

N.C. Department of Cultural and Natural Resources

Strategic Plan

2023-25



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1. Strategic Plan Executive Summary

The Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) manages, promotes, and enhances the things that people love in North Carolina – its diverse arts and culture, rich history, spectacular natural areas.

With 28 historic sites, seven history museums, two art museums, four science museums and two outdoor science education centers, three aquariums, Jennette's Pier, 42 state parks and recreation areas, the N.C. Zoo, the nation's first state-supported Symphony, the State Library, the State Archives, the N.C. Arts Council, the African American Heritage Commission, State Preservation Office, Office of State Archaeology, and Division of Land and Water Stewardship, DNCR manages the treasures of the state. These things unite North Carolinians, create a shared identity, and provide common ground.

DNCR's mission is to improve the quality of life in North Carolina by creating opportunities to experience excellence in the arts, history, libraries, and nature by stimulating learning, inspiring creativity, preserving the state's history, conserving the state's natural heritage, encouraging recreation and cultural tourism, and promoting economic development.

DNCR's vision is to be the leader in using the state's natural and cultural resources to build the social, cultural, educational and economic future of North Carolina. Every day, DNCR's places, programs, and ideas strengthen education, improve public health, enhance quality of life, and support robust economic growth across North Carolina.

DNCR anchors its strategic goals around Governor Cooper's priorities:

- Positioning North Carolina to create new jobs and foster economic growth and recovery;
- Strengthening our education and workforce development systems to ensure students and jobseekers are prepared for the jobs of today and tomorrow;
- Promoting healthier, cleaner and safer communities;
- Advancing Equity and Diversity; and
- Ensuring an effective and accountable, well-run state government

DNCR's goals for the next biennium include:

- Goal 1 - Expand educational opportunities for children and families by increasing access to our state's innovative, interactive, and inspirational natural and cultural sites, programs, and services.
- Goal 2 - Boost economic growth through initiatives to support rural communities, and other efforts.
- Goal 3 - Preserve, enhance, and expand North Carolina's natural and cultural resources in an effective, efficient, collaborative, and customer-friendly manner.
- Goal 4 - Promote diversity, equity, accessibility, and cultural inclusion in departmental programs, recruitment, administration, and community engagement.
- Goal 5 – Evaluate the impact of climate change and integrate climate change mitigation, adaption, education, and resiliency practices into DNCR programs and operations.

These goals will place the department at the forefront in providing high quality non-formal education programs, boosting workforce development and rural economies, building communities' resiliency to natural disasters, strengthening public health, and improving quality of life. Across the department, staff will pursue these goals and objectives through creative collaborative partnerships that efficiently leverage state resources with those from federal and local governments, nonprofits, and private entities.

DNCR used the following methodology to create this strategic plan:

- Senior leadership used the existing vision, mission, and values;
- Senior leadership revised the department's goals to align with Governor Cooper's goals and "mission statement" for the state, and to reflect current performance goals for all DNCR employees;
- All divisions, collaboratively with designated Goal Champions, reviewed DNCR's Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats analysis, goals, objectives, measures, highlights, and opportunities, and submitted updates;
- A team reviewed and synthesized the information submitted by divisions to update department objectives, measures, and milestones;
- Strategies, initiatives and targets are separately tracked in the DNCR annual plan;
- Senior leadership reviewed and revised the draft strategic plan (including the DNCR IT strategic plan) and approved the final version of the plan; and
- The department shared the final plan with all employees and featured it on the DNCR website.

2. Mission, Vision, and Values

Agency Mission Statement

Our mission is to improve quality of life in North Carolina by creating opportunities to experience excellence in the arts, history, libraries and nature in North Carolina by:

- stimulating learning
- inspiring creativity
- preserving the state's history
- conserving the state's natural heritage
- encouraging recreation and cultural heritage tourism
- promoting economic development

Agency Vision Statement

Our vision is to be the leader in using the state's natural and cultural resources to build the social, cultural, educational and economic future of North Carolina.

Agency Values

Accountability

Accepts full responsibility for oneself and for one's contribution as a team member; displays honesty and truthfulness; confronts problems quickly; displays a strong commitment to organizational success and inspires others to commit to goals; demonstrates a commitment to delivering on their public duty and presenting oneself as a credible representative of the agency and state, to maintain the public's trust.

Innovation & Creativity

Applies creative problem-solving skills to their work to develop solutions to problems; recognizes and demonstrates the value in taking calculated risks and learning from mistakes; develops multiple alternatives and understands the feasibility of each; effectively shares and implements their ideas. Continually seeks imaginative, innovative, and efficient solutions to business problems, both old and new. Recognizes and appreciates the diversity of thoughts and ideas.

Professionalism

Exhibits courteous, conscientious, and businesslike manner in work-related activities and when communicating with others in the workplace. Is knowledgeable about aspects of one's job. Acts for the public good without regard to convenience or self-interest. Is considered by others to be trustworthy and dependable in carrying out one's job responsibilities. Is respectful and cooperative when interacting with others in the workplace. Upholds behavioral and ethical standards relevant to one's job and/or profession. Honors commitments.

Customer Service

Consistently demonstrates a strong commitment to providing services to external and internal customers. Establishes and manages long lasting relationships with stakeholders. Proactively identifies customer needs and requirements with relevant insight into consumer success, delivers quality service, and continuously improves performance of self and others. Develops, implements, and evaluates work processes which are both efficient and effective from the customers' perspectives. Addresses immediate business problems with valued solutions.

Diversity & Inclusion

Demonstrates an open-minded approach to understanding people, regardless of their sex, age, race, color, national origin, religion, ethnicity, disability status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, or other characteristics; treats people fairly with dignity and respect; effectively builds an inclusive and equitable work environment, composed of people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse perspectives, where everyone has access to the same opportunities, feels welcomed and valued, and is allowed to grow using their skills, abilities, and knowledge to succeed.

Safety & Health

Consistently demonstrates a strong commitment to providing state employees with a safe and healthy workplace. Proactively identifies and reduces, or takes action to reduce, risks and hazards and abides by regulatory requirements. Understands the importance of safe work practices and personal protective equipment, enables assigned employees to do the same, and acts to correct unsafe conditions, not waiting for others to correct issues. Develops, implements, and evaluates work processes (utilizes Hazard Recognition practices) that address immediate risk and improves systems to address future risk. Complies with state and agency safety requirements for the position, including training, medical clearance, use of personal protective equipment, injuries/illness reporting requirements, and medical treatment for work-related injuries/illness.

Teamwork & Collaboration

Cooperates with others to accomplish common goals. Articulates and enforces the norms of teamwork and creates commitments through the practice of collaboration. Works with interested parties and other employees to achieve shared goals. Treats others with dignity and respect. Maintains a friendly

demeanor. Values the contributions of others. Communicates confidently and clearly using visual, written, and verbal methods. Understands, respects, and responds non-judgmentally to those different from them. Builds effective teamwork. Uses negotiation and persuasion to mobilize others to work toward a common goal.

3. Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures

| Goal 1 - Expand educational opportunities for children and families by increasing access to the state’s innovative, interactive, and inspirational natural and cultural sites, programs, and services. | |
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| Objectives | Performance Measures or Milestones |
| Objective 1.1 - Increase on-site visitation across divisions/sites through creation of new programs and exhibits, and targeted initiatives. | <p>Milestone 1.1.1 Assess existing programming, exhibits, update content for the exhibits, and create a tour script for guides to interpret the permanent exhibitions for visitors, educators, and student tours</p> <p>Milestone 1.1.2 Successful implementation of new programs and exhibits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NC Music: All-inclusive initiative to capture and promote authentic and compelling stories in NC (both past and present) as a cultural asset to residents and visitors • Continue funding to Museum of Natural Sciences for the Dinosaur Lab and Exhibit to display Dueling Dinosaurs and paleontology work on the fossils • The Museum of Natural Sciences will develop and implement a DNA-framed learning opportunity menu to advance the race equity goals of the State called, “Statewide Race: Are We So Different?” • America250: Develop innovative and inclusive DNCR programming and resources for the America 250th commemorative period. Foster and support programming with partners across the state |
| Objective 1.2 - Increase engagement with DNCR programs and sites through expanded online outreach, distance learning opportunities, live-streaming, social media, and traveling exhibits. | <p>Measure 1.2.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase web traffic and social media growth by 20% • Marketing Digital Production of Online Content: Reach schools in all 100 counties • Ongoing support to serve libraries in at least 62 counties in NC, and to ensure NC Cardinal continues to meet the needs of their communities by evaluating whether more services are needed <p>Milestone 1.2.2 Partner with Department of Public Instruction to use DNCR educational resources</p> |

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| <p>Objective 1.3 – Expand interactions with schools through partnerships and programs.</p> | <p>Measure 1.3.1 Arts Council A+ Schools: Maintain the level of training and support for current network and recruit an additional 3 to 5 schools each year</p> <p>Milestone 1.3.2 Division of Parks and Recreation (DPR) Student Curriculum: Initiate pilot program and expand each year to reach every North Carolina fourth grader</p> |
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Goal 2 – Boost economic growth through initiatives to support rural communities, and other efforts.

| Objectives | Performance Measures or Milestones |
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| <p>Objective 2.1 - Enable divisions to work collaboratively in economically distressed counties.</p> | <p>Measure 2.1.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband adoption to reach 10% of tier 1 and tier 2 counties • Digital access for residents of rural and underserved areas <p>Measure 2.1.2 Initiate at least 2 historic preservation surveys</p> <p>Measure 2.1.3 Reach 10 to 12 counties to provide capacity building assistance to rural counties for grant writing, networking, potential partnerships</p> <p>Milestone 2.1.4 Enhance partnerships with the outdoor recreation industry</p> |
| <p>Objective 2.2 - Engage young people in the department’s work by expanding programs that provide paid positions and internships.</p> | <p>Milestone 2.2.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Conservation Corps in State Parks: Implement programming to serve teens and young adults • Coordinate and add to internship programs across the Department • Funding for Commission on Volunteerism |

Goal 3 – Preserve, enhance, and expand North Carolina’s natural and cultural resources in an effective, efficient, collaborative, and customer-friendly manner.

| Objectives | Performance Measures or Milestones |
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| <p>Objective 3.1 - Increase staffing in programs and sites stretched thin by growth in visitation and stagnant or declining staff levels.</p> | <p>Milestone 3.1.1 Sea Turtle Assistance and Rehabilitation Center Staffing Expansion: Provide enhanced and increased conservation of sea turtles and education about sea turtles for visitors to the North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island</p> <p>Milestone 3.1.2 Complete construction, fully staff and operate all Connect NC bond projects</p> <p>Milestone 3.1.3 Obtain criminal background evaluations on all employees prior to employment</p> <p>Milestone 3.1.4 Examine and research Queen Anne’s Revenge conservation and excavation project</p> <p>Milestone 3.1.5 Fully staff all State Historic Sites to address safety and operations</p> |
| <p>Objective 3.2 - Complete capital projects and strengthen safety and security programs at sites with high visitation.</p> | <p>Milestone 3.2.1 Reduce the deferred maintenance of buildings for State Historic Sites and Tryon Palace</p> <p>Milestone 3.2.2 Complete the funded projects on the Capital Improvements Plan</p> |
| <p>Objective 3.3 - Create more outdoor recreational opportunities in response to rapidly increasing visitation to state and local parks, reinstate dedicated revenue source for Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) and NC Land and Water Fund (NCLWF) to conserve land, protect water quality, and create and expand state and local parks, trails, and greenways.</p> | <p>Milestone 3.3.1-2 Increase funding and grants awarded for NCLWF and PARTF</p> <p>Milestone 3.3.2 Increase funding and administer the Great Trails Grant Program and Complete the Trails Grant Program</p> <p>Milestone 3.3.3 Natural Heritage Program Biological Surveys: Conduct surveys of potential nature preserves</p> |

Goal 4- Promote diversity and cultural inclusion in departmental programs, recruitment, administration, and community engagement.

| Objectives | Performance Measures or Milestones |
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| <p>Objective 4.1 - Diversify who we are (DNCR staff, boards & commissions appointees, support groups).</p> | <p>Milestone 4.1.1 Preserve and interpret histories of marginalized communities throughout DNCR</p> <p>Milestone 4.1.2 Continue Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Internship Program</p> <p>Milestone 4.1.3 Develop a strategy to increase the number of minority employees and Board and Committee members</p> <p>Milestone 4.1.4 Develop, manage, and promote African American Heritage Commission initiatives</p> <p>Milestone 4.1.5 Develop, manage, and promote American Indian Heritage Commission initiatives</p> |
| <p>Objective 4.2 - Diversify who we serve.</p> | <p>Milestone 4.2.1 Develop a strategy for outreach and collaboration with Latinx communities</p> <p>Milestone 4.2.2 Update content for the "Race: Are we so Different?" exhibition</p> <p>Milestone 4.2.3 Plan, design, and develop an African American Monument on the State Capitol Grounds</p> <p>Milestone 4.2.4 Assess existing programming, exhibits, update content for the exhibits, and create a tour script for guides to interpret the permanent exhibitions for visitors, educators, and student tours</p> <p>Milestone 4.2.5 Meet or exceed Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB) goals</p> <p>Milestone 4.2.6 Reach new audiences and diversify marketing programs</p> <p>Milestone 4.2.7 Utilizing the America250 theme of "When Are We US?" the Department will create diverse content and programming to explore and highlight a broad range of people and times when North Carolinians have sought to transform their lives and communities to live into the ideals and promise of the Revolution</p> <p>Milestone 4.2.8 American Indian Heritage Commission will establish outreach and collaboration among the 8 state-recognized tribes and 4 urban organizations</p> |

Goal 5 – Evaluate the impacts of climate change and integrate climate change mitigation, adaptation, education, and resiliency practices into DNCR programs and operations.

