North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund

ANNUAL REPORT

2026

North Carolina Parks & Recreation Trust Fund

DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION
Brian Strong, Director

NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS
Naturally Wonderful

DNCR North Carolina Department of Natural & Cultural Resources

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES
Josh Stein, Governor | Pamela B. Cashwell, Secretary

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All photos courtesy of N.C. State Parks unless otherwise noted.

Cover photos, from left to right: Rocky Knob Bike Park, Watauga County; Mayo Park Amphitheater, Person County; French Broad River Park, Asheville; Waxhaw Downtown Park, Union County

1.0 Introduction

Cashie River Treehouses, Bertie County, Photo: DNCR – L. Fox

The North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund was established in July 1994 to provide a dedicated funding source for improvements in state parks, matching grants for local parks, and public access to the state's beaches and waterways. PARTF is funded by annual appropriations as well as revenue from personalized license plates and is administered by the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation.

Per N.C. General Statute §143B-135.56, PARTF is allocated as follows:

- 65% for the state parks system or a state recreational forest for capital projects, repairs, and renovations of facilities and land acquisitions.
  - By resolution of the Parks and Recreation Authority, 4% of this allocation is allocated to the DuPont State Recreational Forest annually.
- 30% to provide grants to local governments on a dollar-for-dollar basis to establish or improve parks and recreation projects.
- 5% for the Public Beach and Coastal Waterfront Access Program of Department of Environmental Quality's Division of Coastal Management.
- 3% may be used by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources for the operating expenses associated with managing capital improvements projects, acquiring land, and administering the grants program for local governments.

The nine-member N.C. Parks and Recreation Authority allocates PARTF funding for projects in state parks and grants to local governments. The Division transfers 5% of PARTF revenue to DCM, which administers the Public Beach and Coastal Waterfront Access Program and offers matching grants to local governments in 20 coastal counties.

2.0 North Carolina Parks and Recreation Authority

2025-26 Parks and Recreation Authority Members

Margaret Newbold
Chairperson
Watauga

Doug Auer
Catawba

Amber Brown
Cleveland

Addie Corder
Randolph

Benjamin Curtis
Rockingham

Mavis Gragg
Durham

Lewis Ledford
Forsyth

Clay McCreary
Caldwell

Barnes Sutton
New Hanover

The nine-member N.C. Parks and Recreation Authority oversees PARTF. The Governor appoints five members, including the chair. The General Assembly appoints four members, two by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and two by the Speaker of the House. Members are appointed for 3-year terms.

The Authority is charged with six powers and duties:

- to allocate funds for land acquisition,
- to allocate funds for capital projects,
- to solicit financial and material support,
- to receive public and private donations and funds for deposit into the Trust Fund,
- to develop effective support for parks and recreation,
- and to advise the Secretary of DNCR on any matter referred to the body.

The Parks and Recreation Authority held four meetings during fiscal year 2025-26.

Field of Honor Monument at Triad Park in Kernersville, Forsyth County

3.0 Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Revenue Summary

Table 3-1: PARTF Deposits and Distribution of Revenues, Fiscal Year 2025-26

Revenue	Amount
Recurring Appropriations	$28,000,000
Non-Recurring Revenue	$0
License Plate Fees	$1,863,150
Total PARTF Revenue	**$29,863,150**

Distribution	Amount
State Parks System / DuPont State Recreational Forest *State Parks System: $18,075,567* *DuPont State Recreational Forest: $753,149*	$18,828,716
Local Government Matching Grants (awarded in August 2026)	$8,690,177
Public Beach and Coastal Waterfront Access Program	$1,493,157
Administrative Expenses Reserve	$851,100
Total PARTF Allocation	**$29,863,150**

Table 3-2: Helene Recovery Fund for PARTF – Deposits and Distribution of Revenues, Fiscal Year 2025-26

Revenue	Amount
Appropriation from Session Law 2025-26	$12,250,000
Total	**$12,250,000**

Distribution	Amount
State Parks System / DuPont State Recreational Forest *State Parks System: $7,414,680* *DuPont State Recreational Forest: $308,945*	$7,723,625
Local Governments Matching Grants (awarded in March 2026)	$4,158,875
Administrative Expenses Reserve	$367,500
Total PARTF Allocation	**$12,250,000**

4.0 Local Government Grants

Neuse River Greenway, City of Raleigh

French Broad River Park Playground, City of Asheville

Church Street Park Playground, Town of Morrisville

4.1 Program Description

Parks and Recreation Trust Fund

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fu rovides dollar-for-dollar matching grants to local governments to acquire land for public parks and to build or renovate recreational facilities. N.C. counties and incorporated municipalities are eligible for PARTF grants. Public authorities, as defined by N.C. Gen. Stat. §159-7, are also eligible if they are authorized to acquire parkland or develop facilities for public recreation.

