

SYSTEMWIDE PLAN FOR NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS

CHAPTER TWO STATE OF THE SYSTEM

Updated for FY 2010-2011

SYSTEM UNITS

As of July 1, 2011, the North Carolina State Parks System consists of 74 units, 39 of which are operated for the visiting public with on-site staff and regular gate hours. The remaining units are managed in one of the following ways: as part of an operated park, as a satellite unit, or through cooperative and partnership agreements. For example, Lake Phelps State Lake is managed as part of Pettigrew State Park. Run Hill State Natural Area is a satellite of Jockeys Ridge State Park. Hemlock Bluffs State Natural Area is leased to the Town of Cary in a cooperative agreement, and the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail is an example of a protection partnership with other agencies and organizations.

Table 2.1. Size of the State Parks System

SIZE OF THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS SYSTEM As of July 2011			
Unit Type	Units	Size (Acres)	Length(Miles)
State Parks	35	150,005	
State Recreation Areas	4	12,240	
State Natural Areas	20	22,145	
State Lakes	7	29,135	
State Rivers	4	0	146
State Trails	4	1,965	727
TOTAL	74	215,490	873
Land Area		186,355	
Water Area (State Lakes)		29,135	
Easements		803	
TOTAL		216,293	

Table 2.2. The 74 State Parks System Units with Acreages as of July 1, 2011

STATE PARKS (land area only)	Size (acres)	STATE RECREATION AREAS (land area only)	Size (acres)
Bay Tree	609	Falls Lake	5,035
Carolina Beach	420	Fort Fisher	287
Carvers Creek	4,332	Jordan Lake	3,916
Chimney Rock	4,691	Kerr Lake	3,002
Cliffs Of The Neuse	892	Total	4
Crowders Mountain	5,126		12,240
Dismal Swamp	14,432	STATE NATURAL AREAS (land area only)	Size (acres)
Elk Knob	3,469	Baldhead Island	1,260
Eno River	4,196	Bear Paw	351
Fort Macon	424	Beech Creek Bog	120
Goose Creek	1,672	Bullhead Mountain	365
Gorges	7,641	Bushy Lake	6,343
Grandfather Mountain	2,456	Chowan Swamp	6,066
Hammocks Beach	1,155	Hemlock Bluffs	97
Hanging Rock	7,049	Lea Island	25
Haw River	1,374	Lower Haw River	1,022
Jockeys Ridge	426	Masonboro Island	106
Jones Lake	1,669	Mitchell Mill	93
Lake James	3,515	Mount Jefferson	803
Lake Norman	1,917	Occoneechee Mtn.	162
Lake Waccamaw	2,159	Pineola Bog	91
Lumber River	9,268	Run Hill	123
Mayo River	1,961	Sandy Run Savannas	2,538
Medoc Mountain	3,892	Sugar Mountain Bog	102
Merchants Millpond	3,447	Theodore Roosevelt	265
Morrow Mountain	4,496	Weymouth Woods	900
Mount Mitchell	1,996	Yellow Mountain	1,312
New River	2,449	Total	20
Pettigrew	5,578		22,145
Pilot Mountain	3,651	STATE LAKES (water area only)	Size (acres)
Raven Rock	4,694	Bay Tree	1,418
Singletary Lake	649	Jones	224
South Mountains	18,491	Phelps	16,600
Stone Mountain	14,210	Waccamaw	8,938
William B. Umstead	5,599	Salters	315
Total	35	Singletary	572
	150,005	White	1,068
		Total	7
			29,135

STATE RIVERS	Size (Acres)	Length (miles)
Horsepasture	0	4.5
Linville	0	13.0
Lumber	0	102.0
New	0	26.5
Total	4	146.0

STATE TRAILS	Size (Acres)	Length (miles)
Deep River	1,274	0
French Broad River	0	67
Mountains To Sea	691	530
Yadkin River	0	130
Total	4	727

TYPES OF UNITS

The State Parks Act of 1987 lists six types of units included in the North Carolina State Parks System: State Parks, State Natural Areas, State Recreation Areas, State Trails, State Rivers, and State Lakes.

