**NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COUNCIL**

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

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

MEETING

September 17, 2015

Rose Cottage

102 S State Street

Dover, DE 19901

9:30 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

**Council Members:**

Debbie Heaton, Chair

Peter Martin

Theodore Palmer, Jr.

John Williams, Esq.

Ed Lewandowski, Secretary

**Guests:**

**Staff:**

Eileen Butler, Parks & Recreation, DNREC

Ron Vickers, Parks & Recreation, DNREC

Freddie Patterson, Parks & Recreation, DNREC

Ray Bivens, Parks a& Recreation, DNREC

Rich Phifer, Fish & Wildlife, DNREC

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

Ms. Heaton, Chairperson, called the Natural Areas Advisory Council meeting to order at 9:32 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 11, 2015 minutes. Motion was made by Mr. Lewandowski to approve minutes, Mr. Williams seconded. Motion carried.

**III. Old Business**

* *Proposal for Delaware Forest Service:* Staff prepared two parcel-based proposals for Nature Preserve dedication for the Delaware Forest Service consideration. Both parcels are located within Blackbird Forest. One parcel is within the VanDyke Tract and the other is known as the Naudain Tract. Mr. White, will contact Mr. Valenti of the Delaware Forest Service along with Mr. Martin, and Mr. Heckscher to discuss the possibility of dedicating these two tracts into the Blackbird Delmarva Bays Nature Preserve.
* Staff prepared a letter to Acting Land Use Manager George Haggerty regarding the location of the Faithful Friends’ facility in the Christina River Natural Area. After much discussion, it was decided that Staff would re-word the letter with assistance from John Williams.
* Staff provided an overview of a proposed development in the Ogletown area of Newark, Delaware and the potential for impacts to the forested wetlands on the site. The wooded area was proposed for inclusion in the State Natural Area Registry. Council is awaiting its response from Secretary Small.

**IV. Natural Areas Registry**

**V. Nature Preserve Dedications**

* Rich Phifer from the Division of Fish & Wildlife presented Articles of Dedication to be included in the deed of an upcoming Division acquisition of 2.3 acres to be known as the Lowe Tract (2) of the James Branch Nature Preserve. This tract is directly adjacent to the existing 27-acre Lowe Tract of said Preserve. Motion was made by Mr. Lewandowski to approve the dedication with itemized modifications, and Mr. Palmer seconded the motion.

1. **Nature Preserve Management Issues**
2. **New Business**

Staff presented the Department’s internal Delaware Ecological Network, which incorporates important core forestlands, wetlands, heritage points, and wildlife corridors. This network is being used internally to determine if the State Natural Area Registry is complete. Staff is reviewing each county closely to identify the potential for Natural Area designation. Future Council meetings will be used to discuss the results of this analysis.

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

Mr. White attended the Delaware Parks Council Meeting held at Rehoboth Beach Sailing Club on August 6, 2015. The following is a summary:

       Presentation on trail development and improvement at Brandywine Creek State Park. Plans have been developed to:

o   Improve several multi-use (walk, bike, horse) trails on the east side of creek.

o   Convert walking trails to multi-use trails (walk, bike) on the west side of creek.

Comment: Mr. White is a bit concerned about the trails on the west side of the creek becoming bike trails. The walking/birding folks may be disturbed about this change.

       The park staff is enforcing single file parking on the Cape Henlopen beaches. This enforcement appears to have resulted in less congestion and a slight reduction of non-fishing activities on the beach.

       Parks are working with the University of Delaware to offer special deals and opportunities to campers that are in the area attending UD football activities.

Mr. Martin discussed activities surrounding Delaware’s Farmland Preservation Program as well as activities in the NCC Farmland Preservation program that have the potential to undermine the State’s program.

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.
* December 10
1. **Adjournment**

Ms. Heaton asked for a motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.