



# Friends of Congaree Swamp News

## Save the date

### Butterfly count

Congaree National Park will hold its annual North American Butterfly Association butterfly count **Saturday, Sept. 12.**

Park staff members David Shelley and Frank Henning and Carolina Butterfly Society members Marty and David Kastner are organizing the event, which will last from 9 a.m. until about 4:30 p.m.

Participants will spend the day counting butterflies along the trail system and within the park's various habitats. All ages and experience levels are welcome and you may come for all or just part of the day.

The program is free, but space is limited. Advance reservations are requested. Appropriate clothing

*See Save the date, page 6*

## Park acquires new tract



*The red area represents the new acquisition.*

The U.S. Department of the Interior closed Aug. 3 on a 263-acre tract for Congaree National Park. The bell-shaped tract is bounded by the Congaree River to the south, U.S. 601 to the east, and Bates Old River to the west.

With this purchase, all but 10 acres of the 4,533 acres in the 2003 boundary expansion are now owned by Congaree National Park. The park used a portion of the \$1.4 million appropriation it received in 2014 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to purchase the tract.

The tract was protected by a conservation easement held by Congaree Land Trust and set up by one of the former owners, Clay Johnston. The conservation easement

*See Tract, page 5*

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# President's Corner

*Dr. John Grego*

## **Lexington stormwater plan revisions**

Lexington County staff is drafting a revision to its 2007 stormwater management ordinance that recommends maintaining current buffer widths and tightens an exemption for single-owner parcels.

The current ordinance includes 50-foot buffers for intermittent streams, wetlands, lakes, and ponds, and 100-foot buffers or the floodway width, whichever is wider, for permanent streams. To be more precise, the details on Lexington's buffers are part of its Land Development Manual, rather than the ordinance proper. Lexington County must periodically update its stormwater ordinances and Land Development Plan to ensure compliance with stormwater management activities regulated under the EPA's Clean Water Act.

Until recently, the county had received input primarily from the development community, specifically the Building Industry Association (previously and better known as the Home Builders Association). In response to recent input from conservation groups and resource

agencies, Lexington County held a listening session July 14 to hear from a wider variety of stakeholders.

Friends of Congaree Swamp prepared a letter prior to the meeting and shared it with county staff and council members. Our letter noted that impaired streams could be found in all nine council districts and shared information on the benefits of increasing water quality buffers. Frankly, 50-foot buffers provide only modest water quality improvements, while buffers up to 300 feet are needed to see improvements across a wide variety of water quality measures.

The listening session is available online and makes for interesting viewing. Speakers from the development community spoke in favor of smaller buffers on permanent streams—50 feet, 35 feet, or perhaps no mandated buffers at all.

The conservation community was well represented by Karen Kustafik of Palmetto Paddlers, Bill Marshall from the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Congaree Riverkeeper Bill Stangler, Reuben Chandler from Trout Unlimited, and Tim Rogers from Friends of the Edisto River. Members of the Lexington County Soil & Water Conservation District, the Lexington County Stormwater Advisory Board, and Lexington residents also spoke in favor of the proposal. By the end of the session, council members had to have been impressed by the wide range of stakeholders in favor of wider water quality buffers.

Sheri Armstrong, the county's stormwater manager, said no firm schedule has yet been set for the council to take up staff's recommendation, but there will be opportunities for additional public input.

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Friends of Congaree Swamp advocates for Congaree National Park and its unique environment.

Dr. John Grego, President

Sharon H. Kelly, Editor

# Specialist to manage feral hogs at park

Congaree National Park has signed a three-year interagency agreement to hire a full-time feral hog management specialist.

The agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service will help the park develop and carry out an integrated hog management plan, including trapping, shooting and collecting samples for disease surveillance. The park will provide a project manager to work with the hog management specialist and together they will coordinate education and outreach.

Though the park does not have dedicated funding specifically for the hog management specialist position, it does have funds from visitor donations and staff vacancies in the current budget year to jump-start the project.

Friends of Congaree Swamp agreed to provide \$10,000 for the upcoming fiscal year to fully fund the first year of the position. The additional contribution allows the park to hire at a higher pay grade and



*A feral sow forages in the park with her piglets.*

provide more benefits.

