

Notes From the President



John Graham

What a difference a year makes!

Just one year ago, the board of FSP outlined its goals and objectives for 2006.

The goals defined that day did not take flight with the Tundra Swans as they lifted off Phelps Lake in Pettigrew State Park and went northward; rather they remained here in North Carolina to become reality in the finest state parks

The Junior Ranger Program booklets, funded by a grant from Great Outdoor Provision Company, are now published for five state parks, Hammocks Beach, Goose Creek, Jordan Lake, Mount Mitchell and New River, and active programs are underway.

Members and lapsed members responded to encouragement to bring every membership to current status enabling FSP to support more aggressively projects for parks.

FSP paid for the first printing of 3000 copies of the NC State Parks "Celebrating 90 years of Stewardship," a booklet of reminiscences and vintage postcards that is becoming a coffee table item in many park lovers' homes and is now in its second printing. Visit our website for information on how to obtain a copy.

The FSP "Map Guide" for our state parks is updated and ready for final proof before publication.

Lib and Bob Connor, charter members for over three decades, were

recognized for their pioneering conservation efforts in the interests of our state parks system.

Our contacts in the General Assembly continue to grow stronger and our efforts on behalf of state parks and the great people who make up the professional ranks of our park stewards are producing an active awareness there as your voices are heard.

On March 27, 2006, the "pay equity" for park rangers and maintenance staff became a moot issue. Lewis Ledford announced the good news that raises retroactive to February 1, 2006 were in effect.

Our web site and communications have improved tremendously under the stewardship of Bob Sowa.

Our support for special events continues at Mt. Mitchell, Morrow Mountain, Stone Mountain, Umstead, and the Eno Festival and we hope to add Crowders Mountain, Elk Knob and perhaps others in 2007. Our web site will feature these and other special events, park improvement projects and opportunities of volunteerism,

"New Parks for a New Century," adopted in early 2000 reflects the vision, planning and hopes of the professionals in the Division of Parks and Recreation. In just four short years we have added four new state parks, expanded significantly eight existing parks, brought under protection bogs and savannahs, and created a groundswell of support from the people across the state. We must act promptly to save our "natural heritage" from the bulldozers of developers and to preserve them for a sound and secure future.

Chimney Rock is now a part of Hickory Nut Gorge State Park. After many months of negotiations, Gov. Mike Easley and owner Lucius Morse III met on the mountaintop and shook hands in an act of leadership and good citizenship. Hickory Nut Gorge State Park will open to the public in 2008.

Don't let an opportunity to serve this and all of our 39 state parks pass you by—visit our web site ncfsp.org and join us in support of "Best in the Nation" State Parks -- North Carolina State Parks, that is.

John E. Graham
President



In Memoriam: Thomas C. Ellis . 1912-2006

We mourn the passing of our friend and former president Tom Ellis who died December 30th. Tom served the parks system of North Carolina for much of his life. He joined the Division of Forestry in 1942, transferred to the newly formed Division of State Parks in 1948 and rose to serve as Superintendent of State Parks from 1961 until his retirement in 1977.

In 1942 Tom was the ranger responsible for Singletary Lake, Jones Lake, White Lake, Black Lake (now known as Bay Tree Lake) and Lake Waccamaw. In 1949 he was promoted to Superintendent, a capacity in which he subsequently served at Morrow Mountain from 1952 until he was appointed as Assistant Superintendent of State Parks in 1955. He became Superintendent of State Parks in 1961, a position he held until retirement. When Tom became Superintendent of State Parks there were eleven parks in the system. Thirteen parks and six State Natural Areas were opened during his tenure.

After retirement Tom maintained his interest in North Carolina's parks and to service to others. He joined Friends of State Parks and served as president for four years, continuing as a director for all his remaining years. He attended a board meeting just two months before his death. In addition, he was active on other boards and in his church. In 2005 Tom, in recognition of his service to the state, was presented with North Carolina's highest award, The Order of the Longleaf Pine.

Tom will be missed by his many friends but his legacy to the parks system of North Carolina will long outlive him.

Lost Colony — Lost Park?

Derived from *History of North Carolina State Parks* by Leon Carter

On October 15th, 2006 an article appeared in the News & Observer describing an archaeological dig of the Lost Colony site and telling its readers that Fort Raleigh had been a State Park from 1934-1939. The N&O's information came from *Preserving the Mystery* by Cameron Binkley & Steven Davis, published by the National Park Service. According to this source, Fort Raleigh was donated by the Roanoke Colony Memorial Association to the State of North Carolina on January 10, 1934 when the NC Historical Commission assumed stewardship of "Fort Raleigh State Park." The site was transferred from the State of North Carolina and the NCHC to the US National Park Service on July 14, 1939.

Cameron Binkley is still a Historian with the US National Park Service. Mr. Binkley's sources are letters tracing the history of the ownership of the site using the term "Fort Raleigh State Park" in regard to the transfer of the site to the NPS. Additional documents acknowledge the transfer of "Fort Raleigh State Park" to the United States as the basis for canceling insurance policies on the structures at Fort Raleigh.

An earlier article in the News & Observer (July 10th, 1938) states; "the property acquired and maintained by the old Roanoke Colony Historical Association was deeded to the State Historical Commission, as a State Park, 5 years ago ..."

Another booklet published by the National Park Service *Fort Raleigh National Historic Site*, by Charles W. Porter, III, states that, while it was owned by the North Carolina, Fort Raleigh became a State historical park under the administration of the NC Historical Commission.

