

North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department

NEWS RELEASE

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State parks see strong visitation in first quarter

North Dakota's mild winter and early spring are enticing people outdoors and this is reflected in first quarter state park visitation numbers as compiled by the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department.

Through the first three months of 2012 there have been 73,197 visitors to North Dakota state parks which is 32 percent higher than the first quarter of 2011. A check of visitation history shows this is the highest first quarter visitation in the state park system since annual visitation started being kept in 1988. The highest first quarter previous to this year's came in 1994 when 65,206 people entered state parks.

Nearly every park of the 13 in the park system saw a significant increase in visitation during the first quarter. Two parks, Sully Creek and Little Missouri, are closed to visitors until April or May. The rest are open year round, though full service camping doesn't begin until mid-May. This year full service for the state park campgrounds is May 18, with the exception of Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park which remains closed for repairs due to last year's flooding. Expectations are to have Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park's campground reopened by the beginning of June.

"It just shows the effect the nice weather has had on people," NDPRD director Mark Zimmerman says. "Last year we had to deal with a long winter followed by a very wet spring and all the flooding. This year people are ready to get outdoors and the weather has been conducive to exploring the parks. We're gearing up to have another great season and North Dakota's state parks offer opportunities for recreation and relaxation."

More information about the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department can be found online at www.parkrec.nd.gov.