



MEDIA CONTACT:
Marisa Dobrot
Verde Brand Communications
marisa@verdepr.com
505.917.5866



Old Fort Trails Project Approved and Funded *The First Six Miles of Trail Construction Will Begin Immediately*

OLD FORT, North Carolina (November 16, 2021) – In a press conference today, the community of Old Fort, N. C. announces plans to build 42 miles of new, accessible trails for people of all abilities and backgrounds in **Pisgah National Forest**. The **U.S. Forest Service** has formally approved the plans, and funding for construction of the first six miles of the system has been provided by the **Dogwood Health Trust**. Groundbreaking on the **Old Fort Trails Project** will begin in January 2022 and the first sections of trail and parking area are slated to open by late summer.

The Old Fort Trails Project is grounded in equity, supported by a grassroots effort and widespread citizen participation, to provide opportunities for all users in an accessible, sustainable, and connected trail system in national forest lands surrounding Old Fort, N.C.

The first concepts for the trail system emerged out of a trail maintenance and advocacy group called the [G5 Trail Collective](#). What began as conversations between traditional users and the Pisgah National Forest's Grandfather Ranger District quickly picked up momentum in 2019 when the project was embraced by a diverse coalition of not-for-profit groups, individual citizens, and employers in Old Fort that had gathered to focus on equitable development in the town under the leadership of People on the Move for Old Fort and the West Marion Community Forum. After just two years, trail construction starts immediately.

The coalition includes:

People on the Move for Old Fort, a Black led community collaboration group from the Old Fort Community Forum organized to address community engagement and build interest in both civic and economic challenges facing the town of Old Fort that grew out of the West Marion Community Forum;



MEDIA CONTACT:
Marisa Dobrot
Verde Brand Communications
marisa@verdepr.com
505.917.5866

The G5 Trail Collective, organized under Camp Grier, is a non-profit partnership with the U.S. Forest Service Grandfather Ranger District to build community connections to the Pisgah National Forest through collaboration, trail development, and maintenance on public lands;

Eagle Market Streets Development, a not for profit, but for public benefit, community development corporation whose mission is to develop people, property, and businesses in communities of color across North Carolina;

The Grandfather Ranger District, the local management unit of the Pisgah National Forest, spanning from the Buncombe County line to Boone, N.C, dedicated to increasing sustainability and accessibility of its trail systems on the iconic landscapes it covers including the lands surrounding Old Fort;

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Texas Tech, the university partners that bring community engaged archaeology to the project that speak to the deep history of Native American societies, colonial settlement, railroad and timber development, African American communities, and others whose lifeways have left recoverable traces in and around the National Forest;

Camp Grier, a non-profit organization that began in Old Fort 70 years ago and has been focused on introducing young people of all backgrounds to the outdoors for more than 50 years, offering more than 100 scholarships each year and removing barriers to outdoor access through summer and year-round programs;

Kitsbow Cycling Apparel, an apparel brand based in Old Fort that has brought careers and jobs in manufacturing back to the area, while also dedicated to improving Old Fort for the community's benefit; and

McDowell Technical Community College, the local educational resource that partnered to launch a trail construction and sustainability program in Old Fort to grow professionals in the trail building industry and train volunteers, trail managers, and local citizens in trail maintenance.

The coalition is led by: **Lavita Logan** the Project Coordinator for People on the Move for Old Fort, **Stephanie Swepson Twitty** the CEO of Eagle Market Streets Development Corporation,



MEDIA CONTACT:
Marisa Dobrot
Verde Brand Communications
marisa@verdepr.com
505.917.5866

Jason McDougald the Executive Director of Camp Grier, and **Lisa Jennings** the Recreation Program Manager for the Grandfather Ranger District on Pisgah National Forest.

Lisa Jennings of the U.S. Forest Service explained, “The Old Fort Trails project is more than new trails -- it is a result of what can happen when we dream big together and intentionally engage everyone in the community in caring for their public lands. This model for community engagement represents a new trail system in the Pisgah National Forest that has been planned, designed, and built with broad community input from the very beginning and continuing throughout the project.”

