

2nd Natural Bridge State Park Master Plan Committee Meeting Record

June 23, 2016; 3 to 5:30 PM

Natural Bridge Historic Hotel and Conference Center

15 Appledore Land, Washington Room

Natural Bridge, VA 24578

Purpose of Meeting – Develop the purpose statement for Natural Bridge State Park and examine park challenges, opportunities and significance.

Committee Members in Attendance

Mike Pulice, Jean Clark, Faye Cooper, Chris Wise, Conrad Matiuk, Susan Hammond, Eric Wilson, Bonnie Riedesal, Jay Scudder, Arthur Bartenstein, Bill Gordge, John Mays, Jennifer Bell, Al Bourgeois, Angela Conroy, Ken Conger, Spencer Suter, Lauren Stull, Paul Cooper

Committee Members not in Attendance

Benjamin Cline, Sam Crickenberger, Creigh Deeds, Chris Green, David Hinty, Wayne Nicely, Barbara Walsh, Tracy Lyons, Kevin McLindsay, Brenda Mead, Jim Northrup, Kurt Russ, James Woltz, Bonnie Cranmer, Destry Jarvis

DCR Staff in Attendance

Lynn Crump, Theresa Duffey, Jennifer Wampler, Sammy Zambon, Dave Collett, Craig Seaver, Dave Sommers, Fred Hazlewood, Jim Jones, Forrest Atwood, Amy Atwood, Al Cire, Linnea McCarty, Kessler Dingus

Others in attendance

Laurence Hammack, Chris Conger, Bruce Bytnar, Charles Durham, Steve Funkhouser, Major Ballard, Paul Bryant, Jeff Waldon, Bruce Rinker

Summary of presentations and discussions

Lynn Crump welcomed the committee and asked members to check the dropbox for copies of meeting presentations, handouts, etc.

Since there were no suggested changes to minutes from 4/26 meeting, the final copy will be posted on Town Hall. All present were asked to look at the park and connectivity maps to let us know if there is additional information that we should know about. All suggestions will be noted on future maps.

Sammy Zambon provided a photographic tour of the driving tour stops.

Bruce Rinker brought the committee's attention to a J.R.R. Tolkien quote carved into the rocks beside the amphitheater near the Monacan Village:

Still round the corner there may wait
A new road or a secret gate
And though I oft have passed them by
A day will come at last when I
Shall take the hidden paths that run
West of the Moon, East of the Sun.

Does anyone have more information on when and how this quote came to be carved there?

Al Cire provided some background on site resources: topography; historic and natural resources, including 11 caves (4 biologically significant) and sinkholes; wetlands; soils and soil suitability; and viewsheds.

Jennifer Wampler went over the survey results (27 respondents), which are posted, along with the presentation, in the dropbox.

Theresa Duffey provided a handout on opportunities and challenges gleaned from survey results, and the committee provided additional feedback.

Summary of input on Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

- Two dams on property, one failing, third one beside summerhouse under the radar. One at Stonehenge, one on Cedar Creek has other issues
- Transition will be a significant challenge—letting go of baggage that came with park in private ownership (religious stuff, commercialization), DCR should acknowledge and be grateful for this history and the stories that abound, but must also meet state-level obligations

Opportunities

- Make historic connection to all things Jeffersonian (Poplar Forest-Monticello-Natural Bridge triangle) for economic development/tourism
- Connection to other venues (National Forest, Blue Ridge Parkway)
- Monacan interpretation unique in state, really important, outstanding program
- Could become national center for conservation and sustainability, understanding people and place, Monacan, pioneers, civil war and current
- Gift shop will be the largest ever in state park, great opportunity, potential arts and crafts center. Challenge to determine what to do with 50,000 sf?
- History of the way people look at nature, how we have treated nature through the years, how we have interpreted nature, artistic interpretation of those different views, art and tacky art inspired by Natural Bridge
- James River, old canal system, Maury River also had canal-two rivers rich history, important role transportation in development of the Commonwealth

- Fisheries-native brook trout in headwaters of Cedar Creek (Short Hills) TMDL, great opportunity to work to clean up Cedar Creek, have native, eastern brook trout fishery, fly fishermen would love it
- Log building on other side of bridge next to road: rehab and use as part of state park, needs work, plan, should not escape attention
- Potential for habitat demonstration area, open lands, how to manage, bring in pollinator habitat, edge cuts to show value that people can do on their own properties
- We should consider collective volume of stories -- record experiences, ongoing contribution
- See pictures of Natural Bridge all over country, in many antique and curiosity shops

Lynn Crump went over the uniqueness/significance of the site based on survey results, and the committee voted on the each item. This feedback will help shape the goals and objectives.

