



www.friendsofcongaree.org
Spring 2007

Advocates for Congaree National Park and its unique environment.

Conservationists Request Acquisition Funding

Friends of Congaree Swamp and eight other organizations have jointly requested Congress to appropriate \$5.6 million in Fiscal Year 2008 for the National Park Service to purchase the 1,840-acre Riverstone tract for Congaree National Park. Our request was submitted during April to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, and the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies.

In 2003, Public Law 108-108 designated Congaree as a National Park – South Carolina's first and only national park – and authorized a boundary expansion of 4,576 acres. Four tracts comprise this authorized expansion.

In Fiscal Year 2005, Congress appropriated \$6 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to purchase the 2,395-acre Bates Fork tract – the largest tract within the park expansion authorized in 2003. The National Park Service purchased this tract in November 2005.

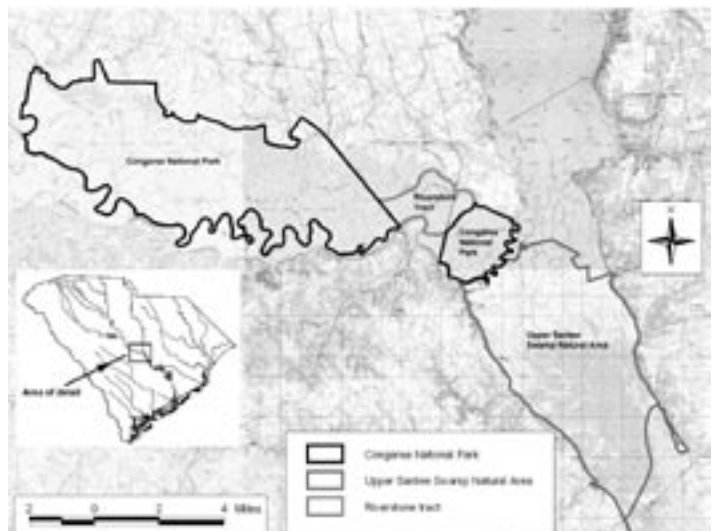
Fiscal Year 2008 presents the opportunity to purchase the 1,840-acre Riverstone tract – the second-largest tract within the park expansion authorized in 2003. The Riverstone tract will connect the previously-acquired 22,000 acres of Congaree National Park with the recently-acquired 2,395-acre Bates Fork tract. The Bates Fork tract, in turn, adjoins the 16,700-acre Upper Santee Swamp Natural Area, owned by the South Carolina Public Service Authority (Santee Cooper). So, the Riverstone tract is the link to connect Congaree National Park and the Upper Santee Swamp Natural Area.

Resources on the Riverstone tract – including Bates Old River – have significant natural, recreational, and historical values. Bates Old River is the longest oxbow lake (4 miles) on the Congaree River and one of the longest oxbows in South Carolina. An unusual mix of sweetgum, bald cypress, water tupelo, and green ash dominates the Bates Old River ridge and

swale system. The Riverstone tract harbors areas of early- and mid-successional plant communities rarely found in Congaree National Park, plus dwarf cypress and planer tree communities not represented at all on existing park lands. In addition, there are numerous large specimen swamp cottonwoods and water hickories. Acquisition of the Riverstone tract will provide new and diverse recreational and historical interpretation opportunities for park visitors while adding to the park's natural resources.

A Fiscal Year 2008 appropriation of \$5.6 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund would provide the National Park Service with funds to purchase this critical Riverstone tract, thereby ensuring permanent protection of its outstanding natural, recreational, and cultural resources, and connecting the 22,000 acres upriver with the 19,000 acres downriver.

Federal Fiscal Year 2008 begins October 1, 2007. Between now and September 30, Congress will be working to pass more than a dozen appropriations bills. By July, we should see some indication whether Congress is likely to provide FY 2008 funding for Congaree National Park land acquisition.



Map provided by Dan Tufford

President's Corner



Dr. John Grego

Highway 601

SC DOT's request for a contested case hearing for the 601 bridges project will be heard by an Administrative Law Court. The likely trial date will be October 16-October 18, 2007. Friends of Congaree Swamp, Audubon SC, and SC Wildlife Federation have intervened in the hearing, and anticipate providing testimony in opposition to SC DOT's appeal.

No firm date has been set for the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) lawsuit filed by Friends of Congaree Swamp, Audubon SC, and SC Wildlife Federation in Federal court, partly since we feel the Administrative Law Court case should proceed first. The NEPA lawsuit requests a more thorough Environmental Assessment of the 601 bridges project.

