

Parks & Recreation Council

LOCATION:
Killens Pond State Park
5025 Killens Pond Road
Felton, De 19943

Thursday, February 2, 2017
9:30 a.m.

Council Members

Ron Mears, Chairperson	Ron Breeding, Vice Chairperson	Joe Smack
Clyde Shipman	Brenda Bramble	Isaac Daniels
Jim White		

Staff

Ray Bivens, Director	Lea Dulin	Matt Ritter	Matt Chesser
Greg Abbott	Chris Polo	Jennifer Bradford	Wayne Kline
Darren Lawson			

I. Introductions/Announcements

- A. Chairman Ron Mears called the Council meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.
- B. Upgrades to the water parks were well received.
- C. Introduction of Jennifer Bradford, New Webmaster for Delaware State Parks

II. Official Business/Council Activities

- A. Approval of Meeting Minutes
Ron Mears asked for Council approval of the November 3rd meeting minutes. Ron Breeding made a motion to approve the minutes. Joe Smack seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- B. Investigation of Go Apes' accident has been concluded. ;

C. Council Member Reports:

1. Fort Delaware Society – *No report.*

2. Natural Areas Advisory Council – *Jim White reported.*

Costco wants to build a gas station on a natural area near the Christiana Mall. They have submitted a proposed land swap in order to allow that to happen. The proposal is complicated and the Council is trying to determine if it will be feasible.

There is a small parcel of land at Lums Pond that the Council would like to include in the nature preserve. Meetings and discussions are ongoing.

3. Wildlife Management Committee – *Matt Ritter*

Managed hunt deer counts were lower this year. Numbers are still coming in. No managed hunt at Deerfield last year. There are some changes on how Deerfield is being handled this year. There were 19 deer harvested in the two managed hunts at Killens Pond. White Clay Creek's hunts were successful; this year 145 deer were harvested.

We are currently analyzing Division-owned lands in Sussex for a hunting lease agreement and are considering several areas including the Godwin/Stockley area.

Fish and Wildlife have been managing the hunt at Brandywine Creek but will not be doing that in the future. The Division is committed to managed hunts but is unsure yet of the method.

Chris Bennett was promoted to manager of the Environmental Stewardship Program replacing Rob Line who retired. Ashley Kroon accepted Chris Bennett's previous job. Ashley worked for the Division several years ago. Ashley assumes the new Stewardship Manager role on March 1st.

4. Resident Curatorship – *Joe Smack reported.*

The proposal for the Warrington House curatorship has been received. A meeting will be scheduled in the next few weeks to go over the couple's financial information. There are some legal issues that also need to be worked out and Jim Hall and Becky Lovin are working on those.

5. Delaware Land and Water Conservation Trust Funds – *Ron Breeding reported.*

Currently the trust fund money is split into "two pots" and is designated either for trails or acquisition projects/park improvements

III. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

IV. Staff Reports

1. Policy/Legislation – *Ray Bivens reported.*

The Division received the Governor's recommended budget. Funding for the Open Space Program was reduced from \$10M to \$200K. The Division requested funding for facilities maintenance for the waterpark, Baynard Stadium and Fort Miles. None of those received funding. The \$3.5M funding for rehab which is split with Fish and Wildlife did remain in the budget.

On July 1st, rangers will begin working 40 hour shifts per week. Currently, they work a 37.5 hour shift each week. The FOP and the Director were both supportive of this initiative because it provides for better coverage in the parks. The number of special events in State Parks has skyrocketed and finding coverage for these events has been difficult. Increasing the number of hours in the work week will provide additional coverage and will result in increased salaries for rangers.

A bill was introduced that would offer retirement rangers and correctional officers the opportunity to retire after 20 years of service. Retirement would not be mandated at 20 years

but rangers who continued to work would receive a higher contribution to their pension for years 20-30.

Because of the transition of the new administration, the Division did not have the opportunity to submit any proposed legislation yet. However, the Division would like to propose a change in the roles of seasonal Park Patrol Officers. The Division would like the year round seasonal Officers to have the authority to handle minor offenses without the involvement of a sworn Officer. This would be especially helpful if the Division installs fee collection machines, in areas of self-registration, and on surf fishing beaches.

