

North Carolina Mountain State Fair

A brief history...

1994 The gates opened Sept. 5, 1994 for the new North Carolina Mountain State Fair, operated by the Division of Marketing for the N.C. Department of Agriculture. The five day fair was held in the McGough Arena and surrounding buildings, with the carnival in the parking lot. More than 45,000 visitors came through the gates that year.

1995 The fair was again held in the upper portion of the WNC Ag Center for the second year, but plans and money were in place for a new permanent building on the lower portion of the grounds. The lower grounds were used for parking that year.

1996 Visitors welcomed the new livestock building, now called the Davis Arena, in 1996. The fair remained a five-day event, and despite rain on four of the five days, attendance climbed to 64,000. Hurricane Fran decimated much of eastern North Carolina during the fair, but western N.C. escaped Fran. The carnival moved “down the hill” this year to its current location.

1997 Based on the success of the first three fairs, the schedule was increased from five to nine days this year. Attendance topped 100,000 for the first time, and significant increases were noted in competitive entries, too.

1998 To fully encompass two weekends, the fair schedule increased from nine to 10 days in 1998. More and more citizens of western N.C. brought their competitive entries trying to get ribbons and a piece of the \$75,000 offered in prize money. Attendance jumped to 130,000.

1999 Hurricane Floyd came to the 1999 Mountain State Fair and caused the first cancellation of a day of the fair. But one day later, the fair re-opened. We set a one-day attendance record of over 32,000 visitors on the first Saturday. And new satellite parking areas and shuttle buses were added this year.

2000 Attendance hit 180,000 this year, generating more revenues and allowing the fair to complete new projects like the addition of more restrooms, more paved parking and walkways, etc. Entry numbers in the competitive exhibits continued to grow.

2001 We all stopped and mourned on 9/11/2001, right in the middle of the fair. The decision was made to keep the fair running, and moments of silence were held in honor of those lost. Visitors had a new view of the fair from the aerial tram which ran from the main gate to the original fairgrounds.

2002 New competitions were added to the '02 fair, with 132 competitors in the Gospel Singing, 109 musicians in the Mountain Music Festival, 1,389 cloggers and 2,444 livestock exhibitors. Records were set on attendance for Ingles Day and for the total ride revenue collected for the fair.

2003 The N.C. Mountain State Fair earned the honor of being the third largest fair in the state this year when attendance topped 186,000. Due to the popularity of the Gospel Singing Competition, it was held on both Sundays to allow more competitors to join. Motorsports entertainment joined the line-up with monster truck and motorcycle shows in McGough Arena. The aerial tram was gone in 2003, but the Moo-Ternity Ward returned showcasing births of dairy calves at the fair.

2004 Fairgoers celebrated a “Harvest of Fun” this year with a new carnival company at the fair. Powers replaced Drew and brought a new mix of rides to the fair. Attendance remained steady despite the flooding from two hurricanes before and during the fair. The original satellite parking lot was under six feet of water, and Grace Community Church loaned the fair the use of their paved lots for overflow.

2005 Matt Buchanan took over as manager of the fair from Bill Edmondson, the original manager who retired before the '05 fair. The fair partnered with Ingles Supermarkets to generate more visibility and increase advance ticket sales, setting a record. On-line advance tickets sales also hit a new record, and advance tickets were marketed at Asheville Tourists games and at the Apple Festival. Special emphasis was placed on hand-washing to prevent the spread of e-coli and other diseases. Strong attendance boosted fair numbers and generated profits for future improvements to the facilities.

2006 The 2006 edition of the NC Mountain State Fair took place September 8-17 with the theme “Go Hog Wild”. Attendance was the third highest ever, totaling 177,813. Great concerts in McGough Arena included a sell-out Josh Turner. Commissioner Troxler drove into opening ceremonies in the Got to be NC Big Cart, which stayed on the grounds for several days. The Mountain Music Festival moved out from the Hospitality Tent to its own outdoor theater on Heritage Boulevard, drawing large crowds for each performance.

2007 This was a new record breaking year in many different ways with “Full Throttle Fun” and Avery the goat as our mascot. There were four record-breaking days (opening Friday, Monday and the last Saturday and Sunday) with an overall record attendance of 187,819. We only had one day of rain, which cleared up, for most of the afternoon. The fair will continue to move “Full Throttle” ahead with the announcement of two new buildings being built on the fair grounds to better accommodate future growth and other non-fair uses.

2008 15th year Anniversary! We finished the fair with two recorded-breaking days (Monday, 2nd Friday) with an overall attendance of 177,869. There was only one bad day of rain but the gas shortage caught us on the 2nd weekend. Our fair theme, “Best of the West”, served us proud as we had a great fair with representation of all the wonderful opportunities we have here in Western North Carolina.

2009 The Virginia C Boone Mountain Heritage Center and the Livestock/Expo Building opened just in time for “How the West Was Fun”. Drew Amusements provided fairgoers the experience of seeing the grounds from the sky in the Chairlift. A record breaking day occurred on Monday with 14,482 folks coming through the gates; however the attendance only reached 160,242 due to rain the last four days. Competitive entries were displayed within the Expo Building and the Heritage Crafters in the Virginia C Boone Mountain Heritage Center.

2010 A great year for “Cultivating Fun!” With only one day of rain, visitors poured in to enjoy all that the fair had to offer. Three days set new attendance records with the overall attendance of 185,323 being just 2,496 short of the record set in 2007. “Ingles Day” also set a record amount of food collected which was given to MANNA Food Bank. Drew Amusements returned with midway rides as well as the chairlift and the new Bojangles Stage hosted local bands. Two scholarships were awarded by the WNC Beef Commission in memory of Scotty Cochran. Barbara Worley and “Burder” Reeves were inducted into the Fair’s “Livestock Hall of Fame.”



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