

NORTH CAROLINA

DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION

*2008 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
- CHIMNEY ROCK 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 PARK
- ELK KNOB STATE PARK
- WEYMOUTH WOODS-SANDHILLS NATURE PRESERVE

## *Message from Director*

The past 12 months have been a whirlwind for the North Carolina state parks system as we enjoyed accomplishments, reached milestones and overcame several obstacles and challenges. I will briefly touch on some of them, but I hope you will take the time to read about them in detail elsewhere in this annual report.

In 2007, the state parks system brought 8,042 acres of land into conservation at 16 units with support from the Parks and Recreation, Clean Water Management and Natural Heritage trust funds. A premier partnership effort involving the trust funds, the General Assembly, land conservancies and local communities resulted in the acquisition of the 996-acre, private nature attraction Chimney Rock Park to be integrated into Chimney Rock State Park now in development.

The General Assembly authorized the Deep River State Trail as a network of conservation and recreation lands along the river. And, the division established the Mountain Bogs and Sandy Run Savannas state natural areas with acquisitions of 91 acres and 2,357 acres respectively.

Other results from more than 200 active acquisition projects included expanding Medoc Mountain State Park with 1,507 acres of former International Paper Corp. land, 10 properties containing 301 acres added to the developing Mayo River State Park and, 249 acres in an important watershed added to Lake Norman State Park.

Improvements to the US 221 Access at New River State Park, including a 14,000-square-foot visitor center, campground, picnic grounds and maintenance complex were dedicated. The division has more than 50 active design and development projects including new visitor centers being developed at Dismal Swamp, Merchants Millpond and Raven Rock state parks, a new observation platform at Mount Mitchell State Park and development of infrastructure at Gorges State Park. In addition, master plans were completed for a 3,000-acre addition at Lake James State Park and for South Mountains State Park.

A total of \$17 million was channeled into local park acquisition and development projects through 54 matching grants from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, administered by the division. In the 13-year history of the fund, more than \$108 million has been awarded through 531 matching grants.



The division's State Trails Program initiated a corridor plan with local governments for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail in the western piedmont from Stone Mountain State Park through Guilford County and continued to fine tune corridor plans for the piedmont and eastern sections of the 1,000-mile route. A 15.1-mile segment of the trail along the Blue Ridge Parkway was dedicated.

The division established a Natural Resource Research Advisory Committee to open dialogue with universities and scholars about potential research projects in the state parks. The parks system partnered with five public and private organizations to inaugurate the eastern North Carolina Birding Trail; 14 of its 102 sites are state parks.

The division teamed with conservation organizations to initiate oyster reef construction at Jockey's Ridge and Hammocks Beach state parks and to create stormwater mitigation and erosion protection projects at Hammocks Beach. Through our association with the National Association of State Park Directors, this year, Mike Leonard and Dick Ludington of The Conservation Fund and Sen. Walter Dalton were honored with national conservation awards.

Sixty state park rangers and division employees earned environmental education certification through the Office of Environmental Education, representing nearly one third of the state's annual certifications. To further define its identity, the division began a program to issue state parks license plates and redesigned and expanded its Web site to include more data-based descriptions and more descriptions about such programs as state trails, resource management and employment opportunities.

There are so many things that make the North Carolina state parks system special. They include the highest peak east of the Mississippi River at Mount Mitchell and the tallest sand dune on the East Coast at Jockey's Ridge, unique and regionally distinctive Carolina Bays, 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 200,000 acres entrusted to us for stewardship, management and interpretation.

But what really sets our system apart is the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation's professional and dedicated staff. These highly qualified public servants are committed to offering safe, fun and educational experiences to all our visitors. During 2008, visit a state park, reconnect with the world outside and take in and enjoy the magnificent natural resources that make North Carolina state parks Naturally Wonderful.

Sincerely,

Lewis R. Ledford

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lewis R. Ledford". To the right of the signature is a small, stylized icon of a green hat with a yellow band.



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## *North Carolina Purchases Natural Icon*

North Carolina kicked off 2007 in style, announcing plans to acquire Chimney Rock Park, one of the most significant preservation actions in North Carolina history.

Then, Gov. Mike Easley announced May 21 that the state of North Carolina closed on the \$24 million purchase, adding the natural attraction in Rutherford County to the new state park under development in the Hickory Nut Gorge.

The 2007 General Assembly authorized naming the new park Chimney Rock State Park. It is traditional for North Carolina state parks to be named after a dominant natural feature, and the acquisition made the name change practical.

“Chimney Rock is a cherished landmark in North Carolina, and this represents a landmark acquisition for the state parks system and the cause of conservation in our state,” Easley said. “The state is honored to accept the stewardship of this important natural resource.”

North Carolina purchased Chimney Rock Park from the Morse family descendents of the attraction’s founder, Lucius B. Morse.

The acquisition was made possible through a \$15 million appropriation from the General Assembly, \$4.85 million from the Parks and Recreation, Natural Heritage and Clean Water Management trust funds and \$2.35 million from a private donor.

The transfer of the 996-acre property was accompanied by an agreement under which the Morse family, through its Chimney Rock Company Management LLC, will continue to operate the park through 2009 in a manner similar to its current operation, including charging an admission fee, offering special events and staying open on a year-round basis.

Beginning in 2008, the state will receive a licensing fee based on a percentage of gross revenues. During that period, the Division of Parks and Recreation will continue land acquisition efforts and develop an operations plan for the larger state park that encompasses Chimney Rock.

The state parks system will also work with the local community, the trust funds and the legislature to create a state park that will be a legacy. The short-term goal is to ensure a seamless transfer of Chimney Rock into the state parks system with no interruption to the public’s access or to the tourism economy of that area.

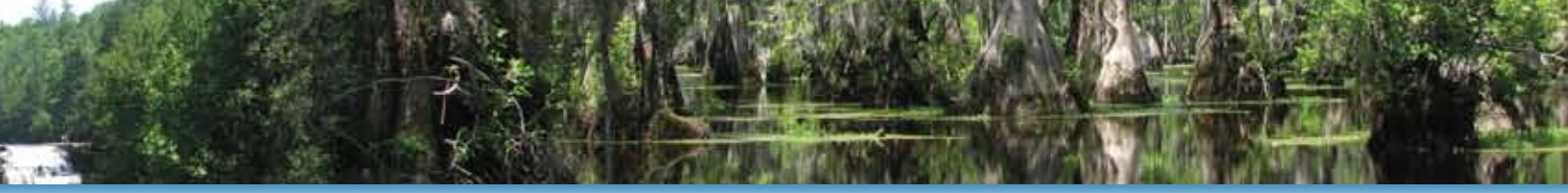
The park has grown to more than 3,200 acres spanning both sides of the gorge and includes the World’s Edge property southwest of Chimney Rock. It may eventually include properties on Rumbling Bald Mountain now held by The Nature Conservancy.

Easley applauded the decision by the Morse family and Todd Morse, president and general manager of the attraction, to continue to be involved in the process.

DPR Division Director Lewis Ledford met with Lucius Morse at a 2004 national conference held in St. Louis and initiated talks about the state’s possible acquisition of Chimney Rock. The pair held numerous discussions about the purchase between that time and the actual acquisition in May 2007.

Chimney Rock Park began as a private nature attraction in 1902. Its dominant feature is a 315-foot-tall rock spire that offers 75-mile views. The park also has a nature center and a network of hiking trails leading to unusual geologic features and the 404-foot Hickory Nut Falls. It has also been featured in a number of motion pictures, including *Last of the Mohicans*.

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The state has received significant help in piecing together the new state park from The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy and the Foothills Conservancy as well as supporters in the local community.



**Richard "Dick" Ludington** (left) and **Michael Leonard** (center), both of TCF, and **Senator Walter Dalton** were recognized with the President's Award from the National Association of State Park Directors for their leadership efforts to conserve Chimney Rock as part of the state parks systems.

Gov. Mike Easley signed legislation in August authorizing the establishment of the Deep River State Trail as a unit of the state parks system. Simultaneously, the Triangle Land Conservancy and the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation announced a 75-acre land acquisition that will enlarge the first principal component of the state trail.

### *Governor Easley Signs Bill Authorizing Deep River State Trail*

The Deep River State Trail will eventually be a network of conservation lands and recreation amenities stretching along the river corridor from its headwaters in Guilford County through Randolph, Chatham and Moore counties to the confluence of the Deep and Haw rivers in Lee County.



The authorization allows the state parks system to set aside land and actively coordinate the project with other agencies, local governments, land conservancies, nonprofit organizations, private landowners and recreation interests.

Director Lewis Ledford said the Triangle Land Conservancy has been an invaluable partner in developing this innovative state trail concept, and Sen. Bob Atwater's generous and tireless support has been crucial as well. This authorization allows the division to nurture other partnerships all along the river corridor.

