

A group of hikers is seen from behind, walking down a wooden staircase in a forest. The hiker in the foreground is wearing a black jacket and a black beanie. The hiker next to them is wearing a maroon hoodie and a pink backpack. The forest is filled with trees and fallen leaves, suggesting an autumn setting. The wooden staircase has railings on both sides.

# North Carolina Friends of State Parks 2017 Annual Report

## Message from the Executive Director

Hello Friends,

Its hard to believe how far we have come from just a few organized “Friends Groups” to over 30 Friends Groups who are actively engaged in their communities and making valuable contributions to the NC State Park system. There are thousands of volunteers, thousands of dollars and thousands of hours being donated to the parks we love because “Friends” care, and “Friends” make a difference.

Friends cared just a few years ago by dreaming of a state parks bond and having new projects in every park for the centennial. Friends came up with the idea, promoted it to our leadership, and we made a difference.

Over the next few years we will see increased visitation and demands placed on our parks. It is up to us, the citizens of North Carolina, to preserve our parks and promote the quality of life that we all enjoy.

Friends care! And Friends make a difference!

Just like the original Friends at Mount Mitchell worked to preserve a mountain we must work to preserve our park system. We must be engaged and be active. We must promote good stewardship and quality natural experiences.

Our goal is to get the youth outside to learn about the environment. We want to promote diversity in our outdoor activities and fill the nature deficit.

We hope to get school students outside and into nature’s classroom instead of the confines of the traditional school building.



I have long envisioned a program where the NC Public School system taught in a natural environment at least 30 days a year. Scary thought? Or would it solve many of today’s societal problems? Educate our youth about nature and sooth social issues? What do you think?

Do we dare dream of holding public school classes in a park? Do we dare dream of youth who understand and respect nature in a diverse world?

Friends care! And Friends make a difference!

If your answer is yes we can make a difference by getting today’s youth outside and having regular classes in a natural environment, let your voice be heard. We can preserve the environment, but only if we educate tomorrows generation about the significant and important role nature plays in our lives, well being, and economy.

The Great Outdoor University....

Friends care and friends can make a difference!

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David M. [unclear]". The signature is fluid and cursive.

David

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## Friends of State Parks, Inc.

### 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 on December 15, 1978 and designated as a 501(c)3 federal tax exempt organization. Tax ID #58-1634155

FSP supports this mission of N.C. Division of State 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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# Board of Directors

## Board of Directors

### Executive Committee

President	Jim Richardson - Raleigh
1st Vice-President	Tim Aydlett - Elizabeth City
2nd Vice-President	Larry Ragsdale - Brevard, Friends of Gorges
Secretary	Morgan Lloyd - Garner
Treasurer	Doug Youngblood - Charlotte
Past President	Mary Penney Kelley - Spring Hope
Executive Director	David Pearson - Swansboro

### At Large Directors

Peggy Birkemeier - Kitty Hawk, Friends of Jockey's Ridge
David Craft - Greensboro, Friends of Haw River
Lindsey Golnik - Raleigh
Will Hendrick - Chapel Hill
Rob Hewitt - Spring Lake, Friends of Raven Rock
Jane Hunt - Raleigh
Elizabeth Willard - Raleigh
Edythe McKinney - Raleigh
Cyndy Weeks - Carrboro
Alec Whittaker - Raleigh
John Young - Albemarle, Friends of Morrow Mountain
Emeritus - Dorothy Graham, Durham

### Newsletter Editor

Pam Pearson

### Local Friends Groups

As a state-wide "umbrella" organization Friends of State Parks depends heavily on its network of local support groups to provide help to individual parks. We have been successfully expanding this network and now 32 of our 35 state parks have a local group to assist them with their programs. Local people are key to supporting park specific activities such as education programs, facilities improvements and festivals, as well as advocating for their park within the community. Local friends groups consist of well established affiliate organizations as well as the newer direct chapters of Friends of State Parks and all of them welcome new members. Contact information can be found on the FSP website.

