



LJSP VISITORS CENTER GROUNDBREAKING CELEBRATION

Christmas came a week early for Lake James State Park and its many supporters. On Dec. 18, 2019 the long-awaited groundbreaking ceremony took place for the park's future visitors center. The origins of the visitors center go all the way back to 2006, when the state legislature approved the purchase of nearly 3,000 acres in Burke County that became the Paddy's Creek Area of Lake James State Park.

Now, after years of establishing the PCA's expansive infrastructure, the time is right to add the crown jewel to the facility. In 2016, the Connect NC Bond, approved by the citizens of North Carolina, compelled the state legislature

to fund more than half of the projected cost for a visitors center at Lake James, but many other partners have made significant contributions to get the project off the ground.

- The NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund granted \$4,672,000 for the visitors center and Cove Bridge project.
- The Duke Energy Foundation contributed \$55,000 for the facility's exhibit hall.
- The National Park Service donated \$92,000 to add exhibits relating to the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.

- The Rostan Foundation of Valdese donated \$70,000 towards the construction of an adjoining outdoor amphitheater.

"I would like to thank all of our state legislators for supporting state parks and this project in particular," Park Superintendent Nora Coffey said. "Thank you to all who voted for the Connect NC Bond and thank you to those who ensured it was on the ballot back in 2016."

Look for future editions of this newsletter for updates on construction and timetables on the visitors center's eventual opening.



NC Division of Parks and Recreation Director, Dwayne Patterson





FIRST DAY HIKE – WEDNESDAY, JAN. 1

There is no better way to start off a new year than with a hike at Lake James. Meet Park Ranger Wade Engels for what has become a cherished holiday tradition at Lake James State Park – the First Day Hike. Whether you're interested in starting a resolution of fitness, nature appreciation or learning about the environment, make a visit to Lake James State Park part of your family's holiday tradition. The hike will start at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 10 a.m. Bring warm clothing and be prepared to walk two miles.

LONG ARM CEMETERY TOUR – FRIDAY, JAN. 3

It's a rare opportunity for members of the public to have the chance to visit the historic cemetery on Long Arm Peninsula. Before the area became part of Lake James State Park in 2005 it was long held in private ownership. As new park facilities are developed to access and enjoy this beautiful area, the park staff is excited to provide this experience to walk among the tombstones. Meet Ranger Clay Veasey at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 10 a.m. and we'll caravan to the cemetery from there.

WINTER BOAT TOUR – SATURDAY, JAN. 4

Lake James hosts many species of waterfowl during the winter months, as well as the critters that stay here year-round. As an added bonus, winter offers some of the most majestic views of the Linville Gorge and the Black Mountain Range of the year. Ranger Clay Veasey will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for loons, otters, eagles and scenic vistas. The weather could be blustery, so be sure to dress warmly if you are one of the eight lucky participants. Registration is required and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 to reserve your spot. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area East Picnic Shelter at 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt 10 a.m. departure.

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WINTER BIRD HIKE – SATURDAY, JAN. 11

It may come as a surprise to some, but birdwatching during the winter can be excellent. With all of the winged visitors from the north, we might see as many as 30 different types of birds in little more than an hour. Join Ranger Jamie Cameron for a walk along the Paddy's Creek Trail to see what kind of surprises we might turn up. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 9 a.m.



HIKING THROUGH HISTORY – SUNDAY, JAN. 12

Follow in the footsteps of the Overmountain Men as they traveled from the frontier to the frontline of the Revolutionary War. The guided hike will follow a section of Lake James State Park's Overmountain Victory Trail as it shadows the original route that was used to ultimately reach the Battle of Kings Mountain. Join Ranger Jamie Cameron for a step back in time. The hike will begin at 10 a.m. from the Holly Discovery Trail parking lot.

SOUTHERN SYRUPS – SATURDAY, JAN. 25

Everyone knows the king of pancakes, the duke of French toast, the undisputed life-blood of Canada known as maple syrup, but how many have tasted or even imagined the other tree syrups? Birch syrup? Hickory syrup? Sycamore? Fuhgeddaboutit! Join Ranger Wade Engels as he leads a guided hike where southern syrups reign supreme. Learn the process of making your own syrups at home, from choosing the right trees all the way through bottling. This program will start at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 10 a.m. Please dress for the weather forecast and be prepared to be outside for approximately two hours.

