

# Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail



## A progress report on the status of the Trail

Vol. 5, No. 1 fall 2008



elcome to the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.

The several stories in this Progress Report highlight the wonderful successes we have had this year along the Trail through the efforts of some of our Trail partners. We now have 70 miles of certified, publicly accessible trail on the ground, and we anticipate adding even more next year.

Unlike many other areas administered by the National Park Service, the OVNHT depends on Trail partners for all that it does. Trail development, educational and interpretive programming, resource preservation and management, and other important functions are all accomplished through the cooperation and volunteer participation of Trail partners It is a fitting means through which we can honor the volunteer militiamen whose heroic efforts in 1780 we commemorate.

We invite you to consider partnering with us—NPS and all the OVNHTrail partners—to help make this trail the best it can be. We encourage you to learn more about its stories. The American Revolution in the South was vital to our country winning Independence and we hope the Trail provides you the opportunity for a greater understanding and appreciation of this era in our nation's history.

- Paul Carson, Superintendent

# A Pleasing Day for Pleasant Gardens

Historic home in Marion certified on OVNHT

e are all McDowells," declared Anne Swann, chair of the McDowell House Project Committee, adding, "It is the enduring spirit of this building that makes it so special." She was addressing a large gathering of citizens who had come to

(Continued on page 6)





Citizens of McDowell County gathered at Pleasant Gardens in Marion for the OVNHT certification ceremony.

(left)
Accepting the OVNHTrail Certificate held by Mayor Everette Clark (I) and Andy Webb, Chairman, McDowell Co. Commissioners, are (I-r): Anne Swann, Chuck Abernathy, Kristina Bartlett, (Paul Carson,) Terrell Finley, Frank Dean, Bob Boyette, Carol Price, Arthur Campbell, Rod Birdsong, and James Haney.

## **History Returns to Caldwell County**

First-ever Trail segment in county at The Patterson School

n Sept . 27, citizens of the community joined with students and staff of The Patterson School to honor the historic events of 228 years ago by making history of their own. In a special ceremony, the NPS certified The Patterson School's recently constructed, one-mile section of the OVNHT. This trail along the upper Yadkin River is the first such (Continued on page 3)



Flanked by the Guilford Courthouse Fife & Drum Corps, Paul Carson (I) presents certificate to Randy Gibson, Director of Development, and Katrina Martin, Head of The Patterson School.

# **Crossing Over**

## Choate's Ford becomes a designated site in Bluff City

n 2008, the citizens of Bluff City in Sullivan County, Tennessee embraced another section of the Trail. Following on the certification in 2007 of a section of the OVNHT



Bluff City Middle School students gather with militia reenactors to witness the dedication of Choate's Ford as a protected site of the OVNHT.

through town, Bluff City now enjoys having historic Choate's Ford as a recognized historic site.

On September 24, 1780, four hundred Virginia militiamen crossed over the Holston River at Choate's Ford on their way to muster at Sycamore Shoals. This year on the anniversary date, militia reenactors from the Overmountain Victory Trail Association told the exciting story about the campaign to the Battle of Kings Mountain to the entire body of students at Bluff City Middle School gathered on the football field. After the story, the reenactors and all the students paraded down to the park along the Holston River for the dedication ceremony.

Paul Carson, Superintendent of the OVNHT, encouraged the students to remember this ceremony. "From this day forward, Choate's Ford will be a special part of the history that is told about the Overmountain Men on their march to

King's Mountain, and you are here to see it dedicated," he said. (Choate's Ford is on land administered by the



OVTA reenactors fired two volleys of blackpowder near a marker erected at the park in 1998 to commemorate the crossing at Choate's Ford. The historic ford is 400 yards east of the park.

New OVNHT markers have been erected at the site of Choate's Ford across the Holston River at Bluff City.

Tennessee Valley Authority. Historic sites already on federal land are "designated" rather than "certified" as are historic sites and trail segments which fall on private property.)