## Record Visitation for a Record Year

In its 2016 Centennial year, North Carolina State Parks enjoyed record visitation of 18.8 million, a nine percent increase over the 17.3 million visitors the previous year.

“North Carolina’s state parks are a treasured resource that belongs to all of us,” Governor Roy Cooper said. “I want to encourage even more North Carolinians to visit and enjoy our wonderful state parks.”

Among 39 state parks and state recreation areas, 31 reported increases in visitation in 2016. William B. Umstead State Park in Wake County reported the highest visitation at 1.84 million, a 38 percent increase over 2015, and was among six state park units logging more than a million visitors. The others were Fort Macon and Jockey’s Ridge state parks and Falls Lake, Jordan Lake and Kerr Lake state recreation areas.

“Our Centennial year in 2016 was a time of celebration and reconnection with state parks, and record visitation suggests that North Carolinians participated fully,” said Mike Murphy, state parks director. “Visitors have come to rely on the state parks as a valuable resource for recreation, conservation and education.”

A Centennial event at Hanging Rock State Park drew hundreds of visitors.

Visitation at state parks and state recreation areas has increased more than 49 percent in the past 10 years. In 2006, 12.6 million people visited state park units.

During the system’s Centennial year, North Carolina State Parks initiated its passport program, where prizes can be earned for visiting at least 10 state parks, and 100-Mile Challenge in partnership with Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina, which promotes a healthy, active lifestyle.

The state parks system achieved the record attendance despite closings due to Hurricane Matthew in early October and wildfires in western parks a month later. In the aftermath of the hurricane, 25 state parks were at least temporarily closed, and in November eight state parks were closed to allow personnel to help contain wildfires at Chimney Rock and South Mountains state parks.



State parks reporting significant increases in visitation included Pilot Mountain State Park in Surry County (51 percent), Petti-grew State Park in Washington/Tyrell counties (38 percent), Lake Norman State Park in Iredell County (24 percent) and Mount Mitchell State Park in Yancey County (26 percent).

# CENTENNIAL

## First Day Hikes



For the first time ever, visitors were allowed to hike three miles up the scenic entrance road to Chimney Rock. At Crowders Mountain, 150 hikers had taken the challenge of walking over six miles into South Carolina to the Kings Mountain National Military Park.

On the first day of the 2016 centennial year, North Carolina's state parks welcomed 3,469 hikers for the annual First Day Hikes event, a record number that together traveled 8,228 miles on state park trails.

The visitors enjoyed 54 guided hikes, and though 46 hikes were originally planned, large crowds convinced some of the parks to add more hikes. Due to weather conditions and very muddy trails, Jordan Lake State Recreation Area was forced to cancel its hikes, but luckily was the only park forced to do so. Once again, the largest crowd at 809 hikers was drawn to Eno River State Park, where a New Year's Day hike has been a tradition for more than 40 years. Raven Rock State Park drew the second largest crowd with 225 hikers.

At Medoc Mountain State Park, Ranger Sandra Fambrough had said, "We had beginners and experienced hikers in our group. One family had not been to Medoc Mountain since the early 1970s. A good time was had by both young and old. A cloudy, chilly day spent with new friends, all enjoying the beauty of Medoc in the New Year."



The hike at Merchants Millpond State Park drew participants from five North Carolina counties, and from four locations in Virginia. A group of 50 girl scouts joined in exploration of the trails at William B. Umstead State Park.



Related events during that day drew 76 people to a "Polar Plunge" at Hanging Rock State Park, and 110 runners to the inaugural First Day 5K at Haw River State Park.

2016 was the fifth year that First Day Hikes were held throughout the state parks system. The event was the first of a string of special celebrations planned throughout the state for the 2016 centennial.

