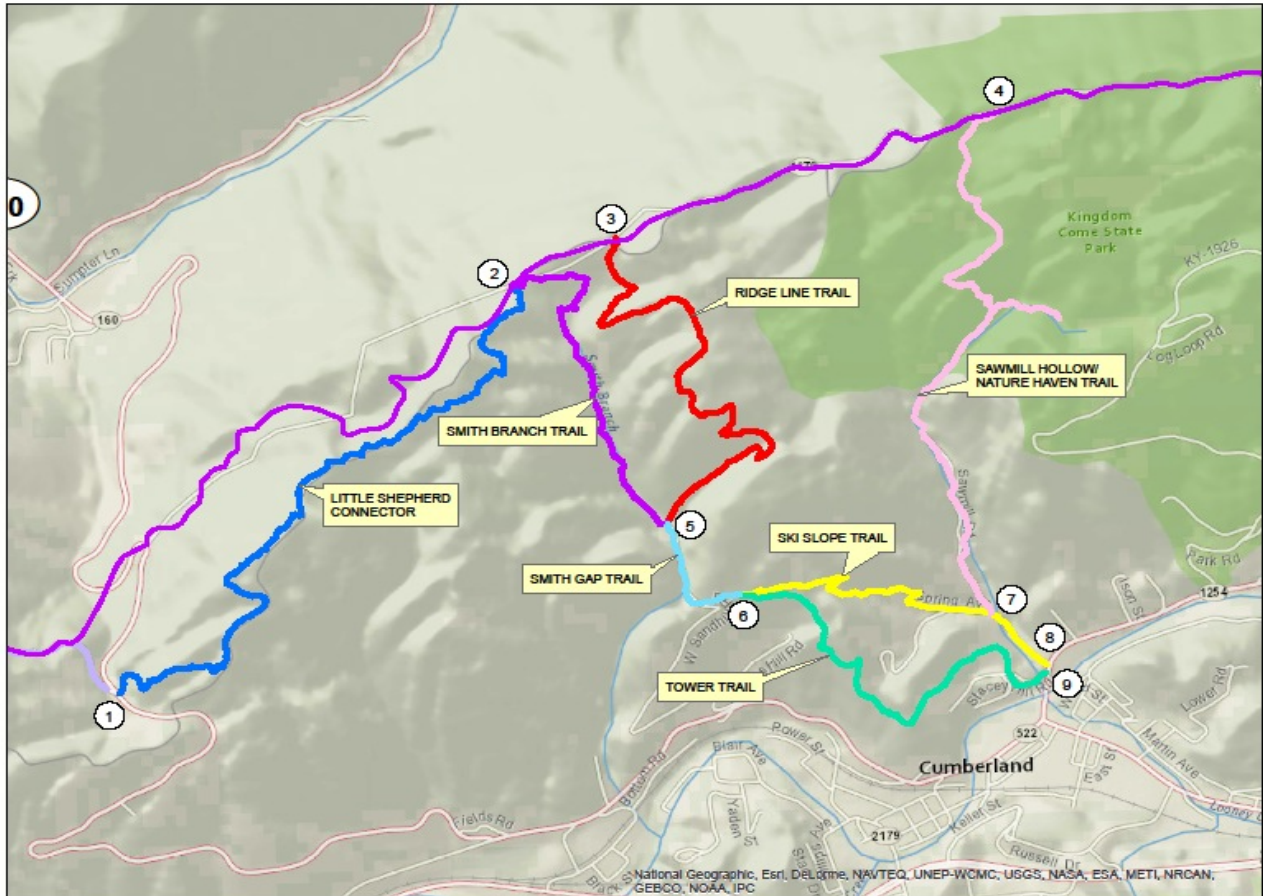


CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

CHAPTER II Creating Connector Trails

CONNECTING KINGDOM COME STATE PARK TO THE CITY OF CUMBERLAND

Several trail options connecting the State Park to the community are provided in this chapter. The attributes of each proposed routes such as ease of construction, shared-use potential, unique features, and other factors have been reviewed to help determine preference. In a few cases a proposed route may be the only one recommended to connect the bottom to the top due to the physical features and challenges presented in traversing the mountain.



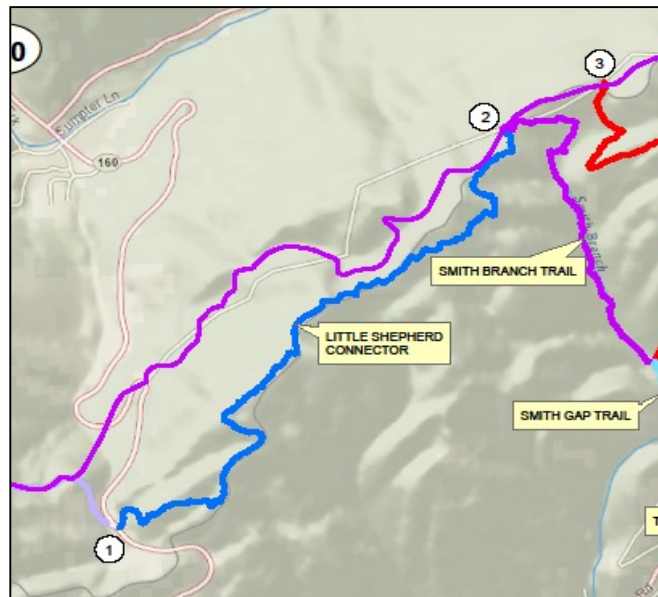
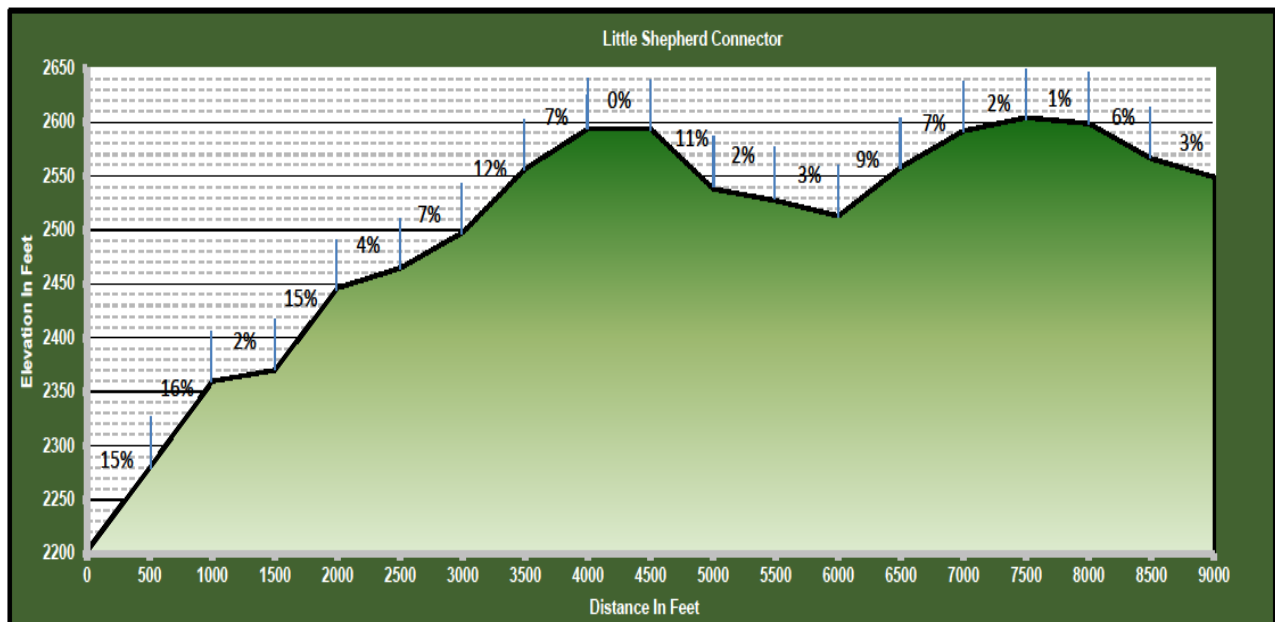
1. **The Little Shepherd Connector** – connects the Little Shepherd Trail at Hwy 160 to Kingdom Come State Park.
2. **Smith Branch Trail** – comes off Little Shepherd Trail following an old road down to Smith Gap Trail. Stays primarily on one landowner’s property.
3. **The Ridge Line Trail** – an alternative to Smith Branch offering more scenic views from the top of the ridge.
4. **Sawmill Hollow Nature Haven Trail** – starts at Kingdom Come State Park and follows first Nature Haven Trail then Sawmill Hollow where it parallels Spring Avenue and comes out on KY 1254.
5. **Smith Gap Trail** – connects Smith Branch and Ridge Line Trails to Tower and Ski Slope Trails through one landowner’s property.
6. **Tower Trail** – starts at Stacey Hill Road, turns right at Wells Cemetery and follows ridge to Smith Gap Trail.
7. **Ski Slope Trail** – travels up Spring Avenue then Sawmill Hollow Road and continues westerly eventually connecting to Smith Gap Trail. Due to the steep terrain, road surface, and route through residential area, this trail is discouraged except as possibly a hiking trail.

CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

CONNECTOR TRAILS OPTIONS

The Little Shepherd Connector

This trail runs along the spine of the mountain and connects the Little Shepherd trail at Highway 160 to the Kingdom Come State Park. This trail is 1.70 miles long and involves three property owners. The overall slope of this trail is a little less than 4% grade with the steepest section being around 15-16% but only for 1000 feet. The remainder of this route varies from 12-1%. This section of trail is proposed to be a joint use trail with hikers, horses and bikes and will share the same corridor as the Pine Mountain State Scenic Trail. The trail system will be constructed as parallel tracts with each trail being separated thus enabling each user group to enjoy their trail unobstructed by the other user group. Three properties were crossed on this proposed route. See Appendix K for list of property owners.



CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Little Shepherd Connector Trail

The Little Shepherd Connector Trail runs from Route 1679 where the Smith Branch Trail begins. This trail generally runs along the ridge southwest towards where Route 160 and the gravel section of the Little Shepherd trail intersect.



The trail begins on the top of the ridge line and runs a fairly gentle grade until it gets to the first point. The trail will then go around the side of the hill through a break in the rock line and eventually get back on to the ridge line on the other side of the point.



The trail will stay just south of the top of the ridge line for approximately 3300 feet. The terrain is fairly flat and very conducive to trails.



There is one section that will have to navigate through another cliff line. There is a way to get through but it will take some work.



CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Just before the trail turns left and starts it's decent towards the road. It will run in to an old structure. We were not sure what it may have been used for. It was built out of metal and there were not any obvious roads leading to or away from the structure.



From this point the trail will meander off of the ridge down to the low gap where routes 160 and 1679 intersect.



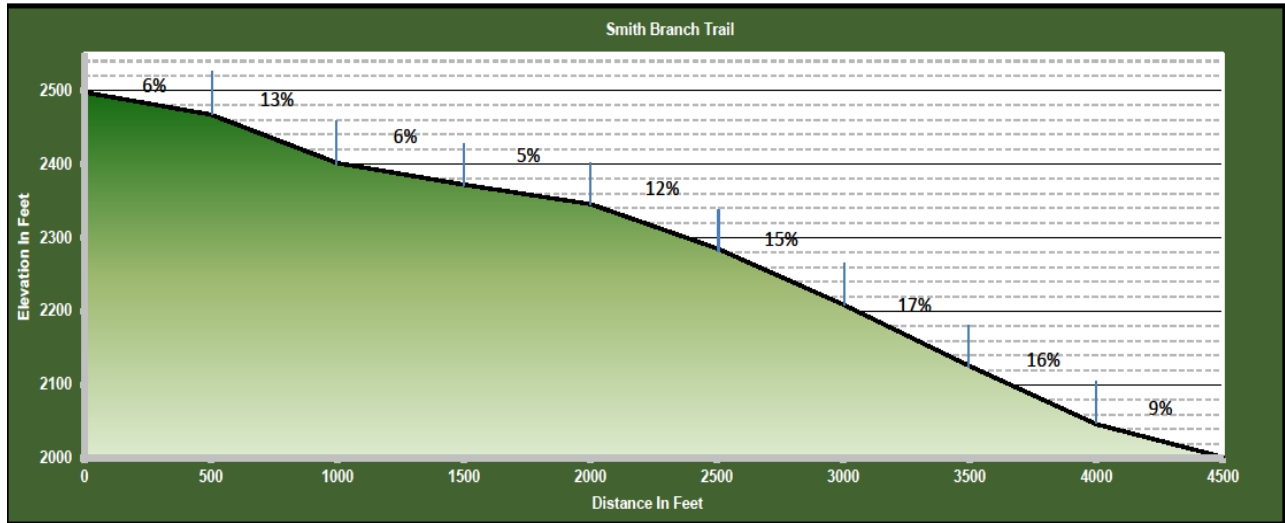
This is the view heading on to the gravel section of the Little Shepherd Trail that goes towards Putney.



CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Smith Branch Trail

The Smith Branch Trail will run from the Little Shepherd Trail (Route 1679) at the top of Pine Mountain down to Smith Gap Trail. This trail has an elevation change of 500 feet with an average slope of around 11%. The steepest portion of the trail ranges from 16 to 17% but only for approximately 1000 feet. The Smith Branch section will be a 0.9 mile, Class 3 Trail upon completion of construction. There are two property owners along this route that will need to be contacted. *See Appendix K for list of property owners.*



CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Smith Branch Trail Description

The trail leaves Route 1679 (Little Shepherd Trail) about 4900 feet west of the park boundary. It leaves the roadway by way of an old logging road heading southeast towards Cumberland.



About 1500 feet into the trail, the old logging road ends into a flat area at the head of a major hollow that leads off the mountain.



We were able to locate an old trail at this point that some of the locals had told us about. The trail allegedly led all the way down to the Short Arm Gangs gathering area. This trail was very grown up and hadn't been used in many years. It generally followed the creek down off of the mountain.



CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

This trail was by far the most scenic and historical in the fact that you were right in and along the unique rock formations and evidence of people traveling this old route from years past.



Some trail rerouting would be required to keep the trail tread out of the creek area and all of it would require substantial work to be usable. Even with these issues, this route as it exists closest meets grade requirements for equestrian trail use.