"This is so cool," said one of the students. "Getting

out of class is great, but being a part of history is really neat." ●

# **Room Enough to Tell the Tale**

Wilkes Heritage Museum opens new exhibit

ilkes Heritage Museum has installed a new exhibit about the OVNHT and the role of backcountry militia from the area around Wilkes County.

"When the museum opened three years ago," said Jennifer Furr, Executive Director, "we set aside an entire room to tell the story of the American Revolution in Wilkes County. We are a Trail Partner and a site on the OVNHT; we have the Tory Oak and the Robert Cleveland cabin. We have a great story to tell and the perfect space now in use."

The exhibit was designed to appeal to a range of age groups including local third-graders who come to the museum on field trips.

They enjoy the hands-on exhibits such as the tri-corn hat, the camp scene with the tent, and the kiosk



The new exhibit at Wilkes Heritage Museum includes a tent, informative panels, a lighted map and kiosk. Jennifer Furr holds one of the "touchable" elements that attract children.

map of the OVNHT that lights up. The text and images on the several wall panels and the artifacts on display engage the adults and history buffs. "We want visitors to understand the role of the backcountry militia in winning America's freedom," said Furr. "When called to muster, these men grabbed their rifles, mounted up, and left their homes risking everything. These are the true heroes of the American Revolution."

Funded in part by the National Park Service through OVNHT, the

Museum contributed funds from its capital fund for exhibit development. The new display complements other exhibits in the area about the OVNHT including the display opened in 2007 at nearby W. Kerr Scott Reservoir Visitor Center. •

## **Coming Back Home**

### Rocky Mount is recertified as a historic site on the OVNHT

ollowing a candlelight tour and program conducted by OVTA reenactors at Rocky Mount Museum on September 24, a special evening ceremony recertified the

living history site as part of the OVNHT.

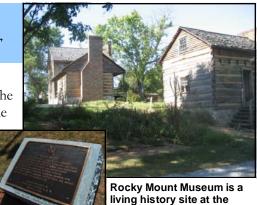
"Rocky Mount is a significant site on the Trail," said Paul Carson. "This is where the Virginia militiamen spent the night and where some of North Carolina's overmountain militiamen mustered before arriving at

Sycamore Shoals." Rocky Mount was the home of William Cobb. He provisioned some of the men with gunpowder, blankets, and food. He and two sons then rode off to join the muster at Sycamore Shoals. After the American Revolution and following the failed effort to create the State of Franklin,

Governor
William
Blount lived
with the Cobb
family at Rocky
Mount while he
administered the
Southwest
Territory.

Rocky Mount Museum is a living history site in Piney Flats,

Tennessee. It is one of eight historic resources in Tennessee identified in the Comprehensive Management Plan



home of William Cobb who moved into the area in 1769.

ioved into the drea in 1705.

drafted after Congress designated the OVNHT in 1980. The recertification of Rocky Mount this year puts it under the new certification procedure, which automatically renews every five years. "We are delighted to recertify Rocky Mount," Carson continued. "It is an important part of the story and a significant site for educating the public about life in the late 1700's."

(Continued from page 1)

trail segment designated in Caldwell

County, which has a potential 25 miles along the historic route.

"Caldwell County has a strong connection to the history of the OVNHT," said Paul Carson, Superintendent, OVNHT. "Three of the Trail's founders are native sons of Caldwell County: Senator James T. Broyhill, who

County: Senator James T. Broyhill, who submitted the bill for the trail's Congressional designation, Gary Everhardt, former Director of the National Park Service, and Harry Smith, Grand Marshal of the 1976 March and who was so instrumental in organizing the earliest commemorative marches. The late Bill Stronach, former director of parks and recreation for Lenoir, was also deeply involved in the early years of the Trail's development."



First-person interpreter Emily

McClellan, who for 36 years has por-

trayed Mrs. William Cobb at the site,

welcomes a visitor with a cup of tea.

