



LAND *for* TOMORROW

2010 GREEN BOOK



CONSERVATION FUNDING = ECONOMIC STIMULUS

The New Economic Reality

ABOUT LAND *for* TOMORROW

Land for Tomorrow is a statewide coalition of community leaders, organizations and local governments with a common goal: increasing land and water conservation. The coalition works to ensure that the state's four conservation trust funds – Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF), Natural Heritage Trust Fund (NHTF), Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) and the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (ADFPTF) are well funded.

North Carolina leaders have been forward-thinking, creating the trust funds and continuing to fund them over the years. This smart leadership has resulted in the preservation of hundreds of thousands of acres of family farms, forests, stream banks, game lands, parks, greenways and trails. While conservation has kept many areas natural, it has also played a major role in the state's economy, boosting agriculture, tourism, forestry, hunting, fishing and wildlife-watching.

This conservation has saved local government money by reducing the cost of water treatment. An American Water Works Association study says that for every 10 percent increase in forest cover, drinking water

treatment and chemical costs decrease approximately 20 percent. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that it is anywhere from 20 to 400 times more expensive to treat contaminated water than to prevent that contamination through watershed protection.



Photo © Aaron McCall/TNC

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LAND FOR TOMORROW – Green Book 2010

This is the sixth annual Green Book report. Past editions have focused on success during the previous year. You won't find many 2009 success stories, because last year conservation funding in North Carolina came to a standstill. A historically bad economy forced Governor Beverly Perdue to make tough choices to fill budget gaps. Money that had been appropriated to the state conservation trust funds for acquisition of land was moved elsewhere in the budget.

The biggest loser was the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, with \$115.5 million transferred out. The Natural Heritage Trust Fund lost \$2.8 million and the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund lost \$6 million.

This has left the state in a position of playing catch-up with conservation acquisitions. The Clean Water Management Trust Fund board of trustees awarded \$62.2 million in grants for conservation acquisition in 2008, but only \$5.1 million of those grants were awarded before money from the trust fund was transferred.

It will take years to clear out the resulting backlog. The General Assembly appropriated \$50 million to the CWMTF for the current fiscal year. The CWMTF board of trustees allocated \$26 million of that for conservation acquisition, beginning to make good on the

remaining \$56 million in 2008 grants. Even after that \$26 million is spent, there will still be more than \$30 million in 2008 acquisition grants that remain unfunded. That's not taking into account new conservation proposals. CWMTF has received more than \$270 million in grant requests, including \$132 million in proposed acquisitions, for its 2010 grant cycle.

As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, it is a time to reflect on what we have accomplished, and renew our commitment to protecting the best of our state's natural areas. North Carolina icons from Grandfather Mountain to the Outer Banks have been safeguarded. While their preservation has saved important natural places, it has also contributed a great deal to our state's economy.

Conservation funding is economic stimulus. Many communities in North Carolina need that stimulus now more than ever as they struggle to recover from the recession. Manufacturing jobs like those provided in the textile and furniture industries are gone. Tourism, retirement and second homes are now the driving economic forces in those communities.

It is also a time to reflect on last year's successes, even though they are much fewer in number than in past years. Even in the midst of a historic economic downturn, we did score some conservation victories –



Grandfather Mountain © Bill Lea

protecting some special places that are important not only for their natural beauty, but also for the economic stimulus they provide to local communities.

North Carolina's Conservation Trust Funds

North Carolina has four publicly funded conservation trust funds.

The Natural Heritage Trust Fund, created in 1987, provides funding for the acquisition and protection of important natural and cultural areas. Acquisitions include land that is home to rare plant and animal species as well as important wildlife habitats. It also covers the acquisition of sites that are significant to North Carolina's cultural history. To date, it has funded more than \$310 million in projects.

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, created in 1994, funds improvements in the state's park system, dollar-for-dollar matching grants to local government for parks and grants to local government to improve public beach and estuarine access. It is the main source of funding for most state park improvements or acquisition of land to create new parks or expand existing ones. To date, it has funded more than \$449 million in projects.

