

FEASIBILITY STUDY OF ESTABLISHING A STATE PARK ALONG THE BLACK RIVER IN SAMPSON, BLADEN AND PENDER COUNTIES

North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation
February 2018

INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly enacted HB353, which directed the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation (Division) to study the feasibility and desirability of acquiring land and establishing a State Park on the Black River. The law specifies the Black River in Section 3 and is as follows:

SECTION 3. The Division of Parks and Recreation of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources shall study the feasibility and the desirability of acquiring land and establishing a State Park on the Black River. The study shall include public input and shall estimate the cost of developing the proposed park. In addition, the study shall include an assessment of actions the State can take to improve the navigability of the Black River. The Division shall report its findings and recommendations, including any legislative proposals, to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources on or before March 1, 2018.

The Black River, a tributary of the Cape Fear River, is approximately 50 miles long and is located in southeastern North Carolina. It is formed in Sampson County by the confluence of the Great Coharie and Six Runs Creeks. It flows southeast, receiving the South River approximately 30 miles south of Clinton, then continues southeast until it merges with the Cape Fear River, approximately 12 miles north of Wilmington.



This river's blackwater swamps contain some of the oldest known living trees in eastern North America. The river banks and stream edges are generally made up of dense forests consisting of cypress, maple, swamp tupelo, ash, and oaks. In a few places, dry upland bluffs along the river support longleaf pines.

In 1994, the river was recognized as one of the cleanest, high-quality waterways in North Carolina when the state designated the river an Outstanding Resource Water. Many wildlife species inhabit the river's floodplain, including turkey, deer, bobcat, river otter, black bear, and more.

This study will review the criteria for establishing a new state park, land availability, and the natural and cultural resources in the Black River study area. In making this assessment, Division staff visited the area, canoed or kayaked sections of the river, visited The Nature Conservancy (TNC) land, met with the local conservation partners and held public meetings in Sampson, Bladen and Pender Counties. The study will include an assessment of actions to improve the navigability of the river.

BACKGROUND

The Division has long been interested in the Black River ecosystem and the cypress swamps and trees located along it. As can be seen by the following timeline, the Division first identified the Black River for a potential park unit in the 1970-1975 statewide plan "NC State Parks Now or Never" (See Figure 1).



1975 NC Parks System Plan

The study area for a potential state park unit encompasses the Black River corridor from 5 miles south of the confluence of the Great Coharie and Six Runs Creeks to where Colly Creek flows into the river. This represents 45 miles of river through Sampson, Bladen, and Pender counties (See Figure 2). Several state parks units are located in the vicinity of the study area in Bladen County; Jones Lake and Singletary Lake State Parks, and Bay Tree Lake State Natural Area.