## Centennial Celebrations



The theme for Carvers Creek State Park's 2016 Centennial event was "Blast from the Past." That's fitting since James Stillman Rockefeller, who built Long Valley Farm that makes up much of the park lived to be 102 years old. Rockefeller bequeathed the Cumberland County farm to The Nature Conservancy, which in turn, gave it to the state parks system as a part of its newest state park. Tours of Rockefeller's rustic country estate were a popular part of the day's agenda along with a hayride, bluegrass music, visits with farm animals, crafts and fishing on the farm's pond. Here are some photos of the event.



Making sock ponies at a crafts tent.



Exploring in the James Stillman Rockefeller house.



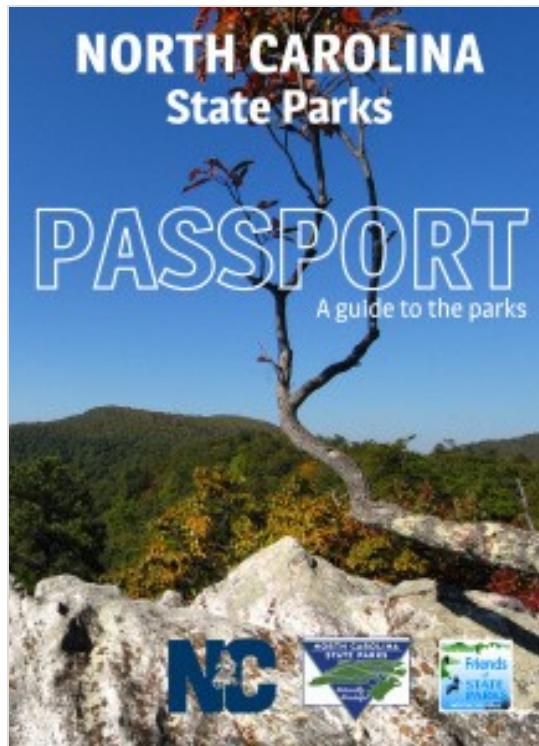
A special guest with Ranger Colleen Bowers.



Bluegrass music from the porch of the Rockefeller house.

# PROMOITE

## Don't Forget to Get Stamped



If you can't get to a park right away, you can also get a passport from the online store. Just for fun, many of our parks offer stickers at interpretive programs, and special events, which can also be placed into the passport. If you have kids, consider helping them earn Junior Ranger patches at the parks you visit.

### COOL PRIZE PACKS

# of visits	1 <sup>st</sup> time participant	2 <sup>nd</sup> time participant
10 visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ NC sticker</li> <li>■ Bug spray</li> <li>■ Bracelet</li> <li>■ Sunscreen</li> <li>■ Hiking sock voucher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Hiking sock voucher</li> <li>■ NC sticker</li> <li>■ Magnet</li> <li>■ Sunscreen</li> </ul>
20 visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Hiking sock voucher</li> <li>■ Outdoors kit</li> <li>■ Carabiner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Waterbottle voucher</li> <li>■ Phone strap grip</li> <li>■ Stick-on phone pocket</li> </ul>
30 visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ State Parks hat</li> <li>■ Gift card to an outdoor recreation store</li> <li>■ State Parks DVD</li> <li>■ Twig pen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Hiking shirt voucher</li> <li>■ Buff</li> <li>■ Sunglass strap</li> </ul>
40 visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Pin</li> <li>■ State Parks t-shirt</li> <li>■ Gift card to an outdoor recreation store</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Patch</li> <li>■ Gift card to an outdoor recreation store</li> </ul>

All prizes are while supplies last

Over the years, many people have taken on the challenge of visiting every state park, but bragging rights to that accomplishment have been difficult to back up until last year with the introduction of the North Carolina State Parks Passport.

In celebration of the 2016 Centennial, the passport program allows outdoor lovers to carry a keepsake passport to be stamped at any of the 41 state parks visited. The passport is free, and every visitor completing the challenge gets a Centennial prize pack. The more state parks that you visit and stamps you collect, the more prizes you can earn.

PROMOTE



# How Election Results will impact NC Business

By Ed Turlington, Elizabeth Biser, and Chris McClure  
November 9, 2016

After a lengthy and contentious campaign, voters have chosen new leaders for our nation and state. Those choices could impact North Carolina businesses in a number of significant ways.

