

Greetings from Friends of State Parks

During this school year, Friends of State Parks is focusing attention on getting students outside the classroom into our state parks. Our state parks preserve some of North Carolina's greatest examples of geology, ecology and cultural history. Field trips give children meaningful experiences with these tangible resources. Their increased knowledge and improved attitudes towards history and science can have long-lasting effects.

Schools are finding it increasingly difficult to take students on nature outings and many families lack the resources to do this on their own.

Schools have identified the lack of funds to pay for transporting kids to the state park as an obstacle. Park rangers as environmental educators welcome the opportunity to have school groups come to the park but are not sufficiently staffed to accommodate all the individuals and groups that would like to participate.

In an effort to get underserved kids outside without creating an unrealistic demand on state park naturalists' capacity, Friends of State Parks has designed the Youth in Parks—Environmental Education (YIP-EE) project, envisioned as a partnership between a state park, the park's friends group and a public school. FSP wants Friends groups, some of which are just getting established, to be key players in helping plan and implement a YIP-EE project along with the park staff and school representatives.

It is hoped, where feasible, an additional level of support will come from environmental educators or those seeking environmental education certification to volunteer as assistant group leaders.

This year, FSP is making available to parks with Friends groups mini-grants to pay for transporting kids to the park.

A grant request form with contact information is attached along with planning and implementation guidelines and program objectives. We hope as Park Superintendents and as Park Friends Groups you will review these materials and consider making this opportunity available to an inner-city or underserved school population in your community.

Sincerely,

David Pearson, Executive Director
Friends of State Parks