The Open Space Council has approved a land swap at Bancroft Mills near Alapocas Run State Park. Approval to make this swap will require an act of the General Assembly. If approved, the Division will end up with a new 25 car parking lot, a pavilion, a bathroom facility, and full ownership of the dam. This is significant because DNREC is trying to remove all of the dams on the Brandywine River. In addition, the swap would eliminate the current parking lot which looks like a “war zone” and would allow signs to be posted directing visitors (pedestrian and vehicular) to the entrance of the Park.

There would be a fantastic entrance to Alapocas, visitors could rent a pavilion and have easy access to the only rock climbing location in the State. The Division would be swapping a 1.4 acre parcel for a 3.8 acre parcel, though part of that would be water. This is a trade with a land developer and may be the first time that has ever happened. But there is precedent because the Division has previously swapped land with the Epworth Church. Jim White asked if the Division owns any buildings at Bancroft Mills, Ray stated that we own the Copper Black building.

The Division, through the Open Space Program, will be purchasing 5 acres of land from Epworth Church. The land is located in the middle of the Rehoboth Little League fields and is adjacent to land the Division currently owns.

Governor Carney’s nomination of DNREC Secretary Shawn Garvin will be voted for conformation in the middle of March. Dave Small has agreed to continue to serve as the Secretary which will be helpful at the Joint Finance hearing. This year the format has changed and rather than the Department making a presentation, the committee will be asking questions and Department staff will respond to their inquiries. The Division provided a list of all special funds accounts and is trying to prepare to respond to any random question. Joe Smack share that the Division should be prepared to answer questions regarding contracts. Ray said that the time allotted for the Department was reduced from 45 minutes to 10 minutes and that he is anticipating questions regarding vacant positions. Ray shared that at one time the Division had 197 positions but through complement reductions and budgeting constraints, the Division functioning with 147 full time employees. At the same time, the number of facilities, trails and special events has increased so there is not a lot of room for additional cuts. Killens Pond is a great example of the Division “doing more with less”. Twenty years ago, there were no cabins, no waterpark, no amphitheater and no nature center but staffing has remained stagnate. Council asked how about the number of rangers assigned to Killens Pond State Park; Ray stated there were two.

Clyde Shipman asked about the new restaurant that will be coming to Delaware Seashore State Park this summer. Ray stated that there have been many calls from organizations that did not see the RFP (Request for Proposals). There is a segment of the public that does not

like change and they have concerns regarding parking and how to fit more people into the area. Many folks don't realize that the restaurant will be built on the existing bath house. The Division has signed the notice to proceed with this public/private partnership. The State is not putting money into the project. LaVida Hospitality will be investing approximately \$1M into the property. This will be a great revenue source for the Division. The anticipated completion date is the middle of May. Clyde asked what the length of the contract is. Greg Abbott responded it is a 15 year with two renewal options. There is a \$30K base and then a percentage of revenue generated. Capital improvements / leasehold (brick and mortar) improvements would be retained by the Division. They would be allowed to take their equipment, etc. Ray stated that they are having a large canopy shipped from Switzerland, the Division is working into the contract that we will have the option to purchase that and other equipment at a reduced price.

Clyde asked about the Summit North Marina. Ray stated that the Army Corps owns the property and the Division holds a lease of the property. The Council was aware that there were some legal issues at this site. A settlement has been reached. The Department is doing a \$1.3M dredging project. A new restaurant, Grain H2O will be taking over the Aqua Sol location. Southern Maryland Dredging is working on the project and has one month to finish it. Ray stated they had an issue with the spoil site and had to shut the project down. That issue was resolved and the project is about 60% completed. Greg added they had removed 48,000 cubic yards and the project is about 2/3 complete. Ron Mears shared that he read a newspaper that stated that the Michael Castle Trail ran right through their parking lot. Ray said it was nice to see a vendor recognize that the route of the trail will help their business. In the past, Summit North has voiced concerns about people parking there and the cost of providing parking. Clyde Shipman commented that he looks forward to the day when all of the park spots in the lot are filled. Ron Mears asked when the new restaurant will open; Ray said it sounds like it will open Memorial Day.

