

Catawba County Parks Division

“Preserving Catawba County’s Unique and Diverse Natural Heritage...”

2008 - 2009
Year End Report



“ Celebrating 10 Years of Service to the Citizens of Catawba County ”

Submitted by
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Catawba County Parks Manager
July 3, 2009

Notes:

A digital copy of this report is available. Please send me an e-mail requesting a copy or any additional information.

Thank you.

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Catawba County Parks Division

Statement of Purpose

Provide recreational opportunities for the citizens of Catawba County through the operation and development of parks and the preservation of open space. Preservation and education of Catawba County's unique natural heritage are the primary goals of the Parks Division.

Outcomes

1. Increase the Parks Division daily attendance average by 10% as evidenced by traffic counter statistics/sign-in sheets and the quarterly Parks Division reports. This will be achieved by ensuring that 98% of all prescribed daily maintenance and operational duties are performed satisfactorily as evidenced by inspection by the Parks Manager. Attendance will also be increased by the individual efforts of all park staff to fully explore and execute all available resources relating to the public media and scheduled public events hosted by the Parks Division. The daily attendance log indicating such events will evidence this. Particular effort will be placed on outreach to civic, volunteer, and educational organizations. These organizations will include such groups as Girl and Boy Scouts, Church Groups, YMCA, Non –profits, and educational institutions such as NC Public Schools, CVCC, Catawba County Schools and Lenoir Rhyne College.

Year End Status: Outcome met and exceeded.

Division attendance is 121,370 or a 60.1% increase above last year's attendance of 75,796 for the same period.

2. Achieve 500 volunteer labor hours by completing a minimum of four parks improvement projects. The primary goal of this outcome is to promote civic and environmental stewardship education while reducing operating cost and further developing the goals regarding the preservation of Catawba County Parks facilities. The secondary goal of these improvement projects will be environmental/interpretive education and community involvement. In an effort to involve youth, these projects will include school and scouting groups when possible. This will be completed as evidenced by the volunteer/project log, sign-in sheets, and the quarterly Parks Division report.

Year End Status: Outcome met and exceeded.

583 Volunteers have provided 1729.5 volunteer labor hours. This equals over 43 weeks of FTE labor.

3. Host educational/interpretive programs with no less than 800 patron participants as evidenced by daily sign-in sheets. The goal of these programs is to share environmental/interpretive information with the public in an effort to broaden public awareness and participation in the preservation of Catawba County's unique natural heritage.

Year End Status: Outcome met and exceeded.

3,891 patrons have participated in educational programs.

4. The Parks Division will assist in the development of the St Stephens Park facility and Bunker Hill Covered Bridge to improve accessibility and amenities at the sites. Staff will also research additional grant opportunities and apply for appropriate grants as approved by the Catawba County Board of Commissioners. The purpose of these grants will be to fully develop site amenities and preserve the natural and historical integrity of the sites. The goal is to have the St Stephens Park facility opened to the public by Midyear of 2008/2009.

Yea End Status: Outcome was met.

St Stephens Park was opened in early December 2008. Park staff saved the St Stephens Project approximately \$35k by in house design, grading, landscaping, and other construction duties. Staff applied for a PARTF grant for the St Stephens Park Project and it was not funded. Staff also assisted in the development of a Clean Water Trust Fund Grant for the 600-acre Mountain Creek Park site – This grant was successfully funded. However, due to the current economy and actions by the State most grant sources are suspended. The Bunker Hill Covered Bridge project is currently on hold until further negotiations with surrounding property owners have been completed and grant sources become available once again.

Notes: Attendance is higher than ever. Staff has been fully taxed in basic operations and maintenance in order to meet the demands of high attendance and the new six-day operating schedule. Additional staffing will be required in order to increase educational programming and volunteer development and management. Requesting additional staff and funding may remain elusive until the economy greatly improves.

CATAWBA COUNTY – PARKS DIVISION

Division Report

Year End 2008/2009

Attendance: 121,370 patrons visited Catawba County Parks from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009 - based on traffic attendance estimates. This is a **60.1% increase** above 07/08. This has been the first year since 2001 that the Parks Division has operated on a six-day schedule. Attendance is above our 10% outcome goal. Attendance was high at both parks. Riverbend's attendance was up 46.1% and Bakers Mountain was up 57.0%. Weather was very favorable during the 08/09 year and we are currently out of the grip of the previous years drought. For reference, the 2007/2008-division attendance was 75,796 patrons.

