Cape Fear State Park

Prospectus (Preliminary)

Part I–The Plan

[Draft–October 22, 2014]

Abstract

This is a plan to create a new State park in Brunswick County, North Carolina, on land owned by the North Carolina State Ports Authority on the Cape Fear River near Southport.

- Brunswick County is the sixth largest of the 100 counties in North Carolina and the tenth ranked in tourist revenues, but does not have a State park. The County is facing a substantial deficiency in parkland, particularly passive recreation facilities.

- Brunswick County’s economic future is based on tourism, recreation, and life-style oriented housing, all of which depend on parks. Parks return ten times their annual operating cost in economic benefits to host communities.

- The North Carolina State Ports Authority owns a 600-acre undeveloped site on the Cape Fear River and no longer plans development of a container terminal on the site.

- The State Ports Authority needs capital to repair and improve its facilities to meet emerging needs of the State’s economy and seeks to realize value from the site.

- Federal grants are available for parks and land preservation and for conservation of estuarine and coastal natural assets.

- The plan described herein would transfer the 600-acre Ports Authority property to the NCDENR Division of Parks and Recreation in exchange for the proceeds of Federal grants for parklands, matched by State appropriations.

- The new park could become the gateway for a new “Cape Fear Maritime Heritage Area” created by assembling the existing State reservations and facilities at the lower Cape Fear.
Contents

Summary

Part I – The Plan: A State Park for Brunswick County
The Plan in Brief................................................................. I-2
Why a Park?........................................................................... I-7
   Economic Effects ............................................................. I-8
   Tourism and Brunswick County....................................... I-10
The Natural and Historical Heritage of Brunswick County and the Cape Fear...... I-11
   Flora, Fauna, and Natural Heritage Areas...................... I-11
   Historical Significance of the Lower Cape Fear................ I-14
State and County Parks....................................................... I-17
   Brunswick County Parks................................................ I-19
   County Growth and Demand for Parks........................... I-20
   Urgency............................................................................. I-23
Economic Benefits.............................................................. I-24
   Direct Revenues............................................................. I-24
   Economic Impacts of Tourist Visits.................................. I-25
   Other Economic Effects–Ecosystem Valuation................ I-28
   Other Economic Effects–Indirect..................................... I-29
   Relief of a Burden on Brunswick County....................... I-31
   Total Economic Value.................................................... I-32
Implementation................................................................. I-33
Supplementary Funding Sources......................................... I-35
The Next Step–the Cape Fear Maritime Heritage Area............................. I-38

Part II – The Cape Fear State Park: The Park Plan
The Park and its Components............................................... II-1
Location............................................................................... II-11
The Park Site................................................................. II-13
   Topography and Site Characteristics.............................. II-13
   Geology............................................................................ II-16
   Soils................................................................................ II-18
   Climate............................................................................. II-22
   Natural Communities and Features................................. II-24
   Species Lists................................................................... II-38
Criteria for New State Parks................................................ II-47
   Step 1: Preliminary Screening......................................... II-47
   Step 2: Scoring.............................................................. II-53
   Step 3: Priorities........................................................... II-58

References

Appendix A   The State Ports Authority and the 600-acre Property
Cape Fear State Park

Prospectus (Preliminary)

It shall be the proper function of the state to acquire and preserve park, recreational and scenic areas, and in every other appropriate way, to preserve as a part of the common heritage of this State, its open lands and places of beauty.

–North Carolina Constitution

Summary

This is a proposal to create a new State park at the Cape Fear. A unique opportunity presents itself for a park that would address the recreational needs of Brunswick County and the region as well as the traditional conservation objectives of the State park system. The Cape Fear is a biodiversity hotspot, with unique species of plants, birds and animals, some of which are endangered and some of which exist nowhere else. The residents and guests of the State and County should have the opportunity to enjoy, appreciate, and learn about the very special plant and animal life of the Cape. The unusual trees and plants–including carnivorous plants unique to the region–and the astonishing splendor of the birds of the region are assets that deserve to be displayed and nurtured.

The opportunity for a new park arises because a semi-autonomous agency of the State, the North Carolina State Ports Authority, owns a 600-acre undeveloped tract on the Cape Fear River in the heart of this prolific area. The property was purchased in 2006 for a very large container terminal, but the State Ports Authority has written off that “megaport” project and seeks to realize value from the property to devote to projects and services that more efficiently benefit the State. The Ports Authority needs new funds but is already burdened by heavy debt.

This is a plan to create a park on that 600 acres and provide new capital to the Ports Authority equal to the value of the land. Because the Ports Authority owns property in its own name, transfer of the site to the State for a park would be necessary. As would payment. But the State should not have to pay the full amount due the Ports Authority. The availability of Federal grants for parkland could leverage the State’s payment to the Ports in the proportion of about 2 to 1. So, for the Ports to receive $10 million, the State would pay $5 million.

In addition to the Federal grant, a new park would bring about $6.4 million in new money to Brunswick County each year. State parks are significant economic drivers. Both North Carolina and Brunswick County depend to a substantial extent on travel and tourism. In 2013, visitors brought $20.2 billion to North Carolina and $471 million to Brunswick County. Recreation and tourism are major economic factors for North Carolina, and perhaps the primary economic driver for Brunswick County. The new capital going into Brunswick County for lifestyle-based housing demonstrates the economic future of the county, for which attractive parks are an essential component.
Part I – The Plan: A State Park for Brunswick County

The Plan in Brief

(See Part II for a complete description of the proposed park)

This is a proposal to create a new State park at the Cape Fear, on a pristine 600-acre site on the Cape Fear River, one of the last available points of access to the west bank of the lower Cape Fear River estuary.

This unique and altogether rare opportunity arises because an agency of the State, the North Carolina State Ports Authority, owns a 600-acre tract on the shore of the Cape Fear River in the heart of this prolific area. The property was purchased in 2006 for a very large container terminal, but the Ports Authority has written off the engineering costs for that project and seeks to retrieve value from the property so that its resources can be devoted to projects and services that more efficiently benefit the State, particularly the eastern part of the State. Thus the Ports Authority is now considering disposition of the property.

The property, shown at right, has never been developed beyond partial use as a farm. Besides the fields and woodlands, the site includes nearly 200 acres of salt and freshwater marsh, regarded as the most biologically productive habitats in nature. It also includes a tidal freshwater creek and several ponds. In addition to this rare, fragile, and endangered plant and animal habitat, substantial upland areas are available for development of recreational and educational facilities for the residents of the County and the State and their guests. Some of those recreational facilities can produce substantial revenue, sufficient to defray a major share, perhaps all, of the operating costs.

The property is in southeastern Brunswick County, an area whose economy is based on tourism, vacation stays, and life-style based housing for both retirees and families, all fostered by the natural characteristics of the area.
**Features**  The plan contemplates a regional destination park, which would fill significant gaps in the State park system and the Brunswick County park system. Features would include:

- rehabilitation center for injured and sick birds and other wildlife
- arboretum and botanic garden
- bird sanctuary for both upland and shoreline species, accessible to the public
- campgrounds and recreational vehicle facilities
- hiking trails and observation walkways, through woodland areas and along a high bluff overlooking the Cape Fear River
- amphitheater and events center
- restaurant overlooking the river and marshlands from a live oak forest on a high bluff
- regional environmental education center
- sustainable energy demonstration facility
- dock for tours of the many islands and shallow waterways of the Bald Head State Natural Area across the river.
- farming demonstration plots and aquaculture demonstration facilities
- picnic areas for families and groups

View of the Cape Fear River from a high bluff formed during the Last Interglacial Period, about 125,000 years ago, when sea level was 10 to 25 feet higher than today, and most of the Cape Fear peninsula, from Carolina Beach to Bald Head, did not exist. This bluff supports a coastal fringe evergreen forest with 300-year old live oak trees. This is one of the last such forests, the others having been consumed by coastal development.
**Location** The property is located in southeastern Brunswick County, on the estuary of Cape Fear River just north of the City of Southport and the Fort Fisher ferry landing. Southport is at the eastern end of the fifty-mile stretch of Brunswick beaches. Once the county seat, Southport remains as the center of tourist activity and the social capital of the retirement community.

Access to the park would be by NC 211, which passes through the City of Southport. A bypass connection to NC 87 is planned for completion in late 2014.