The biggest question in this election cycle for the General Assembly was whether Republicans would hold their “supermajorities” (60% of those voting) in both houses. Supermajorities are important in that if members vote their party label, they can override a Governor’s veto of a bill. This becomes especially important if the Governor is a different party than the General Assembly majority.

Republicans did retain their supermajorities by increasing their numbers in the Senate to 35 to 15 and a margin of 74 to 46 in the House. Judiciary Democrat Mike Morgan, a Wake County Superior Court Judge, defeated incumbent Republican Justice Bob Edmunds by a nine-point margin. This changes the Court to a 4 to 3 Democratic majority.

What does the election mean for businesses?

The new year will get off to a fast start with the inauguration of the Governor and other State officials on January 7 and the opening of the Legislative session on January 11. Even with some key races undecided, certain policy trends will likely continue given that the Republicans maintain a supermajority in the General Assembly.

Here are some areas to watch:

- Economic Development – a continuing examination of the role of incentives and how to spur job growth in rural North Carolina
- Education – funding for educator salaries, textbooks, and technology; the role of charter schools; and aid to private school students
- Environment and Energy – continuing regulatory reform and growth in the State’s energy economy
- Health Care – examining the role of insurance exchanges, the certificate of need process and the continuation of Medicaid reform
- Judiciary – increasing funding for technology in the courtroom
- Taxes – following recent reductions in the corporate and personal income tax rates, the debate could include moving to market-based sourcing when calculating corporate income tax, expanding the State sales tax to cover additional services, and changing the distribution of sales tax proceeds between urban and rural counties.

For more information, contact a member of the Brooks Pierce Government Affairs Team at 919-839-0300 or 336-373-

## Special Events

***Saving the Best: North Carolina State Parks at 100***, a documentary celebrating the parks system's 2016 centennial, was the centerpiece of premiere viewing parties at 22 state parks in January, according to the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation. The hour-long show also aired on UNC-TV.

Mountain, Chimney Rock, Fort Macon, Hanging Rock, Weymouth Woods, Jones, Pettigrew, Cliffs of the Neuse, Goose Creek, Carolina Beach, Crowders Mountain, Lake Waccamaw, Umstead, Jordan Lake, Kerr Lake, and South Mountains.



### Congratulations Junior Rangers!

Hanging Rock State Park's goal was to train 100 new Junior Rangers to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of North Carolina State Parks.

The park easily surpassed that mark, welcoming 136 new Junior Rangers to the ranks, teaching them about stewardship of the natural resources, how to find nature's secrets in the forest, state parks history, and the finer points of a ranger's duties.

The production, by Tom Earnhardt, is a tribute to the men and women who work in the parks, volunteers who give their time and energy, and the 17 million visitors who visit state parks each year. It included a montage of 41 State Parks.

Superintendent Robin Riddlebarger, and the park's staff, cycled the candidates through learning stations. For a stewardship project, the youngsters helped fill landscaping steps with soil, forming a bucket brigade. Then, Mike Murphy, state parks director, swore them in with the oath and presented each with a Hanging Rock State Park Junior Ranger patch and certificate.

"This film is a terrific story about North Carolina; it's about who we are and where we came from. It's also about the people who make our parks run, probably the most dedicated people as servants in our parks system, an extraordinary group of stewards," Earnhardt said. "The goal of this program is to excite the people of North Carolina about the parks system and to educate them about the great efforts of those who work in the parks."

Parks that participated in the viewings of the documentary were: Haw River, Hammocks Beach, Lake Norman, Raven Rock, New River, Gorges, Medoc



## What's New With Some Of Our Parks



Onslow County, the home of Hammocks Beach State Park, was recognized by the state parks system for its outstanding support of the state park, including direct financial support for planned new facilities.

State Parks Director Mike Murphy presented the Onslow County Commissioners with a plaque of appreciation, in part for a \$1 million commitment to build boating facilities on a 289-acre tract recently added to the park's mainland complex. The commissioners have pledged \$250,000 over four years from the county's tourism occupancy tax.

