



NC DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION
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September 2017

State lawmakers, Governor Approve New State Natural Areas

Gov. Roy Cooper approved the addition of three new state natural areas across the state on July 25 with the signing of House Bill 353. Bobs Creek State Natural Area in McDowell County, Salmon Creek State Natural Area in Bertie County and Warwick Mill Bay in Robeson County will join 21 other state natural areas in the N.C. state park system.

The new lands are valued for their pristine and rare ecosystems, historic value and proximity to existing conserved lands, which provides contiguous habitat to plant and animal species that are impacted by land development. The new law also instructs the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation to study the feasibility of a state park at the Black River in Bladen, Pender, and Sampson counties.

Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Secretary Susi Hamilton, State Parks Director Mike Murphy, regional state park superintendents and park rangers who will help manage the new natural areas gathered at the Governor's mansion in downtown Raleigh for a special signing event. Gov. Cooper praised the protection of lands by the state. Champions of the legislation were also at the mansion to celebrate the new legislation. The new state natural areas were approved due to the hard work of our conservation partners and proactive communities across the state.

Champions of the legislation were also at the mansion to celebrate, including director of the N.C. State Conservation Fund Bill Holman; Will Morgan of Manning, Fulton, and Skinner, P.A.; Lex Janes, director of Legislative Affairs at DNCR; Walter Clark, director of the Clean Water Management Trust Fund; and Camilla Herlevich, director of the N.C. Coastal Land Trust.



Salmon Creek State Natural Area



Lake Waccamaw State Park



Profile Trail at Grandfather Mountain State Park
Photo: Martin Kane



New restroom facility at the Profile trailhead, Grandfather Mountain State Park

Coastal Land Trust Donates Acreage, River Frontage to Lake Waccamaw State Park

State and local officials gathered at Lake Waccamaw State Park in Columbus County July 21 to celebrate the addition of 197 acres to the park. The new lands, a donation from the N.C. Coastal Land Trust, include beautiful bottomland hardwoods, frontage on the Waccamaw River and cypress-gum swamp.

The Coastal Land Trust acquired the land using, in part, funds it received from a 2012 settlement deal with Freedman Farms President Barry Freedman. The Trust also used funds from the N.C. Attorney General's Environment Enhancement Grant program, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant and private donors Fred and Alice Stanback of Salisbury, N.C. The property was purchased from Campbell Global LLC, a timberland investment company based in Oregon.

The park sits on the banks of a Carolina bay, one in a series of geological depressions from a few inches to 20 feet deep that appear along the length of the East Coast. Scientists aren't sure what caused this series of depressions, and Lake Waccamaw is the deepest and one of few that hold water. Limestone deposits and tannic acid from surrounding vegetation neutralize the lake's pH, making it a highly hospitable environment for aquatic species including several endemic species—species that evolved there and live nowhere else in the world.

Profile Trail Expands to Improve Access, Convenience at Grandfather Mountain State Park

The Profile Trail at Grandfather Mountain State Park offers breathtaking views of the mountain's famous vertical profile and serves as a vital artery that connects visitors with an iconic mountain viewscape. However, crowded parking lots forced many visitors to adapt by using makeshift and unsafe roadside parking areas that lacked crucial facilities for a day on the trail. It was no surprise when the new access offering ample parking, drinking water, restrooms and a new place to access the Profile Trail was greeted with fanfare.

On Aug. 11, Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Secretary Susi Hamilton, NC State Parks Director Mike Murphy, local leaders, park staff, and volunteers gathered to dedicate the new access. Speakers, including N.C. state Sen. Deanna Ballard and Grandfather Mountain State Park Superintendent Sue McBean, expressed their appreciation for the keen design, expert construction and tireless work of volunteers. Murphy spoke about the importance of flexible funding for capital improvement and maintenance projects like the new Profile Trail access, which address needs based on dramatically increasing visitation at this and many North Carolina State Parks.

The new access and a portion of the connection to the Profile Trail is on a 32.6-acre tract purchased in 2012. A 33.3-acre tract that adjoins the new access was donated to the park by The Nature Conservancy in 2015 and allowed the new access to connect with the trail. The new access and facilities represent a \$1.7-million investment from the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the principal funding source for state park capital projects and land acquisition. *(continued on next page)*



NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

Roy Cooper
Governor

Susi H. Hamilton
Secretary, DNCR

(continued from page 1) Grandfather Mountain State Park was established in 2009 and encompasses 2,687 acres of Grandfather Mountain's backcountry. It offers eight trails ranging from leisurely to rugged and camping at 13 sites around the park.

