

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE BILL 140
Committee Substitute Favorable 4/29/25

Short Title: Authorize Gullah Geechee Heritage Trail.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

February 18, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE GULLAH GEECHEE GREENWAY/BLUEWAY
HERITAGE TRAIL IN BRUNSWICK COUNTY.

Whereas, the history of the Gullah Geechee culture is an important part of the story and formation of the United States; and

Whereas, the Gullah Geechee peoples of coastal Africa were forcibly brought centuries ago to the coastal areas and the sea islands of southeastern North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida because of their experience in rice cultivation, and the rice plantations that formerly lined the western side of the Cape Fear River in Brunswick County thus became the focal point of Gullah Geechee culture in this State; and

Whereas, many reminders of the Gullah Geechee culture remain on the west side of the Cape Fear River in Brunswick County, including Reaves Chapel, Moore's Chapel, former rice plantations, and pine tar pits used to repair wooden ships; and

Whereas, numerous local governments and regional organizations, including Brunswick County, the Towns of Navassa, Leland, and Belville, the Wilmington Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the Cape Fear Council of Governments have partnered with many local and regional nonprofit entities to delineate and sponsor sites important to Gullah Geechee culture along or near the west bank of the Cape Fear River; and

Whereas, this partnership has led to the creation of the Gullah Geechee Greenway/Blueway Heritage Trail, which will include 9 segments utilizing existing rights-of-way stretching 21 miles from northern Brunswick County to the Brunswick Nature Park; and

Whereas, the extensive planning envisions a multiuse trail for bicycle and pedestrian use, as well as points of historical interest, such as the restored Reaves Chapel; and

Whereas, the Gullah Geechee Greenway/Blueway Heritage Trail can become a part of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, a National Heritage Area established by the U.S. Congress, to recognize the unique culture of the Gullah Geechee people; and

Whereas, benefits of the Gullah Geechee Greenway/Blueway Heritage Trail include tourism, economic development, transportation mobility, and the connection of communities, which are important to this traditionally economically disadvantaged area; Now, therefore, The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. The General Assembly authorizes the Gullah Geechee Greenway/Blueway Heritage Trail (Heritage Trail) in Brunswick County. The State shall support, promote, encourage, and facilitate the establishment of trail segments on State park lands and on lands of other federal, State, local, and private landowners. On segments of the Heritage



1 Trail that cross property controlled by agencies or owners other than the State, the laws, rules,
2 and policies of those agencies or owners shall govern the use of the property.

3 **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law.