**The Megapark Option** The park contemplated by this plan could be a building block, perhaps the keystone, of a larger concept of a megapark at the Cape Fear, a park with the status, identity, and natural and economic value of a national seashore. In 1967 the National Park Service recommended the lower Cape Fear for a national monument. Since then much of the region has come under the protection of a complex web of State reservations and private conservation easements. The missing link in this emerald necklace on the western bank of the Cape Fear River is the State Ports Authority’s 600-acre site. This suggests that North Carolina could assemble and supplement these reservations into a coherent entity, creating at the Cape Fear a wonderful, permanent monument to our stewardship of our natural legacy. It would be a new structure, called, perhaps, the “Cape Fear Maritime Heritage Area.” Greater than the sum of its parts.
Implementation. The 600-acre site for the proposed park is in the State inventory. However, title is not in the name of the State, but the North Carolina State Ports Authority, a semiautonomous “enterprise agency.” The Ports Authority is located within the North Carolina Department of Transportation, but is governed by a board of directors, with oversight by the Secretary of Transportation (who is also a board member).

The State Ports Authority had acquired the 600-acre site in 2006 with the intention of building a very large marine container terminal. That project was put “on hold” in 2010, and then in 2013 and 2014 the Ports Authority wrote off the engineering costs for the project. There are not any plans to revive the project, and circumstances, such as an estimated cost of $4.4 billion (including $1.2 billion for dredging an adequate channel), poor highway access, no practical railroad access, the availability of adequate port facilities to the immediate north and south, and proximity to the largest marine ammunition terminal on earth, suggest such a project is entirely inappropriate for the site.

Yet the State Ports Authority’s expenditures on the project resulted in $44 million in long-term debt, which, with another $50 million, remains as substantial burden for an agency that is intended to be self-sufficient. The Ports Authority struggles under that debt. Servicing that debt while repairing and improving port facilities to serve existing and new business needs of North Carolina’s commerce, particularly agribusiness in eastern North Carolina, will no doubt require recourse to the State General Assembly for appropriations.

This project provides a means of injecting new money into the ports in amounts approximately equal to twice the amount appropriated by the General Assembly. The Ports receive the full value of the property while the State obtains property for a new park at half that cost. This is because the Federal government has grants available for parkland and coastal resource acquisition, and the State need only supply the matching funds.

This is how it would work (using $10 million to illustrate—there is no presumption that is the actual value):

1) The State Ports Authority agrees with the State, on behalf of the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NCDENR), to sell the property to the State for $10 million (to illustrate, as aforesaid).

2) NCDENR seeks and obtains a grant from the Federal government for $5 million.

3) The General Assembly appropriates $5 million, the local matching share, and the total $10 million purchase price is paid to the State Ports Authority.

Although this is not something for nothing, it is something for half price. A related benefit is that this would not draw on scarce funds available to NCDENR’s Division of Parks and Recreation for parkland acquisition nor intrude on other park projects.
The Need for a New Park. Brunswick County, the sixth largest and the tenth most visited of North Carolina’s 100 counties, does not have a State park. Yet the County has extraordinary natural attributes, and tourism is a key tenet of the economic development strategy of both the State and the County.

Brunswick County has a fine park system, focused on athletics, the traditional need in the County. But by national standards, taking into account the current growth due entirely to in-migration, Brunswick County is underserved by park facilities and needs both additional acreage and a greater variety of recreational opportunities. Taking into account the increase in population during vacation season of 2.6 times the permanent population, the County’s needs are substantial indeed. Surveys by both County and State parks agencies show an overwhelming support for passive recreational facilities—walking trails and the like—which are scarce in the County but would be abundant in a new State park.

The Economic Benefits of a New Park. The proposed park would have revenue-producing features, particularly an RV campground to fill a substantial need in Brunswick County, sufficient to pay the full operating budget and return a few dollars to the NCDENR Division of Parks and Recreation. But the major economic benefit is the new money brought to Brunswick County and the State by non-local visitors to the park. Using data developed by NC State, we estimate that the proposed park will have these economic effects in Brunswick County annually:

- $6.4 million in new cash added to the economy
- $9.9 million impact on sales
- $4 million impact on personal income for residents
- 169 new jobs.

Equally important, perhaps more so, is the support a good park facility would provide for the economic growth of the County, based primarily on life-style based housing. The park’s contribution to the attractiveness of the County also would support efforts to recruit the knowledge and technology-based enterprises that have emerged as the future of the country.

Gateway to the Cape Fear Maritime Heritage Area. The lower Cape Fear, once recommended for a national seashore, benefits from a variety of State reservations with recreational, conservation, and historic purposes. But it is an incoherent conglomeration. Bringing all of those facilities under a single organizational umbrella and common identity would provide much more than the sum of the parts in terms of fulfillment of conservation purposes, efficient administration, and attractiveness as a tourist destination. It would be the cornerstone of the area’s new economic growth and future prosperity.

A new Cape Fear State Park would be the western gateway to the Cape Fear Maritime Heritage Area.
Why a Park?

*The nation behaves well if it treats its natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value.*

–Theodore Roosevelt

Parks need no justification. They are a mark of a modern civilized society, a common need to be provided by governing bodies just as roads, law enforcement, and education.

In a pedestrian society, parks were created as cities grew, some simply common areas, some the gardens of potentates opened to the public, and some created by visionaries such as Joseph Paxton, Frederick Law Olmstead, and Pierre L’Enfant. Such parks were regarded as essential relief from urban density and points of community pride.

As society became mobile and urban density became suburban sprawl, so also parks followed as part of the fabric of growth. And as growth and human activities began to threaten the land and water on which we depend, our beautiful places, the habitats of the creatures with which we share this earth, recognition of the need for conservation and preservation spawned our system of national parks. This was promptly emulated by the park systems of the sovereign states.

So evolved a dual purpose of parks: recreation and conservation. Those functions are entirely complementary, conservation providing areas for enjoyment by the present generation as well as preservation for future generations.

At the highest level, our great national parks, conservation is the paramount objective, development being limited to such facilities–roads, trails, campgrounds, visitor centers–as are necessary for access, enjoyment, and appreciation. At the state level, the recreation aspect assumes greater importance, serving the needs of nearby communities while maintaining contact with nature. Then at the local level, parks are typically highly developed for more active use. in some cases being designed as blends of culture and nature, places of pride and relaxation, while in other cases entirely focused on active recreation. That is the case in Brunswick County, where parks have been designed and built to support a full range of athletic activities. Only recently have plans for expansion of parks embraced the need for passive enjoyment of our beautiful places and rich natural heritage.

All of this does not suggest that the benefits of parks are solely abstract–natural features preserved, wildlife nurtured, rest and recreation provided, life-style enhanced. Responding to human needs and desires, as parks do, produces very real and measurable economic impacts. Some are direct and measurable, as revenues from tourism and recreation. Some are more subtle, but none the less significant. Parks are part of the regional and community structure, evidence of the quality and standards of its people as much as good roads, good schools, and enlightened leadership. And just as essential to attract development capital and foster thoughtful growth, complementing the area’s natural assets rather than consuming them.
Economic Effects

Tourism is, and has been, a major economic driver in North Carolina. In a statement in May 2014, Governor Pat McCrory announced that the North Carolina tourism industry generated record visitor spending in 2013, $20.2 billion. That represents a 4.1 percent increase over 2012.

“The growth of our tourism industry gives us a lot to celebrate,” Governor McCrory said. “We attracted 52.5 million travelers from across the United States last year because of our great tourist destinations. The money they spent while visiting our mountains, beaches, cities and places in between directly supported nearly 200,000 jobs and more than 40,000 businesses. We can be proud that the quality of North Carolina’s travel experiences makes us the sixth most visited state in the nation.”

The State Department of Commerce provides these facts:

- In 2013, total visitor volume was 52.5 million, up nearly 16 percent from 2012. North Carolina is the sixth most visited state for domestic travel.

- North Carolina’s domestic market share of tourist visits increased from 4 percent to 4.3 percent.

- More than 40,000 businesses in North Carolina provide products and services to travelers, with travelers directly contributing more than 25 percent to their total products and services. Direct tourism employment in North Carolina increased nearly 2.1 percent in 2013, to 197,700. The majority of the growth was in lodging, transportation, food service and retail employment. Direct tourism payroll increased 3.8 percent to $4.6 billion.

- Visitors to North Carolina generated more than $3 billion in federal, state and local taxes in 2013. State tax receipts as a result of visitor spending passed the $1 billion mark in 2013. The figure represents 4 percent in growth over 2012’s $970 million. Local tax receipts from visitor spending grew 3.1 percent to $597.3 million.