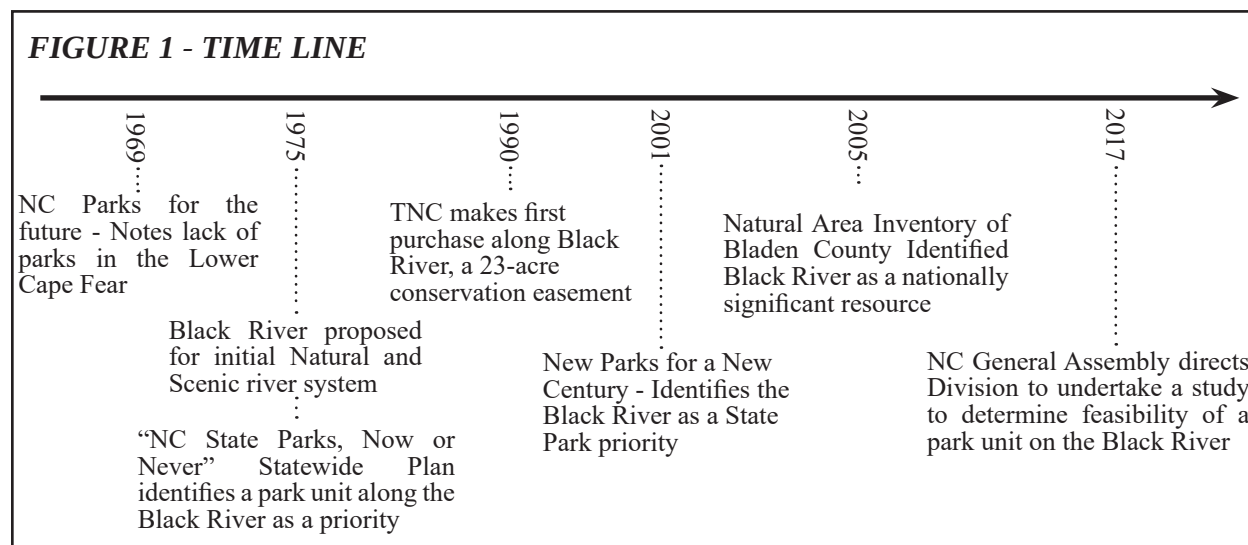
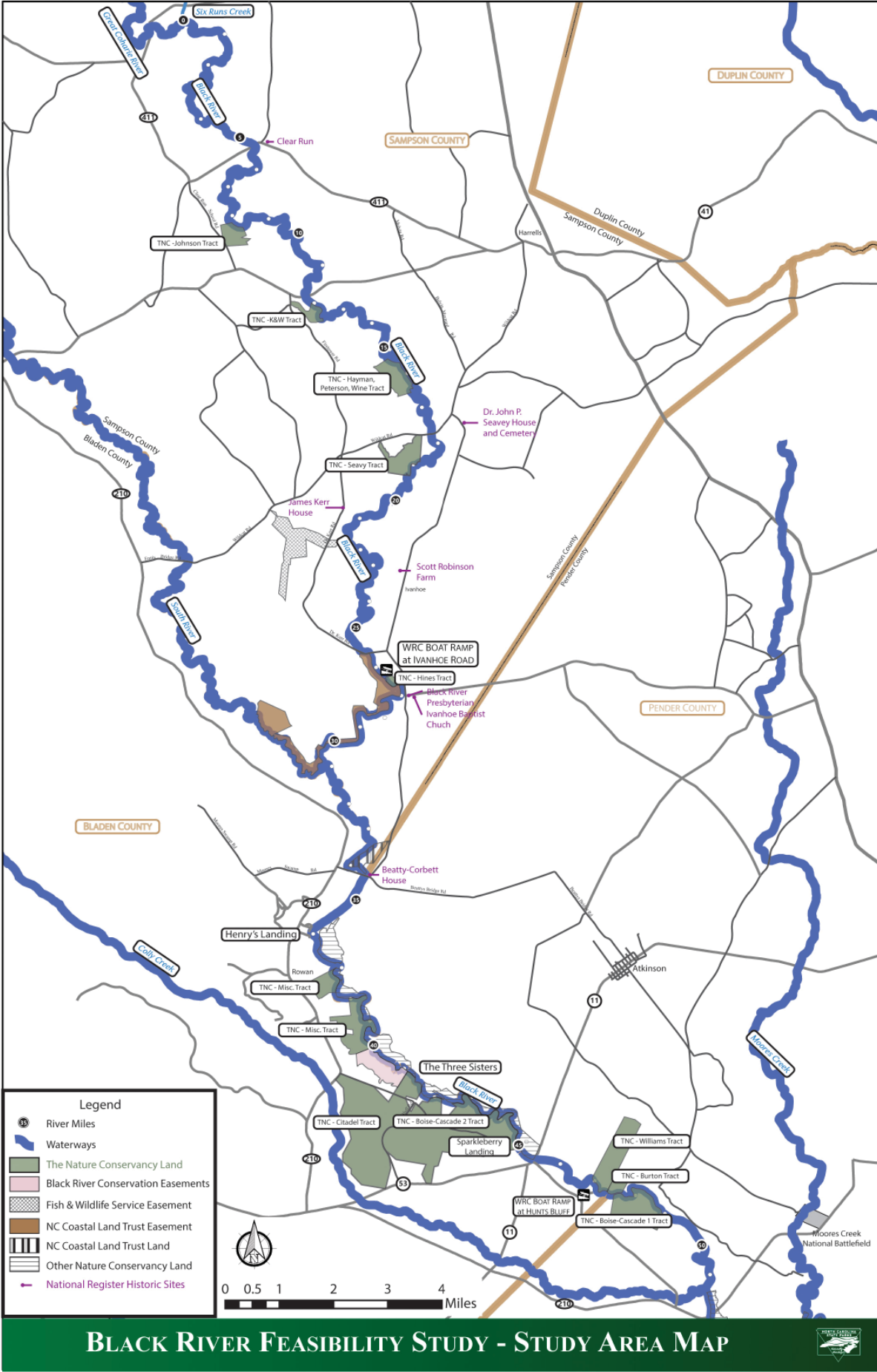
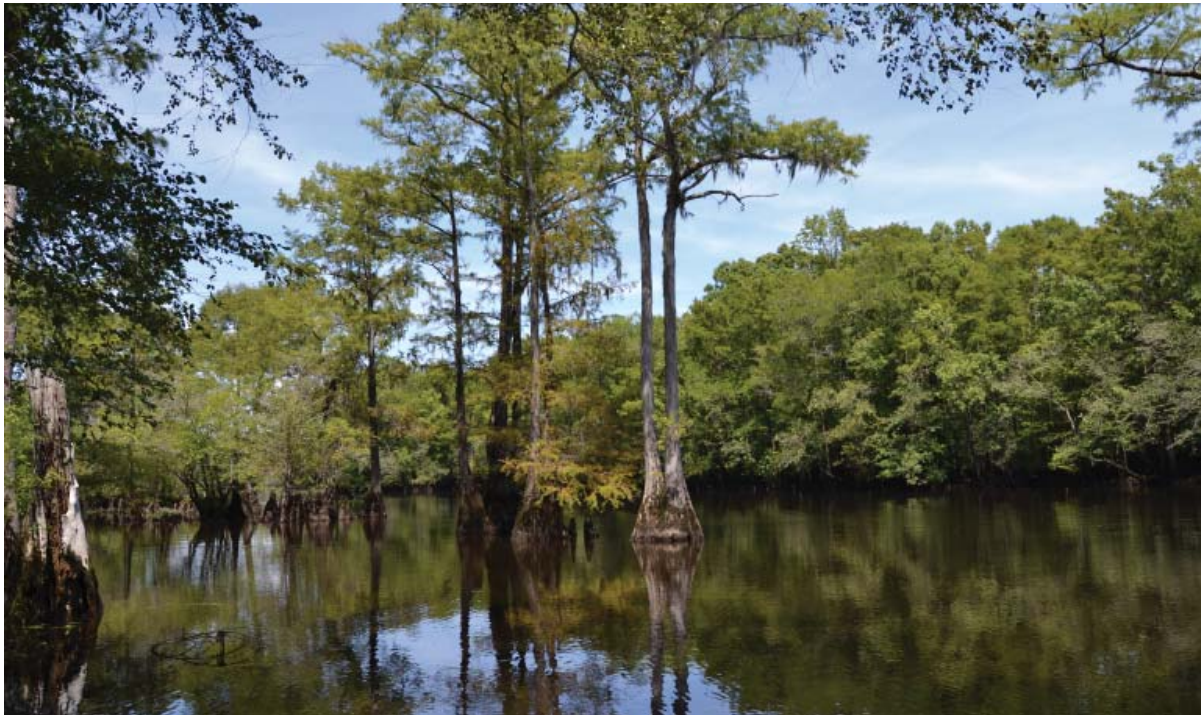


