



Building the GREAT TRAILS STATE

Piedmont Transportation Professionals

October 2023

Palmer McIntyre



**GREAT
TRAILS
STATE
COALITION**

Building the Great Trails State



- **2019 State of Trails**
- **Great Trails State Vision**
- **Strategies**
 - Speak with ONE Voice
 - Tell the Story with Data
 - Professionalize Lobbying
 - Year of the Trail
- **Next Steps**
- **Local Impact**

North Carolina Trails



THE GREAT TRAILS STATE VISION

- A **robust network** of trails across North Carolina
 - Connect residents and visitors with nature,
 - Provide safe transportation alternatives,
 - Drive economic development, and
 - Protect our natural resources.
- **Statewide collaborative advocacy** to transform North Carolina trail funding and policies
 - Shift the value system among policy makers to recognize the transformative potential of trails and greenways = **SUSTAINED STATE FUNDING FOR TRAILS**
 - Historic levels of federal investment
 - Rectify North Carolina's rural gap in investment and removing obstacles to accessing federal investment through collaborative action.



Pre-GTSC State of NC Trails



**No Statewide
Investment
in Trails**



**Stakeholders
Working in
Isolation**



**Falling
Behind Other
States and
NC Needs**

States Going BIG on Trails



State Funding Yields 5x in Federal Investment

Statewide Independent Bicycle and Pedestrian Funding Comparison

STATE DOT	ANNUAL BUDGET	POPULATION IN 2019 (IN MILLIONS)	BIKE/PED \$S SPENT PER PERSON	% OF BUDGET FOR INDEPENDENT BIKE/PED PROJECTS
Georgia	\$1 million - \$5 million	10.62	\$0.09 - \$0.47	0.1% to 0.5%
Tennessee	\$10 million - \$50 million	6.83	\$1.46 - \$7.32	0.05% to 0.1%
Florida	\$10 million - \$50 million	21.48	\$0.46 - \$2.33	>2%
Montana	\$5 million - \$10 million	1.07	\$4.67 - \$9.35	1% to 2%
Louisiana	\$5 million - \$10 million	4.65	\$1.08 - \$2.15	0.5% to 1%
Arkansas	\$5 million - \$10 million	3.02	\$1.66 - \$3.31	
Virginia	< \$1 million	8.54	< \$0.12	>2%
Missouri	< \$1 million	6.14	< \$0.16	<0.05%
North Carolina	< \$1 million	10.49	< \$0.10	<0.05%

Source: Bench-marking Non-motorized Policies and Project Delivery, 2020



Our Brand is All



All STAKEHOLDERS



Non-Profits



Municipal



Agencies



Industry

All SURFACES



Natural



Water



Paved

All USES



Foot



Wheel



Hoof



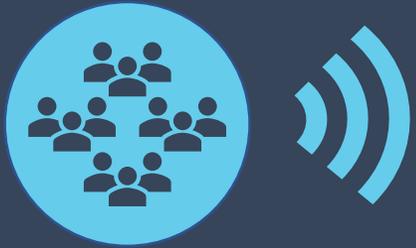
Paddle

All 100 COUNTIES



ALL PEOPLE

Core Strategies to Achieve Vision



**Speak with
ONE Voice**



**Make the Case
with Data**

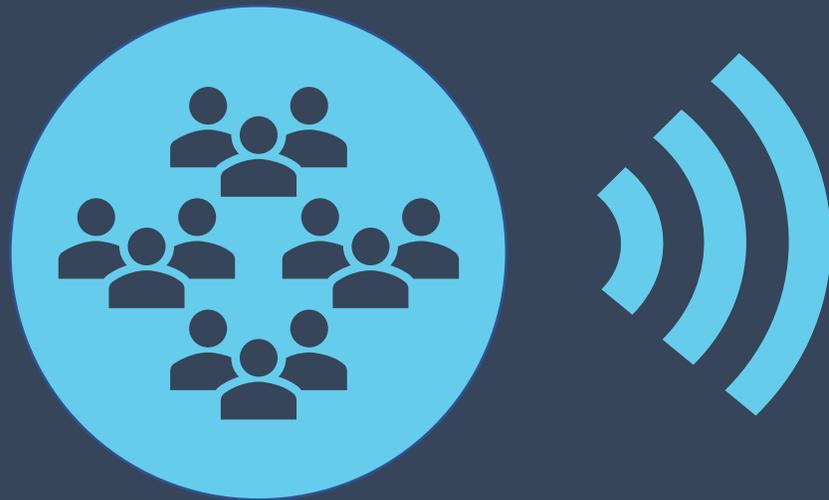


**Professionalize
Lobbying**

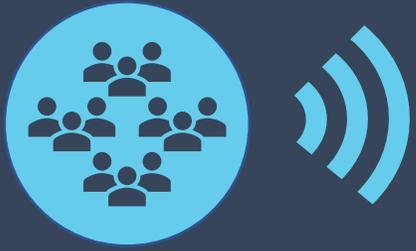


Celebrate NC Trails

Speak with ONE Voice



Gather Partners
Expand Coalition
Launch a Compelling Brand



Gather Partners



NON-PROFITS



INDUSTRY

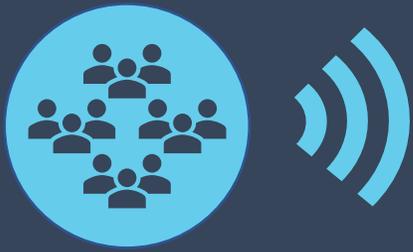


LOCAL GOVERNMENT



AGENCY PARTNERS

87 Members and Growing

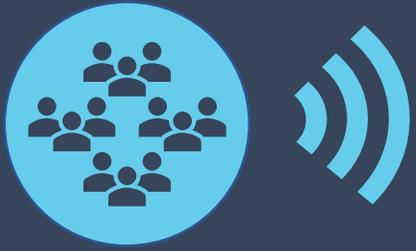


Gather Partners



NON-PROFITS

Lesson Learned: Building trust takes time and commitment.



