

WPCC doubles its land holdings

By **JOHN WANLESS**
News Herald Staff Writer

MORGANTON — The next time you ride by Western Piedmont Community College, take another look. It just more than doubled in size this week.

You probably won't notice a great difference right now because the increase in size is due to the acquisition of 209 adjoining acres of rolling hills that were previously state property.

WPCC officials formally announced this acquisition at a press conference there on Tuesday. WPCC President Jim Richardson explained that the North Carolina General Assembly directed the transfer for development of an Agricultural Campus during the short session in July.

Richardson said, "This addition to the existing campus gives WPCC more than 320 total acres within the city limits of Morganton making it one of the largest, if not the largest, community colleges in terms of physical size in the State."

Richardson added, "For far too long, the College has had to scatter many programs throughout the county to accommodate our student population." He explained that each year, more than 5000 curriculum students and more than 13,000 continuing education students take classes at WPCC. "One adult in four in Burke County enrolls in at least one class at WPCC each year," said Richardson. "With the addition of this property, we will be able to run several of these programs from a centralized location and move forward with plans to develop an Agricultural Campus to

Land

Continued from Page One

focus on issues impacting our natural resources and the environment and meet the training needs of our community," he added.

Officials at Tuesday's press conference presented a list of 35 certification and continuing education classes which may be offered in the near future as part of the Agricultural Campus.

These included: Agribusiness Technology, Animal Care/Management, Christmas Tree Farming, Dog Obedience Training, Forklift Safety, Forestry Management Practices, Fruit Tree Propagation/Maintenance, Helicopter Rescue, Herb and Home Gardening, Horse Training and Management Practices, Hunting Dogs Training/Maintenance, K-9 Training, Landscaping, Organic Gardening, Pond Building/Management, Search/Rescue Techniques, Small Engine Repair and Maintenance, Solar Energy Applications, Stone Masonry, and Wildlife Management Practices.

David Campbell, Chair of the Burke County Commission, discussed the County's plans to use 12 acres of this property for the construction of an Agriculture Resource Center to serve Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, and McDowell counties. "It will help to relieve the great space shortage at the Human Resource Center," he said.

The approximately 14,285 square foot facility will provide office space for five agencies currently housed at HRC on East Parker Road: North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service-Burke Center, the USDA-Farm Service Agency, Burke Soil & Water Conservation District/USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and USDA-Rural Development.

Campbell added that the new building will include an auditorium and kitchen facility for meetings and training programs primarily for 4-H demonstrations, cooking classes, Expanded Foods & Nutrition Education Program classes, School Enrichment Program training, Community Service classes, and numerous agriculture, gardening, farming, and other related classes and community training programs.

Richardson explained that the acquisition would benefit everyone in the county. "Any project at WPCC will be available for all students of public schools in Burke County," he said. According to Richardson, plans are also in the works to develop a large system of walking, hiking, horseback and bicycle trails in the expansion of the Greenway Project which will now cover over 500 acres.

Other officials added that some parts of the new acquisition will be designated as wetlands and other natural areas.