

NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS AND RECREATION

2013 ANNUAL REPORT

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The cover photo of Hanging Rock, the 2012 State Park of the Year, was taken by Joseph W. Nienstedt.



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Lewis Ledford, Director of N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

North Carolina state parks continue to be an affordable and popular escape for our residents and guests. The North Carolina state parks system staff works diligently to provide quality recreational experiences, safe and clean facilities and protect North Carolina's most outstanding natural resources for our more than 14.2 million visitors.

Continued record attendance demonstrates that our state parks and state recreation areas fulfill a desire for affordable family recreation and a meaningful outdoor experience. A direct result of this high visitation is the strong contributions that state parks make to North Carolina's tourism economy as well as the economies of local communities.

Given recent and current economic conditions, we fill a valuable and much-needed place for people to escape and have fun.

We are eternally grateful for the hard work of our friends groups, park advisory committee members, volunteers, land conservation partners, local parks and recreation programs and so many others.

In this report, you will learn more about the many accomplishments and challenges we faced in 2012. They included land protection, grant awards, major construction projects, environmental education programs and increased use of new technology.

North Carolina has a deep-rooted tradition of protecting its stunning natural resources and making them accessible at low cost to citizens and visitors. That would not be possible without all of us working together on their behalf.

Every visit to a state park is an opportunity for the entire family to learn and to interact with natural and cultural history. The exhibits, visitor centers, trails and other amenities complement self-discovery and interpretive programs offered by our rangers and broaden the visitor experience.



Our new visitor centers provide a focal point for the park and a gathering place for visitors. The centers are places to learn about the state parks and their natural resources. They offer an integrated exhibit hall, a teaching auditorium and classrooms. They are also great places to conduct civic functions and all sorts of community events.

I wish to commend to you the dedication, hard work and commitment demonstrated each and every day by our park rangers, maintenance staff, administrative staff in Raleigh and across the state and the seasonal employees who help us make it through peak seasons. These are hallmark traits



Hanging Rock State Park

we will celebrate in 2016 during the 100-year anniversary of the state parks system. The 100th anniversary also represents a crossroads for our state parks system. While we are excited to celebrate the history and legacy of state parks in North Carolina, we also have a special responsibility and opportunity to plan for its future. We hope the anniversary will trigger even greater public support and involvement so we can ensure our most important natural and recreational resources are properly protected and available for generations to come.

As this report goes to press, the General Assembly is finalizing the 2014-2015 biennial budget. While an important funding source of the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund is being redirected, there is strong support for the trust fund to be continued, included being supplemented with a \$24 million direct recurring appropriation, payment and relief of future bond indebtedness (COPS), and other support for parks as a

whole. These are challenging budgetary times. Please convey appreciation to your members of the General Assembly and the administration for their support of parks and conservation.

I hope you will take the time to read and learn more about our efforts to improve the visitor experience, enhance natural resource management efforts, increase planning and expand recreational opportunities across our state parks system.

We take great pride in the work we do and hope all our citizens have the opportunity to come visit our state parks and enjoy something naturally wonderful in the days and years ahead.

Sincerely,

Lewis Ledford





HANGING ROCK STATE PARK IS THE NORTH CAROLINA 2012 PARK OF THE YEAR

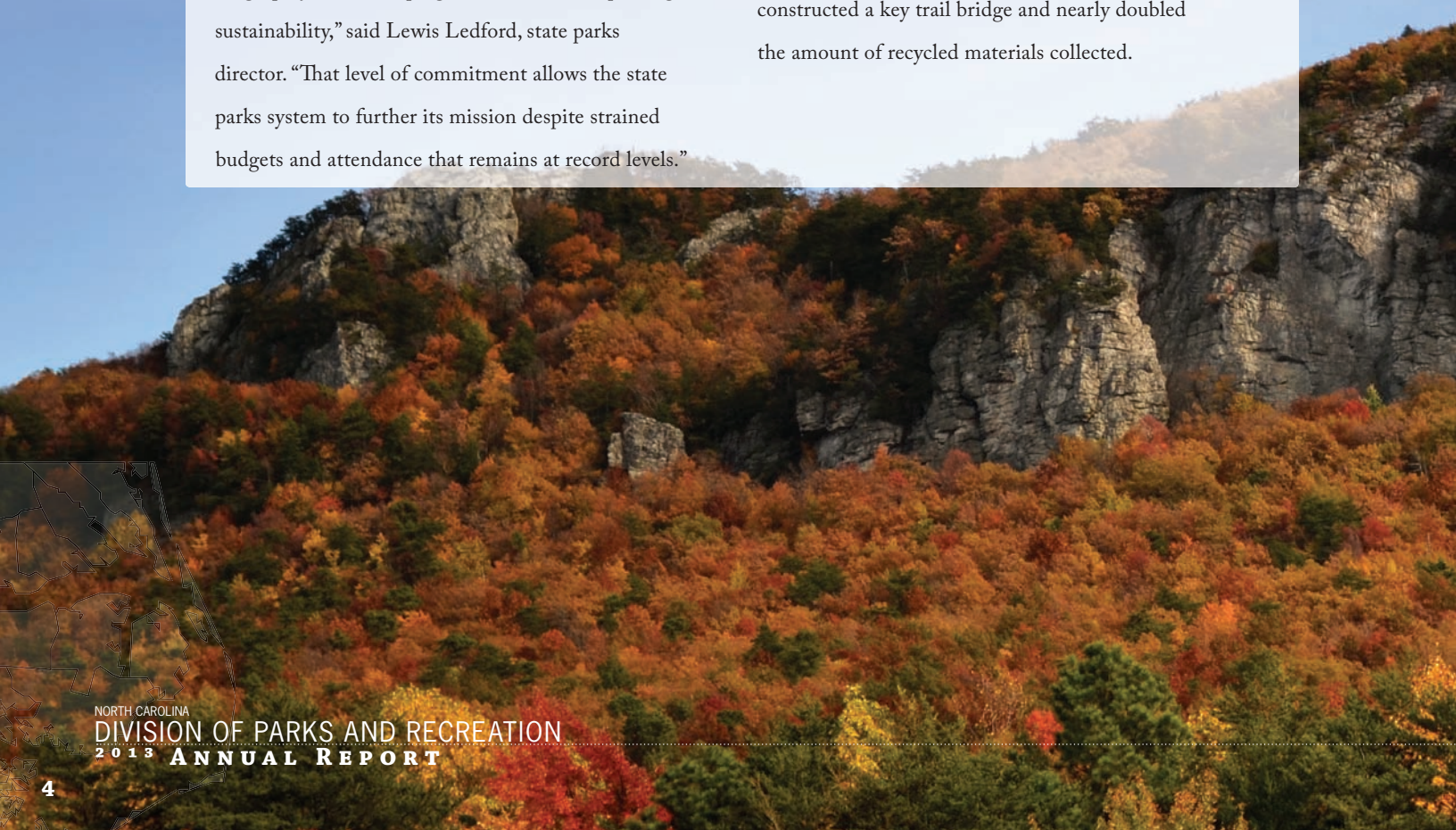


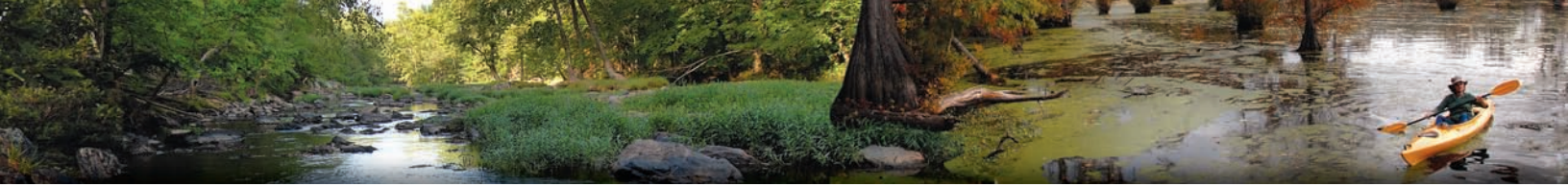
Hanging Rock State Park in Stokes County has been named the North Carolina 2012 Park of the Year by the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation.

The park was chosen for its “exemplary contribution to the North Carolina state parks mission of stewardship, public service and education,” and specifically recognized for initiatives in education and interpretation, volunteerism and sustainability.

“Hanging Rock State Park exceeded expectations during 2012 with hard work by its staff tackling tough projects, developing volunteers and improving sustainability,” said Lewis Ledford, state parks director. “That level of commitment allows the state parks system to further its mission despite strained budgets and attendance that remains at record levels.”

During the year, Hanging Rock improved educational displays, presented nearly 200 interpretive programs and staged a 75th anniversary celebration with 93 past and present employees. The park strengthened a relationship with the Friends of Sauratown Mountains support group. Volunteer hours spent improving trails and staffing the visitor center increased 58 percent. Park rangers and maintenance staff rerouted trails, constructed a key trail bridge and nearly doubled the amount of recycled materials collected.



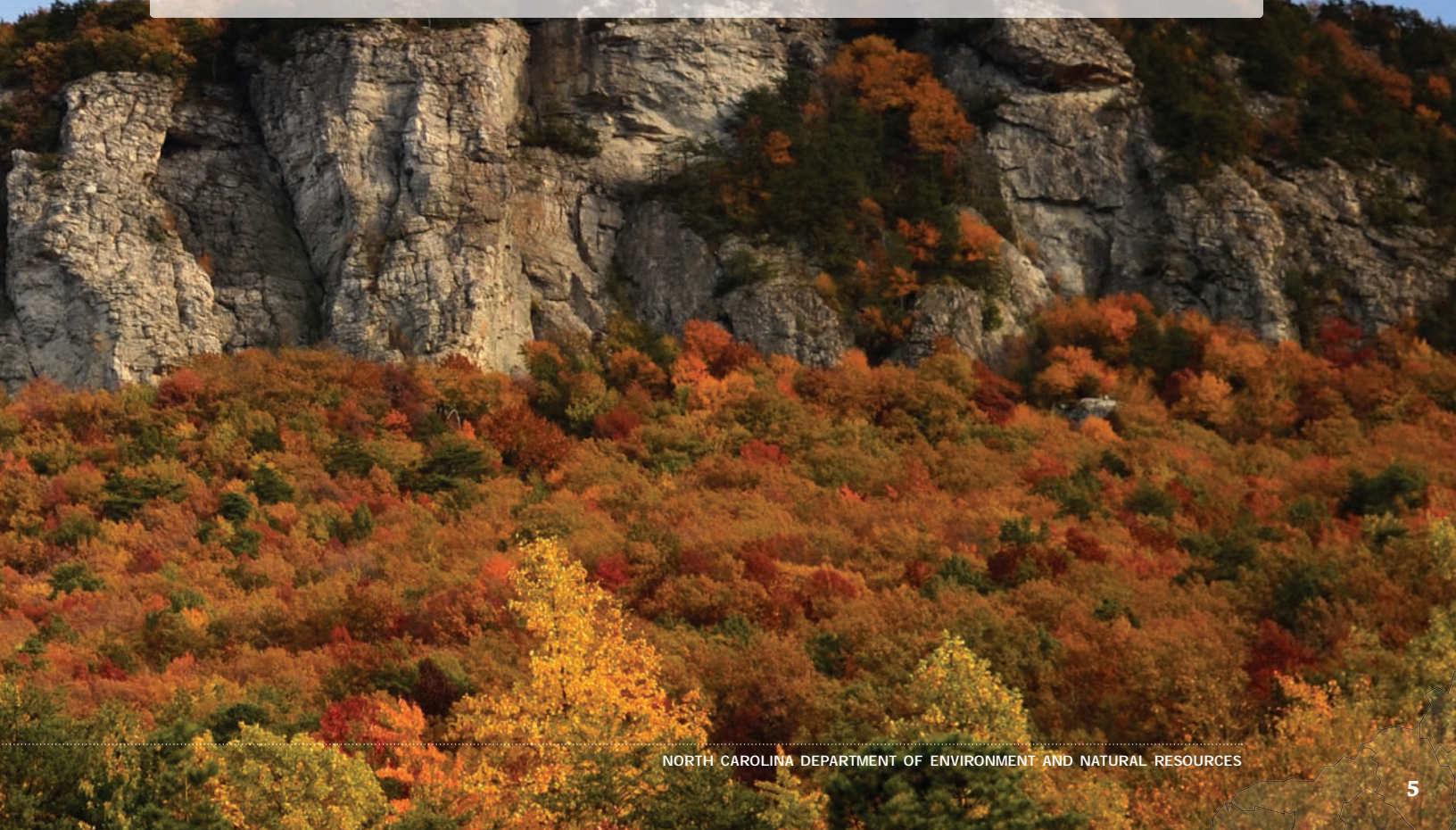


The state parks system began choosing a Park of the Year in 2010 with nominations from each of the four districts. Each of the state parks and state recreation areas submits an annual report that is objectively scored on progress in recreation, natural resource protection, sustainability, public safety and environmental education. Final judging is by

senior and peer administrators. To honor the Park of the Year, a medallion is attached to a hiking staff that is passed to the current award recipient each year. Lake Waccamaw State Park in Columbus County was honored in 2011.

Developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, Hanging Rock State Park is one

of North Carolina's oldest parks. Until recently, it was under the direction of Superintendent Dave Cook. In October, Cook was named north district superintendent. The park encompasses 7,049 acres and reported 443,899 visitors in 2012.





RECORD-LEVEL ATTENDANCE AT NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS CONTINUED IN 2012

The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation announced that visitation at North Carolina's state parks and state recreation areas continued at a record level in 2012, with 14.2 million visits, matching attendance levels set in 2009 and 2011.

Eighteen state parks and state recreation areas reported increases in attendance in 2012. Fort Macon State Park in Carteret County reported the highest attendance at 1.24 million visits, down slightly from 1.29 million last year.

A 2008 economic study revealed that travelers spend an average \$23.56 a day to enjoy the state parks. The analysis by North Carolina State University's Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management estimated the state parks system's total annual economic impact at more than \$400 million. The complete study can be found at: http://www.ncparks.gov/News/special/economic_impact.php.

A new economic impact analysis for state parks is planned in 2013.

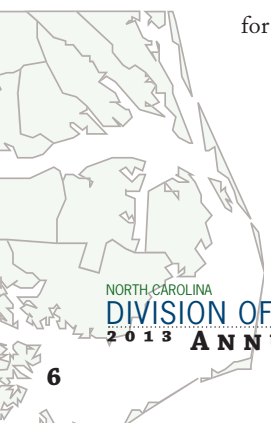
During the past 25 years, the state parks system has seen a dramatic 87 percent increase in visitation. In 1987, 7.6 million people visited North Carolina state parks and state recreation areas.

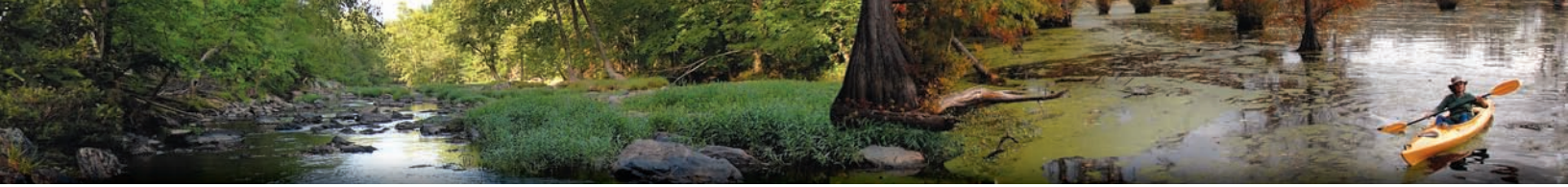
Several state parks that reported higher attendance in 2012 were able to offer improvements and new amenities to visitors. A new 7,100-square-foot visitor center and related facilities were dedicated at Gorges State Park, and the park experienced a 22 percent increase in visitation.

Improvements in facilities at Chimney Rock State Park contributed to a 36 percent jump in attendance, while William B. Umstead State Park in Wake County, which improved parking and a popular trailhead area, recorded visitation up 33 percent.

Other parks with significant increases in visitation include Hammocks Beach State Park in Onslow County (57 percent), Haw River State Park in Guilford and Rockingham counties (31 percent), Jordan Lake State Recreation Area in Chatham County (35 percent) and Lake Waccamaw State Park in Columbus County (53 percent).

The state parks system manages more than 217,000 acres within state parks, state recreation areas and a system of state natural areas dedicated to conservation of rare resources. Through its New Parks for a New Century initiative, six new state parks have been added to the system since 2003.





FORT MACON STATE PARK REENACTMENTS AND CANNONADE HIGHLIGHT 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF BATTLE

Reenactments of the Civil War battle and capture of Fort Macon and a spectacular night cannonade dramatized the 150th anniversary of the event in April at Fort Macon State Park.

Rangers, Friends of Fort Macon volunteers and more than 200 re-enactors were involved in the principal two-day event, which also featured living history demonstrations of Federal and Confederate troops, musket firings, drills, Civil War music and children's activities.

The Fort Macon event was similar to other observances to be held throughout the country between 2011-15 to mark the sesquicentennial of the Civil War. It was one of the largest sesquicentennial events in North Carolina and the largest reenactment in the state park's history.

The siege of Fort Macon began on March 23, 1862, with the first demand by the Federal forces of Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside for the surrender of the fort held by Confederate forces of Col. Moses J. White. White refused, forcing Burnside's forces to begin a siege that culminated on April 25 in a bombardment by Federal artillery positioned in the sand dunes about three-quarters of a mile away, supported by U.S. Navy gunboats offshore. The 11-hour bombardment ended with the fort heavily damaged and in danger of being destroyed by the explosion of its own gunpowder magazines. Col. White had no choice but to

surrender the fort the following morning. Federal troops occupied the fort for the rest of the war.

Re-enactors portrayed members of both Federal and Confederate regiments with the 1st North Carolina Volunteers/11th Regiment acting as host unit. Staff of North Carolina Historic Sites aided in the artillery cannonade, along with personnel from Fort Fisher State Historic Site and Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site. Other sponsors included Atlantic Beach, Morehead City, the Morehead City Marlins, and the Beaufort Historical Association.





GORGES STATE PARK DEDICATES NEW VISITOR CENTER, DAY-USE FACILITIES

A new 7,100-square-foot visitor center at Gorges State Park in Transylvania County, designed to national green building standards, along with two picnic areas and maintenance facilities, was dedicated in October.

Similar to visitor centers built at 21 state parks and state recreation areas since 1994, the facility at Gorges offers a unique design fitted to the park's mountain setting, and features an exhibit hall, teaching auditorium and classroom along with administrative offices. Two day-use picnic areas with shelters were built nearby, and three separate parking areas offer space for 160 vehicles. The project represents an investment of \$6.4 million from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the principal funding source for state park capital projects and land acquisition.

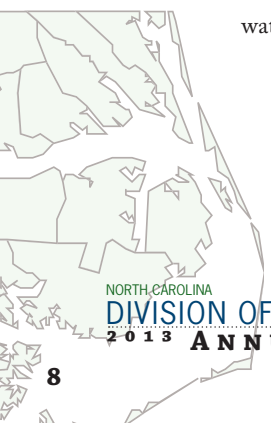
Museum-quality exhibits in the exhibit hall and throughout the visitor center explore the rich natural and cultural history of the park, incorporating a manmade waterfall. Gorges State Park is

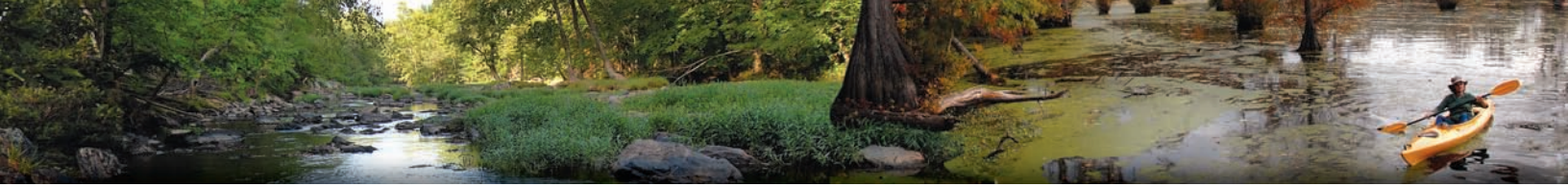
situated on the dramatic Blue Ridge Escarpment of the southwestern mountains and offers more waterfalls than any North Carolina state park. Its climate resembles a temperate rain forest, supporting at least 46 species of rare plants and animals. The area was used for hunting and subsistence farming by generations of mountain families and later purchased as a protected watershed by Duke Energy Co.

The state parks system has increased its commitment to sustainability by seeking certification for all large projects by the national Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program of the U.S. Green Building Council. Features at the Gorges State Park visitor center that will contribute to certification include active and passive solar

energy systems, geothermal energy systems, rainwater collection and water-saving fixtures and natural landscaping. The structure was designed by Pearce, Brinkley, Cease and Lee PA of Asheville, and the general contractor was Cooper Construction Co. of Hendersonville.

The project marks the completion of the first phase of development under the park's 2003 master plan. The plan also included infrastructure for long-term development and a loop road into the park's interior to eventually serve camping areas and additional hiking opportunities. Gorges State Park opened with interim facilities in 2001 and served 112,000 visitors in 2012.





FRIENDS OF STATE PARKS HOLDS STATEWIDE CONFERENCE

Collaboration, fundraising and strategic planning were among objectives examined during the second-ever statewide conference of the Friends of State Parks (FSP). The event, which occurred just prior to this reports deadline, was held in the new Nature Research Center in Raleigh.

Members of the parks support group as well as leaders of friends groups dedicated to specific state parks heard 14 speakers on a broad range of topics along with brief addresses by Brad Ives, assistant secretary for natural resources in the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, N.C. House Speaker Thom Tillis and N.C. Senate Majority Leader Harry Brown.

It was an opportunity for supporters of individual parks, FSP members, park advisory committee representatives and state parks administrators to exchange ideas on broadening support for the mission of the agency.



Friends of State Parks President David Pearson moderated the 2013 conference.



N.C. Senate Majority Leader Harry Brown

A legislative reception held at the Nature Research Center.





LAKE WACCAMAW STATE PARK DEDICATES EXHIBIT OF RARE WHALE FOSSIL

Lake Waccamaw State Park unveiled in August a new exhibit created to display a rare, 2.75 million-year-old whale fossil discovered in the bay lake in 2008. The fossil, pulled from a limestone outcropping in the lakebed, is the skull of a Balaenula whale.

A member of the baleen family – a class of whales that includes today’s humpback and right whale species – the animal measured approximately 20 feet long and lived during the late Pliocene or early Pleistocene eras. The skull is the most complete Balaenula fossil known in the world and one of the first discovered in North America.

In early 2008, a lake resident and supporter of the state park found the seven-foot-long fossil near the shoreline in waist-deep water. Park rangers, divers of the Underwater Archaeology Branch of the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources and researchers from the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences collaborated to recover the pieces of skull and jaw.

Paleontologists from the Virginia Museum of Natural History assisted in separating the skull from the limestone in which it was encased and in

assembling the components. The project was also supported by Friends of Lake Waccamaw State Park and the North Carolina Museum of Forestry.

The limestone deposit that runs through the Lake Waccamaw area has yielded fossils in the past, including those of prehistoric horses and giant sloths. Until a few thousand years ago, much of the area surrounding the bay lake in southeastern North Carolina was covered by the ocean.

The exhibit is mounted in the visitor center lobby near the entrance to the park’s exhibit hall, which offers an array of displays on the state park’s natural resources and cultural history.





CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK OPENS IMPROVED FACILITIES

Chimney Rock State Park dedicated improvements to its elevator and trail access facilities in June that allow visitors to reach the signature rock spire and nearby natural features.

The two-year project resulted in a complete renovation of a 1940s-era elevator that carries visitors up 26 stories to the park's principal features as well as replacement of the Outcroppings Trail, a companion stairway that also allows access to summit destinations. The projects were completed by contractors supported by state park staff and Chimney Rock Management LLC, the private firm that operates visitor facilities within the Chimney Rock section of the 5,700-acre state park.

The dedication marked completion of a long-term effort to improve infrastructure at Chimney Rock, the centerpiece of the state park. Chimney Rock had been a private tourist destination before it was incorporated into the state park in 2007. The Morse family started developing the popular attraction in 1902.

To furnish elevator service to the mountain's summit in 1949, workers labored for 18 months to blast through solid granite, creating a 258-foot elevator shaft reached through a 198-foot-long tunnel. The Sky Lounge entrance facility at the top was then built as a gateway to the Chimney Rock feature. The elevator renovation project repaired or replaced almost every part, including the original elevator car and an emergency evacuation stair system.

The Outcroppings Trail, a series of 491 stairs that rise 260 feet in elevation, was reopened to the public in April, replacing a network of wooden stairways gradually created in the first half of the last century. The project involved

four helicopter airlift missions to transport construction materials. Steel columns were carefully lowered between rock outcroppings and large trees onto new concrete footings.

Since 2007, the state parks system has invested \$5.1 million in renovations at Chimney Rock, most of it provided through the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the principal funding source for state parks capital projects and land acquisition. The improvements have also included replacement of water-supply tanks on the mountain's summit, structural repairs and repaving of the park's entrance bridge. Also, the Sky Lounge and restrooms at two sites were modified, making them fully accessible and adding sustainable water-saving features.





