



# The Oasis

The Seasonal Newsletter of Prince William Forest Park • Winter, 2010

## Park Welcomes New Superintendent

Vidal Martinez brings thirtyfour years of government experience to his new position at Prince William Forest Park. This includes; Superintendent of Sagamore Hill National Historic Site (1990-2000), George Washington Birthplace National Monument and Thomas Stone National Historic Site (2000-2008), Canaveral National Seashore, and the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River.

On February 5, 2008, Vidal Martinez entered on duty as the new superintendent of the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (UPDE). He was responsible for a full range of operational and management programs for the National Park Service (NPS) in an area that is cooperatively managed through a complex and often controversial River Management Plan. The park consists of approximately 56,000 acres of land, the majority of which is not owned by the NPS including seventy-four miles of the river corridor.

Prior to that assignment Vidal spent eight years serving as the Superintendent of George Washington Birthplace National Monument, Colonial Beach, VA and the Thomas Stone National Historic Site, La Plata, Maryland overseeing the development of the two areas.

During his nine years at Sagamore Hill National Historic Site (the home of Theodore Roosevelt), he successfully managed and supervised several program areas



Superintendent Vidal Martinez. Photo Courtesy: NPS

involving Natural and Cultural Resource Management, Maintenance, Protection, Partnerships, Concessions, Volunteerism, and Cooperating Associations while maintaining a successful relationship with the local community.

Vidal officially started his NPS career in 1975 as an Interpretive Park Technician giving tours at Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace NHS and other popular national parks in New York City such as; General Grant NM, Hamilton Grange NM, Castle Clinton NM and the Statue of Liberty NM. Late in 1978, he was hired as a Lead Park Technician at

the Sandy Hook Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area in Highlands, NJ. In this capacity, he supervised the daily interpretive operation at the visitor center.

From 1981 to 1987, he worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and served as an Outdoor Recreation Planner at the Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery (VA) and Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge (MD). He developed a variety of environmental, educational, and interpretive programs that were enjoyed by the 1/2 a million annual visitors to this area. While employed with USFWS, he also served as a refuge officer enforcing USFWS laws and regulations.

In 1987, Vidal accepted a position as Supervisory Park Ranger for Resource Management and Visitor Protection at Petersburg National Battlefield. During this tour of duty, he supervised a complex resource monitoring and protection program at the battlefield.

Vidal holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Recreation, from Herbert H. Lehman College (City University of New York) and a Masters of Science in Recreation Planning and Education earned at Virginia Commonwealth University in 1989.

Vidal and his wife, Zoraida have four children, ages twenty-five, twenty-four, twelve and six.

# Superintendent's Corner



Superintendent Martinez surrounded by park staff. Photo Courtesy: NPS

My first day as Superintendent of Prince William Forest Park was October 27, 2009 and I want to thank the staff for a great welcome. Since my arrival I have attended a series of meetings and conferences. I am gradually becoming familiar with park issues and acquainting myself with key members of the community. During

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my first week I was asked to attend a press conference and briefing held by Vice President Joe Biden regarding the progress of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Representatives from Prince William Forest Park were asked to attend because of the ARRA projects occurring throughout the park.

On the morning of October 29th, I was on my way to the Vice President's briefing with several park employees, un-

certain of what was expected of us. We brought a briefing package illustrating the ARRA projects that will be completed at the park, highlighting the total number of jobs created by these projects. We arrived at the briefing room of the Old Executive Office Building and waited for nearly half an hour for Vice President Joe Biden, who entered the auditorium with Maryland Governor, Martin O'Malley and California Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger. As the Vice President started his opening remarks, the audience took full advantage of using their video cameras—and from my observations; it appeared that the focus was mainly on Governor Schwarzenegger!

The Vice President skillfully discussed the attributes of ARRA with the emphasis on day labor and provided a breakdown of statistical data to illustrate the success of this program. Both governors also discussed the success of ARRA in their respective states. Although we never had the opportunity to provide the information we compiled for this meeting, the overall experience was enlightening and quite an orientation for me.