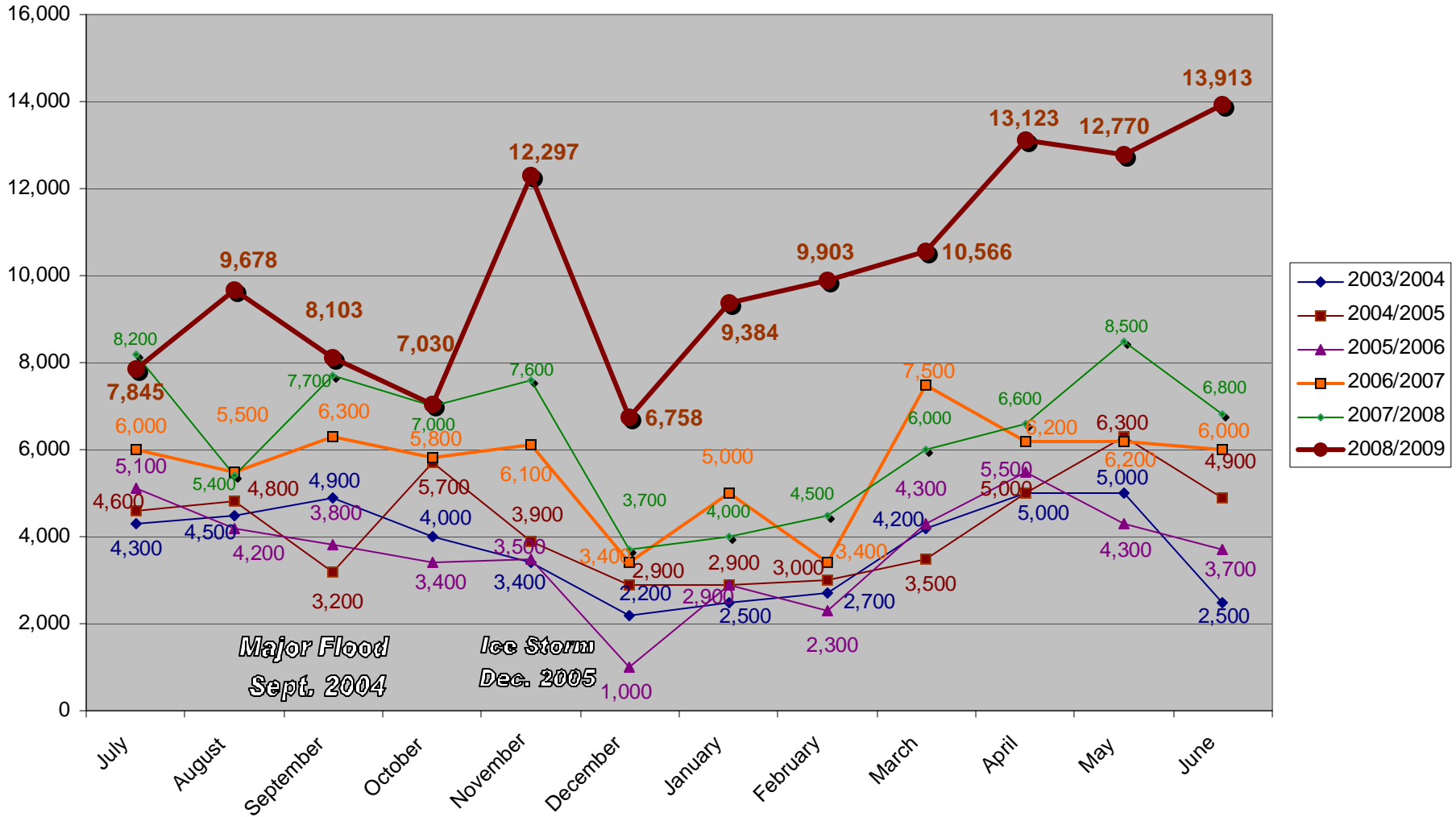
Volunteers: 583 volunteers provided 1,729.5 labor hours to projects that helped maintain and improve both parks. This is equal to a full time employee working just over 43.2 weeks. This valuable service has resulted in cost savings and numerous improvements and considerably exceeded our outcome goal of 500 labor hours.

Educational Programming: 3,891 patrons participated in educational programs. This far exceeds our outcome goal of 800 participants.

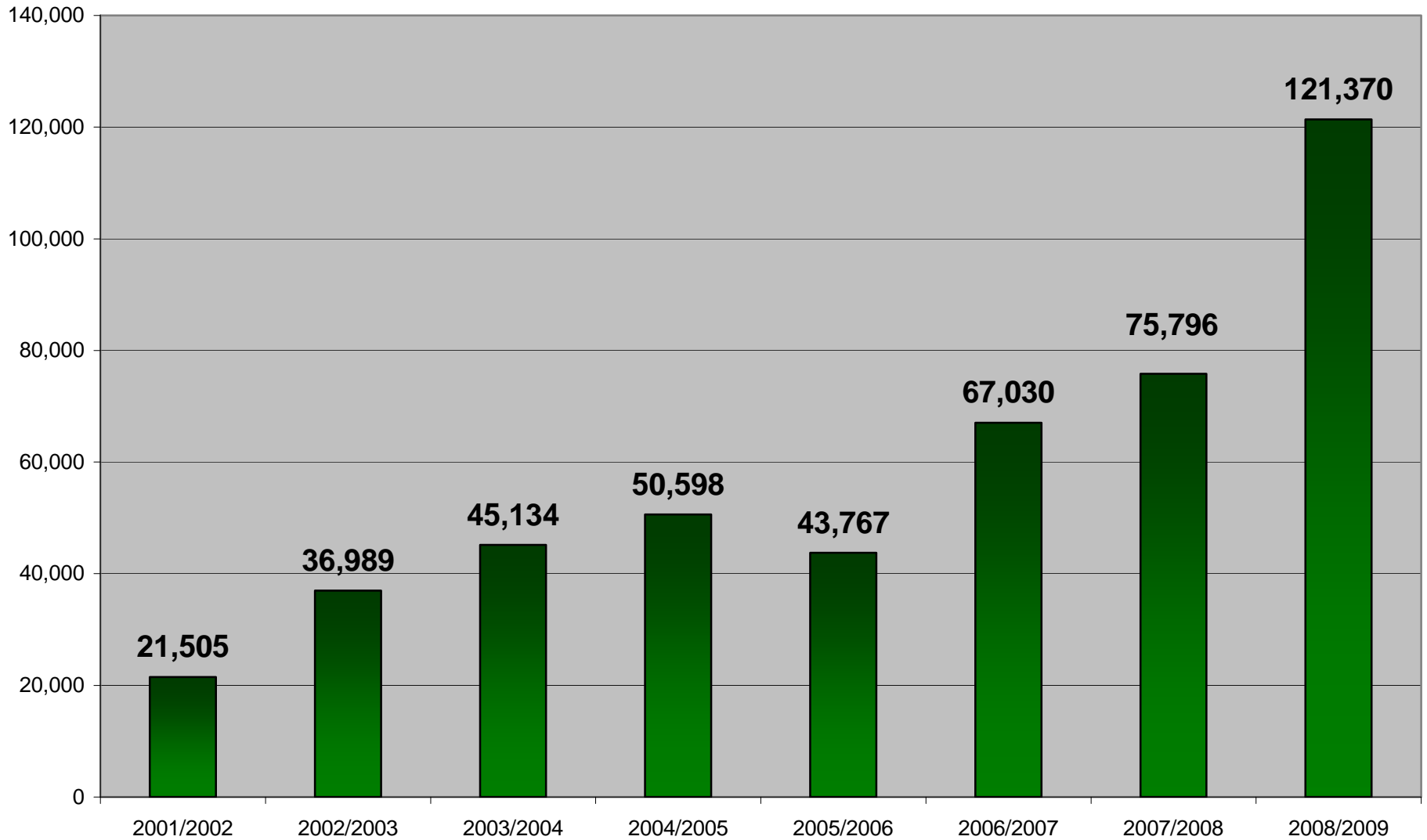
Projects: With attendance at record highs all efforts by staff have been focused on customer service and maintenance. Educational programming was very high this year. We spent the majority of the year in the construction and renovation of St Stephens Park. The Parks Division has a new newsletter, Facebook presence, and the website is under renovation.