Gather Partners



INDUSTRY



Lesson Learned: Opened access to previously unknown resources, tap into influential networks



Gather Partners



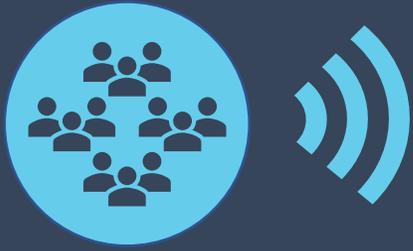
CITIE*S*
TOWN*S*
COUNTY*ES*

FOR

TRAIL*S*



*A Great Trails State
Coalition Working Group*



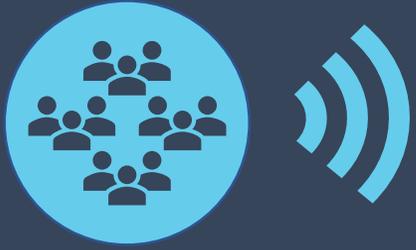
Gather Partners



LOCAL GOVERNMENT



Cities, Towns & Counties for Trails Working Group is a first ever peer group for communities on trails.



Gather Partners



- NC State Parks
- NCDOT

AGENCY PARTNERS

Lesson Learned: Collaboration critical to create a new competitive grant program.

greattrailsstatecoalition.org

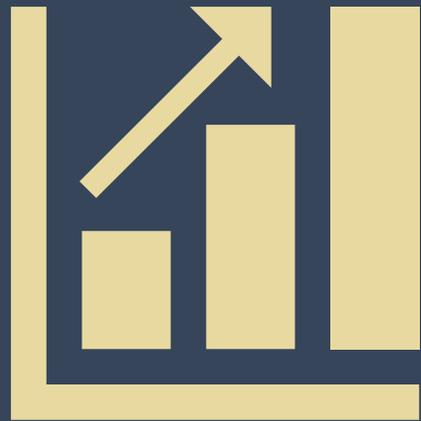


[About](#) ▾ [Investment Ready Projects](#) [News](#) [Members](#) [Year of the Trail](#) ▾ [Get Involved](#) [Join](#)



A broad-based group of diverse organizations, agencies, and supporters advocating for increased state investment in all types of trails in North Carolina – hiking, paddle, mountain bike, equestrian, paved.

Make the Case with Data



**Economic Impact
Investment Ready
Projects**



Make the Case with Data



Outdoor Recreation = North Carolina

Outdoor Recreation is a **\$11.8 Billion Industry** in North Carolina.

Our greenways and blueways are the infrastructure that supports that industry. Trails are great for the health of our residents and the health of our economy.

56% of North Carolinians participate in outdoor recreation activities.



TRAILS HAVE A SIGNIFICANT RETURN ON INVESTMENT:

Every \$1.00 spent on trail construction generates \$1.72 ANNUALLY from local business revenue, sales tax revenue, & benefits related to health and transportation.

An [NC DOT study](#) of a one-time \$26.7 million investment in four NC shared-use paths created the following economic impacts:



\$19.4 MILLION

Estimated ANNUAL sales revenue at local businesses along the four greenways



\$25.7 MILLION

Estimated ANNUAL savings due to more physical activity, less pollution and congestions, and fewer traffic injuries from greenway use



\$48.7 MILLION

Estimated business revenue from greenway construction



790

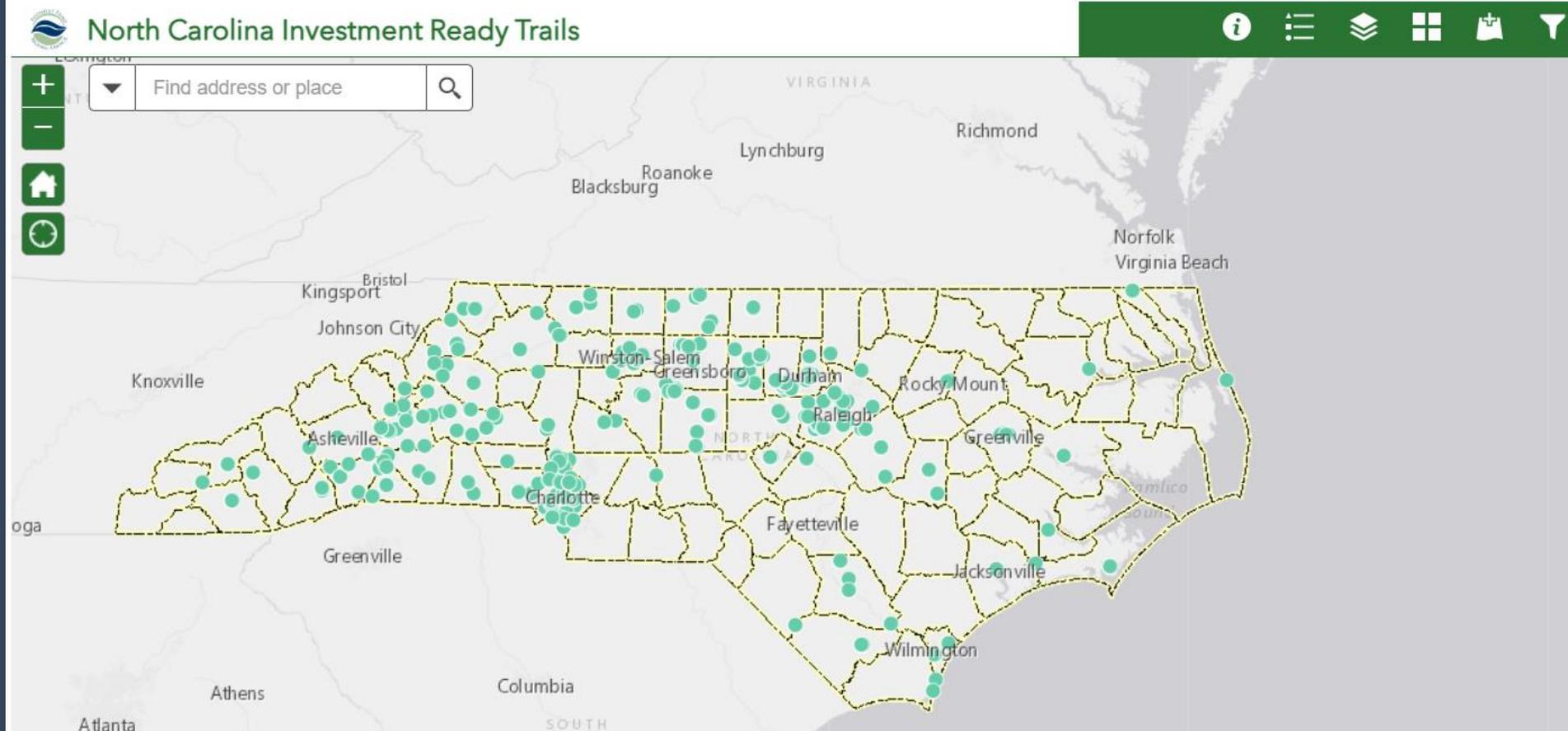
Jobs are supported ANNUALLY through greenway construction



