

Friends of State Parks 2013 Annual Report

Friends of State Parks

Mission Statement

Friends of State Parks is a citizen's group dedicated to the understanding, enjoyment, and protection of North Carolina's State Parks. FSP was incorporated under Chapter 55A of the NC General Statute on 12/15/1978. We are a 501(c)3 organization and operate under federal tax exempt status ID # 58-1634155.

FSP supports the mission of the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation: to protect and manage the unique biological, geological, archaeological, recreational, and scenic resources of the state. Friends of State Parks promotes public awareness of the immense contributions of these natural areas to the quality of life for North Carolinians of present and future generations.

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President's Message

Dear Friends:

On behalf of the Friends of State Parks and the nearly 30 associated individual park groups across this great state, we invite you to experience first-hand the natural beauty, grandeur, outdoor opportunities and wonder that are the state parks, recreation areas, state trails, natural areas, state rivers and more of North Carolina.

Our North Carolina state park system, that began nearly a century ago with the establishment of Mount Mitchell State Park in 1916, has become one truly entrusted to care for what represents the best of the best of the Tarheel state—"the goodliest land" as described by the early European explorers. From the highest mountain in eastern North America, to the second oldest river in the world, to the tallest sand dune on the Atlantic seaboard, to unique habitats and endangered species, the state park areas are filled with the superlatives of nature. North Carolina state parks offer a wide range of educational opportunities and quality outdoor experiences. The visitation is at record levels of over 14 million visitors each year. Wow! We really love our state parks! Our state system contributes more than \$400 million to local economies annually according to comprehensive research by N.C. State University in 2009.

Friends of State Parks, Inc. is a citizens' group dedicated to the understanding, enjoyment, and protection of North Carolina's state parks. FSP, established in 1978, is a 501(c)3 organization. We are proud to *promote* positive recreational use of parklands; *advocate* for new contributions of land and resources to the system; *lobby* against any actions deemed potentially damaging to the natural character of parks; and *support* the educational programs about the natural features of the parks which are such a vital part of the visitor's experience. Simply stated, we are a collection of individuals and groups who give their personal time and resources in order to make our state parks all they can be and represent the best and brightest citizen supporters of North Carolina. From supporting the junior ranger and the YIP-EE (Youth In Park & Environmental Education) programs, to championing public policy, there is a place for you.

Many positive changes have occurred in recent years. Yet much more needs to be accomplished! Let's make the effort to further improve upon what we pass on to those who follow us—all the while enjoying the journey. More friends and new faces are a welcome sight.

It is our hope that you find this annual report educational and inspiring. We love North Carolina's Naturally Wonderful state parks system!

Sincerely,



David M. Pearson, President
Friends of State Parks, Inc.

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Local Friends Groups

are a great way for local people to assist parks. The East District has a friends group in each park. Most of the other districts are close behind. Some groups are supporting more than one park which helps our parks that do not have large populations.



Remembering the “Early Days”

