

Winter 2017 volume 21

Membership Perks

What Your Membership does for the Park.

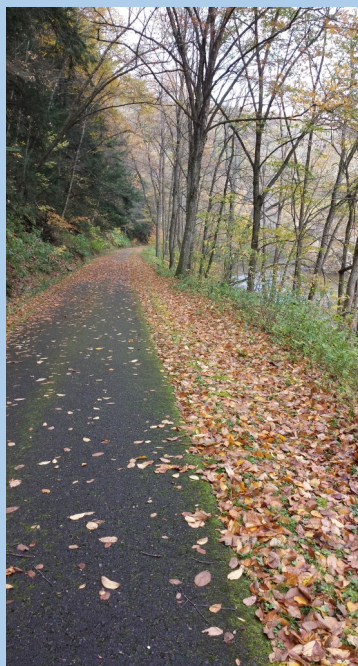
We are often asked what are the benefits of a Friends of Oil Creek State Park Membership (FOCSP). The following pictures are just a few of the perks your membership purchases. In addition , memberships also help : Chicks-in-the-Sticks, the biathlon, and multiple races including the 5k and OC100. Without your support , we would be hard pressed to maintain the park as well as we do.



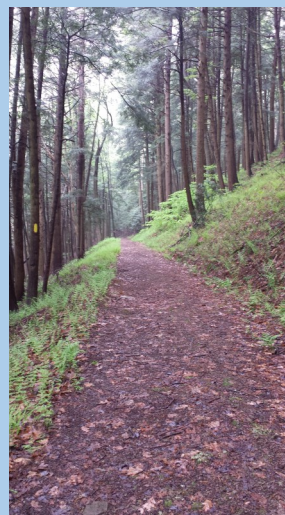
The FOCSP furnishes the Over the Hill Gang with money and materials to make the bridges safer with roofing shingles and fenders



Memberships help maintain ski trails and the ski hut.



The FOCSP help maintain the bike trail



With your membership, we are able to insure the trails are well marked, and the signage is up to date and visible.



FOCSP in conjunction with PNC bank and Greenways wrote a grant for the children's playground at Egbert Farm. The Friends are looking into more grants for endeavors such as this

Your Membership is needed.

Renew or initiate a membership at:

www.friendsocsp.org . The membership prices are : single \$10, family \$25, and corporate/business/group \$100.



In the depths of winter I finally learned there was in me an invincible summer.

Albert Camus

Park Manager's Report

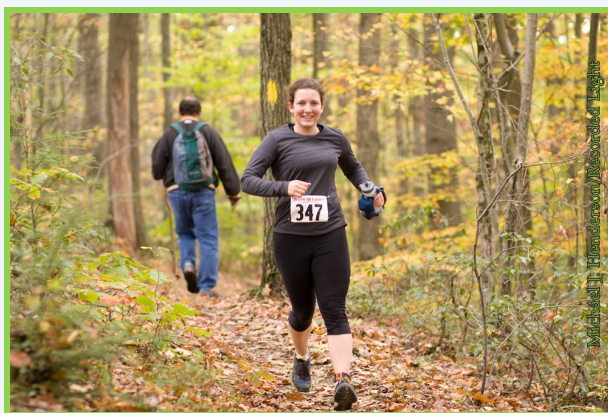
TODAY'S YOUTH

Introducing today's youth to the outdoors, to me, is extremely important. Not only for my children but for all children. When I was a youngster, the woods and the streams of PA were my Nintendo. I couldn't wait for summer break so I could wake up every morning, ride my bike three miles or so down an old dirt road, and spend the entire day fishing and exploring. I was lucky enough to have a father that took the time to introduce me to fishing, hunting, camping, and so many other outside activities. There was rarely a time that I wasn't by his side when he headed off to the woods. Now I am the father, and I often find myself competing with computers, iPhones, iPods, PlayStations, and other forms of technology when it comes to exposing my children to nature. Luckily, I think my son has inherited my outdoor gene. He seems to enjoy spending time outside more than he does sitting in front of a screen. He enjoys identify mushrooms (be careful with this one), fishing, tagging along on a whitetail hunt, and just going for a simple hike. If my father hadn't taken the time to expose me to various forms of outdoor recreation, I may not have the passion for it that I do today, and I probably wouldn't be working for State Parks. My point is that we can shape today's youth, and we can pass on values that are important to us. The world is changing, and technology is here to stay. I understand that not every child will want to hunt or fish, even my children may ultimately decide that it is not for them. However, I feel that it is important they get the chance to decide for themselves. So, if you have a niece, nephew, grandchild, or know of a youngster that you think would benefit from being outdoors, I encourage you to take them outside and enjoy what Mother Nature has to offer.