Investment Ready Projects



There are 263 projects in 52 counties, representing an estimated \$511 million of construction costs. NC DOT's Great Trails State Plan identifies future projects in all 100 counties. Check them out below.





Data - Lessons Learned



- Some Legislators dismiss as **too good to be true**
- Sometimes better to go with **Feel Good** aspect of trails
 - Invite Legislators onto trail
- Needs for data are vast and beyond current capabilities

Professionalize Lobbying



Identify Champions

**Adequately Fund
Lobbying**

Articulate the Ask



Articulate the Ask



BUILDING the GREAT TRAILS STATE

2023 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

\$25M

One Time

Great Trails State Fund

\$25M competitive grant program to fund investment ready trail projects. Administered by NCDNCR (\$500K).

BENEFIT TO NORTH CAROLINA

Design and construction of a rich variety of trail types throughout North Carolina – natural surface, paved, equine and paddle trails.

Flexible match demonstrates community investment.

Source of matching funds for local governments, non-profits and tribal governments applicants. More communities will have access to increasing Federal funding specific to biking and walking.

Significant, recurring economic, health, and environmental benefits to every community that builds trails.

\$700K

Recurring

Support State Trail Non-Profits

Recurring \$50,000 capacity building grants for State Trail non-profits.

State Trail Non-Profits have developed detailed 5-year plans with the State to get trail on the ground faster. These organizations are the driving force behind State Trail development, as they bring stakeholders together, advocate for and promote the trail, harness tens of thousands of volunteer hours each year, and connect State Trails to local communities for economic development opportunities.

\$1M

One Time

Paved Trail Feasibility Study Program

\$1M administered by NCDOT.

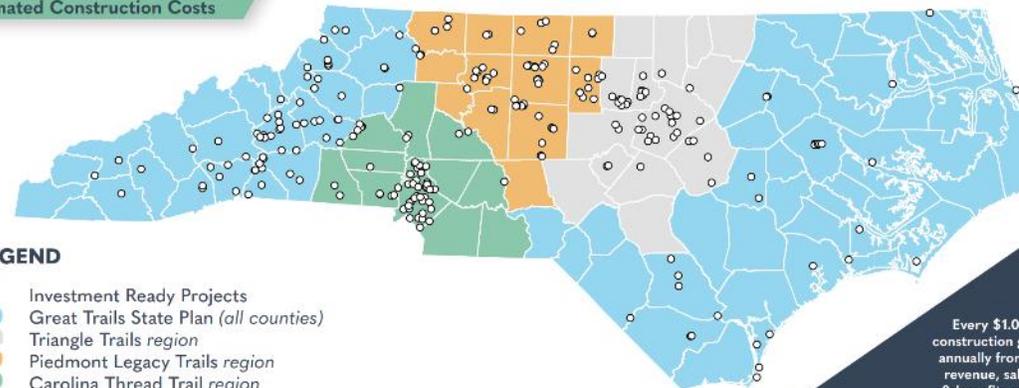
Program readies well-conceived paved trail projects for design and construction. Projects are more competitive for Federal funds. Inaugural \$2M program received over 60 applications for \$5M in funding for over 250 miles of trails.



INVESTMENT READY

Communities have invested in planning and identified trail projects in all 100 counties across North Carolina.

263 Projects – \$511 Million of Estimated Construction Costs



Every \$1.00 spent on trail construction generates \$1.72 annually from local business revenue, sales tax revenue, & benefits related to health and transportation.

Source: Evaluating the Economic Impact of Shareable Paths in North Carolina. Institute for Transportation Research and Education, 2018



The Great Trails State Coalition represents 60+ organizations across North Carolina.

