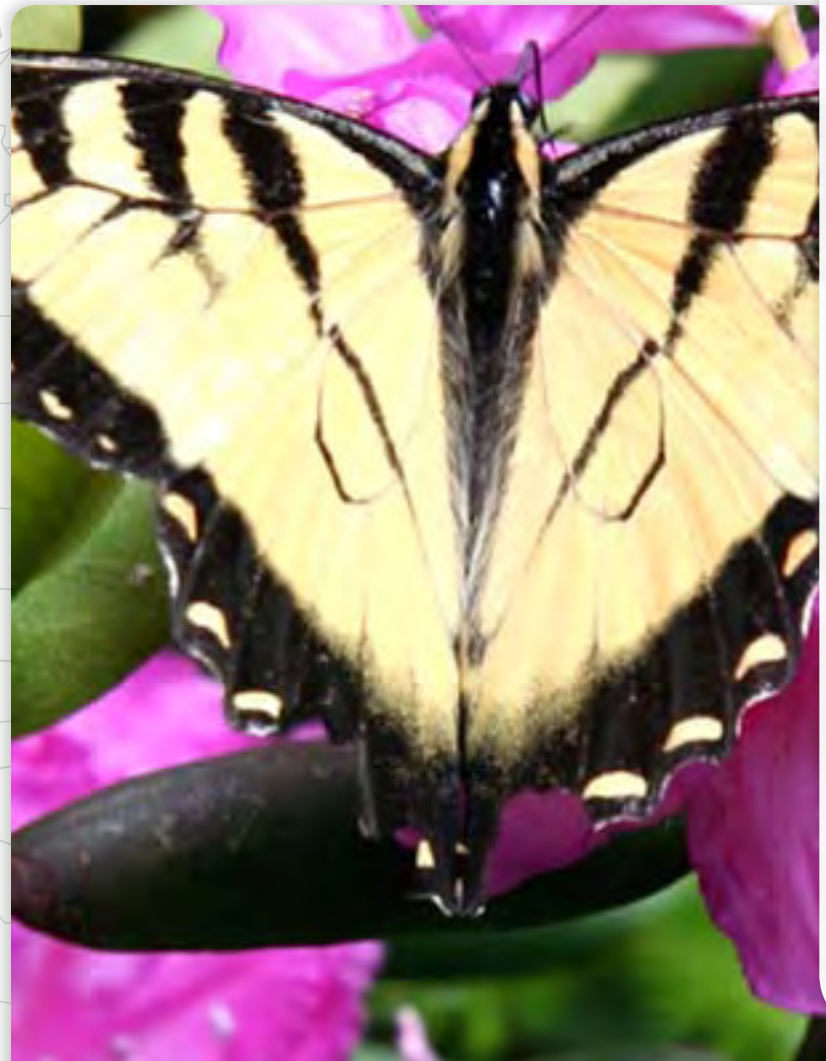
NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS

Naturally Wonderful

NORTH CAROLINA

DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION

2010 ANNUAL REPORT



GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN STATE PARK	2009
BEAR PAW STATE NATURAL AREA	2008
YELLOW MOUNTAIN STATE NATURAL AREA	
DEEP RIVER STATE TRAIL	2007
PINEOLA BOG STATE NATURAL AREA	2006
SUGAR MOUNTAIN BOG STATE NATURAL AREA	
SANDY RUN SAVANNAS STATE NATURAL AREA	
CARVERS CREEK STATE PARK	2005
CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK	
MAYO RIVER STATE PARK	2003
HAW RIVER STATE PARK	
LOWER HAW RIVER STATE NATURAL AREA	
ELK KNOB STATE PARK	2002
BEECH CREEK BOG STATE NATURAL AREA	
BULLHEAD MOUNTAIN STATE NATURAL AREA	2000
LEA ISLAND STATE NATURAL AREA	
MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA STATE TRAIL	
GORGES STATE PARK	1999
OCCONEECHEE MOUNTAIN STATE NATURAL AREA	1997
RUN HILL STATE NATURAL AREA	1995
LUMBER RIVER STATE PARK	1989
FRENCH BROAD RIVER STATE TRAIL	1987
LAKE JAMES STATE PARK	
YADKIN RIVER STATE TRAIL	
FORT FISHER STATE RECREATION AREA	1986
HORSEPASTURE STATE RIVER	1985
FALLS LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA	1982
JORDAN LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA	1981
BALDHEAD ISLAND STATE NATURAL AREA	1979
BAYTREE LAKE STATE PARK	
SOUTH MOUNTAINS STATE PARK	1978
BUSHY LAKE STATE NATURAL AREA	1977
HEMLOCK BLUFFS STATE NATURAL AREA	1976
LAKE WACCAMAW STATE PARK	
MASONBORO ISLAND STATE NATURAL AREA	
MITCHELL MILL STATE NATURAL AREA	
JOCKEY'S RIDGE STATE PARK	1975
NEW RIVER STATE PARK	
LINVILLE STATE RIVER	
DISMAL SWAMP STATE PARK	1974
GOOSE CREEK STATE PARK	
CHOWAN SWAMP STATE NATURAL AREA	1973
CROWDERS MOUNTAIN STATE PARK	
ENO RIVER STATE PARK	
MERCHANTS MILLPOND STATE PARK	
MEDOC MOUNTAIN STATE PARK	
THEODORE ROOSEVELT STATE NATURAL AREA	1971
RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK	1970
CAROLINA BEACH STATE PARK	1969
STONE MOUNTAIN STATE PARK	
PILOT MOUNTAIN STATE PARK	1968
WEYMOUTH WOODS STATE NATURAL AREA	1963
LAKE NORMAN STATE PARK	1962
HAMMOCKS BEACH STATE PARK	1961
MOUNT JEFFERSON STATE NATURAL AREA	1956
KERR LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA	1952
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK	1945
WILLIAM B. UMSTEAD STATE PARK	1941
PETTIGREW STATE PARK	1939
JONES LAKE STATE PARK	
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HANGING ROCK STATE PARK	1935
MORROW MOUNTAIN STATE PARK	
SALTERS LAKE	1929
WHITE LAKE	
FORT MACON STATE PARK	1924
MOUNT MITCHELL STATE PARK	1916

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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www.landmark-galleries.com

Dear Friend:

In spite of the struggling economic times, which included significant staffing and budgetary reductions, the North Carolina state parks system continued to make great headway in fulfilling its mission of conserving our finest natural resources, providing quality recreational experiences and teaching the importance of responsible stewardship.

Working with our partners in local and state government, the nonprofit land conservation organizations, the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) and others, we were able to secure critical lands and waters for permanent protection and enjoyment and build some world-class facilities where visitors can learn more about North Carolina's diverse natural resources and history. Our state parks system has now grown to more than 208,000 acres, featuring North Carolina's finest geologic, biologic, scenic, recreational and archaeological resources.

Like other states, North Carolina has experienced the hardships and challenges in these difficult times, and the trust fund revenues are reflective of that. However, the vision and foresight demonstrated by our state's leaders in preserving PARTF and the other associated trust funds are inspiring.

Although we have faced many challenges, we have had much to celebrate in 2009. The year was highlighted by the official creation of our newest state park at Grandfather Mountain. We also constructed and dedicated new visitor centers at Fort Macon and Merchants Millpond state parks. These facilities, which were designed to meet sustainability standards of the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program, demonstrate our commitment to setting the example and serving as truly responsible stewards of our natural resources on multiple fronts. Similar facilities being built at Cliffs of the Neuse and

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Design: Brandon Whitesell, Creative Services, N.C.DENR

Above: The Few's Ford area at Eno River State Park.

Cover: An eastern tiger swallowtail on a Catawba rhododendron on Roan Mountain massif, near the Yellow Mountain State Natural Area.

Raven Rock state parks will open in 2010. These projects also have brought much-needed jobs, investment and purchases to the communities where they are being built.

The state parks system also implemented an Internet – and call center-based reservations system for campsites and other facilities. A reservations system is one of the most requested services by visitors. We also had a record year in attendance, proving once again that state parks provide a safe, affordable and convenient escape and destination for North Carolinians and our guests.

There is so much more to tell, other land conservation, grants to local governments and more. You can learn more details about these and other efforts in this 2010 Annual Report.

Regardless of the challenges we face, I believe our state parks are positioned to make many more great strides in the new decade upon which we are about to embark. That is due, in large part, to the elected, appointed and public support we enjoy, the dedicated, professional support we receive from PARTF and the other trust funds, and the capable park staff.

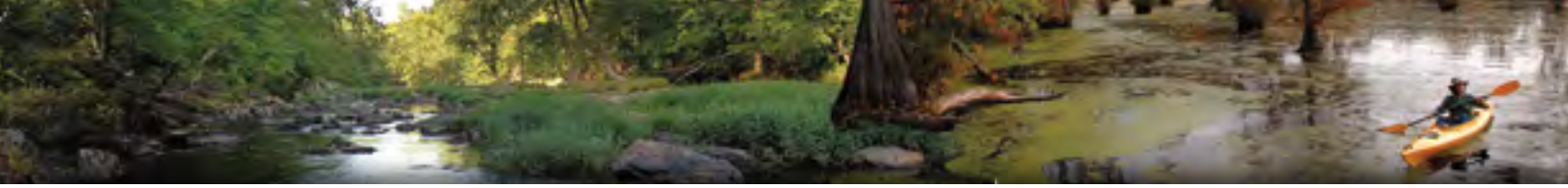
We will continue to strive to be responsible stewards of the lands and waters entrusted to us, to be effective teachers about the environment, to be providers and maintainers of high-quality recreational opportunities, to be examples of sustainability and to be a mainstay in North Carolina's thriving travel and tourism industry, all the while making sure that our state parks remain Naturally Wonderful.

Sincerely,

Lewis R. Ledford

Aerial photo shows the fortress and the new coastal education and visitor center at Fort Macon State Park.

Interior of Merchants Millpond Visitor Center.



NEW VISITOR CENTERS BUILT AT FORT MACON AND MERCHANTS MILLPOND

A new visitor center at Merchants Millpond State Park and a coastal education and visitor center at Fort Macon State Park were opened last year. With many sustainable features, both are positioned to earn gold certification by the U.S. Green Building Council through its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program. The facilities are the 19th and 20th visitor centers built at state parks since 1994; all are dedicated to environmental education with auditoriums, classrooms and exhibit halls to showcase the parks' natural and cultural resources.

Ground was also broken for similar facilities at Raven Rock and Cliffs of the Neuse state parks. A new visitor center is under design at Gorges State Park. Ground will likely be broken for this facility in 2010.

Similar in function to visitor centers built at other state parks and state recreation areas since 1994, the 22,547-square-foot Fort Macon facility is devoted to environmental education about North Carolina's fragile coastal ecology, offering 4,000 square feet of exhibit space, a teaching auditorium and conference room along with administrative offices.

The coastal education and visitor center was designed to meet sustainability standards of the LEED program. It offers features such as rainwater collection and low-flow water systems, recycled construction materials and preferred parking for alternative fuel vehicles.

The brick-and-block facility reflects the style of the 183-year-old fort, which was fully restored from 1999-2003. The project represents an investment of $8.8 million from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF), the principal funding source for state park capital projects and land acquisition. The project has had strong support from Friends of Fort Macon, a nonprofit group instrumental in upgrading many of the fort's exhibits and in managing a volunteer program to conduct fort tours.

The new 9,500-square-foot visitor center at Merchants Millpond State Park in Gates County offers a unique design reflecting the park's character and represents an investment of $2.8 million by the PARTF.

Museum-quality exhibits explore the importance of the millpond in the community's history and the park's natural resources, including four distinct natural communities around the millpond and the adjoining Lassiter Swamp. The project also includes a freestanding, 600-square-foot outdoor classroom that will provide a natural setting for the park's environmental education programs.

The Merchants Millpond visitor center features ground source heating and cooling, maximum open space and day lighting, energy efficient lights, waterless urinals and rainwater harvest cisterns. The building's cypress siding came from naturally felled trees in Dismal Swamp State Park.