Each year, the Parks and Recreation Authority announces the availability of PARTF grants and the schedule for applying to local government officials. A local government can request a maximum grant amount of $500,000 in PARTF assistance with each grant application.

The Division of Parks and Recreation supports local governments in several ways. The Grants and Outreach Program staff posts a PARTF application guide online where local governments can learn about the program and how to complete an application. The Department of Natural and Cultural Resources contracts with North Carolina State University to provide technical assistance to local governments through Recreation Resources Serv RRS provides advice to local governments on preparing grant applications with consultants in five regional offices. An online webinar is hosted when the funding cycle opens.

The members of the Parks and Recreation Authority vote to select grant recipients. The factors considered by the Authority include but are not limited to: the criteria contained in the PARTF scoring system, the population of the applicant community, the geographic distribution of projects across the state, the grant funds requested in comparison to the funds available, and compliance with prior grant agreements. Applications were due May 1, 2025. The Parks and Recreation Authority met Aug. 22, 2025, to award t grants. *(Table 4-1)*

Helene Recovery Fund for PARTF

The Disaster Recovery Act of 2025 (SL 2025-26, House Bill 1012) was ratified on June 27, 2025, allocating $12.25 million to PARTF for eligible uses in the affected area for state parks and local governments. Of these funds, 65% shall be used for the state parks system or a state recreational forests and 35% shall be used for grants to local government or public authorities. Per statute, the Parks and Recreation Authority shall not impose the maximum grant size set forth in 07 N.C. Admin. Code 13K .0103(2).

Applications were due January 30, 2026. The N.C. Parks and Recreation Authority met March 27, 2026, to award the matching grants. *(Table 4-2)*

E. C arroll Joyner Park, Town of Wake Forest

4.2 Applications and Grant Awards

The PARTF revenue available to local grants for grant cycle 2024-25 was over $9.1 million, which includes returned and withdrawn grant funds. Thirty-eight local governments submitted PARTF applications, requesting $14.7 million in PARTF assistance. The Authority awarded 21 grants with an overall impact of approximately $29.1 million. *(Table 4-1)*

The Helene Recovery revenue available to local grants was over $4 million. Twenty local governments submitted applications, requesting over $9.5 million. The Authority awarded [illegible] grants with an overall impact of approximately $8.6 million.

Table 4-1: PARTF Matching Grants Awarded to Local Governments, Grant Cycle 2024-25

Organization	County	Project	Funds Awarded	Local Matching Funds
Alamance County	Alamance	Carolina Mill Community Park in Burlington	$170,000	$170,000
Town of Angier	Harnett	New Angier Town Park	$500,000	$1,288,340
Chatham County	Chatham	Parker's Ridge Park in Moncure	$500,000	$753,550
City of Graham	Alamance	Bill Cooke Park Expansion	$307,725	$307,725
Harnett County	Harnett	Neills Creek Park in Angier	$500,000	$864,780
Town of Holly Ridge	Onslow	Holly Ridge Municipal Park	$500,000	$1,094,598
Town of Hope Mills	Cumberland	Heritage Park	$500,000	$677,650
Town of Huntersville	Mecklenburg	Fire Station No. 4 Park	$500,000	$6,000,000
Town of Leland	Brunswick	Sturgeon Creek Boardwalk and Dock	$443,108	$1,056,892
City of Marion	McDowell	Peavine Rail Trail	$500,000	$500,000
Town of Mars Hill	Madison	Mars Hill – West Farm Acquisition	$500,000	$1,669,000
Town of Mayodan	Rockingham	Washington Mills Park	$500,000	$784,720
Town of Mooresville	Iredell	Willow Valley Park	$286,125	$286,125
Town of Mount Airy	Surry	Carter Street Park	$500,000	$500,000
Nash County	Nash	Nash County Indoor Recreation Facility Acquisition in Nashville	$500,000	$747,100
City of Rocky Mount	Edgecombe	Stith-Talbert Park Renovation	$500,000	$511,025
Town of Rosman	Transylvania	Rosman Riverfront Park	$301,694	$398,218
Town of Salemburg	Sampson	Love McDaniel Memorial Park	$84,621	$145,244
Town of Sylva	Jackson	Pinnacle Park Improvements	$341,323	$341,323
Town of Spencer	Rowan	Stanback Educational Forest Center	$246,813	$250,000
City of Trinity	Randolph	City-Center Park Phase I	$500,000	$684,055
Town of Wilkesboro	Wilkes	Courtside Gateway Plaza	$500,000	$937,500
		Total Funds:	**$ 9,181,409**	**$19,967,845**

