

## Carolina Beach, Lake James open new camping facilities

New camping facilities have opened at Carolina Beach and Lake James state parks and are already popular based on heavy demand for summer reservations.

Carolina Beach opened four camping cabins and added nine RV-friendly sites with full utilities at its 83-site campground. The two-room cabins are log construction built from kits. With double beds and bunk beds, each can sleep up to six campers. They're outfitted with heating/air conditioning systems, electric outlets, picnic tables and outdoor fire pits.

Lake James opened a 33-site, tent-only campground in the Paddy's Creek Area, a short hike from the park's popular swim beach. The new campground complements a 30-site, boat-in camping area opened last year. The new tent-only campsites offer traditional campsite amenities (picnic table, fire ring, lantern post and food storage locker) and surround a wash-house. Two sites are ADA accessible.



The park will eventually offer a separate campground for trailer and RV-friendly sites as well as group camps as part of its master plan. The \$2 million campground project was supported by the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

## Mountains-to-Sea State Trail adds 20-mile segment

North Carolina State Parks officials joined Carolina Mountain Club volunteers on National Trails Day June 4 to formally open a new 20-mile segment of the Mountains-to-Sea (MST) State Trail along the Blue Ridge Parkway and extending into the Qualla Boundary of the Eastern Cherokee Reservation.

After much planning, work on the segment began in 2006. More than 250 club members in multiple crews contributed almost 25,000 volunteer hours during some 240 workdays. The new trail section begins on the Blue Ridge Parkway, travels down Highway BIA 407 for four miles and then back along the parkway for 16 miles to Balsam Gap.

The completion of the MST segment means closure of a 30-mile gap is near. Once this gap is filled, there will be a 300-mile continuous section of the trail from Clingmans Dome to Stone Mountain State Park. The National Park Service is working on completing the final seven-mile section.

Touching upon North Carolina's highest elevation at Mount Mitchell State Park and sea level at Cape Hatteras National Seashore, more than 600 miles of the MST are open as off-road trail.

## Centennial Passport program launched

Many people have taken on the challenge of visiting every state park, but bragging rights to that accomplishment have been difficult to back up until now with the introduction of the North Carolina State Parks Passport.

In celebration of the 2016 Centennial, the passport program allows outdoor lovers to carry a keepsake passport to be stamped at any of the 41 state parks visited. For a limited time, the passport is free and every visitor completing the challenge will get a Centennial prize pack.

Many of the parks are offering stickers at interpretive programs and special events, which can also be placed into the passport.

### *Continued Other Side*



NC DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
NC DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES



---

---

## Dynamic pricing implemented for state park fees.

The state parks system has embarked on a new dynamic pricing system for campsite and facility rentals and special activity permits, which are issued for organized events, non-traditional activities and other commercial and non-commercial enterprises.

Dynamic pricing is based upon supply and demand and is standard throughout the travel industry now. It was authorized by the 2015 General Assembly and will be implemented in phases.

A component of dynamic pricing will be simplified pricing and fee collection for group campsites. By charging a flat rate rather than a per-camper fee, groups can better plan for fees regardless of attendance.

As part of the 2016 Centennial Celebration, visitors are encouraged to visit relatively undiscovered parks at off-peak times. To encourage that visitation, weekday camping in some state parks is now being offered at a special promotional rate.

The fee for special activity permits is also changing. Until recently, state parks were only authorized to charge a flat fee of \$35 for any activity requiring a special activity permit. The new pricing structure is designed to assess a more appropriate fee based upon the activity to be conducted.

The state parks system has a fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers of North Carolina for adequate financial return for the use of public resources for private financial gain and the new pricing system will help accomplish that.

## Projects at 11 state parks approved for funding.

The N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority allocated \$8,944,597 for improvements and repairs in four state parks and for land acquisitions in seven state parks during its May meeting at Mount Mitchell State Park.

Authority members approved \$700,000 for trail improvements at Chimney Rock State Park; \$60,000 for design work on a planned family campground shower house at Cliffs of the Neuse State Park; \$750,000 for dredging access to Bear Island at Hammocks Beach State Park, and \$2,750,000 for wastewater system improvements at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area.

The authority earmarked \$4,484,597 to be used in the acquisition of 2,775 acres at Hammocks Beach, Hanging Rock, Carvers Creek, Chimney Rock, Merchants Millpond, New River and Mount Mitchell state parks. The new park lands will protect natural resources, improve park access and management and provide land for new visitor facilities.

Tim Johnson, head of the Division of Parks and Recreation's Grants and Outreach Program, told authority members the division has received 69 grant requests totaling \$19,450,000 for local government parks and recreation projects. The estimated total amount available for local government projects is \$6,772,204.

Awarding the funds for both state park projects and local grants is contingent on passage of the 2016-17 state budget.

## Haw River opens Iron Ore Belt Access

Haw River State Park marked a major milestone in its development, opening the first public access outside of The Summit Environmental Education Center.

The Iron Ore Belt Access is the park's initial development on a 692-acre property that was considered for a golf course community before it was acquired by the state parks system in 2008. The new access is just west of the environmental education complex, which is reserved for private retreats, conferences and training and is not open for public visitation on a regular basis.

The access offers a 0.75-mile roadway with bike lanes that leads to a trailhead with toilet facilities and parking for 29 vehicles. The 3.2-mile Great Blue Heron Trail, built by the park's staff, loops through varied wildlife habitats and plant communities on property that includes headwaters of the Haw River.

The park's master plan calls for further development on the property, including camping facilities, picnic grounds and additional trails – amenities that will ultimately help support hikers on the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail.

*The Steward is an e-newsletter of the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation. To learn how to subscribe to the complete version and have news of the North Carolina state parks sent directly to your email inbox, scan the QR code here with a smartphone app or visit [www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov), and click "News."*