KERR LAKE STATE PARK DEDICATES EXPANDED BOATING/FISHING FACILITIES

An expanded 8.5-acre boating access and tournament event area opened in May at the Nutbush Bridge access of Kerr Lake State Recreation Area.



The project at the site of a former camping area includes four new ramps, courtesy docks, a 600-square-foot restroom facility and parking areas for 165 vehicles, including 135 spaces for boat trailers and five fully-accessible spaces. Separate docking

and event space is set aside for events such as fishing tournaments, which are popular at the 50,000-acre lake.

The project was supported by the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. Since its creation in 1994, the trust fund has provided more than \$20 million for improvements

at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area. Boat access is available at each of the eight recreation sites, and more than 600 individual campsites are available through the state parks' reservations system.

HANGING ROCK STATE PARK CONDUCTS TRAIL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

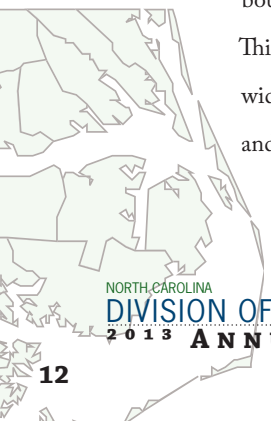
Hanging Rock State Park re-routed and upgraded a section of the popular Tory's Den Trail near the park's western boundary in April. The existing trail was not closed during the project. Hanging Rock State Park is in Stokes County about 30 miles northwest of Winston-Salem.

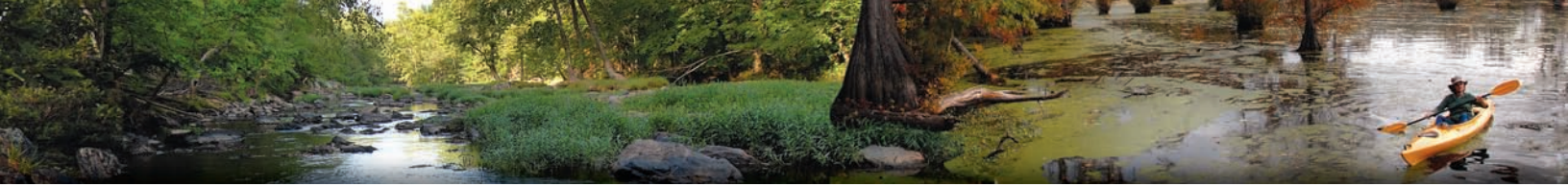
A section of Tory's Den Trail of just over one mile also serves as part of the Sauratown Loop Trail for both hikers and equestrians, which continues beyond the park boundary onto private property. This section was re-routed with a wider corridor, a more gentle grade and it incorporates features to

shed stormwater runoff and reduce erosion, which can pollute streams and damage trees and native plants.

The trail project was completed through a contract with YRU Contracting of Cambridge, Idaho. State park staff constructed a necessary bridge. The project was supported through the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. In recent

years, the trust fund has supported improvement projects of the Moore's Wall Loop, Window Falls and Lower Cascades trails as well as major maintenance of historical CCC structures in the park.





MORROW MOUNTAIN STATE PARK DEDICATES NEW BOATHOUSE IN APRIL

A new recreational boathouse that provides opportunities for visitors to explore Lake Tillery by canoe and paddleboat, was dedicated in April at Morrow Mountain State Park.

The 986-square-foot boathouse replaced a structure built in the early 1950s that was weakened by shoreline erosion and closed in 2010. It offers paddleboat slips and a storage area for canoes, both of which can be rented by visitors, as well as all-season restrooms and a concession stand.

The structure incorporates recycled stone used in the original boathouse and stone stored elsewhere in the park that was quarried onsite in the 1930s by workers with the Civilian Conservation Corps and combined with red cedar and plank siding. The \$1.1 million project funded by the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund also included shoreline



stabilization to prevent erosion and a new courtesy dock at the public boat launch. The designer was Smith Sinnott Architecture of Raleigh and general contractor was Kearey Builders Inc. of Statesville.

Established in 1939, Morrow Mountain encompasses 4,496 acres in Stanly County. The park reported visitation of 372,500 in 2012.

LAKE JAMES STATE PARK OPENS NEW HIKING TRAIL AT PADDY'S CREEK AREA

A new, 3.6-mile hiking trail opened in the Paddy's Creek Area of Lake James State Park in Burke and McDowell counties.

The Mill's Creek Trail loop begins and ends at the parking area serving the new picnic grounds and swim beach in the Paddy's Creek Area. The addition of the Mill's Creek Trail brings the total to six miles of hiking trails within the Paddy's Creek Area that opened in September 2010. There are currently three other trails covering 2.5 miles in that area.

Lake James State Park continues to develop recreation opportunities at the Paddy's Creek Area, created from 2,915 acres acquired in 2005 from Crescent Resources Inc.



The trail network at Lake James State Park is expanding with several projects underway.



NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS AND AMERICORPS PARTNER TO IMPROVE LONGLEAF PINE FOREST

A crew of AmeriCorps volunteers planted 13,000 wiregrass plants in November to improve Singletary Lake State Park's longleaf pine forest and its habitat for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.

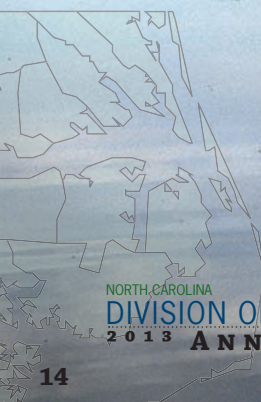


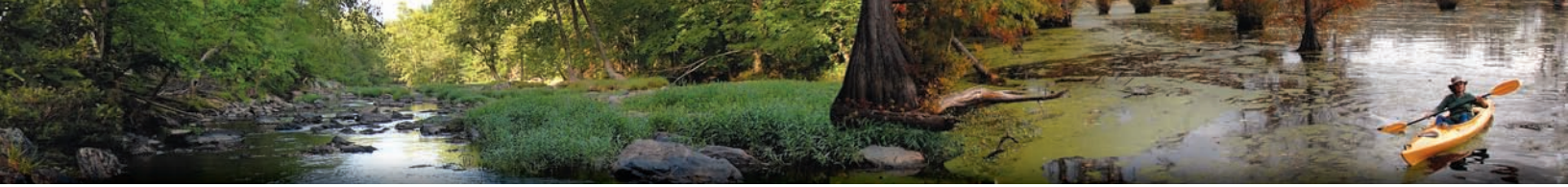
The partnership also involved Quail Unlimited, which provided a \$2,500 grant set aside to nurture warm-season grasses in areas off-limits to hunting. The wiregrass plants originated at the North Carolina Forest Service's Claridge Nursery in Goldsboro.

Singletary Lake State Park in Bladen County has two known red-cockaded woodpecker colonies. The species prefers an "open" longleaf pine forest with few mid-story trees such as oak. A longleaf pine ecosystem is best supported by a wiregrass ground cover and regular prescribed burns. Establishing wiregrass is a labor-intensive process

of planting by hand, and the team also removed small hardwoods from the state park's longleaf pine forest.

2012 was the third year the state parks system has qualified to host an AmeriCorps volunteer team. The federal program for men and women age 18-24 dispatches teams throughout the states for up to 11 months to perform about 1,700 hours of community service. The nine-person team spent more than six weeks in North Carolina's state parks, participating in prescribed burns, preparing fire lines and removing exotic species and hardwoods in longleaf pine areas.





NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS MOBILE APPLICATION AMONG MOST POPULAR OF ITS TYPE

The free Pocket Ranger® mobile application for North Carolina's state parks, developed for smartphones by ParksByNature Network, has been ranked among the top 100 free navigation applications by Apple's iTunes.

Apple's iTunes ranked the North Carolina State Parks Pocket Ranger Mobile App 43rd in popularity, based on the number of times the application has been downloaded.

The mobile application, or app, was introduced in May 2011 by the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation in partnership with Friends of State Parks and ParksByNature Network. The app was among the first such comprehensive mobile applications for state parks systems created by New York-based ParksByNature.

The downloadable application for iPhone and Android smartphones allows visitors to plan trips and explore state parks with

details readily at hand about park locations, trails, facilities, reservations, events and special news alerts. It also allows GPS-aided, state-of-the-art navigation of state parks, storage of detailed topographic maps and enhanced interactive features for social media. An "alert" feature supplies GPS coordinates to designated contacts in case of emergencies.

The mobile app for North Carolina state parks can be downloaded from the iTunes Store and Android's Market by searching NC State Parks or NC Pocket Ranger or by logging on to www.PocketRanger.com.





NORTH CAROLINA'S STATE TRAILS PROGRAM

The North Carolina trails program's mission, as mandated in the North Carolina Trails System Act, includes establishing trails in natural, scenic areas and in and near urban areas that are coordinated with and complemented by future and existing local trails. Program services include technical assistance for all types of trails to non-profits, local, state, and federal governments; sustainable trail planning, design, construction, and training; trail system assessment and consulting services for state park units; and management of the federal Recreation Trails Program and state Adopt-A-Trail grant programs.

2012 NORTH CAROLINA TRAILS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Barbara Oslund,
Chairperson
Pittsboro

Representing Equestrian Trail Users

Paul Elliot
Cary
Representing Mountain
Bicycle Trail Users

Joe Jacob
Pittsboro
Representing Canoe/
Kayak Trail Users

David Lee
Wilson
Representing Local
Government Parks
and Recreation

Leslie Love
Weaверville
Representing Hiking
Trail Users

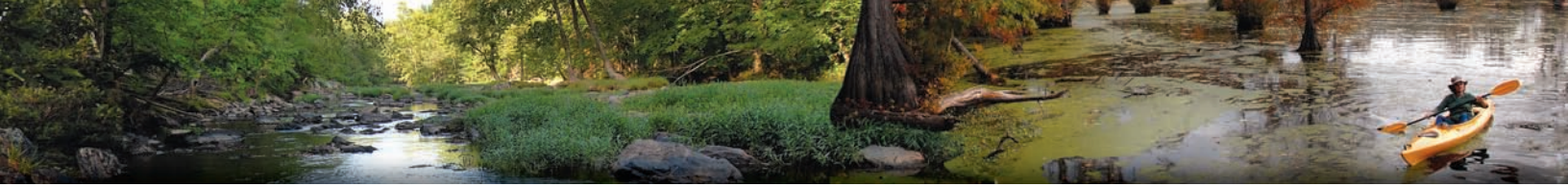
Brian Sears
Granite Falls
Representing Off-
Highway Vehicle
Trail Users

Terry Smith
Morehead City
Representing Hiking
Trail Users

TRAIL PLANNING HIGHLIGHTS

- Mountains-to-Sea State Trail
- Deep River State Trail
- Dismal Swamp Canal Trail
- Croatan Regional Bike and Trail Plan
- Southwestern Commission Council of Governments 7 County Trail Assessment and Plan
- NC DOT Statewide Bike and Pedestrian Plan





STATE PARK TRAIL PROJECTS

All design work for state park trail projects has been completed by the State Trails Program and park staff, which resulted in tremendous cost savings for the citizens of North Carolina. Working with park staff and professional trail builders, trails program staff assisted with completing construction of approximately 12.5 miles of new sustainable trail to replace several miles of existing trail in poor condition. Additionally, approximately 0.3 miles of existing trail were improved and approximately two miles of abandoned trail rehabilitated. These trail projects have been completed at Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area and Hanging Rock, Morrow Mountain, Lake James, Chimney Rock, and Haw River state parks. Also, additional design work is underway at Lake James, Pilot Mountain, Stone Mountain, Cliffs of the Neuse, Raven Rock, Carvers Creek, and Morrow Mountain state parks.

NORTH CAROLINA'S FEDERAL RECREATIONAL TRAILS GRANT PROGRAM

The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources awarded 23 federal Recreational Trails Program grants totaling more than \$1.5 million to applicants for trail and greenway projects. The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation received 63 applications totaling more than \$4 million in requests for the \$1.5 million available through the Recreational Trails Program.

NORTH CAROLINA TRAILS COMMITTEE

The trails program is advised by the seven-member North Carolina Trails Committee appointed by the secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The committee advises the department, the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation and the State Trails Program on all matters pertaining to trails, their use, extent and location. The committee is also responsible for making federal Recreational Trails Program and state Adopt-A-Trail grant award recommendations to the secretary.

NORTH CAROLINA'S STATE ADOPT-A-TRAIL GRANT PROGRAM

The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources awarded 25 state Adopt-A-Trail grants totaling \$108,000 to applicants for trail and greenway projects. The Division of Parks and Recreation received 47 applications totaling more than \$220,000 in requests for the \$108,000 available through the state Adopt-A-Trail grant program.

A summary of all applications received and grants awarded can be found on the Division of Parks and Recreation's website: http://www.ncparks.gov/About/trails_grants.php.



