



Friends of Congaree Swamp News

www.friendsofcongarree.org

Fall 2020

Water/Ways exhibit open at the park

The Water/Ways exhibit finally got under way November 13 and lasts through January 13, 2021. The exhibit is in the Visitor Center auditorium, with a separate entrance from the general public.

During the week, visitors will be able to drop by unscheduled, but the park will allow 10 people every 30 minutes on the weekends, with reservations controlled through Eventbrite. Details are available through the park’s website.

We have continued to make adjustments in the events schedule, while new opportunities continue to arise. A soft opening was scheduled for local partners, regional park staff and politicians, but that had to be set aside due to COVID, as were more ambitious plans for a grand opening on Saturday, November 14.

Friends of Congaree Swamp did use some of its funding to have musician John Arnold play at the new platform at the American Beech on the boardwalk on November 14, and the park feels some interpretive walks may be possible.

We talked with Friends member and University of South Carolina School of Music professor Greg Stuart about using his composition “Congaree Nomads” as music to accompany the exhibit, and he instead proposed a new composition specific to the installation. Greg worked over the summer to complete the music, and coordinated with

park staff on sound installation details, to be accompanied by video and images, which will make the exhibit just that much more immersive.

We had to cancel an Aquatic Critters event hosted by Jason Bettinger, a S.C. Department of Natural Resources fisheries biologist, since SCDNR is not yet sponsoring such events. On the other hand, we designed National Public Lands Day (September 26) with a focus on the park’s waterways, combining events earlier scheduled for consecutive weekends.

Paddlers collected fishing gear and trash along Cedar Creek, while other groups collected trash at Bates Ferry Trail, Fork Swamp Trail, Bates Old River landing and Bates Landing on the

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S.C. Honors College students helped with the litter pickup.

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President's Corner

Dr. John Grego

The Friends Board will welcome new board members Dr. Neal Polhemus and Dr. Tameria Warren, while Lynn Teague, LaBruce Alexander, Carolyn Hudson and David Schuetrum will begin new 3-year terms.

Long-time board members Carol Kososki and Marie Adams will be stepping down. I will miss their presence on the board deeply.

Carol is a founding member of the Friends board, has served terms as vice president and secretary, and been a member of the Executive Committee for her entire tenure.



Carol Kososki

She also recruited me to serve on the Conservation Commission some years ago, and so we have a long history working closely on conservation issues. Our approaches to advocacy are completely different, but Carol and I invariably see eye-to-eye on issues, and our styles complement each other well.

Though Carol will be stepping back from the board, I'm sure she'll stay closely involved with conservation and development issues affecting the Midlands, not to mention all the other organizations and efforts with which she shares her skill, leadership and experience.

Marie, with her sisters and members of the

Lower Richland community, forged SERCO into the park's closest community partner. She has worked tirelessly to promote and celebrate



Marie Adams

Lower Richland, with many of the community activities anchored at her family's ancestral home, the Harriet Barber House and grounds.

Through Marie, both the Friends and the park have been introduced to many other community

partners at SwampFest, Strong Threads, Water/Ways, Government Cemetery Memorial Day and other events. And she's always ready to share her time and knowledge with park staff, researchers, nonprofits, and students. I will miss her immensely on the board, but look forward to many more years of SERCO events.

New board members are:

Neal Polhemus, a Ph.D. historian of Early America and currently assistant director of the Bridge Humanities Program at the University of South Carolina.

He has published peer-reviewed essays on the Sierra Club's grassroots campaign to protect the Beidler Tract and overlooked archival resources pertaining to the history of Congaree National Park.

A devotee of Mother Nature from a young age, Neal spent summers hiking throughout the Blue Ridge mountains and canoeing the Nantahala and French Broad rivers.

He is a member of a research team that is presently undertaking a parkwide survey of the ancient Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*) that inhabit the Congaree floodplain. While former researchers have established the scale of the park's Loblolly Pines and other hardwoods, once completed, the survey will be the first to establish the breadth, dimensions, and character of the species.

Tameria M. Warren, Ph.D., a senior environmental scientist with Whitetail Environmental, LLC (based at Fort Jackson) and an adjunct professor at the University of South Carolina. She also worked as an environmental engineer with General Motors at multiple Midwest

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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

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Land Development Code draft needs work

The process of reorganizing and rewriting of Richland County's Land Development code that first started in 2018 as the We Plan Together initiative has now resulted in a final draft of the code by consultants Clarion Associates.