Table 4-2: Helene Recovery Fund Matching Grants Awarded to Local Governments, Fiscal Year 2025-26

Organization	County	Project	Grant Amount	Local Match
Ashe County	Ashe	Family Central Park in Jefferson	$300,000	$300,000
City of Asheville	Buncombe	Azalea Park	$345,000	$ 350,000
Avery County	Avery	Hodge Turbyfill Fields in Newland	$ 987,500	$ 987,500
Town of Banner Elk	Avery	Tate-Evans Park	$204,201	$204,201
Town of Beech Mountain	Watauga	Shane Park	$353,250	$353,250
Buncombe County	Buncombe	Boat Launch Replacements on the French Broad River	$284,368	$284,368
Town of Canton	Haywood	Sorrells Street Park	$403,804	$ 657,573
City of Hendersonville	Henderson	Sullivan Park	$361,762	$361,762
Town of Montreat	Buncombe	Flat Creek	$307,274	$307,274
Town of Seven Devils	Watauga	Repairs on the Otter Falls Trail	$117,716	$118,014
Watauga County	Watauga	Cove Creek Park in Sugar Grove	$494,000	$494,000
		Total Funds:	**$4,158,875**	**$4,417,942**

Davie County Community Park in Mocksville, Davie County

4.3 Examples of Completed Local Government Projects

Cedarock Park in Burlington, Alamance County

Price Landing at Mulberry Park, Town of Shallotte

Beech Bluff County Park Playground, Wake County

Marina, City of Jacksonville

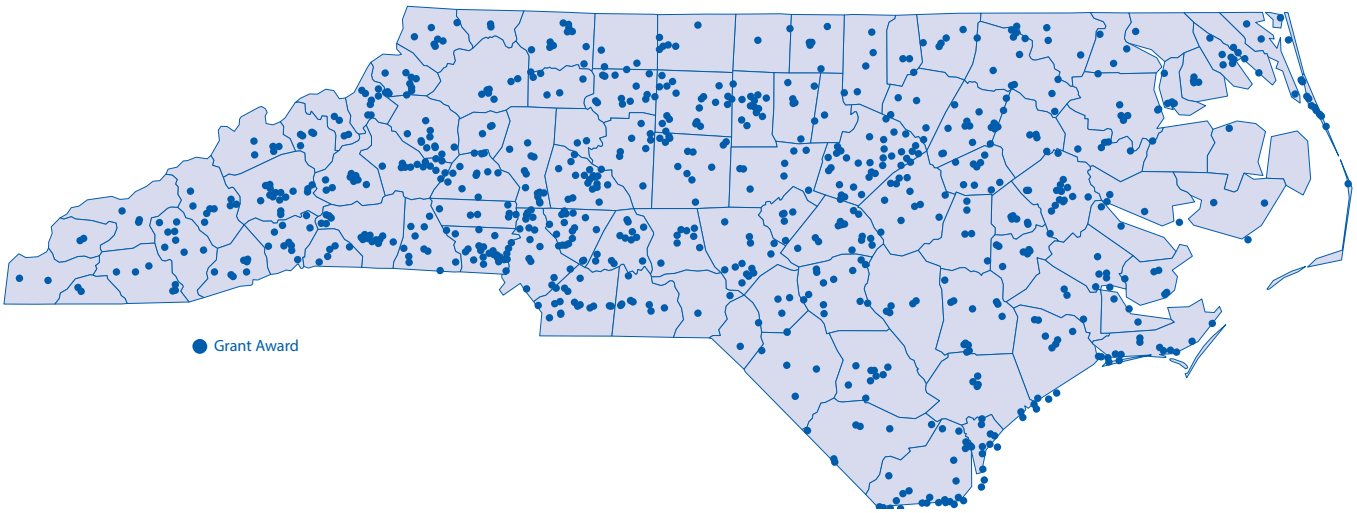
Paddy Mountain Park, Town of West Jefferson

