

FWCCSP RECORD

Newsletter of the Friends of White Clay Creek State Park

Friends of White Clay Creek State Park

P.O. Box 9734

Newark, DE 19714-9734

www.whiteclayfriends.org

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Trail Construction and Maintenance Work Continues

Recent activity has focused on repairs and improvements to the Preserve Loop Trail along the creek, where erosion has damaged the trail. Our long term project, currently in-progress, is a major re-routing of the David English Trail near the twin ponds area. One section of this re-route was completed last fall/winter and this spring, with 15 volunteers contributing over 150 hours of work. There are still large sections to be completed in association with the state park trail crew.

Work sessions occur once a month for 3 hours on Saturday mornings or on Sunday mornings during hunting season. The next session is scheduled for September 12th at 9 am. Everyone is welcome to come out and participate. You do not need any prior experience, and all equipment is provided. Please contact Mike Ott (mikeott52@aol.com or 302-738-6652) or Joe Castagnola (jcastag3@comcast.net or 610-255-0365) if you are interested or would like more information.

New Trail Map is Available On-Line

A new trail map for the White Clay Creek watershed is now available on the recently upgraded website of the White Clay Creek Wild and Scenic River program – www.whiteclay.org. To access the map, go to the site and click on “White Clay Map” on the main menu. (NOTE: there may be a temporary access problem – if your browser doesn’t open this page, try again later). This is a Google Earth map, so in addition to viewing the traditional map format, the viewer can select satellite or hybrid views to see an aerial view of the trail, or terrain view to know what kind of elevation changes to expect.

The recently printed Trail Map and Visitor Guide to the White Clay Creek area is also available on the site under Resources/Publications. In addition, the site contains a large and growing amount of information of potential relevance to persons interested in the White Clay Creek Watershed.

Tribute to Dick Robinson

Recently deceased Eugene Clyde Robinson, commonly known as Dick, was born on Prospect Street in Newark Del., on March 17, 1924. His father worked for the University of Delaware as a maintenance man in charge of plumbing, heating, and other

problems. He lived in Newark all his life except for the six years he was in Chattanooga, Tenn., with the Dupont Co. to work in their nylon plant and for the 2 years he was in the Navy training to be a pilot during WWII.

He attended Newark public schools and graduated from the University of Delaware with a degree in economics. While he was growing up in Newark, Dick enjoyed exploring the White Clay Creek Valley. He fished, hunted, hiked, and swam, and had other adventures in the valley. While at Newark High School he started to date Addie Foster who would become his wife. They had 6 children and now have 15 grandchildren.

In his words, “The creek and the land surrounding the creek were pristine and immaculate in those days. People would not litter. You would never see bottles, trash, or even a cigarette butt on the ground. Creek Road was a gravel road that was maintained well with scraping twice a year; once in late fall and again in late spring. The creek was full of fish.Every spring by the millions they would come up the creek to spawn. It was a sight to see.”

As a tribute to Dick’s memory we are publishing as newsletter supplements at the end of this and later issues, summaries of interviews with him by Andrea Cassel that she recorded from July 2005 through March 2006. Most of the “Stories of the White Clay Creek Valley” are in his own words. One of the stories, “Motorcycle Hill Climbs” by Andrea Cassel, appeared in the April 2006 newsletter.

Graffiti Feedback Needed

As has been happening elsewhere in our communities, the park has been targeted recently by graffiti vandals. Park rangers recently arrested two suspects who vandalized the nature center men’s restroom. Assistant Superintendent Art Angelo would appreciate help from the Friends organization in reporting graffiti in the park.

Like littering, if you don’t deal with graffiti promptly it tends to proliferate; however, unlike litter, don’t try to clean it up yourself – you could make the situation worse. Instead, as you would with a large tree across a trail, call the park office at 368-6900 to report the location so the park staff can respond. The rangers will take a photograph for possible prosecution evidence, and they have the proper chemicals and methods for safe removal. The sooner it is discovered, the easier it is to remove and the more likely the sign or facility can be salvaged without long term damage.

Donated Items Are Sought for Park and Friends

There are several items that are needed by the park or the Friends that might be sitting in someone’s garage or basement, just looking for a new home. Purchase of such items is difficult to impossible in today’s budget environment.

If you have any of the following items and could part with them, we will guarantee that they would be well used and much appreciated. Also, your donation either to the Friends or directly to the park would be tax-deductible.

- Freezer capable of holding several water ice containers (~14” diameter x 20” long)
- 10ft x10ft pop-up canopy (Friends and Nature Center staff)
- Mountain bike (Rangers – to replace a damaged bike used for off-road patrol)
- Old 78 rpm phonograph records from the ‘30s and ‘40s (Judge Morris)

“Smash and Grab” Robberies Are Increasing Again

There have been several recent “smash and grab” break-ins of cars in various parking lots in the park. Ideally, valuable items should be left at home when possible. Valuables that must be brought along should not be left in any visible location in the vehicle and preferably should be locked in the trunk (for vehicles with trunks).

