

# **FWCCSP RECORD**

**Newsletter of the Friends of White Clay Creek State Park**

**Friends of White Clay Creek State Park**

**P.O. Box 9734**

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**[www.whiteclayfriends.org](http://www.whiteclayfriends.org)**

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**Volume 13, No. 1**

**August 2010**

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## **Friends Leadership Submits Comments on Trail Plan Draft**

In June, following a review provided by the Division, the leadership of the Friends submitted comments on a draft of a new trail plan for our park. The leaderships' comments mostly fell into a few general categories:

To minimize damage to wildlife habitat, unnecessary trail construction should be avoided. For example, trails that are functioning satisfactorily without requiring regular maintenance should be kept as is, even if they don't conform to the accepted design standards for sustainability.

Trails should avoid areas known to support nesting habitat for Delaware rare bird species or other special wildlife.

The Division needs to be more cognizant of the incompatibilities between pedestrians and mountain bikers (as demonstrated by the survey of Friends members conducted in 2009) and provide sufficient trails for pedestrians to use without having to encounter mountain bikes.

New shared use trails should not be constructed in the White Clay Creek Preserve. In Delaware, this is the area of the park between Hopkins Road, Thompson Station Road, and the Pennsylvania border. The presence of mountain bikes in this area is inconsistent with the management philosophy adopted by the Bi-State Advisory Council for the Preserve, requiring the maintenance of "as close to a wilderness-like experience as it is feasible to attain."

The draft trail plan can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/2vfly24>. The Division is currently considering changes to the draft based on comments they received from groups they showed it to, including the Friends Leadership, Trail Spinners, Trail Club, and Trail Dawgs. The Leaderships' comments can be accessed through the first item on the Notices page of our web site – [www.whiteclayfriends.org/notices.php](http://www.whiteclayfriends.org/notices.php). We expect the Division will hold a public meeting on the next draft of the trail plan, and we will announce to our members the schedule for the meeting when it is available.

## **Most Trail Work is Suspended Pending New Trail Plan**

Until the new trail plan is completed, the Division is not approving any new trail work projects in the park. Thus, the Friends trail work efforts have been largely suspended. We hope to be back in business soon and will inform our volunteers when we are ready to go.

## **Christina River Watershed Cleanup Targets Two Dumps**

One of the legacies of private land acquired for addition to White Clay Creek State Park is the presence of dumps of refuse and other items discarded while in private hands. Two of these dumps now within the park were targeted for removal during the annual Christina River Watershed Cleanup on April 17.

About 30 volunteers from the Wilmington Trail Club, the Friends, and a few UD students began removing empty plastic computer tape cases from a large dump area measuring approximately 10 x 5 yards. The cases fill the area up to two feet deep. The site is located in the woods off the hunting trail across from the Wedgewood Road bridge, between archery hunting pins E and B. We filled over 100 plastic bags, and ranger Art Angelo transported them by the park's gator down the steep trail to the Pomeroy RR trail where the bags were hauled away later by the park's dump truck. As we removed only 10-15 percent of the cases, this will be a long-term project.

The other dump was of old discarded tires located in the Judge Morris section of the park. The Friend's trail construction crew was assisted by six members of the U of D Students for the Environment Club and by park ranger John Wales in removing 100 tires, including about eight very large tractor tires. The tires were taken by park maintenance staff in the dump truck and safely disposed of in roll-off containers that the City of Newark provided for the Christina River Clean-up program.

## **Coyotes in the Park!**

The following account is by Nikki Testa, a biological aide/fire planner and WCCSP patrol officer.

Working for White Clay Creek State Park for the past 4 years has given me the opportunity to witness many new and exciting experiences of nature. From learning the differences between the migrating birds to the movement patterns of white tail deer, I am now able to provide visitors with more than just a lesson on daily entrance fee procedures. Although sneaking up on a wood duck hot spot or consistently visiting a known snake hangout has proven worthy of mention, I have to say that one experience in January tops them all.

While driving a section of Thompson Station Road one cold, early morning of shotgun season, something ran across in front of my vehicle. Now, I am pretty certain it was not a fox, for it was a bit larger, and its coloring was more tan and black. It was not a dog because of its stature and gait, and how it held its tail was quite different from that of a typical German shepherd. I sat there more or less in shock replaying the scene in my head. "It was a coyote, I'm sure of it!"

After a few days of telling my story, several of my colleagues were less than impressed. Right, I thought, I'm on a mission which was to capture a picture of this

coyote by using a trail camera. I spent the next three months obtaining and setting up trail cameras throughout the park. After months of capturing only images of deer, people and squirrels, I began to get discouraged and somewhat bored. Then one afternoon I reluctantly checked the cameras after nearly a month. Imagine my surprise when low and behold there they were a couple of unmistakable pictures of a coyote. Vindication!