Long popular with paddlers and anglers, the Deep River corridor offers tremendous potential for linking conservation lands, cultural resources and recreation opportunities and building destination tourism.

The Deep River State Trail would likely begin as a canoe/paddle trail with a series of public access sites. Ultimately, it could become the backbone of a regional land and water trails system with connections to Greensboro, Asheboro, the N.C. Zoological Park and Jordan Lake, and could eventually be extended down the Cape Fear River to Raven Rock State Park and beyond.

The river is considered nationally significant for its biological resources including a globally rare species of fish (Cape Fear shiner) and mussel (Atlantic pigtoe). Along the river's edge, scenic bluffs and rock outcrops alternate with high quality floodplain forests. The Deep River was significant in the history and development of piedmont North Carolina. Historic points of interest include the House in the Horseshoe State Historic Site, an 18th century plantation, a 19th century canal/lock system for navigation, the Endor iron furnace and the Deep River coal field.

The Triangle Land Conservancy manages 720 acres along the corridor including the White Pines Nature Preserve, the La Grange Riparian Reserve and the McIver Landing canoe access, with some projects funded by the Clean Water Management and Natural Heritage trust funds.



*The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund has been the most significant source of funding for visitor facilities in state parks, providing more than \$137 million since 1997. Prior to PARTF, decades of minimal funding created a shortage of visitor facilities and a backlog of deferred repair projects. As shown in the chart at right, PARTF capital improvement projects have addressed the repair needs of parks across the state.*

Perhaps more importantly, the new construction funding has allowed state parks to enhance environmental education efforts. In addition to The Summit Environmental Education Center at Haw River State Park, PARTF has provided funds for nine new visitor centers (Cliffs of the Neuse, Dismal Swamp, Fort Macon, Hammocks Beach, Jones Lake, Merchants Millpond, New River, Raven Rock, and South Mountains). Exhibit halls in six other state parks have also been provided (Carolina Beach, Crowders Mountain, Lake Waccamaw, Medoc Mountain, Mount Mitchell, and William B. Umstead).

## *PARTF Supports Variety*

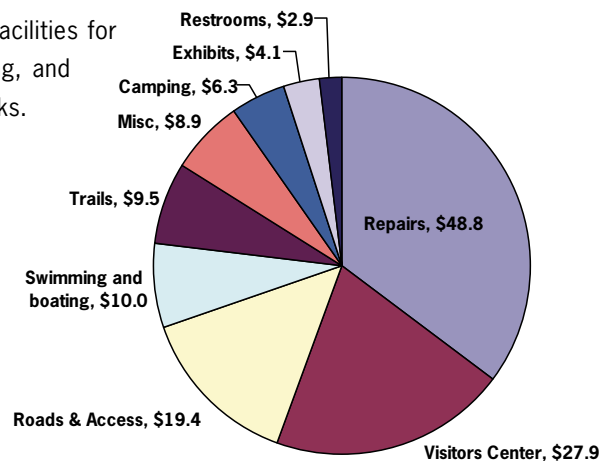
*Visitor Center at New River State Park*





## PARTF Expenditures for State Parks System Capital Improvements 1997-2007

Other funds have provided access to new parks and visitor facilities for popular activities, such as swimming, boating, hiking, camping, and learning about the significant natural resources in our state parks.

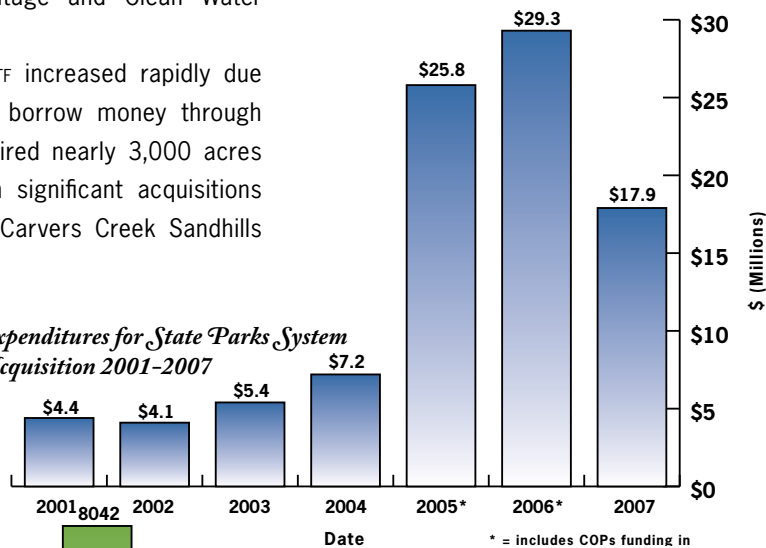


Nearly 32,000 acres have been added to the system using over \$111 million in PARTF funding since 1997. The funds have been frequently combined with grants from the Natural Heritage and Clean Water Management trust funds.

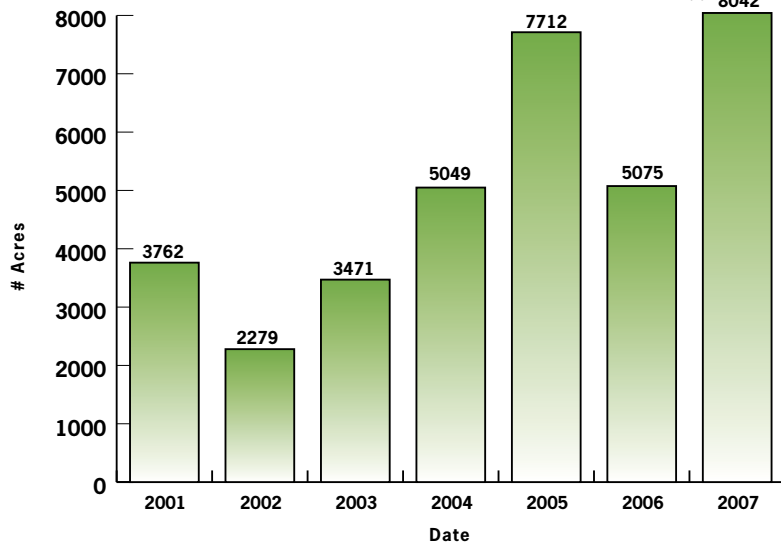
Beginning in 2004, land acquisition using PARTF increased rapidly due to acquisition opportunities and the ability to borrow money through Certificates of Participation. The division acquired nearly 3,000 acres to expand Lake James State Park, along with significant acquisitions at Chimney Rock, Mayo River, Haw River, and Carvers Creek Sandhills state parks.

## Land Acquisition Funding in the State Parks System

PARTF Expenditures for State Parks System Land Acquisition 2001-2007



State Parks System Land Acquisition 2001-2007



## *PARTF Supports Variety (continued)*

### *Parks and Recreation Authority Expands to 15 Members*

The 2007 General Assembly expanded the Parks and Recreation Authority from 11 to 15 members, with five members each being appointed by the governor, speaker of the house, and the president pro tem of the senate. The current members of the Authority are:

Mr. Jonathan B. Howes, *Chairman*  
 Ms. Cynthia Tart  
 Mr. Wendell Begley  
 Mr. Robert Epting  
 Mr. Timothy L. Aydtlett

Mr. Daryle Bost  
 Dr. Philip K. McKnelly  
 Ms. Lisa Weston  
 Mr. Cody Grasty  
 Mr. Edward W. Wood

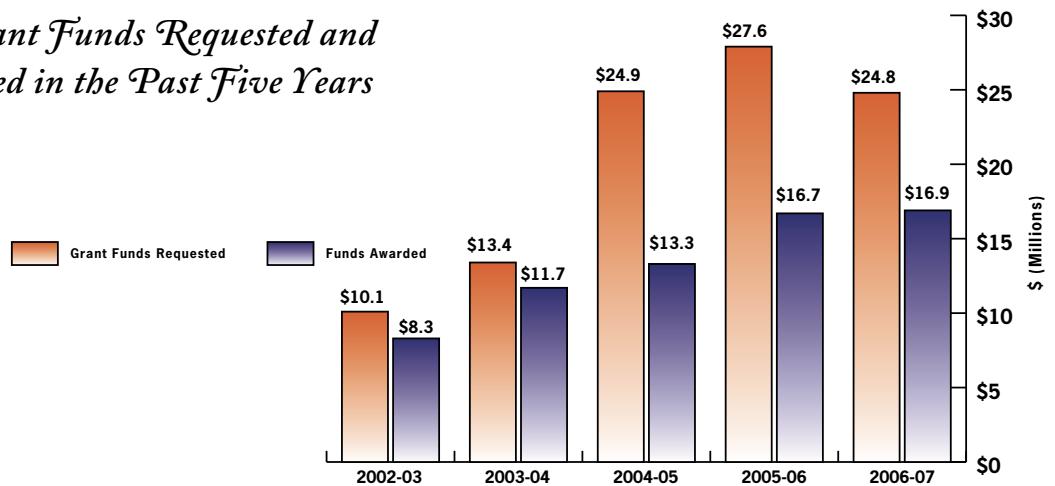
Ms. Hollis Wild  
 Mr. Thomas Blue  
 Mr. Eddie Holbrook  
 Mr. Ron Kincaid  
 Mr. Boyd Lee

