



PARK PROJECTS MOVING FORWARD

You might think the winter months are quiet and reflective for the staff at Lake James State Park – a time to catch their breathes and put their boots up after a frantic summer swimming season followed by enthusiastic crowds of autumn leaf peepers, but you’d be wrong.

Maintenance mechanics and rangers at the park are working hard on off-season projects that will make 2014 even better for visitors. At the top of the to-do list are two exciting projects that will greatly expand recreational opportunities at the park and make strides towards completing the Lake James State Park master plan.

The long-awaited mountain bike trails are rolling towards the finish line. Trail builders are approximately 80-percent through the 11-mile intermediate loop and a new parking area has been established by N.C.D.O.T. for mountain bikers to have easy access to the trails when they are opened. Much work still needs to be accomplished before that day; most notably the construction of four bridges and a connector trail that links up with the parking area. Visitors are reminded that until the designated mountain bike trails are open, bicycles are prohibited on the unfinished routes as well as the park’s established hiking trail system.

Boaters will be happy to know the boat-in camping sites are well on their way towards completion. Three campground “pods” consisting of approximately 30 individual sites have been designated. Clearing and site prep is finished and construction of the tent pads is expected to begin soon. Logistical planning for what promises to be a very popular attraction is well underway. Overly enthusiastic campers should note that camping outside designated camping areas within the park is illegal and park rangers will be on patrol by boat and by land.

Good things come to those who wait, and Lake James State Park is about to get a whole lot better.

If you would like to receive our monthly events list, contact Nora Coffey at nora.coffey@ncparks.gov. Please note: In an effort to reduce idle time, please make a reasonable effort to arrive a few minutes before the times set for programs.

FIRST DAY HIKE - Wednesday, January 1

What better way to start off the New Year than with a hike along the shoreline of Lake James? Kick the year off on the right foot and join Park Ranger Clay Veasey as he leads a hike along the Paddy's Creek Trail. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 2 p.m. Please wear appropriate clothing for the weather and be prepared to walk approximately 2 miles.

WATERFOWL HIKE - Saturday, January 4

Many bird species call Lake James home during the winter months. Meet Park Ranger Clay Veasey as he leads a group on a 2-mile hike to discover the waterfowl that spend the winter months on Lake James. The hike begins at the Holly Discovery Trail parking area at 10 a.m. Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the hike.

WINTER TREE ID - Sunday, January 5

When the leaves have fallen off the trees for the year, tree identification can become difficult. If you have ever wondered how to identify trees without their leaves, this hike is a perfect opportunity to learn. Meet Park Ranger Clay Veasey at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway where he'll lead hikers into the wonderful world of tree identification. The hike leaves at 10 a.m. and lasts for about an hour. Please bring appropriate clothing for the weather and don't be late!

FIRE & FORESTS - Tuesday, January 7

After years of study and planning, Lake James State Park is set to embark on a prescribed fire management plan this winter. Low-intensity fires are planned for both the Catawba River and Paddy's Creek sections of the park. Prescribed fire will make the park and surrounding communities safer from the devastating effects of catastrophic wildfires and enhance biodiversity and wildlife habitat. Come join park staff and subject experts to learn more about this exciting resource management tool that will eventually return the park to a more natural state. Meet at the Catawba River Area classroom at 6:30 p.m.



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JUNIOR RANGER BOOTCAMP - Saturday, January 11

Do you think you have what it takes to join the prestigious ranks of the North Carolina State Park Junior Rangers? If you do, the rangers at Lake James State Park want you! The Junior Ranger program is for kids ages 6-12 who have an interest in nature and stewardship. Join Park Ranger Jamie Cameron to receive your Junior Ranger workbook and participate in several activities that will put you well on your way toward earning your Junior Ranger certificate and patch. We'll meet at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 10 a.m. You must pre-register for this program by calling the park office at 828-584-7728.



BIRDING THE RIVER SECTION - Sunday, January 12

Most birdwatching tours at Lake James State Park stick to well-worn trails and overlooks. This field trip promises to be different as Park Ranger Jamie Cameron leads an intrepid group of explorers down into the inaccessible "River Section" of the park. Scouting forays have shown the area to be a haven for winter sparrows and there's no telling what we'll turn up. There are no trails and the birding will be fast and furious so be prepared for a challenging, but potentially rewarding experience. Meet at the Canal Bridge Boat Access parking area at 8:30 a.m.

PADDY'S CREEK TRAIL HIKE - Saturday, January 18

The air is cool and the leaves have fallen from the trees, and what better time of year to enjoy a walk in the woods. Meet Park Ranger Earl Weaver as he leads a hike along Paddy's Creek in search of Lake James' winter residents. The hike starts at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 2 p.m. Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the weather.

BIRD HIKE - Sunday, January 19

Fall color has gone and the leaves have fallen from the trees, making winter a great time to see birds in the park. Meet Park Ranger Earl Weaver as he leads a hike along the Holly Discovery Trail to search for the birds that call Lake James home during the winter months. The hike starts at the Holly Discovery Trail parking area at 10 a.m. The hike is .75 miles in length so wear appropriate clothing and footwear.

COLD BLOODED LAKE JAMES RESIDENTS - Saturday, January 25

Some of the most feared and misunderstood animals of Lake James are reptiles and amphibians. But what are they and what makes them different? Come to the Catawba River Area park office to find out how to tell reptiles from amphibians and which ones call this area home. Meet Park Ranger Kevin Bischof at 3 p.m. and prepare to meet one of the Lake James reptiles. This program will be out of the weather and indoors.