The Division made the decision to send the Tiger to the Bronx Zoo as part of the species survival program. The zoo received AZA accreditation for another five years but they came with a comment that before the next accreditation period, we needed to double the size of the tiger exhibit. Ray stated that was, "a pretty limiting factor". They also stated that the exhibit needed \$80-\$100K in improvement in the next six months. In order to enlarge the exhibit, the enclosure would have to move up the hill and would cost approximately \$4M. A meeting was held with the zoo staff and made the decision to focus on smaller animals that are more within our footprint. They also suggested improvements to the Zoo hospital and otter exhibit and work on a master plan. The Division will focus on those tasks instead of focusing all our efforts on the tiger. Ray stated that the Bronx Zoo has an amazing facility and everything went great with the transport. Division staff went to New York to assist with the transition. Ron Mears asked if the Division had rectified the accessibility issue near the otter exhibit; Ray shared that last spring the Division opened "Eagle Ridge" which is a switch-back system that allows for accessibility for people with strollers and wheel chars. It was a \$100K project and was completed with funds provided by five local legislators using community transportation funds.

V. Section Updates – A handout was provided to the Council and highlights were discussed.

1. Administrative Services – Greg Abbott reported.

Creative Services has two new staff members:

On January 9th, Drew Clark was hired to replace Jasmine Chambers as the Division's seasonal designer. Drew brings with him extensive design and illustration skills.

Jenn Bradford was hired as assistant webmaster, filling the position previously filled by now Marketing Director Madison Watkins. Jenn has a wide range of programming experience using a variety of languages; past projects include online Bar Exam forms for the Supreme Court of South Carolina and websites for the State of Maryland.

Website at destateparks.com

Statistics: The website was visited by **180,782** visitors from **129** countries who collectively viewed **585,359** pages. This represents a **4.66% increase** in visitors over the same period last year.

A presentation on the Division new web page was made by Chris Polo. She stated that the following new pages have been completed for Alapocas Run, Bellevue, Brandywine Creek, Cape Henlopen, Delaware Seashore and Fenwick Island State Parks.

Publications: Major print/design projects

Number of print/design projects completed since 10/14/2016: **51**

Major projects:

- Hawthorne Wedding Brochure: a new glossy 20-page booklet promoting weddings at all Delaware State Parks venues was produced in conjunction with Hawthorn Publications. The Creative Services team, with input from the rental venue managers and staff, wrote text, collected photos and made editorial and design decisions; Hawthorn Publications provided layout services. The majority of the publication's cost was covered by advertisements sold by Hawthorn staff.
- 11 individual Winter 2016 -17 program guides
- 2017 Summer Camp guide
- New anniversary logos: 50th for Delaware Seashore, 10th for Alapocas Run
- 2016 Annual Report: Text edited and organized; layout nearly complete

Volunteer and Community Involvement

AmeriCorps Veterans Conservation Corp:

On October 1, the second team of AmeriCorps Veterans Conservation Corps members began their service with a swearing in ceremony. Governor Markell and representatives from the State Office of Volunteerism were in attendance at Legislative Hall. This year's Corps consists of two teams, a northern and a southern team totaling 11 members. Heavy attention and detail has been spent on training the team and thus far, the two teams have treated 52.16 miles of trail and 50 acres of natural area.

On Veteran's Day our members visited a veteran's home in Milford where the team provided fellowship, group activities, and afternoon snacks with the residents.

Interns: Postings for the upcoming Internship program went live on November 19th. To date, 164 applications have been received.

Marketing:

The Marketing team is finalizing the 2017 State Park Visitor Welcome Maps. This includes compiling a distribution list for the Welcome Maps as well as researching new distribution channels throughout the state.

The Marketing team compiled a Division Events Schedule Calendar that will serve as a guide to upcoming events and how to promote them.

A Marketing Committee has been formed and will meet quarterly to discuss upcoming events, areas of interest, and events and programs that need more support and promotion from the Marketing Department. Prior to each Marketing Committee meeting, ideas will be gathered from six subcommittees which include programming, special events, social media, volunteerism, camping and discounts, and web and publications.

