



# The Oasis Newsletter

## Heritage Festival

On September 11, 2010, over 700 visitors enjoyed a day of historic family fun at our 3rd annual Prince William Forest Park Heritage Festival. From 10am-4pm, visitors enjoyed live woodworking, masonry and blacksmith demonstrations that exemplified the skills that built the 15,000-acre park in the 1930s. New this year was the addition of Sheryl Warner and the Southside Homewreckers who joined Hokum Jazz on the main stage to showcase the music of the 1930s and 40s.

Kids enjoyed making pine cone bird feeders and rustic picture frames with leaf rubbings at the Crafts Cabin. Outside the cabin, bubble gum contests, ranger dress up relay race, potato sack races are more fun and games rounded out the day. Antique cars and tractors were on hand to provide more insight into life during the Great Depression and World War II eras. Museum exhibits highlighted park history. Returning once again this year was OSS Veteran Art Reinhardt who was on hand to share his stories as a radio operator and cryptographer. Mr. Reinhardt trained with the OSS at Prince William Forest Park (then known as Area C).

We would like to take this opportunity to offer a special thank you to TD Bank of Dumfries, and our bookstore operator Eastern National for their sponsorship of this event! Join us next year for another Heritage Festival and let us know your ideas for more exciting history to share!

## National Public Lands Day

On September 25, 2010, Prince William Forest Park hosted over 250 volunteers for National Public Lands Day. From 9 am to 12, visitors got their hands dirty building trails and benches, cleaning up debris and brush, and landscaping the front entrance and visitor center. REI of Fairfax and Dominos Pizza of Quantico sponsored the event and provided the lunch that powered our volunteers forward!

Every year, we are amazed by what our volunteers can accomplish in a short, 4 hour period! We couldn't do it without you!

## Superintendent's Welcome

Nearly a year ago I arrived at Prince William Forest Park as the new superintendent of this unique and interesting resource. Only then did I realize the variety of fascinating places to explore within our park boundary. This immediately brought to my attention the fact that the park's name does not properly represent its national significance or purpose.

Prince William Forest Park appears to be disconnected from the larger National Park Service identity. Visitors do not know that they are in a National Park, particularly the users of the cabin camps and concessionaire-operated Travel Trailer Village. Several generations of park staff have struggled with the name of the park. Most concur that the current name fosters confusion and fails to link the site to the national park system. Many visitors are left thinking they are in a county or state park facility. In an effort to address this issue the park staff has been involved and re-energized about renaming the park and an employee committee has been developed to address this issue.

These and many other park-related issues have been brought to my attention during my tenure here. In an effort to address these issues, we hosted and are now responding to a management review team. One key recommendation of the team was that emphasis should be placed on programs that engage the larger community outside the park. They recommended the development of a multi-pronged engagement plan to reintroduce the park to local and regional community leaders, stakeholders, and our congressional delegation. They also recommend that I clearly articulate to *all* park staff the value and importance of external relations and community engagement and their role in that engagement. Since my entrance on duty, I have been making an effort to participate in organizational meetings and networking with community leaders.

It has been a busy and engaging eleven months and the resource, partners, and people are well worth the investment and involvement of the National Park Service at Prince William Forest Park. The volume of work and the number of issues that the Prince William Forest Park staff deals with is amazing. The fact that they also manage to reach out and support other parks and parts of the National Park Service underlines their credibility and hard work.

Vidal Martinez  
Superintendent

# What We've Been Up To...

Fiscal Year 2010 (Oct 1 2009-Sept 30, 2010) was a year of new beginnings for Prince William Forest Park. With a new superintendent, and support by the Recovery Act and your own entrance fees we did our best as caretakers of a park that YOU own. But don't take our word for it, let's see what you think....

### **Piedmont Forest Trail Rehabilitation:**

This year, our park maintenance staff and volunteers replaced 125 feet of walkway along the Piedmont Forest Trail using recycled decking. They replaced the overlook at the base of the trail, removing rotting wood and installing 9 new support piers, 3 new beams, 3 seats, one table and new hand rails.