Feral hogs affect numerous natural, cultural and recreational resources through their activities and presence, including:

- Rooting at National Register of Historic Places sites, including cattle mounds and agricultural dikes, where they seek high ground during flooding.
- Rooting and trampling along stream banks and sloughs, which affects water quality.
- Rooting and foraging that disrupts vegetation

and affects forest succession and composition.

- Rooting and foraging that competes with native species for resources.
- Foraging that targets small birds, herbs, macroinvertebrates, ground-nesting birds, and vegetation.
- Aggressive behavior that represents a danger to park visitors.
- Harboring diseases such

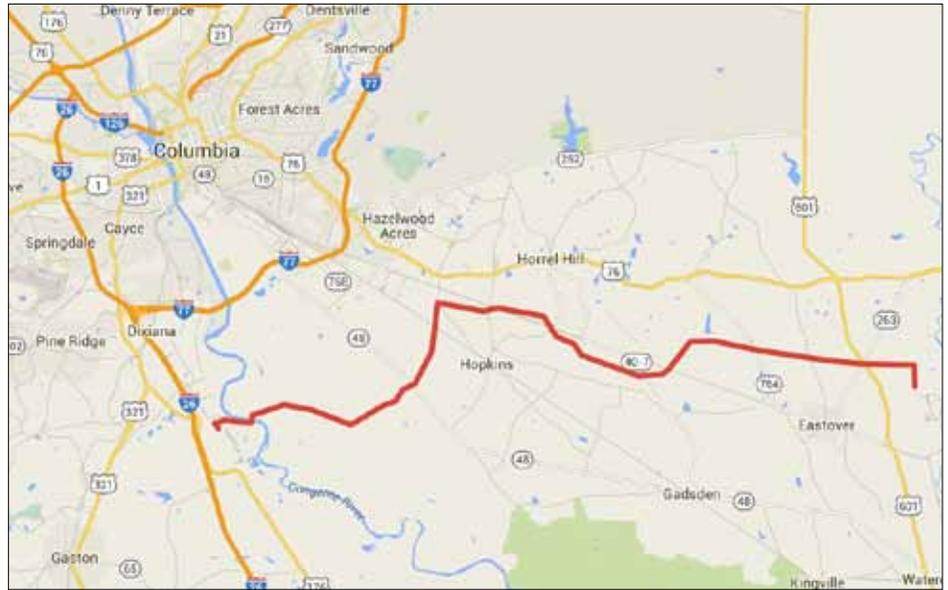
*See Specialist, page 5*

# Friends comments on pipeline project

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) recently released a public notice for Dominion Carolina Gas Transmission's proposed 28-mile-long pipeline project to supply International Paper with natural gas. The natural gas would replace International Paper's current reliance on fuel oil and coal as fuel for its boilers. A cleaner fuel is required to meet environmental air quality standards.

The 8-inch pipeline would tap an existing 24-inch pipeline at DAK Americas (the former Carolina Eastman plant) in Calhoun County, cross under the Congaree River, traverse the floodplain then run roughly parallel to Air Base Road before jogging north then east to International Paper's plant on the Wateree River.

The public notice precedes completion of an environmental assessment by FERC. Friends of Congaree Swamp reviewed elements of the Columbia to Eastover pipeline project and filed comments on the environmental review with FERC in July. Our comments focused on the pipeline path and directional drilling, though we discussed a couple



*Proposed pipeline project marked in red.*

other aspects of the complex set of application documents that could well be scrutinized by others, including affected property owners.

**Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD).** In general, we commended the use of HDD to lessen impact on wetlands and water bodies in the pipeline's path. Horizontal directional drilling uses a mixture of fine bentonite clay and water to bore through ground underneath water bodies, wetlands, roads, and railroads and is less disruptive than cutting a trench. However, the drilling fluid's dense slurry of suspended particles represents a hazard if accidentally released to water bodies.

To lessen the impact of drilling fluid spills, we

requested that drilling not take place under the Congaree River in the early spring. Shortnose sturgeon, a rare, threatened and endangered species, and striped bass, an important recreational species, migrate and spawn near this reach of the Congaree River during the late winter and early spring. The threat from accidental spills of the bentonite drilling fluid will be lessened by suspending drilling at this time.