FIGURE 2 - STUDY AREA MAP





Sparkleberry Landing - Black River

Several tracts of land along the river (focused around the cypress swamp near Rowan) have been purchased by TNC totaling over 3,400 acres. There are other Nature Conservancy Land easements on properties along the river which protect the resources and preclude them from being developed into a state park unit. However, there are several large tracts of land in the Rowan area that total approximately 2,500 acres and other smaller tracts along the river that total approximately 900 acres that would be developable.

Physical Characteristics

The Black River, as its name implies, is a slow moving, black water river with an average depth of 4 feet and width of 150 feet.

Typically, the meandering streams in the Black River area have eroded through the unconsolidated superficial sands and clays into the older well-bedded sand and clay layers, forming deep valleys. Often these valleys have sheer bluffs which expose the older sedimentary formation ranging in age from 65-100 million years. These deep valleys cut through the flat to gently rolling topography and usually have very wide, flat flows that form low, swampy floodplains with heavy vegetation.

The Black River and its main tributaries provide a beautiful and scenic route for the small boat enthusiast. The watershed has approximately 175 miles of navigable water at normal water levels.

History

The Black River has been an important asset to the community as both a commerce route and an environmentally exceptional area. Trade along the Black River is documented as far back as 1738 with the first plantations being carved out along the lower Black River. Principal exports were naval stores (tar, pitch, and turpentine), lumber and wood products, rice, corn, livestock and other agricultural commodities. This plantation development and commodity export continued into the early part of the 20th century with the river being used as an integral component of the delivery of

these commodities south to Wilmington.

Several ferries provided crossings of the Black River. The first began operation in 1740, which was Dollison's (or Dallison's) Ferry. The most notable ferry was Corbett's Ferry, which operated near present-day Ivanhoe. Corbett's ferry continued operation until after the Civil War.



Steamer Frank Sessoms - 1890s

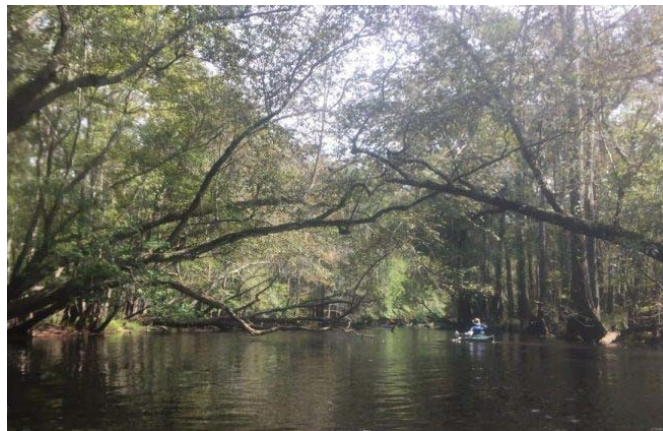
In 1869, the first steamboat was put to use on the Black River, the Mary Eleanor operated out of Point Caswell. During the 1870s several other steamboats hauled commodities along the Black River.

