The STEWARD

North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation

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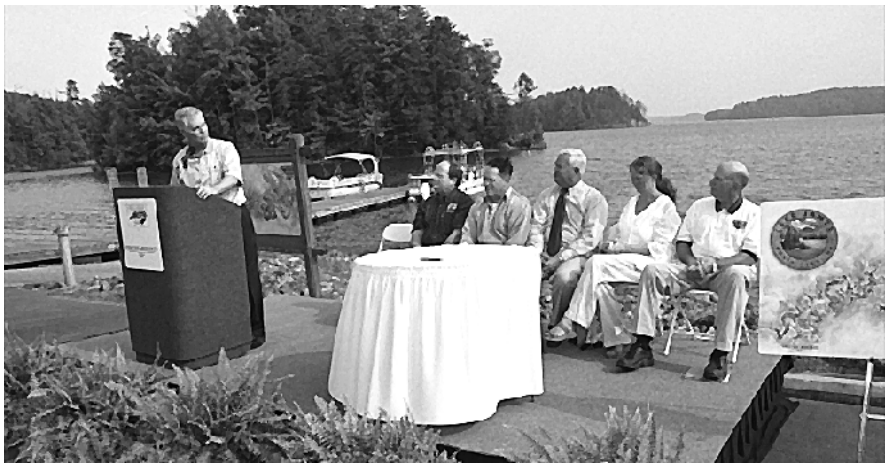
Michael F. Easley, Governor | September 2004 | Volume 18 Number 7 | William G. Ross Jr., Secretary, DENR

LAKE JAMES AGREEMENT IN PLACE

Lake James State Park will expand to nearly six times its current size under an agreement announced Aug. 19 by Governor Mike Easley and officials of Crescent Resources LLC.

The land-development subsidiary of Duke Energy has agreed to sell 2,915 acres on the lake to the state parks system for $18.36 million this year, far below the appraised price of $30.6 million.

"It's a great day for Burke County and a great day for the state," Easley said after arriving by boat at a brief ceremony on the lake's shoreline. "This project is a result of a public-private partnership. And, that's the best kind, where it's a win-win situation."



LAKE JAMES IS THE BACKDROP AS GOVERNOR EASLEY ANNOUNCES DEAL.

The parks system expects to finance the sale through legislation approved in July that allows the state's three conservation trust funds to issue certificates of participation. It authorizes land conservation to be financed by pledging future revenues of the trust funds.

While signing a document officially accepting the agree-

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RANGERS' STUDY MOVES STATE PARKS INTO ROLE AS PREMIER ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AGENCY

More than 96 percent of veteran rangers and park superintendents in the state parks system have become certified environmental educators. And, 41 new rangers are actively working toward certification, according to a division report just issued.

The results mark a significant milestone in a five-year division effort to raise the bar for park rangers and improve the quality of environmental education in state parks.

With more than 200 hours of workshops and hands-on training required, it generally takes two to three years for a ranger to earn the coveted certification, said Marti Kane, the division's lead interpretation and education specialist.

"With some 130 certified environmental educators, the division has more veteran educators working directly with the public than any other resource

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DOWDY GETS LAW ENFORCEMENT POST

Bryan Dowdy, formerly the superintendent at Falls Lake State Recreation Area, will become the division's first Law Enforcement Specialist.

This newly created position will assist Chief Ranger Tom Jackson in managing law enforcement issues associated with the division's public safety program.

According to Jackson, Dowdy will be involved in public safety training, equipment inventory, administrative and criminal investigations, response to serious law enforcement incidents and will represent the division on the State Emergency Response Team.

He will also maintain the division's employee law enforcement files and data system. The division employs nearly 200 commissioned law officers and generates more than 2,000 citations, case incident and criminal information reports each year.

"Aside from his experience as a park superintendent, Bryan has an in-depth knowledge of the division's law enforcement program and the law enforcement field in general. That will be very helpful as we work to bring an even higher standard of professionalism to the state parks' law enforcement role," said Lewis Ledford, the division director.

Dowdy was raised in Raleigh and graduated from East Carolina University in 1989 with a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management. He joined the division as Park Ranger II later that year.

Dowdy has earned an Advanced Law Enforcement certificate and several law enforcement instructor credentials. He is also a certified specialized firearms instructor and is the division's armorer for service weapons.

Dowdy, who has been superintendent at Falls Lake State Recreation Area since 1989, is excited about the new role.

