

## REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

### HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

**MEETING DATE:** April 4, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Bell Trail PARTF

**PRESENTER:** Tim Hopkin, Parks and Recreation  
Kieran Rowe, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy

**ATTACHMENTS:** Yes

1. Bell Trail Park Project PowerPoint
2. TDA Letter of Support
3. Times-News Article

#### **SUMMARY OF REQUEST:**

The Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy (CMLC) approached the Henderson County Parks and Recreation Department with a proposal for a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant application. The application would be to purchase a 68 acre parcel of land in southern Henderson County to create a public access point and trails leading from the old High Bridge across the Green River along the top of the gorge leading to Pot Sholas and the Tuxedo Hydro Plant. This trail could then lead into the Green River Game Lands.

The trail access park project would be similar to the one in the Upper Hickory Nut Gorge. This project would not require funds for acquisition or development of the park. The PARTF grant fund request would be matched by the donated value of the land. Staff has toured the property with the land owner and CMLC staff. The project has been presented to the Recreation Advisory Board at two separate meetings. At the March 8th Recreation Advisory Board meeting the project was endorsed by the group.

No County funding is requested, or required, for this project.

#### **BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:**

The Board is requested to direct staff to work with CMLC to submit the grant, and set the required Public Hearing for the PARTF application.

#### **Suggested Motion(s):**

*I move that the Henderson County Board of Commissioners approve the submission of a PARTF application for the Bell Trail Park and that the Board set a public hearing for Wednesday, April 20<sup>th</sup> at 9:00am to receive public input.*

