

# VI. 2009 - 2013 ACTION PLAN

## INTRODUCTION

The Action Plan identifies specific actions the state will take during 2009-2013 to improve the state's outdoor recreational resources. The primary state agencies involved will include the Division of Coastal Management, Division of Water Quality, Division of Parks and Recreation, Division of Forest Resources, and the Wildlife Resources Commission.

## CONSERVING NATURAL RESOURCES

Goal: Preserve, maintain, and promote the wise use of North Carolina's unique natural and scientific environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

### Actions - Department of Environment and Natural Resources

- The Department of Environment and Natural Resources will develop a statewide conservation plan, *One North Carolina Naturally*.
- The Department of Environment and Natural Resources will seek continued funding of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund and the Natural Heritage Trust Fund to promote a stable funding source for outdoor recreation acquisition and development and conservation purposes.

### Actions – Division of Water Quality

- The Division of Water Quality (DWQ) will revise its basin-wide management plans in order to communicate to policy makers, the regulated community, and the general public the state's rationale, approaches, and long-term strategies for its river basins.
- The Division of Water Quality will continue to administer the Water Supply Watershed Protection Program so as to prevent pollutants from entering drinking water supplies.
- The N.C. Division of Water Resources will continue the Stream Watch Program, including publication of a quarterly newsletter, to promote protection and enhancement of water quality and streamside habitat.

### Actions – Conservation Trust Funds

- The Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) will continue making grants to protect and conserve the state's waters by planning for and acquiring riparian buffers and greenways for environmental, educational and recreation benefits.
- The Natural Heritage Trust Fund (NHTF) will continue to fund grants to purchase natural areas and wildlife habitats.
- The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) will continue to make grants to state agencies and local governments to acquire outdoor recreation lands.

## **Actions – Natural Heritage Program**

- The Natural Heritage Program (NHP) will continue to collect information about the occurrences and distribution of the rarest plants and animals and the highest quality natural communities of the state.
- The NHP will continue to provide landowners, agencies, corporations, scientists and others with information needed for effective planning, research, and protection efforts.
- The NHP will continue to seek grants and contracts to undertake field studies, particularly for ongoing county inventories. The NHP will compile information collected in the Biological and Conservation Database and continue to update existing information.
- The NHP will review plans for roads and bridges, airports, wastewater treatment plants, sewer lines, timber sales, dredging, and many other public and private construction and development projects to identify rare species and priority natural areas that might be affected by proposed projects so negative effects can be reduced or eliminated.
- The NHP will continue to assist landowners with appropriate protection measures through informing the landowners of the high ecological value of the site, providing useful information on protection and management needs, and discussing protection options.
- The NHP will continue to encourage landowners to dedicate property as a state nature preserve so as to preserve its natural values permanently.
- The NHP will continue to provide landowners with management advice and assistance to ensure that natural areas are successfully managed.
- The NHP will prepare a Biennial Protection Plan to inform the governor, the General Assembly, and the public of program activities planned.
- The Natural Heritage Program will cooperate with academicians and private and agency biologists in the collection and sharing of information.
- The NHP will continue to cooperate with the Wildlife Resources Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Agriculture, and other agencies to assist in the protection of endangered species.
- The NHP will continue to maintain the N.C. Registry of Natural Heritage Areas to encourage landowners to make voluntary, non-binding commitments to preserve their ecologically significant sites.

## **Actions – Division of Parks and Recreation**

- The Division of Parks and Recreation (DPR) will set priorities for funding acquisition and development of LWCF outdoor recreation projects based on how projects address issues and needs identified in the SCORP.
- The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation (DPR) will seek to expand the State Parks System according to priorities identified in the Division's expansion plan and Systemwide Plan.
- The DPR will use the Open Project Selection Process as a formal and objective method of selecting acquisition and development projects to be funded by LWCF.

- The DPR will complete natural resources management plans for state park units as resources allow.
- The DPR will continue to work with other governmental agencies and non-profit organizations to protect more of the state's natural heritage.
- The Natural Heritage Program, Wildlife Resources Commission, and Division of Forest Resources will continue training in prescribed burning methods for fire-dependent ecosystems.
- Make significant progress towards the completion of up-to-date park-specific inventories to determine the presence and condition of plants and animal species, soils, water and air quality and natural community types.
- Develop vegetation maps for the ten highest priority parks in a GIS format.
- Develop and fund long-term cooperative research agreements with research institutions for high priority research needs.
- Implement park-specific long-term biological monitoring programs to assess changes in the condition of natural resources at the highest priority parks.
- Continue to develop cooperative relationships with local agencies and communities so that park protection is considered and addressed in local development plans.
- Develop landscape-level plans to address the highest priority water quality problems at individual parks and begin implementation.
- Incorporate landscape-level considerations in park acquisition planning, including linkage to other public and privately protected areas and trails, and the provision of wildlife corridors.
- Review park construction projects and recommend changes if needed to ensure minimal environmental impact and compliance with applicable environmental laws and regulations.

#### **Actions – Wildlife Resources Commission**

- The Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) will train educators annually through NC WILD and NC CATCH environmental education workshops.
- The WRC will continue to produce *Wildlife in North Carolina*, an educational magazine that promotes boating and hunting safety and the conservation of wildlife resources.
- The WRC will continue to incorporate agency environmental education programs into existing youth programs of other organizations.
- The WRC will continue to incorporate its NC CATCH and NC WILD programs into the school system and youth group curricula.
- The WRC will develop cooperative relationships with local agencies and communities so that wildlife habitat protection and management is considered and addressed in local land use and park planning.