In addition to Nikki's experience, there have been other reliable sightings (and hearings) of coyotes in the park. While coyotes can be a threat to pets (another reason to keep dogs on a leash!), they are not considered much of a threat to humans.

### **A Glimpse of Park History from Fraser Russell**

Some considerable field work was carried out to follow the 470-meter mill race that was constructed from the dam at the pump house to Tweeds Mill at the foot of Wedgewood Road. Over half of this race is clearly visible on the west side of the road in the fall and winter seasons; the rest of the seasons it is difficult to see or follow all the way to the mill because of heavy undergrowth. In December 2009 and January 2010, the nature center staff led by Angel Burns and me carefully found a way through the woods to follow the race to within about 50 meters of the mill. This was followed by a history hike on January 16 that followed the mill race from the dam to the mill. The three-hour hike, led, by Angel with help from several volunteers and her own staff, had some forty participants. The most intriguing part seen was the ruins still existing where the mill race crosses Bull Frog Run. This small stream drains down from Mill Stone Pond and crosses Creek Road just north of the parking lot at the intersection of Wedgewood and the road. It is not completely clear how the structures at the intersection of the mill race and Bull Frog Run were built and operated since it appears that the original structure has been moved and partially destroyed. It appears that there was a gate control on the downstream side of the run.

The information that so fascinated all those who attended the hike was carefully researched and clearly summarized by Debbie Paruszewski Keese in her talk to the annual meeting of The Friends of White Clay Creek State Park, March 15, 2001.

We are always looking for additional information and if you have anything to contribute to our study of the mill and mill race we would welcome a discussion. Contact me, T W Fraser Russell, at [twfr@udel.edu](mailto:twfr@udel.edu), or 302-731-4293.

### **Three Friends Members Win Outstanding Volunteer Service Awards**

In December 2009, Friends members Jim Ries, Lisa Wool, and Carole Walsh received outstanding volunteer service awards from the Division of Parks and Recreation. Jim is the Friends projects coordinator, responsible for working with our project leaders to help them succeed on their projects. Jim also serves on the executive committee and as the project leader for our nature center staffing project. Lisa Wool is the Friends membership chair. She does a huge amount of behind-the-scenes but absolutely essential work in maintaining our membership records and leading our membership renewal process. Carole was recognized for her exceptional work as a volunteer in two of our projects – the Judge

Morris support group and nature center staffing. We are proud that our outstanding volunteers have been recognized in this way

### **Volunteer Picnic Scheduled for Tuesday, August 17**

In appreciation for all the wonderful volunteer efforts at White Clay Creek State Park, the staff would like to invite park volunteers contributing 10 or more hours or volunteering two or more times during the past year to the 2010 picnic. The event is scheduled for Tuesday, August 17, 6:00 pm, at the Carpenter Recreation Area pavilion. If necessary, the rain date is Thursday, August 19.

The staff will provide hamburgers, hotdogs, and beverages. Feel free to bring a side dish, salad or dessert. Keep in mind there are usually lots of desserts, and often more side dishes are needed.

Those planning to attend are requested to RSVP by August 13<sup>th</sup> by calling the nature center at 302-368-6560 or e-mailing [Angel.Burns@state.de.us](mailto:Angel.Burns@state.de.us). Leave an e-mail address or phone number so you can be contacted in case of inclement weather. Please also indicate any special dietary needs, and the staff will try to accommodate you.

### **Notes from the Nature Center Staff**

This summer has been really busy around the nature center! We had 10 weeks of camps with as many as three camps going at once. During those weeks we used up all the recycle and craft supplies you have donated to make boats, animal crafts, and more – thanks so much! And those crazy long weeks would be so much harder if we had to come in every Saturday and Sunday. Since we have a terrific group of nature center staffing volunteers, we are able to take most weekends off or just come in for our programs.

Sometimes the Wednesday night concerts are tough to gear up for after a long day of summer camp. It's the Friends' water ice that gives us that extra push we need to look forward to another three hours out in the sunny summer weather. Thanks for the refreshing treat during those hot nights!

With the help of a Friends project to upgrade the nature center exhibits, we have made some nice changes to the downstairs exhibit room, including removing deteriorating exhibits, painting, and adding a bird feeding station outside. We've had to postpone our progress for the busy summer, but we are looking forward to picking up where we left off in the fall.