For more information:

John Cooper 919.619.1214
David Ferrell 919.573.7421
greattrailsstatecoalition.org



2021 LONG SESSION SUCCESS

- 2023 Year of the Trail Designation
- Budget funding – first time ever specifically for authorized State Trails
 - \$29.15 M for the Complete the Trails Fund
 - Non-State Trails not eligible for funding
- \$2 M to NC DOT for Feasibility Studies





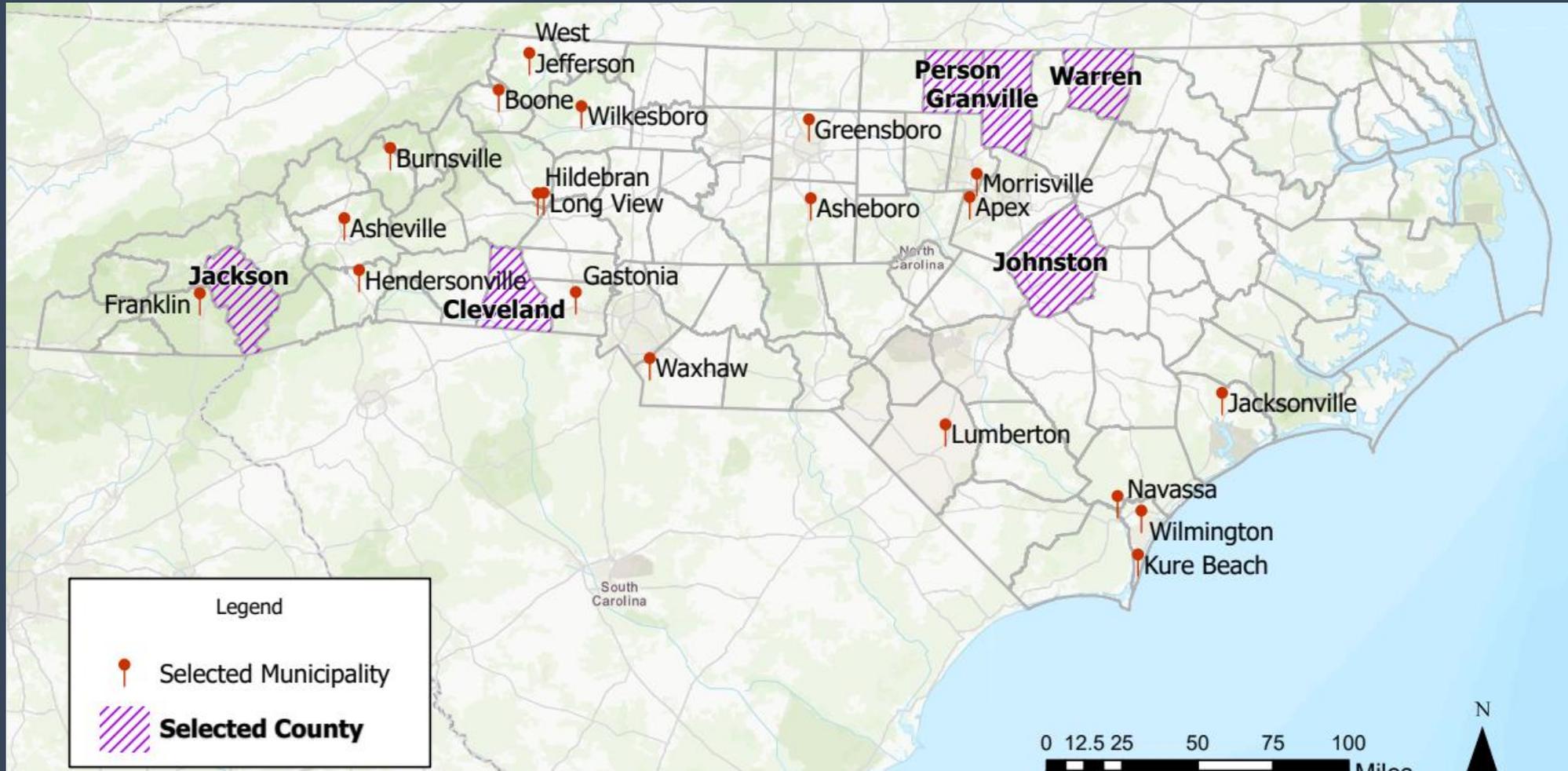
NC DOT Feasibility Study Program



Paved trails, greenways, sidepaths, sidewalks

25 projects selected for funding

6-to-12-month study process to analyze opportunities/barriers, identify recommended alignment, and develop cost estimates





Quick Response to Hard Questions



“As a rural community, we must rely on trails to help us attract residents and visitors to our region. By creating more opportunities for our citizens to be outdoors, we are improving the quality of life of those who choose to call rural NC home.”
 Chase Conner – Executive Director, Martin County Tourism Development Authority

Why build paved trails?
59% of NC governmental agencies ranked paved trails as their most desired and needed trail type.
Source: Cities, Towns & Counties for Trails Working Group Survey

How many people use paved trails?

There are over **1,500 miles** of paved trails today in North Carolina within walking distance of **3.1M people**. As the Great Trails State network grows it will serve **5.4M people**—over half of all North Carolinians.

Why are paved trails in high demand?

Paved trails are the most desired trail type in communities across NC and are built to withstand high use everyday with very low maintenance burden. NC State's Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) reports numbers of users increase every year.

Communities experience the following benefits from investing in paved trails:

- Used by all ages and abilities
- Supports wide range of uses
- Reduces health care costs
- High return on investment
- Sparks economic development
- Increases property values and tax base

“Walking/biking trails were the top outdoor amenity our community selected in our 2013 and 2017 needs assessment.”
 Paul Moore – Recreation and Parks Director, Davis County



“If there was any question before, Covid has shown us the mental and physical benefits of trails. They offer recreation and transportation opportunities for everyone and enrich the overall quality of life for the community.”
Rural parks and recreation director

How much do paved trails cost to build?