PHOTO SAFARI – SATURDAY, JAN. 25

Stark winter light might be vibrant or subdued for this guided photography hike along the Holly Discovery Trail. Shutterbugs of all skill levels are welcome to join Park Ranger Jamie Cameron, whose former career as a photojournalist and newspaper editor has equipped him with some helpful tips on composition – whether you shoot with a phone or a large format SLR. We'll meet at the Holly Discovery Trail parking lot at the Paddy's Creek Area at 10 a.m.

WINTER WATERFOWL BOAT TOUR – SUNDAY, JAN. 26

Many species of waterfowl, including ducks, grebes, loons and cormorants spend the winter months on Lake James and now you have an opportunity to observe them in their element. Ranger Jamie Cameron will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for birds. The weather could be blustery, so be sure to dress warmly if you are one of the eight lucky participants. Registration is required and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 to reserve your spot. Meet your captain at the Paddy's Creek Area, East Picnic Shelter at 10:45 a.m. for a briefing prior to departure promptly at 11 o'clock.

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ASTRONOMY AND BEERS – FRIDAY, JAN. 31

You can't have alcohol at the state park, but you can gaze at the heavens with a brew in your hand at the neighbor's place. Lake James State Park will be co-hosting with the Catawba Valley Astronomy Club for a night of star gazing at Fonta Flora's Farmhouse Brewery at the old Whippoorwill Dairy Farm (just 1-mile northeast of the Paddy's Creek entrance at 6751 NC-126). Enjoy a cold beverage or some hot chocolate, learn some basic star gazing tips, and experience the night sky like you've never seen it. There will be telescopes and binoculars set up for viewing the night sky, but feel free to bring your own if you have them. Folding chairs and blankets are also recommended. The show will start at dusk (between 6 and 6:30 p.m.) and the brewery will stay open until 9 p.m. to accommodate us, so don't miss this rare opportunity. All ages are welcome. No need to register for this one.

WALKING THE WETLANDS – SATURDAY, FEB. 8

Park Ranger Jamie Cameron will be meeting a group of adventurous hikers to the Old Catawba River to search for aquatic plants, animals, insects and birds. The wetland habitat in this area is rich in biodiversity and rarely visited by humans. Meet Ranger Cameron at the Canal Bridge Boat Access on NC 126 at 9:45 a.m. for a 10 a.m. carpool caravan to the site.



SOUTHERN SYRUPS – SATURDAY, FEB. 8

Everyone knows the king of pancakes, the duke of French toast, the undisputed life-blood of Canada known as maple syrup, but how many have tasted or even imagined the other tree syrups? Birch syrup? Hickory syrup? Sycamore? Fuhgeddaboutit! Join Ranger Wade Engels as he leads a guided hike where southern syrups reign supreme. Learn the process of making your own syrups at home, from choosing the right trees all the way through bottling. This program will start at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 10 a.m. Please dress for the weather forecast and be prepared to be outside for approximately two hours.

WINTER BIRD HIKE – SUNDAY, FEB. 9

The Fox Den Loop Trail offers just the right mix of open water, shoreline woods and fields to see plenty of plants and animal and bird species in a morning. Join Ranger Jamie Cameron for a leisurely trek to start the day. We'll begin at 9 a.m. from the Catawba River Area picnic shelter. Bring binoculars if you have them and dress appropriately for the forecast. The hike will take approximately 90 minutes.

CONTROLLED ROT: WILD YEASTS AND THEIR USES – SATURDAY, FEB. 22

Wild yeasts and bacteria have been used for thousands of years by humans to preserve many different foods. From sourdough bread to pickles, wild yeasts were the unseen force that ruled over food preservation for generations before refrigeration. Join Ranger Wade Engels on a guided hike to discuss where wild yeasts live, how to capture them and how to use their powers of preservation. The program begins at the Catawba River Area breezeway at 10 a.m. and lasts approximately 1-and-1/2 hours.

