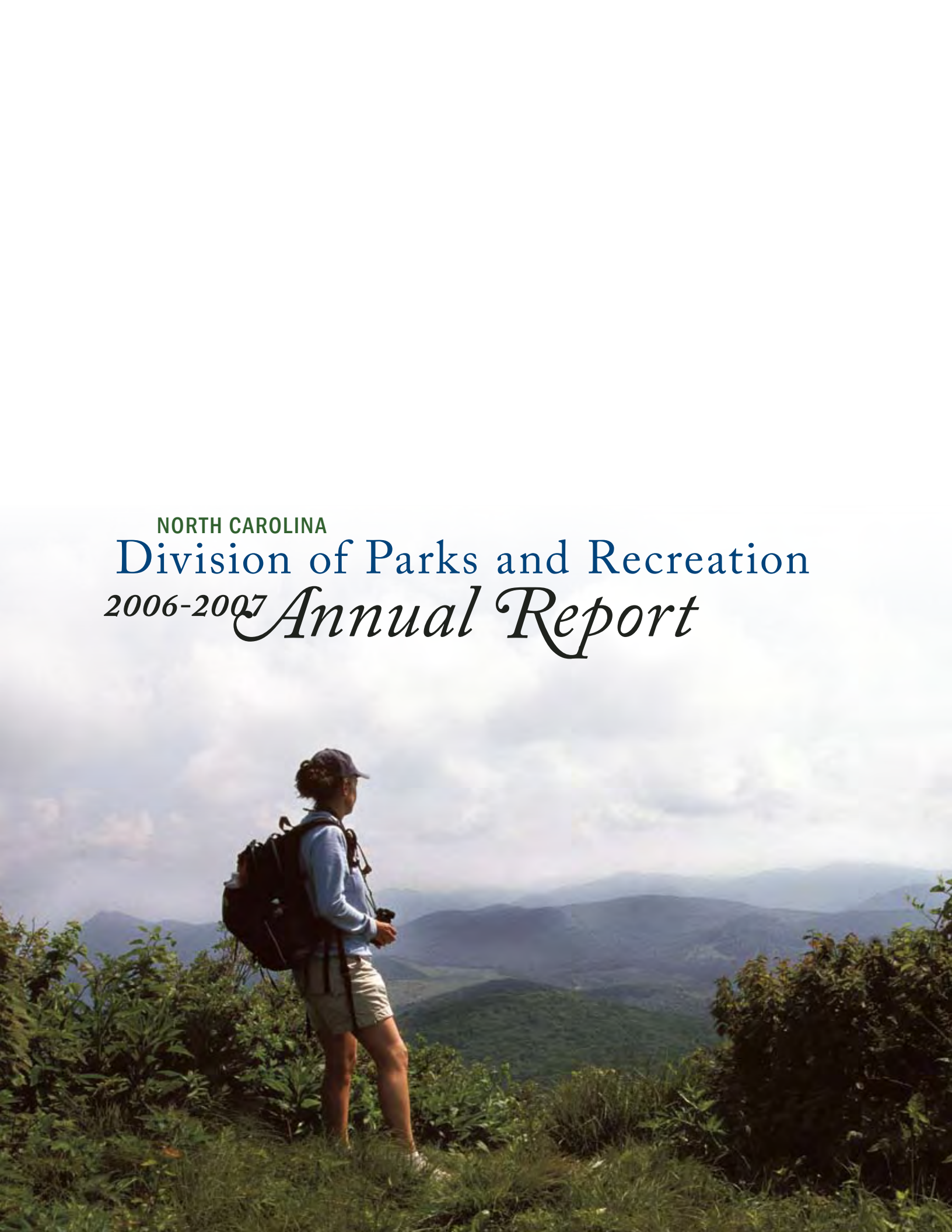


NORTH CAROLINA
Division of Parks and Recreation
2006-2007 *Annual Report*





- Gorges State Park
- Mount Jefferson State Natural Area
- Mount Mitchell State Park
- New River State Park
- Crowders Mountain State Park
- Hanging Rock State Park
- Lake James State Park
- Lake Norman State Park
- Morrow Mountain State Park
- Pilot Mountain State Park
- South Mountains State Park
- Stone Mountain State Park
- Eno River State Park
- Falls Lake State Recreation Area
- Jordan Lake State Recreation Area
- Kerr Lake State Recreation Area
- Medoc Mountain State Park
- Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area
- Raven Rock State Park
- William B. Umstead State Park
- Carolina Beach State Park
- Cliffs of the Neuse State Park
- Fort Fisher State Park
- Fort Macon State Park
- Goose Creek State Park
- Hammocks Beach State Park
- Jones Lake State Park
- Jockey's Ridge State Park
- Lake Waccamaw State Park
- Lumber River State Park
- Merchants Millpond State Park
- Pettigrew State Park
- Singletary Lake State Park
- Carvers Creek State Park
- Hickory Nut Gorge State Park
- Mayo River State Park
- Haw River State Park
- Mountain Bog State Natural Area
- Sandy Run Savannas State Natural Area
- Dismal Swamp State Natural Area
- Elk Knob State Natural Area

Director's Message

The North Carolina state parks system had many significant achievements in 2006, and we want to share them with you as part of this first-ever annual report.

In our 90th Anniversary year, the state parks system brought 5,101 acres of land into conservation in partnership with the private conservation community and with support from the Parks and Recreation, Clean Water Management and Natural Heritage trust funds.


That is but one of our accomplishments for 2006.

Land conservation efforts advanced the division's New Parks for a New Century initiative by establishing the recently authorized Carvers Creek Sandhills State Park with 1,393 acres and Hickory Nut Gorge State Park with 2,264 acres. Land acquisition efforts continue at those new parks.

One such effort included the state's acquisition of Chimney Rock Park. The park will become the centerpiece of the new unit under development in Hickory Nut Gorge. The agreement set a purchase price of \$24 million for the 996-acre park and its signature 315-foot spire that overlooks Lake Lure. "Chimney Rock is one of the most visible images of our state's landscape and giving it an honored place in our state parks system is a conservation success story for all North Carolinians," Gov. Mike Easley said in announcing the planned acquisition.

Additionally, two rare ecosystems became represented in the parks system as the N.C. General Assembly authorized the Mountain Bogs and Sandy Run Savannas state natural areas.

The first land acquisition of 101 acres for Sandy Run in Pender County was completed with the help of The Nature Conservancy. The existing Beech Creek Bog natural area will be combined with similar bog areas elsewhere in Avery County.



Other significant land acquisitions during the year included the largest single addition ever to New River State Park at 638 acres. The acquisition protects 1.6 miles of river shoreline just downstream of the Wagoner Road Access.

And, 549 acres were added to Elk Knob State Natural Area, protecting the summit area of The Peak, the highest mountain in Ashe County.

Among capital projects, a new 7,500-square-foot visitor center at South Mountains State Park was dedicated in December, representing an investment of \$2.6 million.

Also, new visitor centers are under development at Merchants Millpond, New River and Raven Rock state parks and at Dismal Swamp State Natural Area. The division's design and development group completed a swing-span access bridge across the Dismal Swamp Canal to open the way for that project.

