

WHEELS IN THE WILD:

OPENING THE TRAIL TO EVERYONE



There is a difference between seeing a trail and truly being able to experience it. Forsyth County Parks & Recreation is working to close that gap through a new adaptive outdoor access initiative called Wheels in the Wild.

The concept is simple: provide all-terrain mobility equipment that allows individuals with limited mobility to access natural trails, outdoor recreation opportunities and environmental education experiences alongside peers, family members and the community around them. The impact, however, extends far beyond a piece of equipment.

A student should not have to stop at the trailhead while classmates continue into the woods. A Therapeutic Recreation participant should not have to miss the hike, overlook or outdoor program because the route is inaccessible. A resident with mobility limitations should not be limited to paved pathways when some of the most meaningful experiences in our parks exist beyond them.

Forsyth County Parks & Recreation recently received its first Action Trackchair thanks to an ongoing partnership with the Forsyth County Parks Foundation, marking the beginning of the Wheels in the Wild program. Designed to navigate dirt trails, roots, gravel and uneven terrain, the chair creates opportunities for individuals to experience outdoor spaces that traditional mobility devices often cannot access. At locations like Sawnee Mountain Preserve, where thousands of students participate in environmental education each year, that access matters.

Wheels in the Wild will launch as a pilot program at Sawnee Mountain Preserve in the fall of 2026, with Outdoor Recreation and Therapeutic Recreation staff working together to develop safe routes, operational procedures, staff training and

a program model designed for long-term sustainability. The goal is not simply to place adaptive equipment in a park, but to create a thoughtful, responsible program that expands access while protecting participants, staff, equipment and natural resources.

With more than 55 miles of trails throughout Forsyth County's park system, many natural areas remain difficult to access without specialized mobility equipment. Wheels in the Wild gives the department a way to begin removing those barriers.

Even though the first chair is an important milestone, it is only the start. The long-term vision includes expanding equipment availability, increasing participation opportunities and growing adaptive outdoor access beyond a single park location.

That will take partnerships, funding and community support. Forsyth County Parks & Recreation is continuing to explore opportunities to help bring more chairs into the system and make adaptive outdoor access a lasting part of the county's recreation services.

Parks and recreation professionals often talk about inclusion. Wheels in the Wild is inclusion put into action. It is the difference between watching and participating, between modifying an experience and fully sharing it.

Somewhere in Forsyth County, there is a student waiting to experience a trail with classmates, a parent wanting to explore with family, or a recreation participant ready for their next outdoor adventure.

**Wheels in the Wild is for them—
and now, the trail is beginning to open.**

-Written by Lacy Richards & Whitman Morgan