

## Sustainable Sandhills Community Trail Network

If the long work week leaves you with the urge to travel and explore, you do not have to go far if you live in the Sandhills and Middle Cape Fear region -just head outdoors! There are a number of great trails – walking, biking, hiking and paddling – right here in our region. The list of trails is long and varied, but the common elements in the trails experience are personal renewal and reconnection to our natural landscape.

Trails help us become more physically active. Local trails are designed for the recreational activities most people enjoy, including walking, cycling, jogging and paddling. They are found in a variety of natural and urban settings and can provide moderate activity or challenging outdoor adventure.

Community trails are an important and often neglected element in community development. They not only benefit residents, they can also attract tourists which aids the local economy. They also are an important factor in attracting new residents and they increase property values for current residents.



Trail networks can be used to connect neighborhoods to community assets - parks, schools and churches. Trail networks also connect communities and enable sustainable commuting – a truly lost art given our current development patterns.

Trails lead users through varied landscapes that include diverse plant and animal habitats like wetlands and forests, and historic places like old mills and historic downtown areas. Trails can be incorporated into the school curriculum about the local ecology like the endangered Longleaf pine ecosystem. Trails provide a meaningful outdoor experience that connects us with our natural environment and are a critical step in valuing the landscape enough to protect and preserve it.



## The Sustainable Sandhills Community Trails Project

As part of a region-wide **Cultural Resources Inventory**, Sustainable Sandhills is compiling a comprehensive regional GIS-based trails inventory. This will allow residents and other conservation, recreation and tourism organizations to work together more effectively to extend and connect the trails that currently exist. And just as importantly - to create new trails!

The **SS Cultural Resources Inventory** will also include every park, church, school, cemetery historic marker, cultural arts site, agri-tourism site and historic community in the region. The data will be housed in a “geodatabase” and viewable by anyone with an internet connection. The map-viewer will be very similar to google-earth and will include aerial photography so that the assets can be referenced to landmarks on the ground. The individual datalayers (or the entire dataset) will be downloadable for use by anyone involved in planning the future and preserving the past in our region.



Look for more detail on the **SS Cultural Resources Inventory** on the [Sustainable Sandhills website](#) – coming soon!

Sustainable Sandhills is also starting a **Community Trail Brochure** initiative on each of our four Community Action Teams in Cumberland, Moore, Harnett and Lee counties. The vision of this project is to have a trail network brochure for each county that identifies the multiple trails that make up their network, and a separate brochure for each of the individual trails in the network.



Each trail brochure will include important information about trail location, parking and amenities, and information about plants and animals and significant local history along the trail. There will be a section in each brochure to promote preservation activities that are underway and future trail projects that are in development.



## **How You Can Help**

This Community Trail Brochure Project is still in the “seedling” stage and we need your help. Here are some ways you can get involved:

- Identifying existing parks and trails – verifying we haven’t missed anything in our inventory.
- Identifying future parks and trail sites.
- Collecting facts about existing and future trails – history, identifying important plant and animal habitats.
- Writing and photography for the trail brochures.

Please contact [Amanda Blue](#), SS Community Action Team Coordinator, if you are interested in getting involved.