



News Release

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For Immediate Release

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The Nature Conservancy in North Carolina

NATURE CONSERVANCY ADDS TO HICKORY NUT GORGE MOSAIC

Acquisition helps to preserve signature view from Chimney Rock

LAKE LURE, NORTH CAROLINA – The Nature Conservancy is working to fill in the gaps to protect Hickory Nut Gorge, recently acquiring five important tracts that will be transferred to the state parks system as additions to Chimney Rock State Park.

“This is like a mosaic,” said David Ray, the Conservancy’s Southern Blue Ridge Landscape Director. “The Nature Conservancy has been protecting important parts of Hickory Nut Gorge for more than two decades. With this round of acquisitions, we’re filling in some vital pieces of the mosaic, in particular protecting a large portion of the signature view from the top of Chimney Rock.”

“Our longstanding partnership with The Nature Conservancy has yielded many benefits,” said Adrienne Wallace, superintendent of Chimney Rock State Park. “Here in the Hickory Nut Gorge, these targeted land acquisitions result in very effective conservation as well as the creation of a world-class state park.”

The five tracts are located in Rutherford County. Four of them, totaling 133.84 acres, are located on the slopes of RoundTop Mountain, which is a major landmark in Hickory Nut Gorge. For visitors to Chimney Rock, this is the main feature they see when they look to the northwest from the top of Chimney Rock. The tracts also could provide key access as other parts of the park are developed.

The fifth 24-acre tract helps to complete parklands on top of Rumbling Bald Mountain, running across the ridge of the mountain. Rumbling Bald is one of the most prominent features in Hickory Nut Gorge. Its series of three mounds and staggering rock cliffs are easily recognizable from Lake Lure.

The acquisition of these tracts is part of a far-reaching conservation strategy for important natural resources in the gorge and for the development of Chimney Rock State Park. The Nature Conservancy, along with its partners – Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina and Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy – is working to acquire additional property that will also be transferred to the state park system. About 3,500

MORE

acres have been set aside for the park; however, the only current public access is at Chimney Rock, the former 1,000-acre tourist destination.

The Nature Conservancy's conservation goal is to protect 10 percent of each major habitat on Earth by the year 2015. The Southern Blue Ridge, where Hickory Nut Gorge is located, is a priority forest habitat type for the Conservancy. Many rare plant and animal species, including some that are federally endangered, are found in the gorge.

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The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 18 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 117 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. The North Carolina Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and its 28,000 members have protected nearly 700,000 acres in the state. Visit us on the Web at nature.org/northcarolina.