

Press Release

Contact: Dan Bell
Phone: (910) 695-1323

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 21, 2008

RIVER ROAD HARDWOODS RESULTS IN THREE MILES OF CAPE FEAR RIVER PROTECTED

SOUTHERN PINES, NC, NOVEMBER 21, 2008: The Sandhills Area Land Trust (SALT) has reached a major milestone in the protection and preservation of lands along the Cape Fear River through the addition of approximately 3 miles of contiguous buffer comprising 95 acres of riverfront protection.

The project, known as River Road Hardwoods, is located along the east side of the Cape Fear River about five miles northeast of downtown Fayetteville. It is also located directly across the river from the recently protected SALT-owned River Oaks Preserve, the Methodist College River Preserve and the new Cape Fear River Bike Trail and forms the view shed for public enjoyment along the west side.

The protection and preservation of lands along the Cape Fear River is one of the major strategic focus areas of SALT. Through its Cape Fear River Protection Initiative, a landscape scale effort to secure the riparian buffers of significant natural areas along the Cape Fear River, SALT is protecting the

drinking supply for communities along this waterway as well as conserving a unique ecosystem that exists from the Erwin Bridge in Harnett County through Cumberland and terminating in northern Bladen County.

These lands owned by Earl and Betty Hubbard, Jack Hubbard, John and Carol Hubbard, Bill and Laurie Hubbard and Craig and Lynn Williams of Fayetteville form a complex designated by the NC Natural Heritage Program as a Regionally significant natural heritage area.

"We are so grateful," said Director Dan Bell, "to the Clean Water Management Trust Fund for providing funding for the protection of this project and to its landowners and SALT supporters who share the vision of saving the lands that we love for future generations."

The project is characterized by deep ravines, terraces up to 70 ft. in height, majestic hardwoods, flowing waterfalls (a phenomenon in the Coastal Plain), flora (such as mountain laurel and galax) generally found in the mountains of N.C, and is one of the two finest examples of mature high quality mesic forest remaining in the Harnett-Cumberland-Bladen sector.

It supports a rare plant, eastern isopyrum (*Enemion biternatum*) and a rare orchid, lily-leaved twayblade (*Liparis lilifolia*) - a first for Cumberland County and one of a handful of populations known for the coastal plain of North Carolina. In addition, an enormous population of state-rare sedge, known as James's sedge (*Carex jamasii*) as well as longleaf spikegrass (*Chasmanthium sessiliflorum*), a NC NHP Watch list species. This project is

also located in the portion of the Cape Fear River that is designated by the NC Natural Heritage Program as "Upper Cape Fear River Aquatic Habitat, an area known to support six rare freshwater mollusks, and rare sightings of the Federally and State Threatened American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*).

SALT is a nonprofit organization dedicated to natural preservation in the Sandhills. It covers a six-county region and has targeted land around Drowning Creek, Deep River and the Lumber River for conservation. It has also placed conservation easements in parts of Moore County's horse country.

A conservation easement lets the private property owner maintain ownership, but give up the right to develop it.

Since SALT's formation in 1991, it has placed 46 separate conservation easements on more than 4,300 acres and owns 16 nature preserves, bringing the total number of acres protected to over 8,500.

-End-