Comments/Notes: We achieved and exceeded this year's outcomes in many areas. Attendance was high this year at over 60%. This has presented new challenges to staff in the areas of customer service and park maintenance. The outcomes were exceeded are not the result of low expectations, but accurately reflect the dedication of our park staff – Tim Giblin, Alisha Hayes, Tabitha Hope, Dwayne Martin, Joe McRae, Lori Owenby, Frank Porch, and John Sutton. Another significant factor in the success of the Parks Division has been our affiliation with the Planning Department. Special thanks must also go to Susan Ballbach for the countless hours in assistance to the Parks Division and the Parks Advisory Board. Joanne Kennebeck has also provided a tremendous amount of administrative support to all of our efforts.

Parks Division Monthly Attendance

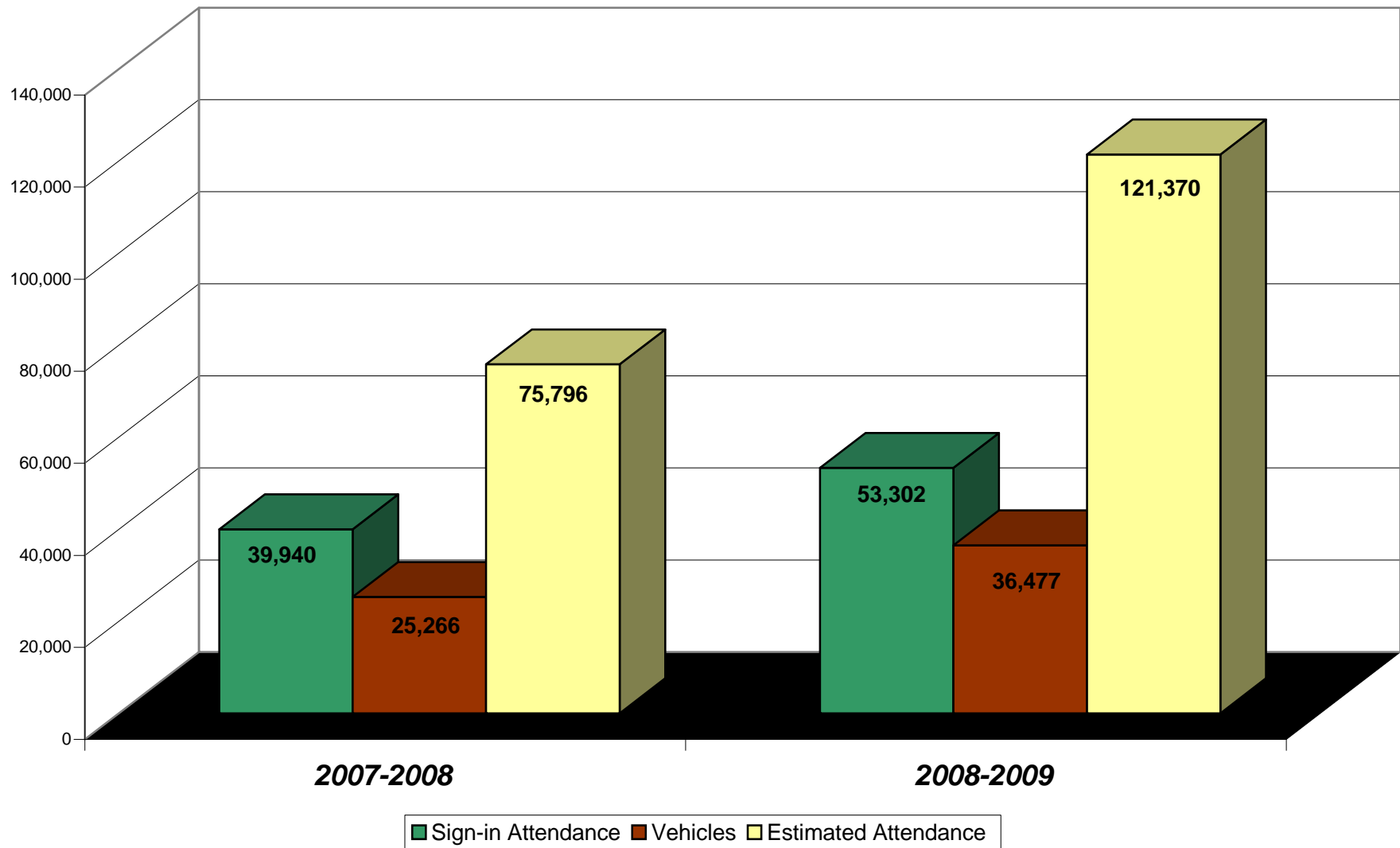


Parks Division Attendance



08/09 Year-End Attendance Comparison Chart

Actual Numbers for the Parks Division



Riverbend Park

Attendance / Use Statistics
Year End 2008/2009

ACTIVITY	July 1, 2007 To June 30, 2008	July 1, 2008 To June 30, 2009
HIKING/WALKING/RUNNING	8,857	12,438
PICNIC	1,357	2,114
FISHING	1,423	2,092
DOG WALKING	1,882	2,165
WILDLIFE/BIRD OBSERVATION	895	1,233
DOG PARK	2,127	2,534
BIKE RIDING	909	1,143
BOATING CANOE	108	159
EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY	228	516
VOLUNTEERS	197	151
OTHER RESTROOM / INFO	364	389
SPECIAL EVENT	1,125	550
SIGN-IN ATTENDANCE	19,472	25,484
TRAFFIC COUNT (CARS)	14,281	19,195
TRAFFIC ATTENDANCE ESTIMATE	42,843	62,627
REVENUE	\$2,925.00	\$3,700.00