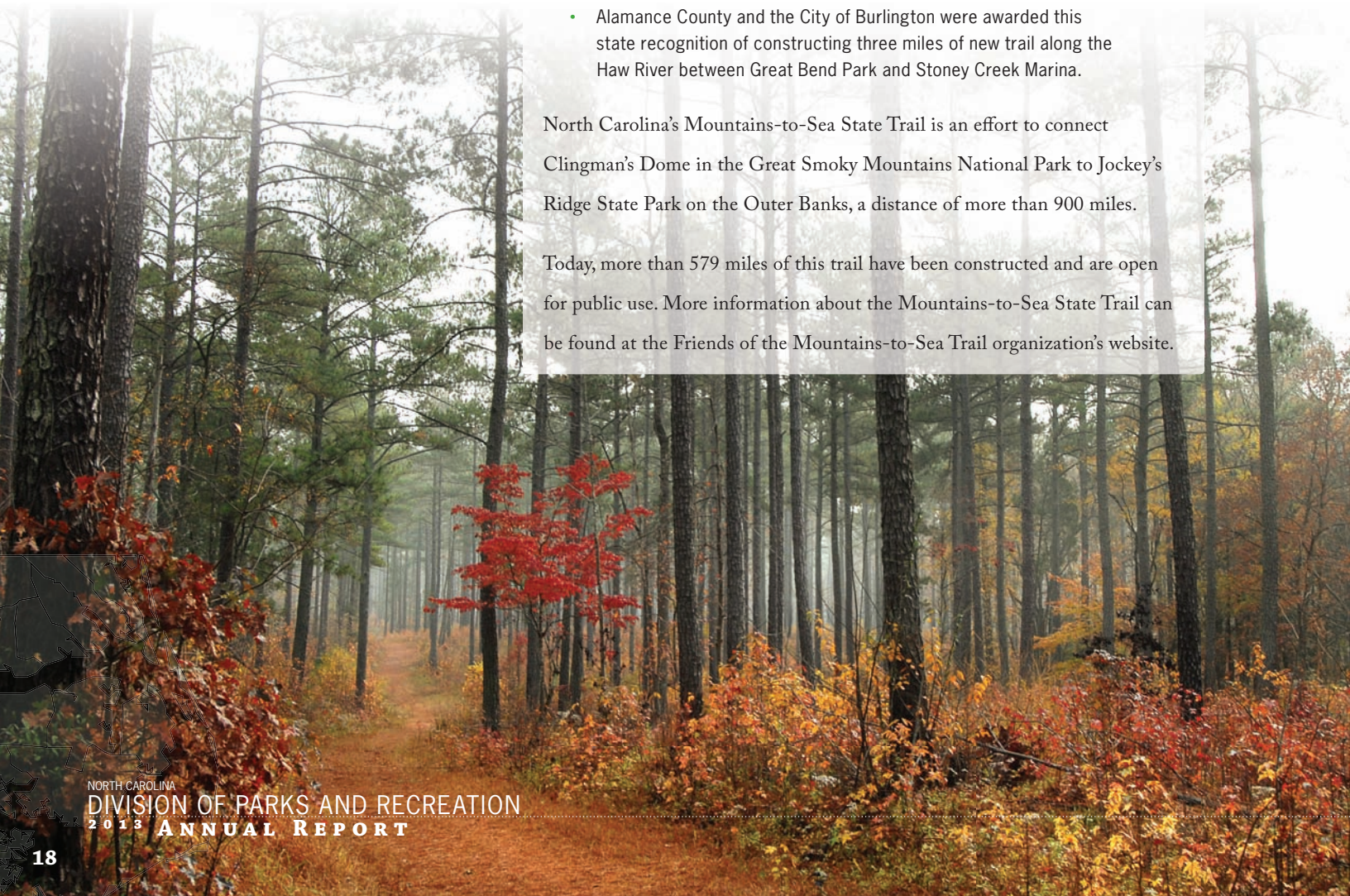
NORTH CAROLINA'S MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA STATE TRAIL

North Carolina designated and opened three new segments of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail in 2012 increasing the overall length of this trail by 33 miles. These new segments of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail are results of successful partnerships with these land managers and volunteers:

- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Falls Lake, the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, the Botanical Garden Foundation and the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail organization were awarded this state recognition for constructing 23 miles of new trail connecting Penny's Bend Nature Preserve to Rolling View Recreation Area of Falls Lake State Recreation Area in Durham County.
- The National Park Service, Blue Ridge Parkway and the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail organization were awarded this state recognition for constructing 7.5 miles of new trail connecting Bamboo Gap to US 321 in Watauga County.
- Alamance County and the City of Burlington were awarded this state recognition of constructing three miles of new trail along the Haw River between Great Bend Park and Stoney Creek Marina.

North Carolina's Mountains-to-Sea State Trail is an effort to connect Clingman's Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Jockey's Ridge State Park on the Outer Banks, a distance of more than 900 miles.

Today, more than 579 miles of this trail have been constructed and are open for public use. More information about the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail can be found at the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail organization's website.





CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2012

COMPLETED CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS IN 2012

- Nutbush Access development at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area was completed in January 2012. The project included four new boat ramps, bathroom facilities, increased parking, and an event area.
- The final two phases to replace the aging trail structure at Chimney Rock State Park from the Sky Lounge to the upper parking area were completed in April 2012.
- The improvements to the two restroom facilities (one located in the Meadows and one located in the Upper Parking Area) at Chimney Rock State Park were completed in April 2012.
- The Sky Lounge building and elevator improvements at Chimney Rock State Park were completed in June 2012. The facility was brought up to state code standards and the aging elevator infrastructure was replaced.
- Dam repairs at Cliffs of the Neuse State Park were completed in June 2012. Repairs included a new siphon lower drain system.
- The first of two phases of mountain bike trails was completed at Lake James State Park in October 2012. The final phase is expected to be complete in late 2013 or late 2014. A total of 10 miles of mountain bike trails will be constructed.
- The Crowders Mountain State Park visitor center parking lot was expanded by 75 spaces with completion in October 2012.



Some of the new trail structure at Chimney Rock State park.

- Construction of the visitor center, maintenance facility and two day-use areas at Gorges State Park was completed in October 2012. The division is seeking a LEED® gold rating.
- Although completed in 2011, the Pettigrew State Park maintenance facility received a LEED® certified rating in May 2012.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN 2012

- The replacement of over five miles of water distribution lines at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area was begun in September 2012. This includes connecting a Parkers Creek section to county water.
- Interim development at Carvers Creek State Park was initiated in October 2012. This development includes a modular office facility for park staff, a bathroom facility for visitors, and replacing the roof at the main building.
- Campground improvements at Crowders Mountain State Park began in August 2012. The group camps will be expanded by three sites (removed one for more space between sites and added four new larger sites); replaced existing wells that were closed due to poor water quality; installed restroom facilities at both camping areas.

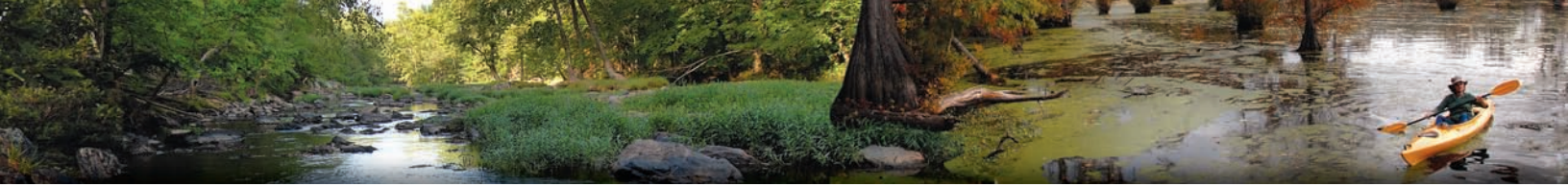


CUSTOMER SERVICE: IT'S WHAT WE'RE ABOUT

Whether it's a state park ranger in a green and gray uniform or a friendly office assistant at your park's visitor center, every employee of the Division of Parks and Recreation has a variety of "tools" in their "tool box" to get the job done. Although they are all equally important, with 14 million visitors annually, it's that handy customer service tool that is the one that is used the most!



Customer service and providing park visitors with a positive and enjoyable experience during every visit is the foundation of the division's mission and each employee's core responsibility in their jobs. It may be a park ranger providing information about park rules or directing large crowds during a busy holiday weekend; a maintenance mechanic helping fix a water leak on a camper's RV; an office assistant contacting other state parks or private campgrounds for an out-of town camper who arrives after the park's campground is full; or even a seasonal employee providing assistance to a family setting up a tent for the first time. Our goal is to provide every visitor — from a small child to a group of senior citizens — an experience that will reflect positively on the park and leave that visitor with a lasting impression of that park visit and that division employee.



For nearly 100 years, the Division of Parks and Recreation has held a tradition of providing safe and enjoyable recreation opportunities while balancing the protection and preservation of the state's most significant natural resources. Maintaining that balance of fun and safe experiences with resource protection can often be challenging for the division's employees when dealing with millions of visitors every year.

But through hands-on experiences, relationships with park citizen advisory committees and friends groups and annual training for both seasonal and permanent employees in customer service, the division continuously promotes and refreshes the importance of this vital skill.

Seasonal employees, often considered our front-line work force, may be the only park employees that a visitor comes in contact with and are an integral part of the division's work force. These temporary, seasonal positions vary around the division and range from park technicians, general utility and grounds maintenance to lifeguards, concession stand attendants, naturalists and office attendants.

Before a seasonal employee even begins working, he or she attends seasonal employee orientation and customer service training. This training provides them with basic safety and job training skills as well as skills on treating and interacting with park visitors in a variety of situations.

Although many believe that a park ranger in the green and gray uniform epitomizes the definition of a public servant, customer service is something that should be and is refreshed annually. Along with the division's permanent maintenance and office staff, rangers participate in annual customer service training on dealing with park visitors, complaints and park operational issues.

This internal training encompasses meetings, discussion groups and scenarios. Although there will always be situations where visitors disagree with a park ranger or park rules, the division and its employees constantly strive to make the most of each person's visit through these efforts and hope that every new state park visitor will be a return visitor.



NORTH CAROLINA PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND (PART F)



The North Carolina Parks and Recreation Authority, a 15-member board which oversees the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, was created by the N.C. General Assembly with the authority's powers and duties becoming effective July 1, 1996. The governor appoints five members, including the chairperson. The general assembly appoints 10 members, five upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and five upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the House.

Members are appointed for three-year terms and may serve two consecutive three-year terms before rotating off the board.

Mr. Bill Ross, Jr.
Chairman
Chapel Hill

Ms. Lydia Boesch
Pinehurst

Mr. Boyd Lee
Greenville

Mr. Daryle Bost
Charlotte

Mr. Philip McKnelly
Raleigh

Mayor Loretta Clawson
Boone

Mr. Monroe Pannell
Conover

Mr. Robert Epting
Chapel Hill

Ms. Jennifer Scott
Pittsboro

Mr. Ashley B. Futrell, Jr.
Washington

Mr. John S. Stevens
Asheville

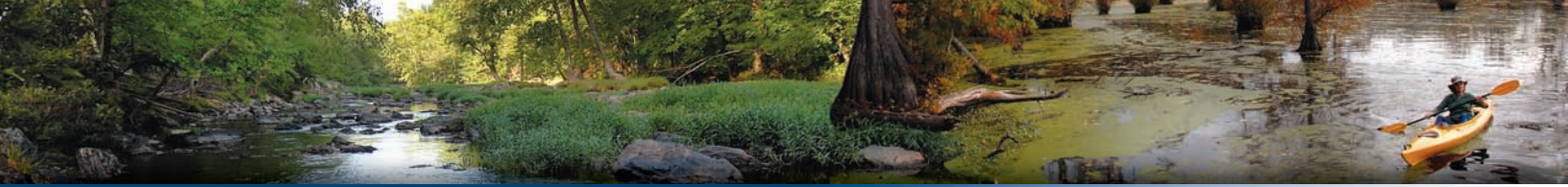
Mr. Cody Grasty
Maggie Valley

Ms. Lisa Wolf
Burlington

Mayor Woody Gurley
La Grange

Mr. Edward Wood
Wilmington





GRANT PROGRAM FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

The N.C. General Assembly established the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) on July 16, 1994. The PARTF program provides dollar-for-dollar matching grants to local governments to acquire land and to develop parks and recreational projects that serve the general public. Building park and recreation facilities creates jobs and stimulates local economies.

The Parks and Recreation Authority has awarded grants to more than 370 different communities and counties.

Local governments in 99 out of North Carolina's 100 counties have received a PARTF grant.

