

Appendix 10A: Beaufort County Trails and Blueways Master Plan

PROJECT GOALS

Beaufort County recognizes the need to protect historic resources, provide public recreational facilities and parkland, provide alternative transportation, and preserve open space in its Comprehensive Plan. The proposed Beaufort County Trails and Blueways System will help Beaufort County in its quest to achieve some of these goals.

The Comprehensive Plan defines greenways as natural areas that often follow linear landscape features such as rivers, streams, highlands, and even abandoned railroads. Greenways can be publicly or privately owned, and may be open or closed to public use. Greenways are usually linear strips running through urban, suburban, and rural areas that protect water quality, floodplains, wetlands, wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, historic and cultural resources, and recreational uses. Greenways can link communities, parks, and other large natural areas. Some greenways have trails that are protected pathways for recreation and transportation. Trails and greenways may enable people to walk to pleasant natural areas; to walk, bicycle, or ride a horse away from noisy, dangerous roads; and to travel without cars to schools, community centers, shopping centers, stores and parks.

Beaufort County has begun taking steps towards establishing a trail and greenway network through the preservation of natural and historically important areas. Thousands of acres of sensitive land have been protected through the Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Ordinance, the river buffer standards, conservation easements on private lands, and the Beaufort County Open Land Trust.

Bluffton, in southern Beaufort County, has begun working with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources to develop wildlife corridors and open space greenways. Bluffton has also developed an area plan to determine how and where greenways and trails can best serve the Southern Beaufort community. The Town of Hilton Head Island has developed and put in place an extensive trail system adjacent to SC Highway 278. Greenway and trail projects have unique purposes for each community in which they are developed. The Southern Beaufort County concept is intended to connect the community with safe routes for people to access the community's resources via walking, cycling, or non-motorized modes. It is also the purpose of the Southern Beaufort County Greenway Project to provide the community with access to watercourses and other natural resources.

This trail masterplan or vision for Beaufort County is based on the documents produced by the Northern Trails and Blueways project and the Southern Beaufort Greenways Project, which are incorporated herein by reference.

The Beaufort County Trails and Blueways Master Plan focuses on the recreation and alternative transportation components of a trail system. The goals of the plan are to:

- Provide a safe alternative to traveling with motor vehicles, thus reducing traffic congestion on roadways and reducing air pollution.
- Provide connections to cultural and natural resources for residents, tourists and visitors.
- Link communities with commercial areas and community resources, such as schools and shopping centers.
- Provide access to open space and recreational opportunities.
- Provide links and connections within, and to, the various communities in Beaufort County.

Additionally, numerous historically relevant sites in Beaufort County have been identified. The trail system helps to preserve and protect these historic resources by:

- Identifying these resources as sites that should be prioritized for protection because of their historic significance.
- Raising the community's awareness of the significance of these resources by linking them to the trail system.

Beaufort County is a region endowed with cultural richness and natural beauty. The Beaufort County Trails and Blueways Master Plan is an important step towards protecting these assets, and minimizing the impacts of increased development and tourism, while providing safe routes for alternative transportation and recreation.

PROCESS AND APPROACH

The Beaufort County Trails and Blueways Master Plan depicts routes for the development of the trail and blueway network. To achieve the goals listed in the introduction required, and will continue to require, extensive public input, data collection, site visits and examination of existing master plans in the various communities. The following is a summary of the Beaufort County Trails and Blueways Master Plan processes for the northern and southern sections of the County and is based upon the products from the Northern Beaufort County Trails and Blueways project and the Southern Beaufort Greenway Project. Various types of trails are shown on the maps and are listed on each legend. Below is a brief definition for each:

- **Existing South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) Port Royal Sound Paddle Trails** are water trails for paddle craft that have been designated and mapped by SCDNR.
- **Proposed Blueways** are water trails for paddle craft that are being proposed based upon input gathered during the public information meetings and agency interviews. They include water trails that link into the existing greenway system at water access points and links that provide access to the adjacent ACE Basin in Colleton County.
- **Existing Trails** include designated trails that have been constructed.
- **Proposed Trails** are trails that are being proposed based upon input received during the public information meetings and agency interview process completed during this study, as well as trails which have been preliminarily routed or planned by Community Preservation Areas, municipalities, the Lowcountry Council of Governments (LCOG) or other governmental entities. They include trails being proposed in the short and long term.

- **Proposed Rails to Trails** include trails and greenways that are along existing and/or abandoned rail lines.
- **Proposed Trail in Water Line Easement** is a trail that follows an existing water line easement.

