

## *Cabarrus SWCD Case Study*

*Compiled by Dennis Testerman, Resource Conservation Specialist, Cabarrus SWCD, 2010*

Cabarrus Soil and Water Conservation District has been involved with the Land Trust for Central North Carolina since the beginning of our regional land trust partnership. An organizational meeting for the Land Trust was held in Cabarrus County in the early 1990's. In 1995, the Land Trust was formally organized, serving a ten-county region along the Yadkin River from the South Carolina line north to Davie and Davidson counties.

In 1997, Cabarrus SWCD initiated a countywide natural heritage inventory with funding from the Cabarrus County Board of Commissioners and the North Carolina Natural Heritage Trust Fund. One of the 25 state-designated sites that was identified early on during the field work phase for the Inventory of the Significant Natural Heritage Areas of Cabarrus County, North Carolina was a great blue heron rookery associated with a 200-acre wetland. A 33-acre parcel spanning this wetland was for sale at the time that this wetland was "rediscovered," so the Land Trust stepped in to explore options for purchasing this key parcel. With partial funding from the state Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the property was purchased in 1999.

Eight years later in 2007, the boards of the Land Trust and District mutually agreed that the transfer of the title to this property was in the best interest of its long-term stewardship. Since that time, the District has continued efforts to other properties included in this wetland complex. That same year, the District secured a \$35,000 grant from the Altria Corporation for seed funds towards establishment of a conservation field school on this site and towards ongoing land protection efforts.

More recently, the District and the Land Trust partnered to place a conservation easement on a 19-acre suburban farmstead, with the Land Trust serving as a contingent grantee. The Land Trust staff joined District board and staff members on site on multiple occasions and reviewed drafts of the conservation easement

The District is a long-standing member of the Land Trust, the Conservation Trust for North Carolina and the national Land Trust Alliance. District, Land Trust and Conservation Trust staff travelled together to the 2006 Land Trust Alliance rally in Nashville, Tennessee. District staff has also participated in workshops held by regional and state land trust organizations. The Land Trust staff, in turn, gives presentations at landowner dinner meetings organized by the District. The District has been represented on the Land Trust's Land Protection (formerly Priority Lands) committee. One of the decisions made after initial discussion in this committee was that the District would take the lead on term easements in Cabarrus County.

To formalize their growing partnership, the District and Land Trust are currently exploring a Memorandum of Understanding.