Message

From: Michael Corley [michael@conesteepreserve.org]
Sent: 1/20/2021 1:10:27 PM
To: williajc@dhec.sc.gov; Cole, Robert [colerb@dhec.sc.gov]; Cc: Henry Porter [porterhj@dhec.sc.gov]; Famble, Alayna [famble.alayna@epa.gov]; reecemc@dhec.sc.gov; Crowley, Jeffery [Crowley.Jeffery@epa.gov]; Angela K. Gorman [gormanak@dhec.sc.gov]
Subject: Re: Response to Questions - Lake Conestee / Reedy River Site Investigation

Hi folks,

I regret the need to send this email, but I have to respond to the email thread below, which has been forwarded with me. I know at least some of you are aware that I have succeeded Dave Hargett as executive director of Lake Conestee. Unfortunately, Dave's retirement and our transition has not been as seamless as one would hope, exactly because of emails like in the thread below. Dave has no authority to communicate on behalf of Conestee. The board and I certainly desire to draw upon his long history with the Preserve and dam, and we have attempted to work out arrangements for his continuing involvement. Frankly, though, those efforts have been repeatedly derailed by his overreaching like in the thread below.

I'm sorry that I have to bring you all into our Conestee "drama," but, needless to say, I'm very disturbed to discover that Dave has been engaging in this level of interaction with the Agency.

However you all want to handle continuing communications with Dave is fine with me, but just be advised that unless and until you hear differently, he is speaking completely as a private citizen, and any actual response from the Conestee Foundation will of course come fro me.

Thanks for all of your work and attention committed to the Conestee dam.

Michael Corley
Executive Director
LAKE CONESTEE
NATURE PRESERVE
DISCOVER A WORLD APART.
(864) 277-2004
www.conesteepreserve.org

---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: **Dave Hargett** < Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP) >
Date: Tue, Jan 19, 2021 at 3:39 PM
Subject: Response to Questions - Lake Conestee / Reedy River Site Investigation
To: Williams, Jason C. <williajc@dhec.sc.gov>, Cole, Robert <colerb@dhec.sc.gov>
Cc: Henry Porter <porterhj@dhec.sc.gov>, Famble, Alayna <famble.alayna@epa.gov>, Myra Reece <reecemc@dhec.sc.gov>, Crowley, Jeffery <crowley.jeffery@epa.gov>, Angela K. Gorman <gormanak@dhec.sc.gov>

Jason / Robert
Here are the answers to your questions.

How many full time & part time employees does the preserve have that works on site?

- *Conestee Foundation has 9 employees, including full- & part-time working at the Site.*
- *Also, CF has volunteers working most weeks on a wide variety of trail maintenance and construction projects.*
- *In a typical year CF/LCNP will have 2,500 to 3,000 hrs of volunteer labor, provided by hundreds of individuals, on maintenance, construction, habitat enhancement, tree planting, cleanups, and a wide range of activities at the Site.*
- *Also, CF frequently has contractors working at the site on construction projects, often in wetland areas. Appropriate PPE and protective protocols are always used.*
- *CF's nature education programs host over 3,500 K-12, plus college students each year (of course not in pandemic times).*

Estimated number of guests to the preserve annually?

- *Based on motion detector cameras at key entrances, and direct surveillance, LCNP has over 125,000 visitors per year, possibly over 150,000.*
- *On some days over 1,500 patrons have been observed in one day entering the Preserve.*
- *Activities include professionally led classes, tours, and field trips, self-guided educational activities, hiking, biking, dog-walking, and bird-watching and wildlife viewing.*

Documented instances of state & Federal threatened /endangered spp. within the preserve?

- *No T&E species confirmed.*
- *Anecdote: This reach of the Reedy River was the last documented observation of an active Ivory-Billed Woodpecker nesting in SC, 1890s if I recall. (We may claim they are still there.)*
- *LCNP is an "Important Bird Area of Global Significance," per Audubon Society. The only IBA of GS in Upstate SC.*
- *LCNP is the overwintering area for the largest population of Rusty Blackbirds east of the Mississippi R., an imperiled species due to habitat losses and climate change (but not a T or E species at this time).*
- *LCNP is recognized as the Upstate Partner with Audubon of SC.*
- *At last count we have had 222 bird species identified at LCNP.*

Has there been any wetlands delineation at the preserve, upstream of the dam? (aside from the FWS wetland inventory)

- *There has been no formal wetland delineation of the entire Preserve, or the entire Site (historic extent of Lake Conestee).*
- *Obviously, nearly all of the historic lake parcel, 145 acres, all but about 4 acres of Sparkleberry Island (aka Taylor Island) and a tiny island no longer discernable (Henry's Island), per the 1892 plat (dam construction date) were impounded by the dam.*
- *A very rough estimate is that about 20-25 acres of the historic lake area are still impounded by the historic dam, at the top-of-dam (primary spillway) elevation (~797 ft msl).*

- *In addition, the area impounded behind beaver dams within the former historic lake area is another roughly 20-25 acres, mostly the West Bay.*
- *All of the historic lake area, except Sparkleberry Island, undergoes frequent flood inundation.*
- *Also, extensive areas of the historic lake area are inundated by several beaver dams, and associated step pools.*
- *The West Bay (above the 'neck of the lake') had no active beaver ponds during the 2001-2003 TBA sampling.*
- *At this time there are three significant beaver dams, that stack water across the West Bay, each at 2-3 ft below the next downstream .*
- *As a result all areas of the West Bay have 2 to 6+ ft of additional water column and/or accumulated sediment above the sediments that were sampled in 2001-2003 (aerial images will be forwarded later).*

Even though fishing, boating, and swimming is prohibited,
are there any reports or observations by staff of these activities occurring? I heard that someone was caught harvesting frogs for consumption. It would be helpful to have that documented for the report.

