

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEETING DATE: January 18, 2006

SUBJECT: Resolution Requesting an Increase in State Funding for
DuPont State Forest

ATTACHMENTS: Resolution

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

Several months ago the Board discussed the need for additional State funding for DuPont State Forest and requested that a resolution voicing this need be drafted. The attached resolution was drafted/reviewed by Mr. Dick Thompson, Commissioner McGrady, and staff. If adopted, the resolution will be distributed to appropriate local and State officials.

COUNTY MANAGER'S COMMENTS\RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend adoption of the attached resolution.

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**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HENDERSON COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA**

**RESOLUTION REQUESTING AN INCREASE IN STATE
FUNDING FOR DUPONT STATE FOREST**

Whereas, North Carolina's publicly-owned open spaces greatly enhance the State's natural environment; and

Whereas, tourism is a key component of North Carolina's economy; and

Whereas, North Carolina's publicly-owned open spaces are one of the essential elements of the State's tourism product; and

Whereas, the State of North Carolina created DuPont State Forest in 1997 with the purchase of approximately 7,600 acres at a cost of \$16 million and further expanded the forest in 2000 with the purchase, by eminent domain, of approximately an additional 2200 acres at an additional cost of \$24 million, and additional acreage has since been added; and

Whereas, Dupont State Forest is now comprised of approximately 10,265 acres, over 80 miles of roads and trails, four major waterfalls, five lakes, petroglyph estimated to be over 1000 years old, scenic mountains and numerous areas designated as natural heritage sites; and

Whereas, DuPont State Forest has, solely because of its natural resources, become a major tourist destination for Western North Carolina drawing an estimated 1,000,000 visitors since its inception; and

Whereas, without any direct advertising, the forest has received glowing reviews in a large number of publications, has become popular as a site for outdoor and apparel advertising, hosts a marathon and numerous biking and hiking events and was a focal point for the filming of a popular movie; and

Whereas, Dupont State Forest does not now have access to funding from the State Parks Act and, as a State Forest, the Forest's funding is limited to allocations for staffing and support equipment needed for maintaining it only as a forest; and

Whereas, several volunteer organizations, led mostly by Friends of Dupont Forest, have stepped into the void by contributing much needed labor and funding for capital improvements, to maintain existing trails and providing visitor services; and

Whereas, the burden of this effort cannot be sustained solely by volunteer organizations; and

Whereas, the visitor load and overall needs greatly exceed what volunteers can provide; and

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Whereas, because of the substantial natural attractions provided by Dupont State Forest and the important role it plays in Western North Carolina's tourist economy it is vital that the Forest be allocated appropriate funding similar to that allocated to State Parks.

Whereas, specific needs for DuPont State Forest include:

1. Funding for a pedestrian bridge over the principle stream in the forest. Currently an estimated 60,000 visitors per year must cross a busy highway bridge to reach the most popular of the trails in the forest. This need is paramount.
2. Funding for a Visitors Center similar to that normally provided for State Parks. This should include areas for visitor orientation, environmental education, rest rooms and staff support
3. Funding for maintenance and, where appropriate, rebuilding of trails that are rapidly becoming worn due to the heavy visitor usage; and

Whereas, increased investment in DuPont State Forest from the State of North Carolina will greatly enhance Western North Carolina as a tourist destination and, in turn, positively impact the State's economy.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Henderson County Board of Commissioners to request that the State of North Carolina allocate funding, perhaps through a formula similar as that provided to State Parks through the State Parks Act, to provide for the needs of DuPont State Forest.

Adopted this the 18th day of January, 2006.

William L. Moyer, Chairman

ATTEST:

Elizabeth Corn, Clerk to the Board