



OVERLOOK *on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau*

Spring, 2006

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*The mission of the Highlands-Cashiers
Land Trust is to preserve the natural
areas, scenic beauty, and green spaces of
Highlands and Cashiers for the enjoyment
and benefit of the public.*

Gary Wein to take over in June

Land Trust Names New Executive Director

The new Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust executive director, Dr. Gary R. Wein, will replace Mike Cavender starting May 15.

Wein has been working as a plant ecologist in various assignments at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina since 1986. Much of his work has been through the University of Georgia's Ecology Laboratory. Wein earned a Ph.D. in botany and plant physiology from Rutgers University in 1984.

"We are extremely fortunate to get someone of Gary's academic background and experience," says Bill Stiefel, HCLT president. "Gary's background fits perfectly with our expectations of him."

In addition to supervising the land trust's regular operations, Wein will focus on developing a science-based strategic conservation plan to guide the land trust through the next several years. He has an extensive background in using various technical tools to study environmental and ecological issues. Among his research interests are studying land management impacts using remote sensing and GIS (geographic information systems) technologies.

"I'm looking forward to getting to know more about the history of the Highlands-Cashiers area,

both natural and cultural," Wein says. "This interface between the natural and man-made worlds is important in determining the capacity of the natural ecosystem to tolerate us humans. A high rate of sustained growth in the region could destroy the very thing that makes it attractive in the first place. An important question for the community is how we keep from killing the goose that laid the golden egg."

Wein is the author or coauthor of more than 20 academic articles. He was an assistant professor of biology at the University of Mississippi from 1991 to 1992 and adjunct professor of biology at the University of Memphis from 1989 to 1992.

New Director continued on page 3



New H-CLT Director Dr. Gary R. Wein

Crucial time in land protection

Initiative aimed at doubling the state's efforts in conservation.

The best chance for increased land conservation in North Carolina is in the state legislators' hands right now.

Land for Tomorrow, a diverse partnership of businesses, preservationists, farmers, environmental groups, health professionals and community groups, has asked the General Assembly to support a five-year plan designed to preserve and protect areas critical to clean water, farming, forestry, the state's historic properties, tourism, jobs and quality of life in the state.

The coalition is recommending the passage of a 2006 bond initiative that would generate \$200 million per year for five years to expand preservation of critical lands and historic places, provide jobs, and strengthen communities.

These bonds would supplement the state trust funds already in place, such as the N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund, Natural Heritage Trust Fund and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund.

This initiative couldn't come at a time that is more crucial. Over the last decade, one million acres of the state's prime farmland, game lands, working forests, unique natural areas, scenic beauty and potential parks and recreation areas have been converted for other uses. Between 1987 and 1997, North Carolina lost more prime farmland than any other state except Ohio and Texas.

These state trust funds can provide critical funding for the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust's land protection projects. As the threat on mountain land increases and the costs of these conservation projects rise, the state funds are increasingly vital to continue our protection work.

This year's state budget includes practically no money for the Farmland Preservation Trust Fund. The Clean Water Management Trust Fund is only six months into its funding cycle, and has already received over \$236 million in requests, but only \$100 million in available funding for the entire year. At this rate, it will be able to fund about 20 percent of its requests.

"North Carolina is losing 100,000 acres of forests, farms and stream banks per year due to growing development pressures. Once these areas are gone, there's no replacing them," said Kate Dixon director of Land for Tomorrow. "If we do not act to protect these areas, it will be devastating to our economy, drinking water quality, communities and natural beauty that makes North Carolina such a special place to live and work."

Visit www.landfortomorrow.org to learn more about this effort to provide long-lasting benefits for the mountains of western North Carolina.

Contact your legislators in support of conservation

To ensure that the N.C. General Assembly places Land for Tomorrow on the ballot in November, write or call your state senators, representatives and Governor Easley in support of this initiative.

Here are suggested points for your letter:

- North Carolina's forests, farmlands, wetlands, and other open spaces are important for tourism, protection against flooding, recreation, and clean drinking water.
- No other area in our state is more dependent upon the quality of its land, water and air than the mountains. So many residents and businesses reside here because of our magnificent natural areas.
- By 2030, the U.S. Census Bureau expects North Carolina's population to surpass that of urban states like Michigan, New Jersey and Ohio. But, while our population is growing, our supply of land is not.
- Over the last decade, one million acres of prime farmland, game lands, working forests, unique natural areas, scenic beauty and potential parks and recreation areas have been converted for other uses. Between 1987 and 1997, North Carolina lost more prime farmland than any other state except Ohio and Texas.
- For the first time since the 1930s, falling forest acreage contributed to a decline in the volume of the state's timber growing stock. Meanwhile, over 2,600 miles of North Carolina's streams and rivers are not meeting state water quality standards.
- A few years back, the General Assembly set a goal for 2009: to protect one million acres of critical North Carolina land. They should follow through on this goal.
- Please support the "Land for Tomorrow" initiative for \$200 million per year for the next five years for land conservation funding.