Trail-clearing

A special thanks to USC Geology 103 students Daniel Gordon and Kyle Gilbert, and Midlands Tech 101 students Whitney Smith, Jonathan DeSantis, and Tiffany Scheaffer for helping out with the February trail-clearing. Bob Render (as always!) and Bill Frye assisted as well.

We had no sooner completed our February 24 trail clean-up when a quick-rising flood inundated the Park. As the river receded, it deposited a thick layer of flotsam over the trails. At the Park's request, we scheduled a work day to clear the trails once again. John Torrence drove us down the Western Boundary Road and two teams worked their way separately back to the Visitor's Center, clearing the entire River Trail, and parts of other trails of debris. Johannes and Claudia Stratman, Allen Gibbes, John O'Sheal, and Kate Hartley helped out, while Bill Frye showed up later and worked independently on the Sims Trail.

Blue Trail

The June 2 National Trails day event (page 5) mentioned in the previous newsletter is now part of a 3-day event, "3 Days for 3 Rivers: Celebrating our Waters". Downtown Columbia is definitely the focal point for this event, but Friends of Congaree Swamp, the National Park Service

and other sponsors will organize a clean-up of the public boat landing on the Congaree River at Highway 601 on Thursday, May 31 at 8:30 AM. In addition to clearing debris, we will remove some decidedly family-unfriendly graffiti from 601 bridge supports. Palmetto Pride has arranged a kayak raffle for participants; the longer you work, the more chances you'll have to win! Please contact Virginia Winn if you would like to help out...

Subject line: FCS, Hwy 601 Clean-up, Thurs., May 31
Home: vewinn@sc.rr.com, 803-787-1592

Eagle Scout project

Friends of Congaree Swamp has provided over \$500 in matching funds to Tyler McInnis (Troop 5. Shandon Presbyterian Church) to support his Eagle Scout project. Tyler had originally planned a handicap-accessible pathway from the after-hours parking lot to the nearest campsite in the campground. The Park, however, plans to redesign the parking lot and campground in response to greatly increased visitation and use. Park staff instead recommended that Tyler construct a 5-foot wide handicap-accessible trail to the picnic shelter; this new project will actually have a higher profile, and greater impact than the campground path. Tyler plans to install the walkway on May 19.

Naturefest

As we mentioned previously, visitation to the Park has been extraordinary this year. The news has been highlighted in the local paper, and any visit to the Park this spring confirms it. Further proof was available at Naturefest this year, with truly astonishing attendance in general, and at the organized events (some of which drew over 60 participants). The Friends of Congaree Swamp maintained a table on Saturday in the breezeway—a position of privilege with everyone else out in the sun. Virginia Winn and Barry Beasley both stayed at the table for several hours, while Bill Frye and Bob Mitchell assisted Park staff with parking, set-up, and organization.



Newly Acquired Tract May Yield Archeological Secrets

Congaree National Park's newly acquired Bates Fork Tract may be about to yield some of its secrets this month.

The National Park Service routinely does an archeological survey when a new tract of land is acquired, said Meredith Hardy, an archeologist with NPS's Southeast Archeological Center in Tallahassee, Fla.

Hardy and another archeologist, along with some volunteers, will spend three weeks surveying the area, beginning May 14.

The 2,395-acre tract, also known as Fork Swamp, is located north of the confluence of the Congaree and Wateree rivers, east of Highway 601 and south of Bates Old River. It contains a high sand ridge known as Sampson Island.

Shortly after the tract was acquired in November 2005, Bill Hulslander, the park's integrated resource manager, found several large sherds of prehistoric pottery lying on the ground, "so we already know stuff is out there," Hardy said.

The sherds, found near Sampson Island, indicate the area might possibly have been the site of a village during the Woodland period (1000 B.C.—1000 A. D.).

While the frequently inundated Congaree Swamp floodplain was not necessarily conducive to prolonged occupation during prehistoric times, visits to the area by Native American people did take place, Hardy said.

"I was at the site last August and found lots of ceramics," she said, "but this will be the first real documentation."

The archeological evidence indicates that prehistoric occupation of the area occurred throughout the 10,000-year time span covering the Early Archaic through the Late Mississippian periods (8,000 B.C.—1,500 A.D.). The survey will identify and delineate the site's boundaries and potentially could yield materials that could be radiometrically dated.

