

Connect NC Overview:

Investing in the growing state of North Carolina's future with the introduction a \$2.85 billion bond that will take advantage of historic low interest rates, will leverage (*and not jeopardize*) the state's positive credit rating and will not raise taxes. Analysts expect interest rates to rise soon. With each .25% increase in rates, it will cost North Carolinas **more** to do these projects in the future. The time is NOW!

Background: North's Carolina's central location on the east coast, growing economy and numerous natural settings and recreational opportunities makes it an ideal place for relocation and tourism. North Carolina State Parks has seen this by welcoming almost 15.6 million visitors in 2014. North Carolina State Parks continues to be ranked and recognized as one of the best State Parks in the United States and was ranked the 3rd most efficiently run system in the country spending only \$3.70 per capita in 2013.

Issue:

With 35 state parks, four recreation areas, 20 state natural areas, seven state lakes, four state rivers, four state Trails and 225,000 total acreage, the ability to modernize facilities to meet the needs and demands of visitors to the parks is critical. The state parks budget, as a percentage of the state budget, was ranked by the National Association of State Budget Officers as being among the lowest in the nation (.08%, #44 of 50). The value of the state park system to North Carolina is much greater. Visitors are expecting and wanting up-dated facilities, technology in the parks, and more outdoor experiential activities. North Carolina state parks are falling behind neighboring states by not being able to meet these needs. For example, there has only a 1% increase (2.2% in 2010 to 3.2% in 2013) in visitors staying in RV/Tent while rental homes have doubled (3.2 in 2012 to 6.2% in 2013) in only 2 years.

Opportunity:

North Carolina's economy is strong with ample credit capacity to borrow and repay a bond with no tax increase. The bond projects would be 100th anniversary gift to our citizens to celebrate the North Carolina State Park System's 100th anniversary in 2016. During the celebration year, North Carolina State Parks will promote your spectacular state assets and encourage support in the growing demand on these assets. An opportunity to foster public pride, optimism and positive messages. Address increased facility's needs and to modernize them to 21st Century standards. Establish legacy for the next 100 years.

Proposed State Park Projects: \$67,260,000 28 projects 30 counties

**Raven Rock State Park, Harnett County – Campground Improvements
\$1,500,000**

This project will introduce family camping at a park located in a rapidly developing county. High above the Cape Fear River, Raven Rock's austere beauty is a testament to the forces that have shaped the land. As the river below rushes to join the sea, nature's elements continue to shape the surface of this natural monument. A number of facilities, including expansion of equestrian trails, a new visitor center and new picnic facilities, were recently added to the park. In addition, mountain bike trails are already in the pipeline for the park. The planned family camping option will expand user opportunities, enhance the visitor experience and increase recreational opportunities.