Paved trails cost about \$1.6M* per mile

Source: UNC Highway Safety Research Center – Average total (including costs associated with) per year

*Every trail is different. A feasibility study is necessary prior to budgeting.



Obstacles to building paved trails

76% of governmental agencies listed funding as the biggest obstacle to meeting the demand for paved trails in their community.
Source: Cities, Towns & Counties for Trails Working Group Survey

“Trails contribute to our quality of life in Johnston County. Whether it's a greenway, hiking trail, or paddling trail, trails provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and have a positive economic impact across our county.”
 Dave Herby – Founding Board Member at Friends of Johnston County Parks

How much do communities need to build a mile of paved trails?



Federal funding for paved trails is on the rise in North Carolina.

TAP funds increased 63% under IJA to **\$36.5M ANNUALLY** and will increase 2% each year through 2026. Discretionary grant programs like RAISE are also available for communities that can provide 20% match. State grants to North Carolina towns and cities can help take advantage of this historic funding.

“Trails connect people with places they want, or need, to go. Trails provide exercise and recreational opportunities within the community. Trails are essential.”
 Andy Stahr – Senior Administrative Services Coordinator at City of Gastonia



John Cooper 919.819.1214
 David Ferrell 919.573.7421
 greattrailsstatecoalition.org



2023 LONG SESSION STRATEGY

- Get Legislators out to Year of the Trail Events
- **\$25M Great Trails State Fund**
 - Competitive grant program
 - All trail types
 - One time money – prove trails are a GREAT investment
- **\$50K Recurring funding for state trail non-profits**





North Carolina State Trails - 15





2023-2024 Budget

- **\$25M Great Trails State Program**
 - Competitive grant program
 - All trail types
 - One time money – prove trails are a GREAT investment
- **\$5M Complete the Trails Fund**
- **\$24.9M other projects**

Total trail and greenway investment in this budget: \$54,965,000



Celebrate North Carolina Trails



2023

YEAR OF THE TRAIL

**YEAR
OF THE
TRAIL**
• 2023 • NC •

DISCOVER YOUR TRAIL!

@greattrailsnc | greattrailsnc.com

Year of the Trail Campaign Goals



- **Inspire people** of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to try trails
- **Boost outdoor recreation tourism** across the state with events in all 100 counties
- **Advance diversity & inclusion** on trails.
- **Demonstrate the importance of trails** to elected officials
- **Promote safe and responsible** use of trails, aligning with Outdoor NC Leave No Trace principles.

Year of the Trail Campaign: REACH

- Website/Social media
- Local toolkits
- Events
- Advertising: Outdoor/radio/digital
- Merchandise
- PBS NC Partnership
- Conferences
- Blogs/Newsletters
- Measurement

DOWNLOADS



Download all Toolkit Assets
[Click Here »](#)



Download the Toolkit PDF
[Click Here »](#)



GET HIKING! AT SHALLOW FORD NATURAL AREA



greattrailsnc.com



HOME ABOUT EVENTS BLOG TOOLKIT FIND A TRAIL STORE

THESE ARE OUR TRAILS. THIS IS OUR YEAR.



TOOL KITS



1. Introductory Information

- YOTT Toolkit Fact Sheet
- YOTT Brochure
- Logos, Assets & Brand Usage Guide

2. All About Trails

- What makes a good trail
- Trail Asset Analysis Worksheet

3. Trail User Guides

- Trail Day Planning Checklist
- Leave No Trace (Outdoor NC)

4. How to Host a YOTT Event

- Templates - Event Planning, Volunteer Recognition, Banners, Proclamation template, Event Flier, Event Evaluation

5. Community Engagement Strategies

Communicating trails benefits and ideas and tools for advocating for trails in your community.

- Finished Social Media Assets - Monthly Content Calendars, Canva Templates, Trail Awareness Flier, Editorial templates, Trail story ideas

6. Trail Support beyond 2023

- *How to stay engaged with trails in NC and your community and how to become part of the Great Trails State Coalition.*

14 Virtual Trainings / 1200 participants



2023 YEAR OF THE TRAIL PROCLAMATION

TEMPLATE FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

WHEREAS, [NAME OF COMMUNITY]'s natural beauty is critical to its residents' quality of life, health, and economic wellbeing; and

WHEREAS, the trails that span across our community are an integral part of the recreational and transportation possibilities of our area and promote an enjoyment of scenic beauty by our residents and our visitors; and

WHEREAS, the parks, greenways, trails and natural areas in our community are welcoming to all and provide a common ground for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to access our rich and diverse natural, cultural, and historic resources; and

WHEREAS, [NAME OF COMMUNITY]'s natural assets and resources are integral to disaster recovery and resiliency to climate change for future generations; and

WHEREAS, [NAME OF COMMUNITY]'s nature trails vary from [DESCRIBE LOCAL TRAILS] [EXAMPLE IN THE DRAFT STATE PROCLAMATION: *less than a mile in length to the Mountains-to-Sea Trail that stretches more than 1,000 miles from the mountains to the coast; range from rugged footpaths on mountain ridges to bikeways along abandoned railway corridors, from canoe trails down our state's rivers to bridle trails in the rolling Piedmont, from trails through state parks to footpaths and greenways through local neighborhoods*]; and

WHEREAS, trails offer quality-of-life benefits to all as expressions of local community character and pride, as outdoor workshops for science education, as tools for economic revitalization, as free resources for healthy recreation, as accessible alternative transportation, and as sites for social and cultural events; and

WHEREAS, [SPEAK HERE ABOUT ANY SPECIAL LOCAL PROGRAMS YOU HAVE THAT IMPACT TRAILS]; and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina General Assembly designated 2023 as the Year of the Trail in North Carolina to promote and celebrate the state's extensive network of trails that showcase our state's beauty, vibrancy and culture; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina is known as the "Great Trails State;"
NOW, THEREFORE, I, [NAME], [TITLE], do hereby proclaim 2023 as "THE YEAR OF THE TRAIL" in [NAME OF COMMUNITY], and commend its observance to all people.

