**N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation**

**Monthly Activity Report**

**September 2014**

***North District***

**Hanging Rock**

* **Vade -Mecum** - The property (aka Camp Sertoma) and Moore Springs were transferred from NCSU to Hanging Rock State Park Sept. 23, 2014. The second meeting of the Vade-Mecum operations planning team, held September 24, focused on short- and long-term draft plans which are being prepared for review.

**William B. Umstead**

* **Suicide -** A 37-year-old man committed suicide on the Inspiration Trail on Sept. 22. A search for the subject was initiated based on a suicide note and the location of his car. The first search crew out located him. This was a joint park and Raleigh Police Department operation.

**Medoc Mountain**

* **Campsites open -** 6 new horse trailer campsites opened and are available on the reservation system

**Districtwide**

* **Vacancies** - Long-term vacancies continue to hamper park operations throughout the North District. There are currently 12 vacant permanent positions equating to one office assistant, eight rangers, and three maintenance mechanics. Most parks are reporting hampered operations due to an inability to fill seasonal positions as the low salary levels make recruiting difficult.

***East District***

**Hammocks Beach**

* **New Property** - A Facility Condition Assessment Program (FCAP) review for the new property at HABE.  This will most likely happen sometime during the next month or two.
* **N.C. Paddlefest** - This special event was held Sept. 18-19. It included paddling races, instruction, scavenger hunt, film festival and more.

***South District***

**Carver Creek**

* **Anniversary** - September 9 marked the park’s one year anniversary open to the public at Long Valley Farm Access area.
* **Multi-use Trail** - The park has been awarded a 2014 RTP grant for multiuse trail at the Sandhills section.

**Lumber River**

* **New Property** - Park staff are now managing the new properties that were once the Indian Cultural Center. This property was acquired in in late 2013 when the legislature closed the NC Indian Cultural Center. The legislature gave the Lumbee Tribe the option to buy the main part of the property on the north side of the river, which includes a lake, amphitheater, golf course, and other attractions.  They did purchase that and the park system got three tracts on the south side of the river, which is planned for development as the park's 2016 Centennial project.

**Raven Rock**

* **Recreation Trails Program Grant** - An RTP grant for 100,000 was awarded to RARO to build seven miles of a mountain bike trail.

***West District***

**Chimney Rock**

* **Writers on the Rock** – Ten local authors, including Jeremy B. Jones, Robert Morgan, and Rose Senehi, met with visitors and fans on September 7 to sign autographs and answer questions about their books.
* **Concessionaire Contract Renewed** – On September 9, the concessionaire contract with Chimney Rock Management LLC was renewed for calendar year 2015.
* **Homeland Security Border Patrol Search Trauma and Rescue Training Exercise** – From September 8-12, officers from the Department of Homeland Security practiced high angle rope rescue techniques at the Rumbling Bald Climbing Area.
* **Race to the Rock Proceeds Donated to Friends of CHRO**. On September 22, representatives from the Race to the Rock donated $500 of their proceeds to the Friends of CHRO.

**Crowders Mountain**

* **Trail Races** - On Labor Day, 100 runners completed a 5K trail run on the Tower Trail heading toward the Crowders Mountain summit. On September 13, 66 runners completed a 5K trail run on the Turnback/Pinnacle trails heading toward the Pinnacle summit. Off-site participant parking was utilized for the Labor Day race in order to prevent parking issues, and both races utilized off-duty LE staff (paid by race organizers) to prevent overburdening the lone opening ranger. Race requests are becoming more frequent; therefore the use of both off-site parking and off-duty LE personnel will probably become more commonplace.

**Elk Knob**

* **Preservation Efforts at Bear Paw State Natural Area** **Historic Cabins** – Work continues with the Appalachian Studies Department of Appalachian State University. to determine how to proceed with preservation of two historic cabins acquired at Bear Paw State Natural Area in 2013. The cabins date back to the 1800s.
* **10th Annual Elk Knob Community Headwaters Day** – This special community event was held on September 13 with 350 attendees.