Students at Patterson School walk along new trail segment. (photo - Pam Truax)

In accepting the certificate, Ms. Katrina Martin, Head of

School, expressed the institution's enthusiasm for having this educational resource as part of the its campus. She announced that students would soon begin researching, writing, and recording audio material for a program called "Overmountain Victory Voices." Students from other schools and visitors to the new trail

segment will use these MP3 files to learn about the history.

The Guilford Courthouse Fife and Drum Corps performed for the gathering. Members of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association presented a check to The Patterson School for the purchase of books about the history of the Battle of Kings Mountain. •

# More Yadkin River Greenway Certified



Paul Carson presents a framed certificate to Executive Director Bill Clifton (I) and members of the board, Gary Coghill and Frank Taracido (r). On the right with the Guilford Courthouse Fife and Drum Corps is R.G. Absher, assistant operations manager for W. Kerr Scott Reservoir River on the Yadkin River and also VP of OVTA.

s part of the ceremony at The Patterson School, NPS certified x miles of Wilkes County's Yadkin River Greenway for a segment at Moravian Creek. With this new addition, Wilkes County now has xx miles of trail certified and walkable along the historic route of the Overmountain Men.



## Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail

his is the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780 and how they helped win America's independence.

#### Late September 1780

September 12, Burke County (NC) militiamen under the command of Charles McDowell skirmished with a part of Ferguson's Loyalist army at Cane Creek, then retreat over the Appalachian Mountains to Sycamore Shoals.

As a prisoner of war released by British Major Patrick Ferguson, Patriot militiaman Samuel Phillips delivers Ferguson's threatening message to Isaac Shelby in the overmountain regions of NC. Isaac Shelby rides 40 miles to the home of John Sevier to talk about the threat. The men agree to send messengers to call for a muster of militia at Sycamore Shoals (today's Elizabethton, TN).

**September 24** – Colonel William Campbell leaves The Mustering Ground (today's Abingdon, VA) with 200 Virginia militiamen. Colonel Arthur Campbell leads another group of 200. They ride along the Watauga Road.

**September 25** – Four-hundred eighty militiamen from the Overmountain regions of North Carolina (today's Tennessee) muster at Sycamore Shoals with the militiamen from Virginia and 160 militiamen from Burke Co., NC.

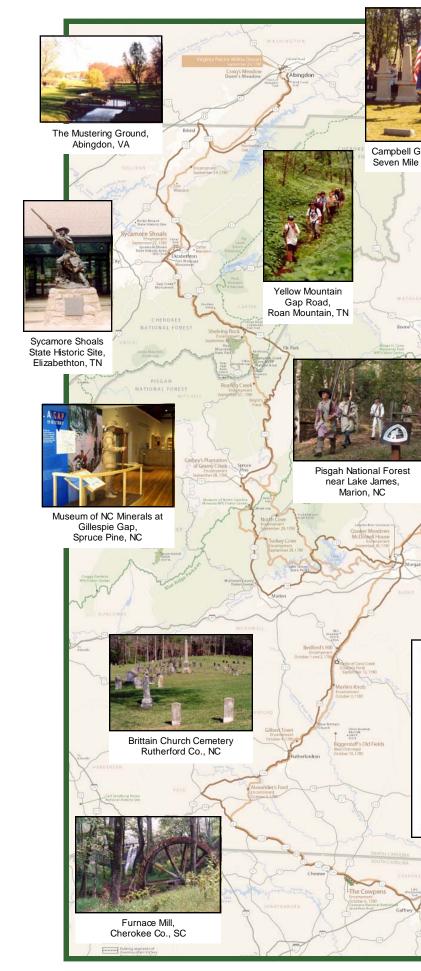
**September 26** – The Overmountain Men ride toward the mountains driving a herd of cattle to feed their army; they camp at Shelving Rock, storing their powder beneath the rock ledge to keep it dry.