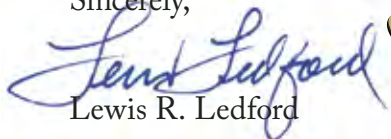
A major expansion of the campground at Stone Mountain State Park was completed. And, at Hanging Rock State Park, four vacation cabins were built and six existing cabins were renovated.

You can read more about these and several other initiatives in more detail elsewhere in this report. I hope you will take the time to do so.

There are so many things that make the North Carolina state parks system special. They include some true natural treasures, such as Pilot Mountain, Mount Mitchell and Jockey's Ridge, clean running streams and rivers, mountain peaks, beaches, unique Piedmont area ecosystems and outstanding new campgrounds and visitor centers. We are extremely proud of the 186,000 acres entrusted to us for stewardship, management and interpretation.

But what really sets our system apart is the dedicated staff of the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation. These public servants are committed to offering a safe, fun and educational experience to all our visitors. Take the time, as you travel our great state, to visit a park. With a combination of scenery, service and facilities, I'm sure you won't be disappointed and will find that our state parks are truly Naturally Wonderful.

Sincerely,


Lewis R. Ledford





Gov. Easley Announces State Purchase of Chimney Rock

After more than two years of discussions and negotiations, Gov. Mike Easley announced the state will purchase Chimney Rock Park, a popular attraction in Rutherford County, to become the centerpiece of a new state park under development at Hickory Nut Gorge.

The \$24 million acquisition, completed in May 2007, adds the 996-acre property to another 2,264 acres already acquired for the new state park authorized by the General Assembly in 2005.

“The acquisition of Chimney Rock adds one of the most visible images of our North Carolina landscape to our state parks system, alongside Mount Mitchell, Jockey’s Ridge, Pilot Mountain and our other crown jewels,” Easley said during a news conference at the park.

“It will be the centerpiece of what is certain to become a world class state park at Hickory Nut Gorge. The Morse family has maintained careful stewardship of this land for more than 100 years, and we intend to continue that stewardship.”

The park is 25 miles southeast of Asheville and features a signature 315-foot-tall spire that offers 75-mile views of the gorge and Lake Lure. Visitors reach this point through a 198-foot tunnel carved into the mountain’s rock face and an elevator that climbs 26 stories.

There is a network of hiking trails leading to unique geologic features and the 404-foot Hickory Nut Falls and a nature center. It has been a popular tourist attraction since a crude stairway was built to the rock’s summit in 1885.

The park and Chimney Rock Co. were owned by the descendants of Lucius Morse, who bought the property and began to develop the park in 1902. Todd Morse was the president and general manager.

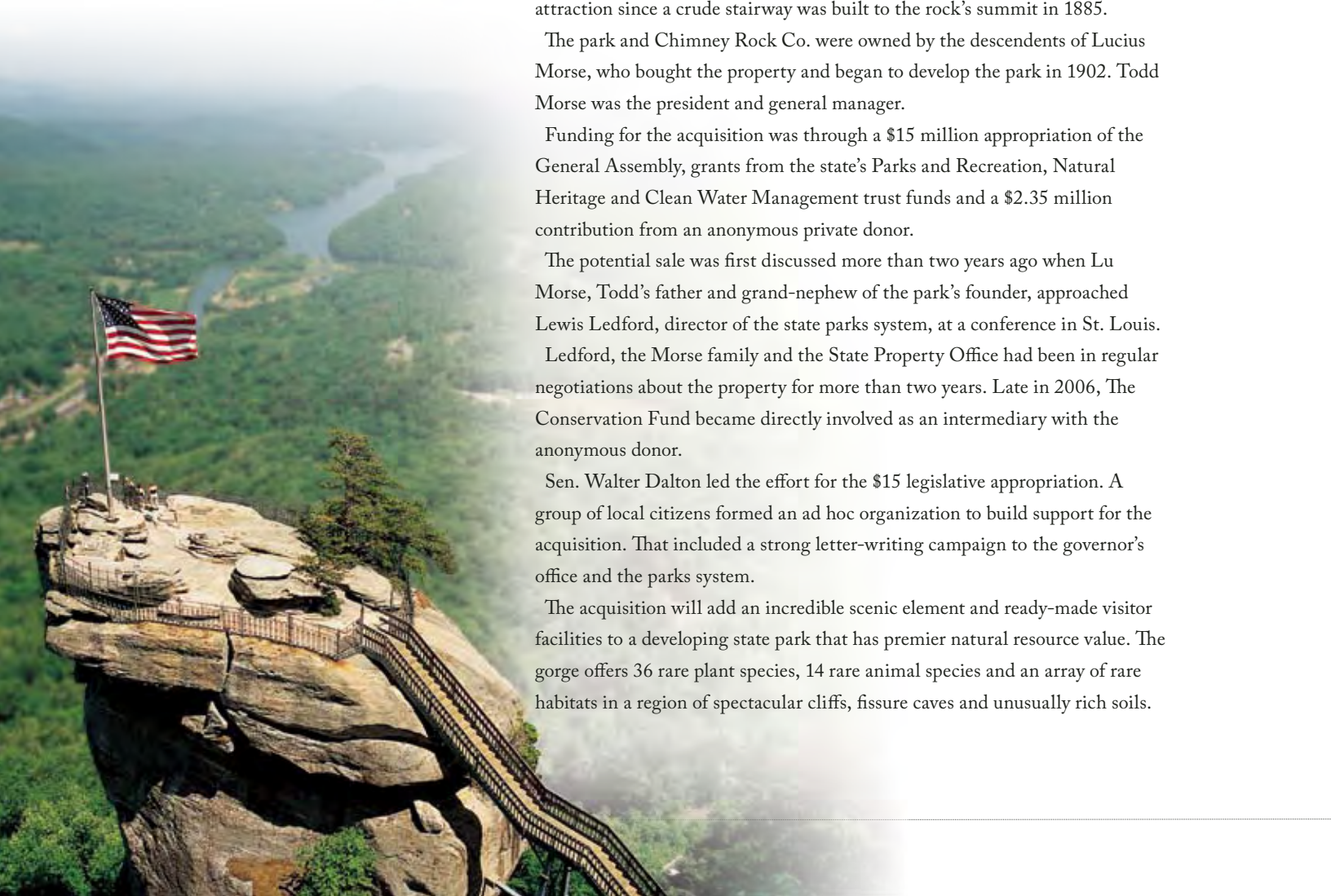
Funding for the acquisition was through a \$15 million appropriation of the General Assembly, grants from the state’s Parks and Recreation, Natural Heritage and Clean Water Management trust funds and a \$2.35 million contribution from an anonymous private donor.

