

Press Release - July 28, 2006

LAKE LURE – A grassroots effort to save one of the state’s most recognizable landmarks has been launched. The Friends of Hickory Nut Gorge, a group formed earlier this year with the mission of protecting the beauty and integrity of the Gorge, is urging all interested citizens to help save Chimney Rock Park. The park owners put the entire property on the open market last week, listing it with Cape Fear Sotheby’s International Realty for \$55 million. The Friends’ campaign is geared towards keeping the State of North Carolina at the bargaining table with park owners, Todd Morse and his father, Lucius.



“We feel strongly that the best long-term option for preserving this piece of our history is for the people of North Carolina to become the next steward,” said Robert Wald, a Friends organizer. “Other options such as a public-private partnership are feasible as well, but at the top of our list is making Chimney Rock Park the centerpiece of what would be the best state park in the Southeast.”

The State of North Carolina is already committed to developing the Hickory Nut Gorge State Park. More than 3,000 acres has already been preserved in the Gorge through private donors, conservation organizations and the State. Adding Chimney Rock Park to that list would provide a permanent legacy to Morse family and to the citizens of North Carolina.

The Friends have launched a website ([www.savechimneyrock.net](http://www.savechimneyrock.net)) and letter writing campaign to grow support for the park’s preservation and to send a clear, positive message to State officials that everything possible must be done to save this treasured landscape.

“Losing Chimney Rock Park to development would be devastating to the Gorge,” said fifth-generation Gorge resident, Lake Lure Mayor and Friends organizer Jim Proctor. Proctor put in extra volunteer hours to develop the Friends’ new website dedicated to preserving Chimney Rock. “We understand that the decision of the Morse family to put this property on the market was not easy. We have only thanks to give to the Morses for the stewardship they have shown over the past 100 years and want to work with them and the State to find a solution that leaves a positive, lasting legacy.”

The Friends are urging all interested parties to write letters to the governor’s office, State House and Senate members, North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation officials, the Morse family and others to work together towards preserving this landmark.

“While the first round of negotiations with the Morses and the State were unsuccessful, we are encouraged that both parties have publicly stated they intend to continue negotiations,” said Friends organizer Jerry Stensland. “We also want to thank Governor Mike Easley, Senator Walter Dalton and others for their support in placing the unprecedented \$15 million special appropriation for Hickory Nut Gorge State Park land acquisition in this year’s state budget.”

The Friends of Hickory Nut Gorge consists of residents of the various Gorge communities including Gerton, Bat Cave, Lake Lure, Chimney Rock Village and Fairview as well as individuals who share a love of the Gorge. The driving vision of the group is to protect the natural beauty and ecological integrity of Hickory Nut Gorge. Other efforts already underway through the Friends organization include a concerted effort to save the area’s hemlock trees from a deadly pest, the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid.

Contact the Friends via E-Mail at: [savechimneyrock@aol.com](mailto:savechimneyrock@aol.com)

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