



Adventurous project to connect more than 2 million people 15 counties in two states to participate in Carolina Thread Trail

By [Dee Henry](#) | Hickory Daily Record Published: February 23, 2009

NEWTON - The goal is big — connecting more than 2 million people in 15 counties in North and South Carolina.

Catawba County is gearing up to do its part in the Carolina Thread Trail, planned to be a network of greenways, trails and blue ways or rivers to connect the 15 counties and their historical destinations and attractions.

"The idea is to be like a patchwork quilt with the threads linking all of us together," said Mary George, Catawba County planner and project manager for the Catawba County portion of the Thread Trail.

While the exact path of the trail through the county has yet to be determined — the steering committee will begin that process soon — the plan, George said, is to connect several historic sites — Bunker Hill Covered Bridge, Murray's Mill — as well as the planned Mountain Creek Park, the newest county park to be on property along Lake Norman.

George said the formation of the trail will be done through a four-stage process — planning, design, acquisition and construction. Catawba County is entering the planning stage with the formation of a 35-person steering committee.

"We've got a really great group of people and are looking at a first meeting sometime in March," she said.

The Carolina Thread Trail project is a nonprofit organization and has raised \$15 million in private funds and \$3 million from the Clean Water Management Trust. The organization will distribute funding through the four-step process, beginning with money to hire a consultant for the planning process, set at \$60,000 by CTT and requiring a 10 percent, or \$6,000 match, from the municipalities.

Plans are for Catawba County to foot \$3,000 of that match, with the remainder being split among the cities in the county, according to Catawba County's planning department.

The formation of the trail through this region is up to the steering committee.

"It could be one trail or more trails," George said. "Most likely it will build on what we already have."

Dr. Jim Ross, a citizen-hiking advocate on the steering committee, said he hopes the trail will extend down his way near Lake Norman. "I would like to see it connect with some existing trails and I hope it will run down the Catawba River to Lake Norman," Ross said.

Ross said he is part of a hiking group based in the Lake Norman area known as the Golden Boys. As a part of that group of 400 people, he has seen the beauty of the area and hopes the trail will allow more people to experience it.

"It's the natural thing, to have the trails run along these lakes," he said, referring to Lake Hickory, Lookout and Norman. "There's not much access for the public to see the beauty of the Catawba River."

George said she expects the planning process to last 10 to 12 months. After the steering committee plots the path of the trail, those plans will have to go before the board of commissioners for approval.

"This will obviously be a multi-year process, but this is the first step to get it started," she said.

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