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CONSERVATION VOICES



CONSERVATION TRUST FOR NORTH CAROLINA
LAND WITH PURPOSE

SPRING 2023

DEAR CTNC FAMILY,

Spring is here, and hopefully all of you will be able to enjoy North Carolina's trails, greenspaces and natural beauty more abundantly after a winter indoors. In this quarterly issue of our newsletter, you will see the most recent updates about CTNC's policy goals for the North Carolina General Assembly's 2023 long session, as well as our ongoing collaborations with conservation leaders at the state and local level to form a new initiative, the Resilience Service Network, to mitigate climate-change effects in North Carolina. As we have pledged before, CTNC is committed to inclusive partnerships with diverse communities that broadens the land trust community's reach, and ensures that the benefits of our work are equitably shared among our state's people.

Also, 2023 is a year of transition as we plan to say goodbye to our Executive Director, Chris Canfield, who is retiring at year's end. As many of you know, Chris' tenure has been marked by historic acquisitions of properties and easements in Western North Carolina, and by substantial increases in donor support and national exposure for our organization. Please reach out to Chris whenever you can to thank him for his exemplary service to our community.

Enjoy this season,

Brandon A. Robinson
President, CTNC



CTNC staff join the Land for Tomorrow coalition members for Lobby Day 2023.

Strong conservation policies seed community resilience

With elected leaders across the state making key decisions that will shape the trajectory of conservation funding, land-use policies, and critical investments in community resilience strategies, it's important to advocate for strong conservation policies. **CTNC is meeting with decision-makers to further expand our mission to build resilient, just communities throughout our state.** This upcoming session, we're looking to build capacity for a statewide Resilience Service Network, an effort to provide communities with increased capacity to address the impacts of flooding, fire, extreme heat and other environmental challenges. We hope 2023 will be the year the NC Legislature adopts the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act to increase protections for family-owned landowners who are vulnerable to involuntary land loss.

We also support requests for the state's conservation trust funds to receive adequate funding, building on the success of past conservation trust fund allocations. Funding North Carolina's trails, bringing back funding from state deed excise stamp tax revenues and restoring the conservation tax credit will also show that land conservation is important to the health of our state.

These investments in conservation action are critical to support future generations of North Carolinians.

Learn more about CTNC's legislative priorities at ctnc.org/2023-legislative-priorities.

Training Future Practitioners to Protect Heirs Property Landowners

As much as 4% of all property in North Carolina is held as heirs' property, yet only a handful of organizations in North Carolina provide legal services to protect land owners. This land, valued at approximately \$2 billion, should be retained by families instead of being lost through forced partition sales.

Thanks to the support of an anonymous donor and the NC Heirs' Property Coalition, CTNC has pledged \$50,000 to fund the new Heirs' Property Project of the Wake Forest Law Environmental Law and Policy Clinic.

Now, families facing heirs' property difficulties can receive direct legal services from skilled attorneys and law students. Beyond legal help, this project strives to support, train, and provide a framework for other legal practitioners, to help stem the rate of land loss in North Carolina due to forced partition sales.

The Clinic will support families with a desire to resist unwanted development, enhance their farming or forestry practices, and build wealth to weather natural disasters and economic downturn. By addressing heirs' property protections, families can create a legal structure for managing their land as a performing asset over the long term.

Read more on our blog about the details of this exciting partnership at ctnc.org/heirs-clinic.

Pictured: Landowners participating in the Sustainable Forestry and Land Retention Project.



Latest 408-Acre Acquisition Expands E.B. Jeffress Park

CTNC recently purchased 408 acres that will contribute to our concerted effort to expand protected land around E.B. Jeffress Park near the intersection of the Blue Ridge Parkway and Highway 421. Jeffress Park, home to a popular picnic area, Tompkins Knob, and the Cascades Trail is named for a native North Carolinian who was instrumental in routing the Blue Ridge Parkway through Western NC.

Jeffress Park is the only significant block of conserved land along the 55-mile stretch of Parkway between Moses Cone Park and Doughton Park. Currently encompassing 600 acres, an expanded Jeffress Park could become a much more significant conservation and recreation destination. Once transferred to the National Park Service, this property will join four others already protected by CTNC and a fifth property awaiting transfer from Blue Ridge Conservancy. **Combined, they will more than double the size of Jeffress Park!**

This conservation achievement was made possible by the generosity of the landowners who donated a portion of land value that reduced the overall purchase cost. This reduction enabled CTNC to purchase the property and secure another win for America's most popular National Park unit. **Learn more about this significant investment by visiting ctnc.org/jeffress-park.**



Resilience Service Network to Address Community Capacity Needs

North Carolina is making unprecedented investments in building resilience to protect against the effects of our changing climate. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been allocated for a statewide flood resiliency modeling effort, coastal community planning, floodplain protection, stormwater management, and reducing the vulnerability of transportation systems, to name a few of the vital investments. Billions of additional dollars from federal sources have also been earmarked for climate resilience.

Local leaders across North Carolina are constrained by community capacity to access the funds. They have the drive and desire to implement climate resilience projects but often lack the capacity on their team to manage the talent pool, provide a living wage, or sustain program funding year-over-year.

A proposed statewide Resilience Service Network could scale service programs in ways that build community capacity and achieve greater climate resilience.

To address this vulnerability, CTNC will collaborate with service program providers, community-based nonprofit organizations, and state and local governments to form the Resilience Service Network, designed to build community capacity toward accessing funding to design and implement climate resilience projects where they're needed most.

Learn more about how this program will support the service infrastructure in North Carolina by visiting ctnc.org/resilience-service-network.

New Tools Set Land Conservation Priorities Amid Changing Climate

Conservation organizations and land trusts in North Carolina increasingly view their mission to protect the state's natural lands through the lens of climate change. A new pair of online tools aims to help them more efficiently consider how their work could contribute to climate resilience, adaptation and mitigation, as well as deliver other conservation benefits.

CTNC, with funding from the Open Space Institute and Land Trust Alliance, collaborated with the Duke Nicholas Institute to evaluate the ways protected natural and working lands can benefit climate resilience, adaptation, and mitigation strategies.

"Land conservation provides so many overlapping benefits to communities," noted Chris Canfield, executive director of CTNC, "yet documenting and sharing these can be difficult for many organizations. Input from nonprofit and government conservationists has driven this effort to tell a more complete story of our work together."

The tools use many of the same data sources as recent state planning efforts recognizing the importance of natural and working lands. The tools are also part of a growing set of resources from the Nicholas Institute related to natural and working lands in North Carolina.

Start exploring at ctnc.org/duke-osi.