## *PARTF Grants to Local Governments 2007*

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Grant Amount</b>
Apex	Wake	Beaver Creek Parkway - Phase 1B	\$277,865
Archdale	Randolph	Creekside Park Expansion	\$464,469
Ashe	Ashe	Family Central Recreation Complex Expansion	\$499,968
Asheboro	Randolph	Zoo City Park	\$500,000
Black Creek	Wilson	Town Park Redevelopment II	\$82,123
Blowing Rock	Watauga	Robbins Memorial Pool Park Enhancement	\$500,000
Clinton	Sampson	Sampson Center Improvements	\$52,967
Columbus	Columbus	Riegelwood Park	\$49,823
Cornelius	Mecklenburg	Westmoreland Athletic Complex	\$500,000
Cramerton	Gaston	Goat Island	\$500,000
Currituck	Currituck	Carova Beach Park	\$254,905
Dare	Dare	Kitty Hawk Park Land Acquisition	\$500,000
Elizabeth City	Pasquotank	South Park Sports Complex	\$482,000
Erwin	Harnett	Municipal Park Renovations	\$395,000
Faison	Duplin	Faison Park and Recreation Center	\$250,000
Franklin	Franklin	Pilot Lion's Community Park	\$131,959
Graham	Alamance	Graham Civic Center	\$280,000
Greensboro	Guilford	Keeley Park	\$500,000
Hoke	Hoke	Hoke Community Forest	\$500,000
Lewisville	Forsyth	Jack Warren Park - Phase I	\$500,000
Liberty	Randolph	Freedom Park Improvements	\$38,278
Louisburg	Franklin	Joyner Park Phase II Acquisition	\$426,300
Marion	McDowell	Mt. Ida Wilderness Area	\$165,000
Morrisville	Wake	Indian Creek Greenway Trailhead	\$355,500
Mount Airy	Surry	Ararat Riverside Park - Phase I	\$500,000
Mount Pleasant	Cabarrus	McAllister Park Ballfield Lighting	\$7,700
New Bern	Craven	Stanley White Center Renovation	\$500,000



*PART F Local Grant Funds Requested and Funds Awarded in the Past Five Years*



Applicant	County	Project Name	Grant Amount
Oak Island	Brunswick	Oak Island Teen Center	\$99,000
Orange	Orange	Cedar Grove Community Park	\$500,000
Oxford	Granville	Oxford Athletic Park Phase II	\$405,776
Pasquotank	Pasquotank	River Road Sports Complex	\$500,000
Perquimans	Perquimans	County Community Center Phase II	\$431,125
Person-Caswell Lake Authority	Person	Nature Learning Area	\$19,687
Pittsboro	Chatham	Pittsboro Town Park	\$450,000
Pittsboro	Chatham	Pittsboro Recreation Complex	\$341,541
River Bend	Craven	River Bend Town Commons	\$30,533
Rolesville	Wake	Main Street Park Expansion	\$250,000
Rutherfordton	Rutherford	Rutherfordton Clubhouse Renovation	\$305,749
Sawmills	Caldwell	Veterans Memorial Park	\$427,637
Snow Hill	Greene	Greene Community Center	\$211,575
Southport	Brunswick	Lowe White Memorial Park	\$194,404
Spindale	Rutherford	House Gym Renovation	\$43,736
Statesville	Iredell	Statesville Recreation Center	\$500,000
Summerfield	Guilford	Summerfield Community Park Phase II	\$492,120
Surry	Surry	Mountain Park Community Park	\$230,500
Tabor City	Columbus	Athletic Park Expansion	\$52,500
Teachey	Duplin	Teachey Town Park	\$30,000
Wadesboro	Anson	Wadesboro Park	\$174,798
Warsaw	Duplin	Community Recreation Complex	\$500,000
Wilkesboro	Wilkes	Cub Creek Park Enhancement	\$128,425
Wilson	Wilson	Burt Gillette Athletic Complex	\$500,000
Yadkinville	Yadkin	Community Park	\$399,463
Youngsville	Franklin	Bill & Angie Luddy Recreational Facility	\$154,579
Zebulon	Wake	Zebulon Community Center	\$500,000

## *Authority Uses COPs to Fund Key Land Acquisitions*

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority in October approved issuing \$10 million in Certificates of Participation (COPs) for land acquisition at Elk Knob, Haw River and Mount Mitchell state parks and the newly authorized Deep River State Trail.

Earlier this year, the N.C. General Assembly approved a plan to allow up to \$100 million in COPs with up to \$50 million each to be issued by the Parks and Recreation and Natural Heritage trust funds. Similar to bonds, the certificates will be repaid over 20 years by future revenues of the trust funds.

The authority also approved allocations for fiscal 2007-08 of \$7.15 million for land acquisition at seven other state parks and state natural areas and \$18 million for capital projects throughout the system.

Sixty-five percent of the trust fund is reserved for state park land acquisition and capital improvements. The remainder is used for grants for park projects by local governments and for a coastal beach access program.

Part of the \$10 million in new certificates will target about 300 acres in various tracts at Haw River. The parks system also hopes to use the certificates to acquire 180 acres at Elk Knob. A portion of that land may help eventually link park areas in Watauga and Ashe counties. And at Mount Mitchell, 65 acres in two tracts could be acquired.

The Deep River State Trail was authorized by the General Assembly this year, and the parks system has acquired land on the river in Chatham County. Up to \$500,000 in COPs will be issued for other tracts near that site.

The \$7.15 million set aside for land acquisition may purchase up to 1,206 acres in multiple tracts that are either under option by the parks system or in the appraisal stage.

They include 459 acres at South Mountains State Park that may be used to improve opportunities for camping facilities as well as properties at Eno River, Mayo River, Medoc Mountain, New River and Raven Rock state parks and Mount Jefferson State Natural Area.

Some of these acquisitions are likely to be augmented by grants from the Natural Heritage and Clean Water Management trust funds.

The approved capital projects are planned for 11 state park units and include \$3.58 million for a new visitor center at Raven Rock State Park and \$3.3 million for a visitor center and eastern district office at Cliffs of the Neuse State Park. Funds for design of both projects were set aside earlier.

The project list also includes a significant renovation of the marina and boat ramp facilities at Carolina Beach State Park, campground improvements at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area and a new boathouse and shoreline improvements at Morrow Mountain State Park.





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## *General Management Plans*

The State Parks Act directs that general management plans (GMPs) be developed to guide individual parks. GMPs provide a multi-disciplinary, thorough and logical approach to planning. The plans include:

- A statement of park purpose, including identification of the park's significant resources;
- A summary of interpretive themes;
- An analysis of demand and trends;
- Summary of laws and policy guiding park management;
- An analysis of natural and cultural resource management, including external and internal threats and research needs;
- Physical plant inventory, needs and priorities;
- Capital improvement needs, priorities, and proposed facility locations;
- Operations and management issues and recommendations; and
- Land acquisition needs.

Development and revisions of GMPs have documented needs and set priorities. These plans help ensure funds are spent effectively and that projects are designed and constructed to serve their intended purposes. Park advisory committees review park plans and provide valuable feedback.

During 2007, four GMPs were completed: Fort Fisher State Recreation Area, Lake Waccamaw State Park, Carolina Beach State Park, and Raven Rock State Park. These four are currently pending final approval and 12 others are underway. Once approved, the plans are posted on the division's Web site.

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## *Construction Program*

In 2007, the division continued its ongoing efforts to promote planning and construction practices of infrastructure and buildings that are environmentally responsible and healthy places to live, work and enjoy. The agency adopted a policy requiring the pursuit of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification through the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Green Building Rating System for all new, or significantly renovated, buildings having 5,000 square feet or more.

For buildings less than 5,000 square feet, project team members are to be familiar with the use of LEED as a tool to help guide the project. Sustainable and green buildings typically require some additional services and result in additional deliverables. In most cases, additional costs are recovered within a few years based upon energy savings and other factors.

Aggressive efforts, such as qualifying for gold or platinum LEED certification, or other certifications deemed appropriate, may require longer-term payback analyses. While multiple types of environmentally sound innovative building technology may be considered, the division is particularly interested in technologies that address the following:

- Ecological site design: on-site erosion control, water purification/pollution reduction, and stormwater management.
- Transportation: promoting bicycle, pedestrian and transit use where possible.
- Waste reduction: building reuse, job site recycling and efficient use of materials.
- On-site management of sewage and organic wastes, such as gray water systems and biological wastewater treatment.