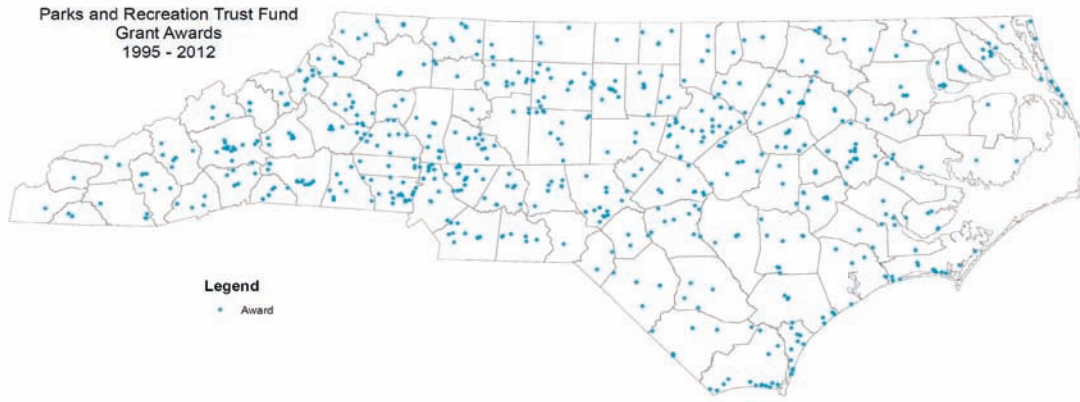
Sixty (60) local units of government submitted PARTF applications in 2012, requesting \$12.6 million in PARTF assistance. The authority awarded 31 grants for \$5,860,370.

PARTF funds have been leveraged by local governments with funds from other sources. Each \$1 of PARTF grants funds has been matched with nearly \$2 of local funds.

GRANTS AWARDED IN FISCAL YEAR 2011-12

Applicant	County	Project	Grant Amount
Aberdeen	Moore	Ray's Mill Pond Park Acquisition and Development	\$252,000
Alamance County	Alamance	Cedarrock Park Enhancement	\$245,367
Archdale	Randolph	Creekside Park Expansion	\$42,857
Bladenboro	Bladen	Clarence McLean Park Acquisition and Development	\$213,000
Blowing Rock	Watauga	Blowing Rock Recreation Area	\$142,500
Brunswick	Brunswick	Town Creek Park	\$359,354
Carolina Beach	New Hanover	Ocean-to-Sound Access Park Acquisition	\$369,179
Clay	Clay	Wal-Ford Farm Acquisition	\$215,450
Cornelius	Mecklenburg	Robbins Park Phase II	\$300,000
Dunn	Harnett	Tyler Park Enhancement	\$500,000
Enfield	Halifax	Enfield Community Park Phase III	\$36,500
Guilford County	Guilford	Northeast Park Phase 3	\$150,000
Hillsborough	Orange	Riverwalk Phase II	\$425,000

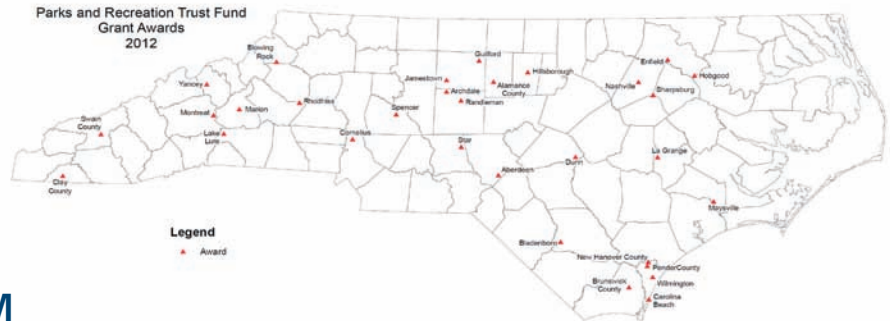
NORTH CAROLINA PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND (PART F)



GRANTS AWARDED IN FISCAL YEAR 2011-12

Applicant	County	Project	Grant Amount
Hobgood	Halifax	Hobgood Community Park	\$12,000
Jamestown	Guilford	Wrenn-Miller Park	\$132,688
La Grange	Lenoir	LaGrange Community Building	\$315,000
Lake Lure	Rutherford	Buffalo Creek Trail System	\$93,478
Marion	McDowell	Catawba River Greenway Phase II	\$238,800
Maysville	Jones	Frost Park Improvements	\$55,693
Montreat	Buncombe	Assembly Drive Greenway	\$115,160
Nashville	Nash	Stony Creek Environmental Park	\$284,375
New Hanover County	New Hanover	Castle Hayne Park Acquisition	\$287,817
Pender County	Pender	Millers Pond Park	\$162,545
Randleman	Randolph	City Park Purchase	\$52,750
Rhodhiss	Burke	Horseshoe Trail Park	\$163,750
Sharpsburg	Edgecombe	Sharpsburg Town Park	\$88,200
Spencer	Rowan	Stanback Educational Forest and Park	\$200,000
Star	Montgomery	Star Park Improvements	\$11,830
Swain County	Swain	Swain County Park Improvement	\$60,000
Wilmington	New Hanover	Cross City Trail – Autumn Hall Section	\$219,308
Yancey County	Yancey	Cane River Park	\$115,769
Total			\$5,860,370





STATE PARK SYSTEM PROJECTS FUNDED BY PARTIAL LAND ACQUISITION

For fiscal year 2011-12, no land acquisition projects were approved. The Parks and Recreation Authority reallocated \$1,833,169 for land acquisition projects in the state parks system. These funds became available from previously approved projects that either were not completed or were completed under budget. These projects will help address the need for additional acreage at four state park units. However, it will cost an estimated \$176 million to purchase the 43,752 acres needed to complete all current state park units.

STATE PARK LAND ACQUISITION PROJECTS TO RECEIVE REALLOCATED FUNDS

Unit	Acres	Cost	Project Description
Chimney Rock State Park	3	\$50,169	Additional funds to match LWCF for World's Edge Access tracts.
Mayo River State Park	83	\$330,000	Additional funds for half of Cedar Mountain, a state significant natural heritage site
Mount Jefferson State Natural Area	53	\$953,000	Protection of a lower ridge on Mount Jefferson—half of phase 2
Mount Mitchell State Park	14	\$500,000	Two small tracts within nationally significant natural heritage site.
Total	153	\$1,833,169	



NORTH CAROLINA PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND (PARTF)

CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION

During fiscal year 2011-12, the Parks and Recreation Authority approved state park construction and renovation projects totaling \$796,194. With PARTF funds, the Division continues to address a lengthy backlog of construction and renovation projects in the state parks system. However, approximately \$417.6 million is required to meet all of the needs for new construction and renovation for the state parks system.

CAPITAL PROJECTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011-12

Park	Project	Cost (\$)
Park System	Major Maintenance Funds	796,194
TOTAL REQUEST		796,194

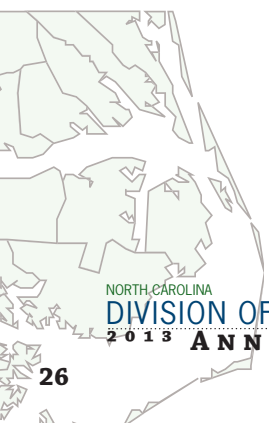
COMPLETED PROJECTS



Sensory Garden

ROWAN COUNTY—ELLIS PARK

Ellis Park is used by a diverse population including Rowan County's Therapeutic Recreation Program and its Senior Games/Silver Arts Program. The grant project expanded and strengthened elements in the park that will meet the recreational needs of this population. The project scope included construction of a new nine-hole disc golf course where many holes are accessible to people with disabilities. The project also created a sensory garden for the visually impaired that features experiencing the garden through touch and smell. The installation of fitness stations is an added benefit to the existing walking trail.





Map and Boardwalk



Observation Tower

TOWN OF KITTY HAWK—SANDY RUN PARK

Sandy Run Park adjoins Kitty Hawk Woods Coastal Reserve, which preserves over 2,000 acres in one of the only remaining maritime deciduous forests in North Carolina. The coastal reserve contains miles of pathways that are used for hiking, biking and trail riding. Sandy Run Park complements the coastal reserve by providing additional recreational activities and promoting a public awareness of this unique coastal ecosystem.

With PARTF assistance, the town of Kitty Hawk expanded the existing boardwalk and nature trail to complete a half-mile loop within the park. They added a canoe/kayak access, a nature observation tower, a fishing pier, and picnic area.

TOWN OF HILDEBRAN—HILDEBRAN COMMUNITY PARK

Hildebran, located just within the eastern boundary of Burke County, sits at the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. A PARTF grant allowed the town to purchase four acres overlooking the entire town and develop it as the town's first park. The park facilities include a wide range of passive and active recreational elements to serve the residents of Hildebran, including a picnic pavilion, a walking trail with fitness stations and a nine-hole disc golf course. In addition, there are two play areas – one for older children and one specifically for toddlers and smaller children. The park is the new home of the historic Hildebran depot which was relocated and faithfully restored to its former glory as a community center.





NORTH CAROLINA PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND (PARTF)

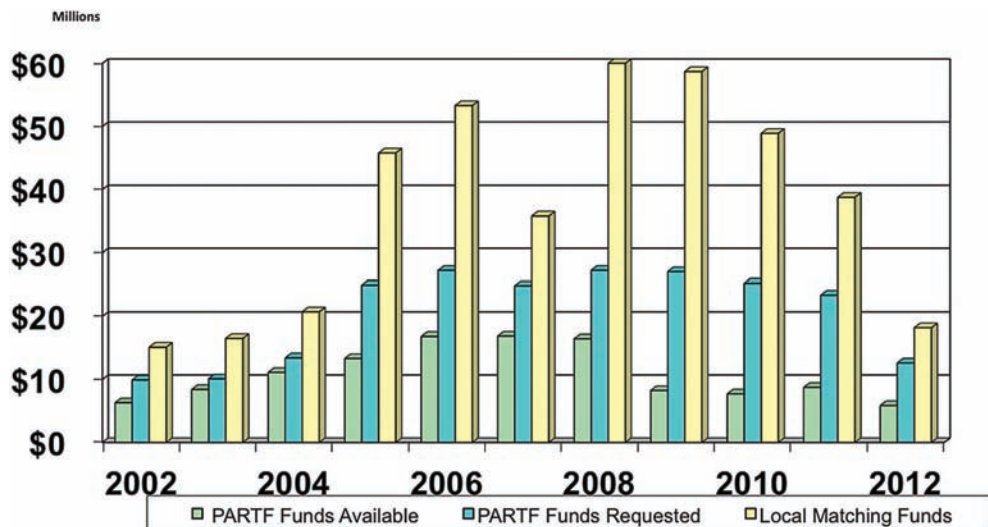
ALEXANDER COUNTY—ROCKY FACE MOUNTAIN RECREATION AREA

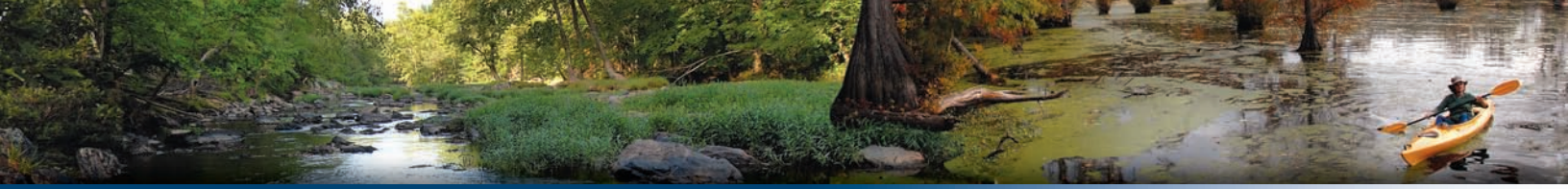


Pictured from left to right: Wendell Kirkham of Carolina Land & Lakes Resource Conservation & Development, County Commissioner Larry Yoder, Commission Chairman Ryan Mayberry, Commission Vice-Chairman Burkie Jennings, Robert Epting—PARTF Board Member, State Representative Mark Hollow, Mike Finley—Field Representative for U.S. Senator Richard Burr, and William Ross Jr. — PARTF Board Chairman.



Rocky Face Mountain Recreational Area was established through a PARTF grant and a donation of 318 acres by Carolina Land and Lakes RC&D, a non-profit conservancy group in Alexander County. Rocky Face is identified by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program's Registry of Natural Heritage Areas. Rocky Face is a dome shaped mass of granite gneiss. The summit is approximately 600 feet above the surrounding terrain.





