

Friends of Seven Bends State Park

Public Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 2, 2021, 5:00 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.”

General E-mail Address: fsbsp@fnfsr.org
FSBSP News: <https://www.facebook.com/friendsoffsbbsp>

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

FNFSR staff: David Brotman, Concha Mendoza, Julia Sargent

SBSP and DCR personnel: Veronica Flick (SBSP manager), Megan Church (interpretive/admin)

SBC members: Cecelia Latham (vice-chair), Linda Walcroft, Joan Chapman (treasurer/scribe)

Attendees: Jo Acosta (volunteer and walker), Bob Cline (friend of the park and the river), Glenny Comer, Ginger Gladding (walker), Amy Hodge (beekeeper and head of apiary), Kaycee Lichliter (bluebird trail manager), Andrew Thayer (photographer), Renee Weidman

Absent, but sending regards: Chief Ranger Tom Stevens

2) A few words about our meetings (David Brotman, Executive Director)

The SBC was formed to be representative of the entire FSBSP group and to make decisions for that group, although such decisions are subject to change based on the wants of the entire group. Today's meeting is of historic note with everyone meeting together. Are the public meetings being structured in the best way for those in attendance? Opportunities for volunteering will be offered and discussed during the meetings, as long as it is deemed useful, along with opportunities for classes or programs in which volunteers can become involved as participants as well as leaders. The SBC needs to know the wants and interests of the FSBSP. What other things might be included in these meetings?

3) Updates

a) Park Update (Veronica Flick for Tom Stevens)

- Dedication: The official park opening is noted as May 2020. An official dedication by the Governor's office was set for two dates, cancelled and rescheduled, and no updated official date has been set.
- Nature's Way PlaySpace: C&S, contracted for the excavation work, has completed the earthworks. The design mimics the river bends to scale. C&S also installed the first PlaySpace feature, the tunnel. This area will be completed later in the fall but will be usable by late summer/early fall.

- An AmeriCorps intern, Noah Varias, will be working at the park through the summer. The Gokotta Trail is almost complete and will be ADA accessible. The NFCC and park maintenance crew have work on installing two fishing pads along the Gokotta Trail.
- Two Smithsonian students completed a study of native orchids in the park.
- On July 10th, the park will host the 7 Bends Family Adventure Race by Rev3 Endurance Race Co. This event has been capped at 150 participants. There will be two trails, one for family teams and the second for the longer competition trail. Part of the competitive trail will travel the entire park with all the mountain trails being used. According to Rev3, these competitions have drawn lots of out of state interest and attendance. There will be flags in trees and participants will be recording the codes. Next year, geo tracking might be possible.
- Check the FSBSP facebook and instagram sites to get info about programs. Sign up sheets for a variety of programs, classes, and volunteer workdays are on the tables this evening.
- Bluebird Trail (Kaycee): The bluebird trail program has seven trained individuals who monitor the boxes and help manage the trail. The second brood of bluebirds is now in progress; there is also a good population of tree swallows. The planned trail expansion to continue up Eagles Edge Trail has been put on hold for the time being - maybe next year. Kaycee will be addressing this with Tom. At end of the season, Kaycee will report to Tom and also various bluebird societies. The tree swallows have not enough boxes anywhere, not just in the park, and will drop eggs in a house as soon as a brood is gone. Therefore, some of the boxes with flat but clean nests will be left for this purpose. Last year no monitoring occurred but all boxes were utilized. The goal of the monitoring is education and an extension of housing for birds. At present, 5 boxes are occupied by bluebirds, 9 by tree swallows, 5 are not presently active, and box 20 is empty.
- Apiary (Amy): At present there are 14 hives. This year is slower than last year, with reduced homey production although there is enough honey for the bees. The nectar flow didn't come in when expected this year.
- The park is open to field trips from schools. During May, the park hosted three days of field trips, two days with North Fork Middle School and a day with a Shenandoah County private school. Bus drivers must be comfortable with the entrance roads to park – sometimes the roads are a hindrance.

b) FNFSR/FSBSP Update (David Brotman and Concha Mendoza)

- During the April and May, FNFSR hosted a wildflower walk (with Jack Monsted, assistant curator at Blandy Native Plant Trail), and four bird walks with Martha Heisel and Kirk Andrews, and a photography workshop with Jeff Reilly.
- The LOVE sign was decorated for a Mother's Day Photo Shoot on May 9th.
- The wildflower program and the spring and summer tree ID hikes will be repeated in the fall.
- The Environmental Education Summer Camps are scheduled for June 14th-25th.
- With assistance from the Izaak Walton League VASOS program, FNFSR launched a benthic macroinvertebrate program in the North Fork watershed. 30 people completed the initial training and are working on certification. Julia is being trained by VASOS as a train-the-trainer. The goal is to have a large number of people trained to cover a large part of the watershed. Data goes to the VASOS database to help determine the health of the river at various locations and to determine the maximum daily loads that the river can endure.
- Voices of the Shenandoah in Story and Song. The first of these evenings is scheduled for July 15th at the Pale Fire Brewing Co. in Harrisonburg, VA. Celebrate our shared connection to the

Shenandoah River through original music and river-centered stories shared by community members. Two other evenings will be scheduled for August and September.

