Pay for Play:
Seth O’Shields

Prior Outdoor Engagements:
Mitch Parris

PRM Scholarship News:
Debby Singleton
A Note From The Editors

This semester’s publication features a variety of stories, personal experiences, photographs, and insight into current issues related to Parks and Recreation Management. We have thoroughly enjoyed compiling your works, creating this magazine and we hope that you appreciate it as much as we do. We wish you the best in the semesters and years to come and encourage you all to continue to make the PRM program the best that it can be!

-Adam Berry & Krista LaPlante
Special Thanks To:

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PRM in Action
“We are often temporarily misplaced, but our job as outdoor leaders is to constantly assess our surroundings for information that can help us stay found.”—Andrew Bobilya
Frederick

By: Amber Williamson

One of my favorite stories from childhood was one called “Frederick,” written by a brilliant man named Leo Lionni. In this story you are introduced to a world of field mice hastily preparing for the winter. As the community of mice labor to gather their wheat, corn, nuts and berries, there is one sole mouse named Frederick who merely sits on a rock in silence. To the other mice, Frederick is doing absolutely nothing, but he claims he is working by collecting odd things like, the sun rays and colors of the flowers. Frederick’s behavior is labeled as a joke and a lazy one at that. The others don’t “get” Frederick. Later on, when winter comes, the mice spend the first months celebrating their labor with good food and stories from their summer adventures. But soon their stories and supplies dwindle and their dark habitat begins to wear on them. It is at this point they turn to Frederick and ask that he share his “supplies.” Frederick then opens his mouth and tells of the warm sunrays so that they can feel them. He describes the colors of the summer so that they can see them. Engaging their senses, he then weaves them into a captivating poem about the seasons. As he speaks the mice are caught up in his words and feel as though magic has entered the room. The magic lifts their depression. When Frederick share’s his last word, the mice realize that he had a place in their society.

As a non-traditional student pursuing a degree in Parks and Recreation, I’ve often played Frederick’s story through my mind as I tried to convince friends and family members that my degree wasn’t a joke. Their resounding claim was that my career choice was a one-way ticket to financial hardship. Some asked why I should get paid to play all year long. Maybe you have heard the same things? Funny, we are still here. Why? Because we know that our world needs more than office jobs, mass-produced electronics, fast cars and prescriptions. People need play. We need adventure. Our bodies, minds, and souls demand it. For ages philosophers and leaders have debated the role of the arts and play in our lives. They debated over what supplies were most valuable to society. Do people need pre-selected jobs? Should everyone have a social contract? Should the recreation department be the first to be cut when financial hardship comes? Are alternative outdoor schools effective?

Thankfully, these questions have been answered. They are answered through personal experiences and sound research. Yet, in our frantic society even the solid answers are missed. That’s where our role comes in. We get to be the middleman between the answers and the people. Whether it’s working for a community recreation center or the ski patrol, we get to model the things we believe. My hope is that, as we all continue to grow in this program, we find the answers to these questions and like Frederick, take those colorful answers and share them with the community. So go ahead and sit on rock and soak up whatever you believe is important and when winter comes, share!
Hiking to Clear the Mind

By: Dillon Freeman

My father introduced me to leisure hiking when I was just a child. He would take my younger brother and I to small local trails at public parks and a few trails around the wooded areas where we grew up. At that age, I was not aware of the peacefulness a hike could bring to one’s self. It was not until I reached the age of sixteen when I realized the importance of these hikes my father would take me on as a child. I never got into backpacking and hiking trips because I was always busy with school and sports. I was only fascinated with the spur of the moment kind of hikes. At sixteen, when I received my driver’s license, I began to venture to more difficult and higher terrain for my hikes. I would take day trips up to Asheville, NC in the Great Smoky Mountains since it was only a few hours drive away. I would be gone all day and not come back until nightfall.

One of my favorite trails to hike in my teenage years, was the Mt. Pisgah Hiking Trail in the Pisgah National Forest. The trail is a three-mile round trip hike with an elevation of 5,721ft. The trail begins with a moderate climb along the Little Pisgah Mountain slopes. The next stage in the hike will lead you to a ridge that lies between Little Pisgah Mountain and Mount Pisgah. From there starts a slightly more difficult and steep climb along the ridgeline. Soon the trail will begin to level out and will not be as steep once you have reached the south end of the ridge. At the end of this ridge, you will enter a long and rocky mountain tunnel and then head straight up to the summit of the mountain. Here at the summit is where I would sit for hours at a time and glance along the earth’s wonderful landscape, eliminating all worries.

Horseback Riding on the Beaches of Bermuda

By: Kimberly Colozzi

Close your eyes and imagine the smell of the ocean, the sound of the waves crashing on the shore, the perfect breeze that is not too hot and not too cold, and a beach so perfect as there is not even a piece of trash on the sand and clear blue water. Yes, you are at the beach on an island called Bermuda. Bermuda is a British Overseas Territory located off the east coast of the United States of America, near the state of North Carolina.

Now listen even closer and you will start to hear a horse neighing in the distance and then suddenly you hear splashes in the waves. These splashes are not just any human splash, but they are the splashes of the horses’ hooves as they make their way down the shore. Horseback riding on the beach is one of my favorite things to do, but the time I rode on the beach with Spicelands Equestrian Center in Bermuda made a greater impact on my life than any other ride. I have always enjoyed trail riding in general with the different views, animals one sees, and experiences that happen in each individual ride one takes. I never thought a trail ride on the beach would impact me as much as it did the day I took a trail ride with my father on the beaches of Bermuda that summer. From the pure beauties of nature, I got to experience spending quality bonding time with my father trail riding on the beaches of Bermuda. It is a spiritual experience that most, given the opportunity, should experience.
A Memorable Backpacking Trip

By: Allen Grosse

Last school year, just before Thanksgiving break, my friend asked me to take her backpacking for the first time. She really wanted to go since she was writing a paper about backpacking and wanted to get some experience. I gladly accepted the offer. The trip that we had planned was going to be for a whole weekend, a basic three day and two night excursion. I wanted her to have a memorable first experience so I decided to take her to Black Balsam Mountain. I had been there before and it is one of my favorite places to hike. The views are amazing and the hiking isn’t too easy but it isn’t too hard.

The trip was almost done being put together. Since my friend had never been backpacking before she had no gear besides a pair of hiking boots. I told her that she should go to Base Camp Cullowhee and have them help her get set up for a weekend long backpacking trip. I did not want to help her too much since this was a learning experience for her, I was only acting as her guide.

The night before our trip we met up to get our packs ready. Since she did not personally buy her gear, all of it was really good quality compared to mine which was bought on a tight budget. Everything I had was the cheapest stuff that I could find. The only new piece of gear that I had bought was a thirty dollar, two-person tent from Walmart.

Friday rolled around and it was time to set off. We got to the parking area just a few hours before sundown. This meant we had to hike fast in order to get to our first campsite if we wanted to pitch our tents with any amount out of sunlight left. Luckily we made it to camp just in time with a small amount of light left. We pitched our tents, made dinner, and went to sleep.