| Objectives | Performance Measures or Milestones |
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| <p>Objective 5.1 –Incorporate best practices for state government building energy efficiency to reduce energy consumption.</p> | <p>Milestone 5.1.1 Improve tracking energy use to reduce energy consumption</p> <p>Milestone 5.1.2 DNCR will lead by example to increase state employees’ familiarity with Zero Emissions Vehicles (ZEV), prioritizing ZEVs and hybrids in the purchase or lease of new vehicles and shall use ZEVs for agency business travel when feasible</p> <p>Milestone 5.1.3 Partner with Capital Projects to integrate energy efficiency measures and reduce energy consumption for facility construction and upgrades</p> <p>Milestone 5.1.4 Design and install electric vehicle charging stations at 10 or more selected DNCR sites</p> |
| <p>Objective 5.2 - Mitigate against future catastrophic events and assist with disaster recovery at DNCR sites.</p> | <p>Milestone 5.2.1 Renovate and expand the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher</p> <p>Milestone 5.2.2 Floodplain and wetland acquisition and restoration</p> <p>Milestone 5.2.3 Identify and mitigate high energy use levels in DNCR using the Capturis system</p> <p>Milestone 5.2.4 Complete repairs at State Parks related to storm damage</p> <p>Milestone 5.2.5 Develop on-demand training for public records custodians, cultural heritage practitioners, and the public around disaster preparedness and recovery for public records and documentary heritage of the state</p> <p>Milestone 5.2.6 Protect historic structures and artifacts</p> <p>Milestone 5.2.7 Complete the relocation of Underwater Archaeology artifacts</p> <p>Milestone 5.2.8 Conduct environmental reviews and provide assistance to constituents for disaster recovery, response, and mitigation for future events</p> |

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| | <p>Milestone 5.2.9 NC Museum of Art: Complete bridge, culvert, path repairs and replacement and stream restoration</p> <p>Milestone 5.2.10 Evaluate off site storage solutions for collections at risk from the triple threats of flooding, heavy precipitation, and sea level rise climate risks</p> <p>Milestone 5.2.11 Introduce and promote land management practices to restore long-term resilience and mitigate climate change, such as prescribed fire, hydrologic restoration, reforestation, and natural riparian vegetation</p> <p>Milestone 5.2.12 Consider climate-related hazards when developing master plans for natural areas, parks, and nature preserves</p> |
| <p>Objective 5.3 - Evaluate the impacts of climate change on DNCR programs and operations to ensure meaningful engagement with communities.</p> | <p>Milestone 5.3.1 Increase outreach efforts in impacted communities. Implement a coordinated, strategic approach to increase communication and interaction, with an emphasis on vulnerable and historically marginalized communities</p> <p>Milestone 5.3.2 Publish clear percentages of newly established jobs or contracts that should go to vulnerable communities and for which historically marginalized businesses receive priority bidding</p> <p>Milestone 5.3.3 Increase outreach efforts for hiring in communities where work will be completed. Continue to partner with the DOA Office of Historically Underutilized Businesses, NC Institute of Minority Economic Development, and other entities to increase outreach efforts of bidding and contracting opportunities for underserved communities</p> <p>Milestone 5.3.4 Leverage disaster recovery funds and other sources of capital to promote equitable job creation and inclusive business development in communities most vulnerable to climate change</p> <p>Milestone 5.3.5 Develop a statewide science trail of venues to offer unique science experiences with the natural world for visitors and citizens</p> <p>Milestone 5.3.6 Environmental Justice and Inclusion – Promote Environmental Justice and Inclusion through collaboration with DNCR environmental,</p> |

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| | <p>conservation, and preservation programs to ensure appropriate and fair uses of natural resources</p> <p>Milestone 5.3.7 Promote equal access for communities of all backgrounds to parks, trails, greenways and other open spaces, and make recommendations through DNCR divisions to improve outcomes</p> |
| <p>Objective 5.4 Foster resiliency through local and statewide planning efforts, education, and grant opportunities to constituents.</p> | <p>Milestone 5.4.1 Complete the statewide historic resilience project through cooperative agreement between the Historic Preservation Office and the UNC School of Government by September 2023</p> <p>Milestone 5.4.2 Broaden constituent outreach and education for resiliency measures, such as restoration workshops on how to floodproof or dry out buildings, annual CREST-led disaster planning training, resiliency-oriented technical assistance to locally-owned cultural resources and Register of Deeds training, to aid in better statewide preparation for flooding events</p> <p>Milestone 5.4.3 Bring resiliency-oriented grant projects (constituent and internal) to completion through the State Historic Preservation Office hurricane grant program for Hurricanes Florence and Michael recovery</p> <p>Milestone 5.4.4 Increase funding for the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and Land and Water Fund</p> <p>Milestone 5.4.5 Incorporate climate change and resilience information into DNCR educational materials, campaigns, and social media feeds</p> |

4. Highlights, Opportunities and Priority Questions

Agency Highlights and Best Practices

Department-wide America's 250th Anniversary Preparations

As the country prepares to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States, the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources is developing broad programming and resources to be made available throughout the commemorative period (April 12, 2024-2033). The period of focus for the majority of special events and programming will fall between April 12, 2025 and December 31, 2026. In addition, the department is supporting the officially recognized statewide committee to foster programming, commemorations and events across the entire state. Partners on the statewide committee include representatives from history and heritage groups, *National Park Service*, *American Indian Heritage Commission*, *African American Heritage Commission*, *Federation of NC Historical Societies*, state historic commissions, the reenactor community, land preservation partners, *NC Museums Council*, *NC Literary and Historical Association Foundation*, and several heritage organizations. Organized around the thematic frameworks “Revolutionary NC” and “When Are We Us?” the commemoration programming, events, and resources will seek to highlight the events and people of the Revolutionary era in North Carolina, as well as to explore a broad range of people and times when North Carolinians have sought to transform their lives and communities to live into the ideals and promises of the Revolution. Special emphasis will be placed on surfacing stories about people often left out of the narratives around the Revolutionary War, as well as North Carolinians who have championed the expansion of freedom and equality throughout history. Plans include the development of teacher resources and curriculum support around the commemoration themes, exhibits, special events, online educational resources, special archeological field schools at select Revolutionary War era locations, festivals, publications, and programs across DNCR locations and online sites. Working with the land trust community and Land and Water Stewardship, the commemoration period provides an opportunity for a focused effort on preserving sites related to the Revolution in North Carolina. It also provides an opportunity to pursue a capital package for the acquisition of and upgrades to visitors’ centers. A regrant program to support local programming during the commemorative period is also under development.

Department-wide Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Visitor Experience Assessment – Completed Phase 1 of the assessment in June 2022. The project was a thorough and comprehensive assessment of visitors’ experiences at six departmental sites. The objective of the assessment was to develop a thorough assessment, realistic recommendations, and a toolkit of visitor experience strategies. This is a basis to promote equity and inclusion and develop programming to reflect and celebrate North Carolina’s diverse population, communities, culture, and history. Phase 2 is now underway with six additional sites and Marketing and Communications.

HBCU/MIHE Internship Program – The fourth cohort of students completed their summer internship in projects across the state. Twenty-three students completed the 2022 program, which increases the total number of students to participate in our program to ninety-eight.

Marketing and Communications, Outreach Diversification – Translation of dozens of signs, handouts, and other guides into Spanish for multiple divisions across DNCR. Diversified media and marketing efforts to include Spanish speaking outlets, African American media partnerships, and statewide advertising to reach all 100 counties. Attended Hispanic Education Summit in Raleigh sharing DNCR information with 400+ middle and high school students from across NC. Sponsored and attended the Hispanic Fiesta in Siler City to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month with over 5,000 residents.

African American Heritage Commission (AAHC)

Africa to Carolina – AAHC initiative which seeks to identify, mark, and develop resources around the primary sites in NC where enslaved Africans disembarked. Developing seven site-specific pop-up exhibits and web portal. Pop-up exhibits were installed during the spring and summer and the web portal launched in December. The project has been selected as a semi-finalist for the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation’s Inclusive Public Art grant project. As a semi-finalist, the AAHC received a planning grant to prepare for presenting a full application to mark disembarkation sites with public art in collaboration with Black artists and stakeholders in and from disembarkation communities. If selected as a finalist, funds would enable the design of a public art piece commemorating enslaved people who disembarked in NC aboard vessels directly from Africa.

Black History Month – Governor Cooper proclaimed February as Black History Month to remind us of our responsibility to honor the contributions and achievements of African Americans and their pivotal role in shaping our state and nation, particularly in the STEM field.

Juneteenth – Governor Cooper proclaimed June 19 as Juneteenth Day, an opportunity to celebrate Black freedom while progress toward Black liberation is being achieved. The AAHC provided an abundance of Juneteenth resources to its constituency, including Juneteenth toolkits, sponsorships to local Juneteenth celebrations and programs across the state, and a Juneteenth Speakers Bureau.

North Carolina Civil Rights Trail – Additional markers were awarded for Griggs v. Duke Power (Reidsville), James H. Jones (Jackson), MLK Jr. Visit (Montreat), Hargraves Community Center (Chapel Hill), Huber Arthur Eaton (Wilmington), Watts Grill (Chapel Hill), Slade’s Chapel (Morganton), Warren County Community Center (Warrenton), East Tarboro Citizens League (Tarboro), Fayetteville Protests (Fayetteville), and Magnolia House Hotel (Greensboro). To date, 25 of an eventual 50 markers have been awarded.

American Indian Heritage Commission

Establishment – G.S. §143B-135.5 established this new Heritage Commission to advise and assist the Secretary in the preservation, interpretation, and promotion of American Indian history, arts, customs, and culture. The Director and Associate Director have been hired, and the Commissioners have been seated. An inaugural meeting was held in the fall of 2022 to begin the important work of amplifying the contributions of the American Indian Community. AIHC staff have actively engaged with stakeholders and community events since assuming their roles.

Oral History Project – An inaugural project of the new AIHC, oral history interviews are being conducted with American Indians in NC with a focus on experiences in Indian schools. The first two interviews were conducted with two gentlemen from the Coharie and Lumbee tribes.

NC Arts Council (NCAC)

NCAC DEAI – Throughout 2022, NCAC continued assessing funding strategies to identify unbalanced grantmaking practices and defined ways to implement equitable methods. The agency hired additional staff of color in leadership positions and increased NCAC board membership diversity from four to 10 within the past five years. In FY2022, 62% of grant panelists and reviewers were from diverse backgrounds. In FY2022, NCAC partnered with the NC African American Heritage Commission and the *McColl Center for Art + Innovation* in Charlotte to present two virtual workshops for 96 NC BIPOC artists to advance diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion in the arts.

LEAD Scholarship Grant & Statewide Arts Accessibility Learning Cohort – The LEAD Scholarship Grant & Statewide Arts Accessibility Learning Cohort provides professional development for arts administrators who are new to the field of arts accessibility and who are proactively developing inclusive arts programs and experiences for artists and audiences with disabilities in their communities. For FY2023, arts administrators from 25 arts nonprofit were selected to participate in the program through an application process. Participants received conference registration scholarships to attend the *Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts’* national Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disabilities (LEAD) Conference which was held in Raleigh (August 2022). After attending the conference, the 25 arts administrators participated in a Statewide Arts Accessibility Learning Cohort program during Fall 2022. The program is facilitated in collaboration with *Arts Access Inc.*, a Raleigh-based organization that provides statewide professional development programs and resources to support inclusive arts experiences. Cohort participants each received a \$2,500 FY2023 Technical Assistance Grant which supported their travel costs to attend the conference (per diem rate), and remaining funds may go toward implementing an accessibility initiative at their host organization.

NC Aquariums, Women in Science – Women in Science, hosted by the Aquarium at Fort Fisher, continues to be a favorite event for exhibitors and visitors. Sixteen organizations participated with 70 exhibitors engaging with 2,100 visitors at the Aquarium during the event.

Historical Resources, Underrepresented Communities Grant – North Carolina successfully applied for and was awarded a \$50,000 *National Park Service Underrepresented Communities Grant* to fund (1) survey field work for North Carolina Green Book properties as foundation for a Multiple Property Documentation Form; (2) preparation and completion of a statewide thematic Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) for North Carolina’s Green Book properties, informed by survey fieldwork and (3) an initial individual listing nomination for the Magnolia House, a Green Book tourist home, located in Greensboro, North Carolina, as a crucial step towards (1) recognizing the role of Black entrepreneurship and these “oasis spaces” during the Segregation era and (2) fostering greater preservation of extant examples of these properties, which represent locally and on a statewide basis both the fact of segregation and the resilience of North Carolinians living in such circumstances.

NC Historic Sites

Accessibility – Two major site projects, the installation of a new wheelchair lift at House in the Horseshoe and the installation of a rubberized trail surface at Duke Homestead, contributed to increasing physical accessibility. The staff at CSS Neuse Interpretive Center have proactively pursued many accessibility opportunities, providing a model of best practices for SHS. They offer a wide range of assistive equipment to meet visitors’ diverse needs, including mobility aids; assistive listening devices; devices for magnification, lighting, and electronic reading; fidget and sensory items; and

noise-cancelling headphones. They offer *American Sign Language* interpretation for all programming upon request. They are also pursuing video transcripts and closed captions, as well as collaborating with Lions Industries for the Blind to print their tour script in Braille and to create three tactile tours.

Juneteenth – The State Capitol debuted a new special focus tour and exhibit, “Stories of Freedom”; Vance Birthplace partnered with the American Myth Center and the Mountain History and Culture Group to launch a new performance and discussion, “Leah and the Rabbit: A Conversation Around Resiliency and Reclaiming Narratives”; and Historic Stagville overcame a multi-day power outage to host two events, an open house program with guided tours about emancipation and a private evening program for descendant families.

Charlotte Hawkins Brown Museum Dormitories – The dormitory buildings of the Charlotte Hawkins Brown Museum at the Palmer Memorial Institute have been included on the 2022 list of America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. The list is compiled annually by the *National Trust for Historic Preservation* to raise awareness of the threats faced by some of our country’s greatest treasures.

Cherokee Apples – The Southern Heritage Apple Orchard at Horne Creek Farm is helping to bring three Cherokee apple varieties back to the Cherokee homeland. Junaluska, Cullasaga, and Nickajack trees grown at the Orchard will be planted on the Nikwasi Initiative’s Barbra McRae Cherokee Heritage Apple Trail outside Franklin.

From Naming to Knowing: Uncovering Slavery at the North Carolina State Capitol – State Capitol staff held the first in a series of listening sessions about their major research and digital humanities project recording the names and stories of enslaved workers who built the Capitol.

Golden and Ruth Frinks Freedom House – In May, June, and July, 2022, community listening sessions for the Golden and Ruth Frinks Freedom House project were held in Edenton. These sessions collected community members’ memories of the Frinks family and hopes for the future of the house. In May, staff gathered in Edenton for a facilitated conversational circle, discussing the project and level-setting shared values.

Harriet Jacobs Project – A public art initiative planned for 2024 at Historic Edenton State Historic Site, was selected as a semifinalist in the Z. Smith Reynolds Inclusive Public Art initiative. This designation comes with a \$5,000 planning grant to support the creation of a full application for the project.