- Visitors spend more than $55 million per day in North Carolina. That spending adds more than $4.4 million per day to state and local tax revenues (about $2.8 million in state taxes and $1.6 million in local taxes).

- Each North Carolina household saves $435 in state and local taxes as a direct result of visitor spending in the state.

The State’s attractiveness to visitors is based on many things, but the State parks are symbolic of the State’s natural beauty and are a significant element of tourist draw. A study done in 2008 by North Carolina State University attributed $289 million in sales to visitors to...
our State parks, approximately ten times the NCDENR Division of Parks and Recreation annual budget. This figure excludes direct revenues such as campsite rental. Most importantly, the figure does not include local visitors—only revenues from those visitors from other areas traveling specifically to see a park were counted.

The study attributed 5000 full-time equivalent jobs to these non-local visitors to the State parks.

The NCDENR Division of Parks and Recreation has contracted with NC State for a new economic impact study based on 2013 visits to State Parks. Those visits continue to grow, exceeding 14 million in 2013. Carolina Beach State Park, on the other side of the Cape Fear River in New Hanover County and relatively inaccessible from Brunswick County, was one of the most popular in the park system, drawing 527,000 visits in 2013. Most remarkable is the Fort Fisher State Recreation Area, also on the other side of the river and not having the full range of park facilities. That area drew over 863,000 visitors in 2013, an increase of 11% over 2012. In the 2008 study, that recreation area generated over $14.5 million in economic impacts from non-local visitors—46 times the facility’s $316,000 net cost of operation.

On a national basis, parks show the more typical 10-to-1 ratio of benefits to costs as occurs with our State parks. A study done for the National Park Service in 2013 showed that national parks generated $26.5 billion in economic activity and supported 238,000 jobs. More than one-half of those billions, $14.6 billion, went into communities within 60 miles of a park. The “gateway” communities nearest the parks inevitably prosper, from parks payroll and local purchases, but more importantly, from tourist dollars spent on lodging, food, fuel and also on collateral activities—other attractions, entertainment, and retail.

Fort Fisher State Recreation Area
Tourism and Brunswick County

In Brunswick County, tourism is the lifeblood of the economy. The State Department of Commerce recently reported these facts for 2013:

- Domestic tourism in Brunswick County generated an economic impact of $470.58 million in 2013. This was a 5.54 percent increase from 2012.

- In 2013, Brunswick County ranked 10th in travel impact among North Carolina’s 100 Counties.

- More than 5,030 jobs in Brunswick County were directly attributable to travel and tourism.

- Travel generated a $85.71 million payroll in Brunswick County in 2013.

- State and local tax revenues from travel to Brunswick County amounted to $49.62 million. This represents a $428,99 tax saving to each county resident.¹

The Department also reported that Brunswick County’s seasonal population is 2.6 times the permanent population—adding 180,000 vacationers seeking things to do and places to see.

We cannot report the contribution of the State parks to the economy of Brunswick County, however. There are not any State parks in Brunswick County. The only part of the State park system in Brunswick County is a small part of the Bald Head Island State Natural Area, on the other side of the Cape Fear River, at the tip of the Cape, inaccessible by land.

However, using State averages for other parks as a guide, we can estimate that the proposed Cape Fear State Park would have these economic benefits in Brunswick County:

- $6.4 million in new cash added to the economy,

- $9.9 million impact on sales,

- $4 million impact on personal income for residents,

- 169 new jobs.

For a full discussion of these economic benefits and others not quantified, see the section on Economic Benefits.

¹ North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development, The Economic Impact of Travel on North Carolina Counties.
The Natural and Historical Heritage of Brunswick County and the Cape Fear

Flora, Fauna, and Natural Heritage Areas

The Cape Fear is a region of unique biogeographic features and extraordinary biodiversity. The southeastern coastal plain of North Carolina is an area of particularly high biodiversity, but within that area the Cape Fear is the highest. The Nature Conservancy identifies the Cape Fear as a “biodiversity hotspot,” with greater diversity of plant and animal species than any area along the East Coast north of Florida. Brunswick County, which embraces most of the Cape, has the largest number of rare species in the State. Many of those species grow nowhere else, and are endangered or threatened.

![Biodiversity Hotspots in the United States. Note the Cape Fear region.](image)

Biodiversity “hotspots” in the United States. Note the Cape Fear region.

The region has

* 50 different natural communities
* 300 species of animals and plants
* 19 federally threatened or endangered species
* 63 state threatened or endangered species
* 22 endemic species of plants
* 19 endemic species of animals
* 100% of the world’s native Venus flytraps
* The oldest trees east of the Rocky Mountains, including a 1,700-year-old Bald Cypress.
This map from the NCDENR Conservation Planning Tool shows the biodiversity/wildlife habitat assessment for the lower Cape Fear region based on surveys for the Natural Heritage Program. The State Ports Authority property on the west bank of the Cape Fear River, proposed to be dedicated to a park, is outlined in red.
This map from the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program shows sites of National, State, and regional significance in eastern Brunswick County:

2. Bald Head Island
3. Battery Island
8. Blue Pond
9. Boiling Spring Lakes Limesink Complex
10. Boiling Spring Lakes Wetlands Complex
15. Clarendon Plantation Limesinks
18. Fort Caswell Dunes and Marshes
19. Funston Bays
26. Lower Cape Fear Bird Nesting Islands
27. MOTSU Governor’s Creek Natural Area
28. MOTSU Northwest Natural Area
29. MOTSU Three Ponds Natural Area
32. Orton Pond
33. Pleasant Oaks/Goose Landing Plantation
34. Pretty Pond Limesinks Complex
42. Southport Ferry Landing Forest
48. Town Creek Marshes and Swamp
54. White Springs Pond Complex
56. Middle Island
57. Zeke’s Island
60. Bluff Island and East Beach
63. Lower Cape Fear Aquatic Habitat

Note: MOTSU is the Military Ocean Terminal at Sunny Point. Natural Heritage Sites numbered 27, 28, and 29 are within the Sunny Point property.

The Boiling Spring Lakes wetlands complex (10) is a favored habitat of the red-cockaded woodpecker, an endangered species, although the bird can be seen over a larger area.

The proposed park site, while not a significant example of a particular natural community, lies in the heart of a diverse ecosystem supporting unique plants and animals, and a particularly prolific avian population. Its value is its accessibility, its variety of terrain and natural communities, and its utility for display of nature’s variety for enjoyment by the people of North Carolina and our guests.
Historical Significance of the Lower Cape Fear

The lower Cape Fear region has an extraordinarily rich history, from the first European exploration by Giovanni da Verrazano in 1524 through the battle that severed the lifeline of the Confederacy in January, 1865, ending the Confederacy’s ability to carry on the Civil War. That was the capture of Fort Fisher, located directly across the Cape Fear River from the site of the park proposed hereby.

After Verrazano’s visit, the Spanish promptly attempted settlement in 1526 with an expedition from Florida led by Lucas Vásquez de Ayllón. This was well before Sir Walter Raleigh’s settlers landed at Roanoke Island, the establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and the founding of Jamestown in Virginia. The Spanish soon withdrew, however, leaving the natives in peace until William Hilton came along in 1662, purchased the area from the natives and left a party of settlers. That settlement was also short-lived. Then in 1664 John Vassall and 200 settlers established a town, called Charles Town, on the river they then called the Charles, a few miles upriver at the mouth of what is now called Town Creek. That was the center of rapid growth, to a reported 800 settlers spread 60 miles along the river. Alas, the natives were less than friendly, and this settlement was abandoned in 1667.

Then in the early 18th century, colonists from South Carolina and the northern part of North Carolina began to resettle the Cape Fear region. In 1726, Roger and Maurice Moore established the town of Brunswick a short distance upriver from the proposed park site, just above what is now Sunny Point. That was the beginning of the era of rice plantations in the lowlands along the river north from Brunswick. Roger Moore’s plantation, Orton, remains today, the building and grounds undergoing restoration by Orton’s current owner, a descendant of Roger Moore.

The Cape Fear Indians who had once inhabited the region in substantial numbers had dwindled to about 200 in 1715, living in five villages. They may have frequented the park site, in pursuit of their custom of a festival based on the digestive track cleansing effects of a black tea from the yaupon holly (ilex vomitoria) that were, and are, plentiful on the high ground near the river. By 1725 they had died, left, been killed or driven off, leaving scarcely a trace.

A new colonial settlement 15 miles upriver, established in 1733 and renamed Wilmington in 1740, began to draw commerce away from Brunswick. By the time the British arrived to sack Brunswick Town in 1776, the town had been virtually abandoned.