Now, my favorite part about backpacking at this place is the fact that there are no trees on the whole mountain and camping at the top provides the best views in the morning. There was just one issue that I faced on this trip and that was the wind. Right around midnight the wind picked up to what felt like a hurricane. My Walmart tent was not fair-
Adventure to Paradise Falls
By: Jonathan Waszak

Moving to the mountains, I expected to have all kinds of adventures out in the backcountry. Little did I know that I would not have much time because I would be playing baseball and it occupies all of my time. Coming from the Piedmont Region I had not been around mountains and waterfalls at all. I had only been to the mountains once or twice and when I was very young. The beauty from the mountains had me very excited to climb mountaintops and see a waterfall. Who would have known that it would take until my junior year to see my first waterfall? This past fall semester I finally got a free weekend and a few friends and I decided to explore Paradise Falls. I was so excited to finally see a huge waterfall. Western Carolina is notorious for its hiking adventures and beautiful waterfalls.

The day started out with us driving out there. My anticipation was through the roof because it’s a decent drive to get to the entrance of Paradise Falls. Once we finally got there, I was ready to begin our hike. The hike to paradise falls was not bad at all. We were not really sure exactly how to get there so we were just winging it. We hiked and hiked crossing all sorts of creeks and rocks and it felt like we were never going to find it. We finally got to a point where we could hear the waterfall and we were all excited to get there. We came around the corner and out popped this beautiful waterfall. I had never seen such a force of water coming over a cliff like that before. Standing there looking at the waterfall I thought it looked absolutely stunning. I really had only seen the ocean and that did not even compare to how fast the water was falling. This was an adventure of a lifetime and you really have to see it in person to really experience it. Pictures do not do it justice. Some things you just have to see in person.

I truly recommend everyone getting out and enjoying the waterfalls we are blessed to have so close to our campus. You really cannot come to a college in the mountains and not explore what they have to offer. This trip was my first true adventure while in college and I will be sure to get out and explore many more waterfalls in the coming year.
South African Bunny Chow

By: Molly Fagan

Traveling half way across the world on three planes, stopping in two cities, and finally ending up in a place that I would call home for the next 9 weeks straight was an adventure all in itself. However, during my stay I got to experience many things that we, as Americans, would find to be a little strange or out of the ordinary. I am sure you are asking, “Why did you go?” Let me fill you in on at least one of the fun and interesting things I experienced during my incredible nine-week stay in South Africa. Buckle up and remain seated because we are about to take off.

When traveling across the world I started to ask myself and wonder about a few things that I was hoping to experience while I was visiting my new home. A few of those things were of course the culture, the people, and what kind of food was I about to be introduced to. I don't know about you, but I take my food seriously and I am all about mixing it up to try a new thing or two; I like a variety.

So after landing and being introduced to our missionary host families we, the IMPACT interns, were introduced to a local street dish called Bunny Chow. At first we were a little taken back by the name, not knowing if it was real “bunny” meat or not, but soon came to realize that it is basically a bread bowl with some sort of stew inside. The funny thing was that it was served in a half loaf of bread with a side of shredded carrot salad. You may be saying, “that’s not strange,” but there’s a kicker. You must sit on the floor and only use your fingers to eat the dish. We were not given napkins or anything to clean up with and for us, we viewed this as being a little out of the ordinary. However, the Bunny Chow was delicious; it has become a meal I crave here in the States and luckily I have the recipe to whip up a batch whenever I please.

With that little moment in my impactful summer I can honestly say that the yummy Bunny Chow doesn’t even touch the amount of unique and exciting things I experienced while in South Africa. I hope my experience has inspired you to branch out and try something new!
Diamond on Day 1
By: Jennifer Browne

As a kid I loved watching the X Games, my favorite was the snowboarding competition. I always wanted to try snowboarding, it looked like so much fun. Once I got to college, here at Western Carolina University, I found out there was a ski resort about forty-five minutes away. My hallmates and friends snowboard so I knew they could teach me next time they went. One day they were discussing a time and day they wanted to go to Cataloochee, the ski resort, and they offered to take me so I could learn. We decided to go on a Thursday evening around five because the evening lift ticket during the week is the cheapest. Once we got our ticket, I grabbed my board, strapped in and headed to the lift. I knew that I needed to go to the bunny slope since this was my first time on the mountain. My friends said it was on the other side of the mountain, and that we had to ride the lift to the top then there was one to take us down to the bunny slope on the other side. Well they lied; they took me to the top of the mountain up to the black diamond. They told me the best way to learn is to start at the top. Keep in mind this was my first time on a board; I have never turned, carved, or stood up on my board before. My body was frozen in fear while I looked down the hill. That slope caused me to tumble, roll, fall, slip, and smash into a tree. Luckily I did not hit one person on my way down. Every bone in my body was in pain, I thought all of them had broken, but thankfully I had only a few bruises. Needless to say, I stayed on the real bunny slope for the rest of the night. My friends ended up staying with me so they could properly teach me the basic beginner’s steps of the sport. Now four years later I try to go to Cataloochee as often as I can, also I proudly can say I ride the diamond with confidence now.

Passing on Tradition
By: Bailey Gordon

Located in the Outer Banks of North Carolina, Bear Island is accessible by ferry or non-motorized boats. Bear Island makes up the majority of Hammocks Beach State Park and is approximately four miles long. In March of 2010, I was part of a small weekend trip to the island; we did the 2.6 mile canoe trip to the island. Even going with the tide we still had to fight the wind all the way out; if we stopped paddling for a moment we would be pushed back. My little sister, seven years old at the time, was a part of the trip, and this is the first time I remember her joining us on one of our camping trips. Seeing my little sister on trips with my dad and brother reminds me of when I was younger and went on trips with them as well. We spent part of our weekend playing in the marsh that separates the island from the main beach. Spending the day playing with my little sister and my brother, running up and down the beach and playing in the ocean was like going back in time. Even though the sand got everywhere it was well worth the frustration. My father is the reason why I love outdoor activities such as, camping, backpacking and canoeing. Including my little sister in these activities at a young age passes on a family tradition of the outdoors and teaches her that there is more to life than we see every day. Over the past five years she has been a part of many camping trips, always as the youngest, but never excluded. Getting the chance to be with my dad as he instilled a love of the camping in my sister and showed that we can put down our phones for a weekend has been one of my favorite parts of the trips my dad took us on.
Growing up I was lucky to have grandparents that loved to travel, and, I was lucky enough to accompany them quite a few times. Over the years I have traveled to many places out west such as Colorado, Utah, California, New Mexico, Nevada, and other amazing places. In each state we made sure to catch the biggest or most significant places such as hiking the Grand Canyon, Mesa Verde National Park, day hiking Death Valley and any other outdoor adventures we could get into. The best experience I have had so far was our three-week trip to Alaska.

