

NEWS RELEASE

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TLC conserves another 125 acres at White Pines:
Tops 10,000 acres across the Triangle region

Oakland Township, Chatham County – Three conservation projects encompassing 125 acres along the Rocky River will enhance water quality and wildlife habitat at White Pines, the most significant natural area in the Triangle region.

Combined with several other new conservation projects across the six-county Triangle region these deals helped push Triangle Land Conservancy's protected land total to more than 10,000 acres. As Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC) prepares to celebrate its 25-year anniversary in 2008, it reaches a major conservation milestone. The organization has done so by significantly increasing its pace of conservation. By the year 2000, TLC had conserved 2,000 acres in 17 years. In the last seven years, the group has conserved 8,000 acres to reach the 10,000-acre plateau.

Much of TLC's success of the last seven years is attributable to increased funding opportunities through North Carolina's conservation trust funds: the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the Natural Heritage Trust Fund and the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. All three of the new White Pines area projects are funded by the N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund, for a total of \$677,000.

Located about 8 miles south of Pittsboro at the confluence of the Deep and Rocky rivers, the White Pines area supports a habitat that is more akin to the North Carolina mountains than the Piedmont. Sustained here by cooler north-facing slopes and the cooling influence of two rivers, white pine, mountain laurel and other montane species thrive. TLC identified this area as the most significant natural site in the six Triangle counties in the mid-1980s and has been piecing together conservation tracts since that time.

The three new conservation projects include conservation agreements with two private landowners and a bargain sale of land that will be added to TLC's White Pines Nature Preserve.

The bargain sale of 12.5 acres for \$75,000 by out-of-state landowner Dr. Gloria Grizzle brings the White Pines Nature Preserve to 288 acres. It also extends the preserve's reach up the Rocky River and protects some of the most dramatic bluffs on the river. A grant from the N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund (NC Clean Water) provided \$39,600 for the purchase and \$19,350 for transaction costs; NC Clean Water holds a conservation easement on the three acres immediately adjacent to the river. TLC paid the remaining \$35,400 purchase price out of its Land Opportunity Fund and now owns the entire tract.

The two private conservation agreements—one on 12.3 acres, the other on 100 acres—are on adjacent tracts just upstream of the White Pines Nature Preserve. Together they provide water quality protection buffers on 3,000 feet of Rocky River stream frontage. The Lower Rocky River/Lower Deep River is a Nationally Significant Aquatic Habitat that supports rare aquatic species including: the Cape Fear shiner (a minnow); Carolina redhorse (a variety of “quillback” fish); and Roanoke slabshell, brook floater and the yellow lampmussel (all freshwater mussels). They also help maintain the connectivity of a wildlife corridor for birds and mammals in this area.

Kathy Hundley donated a conservation easement on 12.3 acres on the Rocky River. A mini-grant from NC Clean Water provided \$23,350 for closing costs.

Beth Goldston and Bryan Goldston are a sister and brother who inherited 340 acres of managed forestland from their father, Earl Goldston, when he passed away in 2005. The Goldstons made a bargain sale of a conservation easement on 100 acres of forestland to NC Clean Water for \$570,000. NC Clean Water also provided \$24,725 for closing costs. Under the terms of the easement, the Goldstons will limit forestry practices on the 100 acres to activities that will enhance the native white pines populations. They will continue with commercial forest management practices on their remaining 240 acres based on their forest management plan.

NC Clean Water holds the easements for both conservation agreements, with TLC providing long-term stewardship. With the land remaining in private ownership, the Goldston and Hundley tracts will not be available for public access.

Some conservation definitions

Stream frontage: The greatest threat to water quality in our region comes from sediment and other pollutants running off the land into our streams. Maintaining vegetated buffers on streams helps keep sediment and other pollutants out of

streams. By purchasing land with frontage on streams, TLC and the state ensure that stream buffers are maintained.

Connectivity: Many of our native plant and animal communities require large, contiguous territories to maintain the vitality and viability of their populations. As human activities reduce the size of natural areas and isolate them from one another, populations of native species become isolated, their natural movements, dispersal patterns and gene flows are disrupted. By connecting protected tracts, TLC and the state help to maintain the vitality and viability of our native plant and animal communities.

White Pines Nature Preserve has about four miles of walking trails and is open to the public year-round for low-impact outdoor recreation. The preserve has been used extensively for research and education by Triangle-area and other universities.

The Deep River is one of Triangle Land Conservancy's priority areas. This nationally significant river provides drinking water for Chatham and Lee counties and is home to many rare and endangered fish and mussel species.

Since 1983, TLC has helped to conserve 4,190 acres in Chatham County. These projects include conservation agreements with five owners of farmland and forestland conserving 956 acres; ownership of 840 acres on eight properties; and conservation partnerships on projects that have conserved 2,282 acres.

Triangle Land Conservancy is a private, nonprofit group that conserves important open space—stream corridors, forests, wildlife habitat, farmland and natural areas—to help keep our region a healthy and vibrant place to live and work. TLC's 74 protected sites in Wake, Durham, Orange, Chatham, Johnston, and Lee counties encompass more than 10,461 acres, including several preserves open to visitors year-round. TLC is primarily funded by individual contributions and memberships, plus grants from foundations, state government and corporations.

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