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WINTER WATERFOWL BOAT TOUR – SATURDAY, FEB. 22

Many species of waterfowl, including ducks, grebes, loons and cormorants spend the winter months on Lake James and now you have an opportunity to observe them in their element. Ranger Jamie Cameron will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for birds. The weather could be blustery, so be sure to dress warmly if you are one of the eight lucky participants. Registration is required and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 to reserve your spot. Meet your captain at the Paddy's Creek Area, East Picnic Shelter at 1:45 p.m. for a briefing prior to departure promptly at 2 o'clock.

LONG ARM CEMETERY TOUR – FRIDAY, FEB. 28

It's a rare opportunity for members of the public to have the chance to visit the historic cemetery on Long Arm Peninsula. Before the area became part of Lake James State Park in 2005 it was long held in private ownership. As new park facilities are developed to access and enjoy this beautiful area, the park staff is excited to provide this experience to walk among the tombstones. Meet Ranger Clay Veasey at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 10 a.m. and we'll caravan to the cemetery from there.

WINTER BOAT TOUR (LEAP YEAR SPECIAL) – SATURDAY, FEB. 29

Lake James hosts many species of waterfowl during the winter months, as well as the critters that stay here year-round. As an added bonus, winter offers some of the most majestic views of the Linville Gorge and the Black Mountain Range of the year. Ranger Clay Veasey will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for loons, otters, eagles and scenic vistas. The weather could be blustery, so be sure to dress warmly if you are one of the eight lucky participants. Registration is required and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 to reserve your spot. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area East Picnic Shelter at 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt 10 a.m. departure.

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

To all of you who visit Lake James State Park and love it so well, I'd like to wish a very happy New Year.

As we reflect on the year that has passed and look forward to the one ahead, I want to take a moment to thank all of the people who care enough about this amazing place to volunteer their time and efforts into making the park the place of beauty, peace, refection, recreation and education that it is. Lake James State Park means so much to so many, without the help of our dedicated volunteers, the staff and I would be quickly overwhelmed.

Since they opened in 2014, our 15-mile mountain bike trail system has benefitted from the expertise and unflagging enthusiasm of the members of the Northwest NC Mountain Bike Trail Alliance. The MBTA organizes regular trail maintenance workdays that keep the sprawling single-track fast and smooth and free of obstructions. Anyone who has ever ridden the Wimba or Tindo loops can thank the MBTA for the experience.

Our two day-use campgrounds, consisting of 53 primitive campsites, are stewarded by a terrific corps of volunteer campground hosts. Our hosts,



some of whom return for duty year-after-year, are in charge of maintaining the sites, welcoming campers and selling firewood. Most importantly, they act as ambassadors to the hundreds of visitors they interact with on a weekly basis; answering questions, giving advice and creating a welcoming atmosphere.

The annual lake clean-ups, in both McDowell and Burke counties, are spearheaded by hundreds of volunteers who seek nothing more than to provide a clean lakeside environment for

wildlife that lives here and the people who love to recreate here.

During the course of the year, Lake James State Park benefits from many other volunteers who assist our staff in providing educational programs, festival staffing, trail clean-ups and a variety of other tasks. I would be remiss not to include our incredible Friends of Lake James State Park members for all the work they do to make the park the best it can possibly be.

As we embark on 2020, I invite you to join the volunteers who help make this park great. Ranger Wade Engels is our new volunteer coordinator and he will be happy to add

you to our list of passionate park-lovers who give their time and effort. He can be reached through the main office by calling (828)-584-7728.

I hope you're planning a year filled with visits to Lake James State Park. The staff and volunteers look forward to seeing you.

NATURE NOTES

Not many folks think the dead of winter can be productive for nature watching, but when you're at a lake in western North Carolina it can be one of the very best seasons, especially if you happen to be a birdwatcher.

Species of birds that are attracted to Lake James in winter are often here in great abundance. Different types of gulls rove around the lake in large flocks searching for small fish swimming near the surface. Most of them are ring-billed and Bonaparte's gulls, but there are a small number of herring gulls that also find their way here.



Double-crested cormorants are another common waterbird in winter. These are often mistaken for geese, but are different in both plumage and behavior. Cormorants are darker than the geese and ducks and loons they resemble. Young birds have pale-colored bellies, but the hooked tip of the bill is distinctive. When feeding, cormorants swim at the surface with their heads underwater as they search for fish. Once prey has been spotted, they dive below and chase down they're meal, propelling themselves with powerful webbed feet.