One of my grandpa’s best friends is an expert bush pilot who moved to Alaska years ago to be a missionary to the many remote locations, some only accessible by plane. Since then, my pa has done his best to go up there every year or so to help Earl and his family, while also exploring and adventuring. This time he somehow managed to talk my mom into letting him take me and my brother along. We landed in Anchorage and then immediately drove to Whittier Alaska, about a 6 hour drive. On the way we almost hit a few moose and got to see all kinds of wildlife. It’s almost like a whole different world up there. We made it into Whittier at about 6am, then took a nap and went on an Alaskan boat ride at 10am. This pretty much was the agenda for the whole trip, driving, napping, and right back to adventuring. We did everything from checking out some Alaskan gold mines, to white water rafting a half frozen class IV-V river, to deep sea fishing for some monster halibut. On a side note, I did end up catching the biggest halibut weighing in at around 85lbs. But, one of the biggest adrenaline rushes I’ve ever experienced would have to be what happened when we went salmon fishing. At this point in the trip we had met up with one of my grandpa’s friends, who had also taken us on the deep sea fishing trip the day before. He said he wanted us to experience the salmon run to add on to fishing in the ocean. So, he sent his thirteen-year-old son with us to be our guide, since he had to take another group out to sea. We went to a few local spots and didn’t really have any luck, but we decided to try one more place for the day.

There were plenty of signs that there were fish in the river, and a few people had passed us saying that they had caught some. We baited our lines and put our waders on and went for it. After an hour or so of no luck we moved upriver a ways. My younger brother and I had waded in about thigh deep and half-way across the river, trying to sink our lines into an undercut on the other side. All of a sudden we hear someone upriver from us yell “bear!” which I thought was cool at the time since we don’t get to see bear very often here in NC. But, bears in Alaska are a little bigger than we have here, a lot bigger. We started looking around and trying to see a glimpse of it and then someone closer to us yelled “bear! Turn around!” My brother looked at me and had that look that said “you first”, so we turned and looked and surprise, a mother grizzly bear and her cub were entering the river about ten or fifteen feet away from us. Luckily for us, the legal age to carry a pistol in Alaska is thirteen, so our friend pulled out his .44 magnum and shot in the air which scared them off. They ran back into the woods and we kept on fishing. Alaska is one of the most extreme places for outdoorsy people to adventure. I will always remember my experiences there and hope to one day go back.
Duking Out the Pros and Cons:
The Price of the Cullowhee Falls Trail
By: Tayler Hashbrouck

Nestled alongside the serene Lake Glenville, Cullowhee Falls tumbles for nearly one hundred and fifty feet before creating a picturesque swimming hole at the base. Formally known as High Falls, Duke Energy built a new trail leading to the base of the falls in 2013 due to pressure from American Whitewater. Although it is plausible that they built the High Falls Trail to alleviate the negativity radiating from all the atrocious things they have done to the surrounding rivers and environment. However, the method and materials that Duke Energy utilized to construct the new trail consisted of many nonrenewable resources and excessive wastefulness regarding the use of surrounding timber.

Cullowhee Falls received the makeover because of the crowds that the trail draws when the dam is released. Situated on the West Fork of the Tuckasegee River, the falls become the most powerful in the state during the scheduled release days making the base of the falls a mecca for paddlers looking for an adventure. To make the drop-in more accessible, Duke spent upwards of ten months producing the trail and abusing the surrounding landscape.

The new trail is absolutely beautiful, consisting of seventy-three stairs which serve as a good alternative to going to the gym. However, all of the stairs are built from raw stone. When observing the land encompassing the trail, it becomes quite apparent that the area is not excessively rocky, especially with stones small enough to form stairs. This leads hikers to believe that Duke Energy transported the stones in from a different area, which has likely caused extreme erosion elsewhere. Thousands of pounds of rocks were haphazardly thrown into the position of a staircase with little support on either side. The trail will likely need rebuilding and revitalization within the next five years because the only objects holding the stones stable in sections are dying trees and strewn limbs. Therefore, Duke will likely require more precious stones to be removed from other natural areas to maintain the High Falls Trail.

Furthermore, Duke Energy was also wasteful with the renewable resources used as well. When people go hiking, they tend to crave an area abundant with trees and wildlife. It is discernable that the area used to have heavy tree growth and shrubbery; however, in addition to the stone stairs mentioned above, the power company also used trees to construct stairs, handrails, and bridges. When building the bridges, rather than cutting the trees in half longitudinally to make two bridges, the top layer was simply cut off the tree to create a walkable surface. Instead of only using two trees to construct all four bridges, Duke exploited four trees unnecessarily. Right next to the bridges, there is also a pile of enormous, old-growth trees that were cut down and left there by the company; their project was obviously abandoned. Throughout the length of the trail, tree stumps sprout out of the ground as a reminder of what used to be. Meanwhile, the piles of cut down trees holding up the stone staircases act as a harsh snap back to reality.

Although Duke Energy built the trail to please the local paddlers and apologize for the company’s corrupt practices, the trail may have done more harm than good. Rather than having a corporation in charge of conservation ethics and trail maintenance, it would be highly preferable to hire a nonprofit that understands the trade. As Duke plans to build more recreation areas throughout Jackson County, it should be asked, “Is Duke Energy causing more harm than good?”
Hike to Chimney Tops:
A Clear Head Above the Clouds
By: Adrian Smoker

Over the course of my college career at Western Carolina University, I have had the most ideal college experience that I could have ever anticipated. WCU has an abundance of things to offer for every type of college student. Along with the various scholarly resources it provides, WCU also offers breath taking scenic views that deserve to be marveled. With the Great Smoky Mountains literally in my backyard, it was obvious to me that this was definitely the place where I was destined to continue my education. For me, an aspiring Parks and Recreation major, attending school here has given me the opportunity to learn about the great outdoors and experience first-hand some of the beautiful landmarks the Great Smokey Mountains has to offer. One of the most memorable experiences I’ve had at WCU is the time when I went with Base Camp Cullowhee, a PRM organization, on a nature hike to a scenic view named Chimney Tops.

After hearing about Base Camp Cullowhee I was instantly intrigued with the activities that the organization had to offer. Therefore, when I was given the opportunity to participate in a Base Camp activity, I chose to go on a hike with them to Chimney Tops. Experienced leaders for this hike were provided along with some snacks and water. All that we were required to bring were proper hiking equipment and clothing. When we got to the starting point, we immediately began hiking up what would be about a two mile hike to the destination. Along the way, I saw gorgeous forest vegetation, water springs, and even some forest wildlife. The flowers, running water, and animals such as crawfish, birds, plus salamanders gave the hike a type of euphoric feeling along with a sense of oneness with nature. These features all continued to present themselves throughout the hike. When we finally reached our destination, which was at the peak on a ridge of a mountain, I was suddenly astonished. At this peak it literally felt as though you were high above the rest of the world. You could see green rolling mountains for great distances that seemed to go on and on. As you looked down, you could watch clouds slowly pass you by as the wind carried them across the mountains. This was one of the greatest sights I had ever seen and I immediately fell in love with the Chimney Tops.

