

Bob and Lib Conner Recognized

We in Friends of State Parks celebrated our 25th anniversary in 2003 but that merely recognized the year of our incorporation - 1978. Before that 'official' existence there was a 'Friends' group with Bob and Lib Conner. Since 1973 - more than 33 years ago, Bob and Lib have been advocates for the North Carolina parks system, lobbying at the legislature, tirelessly supporting good laws and opposing bad while pressing for the growth and betterment of the system.

Since retiring from their respective careers as architect and biology teacher, Bob and Lib have spent time at every one of our 34 parks, camping at those with facilities and (where the superintendent willingly turned a blind eye) at a few without.

Bob served several terms as president of Friends of State Parks and, for 16 years, Lib acted as editor of this newsletter. She continues to serve as a director on the FSP board.

On July 29th the board of Friends of State Parks recognized their outstanding contribution with a plaque, presented by President John Graham, which acknowledges and commemorates the first three decades of the Conners' service and support of North Carolina State Parks.



Photo: Bob Sowa

An Inconvenient Truth

reviewed by Alec Whittaker

The focus of Friends of State Parks and of this newsletter is on North Carolina State Parks, so perhaps it might seem a stretch to offer a movie review. But perhaps not if the movie suggests that many of those parks might soon be under water.

An Inconvenient Truth weaves the science of global warming and Al Gore's personal history in a thoughtful and compelling argument that suggests that much of North Carolina's coastline will, unless we act, be inundated within the next half century.

The film presents overwhelming evidence for global warming and mankind's link to it. Global temperature and atmospheric carbon patterns over the last 20 years have been

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Albert Ernest Radford - R.I.P.

Albert E. Radford, (1918 - 2006) past president of Friends of State Parks, died on April 12, 2006 surrounded by family at his home in Columbia, Missouri.

He was best known for his work as senior author of *Manual of the Vascular Flora of the Carolinas*, the definitive work on the flora of North and South Carolina.

Al was educated at Junior College of Augusta, Furman University (B.S., 1939) and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (Ph.D., 1948). He served in the 51st Engineer Combat Battalion of the United States Army during World War II, and saw action in North Africa and Europe, including the Battle of the Bulge.

He and his wife Laurie Stewart Radford had three children, David, John, and Linda. He was Professor of Botany at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill for forty years and director of the University of North Carolina Herbarium for 23 years.

In addition to his presidency of Friends of State Parks, he served as President of the Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society and of the Southern Appalachian Botanical Club. Besides his academic work in botany, he was active in conservation of natural areas in the Southeastern United States.



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the highest for the more than 600,000 years of which we have geologic evidence.

If global warming continues at its current rate, not merely will our coastal parks be endangered as the Antarctic and Greenland ice shelves melt, but coastlines will be flooded around the world displacing tens of millions of people. We have seen the damage to our parks caused by storms in the past decade and the strength and frequency of hurricanes and tornadoes will increase.

But most important, the film shows ways in which we can affect a change and stave off this potential disaster.

The film is solemn without being dark, it is challenging without being depressing. You owe it to yourself, your children and your grand-children to see it.

South Mountains State Park – Collaboration At Its Finest

Contributed by Alice Zawadzki

The protection of the South Mountains, just 18 miles south of Morganton, is a tribute to the hard work of many individuals, public agencies, and private organizations. The Foothills Conservancy, a regional land trust, with Susie Hamrick Jones as its executive director, has played a decisive role in uniting the efforts of many groups in preserving 40,000 of 100,000 acres that are known as the South Mountains. In the 1990s during festivities at the Rollins Tract dedication, NC Superintendent of State Parks, Tom Wells, spoke of North Carolina losing 15 acres every hour to some form of development. That is a loss of 300,000 acres each year. The collaborative efforts of so many individuals, organizations, and state agencies are really making a difference in forming and protecting nature preserves in our state.

At our Friends of State Parks Board meeting in the home of South Mountains State Park Superintendent Jonathan Griffith on July 29, 2006 we learned about the ongoing additions to the South Mountains State Park and Gamelands. The newest collaboration involves the NC School of the Deaf, whose 459-acre property in the Bailey Creek watershed adjoins the park. The school will partner with the State Park producing an Environmental Education Facility on Clear Creek with special focus to serve the physically challenged population. After the Board meeting, we visited the work-in-progress at the impressive visitor's center. On entering the park we saw the equestrian area including a 37-stall barn and washhouse. It is with pride that we citizens can watch our state parks grow.

The rugged South Mountain range is a reminder of the wilderness that once characterized the Piedmont of North Carolina. Although logged in some areas as late as the 1970s, it remains a large block of unfragmented forest. The land is host to many rare natural communities including rocky summits, rich cove forests, and old growth forests. The reserve is rich in wildlife including black bear, bobcat, mink, brook trout,

migratory songbirds, and 60 species of nesting birds. Some 200 rare plant species have been found in the park including North America's rarest orchid, the small whorled Pogonia. Jim Terrell of Tablerock Trout Unlimited reported that in 1977 first South Mountains Park Superintendent John Sharpe's job was to build North Carolina's finest wildlife access to trout fishing. In some streams there were no trout before the 1940s. Today most of the streams are classified as wild trout water. South Mountains is a treasure.

Development of land which is now in the South Mountains State Park began in the 1930s in Enola when Camp Dryer, a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp was established to construct forest service roads, clean stream beds, and build a forest observation tower. The lower and upper CCC roads are still in use at the park. Although proposals for the park began in the 1940s, it was not until 1974 that funds were appropriated for the first



*South Mountains Visitor Center
Photo: Courtesy of The Steward*

5,779-acre acquisition. Today at about 20,000 acres, South Mountains is the largest land-based State Park. It joins with the 20,000 acres of State Game-lands to be a celebration of collaboration and wise investments in nature that future generations can enjoy.

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There's Some Good News and Some Bad News ...

The good news ... Meandering across five North Carolina counties from Pilot Mountain State Park to Eno River State Park, the 70-mile long Haw River Trail will be a section of the ambitious Mountains-to-Sea trail. The trail, which passes through the Haw River State Park, will ultimately provide for both hikers and canoeists but, while many access points to the river are already available, the hiking trails, as yet, exist only in limited sections.

The state and nine local governments, Alamance, Guilford, Chatham, Orange and Rockingham counties, the cities of Burlington and Graham and the towns of Haw River and Swepsonville have formally agreed to complete the trail and to work toward a 1,000 ft barrier protecting the river.

If you live in any of these regions, let your local legislators know that you appreciate their efforts.

And the bad ... Chimney Rock comprises about 1,000 acres of environmentally sensitive habitat. Its most distinctive feature the granite monolith overlooks Hickory Nut Gorge and Lake Lure. It had been hoped that this unique natural feature might become part of the new Hickory Nut State park but the owners of Chimney Rock Park have decided to list the park for sale with Sotheby's International Realty.

Go to <http://savechimneyrock.net>, read about it and express your opinion.

Mark Your Calendar

The next quarterly meeting of Friends of State Parks will be held at Weymouth Woods State Park on Saturday, October 28th starting at 11 am. All are welcome.