### **Golden Pheonix Property:**

In 2005, Prince William Forest Park purchased a new property off of Mine Road. This year the well was capped for safety and groundwater protection.

### **Recovery Act Project Completed:**

Contractor removed 108 existing windows and replaced with 108 new vinyl replacement window units. The four dormitories had approximately ten inches of recycled insect resistance cellulose insulation (Green Product) blown in over the existing insulation. A total of 6912 square feet of attic area was insulated.

The park also received Recovery Act funds to rehabilitate 16 historic cabins in Cabin Camp 4. The park hired an additional 6 summer workers to restore the cabins which were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. The repaired rotting wood and roofs, making the cabins more suitable for summer campers now and into the future!

### Your Entrance Fees At Work!

#### **Relocation of AM Radio Station Tower:**

Bad wring, tree cover, and a short tower left our AM Radio station (AM1630) barely audible to the public. We have now relocated the radio tower to provide a better signal to the public. Tune in to find out!

#### **Produce 2010 Heritage Festival**

That's right folks... our Heritage Festival was supported by your entrance fees! Exhibitors, blacksmiths, woodworkers, musicians, and brochure printing all benefited from your generosity.

#### **Visitor Center Flagpole and Landscaping**

Next time you stop by our visitor center, check out our new flagpole and landscaping.

# Your Fee Dollars @ Work! New Playground Now Open!



## Let's Move Outside: Junior Ranger Book

This June, Prince William Forest Park was chosen as one of 20 national parks kicking off the Let's Move Outside Junior Ranger Program, an initiative is part of the First Lady Michelle Obama's campaign to fight childhood obesity. Let's Move Outside, led by the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, provides tools and information to parents to make it easy to enjoy the outdoors and be active and healthy.

"Young people inspire us; we want to help them be healthy and curious for life. It starts with family fun. We want to help parents learn the skills they need to enjoy the outdoors with their kids," National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis said. Young people who complete at least one physical activity in pursuit of their Junior Ranger badge receive a special sticker that designates them as a Let's Move Outside Junior Ranger.

Prince William Forest Park's Let's Move Outside Junior Ranger program offers kids and parents the chance to hike to the Cabin Branch Pyrite Mine or look for color clues in the beautiful park ecosystem. "These activities are not only great exercise, but also incredibly fun ways to see and learn about the park," said Park Superintendent, Vidal Martinez. "Our Junior Rangers carry on a long-standing tradition of youth exploring the outdoors in Prince William Forest Park," he continued. "It's really why the park is here in the first place!" Prince William Forest Park, founded as Chopawamsic Recreational Demonstration Area in 1936, was created to provide DC-area youth access to the great outdoors as a form of 'relief' during the Great Depression. The film, *The Human Crop*, available for viewing in the park visitor center and on the park website, shows Depression-era children on their first frolic in the park in 1936.



Before heading out, families can visit [www.letsmove.gov/outside](http://www.letsmove.gov/outside) for more information about activities and participating parks. This website hub will link families to the great outdoors and give tips and ideas on how to best plan and enjoy an active adventure. The National Park Service provides 84 million acres to explore, so there are many places and ways to move outside!

## Visitor's Voice

### Biodiversity beyond the Beltway

Having lived and worked in conservation sector in the Washington DC area for 10 years now, I had fooled myself into thinking that I knew our region's network of protected areas managed to conserve animals, plants, and natural habitats quite well. Wrong! I had the honor of becoming a US citizen last Tuesday, and so we decided to celebrate with a weekend camping trip somewhere we hadn't been before – and Prince William Forest Park popped up as a candidate.