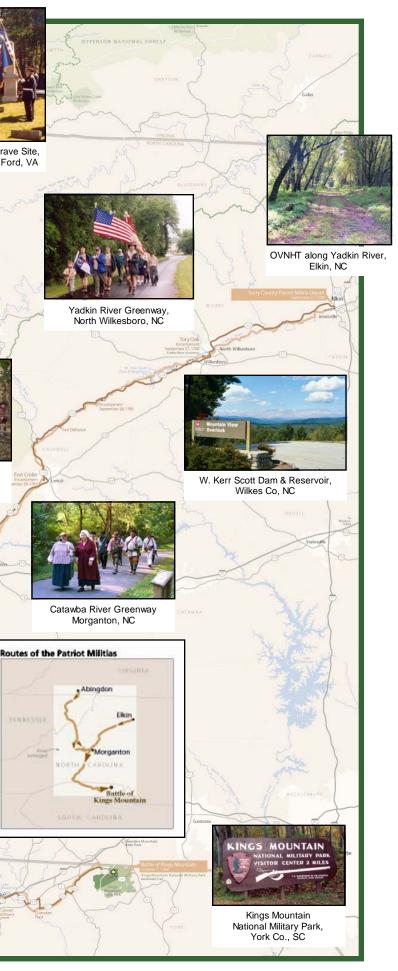
September 27 – Overmountain Men "Cross the Roan" through the Yellow Mountain Gap after slaughtering beeves and preparing the meat. At the top of the mountain saddle, they parade in "snow shoe-mouth deep" and take roll. Two men with Tory leanings are discovered missing. The Overmountain Men camp along Roaring Creek. Meanwhile, in the northern piedmont of North Carolina, 350 Wilkes-Surry Patriot militia under the command of Major Joseph Winston and Colonel Benjamin Cleaveland ride upstream along the Yadkin River toward Quaker Meadows.

**September 28** – Overmountain Men move south along the North Toe River and camp where it joins Grassy Creek (near today's Spruce Pine).

**September 29** – Patriots divide into two groups near Gillespie Gap and descend the Blue Ridge Mountains following separate routes; they camp at Turkey Cove and North Cove.

**September 30** – The two groups of Overmountain Men ride along separate routes near the Catawba River and reunite along the way. They camp at Quaker Meadows where they are joined by the Wilkes-Surry militia and others. The spirit of the men is lifted as the band of Patriots grows in number.





October 1 – The combined army of over 1400 militiamen head south toward Gilbert Town (near today's Rutherfordton) where they expect to find Ferguson's army. Because of heavy rain, the Patriots stop in the late afternoon at Bedford Hill in South Mountain Gap.

October 2 – Continuing rain keeps the men in camp this day. The Patriot leaders meet and elect William Campbell as their commander.

October 3 – The Patriot militiamen prepare for battle and move toward Gilbert Town along Cane Creek. They do not pitch camp; the men sleep on their arms.

**October 4** – The Patriots arrive in Gilbert Town to find that Ferguson is already gone. The militia leaders send out scouts and continue south to learn if Ferguson is heading for the fort at Ninety-Six (SC) or for Charlotte (NC).

**October 5** – The Patriots head southwest and camp at Alexander's Ford on the Green River. They learn from scouts that Ferguson is marching toward Charlotte and the protection of Cornwallis's army.

**October 6** – The Patriots ride southeast toward Cowpens where they are joined by militiamen from South Carolina, Georgia and Lincoln Co., NC. They learn that Ferguson is only 35 miles away, camped at Kings Mountain. The leaders pick the 900 best marksmen and the 900 fastest horses. At 9:00 P.M. these Patriot militiamen ride into the night as a cold rain continues to fall.

October 7 – Having ridden all night and forded the rainswollen Broad River, the Patriot army encircles Kings Mountain at 3:00 pm and in "one heroic hour" captures or kills—including the despised Patrick Ferguson—the entire Loyalist Army. The Patriot losses are small: 28 killed and 62 wounded. The Loyalists suffer more: 150 killed, 150 wounded, some 800 captured. Cornwallis's left flank is destroyed.

