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Boone County buying forest land

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Boone County has agreed to buy 181.4 acres of forested land in western Boone County from a nonprofit group.

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The Boone County Fiscal Court on March 2 approved using a state grant to purchase two parcels called Dinsmore Woods and Boone Cliffs. The county will buy the land for \$1,200 an acre. That's a total cost of \$217,178. The parcels are owned by The Nature Conservancy, an organization based in Arlington, Va.

Barbara Bardes, chairman of the Dinsmore Homestead Foundation's board, said the parcels are the only properties The Nature Conservancy owns in Northern Kentucky. She said they sent letters to Dinsmore and The Boone Conservancy asking them to buy the property because they have no intention of caring for it. She said they have no volunteers in this part of Kentucky.

Regarding Dinsmore, Bardes said "it would wipe out our endowment if we attempt to buy the land at that amount and so we simply couldn't even think about that ... (and) spare that money."

The county will maintain the properties.

Bardes both pieces are under permanent preservation so that the only thing that can be done is clear paths. She said shelters can't be built and highways can't be paved on it. She said the properties have to be kept in their natural state.

The Nature Conservancy's Web site says the Boone Cliffs property gets "its name from the 20- to 40-foot conglomerate 'cliffs' that rise above the valley slopes." The site called Dinsmore Woods a "relatively mature forest."

The grant is from the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund. The grant will purchase signage and help with weed control too.

Money to the fund is from the extra \$10 the state's nature license plates cost. David Whitehouse, director of Boone County Parks, said there are almost 2,100 nature plates in Boone County. The \$10 is a tax deductible contribution to the fund. The fund also gets money from environmental fines and the state's portion of the unmined minerals tax.

Judge-Executive Gary Moore said no local dollars will be used as matching funds on the project. Some grants require local money to be used to do projects in addition to the actual grant money.

Moore said when one looks at other properties in the area such as the county's Middle Creek Park "it really starts to shape up and if we can continue to accumulate other parcels as we go forward ... it creates a tremendous canopy ... almost a mini-state forest, a county forest as such that I think could be something special for future generations."