

State tourism industry hopes to dodge Earl

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If Hurricane Earl steers clear of the East Coast, Shannon Johnson, of Willow Spring, said her husband has big plans for Labor Day weekend.

“They’re going to go mud-riding,” Johnson said. “It’s just when you ride in monster trucks and you ride through the mud and get stuck and have races.”

Johnson’s husband is planning a trip to CarolinaBackwoods ATV park in Ash located in Brunswick County, near the North and South Carolina state lines

But the plans, she said, depend on the direction of Hurricane Earl.

The Labor Day weekend always provides a big boost for the tourism industry in the state, North Carolina Director of Tourism Marketing Wit Tuttell said. Visitor spending typically tops \$15 million per day along the coast in the summer.

“Tourism is so important for the coast,” Tuttell said, noting that the tourism industry accounts for 47,000 jobs.

Though the Category 4 storm is expected to come close to the North Carolina coast, Tuttell said he is hopeful that it won’t weaken the economic turn-around the industry has seen in recent months.

“We hope it (Earl) will blow through before Friday,” Tuttell said.

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