Historic Bath Permanent Exhibition – The new permanent exhibition at Historic Bath State Historic Site, “On the Banks of Bath Creek: A Story of People and Place”, opened on December 9. The exhibition traces the area’s history through Algonquian-speaking American Indians who lived along the Pamlico River, the founders of NC’s oldest European-settled town, eighteenth-century female ferry keepers, nineteenth-century freedom seekers, and the families who call the area home today.

Historic Stagville Honor – Stagville was selected to participate in project funded by the *Institute for Museum and Library Science* with the *International Coalition of Sites of Conscience*. Staff will participate in a training cohort with nine other US sites to grow best practices for inclusive community engagement.

Native Songs of Southern Appalachia: Social Change and Cherokee Music Traditions – In collaboration with the Mountain History and Culture Group, Vance Birthplace presented its annual lecture. This year’s speaker, Dr. James Owen with Western Carolina University, presented a lecture titled “Native Songs of Southern Appalachia: Social Change and Cherokee Music Traditions.”

Town Creek Indian Mound Grant – Town Creek was selected for a highly competitive federal award from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Museums for America. The \$147,000 award will support the “Artifact Exploration” multimedia exhibit, featuring new footage of modern-day American

Indian tribal representatives discussing Mississippian artifacts and their relevance to modern American Indian cultures.

NC State Library, *Racial Equity in Libraries Toolkit* – Launched in 2022, the Racial Equity in Libraries toolkit was collaboratively developed by SLNC and the *North Carolina Library Association* Roundtable on Ethnic and Minority Concerns to increase awareness and knowledge of structural racism within the library profession. Available through the SLNC Academy, this interactive toolkit has over 1,700 views, providing library staff training to better understand how organizational structures and personal bias perpetuate inequities along with resources to assess their own library’s practices.

North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA), *Collection* – The NCMA has reimagined the People's Collection and reopened its newly organized collection galleries to the public on October 8. This reimagining increased works on view by 25%; returned the African Collection to West Building; offers a mix of geographical and historical galleries alongside cross-collection thematic galleries; highlights the art of conservation science; features 30 newly acquired works, 5 site-based commissioned works including commissions from NC artists Elizabeth Alexander and JP Jermaine Powell, 78 new loans from both US and international institutions, and 100 collection objects on view for the first time in many years or ever; and includes a wealth of new digital and educational components, including interactive labels, maps, and activities and community voice labels, which invite community members to share their interpretations of 20 objects in the People’s Collection. All interactive elements were designed with inclusivity and accessibility in mind and with the support of NC DHHS. To celebrate its reopening, NCMA hosted a variety of events in advance of the grand reopening on October 8 including a community member and partner event, a teacher event, a member event, and a gala. From October 3 to October 9, the Museum welcomed over 14,000 people to its celebrations and the public celebration included a family day, Music at the Museum in partnership with Come Hear NC and PBS-NC, free access to special exhibition the Phillips Collection, Monster Drawing Rally, artist-led tours, performing arts programs, and more.

Museum of History

Museum of the Albemarle Exhibit Openings – Guardians of the Land: Discovering Indigenous Americans (in collaboration with the Meherrin, Chowanoke, Roanoke-Hatteras Indian Tribes, as well as *Chowan Discovery Group* and *Frisco Native American Museum*); Reliving 1970s: Toy Edition; When the Computer Wore a Skirt (on loan from *Hampton History Museum*); Soybean Harvester (in collaboration with the NC Historical Markers Program); Votes for Women: Portraits of Persistence (on loan from the *Smithsonian*); Rock of the Eye: Boatbuilding Traditions Around the Albemarle Sound; Working Birds: Decoys and their Carvers; 1970s Back to Christmas. The storyline text for two of our major exhibitions Our Story: Life in the Albemarle and High on the Hog are now available in Spanish. Visitors can pick up a copy of the translations before entering the galleries.

Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum – Completed an American Sign Language tour of the museum program. Uploaded Spanish translations for Grade 4 and Grade 8 maritime history lessons and hands-on activities that meet the NC Public Schools Essential Standards for Learning.

North Carolina Maritime Museum Southport – Recertified as an Autism Center.

NC Museum of Natural Sciences, 'RACE: Are We So Different?' – What does the word “race” mean to you? A new, pilot exhibit, “RACE: Are We So Different?,” opened on August 23, looks at race through the lens of science, history and personal experiences to promote a better understanding of human variation. Based on the large-scale exhibition of the same name, hosted by MNS in 2017, this smaller pilot exhibit includes more information specific to the southeastern U.S. and details the recent shift in how Americans view systemic issues related to race. The exhibit, which is also available at Museum satellites in Whiteville and Greenville, is free to the public.

NC Symphony

Education Concerts and Events – A bilingual version of *Peter and the Wolf* was released with accompanying lesson plans targeting students in grades K-2.

Juneteenth Freedom Celebration – Part of the UNC Health Summerfest series at Koka Booth Amphitheatre in Cary. The program featured the world premiere of a new commission from NCS Composer in Residence, Dr. Anthony Kelley, titled *Spirituals of Liberation*. Later that month, the Freedom Celebration program was repeated in free community concerts in Chapel Hill, New Bern, and Tarboro.

Tryon Palace, Pathway to Freedom – In May 2022, Tryon Palace held *Pathway to Freedom*, a symposium on the Underground Railroad featuring academics whose research has revealed new understandings about the lesser-known maritime pathways to freedom. Topics covered included the maritime dimensions of the Underground Railroad, how pathways and destinations shifted from colonial times to the years leading up to the Civil War, and the role of eastern NC’s port cities. The keynote speaker was Dr. Timothy D. Walker, Professor of History at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. The symposium was sold out and received many accolades from attendees.

Department-wide Rural Economic Development Initiatives

The Department of Natural and Cultural Resources helped to create and has supported Governor Cooper’s *Hometown Strong* initiative. DNCR has increased its presence and programming in *Hometown Strong* communities, which now includes approximately 80 counties. To focus on rural work, DNCR’s collaboration with rural communities and other agencies has grown and success in rural North Carolina has followed. DNCR spearheaded the NC Student Connect initiative during the pandemic, including the *Park and Learn* program. *Park and Learn* continues to provide free, unlimited wireless access at more than 400 locations, mostly in underserved rural parts of the state. These sites include 75 state sites, such as state parks, historic sites, aquariums and museums. Previously, the department purchased hotspots and other equipment for libraries in 15 of the state’s poorest 25 counties to improve connectivity. DNCR partnered on 11 unique connectivity programs ranging from fixed wireless to digital instructional aides in the Region A and Land of Sky Councils of Government. DNCR provided funding to connect the Rosenwald School in Mars Hill to the internet; and successfully completed a pilot project with the Wilson County Library connecting senior citizens with cognitive challenges to arts programming provided by the NC Museum of Art and work is continuing this effort. *Hometown Strong* developed a music-based economy research pilot in three communities across the state: Durham, Elizabeth City, and Shelby. The pilot program collected data and community feedback on music-based assets, and produced a report for the state and each community that outlined strategies to strengthen the music heritage, industry, and economy in each

of the communities. Trail Days events were held in 14 Hometown Strong communities, to reflect the natural, cultural, and literary trails and assets in their area.

African American Heritage Commission

The North Carolina African American Heritage Commission (AAHC) was established by General Statute in 2008. In its foundational years, the AAHC existed as a program of the North Carolina Office of Archives and History and, most recently, the North Carolina Arts Council, both divisions of DNCR. In 2017, the AAHC was elevated to division-level status within DNCR and will be celebrating its 15th anniversary as a commission in 2023.

The AAHC consists of ten commissioners, appointed by the Governor and the North Carolina General Assembly, and six staff positions: a director, an associate director, an education and interpretation specialist, two program coordinators, and an administrative assistant.

It holds as its mission to preserve, promote, and protect North Carolina’s African American history, arts, and culture for all people. Its vision, which was updated in 2020, is to cultivate and maintain sustainable statewide African American culture work by building meaningful connections between African American heritage practitioners, artists, institutions, and resources.

Notable highlights:

Africa to Carolina

In 2018, the AAHC accepted a charge from the *Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture* to identify, acknowledge, and physically mark sites where enslaved people disembarked from the African Continent, resulting in the development of the Africa to Carolina initiative. Africa to Carolina has been executed in a series of thoughtful, collaborative, and community-informed phases. The initiative—which has been guided by a scholarly advisory board, as well as by constituents via community meetings—currently seeks to make information about North Carolina’s role in and relationship to the global slave trade more widely available to the public through exhibits (7 stationed at DNCR sites, and two traveling copies) and a web portal, in addition to marking disembarkation sites with public art markers. Grant funding from the federal *Institute of Museum and Library Services* has enabled these first two goals to move forward. Regarding the latter goal, in 2022 AAHC was recognized as a semi-finalist in *Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation* Inclusive Public Art initiative. In this work AAHC designed and implemented additional community engagement sessions to share project updates, and to gather public art design concepts from statewide stakeholders. These concepts shaped semi-final renderings that the artist team submitted for grant consideration. If selected as a finalist in 2023, funding would enable to project to expand to place public art markers in coastal disembarkation communities, develop curriculum, and continue public engagement.

Activating African American Heritage Trails

The AAHC thinks expansively about the potential for African American heritage trails to shape North Carolina’s tourism infrastructure, and to boost local economies. In 2020, the AAHC secured funding from the *William G. Pomeroy Foundation* to create and launch Phase I of the NC Civil Rights Trail in partnership with Visit NC. This included a digital map of North Carolina civil rights sites; 50 physical markers for community-based civil rights sites, with an eye towards Hometown Strong counties; and travel itineraries. At time of writing, 25 markers have been across the state from Brevard to Ocean City, and many communities in between.

In the fall of 2022, the African American Music Trails of Eastern North Carolina transitioned to the stewardship of AAHC. African American Music Trails of Eastern North Carolina is an exploration of the long and rich heritage of African American music in Eastern North Carolina. The abundance of this music and its musicians is one of the state’s best kept secrets. Funk, blues, jazz, and gospel in Kinston, Tarboro, Wilson and everywhere in between. Components for the next phase of the trail are being completed with Crystal Taylor, founder of the *Underground Collective, LLC*. Next steps include continued touring of traveling exhibits, community engagement sessions, digital engagement, and programming.

In 2022, AAHC launched the second phase of Oasis Spaces, the North Carolina Green Book Project. This newest phase, “Exploring a National Model for Mapping and Marking Green Book ‘Oasis Spaces’” project identified, designed, and developed infrastructure for digital maps and markers for extant sites from the Negro Motorist’s Green Book. Deliverables included additions to the existing Green Book web portal, a new web portal in collaboration with South Carolina, and an advocacy toolkit. This work was completed in collaboration with the *WeGOJA Foundation* with funding from the National Trust’s African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund.

The AAHC works with communities across the state to activate its Underground Railroad and Freedom Seeking trail system, Freedom Roads. AAHC has seen success in activating the trail through digital tools, local programs, and educational resources. In fact, in 2022 AAHC was awarded a grant from the *National Park Service’s Network to Freedom* program which funded the development of lesson plans and a teacher’s workshop at Tryon Palace. Additionally, the Freedom Roads program was formally recognized as part of the *NPS National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom*. Through this work AAHC will continue to explore the possibilities around physical trail elements, educational resources, and waysides.

In 2018, the AAHC accepted a charge from the *Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture* to identify, acknowledge, and physically mark sites where enslaved people disembarked from the African Continent, resulting in the development of the Africa to Carolina initiative. Africa to Carolina has been executed in a series of thoughtful, collaborative, and community-informed phases. The initiative—which has been guided by a scholarly advisory board, as well as by constituents via community meetings—currently seeks to perform additional research on North Carolina disembarkation sites (Bath, Edenton, New Bern, Wilmington), to make information about North Carolina’s role in and relationship to the global slave trade more widely available to the public, and to mark disembarkation sites with public art markers. Grant funding from the federal *Institute of Museum and Library Services* has enabled these first two goals to move forward.

Arts Council

The arts sector in North Carolina was severely impacted by COVID-19 and is still recovering. The state’s art community is beginning to rebound from the unprecedented events and upheavals of the past few years. During the pandemic, the Arts Council, under extreme duress—understaffed and with reduced access to the office—rose to the challenges of the pandemic and reprioritized its programs so that every available resource could be used to help arts organizations and artists to survive and recover. Charged with distributing the most money in its history, the Arts Council’s staff streamlined application processes and guidelines and converted project support grant categories into organizational support grants. We’ve distributed more than \$48.75 million in state, federal, and private dollars since the

beginning of the pandemic, which has had a tremendous impact on the survival and sustainability of the state's arts sector.

Aquariums

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Card Reduced Admission

The Aquarium's reduced admissions program for low-income families was not in effect during the public closure due to the pandemic. The program has resumed and families who present their EBT card can get admission at the reduced rate of \$3 for themselves and up to 3 other guests. In FY21-22, 57,141 citizens have used the EBT access program and during the current fiscal year to date, 30,655 citizens have benefited from this program. Since the program's inception in FY17-18, over 134,733 citizens have been served.

Aquarium Scholars Program

The Aquarium Scholars program continues to rebuild after being impacted by the COVID pandemic. Under this program, the Aquarium Society raises private funds for which schools that qualify for Title I status can apply to 1) cover costs associated with classes visiting the Aquariums or Jennette's Pier, 2) receive an outreach educational program from the Aquariums or the Pier, or 3) receive a virtual learning program. While COVID-safety guidelines during most of this period made the first two options unavailable, the virtual learning option increased. During the current fiscal year, the program awarded 119 grants to schools and served 12,141 students. Since its inception in 2018, the program has awarded over \$521,000 through 813 grants to schools and served over 69,000 students.

Cold-Stunned Sea Turtles

More than 200 sea turtles were located by Network for Endangered Sea Turtles volunteers and Cape Hatteras National Seashore biologists. Frigid weather arrived on the Outer Banks in late December 2022, causing a large-scale cold-stunning event for sea turtles. The Aquariums regularly care for weak or injured sea turtles throughout the year, with winter weather bringing an influx of cold-stunned sea turtles. The loggerhead, green, and Kemp's ridleys sea turtles caught in frigid water temperatures were unable to swim because of a hypothermia-like response. After quick data collection, the turtles were transported to the Sea Turtle Assistance & Rehabilitation (STAR) Center at the Aquarium on Roanoke Island, and the Aquariums at Fort Fisher and Pine Knoll Shores.

USAToday Readers' Choice Award

In 2022, the North Carolina Aquariums and Jennette's Pier were voted top 10 in the USA Today's Readers' Choice Award for best aquarium nationally.

