



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Release: Immediate

Date: Nov. 7, 2007

Contact: Jamie Kritzer

Phone: (919) 715-7357

State Trust Fund Awards \$23.8 Million For Significant Natural Heritage Sites

RALEIGH – Trustees with the N.C. Natural Heritage Trust Fund have awarded \$23.8 million to help the state preserve more than 13,000 acres of some of North Carolina's most culturally and ecologically significant land.

The trust fund's board of trustees made the awards Oct. 22 after a regular two-day meeting. Many of projects call for funding from private donations, land owner bargain sales, the state's other trust funds, local government matching funds and others.

The trust fund board awarded:

- \$6.2 million to the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Most of these funds will be used to acquire additional land for Chimney Rock State Park. The award also will enable the department to protect environmentally significant areas in the Scuppernong River Swamp Forest in Tyrrell County, Carolina Bay and longleaf and wiregrass habitat in Bladen County, DuPont State Forest in Transylvania County, Deep River State Trail in Lee County and other areas.
- \$865,000 to the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources to help acquire tracts near the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge in Catawba County, the Stagville State Historic Site in northern Durham County and a stretch of the historic Overmountain Victory Trail at Alexander's Ford.
- \$12 million to the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. Part of this award will help protect water quality, recreational areas and a bald eagle habitat in New Hope Valley Forest in Durham and Chatham counties. The Wildlife Resources Commission also will use the funds to help buy land that buffers Camp Lejeune and protects wildlife such as the endangered red cockaded woodpecker. Part of the money will be used to acquire land in the Upper Tar and Juniper Creek that had been owned by International Paper.
- \$4.7 million to the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Plant Conservation Program to help protect land with rare plant and animal species in counties such as Jackson, Durham and Brunswick.

Almost half of the funds awarded, \$11.2 million, came about thanks to the General Assembly's recent authorization for special indebtedness financing of up to \$50 million in certificates of participation. 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 on the trust fund, go to <http://www.ncnhtf.org/>.

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Office of Public Affairs

Phone: (919) 715-4112

1601 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1601

Diana Kees, Director

FAX (919) 715-5181

diana.kees@ncmail.net