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State Park Celebrates New Year With First Day Hike

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You can ring in the new year in the great outdoors with the 'First Day Hike' at Chattahoochee Bend State Park in Western Coweta.

The hike, along the River Trail, will be guided by Jean Royal, the park's naturalist. It's an all ages hike, and will go along the river to the observation tower. It will begin at 2 p.m.

First Day Hikes are held at Georgia State Parks 'as part of the 'get out and get fit' program,' said Sid Cooper, assistant park manager.

You can also camp for a great price at the park through Jan. 20. All campsites will be \$10 per night.



Royal joined the park staff in November, and has been organizing programs with campers, focusing on children. There will probably be more guided hikes and other events as Royal gets settled into the job.

It's been a good year at the state park, located on the Chattahoochee River in western Coweta. It was the second full year of operation for the nearly 3,000-acre park, and lots of groundwork was done to expand the park's trail system to include trails horseback riders and mountain bikers.

Lots of planning has been done on the equestrian and mountain bike trails, and trails have been flagged. But, before they can be built, the routes have to be approved by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. That process can take awhile, but the wait is nearly over.

'We're waiting on one last DNR engineering review,' said Steve St. Laurent, president of the Friends of Chattahoochee Bend.

Much of this year's volunteer work consisted of maintaining and upgrading existing trails, including the addition of bridges and some rerouting. But in late September, volunteers built the first trail accessing the park's iconic 'flat rock' granite areas.

In addition to getting busy with the mountain bike and equestrian trails, 'we'll be scouting and building more hiking trails,' said St. Laurent.

'That means we're going to need more volunteers.'


In addition to the trail work, volunteers and rangers installed new trailhead kiosks at the Day Use Area and Visitor's Center and improved road crossings with flagstone and crushed slate, St. Laurent said.

Volunteers and staff did 'lots and lots of planting: trees, grasses, flowers, even some things we can't identify until the bulbs sprout,' he said. 'Scouts placed owl and bat boxes and bird houses in various places. The park staff put in a volleyball court and sodded a new play field at Campground 1, and that's on top of all the dayto- day stuff they have to do.'

The Friends group hosted two successful river cleanups with Chattahoochee Riverkeeper and Rivers Alive, and will be doing the same in 2014.

You can find out more about the Friends of Chattahoochee Bend State Park by visiting www.bendfriend.com.

For more about the park, visit www.gastateparks.org/chattahoocheebend or call 770-254-7271.



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Marcia Horne Dees · Newnan High School

Wow Jeanne! This is awesome! I can't wait to come see you and Anthony!

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