If you remember the great water quality buffer and floodway wars of 2007-2012, well-documented in this newsletter, then you're familiar with some of the issues that could arise in the new version of the Land Development code.

The code actually covers a spectrum of topics of interest to environmentalists, including water quality improvement, sustainable development, smart streets, sustainable energy, stormwater management, and natural and cultural resource protection. We will present impressions of how some of these topics have been addressed in the draft code.

Density-based Zoning. For many zoning classifications (agricultural, rural, residential), the code moves away from minimum lot size to density-based zoning. For instance, rather than requiring a minimum lot size of half an acre, a Rural-Residential Transition district would require an average density of two homes per acre.

This practice can allow homes to be clustered together while preserving larger natural areas or open space

in developments, rather than sprawling developments with large individual lots, but little contiguous open space. Existing rural neighborhoods will surely express concern that their properties may now be adjacent to more homes than they would like, but these concerns are alleviated somewhat by requiring minimum lot widths.

Water Quality Buffers. Water quality buffers were a flash point during the last code revision, and the fight over buffer widths actually led to the formation of the Land Development roundtable in 2009-2012. The cooperative discussions among environmental advocates, staff and the development community were quite productive, though water quality buffers were still the most controversial topic.

The new code faithfully reproduces those regulations, including some then-reluctant compromises on buffer widths and exemptions for single-family homes. Current water quality buffer widths appear narrow (50 feet in either direction from stream bank), but those widths are increased to 100 feet for 303(d)-listed streams, which include many of the watersheds in the county.

In addition, conservationists fought to preserve a rule that the buffer width for waterways with floodway determinations (i.e., most large streams and

streams) is actually the maximum of the regulatory buffer width or the floodway, so water quality buffers can be quite considerable on waterways with wide floodplains.

Rather than revisit some of these topics and advocate for improvements, we will likely work to ensure that the regulations remain as strong as they appear in the current draft.

Since the draft code was released, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, under the guidance of the Trump administration, has released a new definition of Waters of the United States that greatly reduces the Corps' role in regulating isolated wetlands, headwaters, and ephemeral streams.

The county code relies on the Corps' determination of jurisdictional waters, and the code's effectiveness in protecting water resources will be compromised unless some means can be devised to cover all waters within the original scope of the code.

Green Code. The so-called "Green Code" in the current land development regulations (Section 26-186) encouraged an array of progressive development practices, including density-based zoning and open space protection, in exchange for density "bonuses"; i.e., the opportunity

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Cely wins regional volunteer award

John Cely was recently successfully nominated by park ranger Jon Manchester for a 2019 George and Helen Hartzog Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service.

John received the Enduring Service Award at the regional level, and was hence eligible for the national award, which was won by another regional nominee.

The park's Firefly Program also received a regional award.

The awards are named in honor of South Carolina native George B. Hartzog, Jr., director of the National Park Service from 1964 to 1972, and his wife Helen. Upon George Hartzog's retirement, the Hartzogs made a donation to the National Park Foundation in honor of the Volunteers in Parks program, which helped establish the annual volunteer service awards.

Congratulations to John, and thanks again to Jon Manchester, who prefaced the award nomination with the following statement:



John Cely in his natural habitat

“John Cely has been a part of Congaree from the very beginning. From his vast knowledge of the natural and cultural history of the Congaree landscape, he continually provides both staff and visitors a deeper understanding of the park's significance, as well

as a living connection to the movement that established the park.

His legendary programs have taken visitors off the beaten path to experience the champion trees and other unique features of the park that many rarely get to see.

In addition to over 20 years of volunteering with the park, he has spent thousands of hours exploring deep into the wilderness, documented the rise and fall of champion trees, and researched the rich history of humans in this landscape.

All of this has given him a deeper understanding of this special place which he freely shares with others.

John's love for Congaree is readily evident to both visitors and park staff, and can be seen through his wisdom and insights, given to others with a simple clarity that can only come from over half a century of passion and dedication.”



Zebra Longwing



Giant Swallowtail

Butterfly Count

The Fall North American Butterfly Association (NABA) count was an invitation-only event on Sept. 12. A final report is not yet available, but Zebra Longwing was seen in the park for the first time in three years and two Giant Swallowtails were a new park record.

