

December 2016

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 2016 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 October 2015, even though funding became available in July 2014. We provided comments on the initial site plan and design for this facility was completed by a contractor this Fall. Efforts to date utilized over \$49,000 of the \$100,000 allocated by the Council and it appears that additional funds will be required. Until bids on this project are received some months from now, it is not clear whether the currently available funds (~\$50,000 + \$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 late in 2017.

Trail safety: We continued efforts to request NCDOT to lower the speed limit to 45 mph at the O'Kelly Chapel Road crossing area and were finally successful in getting this long overdue change. Working with the Town of Cary we paid for new STOP and warning signs for trail users for both sides of the crossing at O'Kelly Chapel. We've had favorable comments on these changes, however, the high volume of commuter traffic on O'Kelly still poses a hazard to those crossing. To provide another level of warning to motorists, TRTC has continued its efforts to get Chatham County to provide funding for a pair of user activated amber warning lights for this crossing. Funding for these was not approved for the 2015-2016 fiscal year but has been placed on a list of items for consideration for funds available in the 2016-17 fiscal year. A decision on these could be made at the Commissioner's January 2017 meeting.

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 in early December. 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. Just this Fall we were notified by NC DOT that this lot is not in compliance with requirements of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (commonly referred to as the ADA). The construction approvals we received in 2012 did not specify the need to have 2 paved parking spaces and firm and stable surfaces providing access to the water fountain. We are now looking into how we can do these economically and will most likely try to do a good bit of the work using volunteer efforts. Stay tuned to our site and the ATT Facebook page this Spring for notices of future workdays.

We held eight targeted workdays this year. These included maintenance of the access trail and grassy areas 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 four workdays on the 2.2-mile Eagle Spur rail-trail south of Stagecoach Road, to remove downed trees, widen the trail 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 2017 we plan to replace up to three of the very damaged drainage culverts to improve user safety and allow trail usage even in very wet conditions. These installation projects look to be large efforts involving substantial digging and covering that will need numerous volunteers. At the Stagecoach Road start of the Eagle Spur, TRTC provided support to Matthew Darby of Troop 402 to construct an information kiosk as an Eagle Scout project. We'll be putting together and installing information for trail users at this kiosk early in 2017.

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

Maps: Printable PDF files for the 2015 ATT maps were made available on our site early in the year. During 2016 we provided almost 2000 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.

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)
P.O Box 61091
Durham, NC 27715-1091

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 our TRTC Treasurer at: michaelforte@hotmail.com

With thanks for your support,

Curt Devereux, President, Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