Common loons are also spending the winter on the lake and diving for fish in much the same way, but they are larger than cormorants and have broad, straight bills and white throats and flanks as they sit on the water. On foggy, windless mornings it's not uncommon to hear the loons uttering their mournful, wailing calls that echo across the lake.

Of course the lake also hosts a variety of ducks during the season, but their abundance depends largely on the weather conditions to the north. As winter strengthens its icy grip across the Great Lakes and New England, waterfowl are forced to head south in search of open water. Lake James acts as a stopover for many species, including buffleheads, mallards, ring-necked ducks, gadwalls, redheads and wigeon.

If the winter doldrums have gotten you down, think about lacing up your warm boots, throwing on an extra sweater and coming to the park to enjoy the quiet beauty and variety of waterbirds that don't mind sharing it.

See you out on the trail!

WHO WE ARE

A group formed in 2010, made up of dedicated people work together to help Lake James State Park meet its mission of providing opportunities for public enjoyment and education while still protecting the natural beauty and historic integrity of the State Park.

BOARD MEMBERS

Eric Jenkins - President

Robert Hunter - Vice President

Mike Sewell - Secretary

Annette Bryant - Membership Coordinator

Randall Conley - Member at Large

George Milner - Member at Large

Greg Norell - Member at Large

Molly Sandfoss - Member at Large

Jeff Stark - Member at Large

Jim Williams - Member at Large

Mickey Lewis - Member at Large

Charles Abernathy - Member at Large

To contact the Friends of Lake James State Park Group please email info@lakejamesstatepark.org

FONTA FLORA TRAIL UPDATE



The date: December 18, 2019, might well go down in the history of Burke and McDowell counties as a day when the future of outdoor recreation and tourism shined particularly bright.

Not only was it the groundbreaking ceremony for Lake James State Park's new visitors center; it also served as an important update on the progress of the Fonta Flora State Trail.

Immediately following the state park event, local and state politicians, business leaders and supporters retired to the popular Fonta Flora Brewery at the old Whippoorwill dairy farm to hear the latest on the regional trail that will circumnavigate Lake James and it is hoped, eventually, link Morganton to Asheville for hikers and bikers.