Chief of Operations Mike Lambert, left, visits reservations call center of InfoSpherix.

VISITOR SERVICE

The state parks system launched a full-service, Internet – and call center-based reservations system in mid-2009 for its nearly 3,000 campsites as well as picnic shelters, community buildings, conference rooms and auditoriums. Such a reservations system has been the most requested amenity in recent years by park visitors.

In the six months of system operation, ending Dec. 31, 2009, more than 30,000 reservations were made, securing facilities for 61,795 nights. Information on visitor use secured in the system will also greatly enhance park operation and planning.

Beyond assisting citizens in planning visits to state parks, the system provides valuable information about visitor demographics and preferences. Reservations can now be made for visits to state parks either online at www.ncparks.gov or by calling toll-free 1-877-7 CAMPNC.

Visitors can reserve campsites at most state parks for a single night or more, and campsites and facilities can usually be reserved as little as 48 hours beforehand.

Questions about the reservations system can be directed to specialists at the call centers from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends.

Advance reservations are not required for a campsite or picnic shelter at a state park if the facility is available, and at many parks, some campsites will be set aside for walk-in registration. Without an advance reservation, available campsites and picnic shelters are on a first-come, first-served basis as in the past.

Reservations for most facilities can be made up to 11 months ahead. A $3 surcharge per night's stay or per reservation supports the system.

Find us on Facebook

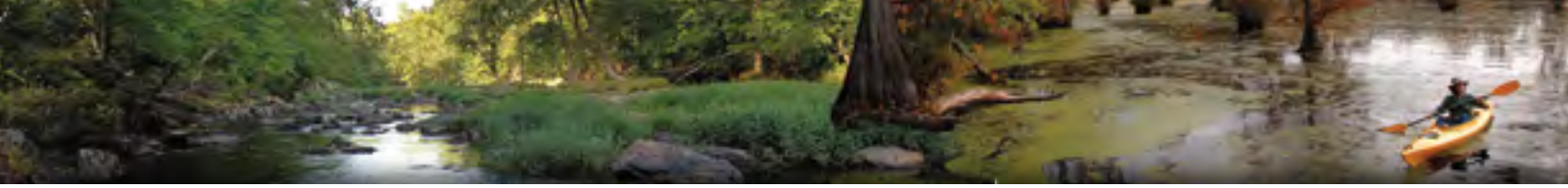
In keeping with Gov. Bev Perdue's encouragement for agencies to develop social media skills, the state parks system launched a Facebook site in late September (North Carolina State Parks and Recreation).

The site has been a success, logging more than 3,000 fans thus far. Those fans can follow state park news, view photo galleries and videos and connect with one another. The site has prompted several friends groups to launch similar sites for individual state parks.

http://www.facebook.com/pages/Raleigh-NC/North-Carolina-State-Parks-and-Recreation/143412869029

Using social media outlets allows the agency to speak directly to stakeholders and those passionate about the parks, the outdoors and conservation without the filter of traditional media. And, it provides two-way, instant communication with fans and valuable feedback.

The division intends to continue to explore social media outlets as they appear and mature.



NEW OBSERVATION DECK OPENS AT MOUNT MITCHELL

A new observation deck was completed at the summit of Mount Mitchell, the highest point in the eastern United States and the centerpiece of North Carolina's oldest state park. The low-profile deck offers 360-degree views and has a stone façade and stonework accents to blend into the rugged surroundings.

The circular platform presenting a 360-degree view of the surrounding Black Mountains crowns the 6,684-foot peak and becomes a new focal point for Mount Mitchell State Park, the oldest state park in the North Carolina system and one of the oldest in the nation.

The project, completed in May, also includes extensive renovation of the 850-foot walking trail to the summit from the park's main parking area. The trail has been paved and realigned slightly and features intermittent "rest areas" with benches along the route.

The observation deck replaced a 25-foot-high tower built in 1959 that had become unsafe after decades of exposure to the mountain's harsh climate. The deck is the fifth structure built on the summit since 1888. At that time, a monument was erected next to the grave of geographer Elisha Mitchell, the mountain's namesake. By 1915, a ladder about 15 feet high stood on three poles that formed a pyramid-shaped base. In 1916, at the time Mount Mitchell State Park was created, the summit offered a covered wooden platform about 15 feet high. That was replaced by the state in 1926 with a stone tower in a medieval motif.

The new observation deck is 10 feet high and 36.5 feet in diameter with a curved and gently sloping ramp for accessibility. The 135-foot ramp is supported by circular columns, and the entire structure has a stone façade and stonework accents. A granite insert in the deck's floor features an outline of the North Carolina map with a survey monument marking the mountain's location.

The project, including the trail improvements, represents a $1.5 million investment by the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the principal source of support for state park land acquisitions and capital improvements.

NORTH CAROLINA AND SOUTH CAROLINA DEDICATE CONNECTING TRAIL

State parks systems in North Carolina and South Carolina in April dedicated the 8.5-mile Ridgeline Trail that links Crowders Mountain State Park with Kings Mountain State Park and the Kings Mountain National Military Park in South Carolina. Directors and superintendents of both state park systems were on hand for the dedication.

Crowders Mountain State Park also formally opened its new Boulders Access, which serves as a gateway for the trail. The Ridgeline Trail connects more than 15,000 acres of parkland in the two states, serving more than 1.5 million visitors each year. Also, it has become a central link in a network of hiking trails extending more than 45 miles, including a 13-mile, one-way stretch from the northern reaches of Crowders Mountain State Park to the state line following the ridges of the Kings Mountain Range.

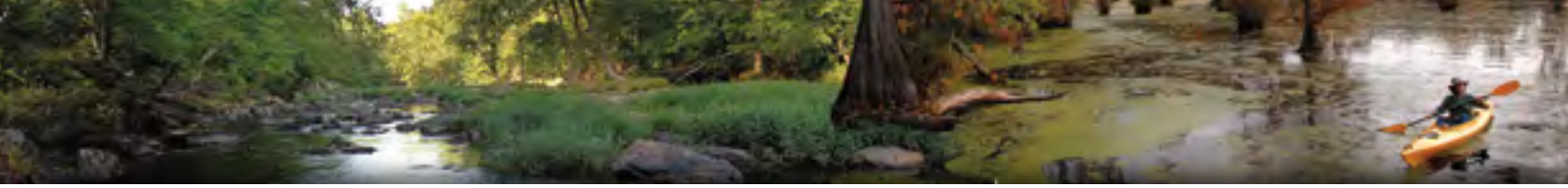
History is an integral part of hiking the Ridgeline Trail. The trail provides walking access to Kings Mountain National Military Park, site of a pivotal Revolutionary War battle, and Kings Mountain State Park, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Also, the trail features interpretive signs at the state line that describe a boundary dispute that took six surveys and more than 70 years of arguments to settle before the line between the two Carolina colonies was firmly drawn in 1772.

The concept of a hiking trail connecting the two states was part of an original master plan for Crowders Mountain State Park, which opened in 1974. It became feasible in 2000 when about 2,000 acres was acquired in North Carolina along the ridgeline for a trail corridor. Since that time, several hundred volunteers helped build the trail, supplemented by park efforts in both state parks and professional contract assistance from Long Cane Trails Inc. of Clarks Hill, SC.

The Ridgeline Trail is enhanced by the new Boulders Access in Crowders Mountain State Park near the state line. The $1.6 million project, supported by the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, includes a 2,200-square-foot ranger contact station, picnic grounds and parking area with space for 80 vehicles. In addition to the recently completed Boulders Access facility, spillway repairs were completed for Shorts Lake at Crowders Mountain State Park.

Left: Scenery along the popular "boulders area" of the Ridgeline Trail.

Right: Lewis Ledford and Phil Gaines, South Carolina state parks director, trade hiking staffs near the state line on the Ridgeline Trail during dedication. Mike Leonard of The Conservation Fund, center, was on hand for the event.



ADDITIONAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

The division completed two dredging projects at Hammocks Beach and Carolina Beach state parks. The access channel to Bear Island at Hammocks Beach State Park was dredged and completed in 2009. Approximately 110,000 cubic yards were dredged from the channel. Funds for this project came from the Division of Water Resources. Approximately 16,000 cubic yards were dredged from the marina and entrance channel at Carolina Beach State Park. The completion of the bulkhead, floating docks and boat ramp project at Carolina Beach State Park is anticipated in 2010.

The initial phase of Gorges State Park development was completed in 2009. The initial development included approximately 3.6 miles of new roads, a parking lot and site work for the future visitor center currently under design, and an observation/overlook area.

Miscellaneous building improvements at Morrow Mountain State Park were completed in 2009. The improvements include an addition to the existing maintenance building, a new vehicle shed, improvements to the pool drain, and HVAC and plumbing improvements to the rental cabins.

A boat ramp and a courtesy dock were completed at Lake Norman State Park.

Entrance road and bridge to new recreation facilities at Lake James State Park.

MEDOC MOUNTAIN STATE PARK INTRODUCES BRIDLE TRAIL SYSTEM

In October, Medoc Mountain State Park formally unveiled its new bridle trail system. The 11-mile network of bridle trails was built by volunteers and park staff beginning in 2007, when the park added about 1,200 acres as part of the state's acquisition of lands from International Paper Corp.

More than three dozen volunteers, including the Cowboys for Christ chapter based in Nash County, contributed hundreds of man-hours of labor, and the project was completed in July.

The bridle trailhead is located off Medoc Mountain Road (S.R. 1002) just west of the Little Fishing Creek bridge and includes a trailer parking area of nearly two acres, a shelter, a well-water facility for horses, picnic area and a large outdoor grill. Improvements to the trailhead were funded by the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

MASTERPLANNING CONDUCTED FOR THREE NEW UNITS

The master planning process was launched for new state parks under development at Carvers Creek in Cumberland County, Haw River in Guilford and Rockingham counties and Chimney Rock, primarily in Rutherford County. The master plans will guide development of the state parks for 15-20 years and will set priorities for recreational facilities and natural resource protection.

Area residents view maps of Haw River State Park master plan during a public meeting

"Creating a truly great state park is always a partnership effort between the state parks system and the community," said Lewis Ledford, division director.

A state park's master plan is essentially a blueprint for long-term development of facilities and recreation opportunities and a guide for protection of natural resources. It is meant to be an organic document, evolving as the park grows and as knowledge is gained about a park's natural resources and public use.

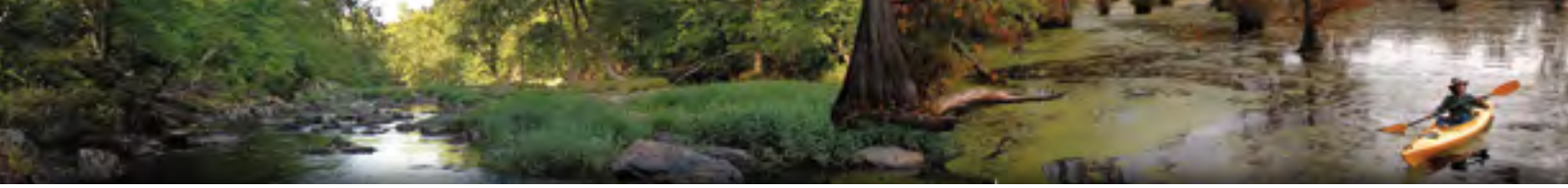
The N.C. General Assembly authorized Haw River State Park in 2003, and it now encompasses 1,334 acres, including the 200-acre campus of The Summit, formerly operated by the Episcopal Diocese, and which now operates as an environmental education, conference and training center. In 2008, the park acquired 692 acres that, at one time, was to be developed as a residential golf community.

Chimney Rock State Park was authorized by the N.C. General Assembly in 2005 and currently encompasses more than 4,300 acres on both sides of the Hickory Nut Gorge, including the dramatic Chimney Rock spire and surrounding nature park that was formerly a private tourist destination.