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## *Construction Program (continued)*



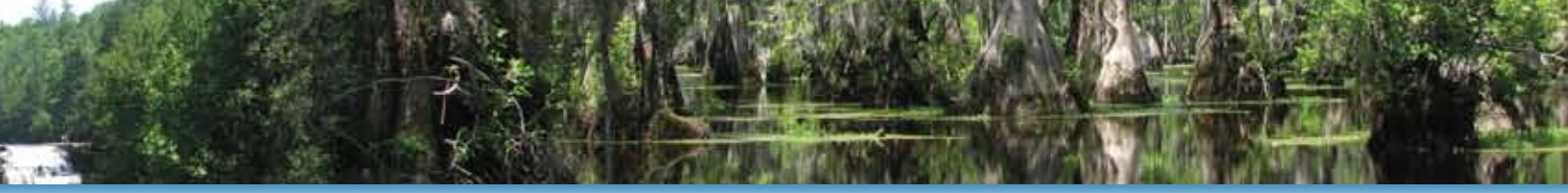
- Energy efficiency: efficient thermal envelopes, efficient space and water heating, lighting, controls and monitoring and appliances.
- Renewable energy: photovoltaics, geothermal pumps, and wind turbines.
- Water efficiency, both domestic and irrigation, including rainwater harvesting for irrigation and toilet flushing. Consider waterless urinals in all applications.
- Materials and resources: durable building envelopes and long-lived materials or assemblies, recycled-content materials, safer, less toxic materials, such as alternatives to CCA-treated wood, innovative application of natural materials (characterized by low embodied energy, local availability, good performance, biodegradable, safe, aesthetic) such as straw, earth and other composites.
- Indoor environmental quality, pollution reduction, worker and occupant safety, air cleaning, humidity control, and thermal comfort.
- Operations and maintenance: monitoring energy, water, waste, air quality, and transportation use along with resource-efficient operation practices.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification projects now under construction contract are the Fort Macon coastal education center and the Merchants Millpond visitor center. Other LEED projects soon to be bid are the Raven Rock visitor center, the Lake James phase I development project, and the Cliffs of the Neuse visitor center.

Typically, the construction program administers 40-50 ongoing capital improvement projects ranging in value from \$300,000 to \$7.5 million maintaining a total active project value of \$70-80 million.

In addition to large planning and design efforts that span thousands of acres, design and development staff also focus on site-specific small-scale needs, such as the recent completion in September of a LEED-based landscape plan for the planned Fort Macon State Park coastal education center.

Landscape plans that follow LEED principles adhere to standards such as using native vegetation, avoiding the need for irrigation, minimizing site disturbance and impervious surfaces, and identifying appropriate sites that avoid sensitive natural resources.



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## *Continued Planning Efforts at New and Existing Units*

### **South Mountains State Park Master Plan**

Completed in November, the new South Mountains State Park master plan will guide development while carefully balancing recreation demands with the protection of the valuable natural resources.

At over 18,000 acres, the park has historically focused on rugged backcountry experiences. The master plan preserves this focus while establishing a blueprint for compatible long-term development of recreation and environmental education opportunities. The master plan outlines specific projects within three designated park sections: Jacob Fork, Henry Fork, and Clear Creek. The relatively recent addition to the park of the Clear Creek watershed on the western edge of the park offers the possibility of opening another gateway. This Clear Creek section of the park has the potential to support an environmental education center and related activities that would allow all citizens, and especially populations with special needs, to connect with nature in a very special way.

Following DENR's Green Building Policy, all components of the master plan have been evaluated and designed based on principles of sustainable design/green design with reference to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

### **Growth and Change at Elk Knob**

A name change in 2007 from Elk Knob State Natural Area to Elk Knob State Park recognizes the potential of this unit in Watauga and Ashe counties to support a wider array of recreational opportunities.

Design and development staff collaborated with park staff in the layout and construction of interim facilities that include a visitor contact station opened to the public in September 2007, trailhead facilities, and continuing work on a new summit trail, day-use/picnic area and maintenance facility.





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## *New State Park Units Taking Shape*

Progress continues on development of six new state parks as part of the system's New Parks for a New Century initiative. Chimney Rock, Haw River, Mayo River and Carvers Creek Sandhills state parks were authorized by the N.C. General Assembly over the past four years. Elk Knob and Dismal Swamp state parks -- formerly state natural areas -- were given state park status by the 2007 General Assembly.

### **Chimney Rock State Park**

The park initially authorized as Hickory Nut Gorge State Park in 2005 was re-named in last year's legislative session and now encompasses more than 3,200 acres including the 996-acre Chimney Rock Park, the former private nature attraction, which was purchased as part of the state park early in the year. That portion of the state park is open to the public and operating under a contract with Chimney Rock Management LLC.

Land acquisition efforts continue on both sides of Hickory Nut Gorge with the help of land conservancies. In recent months, the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy acquired three tracts that will improve a corridor linking the Chimney Rock area with the 1,600-acre World's Edge tract to the southwest. And, The Nature Conservancy announced land acquisitions that also will improve corridors and the potential for rock climbing facilities.

### **Haw River State Park**


Improvements to facilities at The Summit Environmental Education and Conference Center at Haw River State Park in Guilford County continue with funding from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. In addition, negotiations continue on acquiring several key tracts adjoining the 300-acre conference center campus. These include a 700-acre tract to the west in the river corridor that would provide land for recreation facilities and includes high quality hardwood forest.

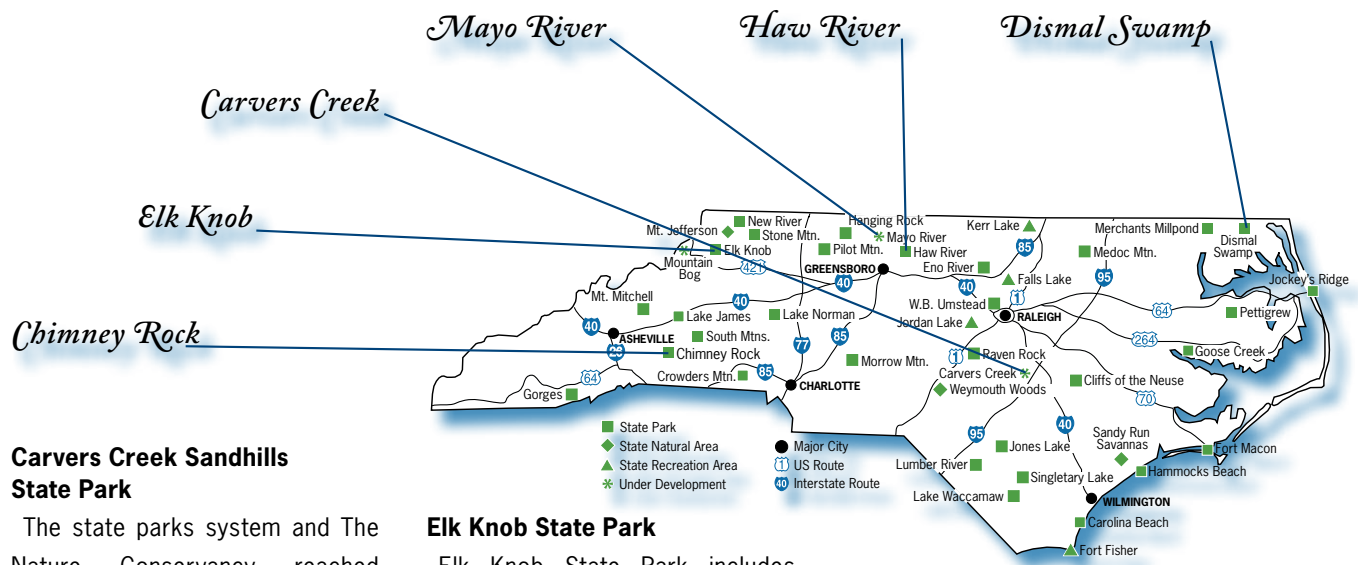
In October, the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority agreed to issue up to \$7 million in certificates of participation for land acquisition at Haw River. These instruments, similar to bonds, were authorized by the 2007 General Assembly and will be repaid over 20 years by revenues into the trust fund.

### **Mayo River State Park**

Construction is expected to begin in the spring on interim facilities and historic preservation at Mayo River State Park in western Rockingham County. Development will include a ranger contract station, entrance road, parking area, picnic grounds and a restroom building on a 398-acre site formerly known as the Old Mayo Park. In addition, the project includes historic renovation of a picnic shelter and cooking shelter designed by Antonin Raymond, a noted architect and disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Meanwhile, land acquisition continues at several points along the river corridor north of Mayodan to the Virginia state line, with the park now encompassing 1,922 acres.