A series of open community forums were held to both solicit input, and present tentative, draft trail designs. Feedback was frequent and in-depth, and at each step the input changed the plan, so that the final version approved today by the U.S. Forest Service is not the product of experts and consultants but the community of users in and around Old Fort specifying what they need and want in order to lower barriers and access the forest.

Initial funding for the first phase of planning this ambitious project was funded by People on the Move for Old Fort, IMBA, Kitsbow, and other private citizens for a total of more than \$200,000. However, more funding was needed to begin construction on the first miles of trail.

The G5 Trail Collective was recently awarded \$489,800 from the Dogwood Health Trust to further equitable access to the trail system and improve the economy in Old Fort. This will fund the construction of approximately 6 miles of multi-use trails by August 2022, as well as a parking lot, project management, signage, and outreach to engage a diversity of trail users.

“We are delighted to support community-driven projects that improve healthy lifestyles for residents, bolster the local economy, and attract careers and jobs to Western North Carolina – and that align so closely with our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion,” stated Dr. Susan Mims, interim CEO of Dogwood Health Trust.

“Even without the first foot of trail yet built, this project already proves how a love for the outdoors brings people together from very different backgrounds and cultures, for a common purpose and for the joy of being in nature,” explained Lavita Logan, community leader and Project Coordinator for People on the Move for Old Fort.

“This started as a discussion of how to give users in the forest a way to get from the amazing backcountry trails into downtown Old Fort. Through community engagement efforts, this initial



MEDIA CONTACT:
Marisa Dobrot
Verde Brand Communications
marisa@verdepr.com
505.917.5866

concept has expanded into a plan for 42 miles of new trail. That is the power of community involvement,” noted Jason McDougald, Executive Director of Camp Grier. “We’ve touched something in the community that is bigger than any one of us, and has the power to bring people together around something that is fundamental to our health and well being.”

More than 110 jobs and careers have bloomed in the past two years because of the existing trails and the promise of additional recreation use, all within walking and biking distance from the Old Fort downtown on 70,000+ acres of public lands that surround the town. In addition to the construction funds awarded to the G5 Trail Collective, Eagle Market Street Development Corporation was awarded \$280,000 by the Dogwood Health Trust to expand services in Old Fort to support small business and equitable development.

Stephanie Swepson Twitty, CEO of Eagle Market Streets Development Corporation, stated, “Not only is this project an improvement for our public lands, giving people more ways to get into the forest and enjoy it, but also it helps illuminate the tremendous opportunities for jobs and careers. We must look at the needs holistically, addressing local infrastructure and inclusive housing, as well as supporting local businesses and communities of color to participate in economic development that leads to generational wealth and economic mobility. These are the first steps in a sustainable economy and conscious growth of our town.”

The coalition leaders are committed to continuing the community-led process as the project moves into construction. Community meetings are scheduled next month. Sign up [here](#) to participate in the **December 2, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.** and [here](#) for the **December 9, 2021 12:30 p.m.** virtual sessions. For more information on the trails and ways to volunteer and get involved, please visit the [G5 Trail Collective Website](#).

###

About Dogwood Health Trust

Dogwood Health Trust is a private foundation based in Asheville, North Carolina with the sole purpose of dramatically improving the health and well-being of all people and communities of 18 counties and the Qualla Boundary in Western North Carolina. Dogwood Health Trust focuses on innovative and equitable ways to address the many factors that contribute to overall health and wellness. With a focus on housing, education, economic opportunity and access to care and health resources, Dogwood Health Trust works to create a Western North Carolina where every generation can live, learn, earn and thrive, with dignity and opportunity for all, no exceptions. To learn more, please visit www.dht.org.



MEDIA CONTACT:
Marisa Dobrot
Verde Brand Communications
marisa@verdepr.com
505.917.5866

About People on the Move for Old Fort

People on the Move for Old Fort is a group formed under the West Marion Community Forum, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit which works to form partnerships between grassroots and institutional leaders to address shared challenges; policy changes at the city, county, and town of Old Fort related to housing and transportation; more unity across race and class; cultural shifts related to healthy eating and active living; and better access to existing resources.

About The G5 Trail Collective

The G5 Trail Collective is a 501-c3 non-profit initiative powered by Camp Grier in partnership with the USFS, the five counties that make up the Grandfather Ranger District of Pisgah National Forest, local communities, and the recreational trail user groups. The G5 Collective was conceived as a solution to the lack of funding for trail maintenance and trail development projects in the Grandfather District. The working group recognized that the district is a tremendous asset and could be a significant force to help build healthy and economically vibrant rural communities.