Currently, the 996-acre Chimney Rock area purchased by the state in 2007 is the only portion of the state park available for public access and is operated by the management company Chimney Rock Management LLC.

Land acquisition efforts for Chimney Rock State Park continue with the help of several land conservancies. The park includes the so-called "World's Edge" escarpment and properties on Rumbling Bald, Cane Creek, Rich, Stony, Sugarloaf and Round Top mountains. The Nature Conservancy has indicated it will enlarge the park with other acreage it holds in the gorge, including more than 800 acres on the crest of Rumbling Bald.

Established in 2005, Carvers Creek State Park has 1,395 acres north of Fayetteville. The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation has received approval from the Council of State to have 1,400 acres donated for the park. The property, known as Long Valley Farm, is part of the former Rockefeller estate and is being donated by The Nature Conservancy.



GENERAL ASSEMBLY AUTHORIZES GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN STATE PARK

Following formal authorization of Grandfather Mountain State Park by the legislature and governor in March, the division began to integrate this high-profile acquisition into the state parks system.

The formal closing on 2,456 acres of the famed attraction's "backcountry" occurred in June, and the division entered a partnership agreement with Grandfather Mountain Inc. for interim joint management of the property, providing uninterrupted public access to the mountain's popular trail and camping facilities.

An agreement for the state to purchase the undeveloped, backcountry portion of Grandfather Mountain was announced in 2008. Funding for the $12 million acquisition came equally from the Parks and Recreation and Natural Heritage trust funds.

The heirs of company founder Hugh Morton established on Nov. 1, 2009 the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, a nonprofit organization, to continue to operate the nature attraction with its nature center, wildlife habitats and "mile-high" swinging bridge on a paid admission basis. The acquisition agreement gives the state a conservation easement on that 749 acres of the original property.

Right: The 2009 Annual Report featured Grandfather Mountain State Park on the cover.

Below: Gov. Bev Perdue signs the authorization bill for the park.

STATE PARKS REPORT RECORD ATTENDANCE IN 2009

RALEIGH – State parks in North Carolina reported record attendance in 2009 of 14.16 million visits, a jump of 13 percent over the previous year, and up 5 percent from the previous record set in 2007.

Over the past 25 years, the state parks system has seen a dramatic 238 percent increase in visitation. In 1984, 5.9 million people visited state parks and state recreation areas.

"It's obvious North Carolinians and visitors to our state recognize the tremendous value our state parks offer in terms of affordable family experiences and respite from a difficult economy," said Gov. Bev Perdue. "Every visitor to the state parks can also take pride in this state's long history of conservation of its remarkable natural resources."

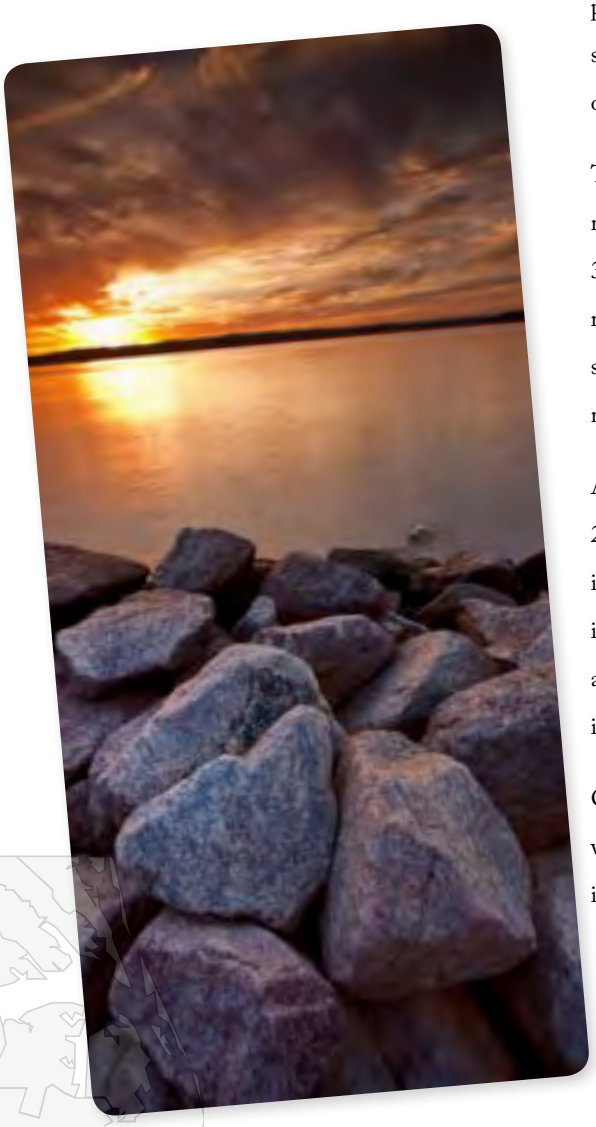
The state parks system manages more than 208,000 acres, including 34 state parks and four state recreation areas and a system of state natural areas dedicated to natural resource protection.

Among the parks and recreation areas, 22 reported increases in attendance in 2009. Jockey's Ridge State Park in Dare County reported the highest attendance at 1.4 million visits, an increase of 2 percent over last year.

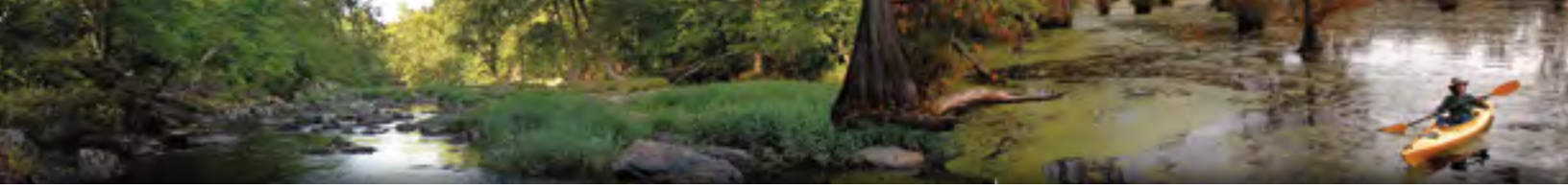
Other parks with significant increases were Cliffs of the Neuse State Park in Wayne County (42 percent), Crowders Mountain State Park in Gaston County (58 percent), Dismal Swamp State Park in Camden County (59 percent), Jordan Lake State Recreation Area in Chatham County (52 percent) and Mount Mitchell State Park in Yancey County (77 percent). The popular summit area at Mount Mitchell reopened in 2008 upon the completion of a new observation deck at the highest point in the eastern United States.

"Beyond the quality recreation experiences, health benefits and exposure to the natural world, state parks also offer economic benefits to the local communities where they're located," said Lewis Ledford, state parks director. "A 2008 economic study revealed the state parks system has an annual economic impact of more than $400 million, much of it in direct contributions to local tourism economies."

The study by North Carolina State University's Department of Parks Recreation and Tourism Management determined that tourist visitors spend an average $23.56 a day to enjoy the state parks. The complete study can be found at http://www.ncparks.gov/News/media_room/main.php.



Jordan Lake State Recreation Area (Photo courtesy of Julian De La Rosas).



NATIONAL AWARD RECOGNIZES MORTON FAMILY FOR CONSERVATION EFFORT

STONE MOUNTAIN, Ga. — A national organization dedicated to supporting the goals and operations of state parks systems across the nation recognized the outstanding efforts of the Hugh Morton Family in 2009 for its longtime natural resource stewardship efforts and critical role in the creation of North Carolina's newest state park at Grandfather Mountain.

The National Association of State Park Directors, an organization which advises state park systems on effective administration and management, presented its President's Award to Julia, Catherine, Jim and Crae Morton at its annual meeting Sept. 10.

The Morton family was recognized for working with state officials in North Carolina to preserve Grandfather Mountain, a family-owned property affording rich natural resources and recreational opportunities for visitors and residents. Valued at $25 million, the property was sold to the state for $12 million, due to the generosity and conservation ethic of the family. In 2008, the Morton Family approached the North Carolina state parks system about the long-term preservation and conservation of the property and creation of a state park to provide a source of perpetual management and public access of the property.

In September 2008, the state announced plans to acquire 2,456 acres on the landmark mountain for $12 million from the Morton family and Grandfather Mountain Inc. The acquisition also includes a conservation easement on 749 acres that are now managed by a non-profit foundation established by the heirs of Hugh Morton, the family patriarch who inherited the mountain in 1952 and is credited with developing the park as a tourist destination and endowing it with a strong conservation ethic. Morton died in 2006.

The award to the Morton family marks the third time in the last four years that North Carolina land conservationists have received NASPD recognition. In 2007, Dick Ludington and Mike Leonard of The Conservation Fund and Lt. Gov. (then state senator) Walter Dalton received the President's Award for their work in the preservation of Chimney Rock. Susie Hamrick Jones and the Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina received the award in 2006 for her organization's efforts to secure 4,300 acres for the expansion of Lake James State Park in Burke and McDowell counties.

The National Association of State Parks Directors is composed of park directors from all 50 states. NASPD meets annually in September to share ideas about operations, budgets, and other issues. This year's meeting focused on balancing budget challenges with meeting operational needs and visitor expectations.

LAND ACQUISITION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

In spite of limitations and challenges created by the struggling economy, the division's land protection program was able to acquire a number of key properties across the state.

The Division of Parks and Recreation acquired 6,639 acres in 35 transactions for a cost of $36.8 million for an average cost of $5,543 per acre. Two of these transactions were donations with a value of $218,100. The acreage and cost figures include the Grandfather Mountain State Park acquisition. Another new unit, Bear Paw State Natural Area, realized its first acquisition, 216 acres for a cost of $3,516,881. Bear Paw is a nationally significant natural heritage area that is also visible from Grandfather Mountain. Both Bear Paw State Natural Area and Grandfather Mountain State Park were acquisitions with bargain sale land values to the state.

Other key acquisitions were completed at Elk Knob State Park with significant acreage on Snake Mountain (449 acres) and two smaller tracts that are vital for trail access and connections. These tracts are also within a state natural heritage area and will help protect water quality in the North Fork of the New River. Funding for these acquisitions was from the Parks and Recreation and Natural Heritage trust funds.

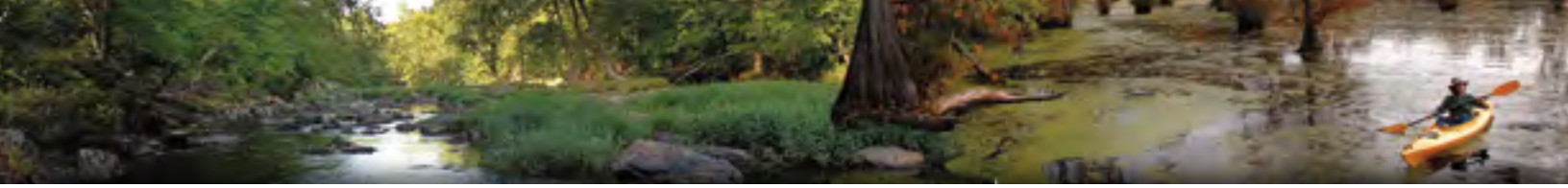
A water quality and fisheries related acquisition was completed at Merchants Millpond State Park with the acquisition of 94 acres on Bennetts Creek with the assistance of Environmental Defense and the Clean Water Management Trust Fund. This tract will help protect water quality in the Chowan River and protect spawning habitat for river herring.

At Mount Mitchell State Park, the state acquired two tracts containing 50 acres, which will protect the views from Mount Mitchell and the high elevation spruce-fir natural communities, which are nationally significant. Funding for these acquisitions was from PARTF and NHTF.

Additional strong water quality acquisitions occurred at Pettigrew State Park along the Scuppernong River. Four tracts were acquired containing a total of 1,138 acres. Funding for these acquisitions was from CWMTF, NHTF and PARTF.

