



Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy

34 Wall Street, Suite 502, Asheville, NC 28801-2710 Telephone: 828.253.0095 Website: appalachian.org



Press Release

For Immediate Release
7 May 2010

Contact: Kristina Tarasan
828-253-0095 x 205
Kristina@appalachian.org

Urge Legislators to Make Conservation Funding a Priority

The Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC), the Asheville-based land trust that has safeguarded nearly 50,000 acres in the mountain region since 1974, thanks Governor Perdue for recommending continued funding for the Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) at \$50 million for the upcoming fiscal year.

Perdue's support is vital in making sure that conservation remains a priority in these tough economic times. With the governor's budget recommendations, she has recognized that conservation projects create jobs in many communities hit hard by the recession. The state parks system, for example, continues to set records for both visitors and economic impact (more than \$400 million per year).

Projects funded by our state's four conservation trust funds, CWMTF, NC Natural Heritage Trust Fund, NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, have set aside hundreds of thousands of acres for the public to hike, fish, hunt, boat, bird and sightsee. Mountain land trusts hope legislators will also recognize the value of conservation, and we urge them to support conservation funding as the General Assembly works on its budget legislation.

North Carolina has shown exceptional national leadership in conserving its irreplaceable natural resources as the state with the distinction of losing more natural lands than any other state in the country over the last decade. Thanks to North Carolina's investment through its four conservation trust funds, communities across the state have formed private and public (local, state and federal) partnerships to leverage state dollars and maximize economic benefits.

The Clean Water Management Trust Fund has identified dozens of quality conservation and clean water projects that are ready to close upon receipt of funding. These projects will protect our most important economic resource--a clean water supply. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that it is 20 to 400 times more expensive to treat polluted water than to prevent contamination through watershed protection.

SAHC has received over 15 grants from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund since 1996 to purchase and protect pristine streams and rivers, and to cover closing costs such as surveys and appraisals for perpetual conservation easements. Trust Fund grants also supported the partial purchase of development rights from landowners who wanted to ensure their land would never be developed. However the CWMTF tap was temporarily turned off in 2008-09 due to the state's budget crisis.

The CWMTF had approved funding for three SAHC conservation projects in 2008 to protect the water quality of Mollie's Branch, White Oak Creek and the headwaters of the Elk River, all located in Avery

County within the Highlands of Roan. In 2009, SAHC submitted four additional grant requests that are awaiting approval by the CWMTF.

“We are so grateful to Governor Perdue for restoring funding to the Clean Water Management Trust Fund and are counting on the General Assembly to approve much needed funds this summer in the Short Session,” said Carl Silverstein, Executive Director of SAHC. “These dollars are crucial for protecting clean drinking water sources in North Carolina for future generations.”

With the commitment of North Carolina’s governor and legislators, conservation will continue to create jobs and protect our state’s valuable quality of life. Please consider joining land trusts for Land for Tomorrow Lobby Day in Raleigh on May 25. (Information available at <http://www.landfortomorrow.org/page166.html>.)