**Epilogue** – With this Patriot victory at Kings Mountain, the British found it harder to muster Loyalists. After subsequent battles at Cowpens and Guilford Courthouse, Cornwallis decided he could not subdue North Carolina. He moved into Virginia; just 12 months and 12 days after the Battle of Kings Mountain, Cornwallis surrendered the British forces to the Continental Army under General George Washington, on Oct. 19, 1781 at Yorktown, VA. ●

#### **New OVNHT Brochure**

During 2007, the NPS Harpers Ferry Center completed a new brochure for the Overmountain Victory NHT. It includes the detailed base map shown at left (completed in 2006), and interprets more history of the backcountry and piedmont patriots as well as the Southern Campaign. •

## Renewing the Old

## Charles McDowell House in Morganton recertified on OVNHT

n Sept 27, the NPS continued the designation of the Charles McDowell House with provisions for automatic renewal at five-year intervals. This action simply corrected an administrative detail related to its original certification in 1995 as a designated historic site along the OVNHT,

"The Charles McDowell House and Quaker Meadows are significant sites along

the OVNHT," said Paul Carson, OVNHT

Superintendent, at a brief ceremony during Historic Burke Foundation's Revolutionary Weekend. "The meadows are the site where 1,000 Overmountain Men from Virginia



(I to r) Scott Coley, Forrest Fleming, Morganton City Councilman, Paul Carson, Almon Carr, HBF President, and Mel Cohen, Mayor of Morganton, pose in front of the historic Charles McDowell House at Quaker Meadows.

and today's East Tennessee met with 350 militiamen who rode up the Yadkin River Valley from Wilkes and Surry counties. From this point, they began in earnest a coordinated search for Major Patrick Ferguson."

Historic Burke Foundation organized again this year a four-day festival that included the performance of plays, storytelling, reenactors and craftsmen, music by the Guilford Courthouse Fife and Drum Corps, and an educational program by the reenactors of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association during their 34th annual march. "This festival is one way the Foundation

reaches out to the community every year to invite participation in recognizing and celebrating our collective history from the Revolutionary War era," said Scott Coley, chairman of the event and a past-president of the Foundation. •



The Guilford Courthouse Fife and Drum Corps engaged the audience in "roaring" as part of a song once used by Scots warriors when marching into battle.

(Continued from page 1) celebrate the preserving and interpreting of *Pleasant Gardens*, the home of Joseph McDowell. Through efforts that began in earnest two years ago, the citizens of the City of Marion and McDowell County had purchased the home. On September 28, they gathered to celebrate another milestone it is preservation and interpretation: the house's certification as a historic site on the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.

Rod Birdsong, Chamber of Commerce, recounted the story of the home's preservation, noting that the owners of the house were willing champions of the effort. "Mayor Everette Clark issued a challenge to us all to purchase the home. We got the Tourism Development Authority involved, increased the occupancy tax, and in February 2008, McDowell County bought the home."

Applying the diverse committee's

Applauding the diverse committee's work and the community-wide effort, County Manager Chuck

Abernathy said, "We do a

Joseph M Douell
Room

The nex

Community supporters gather inside the Joseph McDowell Room which may eventually be restored to its historic configuration.

Joseph McDowell, born in 1758 and for whom the county was named, was

good job of involving our citizens."

a captain and later a colonel of the Burke County militia. He was a circuit doctor and one of the first trustees of the University of North Carolina.

> Historians differ as to whether he is also the Joseph McDowell of Quaker Meadows.

The next step is a capital campaign for funds to restore the house, which will be incorporated as a trailhead along the McDowell Trails Greenway connecting Marion with Old Fort adjacent to the Catawba River.