The Clean Water Management Trust Fund, created in 1996, makes grants to local governments, state agencies and conservation nonprofits to help finance projects that address water pollution. It covers land acquisitions that protect watersheds. It also funds other solutions to pollution, such as wastewater treatment or stormwater upgrades. To date, it has funded more than \$950 million in projects.

The Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, created in 2005, funds conservation easements on lands used for production of food, fiber and other agricultural products. It also supports public and private enterprise programs that promote profitable and sustainable agricultural, horticultural and forestland activities. To date, it has funded \$11.6 million in projects.

CONSERVATION FUNDING = Economic Stimulus

North Carolina can point to large, visible successes in land conservation since the first Earth Day in 1970. The North Carolina State Park System is a good example. In 1970, there were 59,061 acres of land in state parks. Today there are 210,376 acres. Much of that gain has been driven through purchases made using the trust funds. While some would view this as merely the protection of special natural areas, these acquisitions mean much more. A couple of years ago, NC State University researchers estimated North Carolina state parks contribute about \$400 million to our state's



Chimney Rock State Park
© Charlie Peek

economy each year. That study was completed before the creation of several new parks, including Grandfather Mountain.

North Carolina state parks are getting more use these days. According to the NC Division of Parks and

Recreation, 2009 was a record year for park attendance with 14.16 million visits – a 13 percent increase over the previous year. It is likely that their annual economic contribution has risen as well.

For nearby communities, parks have economic benefits

beyond the jobs directly created at state parks, such as rangers and others working for the park system. Researchers at the Political Economy and Research Institute of the University of Massachusetts estimate that for every \$1 million spent on land conservation, 20.3 additional full-time jobs were created.

As the economy recovers, there has been a great deal of talk about “shovel-ready” projects – particularly road and bridge work designed to stimulate the economy. The Massachusetts’ research suggests that there should be an equal focus on conservation. Road and bridge repair accounts for the same number of new jobs as conservation. New road and bridge construction accounts for even less, at 14.4 jobs per \$1 million.

Another “green” industry tops the list of jobs created. Reforestation, land and watershed restoration and sustainable forest management create 39.7 jobs per million-dollar investment. Much of the conservation funding in North Carolina goes toward these goals.

The study also credits crop agriculture with creating 22.8 new jobs per million-dollar investment and livestock agriculture with creating 21.7 new jobs per million-dollar investment. Conservation funding, particularly from the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, helps to drive those goals.

At the same time that land conservation creates jobs and boosts the economy, it serves communities by protecting and improving water and air quality. Robert Costanza, director of the Gund Institute for Ecological



© Charlie Peek

ANYONE WHO DEFINES LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION AS MERELY SAVING PRETTY PLACES DOESN'T GRASP THE ENTIRE PICTURE. The economic benefits of conservation are felt across the board. A study by Responsive Management and Southwick Associates found that, in 2008, nearly 93,000 people tried their luck at trout fishing in the North Carolina mountains. Those anglers spent \$146 million on trips and fishing equipment. When the secondary effects were factored in, the total economic benefit was \$174 million.

Economics at the University of Vermont, co-authored a paper that explored those benefits. He found that an annual investment of \$45 billion in land conservation across the country would result in an annual “public good” benefit of \$4.4 trillion to \$5.2 trillion.

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY – The New Economic Reality

Across North Carolina, there are countless examples of North Carolina communities that have embraced a new reality – large manufacturing facilities have closed, new economic drivers have emerged. Transylvania County is a good example. The county’s economy was once based around two large manufacturing facilities – the Ecusta paper plant and the Dupont film factory. Both went out of business years ago.

Today the major economic drivers in the county are second home/retirement home development and tourism. The county’s recently completed economic development plan calls the natural environment and recreation opportunities key elements:

“What makes Transylvania County such a remarkable place to live, work and invest? While every community can claim to have a great quality of life, there are a number of very specific factors that make Transylvania County unique:

- Natural beauty and surrounds; a clean, pollution-free environment
- A pleasant climate with moderate temperatures and infrequent storm severity
- Attractive National and State recreational areas and facilities.