**Carvers Creek Sandhills State Park**

The state parks system and The Nature Conservancy reached an agreement under which a 1,380-acre former Rockefeller family estate in Cumberland County will be donated as part of Carvers Creek Sandhills State Park. It is several miles south of about 1,400 acres acquired for the park in 2006. The conservancy intends to complete some stream and long leaf pine forest restoration projects on the property before the transfer late in 2008.

The Rockefeller property includes an old estate house and several outbuildings of historic value as well as a 100-acre lake adjoining a cypress swamp.

During the next year, the parks system hopes to devise a plan for operating interim facilities at the park and to establish core park staff.

**Elk Knob State Park**

Elk Knob State Park includes property at the summit of the tallest peak in Watauga County as well as the summit of The Peak, one of the highest points in neighboring Ashe County. The park is now at more than 2,600 acres, with land acquisition efforts focused on a corridor linking the two peaks.

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority approved \$1.5 million in Certificates of Deposit to be issued for further land acquisition at Elk Knob.

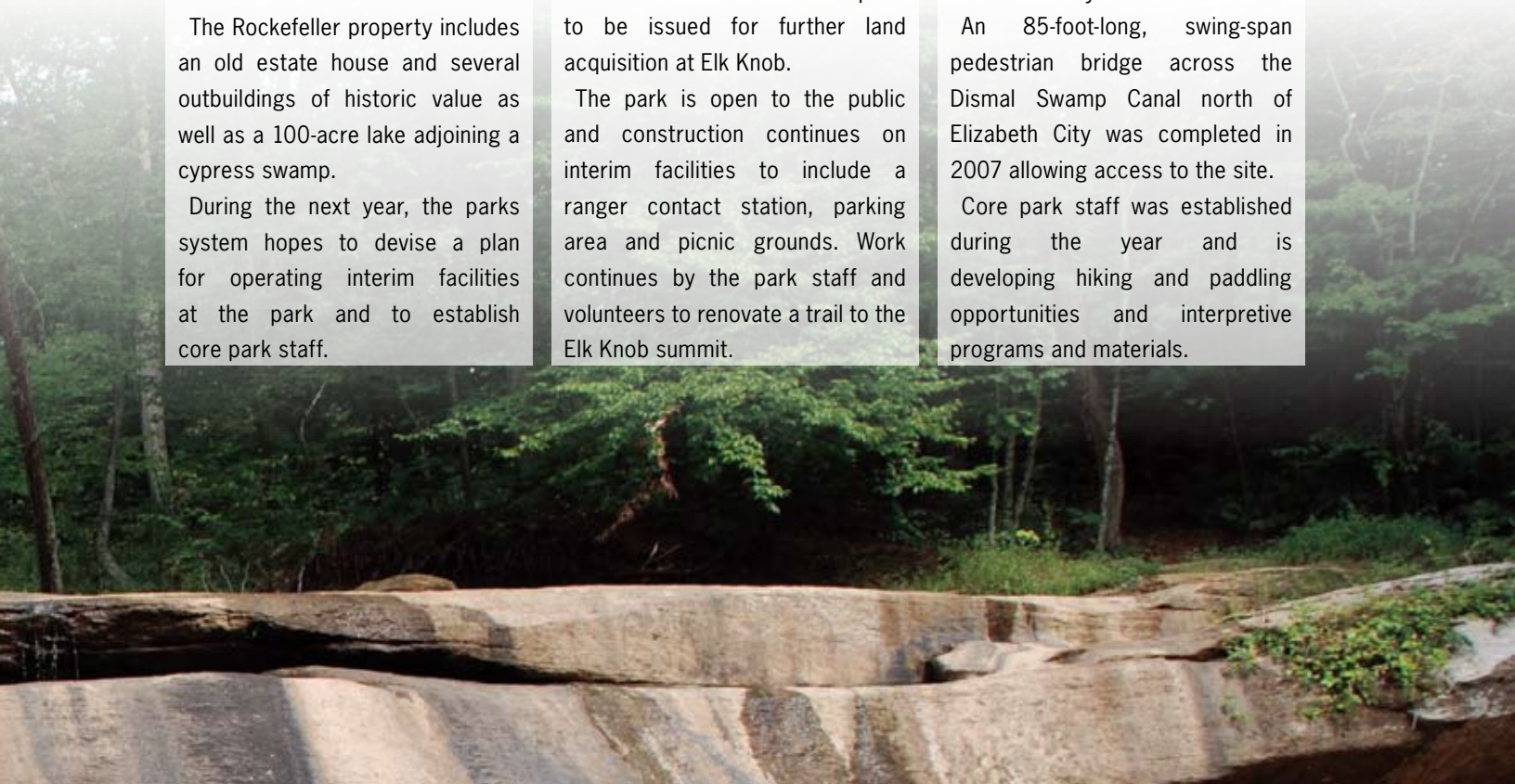
The park is open to the public and construction continues on interim facilities to include a ranger contact station, parking area and picnic grounds. Work continues by the park staff and volunteers to renovate a trail to the Elk Knob summit.

**Dismal Swamp State Park**

A 7,050-square-foot visitor center and related facilities was completed early in 2008 at this 14,344-acre state park in Camden County. The visitor center is surrounded by a gazebo, decks and a wooden boardwalk to add to the visitor experience. An exhibit hall within the center explores the swamp's rich natural and cultural history.

An 85-foot-long, swing-span pedestrian bridge across the Dismal Swamp Canal north of Elizabeth City was completed in 2007 allowing access to the site.

Core park staff was established during the year and is developing hiking and paddling opportunities and interpretive programs and materials.



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## *State Park License Tag Unveiled*



Friends and supporters of North Carolina's state parks and of conservation will soon be able to publicize that support with a "Naturally Wonderful" state parks license plate.

The Division of Parks and Recreation continues to accept applications and payment for the first 300 license plates that feature an outdoor recreation design theme in blue, green and black.

There is a \$30 fee for the plate in addition to regular license fees of the Division of Motor Vehicles. The fee is \$60 for a personalized state parks plate. A significant portion of the additional fee will be distributed to North Carolina's Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and Natural Heritage Trust Fund.

Once the minimum 300 initial applications are received, processing and mailing of the new plates should begin within 90 days, and thereafter, plates will be produced and mailed directly from the Division of Motor Vehicles.

Applications and complete information can be found on the division's Web site ([www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov)) or write: N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, 1615 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1615

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## *New Park Designations for Dismal Swamp, Elk Knob, Chimney Rock*

State natural areas at Dismal Swamp in Camden County and Elk Knob in Watauga County have been re-designated as state parks as a result of 2007 legislative action.

Alterations to the State Nature and Historic Preserve Act also changed the name of Hickory Nut Gorge State Park in Rutherford County to Chimney Rock State Park.

The changes better reflect the status of those units of the state parks system.

Dismal Swamp at 14,344 acres and Elk Knob at 2,316 acres are of sufficient size to be state parks, and they are likely to develop in such a way that suits state park status. In the case of Chimney Rock, it is traditional for our state parks to be named after a dominant natural feature, and our acquisition of Chimney Rock this year made the name change practical.

State parks and state natural areas are sometimes managed in similar fashion. But, the broad category of state natural areas includes some tracts not suitable for traditional state park facilities because of their fragile natural resources or because they are too small for development.

There are now 37 state parks, two of which remain under development and not open to the public. There are 17 state natural areas and four state recreation areas.





To the land, they're guardians and stewards.

To the people visiting state parks every year, they're a source of security, help and knowledge.

For nearly 200 professionals in the state parks system, being a ranger means contributing to something bigger than themselves and something that's enduring.

"The job's very rewarding in teaching visitors, especially the children, about the cultural and natural history of the park," said Randy Newman, a 20-year veteran ranger at Fort Macon State Park.

"I also take great pleasure in protecting the native flora and fauna of the park to ensure their survival for future generations."

They're sentiments frequently expressed whenever a ranger reflects on his or her life working in the woods, the lakes or the beaches of the state parks system.

Park rangers are truly the backbone of North Carolina's state parks system, responsible for the protection of the state's most precious natural resources and for the safety of millions of visitors.

The profession has changed dramatically in just a generation or two. Once, near-forgotten forest "wardens," rangers now are law enforcement officers and highly trained multi-specialists, with greater stresses and demands on their time and skills than ever.

The park ranger now is an important component of that thin line of interface between urban life and the so-called "protected" natural world – the world to which so many people these days seem to want to reconnect.

And, as threats to our natural resources increase and intensify and, urban populations demand more ready access to the natural environment, park rangers are looked upon not just as stewards of the environment, but as the community's representatives for law and order in the forest.

As part of the "thin green line," they are on the front line between conservation and voracious development. And, they're on the front line in protecting people, resources and each other in what, by its nature, is already a dangerous environment.

