**FSP Position Statement on the Transfer of State Parks**

Regardless of where, organizationally, the State Parks System is housed within state government, there are key principles regarding how State Parks are operated that need to be maintained:

**CONTINUE TO MANAGE STATE PARKS AS A NATURAL RESOURCE,**

**NOT AN ATTRACTION**

Maintain and promote the natural resource focus of state parks and natural areas.  Our state parks are outdoor destinations, but not attractions.

The department’s name should reflect the added natural resource component (i.e. Natural and Cultural Resources).

Parks provide intangible benefits, such as contributing to quality of life (which helps with business recruitment), and healthy lifestyles.  As such, state leaders should not look to parks to generate a significant portion of revenue at the expense of the natural resource or the ability of citizens and tourists of all income levels to enjoy them.

The State Parks System contains a diverse set of resources, including state recreation areas (such as Kerr Lake), and state natural areas (with a conservation, rather than recreation focus).  Management of the Parks System should continue to be handled in a way that facilitates the success of all aspects of State Parks.  For example, State Parks has an excellent prescribed fire program that facilitates healthy landscapes.  This type of land management activity needs to continue, regardless of organizational location.

Maintain the natural resource-based management of the system. Prohibit the development of “resort-style” infrastructure on state park land and maintain educational/passive recreational focus for facilities and expansion.

**ENSURE THE STATE’S COMMITMENT TO STATE PARKS**

Parks has taken a $10.5M cut to its operating budget since 2008.  At the same time, North Carolina also has the third most efficient state parks system in the nation.  The system could not support further cuts, and state leaders need to ensure that a sufficient number of support staff moves with the Natural Resource divisions.

Maintain the organizational integrity of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund under existing statutory guidelines.  The fund has lost significant revenue since losing dedicated funding in 2013.  The State should redouble its efforts to invest in our state parks system, especially with the upcoming Centennial celebration.  Facilities across the system are in disrepair; six state parks do not have visitor centers.  With visitation continuing to increase (over 15 million visitors last year alone, a record) and as North Carolina’s population continues to grow, we need to be forward-thinking in setting aside land and taking care of our park infrastructure.

Increase acquisition of private in-holdings and other priority conservation lands near or adjacent to state parks and natural areas.