The area downriver from the park site received less attention, the only building of note occurring in 1745 when construction was started on Fort Johnson on the current site of Southport. The town of Smithville was established in the area around Fort Johnston in 1792, and renamed Southport in 1892 in an effort to attract commerce.

The Cape Fear’s major historic significance derives from an important Civil War event. The Union blockade, although effective at other Southern ports, was difficult to enforce at the
Cape Fear. A storm in 1761 had opened an inlet from the sea (called New Inlet) into the river directly across from the park site. Thus the Union navy was compelled to block both old and new river entrances to prevent access to the port at Wilmington. Both entrances were shallow and shoals extended well out to sea, impeding maneuvering by the deep-draft Union gunboats. Shallow-draft blockade runners, keeping close to shore and protected by shore batteries, could often elude the Union boats. War materials brought in through Caribbean ports were unloaded at Wilmington and shipped onward north or west via the two railroads terminating at Wilmington. Other Southern ports effectively had been closed, so the route through Wilmington became known as the “lifeline of the Confederacy.”

Both river entrances were heavily fortified to provide cover for the blockade runners, the lower entrance by Fort Holmes on Bald Head Island and Fort Caswell on the western side of the channel. At New Inlet a major fortification, called Fort Fisher, was built on the northern side of the inlet, at Federal Point. That location is visible from the high bluffs of the park site, although most of the fortifications are gone.

In late 1864, a large Union armada, the largest ever assembled in the war, arrived to take Fort Fisher. The first attack in December was unsuccessful. Then in January 1865, the largest combined operation by the armed forces of the United States until World War II was mounted, overrunning the Fort. That ended the flow of war material to Virginia, forcing General Lee to surrender his forces in April, ending the war.

In 1871, the US Army Corps of Engineers began constructing a rock wall in the Cape Fear River across New Inlet to block the passage to the sea, in case the South should rise again. That was successful. New Inlet, deprived of currents, gradually filled in. Now, from the bluffs at the park site, the view of the opposite shore of the river shows a continuous land mass from Federal Point south. Other, smaller inlets south of New Inlet have also filled in, so Bald Head Island is now connected to the mainland.

The waters around Federal Point are the graveyard of many ships of the era, including the CSS Raleigh, one of two ironclads built in Wilmington. That lies between Snow’s Marsh, the island just off of the park site, and Federal Point. The other, the CSS North Carolina, lies just off of Battery Island near Southport.

Through all of these events, the 600-acre site for the park escaped notice by the historians, and perhaps even by history. The earliest available record seems to be a Civil War era map showing the area to belong to W. McCracken. That denotes the McCracken farm, which endured in the McCracken family until 1982, when Williams Terminal Company purchased the upper two-thirds, intending to build a coal export terminal. That project was abandoned after a conversation with Carolina Power & Light, the proprietors of the Brunswick Nuclear Plant immediately to the west. Williams then in 1990 sold its property to Pfizer, Inc., the owner of the citric acid plant immediately to the south. Pfizer had acquired the remainder of the McCracken farm in 1971. In the 1990’s, Pfizer removed the remaining farm buildings. Then in 2006, the North Carolina State Ports Authority purchased the property from Pfizer.
The chart shows the sites on the National Register of Historic Places within six miles of the proposed park site.

**SITES LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES WITHIN SIX MILES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brunswick County</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bald Head Creek Boat House</td>
<td>Smith Island, mouth of the Cape Fear River</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bald Head Island Lighthouse</td>
<td>South of Southport on Smith Island at Bald Head</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brunswick County Courthouse</td>
<td>Davis and Moore Streets, Southport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick Town Historic District</td>
<td>North of Southport off of SR 133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Caswell</td>
<td>Caswell Beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Johnston</td>
<td>Moore Street, Southport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Island Life Saving Station</td>
<td>217 Caswell Beach Road, Caswell Beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orton Plantation</td>
<td>On Cape Fear River at junction of NC 1530 and 1529, Smithville Township</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southport Historic District</td>
<td>Roughly bounded by Cape Fear River, Rhett, Bay, Short, and Brown Streets, Southport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Philip’s Church Ruins</td>
<td>South of Orton off of NC 1533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Hanover County</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Fear Civil War Shipwreck Discontiguous District</td>
<td>Location Restricted, Kure Beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Fear Lighthouse Complex</td>
<td>South of Kure Beach, Kure Beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Fisher</td>
<td>18 miles south of Wilmington on U.S. 421, Wilmington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S. Peterhoff</td>
<td>Location Restricted, Fort Fisher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Risingwater Associates           | I-16                                                                      | Save the Cape, Inc.
State and County Parks

The North Carolina State park system does not include a State park in Brunswick County—even though the County is the State’s sixth largest and the tenth most visited of the 100 counties. The park system has reserved areas in the County on the east side of the Cape Fear River as “natural areas,” but these are inaccessible and without visitors’ facilities; they have been reserved primarily to protect the unique flora and fauna and only incidentally provide recreational or educational opportunities.

This map from the NCDENR Division of Parks and Recreation shows the State reservations at the Cape Fear. All except Brunswick Town are on the east side, accessible from greater Brunswick County on the west side only by ferry or by river crossing 20 miles north at Wilmington. Brunswick Town and Fort Fisher Historic Sites are managed by the Department of Cultural Resources. Carolina Beach State Park, the North Carolina Aquarium, and Fort Fisher State Recreation area are active tourist attractions, operated by the Division of Parks and Recreation. The other sites are passive natural areas, relatively inaccessible.

The Nature Conservancy and the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust, private foundations, have reserved large tracts in the area by acquiring ownership or conservation easements, but those, too, focus on protection of unique ecological features and not recreation. Most are not accessible by the public.
The State Parks System is constantly under pressure to grow to meet the needs of a growing population and the increasing urbanization of that population, both of which put greater stress on existing scenic and recreational resources. The State Parks must also be expanded to fill gaps in the types of resources preserved and made available, and to fill gaps in geographic coverage. But funds are scarce.

In its report, *New Parks for a New Century*, the Division of Parks and Recreation reports that:

The State Parks Act directs the system to include representative examples of North Carolina's archaeological, geological, biological, scenic and recreational resources. Under those categories, specific examples of the state’s natural diversity are considered resource themes, such as mountain bog, spruce-fir forest, tidal wetlands, etc. Of 108 resource themes identified in the State, only 29 are adequately represented in the parks system now. Thirteen resource themes have little representation in any geographic region, and four are not represented at all.

High-quality examples of the state's great diversity of natural communities are being damaged every day as population growth and development infringe on important natural areas. Wildlife habitat is becoming further fragmented and many species of plants and animals are dwindling in number.

Despite this mandate, the General Assembly has been stingy with funding for parks. The most recent report of NCDENR, in which the Division of Parks and Recreation resides, shows that North Carolina parks system operations spent $3.46 per State citizen, 47th of the 50 states. Some of that is defrayed by revenues from fees and concession sales, but 75% of the operating cost comes from the State budget. Neighboring states spent considerably more: $4.30 per citizen in Virginia, $4.92 in Georgia, $5.36 in South Carolina, $12.53 in Tennessee. On a per-visitor basis, North Carolina parks spent an average of $2.30 for each visitor, also lower than neighboring states. Nearby State parks were even more frugal: in fiscal year 2011-2012, Carolina Beach State Park, across the river in New Hanover County, made do with 93 cents per visitor. Fort Fisher State Recreation area, also across the river, spent 33 cents per visitor. Yet a study in 2008 showed each visitor to Fort Fisher Recreation Area from out-of-the area spent $43.53 in the County each day. On a State-wide basis, each non-local visitor to State parks spent $23.56 cents in each day of the visit. Taking into account revenues from fees and services, the State is taking in ten times the amount spent on park operations.

Capital funds are also scarce. The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the funding source for acquisition and improvement of both State and local parks, since 1994 has been fed by 75% of an excise tax on land transfers. That yielded $25 million in fiscal year 2012-2013, but for fiscal year 2013-2014, the General Assembly diverted that to the State general fund, and instead appropriated $11 million to the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.
**Brunswick County Parks**

The Brunswick County parks system, until recently, focused almost exclusively on athletic facilities. The 2007 County CAMA land use plan shows a system with eight parks, comprising 223 acres, with extensive baseball, soccer, and football fields, tennis and basketball courts, and playground and picnic facilities. The recreational scope of the parks has now been broadened by a new park with water access, Dutchman Creek Park with 30 acres, still under development. Another new park with access to the Cape Fear River, Brunswick River Park, 22 acres, has been conveyed to the Town of Belville.

