

Bill seals Mercer in parkway

By ANITA ROSEN

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Gov. Arch Moore Jr. signed a bill Tuesday that officially seals Mercer County's membership on the New River Parkway Authority.

With the bill already approved by both the House and the Senate, Moore's signature was all that was needed to allow Mercer to join Raleigh and Summers counties in the authority. Each county will have a three-member representation.

The grassroots effort began last year with Spanishburg resident Bill Harvey who read about Raleigh and Summers counties' efforts to attract tourism by promoting the scenic parkway. Harvey felt the Mercer representatives had been "caught sleeping."

Harvey, along with William Sanders, Harold Wood, Buford Meador and Franklin Lilly, formed the Bluestone Highland Parkway Association. With the help of Rep. Richard Flanigan, Jim McNeeley and Sen. Tony Whitlow, efforts began to make Mercer a part of the New River Parkway Authority.

Mercer County got a vote of approval to become a part of the NRPA by members Feb. 9 after a telegram from Congressman Nick Rahall confirmed the \$17.6 million earmarked for the construction of the New River Parkway between Sandstone and Hinton would not be affected. Rahall gave his full support.

Sanders was appointed by the County Court as an interim member of the authority. Also representing Mercer on the authority will be Ray Bragg, president of the county commission and Del. Richard Flanigan.

It has not yet been decided where the scenic highway will be located in Mercer County or if it will follow another route already in use.