The LandTrust for Central North Carolina transferred a unique, five-acre property to Morrow Mountain State Park. It is for the perpetual protection of a unique, and nationally significant hillside seepage bog.

Wildlife such as deer and turkey are found in the mature hardwood forest on the property, and it is home to a rare plant, the crested coralroot. The large rocks and boulders are habitat for timber rattlesnake, a state endangered species. The property will also add to the recreation, research, and education opportunities at the state park.

In addition to the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, The Cannon Foundation and the Stanly County Convention and Visitor's Bureau contributed financially to the project.

The Friends of Morrow Mountain State Park were supportive of this transfer as well. "It is very important to protect and expand the boundaries of Morrow Mountain State Park so that the long range viewshed from atop Morrow Mountain remains natural and scenic,"

The tract was acquired in 2015 from the heirs of John Hurst, son of a onetime slave who was caretaker of game lands owned by Dr. William Sharpe in the early 1900s. Negotiations over the acquisition lasted nearly 20 years. David Pearson, Executive Director of Friends of State Parks, said that when Friends of State Parks also suggested financial help with development of the tract, they found Onslow County to be an eager partner.

Jeffrey L Hudson, the county manager, said that the county considers Hammocks Beach State Park to be a good long-term investment for recreation and tourism. "In the words of one county commissioner, 'It's a jewel in Onslow County,'" Hudson said.

Onslow's population and its tourism economy are booming, Hudson said, and many of its citizens and visitors are avid boaters on the Intracoastal Waterway, the White Oak River, the New River, and the Atlantic Ocean. The county partnered with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission for three boat ramps in recent years.

says John Young of Friends of Morrow Mountain State Park.



"This property transfer echoes the same community support that established Morrow Mountain as North Carolina's third state park in 1935, following an initial 1,800 acres of land donations made by local citizens, land protection groups, and community supporters," said park superintendent Jeff Davidson. "This new property will bring the park to 4,747 acres, with the majority of the land being donated throughout the park's 81 year history."

## It's All About the Hikes



### It's a Pine Party

One of the initial 2016 centennial events for the state parks system was the Party for the Pine Saturday at Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve.

For the park in Moore County, it was a birthday party for what is believed to be the oldest longleaf pine in the world, estimated to have sprouted 468 years ago. (The park also boasts the second largest longleaf.)

There were hikes to the old tree led by retired Superintendent Scott Hartley, and a cake cutting and singing presided over by current Superintendent Billy Hartness. The new Friends of Weymouth Woods and other community groups helped stage the event.



### I Would Walk 500 Miles

In the 100th year of North Carolina State Parks, we issued a 100-Mile Challenge: Can you walk, hike, run, paddle, ride a horse or roll a wheelchair 100 miles in a year?

This health and wellness challenge was to hopefully motivate North Carolinians to get outdoors, explore state parks and other natural areas, and personally get involved in our Centennial.



First, North Carolina State Parks launched its 100-Mile Challenge website. There, you create an online account to keep track of your progress by logging your mileage, even from a mobile device. It also lists locations and mileage of the more than 600 miles of state park trails. And, it explains how participants can create groups to meet the challenge as a team, or log "buddy miles" for family members (and even pets).

Need more motivation? Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina stepped in with its HikeNC! Initiative. The website has a list of 60 hikes that are led by a state park ranger or hiking expert. The hikes range from kid-friendly strolls to more adventurous outings. This initiative is supported, in turn, by Friends of State Parks, GetGoingNC, the North Carolina Recreation and Park Association and Great Outdoor Provision Co.

## From the Past to the Future

The theme for Carvers Creek State Park's 2016 Centennial event was "Blast from the Past." That's fitting since James Stillman Rockefeller, who built Long Valley Farm that makes up much of the park, lived to be 102 years old. Rockefeller bequeathed the Cumberland County farm to The Nature Conservancy, which in turn,

gave it to the state parks system as a part of its newest state park.