I was asked to comment on my vision for the park. At present, I have several thoughts in mind but would like to wait until I am in a better position to share my ideas with you. There appears to be major changes planned for the National Capital Region (NCR) of the National Park Service. Both Deputy Superintendent George Liffert and I recently attended a NCR strategic planning workshop which will set a new direction for the Region with specific goals for all of us to pursue. NCR Regional Director Peggy O' Dell has tasked the superintendents with developing these goals for the next four years which complement the Director's vision for the National Park Service. Topics include Stewardship, Environmental Leadership, Recreational Leadership, Education and Professional Excellence. As the Strategic Plan is finalized we will certainly share it with you.



Vice President Biden, flanked by Schwarzenegger and O'Malley. Photo Courtesy: NPS

In summary, I am very pleased with my new assignment at Prince William Forest Park. I am impressed with the park's resources as well as the passion and commitment of the park staff. As we enter a new year, I look forward to serving as an agent of positive change and working with each one of you and the park partners to take care of this special place.

# Programs in the Park

## Interpretive Programs and Special Events - 2010

A variety of ranger-led walk, talks, programs and special events are happening in 2010 at Prince William Forest Park. All programs time and dates are subject to change. As dates approach, please check our online calendar at [www.nps.gov/prwi](http://www.nps.gov/prwi) or call the visitor center at 703-221-71181 to confirm.



### January 14 REI Ranger Talk

Join Ranger Laura at REI in Fairfax, Virginia at 7:00- 8:00 pm for an exciting presentation on Spies in the Park. The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) trained in the park from 1942- 1945.



### Saturday, April 17 Operation Clean Sweep Volunteer Day

Do you want to give back to Prince William Forest Park? Perhaps you've stayed in a cabin here before. Operation Clean Sweep is an attempt to clean out the winter grime from all park cabins in one day to get them ready for the summer season. A cabin that starts out clean ends up clean!



### Saturday, April 24 Paws in the Park

Celebrate responsible pet ownership and have a ball with your four legged friends at Paws in the Park on Saturday, April 24 from 10 am to 2 pm at the Pine Grove Picnic area! Enjoy working dog demonstrations, information booths, rescue groups, a "faux" dog show, and activities for the kids. Bring your canine companions and take part in training workshops and listen to guest speakers in this 15,000 acre oasis.

# Programs in the Park... *Continued*



## May 28nd - September 4 Programs in the Park

Travel through time to the site of the 19th century Cabin Branch Pyrite Mine. Hike through the night with a ranger by lamplight. Listen to stories by the campfire in our weekly campfire programs. Join us from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend, for a variety of ranger-led programs to help you explore this 15,00 acre oasis.



## Saturday, June 12 Marine Corps Marathon - Crossroads 17.75

The 11-mile (17.75K) run is unique to the MCM Event Series and commemorates the year in which the USMC was founded and runs through Prince William Forest Park. **Major road closures and disruptions will occur throughout the park.** For more information and to register, visit [.http://www.marinemarathon.com/Event\\_Series/Crossroads\\_17\\_75K.htm](http://www.marinemarathon.com/Event_Series/Crossroads_17_75K.htm)



## Saturday, June 5 National Trails Day

Volunteer with the National Park Service, Potomac Appalachian Trails Club and other outdoor organizations to do some heavy lifting out on the trails! Clear brush, install waterbars, handrails and more!



## Saturday, September 11 Heritage Festival

Come see the history through the trees and celebrate our shared local heritage with music, craft demonstrations, kids activities and more. Learn about the early farm families of Prince William Forest Park and travel the route that General George Washington and his troops took to win the battle of Yorktown. It's all right here in your neighborhood national park!



## Sunday, September 12 Chopawamsic Cycle Challenge

Challenge yourself on this 14 mile on and off-road bicycle ride through Prince William Forest Park. Sponsored by the Friends of Prince William Forest Park, this event is a great way to become familiar with the park and its friends group. For more information visit [www.fpwfp.org](http://www.fpwfp.org).

