



Lake James State Park Superintendent Sean McElhone introduces speakers during the dedication ceremony to open the new Paddy's Creek section of Lake James State Park on Friday.



A small crowd gathered to celebrate at the new Paddy's Creek section of Lake James State Park for a dedication ceremony on Friday morning.

Tears and smiles at dedication

Lake James State Park's new section open at last

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MORGANTON — It was an emotional day for some as a new addition to Lake James State Park opened on Friday.

For the public, it is a promise kept, park officials said.

The new Paddy's Creek Section boasts a 700-foot-wide swim beach, a 6,000-square-foot bathhouse with showers and changing area, picnic grounds with two picnic shelters and toilets and parking areas. It also has three miles of new hiking trails.

Park officials say Paddy's

Creek will give the public more access to the lake.

Paul Braun became emotional when he talked about the years-long journey to get the new park open. Braun led the charge to protect the lake and preserve public access for future generations.

It was a journey that started when he spotted bald eagles in the area. He tried to find the eagles' nest and discovered a housing development being built on the lake.

"It sickened my heart, what I saw," Braun said after the ded-



PHOTOS BY JENNIFER FREW | THE NEWS HERALD

Officials participate in a ceremonial ribbon cutting during the dedication of the new Paddy's Creek section of Lake James State Park on Friday. Pictured, from left, Rep. Mitch Gillespie, Dist. 85, Lake James State Park Superintendent Sean McElhone, Sen. Joe Sam Queen, Dist. 47, Lake James State Park Advisory Committee Chairman Ken Harris, Committee member Paul Braun, Judge Bob Hunter, N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation Director Lewis Ledford, Foothills Conservancy of N.C. Executive Director Susie Hamrick Jones and Rep. Hugh Blackwell, Dist. 86.