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The Power of Parks

Letter to the Editor By Jim Johnson

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People visit North Carolina because it is a beautiful place. Visitors create thousands of jobs, boosting the economy. Protecting natural areas encourages tourism and protects water quality. The Council of State made the right decision by approving the acquisition of land to add to our state parks system.

Two of those tracts will become part of Chimney Rock State Park. As the former mayor of nearby Lake Lure, I can tell you firsthand that our economy would be dead without the park. Textiles and furniture are gone; Chimney Rock's scenery is the backbone of our economy. The Council of State recognized this reality. The vote quite simply is economic stimulus for Lake Lure and other communities near the affected state parks.

The significant success this state has had in land and water conservation owes its thanks to practical-minded leadership. Those leaders recognize that, while everyone must scale back in challenging times, an investment in conservation funding must be part of the mix to help move this state forward.

Thanks to the Council of State for its leadership.

Jim Proctor, Mayor, 1999 to 2009, Lake Lure