

The Greenway News



**The Yadkin River Greenway Council
Newsletter**

SEE HOW FAR WE'VE COME

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Greenway Construction Update 2

Under the hood; How the Yadkin River Greenway gets built 3

Volunteers Keep It Going Strong 4

Easements are needed ...Grants will follow 5

Greenway Council leads the way 5

Chickens, Turtles & Golf raise funds 6

Greenway featured in Southern Living 6

Greenway Day... A Truly Special Event 7

"Friends of the Greenway" Needs You 8

Message from the President's Chair –

As the old saying goes, you won't know where you're going if you don't know where you've been. I thought it would be interesting to revisit the origins and history of the Greenway's conception and see how far we've come.

Borrowing some information from the Greenway's website: "The Greenway dream began, not on some planner's desk, but in the fertile imagination of radiologist Phil Carlson. After canoeing down the Yadkin through town with his son Ian, Dr. Carlson was struck by the beauty of the river that winds through the middle of our county's largest towns. Dr. Carlson shared his vision with Dr. Tom Frazer, Dr. Larry Bennett and the late Becky Comer Mann. That canoe trip spawned the genesis of the Greenway effort in 1994, and the first phase of the Greenway became a reality and was opened May 18, 2002."

Over the years it's grand design has been expanded to develop a linear park or greenway system that would connect every park and recreation center in the towns of North Wilkesboro and Wilkesboro, along with the county's facilities, from Smoot Park to W. Kerr Scott Reservoir along the Reddies and Yadkin Rivers.

Today, that grand design, while not completed, has realized great progress. Of the approximately 13 miles originally contemplated approximately 5 miles of greenway, in four (4) unconnected sections, are on the ground and ready to be enjoyed!

And that dream continues to grow! 2009 has been yet another successful year for the growth in size, continued development and popularity and use of the Greenway! *Following articles will chronicle and enlighten you on these aspects of the past years events.*

Remarkably, even in this challenging economic environment, funding sources for this great project are still availing themselves to support the Greenway's expansion. I would like to personally thank our Executive Director, Bill Clifton, for his untiring efforts and creativity in finding and soliciting those funds and wish to thank the generous supporters of this great cause for their continued support.

The *single* obstacle that thwarts the completion of the Greenway is the granting of easements along the greenways proposed routes. While many land owners have readily supported the greenways development, others have continued to be reluctant to support the concept. We hold out hope that as the greenways expansion continues they will come to share in our enthusiasm for this project and allow the use of their property to allow the completion this noble cause.

By Charlie White, President
Yadkin River Greenway Council

GREENWAY CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

In the first half of 2009, construction of the Jefferson Turnpike was completed. Because of the dredging operations by the Town of North Wilkesboro above the Reddies River dam, approximately 10% of the Jefferson Turnpike Trail had not been improved in 2008. Upon completion of the dredging in the spring of 2009, the remaining trail was completed. Also, various erosion control measures, storm drain outfall protection and signage were completed by mid summer. By the end of July of 2009, several picnic tables and trash cans were installed.

In conjunction with the Jefferson Turnpike construction, in April of 2009 the Town of North Wilkesboro began the installation of the 13th Street sidewalk. This sidewalk connects D Street to the new Jefferson Turnpike near the Reddies River dam. The Yadkin River Greenway and the Town of North Wilkesboro jointly constructed this sidewalk to provide connectivity from the CVS Trailhead to Suncrest Orchard Road.

During 2009, the Greenway Council continued plans for the trail segment along Lover's Leap extending from the existing Moravian Creek Trailhead to a proposed trailhead near Curtis Bridge Road. This segment has been on the NC Dept. of Transportation-Transportation Improvement Project (NCDOT-TIP) listing since 2004. State budget reductions at NCDOT has delayed progress on this segment. We have procured easement intents from most of the property owners along this segment but have been unable to make any headway with one critical property owner. The delay in the procurement of this easement has prevented the us from actively pursuing the necessary funding from the NCDOT-TIP Program. Before funding can be finalized, all easements must be procured. We continue to negotiate with the property owners in hopes of filling in the last gap for this segment. We are hopeful that in 2010 this will come about; however, we are at a standstill until this final easement can be procured.

