

Friends of State Parks Summer 2007

Notes From the President



John Graham

Your FSP board is taking an active part in opposing the Bluegreen Properties proposal in Guilford County which would impact our Haw River State Park, the entire Haw River corridor as well as the Cape Fear River Basin and destroy sites of our natural history dating back 10,000 years or more. Contact Haw River State Park at 336-342-6163 for information on when the next public hearing will be held of the Rockingham and Guilford County Commissioners relating to the "Patriot's Landing Development." This is an opportunity to get involved and let your voices be heard.

The North Carolina General Assembly treated the Division of Parks and Recreation quite favorably this past session. Contact your local State Senator and House Representatives and thank them for supporting our Parks system and the Trust Funds that make possible the conservation of our land and water and in so doing keep the air we breathe clean and healthful.

The JURA (Junior Ranger) program will soon be in high gear as Lead Interpretive and Education Specialist Sean Higgins takes over this long vacant position. It appears that he was worth waiting for. He is well qualified by education, temperament, teaching skills and sensitivity to the needs of today and tomorrow. He understands the role of state parks in the imparting of knowledge about our environment,

natural history, natural resources and the preservation of each.

To change our wasteful culture, we must educate our youth. Welcome aboard Sean! FSP stands ready to join in this critical endeavor. September 24-29 is also Take A Child Outside Week see the article inside.

Every member of FSP should attend your Board of Directors meeting at Dismal Swamp State Park on October 27, 2007 Details are elsewhere in this newsletter.

Great things are happening in our State Parks and in FSP. Go to ncfsp.org for updates.

John E. Graham
President

Hellbenders ("Snot Otters") and more at New River State Park

Thankfully, in 1965, citizens decided that the New River needed to remain running free and not be dammed by the Appalachian Power Company. When I moved to North Carolina in 1968, I remember the hard work of the National Committee for the New River (NCNR), which was trying to protect the river and the 42,000 acres and its creatures in the northwest corner of North Carolina and southwest Virginia from being flooded.

In 1975, in order to protect this historic river, the North Carolina General Assembly declared the New River as a State Scenic River. The next year, in 1976, the national fight led to the 26.5-mile section of the New River being designated as a National Scenic River. With that, the hellbenders and all the other critters got a reprieve; the river was protected and the New River State Park was established along its scenic corridor in North Carolina. The park now encompasses over 2000 acres in three areas with access to the waterway.

In 1991, the original National Committee for the New River morphed into a local land trust, which currently protects about 1000 acres along the river. Its five-year conservation initiative includes protecting 5000 acres, restoring eroding stream banks, and educating citizens on the complexity of protecting the river's natural environment

Continued on Page 2



and pristine waters.

The Board of the NC Friends of State Parks met on July 28, 2007 at the beautiful new visitor's center at the New River State Park with a special welcome by Park Superintendent Mike Lambert. The development project at this 195-acre access represents an investment of \$6.6 million from the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. It includes the 14,000 square foot visitor center, which will serve an important education role with its museum-quality exhibit hall with beautiful scenic murals of the river landscape, interactive displays of how the ancient river carved its way in the rising landform, a map with lights that show the path of the New on its way to the Gulf of Mexico via the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, a diorama of the riverbank habitats, diaries of early settlers, and farm implements from the grandparents of park rangers.

The project also includes an improved campground with a bathhouse and 20 campsites, half of which offer utility connections for trailers and recreation vehicles, a community building with meeting space, a picnic shelter, and a maintenance complex.

The NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund is supported by the state's tax on real estate deed transfers and is the principal source for land acquisition and capital improvements in the state parks system. It is important for us to advocate that this tax that appears in the form of a "Land Tax," is really a "Land Protection Fund". Without it, thousands more acres of our beautiful state are going into the path of the bulldozer and our waters degraded so that the "snot otter" (as the hellbender is fondly nicknamed) found at the park and an indicator for clean water will be lost.



*New River Visitor's Center
Photo: Bob Sowa*

Alice Zawadzki

Mount Jefferson Community Outreach

Mount Jefferson State Natural Area is a small park in northeastern North Carolina of not more than 700 acres but ecologically it is a giant with over 700 unique plants and animals.

It's a short walk to the summit from the picnic parking lot but that is just the starting point. Take the 1.1 mile Rhododendron Trail reading the special signs about the local plants and history to enjoy the amazing views from Luther Rock. The photo is the view of Mt Jefferson from Luther Rock.

The small staff including Tom Randolph has reached out to the community and become a haven for the school system in Ashe County bringing in more students and go-



ing to visit more schools than any park in the region. They hold activities to teach geology, topology, compass use, and astronomy working with the schools to align the activities to the school's curriculum. They have a very successful Junior Ranger Program. Stop and talk with the rangers and learn what this great staff has done.

New State Park Map Guide Book

Our long awaited North Carolina Map Guide will be available next month. This 121-page coil bond book is a unique reference book to our state park system. Each park has a map, photo, and information on the park.

You can pre-order the book on our web page or by using the ordering form on the back of this newsletter. We are pleased to offer a special rate for all current FSP Members.

Elk Knob State Park Visit

Elk Knob Natural Area has just been re-designated as a State Park. The day before our summer meeting several FSP members met to climb to the 5520 ft high peak.