Division of Parks and Recreation (DPR)

State parks had 19.4 million visits in 2022. This was down 15% from 2021 and near 2020 levels. State Parks continue to deal with overcrowding especially on the weekends and holidays. The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund awarded 58 grants to local parks for trails, greenways and local park facilities totaling \$19.3 million for fiscal year 2021-22. In addition, the trusts fund also distributed \$8.6 million for the acquisition of 3,608 acres and \$29.6 million for various capital and maintenance projects at North Carolina State Parks.

In addition to the funding for the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, in FY 2022-23 the Complete the Trails Fund was authorized. The fund provides grants for State Trail projects and builds capacity for State Trail nonprofit partner organizations for the 12 State Trails. The budget also created a new permanent trail planner position. The Complete the Trails Fund will be managed by the NC Trails Program within the NC Division of Parks and Recreation with a budget of \$30 million.

Executive Order 80 and Executive Order 246

DNCR is committed to continuing its work on climate change, environmental resilience, and environmental sustainability. Through this work, DNCR works to be a leader among state agencies on complying with *Executive Order 80: North Carolina's Commitment to Address Climate Change and Transition to a Clean Energy Economy* and *Executive Order 246: North Carolina's Transformation to a Clean, Equitable Economy*.

DNCR considers how it manages specific assets under its stewardship, like public lands and facilities, state historic sites, and public records, accounting for the growing impacts of climate change. The department uses its educational and regulatory programs to encourage broader adoption of best practices for addressing climate change and implementing resilience strategies among its partners and the public. These programs range from inventories of natural and cultural resources, to administering grant funding to protect important resources, to educational programs aimed at specific constituents (local planners, public records administrators, etc.) and the public at large through activities at DNCR's many facilities. Two such examples are climate change education signs at all state park sites and a chronology photography citizen science project spearheaded by NC State Parks in partnership with NC State University, which collects data on changing ecosystems.

Another approach to fulfilling *Executive Orders 80 and 246*, is the creation and fulfillment of a sustainability coordinator position. This position is new to the department and was created to support the development and implementation of actions, policies, and program decisions to ensure DNCR is a leader among state agencies in addressing environmental sustainability.

Reducing Energy Use

The Department of Natural and Cultural Resources works to reduce energy use as described in *Executive Order 80*. The next step is to create and fill a full-time energy manager position. Currently, a project manager in the Capital Projects Unit at DNCR collects annual usage data and submits it to the Department of Environmental Quality. This project manager works parttime in the utility manager position and has accomplished the following:

- Initiated the use of *Capturis*, an energy data gathering model and payment system, to help DNCR monitor energy usage and identify issues with any utilities. *Capturis* will also recommend and identify energy savings projects once fully implemented.
- Retained the services of an energy savings contractor to identify energy savings projects. The contractor was paid as part of the *Guaranteed Energy Savings Program* administered by the *Department of Environmental Quality's Utility Savings Initiative*. DNCR expects to receive the Investment Grade Audit report before the end of 2022. DNCR will use the report to review and approve energy saving projects.
- Submits the annual energy usage reports to the *Department of Environmental Quality* by the required deadline.

- Helps create energy savings repair and replacement projects.

Addressing Environmental Injustices and Inequities

The Deputy Secretary for Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion is the environmental justice and equity lead for the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, serving as the agency point person for environmental justice efforts, informs development and implementation of the agency public participation plan described in *Section 8 of Executive Order 246*. The Deputy Secretary works with environmental justice and equity leads in other agencies to share and coordinate related activities, best practices, and relevant data.

Historical Resources

HPOWEB. Launched in 2011, the State Historic Preservation Office's (HPO) GIS mapping service, called HPOWEB, displays the location of more than 135,000 historic resources and is acknowledged as one of the best preservation-data-based mapping services in the nation in terms of sophistication, comprehensiveness, and ease of use; it is viewable online as HPOWEB (<http://gis.ncdcr.gov/hpoweb>). Virtually all properties and districts with some sort of official historic designation (National Register, Study List, Determined Eligible, or Local Landmark/District designation) have been mapped. In addition, most of the state's rural surveys have been mapped. Mapping of urban surveys, including individual properties within National Register districts, is in progress. An internal layer for archaeological information is available to staff, and plans are underway to incorporate HPOWEB's historical architectural and archaeological data layers for NCDOT's Project Atlas project for transportation planning. The HPO engineered this service in-house and has saved the state at least \$500,000 in consulting costs. The site is widely used by environmental review consultants, NCDOT, investors in historic properties, researchers, genealogists, and scholars.

CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANTS FOR UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES. The State Historic Preservation Office conducts a competitive grant program annually with 10% of its federal funding for the 50 plus certified local governments in North Carolina; these local governments have federally recognized local preservation commissions. Approximately 8 to 12 projects receive funding each year, and communities are now actively seeking these grants for historic preservation projects to aid previously underrepresented or underemphasized communities in their jurisdictions.

MOSAIC. Established in 2019 by the division's Historical Research Office, this online digital humanities presence showcases the now digital Colonial Records and Governors' papers project, affording greater public accessibility for scholars and laypersons alike rather than the traditional print versions, and collections from Royal Governor Dobbs and early 20th century Governor Bickett accompanied by transcriptions and annotations inaugurated its launch.

ARCHAEOLOGY MONTH. The Office of State Archaeology has sponsored a thematic Archaeology Month lecture series in the last four years, and in 2021 and 2022, expanded it to Archaeology Year with the theme of Submerged North Carolina, focused on the underwater archaeological resources related from the state's maritime trade and military history, and has partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to connect to their stewardship of Civil War and Battle of the Atlantic shipwrecks in federal waters beyond the three-mile state waters limit. In person public lectures have gone online and captured a wider and larger audience.

Historic Sites

The Division of State Historic Sites and Properties has five priorities which include safety, true inclusion, communication, streamlining and simplifying procedures, and protecting our buildings and structures, as well as our collections, land, water, flora and fauna.

With these priorities, staff have shown growth by participating in nationally-recognized professional development, engaging new audiences, fundraising, digital humanities innovations, community engagement, and environmental stewardship and conservation.

Historic Sites completed its strategic planning process and launched its new plan at its annual Summit in September of 2022. The Division also completed a values level set, throughout the organizational chart, regarding its True Inclusion initiative during 2021-2022.

Land and Water Stewardship

The *NC Land and Water Fund* continues a 27-year legacy of protecting and enhancing the state's natural and cultural resources of North Carolina. During that time, over \$1 billion has been awarded to state agencies, local governments, and nonprofit land conservation organizations, leveraging over \$1.7 billion and protecting nearly 500,000 acres and protecting or restoring 3,000 miles of stream. In FY2021-22 the NCLWF board funded 134 projects totaling \$73.8 million. Administratively, NCLWF focuses on accountability and transparency, boasting one of the most open grant funding processes of any agency.

The *Natural Heritage Program* is nationally recognized, providing comprehensive biodiversity information and making it available in a variety of formats, tailored to both the economic development interests as well as land conservation groups. During the past year, the program has responded to requests for project support from numerous private consulting firms, as well as the *NC Forest Service*, *NC Department of Transportation*, *US Forest Service*, *US Department of Agriculture*, and more than 4,781 online requests for natural heritage reports.

Marketing

DNCR boasts an impressive digital production team with the expertise to create compelling and timely online content, including video, audio, and written content for web and social media platforms. In February 2023, DNCR was awarded its first Emmy award for 'DNCR: The Best of NC' short form video and we have increased our virtual and streaming programs across the agency. DNCR's *NCLearn* platform now features over 2000 pieces of educational content from across the agency and growing. In 2022, we supported 22 events across the state to engage with communities and promote our regional sites and programs. The Division of Marketing continues to develop educational content for distribution into schools across the state, especially in rural communities where complementary curriculum content is not as readily available as in larger markets.

Accomplishments to note include launching a mobile educational unit in an Airstream to expand engagement and outreach across the state, delivering arts, history, nature, science, and cultural experiences to schools and public events, and quality educational and cultural experiences.

DNCR has developed a range of integrated campaigns that are effectively implemented and promoted across the division and has seen strong gains in website and social media reach. The number of visitors on the DNCR online platforms has increased exponentially, reaching an average of 30 million users per

month. Since January 2023, DNCR's online engagement has surpassed 300 million users - a 400% increase from 2021, when we reported an average of 6 million users per month. Highlights include developing three statewide branding toolkits for PATH, America 250, Juneteenth, American Indian Heritage Commission, and the new Moonshine and Motorsports Trail. These toolkits are broadly shared across the agency and with statewide partners to coordinate and strengthen marquis campaigns and celebrations.

North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA)

In the last two years, the Museum has added 90 works of art by North Carolinian, American, and international artists. Sculpture acquisitions include *Mirror Labyrinth NY*, an interactive artwork in the Museum Park by Danish artist Jeppe Hein. Additionally, the Museum acquired a figurative glass sculpture, *Semi-Reclining Dress Impression with Drapery*, by Karen LaMonte; a monumental wood sculpture, *Number 235*, by Leonardo Drew and the centerpiece of our new Global Contemporary galleries; a figurative sculpture, *Grab*, by North Carolina artist Bob Trotman; a mixed-media sculpture, *Acknowledgement: Indigenous Land, Pachamama, Story Circle*, by Marie Watt, the first work by a contemporary Native American artist to enter the Museum's collection; and *Zonal Harmonics*, a site-specific sculpture commissioned for the West Building lobby by Tomas Saraceno. Contemporary acquisitions include a mixed-media installation, *You Deserve It Mama*, by Aaron Fowler; a painting, *Horry County 16*, by North Carolina artist Damian Stamer; and a new media work by North Carolina artist Sherrill Roland, *With Heart, Letter #010814*. Thirteen photographs by both American and international artists were added to the collection, including works by North Carolina photographers Endia Beal and Faith Couch. The African art collection expanded significantly with 31 works, primarily gifts from private collections, featuring textiles, sculptural objects, metal work, and jewelry. An important marble sculpture, *The Old Indian Arrow Maker and His Daughter*, by the 19th-century American artist Edmonia Lewis was acquired for the American collection along with a landscape painting by Francis Duveneck from 1900. The European painting collection expanded with a rare work, *Mon Atelier*, by 19th-century Swiss female artist, Lucie Attinger, and the gift of several 19th century paintings, including works by William-Adolphe Bouguereau, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, and Gustave Courbet. The Museum also continued to build its nationally recognized Judaic collection with several works, including a pair of 18th-century Torah Finials by female British artist, Hester Bateman; an 18th-century Hanukkah Lamp; a Torah Crown by contemporary artist Zelig Segal; and an 18th-century Sabbath Lamp by Georg Gerstner; at this time, the Museum's Judaic collection remains among the top three in the nation.

A signature component of the Museum's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan was the reimagining of the People's Collection in 2022 in conjunction with the 75th anniversary of the state legislative appropriation of \$1 million dollars to purchase this collection. The reimagining of the People's Collection opened to our citizens on Saturday, October 8, 2022, presenting its newly-organized collection galleries to the public. This reimagining increased works on view by 25%; returned the African Collection to West Building; offers a mix of geographical and historical galleries alongside cross-collection thematic galleries; highlights the art of conservation science; features 30 newly-acquired works and 5 site-specific commissioned works, including commissions from NC artists Elizabeth Alexander and JP Jermaine Powell, as well as 78 new loans from both US and international institutions and 100 collection objects on view for the first time in many years or ever. It also debuted a wealth of new digital and educational components, including interactive labels, maps, and activities and community voice labels, which invite community members to share their interpretations of 20 objects in the People's Collection. All

interactive elements were designed with inclusivity and accessibility in mind and with the support of the *NC Department of Health and Human Services*. To celebrate its reopening, the NCMA hosted a variety of events in advance of the grand reopening on October 8; these included a community member and partner event, a teacher event, a member event, and a gala. From October 3 to October 9, the Museum welcomed over 14,000 people to its celebrations, and the public celebration included a family day, *Music at the Museum* in partnership with *Come Hear NC* and *PBS-NC*, free access to special exhibition the Phillips Collection, Monster Drawing Rally, artist-led tours, performing arts programs, and more.

The Museum continues to educate and engage over 100 touring docents, and while school and public tours were paused until Fall 2021, 10,546 individuals enjoyed Museum tours in fiscal year 2022; 68% of these tours were collection tours that included multigenerational audiences. In the 2021-2022 academic year, 6,047 students participated in virtual field trips, and the NCMA's virtual field trip program continues to be a national standard among art museums, enabling us to serve students across North Carolina, as does *NCMA Learn*, our digital resource for learners, which continues to serve all 100 counties and nearly 100,000 users annually. In Fall 2022, the NCMA led 73 virtual tours for 2,133 NC students.

In accordance with the 2020-2025 strategic plan, the Museum has focused on outreach across North Carolina; this effort spans programming in communities across the state to the digital format. In 2021 and 2022, the Museum was fortunate to receive funding from the *Anonymous Trust*, courtesy of Trustee Anne Faircloth, for its *Artist Innovation Mentorship Program (AIM)*; this program pairs local artists in communities across NC with middle school students with the goals of exposing them to the creative arts, inspiring their capacity, sharing innovative thinking strategies through art-making, and strengthening creative economies especially in rural towns and under-resourced areas. Originally funded to be a program in Eastern NC, AIM received additional funding in 2022 to expand westward; we are currently operating in 7 counties and will be in 13 by the end of 2023. A similar program, *Moving from Transactional to Transformational*, was funded by the *Kenan Foundation* in 2021 and allows the Museum to listen and respond to specific needs in 8 communities from now through 2025; the initial project, which included a visual art exhibition and 14 programs, opened in Wilmington in July 2022. The Museum was also grateful to receive legislative funding for the development of a new digital educational tool titled *NCMA Explore*. The tool, which has been developed to engage middle school students, invites young people into a virtual reality and allows them to explore the historical settings of objects in the People's Collection while also learning about the objects from curators and other experts. Outreach programs such as these continue to expand to schools as well as to communities; in 2023, we will be offering programs specific to individuals living with and caring for those with dementia and Alzheimer's as well as to at-risk or deferred youth.

Growth in the *Ann and Jim Goodnight Museum Park* has been significant since its 2016 expansion, and the COVID-19 pandemic and its encouragement of outdoor activity has brought our highest visitorship to date. We opened a new Welcome Center in December 2021 as part of a Wake County grant; this building houses our State Park Rangers as well as members of our visitor experience team and volunteers, linking campus-wide security operations with public safety and information services in the Park.

