



NEWS RELEASE

GOVERNOR'S COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

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TENNESSEE STATE PARKS SYSTEM NAMED BEST IN THE COUNTRY TENNESSEE WINS GOLD MEDAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN PARKS MANAGEMENT

Nashville, Tenn. - Governor Phil Bredesen and Environment and Conservation Commissioner Jim Fyke announced today that the Tennessee State Parks System has been named the best state parks system in the country by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration and the National Recreation and Park Association.

The 2007 Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management in the state parks category was presented to Fyke today at NRPA's annual conference in Indianapolis.

"This award affirms the steps we're taking to protect special places and to offer a wide range of recreational opportunities to both Tennesseans and visitors to our state alike," said Bredesen. "I'm particularly pleased to see Commissioner Fyke and his dedicated team of parks professionals receive this recognition, and I urge all Tennesseans to get out and take advantage of our award-winning parks system."

Tennessee has 54 state parks and 77 natural areas with a wide range of recreational opportunities, including camping, hiking, swimming, golf, boating, whitewater rafting and more. The state parks system includes resort parks with inns, conference centers and restaurants. Tennessee State Parks and natural areas also play an important role in environmental protection of ecologically significant land and preservation of cultural and historic sites.

"Governor Bredesen continues to be instrumental in protecting lands with ecological, scenic, historic and cultural significance for the enjoyment of future generations of Tennesseans," said Fyke. "I'm proud of all we've been able to accomplish in the areas of land conservation and parks management under his leadership."

Some of the key accomplishments of Tennessee State Parks since 2003 include:

- Immediately reopening 14 parks that had been previously closed;
- Removing access fees from the 23 state parks that had instituted them;
- Acquiring properties with exceptional conservation value from Bowater;
- Partnering with the Nature Conservancy and conservation-minded timber companies to protect 124,000 acres on the Northern Cumberland Plateau;
- Working with community organizations and other partners to open the first Boundless Playground at a state park anywhere in the country at Warriors' Path State Park;
- Purchasing renewable "Green Power" in all state parks where it's available.

Bredesen also announced in 2006 plans to pursue the construction of a scenic state park lodge in Southeast Tennessee and to add a new state park in Middle Tennessee during his second term.

(MORE)

“Tennessee’s park professionals take pride in their parks and in being able to interpret these special places for the public who enjoy them,” said Fyke. “This wonderful accomplishment is a tribute to their dedication, expertise and commitment.”

In addition to Tennessee, the states of Georgia and Utah were finalists for the Gold Medal Award. In grading award entries, a panel of judges comprised of parks and recreation professionals reviewed application materials with an emphasis on long-range planning, resource management, citizen support systems, environmental stewardship, program and professional development and agency recognition. State parks systems are judged every two years, and Tennessee was also a finalist for the Gold Medal Award in 2005.

For more information about the Gold Medal Awards, visit NRPA’s Web site at: www.nrpa.org.

To learn more about what’s available at Tennessee State Parks, visit the Web site at www.tnstateparks.com. To book your stay at a cabin or park inn, call 1-866-836-6757.

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