



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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State Trust Fund Awards \$47.03 Million for Significant Natural Heritage Sites

RALEIGH – Trustees with the N.C. Natural Heritage Trust Fund awarded on Monday \$47 million to help the state preserve more than 11,000 acres of culturally and ecologically significant land.

The trustees made the awards during their regular two-day meeting. Many of the projects funded on Monday call for additional money from private donations, landowner bargain sales, the state's other trust funds, local government matching funds and other sources.

The trust fund board awarded:

- \$29.6 million to the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. More than half the funds will be used to acquire land in Elk Knob State Park in Ashe and Watauga counties. Other projects funded will enable the protection of environmentally significant areas including South Mountains State Park in Burke County, Watauga County's Dutch Creek Cove Conservation Land and Chimney Rock State Park, Haw River State Park in Guilford and Rockingham counties.
- \$15.5 million to the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. Funding will help protect pocosin and pine upland, black bear habitat and a corridor on the coast that is part of the Duck Creek Natural Area in Craven County. The Wildlife Resources Commission also will use the funds to help complete the final phase of funding on environmentally significant land near Tyrrell County's Alligator River. The funds also will enable the commission to protect and maintain property in Caldwell County's Wilson Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor and land made available as part of Alcoa's Federal Energy Regulatory Commission settlement agreement.
- \$1.8 million to the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources. The department will be able to acquire land in Forsyth County's Historic Bethania that now holds the only remaining example of a European-style "open field" agricultural village in North Carolina. Funding from Monday's award also will enable the department to acquire 130 acres in its ongoing effort to protect and preserve part of the Bentonville Battlefield Site in Johnston County. Bentonville Battlefield was the site of one of the last Civil War battles.

More than 80 percent of the funds awarded, or \$38.8 million, came about thanks to the General Assembly's authorization for special indebtedness financing of up to \$50 million certificates of participation (COPS). The entire \$50 million in COPS has now been awarded. Financing from certificates of participation enables the state treasurer to sell bonds. The board of trustees will repay the debt from the bonds using the trust fund's future revenues. The General Assembly authorized these certificates of participation to protect ecologically diverse land and support the conservation priorities established by the One North Carolina Naturally program.

The N.C. Natural Heritage Trust Fund provides supplemental funding to select state agencies to acquire and protect important natural areas, preserve the state's ecological diversity and cultural heritage and inventory the natural heritage resources of the state. The trust fund is supported by 25 percent of the state's portion of the tax on real estate deed transfers and a portion of the fees for personalized license plates. It is one of four trust funds the state administers to protect and conserve land. For more information, go to www.ncnhf.org.

For a complete summary of funds awarded by the board of trustees, contact Jamie Kritzer, public information officer with the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, at (919) 715-7357.

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