The county has experienced more than \$749 million in

new construction since 2000, of which new retirement and second home construction account for \$670 million. Tourism accounted for a \$77 million shot to the county's economy in 2008. That same year, local tax revenues from travel and tourism accounted for \$6.7million, a \$225 tax savings to each county resident.

Today's tourist may well become tomorrow's resident. Libby Freeman, who heads the local chamber of commerce, says tourists often drop by her office, making plans to move to the county. She says the natural beauty is a big selling point. "They've done a good job of preserving the entrances to the county," she explains. "Serenity and peacefulness attract people who don't need interstates – they don't need the fast lane."

A look at the county business makeup supports the new economic reality. Of the 1,750 businesses in Transylvania County, 308 involve construction and building trades. Accommodations, entertainment, outdoor attractions, outdoor merchandise and food account for 250 businesses and real estate accounts for another 108. There are just 35 manufacturing businesses in the county.

Even the county's slogan, "The Natural Power of Success," highlights the importance of natural resources. "When we decided to brand the county, we looked at what we do, how do we need to do it and what are our assets," Economic Development Director Mark Burrows explains. The county's mountains, waterfalls and other wild areas were the biggest marketable asset.



Gorges State Park © Charlie Peek

Burrows says these assets are also a huge draw for small businesses that have nothing to do with nature. "About seven years ago, we brought in PharmAgra, which is a pharmaceutical company. They had five employees. Today, they have 16 employees and all but one are Ph.D.s," he says, noting that he often sees the company president jogging or mountain biking on one of the county's many trails. "They moved here because of the environment and the natural resources."

Another company, Sylvan Sports, which makes camping gear, has its world headquarters in Transylvania County.

"When Tom Dempsey, who is the CEO, brings CEOs of companies from around the world here for business meetings, half of the meeting is in his office, the other half is on a mountain bike in Dupont State Forest," Burrows explains. "That's why they are here."

Burrows says local planners are building on these success stories. This spring they have attracted the Banff Mountain Film Festival to Brevard College and are using the festival to highlight area outdoor activities with a fly fishing contest and a canoe trip.

Success 2009

Despite disappearing public dollars, conservation groups scored success across the state in 2009.

(Note: To take advantage of conservation opportunities in a timely manner, a land trust or conservancy generally purchases property and is then reimbursed by the state trust funds. CWMTF grants referenced are from 2008.)

Conservation Key to Strong Military Presence in NC

FUNDING:

Total – \$11.3 million

Department of Defense – \$3.76 million

PARTF – \$3.76 million

NHTF – \$3.76 million

Most people recognize that the military is a driving economic force in North Carolina, contributing \$23.4 billion (seven percent) to the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The military employs 416,000 North Carolinians – eight percent of total state employment. What many people may not realize is the role the military plays in land conservation and the role that conservation plays in ensuring a strong continued military presence in the state. The 1,263-acre Clark tract in Cumberland County, which The Nature Conservancy purchased last fall, is a good example of the military/conservation connection.

From a conservation viewpoint, the Clark property is



Clark tract © Debbie Crane/TNC

perfect. It is covered in high-value mature longleaf forest that is excellent habitat for the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. It is equally if not more important from a military standpoint. It provides a valuable buffer along 2.5 miles of Fort Bragg's boundary. Without that buffer, subdivisions that dot Cumberland County could be built right up to the base perimeter, forcing the military to restrict its important training mission during war time. That's why the Department of Defense ponied up more than \$3 million to purchase the tract – money that was leveraged by the state conservation trust funds.

Mike Lynch leads Fort Bragg's conservation efforts as Director of Planning, Training and Mobilization. Lynch says his work is two-fold. "Our primary purpose

is to protect soldier training by creating buffers on adjoining property. Had the Clark property turned into commercial or residential use, the loss of habitat would have adversely affected our training. We are also good citizens of the community. Acquiring this land provides green space for our soldiers and their families."

Fort Bragg has become the poster child for this kind of military conservation. Other military bases, including Camp Lejeune, have replicated the program. In the last decade, the Department of Defense has spent more than \$30 million to protect more than 102,000 acres in North Carolina. During that time, the military presence in North Carolina has continued to grow and it is expected to increase in the future. The N.C.