Reenactors with the OVTA marchers fired a commemorative volley. "We have come by this quiet site during our annual marches for 30 years, folks," said Mike Dahl, a spokesman for the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. "Now, thanks to you, it will be silent no more." •

## **Looking at a Southern Revolution**

Southern Campaign of the Revolution Heritage Area Study

he American Revolution in the South is the theme of a potential national heritage area that may be established in North Carolina and South Carolina. During

the next two years, representatives from the National Park Service, North Carolina, and South Carolina will conduct a feasibility study for such a heritage area and



Map showing just the NPS sites in the study area for a proposed Southern Campaign of the Revolution Heritage

report back to Congress in 2010 with a recommendation.

Several criteria apply to achieving the status of a national heritage area and all will be evaluated quite carefully. One important criterium is whether the subject area has "the natural, historic, and cultural resources that together represent distinctive aspects of American heritage worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use"

> and that can be best managed through public/private partnerships.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for the OVNHT," said Paul Carson. "Not only will we be linking our heritage

story with other parks, museums, trails and the like, but we will be able to tell our special story of how the OVNHT has come to be. After all, our Trail, stretching across four states and 330 miles, exists as a result of and through

(Continued on page 8)

## **Digging History**

Virginia Boy Scouts earn special NPS recognition

group of Boy Scouts from Troop 117 in Damascus, VA helped prepare for the installation of a new informational kiosk to be erected at The Mustering Ground in Abingdon. Under the



Scouts receiving the award and patch from NPS are (I - r): Corey Johnson, Austin McClure, Luke Wallace, Ben McClure (cub scout), McKenzie Thornsbury, and Jenner Johnson. Also receiving the award bur not pictured are Devin Keith, William Rouse, JJ Rouse. Paul Carson, OVNHT, addresses the audience. (Photo by Donna McClure)

supervision of Dr. Charles Bartlett

and Dan Kegley of the Washington Co. Archeological Society, these Scouts conducted an archeological investigation of the kiosk site to discover if any artifacts or history might be disturbed with the kiosk's installation. Eagle Scout candidate Corey Johnson undertook this

project as his service project and engaged the help of several members of his troop. For their effort, they earned a certificate as Scout Rangers under the new Resource Stewardship Program from the NPS coordinated with the Boy Scouts of America initiative, Good Turn for America. The Scouts, led by Scoutmaster Jimmy Anderson, were the first along the OVNHT to receive the new patch.

itiative, Good Turn for America. The couts, led by Scoutmaster Jimmy And ere the first along the OVNHT to rece new patch.

The Scouts were recognized in a ceremony during another success:

five-day educational program

The Scouts were recognized in a ceremony during another successful, five-day educational program conducted by community volunteers and reenactors at The Mustering Ground. •

# Campaign Headquarters

Study to locate OVNHT headquarters

t has long been the plan of the National Park Service," said Paul Carson, OVNHT Superintendent, "to place the headquarters for the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail in a community centrally located to the 330 miles of Trail route." During 2009, the NPS is funding a study to select the headquarters site. A private consulting firm has been contracted by the NPS to conduct the search and to evaluate locations. The contractor will submit its recommendations during 2010, and the NPS will make a decision thereafter.

"During this fall's commemoration," continued Carson, "I spoke with representatives of some of the potential communities to advise them of the study. Several have expressed a strong willingness and sincere interest in being the home to the new OVNHT headquarters. We are truly blessed with so many enthusiastic Trail partners." •



Boy Scouts from Troop 117 in Damascus, VA conduct an archeological investigation of the historic site prior to the installation by NPS of an informational kiosk. (Photos by Mac Johnson, top; Bill McKee)

## **Patriots for Partners**

## Trail partners are taking big steps together

usiness consultants tell us that an organization is formed when a task is more than one person can do alone. That is certainly true when it comes to building the OVNHT. Today, dozens of organizations are working together across four states to build the commemorative Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail (OVNHT). In fact, today the Trail has well over 100 partners and more are joining every month! Here are some of them:

