**NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COUNCIL**

***33 Years of Service to Improving Delaware’s Quality Of Life***

***“Preserving Delaware’s Natural Areas Today for All Delawareans Tomorrow”***

MEETING

December 11, 2014

Rose Cottage

102 S State Street

Dover, DE 19901

9:30 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

**Council Members:**

Debbie Heaton, Chair

Christopher Heckscher, Ph.D.

Dean Holden

Edward A. Lewandowski, Secretary

Theodore Palmer, Jr.

James White, Jr., Vice Chair

John Williams, Esq.

**Guests:**

**Staff:**

Eileen Butler, Parks & Recreation, DNREC

Ron Vickers, Parks & Recreation, DNREC

Rose Ryödi, Parks & Recreation, DNREC

**I. Call to Order/Welcome/Introductions/Announcements**

Ms. Heaton, Chairperson, called the Natural Areas Advisory Council meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. She welcomed Council members and staff and asked for announcements.

**II. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Heaton asked for a motion to approve the June 12, 2014 and September 11, 2014 minutes. Motion was made to approve minutes as written. Motion carried.

**III. Old Business**

* White Clay Creek State Park Proposed Nature Preserve dedication areas. Mr. Ray Bivens, Parks Director, could not attend meeting –issue postponed to the March 2015 NAAC meeting.
* Godwin Tract – Doe Bridge Nature Preserve, Sussex County

Ms. Butler said 182-acres of the Division of Parks and Recreation Godwin Tract was dedicated as part of the Doe Bridge Nature Preserve on October 31, 2014 and will be known as the Godwin Tract of the Doe Bridge Nature Preserve.

**IV. Natural Areas Registry**

Ms. Butler informed Council that the 2014 Bond Bill included language to permit Faithful Friends to build a no-kill shelter on lands included in the Natural Area Registry as part of the Christina River Natural Area.

A discussion ensued regarding the possibility of Council writing a letter to the elected officials in New Castle County stating their disapproval of having a private entity develop State land that will negatively impact the last remaining Natural Area within the Christina River watershed.

Mr. Vickers suggested that Council read the language in the Bond Bill first before taking action. He said, however, this is symptomatic of the issues we have throughout Delaware, but more so, in New Castle County due to the highly developed nature of the County.

Ms. Butler said she is working with Bill McAvoy and Kate Fleming, both from Fish & Wildlife’s Heritage program to determine the quality of the resources on an adjacent site where a road will be located to reach the State property.

Ms. Heaton asked for a motion to appoint Mr. Jim White to represent the Council to attend the field trip. Mr. Martin made a motion and Mr. Williams seconded. Motion passed.

**V. Nature Preserve Dedications**

* Fork Branch Nature Preserve – the Smith Property was acquired last month and Ms. Butler is moving forward to create Articles of Dedication for this property to be added to the Fork Branch Nature Preserve. The Articles of Dedication will be on the agenda for review at the next Council meeting.
* Lums Pond Woods Nature Preserve – Ms. Butler is working internally to expand the existing Nature Preserve by including adjacent forest land within Lums Pond State Park.

1. **Nature Preserve Management Issues**

* Delmarva Bays Nature Preserve, New Castle County – Ms. Butler inspected the 7 independent Delmarva Bays with Jim Dobson, with the Forestry Service. There are a number of bays within the Van Dyke Tract owned by Forest Service. Ms. Butler discussed the possibility of dedicating the entire tax parcel as the new boundary for the nature preserve, instead of the individual bays, as is the current boundary. Mr. Dobson was supportive of the idea, as long as all things remained the same. Ms. Butler discussed this approach with Mr. Mike Valenti, Forestry Service but he was not supportive. Council requested meeting with Mike Valenti to discuss further. Mr. White will set up meeting for him and following Council members, Mr. Heckscher, Mr. Lewandowski, and Mr. Martin to meet with Mr. Valenti.

1. **New Business**

* Forest Legacy Project Application

This is a federal program through the Fish and Wildlife Service to assist states in maintaining workable forestry lands.

Mr. Heckscher shared that Mr. Valenti stressed the ‘workable forestry lands’ is a broad term – it does not necessarily mean timber cutting, that it can also mean recreation.

Mr. Heckscher said both he and Mr. Lewandowski are on the Forestry Stewardship Committee. At the last Committee meeting it was discussed that the Forestry Service would submit its Forest Legacy Project application. Mr. Valenti had been looking for letters of support from other groups and Mr. Heckscher approached the Natural Areas Advisory Council for such support.

Council agreed to send a supporting letter to Mike Valenti.

* Articles of Dedication, Delaware State University Tract, Fork Branch Nature Preserve

Ms. Butler distributed a draft of the proposed Articles of Dedication which was discussed.

Mr. Heckscher said he assisted with the drafting of document. Ms. Butler said DNREC is in agreement and is ready to move forward.

Ms. Heaton asked for a motion to approve moving forward with the Articles of Dedication for the Delaware State University Tract of the Fork Branch Nature Preserve. Mr. Lewendowski made a motion and Mr. White seconded. Motion passed. Mr. Heckscher abstained from voting.

* Election of Officers

Mr. Heckscher said he had discussions with the current officers and all affirmed their wish to remain as officers for 2015. By handwritten ballots, Council nominated as follows:

* Debbie Heaton, Chair
* James White, Jr., Vice Chair
* Edward A. Lewandowski, Secretary

There is no change in the nomination of new Council members for 2015.

1. **Public Comment and Synopsis Reports From Other Councils, Stakeholders, and Partners**

Mr. White said he attended the State Parks Advisory Council meeting held at the Biden Center at Cape Henlopen State Park on August 14. He said an increase in Park Entrance Fees was discussed but no legislation was put forth. Additionally, Parks and Recreation is working towards bringing the Parks, especially the facilities areas, up to a higher standard. Bathrooms seem to be the main concern of visitors.

Mr. Williams said he recently joined the Christina Conservancy and had attended their annual meeting.

Mr. Lewandowski announced that the Governor was part of a dedication for Delaware’s new National park today.

1. **2015 Council Meeting Dates/Time**

* The 2015 Natural Areas Advisory Council meetings will be held at The Rose Cottage, 102 S. State Street, Dover, DE 19901, starting 9:30 a.m.
* March 12
* June 11
* September 10
* December 10

1. **Adjournment**

Ms. Heaton asked for a motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.