A 2004 archeological survey conducted along Highway 601 found evidence that the Sampson Island area was occupied throughout the 19th and 20th centuries and possibly back to the middle of the 18th Century.

Hardy's research has turned up a 150-acre tract at the heart of Bates Fork that was laid out in 1756 for a Harman Rich. The plat includes a reference to Samson (*sic*) Island.

"I don't know if anyone actually lived there, though," she said. But, "It's at the juncture of two rivers, so it makes perfect sense."

Hardy's team also will be relocating and evaluating the conditions of the two previously identified archeological sites located within the Bates Fork Tract.

The Bates Old River site, identified in 1972 by Thomas Ryan after John Cantey, a member of the Fork Swamp Hunt Club, collected a ¾-complete complicated stamped Pee Dee-style vessel that had eroded from a natural sand levee. Several sherds with complicated stamping also were found.

The second site is identified only by number. It also was found in 1972 by Ryan, based on information provided by Cantey. This site was located on the edge of a sand ridge, most likely on a natural levee along a dirt road leading from Bates Old River to Sampson Island and the Fork Swamp Hunt Club lodge. The area had been scraped for road fill, exposing a number of artifacts.

If time allows, the project may include preliminary archeological testing of two previously identified sites located in other parts of the park.

Cooner's Mound, which is located near the center of the park some distance away from the Bates Fork Tract, has long been known as a cattle mound built sometime in the 19th century. But, because of its large size and truncated pyramid shape, Hardy believes it's possible that the mound is prehistoric in origin, although no prehistoric artifacts have ever been found there.

Starling's Mound has almost eroded into the Congaree River, but several large, old-growth hardwood trees and a slight depression mark its perimeter. Several prehistoric pottery sherds have been found there.

A native of Pascagoula, Miss., Hardy has been with the Park Service for nine years. She is working on her Ph.D. at Florida State University, studying prehistoric Caribbean societies.

Much of the information in this article was drawn from Hardy's research design proposal for the archeological survey of the Bates Fork Tract and Sampson Island in the Congaree National Park.



The new Bates Fork Tract was recently visited by Friends' members in November 2006.



Cooner's Mound, located in the center of the park, has long been known as a cattle mound built in the 19th century.

Upcoming Field Trips & Events

Bates Fork Tract Archeology Field Trip Saturday, May 26 9 AM

You've read the article, now visit the site! NPS-SEAC has planned an exclusive field day for Friends' members to come out and view/participate in the archeological project on Saturday, May 26. SEAC will have started its study a couple weeks earlier, and there may be a few distinct study units open with some really interesting things to see and do.

Meet at the Visitor Center at 9 AM, and we will car-pool and caravan out to the study site. Everyone should be prepared for field conditions with lots of drinking water, sunscreen, hat, and insect repellent. Bring both hiking boots and tevas (parts of the trail may be flooded). Anyone interested in participating should contact the Park's Resource Manager, Bill Hulslander (776-4396 ext 20, Bill_Hulslander@nps.gov) to sign up.

This event is limited exclusively to members of Friends of Congaree Swamp.



Congaree Butterfly Count Volunteers Needed Saturday June 30, 2007



Carolina Satyr



Fiery Skipper



Red Spotted Purple

Congaree National Park's annual Butterfly Count will take place on Saturday, June 30, 2007 beginning at 9:00 a.m. at the Harry Hampton Visitor Center. Volunteers of all ages will gather to conduct a one day census of butterfly species found throughout the park. This is a great way to enjoy your national park and assist with wildlife research.

- ✧ No experience needed
- ✧ Training provided
- ✧ All ages welcome

A great way to enjoy the outdoors

To learn tips on how to identify local butterfly species, attend one of our free training sessions (indoor powerpoint presentation and walk).

Free butterfly identification training:
Saturday, May 19, 2007
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
or
Saturday, June 9, 2007
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

To volunteer for the count or sign up for a training session, please contact Theresa Yednock:
(803) 776-4396 ext. 21
e-mail Theresa_Yednock@nps.gov

Upcoming Field Trips & Events



Congaree River Blue Trail Dedication and Inaugural Voyage June 2, 2007 at 10:00 A.M. Riverwalk Amphitheatre, West Columbia, SC

On June 2, 2007, American Rivers will dedicate the Congaree River Blue Trail as the nation's first under American Rivers' Blue Trail Initiative.