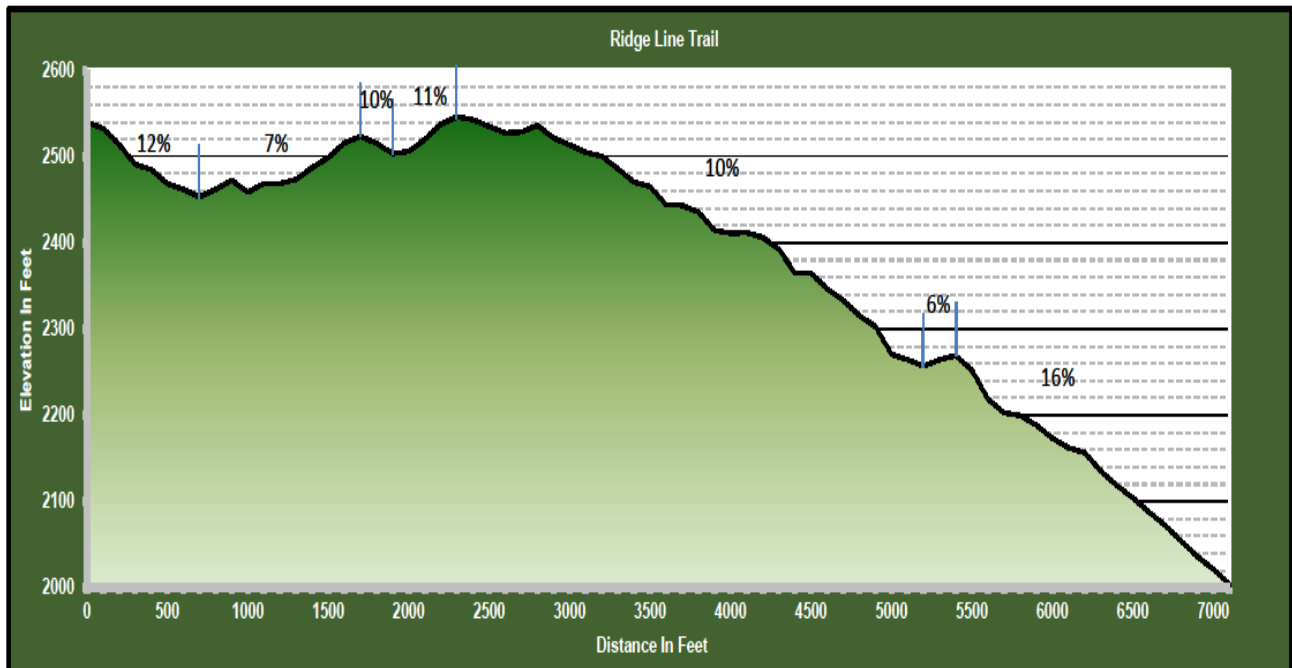
Both this trail and the Ridge Line Trail end at the Short Arm Gang's Motorcycle Club gathering area.



CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Ridge Line Trail

The Ridge Line trail is an alternate to the Smith Branch section. Ridge Line Trail is 1.5 miles long and ties the Little Shepherd Trail to Smith Gap Trail. It has an elevation change of 540 feet over 7000 feet for an average grade of less than 8% even though the first 2500 feet at the lower end averages 16%. This section will also be a Class 3 Trail upon completion. The two property owners along this route are the same owners as the Smith Branch section. See Appendix K for list of property owners.



CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Ridge Line Trail Description

This trail leaves Route 1679 (Little Shepherd Trail) about 3600 feet west of the park boundary. It starts out on the western slope of a point and runs down the mountain toward Cumberland. The proposed route runs along this side hill for a short time before it makes its way up onto the ridge line.



Note: This side of the mountain does have areas that are solid rock and completely barren of soil. In one section of the trail would need to run up onto the ridge line due a large rock outcropping that could not be passed any other way.



Once up on the ridge line, the trail would have to continue across the top of a large rock formation that is completely bare for several hundred feet. Both of these areas would be difficult to place a flat enough tread base adequate for horse trails.

Once back on the main spine of the point, the trail turns back south east towards Cumberland. This area is more conducive to trail construction because of the amount of topsoil and gradual grade.



CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

The only issue along this section of trail is that we did pass an upland marsh area. It is however avoidable and provides a unique feature along the trail.



The trail would follow this southeasterly track until it runs into a large vertical rock face that runs from the bottom of east drainage all the way across to the bottom of the west drainage. This rock face is approximately 30 feet in height. The eastern side of this point becomes very steep.



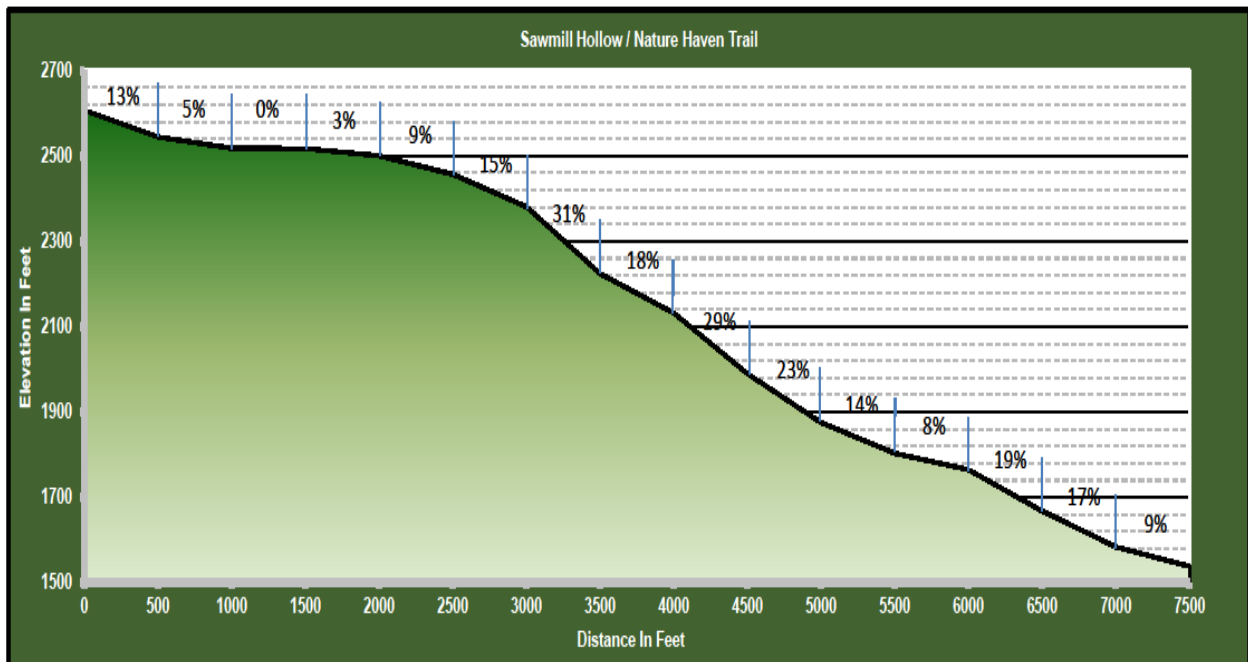
Heading west, there is a drainage that runs down toward the Short Arm Gang Property. There is also an old trail bed that leads all the way out to where this drainage converges into the main hollow. While the old trail exists, it is well over the 20% maximum for equine trail development. There is enough soil and the grade is gentle enough to add some switchbacks to lengthen the trail and as a result, lessen the grade making it passable by horses.



CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Sawmill Hollow / Nature Haven Trail

This route begins on the bottom of the mountain and would incorporate a small section of the Ski Slope Trail route it would then continue up the mountain along sawmill Hollow road into the park where it would tie into the Existing Nature Haven Trail which passes very near the Kingdom Come State Park Lake, this was a favorite route taken by the local residents to reach the lake during the warm summer days when a cool dip in the lake made it worth the walk. The total length of this route from the bottom to the top is 1.5 mile with an average slope of almost 15% with one section measuring in at 31%. This is the one route in this area that terminates in the park not far from the proposed overnight camping area. Eleven properties were identified along this route with one of those being the Kingdom Come State Park. *See Appendix K for list of property owners.*



CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Sawmill Hollow / Nature Haven Trail Description

This trail begins at the northwest end of the Nature Haven Trail inside Kingdom Come State Park. It follows the existing Nature Haven Trail down to a point near the lake.



This trail is part of the Kingdom Come hiking trail network. It is a Class 1 hiking trail as defined by the US Forest Service Handbook. Some of the attributes that defines this classification is the fact that the trail has a natural side slope and closely approaches a maximum grade of 40%.



Once the trail reaches the area of the lake, a local had told the Team of an old trail that was used by the town's people to access the lake years ago. We were able to locate this old trail and follow it down to Sawmill Hollow Rd.



This old trail was very grown up, steep and went along several bare rock sections.



CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Alternative routes through this watershed were explored but due to the vertical rock outcrop on the south side and the diagonal bare rock areas to the north, this was the only rock that showed any possibility.



The old trail eventually came out at a house at the end of Sawmill Hollow. There was barely enough room to walk between the vehicle and house.



