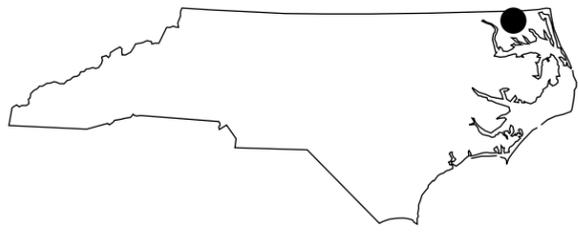


Dismal Swamp State Park



GPS: 36.5057, -76.3551

Directions: Dismal Swamp State Park is located in Camden County, NC, just 3 miles south of the Virginia border on US 17, between mile markers 274 and 275. The main entrance to the park is approximately 3 miles north of the town of South Mills, at the rear of the DOT-maintained rest area.

Park Information

Park Hours:

North Carolina State Parks are open every day, with the exception of Christmas Day. Park hours vary with the seasons.

Please visit the North Carolina State Park website or contact the park office for the most current information about seasonal hours, activities, alerts, camping fees, programs, rules and weather.

Contact Information:

Dismal Swamp State Park
2294 US 17 North
South Mills, NC 27976
252-771-6593
dismal.swamp@ncparks.gov
www.ncparks.gov

N.C. Division of Parks
and Recreation
Dept. of Natura and
Cultural Resources
1615 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1615
919-707-9300

Welcome

The Great Dismal Swamp is one of North America's great wetland forests. Spanning two states and 125,000 acres between the state park and national wildlife refuge, it is one of the largest undisturbed tracts of land remaining. With its unique peat soils and distinctive brown waters, the Swamp is a fascinating place to explore. It is home to birds, butterflies, black bears, and more. There is something for everyone, whether you are a history buff or an amateur naturalist. With the exception of the Swamp Boardwalk and the Supple-Jack Trail, all trails are open to hiking or biking.

However you choose to enjoy the beauty and mystery of the Dismal Swamp, plan to cross the bridge back to the parking area no later than 30 minutes before the seasonal gate closing time.



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Natural and
Cultural Resources

Pat McCrory
Governor

Susan Kluttz
Secretary

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Visitor Center

The Dismal Swamp State Park's Visitor Center has something for everyone. Located on the west bank of the Dismal Swamp Canal, you must first cross the park's swing bridge. The entrance features a gazebo and boardwalk overlooking the Canal. Inside, you'll find the park office and gift shop, along with exhibits about everything from habitat to history to wildlife and plants. Many exhibits are interactive, allowing you to experience the feeling of standing on peat soil, the smell of cypress and cedar trees, and the sounds of birds and animals. Use the visitor computer to look up birds, learn hiking safety strategies, and even to check the weather to be sure you won't get rained on during your exploration of the Swamp. Other exhibits detail some of the rich cultural history of Dismal Swamp, along with the origins of some of the many myths and tall tales about the mysterious sounds and smells that come from the Swamp.

Be sure to check out the park's collection of mammal, bird, amphibian, and reptile mounts, including "Midnight," a 400-lb black bear struck by a car on the highway outside the park who now graces the lobby area of the Visitor Center. For those who are short on time or not ready to venture into the Swamp itself, a short introductory film provides an overview of the park and its history, along with some beautiful footage from around the park.

Other amenities at the Visitor Center include restrooms, water fountains, and drink/snack machines, as well as an auditorium and classroom. These rooms may be reserved for special activities, such as meetings or parties (fee required). Call the park office for additional information.

History Highlights

Early European settlers encountered a very different Great Dismal Swamp than the one we see today. In the late 1600s, the Dismal was a vast wetland, covering about 1.28 million acres. It stretched from the James River in Virginia to the Albemarle Sound in North Carolina. For centuries, Native Americans used the Swamp as hunting and fishing grounds but found it too wet to make homes there.

Some early explorers, such as William Byrd II, saw no value in swampland and thought it should be drained and converted to agricultural uses. The system of ditches criss-crossing Dismal was intended to carry water out. This endeavor was only partially successful, so efforts turned to harvesting timber. The Nature Conservancy purchased land from the timber companies in 1972 and sold over 14,000 acres of that land to the State of North Carolina in 1974, creating Dismal Swamp State Park.

During the time of slavery the Great Dismal Swamp offered a refuge to runaway slaves. Some of these slaves lived in maroon colonies deep within the swamp. Others used the Dismal as a resting place on their journeys to freedom. In December of 2003, the National Park Service recognized the Great Dismal Swamp as a site of the National Underground Network to Freedom.

Nature's Classroom

The park offers regularly scheduled interpretive programs. A current listing of programs is available in the Visitor Center or by visiting www.ncparks.gov. Topics vary month to month but often include snakes, insects, trees, wildflowers, night hikes, canoe trips, and much more. Some may require advance registration, but all programs are free to the general public.