It was at that very moment, atop the mountain ridge that I realized why I wanted to be a PRM major at WCU. It was all thanks to Base Camp’s guided hike that I discovered my desire to be in PRM. If it had not been for this trip, I may have never even considered it. The breath taking view of the beautiful nature this world has to offer opened my eyes to the fact that we live in a beautiful place and should feel blessed to live the life that we’ve been given. Chimney Tops is the epitome of what natural beauty is and in order for us to continue to enjoy it for generations to come we must do all that we can to preserve it. I want my children and their children to one day go to Chimney Tops and see the things that I have seen so that they may learn to appreciate and respect nature and the things around us. That is why I am in PRM, and in my opinion there is no better place to be involved with it than at Western Carolina University.
Land of 10,000 Lakes

By: Matthew S. Drauszewski

Through my travels I had the opportunity to experience the Boundary Waters within the Superior National Forest in northern Minnesota. I participated in a two-week program which involved a week of trail maintenance and a week long journey that my group had planned. Spending that short two-week period was enough for me to rank the Boundary Waters as one of the most beautiful destinations I have ever experienced.

Prior to this program, I had never experienced a backpacking trip longer than three or four days, much less a two-week canoe trip. So, this was a relatively new experience and I had no clue what to expect. The day before the first week began, we were outfitted and planned our trip for the second week. Early the next morning we put in and paddled to the Moose to Wind Lake portage trail. Our destination was Wind Lake where we would set up a base camp to allow for easy access of the Moose to Wind portage trail for much needed repairs. Arriving at the portage trail we were instructed on how to carry the canoes on our shoulders to transport them over dry land. As I traversed my first portage trail, I couldn’t see much without turning due to carrying one of the canoes. Then, at about halfway, I rose above the tree line and looking from underneath the canoe I was able to see a spectacular view overlooking Moose Lake.

When we arrived at Wind Lake we chose an island to set up camp, got to know each other better, and then paddled back to the portage trail to begin repairs. We collected the tools, which were hidden off the portage trail, and preceded to a rock face where we would create gravel to retread the trail. We split the group into bucket carriers and rock crushers. After duties were assigned we spent the rest of the day filling buckets with rocks and spreading them onto the trail. As evening fell we returned to our island and cooked dinner. That night we earned a valuable lesson about getting into our tents before sundown to avoid masses of mosquitoes. For the rest of the week we worked on retreading the trail and placing check dams at strategic locations throughout the trail to combat erosion. Once the first week came to a close we prepared to start the second week of our canoe trip.
We began by crossing the portage trail back to Moose Lake and paddling south. Unfortunately our interpreters got lost between lakes on a cross-country ski trail. This mistake caused us to take an unexpected five mile portage off the ski trail and onto a highway. That hike was the hardest part of the entire two-week journey but we got through it and back on course shortly thereafter. We had good weather up until the third day when clear skies turned grey preluding the intermittent rain which stayed for two days. The rain forced us to stop in order to prevent one of our members from progressing too far into hypothermia. We set up camp, put dry clothing on him and bundled him up in his tent with two sleeping bags while we made hot chocolate. After nursing our peer back to health our interpreters put each of us in a solitary location to reflect on the trip. I was placed on a beautiful island where I spent my time lying in pine needles watching the damsel flies flitting about. We paddled and hiked our way back to Wind Lake and spent our last night in the campsite we had spent the first week. The next morning we returned to the dock on Moose Lake and had a welcome shower. I was captivated by those waters and highly recommend it to others so they may share in the beauty that is provided in the land of 10,000 lakes.
My First Day of Outdoor Climbing

By: Amanda Salvo

I was in my first semester of my freshman year at Western Carolina University and I was far away from home. I didn’t know anyone when I came here so I started climbing to get myself involved with something and meet new people. Next thing I knew, climbing at the wall made me feel like I was home. It was the next best thing so I decided to join the climbing club.

Not long after joining the club, we had our first trip on Labor Day weekend to Obed, Tennessee. About ten club members, including the leaders and myself, went on this trip. We decided to separate into three cars since some of the members needed to work the rock wall. My group was the first to make it to the campgrounds so we had first pick on where we wanted to set up our tents. It was dark enough to the point that it was hard to see where a good place to set up would be. About an hour later, the rest of the group that decided to go showed up and set up their tents. Once they were finished, we set up a campfire and ate dinner while we talked about what we planned on doing for the next day.

It was my first time camping so I wasn’t completely prepared for sleeping in a tent. I did not have a sleeping pad so it felt like I was sleeping on rocks the entire night although I slept pretty well. I woke up the next morning with little bruises on my hips but that wasn’t going to stop me from doing the day’s activities. Early that morning we all woke up and started packing up the cars with the climbing equipment. Some of us chose to go bouldering while others decided to go top rope. I chose to top rope since that is where I felt more comfortable.

My first climb was on a five-nine, which was about a half-a-mile into the trail to the rock faces. At the rock wall, a five-nine was easy for me, but this was nowhere near easy. I was only able to get about half way up the route before I got stuck at an overhang. Granted that I’ve only been climbing since the beginning of the academic year, I still give myself credit for at least trying.

It started raining a few minutes later so the group decided to walk farther into the trail where we were able to set another rout under a large overhang. There, we ate our lunch and some of us took a little nap. Feeling refreshed I rejoined the team and climbed a little longer. When the rain subsided, we walked out of the trail and back up to the cars.

It was probably around five when we finally got back to the cars and there were no clouds in the sky. It was on the warmer side so we decided to go to a river to “wash up.” We met up with the members that went bouldering at the river and we all jumped in for a swim.

We got back to the campsite around 7:00 since we went out to get food to make for dinner. We got into dry clothes and made our dinners. Later that night, another group of climbers arrived at the campsite. They set up a fire that we all started huddling around. These people were from Atlanta, Georgia, which is where my cousins live. I got to know these people very well and still keep in touch with one of them.

We stayed at Obed for another two nights and drove back to Western that Monday. It rained all day Sunday and Monday morning so we didn’t get as much climbing done as we wanted. But overall, this was my first time climbing in an outdoor environment. I was very satisfied with what I was able to do and what I learned while on this trip. I enjoyed the company I was with and myself and would love to experience this adventure again sometime soon.
My Year Here
By: Carlton Bennett

Western Carolina University has given me many advantages for joining in the numerous programs over the four years that I have attended. From day one I was introduced to clubs, activities, various sports, and all the different majors and career paths that I could possibly find. Thanks to this, I discovered one of the best programs on campus. Parks and Recreation Management was not my first choice, but after some trial and error in various fields I found myself gradually wanting to be a part of it more and more. It was no surprise that many people didn’t know about it, due to school keeping the program out of its major advertising, but some friends showed me how to get involved and eventually I made the permanent change.