"I've enjoyed the diverse challenges, excitement and multitude of responsibilities and activities that are associated with operating a large recreation area, but I'm also looking forward to working towards some of the division's new law enforcement initiatives, activities and procedures," he said.

From The Director's Desk

House Bill 1264 (COPs legislation) has paved the way for the very important land acquisition at Lake James State Park and could have implications for other parks as well. It will provide up to $25 million over the next two years for land acquisition and park expansion projects through certificates of participation. These financing instruments, similar to bonds, would be repaid by a portion of future revenues into the state's three natural resource trust funds.

The legislation not only gives the division and the Parks and Recreation Authority great planning flexibility, it is a vote of confidence in the successes of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, now 10 years old.

But, this was only one among several positive notes sounded for the state parks system during this year's legislative session.

We're extremely grateful for the addition to the legislative studies bill that orders a classification study of all law enforcement positions in the parks system. This could go a long way toward gaining equity in salary and benefits for park superintendents and rangers, compared with other state law enforcement officers.

The Office of State Personnel is to report back to the legislature by Jan. 3, and we're doing everything possible to give that agency the information it needs for a thorough review. It's important that we make clear the skills necessary and the complexity of the jobs our commissioned staff performs.

In the interim, the General Assembly approved salary increases that will make law enforcement positions within DENR more comparable to other state agencies. That action immediately provides $630,997 for division positions.

There was also a mandate for a feasibility/suitability study for a Blewett Falls State Recreation Area in the Yadkin/Pee Dee river basin. A site in Anson County was identified as a desirable addition to the state parks system in its New Parks for a New Century initiative unveiled last year, and the planning staff is working hard to draft a conceptual plan to be presented to local residents and officials before year's end.

Another study will be done at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area to determine the impact of restrictions on nighttime, four-wheel-drive vehicle access. This was in response to legislative concerns about the policy changes there. I want to express thanks to UNC-Wilmington, which has stepped forward and already begun work on the study.

It was a busy legislative session, but also a productive one. I feel that much of the credit goes to the professionalism and attention to mission of our division employees.

Sincerely,

Lewis Ledford

Totten will lead north district

William Totten, the 14-year superintendent of Jordan Lake State Recreation Area, has been promoted to North District Superintendent. He succeeds Susan Tillotson who was promoted to superintendent of state parks in June.

As one of four district superintendents, Totten will be responsible for resource management, environmental education programming, law enforcement, safety and facility maintenance for seven state parks reaching from Hanging Rock eastward to Kerr Lake State Recreation Area.

In making the announcement, Lewis Ledford, division director, said, "Billy has done an outstanding job managing Jordan Lake, which has been one of our busiest state parks with a large staff and an abundance of administrative challenges. That kind of on-the-ground experience will prove invaluable to the parks system as he moves into one of our most important operational roles."

A native of Durham, Totten earned a bachelor's degree in parks, conservation and recreation from East Carolina University in 1979 and completed courses in forestry at Chowan College.

After working in parks management for the City of Durham, Totten joined the division in 1979 as a seasonal naturalist and trail worker at Medoc Mountain State Park. Within three months, he became a YACC coordinator at Pilot Mountain State Park.

In 1980 Totten was hired as a Park Ranger I at Stone Mountain State Park and, in 1983, was promoted to chief ranger at Lake Norman State Park. In 1990, a promotion to superintendent took him to Jordan Lake. He was promoted to Superintendent IV in 2002.

He is a medical first responder and holds advanced law enforcement certification.

Totten said he is excited about the challenges and responsibilities that face him as a district superintendent.

"I feel my previous experience working as a seasonal employee and ranger in various parks with a lot of operational diversity, will help me relate to some of the issues facing the north district field staff," he said. "I also realize that I will learn a lot from the district's superintendents, rangers, maintenance and administrative staff. The district has a very competent and professional staff and I look forward to working with them all."

Totten will be stationed at the division's north district office in Wake County.

Don't forget. . .

. . .to let us know what's going on in your part of the Division. We'd like to include it in The Steward.

New Rangers Commissioned

Six new state park rangers received their law enforcement commissions recently in two separate ceremonies at the Archdale Building. In photo at left are (from left) Joseph martin of Mount Mitchell, Michelle Mancinelli of Eno River and Jeffrey Tucker of Merchants Millpond. In right photo are (from left) Jeffrey Jones of Stone Mountain, Kenneth Futch of Carolina Beach and Jason Anthony of Hanging Rock.