CANOplay Treescape at Davie County Community Park in Mocksville, Davie County

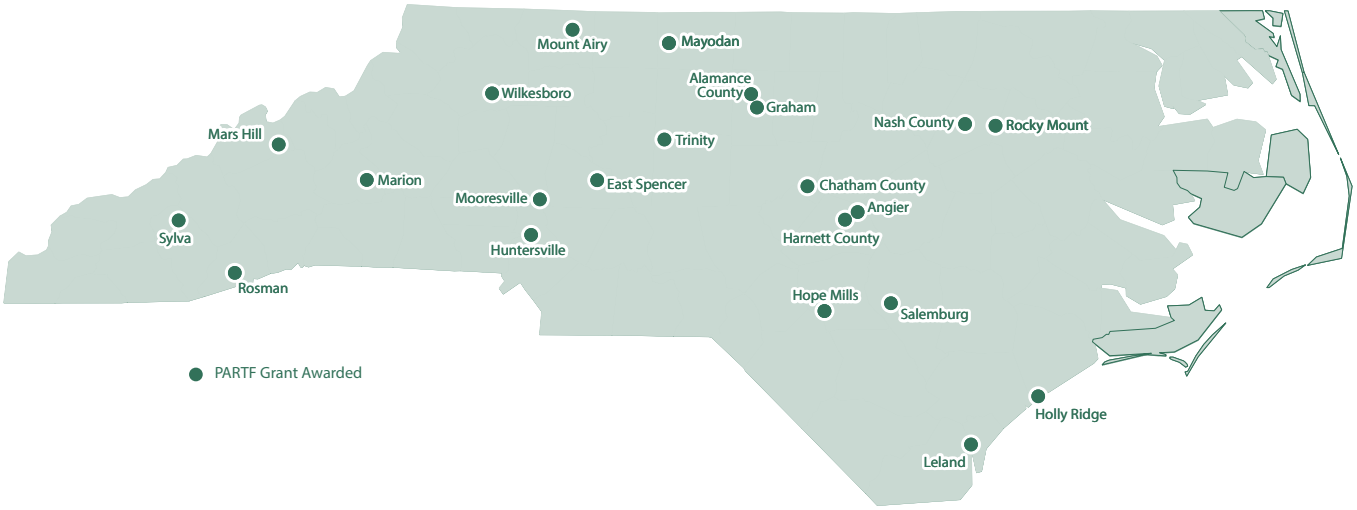
4.4 Geographic Distribution of Grants

Since 1995, the Parks and Recreation Authority has awarded 1,076 matching grants in all 100 counties across North Carolina.

Distribution of PARTF Grants by County, 1995-2025



Distribution of PARTF Grants, Grant Cycle 2024-25



5.0 State Parks Funding

The Parks and Recreation Authority allocates PARTF revenue to capital improvement, maintenance and land acquisition projects for the state parks system. The Division develops priorities for the state parks system and recommends projects for the Authority's approval.

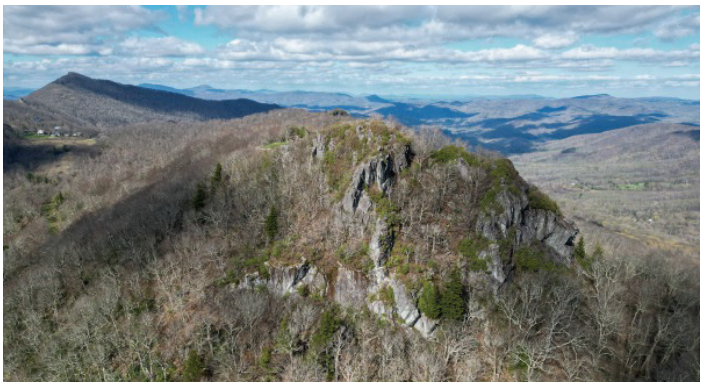
The total amount awarded to state park projects in fiscal year 2025-26 was over $18 million, which includes funds from projects from previous years completed under budget or postponed. *(Tables 5-1 and 5-2)*

The Parks and Recreation Authority allocated $753,149 for projects at DuPont State Recreational Forest (N.C. Gen. Stat. §143B-135.56 (b)(1)). Section 7.0 provides additional information about these projects.

