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Proposal for a  
Kings Mountain Ridge Connector Trail

CPM Candidate:

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10/24/97

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## Project Goal

The purpose of the Kings Mountain Ridge Trail is to join, not only two state parks and a National Military Park, but to create a partnership that will provide for excellent recreational opportunities in the rapidly expanding Charlotte/Spartanburg corridor.

The five mile proposed trail between the two state parks will primarily follow the ridge line and connect the 16 mile of Kings Mountain Hiking Trail to the 13 miles of trails at Crowders Mountain State Park. It will be a multi use trail for hikers and mountain bikes which neither park has had mountain bike trails.

The idea of a connector between Kings Mountain State Park, SC and Crowders Mountain State Park, NC was originally in the master plan for CMSP in 1974 when the park was created. Meetings concerning this project take place every few years and both park systems agree that it should be built.

In July of 1996, Kings Mountain was donated 268 acres of land on the park boundary that put the park boundary on the NC state line on the Kings Mountain ridge line.

The ridge line between the two parks is approximately 4 miles in length and is currently not developed. Tax maps of Cleveland County and Gaston County, NC will have to be researched to determine the owners of the property.

An agreed upon easement or Memorandum of Understanding will have to be agreed upon by all parties involved before trail construction can begin using volunteer labor.

Construction of the trail should begin no later than Spring/Summer 1998.

## Opportunity Statement

The South Carolina State Parks System's mission is to improve the quality of life and economic well being of the citizens of South Carolina by providing natural resource - based recreational opportunities with the emphasis on conservation, education, and interpretation of the natural, cultural, and historical resources of the state.

With this mission the South Carolina State Park Service developed a strategic Management Plan in January of 1997.

Some of the objectives of this plan that are a directive for this project are:

1. Working with other agencies to develop a comprehensive state wide trail plan.
2. Expand trail opportunities.
3. Develop partnerships with other agencies to provide trail networks.
4. Develop plans to effectively use volunteers in trail construction and maintenance projects.
5. Become more proactive in watershed protection.

The opportunity of joining two state park systems and a national park with trail system has implications much greater than just a 5 mile trail. It will bring together these agencies for a common goal that can be expanded upon and will show citizens that government agencies can work together to promote a recreational activity of southeastern significance.

Data will have to be collected on number of hikers utilizing trails in this area and mountain bikers user in other areas.

Also research needs to be done concerning partnerships on similar recreational projects incorporating boundaries such as county and state lines. State Library

## CAUSE ANALYSIS

The purpose of the South Carolina State Park Service is to provide opportunities to the public to enjoy our natural resources. One form of recreation is walking trails, of which there are many in the state. Another form of recreation is mountain biking, which there are only few areas that allow mountain bikes to ride on trails. Mountain biking is one of the fastest growing sports in the United States. At the present time there are no plans to create one a Kings Mountain State Park, but we can create one off the park.

Many visitors come to Kings Mountain State Park to hike to the top of Kings Mountain, which is actually at Crowders Mountain State Park, creating this trail would give visitors the opportunity to hike to the top of Kings Mountain.

There will be many problems associated with this project:

- \* During previous meetings it has always been said that the land is owned by a local family the Plonks. Research will have to be done in Cleveland and Gaston County, NC to determine the ownership.
- \* There will be many agencies brought together to work on this project. We will call together all parties for an introductory meeting to focus on the idea of the trail to make sure every one is still in agreement for the trail.
- \* A conservation easement or a memorandum of understanding will have to be drawn up and agreed to by all involved parties.
- \* A meeting with the landowners will be held on the proposal to try to get an agreement with them.
- \* We must determine how the trail will be built, who will build the trail, maintenance of the trail, law enforcement, liability, etc.
- \* Solicit volunteers for construction and maintenance of the trail.

A force field analysis will be used to energize the group to support the project.

#### BASELINE PROFILE

- Two separate trail systems
- Three separate agencies

#### TARGETED PROFILE

- Provide a connector
- Bring agencies together for a common goal

There are obstacles to overcome in order to achieve the future state so we must provide momentum and support to counteract them.

#### MOMENTUM

- All agencies agree to project
- SC State Park Service is in favor of the trail, including the Director.
- Provide mountain bike trail for this area

#### RESISTANCE

- Who will manage the trail?
- Liability
- Other projects to complete
  - Not enough staff to manage trails we have

#### SUPPORT

- Natural ridge line of undeveloped forest
- Short trail 4-5 miles
- Several paths have been made by four wheelers and hikers.
- A trail managed by the agencies will provide more security for land.

#### BARRIERS

- Landowner might not agree to trail
- Will have to cross 3 roads
- Too many landowners

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The idea of this project has gone on since the formation of Crowders Mountain State Park and its Master Plan in 1970. With the increased population in this area we feel that if this project does not move ahead quickly, there is the possibility that development would prohibit this endeavor.