When I first learned about the program I had wished to work in any service that would get me close to wildlife. My dream was to become a vet and work in zoos or various centers for rehabilitation of wildlife. However, reality struck and informed me that most people can’t afford to pay for animals that no one owns. This left me without much of a will to continue any sort of biology or veterinarian program. Luckily, a good friend of mine showed up with the idea to make me switch majors, and after seeing what the PRM professors had to offer I knew what I wanted to do with my life. This led me towards seeing other job opportunities and created a passion towards the outdoors that I simply had yet to find before.

The program, one that offers large amounts of help and assistance, was filled with knowledge and staffed by some of the best individuals who I’ve had the pleasure of being taught by. From learning various group activities, traveling across the world to Ireland, creating my own personal business plan, and establishing numerous safety reports and risk management plans I found that I could apply all of my knowledge to my career and my social life in very effective ways. Not only that, but the amazing staff continue to work with all their efforts to help students excel by offering as much advice as possible to guide them towards the resources they need. This helped vault my passion and desire to grow and learn more behind the PRM life.

In the four years that I have considered myself a Western Carolina University student I have found it to be an amazingly exciting experience. From all the drama of growing up, discovering my own abilities, career changes and various opportunities that I have faced it is clear that I would not have made it without the help of my friends, professors, and family. I owe a lot to the program which continues to guide me on an amazing ride, and like many students who will be graduating this year, it is only the beginning.
ADVENTURES IN PANTHER TOWN

PRM 420
Pay For Play: Examining Fee Areas on Public Lands

By: Seth O’Sheilds

Going out into the mountains, forests, or rivers for recreation has been a human right for as long as humans have been recreating. When planning or executing an outdoor adventure the last thing most of us are concerned with is being able to afford required fees or jumping through the hoops of government red tape; in fact, many people may not even be aware of these requirements, and the confusions that sometimes ensues can dissuade them from future outdoor pursuits. On the other hand regulating agencies say that these permits and fees are necessary for a number of reasons; chiefly, financial woes drive their desire to increase fees at campgrounds and permit stations. Both sides of the argument have valid points, but no matter which side loses out in the end, the way we fund our federal recreation lands is long overdue for a makeover.

To most of us here in North Carolina and Tennessee, using federal lands is a part of our everyday lives. Whether you commute from one end of Asheville to the other on the Blue Ridge Parkway, go for afternoon runs up in Deep Creek to stay fit, or spend your day off from work surfing the many standing waves of the Nantahala in your preferred white-water craft you can’t escape the fact that the culture in this part of the world is dependent on access to public lands of all types. History shows us that the white settlers used our mountainous frontier to give them everything they needed to thrive in this region: the building materials for homes, plants for medicine, and food gained from the hunt. What was then a necessary element of their survival now has become a way for their descendants to connect with their forefathers through the sports of hunting and fishing, visiting their old home sites, and keeping up the ways of the old medicine people. For these reasons and many others, limiting access to the lands our lives are so entrenched in has caused concern for some, and uproar for just as many.

Talk to a number of people involved in the newly formed watchdog group Southern Forest Watch (SFW) and you will probably get a feeling that these men and women care deeply about their communities and the connection they have to their ancestral lands in the Smokies. Like any good politicians, they use the theatrical to their advantage; nothing that would look too extreme if it were put on the local news, but enough to get their detractors hot during internet forum debates. They have a tendency to push the buttons of the local NPS staff to get their points across as well, staging protests opposing the new backcountry use fee that was enacted recently by the now-retired Park Superintendent Dale Ditmanson. Accusations of tit-for-tat game playing by park administrators and local businesses, as well as illegal land acquisition by a former Tennessee Governor who happens to live on the park boundary add fuel to their fiery sermon against over-regulation of park land that was taken from many families through condemnation in the early 20th century.

This notion that the Smokies are unique and therefore should be exempt from user fees is central to the message the SFW is trying to publicize. Unlike most National Parks, which are made up of lands that were mostly kept in the public trust from the beginnings of our nation, the Smokies are different. Scotch-Irish immigrants (Full disclosure: The author’s ancestors were among those settlers.) found a home away from home across the southern Appalachian range. The climate was similar enough to the British Isles that they thrived in this wilderness that most flatlanders balked at. When the federal government decided that the Eastern United States needed a National Park equivalent to the grandeur of places out west such as Yellowstone and Yosemite, the Smokies were chosen above other nearby ranges for the sheer size and quality of the uninterrupted wilderness compared to the other contenders. The big losers in this decision were the hundreds of people that had built communities in the coves and hollows of every corner
of this land. Except for a few lucky souls who were able to convince the powers that be to give them lifetime leases on their homes, the rest would have to vacate the land they had lived on their whole lives in exchange for a meager stipend meant to help them relocate to nearby towns. When the roadways within the park were transferred from the State of Tennessee to the US Department of the Interior in 1951 a deal was struck between the two agencies: In exchange for this land, and as a show of good faith to the families that had previously lived inside the park, the NPS could never charge a fee for access to the lands along US Highway 441. Because the wording in those contracts is vague the NPS has declared, “The contract was intended to apply to motor vehicle access only.” The local park administration was able to convince the Department of the Interior to allow them to implement fees for overnight backcountry use, even though many overnight use areas are accessed via US Highway 441. This is where the controversy started.

Similar fee programs have been in place in parks and forests in every region; some very minimal, and some quite pricey. In most of these places the fees being charged are linked to a service being provided. In Pisgah National Forest a popular water recreation area called Sliding Rock charges a $2 fee per person using the area. These funds are designed to help offset the salary of the lifeguards on duty during tourist season. Services at campgrounds similarly charge fees for the maintenance of camp facilities, and to offset the costs associated with having a camp host on premises through the busy season to ensure campers are paying their permits and not breaking any rules. Due to insufficient staffing of Park and Forest Rangers these camp hosts are necessary to keep the campgrounds from deteriorating due to irresponsible use. For the opponents of fees, besides reneging on the old contract, the biggest problem with charging fees for the Smokies backcountry use is their claim that the government is not providing any services at all, or at least that services are being created where there is no demand. If you have never been to a backcountry campsite in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park you might not be aware that there are literally no services or facilities provided. One must bring one’s own water purification system, bedding, shelter, and anything else needed to live in the wilderness (Appalachian Trail shelters do have minimalist structures and privies, but they are installed and maintained by volunteers rather than government employees). Cables provided for proper food storage were funded by non-profit groups years ago, and there are no designated tent pads installed at any of the sites.