- *CF's rules and postings advise that all visitors must stay on marked trails.*
- *CF / LCNP does not have rangers or enforcement staff to monitor human activity, other than what is observed by educational and maintenance staff.*
- *Frequently, especially during favorable weather, we encounter unauthorized contact with waters and wetlands, by swimmers, waders, boaters, and anglers.*
- *On 30 Dec 2020 I encountered a Hispanic father, with three children 4-8, with fishing poles in hand, ready to enter the area. I advised that no fishing was allowed.*
- *Anglers regularly trek in from nearby neighborhoods and roads to fish, to include from the dam. They regularly have children accompanying.*
- *Last year I encountered two persons wading in wetland areas of the Site to capture turtles. I advised them that those activities are not permitted, and to leave the Site.*
- *We have encountered persons gigging and netting frogs.*
- *Waterfowl hunting has largely been eliminated.*
- *We do encounter some degree of deer poaching each fall.*
- *Paddling through this reach of the Reedy River does occur, and technically the Reedy is a navigable water.*
- *CF/LCNP's clear and well posted rules include: NO FISHING, NO SWIMMING, NO WADING, NO BOATING, KEEP OUT OF WATERS AND WETLAND AREAS. (See attached sign presently used at selected points where easy access to waters appears inviting.)*
- *All continuously wet areas where trails are located have boardwalks and bogwalks to mitigate potential exposures.*
- *LCNP has over 1-mile of wetland boardwalks, more than any state or federal park / preserve in SC.*
- *CF staff and signage at all entrances reinforce that only the trails and boardwalks are accessible to humans, and all other areas are "DO NOT DISTURB AREAS."*
- *To further reinforce these rules we re-branded from LCNPark to Lake Conestee Nature Preserve in early 2020.*
- *CF also received official State-sanction as a Wildlife Sanctuary under Title 50 of State Code of Laws several years ago.*
- *We do occasionally allow researchers and water quality professionals to enter restricted areas for study purposes.*
- *Wildlife seem to be thriving and reproducing.*
- *Managing humans is a constant challenge.*

Let me know if I can help further.
I will be sending several supplemental files to you this evening via DropBox.
Thanks,
Dave

Dave Hargett, Ph.D.

Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)

Please Note: As of 01 January 2021 I am no longer serving as Executive Director of Conestee Foundation, Inc.

DSC06221 (1).jpg

On Fri, Jan 15, 2021 at 3:08 PM Williams, Jason C. <williajc@dhec.sc.gov> wrote:

Thanks Dave.

Also, could you provide some info for the questions below to update the data from the 2019 PA ?

How many full time & part time employees does the preserve have that works on site?

Estimated number of guests to the preserve annually?

Documented instances of state & Federal threatened /endangered spp. within the preserve?

Has there been any wetlands delineation at the preserve, upstream of the dam? (aside from the FWS wetland inventory)

Even though fishing, boating, and swimming is prohibited, are there any reports or observations by staff of these activities occurring? I heard that someone was caught harvesting frogs for consumption. It would be helpful to have that documented for the report.

Thanks again for the assistance.

Jason

Jason C. Williams
Environmental Health Manager
State & Federal Site Assessment Section
S.C. Dept. of Health & Environmental Control
Office: (803) 898-0793
Connect: www.scdhec.gov Facebook Twitter

From: Dave Hargett <Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)>
Sent: Friday, January 15, 2021 1:47 PM
To: Cole, Robert <colerb@dhec.sc.gov>
Cc: Porter, Henry <porterhj@dhec.sc.gov>; Reece, Myra <reecemc@dhec.sc.gov>; Williams, Jason C. <williajc@dhec.sc.gov>
Subject: Re: Conestee / Reedy River Site Investigation

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Sounds good.
Thanks for the quick response, Robert.
Will have comments to him on Monday.
Many thanks for your good work on the SI.
Cheers,
Dave

Dave Hargett, Ph.D.
Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)

On Fri, Jan 15, 2021 at 1:43 PM Cole, Robert <colerb@dhec.sc.gov> wrote:
I believe the draft report will be sent to EPA by 1/29. Feel free to send Jason your comments.

Robert

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From: Dave Hargett <Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)>
Sent: Friday, January 15, 2021 1:32:28 PM
To: Cole, Robert <colerb@dhec.sc.gov>
Cc: Porter, Henry <porterhj@dhec.sc.gov>; Reece, Myra <reecemc@dhec.sc.gov>
Subject: Conestee / Reedy River Site Investigation

*** Caution. This is an EXTERNAL email. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email. ***

Hi Robert,
I'm just touching base on the status of your SI on Lake Conestee and the Reedy River.
I'm still looking at data, and there is a lot of useful info there. Good work.

I would still like to send you a few comments, and suggestions, for your consideration, if you are still in process.
Please let me know your timeline and status. I'll work on compiling a few comments this weekend.
Thanks,
Very best regards for a happy and healthy New Year !
Dave

Dave Hargett, Ph.D.

Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)