



**RESOLUTION TITLE:     AMENDMENT TO THE CAROLINA THREAD TRAIL MASTER PLAN TO INCLUDE THE ADDITION OF DUTCHMAN'S CREEK AS A DESIGNATED BLUEWAY**

WHEREAS, on February 26, 2009, the Gaston County Parks and Recreation Commission and on February 26, 2009, the Gaston County Planning Board, voted to recommend adoption/approval of the "Carolina Thread Trail Plan for Gaston County Communities" to the Gaston County Board of Commissioners; and,

WHEREAS, a Resolution to support the Carolina Thread Trail was approved by the Board of County Commissioners on March 26, 2009; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Mount Holly has submitted a map amendment to include the addition of the five-mile waterway, Dutchman's Creek, as a designated blueway; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Mount Holly and the City of Mount Holly's Park and Recreation Advisory Board offers written support; and,

WHEREAS, the Gaston County Planning Board voted to recommend adoption/approval of the Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan and Maps Amendment at their regularly scheduled meeting on May 5, 2025; and,

WHEREAS, public hearing comments are on file in the Commission Clerk's Office as part of the minutes of the meeting.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Gaston County Board of Commissioners adopts the Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan and Maps Amendment; a submittal to include the addition of the Mount Holly Blueway that is intended to provide better connectivity and outdoor recreation opportunities for Gaston County residents and visitors.

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DO NOT TYPE BELOW THIS LINE

I, Donna S. Buff, Clerk to the County Commission, do hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of action taken by the Board of Commissioners as follows:

NO.	DATE	M1	M2	JBailey	CBrown	CCloninger	AFraley	BHovis	TKeigher	SShehan	Vote
2025-139	05/27/2025	BH	SS	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	U

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# GASTON COUNTY CAROLINA THREAD TRAIL MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

## STAFF REPORT

### APPLICATION SUMMARY

**Request:**

To amend the Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan to include the addition of Dutchman's Creek as a designated blueway

**Applicant(s):**

City of Mount Holly

### BACKGROUND

Dutchman's Creek is an approximately five-mile waterway within Mount Holly's city limits that begins at the intersection of Sandy Ford Road and Dutchman's Creek and ends in the Catawba River. At Dutchman's Creek confluence with the Catawba River, this future blueway will connect to the existing 27-mile Catawba River Blueway – Lake Wylie Section.

For the first 2.5 miles of this stretch of Dutchman's Creek, paddlers experience a rural and quiet connection with nature. The upper Dutchman's is characteristic of a Western NC paddle, with little development, a tree canopy covering most of the river, rocky shoals, and Class I-II rapids depending on the water level.

