

North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department

NEWS RELEASE

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Visitation to State Parks up in 2009

Visitation to North Dakota's state parks is up 6 percent in the second quarter relative to the same period last year with over 311,000 people visiting as compared to 293,000 in 2008. Through the first half of 2009 park visits are up 4 percent. Camping numbers at state parks are up 5 percent.

"State parks remain popular and economical family getaways," Parks and Recreation director Doug Prchal says. "A late spring, complicated by cold temperatures and flooding, meant a slow start to the season, but once the weather straightened out, the parks have been a popular and welcome get-a-way with visitors."

All three parks on Lake Sakakawea – Lake Sakakawea, Fort Stevenson and Lewis & Clark – are seeing improved visitation as the reservoir elevation increased 17 feet to 1841.2 this year. Marinas, which have been inoperable for nearly a decade because of low water, are again open and proving popular with water recreationists.

Lake Sakakawea State Park manager John Tunge notes it's the first time in five years the park has had a useable swimming beach, though the low water ramp has always provided access to the big lake. Lewis & Clark State Park has seen a 73 percent increase in visitors, while Fort Stevenson State Park is up 20 percent.

The new marina at Fort Stevenson State Park is expected to be completed later this fall and will open in the spring of 2010. But the old marina on de Trobriand Bay, which has been closed because of the low water, is again open, under new management and proving a hot spot.

Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park missed its opening date because of flooding and cleanup, but visitation is up over 6 percent in the second quarter. Fort Ransom State Park, also a victim of flooding is also seeing a 3 percent increase in visitors through the first half of this year.

“State parks continue to provide programming and activities which ensure guests have plenty to keep them busy if they so choose,” Prchal says. “Park staff are attentive to keep the parks clean, safe and up to the standards that visitors have come to expect.”