# Bell Trail Park Project

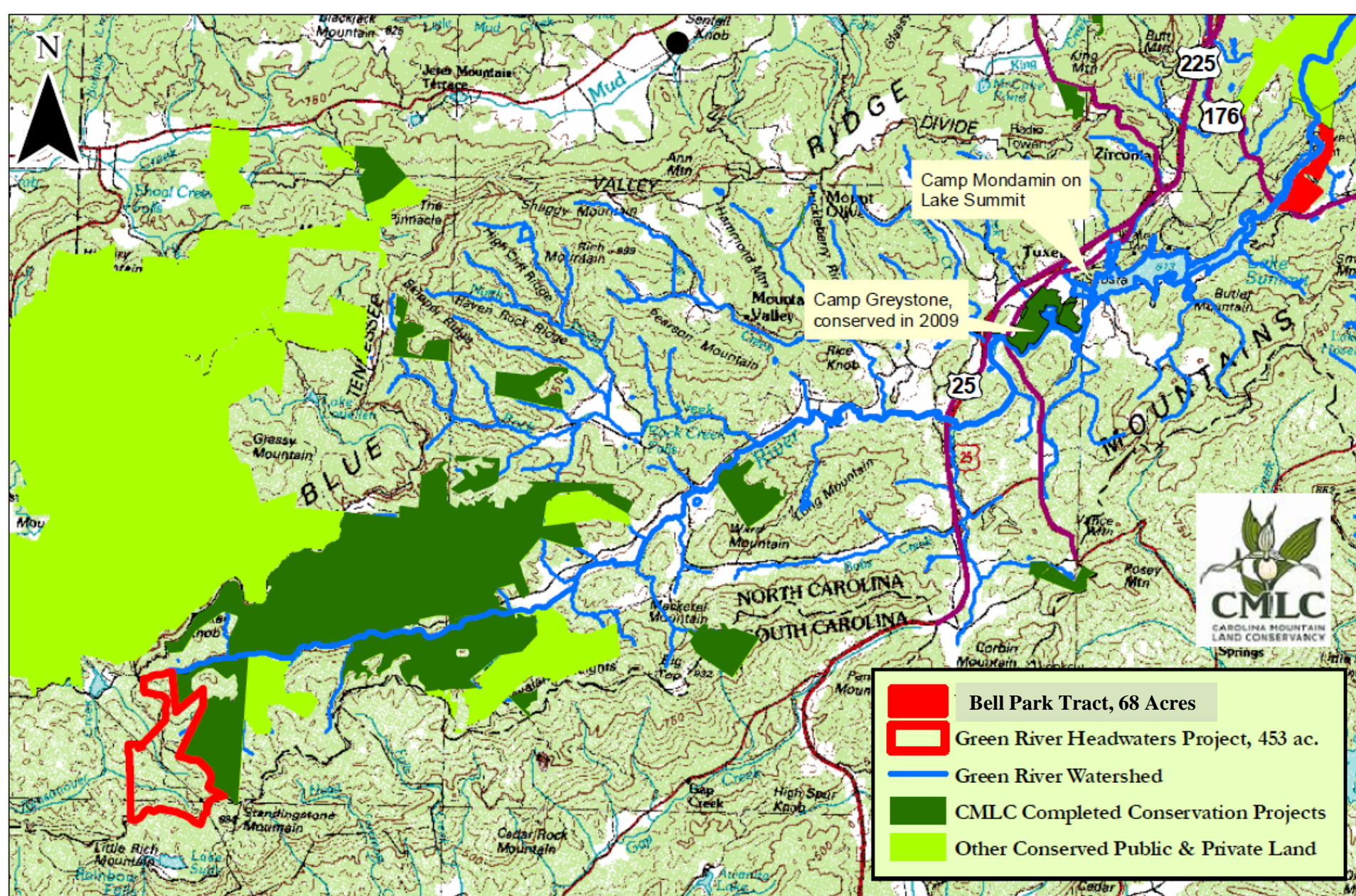
## Southeast Henderson County



Henderson Co. Commissioners  
April 4, 2016

Kieran Roe  
Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy





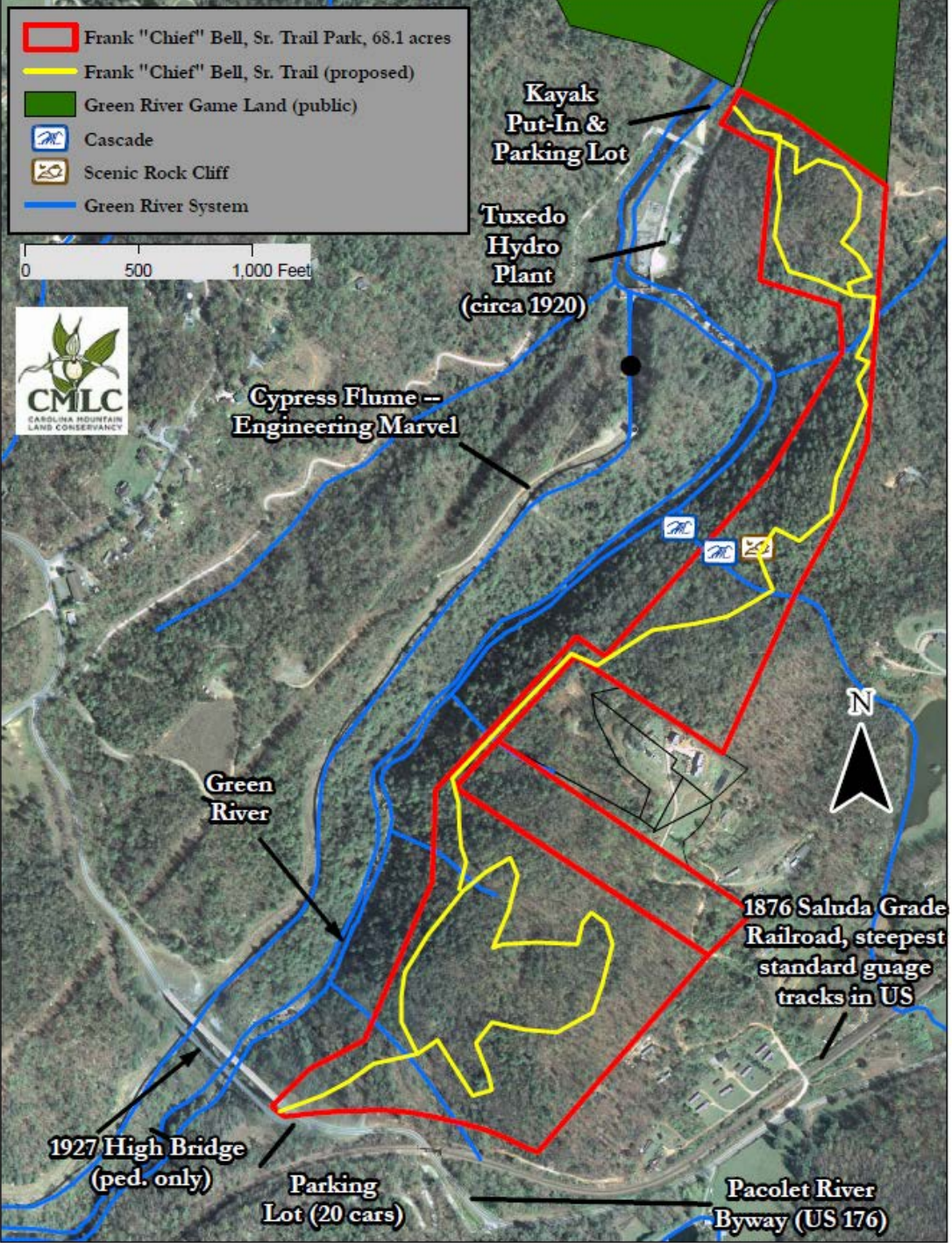
## Lands Conserved by CMLC in the Green River headwaters, over 3,500 acres