WILD LEAVES POST, BUT NOT NEW RIVER

Throughout his long career, Jay Wild remained as constant, strong and low-key as the mountain river he helped protect at New River State Park.

That earned him a place as a pillar of the state parks system, according to the colleagues, employees and friends attending a picnic for the retiring superintendent at the park in June.

Susan Tillotson, superintendent of state parks, said that as a ranger beginning her career in another part of the state, she learned about Wild from his reputation. "Early on, I learned that Jay earned the respect of this division. That's not something that comes easily or quickly," she said.

Wild retired after 31 years in the division and having worked at five parks, but his name is nearly synonymous with the New River where he guided the park for 24 years, beginning in 1980, just four years after a 26.5-mile stretch of the river was given a federal "wild and scenic" designation.

Wild's tenure can be described with four "c-words", said Lewis Ledford, director of the division – commitment, consideration, consistency and compassion. "What a pillar he has been for the state parks system."

Wild was a young ranger at Mount Mitchell State Park, but was already regarded as a mentor for even younger rangers when Ledford came to work there as a seasonal in the mid-1970s. "There was nothing I saw Jay asking the seasonals to do that he wasn't out there first already doing it," Ledford said.

A native of Winston-Salem, Wild graduated from Parkland High School in 1968 and earned a biology degree from William & Mary University in 1972. He first served at Pilot Mountain State Park where he met his wife Hollis while she was volunteering. Throughout Wild's career, Hollis has been a steadfast advocate both for the parks system and for the New River.

Wild worked at Mount Mitchell, Mount Jefferson and Stone Mountain state parks before arriving at New River with one other staff member in 1980. He had already fallen in love with Ashe County while working on a nearby Christmas tree farm.

FRIENDS, COLLEAGUES GATHER AT PARK FOR FAREWELL.

HOLLIS AND JAY WILD LOOK AT SERVICE PLAQUE.

One of his first challenges was to help acquire land for the tiny park among neighbors wary of the state government's intentions. Many feared that the federal designation would prompt the state to take their land for the new park.

Wild earned the respect of the community, reflected by the park's doubling in size to more than 1,600 acres in nine tracts along the river's designated scenic corridor. Three access points now have picnic areas, hiking trails, campsites and canoe ramps, and a $6 million project to add a visitor's center, RV campground and new maintenance compound is just moving into the construction phase.

With that kind of success, Wild had opportunities to move up in the division, but he made a deliberate decision to stay at New River, largely because he enjoyed the teaching and resource protection aspects of his job better than administration.

He told the Winston-Salem Journal recently, "I always felt strongly about staying directly involved in field operations. I was more interested in hands-on involvement because I felt it gave a more immediate response."

At the picnic, Wild's retirement gifts included, of course, a canoe, as well as a chance to introduce his father, Silas Wild, who is 97. And, he told the crowd that the best any park ranger could hope for in a career was to be able to stay in the park that he loves for as long as possible.

"This division is driven by the passion and the quality of all those people who work for it," he said. "It's that family and our sense of responsibility to it that keeps many of us working for it longer that 30 years."

Trust fund's local grants top $60 million

Grants to local governments from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund passed the $60 million mark in July when 2003-04, fourth-quarter revenues were distributed.

This year, a record $11.6 million was earmarked for local parks and recreation projects. Fifty grants totaling $8.84 million were approved in May by the NC Parks and Recreation Authority, the trust fund's governing body. On July 23, 15 more grants worth $2.8 million were provided.

The trust fund was established 10 years ago and is supported by the state's tax on real estate deed transfers.

"This year, the trust fund generated $37 million, the largest amount since the program's inception," said Jonathan Howes, chairman of the 11-member authority. "We were able to award a record number of grants across the state, to continue to address the capital improvements and land acquisition needs in the state's parks system and to help coastal counties improve the public's access to our beaches."

Also at its July meeting, the authority approved the allocation of $412,361 for land acquisitions for Mayo River State Park in Rockingham County. In 2003, the NC General Assembly authorized a new state park on the Mayo River, clearing the way for the parks system to begin negotiating to acquire land.

In 2003-04, the trust fund generated $7.1 million for state park land acquisition projects throughout the state.

