



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

October 4, 2022

2022-2023 Board Members

President William Bradley

Pres Elect Edwin Peacock

Past Pres Carol Hardison

Secretary Kim Brattain

Treasurer Patrick Baker

Exec Sec Christine Cipriano

Directors 2021-2023

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Glenn Bouley

Margaret Donovan

Laura Little

Mark Norman

Diego Ramon

Robert Shaw

Membership Terri DeBoo

Foundation Joe Morris

Programs Elly Clary



Bart Landess, Executive Director, Catawba Lands Conservancy

by **Elly Clary**

Bart Landess painted an impressive picture of Catawba Lands Conservancy accomplishments in its 32 years of abiding by its motto: Saving land and connecting lives to nature.

Consider these numbers from the organization's executive director:

- The Conservancy has assembled 17,000 acres of green space. Its sister organization, the Carolina Thread Trail, counts 400 walkable miles.
- There are 23,000 acres of park land in the Conservancy's 15 counties of North and South Carolina.
- That adds up to 40,000 acres of green space. And there are 1,200 miles of trail plains to go with those 400 hiking miles.

"I wanted Charlotte to be known for something other than a football team or a bunch of tall buildings," Landess told Charlotte Rotarians. "There's only one municipality – and that's cheating because it's two municipalities – that has a larger network of trails, and that's Oakland and San Francisco together."

But the Conservancy has further aspirations. "Our vision," Landess said, "is to have 85,000 acres of natural spaces connected by 1,500 miles of trails."

There are 88 municipalities in the Conservancy's 15 counties. Those

entities build their own trails. “Our job is to make sure they connect,” he said.

An important emphasis is protecting Mountain Island Lake on the Mecklenburg-Gaston line. That body of water provides drinking water for Charlotte and the surrounding area – 10 percent of North Carolina’s population. The effort includes acquiring land along the lake’s tributaries where tree harvesting and paving have increased the threat of contamination.

A tree canopy is important, Landess explained. By absorbing rain, a forest filters water and cleans it. When the Conservancy takes control of a property, its aim is to preserve the trees. He shared a Franklin Roosevelt quote: “Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people.”

Landess harbors his own thoughts about this. When people communicate on urban streets and highways, he said, they are often confrontational. But that’s decidedly different on a nature trail. People from all walks of life enjoy the Thread Trail, he said. “On the trail, when people exchange words, it’s always nice conversations. It’s how people circulate with each other.”

*A recording of the program is available here: <https://vimeo.com/757194727>
The speaker’s introduction begins at 21:20 minutes.