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Lake James money a lock

Funds will help preserve lake's northern section

From Staff Reports

A congressional panel is considering \$4 million to protect the northern flank of Lake James by expanding the Pisgah National Forest in both McDowell and Burke counties, and legislators said Thursday they are confident the money will be approved.

The lake is the most pristine reservoir in the Catawba River basin.

U.S. Rep. Charles Taylor, who worked to obtain this money as a member of the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, said the \$4 million will be included as part of the fiscal year 2001 Interior Appropriations Bill.

A joint House-Senate conference committee, on which Taylor sits, was scheduled to formally approve the item Thursday, but, at last report, the subcommittee had recessed for the week.

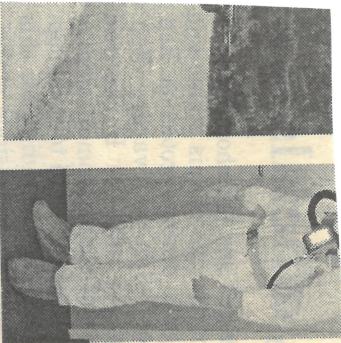
The item is not controversial, said Taylor spokesman Roger France.

The acquisition has also been a top national priority for the Clinton administration.

Earlier this summer, U.S. Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C. and also a supporter of this project, played a role in keeping the funding hopes alive by helping to obtain \$1 million in the Senate's budget. U.S. Rep. Cass Ballenger has also been supportive of efforts to obtain money for Lake James.

The Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina, a regional land trust, has worked closely with the U.S. Forest Service, area U.S. House members, county officials, Citizens to Save Lake James, the Lake James Environmental Association and other conservation groups. All of these groups and government officials have worked to build support for adding important watershed and shoreline lands on the north side of the lake, including the lower Linville Gorge area, to the Pisgah National Forest.

Crescent Resources, Duke Energy's land development arm, and paper maker Champion



hicle (left), and SODAT
t) shows off the gear he

County?

In the past six years,

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