



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK WILL BENEFIT FROM MASTER PLAN

RALEIGH – The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation has begun the process of creating a master plan for Chimney Rock State Park to guide the long-term development of facilities and protection of natural resources for the new park in the Hickory Nut Gorge region of Rutherford County.

The state parks system has engaged Greenways, Inc., a Durham environmental planning and landscape architecture firm, to develop the master plan with input from the division's planning, natural resource and operations staffs as well as from the public and communities in the Hickory Nut Gorge. The target date for completion of the master plan is spring 2010.

“Creating a world class state park is a combined effort of the state parks system and the community,” said Lewis Ledford, director of the state Division of Parks and Recreation. “A master plan that thoughtfully balances conservation and recreation in such a stunning landscape as Chimney Rock and the Hickory Nut Gorge is a vital component and an exciting part of that process.”

Chimney Rock State Park was authorized by the N.C. General Assembly in 2005 and encompasses more than 4,300 acres on both sides of the gorge, including the dramatic Chimney Rock spire and surrounding nature park that was formerly a private tourist destination.

The 996-acre Chimney Rock area purchased by the state in 2007 is the only portion of the state park available for public access and is operated by the management company Chimney Rock Management LLC.

Land acquisition efforts for Chimney Rock State Park continue with the help of several land conservancies. The park includes the so-called “world’s edge” escarpment and properties on Rumbling Bald, Cane Creek, Rich, Stony, Sugarloaf and Round Top mountains. The Nature Conservancy has indicated it will enlarge the park with other acreage it holds in the gorge, including more than 800 acres on the crest of Rumbling Bald.

The master plan will address such issues as the type and scope of recreation facilities, the proper protection of sensitive habitats and rare species, the visitor experience at the Chimney Rock access, the location of state park infrastructure such as roads, entrances and a visitor center, and the development of a comprehensive trail system.

Greenways Inc., the company contracted to complete the master plan, previously worked with the state parks system to develop an action plan for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail. Its greenway, open space and master plan projects have also included the American Tobacco Trail, Grand Canyon National Park, the Fredricksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park and a Nevada state park.

The master planning process will include an opportunity for written public comment and a public meeting to present a draft plan, likely to be scheduled near the end of 2009.

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