

# Saving the Goodliest Land

A Five-Year Plan for Investing in North Carolina's  
Land, Water, History and Future

June 2005



**LAND** *for* **TOMORROW**

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## **Table of Contents**

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Introduction and Summary of the Plan	1
Why Act Now? Rip Van Winkle is Awake.	4
Land Ownership Patterns are Changing	
Rural and Urban Areas Have Different Problems but Land and History are Critical to Both	
North Carolinians Support Open Space Protection	7
Why Land Conservation and Historic Preservation Are Critical to North Carolina's Future	8
Growing the Economy and Providing Jobs	
Protecting Public Health	
Enhancing Quality of Life Through Recreation, Historic Sites and Scenic Beauty	
Protecting Native Plants and Wildlife	
Examples of Successful Projects that Invested in North Carolina's Land, History and Future	14
State Funding Makes the Difference	17
Places that Matter: Five-Year Conservation Goals for Nine Types of Property	19
Rivers, Wetlands, Floodplains and Coastal Waters	
Working Farms	
Working Forests	
Local Parks and Trails	
State Parks and Trails	
Game Lands and Other Natural Areas	
Urban Forests	
Land Visible From Scenic Highways	
Historic Places	
State Funding and Program Needs to Meet Five-Year Conservation Goals	31
Funding Options for Consideration	34
Saving the Goodliest Land	35
Acknowledgements	36

## **Table of Contents – Maps and Appendices**

Maps	M1
Map 1: Water Supply Watersheds and Other Bodies of Water to Receive Protection as High Quality Waters	
Map 2: Development Pressure on High Quality Farmland in North Carolina	
Map 3: Existing and Proposed State Forests and Forest Legacy Areas	
Map 4: Existing and Proposed North Carolina State Parks	
Map 5: North Carolina Game Lands and Wildlife Resources Commission Focus Areas	
Map 6: Terrestrial Ecoregions of North Carolina	
Appendix A: Growing the Economy and Providing Jobs	A1
Agriculture	
Tourism	
Forest Products	
Military Bases	
Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Watching	
Recruiting and Retaining Knowledge Workers	
Economic Impact of Restoration and Reuse of Historic Buildings	
Appendix B: Protecting Public Health	B1
Clean Water	
Clean Air	
Places to Exercise	
Flood Protection	
Appendix C: Enhancing Quality of Life Through Recreation, Historic Sites and Scenic Beauty	C1
Natural-Area Recreation Such as Hiking, Camping and Swimming in Lakes and the Ocean Viewing Scenery	
Local Recreation Such as Walking and Biking, Playgrounds, Swimming Pools and Soccer Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Watching	
Visiting Historic Sites	
Appendix D: Protecting Native Plants and Wildlife	D1
Appendix E: Summary of North Carolina Land Conservation Financing Study	E1
Appendix F: Survey Results from Local Parks and Recreation Departments	F1
Appendix G: Summary of Survey Results from Farmland Owner Poll – November 2003	G1
Appendix H: Summary of Survey Results from Public Poll – March 2004	H1
Appendix I: State Land Conservation Spending 1999-2004	I1

## **Introduction and Summary of the Plan**

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In 1585, Sir Walter Raleigh sent Lieutenant Ralph Lane and a group of surveyors to establish the first English colony in the New World. Adventuring off Roanoke Island, Lane's men explored the mainland to the west and declared it "to bee the goodliest soile under the cope of heaven."

That "goodliest soile" became North Carolina. Since then the farms, forests, fields, mountains, rivers, sounds and oceans have provided livelihoods for our citizens and astonished visitors with their beauty. Lane's men were right: we truly live in the "goodliest" land.

Today, the quality of North Carolina's natural and rural lands and its water are just as important as they were 400 years ago.

- A significant amount of the state's jobs and gross product depend on quality land and water including those in tourism, agriculture, forestry, fishing and on military bases.
- Other businesses strongly consider quality of life and a healthy environment for their employees when they make decisions about where to locate.
- Public health depends on safe drinking water, clean air and places to exercise.
- Our quality of life is enhanced by the state's parks and trails, places celebrating our history and the sheer beauty of the land.
- North Carolina's geographic diversity produces a special variety of native plants and animals that makes this one of the world's ecological "hot spots."

North Carolina is a "hot spot" for people. Between 1990 and 2000 our population grew by 21% and is expected to increase by 50% by 2030. You can travel almost anywhere in North Carolina and see firsthand the pressures our population creates on the land. More than one million acres of natural and rural land have been developed over the last decade. North Carolina lost more prime farmland between 1987 and 1997 than any other state except Ohio and Texas. And for the first time since the 1930s, falling forest acreage contributed to a decline in the volume of the state's timber-growing stock.

To help protect these critical areas, the General Assembly created the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, Natural Heritage Trust Fund and Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. The General Assembly also set a goal of conserving one million acres of critical lands between 2000 and 2009. Significant progress has been made, but efforts have fallen short because of lack of funding. The Farmland Preservation Trust Fund has received no funding for the last two years. In 2004, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund had only \$62 million in appropriations compared to \$350 million in grant requests. Protecting our critical land is only going to get harder and more costly.

Because of the need to expand land and historic conservation efforts in North Carolina, several of the state's leading nonprofit organizations joined together to form Land for Tomorrow in 2003.<sup>1</sup> Their goals are to:

- Build awareness of the importance of land conservation and historic preservation to North Carolina's future.
- Advocate for expanded funding to meet that need.

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<sup>1</sup> At the time this plan was developed, ten groups were members of Land for Tomorrow: American Farmland Trust, Conservation Trust for North Carolina, Land Loss Prevention Project, NC Community Development Initiative, NC Public Interest Research Group (NCPiRG), NC Recreation and Park Association, Preservation NC, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy NC Chapter and The Trust for Public Land. Since that time, many more organizations have become partners of Land for Tomorrow. An up-to-date list is available at [www.landfortomorrow.org](http://www.landfortomorrow.org).

Land for Tomorrow began its work by interviewing business, government and nonprofit leaders from across the state and polling registered voters and farmland owners to learn more about what people in North Carolina think about conservation. We studied conservation finance techniques used in North Carolina and other states to develop a better understanding of options available to increase funding at the federal, state and local levels.

Based upon this information, research into land and historic properties in North Carolina and current programs to protect them, and advice from more than one hundred experts, the Coalition presents this report, *Saving the Goodliest Land: A Five-Year Plan for Investing in North Carolina's Land, History and Future*.

This report:

- Examines changes in land use and ownership that are creating economic, public health, ecological and quality of life challenges in urban and rural areas.
- Recommends how the state can address these challenges by increasing funding for land conservation and historic preservation.
- Recommends the following five-year conservation goals:
  - **Rivers, Wetlands, Floodplains and Coastal Waters** – 6,000 miles of stream banks and flood plains
  - **Working Farms** – 50,000 acres of productive farmland
  - **Working Forests** – 25,000 acres
  - **Local Parks and Trails** – 34,000 acres and needed trail and park facilities
  - **State Parks and Trails** – 60,000 acres and needed trails and facilities
  - **Game Lands and Other Natural Areas** – 150,000 acres
  - **Historic Places** – Restore 350 historic landmarks for public use and protect 3,000 acres of important archeological sites and land around State Historic Sites
  - **Land Visible from Scenic Highways** – 50,000 acres along the Blue Ridge Parkway and other scenic highways
  - **Urban Forests** – Increase tree canopy in areas that are not meeting air quality standards
- Estimates that the projected cost to North Carolina state government to meet these conservation goals is an additional **\$200 million annually for five years** which can be used to leverage federal, local and private matching funds.
- Recommends creating one new initiative to help communities take advantage of their critical land and historic places to create sustainable jobs and a higher quality of life.
- Recommends building on the State's excellent existing conservation trust funds, One North Carolina *Naturally* program and the creative, vibrant work of local governments, nonprofits and community groups to accomplish these goals.

Land for Tomorrow presents this plan as a proposal for discussion. We hope that it will be used by legislators, state agency staff, and citizens and organizations to craft an action plan for saving North Carolina's critical land and historic places and ensuring a bright future for our citizens and communities.

If we're successful in this effort, our children and grandchildren will still think of North Carolina as the "goodliest land" with:

- Clean air and water
- Sustainable jobs and vibrant communities
- Thriving farms and forests
- Places to enjoy the beauty of North Carolina, to exercise, to hunt and fish
- Places of historic significance and ecological value

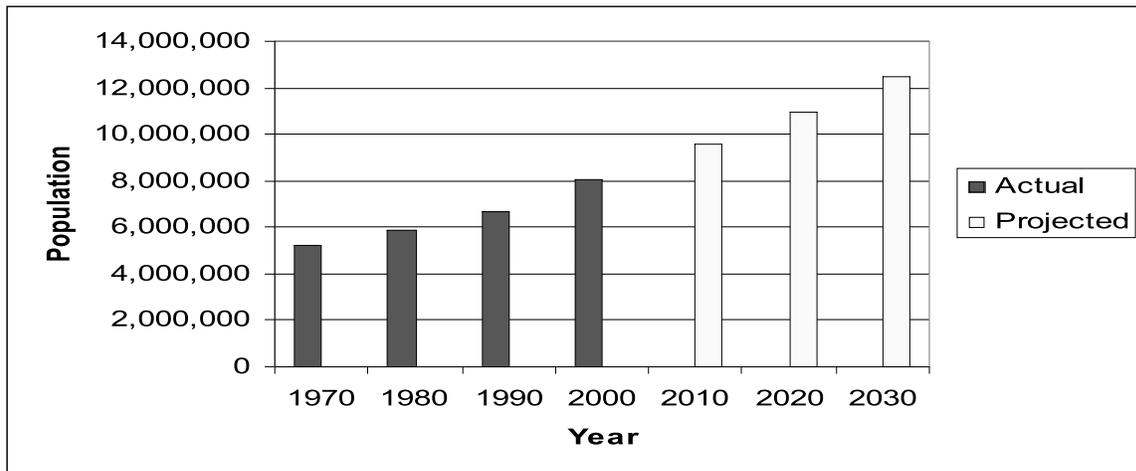
In 1971, North Carolina voters approved Article XIV, Section V of the State Constitution, which mandates that we must use "every appropriate way to preserve as part of the common heritage of this State its forests, wetlands, estuaries, beaches, historical sites, openlands and places of beauty." Implementing Saving the Goodliest Land is the best way to follow through on that Constitutional commitment. We must protect North Carolina's critical land and historic places now. There will be no second chance.

