



## Commissioners OK trails master plan

December 20, 2010

By Sharon McBrayer

Newton, NC -- Catawba County adopted a master plan that would build and connect trails through 15 counties in North and South Carolina.

Catawba County Board of Commissioners approved the Carolina Thread Trail Master plan on Monday. Carolina Thread Trail is a non-profit organization with a goal to create a network of greenways, trails and waterways, according to information from the organization.

Randi Gates, community coordinator for Carolina Thread Trail, said the master plan won't be able to be implemented in the near future. The organization plans to raise \$40 million, which would be financed with private donations and state and federal funding, she said. The organization hopes about \$15 million of the \$40 million would be in land donations, Gates said.

The county received a \$60,000 planning grant from Carolina Thread Trail, Gates said, and appointed a steering committee. The committee identified those who would use the trail system and took input from the public to narrow down possible destinations.

Some of those designations within Catawba County include Henry, Jacobs and South Fork rivers, Murray's Mill, Bunker Hill covered bridge, cemeteries, nine downtowns and entertainment, according to information from the county.

On Monday, Gates called the connections outstanding.

According to the organization and county officials, around 56,500 county residents would live within a half-mile of the proposed trail network.

Every city and town the trail system would touch has approved the plan except for the town of Brookford, Gates said.

Mary George, assistant county planning director, told commissioners their adoption of the plan doesn't bind the county to the project. She said they can get out of it at any time.

George said it will take 20 to 30 years for the master plan to be realized.

Commissioner Dan Hunsucker said if the county participates in the trail system he wants some continuity, not piece-meal trails in case the organization runs out of money before the entire system is built.

Gates said there will be certain sections in different areas constructed but the trails will eventually all connect together.

Local communities will maintain trail sections that run through their areas, she said.

To see a copy of the master plan for Catawba County, go to [www.carolinathreadtrail.org](http://www.carolinathreadtrail.org).

<http://www2.hickoryrecord.com/news/2010/dec/20/commissioners-ok-trails-master-plan-ar-633538/>