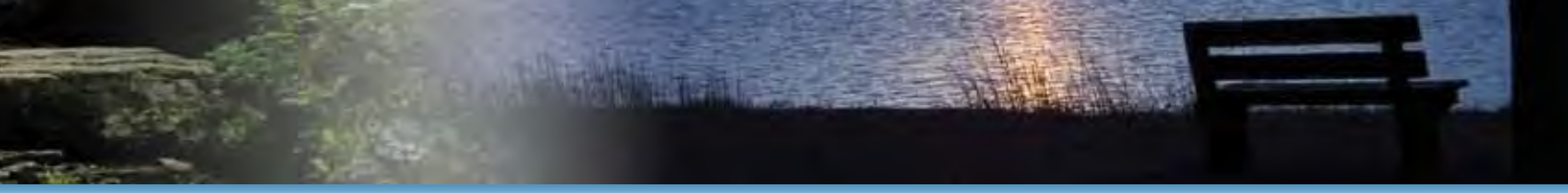
The potential sale was first discussed more than two years ago when Lu Morse, Todd’s father and grand-nephew of the park’s founder, approached Lewis Ledford, director of the state parks system, at a conference in St. Louis.

Ledford, the Morse family and the State Property Office had been in regular negotiations about the property for more than two years. Late in 2006, The Conservation Fund became directly involved as an intermediary with the anonymous donor.

Sen. Walter Dalton led the effort for the \$15 legislative appropriation. A group of local citizens formed an ad hoc organization to build support for the acquisition. That included a strong letter-writing campaign to the governor’s office and the parks system.

The acquisition will add an incredible scenic element and ready-made visitor facilities to a developing state park that has premier natural resource value. The gorge offers 36 rare plant species, 14 rare animal species and an array of rare habitats in a region of spectacular cliffs, fissure caves and unusually rich soils.





With departmental and General Assembly support, funding was provided to implement the recommendations of a 2004 study to raise salaries of all rangers and park superintendents in the state parks system by an average 6.95 percent. Salary grades for those commissioned law enforcement officers will also be adjusted.

In a related move, funding was provided to improve salaries of maintenance personnel, with increases to range from 3.2 to 9.7 percent.

DPR Director Lewis Ledford said the salary adjustments were a long time coming and were the result of hard work by division personnel over a period of almost two decades.

“For the better part of our 90-year history, state park superintendents and rangers have been under-compensated on several fronts when compared to professionals working elsewhere in state government. That problem was exacerbated after we formally entered into the law enforcement field in the late 1980s,” he said.

The salary adjustment will alleviate an inequity in pay that has existed since at least 1988, when law enforcement certification began to be required for rangers and superintendents. The change will also make it easier for the division to recruit and retain entry-level rangers.

The new entry salary for a park ranger is \$28,172 once that ranger is trained and commissioned as a special peace officer.

The pay adjustment was a positive step forward, but ranger salary study is on-going with a “banding” of classifications by the Office of State Personnel, along with a focus on making sure all division salaries are fair and equitable.

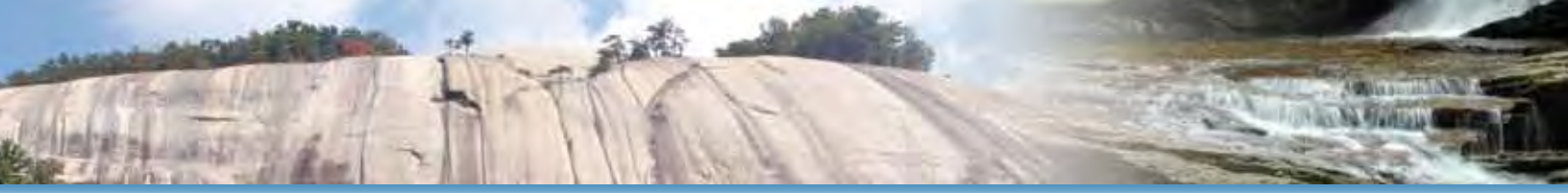
The study found that rangers in North Carolina were being paid 10-14 percent less than their counterparts in other states when performing the broad duties required.

The study noted that it is difficult to compare the job of park rangers and superintendents with other law enforcement jobs such as police officers and deputies, or even those elsewhere within the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, such as marine fisheries and wildlife enforcement officers.

Beyond law enforcement duties, North Carolina rangers are responsible for natural resource management, environmental education and visitor services.

Ranger Salaries Get a Much-Needed Boost





The 2006 N.C. General Assembly authorized two new state natural areas that will be added to the state parks system.

Two rare and highly sensitive habitats will be represented by the Mountain Bog State Natural Area in Avery County and the Sandy Run Savannas State Natural Area in Pender and Onslow counties.

The mountain bogs and the savannas are important additions in the division's New Parks for a New Century initiative, which surveys all known significant sites in the state. Three state natural areas – on the Haw River in Chatham County, at Elk Knob in Watauga County and Beech Creek Bog in Avery County – have also been added to the system as a result of the initiative.

The State Parks Act directs the system to protect representative examples of North Carolina's natural resources.

The state now has 19 such natural areas, which differ from state parks in management style. Some recreational uses are not permitted in particularly sensitive natural areas and conservation is given a very high priority.

North Carolina adds new areas, Moves ahead on other new parks

The Trust for Public Land is helping in negotiations for 102 acres of the Sugar Mountain bog with a grant from the Natural Heritage Trust Fund. And, the division hopes to acquire about 100 acres of Pineola bog with help from The Nature Conservancy. Those will be managed as a group with the Beech Creek Bog.

Mountain bogs are wetlands that support a variety of rare and unique species, but which are highly vulnerable to development because they are level sites in the mountain terrain.

Rare species identified at the sites include the bog turtle, bog fern, cranberry, Gray's lily, large, purple-fringed orchid, purple-leaf willowherb, four-toed salamander and Baltimore checkerspot.

At Sandy Run, a Natural Heritage Trust Fund grant will help acquire 2,206 acres of savanna. The Nature Conservancy owns a portion of the site and will continue management under a memorandum of agreement.

Savannas are known for extraordinary plant diversity and high numbers of rare species. And Sandy Run is also strategically located as a military base buffer at the edge of Camp LeJeune.

Rare species at the site include Venus flytrap, golden sedge, red-cockaded woodpecker, Cooley's meadowrue, yellow fringeless orchid, Carolina goldenrod and rough-leaf loosestrife.





Hickory Nut Gorge

Hickory Nut Gorge State Park in western Rutherford County was authorized in the 2005 session of the General Assembly, making it one of the newest state park projects.

Hickory Nut Gorge scored among the highest of 47 sites originally listed in the division's New Parks for a New Century initiative in terms of recreation potential and biological significance. With 36 rare plant species and 14 rare animal species – such as the white irisette, golden dome goldenrod and pygmy shrew – the gorge is one of the most significant centers of biodiversity in the state. The spectacular cliffs, fissure caves and unusually rich soils create a cluster of important natural heritage sites.

All three of the state's conservation trust funds – Parks and Recreation, Clean Water Management and Natural Heritage – are involved in financing the land acquisitions.



Carvers Creek

Due to the careful stewardship of The Nature Conservancy, the Carvers Creek Sandhills State Park in Cumberland County will have as its centerpiece one of the finest examples of long leaf pine habitat in the country.