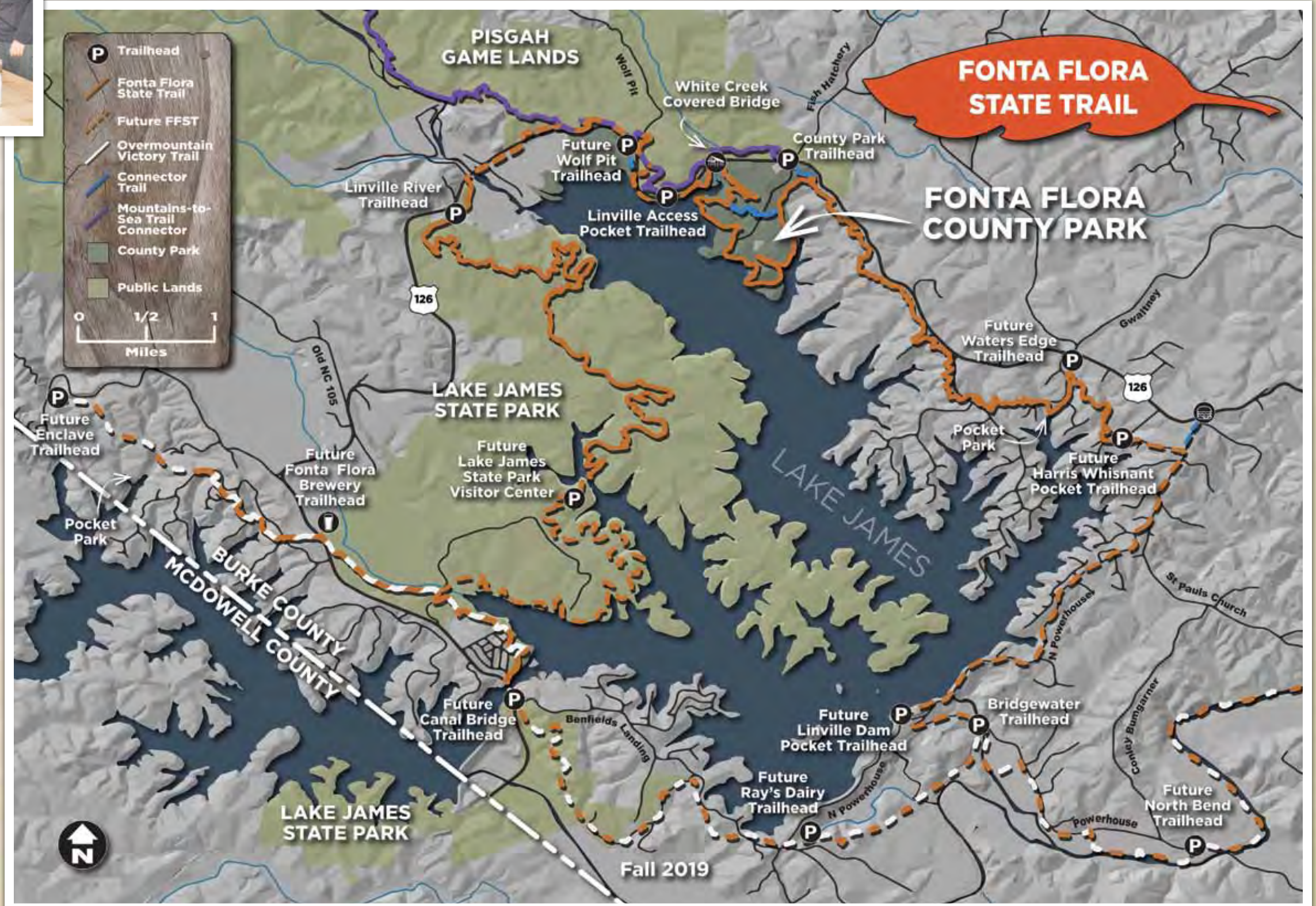
The Friends of Lake James State Park has been an enthusiastic supporter of the project since its inception five years ago and provided the funds and logistics for the meeting.

Friends of Lake James State Park's vice president, Robert Hunter, said the Fonta Flora State Trail project is gaining momentum.

"We had a wonderful crowd," he said. "The connection between Burke and McDowell counties is Lake James ... and now we're seeing signs that Buncombe County is going to get more involved. There's going to be a lot going on within the next year and that's thanks to a lot of people who have really helped move this forward."

In fact, the Friends of Fonta Flora State Trail recently incorporated to focus efforts both locally and in Raleigh to see the project through.

As it's currently envisioned, the trail will span between 70 and 100 miles, but there is opportunity for spur trails to connect with other regional attractions and established trail systems.



INTRODUCING THE YEAR OF THE FIRE

Fire: The phenomenon of combustion manifested in light, flame and heat (as defined in the 'Merriam-Webster Dictionary').

It's hard to think of an earthly, chemical process that evokes a broader spectrum of human emotions than the presence of fire. Without fire, human civilization as we know it today would not exist. Fire gives us heat to warm ourselves in the coldest of nights and light to see through the darkest caves. It's not hard to imagine the first conversation between humans taking place around a campfire. Fire is also a destructive force that can wipe away fortunes in the blink of an eye. It can burn and disfigure. Its smoke can suffocate and render places unlivable.

During 2020, the North Carolina State Parks system has chosen to highlight fire, both wildfire and prescribed fire, as its topic of discussion and interpretation. Throughout the year we will bring a series of articles on the history of wildfire in the region, the reintroduction of fire within the park in the form of prescribed burning and the ecological reasons that habitat managers use fire to suppress invasive species while at the same time increase biodiversity.

We will also explain the use of fire to fight fire; how wildland firefighters use deliberate "backfires" to protect property and infrastructure from catastrophic wildfires.

It's a fascinating topic with lots of complexity and nuance and we can't wait to get started.

Happy New Year everyone.



SAVE THE DATE

- The annual Lake James Clean-Up will take place on the Burke County side of the lake, March 21. To find out how to volunteer, call John Steine at (828)-584-6948 or Howard Morgan at (828)-584-0876.