A major new County project is the Brunswick Nature Park, 911 acres of woodland, swamp, and pocosin bordering Town Creek, a tidal creek off of the Cape Fear River. This park was conceived to meet the need for preservation and enjoyment of large wilderness areas, and fill a gap for passive recreation and hiking and bicycle trails. New projects to renovate and enlarge Town Creek Park and Smithville District Park also will provide walking trails.

Of the 911 acres of Brunswick Nature Park, 320 acres are wetlands associated with Town Creek and another 250 acres are pocosin, upland areas that remain wet due to poor drainage and slow water movement. This leaves 341 developable acres for which a system of hiking and bicycle trails are planned. Original plans, presented in 2007, included equestrian facilities and an ambitious regional environmental center with exhibit gardens and outdoor classrooms. The park opened very recently with a system of gravel roads and trails, and some visitor facilities, but development of the equestrian trails and the environmental center remain in the planning stage. The primary use is now off-road bicycling, and the trails are maintained by a local trail bike club.

In 2006 the County purchased an 825-acre property in the central part of the County, on NC 211 about two and a half miles north of US 17. A “Coastal Events Center” was planned for the site, providing an arena, equestrian facilities, and a children’s museum, all intended to support events drawing from the coastal region, from Myrtle Beach to Wilmington. Plans for the project reached a peak of enthusiasm in 2007, but by 2010, after the death of County Commissioner David Sandifer, the project had been abandoned and the property, still owned by the County, is no longer in the active inventory of the Parks and Recreation Department.

Brunswick County’s public parks system is supplemented by extensive private and municipal systems. There are 26 golf courses, all private and many in gated communities, and large expanses of ocean beach operated by the coastal towns and villages. There are also several very large privately-owned nature preserves—the largest being the 16,000 acre Green Swamp and the area around Boiling Spring Lakes, both owned by The Nature Conservancy. The Green Swamp is a forbidding place, however, and visitors are actively discouraged from the Boiling Spring Lakes preserve to prevent destruction of the habitat of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and poaching of Venus fly-traps.
County Growth and Demand for Parks

Brunswick County has been experiencing explosive growth, from 24,223 in 1970 to 107,431 in 2010, a rate of increase of about 43% every ten years. Brunswick County is the fourth fastest-growing county of North Carolina’s 100 counties, and the State is the sixth fastest growing state in the nation. Most of this growth is in-migration; residents of other states are moving to North Carolina at the fifth highest rate in the nation. The highest rate of in-migration in the State occurs in Brunswick County–8% from April 2010 to January 2013.

In Brunswick County, all growth is in-migration. Natural growth is negative–deaths exceed births. This is producing a rapid change in demographics. The demographic analysis done for the 2009 Parks and Recreation Master Plan shows the County in-migration comprised two dominant groups: a young generation choosing the County to raise their families, and seniors seeking an agreeable place for retirement. Both have high expectations for quantity and quality of parks and recreational facilities.

An additional, and very significant factor for planning of parks and recreation facilities, is the heavy influx of seasonal residents and tourists–not counted in the population statistics but nevertheless heavy users of recreation facilities and with high expectations. Brunswick County’s seasonal population is about 2.6 times the permanent population.

This chart shows recent and projected growth in both permanent and seasonal population for Brunswick County:

The last actual count, for 2010, is 107,531 for the permanent population. The seasonal population for that year was approximately 280,000.

The 2009 Parks and Recreation Master Plan for Brunswick County cites the guidelines for parks published by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) : “A park system, at a minimum, should be composed of a ‘core’ system of park lands, with a total of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed open space per 1000 population.”

The Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department Web site reports ownership of approximately 1516 acres of parkland, 745 of which are developed. Over half of the total acreage, 911 acres, is in the Brunswick Nature Park. Of that 590 acres are wetlands, neither developed nor developable. There is little room for additional development in the other park properties, perhaps 100 acres.
Because of Brunswick County’s economic dependence on recreation and tourism, and the influx of life-style seeking population, the Parks and Recreation Department’s consultants for the 2009 Master Plan selected a guideline on the high side of the NRPA range, 10 acres of developed open space per 1000 population.

That yields a requirement of 1007 acres of developed parkland for the 2010 permanent population of Brunswick County—262 acres more than the 745 developed acres reported by the Parks Division as being in the County system. Measuring that against the seasonal population, however, we see a deficiency of about 2035 acres. Going forward, the chart on the right shows the guideline requirements for future developed acreage for both permanent and seasonal populations, with the acreage of the current system shown for comparison.

The present and growing deficiency in parklands for Brunswick County is evident. This table presents the projected needs for park acreage together with the deficiency, if no additional park acreage is added.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Permanent Population</th>
<th>Seasonal Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>1310 acres (565 acre deficiency)</td>
<td>3420 acres (2675 acre deficiency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2030</td>
<td>1550 acres (805 acre deficiency)</td>
<td>4030 acres (3285 acre deficiency)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2009 Master Plan also identified some specific deficiencies, but this table suggests a certain urgency in adding significant acreage to the existing 745 parkland acres simply to meet growth. Indeed, the 2009 Master Plan observes “While this rate of growth does allow time for planned growth, it does not allow for deferred capital improvement or department upgrading. Rather, it dictates an assertive program of growth in the parks and recreation programming for Brunswick County because it is obvious from further qualitative research that the new residents will anticipate and expect a first-class system.”
The qualitative research of which the plan speaks was a comprehensive program of seeking public input by interviews, public meetings, and community surveys. This is a summary of facility preferences from the report:

The top ten “high priority” items were echoed throughout all forms of public input and our team’s assessment of the current parks system, indicating a strong support for the prioritized action steps:

1. Walking trails within existing parks 59%
2. More public beach access and parking 53%
3. Indoor aquatic center 49%
4. Additional park land 49%
5. More parks throughout the county 47%
6. Multi-generational recreation center 47%
7. Pier at the beach 46%
8. Bike trails throughout the county 45%
9. Greenway/trail system throughout the county 45%
10. Natural surface trails 40%

Trails were a popular topic in the interviews and public meetings, and with four of the top ten items being trail-related, it is clear that this should be a top priority for the County.

The desire for more facilities for trail-related activities was also a key finding of survey done by the NCDENR’s Division of Parks in 2008. The Parks Division 2012 update to its master plan reports:

During October 2008, public meetings were held and an on-line survey was conducted to give the public an opportunity to comment on the current status of the state parks system and to express their preferences for how the system should function in the future to meet their needs.

- The five most popular facilities in the parks system were found to be hiking trails, nature trails, picnic tables with grills, multi-use trails, and observation decks.
- More than 95 percent of respondents agreed with the statement “NC should add new parks to provide additional recreational opportunities.”
- More than 93 percent agreed that “It is important to protect natural and scenic resources by acquiring land even if these areas may not be accessible to the public until planning, design and funding are in place to be developed as park units.”

There is a remarkable consistency between the two surveys—a desire for new parkland with facilities for passive activities. The very thing that a new State park could provide for Brunswick County.
Urgency

*It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.*
–Richard Cardinal Cushing

*Don’t it always seem to go*
*That you don’t know what you’ve got,*
*Till it’s gone*
–Joni Mitchell

Parks must be established before they are needed. By the time the need for a park is apparent, the most suitable sites have usually been overrun by the very development that generates the need for a park. Needless to say, this requires a certain vision, a rare commodity.

An example of the failure of foresight is the nation’s seashores. In 1955, a report by the National Park Service, *Our Vanishing Shoreline*, pointed out:

One of our greatest recreation resources—the seashore—is rapidly vanishing from public use. Nearly everyone seems to know this fact, but few do anything to halt the trend.

Few did. When the issue was revisited in 1988 by the National Parks Conservation Foundation, most of the “greatest recreation resources” identified in 1955 had succumbed to development, although a few national seashores had been created. When the National Park Service made its recommendation for national monument status for the Cape Fear in 1967, all of the lower Cape Fear was in private hands. Fortunately, due to the foresight of the State of North Carolina, most of the sensitive areas have since been placed under some type of State reservation, although the most important resource, Bald Head Island, is now a private development, albeit an example of wise stewardship of natural resources.