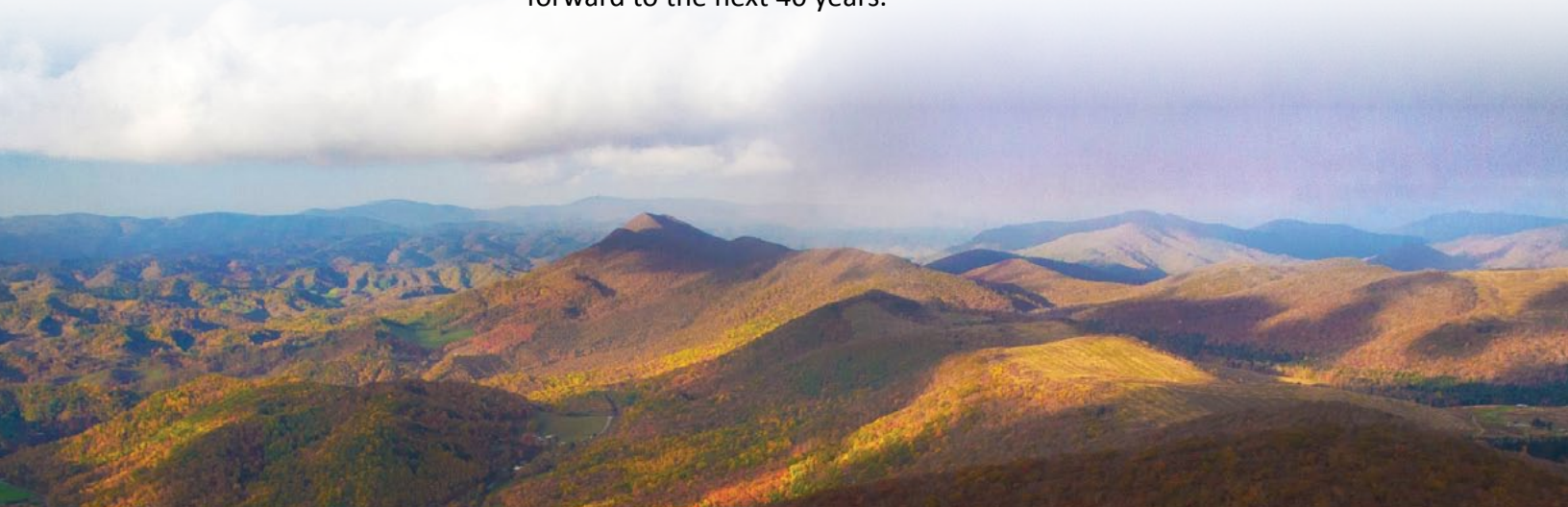
by Lib Conner and Alec Whittaker

We will leave a legacy for our children and their children...

As we approach the 40th anniversary of the establishment of Friends of State Parks, we can perhaps pause to look back at those who founded this organization. It was in 1973 that Joe Matthews, who headed the Northwest Economic Development Commission, gathered a group of interested citizens to support the formation of a land conservancy to facilitate the purchase of land for the expansion of the North Carolina’s state parks system. The group adopted the name Friends of State Parks and lobbied the Legislature to form the Land Conservancy and fund it through a \$50 million bond issue. The General Assembly authorized the Conservancy but not the bond issue. While the bond issue was not approved, the publicity which it gave to State Parks led to an \$8.5 million appropriation by the 1975 General Assembly. In 1978, Friends of State Parks became a permanent organization with Alexander Davison as its first president. Since then, FSP has operated as “a citizens’ group dedicated to the understanding, enjoyment and protection of North Carolina’s state parks.” Alexander Davison was succeeded as president by, in turn, Tom Ellis, Bob Conner, Ray Noggle, Al Radford, Jim Stevens, John Graham and current president David Pearson.

In the 40 years FSP has actively lobbied on behalf of North Carolina state parks, we have seen the implementation of a major bond issue, the establishment of a Parks Trust Fund, pay levels of park rangers brought in line with other law enforcement, a doubling of the state parks system’s land area and a 50 percent increase in the number of state parks.

We will leave a legacy for our children and their children who can look forward to the next 40 years.



2013 Friends Conference

The Nature Research Center at the Museum of Natural Sciences was the place to be February 6, 2013, as David Pearson, president of Friends of State Parks (FSP), welcomed over 100 friends to the William G. Ross Conference Center for the 2013 Friends Conference. Collaboration, fundraising and strategic planning were among objectives examined during the second-ever statewide conference of FSP.

Jim Richardson, Vice President of FSP, shared there are 23 friends groups representing a total of 28 parks and announced that the east district was the first of the four districts in the parks system to have a friends group in each park. Growth of new friends groups averaged about five per year since 2010. Lewis Ledford, Director of N.C. Division of Parks & Recreation, presented a timeline of the parks since Mount Mitchell became the first state park in 1916 through the present and invited input from the friends in planning an exciting centennial celebration marking 100 years of North Carolina state parks in 2016. Members from new and veteran friends groups led an informative discussion on fundraising and attracting volunteers. The five-member panel consisted of Tom Kelly, Friends of Fort Macon; Cynthia Satterfield, Eno River Association; Kate Dixon, Friends of Mountains-to-Sea Trail; Jay Young, Friends of the Sauratown Mountains; and David Funderburk, Friends of High Country State Parks. Dr. Jonathan Howes and Dr. Tom Linden with the University of North Carolina gave a special presentation showing three videos which appeared on the PBS television show *North Carolina Now* and featured Gorges, Eno River, and Fort Macon state parks.

In all, conference participants heard from 14 speakers on a broad range of topics along with brief addresses by N.C. House Speaker Thom Tillis, N.C. Senate Majority Leader Harry Brown, and Brad Ives, assistant secretary for natural resources in the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

The meeting ended with an evening reception where friends as well as Brad Ives and Mary Penny Thompson, Assistant Secretary for Administration from NC DENR, were joined by Representative Thom Tillis, Speaker of the House, and Senator Harry Brown, the Senate Majority Leader, along with other notable North Carolina legislators to share some refreshments and talk about the importance of state parks.

