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TEED OFF: Golfer's dream comes true at Greater Hickory Classic at The Rock Barn Golf and Spa this weekend. **C1**

EATING FOR OTHERS: Local restaurants offer diners the opportunity to take a bite out of hunger. **B2**

Published daily for loyal reader Nathaniel Conley and all of Burke County

Gov. signs off on lake park

BY JOSHUA HARRIS
THE NEWS HERALD

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

Gov. Mike Easley signed off on a deal between the state and Crescent Resources on Thursday, which 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 valued at \$30.6 million.

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

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

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 Commissioners, the Foothills Conservancy, the Lake James Environmental Associations and numerous other groups included in the

Lake James Task Force for the future for Lake James.

But until the governor put his signature on the agreement, no one involved was sure an expanded Lake James State Park would become a reality.

The funding for the park expansion came within a \$310-million state House bill recently signed by Easley. The bill allowed \$20 million for state parks, but did not include any mention of Lake James.

"It's a great day for Burke County and it's a great day for the state," Easley said. "The project is a result of a public private partnership and that's the

PLEASE SEE LAKE, A2



JENNIFER M. PHELPS | THE NEWS HERALD

North Carolina Governor Mike Easley signs off on a land purchase deal between Crescent Resources and the state that will add almost 3,000 acres to the current state park at Lake James on Thursday. The entire parcel is valued at nearly \$30 million, but through a gift from Crescent, the state only had to pay \$18 million. In the background from left, Tom Johnson, chairman of the Burke County Board of Commissioners, Art Fields, CEO of Crescent Resources and Susie Hamrick Jones, executive director of the Foothills Conservancy, celebrate along with the governor. The map at left shows where Lake James State Park currently exists and where its 3,000-acre expansion will be. As Burke County celebrates the park expansion, McDowell County looks to the future for ways to expand conserved lands on its side of the lake.

McDOWELL COUNTY looks to expand on its side

BY MIKE CONLEY
MEDIA GENERAL

LAKE JAMES — 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 Commission Chairman David Walker. "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 expected to spark greater

PLEASE SEE EXPANSION, A8