PRESS RELEASE

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Kris Anne Bonifacio,
(919) 817-3752
Michele Walker, (919) 814-6660
Josh Lynch, (703) 908-5809

State Parks Acquires Land for Lumber River State Park

The Conservation Fund Facilitates Acquisition of More Than 3,000 Acres

FAIR BLUFF, N.C. — N.C. State Parks and The Conservation Fund today announced the acquisition of a 3,005-acre tract along the South Carolina border to be added to Lumber River State Park. The land, located in Robeson County near the town of Fair Bluff, will protect the west banks of the river and provide public access to a scenic section of the river boasting dual designations as a National Wild and Scenic River for its recreation opportunities and a state Natural and Scenic River for its natural composition. N.C. State Parks is part of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

“Millions of residents and visitors enjoy North Carolina’s remarkable natural beauty every year,” said Governor Josh Stein. “Protecting this land along the Lumber River will help preserve it for generations to come.”

The Conservation Fund coordinated the endeavor and acquired the property from a willing seller through a $4.05 million grant from the North Carolina Land and Water Fund and private fundraising. State Parks is acquiring the land from The Conservation Fund using a $3.6 million grant from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) with supplemental funding of $234,375 from the state Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, approved in fiscal year 2025-2026.

“Protection of this property along the Lumber River is an investment in the protection of water quality, outdoor recreation, and the long-term resilience of the area,” said DNCR Secretary Pam Cashwell. “This acquisition will also protect a significant portion of the federally designated National Wild and Scenic River system.”

“Big conservation wins happen when the right people come together around a shared goal,” said Guenevere Abernathy, The Conservation Fund’s North Carolina state director. “The Conservation Fund helped bring the partners and resources together to

protect these 3,005 acres, and we're excited to see this land become part of Lumber River State Park. It's a win for the river, for wildlife, and for the people who live nearby. This remarkable place will be enjoyed by people from across the state for years to come."

"North Carolina's natural resources are a big part of what makes our state a great place to visit and to live," said U.S. Senator Thom Tillis, who represents the area. "By protecting this land and expanding access to the Lumber River, we're preserving our state's outdoor heritage and ensuring future generations can enjoy it for years to come."

The Lumber River basin includes a wide expanse of wetlands that are home to endangered and rare species of plants and animals. The river has also long been an important water resource for the communities along it, dating to the time of the ancestors of the present-day Lumbee Tribe. Lumber River was ranked No. 4 on American Rivers' list of Most Endangered Rivers in the country earlier this year.

Located in Columbus, Robeson, Scotland, and Hoke counties 60 miles south of Fayetteville, Lumber River State Park features three primary access areas along the 115-mile river: Princess Ann in Orrum, Wire Pasture in Maxton, and Chalk Banks in Wagram. The new Wire Pasture access opened this summer just minutes from the Lumbee Tribe Cultural Center and the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. The addition of the 3,005-acre parcel will increase the park's acreage to 16,594 acres, surpassing the Dismal Swamp and Stone Mountain state parks and making it the second-largest unit of the state parks system after South Mountains State Park.

About The Conservation Fund
The Conservation Fund protects the land that sustains us all. the Fund is in the business of conservation, creating innovative solutions that drive nature-based action in all 50 states for climate protection, vibrant communities, and sustainable economies. The organization applies effective strategies, efficient financing approaches, and enduring government, community and private partnerships to protect millions of acres of America's natural land, cultural sites, recreation areas and working forests and farms. To learn more, visit www.conservationfund.org.

About North Carolina State Parks
The North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation exists to inspire all through conservation, education, and recreation, with a vision to connect generations with nature through exceptional outdoor experiences. The state parks system features 35 state parks, 26 state natural areas, four state recreation areas, seven state lakes, four

Natural and Scenic Rivers, and 17 state trails – spanning 265,000 acres of iconic landscapes and welcoming 18 million visitors annually.

In addition to overseeing the state parks system, the division administers federal and state parks and trails grants, including the state-funded Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the Complete the Trails Program, and the Great Trails State Program, as well as the federally funded Recreational Trails Program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The division is part of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

About the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
The N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) manages, promotes, and enhances the things that people love about North Carolina – its diverse arts and culture, rich history, and spectacular natural areas. At more than 100 sites across the state, the department enhances education, stimulates economic development, improves public health, expands accessibility, and strengthens community resiliency. For more information, please visit www.dncr.nc.gov.

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N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
109 E. Jones Street | Raleigh, N.C. | 27601
communications@dncr.nc.gov | dncr.nc.gov