The old trail is a steep heavily eroded dirt road but the Rangers are working with volunteers to build a trail lined with native stone that will switch back and forth up the mountain. Contact the park if you can help to create this path in the style of the CCNC workers in the thirties.



*Elk Knob State Park Visit
Photo: Bob Sowa*

We need your EMAIL Addresses

We need your email address. Occasionally we need to contact our members to notify you of an immediate need or event. Please send your address to ncfsp@ncfsp.org FSP will not sell or give out your address and you may remove your address at any time. In addition, postal rates have gone up again; let us know if you would prefer to receive this newsletter by email instead of postal mail.

Fall FSP Quarterly Meeting and Event at Dismal Swamp

Mark your calendar, our fall meeting is October 27 at Dismal Swamp State Park. We meet in the soon to be completed visitor center. Come join us and explore this unique ecological part of the state. See the swinging bridge. Learn its historical connections with George Washington and the Underground Railway.

Come early and join us for dinner Friday night in historical Elizabeth City. Please call John Graham at 919-477-2601 or email him at JohnG@ncfsp.org if you plan to attend and we'll save you a space. Our meeting begins Saturday at 10 am with an introduction to the park by its superintendent.

The fall weather should be ideal for exploring this area with the mosquitoes gone and the migrating birds flying in. See our special web site <http://ncfsp.org/ThingstoDo.html> for other ideas on other things to do in the area. Please let us know how we can improve our Quarterly Meetings.

Legislature Update

- A bill to create a new water trail along the **Deep River** was approved by the legislature and governor. Contact your representative and senator and thank them for having the park approved
- Elk Knob Natural Area re-designated as **Elk Knob State Park**
- **\$50 million to Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.** Land and Water Conservation Bond Act of 2007 authorizes the issuance of \$50 million in Certificates of Participation (COPS) to the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund for the acquisition of state park lands, conservation areas and land to promote waterfront access. The debt is to be serviced through revenues deposited into the trust fund. This was instead of Land for Tomorrow's Bonds of \$200 million for 5 years
- **Farmland Preservation Trust Fund** - Budget bill includes \$8 million for farmland preservation.
- **H1715 not approved** - This bill discussed in the last newsletter was to change the funding procedure for the trust funds and was of concern due to the reduction of funds to parks.

Junior Ranger Program

This June I guided eleven youth on a camping trip to Hammocks Beach State Park. Unfortunately, nine-year old Preston became very ill with the stomach flu and had to leave the island early. He spent the night with his father in a nearby motel. Preston was heartbroken to miss the fun of searching for ghost crabs by flashlight with his friends. The next morning, he waited at the visitor center for the others to return on the ferryboat.

While exploring the exhibits, a park ranger asked Preston to help carry turtle shells, skulls, and other interpretive materials to the ranger truck. The two of them discussed sea turtle biology as they worked. This small act turned Preston's trip from a disappointment into a most memorable learning experience.

What the Hammocks Beach park ranger understood was that young people learn best when they are participating hands-on. For this reason, Friends of State Parks and the state parks

Continued on Page 4

Friends of State Parks
P.O. Box 37655, Raleigh, NC 27627

Non-profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Raleigh, NC
Permit # 167

Return Service Requested



Visit the Website: www.ncfsp.org
Email: fsp@ncfsp.org



Mail To: Friends of State Parks PO Box 37655 Raleigh, NC 27627

Please send me: Note the special reduced rates for current Members

- ___ Guide to the Snakes of North Carolina @ Member Price \$8.00 + \$2 S+H = \$10.00 each
- ___ Exploring the Geology of the Carolinas @ Member Price \$15.00 + \$2.50 S+H = \$17.50 each
- ___ North Carolina State Parks Map Guide @ Member Price \$15.00 + \$3 S+H = \$18.00 each
- ___ Guide to the Snakes of North Carolina @ Public Price \$10.00 + \$2 S+H = \$12.00 each
- ___ Exploring the Geology of the Carolinas @ Public Price \$19.95 + \$2.50 S+H = \$22.45 each
- ___ North Carolina State Parks Map Guide @ Public Price \$19.95 + \$3 S+H = \$22.95 each

The Map Guide will be reserved for you and shipped this fall

Name: _____

Address: _____

City & Zip _____

system are partnering to expand the Junior Ranger Program to each park. The Junior Ranger program engages youth in learning through participating in park educational programs, completing a junior ranger booklet, and doing a park stewardship project. Youth also learn about career opportunities in natural resource conservation.

The most effective way for us to sustain the mission of the Division of Parks and Recreation may be to provide young people with meaningful learning opportunities by connecting them with nature. We are most grateful to the Friends of State Park for their leadership with Junior Rangers.

Sean Higgins
Lead Interpretation & Education Specialist, NC State Parks

Coming Soon

- Map Guide of North Carolina State Parks – this fall
- Niche Guide to North Carolina State Parks – this fall
- Take A Child Outside Week - September 24-29
- Big Sweep State Wide Cleanup October 6 – contact your favorite park
- Fall Quarterly Meeting Dismal Swamp State Park - October 27 10 AM
- Morrow Mountain: Festival - November 4 2007
- Crowder’s Mountain: Fur, Fangs, and Feathers Fall Festival - November 10, 2007.