1. Map out on topographic maps the proposed trail joining the two parks.  
9/1/97 KMSP Staff
  
2. Research Cleveland and Gaston County, NC tax maps to determine the ownership of the property between the two parks.  
9/10/97 - 9/12/97 KMSP - Ranger Interpreter Linda Howell
  
3. Set up a group meeting with:  
Supt. Joe Sox, Crowders Mountain State Park  
Dwayne Stutzman, NC State Park Trail Coordinator  
Chief Ranger Chris Revels, Kings Mountain National Military Park  
Irvin Pitts, SC State Park Trail Coordinator/Resource Biologist  
Jim Schmid, SC Trail Coordinator  
Supt. Couch, Kings Mountain State Park  
To discuss the trail proposal  
10/1/97 KMSP - Supt. Couch
  
4. Make proposal to landowners on the trail connector to let them know what we are working toward.  
10/15/97 KMSP - Supt. Couch  
CMSP - Supt. Sox
  
5. Prepare Memorandum of Understanding M.O.U. for agreement between  
CMSP - KMSP - KMNMP - Landowners  
10/30/97 - 11/14/97 KMSP - Supt. Couch  
Jim Schmid
  
6. Map out proposed trail by flagging trees along trail route.  
1/1/98 - 1/9/98 KMSP - Staff  
CMSP - Staff
  
7. Solicit volunteers for trail construction and form team leader for volunteers.  
2/1/98 - 3/1/98 KMSP - Ranger Interpreter Howell  
KMNMP - Ranger Taylor

8. Construct trail, blaze trees, signage, maps, etc.

4/1/98 - 5/1/98 KMSP - Staff

KMNMP - Staff

CMSP - Staff

As this process begins, I will be acting as the facilitator and team leader for the whole project. Each step of the process is important in itself to achieve the project goal.

In undertaking this project, I understand that at any point the landowners may decide that they do not want the trail on their land.

During this process we have been in contact with other trails that cross county and state boundaries that have multi agencies operating the trails:

Broad River Greenway

Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail

Palmetto Trail

Gaston County Greenway

Appalachian Trail Conference

## EVALUATION METHOD

The intent of this project is to build a trail between Kings Mountain State Park and Crowders Mountain State Park. It is our intent to complete this trail within a short period of time ( 1 year to 18 months).

There are many other outcomes or goals of this project that can be evaluated:

1. Mapping of the trail ( Appendix 1 )
2. Research on land ownership.
3. Cooperation between 2 state agencies and 1 federal agencies.
4. Present landowners with the fact that we are committed to land stewardship.
5. Agreement on the M.O.U. ( Appendix 2 )
6. Build a core of volunteers who will be present for other projects. Give staff skills for leading that team.



## RESULTS

In conversations with members of our organizational meeting involving all agencies involved with this project, it was agreed that if this endeavor is not completed soon it will fail.

The land in question about 1100 acres between the two parks is undeveloped and owned by the heirs of 2 related families M.L. Plonk and J.O. Plonk. They are approached frequently in regards to sale of the property for development.

Another variable has entered into the project that could have a greater impact in the recreational opportunities for South and North Carolina. The landowners have stated that they are wanting to sell the land in one piece for use as a conservation area.

We have had meetings with the N.C. Natural Heritage Trust Fund and the Conservation Fund concerning the purchase of the property. The Conservation Fund has expressed an interest in purchasing the property for donation to Crowders Mountain State Park. NC State Parks will agree to the donation.

The M.O.U. has been agreed to by S.C. State Parks and has been given to N.C. State Parks for their approval, but has not been returned, therefore we have not been approved by the landowners to begin any trail construction.

APPENDIX 2

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)  
Between  
Crowders Mountain State Park, NC  
and  
Kings Mountain State Park, SC  
and  
the Plonk family heirs (Property Owners)

Concerning the Kings Mountain Ridge Trail/ Plonk Trail

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is made and entered into by and between the Crowders Mountain State Park of North Carolina, herein after referred to as CROWDERS, Kings Mountain State Park of South Carolina, herein after referred to as KINGS MOUNTAIN, and the Plonk family heirs, herein after referred to as PLONK, for the purpose of establishing a partnership to develop a five mile connector trail between Kings Mountain State Park and Crowders Mountain State Park.

Whereas, the proposed Kings Mountain Ridge Trail/ Plonk Trail, herein after referred to as the TRAIL, will be a hiking/ mountain biking trail between above said parties, with the expressed purpose of providing optimal recreational opportunities, protecting a greenway corridor, and preventing destruction of a valuable view shed in a rapidly growing metropolitan area.

