



David Pearson

WE NEED YOUR HELP! Lobby Day – May 25th

The 2010 legislative session is starting up soon, and leaders will be making critical budget decisions. They need to hear from people across our state who believe it is important to continue conservation funding in next year's budget so we may preserve critical land and protect our state's natural resources.

While Friends of State Parks is not a lobby group and does not spend money on lobbying, we as members and state park supporters have every right and are encouraged to participate in our state government. That is why Friends of State Parks is asking our members and supporters to once again attend Lobby Day with Land for Tomorrow on May 25.

To Register go to **<http://www.landfortomorrow.org/lobbyday2010registration>**

Land for Tomorrow is a statewide partnership of concerned citizens, businesses, interest groups and local governments urging the General Assembly to fully fund the state's conservation trust funds. These include the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the Natural Heritage Trust Fund, the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust.

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, created in 1994, funds improvements in the state's park system, dollar-for-dollar matching grants to local governments for parks and grants to local governments to improve public beach and estuarine access. The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund is the main source of funding for most state park improvements or acquisition of land to create new parks or expand existing ones. To date, the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund has funded more than \$449 million in projects.

Many of these funds have been reduced by

the General Assembly in recent years due to the economy, and the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund has also seen a reduction because of fewer real estate sales. Land For Tomorrow's goal this year is to ensure the state budget includes \$50 million for the Clean Water Management Trust Fund and \$2 million for the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund.

Like all other agencies in state government, the state parks division has felt the severe cuts of the budget knife made necessary by these difficult economic times. The dedicated staff who run the parks will be challenged to provide the same level of outstanding service and experience for visitors, which we have come to expect. I have true faith they will do their very best with the resources they have. However, we need to understand that some services will be reduced, fewer people will be in the parks to assist visitors and routine repairs, maintenance and custodial services will be delayed and reduced.

That being said, the North Carolina state park system has not experienced the same kind of Draconian cuts facing systems in other states where massive budget reductions have led to park closings and staggering layoffs. I believe our state's elected and appointed officials have not chosen this route because they are visionary leaders who understand the social and economic values of our state parks.

Construction projects funded through PARTF bring much-needed jobs to local com-

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munities and state and local park projects bring outdoor recreation opportunities closer to home to help people live healthier lives. State parks also contribute \$419 million to local communities across the state, according to a North Carolina State University study.

However, revenue generation is receiving considerable attention from legislators. At the direction of the General Assembly, the Division of Parks and Recreation implemented a modest fee increase effective May 1. In the upcoming session, lawmakers will also review a study examining the costs and feasibility of charging parking fees at state park units. The professional report, prepared by state park staff, thoroughly evaluated the proposal, gathering information from other states, and identified staffing, facility and road construction needs associated with fee collection and recommended fees not be charged. Charging a parking fee at North Carolina state parks would reduce visitation, discriminate against low-income residents and inhibit environmental education and outreach efforts. North Carolina has always been proud to allow access free of charge to our natural wonders and that should not change. FSP will keep you informed if this proposal gains any momentum.

With all this in mind, as we converge on the Capital on May 25, let us meet with our legislators in support of our parks and conservation of our land and natural resources. But, also let us count our blessings! These are hard times and our legislators are dealing with some of the most important decisions of our state. Meet with your representatives, your senators, their aides and office staff. Tell them how much we appreciate them and how thankful we are for their support and their commitments to our state park system and our state's natural resources.

Remind them this is the very best time to support acquisitions of new park lands and any support they can give to the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the Natural Heritage Trust Fund, the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust is very much appreciated. Also stress the financial impact state parks provide in some of the most economically challenged places in our state.

Meet with your legislators, talk with them about state parks and thank them for their on-going support!

Thank them, because it is only through their support of these trust funds that we will have Land For Tomorrow!

David Pearson
President
Friends of State Parks

The Junior Ranger Program

Report By Dorothy Graham

An Opportunity for Youth

“Do you like to explore nature?
Do you like to have fun?
Do you like to protect our parks?”

These are the challenges and the promise of the Junior Ranger Program, now active in every North Carolina State Park for young people ages 6 -12. Each park now has its uniquely designed patch to be earned by those completing the program.

Participation requires access to the newly designed Junior Ranger Activity Guidebook which can be downloaded from the Parks website or is available at any park.

What You Can Do

All FSP members and friends are encouraged to promote participation among youth and youth leaders. These colorful, eye-catching rack cards will soon be available to build awareness and promote participation in the program. If you are part of an environmental or state parks festival, work with young people through scouts or 4-H clubs or in other ways, we ask that you support the program by displaying and distributing the rack cards.