PARTF Projects Shine in Local Communities

Outstanding new local government amenities are coming online this year from Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grants awarded in 2013. Earlier this year, Morrisville's Church Street Park was completed with a \$500,000 grant. The town built a playground, picnic areas, and athletics amenities including a tournament quality regulation cricket field, which has already caught the attention of the International Cricket Council. East of Raleigh, the Knightdale Station project utilized seven acres of Knightdale Town Park to add multi-purpose shelters, walking paths, a performance stage, and a restroom facility to the beloved park. The town was awarded \$400,000 for the project, which was completed early this year.

The Parks and Recreation Authority approved \$6.2 million in grant funds to local government parks and recreation projects on Aug. 25. Of 60 proposed projects totaling \$18 million in requested funds, the authority granted funding in full to the following projects:

City of Burlington: Willowbrook Park

Halifax County: Halifax County Recreation Improvements

Town of Oak Island: Middleton Park Redevelopment

City of Sanford: Kiwanis Family Park Renovations

Catwamba County: Riverbend Park Expansion

Yadkin County: Yadkin Memorial Park Recreation

Nash County: Nash County Play Together Regional Park

Alamance County: Haw River section of Mountains-to-Sea State Trail

Davidson County: Wil-Cox Bridge Recreation Area

Town of New London: New London Park Project

Greene County: Greene County Wellness Center

City of Wilson: Cavalier Terrace

City of Archdale: Creekside Park Enhancements

Polk County: Little White Oak Mountain

Town of Valdese: Lake Rhodhiss Park Acquisition

Town of N. Topsail Beach: Town Park Renovation

Town of Forest City: Phase I, Thermal Belt Trail

Burke County: Fonta Flora State Trail

Town of Tarboro: Braswell Playground Renovations

Stanly County: Long Street Veteran's Park

Chatham County: Enhancement of Briar Chapel Park

City of Dunn: Clarence Lee Tart Park Improvements



New facilities in the Town of Knightdale



Tents lined up at Gorges State Park to see the total solar eclipse



Group watching the total solar eclipse at Gorges State Park

Gorges State Park Rings in Total Solar Eclipse with 7,500 Visitors

On Aug. 21, Gorges State Park welcomed several thousand visitors to its 7,700 acre park in the path of totality to learn about and view the total solar eclipse. Visitors began to arrive two days before the eclipse for educational programs, local vendors, and live music. On the day of the eclipse, park rangers, local police, firefighters and other volunteers from across the region managed traffic and parking of at least 1,599 cars that arrived beginning before 5 a.m. The park reached capacity at 7:40 a.m.

Gorges State Park in Transylvania County is the westernmost state park in North Carolina. It was a prized and picturesque location for viewing the eclipse due to lying in the path of totality and its open, natural setting. The Friends of Gorges State Park sponsored the events, including providing eclipse viewing safety glasses for the visitors.

The total eclipse was a rare event in that it was visible all across North America. The event lasted over two and a half minutes at Gorges State Park, which was the only N.C. State Park that was in the path of totality.

We earn when we burn

Prescribed fire is an integral part of our environmental management program. We incorporate prescribed fire in all our park ecosystems that benefit from it, including Crowders Mountain, Carvers Creek, Carolina Beach and Weymouth Woods Nature Preserve. If you see a fire in a state park, it's always good to report it. Fortunately, we're most often just rejuvenating our natural areas! Some species are traditionally fire dependent, meaning they rely on fire to help spread their seeds. Native species often benefit from prescribed fire because it helps restore the area to its natural state.



Prescribed burn at Pilot Mountain State Park

Is Your Adventure Un"bear"able?

If you're going hiking or camping in North Carolina State Parks this fall, please use extra caution. Black bear sightings are on the rise, and some are behaving more boldly than in the past. The most effective way to deal with bears is to avoid coming into contact with them in the first place.

- Store food, drinks, soap, cosmetics, trash and coolers away from tents and sleeping areas and hung from a tree 10 feet from the ground and 10 feet from the trunk.
- Report bear sightings to the park office or to a ranger.
- Don't panic! Black Bears will rarely see you as prey and are generally afraid of humans.
- Don't feed or leave food accessible to bears. Feeding bears is dangerous and prohibited by N.C. Wildlife laws.



Bear in dumpster at Mount Jefferson State Natural Area



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