In one instance, keys hidden on a vehicle were found and used to open a door and remove a purse. Possibly this person was observed hiding the key. Visitors should take appropriate precautions.

Membership Renewal Grace Period Ended July 23

Membership renewals for 2009 were due on March 23, the date of our annual meeting. The grace period for renewals is 4 months, which expired on July 23. For the small number of members who have not yet renewed, if you would like to remain on our membership rolls, and we certainly hope that you do, please send in your dues at your earliest convenience. Dues remain at \$15 for families, \$10 for individuals, and \$5 for students. Checks should be sent to Friends of White Clay Creek State Park, P.O. Box 9734, Newark, DE 19714-9734.

Notes from the Nature Center

The end of summer is near, which means there is only a limited time left for camp, creek gems, concerts, and stream exploring. We have had a very busy concert season with record-breaking crowds. We would like to extend a big thank you to the Friends for the extremely popular water ice table. Don't forget to join us for the second annual Labor Day Concert with the Almost Fab Beatles tribute band – band starts at 3pm.

We are now gearing up for fall, which means school programs, hayrides, hawk count, and Judge Morris programs (including an American Girls on the Homefront program for girls and the ever popular Mystery at the Mansion). We are also recruiting Friends members to lead programs this winter – do you have, for example, a favorite trail or a passion for pointing out your favorite plants? Join the nature center team as a volunteer program guide. Email Angel.Burns@state.de.us for details. Also if you know how to sew we are looking for a stuffed animal repair specialist.

Reusable Goods Requested. Do you have any of these items lying around? If so, please save them for the nature center & camp programs.

- Old craft materials (wooden beads, felts, pipe cleaners, stickers, yarn, ribbon, construction paper, crayons and markers, etc), old party decorations, or old treasures such as jewelry, charms, bells, measuring cups, fabric dye, clay pots.
- Kitchen reusables (all thoroughly cleaned please) - tin pie pans, yogurt containers, paper towel rolls, small food trays)
- Old nature magazines
- Plastic storage containers (in good condition, with lids).

Volunteer Appreciation Picnic is Tuesday August 11, 6 pm, Carpenter Recreation Pavilion

Attention White Clay Creek State Park volunteers with 10 or more hours. In appreciation for all your wonderful volunteer efforts at the park, the staff would like to invite you to the 2009 picnic. We will provide the burgers, veggie burgers, hotdogs, and beverages. Feel free to bring a side dish, salad or dessert. Keep in mind we usually have lots of desserts and need more sides. Please RSVP by Monday August 10, at the latest, to Angel at Angel.Burns@state.de.us or call the nature center at 302 368-6560. Leave your email and/or telephone number so we can contact you in case of inclement weather. Rain Date – Tuesday, August 18.

Calendar of Scheduled Activities

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| August 10 | Executive Committee Meeting |
| September 12 | Trail Work |
| September 14 | Executive Committee Meeting |
| September 20 | Newark Community Day |
| October 3 | Trail Work |
| October 12 | Executive Committee Meeting |
| November 8 | Trail Work |
| November 9 | Executive Committee Meeting |
| December 6 | Trail Work |
| December 14 | Executive Committee Meeting |

Projects and Project Leaders

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| Adopt-a-Highway: Dee and Dick Benson, 410-398-4180 | Nature Center Exhibits: Andy Urquhart, 239-2471 |
| Adopt-a-Trail: Mike Ott, 738-6652 | Nature Center Staffing: Jim Ries, 239-1658 |
| Advocacy: Andy Urquhart, 239-2471 | Newark Community Day: Open |
| Birders Guide: Andy Urquhart, 239-2471 | Oral Histories: Fraser Russell, 731-4293 |
| Bluebird Boxes: Debra Chiczewski, 234-0919 | Park Office Plantings: Carolyn Stoner and Jayne Fernsler, 453-8440 |
| Conservation: Andy Urquhart, 239-2471 | Reforestation: Christa Stefanisko, 369-1933 |
| Historical Publications: Fraser Russell, 731-4293 | Scholarship Funds: Angel Burns, 368-6560 |
| Judge Morris Support Group: Cathy Duffus, 731-9794 | Trail Benches: Andy Urquhart, 239-2471 |
| Kestrel Boxes: Andy Urquhart, 239-2471 | Trail Improvement Work: Mike Ott, 738-6652, and Joe Castagnola, 610-255-0365 |
| Light Construction: Nick McFadden, 368-6900 | Water Ice Sales: John Schwander, 737-7901 |
| Member-led Park Programs: Angel Burns, 368-6560 | |
| Website: Rick Hall, 831-1295, and Pat Walters | |

