

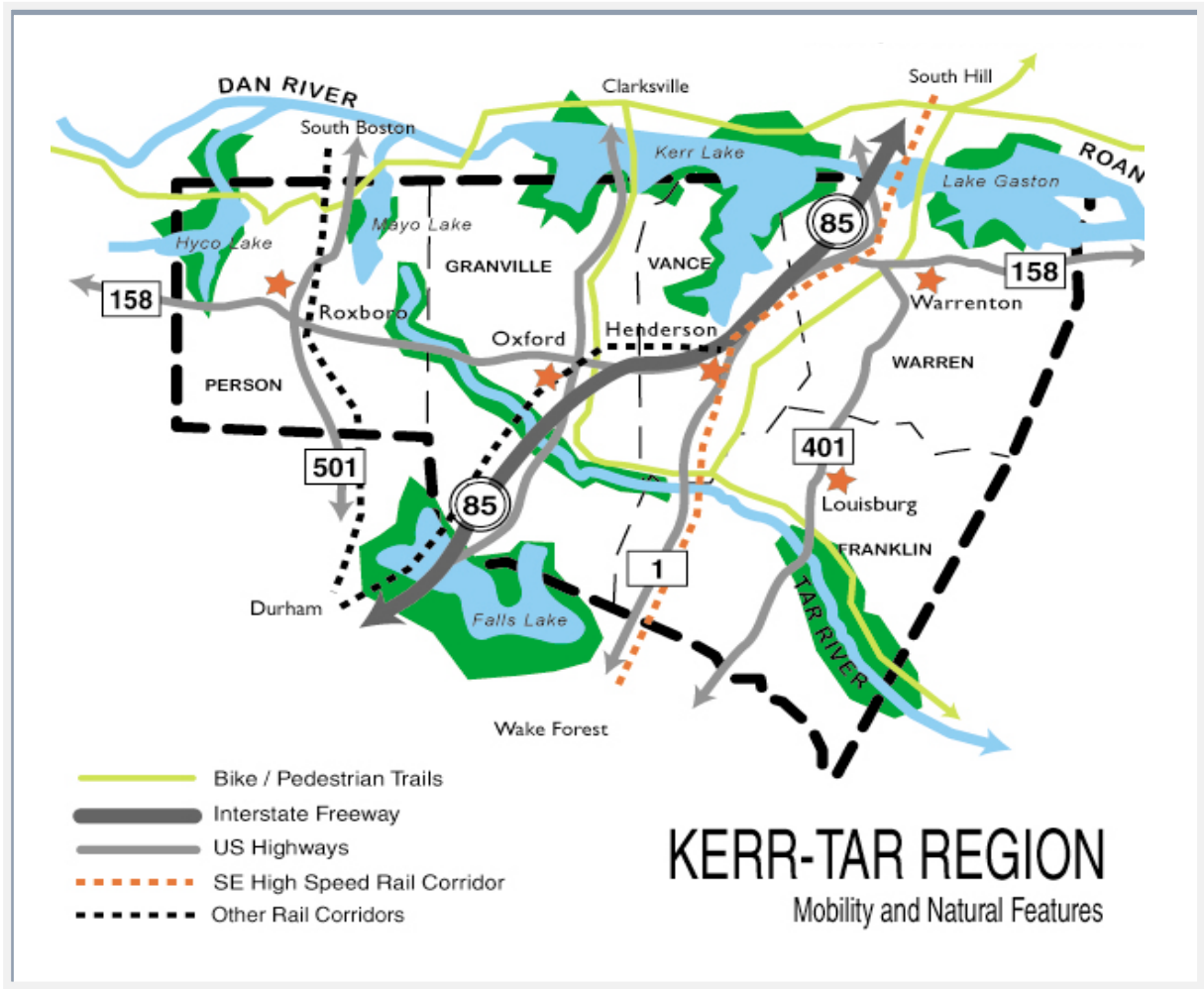
NORTH CAROLINA LAKES DISTRICT



Introduction

The area known as the Kerr-Tar region is located in north-central North Carolina. The region is largely rural, dotted with small family farms, historic communities and properties, and rich in opportunities for outdoor recreation. The region's name is derived from the Tar River which bisects the region and Kerr Lake, the largest man-made lake in the southeast United States. The region is also home to several other large lakes among these Lake Gaston, Hyco Lake and Mayo Lake. The region is located north of the Durham – Raleigh metropolitan area, and approximately 2.5 hours from Charlotte, 2 hours from Richmond, VA and 3.5 hours from the Washington, DC area. The Kerr-Tar Blueways Plan has been incorporated into the North Carolina Lakes District Regional Plan that includes a regional bike and hiking plans and is envisioned to be the cornerstone to develop a regional tourism and recreation plan. A website has been created to showcase these plans and to provide guidance for visitors to the region. (Please see: www.NCLakesDistrict.com)

This Plan is intended as a guide advocates may use to further expand the development of a formal network of blueways in the Kerr-Tar region to complement other tourism and recreation initiatives.