## Why Act Now? Rip Van Winkle Is Awake.

By all accounts, North Carolina got off to a slow start. In the early 1800s, North Carolina became known as the “Rip Van Winkle” state because it was so remote and uninvolved compared to its fellow colonies.<sup>2</sup>

In the last thirty years, however, North Carolina has fully emerged from its Rip Van Winkle slumber. Three million more people live here now than in 1970, and the population is expected to grow by another 4.4 million by 2030 (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> In absolute numbers, North Carolina is the sixth-fastest growing state in the nation.<sup>4</sup> For the period of 1990 to 2000, 97 of our 100 counties had an increase in population, some growing as much as 50%.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 1: Actual and Projected Population: 1970-2030**



This rapid growth has brought many good things to North Carolina – jobs, cultural diversity and new ideas. But while our population is growing, our supply of land is not. Recent estimates indicate that North Carolina’s farmland and natural lands are being built into new subdivisions, shopping centers, offices and roads each year at a rate of 277 acres per day or one million acres each decade.<sup>6</sup>

Even with continued population growth, this loss of land is not inevitable. Our current patterns of development use a great deal more land per person than we did in the past. As a result, our cities and towns are spreading out into the countryside, and downtowns and older neighborhoods in many towns and cities are struggling. For example, in the Triangle area in 1950, only 122 acres were developed for every 1,000 residents. In 1990, that same number of residents used 353 acres of land (Figure 2).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Powell, William S. 1989. North Carolina through Four Centuries. The University of North Carolina Press. p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> North Carolina State Demographics, from US Census data, <http://demog.state.nc.us/demog/projections.html>

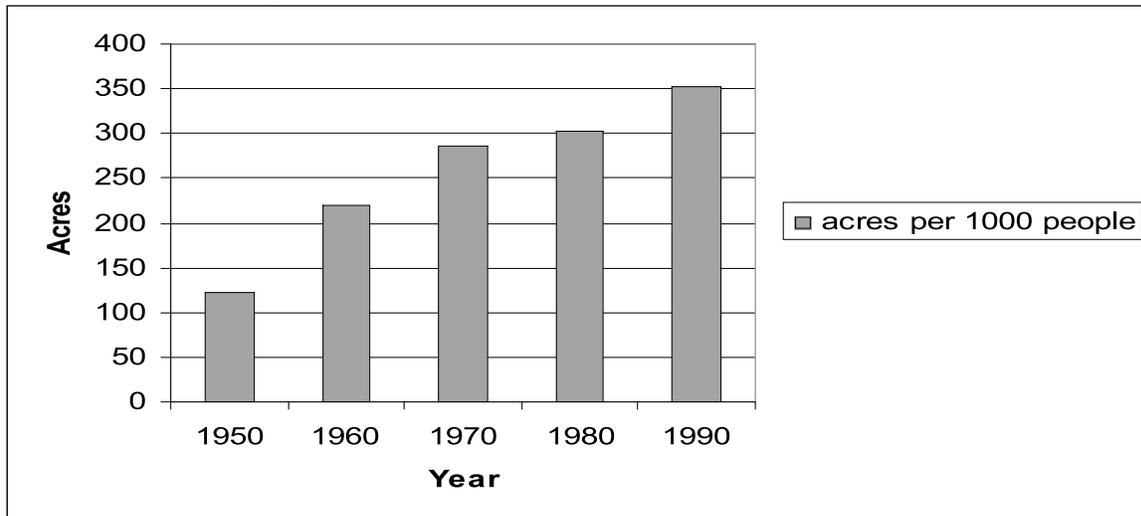
<sup>4</sup> North Carolina State Demographics, from US Census data, <http://demog.state.nc.us/demog/stgr13a.html>

<sup>5</sup> US Census data, <http://www.census.gov/>

<sup>6</sup> One North Carolina Naturally website: <http://www.enr.state.nc.us/officeofconservation/pages/impactfacts.html>

<sup>7</sup> Costa, Lorelei and Andrea Petersen. 2002. State of Open Space 2002: The Status of the Triangle’s Green Infrastructure. Triangle Land Conservancy. Raleigh, NC. [www.tlc-nc.org](http://www.tlc-nc.org).

**Figure 2: Number of Acres Developed per 1,000 People in the Triangle Region, 1950 to 1990**



**Land Ownership Patterns Are Changing**

Three types of landowners that own substantial acreage in North Carolina are selling off land because of changes in their industries. This widespread sale of land provides North Carolina with a rare opportunity to permanently protect water quality and native plants and wildlife and to keep critical lands in productive agriculture and forestry.

**Power Companies Key finding:** Power companies are selling land acquired for hydropower generation along rivers and streams throughout North Carolina because of changes in their industry and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission re-licensing process. Currently, this land provides natural buffers that protect water quality, and the vegetation in these buffers may be cleared when the land is sold.

*Recommendation:* Protect buffers along rivers and streams to permanently protect water quality when power companies sell land along rivers and streams. Assess these lands to determine whether they have potential as parks, game lands and other natural areas.

**Forest Products Industry Key Finding:** Industrial timber companies are selling hundreds of thousands of acres of forest land, particularly in the coastal plain.

*Recommendation:* Work to keep this land in forest use, particularly when the land has been designated by the state as a “Forest Legacy” area because of its value to the forest products industry or as a “Natural Heritage” site because of its significant natural resources.

**Tobacco Farms Key Finding:** With the tobacco quota system now officially over, quota holders will be deciding over the next few years whether to keep farming their land. Thousands of acres in working farms may be sold for development, and farming communities may disappear if the state does not deal creatively with this change in agriculture.

*Recommendation:* Work to keep productive farmland available for farming through purchase of development rights (PDR) programs (described in more detail in Appendix A) and other programs to help make farming profitable.

### **Rural and Urban Areas Have Different Problems But Land and History Are Critical to Both**

Rural and urban areas in North Carolina face very different challenges. In the past fifty years, urban and suburban areas have prospered economically, while rural areas have faced dramatic economic declines. In fact, the disparity of income among these different areas of North Carolina has led Governor Michael Easley and others to talk about “two North Carolinas” and the importance of providing opportunity for everyone so that we can become “one North Carolina.”

Many rural counties in North Carolina face very high rates of unemployment and poverty, and they have trouble attracting clean industry and new residents because they are remote and often have struggling downtowns and old or minimal infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer systems. From 2000 through 2003, there were more than 73,000 layoffs in rural counties; 60,000 were in manufacturing. Eighteen rural counties lost population during that time, in large part due to these job losses. In 2003 ten rural counties had unemployment rates of 10% or greater.

On the other hand, these same rural counties are among the richest in natural and historic resources in all of North Carolina. With creative and strategic investments, these resources could become valuable economic assets and provide jobs and improved quality of life to citizens of these communities through heritage tourism, value-added agriculture, forestry, renovation and re-use of historic buildings, and other conservation-based economic activities.

Urban and suburban areas and some rural counties that are attracting tourists, retirees and second-home residents face very different challenges caused by rapid and unplanned growth. Population in North Carolina’s urban counties grew by 25% or 800,000 people from 1990-2000 and is projected to increase by another 50% by 2030. Land for Tomorrow focus groups conducted in Asheville, Raleigh and Wilmington found that traffic jams, water and air pollution and the loss of beautiful and historic landscapes worry citizens greatly.

These counties need help improving water and air quality, providing parks, trails and places to enjoy the outdoors, and preserving historic buildings and natural and rural land. Such investments will help urban and rapidly-developing rural communities maintain the quality of life that has made them economically successful and desirable places to live.

## North Carolinians Support Open Space Protection

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To learn what North Carolinians think about issues related to land, development, outdoor recreation and historic preservation, Land for Tomorrow conducted focus groups and a statewide poll.

In the fall of 2003, Land for Tomorrow conducted focus groups with citizens in Asheville, Raleigh and Wilmington, and the first question asked was what they like best and least about the communities in which they live. In all three areas, people talked about the beauty of the land and their love for North Carolina's farmland, its mountains and coast. One Raleigh resident said, "This community is known for its greenery, and the building is wiping the green out." Top concerns were traffic, air pollution and lack of planning to deal with all the development needed to support the people moving into the area.

Land for Tomorrow then conducted a statewide poll in early 2004 to better understand broad public opinion.<sup>8</sup> More than 70% of respondents saw the following issues as very or somewhat serious in North Carolina:

pollution of rivers and streams – 84% thought it was a serious problem  
loss of wildlife habitat – 75% thought it was a serious problem  
air pollution – 74% thought it was a serious problem  
loss of farmland – 73% thought it was a serious problem

Fifty-nine percent of North Carolinians agreed that we are losing land so fast that we must find a way to preserve open space, farmland and water supply areas. Eighty-six percent say that they would be likely to support increased funding if it would protect rivers and waterways, and 82% say that they would be likely to support increased funding if it would protect family farms and farmland.

