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South Cumberland State Park Recognized for Best in Resource Management Statewide



MONTEAGLE – The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) recognized South Cumberland State Park for Excellence in Resource Management for park staff’s work to improve trails, combat invasive pests and provide richer recreation experiences for visitors over the past year.

“All 56 Tennessee State Parks strive and succeed in achieving our mission to preserve and protect unique examples of natural, cultural and scenic areas,” said TDEC Deputy Commissioner of Parks and Conservation Brock Hill. “But South Cumberland went above and beyond in 2016 thanks to the talent and skills of park staff that protected more land and created a better visitor experience.”

Park Ranger Jason Reynolds has been spearheading an endeavor to reroute portions of the Fiery Gizzard trail to accommodate for private property, a majority of which was completed in 2016. Ranger Reynolds improved the trail by rerouting it into the gorge and crossing over new water features to provide a more scenic experience for hikers.

Park Ranger Aaron Reid worked alongside a professor from the University of Tennessee to combat an invasive pest – the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. Park staff worked to clear brush from around the endangered White Fringeless Orchid in the same area. They also repaired deer fences that surround the plant to prevent herbivores from eating the orchids.

South Cumberland also recently acquired more land for conservation and recreation. Roughly 4,500 acres of land has been added to the park, which includes environmentally sensitive and significant areas like bluff lines, viewsheds, woodlands and some of the best outdoor rock climbing areas in the southeast.

The Annual Park Awards of Excellence – which honor five parks annually – were created to recognize exceptional work within Tennessee State Parks. The 2016 award winners were recognized at the Tennessee State Park annual park management conference on Jan. 17, 2017 at Montgomery Bell State Park.

Parks are nominated by TDEC staff. Park Area Managers review the nominations and select finalists from each region, which are then voted on by Tennessee State Park leadership.

For more information about South Cumberland State Park, visit <http://tnstateparks.com/parks/contact/south-cumberland>.