As early as 1893, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) began a project to clear the Black River from the Cape Fear River north to Clear Run. This was done to improve passage for the steamboats operating

on the river. By 1897, steamboats were regularly navigating the Black River north to Clear Run. The number of steamboats reached its peak in the 1890s but continued operation into the early 20th century. Even though steamboat use was dwindling due to railroads being more efficient for hauling commodities, the river was cleared again in 1923. The last clearing project along the Black River was in 1967 and was limited in scope to make passage by recreational craft possible.

Current Usage

The Black River is used for recreation purposes with limited public access points along the river. Most of these access points are through private property (with the owner's permission), such as the NC Route 411 access in Clear Run. There are three river access areas open to the public: the two Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) boat ramps located in Ivanhoe and Hunts Bluff and Henry's Landing (there is a nominal fee for Henry's) located in the Rowan area. All of the public access is located in the lower section of the Black River. Typical uses are paddling, hunting, and fishing, with infrequent overnight paddle trips. The river is shallow and has many obstacles, so it is only navigable by the smallest motor boats and paddle craft, such as canoes and kayaks.



Paddling the Black River

NATURAL RESOURCE SIGNIFICANCE

The Black River Macrosite Floodplain has two distinct areas that are considered Significant Natural Heritage Areas by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program (NCNHP). These are the Black River Cypress Swamp and the Upper Black River Bottomlands. These areas are regarded as among the most outstanding examples of blackwater river systems remaining in the southeastern United States, with one of the best examples of old-growth swamp forest anywhere in the eastern United States. Cypress trees along the Black River in Bladen and Pender counties have been dated to over 1,600 years of age, with some estimated to be over 2,000 years old. These are the oldest trees known in North America east of the Rocky Mountains.

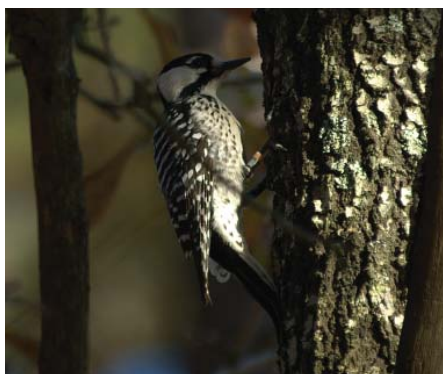
Rare and Unusual Plants and Wildlife

The Black River Cypress Swamp comprises the floodplain of the Black River, which is mostly covered by two natural community types: the Cypress-Gum Swamp Blackwater Subtype and Coastal Plain Bottomland Hardwoods Blackwater Subtype. Two floodplain lakes formed from former meanders of the river contain the Oxbow Lake community (these are abandoned river channels with permanent nonflowing water). A Colonial Wading Bird Rookery Special Habitat has also been identified on this site.

The Upper Black River Bottomlands contains some of the best examples in the state of three natural communities: Coastal Plain Bottomland Hardwoods Upper Blackwater Subtype, Coastal Plain Levee Forest Blackwater Subtype, and Piedmont/Coastal Plain Heath Bluff. The upper Black River Bottomlands is a blackwater floodplain with meanders, oxbows, artesian springs, bluffs, and a riverside levee, which flood periodically onto broad flats.



Cypress Swamp - Black River



Red-cockaded Woodpecker

The study area also contains breeding colonies of the Federal and State Endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) and several other rare plants and animals, including globally rare fishes and mussels in the Black River. The State Endangered and Federally Threatened Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*) have been observed along the Black River. State Endangered and Federal Species of Concern present are the Yellow Lampmussel (*Lampsilis cariosa*), and Atlantic Pigtoe mussel (*Fusconaia masoni*). A full list is included in Table 1.

