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## Chimney Rock park expands

*By Mike McWilliams*

Cane Creek Mountain is now part of Chimney Rock State Park thanks to two properties secured by the Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina on behalf of the state park system.

Cane Creek Mountain extends the park northeast from the area known as Worlds Edge. Foothills Conservancy, a nonprofit regional land trust, negotiated the first purchase agreement more than a year ago with landowners Bob and Anne Washburn for a 174-acre tract.

Foothills Conservancy purchased 156 adjoining acres from John and Alan Moore in February using a loan from the Conservation Fund.

Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina has its annual membership day today at Chimney Rock State Park to showcase the new addition to the park and thank its supporters.

The state recently acquired both tracts for addition to Chimney Rock Park. The land purchases cost \$6.5 million.

"Lasting protection of Cane Creek Mountain represents another milestone in safeguarding the scenic views and nationally significant heritage of Hickory Nut Gorge," Tom Kenney, Foothills Conservancy's land protection director, said in a news release.

Foothills Conservancy has worked closely in western Rutherford County with the state parks system and other conservation partners since 2004 to secure support for and create a new state park in the Hickory Nut Gorge by acquiring priority tracts, including Chimney Rock Park and Cane Creek Mountain, according to the news release.

"It will be a wonderful place for hiking, and wilderness park, for years to come," said Susie Hamrick-Jones, Foothills Conservancy executive director.

To date, 4,320 acres have been set aside for the park, with acquisitions supported by three state conservation trust funds, the N.C. General Assembly and private donors.

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