

NC State Parks Offering First Day Hikes on Jan. 1

Written by Staff Reports

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State parks in North Carolina are creating a new tradition for New Year's Day by offering First Day Hikes on trails across the state, according

to the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation.

First Day Hikes guided by rangers and volunteers will be held at 28 state parks. All state parks and state recreation areas will be open on the holiday with cold-weather recreation opportunities as well as warm visitor centers with exhibit halls presenting cultural and natural history.

"Connecting with the outdoors brings a sense of rejuvenation that's especially appropriate on New Year's Day, and state parks are the perfect place for that experience," said Lewis Ledford, state parks director. "We would hope that exploring our natural areas on Jan. 1 will become a tradition for every citizen."

Detailed information about scheduled hikes in North Carolina's state parks can be found under "Education" on the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation website, www.ncparks.gov.

First Day Hikes are being promoted in North Carolina in concert with a national effort by America's State Parks and the National Association of State Park Directors. News about hiking opportunities in all 50 states along with tips on winter hiking can be found on the America's State Parks website, www.americasstateparks.org. The effort promotes a healthy lifestyle as well as appreciation of natural resources.

"Studies have proven that getting outdoors is one good way to relax and recharge the body, mind and spirit," said Phil McKnelly, NASPD executive director. "We hope that hiking along a trail in a state park will become part of an individual's or family's regular exercise routine."

For more information locally, please call the Watauga County Parks and Recreation department at 828-264-9511.