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Trust buys tract near Roaring Fork headwaters

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The Conservation Trust for North Carolina this week purchased a 48.7-acre tract of land near the Roaring Fork headwaters for \$125,000, buying the land from Mike Carson of Gainesville, Ga., who agreed to sell the property at a discount in order to assure it would be forever protected.

The property is on the border of Alleghany and Surry counties near Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 220.5. It includes the headwaters of the Fisher River, which is part of the Yadkin River Basin, and is upstream from the water supply for the town of Dobson.

The purchase puts the land in a permanently protected status, which will keep it in its present undeveloped condition. The tract is adjacent to the 201-acre Cumberland Knob/Saddle Mountain Vista property that was conveyed by the trust to the National Park Service in 2007. Both are near the 3,400-acre Saddle Mountain Wilderness Area and the 1,000-acre Cumberland Knob National Recreation Area.

“This purchase demonstrates that, even in a difficult economic climate, the will and the opportunities are there for us to permanently safeguard North Carolina’s natural treasures,” trust Executive Director Reid Wilson said. “We will be able to protect our state’s land and water as long as we have the help of landowners like Mr. Carson who love their land and want to see it conserved.”

The trust said it intends to give the entire tract to the National Park Service to be included in the Blue Ridge Parkway corridor. The trust has already protected more than 32,000 acres along the parkway through purchases and conservation agreements with landowners.

In addition to protecting drinking water downstream, preservation of the Roaring Fork headwaters tract will add wildlife habitat to the existing conservation land nearby, the trust said in a written statement. With the property visible from two parkway overlooks (Fox Hunter’s Paradise and High Piney Spur), it will also help maintain the views from the parkway in that area.

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