

Annual Report 2013
Friends of Croft State Park
Spartanburg, SC

Friends of Croft has had another busy year and looks forward to even more activities and projects for 2014. Although we are still a small group, our volunteers are committed to helping improve Croft State Park. With this core group, we have contributed 680 hours in direct volunteer time at Croft in the year 2013.

Our big events we sponsored at Croft were Hop into Croft, Fishing for Fun and Neewollah. Hop into Croft was March 25 and 26 and featured the movie Hop Friday night and an Easter Egg hunt, Dante the Magician, the Easter Bunny as well as hotdog plates on Saturday. On May 4 we helped with the fourth annual Fishing for Fun, which is an event free for kids up to age 15. Over a 100 kids were given a free fishing rod, t-shirt and hotdog lunch as well as the opportunity to learn to fish at beautiful Lake Craig. Neewollah is a family friendly Halloween event at Croft. We had our favorite magician and balloon artist Dante back, a bounce house and slide, face painting, food, costume contests, a haunted hayride after dark, marshmallow roasting and 2 big bonfires. We had a great turnout and lots of fun.

Projects we worked on included continuing work on the two bathhouses near Lake Craig. We landscaped and mulched the Lake Craig Bathhouse and painted the campground bathhouse with the help of Kohl's volunteers. We are currently working on improving the steps at the lake bathhouse. Ten butterfly bushes were purchased to help beautify the entrance to the park at the Iron Ranger. We continue to clean up the trash along Dairy Ridge Road through the Spartanburg County Adopt-A-Highway and participated in the State Beach/River Sweep on September 21. In total, we collected 475 pounds of trash.

A main focus for Friends of Croft is maintenance of trails, especially the heavily eroded ones used by horses. Volunteers have committed many hours and machinery toward this. But as the needs are great, the park decided the best use of time and money was to hire a professional to attempt to accomplish a great deal in a short amount of time. The Fairforest Connector Trail was finished and Foster Mill is currently being worked on as weather permits. But as usage is heavy, ongoing maintenance will be needed.

Friends of Croft served lunch and dinner plates to deer hunters participating in the three biological deer hunts for the second year. Plates are offered in exchange for a donation and hunters seemed to appreciate a tasty, hot meal after being out all day.

Since the park system is pack in, pack out, there is no soap nor paper towels in bathrooms. Friends of Croft was able to get Purel soap dispensers donated for all bathrooms. Now folks can wash off dirt from hiking, fishing, horses, etc. Another bathhouse project is to make one handicapped accessible. The Panthers Foundation gave us a grant of \$2500 towards this. We are in the process of getting the State to approve plans and then can get estimates of cost. The plan is to get the bathhouse by the horse arena upgraded.

Friends also helped the Trail Half Marathon on November 10 by manning the three Aid Stations. We are very grateful to be the recipients of the proceeds from this fun event directed by Seth Novak. Other races are being planned and we hope to be able to help with those as well.

We improved our website in 2013. People can now sign up for membership and make donations through PayPal on the website. Check it out at www.friendsofcroft.org. We also plan to get our Facebook page back up and available soon.

Goals for 2014 seem to be ever expanding! We represent all user groups of the park and we hope to contribute in all areas. We plan to have Hop into Croft, Fishing for Fun and Neewollah again in 2014. We will be partnering with the Palmetto Conservation Foundation's National Trails Day to be held at the park June 7 and 8. Trail improvements will continue, including better signage. Upgrading the arena bathhouse to be handicapped accessible will continue. Any ideas are always welcome, so contact us through our website if you have a suggestion or comment.