The Smoot Park to Memorial Park segment of the Greenway has been under consideration for the past two years. The Yadkin River Greenway in conjunction with the Town of North Wilkesboro again applied for a PARTF grant with the State of North Carolina for construction of this trail. For the third year in a row, the grant request was rejected. The Yadkin River Greenway Council and the Town of North Wilkesboro will resubmit.

During 2009, the Greenway Council began investigating the possibility of extending the Yadkin River Greenway from the existing Moravian Creek Trailhead to Wilkes Community College by following Moravian Creek along the west bank and connecting to the existing Community College walking trail. The Moravian Creek Trail project is in three (3) segments. The first segment extends from the existing Moravian Creek Trailhead to the northeast corner of Town of Wilkesboro property. The second segment extends from the Town of Wilkesboro property to the north side of the bridge on Highway 268. The third segment extends from the Hwy. 268 bridge to the Community College trail. Members of the Greenway Council met with Wilkes Community College representatives, and they are in support of the proposed Moravian Creek segment. We have raised funding from grants for the first two segments of the Moravian Creek Trail. Contact has been made with all of the affected land owners and we have received positive feedback relative to easement agreements. We are in the process of contracting with an engineering firm to complete a "no-rise" study for the entire Moravian Creek Trail and expect to finalize the contract by the end of December 2009 and complete the study in early 2010. If easements are obtained in early 2010, we hope to begin construction by April on the first segment. The third segment of the trail is expected to extend into the next two to three years. More detailed design will be required in order to raise the necessary funds for this segment.

The proposed fishing pier on the Yadkin River with the NC Fish and Wildlife Commission remains in the planning stage. The NC Fish and Wildlife Commission requires handicap accessible parking close to the proposed fishing pier site. We are in the process of procuring an easement adjacent to the greenway where the proposed pier is to be constructed. This easement has been agreed upon by the owners, and we are awaiting for the paperwork to be completed. Once this is completed and the parking spaces are provided, then the proposed fishing pier will be constructed. We are hopeful that this will come through during the year of 2010.

While the economic down turn has negatively impacted fund raising, the Greenway Council continues planning and working on procurement of easements along proposed segments. To better focus our efforts, the Construction Committee has formed teams for specific trail segments. Each team will work during 2010 contacting landowners. We continue to press forward with new routing options for the Greenway and planning for construction of those segments that have easements secured. As always, we are very grateful to all the "Friends of the Greenway" for their ongoing support and look forward to the new year and the possibilities that lie ahead.

By: Frank Taracido, Construction Chair

Under the Hood: How the Yadkin Valley Greenway Gets Built

Have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes to make the Yadkin River Greenway happen? Because this is a team effort involving many players, probably no individual person knows exactly how it all takes place, but if you're interested, read on.

The YRG Council is a group of up to 21 volunteers constituting the board of the greenway. We meet once a month, except for December, and various subcommittees also meet frequently. You can find our meeting schedule on the YRG website, and all our meetings are open to the public.

I am fortunate to serve on the construction subcommittee, as did my Dad before me. Frank Taracido of Cubic Engineering and Construction ably chairs that group. Our responsibilities include planning and implementing extensions to the greenway. The Master Plan for the greenway was created years ago, but it was a high-level conceptual plan, not a set of blueprints.

As YRG users know, there are several gaps in the greenway, which some might call a "target-rich" environment." Many factors go into deciding which one to target next, but the three most important are cost, availability of funds, and availability of easements. Setting our building priorities is a strategic decision shared with the entire YRG Council.

The first step in planning an extension involves aerial mapping, researching property ownership, and discussing potential alternative routes. The construction subcommittee spearheads this, and reports back to the full Council regularly. Key players in this effort include Andrew Carlton (Wilkesboro Planner), Josh Harrold (North Wilkesboro Planner), Bill Clifton, Steve Steel (Surveyor), Frank Taracido (Engineer), Charlie White, Lee Bentley (Attorney), Carl McCann (DOT Liaison), John Gygax (Geologist), Sam Stroud, and others.