5.1 Land Acquisition

Table 5-1: PARTF Funds for State Parks System Land Acquisition Projects, Fiscal Year 2025-26

State Park	Acres	Funds Approved	PARTF Reallocation/ Prior PARTF	Matching Funds	Total Project Cost	Scope of Work
Chimney Rock State Park	93.1	$485,860	-	-	$485,860	High-quality natural area on the eastern side of the park
Chimney Rock State Park	6	$42,000	-	$113,000	$155,000	Replacement access to Eagle Rock
Haw River State Park	47.04	$2,200,000	-	-	$2,200,000	Connection to existing tracts for visitor access
Lumber River State Park	3,000	$300,000	-	$8,200,000	$8,500,000	Protects Lumber River and provides potential site for paddle-in camping
Mount Jefferson State Natural Area	59.87	$598,700	-	-	$598,700	High-quality natural area
Pisgah View State Park	125.79	$754,740	-	-	$754,740	Protection of ridgeline and water quality of headwater streams
Wilderness Gateway State Trail	3,297	$2,000,000	-	$5,709,160	$7,709,160	Protects high-quality natural area and secures large section of land for the state trail
William B. Umstead State Park	26	$1,275,000	$1,975,000	$2,000,000	$5,250,000	Land exchange to create safer access to the park
Totals:	**6,654.8**	**$7,656,300**	**$1,975,000**	**$16,022,160**	**$25,653,460**	



Peak Mountain tract added to Grandfather Mountain State Park

Morgan Heirs property added to Lumber River State Park

5.2 Construction, Renovation, and Interpretation and Education

Table 5-2: PARTF Funds for State Parks System Capital Improvement and Interpretation and Education Projects, Fiscal Year 2025-26

Park	Project	PARTF Request	Prior PARTF	Total Cost
Mount Mitchell State Park	Fix of septic system	$3,900,000	-	$3,900,000
Hammocks Beach and Carolina Beach state parks	Dredging and repairs to Cow Channel and Carolina Beach Marina	$2,500,000	$2,000,000	$4,500,000
Systemwide	Major maintenance funding for ongoing repair work and emergency repairs	$1,794,267	-	$1,792,967
Systemwide	Demolition projects throughout the system	$100,000	-	$100,000
Systemwide	Disaster recovery projects	$500,000	-	$500,000
Systemwide	Planning efforts Strive for Access and design strategies	$200,000	-	$200,000
Systemwide	Statewide exhibit and sign repair and replacements	$250,000	-	$250,000
Carolina Beach State Park	Renovation of exhibit hall and replacement of exhibits at Carolina Beach State Park	$250,000	-	$250,000
Hanging Rock State Park	Renovations to the Vade Mecum Hotel	$800,000	-	$800,000
Pettigrew State Park	Flood inundation mapping stations	$125,000	-	$125,000
	Totals:	**$10,419,267**	**$2,000,000**	**$10,419,267**

5.3 Helene Recovery Funding for PARTF for State Parks

The Helene Recovery revenue available to state parks was $7.4 million. The Authority approved a motion that the funds will be used to pay for any capital or maintenance cost related to Helene recovery based on priorities set by the Division.

6.0 Public Beach and Coastal Waterfront Access Program

6.1 Program Description

North Carolina's Public Beach and Coastal Waterfront Access Program was established by the General Assembly in 1981. The program began receiving 5% of the revenues from PARTF during fiscal year 1996-97. The program's enabling legislation (N.C. Gen. Stat. § 113A-134.1) states that public interest would be served by providing increased access to coastal waters, public parking facilities, or other related public uses.

The program, administered by the Division of Coastal Management, offers matching grant funds primarily to local governments throughout the 20 Coastal Area Management Act counties. Since 1981, over 497 public access sites have been acquired or improved at a cost of over $53.8 million in grant funds. Local governments are responsible for construction, operation, and long-term maintenance of the facilities. While most of the early projects were located along the oceanfront, more projects are now designed to improve access to estuarine shorelines, coastal rivers, and urban waterfronts.

DCM sends pre-application requests for proposals, or RFPs, to local governments in the 20 coastal counties annually. Criteria developed by the Coastal Resources Commission are used to select grant recipients. Local governments are given 18 months to complete projects. Extensions may be granted for unforeseen events and delays, such as hurricanes, with a 3-year maximum life of a contract.