- **State Park** - North Carolina's first State Park was established at Mount Mitchell in 1916 to protect the summit of the highest mountain in the eastern U.S. There are currently 35 State Parks in the system. Generally, State Parks are expected to possess both significant natural resource values and significant recreational values. State Parks are expected to accommodate the development of facilities, but may vary in the extent of development depending upon what can be provided without damage to the scenic or natural features. Facilities are planned and constructed to keep disturbance of natural resources to a minimum and to leave a large portion of each park undisturbed and free from improvements and structures, except for trails.
- **State Natural Area** - State Natural Areas were established as a separate type of system unit in 1963 with the adoption of separate principles for management. The first State Natural Area was created that same year. There are currently 20 State Natural Areas. The purpose of State Natural Areas is focused on preserving and protecting areas of scientific, aesthetic, or ecological value. Facilities are limited to those needed for interpretation, protection, and minimum maintenance. Generally, recreational and public use facilities such as camping, swimming, picnicking and the like are not provided in State Natural Areas.
- **State Recreation Area** - State Recreation Areas are sites where the primary purpose is outdoor recreation, rather than preservation. More intensive development of facilities is provided than in State Parks. Protection and enjoyment of the natural resources are still important, and the sites are expected to contain scenic and attractive natural features. Development is planned and constructed to keep a "reasonable amount" of each area undisturbed and free from improvements and structures. The first State Recreation Area was added to the system in 1971, and principles to guide the development and operation of State Recreation Areas were adopted in 1974. There are currently four State Recreation Areas.
- **State Trail** - The North Carolina Trails System Act was passed in 1973 to help provide for the state's outdoor recreation needs and to promote public access to natural and scenic areas. The act prescribed methods for establishing a statewide system of scenic trails, recreation trails, and connecting or side trails. The Trails System includes "State Trails", which are designated and managed as units of the state parks system, and "designated trails", which are regional connector trails managed by other governmental agencies or organizations. At present there are four State Trails.
- **State River** - The Natural and Scenic Rivers System was created by the 1971 General Assembly to preserve and protect certain free flowing rivers, their water quality and their adjacent lands for the benefit of present and future generations. The Natural and Scenic Rivers Act established criteria and methods for inclusion of components to the system. Components of the Natural and Scenic Rivers System are State Rivers, and are also units of the state parks system. Currently there are four State Rivers.

- State Lake** - Chapter 165 of the Laws of 1929 specified that “all lakes now belonging to the State having an area of 50 acres or more” should be “administered as provided for other recreational areas now owned by the State.” This allowed the then-Department of Conservation and Development to assume management authority for seven Coastal Plain lakes that became units of the state parks system known as State Lakes. Most of these are administratively included as part of an adjoining State Park, but one of the lakes (White Lake) has no public ownership on its shoreline.

VISITATION

Total visitor attendance for 2010 was 14,189,403, near the all-time record. Visitation fluctuates from year to year based on weather conditions, facility closures, and the state of the economy, but the trend over time is for increasing visitation (Figure (2.2)).

Park units with the highest attendance have been the state recreation areas located on reservoirs (Kerr Lake State Recreation Area, Jordan Lake State Recreation Area, and Falls Lake State Recreation Area) as well as two coastal parks located in popular vacation destinations (Jockey’s Ridge State Park and Fort Macon State Park). These five park units accounted for over 6 million visits or nearly half of the total state parks system attendance (Table 2. 3).

