The long-awaited wildlife education center project has taken another big step forward. The contract for construction of the building was awarded at the end of April to Wolf Creek Contracting, Inc. Construction started in May and is expected to continue for at least a year to 18 months.

During construction there will be safety issues for visitors due to equipment movement. The Yellow Trail will be closed or partly closed some of the time. Signs will be posted.

The center will house nearly $1 million worth of specially designed exhibits to help visitors learn about our native wildlife including fish, conservation, game management, forestry, stream restoration, Coal River history, and how to identify native plants and animals. The theme: Healthy, sustainable wildlife populations depend on suitable habitats and wise, science-based management of those resources in which people play a key role.

Visitors to the center will also learn about some of our state’s wildlife success stories, and what they can do to improve the health of wildlife populations, water and habitats in West Virginia.

NOW’S THE TIME—BUY A BRICK!

Commemorative bricks to honor loved ones or celebrate a special event are still available. Please visit our website at www.forksofcoalfoundation.org and click on the brick.

You can complete the online form and pay through the website or mail a check to P.O. Box 5556, Charleston, WV 25361.

Or, e-mail us at forksofcoalfoundation@gmail.com and request an order form.

PLEASE USE CAUTION DURING CONSTRUCTION

We urge all visitors to exercise caution while construction of the center is under way. There will be changes in the traffic pattern from time to time, as well as heavy equipment moving on the entrance road and main parking area.

Please obey all safety practices and signage, and be prepared for limited or no access to some areas from time to time during construction.
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

NEW NORMAL AND Big NEWS

Welcome to the “new normal,” whatever that is! Social distancing, Zoom meetings, face masks and limited group sizes are among the ways we must all learn to navigate the current world health crisis. Six months ago, who would have ever thought we would be in this situation? And we had just begun to plan for our Discovery Day/Annual Meeting when everything got put on hold. Fortunately, we were able to receive 126 tons of donated compost from the City of Charleston for the wildlife viewing area seeding project before the world locked down. Now we have to wait for more cooperative weather to complete the work.

But we do have some exciting news that will help us feel a little more normal. The contract for the Claudia L. Workman Wildlife Education Center has been awarded to Wolf Creek Contracting as of May 1. Construction on the area has begun and there may be some disruption in traffic flow and access to the area as construction moves forward. Every effort will be made to keep the area open to the public as much as possible, but understandably some areas will be temporarily restricted or off limits while construction is on-going. We ask for your patience as construction progresses.

I hope you will be able to get out and enjoy the trails this spring. Just remember to keep your social distance! Enjoy!

Leanna Preston

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The Forks of Coal State Natural Area Foundation is a West Virginia 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The Foundation is governed by an all-volunteer board of directors made up of local citizens who generally represent the makeup of the regional population. The Foundation has no paid staff and is funded through donations, dues and grants.

ANNUAL MEETING & KAYAK RAFFLE POSTPONED

Due to continuing concerns about health safety and the COVID-19 epidemic, the Foundation will not hold in-person events this summer. The kayak raffle drawing is also postponed and tickets are still on sale. The drawing will be held when it is safe to gather for a public event.

THANK YOU, SUPPORTERS!

West Virginia Trophy Hunters Association
West Virginia Watershed Network
Frances and Larry Miller
Dewey and Nancy Beezley
Aaron (Duke) Fox
Tony and Lydia Politino
Robert Fala
Cynthia D. Ellis
Handlan Chapter - Brooks Bird Club
Boone Career & Technical Center
Louis Watts
Wes Lafferty and Liam Lafferty
Sandy Green
Jack and Faye Chafin
Tomi Bergstrom
Lee Runyon
CHIMNEY SWIFT TOWER READY

The Adventure Tourism program at the Boone Career & Technical Center (BCTC) partnered with the Forks of Coal State Natural Area Foundation (Foundation) to build a Chimney Swift Tower for the Forks of Coal State Natural Area.

Because of the loss of the bird’s natural habitat, its numbers are decreasing across America. Chimney Swifts usually nest and roost in old trees with hollows inside or the chimney of someone’s home, but most homes now have central heating and no chimney. Flues in modern chimneys are too narrow.

These birds are important to the environment because they eat huge numbers of insects. Our Adventure Tourism program and the Foundation hope that building the tower will help the birds establish a stable population in Southern West Virginia.

BCTC works closely with the state park system to assist in trail building, bench construction and picnic table construction. They also help with the eradication of invasive species, helping remove undesirable plants from the State Natural Area.

BCTC would like to thank the Handlan Chapter of the Brooks Bird Club, an international bird club based in Wheeling. The Club contributed a $500 donation for the construction of the 14-foot tall habitat tower. The Foundation contributed approximately $800 in materials to build the tower.

REMEMBERING A FRIEND...

Nelle Ratrie Chilton

The Foundation has lost a good friend and civic leader with the passing of Nelle Chilton in April. She was a Charleston area native who played a prominent role in our city’s business community for several decades, as well as supporting the arts and sciences and health care institutions. Nelle was a Master Naturalist, Master Gardener, a corporate board member, including the boards of CAMC and One Valley Bank/BB&T. She was an artist and supporter of many educational and social improvement initiatives. She also served on the board of the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation for several years.

Nelle took an interest in the Forks of Coal Foundation’s work and made a generous gift toward our endowment fund in 2017. While supporting educational programs she continued to pursue her own learning throughout her life. Despite facing some health challenges in the past few years, she visited the Forks of Coal State Natural Area and went hiking.

In recent years, Nelle was honored as a YWCA Woman of Achievement and received the YMCA’s Spirit of the Valley Award. Her contributions to our community are beyond counting.

During her long and well-lived life, Nelle was a mentor and good friend. She made a difference in many lives and she will be greatly missed.

COMING EVENTS - WE HOPE!

Save the date - October 3

We are tentatively planning some fun and educational events for this fall – IF the COVID-19 health crisis has stabilized and it is safe to participate. Hopefully, we will know by early September if will be safe to continue with plans.

October 3 is our tentative date for another Floating Nature Walk and choice of two nature hikes on the trails of the Natural Area. We will keep you informed of plans through our Facebook page and our website at www.forksofcoalfoundation.org.
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 ______________

Address____________________________________________________________________

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

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

Construction has started!
You can still buy a brick...see page 1