



HOUSE BILL 353: Authorize State Park System Expansion.

2017-2018 General Assembly

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| Committee: | Senate Rules and Operations of the Senate | Date: | June 28, 2017 |
| Introduced by: | Reps. Dobson, Brisson, Brenden Jones, Hunter | Prepared by: | Billy R. Godwin Staff Attorney |
| Analysis of: | Second Edition | | |

OVERVIEW: House Bill 353 would authorize the North Carolina State Parks System to accept the transfer of three properties as a State Natural Area and to preserve these lands as part of the State Parks System. The bill would also direct the Division of Parks and Recreation of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to study the feasibility and desirability of establishing a State Park on the Black River. The bill would be effective when it becomes law.

CURRENT LAW: The State Parks Act requires General Assembly authorization before the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources can add or remove a park from the State Parks System. All additions must be accompanied by adequate authorization and appropriations for land acquisition, development and operations.

BILL ANALYSIS: House Bill 353 would authorize the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to add the following sites to the State Parks System:

- Bob's Pocket State Natural Area – an approximately 2,900 acre site in McDowell County.
- Warwick Mill Bay State Natural Area – an approximately 1000 acre site in Robeson County.
- Salmon Creek State Natural Area – an approximately 1000 acre site in Bertie County.

The bill would authorize the State to receive donations of land and to purchase other needed lands for these three sites. Funds for land purchases would come from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the federal Land and Water Trust Fund, and other available sources of funding. All of the sites would be acquired with the help of private conservation organizations and additional funds requested from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund or other grants. No appropriations for land acquisition or operating funds are requested in the bill.

In addition, the bill would direct the Division of Parks and Recreation of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to study the feasibility and desirability of establishing a State Park on the Black River and to assess actions the State may take to improve the navigability of the Black River.¹ The Division must report its findings, along with any legislative proposals, to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources on or before March 1, 2018.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This act would be effective when it becomes law.

¹ The Black River is located in Sampson, Bladen, and Pender counties.

Karen Cochrane-Brown
Director



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BACKGROUND: Bob's Pocket State Natural Area and Salmon Creek State Natural Area would be operated with existing staff at nearby state parks. Warwick Mill Bay State Natural Area would be managed by Audubon NC at no cost to the state.

A State Natural Area is part of the State Parks System, but differs from a State Park. A State Park protects important natural resources, but also includes the development of recreational facilities. A State Natural Area is focused on preserving and protecting areas of scientific and ecological value, with more limited recreation, although trails, educational activities, and low-impact recreation can be accommodated.

Staff attorney Nicholas Giddings substantially contributed to this bill summary.