Other such anti-fee groups in the White Mountains of New Hampshire and the Western Slope No-Fee Coalition of Colorado have used similar reasoning in fighting the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management in federal court. The Colorado group’s fight began as a response to parking fees along remote dirt roads of the Yankee Boy Basin in Uncompahgre National Forest. The government eventually gave in and lifted the access fee after numerous protests and pressure from Ouray County, CO to do so. There are currently lawsuits in appeal at the federal level in response to fees in other unimproved backcountry areas. California anti-fee groups have even been successful in getting a federal judge to label these fees unlawful under the parameters of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. The ruling stated that these fees discriminated against forest users that did not make use of facilities at trailheads such as picnic areas or toilets. The plaintiffs in this case had hoped the ruling would set a precedent for similar court cases and fee systems in all National Forests would have to be rethought and retooled to meet the new interpretation of the law. The Forest Service disagreed, stating that the interpretation of the law only applies to the few fee areas
The Forest Service disagreed, stating that the interpretation of the law only applies to the few fee areas that were in contention for the purposes of the lawsuit. Only time, and likely a few more lawsuits will tell if the new interpretation is enforced nationwide. From this you can see why the lack of services or facilities is a key talking point for the SFW in their fight against a fee in the Smokies. A lawsuit has been filed in federal court by the leaders of the organization, and they are awaiting trial as of this writing.

From the perspective of the Park Service staff entrusted with the care and management of this land it was clear that something needed to be done to better manage high use areas of the backcountry. Several programs over the years that put NPS Rangers in hiking boots and sent them out into the woods to patrol the backcountry have come and gone. Lack of appropriated funds is usually cited as the reason for discontinuation of these efforts, and inevitably those rangers have to trade their boots and backpacks in to resume the more urgent tasks of traffic enforcement and office work. As a land manager, it makes logical sense to exhaust all options when grasping for much needed dollars, and considering the between nine and ten million visitors the Smokies receives every year. Grasping at the dollars of park visitors was an obvious move, even if the nearly 60 year old contract was going to be violated.

Before the new fees went into effect in the Smokies the NPS first stated that the current system of backcountry reservation was inadequate and needed to be modernized, and a backcountry use fee would pay for this new modern reservation system. Overcrowding and overuse of the park’s ~100 undeveloped campsites was claimed at this time as well, even though statistics kept by the NPS stated that between 2006 and 2011 total “camper nights” were 73,000 per year, or approximately 2 people per night per campsite. Certain sites close to road access bore most of the use and abuse. These few sites were known to attract crowds, but there was already a reservation system in place to keep numbers down. This of course doesn’t stop people from camping at these sites illegally, but there is no way to determine how often this happens.

The claim that many customers were dissatisfied with the old reservation system was quickly debunked through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to see these complaints. The complaints totaled seven over a period of two years, half of which were submitted by the same person, a NPS trail maintenance volunteer. When this came to light the NPS backpedaled and changed their reasoning for the fee, stating that the fee would pay for two full-time law enforcement rangers to patrol the backcountry. This would address claims that great numbers of park visitors had said that “they desire to see more rangers in the backcountry to address problems such as dogs on trails, permit and camping violations.” Through more public records it became known that these fees had nothing to do with underwriting two rangers, and that the collected funds were intended to solely pay for the new reservation system. Furthermore, Superintendent Dilmanson is on record stating that the fees would be used to pay for the rangers, when, according to internal Department of Interior documents (again, obtained via the FOIA) he knew this was untrue. The final volley in the SFW’s payload came after a public comment period was completed by the NPS. When federal agencies propose a new fee
for an increase to a current fee they are compelled to first accept comments from the general public to gauge support for a proposed change. Whether or not these comments are taken into consideration before a final decision is made is debatable. The new fee went through the standard process, and at the end of the comment period there were 230 narrative comments and two separate petitions regarding the fee. These comments and petitions were once again brought into the public light only after a FOIA request by the SFW for the documents. The comments and petitions, once tallied up showed the public’s opinion on this new fee, and it didn’t look good for the Fed’s cause. The responses were 827 against the tax and 45 for the tax, vastly different from the superintendent’s claim that “...a significant number of responses received either showed support or offered substantive comments towards improving it... and a small group took exception to the concept of a new fee...”

After the public made it clear they did not approve of these new fees, well-respected organizations came out publically against it as well. Groups such as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Benton MacKaye Trail Association, and local county governments all spoke out against the fee. The government balked, and the fee was introduced at a rate of $4 per person/per day. Shortly after its introduction, a lawsuit was filed in federal court by the SFW, claiming that the Department of the Interior had overstepped its bounds. The suit is still pending trial as of this writing.

Our public lands are treasures that must be protected, but at what cost to the public? In an ideal world the congress would appropriate funds to manage all of the nation’s assets appropriately. We don’t live in a perfect world, and often when matters of national security or the failure of social programs become critical, funding gets pulled from our parks and forests to take care of those immediate problems. The issues that affect our natural resources are often ignored as second tier problems that can wait for a solution from the next batch of politicians to take office. One must remember that a great nation must protect its natural resources, or suffer grave consequences. We must demand that our resources be managed properly so that they can be taken care of for all to enjoy forever. The majority of people that use these lands have made it clear that they think land management should be funded through taxes and not user fees. Whether or not the government will take heed of the peoples’ demands is yet to be seen. No matter what the courts eventually decide, one thing is for sure: there will always be someone there keeping them honest.

For more information on this topic, and to access public records cited in this article please visit: http://westernsloopenofee.org/ and http://johnquelle0.wix.com/southernforestwatch2
Prior Outdoor Engagements

By: Mitch Parris

It was July 27th, 2014, a beautiful, sunny Sunday. Today was the day I would ask her. Two days prior, I made the two and a half hour drive from Sylva to Statesville for the fifth time that summer and there was one great reason why. I told my girlfriend I wanted to hike to Catawba Falls with her on Sunday. It’s an easy hike to a gorgeous waterfall off of exit 73 on I-40. Catawba Falls is special to us because it is the first place we went together on a date. So that morning, I helped her pack a picnic for us, knowing full well we weren’t going to need it when we got there. We got in the car and I texted my parents and friends to let them know of our departure. We got to the trailhead and we couldn’t have asked for better weather; it was sunny, yet not too hot. I lugged the somewhat weighty picnic basket up the trail as we talked and reminisced about our first date: the river crossing where I had almost fallen down carrying a picnic basket; the small pool of water where we climbed down to take a picture of the first waterfall (that would be dwarfed by the final one); the old man-made dam that created yet another beautiful waterfall where we had stopped to give advice to some strangers; the over-grown rocky area where we encountered a copperhead and a garter snake.

