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## Conservancy finishes 20 projects

### Tough economy doesn't stop efforts to protect land

By Jessica Goodman Times-News Staff Writer

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The Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy weathered the economic struggles of 2009 to address more projects in one year than ever before. The agency helps protect land and water resources in the area "creating a regional network of protected farm, forest, park and natural lands," according to the organization's Web site.

Last year was difficult, according to the CMLC Board of Trustees President Rick Merrill, who addressed the annual meeting on Saturday at the Holmes Educational State Forest.

"We accomplished more with less," he said. "We stretched every donated dollar."

The agency completed 20 new conservation projects, which covered 2,686 acres. In total, the agency has helped protect more than 21,000 acres in more than 100 projects in the agency's 16-year history.

More than 75 miles of streams and watershed were also protected in the agency's time.

At the annual meeting, the agency presents the Lela McBride Land Stewardship Award, which is given to a group or individual making contributions to land conservation or stewardship in the area.

This year, the award was presented to Transylvania County for their contributions which included protecting the land around Connestee Falls to create a public park for the community and its continued support to protect local farmers and farmland.

"This is the first time the award has gone to a government agency," said Kieran Roe, executive director of CMLC.

Transylvania County Commissioner Daryle Hogsed, County Manager Artie Wilson and Agriculture Advisory board members Jimmy Whitmire and Carroll Parker were on hand to accept the award.

"I wish all decisions were as easy to make as conserving our waterfalls or our farmland," Hogsed said. "I look forward to continuing the work to preserve" these lands.

"We appreciate the recognition," he added.

Patrick McMillan, a botany professor at Clemson University, presented at the meeting on the southern Blue Ridge Mountains, explaining their importance in the



face of global climate change.

He discussed "preserving the mountain's diversity of life and the important role private property plays in preserving that diversity."

For more information on the CMLC, visit [www.carolinamountain.org](http://www.carolinamountain.org).

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