Significance

- Unique, historic Natural Bridge-32 votes
- Connection to Jefferson-6
- Monacan living history-11
- Caverns and karst topography-11
- Documented history-0
- Blue Ridge Parkway-0
- GWJ National Forest-0
- Rivers and water trail, liveries-7
- Unique flora and fauna-11
- Surrounding scenic views-23
- Historic hotel, restaurant and gift shop-9
- Proximity to I-81-3
- Glasgow-A.T. community, river access-2
- Range of camping opportunities nearby-0
- Nearby activities in towns and cities-9
- Buck Hill-scenic area-3

Summary of input on other significant features:

- This particular site is especially important to Monacan tribe because of their history, but also because of the work staff have put into living history. The village has been recreated with hand tools and period techniques-- there is no other Monacan site in country. Also, the Monacan home base is in Amherst County, fairly close by.
- Buck Hill scenic area may not be well known to most people here, but it has absolutely magnificent views, with Apple Orchard Mountain and ranges north, there is great potential here for primitive recreation

Lynn presented the DCR mission statement, the DCR state park mission Statement and four options for park purpose statements attached] and described how this will be used (for internal use, to shape goals and objectives and the visitor services plan). Committee members provided the following feedback on the options and then voted on their favorite:

- Take out “most” unique (3rd statement)
- None include education
- Surrounding Blue Ridge mountains (take out Blue Ridge)
- Take out Shenandoah Valley (use Valley of Virginia)
- Preserve national historic landmark in perpetuity (in perpetuity important)
- When Jefferson protected Natural Bridge—one of world’s first efforts to preserve natural resource, had world significance, interest throughout history as romantic (equal to Niagara Falls) demonstration of nature’s romantic significance (goes way beyond valley of Virginia in impact)
- Work across sectors, broad—only one statement includes this important phrase

Based on a committee multi-vote, the preferred purpose statement reads as follows:

The purpose of Natural Bridge State Park is to protect one of Virginia’s unique natural features, the Natural Bridge; connect visitors to our storied past; demonstrate ecologically sound management; offer a range of outdoor recreation opportunities; and work across sectors to promote this premier destination.

Craig Seaver announced that the park manager for Natural Bridge has been selected: Jim Jones, who currently serves as assistant manager at James River State Park, will assume the position.

Information on next steps follows:

Check the drop box for an updated schedule and other meeting materials.

At the next committee meeting in the fall the purpose statement will be finalized and the committee will work on goals and objectives. We will also begin talking about facilities and preparing for 1st public input meeting. After the public meeting, a few committee members will be asked to participate in a design charette.

DCR Mission Statement

Conserve, protect, enhance and advocate wise use of the commonwealth's unique natural, historical, recreational, scenic and cultural resources.

State Parks Mission Statement

To conserve the natural, scenic, historic and cultural resources of the Commonwealth and provide recreational and educational opportunities consistent with the good stewardship of these lands, waters and facilities that leave them unimpaired for future generations.

Natural Bridge Purpose Statement Options

3. The purpose of Natural Bridge State Park is to provide the opportunity for visitors to marvel at Natural Bridge and its related karst features, to enjoy surrounding scenic views, to experience the area's history and culture and to become invested in protecting the resources of the James River and Shenandoah Valley as they recreate together.

4. The purpose of Natural Bridge State Park, the gateway to the Great Wagon Road and the Valley of Virginia, is to welcome visitors to the spectacular views of Natural Bridge and the surrounding Blue Ridge Mountains; to protect and interpret the unique karst, natural and historical resources of the storied James River watershed; and to provide memorable, sustainable outdoor recreational opportunities.

5. The purpose of Natural Bridge State Park is to protect one of Virginia's most unique natural features, the Natural Bridge; connect visitors to our past; demonstrate ecologically sound management; offer a range of outdoor recreation opportunities; and work across sectors to promote this premier destination.

6. The purpose of Natural Bridge State Park, shaped by water, time and human curiosity, is to protect and interpret the Natural Bridge and surrounding karst topography and their impact on historical and cultural development in the Valley of Virginia while providing memorable, sustainable recreation experiences.