Top: Bennett's Creek near Merchants Millpond State Park.

Bottom: Long View Farm at the developing Carvers Creek State Park.



GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRAM

The State Parks Act directs the division to create General Management Plans (GMPs) for each park in the system. The GMP is based upon a statement of purpose for each park as well as an analysis of the major resources and facilities available to implement that park's purpose. Through this process, each state park has its management direction defined.

The GMP process uses a multi-disciplinary approach to planning that includes representatives from all of the division's various sections and programs. Each park in the system has its GMP updated on a rotating schedule to ensure that it accurately reflects the current conditions of the park and is poised to address future needs. Routine review of GMPs gives the division the opportunity to document park needs and develop management and capital improvement priorities.

GMPs also help to ensure funds are spent effectively and that new projects are designed and constructed to serve their intended purposes. Draft GMPs are reviewed by the park's advisory committee to provide valuable feedback to division staff.

In 2009, GMP meetings were held for: New River State Park, Jordan Lake State Recreation Area, Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve, Merchants Millpond State Park, Jockeys Ridge State Park and Dismal Swamp State Park.

GMPs for Medoc Mountain State Park, Pettigrew State Park, Goose Creek State Park, Pilot Mountain State Park, Mount Mitchell State Park, and Jordan Lake State Recreation Area have been updated and are under internal review.

Several draft GMPs are in progress: Stone Mountain State Park, William B. Umstead State Park, Crowders Mountain State Park, New River State Park, Lake Norman State Park, Kerr Lake State Recreation Area, Eno River State Park, Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve, Hammocks Beach State Park, Falls Lake State Recreation Area, Morrow Mountain State Park, and Merchants Millpond State Park.

In 2010, GMP updates are planned for: Fort Macon State Park, Bay Tree Lake State Park, Singletary Lake State Park, White Lake, Mount Jefferson State Natural Area, Hanging Rock State Park, and Cliffs of the Neuse State Park.

Hanging Rock, Lower Cascades Falls

NORTH CAROLINA'S MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA STATE TRAIL

North Carolina designated and opened a new 11-mile section of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail. This segment of trail is in Durham and Wake counties and follows the south shore of Falls Lake, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project, and connects Falls Lake State Recreation Area managed facilities at NC 50 and Rolling View Recreation Area.

Mountains-to-Sea State Trail

This trail, which opened in October, was made possible through the cooperation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Falls Lake Unit, Durham County, Wake County, the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation and the Falls Lake State Recreation Area staff and volunteers from the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail organization.

North Carolina's Mountains-to-Sea State Trail is an effort to connect by trail, Clingman's Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Jockey's Ridge State Park on the Outer Banks, a distance of more than 900 miles. Today, more than 500 miles of this trail have been constructed and are open for public use. More information about the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail can be found at the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail organization's website: www.ncmst.org.

NORTH CAROLINA ACQUIRES AND LEASES 691 ACRES TO ADVANCE THE MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA STATE TRAIL EFFORT

The Division of Parks and Recreation has acquired 691 acres of land in Guilford, Alamance and Johnston counties to help advance development of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail. The respective local governments have agreed to lease these lands for the construction and management of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail.

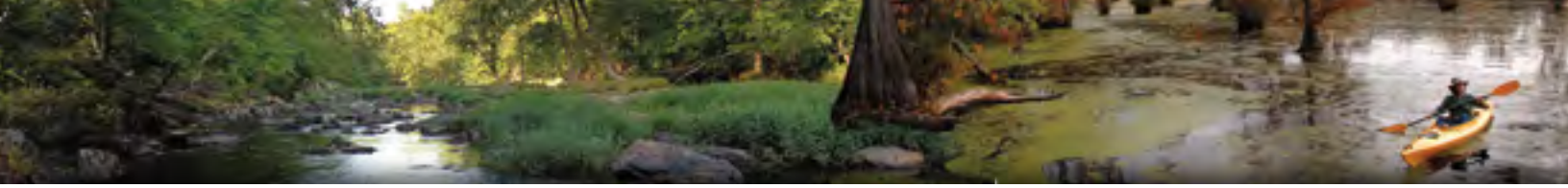
Of the total 691 acres, 188 acres acquired in Guilford County will advance efforts to link the city of Greensboro's Watershed Trails (a 20-mile designated segment of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail) to the Haw River State Park. This acreage will be leased to and managed by the city of Greensboro.

In Alamance County, 180 acres were acquired to serve as a significant visitor access point on the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail. This acreage will be leased to and managed by Alamance County Parks and Recreation.

In Johnston County, 323 acres were acquired to serve as a significant visitor access point on the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail. This acreage will be leased to and managed by the town of Clayton.

FMST

Friends of the
MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA TRAIL



2009 FEDERAL RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM GRANT AWARDS

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources awarded 16 federal Recreational Trails Program Grants totaling more than $1.5 million to applicants for trail and greenway projects.

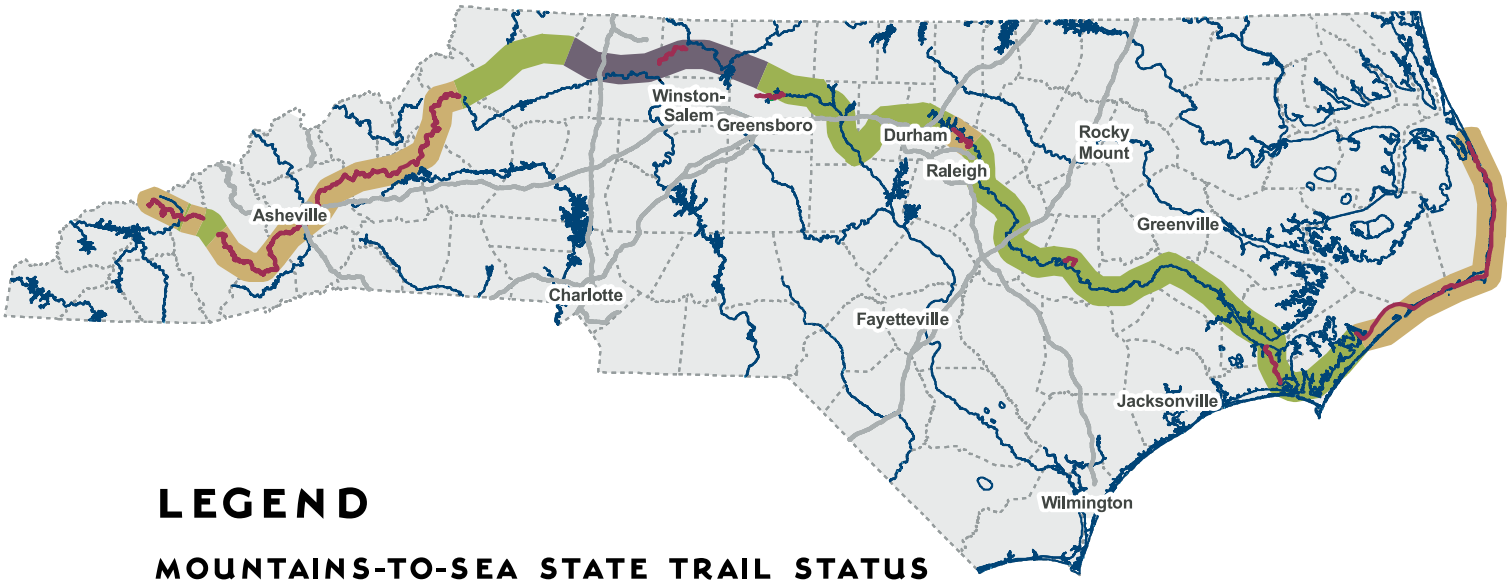
The Division of Parks and Recreation received 40 applications totaling more than $2.5 million in requests for the $1.5 million available through the Recreational Trails Program.

2009 STATE ADOPT-A-TRAIL PROGRAM GRANT AWARDS

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources awarded 25 state Adopt-A-Trail grants totaling $108,000 to applicants for trail and greenway projects.

The Division of Parks and Recreation received 40 applications totaling more than $186,000 in requests for the $108,000 available through the State Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program.

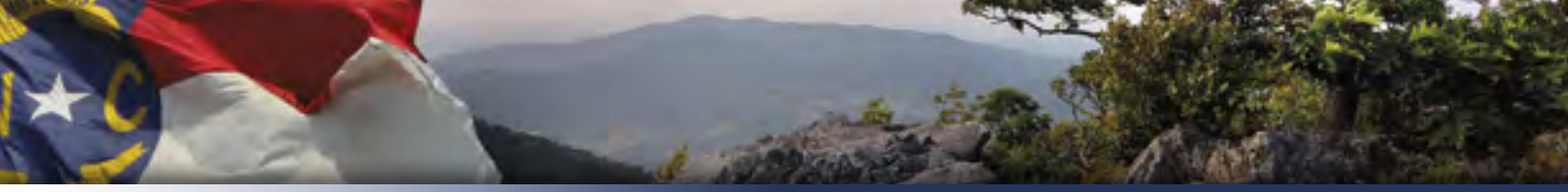
A summary of all applications received and grants awarded can be found on the Division of Parks and Recreation's website: http://www.ncparks.gov/About/grants/trails_main.php



LEGEND

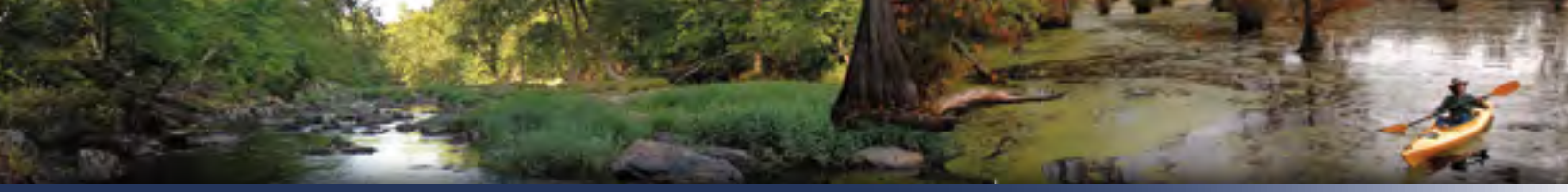
MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA STATE TRAIL STATUS

- Completed Trail
- Comprehensive Regional Plan
- Conceptual Corridor
- Existing Mountains-to-Sea Trail
- Interstate



The Sandhills bog lily can be found at Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve.

Wilson's Plover sits on a pair of eggs at Hammocks Beach State Park



NORTH CAROLINA PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND (PARTF)

PARKS AND RECREATION AUTHORITY

The North Carolina Parks and Recreation Authority, a 15-member board that oversees the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, was created by the General Assembly with the Authority's powers and duties becoming effective July 1, 1996. The governor appoints five members, including the chairperson. The General Assembly appoints 10 members, five upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and five upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the House.

Authority members can serve two-consecutive three-year terms before rotating off the board. This year the governor appointed Bill Ross to succeed Jonathan Howes, who fulfilled his term as chairman. Other new members appointed by the General Assembly to serve on the authority are Ashley "Brownie" Futrell Jr. and Jennifer S. Andrews. Cody Grasty received a reappointment to serve a second term from the General Assembly. H. Boyd Lee and Edward Wood were appointed to their first full terms after serving partial terms.