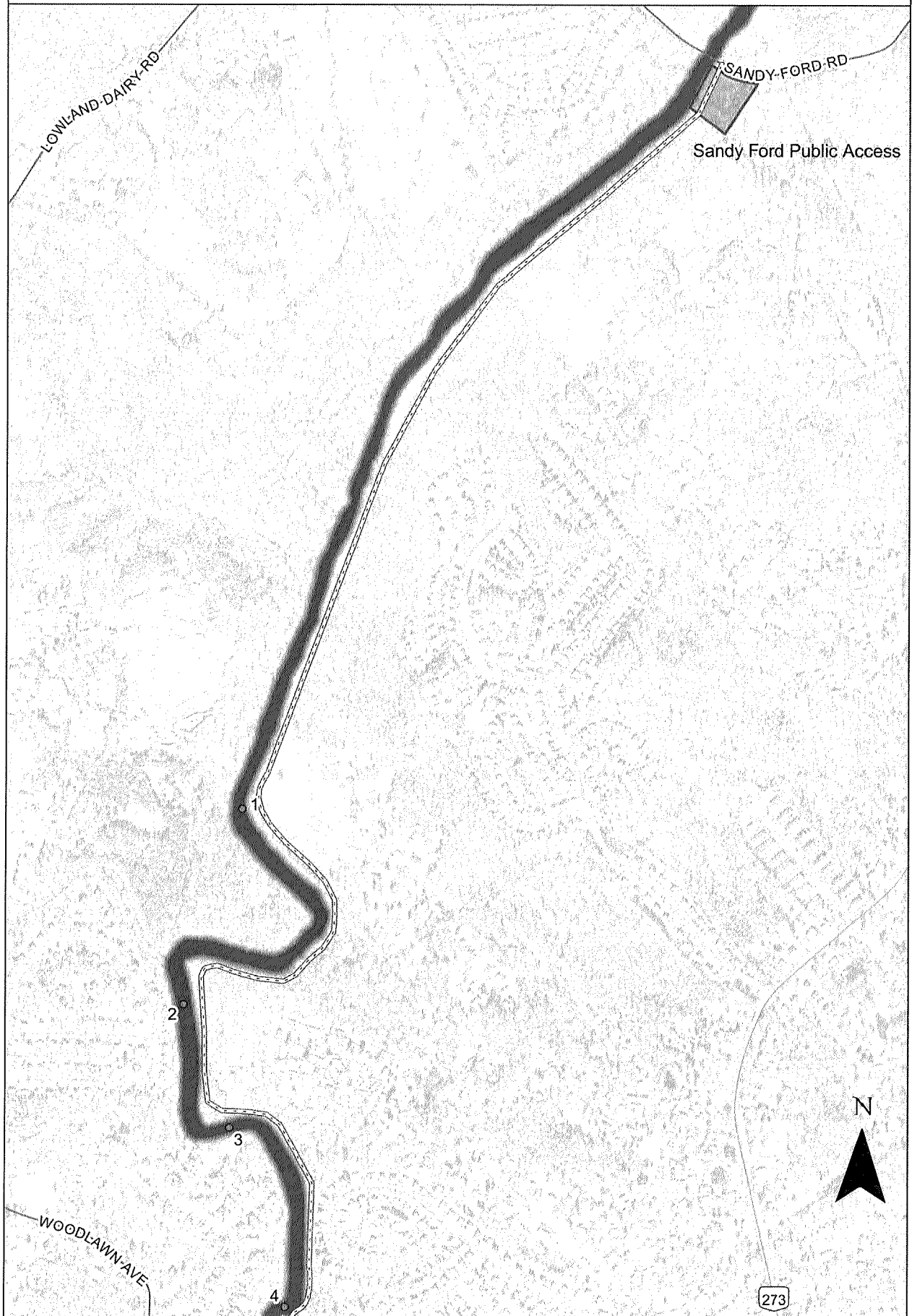
The lower Dutchman's or back half of the five-mile paddle affords paddlers the opportunity to experience the rich textile history of Mount Holly as the river meanders into the heart of Mount Holly. As the water reaches lake level and flattens out, Dutchman's Creek slowly flows by the Historic Woodlawn Mill, an original Mount Holly Fire Station turned restaurant, the Historic Mount Holly Cotton Mill known as Muddy River Distillery, and many other great points of interest.

