

River Road Rehab: An Update

by Bill Leonard, P.E.

The rehabilitation of River Road is on schedule. Planning began in late 2003 and public meetings took place in January 2004 to solicit input from the community. On June 15, 2005, the park completed a 30-day public comment period on the project's *Environmental Assessment*, in which the park announced its *Preferred Alternative*.

Under the preferred alternative, the roadway will remain a two-way road from Shawnee-on-Delaware to Smithfield Beach, to accommodate the great majority of traffic that travels to the beach. Between Smithfield and Park Headquarters, River Road would become one-way (the direction of travel to be determined).

River Road is now in poor condition, and has an average width of only 18 ft., well below modern standards. Under the preferred alternative, the two-way section will have two 10-foot lanes, plus 2-ft. shoulders, which will require the clearing of some trees. However, the one-way section of roadway will fit within the existing road footprint and will consist of one 10-ft. vehicle lane and an 8-ft. hard-surface bicycle/pedestrian lane.

Park roads such as River Road are not intended to provide fast and convenient transportation like many other highways; they are intended to be part of the recreational experience for park visitors. This alternative allows rehabilitation of the road while preserving its historic character and minimizing environmental impacts. Retaining the rural character of this narrow road, lined with trees and open fields beside the river, was critical in designing the project to minimize impact on resources while still providing safe and enjoyable travel through the park. Normal design standards, for example, would call for trees to be cleared along the edge of the roadway, but clearing will be drastically reduced to preserve the cultural landscape of this historic rural road. In addition, the portion of the McDade Trail from Turn Farm to Park Headquarters will be

CONTINUED IN COLUMN 3

CONTINUED FROM COLUMN 1

incorporated into the bicycle/pedestrian lane. The Environmental Assessment for the proposed realignment of McDade Trail in this and several other sections should be released later in 2005.