

PRESS RELEASE



For more information, contact:

Roger Holnback, Executive Director
Western Virginia Land Trust
722 First St., SW, Suite L
Roanoke, VA 24016-4120
Phone/fax (540) 985-0000
rholnback@westernvirginialandtrust.org

ROCKY MOUNT— The Western Virginia Land Trust has donated a 145-acre parcel of land in Franklin County to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. DCR will add the land to the adjacent 1,295-acre Grassy Hill Natural Area Preserve, to protect native species and natural views from the town of Rocky Mount.

“The Land Trust was very pleased to make this donation happen,” said Land Trust Executive Director Roger Holnback. “By accepting the donation of land in 2006 and holding it until the state could take ownership, we were able to add significantly to the natural area and protect an area that may have otherwise become another subdivision.”

The Land Trust’s transfer runs along the north side of Grassy Hill Rd. and ensures that the views along that section of road will remain wooded and scenic, and the significant natural resources it supports will be protected. Dr. Alice Lee Melchor, daughter of the late Dr. Henry Lee and Dr. Elizabeth Lewis Saunders Lee, donated the property to the Land Trust in the summer of 2006 with the intent that it be transferred to the Commonwealth of Virginia for inclusion in the Grassy Hill Natural Area Preserve. After a review process, DCR and the Land Trust completed the transfer of the land in August.

This was Dr. Melchor’s second donation of land for Grassy Hill, having donated 368 acres in 1998. In addition, Dr. Melchor’s brother Charles Carter Lee sold a 853-acre parcel to the state at a charitable price.



“We’re grateful for the kindness of the Melchor family as well as the commitment to the project from the Western Virginia Land Trust,” said DCR Director Joseph Maroon. “The support is an

excellent example of different groups of people working together to achieve something that will benefit all of Virginia's citizens."

This addition to Grassy Hill will be managed by DCR's Natural Heritage Program staff. Virginia's Natural Area Preserve System protects rare, threatened and endangered species and outstanding examples of natural communities. Across Virginia, there are more than 50 preserves in which almost 46,000 acres are protected. Grassy Hill Natural Area Preserve is open to the public and includes a 6.6 mile hiking trail system.

This is the seventh land transfer that the Land Trust has been involved in. Other projects have included championing the state's purchase of 8,500 acres in the Big Survey area near Wytheville, four land transfers along the Blue Ridge Parkway, and a property transaction along the Lick Run Greenway in Roanoke. "As a private organization, sometimes we can act more quickly than the government," said Holnback. "We act as an intermediary and accept land when the owner is ready to donate it, and then transfer it to the government later when they're able to accept it."

The Western Virginia Land Trust helps to save farms, forests, waterways and rural landscapes in a 10-county area around Roanoke. By promoting and holding conservation easements and negotiating sales and donations of land, the Land Trust has helped to save over 56,000 acres since its founding in 1996. For more information, call (540) 985-0000 or visit www.westernvirginalandtrust.org.

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation works with Virginians to conserve, protect, and enhance their lands and improve the quality of Virginia's waters. DCR also promotes the stewardship and enjoyment of natural, cultural and outdoor recreational resources, and ensures the safety of Virginia's dams. For more information, visit www.dcr.virginia.gov.

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