Executive Committee

President: Andy Urquhart, 239-2471, aurqu@aol.com
Vice-president: Mike Ott, 738-6652, MikeOtt52@aol.com
Secretary and Newsletter Editor: Dick Benson, 410-398-4180, rbenson6@comcast.net
Treasurer: Ken Daws, 737-8120, wahkegan@hotmail.com
Membership Chair: Lisa Wool, 562-9788, lwool@delawareestuary.org
Projects Committee Chair: Jim Ries, 239-1658, dries@udel.edu

Membership Application

Join us! If you are not already a member and would like to join, please return this form with your check made payable to Friends of White Clay Creek State Park. Annual dues are \$5.00 for students, \$10.00 for individuals, and \$15.00 for families. Any extra donation with your dues would be appreciated and put to good use.

Name(s) _____
Address _____
Phone (____)_____ E-mail _____

Friends of White Clay Creek State Park, Inc.
P.O. Box 9734, Newark, DE 19714-9734

Stories of the White Clay Creek Valley

Summary of some of Andrea Cassel's interviews with Eugene "Dick" Robinson from July 2005 through March 2006. Most is Dick Robinson's own words.

Cold Winters

When I tell people that it was colder when I was young they scoff at my tales. I remind them that it was so cold that one could ice skate all the way to Newark on the White Clay Creek.

Swimming in the Creek

The Drobreck boys, Peter and Klaus, were my best friends growing up in the valley. We would often go swimming in what we called the sucker hole, because in the spring it was full of suckers laying eggs in the 8-foot-deep and rapidly running water. On the west side there was an eight-foot-high bank by a meadow. We could jump off that bank into the deep water. On the other side there was a sand bar and sloping bank of a pasture of the Chambers Rock Farm. It was an isolated area with no road nearby. For 10 years we would swim there with no bathing suits. A boy then would not be caught dead with a suit on.

One day we were lying there on our backs sunning ourselves when we heard Peter say that he thought we had company. I looked over at the bank and there were three girls over there. We were about 16 to 17. They were 17 to 18. One of them had a box camera and was taking pictures of us. This was the first time anyone had ever come upon us while we were there. Klaus and I tried to cover up by moving the sand over us. Peter, who was a year older, stood up in all his majesty and announced that this was our swimming hole and they were most welcome to come over and join us. They had to be nude, no suits to join us. The girls chuckled and giggled. The oldest one said, "Thank you, but we are just walking through." and

turned around. As they were walking off Peter said, "Nice to see you." "Likewise," said the older girl. We laughed at that and thought it was so clever of her to have such a quick comeback.

Another swimming hole story took place when we were in high school. We always took our clothes off on the bank and swam in the nude in the creek. One day a group of girls came along and stole our clothes! We had to promise them that they could swim there too so we could get our clothes back.

Chambers House (Stairways)

My wife, Addie, and I and our children moved in to the Chambers House (Stairways) in 1954. The property had a long history in the valley. A Quaker named John Chambers received 1,000 acres from William Penn. When he came to claim the land, a trader lived on the property in a log cabin where the Hopkins house is now located on Hopkins Road. The kitchen of that house had logs from the trader's cabin. This trader would trade with the Indians who had a settlement nearby along the Creek. John Chambers removed him and began to settle the land for his family. Eventually he and his family built six big houses and about five barns on the property. It was quite a prosperous farm. He also built the first schoolhouse there for his children and others in the area. The man he hired to teach at the school was a graduate of Harvard. Later he was a member of the Continental Congress.

One of those houses [the current Nature Center for the park] was called Stairways by people in the community. This was because it had two unique spiral stairways that were steep, hand-made, unbalanced with no architectural design. It looked as if the person who made them was half blind.

We were given Stairways in 1954 by Mary Chambers Folwell. She was a direct descendant of John Chambers. Her husband had a large department store in Allentown, Penn. Over the years the 1,000-acre Chambers Rock Farm had been parceled out. Mrs. Folwell tried to get as much of the original acreage back as possible. She did pretty well, getting back about 750 acres. Dick described her as a wonderful lady, no bigger than a mite at 5ft and 100 pounds, but a real dynamo. Bob Hopkins was one who refused to sell his portion back to Mrs. Folwell.

Knee-deep Meadow

When I was a boy there was a beautiful meadow along Creek Road to the east called Green's Meadow. It ran all the way from the railroad bridge up to the second dam. Dairy cows were kept there. There was a tunnel there that the cows went through to get to the meadow. The meadow was very marshy with a slight depth to the water. It was very damp. We called it knee-deep meadow because in the spring millions of peepers could be heard singing. To us it sounded like knee-deep, knee-deep, knee-deep. We would sit on Rte 896 at sunset, about where the Fairfield shopping center is today, and listen to the millions of frogs sing. We would hear one, then two, and so on until millions would be singing.

Stories to be continued in the next newsletter.