Given that HDD will be used beneath several Congaree River tributaries, we also requested that drilling not take place in the event of high water levels on these streams to mitigate the effect of any spill.

**Mitigation.** The project

*See Pipeline, page 7*

## Tract

*continued from page 1*

will remain in place, though the land will now be managed with a higher level of protection than required under the easement. Originally, the tract measured 270 acres, but almost 7 acres were purchased by the S.C. Department of Transportation to modify the alignment of the U.S. 601 causeway.

Since it was formerly managed for hunting, it has an existing network of jeep trails, which can be reached from a newly redesigned access road off U.S. 601. The access road is directly opposite the wide pull-out at the Sampson Island trail head, so parking to visit the tract is quite convenient.

The tract also adjoins the S.C. Department of Natural Resources' Bates boat landing on the Congaree River, though that portion of the tract appears to be low-lying and not readily accessible.

Nevertheless, the proximity of the tract to the new Bates Ferry Trail and convenient and safe access points provides yet another exciting recreational opportunity on the eastern end of the park.

# Hike set for Sept. 26 to explore new acquisition

Friends will be traveling to the U.S. 601 causeway **Saturday, Sept. 26**, to visit the new tract.

The tract has an established access road and several jeep trails leading to food plots, so it should be an easy area to explore. We will have the opportunity to follow Bates Old River channel and visit the bank of the Congaree River. There may be other highlights to discover along the way—that's part of the reason for the trip.

The hike should be no more than three miles, and a side trip to the park's newly opened Bates Ferry

Trail to see the General Greene cypress is a definite option.

We will meet at the Harry Hampton Visitor Center at 9:30 a.m. and carpool 16 miles to the wide pull-out along the U.S. 601 causeway at Sampson Island. Bring a lunch if you like, to enjoy along with the fine weather that always accompanies FOCS field trips. The hike should last until about 12:30 p.m.

Contact John Cely at [jcely@sc.rr.com](mailto:jcely@sc.rr.com) or (803) 782-7450 to register. Preference will be given to members of Friends of Congaree Swamp.

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## Specialist

*continued from page 3*

- as brucellosis.
- Foraging off-site that creates animosity between the park and adjacent landowners.

Funding for the remaining years of the project is uncertain, but we are excited to see the

park move so quickly on its management plan and proud to make such a substantial contribution for the first year of the program.

We have pledged to continue contributing to the program and to seek more funding outlets to support the management program.

# Park has many volunteer opportunities

Congaree National Park has a number of opportunities for volunteers.

The **Resource Management Division** needs assistance with a variety of projects throughout the year. Volunteer hours will primarily be Monday through Friday during working hours and training will be provided.

Opportunities include:

- Assisting with the removal of sweet gum in the uplands area of the park. Treatments may include the use of herbicide and hand and power tools.
- Assisting with ongoing research projects

- Helping to research and write grants
- Putting GIS experience to work

For details, contact Theresa Yednock at (803) 647-3974.

The **Division of Interpretation** is looking for as many volunteers as possible to assist with this year's Swamp Fest on October 2. We are going to make this the biggest park event of the year, so we will need folks to assist with all manner of activities, including staffing the Visitor Center, leading tours, helping with event preparations and promotion, conducting

special cultural programs, and countless other opportunities.

This will be a fun and exciting weekend for our local community, park visitors, and our park staff and volunteers!

There are many other opportunities not listed here, so if you have other interests or skills and want to volunteer, there may be something for you at Congaree!

If you are interested in volunteering, contact Greg Cunningham, interpretive park ranger and volunteer coordinator at (803) 647-3983.

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## Save the date

*continued from page 1*



*Zebra swallowtails*

includes long pants and closed-toed shoes. Meet at the Harry Hampton Visitor Center.

Sun screen, bug spray, water, snacks, and a sack lunch are recommended. Binoculars are recommended as well, but not required. A limited supply of

binoculars are available and may be reserved ahead of time at the front desk.

For more information, contact David Shelley, education coordinator of the Old-Growth bottomland Forest Research and Education Center, at [david\\_shelley@nps.gov](mailto:david_shelley@nps.gov) or (803) 647-3966.

