

Facts About the Trail

The MST is North Carolina's state trail and its longest marked footpath, stretching almost 1,200 miles across the State, from Clingmans Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains to Jockey's Ridge on the Outer Banks. First proposed in 1977, the trail was added to the state park system in 2000. The trail passes through 37 counties, four national parks, three national forests, and two national wildlife refuges, and it connects to ten state parks. The trail takes over 2 million footsteps to complete and climbs both the tallest mountain peak and the highest sand dune in the Eastern United States!

The goal is a continuous off-road trail across North Carolina. Over the last ten years, an average of 15 new miles of trail have opened each year, the result of a partnership involving local communities and trail groups, land trusts, federal and state land agencies, private landowners, the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation, and the nonprofit Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail. At this point, over 700 miles are now completed on natural surface, greenway trail, unpaved forest roads, or beach, with temporary routes on backroads and bicycle paths filling out the remainder.

The MST in Orange County

The MST through Orange County is envisioned as a 35-mile continuous footpath stretching from the Alamance County line near Saxapahaw and then heading northeast along the Cane Creek Reservoir to Hillsborough where it follows the Riverwalk along the Eno River. From there, the trail is to continue east through the Eno River State Park to the Durham County line. To date, 7.2 miles of this route are open, and work is underway to construct an additional 14.5 miles.

Orange County and Friends of the MST are working with private landowners to gain permission to build trail, designing and building trail, and providing hiking guide books, maps, kiosks, and other materials to help people use the trail.

About Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail

The mission of Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail is to bring together communities and volunteers to build and maintain this simple footpath connecting North Carolina's natural treasures for the enjoyment and education of citizens across the State, as well as visitors. Friends coordinates trail building and maintenance, spreads the word about how to access and enjoy the trail, helps with the acquisition of land to build new sections of trail, and advocates to help elected officials understand the value of the trail for recreation, quality of life, the economy, and the environment.