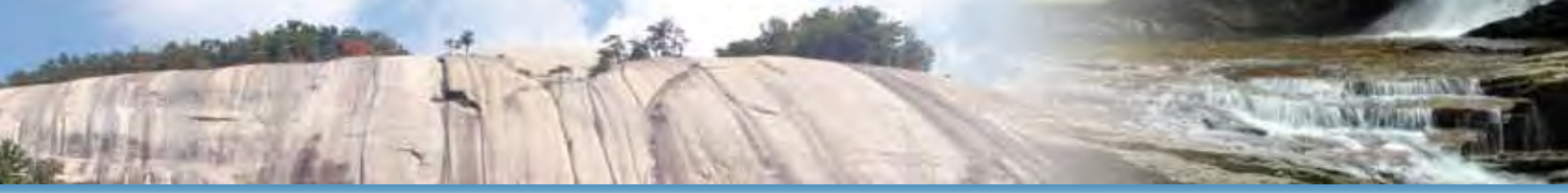
Discussions with the The Nature Conservancy have resulted in their board of directors unanimously agreeing to donate a 1,380-acre estate that was owned by the Rockefeller family to the state Division of Parks and Recreation for addition to Carvers Creek State Park. The Rockefeller Tract, also known as Long Valley Farm, will add historical significance and public use potential that would greatly enhance the park.

To this point, funding has been provided by a Natural Heritage Trust Fund grant and by the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund through certificates of participation – a financing instrument similar to bonds.

The Nature Conservancy will continue to manage the property until division staff is assigned to the new state park.

The Carvers Creek acquisitions are also important buffers against development along the perimeter of Fort Bragg.

Additional property will be necessary to develop facilities, but ultimately Carvers Creek Sandhills will likely offer the full range of state park recreation opportunities including camping, hiking and picnicking.



*North Carolina adds new areas,
Moves ahead on Other New Parks (continued)*

Haw River

Haw River State Park, along with a similar project on the Mayo River, were the first new state parks to be authorized as part of the division's New Parks for a New Century initiative.

The park was authorized in 2003 by the General Assembly and is taking shape in the Browns Summit vicinity along the Rockingham-Guilford county line north of Greensboro. The Guilford Open Space Committee and the Piedmont Land Conservancy are active partners in development of the park.

The Haw River area is attractive as a potential state park site because of natural resource features, especially wetlands, and proximity to the Triad area, which is somewhat underserved by the state parks system.

In late 2003, the system purchased the first tract of 82 acres. And in mid-2005, took possession of the 210-acre Summit conference center from the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina. The 25-year-old facility is being transformed into the state parks system's first residential environmental education center.

Situated on rolling woodlands, the camp-style center has a six-acre lake, amphitheater, ropes course, miles of walking trails, gymnasium, swimming pool and lodge with food service. It has sleeping accommodations for 180. The Haw River Program currently offers residential and day camp-style education courses and group activities.

The Summit Environmental Education Center at Haw River State Park will augment education and interpretive programs offered in all the state parks and will serve as a training facility for the state parks system and other state agencies.

Meanwhile, the land acquisition process for Haw River State Park continues.





Mayo River

More than 1,700 acres have been acquired for the new Mayo River State Park in western Rockingham County.

The park was authorized by the General Assembly in 2003, due in large part to local activism by the Dan River Basin Association.

The association and the Piedmont Land Conservancy have been active partners in identifying potential land acquisitions and gathering support from local governments and civic organizations.

The proposed concept area for the park reaches from the North Carolina-Virginia border south to just above the town of Mayodan, a 12-mile stretch of the river corridor. Along this route, the river is quite scenic and offers exceptional canoe/kayak recreation potential.

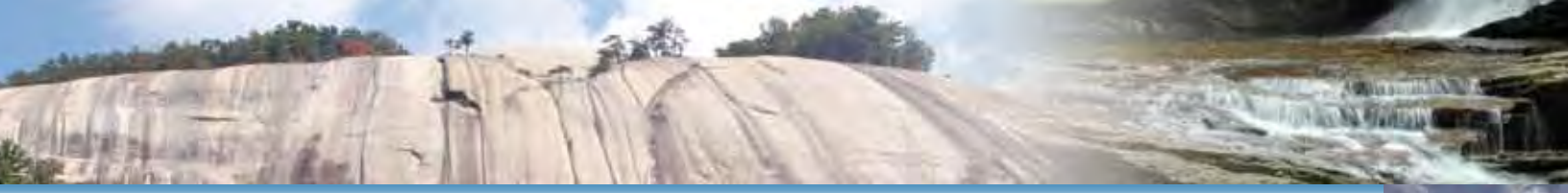
Land acquisition has centered on two areas – a former mill recreation facility known locally as Old Mayo Park just north of Mayodan, and parcels of land near the Virginia border. This river park will likely have two or more recreation “nodes” linked by the river.

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund has set aside money to develop interim facilities at the Old Mayo Park site. The park contains structures of historic significance designed by architect Antonin Raymond.

The \$1.6 million trust fund allocation will pay for period restoration of Raymond’s picnic shelter and cooking shelter, renovation of an existing residence as a ranger contact station and infrastructure including an entrance road, parking area, utilities and toilets.

The new park’s superintendent came on board in 2006.





In 1995, Governor Jim Hunt commented that the creation of a dedicated funding source for the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund was "one of my finest days as governor ... this trust fund will be a legacy for years to come."

10 Years of Accomplishments **PARTF Grant Program**

Jonathan Howes, then Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and now serving as the Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Authority, praised the team effort that played a major role in passage of the legislation. More than 200 organizations supported and lobbied for the dedication of the deed transfer tax to fund partf.

The permanent source of funding created an unparalleled opportunity to make a difference by acquiring park land and building recreational facilities in communities and the state park system across North Carolina. At the same time, the opportunity created high expectations and a challenge to realize the fund's potential while continuing to foster the widespread public support that made PARTF possible.

Parks and Recreation Authority Members

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Mr. Jonathan B. Howes, Chairman | Mr. Timothy L. Aydlett |
| Mr. Wendell Begley | Ms. Lydia Boesch |
| Mr. Cody Grasty | Mr. Eddie Holbrook |
| Mr. Walt Israel | Mr. Ron Kincaid |
| Dr. Kenneth M. Sadler | Ms. Cynthia Tart |
| Ms. Lisa Weston | |



Making a Difference Across North Carolina

The PARTF grant program is a partnership between state and local governments. Cities, counties, and public authorities have made PARTF a very popular program by submitting 874 applications requesting more than \$150 million since 1996.

In turn, the Parks and Recreation Authority awarded 487 grants worth \$92 million to North Carolina counties and municipalities. Local matching funds of over \$156 million, the total value of these PARTF projects is nearly \$250 million.