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# Preserving Ancient History

In October 2009, the National Park Service Geoscientists-in-the-Parks Program (GIP) sponsored Matt Brown, a vertebrate fossil preparator at the University of Texas, to conserve two pieces of petrified wood at Prince William Forest Park. The petrified wood specimens, one at the visitor

**“We should preserve this petrified wood because it represents millions of years of history, taking us back to a time when few would recognize the land that now comprises the park.”**

center circle and another in front of the T.R.E.C building, were recently placed on display. These specimens are over 65 million years old and have been identified as the early Cretaceous Potomac tree *Taxodium distichum*, or bald cypress. One of the specimens was uncovered and given to the park for protection in the 1960s during construction of Interstate 95 on land originally owned by the park, and the other was discovered during construction in a neighboring Brittany development during the 1980s.

The specimens were extremely porous in some areas and small pieces were beginning to flake. Brown applied different consolidants to the porous areas to help slow the unavoidable deterioration that will occur. Park staff will continue to monitor the petrified wood specimens in the coming years to ensure that the treatment was successful.

We should preserve this petrified wood because it represents millions of years of history, taking us back to a time when few would recognize the land that now comprises the park. It is hard to imagine that this area was once the home of volcanoes and dinosaurs; that it was once both an inland swamp and under a shallow sea. Perhaps it is even harder to believe that this land was at one time merged with the African continent.

If you were suddenly transported 150 million years back in time to Prince William Forest Park, you might find yourself next to a dinosaur, four stories tall. You would be shaded by a grove of bald cypress trees. But upright and alive, this grove of bald cypress trees would stand 120 feet tall, their roots buttressed by large arms reaching out into the standing warm waters of a subtropical swamp. Sea levels rose during the mid-Cretaceous, covering about one-third of the land area. This



Geoscientist Matt Brown applies preservative to petrified wood. Photo Courtesy: NPS

is when the fossil trees were growing; the area was mostly swamp with tremendously high humidity and daily temperatures over 100°. This ancient bald cypress was a large, slow-growing deciduous conifer, reaching 100 to 120 feet in height and 3 to 6 feet in diameter. Its trunk was massive, tapered and buttressed. At approximately 90 years old, the tree died and fell over into the thick sedimental mud of that ancient ocean. Without oxygen, the tree could not decompose, and petrification ensued. With pressure and over time, minerals contained in the water infiltrated the internal structure of the tree and replaced the organic matter. As the water disappeared and pressure and time compressed the tree, it fossilized into a rock. When petrified wood is exposed to oxygen, deterioration begins.

In its 70 year history as a unit of the National Park Service, Prince William Forest Park has worked to protect the resources within its boundary so that future generations can experience the natural beauty and history contained within. The next time you are out hiking in the park, try to imagine yourself surrounded by the sensations of that ancient environment, and wonder what changes will occur over the next 150 million years.



## Park Celebrates Accomplishments as 2009 Comes to a Close

2009 has been an exciting and eventful year at Prince William Forest Park. Here are some of our accomplishments for the year:

- Relocated park radio antennae to provide consistent radio contact for park staff
- Emergency repairs to Cabin Camp 2 electrical system completed
- Rehabilitated craft lodges in Cabin Camp 1
- Repaired Oak Ridge Campground B Loop sewer line
- Installed petrified wood in front of visitor center
- Completed public survey of park cemeteries
- Water quality tested at 5 park lakes to ensure visitor safety
- Completed Save Our Streams benthic macroinvertebrate testing in park streams
- Applied herbicides to Wisteria invasive plant species on historic Taylor Farm site
- Prepared application to nominate park as Climate-Friendly Park
- Drafted 3 environmental assessments for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) projects
- Published first ever book on park
- Began new Park Explorer program
- Coordinated and implemented Heritage Festival, Paws in the Park, National Public Lands Day events
- Provided education programs for 1,200 high school science students
- Provided interpretation and education to 12,000 visitors
- Created new online museum exhibit showcasing park museum collection
- 20,000 volunteer hours contributed to the park (equivalent to over 10 full time employees)
- Interpreted petrified wood in front of visitor center
- Acquired 5 new hybrid vehicles to reduce fleet fuel consumption
- Installed energy efficient lighting in park cabin camps
- Installed 2 energy efficient tank-less water heaters at Travel Trailer Village
- Installed motion detector lights in the 2 bathhouses and the laundry room at Travel Trailer Village
- Park won National Capital Region Safety Award for dedication to employee and visitor Safety