Strong majorities also supported protecting land for many other purposes including:

- historic sites
- habitat for wildlife
- scenic views
- local parks
- hunting and fishing
- hiking and biking trails

Another measure of growing public support for land conservation is the amount of local bond money raised in North Carolina. Between 1998 and 2004, more than \$180 million local dollars have been raised for open space protection through bond measures. Between 2000 and 2004, there were 14 local referenda across the state, with 13 of those measures passing. The 13 approved referenda passed by wide margins - an average of 64%.<sup>9</sup> This trend is happening in other parts of the country too. Since 1996, 1,065 out of 1,376 conservation ballot measures have passed in 43 states, raising over \$27 billion – a passage rate of 77%.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Land for Tomorrow: Survey Results from Public Poll - March 2004. Available in Appendix H of the full report and through [www.landfortomorrow.org](http://www.landfortomorrow.org)

<sup>9</sup> The Trust for Public Land. 2004. NC Land Conservation Financing Study. Available in Appendix E of the full report and on [www.landfortomorrow.org](http://www.landfortomorrow.org)

<sup>10</sup> [www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org); The Trust for Public Land and Land Trust Alliance publish a report each year called Land Vote: Americans Invest in Parks and Open Space which documents all of the ballot measures each year.

## **Why Land Conservation and Historic Preservation Are Critical to North Carolina's Future**

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This section of the report summarizes our findings about how water, land and historic places impact the state's economy, public health, quality of life and native plants and wildlife. After each summary of our findings, we present a recommendation about how to ensure that the benefits derived from our water, land and historic places are not lost now or to future generations. This summary of findings and recommendations are drawn from more detailed information on each topic presented in Appendices A through D at the back of this report.

### **Growing the Economy and Providing Jobs<sup>11</sup>**

North Carolina's water, natural and rural lands, and historic places are integral to the state's economy. More than one third of the state's gross product is generated by industries that depend on land and water such as agriculture, tourism, forestry, fishing, hunting and wildlife-watching, and jobs found on military bases.

***Agriculture Key Finding:*** In North Carolina, agriculture generates almost \$7 billion annually in cash receipts. North Carolina ranks among the top five states in the nation in items as diverse as tobacco, turkeys, sweet potatoes, hogs, trout, greenhouse and nursery plants, blueberries and pickling cucumbers. However, between 1987 and 1997, North Carolina lost more prime farmland to development than any state other than Texas and Ohio.

*Recommendation:* Maintain a critical mass of productive farms in agriculture through purchase of development rights (PDR) and other programs to keep agriculture profitable.

***Tourism Key Finding:*** North Carolina is the sixth most visited state in the country in large part because visitors think of North Carolina as a "state where you can enjoy unspoiled natural beauty in a restful and relaxing atmosphere." In 2003, visitors spent \$12.6 billion and provided jobs for 183,220 North Carolinians. Heritage tourism is the fastest-growing sector in the tourism industry.

*Recommendation:* Protect beautiful views and clean water and air and provide a variety of natural and historic sites to visit in order to expand and protect North Carolina's tourism industry.

***Forest Products Industry Key Finding:*** Forest products, such as lumber, pine straw, pulp and paper, generate \$3.7 billion of North Carolina's gross state product. However, forest acreage decreased by one million acres between 1990 and 2001, primarily because forests have been developed around urban areas.

*Recommendation:* Protect forest land through purchase of development rights (PDR) and other programs to keep forestry profitable.

***Military Bases Key Finding:*** North Carolina's four military bases generate approximately \$12 billion of our gross state product. One of the biggest problems facing military bases is development of once rural land surrounding their borders because it makes training exercises difficult and dangerous. The US Department of Defense considered development around bases and states' efforts to prevent it as one of the main factors in its recent decision about which bases to close.

*Recommendation:* Prevent urban encroachment around North Carolina's bases and their training grounds by protecting natural and rural land on their borders.

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix A for a more complete description of the how land conservation and historic preservation benefit the industries listed in this section.

**Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Watching** *Key Finding:* Fishing, hunting and wildlife-watching are important economic drivers in North Carolina. Recreational anglers, hunters and wildlife-watchers spend \$2.8 billion per year, and commercial fishing adds \$103 million in nineteen coastal counties.

*Recommendation:* Protect vegetated buffers along streams and estuaries to protect habitat for fish. Protect forests and farmland that provide important habitat for wildlife. Provide access to places to fish, hunt and watch wildlife, and encourage development of lodging, restaurants and other amenities for traveling sportsmen and wildlife-watchers.

**Recruiting and Retaining Knowledge Workers** *Key Finding:* Recent research into location decisions of high-tech companies indicates that the best strategy for recruiting and retaining such companies is to build and maintain communities that appeal to “knowledge workers.” Among other things, such workers are interested in outdoor activities and the authenticity and uniqueness that come from historic buildings, established neighborhoods and unique natural and rural landscapes.

*Key Recommendation:* Protect natural areas, historic places and rural landscapes and provide trails, parks and other amenities for outdoor activities in order to maintain the high quality of life valued by knowledge workers.

**Economic Impact of Restoration and Reuse of Historic Buildings** *Key Finding:* Restoration and reuse of historic buildings provides important economic benefits beyond being a draw for tourists and knowledge workers. Jobs, tax revenues and additional income and investments are created through the process of restoration.

*Key Recommendation:* Invest strategically in restoration and reuse of historic landmarks that are open to the public to leverage jobs, private investment and other economic benefits.

**Places that Matter: Protecting the Economy and Jobs** The table below shows which of nine types of places are critical to the industries described above. For more information about how these types of places contribute to each industry, please see Appendix A.

PLACES THAT MATTER	INDUSTRY BENEFIT					
	Agriculture	Forest Products	Tourism	Military	Fishing, Hunting, Wildlife-Watching	Knowledge Workers
Rivers, Wetlands, Floodplains and Coastal Waters			X		X	X
Working Farms	X		X	X	X	X
Working Forests		X		X	X	
Local Parks and Trails			X			X
State Parks and Trails			X	X	X	X
Game Lands and Other Natural Areas		X	X	X	X	X
Urban Forests			X		X	X
Land Visible from Scenic Highways	X		X			X
Historic Places			X			X

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix B for a more complete description of how land conservation and historic preservation benefit public health.

## **Protecting Public Health<sup>12</sup>**

**Clean Water Key Finding:** More than 2,600 miles of streams in North Carolina do not meet water quality standards. An additional 25,260 miles have not been monitored enough to assess water quality.

*Recommendation:* Protect land and vegetation along the banks of rivers and estuaries to keep polluted runoff from fields, lawns and roads from contaminating our water. Also protect wetlands from development because they purify the water.

**Clean Air Key Finding:** North Carolina's air quality has been steadily degrading. The federal government has ordered 32 counties to reduce levels of the pollutant ozone. Three of these counties also have higher concentrations of small particulate matter (PM 2.5) in the air than national standards consider safe.

*Recommendation:* Protect and replant trees in areas with poor air quality to help reduce ozone and particulate matter in the air. Maintain at least 40% tree cover, ranging from 15% in central business districts to 50% or more in suburban residential areas.

**Places to Exercise Key Finding:** Physical inactivity and poor diet combined have become the second-leading cause of preventable death in North Carolina. Medical costs associated with obesity now total \$2.1 billion per year. Public health officials recognize that the design of many neighborhoods, which makes walking and biking difficult and dangerous, is a significant contributor to this epidemic.

*Recommendation:* Build more parks, greenways and trails to provide convenient opportunities for physical activity. Restore and reuse public buildings such as schools in established, walkable neighborhoods to encourage physical activity among children and adults.

**Reducing Flood Damage Key Finding:** Hurricanes and tropical storms in the last ten years have illustrated the great cost in lives and property damage caused by flooding.

*Recommendation:* Protect land and vegetation in floodplains and on steep slopes to reduce damage from flooding of buildings and resultant loss of life.

### ***Places that Matter: Protecting Public Health***

The table below shows which of nine types of places are critical to protect for clean water and air, exercise and prevention of flooding. For more information about how these types of places contribute to public health, please see Appendix B.

<b>PLACES THAT MATTER</b>	<b>PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFIT</b>			
	<b>Water Quality</b>	<b>Air Quality</b>	<b>Places to Exercise</b>	<b>Flood Prevention</b>
Rivers, Wetlands, Floodplains and Coastal Waters	X	X	X	X
Working Farms				X
Working Forests	X	X		X
Local Parks and Trails	X	X	X	
State Parks and Trails	X	X	X	X
Game Lands and Other Natural Areas	X	X	X	X
Urban Forests	X	X		X
Land Visible from Scenic Highways	X	X		
Historic Places		X		

## **Enhancing Quality of Life<sup>13</sup>**

Every five years, the NC Division of Parks and Recreation surveys North Carolina citizens to learn which outdoor activities they are participating in and which they would participate in if more opportunities were available. The most popular activities are ones that can be enjoyed by almost everyone, at relatively low cost. These activities include walking (75% of households participate), viewing scenery (71%), visiting historic sites (62%) and visiting natural areas (53%).

***Natural-Area Recreation such as Hiking, Camping and Swimming in Lakes and the Ocean*** *Key Finding:* Walking for pleasure, beach activities, swimming in lakes and visiting natural areas are some of the most popular activities in North Carolina, and North Carolinians strongly support public funding to provide additional places for such activities. A record 13.2 million people visited North Carolina's state parks in 2002, a 160% increase over the last 20 years.