What have these grants purchased? The answer is as varied as the communities that have applied. One of the strengths of the PARTF grant program is that local governments decide how the funds can best be used at the grass roots level. As a result, PARTF has funded an array of projects, including:

2800+ acres acquired	31 amphitheaters	209 ballfields	85 basketball courts
41 boat ramps / dock facilities	65 campsites	40 community / recreation centers	71 concession building
34 disc golf courses	24 fitness trails	51 multi-purpose fields	327 picnic shelters
207 playgrounds	157 restrooms	133 soccer fields	10 swimming pools
88 volleyball courts	232 hiking / horse / nature trail projects		101 tennis courts

Of course, the numbers don't reflect the benefits to individuals, families, neighborhoods, and communities. Long walks along a greenway, roasting marshmallows after a family picnic, summer concerts at sunset and breath taking landscapes mean a higher quality of life, healthier lifestyles, more cohesive families, stronger communities and amenities that contribute to making North Carolina a great place to live and play.

Widespread Benefits Foster Widespread Support

Because PARTF was established with support from across North Carolina, the proponents also understood the importance of spreading the benefits to many local governments.

In fact, since 1998, the PARTF general statute has stated that geographic distribution of the funds would be considered as grant recipients were selected.

Has the PARTF program met this expectation? Absolutely! The Parks and Recreation Authority, the 11-member board that allocates all PARTF funds, has selected grant recipients in every corner of the state (see map). The grant recipients represent

99 of the state's 100 counties. Of the 342 local governments that have applied since PARTF began, 286 have received a grant.

In other words, five out of every six applicants have received at least one grant, including many unsuccessful applicants that improved their proposals and reapplied. During the past 10 years, only eight cities or counties (about two percent of all applicants) have applied at least three times without receiving a grant.

The Parks and Recreation Authority has also considered population when selecting grant recipients. Although larger communities with greater resources for grant writing may seem to have an advantage, smaller towns have been quite successful.

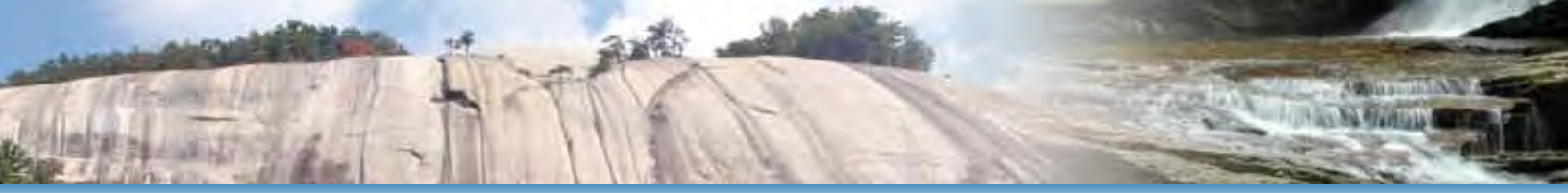


A Bright Future

After 10 years, the PARTF program is a legacy of which all North Carolinians can be proud. PARTF has provided more park and recreation opportunities across the state than any other program.

Last year, local governments proposed park and recreation projects worth over \$80 million, the highest request in PARTF's history. If early indications are correct, local government requests for PARTF funding in 2007 will be even higher. In addition, the state park system has identified needs for land acquisition and construction totaling over \$900 million. Based on the success of the first ten years of the program, PARTF will help state and local governments meet these challenges for many years to come.

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund is the largest single source of funding for building park facilities and buying land for the state parks system. PARTF has provided over \$225 million to protect some of North Carolina's most important natural resources as well as establish visitor facilities to help citizen learn about and enjoy the state's natural heritage. The total amount of PARTF dollars spent on state park capital improvement projects is \$134,642,490. A total of \$93,263,720 has been allocated to purchase nearly 30,000 acres (29,763).



North Carolina has set the goal of creating the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST) that, when complete, will link Clingman's Dome along the western edge of the state in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Jockey's Ridge State Park on the Outer Banks – a distance of over 900 miles.

Since its inception in 1977, more than 400 miles of trail have been constructed, mostly on National Park Service and US Forest Service lands, and are open for public use. Completion of the trail has been hampered by the absence of public lands in the remaining sections.

North Carolina's Mountain-to-Sea Trail Plan

In 2000, the North Carolina General Assembly enacted legislation adding the MST to the state parks system. This legislation authorizes the state to acquire and manage lands for the MST and directs the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation to promote, encourage, and facilitate the establishment of dedicated trails through lands and easements managed by other entities to form a continuous trail across the state.

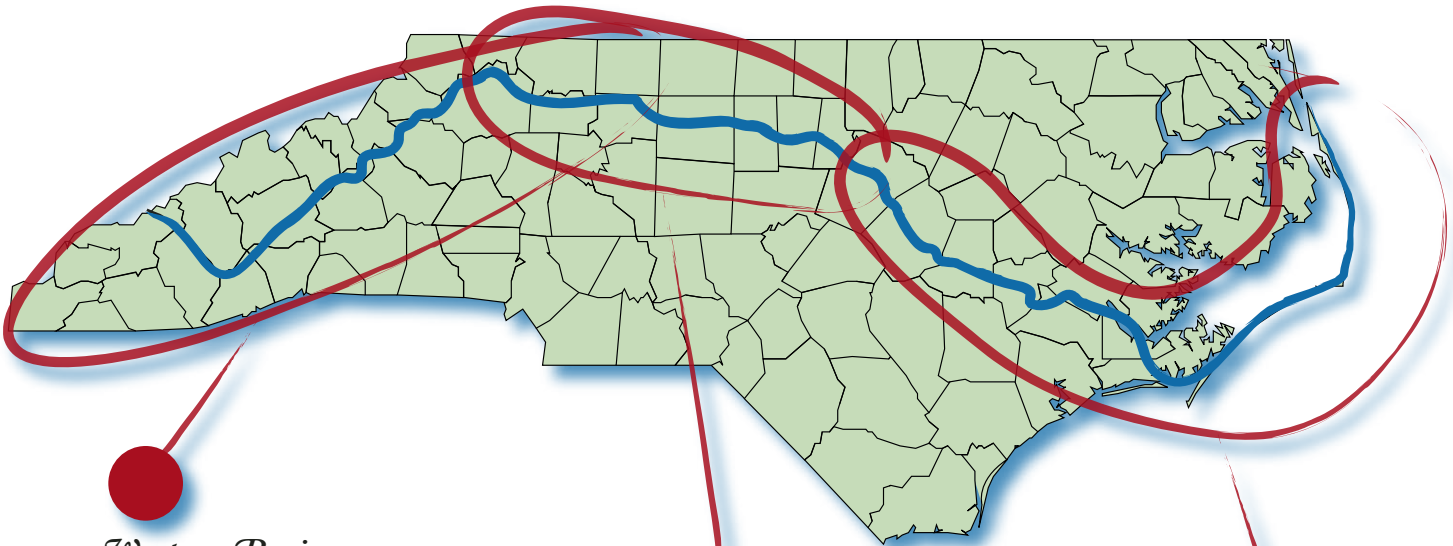
In 2006, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Bill Ross designated as a component of the State Trails System, a 10.6-mile segment of MST located in McDowell County. This segment begins at the North Fork of the Catawba River and ends at the Pinnacle at Linville Gorge on the Blue Ridge Parkway. This trail is the result of the cooperative efforts of the Central Blue Ridge Taskforce, Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, the USDA Forest Service and the State Trails Program.

