

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEETING DATE: November 7, 2005

SUBJECT: Agfa Property/DuPont State Forest

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) Resolution Adopted by Transylvania County Board of Commissioners
- 2) October 22, 2005 Times-News Article

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

At the October 19, 2005 meeting, Mr. Dick Thompson requested that the Board endorse a proposal to create a State park on the closed DuPont/Agfa film plant property. The property in question is located on 459 acres in the middle of the 10,268 acre DuPont State Forest. The State Forest straddles Henderson and Transylvania Counties. A resolution adopted by the Transylvania Board of Commissioners supporting this proposal is attached for review. In order to provide background, an October 22 Times-News article concerning this issue is also attached.

Since the meeting on October 19, this issue has been discussed by two key stakeholder groups – the DuPont State Forest Advisory Committee and the Friends of DuPont Forest. The DuPont State Forest Advisory Committee voted to take no action concerning the proposal to create a State park on the Agfa Property. Chairman Moyer is a member of that committee, representing Henderson County. The Friends of DuPont Forest's Board of Directors issued a statement indicating that the industrial site should be used to improve public access to Dupont State Forest. However, the group did not endorse the proposal to save the Agfa buildings for use as State facilities.

Additional information concerning this issue can be provided during Monday night's meeting by Mr. Thompson, Chairman Moyer, and Commissioner McGrady.

COUNTY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION/ACTION REQUIRED:

No action is recommended at this time.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Raymond D. Miller, Chairman
W. David Guice, Vice Chairman
Jason Chappell
Jeff Duvall
Kelvin Phillips
828-884-3107



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Transylvania County

Resolution 30-05

RESOLUTION FOR REQUEST FOR STATE PARK

WHEREAS, in 1997 the State of North Carolina purchased 7,600 acres from DuPont and created the DuPont State Forest; and

WHEREAS, in 2000 the State of North Carolina used eminent domain to acquire an additional 2,200 acres, which include scenic waterfalls and lakes, for the DuPont State Forest; and

WHEREAS, there remains approximately 400 acres of additional property to be remediated by DuPont, that upon remediation is to be given to the State of North Carolina as part of the DuPont State Forest; and

WHEREAS, effective October 1, 2005, AGFA resumed demolition of the remaining manufacturing buildings at the former DuPont location in Transylvania County; and

WHEREAS, a large portion of this 400-acre property (along with the waterfalls and lake area) is better suited as a state park since it also contains a 20-acre swimming and boating lake and campground with 35 fully-equipped campsites and two bath houses that were used by former employees. The property also includes a 10-acre paved parking lot and a 26,000 square foot building ideally suited for park offices, a visitor center, warehouse, and forest education complex. In addition, there are two other buildings on the property that could be used in conjunction with a state park. The replacement cost of these buildings is estimated to be over \$3 million; and

WHEREAS, these buildings are scheduled to be torn down in the near future unless there is an agreement reached between the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources and DuPont and AGFA to spare these buildings;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County, North Carolina, to request that the State of North Carolina reach an agreement with DuPont and AGFA to preserve the aforementioned buildings and recreation sites and set aside these areas for a state park, separate from the DuPont State Forest.

Approved this 10th day of October, 2005.

ATTEST:

Raymond D. Miller, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners

Kimberly T. Conover, Clerk to the Board

“An Equal Opportunity Employer”

Article published Oct 22, 2005

Panel puts off state park proposal

By Joel Burgess
Times-News Staff Writer

DUPONT STATE FOREST -- This popular public destination straddling Transylvania and Henderson counties should for now remain entirely a state forest, and should not include a state park, an advisory committee has said.

The DuPont State Forest Advisory Committee voted Friday to take no action on saving an industrial office building that proponents said could become part of the infrastructure of a more-than-400-acre state park inside the forest.

Though some appeared to abstain, there were no "nay" votes among the nine members present of the volunteer board, which is appointed by the N.C. Division of Resources. They met in the building that was part of the company Agfa's film-making operation until it closed in 2000.

Jeff Jennings, a hiker representative to the board, said most members of Friends of DuPont State Forest that toured the 30,000-square-foot metal building Tuesday were not impressed.

"The consensus among the people who toured the building for the first time was it didn't look like a state park to them," the past president of the non-profit Friends of DuPont said.

The decision ultimately lies with the state. No action by the state means Agfa will likely demolish the building along with the plant and that the 459 acres on which they sit will become part of the state forest.

No state agency has expressed interest in adding a park.

The idea has come locally from those such as Dick Thompson, current Friends president. Thompson proposed to his organization and the advisory board that a state park be created from the closed Agfa facility and possibly from the central area containing the forest's popular water falls. The forest covers 10,269 rugged acres marked by massive granite slabs and falls with names like, Triple, High and Bridal Veil.

Thompson said putting the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation in charge of some of the land would provide more money for recreation infrastructure and better serve many visitors who are less likely to tackle a strenuous hike.

"There are some that say, 'I like it wild,' meaning the forest. I share that view; however, I believe we need to step forward and recommend ... the needed actions for the proper use and protection of this unique and wonderful acreage," he said.

The Transylvania County Board of Commissioners agreed to sign a letter outlining Thompson's proposal that will be sent to the state. The Henderson County Board of Commissioners put off the matter Wednesday, saying they needed more information and would take up the issue Nov. 7.

Others, such as the advisory board's mountain biker representative, Woody Keen, adamantly opposed the transfer, which he said could restrict some uses.

"Our state park system is unfortunately not very friendly to mountain biking and not very friendly to equestrian use. Many of the trails that are now narrow single track, they would not be allowed. And I'm afraid there would be too many cooks in the kitchen," said Keen, a professional trail-system builder.

Industrial representative Jamie Van Buskirk said the state property office had expressed interest in some of the bath houses, picnic shelters and other amenities near a lake, but not in the building.

N.C. Rep. Trudi Walend, the board's legislative representative, said she would contact the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which is over the forestry and recreation divisions, and see if they were interested in the building or any other structures slated for destruction.

DuPont opened the plant in the late 1950s and operated it until 1997, when it sold its worldwide medical imaging business to Sterling. DuPont sold 7,600 acres of surrounding land to the state in a bargain sale, lands that became DuPont State Forest. Sterling sold the plant to Agfa. After Agfa demolishes the plant and cleans up the property, it is to revert to DuPont. That company said it wants to give the land to the state, and that it could become part of the surrounding forest.

Transylvania County residents had hoped for a deal to resurrect some manufacturing jobs at the site. The British film company Ilford and its Japanese parent company Oji had expressed interest in using the site, but were unable to reach an agreement in time with the state over environmental liability issues.

The Friends group supported the return of manufacturing at the site.

Some, like Keen, suggested the state create a new entity, a state recreational forest that will overcome some of the funding problems that DuPont has had getting money for infrastructure, such as toilets, a visitor's center and camping facilities.
