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Grandfather Mountain representatives receive a plaque Tuesday recognizing the attraction's certification as part of the NC GreenTravel Initiative. From left are N.C. DENR Chief Deputy Secretary Mary Penny Thompson, Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation Director of Mission Catherine Morton, Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation Executive Director Penn Dameron and Center for Sustainable Tourism Director Pat Long. Photo by Anna Oakes

**Grandfather Mountain is first NC GreenTravel attraction**
by Anna Oakes

State officials honored Grandfather Mountain Tuesday for being the first North Carolina attraction to become certified through the state's new NC GreenTravel Initiative.

The program recognizes travel-related businesses that employ healthy environmental practices. The N.C. Division of Environmental Assistance and Outreach; Center for Sustainable Tourism at East Carolina University; and N.C. Department of Commerce Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development launched the initiative earlier this year.

Catherine Morton, director for mission for the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, said the foundation hopes its practices in protecting and preserving the mountain will inspire visitors to become stewards of their own environments.

“(We are) encouraging them to think about nature in a different, deeper way,” Morton said. “We want the whole world to look at planet Earth as something entrusted to all of us.”
Grandfather Mountain's green practices and features include generating seven kilowatts of electricity per month through an array of photovoltaic cells; using solar thermal panels to heat water and supply radiant heat in the Fudge Shop; renewable bamboo flooring and natural lighting at the Fudge Shop; using reclaimed water from rain barrels to water the butterfly garden; using 100 percent compostable and biodegradable plates, cups, forks, spoons, knives and take-out containers in the Nature Museum restaurant; and recycling bins for aluminum and plastic located throughout the park.

“These businesses know that putting environmental practices in place can often save money,” said Mary Penny Thompson, chief deputy secretary for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which oversees the Division of Environmental Assistance and Outreach.

A growing segment of tourists want to visit locations that employ sustainable practices, Thompson noted, and NC GreenTravel promotes certified entities to these green-savvy travelers.

Pat Long, director of the Center for Sustainable Tourism, congratulated Grandfather Mountain and its founding MacRae and Morton families for the history of stewardship and good business practices at the attraction, which has served as a model for other agencies.

“There is nothing more unsustainable than a bankrupt business,” Long noted.

To date, 23 other entities throughout the state have become certified through the NC GreenTravel Initiative, including lodging facilities, restaurants and a museum.

Four of the 11 restaurants certified thus far are in Watauga County: Casa Rustica, Pepper's Restaurant & Bar and Makoto's Japanese Steak House & Sushi Bar in Boone and Canyons in Blowing Rock. Long said the region is building a sustainable “brand” for itself.

“We are setting a standard for many states,” he said.

Businesses seeking recognition by the NC GreenTravel Initiative submit an online application. The application features categories related to recycling, energy management, water conservation and other sustainable actions, along with an associated score.

Applicants recognized by the NC GreenTravel Initiative receive a wall certificate and door decal and are listed as a sustainable travel business on the NC GreenTravel website at http://www.ncgreentravel.org.
ECU-Bound Teen's BodyRecovered From James City Co. Creek

By Affiliate Reports / WVEC

JAMES CITY COUNTY, Va.-- Authorities pulled the body of a teenager from the creek where he disappeared Monday afternoon.

"Using their side-scan sonar, the Virginia Marine Police have located the body," VMRC spokesman John Bull told WVEC.com around 11:00 a.m.

The VMRC deployed the boat and a plane to conduct aerial searches while James City County police and fire searched creekside for 18-year-old Trevor Times.

Around 2:15 p.m. Monday, Times was swimming with some friends in College Creek off the Colonial Parkway. Investigators say he was trying to reach a sand bar 75 yards out when he got in trouble.

The sonar located is body about 35 feet from shore.

Times was a senior at Jamestown High School.

The Creek is a popular swimming spot, but warning signs are posted outlining dangers of a strong rip tide and deep water.

James City County Police and Fire Marine Units and Dive Teams conducted a search and rescue operation. It changed to a recovery operation, but crews suspended the search at 8:15 p.m. Monday due to darkness. Also helping in the search Monday was the U.S. Coast and Marine Patrol from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission.

