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Bill and Holly Stevens preserve a “bit of wildness” in Oak Ridge with Piedmont Land Conservancy

Piedmont Land Conservancy is pleased to announce the protection of 27 acres of Haw River headwaters in Oak Ridge. Late in 2007, Bill and Holly Stevens donated an easement protecting land Bill has owned since 1961. The land is 95% forested and contains a significant, beautiful and clean unnamed tributary of the Haw River.

Protecting land in highly developed areas such as Oak Ridge is rare because of the land’s value for development. The Stevens’ donation assures a significant “bit of wildness” will remain that way.

Bill Stevens and his first wife, Margaret, bought 38 acres including the easement area as an ideal place to build a retreat center and to preserve the magic of forest and stream they found there. Sadly, Margaret passed away before they could build their retreat center. Bill persevered and built Glenagape Center as a retreat and counseling center with his own hands, then operated it for many years.

He and Holly decided to protect most of the land as a “mini wild preserve in the midst of the Triad.” As Bill said in the early days of the project, “we... need pockets of woods set aside simply for the birds and the animals.” This easement guarantees the water in the Haw will remain a little bit cleaner and birds and animals will have a retreat center near Oak Ridge forever.

Bill said, ““Why should I take a windfall profit from selling this land which I have cherished for 46 years. There's more to life than money. Besides, do I really own it? Does it not belong to the animals; the trees and ferns who live here? I am merely the caretaker and right now my care takes the form of long term protection afforded by this easement. If not this, then what else about my life is more important?”

Piedmont Land Conservancy Associate Director, Kalen Kingsbury said, “It is particularly gratifying to work with landowners like Bill and Holly, who are willing to take personal responsibility for protecting the natural beauty of an area that is facing tremendous development pressure. Future generations will be the lucky beneficiaries of their action today.”

Piedmont Land Conservancy is a grassroots land trust dedicated to permanently protecting important lands to conserve our region’s rivers and streams, natural and scenic areas, wildlife habitat, and farm land that make the Piedmont a healthy and vibrant place to live, work and visit for present and future generations. To date, PLC has protected over 15,000 acres in 135 projects across its nine county region of Alamance, Caswell, Forsyth, Guilford, Randolph, Rockingham, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin counties. To learn more about the Conservancy, and how you can support its efforts to protect farms, rivers, forests, wildlife habitat and urban greenways and parks, visit www.piedmontland.org or call (336) 691-0088.

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