*Recommendation:* Expand existing parks and create new parks in areas of the state without nearby natural-area parks to meet public demand for outdoor recreation.

***Local Recreation such as Walking, Biking, Playgrounds, Swimming Pools and Soccer*** *Key Finding:* Popular facilities provided by local park and recreation departments include walking and biking trails, playgrounds, swimming pools and open areas for activities such as organized and unorganized sports activities, special events and a variety of programs for all ages. North Carolina's growing population and the increase in obesity mean that local parks departments face a rapidly increasing need for their services.

*Recommendation:* Build more local parks, trails and recreation facilities to meet the need for active recreation and to provide safe and pleasant places to walk and bike.

***Viewing Scenery*** *Key Finding:* Over 70% of North Carolinians report that driving for pleasure and viewing scenery are popular activities for their households.

*Recommendation:* Protect vistas from development along officially-designated scenic highways.

***Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Watching*** *Key Finding:* Thirty-nine percent of North Carolinians like to hunt, fish or watch wildlife, but as forest and farms have been developed the diversity of species where many people live has declined and more and more land is off limits to hunting, fishing and exploring.

*Recommendation:* Protect habitat for fish and wildlife and provide places to hunt, fish and watch wildlife.

***Visiting Historic Sites*** *Key Finding:* Sixty-two percent of North Carolinians visit historic sites each year, and there is strong support for public funding to restore and open additional historic sites.

*Recommendation:* Acquire, restore and open more historic sites to the public. Renovate and reuse public historic buildings such as court houses and school buildings to help maintain vibrant communities and slow new development on rural lands. Protective covenants on privately-owned historic buildings can also maintain their aesthetic and educational value to a community.

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix C for a more complete description of how land conservation and historic preservation enhance quality of life.

***Places that Matter: Enhancing Quality of Life***

The table below shows which of nine types of places provide North Carolina's citizens places to recreate, view scenery, hunt and learn about history. Appendix C provides a more complete description of how each of these types of places enhances quality of life.

<b>PLACES THAT MATTER</b>	<b>QUALITY OF LIFE BENEFIT</b>				
	<b>Natural-Area Recreation such as Hiking, Camping, Swimming</b>	<b>Local Recreation such as Walking, Biking, Soccer, Playgrounds</b>	<b>Viewing Scenery</b>	<b>Hunting, Fishing, Wildlife-Watching</b>	<b>Visiting Historic Sites</b>
Rivers, Wetlands, Floodplains and Coastal Waters	X	X	X	X	
Working Farms			X	X	
Working Forests				X	
Local Parks and Trails		X	X	X	
State Parks and Trails	X		X	X	
Game Lands and Other Natural Areas	X	X	X	X	
Urban Forests		X	X	X	
Land Visible from Scenic Highways			X	X	
Historic Places			X		X

## **Protecting Native Plants and Wildlife**<sup>14</sup>

*Key Finding:* North Carolina has some of the most extraordinary natural habitats in the world. Four of our five “ecoregions” are considered “globally outstanding” by international scientists, but 18% of North Carolina’s native species are in danger of extinction and only small percentages of the state remain in natural habitat.

*Recommendation:* Protect and restore large blocks of unfragmented natural habitat in order to save our extraordinary ecosystems and the native plants and wildlife that depend on them.

### ***Places that Matter: Protecting Native Plants and Wildlife***

The table below shows which of nine types of places are needed to ensure that our native species of plants and wildlife flourish in North Carolina. Appendix D provides a more complete description of how each of these types of places protects native plants and wildlife.

<b>PLACES THAT MATTER</b>	<b>Habitat for Native Plants and Wildlife</b>
Rivers, Wetlands, Floodplains and Coastal Waters	X
Working Farms	X
Working Forests	X
Local Parks and Trails	X
State Parks and Trails	X
Game Lands and Other Natural Areas	X
Urban Forests	X
Land Visible from Scenic Highways	X
Historic Places	

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix D for a more complete description of how land conservation protects native plants and wildlife.

## Examples of Successful Projects that Invested in North Carolina's Land, History and Future

Seventy years ago, the federal government showed extraordinary foresight when it invested in several grand conservation projects envisioned by North Carolinians. Some examples are the Blue Ridge Parkway and Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Cape Hatteras National Seashore and Umstead State Park in Raleigh. These projects have paid huge returns on the original investment – in economic development and jobs, in enjoyment for citizens and visitors alike, in protection of native plants and wildlife. In fact, these places are often the ones that come to mind when people think of North Carolina.

At the time, those projects required massive federal dollars. Now, we've developed many other conservation tools and partners to help share the work and cost. Land and buildings can be kept in private hands, protected through conservation easements and protective covenants. Local governments, nonprofit land trusts, community development groups and historic preservation organizations can own and manage land, easements and buildings.

All across North Carolina, governments and community groups and nonprofits are taking action to protect water quality, build trails to help people exercise and improve air quality, protect working farms and forest land, create new parks and historic sites and protect land around military bases. These projects have the potential to mean as much to North Carolina as those completed seventy years ago. In the four years between 1999 and 2003, all these entities together protected 280,342 acres of land<sup>15</sup> and numerous historic buildings.

One of the most extraordinary things about these projects is that almost all provide multiple benefits to a community. For example, a project may begin as a means to protect water quality, but in the end it may also provide a place for people to walk and enjoy the outdoors and for native wildlife to flourish. It may also bring income to the community through farming, forestry or tourism, or by helping it attract new businesses. Here are some examples of recent projects that have made a difference:

- In 1999, **Bryson City** leaders came together to assess the major needs in their community. They were very concerned about problems with their aging water system and the number of vacant buildings in their once vibrant downtown. The challenge was to find the capital needed to address these problems. With technical assistance from The Conservation Fund and Land Trust for the Little Tennessee, they decided to sell a permanent conservation easement to the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund that restricts future development in their water supply watershed, which is adjacent to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. They will use the funds from sale of the easement to upgrade their water system and revitalize the downtown business district. Through the easement, they will also protect public health and their economy by preventing inappropriate development in the watershed that might impact their water quality and disrupt wildlife and recreation in the park, the town's most important economic asset.
- In 1995, a farm in the heart of the **Sutphin Mill** farming community on the Chatham-Alamance County line went on the market. Land prices had been rising fast enough in this community located halfway between the Triad and the Triangle that no farmer could afford to buy it. Other farmers were very concerned about the effect a housing development might have on their own ability to farm. They knew they needed a group of farms together to keep other associated businesses, such as feed and tractor stores, profitable. They also worried that new neighbors might complain about farm practices like pesticide use and slow-moving machinery on the roads. They turned to the Piedmont

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<sup>15</sup> 2004 Annual Report: NC Million Acre Initiative. Office of Conservation and Community Affairs, NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources. <http://www.enr.state.nc.us/officeofconservation/>

Land Conservancy and American Farmland Trust to help them find a solution. By piecing together funding from a variety of sources, the Piedmont Land Conservancy was able to purchase the farm at fair market value, place permanent restrictions within the deed on any future non-agricultural development on the farm, and then resell it at its farm value to a farmer. This project was so successful that four other Sutphin Mill farmers have since entered into similar agreements, and more than 500 acres of farmland have now been permanently protected.

- The **Roanoke River** in northeastern North Carolina is the “largest intact bottomland hardwood swamp forest east of the Mississippi. Mistletoe and Spanish moss decorate majestic cypress trees and towering tupelos. Blossoms of cardinal flowers blaze in shafts of sunlight underneath. The area is home to black bear, river otter, white-tail deer, bobcat, beaver and mink. Over 200 bird species have been sighted in the river corridor, including bald eagles, barred owl, osprey, and anhinga. Coupled with the hundreds of great egrets and great blue herons nesting in the region, it is a birdwatcher’s paradise. The River is renowned for its abundance of striped bass, largemouth bass, black crappie, lunker catfish, gar and bowfin.”<sup>16</sup> For many years, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, NC Wildlife Resources Commission, and The Nature Conservancy have worked cooperatively to protect land along this river because of its extraordinary natural habitats and diversity of wildlife and native plants. They have partnered with Dominion Power and the US Corps of Engineers to manage water flow through dams to mimic the natural flow of the river while still generating needed power. But the river has been difficult for many people to access and enjoy unless they were willing to don hip waders for the swamps or had a sturdy fishing boat. Roanoke River Partners is a new nonprofit working to change that by building elevated camping platforms on the river and its tributaries. Eleven of these are now in place, including a luxury model with screening to keep the mosquitoes away!
- According to the NC Advisory Commission on Military Affairs, construction of houses and other developments around military bases is the most critical problem facing North Carolina’s military. New neighbors often complain about noise and safety concerns, and they make it difficult for the military to train its soldiers. In recent years, the Army and the Marines have partnered with The Nature Conservancy, US Fish and Wildlife Service and NC Wildlife Resources Commission to protect land around **Fort Bragg** and **Camp LeJeune**. TNC, USFWS and NCWRC want to protect and restore the extraordinary natural habitat that surrounds these bases, and the military welcomes the assurance that if the land remains in natural habitat they will not have many neighbors on their borders. One recent project that illustrates the value of this partnership is the permanent protection of a 2,500-acre tract surrounded on three sides by Camp LeJeune that was slated for a 3,000 home subdivision with two golf courses. The land has now become a new addition to the NC Wildlife Resources Commission’s game lands program.
- Turning the abandoned **American Tobacco** railroad line into a trail has been a dream for many years of Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (TRTC), and, through a regional effort, that dream is coming true. The railroad ran more than 23 miles from Bonsal in western Wake County through Chatham County into downtown Durham. Now, thanks to the efforts of TRTC and Durham and Wake County’s Parks Departments, the trail bustles with life as walkers, runners and bikers exercise and commute on the miles of completed trail. TRTC is now working with Chatham County to help raise the funds needed to link the Durham and Wake sections. The trail is enhanced by the renovation of the historic American Tobacco factory and warehouses, a model mixed-use historic redevelopment project, at the terminus of the trail.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.roanokeriverpartners.org/Basin/RiverBasin.htm>