#### **Actions – Division of Coastal Management**

- The Division of Coastal Management will continue to manage estuarine research reserve sites for preservation, research, education, and recreation.

## **Actions – Division of Forest Resources**

- The Division of Forest Resources will manage its educational state forests to promote a better understanding of the value of forests.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH AND FITNESS**

Goal: Foster public health and fitness through improved outdoor recreation resources and services.

## **Actions – Department of Environment and Natural Resources**

- The Department of Environment and Natural Resources will seek continued funding of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund and the Natural Heritage Trust Fund to promote a stable funding source for outdoor recreation acquisition and development and conservation purposes.

## **Actions – Division of Parks and Recreation**

- The Division of Parks and Recreation (DPR) will set priorities for funding acquisition and development of LWCF outdoor recreation projects based on how projects address issues and needs identified in the SCORP.
- The DPR will continue to offer interpretation and education programs at staffed state parks and recreation areas.
- The DPR will provide technical assistance to agencies and organizations in the areas of trail corridor planning, design, construction, maintenance, management, and funding.
- The DPR will conduct educational workshops on trails.
- The DPR will use the Open Project Selection Process as a formal and objective method of selecting acquisition and development projects to be funded by LWCF.
- The DPR will maintain a website that provides outdoor recreation information about the state parks system. Other state agencies will also maintain such websites.
- The DPR will continue to promote and hold special events in state parks such as Civilian Conservation Corps Day at Hanging Rock, Civil War re-enactments at Fort Macon and Indian Heritage Week at Pettigrew.
- The DPR will continue to administer grants, encourage individuals and groups to volunteer, and recognize volunteers for their contributions.
- The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) will continue to make grants to state agencies and local governments to provide new capital improvements, repairs and renovation of areas and facilities.

### **Actions – Division of Travel and Tourism**

- The N.C. Division of Travel and Tourism will continue to promote special events held by local governments such as Riverfest in Wilmington, Lazy Daze in Cary, and Artsposure in Raleigh.
- The N.C. Division of Travel and Tourism will continue to answer inquiries and provide information regarding the state's outdoor recreation areas and services.

### **Actions – Wildlife Resources Commission**

- The Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) will construct new boating and fishing access areas and renovate older ramps as resources allow.
- The WRC will conduct Caring for Aquatics Through Conservation Habits (CATCH) clinics annually throughout the state.
- The WRC will hold environmental education programs at its Pisgah Environmental Education Center near Brevard.
- The WRC will hold annual youth hunts.

### **Actions – Division of Transportation**

- The N.C. DOT's Bicycle Program will undertake state bikeway system improvement projects such as signs, maps, and road improvements.

### **Actions – Recreation Resources Services**

- The Recreation Resources Services (RRS) will publish an annual study of municipal and county park and recreation services and other studies as resources allow.
- Consulting services will be offered to the public and private sectors through Recreation Resources Services, contingent upon renewal of the contract and availability of funds.
- RRS and the N.C. Recreation and Park Society will share information and provide training through workshops dealing with topics such as low maintenance and vandal-resistant facility design, swimming pool maintenance, and grant applications.

## **QUALITY OF LIFE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Goal: Improve quality of life and economic growth through land and water conservation.

### **Actions – Department of Environment and Natural Resources**

- The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources will cooperate with seven states, several federal agencies, industry, environmental organizations, academia, and other interested parties in the Southern Appalachian Mountains Initiative. The SAMI will deal with regional issues of air quality and its effects on resources in the Southern Appalachians.
- The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission will continue efforts to expand Commission-managed acreage through cooperative efforts with Ducks Unlimited, the Natural Heritage Trust Fund, the Nature Conservancy, and other private and government agencies.

- The DENR will organize and promote Big Sweep annually, a day in which volunteers are mobilized to collect refuse at state parks, lakes, and trails.
- The DENR will cooperate with the Corps of Engineers during the revising of the reservoir master plans.
- The Division of Parks and Recreation will encourage state and federal agencies to consider SCORP-identified needs when planning for additional recreational facilities and areas.
- The DPR will continue to inspect LWCF projects to ensure local government compliance with federal regulations.
- The DPR, through Recreation Resources Service, will provide LWCF workshops for local governments interested in seeking funding assistance.
- The DPR will continue to cooperate with and support efforts of numerous federal, state, and local governments and volunteer trail organizations as they develop trails.
- The Division of Water Resources will work with TVA and the USFS concerning lake level management and in stream flows needed to enhance recreational opportunities.
- The Division of Coastal Management will continue to encourage and assist local governments in the establishment of public accesses to beaches, sounds, and tidal creeks.
- The DOT Bicycle Program will assist local governments with the development of bicycle programs and the construction of bicycle facilities.
- The Recreation Resources Service will continue to conduct statewide training sessions via the University of North Carolina's teleconference system.
- Seek to expand the State Parks System using a ranked master list of potential state parks, state natural areas, state recreation areas and state rivers.
- Expand handicap accessibility to state park facilities. All new projects will provide accessibility in accordance with the standards of the American Disabilities Act. Pursue multiple funding opportunities for modifications to existing facilities.