

## CONTINUED FROM COVER - Official Scoop

James, the Lake James Task Force and the Southern Environmental Law Center, which represented the interests of the Sierra Club, Trout Unlimited and other conservation groups.

"This is an historic day," said Tom Johnson, chair of the Burke County Commission. "Not only are we preserving the natural attributes of this property and the lake, we are creating a major opportunity to diversify our economy. The expanded state park will serve as a catalyst for further development of tourism-related destinations and businesses. With an unprecedented spirit of cooperation, the county, state, Crescent Resources, environmental groups and citizens came together and found common ground in their needs and long-term goals."

"This addition will immediately move Lake James State Park into a new class in terms of recreation potential and conservation of natural resources," said Lewis Ledford, director of the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation. "Perhaps the most gratifying aspect about the acquisition is the example of true partnership among the state parks system, a corporate entity, the conservation community and local government."

Financing the park expansion will be possible as a result of legislation by the 2004 N.C. General Assembly. It allows certificates of participation to be issued for park projects and military buffer acquisitions. Those would be repaid with a portion of future revenues into the three natural resource trust funds -- Parks and Recre-

ation, Natural Heritage and Clean Water Management. The Parks and Recreation and Natural Heritage trust funds are supported by the state's tax on real estate deed transfers.

Since its creation in 1987, Lake James State Park has been among the smallest of the state's 33 parks and recreation areas. The additional property offers potential for a broad range of expanded camping, hiking and water-based recreation, and the park becomes an obvious candidate for a visitor's center and exhibit hall similar to those being built at other parks, Ledford said.

The division's planners will soon begin revising the park's master plan with input from the citizens' Park Advisory Committee. That master plan will be used to guide the park's development.

"With the spectacular Linville Gorge and Blue Ridge Mountains as a backdrop, Lake James deserves special attention and careful stewardship," said Susie Hamrick Jones, executive director of the Foothills Conservancy, a regional land trust which has worked closely with state and local officials. Crescent, other conservation groups and citizens to facilitate a park expansion. "Thanks to Crescent's generosity and leadership, the state and county's foresight, and the citizens who have worked to protect the lake, these lands which shelter bald eagles and feed clean waters into Lake James will be open to all."

Crescent Resources, LLC is a land management and real estate development

company. Formed more than 40 years ago by Duke Energy, the company has land interests in nine states in the southeast and southwestern United States.

The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is the lead and protection of North Carolina's out-

standing natural resources. Its Division of Parks and Recreation is responsible for managing the state parks system, which includes 29 state parks, four state recreation areas, 17 natural areas, seven state lakes and the state trails and rivers systems. With an annual attendance of more than 13 million people, the state parks are the second most visited outdoor attraction in the North Carolina, trailing only the Blue Ridge Parkway.

More information, photos and maps are available on the Internet at [www.crescent-resources.com/news.asp](http://www.crescent-resources.com/news.asp)