- “Visitors who follow the scenic ribbon of the **Blue Ridge Parkway** along mountain ridges are treated to views of the most interesting landforms and natural resources in North Carolina’s mountains. It is little wonder that the Parkway is the most popular National Park in the United States, annually attracting over 14 million visitors and up to \$2.3 billion for the local economy. The Parkway’s importance goes beyond its national popularity and is deeply rooted in the culture of the Blue Ridge. It is the unifying element engendering a shared regional identity. However, the protected land along the Parkway averages only 800 feet wide. Much of the land adjacent to the Parkway is privately owned, and residential and commercial development is encroaching, threatening the scenic beauty treasured by millions.”<sup>17</sup> Conservation Trust for North Carolina and a number of local land trusts and national conservation groups have been working with the National Park Service to acquire land and easements in some of the most scenic stretches. Their work is helping to ensure that this historic park loved by all Americans retains its extraordinary beauty.
- **Glencoe Mill Village**,<sup>18</sup> built in 1880 on the Haw River near Burlington, was one of the last water powered mills to be built in the state. The 105-acre site still includes the old mill complex, 32 of the original mill houses, the mill store, office, lodge, other associated buildings and more than a mile of frontage on the Haw River including half a mile of undeveloped land. In 1998, Preservation NC purchased the vacant property and developed a master plan for the site with the help of nearly 90 architects and other design professionals. Among the goals of the master plan are preserving the historic structures, conserving open space along the Haw River as a park, and encouraging the development of compatible infill houses and other buildings. Almost all the original mill houses have now been sold to private families, and several new infill houses have been built including one that was selected by Country Living magazine as its 2002 House of the Year. Sidewalks, bike trails and walking paths are being built and street trees planted thanks to a US Department of Transportation grant. An experienced developer is rehabilitating the mill into apartments and commercial space. The restoration of this historic place has already contributed more than \$10 million to the economy of Alamance County, and it is reusing land productively rather than impacting rural or natural land that has never been developed. The mill also has the potential to be a major tourist destination. Local preservationists dream of a museum village where visitors can learn about textiles’ influence in the post-war South. Glencoe may someday be an attraction on the scale of Old Salem.
- **Rocky Mount** has served as the home-base for many locally-driven businesses over the years, but by the late 1980s the once-thriving downtown area had deteriorated. The Rocky Mount-Edgecombe Community Development Corporation, in partnership with a number of other groups and government agencies, has worked to revitalize the community by renovating historic buildings for offices, commercial and retail space and senior housing. Housing and economic development programs have created jobs, small businesses and community development. Special events and festivals now draw thousands of visitors to the city and the region.
- In 2003, **Princeville**, the nation’s first town incorporated by freed slaves after the Civil War, turned human devastation by Hurricane Floyd into something positive when it purchased eleven acres for the new Riverside Heritage Park. The site had been a mobile-home park in the floodplain of the Tar River before the hurricane swept everything downstream. The Trust for Public Land helped Princeville apply for funding from the Lowe’s Foundation and the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund to construct playgrounds, picnic areas, sports fields and a historic walking trail along the river. The park will not only meet citizens’ tremendous need for recreational areas; it will also help prevent devastation of lives in the future when the river inevitably floods again.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.ctnc.org>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.presnc.org>

## State Funding Makes the Difference

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The organizations and governments involved in the projects described above cobbled together funds from a variety of sources to make them happen. In many cases, however, one or more of the state's conservation trust funds was the first funding partner – the one whose early encouragement and financial commitment gave those involved the courage to dream, plan and pull the project together. Promised grant funds from the state helped leverage funding from other sources including federal and local governments and private donors.

To its great credit, the NC General Assembly has had the vision to create these funding sources and, in 1999, to vote to save one million additional acres in the state by year-end 2009.

North Carolina's four conservation trust funds are:

- ***NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund*** (\$62 million per year) About half the funds are granted to state and local governments and nonprofit land conservancies to acquire land and easements along rivers and streams to protect water quality. The other half are granted to local governments to upgrade wastewater and stormwater systems. Of the eight projects described in the previous section, four have received some funding from CWMTF.
- ***NC Farmland Preservation Trust Fund*** (\$0 in FY 2003 and 2004) When funds have been appropriated, this trust fund has provided funding to land trusts and local governments to purchase development rights from farmers such as the Sutphin Mill project described above.
- ***NC Natural Heritage Trust Fund*** (approximately \$15 million per year) This fund makes grants to state agencies to purchase land of great natural or cultural significance for parks, game lands and state historic sites. Three of the projects described above received funding from NHTF.
- ***NC Park and Recreation Trust Fund*** (approximately \$40 million per year) This fund makes grants for state and local parks and for beach access. Grants are made for land acquisition and for construction and restoration of facilities. Two of the projects described above received funding from PARTF.

The General Assembly has also provided:

- ***Funding for historic properties*** (approximately \$21 million in FY 03-04) These funds are frequently earmarked for specific historic properties across the state that are in public use. In FY 03-04, the General Assembly provided funds to the NC Rural Economic Development Center for a grants program to renovate vacant buildings in rural areas to create jobs.

In addition, the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources has created:

- ***One North Carolina Naturally*** (\$0 appropriated for this purpose) This initiative promotes and coordinates the long-term conservation of North Carolina's threatened land and water resources and tracks progress on the Million Acre initiative. NC DENR's Office of Conservation and Community Affairs manages the program by leading the development and implementation of a comprehensive statewide conservation plan involving government agencies, private organizations, landowners and the public. One NC Naturally also provides support for development of regional open space plans, providing assistance through regional meetings and resource materials.

These trust funds and programs have had a tremendous, tangible impact throughout North Carolina. Every single county has benefited, and the grants have helped:

- Grow the economy and provide jobs.
- Protect public health by protecting water and air quality, providing places to exercise and preventing loss of life and property from flooding.
- Protect North Carolina's extraordinary diversity of native plants and wildlife.
- Enhance our quality of life by providing places to enjoy the outdoors and learn about history.

In addition, one dollar spent by the four trust funds has leveraged an average of \$1.30 from other state, local and federal dollars, yielding \$2.30 in spending power – more than doubling the state's investment.

Given their impact, the demand for funding from the state's conservation trust funds is immense, and they are not able to meet the growing need as more and more communities develop visions about how they can make a better future by investing in their land and history. The Clean Water Management Trust Fund, for example, is now only able to fund one of every eight proposals it receives. And although the state has increased its rate of land protection, it is only saving land at a little more than 60% of the rate needed to meet the Legislature's goal of protecting one million acres between 1999 and 2009.

## **Places that Matter: Five-Year Conservation Goals for Nine Types of Property**

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In previous sections we identified nine types of places that need to be protected for the future of North Carolina. In this section, we provide more information about each of these places that matter:

- Rivers, Wetlands, Floodplains and Coastal Waters
- Working Farms
- Working Forests
- Local Parks and Trails
- State Parks and Trails
- Game Lands and Other Natural Areas
- Urban Forests
- Land Visible from Scenic Highways
- Historic Properties

This section begins with Table 1 which summarizes a conservation goal and funding needs for each type of place, lists what funding is available now and calculates the *gap in funding* needed to meet the goal. Following the table, we present more complete information about the conservation goals for each property type, including:

- The public benefits that come from protecting that type of property.
- Priority areas for protection within all the North Carolina places of that type.
- A five-year protection goal in acres, miles or buildings for each type of place.
- The techniques used to protect that type of place.
- The total amount of funding needed to meet the five-year protection goal.
- An explanation of how Land for Tomorrow developed the protection goal and cost estimate.

**Table 1: Five-year Goals, State Funding Sources and Funding Gap for Places that Matter**

<b>PLACES THAT MATTER</b>	<b>Land Needs acres/\$</b>	<b>Facility Needs \$</b>	<b>Inventory Needs \$</b>	<b>Total Funding Needs</b>	<b>State Funding Sources<sup>19</sup></b>
Rivers, Wetlands, Floodplains and Coastal Waters	6,000 miles \$500 million			\$500 million	CWMTF
Working Farms	50,000 acres \$110 million			\$110 million	FPTF
Working Forests	25,000 acres \$55 million			\$55 million	
Local Parks and Trails	34,000 acres \$459 million	\$1,800 million		\$2,259 million	PARTF, CWMTF <sup>20</sup>
State Parks and Trails	60,000 acres \$200 million	\$100 million		\$300 million	PARTF, NHTF, CWMTF
Game Lands and Natural Areas	150,000 acres \$240 million		\$15 million	\$255 million	CWMTF, NHTF
Urban Forests	>tree canopy \$15 million		\$2 million	\$17 million	<sup>21</sup>
Land Visible from Scenic Highways	50,000 acres \$150 million			\$150 million	
Historic Places	3,000 acres \$10 million	Renovate 350 buildings \$255 million	\$3 million	\$268 million	NHTF, annual appropriation
<b>TOTAL NEED</b>	<b>\$1.7 billion</b>	<b>\$2.155 billion</b>	<b>\$20 million</b>	<b>\$3.9 billion over five years (\$780 million/year)</b>	
<b>TOTAL FUNDING AVAILABLE NOW</b>				<b>\$0.7 billion over five years (\$138 million in FY 03-04)</b>	
<b>FUNDING GAP</b>				<b>\$3.2 billion over five years</b>	

<sup>19</sup> Abbreviations defined: FPTF – NC Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, CWMTF – NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund, PARTF – NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, NHTF – NC Natural Heritage Trust Fund

<sup>20</sup> Other smaller funding sources include: NC Division of Public Health, NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund, NC Department of Transportation, NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources trail fund

<sup>21</sup> A grants program for street tree planting is available through the NC Division of Forest Resources.