Also, $817,632 was allocated to two capital improvement projects. The authority approved the construction of four rental cabins at Hanging Rock State Park for an estimated $678,500, and improvements to a maintenance compound at Jockey's Ridge State Park for $139,033.

Environmental Education

Continued from Page 1

management agency. To me, that's pretty amazing. We have become the premier environmental education agency in state government today," Kane said.

"Hopefully, on the ground, that means providing better programs, better exhibits and a more meaningful educational experience for our visitors."

Education is one of the three principal components of the parks system's mission, alongside recreation and natural resource protection.

Aside from other duties, park rangers regularly prepare interpretive programs for visitors, including school students and even other educators. They're also often involved in preparing displays, trailside exhibits and multi-media programs and planning for exhibits in visitor's centers.

Park rangers also prepare and conduct the division's Environmental Education Learning Experiences, or EELE's for school groups and teachers. These highly structured programs incorporate lessons learned in the parks into the state's curriculums.

"Being formally certified reflects the professionalism with which our rangers approach that aspect of their job," said Lewis Ledford, director of the division. "It is essentially the same quality of training that rangers also must have in law enforcement, emergency medical techniques, search and rescue and fire suppression."

"That's just all part of being a park ranger in North Carolina now," he said.

In 1999, soon after the state Office of Environmental Education established the certification criteria, Ledford, then a district superintendent, proposed that certification be a job requirement. A division staff directive by the division's former director, Phil McKnelly, enrolled all rangers and park superintendents.

Both felt that stressing this type of professional development would signal the division's commitment to environmental education in the parks.

Kane said that the division had expected to have all veteran rangers and park superintendents certified within three years. But, budget shortfalls stymied plans for holding workshops and for employee travel. Hiring freezes also made it more difficult for rangers to leave parks that had become short on staff.

Certification demands attendance at seven workshops of 10 hours each (many of them held at state parks, and attended by educators from schools and from other state agencies). Also required are some 110 hours of related training and study, and a 20-hour action partnership that Kane said is demanding.

It involves a project to work with volunteers to directly improve the environment and educate the community about it. Projects have included such things as nature trails, wildlife observation platforms, native plant gardens and recycling centers, she said.

"You've got to raise money and pull together a bunch of volunteers from the community. For me, that was a big challenge, and it often takes a lot more than 20 hours," she said.

LAKE JAMES

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ment, Easley shared the podium with Bill Ross Jr., Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Lewis Ledford, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation, Art Fields, president and CEO of Crescent, Susie Hamrick Jones, executive director of the Foothills Conservancy and Tom Johnson, chairman of the Burke County commissioners.

Easley noted that the agreement that will protect almost 30 miles of the lake's shoreline came only after months of intense negotiations between Crescent and a coalition of environmental groups and Burke County, which had sought more public access to the lake in exchange for altering rules on development of Crescent-owned land.

"We don't have but so much water and we have to protect it every day," he said.

Lake James, at 605 acres, has been one of the smallest of the state's 33 parks and recreation areas since its creation in 1987. Yet in draws about 250,000 visitors a year to its modest swim beach, picnic grounds and two boat ramps.

"The addition of this property will immediately move Lake James State Park into a new class in terms of recreation potential and conservation of natural resources," Ledford said. "It offers us the chance to broaden our efforts in environmental education here. And, the park becomes an obvious candidate for a visitor's center that will become a focal point in the community."

The property lies along the lake's northern shore with views toward Shortoff Mountain and the Linville Gorge, and it includes the Paddy's Creek watershed area and an extensive peninsula known locally as Long Arm.

Currently, the division's planners are evaluating its potential for a network of hiking trails, family campgrounds, backcountry campsites, canoe/kayak areas and swim beaches. An interim management plan will be developed for the property while the park's master plan is rewritten

ABOUT 75 SPECIALLY INVITED GUESTS AND MEDIA ATTENDED THE BRIEF ANNOUNCEMENT CEREMONY.

EASLEY SIGNS LETTER ACCEPTING DEAL FLANKED BY (LEFT TO RIGHT) DIVISION DIRECTOR LEWIS LEDFORD, BURKE COUNTY COMMISSIONER TOM JOHNSON, CRESCENT CEO ART FIELDS, SUSIE HAMRICK-JONES OF THE FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY AND DENR SECRETARY BILL ROSS JR.

