

1997

**HOUSE
COMMERCE –
TRAVEL & TOURISM**

MINUTES

HOUSE
SUB-COMMITTEE ON
TRAVEL AND TOURISM

1997 - 1998

Representative Edgar V. Starnes
Chairman
Representative Thomas Wright
Ranking Minority Member

Staff Counsel
Walker Reagan

Committee Clerk
Pattie S. Fleming

HOUSE SUB-COMMITTEE ON TRAVEL & TOURISM
1997-98 SESSION

MEMBER _____(Clerk)_____	TEL.	OFFICE	SEAT
Edgar V. Starnes, Chairman Pattie Fleming	5-3012	418A	88
Lanier M. Cansler Barbara Cansler	5-3007	419A	53
Stan Fox Sue Buehlmann	3-5661	1019	46
Robert Grady Peggy Murray	5-3024	402	37
Jean Preston Alice Falcone	5-3026	403	38
Nurham Warwick Carolyn Honeycutt	3-5886	1015	113
Cynthia B. Watson Ebern Watson	5-3015	417C	19
Michael S. Wilkins Lillie Pearce	3-4948	1204	32
Thomas Wright Clarestene Stewart	3-5877	538	93



Edgar V. Starnes
Chairman



Lanier M. Cansler



Stan Fox



Robert Grady



Jean R. Preston



Nurham Warwick



Cynthia B. Watson



Michael S. Wilkins



Thomas Wright

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AGENDA

HOUSE SUB-COMMITTEE ON TRAVEL AND TOURISM

February 26, 1997
Room 415 LOB
10:00 a.m.

OPENING REMARKS

Representative Edgar V. Starnes, Chairman of Travel and Tourism
Sub-Committee of Standing Committee on Commerce

PRESENTATION: Mr. Gordon Clapp

Director of North Carolina Department of Travel and Tourism

ADJOURNMENT

MINUTES

HOUSE SUB-COMMITTEE ON TRAVEL AND TOURISM

February 26, 1997

The House Sub-Committee on Travel and Tourism met in Room 415 of the Legislative Office Building on Wednesday, February 26, 1997 at 10:00 a.m. Representative Edgar V. Starnes, Chairman, presided and the following committee members were present: Representatives Cansler, Fox, Grady, Preston, Warwick, Watson, and Wilkins. Also present were Walker Reagan, Staff Counsel, Chris Reavis, Page, and the Sergeant-at-Arms representative.

The Chairman called the meeting to order and explained that today's meeting was being held as an organizational meeting. He asked each member in attendance to present some of the natural areas of attraction in their district. The list was varied - from the coastlands to the ski slopes - all holding natural beauty and thus attractive to the tourist visiting our state.

Chairman Starnes introduced Gordon Clapp, Director of Travel and Tourism for the State of North Carolina, and his assistant, Lynn Minges. Mr. Clapp presented an overview of the goals of his department as we move toward the year 2000. He stated that tourism is the 2nd largest industry in our state, but to keep it at this level North Carolina must remain competitive. The surrounding states spend two to three times more money on marketing their tourist industry than North Carolina. "Tourism 2000" will meet Thursday and ask the General Assembly for funding to keep North Carolina competitive with our neighboring states. On March 12, 1997 a Gala Reception will be hosted at the History Museum by Travel and Tourism. They plan, not only to entertain the members of the General Assembly, but also to inform them of the workings of the Department of Travel and Tourism.

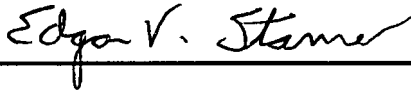
Thematic trails will be used to promote North Carolina worldwide. Handmade craft trails, Civil War trails, botanical trails, writers trails, etc. will encourage folks to vacation in North Carolina. The international market is also a lucrative field to tap as Europeans tend to come and stay longer and spend more money than our local people do. Marketing has been carried on in Germany and Great Britain with an increase in tourists from 40,000 to a projected 90,000 in 1998. Protection and preservation of our heritage in North Carolina is of utmost

importance. 85 of our 100 counties have something in their area that can provide a strong tourism base, but it must be protected and preserved or it can be destroyed.

Mr. Clapp distributed packets from his department for each member present and entertained questions from committee members. Representative Warwick voiced concern about the destruction at Topsail Island from the recent hurricanes and asked if funds might be made available for tourist housing for the upcoming tourist season upon which Topsail is greatly dependent. Mr. Clapp responded that the lingering perception left by CNN and the news media is that North Carolina is not ready for tourists following the recent hurricanes, so North Carolina needs to respond more quickly to give a positive image and encourage tourists to return to North Carolina.

