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Blue Ridge Forever is working to keep parkway special

Valerie True, Asheville

We're enjoying your series on the Blue Ridge Parkway, in particular Mark Barrett's article Sunday on the threats posed by encroaching development.

Blue Ridge Forever, a coalition of 10 land trusts serving Western North Carolina, has, in fact, named the Parkway one of our 28 conservation focus areas, earmarked in our Conservation Vision as being in urgent need of protection. The details of the Vision are at www.blueridgeforever.info.

Land trusts play an irreplaceable role in protecting the natural, cultural and historic treasures of the Parkway and all of Western North Carolina. Since our coalition began in 2006, the member land trusts have protected 19 properties adjoining or in view of the Parkway — a total of 4,257 acres — at a cost of more than \$20 million. But it's a struggle to keep up the pace of this work as state government has been forced to cut back on funding to protect clean water, wildlife habitat, parkland and mature forests that make our region special.

We hope your articles on the Parkway will help private individuals and businesses understand why it's critical for them to step up now and help us continue to protect the places we all love.

Valerie True, Asheville

True is the coalition coordinator of Blue Ridge Forever