The conference was sponsored by Friends of State Parks, Friends of the Hammocks and Bear Island, Inc., Great Outdoor Provision Company, and Parks by Nature.

Collaboration
Fundraising
Strategic
planning

Friends of State Parks President David Pearson moderated the 2013 conference.



North Carolina state parks mobile application



Pocket Ranger®

The free Pocket Ranger® mobile application for North Carolina's state parks, developed for smartphones by ParksByNature Network, has been ranked among the top 100 free navigation applications by Apple's iTunes.

Apple's iTunes ranked the North Carolina State Parks Pocket Ranger mobile app 43rd in popularity, based on the number of times the application has been downloaded. The mobile application, or app, was introduced in May 2011 by the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation in partnership with Friends of State Parks and ParksByNature Network. The app was among the first such comprehensive mobile applications for state parks systems created by New York based ParksByNature.

The downloadable application for iPhone and Android smartphones allows visitors to plan trips and explore state parks with details readily at hand about park locations, trails, facilities, reservations, events and special news alerts. It also allows GPS-aided, state-of-the-art navigation of state parks, storage of detailed topographic maps and enhanced interactive features

for social media. An "alert" feature supplies GPS coordinates to designated contacts in case of emergencies.

The mobile app for North Carolina state parks can be downloaded from the iTunes Store and Android's Market by searching N.C. State Parks or NC Pocket Ranger or by visiting www.pocketranger.com/apps.



State parks license plate

The revenue derived from the special plate is transferred to Friends of State Parks, Inc., for its educational, conservation, and other programs in support of the operations of the State Parks System

Almost 5,000 plates are on the road today. If you'd like to order our popular plate, please either

- Complete an online DMV application
- Visit your local license bureau
- Or you may download an application and mail it in for processing.

Download the application at
http://www.ncparks.gov/News/special/license_plate.php

Send your completed application, along with payment to the DMV. Make checks payable to N.C. DMV.

North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles
3155 Mail Service Center
Raleigh NC 27699-3155

Help Support
and Protect
State Parks
with a N.C.
State Parks
License Plate



Record-level attendance at North Carolina state parks continues



The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation announced that visitation at North Carolina's state parks and state recreation areas continued at a record level in 2013, with 14.2 million visits, matching attendance levels set in 2009, 2011 and 2012.

Among 41 state parks and state recreation areas, 19 reported increases in attendance in 2013. Fort Macon State Park in Carteret County reported the highest attendance at 1.19 million visits, down slightly from 1.23 million last year.

A 2008 economic study revealed that travelers spend an average \$23.56 a day to enjoy the state parks. The analysis by North Carolina State University's Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management estimated the state parks system's total annual economic impact at more than \$400 million.

The complete study can be found at: http://www.ncparks.gov/News/special/economic_impact.php.

A new economic impact analysis for state parks is planned.

During the past 25 years, the state parks system has seen a dramatic 87 percent increase in visitation. In 1987, 7.6 million people visited state parks and state recreation areas.

Maintaining the structural and fiscal integrity of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund

In 2013, Friends of State Parks retained Elizabeth Biser, of Brooks Pierce, to advocate on behalf of State Parks at the NC General Assembly. In 2013, the Friends' advocacy efforts centered around maintaining the structural and fiscal integrity of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF).

Following the Governor's recommendation to eliminate the primary dedicated funding source for PARTF and leave only \$3.5 million in availability, Friends of State Parks worked with legislative leaders to craft a compromise, which maintains a satisfactory amount of funding. The end result eliminates the dedicated funding source, but appropriates back \$11 million in FY (fiscal year) 2013-14 and \$13 million in FY 2014-15, while relieving the fund of debt obligation and some operating expenses. The end result leaves PARTF with \$12.4 million for FY 2013-14 and \$14.4 million in FY 2014-15.

The elimination in dedicated funding indicates a shift in budgetary philosophy, not a lack of support for state parks. Other dedicated funding sources received similar treatment.

Other conservation trust funds were affected by the budget as well. The Natural Heritage Trust Fund was eliminated, with some of its functions transferred to the Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF). CWMTF is slated to receive \$10,426,976 for FY 13-14 and \$13,657,530 for FY 14-15. Also of note, state funding for the Adopt-a-Trail Program was eliminated.