151 volunteers have provided 436 volunteer hours of service to Riverbend Park for the fiscal year of 08/09.

For the fiscal year of 08/09

Riverbend Park had a 30.1% higher activity sign in than 07/08.

Riverbend Park had a 46.1% higher estimated attendance than 07/08.

CATAWBA COUNTY – PARKS DIVISION

Riverbend Park Year End 2008/2009

Attendance: Riverbend had a 30.1% higher sign in rate than 07/08. Sign in attendance more accurately shows how the park is used rather than the true actual number of patrons. The actual estimated attendance is close to 46.1% higher than 07/08. This exceeds our outcome goal of 10% for 08/09. Approximately 19,195 vehicles entered the park with an estimated 62,627 patrons.

Volunteers: Volunteers have assisted the park with trail repairs, habitat management, and educational programs, trail seeding and litter sweeps. 151 volunteers provided 436 volunteer hours.

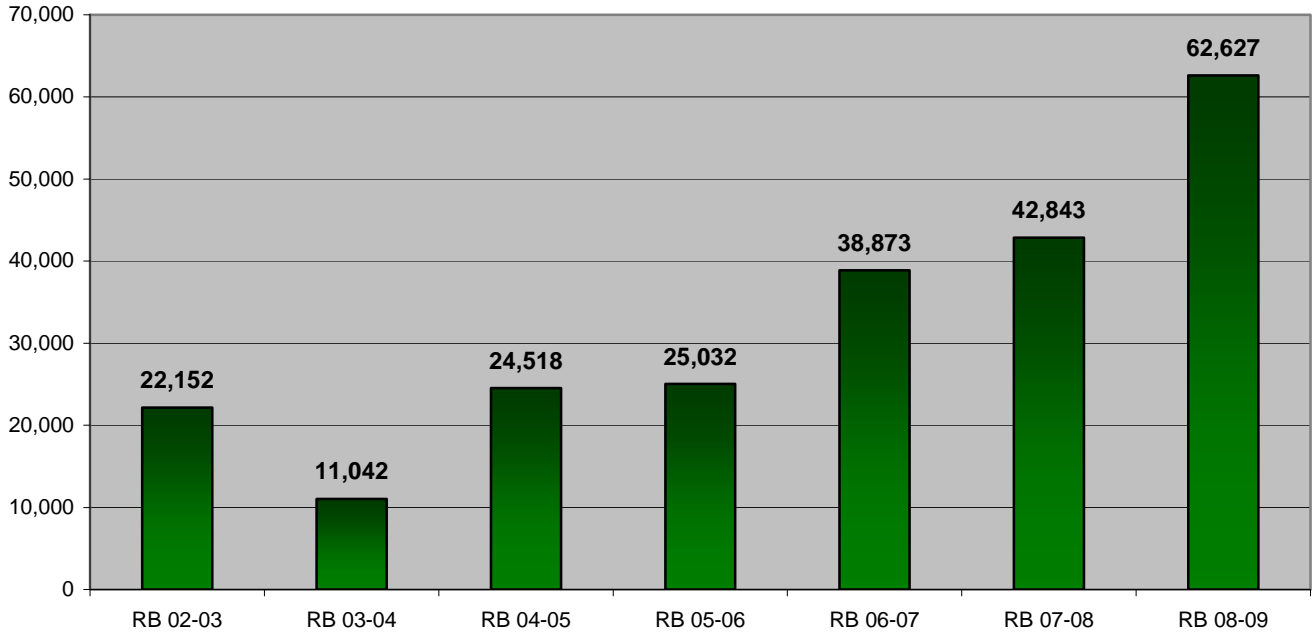
Educational Opportunities: Riverbend hosted interpretive educational programs for 516 patrons. Educational programming has greatly improved as we utilize the educational/ meeting room facility at Riverbend. CVCC and Lenoir Rhyne both use this facility for educational purposes. The park itself is an outdoor laboratory.

Projects: The habitat restoration project that began in February 2007 is evolving quite successfully. This area has begun to successfully reestablish as early successional deciduous forest. We have already experienced a significant number of new bird species. The area is reestablishing on schedule and an additional 40 acres may be ready for harvest in the summer of 2011 or 2012.