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Friends of Lake James State Park

Eric L. Jenkins President

As the fourth person to serve the Friends of Lake James State Park as President, it is truly an honor to continue the foundation of service developed by the leadership of previous boards. 2014 will be a huge year for expanding recreational opportunities on Lake James and Lake James State Park. Boat-in camping, a much-needed resource, is on schedule to open this year, along with 14 miles of mountain bike trails, which will be a first for Lake James. Riverfest is LJSP's largest annual event and, in my opinion, will become a premiere fall event for western North Carolina over the next few years.

The FLJSP Organization was created to support and assist the Lake James State Park staff and I have been very fortunate to have been a part of this organization since its formation. It has been a true educational journey witnessing the dedication of the Lake James State Park staff. The staff members of LJSP have received state and national awards for designing and constructing trails in-house, such as the Holly Discovery Trail, the boat-in camping sites will become available for use, years ahead of schedule, due to the dedication of our park staff. I have volunteered closely with the past three LJSP Superintendents; all three have provided incredible service not only to the park, but the greater Lake James community in two counties.

As a volunteer for quality planning initiatives and expanded quality public recreational opportunities for almost 25 years, I am very thankful for our park staff, citizen volunteers, local and state elected officials, community organizations, Duke Energy, and Crescent Communities for supporting and protecting a one of a kind lake to share with future generations.

Please let our rangers and state park staff know how much they are appreciated and I wish everyone a Happy New Year!

Thanks for being a Friend and please visit the park often with family and friends!

Eric L Jenkins



NATURE NOTES

There's no doubt about it, we're in the heart of winter now

While much of December was relatively mild, the overnight temperatures regularly dipped into the 20s, putting extra importance on the abilities of the park's animals and birds to find shelter and find enough food to survive. Critters have all sorts of strategies for making it through the long, cold nights. Many birds roost in abandoned woodpecker nest holes, which provide plenty of insulation. Larger species find perches amid thick stands of vegetation or tree branches to keep them sheltered from the wind. Mammals like raccoons, opossums, foxes and deer typically remain active after the sun goes down. They rely on thick winter coats and a protective layer of fat to keep them warm on the coldest nights.

The autumn acorn drop was poor this year, causing white-tailed deer, gray squirrels and wild turkeys to find other sources of nourishment. Perhaps this is why these animals are so prevalent along the park road this winter. Without the necessary stores of fat they would have gotten from feeding on acorns during the fall, they are forced to work harder and longer to find enough calories to stay healthy.

The health of the forest within Lake James State Park is a critical mission for its professional staff. That is why, after years of study and deliberation, plans are moving forward to conduct several prescribed fires within the park this winter. Low intensity fires remove thick understory vegetation that chokes out herbaceous plants and creates space for trees to grow big and tall. It also improves habitat for wildlife by allowing highly nutritious plants to grow in the quality soils that fire creates. As an added bonus, the prescribed fires will reduce the fuels lying on the forest floor that could feed a catastrophic wildfire someday.

To learn more about the prescribed fire program, the Friends of Lake James State Park invites you to attend a special program, January 7 at 6:30 p.m. in the basement classroom at the Catawba River Area park office. Park staff and experts from N.C. Forestry Service will be on hand to explain the process and answer questions. Hope to see you there.

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
Wendell Shelton - Vice President
Mike Sewell - Secretary
Bob Bielitz - Treasurer
Paul Braun - Member at Large
Joe Carey - Member at Large
Greg Norell - Member at Large
Frank Dean - Member at Large
Jim Williams - Member at Large
George Milner - Member at Large
Brock Hall - Member at Large
Ashley Wooten - Member at Large

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



RANGERS ON PATROL

During 2013, rangers at Lake James State Park issued 19 citations for 20 charges within the park boundary, including;

- Exceeding safe speed ~ 12
- Driving without a license ~ 3
- Failure to change address on driver's license ~ 1
- Possession of alcoholic beverages ~ 3
- Possession of a controlled substance ~ 1

Lead law enforcement ranger Clay Veasey said the purpose for enforcing park rules and state laws is to make Lake James State Park as safe as it can be for the many hundreds of thousands of people who visit each year.

“We ask that folks pay special attention to the 25 mile-per-hour speed limit on all park roads and to please leave alcoholic beverages at home,” continued Veasey. “We are looking forward to everyone having a safe and enjoyable year in 2014.”



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)



NC STATE PARK BLOG ncstateparks.wordpress.com

Looking for the most up to date information about the North Carolina State Parks? If you haven't yet checked out our new NC State Parks blog, you should. It's here: <http://ncstateparks.wordpress.com>

There is much timely news about the division and the state parks system; that gets to you even more quickly than the state parks grapevine or the newsletter. Please check the "Follow our Blog" box on the right hand side of the webpage. You'll get the news shipped directly to your inbox the instant it's published. It's a great way to keep up with what is happening in the state parks.



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.



PARK GENERAL INFO

- January gate hours are 8 a.m. until 6 p.m.
- The campground is closed for season
- The swimming area is closed for season
- The concession stand is closed for season
- Hidden Cove Boat Access Area is closed for season

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 \$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.