

Superintendent moves into Leesylvania Park

By EILEEN MEAD
of the Potomac News

The initial duty of the first superintendent of Leesylvania State Park this week will be to oversee a "dig" by archeologists at a former Indian camp site in the park.

Superintendent G. Warren Wahl, his wife, Helen and Trey, 2, moved last week into a spacious house on the edge of the park off Neabsco Road. The three-bedroom house was purchased recently from a private owner by the Virginia Division of State Parks.

Mr. Wahl said construction of the access road into the park will start soon, but first it must be determined exactly where the boundaries are of a known Indian camp near the entrance to the park. Archeologists from the Virginia Archeological Society, of Williamsburg, began digging at the site today and will be working there all week, Wahl said.

The last General Assembly made funds available for initial development of the park, and the first priority was to get a superintendent on the site.

Although the access road to the park is closed, the park is accessible from the Potomac River.

The majority of the visitors who come in by boat just swim or picnic on the sandy beaches, but some intruders have been destructive, according to Don Curtis of Woodbridge, a historian who has been a strong supporter of development of the park.

"The park has been frequently invaded by people looking for artifacts, poachers of wildlife, vandals and people who cut down trees. It was imperative to get someone in there as soon as possible," he said.

Mr. Wahl, who was busy unpacking boxes Friday, said this is the fifth move the family has made since he started working for the Division of State Parks in 1978. The latest move was from York River State Park, near Williamsburg, where he was superintendent. There they lived in a modular home in the park.

"We don't have enough furniture to fill this place," Mr. Wahl said as he showed a large family room devoid of furniture off the kitchen. "We'll probably use this room as an office for a while."

Initial plans were to place a modular home in the park for the superintendent, he said, but it

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By Cliff Owen — Potomac News
Leesylvania Park Superintendent Warren Wahl, with his wife and son Trey

would have taken considerable time to get the necessary permits and to bring water, electricity, sewers and roads to the site.

"The department was anxious to get a superintendent in the park as soon as possible, so they bought this house when it came on the market at a good price," he said.

Mr. Wahl, 28, worked for the Division of Parks each summer during his years at The College of William and Mary, where he majored in biology and chemistry. Immediately after graduating, he started working full-time for the Division of Parks.

He is excited about the development of the new park and the challenges before him.

—See PARK, Page A5

PARK / From A1

"This park has so many different things to offer. It is going to be one of Virginia's finest parks," he said.

The park, acquired through a donation by Daniel K. Ludwig from the American-Hawaiian Steamship Company, has historical significance as well as access to the Potomac River.

It was the site of the former home of the Lee family. Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee III, a cavalry colonel in the revolution, governor of Virginia from 1791-1794 and the father of Robert E. Lee, was one of the Lees who lived there.

The Lee family graveyard is also in the park. Mr. Wahl said a tractor will be brought in soon to upgrade the condition of the graveyard and to fence in the area. A memorial is planned to be erected in April.

The park will feature launching and storage facilities for sail and motor boats, picnic areas, swimming pools, concessions and a historical center.

Plans are to hire a Chief Ranger for the park by the first of November, Mr. Wahl said.

"Once the roads are in, the county will have access to free land in the park and could start development at any time," Mr. Curtis said.