### Migratory bird hike

Join us **Sunday, Sept. 27**, for a fall hike to look for migratory birds moving through the park on their way back to the Caribbean, Central America and South America. This is also a good opportunity for final looks at some of our summer resident bird species. During the hike, we will have the opportunity to practice audio

identification skills (mostly of resident and summer species), and will be able to observe several species up close.

The hike will be part of the North American Migration Count for Congaree National Park, and our observations will be part of a statewide compilation. We plan to cover other areas of the park both preceding and following the morning hike and welcome additional volunteers.

We'll meet at the Harry Hampton Visitor Center at 8:30 a.m. and the hike should last until noon. Bring water, insect repellent and binoculars. The hike will follow portions of the Sims Trail, Boardwalk Loop Trail and Bluff Trail.

If interested, contact John Grego at (803) 331-3366 or [jrgrego@sc.rr.com](mailto:jrgrego@sc.rr.com).

## Pipeline

*continued from page 4*

description states there is a reasonable possibility that archaeological sites could be affected and suggested that these sites “could likely be mitigated.” It would be helpful if existing sites on International Paper property, including a slave/sharecropper cabin and Kensington Mansion, could be considered for mitigation projects. Such a request would be timely given the recent controversy over maintenance of these historic sites.

**Access roads** The pipeline will be reached along existing road routes, which presumably will be improved and buffered. Temporary access roads will affect 30 acres of land, while 115 acres will be affected by permanent access roads. We are concerned with several aspects of the access roads, including those that appear overly long, pass through prime farmland and other conservation property, or appear redundant. More careful consideration of these roads in particular and alternate routes and mitigation should be discussed.

**Pipeline path.** The pipeline would follow existing utility easements for 75 percent of its path. We reviewed the pipeline path and were particularly concerned about further fragmentation of the Congaree River floodplain by utility easements. We



*Polo stables at Belle Grove*

## Annual meeting set for Oct. 25

Friends of Congaree Swamp will hold its Annual Oyster Roast and Business Meeting on Sunday, October 25, 2015, at Belle Grove off Bluff Road.

Guided hikes on the property will include overlooks of Mill Creek and its scenic sloughs, as well as a visit to Thomas Howell’s 18th Century homestead.

Bryan Tayara of Our Local Catch will roast South Carolina oysters and Friends of Congaree Swamp board members will prepare our usual feast of chili, roast chicken, vegetarian selections, beverages and desserts. Look for registration materials soon.

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noted a 2.5-mile reach of the floodplain in which the pipeline path leaves an existing utility easement right-of-way and cuts across a bend in Mill Creek before rejoining the path of another existing utility easement. Given that utility easements that avoid Mill Creek are readily available, we requested

that a new easement not be cut along this stretch. We also noted a couple other instances in which existing utility rights-of-way were ignored.

An additional public notice has been sent out to determine the scope of the Environmental Assessment, and we plan to prepare comments for that notice as well.



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**Join Friends of Congaree Swamp today!**

Yes, I want to support conservation of Congaree Swamp for future generations. Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_. (Please make checks payable to Friends of Congaree Swamp.)

_____ Individual \$15	Name(s) _____
_____ Family \$35 *	Mailing address _____
_____ Advocate \$50	City _____ State _____ Zip _____
_____ Partner \$100 **	Phone _____ Email _____
_____ Benefactor \$500	
_____ Patron \$1000	
_____ Nonprofit \$50	
_____ Corporate \$1000	

**Please keep your information current to receive special notices about field trips, events, scheduling changes and acknowledgements in addition to a quarterly newsletter.**

\*For a contribution of \$35 or more, you may choose one:

Baseball cap maroon \_\_\_\_\_ tan \_\_\_\_\_

Tan visor \_\_\_\_\_

Bandana with map of Congaree National Park gold \_\_\_\_\_ blue \_\_\_\_\_ red \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*For a contribution of \$100 or more you will receive a copy of "The Natural History of Congaree Swamp."

In addition, I would like to donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ as a gift.

**Thank you for supporting Friends of Congaree Swamp!**

Friends of Congaree Swamp, P.O. Box 7746, Columbia, SC 29202-7746  
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