



# THE MOUTH OF THE HAW

## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE HAW RIVER TRAIL PARTNERSHIP

Spring 2015

### THE NEW HAW RIVER TRAIL TEAM

#### What is the Haw River Trail Partnership?

The Haw River Trail Partnership was formed with the goal of helping the public enjoy and conserve the natural resources of the Haw River corridor.

The Partnership is the result of a signed Memorandum of Understanding between 10 governmental agencies agreeing to work together for the development of trails along the river and conservation of the river and lands within the watershed.

*Conservation  
through  
recreation*

[www.thehaw.org](http://www.thehaw.org)

It's been nearly 10 years since the Haw River Trail (HRT) Partnership was formed in 2006 with Brian Baker as Project Coordinator. Under Brian's tenure an enormous amount of progress has been made in acquiring land for trails and watershed conservation. The paddle trail is open with fourteen paddle access sites providing parking and safe access to the river. Nearly twenty miles of hiking trails are open to the public and three new recreational areas have been opened along the river offering opportunities to enjoy the natural and cultural resources of the Haw River corridor.

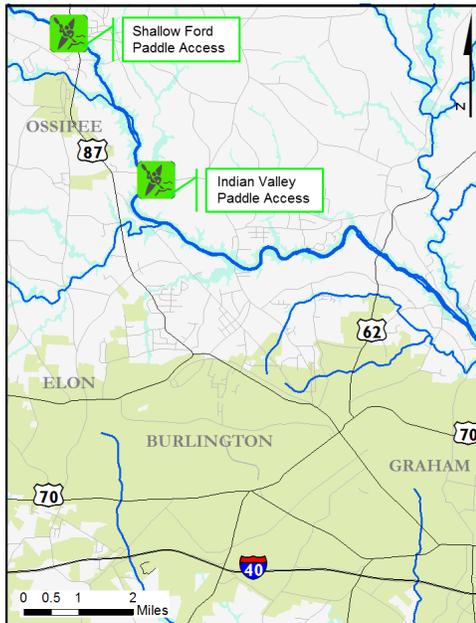
This past winter, **Brenda Wichmann** was named Project Coordinator of the HRT Partnership. **Brian Baker** remains actively involved in the project. **Katie Gensel** recently joined the team to assist with communications and grants. The new team is excited about the next decade of work further developing the HRT and promoting conservation through recreation.



*Katie Gensel (left), Brenda Wichmann (center), and Brian Baker (right)*

### 2015 YEE-HAW! RIVER PADDLE SET FOR MAY 9TH

The 2015 YEE-HAW! River Paddle will take place on May 9<sup>th</sup> in northern Alamance County. The day will begin at 10:00 am with a Family and Beginner Paddle at Indian Valley Paddle Access. This section of river offers flat water, ideal for the beginner paddler and families with small children.



*A portion of the Haw River Paddle Trail in northern Alamance County, North Carolina.*

At noon, the Intermediate/Advanced Paddle will take place from Shallow Ford Natural Area to Indian Valley Paddle Access. Here paddlers will experience a 4-mile stretch of river offering seven Class I rapids.



**Yee Haw! River Paddle, May 9th—Northern Alamance**  
**10:00 am—Family/Beginner Paddle; Indian Valley PA**  
**12:00 pm—Intermediate/Advanced Paddle;**  
**Put-in, Shallow Ford PA**  
**Take-out, Indian Valley PA**

*Registration and full event details will be available  
April 1, 2015 at [www.thehaw.org/yeehaw](http://www.thehaw.org/yeehaw)*



## RIVER RESEARCH

**D**r. Janet MaFall and her team at Elon University have been studying the Haw River for many years. Recently, the team published an article detailing a study in which they used field-collected data and Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to describe the changes in shape and processes regulating erosion on the banks of the Haw River. Understanding the shape and configuration of the river banks, as well as erosion patterns, reveals the history of the river, its current state, and can serve as a basis for future management practices.

The healthiest of rivers are in a state of *dynamic equilibrium* allowing them to maintain a steady balance between erosion and deposition of sediment. However, most rivers have suffered decades of severe disturbance from human activity and are in the process of adjusting to a balanced state.

Results of the Elon study indicate that the Haw River is adjusting to a balanced state rather than in a state of equilibrium. The banks of the river are unstable and active erosion is occurring with the potential for future erosion high. The study also suggests that the current condition of the river is a response to a long history of row crop agriculture within the watershed, which left behind *legacy sediment*. Interestingly, the study found that the influence of historical dams on the river is minimal.