Blue trails, or water trails, are the river equivalent to hiking trails. They are corridors established to facilitate recreation in and along rivers and other water bodies. Blue trails are found in urban settings as well as remote environments. They come in all shapes and sizes and are used by paddlers, anglers, hikers, picnickers, and those just seeking a bit of solitude.

Starting on the Congaree in downtown Columbia, the trail will offer paddlers an urban adventure with opportunities to learn about the historic significance of the area including prehistoric Native American sites along its tributaries. Continuing downstream, paddlers will cross the fall line and enter the Coastal Plain known for its countless sandbars, high bluffs, and extensive floodplain habitats.

The highlight of the trail is the section along the Congaree National Park, a protected wilderness that is home to the largest continuous tract of old growth bottomland hardwood forest in the U.S. Paddlers and hikers alike can enjoy the network of 20-miles of hiking trails within the park and take advantage of opportunities to camp, fish, watch birds, and study nature.

American Rivers' is the nation's leading river conservation organization with over 65,000 supporters across the country including many in South Carolina. The organization has been active in conservation issues affecting South Carolina rivers since 2001 and opened its Southeast Field Office in Columbia, SC in 2005.

Organizations partnering with American Rivers to develop the Congaree River Blue Trail include Congaree National Park, Richland County Conservation Commission, SC Department of Natural Resources, Congaree Land Trust, Friends of Congaree Swamp, Coastal Conservation League and the River Alliance.

Please join us on June 2 at 10:00 A.M. as we announce the Congaree River Blue Trail. Bring your boat and take part in the inaugural, 4-mile paddle down the Congaree River to the Cayce landing following the announcement.

Big Tree Walk Saturday, April 7, 2007

We had nearly a full complement of 30 people and beautiful coolish spring weather for a delightful walk in the woods to see some of Congaree's finest old growth forest near the Weston Lake Loop Trail. We first stopped at the famous old loblolly pine next to the boardwalk at Weston Lake, a tree I never get tired of seeing. Referred to as the "Richland County pine," this venerable tree was probably 40-50 feet tall when Richland County was first formed in 1785. Using an increment borer, a Congaree researcher found it to be at least 232 years old 14 years ago. The average life span for loblollies is about 125 years so this tree has had a long life indeed.

Our next stop was the national champion loblolly pine located near the Weston Lake Loop Trail. This pine is 6 inches smaller in circumference than the Richland County pine but is 17 feet taller (167 feet) with a much bigger crown spread. It is also probably a younger tree and may have a lot of growth left in it.

After stopping to admire a large cherrybark oak on the trail, we headed off-trail and found a 14 foot circumference sweetgum, and a 16 foot circumference overcup oak. Sweetgums are the dominant tree in Congaree's bottomland forest. We recently submitted the state champion sweetgum, a 17 and a half foot circumference giant located near the banks of Cedar Creek near the River and discovered by forest ecologist Robert Jones back in the 90s, as a national champion to the American Forestry Association.

I'm convinced that Congaree has the finest sweetgum forest in the world. "Ordinary" sweetgums here routinely attain circumferences of 12,13, and even 14 feet, trees that would be record-setters at most other locations. I probably know of two dozen sweetgums at Congaree that make it to 15 feet and half a dozen or so that are 16 feet. The only one I know that is 17 feet is the proposed national champ. Probably the largest concentration of big sweetgums is the area between Horsepen Gut and Cedar Creek. In some spots it appears that the big gums are holding up the sky. This would make a wonderful tree walk but logistically is hard to get to, requiring a good canoe/kayak trek.

We continued our walk westward through the forest, in an area marked by "ridge and swale" topography – with the swales representing ancient sloughs and watercourses that now grow overcup oak, maple, cypress, and other hydric species. The ridges, only a few feet higher than the swales, support American holly, sugarberry, sweetgum, persimmon, swamp chestnut oak, and others. We found a

very handsome chestnut oak giant 16 feet in circumference with a canopy that soared to the sky. The distinct large leaf with the wavy margin makes this oak easy to identify, as does the very large acorns, some of which are 1-1/2 inches long. The acorns themselves were long gone, being highly relished by deer and feral hogs, but we saw the large cups that were left behind.

We concluded our walk in the woods with a visit to the national co-champion overcup oak, also discovered by Robert Jones. This tree is more than 17 feet in circumference, 136 feet tall with a crown spread of 104 feet. Because this tree is similar in size to the one we saw near the western boundary on a hike a couple of years ago, both are considered national co-champions.

