

Nebo, NC – The North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation has slated Saturday, June 7, 2014 for the official opening of a new, 15-mile mountain bike trail system at Lake James State Park's Paddy's Creek Area in Burke County. The trail dedication will take place at 9 a.m.

Included in the new layout are a 4-mile beginner loop and an 11-and-1/4-mile intermediate loop. A 30-vehicle parking area has been constructed to provide direct access to the loops via short connector trails.

According to Tim Johnson, regional trails specialist for NCDPR West District, the mountain bike trails at Lake James State Park have been constructed to provide a "back-country" experience to riders and an eye toward sustainability. "The trails are purpose built to use the natural rolling contours of the terrain to shed water and dry quickly," said Johnson. "This protects the state's investment by greatly reducing the effects of erosion and minimizing closures necessitated by heavy rains."

The trail system was constructed by Benchmark Trails Inc. and Long Cane Trails L.L.C., with significant support from park staff and volunteers.

Members of the Northwest North Carolina Mountain Bike Alliance will assist park staff in maintaining the new trails. "The Alliance is excited to partner with Lake James State Park on these trails," said Northwest NC MTBA president Paul Stahlschmidt. "We are looking forward to working with the park staff on keeping the trails in good shape and also planning for the future of mountain biking at Lake James."

Lake James State Park Superintendent Nora Coffey said the opening of the mountain bike trails will fill a void for local enthusiasts. "The nearest mountain bike trails in Boone, Lake Lure and Lake Norman are at least an hour away," she said. "The trail system at Lake James State Park is a first-class project that we hope everyone will come and enjoy. Mountain biking is a tremendously popular sport with passionate participants. We look forward to welcoming those people to the park and introducing them to all of the other recreational opportunities that are available here."

The project, funded through the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, is a high priority within the master plan for Lake James State Park and represents a significant addition to the recreational activities already available there; including hiking, picnicking, wildlife viewing, swimming, boating, fishing and environmental education.

*** Media Contact: For more information or to schedule a site visit or interviews, contact Ranger Jamie Cameron at Jamie.cameron@ncparks.gov