Tours of Rockefeller's rustic country estate were a popular part of the day's agenda along with a hayride, bluegrass music, visits with farm animals, crafts and fishing on the farm's pond.

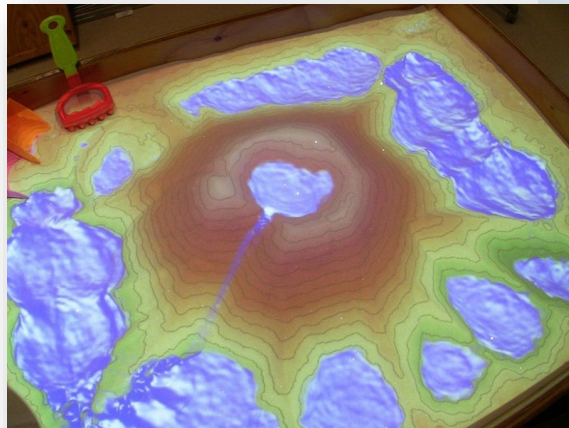


Crowders Mountain State Park will get a dynamic new exhibit in its visitor center, thanks to a \$4,500 grant from the Gaston Community Foundation to The Friends of Crowders Mountain.

The park's exhibit hall will be outfitted with an "augmented reality sandbox," a computer-aided display that'll allow visitors to experience and experiment with the unusual geography of the park and its surrounding terrain. The sandbox will be built specifically to demonstrate the unique geology of the region and how forces of erosion created the park's unique landforms.

It will be a hands-on connection to the terrain experienced by more than 700,000 hikers each year. The exhibit should be especially fulfilling to visitors with physi-

cal challenges and visual impairments. The grant will be matched by exhibit repair funds already allocated. The Friends of Crowders Mountain is greatly appreciative for the support of the Community Foundation for its support.



# SUPPORT

## Seeds of Hope

More than 40 volunteers worked to restore native habitat in Dismal Swamp State Park in Camden County by planting 3,000 Atlantic white cedar seedlings during a three-day project in late April and early May.

The restoration effort began in 2013 and has been co-sponsored by the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership, which helped obtain the trees raised by the N.C. Forest Service.



Since 2013, 16,000 seedlings have been planted in the park, and the initial planting included 10,000 trees in an area heavily damaged by Hurricane Isabel, and subsequently burned in a forest fire. Those have taken hold and are growing, helping to store floodwaters, protect against drought and improve water quality.



The volunteers included members of Friends of Dismal Swamp State Park, the local Cub Scout Pack 158, and community residents. The group also involved more than 30 members of the U.S. Navy Search and Rescue Unit Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 26 from Norfolk, Va.

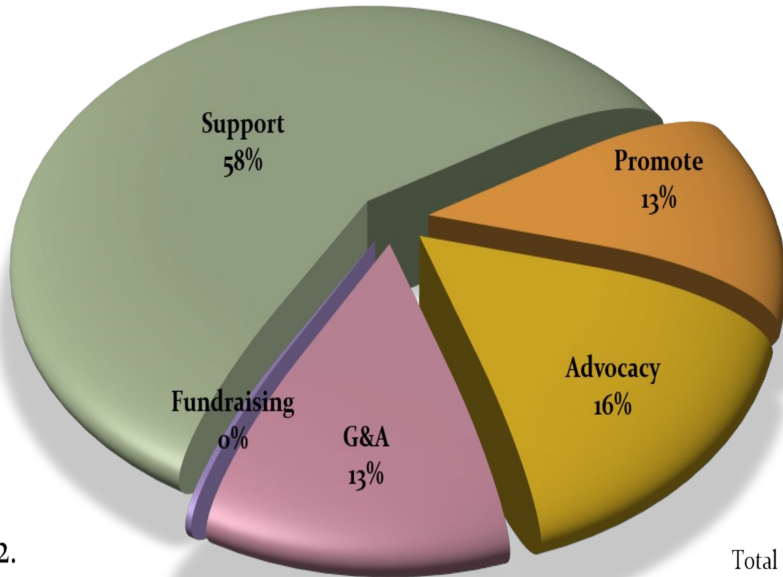
Atlantic white cedar – also known as juniper, southern white cedar, and swamp cedar – was once a dominant feature of the Great Dismal Swamp and other forested wetlands of the Albemarle-Pamlico region. Though, now recognized as ecologically valuable, the species was historically used for shingles, boats and siding, extensive logging, draining, and clearing for agriculture, and this led to its decline from coverage of more than 200,000 acres in the late 1890s to less than 10,000 acres today. Cedar forests support rich ecosystems, numerous songbirds and the rare Hessel’s hairstreak butterfly.