The secretary also designated a 3.1-mile segment of North Carolina's Mountains-to-Sea Trail in Eno River State Park, the result of the cooperative efforts of the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, Eno River State Park and the State Trails Program.

In 2006, the Division of Parks and Recreation led a comprehensive planning effort that identified primary and alternate routings for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail from the City of Greensboro to Falls Lake in Wake County.



Current Status By Region



Western Region

Clingman's Dome to
Stone Mountain State Park

Total Distance:	332 miles
Miles Open to Public:	284 miles
Included in Comprehensive Regional Plan:	48 miles

Central Region

Stone Mountain State Park to the
Falls Lake Dam In Wake County

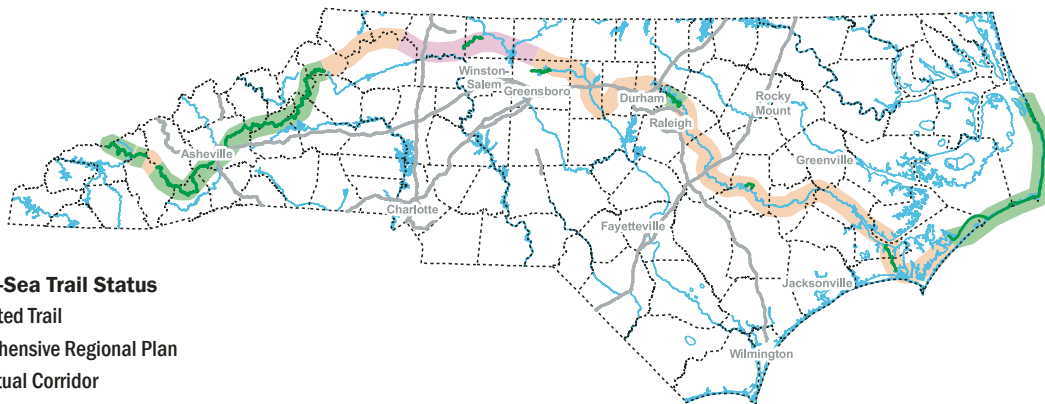
Total Distance:	255 Miles
Miles Open to Public:	45 miles
Included in Comprehensive Regional Plan:	96 miles
Further Study Needed to Complete a Comprehensive Plan:	114 miles

Eastern Region

Falls Lake Dam to
Jockey's Ridge State Park

Total Distance:	313 miles
Miles Open to Public:	81 miles
Comprehensive Regional Plans:	232 miles

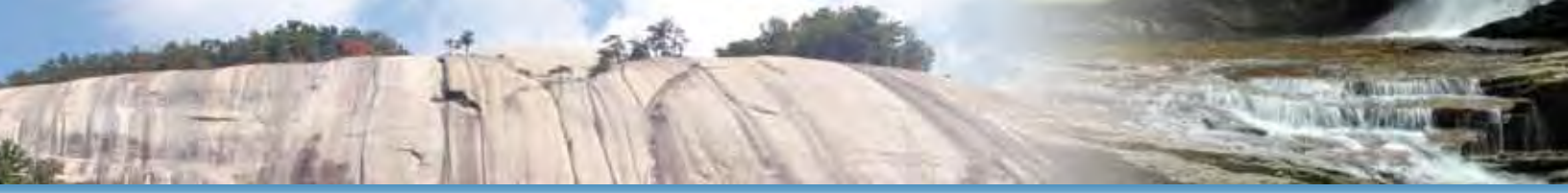
Mountains-to-sea Trail Plan Map



Legend

Mountains-to-Sea Trail Status

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



Haw River Trail



A 70-mile-long river corridor – with state parks anchoring each end – that provides conservation, recreation and opportunities for ecotourism is the vision contained in a memorandum of understanding adopted in 2006 by nine local governments in central North Carolina and the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The agreement formalizes the Haw River Trail, which is already emerging as a major hiking and paddling attraction stretching across five counties.

Bill Ross, secretary of DENR, told the group that its bold vision combined with a strong partnership will allow the Haw River region to design its own future to meet the needs of citizens and the environment.

“That’s the opportunity I see you all seizing in this partnership...The future is so promising,” Ross said.

The Haw River corridor has been a popular recreation draw for canoeists, kayakers and hikers for more than 10 years with informal agreements among recreational users, landowners and local governments for access and use. Advocates of the trail asked the state trails program, administered by the Division of Parks and Recreation, to help coordinate efforts to develop a more formally recognized trail.

That led to the memorandum of understanding that will work to build consensus for management, project priorities, increased funding opportunities, safety standards and infrastructure for a multi-use trail within a 1,000-foot-wide corridor.

The local governments who have signed the agreement are the counties of Alamance, Guilford, Chatham, Orange and Rockingham, the City of Burlington, the City of Graham, the Town of Haw River and the Town of Swepsonville.

Trail Grants



Greenways, trails, boardwalks, kiosks and bridges are among the many projects made possible in 2006 through grants provided from the federally funded Recreational Trails Program (RTP).

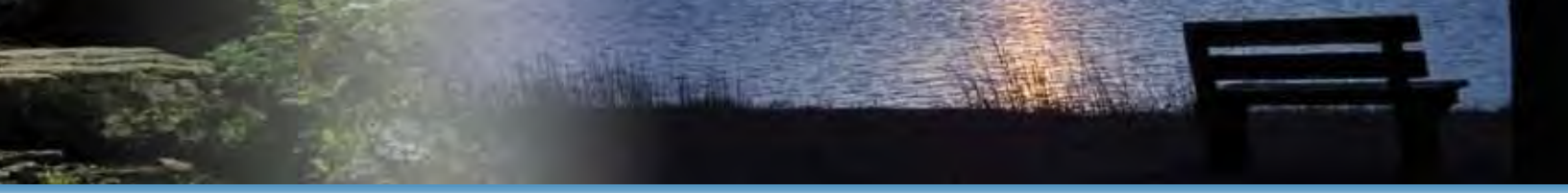
Funding for this program comes from federal gas taxes paid on fuel used by off-highway vehicles. RTP grant funds can be used for new trail construction, trail repair and renovation and trailside facilities.

North Carolina’s share of the RTP was \$1,578,400. The State Trails Program was able to fund all 32 applications requesting almost \$1.46 million.

Meanwhile, through Adopt-a-Trail, the State Trails Program awarded 23 grants in 2006 totaling \$135,000 in 2006 to local governments, volunteer groups and non-profit organizations for a variety of trail projects. The program received 49 applications requesting almost \$224,000.

The grant program was established and funded at a level of \$35,000 annually by the 1987 General Assembly to provide grassroots funding for planning, developing and managing trails across North Carolina.

Due to the overwhelming number of applications for the available \$35,000, the General Assembly in 1996 increased the annual appropriation to \$135,000.



The state parks system is ratcheting up its efforts at “building green.”

For new visitor centers and some other park facilities now on the drawing board, the parks system will seek certification through the national Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program of the U.S. Green Building Council.

The LEED program is promoted as an industry standard for environmentally sustainable construction.