A typical day for a park ranger rarely ever is. It can include leading a busload of school kids on a hike or finding and patching up an injured hiker. It can include calming a domestic dispute, ticketing a speeding driver, monitoring a patch of rare plants, designing a trailside display or battling a wildfire.

Also atypical is the extensive training rangers need to hone skills so varied. Rangers are required to have at least a two-year degree – and most have a four-year degree – in a curriculum such as parks management, outdoor recreation or resource protection.

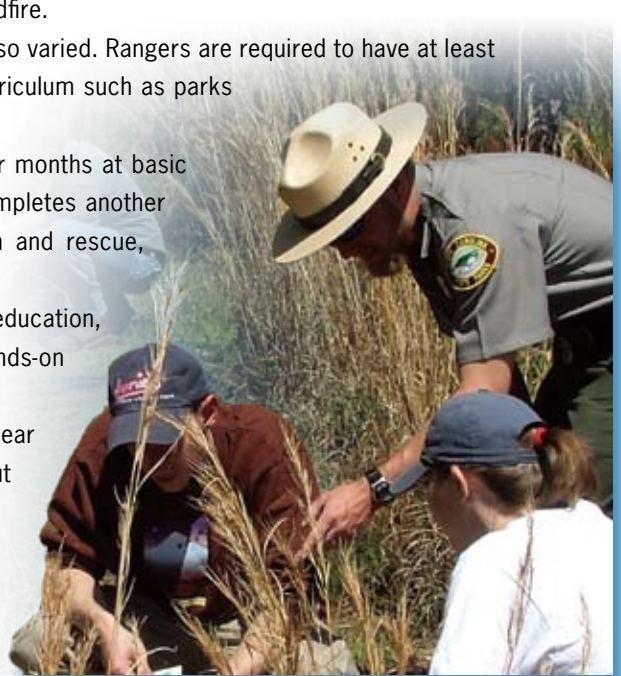
Within the first two years on the job, a ranger spends about four months at basic training to be commissioned as a law enforcement officer and completes another 200 hours of training in emergency medical techniques, search and rescue, wildfire suppression and interpretation and education skills.

They must also work toward certification in environmental education, involving yet another 200 hours of workshops, research and hands-on projects.

It's only then, that they're considered to have what it takes to wear the distinctive campaign hat of a park ranger. All told, it takes about \$15,000 to train and equip a state park ranger.

The ranks of park rangers are now more diverse than ever, and the profession is continually attracting better quality candidates. Gradually, competition for the jobs has grown stronger, and

## *What's It Like To Be A Park Ranger?*



...continued on page 19



## *DPR Launches New Web Site*

The Division of Parks and Recreation in November unveiled a redesigned and expanded Web site and established a new Web address at [www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov).

The new site retains all the information about the state parks system and related programs of the division as well as new features that should appeal to visitors and parks system partners and stakeholders. The division's site was last redesigned in 2002. The new site was developed by Ed King, who retired in 2005 from the Information Technology program of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and Tom Howard, a retired interpretation and education specialist with the division who was largely responsible for developing and maintaining the site since its launch in 1995. Howard has created ways to integrate the site with several of the division's existing databases, and that has resulted in more sophisticated Web-based tools. Individual parks can make "real time" changes to select areas of the Web site for such information as trail closures and changes in operating hours. New portions of the site are meant to offer a broader picture of all the division's work, giving higher profile to such programs as trails, natural resource management, federal and state grants, long-range planning and the design and development of new parks and park facilities.

There is new information about jobs in the state parks system and in the administrative branches of the division. And, there are "Frequently Asked Question" sections aimed at park visitors and the media.

The individual state park sites also include a "Sights and Sounds" feature where parks can post photos, video and audio segments and detailed information about park-specific features and programs.

## *Connecting Nature Across Generations*



Connecting young people with nature is an essential way to sustain the state parks system mission. There is growing concern among parents and educators that children are spending far less time outdoors and more time "wired" to video games, televisions and computers. Research indicates children are more physically fit and score higher on tests of concentration when they spend more time in natural settings.

The division made major strides towards reconnecting children with nature in 2007.

Eighteen staff members earned their environmental education certification in 2007. The 188 certified environmental educators in the state parks system represent the largest group of such educators outside of the public school system. The certification requires more than 200 hours of training and an action partnership. Interpretation and education programs provided by these environmental educators reached over 300,000 people during the year.

Partnerships with educators are an important way that park staff spread the division's conservation message. State parks staff trained more than 600 educators during workshops in 2007. The outreach efforts of these trained educators reached an additional 90,000 youth.

The division continues to develop junior ranger programs through collaboration with the Friends of State Parks. Junior ranger programs engage elementary age children in meaningful learning by participating

*...continued on next page*





in park educational programs, completing an activity booklet, conducting a park stewardship project, and learning about career opportunities in natural resources.

North Carolina State Parks proudly served as the partner organization to promote the first annual Take A Child Outside Week, in September. This international initiative was sponsored by the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences to help families and educators engage children in outdoor discovery.

A residential environmental education program at Haw River State Park completed its inaugural year. School students and youth groups visited the outdoor school to be fully immersed in outdoor education. Over 5,000 students and adults participated in the Haw River Program this year.

“One thing we focus on is the comfort level of students outdoors. Youth need to overcome their fears of nature first in order to learn from and appreciate it”, says Education Director Kathryn Royall.

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### *Natural Resource Protection Highlights*

The division’s resource management team stepped up efforts to protect the state parks’ natural resources, particularly in the areas of prescribed burns, invasive species and stream restoration.

A 105-acre prescribed burn was conducted at Crowders Mountain State Park, the largest ever at the park and one of the largest ever in a mountain region. Increased mountain burning is planned for 2008. The division hired an environmental specialist to direct its prescribed burn program.

In fighting invasive species, the staff neared completion of a four-year eradication effort for tree of heaven at Pilot Mountain State Park and completed the second year of treatments for an extensive privet population at Lake Norman State Park. Eradication efforts continue at Stone Mountain State Park for bamboo and New River State Park for multiflora rose.

At Stone Mountain State Park, the first phase of restoration of Big Sandy Creek was completed with funding from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, and upgrades were completed to climbing routes on the mountain’s south face. Similar upgrades were done on climbing routes at Pilot Mountain State Park.

At Fort Fisher State Recreation Area, the team wrote a plan to protect nesting shorebirds and sea turtles by controlling red fox predation and by implementing a trash-free beach zone.

During 2007, the staff was also involved in completing an archaeological survey at Lake James State Park, identifying nature preserve boundaries at Chimney Rock, Elk Knob and New River state parks and developing a program with N.C. State University for a three-year study of trout streams.

### *What’s It Like To Be A Park Ranger? ...continued from page 17*

in North Carolina, salaries have improved significantly.

Beyond all the training, park rangers today are required to be resourceful and adaptable. They’re encouraged to seek new tools, new methods of working and even new ways of thinking about the job they do.

The job is more demanding than in the past, but in many ways it’s also more rewarding.

A park ranger is still able to work day-to-day in the natural environment, something that fewer and fewer people are able to do in the modern world.

As the public yearns to be in the natural world and becomes more aware of the threats to our natural resources, it also becomes more aware of the importance of the job that rangers perform. This helps to raise the ranger’s standing in the community

And, park rangers are still in a position to do work that makes a difference in the world and in peoples’ lives. There’s more reason than ever to take pride in their accomplishments as a part of that “thin green line.”



*The North Carolina Trails Committee and the staff of the State Trails Program share a vision, a statewide network of trails for all users—hikers, bikers, equestrians, canoeists, and off-road vehicle enthusiasts. Across this network, the citizens of North Carolina and visitors can experience and enjoy the state’s natural, cultural, and recreational resources. Whether the trails are close to home, pass through the rural countryside, or scale a rugged mountain, they should be available to all citizens for their enjoyment.*

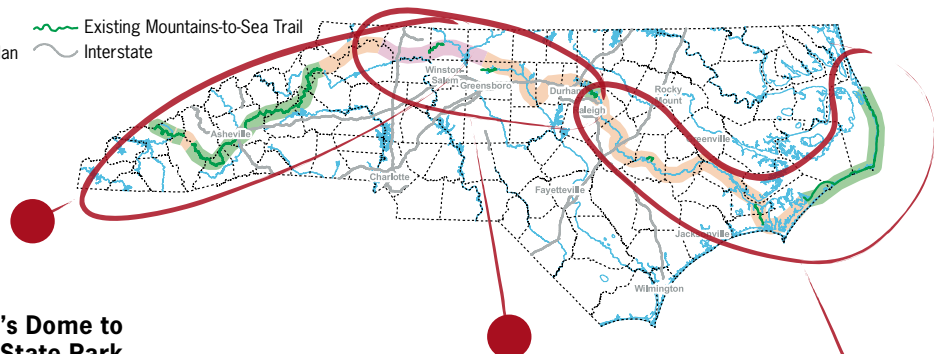
The Division of Parks and Recreation strongly supports the North Carolina Trails System Act, which established the goal of a state trails system. Trails are an essential part of the state’s infrastructure and a part of the ordinary responsibility of our governments. Trails need to be seen in the larger environmental context of protecting the state’s air and water quality, and wildlife. The trails program strives to promote the recreational, cultural and transportation benefits of trails to a community and increase recognition of the positive economic impact on tourism and business recruitment that trails have demonstrated.