Year of the Trail Proclamations:

Dozens of communities participating



Collaborations – State Agencies



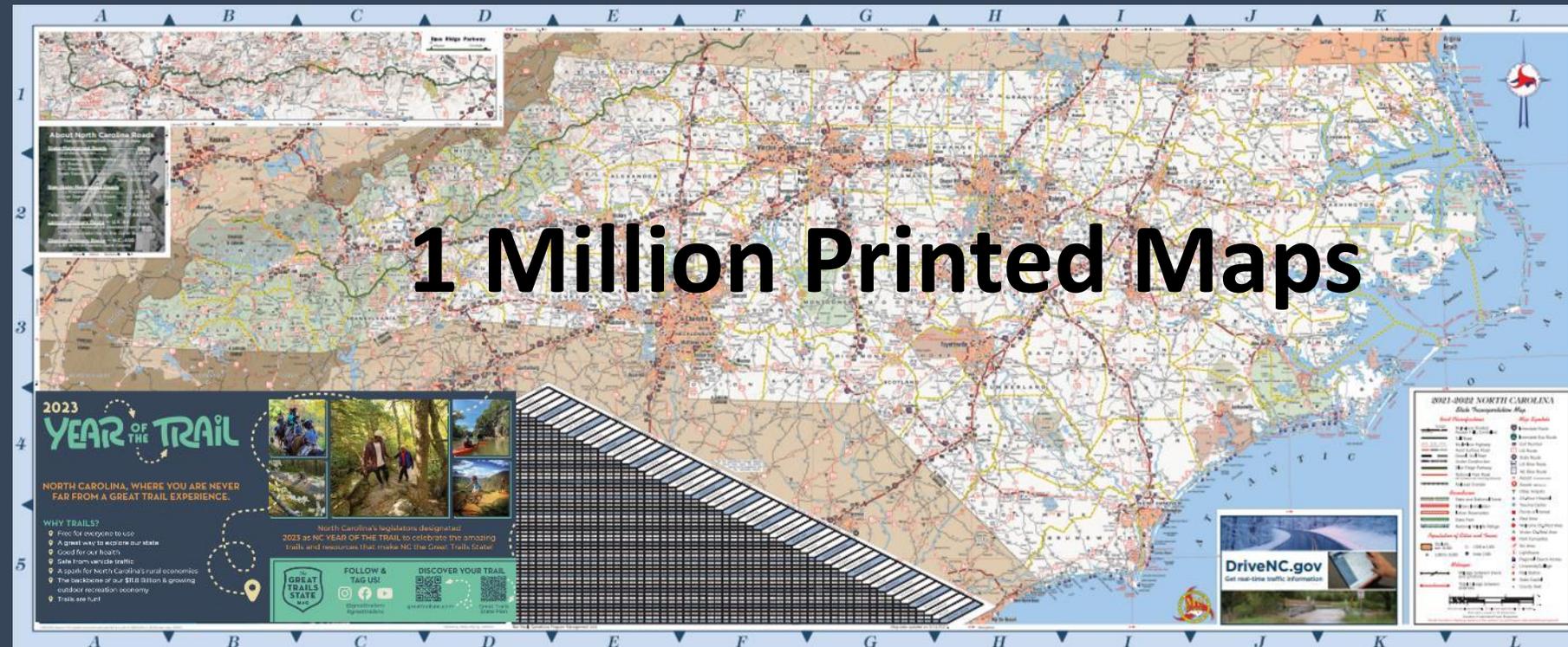
☰ NCDOT 🔍

Select Your Location: 📍



Find Your Outdoors

Experience N.C.'s natural beauty by celebrating the state's trails, greenways and blueways. [Learn More.](#)



1 Million Printed Maps

2023 YEAR OF THE TRAIL

NORTH CAROLINA, WHERE YOU ARE NEVER FAR FROM A GREAT TRAIL EXPERIENCE.

WHY TRAILS?

- Free for everyone to use
- A great way to explore our state
- Good for our health
- Safe from vehicle traffic
- A boost for North Carolina's rural economy
- The backbone of our \$11.8 billion growing outdoor recreation economy
- Trails are fun!

North Carolina's legislature designated 2023 as NC YEAR OF THE TRAIL to celebrate the amazing trails and resources that make NC the Great Trails State!

FOLLOW & TAG US!

