

X. LAND ACQUISITION

Raven Rock, part of a series of steep bluffs composed of mica schist, attaining a maximum height of 150 feet and stretching for almost a mile along the Cape Fear River's south shore, is the namesake and main feature of Raven Rock State Park. The preservation of this geological feature is a primary purpose of the state park. The park is also committed to the protection of rare species and high quality examples of natural communities along the river. Much of the park has been identified as part of a state significant Natural Heritage Area by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program and lies adjacent to the nationally significant Cape Fear River Aquatic Habitat. Approximately 1,590 acres of the park is a designated nature preserve, which contains several rare natural community types as well as a number of significantly rare plant species.

Several factors are considered in determining whether a piece of property should be included in an acquisition plan. These include: data from the Natural Heritage Program and the Division of Water Quality; identified needs for resource protection, recreation, buffer areas and park management; and recommendations from Division staff. Threats to these properties often include development, logging, sedimentation, and other forms of short- or long-term damage. Needs and threats are evaluated to determine what additional properties should be added to a park's acquisition plan.

CURRENT ACQUISITION STATUS

As of May 1, 2006, Raven Rock State Park contains 4,667 acres. The primary feature of the park is the steep mica schist bluff of the same name, which is an important natural, scenic, and educational resource. The views across the Cape Fear River from Raven Rock itself is also an important element of the park experience, in addition to the diverse flora and fauna of the remaining park area and river ecosystem. The objectives for establishing Raven Rock State Park are described in the Park Purpose Statement (see Chapter II). They include the provision of appropriate public recreational use, the protection of unique natural resources, buffering these resources and visitor activities from incompatible uses, and protecting scenic views. With these objectives in mind, adjacent lands were assessed for their value to the park and a revised acquisition plan for the future protection needs of Raven Rock State Park developed.

FUTURE ACQUISITION NEEDS

Completion of the acquisition plan described in the *Raven Rock State Park Master Plan*, finished in March 1977, requires the acquisition of an additional 840 acres. High acquisition priorities on the southern side of the park include the Fish Creek watershed, land to provide a more adequate park entrance, land to further protect Campbell Creek, and greater buffer for the wilderness camps. High acquisition priorities on the northern side of the park would protect the land directly across the Cape Fear River from park land on the south side, provide for additional protection of the river corridor, preserve the

viewshed from Raven Rock and the overlook along the Raven Rock Trail, protect the park from encroaching development, and expand recreational opportunities.

In addition to the remaining 840 acres identified for acquisition in the 1977 master plan, Division staff - as part of the development of this general management plan - assessed land acquisition needs at Raven Rock and expanded the proposed park boundary by 2,338 acres (Figure X-1).

Raven Rock State Park has traditionally received much of its visitation from the local community and from Fort Bragg, and many park visitors are repeat users. This traditional visitation will certainly continue. In addition, because of the park's proximity to the Triangle area and the continued growth of that area, increased future demand is certain to come. Nearby small towns of Apex, Holly Springs and Fuquay-Varina are growing at brisk paces. This population growth will place increased pressures on the park. Adding land to the park to accommodate additional recreational facilities will help to meet the increased demand.

The proposed boundary on the north side of the Cape Fear River extends west to Captains Landing Subdivision, and it extends on the north side of River Road to continue the green entrance corridor along both sides of that entrance road. To the east, the boundary goes to the general vicinity of Hector's Creek and an existing road through the woods for ease of management. Adding this land to the park will serve to protect the park's viewshed from the south bank of the Cape Fear River, particularly the viewshed from the overlook along the Raven Rock Trail.

The proposed boundary on the south side of the Cape Fear River extends to the end of State Road 1267 (Dickens Road) on the west side of the park, allowing park staff direct management access to this end of the park and lining up with the proposed west boundary across the river. To the east, the proposed park boundary extends to encompass abandoned tailings ponds from an old sand pit/quarry with some ponds.

ACQUISITION SUMMARY TABLE

Current size of the park (May 2006)	4,667 acres
Acreage needs per 1977 master plan	<u>840 acres</u>
Original planned size of the park	5,507 acres
Additions to master planned needs	<u>2,338 acres</u>
New total planned size of the park	7,845 acres