“Building green” is considered a somewhat holistic approach to design and construction that puts a priority on energy efficiency, water savings, thoughtful materials and site selection and a healthful indoor environment.

A new visitor center at South Mountains State Park incorporates many features that are not only touted by the LEED program but are just good common sense.

For example, deep roof overhangs and the extensive use of glass on the building’s north side are calculated to let in more light than heat. The windows frame a fireplace and chimney faced with stone quarried from only 50 miles away in McDowell County. (That saves gasoline costs.)

LEED certification is being sought for new visitor centers planned at Merchants Millpond, Fort Macon and Raven Rock state parks.

Over the years, the parks system has been cautiously implementing some cutting-edge sustainability ideas that now may be adopted on a grander scale as they become more familiar and technology is refined.

For instance, early design plans for a coastal environmental education center at Fort Macon State Park include under-floor, warm-water heating and waterless urinals. A similar heating system was installed earlier in a small toilet building at Cliffs of the Neuse State Park, and Fort Macon has been using the waterless urinals at its bathhouse for some years.

Many sustainable building techniques used in state parks are really quite mundane, but can offer surprising results in cost-savings and preservation of resources.

For instance, landscaping plants are chosen and drainage systems are designed to minimize the need for fertilizers and pesticides.

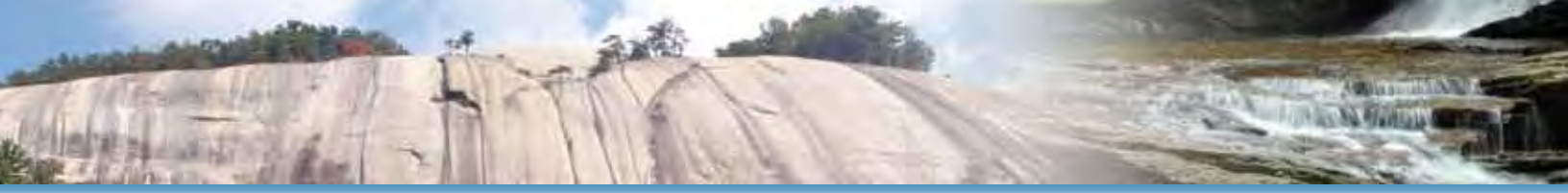
Water meters on all large buildings can detect leaks and ensure that septic drain fields are not oversized, so that less land is disturbed.

The parks system has experimented with passive solar systems in recent years in small buildings such as remote washhouses. A much larger system was incorporated into a new visitor center at Jones Lake State Park which opened last year.

More contractors are likely to embrace the LEED certification program once they conquer fears of the paperwork involved and realize that some type of certification is likely here to stay.

State Parks’ Design & Construction Takes Major “Leap” Forward





State Parks Leads the Way on Environmental Education Certification



Sixty staff members of the state parks system were honored by the state in late 2006 for earning environmental education certification.

The park rangers and superintendents were the largest group by far among the 257 people who earned the certification. More than 95 percent of park rangers and superintendents in North Carolina hold the certification and the remainder are enrolled in the program of the state Office of Environmental Education.

The honorees were acknowledged by Lieutenant Governor Beverly Perdue, Bill Ross, secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and guest speaker Richard Louv, author of the nonfiction book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*.

Certification demands more than 200 hours of training including attendance at seven workshops of 10 hours. Also required are some 110 hours of related training and study, and a 20-hour action partnership.

It generally takes two to three years for a ranger to earn the coveted certification.

On the ground, the intense training for rangers and superintendents leads to better interpretive programs, better exhibits and a more meaningful educational experience for all park visitors.

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 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 school curriculums.

Conservation Trust Honors State Parks System



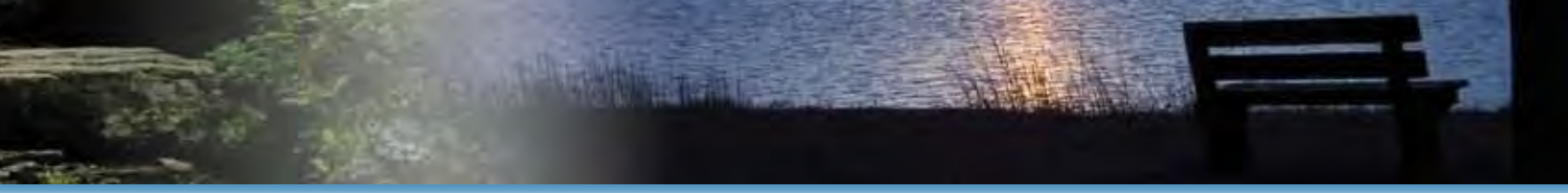
The Conservation Trust of North Carolina, representing the state's 24 land trusts, presented the Division of Parks and Recreation with the 2005 Government Conservation Partner of the Year Award April 20, 2006.

The award honors the agency's work in aggressively planning for the state's future recreation needs by strategically identifying and vigorously pursuing new state parks where there are still available natural lands.

The award is given each year to a state or federal government entity to recognize exemplary work in partnering with local and regional land trusts to protect land and water resources in the state.

The division moved quickly and decisively in early 2005 to save a tract known as "World's Edge" for a new state park in the Hickory Nut Gorge area of Rutherford County, according to the nomination by Kieran Roe, executive director of the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, a land trust partner in the effort.

"Director Ledford seized a very narrow window of opportunity to secure a major land acquisition for the new Hickory Nut Gorge State Park," Roe said. "The division made a steep financial commitment and put its trust in a local



land trust with whom they had not previously dealt to move this new state park forward.

“Because of their leadership, the public will have access to stunning views, beautiful waterfalls and a richly diverse natural area.”

“World’s Edge,” with its stunning scenic vistas and rare geologic and natural communities, is the 1,568-acre centerpiece of the planned park authorized in 2005 by the General Assembly. The land became available in April 2005 with the death of the owner.

An out-of-state developer submitted an offer in early June to buy the property. Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy submitted an offer a few days later after working with The Nature Conservancy, the Open Space Institute and Self-Help Credit Union to raise \$16 million for the property.

Recreation Resources Service (RRS) is a technical assistance program jointly administered by the division and North Carolina State University’s Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management. RRS was involved during 2006 with an economic impact study of state parks, a record number of applications for local grants from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and assistance projects in 96 of the state’s 100 counties.

A report of the economic impact study is in final editing stages. The study involved research teams visiting 15 state parks between July 2005 and June 2006 to interview park visitors about trip spending in categories such as food, lodging, services, recreational equipment, etc. as well as data about length and purpose of visits. To analyze economic impact, the information was fed into an economic input/output analysis program known as IMPLAN, which extrapolates based on annual visitation of the parks.

With its team of regional consultants, RRS regularly helps local governments submit grant proposals for the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and follows through with project inspections, application processing, conversion issues and closeout processing. Last year, local governments proposed park and recreation projects worth over \$80 million, the largest in the trust fund’s history.