Background / History of Blueways

Scenic paddling trails in many states provide signed routes with a variety of facilities and recreation opportunities for canoeists and kayakers of all abilities. Many “water trails” have been designated as National Recreation Trails, joining many kinds of trail recreation, including hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, and driving ATVs and four-wheel drive vehicles.

Unlike bikeways, water trails already exist. What is needed is help for trail users to get to the water and to find their way around. Signs, route markers, maps, and promotion of water routes are essentials. Trail supporters can create more opportunities by providing facilities like parking, boat ramps or docks, and places to camp and picnic

Examples of Existing Programs and Facilities

Alabama Scenic River Trail, Alabama —Stretching 631 miles from the Coosa River to the Gulf of Mexico, this scenic water trail features numerous camping, hiking, and bird watching opportunities.



Apalachicola River Paddling Trail System, Florida — Runs 100 miles through the panhandle of Florida to the Gulf of Mexico.

Congaree River Blue Trail, South Carolina — 50-mile water trail and greenway offers an urban adventure featuring prehistoric Native American sites, sandbars, high bluffs, and Congaree National Park.

Susquehanna River Water Trail - Middle and Lower Sections, Pennsylvania — Flowing from Sunbury to the Maryland border, this 103-mile segment offers an array of experiences, from observing great blue herons to learning about the Underground Railroad.

Cascadia Marine Trail, Washington — This Puget Sound water trail is a network of 55 shoreline campsites for people traveling the Pacific Northwest inland sea in human or wind-powered, beachable watercraft.

Delaware River Water Trail - Middle Delaware Segment, New Jersey —

This 40.6-mile water trail is located within the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

Potomac River Water Trail (DC, MD, VA, WV) — System of water and greenway trails traversing over 300 miles along the diverse landscapes and rich history of the Potomac River.



Schuylkill River Water Trail, Pennsylvania. The Schuylkill River Water Trail is 142-miles long and covers five counties near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Schuylkill River Water Trail is part of the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area and Pennsylvania Heritage Corridor

Implementation and Funding

Rivers and the many clean water, recreation, and health benefits they provide are a primary focus in a report released in 2011 by President Barack Obama's Administration detailing its "America's Great Outdoors" initiative.

The report, which presents the administration's vision for conservation in the 21st century, echoes recommendations and calls for the creation of "blueways", also known as blueways or water trails, to give portions of rivers and lakes special attention for restoration and access. The report also recommends managing federal lands and waters in a larger context to promote ecosystem health, while preparing for droughts and other impacts of climate change. Further, the administration aims to engage youth in land and water restoration by establishing a Conservation Service Corps.

"Rivers truly are the arteries of America's Great Outdoors," said Rebecca Wodder, president of the non-profit, non-partisan, American Rivers Association. "Most Americans live within a mile of a river or stream, so rivers are essential to our health and quality of life. Rivers and blueways provide a great opportunity for people to experience the outdoors and connect with nature. We applaud the administration for listening to the groundswell of grassroots support for river protection and restoration."

Key recommendations in the America's Great Outdoors report include:

- Creating a national blueways initiative to give portions of rivers special attention for restoration and access.
- Managing federal lands and waters in a larger context to promote ecosystem and watershed health, and to increase their resilience and prepare for drought and other impacts of climate change.

- Fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund to protect riverside lands and wildlife habitat.
- Establishing a Conservation Service Corps to engage youth in land and water restoration.

Local Involvement and the Creation of Blueways

There are a number of investments that must be made to create and maintain blueways. This section provides basic information on raising funds for your blueway. Seek planning assistance from a financial consultant or small business development center, possibly one associated with a local college. Or contact River Network, a national non-profit organization that provides information, training, consultation, and resources to groups working for clean and healthy rivers.

Due to the nature of the process for creating blueways, more funding will be needed in some years than in others. An annual operating budget should be prepared to plan for routine revenue and expenses. A separate fiscal plan will be needed to plan for anticipated major, one-time project expenses and to identify potential funding sources.

If you are creating a non-profit organization to develop and manage the blueway, start by developing a budget for ongoing operational expenses and balance those expenses with revenue. Grantmakers are likely to require a copy of your budget, as well as an audited financial statement, with a grant application. Having a balanced budget will give potential partners a reason to take the project seriously, and will help contributors appreciate the magnitude of the undertaking and the value of their contribution.

Create a fiscal plan: Major project expenditures include the one-time cost of conducting a feasibility study and creating a master plan. To form a comprehensive program to meet these financial needs, a finance and fundraising committee should develop a fiscal plan and revise it as needed. Once the study and plan are completed, costs for developing the blueway should be known and maintenance and operating expense estimates should be available. Sources of funding to meet each expense must be identified and developed. The plan should include a timeline showing major project expenditures to help keep fundraising activities on track.

