

North Cumberlands Conservation Acquisition

Connecting the Cumberlands through the North Cumberlands Acquisition

Governor Phil Bredesen is a strong believer in public-private partnerships and leveraging shared resources toward common goals. This commitment to partnerships is particularly true when it comes to protecting special places in Tennessee for current and future generations. On November 8, 2007, I joined Governor Bredesen and our partners with The Nature Conservancy at World's Fair Park in Knoxville to celebrate a series of complex transactions through the North Cumberlands Acquisition initiative that will protect connected forestland in four counties on the Northern Cumberland Plateau.

The North Cumberland Acquisition is a \$135 million total investment that encompasses more than 127,000 acres on the Cumberland Plateau, stretching across Anderson, Campbell, Morgan and Scott counties. It's an area appropriately known as the "Heart of the Cumberlands," and it is considered one of the most ecologically significant places left on Earth.

This public-private partnership allowed us to leverage resources in order to do more than working independently. The state, through a one-time appropriation approved by the General Assembly, invested \$82 million. Conservation Forestry and Lyme Timber, two forestland investment companies that seek properties with high conservation values, contributed about \$40 million, and The Nature Conservancy contributed \$13 million as well as a great deal of time and expertise to make this unprecedented conservation project possible.

The state's \$82 million conservation investment in the North Cumberlands Acquisition is the largest of its kind in state history and the largest conservation appropriation by any one state in recent years. This is landscape conservation that will protect majestic woodlands, including important forests, mountains, streams and wildlife habitat. It will enhance tourism, protect unique forms of wildlife, offer opportunities for managed public access and incorporate working forest easements to benefit local economies. I am particularly pleased this North Cumberlands Acquisition contains more than 10,000 acres along the Emory River adjacent to Frozen Head State Park, including Love and Bird Mountains. These parcels were under particular stress from potential development and have been a major concern for a long time.

I am grateful for Governor Bredesen's vision and all the partners that made it possible to conserve these ecologically significant lands across this unique region. There is no doubt this landmark initiative will make a real and lasting difference for Tennessee and the entire landscape of the Cumberland Plateau.



Headwaters of the Emory River in Morgan County will benefit from the Connecting the Cumberlands project.

Jim

North Cumberlands Acquisition Public Benefits

1. Access to clean water

- Protects the New River and Emory River, which provide the water supplies for more than 27,000 Tennesseans in nine communities including Harriman, Kingston and Rockwood

2. More Land for Hunting

- Additional 49,000 acres for hunting and fishing in Morgan and Scott counties

3. Working Forests

- 94% of land will be actively managed for timber production
- Acquires the timber rights on 75,000 acres the state already owns

4. Enhances Frozen Head State Park

- Adds Love and Bird Mountains to Frozen Head State Park to be protected for future generations

5. Maximizes State Investment

- Leveraging funding from Conservation Forestry LLC, Lyme Timber Company and The Nature Conservancy allows the state to protect more land with less investment

6. Protects Local Economies

- Annual payment in lieu of taxes paid by the state on 10,000 acres in Morgan County adjacent to Frozen Head State Park and Natural Area
- Private property owners continue to pay property taxes
- Working lands provide local jobs

7. Promotes economic development and tourism

- Like the Great Smoky Mountains to the east, the diversity of the Cumberland Mountains are a draw for hikers, bikers, camping and wildlife viewing

8. International Treasure

- The Nature Conservancy has ranked this biologically rich area, also known as the Heart of the Cumberlands, as the 8th most important place on earth

North Cumberlands Acquisition Facts

- The North Cumberlands conservation acquisition represents more than 127,000 acres valued at an estimated \$135 million.
- The three tracts, as shown on the map, include the Emory River, Brimstone and Sundquist tracts.
- The properties are located in Scott, Campbell, Anderson and Morgan Counties and stretch from Frozen Head State Natural Area to the Royal Blue Wildlife Management Area.
- The state's investment includes an \$82 million cash for this purchase; a onetime appropriation in the Governor's budget.
- The state's conservation partners in the acquisition include The Nature Conservancy, which will invest approximately \$13 million, Conservation Forestry LLC and The Lyme Timber Company, two forestland investors that seek properties with high conservation value and often work in partnership with non-profit conservation organizations and government agencies, and other like-minded private equity partners who will invest approximately \$40.2 million.
- Highlights of the acquisition include:
 - Public access rights on all 127,000 acres.
 - All rights on approximately 10,000 acres at Emory River, including Love and Bird Mountains (adjacent to Frozen Head State Natural Area).
 - Timber rights with a 10-year timber leaseback agreement with The Lyme Timber Company on 75,000 acres of the Sundquist Wildlife Management Area.
 - Conservation easements governing sustainable forestry practices and public access on approximately 23,200 acres at Brimstone and 18,875 acres at Emory River.
 - Conservation easements present an opportunity to protect not only the properties themselves but also the economic benefits they generate for local communities as working forests. Landowners continue to pay property taxes on properties with conservation easements and the state will pay in-lieu of taxes on lands it holds in fee simple ownership.
- This acquisition represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to protect majestic woodlands on the Northern Cumberland Plateau that include some of the most important forests, mountains, streams and wildlife habitat remaining in North America. (Source: The Nature Conservancy)
- Over the long term, establishing this unbroken core of protected land has the potential to enhance life in Tennessee through increased tourism, protection of unique forms of wildlife and their habitats, and opportunities for public access and recreation.
- The "landscape scale" of this acquisition will also help preserve the purity of streams and rivers and provide a natural corridor for wildlife such as songbirds, bats, elk and deer to move and migrate freely.
- The Cumberland Plateau is widely considered one of the most biologically rich regions in the world. The plateau is home to countless unique species, particularly in its waterways and cave systems. (Source: The Nature Conservancy)
- For information on the Tennessee Chapter of The Nature Conservancy:
<http://www.nature.org/wherework/northamerica/states/tennessee/>
- For information on The Lyme Timber Company: <http://www.lymetimber.com/>

Source: <http://tennessee.gov/environment/northcumb/>