

## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

**Name of Fee:** Aquarium Admission Fees, 15A NCAC 1R .0101

**Statutory Authority:** The admission fees are authorized in G.S. 143B-289.44

**Purpose of Fee:**

The fees are to be used for the repair, renovation, expansion, maintenance, educational exhibit construction, debt obligation for expansion and construction, and operational expenses at the Aquariums.

|                                |                      |     |                          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----|--------------------------|
| <b>Current Admission Fees:</b> | Adults               | \$7 |                          |
|                                | Seniors and Military | \$6 |                          |
|                                | School age children  | \$5 | (School groups are free) |

**Revenue Generated (04-05 FY):** \$2,956,800

|                      |                     |     |                             |
|----------------------|---------------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| <b>Proposed Fee:</b> | Adults              | \$8 |                             |
|                      | Seniors             | \$7 |                             |
|                      | School age children | \$6 | (School groups remain free) |

**Additional Revenue Generated:** \$560,000

**Projected Total Annual Revenue:** \$3,516,800

**Rationale for Fee Increase:**

Beginning in FY 1999-2000 and continuing through the current fiscal year, the Aquariums Division has had its State appropriations reduced by \$2,847,196. These reductions in operating funds have been made up by using monies from the Aquariums' Admission Fund (2865 Fund). In addition, the North Carolina Aquariums are obligated to a lease/debt payment schedule for the expansion of the North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores. These payments will begin in June 2006 at \$1.9 million each year. In order to maintain current educational programs, exhibits and services offered by the three North Carolina Aquariums, and to meet the Aquariums' lease/debt obligations, it is necessary to increase the admission fees at the three Aquariums.

**Who Pays:**

Visitors to the three aquariums. Children under the age of 6, registered school groups, and AZA reciprocal members are admitted free. Members of the US Military are admitted free on Veteran's Day and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

**Number Affected by Fee:** The Aquariums have about 1,000,000 visitors annually.

**Inception Date of Fee:** 1993

**Date of Last Fee Change:** March, 2004