



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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STATE PARKS REPORT RECORD ATTENDANCE IN 2007

RALEIGH— State parks in North Carolina reported record attendance in 2007 of 13.4 million visits, despite a prolonged drought that closed facilities at some parks and curtailed the summer season for swimming and boating.

The visitation totals represent an increase of 6.5 percent over 2006 and a dramatic 260 percent increase over the past 25 years. In 1982, 5.1 million people visited the state parks system. The previous high attendance for the system was 13.2 million visits in 2002.

“Strong visitation at our parks reflects the value North Carolinians place on outdoor recreation and the contribution of the state parks system to North Carolina’s tourism economy and to the economies of the communities where the parks are located,” said Lewis Ledford, director of the state Division of Parks and Recreation.

“The state’s population growth has increased pressure on our infrastructure of state parks as it has in other areas. We are addressing that with our New Parks for a New Century initiative, which to this point, has brought four new state parks into development.”

The state parks system manages nearly 200,000 acres, including 31 state parks and four state recreation areas that are open to the public, and a system of state natural areas dedicated to conservation of natural resources.

Among the parks and recreation areas, 23 reported increases in attendance in 2007. Jockey’s Ridge State Park in Dare County reported the highest attendance at 1.5 million visits, an increase of 43 percent over last year.

Other parks with significant increases were Cliffs of the Neuse State Park in Wayne County (20 percent), Gorges State Park in Transylvania County (23 percent), Fort Fisher State Recreation Area in New Hanover County (34 percent) and Hammocks Beach State Park in Onslow County (52 percent). Attendance at Hammocks Beach was unusually low in 2006 due to restrictions on ferry service to the park’s beach that were eased in 2007 following an emergency dredging project.

Three state recreation areas on Jordan, Falls and Kerr lakes together attracted 3.1 million visitors in 2007, unchanged from a year earlier. All those reservoirs experienced dramatically low water levels beginning in mid-summer due to drought conditions.

(Editors: complete 2007 attendance records are available on our Web Site, www.ncparks.gov. Click “News”)

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