From this point the trail traffic would have to go up or down a very steep (30% +) blacktop single lane road in order to access town. Due to numerous reasons, this trail would be best designated for hikers only.



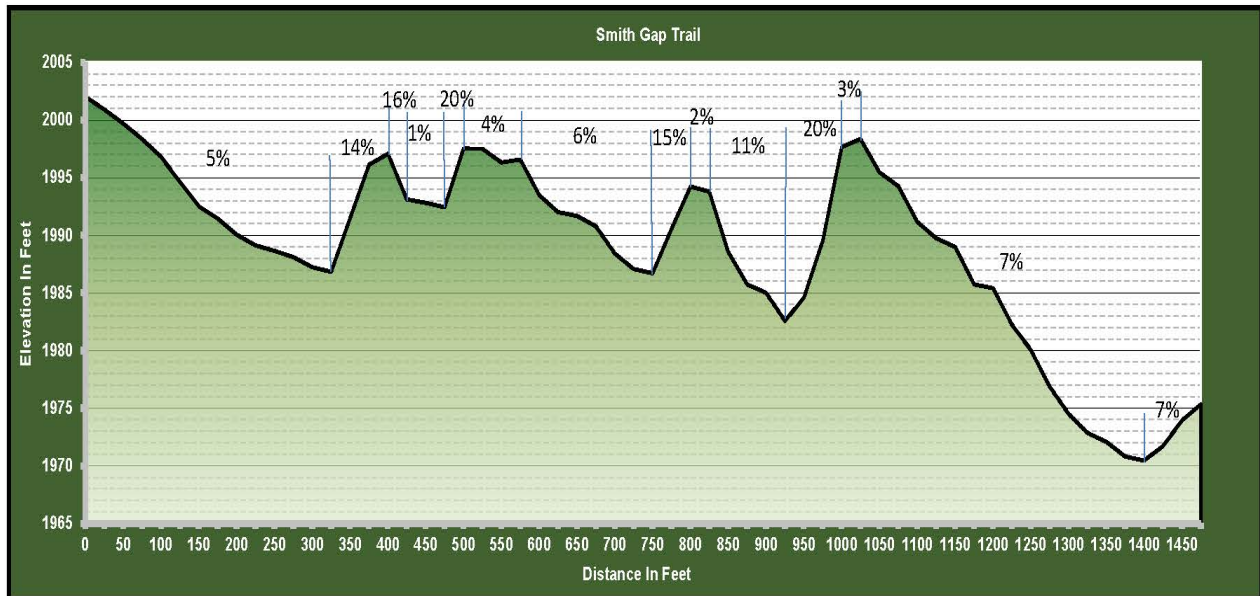
CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Smith Gap Trail

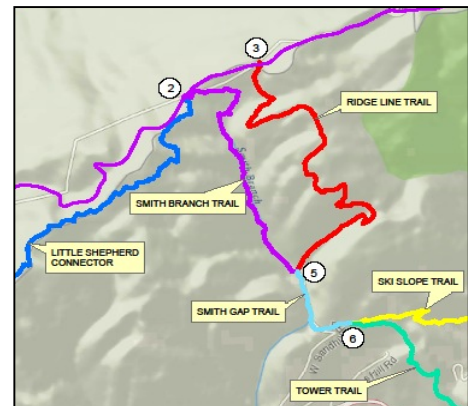
The Smith Gap section is one of the few points on the mountain that will allow a user to traverse from the bottom at Cumberland to the top of the mountain, as mentioned in an earlier section the majority of the major routes across the mountain had to be located at a physical feature that would allow the passage of people. The smith gap trail is no exception it is comprised from an old roadbed as it passes thru a gap in the rock face that makes up this section on the mountain. This section will



be a class 3 and is 0.3 miles long. While having an elevation change of only 28 feet with an average grade of less that 2%, there is a short portion of approximately 150 feet where the trail reaches 20%. We have identified five individual owners along this route. *See Appendix K for list of property owners.*



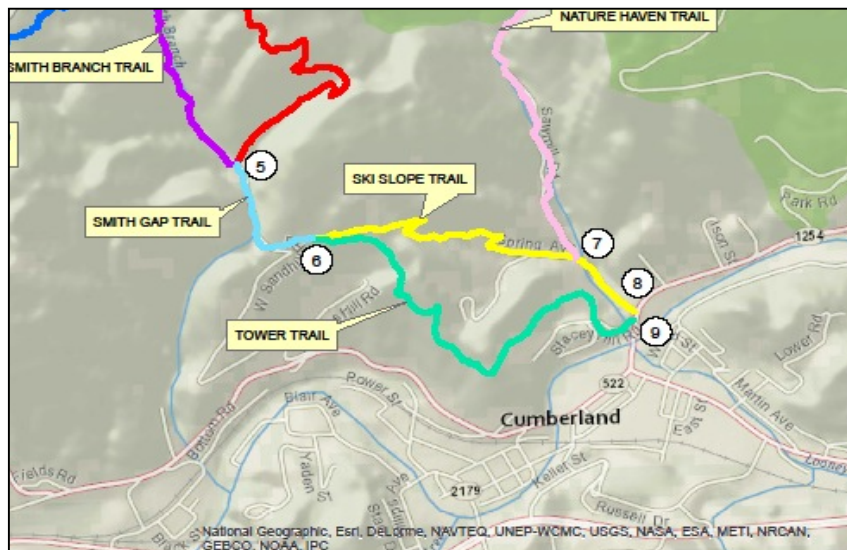
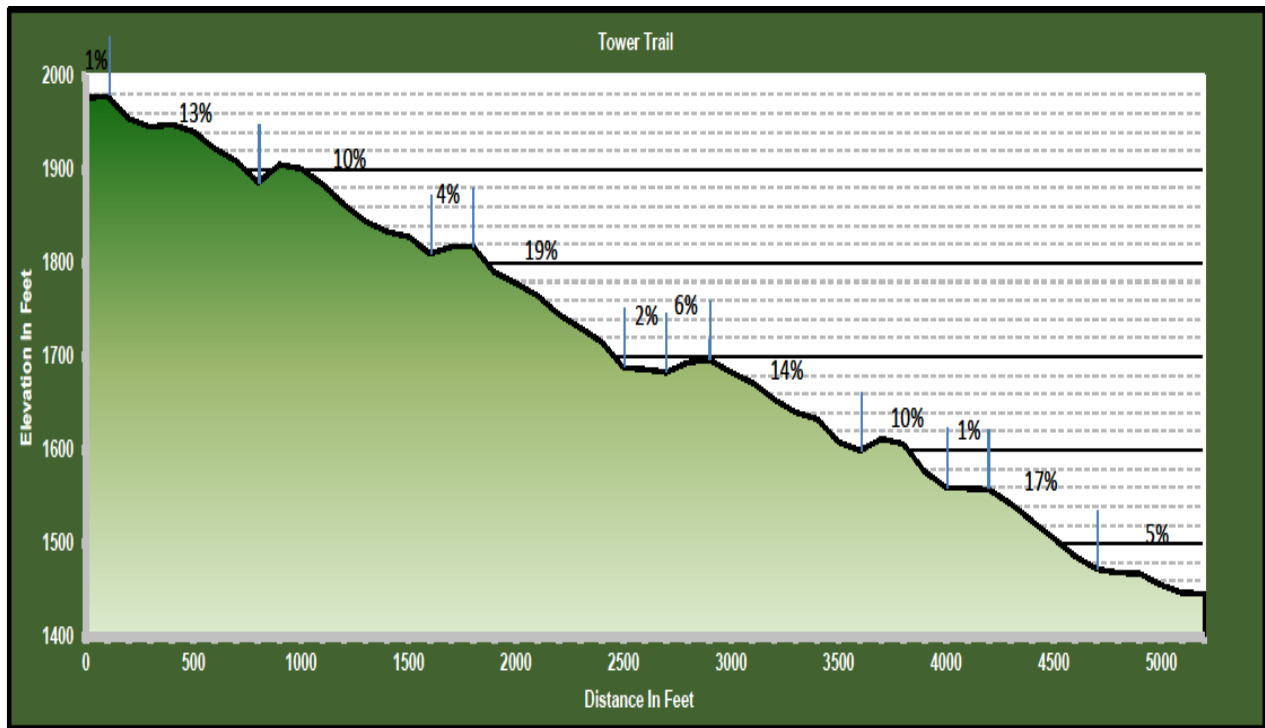
Smith Gap Trail would connect the upper options 1 or 2 to the lower options 1 or 2. It follows the roadway from the Short Arm Gang's Gathering Area to West Sand Hill Rd. It is the only way to make this connection because of two large vertical cliffs that meet in this watershed.



CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Tower Trail

The tower trail being typical of the terrain along the base of the mountain has a much more consistent and gentler slope compared to the sections near the top with and overall grade of around 10% over its 1 mile length. This section will also fall into the Class 3 designation when it is constructed. The tower trail will connect the Smith Gap trail to the Downtown trail. Twenty-one property tracts have been identified along this route with ten of these being under the same name of five of the identified owners. This will reduce the number of property owners that would need to be made to sixteen. *See Appendix K for list of property owners.*



CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Tower Trail Description

This trail would leave West Sand Hill Road and head south east towards the new tower. The cross slope on this 1000 foot section is fairly step in this section until you get to the tower road. There appears to be ample topsoil to be able to build a trail around this section without too much difficulty.



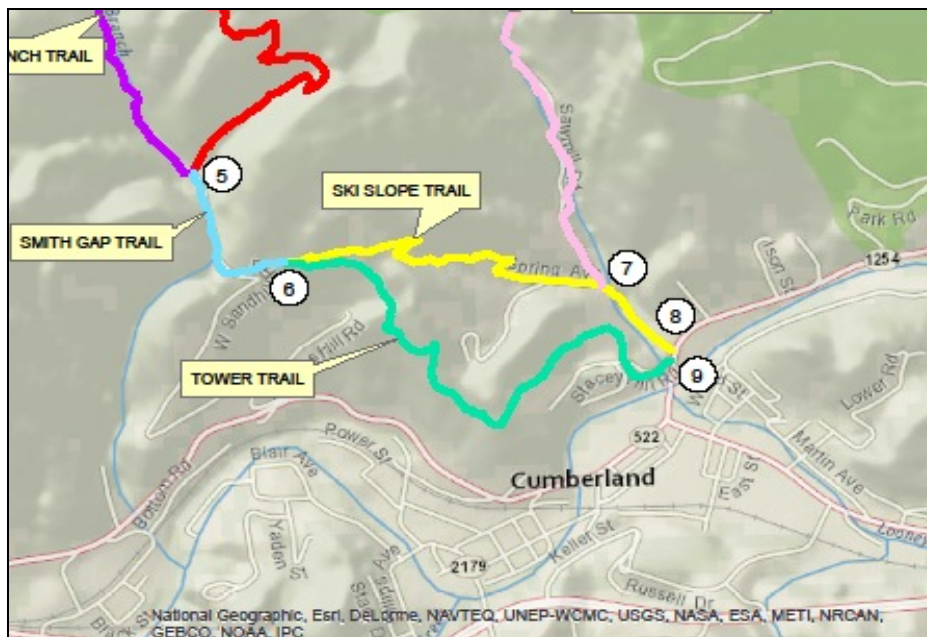
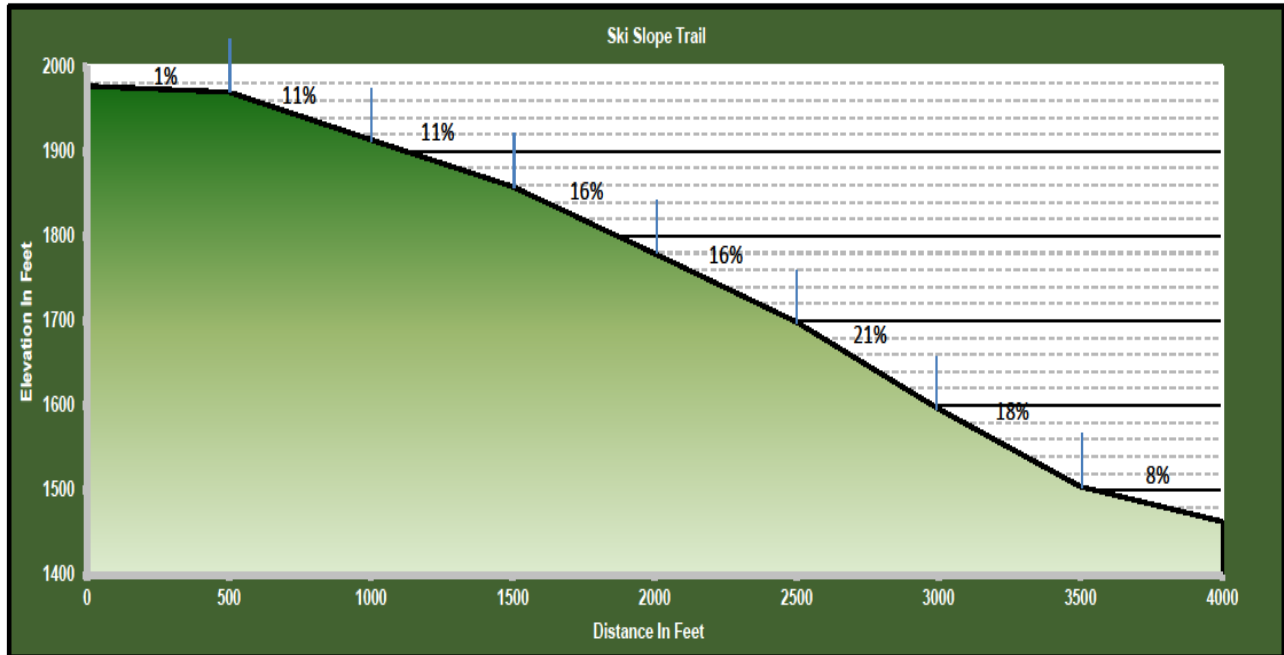
This trail would follow the tower road for a very short distance and connect to a trail created by the installation of a water line. The trail would then leave the water line trail and gradually lose elevation until it connected with Stacey Hill Road at the cemetery.



CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Ski Slope Trail

The Ski Slope Trail also connects the Smith Gap Trail to the Downtown Trail. It is 0.75 miles long and will be a Class 3 trail when constructed with an overall grade of 13% with the steepest section at 21% and is therefore **not** recommended for equestrian use. Its use would be limited to “hikers only”. The Ski Slope trail begins and ends in almost the same point as the Tower trail but has a different route down the mountain into town paralleling Spring Avenue. There will be ten properties required along this route. *See Appendix K for list of property owners.*



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Ski Slope Trail Description

This trail would run from West Sand Hill Road to Prank Road following the old gravel road that connects the two. The first section of this trail is very good in grade however, when it gets to the houses at the top of Prank Road, the slope increases and the surface becomes a mixture of blacktop and concrete. Because the route travels along a very steep road in very close proximity to houses, this is **not** a route the Team recommends.



RECOMMENDATIONS

None of the routes selected will be an easy construction project simply due to the terrain and grade one must traverse to reach the top of the second highest mountain range in Kentucky. Smith Branch Trail to Smith Gap Trail to Tower Trail appears to be the best option for equestrian riders being the easiest to reach the recommended grade standards. It is also the more scenic due to the numerous rock formations one will pass and provides watering opportunities for horses.

