

Trails unveiled at county landfill

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A nearly 300-acre trail complex debuted at a ribbon-cutting ceremony Sunday afternoon sponsored by the Davidson County Horsemen's Association and the Regional Equine Information Network Systems, or REINS, volunteers.

The site, known as the Hamby Creek Trails, is off Lower Lake Road on a buffer area near a retired section of the Davidson County Landfill.

The Hamby Creek Trails offer a unique opportunity for horseback riders, hikers, bikers and general outdoor enthusiasts to walk or ride over 20 trails that stretch approximately five miles.

The trails, the first of their kind in North Carolina, received permission to be constructed by the Davidson County Board of Commissioners, the Davidson County Parks and Recreation Department and the N.C. Department of Environmental and Natural Resources, Waste Management Division.

Volunteers from the horsemen's association completely built the trails at no cost to county taxpayers. Members from the Davidson County Foundation for Tourism Recreation Investment Partnership (TRIP) also helped with the trails.

Klynt Nifong, president of the horsemen's association and a horse enthusiast, was excited to see the trails as a finished product after two years of discussion.

"This is great," Nifong said. "This is the only recreation, horseback and hiking trails that have been done on landfill land in the state. We hope this blossoms out. It's been a great challenge, but all the people have been so wonderful in helping."

Doug Meredith, a member of the board of directors of the horsemen's association, said the trails would not be possible without volunteer work.

Meredith said volunteers worked about 600 hours to make the trails a reality.

"Our horse association has done most of the work," Meredith said. "This was a lot of hard work, blazing the trails; a lot of our members really pitched in."

Meredith also praised the county and state government for granting permission for his association to take on the project.

"We learned a lot about patience," Meredith joked. "We had to get approval from our commissioners and then from there we had to get state approval because this is an environmental area. We've got some really good people in the government. They're professional, but they are also helpful."

Commissioner Billy Joe Kepley had the honor of cutting the ribbon and said he was happy the county had a place for folks to ride horses and enjoy nature.

"I'm probably as excited as the participants and the people that have horses here today," Kepley said. "I tried for years to find people a place to ride (in the county). It dawned on us that we had 500 acres out at the landfill that's got a buffer all the way around it, and most of it's undeveloped and that would be the perfect place."

Welcome resident Nolan Smith attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony with his 4-year-old granddaughter, Caroline.

Nolan said he has been riding horses for 55 years, and Caroline was in her third year of riding. He

looks forward to having trails to ride in his own back yard.

“We usually would go to southwestern Virginia to ride,” said Smith of the 100-mile commute to reach the trails. “But it’s great to have this (trails) here and not just for us but for hikers and bikers as well.”

The trails officially open to the public on April 1, and the complex will be open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

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