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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VOLUNTEER MEETING FOR SEVEN BENDS STATE PARK SLATED FOR JUNE 18

Woodstock, VA, June 5, 2015 – Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River invites the public to attend an initial organizing meeting for volunteers interested in supporting the yet-to-be opened Seven Bends State Park. The meeting will be held at **7 p.m. on Thursday, June 18** at the Friends of the North Fork office, 305 West Court Street in Woodstock.

Participants will learn about upcoming volunteer opportunities and have a brief review of the general plans for the Park. They will hear about incentives through the state park system for people who volunteer consistently.

Megan Church of Woodstock, who is volunteering with the Park project as an intern with Friends of the North Fork, adds that “With no Park facilities in place yet and our efforts just getting started, we will need help with everything from physically demanding trail work to organizing, office work, and fundraising for future projects.” Both trail clearing and river clean-up projects are already slated for this summer. Other activities such as habitat improvements, educational activities, and inventories of the Park’s resources will be planned out for the rest of the year and beyond.

“Seven Bends is so much more than just the stretch along the river,” said Concha Mendoza, Operations Manager at Friends of the North Fork. “There are miles and miles of trails, unique habitats, and lots of recreational opportunities to be explored. We know a lot of people have enjoyed this area for many years. Now those who know it well can help make it accessible for everyone.”

Friends of the North Fork was recently designated by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation as the official “community support organization” for Seven Bends. Usually such groups form after a Park is developed. Friends of the North Fork had already been working in the community since 1988 and it was a simple step to add in a new program area to support the Park.

“The river is such a key element for Seven Bends State Park, it made sense for us to be involved early on” said John Eckman, Executive Director. “We are so lucky to have a community that has embraced tourism as a sensible way to build our economy.”

The Park is not officially open to the public and likely will not be before next summer. People attending the meeting will hear about opportunities to join with other volunteers for hikes to explore the land and scout out projects. The 1,066 acres lies along roughly four miles of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River, primarily between the Lupton Road bridge and the South Hollingsworth Road bridge in Woodstock. The mix of open and forested land extends to the National Forest boundary along the slopes of Massanutten Mountain.

People who cannot attend the June 18th meeting are encouraged to contact Mendoza to get involved. “This volunteer effort will be most success if people come forward with their own energy and ideas for projects that can make the most out of this unique community resource. We will be working on this for years to come, but it’s exciting to get started.”

For more information and to sign up as a Park volunteer online, visit sevenbends.info online or call the Friends of the North Fork office at 459-8550.