Eventually, we were getting near the top, and I saw my friends and family waiting for me a hundred yards up over the top of a boulder. Suddenly, my heart was racing and my stomach felt like it was in my throat, so I pretended I was tired and needed a breather. After a minute or two of small-talk, in which I wasn’t paying attention to anything except what I was going to say in a few minutes, we continued on up the path. We appeared on the other side of the boulder where I had caught a glimpse of my friends previously, and my family and two best friends were waiting in front of the base of the giant waterfall at the end of the trail. My girlfriend was completely stunned for a moment, and then let out a yell because she realized what was happening. (I was shocked too—my best friend was there! He was supposed to be hiking the Art Loeb trail, but it turned out he had to be rescued midway through the hike, but that’s a tale for another time.) I walked her in front of the waterfall beside a picnic I had my family set up for me, got down on my knee, and asked my girlfriend to marry me. With the sun shining on her face, the mist from the falls floating through the air, and the sounds of nature all around us, she said yes! Catawba Falls will always be a wonderful, special place to us.
Snowmaking in the Southeast

By: Thomas Graham

“There is skiing in North Carolina?” Many of us winter sports enthusiasts know exactly what I am referring to. Often times, this is a famous question we hear from people who do not realize North Carolina has snow. Living in the southeast we experience all four seasons, none of them being very extreme. This drives many of us out west to ski and snowboard where there is more snow and larger ski resorts. When riding the chairlift out west, you tend to meet people from all around the country. Often times conversations start with random people. At the point of the conversation when you tell them where you are from, or where you ski at home, a lot of these people respond with “There is skiing in North Carolina?” This often surprises people. However, we are fortunate enough to be able to ski and snowboard on a mountain that only has an average annual snowfall of 48 inches (Cataloochee Ski Area). Without constant cold temperatures, there would be very little skiing and snowboarding in the southeast.

Cold weather allowed early snowmaking technology to begin at Cataloochee Ski Area over 50 years ago. Without snowmaking, Cataloochee would not be able to operate solely on natural snowfall. Cataloochee has invested a lot into their snowmaking, allowing them to open for business quickly, needing only one cold night of making snow. So, how cold is cold enough? Snowmaking is based on the wet bulb temperature. The wet bulb is the combination of humidity and air temperature. If the wet bulb temperature is below 32 degrees, snow can be made. Therefore, it could be 30 degrees air temperature and 100% humidity and snow could not be made because the wet bulb is too high. Lower humidity decreases the wet bulb temperature allowing for better snow to be made. Man-made snow occurs the same way natural snow does. A lot of people believe the myth that ski areas make artificial snow. This is not true, water comes out of the snow gun nozzles at high pressure, allowing it to shoot in the air and turn into ice crystals as it falls to the ground. This is very similar to how natural snow condenses in the clouds before it falls. The only difference is man-made snow is denser and holds less air. This makes the snow firmer and last longer. These things give you a basic understanding of how man-made snow is made and how it is different from natural snow. There are 16 ski areas total in the southeast, and all of them use snowmaking. Even with the little snowfall we received this winter, southeast ski areas offered 5 months of skiing and snowboarding.
Spontaneous Snowboarding

By: Clayton Johansen

At the beginning of December, I received a phone call from my friend Tay asking if I wanted to go snowboarding out West instead of just coming to Charlotte to visit him over Christmas break. I assessed my finances and decided it was an opportunity I could not pass up, so we planned to leave the day after Christmas and fly into the Reno/Tahoe International Airport. We flew on buddy passes to reduce the cost of the trip which led to us spending about 25 combined hours either in the airport or on a plane over the whole trip. We got bumped off the first flight out of Charlotte and decided to reroute through Las Vegas to get us at least on the other side of the country. We did not end up arriving at The J.A. Nugget in Reno until about two o'clock in the morning, West Coast time. I approached the desk eager to receive the key card to our room so we could hit the sack; much to my dismay, the resort had a computer glitch earlier that day that had overbooked the hotel so they had no room to put us in. The very nice girl, named Caileigh, at the counter was able to accomplish the impossible and found us a hotel room in Reno when the whole town was fully booked. The hotel’s general manager drove us to our new hotel, the Peppermill, which would be our residence for the night and wished us good luck snowboarding and told us to have a great trip.

The next morning, Tay and I were going to get our snowboards and rental car from the airport so we could head to Lake Tahoe to start our first day of boarding. We hit the road around eight and arrived at the mountain a little over an hour later, only making a short pit-stop at McDonalds for breakfast. We were pulling into a small parking lot right in front of the mountain and parked beside a pine tree that was at least eight stories tall. We got our lift tickets and put all of our gear on and then headed to the first lift, which only takes you about half way up the mountain. The view from this lift was spectacular; if you turn around while on it, you get to see yourself rising up the mountain with your view of Lake Tahoe growing in the background, which is perfect for taking “selfies”, as you ascend the mountain. To reach the top of the mountain you have to snowboard down a short, but pretty steep slope. Now I am not, by any means, a great snowboarder and I think I have actually discovered that I am a better skier this semester in Debby’s skiing class, but I was not going to let this mountain get the best of me and make me not want to snowboard. So I strapped in and dropped down the hill and I made it to the next lift. It was a little rough, but I only fell once so I was pretty pleased. We rode up to the top and took one of the blue runs that puts us back out at the halfway lift. Then, we continued to ride up to the top and keep running the different slopes. I told Tay to not worry about me if he wants to go on any of the black diamonds to go ahead and that I will be fine riding alone. No matter how many times I fell, I just kept getting back up, because I felt like it should be more about the experience and not giving up and trying to just keep pushing myself to do better. Between the two days that we were there, the resort opened up pretty much all the slopes on the mountain, so we kept making runs and new things would open so we would keep riding new things.
Summertime Selections

By: Alex Hall

Western North Carolina is known for its beautiful scenery and world class outdoor recreational opportunities. People from all over the country come to see the Great Smokies in all of its wonder. As Western Carolina University students, we have a wonderful opportunity to explore this part of the state and participate in some of the wonderful recreational activities that this area has to offer. There are many things you can do in this part of the Blue Ridge Mountains such as kayaking, hiking, camping, and much more. These are especially prevalent during the summer months due to the wonderful weather.

There are some world class whitewater rivers that run throughout this area. The Nantahala Outdoor Center is one of the main benefactors of this and they have their main base of operations about an hour away from campus located near Bryson City. They will show you all kinds of places to paddle in the area as well as give basic kayak lessons and even take clients on guided trips. This is a great way to get your feet wet in the paddling industry. For the person who likes to do smaller kayaking trips and for free, if you have your own gear, you can go to our local Tuckasegee River that runs right behind campus or drive about thirty minutes to paddle world class whitewater on the Nantahala River. So you do not have your own gear? Then go up to Base Camp Cullowhee and you can rent kayaking gear for a low cost.

Another great opportunity for outdoor enthusiasts in the Smokies is hiking. There are countless numbers of hiking trails with great views right in Western Carolina Universities’ back yard. Hiking is simple given the fact that it takes very little equipment and skill to go out and hike. Panthertown Valley, located about forty-five minutes from campus, offers trails with spectacular views and gets you in touch with your inner nature child. The Pinnacle located just outside of Sylva, North Carolina is a lesser known trail that is also a wonderful hike that offers amazing views of the western North Carolina countryside. If you do not mind dealing with all the out of state visitors you can hike all along the Blue Ridge Parkway. There are multiple spots on the side of the parkway that you can get off and hike up to the many peaks that surround the Blue Ridge Parkway. If you are less of a people person you can go and hike to the many waterfalls around WCU such as Cullowhee and Paradise Falls.

