



## LAND *for* TOMORROW

**For Immediate Release**  
June 12, 2007

**Contact:** Kate Dixon  
(919) 489-8129 (work)  
(919) 698-9024 (cell)

### **PRICE OF NORTH CAROLINA CONSERVATION LAND JUMPS NEARLY 300 PERCENT IN 10 YEARS**

***Group urges state to protect land now before prices climb higher and  
land for conservation disappears***

**RALEIGH** – North Carolina’s costs for land to protect drinking water, create state and local parks, and preserve critical habitats for native plants and wildlife have jumped nearly 300 percent in the last 10 years, according to *No End in Sight: Price of Conserving Land In North Carolina 1996 to 2005*, a report released today by Land for Tomorrow.

“These numbers make clear the urgency and difficulty North Carolina faces to preserve the present quality of life in our state for future generations,” said Kate Dixon, executive director of Land for Tomorrow. Dixon presented the report today before the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee. Land for Tomorrow is a statewide organization of more than 250 organizations, including local governments and business, conservation and community groups advocating increased funding for land and water conservation.

Dixon said from 1996 to 1997, state agencies paid an average of \$699 per acre for conservation lands. From 2001 to 2002, it was little more than \$1,000. By 2004 to 2005, that average was \$2,691 per acre or a 285 percent increase. The analysis of costs is based on data collected by the State Property Office on all purchases of land for conservation purposes.

“The supply of critical conservation areas is dwindling as lands are developed to meet the needs of our rapidly growing population,” said Dixon. “Under such conditions, waiting will only mean higher prices and lost opportunities.”

North Carolina’s population is expected to increase by nearly 50 percent in the next 23 years. More than 100,000 acres of farms, forests and other natural areas are developed every year in the state. More than 3,500 miles of the state’s rivers and streams do not meet water quality standards.

In 2006, funding requests to land and water conservation trusts exceeded money available by \$350 million. The General Assembly’s 1999 goal to preserve an additional one million acres of land by 2009 is less than halfway completed. Land for Tomorrow is urging the General Assembly to pass House Bill 990 and Senate Bill 1522 for a statewide bond referendum to authorize approval of \$1 billion in land and water conservation bonds over the next five years.

“With land prices rising faster than interest rates, bond funding makes good fiscal sense,” said Sue Cole, principal of Granville Capital Inc., and Land for Tomorrow ambassador. “The state could save millions by using bonds to buy land now before the prices increase, or the usefulness of the land for conservation disappears forever.”

– MORE –

The rising cost of conservation land means that meeting the N.C. General Assembly's million acre goal will be more expensive the longer the state puts off protection efforts. In 1999, legislators mandated that North Carolina would preserve an additional one million acres of land by 2009 in order to protect drinking water, create state and local parks for our growing population, and protect the most critical habitat for native plants and wildlife. Seven years after the goal was established, the state has only saved 405,521 acres, more than 230,000 acres behind schedule in meeting the goal.

The full report can be viewed by visiting [www.landfortomorrow.org/page401.html](http://www.landfortomorrow.org/page401.html).

**ABOUT LAND FOR TOMORROW**

Land for Tomorrow is a commitment to preserve and protect North Carolina's water, land and historic places. The goal is to increase public awareness for the need to protect additional land and historic places that are critical to the economic well-being and quality of life in North Carolina. Through public education, Land for Tomorrow wants to help the state reach its declared goal of conserving a million acres, and ensure that critical land will be available to provide clean air and drinking water, strengthen our communities, promote job growth and enhance the quality of life for generations to come. For additional information about Land for Tomorrow, visit [www.landfortomorrow.org](http://www.landfortomorrow.org).

###