

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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SENATE BILL DRS15388-MH-117

Short Title: Authorize First Broad River State Trail. (Public)

Sponsors: Senator Alexander (Primary Sponsor).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE FIRST BROAD RIVER STATE TRAIL.

3 Whereas, the First Broad River has rich cultural, historical, natural, economic, and
4 recreational value to the people of Cleveland and Rutherford Counties as well as all of North
5 Carolina's citizens; and

6 Whereas, the First Broad River is the central defining geological feature in Cleveland
7 County, entering the county in its northwest corner and continuing south through Shelby before
8 joining the Broad River just above the South Carolina state line; and

9 Whereas, the headwaters of the First Broad River extend into the 22,000 acre South
10 Mountains Game Lands and surrounding South Mountains State Park. The 17,800 acre Rollins
11 Tract within the South Mountains Game Lands was one of the largest conservation acquisitions
12 in North Carolina history and encompasses areas categorized as a nationally significant natural
13 area by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Trust Fund; and

14 Whereas, plant species like hemlock, mountain laurel, and rhododendron typically
15 found only at higher elevations of western North Carolina are prevalent throughout the river
16 basin; and

17 Whereas, the scenic, historic, and recreation resources of the First Broad River can be
18 accessed within an hour or less of travel time from the Charlotte, North Carolina, and the
19 Greenville-Spartanburg, South Carolina, metropolitan areas, and thus would attract outdoor
20 enthusiasts from these two rapidly growing metropolitan regions with a combined population of
21 over 3.5 million, helping grow the outdoor and tourism economy of Cleveland and Rutherford
22 Counties; and

23 Whereas, the First Broad River, spanning more than 65 miles and connecting the
24 communities of Golden Valley, Moriah, Delight, Lawndale, Zion, and Shelby, has only four
25 public access points and the establishment of a State Trail would provide focus and greater
26 funding opportunities to increase the number of access points along the River; and

27 Whereas, Cleveland and Rutherford Counties and the local governments in those
28 counties are already making sizable investments to enhance outdoor recreation, such as the
29 Stagecoach Greenway and the Broad River Greenway. These investments provide recreation for
30 the citizens of the area and attract tourism from surrounding areas, which creates enhanced
31 opportunities for local businesses providing recreational services, such as tubing trip providers
32 and shuttle services for paddlers; Now, therefore,
33 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

34 **SECTION 1.(a)** The General Assembly authorizes the Department of Natural and
35 Cultural Resources to add the First Broad River Trail in Cleveland and Rutherford Counties
36 between the River's head of navigation in Golden Valley in Rutherford County and the River's



1 confluence with the Broad River in Cleveland County to the State Parks System as a State Trail,
2 as provided in G.S. 143B-135.54(b).

3 **SECTION 1.(b)** The Department shall support, promote, encourage, and facilitate
4 the establishment of trail segments on State park lands and on lands of other federal, State, local,
5 and private landowners. On segments of those State Trails that cross property controlled by
6 agencies or owners other than the Department's Division of Parks and Recreation, the laws, rules,
7 and policies of those agencies or owners shall govern the use of the property.

8 **SECTION 1.(c)** The requirement of G.S. 143B-135.54(b) that additions be
9 accompanied by adequate appropriations for land acquisition, development, and operations shall
10 not apply to the authorization set forth in this section; provided, however, that the State may
11 receive donations of appropriate land and may purchase other needed lands for the First Broad
12 River State Trail with existing funds in the North Carolina Land and Water Fund, the Complete
13 the Trails Fund, the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the federal Land and Water Conservation
14 Fund, and other available sources of funding.

15 **SECTION 2.** There is appropriated the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars
16 (\$25,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year to the Department of Natural and
17 Cultural Resources for public education and system planning efforts related to the authorization
18 of the First Broad River Trail by this act.

19 **SECTION 3.** Section 2 of this act becomes effective July 1, 2026. The remainder of
20 this act is effective when it becomes law.