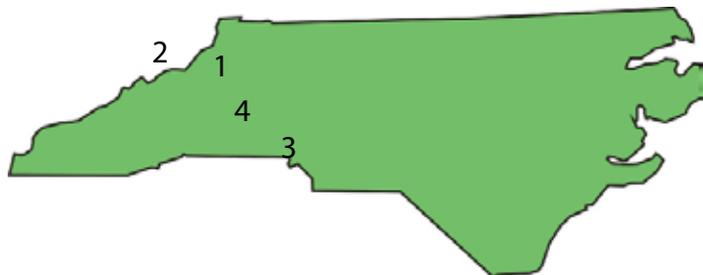




# NORTH CAROLINA

View along Proposed Mount Mitchell Axis Trail System; Photo. Ashley Wooten

## PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2009



- 1. Lake James Greenway Masterplan Initiative**  
McDowell County, NC
- 2. Mount Mitchell Axis Trail System**  
Buncombe County, NC
- 3. Yadkin River Heritage Corridor**  
The Yadkin River Heritage Corridor Partnership
- 4. Pioneering Healthier Communities**  
YMCA of Western North Carolina

## Recent Successes

### RTCA Continues Partnership with Blue Ridge Parkway.

The National Park Service (NPS) opened a Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program field office in Asheville, North Carolina in 2004. The Blue Ridge RTCA field office is located at the Blue Ridge Parkway Headquarters and is operated in partnership with the Blue Ridge Parkway (Parkway). This Field Office provides assistance to communities throughout Western North Carolina and also assists the Parkway on gateway issues in both North Carolina and Virginia.

This partnership between that RTCA and the Parkway provides a full time community planner position for the area. This shared community planner is a unique partnership between RTCA and a park unit, one of

only two across the nation. In addition, having a community planner allows the Parkway to engage with stakeholders and identify projects and opportunities outside of park boundaries in conjunction with park projects like the General Management Plan, Land Protection Plan and day to day planning work.

*“RTCA has been an invaluable help to the Blue Ridge Parkway. Their emphasis on community outreach and ability to identify park partners has helped us leverage our resources more effectively”*

Phil Francis, Superintendent, Blue Ridge Parkway

In February of this year the RTCA program was pleased to have the opportunity to renew its partnership with the Parkway by placing a staff person, Dawn Godwin, at Park Headquarters to replace Deirdre Hewitt, who is now the Southeast Region’s RTCA Program

Leader. Dawn is a Roanoke, VA native and has worked for the National Park Service for over 8 years.

# Current Projects

## 1. Lake James Greenway Masterplan Initiative

Project Partner: McDowell Trails Association

RTCA Contact: Dawn Godwin  
828.271.4779 (ext. 208)

### Project Goal

The goal of this project is the implementation of the Greenway Master Plan in the Eastern part of McDowell County. The project starts at Black Bear Access Area where the historic National Park Service Overmountain Victory Trail and the North Carolina Mountains to the Sea Trail intersect, connecting to the new 2,915 acre Lake James State Park and the Burke County greenway system, another RTCA project.

The primary partner, the McDowell Trails Association, will eventually create a greenway across McDowell County and connect to the Buncombe and Burke County greenway systems. The length of the Lake James greenway would be approximately 9-11 miles.

### RTCA Role

RTCA will work with the McDowell County Trails Association in implementing their greenway plan by helping identify existing public sites, the uses that each site may support, and connections between these sites to create an on the ground trail route linking



Mount Mitchell Axis Trail System - Buncombe County, NC

the Overmountain National Historic Trail and ultimately completing the loop around Lake James.

## 2. Mount Mitchell Axis Trail System

Project Partners: The towns of Black Mountain, Old Fort, and Montreat and Buncombe and McDowell Counties  
RTCA Contact: Dawn Godwin  
828.271.4779 (ext. 208)

### Project Goal

The Mount Mitchell Axis Trail System project focuses on development of a trail and greenway system that connects the Towns of Old Fort, Black Mountain, and Montreat in McDowell and Buncombe Counties in western North Carolina with public lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the

National Park Service. As a “gateway” to the Blue Ridge Parkway and Pisgah National Forest, the Towns and Counties are working together to develop a cohesive plan for trails and related signage and visitor information. The first segment, Point Lookout Trail, celebrated a grand opening on October 30, 2008.

Longer term connections will ultimately link McDowell County and Buncombe County and extend up to Mount Mitchell. Visitors will be able to travel through Old Fort, Black Mountain, Swannanoa, and access the City of Asheville’s developing greenway system. There is also the potential to include integration of passenger train and bicycle routes, resulting in a unique loop connection. Another exciting aspect of the project are the numerous opportunities to protect and restore streams and improve water quality where trails run along waterways like Flat Creek and the Swannanoa River.

### RTCA Role

RTCA will work with stakeholders to identify ways in which individual trail segment efforts and agency goals complement each other and can be met through regional cooperation. Specifically, RTCA staff will assist the partners with education and outreach efforts, identifying funding strategies, providing trail design and management expertise



## We're Here For You.

Could your project benefit from RTCA Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.

### Dawn Godwin

Blue Ridge Field Office  
Blue Ridge Parkway  
199 Hemphill Knob Road  
Asheville, NC 28803

828.271.4779 (ext. 208)  
828.271.4119 (fax)

dawn\_godwin@nps.gov

## THE RTCA PROGRAM

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. RTCA staff provides technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate. By investing in the protection of special places, recreation, tourism, and well planned development, local leaders can bring long-lasting economic and quality of life benefits to their communities.