White oak leaves



Mountain laurel blossom



MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS OF EXHIBITS

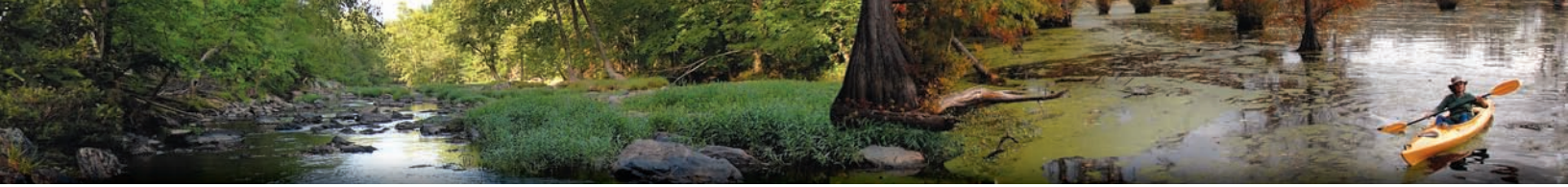


Gorges State Park visitor center exhibits were completed as part of the visitor center construction. The project included artistic interpretation of a waterfall that allows visitors to experiment with the patterns of light created by water. Nationally known photographer Charles Downs provided the exquisite wall murals.

The Exhibits Program expanded outreach exhibits with development of the coyote poster series. The division had requests for the posters from people across the state and from as far away as Georgia.

The program also continued an energy-savings effort. The system now has eight parks converted to LED lighting in exhibit halls: Raven Rock, Morrow Mountain, Carolina Beach, William B. Umstead, Dismal Swamp, Merchants Millpond, Lake Waccamaw, Mount Mitchell and Crowders Mountain (partial).





GIFT SHOPS

North Carolina State Parks have been focusing recently on ways to provide new services to our visitors. A successful example of this is by offering gift shop areas in our visitor centers. In the past, park staff had to send campers to the local convenience store if they forgot matches to light a campfire or marshmallows to roast over that fire. Guests also inquire about souvenirs they could take home to remind them of their visit.



Recently New River, Merchants Millpond, Stone Mountain and Goose Creek state parks added display cases offering such items as t-shirts, coffee mugs, water bottles, paper plates, bug spray and yes, matches.

The newly opened visitor center at Gorges State Park has a designated gift shop area which was included in

the planning phase. Sales have been brisk and comments from the public have all been favorable. Plans for any new visitor centers to be built in the future will include designated gift shop areas which will provide educational items, souvenirs, snacks and camping necessities; all in an effort to provide a memorable visit to our state parks.



Welcome to
Gorges State Park



FIRE MANAGEMENT

It was a record year for prescribed fire in North Carolina state parks. In 2012, the mountain region led the division for the first time ever in acreage burned. Highlights included a 600-acre prescribed burn at Morrow Mountain State Park in January, which at the time, was a one-day record for the system.



AmeriCorps volunteer planting wiregrass seedlings in Singletary Lake.

This fire was conducted in cooperation with the N.C. Forest Service, which supplied planning, logistical, and personnel support for the burn. This fire utilized aerial ignition and reduced hazardous fuel levels and initiated the long-term use of prescribed fire as an ecological management tool in this park.



AmeriCorps volunteer removing exotic bamboo from Stone Mountain State Park

South Mountains State Park continued its leading role as the system's representative in the multi-agency Southern Blue Ridge Fire Learning Network with its participation in a multi-day, 1,671-acre fire in March with the Wildlife Resources Commission and the N.C. Forest Service. This fire included 632 acres on park property, which eclipsed the Morrow Mountain fire as the single-day record.

Crowders Mountain State Park conducted a 105-acre fire on its namesake peak in February. This was conducted with assistance from the forest service and was the second time this unit had been burned. The ecological benefits of prescribed fire are now becoming apparent in this unit, which contains several fire-adapted species and some of the park's highest quality natural communities.

AMERICORPS:

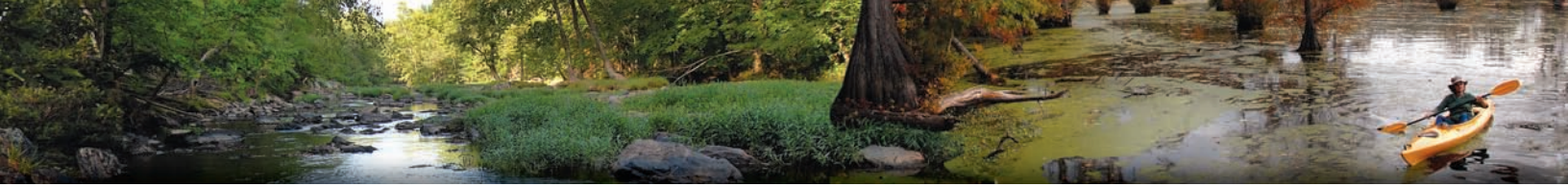
The division benefitted once again from the presence of a team of AmeriCorps volunteers, which spent eight weeks working in nine parks. Their work in the mountain region included fire line preparation, invasive species

management, and fire management, which included aiding in the Pilot Mountain wildfire in November.

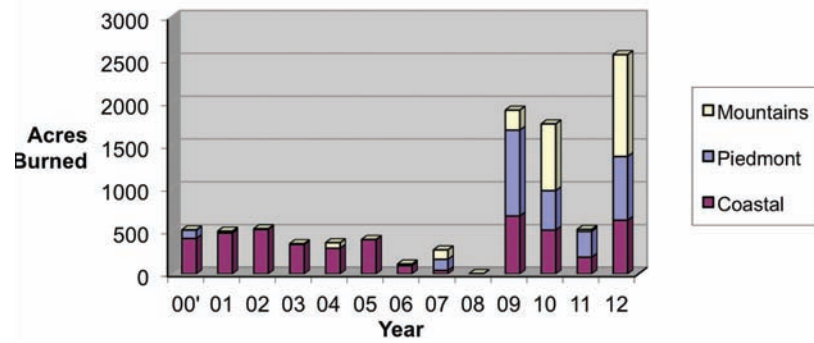
The crew also assisted with invasive species control in multiple parks, including tackling a major bamboo infestation at Stone Mountain State Park. One of their more

significant projects was the longleaf pine restoration at Singletary Lake in the coastal plain where they removed encroaching hardwoods from 10 acres of longleaf habitat, and, assisted by a grant from the N.C. State Council of Quail Unlimited, planted 13,000 wiregrass plants.





Prescribed Burning at NC State Parks 2000-2012



PILOT MOUNTAIN STATE PARK FIRE CONTROLLED

Pilot Mountain State Park in Surry County experienced the brief escape of fire as part of a controlled burn at the park in November. The blaze began as a prescribed fire that escaped lines when embers blew from a dead tree into steep terrain. The fire was brought back under control within a few days through the cooperative efforts of the Division of Parks and Recreation, N.C. Forest Service and local emergency responders.





Rappelling on cliff faces to monitor for the federally endangered plant spreading avens is a routine part of natural resource management in state parks.

RARE SPECIES

Significant mountain region surveys in 2012 included hellbenders (a type of salamander) at New River, which involved volunteers from multiple agencies. State parks staff also conducted annual surveys for the federally-endangered spreading avens (a perennial herb), which is a cliff-dwelling species that is known from only about a dozen sites in the world, including three North Carolina state parks. These sites require technical rock climbing skills and are conducted in collaboration with staff from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. This year's surveys included video that was taken for the Emmy Award-winning SC Educational TV series "Expeditions with Patrick McMillan."



Professors from NCSU and Christopher Newport University, their students, and park staff prepare to install water monitoring equipment at Dismal Swamp State Park

DISMAL SWAMP WETLAND HYDROLOGY MONITORING AND RESTORATION:

The Natural Resource Program served as the administrator for this project including acquiring \$180,000 of grant funding, grant administration, assembling the project scope and team members, submission of permit applications, and installation of hydrologic monitoring equipment.



Parks biologist Amin Davis seals a water monitoring well at Dismal Swamp State Park. Neither the mosquitoes, thick vegetation, nor the 105-degree heat kept the scientists from their work.

The project goal is to partially restore the natural hydrology of an approximately 2,130-acre priority area identified within Dismal Swamp State Park through a cooperative partnership with N.C. State University Biological & Agricultural Engineering, the N.C. Division of Water Quality and Christopher Newport University.

This project is associated with the larger GDS Hydrology Analysis collaborative partnership that was spearheaded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and includes at least 10 federal, state, and non-profit organizations tasked with coordinating a systematic approach to hydrology restoration and management within the GDS. Phase I of this multi-year project will consist primarily of gathering and analyzing water monitoring data within identified priority areas. Data analysis will guide the secondary phases of restoration design and implementation, which will involve the installation of several water control structures at strategic locations to reduce the outflow of water and more closely identify the natural hydro periods of the wetland natural communities.





NCSU scientists and park staff install water level gauges at Goose Creek State Park to determine the degree to which a park road may be influencing vegetation changes.

GOOSE CREEK WETLAND HYDROLOGY MONITORING:

Natural resources staff coordinated monthly visits with NCSU's Department of Forestry and Environmental Resources and park staff with ongoing hydrology research at an impaired wetland area along Main Road, the only vehicular access road into the interior of Goose Creek State Park.

The project involved installation of a series of instruments in September, 2011 to assess the complex environmental stressors on this wetland area including hurricanes, sea level rise, and roadway development.

These research findings will also guide division staff to determine a feasible ecological management option for roadway infrastructure along this portion of Main Road. NCSU staff have sent the state parks system preliminary research findings and will continue to conduct monitoring and data analysis in 2013.



Area at Hammocks Beach State Park where an ecologically sensitive boatyard washing station is planned.

HAMMOCKS BEACH STATE PARK'S BOATYARD POWERWASHING TREATMENT & RECYCLE SYSTEM:

Natural Resource Program staff consulted with NC Sea Grant, NCSU, the Division of Coastal Management, and the N.C. Clean Marina Program to evaluate Hammocks Beach State Park's current boatyard wash-down procedures to determine how to implement a plan to complete a wash pad and closed loop reclamation system. These improvements will protect the DWQ-designated Outstanding Resource Waters between the mainland and Bear Island, and is part of the system's goal of becoming a certified N.C. Clean Marina. NCSU's Biological & Agricultural Engineering Department is working on a design for this reclamation system at no cost to the division and were to present a design to park staff in February 2013.



JORDAN LAKE-HAW RIVER SHORELINE STABILIZATION



Repairs are made to an eroded section of the Haw River shoreline at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area.

Natural Resource Program staff consulted with NCSU's Department of Biological, Agricultural and Engineering to evaluate the stabilization of severely eroding riverbanks along the Haw River at a paddle access site at the Robeson Creek access of Jordan Lake State Recreation Area.

Staff also worked with Jordan Lake State Recreation Area staff to identify a new paddle access site. NCSU provided a bio-engineered stabilization design at no cost to the division that park staff and volunteers were able to construct in Summer 2012.

LAND PROTECTION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2012

In 2012, over 2,200 acres were added to the North Carolina state parks system in 15 transactions at eight units for a cost of \$12.1 million and a value of \$13 million.

The state conservation trust funds were leveraged with over \$1.3 million of private funds or donated value through the land trusts and \$450,000 of federal Land and Water Conservation Fund assistance.

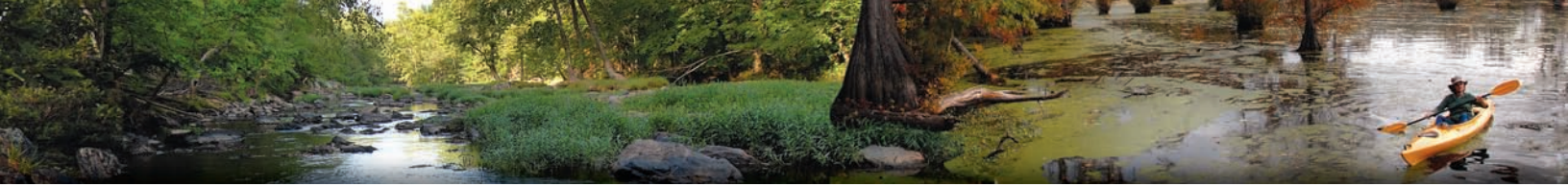
The first trail easement for the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail was completed in 2012. This donated easement encompasses 87 acres in Orange County and connects Eno River State Park property with the town of Hillsborough Riverwalk greenway. The easement

template developed for this property will be used at other locations across the state for public trails.

A key addition to Chimney Rock State Park was acquired this year. A small but critical 29-acre tract on the south side of the World's Edge section was added to the park. A master planned public access and trailhead will be located on this property in the future. This is the only planned public access from the south into Chimney Rock State Park.

continued on page 46





INVENTORY AND MONITORING FOR RARE SPECIES

Inventory and monitoring for rare species is an important part of natural resource management in state parks. Natural Resource Program biologists routinely coordinate with biologists from the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, the Natural Heritage Program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, university scientists, and dozens of volunteers to bring the necessary talent and resources to assist park staff in management.

In 2012, annual surveys were conducted for eastern hellbenders at New River State Park, Neuse River waterdogs at Oconeechee State Natural Area and Eno River State Park and green salamanders at Chimney Rock and Gorges state parks.