DISCOVER YOUR TRAIL

DriveNC.gov
Get real-time traffic information

Collaborations – Private

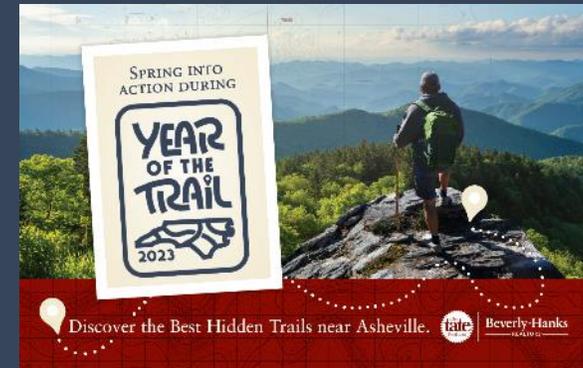


**BLUE
BLAZE**
BREWING CO.
CHARLOTTE, NC

NC
NORTH CAROLINA
CRAFT
BREWERS GUILD



**GREAT OUTDOOR
PROVISION CO.**



Collaborations – Local



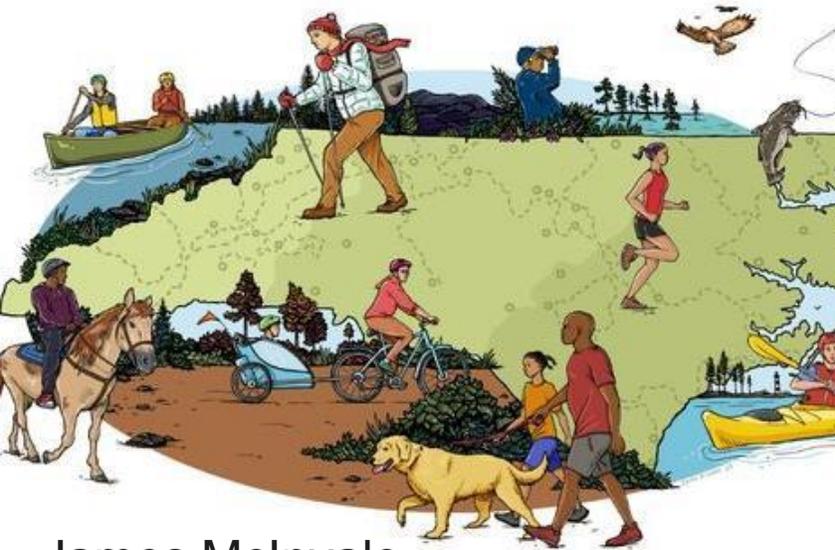


Scott Partridge



YEAR OF THE TRAIL

Year of the Trail ~ Call for Artists



James McInvale

Autumn Cobeland

Monthly Themes

September: Achieve a Trail Goal

October: Trail Innovators: Past & Present

November: Show Gratitude for NC Trails

December: Year in Review & Future

Aspirations





- 30-minute documentary featuring 10 trails across NC premiering August 31, with special screening and community discussion August 29



- 10 additional trail stories distributed through PBS NC's most popular original series NC Weekend, My Home NC, and Sci NC



SECU Foundation

PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE®

YOTT on Social Media

@greattrailsnc



"What the Trail Means to Me"

123 views • 6 days ago



Trails for the Future: How History is Shaping Trail...