Once a route has been decided on, many tasks proceed in parallel. Cost estimates are prepared, based on the information available. Various team members contact the property owners and negotiate property easements. With very few exceptions, we have been able to work out satisfactory arrangements, sometimes involving a slight relocation. The property owners receive a small tax benefit because they no longer have to pay taxes on the land in the easement area. The greater benefit is creating a lasting legacy for the community.

When the legal descriptions of the land easements are finalized, contracts are prepared for execution. We have been fortunate to have the services of County Attorney Tony Triplett for most of these transactions. Our Executive Director Bill Clifton is the man who keeps all the paper flowing, in addition to hundreds of phone calls, emails, letters, and meetings throughout each project.

Numerous regulatory hurdles must be dealt with, notably obtaining independent certification from a qualified engineering firm that the proposed construction will not aggravate the potential for flooding in the area. This is called a "No-Rise" certification, and it can involve further adjustments to the plan.

During this stage detailed engineering drawings are prepared by Cubic Engineering. Typically the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) reviews the plans and some further adjustments are made, e.g., design of drainage structures. When the plans are solid enough, price quotes are obtained from suppliers for materials such as liner cloth, crushed stone, and/or asphalt. We look for the most economical sources, and quite often receive significant discounts from suppliers, notably Vulcan Stone, in consideration of our charitable mission.

The YRG Council is never the prime contractor for any of our projects. Typically the actual construction work is performed by Wilkes County, although the two towns sometimes take this role when the project is within their boundaries. The majority of the construction has been led by Phil Greene, a very skilled heavy equipment operator and county employee. We are extremely grateful for his contributions.

Depending on the exact funding mechanism, typically the county is reimbursed by the Council for work performed. Actual costs never come in exactly on budget, but fortunately there are usually some under runs as well as overruns, and the net result is close enough to the available funding. Each project typically has several funding sources, such as DOT grants, other state and local grants, corporate grants, private donations, etc. Some funding sources may come with strings attached, which can impact the construction timetable – sometimes speeding it up, sometimes delaying it.

At the completion of each greenway expansion project the ownership is conveyed to the government entity where it is located. The Yadkin River Greenway Council does not own any of the greenway, nor do we have means or authority to address ongoing operating issues on the greenway. However, we do serve as a customer service bureau, funneling public concerns to the appropriate people in the town and county governments. All of these entities have a very cordial and productive relationship with the YRG and we are grateful for their outstanding support.

By: Sam Stroud, YRG Council Member

VOLUNTEERS KEEP IT GOING STRONG

Volunteers are necessary in keeping our non-profit organization going strong. Without volunteers we could not succeed in accomplishing our goals whether it be our council members, donors, landowners donating easements, "Adopt-a-trail" volunteers, or county and town employees. They are all vital parts in how we continue to function.

The "Adopt-a-trail" volunteers have continued to be active in keeping our trails clean and attractive for all to enjoy; while enriching the quality of life through the opportunity for our citizens to exercise in a safe environment.

In February six new birdhouses were installed and all other birdhouses were repaired as needed and cleaned. Charles White and his cousin Randy Whitley built 28 bluebird houses to be installed along the greenway. An attractive new trashcan with wooden holder was installed at the Moravian Creek Trailhead.

A Tyson crew led by council member Gary Johnson commemorated "Earth Day" by cleaning-up, weeding, and trimming bushes around the Tyson Trailhead, along Ray's Way and near Pardue Crossing. These areas were again groomed in September.

In August the Rev. Dr. Carter Shelly Frazer memorial blueberry patch at the confluence of the rivers was weeded and mulched by two council members. The Greenway Council is thankful for the citizens and council members who volunteer on a regular basis to tend certain areas of the greenway corridor. These "Adopt-a-trail" members are Harvey & Ginger Barlow, Sonny Church, Gary Johnson, Alison Pipes, Jennifer Lankford, Masters Gardeners, Charles White, and Freida Matthews.

