FORKS OF COAL DISCOVERY DAY MAY 5TH!
A great day of fun and learning

The Foundation’s Discovery Day at the Forks of Coal was a great event despite the rainy forecast. The rain pretty much held off until after the event, and more than 350 people turned out.

Exhibits, games, hikes, music and presentations kept all family members entertained throughout. The day included more than a dozen exhibits, a morning bird walk, a hike for health, an interpretive nature walk, an avian presentation, a WV History Alive! presentation by Doug Riley as Civil War General Stonewall Jackson and a Coal River history presentation by William Donegan as Union General William Rosecrans. Rosecrans was an engineer and a leader in the development of the locks and dams on the Coal River in the 1850s, as well as being credited with changing the course of West Virginia history during the Civil War.

The morning bird walk was led by Sara Miller, and 35 different species of birds were heard or sighted. Dr. Howard Lafferty of Madison led a hike for health mid-morning. The afternoon’s interpretive hike was led by David Dendler, summer naturalist for Kanawha State Forest. The hike went out the Blue Trail to the bridges at the Forks. Exhibitors included Mountain Surf Paddle Sports, Coal River Group, the American Chestnut Foundation, Doug Smith with his excellent wildlife taxidermy, the WV DNR live native reptiles, Boone Career & Technical School – benthic invertebrates as water quality indicators, Alum Creek VFW, WVDEP Project Wet, the State’s mobile aquarium, WV Beekeepers Association.

Cabela’s had a fun fishing game for all ages.

WV American Water provided H2O to Go, their mobile water unit. Swiftwater Cafe donated pepperoni rolls and Charleston Bread supplied delicious pastries.

Debby Mullins did face painting. Raffle items included a stay at Blackwater Falls State Park, a kayak, ski packages, a paddle board rental/lesson from Mountain Surf Paddle Sports, camping gear, fishing gear from Cabela’s, fine jewelry from Broyles Jewelers, gift certificates and more.

More on page 2......

FALL EVENT TO BE OCTOBER 25TH

Mark your calendars! Members will be invited to attend a presentation and dinner meeting on Thursday, October 25 to learn more about the wildlife education center at the Forks of Coal State Natural Area and the WV DNR’s elk restoration project in southern West Virginia.

The event will be held in South Charleston. For more information, please visit our Facebook page or our website at www.forksofcoalfoundation.org.
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

HISTORY

“If you don’t know history, then you don’t know anything. You are a leaf that doesn’t know it is part of a tree.”
– Michael Crichton

I recently had a conversation with an elderly fellow at my church. We discussed Forks of Coal. I’ve known Ed for all my adult life and didn’t know he grew up right across the river from what is now the Forks of Coal State Natural Area. He told me how he walked to school crossing the bridges built across the river for that purpose! He told me about summers on the Coal and going to boy scout camp close by. He told how they would dam the river so the boy scouts and girl scouts from camp would have a place to swim.

We learn more and more about the history of the Forks of Coal area as we talk to locals who grew up there. We learn how the river played a big part in their lives and how they used the area.

If you have a piece of Coal River history and would like to share it with us we would love to hear it! Contact us at our Facebook page or www.forksofcoalfoundation.com. Become a leaf on our family tree as we build on the history of the area and work to preserve it.

Kim McCluskey

THANK YOU, SUPPORTERS!

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Alum Creek Lions Club and Ed Rabel
Alum Creek Volunteer Fire Dept.
Jeff and Carol Stevens
Doug Smith
Dr. Howard Lafferty
Julian Martin
Paul Wheeler
Kevin and Kathy Hill and friends
West Virginia American Water
Elizabeth McClintock
HISTORY AT THE FORKS: Becky Hager’s Memories

PART 1 - Becky Hager grew up in a one-story cabin on Little Coal River. It was on the downstream end of the lands that are now part of the Forks of Coal State Natural Area. Life there was peaceful and Becky says, “It was a joy to live and grow up there.”

But life on the hill overlooking the river was also a challenge, because there were no roads to access their home place and the only running water was the river itself. This area was one of the most isolated parts of Kanawha County until the 1950s, and to get to the nearest road, one had to get across Little Coal River to a road on the Lincoln County side of the stream.

A quote from the Charleston Gazette-Mail, dated 9/11/2017, describes her family’s situation: “Hager’s family... lived on the south side of the place where the Little Coal flows into the main Coal River. The nearest road was on the north side. To get to the road, residents on the south side had to follow a path along the river to a swinging bridge. Hager’s stepfather, Joe Miller, got tired of making the hike. Rather than construct a bridge of his own, he built a tram.”

“He strung 400 feet of steel cable from a large beech tree at one end to a large elm at the other. A 32-gallon oil drum, cut in half (length-wise) served as the gondola. The pulleys and swivel were salvaged from a junkyard... [and] the family used an electric doorbell... to signal someone to send the tram across. “When Hager’s mother returned from the grocery store, she would honk her car horn to call for the bucket.”

Kids loved the “high line trolley” and campers from Camp Cliffside and Camp Roof Rock (the first permanent Girl Scout camp in Kanawha County) came to ride it.

PART II will appear in the next issue.........

ALL BENCHES ARE SPONSORED

All seven of the new benches at the Natural Area have been sponsored. The benches are located at key points along the trails. The support of all sponsors is greatly appreciated. Engraved commemorative plaques have been affixed to the benches.

THE FOUNDATION’S MISSION

The mission of the Forks of Coal State Natural Area Foundation is to work with the WV Division of Natural Resources to preserve, protect and enhance the Forks of Coal State Natural Area by providing leadership in communication, funding, advocacy and conservation education for children and the community.

BOONE CAREER AND TECHNICAL CENTER HELPS OUT

Students from the Boone Career and Technical Center and two of their teachers held a trail blazing work day at the Forks of Coal State Natural Area on March 23rd.

Led by teachers Bobby Miller and Jeff Nelson, about 20 students spent a busy morning working on three projects - clearing the view from the Blue Trail overlooking the Forks of Coal River, blazing a trail from the bridge to the actual confluence of the river’s forks and working on the benches. After the trail projects, the students had lunch and got to spend some fun time exploring the other trails before heading back to school.

THANK YOU, STUDENTS!
The Forks of Coal State Natural Area Foundation was formed in 2016 to work with the West Virginia DNR to build a wildlife education center and support learning programs on the 102 acres at the Forks of Coal. The Foundation and the DNR are working together in the development of the center and educational activities which will benefit our local Coal River and Kanawha Valley communities.

Please join us! To learn more, go to Facebook or visit our website at www.forksofcoalfoundation.org.

Name_________________________________________ Phone Number/E-Mail ________________

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Street Number   City   State   Zip Code

Amount of Gift ____$25____$35____$50____$100______ $250 ______$500______Other

Please make check payable to:  Forks of Coal State Natural Area Foundation
P.O. Box 5556, Charleston, WV  25361

The Forks of Coal State Natural Area Foundation is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Forks of Coal State Natural Area Foundation
Post Office Box 5556
Charleston, West Virginia  25361

Please join us October 25th
for a special invitation-only event