LOCATIONS, BOUNDARIES, AND AREAS APPROXIMATE

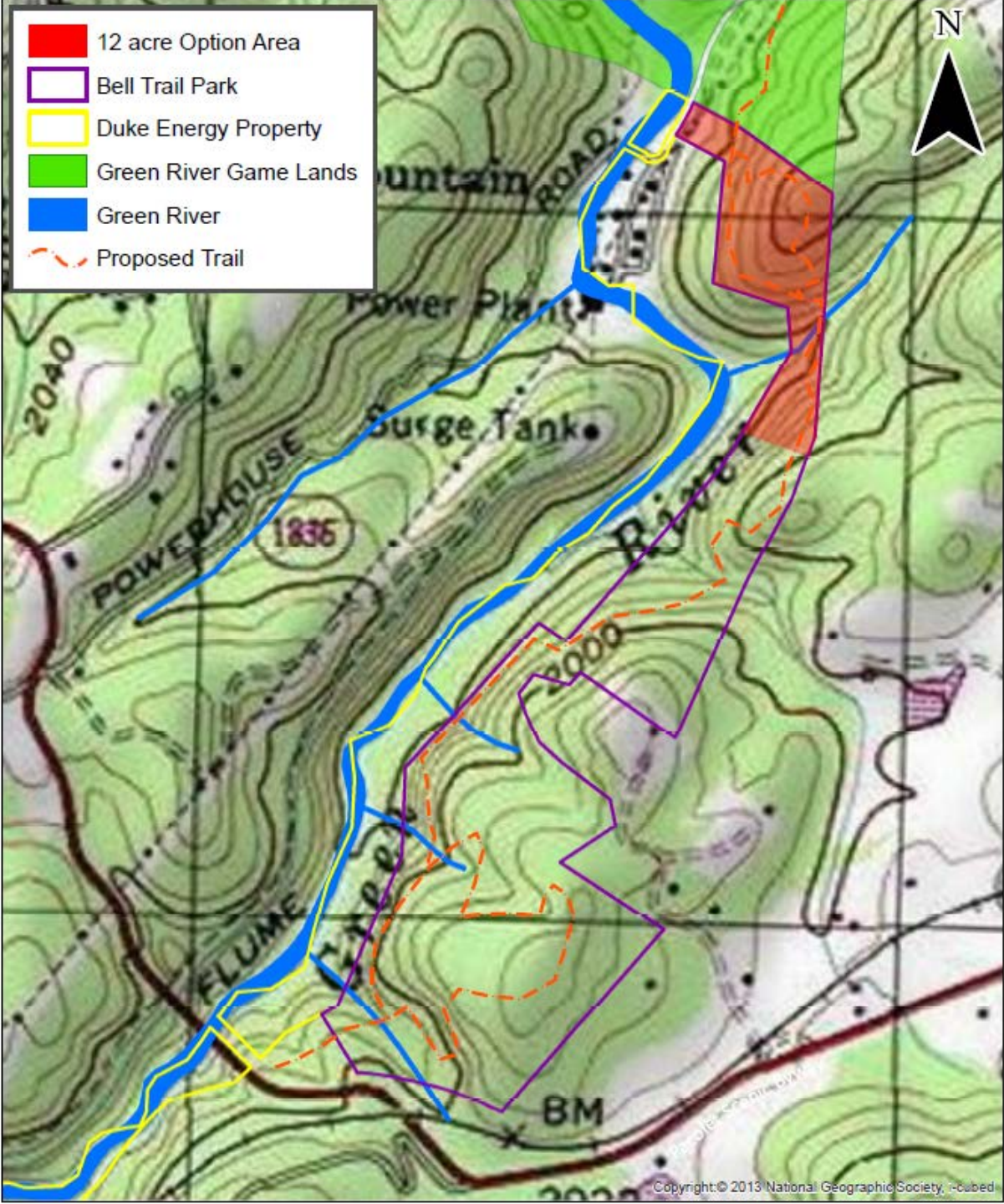




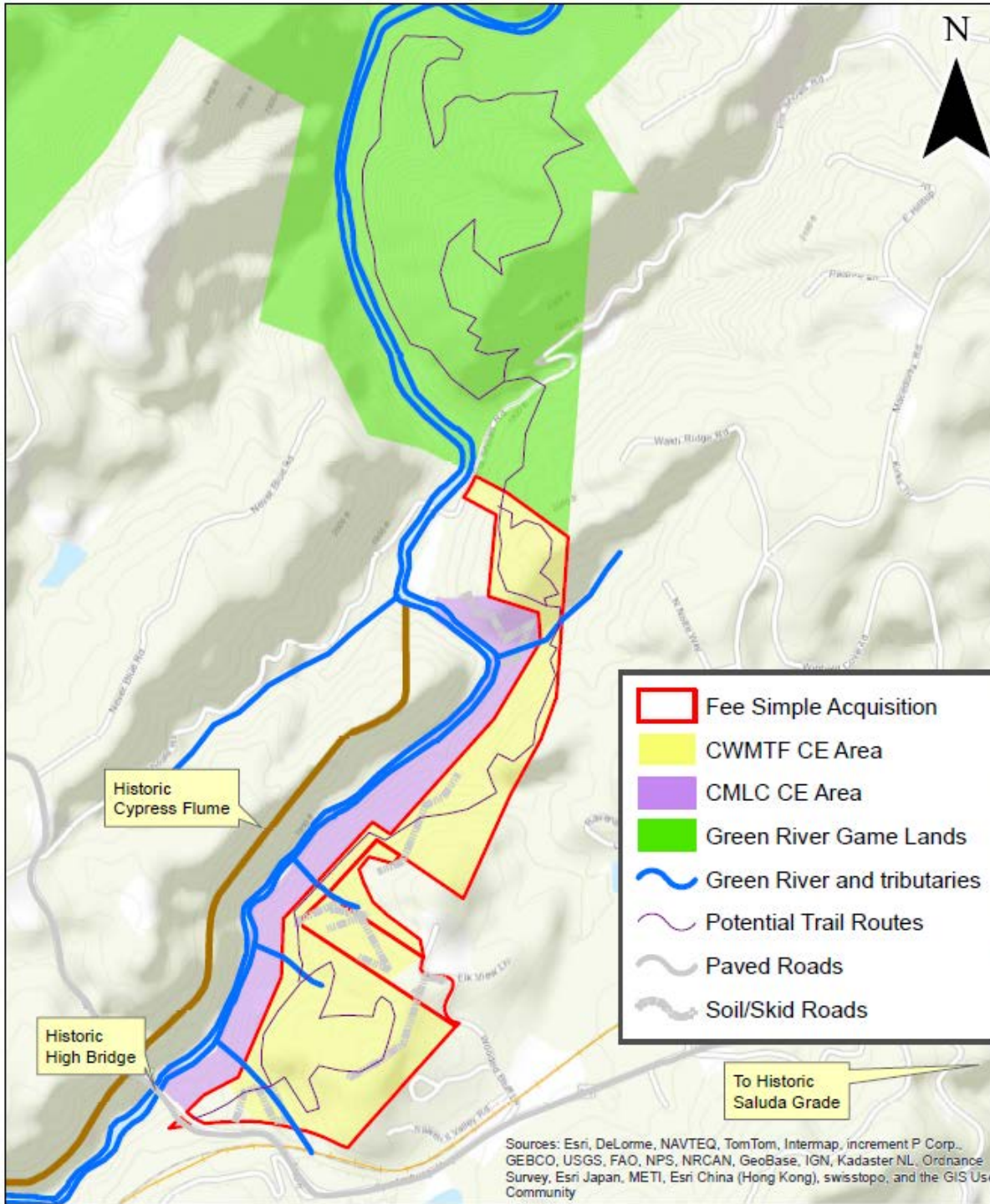












Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, TomTom, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

# Bell Trail Park Project

## Goals/Purposes

- Scenic Protection
- Historic/Cultural Interpretation
- Recreational Walking/Hiking
- Wildlife Habitat Corridor
- Water Quality Protection
- Promote Outdoor Recreation Tourism
- Honor Regional Camp Heritage

Henderson Co. Environ. Adv. Comm.  
March 2016

Kieran Roe & Rebekah Robinson  
Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy



# Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy

## Local Parks Partnerships

- Town of Tryon (Vaughn Creek Greenway)
- Town of Fletcher (Cane Creek Greenway)
- Town of Lake Lure (Buffalo Creek Park)
- Village of Flat Rock (The Park at Flat Rock)
- Town of Laurel Park (Rhododendron Park)
- Henderson County (H.N. Gorge Trailhead)
- Polk County (Alexander's Ford)
- Transylvania County (Connestee Falls Park)

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# Bell Trail Park Project

## Prospective Partners

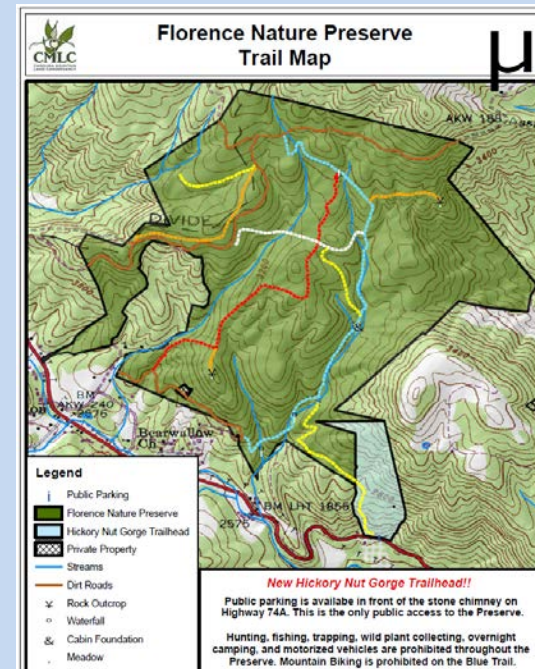
- Henderson County
- Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy
- Henderson County Travel & Tourism
- City of Saluda
- Summer Camps and Alumni
- Private Donors and Volunteers

Henderson Co. Environ. Adv. Comm.  
March 2016

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# Upper Hickory Nut Gorge Trailhead



## Bell Trail Park Project Budget

### PROJECT PHASE ONE -- PROPERTY ACQUISITION

#### Expense

Property Purchase Value	640,000
Transaction Costs -- Survey, title, appraisal, etc.	25,000
Property Management Cost	<u>20,000</u>
Total	665,000

#### Income

Felburn Foundation (Awarded)	75,000
NC PARTF (To Be Requested in Partnership with County)	350,000
Landowner Donated Land Value (Committed)	190,000
Private Donations	<u>50,000</u>
Total	665,000

### PROJECT PHASE TWO -- TRAIL PARK DEVELOPMENT

#### Expense

Park/Trail Development Cost	120,000
Trail Park Master Planning	22,500
Educational/Interpretive Signage	<u>2,500</u>
Sub-Total	145,000

#### Income

Private Donations	<u>145,000</u>
	145,000



# Bell Trail Park Project

## Southeast Henderson County



Henderson Co. Commissioners  
April 4, 2016

Kieran Roe  
Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy





Henderson County Tourism Development Authority 🍏 201 South Main Street 🍏 Hendersonville, NC 28792 🍏 828.693.9708

February 22, 2016

Tommy Thompson, Chairman  
Henderson County Board of Commissioners  
1 Historic Courthouse Square, Suite 1  
Hendersonville, NC 28792

Dear Commissioner Thompson,

I am writing on behalf of the Henderson County Tourism Development Authority (TDA) to express my support for the creation of the Frank "Chief" and Calla Bell Trail Park, a project proposed along Pacolet River Scenic Byway (Highway 176) in southeast Henderson County. Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy (CMLC), which has an excellent record of protecting the unique scenic, recreational, cultural, and natural resources of Henderson County, is working with the landowner to acquire the 68-acre tract and develop the proposed park.

The Bell Trail Park project will open to the public a scenic hike from the parking lot at the historic 1927 High Bridge to the public put-in on the Green River. Both drivers and hikers will appreciate the permanent protection of the view of the property, which stretches along the Green River Gorge below Lake Summit. The tract is highly visible from Highway 176, and from the pedestrian-only High Bridge. Sightseers will be able to take a stroll on the High Bridge, and then take a hike into the lush forest that blankets the Green River Gorge.

