

Notes From the President



John Graham

“Esprit de Corps” as defined in the Oxford Dictionary is a feeling of devotion to and pride in the group to which

one belongs. So why do I start my “notes” with “Esprit de Corps?”

It simply defines the 500 men and women in the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation, the folks of the North Carolina Audubon Society; the many conservationists who strive to protect our natural resources (for parks and natural areas). The members of the North Carolina General Assembly and the Council of State whose visionary leadership provides tax dollars for expanding and maintaining our “Best in the Nation” system of Parks and Recreation. The individuals and corporations such as International Paper, Great Outdoor Provision Company, and REI, who provide private monies to make possible exhibits, park improvements and educational programs that daily add to the enjoyment of the millions of our park visitors.

Millions of charitable dollars flow into the people’s parks giving 13,000,000 annual visitors recreational and educational opportunities that enrich their lives and give life to their dreams.

As FSP nears its 40th year of service to the NC Division of Parks and Recreation, we pause to reflect on the future and our role in it.

In less than two decades, we are projected to be the 7th most populated state in the nation. What challenges do we face? Will our landscape be tree-free only to be filled with buildings, communication towers, construction cranes reaching higher as if to touch the moon; billboards with more daring “Coppertone” ads and leveling the earth for yet another mall complex – all impervious surfaces.

And so it goes – unless bold people with bold ideas for planning and bold engineering say “this land is our land: the air we breathe will be clean; the water we drink will be pollutant-free and we will have preservation of our natural resources.”

Time is not on our side: we are losing land to developers at the rate of 100,000 acres a year; some of it impacts our history, our natural heritage, and the very elements of life – air, water, and peace of mind.

FSP is alarmed by House Bill 1715 that would cut funding for the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) by 42% from its current level even in view of increased demand from the electorate for greater conservation of our natural resources and heritage and more educational and recreational opportunities in our preserved resources. FSP and affiliated groups know that HB1715 must be amended to reflect the needs and demands of our citizenry. As the state treasury is preparing to receive \$1.14 billion surplus tax revenues for FY2007-2008, the very minimum funding for PARTF is to maintain the current level, plus the population, inflation and environmental pressures as they increase.

Strong voices are heard in Raleigh!

Believing that a cultural change through education is a vital component of our mission, FSP has assisted in the revitalization of the P & R’s Junior Ranger (JURA) program with grant monies from Great Outdoor Provision Company, our own funds, and support from Friends organizations of specific parks. The JURA program is a pilot for educating our youth with regards to environmental concerns, knowledge of their local parks, the flora and fauna that thrive there, career opportunities available as caretakers of the gifts of nature and the importance of sustainability of our parks and the treasures that await visitors.

To learn more about FSP and to join in our efforts visit our website at ncfsp.org.

John E. Graham
President



Crowder's Mountain Prairie Restoration

FSP's Spring Quarterly meeting was at the new Crowders Mountain Visitor Center. Superintendent Larry Hyde led us on a tour of the new prairie restoration project. The previous week they had completed a major milestone for this ambitious project. They cleared a 2-acre lot of Virginia pines and re-seeded it with native plants to recreate a common ecosystem that existed before European settlement. Although, you will have to use your imagination to see the herds of buffalo that used to roam the area. The park rangers led a group of volunteers to complete the seeding and put in place several education centers to explain the purpose and history of the piedmont prairie. Located next to the new visitor center the prairie will be easy to access and afford an unusual opportunity for interpretation and education. Thanks to REI who funded this project and to the REI staff that came out to volunteer their time and effort to the project. You can see more photos of parks staff and volunteers at work



Crowder's Mountain Visitor's Center

Photo: Bob Sowa

on our web site <http://ncfsp.org/REI2006.html>.

Crowder's Mountain is convenient to the Charlotte Metropolitan area. The prairie is a great spot to visit for itself or at the beginning or end of a hike up King's Pinnacle or Crowder's Mountain. Be sure to stop at the park and watch the prairie grow and change

throughout the year. However, get there early on the weekends, because local hikers, rock climbers, and campers have discovered the park. If you have any photos of the prairie or park that you would like to share, we would love to see them. Send them to us

at FSP@ncfsp.org or post them to our photo group "NC State Parks" on <http://flickr.com>.

FSP News

... paved with good intentions.

