

To the Rails to Trails Advisory Committee

We are pleased and excited to see the Ecusta Rails to Trail Greenway come to fruition. In addition to the benefits for Western North Carolina residents, the greenway will showcase our region to a wider population around the area. We would like to encourage implementation of another positive aspect of the greenway development.

In 1894 when the railroad between Hendersonville and Brevard was built there was little consideration of the impact on the natural environment incorporated into the design. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have become much more knowledgeable about the environment and the impacts that human infrastructure projects can have. The Ecusta Trail will have 16 major trestle crossings of waterways in addition to numerous culvert crossings of smaller streams. The construction of the trail offers an opportunity to correct and improve on past waterway crossing construction efforts.

Instead of hardening the banks adjacent to stream crossings, we have the opportunity to improve the natural infrastructure of the intersecting streams. We are encouraging the use of natural bank stabilization, modifying crossing design to accommodate natural stream alignment and flood water passage, and the planting of native riparian vegetation on stream banks. Stable and appropriate stream crossing design will ensure that the Trail causes minimal impact to the region's water systems from erosion, improves regional water quality and enhances the quality of all aquatic organisms, some of which are threatened. Additionally, this will improve the greenway for both humans and the environment. Appropriately designed and planted stream crossings will encourage pollinators, birds, fishes, mussels and other native animals while providing a more natural and educational experience for those using the trail as well as providing more of a buffer to neighboring properties.

The Ecusta Trail has been thought about and dreamed of for many years. As the planning and construction begins, we urge the Rails to Trail Advisory Committee to think long term in order to ensure that the Trail enhances the natural experience of its users and benefits the broader community through environmentally sound waterway crossing design techniques.

Sincerely,