

Riverbend Naturalist

Summer 2022



Riverbend Naturalist is the newsletter of the Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB). Riverbend Park is located at 8700 Potomac Hills Street, Great Falls, VA 22066
703-759-9018

www.forbpark.org (Note new direct web page!)

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FORB and Riverbend Park Updates and Coming Events

The Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB) and Riverbend Park have some updates and coming events this fall which may be of interest to park visitors.

FORB's annual Membership Campaign begins on September 1st and runs through December 31st. During the next few months, it's time to review your membership status, renew if applicable, and encourage your friends and neighbors to support Riverbend Park through FORB. If there are any questions regarding your membership status, please feel free to contact FORB president Hugh Morrow at hughmorrowiii@gmail.com or forbpark@gmail.com.

Memberships may be renewed online at our website, whose URL is now www.forbpark.org, easier and quicker to access than the previous address of www.forb.wildapricot.com.

In other news from Riverbend Park, the staff has just acquired a new electric All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV), and is looking forward to the return of the Virginia Native American Festival in 2023.



Riverbend Park Manager John Callow and Casey Pittirizzi, Natural Resources Manager, in the park's new electric ATV.

Boating on the River at Riverbend Park

There are few activities at Riverbend Park more enjoyable than taking to the river in a canoe or kayak or on a stand-up paddleboard. The river is quiet, serene and tranquil, and provides an entirely new experience and perspective than hiking along the Potomac Heritage Trail, as enjoyable as that is. Wildlife, particularly shore birds such as the Cormorants shown below, is much more evident and visible from the middle of the river than onshore. Even the animals on land are often more evident from the river than when they are hidden along the hiking trails. One cannot help but relax and enjoy the park while drifting peacefully on the river.



Photo courtesy of Jonathan Foust

Riverbend Park offers a large variety of watercraft, including canoes, single-seat kayaks, and two-seat or tandem kayaks. Rental fees for 2½-hour individual excursions are \$18 for a single-seat kayak, \$25 for a two-seat or tandem kayak and \$20 for a canoe. Riverbend also offers group tours of 2 hours for groups of a maximum of 15 persons in kayaks, 12 persons maximum in canoes, and up to four persons (over 12 years of age) on paddleboards. Complete rental details

and all the necessary registration forms and risk waivers are available at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend/boating>.

Boat rentals open every year on the Memorial Day holiday weekend and operate on Saturdays, Sundays and holiday Mondays during the summer. They may be closed due to inclement weather or hazardous river conditions. The status of river conditions and boat rentals may always be determined by calling Riverbend Park at 703-759-9018. Riverbend has established a timed ticketing system with boat rental tickets available during the time slots starting at 10 AM, 11 AM, 1 PM, 2 PM and 4 PM. Walk up registration is also available but it is best to reserve tickets online to ensure getting a canoe or kayak. Each rental includes a boat, paddles and a life jacket, and no prior experience is required.



Even though there is no whitewater available for boaters at Riverbend Park, expert kayakers such as Jordan Libera, Riverbend Park's Senior Interpreter and Programs Manager (shown below), are available for kayak training and instruction at some of Riverbend's many summer camps. Riverbend Park also sponsors fishing camps and river nature-viewing excursions for all ages utilizing the \$15,000 Bass Fishing Boat which FORB donated to the park in 2015.



In 2021, FORB also donated \$16,000 towards the purchase of a new jet-motor Patrol and Rescue Boat to replace the old dysfunctional and irreparable one. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic and supply-chain disruptions, it took more than a year to procure the jet motor required to operate in the shallow waters and rocky bottom of the river at Riverbend Park. In addition, FORB donated \$3,000 in 2018 towards the purchase of six Mad River canoes, plus being instrumental in the acquisition of ten L.L. Bean canoes back in 2010. The Riverbend Park staff also sponsors volunteer river cleanups at periodic intervals to help restore the vitality and aesthetics of the river and its banks. The Friends of Riverbend Park views the park's position along the river and the opportunities and experiences that it offers for visitors as one of the park's highlights.



2015 FORB President Tim Hackman (right) presents the Bass Fishing Boat key to John Callow

Over the years, FORB has also contributed to numerous river-related programs and projects such as support of water-quality measuring equipment and river clean-ups. The Potomac River and its vitality are of great importance to FORB, both for all the enjoyment it brings to park visitors and the preservation of the park's natural resources.