Both Smith Branch Trail and Ridge Line trails intersect the Little Shepherd Trail. By turning east, one can access the State Park via the Little Shepherd Trail or by a trail corridor that could parallel the Little Shepherd Trail. If one turns left, they could take the proposed Little Shepherd Connector Trail, eventually crossing Route 160. One can then follow the unpaved section of the Little Shepherd Trail westward until it intersects with the connector trail leading to the Putney Trailhead thus avoiding any travel on blacktop.

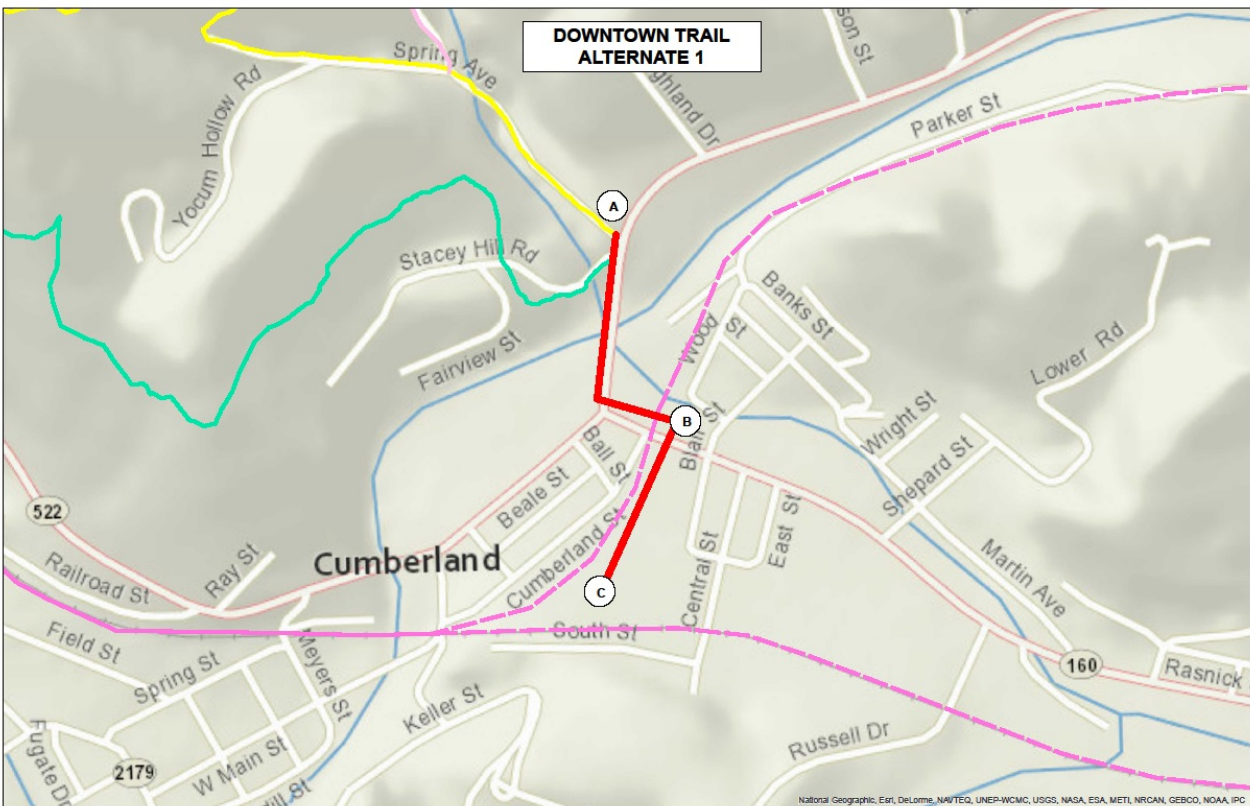


CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

THE DOWNTOWN TRAIL

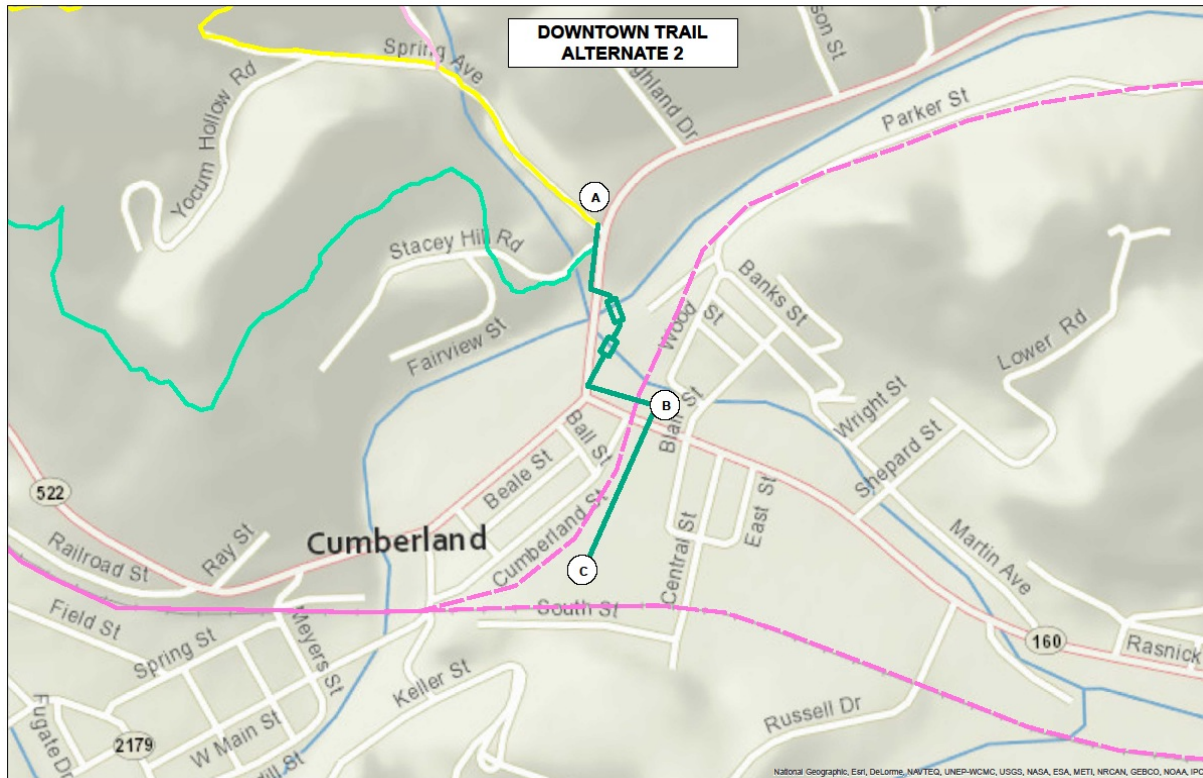
As the name implies this trail covers the downtown section of the study area. This will be a Class 4 section and all new construction. At only .3 miles long, this section was commonly referred to as the “Hub” of the study area. It will connect the mountain trail sections with the downtown area of the City of Cumberland and the proposed rails-to-trail section toward Lynch via Benham.

This section will need to cross the Poor Fork of the Cumberland by replacing the existing Pedestrian bridge which is currently attached to the Kingdom Come Drive Bridge but in disrepair and no longer usable. This route is shown as Alternate 1. Alternate 2 will be to cross the stream above the existing bridge and use two smaller bridges by making use of the land section between Poor Fork of the Cumberland and Looney Creek. Also considered was Alternate 3 which would cross Kingdom Come Drive at Spring Avenue then cross Poor Fork on a single bridge and continuing onto the newly abandoned rail bed that was the Scotia Line. Once there, the users will be able to turn south into town by way of the existing railroad bridge or turn north along the abandoned line toward Scotia and the trailhead at Partridge.

