



JENNIFER M. PHELPS | MEDIA GENERAL NEWS SERVICE

Gov. Mike Easley (second from left) signs the land purchase deal between Crescent Resources and the state Thursday. With him (from left) are Tom Johnson, chairman of the Burke County Board of Commissioners; Art Fields, Crescent chief executive officer; and Susie Hamrick Jones, Foothills Conservancy executive director.

McDowell officials seek expanded preservation

BY MIKE CONLEY
MEDIA GENERAL NEWS SERVICE

MARION — An expanded Lake James State Park will mean the preservation of more land on the Burke County side and continued public access to the lake as a whole.

Meanwhile, McDowell County officials said they are open to other possibilities that could preserve more land on Lake James for the McDowell side.

"I want to see a proper balance between growth and preservation," said David Walker, chairman of the McDowell County Board of Commissioners. "Growth is inevitable."

"I want to preserve as much as we can of the land around the lake so future generations will be able to enjoy hunting, fishing and camping. Everything has got to have a proper balance to it."

The purchase of the land is

The park has two boat ramps at Hidden Cove and Canal Bridge, campsites, hiking trails, fishing areas, picnic areas and a beach for swimming and sunbathing. The park also has exhibits and information about the animals and plants that live along the lake.

McDowell County Manager Chuck Abernathy said leasing the existing park by both McDowell and Burke certainly could be a possibility.

"There's all kinds of alternatives," he said. "We're open for discussion. We certainly want to be cooperative."

Also, McDowell officials still are pursuing the idea of leasing more than 300 acres of land at the Black Bear section of Lake James for use as a county-operated recreation park.

ON THE NET:

- *Lake James State Park:*
www.ils.unc.edu/parkproject/visit/laja/home.html

Lake James land deal signed

BY JOSHUA HARRIS
MEDIA GENERAL NEWS SERVICE

MORGANTON

Lake James State Park expanded to six times its current 650 acres with one swipe of a pen.

Will expand by 2,195 acres.

Gov. Mike Easley signed off Thursday on a deal between the state and Crescent Resources that adds 2,915 acres of land to the state park.

The agreement is for the state to pay \$18.36 million to Crescent for the nearly 3,000-acre peninsula southwest of the Linville River that is val-

ABOUT THE PARK

Established in 1987.

Annual visitation has reached about 250,000.

Originally 565 acres, was 605 acres until Thursday's deal.

Will expand by 2,195 acres.

ued at \$30.6 million.

"We don't have but so much water and we have to protect it every day," Easley said. "It can be challenging in tough times and a tough fiscal environment, but that's when we are at our best."

The balance of the land value is a one-time, \$12.25 million gift by Crescent to the state.

The park expansion, although never secure until Thursday, was part of the vision agreed upon among Crescent Resources, Citizens to Save Lake James, the Burke County Board of Commissioners, the Foothills Conservancy, the Lake James Environmental Associations and numerous other groups included in the Lake James Task Force for the lake's future.

The funding for the park ex-

BY THE NUMBERS

\$30.6 million

Agreed value of the 2,915-acre piece of land.

\$20 million

Amount allotted for state parks in the bill.

\$18.36 million

Amount that North Carolina paid Crescent Resources.

\$12.25 million

Gift that Crescent paid to the state to secure the deal.

pansion came within a \$310 million state House bill recently signed by Easley.