

WINDOW CLIFF NATURAL AREA

The Window Cliff Natural Area may get an improved entrance on Old Cane Creek Road in time for its grand opening next month.

(State park in Putnam Co., TN: 8400 Old Cane Creek Rd., Baxter, TN).

Photo by Chuck Sutherland

Posted Tuesday, March 14, 2017: Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN

By Lindsay McReynolds

The long-anticipated opening of a new natural area in Putnam County may get an improved entrance, thanks to the county road department.

Commissioners on the county's fiscal review committee on Monday recommended using \$12,000 from the economic development fund to widen part of Old Cane Creek Road, which will serve as the entrance for the new Window Cliff Natural Area.

The natural area in southwestern Putnam County is slated to open April 7.

Bill Summers, the park manager of nearby Burgess Falls State Park, has been working



with his staff and

volunteers for the past two years to prepare for the public opening of the 210-acre natural area known for its waterfalls.

“We and a dedicated number of volunteers have been working hard for the past two years to build a trail, paint signs and get us ready,” Summers said. “We’re continuing to tweak everything.”

Summers noted that the five-mile trail at the natural area is a strenuous hike with nine creek crossings.

“We want people to be aware,” he said. “It will be a challenge.”

Putnam County Executive Randy Porter said the county’s economic development fund, which has an annual budget of about \$500,000, is used for tourism, planning and incentives for companies bringing jobs to the area.

If the commission approves the \$12,000 to widen Old Cane Creek Road next week, the county road department will then begin working on the project, which they hope can be complete in conjunction with next month’s opening of the Window Cliff Natural Area.

A formal ceremony for the Window Cliff Natural Area opening is set for 10 a.m. on Friday, April 7, with a hike to follow in the afternoon.

Man collapses, dies at Window Cliffs

The 20-foot waterfall at Window Cliffs State Natural Area is a popular destination for hikers. A Mississippi man collapsed on the strenuous trail on Tuesday afternoon.

Photo by Chuck Sutherland

Posted Wednesday, July 12, 2017: Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN

By Lindsay McReynolds

A Gulfport, Mississippi man died at Window Cliffs State Natural area on Tuesday afternoon after collapsing on the trail.

Emergency officials said 60-year-old Burnis Page was hiking with his family not too far from the beginning of the 5.4-mile trail when he collapsed.

The Putnam County Rescue Squad, Putnam Fire Department and Putnam Emergency Medical Services responded along with park rangers from Burgess Falls, who oversee the natural area.

A family member reportedly attempted CPR, but was unable to resuscitate Page.

Putnam Emergency Management Agency Director Tyler Smith said the trail is too narrow for the rescue squad's ATV, so they had to use an old logging road to carry the man out.

This is the second time the Putnam Rescue Squad has been called to Window Cliffs since it opened to the public in April. Smith said the first call was for a lady who had broken her ankle there.

The opening of the natural area happened after a purchase of three tracts of land by the Land Trust of Tennessee.

The 275-acre site contains an unusual geologic feature. Erosion on the narrow cliffs there have created "windows" within those cliffs

The area also features a 20-foot waterfall and a few cascades.

The 5.4-mile trail is rated strenuous and crosses nine streams to get to the cliffs.

The natural area was closed Tuesday afternoon.

Group behind Window Cliffs gets award

Posted Sunday, May 27, 2018: Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN
By Lindsay McReynolds

Story by Kate Cook

The group behind making Window Cliffs a state natural area will receive the governor's Environmental Stewardship Award.

Lindsay McReynolds | Herald-Citizen

The team that made Window Cliffs State Natural Area possible will receive an award for their efforts.



The Land Trust for Tennessee bought the properties that make up Window Cliffs as they came available, then transferred them to the state.

Earlier this week, Gov. Bill Haslam and TDEC announced The Land Trust would receive a 2018 Governor's Environmental Stewardship Award.

The ceremony will take place July 9 in Franklin. The Land Trust will receive the "natural heritage" award for the Window Cliffs project.

The Land Trust President and CEO Liz McLaurin said the group is motivated by preserving the land for future generations.

“Window Cliffs is a truly special place, and we are pleased to know Tennesseans and visitors will have the opportunity to enjoy its tremendous beauty and that its important habitats and natural resources will be conserved for generations to come. The opening of the state's newest natural area was the result of strong partnership, complex transactions and the hard work of many. We are glad to celebrate with our conservation partners and all of the hardworking volunteers who have made the area accessible," McLaurin said.

Window Cliffs is part of the Burgess Falls State Park. Park Manager Bill Summers said the natural area has added a new dynamic to the park. Window Cliffs has a more strenuous hike with 9 water crossings. And even though the hike is harder, people keep coming.

"We're hearing good things," Summers said. More people are visiting Burgess and now Window Cliffs each year.

"Ten years ago, we had 62,000 visitors a year at Burgess," Summers said. "Now we're heading towards 250,000."

The Land Trust has worked with the state to expand local and state parks, natural areas and wildlife management areas. Since 1999, they've partnered with the state to conserve more than 20,000 acres of public land.

*Read more about Putnam Co., TN & surrounding areas at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>