But there are wonderful success stories of foresight in the nation’s great urban parks. Central Park in New York, now part of the City’s essence, was laid out in 1857, when the central part of Manhattan Island was a wilderness. New York City began at the southern tip of the island, but was rapidly growing northward in the mid-nineteenth Century when Frederick Law Olmstead had his great vision for a park. Only a few years later, such a reservation of land would have been impossible.

How many years will it take for development of Brunswick County to consume our best potential parklands?
Economic Benefits

Parks have strong and obvious intrinsic value–preservation of beautiful places, protection of our fragile environment for ourselves and future generations, enhancement of our community and our life style. Yet in any discussion with public officials about a project for a new park, the first question asked is “What would it cost?” For officialdom often regards parks as nice things to have, but only if we have some extra money.

But that disregards the other side of the ledger, the economic return that parks bring to a community. Some of that is apparent–direct revenues from campground fees and concessions. But other economic effects, indirect perhaps, are very real and in magnitude overwhelm the cost of a park and become a major economic driver. Here are some of those effects:

Direct Revenues

Although admission would not be charged for the proposed park, the park would produce revenue from several sources:

Campgrounds. Fees would be charged for use of campsites, with sites for RVs bearing a premium over the tent sites. Covered group picnic sites also bear fees.

Restaurant. The restaurant at the crest of the bluff would be a concession to a private operator, who would pay rent or a percentage of sales, or both.

Water tours. The pontoon boat tours of the natural areas across the river would likewise be privately operated, with a base fee and a percentage of ticket sales payable to the park.

Gift shop. The gift shop could be operated by park personnel or a concessionaire, in either case producing revenues for the park.

Amphitheater and events center. Charges would be imposed for use of these facilities.

This is a very rough estimate of the annual revenue from those sources:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Revenue (in $)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campground (100 tent sites, 50 RV sites, 50% occupancy)</td>
<td>$634,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water tours</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift shop</td>
<td>36,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment facilities</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$810,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average annual operating budget for the 14 parks included in a 2009 Parks Division study of economic impacts was $714,000. Using this average, we can estimate that the
proposed park should be more than self-sustaining as to operating costs, and should generate positive revenue for the Parks Division in the amount of almost $100,000 per year. This is unusual. On a systemwide basis, parks produce revenue sufficient to cover about 25% of operating costs. The difference between the proposed park and the typical park is an emphasis on revenue-producing concessions, which produce visitors as well as revenues. This park would also provide separate recreational vehicle facilities, which are in short supply in Brunswick County. Charges would be in the middle of the national average of $15-$50 per night for full hookups. Anticipating usage of both tent and RV campgrounds similar to that for the tent campgrounds at Carolina Beach State Park–fully booked in warm months–should provide self-sufficiency as to operating costs.

Amounts spent for operating expenses for the park, whether from revenues or State appropriations, do not vanish–those amounts flow into the local economy–staff salaries, supplies, local contractors. In a study of 14 State parks by North Carolina State University in 2008, analysis showed that operation of the 14 parks generated an average of $1.07 million in sales in the immediate area, with a $714,000 beneficial impact on residents’ income. Each park accounted for an average of 18 full-time equivalent jobs.

Thus although the revenues of the park would accrue to the State, those would stay in Brunswick County in spending for park expenses, creating jobs and feeding the local economy. That would not be on a dollar-for-dollar basis, but would have a multiplier effect as that money moves through the economy (see the discussion below regarding economic impacts of visitor expenditures).

**Economic Impacts of Tourist Visits**

Economic impact analysis of a park goes beyond the simple comparison of revenues and expenses from the park activities, as shown on the books of the park, and the local effects of park operating expenditures. A broader economic impact analysis determines the changes to a regional economy that can be attributed to the inflow of new money to the economy from non-local visitors, people who come from outside the area or even the State to visit the park or include the park in their visit itinerary. Economic impact estimates for parks include only spending by those non-local visitors. Spending by local visitors is excluded because those visitors would likely spend a similar amount of money within the local economy whether they visit the park or not.

The NCDENR Division of Parks and Recreation contracts with North Carolina State University to analyze the economic impacts of parks in the State. The last report was issued in 2008; NC State is currently preparing a new report, for release later this year (2014).

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For the earlier study, the investigators spent a year surveying visitors to 14 selected parks, asking such questions as how many people were in their party, how long did they stay, and most important, whether visiting the park was the primary purpose of their trip to the area. Respondents were asked to account for expenditures in the region around the park in nine different categories: admission fees, camping fees, groceries, dining out, recreational equipment and supplies, retail shopping, transportation costs, lodging, and any other expenses. In order to prevent respondent over-estimation of their expenditures in the area of the park being visited, visitors were asked to discriminate between the amount spent “in the area” (near the park), and “outside the area” (pre-trip, en route to the park).

The investigators used IMPLAN (IMpact Analysis for PLANning), a program developed by the U.S. Forest Service to model the economic impact of recreational spending. IMPLAN calculates the direct, indirect, and induced effects of an economic event. Direct effects are those that occur directly when an item is purchased from a local vendor. Indirect effects occur when that vendor buys supplies from local sources. Induced effects are the third tier, the new expenditures of income generated by those direct and indirect effects of the initial sale. The investigators programmed IMPLAN to calculate all three effects, so that the result provides a measure of how money moves through an economy by initial and subsequent expenditures.

Economic impacts were shown through four measures:

Direct expenditures: Direct expenditures are the actual dollars spent by visitors in a community. After eliminating local and casual use visitors from the sample, direct expenditures made per person per day by primary purpose, non-local visitors were totaled and estimated by using the official visitation data provided by North Carolina state parks.

Impact on sales: This figure accounts for how the direct expenditures re-circulate in a community. Impact on sales is an expression of the direct, indirect, and induced effects. For the study, community is defined as the county or counties in which the park or recreation area is located.

Personal income: Personal income is a measure of the income that accrues to local residents per dollar of direct sales to non-local visitors. According to some economists, this and the employment measure (described below) are the most valuable measures of economic impact because they provide information about how a facility or service contributes to a county’s standard of living.

Employment: The contribution of non-local visitor spending to employment is measured in full-time equivalent jobs. A full-time equivalent job is defined as a full-time employee, or combination of part-time employees who work the equivalent of a full-time position as defined by the employer. This is not a description of actual jobs, but rather a measure of full-time equivalent jobs generated from the flow of revenue created by non-local visitors.
The data and analysis from 2008 show these average effects for the 14 State parks studied:

- $5.7 million in direct local expenditures per park (more than ten times net park expenses)
- $8.8 million in local sales for each park
- $3.3 million impact on personal income in the immediate area
- 151 full-time equivalent jobs in the immediate area.

Note that the foregoing effects cannot be added. They must be considered separately to avoid double-counting.

Using these average data from 2008, and adding the effects of both park budget and visitor spending, we can estimate that the proposed park will have these economic effects in Brunswick County annually:

- $6.4 million in new cash added to the economy
- $9.9 million impact on sales
- $4 million impact on personal income for residents
- 169 new jobs.

As in the case of the State results, these cannot be added.

The NC State study does not address the effect on taxes, although some state studies, such as a recent one in Maryland, do that. Using the current 6.75% sales tax rate in Brunswick County, the new sales would add about $600,000 to County tax proceeds.

The NC State data for North Carolina show an economic multiplier of about ten times the annual amount of State spending to operate parks, using only the direct local expenditures, disregarding the indirect and induced effects. This economic return of ten times expenses is consistent with findings in other states and at the Federal level in the National Park System.

Those effects vary, of course. At Fort Fisher State Recreation Area in New Hanover County, the survey showed that visitors from out of the area spent $14.5 million in the sample year, 46 times the park’s net annual operating budget—a stupendous return.
Other Economic Effects—Ecosystem Valuation

The above economic results are based on the recreation aspect of the State parks. However, the traditional objective of the parks is preservation—keeping and maintaining significant examples of North Carolina’s ecological and scenic resources.

The preservation aspect has a value, too, and not just the intrinsic value of our heritage. In recent years, techniques have been developed to put dollar values on ecosystems, to recognize the linkages between the economy and the environment. This would come into play in benefit/cost analyses of projects that would have positive or negative environmental effects, so that such effects, quantified, can be included in the decision process.

The technology, although not in its infancy, is not yet widely used. It is marked by a variety of approaches, all of which usually are presented in a form only those trained in both environmental sciences and economics can comprehend.

Nevertheless, ecosystems have real value and preservation of those ecosystems enhances the asset side of the State and region’s economy. Just as destruction would reduce the State’s net worth.

