



Sheltowee Trace Association Strategic Plan



400 MILES BY 40 Connecting America's Trails

The mission of the Sheltowee Trace Association is to protect, preserve, and promote the Sheltowee Trace National Recreation Trail as a significant national resource for the enjoyment of hikers, bikers, and equestrians, and for the value that wild and scenic lands provide to all people.



Sheltowee Trace Association - 2016 - 2018 Strategic Plan

“Connecting America’s Trails”

INTRODUCTION: VISION AND MISSION

The Vision that Drives Us

A continuous, over 400 mile trail from the Ohio River in the North to the Cumberland Trail in the South, connecting The Great Eastern Trail with the North Country Trail opening up the Sheltowee and thousands of miles of the National Trail System to the nation.

The Sheltowee Trace Association was founded on a vision of connecting the Trace with the National Trails Network to enable potential users to experience the beauty and wonders of the Daniel Boone National Forest, the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, two wilderness areas along with two of Kentucky’s finest state parks.

From an improbable beginning in September 2008 in Winchester, that vision has awakened ordinary folks, groups and agencies to the amazing sights and scenery, tremendous recreational opportunities available along the Sheltowee Trace National Recreation Trail.

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to outline the way forward as we seek to complete the Trace, over 400 miles of continuous by the 40th Anniversary of its designation in 2019.

The Mission Before Us

The mission of the Sheltowee Trace Association is to protect, preserve, and promote the Sheltowee Trace National Recreation Trail as a significant national resource for the enjoyment of hikers, bikers, and equestrians, and for the value that wild and scenic lands provide to all people.

The Association works to achieve this mission by:

- ◆ Preserving the Trace for future generations by finding, training and encouraging volunteers to protect, preserve and promote to all user groups and trail towns along the Trace;
- ◆ Protecting the Trace by developing a minimum protective corridor that will serve as a buffer for trail users from the growing encroachment of urban areas;
- ◆ Promoting the Trace by developing, growing and deploying financial and organizational resources to complete the Trace, maintain its uniqueness, and promoting its proper use;
- ◆ Developing communities, groups, chapters and individuals who deeply appreciate the value that wild and scenic trails provide and serve as links to the future and long range survival of this the nations longest National Recreation Trail.

The three mission objectives stated in the Mission Statement— preserving, protecting and promoting are the organizational pillars for this strategic plan. With this roadmap we will achieve our goal of completing the Trace by the 40th Anniversary of the opening of the Trace.

Background

The Sheltoewe Trace Association was formed in September 2009 as the outgrowth of the efforts of several concerned users of the Trace who had a vision of improving trail conditions, re-route where possible the Trace off hard-surfaced roads and back into the woods, encouraging an increase in the use of the Trace, and connect the Trace with the National Trail System.

In January of 2010, the Sheltoewe Trace Association signed an agreement with the USDA Forest Service outlining the association's relationship with the organization. This framework set the agenda for the Association work developing trail initiatives and maintenance plans for the last 5 years.

Functional Needs

In developing this long-range plan various functional needs were identified that the STA must be willing to achieve. They include:

