



The STEWARD DIGEST



NC DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION

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Deeck property on Mountain Creek at Morrow Mountain State Park

Deeck Property Brings Mountain Creek Frontage to Morrow Mountain State Park

The Deeck property adjacent to Morrow Mountain State Park, was purchased for conservation by Three Rivers Land Trust and dedicated to Morrow Mountain State Park on June 25. The division held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new lands that was attended by leaders from the Three Rivers Land Trust, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the Division of Parks and Recreation and the Friends of Morrow Mountain.

The newly acquired property boasts mature hardwood forests and frontage along Mountain Creek, a pristine stream that is home to a variety of species of rare and endangered mussels. This purchase was made possible with funding from the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and the Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

The lands are part of Stony Hill Church Hardwoods, which is designated as a natural heritage area by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program due to its mature hardwood forests and rocky outcroppings.

Also in June, Duke Energy donated 62 acres to Morrow Mountain State Park that were leased by the park since 1941. Along the banks of Lake Tillery, the land includes the park's lake access facilities. The donation allows the park to sustain or expand its recreational operations on Lake Tillery and rely on conserving the area in perpetuity.



Morrow Mountain State Park

Legislation Signed by Governor Authorizes New State Trails and Park

New laws authorizing three new state trails and a state park have been signed by Governor Cooper. The legislation, sponsored by state senators Ballard, Daniel, Davis, Edwards, Hise, and Wells and state house members Blackwell, Setzer, McGrady and Dobson, authorizes the addition of Pisgah View State Park in Buncombe and Haywood counties; Northern Peaks State Trail in Watauga and Ashe counties; Wilderness Gateway State Trail in the South Mountains range in McDowell, Rutherford, Burke and Catawba counties; and Overmountain Victory State Trail reaching across Avery, Mitchell, McDowell, Burke, Rutherford, Polk, Caldwell, Wilkes and Surry counties.

The legislation also requires the Division of Parks and Recreation to conduct a feasibility study that will further refine a corridor for the Wilderness Gateway State Trail that could connect Chimney Rock State Park, South Mountains State Park, the Town of Valdese, the City of Hickory, Overmountain Victory State Trail and other natural areas located in Burke and Catawba counties. The division is to report their findings to the General Assembly by Dec. 1.

The new Pisgah View State Park will be in highly scenic southwest Buncombe and Haywood counties. The area is full of rare habitats, including high-quality cliffs, coves and upland forests that are home to several rare plant and animal species.

New state parks and trails units are developed following authorization by the N.C. General Assembly. The process of developing a new unit once authorized takes several years and includes land acquisition, partnership with local communities, public input on recreation and conservation priorities, planning, construction and staffing.



Future Pisgah View State Park lands



NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

Roy Cooper
Governor

Susi H. Hamilton
Secretary, DNCR

New River Opens New Swim Area at Elk Shoals

A new swim beach is now open at New River State Park's Elk Shoals access. It is the only sandy swim beach on the New River in the state and is open from sunrise to sunset daily. There is no cost to park or swim, but visitors must swim at their own risk. The Elk Shoals Property, a recent addition to the park, is at the southern end of the park, just southeast of Mount Jefferson State Natural Area.



New swim beach at New River State Park

Lake James to break ground on bond project

Lake James State Park will break ground on a new 7,200 square foot visitor center and other upgrades this fall. The project, funded by the Connect N.C. Bond, will include a 225-space parking area; a trail connecting the facility to the lake; and a pedestrian bridge over a portion of the lake. Construction is expected to take about 12 months to complete.

The new visitor center will include a large exhibit hall, retail space, two classrooms, office space, maintenance service space and public restrooms. The grounds will include an outdoor classroom and amphitheater. Burke County, a priority county in Governor Cooper's Hometown Strong initiative, is also an integral partner with the division for the development of Fonta Flora State Trail, which passes through the county and loops around Lake James.



Rendering of the new Lake James Visitor Center

Chief Ranger Bryan Dowdy To Retire After 30-year Parks Career

Chief Ranger Bryan Dowdy has retired after an exemplary 30-year career with the division of parks and recreation. His focused, steady leadership has served as a model for state parks rangers for decades.

As a college student, he began as a seasonal general utility worker at Jordan Lake. By the next summer, he was an assistant ranger at Falls Lake. He then served an internship and another season as an assistant ranger there before becoming a park ranger in 1989. By 1998, Dowdy was the superintendent of Falls Lake, a position that he held for six years until he became the division's law enforcement specialist. He has served as Parks Chief Ranger since 2005.

Dowdy's career with state parks was full of activities, initiatives, and special projects. Always looking toward improvement in professionalism for rangers across the state, he relentlessly pursued new and advanced training and education for rangers. His service to the state has created a more well-rounded, informed, skilled and dedicated force of park rangers for our state parks system.

In his retirement, Dowdy plans to remain in Raleigh with regular visits to Carolina Beach, a bit of traveling and—in true Dowdy fashion—the pursuit of new work. The division will greatly miss his expertise and leadership and wishes him the very best in his new pursuits.



Chief Ranger Bryan Dowdy

New Effort to Improve Pet Etiquette in State Parks

Across the state parks system, we are working to improve our communication about commonly-broken rules that cause frustrating or even dangerous situations for other visitors. Using new, more engaging signage, we hope to catch the attention of visitors and encourage more responsible, considerate behavior. The new campaign shows visitors that off-leash pets can create a dangerous or bothersome situation to other visitors and other pets in the parks.

DON'T:



Graphic depicting new pet etiquette campaign.



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