**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

December 10, 2015

Rose Cottage

102 S State Street

Dover, DE 19901

9:30 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

**Council Members:**

Debbie Heaton, Chair

Peter Martin

John Williams, Esq.

Jim White

Christopher Heckscher

**Guests:**

**Staff:**

Eileen Butler, Parks & Recreation, DNREC

Ron Vickers, Parks & Recreation, DNREC

Freddie Patterson, Parks & Recreation, DNREC

Ray Bivens, Parks a& Recreation, 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 9:30 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 September 17, 2015 minutes. Motion was made by Mr. Lewandowski to approve minutes, Mr. Williams seconded. Motion carried.

**III. Old Business**

* *Proposal for Delaware Forest Service:* It was decided by Council members to invite Mike Valenti to present the Forest Stewardship Program to Council at the March meeting, with special focus on the Best Management Practices used in the program.
* *Felician Sisters Property:* The DNREC Secretary signed the Natural Areas Designation on November 30, 2015. Mr. White shared with the Council that the Delaware Nature Society was considering managing the remaining open space associated with the Ogletown Pond development plan. Mr. White is interested in reviewing the various development scenarios suggested by the developer to the State for its review and comment.

**IV. Natural Areas Registry**

* *Update on County review for Natural Area Registry:* Staff reviewed various properties against the Delaware Ecological Network mapping layer and found that three areas of New Castle County above the C&D canal will be studied for inclusion:
	+ Brandywine Creek State Park – west side of the creek
	+ Bank of America property – just north of I-95
	+ Various Frenchtown Woods properties – West side of Rt. 896

**V. Nature Preserve Dedications**

* *Delaware Nature Society Parcels:* Mr. White shared with Council the Society’s desire to add two parcels to the Red Clay Creek Valley Natural Area so that it can eventually dedicate the parcels into the Burrows Run Nature Preserve, to be consistent with most of its holdings in that area.

The proposed site is made of two continuous parcels (4.39 acres and 13.4 acres) that lie adjacent to the Genevieve Estes DuPont area of the Burrows Run Nature Preserve of the Red Clay Natural Area. The land is in the hilly Appalachian Piedmont Providence of Northern New Castle County, Delaware. Habitats include approximately 13 areas of open field that is managed for nesting and wintering birds and other native wildlife. Future land and biodiversity management plans for the area are to improve this field habitat by creating a native meadow. In addition, woodland edge restoration will occur along the western border with the existing Genevieve Estes DuPont Area. The remaining 4 acres of land is primarily sedge, shrub and red maple wetlands and dry stream bank associated with a 6th order stream that flows into the Burrows Run. Water quality in the stream appears to be relatively good. This area is to be managed as wetland habitat for native flora and fauna. Although no Bog Turtles have been observed on the site, the existing wetlands could provide habitat or a dispersal corridor for other bog turtles in the area. The site is an excellent opportunity to expand and buffer the high quality woodlands of the Genevieve Estes DuPont area of the Burrows Run Nature Preserve in the Red Clay Creek Valley Natural Area.

Lastly this land is also a key parcel protecting scenic views along Old Kennett Rd, part of the Red Clay Creek Scenic Byway.

Dr. Heckscher motioned to designate the parcels into the Red Clay Creek Valley Natural Area and Mr. Williams seconded. Four members of Council voted yea, Mr. White abstained.

The Technical Advisory Committee will review the submission, and provide its decision. If found to meet the criteria for inclusion onto the Registry, the proposal will be forwarded to the Department Secretary for signature.

1. **Nature Preserve Management Issues**
* *Beach Plum Island:* A citizen of Delaware complained about access to the Nature

 Preserve, indicating that he should be permitted to traverse over all of the beach,

 including the area closed to the public. Park staff met on site and all agreed that the

 beach should remain closed, providing the only “wilderness” beach in Delaware. There

 is approximately 26,000 acres of beach in Delaware, and this closure impacts 60 acres.

 The last management plan was created in 1993, therefore, a new plan will be crafted by

 Staff in 2016.

* *Thompson Island:* Two citizens of Delaware are disgruntled as the trail at Thompson

Island closes off the opportunity for members of the public to traverse the entire length of beachfront at the island. As was done in Beach Plum, Staff will meet to discuss management of this Nature Preserve regarding public access, and natural/cultural resource protection requirements. The meeting is scheduled for January 19, 2016.

1. **New Business**
* *Costco Fueling Station, Christiana Mall:* Staff is working with other sections of the Department to protect the Christina River Natural Area from development associated with a fueling station adjacent to the Costco at the mall.
* *Frenchtown Woods Natural Area logging access issue:* Park Staff has decided against providing access for an adjacent landowner to access their property for continued logging purposes. Ryland Homes will transfer approximately 58 acres of forested wetlands to the State after 25% of the development is occupied. They have also decided against permitting access.
* *Articles of Dedication Template:* Ms. Heaton has requested that the Council review the current Nature Preserve Management Guidelines. Mr. Bivens provided his comments and the Council will review this issue in depth at its March meeting.
* *Elections:* Council posts for Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary were voted on, and Ms. Heaton was voted to remain as Chair, Mr. White remains as Vice-Chair, and Mr. Lewandowski remains as Secretary.
1. **Public Comment and Synopsis Reports From Other Councils, Stakeholders, and Partners**

Mr. White attended the Delaware Parks Council Meeting in November. He indicated that the lands surrounding the Kalmar Nickle will be planted to reflect the time period from when the Swedes landed in Delaware.

Mr. Williams shared with the Council that the Christina Conservancy will be initiating a Terrain 360, but was unable to go into specifics about the program at this time.

1. **2016 Council Meeting Dates/Time**
* Dates for 2016 are scheduled for March 10, June 9, September 8, and December 8. The

 March 10 meeting will be held at the Lums Pond State Park Nature Center and will

 begin at 9:30 am.

1. **Adjournment**

Ms. Heaton asked for a motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 11:53 pm.