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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Box Creek Wilderness Owner Acquires Additional 1,800 Acres to Conserve 5,100-Acre Tract in McDowell and Rutherford Counties

Parcel Ranks as NC's Largest Private Registered Natural Heritage Area

(ASHEVILLE, NC) – Unique Places announces that the 3,300-acre Box Creek Wilderness on the Rutherford-McDowell county line has recently been expanded to a total of 5,100 acres through the acquisition of two additional parcels of 200 acres and 1,600 acres. With the greater than 50% expansion of the total contiguous parcel size, the project team managing the land expands its conservation vision.

The new purchase connects two State Natural Heritage Areas, Box Creek and Camel Knob, and is now one of the largest privately owned and un-fragmented parcels in the entire state.

In North Carolina geographical data released in August 2012, the 3,016-acre Box Creek Wilderness was ranked as North Carolina's largest private Registered Natural Heritage Area (RNHA) out of 337 total RNHAs, 121 of which are protected by private landowners. Its 3,016 registered acres make it 921 acres larger than the second largest privately owned RNHA in the state, the Montreat Watershed.

Prior to the purchase of the additional 1,800 acres, the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources announced on July 10, 2012 that Tim Sweeney, the landowner of the 3,300-acre Box Creek Wilderness area had signed a Registry Agreement with Dee Freeman, secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Voluntary SNHA Registry agreements recognize the landowner's commitment to ecological conservation of the area. The agreement formalized Sweeney's commitment to manage the Box Creek Wilderness area in ways that will protect the property's rare species and enhance its natural beauty, said Linda Pearsall, director of Conservation, Planning, and Community Affairs.

The new assemblage contains Box Creek, as well as five peaks: Camel Knob, Conway Knob, Wolf Mountain, Cedar Knob, and Rockey Face Mountain. Over the next year, Durham-based Unique Places, the company that manages the conservation and ecological registration of the Box Creek Wilderness area, will expand ecological land management practices to the additional acreage, including prescribed burns, planting

blight-resistant American Chestnut trees, and remediating historic logging trails.

Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina, the regional land trust partner on the project, has long sought protection for the parcel, which ranks as a high protection priority within the conservancy's South Mountains to Blue Ridge Mountains Corridor Focus Area. The entire property is one of a chain of large natural areas linking the mountain ranges across the 20 miles between more than 40,000 acres of protected state park and game lands in the South Mountains to the protected national forest, state, and conservancy lands of the Blue Ridge including Chimney Rock State Park and Pisgah National Forest. Given its size and location, it serves as an ecological bridge between the mountain and piedmont eco-regions. As a result, the site harbors a wide breadth of species and serves as a critical, un-fragmented corridor for migratory animals.

For more information about the Box Creek Wilderness and Camel Knob SNHAs, contact: Jeff Fisher, Unique Places, LLC: (919)632-0161 or jeff@uniqueplacesllc.com. For more information about the Box Creek Wilderness, videos of the stewardship activities, and additional photos of the site, see www.boxcreekwilderness.com.

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