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# Project proposal on funding for parks

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# Alternative Funding for Parks

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## A Creative Inquiry (CI) project.

**What is CI?** At Clemson University, teams of undergraduate students take on problems that spring from their own curiosity, from a professor's challenge, or from the pressing needs of the world around them. The range of topics is endless. Projects tend to be long-term, spanning three or four semesters. Students are encouraged to take ownership of their projects and to take risks. They learn to work as a team. They develop communication skills.

**This project...**came about from the increasing need for park managers to look to new and innovative methods to conserve spending and bring in additional revenue. The CI team will survey park visitors to learn of alternate funding methods. This is a different approach from the typical, top-down method of budgeting and resource allocation. Park visitors at two locations in the upstate region of South Carolina will be surveyed.

## Introduction

Since 2008 the federal and state governments have been constantly working to try and help our economy and country recover from the recession. In doing so the government has resorted to reducing the fiscal budget, causing major budget cuts. New fiscal budgets for the government are becoming increasingly important to county and state parks around the nation. The new fiscal budget affects how much funding the government is willing to provide for county and state parks alike.

There are other problems within the county and state parks system but funding has consistently been the most distinguishable one. In this project we are going to look to state and county level parks to see what alternative funding solutions exist for these parks.

The first things we want to know is how funds are currently spent in the parks and where do those funds come from. Another thing we need to know are the funding alternatives currently existing to fund parks. We are also interested in finding the funding alternatives that would be effective in generating substantial revenue. Our plan is to start and base our research off of these questions. Our ultimate goal is to find alternative solutions and more practical ways for state and regional parks to fund themselves without the help of the government, thus becoming as self-sufficient as possible.



Nettles Park

## Research Methods

We will use two techniques in gathering data for our research: interviews and surveys. We will interview officials and administrators of at least one local and one state park (both in South Carolina) while using surveys to gather information from visitors of the parks. The interviews that we will use for the park officials and administrators will be semi-structured. This means that we will have a list of questions that we intend on asking the person but will not stick only to those questions. Data collection will take place in April, 2014.

In analyzing the data we receive from the interviews, we will use three techniques: member checking, qualitative coding, and developing themes. These three techniques will help ensure that our information is accurate and reliable, and help us make sense of the data we have collected.

The second method we plan on using is surveys of park visitors. We want to conduct exit surveys with approximately 200 visitors of the two different parks, one local and one state. These surveys will be administered to a random sample of individuals 18 years of age and older. Data collection will take place in April, 2014 at Table Rock State Park in Pickens County and at Nettles Park in Clemson, South Carolina.

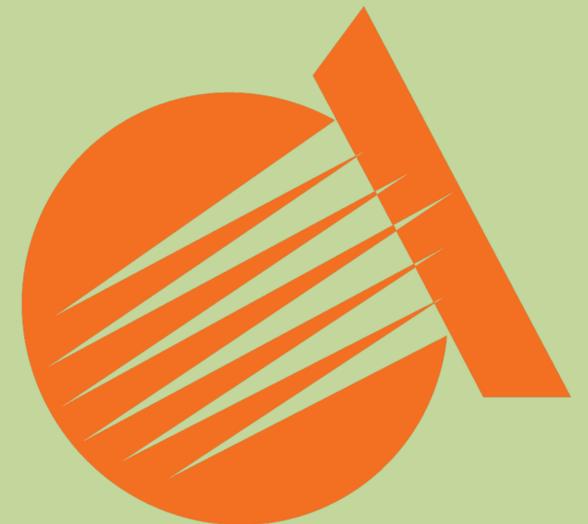
Once the data are collected we will analyze the responses with frequency tables. This will give us a good summary of what people would like and not like. From these results we will be able to make inferences about the population of park visitors, and we would be able to advise parks which funding alternatives would be successful and unsuccessful.



Table Rock State Park

## Results

This study is unique in that we are attempting to learn of funding alternatives from the visiting public, instead of the usual method of asking park officials and managers. Results from this study will be forwarded to the managers of both park units.



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