

AGENDA-RECREATION PROPOSAL

SALTWATER ADVENTURE TRAIL

Croatan National Forest

Project Description: The proposed Saltwater Adventure Trail is unique in that it is the only national forest saltwater trail in the nation. It is a water-based trail that displays the unique ecosystems and history of the eastern coastal tidelands. The trip provides visits to several points of interest, is suitable for novices, and can take as long as seven days. The route is approximately 100 miles long and nearly circumvents the Croatan National Forest. Recreational opportunities are numerous. The focus of this trail is **adventure, exploration, accessibility and a unique setting**. Many of the features along the trail can also be accessed by car.

NOTE: Currently, most of the overnight areas have few facilities, no developed campsites, and the landing areas are generally not accessible to people with disabilities.

The Place---The Experience

Day one in our paddler's diary begins at **Brices Creek**:

“Our anticipation rises as we leave the pavement and the rush of everyday life seeps into the sands to be left behind. We look forward the peace and quiet folded within the corridor of Brices Creek. Finally, we arrive at the parking area and unload the kayak from the vehicle. As we slip the kayak into the creek, a dragonfly dances for us atop the black reflective waters. We ease ourselves into the kayak and begin the journey into a world that belongs to the creatures of the forest – where we are the visitor. The laziness of the creek is intoxicating and relaxing. The water is like a mirror that reflects the beauty surrounding us. We see a turtle resting in the sun on an old log, but only for a brief moment, for as we paddle closer, it slips effortlessly into the protective blackness.



We are in awe of the beauty that surrounds us and the uniqueness of this area where water meets land. The vegetation is so green and lush that it seems like a curtain is drawn across the waters' edge. Our curiosity grows as we see what lies within this forest, where the cypress sit at the edge, their knees forming a barrier daring anyone to crawl behind the curtain. Suddenly, like a stage curtain opening, we approach a

view of the heart of the woods. A flutter of heavy wings shatters the quietness above the canopy as a flock of turkeys take flight.



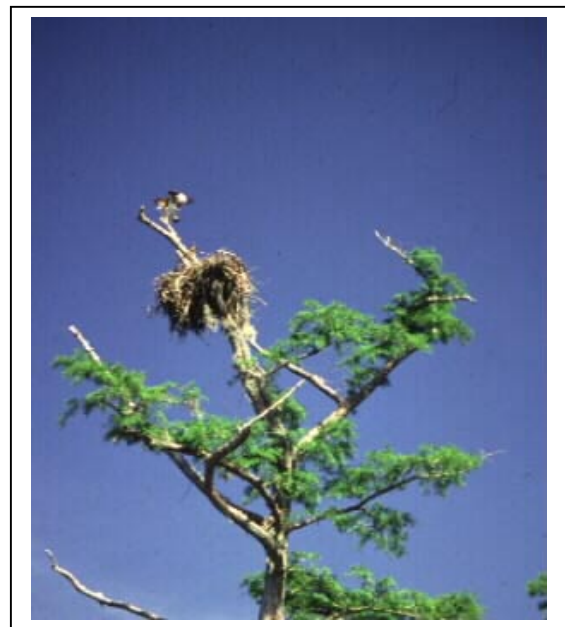
There is a change in the vegetation as we leave the swamp for a brief moment and float by the higher ground where loblolly pines, maples and oaks stand like sentinels. As our eyes climb upward, we see an observation tower which invites to climb its steps. We pull the kayak ashore and ascend the structure to see the world below. The view is breathtaking, for you see as far as the earth will allow before your eye slips over the edge of the horizon.

Flying above the carpeted forest roof is an osprey with a freshly caught fish clenched between its powerful talons. We can see the winding path of the creek that lies ahead of us like an artery flowing away from the heart of the forest. We see a log slide into the waters below and suddenly realize the



log has transformed into a living creature---an American alligator! A splash of commotion erupts downstream from where we saw the alligator and the flash of silver between the alligator's teeth indicates to us that, like the osprey, it has found its meal for the day. We get back into our kayak a little more aware of the powerful creatures that live here. Our eyes are glued to the shoreline as our minds begin to see imaginary alligators with every log we pass.

As the kayak glides around the bend we see a deer jump into the creek and swim gracefully across the 25-foot expanse to the other side. Within the blink of an eye, the deer disappears into the brush as quickly as it had entered the scene. We inhale the essence of this wonderful experience and realize we can smell the earth, the water and the leaves. My partner taps me on the shoulder and points upward where we spot a huge nest tucked snugly between the top branches of a dead tree. My thoughts focus on how wonderful Mother Nature is as life is born out of the death of something as strong as a tree. We are snapped away from our thoughts by the beating of wings off the water.



These are wood ducks that inhabit the trees along the water's edge. A few more strokes of our paddles and we arrive at our campsite for the night.



We settle into our evening routine, and just as this water reflects back all that we can see, we share again all that we have experienced this day. As we drift off to sleep we look forward to what will be revealed to us tomorrow in nature's own way!"

