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STATEMENT ON STATE PARKS

North Carolina is fortunate to have acquired some very valuable state park lands. In 1974 a major effort began to improve the state's park system. However recent recessions have forced the state to cut back on its efforts to complete the overall system and very little acquisition has occurred. Currently 112,000 acres are under state jurisdiction including 25 state parks, 5 recreation area, 9 natural areas, 1 state river and 1 state lake.

In the next four to eight years, North Carolina must move ahead in several areas to improve the park system and to develop more public support. Additional land must be purchased and more must be done to improve and complete existing facilities.

First, additional land is needed to complete the park system to acquire inholdings and provide buffer zones to protect the environmental quality of the park lands. Senator Jordan supports appropriating additional funds to complete the purchase of this land.

Besides providing money for land acquisition, funds are needed to develop recreational areas of existing parks and to provide more personnel to run the parks. Without increasing personnel additional land will do very little in helping develop and promote the system. In 1981, North Carolina ranked 34th nationally in park attendance. A new effort must be made to examine ways the state can develop recreation uses for parks to attract higher attendance and public support. The per capita expenditure for parks was 84 cents compared to the national average of \$4.20. The key to gaining public support for the parks is to develop recreational uses such as hiking trails and campgrounds. But in developing these uses, efforts must be taken to ensure that the natural environment of the park is protect and preserved.

The Master Plans for our parks need to be reviewed to see if the plans are cost effective and to see if they meet the changing needs and demands of the public. Public hearings should be held to give citizens adequate input into the system to ensure their concerns about recreational uses and enviromental protection. Many cities and counties also have been active in developing park programs and recreation areas, so the Master Plans need to take those into consideration in developing an overall state effort.

North Carolina has a substantial investment in its park system. Senator Jordan looks forward to working with state park officials, local officials and citizen groups in increasing support to develop our parks to their full potential.