The proposed park presents a compelling example of ecosystem values. The park property includes over hundred acres of brackish marsh along the Cape Fear River. Such marshland is regarded as among the most biologically productive in nature. At the Cape Fear, this marshland is a fundamental to the life cycle of much of our marine life. And the marine environment is the classic example of the food chain, with little fish being eaten by bigger fish in a series of steps. That food chain starts in the brackish marsh, where the smallest life forms emerge and larger creatures feed. And still larger creatures feed on them. This extends out to sea, and is particularly significant for anadromous species, those saltwater species that spawn in fresh and brackish water.

The result, at the Cape Fear, is a wonderful variety of fish, shellfish, and other sea creatures with measurable commercial value and recreational value.

We do not attempt to apply evaluation techniques to the brackish marsh. We only point out that NCDENR’s Division of Marine Fisheries has determined that the value of Brunswick County’s average annual commercial catch for the years 1994-2012 was $3,953,591, that the commercial fisheries employed 131 people in 2012, and the economic impacts in Brunswick County of commercial fishing in that year were $4,370,000.

The Division of Marine Fisheries has also estimated the economic impacts of recreational saltwater fishing in North Carolina in 2009 to be $1,602,722,304. That has not been broken down by county. Using Brunswick County’s share of commercial catch, 4.7%, as a guide, we can estimate the County’s share of recreational fishing economic impacts to be about $75 million annually, a very substantial economic effect that must be not only protected.
but nurtured. The proposed park site’s hundred acres of marine nursery habitat is a significant part of that effort.

US Open King Mackerel Tournament at Southport

*Other Economic Effects—Indirect*

The theme of Brunswick County’s economic development program is “Work where you play,” indicating the importance attributed to recreational opportunities in attracting business. However, it is becoming increasingly obvious that Brunswick County’s economic future is tied less to industry and more to amenity-based housing and the care and feeding of retirees. For whom a good system of State and local parks is a compelling feature in marketplace vigorously competing for them.

The nearly explosive population growth in Brunswick County—due entirely to in-migration—is resulting in a significant change in County demographics. This was noted in the 2009 planning study done for the County Department of Parks and Recreation, the consultants noting that “the growth is quality growth, balanced between the younger generation choosing to make Brunswick County home for work and raising a family and the seniors choosing to make the county their home for retirement.” The consultants further observed that younger families are the traditional heavy users of parks. As for the retirees, the consultants noted that, for the most part, they were coming from urban and suburban areas in the northeast and expected to find a first-class park system.

New capital coming to Brunswick County is being invested, not in heavy industrial enterprises, but in major housing communities, such as the 4500-acre Brunswick Forest in I-29 Risingwater Associates

Save the Cape, Inc.
Leland, which appeals to both retirees and young families, and The Charles, a full-service retirement community planned on a 2100-acre plot in the southeastern part of the County.

This emphasis in investment in life-style based housing does not suggest industry is dead in Brunswick County; but it undergoing change. And the factors attracting housing are equally applicable to attracting the new industrial enterprises. Enrico Moretti, in *The New Geography of Jobs*, points out that “Over the past century, the United States has shifted from an economy centered on producing physical goods to one centered on innovation and technology.” And “In the twentieth century, competition was about accumulating physical capital. Today it is about attracting the best human capital.”

Thus attracting human capital is essential to the economic success of both housing development enterprises and the new industrial economy. Needless to say, an area’s parks are a central part of the picture the area must present to attract that human capital.

Headwaters Economics, in a recent (2012) research paper on business location, observed:

Traditional location factors are relatively less important to firms in knowledge-based enterprises. Thanks to advances in transportation and communication, these companies now have far fewer constraints on where they conduct business. As “footloose” businesses, whose success is relatively independent of location, such companies are less focused on traditional cost factors and more sensitive to the preferences of CEOs and recruitment and retention factors such as access to outdoor recreation and natural landscapes.

Quality of life variables are shifting from “would like” to “must have” location factors. A growing body of research developed over the last 30 years has documented this shift. According to a recent survey, “Quality of life consistently ranks near the top of locational criteria for high-technology, R&D labs and other facilities that are more footloose in relation to traditional cost–sensitive location factors and place a greater emphasis on attracting and retaining skilled labor.”

Sometimes the quality of life aspects can be quantified. The Trust for Public Lands made such an effort in research done under a grant by the US Forest Service. The report outlines these economic effects of parks:

**Property Value.** Parks have a positive impact on nearby residential property values. Other things being equal, most people are willing to pay more for a home close to a nice park. Economists call this phenomenon “hedonic value.” It varies with both distance and the quality of the park. The proposed park would be much closer to residential communities than the typical State park located in remote areas, and the proposed plan responds to demand expressed in the surveys and would provide an unusual variety of recreational opportunities not otherwise available in Brunswick County.
**Income from non-local visitor spending.** This economic aspect is well recognized, and has been developed above.

**Direct Use Value.** This quantifies the recreational opportunities available at a park by determining the amount a park visitor would be willing to pay in the private market for a similar experience. This approach, called “willingness to pay,” is used by the Corps of Engineers in putting a value on recreational lands it may contemplate destroying, or new recreational facilities, such as a lake, it is contemplating building.

**Health Value.** Research has documented the economic burden of physical inactivity and related health effects. Other research suggests that access to parks can help people increase their level of physical activity. There is even a “Parks Health Benefits Calculator” to measure a community’s collective economic savings through the use of parks for exercise.

**Community Cohesion.** Webs of human relationships, sometimes called “social capital” are strengthened by parks and the social activities they foster. While this economic value cannot be measured directly, the amount of time people spend in their parks is a good indicator.

**Managing stormwater.** Preserving the natural landscape prevents the sort of uncontrolled stormwater runoff that hardscape development would produce. The economic benefit here is the prevention and reduction of the ecological damage that would ensue if stormwater was not captured and treated, and avoiding the cost of such treament to the community.

**Removal of Air Pollution.** Parklands and their trees and vegetation remove air pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, ozone, and some particulates that would detract from the community and the region.

**Relief of a Burden on Brunswick County**

Brunswick County has a fine parks system, but even in 2009, the pending inadequacy in both acreage and nature of facilities was recognized, and an aggressive program of expansion was recommended to take into account the very rapid growth of the County and the change in demographics brought with that growth. The County has responded with two new projects of improvements at two existing parks, and a new nature center, with extensive bike trails, in a large wooded area provided through the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust.

Yet the County’s growth continues at the fourth highest rate in the State. All of that growth is in-migration, bringing in young families and retirees, all of whom bring with them expectations of first-class park system. That first-class park system would be possible with the addition of a 600-acre State park, funded and supported by sources outside the County, yet producing real economic benefits—new cash arriving with tourists—within the County. All without expense to the County, and indeed, bringing in tax receipts.
**Total Economic Value**

The total economic value of a new State park on the Cape Fear River cannot be expressed in a single figure, the total of a column of figures. Certainly many benefits of a State park in Brunswick County can be quantified, such as the new dollars brought in and spent by out-of-county tourists. But some benefits cannot be added without double-counting. And others are more elusive, but nevertheless real. Yet the true economic value of a park includes those intangible effects.

This chart shows the elements of the total economic value of a new State Park on the Cape Fear River in Brunswick County.
Implementation

The State parks system looks to several trust funds to meet its needs for land acquisition and capital projects: the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, and the Natural Heritage Trust Fund. The combined proceeds from these funds still leave a substantial gap between planned projects and available funds.

This plan contemplates implementation without competing with other projects for those parks system trust funds. The basis of this plan is that the property proposed to be devoted to the Cape Fear State Park is already in the State’s inventory, although in another agency, and that the General Assembly faces supporting that agency, the State Ports Authority.

The plan for the Cape Fear State Parks would be effected by a State-Federal-private partnership. This how it would work:

- The property proposed for the new State Park is owned by the State Ports Authority in its own name. The State Ports Authority does not have plans for use of the property, having written off its investment in engineering for the use originally planned.

- The State Ports Authority is facing substantial needs for capital to meet its debt service requirements and to make improvements to respond to changing markets and the needs of the State’s business, particularly agribusiness. The General Assembly has in the past provided capital grants to the Ports Authority. Such grants are again necessary, but recent efforts to obtain funds have been received in Raleigh without enthusiasm.

- Redeployment of the State Ports Authority property for park use by conveyance to the NCDENR Division of Parks and Recreation for the new Cape Fear State Park opens the door to new sources of Federal funding for parks, land preservation, and estuarine conservation. Such grants would be made to the Division of Parks and Recreation, and passed through to the State Ports Authority in consideration of the transfer of the property described herein for a park site.