Recent changes in the grant process have also increased the involvement of RRS. In the past, agencies were given funds up front and required to justify expenditures at the close of the project. Now, grant funds are distributed through a reimbursement program with RRS consultants processing the reimbursement requests and forwarding them to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for payment.

RRS is currently administering 158 trust fund grants and considering 82 new requests this spring.

RRS annually conducts the North Carolina Municipal and County Parks and Recreation Study. Three research themes (salaries, fees/charges, facilities inventory), budget data and special interest area data are sought from every public parks and recreation department. With roughly 50 percent responding, about 35,000 data points are collected. That is used to generate an executive

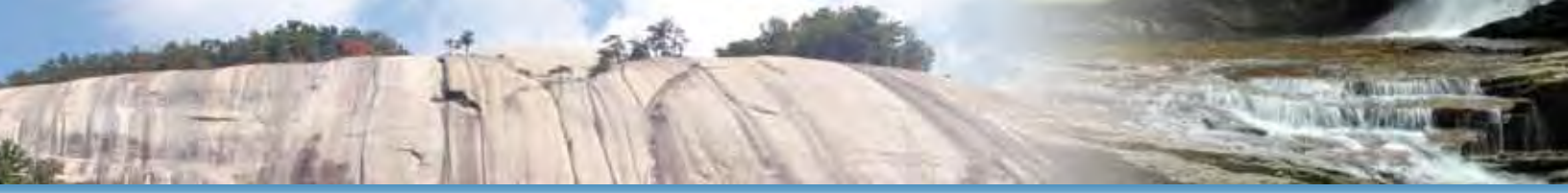
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Consulting Services Assist Local Governments



NC STATE UNIVERSITY



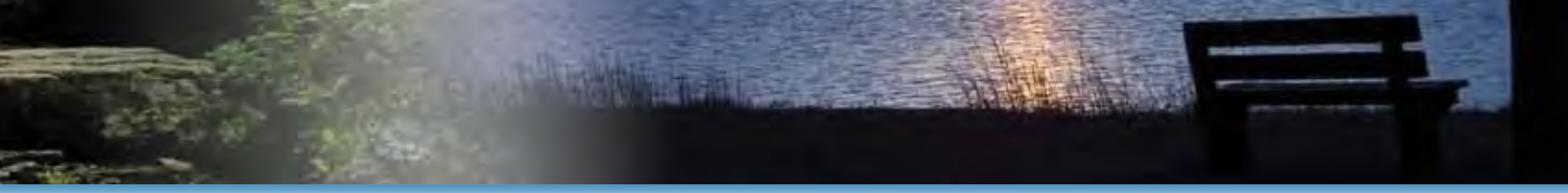


Natural Resources Protection Efforts Continue Throughout State Parks System

- With funding from REI and assistance from Dr. Larry Borden at UNC-Charlotte, Crowders Mountain State Park staff established a native grass area near the visitor center. The area will be included in a new fire management program developed jointly with the Division of Forest Resources that will address wildfire concerns, the park's need for assistance in prescribed burns and the aim to restore a larger landscape to a more representative example of piedmont mixed pine-hardwood forest.
- Control plans for invasive species were advanced at Hanging Rock (Chinese privet and tree-of-heaven), Lake Norman (Chinese privet) and Stone Mountain (bamboo) state parks. At Stone Mountain, staff developed control protocols and held the first of a series of annual training workshops targeting the species.
- Contributions to natural resource inventories were significant at Mount Jefferson State Natural Area, where Appalachian State University student Derek Poindexter completed a major review of vegetation, including rare species, and at Dismal Swamp State Natural Area, where staff and botanists from local universities and the Natural Heritage Program completed a vegetation survey and established permanent study plots. Also, staff began biological inventory at the new Mayo River State Park in the spring of 2006.
- Approximately 500 stems of Schweinitz's sunflower were relocated to Hanging Rock State Park in March 2006 following salvage from a DOT project adjacent to the park. This species is listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as endangered and was last documented from the park in 1948.
- With the cooperation of the Carolina Climbers Coalition, replacement of all of the fixed anchors on climbing routes across the south face of Stone Mountain was completed. This involved mapping and removing approximately two dozen old anchors and installing state-of-the-art anchors. More than 300 anchors on approximately 60 routes across the south face of Stone Mountain have now been retrofitted with modern hardware, substantially decreasing resource impacts and increasing climber safety.
- Under a \$290,000 grant from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, two sections along Big Sandy Creek at Stone Mountain State Park were restored to natural conditions, significantly decreasing sedimentation and improving aquatic habitat. In a separate project, as a followup to the previous stream restoration project along the East Prong Roaring River, repairs were made to many of the in-stream structures, which are now believed to be substantially more stable.
- In cooperation with the staff at Corrections Enterprises, natural resources' staff designed a prototype National Park Service food storage locker for use in campsites. Units are expected to be in place by summer 2007. The partnership also developed one- and two-can versions of the "Paw-Proof" trash cans for use throughout the system.

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- The division continued the long process of permitting and planning for the removal of the Pleasant Green dam, which has since culminated in the restoration of natural flow to more than two miles of the river upstream of Pleasant Green Road at Eno River State Park.
- In the process of writing a plan for cultural resource management at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area, Natural Resources Protection and park staff rediscovered the foundation of the Glebe House, an 18th century homesite now disguised by mature forest.
- Park staff and Natural Resources Protection staff collaborated on a vista management plan for the area in front of the observation deck on Oconeechee Mountain, which is scheduled to be reconstructed this year.



*Consulting Services Assists
Local Governments
...continued from page 17*

summary and is used to generate special request studies, for instance salary and fee comparisons.

Technical assistance to individual counties during the year included:

- Comprehensive system-wide parks master plans for Pamlico County and Wrightsville Beach.
- Planning and public involvement assistance for the Town of Wilson Mills, Caswell County, Watauga County, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy (Transylvania County) and Yadkin River Heritage Park Task Force (Caldwell and Surry Counties).
- National Recreation and Park Association accreditation assistance to Durham.
- Establishing a statewide database of land dedication ordinances, master plans, community surveys and other similar documents.

Other research efforts by RRS staff included an economic impact study of the City of Washington's waterfowl festival and a study for performance benchmarks for parks and recreation agencies in partnership with the North Carolina Recreation and Park Association and East Carolina University.

Annually, RRS sponsors continuing education opportunities for parks and recreation professionals and citizen board members. Last year, these included a five-part Recreation Resources Teleconference series in nine locations. Topics included: Building Partnerships for Healthy Communities, Updated Senior Programs, Basic Program Assessment, ADA Accessibility Guidelines and Performance Management.

Also 81 people attended the

National Playground Safety Institute, a training course offered by the National Recreation and Park Association and hosted by RRS. And, RRS coordinated the 59th Annual Municipal and County Recreation Directors Conference with more than 75 directors attending the two-day event.

Citizen board trainings were conducted for Chatham County, Town of Boiling Springs Lakes, Town of Warsaw, Town of Pikeville and Hatteras Village Civic Center Committee.

Designed by Brandon Whitesell, Creative Services, DENR



NORTH CAROLINA
Division of Parks and Recreation
2006-2007 *Annual Report*



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