Grego

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manufacturing facilities.

For more than 20 years, Dr. Warren has focused her work on sustainability management, pollution prevention, and environmental compliance and education. As a resident of the Lower Richland community, she is also involved in various organizations such as Sustainable Midlands, Gills Creek Watershed Association, South East Rural Community Outreach (SERCO), City of Columbia's Climate Protection Action Campaign (CPAC), and Lower Richland NAACP.

Dr. Warren is a native of Detroit, MI and has resided in SC since 2008.

Re-elected members are:

Lynn Shuler Teague grew up in Columbia before moving to the Southwest with her husband, George Teague, in 1968. She was curator of Archaeology at the Arizona State Museum, University of Arizona. Upon retirement, she and her husband George moved back to Columbia. She and George immediately joined Friends of Congaree Swamp, recognizing it as an organization that is working to preserve a treasure that is personally important to both of them. Lynn is also heavily involved in advocacy at the S.C. State House for the League of Women Voters, especially on issues of voting, elections, and ethics. She continues a long-time interest in the history of early

German-Swiss and German settlers in South Carolina.

Carolyn Hudson is a charter member of the Friends of Congaree Swamp and has been a member of the Board of Directors since 2005.

Previously she served on the Education Committee. She has also been a Congaree National Park volunteer. Her other environmental activities include being a certified member of the Climate Reality Leadership Corps and a member of the local Climate Reality Chapter, serving as an environmental appointment on the S.C. Nuclear Advisory Council, and being a member of the Columbia GreenFaith Circle and the Sierra Club.

She previously taught environmental geology at the University of South Carolina for 18 years. Additionally, she is vice chair of the Greater Piedmont Chapter of the Explorers Club, and a member of the League of Women Voters and several community bands.

LaBruce Alexander was one of the leaders in the effort to protect Congaree Swamp in the 1970s, which ultimately led to the establishment of the Congaree Swamp National Monument.

She was the founder of the S.C. Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, served as executive director for 12 years, and took part in the initial efforts to create the ACE Basin.

Brusi was one of the first people approached to establish a friends group for Congaree

Swamp National Monument.

She was an original board member and served as president from 1998 to 2003 during our organization's formative years. She continues to serve on the Friends of Congaree Swamp Executive Committee.

She has served in leadership positions in numerous other conservation and advocacy groups, including Columbia Audubon Society (board and staff); League of Women Voters, Columbia and S.C. (boards); Sustainable Midlands (executive committee); Lourie Senior Center (board chair); Columbia Garden Club (board); and Columbia Council For Internationals (board).

David Schuetrum grew up in a military family and later enlisted in the Air Force in the weather field. He has lived in multiple states, ranging from Alaska to Hawaii, California, and Florida, with several states in between. He has been married 35 years.

He met his future wife Claire on the trail, in the mountains, with the Carolina Mountain Club when living in Asheville, NC.

He has been retired for several years from a career in the National Weather Service. His passions involve biology and the natural world. He has been a member of Kingville Hunt Club, which borders the park, for about 25 years and rambles the woods a good bit.

He is a Master Naturalist, beekeeper, and active with the South Carolina Association of Naturalists, and several other clubs and organizations.

Sign Malfunction

Delight at new signage along U.S. 601 turned to dismay when we saw not one, not two, but four signs mislabeling the two crossings of Bates Old River as Old Bates River. After multiple phone calls, personnel at the S.C. Department of Transportation District One's sign shop indicated an unnamed agency had been explicit about the name, but SCDOT would consider replacements if we would document the correct name. Documentation was easy to come by, and we're happy to report SCDOT will replace the signs within weeks.



Code

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to develop housing at a higher density than permitted for a given zoning classification.

One of the motivations behind the new draft would be to propagate some of these ideas throughout the land development code. As we have seen, density-based zoning has been proposed for all code. In addition, minimum requirements for open space are provided as well.

Depending on zoning classification, open space will comprise 10 to 25 percent of development. Since natural areas, including floodplains, can count toward open space, this requirement can seem rather modest. Nonetheless, a portion of open space must always be developable space, and it is good to see the open-space principle applied more generally.

Green Development incentives are available for a wide variety of conservation measures and apply to all new development and substantive redevelopment. Incentives

comprise density bonuses and relaxing of height and parking restrictions.