What a wonderful place, so close to the Beltway, and yet astonishingly peaceful – there were only another dozen or so tents in the extensive Oak Ridge campground. But as soon as we'd pitched our tent, the kids – aged 3 and 5, ever the curious little naturalists – were off to lead our exploration of the park's extensive trails. Fall colors were beginning to paint the trees, and wildlife was everywhere: we saw beavers and bats at dusk on the South Valley Trail off the Mawavi Road; watched a House Wren; and had close encounters with interesting herps like Northern Cricket Frog and Black Rat Snake. Then back to Oak Ridge to enjoy the delights of campfire cooking, dodging the hail of acorns from the busy squirrels in the trees above... and all that less than half-an-hour from the doorstep in Alexandria.

I was left with two abiding thoughts: how lucky we are as US citizens to have such a wonderful park system to learn from, share, and enjoy; and how biodiversity always holds surprises, even just a stone's throw from our nation's capital!

Thomas Brooks  
(NatureServe, [www.natureserve.org](http://www.natureserve.org))

# From Construction Wasteland to Restored Grassland.

The Headwaters Property is a piece of land acquired by the park in 1997. It is so aptly named 'Headwaters' because the property encompasses the land where Quantico Creek originates. The land was previously mined for gold, then used as a dump for construction debris, and was also dammed in two places, creating two small recreational ponds. The contamination left from the mining and dumping was detrimental to the ecosystem of the Headwaters. The two ponds were not as nature intended and changed characteristics of the ecosystems downstream.

Clearly, something needed to be done. Between 1997 and 2009 many things had to be accomplished before the restoration could begin including site assessments, soil and water testing, exotic plant treatments, removal of contaminated soils, and miles of paperwork. The actual restoration of the 2.3 acres of disturbed land began in March with the removal of the two earthen dams. Do not fret, though, the animals that were using the ponds as their homes were captured and

relocated within the park and erosion control measures were implemented to prevent stream bank erosion. After the removal of the earthen dams, the road was pulverized, the large field of debris was removed, AmeriCorps personnel installed silt fencing around the perimeter, the field was covered with topsoil and the whole site was reshaped and graded to restore the natural topography.

Now that the property was back to a natural state, park staff and volunteers spread 150 pounds of native warm season grass seed, 30 pounds of riparian grass mix, and 100 bales of hay to stave off hungry birds and keep the seeds from washing away during a rainstorm. The park staff and SCA interns also planted 525 native trees to speed up the natural progression. Finally, after 13 years of work, the restoration of this habitat was complete.



Before and after for the headwaters project. Photo by Gareth McMahon.

# Youth Lead The Way In Summer Programs

This summer, Prince William Forest Park joined a nationwide effort to recruit young people into summer hire positions. The park tapped into various existing programs, and a few new ones, to recruit and young, diverse and dynamic workforce. Hopefully, leading the way to future careers in the National Park Service. Here are just some of their highlights:

## Youth Conservation Corps:

Prince William Forest Park has been hosting the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program for over 25 years. In June of 2010, another four local residents were selected to participate in this year's program. The park staff engaged these youth in a variety of work projects to include: rehabilitation of historic cabins, trail maintenance, construction projects, painting projects, and landscaping projects. This program introduces our youth to the many careers available in the National Park Service, while providing them the opportunity to learn about teamwork, safety and leadership. Environmental education is also integrated into the program so they gain experience in becoming environmental stewards. The YCC program is open to youth ages 15-19. Applications are available on line at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov) in the March/April timeframe. All eligible youth considering a career with the National Park Service, or who likes to work outdoors, are encouraged to apply. This program has been and continues to be positive for Prince William Forest Park and the surrounding community.

## Youth Internship Program

Molly Galloway and Michelle Ellis were hired this summer through a new initiative called the Youth Internship Program (YIP). YIP attempts to recruit youth from diverse backgrounds and populations to broaden the audiences for the National Park Service. Molly and Michelle were an essential part of the Visitor Services division helping staff the

entrance station and visitor center, and helping to conduct multiple educational programs including our craft program and Saturday campfire programs.

## Public Lands Corps:

Public Land Corps youth aided in the removal of invasive species and testing of water quality in the park's lakes and 9 miles of streams.

