

Pilot Mountain Park Grant Gets Approval

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A grant of \$285,607 for the acquisition of an additional 1,335 acres for Pilot Mountain State Park will help make possible the fulfillment of a dream that has been in process now for approximately four years.

The grant, approved by the U. S. Department of the Interior, was announced last week by the office of Rep. Wilmer Mizell of the Fifth Congressional District.

It will augment approximately \$160,000 raised from a six - county area through a fund - raising committee headed by Huber Hanes of Winston - Salem, who headed a similar committee when the mountain itself and approximately 1,400 acres of surrounding land were acquired two years ago.

The funds now made available will be applied to purchase a corridor nearly five miles long leading to the Yadkin River, two large islands in the Shoals area and bordering tracts on the opposite side of the river. The enlarged area will be used for recreational purposes, including camping, swimming, hiking, horseback riding and nature studies.

The additional scope of the park was the brainchild of Joe Matthews, director of the Northwest Economic Development Commission, which has its offices in Winston-Salem. Matthews, from the beginning, has been a tireless promoter for the park plan and during the past year or so has made a number of excursions to the river and its two major islands, the largest of which is more than 40 acres in size, to show off the prospects to public officials, citizens and others interested in the idea.

Now the plan is assured of fulfillment and probably no one is more elated over its success than Matthews himself.

He promoted the facility

for citizens throughout the five-county area of the Northwest Economic Development Commission, including Forsyth, Davie, Yadkin, Stokes and Surry.

In the subsequent fund-raising campaign, Guilford County was added to the fold, since Interstate 40 and the new U. S. 52 provide a direct, speedy route from Guilford to the mountain.

The six - county fund campaign was organized to raise approximately \$370,000 through private and corporate contributions.

All were successful. The acquisition of the mountain and the surrounding tracts for a total of \$1,040,000 became simply a matter of getting the technical details worked out.

Matthews himself spent day after day for months on the mountain site, relocating old, obscure boundaries, getting the tracts surveyed and obtaining options from the landowners. This was the most tedious job of all, but Matthews stuck with it until it was finished.

The North Carolina State Parks Commission said it would accept the mountain area as a state park provided it would be donated to the commission free of charge.

For many years one of the highlights of a visit to Pilot Mountain was to climb the pinnacle for an unexcelled view of the countryside around for miles in all directions.

But recently the ladders leading up to the top were condemned as unsafe and the lower section was removed to deter would - be climbers.

Thomas C. Ellis, state superintendent of parks, said the steps would be replaced, but that is not likely for several months until the 1971 legislature can approve the necessary funds.

The successful campaign to raise \$160,000

from private and corporate sources and the \$285,607 grant by the Department of the Interior to purchase the corridor and river area marks another major milestone in the Pilot Mountain State Park concept.

Already visited by thousands of persons, including many from out of the state, the future development of the park will provide an outstanding tourist attraction.