



# North Carolina's Return on its Investment In Land Conservation

## CONSERVATION LANDS ARE A GOOD VALUE

An economic study conducted by The Trust for Public Land (TPL) shows that investing in conservation lands through four state programs (Conservation Trust Funds) – the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the Natural Heritage Trust Fund, and the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund – more than pays for itself. **Every \$1 invested in land conservation returns \$4 in economic value** from natural resource goods and services alone. The state's investments over the past 10 years will ultimately return more than \$3.6 billion.

*For every \$1 invested in land conservation, there is a return of \$4.*

*This study measures natural resources goods and services, and does not include additional economic benefits from new jobs and retail sales related to conservation lands.*

## CONSERVATION LANDS PROVIDE INCOME AND JOBS

### *Tourism and Outdoor Recreation*

State lands are key to local recreation and tourism industries. In 2006, 3.4 million residents and non-residents participated in some form of fish and wildlife-related recreation in North Carolina. Anglers, hunters and wildlife viewers spent \$2.62 billion in retail sales, creating \$1.26 billion in salaries and wages and supporting 45,200 jobs. The total economic effect from fish and wildlife-related recreation is \$4.3 billion.

Economic impacts also flow from North Carolina state park investments. Each year, 3.4 million tourists visit a sample of 14 state park units, spending nearly \$80 million in respective local economies. In fact, for each state dollar invested in net operating costs at state parks, \$1.63 is generated in sales and \$1.03 of resident income is created.



### *Defense and Conservation*

The state's Conservation Trust Funds help the U.S. military create safe buffer zones around bases in North Carolina, separating growing communities from land needed for vital training missions. The military plays a substantial role in both the economy and environment of North Carolina. In 2007, military activities totaled 7 percent of state's domestic product and translated into 416,000 jobs.

### *Agriculture*

Farmland preservation helps sustain the agriculture industry in North Carolina. In 2009, the agriculture industry added \$32.1 billion in value to the state's economy and employed 120,000 people.

*"Sixteen years ago, the Orchard was dying, ripe for development that would ruin a spectacular two-mile stretch along the Parkway. Thanks to our partnership with land trusts and a judicious mix of public and private funding, the Orchard thrives as an agricultural and cultural haven, attracting visitors in large number. We're a non-profit, so the income is turned back to the local community. And because we're a longstanding regional attraction, the Orchard draws people to businesses throughout our area."*

- Bill Carson, owner, The Orchard at Altapass, one of thousands of businesses along the Blue Ridge Parkway that depend on magnificent vistas to draw visitors

THE TRUST *for* PUBLIC LAND

CONSERVING LAND FOR PEOPLE

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

- Mike Lynch, Director of Plans, Training and Mobilization, Fort Bragg, on working with The Nature Conservancy and its partners to protect more than 15,000 acres around the base



### **Forestry**

The economic impact of timber harvesting, production, and manufacturing on North Carolina's economy is substantial. In 2009, forestry, logging, and wood products manufacturing contributed well over \$6 billion to North Carolina's economy and employed nearly 75,000 people in the state.

### **CONSERVATION LANDS PROVIDE CLEAN WATER**

Preserving land along lakes and streams is a fundamental step in protecting drinking water. Natural lands filter pollutants and slow runoff from surface water, resulting in cleaner water downstream, less flooding and soil erosion, and greater groundwater reserves. The Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative (UNCWI) teams land trusts with landowners and municipal, county and state agencies to protect drinking water sources in the Upper Neuse River Basin. Through UNCWI, land protection groups leverage government funds with private donations to acquire property or conservation agreements on priority parcels, creating and expanding buffers on streams and water supply reservoirs in the basin that serve more than 500,000 people. Since UNCWI was formed in 2005, partners have protected more than 57 miles of stream buffer and 5,460 acres of land worth \$54 million.

### **CONSERVATION LANDS PROVIDE FLOOD CONTROL**

The toll of flooding on North Carolina has been sustained and tragic. According to the Hazards and Vulnerability Research Institute, over the past 20 years, flooding has cost

*"Clean drinking water is essential to attracting growth and new businesses to Wake County. Reducing polluted runoff by conserving land along the streams that feed into Falls Lake is a cost-effective way to safeguard drinking water quality. It makes good business sense."*

- Joe Bryan, Wake County Commissioner

North Carolina the lives of 58 residents, over \$365 million in property damages, and \$134 million in crop damages. Residents and taxpayers alike incur the costs of living on a floodplain: drainage improvements, flood control projects, flood insurance, and disaster relief.

The value of conserved lands in combating flood and storm waters is tremendous. Open floodplains absorb swollen river waters, protecting nearby communities from flooding and alleviating the potential of flooding downstream. In a 2010 study, American Forests determined that the total stormwater retention capacity of Mecklenburg County's urban forest is 1.38 billion cubic feet. The cost of building the infrastructure to handle an equivalent retention capacity would be \$2.8 billion.



*Prepared by The Trust for Public Land, February 2011.  
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