*View of the Haw River as seen from the Haw River Trail*  
Photo courtesy of Katie Gensel

## WATER-POWERED MILLS OF THE HAW RIVER

*Contributed by Bob Ellis*

**T**he Haw River has a rich history of water-powered mills, the remnants of which are visible today along the Haw River Trail. The history of the mills is integral to the cultural heritage of Alamance County, beginning with European immigrants arriving in the 1700s. Immigrants often traveled in small groups and established farms close to one another along the Haw River. They raised grains such as corn, oats, and wheat which were ground into flour or cornmeal. This required a lot of manual labor using a mortar and pestle or *quern-stones*. One of the trades that eventually migrated with the immigrants was that of a millwright, an individual skilled at constructing and operating water-powered gristmills which were used to grind grain into flour or cornmeal.

Each community needed access to a gristmill since flour and corn meal were such important ingredients to their diet. Records of gristmills in the area date to the mid-1700s and by 1800 there were at least 17 gristmills along the Haw River, and dozens more along its tributaries. These water-powered mills needed dams and *millraces* to provide a constant supply of water to the water wheels and, later, turbines. Dams associated with gristmills were often built of

### Definitions

#### **Dynamic equilibrium:**

*The ability of a system to persist within a range of conditions.*

#### **Legacy sediment:**

*Fine-grained sediment that was eroded from upland slopes during several centuries of intensive land clearing, agriculture, and milling.*

#### **Quern-stone:**

*Stone tools used for hand-grinding materials. Two stones are used, a lower stationary quern and upper mobile stone called a hand stone.*

#### **Millrace:**

*The channel carrying the swift current of water that drives a mill wheel.*

#### **Learn more :**

*Make time to visit the Textile Heritage Museum located at 2406 Glencoe Street, just off the Haw River Trail at Glencoe.*



## FRIENDS OF THE MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA TRAIL VOLUNTEERS HELP TO BUILD THE HAW RIVER TRAIL

**T**rail building on the newest section of the Haw River Trail began the second weekend of May 2014 and continues on the second Saturday of each month. Volunteers lead by Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (FMST) task force leader, Greg Yahn, have been working tirelessly to blaze a new trail nearly 4 miles in length. Completion of this new section will create 9 miles of contiguous HRT beginning at Indian Valley Paddle Access and ending at Red Slide Park. This section will be dedicated as a part of the state-wide Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST).

**Thank you to all 78 volunteers from 7 counties, who have contributed 955 hours of time blazing trail and building bridges.**

Volunteers have constructed nearly 2 miles of trail and built 4 bridges since May 2015.

### BIG DIG

The FMST Big Dig is coming to Alamance County.

