**Meeting Minutes**

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

**January 28, 2014, Judge Morris House**

**Persons Present:**

**Council and Division Representatives:**

AFL/CIO – Delaware – not represented

Coalition for Natural Stream Valleys – Andy Urquhart

Delaware Audubon Society – Dorothy P. Miller

Delaware Equine Council – not represented

Delaware State Sportsmen’s Association – Donald Palmer

Delmarva Ornithological Society – not represented

Friends of White Clay Creek State Park – Debra Chiczewski Price

Mason-Dixon Trail System – Mike Ott

Trail Dawgs – Pete McLaughlin

Trail Spinners – Jessica Mazewski

UAW CAP Council – Delaware – not represented

White Clay Flyfishers – Ed O’Donnell

White Clay Watershed Association – Linda Stapleford

Wilmington Trail Club – Gary Kirk

Greg Abbott – Division of Parks and Recreation

David Bartoo – Division of Parks and Recreation

Kendall Sommers – Division of Parks and Recreation

Glen Stubbolo – Division of Parks and Recreation

Nick McFadden – Superintendent, WCCSP

**Members of the Public:**

Paul Baumbach – State Representative

Robert Bennett – Mason-Dixon Trail System

Glyn Thomas – Friends of White Clay Creek State Park

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I. The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm by Chair Linda Stapleford. Council Representatives, Division Representatives, and Members of the Public introduced themselves.

II. Minutes of the October 22, 2013 meeting prepared by the Secretary were approved unanimously.

III. GROUND RULES FOR COUNCIL OPERATIONS

* A change to an existing Ground Rule concerning the handling of meeting minutes was considered. The proposed modified Ground Rule would read as follows: “Draft minutes will be circulated to Council members and other scheduled/invited presenters with 10 days allowed for review and comment. Final approved resolutions will be issued as part of the minutes of the meeting. After incorporating any comments received during the 10-day review period, the minutes will be considered final. Minutes must be posted on the DNREC web site for public availability within 5 days after they are made final and must also be provided to the leaders of the two caucuses of the General Assembly. Any changes made during review of the minutes at the next Council meeting will be recorded in the minutes of that meeting rather than revising the minutes of the previous meeting.” This modified Ground Rule was adopted by unanimous vote of the Council.

IV. OLD 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. Mrs. Stapleford reported that she has been informed by Delaware State Parks personnel that there is no pipeline right-of-way on park property in WCCSP. Thus, if there is a right-of-way near the creek as previously suggested by Art Sullivan, it would have to be on DelDOT property along the road.
* Division plans for implementation of the Trail Plan during 2014 were summarized by Mr. Bartoo.

He began by summarizing the status of trail projects proposed for 2013:

* Whitely Farms Trail improvements are under construction. This work will continue, but may not be completed in 2014.
* Bryan’s Field Trail reroutes are in planning. Reports from Cultural and Natural Resources are needed.
* Tri-Valley Trail construction will probably start in spring of 2015. The project is now in the planning/engineering stage. The trail will be 6 feet wide, and hardened surfaces will be asphalt or concrete.

He also described some new projects planned for 2014, which were described as being mostly in planning or beginning of construction:

* Preserve Loop Trail needs a safety reroute because of erosion by the creek undermining the trail. The trail cannot be simply rerouted further back from the creek because those areas are too wet. Tentatively, the rerouted trail would follow Creek Road over the first hill and then diverge toward the east through the woods to rejoin the existing trail upstream of the eroded areas.

Mr. Urquhart commented that the wet areas may dry out when enough remnants of the railroad right-of-way are removed to allow better drainage. He also pointed out that fishermen will be maintaining their own trails through this area to enable access to the Creek.

* Charles Bailey Trail also needs a safety reroute because sections of the trail are close to falling in the Creek. Mr. Bartoo indicated that the new trail would be routed back away from the Creek in some areas and would be 5 feet wide with a stone surface to potentially allow equestrian use. He stated that a single track trail would not be safe for such purposes – the planned 5 foot width would allow trail users to get off the trail to allow horses to pass. He indicated that the wetter winters and springs associated with climate change creates problems with dirt-surfaced trails such as this one. He also indicated that the trail would be pedestrian-only until a later Phase 2 is completed. The Division aims to complete this project during 2014.

Mr. Ott expressed concern about losing beautiful views of the Creek with the trail being rerouted so far away.