A group of paddle boarders set off from the boat launch area at Riverbend Park



A summer early evening view of the park from a kayak on the river

The Potomac River at Riverbend Park is truly a magnificent asset for the park and its visitors. It is a reasonably stable and reasonably predictable body of fresh water which sustains and supports all manner of wildlife, and provides great enjoyment and relaxation for boaters. The river, however, must be respected, both from a safety point-of-view and as a natural resource which sustains many different forms of life. The Friends of Riverbend Park and the Riverbend Park staff work to accomplish all of these goals - enjoyment of the river, protection of the river as a natural resource, and the safety of all those who venture out on the water. In these times of climate change and extreme weather, we are indeed fortunate to have the Potomac River here at Riverbend Park to sustain us and enjoy.

Water Safety Specifics – Safety on the water is paramount. All boaters must wear properly-fitted life jackets; boating is at your own risk; and swimming in the river is prohibited. Pets are not allowed on boat rentals, and the number of persons allowed on boats varies by the type of boat (one person per single-seat kayak, two persons per two-seat kayak, three persons per canoe, and one person per paddleboard). Water skiing, jet skis, big boats and tubes are not permitted. The river is shallow and rocky at Riverbend Park and only minimum draft craft such as kayaks, canoes and paddleboards are suitable for navigation there. Boaters are advised to go upriver (North) from the boat launching area and always to stay upriver of the line of buoys marking the Washington aqueduct dam about a 1/2 mile downstream from the Visitor Center. No boating is permitted downriver of this line of buoys.



The boat launch for private boats at the Visitor Center

Boaters should always check weather conditions and forecasts and other environmental hazards prior to and on the day of their trip. Potential hazards that may be encountered, including current, rocks, logs, rapids, ledges and strainers, should also be identified. For any weather, a hat,

sunscreen, extra clothing, sunglasses, water, snacks, a cell phone in a dry case, and a dry bag are recommended. Boaters should be well hydrated and continue to drink water during their trip. Using the correct paddling technique is also important to prevent loss of control of the boat and possible injury. The Riverbend Park staff will demonstrate proper paddling techniques for beginners. More information on proper paddling techniques is also available on www.americancanoe.org. The Riverbend Park staff also offers basic kayaking classes to learn paddling techniques and safety information to make your trip on the river a fun, safe and enjoyable one.



Many different boats line up at the Riverbed Park launching area for a day of enjoyment on the river

FORB Welcomes Riverbend Park's New Natural Resources Manager

The Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB) is pleased to welcome Casey Pittrizzi as Riverbend Park's new Manager of Natural Resources. Casey joined the Riverbend staff in April with 15 years of experience in local parks and recreation positions. He began his career in 1998 as a volunteer at the Hidden Pond Nature Center. As a volunteer, he cared for the captive reptiles, amphibians and fish used to interpret the wildlife of Fairfax County. He also developed a keen interest in the local flora and fauna, and subsequently joined the staff there as a seasonal naturalist. While working at Hidden Pond, Casey attended George Mason University and graduated with a B.S. degree in Health, Fitness and Recreation Resources, with a concentration in Parks and Outdoor Recreation. He has a strong passion for preserving natural and cultural resources at Riverbend Park. His hobbies include birding, fishing, hiking and spending time with his family.



Summer Camps at Riverbend!

In another sign that normalcy has returned to Riverbend Park after Covid disrupted activities, almost 370 children registered to attend 28 summer camp offerings at the park this season. These programs include a variety of nature and outdoor recreation-themed camps including Eco-Warriors, Art in Nature, Freshwater Fishing Adventures, Anglers & Archers, Forces of Nature, Primitive Teachings, and much more. Riverbend staff also organize and lead camps out of Turner Farm Park and Lewinsville House; these include Little Astronauts and Dinosaur Days camps. Seven incredible summer camp staff, including two outdoor and nature education interns, were hired to support the five year-round staff in leading these summer camps. Jordan Libera, Senior Interpreter, oversees the coordination of all camps and camp staff. Staff have done a superb job at planning and leading fun, educational, and safe summer camps for children to get outside and enjoy their summer break.