### **Your Fee Dollars at Work**

*The following projects were completed using visitor entrance fees:*

- New waysides designed and erected throughout park
- Replaced picnic tables at Cabin Camp 5
- Turkey Run Education Center (TREC) training classroom rehabilitated and upgraded
- Cabin Camp 2 ball field latrine rehabilitated
- Work on trails and campgrounds completed by Student Conservation Association interns

# Updates & Highlights...

## Pass Photo Contest Winner Announced

Prince William Forest Park and the Friends of Prince William Forest Park congratulate Tab Asselin, the winner of the annual photo contest in 2009. His photo of the arch bridge over Quantico Creek on South Valley Trail took first prize. You can see his photo on the Prince William Forest Park 2010 annual pass, available at the visitor center for \$20.00.



Winning photo appearing on park's 2010 annual pass. Photo Courtesy: Tab Asselin

We would also like to announce the theme for next year's photo contest: Celebrating 75 Years. 2011 is the 75th anniversary of the founding of Prince William Forest Park. The winner will receive a free annual pass and the honor of knowing that their photo will be on 2011's annual pass. All entries must be received by November 1, 2010. For further details, visit <http://www.nps.gov/prwi/supportyourpark/photo-contests.htm>.

## Park Float Takes Second Place in Dumfries Holiday Parade



On Saturday, December 12, 2009, Prince William Forest Park participated in the annual Dumfries Holiday Parade. The park's entry, "Nature Gives Back", based on Shel Silverstein's children's book *The Giving Tree* took second place among dozens of entrants in the Best Organization category. Congratulations team!

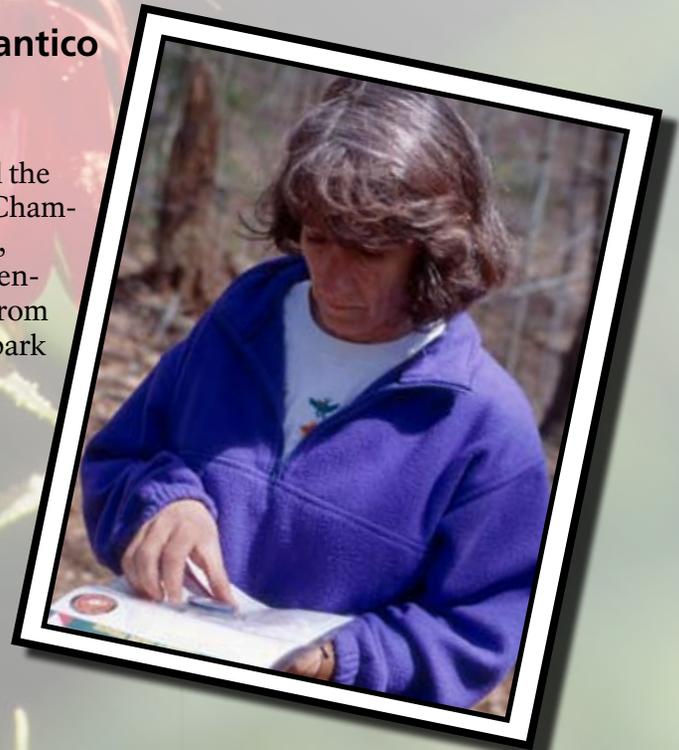


## Park Signs Partnership Agreement With Quantico Orienteering Club

The park recently signed a long awaited partnership agreement with the non-profit organization Quantico Orienteering Club (QOC) to further orienteering activities in the park.