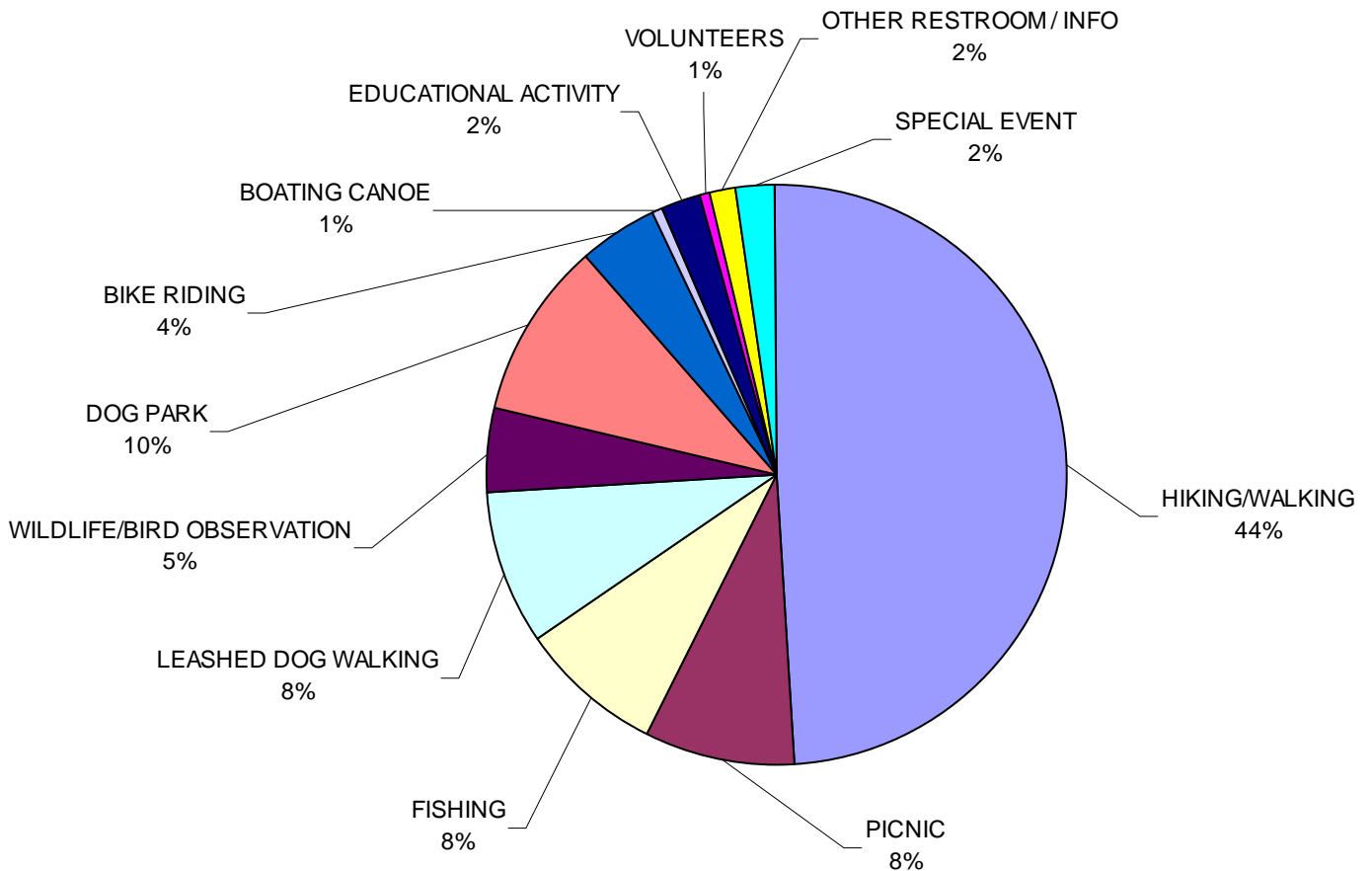
Bird banding, as part of public demonstrations and educational events was a major attraction. The National Banding Lab uses the banding data for research. Riverbend is one of the top birding sites in western NC. Riverbend and Bakers Mountain Parks are listed as sites in the NC Birding Trail book.

Operation of the first dog parks in Catawba County has been very popular and continues to be one of the top amenities offered by the Parks Division - 187 dog park passes were sold in this fiscal year.