* Paper Mill Connector from Smith Mill Road to Paper Mill Park is proposed for planning/engineering work this year. This trail would have a hardened, all-weather surface and is viewed as part of an alternate transportation system. Mr. Bartoo estimated that this project is probably 2 years away from construction.
* A Middle Run Connector from the Bryan’s Farm Trail to Middle Run trails is under consideration. This would probably involve replacing the existing culvert and providing a platform passing under Paper Mill Road for trail users, eliminating an awkward and hazardous road crossing.
* Tri-State Monument Trail (Delaware portion) will be in planning this year.
* A Whitely Farms Trail bridge project is under consideration as a joint effort this year with engineering students at the UofD. This might be a covered bridge. Mr. Bartoo indicated that the existing bridge would likely need to be replaced in 5 years or so.

Mr. Urquhart expressed concern that a covered bridge would be incompatible with the original concept that these lands were to be preserved as natural, open spaces with appropriate human access. He felt that bridges should be kept to the minimum structure necessary to serve trail users. Mrs. Miller stated that she agreed with Mr. Urquhart. Mr. Bartoo stated that one advantage of a covered bridge would be that it would last longer.

* Ms. Majewski, representing the Trail Spinners, presented a series of proposed volunteer projects for 2014:
* Create loop around yard waste site that connects Roseville Park. Several residents of this development would like to see these connections occur. This was overlooked when trail plan revisions were done.

Mr. Bartoo noted that this connection was not overlooked in the plan but rather was dropped from consideration. Funneling trail users into the yard waste site and to the mid-block crossing of Polly Drummond was not the safest choice, so an alternative was picked - Parks, DelDOT, and the public were in overwhelming support of eliminating the crossing. The alternative in the plan has not played out, and so work on this connection cannot proceed this year.

Mr. Bartoo indicated that the Division is currently defining a process for amending the trail plan. The current plan was intended as a 5-year plan, and it has been in place for about 2 ½ years.

* Create trails that would facilitate moving the Polly Drummond Road Crossing from Yard Waste/Judge Morris Estate Entrance to Old Coach Road. This is part of the trail plan.

Mr. Bartoo indicated that DelDOT needs to put the new crossing on their project list before the Division would begin planning the new connections. He suggested that people work through their legislators to try to influence DelDOT project priorities.

* Work on Skills Trail Expansion Loop. This is the small piece added to the existing trail. This is part of the trail plan.

Mr. Bartoo indicated that this project is not on the Division’s priority list at this time so that needed support from the Division is not available.

* Work on plan and create skills development area at Nine Foot Road Parking Area. This was part of the trail plan but doesn’t show as trail.

Mr. Bartoo indicated that this proposal is premature. Changes are under consideration for the Nine Foot Road Parking Lot which would be clarified during the engineering of the Tri-Valley Trail. Work on the skills area cannot proceed until it is known what will be done with the parking area.

* Generally Mr. Bartoo recommended that groups wanting to do volunteer projects first sit down with the Division to review the proposed work. He stated that all such projects require the supervision of Division Staff. He noted that the Division has developed a new system to feed volunteers into planned projects and to provide the needed training. He stated that volunteers are needed for some of the ongoing projects described above.
* Mr. Stubbolo described two areas where volunteers are sought: (a) maintenance work, such as Adopt-A-Trail, and (b) trail construction working with the Trail Crew on projects that have been developed through the Division planning process.
* Mr. Bartoo described preliminary plans for the 9’ Road Parking Lot. This would involve several changes: (a) replacing the gravel surface with paving, (b) adding a composting toilet in place of the porta-potties, (c) adding a pavilion, and (d) increasing the size of the lot and providing turn-around capability for school buses.

He indicated that the 9’ Road itself would not be changed at all except perhaps to lengthen the concrete part toward Paper Mill Road.

V. NEW BUSINESS

* Mr. Urquhart noted that this would be the last meeting for Mr. McFadden, since he will be retiring at the end of February. He proposed a resolution thanking Mr. McFadden for all of the many contributions he made to the park and its users over his many years as Superintendent of White Clay Creek State Park. The resolution was adopted unanimously, with many favorable comments from Council members.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS – There were none.

VII. ISSUES FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL – None were proposed at this time.

VIII. NEXT MEETINGS – scheduled for April 22, 2014, July 22, 2014, and October 28, 2014, all at the Chambers House Nature Center.

IX. ADJOURNMENT – the meeting was adjourned at 8:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Andy Urquhart

Council Secretary