#### Virginia

Numerous Private Landowners Virginia DOT Virginia Department of Tourism Virginia Department of Historical Resources Smyth County

Smyth County
Town of Abingdon
Washington County
Historical Society of
Washington County



#### **Tennessee**

Numerous Private Landowners Tennessee DOT Town of Elizabethton Town of Bluff City

Carter County
Sullivan County
Southern Appalachian

Southern Appalachian Greenway Alliance

Tennessee Department of Tourism
Roan Mountain State Park
Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area
Rocky Mount State Historic Site
Hampton Creek Cove State Natural Area
Cherokee National Forest – U.S.F.S
Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
Appalachian National Scenic Trail—NPS
Appalachian Trail Club

Back Country Horsemen of East Tennessee

### **North Carolina**

Numerous Private

Landowners

NCDOT

NC Dept. of Cultural Resources

NC Dept. of Tourism

Pisgah National Forest - U.S. Forest Service

NC

Blue Ridge Parkway – NPS

The Altapass Foundation

McDowell County

Wilkes County Brittain Church

McDowell County

Historical Society

Historic Burke Foundation, Inc.

Wilkes County Historical Society

Surry County Historical Society

Rutherford County Historical Society

Lake James State Park

Fort Defiance Historic Site

Yadkin River Greenway

Catawba River Greenway

Duke Energy Company

Crescent Land Corp.

Wilkes County Heritage Museum

Unimin Corporation

Catawba-Wateree Relicensing Coalition

Rutherford County

Polk County

City of Morganton

City of Kings Mountain

Town of Elkin

Town of Rutherfordton

Town of Ruth

County of Burke

Wake Forest University

Piedmont Land Conservancy

Foothills Land Conservancy

Mountain to the Sea Trail

Kings Mountain Gateway Committee

Betchler Development Corporation

Brushy Mountain Cyclists Club

W. Kerr Scott Reservoir – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Yadkin River Heritage Corridor
Foothills Nature Science Society
Blue Ridge National Heritage Area
NC State University
White Oak Development
Overmountain Vineyards
The Bradley Fund, LLC
Conservation Trust for NC
Avery County
Mitchell County
High Country Council of Governments
Caldwell County
Surry County

#### **South Carolina**

Numerous Private Landowners

SCDOT SC Department of Tourism

North Carolina Horse Council

Cowpens National Battlefield – NPS

Kings Mountain NMP - NPS

Kings Mountain State Park

SC Department of Parks

Overmountain Victory Trail Committee

Cherokee County

Spartanburg County Town of Gaffney

Carolina Backcountry Alliance

Carolina DackCountry Alliance

The Palmetto Conservation Foundation Colonial Pipeline Company

Cherokee County Historical Society

### **All States**

Overmountain Victory Trail Association, Inc. Federal Highway Administration
Daughters of the American Revolution
Sons of the American Revolution
American Hiking Society
HistoryAmerica Tours
American Battlefield Protection Program
Eastern National Monument Association
National Park Foundation
Student Conservation Association



# For more information about being a Trail Partner, contact:

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2635 Park Road
Blacksburg, SC 29702

(864) 936-3477 www.NPS.gov/ovvi

Picture credits: All photography by Randell Jones except as noted.

With so many interested parties working together on the OVNHT, we should not be surprised to see major elements of the Trail becoming a reality every year. It is indeed an exciting time to be involved with building the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. •

(Continued from page 7)

continuing public and private cooperation."

The feasibility study will gather and consider public input. Although the meeting schedule is not yet established, public meetings in North Carolina will be held in New Bern, Greensboro, and Morganton. Meetings in South Carolina will be held in Charleston, Camden, and Spartanburg. Those wishing to comment without attending a meeting can submit remarks at <a href="http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sero">http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sero</a>. Click on the link for Southern Campaign of the Revolution Heritage Area.