In 2021, the Museum completed a Museum Park Vision Plan, and in the 2022 grant cycle, the *NC Land and Water Fund (NCLWF)* awarded the Museum \$750,000 to complete the stream restoration of the Unnamed Tributary in the Museum Park as part of this work, which is expected to begin in 2023. The NCMA was also awarded the Sir Walter Raleigh Award in Fall 2022 in the category of Land Planning

for the Museum Park Vision Plan. Jurors of the award appreciated the thoughtful attention the Plan made to the natural environment and its incorporation of ecology into the Park experience.

NC Museum of History

Educational Programming

During the pandemic, the museum focused on developing several new virtual lecture series to reach a wide range of audiences with a variety of speakers and topics. We continued those programs, including our regular monthly series such as *History at High Noon*, *History and Highballs*, and *Coffee with a Curator*. The Museum of History's monthly on-line evening lectures, *History and High Balls*, begins with instructions on mixing that evening's featured cocktail and continues with an interesting lecture on various topics. These programs, along with our virtual exhibition tours, have reached over 24,000 people.

The Museum took its two traditional festivals, the American Indian Heritage Celebration, and the African American Cultural Celebration virtual during 2020 and 2021. In 2022 the festivals returned to in-person events but retained some virtual aspects such as the Education Days and portions of the in-person events. The virtual *27th Annual American Indian Heritage Celebration Education Day* held on November 20, 2022, reached 29,665 participants from 74 NC counties and 8 states. The performances, panel discussions, and demonstrations at the in-person event on Saturday, November 19, were viewed by over 5,900 people.

The *22nd Annual African American Cultural Celebration*, was held on January 28, 2023. 5,345 people attended the in-person event. 22,604 students and participants from 62 counties, 6 states and one foreign country tuned in for our virtual education day the Thursday before the public event.

The Museum's Beyond the Exhibit team, which focuses on museum outreach to schools, has been very successful. Their programs, which include History in a Box kits, Live! streaming programs from sites around the state, distance learning classes, educator notebooks, online professional workshops for teachers and the Tar Heel Junior Historian history club program, have reached over 190,000 students and teachers in 74 counties since September 2023.

Exhibitions

The museum welcomed three traveling exhibits during the past two years. *Dressing the Abbey* featured the costumes from the iconic PBS series *Downton Abbey*. It was very popular with over 13,000 visitors during its relatively short 12-week run. In October 2022, *The Power of Women in Country Music*, curated by the GRAMMY Museum in Los Angeles, opened at the museum. Over 11,000 people visited this exhibit of dresses and musical instruments from the female country music artists who have received a Grammy award for their work. In addition, the museum curated a case of artifacts from other female country music artists from North Carolina.

In September 2021 the museum opened an exhibit on Blackbeard. *Blackbeard's Queen Anne's Revenge, 1718: The Legend of Blackbeard*, was created by the North Carolina Maritime Museum. It offered a fresh look, not just at Blackbeard himself, but at the men who sailed with him, and his flagship, the Queen Anne's Revenge.

The museum also produced its own exhibits including an exhibit on Pauli Murray, a Civil Rights activist from Durham, *Are We there Yet?*, all about North Carolina's tourism campaign, and *Answering the Call*, an exhibit on North Carolina's military history. The Museum has recently opened two new

exhibits, including *North Carolina A to Z*, telling North Carolina’s history through the alphabet, and *Sign of the Times*, all about the how and why of protesting.

Museum of Natural Sciences

In 2021, NCMNS published a strategic plan for the fiscal years 2022-2024, outlining goals and key milestones for the next three years. The museum has created from the strategic plan an annual plan outlining goals for each year and an annual report that reflects the progress made over each past fiscal year. The Museum distributes \$2.4M annually, and \$6.3M in ARPA funds to over 50 local science museums and nature centers. The museum launched the “Hundred Counties Project” to balance effort expended by the Museum across the state and celebrate its success in engaging North Carolinians with science and nature. All NCMNS sites are charter members of the new NC Science Trail, with Prairie Ridge Ecostation hosting the Trail’s launch event. In 2023 the Museum launched the Museum Dashboard that provides key metrics on Visitation, Programs Offered, Contributed Revenue, Net Promoter Score, Publications by Museum Team Members, Statewide Reach and Volunteer Hours. The Museum wrapped up the IMLS funded Impact NC project to develop collective evaluation measures and methods for more than 30 science museums throughout North Carolina. The Museum now has an antenna on the International Space Station that will be used to track wildlife throughout the continent.

The Museum’s researchers publish more than 80 peer-reviewed articles annually and are cited thousands of times over the course of each year. They made discoveries, including the rare find of a new vertebrate, the Carolina Sandhills Salamander. NCMNS also made significant progress with displaying the 67-million-year-old Dueling Dinosaurs fossils, one of the most significant paleontological finds of the last hundred years. The fossils are the most complete skeletons in the world of these two popular dinosaurs, and were featured on the TODAY Show in January 2022. The Museum broke ground on the DinoLab in September 2021, and the exhibit is slated to open to the public in 2024.

The Museum has also expanded the regional branches to include Greenville and Contentnea Creek, both with new facilities, expanding our science education reach into more under-served communities. The Museum continues to progress the update of the exhibition “Race: Are We So Different” and launched a series of popup satellite displays for touring throughout the state. NCMNS is also working on a new environmental education center at its Prairie Ridge facility in Wake County, with fund raising nearly complete, the project should break ground in 2023.

NC Science Trail

The NC Science Trail was officially launched in April 2023 as a year-round digital guidebook to North Carolina’s science adventures. The website was developed by nonprofit partner *InSitu Explorers*, which hosted an April 4 celebration of the website’s launch at the *North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Prairie Ridge Ecostation*, one of the Trail Partner locations. Funded by the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and the *NC Science Network*, the NC Science Trail features more than 60 science-focused sites open to the public, including state parks, aquariums, gardens, nature centers, and science museums as well as the *NC Zoo*. More sites will be added over time. The Science Trail and its interactive website are designed to help families and science enthusiasts find fun and exciting science experiences across the state. Launched during (and in partnership with) the *2023 NC*

Science Festival, the NC Science Trail is also partnered with the citizen science organization, Science Across North Carolina, and the *Great Trails State* coalition, the organization managing the *2023 Year of the Trail* activities throughout North Carolina. The Trail is fashioned after other cultural and food-based trails like the *Blue Ridge Heritage Trail*, the *NC Civil Rights Trail*, and the *NC Oyster Trail* and features program offerings, special events, citizen science opportunities, and science travel itineraries for children and adults. The idea grew out of a 2016 brainstorming session at an annual meeting of the *NC Science Network* and was reinvigorated through a 2021 work group convened by Secretary of Natural and Cultural Resources Reid Wilson to explore the concept.

North Carolina Symphony

Over the past year, more than 250,000 patrons heard the North Carolina Symphony. During the 2021-22 academic year, the North Carolina Symphony (NCS) provided music education programs to over 170,000 students across the state—70% more students than the previous year. These programs reached students in 79 counties from the mountains to the coast. Over 78% of the counties served are designated as Tier 1 or Tier 2 by the North Carolina Department of Commerce. Nearly 39% of the students served are from non-white households, and approximately 60% are from low- to moderate-income households.

The Symphony's education programs are based on the Essential Standards for Core Subjects established by the *North Carolina Department of Public Instruction*. Through all its music education programs, NCS introduces children to orchestral music, supplements the arts education curriculum in public schools, increases arts access within North Carolina communities, inspires young people through music, and supports the work of North Carolina music educators. By working closely with administrators and educators, NCS provides programming that best fits the diverse needs of North Carolina students.

Statewide Service

- NCS introduced new music education residencies in rural Jones County and in Dare County's Outer Banks. Residencies allow NCS musicians to deepen its impact, with numerous music education opportunities and performances for residents of all ages.
- The Symphony's *Music Discovery* program—typically held in libraries and preschool classrooms—added visits to homeless shelters and service organizations such as Family Promise of Wake County, Durham Rescue Mission, and Book Harvest of Durham. After the pandemic, the Music Discovery program became completely virtual and continued to provide music education and literacy support for preschoolers at home.
- NCS is a member of the National Alliance for Audition Support and proactively seeks to engage with diverse orchestra candidates through the Sphinx Orchestra Partners Auditions. NCS is also an active participant in the *North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resource's Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCU) & Minority Institutions of Higher Education (MIHE) Internship* program.
- NCS is the recipient of a Catalyst Fund grant from the *League of American Orchestras* made possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. This grant supports NCS in building capacity to advance its understanding and encourage the practice of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).
- *Juneteenth* commemorates the June 19, 1865 abolition of slavery in Texas and the emancipation of enslaved African Americans throughout the former Confederate States of America. In partnership with the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission

(AAHC), the North Carolina Symphony (NCS) honored *Juneteenth* with a work commissioned by Composer-in-Residence Anthony M. Kelley. NCS featured this piece in its full-orchestra Education Concerts for 4th graders across North Carolina beginning in September 2022, a public performance in June 2022 at its outdoor summer venue in Cary, NC, and in free statewide community outreach programs and concerts in the summer and fall of 2022.

State Archives

The State Archives created a division-wide working group charged with the evaluation of all descriptive information about collections, including collection finding aids, index terms, and metadata. The working group will create case studies and best practices for the creation of more inclusive and diverse descriptive language about collection contents. In addition, the division's Community Building Team continues to foster targeted collaborative opportunities to expand the division's partnerships with broad groups of North Carolinians interested in the preservation of and access to the rich documentary heritage of our state no matter where it is held.

State Library

The State Library supports educational efforts in a number of ways. It continues to collaborate with content partners, including the *Office of Archives and History* to expand content in the *ANCHOR: A North Carolina History Online Resource* digital textbook. NC Cardinal includes a Student Access initiative for participating libraries that opt into it, making it easier for students to access library materials.

The State Library continues to provide support, resources, and services to help libraries across the state in meeting the needs of their communities as those needs evolve (i.e., support for public libraries to anticipate and prepare for the expansion of Medicaid and how to assist community members apply.)

NC Cardinal project is a consortium of over half the public libraries throughout the state that aims to make the combined resources of North Carolina's public libraries available through a shared catalog and by supporting and facilitating resource sharing. It is managed and coordinated by the State Library. Efforts to ensure the project meets the needs of member libraries in effective and efficient ways will continue.

State Library Services for the Blind Name Change and Expanded Service

On January 1, 2023, SLNC's Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped name changed to State Library of North Carolina Accessible Books & Library Services (SLNC ABLS) and their services were expanded to include North Carolinians with reading disabilities. Over 1,250 new customers have been registered for service and over 995,000 physical and digital materials have been circulated to customers in 2022. Accessible Books and Library Services continues to expand its services to qualifying individuals through programming and resources. It will continue to host the Braille Challenge in North Carolina in coming years with the collaboration and support of other Divisions and organizations.

New Public Library Standards

Approved by the State Library Commission and released in 2022, the North Carolina Public Library Standards offer relevant, dynamic, and flexible community-based standards in a self-assessment format to guide libraries in local planning, management, and evaluation processes. 27 of the 84 public

library systems statewide have accessed the Standards using them for various projects including advocating for staff positions, strategic planning, and facilities planning. This update of the 2012 Standards will help guide libraries in providing quality service based on community needs.

Zoo

Attendance at the North Carolina Zoo increased from 694,907 in 2011 to 1,008,295 in the fiscal year 2021-2022, crossing the one million guest threshold for the first time. The growth in attendance and revenue is attributed to a new awareness of the Zoo across the state due to expanded and sustained marketing and outreach efforts. These efforts have emphasized the diversity of recreational and educational opportunities provided by the 500+ acres of developed Zoo property and the links between visiting the Zoo and our mission's conservation and welfare components. These connections help our guests to understand how a fun visit to the Zoo also helps to protect wildlife in North Carolina and around the world. The Zoo is also featured on *Secrets of the Zoo: North Carolina*, which is still airing nationally and internationally on the *Nat Geo Wild* and *Disney+* channels since initially filming in 2021. This eight-episode series unveils the work behind the scenes, following veterinary and keeper staff doing their extraordinary jobs caring for the 1,700 animals at the Zoo.

Of course, the highlight of any visit to the Zoo is the opportunity to see a diverse array of animals in large, natural habitats. Guests can get underwater views of polar bears swimming, see a large troop of gorillas in a lush forest-like environment, observe African elephants dust bathing, or see dozens of antelope and rhinos roam freely over the 40 acres of our Watani Grasslands habitat. Our newly renovated baboon habitat offers a new way to view the Zoo's large troop of hamadryas baboons while showcasing new thematic elements: the indoor building is designed to mimic the rock-carved traditional architecture of Ethiopia. The Zoo expects several high-profile births in 2023, including a giraffe calf. New additions, such as Haji, a young male lion, and the opening of the renovated Baboon habitat in May, entice our guests to return to see what's new.

Experience Enhancements

The Zoo visit has been enhanced in recent years by many added opportunities for guests to interact with nature through exciting and memorable experiences. These include Zoofari, an open bus experience through the heart of the Watani Grasslands habitat that lets guests get close to grassland species such as rhinos and antelope. Other revenue-generating attractions include an endangered species Carousel, the Air Hike ropes course that gives guests an adventure in the treetops, the Giraffe feeding deck, and the Butterfly Garden featuring exotic plants and butterflies. With the unfortunate closing of the Aviary in 2022, the Zoo is bringing on a fun, action-packed attraction in 2023 called Canine Champions for Conservation. This attraction showcases the agility of rescue dogs and how canines can help in wildlife conservation fieldwork by demonstrating how animal training improves the welfare of animals at the Zoo and how trained detection dogs do things like find poached ivory and help prevent poaching. Guests will enjoy this free attraction daily (except Mondays) from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

After several years of planning and funding by the NC Connect bond and the General Assembly, the Zoo broke ground for our new Asia region in August 2022. This 12.5-acre expansion, slated to open in 2026, will bring entirely new animal habitats to our facility for the first time in over 20 years. Included in Asia are habitats for tigers, Komodo dragons, gibbons, vultures, Asian warty pigs, and a new building featuring many different amphibians and reptiles (e.g., king cobra). Asia will also include a dedicated state-of-the-art classroom, allowing significant expansion of our educational programs. Another

prominent feature of Asia will be a new café and special events space. This themed dining area will serve daytime Zoo guests and allow us to host indoor events for up to 300 people (with even more significant events possible when combined with the expansive Asia Plaza. Collectively the elements of the Asia region will draw many more guests to the Zoo and allow us to serve them in ways not previously possible. We anticipate this will generate considerable new revenue for the Zoo and grow our broader economic impact in the region. The Zoo plans to expand further to another continent after Asia. The Zoo is in the schematic design planning for the Australia region, which will feature a kangaroo walk-about and many other exciting Australian species.