- RiverFest is scheduled for Sept. 19. Stay tuned to this newsletter and the Friends of Lake James State Park Facebook page for information on this event as the year progresses.
- The Lake James Dragon Boat Festival is Oct. 10. Don't miss out on the biggest event on Lake James. For more information check out www.healingdragonsoflakejames.org

★★★★★ EAGLE SCOUT CANDIDATE BUILDS NEW INFORMATION KIOSK



Jacob Hanlon

Over the years, Lake James State Park has been the beneficiary of several Boy Scout and Girl Scout service projects. Recently, Eagle Scout candidate, Jacob Hanlon, completed the new information kiosk at the Paddy's Creek Area drive-in campground. Jacob, along with help from several of his fellow Troop 197 members and adult consultants raised money for, designed and erected the structure that will allow for a smooth transfer of information to thousands of campers that use the facility annually.

LJSP TRAILS



CATAWBA RIVER AREA:

- Fishing Pier Trail (0.3 mile, easy)
- Fox Den Loop Trail (2.25 miles, moderate)
- Lake Channel Overlook Trail (1.5 miles, moderate)
- Sandy Cliff Overlook Trail (0.5 mile, easy)

PADDY'S CREEK AREA:

- Holly Discovery Trail (0.75 mile, easy)
- Mill's Creek Trail (3.6 miles, moderate)
- Overmountain Victory Trail (2.0 mile, moderate)
- Paddy's Creek Trail (2.0 miles, moderate)
- Tindo beginners' mountain bike trail (4.0 miles)
- Wimba intermediate mountain bike trail (11.25 miles)

PARK GENERAL INFO

- Gate hours during January and February are 7 a.m. until 7 p.m.
- The Hidden Cove Boat Access is closed until March 1.
- The Paddy's Creek Area swim beach, concessions stand and canoe/kayak rentals are closed for the season.

FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Do you have an interest in Lake James State Park? Whether you enjoy hiking the trails, swimming at the beach or just picnicking with your family, there is some part of the park for everyone.

Join the Friends of Lake James State Park group and learn about all the opportunities to help make the park a better place for everyone to enjoy. The Friends of Lake James State Park focus on working together to help Lake James State Park meet its mission of providing opportunities for public enjoyment and education while still protecting the natural beauty and historic integrity of the State Park.

There are a variety of opportunities to get involved from trail work days, to volunteering at RiverFest and other festivals. Become a member of Friends of Lake James State Park, and know that you are helping to preserve the natural beauty and historic resources of Lake James for generations to come.

FRIENDS CONTRIBUTIONS

The Friends of Lake James State Park is proud to support the hardworking staff at Lake James State Park and contribute wherever we can to help improve park operations and offer new recreational opportunities to visitors. If you think these efforts are meaningful, please consider joining our group using the form at the bottom of this page.

- Boat Camping Project; partially funded, purchased equipment including rebar driver and auger
- Stand-up Paddleboards; purchased two for rental fleet and one for lifeguard use
- Funded instructor for Waterfront Safety training for lifeguards
- Linville Overlook picnic area
- Assisted with Overmountain Victory Trail 2 construction
- Holly Discovery Trail; partially funded and dedicated, annual funding for upkeep
- Park of the Year celebration
- Sponsored night rides on mountain bike trails
- RiverFest Sponsor

HOW TO JOIN THE FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK GROUP

Become a member of Friends of Lake James State Park, and know that you are helping to preserve the natural beauty and historic resources of Lake James for generations to come.

For more information please visit www.lakejamesstatepark.org or email info@lakejamesstatepark.org.

FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK - MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Be a Friend of Lake James State Park

Select class of annual membership:

- Individual \$10
- Family \$25
- Corporate \$50
- Patron/Industry \$100 - \$999 \$_____
- Lifetime \$1000 (or more) \$ _____

I would like to be contacted about volunteer opportunities with the Friends of Lake James State Park

Where did you hear about us? _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

**Return to:
Friends of Lake James State Park, Inc.
P.O. Box 1327
Nebo, NC 28761**

Friends of Lake James State Park, Inc. is a registered 501(c)3 charitable organization. Receipt of membership will be supplied upon request.