Phillip Haire (D-Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain) and Pricey Harrison (D - Guilford) are legislators with environmentalist credentials but even the best of "green" politicians have to be watched. House bill H 1715 of which they are co-sponsors is 'AN ACT TO INCREASE THE STATE EXCISE TAX ON CONVEYANCES TO FUND LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAMS' which will, in fact, substantially reduce the revenue stream of the Parks & Recreation Trust Fund.

Currently there is a levy of \$1 on each \$500 of all real estate transfers of which 50¢ is retained by the State - the other 50% goes to the County. The State's share is then divided between the Natural Heritage and Parks & Recreation Trust Funds. In 2005-6 Parks & Recreation received more than \$57 million of which \$37 million went to State Park projects.

If H 1715 becomes law, that levy will become \$2 but the resulting revenue will be divided between Clean Water, Farmland Preservation, Natural Heritage, and Parks.

However, Parks Trust Fund would now receive only one sixth of the total. One sixth of two dollars being less than half of one dollar, Parks revenue would be reduced to approximately \$33 million.

Call, write or e-mail these legislators, thank them for their environmental awareness but point out the error of their ways.

R. Phillip Haire - (919) 715-3005 - Philliph@ncleg.net

Pricey Harrison - (919) 733-5771 - priceyh@ncleg.net

Deep River State Park Proposal

A bill to create a new water trail along the Deep River was introduced in the legislature. Contact your representative and senator and let them know what you think of House bill H1811 and Senate bill S1431. For the status and text of the bill, enter the bill number at North Carolina General Assembly Bill Lookup <http://ncleg.net/gascripts/BillLookup/BillLookup.pl>. To find who represents you, enter your zip code at http://ncleg.net/GIS/Representation/Who_Represents_Me/Who_Represents_Me.html.

New License Plate Design

The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation is accepting applications and payment for the first 300 license plates that feature an outdoor recreation design theme in blue, green and black. To view the license plate design and find an application, go to the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation web site at www.ncsparks.net, or write the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation at 1615 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC, 27699-1615.



Exploring the Geology of the Carolinas

A Field Guide to Favorite Places from Chimney Rock to Charleston by Dr. Kevin G. Stewart, associate professor of geological sciences at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Mary-Russell Roberson who has written about everything from astronomy to zoology.

“We felt there was a real need for a book like this that would be accessible to non-scientists,” Stewart says. “We want to help people see the Carolinas in a new way.” FSP supported the publication of this book for non-scientists.

The book features fifteen North Carolina state parks including Chimney Rock.

You can order the book on our web page or by using the ordering form on the back of this newsletter. Note that we are pleased to offer a special rate for FSP Members.

Geology Book Review

As a regular visitor to our state parks and forests, I have often wondered how such natural beauty was created. Why is Pilot Mountain there? How were the Carolina bays formed? What are wind shadows and in which state park can you see them? The answer to these and many similar questions can be found in a new book by Kevin G. Stewart and Mary-Russell Roberson entitled “Exploring the Geology of the Carolinas - a field guide to favorite places from Chimney Rock to Charleston.”

This book pairs a brief geological history of the Carolinas with 31 field trips to both popular and lesser-known outdoor sites in the region, including many of our state parks. The guide is the first of its kind and the authors have done an excellent job of providing information using simple language and explanations, making it very readable for the general public. In fact, when I sat down to read the chapter on Crowder’s Mountain in preparation for a recent visit, I found myself continuing to read other chapters well past my bedtime!

This field guide is a handy and informative carry-along for hikers, tourists, teachers, and families -- anyone interested in the science behind the sights at their favorite Carolina spots -- and will make a great present for any outdoor enthusiast. See the FSP website at ncfsp.org to order a copy.

Jim Richardson, FSP

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Address: _____

FSP NEWS

Keep up to date on the latest FSP news in between newsletters at our online News page <http://ncfsp.org/news.html>.

Coming Soon

Map Guide of North Carolina State Parks – this summer.
Niche Guide to North Carolina State Parks – this fall.

Come Meet FSP

Under the Big Tent at the Eno River Festival - July 4, 7, 8.
Summer Quarterly Meeting at New River State Park - July 28 10 AM.

Congratulations

Congratulations and a hearty Thank You to our corporate sponsors including REI, Great Outdoor Provision Company, and International Paper who have enabled improvements to the State Parks. Visit our new page on Corporate Sponsors to see the results of their contributions. If you think your company may be interested in making a donation to the state parks please contact us.