We really appreciate all our volunteers and the time they give, and, as usual, we can see more opportunities for volunteering in the future. We have a lot going on this fall – including hayrides, campfires, murder mysteries, school programs, and more. There are always needs for volunteers to help with these great programs. Also, Newark Community Day is Saturday, September 19. We are looking for help with this fun fall event (11-4pm) – especially with setup (9-11am) and tear down (3-5pm). E-mail [Angel.Burns@state.de.us](mailto:Angel.Burns@state.de.us) or call the Nature Center at 302-368-6560 if you can help out.

## **Supplies are Needed for Nature Center Programs**

One person's Trash is another person's Treasure! Here are items that would be gratefully accepted at the Nature center:

Egg cartons

Microwave trays

Film canisters

Pie plates (aluminum)

Clear plastic storage tubs (with lids) or baskets

Old craft Supplies (felt, beads, jewelry, ribbon, paper, stickers, etc.)

Old games, books or toys (pertaining to nature/animals)

If you are cleaning the basement and have some treasures you are not sure about, just ask the nature center staff at 302-368-6560.

## **White Clay Creek State Park is Now on Facebook**

Visit White Clay Creek State Park's new Facebook site. If you have a FB account, search White Clay Creek State Park and you will find this fun, interactive site with photos, videos, announcements and more!

## **Summer Concert Series is Continuing**

Once again, the park has scheduled an outstanding concert series this summer. As in previous years, the concerts are on Wednesday evenings, from 6:30 pm until about 8:00 pm, at the Carpenter Recreation Area. Bring a picnic supper, blankets or lawn chairs, and top off the evening with some cool water ice sold by the Friends. This is truly a great way to spend a summer evening. In addition, there will be a special holiday concert at 3 p.m. on Labor Day, September 6.

The concerts are free; however, park entrance fees are in effect. Call the nature center (302-368-6560) for updates on delays or cancellations due to weather conditions. The remaining summer concerts are listed below.

August 11	Blue Bayou (Rock, Pop, Blues, Jazz)
August 18	Johnny Cash Tribute
August 25	Karen Rodriguez Latin Jazz Ensemble (Salsa, Bossa Nova, Jazz)
September 6	Almost Fab (Beatles Tribute Band). Special 3 p.m. Labor Day Concert

## **Membership Support is Appreciated – Keep Renewals Coming!**

We thank all of our new and renewing members for their support of our organization. We are now about 470 members strong. There are still some members who need to renew, and we ask that they send in their dues to help us continue to improve and preserve the park.

Memberships are still \$15 for families, \$10 for individuals, and \$5 for students. No special renewal form is needed; just send dues checks payable to Friends of White Clay Creek State Park to P.O. Box 9734, Newark, DE 19714-9734.

### **Calendar of Scheduled Activities**

August 9	Executive Committee Meeting
September 11	Trail Work*
September 13	Executive Committee Meeting
September 19	Newark Community Day
October 2	Trail Work*
October 11	Executive Committee Meeting
November 7	Trail Work*
November 8	Executive Committee Meeting
December 5	Trail Work*
December 13	Executive Committee Meeting

\*Note – most trail work is currently suspended pending completion of the new trail plan for the park. Contact Mike Ott at 738-6652 for more information.

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### Projects and Project Leaders

**Adopt-a-Trail:** Mike Ott, 738-6652  
**Advocacy:** Andy Urquhart, 239-2471  
**Birders Guide:** Andy Urquhart, 239-2471  
**Bluebird Boxes:** Debra Chiczewski, 234-0919  
**Conservation:** Andy Urquhart, 239-2471  
**Historical Publications:** Fraser Russell, 731-4293  
**Judge Morris Support Group:** Cathy Duffus, 731-9794  
**Kestrel Boxes:** Andy Urquhart, 239-2471  
**Light Construction:** Nick McFadden, 368-6900  
**Member-led Park Programs:** Angel Burns, 368-6560  
**Nature Center Exhibits:** Andy Urquhart, 239-2471  
**Nature Center Staffing:** Jim Ries, 239-1658  
**Newark Community Day:** Open  
**Oral Histories:** Fraser Russell, 731-4293  
**Park Office Plantings:** Carolyn Stoner and Jayne Fernsler, 453-8440  
**Reforestation:** Christa Stefanisko, 369-1933  
**Scholarship Funds:** Angel Burns, 368-6560  
**Trail Benches:** Andy Urquhart, 239-2471  
**Trail Improvement Work:** Mike Ott, 738-6652, and Joe Castagnola, 610-255-0365  
**Water Ice Sales:** Charles Tiellema, 302-528-225  
**Website:** Rick Hall, 831-1295, and Pat Walters

### Executive Committee

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

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### 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