About Eagle Market Streets Development

Eagle Market Streets Development Corporation, CDC's mission is to develop people, property, and business and envision economic and social justice for all. Guided by our mission Eagle Market Streets Development Corporation's vision is to bring the opportunity for economic and social independence to the low-to-moderate income community. We focus on property development, economic business and workforce development.

About The Grandfather Ranger District

The lands that make up the Grandfather Ranger District, part of the Pisgah National Forest, are those public lands that run from the McDowell/Buncombe county line near Ridgecrest just east of Asheville over to US 321 between Lenoir and Blowing Rock. The Blue Ridge Parkway forms the northern boundary of the district. The Grandfather Ranger District began under the Weeks Act with the purchase of an 8,100-acre tract in 1912, the first tract of national forest land in the Eastern US. Now, the district covers close to 200,000 acres including Linville Gorge Wilderness and the Wilson Creek Wild and Scenic River.

About Camp Grier

The mission of Camp Grier is to provide opportunities for connection, service, celebration, and renewal in nature. We talk a lot at camp about "common ground" or places and things that we all share as part of humanity. The outdoors provides vital "common ground" that we all need for our physical, psychological, emotional, and social health and it also provides one of the last "common" spaces that we all share. Kids today spend on average between 4 and 7 minutes



MEDIA CONTACT:
Marisa Dobrot
Verde Brand Communications
marisa@verdepr.com
505.917.5866

outside in unstructured play each day. At the same time our neighborhoods, churches, and schools are more segregated than ever. We like to say that, "no matter where you're from it's not like camp."

About Kitsbow

Relocating its manufacturing to Old Fort, North Carolina in 2019, Kitsbow is committed to a Just in Time manufacturing model, minimizing waste and maximizing flexibility to serve the customer. All products are packaged in compostable packaging, as well as all shipping materials, ready to return to the Earth in your own garden. Kitsbow already makes over 75% of its products in the USA and is on track to be making all of its products in-house in 2021. Kitsbow is a Bicycle Friendly Business, designated at the highest level (Platinum) by [The League of American Bicyclists](#).