- ◆ **Connecting the Sheltoewe.** Connecting the Trace to the North Country Trail via the Buckeye Trail in the north and connecting in the South to the Cumberland Trail will complete our vision of linking our National Recreation Trail to these two significant links in the National Trail system. In the next two years, working with the NPS BSF NRRA, we can add 20 more miles to the Trace in the south down to Peter's Bridge. This will leave 30 miles of private land to cross to reach the Cumberland Trail. In the north, we are 20 miles across private land outside the DBNF boundary to get to our objective at South Portsmouth on the Ohio.
- ◆ **Rerouting the Trace.** We continue to reduce the percentage of road miles on the Trace. As of 1 October, we believe that around 23% of the Trace is on "hard surfaces". We have currently identified 6 potential opportunities for rerouting the Trace off roads during the timeframe of this strategic plan. Our success in this area will depend on our cooperation with land managers and some private land owners.
- ◆ **Effective Stewardship of the Land.** We continue to see an increase in the number of users on the Trace from a variety of groups. By in large, the greatest interest is in backpacking either on day hike adventures or complete end to end hikes of the Trace. Second we see specific pockets where trail riding has and continues to grow. To plan for continued growth this strategic plan calls for a comprehensive trail improvement plan that will identify potential fixed campsites, new or expanded trail heads, needed bridges, potential environmental obstacles, . This plan will be the road map for future efforts in this area.
- ◆ **Financial Resources.** Our operational, maintenance, protection, promotion, and advocacy for the Trace require the financial support of our members and friends. Existing grants and new grants will have to be secured. We can meet this financial challenge through increased membership(s), membership fees, enhanced marketing partnerships, grants, and comprehensive fundraising.
- ◆ **Volunteer Coordination.** Even with optimum resource development, it is likely that continued construction, maintenance and monitoring of the trail, as well as enhanced membership services, will require the expansion of both trail and administrative support. Better volunteer coordination is essential to meeting this task.

- ◆ **Membership Recruitment.** Members are critical to the success of the work of the STA. They provide a source of vital leadership personnel, volunteers and financial resources. The STA will strive to recruit and retain levels of membership to safeguard the operational and financial viability of the organization. Working more closely at the local level, the STA will work to establish local chapters that will oversee portions of the Trace, recruit new members, organize trail maintenance opportunities, and social activities to encourage participation in the mission of the STA. Greater membership services and programs will be required to sustain member(s) interest and participation over the long term.
- ◆ **Promotion and Publicity.** A fundamental priority of the STA is to promote the use of the Trace by all user groups. The Trace's very existence is endangered if we do not continue to seek publication of articles, radio, television stories across the state and the nation. Partnering with outside groups that utilize the Trace for fundraising is an important step in our efforts cross promote the Trace.
- ◆ **Advocacy.** The STA can not operate in a vacuum. There are issues on a national level as well on state and local levels that can have a significant impact on the work of the STA and the long term existence of the Trace. We will advocate with public officials to make sure they are aware of the concerns of our members.

PROTECT

Objective: The first mission of the Sheltolee Trace Association is to protect.....as a significant national resource for the enjoyment of hikers, bikers, and equestrians, and for the value that wild and scenic lands provide to all people.

Protecting the Trace from overuse, improving the Trace experience, the establishment of a protective corridor and barrier from the advancing urbanization of the forest, and having an awareness of the environmental issues within the Trace corridor are fundamental roles of the STA and are top priorities of the strategic plan.

Strategic Goal 1: Connecting the Trace to the National Trails System

- ⇒ Work with the leadership of the Big South Fork National River and Recreation area to extend the Trace from Honey Creek Loop down to Peter's Bridge through the town of Rugby.
- ⇒ Work with the leadership of the Cumberland Trail Conference to find a route and build the last 30 mile trail over to the Cumberland Trail.
- ⇒ Work with local governments and designated or anticipated Trail Town in Lewis and Carter County to see the Trace extended beyond the DBNF boundary to South Portsmouth.
- ⇒ Work with local government, Shawnee State Park officials in the connecting of the Trace from South Portsmouth to the Buckeye Trail.

Strategic Goal 2: Complete the necessary reroutes of the Trace to move the trail off hard surface roads and take advantage of local trail town resources.

- ⇒ Work with Forest Service (London District) to reroute off Hazel Patch access of the Trace to where the trail goes into Livingston and across Rockcastle River at historic low water crossing and up to Wildcat Battle area.
- ⇒ Work with Forest Service (Cumberland District) to reroute the Trace off the Corner Ridge / Tarr Ridge route to a route into the Clifty Wilderness and out Mariba Fork to Fletcher Ridge Rd.
- ⇒ Work with the Forest Service (London District) to reroute the Trace in the S-Tree area across S-Tree road direct to Raccoon Creek Rd.
- ⇒ Work with the Forest Service (London District) to reroute the Trace off highway 89 and 490 back into the woods.
- ⇒ Work with the Forest Service (Stearns District) to reroute the Trace off Thunderstruck/700 through the forest over to Catron Rd. intersection.
- ⇒ Work with the Forest Service (Cumberland District) to reroute the Trace off Highway 1036 into the adjacent woods and trails.
- ⇒ Work with the Forest Service (Cumberland District) to reroute the Trace off Highway 399 and back into the woods out to Rt 52.