Marketing is coordinating with Caroline Foltz the Division's Entrepreneurial Development Coordinator on upcoming partnership opportunities with outside organizations as well as attracting new and exciting events and opportunities to Delaware State Parks.

Since January 2015, the Division's social media following has grown by more than 325%.

1. The Delaware State Park's Pinterest account was displayed at Indiana University's Executive Development Program for Parks Professionals as an example of one of the best park Pinterest accounts in the nation.
 2. The Division's Pinterest account was also recently cited in *Delaware Today's* article of the nine social media accounts to watch in 2017.
2. Operations and Programming – *Matt Ritter reported.*

During the week of November 3rd, DNREC's new state-of-the-art mobile science laboratory, "Science at Your Door" was unveiled at North Laurel Elementary School in a ribbon cutting ceremony led by Governor Markell, DNREC and Secretary David Small.

On Sunday, January 1st, fourteen State Parks offered seventeen different First Day Hikes, giving individuals and families an opportunity to begin the New Year reconnecting with the outdoors.

Fort Delaware Paranormal tours reported 1,007 visitors this fall.

Kudos to the Killens Pond staff for two successful managed deer hunts. Director Bivens received an email from a hunter who stated these were "professional, well-run" hunts. The hunter wanted "to make sure that Killens Pond staff was recognized" and four staff members were acknowledged for their efforts: Darren Lawson, Mike Phillips, Dave Moore and Wayne Knolls.

Killens, Lums and Trap Pond Campgrounds were 100% full for Halloween weekend. Trap's 26th Halloween Howl event had an estimated 3,000 in attendance.

The week of November 6th, Killens Pond hosted 75 fourth-graders for the *Kent County Watersheds* program and on November 12th approximately 70 visitors enjoyed a *Native Ways, Reconstructing Technologies and Life-ways of First Nations People* program. This Time Travelers Program was funded by the Delaware Archaeological Society.

Killens Pond hosted the first annual *Girls on the Run Final 5K* at the sports complex with more than 900 third-grade girls and their parents in attendance.

The Winter WonderFEST Christmas Light Show at Cape Henlopen attracted more than 12,000 vehicles from 24 different states. A total of \$25,000 was given to the Division for hosting the event.

Capital One awarded \$34,833.00 in grant funding to the Friends of Cape Henlopen State Park to support the Youth Conservation Corps program. The grant will provide high quality summer jobs and environmental opportunities for youth throughout the State of Delaware. Through the YCC program, young people will gain job skills, natural resources education, and practical work experience.

On December 13th and 14th, Fish and Wildlife managed the annual deer hunt at Brandywine Creek with 38 deer harvested.

3. Planning, Preservation and Development – *Matt Chesser reported.*

Susan Moerschel retired at the end of 2016, leaving a second Chief's vacancy after Ron Vickers' retirement last summer. Elena Stewart and Bob Ehemann are acting as Chiefs for the soon-to-be consolidated Planning and Preservation section. One Chief's position has been posted.

A team from the Planning Resource Office worked with Ron Vickers to develop a complete database of Open Space acquisitions since the program was created in 1990. Information includes settlement dates, acreage, sellers' information, appraisal/settlement/survey costs, and the contributions of the Open Space Program and other funding sources toward the acquisition of each property. This information is being linked to the spatial layer that shows the boundaries of the property to eliminate searching paper files for information.

Three work plans of trail construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation projects totaling \$4.2M have been approved by DelDOT. An additional work plan will be developed for \$2.0M in 2017. The Park Resource Office is assembling environmental and cultural resource documentation for all projects.

Fort DuPont Revitalization Corporation (FDRC) is proposing to convert 18 acres of state park land protected by the LWCF 6(f) to non-recreational use for residential, commercial and private marina development. Next steps are an independent appraisal, a public meeting, and assembling a conversion package.

The Park Resource Office anticipates a fall 2017 phone survey to gauge the public's outdoor recreation participation preferences and trends.