Local governments are required to obtain match grants that are 10-25% of the project costs based on the type of project being funded and the community's economic status per the North Carolina Department of Commerce's Tier designations, as outlined by N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143B-437.08. The required grant match may include federal and other state funds, provided these funds are not already being used as match funds for any other state or federal program.

6.2 Types of Projects Funded

Communities can apply for the following types of projects:

Land Acquisition/Easement

- Purchase of land for future public access facilities
- Purchase of easements for public access

Construction Projects

- Facilities such as dune crossovers, boardwalks, and piers that provide access to the water
- Support facilities such as parking areas, restrooms, and other facilities
- **Boat launch facilities:** Boat launch and ramp facilities, whether motorized or not, provided that pedestrian access is still a major component of the project

Rehabilitation

- **Urban waterfront access sites:** Improved public access to deteriorating or underutilized urban waterfronts through reconstruction or rehabilitation
- **Reconstruction or relocation of existing damaged public access facilities:** Primarily for sites not originally funded by this program or for improvements to any sites at least 15 years old

Roanoke Marshes Lighthouse, Town of Manteo

Kayak Launch, City of Southport

6.3 Awards for Fiscal Year 2024-25

State appropriations are allocated to DCM through PARTF. The amount transferred from the PARTF to DCM during fiscal year 2025-26 was around $1.4 million. The amount budgeted for grants in addition to this allocation includes an added $1.3 million of funds unused from previous fiscal years and returned funds from previous grants. Table 6-1 provides the list of local governments that have been awarded grant funding. Additional information on current and past grants awarded can be found here.

Table 6-1: Public Beach and Coastal Waterfront Access Program Communities Awarded or Prioritized, Fiscal Year 2025-26
Funding Based on Earlier Deposits and Other Available Funds

Local Government	Project Description	Grant Amount	Total Project Cost
Atlantic Beach	Beaufort and Greenville Avenue Dune Crossovers	$118,817	$247,634
Carolina Beach	1810 Canal Drive Site Improvements	$132,322	$176,430
Carteret County	Straits Water Access	$225,000	$300,000
Carteret County	West Beaufort Water Access	$300,000	$400,000
Dare County	Old Lighthouse Beach Restrooms	$114,010	$393,010
*Elizabeth City	Causeway Park Restoration	$378,000	$478,000
Indian Beach	Ocean Club Neighborhood Boardwalk Replacement	$179,863	$239,818
Kill Devil Hills	Hayman Boulevard Dune Crossover	$77,928	$105,254
Manteo	Roanoke Marshes Lighthouse Pier and Deck Replacement	$87,386	$120,299
Morehead City	10th Street Site Improvement and Living Shoreline	$205,084	$273,445
Nags Head	June Street Dune Crossover, Gazebo and Shower-Station	$207,669	$277,259
Oak Island	SE 31st Kayak Launch	$32,000	$43,000
Sunset Beach	Concord Street Dune Crossover Extension	$54,000	$72,000
Topsail Beach	Majestic Oaks Park Boardwalk	$392,175	$522,900
	Totals:	**$2,854,254**	**$4,449,049**

**Denotes communities that are Tier 1 jurisdictions. $378,000 (13%) of the grant awards are proposed for Tier 1 communities.*

The above project list does not include any direct partnerships with other state agencies. The only non-award use of the funds is providing access site signs made by the Department of Adult Correction. Signs are provided to local governments for new sites and for replacement of weathered signs.

7.0 DuPont State Recreational Forest

Since 2017, in keeping with N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143B-135.56, the Parks and Recreation Authority allocated 4% of the annual appropriation for state parks for capital projects, repairs, renovations, and land acquisitions at DuPont State Recreational Forest. The amount transferred was $751,761. An additional amount of $308,945 was transferred from the Helene Recovery Fund. In fiscal year 2025-26, state forest staff made progress on capital projects supported by PARTF funds, expending a total of $394,408. Table 7-1 provides a summary of expenditures.

Table 7-1: DuPont State Recreational Forest PARTF Expenditures, Fiscal Year 2025-26

Capital Project	Expenditures
Conservation Road Renovation and Gravel	$96,947
Fawn Lake Dock	$18,472
Grassy Creek Bridge	$40,565
Guion Farm Residence	$11,757
Maintenance Facility Restroom Design and Construction	$145,756
Trail Renovations (Burnt Mount Trail, Little River Trail and Mine Mountain Trail)	$80,911
Total	**$394,408**