

**From:** [Sarah Myers](#)  
**To:** [Rachael Sawyer](#)  
**Subject:** A Statement and the List of Participating Team Members  
**Date:** Sunday, August 4, 2024 8:01:50 PM  
**Attachments:** [Outlook-xs1ff5jx.png](#)  
[Approach from West \(Weaverville, Asheville\) to Parking.png](#)  
[Approach from East \(Blue Ridge Parkway, Bull Gap\) to Parking.png](#)

---

Hello!

Here are the names and emails of the folks who will be joining the Wednesday 9am call.

Scottie Harris: [sharris@weavervillenc.org](mailto:sharris@weavervillenc.org)  
Jennifer Jackson: [jjackson@weavervillenc.org](mailto:jjackson@weavervillenc.org)  
Mark Endries: [markendries@hotmail.com](mailto:markendries@hotmail.com)  
Peter Mills: [elevatedtraildesign@gmail.com](mailto:elevatedtraildesign@gmail.com)

The grant committee has developed a statement that we would like to be shared with the Subcommittee Members. Would you mind passing this along to them?

Thank you for all of your work,  
Sarah

-----  
Dear Buncombe County Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee.

Please accept this statement in response to Public Comments that have been received about the Weaverville Watershed Trails grant application. The grant team has spent a considerable amount of time and effort on the Watershed concept design and continues to do so in light of the public feedback. The Town of Weaverville is committed to providing public use access on this property, ideally in a way that would benefit Buncombe County residents. We would like to clarify the following.

### **Community Engagement Plan**

Public engagement has always been a part of our project plan, with initial outreach to neighboring Sourwood Inn (now SoHum Healing Resort) in 2022 and outreach to potential community partners in 2023 and 2024. Public engagement with neighboring residents of the property and the greater community was planned once funding was secured. Given the feedback we've received, we have now met with an Elk Mountain Scenic Highway resident, and plan to host Public Input Sessions in advance of trail construction. These public input sessions will include neighbors, community partner organizations, and Weaverville Town Residents, with the goal of gathering feedback and opinions on the project design and park operations in order for us to optimize our designs to best serve the community. We know this will help to create a stronger project in the long term.

## **Intended Park Audience**

We are intending to build a multi-use trail system for walkers, hikers, and bikers of all ages, designed to offer access for people who are mobility impaired. There is no comparable public passive recreation space in North Buncombe. The plans call for both hike-only and bike-only routes to allow users trails where hikers won't be impacted by bikers, and vice versa. Mountain bikers looking for highly technical trails with jumps and drops will need to look elsewhere, and there are other locations in the regional area where mountain bikers looking for serious adventure will prefer to go. Our trails will be built with a natural approach and minimal impact. As a result, we will see some mountain bike use, but more likely it will be nature lovers, hikers, trail runners, birders, and gravel bike riders passing through the property. We intend to communicate the 15-mile round-trip loop from Downtown Weaverville as an attractive option for Weaverville residents and visitors.

## **Moving the Proposed Elk Mountain Parking Location**

We have assessed the entire property while identifying where to install a small parking area, including the right of way access on Eller Cove Road and a location further up Elk Mountain Highway towards Buzzard Rock. While we feel the best space for the 5-10 car parking area is where we currently have it situated in our application, we are looking at the opportunity to situate the parking area further East on Elk Mountain Scenic Highway.

Regarding a parking area on Eller Cove Rd., we would like to keep folks away from the water reservoir and water supply equipment located at the Eller Cove access point to the property. This area is very steep and narrow, hence the switchback trails from this entry point into the trail system. Steep, switchback trails would not allow for the accessibility that parking on Elk Mountain, near the old logging roads, would provide. The space on Eller Cove does not connect directly to a public road, instead access is through a right of way easement that passes through the property at 181 Eller Cove Road. This entry is narrow passing within 30 ft. of two houses and 100 ft. of a third house. Currently, the closest house to the Elk Mountain Scenic Highway proposed parking location is 500 ft. and out of any direct sight lines.

As we investigate placing the small parking area further east along Elk Mountain Scenic Highway, the two limitations we see are: less flat land and less access to the accessible trails. These are not insurmountable limitations; they would result in greater expense and effort, while potentially limiting the number of residents physically able to use the trail system.

Our original Elk Mountain parking placement takes advantage of a relatively flat terrain, eliminates non-native invasive plants, is situated at a location where three trails meet, and relies on existing logging roads.

## **The Safety of Elk Mountain Scenic Highway**

With safety as a priority, we have spoken with sightline experts about the concern that the proposed parking area is in a blind curve. As you will see in the attached photos, visibility of the parking area from the West (Weaverville/Asheville) would be approximately 400 feet. From the East (Blue Ridge Parkway/Bull Gap) visibility would be approximately 250 feet, with existing signage warning of

hidden driveways. We expect that a parking lot location will improve driving sight lines and safety around the curve by removing obstructions to view by road users.

Furthermore, the availability of safe parking will reduce/eliminate vehicles parked in unsafe locations or locations that would obstruct flow of traffic. We are reaching out to NCDOT to discuss and share the project design. We intend to place signage, in partnership and with permission, about parking on the road and driving carefully. "Share the Road" signage and outreach during project events (e.g. grand opening) could be implemented.

### **Overstated Visitation Numbers from the TDA Grant Application**

After conversations with our Trail experts, we have been informed that the visitation numbers in the application we submitted to the Tourism Development Authority are overstated. We will do more research to identify more accurate numbers, and we don't anticipate the usage to be as high.

### **Sarah Myers**

*Recreation Coordinator/Community Center Manager*

*Town of Weaverville*

[smyers@weavervillenc.org](mailto:smyers@weavervillenc.org)

Office: (828) 658-5816

Cell: (828) 470-8747



All email correspondence to and from this address is subject to public review under the NC Public Records Law.



Approach to parking from the East (Blue Ridge Parkway, Bull Gap) along Elk Mtn Hwy. Parking in proximity of the arrow. Note existing signage. Visibility distance is approximately 250 feet.



Approach from West  
(Weaverville, Asheville) on  
Elk Mtn Hwy. Parking  
would be where arrow is  
pointing. Visibility distance  
is approximately 400 ft.