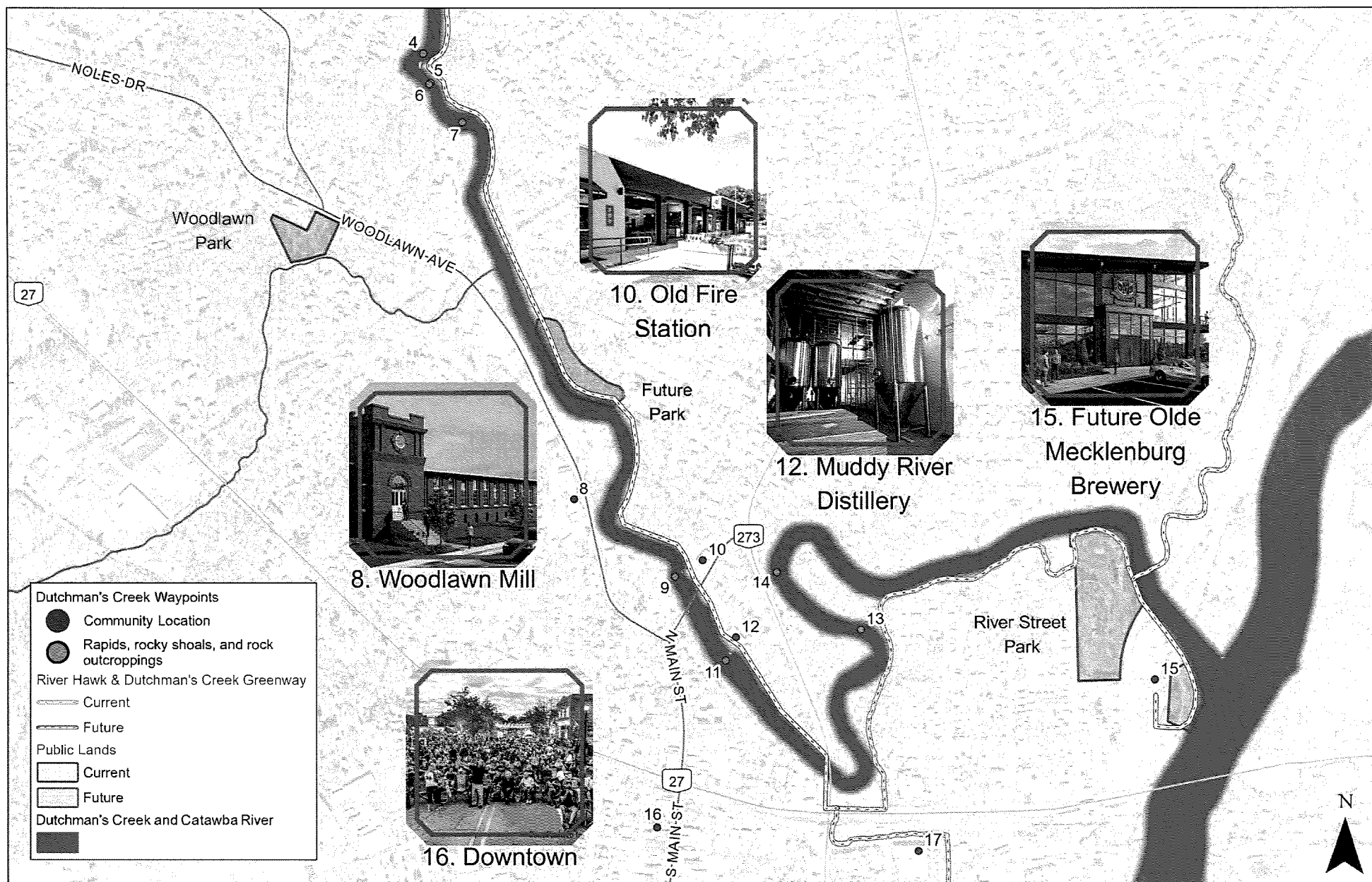
This entire stretch of waterway is home to large rock outcroppings, river boulders, multiple bird and fish species, and the remnants of two old dams. The City of Mount Holly has recognized the importance of this waterway by completing the Dutchman's Creek Blueway Study, commissioning the Dutchman's Creek Wayfinding Study, and identifying it in the Parks and Recreation Masterplan as "one of Mount Holly's greatest assets."

**Attachments: Resolution, Map, and Letters of Support**

# Dutchman's Creek Blueway

A five mile connection to nature





RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE AMENDMENT OF THE GASTON COUNTY  
BLUEWAY MASTERPLAN FOR THE CAROLINA THREAD TRAIL TO INCLUDE THE  
DUTCHMAN'S CREEK

**WHEREAS**, the Carolina Thread Trail is a regional network of trails that connect 2.9 million people in fifteen (15) counties in North and South Carolina, and serves as an example of unprecedented regional collaboration that works to connect people and communities to nature and each other through its 1,610 miles of trails, greenways, and blueways; and

**WHEREAS**, Gaston County was selected for a Carolina Thread Trail pilot project in 2007 to create a Greenway Master Plan where the City of Mount Holly served on the steering committee; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Mount Holly unanimously adopted the Carolina Thread Trail Gaston County Greenway Master Plan as a supplement to the City's Pedestrian Master Plan on August 12, 2013; and