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# Current Projects cont.

## 3. Yadkin River Heritage Corridor

Partner: The Yadkin River Heritage Corridor Partnership  
RTCA Contact: Charlotte Gillis  
404.562.3175 (ext 531)

### Project Goal

The Yadkin River Heritage Corridor Project includes Caldwell, Wilkes, Surry and Yadkin Counties in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The project will develop a concept plan for a 113-mile heritage and recreation corridor along the Yadkin River from historic Happy Valley to Shallowford Shoals. The corridor will link, protect and preserve the many historic, natural and recreational assets throughout the four counties. The San Marcos River offers the community and its visitors a quality recreation experience in an ecologically significant and sensitive resource. But managing recreational use and resource protection is not without its challenges. The project partnership, which includes both public and private sector organizations, seeks to improve management of recreation impacts and protection of riparian greenspace adjacent to 1.5 miles of urban river and 1 mile of spring-fed lake shoreline. The partnership has also planned the acquisition of 250 acres of open space in the headwaters region and the addition of up to three miles of new trails connecting to existing trails.

### RTCA Role

RTCA has been asked to: assist partners in developing a planning process, facilitate the public involvement portion of master plan development, identify study needs, and

assist in conducting studies to support the plan, especially regarding recreation impacts. RTCA will help develop implementation strategies for improved resource management and sustainable recreation uses.

*“RTCA is a valuable resource for the trails community in North Carolina. Time is the most important, but sometimes the most lacking, element that is needed in the effort to accomplish results in a field that is so full of opportunities; which if not seized, can forever be lost with the rapid development that is occurring across the entire state, but which seems to be occurring faster in the mountains of Western North Carolina.”*

Dwayne Stutzman, Chair  
Buncombe Co. Greenways & Trails Commission

## 4. Pioneering Healthier Communities

Project Partner: YMCA of Western North Carolina  
RTCA Contact: Dawn Godwin  
828.271.4779 (ext. 208)

### Project Goal

Through the YMCA's "Activate America" Program, and signed Memorandum of Understanding with the National Park Service, the Western North Carolina YMCA Chapter has requested assistance from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program to create a strategic plan for increasing physical activity in the region through improved green infrastructure. The "Pioneering Healthier Communities" steering committee—which is led by the YMCA and consists of a variety of stakeholders from Mission Hospital, to County School Superintendents, City Planners and the Mayor's Office in Asheville—seeks to identify opportunities to focus on projects in the built environment that encourage and increase physical activity. The YMCA has received implementation funding for the next several years and the project goal for this year is to identify shorter term on the ground implementation projects, the first being completion of critical greenway connections, while developing a long term strategic plan for Asheville and Buncombe County.

The project kicked off with a three-day event featuring Mark Fenton, nationally renowned expert on health and physical activity, which took place in Asheville November 10 – 12, 2008. This event provided input and was the

basis for a community strategic planning session which will guide the PHC project outcomes.

### RTCA Role

The RTCA role is to assist with implementation of a short term project by identifying partners and soliciting public input. As part of a community kick-off event hosting Mark Fenton the PHC group will identify a short-term priority project. In the long term, RTCA will assist with gathering public input and working with community partners and the public to identify additional links which will make Asheville more walkable and encourage residents and employees to increase their physical activity through walking as part of their daily routine.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
  
Rivers, Trails and Conservation  
Assistance Program

### Southeast Regional Office - Atlanta, Georgia

Atlanta Federal Center  
1924 Building  
100 Alabama Street S.W.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303  
Fax: (404) 562-3275

- Deirdre "Dee" Hewitt  
RTCA Program Leader  
Phone: (404) 562-3175 (ext. 521)
- Charlotte Gillis  
Phone: (404) 562-375 (ext. 531)
- Bill Lane  
Phone: (404) 562-3175 (ext. 539)

RTCA Blue Ridge Field Office  
199 Hemphill Knob Road  
Asheville, North Carolina 28803  
Fax: (828) 271-4119

- Dawn Godwin  
Phone: (828) 271-4779 (ext. 208)

RTCA Florida Field Office  
665 South Orange Avenue  
Suite 8  
Sarasota, Florida 34236  
Fax: (941) 373-9067  
• Jaime Doubek-Racine  
Phone: (941) 330-8047

RTCA Louisiana Field Office  
419 Decatur Street  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70130  
Fax: (504) 589-3851  
• Stacye Palmer  
Phone: (504) 589-3882 (ext.140)

RTCA Mississippi Field Office  
Gulf Islands National Seashore  
Davis Bayou Unit  
3500 Park Road  
Ocean Springs, Mississippi 39564  
Fax: (228) 872-2954  
• Liz Smith-Incer  
Phone: (228) 875-9057 (ext. 120)

RTCA Southern Appalachians Field Office  
175 Hamm Road  
Suite C  
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37405  
Fax: (423) 266-2558  
• Alison Bullock  
Phone: (423) 266-2359  
• Dr. Jeff Duncan  
Phone: (423) 266-1150

### E-Mail

Our e-mail follows this convention:  
Firstname\_Lastname@nps.gov

### Internet Web Site

National Program: [www.nps.gov/rtca](http://www.nps.gov/rtca)  
Online application available at web site.