Representative Watson asked about the impact of the hog industry on tourism. The perception is being given out that North Carolina is odiferous. Mr. Clapp said that he was very concerned about the hog factor in relation to tourism. We are living in a small world with instant communication and North Carolina could develop an undesirable image for tourist.

There being no further questions Chairman Starnes thanked Mr. Clapp for his informative presentation and adjourned the meeting.



Representative Edgar V. Starnes, Chairman



Pattie S. Fleming, Clerk

VISITOR REGISTRATION SHEET

Travel and Tourism
Name of Committee

Feb. 26, 1997
Date

VISITORS: Please sign below and return to Committee Clerk.

NAME

FIRM OR STATE AGENCY AND ADDRESS

Bruce W. Clapp

Travel & Tourism Division

Dynan Mingo

Travel & Tourism Div.

Curt Wilhams

Office of Governor

John Bowditch

Lebanon P.A.

D. O. McNeil

SCENIC NC

L. O. McNeil

SCENIC NC

L. Wainer

EGHS

AGENDA

HOUSE SUB-COMMITTEE ON TRAVEL AND TOURISM

April 9, 1997
Room 415 LOB
10:00 a.m.

OPENING REMARKS

Representative Edgar V. Starnes, Chairman of Travel and Tourism
Sub-Committee of Standing Committee on Commerce

PRESENTATION: Mr. Phil McKnelly

Director of Division of Parks and Recreation for the
State of North Carolina

Mr. McKnelly will give a presentation on North Carolina State Parks and Recreation
Areas

ADJOURNMENT

MINUTES

HOUSE SUB-COMMITTEE ON TRAVEL AND TOURISM

April 9, 1997

The House Sub-Committee on Travel and Tourism met in Room 415 of the Legislative Office Building on Wednesday, April 9, 1997 at 10:00 a.m. Representative Edgar V. Starnes, Chairman, presided and the following committee members were present: Representatives Cansler, Fox, Grady, Preston, Warwick, Wilkins, and Wright. Also present were Walker Reagan, Staff Counsel and Courtney Vinson, Page.

The Chairman called the meeting to order and introduced Mr. Phil McKnelly, Director of Division of Parks and Recreation for the State of North Carolina. Mr. McKnelly presented an overview of the N.C. State Parks and Recreation Areas for the committee.

The North Carolina parks system is 82 years old. The first purchase was of Mount Mitchell and since that time 33 units have been added to the park system that employ a full time park ranger. There are many others without staff.

In 1933 an Act was passed to provide for the management and preservation of North Carolina heritage. Historically, our park system has been neglected and underfunded. From 1916-1969 no general funds were used to acquire a park. Interested, private citizens donated land. Fort Macon was donated by the Federal Government.

In 1993 the first park referendum ever was held in the State of N.C. and 35 million dollars, which equals half the total investment that has been made into the park system up to that time, was allotted to the Park System from the Bond Referendum. It put the Park System in the best position ever financially. Much of the money had to go "underground" to fix water systems and things that were not visible to the average visitor. The Park System made a commitment to the General Assembly and the public to be "visitor friendly" with enough of the money that the public can observe it "at work" in the parks. The referendum passed with 57% of the votes and beat the university system by 3%.

The U.S. Forest Service did a study in 1990 and for each 12 hour stay in N.C. the average visitor spends \$26.00 in the community. People come from other states because of the natural beauty in North Carolina. N.C. has a wider range than any other state - extending from Mt. Mitchell to Jockey's Ridge. The Blue Ridge Parkway had over 19 million visitors from 1990 - 94.

The average park is 2,700 acres in size. For the first time in 10 years there has been a decline in attendance at the parks due to Hurricane Fran. Fourteen parks were closed and 4 are still partially closed. On an average they receive 337,000 visits a year. Kerr Lake edged out Fort Macon this year with 1.3 million visitors and Jordan Lake had over 1 million visitors.

The pressing needs at this time are operational needs. Trained personnel, rangers and superintendents, are needed to run the parks. At present there is 1 ranger per 88,000 visits each year or 1100 acres per ranger. Overwhelming odds for the staff. The first thing to suffer is educational. So many school groups visit and request programs in ecology and the role of environment. Rangers are trained as police officers, first responders, EMT workers, search and rescue, and in the field of education. Underpaid and overworked - parks rely on the dedication of their rangers and superintendents to offset the small salaries.