Providing residents and visitors to our area with beautiful vistas and interesting places to hike is crucial to the green tourism economy in Henderson County. The site of the Bell Trail Park is within easy driving distance of our urban center. The aesthetics of the Pacolet River Byway attract visitors, and keeping it beautiful is important to our local economy. As one important "gateway" into the County for tourists and visitors, TDA sees the potential for placing a visitor welcome station at this park. Interpretive signage might not only educate visitors about the park itself, but also could promote and highlight the County's attractions more generally.

Henderson County TDA encourages Henderson County to partner with CMLC in seeking grants from sources such as the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund for the creation of the Bell Trail Park.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Carden".

Beth Carden  
Executive Director

Cc: Steve Wyatt, County Manager  
Kieran Roe, CMLC Executive Director



## Proposed park could be boon to southern Henderson County

### Chief Bell Trail Park hopes to bring hiking, cultural recognition to area

By [Derek Lacey](#)

Times-News Staff Writer

Published: Friday, December 25, 2015 at 4:30 a.m.

A steep, 68-acre lot of pristine mountain land tucked away in a corner of Henderson County may be soon be a hotspot for hiking in the Green River Gorge, named for a man who left his mark heavily on the area and the county, Frank "Chief" Bell.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

A waterfall on the Green River in the Green River Gorge.

The park hopes to honor the regional camp heritage of the area, especially the legacy of the man who the park is named for: Chief Bell, who founded camps Mondamin in the 1920s and Green Cove in the 1940s in southern Henderson County.

Bell pioneered what is now a thriving community of summer camps in the county, and "the Bell family just went on to have a tremendous impact on the camp industry here in Western North Carolina," said Kieran Roe, executive director of the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, which is spearheading the effort to establish the park.

The park would be an "opportunity to have a park travelers could stop at," Roe said, a point of recreation and information about the cultural features nearby.

Historical and cultural interpretation of the varied assets nearby would be established at the park for features like the 1927 High Bridge, the Cypress flume from Lake Summit and the famous Saluda Grade Railroad, build in 1876, the steepest standard-gauge tracks in the country.

The High Bridge itself was saved from demolition after community members spoke out in its defense, garnering 1,000 signatures and getting an endorsement from the Henderson County Board of Commissioners when the new I-26 bridge was completed in 2001, according to a Times-News at the time.

"There's a bit of a history aspect to the park," Roe said. It would tell the stories of those features as well as provide recreational trails for hiking.

But other priorities of the project include more traditional wilderness park goals: creating a wildlife habitat corridor, protecting water quality and beautiful vistas along the Pacolet Byway, or N.C. 176, promoting outdoor recreation tourism and providing walking and hiking opportunities.

It would also add much-desired access to the Green River Game Lands.

The park would consist of a long strip of steep land totaling just over 68 acres on the southern side of the Green River, starting near the Tuxedo Hydro Plant, directly across the river from a kayak put-in. The lot runs south along the river, ending at the High Bridge.

A proposed Frank "Chief" Bell Sr. Trail would run from the High Bridge to the river at the kayak put-in, with loops on either end, and would skirt two waterfalls, stopping at a scenic rock cliff.

Another possibility for future development could be mountain bike trails, which are lacking in the county, Roe said.

The park has been in the work for years, ever since the owner of the land approached CMLC to ask if the conservation group would be interested in acquiring his land and creating a park.

"We looked at it (and) began to realize it could be a pretty exciting park with all the cultural and historic features that we would highlight," Roe said.

The project would be funded in two phases, with the first covering the property purchase, transaction and property management costs, valued at \$665,000, though \$190,000 of that is the value of land the owner plans to donate.

Of the remainder, \$75,000 is covered by a Fellburn Foundation grant CMLC has already secured and \$400,000 could come from a North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant, which CMLC is hoping to work with the county to request.

But now the project is in crunch time, as the Fellburn grant will expire at the end of 2016 if CMLC is unable to raise monies to match it and acquire the land.

"The immediate goal in my mind," Roe said, is asking the county to partner with CMLC in applying for the PARTF grant. He mentioned that the county has used PARTF grants to for a number of local parks. The deadline for PARTF grants is May 2.

North Carolina PARTF grant requests must be submitted by a municipal or county government, Roe said, and CMLC has already received letters of support from organizations like the Henderson County Tourism Development Authority to help them with their request before the county Board of Commissioners.

The second phase, development of the park itself, is expected to cost \$180,000 — for educational and interpretive signage (\$2,500), Park and Trail development (\$150,000) and park master planning (\$27,500) — to be requested from private donors.

The park is "kind of off the beaten path," Roe said, in an area of the county that doesn't get as much attention as other parts. "A park there would be an amenity for that section of the county."

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