About McDowell Technical Community College

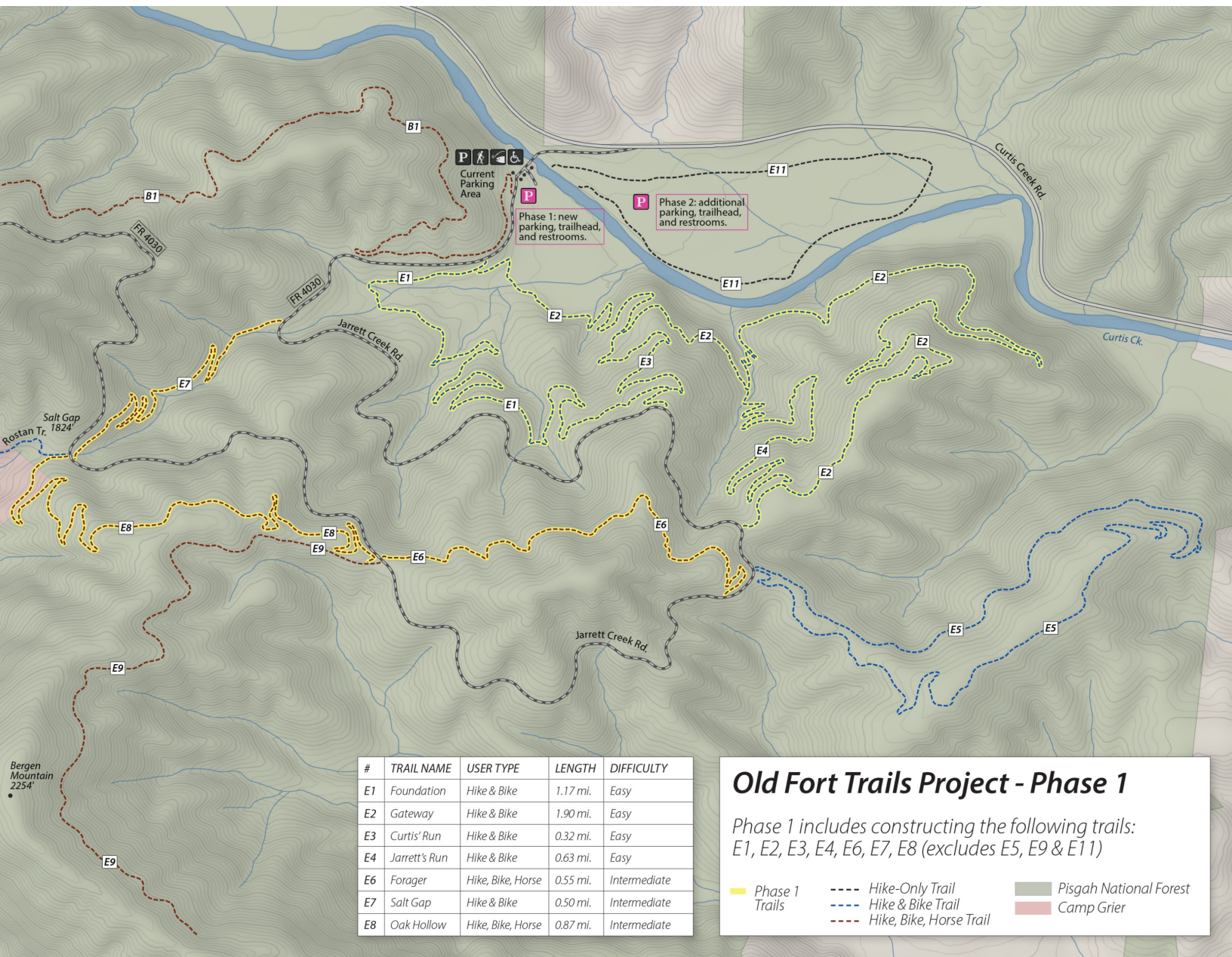
McDowell Technical Community College (MTCC) is a member of the North Carolina Community College System, dedicated to providing student-centered accessible learning. MTCC enriches the local community with access to affordable, high-quality, lifelong learning opportunities that promote workforce development. Founded in 1964 in Marion, NC, MTCC plans to open a satellite workforce training location in Old Fort in 2022 to house its Trail Construction and Sustainability program.

About UNC Chapel Hill

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the nation's first public university, serves North Carolina, the United States, and the world through teaching, research, and public service. The University's mission is to serve as a center for research, scholarship, and creativity and to teach a diverse community of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students to become the next generation of leaders.

About Texas Tech

As a public research university, Texas Tech advances knowledge through innovative and creative teaching, research and scholarship. The university is dedicated to student success by preparing learners to be ethical leaders for a diverse and globally competitive workforce. The university is committed to enhancing the cultural and economic development of the state, nation and world.



#	TRAIL NAME	USER TYPE	LENGTH	DIFFICULTY
E1	Foundation	Hike & Bike	1.17 mi.	Easy
E2	Gateway	Hike & Bike	1.90 mi.	Easy
E3	Curtis' Run	Hike & Bike	0.32 mi.	Easy
E4	Jarrett's Run	Hike & Bike	0.63 mi.	Easy
E6	Forager	Hike, Bike, Horse	0.55 mi.	Intermediate
E7	Salt Gap	Hike & Bike	0.50 mi.	Intermediate
E8	Oak Hollow	Hike, Bike, Horse	0.87 mi.	Intermediate

Old Fort Trails Project - Phase 1

Phase 1 includes constructing the following trails:
E1, E2, E3, E4, E6, E7, E8 (excludes E5, E9 & E11)

- Phase 1 Trails
- Hike-Only Trail
- Hike & Bike Trail
- Hike, Bike, Horse Trail
- Pisgah National Forest
- Camp Grier

PHASE 1 TRAIL DESCRIPTIONS

FOUNDATION (E1)

This 1.17 mile MTB Optimized flow trail provides an entry level experience for all riders. It is designed to be rideable in both directions as either a climb to E3 or a descent from Jarrett Creek Rd. The entire trail length is designed for adaptive MTBs. This will be the easiest trail in the system. Named after the old home foundation it passes by, this trail climbs from open bottom-land forests back to Jarrett Creek road crossing many drainages.

