



Morris brothers share the Blue Devil sideline

SPORTS, 1B

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Expanded services & housing options



ABOVE: Newly replaced decking on the Wilmington Riverwalk on July 6. DANIEL SHEEHAN/STARNEWS
TOP INSET: The Sterling will comprise 265 apartment units as part of the Center Point project. BOB LIEPA/STARNEWS



Officials on Masonboro Island came across a female loggerhead heading back to the ocean after laying a nest in early June 2026. PROVIDED BY MASONBORO ISLAND RESERVE

Sea turtles have laid 1,000+ nests along the NC beaches

Gareth McGrath
USA TODAY NETWORK

The height of summer along the N.C. coast means several things: People hitting the beach for a vacation; steaming and sticky temperatures; the occasional pop-up afternoon shower; and female sea turtles lumbering ashore looking for a place to nest.

But sharing the beach can be a challenge, with the deck largely stacked against coastal wildlife as the lure of sand and the ocean keeps attracting more and more people to the N.C. coast – never mind the other obstacles sea turtles face in the wild off the beach.

While adapted to dealing with soaring temperatures, climate change is another growing challenge the marine reptiles face that could have significant impacts on the species' future.

Here's a mid-season look at sea turtle nesting in North Carolina, which represents just about the northern range of the animal's nesting habitat.

Nesting so far in 2026

Sea turtle nesting season in North Carolina occurs from May through September. Female sea turtles emerge from the ocean at night, and using their flippers, dig an 18-inch-deep hole that will serve as the nest where she will deposit 80 to 120 eggs.

After laying the eggs, she covers the nest and returns to sea.

After about a 60-day incubation period, the hatchlings emerge and make

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The latest on 7 Wilmington projects to watch in 2026

Daniel Sheehan
Wilmington StarNews | USA TODAY NETWORK

Construction crews are putting the finishing touches on several projects that will transform key parts of Wilmington.

At the top of the year, the StarNews published a list of Wilmington-area projects to watch in 2026. The list included hundreds of new housing units, park expansions, airport improvements and more.

The expanded services and housing options will serve a rapidly growing Wilmington area. The latest Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization projects that the region will double in population by 2050, making it the seventh fastest growing in the country.

Here's where each project stood as of early July.

Cape Fear Museum

The Cape Fear Museum of History of Science will open in its new location at 230 Grace St. on Aug. 17. A ticketed grand opening event is being held on Aug. 22.

The new museum is part of a newly built 95,000-

square-foot building that also houses New Hanover County's Main Library. The library portion opened in October 2025.

The centerpiece of the new museum is a 60-seat immersive planetarium theater, which will host a variety of educational programs. The new building will also feature classrooms, an outdoor terrace, hands-on science exhibits and an interactive gallery on Lower Cape Fear history. A 5,000-square-foot rotating gallery will host a variety of traveling exhibitions.

Smith Creek Park expansion

Phase 2A of Smith Creek Park will bring amenities to 85 acres of a popular New Hanover County park. The \$2.8 million project includes a one-mile paved trail, ADA ramps, additional restrooms and parking.

Construction on the project is complete, and the park is open, according to county Parks and Gardens Director Jodi Rich.

The county will hold a ribbon cutting for the project in early August, but a date has not yet been announced.

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Climate change 'fingerprint' seen in heat

Scientists look to causes of hot July 4 weekend

Dinah Voyles Pulver
USA TODAY

Early July brought historic extreme weather for the fourth year in a row, and scientists again see the "fingerprint" of climate change in a deadly Fourth of July.

In 2023, it was a record-smashing heat wave. In 2024, history-making Hurricane Beryl ripped through the Caribbean. In 2025, a shockingly deadly flood.

And in 2026? Another deadly heat wave.

Days later, the heat warnings have finally faded for much of the Eastern United States, but the grim number of heat-related deaths continued to rise.

At least 44 deaths have been reported as a result of the July 1 to July 4 heat wave, but it will be weeks or months before researchers finalize an estimate of the number of people who died or suffered injuries as a result of the extreme heat.

More than 1,300 heat records were matched or broken for maximum high temperatures and warm overnight lows across 40 states and territories over the

four days.

From June 29 to July 5, 201 million Americans experienced at least one day when climate change made warm temperatures at least three times more likely, Shel Winkley, chief meteorologist at Climate Central, told USA TODAY. Temperatures on July 3 had "a very strong fingerprint of climate change," he said, affecting 136 million Americans.

By July 7, New Jersey officials had reported 29 deaths related to the heat and the complications it created for people with preexisting conditions.

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At least 44 deaths have been reported as a result of the early July heat wave, but it will be weeks or months before researchers finalize the data on heat deaths. ED OU/REUTERS FILE

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