Summer camps, Scouts, and school/church/youth or other groups are welcome and encouraged to call the park to schedule a special program.

Ask park staff about our Junior Ranger program. Also free, it gives budding naturalists a chance to earn a badge after completing an activity book and service project. The "Take A Child Outside" kit is available year-round to anyone who would like to borrow it. See park office for details.

On the Water

The Great Dismal Swamp Canal Bridge, a one-of-kind swing bridge, is the only access to the park and is staffed by a bridge tender at all times while the park is open. Boating traffic has the right-of-way along the Canal, so there may be a delay to enter the park when the bridge is open for boats. Visitors can view beautiful boats traveling up and down the Dismal Swamp Canal, which is an alternate route of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, managed by the Army Corps of Engineers. The Dismal Swamp Canal sees boat traffic from all over the country. The best time to observe boats is during the spring and fall months.

At the park entrance near the bridge, you will find a canoe/kayak launch area. There is a loading/unloading zone near the launch, and two RV/trailer parking spaces in addition to the standard parking area. Use of the launch is free, but you must plan to be off the water and packed up by the seasonal gate closing time. Visitors can rent boats by the hour through the park office (day use only). Rentals include a PFD and paddle. A driver's license or other ID and cash or a credit card are required. **Fees:** \$5/first hour, \$3/each additional hour.

Fishing is permitted in the Canal with a valid North Carolina fishing license. See the parking area kiosk for more information.

Flora & Fauna

Animal Life: Only a few old logging roads and ditches break the vast forests of the park. The roadbeds are now used as park trails and also form habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Bobwhite and wild turkey often feed on seeds and insects along the trail edges. Deer and marsh rabbits browse on the green herbaceous plants that thrive in the sunlight. Blackberry brambles and devil's walking stick trees are abundant here as well, and their fruits are a favorite snack of the more than 300 black bear that live in the Swamp. Park wildlife frequently use the trails as they travel in search of food, and you may find the tracks of many animals, such as raccoon, opossum, or gray fox.

You may find some of the park's many amphibians and reptiles on the ground, under logs, or in the water, including the declining Eastern box turtle, river cooters and yellow-bellied sliders. Both terrestrial and aquatic snakes might be seen, from the common and harmless black rat snake to the rare and venomous timber rattlesnake. Copperheads and cottonmouths also call the Dismal home, so any snake you see should be treated with respect. Snakes typically do not bite unless provoked.

The dense tangles of vines and large stands of hardwood trees create the perfect nesting conditions for neotropical songbirds. If you hike deeper into the park, wood ducks, egrets, and herons are a common sight along the Corapeake and Forest Line trails. More than 160 bird species and 50 butterfly species have been documented to date, and a current checklist is available either at the bridge or in the Visitor Center.

Plant Life: Today's swamp is dominated by hardwoods, such as maple, walnut, and several varieties of oak. The fascinating paw-paw tree, a small native species with a tasty fruit and anti-cancer properties, is a common understory resident. Persimmon, poke, blueberry, beautyberry, and vines such as grape, supple-jack, greenbrier, and poison ivy make up much of the rest of the understory.

Along the northern boundary, stands of inkberry, gallberry, shining fetterbush, and sweet pepperbush form high pocosin habitat. These "swamp-on-a-hill" areas are fire-dependent communities and are becoming increasingly rare in the Dismal today.



Make a reservation online
at ncparks.gov or call
1-877-7-CAMP-NC
(1-877-722-6762)

Trails

Hop on your bike or lace up your shoes to enjoy the miles of trails that Dismal Swamp has to offer. The average, leisurely hiker can walk about one mile in 20 minutes. Keep this in mind and plan accordingly to avoid being caught in the park after closing. Remember that you must return to the parking area 30 minutes prior to the posted seasonal gate closing time.

There is no fee to use the trails. Trail surfaces are primarily dirt, sand, or gravel and may be muddy in places following rain. Sturdy hiking shoes or, if bicycling, mountain bikes with wide, strong tires, are a necessity. Mountain bikes can be rented from the park by the hour. Rentals include a helmet (required by state law for any rider under 16). A driver's license or other ID and cash or a credit card is required. **Fees:** \$5/first hour, \$3/each additional hour.

Please see reverse side for trail map and distances. Distances given are one-way. Trails close 30 minutes before the seasonal gate closing time.

Rules & Regulations

Make your visit a safe and rewarding experience. Some of our regulations are posted for the protection of our visitors and our park. A complete list is available at the park office.