The expanded state park would likely become a junction point for three principal trail systems – the state's Mountains-To-Sea Trail, the National Park Service's Over Mountain Historic Victory Trail and the Linville Gorge Wilderness Trails.

The sale will be the first test of House Bill 1264 that allows certificates of participation (COPs legislation). In coming weeks, the Parks and Recreation Authority, governing body of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, must decide how much of the purchase price will be financed and how much of the repayment will come from that trust fund.

The parks system has also asked the Clean Water Management Trust Fund to participate in financing the sale. And, the project may be eligible for funds from the Ecosystem Enhancement Program for wetlands mitigation.

Under the COPS legislation, the authority may allocate up to 50 percent of Parks and Recreation Trust Fund revenues that are normally set aside for the state parks system.

The law authorizes a combined indebtedness among the three trust funds of $45 million to purchase land for parks, to build facilities at an existing state park as part of its expansion and to acquire up to 17,000 acres near military bases to prevent encroachment by development.

North Carolina State Parks
Monthly Attendance Report July, 2004

PARK	JULY 2004	TOTAL YTD JULY 2004	JULY 2003	TOTAL YTD JULY 2003	% CHANGE (2003/2004) JULY	YTD
Carolina Beach	39,383	150,743	34,577	155,785	14%	-3%
Cliffs of the Neuse	20,536	81,572	20,651	76,991	-1%	6%
Crowder's Mountain	43,275	217,457	16,659	115,157	160%	89%
Eno River	28,567	177,648	30,649	168,128	-7%	6%
Occoneechee Mountain	3,241	22,931	2,929	14,797	11%	55%
Falls Lake	124,616	480,980	131,305	460,276	-5%	4%
Fort Fisher	135,749	496,083	97,649	474,514	39%	5%
Fort Macon	228,876	885,810	216,030	809,056	6%	9%
Goose Creek	12,703	88,930	14,500	80,386	-12%	11%
Gorges	26,286	82,233	15,329	49,946	71%	65%
Hammocks Beach	19,053	89,451	22,977	99,051	-17%	-10%
Hanging Rock	47,314	189,190	58,103	210,083	-19%	-10%
Jockey's Ridge	157,347	555,505	179,270	677,639	-12%	-18%
Jones Lake	12,088	65,518	19,996	80,810	-40%	-19%
Jordan Lake	165,823	627,558	167,008	473,730	-1%	32%
Kerr Lake	295,320	1,032,572	176,344	758,168	67%	36%
Lake James	80,890	258,073	48,846	142,783	66%	81%
Lake Norman	55,416	284,796	53,628	215,806	3%	32%
Lake Waccamaw	13,676	60,958	11,404	61,904	20%	-2%
Lumber River	7,053	38,694	5,605	28,961	26%	34%
Medoc Mountain	7,434	33,524	7,147	27,863	4%	20%
Merchant's Millpond	20,145	112,560	21,087	98,622	-4%	14%
Morrow Mountain	41,990	177,050	40,080	158,278	5%	12%
Mount Jefferson	13,237	52,573	13,482	56,001	-2%	-6%
Mount Mitchell	80,606	264,713	116,638	304,805	-31%	-13%
New River	25,852	91,947	27,314	90,608	-5%	1%
Pettigrew	9,081	49,251	9,753	63,532	-7%	-22%
Pilot Mountain	44,419	214,818	45,288	216,636	-2%	-1%
Raven Rock	4,239	57,433	10,203	64,784	-58%	-11%
Singletary Lake	5,770	23,451	4,916	16,226	17%	45%
South Mountains	896	32,478	23,352	108,708	-96%	-70%
Stone Mountain	58,000	253,504	45,116	206,744	29%	23%
Weymouth Woods	3,511	26,666	2,430	17,098	44%	56%
William B. Umstead	54,971	309,480	61,224	227,595	-10%	36%
SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL	**1,887,363**	**7,586,150**	**1,751,489**	**6,811,471**	**8%**	**11%**

Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation is:

to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;

to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina;

and

to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources

for all citizens and visitors of North Carolina.

Safety Zone

Tune in to the dangers of noise

✓Loud sounds that are not painful can still damage hearing.
✓Protect your hearing before damage can occur. Hearing loss can happen so gradually you may not notice it.
✓Be sure to use hearing protection that provides adequate noise reduction.
✓Always inspect personal protective equipment before wearing it, and use it properly.

The Steward
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