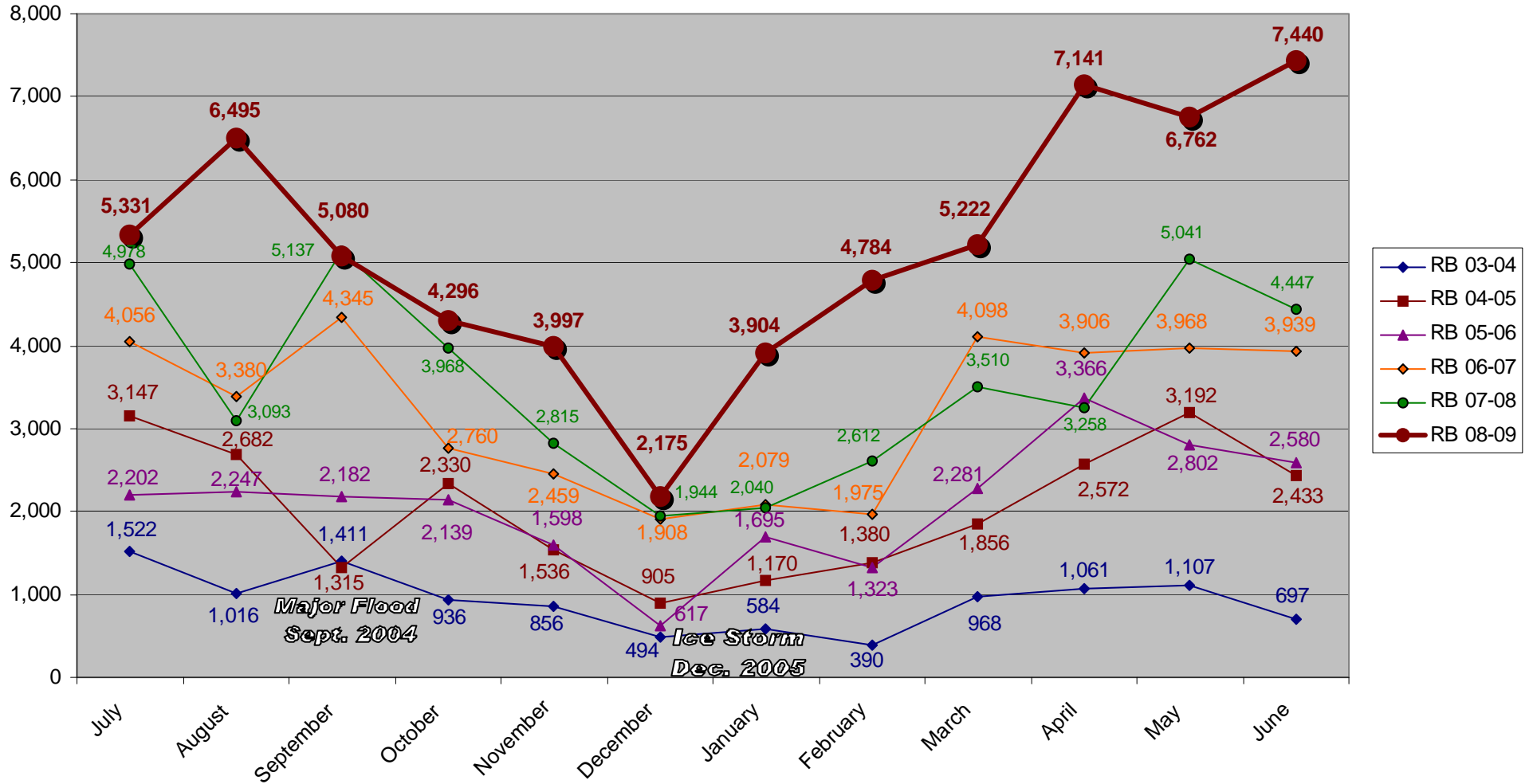
Riverbend Park Attendance



Riverbend Park Usage Year End 08-09 25,484 Patrons (sign in)



Riverbend Park Monthly Attendance



Bakers Mountain Park

Attendance / Use Statistics
Year End 2008/2009

ACTIVITY	Bakers Mountain July 1, 2007 To June 30, 2008	Bakers Mountain Park July 1, 2008 To June 30, 2009
Walking /Running Paved Trail	849	2,403
Hiking Red, Blue, Orange Trail	5,563	9,148
Picnic	1,699	2,582
Dog Walking	1,661	2,078
Wildlife Observation	527	1,916
Volunteer Work	286	432
Educational Activity	4,651	3,375
Other – Information & Restrooms	2,230	4,012
Special Event	1	10
SIGN-IN ATTENDANCE	17,468	25,956
TRAFFIC COUNT (cars)	10,984	15,277
TRAFFIC ATTENDANCE ESTIMATE	32,953	51,769
REVENUE	N/A	\$145.00

432 volunteers have provided, 1293.5 volunteer hours of service to Bakers Mountain Park for 08/09 fiscal year.

For the fiscal year of 08/09

Bakers Mountain Park had a 48.5% higher activity sign in than 07-08.

Bakers Mountain Park had a 57.0% higher attendance estimate than 07-08.

CATAWBA COUNTY – PARKS DIVISION

Bakers Mountain Park

Year End 2008/2009

Attendance: BM had a 48.5% higher sign in rate than 07-08. Sign in attendance more accurately shows how the park is used rather than the true actual number of patrons. The actual estimated attendance is 57.0% higher than 07-08. This represents an estimated 15,277 vehicles and 51,769 patrons. This level of attendance is well above the 10% outcome standard for this park. Due to the difficult terrain at Bakers Mountain Park - high dew point days limit the number of dedicated hikers using the park. We have been fortunate that 08-09 had fair weather and contributed to attendance. This was the first year ever that the park was open six days a week and was strong factor in attendance.

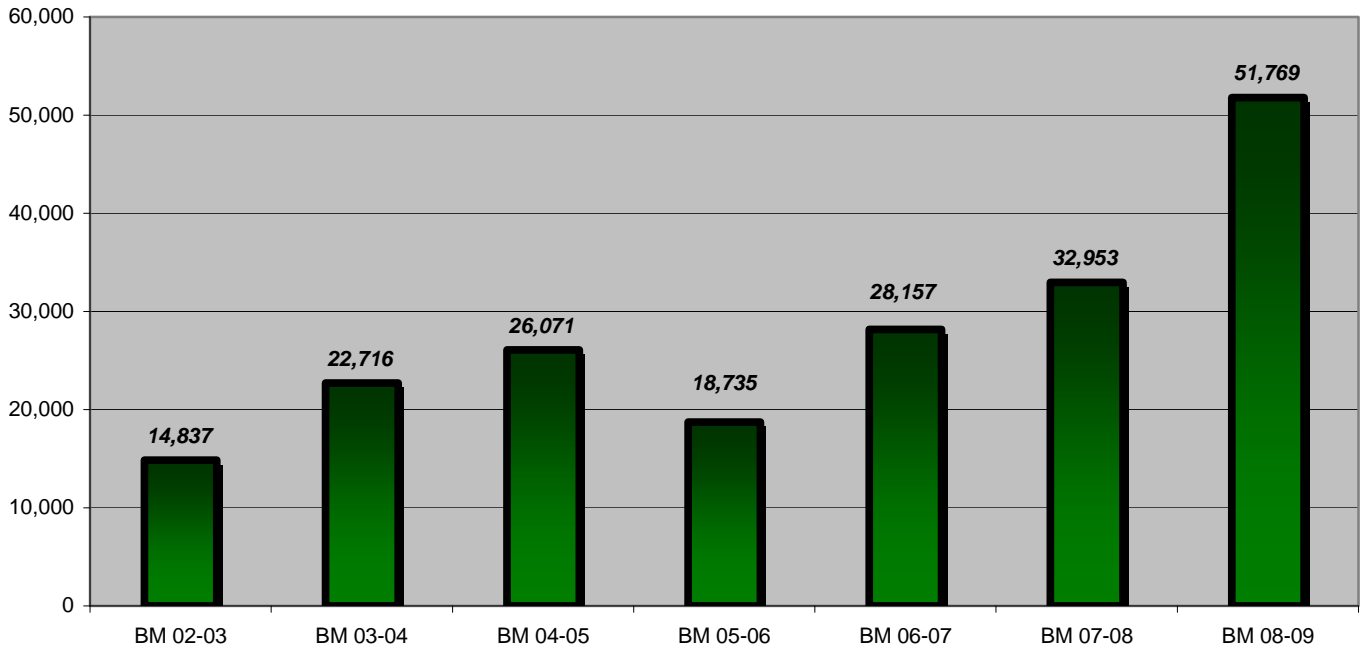
Volunteers: 432 volunteers have assisted the park with improvement of trails and numerous other projects. These volunteers have contributed 1,293.5 volunteer labor hours. This is remarkable, 500 volunteer labor hours was the outcome goal for the entire division for the year. 1293.5 hours is equal to 32 weeks provided by a full time employee. This has allowed for further park development and significant cost savings to the County.