Educational Programming

The Zoo's education programs offer hundreds of thousands of children learning opportunities yearly, from family to school groups. To serve all of North Carolina, the Zoo offers free admission to registered schools in North Carolina for field trips, hosting more than 60,000 schoolchildren in 2022 (these numbers are rebounding since the pandemic years—schoolchildren numbers in 2019 exceeded 75,000). We also host a public high school on-site ("Zoo School") in partnership with the local public school. We recently launched an overnight camp-out program that allows families and groups to experience the Zoo at night, participate in specialized evening activities, and spend the night at the Zoo. The Zoo has a long history of working with under-served groups (e.g., children with autism, Tier 1 communities). This work expanded in recent years through partnerships with the *AmeriCorps* Program and local community groups. These new initiatives provide climate change outreach to economically disadvantaged local communities developed in collaboration with community members. Our Playful Pedagogy and Nature Play programs are nationally recognized, and our staff lead instruction workshops on these topics around the state and across the country.

In 2022 we released our "Zoo Trekker" program, a scavenger hunt that allows guests to complete educational activities around the Zoo and receive a commemorative pin upon successful completion. Tens of thousands of guests have completed these activities. We are developing a new Zoo educational app with support from a \$1M grant from the *North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation*. This app will use augmented reality, geolocated video, and other content to deliver educational information to visiting school groups and members of the general public. The app also has an accessibility focus, with audio descriptions (for blind and limited vision individuals), closed captioning, and complete translation into Spanish. Other educational programs include school programs (including homeschools), library programs, camps, and adult education, serving tens of thousands of children and adults each year.

Conservation

The Zoo's award-winning field conservation program engages staff and guests in protecting animals and their habitats in the wild and supports the Zoo's conservation mission. We are actively involved in leadership roles in conservation projects across North Carolina and internationally. The Zoo's portfolio of international projects includes work to protect African vultures (Tanzania), black rhinos (Namibia), African elephants (Ivory Coast), Cross River gorillas (Nigeria), big cats (Zambia), and hornbills (multiple Asian countries). In North Carolina, we are involved with conservation projects focused on hellbenders (giant salamanders), gopher frogs, Pine Barrens tree frogs, and the American red wolf. The Zoo leads three *Association of Zoos and Aquariums* SAFE (Saving Animals From Extinction) programs and participates in many more. The Zoo is a leader in the SMART conservation software project (smartconsevationtools.org), which provides technology tools to protected areas worldwide. Our system is currently used at over 1,000 sites in more than 100 countries around the world. Zoo staff recently completed deploying the system to all of the national parks in the southern

African country of Namibia. In addition to our species-focused programs, the Zoo conserves more than 2,200 acres of land in central North Carolina. These properties provide wildlife habitats, serve as sites for outdoor educational programs, and provide hiking opportunities for people across the state.

Sustainability

The Zoo's comprehensive sustainability program continues to grow. We operate the largest compost facility of any zoo in the country. We recently initiated a program that allows us to recycle disposable gloves, masks, and veterinary equipment. The Zoo now has 16 publicly accessible charging stations for electric vehicles and recently received a \$1M grant to purchase electric shuttle buses and associated charging infrastructure. The Zoo vehicle fleet has also added multiple fully electric or hybrid vehicles, reducing the carbon footprint of our operation. We remain a *Department of Environmental Quality* "Environmental Steward" and maintain our Environmental Management System (EMS) certification – ISO14001. The Zoo continuously works with its food service partner, SSA, to reduce the use of single-use plastics and to expand composting activities. We have also worked on significantly reducing the use of single-use plastics by providing reusable or compostable cutlery, plates, and packaging and eliminating plastic drink bottles. The Zoo has maintained a "three dogwood" rating, or the highest level of environmental stewardship, with the *NC GreenTravel Initiative*.

Animal Care and Welfare

The Zoo continues to provide outstanding animal care and welfare for our population of more than 1,700 animals, which includes the development of a new process of science-based welfare assessment that builds upon the strong wellness foundation that comes from our animal health, nutrition, natural habitats, and science-based care management routines. In recent years we have expanded our animal welfare mission to include participation in international animal rescue operations and well as working with regional associations to help train and build the staff capacity of partners abroad to enhance animal care and welfare, such as the development of a training MOU with the Zoological Parks Organization in South Africa.

Repair and Renovation

The Zoo is working on dozens of significant repair and renovation projects to maintain its good standing with the *Association of Zoos and Aquariums*. Animal welfare projects include additional shade structures for elephants and other animals. While the new Asia region will be an excellent new addition, many of the existing areas of the Zoo are showing their age. Deterioration forced us to demolish the iconic African Pavilion a few years ago, and the equally iconic Aviary building is now slated for removal since it closed in 2022.

Employee Onboarding and DEAI

In 2021, the Zoo rolled out a Strategic Plan that focused on our team. As part of this Plan, a refreshed onboarding program was created and is rolling out across the Zoo (all staff will go through this training). A consistent approach to training supervisors and managers across the Zoo is planned to launch in spring 2023— the Zoo's new HR trainer designed this program and the onboarding training. An internal communications coordinator was hired in spring 2023 to improve staff relations and communications. The emphasis on our staff reflects a growing trend of focusing on the overall wellness of our team.

The Zoo's diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) program is new and thriving. Among the goals of this program are improving the diversity of our staff, ensuring that all guests feel welcome when they visit the Zoo, and helping to build the next generation of Zoo professionals in a way that is

fully representative of the population of North Carolina and the country. Marketing programs focusing on Hispanic and Black audiences resulted in a measurable increase in attendance in both audiences in 2022. The Zoo accepted three new *AmeriCorps* members for 2023 and the two who completed service in 2022. The *AmeriCorps* positions are focused on bringing climate and outdoor education to underserved communities and expanding access to our natural areas. Staff provided STEAM kits for over 600 Title 1 elementary classrooms. To further create an environment where all staff and guests feel welcome, a Spanish language option was added to the Zoo's website, and social posts were launched to highlight DEAI topics. Inclusion-statement banners are now publicly displayed in our plazas and on our website. Internally, work has begun to focus on hiring practices to remove barriers and promote inclusion. The Zoo initiated an EBT cardholder program in 2023 to serve under-resourced audiences. This program allows an EBT holder to pay a flat fee of \$5 per person, extended up to six guests.

Potential Initiatives

Department-wide Rural Economic Development Initiatives

The *State Library* has been a strong partner in DNCR's rural initiative. The *Library* is working to improve broadband service at the state's more than 400 libraries, particularly those in rural communities. Working with the *NC Department of Information Technology (DIT)*, a series of online workshops for librarians interested in how to plan for, use and afford better broadband service has been developed. The State Librarian and Assistant Secretary have been discussing how to improve health offerings through the libraries with the state *Office of Rural Health* and the *NC Alzheimer's Association*. Lastly, the *State Library* is exploring how to improve opportunities for entrepreneurship in rural communities. DNCR is assisting Warren County in building a stronger creative economy, with plans to incorporate all of the arts groups within DNCR.

DNCR continues to support efforts to build a museum near the Mars Hill landmark Bailey Mountain, arranging for a student folklorist to begin research on the area.

Funding was provided to Morganton to develop the comprehensive plan for the Hunting Creek Greenway that bisects the Broughton Historic District. Stakeholder and community meetings were held from June 2022 to present, to determine development, management, and ownership of the proposed green space.

The NC Hometown Strong office continues to support communities in all 78 counties designated as rural by the NC Rural Center. DNCR will continue to partner with NC Hometown Strong with focused community engagement and programming where DNCR sites and initiatives are aligned.

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion

The *NC Arts Council* is in the process of developing a Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) plan, which will focus on internal and external concerns, thoughts, and hopes for systemic change within the arts and how to break barriers in institutional practices within the agency and the field. Division teams will analyze and work with various sectors of the field (arts in education, individual artist services, arts organizational grants, arts council support, marketing, etc.) and create actionable

goals within each team to create a comprehensive plan. Once the plan has been developed, it will be integrated into the NC Arts Council Strategic Plan.

Last year, the *Arts Council* developed the LEAD Scholarship Grant to provide professional development for arts administrators who are new to the field of arts accessibility and who are proactively developing inclusive arts programs and experiences for artists and audiences with disabilities in their communities. For its pilot year (FY2022–2023), 25 arts administrators around the state, representing a variety of organizational sizes and genres, were accepted into the program through an application process. The grant category provided conference registration scholarships to attend the *Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts 2022 Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disabilities (LEAD) Conference*, which was held in Raleigh this past August. In addition, program participants received a \$2,500 Technical Assistance Grant to support any travel costs (at the per diem rate) to attend the conference, with the remaining grant funds going toward accessibility initiatives at their host organization. The 25 arts administrators participated in a statewide arts accessibility learning cohort, which the Arts Council in collaboration with *Arts Access Inc.* facilitated. We are currently accepting applications for a new LEAD cohort, which will take place in 2023-24.

The *NC Aquariums* division implemented a Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Committee (DEAI) and distributed a Workplace Climate Survey to all employees and volunteers to assess the workplace environment towards inclusion. The results of the survey guided the committee in the development of a comprehensive strategic plan and the creation of 3 sub-committees focused on (1) Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention, (2) Visitor Interaction and Access, and (3) Community Engagement and Partnerships. A budget for each sub-committee was developed and approved by the *NC Aquariums* division leadership team. Accomplishments include, but are not limited to:

- Completed an in-depth analysis of the current ability to recruit/hire and retain staff including a cost-of-living analysis. Through this analysis, we discovered that most employees' salaries do not meet coastal communities' standard cost of living, impacting our ability to recruit and retain permanent and temporary staff.
- Attending diversity-focused career fairs.
- Replaced 1000 feet of wooden handrails at Jennette's Pier with ADA-approved aluminum tube handrails.
- Contracted Arts Access to evaluate all 4 Aquarium facilities for our accessibility strengths and weaknesses related to physical, programmatic, and communications realms. The assessment begins in late April 2023.
- Contracting with a consulting firm to help solve our most significant challenges such as team morale and development, staff diversity and equity, and strengthening our strategic plan and goals. We plan to have a full DEAI committee in-person workshop in the fall 2023.

The *African American Heritage Commission (AAHC)* has a number of ongoing projects that will enhance the interpretation of history in North Carolina. The research of La Concorde, the name of Blackbeard's ship Queen Anne's Revenge (QAR) when it was captured, is ongoing and currently supported with funding from the *Institute of Museum and Library Services*. Once completed, DNCR will tell an inclusive story of QAR. The Africa to Carolina research will mark disembarkation locations of ships carrying enslaved African directly to North Carolina Ports. The AAHC is currently working to enhance the NC Civil Rights Trail and Freedom Roads programs and begin the development of trail components for the NC Green Book Project.

Marketing and Communications is committed to growing the investment of marketing funds available with minority media across the agency. We surpassed our goal of 25% and now have 40% of our media

investments with statewide minority media, including Univision, Black Publishers Association, Latino Outdoors, Black Folks Camp Too and targeted campaigns with NPR, WRAL and PBS-NC.

The *State Historic Sites* division introduced the concept of “True Inclusion,” a philosophy of expansive, bold, and innovative practices through the establishment of its True Inclusion Working Group around this concept. The group includes members from around the division.

Executive Order 80 and Executive Order 246

Electric Vehicles

The Electric Vehicle Q&A Panel will take place in Summer 2023. The panel will consist of representatives from *NC Department of Administration Motor Fleet Division, Advanced Energy, Plug-in NC, and Charlotte Department of Transportation*. The purpose of this panel is to provide answers to frequently asked questions about electric vehicles, remove misconceptions about transitioning the DNCR motor fleet to electric vehicles, and provide a space for DNCR staff to voice any concerns or additional questions. A recording of the Q&A and materials shared during the Q&A will be shared with DNCR staff.

Expansion of EVs in DNCR’s motor fleet

Expansion of electric vehicles in DNCR’s motor fleet has many facets. This includes coordinating with *NC Department of Administration, Motor Fleet Division*, leveraging funding from *Department of Environmental Quality’s VW Settlement Grant Program*, leveraging federal funding opportunities from the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and working with DNCR staff to ensure a successful and sustainable transition to electric vehicles. For timeline, this is dependent on when the federal funding becomes available, staff capacity, and site selection for charging stations.

Expansion of Level 2 Charging and DC Fast Charging Stations at DNCR Sites

Purchase, design, and installation of level 2 charging stations at DNCR sites is partially underway with the awarding of VW Settlement Grants from *DEQ*. These are public facing level 2 charging stations that can also be used by DNCR staff. Applications for another round of funding for level 2 charging stations through the VW Settlement Grants are underway as of April 2023.

Currently, a team across DNCR divisions is working on finding the best avenues for purchasing, designing, and installing DC fast charging stations at DNCR sites. This is reliant on available funding from DNCR, staff capacity, and the design contracting process. This part of the expansion that includes DC fast chargers is still in an early planning phase.

Data Collection

Equity Gap Analysis of Underserved Areas in North Carolina

Following guidance from Executive Order 246 and guidance from DNCR’s Secretary, there is an effort to conduct a gap analysis of areas in North Carolina underserved by DNCR through DNCR sites, programs, and projects and how this analysis can inform future conservation work. This analysis will build on existing analyses that focused on how equitably conservation work is distributed across the state conducted by the Natural Heritage Program and *Duke University Nicholas School of the Environment*. Currently, work has been done to identify and catalog existing data and its sources for

a comprehensive equity gap analysis. The next step is to clearly define the scope of work for this analysis and work with partners and stakeholders across the state to ensure a quality analysis.

Through Governor Cooper’s Executive Order 80, agencies are to “reduce energy consumption per square foot in state-owned buildings by at least 40% from fiscal year 2002-2003 levels.” Part of accomplishing this goal is through monitoring and data collection of building energy usage.

Parks and Recreation

The *Schools in Parks Teacher Collaborative* is a free, year-long professional development program, engaging 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade teachers alongside park rangers in hands-on, inquiry-based activities integrated across content areas. The program emphasizes outdoor activities, current environmental science, and first-hand experiences with the natural resources of state parks. The goal of the program is to bring together park rangers and classroom teachers to collaboratively develop memorable outdoor learning experiences for students. The Division will continue to implement its *Schools in Parks* program with the hiring of 10 additional educators who will work with school systems and other partners.

