



For Immediate Release:
Parking Lot at Chimney Rock Reopens After Complete Upgrade



Another much needed Park improvement has been completed, restoring easier and quicker access to the top of the mountain.

CHIMNEY ROCK, N.C. (November 19, 2020) – The 10-month long construction project to restore the retaining wall and upgrade and expand the upper parking lot that was washed out during heavy rainstorms in 2017 and 2018 is now complete. Chimney Rock Mgt, operators of the Chimney Rock section of Chimney Rock State Park, shuttled guests from midway up the mountain to the attraction throughout the season. Visitors are once again able to drive up and park near the base of the Chimney. From there, they can take the 26-story elevator or hike the nearly 500 steps up the Outcroppings Trail to the Rock.

“We are pleased to reopen the Cliff Dwellers parking area after three years of planning and construction,” said James Ledgerwood, Superintendent of Chimney

Rock State Park. "At a cost of over \$2,980,000, this improvement continues the over 100-year legacy of providing access to Chimney Rock Mountain and Hickory Nut Gorge for the public."

The project was no small endeavor. N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation contractors, GLF Construction Corporation, had to dig down 26 feet and remove 24,300 cubic yards of dirt, rock and debris that formed the foundation of the original parking lot and remove what was left of the old retaining wall. "Going into this, the hardest part was not knowing what we were going to find when we started excavating," said Lenny Hodge, GLF site superintendent for the project.

Once the space was cleared, GLF laid 400 linear feet of pipe between 24-36 inches wide and added seven new storm drains to handle the volume of water that runs off the mountain. It took several months and over 900 dump truck loads to haul in nearly 18 thousand tons of gravel to rebuild the parking area.



The new 670 linear foot retaining wall was built using 1600 interlocking blocks with a cobblestone finish. At its highest point, the wall is 40 feet high. A walkway along the side of the lot was added to give guests a safe designated path up the parking lot to the attraction. Pavers then laid 1400 tons of asphalt before the parking spaces were striped and the project was completed.

The number of GLF staff fluctuated between 6 to 18 throughout the project. "It took a lot of communication and scheduling between N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, Chimney Rock Management and GLF to undergo such a huge project. We would not have been able to continue to operate if GLF had not been so accommodating. We are so thankful to everyone involved, including our guests, who continued to be flexible throughout the process," said Emily Walker, General Manager, Chimney Rock Mgt., LLC.

Looking back at their work, Hodge said, "The original wall held from the 1940's which is a real testament to the first builders. When you think of the lack of technology and hard access up here, it's amazing."



About Chimney Rock at Chimney Rock State Park

Chimney Rock at Chimney Rock State Park is a still-developing international outdoor destination located 25 miles southeast of Asheville on Highway 64/74A in Chimney Rock, N.C. It is recognized as one of the Southeast's most iconic sites and popular travel destinations. The Park's 535-million-year-old monolith called Chimney Rock can be accessed via a state-of-the-art elevator or the nearly 500-step Outcroppings Trail. At the top, guests can enjoy 75-mile panoramic views of the Hickory Nut Gorge and Lake Lure. The Park features one of the highest waterfalls of its kind east of the Mississippi River, Hickory Nut Falls, at 404 feet. Hickory Nut Gorge, one of the state's most significant centers of biodiversity, is home to 36 rare plant species and 14 rare animal species. A destination for travel groups, weddings and special events, the Chimney Rock section of the Park also hosts innovative educational programs for field trips, scout groups, and summer camps. Visit Chimney Rock's website at chimneyrockpark.com for more information.

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