The complete listing of camp offerings this summer at Riverbend is as follows:

Anglers & Archers (8-12 yrs.)
Animal Ambassadors (6-9 yrs.)
Art in Nature (6-9 yrs.)
Dinosaurs Days Camp (4-6 yrs.)
Eco-Warriors (8-12 yrs.)
Fishing Adventures (12-15 yrs.)
Forces of Nature (6-9 yrs.)
Freshwater Fishing Fun Camp (8-12 yrs.)



Geology Rocks (6-9 yrs.)
Jr. Potomac Adventures
Primitive Beginnings (6-9 yrs.)
Science for Wizards (7-11 yrs.)
Summer in Space: Little Astronauts (4-6 yrs.)
Wetlanders Camp (6-9 yrs.)
Women in the Woods (8-13 yrs.)





Riverbend Park Maintenance Facility Officially Open

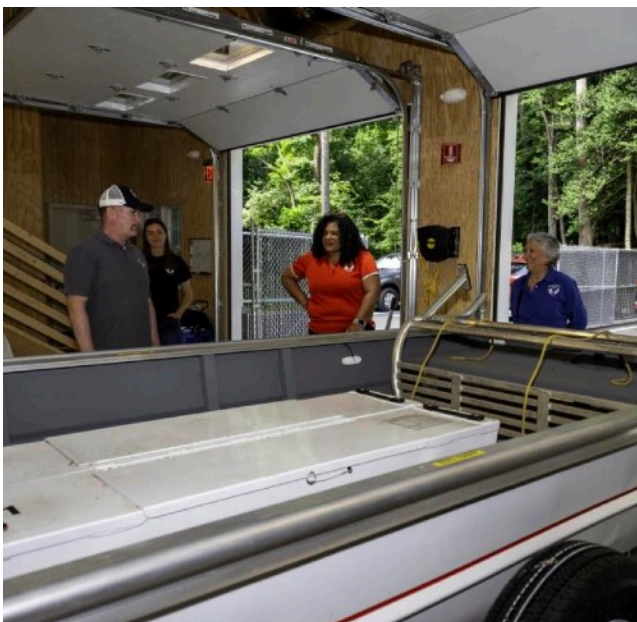


Left to right: Sara Baldwin, Nancy Waugh, Laura Grape, Kylie Starck, Casey Pittrizzi, John Callow, Matt McNeal, Hugh Morrow, Jai Cole, Cindy Gersony, Tim Hackman, Mary Olien, Matt Tauscher, Zeena Al-Nasser, Aimee Vosper, Maria Harwood, Toni Woods, Heather Lynch, Sayonara Aguilera

Officials from the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA), including Executive Director Jai Cole, the Riverbend Park staff, and the Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB) gathered on Tuesday, May 28th at Riverbend Park's new Maintenance Facility on Potomac Hills Street in Great Falls to officially open the new building at a ribbon-cutting ceremony, followed by a tour and a pizza luncheon. Tim Hackman (FCPA Board), Mary Olien (FCPA Staff) and John Callow, Riverbend Park Manager, made remarks to a group of about twenty, and praised the teamwork that brought this \$1.3 million state-of-the-art facility to fruition. The roles of Heather Lynch, FCPA's Project Manager for the Riverbend Park Maintenance Facility, and the Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB) for their support during the 2016 park bond cycle were especially noted, while Riverbend Park staff participating included John Callow, Casey Pittrizzi, Kylie Starck, and Matt McNeal. FORB was represented at the ceremony by Hugh Morrow, President, Board Member Cindy Gersony, and former Board Member and Secretary, Nancy Waugh. FORB was instrumental in placing the new maintenance facility on the 2016 park bond cycle, providing a template for the new facility based on the 2010 Green Springs Gardens maintenance facility, and donating \$8,000 in 2022 for the purchase of major equipment such as the table saw and the facility's appliances.



FCPA Board Member Tim Hackman (left) poses with FORB Members Nancy Waugh, Cindy Gersony and Hugh Morrow at the Riverbend Park Maintenance Facility Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony



Park Manager John Callow reviews the Patrol and Rescue Boat for Jai Cole and Mary Olien



Riverbend Park Staff Members John Callow, Kylie Starck, and Casey Pittrizzi

Friends of Riverbend Park Contact Information

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