Historical Resources

Historic cemetery preservation and identification assistance in collaboration with the *NC African American Heritage Commission*, local historic preservation commissions and non-profit preservation organizations, and Congressional offices, including sponsorship of multiple constituent-oriented trainings for identification, care, and maintenance of historic cemeteries, and a digitization project of cemetery records from the *State Archives of North Carolina* and other public sources and mapping in HPOWEB, the GIS mapping enterprise of the *State Historic Preservation Office* and *Office of State Archaeology*. As of early 2023, 20% of all counties’ publicly available cemetery records have been digitized, aiding constituents and communities in identifying and protecting historic cemeteries.

Building on the 2020-2021 pandemic years virtual outreach approach, continuation of *online topical videos for local government preservation commission training*, especially for niche topics such as disaster preparedness and recovery for historic buildings, comprehensive community preservation, the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, and local commission enabling legislation.

We continue to work with DIT and state regulatory agencies to adopt an “E-106” *web-based environmental review submission system* for the State Historic Preservation Office and Office of State Archaeology. This step will aid in additional streamlining for constituent response and consultation with other agencies.

Historic Sites

Historic Sites has increasingly emphasized repairs, acquisitions, conservation, and professional development around the themes of accessibility, safety, land stewardship, innovative partnerships, and nuanced narratives.

The Division looks to update its graphic identity through an updated logo and refreshed brochures and online messaging.

The Division has also advanced an interpretive and programmatic concept called “True Inclusion.” True Inclusion supports telling an expansive and diverse narrative at all historic sites, reaching out to diverse audiences, growing accessibility with a particular focus on visitors who are living with disabilities, and broadening stakeholder communities for more feedback and advisement. The priority interpretive theme for the launch of “True Inclusion” has been African American historic stories and increasingly American Indian histories and communal relationships. From the “Singing on the Land” and “Healing on the Land” web series and the #TrueInclusion web portal, to the development of the True Inclusion Leadership Team, Sites has taken a comprehensive approach to growing a common ground of connection through history. Going forward, staff envision extending the “... On the Land” theme to include visual arts and historic ecosystems.

Land and Water Stewardship

Conduct field surveys of species and sites in Durham with funding support from Durham County; surveys will focus on Piedmont Prairie flora and native bee populations.

Marketing

The Marketing Division continues to develop, launch, and support DNCR-wide campaigns that are integrated and cross-promoted to drive efficiencies and effectiveness across all DNCR divisions. We also work closely with Visit NC and Hometown Strong to promote travel and tourism across the state, especially in rural counties where DNCR sites are anchors of their communities. In 2023, we are promoting Year of the Trail with our *PATH (Parks and Trails for Health)* initiative and will participate in 50 community engagements events across the state, promoting Outdoor Recreation and Trail advocacy. We also launched the *NC Moonshine and Motorsports Trail* and the *NC Science Trail* as part of the *Year of the Trail* and will leverage these to promote travel and tourism to DNCR sites and communities across the state.

Through our campaigns *ComeHearNC*, *America 250NC* and *HelloNC*, we continue to reach new audiences and diversify marketing programs and efforts for greater inclusion and representation of NC’s population across all 100 counties, increasing attendance and engagement with DNCR sites, programs, and online resources (website, social media and email lists).

In 2023, the Marketing Division will develop a DNCR Digital Strategy that will further develop, implement, and measure online engagement across DNCR and lead efforts across state government. The DNCR Digital Strategy will support each location within DNCR with training, editorial planning and publishing best practices. Within NC state government, DNCR has the most social media sites and managers, and DNCR aspires to be the policy leader for responsible and effective online and social media usage.

Museum of History

Following the museum’s virtual jazz concert series in 2020, and the reopening of the museum to the public, the museum began to focus on bringing more musical programs to the museum. In 2022, in conjunction with the traveling exhibit, *The Power of Women in Country Music*, curated by the GRAMMY Museum in Los Angeles, the museum created a series of concerts featuring female country music artists from North Carolina. The series, named Southern Songbirds, featured North Carolina

artists such as Charly Lowry, H.C. McIntire, Tift Merritt and Rissi Palmer. The series was well received, and the museum is currently planning for the next music series.

In 2022 *NC Community Class*, which began during the pandemic as a new virtual program series for the public to highlight the histories of underrepresented North Carolina communities, began doing in-person programs at the museum. Its goal is to present information to the public about North Carolina history and the African American community. The series features individual speakers or panels, including those that are high profile, such as historians, academics, and leaders who specialize in their various fields or subject areas. Programs have included: *A History of Voting Rights in North Carolina*, and a program on the 1898 coup in Wilmington that overthrew a bi-racial elected government.

The most recent program, *Remembering Warren County: North Carolina and the Continuing Struggle for Environmental Justice*, reflected on NC's role in the origins of the environmental justice movement by way of the 1982 PCB protests in Warren County and on efforts to address the ongoing issues regarding environmental justice nationwide. The program hosted a panel discussion of environmental leaders and activists, including EPA administrator, Michael Regan, former congresswoman, Eve Clayton, and Dr. Ben Chavis.

MOH Capital Projects

There are several capital projects going on at the various museums. The *NC History Center Foundation* has completed work on all three historic houses that were moved to a section of the Museum of the Cape Fear property to be used for education programs, a digital media center and office space. The legislature appropriated \$60 Million in funding to the Foundation for a new museum that will be named the North Carolina History Center on the Civil War, Emancipation and Reconstruction. The museum will focus on North Carolina history during the Antebellum, Civil War and Reconstruction periods. Design of the new History Center and its exhibits has commenced. The History Center is projected to be completed in early 2027 and will replace the current Museum of the Cape Fear.

The 2021 budget included \$3 Million for site planning and initial site preparation for a new Maritime Education Center and future new Maritime Museum on the state's Gallant's Channel property in Beaufort. The *Maritime Heritage Foundation*, a 501(c)(3) organization, is leading a campaign for private funding to aid this project. An initial site design and preliminary drawings of the education center building have been completed.

Design work continues on the *NC Museum of History* expansion project. Design efforts are focused on the expansion and renovation of the current building as well as design of all new exhibits for the building. Pending the availability of additional planning and construction funds, design work is expected to be complete by early 2024 with construction beginning sometime in the third quarter 2024. Completion of the building and installation of new exhibits would be completed by early 2027.

Museum of Natural Sciences

The museum has created an Inclusive Programs unit, that focuses on DEAI issues in exhibition and educational offerings; to date the unit's team members have hosted a STEAM showcase for people with disabilities, made all recent special and traveling exhibitions bi-lingual, and hosted the return of Sensory Friendly Afternoons amongst other accomplishments. The Museum has also created the Evaluation and Project Management section that will bring capacity to major initiatives going forward like construction projects and the utilization of data to promote real changes in Museum practices.

The Museum re-launched its Special Exhibition program in 2021 and plans to offer two special exhibitions annually, the offers so far have included Exquisite Creatures, Permian Monsters and Challenging the Deep; upcoming offers include Spiders and Amazing Pollinators.

North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA)

The NCMA continues to serve communities outside the Greater Triangle in partnership with Michael Williams of the *Black on Black Project* and graciously funded by the *Kenan Foundation*. The purpose of this partnership is to create space for dialogue and programming that examines racial and social injustices through the lens of Black Americans and shape lasting relationships between communities and the Museum. To date, this partnership has resulted in the exhibition *Lost in Transition* and related programming in Wilmington, and we are preparing to launch a series of programs, including original short films, in Asheville in June. This work enables us to build relationships with individual community members as well as organizations and to launch additional programming, such as AIM or teacher professional development, in the communities.

North Carolina Symphony

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, NCS was well-positioned to pivot quickly to provide digital and online programs for parents and teachers in the new at-home school environment. NCS continues to adapt and develop new virtual and digital initiatives for NCS musicians to interact with North Carolina educators and students – while expanding the number of in-person performances throughout the state, especially in rural communities.

The Symphony will partner with *Western Carolina University* in 2024 – with performances and opportunities for collaboration with music students and faculty.

The Symphony is seeking funding to create a fellowship program for recently graduated students to perform side-by-side with the Symphony musicians, present education concerts statewide (especially in rural communities), and to receive instruction from the Symphony’s full-time musicians.

The Symphony welcomes Carlos Miguel Prieto as its next music director beginning with the 2023-24 Season.

State Library

The State Library will work with other Divisions (including the *NC African American Heritage Commission* and the *NC American Indian Heritage Commission*) or agencies (*NC Department of Adult Corrections*) to provide project or grant opportunities to meet community needs in underserved communities.

Accessible Books and Library Services will collaborate with the *NC Division of Services to the Blind* and an independent contractor to create and execute a needs assessment to determine what community needs are met effectively, and whether there are still needed services that could be provided by the Library, DSB, or another partner agency.

Zoo

To improve the people-moving experience and reduce labor and equipment costs, the Zoo is exploring adding alternate means of transportation across our site. While in the long term, we are assessing

whether chair lifts and trains might efficiently move guests around the park, we have an immediate need to expand our parking areas and widen our walking paths. The current Zoo infrastructure was designed for an annual visitation of approximately 600,000 people. In the fiscal year 2021-2022, we surpassed 1,000,000 guests, and we anticipate the opening of Asia in 2026 will increase this by 30-50%. Our existing walkways and parking areas cannot accommodate this level of visitation, so we are exploring different ways to improve our capacity in these areas.

New programs to reach families with young children include a Kids' Contact area. Preliminary planning is slated to begin in spring 2023 for this area.

In the long term, the Zoo's master plan imagines a new central hub, which would replace the existing "Junction Plaza" as the center of the Zoo. This new "Conservation Central" area would integrate guest services and transportation facilities with new cutting-edge habitats communicating about our conservation work across the state and worldwide. Through various experiences, hands-on activities, animal habitats, and technologies, guests will better understand what the Zoo is doing to help preserve nature and wildlife and how they can be part of the solution.

Collaborative Opportunities

Department-wide Rural Economic Development Initiatives

In 2022, the Hometown Strong Initiative housed with the Office of State Budget and Management was moved administratively into DNCR. Hometown Strong also collaborates frequently with *NC DIT* and *DHHS' Office of Rural Health*.

African American Heritage Commission

Activating African American Heritage Trails

Collaboration is at the core of much of the work of AAHC. The division envisions continuing working with other state initiatives and agencies, including Hometown Strong, to activate its trail systems. *NC Parks and NC Historic Sites* will be valuable partners in expanding Freedom Roads, as well.

Heritage Celebrations – Black History Month & Juneteenth

2022 and 2023 saw the continued formalization of AAHC's celebration of Black History Month and Juneteenth on a department and state-wide level. AAHC will continue to serve as a consistent resource to those interested in celebrating and there are numerous opportunities to expand and continue this work across all DNCR divisions.

Arts Council

The North Carolina Arts Council is currently working with DNCR *Marketing and Communications* and the *African American Heritage Commission* to bring back the popular Music at the Mansion series and we anticipate producing three events in 2023. Separately, we are working with the *North Carolina Museum of Art, the State Library of North Carolina*, and staff from *Hometown Strong* to develop a statewide arts program for persons with dementia and their caregivers and families.

Executive Order 80 and Executive Order 246

DNCR Collaboration

Green Team

The DNCR Green Team has been restarted in 2023. This team has been recreated to strengthen DNCR's commitment to climate and sustainability work. Many people at DNCR work on this already. Through this team, with representation from across the agency, we can develop a more comprehensive and consistent body of work.

The following groups operate independently of the Green Team. Many of the Green Team members representing DNCR's divisions are also members of the following groups. Because of this overlap in membership, the groups are communicating and updating one another on sustainability and resiliency efforts across DNCR. This collaboration allows the groups to learn best practices regarding sustainability and resiliency from one another.

- Aquarium Sustainability Team
- Zoo Sustainability Team
- ESHPF Historic Resiliency Project

- Museum of Natural Science, Citizen Science Resiliency Initiative

DNCR participates in the following interagency groups and external partnerships. More information about each group and program can be found below.

Interagency Resilience Council and Interagency Resilience Team

Both groups get their authority from NC Executive Order 80. The Department of Environmental Quality Secretary leads the Interagency Resilience Council, with DNCR's Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources, Jeff Michael, representing DNCR at Council meetings.

The Interagency Resilience Team is housed in the *NC Office of Recovery and Resiliency (NCORR)*. This team has representatives from across DNCR divisions including both natural, cultural, and historic resource divisions. The main purpose of this team is to provide updates on resiliency work across state government, learn from work being done across the state, and submit annual reporting requirements set out in Executive Order 80 and Executive Order 246.

Quarterly Meeting on Flood Reduction and Stream Management

The Quarterly Meeting on Flood Reduction and Stream Management coordinates grant and TA programs on flood reduction and stream management and is hosted by the *NC Office of Recovery and Resiliency (NCORR)*. DNCR is represented at these meetings by Stephen Bevington, Restoration Program Manager at Division of Land and Water Stewardship, NCLWF.

NC Flood Resilience Blueprint

The NC Flood Resilience Blueprint is a statewide watershed planning effort to establish a framework and tools to assist local communities in decision-making related to reducing flood risk and increasing resilience. This program is led by *DEQ Division of Mitigation Services*. DNCR is a consulting partner and is represented by Stephen Bevington, Restoration Program Manager at Division of Land and Water Stewardship.

Natural Infrastructure Flood Mitigation Program Advisory Board

The Natural Infrastructure Flood Mitigation Team within the *DEQ Division of Mitigation Services* is in the process of establishing an Advisory Board and developing a scope of work for design and implementation of a flood resilience pilot project in the Stoney Creek Watershed in Goldsboro, NC. These efforts will help determine the goals, strategies, and funding sources for the NIFMP and help determine ways of expanding current restoration projects to maximize resilience. DNCR is a member of the Advisory Board and is represented by Judy Ratcliffe from the Natural Heritage Program.

Resilient Coastal Communities Program (RCCP)

Overall, this program "facilitates a community-driven process for setting coastal resilience goals, assessing existing and needed local capacity, and identifying and prioritizing projects to enhance community resilience to coastal hazards." The Resilient Coastal Communities Program (RCCP) is moving from Phase 3: Engineering & Design and into Phase 4: Implementation & Construction. The program is hosted in the *DEQ Division of Coastal Management*. DNCR is represented by Stephen Bevington, Restoration Program Manager at Division of Land and Water Stewardship.