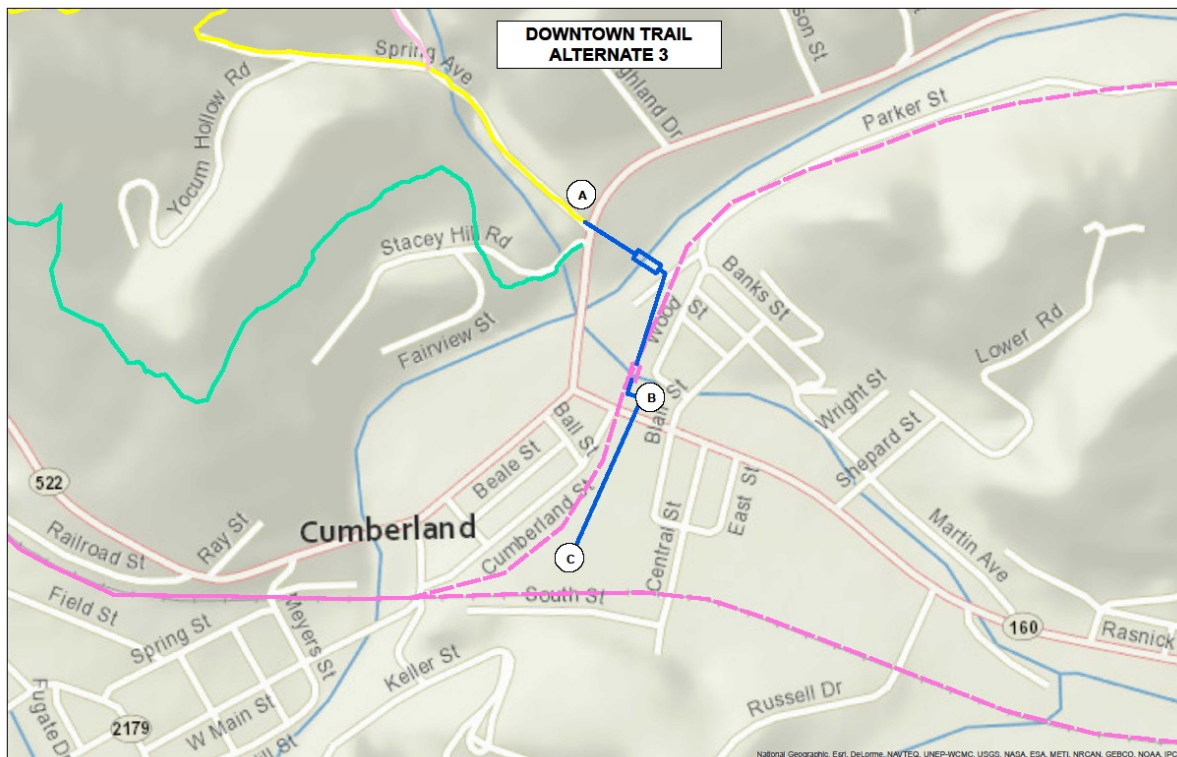


Alternate 1 would involve 9 individual tracts with three of those identified as belonging to the City of Cumberland.

CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS



Alternate 2 would involve 8 Tracts with one belonging to the City of Cumberland.



Alternate 3 would involve seven tracts with one belonging to the City of Cumberland.

CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Cumberland – Benham – Lynch – Rails to Trail

This section will be graded as a Class 4 with portions of medium to heavy rehab and sections where extremely light work will be needed. This section will perhaps connect one of the largest groupings of Coal related history in the state. Once a visitor is at the trail head in Cumberland, they can embark on a walk thru history by traveling upgrade along the existing railroad bed where millions of tons of Kentucky's finest coal was transported to the steel mills in the northeast.

This trail is 5.25 mile long and will connect the existing walking trail in Benham where the Coal History museum lies and continue to the existing Walk of Legends in Lynch, passing by the largest coal tippie in the United States when it was constructed. We have identified 57 individual property owners along the abandoned rail bed from Cumberland to Lynch. We found two property owners whom have purchased the apparent rights to the rail bed from Arc Land (now reported to be NRP). These two locations were the only indications of private owners utilizing the rail bed. Even though the rail bed has been occupied, there is adequate room for the trail to continue close to the original route.



Proposed Rails-to-Trails connecting the Tri-Cities of Cumberland, Benham and Lynch and existing rails-rails to trails.

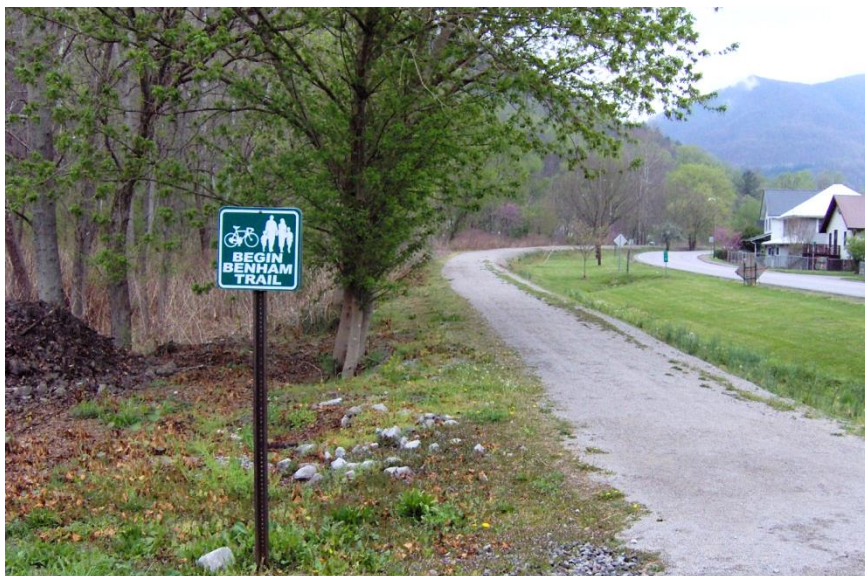
CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS



Food City was built on a portion of the old rail line.

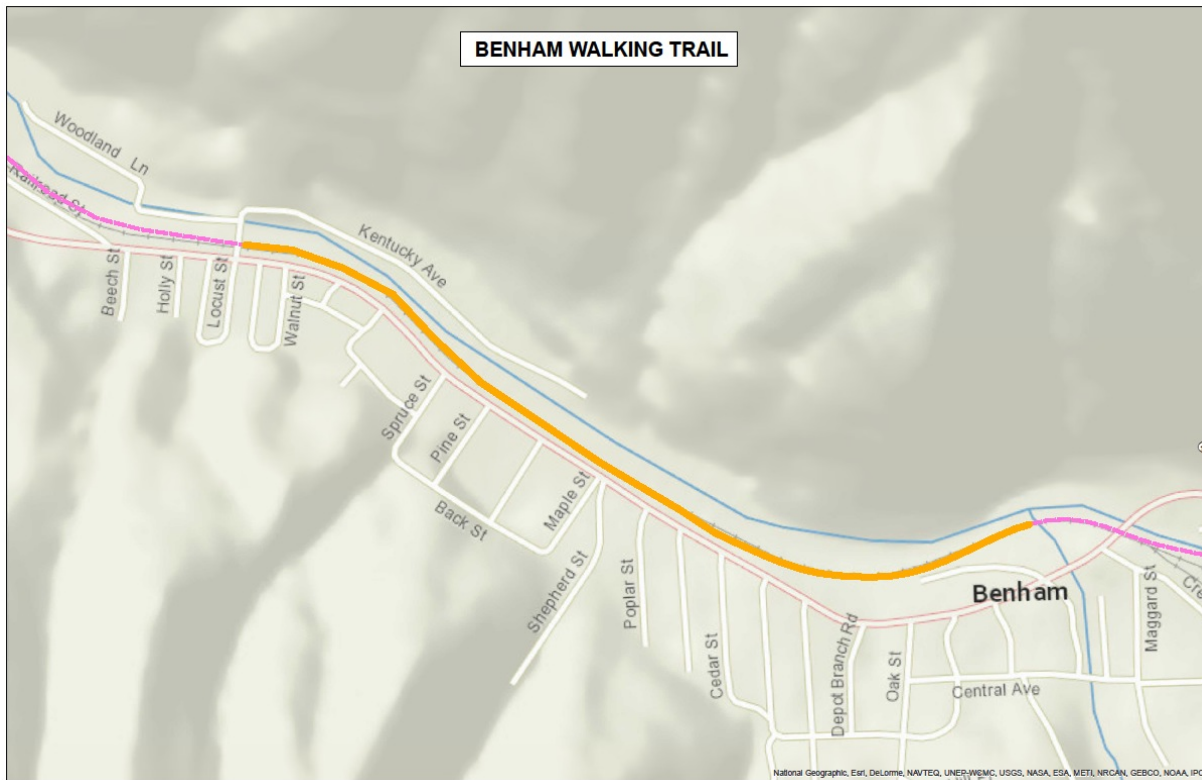
The photo above was taken in downtown Cumberland looking north toward Benham at one of two points where a section of the rail bed been purchased by private individuals. As the photo reveals, there appears to be enough undeveloped property to the right of Food City that could be utilized for the trail. The remainder of the rail bed appears to still be under the current coal company ownership with small sections released to the City of Benham and the City of Lynch for the purpose of developing trails. Preliminary conversations with the coal company indicated a strong willingness to allow the Tri-Cities to convert the remaining sections into rails-to-trails thus connecting Lynch, Benham and Cumberland.