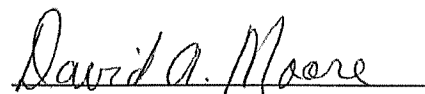
**WHEREAS**, the 2019 Mount Holly Parks and Recreation Masterplan outlines outdoor recreation and conservation of natural resources as a priority for Mount Holly recreational needs and citizen's quality of life and places emphasis on equitable access to the rivers; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2023 Mount Holly Dutchman's Creek Blueway Plan identifies the need to preserve the natural and historic features of the waterway while creating a distinctive water-based recreation destination for the region; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Mount Holly has worked closely with the US Army Corp. of Engineers to create a safe and passable waterway and establish a northern water access to create a navigable five (5) mile blueway; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED** that the City of Mount Holly City Council recommends the amendment of the Gaston County Blueway Master Plan for the Carolina Thread Trail to include Dutchman's Creek.

Adopted this 28<sup>th</sup> day of April 2025.

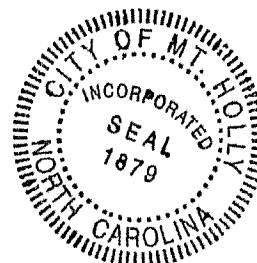


David Moore, Mayor

Attest:



Tara Douglas, City Clerk





March 31, 2025

Gaston County Board of Commissioners  
P.O. Box 1578  
Gastonia, NC 28053

RE: Dutchman's Creek Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan Addition

Dear Commissioners,

On behalf of Gaston County Parks, Recreation and Tourism I would like to express my strong support for the addition of Dutchman's Creek to the existing Carolina Thread Trail Masterplan as a designated Blueway.

Dutchman's Creek is an approximately five-mile waterway within Mount Holly's city limits that begins at the intersection of Sandy Ford Road and Dutchman's Creek and ends in the Catawba River. At Dutchman's Creek confluence with the Catawba River this future Blueway will connect to the existing 27-mile Catawba River Blueway – Lake Wylie Section.

This entire stretch of waterway is home to large rock outcroppings, river boulders, multiple bird and fish species, and the remnants of two old dams. The City of Mount Holly has recognized the importance of this waterway by completing the Dutchman's Creek Blueway Study, commissioning the Dutchman's Creek Wayfinding Study, and identifying it in the Parks and Recreation Masterplan as "one of Mount Holly's greatest assets."

The City has also invested in showcasing Dutchman's Creek through a partnership with Duke Energy to operate the Dutchman's Creek Access Area at the Catawba River, the construction of River Street Park, the construction of the Dutchman's Creek Greenway, and the future construction of the Dutchman's Creek Pedestrian Bridge that will connect the north and south banks of the creek. The Mount Holly Parks and Recreation Master Plan also recommends multiple parks along the banks of Dutchman's Creek and encourages additional river access.

These improvements bolster our recreation offerings to Gaston County residents and visitors alike, enhancing both their personal well-being and the quality of their experiences in our destination. Please add Dutchman's Creek to the existing Carolina Thread Trail Masterplan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Applegate".

Michael Applegate, Director  
Gaston County Parks, Recreation & Tourism

Gaston County Parks, Recreation & Tourism  
1303 Dallas Cherryville Highway □ Dallas, NC 28034

April 24, 2025

Eric Smallwood  
Parks and Recreation Director  
City of Mount Holly  
420 E Central Ave, Mt Holly, NC 28120

**RE: Amendment to CTT Master Plan in Gaston County to include Dutchman's Creek**

Dear Mr. Smallwood,

On behalf of the Carolina Thread Trail (CTT) I am writing to express my sincere support to amend the CTT Master Plan for Gaston County to include five miles of Dutchman's Creek from Sandy Ford Road to the Catawba River in Mount Holly as a new blueway trail.

As you understand, our organization drives the vision for a regional network of trails that will connect 2.9 million people in 15 counties in North and South Carolina, including Gaston County. 435 miles of trails, greenways, and blueways already exist within the network thanks to strong partnerships throughout the region with entities like Mount Holly that work tirelessly to expand access to nature for the community.

