

Our Mission: To develop a system of walking and hiking trails that protect and connect the natural settings and historic sites of the Highlands Plateau.



Highlands Greenway News

The Highlands Plateau Greenway
 A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization
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There is no doubt that 2020 has been a very challenging year. The COVID 19 pandemic has dramatically affected our lives. Despite the challenges that have been presented this year, the dedicated volunteers of the Greenway have continued to make the Greenway a safer, better trail for our community. Our trail volunteers devoted over 525 hours on 23 different work days to help with multiple projects, including the completion of a new entrance and trail on Oak Street, the installation of a new pollinator garden, rerouting of the trail near Oak Lane, and beginning work on a new loop trail in the Kelsey Preserve at the end of 5th Street. In addition, volunteers maintained the trail system by cutting back vegetation, installing new hand rails, and replacing old ones. We are so thankful for our many volunteers, donors, and supporting organizations who keep the Greenway Trail system an important part of the Highlands community. We hope you will join our monthly work days and become a part of the team.

Pollinator Partnership



In June, a group of volunteers created a new pollinator garden at the Oak Street entrance.



Goals for 2021

Launch our new website,
 improve trail signage,
 and build Kelsey Preserve loop trail



Remembering Hillrie

By Ran Shaffner

The Highlands Plateau Greenway owes much of its existence to Hillrie Quin, who passed away at a great loss to us on March 12, 2020. Having just settled in Highlands in 2003, Hillrie was soon to become cofounder of today's Greenway and commenced immediately to establish its foundation. Between 2006 and 2009 he single-handedly negotiated grants as large as \$100,000 each from the N.C. Department of Environmental and Natural Resources and the Highlands Town Council. He secured National Park Service funding for equipment, construction, and maintenance of a proposed new trail.

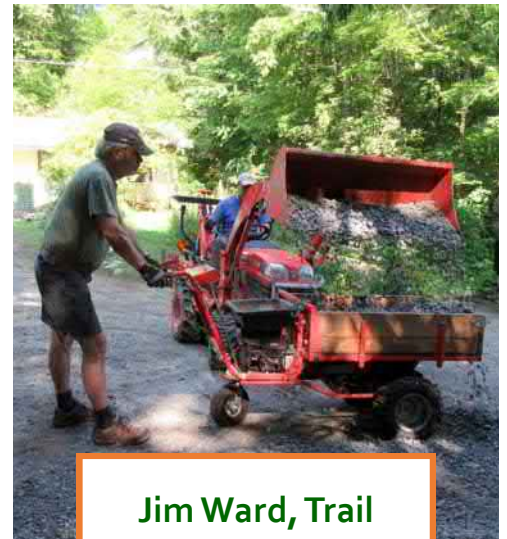
Under his supervision volunteers began restoring an old half-mile trail and constructing a new half-mile loop through the Town Recreation Park. In 2009 work began on a new loop trail through Rhododendron Park, a large forested section of Big Bear Pen Mountain, which he and his wife Beverly had donated to the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust.

Hillrie encouraged partnerships between the Greenway and the Highlands Biological Station, Land Trust, Bascom, and Town of Highlands. Since 2007, volunteers have devoted over 7,100 hours to the trail's construction. He himself contributed 560 hours to working on the trail.

The completed trail now descends from Sunset Rock, the granitic dome overlooking the town; through the Botanical Garden, a living museum of labeled native plants; up Big Bear Pen Mountain through switchbacks to a panoramic view of the mountains surrounding Highlands; through an old-growth forest along the 125-year-old Kelsey Trail, the oldest trail in town; across Mill Creek beneath towering hemlocks and pines; to the Bascom along a sculptured trail of native flora, a brook, and a waterfall; through a charming neighborhood along Oak Lane, and ending at Mirror Lake with a beautiful open view of the water.

The people of Highlands owe their undying thanks, not exclusively but significantly, to Hillrie Quin for his strong vision, competency, facility for networking and coordinating multiple organizations, leadership in goal-oriented and task-directed individual projects, and inspiration and encouragement in promoting the Greenway Trail. In 2010 the U.S. Secretary of Interior officially awarded the Highlands Plateau Greenway the honored title: National Recreation Trail, one of over 1,000 trails nationwide that encourage people of all ages to get outside and use trails for exercise and exploration.

Hillrie himself is no stranger to such awards. But in all modesty he never mentioned any of his considerable accomplishments. Before he came to Highlands, the Georgia Environmental Council had given him its Lifetime Achievement Award; the Georgia Wildlife Federation, its Career Achievement in Conservation Award; the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club, its Trail Worker of the Year Award; and he was recipient of the Volunteer in the Forest Award, the National Wetlands Protection Award for Outstanding Wetlands Program Development, and a Certificate of Appreciation from the Georgia Forestry Commission for work in revising its Best Management Practices for Forestry. In 2010 he was honored by American Trails with its State Trail Worker Award for North Carolina.



Jim Ward, Trail Worker of the year!

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