TABLE 1 - NC HERITAGE PROGRAM RARE AND UNUSUAL PLANTS AND WILDLIFE

Scientific Name	Common Name	NC Status*	Federal Status^	Taxonomic Group
<i>Picoides borealis</i>	Red-cockaded Woodpecker	E	E	Bird
<i>Mycteria americana</i>	Wood Stork	E	T	Bird
<i>Alligator mississippiensis</i>	American Alligator	T	T(S/A)	Reptile
<i>Fusconaia masoni</i>	Atlantic Pigtoe	E	FSC	Freshwater Bivalve
<i>Lampsilis cariosa</i>	Yellow Lampmussel	E	FSC	Freshwater Bivalve
<i>Corynorhinus rafinesquii macrotis</i>	Rafinesque's Big-eared Bat - Coastal Plain subspecies	SC	FSC	Mammal
<i>Heterodon simus</i>	Southern Hognose Snake	SC	FSC	Reptile
<i>Noturus sp. 2</i>	Broadtail Madtom	SC	FSC	Freshwater Fish
<i>Isoetes microvela</i>	Thin-wall Quillwort	T	FSC	Vascular Plant
<i>Lithobates capito</i>	Carolina Gopher Frog	T	FSC	Amphibian
<i>Clinopodium georgianum</i>	Georgia Calamint	E		Vascular Plant
<i>Lechea torreyi</i> var. <i>congesta</i>	Torrey's Pinweed	E		Vascular Plant
<i>Micrurus fulvius</i>	Eastern Coralsnake	E		Reptile
<i>Bacopa caroliniana</i>	Blue Water-hyssop	T		Vascular Plant
<i>Carex reniformis</i>	Kidney Sedge	T		Vascular Plant
<i>Epidendrum magnoliae</i>	Green Fly Orchid	T		Vascular Plant
<i>Cyprinella sp. 1</i>	Thinlip Chub	SC		Freshwater Fish
<i>Elliptio folliculata</i>	Pod Lance	SC		Freshwater Bivalve
<i>Elliptio marsupiobesa</i>	Cape Fear Spike	SC		Freshwater Bivalve
<i>Hemidactylium scutatum</i>	Four-toed Salamander	SC		Amphibian
<i>Sistrurus miliarius</i>	Pigmy Rattlesnake	SC		Reptile
<i>Asclepias pedicellata</i>	Savanna Milkweed	SC-V		Vascular Plant
<i>Gratiola aurea</i>	Golden Hedge-hyssop	SC-V		Vascular Plant
<i>Enneacanthus obesus</i>	Banded Sunfish	SR		Freshwater Fish
<i>Masticophis flagellum</i>	Coachwhip	SR		Reptile
<i>Villosa delumbis</i>	Eastern Creekshell	SR		Freshwater Bivalve
<i>Eupatorium saltuense</i>	Tall Boneset	SR-L		Vascular Plant
<i>Phanopyrum gymnocarpon</i>	Swamp Panic Grass	SR-O		Vascular Plant
<i>Carex lupuliformis</i>	Hop-like Sedge	SR-P		Vascular Plant
<i>Leersia lenticularis</i>	Catchfly Cutgrass	SR-P		Vascular Plant
<i>Lupinus villosus</i>	Lady Lupine	SR-P		Vascular Plant
<i>Luziola fluitans</i>	Southern Water Grass	SR-P		Vascular Plant
* NC Status: E=Endangered; T=Threatended; SC=Special Concern (animals); SC-V-Special Concern - Vulnerable (plants)				
^ Federal Status: E=Endangered; T=Threatended; T(S/A)=Threatened (similar appearance); FSC=Federal Species of Concern				

STATE PARK SYSTEM CRITERIA

The State Parks Act states that the state parks system shall consist of representative examples of North Carolina's unique biological, geological, archaeological, recreational, and scenic resources. New state park system units shall be added by an act of the General Assembly and shall address the needs described in the Systemwide Plan. All additions shall be accompanied by adequate appropriations for land acquisition, development, and operations. Addition of new units to the State Parks System should focus on preserving sites of statewide significance and on ensuring that representative examples of the state's resources are protected.

While the expansion of the system is important, new parks must be selected carefully to ensure that they contribute to fulfilling the purposes of the system and that they justify the considerable public investment in acquisition and long-term management. The Division has developed criteria for evaluating proposed new units to the state parks system. The evaluation criteria are divided into minimum and measured criteria.

The minimum criteria are used for initial evaluation of proposed park sites. The four basic criteria are:

- Statewide significance of the site's resource themes;
- Size (sufficient acreage to protect principal resources and to provide appropriate facilities with minimal impacts to principal resources);
- Absence of incompatible features (through roads, intrusive development, water and noise pollution threats to vistas), and
- Public access free of limitations inhibiting management and public use.

Sites that do not meet these minimum criteria are removed from consideration. If a site meets the minimum criteria, it is then evaluated using measured criteria, which include:

- Number of high priority resources;
- Rarity of natural resources;
- Threat to natural resources;
- Degree of threat/urgency of acquisition;
- Presence of rare and endangered species;
- Interconnection of the site with other protected areas;
- Presence of superlatives (one of a kind, biggest or best example);
- Regional demand for state parks system units that are staffed and open to the public, and
- Suitability for providing high-quality recreation.