As the trail/blueway system is described in the following pages, the routes and trails are referred to as one of three categories:

- **Spine Trails** are the major corridors that tie Beaufort County together. It is envisioned that both residents and tourists will use these facilities.
- **Spur Trails** connect Spine Trails to neighborhoods, parks, community facilities, shopping districts, vistas, historic and natural features and boat landings. It is envisioned that residents will predominantly use these trails.
- **Blueway Trails** are waterways for use by canoes, kayaks and other paddle craft. It is envisioned that both residents and tourists will use these trails.

PRIORITIES

Southern Beaufort County: The Southern Beaufort Greenway (SBG) Plan delineates a number of projects and phases with trails throughout the Bluffton area and connecting to unincorporated portions of the County. The SBG plan includes improving the walk-ability of the downtown historic portion of Bluffton and connecting it with the newly annexed areas of Palmetto Bluff, Buckwalter and Shultz tracts. The vision of the plan also seeks to connect existing and proposed parks, schools, ball fields and other amenities with the residential sections of Bluffton. The SBG plan strives to improve water access for citizens with a proposed blueway as well. The SBG plan also addresses the connection of the Bluffton area with the Town of Hilton Head Island and its trail system.

Northern Beaufort County: Northern Beaufort County includes the portion of Beaufort County north of the Broad and Pocotaligo Rivers. The maps show the entire network throughout Northern Beaufort County. Priorities must be established to develop the plan in a logical and effective manner.

A high priority in the northern part of the County should be the establishment of the Port Royal Rail Trail and Water Line Easement spine trails and greenways. In order to secure conservation easements with public access and implement these facilities, discussions between Beaufort County and CSX and Port Royal rail lines should begin immediately. Beaufort County should also begin similar discussions with the United States Navy and Beaufort Jasper Water & Sewer Authority in reference to the area located within the waterline easement. Although these target areas currently contain active rail and water service lines, properly designed trails could be established within the existing rights of way that would not affect the operations of the existing services. In the future, if these services were relocated and/or discontinued, additional trails and greenway features could be incorporated.

The implementation of the Route 21, Route 170 and Route 280/802/Brickyard Point spine trails should be another high priority in northern Beaufort County. The establishment of these trails will complete the regional routes to which the spur trail network will connect. Roadway improvements are currently under construction for both Route 170 and Route 280. Due to the nature and timeline associated with the completion of these projects, it is imperative that representatives from Beaufort County begin discussions with the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) in order to facilitate the inclusion of bike lanes. Route 170 is an important connection to Southern Beaufort County and the trail system outlined in the

Bluffton/Hilton Head area links existing and future trails and pathways within Beaufort County and eventually Jasper County. At the time of these discussions, the County should present the concept of developing bike lanes along Routes 21, 17 and 280/802 to the SCDOT in order to insure the future programming and funding of these routes.

The final stages of implementation should focus on the development of the various spur trails, which have been identified in the major study areas. Special attention should be placed upon the implementation of the spur routes that connect directly to the spine trails. The creation of these routes will provide a vital link from the spine trails to the adjacent residential neighborhoods and community centers. Establishing these initial connections into the core of each community will provide the populace with regional alternative transportation and recreational opportunities. This approach will also allow each community to experience and examine the various types of trails that have been implemented. This opportunity will allow the community to further refine the trail locations and types that have been proposed for their neighborhoods.

SUMMARY

Municipalities within the County have successfully undertaken the process for planning and implementing trail/blueway networks outlined in this section. In order for the County to achieve the implementation of its trail/blueway networks, it is critical that all parties that have a stake in the development and use of these facilities be involved through each stage of the planning, construction and management processes. This way the links to the municipalities, the unincorporated parts of the County and its resources can be established as the funding and opportunities arise. The proposed trail and blueway routes that are shown on these maps were developed based upon input received from Beaufort County citizens during a series of meetings. Because the goals and characteristics of each area within Beaufort County are unique, the users and uses of the trails/blueways system will vary. The goals, characteristics and users will determine how each area's trail/blueway network is designed and planned.

Northern Beaufort County Trails and Blueway Master Plan

Spine Trails are the major corridors that tie Beaufort County together.

Spur Trails connect Spine Trails to neighborhoods, parks, community facilities, shopping districts, vistas, historic and natural features and boat landings.

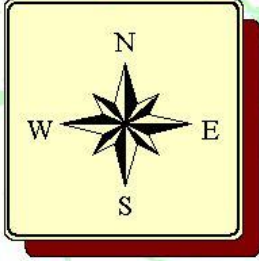
Blueway Trails are waterways for use by canoes, kayaks and other paddle craft.