- These Federal grant programs typically require local matching funds. Such funds would be sought from the General Assembly. The General Assembly would also be asked for such appropriations as are necessary to meet the needs for capital improvement for the State’s ports after taking into account the proceeds of park grant and conservation grants. Three factors soften the impact on the State’s finances:

  First: State funds will be leveraged by the Federal matching grants;

  Second: The General Assembly would be compelled to make appropriations anyway to ensure the viability of the State’s ports, but in this case the State would acquire something for its money—a new State park, in addition to enhancement of the State’s port facilities.
Third: The State and Brunswick County will acquire a new facility to enhance the attractiveness of the State and the area for visitors, supporting one of the State’s most important revenue sources and returning the State’s investment in the first year.

- Funds for improvements to turn the property into a functioning park also would be sought from government agencies traditionally supporting such projects, private foundations with an interest in the success of this project, such as the foundation sponsored by Duke Energy, the proprietor of the nuclear plant adjoining the property, and global and regional foundations already invested in the area and interested in preserving the environmental value of those investments.

PAYMENT FLOWS FOR NEW STATE PARK

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION TRUST FUND

NC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NOAA COASTAL AND ESTUARINE LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM

MATCHING

MATCHING

NCDENR PARKS AND RECREATION DIVISION

PURCHASE PRICE

TITLE

NC STATE PORTS AUTHORITY

DEBT REDUCTION

CAPITAL PROJECTS
Supplementary Funding Sources

The Federal government and the State of North Carolina offer several programs for cost-sharing and assistance for land conservation efforts, supplemented by large private foundations. The Federal government has 2226 grant programs; the Department of Interior alone has 270 programs. Most involve some sort of state or local participation.

A major program for parks and recreation facilities is the US Department of Interior National Parks Service’s \textit{Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF)} program. This is funded by offshore oil leasing revenues to provide matching grants to state and local governments for the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation areas and facilities and to pay for additions to the federal recreation system. Sixty percent is used for the state grant program, while 40% is used for federal land acquisition. The LWCF also stimulates non-federal investments in the protection and maintenance of recreation resources. All LWCF grants require a minimum percent match by a non-federal partner.

Grant types include:

\textbf{Planning} grants to States to develop the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP);

\textbf{Acquisition} grants for the acquisition of lands or interests in land;

\textbf{Development or Redevelopment} grants to enhance projects with new or rebuilt recreation facilities; and

\textbf{Combination} grants which include both acquisition and site development.

Other relevant Federal grant programs include:

\textbf{State Wildlife Grants.} Matching grants for design and implementation of habitat and wildlife conservation plans to help states conserve and restore decline native species before listing under the Endangered Species Act is required.

\textbf{Cooperative Endangered Species Fund.} Grants to state for species and habitat conservation on non-federal lands for species listed or proposed under the Endangered Species Act.

\textbf{Forest Legacy.} Grants to state to help private landowners preserve working forest lands that might otherwise be lost to development.

\textbf{North American Wetlands Conservation Fund.} Acquisition, restoration, and enhancement of fragile wetlands that promote flood control increase water quality, improve wildlife habitat, provide public recreation, sustain our cultural heritage, among others.
This list represents only a sample. The Department of Interior and its component services administer 270 grant programs.

The location of the site of the proposed new park in a coastal region and an ecologically significant estuary opens the doors to other specialized programs, such as the Federal Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program managed by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, part of the US Department of Commerce.

The State of North Carolina 2007 Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) Plan has combined target areas for conservation identified by the One North Carolina Naturally program, regional Councils of Government, and The Nature Conservancy’s Mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain Ecoregional Plan in this map of consensus priority project areas.

The CELCP plan offers this comment on the target areas shown on the map:

All of the priority project areas that have been identified are consistent with the national criteria for project areas. All these areas possess high conservation
values and suffer from high conversion rates, all areas can be effectively managed (either actively or passively), all areas directly advance the goals and implementation of the State’s coastal management program and NERR management plan, and all areas are consistent with the State’s approved coastal management program.

Turning to the private sector, there are a number of substantial foundations with a stake in the use of the subject property compatible with their own investments and interests in the area. Duke Energy supports the Duke Energy Foundation, which makes grants for environmental projects in communities in which it has facilities. Its Brunswick Nuclear Plant property adjoins the site of the proposed park. The Nature Conservancy, a global foundation, has purchased and manages several large, environmentally sensitive properties in the area, including the Natural Heritage Area around Boiling Spring Lakes that is the habitat of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and of the Venus fly-trap. The North Carolina Coastal Land Trust has a network of conservation easements in the area, up and down the river. Audubon North Carolina has substantial interests in the area, and manages the important white ibis nesting site at Battery Island, just downriver. All have interests in the success of this project because industrial use of property (for which it is currently zoned) would damage or destroy a large, complex ecosystem that is the foundation of their other investments and holdings and frustrate their conservation efforts.

The nature of the proposed park and its location suggests that the cost of improvements may also be eligible for Federal government grants and could be supplemented by private, donated funds. Such improvements would be made as funds become available. The range of possible sources is immense.
The Next Step—the Cape Fear Maritime Heritage Area

In 1955, the National Park Service, in the report *Our Vanishing Shoreline*, identified the Cape Fear as an area to be preserved and protected from the march of development that was even then consuming important shoreline resources. Then in 1967, the National Park Service recommended the Cape Fear for national monument status, a stepping stone to national seashore status. Again in 1988, the Cape Fear delta was nominated as a potential new national park or seashore by the National Parks Conservation Association in a report, *New Parks: New Promise*.

Save the Cape, Inc., has revived that project to examine the feasibility of a national seashore at the Cape Fear. The map at right shows the area of inquiry.

That investigation, at its current state, shows that all of the undeveloped areas on the east side of the Cape Fear River have come under some sort of State protection or effective private reservation.

On the west side, the picture is not complete. There are a State historic site, many acres of private land under conservation easement or enlightened stewardship, and the *de facto* protection of large areas of the Military Ocean Terminal at Sunny Point held in the natural state as buffer areas (the “blast zone”).

Two large areas remain in the natural state but not protected: the ferry landing forest on the northern edge of the City of Southport, and the 600-acre site on the Cape Fear River owned by the State Ports Authority.
The State reservations are, at best, a conglomeration of sites of different status, purpose, and administration. There are a State park (Carolina Beach), two State historic sites (Brunswick Town and Fort Fisher), a State recreation area (Fort Fisher), a State natural area (Bald Head Island), two sites in the North Carolina National Estuarine Reserve (Masonboro Island and Zeke’s Island), a State coastal reserve (Bald Head Woods), the State Aquarium at Fort Fisher, and the State Maritime Museum in Southport.

Although some of these sites are significant destinations in their own right, such as the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher, others are relatively unknown outside of the area, and even unfamiliar locally due to inaccessibility and lack of visitor facilities.

A national seashore embracing these important natural assets could transform this conglomeration into a whole, identifiable entity that would be much more than the sum of its parts in terms of fulfillment of conservation purpose, efficient administration, and attractiveness as a tourist destination and cornerstone of Brunswick County’s and North Carolina’s recreation and life–style–based economic growth and future prosperity.

But a national seashore is a major undertaking, which would require many years of climbing national bureaucratic ladders and ultimately, an act of Congress. Much the same result can be obtained by the much simpler procedure of creating a similar State entity, the Cape Fear Maritime Heritage Area, perhaps, by assembling the existing State reservations into a new omnibus entity, under coordinated management and sharing of promotional expenses.

The State park proposed hereby would be the western gateway to such a State heritage area. The upland areas of the site on the west bank of the Cape Fear River provide the necessary space for visitor facilities and exhibits, parking, campgrounds, and all the related improvements and amenities found at National Seashores to draw and accommodate visitors. The tour boat dock planned for the southeast corner of the park site would be the base for pontoon boat tours of the shallow inlets, waterways, islands and marshes of the Bald Head Island Natural Area and the other State reservations across the Cape Fear River. Those areas are otherwise inaccessible except by private boat. Tours based at the marina at Carolina Beach State Park on the eastern side of the river to the north are not practical because of a long transit of the Cape Fear River navigation channel necessary to reach the end of the rock barrier extending south from Federal Point (the location of Fort Fisher) and blocking access to the State reservations.
1967 Report by the National Park Service. The National Monument recommended in this report would have had its headquarters and gateway in the Southport vicinity—where the proposed new State park would be.