

# BUSINESS *Times*

## Land Trust Day returns to area

Several local businesses will celebrate Land Trust Day on Saturday, June 6.

Land Trust Day is a friend-raising event encouraging new memberships in local land trusts as well as an educational opportunity to learn more about the trusts.

"According to the Conservation Trust for North Carolina, the state has lost 2.8 million acres of cropland and forest land to development over the last 20 years. By 2022, it is projected that certain areas of North Carolina will experience an additional 50 percent decrease in their forests and cropland," said John Cooper, president of the Mast General Store.

"With those statistics in mind, it's more important than ever to have an active plan to protect our open farmland, scenic vistas, and significant landmarks for future generations to enjoy and benefit from, not just in North Carolina, but throughout the southeast. Our annual Land Trust Day helps highlight local organizations that are working hard to do just that."

Representatives from the High Country Conservancy, the Blue Ridge Rural Land Trust, and the National Committee for the New River will be on hand at the Mast Stores in the High Country on June 6 to share with guests the activities they are undertaking to conserve the open spaces in the region. The Mast General Store will donate 20 percent of sales on that Saturday to these organizations.

The National Committee for the New River (NCNR) is the oldest organization, founded in 1974 to stop two dams proposed for the free-flowing New. The mission of NCNR is to advocate for successful protection of the New River, to restore eroding river and stream banks and enhance riparian habitat, and to permanently protect land along the River.

The High Country Conservancy (HCC) was founded in 1997 with a focus on protecting the natural resources of Appalachia by conserving land with significant ecological, cultural, recreational, and scenic value in Ashe, Avery, and Watauga Counties. Most recently, High Country Conservancy partnered with N.C. state parks to create Bear Paw State Natural Area, located on Hanging Rock Ridge in Watauga County.

Active for 11 years, the Blue Ridge Rural Land Trust (BRRLT) has been incredibly successful in its preservation efforts. To date, BRRLT has protected over 10,000 acres at 69 sites in the northwest corner of North Carolina. Currently, BRRLT is leading the effort to save one of Ashe County Pond Mountain.

According to High Country Conservancy program associate Zachary Lesch-Huie, more local businesses have signed on to support Land Trust Day, and High Country Conservancy's (HCC) efforts to protect land in Avery, Ashe and Watauga Counties.

On the first Saturday of June, businesses in the High Country

are showing their support for land and water protection by donating a percentage of their sales, or by making a donation, to their local land trusts. By shopping or eating at these businesses on Land Trust Day, customers will support efforts to protect land in Avery, Ashe and Watauga counties.

In addition to Mast General Stores, Footsloggers is also donating a percentage of their Saturday sales to High Country Conservancy, as well as other land trusts in the Blue Ridge area. Carlton Gallery, along with Magic Cycles and Rock Dimensions, are all donating a portion of their sales to HCC.

Our Daily Bread Delicatessen and Melanie's Food Fantasy are also donating to HCC. Green Mother Goods is matching all sales of HCC's signature clothing, hats and bags at their store.

"We're very appreciative of our Land Trust Day partners," says Bob Cherry, HCC's President. "These businesses know that their customers—whether full-time residents or seasonal visitors—value the scenic beauty of the High Country. Their support helps us keep the High Country beautiful."

For more information on land trusts, stop by the information table on Saturday, June 6th in all Mast Store locations. Visit the local land trusts' Web sites — [www.highcountryconservancy.org](http://www.highcountryconservancy.org), [www.brllt.org](http://www.brllt.org), or [www.ncnr.org](http://www.ncnr.org).