Legend

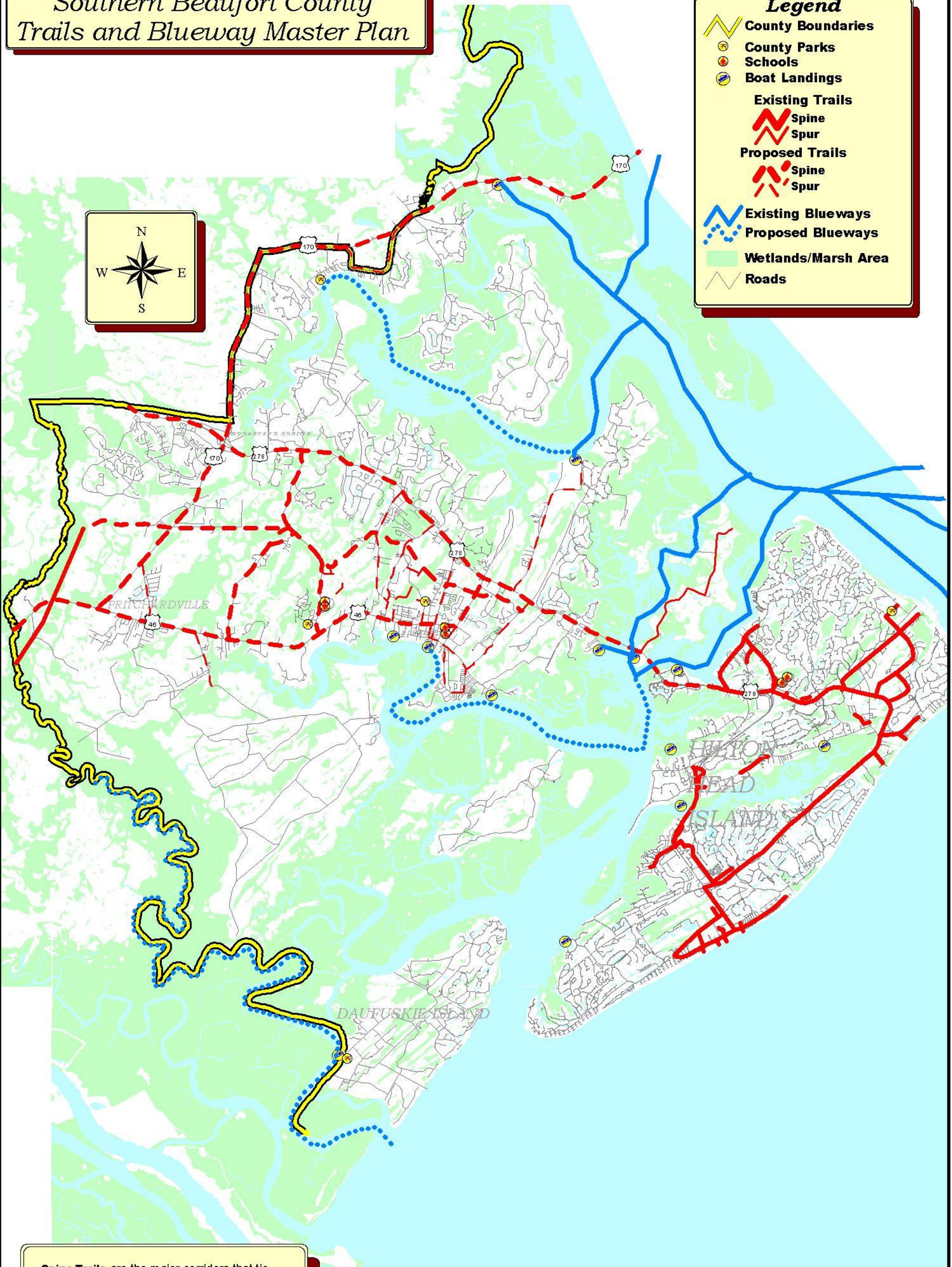
- County Boundaries
- County Parks
- Schools
- Boat Landings
- Existing Trails**
 - Spine
 - Spur
- Proposed Trails**
 - Spine
 - Spur
- Existing Blueways**
 - Existing Blueways
 - Proposed Blueways
- Wetlands/Marsh Area
- Roads
- Active Rail Lines

Southern Beaufort County Trails and Blueway Master Plan



Legend

- County Boundaries
- County Parks
- Schools
- Boat Landings
- Existing Trails**
 - Spine
 - Spur
- Proposed Trails**
 - Spine
 - Spur
- Existing Blueways**
 -
- Proposed Blueways**
 -
- Wetlands/Marsh Area
- Roads



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