## Student Conservation Association:

This summer, student interns from the Student Conservation Association helped conserve artifacts in the park museum collection, staff the visitor center, and complete maintenance projects. In addition, the park hosted a training program for Student Conservation Association Team Leaders who were sent out around the country to construct trails and complete conservation projects.

## AmeriCorps

In June, AmeriCorps reported to Prince William Forest Park to participate in a project for National Trails Day. AmeriCorps assisted the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC), the Mid-Atlantic Road Enthusiasts (MORE), the Student Conservation Association (SCA), Recreational Equipment, Inc (REI), volunteers, and other cooperative groups in the rehabilitation of the Taylor Farm Trail.

They also worked on the following projects:

1. Hazardous fuel removal and winter storm clean-up
2. Removal of organic materials from a recreational lake wading pool
3. Staining historic cabins (an American Recovery and Relief Act funded project)
4. Spreading grass seed and straw
5. Planting trees



## ProRangers

Selected as one of eight parks, in the Northeast and National Capital Regions, Prince William Forest Park, contributed to the successful implementation of the ProRanger Program. Partnering with Temple University in Philadelphia, PA; the ProRanger Program is an intern placement program designed to bring recent college graduates into ranger positions within the National Park Service. Specifically, the ProRanger Program seeks to provide a solid foundation into National Park operations, for Temple University students who will graduate into a law enforcement position in the National Park Service. Thirteen students were selected to participate in this first year of the program, after meeting rigorous selection criteria.

For twelve weeks this summer, ProRangers Kathryn Snyder and Aaron Lyle lived and worked at Prince William Forest Park. They worked as interns in all aspects of the park operations from ranger services, interpretation, administration, cultural and natural resources and maintenance. Next summer, they will attend the National Park Service Seasonal Law Enforcement Training program. Upon successful completion of the training requirements, Kathryn and Aaron will be commissioned law enforcement rangers somewhere at one of 391 National Park Service units across the United States. Prince William Forest Park is a committed partner to the ProRanger Program and looks forward to hosting new faces next summer, and to shaping the future faces of the National Park Service.



# The Return of the Snake Charmer

By Don Lyman

In the spring of 1967 I took a field trip with my sixth grade class to Prince William Forest Park, just outside the Quantico Marine Base in northern Virginia. While running down a trail with some of the other boys I nearly stepped on a three foot long copperhead that was sunning itself on the path. I jumped over the snake, then yelled to the other kids to warn them. Copperheads are venomous, so their bite can be dangerous.

As the snake crawled off the trail into the adjacent woods we began throwing rocks at the retreating serpent, striking it several times, and eventually killing it. A few minutes later a park ranger showed up on horseback. I ran up to him and proudly told him we had killed a venomous snake. Thinking we had done a good deed, I was quite surprised when the ranger shook his head and rolled his eyes, then admonished us. Copperheads, the ranger explained, like any snake, are an important part of the ecology of the forest. They have a role to play in the environment, and if left alone, do not pose a threat to people. Afterwards, I felt terrible about killing that snake, and I never forgot the lesson I learned that day.

In mid July of this summer, ironically after attending the annual herpetology conference in Providence, I drove down to Quantico for a reunion with Junior, who was on summer break from his job as a special ed teacher in Oklahoma. I've been back to Quantico several times since I left there, but never with Junior. He brought his four kids, and his grandson with him. His oldest son, Dane, who just graduated from college, shares his dad's interest in herpetology.



Junior and I took a ride through Prince William Forest Park road cruising for snakes the first night we were there. We had only seen an assortment of frogs and toads, and were almost at the end of our drive through the park when there in the road was a snake – a copperhead! I hit the brakes and hopped out. What a beautiful animal! Its copper colored body with brownish hourglass-shaped blotches glistened in the headlights. Unlike the traumatic copperhead encounter of my youth, this time we merely photographed the snake, then set it free away from the road, where it would be safe from passing vehicles.