The 2009-2010 Parks and Recreation Members are:

Bill Ross, Chairman
Chapel Hill

C. Michael Allen
Mount Gilead

Jennifer S. Andrews
Pittsboro

Timothy L. Aydlett
Elizabeth City

Daryle L. Bost
Charlotte

Robert Epting
Chapel Hill

Ashley B. Futrell Jr.
Washington

Cody Grasty
Maggie Valley

Walt Israel
Belmont

H. Boyd Lee
Greenville

Philip K. McKnelly
Raleigh

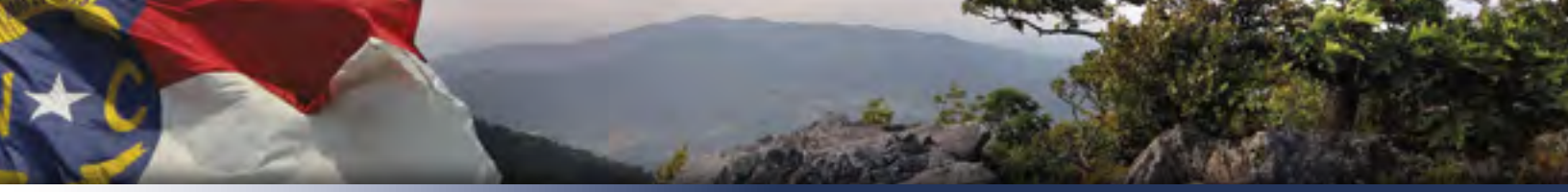
John S. Stevens
Asheville

Cynthia Tart
Oak Island

Hollis Wild
West Jefferson

Edward Wood
Wrightsville Beach

New trust fund authority Chairman Bill Ross, left, with outgoing Chairman Jonathan Howes.



NORTH CAROLINA PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND (PARTF)

PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND PROJECTS FOR THE STATE PARKS SYSTEM

PARTF is the primary source of funding to build and renovate facilities in the state parks as well as to buy hand for new and existing parks.

LAND ACQUISITION PROJECTS

For fiscal year 2008-2009, the Parks and Recreation Authority approved

$5,459,171 for land acquisition projects in the state parks system.

Unit	Acres	Approved Cost	Description
Bear Paw State Natural Area	35	$350,000	Initial acquisition for a new state natural area
Carvers Creek State Park	4	$159,171	Buyout of remaining interest for an inholding with structures
Dismal Swamp State Park	90	$290,000	Tract providing vehicle access from the south access and buildable uplands
Eno River State Park	62	$400,000	Key trail connection in Buckquarter Creek area
Haw River State Park	80	$1,060,000	Tract on Mears Fork where Mountains-to-Sea State Trail enters the park
Lake Waccamaw State Park	221	$300,000	Cove Swamp tract to protect water quality and rare species habitat
Merchants Millpond State Park	86	$100,000	Bennetts Creek tract to protect water quality and important natural resources
New River State Park	75	$1,000,000	Tracts in the vicinity of rest stop #1 and Gentry bridge and tracts at Wagoner Road
Pettigrew State Park	179	$350,000	Scuppernong River tract under contract
Yellow Mountain State Natural Area	1,000	$250,000	Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) tracts in study area for this site
Associated land expenses and existing boundary surveys	0	$1,200,000	Land expenses such as surveys, appraisals, title work, and other overhead expenses for all land projects including from other funding sources.
Totals	**1,897**	**$5,459,171**	

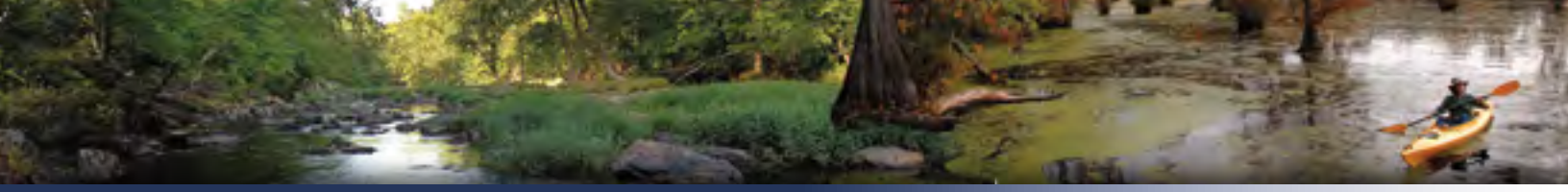
Left to right:

A new bathhouse is the centerpiece of development at Lake James State Park;

New infrastructure at Gorges State Park includes this roadway;

Gorges State Park, Visitor Center Rendering;

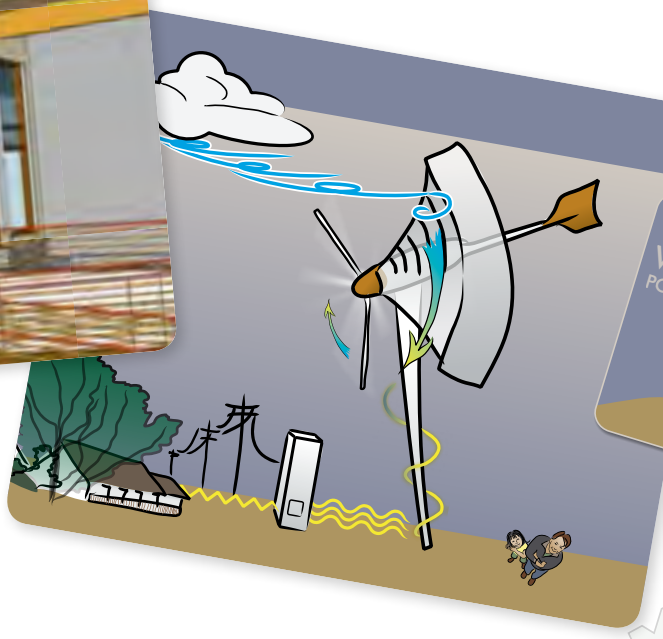
Jockey's Ridge State Park, Wayside Display Artwork for Turbine;

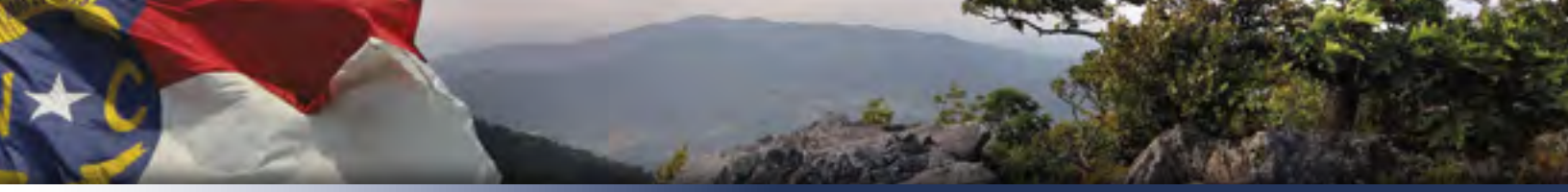


CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

During fiscal year 2008-2009, the Parks and Recreation Authority approved state park construction and renovation projects totaling $7,772,626. With PARTF funds, the division continues to address a lengthy backlog of construction and renovation projects in the state parks system. However, approximately $363 million is required to meet all of the needs for new construction and renovation for state parks.

Park	Approved Cost	Description
Master Plans	$305,000	Carver's Creek, Haw River, Chimney Rock State Parks
Park System	$1,500,000	Major Maintenance Funds
Park System	$590,663	Statewide Construction Reserve
Park System	$200,000	Demolition Funds
Park System	$100,000	Exhibit Repair Funds
Chimney Rock State Park	$900,000	Rocky Broad Bridge, Trail, & Facility Improvements
Gorges State Park	$3,526,963	Phase I-B: Visitor Center, Sewer, Picnic Area, Maintenance Area (Construction Funds)
Haw River State Park	$500,000	Brown Summit Center, Youth and Admin Building Improvements
Jockey's Ridge State Park	$150,000	Wind Turbine
TOTAL FY 2008-2009	**$7,772,626**	





NORTH CAROLINA PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND (PARTF)

ECONOMIC AND HEALTH BENEFITS

The Trust for Public Land has documented that acquiring park land can pay for itself by increasing surrounding property values and thus increasing local tax revenues.

Providing recreational opportunities improves public health and fitness. Increased exercise is a cost-effective way to treat obesity, heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure by reducing costs for medical treatments.

Reducing the medical costs to treat these conditions represents considerable savings for health care expenses for governments and citizens alike, helping to balance budgets.

The Institute of Medicine, in a recent report titled "Local Government Actions to Prevent Childhood Obesity" states "16.3 percent of children and adolescents between the ages of two and 19 are obese. This epidemic has exploded over just three decades."

The report states that local governments are ideally positioned to promote behaviors that will help children and adolescents reach and maintain healthy weights. It recommends that local governments build and maintain parks that are safe and attractive for playing and in close proximity to residential areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Greenways and parks that help conserve plants and trees also limit water, air and noise pollution. For example, the capturing of rainfall by the park trees, bushes and soil reduces the amount of runoff and the cost associated with the treatment of stormwater.

Parks and green spaces can protect habitat and biodiversity.

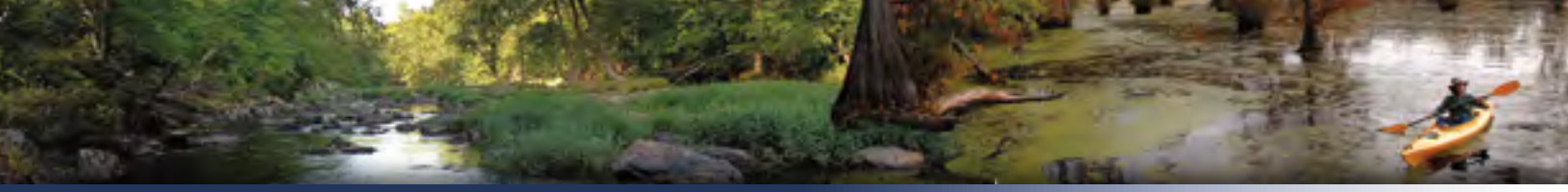
Urban parks and trees provide carbon sequestration, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and conserve energy.

GRANT PROGRAM FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

The North Carolina General Assembly established the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) on July 16, 1994. The PARTF program provides dollar-for-dollar matching grants to local governments to acquire land and/or to develop parks and recreational projects that serve the general public. Building park and recreation facilities creates jobs and stimulates local economies.

Through 2009, the Parks and Recreation Authority has awarded grants to more than 325 different communities and counties.

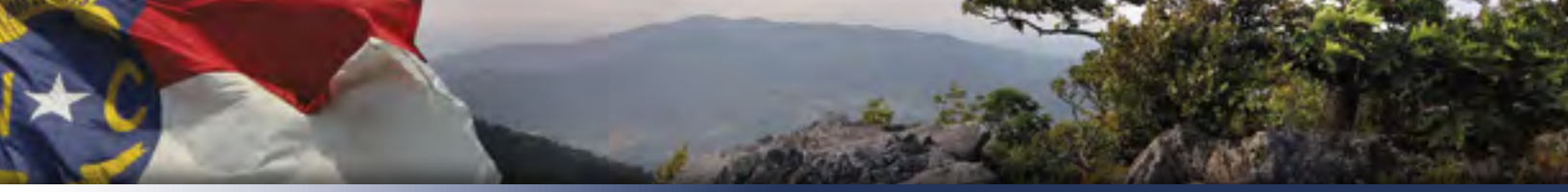
Local governments in 99 out of North Carolina's 100 counties have received a PARTF grant.



GRANTS AWARDED TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

In 2009, 85 units of local government submitted PARTF applications requesting a total of $25.7 million in PARTF assistance. The Parks and Recreation Authority awarded 22 grants for $8,238,736.