Together, Prince William Forest Park and QOC will seek to provide more orienteering education programs to the public, improve orienteering course maps, maintain and improve orienteering posts, and ensure the protection of the natural environment that is impacted by orienteering activities in the park.

In 2007, QOC hosted the World Orienteering Championships in the park, bringing over 300 orienteering participants from ages 6 to 80 into the park to enjoy competitive orienteering.



## Programs in the Park... *Continued from page 4*



### Saturday, September 25 National Public Lands Day

NPLD is the nation's largest hands-on volunteer effort to improve and enhance the public lands Americans enjoy. In 2009, 150,000 volunteers built trails and bridges, removed trash and invasive plants, planted trees and restored our water resources. Join us for the next NPLD on September 25, 2010.



### Saturday, October 30 The Haunted Campground

Join us for family friendly fun at Oakridge Campground. Reserve a campsite today and begin to plan your scare-tastic setup! Prizes awarded for best campsite decoration, best scary story, and best costume. Don't want to setup? Bring your family out to hike from site to site and then vote on who should win first prize!

## Ranger Revelations

*Each edition of The Oasis Newsletter will feature a visitor's emailed question along with a ranger's response*

Dear Rangers,

*My family and I were out hiking in the park the other day and came across what looked like an old cemetery. We tried to make out the words inscribed on the headstones, but it appeared that weather and time had taken its toll, making it hard to read. Are there other cemeteries like this in the park, and if so, who takes care of them?*

*Sincerely,  
The Green Family*

Dear Green Family,

What a great question! There are actually 45 cemeteries in the park with over 400 graves, many just like the one you described. Prior to the park's creation in 1936, 150 families lived on the land and it was common during those subsistence farming days for families to bury the dead close to their homes.

Legally, most of the cemeteries belong to the families who sold their land to the Federal Government in the 1930s. Still, the cemeteries are a remarkable window through time and reveal a great deal about who lived here and how they lived. Within these cemeteries lie pyrite mine workers, farmers, veterans of the Civil War, World War I and II, mothers and their children, and many others.

In an effort to work collaboratively to ensure the respectful maintenance and preservation of these valued treasures, the park is actively seeking out descendants of those individuals buried in the park. In the coming months park staff and volunteers will begin working towards a full scale cemetery management plan to help better care for these treasures. If you are a family member or know of family members



One of hundreds of graves located within park. Photo Courtesy: NPS

of prior land owners who would like to be included in this process, please contact Colette Carmouche, cultural resources, at (703) 221-6921 or email [colette\\_carmouche@nps.gov](mailto:colette_carmouche@nps.gov).

Thanks and keep the great questions coming!

Ranger Jenn



**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**  
**Prince William Forest Park**  
**18100 Park Headquarters Road**  
**Triangle, VA 22172-1644**

# Prince William Forest Park Information Directory



The Oasis, the official seasonal newsletter of Prince William Forest Park, is released in spring, summer, fall, and winter.

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 18100 Park Headquarters Road  
 Triangle, VA 22172 - 1644

Or Call: 703-221-7181

<http://www.nps.gov/prwi>

- General Park Information** 703-221-7181  
*Visitor Center - Open daily 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.*
- Camping** 703-221-7181  
 Including individual, group and backcountry.
- Cabin Camping** 703-221-5843  
 Including group cabins and individual rentals
- Travel Trailer Village** 800-737-5730  
 RV/Trailer camping facility off Route 234 with full hook-ups.
- Ranger-led Programs** 703-221-7181  
 Including regularly scheduled, special request and education programs.
- Volunteering in the Park** 703-221-7181  
 Learn how you can help.
- Official Park Website** www.nps.gov/prwi  
 For the latest information about the park, surf this way.

## Saturday, April 24, 2010

Prince William Forest Park is a unit of the National Park Service located 35 miles south of Washington, DC.

**Prince William Forest Park**  
 18100 Park Headquarters Road  
 Triangle, VA 22172  
[www.nps.gov/prwi](http://www.nps.gov/prwi)

**Phone**  
 703-221-7181

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Join the fun at Paws in the Park on April 24, 2010. Save the date!