John Cely



Field Trips & Events in Review

International Dawn Chorus Day

At 5 AM the morning of May 6, some 25 bleary-eyed birders gathered at the after-hours parking lot of Congaree National Park for the third annual International Dawn Chorus Day walk, led by Robin Carter, and sponsored by the Friends of Congaree Swamp.

We had great weather--cool, overcast, calm. There was about 5 minutes of light rain midway through the walk, but for the most part the walk was very pleasant. Since it has been so dry recently we had almost no mosquitoes.

Most of the birds we heard were summer residents. Migrants (birds of passage) included a Swainson's Thrush, a Veery, one Black-throated Blue Warbler, one Ovenbird, and a Gray Catbird. Thanks to the early start we heard a good selection of night birds, including Chuck-will's-widow and three species of owl (Barred Owl, Eastern Screech-Owl, and Great

Horned Owl). The actual dawn chorus was dominated by Great Crested Flycatcher (present in good numbers) and by nesting warblers.

There were a few frogs calling, including American Bullfrog, Green Frog, Green Treefrog, and Southern Cricket Frog. Since the weather has been so dry there was no big frog chorus this year.

As usual we finished the walk with a gourmet breakfast prepared by volunteers from Friends of Congaree Swamp: shrimp with creamy grits and tasso gravy, raisin and orange scones, cheddar buttermilk biscuits, Southwest strata, fresh fruit, juice and lots of coffee.

What a way to end a bird walk! Many thanks to Andy Fiffick, Sharon Kelly, Virginia Winn, and John Grego for the breakfast.

Mourning Dove--2
Eastern Screech-Owl--2
Great Horned Owl--1
Barred Owl--4
Chuck-will's-widow--2
Chimney Swift--4
Red-bellied Woodpecker--3
Pileated Woodpecker--1
Eastern Wood-Pewee--3
Acadian Flycatcher--1
Great Crested Flycatcher--10
White-eyed Vireo--4
Yellow-throated Vireo--2
Red-eyed Vireo--3
American Crow--1
Purple Martin--1
Carolina Chickadee--2
Tufted Titmouse--8
White-breasted Nuthatch--3
Carolina Wren--7
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher--4
Veery--1
Swainson's Thrush--1
Gray Catbird--1
Northern Parula Warbler--8
Black-throated Blue Warbler--1
Yellow-throated Warbler--5
Pine Warbler--3
Prothonotary Warbler--4
Ovenbird--1
Kentucky Warbler--1
Common Yellowthroat--1
Hooded Warbler--1
Summer Tanager--3
White-throated Sparrow--2
Northern Cardinal--12



Photos by Vickie Swank





Post Office Box 7746
Columbia, SC 29202-7746

www.friendsofcongarree.org
Spring 2007

*Advocates for Congaree National Park
and its unique environment.*

Be a FRIEND: Get a Friend to Join Today!

Yes, I would like to support conservation of Congaree Swamp for future generations. Enclosed is my tax deductible contribution of \$ _____. Please make your check payable to Friends of Congaree Swamp.

\$ 15.00 Individual \$ 50.00 Advocate \$ 500.00 Benefactor \$ 50.00 Nonprofit Org.
 \$ 35.00 Family \$ 100.00 Partner \$ 1000.00 Patron \$ 1000.00 Corporate

New Member Renewal

I would like to work on the following committee(s):

Name(s): _____
 Mailing Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Hm Phone: (____) _____ Wk Phone: (____) _____
 E-mail: _____

Field Trips Fundraising
 Public Relations Membership
 Education Advocacy
 Events Newsletter
 Research Other: _____

In addition to my membership, I would like to give \$ _____ as a donation to Friends of Congaree Swamp:
 In Memory of: _____
 In Honor of: _____
 As a Gift Membership to: _____

Please provide contact information so we can inform the person or family:
 Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

I would like to order the following items (proceeds benefit FCS projects): \$ _____ enclosed.
 _____ copies of the beautifully detailed **"Map of Congaree National Park and Vicinity"** @ \$12.95 each/plus \$3.50 s/h
 _____ copies of **"Images of Congaree Swamp,"** a 64-page, full color, photographic book of the park @ \$10 each/plus \$2.50 s/h

Thank You For Supporting Friends of Congaree Swamp!
 Friends of Congaree Swamp, PO Box 7746, Columbia, SC 29202-7746
 FCS is a nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation, EIN: 56-2057087.