## **Rivers, Wetlands, Floodplains and Coastal Waters**

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### **Protection will provide the following benefits:**

- drinking water quality protection
- protection of commercial and recreational fishing industries
- protection of wildlife habitat
- protection of wetlands
- protection of recreational activities such as swimming, canoeing and rafting
- reduction of loss of life and property through flooding
- long-term financial savings because it is more cost-effective to protect our waterways than to restore them once they are impaired

### **Priority areas for protection (Map 1):**

- streams in water supply watersheds
- non-impaired streams in the headwaters of watersheds
- streams where rare species live
- buffers should be adequate for water quality protection
- if other benefits are added such as a greenway trail, the buffer should be widened to provide all the desired benefits

### **Techniques to protect streams, wetlands, floodplains and coastal waters:**

Streams, wetlands and coastal waters are protected by ensuring that buffers of natural vegetation are protected around them to prevent sediment and pollutants from reaching the stream and to slow the erosive flow of stormwater. Perpetual vegetative buffers can be ensured by purchase of the land or an easement on the land by a nonprofit land conservancy or government agency. Depending on the needs of the landowner, the land or easement can be sold at fair market value or donated to qualify the landowner for tax benefits.

### **Five-year goal:**

Double the current rate of protection from 3,000 miles to 6,000 miles of stream buffers in a five-year period. Meeting this goal would protect water quality in an additional 17% of the state's streams.

**Total funding estimate to meet goal:** \$500 million over five years (\$125 million per year)

### **Source of goals and funding estimates:**

This goal was developed after consultation with staff of the Clean Water Management Trust Fund. Currently, the trust fund is only able to fund about 20% of the applications it receives because of limited state funding. Based on knowledge of recent grant applicants and the projects for which they are seeking funds, Clean Water staff believes local governments and nonprofit organizations have the capacity to work with landowners to at least double the rate of protection if funding were available. Funding estimates were developed by doubling the amount of funding needed to protect 3,000 miles.

## Working Farms

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### Protection will provide the following benefits:

- protection of agricultural jobs, agricultural traditions and way of life
- protection of prime agricultural soils, productive farms and farming opportunities for the future
- protection of scenic views
- job opportunities from tourism that attracts visitors to farms and places that sell local agricultural produce
- farms and forests are preferred neighbors of military bases
- may protect water quality and wildlife habitat
- purchase of development rights from working farmers also provides
  - an alternative to selling land for development
  - a source of capital to help farmers plan for the future
  - more affordable farms for young farmers trying to break into the business

### Priority areas for funding (Map 2):

Farms with productive agricultural soils in areas where there is a critical mass of other farms and agricultural-support businesses such as feed stores and tractor suppliers. Recently, 2,675 farmers have enrolled more than 200,000 acres of farmland in “voluntary agricultural districts.”<sup>22</sup> Farmland within these districts should also receive priority for funding because of the commitment to the future of farming shown by participants.

### Techniques to protect farmland:

Working farms have been successfully maintained through a variety of techniques, including purchase of development rights programs, planning and technical assistance, marketing and market development, crop diversification and enterprise development assistance. Purchase of development rights (PDR) programs keep the land in private ownership and allow continued agricultural use but restrict buildings and other development on the property with the exception of new agricultural buildings. Depending on the needs of the landowner, PDRs may be purchased by a government agency or by a nonprofit land trust at fair market value, or the landowner may donate the easement and qualify for charitable tax benefits. Planning, marketing and technical assistance are critical to help protect North Carolina’s working family farms.

**Five-year goal:** Protect 50,000 acres of productive farmland.

**Total funding estimate to meet goal:** \$110 million over five years (\$22 million per year)

### Source of goals and funding estimates:

This goal was recommended by American Farmland Trust and Conservation Trust for North Carolina as a challenging but achievable five-year goal based on their experience working with farm owners. As this program builds, farmers will need to be informed about options and governments and conservation nonprofits will need to build their capacity to work with farmers. If this five-year start-up program is successful, experience in other states indicates that farmer interest in PDR is likely to increase dramatically. The funding estimate is based on American Farmland Trust’s calculation of the average price per acre paid for PDR in other states.

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<sup>22</sup> Voluntary Agriculture Districts (VADs) designate areas where commercial agriculture is encouraged and protected. They provide a series of benefits to farmers willing to restrict non-agricultural development for ten years. See Appendix A for more information about these programs.

## **Working Forests**

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### **Protection will provide the following benefits:**

- protection of the land base of the forest products industry
- places for hunting
- habitat for many species of native plants and wildlife
- buffers around military bases and flyways
- water quality protection

### **Priority areas for funding (Map 3):**

The NC Division of Forest Resources has identified eight areas across the state as “Forest Legacy Areas” because of their diverse ecosystems and traditional forest industries.

### **Techniques to protect working forests:**

In most instances, working forests are protected through purchase of development rights (PDR) programs that keep the land in private ownership and allow continued management and harvesting of timber, but restrict buildings and other development on the property (although in some instances landowners retain the right to build one or two homes). Depending on the needs of the landowner, PDRs may be purchased by a government agency or by a nonprofit land trust at fair market value, or the landowner may donate the easement and qualify for charitable tax benefits.

**Five-year goal:** Protect 25,000 acres of forest land within Forest Legacy Areas

**Total funding estimate to meet goal:** \$55 million over five years (\$11 million per year)

### **Source of goals and funding estimates:**

This goal was recommended by members of the Steering Committee of Land for Tomorrow as a challenging and achievable goal based on their experience working with working-forest landowners. As this program builds, landowners will need to be educated and governments and conservation nonprofits will need to expand their organizational capacity to work with these landowners. The funding estimate is based on an average PDR price per acre of \$2,200, the same estimate that we have used for PDR for working farms.

If this five-year start-up program is successful, experience in other states indicates that landowner interest in PDR programs is likely to increase dramatically, and it will be possible to substantially increase the number of acres of working forest protected per year.

## **Local Parks and Trails**

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### **Protection will provide the following benefits:**

- Places to exercise to improve health and reduce obesity
- Trails for recreation and non-motorized transportation
- Community gathering places for recreation, relaxation and fun
- Economic benefits from festivals, sports tournaments and other events
- Parks can also protect
  - water quality
  - air quality
  - habitat for native wildlife and plants
  - historic and natural resources
  - places of beauty in urbanizing areas

### **Priority areas for funding:**

Parks, recreation centers and trails near population centers to make it easy for citizens to gather for recreation, relaxation and fun and to exercise regularly to improve health and control weight

### **Techniques to provide more local parks and greenways:**

Parks and greenways are usually developed on purchased land or land set-aside through the development process by local land use regulation.

### **Five-year goal:**

Help local communities implement their park and trail plans.

**Total funding estimate to meet goal:** \$2.3 billion over five years (\$460 million per year)

### **Source of goals and funding estimates:**

One hundred and eight of the state's 218 local parks and recreation departments responded to a 2004 survey by Land for Tomorrow about their needs for additional land and new and renovated park facilities (the results are summarized in Appendix F). These departments seek to add 34,000 acres of park land at an estimated cost of \$459 million, restore buildings at a cost of \$344 million and build new facilities at a cost of \$1.458 billion. The goals and funding estimates presented are the total acreage and dollar amounts listed in these surveys.

## State Parks and Trails

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### Protection will provide the following benefits:

- places to walk, picnic, camp, canoe and enjoy the outdoors that are easily accessible to North Carolinians
- ensure that North Carolina's unusually diverse native species of plants and wildlife thrive along with a growing human population
- protection of water and air quality
- natural lands are a preferred neighbor of military bases
- jobs generated by visitors to the parks
- protection of outstanding examples of North Carolina's diverse archeological, scenic and geological resources
- places to exercise to improve health and reduce obesity
- places for people to study ecology and natural sciences

### Priority areas for funding (Map 4):

- enlargement of existing State Parks to meet public demand for trails and recreational opportunities and protect important archeological, biological, scenic and geological resources
- Land and facilities for the 44 new parks and natural areas proposed by the NC Division of Parks and Recreation in its *New Parks for a New Century* plan

### Techniques to create more parks and natural areas:

In most instances, state parkland is acquired outright by the NC Division of Parks and Recreation or other park agency. When landowners want or need to sell their land or an easement, the property can be purchased at fair market value.

**Five-year goal:** 60,000 acres (approximately 1/3 of acres identified for new and expanded state parks) and new and renovated facilities

**Total funding estimate to meet goal:** \$200 million for land, \$100 million for park facilities (\$60 million per year)

**Source of goals and funding estimates:** In 2004, the NC Division of Parks and Recreation estimated that it could acquire this much land and provide these facilities to implement a sizeable portion of the *New Parks for a New Century* plan. Cost estimates were based on the Division's recent experience in acquiring land.