The elected representatives for our area are:

Sen. John Snow (Dist. 50)
2111 Legislative Bldg.
Raleigh, NC 27601-2808
919-733-5875 or Johnsn@ncleg.net

Phillip Haire (Dist. 119)
419B Legislative Office Bldg.
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925
919-715-3005 or Philliph@ncleg.net

Roger West (Dist. 120)
1004 Legislative Bldg.
Raleigh, NC 27601-1096
919-733-5859 or Rogerw@ncleg.net

N.C. Governor:
Michael Easley
2301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-0301
800-662-7952
Fax: 919-733-2120

Back by popular demand

The 7th Annual Zahner Conservation Lecture Series will kickoff this year on May 25 at 7:00 p.m. at the Highlands Nature Center. The weekly lectures will continue each Thursday through August 10, 2006. We are very excited to announce that the final two lectures, August 3 and 10 will be held at the High Hampton Inn in Cashiers.

The series, which honors Bob and Glenda Zahner, leaders in conserving our natural heritage on the Highlands Plateau for several decades, have become more popular each year. This season's line-up will have something to interest everyone!

One of the most important ways we accomplish our conservation mission is through education. Enclosed in this newsletter you will find a flyer containing the lecture schedule. Please make plans to support the lectures by attending one or all of them. Also, bring a friend and introduce them to the important aspects of saving the special places we all love. Hope to see you there!

New Director continued from page 1

Wein's wife, Dr. Beverly S. Collins, will be an associate professor of botany at Western Carolina University starting in August. They have a son, Mikel, who will be a high school junior this fall. In his home town of North Augusta, Wein helped start a charter school, of which he was a board member.

Wein and his son are active in Boy Scouts, and the entire family enjoys practicing Tae Kwon Do.

"I'm really excited to get a chance to work with people dedicated to preserving what makes the Highlands-Cashiers area unique – its natural heritage," Wein says. "The chance for both of us to pursue our professional careers in such a wonderful area was too good an opportunity to pass up."

The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is now equipped to handle credit card transactions. If you are collecting points to take a special vacation, consider making a "charge for conservation" donation, and make plans to take that trip sooner than you thought!

Help Save Our Natural Heritage

Please accept my donation of _____ and put it to work in the:

- Pine Street Park Fund
 Zahner Conservation Lecture Series

I'm not a member of the Highlands Land Trust, but I want to do my part. Please sign me up at the following level (circle one, please):

\$35+ Individual \$100+ Friend \$500+ Patron \$5000+ Satulah Steward
 \$50+ Family \$250+ Conservator \$1000+ Kelsey Benefactor _____ Other

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone No. _____ E-mail _____

(memberships are renewed annually in June)

Make checks payable to: Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust
P.O. Box 1703, Highlands, North Carolina 28741

OR charge your donation to Visa Master Card American Express

Name on Card _____

Signature _____

Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____

V Code _____

Donations to the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust are tax deductible. We are a 501(c)3 tax-exempt public charity.

Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust

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A MESSAGE FROM GARY WEIN:

New H-CLT Executive Director ponders his move to North Carolina and his priorities for the job.

Hello from South Carolina. In mid May, I'll be reporting to Highlands for my first day as the new Executive Director of HCLT.

Like all new transplants I have a lot to learn about my new home and job. I am really looking forward to getting out and learning the lay of the land, and meeting the folks in Macon and Jackson Counties. I'll need to work out some details like where to live, shop, and how to avoid rush hour (well, maybe not). I know I have a lot to learn about Land Trusts, and I look forward to picking Mike Cavender's brain for a few weeks when our jobs overlap.

Working with Land Trusts is not entirely new for me. I helped the Aiken County Open Land Trust in Aiken County, South Carolina, to restore a Carolina bay (a type of wetland), but that only

means I have enough knowledge to be dangerous. I want to spend my initial time in Highlands-Cashiers listening to folks, and finding out what they can teach me. As I get more comfortable with my job I want to begin developing Geographic Information System (GIS) databases that will help us develop a strategic plan for land trust conservation in the Highlands-Cashiers area. The GIS databases will focus on three questions: (1) Where are our current land trust holdings? (2) What land should we be trying to preserve, protect, and restore? And (3) How does the land trust help the local community preserve its natural and historical resources?

Needless to say, it will be a busy next few months for all of us as we continue to work hard to preserve the special places in our area.