# State Trails Program

## Legend

### Mountains-to-Sea Trail Status

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



## Western Region

**Clingman’s Dome to Stone Mountain State Park**

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

## Central Region

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

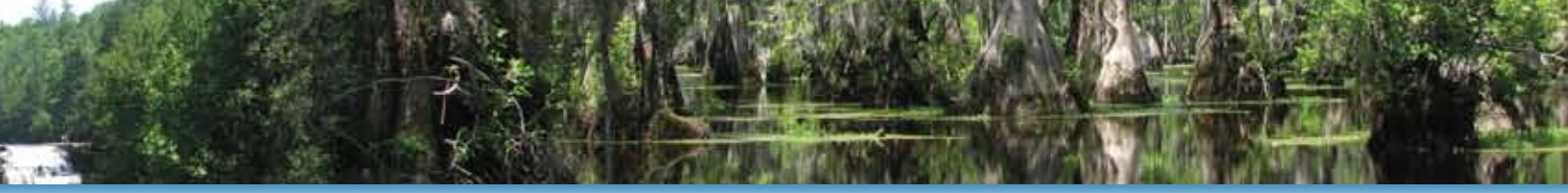
<b>Total Distance:</b>	<b>255 Miles</b>
<b>Miles Open to Public:</b>	<b>45 miles</b>
<b>Included in Comprehensive Regional Plan:</b>	<b>96 miles</b>
<b>Further Study Needed to Complete a Comprehensive Plan:</b>	<b>114 miles</b>

## Eastern Region

**Falls Lake Dam to Jockey’s Ridge State Park**

<b>Total Distance:</b>	<b>313 miles</b>
<b>Miles Open to Public:</b>	<b>81 miles</b>
<b>Included in Comprehensive Regional Plans:</b>	<b>232 miles</b>





## *North Carolina's Mountains-To-Sea Trail Effort*

North Carolina's Mountains-to-Sea Trail, an effort to link by trail Clingman's Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Jockey's Ridge State Park (a distance of over 900 miles) is the flagship project of the developing state trails system. Today, over 450 miles of this trail are open for use. Completion of this trail has been hampered by the absence of public lands in the remaining sections.

## *Secretary Designates a 15.5-Mile Segment of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail*

In 2007, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Bill Ross designated as a component of the State Trails Program, a 15.5-mile segment of the MST in Ashe and Alleghany counties. This trail resulted from the cooperative efforts of the Ashe County Task Force, the Friends of the Mountains to Sea Trail, the National Park Service, Blue Ridge Parkway and the State Trails Program.



Trails community representatives **Allen deHart** and **Jim Hallsey** join others in celebrating the new 15.5-mile MST designation

Greenways, trails, boardwalks, kiosks and bridges are among the many projects made possible in 2007 through grants of the federally funded Recreational Trails Program.

Program funding comes from federal gas taxes for off-highway vehicles. Grants can be used for new trail construction, trail repair and renovation and trailside facilities.

North Carolina awarded 13 such grants in 2007, totaling \$827,744.

The state also awarded 27 Adopt-A-Trail grants totaling \$108,000. Adopt-A-Trail Grants are part of a state-funded program to provide funding to governmental agencies, non-profit organizations and volunteers to build, maintain and promote all types of trails.

The grant program was established by the 1987 General Assembly to provide grassroots funding for planning, developing and managing trails across North Carolina. Funding for this program was increased to \$108,000 by the General Assembly in 1996.

## *Trail Grants*

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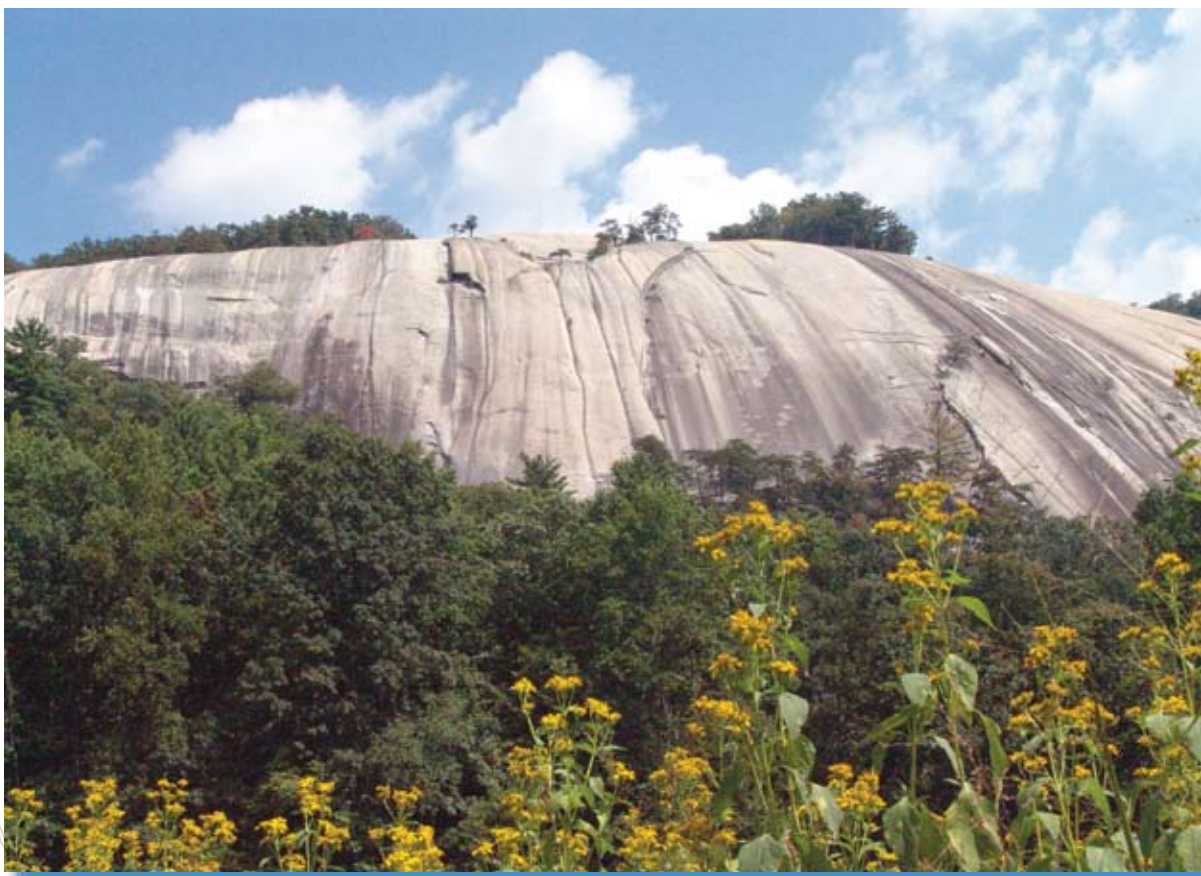
*Regional Trail Plans – MST  
Western Piedmont Plan*

The comprehensive planning for the MST is now complete. A plan for this final segment of the MST from Stone Mountain State Park to the city of Greensboro was developed in 2007. The Division of Parks and Recreation lead this effort that involved representatives from the counties of Alleghany, Wilkes, Surry, Yadkin, Stokes, Forsyth, Rockingham and Guilford and the cities and towns of Elkin, Winston-Salem and Greensboro.

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*French Broad River Regional Trails Plan*

The division also led a comprehensive effort to develop a regional trails system plan for counties and cities surrounding the French Broad River in western North Carolina. It included representatives from the counties of Madison, Buncombe, Henderson, and Transylvania and the cities and towns of Asheville, Hendersonville and Brevard. The planning goal is to find a possible connector trail route that will link the Appalachian Trail in the area of Hot Springs to the Mountains-To-Sea Trail in the Asheville area.





