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Agency News

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Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, a local land trust that has worked to safeguard more than 20,500 acres in the mountains for more than 15 years, would like to thank Gov. Beverly Perdue for recommending continued funding for the Clean Water Management Trust Fund at \$50 million for the upcoming fiscal year.

Her support is vital in making sure that conservation remains a priority in these tough economic times. With the governor's budget recommendations, she has recognized that conservation projects create jobs in many communities hit hard by the recession. The state parks system, for example, continues to set records for both visitors and economic impact (more than \$400 million per year).

Mountain land trusts hope legislators will also recognize the value of conservation, and we urge them to support conservation funding as the General Assembly works on its budget legislation.

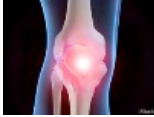
Historically, North Carolina has shown exceptional national leadership in conserving its irreplaceable natural resources as the state with the distinction of losing more natural lands than any other state in the country over the last decade. Thanks to the North Carolina's investment through its four conservation trust funds, communities across the state have formed private and public (local, state and federal) partnerships to leverage state dollars and maximize economic benefits.

The Clean Water Management Trust Fund's board has identified dozens of quality conservation and clean water projects that are ready to close upon receipt of funding. These projects will protect our most important economic resource — a clean water supply. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that it is 20 to 400 times more expensive to treat polluted water than to prevent contamination through watershed protection.

CMLC has received more than 35 grants from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund since 1999 providing funding to cover closing costs such as surveys and appraisals for perpetual conservation easements on streams, rivers and wetlands. In many cases, Trust Fund grants supported the partial purchase of development rights from landowners who wanted to ensure their land would never be developed. However, the CWMTF tap was virtually turned off in 2008 due to the state's budget crisis.

CMLC works in partnership with willing landowners and the state to protect our most critical sources of clean water, wildlife habitat, and working farmland in the face of relentless population growth and development. Western North Carolina lost 261,000 acres to development over the last two decades alone.

Preserving our environment also sustains our Western North Carolina economy.



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Projects funded by our state's four conservation trust funds have set aside hundreds of thousands of acres for the public to hike, fish, hunt, boat, bird and sightsee. Recreational areas generate hundreds of millions of dollars of economic impact and thousands of jobs in hotels, retail stores, local crafts stores, outfitters and restaurants.

With the commitment of our governor and legislators, conservation will continue to create jobs and protect our state's valuable quality of life.

More information is available at www.landfortomorrow.org/page166.html.

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