Applicant	County	Grant Amount	Project
City of Asheville	Buncombe	$500,000	Beaucatcher Overlook Park
Town of Bailey	Nash	$500,000	Bailey-Middlesex Community Park
Town of Benson	Johnston	$199,925	Benson Community Park
Caldwell County	Caldwell	$206,450	Yadkin River Greenway
Town of Castalia	Nash	$78,613	Castalia Neighborhood Park
Craven County	Craven	$500,000	Latham-Whitehurst Nature Park
Currituck County	Currituck	$500,000	Corolla Greenway
Dare County	Dare	$400,000	Rodanthe Public Beach Access and Oceanfront Park Land Acquisition
Town of Emerald Isle	Carteret	$500,000	Public Boat Launching Facility
Town of Hillsborough	Orange	$392,000	Riverwalk Phase II Acquisition
Town of Kure Beach	New Hanover	$456,393	Ocean Front Park
Martin County	Martin	$326,502	Moratoc Park Improvements
Town of Matthews	Mecklenburg	$499,895	Squirrel Lake Park Improvements
New Hanover County	New Hanover	$500,000	Smith Creek Park
Orange County	Orange	$500,000	Fairview Park Development Phase I
Peachland	Anson	$6,000	Peachland Park Improvements
City of Rocky Mount	Nash	$197,000	Rocky Mount Sports Complex III
Rutherford County	Rutherford	$500,000	Rutherford County Soccer Complex
Town of Shallotte	Brunswick	$407,133	Wildwood Park
City of Shelby	Cleveland	$500,000	City Park Enhancement Project
Town of Stovall	Granville	$68,825	Stovall Community Park
Town of Swansboro	Onslow	$500,000	Swansboro Municipal Park Improvement Project
Total		**$8,328,736**	



NORTH CAROLINA PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND (PARTF)

EXAMPLES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROJECTS SELECTED FOR FUNDING BY THE PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND IN 2009

CARTERET COUNTY:
TOWN OF EMERALD ISLE

The Public Boat Launching Facility project will assist with the acquisition of a 16-acre tract of land located on Bogue Sound. This 16-acre tract of land, which includes a deep water canal and boat basin, will be combined with an adjacent 8-acre tract already under the town's control. When the N.C. Wildlife Commission constructs the facility, it will be the largest public boat launching facility on the North Carolina coast. A soundfront pier, kayak launch, bathhouse and picnic shelter are also planned.

MECKLENBURG COUNTY:
TOWN OF MATTHEWS

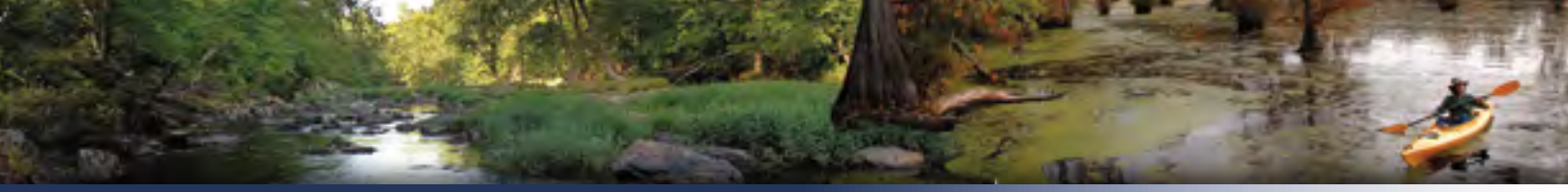
The Squirrel Lake Park Improvements project will provide the needed updates for the town of Matthews' largest park. The project will expand and enhance the parks network of trails as well as add a fishing pier, two picnic shelters and a playground. These improvements will focus on environmental stewardship by using green roof technology and pervious pavements. The park provides a natural area in a part of the town that has rapidly growing residential areas.

BUNCOMBE COUNTY:
CITY OF ASHEVILLE

The acquisition of Beaucatcher Overlook Park will create a downtown overlook park that provides unparalleled views. The 30-acre tract is easily accessible to the residents of Buncombe County and visitors to Asheville. It will become an oasis of passive recreation offering opportunities for walking, bicycling and picnicking.

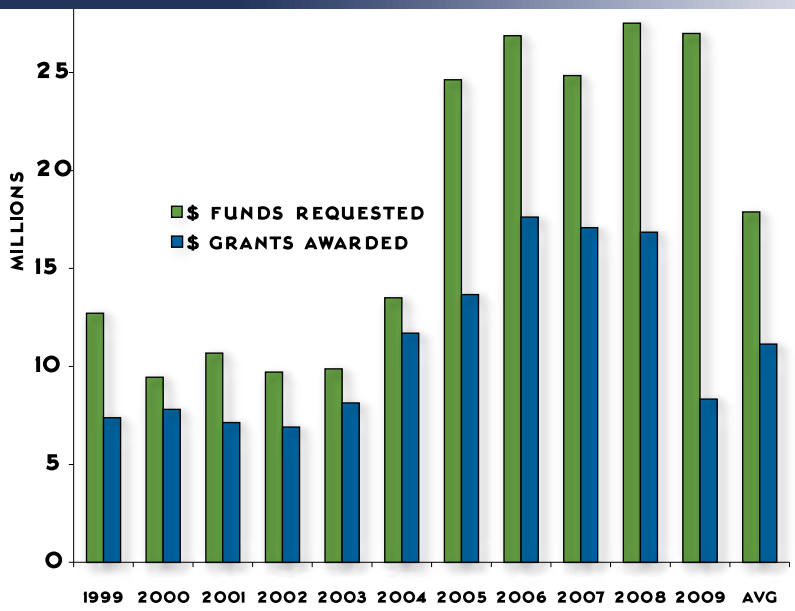
In spite of the trust fund, local parks and greenway systems throughout North Carolina continue to have substantial needs. The PARTF program received 826 grant applications in the past 10 years, and the authority awarded 426 projects. Analysis of the past 10 years shows the competitive grant program funds about 60 percent of all the requests received. The 10-year average request for assistance is about $18 million while the 10-year average of funds available is about $11 million.

In 2009, 85 units of local government submitted PARTF applications requesting $25.7 million in PARTF assistance



DISTRIBUTION OF PARTF GRANTS BY COUNTY 1995-2009

Since 1995, the Authority has awarded more than $134 million in PARTF grants to 608 projects in 99 counties across North Carolina.



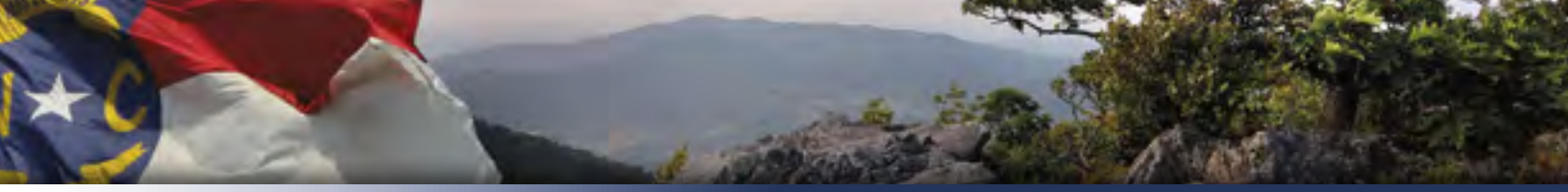
HIGHLIGHTS FROM RECENTLY COMPLETED PARTF GRANTS:

GRANTEE: TOWN OF MOUNT AIRY, WESTWOOD PARK, MOUNT AIRY, FUNDED IN 2006, $202,400 IN PARTF ASSISTANCE

The town obtained grants from several agencies to provide the needed assistance to improve the facilities in this well-loved and popular park. (Partners included city of Mount Airy, Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, Pilot View-Resource Conservation and Development, N.C. Wildlife Commission, Division of Water Quality and the Clean Water Management Trust Fund.)

When asked about this extraordinary effort to improve and provide opportunities to its citizens to recreate and stay active, Catrina Alexander, the town's director of parks and recreation responded, "Westwood Park is a great example of local governments developing partnerships to stretch its budget and to maximize recreational opportunities for the community," Alexander went on to say, "Families visiting Westwood Park can have fun on our two ball fields, picnic shelter, playground area, par fitness golf, a 9-hole Frisbee golf course, 6 miles of mountain bike trail, nearly 1½ miles of gravel and paved trails and the new universally accessible fishing pier on Tumbling Rock Reservoir."

"It has been an incredible process and as we like to say, it could have only happened by working together…Progress Through Partnership!"



NORTH CAROLINA PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND (PARTF)

GRANTEE: CITY OF GASTONIA, LINEBERGER PARK RENOVATION & REVITALIZATION, GASTONIA, FUNDED IN 2006, $500,000 IN PARTF ASSISTANCE

Lineberger Park is centrally located off of Garrison Boulevard in Gastonia on 18.5 acres of land. Lineberger Park is the city's oldest park originating from a gift from the Lineberger family in the 1920s. The new facilities include a lighted basketball court with stadium-style seating, picnic shelters, spray ground, tot lot, playground and quarter-mile extension of the greenway trail.

"The Lineberger Park Renovation project has been a huge success story for the city of Gastonia. We conservatively estimate through traffic counts the park attracted 6,500 visitors weekly during the first three months since our grand re-opening ceremony in July. A large number of park visitors are known to have come from areas outside Gastonia providing economic impact for the community. The ¾-mile paved walking trail, splash pad, basketball court, and open space areas have made a tremendous impact in providing additional health and fitness opportunities to our citizens."

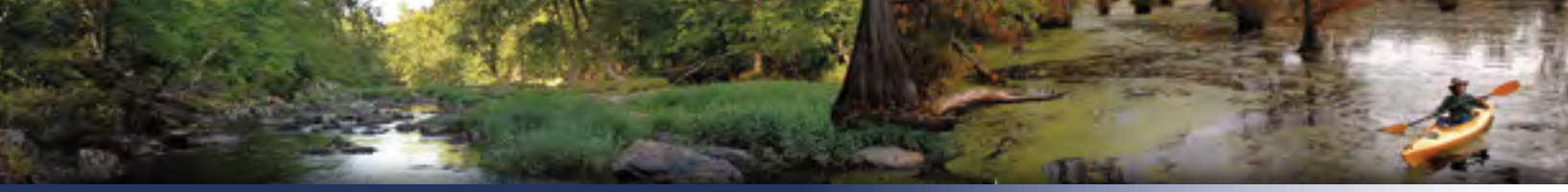
Chuck Dellinger, director of parks and recreation for the city of Gastonia

GRANTEE: TOWN OF OXFORD, THE OXFORD PARK ATHLETIC COMPLEX, OXFORD, FUNDED IN 2007, $405,776 IN PARTF ASSISTANCE

The Oxford Park Athletic Complex (Diamonds at Oxford Park) is an example of making a dream a reality. With the addition of this park that includes four lighted fastpitch/little league fields, two lighted soccer/football fields, two restroom/concession buildings, plenty of parking, walking trails, a tot lot, and lots of trees, the town has been able to more easily address disparities in service of programming to the underserved, and has created a boost to the local economy.

"With the ability to accommodate more participants and new programming, the department has shown measurable increases in participation in youth activities. Adult activities (previously eliminated due to lack of space) will now be reinstated. The addition of this park, as a part of the department's efforts to get people moving, has had a huge impact on how, when, and where the people in the little town of Oxford get active."

Mary Caudle, director of the Town of Oxford Park and Recreation Department



Hiker on the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail rests near Mount Mitchell State Park

NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS NAMED AS GOLD MEDAL AWARD FINALIST

The North Carolina state parks system was named one of four finalists for the 2009 National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Parks and Recreation Management.

As a finalist, North Carolina advanced to the next round of consideration along with state parks systems in Pennsylvania, Georgia and Michigan. Pennsylvania was named the winner in October. The program is a prestigious and comprehensive award that recognizes service excellence and evaluates the challenges and resources of an agency and how it meets those challenges.

The American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration considers 11 criteria including the quality of long-range planning, the response to population and economic trends, the extent of public support, the quality of natural resource protection and the types of services to special population groups.

A school group enjoys an environmental education ferry ride program at Hammocks Beach

NEW RESEARCH PROFILES PADDLING COMMUNITY

The Neuse, Cape Fear and Nantahala are the most popular among North Carolina rivers for the fast-growing sport of paddling, with more kayakers and canoeists originating in the piedmont than any other region, according to a study released by the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation.

And the principal concerns of paddlers, who most often enjoy the sport within 50 miles of their homes, are the safety and convenience of access sites and water quality.

Those are among a broad range of findings from the 2008 Paddle Tourism Study conducted by the division's State Trails Program in partnership with North Carolina State University's School of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management. More than 2,000 online responses were collected from paddling enthusiasts and outdoor outfitters.