Resource Evaluation

The significant archaeological, geologic, scenic, recreational, and biological resources of North Carolina should be represented in a complete state parks system. These resources have been categorized into 108 themes. The Division strives to continue to improve the representation of these themes in the state parks system.

Table 2 shows the themes associated with the Black River study area that are inadequately protected or that are of moderate to very high significance. It also shows the representation of these themes within the state park system.

The Division uses these themes to organize and track resources that should be protected and

how they fit into the larger state park system. For more information on the themes, refer to the "Statewide Plan for North Carolina State Parks," 2015.

TABLE 2 - NORTH CAROLINA RESOURCE EVALUATION THEMES

Class	Theme	Significance	Representation
Biological	Low Elevation Cliffs and Rock Outcrops	Moderate	Adequate
Biological	Blackwater Coastal Plain Floodplains	High	<u>Moderate</u>
Biological	Riverine Aquatic Communities	High	<u>Moderate</u>
Scenic	Rivers	High	<u>Moderate</u>
Scenic	Forests	High	<u>Moderate</u>
Scenic	Caves/Cliffs	High	<u>Little</u>
Scenic	Swamps	High	Adequate

A site proposed for addition to the state parks system must meet all the below minimum criteria to be eligible for further consideration.

Statewide Significance

A proposed new unit of the state parks system must contain a high-quality example of a natural resource (biological, geological, archaeological, recreational, or scenic) of statewide significance. In this context, statewide significance means one of the best examples of its kind in the state, or likely to attract visitors from other regions of the state.

The natural resources of the Black River justify considering the area as a site of Statewide Significance. The NC Natural Heritage Program lists two significant natural areas in the study area as exceptional and three others are ranked high or very high.¹ The outstanding water quality, unique and ancient cypress swamps and trees, and habitat for several plant and animal species that are either threatened or endangered make the Black River significant. The Black Water Bottomlands are also ranked as vulnerable by both the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, making them important to preserve.

Size

A proposed addition to the state parks system must have sufficient acreage to protect the principal resources.

Totaling approximately 3,400 acres, there is sufficient developable land owned by TNC along the study area are for the state park unit. If a linear park unit were created along the Black River, it would not be a continuous stretch of land owned by the Division. The Division would not, and does not need to, own all the land along the river bank in the study area. Much of this land would stay in private ownership as it is today. Rather, the park unit would be made up of "nodes" along the length of the river. These nodes would allow for access to the river with some basic park amenities, such as parking and picnic areas. Due to this node concept, not all TNC land along the river would be needed and therefore would not be acquired. These nodes would add public

¹ Buchanan, M.F. 2017. *Natural Heritage Program 2017 Biennial Report, Division of Land and Water Stewardship, Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Raleigh, NC.*

river access to the northern section of the study area and augment the public access provided by the WRC boat ramps and privately-owned Henry's Landing. The cost of the TNC land to create a park unit would range from \$800,000 to \$2.7 million. The largest TNC tract, totaling 2500 acres in Bladen County, could support more extensive facility development.

Absence of incompatible features

A new state park should be relatively unspoiled and should not contain incompatible features, such as roads that cannot be closed; intrusive development; significant threats to air or water quality that cannot be controlled; sources of excessive noise that cannot be controlled; and incompatible vistas.

The Black River study area includes many miles of scenic natural resources without significant incompatible features.

Public Access

A new state park should have adequate public access and should be free from limitations, such as zoning or deed restrictions, that would inhibit management of public use.



WRC Boat Ramp in Ivanhoe

The Black River study area has adequate opportunities to provide safe and enjoyable public access. However, the study area currently has only three locations open to the public to access the river. Two are through public access at Wildlife Resource Boat ramps and one is at a privately-owned ramp (Henry's Landing) where paddlers can access the river for a modest fee. All other present-day access is through private property and at the discretion of the property owner. The TNC land that would provide nodes along the river would allow for additional public access, especially on the northern section of the study area, where public access is limited.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The NC General Assembly required the Division to include public input into the feasibility study regarding establishing a state park along the Black River. For this, a public outreach plan was created to garner input from the communities in Bladen, Pender, and Sampson counties, as well as statewide. A series of public open houses was held where interested parties could speak with Division staff about the concept of a state park unit on the Black River. Three open houses were held in September of 2017 (Sept. 14 in



Pender County Open House

Bladen County, Sept. 18 in Pender County and Sept. 20 in Sampson County). Based upon public input received at the September open houses, an additional open house was held on November 16, 2017 at the Rowan Fire Station in Ivanhoe, NC



Sampson County Open House Survey Board

During the September 2017 open houses, a survey was prepared to gather feedback both from attendees of the open houses and through an online survey for those who could not attend. The survey was created to determine the type of accommodations people would like to see if a park unit were created along the Black River. The categories for the accommodations included: trails, camping, boating and fishing, play areas, gathering and event space, and interpretation / education. For all categories, “Do Nothing” was an option.

