



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – October 3, 2007

Contact: Carl Silverstein (828) 253-0095 or carl@appalachian.org

Over 400 Acres Protected in Buncombe County Conservation Victory

(Asheville, NC): Buncombe County and the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) accomplished an important conservation victory on Friday, September 14th, when they signed the documents at a downtown attorney's office that finalized the purchase of a conservation easement on the spectacularly beautiful 428-acre Sandy Mush Herb Nursery property, owned by Kate and Fairman Jayne and their children. The property encompasses Little Sandy Mush Bald and is one of the most prominent ridgelines in Buncombe County, visible from Asheville, Weaverville, and Leicester.

Protecting this spectacular mountain skyline was accomplished through collaborations between the SAHC, the County Commissioners, local philanthropists and the Jayne Family. The staff of the SAHC worked on the project for more than two years. The County Commissioners approved a grant through the Buncombe Land Conservation Advisory Board toward purchasing the conservation easement, which was matched by a generous donation from local philanthropists Brad and Shelli Stanback. And, every resident of Buncombe County has the Jayne family to thank for bargain-selling the conservation easement for fifty percent of its fair market value.

The Jayne family operates the Sandy Mush Herb Nursery on the property and will continue to do so. What the conservation easement means is that they have given up the right to develop the property and have agreed to a series of restrictions that will protect it. Among the landowners' reasons for pursuing a bargain sale of a conservation easement is their profound desire to protect the native plants that they

use in their horticulture business. “We are so grateful for the Jayne family’s commitment to conservation,” said Carl Silverstein, Executive Director of the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy. “We hope others in the community will also consider protecting their land.”

At 428 acres, the Sandy Mush Herb Nursery is one of the larger intact tracts in the County. The land is almost all forested, and has not been logged since approximately the mid-1950’s. Along streams and slopes, there are yellow-poplar trees, black birch, sassafras, silverbell and eastern hemlock. A few very large northern red oaks and white oaks intermixed with other tree species populate the ridges with one unusually American chestnut tree in the canopy. The property boasts a rich diversity of native plant species and is remarkable in that very few invasive-exotic plants have become established.

Another reason this property is so significant is that it connects with an extensive network of protected lands. It is adjacent to the adjacent 600-acre Sandy Mush Bald conservation easement, which SAHC has held since 1995, and to the adjacent 138-acre Bill Duckett property, which went into conservation easement earlier this spring. The connectivity afforded by protecting these large contiguous properties supports diverse wildlife, including black bear, bobcat and red fox as well as large birds such as wild turkey, grouse, barred owl and red tailed hawk.

This property is rich in cultural heritage and is a key element of Buncombe County’s agricultural history. The Jayne family operates the Sandy Mush Herb Nursery on the property, and among their reasons for pursuing the conservation easement is their profound desire to protect the native plants that they use in their horticulture business.

The Newfound Mountains/Sandy Mush project area has been identified as a priority for protection efforts by the Buncombe Land Conservation Advisory Board and it is also a high priority for the SAHC. Since 1995, SAHC has pursued a proactive strategy to protect this significant landscape through acquisition of conservation easements and land according to a long-term conservation plan. More than 5,000 acres have been protected here to date with an effort underway to secure ten more key properties in Sandy Mush.

Founded in 1974 as a non-profit, the SAHC’s mission is to protect the world’s oldest mountains for the benefit of present and future generations. The Conservancy has helped ensure the protection of more than 38,000 acres throughout the mountain region but much work remains to be done and the next five

years are crucial. “The land and water resources we protect in the next five years will define our mountain landscape forever,” said Carl Silverstein. “That is why we are working so hard now, and are so grateful to families like the Jaynes.”

To become a member of the Conservancy, to volunteer or to make a donation, visit www.appalachian.org or call 828-253-0095. Working together our community can meet the challenges of protecting these magnificent natural resources for us and for future generations.

Carl Silverstein
Executive Director, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
34 Wall Street - Suite 502 Asheville NC 28801
carl@appalachian.org
www.appalachian.org
(828) 253-0095