PRESERVE

Objective: The second mission of the Sheltopee Trace Association is to **preserve**.....as a significant national resource for the enjoyment of hikers, a bikers, and equestrians, and for the value that wild and scenic lands provide to all people. Preservation of the Trace means to work, work, and work some more work doing all we can to make sure that users of the Trace have a safe and rewarding experience. Preservation means trail maintenance, trail improvements to attract more users, partnering with environmental groups that focus on preserving the trail corridor.

Strategic Goal 1: Give and You Get Campaign. Over the next year as members renew and new members join the STA, we will ask them to join us in our efforts to see a significant increase in the hours of volunteer time given by our members and friends. Members will be asked to “PLEDGE” to volunteer 3 hours, 6 hours, 9 hours or 1 day or 3 days or 6 days over the course of the year.

Strategic Goal 2: To grow local support through the creation of regional chapters. Starting in the north, over the next 4 years we will work with the in-place trail towns to set up local chapters along the Trace that can enhance our ability to perform trail maintenance and invite those unfamiliar with the Trace out to the woods through local trail activities.

Strategic Goal 3: To identify the local private land owners that host segments of the Trace. By identifying landowners and making sure they are aware of the Trace and there is an easement on file we can assist the land managers in their oversight of these agreements and we can protect the use of the Trace and avoid surprise request from land owners asking that the Trace be removed from their land.

Strategic Goal 4: Work with the land managers to protect the Trace corridor. Especially in the DBNF, there are many pockets of land that could be potential additions to the Trace corridor if funds were available. The STA over the next 4 years will work to establish with existing organizations, to establish a way that our members and friends can donate funds for land purchase or land itself for use by the STA for the Trace.

PROMOTE

Objective: The third mission of the Shelton Trace Association is to **promote**.....as a significant national resource for the enjoyment of hikers, bikers, and equestrians, and for the value that wild and scenic lands provide to all people. Promoting the Trace means doing all we can, through as many information networks we can to see a continued interest and steady growth in users on the Trace.

Strategic Goal 1: Complete redesign of the .org webpage. The current website averages now over 5,000 visits per month. Users are accessing the site for basic trail information, answers to specific questions about using the Trace. In order to stay ahead of the flow, the site will need to be redesigned with a goal of being the go to resource for all things “Shelton”.

Strategic Goal 2: See the membership exceed 600 by the end of 2019. To achieve this goal we need to see the membership data updated to a “cloud” based service. We need to continue to be on top of “renewals” so that more than 80% of the membership renews each year.

Strategic Goal 3: To develop alternate sources to inform the public and membership. With the proven success of the Bluegrass Trail Talk podcast, the goal is to see this podcast produced weekly. To keep the members informed, in the next 4 years we will continue to utilize social media but work to send hard copies of information periodically as more and more folks become less interested in the mail coming into their inbox.

Strategic Goal 4: Utilize special events to get the word out about the Trace especially in the towns along the trail corridor. Participate in at least one event annually in each of the counties that host the Trace. Co-host events that bring users to the Trace and raise money in support of the Trace. Organize stand alone events that promote the Trace and raise funds for the Trace. Participate in at least one event in the larger metropolitan areas of the state.

Strategic Goal 5: Maximize the current and projected possibilities that the web and social media provide. Continue to seek new social media apps and sites where the message can be delivered. Look for the shift away from social media to the next great thing or opportunity for reaching our members.

Strategic Goal 6: Seek ways to engage our partners and new partners in the promoting of the Trace. Work with groups like the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and other youth based organization to assist them in group outings on the Trace. Work with the land managers to promote national programs like National Trail Days and National Public Lands Day.