

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

Session 2017

Legislative Fiscal Note

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 244 (First Edition)
SHORT TITLE: Coastal Crescent Trail/State Parks System.
SPONSOR(S): Senator B. Jackson

FISCAL IMPACT					
(\$ in millions)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Estimate Available					
	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22
State Impact					
General Fund Revenues:					
General Fund Expenditures:					
State Positions:					
NET STATE IMPACT	Likely budget costs. See Assumptions & Methodology section for additional details.				
Local Impact					
Revenues:					
Expenditures:					
NET LOCAL IMPACT	No estimate available. Please see Assumptions & Methodology section for additional details.				
PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENT(S) & PROGRAM(S) AFFECTED:					
Department of Natural and Cultural Resources					
EFFECTIVE DATE: When the bill becomes law					
TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS:					
None					

BILL SUMMARY:

Senate Bill 244 (SB 244), Coastal Crescent Trail/State Parks System, requires the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) to add the Coastal Crescent Trail (CCT) to the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail (MST). DNCR is directed to work with the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail staff and volunteers to plan and develop the CCT route.

DNCR must amend the State Parks System Plan to reflect the addition of the CCT to the MST by October 1, 2017, when an updated version of the State Parks System is due to the Environmental Review Commission, the Senate and the House of Representatives Appropriations committees on Agriculture, Natural, and Economic Resources, and the Fiscal Research.

BACKGROUND

A State Trail is a linear corridor on land or water, separated from vehicular traffic, providing public access for non-motorized recreation or transportation. The State's trail system can include various regional and connecting trails, but only trails authorized by the General Assembly can be "State Trails" and, therefore, a component of the state parks system. Currently there are five authorized State Trails:

- (1) The French Broad River State Trail,
- (2) The Yadkin River State Trail,
- (3) The Mountains-to-Sea State Trail,
- (4) The Deep River State Trail, and
- (5) The Fonta Flora State Trail.

While a State Park is operated and managed by the Division of Parks and Recreation within DNCR, a State Trail is comprised of many connected sections, and each section is sponsored by a State or federal agency, local government, or private landowner. Each partner, or section sponsor retain authority over the land under their jurisdiction, and builds, maintains, and manages their section of the trail, including location, design, surface, permitted uses, and amenities.

The CCT runs through Johnston, Sampson, Cumberland, Bladen, Pender, and Onslow counties, and was originally established as a temporary detour around portions of the MST that have not yet been constructed. Currently, the majority of the CCT route is on road shoulders, not along a traditional off-road trail separated from vehicular traffic. According to DNCR, the CCT counties and communities have expressed interest in developing a separated trail for the CCT, and would like technical and financial assistance from DPR in developing a regional off-road trail in the southern coastal plain.

ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGY:

The fiscal impact of adding the CCT to the State Park System as a State Trail cannot be definitively determined. Four potential effects of SB244 on DPR and DNCR are discussed here:

- (1) Increase DPR's internal planning and coordination responsibilities: These costs will be absorbed by existing staff within the Division. However, as the State Park System continues to grow, the Division will no longer be able to assume these added responsibilities without additional staff. DPR will most likely seek master planning funds for the new trail in the near future; master planning funds are expected to be \$100,000 to \$150,000.
- (2) Increase DPR's or DNCR's construction and management responsibilities: DPR and/ or DNCR will be responsible for any necessary construction, maintenance, and management needed for portions of the trail that utilize State park or other DNCR property. These costs will vary based on the how much of the CCT utilizes such property as well as the needs for and along the trail (such as signage, surface, etc.). Since the current trail is primarily along roads and a final route has not been developed, Fiscal Research cannot estimate of the cost of constructing, maintaining, or managing the Department's portions of CCT or when (or if) such costs are likely to occur.

- (3) Make the CCT eligible for Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF): Sixty-five percent (65%) of PARTF, which is funded with net appropriations, is dedicated to supporting State parks capital projects, repairs and renovations, and land acquisition. SB244 would make the CCT eligible for these funds. SB244 does not priorities the CCT over other park or trail projects but will increases the number of park units competing for these limited funds.
- (4) Make the CCT to be eligible for the State Trail portion of the Connect NC Bond: A portion of the Connect NC Bonds, \$4.5 million, is set aside for the MST and other State trails. Adding CCT as a State Trail will allow the trail to be eligible for these Connect NC funds earmarked for State trails. Similar to PARTF, SB244 does not priorities the CCT over other trails but will increases the number of trails competing for these limited funds

SOURCES OF DATA:

Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
[Connect NC Bond Project List](#)

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS: None

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DATE: March 30, 2017



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