

Friends of Seven Bends State Park

Public Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 7, 5:30 pm

Facilitation by: Concha Mendoza, Operations
Manager, Friends of the North Fork of the
Shenandoah River, FSBSP



“The focus of Friends of Seven Bends State Park is to support and advocate for the educational and recreational use of the Park for all.”

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85893228747>

General E-mail Address: fsbsp@fnfsr.org

Contact information: FNFSR: David Brotman, Executive Director (david.brotman@fnfsr.org; 540-252-9545); Concha Mendoza, Operations Manager (concha.mendoza@fnfsr.org); FSBSP: Megan Church, Chair (mchurch5002@gmail.com); SBSP: Tom Stevens, Chief Ranger (thomas.stevens@dcr.virginia.gov; 540-335-0476)

1) Welcome and Introductions made by Concha.

- Concha is the operations manager for FNFSR.
- Veronica is the park manager at SBSP, and has been in that position for two months.
- Chief ranger Tom has been at SBSP for three years.
- David is the executive director of FNFSR, and he gets to visit his “old summer camp spot”.
- Julia is the volunteer coordinator for FNFSR. She loves doing projects at the park.
- Linda is a volunteer at the park and a member of the Seven Bends Committee.
- Cecelia is a member of SBC, as well as FNFSR. She likes working with the people on the Rivers Way PlaySpace.
- Frank is “a busybody who was kicked off the FNFSR board of directors in January”. He just wants to know more about the park.
- Rim and Renee volunteer at SBSP.
- Mike
- Bob.....
- Ginger volunteers at the park. She walks there frequently and has done so for years.
- Joe is a volunteer at the SBSP workdays.

2) Updates

a) Park Update (Tom Stevens)

- Attendance at the park is picking up swiftly, with the heaviest attendance on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- The riverside trails upgrade along the Gokotta Trail continues.
- The NFCC teen program started on Friday, April 2nd, alternating community service projects with recreational/educational activities at the park.
- The Rivers Way Natural PlaySpace groundbreaking begins on Thurs, April 8th, with completion projected within 30 days.
- There are several educational programs and volunteer work days already scheduled. Look on the FSBSP facebook page and the FNFSR and DCR websites for more information.

- b) FNFSR Update (David Brotman)
 - Frank is the former chair of the FNFSR board of directors. David Kaeuper has been installed as the current board chair.
 - The Environmental Education Summer Camps just announced a total in-person schedule with registration beginning May 1st. Part of the camp schedule will have the campers at the park.
 - The NFCC teen program is in its second iteration. Five teens participated in the program in Sept/Oct '20, and there are 19 teens registered for the April/May '21 program. Comments from teens, mentors, and parents indicate the program was a big hit.
 - A valley-wide approach for Earth Day cleanups has been scheduled.
 - Julia is heading a partnership with a Virginia Save Our Streams grant for benthic macroinvertebrate materials. The Izaak Walton League is bringing in additional funds for this endeavor. The program recruited 30 trainees for certification on April 10th. There will be more opportunity for future training and for bringing the water sampling close to home.

- c) FSBSP Update (Concha)
 - The Valentine's Day Photo Shoot was rained out, although some good photos were taken of the sign. Joan Chapman, Linda Walcroft and Juli Bowers rescheduled the event to Mother's Day, Sunday May 9th. Cecelia Latham will be joining the decorating crew.
 - A riverside workday was held on March 20 to remove some of the invasive autumn olives and to assist with the work on the Gokotta Trail.
 - Four bird walks are scheduled, two with Kirk Andrews and two with Martha Heisel.
 - Another photography workshop is scheduled with Jeff Reilley.
 - Bluebird monitoring has resumed with Kaycee Lichliter as trail manager. She works at both Sky Meadows and Blandly.
 - An NEEF application has been submitted by the Department of Forestry and the Master Gardeners for project work on areas impacted by Covid.

- 3) Update on Celebrate Seven Bends and River's Way Natural PlaySpace and Outdoor Classroom
 - The River's Way PlaySpace was discussed previously in section 2.a.
 - The Celebrate Seven Bends grant from the Shenandoah Community Foundation was awarded to celebrate the opening of the park. This opening will occur in September or October. If you are interested in joining the planning committee, please communicate via chat, during this meeting, or email one of the addresses listed at the top of this document.

