



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Release: Immediate
Date: Aug. 24, 2007

Contact: Charlie Peek
Phone: (919) 715-8709

GOV. EASLEY SIGNS BILL AUTHORIZING DEEP RIVER STATE TRAIL

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley signed legislation today authorizing the establishment of the Deep River State Trail as a unit of the state parks system. And, the Triangle Land Conservancy and the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation announced a 75-acre land acquisition that will enlarge the first principal component of the state trail.

The tract on Water Tower Road in Chatham County is adjacent to 870 acres, known as the Justice Lands, acquired earlier for the trail by the state parks system with the conservancy's help. The additional land was purchased July 25 from the Powell family for \$549,300.

The Deep River State Trail will eventually be a network of conservation lands and recreation amenities stretching along the river corridor from its headwaters in Guilford County through Randolph, Chatham and Moore counties to the confluence of the Deep and Haw rivers in Lee County.

The trail was authorized by the General Assembly through Senate Bill 1431 and signed by the governor, which allows the state parks system to set aside land and actively coordinate the project with other agencies, local governments land conservancies, nonprofit organizations, private landowners and recreation interests.

“We must be innovative when considering conservation and recreation opportunities in this part of the state with its fast-paced population growth,” said Lewis Ledford, director of the division. “Triangle Land Conservancy has been an invaluable partner in developing this innovative state trail concept, and Sen. Bob Atwater’s generous and tireless support has been crucial as well. And, this authorization allows us to nurture other partnerships all along the river corridor.”

Long popular with paddlers and anglers, the Deep River offers a corridor with a tremendous potential for linking conservation lands, cultural resources and recreation opportunities. A state trail presents an opportunity to build destination tourism in a five-county region.

The Deep River State Trail would likely begin as a canoe/paddle trail with a series of public access sites. Ultimately, it could become the backbone of a regional land and water trails system with connections to Greensboro, Asheboro, the N.C. Zoological Park and Jordan Lake, and could eventually be extended down the Cape Fear River to Raven Rock State Park and beyond.

The river is considered nationally significant for its biological resources including a globally rare species of fish (Cape Fear shiner) and mussel (Atlantic pigtoe). Along the river's edge, scenic bluffs and rock outcrops alternate with high quality floodplain forests. The Deep River was significant in the history and development of piedmont North Carolina. Historic points of interest include the House in the Horseshoe State Historic Site, an 18th century plantation, a 19th century canal/lock system for navigation, the Endor iron furnace and the Deep River coal field.

The Triangle Land Conservancy manages 720 acres along the corridor including the White Pines Nature Preserve, the La Grange Riparian Reserve and the McIver Landing canoe access.

-more-

The Powell Tract was acquired with funding from the N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund and the N.C. Natural Heritage Trust Fund. It includes nearly two miles of stream frontage along unnamed tributaries of the river and is covered in mixed pine and hardwood forest.

“Triangle Land Conservancy was thrilled to work with the Powell family to add this land to the Deep River State Trail for residents of North Carolina and out-of-state guests to enjoy for years to come,” said conservancy president Kevin Brice. “The Powell family should be commended for their strong desire to enlarge the forestland reservoir here at the Justice Lands that is so critical for wildlife and water quality.”

###