



PROGRAM EVALUATION DIVISION

NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Operational Changes for State Attractions Could Yield \$1.9 Million Annually and Reduce Reliance on the State

Summary

The General Assembly directed the Program Evaluation Division to review state attraction management to determine whether administration could be consolidated and to suggest optimal operating schedules for sites. Sites included in this review were administered by the Department of Cultural Resources (23 state historic sites, nine museums, and three commissions) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (39 state parks and recreation areas, three aquariums, Jennette's Pier, the North Carolina Zoological Park, the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, and the North Carolina Museum of Forestry).

Cost savings and efficiency of site operations could be increased by restructuring site-level management, closing sites partially or entirely, expanding fees, and adopting public-private partnerships with non-profit entities. Shared maintenance, staffing, and oversight for sites located close to one another could increase efficient use of existing positions and lead to staff reductions. Visitation analysis identified sites with significantly lower visitation, suggesting possible closure on days of the week, seasons, or completely. Adopting public-private partnerships with non-profits for zoo and aquarium operations and pursuing corporate sponsorship would reduce reliance on state funds. Potential savings are estimated at \$1.9 million in recurring funds, as shown in Exhibits 14 (page 29) and 15 (page 32).

Consolidating attractions under one of the existing agencies would not enhance effective management nor result in cost savings. Analyses indicated potential savings of \$201,500 would be outweighed by the cost of consolidating management and oversight of state attractions.

To address these findings, the General Assembly should direct

- the Department of Cultural Resources to coordinate site management at historic sites, adopt a five-day schedule for most historic sites, close two sites, and expand public-private partnerships with non-profits and fees to reduce reliance on state funds; and
- the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to coordinate park management, record daily visitation data at all parks to determine potential savings from daily or seasonal closure, adopt public-private partnerships with non-profits for the operations of the zoo and aquariums, and expand public-private partnerships and fees to reduce reliance on state funds.