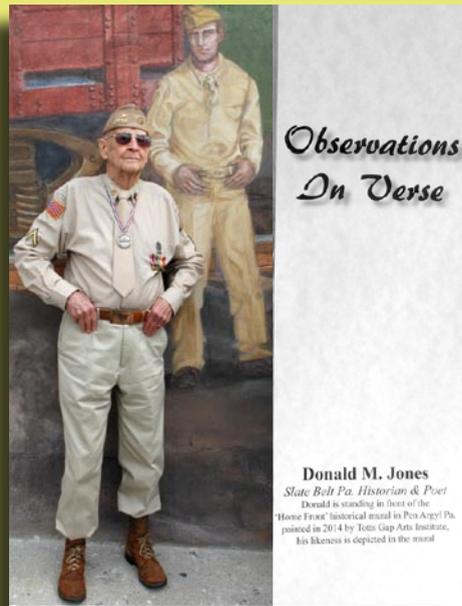


A Poem from the Archives of Donald Jones

Exclusively in the Blue Valley Times



*Observations
In Verse*

Donald M. Jones
Slate Belt Pa. Historian & Poet
Donald is standing in front of the
"Home Front" historical mural in Pen Argyl Pa.
painted in 2014 by Totts Gap Arts Institute.
His likeness is depicted in the mural.

OVERWORKED

Fantastic is not a new word to you and me,
But lately it has been used too frequently.

If an eclipse is a "fantastic" show,
Should a great song be "fantastic" also?
This word is so overworked in our quest
To describe something that we like best
We would better off to take this advice
And just simply say "Isn't it nice?"

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NPS Seeks Public Comment on Watergate Wetlands Restoration Project

By Kathy Sandt

BUSHKILL - Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area is seeking public input on an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Watergate Wetlands Restoration Project. The park proposes to restore wetlands, floodplains, and streams at the Watergate Recreation Site in Warren County, New Jersey by removing man-made dams and ponds, creating a wetland meadow complex in their place, and reestablishing the connection between Van Campens Brook and its floodplain.

The construction of the Susquehanna-Roseland Transmission Line in 2013 and 2014 by Public Service Electric & Gas (PSE&G) and PPL Electric Utilities (PPL) negatively impacted wetlands within the park. Federal policy requires that there be "no net loss" of wetlands. As such, the National Park Service (NPS) required that the power companies provide funding for the restoration an equal amount to that which was lost— 33 "credit acres" of wetlands. A credit acre includes not just the restoration of wetlands themselves but also the restoration of other parts of the ecosystem that support wetlands—in this case, the restoration of a stream, its floodplain, and native vegetation.

The project area has been highly modified by previous landowners and by the NPS. It includes several artificial ponds, a large mowed and maintained lawn area, and a highly altered stream channel. The wetlands restoration project would remove the man-made features and restore the natural topography and flow of water onsite.

Watergate Recreation Site was directly impacted by the transmission line and receives only 6% of the visitation of the park's six fee sites. This project would remove some of the site's recreation features, such as the picnic area and lawn, but the parking lot and restroom facilities would remain. Birdwatching at the site would greatly improve following the restoration of wetlands. The restoration of Van Campens Brook would improve cold-water angling quality and opportunities, although open-water angling would cease with the removal of the ponds.

If the NPS decides to move forward with the project, construction would begin in early 2021 and be completed by early- to mid-2022. During that time, the project area (including the parking lot at Watergate Recreation Site) would be closed to the public. Minor, short-term (approximately 15 minutes) single- or double-lane closures on Old Mine Road from Millbrook Village to the southern end of the project area would be needed for two to six weeks in spring 2021 to allow for safe operation of equipment along the road. Millbrook Village would remain open for the duration of construction.

The NPS is seeking public comment on the proposal, including any changes or alternatives that would help the NPS better meet the required 33 credit acres of wetlands restoration, and any changes or improvements needed to the analysis in the EA.

The EA is available at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/WatergateWetlandsRestoration> for a 30-day public review and comment period beginning on June 2 and ending on July 1, 2020. Comments can be made directly through that website. For those without internet access, hard copies can be obtained by calling the park at (570) 588-7235 and comments may be provided by postal mail sent to: Watergate Restoration Project Team, 1978 River Road, Bushkill, PA 18324.



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