Our biologists also do surveys for special case problems. A good example is this year's search for signs of white-nose syndrome in bats in Pilot Knob Cave at Grandfather Mountain State Park. Luckily, no diseased bats were located, but staff identified two federally endangered Virginia big-eared bats, found for the first time in 20 years in that cave.



Neuse River waterdog trapped in the Eno River during annual surveys.



Green salamander trapped by biologist Ed Corey at Gorges State Park.





RECREATION RESOURCES SERVICE 2012 ACTIVITIES

The Division of Parks and Recreation continues its service to local parks and recreation agencies through its Recreation Resources Service (RRS), the nation's oldest technical assistance program.

The program is administered through a contract with North Carolina State University's Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management in the College of Natural Resources.

In 2012, RRS provided technical assistance to local governments in all 100 North Carolina counties. Examples of assistance included numerous presentations to citizen advisory boards, evaluation of park land purchases and development plans. The staff maintains an up-to-date website with information about educational opportunities, a jobs bulletin, a library of resources for parks and recreation professionals and other information.

With its team of four regional consultants, RRS helps local governments plan and submit grant proposals for the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

They also follow through with

project inspections, application processing, conversion issues and closeout processing.

Last year, local governments submitted 60 applications from 41 counties for PARTF funds. The grants totaled \$12,781,602 with local governments matching with \$20,521,122. The consultants inspected each of the applicant sites, evaluated and scored the applications and made recommendations to the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority. RRS consultants also addressed Land and Water Conservation Fund issues including conversions, inspections and reimbursements.

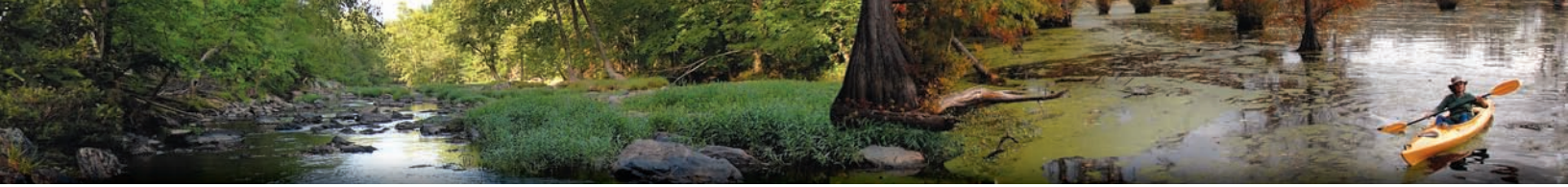
In addition to grant administration, RRS provides continuing education opportunities for parks and recreation professionals and citizen board members. In 2012, RRS sponsored eight teleconferences

in 12 locations across the state using the North Carolina Research and Education Network.

More than 300 people participated in the teleconferences. Topics selected by a teleconference advisory committee included: pesticide certification, summer camps, aquatics, branding and marketing, handling difficult situations, mobile special facilities and volunteerism. Statewide teleconferences were also held regarding the PARTF grant process and financial data reporting with over 135 people attending.

Each year, RRS conducts the North Carolina Municipal and County Parks and Recreation Services Study. The 2012 MCPRSS, marked the 63rd year of assessment for municipal leisure service providers. This edition also marked the 43rd year of assessment for county leisure service agencies.





The study offers leisure service managers and administrators an important tool for tax-supported funding trend analysis based upon changes in operating budget fund levels from year to year and compares park and recreation salaries and revenue sources for similar communities as a tool to evaluate levels of service.

Beginning in 2012, RRS combined the services study with PRORAGIS. Shorthand for Park and Recreation Operating Ratio and Geographic Information System, PRORAGIS is a national

database that allows park and recreation agencies to benchmark with others, develop program planning, and enhance overall community operations.

In 2012, 27 North Carolina parks and recreation agencies entered data into PRORAGIS. A product of NRPA, the effort is similar in many aspects to the services study. RRS requests additional information regarding trends in the profession. The questions received responses from 134 departments.

Educational opportunities provided by state parks/RRS included:

- Presentations at the North Carolina Recreation and Park Association annual conference in Greenville, N.C., the South Carolina Park and Recreation Association, North Carolina Recreation and Parks Association Therapeutic Division and Citizen Board Member Conferences in Greensboro.
- Sponsoring the National Playground Safety Institute, a training course offered by the National Recreation and Park Association.
- Participation in the PlaySafe initiative developed by NCRPA and SCRPA.
- Coordinating the 64th Annual Municipal and County Recreation Director's Conference with more than 125 directors and guests attending the two-day event. A feature of the director's conference was a special workshop for new parks and recreation directors, conducted by RRS, which drew 14 new directors.
- Coordinating the 2nd Annual Women's Lead"her"ship Conference, which drew 104 women from across the country.
- Coordinated the 1st Annual Aquatics Workshop in Mount Airy, attended by 32 swimming pool operators and staff.

State parks/RRS prides itself on its collaborative efforts to improve the quality of life for citizens. Included are:

- North Carolina Children in Nature Conference
- Carolina Thread Trail Forum and the Park Ranger Institute
- Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor
- Western NC Water Quality Summit
- Wake County Advocates for Health in Action
- N.C. Coastal Resources Advisory Committee
- North Carolina Recreation and Parks Association
- North Carolina Senior Games
- North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs
- Community Transformation Catalyst (developing recreational opportunities in Halifax, Beaufort, Cleveland and Rockingham counties)

RRS also exhibited at the N.C. League of Municipalities' and County Commissioners Association's annual conferences in cooperation with NCRPA.

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VOLUNTEERING IN NC STATE PARKS 2012



Carolina Canoe Club members restore old launch site at Jordan Lake.

They are vital in helping us protect our natural resources and natural heritage. They build community by demonstrating strong park stewardship and commitment to public lands.

Volunteers serve North Carolina state parks in a number of functions including oyster shell bagging, constructing picnic tables, working special events, tree planting and repairing bridges.

Some familiar organizations are behind our volunteers such as AmeriCorps, Big Sweep, Boy/Girl Scouts, Eagle Scouts and local universities and colleges.

In 2012, the State Parks Volunteer Program logged a total of 65,096.9 volunteer hours. That is the equivalent of 8,137 eight-hour days.

In general terms, volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services.

People seek to volunteer because it is a worthwhile activity or it is something of importance to them. Volunteers are critical partners of and participants in our parks.

Kerr Lake State Recreation Area once again had the most volunteer base hours at 10,080. The national average value of a volunteer hour is \$21.79. So what does this mean for state parks? That is the equivalent of \$1,418,461 that supplements the state parks budget.

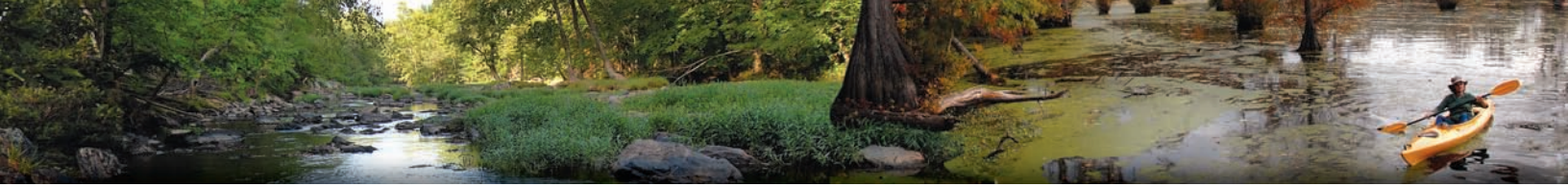
Volunteers free up time for park staff, allowing them to devote much needed time to other necessary park projects. Without our volunteers, we would have a difficult time providing our visitors with the exceptional quality they expect from our facilities.

One example of a unique volunteer effort was the Carolina Canoe Club helping to build a canoe launch at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area. Volunteers rebuilt the stream bank, added gravel, rerouted the trail and completed minor landscaping. More than 110 hours were contributed to this project alone.

Another example of volunteering in our parks was done by nine AmeriCorps volunteers who contributed over 2,000 hours planting wiregrass, removing small hardwood trees from the longleaf pine forest, removing invasive species and digging fire lines for prescribed burns. They also worked the fire lines at Pilot Mountain State Park.



AmeriCorps volunteers plant wiregrass in a longleaf pine forest at Singletary Lake State Park.



IT'S GOOD TO HAVE FRIENDS

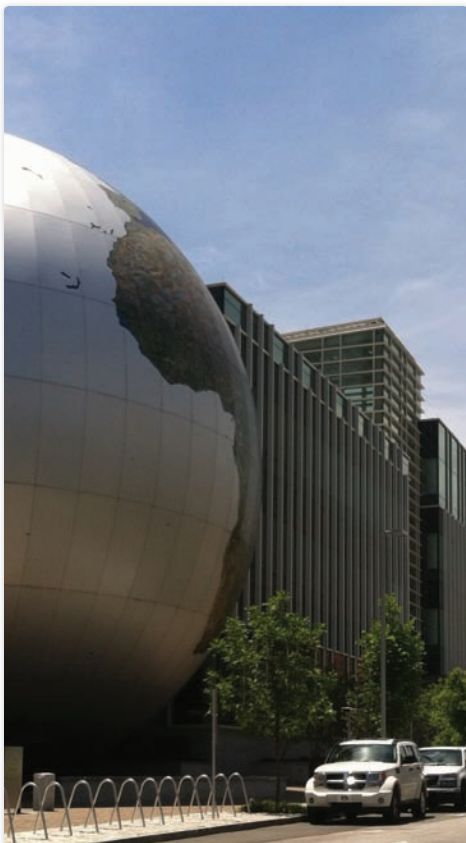
In order to better support North Carolina's expanding state parks system, Friends of State Parks (FSP) has vigorously pursued the creation of local park friends groups as chapters of the statewide organization.



Over the last three years, an average of five new chapters a year have been established, bringing the total of parks supported by local groups to 28. Many of these new chapters have chosen to use FSP as their banker for tax-exempt donations, allowing time to pursue future IRS 501(c)3 non-profit status as their growth and resources dictate.

Having a local friends group for each park provides readily available support, financial help and development of a volunteer pool that can be much more responsive to a park's needs than the statewide FSP. This can be especially helpful when executing park projects in difficult economic times with limited budgets.

In addition, local people are better placed to gain support from the neighboring businesses and community, resulting in a greater appreciation of the park by local residents. Expanding the good reputations our parks have with their local communities can also result in favorable positions from local legislators – an important benefit in these times.



A NEW HOME

In April, North Carolina state parks' central staff moved into its new headquarters in the brand new Nature Research Center, the 80,000-square-foot wing of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. Its goal is to bring research scientists and their work into the public eye, help demystify what can be an intimidating field of study, better prepare science educators and students, and inspire a new generation of young scientists. The Nature Research Center features research labs where scientists from the museum, University of North Carolina system schools, the Department of Environment & Natural Resources, or visiting scientists from industry or agency partners conduct their research while visitors observe "science in action" through floor-to-ceiling glass walls.



NC STATE PARKS ANNUAL SAFETY REPORT FOR 2012

Training and education continue to be a key to safety for all state parks staff as well as visitor safety. This past year was no exception, with training in all areas of park operations. Several new training programs were developed for park staff required to operate vehicles and to tow trailers as part of their daily duties.

This training included both classroom as well as hands-on driver training. As part of the goal of providing effective and efficient training opportunities, state parks created its own American Heart Association training site under Randolph Community College's training center. Twenty-four park employees completed the required training to become AHA certified basic life support instructors.

These instructors provided certification training for 283 park employees in the first year. By having its own training site, the division was able to realize a savings of over \$5,000 the first year as compared to training through the American Red Cross centers.

This training is very important when it comes to saving lives as it did in June during the grand opening of the new Nature Research Center Building, which serves as state parks headquarters. Park staff, who participated in the event, responded to a call inside the museum basement, where one of the maintenance contractors had collapsed as the result of a heart attack.

Park Superintendent Keith Nealson along with Park Ranger Neal Ward began cardiopulmonary resuscitation. After delivering CPR along with administering shocks using the museum's automated external defibrillator, they were able to restore a pulse to the patient. Without their quick action, the victim might not have survived.

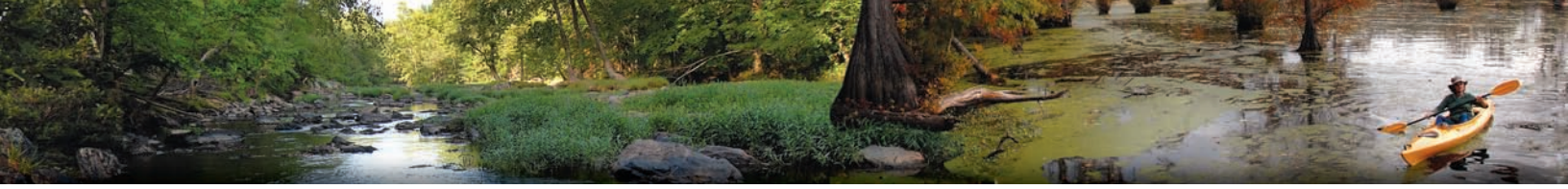
As part of the state's Certified Public Manager's Program, Chief Ranger Bryan Dowdy, along with South District Superintendent Angelia Allcox, conducted a complete update of the new employee orientation program. This program covers all mandatory Occupational Safety and Health Administration required

training as well as the DENR safety program. Other key components of the orientation program are fleet safety, hazard communication, bloodborne pathogens training as well as emergency response plans for all park facilities.

