands Conservancy by McAdenville-based Pharr Yarns.



It's the first gift of a specific tract of land to the Carolina Thread Trail, a planned 15-county network of trails and conservation areas. Multiple access points around the region will allow folks to enter a system of more than 500 miles that will eventually wind along creeks, rivers, neighborhoods and through downtowns in the Carolinas.

In McAdenville, residents such as Taylor are stepping up to get the trail along parts of both sides of the South Fork River ready by late summer or early fall.

"If we were waiting for the state to do this it probably would never happen," said Taylor, 36, of Stanley. "If you want something, if it's really your passion, then do it."

Started in November 2007, the Thread Trail is a major collaborative effort among cities, counties and groups to link the region's points of interest and open spaces as well as conserve the most significant natural areas. The conservancy estimates it will take 15 to 20 years to build.

The South Fork property is one of the newest segments being developed throughout the region, and is included in the 10 miles of new trail the Thread Trail hopes to build this year. Duke Energy has committed \$4 million in cash, access to land and in-kind services. Another 9.1 miles will one day run from Spencer Mountain to south of Cramerton.

Conservancy Executive Director Dave Cable said the Thread Trail is working in 12 priority corridors to identify land; the South Fork is the first identified tract that's actually been donated. Volunteers have not only agreed to build the trail, but to maintain it.

"This is the epitome of the coming together of a lot of different interests, skills and knowledge," Cable said. "It will preserve a natural resource and serve as a community asset for generations."

## **'A good escape'**

Pharr Yarns bought the riverfront property in 1945, said company President Bill Carstarphen.

"We hope a lot of people will enjoy it," he said. "...You feel like you're in the Blue Ridge Mountains, not 15 minutes from downtown Charlotte."

Connect Gaston Inc., a nonprofit that improves pedestrian access with such projects as greenways and bike trails, got a \$74,000 grant from the Conservancy for design work on the South Fork corridor.

Greg Richardson joined the Thread Trail steering committee after he moved to McAdenville's Saussy Burbank neighborhood about three years ago.

One day he walked a few hundred yards from his house to the South Fork River and "was amazed at how pretty it was."

"It was an untapped resource with a lot of potential," said Richardson, 39, a lawyer in Charlotte. "I wanted to get involved and make sure the South Fork was a priority."

Now, he and other neighbors want to build a spur trail that connects to the one being planned for the riverbanks. He's walked the property, just a few minutes from his home.

"It's serene there," said Richardson, who'll use vacation time on the building project. "You see large deer tracks and beaver tracks. You feel refreshed when you get out there. It's a good escape."

Taylor said club members, mainly from Charlotte, Gastonia and York, S.C., couldn't pass up the chance to build a new trail along the South Fork.

"This will be a lasting legacy," Taylor said. "When I know that myself and my friends can be a spark that makes this happen, volunteering is a no-brainer."

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