Benham has 2 miles of trails on the old rail bed.



The City of Benham has developed the Benham Trail, a two mile rails-to-trails which is partially lighted for late evening walks. *See Chapter VI for more on existing trails.*

CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS



Benham Rails-to-Trails

The City Of Lynch has developed the Walk of Legends



This 1 mile rails-to-trails is lighted and is designated a walking trail only. For more on this and other existing trails, see Chapter VI.

CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS



Lynch "Walk of Legends" Rails-to-Trails



Looking North along the "Walk of Legends"

CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS



Looking South toward Benham with the Existing Campground to the right and the “Largest Coal Tipple in the United States” when constructed and is visible in the foreground of this photo.

These two sections of trails will require little if any grading to be consistent with the newly utilized and graded rail bed sections.

MAKING ADDITIONAL CONNECTIONS TO CREATE TRAIL SYSTEMS – ACTIONS TO TAKE

There is an **opportunity to lengthen the horse trail considerably by extending the existing Pioneer Horse Trail** which starts at the Pine Mountain State Park Trailhead near Whitesburg and parallels the Little Shepherd Trail five miles up the mountain. At this time, the Pioneer Horse Trail ends about seven miles short of reaching the Park. To extend the trail requires traversing through the Pine Mountain Wildlife Management Area which the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) discourages plus a major portion of the trail would have to share the road with the Little Shepherd Trail (KY 1679), a steep curvy asphalt road that has limited sight range. This would **not** be recommended or desirable for horse riders.

CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

An alternative would be to **develop a connector trail down either Scuttlehole Gap or Jenkins Branch to the Partridge Trailhead at Creekside Glen.** One could then travel the proposed rails-to-trails 12.9 miles to Cumberland and take the proposed connector trail up to Kingdom Come State Park, providing significant miles of trails and breathtaking mountain views to entice riders from outside the region to trailer their horses to the tri-cities area.

Scuttlehole Gap is already in the county road system and would need very little work to make it into a trail for horse traffic. **Jenkins Branch Trail has yet to be developed** but interest has been expressed by the landowner of constructing a trail down the mountain and providing lodging opportunities for both riders and their horses. *See Appendix G: Entrepreneurial Opportunity for more on this.*



Team discusses entrepreneurial opportunities with landowner at Jenkins Branch.

A crucial component to this proposed route was to ensure the existing rail is rail banked so that at the time of abandonment, the property along the track does not revert back to its original owners. After much research, numerous phone calls and even letters from Kentucky's Secretary of Tourism and the counties, it was finally determined the rail was not banked. Work has now begun to determine who the original landowners were along the old CSX line that starts just west of Cumberland at Chad Yard mile marker 261.05 in Harlan County and travels 12.9 miles east into Letcher County to and includes the Scotia Spur line at the Creekside Glen Trailhead in Partridge and determine how best to proceed. *See Chapter VI and Appendices F-3 and H for more on rail banking and the proposed trailhead.*

Another opportunity would be to **establish a horse trail from the proposed trailhead at the Ranger's Station in Putney.** This connector trail already exists. A staging area could be set up on a two acre plot of land next to the Shriner's Complex. Riders could then take this proposed Putney Connector Trail through Kentenia State Forest to the Little Shepherd Trail (KY 1679) which is unpaved all the way to KY 160. **A 1.75 mile trail could be built paralleling the asphalted portion of the Little Shepherd Trail to Kingdom Come State Park** enabling one to take the proposed Kingdom Come Connector Trail down into Cumberland. This proposed linear trail system would be between 15 and 20 miles in length. At some point, there may be a way to create a looped trail system but in the meantime a two-day pack trip could be set up with lodging at one end to encourage multiple day stays. *See Chapter VI for maps and more information of this proposed route.*

CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

Team members explored the **possibility of bringing a connector trail up KY 160** (Sand Hill Road where it intersects Little Shepherd Trail just 2 miles west of Kingdom Come State Park but found the route to have limited promise due to there being very little land on either side of KY 160 to construct a trail.

As noted earlier in this Chapter, due to the steep grade of the entrance road into Kingdom Come State Park, a new route for a major portion of Park Road (KY 1926) will soon be constructed. The portion of the route no longer to be used could be converted into a **challenge course for bicycle enthusiasts**, with the end goal being to reach the top of the summit at Kingdom Come State Park.



During the research phase of the study, members of the study team noted a few diehard bicyclists making their way up the mountain. For those who consider the incline too great, a **shuttle service similar to the shuttle service offered at the Virginia Creeper** could take visitors and bikes to the top for a small fee thus allowing them the exhilarating opportunity to ride down Pine Mountain via KY 1926 and into Cumberland. It is also highly recommended that the **new section of KY 1926 include a bicycle path** or “share the road” opportunity.

As noted earlier in this chapter, there is the opportunity to **develop a rails-to-trail connecting Kingdom Come State Park to not only Cumberland but also Benham and Lynch** via the old railroad bed that connected these three cities. Benham (home of the Kentucky Coal Museum & Benham Schoolhouse Inn) & Lynch (Home of Portal Mine No. 31) were established in the early 1900’s as coal towns where many of the historic structures still remain. *See Chapter VII for more on these two historic coal towns.*



The rails have been removed along most of the route and a **1-mile lighted rails-to-trail established in Lynch** and a **1.5 mile rails-to-trail in Benham**. *See Chapter VI for more on these trails.* The challenge is that not all of the property has been rail banked and a few property owners along the route have either quitclaimed or outright purchased property in and around the track area. **It is crucial that action be taken immediately by the tri-cities area to ensure the rest of the property can be developed into an uninterrupted rails-to-trail from Cumberland to Lynch** thus providing easy access for hikers, bikers and horseback riders to two historic coal towns.

CHAPTER II: CREATING CONNECTOR TRAILS

CONCLUSION

As a potential adventure tourism trail designation area, these sites **offer unsurpassed beauty in the panoramic views of the Pine Mountain region** along with **miles of both existing and potential trails**. **The region is also rich in history** and architectural styles which is evident in the numerous churches and other historic structures in and around the three communities. The connectors between the valley floor and the top however pose a challenge in that the grades are steep and the access points are limited. **Establishing these connector trails and securing the rails-to-trail options are the first steps toward the area becoming a world class Tri-Cities trail town.**

A proposed campground development at Kingdom Come for overnight camping will be a further incentive for those outside the area to come to the area to ride.



The “Field” – to be utilized as an overnight camping and horse area



Vaulted Toilet beside proposed “Field” Campground