

Friends of Seven Bends State Park

Open Public Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 13, 5:30-6:30pm
Seven Bends State Park, Lupton Entrance



Facilitation by: Juli Bowers, Virginia Master Naturalist
“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.”

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Contact information: FNFSR: David Brotman, Executive Director (david.brotman@fnfsr.org; 540- 252-9545);

Concha Mendoza, Operations Manager (concha.mendoza@fnfsr.org);

Mariama Dryak, Program Coordinator (mariama.dryak@fnfsr.org)

FSBSP: Megan Church, Chair (mchurch5002@gmail.com);

SBSP: Tom Stevens, Chief Ranger (thomas.stevens@dcr.virginia.gov; 540-335-0476)

1) Welcome

a) Introductions

Juli Bowers, FSBSP, VA Master Naturalist; Chief Ranger Tom Stevens, SBSP; Concha Mendoza, FNFSR; Mariama Dryak, FNFSR; Joan Chapman, FNFSR, FSBSP; Matt Kowalski, FSBSP; Lisa Currie, Mayor, Town of Toms Brook

b) Intention and Goals for Open FSBSP Meetings

- The attendees discussed the comprehensive listing of programs/events/workdays/classes offered through SBSP, FSBSP, and FNFSR that has been developed. This listing also includes links for registration to these happenings.
- Attendees also discussed the need to establish a calendar in December that would list all dates and times of open meetings. A query of Seven Bends volunteers will be made regarding preferred day of the week and time of day to hold these meetings. The goal is to be able to establish and post this list by the first of the year 2022.

2) Updates

a) Park Update (Tom Stevens)

- Visitation is down about 25% from last year due to covid restrictions being lifted and other activities are now available. All the Virginia state parks saw dramatic influx of visitors last year; this year the attendance is on a more standard level. Last year the SBSP park staff were overwhelmed with attendance. The attendance numbers are based on numbers of cars, numbers of staff, and determined by an algorithm that determines number of visitors.
- SBSP now has two new maintenance employees, and this is due to turnover with students returning to school, etc. Maintenance now has 3 employees and will eventually expand to 4. Tom is still in the process of hiring an administrative employee.
- The PlaySpace workday was very successful, with a total of 30 volunteers working alongside park staff. It was a joint effort involving FSBSP volunteers and several of the local rotary clubs. The rotary donation to the PlaySpace is now at \$17,000; this money will build features that must be built by trained, certified professionals.
- Reporting of volunteer hours to DCR is very important. SBSP is ranked in the middle of 40 Virginia parks, between two of the state’s busiest parks. The previous reporting problems have been addressed and FSBSP needs to encourage volunteers to log their hours. Two suggestions were made to facilitate this process: 1) establish a point of contact to assist

volunteers with the registering/logging hours process, and 2) have an iPad at the workday site to assist people with logging their hours.

b) FNFSR Update - (Concha Mendoza)

- Restrictions on river use due to the algae issues have been lifted by VDH.
- Mariama is presenting a series of lectures to educate the public about algae issues and water quality.
- The Fish Fry was a success. FNFSR raised \$50,000 from 175 individuals. The Chair of the Fish Fry Committee was Laura Bennett; the venue, Fort Valley Nursery; catering by Shaffers Catering; and rentals from Shenandoah Rentals.

3) Upcoming Classes/Programs

OCTOBER

- 10/8: The Stunning Stars Meteor Shower Program was cancelled due to a very “unstunning” sky, according to Chief Ranger Tom.
- 10/9: The Fall Tree ID Hike, lead by Forester Cain, was well attended. Again, according to Chief Ranger Tom, all the tree ID hikes have been well attended with at least 10 people attending each hike.
- 10/14: Conserving and Protecting the River: Your Role and Ours with Mariama Dryak ([Massanutten Regional Library Registration](#)) (Mariama) This is part of an annual history series hosted by the Massanutten Regional Library, but they have asked Mariama to address current river conservation. The talk will be posted on the FNFSR YouTube channel.
- 10/23: Autumn Photography Workshop with Sharon Fisher ([FSBSP Registration](#)) (Tom) This event is currently at max registration of 15.
- 10/24: Camp Lupton History Program ([SBSP Registration](#)) (Megan)
- 10/28: Autumn Lecture Series, Virginia DWR Presents: Fish Populations in the North Fork -- hosted by FNFSR, 6pm-7pm via Zoom
- 10/30: Fall Festivities at SBSP ([SBSP Registration](#)) (Megan/Joan) Pumpkin painting, roasting hot dogs and marshmallows, and “scary stories” by Warren Halvorson fill the agenda.