GATEWAY (E2)

This 1.9 mile MTB Optimized trail provides a longer, cross-country experience and should define “Pisgah Easy”: a flow trail with few obstacles but a back-country feel that takes users across creeks, through valleys, along cliffs above Curtis Creek, and up an open piney ridge back to Jarrett Creek Road. It is Adaptive MTB accessible to the intersection with E3. The Gateway Trail is the new users entry way to riding Pisgah trails. Alternate lines may be used in some areas to add challenge.

CURTIS’ RUN (E3)

This 0.32 mile connector is a designed downhill trail that follows a series of long, flowing switchbacks through dense rhododendron from E1 to E2. It should be designed to optimize fun for the beginning user, with in sloped turns and accentuated drains. The entire trail is Adaptive MTB accessible.

JARRETT’S RUN (E4)

This 0.62 mile connector is optimized for downhill travel, but can also be used as a climbing connector to create a shorter loop. Beginning as long switchbacks through laurel from Jarrett Creek road, the trail contours around a ridge and then drops down into a steep valley. The trail crosses a creek and joins E2 in an open wooded area.

FORAGER (E6)

This 0.55 mile multi-use trail follows the contours along a bend in Jarrett Creek road. Leaving Jarrett Creek road, the trail flows through coves, crossing a ridge with winter views and descending back to Jarrett Creek where trail E8 begins. The Forager trail is named after the abundance of edible mushrooms in the coves along the trail and the history of native American use in the project area.

SALT GAP (E7)


























This 0.5 mile trail multi-use trail generally follows a social trail along a creek to connect from lower Jarrett Creek road to Salt Gap and the Camp Grier connector (Rostan Trail). The flag line only uses approximately 500 feet of existing trail. In order to make this important connection on a more sustainable grade, the new trail incorporates switchbacks to climb higher on the side slope and connects back to the old trail bed just before rejoining Jarrett Creek road. This higher position provides great views into the valley.

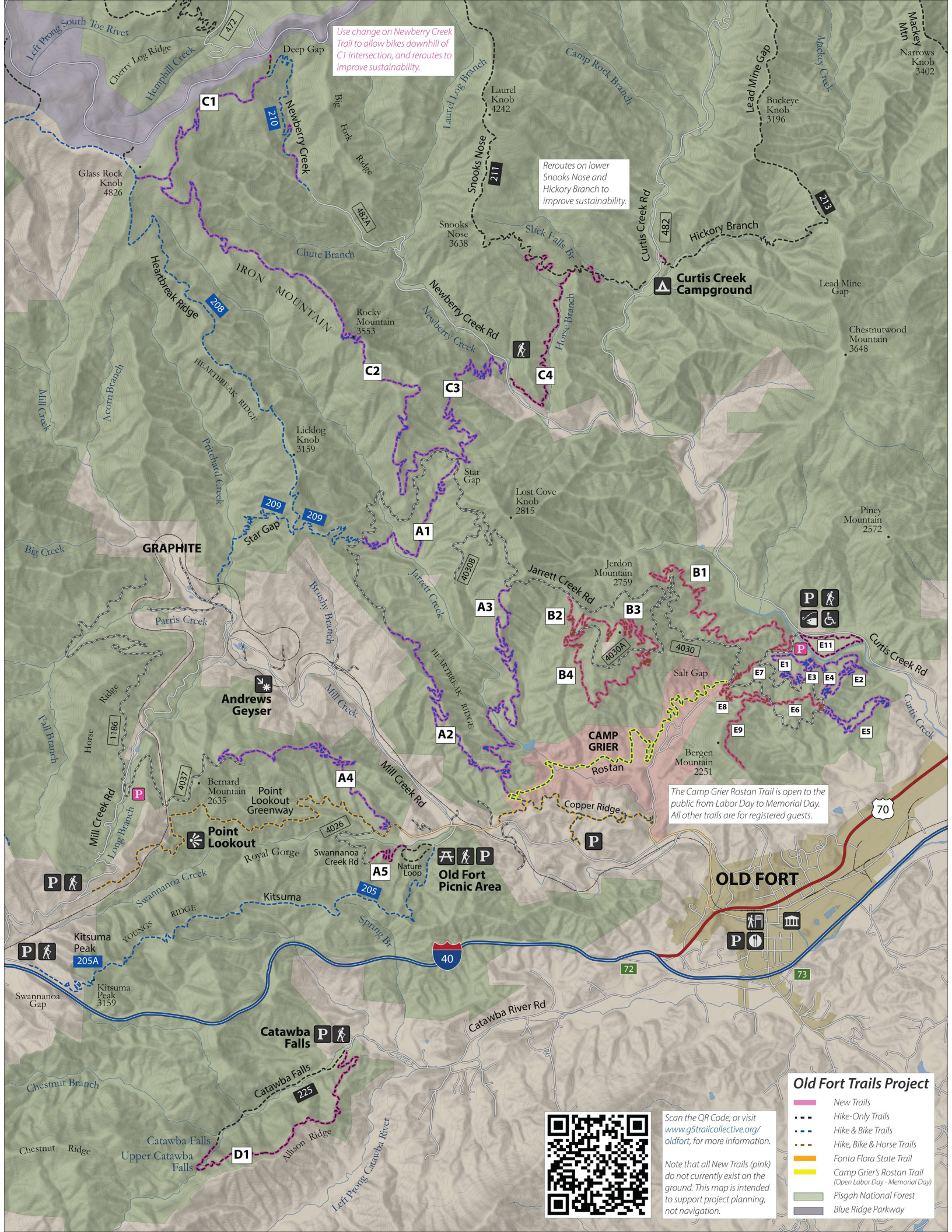
OAK HOLLOW (E8)