- Fires are permitted only in designated areas.
- The removal or disturbance of any plant, animal, rock or artifact is prohibited.
- Firearms and other weapons are prohibited except that those with a proper permit may possess a concealed handgun in permitted areas and under the requirements of North Carolina G.S. 14-415.11. All firearms and weapons are prohibited in visitor centers and park offices.
- Fireworks are prohibited.
- North Carolina state parks are wildlife preserves. Hunting and trapping are not permitted.
- Boating and fishing regulations of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and N.C. Marine Fisheries apply in the park.
- The possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.
- Maintain a clean environment by putting trash in proper receptacles. State law requires aluminum cans and plastic bottles to be placed in recycling containers.
- North Carolina motor vehicle and traffic laws apply in the park.
- Pets must be on an attended leash no longer than six feet.

For Your Safety

To prevent accidents, please remember these safety tips.

- Avoid over-exertion. Heat and wind may be tiring and cause dehydration.
- Ticks are present in the Swamp during most of the year and are especially prevalent during warmer months. Use insect repellent. Wear long pants and sleeves, and tuck your pants into your socks. Tuck your shirt into your pants. Wear light-colored clothing, and check for ticks regularly throughout the day and again when you get home.
- Venomous snakes and poison ivy may be encountered along trails. Use caution, and look where you are walking.
- Do not feed or approach wildlife. Report any sick or aggressive animals to rangers.
- Wear a life vest while canoeing or kayaking. This is required for park rentals.
- Bicycle helmets are recommended for all visitors and required by state law for anyone under age 16.

Contact park staff for other safety tips or an explanation of park rules.

DISMAL SWAMP STATE PARK

TRAILS

Swamp Boardwalk: (0.5 miles) Enjoy a leisurely stroll along the accessible boardwalk as it takes you into the Dismal. Hear the sounds of frogs and birds without getting your feet wet.

Supple-Jack Trail: (0.5 miles) Beginning at the visitor center this trail, blazed with blue triangles, winds through dense vegetation and connects to Canal Road. Keep your eyes peeled for the remains of illegal stills.

Canal Road (2.2 miles), with its sandy surface, is a great place to observe animal crossings. A replica liquor still is located 0.25 miles up the road, near the first Supple-Jack Trail junction. An example of a lighter boat can be found near Cross Canal, about 0.7 miles up the road.

Bull Boulevard (2.25 miles) is a quiet, grassy road deep in the swamp, where a few cypress and cedar trees grow. You are likely to find bear sign, wood ducks and otters.

Corapeake Road (4.8 miles) runs just south of the NC/VA state line, cutting east across the park. At the intersection of Forest Line and Corapeake, you can observe the effects of the 2011 wildfire, which burned for 111 days. You can also see abundant pocosin habitat along Corapeake. Common species include bay and gallberry.

Forest Line Road (2.3 miles) is a gravel road whose shoulders are dotted with Atlantic White-Cedar trees. Black bear and otter are commonly seen here on the park's western boundary, in the heart of the swamp.

