



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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PRESERVATION OF KEY HERITAGE SITES MARKS 2005

RALEIGH - Several key natural areas in North Carolina received protection in 2005, thanks to the combined efforts of three state conservation trust funds, non-profit organizations and the Ecosystem Enhancement Program.

The North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the Natural Heritage Trust Fund and the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund joined with EEP and private land conservation groups across the state to save some of the state's most pristine and ecologically significant natural areas from being lost to development. As a result, water quality and habitat for endangered and threatened species will be permanently protected, impact of growth around military bases will be reduced and more recreational opportunities will be available to the public.

For the first time in its nine-year history, CWMTF received full funding of \$100 million from the North Carolina General Assembly, allowing CWMTF trustees to award 159 water quality improvement grants totaling \$112.6 million in 2005. During the year, the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund provided \$14.45 million for land acquisition for state parks and state natural areas. A total of 9,423 acres was added to the state parks system. The Natural Heritage Trust Fund awarded 28 grants totaling \$23,293,789 to help protect 19,648 acres.

Key conservation projects for 2005 include:

- A major expansion of Lake James State Park in Burke County was accomplished through the acquisition of 2,905 acres in early 2005. This major addition to the state park will allow for expanded recreational opportunities at this park and will also protect over six miles of shoreline of Lake James. Additionally, 1,425 acres were acquired on White Creek in Burke County to protect the corridor between Linville Wilderness and Lake James State Park. The Linville River borders the property, and this section of the river is designated as state-significant aquatic habitat and high-quality trout waters. Several rare species of fish and mussels live in the river. The site will be managed for public use by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.
- The General Assembly authorized two new state parks. At Carvers Creek State Park in Cumberland County, the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation is purchasing a 1,100-acre tract from The Nature Conservancy. To support the creation of Hickory Nut Gorge State Park in Rutherford County, funds from the Natural Heritage, Clean Water Management, and Parks and Recreation trust funds have been approved to purchase the 1,568-acre 'World's Edge' tract.
- The acquisition of the 571-acre 'Trout Club' property on 'The Peak' at Elk Knob State Natural Area in Ashe County is part of the globally significant Long Hope Valley Natural Area, harboring numerous rare plant species and several high quality natural community types. Funding was provided by the Natural Heritage Trust Fund.

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- The acquisition of the 208-acre Summit Center at Haw River State Park in Guilford and Rockingham counties more than tripled the park's acreage and provides existing infrastructure for staff, visitor, and meeting facilities.
- Three tracts totaling 407 acres were acquired for Mayo River State Park on the Virginia border. These tracts will provide the park with a northern section for visitor-use. Also five other tracts totaling 491 acres were acquire for river corridor protection at this recently authorized new state park in Rockingham County.
- The acquisition of the 2,655-acre Sandymush tract in Buncombe and Madison counties is less than 20 miles from downtown Asheville in an area where population increased by 37 percent from 1990 to 2000, significantly higher than the statewide rate of 21 percent. The land has significant biological, scenic and recreational value, and contains 33 miles of streams.
- A 307-acre conservation easement purchased along the Flat River in Durham County will be managed by the Triangle Land Conservancy as open space. The land adjoins U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property above Falls Lake, and contributes to the protection of a wildlife corridor connecting Lake Michie, Flat River, Falls Lake and the Little River reservoir. The acquisition helps protect the water supply in Falls Lake.
- The 4,858-acre acquisition from The Nature Conservancy protects about 4,000 acres of wetlands and more than 29 miles of streams in Sampson County. The Great Coharie Swamp is an extensive cypress-gum swamp, and Great Coharie Creek is part of a high-quality blackwater stream system feeding into the Black River. Protection of the tract will contribute to filtration of runoff from adjacent hog farms.
- A conservation easement on nearly six miles of stream and more than 1,000 acres of wetlands on Drowning Creek Beaver Dam Pines in Moore County protects the nationally significant aquatic habitat in Drowning Creek, which is also designated a high-quality, Outstanding Resource Water. The creek contains two rare fish and other uncommon species, and flows into the Southern Pines water supply intake a few miles downstream.
- The acquisition of three tracts along the Green River in Henderson County helps protect 3,192 acres adjacent to Dupont State Forest and including a State Significant Natural Heritage Area and vital headwaters.
- A grant to Durham County helps protect New Hope Creek, which flows into Lake Jordan. The funds will be used to purchase 66 highly developable acres adjacent to Duke Forest.
- The North Carolina Coastal Federation receiving funds to be used for the purchase of the 18.8-acre Jones Island, which will become part of Hammocks Beach State Park. The project will increase protection of the pristine White Oak River in Onslow County.

The trust funds and EEP also worked to protect military installations from encroaching development. The projects include the following:

- The acquisition of two tracts totaling 1,349 acres in the Shelter Swamp Creek Flatwoods significant natural heritage area in Pender County will help protect water quality and a wildlife-conservation corridor connecting Holly Shelter Game Land to Camp Lejeune Marine Base. It is also located within Camp Lejeune's designated noise buffer zone.
- Funds were provided for the acquisition of several tracts by the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust to help protect Cherry Point and Piney Island bombing range.
- The acquisition of the 377-acre Beck II tract at Folkstone by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission will help protect Camp Lejeune/New River.
- The acquisition of 850 acres by Goldsboro and Wayne County in cooperation with the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust will support the accident potential zones around Seymour Johnson Air Force Base.
- The acquisition of the 457-acre Adirondack tract by the N.C Wildlife Resources Commission helps protect Camp Lejeune.

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- A 194-acre acquisition of a conservation easement on the Troutman tract on Drowning Creek by The Nature Conservancy protects Camp McCall.
- A 1,429-acre expansion of the Angola Bay Game Land, buffering Camp LeJeune, will contribute to the linking of Angola Bay to the Holly Shelter Game Land and provide a landscape approach to protecting these nationally-significant natural areas.
- A 1,027-acre expansion of the Sandhills Game Land provides a much needed buffer along Fort Bragg's southern boundary, the area contains the Redwing Seeps Significant Natural Heritage Area, which supports two rare plants and six rare animal species.

The CWMTF was created by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1996 to help finance projects that enhance or restore degraded waters, protect unpolluted waters, and/or contribute toward a network of riparian buffers and greenways for environmental, educational, and recreational benefits.

The Natural Heritage Trust Fund was created by the General Assembly in 1987 as a supplemental funding source for state agencies to acquire and protect the state's ecological diversity and cultural heritage and to inventory the natural areas of the state.

The North Carolina General Assembly established the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund in 1994 to fund improvements in the state's park system, to fund grants for local governments and to increase the public's access to the state's beaches.

EEP combines an existing state wetlands-restoration initiative from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources with advance-mitigation efforts by the state Department of Transportation to offset unavoidable impacts from transportation projects. EEP's mission, over a two-year transition period and beyond, is to improve habitat, stream and water-quality protection, and to reduce road-construction delays by streamlining required environmental-permitting processes.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources' One North Carolina Naturally initiative focuses on coordinating a statewide conservation plan with public and private partners and landowners and restoring functional ecosystems, biological diversity and working landscapes through the stewardship of land and water resources. These land conservation projects by the three trust funds and EEP are critical to the success of the One North Carolina Naturally initiative.

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