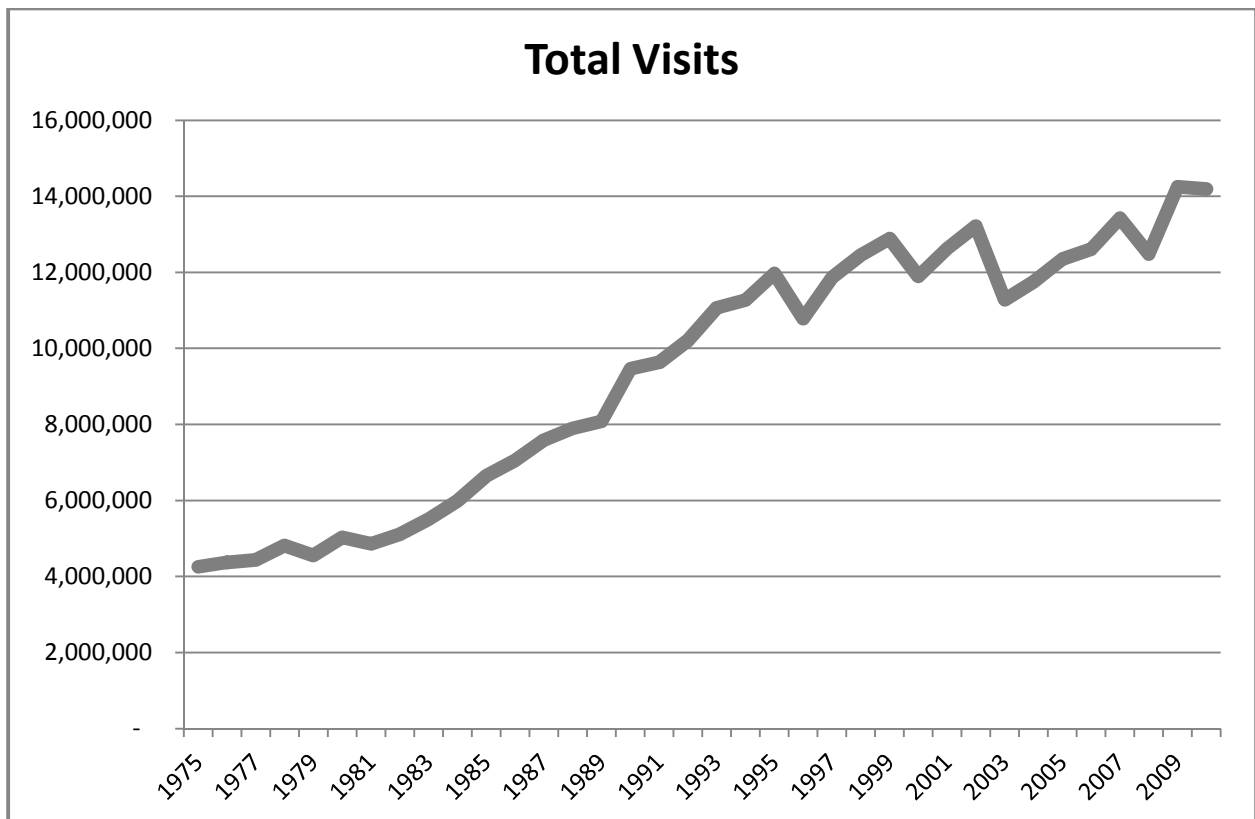


Figure 2.2. State Parks System Visitation 1975-2010

Table 2.3. State Park Visitation by Park Unit 2010

North Carolina State Parks System Unit	Total Visits 2010
Carolina Beach State Park	498,630
Carvers Creek State Park	225
Chimney Rock State Park	214,728
Cliffs of the Neuse State Park	193,704
Crowders Mountain State Park	392,606
Dismal Swamp State Park	58,293
Elk Knob State Natural Area	22,618
Eno River State Park	391,229
Falls Lake State Recreation Area	799,039
Fort Fisher State Recreation Area	843,230
Fort Macon State Park	1,344,126
Goose Creek State Park	273,666
Gorges State Park	77,652
Grandfather Mountain State Park	14,756
Hammocks Beach State Park	91,062
Haw River State Park	24,423
Hanging Rock State Park	537,406
Jones Lake State Park	43,767
Jordan Lake State Recreation Area	1,107,628
Jockey's Ridge State Park	1,478,034
Kerr Lake State Recreation Area	997,616
Lake James State Park	335,537
Lake Norman State Park	526,446
Lake Waccamaw State Park	89,534
Lumber River State Park	90,518
Mayo River State Park	36,772
Merchants Millpond State Park	232,271
Medoc Mountain State Park	62,782
Mount Jefferson State Natural Area	107,966
Mount Mitchell State Park	345,450
Morrow Mountain State Park	370,782
New River State Park	247,254
Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area	72,019
Pettigrew State Park	72,238
Pilot Mountain State Park	439,752
Raven Rock State Park	156,433
Singletary Lake State Park	26,552
South Mountains State Park	218,848
Stone Mountain State Park	424,512
Weymouth Woods State Natural Area	52,306
William B. Umstead State Park	876,993
System Total	14,189,403

VISITOR FACILITIES

In July 2011, the state parks system contained more than 1,300 roofed buildings. This figure does not include bridges, walkways, pavement, trails, or other structures.