Whereas, it is the mutual desire of all parties to enter into a cooperative agreement, in which the planning and development of the TRAIL across the PLONK private land would be jointly planned and arranged, and it is the mutual desire of all parties that both KINGS MOUNTAIN and CROWDERS agree to assume construction, operation, maintenance, and management of the TRAIL. Basic maintenance will consist of pruning of bushes and trees necessary to clear a trail. This TRAIL will be used exclusively for hiking and mountain biking. Marking for the TRAIL will consist of painted blazes on trees along the trail route. Camping is permitted only in areas designated in the state parks.

Whereas the PLONKS reserve the right to require a relocation of the trail or any part of the trail to a different portion of the property if the need arises. In determining the route of said trail or a relocation, the state parks will work cooperatively with the PLONKS to determine the most appropriate location.

Now, therefore, in consideration of the above, all parties hereto mutually agree to the following:

The purpose of this MOU is to set out in general terms, the agreed upon cooperative relationship among CROWDERS, KINGS MOUNTAIN, and the PLONKS, for the Kings Mountain Ridge/ Plonk Trail. This MOU will establish the framework upon which the above parties may cooperatively plan for the development, construction, operation, maintenance, and management of the TRAIL and shall become effective as of the date of the last signature.

## **Statement of Work**

The parties mutually agree to:

1. Discuss matters of mutual concern that may affect the planning, construction, maintenance, and management of the TRAIL, and to outline priorities within the scope of this MOU. Meetings may be called by any party with at least five days notice to all parties.
2. Set objectives for the TRAIL that will be mutually agreed upon by all the parties, this includes any activities that may be undertaken on the TRAIL. The objectives are as follows:
  - a. Provide for recreational opportunities, which are mutually agreed upon by all parties, for all people, without discrimination.
  - b. Allow people to readily access, by either mountain biking or hiking, both CROWDERS and KINGS MOUNTAIN by means of the TRAIL.
  - c. Prevent destruction of the PLONK land, and in doing so, preserve the unique and valuable view shed.
3. Encourage volunteers to enter into projects with either of the Park Superintendents that set forth procedures consistent with this MOU for construction and maintenance of the TRAIL. Volunteer trail workers will perform seasonal trail marking and maintenance. Trail maintenance performed by the volunteers will be coordinated with CROWDERS and KINGS MOUNTAIN. This includes storm damage cleanup, sign placement or replacement, removing vegetation that is obstructing the path of the TRAIL. Other repairs on the TRAIL may be performed if those repairs are deemed necessary and all parties mutually agree.
4. Provide for opportunities for comment and review of each others plans and programs that might affect the TRAIL.
5. Assure consistency of the TRAIL corridor land use plans between the state and county borders.
6. Mark and maintain the TRAIL in a standard procedure to be determined and agreed upon by all parties.

Termination, withdrawal, and amendment will follow the terms listed below:

1. This MOU shall continue in effect unless terminated by mutual written agreement of all parties.
2. The property owner may withdraw from or revoke this agreement by giving 60 days advance written notice to other parties.
3. This MOU may be amended by mutual agreement of all parties.

This MOU is subject to the following provisions to the extent they are applicable by Law:

- a. **Officials not to Benefit**  
No member of or delegate to Congress shall be admitted to any share or part of this MOU or to any benefit that may arise therefrom; but this provision shall not be constructed to extend to this MOU if made with a corporation for its general benefit.
- b. **Civil Rights Assurance**  
During the performance of this MOU, the parties agree to abide by the terms of Executive Order 11246 and Executive Order 75-5 on non-discrimination and will not discriminate against any person because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. (Title VI. Civil Rights Act of 1964. 42 U.S.C. C.2000d.1.)
- c. **Promotions**  
The parties to this agreement shall not publicize, or otherwise circulate, promotional material (such as advertisements, sales brochures, press releases, speeches, still and motion pictures, articles, manuscripts or other publications) which states or implies Governmental endorsement of a product, service, or position. No release of information relating to this agreement may state or imply approval.
- d. **Public Information Release**  
Any public information release made by one party in regards to another party in regards to the TRAIL should receive approval by the other party in advance of its release.

The principal contacts for this agreement are:

- 1. **Superintendent**  
Kings Mountain State Park  
1277 Park Road  
Blacksburg, SC 29702  
(803) 222-3209
- 2. **Superintendent**  
Crowders Mountain State Park  
Route 1, Box 159  
Kings Mountain, NC 28086  
(704) 853-5375
- 3. **J.O. Plonk JR.**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner

Date

Superintendent of Crowders Mountain  
State Park

Date

Superintendent of Kings Mountain  
State Park

Date

APPENDIX 1