Day two: Our voyager's paddle to the Trent River and in about three miles arrive at the City of **New Bern** (founded in 1710) on the Neuse River, the English colonial capital of North Carolina from 1766 through 1776. After docking at the city waterfront, our voyagers tour outstanding examples of early American architecture, including Tryon Palace,



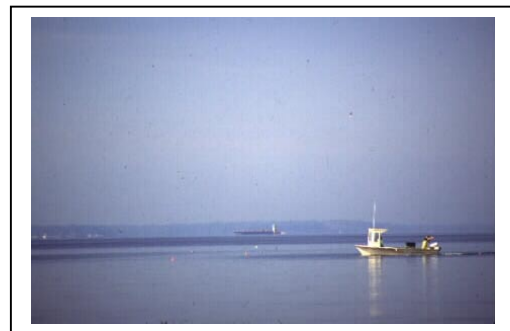
considered the finest government building in America in 1770. During this leg of the trip, river traffic includes shrimp boats, fishing boats, tugboats with barges, ocean going yachts and

small pleasure craft. After leaving New Bern, the paddlers make their second overnight landfall where they will camp at **Fisher's Landing**, site of the civil war Battle of New Bern (1862) and a historic CCC camp.

Day three: Our adventurers continue down the river where they land and enjoy a few hours fishing in Cahooque Creek, beach combing at **Cherry Point**



and picnicking at Pine Cliff.. After maneuvering around an Outer Banks ferry, our voyagers arrive at **Siddie Fields** and camp for the night.



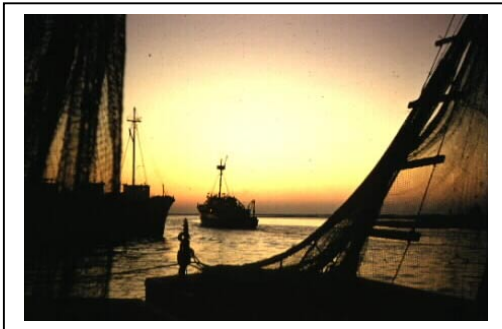
Day four: After an early start, our travelers enter the historic Harlowe Canal, dug by African slaves in 1848, which connects the Neuse and Newport Rivers.

They will end their day and overnight at **Oyster Point**, the terminus of the Neusiok Trail. There they share stories of their adventures with fellow travelers.



At Oyster Point, since it is in season, they gather a bucket of oysters, catch fresh fish and enjoy their evening meal in a rustic, near primitive setting.

Day Five: At daybreak, the paddlers break camp, launch their kayaks and set out for Bogue Sound,



just west of the barrier islands and location of the Intercoastal Waterway. They stop over at historic **Beaufort**, established in the early 1700's, visit the NC Maritime Museum, view the artifacts from the Queen Anne's Revenge (Blackbeard's flagship), visit the Hammock House (Blackbeard's headquarters), the grave of an American

privateer, and view the wild horses in the Rachel Carson Preserve on Carrot Island (descendants of Spanish Conquistador's horses).



At the end of a very long day, our voyagers paddle into a private campground near Salter Path, take a welcome shower and spend the night.

Day Six: After a leisurely breakfast,

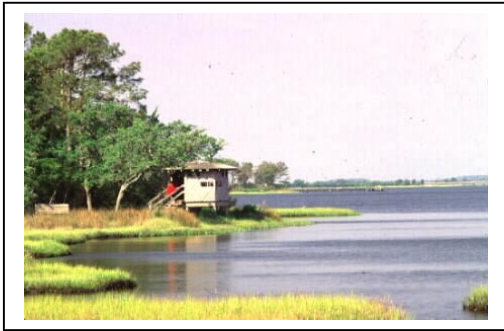


our travelers paddle the short distance to the **North Carolina Aquarium** and spend a leisurely hour or two viewing the exhibits. After paddling on the Intercoastal Waterway for several miles,



our travelers turn into the White Oak River and arrive at the Cedar Point Recreation Area, where they decide to camp for the night. After dinner, in order to view the early evening wildlife, they walk the two-mile Tidelands National Scenic Trail where they view

site and enjoy the scenery. At lunchtime, they stop at Long Point Recreation Area, site of a significant Native American settlement and view the interpretive signs that explain the function of the site and the culture of the original inhabitants.



Finally, after an hour or two of fishing, our voyagers end their journey at Haywood Landing, where friends pick them up and take them to a motel and restaurant for the evening before they travel home, tired in body but refreshed from their journey and excited about the prospect of returning again.

interpretive exhibits, see abundant evidence of recent hurricanes and the thriving birdlife, crabs, fish.

Day Seven: In the morning, some of our travelers decide to paddle about a mile to the Atlantic Ocean for a little surf kayaking. After an exciting couple of hours, the paddlers reluctantly depart and paddle up the White Oak River, a National Wild and Scenic study river. Along the way, they paddle up scenic Hadnot Creek, visit the historic sawmill.



Croatan National Forest Recreation Facilities

Brice Creek	Boat ramp, fishing pier, vault toilet, primitive camping, picnic sites, all facilities accessible
Fishers Landing	Tent camping, accessible vault toilet, drinking water, facilities not accessible from the beach on the Neuse River
Siddie Fields	Primitive camping, no facilities
Oyster Point	Primitive camping, no facilities
Cedar Point	Fully developed campground, flush toilets, shower, boat ramp with pier, Tidelands Interpretive Trail, all facilities accessible
Haywood Landing	Picnic site, accessible boat ramp, vault toilet

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