Dismal Swamp State Park, encompassing 14,432 acres of the larger Great Dismal Swamp, is one of only a few places where visitors can experience the swamp and view an Atlantic white cedar forest. The swamp is a unique feature of the 28,000-square-mile area that drains into the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system.

The estuary partnership has also been involved in restoration of the important peatland hydrology in the park with partners The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

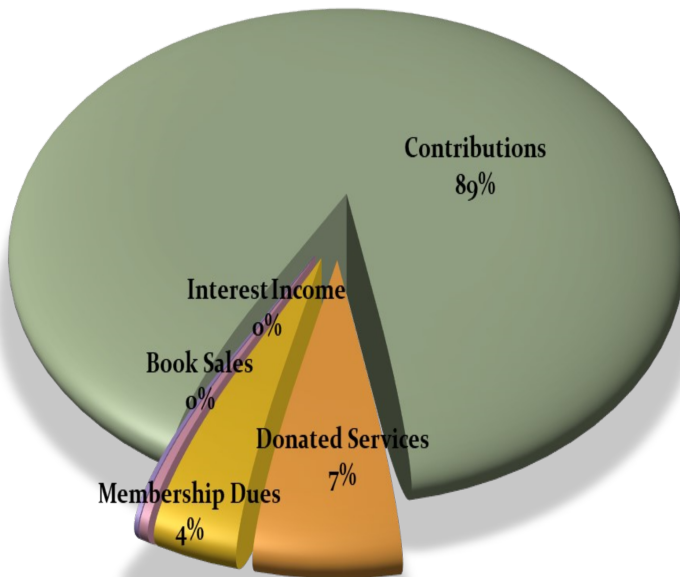
## 2016 Expenditures



Total  
\$165,212.

Total Program 87%  
Total General and Administrative Expenses 13%  
Fundraising 0%

## 2016 Support and Revenues



Total  
\$276,521.

Net Assests, Begining of period \$271,438.  
Net Assests, End of period \$382,747.  
Change in Assests \$111,309.



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## Become a member of North Carolina Friends of State Parks!

With your support, our educators, advocates, conservationists, and Rangers will continue their work to ensure a healthy and prosperous State Park System. Your annual membership helps to

- Support the mission of NC State Parks
- Protect unique biological, geological, archaeological, recreational, and scenic resources of our state.
- Promote public awareness of the immense contributions of these natural areas to the quality of life for North Carolinians of present and future generations.
- Provide outdoor recreational & educational opportunities to North Carolina's youth

To say thank you, you will receive these great benefits:

- Add your voice to supporting our State Parks when FSP presents your views to the Department and Legislature
- Opportunities to interact with other supporters of North Carolina's natural resources
- Receive information about each Park and the total Park System
- A Quarterly Newsletter which gives news from the 40 Parks, FSP activities, major park events,
- Legislative action, and issues in the parks
- Reduced rates on FSP sponsored publications
- Annual Report
- Hands on volunteer opportunities

You can join today at [www.NCFSP.org](http://www.NCFSP.org)

Remember your membership is current for one calendar year. You can always renew online or by mail.

Questions? Call or email us: (919) 827-1088  
or [Friends@NCFSP.org](mailto:Friends@NCFSP.org)