Our community is fortunate for the many volunteer hours and donations made by Eagle Scout candidates working on projects. Cory Myers completed his project of building six picnic tables and placing them along the greenway.



Cory, Freida & Cory's Dad set picnic table

Elliot Hincher completed his project of building 20 blue birdhouses and installing them along the greenway at Rivers Edge. Trent Cleary is progressing with installing his project. Will Howell and Miles Hubbard are making plans for their Eagle projects.

In April and July youth from Celebration Church and First United Methodist Church conducted trash pickups along the greenway. At the request of some greenway users "dog poop pickup signs" were installed at four trailheads.

The maintenance crews from the County and Towns of Wilkesboro and North Wilkesboro have been exceptionally responsive to make sure the trails are maintained and safe for our citizens. The Wilkes County Parks and Recreation routinely mows and maintains most of the greenway. In the past year they also put sealer on the Reddies River bridge deck, installed signage at ECMD trailhead, and routinely sprayed weeds.



The Town of Wilkesboro crew removed down trees, installed parking lot bumpers, trimmed trees and bushes near Moravian Creek Trailhead, and bush-hogged weeds along the Reddies River. The Town of North Wilkesboro removed down trees along the Jefferson Turnpike, placed vehicle barricade rocks at entry to Jefferson Turnpike and Wellness Center trails, repaired broken bollards, and cleaned and mulched area at Reddies River Trailhead. We thank our local government for the continuous support of a first class greenway park.

With future expansion of the Yadkin River Greenway, the Council will need even more dedicated volunteers to aid our growth and create new recreational opportunities. If you or your organization are interested in volunteering for a project to better the greenway, please contact the Yadkin River Greenway at 651-8967 (Bill Clifton) or Freida Matthews at 838-4938.

By: Freida Matthews, Volunteer Coordination Chair

EASEMENTS ARE NEEDEDGRANTS WILL FOLLOW

The two most challenging aspects of building a greenway are obtaining easements and construction grants. Without the generosity of landowners to give easements we are powerless to obtain grants for construction.

In our quest to build a greenway segment from Memorial to Smoot Park in North Wilkesboro, we submitted for a third time, a \$376,000 grant application to the NC Parks & Recreation Trust Fund. This was part of a grant submitted by the Town of North Wilkesboro that included upgrades to Smoot Park. Again our grant application was not approved. We are preparing our 4th application for this grant that will be submitted in January. Also we are preparing for a second time a grant application to the NC Division of Water Resources for this segment.

Upgrade of the Jefferson Turnpike Reddies River Trail is complete. This work was made possible through a \$30,000 grant from Lowe's Charitable & Education Foundation, a \$45,700 grant from NCDENR Recreational Trails Program, and a \$2,000 grant from Wilkes Community Foundation.

Our current project is to build a greenway trail from the trailhead on the Yadkin River at the north end of Collegiate Avenue down the Yadkin to Moravian Creek and up Moravian Creek to Wilkes Community College. Segments one and two will take us to Highway 268. We are in the process of obtaining easements for these segments and have obtained grants for most of the construction. We have a \$17,000 grant from the National Park Service Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail, a \$30,000 enhancement grant from NC DOT, \$35,000 from Lowe's Charitable and Education Foundation, and \$1,000 from Wilkes Community Foundation. Along with this we are adding amenities to the Moravian Creek Trailhead at the north end of Collegiate Avenue and have obtained a \$4,000 grant from the Wilkesboro Tourism Development Authority with local match and a \$4,000 grant from the NCDENR "Adopt-A-Trail". Birding Trail signs at 8 trailheads were included in the TDA grant and have been installed.

The NCDOT Bicycle & Pedestrian Division has on hold a "feasibility study" to build a greenway segment from the Moravian Creek Trailhead down the south bank of the Yadkin River passing under "Lover's Leap" to a proposed trailhead near Curtis Bridge Road. We are in need of one key easements before we can proceed with this grant and trail segment .