Natural Working Lands

The *Natural Working Lands* group in North Carolina published a Natural Working Lands Action Plan in 2020, link [here](#). In April 2023, a contingency from across NC State Government attended a US Climate Alliance Learning Lab focused on Natural Working Lands. Currently, NWL work in North Carolina is

housed in DNCR and is led by a steering committee with subcommittees focusing on specific areas of Natural Working Lands. Next steps for *Natural Working Lands in North Carolina* will be for each subcommittee to provide status updates, next action steps, and priorities for each subcommittee. After this, the steering committee will choose priorities to accomplish within the next two years. Subcommittees can also continue to work on priorities not chosen independently of the steering committee. After identifying priorities, NWL committees will connect with federal funding opportunities in the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Expansion of EVs in DNCR's motor fleet

The DNCR Green Team, DNCR leadership, and *NC DOA's Motor Fleet Division* are working together to distribute state-owned electric vehicles to DNCR staff. Additionally, the Green Team is focusing on identifying ways to provide educational materials for staff using electric vehicles and education on the overall motor fleet transition to electric vehicles.

External Partnerships

DNCR partners with the *Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership (APNEP)* and works to identify, protect, and restore the significant resources of the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system. Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources, Jeff Michael, is on the leadership council and Director of NC Land and Water Fund, Will Summer is on a related committee.

Exhibit Updates

Carolina Public Humanities, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization within the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's College of Arts and Sciences, who will be helping DNCR select consultants and review the consultants' work, identify candidates for a project advisory committee and manage the advisory committee meetings, and manage community conversations including developing discussion topics and facilitating discussions.

The consultants will develop content for the exhibits and a tour script for guides to interpret the permanent exhibitions for visitors, educators, and student tours. Also, the consultants will develop materials to help teachers interpret the history of the facility, site, or monument to their students. Along with this, DNCR will update online content and virtual engagement, and develop and construct exhibits.

Historical Resources

The State Historic Preservation Office continues to partner with both the *Hometown Strong program* and the *Leverage NC* initiative with *NC Department of Commerce, NC Municipal League, and NC Downtown Development Association*, with educational offerings (including historic preservation related educational videos) and technical assistance designed to further local government economic development efforts, designed to provide cities and towns statewide the tools needed to strengthen local economies and support enhanced business opportunity back at home. (<https://www.leveragenc.org/>)

Furthering resiliency efforts for constituents and state and local government

Engaging in bricks and mortar grants assistance and planning efforts for North Carolina communities, funded by the federal 2019 Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund program for

Hurricanes Florence and Michael (“preservation hurricane grants”). Planning efforts getting underway between 2021 and 2024 include (1) a cooperative agreement with the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill for a statewide historic preservation-focused resiliency project, which will yield model design standards for local preservation commissions for appropriate mitigation, repair, and preventative measures to ensure wide-ranging resiliency from flood, wind, and other storm-related damage; better linkage of local disaster planning to historic resource resiliency planning; staff training for state and local governments and non-profit entities for historic resources disaster preparedness and response; (2) historic architectural and archaeological surveys, including a coastal cemetery survey, to assess damage and set a new baseline post-hurricane, and inform resiliency measures.

Historic Sites

Historic Sites continues to collaborate in new and/or expanded ways around the following concepts, commemorations, and/or initiatives:

- 1) Historic landscape conservation working with state and local land and water protection entities;
- 2) Commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution;
- 3) Parks And Trails for Health (PATH) has provided new opportunities for the Division to highlight its natural resources;
- 4) The Civil Rights Trails program of the *NC African American Heritage Commission*;
- 5) "Art on the Land" will provide an opportunity for Historic Sites to work with artists and arts agencies to continue to grow connections between art, history, and communities; and
- 6) Partnership with the *NC American Indian Heritage Commission*.

Land and Water Stewardship

An opportunity exists to work with the *Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ)* to evaluate ecosystems in floodplain areas most susceptible to disasters such as hurricanes and sea level rise. Identifying which floodplains provide the most benefits such as flood protection, wildlife habitat, protection of water quality, and climate resilience can help conservation groups and local governments strategically purchase and restore lands that will provide the most protection for human communities and economic assets into the future. Collaboration with private industry groups is partially supported by fees for access to *Natural Heritage Program* data and field surveys, including partnerships with *Conservation Subdivisions* and voluntary participants in the *Sustainable Forestry Initiative*. Increased efficiency is gained from additional collaboration with extension staff and field biologists within state agencies, especially the *Wildlife Resources Commission*, *NC Forest Service*, and *Natural Resources Conservation Service*.

Marketing

Through our many initiatives and goals of expanding educational opportunities; improving public health; stimulating economic development; strengthening diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; and battling climate change and enhancing community resiliency, our continued

coordinated efforts across the agency ensure we operate as one agency, representing all of the things people love about North Carolina.

Museum of History

The *NC Museum of History* and the *NC Museum of Natural Sciences* are collaborating on children's summer programs for the summer of 2023. The museums are investigating other ways that we can collaborate on programs and exhibits.

The museum's education staff continues to collaborate with the *North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati* on developing lectures, educational materials and programs on the American Revolution and the founding of the United States. The museum's education staff is also collaborating with the state's *Department of Public Instruction* to make sure all the educational material we produce meet the state's requirements.

The Museum is collaborating with the *NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (NCDMVA)* on the *NCDMVA Hall of Firsts*. The museum is the home to the *NCDMVA Hall of Firsts* which honors selected veterans from North Carolina who have honorably served in the US Armed Forces.

The *State Archives* and the *Museum of History* continue working on a joint project to collect stories and artifacts from people across the state regarding their experiences and memories of the Coronavirus Pandemic. In addition, the *Museum of History* has collected artifacts from the Black Lives Matter movement, including gathering some of the plywood panels covering broken windows that were painted on with various slogans.

Museum of Natural Sciences

NCMNS at Whiteville continues to develop a collaborative relationship with the local Waccamaw Siouan Tribe. Whiteville has now hosted two Waccamaw Siouan events welcoming over 800 guests in a celebration of the tribe's culture and heritage. The Waccamaw Siouan were also included in the traveling panel exhibition of RACE Are We So Different during its time at the Whiteville branch. In 2021 the Museum launched the first Volunteer Summit in collaboration with the *NC Museum of History* and the *Governor's Commission of Volunteerism (Volunteer NC)*; 94 people from 4 states attended this virtual event to share best practices in areas of volunteerism, internships, and Junior Volunteers. NCMNS continues to work with the *History Museum* in the planning of event days, security concerns, and the redevelopment of Centennial Plaza.

North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA)

The Museum has continued to provide multigenerational audiences with exhibitions, lectures, classes, and events that reflect the citizens of North Carolina and engage participants on the Museum's campus, virtually, and in communities across the state. This work is reflected in the publication of our children's book *The Museum Lives in Me*, which was distributed to all *NC Cardinal Libraries* in 2022 and is being mailed to all public elementary schools now. We also partner with the Cardinal Libraries and other non-profit organizations to distribute collection-based art kits to children across North Carolina; over 6,600 free kits were shared in fiscal year 2022 alone and offer opportunities for NC residents to build familiarity with works in the collection and, hopefully, excitement about a visit to the NCMA. Our programs also continue to engage multigenerational audiences, and we are proud to

offer everything from What's in the Box for preschool age children to College Conversations for our college students to a wide array of studio, lecture, music programs, and more that engage non-student audiences.

As part of our 2020-2025 strategic plan, we continue to spotlight North Carolina artists; in the last two years, we have partnered with artists in local communities to support outreach programming, celebrated North Carolina musicians like Old Crow Medicine Show and performers Paperhand Puppets, integrated more NC artists in our retail model, and commissioned artists like Elizabeth Alexander to install and activate objects in our galleries. We continue to draw upon both internal creativity and external collaborators and worked with 416 different partners in 39 counties and beyond NC in fiscal year 2022. We find great joy and success in these collaborations and look forward to their expansion in additional communities and with new partners in the years ahead.

NC Science Trail

With its launch in April 2023, the NC Science Trail brought together more than 60 science-focused sites across all regions of North Carolina that are open to the public, including the following DNCR sites: 13 state parks, 3 aquariums, Jennette's Pier, the Museum of Natural Sciences and the NC Zoo. That means that the other 40 sites are non-DNCR sites and a great example of collaboration to promote science education. Future programming associated with the NC Science Trail will expand this collaborative work, and the addition of new sites over time will extend the network of partners.

North Carolina Symphony

NCS in collaboration with *Interfaith Food Shuttle*, holiday concertgoers donate food for families in need.

NCS staff and musicians donated over 150 meals for essential healthcare workers.

The Symphony extended free tickets to under-served members of the community through partner organizations such as *Helping Hands Mission*, *Southeast Raleigh Promise*, *TROSA*, *Family Promise of Moore County*, and others.

NCS has partnered with *PBS North Carolina* to distribute its *Meet the Instrument* program as part of *Classroom Connection*. This series airs twice a week throughout the state and features math and literacy lessons to support at-home learning for pre-K students through third grade.

In an effort to support the well-being of our fellow citizens, the North Carolina Symphony has partnered with *North Carolina State Parks* and the *North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences* to develop a meditation tool—a series of brief musical excerpts, combined with breathtaking visuals from North Carolina landscapes and guided meditation techniques. These videos aim to provide moments of calm and focus, supporting stress-management during the busy school or workday. *Musical Meditations* series are available free of charge via North Carolina Symphony's website and social media channels.

The Symphony wrapped up a three-year Jones County residency with musician and ensemble visits to each elementary school in the county. NCS will begin a new multi-year residency, in Edgecombe County, in the 2022-23 season.

Programs have included free community concerts, a music and literacy initiative for pre-K students, professional development workshops for music educators, master classes through which young instrumentalists have one-on-one learning opportunities with NCS musicians, and more. A woodwind quintet of NCS musicians presented a Spanish-language performance of Peter and the Wolf (Pedro y el Lobo) at the *Episcopal Farmworkers Ministry*. The Symphony expanded this residency to Jones County for 2019-2022 and then expanded the program again to include Edgecombe County for the next three years (FY2023 through FY2025).

NCS plans to collaborate with the *NC Department of Commerce* to perform at the 2024 US Open Championship in Pinehurst.

Parks and Recreation

Parks will be partnering with *Black Folks Camp Too* to encourage participation and engagement with diverse communities through the department's new *Parks and Trails for Health (PATH)* initiative. *PATH* combines physical activity in parks, greenways, and other outdoor spaces in North Carolina with educational opportunities.

Over the past several years, the Division has implemented several recruiting efforts to achieve a diverse workforce. These efforts have included focused recruiting efforts, diverse interview panels and knowledge, skills and abilities modifications. The Division would like to take a closer look at these efforts and determine their effectiveness in recruiting. In addition, further study is necessary to determine if there are other recruiting opportunities to achieve a diverse workforce. To date, no follow-up research has been conducted to determine the impact of these recruiting efforts.

State Library

The State Library will continue to collaborate with others in the Department to support the *America 250* commemoration by coordination educational resources, creating reading lists, planning programming, and more.

The State Library will continue collaborating with the *NC Division of Broadband and Digital Equity* concerning efforts to develop a comprehensive NC Digital Equity Plan. The State Library will support libraries in sharing our survey and other information to the varied communities they serve.

The State Library will collaborate with libraries across the state, *Hometown Strong*, the *NC Office of Digital Equity and Literacy*, the *NC Community College Office*, the *NC Cooperative Extension*, *NC Department of Adult Corrections*, and the *NC Office of Rural Health* on broadband access, digital navigation, digital skills, and telehealth projects. Multiple grant funded projects are underway or launching that relate to these efforts and are anticipated to evolve to meet the varied needs across the state. Once a NC Digital Equity Plan is finalized, it, in addition to the results of other assessments, will inform future goals in this area as well.

Zoo

The Zoo will collaborate on educational programs with other DNCR divisions. *Aquariums*, the *Museum of Natural Sciences*, and *State Parks* as the most obvious partners. For example, we recently worked with the *Museum of Art* to deliver programs that interpreted works of art featuring animals for visitors

who were blind or had limited vision. Similarly, we are collaborating with other colleagues in DNCR and local government to celebrate various state-wide events like the *Year of the Trail* and Drive Electric Week. We are also eager to collaborate in the field of Nature Play. For promotional activities, we are partnering with DNRC on tabling events to reach diverse audiences, such as Hispanic festivals. In preparation for America's 250 anniversary, the Zoo is partnering with DNCR by having the American red wolf as the NC mascot for this milestone event. A book featuring the red wolf is underway, with the Zoo offering consultants on red wolf behavior.

Our conservation and science programs are fertile ground for collaborations with other scientists across the department and in North Carolina Universities. Existing college and graduate-level internships in veterinary studies and animal behavior research could be expanded. The 2,666 acres of wildlife habitat that the Zoo manages are available to other divisions for both research and educational programming.

Priority Questions

1. Where are the most impactful locations to install EV charging stations?

Responses to the question take into consideration various benefits and constraints of locating EV charging stations in both urban and rural areas. Ideally, EV stations should be placed in areas of dense traffic. But rural areas may need charging stations in locations where the nearest charging station is far away. Another consideration is whether the site has agency assigned or owned EVs. Some locations may have infrastructure readiness issues which may be cost prohibitive, at least in the early determination of site locations. As such, current data, such as site visitation and geographic population areas assist in determining where to optimize usage of EV charging stations. Understanding demographic characteristics of drivers, including current and projected users of EVs, will assist in the decision-making process.

2. What agency assigned or owned internal combustion engine vehicles would be best to replace with EVs?

The answers to the question determine the most cost-effective purchase of EVs. Research shows that sedans are the most reliable EV whereas SUVs and pickup trucks are more problematic as they are newer to the market. Data to assist in the determination of which EVs to change out include the use of the vehicle at the site, availability of charging stations, EV maintenance and repair records, range of miles based on full charge, length of time to charge, whether extreme heat or cold weather affects performance across vehicle type, availability of mechanics trained to work on various EV types, and the need to tow behind.

3. What are the gaps in the historical content and the age of the exhibits across sites in DNCR?

Addressing gaps in historical content will require detailed reviews of background information for that given historic site/exhibit. For current sites, research may include finding evidence of missing information and assessing the perspectives of the original sources. For both existing and proposed exhibits, various stakeholders will be engaged and include peer review may be conducted in an effort to bridge historical content gaps. As part of the updating of content, an emphasis will be on expanding online/virtual capabilities. In addition to updating the content of exhibits, the physical structure will require maintenance and improvements. Exhibits may be inspected and inventoried for maintenance as well as for major repairs/renovations. These gaps need to be addressed to preserve and enhance the role they play in the transmission of historical knowledge.