## **Game Lands and Other Natural Areas**

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### **Protection will provide the following benefits:**

- conservation of habitat for native wildlife and plants, including endangered species
- depending on the sensitivity of species to be protected, land may be available for managed timber harvest, hunting, fishing and natural resource recreation such as hiking and canoeing
- safe places for an increasingly urban population to hunt game species
- a source of wood products from timber harvest
- places for everyone to enjoy the outdoors during non-hunting seasons
- protection of water quality
- hunting land is a preferred neighbor of military bases

### **Priority areas for funding (Map 5):**

- Places identified as Natural Heritage Areas by the NC Natural Heritage Program
- “Core preserves” large enough to provide habitat for species such as bobcat that range over vast territories
- “Corridors” of natural habitat to link two or more “core preserves”
- Funding to conduct inventories of natural heritage sites in the 31 counties that have not yet been thoroughly inventoried

### **Techniques to provide more natural areas and game lands:**

Game lands and other natural areas can be protected by several state and nonprofit agencies, including the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, the NC Plant Protection Program of the NC Department of Agriculture and many nonprofit land conservancies. In addition, some of North Carolina’s public game lands are privately owned and managed by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission by agreement with the landowner. When landowners want or need to sell their land or an easement, the property can be purchased at fair market value. Other landowners may be able to donate their land.

**Five-year goal:** To protect 150,000 acres and complete natural heritage inventories for all North Carolina counties

**Funding estimate to meet goal:** \$240 million over five years for land protection and \$15 million over five years for inventories (\$51 million per year)

**Source of Goals and Funding Estimates:** If funding were available, the NC Wildlife Resources Commission estimated in 2004 that it could more than double its rate of land protection from 60,000 acres to 125,000 acres in a five-year period. Estimated funding needs are based on WRC’s experience with recent land purchases across the state. The recommended goal was increased by 25,000 acres to account for the interest and capacity of other agencies, such as the NC Department of Agriculture’s Plant Protection Program, and many local governments and conservation nonprofits in protecting important natural heritage sites.

## Urban Forests

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### **Protection will provide the following benefits:**

- improved air quality in urban areas
- reduced heating and cooling costs because of increased shade and wind breaks
- scenic beauty in urban areas
- homes for wildlife in urban areas
- water quality protection from forests along urban streams

### **Priority areas for funding:**

Urban forests in the 32 counties required by the US Environmental Protection Agency to reduce ground-level ozone and very small particulate matter suspended in the air (PM 2.5)

### **Techniques to protect and create urban forests:**

Planting and caring for street trees, protecting buffers of vegetation along streams, requiring trees in parking lots and increasing building density within cities so that surrounding land can be maintained in a natural state

### **Five-year goal:**

American Forests recommends that communities east of the Mississippi maintain overall tree canopies of 40% or more by establishing tree cover of at least 50% in suburban residential areas; of at least 25% in urban residential areas; and of at least 15% in central business districts.

Goals for the next five years would be to:

- calculate tree canopy percentages in all North Carolina cities and counties that are not attaining EPA air quality standards
- provide matching grants to help these communities increase tree canopy coverage in urban residential and central business districts by at least two percentage points. (Funding to increase and protect tree canopy in suburban and rural areas will be provided by protection of other places that matter)

### **Total funding estimate to meet goal:**

Over five years, \$2 million for inventories of tree canopy coverage and \$15 million for matching grants (\$3.4 million per year)

### **Source of goals and funding estimates:**

The NC Division of Forest Resources administers a federal program which makes small grants to communities for urban forestry and tree planting. In 2005, that program distributed approximately \$300,000 in grants. This funding would allow the Division to work with counties and cities to inventory their urban forests and develop plans for how to enhance them. It would then provide ten times the currently available funding to help counties and cities implement those plans.

## **Land Visible from Scenic Highways**

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### **Protection will provide the following benefits:**

- scenic views for people to enjoy in both urban and rural areas
- protection of historic landscapes along scenic rural highways
- jobs and other economic benefits from tourism

### **Priority areas for funding:**

- protection of forests, farms and fields that are easily viewed from the Blue Ridge Parkway and other designated scenic highways

### **Techniques to protect views from scenic highways:**

The land visible from a scenic highway can be mapped. In areas of steep topography, like much of the Blue Ridge Parkway, many properties are only partially visible. However, some of the visible properties may be many miles from the road. Easements that prevent development on the visible portions of a property can be purchased or donated according to the needs of the landowner.

### **Five-year goal:**

To protect 50,000 acres visible from the Blue Ridge Parkway and other designated scenic highways

**Total funding estimate to meet goal:** \$150 million over five years (\$30 million per year)

### **Source of Goals and Funding Estimates:**

Conservation Trust for North Carolina estimated the capacity of land trusts and governments to protect critical lands along scenic highways based on the work it and other land trusts are doing protecting land along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

## **Historic Places**

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### **Protection will provide the following benefits:**

- opportunities for people to learn more about North Carolina's history and culture
- jobs and other economic benefits from heritage tourism
- business and economic development through downtown revitalization
- protection of scenic places in both rural and urban areas
- health benefits from increased walkability of towns and cities
- reuse of existing public infrastructure, reducing the cost of public investment in roads, water, sewer, schools etc.
- enhanced local government tax base
- reduced development pressure on undeveloped land by reuse of existing buildings
- reduced consumption of natural resources and energy needed for new construction

### **Priority areas for funding:**

- renovation and repair of significant historic properties that are routinely open to the public, including courthouses, schools, auditoriums, State Historic Sites, local government facilities, nonprofit museums, arts facilities, campus landmarks and other similar properties
- improved accessibility for the handicapped in historic public buildings
- environmental abatement for historic public buildings
- protection of battlefields and land adjacent to State Historic Sites
- protection of key archeological sites identified by the NC Department of Cultural Resources
- capitalization of local and statewide revolving funds that acquire endangered historic properties and resell them with restrictive covenants to private owners
- funding for inventories of historic properties

### **Techniques to protect historic properties:**

Properties open to the public on a regular basis are usually purchased and maintained by governments and nonprofit organizations. On historic landscapes such as battlefields around State Historic Sites, easements that allow continued farming or forestry are usually the appropriate technique. Depending on the needs of the landowner, such properties and easements can be purchased or donated.

### **Five-year goal:**

- Protection of 3,000 acres of land adjacent to State Historic Sites and at archeological sites of state significance
- Substantial renovation of 100 significant historic landmarks routinely open to the public
- Repairs and improved handicapped accessibility for 250 additional landmarks routinely open to the public
- Capitalization of local and statewide revolving funds
- 45 architectural inventories and updates

**Total funding estimate to meet goal:** \$268 million over five years (\$53.6 million per year) including

- \$250 million for restoration and repair of historic landmarks that are open to the public
- \$10 million for land and easement acquisition around State Historic Sites and archeological sites of state significance
- \$5 million for revolving fund capital to buy and resell historic properties for private ownership
- \$3 million for inventories of historic properties

**Source of Goals and Funding Estimates:**

In 2004, the NC Department of Cultural Resources provided goals and cost estimates for 1) protecting land around State Historic Sites, 2) renovating state-owned and other historic properties, 3) protecting archeological sites and 4) conducting historic inventories. Preservation NC provided goals and funding estimates for restoration, repair and improved accessibility of historic landmarks and for revolving fund capital needs.

## State Funding and Program Needs to Meet Five-Year Conservation Goals

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After developing goals for the amount of land and number of historic properties to protect over a five-year period and estimating how much it would cost to reach those goals, Land for Tomorrow assessed the state's land conservation and historic preservation programs to determine:

- how much additional funding would be needed from the state and
- whether the state's conservation funding programs would need adjustments if we hope to:
  - achieve dramatic increases in the rate of land protection and historic preservation and
  - help communities use the protected land and historic places to strengthen their economies, create jobs and enhance public health and quality of life

### Additional State Funding Needed

In the previous section, we estimated that it would cost \$3.9 billion to accomplish the five-year conservation goals that we recommend. We estimate that this funding need can be met if the State of North Carolina provides **an additional \$1 billion over five years** for a total funding level of \$1.7 billion over five years.

We estimate that the State's total \$1.7 billion would **leverage an additional \$2.2 billion in federal, local and private sources**. Our leverage estimate is based on the state conservation trust fund's record of leveraging \$1.30 for every \$1.00 they grant and on information developed by UNC's Environmental Finance Center on the cost of achieving the State's million acre protection goal. This leveraging capacity would mean that the State's \$1.7 billion would leverage \$2.2 billion **to meet the total \$3.9 billion need**.

### Recommended Program Adjustments

As we explained in earlier sections of this report, North Carolina has developed an excellent system of funding land conservation that is efficient, encourages local initiative and invests in outstanding projects. We strongly recommend that this system be kept substantially as it exists today. Adjustments will be necessary, however, to help these programs handle the increased workload that would come from these larger conservation goals. We therefore recommend:

- Building the **capacity of the state's conservation programs** to handle the increased work load required to efficiently and effectively protect more land and historic properties and to administer more grant funding.
- **Promoting continued authority of the trust fund boards** to review grant applications against their established criteria.

In addition, a careful comparison of our conservation goals against the funding guidelines of each trust fund clearly showed that several of the nine types of properties do not have adequate or reliable funding sources. We also discussed how more could be done statewide to use land conservation and historic preservation efforts to provide jobs and enhance quality of life for all citizens. We therefore recommend:

- Providing **reliable state funding** by dedicating funding sources and/or through a bond referendum. Because land and historic protection projects can take years of planning and negotiations to complete, stable funding sources are critical to the overall success of these efforts. Several of our state funding sources are funded through annual appropriations and are, therefore, too unreliable to support effective, efficient programs.
- Providing **funding sources for all nine types** of "places that matter" identified in this report. In particular, farmland, working forests, urban forests and land visible from scenic highways have almost no funding now. No dedicated funding exists for restoration of historic properties, and only limited **dedicated** funding exists for protection of rivers, wetlands, floodplains and coastal waters.

