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**For Release:** September 13, 2017

### **RIVERBEND PARK SET TO EXPAND BY MORE THAN 200 ACRES**

NEWTON, NC – Catawba County has been awarded a \$414,109 grant from the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) to expand Riverbend Park by more than 200 acres and 1,900 feet of Catawba River shoreline, bringing the park's overall size to approximately 689 acres and 5,200 total feet of shoreline. Park patrons will be able to access the park's new property by late summer 2018.

Landowner Byron Bean offered 209 acres adjacent to Riverbend Park to the County earlier this year in memory of the late Harriet H. Bean. Mr. Bean and family desired for the land to be used for health, recreation and educational purposes. Appraised at \$1.2 million, the land was sold to the County for \$400,000 with the balance of the appraised value considered a donation. The PARTF grant provides for the entire purchase price and associated surveying and legal fees.

The expansion allows for the addition of five to 10 miles of multi-use, natural surface trails to Riverbend's existing 12-mile trail system, which will wind through the new property's mature forests, rolling hills, open meadows, and variety of natural habitats that range from riparian corridors to upland forests. The property also provides expansive views of Barrett's Mountain, the Brushy Mountains, and the Catawba River.

Located next to the Oxford Dam at 6700 Hwy. 16 N. in Conover, Riverbend Park offers environmental, educational, and passive recreation opportunities year-round. One of the largest non-state parks in North Carolina, Riverbend Park is known for trails that can accommodate hikers and mountain bikers, a two-acre fenced dog park, kayak and canoe access to the Catawba River, miles of shoreline and a three-quarter-acre pond for fishing, a 1,000-square foot meeting facility, exceptional bird watching, and a diverse natural habitat.

Since 1997, Catawba County has received nearly \$900,000 in PARTF grant funds to support the creation and enhancement of Riverbend Park, as well as the creation of Bakers Mountain Park on 189 acres in the Mountain View area.

"We are sincerely grateful for the generosity of the Bean family, who recognized the benefit of making their beautiful property accessible to our community," said Catawba County Planning and Parks Director Jacky Eubanks. "We also truly value our longstanding relationship with the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, whose continued investment in Catawba County has enabled us to provide additional recreational opportunities and preserve our incredible natural heritage for residents and visitors to experience right in our own backyard."

Riverbend Park anchors Catawba County's four-park system, which includes the County's highest elevation point at Bakers Mountain Park, a second dog park at St. Stephens Park in Hickory, and the soon-to-be-

developed Mountain Creek Park on 589 acres in the Sherrills Ford area. Catawba County Parks are open six days a week (except Wednesdays) and on most holidays. For more information about the Catawba County Parks system, visit [www.catawbacountync.gov](http://www.catawbacountync.gov).

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**Photo Cutline:** Riverbend Park, part of Catawba County's four-park system, is set to expand by nearly 200 acres by late summer 2018. Credit: Blair Rayfield, Catawba County Parks.

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