Educational Opportunities: The Bakers Mountain Park Rangers have hosted interpretive educational programs for 3,375 patrons this year. This is phenomenal, and exceeds our outcome projections of 800 for the year. John Sutton's education and training in interpretive education has exceeded our greatest expectations and outcomes. Part Time Ranger, Tabitha Hope has assisted in this area and led numerous programs.

Projects: Routine maintenance, Eagle Scout Projects, trail improvement projects and customer service have been the focus of the 08-09 year. Ranger Frank Porch is to be commended for his expertise and dedication in these projects.

Final Notes: Attendance continues to grow and Rangers John Sutton, Frank Porch, and Tabitha Hope are always highly praised and appreciated by the public they serve. They continue to distinguish themselves by their attention to detail and exceeding the expectations of their assigned duties.

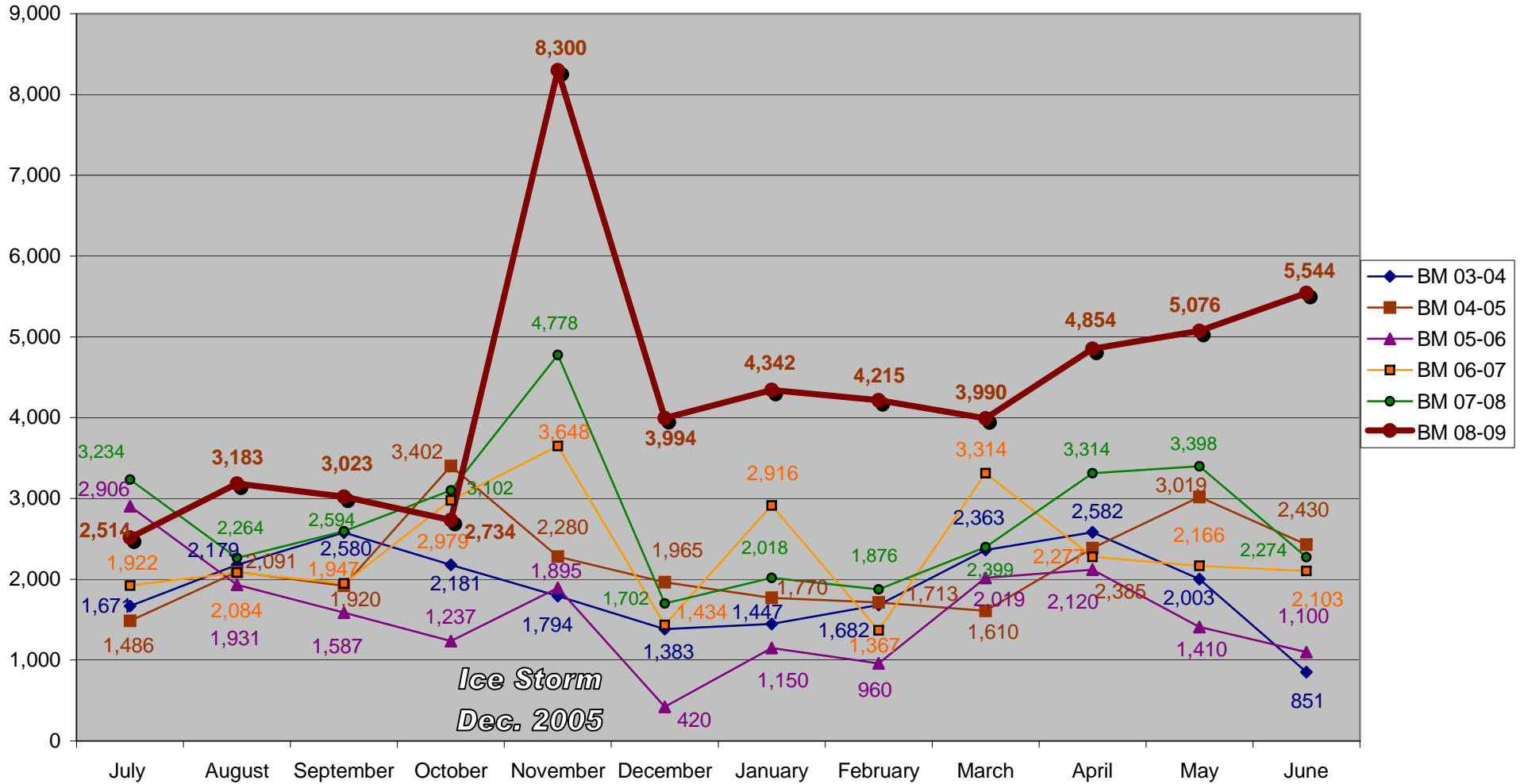
Bakers Mountain Park Attendance



Bakers Mountain Park Usage Year End 08-09 25,956 Patrons (sign in)