Unfortunately, accidents do occur on park property, and these emergency response plans are critical for all park staff to understand their responsibilities during these times. This year alone, park staff responded to nine different incidents where someone lost their life on park property and three others on property that adjoins state parks.

Five of the incidents were drownings, five were falls and one was a cardiac incident. Facility audits and follow-up investigations were conducted on all the incidents. The drowning incidents included three from boats – one in a state lake and the other in an inlet near park property. None





of these incidents occurred within a designated swimming area and all could possibly have been prevented with the use of a personal flotation device. The division encourages the use of personal flotation devices in all swim areas and has expanded its PFD loaner program even further over the past year.

Five of the incidents were falls, two of which involved hikers at Stone Mountain State Park, and three were rock climbers. The other two falls were hikers who left a designated hiking trail and ventured onto the rock face at Stone Mountain.

Although it is impossible to prevent all accidents, follow-ups conducted on all of these incidents help the division determine if steps can be taken to prevent other tragic incidents from occurring. State parks are wilderness areas with many natural hazards, and staff work diligently to educate visitors about those hazards. Signage along trails, information at trailheads, and information in brochures are all part of the education process. An example of this can be seen in the copy of a safety message from one of the kiosks at the Gorges State Park.



Lower Bearwallow Falls at Gorges State Park.



Fall colors at Gorges State Park



THE INTERPRETATION & EDUCATION PROGRAM



An interpretive program at Mount Jefferson State Natural Area

CREATING THE MOST VALUABLE EXPERIENCES POSSIBLE FOR NC CITIZENS AND VISITORS

Each state park offers visitors a chance to experience a unique natural or cultural resource. Park interpretation is communication that helps visitors appreciate parks by finding meaning in their resources and understanding why these great places matter. Rangers and other staff interpret the park through guided programs, hikes, exhibits and general customer service.

THE 1987 STATE PARK SYSTEM ACT ESTABLISHES THAT:

Park lands are to be used by the people of the State and their visitors in order to promote understanding of and pride in the natural heritage of this State.

INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS OFFERED IN 2012

Park staff led 11,918 interpretive programs for 377,620 visitors.



An interpretation and education specialist working on water testing with a girl scout

INTERPRETATION PHILOSOPHY OF NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS

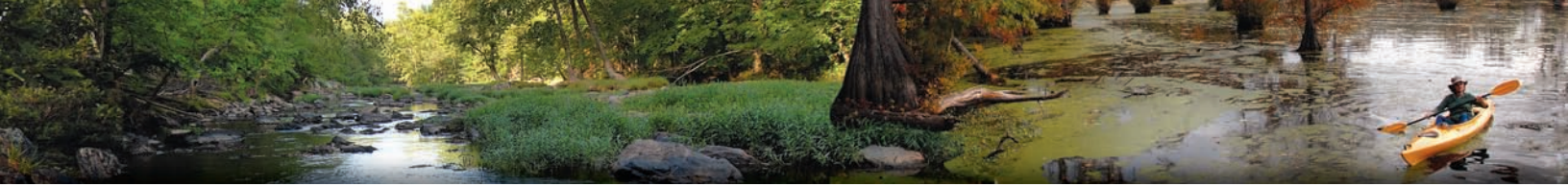
- Every interaction with a park visitor is an interpretive opportunity, and every employee plays a role in park interpretation.
- Interpretation is best when we focus on our most significant resources.
- “The value of state parks as public lands” can be explicitly included in every program.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES

North Carolina state parks offer educational opportunities for youth and families to connect with the great outdoors in a healthy learning environment.

- Through the Junior Ranger program, young people earn patches when they complete learning activities and do a park service project. This award-winning program was developed by Interpretation and Education staff and funded by the Friends of State Parks through a Great Outdoor Provision Company grant.
- Grand Camp at Haw River State Park offers grandparents the unique opportunity to attend an overnight summer camp with their grandchildren. The program received a 2012 Innovative Program Award from the N.C. Recreation and Park Association. One grandparent said, “Grand Camp is the highlight of my relationship with my grandchild.”





PROMOTING PARKS

Park Interpretation aims to promote state parks in a way that leads to increased visitation and revenue.

- Each state park offers a “First Day Hike” on Jan. 1 to encourage starting the year on a healthy note.
- Each year, parks rally around an annual theme to offer additional programs and retail items. Wildflower Wonder is the 2013 annual theme.
- Most parks celebrate with one or more community events that often draw large attendance.

OUTSTANDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

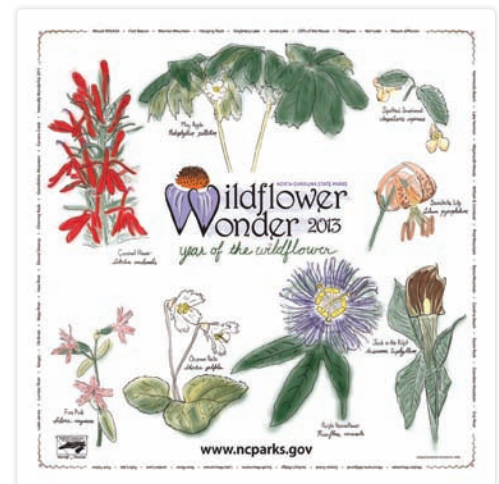
State parks offer outstanding opportunities for hands-on science education.

- Park staff create field trip experiences that are connected with the Department of Public Instruction’s Essential Science Standards.
- Park staff partner with universities, schools and community youth groups to offer science experiences. For example, five state parks partner with the Society for Hispanic Professionals to introduce dozens of Hispanic middle school students to natural resource careers. Raven Rock State Park partners with Fort Bragg Community Services to offer programs for military families with special needs.
- Most parks have in-depth science curriculum called Environmental Education Learning Experiences or EELEs.

INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION TRAINING

To ensure that park rangers are proficient educators, a comprehensive training program is managed by the Interpretation and Education Specialists.

- New rangers attend a three-day Basic Interpretive Training to improve their skills in public speaking, teaching, guiding hikes and customer service. Over their first two years of service, rangers become certified through 200 hours of training.
- Staff from many parks are trained in safety and trip leading for canoe and kayak programs.
- A variety of interpretive training workshops are offered annually to ensure that staff continue the career-long learning process. Workshops are held at parks in all regions to minimize travel time. Often, schoolteachers and other educators are invited to participate.





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LAND PROTECTION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2012

A key natural and scenic resource protection tract was added to Mayo River State Park at the end of 2012. The 283-acre tract on Cedar Mountain is visible from many locations in Madison and Mayodan as well as from US 220. This tract encompasses the northern end of Cedar Mountain and borders the Mayo River across from the Old Mayo Park access of the state park.



Canoes on the Mayo River

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RECREATION RESOURCES SERVICE 2012 ACTIVITIES

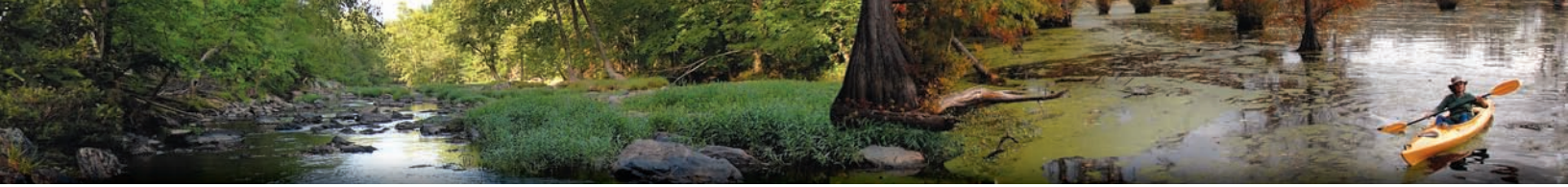
One of the focuses of RRS is to meet the needs of the individual parks and recreation agencies through the state, as well as developing recreational opportunities where there are not any currently. This assistance takes many forms including:

- Recreation Advisory Board training
- Department accreditation assistance
- Conceptual drawings of parks
- Development of system-wide and site specific master plans
- Maintenance audits
- Regional park and recreation directors meeting

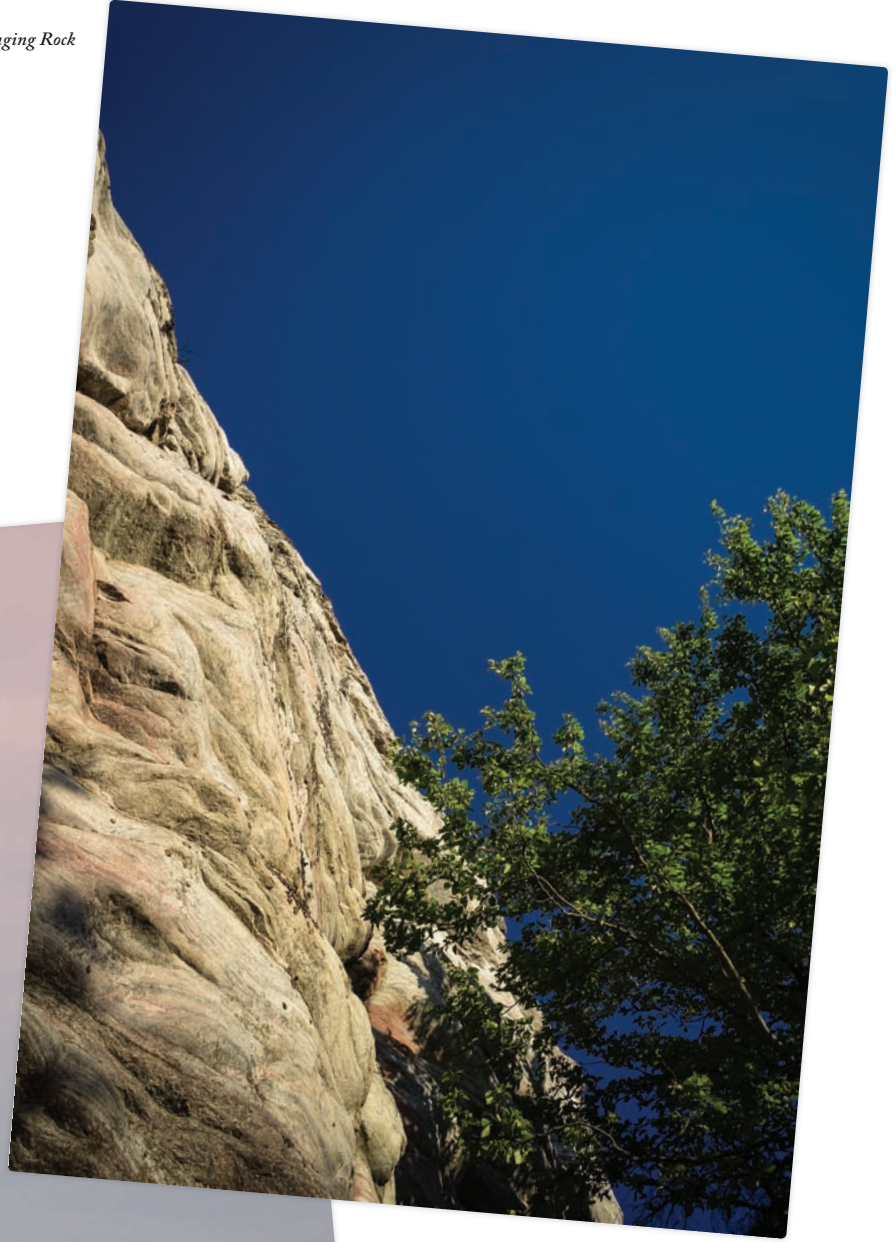
Finally, RRS staff submitted numerous articles to the NCRPA Review, the official publication of the North Carolina Recreation and Park Association, for publication including “Ask RRS,” a regular feature in the magazine.

RRS provides invaluable services to parks and recreation agencies throughout North Carolina. As needs change in the field, RRS has the capability to address these changes, which in turn, improve the quality of life for North Carolina citizens.





Hanging Rock



Hanging Rock



FREE APP AVAILABLE!

Introducing North Carolina State Park's app created by ParksByNature Network, available on smart phone platforms. The app features reservations, maps, activity searches and much more.

Discover why North Carolina State Parks are Naturally Wonderful!



Look for it on the App Store or Google Play as "Pocket Ranger NC."
Or look for it on www.PocketRanger.com



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