If you want to challenge yourself to spend a couple of nights under the stars you have many opportunities to do that as well. Panthertown valley, which was mentioned above, has many campsites that can be used for backcountry camping and backpacking. If you want to really challenge yourself you can go visit the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. The park is located about forty-five minutes from campus and offers backcountry camp sites that require some skill to reach and live in the backcountry. If living in the backcountry does not sound like your cup of tea, you can also camp in the many front country campsites located throughout the park.

So if you ever find yourself looking for something to do this summer, just remember that the area we live in is a wonderful place for recreation professionals as well as the general public. There are countless things you can do in the outdoors of Western North Carolina. Get outside this summer and take advantage of this beautiful place we call home.
The Pine Grove
By: Spencer Williams

It was a cold winter day in middle January 2014 as my cousin and I set off on a day hike. We started off at the Salt Rock entrance of a section of Pisgah National Forest called, Panthertown. We hiked up to a rock formation called Black Rock. As we came around a bend in the trail, all of a sudden, the trail opened up to a large rock face giving way to the amazing view of most of Panthertown Valley. I walked over to the part of the rock that stuck out the farthest to get what I thought would be the best view. As I stood there and took in the awesome beauty of what is basically in our own backyard. I thought about how some people never get to just go and hike. I also thought about all the people who live in the cities that will never see this part of North Carolina. Because of this thought I wanted to see more of Panthertown simply because some people will never get to hike these trails. So we set out again on our hike. After we had hiked for about forty-five minutes or so we came along a narrow part in the trail. That’s when I saw it, a small trail which if I hadn’t been looking down at a bright red leaf I never would have seen it. I told my cousin to wait there and let me check it out and see where it goes. I started down the little trail, and after about fifty yards or so the trail scooped down and opened up into a small pine grove. The ground was carpeted with nothing but pine needles and pine cones. Everywhere around was nothing but pine trees. I sat down my stuff and went back for my cousin. We walked back into the pine grove and lay down in the middle of it. As I looked up toward the blue sky through the mighty pines I thought to myself “I Love Western North Carolina”.

Two Skis, One Mission
By: Drew Briggs

The spring semester of 2015 was a blast for me! I had signed up for the internship class called PRM 383 and I could not have picked a much better internship duo to work with than Haywood County Recreation and Parks Department and Debby Singleton’s Alpine Skiing Teacher’s Assistant internship. At the start of the semester, Debby introduced me to the Teacher’s Assistant opportunity for planning, instructing, implementing and evaluating the Health and Physical Education class called HPE 204: Alpine Skiing. We had worked on several packets and organized each ability level of each student to match with their appropriate skiing instructor for the classes designed to help students better their skill level for the mountain snow. Working with another teacher’s assistant, Seth Roberts and I found ourselves experiencing the dream of teaching a great sport while experiencing the outdoor recreation we both love. Having the class at Cataloochee Ski Resort was very convenient and feasible. I have skied since I was in the 7th grade and I find it one of the most cathartic and exhilarating sports around.

While getting more advanced at skiing, we worked on creating “edges” for the students and positioning their skis for the proper technique on how to traverse down the treacherous slopes they may encounter out west or even in the eastern part of the US.

In conclusion, being a ski instructor's trainee through the course was a great experience because I want to further my ability to teach and instruct individuals later in my professional career. It has been a great semester and I want to thank Debby for giving me the opportunity to be there for the students and for the greatest experience I have ever had here at this university. If any experienced skiing student is looking for a great way to teach students and show them the skills they need to learn for skiing (and snowboarding), look up Debby Singleton, here at Western Carolina University, and join the team for a great internship opportunity!
The summer of 2014 not only tested my mind and determination, but also my strength and endurance. In March 2014 I received a call from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park offering me a job as a grade 3 trail worker. I was enthused with this opportunity knowing that my career with the Park Service is starting. The South District of the park is the district I am in, with my reporting location at Deep Creek. The job is a seasonal position running from May 2014 until October 2014. I did not work a full season because of school starting back.

The first month of work was an eye opener for me. Mile after mile my five-man crew hiked everyday weighted down with our personal supplies for the day, as well as our tools. Digging water drains seemed to be the point of interest for the first month and a half followed by weed-eating trails. With four miles of hiking being an easy day, we all found ourselves getting in shape, and finding out who the toughest was. From Deep Creek to 20 Mile Creek we hiked and worked until the job was complete. Sometimes I would be talking to myself after a brutal 4-10 mile lung-busting hike to where we would start work thinking “can we just be done for the day,” or “how could anybody love this?” When the day was over no matter how hard it was, I realized that I have one of the best jobs out there.

Wearing the National Park Service uniform is not just a uniform to me. I take great pride and respect to others every time I put it on, because of what it represents. As the winter months approach all I can think about is how excited I am to get back out on the trails and start working. The climb, the work, and the determination will make or break you on the trail. I have now come to realize that I have a case of trail fever.
PRM Scholarship News
By: Debby Singleton

Over 20 years ago, the Parks & Recreation Management programs underwent a re-visioning to place more emphasis on outdoor education and leadership. This re-visioning was led by Dr. Maurice Phipps and Dr. Ben Tholkes; who brought new ideas, a fresh perspective, and a wealth of experience to WCU. In 1996, they hired Debby Singleton to teach courses within the commercial recreation focus area and to help teach a wide variety of core courses. Throughout the years, the core instructional staff, with assistance from a talented pool of adjuncts, has led and taught countless Parks & Recreation Management majors. This past year, Dr. Phipps began phased retirement and we welcomed Dr. Andrew Bobilya to our PRM faculty. As we entered this time of transition, we started thinking about opportunities to give back something to our students, especially those who need some financial assistance to help them meet their professional and personal goals.

In 2014, the PRM faculty had the opportunity to explore creating a scholarship for our program. Several weeks ago, the paperwork was completed and now we can begin fundraising. The Phipps-Tholkes-Singleton Scholarship is on track to be endowed for $10,000 by 2020. Each year our goal is to raise $2,000 for the scholarship. Once the scholarship is endowed, we can open the application process to our students. If the scholarship reaches its monetary goal prior to 2020, we can start awarding scholarships sooner.

The process to donate to the scholarship is fairly easy. To give online, just go to this link: https://securelb.imodules.com/s/781/give/index.aspx?sid=781&gid=1&pgid=526&cid=1341&dids=470

To kick off the fundraising for the scholarship, PRM 461: Management & Administration of PRM will be hosting a contra dance in Reid Gym on Thursday, April 23 from 7-9pm. The admission price of $5.00 for students and $10 for faculty/staff/community will go directly to the Phipps-Tholkes-Singleton Scholarship fund. The goal is to raise $300 for the scholarship. We hope to see everyone there, so bring your dancing shoes!

For more information about the scholarship, contact one of the PRM faculty.
Congratulations Graduates!

December 2014