The Daily Press reports Times was set to attend East Carolina University on a golf scholarship.
N.C. State to establish sports Hall of Fame

By J.P. Giglio - jgiglio@newsobserver.com

N.C. State will establish an Athletic Hall of Fame this fall with an inaugural class of as many as 10 inductees, the university announced Tuesday.

The first class of Wolfpack athletes will be selected by a 14-member committee and will be honored at an Oct. 5 gala at Reynolds Coliseum.

The university is encouraging fans to submit nominations for individuals and teams online at gopack.com. Nominations are being accepted until June 15.

According to the university’s instructions for nominations, former athletes in all sports – recognized as individuals or as members of a relay or doubles team – are eligible for induction, “provided that five years has passed since the completion of his or her eligibility.” According to the university’s release, attendance at the ceremony is required for induction, except in the case of posthumous inductees.

Coaches, administrators, distinguished alumni and “friends of N.C. State Athletics” also are eligible for induction. The initial class likely will include three of these “special inductees,” according to the announcement.

The Hall of Fame election committee will be chaired by Chris Kingston, N.C. State’s executive senior associate athletics director. The rest of the committee is made up of three other permanent members, and 10 at-large members, who each serve two-year terms.

The inaugural committee will include former basketball player Chris Corchiani and four other former N.C. State athletes, women’s cross country coach Laurie Henes, assistant AD for media relations Annabelle Myers and Wolfpack Club members.

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Heavy Debt, but No Degree

In the weak economy, people who graduate from name-brand colleges are struggling to repay the heavy debt they often rack up getting through school. But college debt is an even bigger problem for the growing numbers of borrowers who drop out without degrees.

A study published earlier this year by Education Sector, a research group based in Washington, shows that the borrowers who drop out are more than four times more likely than those who graduate to default on their college loans because they are more likely to be unemployed and earn less when they get a job. The study, based on Department of Education data, compares student borrowers who entered college in 1995 with those who entered in 2003 to see how each group fared six years later. Students who were not enrolled and did not earn degrees after six years were classified as dropouts.

The study found that the percentage of students who borrowed for college increased from 47 percent in the first group to 53 percent in second. At the same time, the proportion of borrowers who dropped out rose to nearly 30 percent for the 2003 enrollees, compared with 23 percent for the 1995 enrollees.

The dropout rates rose across all kinds of colleges. But the most striking increases were found in for-profit four-year institutions, where a staggering 54 percent of those who had borrowed to pursue a bachelor’s degree had dropped out.

The study showed that 16.8 percent of dropouts defaulted on their loans compared with 3.7 percent of those who graduated. Dropouts from for-profit colleges also had higher unemployment rates, which may be a result of for-profits recruiting low-income students who are often poorly qualified for college but eligible for federal financial aid.

The federal government, which will soon begin evaluating for-profit schools based on the debt and loan-repayment rates of their graduates, clearly needs to do more. Beyond that, colleges and universities must put in place retention programs that keep more students on track to graduate. Part of the problem, as the study notes, is that students may be dropping out because they have to work too much to meet rising college costs. If those costs continue to spiral upward, there will be more people who lack the degrees needed in the new economy but who are, nonetheless, saddled with crippling debt.
some universities under existing contracts, according to the U.S. PIRG report.

Campus card deals have become more popular in part because of recent legal changes that cut into the profits banks can generate from students. A 2009 law banned credit cards given to students who had no way of repaying. It forced colleges to disclose deals with credit card companies and stopped some forms of marketing, such as offering students free gifts in exchange for obtaining a credit card.

Until recently, banks also made a lot more money from student loans. They extended federal aid to students, and also offered confusingly similar, higher-cost private loans alongside the government programs. Congress cut them out of the equation in 2010.

Neither change affected debit cards. As the recession forced states to slash higher education budgets, companies such as Higher One, Wells Fargo and US Bank approached colleges with an attractive proposition: The companies would assume the cost and hassle of handing out student aid funds, often paying for the privilege.

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