In support of the Yadkin River Greenway Council administration and operations the County of Wilkes, Town of North Wilkesboro, and Town of Wilkesboro again provided funding totaling \$14,000. Major contributions for Greenway construction include donations from the Dwight & Anne Pardue, the Kulynych Family Foundation, the Leonard G. Herring Family Foundation, and the Mr. & Mrs. James N. Andrews Family Foundation, . NC Sales Tax refunds during 2009 total \$6,851.

At year end 2009 the Yadkin River Greenway Council membership consists of Charles White, President & Chairman, Carl McCann, Vice President, Gary Cogdill, Treasurer, Keith Johnston,, Secretary, and other Council members:

GREENWAY COUNCIL LEADS THE WAY

Lee Bentley, Vicki Church, Gary Johnson, Lisa Laufenberg, Freida Matthews, Carolyn Frazier-Pardue, Chuck Smithey, Steve Steele, Sam Stroud, Frank Taracido, and Roy Williams. Executive Director is Bill Clifton..

Leaving the Council during the year were Shelmar Blackburn, Janet Lyon, John Gygax, Mike Kerhoulas, Steve Mathis , and Alison Pipes. We thank these individuals for their service and participation in the success of the Yadkin River Greenway.

Look us up on the internet www.yadkinrivergreenway.com to learn more "About Us", when the YRGC meets (always 4th Tuesday of the month), dates of events, etc. Web-site is currently being updated by Matt Van Buskirk with Web Solutions to be more informative and attractive.

TURTLES, CHICKENS & GOLF RAISE FUNDS

Our primary fund raisers in 2009 were again the Turtle Regatta, Chicken Sale, and Golf Tournament. These not only provided needed funding for the administration and operation of the Yadkin River Greenway Council, but they also provided an opportunity for involvement of our council members and “Friends of the Greenway” to meet with members of the community to express our thanks and to update them on the progress we have made.

Our 7th annual Turtle Regatta was held Saturday, May 17. 1850 toy turtles were adopted and floated down the Reddies River at “crawl speed”. 15 prizes were awarded with 1st place being a bicycle donated by Cook’s. Prizes were awarded by YRGC President Charlie White. Hank Perkins, Town of North Wilkesboro Manager, and Charlie Sink, Wilkes County Commissioner, were again our judges. The event netted \$10,245.



Judges Hank & Charlie pull out winning turtles

The Tyson Chicken Sale held on Saturday, June 13 met with great success and yielded a net income of \$11,300. Again we thank Tyson Foods for their generous support. Thursday September 11 was the date of our 6th annual Yadkin River Greenway Charity Golf Tournament held at Stone Mountain Golf Club in Traphill. 50 golfers participated. Hole sponsors numbered 46 and other sponsors 5. The “hole-in-one” prize of \$10,000 sponsored by Village Inn Pizza Parlor went unclaimed. We netted \$5,753. Our “Friends of the Greenway” program raised \$12,480 in 2009 through annual donations of small or large amounts.

Thanks to all who participated in these fund raising events, whether you made a donation by “adopting” a turtle, buying chicken, playing golf or joining the Friends of the Greenway and providing funding for this organization. With your continued support, we can continue our goal of building a greenway system from W. Kerr Scott Reservoir to Smoot Park.

By: Keith Johnston, Fund Raising Chair

GREENWAY FEATURED IN SOUTHERN LIVING

The September 2009 issue of Southern Living Magazine features an article about the Yadkin River Greenway (YRG) entitled, “Connected by a River.” The article featured three beautiful scenic photos of the YRG. The focus was on the history of the Greenway and how other communities can also develop a community park using the experience of the Yadkin River Greenway Council. These include: determine the function, get the right design, secure permissions from land owners and government entities, round-up volunteers and don’t give up. Southern Living considers the YRG “a big deal.” Which we in Wilkes County already knew!