Department of Commerce projects that, by 2013, it will add another \$2.9 billion to the GDP along with 49,000 new jobs. Continued land conservation, using the state conservation trust funds to leverage federal Department of Defense dollars, will be crucial.

Parkway Protection – Views Boost the Economy

FUNDING:

Total: \$3.67 million

NHTF – \$1.13 million

NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund – \$868,000

State Parks Recreation Trails Program – \$75,000

Private donors – \$1.6 million

The Blue Ridge Parkway is celebrating its platinum anniversary in 2010 – 75 years of providing an incredible scenic adventure. Almost 20 million people visit the park annually, contributing more than \$2 billion to the region's economy. The protection of 1,488 acres of that landscape in McDowell County is an economic boost to an area that has been plagued with losses from textiles and other manufacturing.

No wonder that State Rep. Mitch Gillespie, who represents the area, calls the deal “a win-win all around.”

The property is owned by CSX Corp., which worked with the Conservation Trust for North Carolina (CTNC) and the state for more than six and a half years to hammer out a conservation agreement that will ensure the landscape remains untouched.



CSX property © Margaret Lillard/CTNC

“The protection of this property is a wonderful public-private partnership that saves the natural and cultural heritage of this region from hundreds of years ago,” Gillespie explains. “Since the land will still be owned by CSX Corp., they’ll continue to pay taxes and employ local people, supporting our local economy.”

The conservation easement protects the views from Milepost 325 to Milepost 329.5 of the Parkway. It also includes a mile and a half of the Overmountain Victory National Historical Trail, the route followed by mountain militiamen during the American Revolution on their way to a decisive Patriot victory at Kings Mountain. The agreement will open that section of the trail to public access. In conjunction with other CTNC conservation, a total of three miles of the trail – the only National Historic Trail to pass through North



Little Yellow Mountain © John Warner

Carolina – will be accessible.

The property connects critical habitat in the Pisgah National Forest to the Blue Ridge Parkway. It contains all or part of two state Significant Natural Heritage areas, with mature native forests. It also has more than seven miles of headwaters streams of the Catawba River that provide clean drinking water for more than a million residents in downstream communities and critical habitat to North Carolina's declining trout population.

Little Yellow Mountain: Preserving a Mountain Way of Life

FUNDING:

Total – \$4.7 million

NHTF – \$1.219 million

CWMTF – \$2.5 million

Private donors – \$995,000

Jay Leutze has been concerned about Little Yellow Mountain for decades. “Since I was a child, I worried

about the fate of Little Yellow Mountain,” he says. “Today, it is a summit success story, which is rare in any landscape. This is a landmark achievement.”

That’s because The Nature Conservancy (TNC) purchased the top of Little Yellow Mountain in Avery County in mid-November. Leutze, a TNC volunteer who is also on the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) board, has spent more than three decades gazing at Little Yellow. He lives on the slopes of nearby Big Yellow Mountain and often leads hikes to TNC’s Big Yellow Mountain Preserve, which is jointly managed by TNC and SAHC. The view of distinctive Little Yellow Mountain is one of the highlights of a trip to the top of Big Yellow.

The Hoilman family has been grazing their cattle on top of Big Yellow for more than a hundred years. November’s acquisition of the 466-acre summit of Little Yellow ensures that future generations of Hoilmans can continue to look out on the pretty summit across the way. Because it is likely to become a part of the state’s newly created Yellow Mountain State Natural Area, making it public land, many people will be able to enjoy its beauty in the future, boosting the local economy where the Hoilmans and their extended family live.

David Ray, TNC’s Mountain Programs Director, knew that Little Yellow Mountain was important. But the importance of its acquisition hit home when the Hoilman family heard it had been preserved. “They choked up. They’ve been connected to that land for so



Brian Short © N.C. Department of Agriculture

long, looking at it from the top of Big Yellow, and now it is protected,” Ray said.

