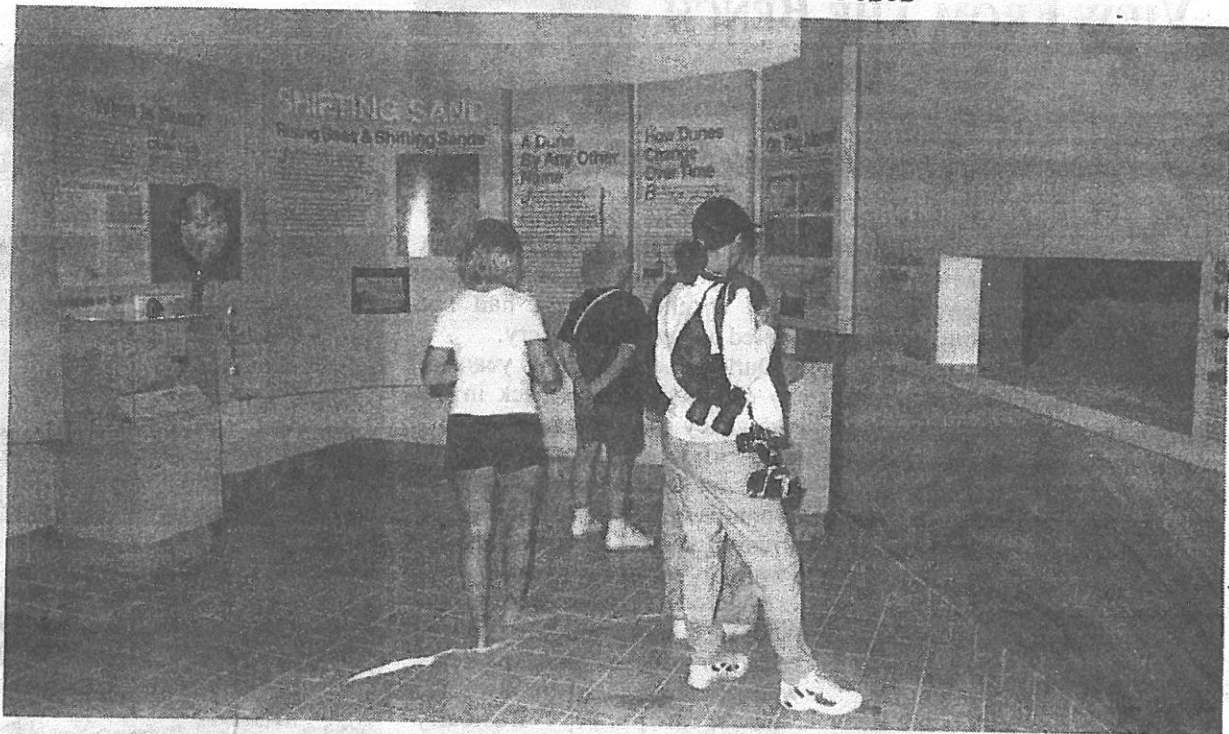


Visitor center draws tourists



THE JOCKEY'S RIDGE VISITOR CENTER introduces tourists to that shifting mound of sand. The visitor's center, newly built with

state and tourist board funds, will be dedicated August 7.

THE COASTLAND TIMES

SUNDAY, JULY 26, 1998

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DENR to dedicate visitor center at Jockey's Ridge Park August 7

NAGS HEAD — Each year close to a million people climb the highest sand dune on the east coast, enjoy beautiful Outer Banks sunsets and pull a seine through the Roanoke Sound. Hang-gliders and kite fliers alike enjoy the fantasy of flight at Jockey's Ridge State Park.

But until recently there was hardly a place to seek shelter from the sun and the billions of grains of sand that blow back and forth across the harsh desert-like environment. In 1993, the state's vot-

ers passed a \$35 million bond referendum which brought new facilities to state parks across North Carolina, including a visitor center for Jockey's Ridge.

The NC Division of Parks and Recreation and the Friends of Jockey's Ridge will dedicate that new visitor center next month.

Along with respite from the sun and sand, the 5,000 square foot facility includes an auditorium, reception and concession areas, restrooms, park offices and a museum.

Exhibits in the museum supplement the hundreds of hands-on educational programs offered at the park each year. The museum offers visitors the opportunity to learn about the big pile of sand through exhibits on sand, dune formation, plants and animals, legends of the Outer Banks and a real-time weather station.

The Friends of Jockey's Ridge, a park support group established in 1991, raised \$100,000 for phase I of the museum's exhibits. A grant from the Dare County Tour-

ist Bureau provided \$50,000 which The Friends matched with contributions from local businesses, t-shirt sales, and fundraising.

Senator Marc Basnight and Henry Lancaster, deputy secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, will be on hand to recognize those who have made the occasion possible.

The visitor center dedication will be held Friday, August 7 at 11 a.m.

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History of dunes



"SUNSET ON THE RIDGE" is presented each evening at Jockey's Ridge State Park in Nags Head as a ranger talks to those gathered about the history and legends of the sand dunes. (L. Skinner photo)

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