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### **Teamwork: State park shows what success looks like**

The Army's need to buffer Fort Bragg from civilian development has been in the news for at least two decades and under discussion even longer. That work took a huge advance this month with the Nature Conservancy's purchase of 1,263 acres between the fort and Cumberland County's only state park.

Once the state is able to buy the tract from the Conservancy, good things will happen all around.

Carver's Creek State Park will become one of North Carolina's larger parks, a major new recreational resource, as the latest acquisition from the Clark family and a 1,435-acre bequest from James Stillman Rockefeller are added to the original 1,173 acres.

The park will extend all the way to Fort Bragg's boundary, giving the fort several linear miles of protection along its east flank.

The fort will also protect the park. Despite the Army's contribution to the purchase, it won't be used for training.

The expanded park will not only be preserved as habitat for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker; it will ease pressure on the rest of Fort Bragg, where training has at times had to be adapted to the birds' habitat.

That last deserves special attention, because there are knee-jerkers who still snort, after all the studies and all the public testimony, that the Endangered Species Act was the problem.

The problem, as the Army tried to explain from the late 1980s onward, was that the Army was almost the only major landholder in the area that was trying to do anything about habitat. Its work was becoming increasingly difficult, despite having devised what ranks among the military's most successful environmental programs, because developers were destroying the off-post habitat.

In general, appeals for more responsible land-use practices in the private sector fell on deaf ears. And, had a few better policies and a few standout landholders like the Clarks and James S. Rockefeller not stepped up, the Pentagon could ultimately have been forced to invoke a power it had held all along: Under the Endangered Species Act, the secretary has power simply to override the act's protections if core missions are imperiled.

The Army, justly proud of its own distinguished work in environmental protection, didn't want that outcome. It wanted to carry out its missions. It wanted to do its statutory duty regarding the birds. It wanted a buffer against civilian encroachment. And it wanted help from the civilian community.

Now, whether you wear a uniform, a business suit or hiking shorts, it's hard to deny that things are looking up.