The study was funded by a federal Recreational Trails Program grant, which established an internship at the university.

The respondents listed 40 rivers and coastal sounds where they prefer to paddle, and almost 75 percent classify themselves as novice or recreational paddlers between 31 and 60 years of age. And, 86 percent of the respondents live in the piedmont. The piedmont was the most frequently paddled region of North Carolina, visited by 40 percent of respondents. The mountains drew 28 percent and coastal areas 27 percent while 5 percent of paddlers visited areas outside North Carolina.

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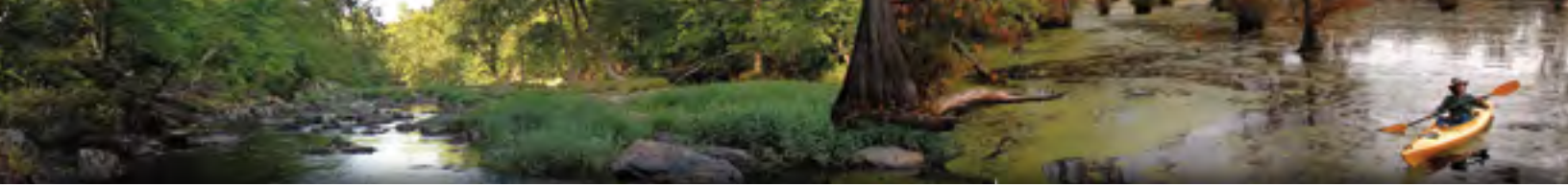


AMERICORPS VOLUNTEERS LEND A HAND AT FIVE STATE PARKS

Five North Carolina state parks benefitted from the work of a team of AmeriCorps volunteers as part of the national "United We Serve" campaign.

The "Wolf 3" team of eight young adults spent a week camping in each of the state parks. Under the guidance of the state parks system's natural resource management program, they worked to eradicate invasive species and shore up hiking trails at Carolina Beach, William B. Umstead, Morrow Mountain and Pilot Mountain state parks and Jordan Lake State Recreation Area.

The "United We Serve" initiative is a national volunteer effort, announced in mid-2009 by President Obama and supported by Gov. Bev. Perdue, which aims to engage more Americans in serving their communities. AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) is a full-time, team-based residential program for men and women age 18-24, which works to strengthen communities and develop leaders in partnership with government agencies and nonprofits.

VOLUNTEERS PROVIDE HOURS OF ASSISTANCE

Volunteers donated 26,277 hours in state parks in 2009, assisting in trail construction and park maintenance, conducting scientific research on endangered species, serving as campground hosts and a myriad of other important operational areas.

The tens of thousands of hours donated by volunteers last year greatly contributed to the system's efficiency and effectiveness and the ability to keep facilities operating at a quality level of service.

People interested in volunteering are encouraged to contact their local state park.

An Americorps volunteer clears invasive species at Jordan Lake SRA.

FRIENDS OF STATE PARKS - MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Friends of State Parks is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that for more than 30 years, has been dedicated to the understanding, enjoyment and protection of North Carolina's State Parks. FSP's mission is to work with local park support groups in supporting the division in delivering a park system of excellence for its citizens and visitors.

FSP provides funding for exhibits, publications, division programs, education offerings such as the Junior Ranger program, milestone recognitions, DPR staff educational opportunities and legislative advocacy from membership dues, corporate grants, private donations and the sale of FSP-sponsored publications.

FSP stands in partnership with the division as it addresses the needs of a record number of visitors to our naturally diverse park system.

FSP needs citizen support in all these efforts. The parks are a haven from everyday stress and interruptions, allowing visitors to reconnect with their true selves, family, friends and nature. For more information, contact FSP at www.ncfsp.org.
FSP membership and donations are tax deductible.

PEARSON NAMED FSP PRESIDENT

David M. Pearson was appointed president of the Friends of State Parks, succeeding John Graham who passed away in 2008.

After a temporary term, Perason was elected to a full two-year term in October.

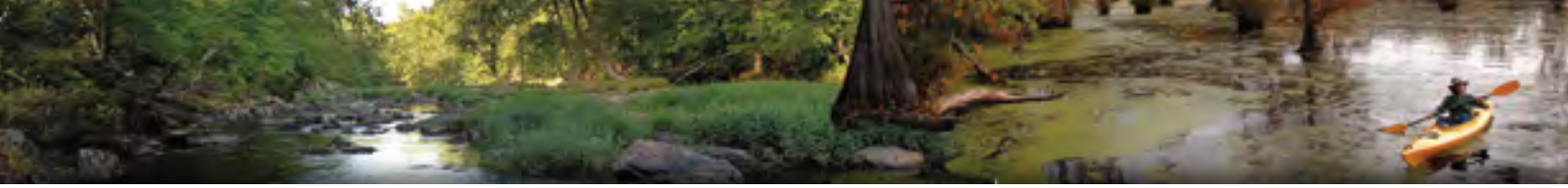
Pearson was a founder and is current president of Friends of the Hammocks and Bear Island Inc., a nonprofit group supporting Hammocks Beach State Park. He has also served on the state park's citizen advisory board since 1992.

A graduate of Coastal Carolina Community College, Pearson is a realtor and has served as a Swansboro town commissioner and on the Onslow County Economic Development Commission and the Onslow County Tax Appraisal Review Board.

He is an active Rotarian, a member of National Association of Realtors and the North Carolina Association of Realtors and a director of the Swansboro Schools Century Club, a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing athletic programs.

"I have a vision for Friends of State Parks that I hope will complement and promote the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation as well as each individual state park while keeping a focus on the environment and habitats," Pearson said. "One of my initial goals as president is to facilitate the organization of local Friends Groups at all state parks."

He and his wife, Pamela, live in Swansboro. They have two children, Jessica, a student at East Carolina University, and Kristen, a student who attends Wake Forest University this fall.



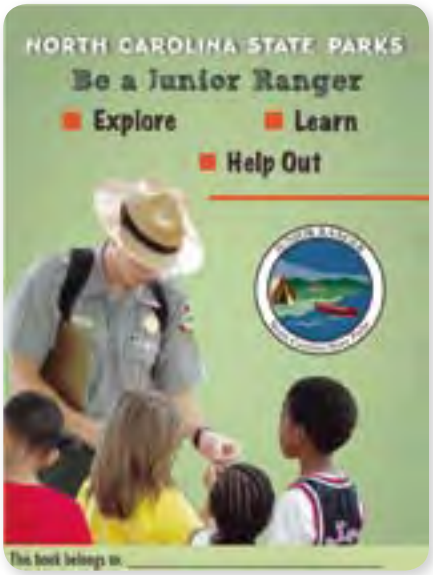
LEADING THE WAY THROUGH INTERPRETATION & EDUCATION

Park interpretation is the art of helping visitors truly appreciate special places and natural resources. Whether a ranger is leading a carefully planned sunset canoe paddle or they just happen to be at the right place to spontaneously answer questions, each interaction with a park visitor is a unique opportunity. While park rangers are trained as our primary park interpreters, the efforts of our office assistants and maintenance staff are just as important for visitors to have the best possible park experience.

- Staff members were honored for their contributions to interpretation by the National Association for Interpretation. Joseph Shimel (New River State Park Superintendent) received the Regional Interpreter of the Year award and Becky Holmes (North District I&E Specialist) received an Outstanding New Interpreter award.
- In 2009, 995 teachers/educators participated in full-day workshops at state parks, and 209,277 park visitors participated in guided hikes and educational programs.
- In 2010, North Carolina state parks will host the 34th Annual Southeast State Parks Program Seminar (SSPPS) in Atlantic Beach. SSPPS began 33 years ago as a networking, sharing and training opportunity for staff from 14 southeast state park systems. The conference will bring together approximately 80 representatives from 14 states, and will include visits to the new Fort Macon Coastal Education Center and Hammocks Beach State Park.
- Mount Jefferson State Natural Area held its 4th annual K-6th grade poetry contest. Park Ranger Tom Randolph started the contest in 2006 as a way to celebrate the mountain with the local community. The 2009 contest included more than 300 entries and was judged by N.C. Poet Laureate Kay Byer.
- North Carolina State Parks has completed a new Junior Ranger activity book. Families and youth leaders can even download the new book from the web site, www.ncparks.gov, or pick up a copy at any of our state parks in 2010. This new program promises to help thousands of children discover the natural wonders of our parks.
- In 2010, state parks will celebrate the first annual interpretive theme, "Year of the Birds." While bird watching has always been a popular activity in the state parks, parks will have an even greater focus on bird programs to celebrate the theme. Partnerships with bird conservation and education organizations such as Audubon NC are being rekindled. Each year, a team of park staff will select a new annual theme.

Park rangers and other professional environmental educators explore the diversity of lichens during an all-day workshop co-sponsored by the N.C. Division of Air Quality.

"Year of the Birds" themed bandanas



Junior Ranger Activity Book

NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION EFFORTS COVER A BROAD SPECTRUM

The Division of Parks and Recreation's Natural Resource Protection Program focused its efforts on identifying and eradicating invasive species, restoring a variety of lands and waters and collecting inventory and monitoring information to support long-term species and natural resource stewardship.

Trout stream study at Stone Mountain

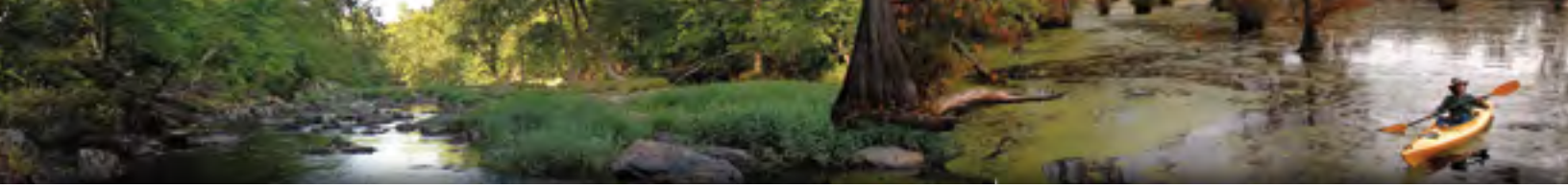
As part of the year's efforts, the coastal region parks treated about 20 acres of invasive plants. Staff at Carolina Beach and Goose Creek state parks treated about 12 acres each of Phragmites australis, and Carolina Beach removed about 1/3 acre of privet. These projects are important for the protection of native species and biodiversity. The Phragmites effort will take several more years of commitment, since this species is noted for its rapid and persistent spread. The privet appears to have been present in the park for many decades. It is located throughout the campgrounds and in a large area adjacent to the swamp, and removal and reversion to native vegetation types is ongoing and will be a long-term restoration project.

At Cliffs of the Neuse State Park, the staff began working to remove invasive privet, chinaberry, honeysuckle and wisteria in the park. The extent of invasives at Cliffs of the Neuse is smaller than that at many other parks, so while this will be a multi-year project, with consistent effort it should see rapid success. The invasives are in scattered locations along the trails and at several home sites. Early detection and eradication of invasives is important. Early efforts reduce impacts to native species, preserve biodiversity, and save significant money and time as compared to late efforts.

The division worked in partnership with the Aquatic Weed Program, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the city of Raleigh to control Creeping Water Primrose (Ludwigia grandiflora ssp. hexapetala), an invasive aquatic plant, in the Beaverdam subimpoundment at Falls Lake State Recreation Area.

Members of the North Carolina Sandhills Weed Management Area mapped and/or treated 146 occurrences of invasive exotic plants at Weymouth Woods State Nature Preserve and Carvers Creek State Park, and several mountain parks continued ongoing invasive species treatments. Lake Norman State Park focused on privet, New River State Park on multiflora rose, and Pilot Mountain on tree of heaven.

Chimney Rock State Park initiated control of kudzu and princess tree, and Gorges State Park initiated feral hog control in collaboration with the Wildlife Resources Commission and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.