However, there are no records showing the NC Historical Commission calling Fort Raleigh a State Park. The Historical Commission managed no other sites before 1955, when the historical sites were transferred from the Division of State Parks to the Division of Historical Sites. During the years of 1934-1939, State Parks were managed within the Division of Forestry and none of their records mention "Fort Raleigh."

Was Fort Raleigh ever a State Park? No, it was not a "State Park". It was owned by the *State*, and it was a *park*. It might have been called, as a generic term, Fort Raleigh state park, although in all archival documents the 's' and 'p' were capitalized. Cameron Binkley says that the National Park Service personnel commonly called all their sites, including historical site or national monuments, "parks." The term "Fort Raleigh State Park" probably originated with the National Park Service. If North Carolina owned the property today it would probably have the name of "Fort Raleigh Historical Site."

Fort Fisher - A Myriad of Activities on Shifting Sand

A Commendable Collage of Collaboration and Cooperation

Contributed by Alice Zawadzki

The rich history of Fort Fisher is preserved as a special place, its many seaside activities under the watchful eye of a dedicated group of people working to protect this fragile array of sand, vegetation, critters, and spirits of days past. The Board of FSP met at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area and Supt Sean McElhone introduced us to the diverse dynamics of Fort Fisher State Recreation and Bald Head Island State Natural Areas, now listed together as Smith Island National Natural Landmark.

During the Civil War, Fort Fisher, known as the “Gibraltar of the Confederacy,” kept Wilmington open for blockade-runners until, in January 1865, it fell after a massive naval bombardment.

In the early 1930s, citizens of New Hanover County began a movement to save the site as a park and after WWII, interest in restoring Fort Fisher revived. The state purchased the fort site, together with 187 acres leased from the federal government and work started on restoration.

By 1974, Fort Fisher became the most visited state historic site. But most were visiting to use the beach and surrounding natural areas. In 1973 the Department of Cultural Resources initiated an interagency initiative to address uncontrolled use of the Recreational Area. A master plan included environmental education to complement the historical program. Carolina Beach State Park staff assisted with outdoor recreation use, but fort staff additions went unfunded. Wildlife Resources Commission built a launch area in 1974. The NC Aquarium was built in 1976 and in 1982 Walter Davis of Texas donated 1160 acres of adjoining islands, marshes, and tidal flats to the NC National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Unrestricted use of the area by off-road vehicles continued to contribute to the deterioration of the dunes, natural vegetation, and breeding sites. In 1985 the Division of Parks and Recreation worked with local officials and legislators to establish 287 acres as a new state park unit. When hurricanes closed the inlet that separated Fort Fisher from Bald Head Island it produced a 10 mile stretch of beach. In 2004 a permitting system was established for off-road vehicles. Besides adding \$115,000 a year to the

state coffers, it produced a dramatic effect on the recovery of the dunes, vegetation, and nesting areas for the rare and endangered species, which include bald eagle, piping plover, American oystercatcher, painted bunting, loggerhead and green sea turtles, diamond-back terrapin, American alligator, and the occasional annual sea-beach amaranth. In 2006 there were 33 sea turtle nests, 9 more than the highest number ever recorded!

Today the collaboration and cooperation between private individuals, and agencies continues. Residents and interns patrol during nesting season. Visitors and drivers are respectful of roped off areas; volunteers plant native grasses; the sand has swept in to cover the original rope markers, leaving only



*The beach and Fort Fisher
Photo: Bob Sowa*

tops of posts showing. Cooperating state agencies manage the area, not by boundaries, but by tasks at which they are skilled.

What a joy to walk the beach with my toes occasionally in the chilly water; with a thank you to Rachel Carson as brown pelicans flew overhead; with the excitement of seeing a big black dorsal fin circling just beyond the second line of breaking waves; and the warm glow of watching a pair of dancing dolphins moving northward at sunset. It is so wonderful to be in such a spectacular place and to know that there are so many good people working together to protect this legacy.

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North Carolina purchases Chimney Rock

After months of negotiations with the Morse family, who have owned the property in Rutherford County since 1902, the State of North Carolina has agreed to purchase Chimney Rock park and make it part of the State Parks system.

Chimney Rock, a 315-foot monolith, and the land around it are expected to become the heart of Hickory Nut Gorge State Park. This new park, located about 25 miles southeast of Asheville, 100 miles west of Charlotte, is scheduled to open officially in 2010. The newly acquired property will add to the 2,264 acres which had previously been acquired by the state.

The Chimney Rock land encompasses hundreds of plant and wildlife species, six hiking trails, a 404-foot waterfall and rocky outcroppings overlooking Lake Lure and Hickory Nut Gorge. On a clear day, visitors can see 75 miles. The park draws more than 200,000 visitors each year. The monolith, 2,280 feet above sea level, is accessed via a 200-foot tunnel in the mountain and an elevator that climbs nearly 300 ft.

To meet the \$24 million purchase price the General Assembly appropriated \$15 million, \$1.54 million will come from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund and \$2.35 million from an anonymous private donor with the balance being made up from the state Natural Heritage Trust Fund and Parks & Recreation Trust Fund.

Joe Hackney new Speaker

Surely all friends of the environment welcome the election of Rep. Joe Hackney (D-Orange) as the new Speaker of the N.C. House of Representatives. Joe Hackney has been the voice of the environment within the N.C. General Assembly for over 25 years, and has been a consistent friend of North Carolina's parks. We offer our congratulations!

Mail to : Betty Martin, 820 Merrie Rd. Raleigh NC. 27606

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