There were 186 attendees at the September 2017 open houses and 383 online surveys were completed (the survey was open from Sept. 13, 2017 to Oct. 18, 2017). The results of the surveys can be seen in Table 3.

TABLE 3 - SEPTEMBER 2017 OPEN HOUSES AND ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

Survey Results	Overall Results*	Online Survey Results		Open Houses***
		Local Counties**	All Other	
In Favor of some type of park amenity	76%	75%	91%	48%
Against any Park Amenity (No Park)	24%	25%	9%	52%
* - Combined Results from the Open Houses and Online ** - Local Counties are Bladen, Sampson and Pender Counties *** - Results from the survey at the Open Houses (Sept. 14, 18 and 20, 2017)				

The survey results showed a trend toward the public preferring passive accommodations such as a park unit similar to a state natural area, if a park unit were developed (see Table 4). A state natural area tends to have limited amenities and does not include camping. Amenities at a state natural area would likely be limited to paddle access, hiking trails, a small picnic area and parking.

The open house held at the Rowan Fire Station was attended by 46 people, and was used to specifically answer several concerns raised at the September meetings and gather additional public input on the feasibility study. These concerns were: Effects on Private Property, Effects on Natural Resources and Effects on Community. Answers to several questions relating to these concerns were displayed and discussed at the meeting. Most notable was the question regarding whether the state would acquire property from unwilling sellers to create a park. The Division does not, and will not acquire land from unwilling sellers. The Division would recommend that a provision be added to legislation to create a park along the Black River requiring that land may be purchased only from willing sellers, if this would help address concerns from the local community. (See Appendix A for the Rowan Open House graphics.)

TABLE 4 - TREND TOWARDS PASSIVE RECREATION FROM SURVEY RESULTS

LESS DEVELOPED PARK UNIT		MORE DEVELOPED PARK UNIT		
<u>Trails</u>	Bank Fishing (42)	<u>Trails</u>	<u>Gathering</u>	<u>Play</u>
Hiking (141)	Canoe Fishing (44)	Mountain Biking (8)	Outdoor Event Space (20)	Playgrounds (14)
Paddle (199)	<u>Gathering</u>	Multi-use (87)	Group Pinic Shelters (50)	Sports Areas (12)
<u>Camping</u>	Picnic Areas (178)	<u>Camping</u>	<u>Educational</u>	Nature Play (139)
Primitive (83)	Picnic Shelters (110)	Tent Trailer (54)	Ranger Led (103)	Paddle Rentals (178)
Platform (85)	<u>Educational</u>	Camper Cabin (115)	Hands on Learning (70)	
Paddle in (45)	Interpretive Signs (104)	RV (14)	Visitor Center (131)	
<u>Water</u>		<u>Water</u>		
Canoe/Kayak (191)		Motor Boat Ramps (23)		
Canoe Ramps (159)	(XX) - denotes number of people favoring each amenity	Motor Boating (6)		
57% of Respondents would like a less developed park unit		43% of Respondents would like more developed park unit		
(XX) - denotes number of people favoring each amenity				

These attendees shared a variety of opinions similar to the other open houses. Comment forms were distributed at the meeting that attendees could fill out and leave with Division staff, or complete and mail in to the Division. No comment forms were collected at the open house, but many comment forms were taken by attendees to distribute in the community. Subsequent to the open house, 73 comment forms were completed and sent back to the Division. Sixty-nine were in favor of the park and four were against the park.

While there was some localized opposition to the development of a park unit, there was overall support for the development of a Black River park unit at the County and State-wide level.

CLEARING AND SNAGGING

This study includes an assessment of the potential for navigational improvements on the Black River. The navigability of a river falls under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE). The ACOE has snagged the river several times in the past, but the most recent project was in 1967. If a park unit was created along the Black River, the Division would be involved in ensuring the river was cleared for small motorized boat and watercraft traffic.

To determine the cost for improving the navigability of the Black River the Division reviewed a similar project that will work to restore the Lumber River to an open and navigable condition for small watercraft traffic.

The Lumber River scope of work requires the contractor to clear a 10-foot wide path to provide passage through any debris that is completely or partially blocking navigation of the river. No clearing will occur within 5 feet of the bank.

On the Lumber River, the stumps of leaning trees or uprooted trees will be left in place. All submerged debris will be snagged to a depth of 3 feet. Overhanging or leaning debris within the 10-foot corridor will be cleared to a height of 10-feet above the river. The removed debris shall be disposed on high ground where indicated by park staff, either placed parallel to the stream channel or wedged/placed behind existing trees so that it cannot re-enter the river channel. Debris cannot be dropped in the river, placed on the banks, piled or situated in any manner that will impede lateral

water flow.