Another accomplishment of the 2013 legislative session was the authorization of North Carolina's State Park license plate to benefit Friends of State Parks. The revenue derived from the special plate shall be transferred to Friends of State Parks, Inc., for its educational, conservation, and other programs in support of the operations of the State Parks System.

In the 2014 short session of the General Assembly, the Friends plan to get legislators and other state leaders into the state parks to experience, firsthand, the benefits that parks bring to our state.



It's good to have friends



In order to better support North Carolina's expanding state parks system, Friends of State Parks has vigorously pursued the creation of local park friends groups as chapters of the statewide organization.

Over the last three years, an average of five new chapters a year has been established, bringing the total of parks supported by local groups to 28. Many of these new chapters have chosen to use FSP as their banker for tax-exempt donations, allowing time to pursue future IRS 501(c)3 non-profit status as their growth and resources dictate.

Having a local friends group for each park provides readily available support, both financially and to provide volunteers, that can be much more responsive to a park's needs than the statewide FSP. This can be especially helpful when executing park projects in difficult economic times with limited budgets.

In addition, local people are better placed to gain support from the neighboring businesses and community, resulting in a greater appreciation of the park by local residents. Expanding the good reputations our parks have with their local communities can also result in favorable positions from local legislators—an important benefit in these times.

Support

Volunteers make major contributions to N.C. state parks

In general terms, volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services.

People seek to volunteer because it is a worthwhile activity or it is something of importance to them. Volunteers are critical partners of and participants in our parks. They are vital in helping us protect our natural resources and natural heritage. They build community by demonstrating strong park stewardship and commitment to public lands.

Volunteers serve North Carolina state parks in a number of functions including oyster shell bagging, constructing picnic tables, working special events, tree planting and repairing bridges.

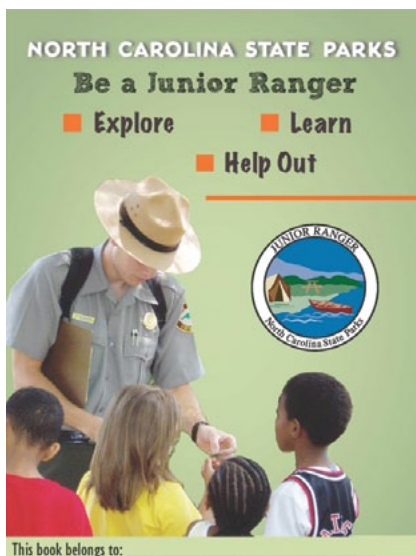
Some familiar organizations are behind our volunteers such as AmeriCorps, Big Sweep, Boy/Girl Scouts, Eagle Scouts and local universities and colleges.

In 2013, the State Parks Volunteer Program logged a total of 65,096 volunteer hours. That is the equivalent of 8,137 eight-hour days.



Support

Special programs for youth and families Junior Ranger Program



The Junior Ranger Program engages children ages 6-12 in meaningful learning by participating in park educational programs, completing an activity booklet, and learning about stewardship of natural resources. Children can earn a patch by completing the activity booklet for that park. They can also complete booklets at multiple parks and earn additional patches. Once they have earned a patch they can subscribe to a free Junior Ranger newsletter published by the Department of Parks and Recreation. After a successful pilot program with five parks the program is now available for all North Carolina's State Parks. For more information and to download the activity booklet, go to <http://www.ncparks.gov/Education/jrranger.php>

SORRY, adults are not eligible to earn these badges—KIDS ONLY! So be a Parent, Big Brother, Big Sister, Uncle, Aunt, or invite a friend's family to a park and help them learn about the world they live in.

This award-winning program was developed by Interpretation and Education staff and funded by the Friends of State Parks through a **Great Outdoor Provision Company** grant.

Young artists design patch

Grandfather Mountain State Park has a new Junior Ranger patch design, thanks to a creative program that encouraged young artists from around the park. Art students at Avery County High School submitted roughly 100 pieces of artwork with the Carolina Northern Flying Squirrel as the theme.



Support

Youth in Parks - Environmental Education (YIP-EE)

The YIP-EE outreach to schools project which FSP supports through transportation grants was developed and is administered by the Friends of State Parks YIP-EE committee with Dorothy Graham, FSP Vice President, as the YIP-EE Chair. The goal of FSP's YIP-EE project is to foster in young people a love and understanding of nature and an appreciation of their role as stewards of the environment.