**Gorges**

* **Sponsored Events -** The Foothills Trail Conference held its annual fall picnic at the Bearwallow Picnic Area on September 13. Over 50 members were in attendance.

**Grandfather Mountain**

* **Search Conducted at GRMO** - A multi-agency search for a missing ASU student was initiated Sept. 12 following a suspected link to the Profile Trail. The search was concluded Sept. 13. The subject was not located within the park.
* **Search for Overdue Campers** - On Sept 20, Ranger Luke Appling participated in a search for over-due hikers from Black Rock Parking Lot in the Grandfather Mountain Attraction. The search concluded at 1 a.m. on September 21when the hikers were located at the Daniel Boone Campsite.

**Lake James**

* **RiverFest** – The 11th Annual Catawba RiverFest took place at LAJA on September 20. This is the fifth year that LAJA has hosted the event. The day-long event focuses on a variety of conservation groups and their ongoing projects working to improve the quality of life for people and animals along the river. This year’s event included around 25 exhibitors and welcomed approximately 700 visitors.

**Mount Jefferson**

* **Park Receives YIP-EE grant –** MOJE requested and received a $400 Friends of State Parks Youth in parks – Environmental Education (YIP-EE) grant, which will help the local high school be able to conduct field trips to the park.
* **AmeriCorps NCCC Team Constructing a New Trail at MOJE –** The nine-memberteam has completed their eight-week project helping to construct a new trail at MOJE. They also spent time working in the community, doing service projects at the local library and DSS office.

**Mount Mitchell**

* **EMS Incidents** - MOMI staff dealt with two separate EMS incidents in September. A patient suffering a cardiac emergency was flown to the Johnson City Medical Center. The patient had prior cardiac history and received 2 stints upon arrival. The other incident involved the carry-out of a patient with a broken ankle who was transported by ambulance to Mission Hospital in Asheville.

**New River**

* **NERI Superintendent Presents at Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance Conference -** The SEEA Conference was held near Asheboro, NC, and was sponsored by EENC. Superintendent Shimel presented two interpretive sessions for attendees, one entitled Interpreting Snakes, and the other Music in Interpretation.
* **NERI Partners with Community for Big Sweep -** NERI partnered with the local community to provide hauling services for 1,680 pounds of litter and 35 tires gathered from the New River during Big Sweep.

**South Mountains**

* **Searches Conducted/EMS Service Calls** - Park staff conducted two searches for lost visitors on September 21. All visitors were located unharmed. In addition, ranger staff completed two EMS service calls.
* **Land Donation** - Work continues on possible land donation of up to 657 acres of property within Pine Mountain Estates on the park’s southeast border.

**Interpretation & Education**

* **West District Fall Festivals** - Elk Knob, Lake James and South Mountains all held their annual festivals in September, with great attendance and many vendors participating.
* **Programs/Events Planned for West District Parks** – Nine programs are in the works for National Public Lands Day in WEDI parks, and 34 programs/events are being planned for Take a Child Outside Week in the west district.

**Districtwide**

* WEDI parks continue to send rangers to assist with operations at Mount Mitchell due to the shortage of commissioned ranger staff there. The rangers providing assistance spend several days at a time at the park so they can work both opening and closing shifts.
* The WEDI currently has 21 vacancies, the longest of which has been vacant for 440 days as of Sept. 25.

***Planning & Natural Resources***

* Clean Water Management Trust Fund Grants - The Division received funding for the following state park projects from the CWMTF on September 16:

- Chimney Rock - Blue Rock Mt. and Cedar Knob--$1,000,000 awarded

- South Mountains - Simms Hill Tract—received $684,000

- Elk Knob - Wrenn tract—received $56,462

- Eno River - Bacon Quarry Tract—received $336,500

The Division also received $75,000 for restoration at Stone Mountain.