- 4) Upcoming Events
 - a) Upcoming FSBSP/FNFSR educational programs: Lectures (Sun 4/11 and Sun 5/2), Bird Walks (Weds. 4/21, Sat. 4/24, Weds. 5/5, Sat. 5/22), Photography Workshop (Sat. 5/1)
 - b) Upcoming Park programs: Meet the Beekeeper (Sat. 4/10), Vernal Pool Walk (Sat. 4/17), Early Spring Tree ID Hike (Sat. 4/17)
 - c) Upcoming Park Volunteer Workdays: Earth Day (Sat. 4/24), Clean the Bay Day (Sat. 6/5), National Trails Day (Sat. 6/5)

- 5) Scheduling Next FSBSP Volunteer Workdays? Ranger Tom says yes, he will not turn down additional work days. But, please, schedule these days to avoid other events and/or educational or volunteer programs. Please don't overlap or schedule days back-to-back. As far as specific activities, he suggests trail work. Spreading crushed stone dust is not fun and

is taxing work, but it is what is most needed at the park at this time. Most workdays are scheduled on the weekends when more volunteers are available. If you happen to have weekdays available and would like to work, give Tom a call to set up a day, time, and assignment.

6) Mother's Day LOVE Sign Photo-Op, (Sun. 5/9) (Joan Chapman and Linda Walcroft) Refer to section 2.c.

7) 7 Bends Family Adventure Race by Rev3Endurance Race Co. (7/10)

Mariama is the FNFSR lead for this event. There are volunteer opportunities to help with registration on race day, crowd control, parking, tabling to promote FSBSP and FNFSR. Tom is looking forward to this first race event at the park in which total points will be collected by participants by finding points within the park. The attendance cap will be 100-150 participants in the race. Rev3Endurance runs all race logistics and the park hosts. No participation by the park employees is required.

8) Other Volunteer Opportunities

- a) Social Media help is needed to get the word to the public about the programs, events, and classes being developed and scheduled. Exposure is needed. If any is interested in volunteering for a few hours a week, please email one of the addresses listed at the top of this document.
- b) Education Programs: Blandy has a person interested in giving a wildflower walk at park. If you have an area of expertise that you would like to teach, please let us know. Spread the word to those you know who have such expertise – let us know or give them our contact information.
- c) Seven Bends Committee needs fundraising expertise and ideas. There is a need for someone to lead the fundraising endeavors. Sit on the committee and help us get the creativity going, forming direction and planning, and bringing this out into the world.
- d) Other Areas of Volunteer Interest and Expertise – no response

9) Fundraising Ideas

- a) Walker's Club/fundraising specific to purchasing benches to "Walk to Sit"
A volunteer is needed to help build this program and get it going. Participants would log hours to raise money to fund benches. People walk at the park daily and weekly. This is a great opportunity to have walkers log miles and get donations from donors. These funds would be attached to specific targets, ie benches. Also, posts could be scattered throughout the park to incentivize walking, ie gift certificates, coupons, QR codes with rewards.

Individuals could sponsor themselves as a personal challenge. We are looking for a Seven Bends volunteer to help get this established and in motion. Mike suggests reaching out to local businesses – post information next to their cash registers, equipment donations.... Tom reminds us that businesses should donate to FSBSP, not the park itself. The state has a memorial bench program, but the benches at the park can go outside the scope of the memorial benches that is part of the state program

b) Brainstorm

- Bob asks if there has been any thought of live music events or a permanent stage at the park. The immediate restriction to that is Covid. Also, consideration must include size, presales, and registration with attendance capped within limits. According to Tom, there are no plans for a permanent stage at this point, but it is not out of reach or impossible.

- David says that on his list of intentions is to recruit Camp Lupton alumni to help at additional events, gather and celebrate at the park. He would like to generate a roster of alumni. Suggestion was made that Massanutten Military Academy might have a list of the Camp Lupton alumni.
- Could an event be held someplace other than the park for FSBSP benefit? Remember the art auction at Muse Vineyard?
- Blue Grass at the Bends - from Tom.

10) Brainstorm FSBSP Projects/Events/Activities

Concha shared the ideas entered in chat at Feb '21 meeting. She asked if anyone had anything else to add? Offered was the need for information about the Woodstock reservoirs and to make this information available to the public.

11) David gave the attendees a reminder of all the potential in the park. He said, "The park is a long time coming and its potential is tremendous. The awkward dual access points also offer benefits. This is our opportunity to be creative and expressive about things we would like to know and do."

12) Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 2nd, at 5:30pm via Zoom.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30pm.