Start up: Start up costs include expenditures to create an organization, set up an office, print initial brochures, recruit members, solicit donors, and conduct kick-off events. Small foundations and individual donors are often willing to provide seed money for start-up costs, hoping to catalyze additional investments in their community. As this money will not likely be renewed, it is critical to spend it in ways that will generate additional funds.

Organizational operating: Few donors and grantmakers are willing to contribute to annual operating expenses such as rental office space and overhead. Consider using membership contributions, conducting annual appeals, and holding fundraising events to generate operating revenue. An efficient organization will seek to minimize these costs by using subsidized office space, donated equipment, and shared staff.

Promotional and fundraising activities: Many organizations have difficulty obtaining initial funds to finance efforts to develop additional revenue. Money from memberships and individual donors should be earmarked for these efforts. Occasionally, individuals or businesses will underwrite the cost of promotional materials. Local businesses may be willing to underwrite a fundraising event in return for positive exposure.

Matching funds for grants: For grants, a substantial local match is often required and commitments or pledges for these funds usually must be obtained in writing, prior to application. Fulfillment of these commitments may be contingent upon a successful grant application. Municipal governments, corporations, and individuals may be solicited for these commitments.

Operation and maintenance: Ongoing operation and maintenance expenses may be covered by user fees, membership dues, contributions, annual fundraisers, or proceeds from product sales. Cost sharing among governmental and non-governmental entities may be spelled out in a maintenance agreement. An endowment can be established, possibly through a community foundation, to hold funds raised through a planned giving campaign, large contributions or bequests. Business and industry or local civic organizations may adopt a section of the blueway and maintain it.

Fundraising events and sales: The variety of fundraising activities is limited only by your imagination.

Attracting members: As your blueway will provide direct benefits to your community, fundraising efforts should begin with an appeal to the community residents. People who subscribe to your mission should join the effort. Some blueway groups charge nominal membership fees from \$10 to \$25. A higher fee is generally charged for businesses and agencies to affiliate themselves as members. Members can be recruited through a brochure, a display, or an event. Most often, however, they are recruited by word-of-mouth. Once individuals are enrolled as members, they should be solicited for additional donations in an annual giving appeal. In addition to monetary contributions, each member is valuable as an ambassador of the program. Be sure they are fully informed of the mission of your blueway and all activities.

Periodically remind them to help widen the circle of supporters by bringing guests to events, distributing membership brochures to friends and acquaintances, and providing referrals. Be sure to follow up and solicit each guest and referral for membership and additional contributions.

Members can be recruited to help raise funds in other ways. One successful strategy is to have member families host dinner parties for their friends on a certain night, and then convene everyone at a central location for entertainment, fundraising activities, and education.

Create a corporate giving program: A corporate giving program can be a successful fundraising tool. Check your public library for directories of business. Begin by identifying corporations with a track record of community giving or a high stake in the quality of life in your community. Insurance companies, healthcare providers, and sporting goods manufacturers often see the benefits of supporting blueways. The chamber of commerce or other business associations may help identify good prospects.

Many corporations have a community relations officer or committee who controls a community gift or grant budget. Identify these individuals or committees and meet with them in person to present the case statement. Ask for a specific contribution and tell them how it will be spent. Often, once a corporation qualifies your organization for a contribution, they will in many cases renew it in future years.

Recognize contributors: Give some thought to how contributors will be recognized and rewarded. Common ways to thank individual members and donors include a decal, newsletter subscription, member discounts at local cooperating merchants, and recognition in a newsletter or annual report. Grantmakers and major donors may deserve a plaque at the project site or a certificate of appreciation to display in their home or office. Special member events can be rewards as well.

Seek foundation grants: Numerous large community, family, and corporate foundations make grants to trail groups. The Foundation Center is the nation's leading authority on philanthropy and maintains the most comprehensive database on U.S. grantmakers and their grants and operates research, education, and training programs. The Center's website receives more than 47,000 visits each day, and thousands of people gain access to free resources in its five regional library and learning centers and its national network of more than 340 Cooperating Collections.

Small family foundations and charitable trusts are often managed by trust officers at local banks. Arrange face-to-face meetings with trust officers to present your case, and ask for assistance identifying which trusts will fund activities related to trails.

Individual foundations and grant programs: The vast majority of donations are from individual donors. You should identify people who are prospective donors and ask them to help by contacting people they know. In contacting individual donors, ask questions to ascertain their interest in the blueway. Do they paddle, fish, bike, hike? How do they feel about wildlife?

Federal funding programs: If you are exploring conservation easements as part of your blueway, there are a number of federal funding programs that can be applied.

Resources

Susquehanna River Water Trail, Pennsylvania <http://www.susquehannarivertrail.org/>

Schuylkill River Water Trail, Pennsylvania

<http://www.schuylkillriver.org/Paddling.aspx>

John H. Kerr Reservoir <http://www.saw.usace.army.mil/jhkerr/parks.htm>

Person County Parks and Recreation

<http://www.personcounty.net/index.aspx?page=181>

