**Meeting Minutes**

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR WHTE CLAY CREEK STATE PARK**

**October 22, 2013, Chambers House Nature Center**

**Persons Present:**

**Council and Division Representatives:**

AFL/CIO – Delaware – Bill Foster

Coalition for Natural Stream Valleys – Andy Urquhart

Delaware Audubon Society – Dorothy P. Miller

Delaware Equine Council – Mary Everhart

Delaware State Sportsmen’s Association – Donald Palmer

Delmarva Ornithological Society – Michael Moore, PhD

Friends of White Clay Creek State Park – Art Sullivan

Mason-Dixon Trail System – Mike Ott

Trail Dawgs – Not represented

Trail Spinners – Jim Ireland

UAW CAP Council – Delaware – Donald Sharpe

White Clay Flyfishers – Ed O’Donnell

White Clay Watershed Association – Linda Stapleford

Wilmington Trail Club – Gary Kirk

Nick McFadden – Superintendent, WCCSP

**Members of the Public:**

Paul Baumbach – State Representative

Bob Bennett

Wendel Cassel – Friends of the PA White Clay Creek Preserve

Peter Saenger

Gary Schroeder – Friends of the PA White Clay Creek Preserve

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I. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Chair Linda Stapleford. Council Representatives, Division Representatives, and Members of the Public introduced themselves.

II. The minutes of the April 23, 2013 meeting prepared by the Secretary were discussed. Mr. Saenger stated that he felt his comments were not adequately reflected in the minutes and requested that the minutes be changed to further incorporate his comments. By a vote of 10 to 3, Council agreed.

III. GROUND RULES FOR COUNCIL OPERATIONS

* A proposed new Ground Rule was considered: “The Council will have 4 officers: Chair, Vice Chair, Second Vice Chair, and Secretary.” The purpose of this change would be to add a new officer – Second Vice Chair – to conduct meetings in the absence of the Chair and the Vice Chair. In discussing this proposal, Mrs. Miller questioned the need for another officer and suggested that the problem could be handled by empowering the Secretary to conduct meetings in the absence of the other two officers. This suggestion was adopted by unanimous vote of the Council.
* A change to an existing Ground Rule was considered, to read as follows: “All effort will be made to allow for full discussion of items with public comments welcomed. However, in the interest of time, the person presiding over the meeting will curtail any comments or discussion that are too lengthy, not directly on topic, or beyond the stated advisory role of the Council. If a consensus of the council members sees the topic as appropriate and recognizes a need for more discussion, the discussion may be continued at a later meeting of the council or by a task force formed to address the situation.” This change was adopted by unanimous vote of the Council.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

* Mr. Baumbach reported that the unpaved portion of Creek Road (extending from Wedgewood Road north to Hopkins Road) has been opened to automobile traffic during normal park hours on Mondays. This practice began the Monday after Labor Day and will continue on a trial basis to see how it goes.

V. NEW BUSINESS

* The possibility of a natural gas pipeline pathway through WCCSP for the proposed Data Center cogeneration plant on the University of Delaware’s Newark STAR Campus was discussed. The Data Center has indicated that it needs to lay 21 miles of pipeline along an existing pipeline right-of-way, which has not been specified. Mrs. Stapleford indicated that available information suggested the pipeline might pass through White Clay Creek State Park. However, there is no definitive information about where the pipeline would go.

Mr. Sullivan indicated that he believes there is a pipeline in the park located near the Creek in the vicinity of Deerfield. He offered to try to get information about pipeline rights-of-way in the park for further consideration by the Council.

* The upcoming retirement of Chazz Salkin (Director of Delaware State Parks) at the end of October 2013 was discussed briefly. Organizations that would like to provide inputs were encouraged to do so. [We subsequently learned that Ray Bivens was promoted to the position of Division Director.]
* Mr. Cassel and Mr. Schroeder of the Friends of the PA White Clay Creek Preserve made a presentation about a proposed new trail that would lead from the WCCSP Nature Center to the Tri-State Marker. The trail would be 4 miles long, 3 in PA and 1 in DE. The DE portion would run from the Nature Center toward and then parallel to Hopkins Road out to Arc Corner Road. The trail would be a single-track, pedestrian-only design and would include 15 bridges, 12 in PA and 3 in DE. Erosion control procedures will be implemented during trail construction to minimize any impacts on waterways. One purpose of the trail is to concentrate traffic along a single route and reduce the use of social trails in the area and associated damage to native plants. The planned route of the trail in PA has been surveyed several times by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to ensure that the trail would not be impacting rare native plants. The trail has been approved by DCNR and work is starting on the PA portion. DNREC approval is pending; DE Parks management is supportive but reviews of possible historical and cultural impacts are not yet complete. The exact trail location in DE has not yet been scouted or flagged. In response to a question from Mr. Urquhart, Mr. Cassel indicated that they are keeping the trail as much as possible in wooded areas; this is the reason for not considering a possible route that would pass behind the Robinson house. Mr. Urquhart also called attention to a possible historic millrace near part of the trail route.

Following the presentation, Council voted unanimously to endorse the trail concept to the Division of Parks and Recreation.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

* Mr. Saenger again raised the subject of a connector trail along Bullfrog Run from the Wedgewood/Creek Road parking lot to Wells Lane. He reminded the Council that the grade of such a trail would be ADA compliant. He clarified that he was not proposing that the trail be fully ADA compliant; rather, he was noting that the gentle grade would make the trail an easy path for people who are not so fit. He also reminded the Council that the trail would provide a connection from the Wedgewood/Creek Road parking lot to the Upper Carpenter Area. He asked that Council representatives consult with their organizations and re-consider the Council’s opposition to the trail voted during the January 22, 2013 meeting.

Mr. Urquhart reminded the Council of the high concentration of rare/threatened bird species that occupy this area (described in detail at the January 22, 2013 meeting) and noted that there are already many, many miles of trails from that vicinity that meet the ADA grade standards. Mr. Saenger stated that the trail could be constructed to avoid breaks in the tree canopy to protect birds. Mr. Urquhart pointed out that the concern is not just the canopy but also the understory, which is used by the birds for shelter, food, and nest sites. Mr. Saenger argued that the understory is just “junk” (non-native plants). Mr. Urquhart responded that, in the absence of an understory of native plants, the existing understory is still very important to the birds. Mrs. Stapleford pointed out that Bullfrog Run is the reference waterway for research by the UD Water Resources Agency and needs to be protected. Mrs. Miller stated her view that the trail would be creeping encroachment into a valuable natural area.

VII. ISSUES FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL

* 2014 plans for implementation of the Trail Plan (to be requested from the Division).

VIII. NEXT MEETINGS – scheduled for January 28, 2014 at the Judge Morris House (if available) and April 22, 2014 at the Chambers House Nature Center.

IX. ADJOURNMENT – the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Andy Urquhart, Council Secretary