## Park Contact Information

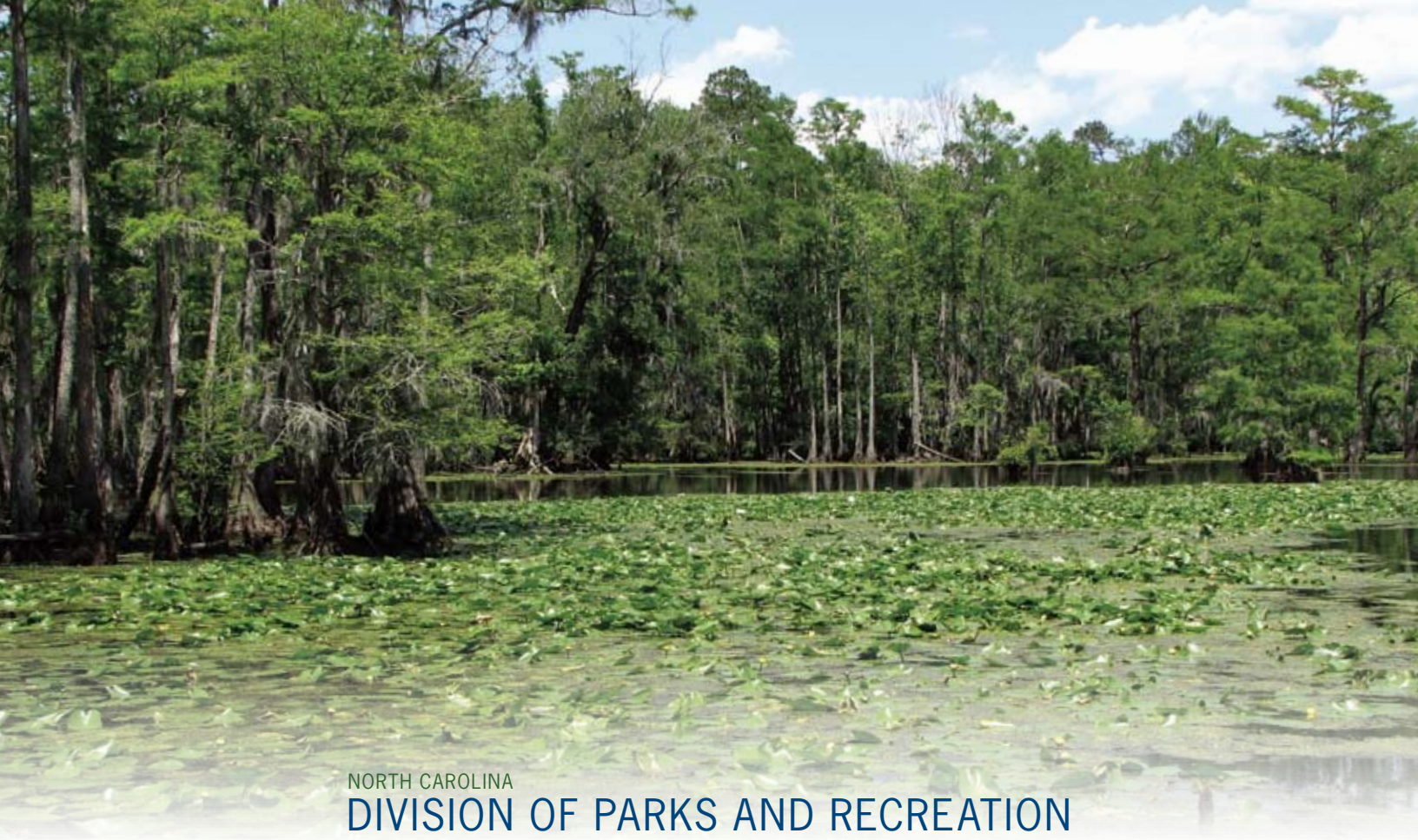
- **Carolina Beach** 910-458-8206 denr.dpr.carolina.beach@lists.ncmail.net
- **Chimney Rock** 800-277-9611 visit@chimneyrockpark.com
- **Cliffs of the Neuse** 919-778-6234 denr.dpr.cliffs.neuse@lists.ncmail.net
- **Crowders Mountain** 704-853-5375 denr.dpr.crowders.mountain@lists.ncmail.net
- **Dismal Swamp** 252-357-5224 denr.dpr.dismal.swamp@lists.ncmail.net
- **Elk Knob** 828-297-7261 denr.dpr.elk.knob@lists.ncmail.net
- **Eno River** 919-383-1686 denr.dpr.eno.river@lists.ncmail.net
- **Falls Lake** 919-676-1027 denr.dpr.falls.lake@lists.ncmail.net
- **Fort Fisher** 910-458-5798 denr.dpr.fort.fisher@lists.ncmail.net
- **Fort Macon** 252-726-3775 denr.dpr.fort.macon@lists.ncmail.net
- **Goose Creek** 252-923-2191 denr.dpr.goose.creek@lists.ncmail.net
- **Gorges** 828-966-9099 denr.dpr.gorges@lists.ncmail.net
- **Hammocks Beach** 910-326-4881 denr.dpr.hammocks.beach@lists.ncmail.net
- **Hanging Rock** 336-593-8480 denr.dpr.hanging.rock@lists.ncmail.net
- **Haw River** (please contact The Summit) 336-342-6163 denr.dpr.summit.center@lists.ncmail.net
- **Jockey's Ridge** 252-441-7132 denr.dpr.jockeys.ridge@lists.ncmail.net
- **Jones Lake** 910-588-4550 denr.dpr.jones.lake@lists.ncmail.net
- **Jordan Lake** 919-362-0586 denr.dpr.jordan.lake@lists.ncmail.net
- **Kerr Lake** 252-438-7791 denr.dpr.kerr.lake@lists.ncmail.net
- **Lake James** 828-652-5047 denr.dpr.lake.james@lists.ncmail.net
- **Lake Norman** 704-528-6350 denr.dpr.lake.norman@lists.ncmail.net
- **Lake Waccamaw** 910-646-4748 denr.dpr.lake.waccamaw@lists.ncmail.net
- **Lumber River** 910-628-4564 denr.dpr.lumber.river@lists.ncmail.net
- **Medoc Mountain** 252-586-6588 denr.dpr.medoc.mountain@lists.ncmail.net
- **Merchants Millpond** 252-357-1191 denr.dpr.merchants.millpond@lists.ncmail.net
- **Morrow Mountain** 704-982-4402 denr.dpr.morrow.mountain@lists.ncmail.net
- **Mount Jefferson** 336-246-9653 denr.dpr.mount.jefferson@lists.ncmail.net
- **Mount Mitchell** 828-675-4611 denr.dpr.mount.mitchell@lists.ncmail.net
- **New River** 336-982-2587 denr.dpr.new.river@lists.ncmail.net
- **Pettigrew** 252-797-4475 denr.dpr.pettigrew@lists.ncmail.net

## Attendance

NC State Park	2007	2006
Carolina Beach	532,086	495,682
Cliffs of the Neuse	128,073	106,347
Crowders Mountain	404,143	368,422
Eno River including Occoneechee Mountain	406,905	367,932
Falls Lake	888,173	943,149
Fort Fisher	834,544	623,849
Fort Macon	1,214,866	1,210,080
Goose Creek	170,707	154,318
Gorges	140,495	114,353
Hammocks Beach	117,966	122,070
Haw River	24,516	3,491
Hanging Rock	474,455	410,241
Jones Lake	69,974	67,390
Jordan Lake	1,190,973	1,052,256
Jockey's Ridge	1,515,734	1,058,251
Kerr Lake	1,148,632	1,162,636
Lake James	383,566	680,110
Lake Norman	523,008	445,392
Lake Waccamaw	85,657	89,274
Lumber River	80,548	83,986
Merchants Millpond	150,019	253,669
Medoc Mountain	57,615	55,185
Mount Mitchell	316,708	289,087
Morrow Mountain	401,800	356,522
New River including Mount Jefferson	287,133	277,873
Pettigrew	66,551	72,317
Pilot Mountain	404,360	396,522
Raven Rock	100,426	98,151
Singletery Lake	33,035	35,421
South Mountains	198,845	205,814
Stone Mountain	467,214	409,376
Weymouth Woods	49,770	46,719
William B. Umstead	612,411	596,793

**SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL 13,480,908 12,652,678**

- **Pilot Mountain** 336-325-2355 denr.dpr.pilot.mountain@lists.ncmail.net
- **Raven Rock** 910-893-4888 denr.dpr.info.ravenrock@lists.ncmail.net
- **Singletery Lake** 910-669-2928 denr.dpr.singletery.lake@lists.ncmail.net
- **South Mountains** 828-433-4772 denr.dpr.south.mountains@lists.ncmail.net
- **Stone Mountain** 336-957-8185 denr.dpr.stone.mountain@lists.ncmail.net
- **The Summit at Haw River State Park** 336-342-6163 denr.dpr.summit.center@lists.ncmail.net
- **Weymouth Woods** 910-692-2167 denr.dpr.weymouth.woods@lists.ncmail.net
- **William B. Umstead** 919-571-4170 denr.dpr.william.umstead@lists.ncmail.net



NORTH CAROLINA  
DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION

*2008 Annual Report*



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North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
Michael F. Easley, Governor | William G. Ross, Jr., Secretary | Lewis R. Ledford, Director



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