

Conservancy buying 71 acres in Mount Holly

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By Leo Hohmann



Catawba Lands Conservancy has recently acquired the 71-acre Meakin Forest in Mount Holly, bringing the total lands permanently protected in Gaston County through the Conservancy's efforts to more than 4,000 acres.

The organization is closing in on its goal of preserving 10,000 acres in the greater Charlotte region by year-end.

Due to the Great Recession, and a near depression in the home building industry, the Conservancy has been able to acquire more land and at cheaper prices.

"The Meakin Forest project is an important conservation success in Gaston and is instrumental in bringing us closer to conserving 10,000 acres of significant natural lands in our region before the year's end," said Dave Cable, executive director for the Conservancy. "Despite the recent lull in housing development, our region is becoming increasingly urban. Projects like this one are necessary to balance our region's long-term growth."

Meakin Forest is positioned between two subdivisions which have been cleared, but are currently undeveloped. The property provides valuable conservation benefits for wildlife habitat, water quality and open space preservation in an area facing significant development pressures.

Meakin Forest is primarily wooded with 2,800 feet of frontage along Taylors Creek and 2,800 feet of frontage along two tributaries of Taylors Creek, providing important buffer lands to protect surface water quality in the Catawba River watershed.

Formerly owned by The Dales Group LLC, Meakin Forest was purchased by Conservancy board member Dr. Chuck Meakin who has donated a conservation easement for the entire 71 acres, protecting the land's numerous conservation values in perpetuity.

Catawba Lands Conservancy protects more than 8,000 acres in Catawba, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg and Union counties and is one of 24 land trusts serving North Carolina. Catawba Lands Conservancy is the lead agency for the Carolina Thread Trail, an initiative that links more than 2 million residents with hundreds of miles of trails that wind through 15 counties in North and South Carolina.

The Carolina Thread Trail is a 15-county, two-state initiative designed to inspire and facilitate the creation of a regional network of trails, blueways and conservation corridors that is growing together to link more than 2.3 million residents. With technical resources and catalytic funding from The Thread, local communities plan and implement their portions of this green interstate system.

For more information visit www.catawbalands.org or www.carolinathreadtrial.org.

<http://www.gastongazette.com/news/conservancy-53162-holly-lands.html>