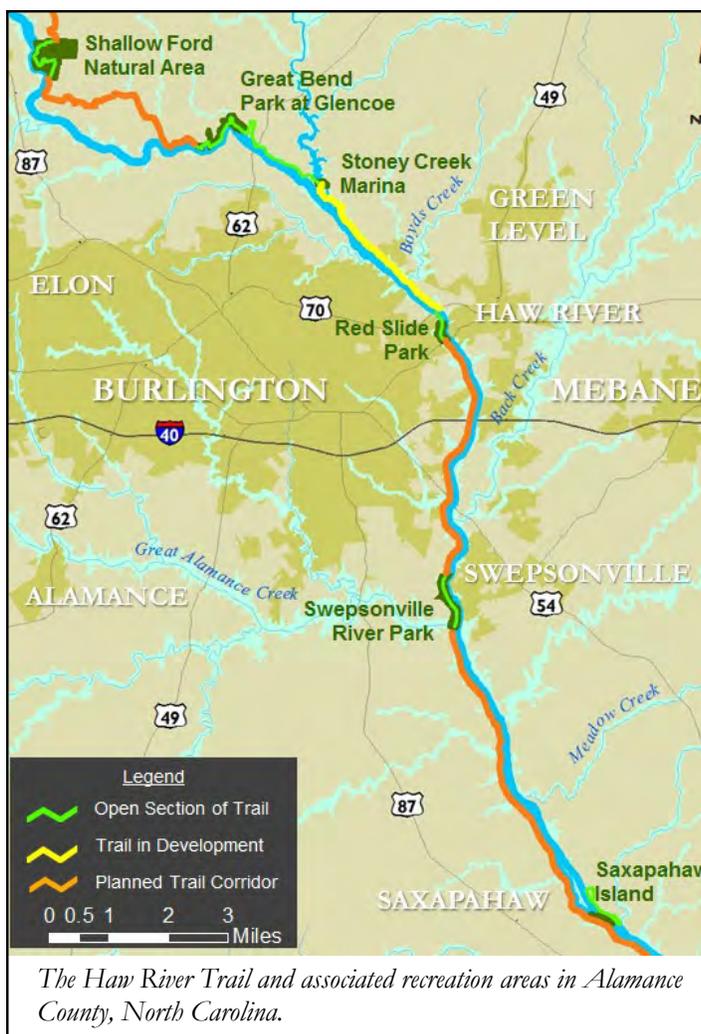
**When:** Fri. April 10-Sun. April 12

**Where:** HRT & Cedarrock Park

**What:** Join experienced FMST trail crew leaders from across the state for a special weekend of trail building and socializing. Camping is available at Cedarrock Park in Burlington.

No experience necessary.  
Registration recommended.

For more information and to register contact FMST task force leader Jim Suiter via email at [jsuiter@mindspring.com](mailto:jsuiter@mindspring.com)



*The Haw River Trail and associated recreation areas in Alamance County, North Carolina.*

### What is the Haw River Trail?

Built on the idea of conservation through recreation, the Haw River Trail (HRT) is a planned 70 mile footpath connecting Haw River State park to Jordan Lake State Recreational Area, and much of the trail is still under development.

The HRT also includes a paddle trail along the Haw River. The trail (land and water) captures the natural resources, history, and culture of Alamance County and the surrounding region, and serves as a critical resource for connecting the community to its heritage.

*To participate in volunteer opportunities associated with the Haw River Trail, please contact the Haw River Trail Project Coordinator at 336/229-2380 or [info@thehaw.org](mailto:info@thehaw.org)*

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## Quarterly Attendance at Haw River Trail Sites

December 1, 2014 through February 30, 2015

Altamahaw Paddle Access: 2,490

Shallow Ford Natural Area: 5,106

Great Bend Park: 2,214

Glencoe Paddle Access: 1,905

Red Slide Park: 4,265

Graham Paddle Access: 3,037

Sweptsonville River Park-Upper: 5,742

Sweptsonville River Park-Lower: 5,834

Great Alamance Creek Access: 2,177

Sax. Lake Paddle Access: 9,557

Sax. Mill Race Paddle Access: 2,555

Total Attendance For Period: 44,882

## WATER-POWERED MILLS - CONT. FROM PG. 1

wood timbers, braced by stones, and were periodically destroyed by floods.

The use of water-powered mills gradually expanded beyond gristmills to include carding and fulling mills for processing wool, textile mills for processing cotton, and saw mills for processing timber. Textile mills quickly expanded along the river, shifting eventually to steam power in the 1880s and to hydroelectric power a few decades later. Today, three hydroelectric power facilities exist on the Haw River and remnants of times past remain embedded in the landscape.

The **Haw River Trail** (HRT) provides an unique opportunity to gain insight into cultural history of the Haw River. The first known gristmill on the Haw River was built in 1748 by Adam Trollinger near what is now **Red Slide Park**



*Abutment of the old dam at Carolina Falls as seen from the Haw River Trail. Photo courtesy of Katie Gensel*

in the town of Haw River. The first cotton mill, operational by 1838 and called Big Falls Mill, remains operational today as Copeland Fabrics. The newest section of the HRT will pass by this mill, giving a glimpse into present-day mill operations on the Haw. The **Haw River Trail at Glencoe** offers a stroll through a restored mill town and an opportunity to experience a landscape shaped by times past. The dam at Carolina Falls, just south of the bridge at Glencoe, was first built in 1868 to serve Carolina Mill and was 200 feet long and six feet high. The abutments still remain and are crossed by the Haw River Trail before it continues on following the mill race downriver to the remnants of Carolina Mill. Few remnants of a gristmill built in 1870 by Peter Gerringer, are located at **Shallow Ford Natural Area** just off trail at the Paddle Access.

## SAXAPAHAW ISLAND

The Haw River Trail Partnership held a public meeting on January 20th to gather input from the local community on their hopes for the future land-use of Saxapahaw Island, located in the heart of Saxapahaw. Over 40 attendees shared their ideas for the island. Thank you to everyone who attended and shared their time and expertise. This feedback will be taken into consideration as development plans progress.



*View of the old Carolina Mill building as seen from the Haw River Trail. Photo courtesy of Katie Gensel*