Mr. McKnelly summed up his presentation by telling the committee that some of N.C.'s parks are just "loved to death" and that the park system would like visitors to deflect to Merchant's Mill Pond, Jones Lake and South Mountain. He used the Travel and Tourism Committee as an opportunity to once again thank the General Assembly for their treatment of the park system.

Representative Starnes thanked Mr. McKnelly for coming and asked for questions from the committee.

Representative Fox asked how the parks captured their numbers for the visitor count. Mr. McKnelly responded with numeric counters across entrances and also they used interns at random times to do a head count in the cars. The zoo has the best figures because they have turnstiles.

Representative Wright asked what the ratio of staff to visitor is on a national scale. Mr. McKnelly answered with monetary figures. N.C. spends about \$2 per person on parks. 11/100s of a percent of state budget goes to parks. Vermont is the only state lower. \$5.50 is the average spent on parks and Kentucky has the highest expenditure of \$15 - \$16 per person on their park system.

Representative Cansler asked about acquiring the Duke Power property above Asheville and if N.C. could maintain it. A bill has been introduced to acquire the property. The area is so unique and significant that it warrants an exception to all rules. Governor Hunt and Hugh Morton flew over it the day before and Gov. Hunt promises to find money in the budget next year to acquire it. An attempt is being made to get matching money. 1 ¼ million has been put up already by a private partnership. Hopefully more will be coming.

Representative Starnes adjourned the meeting.

Edgar V. Starnes

Pattie Fleming, clerk

VISITOR REGISTRATION SHEET

4-9-97

Travel and Tourism 10:00 Room 415

VISITORS: PLEASE SIGN BELOW AND RETURN TO COMMITTEE CLERK

NAME

FIRM OR AGENCY

1. TRMignelly
2. Randall Porter
3. Natalie Haskins
4. Don Holman
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EHNR / DPR
NCADA
Charlotte Chamber
CCNC / Curran Club

April/May 1997

Vol. 5, No. 24

ECO-TOURISM

By Cheryl Runyon and Laura Loyacono

Eco-tourism is a growing segment in the tourism industry.

Each year, thousands of travelers leave home in search of nature. They head to parks to hike and camp or to nature preserves to watch birds and wildlife. These "eco-tourists" are one of the fastest growing segments in the tourism industry. In 1994, worldwide nature tourism sales totaled \$238 billion. Eco-tourism offers new opportunities for economic development in rural communities and challenges to state legislators. Private land owners and entrepreneurs have opportunities to develop environment-related activities (rafting, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, hiking and birding). Legislators must consider land use planning and liability issues, provide funding for development grants, and evaluate the ability of the state to develop itself as a tourist destination.

An ideal eco-tourism trip has been described as one that:

- Provides first-hand experience of the natural or cultural environment;
- Involves experiencing nature on nature's, not the visitor's, terms;
- Accepts that access to and use of natural and cultural resources must be limited;
- Includes local involvement from the planning through the delivery of eco-tours;
- Promotes environmental ethics and provides educational benefits to participants;
- Offers economic benefits to the tourism industry;
- Directs a portion of the revenues to the maintenance and enhancement of the natural- or cultural-resource base.

Roadblocks to eco-tourism development include potential conflicts with landowners over state regulation of private lands and natural resources; conflicts between state agencies' missions (economic development vs. resource protection); the local public's perception of eco-tourists and whether they think the benefits from economic development outweigh the increases in traffic, pollution and disruption of traditional life; and the possibility that the fragile ecology will be "over-appreciated" and damaged by too many tourists. Although there is a natural tension between using and protecting a natural resource, eco-tourism supporters believe the interest in and the financial support provided to use the resource will educate tourists about conservation and resource protection, if for no other reason than to ensure future visits.

Examples of programs in the states include:

- **OKLAHOMA's** "Native America Tourism" campaign in the Panhandle region involves local communities sharing management responsibilities for cultural and natural areas with nonprofit organizations that have acquired tall grass prairie eco-systems. The state program links the privately owned lands to state-owned lands.
- **OREGON's** Department of Tourism publishes a wildlife-viewing guide.
- The **NEBRASKA** Games and Parks Commission and the Department of Economic Development coordinate with public and private partners to promote the annual migration of sandhill cranes to tourists. The commission also promotes canoeing in general and canoe trips on the Niobrara River, a national scenic river.
- **WASHINGTON** publishes seasonal guides for outdoor experiences such as salmon fishing, wind-surfing and whale watching.

State programs provide grant funding, publications, partnerships and task forces to promote eco-tourism.

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