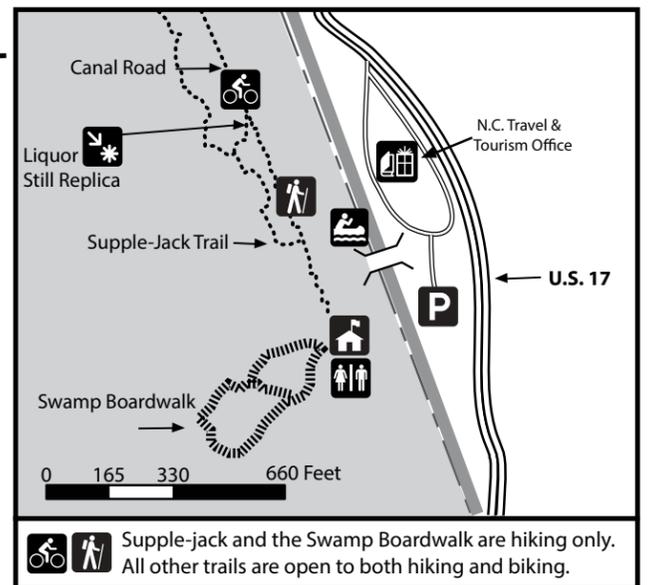
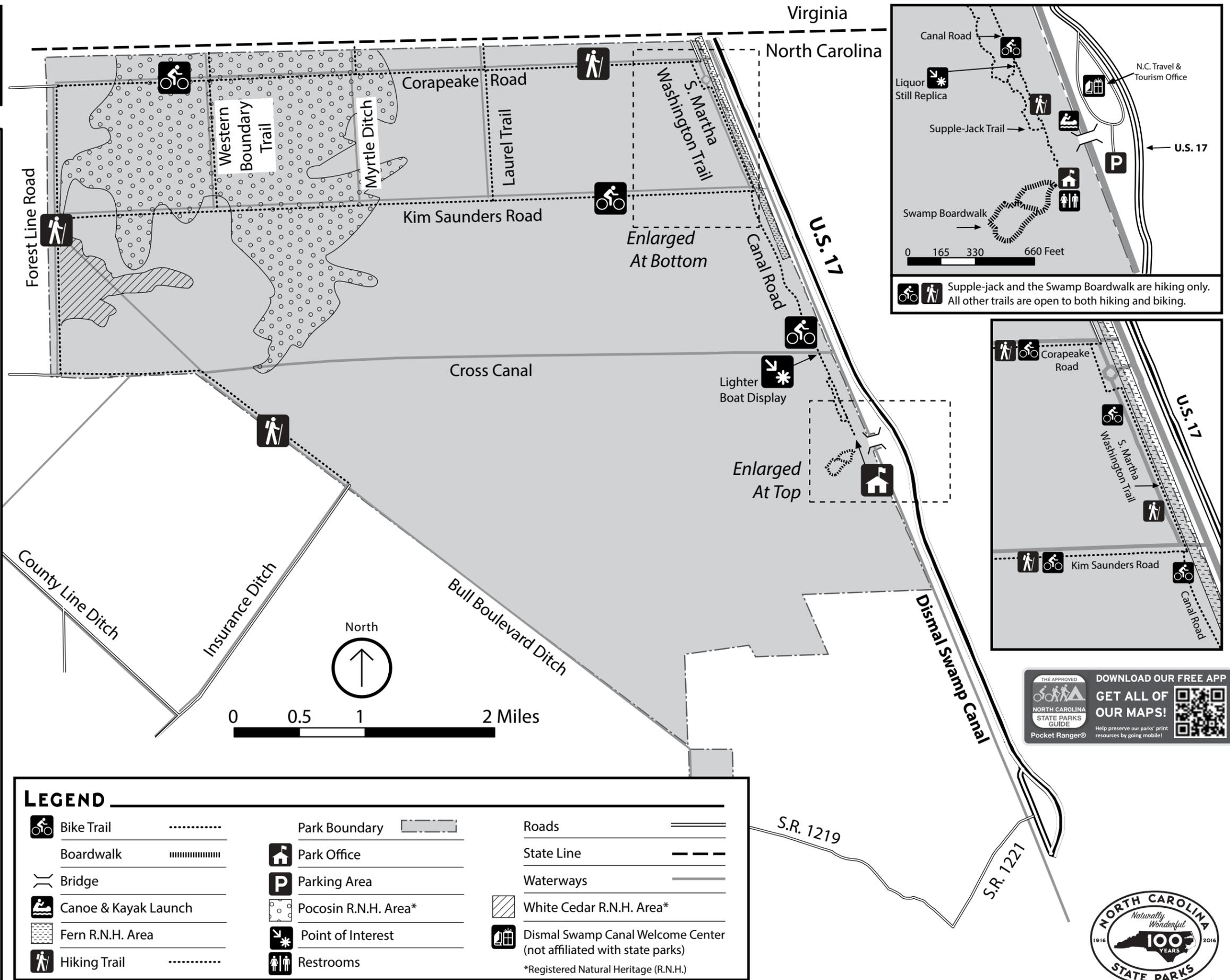
Kim Saunders Road (5.4 miles) a grassy dirt and gravel path, runs straight across the park from its intersection with Canal Road. Black bears, turkey, bobcat and butterflies may be seen here. Birders will enjoy the trail for the many warblers frequenting the woods along either side.

Laurel Trail (1.0 miles) is a mostly grassy road running north from Kim Saunders to Corapeake. From there you can continue further into the park along Corapeake or turn east and visit the water control structures near the park's eastern boundary.

S Martha Washington Trail (1.2 miles) is a newer road connecting Kim Saunders and Corapeake Trails. Beginning just a few hundred feet beyond the end of Canal Road, this is the fastest way to reach the water control structures, located near the junction of Corapeake and S Martha Washington.

Western Boundary Trail (1 mile) connects Kim Saunders to Corapeake Trail, further west than S Martha Washington and Laurel. Be sure to pack a snack to enjoy at the picnic table at the corner by Kim Saunders. A six-mile hike or brings you here from the visitor center.

All trails are classified as easy and are one way and do not loop.



LEGEND			
Bike Trail	Park Boundary	
Boardwalk		Park Office	
Bridge	==	Parking Area	
Canoe & Kayak Launch		Pocosin R.N.H. Area*	
Fern R.N.H. Area		Point of Interest	
Hiking Trail	Restrooms	
		Roads	
		State Line	
		Waterways	
		White Cedar R.N.H. Area*	
		Dismal Swamp Canal Welcome Center (not affiliated with state parks)	
		*Registered Natural Heritage (R.N.H.)	

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