

Public offers input on state park development

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About 60 people attend meeting in McDowell

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Hiking trails and horse trails, a visitor's center, camping sites, bank fishing, boat docks and swimming areas.

The new and larger Lake James State Park could feature these and more.

On Thursday evening, more than 60 residents gathered at the McDowell County Courthouse to talk with state park officials and designers. They gave their input about what they want to see — and not see — in the new park.

"I want to see anything that will help people have access to the lake and to these habitat areas," said Ken Harris, vice president of the Lake James Environmental Association.

Harris has long been an advocate for preserving the lake's natural beauty and keeping it available for the public. He said he favors "any facility that has to do with camping, backpacking, boating, horseback

riding. Anything to demonstrate what our argument has been for 10 years: This is the public's lake and at least a large chunk of it will always be the public's lake."

What does Harris not want to see? "Shoreline development," he said.

The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation is creating a blueprint for how the 2,915 acres recently acquired from Crescent Resources will be developed in coming decades. The new park, to be located on the Burke side, will be six times bigger than the existing one and allows

WANT TO GO?

Another meeting will be held Thursday at 7 p.m. in the commission boardroom of the Burke County Service Building, the former Lazarus building, at 110 North Green St. in Morganton.

(See PUBLIC, 2A)