To take advantage of these bonuses, developments will need to include multiple measures from a wide selection of possibilities under categories including energy conservation, alternative energy, LEED certification, water quality and water conservation, vegetation, urban agriculture, building materials, resiliency to natural hazards, and transportation.

Some of the measures are quite progressive (installing a green vegetated roof, removing turfgrass, installing electric vehicle charging stations), though others appear much too weak, such as planting vegetation around HVAC units. This section of the code will need to be revised to prevent “green-washing” of housing developments.

Though the code includes some progressive ideas, it takes a fragmented approach to the county's natural and cultural resources conservation districts (Floodplain Overlay, Water

Resources Overlay, Land Preservation, and Conservation Development) so it is difficult to discern the distinct purposes of these districts.

Other districts are not nearly as ambitious in scope as they could be, particularly Agriculture, which should focus on preserving large tracts of traditional farmland, rather than serve as a warmed-over rural large-lot zoning district.

We are concerned that this fragmentary approach will not effectively promote conservation goals, including protection of forested landcover and buffers to improve water quality, protection of an agriculture-based economy, preservation of natural resource-based recreation, and conservation of historic landscapes.

Since the final draft was released, the county has received feedback from stakeholders throughout the summer and early fall. Based on that feedback, the county has greatly slowed the process for approval, and will organize additional stakeholder meetings and public hearings well into 2021.

Water/Ways Symposium to be held virtually

The schedule and presenters for the Water/Ways Symposium are essentially confirmed, while details of the delivery for this virtual meeting near completion.

The symposium will start Thursday evening, January 8, with a talk by Dr. Robert Greene of Claflin University, who prepared a study of historical resources at Congaree National Park while a graduate student at University of South Carolina.

On Friday, we will have panels on themes inspired by the Water/Ways exhibit, including

- Home is Where the Water Is: Water, Culture and History in the COWASEE Basin
- Water: Critical Resource, Societal Asset
- It's Our Water: Managing Water at the Local Level
- What's Next? Spurred to Action!

Each moderated panel will have 4 to 6 participants, with a diverse mix of park and community partners. In addition, Eboni Ramm will create an abbreviated version of her Communal Pen Workshop experience for participants.

Registration for the event will be free, with details to be shared through Friends of Congaree Swamp, Congaree National Park and other organizations. We would like to thank the following members of the symposium organizing committee for their work: Dr. John Kupfer (University of South Carolina Geography), Dr. Tameria Warren (University of South Carolina, Whitetail Environmental), Dr. David Shelley (Congaree National Park), and Greg Cunningham and Jon Manchester (National Park Service).

Water/Ways

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Congaree River. Keep the Midlands Beautiful, loaned trash-pickers, gloves, trash bags, and PPE. We will definitely work with them anytime we plan a trash pickup again.

Artist Eboni Ramm's Communal Pen Workshop will be held as a pair of virtual workshops on consecutive Saturdays—December 5 and December 12. Flyers advertising the workshops will soon be available. Park staff has designed a special Junior Rangers insert to accompany Water/Ways.

John Cely's Running Creek paddle to Big Lake and Little Lake went off without a hitch, though the ebbing water levels

in October had us making alternate plans. Fortunately, the Congaree rose to flood level, which made launching difficult, but maneuvering through the flooded forest a pleasure.

After COVID delays this spring, we were able to reconnect with Lower Richland High School educators and are currently working with Dr. Kari-Ann Bitgue's Biology II class and Dale Jacobs' honors biology class on Museum on Main Street's Stories YES projects.

These student-produced and student-led media projects allow students to share personal stories related to Water/Ways themes. Park ranger Greg Cunningham and Friends of Congaree Swamp held a workshop for instructors, and have met

with classes remotely on multiple occasions to help develop project ideas and share contact information.

We hope to review student drafts soon and anticipate that the student projects should be ready to be included as part of the interpretive kiosk that Friends donated to the park.

S.C. Humanities successfully applied for a Richland County Hospitality Tax grant to advertise Smithsonian Water/Ways on local billboards.

It was an ironic turn of events, because whenever billboard advertising comes up at Friends' board meetings, it is invariably turned down. Nonetheless, we did share some of our favorite images of waterways at the park, and park staff and S.C. Humanities are meeting to design the displays.



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

Baseball cap maroon _____ tan _____
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**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!

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