Blueways, navigable waterbodies purposefully designated for paddling and recreation, offer unique benefits to communities and community members. Similar to trail networks, blueways promote physical and mental health through recreation, offer economic stimulus through tourism, and contribute to improved environmental quality by increasing awareness and investment in the natural surroundings. For municipalities like Mount Holly with proximate, navigable waterbodies, designating sanctioned "blueway trails," including launch points and take-outs, improves safety, increases local access and engagement in water-based outdoor recreation, and provides a novel attraction for visitors.

The proposed five-mile amendment to add Dutchman's Creek as a new blueway will only enhance the various benefits of outdoor recreation in Gaston County by expanding access to navigable waterways. Therefore, the Carolina Thread Trail strongly supports an amendment to the CTT Master Plan for Gaston County to include this section of Dutchman's Creek.

Respectfully,



Bret Baronak, Director



April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Gaston County Board of Commissioners  
PO Box 1578  
Gastonia, NC 28053

Re: Letter of Support – Dutchman's Creek Blueway

Dear Gaston County Board of Commissioners:

Catawba Riverkeeper, a 501c3 non-profit dedicated to preserving, protecting, and restoring the waters of the Catawba River Basin, would like to voice its support for the amendment of Dutchman's Creek in the Gaston County Blueway Masterplan from a "proposed connection" to an official blueway.

Catawba Riverkeeper recognizes the importance and value of the County's natural outdoor resources. The Gaston County Parks and Recreation Masterplan for 2017-2026 addresses the value of the County's "miles of creeks and streams" that provide a wide range of water resources. Citizens communicated the desire and need for public access to waterways throughout the public participation portion of the Master Planning process. This commitment to natural resources was one of several reasons we moved our headquarters to Gaston County in 2021.

The Gaston County Blueway Masterplan, adopted on June 22, 2021, identified Dutchman's Creek as a "proposed connection" to the Catawba River – Lake Wylie Section blueway. The City of Mount Holly has made significant investments in this five-mile waterway to make it a navigable and programmed natural resource. Improvements include debris and sedimentation removal, construction of a new public water access and pedestrian bridge, and planning for future public water access areas, safety wayfinding and public parks.

Thank you for your consideration of this amendment to the Gaston County Blueway Masterplan. Catawba Riverkeeper fully supports amending the plan and the opportunity to promote outdoor recreational and eco-tourism opportunities for citizens and visitors to Gaston County.

Thank you,

John Searby  
Executive Director





# Gaston County

Gaston County  
Board of Commissioners  
www.gastongov.com

## Building and Development Services

### Board Action

File #: 25-227

Commissioner Brown - Building & Development Services - To Approve Amendment to the Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan and Maps for Gaston County Communities, to Include the Addition of Dutchman's Creek as a Designated Blueway

#### STAFF CONTACT

Peyton Wiggins - Planner II - 704-866-3530

#### BACKGROUND

On February 28, 2008, the Board of County Commissioners approved a Resolution to support the Carolina Thread Trail. This support allowed for the development of a Master Trail Plan facilitated by Catawba Lands Conservancy and Carolina Thread Trail Planning Team to work with the county, municipalities, and neighboring communities to design, plan, and build a system of connected trails in the 15 County Region, with the mission being to bring resources to Gaston County for trail planning and construction.

On March 26, 2009, the Board of County Commissioners approved a Resolution to adopt the Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan for Gaston County Communities; an outline for a system of trails that will connect our communities, people and special regional points of interest for years to come. The plan does not allow for property condemnation, and property easements, including abandoned railway lines, will only be acquired from willing property owners. In addition, adoption of the plan does not imply a commitment of funding by Gaston County for implementation. The plan is a concept consisting of trail connections or lines on the Master Plan Map that are flexible and can be moved as necessary.

The City of Mount Holly has submitted a map amendment to include the addition of Dutchman's Creek, which shows the 5 mile creek as it meanders through the city; as shown on the attached map.

The Board is requested to consider recommendation for approval of the map amendment in support of the new Blueway that is intended to provide better connectivity and outdoor recreation opportunities for Gaston County residents and visitors.

#### ATTACHMENTS

Resolution, Map, and Letters of Support

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