In partnership with the N.C. Coastal Federation (NCCF), both Jockey's Ridge State Park and Hammocks Beach State Park conducted shoreline and salt marsh restoration projects. Park staff, NCCF staff and volunteers planted salt marsh cordgrass (Spartina alterniflora) and placed oyster shell sills to protect the new marsh and shoreline from wave erosion. The Hammocks Beach project was conducted at the newly acquired Jones Island.

The staff at Jones Lake State Park planted 150 longleaf pine seedlings at Jones Lake and Bushy Lake State Natural Area. The seedlings were donated by the N.C. Forest Service.

Pettigrew State Park initiated the division's first hydrologic restoration project in peatlands. In partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the park will install water control structures on the ditches that currently drain the 500-acre Pocosin Natural Area. This work will retain more water in the wetland, restoring wetland functions and values and sequestering carbon in the process.

Dismal Swamp State Park began collaborating with Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge to install two water control structures on ditches within the park. The project is funded by grants from Ducks Unlimited and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The structures will facilitate hydrologic restoration to 9,580 acres of wetlands and provide safer conditions for future prescribed burns.

The Big Sandy Creek stream restoration project was completed at Stone Mountain. This project will significantly reduce sediment loads, improve water quality and restore habitat. Elk Knob State Park initiated Southern Appalachian bog management at Pineola Bog State Natural Area.

Lake Waccamaw State Park has developed a long-term water quality monitoring program for the lake. This program is volunteer-based and has been created with many partners. Another coup for water quality at Lake Waccamaw is the park's recent acquisition of the 440-acre Cove Swamp, also achieved through the efforts of many partners.

Natural Resources staff completed its sixth season of bird banding at Eno River State Park.

Mount Mitchell State Park continued its annual inventory of the federally endangered spreading avens (Geum radiatum), and Elk Knob initiated inventory of this cliff-dwelling species at The Peak. Elk Knob may host the world's largest population for this species, which is known from only 15 sites in North Carolina and Tennessee. The annual inventories are conducted in collaboration with the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

A trout stream study was conducted at Stone Mountain in collaboration with fisheries researchers at N.C. State University. Field Research for the study was completed in 2009 and the final results and findings will be completed in 2010.

Researchers catalog rare mussels at Lake Waccamaw State Park.

PRESCRIBED FIRE SUMMARY

Prescribed burning has been used by the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation since 1974 to reduce hazardous fuel loads, to restore/maintain specific habitats, and to preserve rare species populations within state parks, recreation areas, and natural areas. The past year marked the 35th anniversary of the first prescribed fire conducted by state parks staff at Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve. Since that day, state parks prescribed fire activity has ebbed and waned, reaching a peak in 2002 with a total of 538 acres burned for that year. Since 2002, the annual acreage burned by state parks staff had declined drastically, reaching a low in 2008 with five acres statewide due to extremely dry conditions that led to long-term burn bans.

In 2009, the North Carolina state parks system was able to secure an agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service under its Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program to support prescribed fire on state park property. State parks were reimbursed on a per-acre basis to conduct controlled burns on its property. This allowed the division to hire a seasonal fire crew to increase the number of acres burned per year. In 2009, with the assistance of the fire crew, the agency was able to burn almost 2,000 acres. This represents a 400 percent increase over the division's previous best year of burning. This grant will remain in place for the next five years and the division hopes to continue the trend of increased prescribed fire in the parks.

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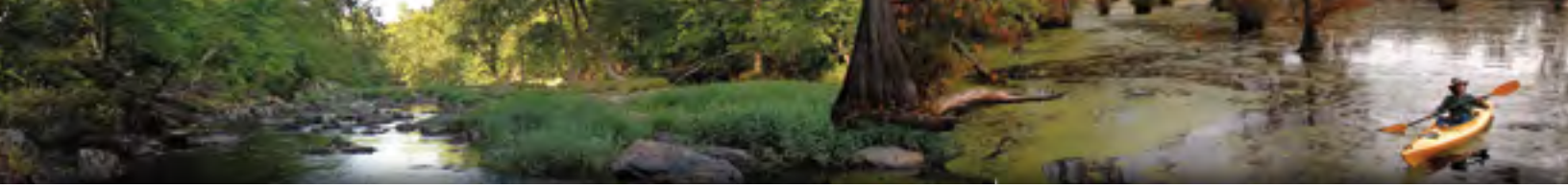
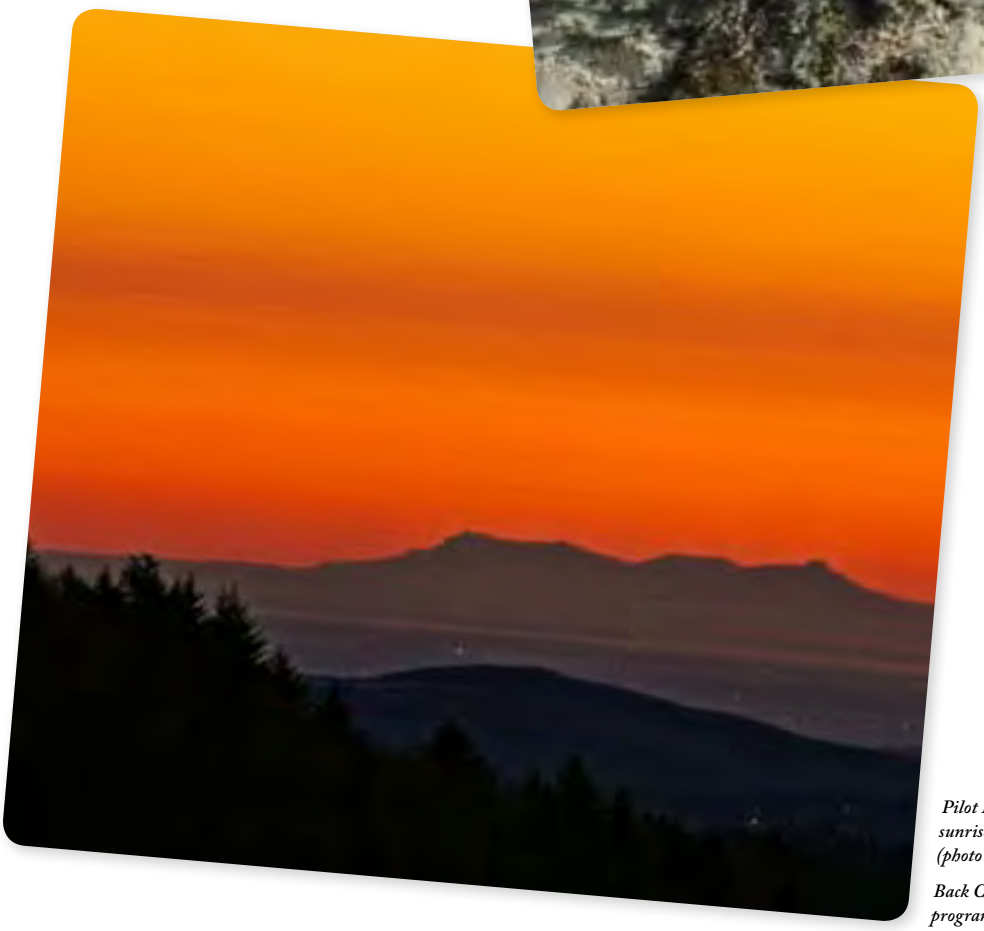
The study found that North Carolina is a destination for paddlers from other states, primarily Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia, and revealed that respondents who consider themselves avid paddlers took an average 17 paddle trips last year within 50 miles of home, with most paddlers preferring camping for overnight accommodations.

The results of the study will help the State Trails Program devise consistent standards for access areas and paddling trails, develop educational materials for local governments and create a forum for enthusiasts to share information and feedback on issues related to the sport.



A view at Hanging Rock State Park.



Pilot Mountain's profile shows in this sunrise view from Grandfather Mountain (photo courtesy of Jesse Pope).

Back Cover: Ranger gives a sunset interpretive program at Jockey's Ridge State Park.

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North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor | Dee Freeman, Secretary | Lewis R. Ledford, Director

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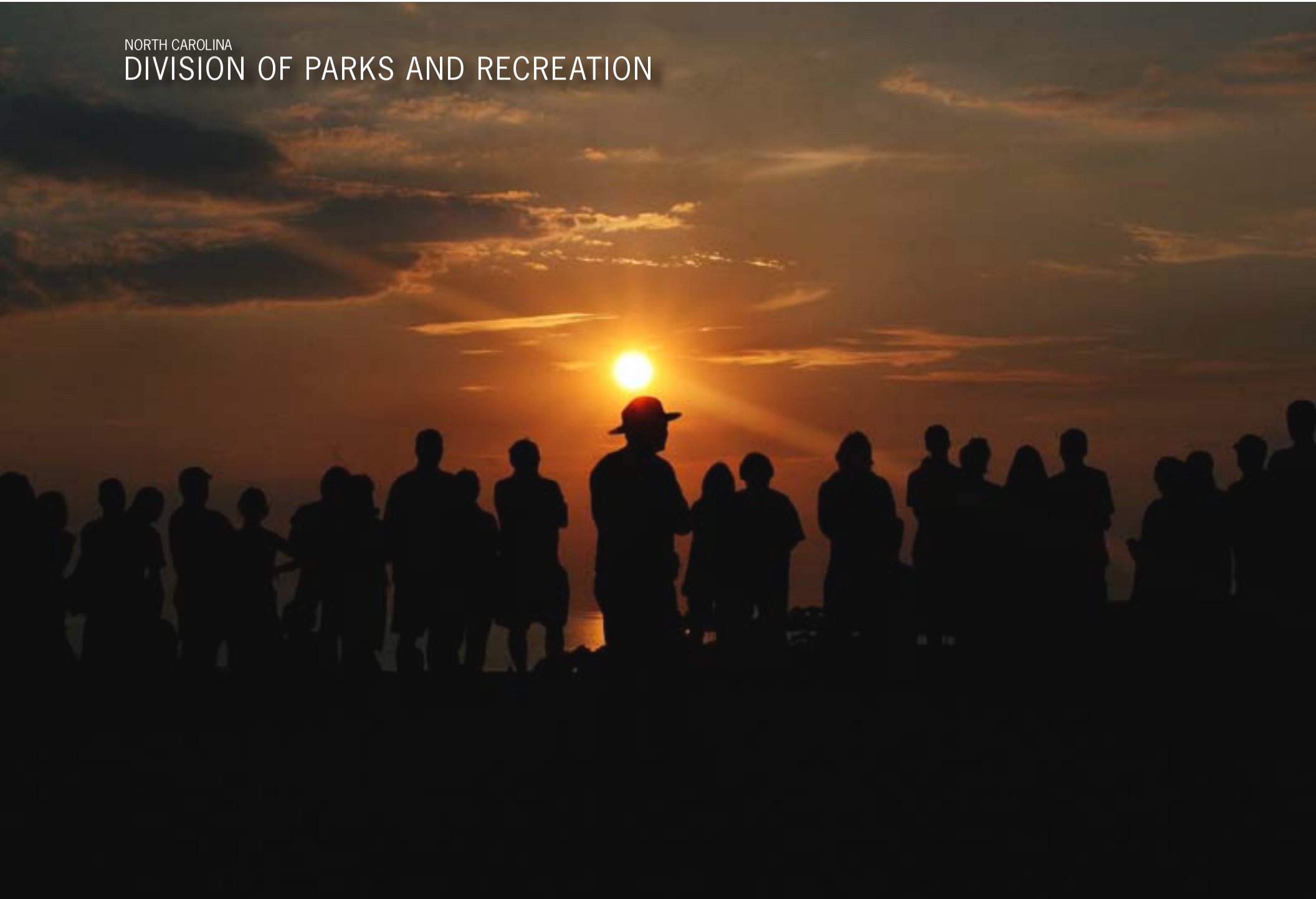
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