To download the activity guide, go to www.ncparks.gov.

To get rack cards, go to <http://ncfsp.org/comments.html>, click on “contact FSP” and in the comment section, note that you want rack cards, how many, and where you plan to place or distribute them.

Include your name, mailing address and telephone number.

Raven Rock: the Fall Line in Focus

Along with Creating a Wonderful Web of Gorgeous Gems

Contributed by Alice Zawadzki

My breath was taken away when we arrived at the forest clearing that dramatized the recently opened, LEED designed, Raven Rock State Park Visitor's Center. Before us appeared a sand-colored roofline that rose like the coastal plain to meet the sky at the Piedmont. Indeed that was the intent: the education message here is to put the fall line in focus and in context with the history of our State. The genuine graciousness of the staff emphasized to me the gift that the local people give to us as they steward each of our State Parks. The exhibits emphasize the exhaustive physical and financial efforts essential in making a staircase of dams to make a thoroughfare that brought the crops and natural resources like longleaf pine and their naval products of the interior of the state to the ships and markets at the coast. Now we have incredible interstates and bridges; just 200 years ago our forebears had the rapids to navigate and the wide rivers to cross with pole-powered ferries. Raleigh and Fayetteville were connected via the Northington Road and Ferry through the area. Citizens paid one day of work on the thoroughfare each year as part of their taxes. Indeed Raven Rock has acreage on both sides of the Cape Fear of this historic passage. Now a twenty-mile trip in either direction is needed to explore or service both sides. Perhaps citizens may choose to bring us an historic ferry for the safe river passage. It would show our grandchildren how people transected the many beautiful waterways to bring goods to nearby markets or go to the legislature in Raleigh just a river crossing and a carriage ride away or to give today's park staff quicker access to both sides of the river.

Besides the well-researched exhibits mirroring the research of local historian, John Hairr (Harnett County: A History), and vocalized by local citizenry, Raven Rock State Park is filled with many hidden treasures. The 150-foot Gneiss rock face stretching a mile along the river was once the home of roosting ravens; it is accessed with a multitude of steps down to the Cape Fear or via canoe that you can rent in Lillington. Inland there is an incredible granite outcropping (the discovery of which prevented a parallel canal to be built). Its very slowly eroding surface becomes a thin pocket of soil that can support a very fragile miniature floral ecosystem. (Please do not walk on these here or anywhere.) In the park there are slopes of disjunct mountain plants like mountain laurel, galax, and other rare wildflower species. Be on the lookout for a black fox squirrel

that looks like a funny skunk without the white stripe and the few resident and fire-dependent longleaf pines, our state tree. The accessible loop behind the education center surrounds a field with tiny longleaf seedlings and a few planted in the rocket stage; the kiosks tell their story. Perhaps with time as the longleaf pine that were logged out will regenerate and the fox squirrel and red-cockaded woodpecker will return.

Friends of Haw River State Park

Reported by David B. Craft

Haw River is one of the North Carolina's newest parks. Currently land open to the public exists only at the Summit Environmental Education Center. Friends of Haw River State Park has assisted with native plantings and various projects around the conference center and have also worked with the State on the Master Plan for recently acquired lands to the west and east of the conference center.

Workdays are planned be held later this year as we begin to open these lands for public access in the next few years. We recently held a farewell reception for our first Superintendent, Sue McBean. Sue is heading to Grandfather Mtn.

Friends of State Parks
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Please send me:

- North Carolina State Parks Map Guide @ \$19.95 (\$15) + \$3 S&H = \$22.95 each
- Guide to the Snakes of North Carolina @ \$10.00 (\$8) + \$2 S&H = \$12.00 each
- Exploring the Geology of the Carolinas @ \$19.95 (\$15) + \$2.50 S&H = \$22.45 each
- North Carolina State Parks: A Niche Guide @ \$14.95 (\$12) + \$2 S&H = \$16.95 each
- Jawbone Trail Cookbook @ \$10 (\$7) + \$2.50 S&H = \$12.50 each

Note: FSP members prices in parenthesis

Name: _____ City & Zip _____
 Address: _____

Lobby Day - Tuesday, May 25th

If you can join us for the day, register at the Land for Tomorrow web site.
 If you can only spare a couple of hours meet us in the Legislative Building lobby on Jones Street at 10 am.
 Let your legislators know how important our Parks are!

Next meeting

The next meeting of the FSP board will be at Mount Mitchell State Park on Saturday, July 31st at 10 am. All are welcome.