

Police partnership key to reopening historic pavilion at Redden State Forest



From left, Sgt. Brooke Africa of the Delaware Natural Resources Police, TFC Heidi Lingo of the Delaware State Police (Bridgeville Troop #5) and State Forester Michael A. Valenti get set to reopen the historic CCC Camp Picnic Pavilion on the Jester Tract at Redden State Forest in Georgetown. The site was closed in early 2017 due to persistent illegal activity. Officials hope increased patrols, brighter lighting, and 24-hour video surveillance will deter crime.

GEORGETOWN, Del. – A partnership with the Delaware State Police and the Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police is helping the Delaware Forest Service reopen its historic picnic pavilion at Redden State Forest that was closed in early 2017 due to persistent illegal activity.

“This historic pavilion was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s and remains an important part of Redden State Forest’s heritage. Though we regret we had to close this area for an extended period, public safety will always be paramount to the Delaware Forest Service. That’s why we are grateful to members in the General Assembly and our partners at the Delaware State Police and Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police – their support is helping us reopen this area for continued recreation and enjoyment,” State Forester Michael A. Valenti said.



From left, TFC Heidi Lingo of the Delaware State Police (Bridgeville #5) joins Sgt. Brooke Africa of the Delaware Natural Resources Police and State Forester Michael A. Valenti

to help reopen the historic CCC Camp Picnic Pavilion on the Jester Tract at Redden State Forest in Georgetown. The site is reopening this week after being closed since January of 2017 due to persistent illegal activity and lewd behavior in the area. Along with increased law enforcement patrols, site upgrades include brighter parking lot lights and 24-hour video surveillance.



Security at the Redden Forest pavilion will include 24-hour video surveillance.

The parking lot and rest area – popular with hikers and horseback riders – now features bright lighting, 24-hour video surveillance, and regular patrols by both marked and undercover law enforcement personnel. Along with these enhanced security measures, new signage reminds visitors that the site is closed from dusk to dawn.

“We are proud to join the Forest Service and State Police in making this pavilion a safe place for families and visitors to enjoy Delaware’s scenic beauty and natural environment,” said Sgt. Brooke Africa of the Delaware Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police. “Everyone should be aware that – thanks to stepped-up patrols and vigorous enforcement – it will not be a welcoming place for anyone planning to engage in criminal conduct.”



The historic pavilion on the Jester Tract at Redden State Forest looks much like it did when it was first built in the 1930s by Civilian Conservation Corps work crews during the Great Depression.

Officials are asking anyone who observes suspicious or illegal activity at the site to report it immediately by calling 911.

“The Delaware State Police and the Delaware Forest Service are committed to restoring this rest area to its proper use as a family-friendly place at our beautiful state forest. This reopening shows how law enforcement agencies can work together to preserve our natural areas while also protecting the public. We hope that everyone will join our efforts by keeping alert to suspicious activity and reporting it immediately by calling 911,” said Sgt. Richard Bratz of the Delaware State Police.

Redden State Forest totals 12,924 acres and includes a variety of recreational activities from hunting to horseback riding. Three of its buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places: the Horse Barn, Ranger’s House, and Redden Forest Lodge – all of which date back to the early 1900s when executives and guests of the Pennsylvania Railroad came to the forest on hunting trips. Visitors arrived by train at the nearby Redden Station and traveled to the lodge by horse and carriage.