Table 2.4 Summary of Visitor Facilities in the North Carolina State Parks System

FACILITY	TOTAL	FACILITY	TOTAL
Visitor Center	21	Group Campsite - Drive To	99
Park Office	15	Group Campsite - Walk In	38
Ranger Station	17	Equestrian Campsite	15
Auditorium	16	Horse Stall	33
Meeting Room	15	Natural Swim Area - Ocean or Sound	5
Classroom	22	Natural Swim Area - Freshwater	20
Laboratory	1	Swimming Pool	2
Community Building	10	Bathhouse	21
Museum/Exhibit Hall	24	Concession	11
Historic Building	7	Showerhouse	50
Amphitheater	13	Toilet Building	62
Play Area	8	Composting Toilet	9
Picnic Area	57	Pump and Haul Toilet	18
Picnic Shelter - 2 table	29	Pit Toilet	17
Picnic Shelter - 4 table	14	Boathouse	5
Picnic Shelter - 8 table	36	Boat Dock	21
Picnic Shelter - 12 table	28	Boat Ramp - 1 lane	26
Picnic Shelter - >12 tables	1	Boat Ramp - 2 lanes	5
Sun Shelter	3	Boat Ramp - >2 lanes	3
Cabin - Improved	46	Pier - Fishing	12
Lodging Room	36	Restaurant	3
Campsite w/ Full Hookups	10	Dining Hall - with food service	1
Campsite w/ Water and Electric	1226	Dining Hall - self service	2
Campsite w/ Electric Only	10	Parks with > 5 mi Hiking Trails	22
Campsite w/ No Hookups	1422	Parks with Bicycle Trails	6
Primitive Campsite - Drive To	12	Parks with Equestrian Trails	9
Primitive Campsite - Walk In	145	Parks with Paddle Trails	7
Primitive Campsite - Paddle In	19	Parks with Interpretive Trails	6

FUTURE NEEDS

Park master plans and general management plans have identified future needs for land acquisition and facility development in each park. Table 2.5 shows new construction and renovation needs and Table 2.6 shows identified land acquisition needs for each park.

Table 2.5. Construction and Repair Needs at Existing Parks

State Park Facility Construction Needs October 2010			
Park Name	New Construction	Repair & Renovation	Total Cost
Baytree Lake	\$7,976,123	\$0	\$7,976,123
Carolina Beach	\$1,508,130	\$1,181,526	\$2,689,656
Chimney Rock	\$25,700,400	\$850,000	\$26,550,400
Cliffs Of The Neuse	\$1,446,405	\$1,972,819	\$3,419,224
Crowder's Mountain	\$2,202,112	\$4,703,045	\$6,905,157
Dismal Swamp	\$1,427,125	\$3,113,868	\$4,540,993
Eno River	\$10,178,471	\$1,998,460	\$12,176,931
Falls Lake	\$7,937,419	\$5,294,438	\$13,231,857
Fort Fisher	\$547,039	\$0	\$547,039
Fort Macon	\$1,215,468	\$2,282,429	\$3,497,897
Goose Creek	\$6,479,543	\$0	\$6,479,543
Gorges	\$9,820,215	\$0	\$9,820,215
Hammocks Beach	\$2,640,530	\$1,854,353	\$4,494,883
Hanging Rock	\$590,227	\$2,824,403	\$3,414,630
Haw River	\$27,216,045	\$108,887	\$27,324,932
Jockey's Ridge	\$1,167,268	\$1,079,433	\$2,246,701
Jones Lake	\$848,741	\$1,145,831	\$1,994,572
Jordan Lake	\$221,404	\$19,044,306	\$19,265,710
Kerr Lake	\$33,387,738	\$1,161,325	\$34,549,063
Lake James	\$22,143,635	\$249,689	\$22,393,324
Lake Norman	\$6,892,614	\$5,925,352	\$12,817,966
Lake Waccamaw	\$6,061,399	\$0	\$6,061,399
Lumber River	\$16,499,493	\$0	\$16,499,493
Medoc Mountain	\$16,591,879	\$0	\$16,591,879
Merchants Mill Pond	\$711,395	\$2,143,258	\$2,854,653
Mitchell's Mill	\$217,491	\$0	\$217,491
Morrow Mountain	\$9,447,495	\$2,970,814	\$12,418,309
Mount Mitchell	\$0	\$4,695,259	\$4,695,259
Mount Jefferson	\$0	\$2,412,555	\$2,412,555
New River	\$3,665,135	\$311,272	\$3,976,407
Occoneechee Mountain	\$1,435,978	\$0	\$1,435,978
Pettigrew	\$12,383,295	\$494,994	\$12,878,289
Pilot Mountain	\$17,119,139	\$3,678,407	\$20,797,546
Raven Rock	\$3,154,491	\$1,734,372	\$4,888,863
Singletary Lake	\$1,589,726	\$0	\$1,589,726

State Park Facility Construction Needs October 2010			
Park Name	New Construction	Repair & Renovation	Total Cost
South Mountain	\$54,256,350	\$0	\$54,256,350
Statewide	\$6,253,341	\$377,738	\$6,631,079
Stone Mountain	\$2,718,147	\$4,541,217	\$7,259,364
Weymouth Woods	\$1,525,430	\$1,090,418	\$2,615,848
William B. Umstead	\$928,515	\$22,522,567	\$23,451,082
GRAND TOTAL:	\$326,105,351	\$101,763,035	\$427,868,386

