

December 2015

Dear Friends of the American Tobacco Trail,

Season's greetings and happy holidays from Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (TRTC)! It's almost the end of the year and we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your help in the past, keep you up to date on what we have been doing this year, and ask you for your continuing support. Any amount you can spare will be welcome as we continue to maintain selected ATT facilities and to promote and improve the American Tobacco Trail and local rail-trails. Here is some of what we have been doing in 2015 with your donations and support:

Special projects: We continued our long term advocacy for expanded parking at Scott King just east of the trail crossing on Scott King Road. ATT user parking along the road has seen a steady increase for several years and additional capacity is clearly needed. Due to staffing limitations, the City of Durham only begun their site planning for this facility in late October, even though approved funding has been available since July 2014. Until bids on this project are received some months from now, it is not clear whether the currently available funds (\$100,000 + \$5000 from the NC Horse Council) will be sufficient to complete the project. TRTC has offered to provide safety fencing if the City faces a modest shortfall. Due to this deferred start, it appears this facility will not be completed until very late in 2016.

Trail safety: We have continued efforts to request NCDOT to lower the speed limit to 35 mph at the Scott King Road crossing area but again this met with no success. We plan to push on this issue again in 2016 since the 45+ speeds by vehicles at this crossing pose a real hazard to the large numbers of users crossing the road. **In Chatham we were involved in two significant efforts:** **First,** we continued our advocacy with Cary and Chatham County to allow yellow center dashes to be applied on the asphalt section of the trail in Chatham. Late this summer we reached agreement on this issue and TRTC agreed to pay for all costs of this striping. Application of this striping was done in mid-September by our contractor and feedback on this improvement from a sample of regular users of this section has been positive. **Our second initiative** involved a nine day cooperative study with NCDOT to collect data on the number and speed of vehicles crossing the trail at O'Kelly Chapel Road and for TRTC volunteers to collect counts of trail users crossing O'Kelly during the busier hours of the nine day period. Although we saw a significant percentage of vehicles exceeding the 50 mph speed limit (with a high of 76 mph seen) and only a small # of vehicles stopping to allow users to safely cross this road, DOT has so far refused to lower the speed limit. In late May they did install 35 mph warning signs. These signs are yellow and are advisory (not an enforceable limit) and do not seem to have altered motorist behavior. In August DOT installed smaller white signs to remind motorists that this is a pedestrian crossing. In September we presented our findings on this dangerous crossing to Chatham County's Commissioners. They were quite receptive to our concerns and have agreed to discuss improved signage, a reduced speed limit and other improvements with DOT. As a part of our presentation, TRTC requested Chatham to provide funding for a pair of user activated amber warning lights for this crossing. Funding for these was not approved for the

current fiscal year but has been placed on a list of items for consideration for funds available in July 2016.

Trail maintenance: We maintained the Pittard Sears parking lot including plumbing support needed to open the water fountain in early April and shut it down for the winter last month. Funds from donations were used to pay the monthly water bill for this very popular ATT amenity. Our Pittard Sears lot saw lots of use this year and provided a safe (and legal) alternative to parking on O’Kelly Church Road. Donations to TRTC and funds from the Tobacco Road Marathon were key to allowing this long term ATT facility to happen.

We held eight targeted workdays this year. These included installing two water bars and efforts to replenish the stone surface on the access trail at the Fayetteville Road trailhead. At Scott King Road we swept or shoveled sand and blew off sand and pine needles several times to augment the somewhat irregular sweeping done by Durham. We also held three workdays on the 2.2-mile Eagle Spur rail-trail south of Stagecoach Road, to remove downed trees and carry out trash. Eagle Spur is an unimproved rural wooded trail corridor leading to Jordan Lake on land now managed by the NC Fish and Wildlife Commission; it is popular with fishermen, hunters and hikers. For 2016 we plan to replace one or more of the very damaged drainage culverts to improve user safety and allow trail usage even in very wet conditions.

Outreach events: TRTC volunteers once again manned a rest stop at Bikefest, an annual fund raising event put on by the Carolina Tarwheels.

Maps: In late August 2014 TRTC measured and marked the entire ATT at quarter mile intervals. TRTC has taken the lead in getting the governments in Durham, Chatham and Wake Counties to agree to use these measurements as the basis for new, uniform mileage markers on the trail using a unitary north to south system (Mile 0.0 at the DBAP and Mile 22.0 just south of US 64). This new signage was installed by these governments during February and March 2015. In January 2015 we revised our 2010 ATT maps to reflect these measurements, the completion of Phase E in Durham County and other miscellaneous changes. Printable PDF files for the 2015 ATT maps were made available on our site early in the year. During 2015 we provided almost 3000 copies of our maps to users via the ATT map boxes at Scott King, O’Kelly Chapel and at the New Hope Church trailhead and at the Cary and Durham REI stores and several other outlets. We updated the sections for Wake and Chatham in November and have started making these available just recently.

Other essential trail support: We continue to pay for regular service to the porta-jon that we brought back into service in July 2013 at the Fayetteville Road parking trailhead. To accommodate the far larger user base at Scott King Road, we moved this porta-jon to the access road at Herndon Park in October 2014. Over the winter months when the restrooms at Herndon Park are shut down this porta jon has been especially appreciated. In sum, we continue to work as volunteers to make the American Tobacco Trail (and its little sibling the Eagle Spur Trail, originally part of the same rail line) great places to get out and enjoy the outdoors. Your donations help us to build connector trails, do maintenance, create and print trail maps, fund important special projects and provide water – and that porta-jon – for trail users. All of us at

TRTC thank you for your continued support. Please consider us in your holiday giving, by purchasing or renewing a membership and making a tax-deductible donation to TRTC.

You can donate online by going to www.triangletrails.org/membership and paying via PayPal, or you can send us a check payable to Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Inc. (TRTC)

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If you have any questions about joining or making a tax-deductible contribution to TRTC, or if you have any questions about your existing or past membership, please contact TRTC Treasurer at: michael.forte@hotmail.com

With thanks for your support,

Curt Devereux

President

Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

