



**North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources  
Office of the Secretary**

Governor Roy Cooper

Secretary Susi H. Hamilton

TO: Kristi Jones, Chief of Staff to Governor Roy Cooper

FROM: Susi Hamilton, Secretary of Natural and Cultural Resources

RE: Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Budget Concerns

DATE: Friday, June 23, 2017

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The N.C. General Assembly's FY2017-18 budget for the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources shortchanges a number of successful programs that improve quality of life for North Carolinians.

This budget allocates \$18.3 million for the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, which provides grant assistance to local governments, state agencies and non-profits to help preserve and protect the state's water and land resources, provide buffers around military bases, and acquire historic land. This is a \$4.1 million decrease from the current fiscal year, an 18% cut. Numerous worthy projects (\$68 million requested by applicants) will go unfunded, leaving water quality at risk.

In addition, the budget delivers a 13% cut to the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (\$19.7 million down from \$22.7 million), which provides grants to expand and enhance state and local parks. State parks experienced record visitation in 2016 (nearly 20 million), a clear indication of how popular they are.

Last year's devastating wildfires in the N.C. mountains highlighted the serious need for an extra fire crew of five full-time employees to respond to wildfires and perform prescribed burns in State Parks. This budget does not provide funding for this greatly needed additional fire crew. Prescribed burns help prevent

catastrophic wildfires, so this investment would have saved money and lives long-term.

The budget does not fund the Governor's request in the second year of the biennium for \$2.4 million and 23 State Parks, leaving no staff for new visitor centers and other facilities that will be built through the Connect NC bond.

Funding for two important N.C. Arts Council programs – A+ Schools and the SmART initiative was not included in this budget. A+ Schools uses arts instruction to teach the state mandated curriculum with 57 schools in 39 counties. The SmART initiative, creates large-scale projects that utilize the arts to transform downtowns and fuel sustainable economic development. These programs support communities and citizens by providing grant funding for arts programs in rural and economically distressed counties. A study released just this week shows that the non-profit arts and culture sector generates more than \$2 billion annually for North Carolina and is a significant driver of economic development. It is critical that the state's rural areas are given the opportunity to share in that economic windfall.

In addition, a request for \$200,000 for the African American Heritage Commission to complete the planning and design of the African American Monument proposed for the southeast corner of the State Capitol grounds was not included in this budget. Our state's rich African American heritage and community is sadly underrepresented in state facilities. This monument, currently in the planning stage, would help rectify this situation.

The Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has the potential to touch every North Carolina resident, improving their quality of life through the cultural, educational and recreational resources we offer throughout the state. Our grant programs and sites are vital tools to help our local communities in economic development, job creation, tourism and education. These programs have a huge impact in local communities, and the money spent is leveraged many times over in jobs, investments and tax revenues.



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