Table 2.6. State Parks System Land Acquisition Needs

State Park Land Acquisition Needs as of July 1, 2011					
Park Name	Planned Acres	Current Acres	Pending Acres	Remaining Needs	
				Acres	Est. Cost
Baldhead Island	1,280	1,260	0	20	\$0
Bay Tree Lake	2,856	2,027	0	829	\$1,250,000
Bear Paw	500	351	0	149	\$2,000,000
Beech Creek Bog	250	120	0	130	\$3,250,000
Bullhead Mountain	550	365	0	185	\$3,700,000
Bushy Lake	7,367	6,343	0	1,024	\$2,600,000
Carolina Beach	485	420	0	65	\$5,000,000
Carvers Creek	8,600	4,332	0	4,268	\$21,000,000
Chimney Rock	8,716	4,691	1,222	2,803	\$23,000,000
Chowan Swamp	6,066	6,066	0	0	\$0
Cliffs of the Neuse	3,499	892	0	2,607	\$2,300,000
Crowders Mountain	6,714	5,126	0	1,588	\$5,900,000
Deep River	4,000	1,274	0	2,977	\$5,000,000
Dismal Swamp	14,953	14,432	0	521	\$500,000
Elk Knob	6,000	3,469	758	1,773	\$11,000,000
Eno River	6,426	4,196	0	2,397	\$23,000,000
Falls Lake	5,035	5,035	0	0	\$0
Fort Fisher	287	287	0	0	\$0
Fort Macon	473	424	0	49	\$1,000,000
Goose Creek	1,991	1,672	0	319	\$750,000
Gorges	9,641	7,641	0	2,000	\$5,000,000
Grandfather Mountain	3,000	2,456	0	544	\$3,264,000
Hammocks Beach	1,497	1,155	0	342	\$5,000,000
Hanging Rock	9,983	7,049	0	2,934	\$10,000,000
Haw River	7,220	1,374	0	5,846	\$20,000,000
Hemlock Bluffs	97	97	0	0	\$0
Jockey's Ridge	428	426	0	1	\$700,000

**State Park Land Acquisition Needs
as of July 1, 2011**

Park Name	Planned Acres	Current Acres	Pending Acres	Remaining Needs	
				Acres	Est. Cost
Jones Lake	2,238	2,208	0	30	\$80,000
Jordan Lake	3,916	3,916	0	0	\$0
Kerr Lake	3,203	3,002	0	201	\$2,500,000
Lake James	3,975	3,515	5	455	\$4,000,000
Lake Norman	1,995	1,917	0	67	\$1,500,000
Lake Waccamaw	14,025	11,097	0	2,928	\$6,000,000
Lea Island	200	25	0	175	\$1,000,000
Lumber River	12,959	9,268	0	3,691	\$15,200,000
Lower Haw River	3,000	1,022	0	1,978	\$20,000,000
Masonboro Island	106	106	0	0	\$0
Mayo River	4,500	1,961	0	2,539	\$9,000,000
Medoc Mountain	4,351	3,892	0	459	\$2,000,000
Merchants Millpond	4,940	3,447	0	1,493	\$3,750,000
Mitchell Mill	149	93	0	56	\$450,000
Morrow Mountain	6,586	4,496	0	2,090	\$3,500,000
Mountains-to-Sea	3,000	691	0	2,309	\$30,000,000
Mount Jefferson	1,800	803	217	780	\$10,000,000
Mount Mitchell	2,819	1,996	0	823	\$18,000,000
New River	6,982	2,449	212	4,288	\$25,000,000
Occoneechee Mountain	231	162	0	69	\$1,500,000
Pettigrew	26,206	22,178	215	3,813	\$7,200,000
Pilot Mountain	5,503	3,651	0	1,852	\$8,000,000
Pineola Bog	200	91	0	109	\$1,500,000
Raven Rock	5,467	4,694	0	773	\$7,000,000
Run Hill	123	123	0	0	\$0
Sandy Run Savannas	6,000	2,538	0	3,462	\$10,000,000
Singletary Lake	1,221	1,221	0	0	\$0
South Mountains	20,861	18,491	0	2,370	\$12,400,000
Stone Mountain	16,867	14,210	0	2,657	\$2,660,000
Sugar Mountain Bog	200	102	0	98	\$1,350,000
Theodore Roosevelt	265	265	0	0	\$0
Weymouth Woods	1,583	900	0	683	\$3,500,000
White Lake	1,068	1,068	0	0	\$0
William B. Umstead	6,200	5,599	0	594	\$11,000,000
Yellow Mountain	4,000	1,312	666	2,022	\$10,000,000
TOTAL	294,653	215,490	3,297	75,865	\$381,304,000