There is growing concern that many young people are not getting outside and are growing up "nature deficient." Schools are finding it increasingly difficult to take students on nature outings and many families lack the resources to do this on their own. Our state parks offer many environmental education opportunities for children and adults. An obstacle the parks face is having enough staff to accommodate all the individuals and groups who might want to participate in their programs. In an effort to get underserved kids outside without creating an unrealistic demand on state park naturalists' capabilities, Friends of State Parks has designed the Youth in Parks Environmental Education (YIP-EE) project, envisioned as a partnership between a state park, the park's friends group and a public school.

Where feasible, an additional level of support would come from environmental educators or those seeking environmental education certification to volunteer as assistant group leaders. Friends of State Parks provided a limited number of \$400 grants for the 2012-13 school year to offset the cost of transportation to the park and for healthy snacks. FSP also provided planning and implementation guidelines based on an FSP-sponsored field trip to Eno River State Park in April 2012.

There is growing concern that many young people are growing up "nature deficient."



Support

Interpretation and education at Long Valley Farm



FSP is managing a grant from the Overhills Foundation through a connection with The Nature Conservancy for Interpretation and Education at Long Valley Farm at Carvers Creek State Park. With this grant the park staff plans to restore the grounds with a 1940s theme when Long Valley Farm was visited by presidents and famous generals as they plotted war strategy and reviewed the troop's readiness at nearby Fort Bragg. They were hosted by James Stillman Rockefeller, already a gold medal Olympic champion and a member of the Airborne Command and later to be a world class businessman heading the bank that would become Citibank. The 1940s theme will be the starting point to portray the historical, social, and natural resources of this special sandhills park.

The Nature Conservancy acquired Long Valley Farm when James Stillman Rockefeller, a New York City banker, died at age 102 in August 2004. In his will, Mr. Rockefeller left the estate to The Nature Conservancy. The conservancy performed several projects to restore the land including allowing the river to revert to its natural flow and planting many acres with longleaf pines. In 2010, the land was transferred to the state park system to manage and to promote the historical, cultural, and social aspects of the park as well as preserving the natural resources. The park staff has already completed some cleanup work with more volunteer work days scheduled. The grant is to help gather and present information of Long Valley Farm's rich history from its connection with Scientific Farmer Robert Wall Christian, Percy Rockefeller, and finally James Stillman Rockefeller as well as its connection to Fort Bragg, Fayetteville, and Spring Lake communities.

Check the website at www.ncparks.gov for volunteer opportunities where you can help work on this project at Carvers Creek State Park.

Designs for restoration of the Spring House are being submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office while other exhibits are being designed. A call has been put out to collect copies of personal photos of the park and recently a video camera was purchased to enable the staff to capture the memories of the Long Valley Farm by the staff and local residents.

Support

Local group matching grants

In addition to the various grants Friends of State Parks awarded in 2013 to support the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation for staff training, Interpretive and Educational supplies, annual theme promotion and other requested support, FSP offers local group matching grants to help promote, advocate, lobby, and support their local State Parks. One project completed in 2013 was awarded to Friends of Dismal Swamp State Park.

Dismal Swamp Friends Group Holds Contest to Name 400-pound Bear

Dismal Swamp State Park is proud to introduce Midnight, a 400-pound black bear mounted and proudly displayed. The bear met its demise on Highway 17, immediately east of the park and the Dismal Swamp Canal and “now lives on as a wonderful educational tool.” Many organizations, including FSP and Friends of Dismal Swamp, came together to make this happen.

