



Hickory Nut Gorge State Trail Plan: 2022-2027

Conserving Carolina

- **Planned Length:** 50+ miles
- **Complete the Trails Funds:** \$358,678
- **Miles Designated:** 0
- **Capacity Funds:** \$49,500

Capacity Building Funds:

Paid staff time to support Hickory Nut Gorge State Trail development during 2022 and 2023.

Deliverables include:

- Maintenance and management of 15 miles of HNGST under direct responsibility of Conserving Carolina
- Maintenance and management of 4 public trailheads
- Work with regional partners to identify, prioritize, and plan for trail projects
- Apply for applicable grants for trail construction, enhancement, stewardship, and maintenance
- Application for official state trail designation of 15 miles of existing HNG State Trail segments under Conserving Carolina responsibility
- Support to the Town of Lake Lure of 8 miles of Weed Patch Mountain Trail, as needed/requested
- Outreach to private landowners within the proposed trail corridor
- Meet monthly with NC State Parks State Trails program planner and staff to plan and facilitate trail development
- Implementation of HNG State Trail blazes and signage on 15 miles of Conserving Carolina existing trail segments

Trail Development

Segment 1: Upper Hickory Nut Gorge Loop (15 miles)

- Open Strawberry Gap Trail (2022)
- Apply for designation of existing and newly constructed accesses
- Develop hiker shuttle system and satellite parking in partnership with local businesses to alleviate terrain-caused parking capacity limitations due to increasing popularity of Segment 1
- Trail easement acquisition to complete Upper HNG Loop (remaining unfinished linkage in Segment 1)

Segment 2: Bearwallow Mountain to Chimney Rock (5 miles)

- Acquire trail easements to connect Florence Nature Preserve to Rocky Broad River
- Design and flag future sustainable trail route through Conserving Carolina Teaching and Research Reserve to link Rocky Broad River crossing to Chimney Rock State Park
- Explore location and construction feasibility/option of bridged crossing of Rocky Broad River (west of Highway 9)

Segment 3: Lake Lure Loop (30 miles)

- Acquire/obtain easement for trailhead and trail corridor
- Construct 1.5 miles trail on Youngs Mountain Phase 2
- Construct new fully-public accessible Youngs Mountain trailhead and parking area (25+ vehicles)
- Implement Youngs Mountain Phase 2 signage and blazing
- Construct 2 miles trail on Youngs Mountain Phase 3 to connect to Buffalo Creek Park/Weed Patch Mountain Trailhead
- Construct 5 miles of trail connecting Chimney Rock Village to Eagle Rock
- Facilitate/partner with State Parks for new trail extensions from Eagle Rock to Shumont Mountain/Rumbling Bald and Exclamation Point to Worlds Edge in Chimney Rock SP
- Explore connectivity between Chimney Rock State Park Worlds Edge/Cane Creek Mountain to Ditmer-Watts Nature Park
- Coordinate/facilitate with Town of Lake Lure for inclusion of former Donald Ross golf path to be incorporated as potential State Trail route as part of potential property conversion to public greenspace

Complete the Trail (CTF) Projects:

1. Purchase Youngs Mountain trailhead parcels (Segment 3) – \$100,000
2. Purchase Youngs Mountain Trail Phase 2 trail easements (Segment 3) – \$25,000
3. Construct 1.5-mile trail on Youngs Mountain Phase 2 (Segment 3) – \$125,000
4. Construct new Youngs Mountain trailhead (Segment 3) – \$100,000
5. Youngs Mountain Phase 2 Signage and Blazing (Segment 3) – \$5,000

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6. Acquire connecting tract near Buffalo Creek Park for Youngs Mountain Trail (Segment 3) – \$225,000
7. Acquire three connecting tracts for Youngs Mountain Trail Phase 3 (Segment 3) – \$300,000
8. Construct 2-mile trail on Youngs Mountain Phase 3 to connect to Buffalo Creek Park/Weed Patch Mountain Trailhead (Segment 3) – \$150,000
9. Construct 5 miles of trail connecting Chimney Rock Village to Eagle Rock – \$300,000
10. Acquire trail easements in middle HNG to connect Segment 1 to Chimney Rock State Park lands (Segment 2) – \$300,000

2023 Year of the Trail Celebrations Planned/Anticipated:

- Youngs Mountain Phase 2 ribbon cutting and opening
- Complete designations for all existing HNG trail miles to include promotion in media and online announcement/celebration