2.1K views • 2 months ago



How to go Hiking the Easy Way: A Beginner's Guide

14K views • 4 months ago



North Carolina Year of the Trail - First Day Outdoors

19K views • 7 months ago



North Carolina Year of the Trail Anthem

8.9K views • 8 months ago

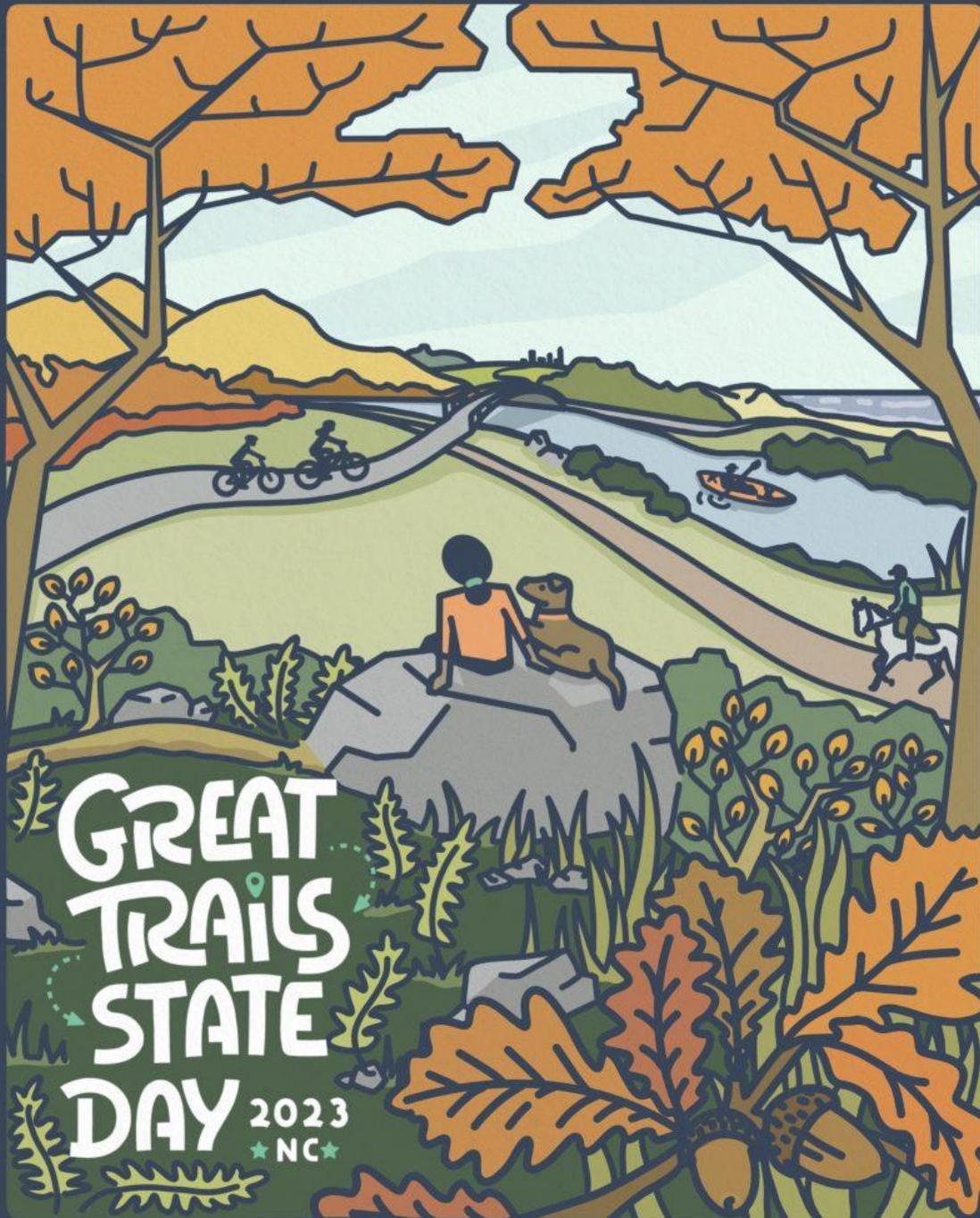




◀ OCTOBER 21 ▶

GREAT TRAILS STATE DAY 2023 ★ NC ★

- Statewide celebration with trail events/personal activities in all 100 counties
- Great Trails State Day kit (branding + poster + ideas)
- Focus on counties that haven't had events yet
- Instagram takeovers
- #greattrailsstateday2023
- Engaging video



Toolkit:

<https://greattrailsnc.com/great-trails-state-day/>

- Logo
- Poster
- Yard sign template
- Proclamation template
- Ideas!

Great Trails State Day Video!



Year of the Trail - Events By County

Select a County

None

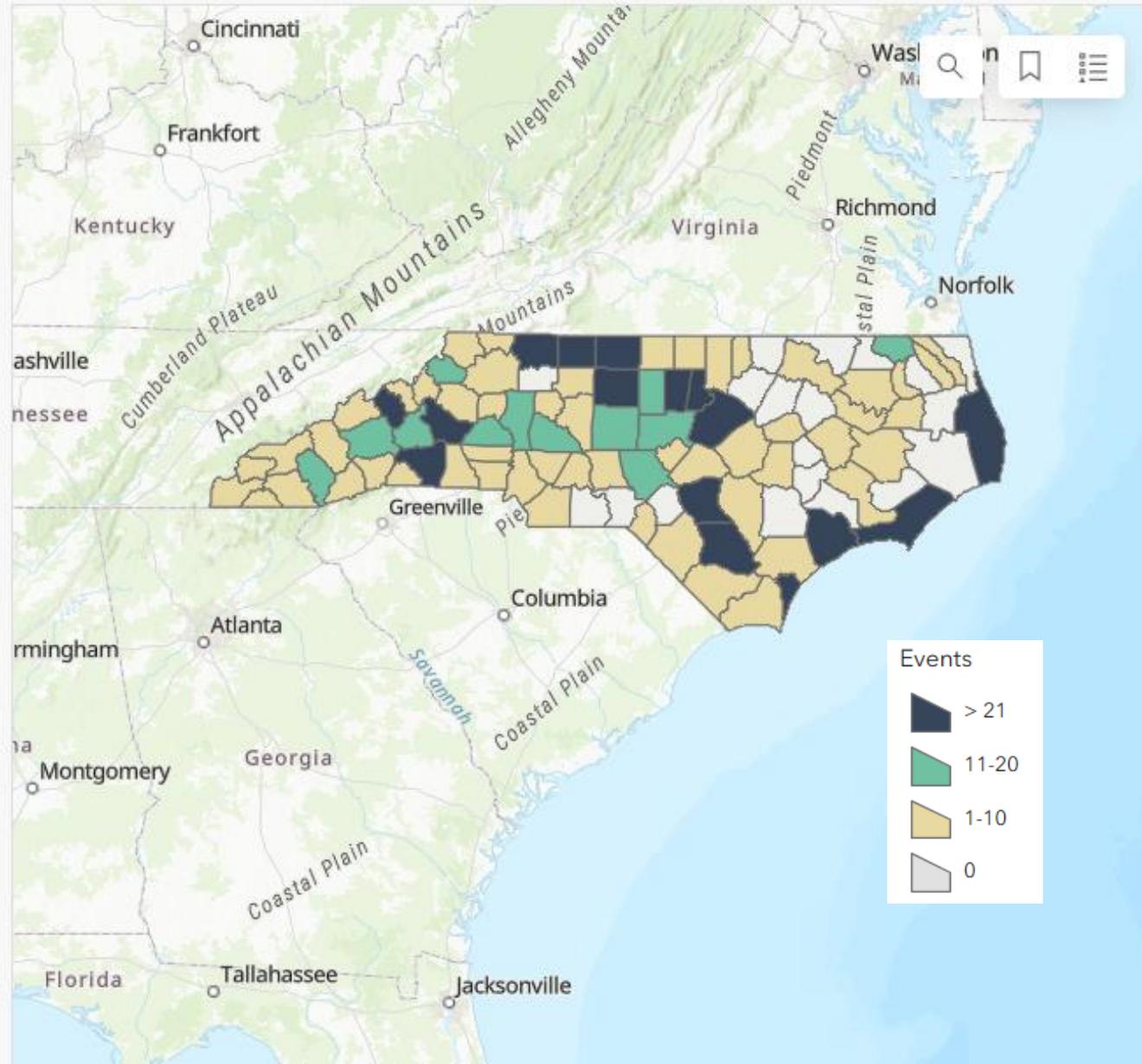
Counties with Events



Total # of Events

1.3k

In All Counties



2023 YEAR OF THE TRAIL



Launched January 1, 2023 - Impact So Far

+15
MILLION
People Reached



+144,000 website visits

1 NC Hero
Trails on
the Radio



+500,000



video views

1400+
events

20



16,887
newsletter
subscribers

What Happens After 2023

- **Shift to Great Trails State Brand**
 - Adjust toolkit
 - Rebrand website
 - Merch



Creating A Movement



What if + Action = **Magic**

2023

YEAR OF THE TRAIL

