

HOW IS A STATE TRAIL CREATED?

A new state trail is authorized by the General Assembly—ideally after a feasibility analysis.

This analysis includes:

1. Statewide significant natural, cultural, scenic and recreation value
2. Enough potential length and beauty to attract varied and significant use from regions outside the local area.
3. Minimal and surmountable incompatible features such as roads, intrusive development or large water bodies.

If a potential State Trail meets these basic requirements, then the feasibility of inclusion as a State Trail is based on:

1. Local public support for the general concept of a public trail and the availability of trail volunteers
2. Presence of viable section sponsors committed to the design, construction, maintenance and management of the trail.
3. Environmental and economic sustainability of the trail route.

The law that creates a state trail may place some restrictions on the trail, such as specific counties where it must be located, but gives few other details on the trail location. To move beyond this concept, detailed planning is required.

NC State Parks plans the general corridor where the trail will be located. The planning process includes meeting with stakeholders, potential segment sponsors and holding public informational meetings. Usually, the planned corridor is 5-10 miles wide to permit for segment sponsors to take advantage of available land and advantageous topography.

Segment sponsors design and construct trail within the NC State Parks planned trail corridor. This should be done in coordination with NC State Parks to ensure that the segments will connect; sustainable standards are met so that the segment can be authorized as an official part of the state trail; and resources can be leveraged.

After the trail is constructed, the segment sponsor applies for state trail designation through NC State Parks. This process involves the approvals of the State Trails Planner, North Carolina Trails Committee and the Secretary of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Criteria for designation include public access, an emergency management plan, detailing available amenities and inspection by a regional trails specialist.



Please contact the state trails program if you have any questions about state trails.



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