- Creating and expanding programs to **help communities strengthen their economies and provide jobs** by taking advantage of the economic value of their protected land and historic places.

As we reviewed programs and talked with experts, it became clear what an important role One North Carolina *Naturally* has to play in the State's land conservation and historic preservation programs. We are therefore recommending that the program receive a portion of the recommended funding so that it can:

- **Provide state leadership** to encourage local governments and private organizations, donors and landowners to do their part.
- Increase **visibility** of state, local and private conservation programs.
- **Expand the state agencies and interest groups involved in land conservation and historic preservation.** Land and history are critical to North Carolina's economy, public health, quality of life and protection of wildlife. However, government agencies and nonprofit organizations actively involved with the trust funds are limited primarily to state agencies within the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources, land conservation nonprofits and local parks and recreation departments. To implement the changes recommended in this report, a broad base of support and involvement is needed beyond the land conservation and parks community. Members of the tourism, economic development, public health, agriculture and historic preservation communities, for example, all have a stake in land conservation and historic preservation and should be actively involved.
- Develop a **plan** for which land and historic properties are the most important to protect. Local plans and preferences should have a major influence on determining state priorities, and North Carolina should continue to help local organizations and governments develop and implement local plans.
- **Monitor progress** on meeting goals and communicate those to the public.
- Provide **planning and implementation funding** to economically-distressed communities, including tier one and two counties, and to multi-county projects to help them take advantage of the economic and quality of life benefits of land and historic preservation projects.

Finally, we discussed low-income counties' concerns about losing part of their property-tax base when land is purchased for conservation. To address this concern, we are recommending that:

- **Low-income (tier one and two) counties be reimbursed for lost property taxes** with one-time compensation of ten times the annual loss in taxes if property is purchased fee simple through a trust fund.

Finally, we discussed and recommended funding levels for each of the following purposes:

- Coordination and planning
- An initiative to help communities use their land and historic assets to create jobs
- Clean water and air
- Natural and cultural heritage
- Parks and recreation
- Working farms and forests

**Table 2: Existing and Proposed Funding Levels for Land Conservation, Historic Preservation and Investment in Communities and Jobs**

Program	Purpose	Annual Funding Level		
		Current Funding/Year	Proposed Additional Funding/Year	Proposed Total Funding/Year
Coordination and Planning	Provide leadership for land conservation and historic preservation in North Carolina; coordinate work of all NC departments and trust funds in land and historic preservation; encourage participation by local governments and nonprofits; evaluate North Carolina's progress in protecting important land and historic properties	\$0	\$3 million	\$3 million
Job Creation through Land and Historic Resources	New initiative to fund creation and retention of jobs and related economic and community development in ways that promote land conservation, historic preservation, parks and recreation, and related facilities and programs	\$6 million	\$30 million	\$36 million
Clean Water and Air	Enhance and restore degraded water, protect unpolluted water, contribute toward network of urban tree cover, riparian buffers and trails for water and air quality improvement and other environmental, educational and recreational benefits	\$62 million	\$54.5 million	\$116.5 million
Natural and Cultural Heritage	Protect the state's ecological diversity and cultural heritage and inventory the natural areas and historic properties of the state	\$15 million (plus \$15 million annual appropriations for historic properties)	\$62.5 million	\$92.5 million
Parks and Recreation	Improve and expand state and local parks and provide access to coastal and estuarine waters	\$40 million	\$20 million	\$60 million
Working Farms and Forests	Conservation and protection of farm and forest land and viable agricultural communities	\$0	\$30 million	\$30 million
<b>EXISTING AND PROPOSED STATE FUNDING</b>		<b>\$138 million/yr OR \$700 million/5 yrs</b>	<b>\$200 million/yr OR \$1 billion/5 yrs</b>	<b>\$338 million/year</b>

## **Funding Options for Consideration**

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Land for Tomorrow urges the state to establish increased and dedicated funding for these critical programs. We are ready to work with state leaders to investigate alternative funding sources. To provide some preliminary ideas, we describe below funding sources used in two other states well known for their innovative conservation programs: Florida and New Jersey.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, Appendix E contains the Executive Summary of a 2004 report by The Trust for Public Land with a fuller explanation of many funding options. In 2001, the Environmental Finance Center at The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill also prepared a study of financing options for the Million Acre Initiative.<sup>24</sup> The complete reports can be accessed through the Land for Tomorrow website: [www.landfortomorrow.org](http://www.landfortomorrow.org).

**Florida:** Florida has provided steady and generous conservation funding since 1990 when Governor Bob Martinez created a blue-ribbon commission to evaluate Florida's environment. The commission warned that Florida would lose three million acres of wetlands and forests by the year 2020 and concluded that the most effective way to protect the environment was to increase the level of funding for land protection programs. Governor Martinez then proposed Preservation 2000, a **\$3 billion fund** based upon \$300 million in **bond** funds over ten years, backed by a **documentary stamp tax**. In 1998, with support from Governor Jeb Bush, voters approved by 72% an amendment to the constitution extending the state's authority to issue bonds for conservation and recreation. The following year, the Legislature passed the Florida Forever Act which, like Preservation 2000, provides \$3 billion over 10 years.

**New Jersey:** In 1998, New Jersey citizens voted to dedicate **\$98 million each year for ten years from the state sales and use tax** towards Governor Christie Whitman's goal of preserving one million acres. The act also authorized the issue of as much as **\$1 billion in revenue bonds** that would be repaid through the dedicated sales and use tax. If the million acre goal is met, 40 percent of New Jersey will be preserved as open space. Another innovative feature of New Jersey's program is that it encourages local governments to do their share to protect open space by **authorizing counties and municipalities to establish voter-approved Open Space Trust Funds supported by property taxes**. As evidence of the success of this program, 39 local governments in New Jersey held referendums in November 2003 alone. Seventy-seven percent of those referendums passed.

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<sup>23</sup> An excellent source of information about funding programs in other states is the website of The Trust for Public Land. [www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org) under Conservation Finance/State Funding Profiles. Information presented here is from that website.

<sup>24</sup> Whisnant, Richard, Richard Norton and Jeremy Firestone. 2001. Costs and Financing Options for the North Carolina Million Acre Initiative. Environmental Finance Center, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

## **Saving the Goodliest Land**

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When North Carolina was primarily a rural state, it seemed that the beauty of our land and its ability to provide food and fiber, clean water and places to enjoy the outdoors would always be there. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, North Carolina was not a prosperous state, but our natural environment and small, close-knit communities gave North Carolinians a great sense of pride and love for their home. That pride and love have continued as rapid growth during the last fifty years has changed our state dramatically. It has brought greater wealth to some parts of the state and provided many opportunities to improve the quality of life for our citizens. But the loss of natural and rural land and historic places are now beginning to hurt us economically, pollute our air and water, lessen our quality of life and threaten our native plants and wildlife.

This plan lays out steps that North Carolina can take to protect its land, water and history. Over five years, it would:

- Protect 375,000 additional acres of critical land across North Carolina
- Protect water quality in 6,000 miles of unprotected streams and rivers
- Build trails and facilities for state and local parks
- Restore 350 historic landmarks in public use
- Invest in job creation and community development that conserves land and historic places

If we are successful, our children and grandchildren will still think of North Carolina as the “goodliest land” with:

- Clean water and air
- Sustainable jobs and vibrant communities
- Thriving farms and forests
- Places to enjoy the beauty of North Carolina, to exercise, to hunt and fish
- Places of historic significance and ecological value

But if we want this future for North Carolina, we need to act now. Saving these critical places will only get harder and more costly.

North Carolina’s future depends on land for tomorrow.

## **Acknowledgements**

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This report represents the ideas and knowledge of many people who shared their expertise and vision about how to expand the state's programs for land conservation and historic preservation and make them even more valuable to the state's economy, public health, quality of life and native plants and wildlife.

The recommendations for five-year goals for the “places that matter” and for enhancements to the state's programs for promoting land and historic protection are the work of the members of the founding Steering Committee of Land for Tomorrow:

Crawford Crenshaw, Chair, Land for Tomorrow Steering Committee  
Gerry Cohn, American Farmland Trust  
Edgar Miller and Reid Wilson, Conservation Trust for North Carolina, representing NC land trusts  
Elizabeth Ouzts and Christine Wunsche, NC Public Interest Research Group (NCPIRG)  
Mike Waters, NC Recreation and Park Association  
Myrick Howard, Preservation NC  
Mikki Sager, The Conservation Fund  
David Knight, Katherine Skinner and Angie McMillan, The Nature Conservancy  
Will Abberger, David Proper and Mack Paul, The Trust for Public Land

While the Steering Committee developed its recommendations, several people shared their expertise by attending meetings regularly. They are:

Paul Meyer, NC Association of County Commissioners  
Bill Holman, NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund  
Jim Cummings, NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
Lewis Ledford, NC Division of Parks and Recreation and NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund  
Dave McNaught, Environmental Defense  
Anita Watkins and Kim Hibbard, NC League of Municipalities  
Linda Pearsall, NC Natural Heritage Program and NC Natural Heritage Trust Fund

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Savi Horne, Land Loss Prevention Project

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Kate Dixon  
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