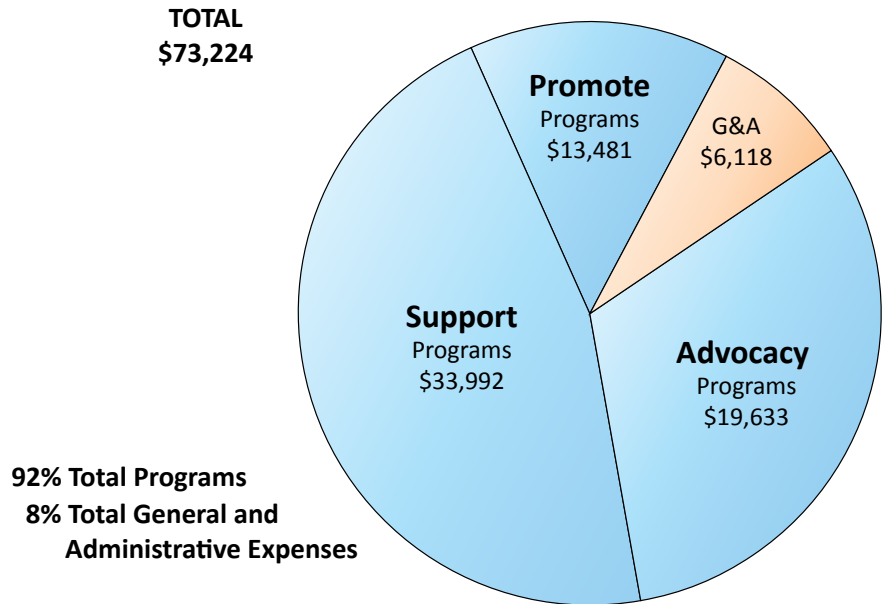
Park Superintendent Joy Greenwood explains “this bear will help further our educational goals by letting our park visitors see a life-size black bear up close. One of the most commonly asked questions we have at the park is how often we see bears. We plan to use it in several of our upcoming programs including our Denizens of the Dismal program and develop an educational panel to educate our visitors about the bear’s life at the swamp.” On October 19th, the Park and Friends group held a contest to name the bear during the annual Dismal Day Festival. Children were asked to make interesting suggestions for the name. The winning name selected was Midnight.

“this bear will help further our educational goals by letting our park visitors see a life-size black bear up close...”

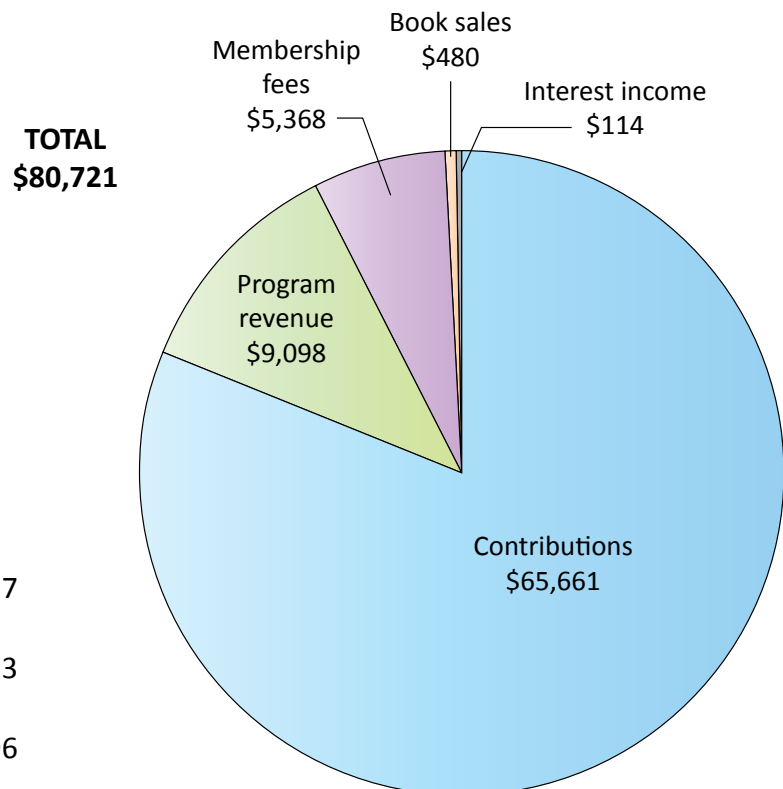


Financial

2013 Expenditures



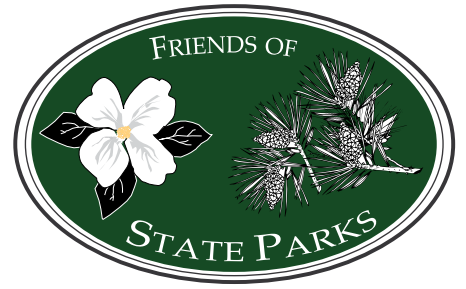
2013 Support and Revenues



Net assets, beginning of period.....\$143,737

Net assets, end of period\$151,233

Change in net assets.....\$7,496



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Supporting N.C. state parks for 40 years



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Or look for it on www.PocketRanger.com



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