In addition to TNC’s purchase of the summit, much of Little Yellow’s lower slopes have been protected by SAHC. The two conservancies have worked together in the area for more than three decades. “Safeguarding Little Yellow dovetails well with the work TNC did back in the ‘70s and ‘80s,” Ray says.

Little Yellow is an important piece of the Greater Roan Highlands. The 5,504-foot peak is home to a number of rare or uncommon plants. The yellow birch, sugar maple and northern red oak that cover its slopes give way to a summit covered in a variety of grasses, sedges and wildflowers.

Ray says Little Yellow is also important for wildlife. It

lies between large forest blocks — some already protected some not — to its north and south. The acquisition of Little Yellow provides a connection that encourages wildlife to roam freely in the area.

Saving the Family Farm

FUNDING:
\$157,000 ADFPTF

Brian Short grew up on a farm in rural Halifax County. About three miles down the road was another farm, owned by a family friend. Short bought it a few years ago. “I helped work it ever since I was seven or eight, spraying kudzu and planting trees,” he explains. He and his wife Jennifer wanted it to remain farmland — not a subdivision.

Their plans and dreams were put on hold when Brian’s work situation changed. He looked for a way to keep the farm, rather than subdividing it to sell for home sites. The solution was to apply for a grant from the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (ADFPTF). “When I got the notice that we had been accepted, we were six months out from losing the farm.” The \$157,000 grant allowed the Shorts to place 108 acres of the farm under conservation easement, ensuring that their land will remain agricultural.

“We are going to keep it in timber production, and we are working with a local hunting club to make it a preserve,” he explains. Short says many of his neighbors weren’t familiar with the idea of conservation

easements. “People in our community were not very receptive, especially when it comes to perpetual easements,” he says. “We’ve started talking to people about what we’ve done and now several of them have applied for grants as well.”

Short, 28, already can see what his decision may accomplish for future generations. He and his wife had their first baby, a little girl, in December. “Our goal is to keep everything in the family. We’re hoping to bring her up helping on the farm in timber production and wildlife management that is economically viable.”

Cove Swamp: It Takes a Community to Save a Swamp

FUNDING:

Total: \$700,000

CWMTF – \$350,000

PARTF – \$300,000

Private donors – \$50,000

Local communities realize the value of conservation land. That’s why the folks around Lake Waccamaw in Columbus County rallied around Cove Swamp last spring. Word got out that its out-of-state landowner planned to clear cut the 441-acre tract, which would have been an environmental, aesthetic and economic disaster for the community.

The two-mile-long swamp runs through the middle of the town of Lake Waccamaw and drains into the lake. Clear cutting not only would have left an eyesore, but would have allowed silt and other pollutants to flow unchecked into a lake that is home to eight species



Alligator in Cove Canal Swamp © Debbie Crane/TNC

found nowhere else on earth.

“If the swamp had been clear cut, the Lake Waccamaw community would have lost a lot of its attraction for people looking for recreation,” says David Scott, who helped lead the campaign to save Cove Swamp.

The State of North Carolina was interested in preserving the swamp as part of Lake Waccamaw State Park but could only provide \$650,000 of the \$700,000 sales price. So folks like Scott put the word out, held a public meeting and in a single evening raised \$30,000 in small donations.

One of the people who spoke at the public meeting was Dr. Diane Lauritsen. She first visited the lake in 1980, conducting research there while working on her doctorate at N.C. State University.

“Cove Swamp is a critical component of the Lake Waccamaw watershed. It provides important ecosystem

services, by moderating flooding and retaining nutrients and sediments. Clear cutting would drastically alter the swamp, ultimately causing water quality problems in the lake,” she said.

Lauritsen says that while the environmental consequences of clear cutting the swamp are clear, there are other important social issues. “If you were to do an economic analysis of the lake’s value, you would have to include recreational and scenic benefits, benefits related to ecosystem services the swamp provides such as water retention and providing habitat to species found nowhere else,” she explains. “Precisely because the value is so high, the cost of protection of these resources seems to be a great bargain.”

By the end of campaign, people from across North Carolina and as far away as Florida contributed more than \$68,000 to save the swamp, which is now one of the state’s newest parklands.



credits



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