

Friends of Seven Bends State Park

Open Public Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 4, 2021
Location: SBSP, Lupton Entrance



Facilitated 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.”

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

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

1) Welcome and Introductions

2) Updates

a) Park Update (Tom Stevens)

- The Chronolog website creates a timelapse video from pictures taken on the post. The video captures a history of the park to capture the change if the seasons and the accompanying landscape. The question was asked if there was a website access or code to access the video. The signage on the post takes you to the Chronolog website and from there gives access to the FSBSP Chronolog page. An access link to the Chronolog website will be placed on the FNFSR and FSBSP webpage.
- Rev3 Race
 - FNFSR was the only table at the race site. Next year’s goal is to include more vendors, food and activities. Tom expressed surprise at the age span of the participants. There were 157 registered participants and 225 attendees (this number includes family and friends). Rev3 has followers all over the US. The race had one Shenandoah County racer, a few from surrounding areas, with 8 states and 55 different cities represented. The farthest participant came from California.
 - Christy and Mike expressed the ease of working with park staff. Tom also noted little impact on the park – no trash, no signs the event took place. Tom feels this was a great test for events at the park and was a good indicator of successful events with sufficient planning. Overnight camping raised \$120 in funds for FSBSP.
- Megan reported that VSP requests programming for certain celebrated days; Culture Day at VSP to touch on history, was one such request. SBSP held its Culture Day at Camp Lupton, with the camp as the focus. David Brotman, FNFSR Executive Director and former Camp Lupton camper, spoke and lead a tour. Pictures and stories about the camp added to the information on the park signage.
- FSBSP has submitted a letter of support for the Shenandoah Valley Bike Coalition, a non-profit based in Harrisonburg. The coalition has submitted an application for a recreational trails program grant at the park. This grant would fund the

improvement of some of the existing hiking trails and the creation of a few miles of new trails for hiking and biking. The \$300,000 grant has not yet been submitted.

b) FNFSR Update - Fish Fry 10/2 Fort Valley Nursery, 4:30-8pm (Dave Brotman)

c) FSBSP Update (Concha Mendoza)

3) Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities/Needs

a) Next FSBSP Volunteer Days (Sat. 8/21 and Sat. 9/25)

- An August 21st workday was held on the Lupton side of the park. Volunteers install a bench at the junction of Lupton Road and the Gokotta Trail, redistributed gravel from the grass area around the road and trail in this area, and finished the day by moving some of the rocks into the fishing pad being built on Gokotta.
- Sept 25th is a National Parks Land Day celebration focusing on the River's Way PlaySpace. This workday will involve a variety of activities, including installation of some of the natural features, ie stump jumps and balance beams.

b) Social Media - Park staff is continually posting information on the FSBSP facebook and instagram pages. Megan is posting quizzes, "What plant/animal is in this photo?", with participants being required to identify the plant or animal and state an interesting fact. Winners are drawn and there are several prizes for the winner to choose.

c) Seven Bends Committee – The committee is looking to expand it's number of members. SBC members attend monthly meetings and there may be events, activities or programs that SBC members are involved with between these meetings. The question was asked by a meeting participant, "What does it do?" A committee member responded with, "We discuss the various projects, the need for funding, we try to build up the calendar of classes and events, and just lots of discussion of what is needed. It is a steering committee, an oversight committee."

4) Upcoming Classes/Programs

a) FSBSP Registration

- 9/18: Photo workshop/Nature Scavenger Hunt with Sharon Fisher - learning about photo composition
- 10/23: Autumn Photography Workshop with Sharon Fisher - more of an advanced workshop

b) SBSP Registration

- 8/7: Meet the Beekeeper
- 8/10: National S'mores Day,
- 8/22 Forest Bathing - Full Moon Forest Therapy: Well attended in the past. This will be the first evening program held on the park property. Special permission was received to hold this after park closing hours. Forest bathing involves all the senses, being mindful of nature. It will be confined to the area by the boat launch.
- 9/4: Meet the Beekeeper
- Mid-Sept: Girl Scout weekend to help scouts complete badge requirements. More information is on the website, facebook, and instagram.

5) Featured Program in Development

a) Walker's Club/Bench Fundraising "Walk to Sit" – temporarily tabled

6) Fundraising

- a) Merchandise Sales -- FNFSR is merchandizing materials, what could FSBSP merchandize? Logo stickers are now available. Participants suggested t-shirts, mugs, hats, a paddle trip.
- b) PlaySpace -- Fresh ideas to raise funds for PlaySpace are being sought. Concha displayed photos of the tunnel feature that has been installed and Megan displayed a photo of the PlaySpace in its present state. Kathy Doyle has begun planting a sensory garden. She has obtained plants from Lynn Phillips at Natural Art Gardens, concentrating on plants that talk to the senses, plants that smell, plants with various textures. Her goal is to create workshops in the PlaySpace similar to those she now holds in the Strasburg community garden: leaf and flower prints, wind chimes, pollinator projects, insect safari, attracting butterflies, nature weaving.....

7) Queries from Participants

- a) What is happening regarding the algae bloom? Is the algae at Lupton Bridge being tested? Tom stated that yes, the area was tested last month and results showed no sign of the bacteria or toxin. The area was again test during the week previous to this meeting and the results have not yet been reported.

Tom suggests that the low flow of the river, and the heat, is the main culprit for the bloom. The USGS flow rate "is probably the lowest it has been in a long time". Participants asked about warning signs. Someone reported signage posted at Milner Road by the Shenandoah Riverkeeper, near the swinging bridge at Deer Rapids, but there are no warnings at the Strasburg Town Park. Since the initial positive tests were at Deer Rapids and have now been found at Strasburg Town Park, additional signage might be posted soon.

David Brotman, ED, is going to push for a public meeting to discuss concerns, causes, etc. It was suggested that water conservation would help alleviate the problem. An attendee noted the two rain barrel workshops advertised on the FNFSR website and asked Tom about rain barrel usage at the park. Tom replied that the SBSP does not have running water. All water used is collected in two 250 gallon tanks, one at the Lupton barn and one at the Hollingsworth side. And, yes, the tank levels are getting low.

- b) A request was made for an update on the last meeting's concern for registration for the Shenandoah Reel Women Fly Fishing Camps. Concha reported that the event had low registrations but the girls attending, and their families, were very enthusiastic. There were many requests to "keep us on your list for next year" and "expanding the camp to other areas of the state".
- c) Kaycee reported on the bluebird monitoring program. The tree swallows have all fledged and are in migration to Central America. There remained one active bluebird nest with 4 chicks in box 15, which until the end of the season had never been used. There was activity in all the boxes, but not all nests had eggs, and of those that did not all hatched. The invasive house sparrows will overtake a bluebird house, kill the chicks, and lay their eggs. When house sparrow eggs are found, wooden eggs are swapped for the viable eggs. The house sparrow will then incubate these eggs for about 4 weeks, and then lay more eggs. Again, the viable eggs are removed. Tom is open to expanding the bluebird trail. Kaycee had 7 volunteers for 20 boxes and that number is close to ideal because volunteers need to monitor at least once a month to maintain interest. The possibility of building more boxes and establishing another trail on the Hollingsworth side of the park was suggested. In the past, FNFSR and SBSP have

held “build two boxes” workshops that have been successful – build a box for the park, build a second box to take home.

d) Tom was queried about the installation of more riparian buffers. His goal is to complete the NEEF grant riparian buffer at the Lupton entrance and then to install more in the future.

7) Next meeting is scheduled on Wednesday, October 6, 5-6pm, at the Lupton Entrance.