The Lumber River project will clear approximately 87 miles of river at a cost of \$225,000 (funded by Federal Emergency Management Agency because of damages from hurricane Matthew). A similar project to clear approximately 45 miles of the Black River would require approximately \$116,500 (45 miles x \$2,590/mile) for the project. Funding for the clearing and snagging of the Black River is not currently allocated.

CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

The Black River study area meets the criteria for addition to the State Parks System. It contains natural resources of statewide significance, and it would be feasible to create a park unit of sufficient size with adequate public access and minimal incompatible features.

The Black River study area contains a significant acreage of undeveloped land of which a large portion is currently protected from incompatible development by conservation easements and ownership by conservation partners. The conservation and protection of other large tracts along the Black River would be beneficial. The area currently has limited access to the river, through public and private boat ramps. A potential state park unit would provide additional access locations along the river. The addition of a state park unit would have the potential to provide other recreational amenities along the river. The study area also represents an important opportunity to preserve and interpret important biological resources, as well as assist in maintaining the navigability of the river.

There are state and federally significant natural features or species in the study area, such as the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, the Wood Stork, and the Grassland Arrowhead. The cypress swamps with trees that are 1600 years old are also significant.

There is both considerable support and localized concern related to the siting of a state park unit along the Black River.

The Division recommends that the residents of Sampson, Pender and Bladen Counties continue to consider the benefits of a state park unit on the Black River to arrive at a community consensus on the proposal.

APPENDIX A - ROWAN OPEN HOUSE GRAPHICS



CONCERNS

EFFECTS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

Will the State take my land to make a park along the Black River?

The state WILL NOT acquire land from unwilling sellers to create a park on the Black River. If a park on the Black River is authorized, the Division of Parks and Recreation will request inclusion of the following in the bill:

“The State may receive donations of appropriate land and may purchase other needed lands only from voluntary sellers for the Black River State Park.”

If a park is created along the Black River, will I still be able to hunt on my land and on the river?

If a state park unit were to be created along the Black River the only restrictions on hunting would be on or into land acquired by the State. By state law, it is illegal to hunt on state park land, however, we hold no jurisdiction over private property. People would still be able to hunt on their own land and they would still be able to hunt on the river, since the State will not own the river.

BLACK RIVER FEASIBILITY STUDY





CONCERNS

EFFECTS ON THE NATURAL RESOURCES

If a park is created along the river, won't the additional visitors it attracts bring in more garbage and damage the river?

The Division of Parks and Recreation is very aware of trash and its effects on the environment. If this were to become a state park unit, staff would be assigned to be responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of any facilities that were added. The Division also sponsors river "clean ups" where the river is cleaned for the community. We are proud of how clean we keep our park units and encourage residents to visit our local parks to see how tidy we keep our parks. There are park units in the area including Jones Lake and Singletary Lake.

If a park is created along the Black River will the construction of facilities be detrimental to the river and the environment?

The mission of the Division of Parks and Recreation starts with conservation, and it is our top priority. If facilities are built they would fit in with the landscape and would be designed and constructed in an environmentally responsible manner.

If a park is created along the Black River won't the additional park visitors damage the resources?

The Black River has many significant resources along its corridor to protect. If a park unit is established, staff would be assigned to monitor and maintain the resource to ensure protection. The Division's environmental education efforts foster awareness and support for the resources along the river. The result is a cleaner and healthier environment.

BLACK RIVER FEASIBILITY STUDY





CONCERNS

EFFECTS ON THE COMMUNITY

If a park is created along the Black River, will the increase in traffic have an affect on our community?

If a park unit were to be created along the Black River, it will take a long time for the visitation levels to increase and the number of visitors is dependent on the facilities included in a park unit. Many of our parks take several years to be developed after the property is purchased. As for traffic on the local road system, if we assume 50,000 visitors, that breaks down to approximately 16,667 cars per year (NC State parks has an average of 3 visitors per car at its parks). This would be approximately 1,870 cars per month (based on the average peak month). If there will be 4 locations on the Black River, this would be 468 cars per location. Which would correlate to 234 cars per weekend, which is 117 cars both Saturday and Sunday. If broken out over a 6 hour window, this is 20 cars per hour added to the infrastructure leading to the park site.

Wouldn't the addition of a park along the Black River further strain the already limited law enforcement and emergency services in the area?

The Division of Parks and Recreation would work closely with the local law enforcement and emergency services to ensure that undue strain would not be placed on them. All state park Rangers are commissioned law enforcement officers. In addition, Rangers and maintenance personnel receive First Responder training.

BLACK RIVER FEASIBILITY STUDY



