

North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department

# NEWS RELEASE

*For Immediate Release, Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2012*

*For more information contact Gordon Weixel, 701-328-5358*

## State park visitation exceeds a million for third year in a row

For the third consecutive year the North Dakota Park and Recreation Department recorded over a million daily visitors at state parks in 2011, this coming despite setbacks due to spring flooding which strongly impacted nearly the entire park system. Total visitation for 2011 was 1,044,685.

NDPRD director Mark Zimmerman was pleasantly surprised by the visitation numbers, even though they were 5 percent below 2010. He pointed out that spring flooding closed campgrounds at Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park, Cross Ranch State Park and Sully Creek State Park. While Fort Abraham Lincoln is to reopen in the spring, Sully Creek and Cross Ranch campgrounds reopened in 2011. Devils Lake flooding had a serious impact on Grahams Island State Park access, which saw a 46 percent decrease in visitors.

“But while some parks struggled, others picked up the slack and helped the entire system have another banner year,” Zimmerman says. “Lewis and Clark, Lake Metigoshe and Sully Creek State Parks had outstanding numbers helping to offset some of the losses.”

Lewis and Clark State Park handled 95,830 visitors this year, up 34.6 percent. Oil activity in the Williston area has had an impact, but restored Lake Sakakawea waters, a rejuvenated local economy and the Lewis and Clark marina are all playing a part in the park’s success. Lake Metigoshe had 130,903 visitors up 26 percent and Sully Creek State Park, closed for a month due to flooding and clean up, attracted 52,423 visitors, up 32 percent. Fort Stevenson State Park led all parks in visitation with 137,536 visitors.

“While we did have some challenges due to the flooding, the beautiful summer weather and extended fall kept people coming to the parks to enjoy all that Mother Nature has to offer,” Zimmerman says. “We’re looking to the 2012 season with great anticipation. Plans are in place to reopen the Fort Abraham Lincoln campground this spring; the road leading to Grahams Island is being raised and we’ll be celebrating anniversaries in two state parks as Beaver Lake turns 80 years old and Lake Metigoshe celebrates 75 years.”

For more detailed information on 2011 North Dakota State Park visitation, contact public information officer Gordon Weixel at 701-328-5358 or at [gweixel@nd.gov](mailto:gweixel@nd.gov).