NOVEMBER

- 11/13: Guided Hike to the Woodstock Reservoirs in Seven Bends State Park (Mariama) The hike will include both reservoirs and is a 4 mile circuit. The posted time is from 9am to noon but may be extended to accommodate a pace comfortable for all hikers.
- 11/18: Autumn Lecture Series, Virginia DEQ Presents: Nuisance Algae Issues in the Shenandoah Basin – hosted by FNFSR, 6pm-7pm via Zoom
- 11/27: Forest Therapy – hosted by SBSP, 10am

DECEMBER

- 12/1: FSBSP Open Meeting – hosted by FSBSP, 5:30pm-6:30pm
- 12/2: Autumn Lecture Series, Virginia VDH Presents: Harmful Algae Blooms and Associated Health Effects – hosted by FNFSR, 6pm-7pm via Zoom
- 12/12: Forest Therapy – hosted by SBSP, 2pm
- 12/16: NSV Regional Commission Presents: Northern Shenandoah Valley Water Supply Plan – hosted by FNFSR, 6pm-7pm via Zoom

JANUARY

- 1/1: First Day Hike at SBSP

4) Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities/Workdays

- a) 10/16: Next FSBSP Volunteer Days ([Camp Lupton Fire Pit Volunteer Workday](#)) Work will be aimed at cleaning the area around the fire pit at Camp Lupton in preparation of the Oct 30th planned event.
- b) 11/5, 11/20, 12/4: NEEF (National Educational Environmental Foundation) Site Prep and Plantings. The plan includes prepping the ground for the planting of 122 riparian buffer trees.
- c) Seven Bends Committee - Join the coordinating committee of FSBSP. The committee was established to make decisions for the entire Friends of Seven Bends group. Members attend meeting about once a month for 1½ hours, but we are also looking for members to participate in FSBSP/SBSP events.
- d) Would you like to present a program?
- e) Like and share our social media!
- f) Lisa Currie, Mayor of Toms Brook, presented a proposal to create a storybook trail at the park. The trail would be a short loop trail containing pages of the storybook in kiosks. To avoid complex copyright laws, Lisa would write the story and Susie Wilburn would illustrate. The main character of the story would be Sadie, Susie's dog would be part of the main story. The stories would show Sadie at the park, seeing flowers bloom in the spring and playing with her friends in the summer. In the fall, there would be another book. Each six months, a new book would be displayed, but books could be recycled for more than one specific season, ie the story for the spring/summer of 2022 could be used again in the spring/summer of 2023. These stories could be printed to hand out to people, or possibly to print a coloring book to hand out. The goal is to get people to read. The stories could be translated into Spanish and both the English and Spanish versions of the stories or coloring books could be sold as a minimum profit fundraiser to cover costs, ie 10 cent profit per book. The kiosks to display the pages would have to be waterproof. The kiosks would be the primary cost involved. Could grants be found to help subsidize the costs of the books and the kiosks? The kiosks would be small (short) for access by young children. Joan will search out grants available thru DWR when their next grant session opens on Nov 1. The stories could target trees, history, bees, Ranger Tom! Marty the Mayfly could be the companion/partner to Sadie. Kids will identify with the dog and the mayfly can add the additional learning component. Ranger Tom says "write that book and everything will fall into place".

5) Benches at Seven Bends

Benches at the park are now in process. John Quincy Adams has made clear his intent to donate toward a bench on the Bass Bight Trail. A second donation was offered by the Latham family for a bench to be located at one of the fishing platforms along the Gokotta Trail. Plaques will be installed on these benches by FSBSP/FNFSR. Tom will update bench plans at the SBC meeting on Oct 14th. A Bench Sub-Committee, consisting of David Brotman, Tom Stevens, and Cecelia Latham will follow up on plans for these benches.

6) Next meeting is scheduled on Wednesday, December 1, 2021, at 5:30-6:30pm.