The Park Resource Office, in collaboration with the City of Rehoboth's Transportation Committee, created a pilot way-finding system intended to guide cyclists through the city. Recognizing the need to aid cyclists who are unfamiliar with city streets and how to safely connect between the southern ends of the Junction and Breakwater and Gordons Pond Trails, the committee took action to install way-finding posts. Graphics from *Rehoboth's Bike Friendly Streets* pamphlet were recreated to fit on 8x8 posts and installed at five locations. The City of Rehoboth received positive reviews and comments regarding the signs. Edits and improvements have been completed on the graphics and additional new signs will be installed this spring.

Parks Resource Office staff continues to collaborate with the Delaware Department of Technology and Information (DTI) to create an interactive website designed to help users locate outdoor recreational opportunities throughout the state. The website will allow users to search for different recreational amenities, parks, or trails throughout Delaware that are open to the public. Users will also be able to enter locations or addresses and see what outdoor recreational opportunities are nearby. The testing phase is complete; the name for the application is Play OutsiDE and a logo is under development. The unveiling of the new site will occur during the 2017 Delaware Recreation and Parks Society Conference in February.

The Open Space Council is tasked with developing, in conjunction with the State agencies and with public input, an Open Space Program Plan ("Plan") for the Council's consideration and approval. The public is invited to give input and ideas as to what should go in the Plan during three public workshops in February.

At the December 8th Natural Areas Advisory Council (NAAC) meeting, the Council reviewed and approved the conservation easement on lands owned by the Delaware Nature Society and adjacent to the Red Clay Creek Valley Natural Area for inclusion into the Natural Area Registry.

Auburn Heights Preserve staff shared the draft Articles of Dedication with the NAAC for the proposed 30-acre Nature Preserve. Council had concerns regarding the wording of the draft and much discussion ensued. A rewrite of the draft will be a topic of discussion for the March meeting.

At the NAAC meeting, Staff shared additional properties that were to be dedicated as State Nature Preserve when the properties are acquired. These properties will be added to the existing White Clay Creek Valley Nature Preserve through an addendum to the original Articles of Dedication. The addition of these 300 acres surrounding the creek, will double the size of the Nature Preserve.

RK & K is working on the trail study for the connection under Route 26 at the Assawoman Canal Trail. A report has been completed and submitted to DelDOT for review.

Utilities plans are being reviewed for final installation on Gun Club Road at Auburn Heights. Stream restoration construction is anticipated to begin in spring 2017.

New entrance, parking lots, trails and historic bridges should be out to bid in spring 2017 at the Paper Mill at Auburn Heights. Construction is anticipated to begin in summer 2017. The park office renovation will be out to bid in early spring 2017 and under construction late spring.

Oversee Trail construction is underway and should be complete in early spring 2017. The CC Arts Trail connection is in design, with construction anticipated in 2017 – 2018.

The Amphitheatre at NVF is in design and should go out to bid in the fall of 2017. Meetings have taken place with the Symphony.

Campground renovation and construction are underway at Cape Henlopen. The campground is expected be closed until Memorial Day 2017.

The Cape Henlopen Park Office renovation is complete.

Renovations to the existing parking lot near the Lums Pond Dog Park are scheduled to begin in late spring 2017. Also, additional overflow parking area for the Lums Pond campground and widening of campsites is under design.

The restroom contract for the Bethesda Church at Trap Pond was awarded to Greenflush Industries. Trail installation from the parking lot to the church is completed. Restroom delivery and placement is scheduled for February 2017.

Demolition of the Tiger Exhibit at the Brandywine Zoo will begin in February 2017 and design and repurposing of site estimated to be complete in spring 2017.

VI. Old Business

VII. New Business

Chris Polo gave a presentation/demonstration of the new Parks website.

VIII. Election of Council officers:

Per Council Bylaws, the annual election of officers was held. Both the chairman and the vice chairman seats were elected. Ron Mears was nominated to serve as Chairman; Ron Breeding made a motion to elect Mr. Mears, Clyde Shipman seconded the motion. The motion carried. Ron Breeding was nominated to serve as the Vice Chairman. Joe Smack made a motion to elect Mr. Breeding, Isaac Daniels seconded the motion. The motion carried.

IX. Upcoming Events

X. Meeting Adjournment

The chairman called for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.