Reddies River Greenway @ spillway as seen in Southern Living

GREENWAY DAY....A TRULY SPECIAL EVENT

The Yadkin River Greenway (YRG) offers opportunities for special events on a daily basis, a walk with a friend, a child learning to ride a bike or attending a community event with thousands of other people in scenic Wilkes County.

Greenway Day was held at Lowe's Rivers Edge Park on May 23rd, which also was World Turtle Day. The turtle is YRG 's adopted logo. Thirty-four agencies furnished booths and activities for participants. Food was provided by Brushy Mountain Smokehouse and the Relay for Life Team from Oakwoods Baptist Church.



**Bill Nichols portrait sketching on
Greenway Day**

Guests were entertained by R.G. Absher & Extra Measure, Pam Mathis and two Teen Idol Finalists. The program featured presentations by Yadkin River Greenway Council (YRGC) President Charlie White, Wilkes County Commissioner Chairman Zach Henderson, Mayor of Wilkesboro Mike Inscore, NC DOT Representative Arnold Lakey and Lowe's Store Manager Jamie Jenkins. YRGC received a \$1,200 grant from Wilkes Tourism Development Authority which partially funded the

event. Later in the day, the 7th annual Turtle Regatta was held on the Reddies River.



**RG Absher & Extra Measure
provide entertainment**

A walk on the YRG provides opportunities to see a variety of birds such as cardinals, bluebirds, and a great blue heron often seen fishing in the Reddies River. YRG is now an official NC Birding Trail. It has been featured in "The North Carolina Birding Trail Mountain Trail Guide." There are now signs posted at eight trailheads designating this distinction. Twenty-six new bluebird houses have been installed along the trail, as well as the existing houses given annual maintenance. In October YRG hosted birders from outside of Wilkes County.



On Halloween the annual Trail of Treats sponsored by the North Wilkesboro Police Department and Samaritan's Christian Ministry (SCM) was held. Forty local organizations lined the YRG providing treats for an estimated 3,000 children. SCM had a truck accepting donations of food items from participants. The children also enjoyed a hayride delivering them back to the parking areas.



The YRGC can be seen participating in other events throughout the county, such as the health fairs held for employees of NC DOT Division 11, Gardner Mirror, Town of North Wilkesboro and families at North Wilkesboro Elementary School. YRGC participates in the Shine to Wine Festival annually promoting the Greenway and selling turtles.

Whether you are running alone on the YRG or attending an event with throngs of fellow folks from Wilkes County, it is a special event on the Greenway!

By: Lisa Laufenberg, Special Events Chair

**The Yadkin River Greenway
Council Newsletter**

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“FRIENDS OF THE GREENWAY” NEEDS YOU

“Friends of the Yadkin River Greenway” has completed its seventh year as a “grass roots” support organization. “Friends of the Greenway” added 13 new members during 2009 and now totals 230 who have joined. Of these, 86 have renewed their membership during the past year and we hope all will renew during 2010.

Contributions for the past 7 years to “Friends of the Greenway” now totals \$68,135. These donations go along way towards covering the administration expenses to run the Yadkin River Greenway Council, thus enabling us to fulfill our mission of developing a greenway system in our community.

Annual membership is open to all people and, by being a 501 (C)3 non-profit organization, membership dues are tax deductible to the extent possible.



Carolyn speaks to Friends of the Greenway

We offer opportunities to our members to volunteer time on specific greenway events and projects, helping in the greenway office, and contacting prospective new members. This newsletter and other communications will keep our members informed of Greenway activities.

In January, based on membership anniversary date, we will begin contacting each “Friend of the Greenway” to renew their membership and to continue their support of the greenway. Regular memberships are: \$20 for individuals, \$40 for families, \$12 for youth, \$100 for businesses, and \$50 for organizations.

Also to be recognized as a “Trailblazer”, categories are: \$100 for Daniel Boone, \$250 for Sir Walter Raleigh, \$500 for Henry Hudson, and \$1000 for Lewis and Clark.

Thanks again for your continuing support .If any questions...Phone: 651-8967. Bill Clifton, Executive Director