As a biologist, my herpetological journeys have taken me to exotic places such as Central America, the Brazilian Amazon, the Galapagos, and Australia. I've even gotten to spend a good amount of time herping in the Southwest, catching rattlesnakes and collared lizards, and exploring those deserts and canyons Junior once told me about. But, none of those beautiful and amazing places seems quite so special to me as Quantico, which still holds that same sense of magic I experienced there as a young boy all those years ago.

## Become a Park Explorer!

Are you an avid hiker of the trails at Prince William Forest Park? If so, why not get credit for it?

The staff at Prince William Forest Park have developed the first ever Park Explorer booklet, available for free at the park visitor center (open daily from 9 am to 5 pm). The booklet includes a map of the park, and boxes that include the name of each trail and fire road in the park. When you have successfully hiked each of the park trails, you can mark those trails as complete on your map with a stamp available at the visitor center.

When you've completed all 37 miles of hiking trails and fire roads, you'll get a Park Explorer certificate and your picture in our newsletter or on our webpage.

It's a great way to enjoy the beauty of the park and then tell all of your friends of your experience. The coming fall season is one of the best times to hike in the park with fewer ticks and chiggers, cooler days, and beautiful fall foliage. Why not take advantage of this free and fun program for the whole family?





National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Prince William Forest Park  
18100 Park Headquarters Road  
Triangle, VA 22172

First Class Mail  
Postage and Fees  
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Permit number

# Park Hosts USMC Crossroads 17.75 Road Race

On Saturday, June 12th, Prince William Forest Park hosted the Marine Corps Marathon's Crossroads 17.75k Run. Over 1,200 runners, ages 12 to 73, ran the race, including the nine miles that traversed the park. The run was created to commemorate the birth of the United States Marine Corps in 1775.

Prince William Forest Park borders the United States Marine Corps Base- Quantico. The event required coordination of NPS, USMC, Prince William County Police, Fire and EMS, Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia State Police, and the National Museum of the Marine Corps. Prince William County Board of Supervisors member and Dumfries District Supervisor Maureen Caddigan fired the start gun for the race.

This was the first annual Crossroads 17.75 and all parties have agreed that the tradition will continue. David Burnham of Arlington, Virginia, finished first among the men at 1:03:37, and Erin Moore of Springfield, Virginia, who also happens to be the wife of park volunteer Adam Moore, finished first among women at 1:15:56.

The course presented many challenges for the runners, including temperatures in the 90s and unexpected hills for many runners who train on flat surfaces. Many runners posted comments after the race such

as "Holy Hilly," "The Crossroads was grueling," and "great course - lots of hill work."

The park is moving forward with plans to work with the Marine Corps Marathon organization to host the event again, most likely in September.



Rangers Laura Cohen and Stephanie Pooler hold the finish line for the first woman to cross. NPS photo



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Prince William Forest Park is a unit of the National Park Service located 35 miles south of Washington, DC at I-95 Exit 150B. The park boasts 37 miles of hiking trails, 21 miles of bicycle-accessible roads and trails, 4 campgrounds and 5 cabin camps.

**Prince William Forest Park**  
18100 Park Headquarters Road  
Triangle, VA 22172

**Phone**  
703-221-7181

**E-mail**  
prwi\_info@nps.gov

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

## Public Comment Needed

Join us for various public comment sessions over the coming months. America's National Parks are owned by the American people and this is a great opportunity to make your opinions known. Be sure to join our email list to receive notifications of this and other park events in the future.

### National Register of Historic Places Nomination

November 16, 2010, 6 to 8 pm

Cabin Camp 4 Theatre

Should Prince William Forest Park be listed on the National Register of Historic Places in its entirety? Currently, cabin camps are listed individually, but join us for this public meeting to discuss the implications of placing the entire park on the National Historic Register.

### Increasing Campground Fees to Accommodate Online Reservation System

December 15, 2010, 6 to 8 pm

Visitor Center

A per transaction fee is charged to Prince William Forest Park for the Recreation.gov online campground reservation system. The park is proposing increasing its campground fee from \$15 to \$20 to accommodate this fee.