- A Father's Day Float will be held at the Strasburg Town Park on June 20th with kayak and tube floats, lots of vendors, and lots of activities for the entire family.
- Riparian buffer support program to help landowners maintain buffers on their property. Lots of landowners are planting buffers but maintenance is time consuming. FNFSR assists with this maintenance. Recently, volunteers completed half of a 17 acre planting. FNFSR is encouraging people to install riparian buffers with funding through KREP, NFCS and the Dept of Forestry. There is money available to install the buffers but not for maintenance. The landowners are responsible for mowing, spreading herbicide, and individual attention to each tree. There is a three-year establishment period. Volunteers are needed for this maintenance work and for looking for lands that need buffers.
- The NEEF grant of \$2500 was awarded FNFSR for 122 buffer trees along the river upstream from Lupton bridge.
- Chronolog: The park is funding a Chronolog at the end of Bass Bight trail on the Hollingsworth side and FSBSP is funding a second Chronolog at the LOVE sign on the Lupton side. Noah will be installing the post and signage and will be developing the website for both devices.

4) Upcoming FNFSR/FSBSP Volunteer Opportunities

June

4th Riparian Buffer Support Activity, Fort Valley, 5pm-7pm

14th-18th River Rangers Summer Camp, 9am-3pm, mariama.dryak@fnfsr.org

20th Father's Day Fish Fry Float, Strasburg Town Park, 12pm-5pm, mariama.dryak@fnfsr.org

21st-25th River Players Summer Camp, 9am-3pm, mariama.dryak@fnfsr.org

26th Edinburg Mill Garden Tour, Northern Virginia Master Gardeners have asked volunteers to assist with the NVMGA information table, 8am-12:30pm and 12:30pm-5pm,

https://fnfsr.secure.force.com/signup/volunteerEventSelectPage?fbclid=IwAR0Jtm5KK_aKVizldbyu8V8YFxDxIuIFYxX3FImTYdOziPLCCW0eJHBCu8

July

21st Volunteer Workday at the Park

August

4th FSBSP Public Meeting, Lupton, 5pm-6pm

21st Volunteer Workday at the Park

5) Upcoming FNFSR/FSBSP Classes/Programs

June 29th-July 1st and **July 6th-8th** SFW Fly Fishing Workshops for Young Women 12-18, 9am-3pm, joan.chapman@fnfsr.org

6) Park Volunteer Opportunities and Programs, <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/seven-bends>

June

4th Meet the Beekeeper, Lupton entrance, 8:30-9:30am

5th Clean the Bay Day, trash cleanup, Lupton entrance, 9am-12pm

5th National Trails Day, volunteer workday, Lupton entrance, 9am-12pm

12th History and Culture Day: Camp Lupton History, Lupton entrance, 9am-12pm

19th Forest Bathing, Lupton entrance, 8:30am-10:30am

July

3rd Meet the Beekeeper, Lupton entrance, 8:30am-9:30am

10th Rev3 Endurance 7 Bends Family Adventure Race, Lupton entrance, 8:30am-1:30pm

August

7th Meet the Beekeeper – Lupton entrance, 8:30am-9:30am

September

4th Meet the Beekeeper, Lupton entrance, 8:30am-9:30am

- 7) Class and program ideas that you or someone you know could provide - no response from attendees.
- 8) Other Volunteer Opportunities
 - a) Social Media – FSBSP needs a volunteer to help with our Facebook and Instagram sites. This would require about 2 hours per week.
 - b) Seven Bends Committee is looking for people interested in joining the committee.
- 9) Fundraising Ideas
 - a) Walker’s Club/Bench fundraising “Walk to Sit” – David is in contact with two of the FSBSP volunteers who are interested in the development of this program.
 - b) Merchandise Sales – Ranger Tom is formulating plans for a merchandizing trailer that could be moved from Lupton to Hollingsworth to offer DCR, SBSP and FSBSP merchandise and information to park visitors.
 - c) Volunteer Ideas and Suggestions
 - Jo Acosta suggested searching out the MMA alumni magazine and placing a ¼ page ad.
 - Bob Cline suggested investigating memorial bricks at the park. Veronica said the bricks could definitely be considered in future park design.
 - Sponsor a bluebird box.
- 10) Next public meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 4, 5-6pm, Lupton Entrance.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00pm.