This 0.87 mile trail parallels Jarrett Creek road, providing a singletrack connection from E6 to E7 and the Rostan Trail. The trail gently climbs through open woodlands, skirting just below a prominent ridge and descending gently through giant rhododendron, eventually switching back down the slope to connect back to Jarrett Creek road. Oak Hollow trail is named after a prominent chestnut oak near a curve in the trail just below the ridge.

Old Fort Trails Project

Trails Table

TRAIL ID	USER TYPE	LENGTH (MI)	DIFFICULTY	Style
A1		1.84	Most Difficult	Cross-Country
A2		2.7	More Difficult	Downhill
A3		3.4	More Difficult	Cross-Country
A4		3.03	More Difficult	Downhill
A5		0.5	More Difficult	Hiking
B1		2.95	More Difficult	Cross-Country
B2		0.51	More Difficult	Cross-Country
B3		2.18	More Difficult	Cross-Country
B4		2.31	More Difficult	Cross-Country
C1		1.47	Most Difficult	Cross-Country
C2		5.68	Most Difficult	Cross-Country
C3		2.64	Most Difficult	Cross-Country
C4		1.53	More Difficult	Hiking
D1		2.21	More Difficult	Hiking
E1		1.17	Less Difficult	MTB Optimized
E2		1.9	Less Difficult	MTB Optimized
E3		0.32	Less Difficult	Downhill
E4		0.63	Less Difficult	MTB Optimized
E5		1.53	Less Difficult	MTB Optimized
E6		0.55	More Difficult	Cross-Country
E7		0.5	More Difficult	Cross-Country
E8		0.87	More Difficult	Cross-Country
E9		0.82	More Difficult	Cross-Country
E11		0.95	Less Difficult	Hiking
E12		0.16	Less Difficult	Hiking



Use change on Newberry Creek Trail to allow bikes downhill of C1 intersection, and reroutes to improve sustainability.

Reroutes on lower Snooks Nose and Hickory Branch to improve sustainability.

The Camp Grier Rostan Trail is open to the public from Labor Day to Memorial Day. All other trails are for registered guests.

- ### Old Fort Trails Project
- New Trails
 - - - Hike-Only Trails
 - - - Hike & Bike Trails
 - - - Hike, Bike & Horse Trails
 - Fonta Flora State Trail
 - Camp Grier's Rostan Trail (Open Labor Day - Memorial Day)
 - Pisgah National Forest
 - Blue Ridge Parkway



Scan the QR Code, or visit www.gstrailcollective.org/oldfort, for more information.

Note that all New Trails (pink) do not currently exist on the ground. This map is intended to support project planning, not navigation.