

# **VI. NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

## **NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT POLICY**

The Division of Parks and Recreation's approach to natural resource management is directed by the North Carolina Constitution and the State Parks Act, both of which require the prudent management of natural resources. The constitution sets the overall policy by broadly defining the conservation and protection of natural resources and the acquisition of such resources as a proper function of government. The State Parks Act states that unique archaeological, geological, biological, scenic and recreational resources are a part of the heritage of the people that "*...should be preserved and managed by those people for their use and for the use of their visitors and descendants.*"

The North Carolina state parks system plays an important role in maintaining, rehabilitating and perpetuating the state's natural heritage. The natural resources of the state parks system are: high quality, rare or representative examples of natural communities; native plants and animals; geological features and landforms; water resources; and the natural processes that affect these resources. The primary objective in natural resource management will be the protection of natural resources for their inherent integrity and for appropriate types of enjoyment while ensuring their availability for future generations.

It is the Division's policy that natural resources will be managed by allowing natural environments to evolve through natural processes with minimal human influence. Natural resource management will not attempt solely to preserve individual species or processes; rather, it will attempt to maintain all the components and processes of a park's naturally evolving ecosystems. When intervention is necessary, direct or secondary effects on park resources will be minimized to the greatest extent possible. Intervention of natural processes may occur:

1. To correct or compensate for the previous human disruption of natural processes;
2. To protect, restore or enhance rare species and natural communities;
3. To protect, restore or enhance significant archaeological resources;
4. To construct, maintain, improve or protect park facilities; and,
5. To prevent danger to human health or safety around park facilities.

All park facilities will be designed, constructed and maintained to avoid adverse impacts to high quality natural communities, rare plant and animal species, major archaeological sites and other significant natural and cultural resources.

## NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Division of Parks and Recreation staff identifies natural and cultural resource management issues as a component of the general management plan process and groups them according to the categories shown below. Staff assigns a high, medium or low priority to each issue using the criteria described at the end of this section. The Division's Natural Resources Program is responsible for addressing these issues unless otherwise noted.

### A. Water Resource Management

#### *1. Shoreline erosion*

-Jetty north of Fort Fisher has resulted in a loss of sand along the shore. In order to stabilize the shore approximately 15,000 Sea Oats will be planted.

MEDIUM

### B. Botanical Resource Management

#### *1. Exotic Species Management*

-Based on the 2000 exotic species inventory there are a number of creeks, canals, and spillways in the park that are severely infested with *Phragmites australis*. A control plan for this species should be developed and implemented in the park.

HIGH

-Privet is located on and near the boundary line with the Aquarium. Again, a control plan should be developed and implemented for this species. HIGH

-Although not yet known to exist at Fort Fisher, Beach vitex is an invasive species that has the potential to create problems at the park. Park staff should be aware of the species, learn how to identify it, and learn methods of eradication.

MEDIUM

### C. Animal Management

#### *1. Rare Species Management*

-Colonial nesting birds, sea turtles and rare plants should continue to be monitored by the Wildlife Resources Commission and park interns. HIGH

-Eastern Woodrat and Northern Yellow Bat at Bald Head Island would be good candidates for surveying. MEDIUM

#### *2. Nuisance Animal Management*

-Control measures for raccoons should be examined due to their high concentration around nesting rare sea turtles and colonial nesting birds.

MEDIUM

#### *3. Exotic Species*

-Due to recent sightings of feral cats, a management plan for this species should

be developed. HIGH

*3. Deer Management*

-Deer at Bald Head Island State Natural Area need to be monitored to determine if overpopulation is a problem. MEDIUM

D. Land Use Management

*1. Park boundaries*

-The boundary lines at Bald Head Island State Nature Preserve need to be determined. HIGH

-A fishing camp located near/in the Bald Head Island State Natural Area should be removed if it is deemed to be located in the natural area and if it has no rights to exist there. MEDIUM

E. Infrastructure Management

*1. Road Management*

-An off road vehicle plan has been established for the park. The plan should be revisited after it has place for a few years to review the visitor-use trends and demands to determine if changes need to be made. MEDIUM

F. Resource Management Training

-General resource management training is needed. MEDIUM

Explanation of priority codes:

HIGH If the resource management activity is not undertaken in the near future, there is a distinct possibility that natural resources will be compromised. These issues should be addressed within the next five years.

MEDIUM Although there is a possibility that resources could be compromised, the priority is not as critical as the high priority projects.

LOW Projects with low priority have significantly less chance for compromise of the natural resources if the project is not undertaken in a timely fashion or the project may depend on completion of other projects.

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