Bakers Mountain Monthly Attendance



St Stephens Park

Attendance / Use Statistics
Year End 2008/2009

ACTIVITY	St Stephens Park July 1, 2007 To June 30, 2008	St Stephens Park December 12, 2008 To June 30, 2009
Walking /Running Gravel Trail	***	378
Dog Park	***	958
Picnic	***	66
Leashed Dog Walking	***	62
Wildlife Observation	***	17
Volunteer Work	***	2
Educational Activity	***	0
Other – Information & Restrooms	***	24
Playground /Horseshoes	***	288
Special Event	***	26
SIGN-IN ATTENDANCE	***	1,821
TRAFFIC COUNT (cars)	***	1,953
TRAFFIC ATTENDANCE ESTIMATE	***	6,835
REVENUE	***	\$1,005.00

**** St Stephens Park opened on December 12, 2008 and is only open 4 days a week ...*

<i>2 volunteers have provided 6 volunteer hours of service to St Stephens Park for 08/09 fiscal year.</i>

CATAWBA COUNTY – PARKS DIVISION

St Stephens Park Year End 2008/2009

Attendance: St Stephens opened on December 12, 2008. Based on traffic counter statistics the estimated attendance is 5,860. It appears that this smaller park will have an attendance level of between 11,000 and 14,000 patrons during a normal year. However, with more educational programming and time to mature, this facility may be capable of attendance in excess of 20,000 patrons a year.

Volunteers: 2 volunteers have assisted the park with construction. An active volunteer program has yet to be created at this facility. This facility is staffed with part time employees and will present challenges in the creation of a volunteer program.

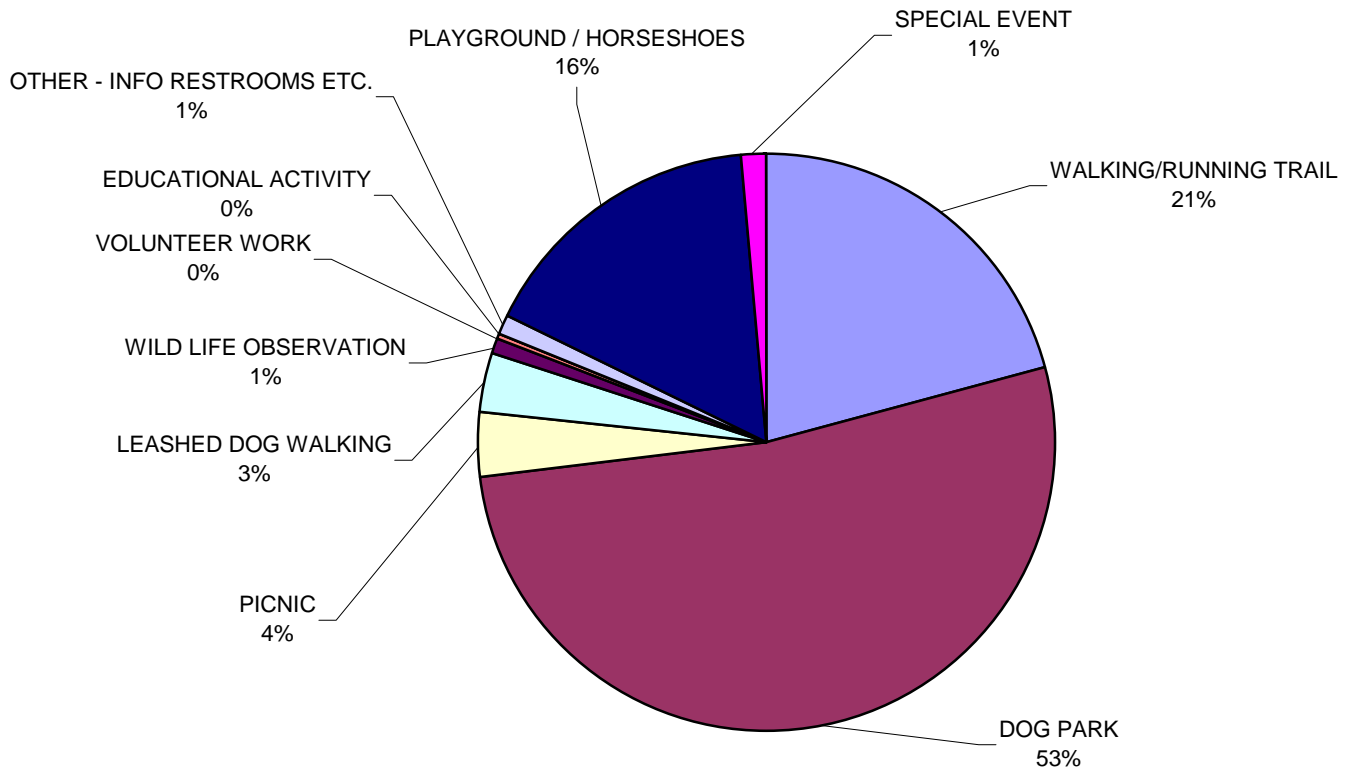
Educational Opportunities: No educational programs have been conducted at this facility to date. This facility is staffed with part time employees and will present challenges in the creation of educational programs.

Projects: Routine maintenance, basic operation and customer service have been the focus of the 08/09-year.

Final Notes: Attendance continues to grow as the public discovers this facility. While this is a small park, it is located in a highly populated area. In the future, once the economy improves, and funding increases, additional programming and improvements will be added at this site. In the current economy, maintenance and basic operation will be the primary focus in the next 12 months. The dog park has been a very popular amenity and will continue to grow as it is promoted.

Park staff saved Catawba County approximately \$35,000 in the construction of this facility by grading, stone placement, landscaping, and project management.

St Stephens Park Usage Year End 08-09 1,821 Patrons (sign-in)



St Stephens Monthly Attendance

