

YATES MILL ASSOCIATES ANNUAL MEETING 2021

Park Report

The park staff hopes all of you are well and enjoying the spring weather. Hard to believe it's been over a year since the pandemic hit. As you may remember, Wake County Parks, Recreation and Open Space never closed its parks during the pandemic, but last spring we systematically began to close services and facilities. By mid-summer 2020 we began to re-open some of our facilities and services including restrooms and playgrounds. Since fall of 2020, the County has held the line on resuming any additional services or reopening facilities. Currently, our indoor facilities such as park offices and park centers are closed and we are not providing in-person programming. In the last few months, park staff have been tapped to work the County's mass vaccination effort at the PNC Arena.

Our division is updating the reopening plan and resuming outdoor programming is most likely the next phase. Outdoor programming could include hikes, utilizing open space and the amphitheater where visitors can be socially distanced. These programs will have limited attendance and safety protocols in place to keep everyone safe. We anticipate a June/July start date for outdoor programming. Park staff continues to offer virtual program offerings to groups and general public. As of right now, there is no timetable for reopening park centers, resuming mill tours or offering other indoor programs/services. This will be the final phase of reopening for us. We are hopeful that we can resume mill tours later this summer, at least at limited capacity with safety protocols to keep everyone safe. This may require slight modifications to our mill tours and how they are conducted. Our division has cancelled all in-person summer camps that are led by park staff.

Park staff continue to be in touch with our dedicated volunteers, providing updates through newsletters, virtual meetings, phone calls and emails. We are so fortunate to have volunteers maintain their interest in being a part of our team as we continue to deal with the pandemic. We've been able to have a few volunteers work on small outdoor projects in the park and we are thankful for this.

Our park visitation continues to be very good over all, but we are not overwhelmed as we were a year ago when many other park agencies closed their gates and Wake County was one of the few systems to keep parks open.

Most of you are aware that N.C. State will be operating an aquatic species research facility in the research wing of the A.E. Finley Center. This is an effort to mitigate negative impacts to wetlands from the construction of Interstate 540's southern loop. The County hosted a pre-bid meeting for the renovation project and plans to award a contract by this summer. N.C. State, Yates Mill Associates and the County have been working to remove items from the research wing in preparation for the work.

Due to budget constraints, the County was not able to save the Phares Yates House, located south of the park on Lake Wheeler Road. This was disappointing to park staff and many of you. We were able to salvage significant pieces of the old house that could be used in some new element for the park's master plan. Thanks to all who provided support and expertise in our efforts to save the house.

The log cabin in the mill yard will be renovated over the coming fall and winter. The work will most likely begin at the end of the mill tour season in late November. The County will be replacing deteriorated logs and constructing a new, more durable foundation while maintaining the rustic look that the cabin adds to mill yard area.

Park staff are available through email and phone if you need to reach out to us. You can also stop by the park for a visit – just let us know when you're coming by. While it sounds like a broken record at this point, we continue to miss our interaction with all of you, our partners, volunteers and visitors. We hope we can all get back together soon.

Timothy W. Lisk, Regional Park Manager