* Natural Resources held a **Longleaf Pine Restoration Workshop** at Singletary Lake. Workshop participants received advanced knowledge of longleaf pine natural history and restoration techniques through a combination of lecture and hands on field experience. Workshop was designed to assist DPR in meeting longleaf and hardwood management goals as stated in a Cape Fear Arch Longleaf Initiative NFWF grant.
* Natural Resources and Goose Creek State Park hosted the division’s 4th all-taxa bio-blitz at Goose Creek State Park Sept. 27. Experts on a variety of taxa from many agencies/institutions came together for 24 hours to identify as many species as possible.
* The Fire Team completed a 20-acre prescribed fire in a red-cockaded woodpecker colony next to Salters Lake in Jones Lake State Park. This was the second step in a restoration process that began with removing excess hardwoods and represents only the second time the division has burned in September.
* A report on the division’s 2013 prescribed fires was prepared for the Natural Resource Conservation Service to satisfy requirements of a Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program grant. The Division burned 1539 acres and prepared 85,600 feet of fire line in 2013 and was reimbursed $34,213 for work under the grant.
* Completed Phase I restoration of a kudzu site with goats at Lake James State Park. Goats were used to remove kudzu biomass from a 3-acre site, a second round of grazing will occur in October. This is the first occasion where DPR has employed livestock to manage invasive species.
* Completed the first phase of restoration at Pineola Bog South. Overabundant alders, red maples, and white pines were thinned from ~6 acres. This was conducted as a pilot project in coordination with the NC Bog Learning Network.

***Trails Program***

* **Chimney Rock State Park – Rumbling Bald Trail reroute -** Trails staff worked with park and natural resources staff to design and flag a new alignment for phase two of the Rumbling Bald trail. The existing trail is in poor condition and experiencing a large amount of resource damage due to poor layout and high use.
* **Technical Assistance Provided to Friends of the Mountains to Sea Trail Task Force -** Trails staff provided technical assistance and training in the field on the MST in Burke County. Staff worked with task force members on severely eroded trail sections located on old roadbeds in the Pisgah National Forest.
* **Mountains-To-Sea Trail Scoping Meetings -** Trails staff attended scoping meetings that were held in the areas where the trail is not yet constructed. The meetings were held to gauge the readiness, willingness and ability of communities to construct segments of the MST. Planning Communities, the firm which is preparing the master plan for the MST, conducted the meetings.
* **Trails Town Conference -** Trails staff attended the Trails Town Conference that was convened by the Friends of the Mountains to Sea Trail. It was designed to share how communities can benefit from a relationship with a long distance trail like the Mountains-To-Sea Trail.
* **Trails Strategy Planning Session -** Trails staff participated in the trails strategy planning session for the Uwharrie National Forest. The session was organized by the US Forest Service. The Uwharrie National Forest is a valued partner in providing trails to hikers, mountain bicyclists, equestrians and OHV enthusiasts.

***Engineering & Construction***

* **Kerr Lake** - Hibernia Area 1 Bathhouse Replacement project - Designer interviews scheduled for 9/24; SBC meeting schedule for 10/21 for designer selection;
* **Haw River** Church Street Entrance project – working on construction contracts;
* **Haw River** - Youth Dorm Renovation project – bid negotiations with contractor complete; bid award recommendation sent to State Construction Office 9/25;
* **Fort Macon** - Bathhouse Renovations project - bid awarded 8/29; working on construction contracts;
* **Carolina Beach** - Sewer Improvements project - approved for bids 9/10; project currently advertised for bids; bid opening scheduled for 10/23;
* **Lake Norman** - Visitor Center project – Exhibit Trail construction project contract executed by DENR on 9/3; Notice to Proceed issued 9/22;

***Publications and Web Development***

* Nine park brochures/map pads and the Naturally Wonderful brochure were printed in September.
* Four draft park posters completed.
* Received OITS permission to install Drupal on Bennie's server. This is a major step in the web overhaul/enhancement project.