See you in the woods,

David Hallman

Upcoming Events:



The Friends of Oil Creek State Park are a chapter of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation



FRIENDS OF OIL CREEK
MISSION STATEMENT :
"The Friends of Oil Creek State Park support the Park's mission to preserve, protect, and interpret our natural environment while providing recreational and educational opportunities for residents and visitors to the Region."

Races:

- Meet U in 5 and 1/2 : May 20, 2017
- Strike Oil 5k/Kids Fun Run :July 15, 2017
- Drake Well Marathon/Half Marathon: August 6, 2017
- Biathlon: August 12, 2017
- Oil Creek 100: October 14-15, 2017



Events

- Chicks-in –the Sticks: June 17, 2017
- Other Park events will be listed on our web site and in future newsletters as they become official. www.friendsocsp.org .

Venango Area Chamber of Commerce News

Stephen Kosak

Citizen of the Year is being honored at Annual Chamber Dinner

Steve has been named outstanding citizen of the year by the Venango Area Chamber of Commerce for his countless contributions to the community. On February 22nd, Steve will be recognized at Cross Creek Resort beginning at 5pm .

The Friends of Oil Creek State Park would like to congratulate Steve Kosak on this outstanding honor. He was instrumental in helping the Friends group obtain a PNC grant to fund the new playground construction at Egbert Farm and he is a great friend of the Park's.

Please consider joining us for this premier event to help celebrate the work of Steve.

The link below allows for online registration to the dinner:

<http://www.venangochamber.org/catalog/event-registration/annual-dinner.html>



Over-The-Hill-Gang

Although the Gang's outside efforts are sometimes hampered by the weather, they have continued to meet throughout the winter. And... The Gang will be back on the trails soon. They have many projects in mind such as continuing to shingle bridges and walkway, improving steps which have become rickety, replacing signage throughout the park, adding benches to overlooks, and improving wet areas. During the winter they have been cutting and trimming trees, splitting wood for the shelters, and getting things in order for their upcoming projects.



Oil Creek Skiing



The mild winter we're having leaves extra time to write about winter activities for those of us who would otherwise be spending that time enjoying the snow. One of the best ways, if not *the* best way, to enjoy the snow is on cross country (Nordic) skis, which are designed so the toe of the boot is attached to the ski, but the heel is not, unlike downhill (alpine) skiing, where the entire sole of the boot is affixed to the ski. This allows the Nordic skier to lift the heel off the skis to push them forward and traverse flat and uphill terrain, unlike Alpine skis, which are only for going downhill. The price the Nordic skier pays for this increased versatility is less control than alpine skis going downhill, which is why hills on typical Nordic ski trails are not nearly as steep as those on alpine courses. The benefit the Nordic skier obtains is being able to ski virtually anywhere.

The technique, which is essentially an exaggerated style of walking, involves pushing the ski forward (the "kick"), and then allowing the ski to glide forward before repeating the process with the other ski. The glide can be anywhere from a few inches to several feet per stride, depending on the terrain, snow conditions, ski preparation, and the skier's ability. Done properly, it is possible to get some glide even going slightly uphill. Compared to alpine skiing, Nordic skiing is easier to learn, expenses for equipment and trail passes are much less, and usually there is not nearly as much travel time involved.

Our Nordic ski area at OCSP, which is run by Sun Valley Nordic, is the best in the area, with about 12 ??? miles of trails. John and Peg Sims do an outstanding job of keeping the trails in the best shape possible. The grooming and tracking of the trails is extremely important in an often snow-deprived area such as ours because it helps to pack the snow down and make it last as long as possible. The trail fees are extremely reasonable at only \$5 per day or \$40 for the season. The Friends of OCSP and other volunteers help to maintain the trails in the off season.

Alpine skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, and ice skating are also fun winter activities, but it's hard to beat Nordic skiing for a fun, aerobic, and economical full-body workout. Indeed, many exercise physiologists rate it as the best aerobic exercise since both the arms and legs are involved, and it is extremely low-impact on the joints - unless you fall- but the snow's there for some cushion! Enjoying winter activities makes us look forward to the season instead of worrying about cabin fever, seasonal affective disorder (SAD), and whatever other terms there are for the winter blahs.

When conditions are right, gliding along under your own power, covering ground more quickly than walking, and enjoying the winter scenery and solitude, make for an exhilarating time. Skiing at night, either under a full moon or wearing a headlamp, is a beautiful experience which also allows the skier to extend the short days of winter. The Friends of OCSP try to have a few night skis each season, but this year we have been thwarted by the weather!

This season seems to be another example of when we have snow early (as we did in November and December), we often don't have much snow later. Oh well, we'll hope for a snowy March, despite the protestations of our warm weather friends. We hope you'll join us!

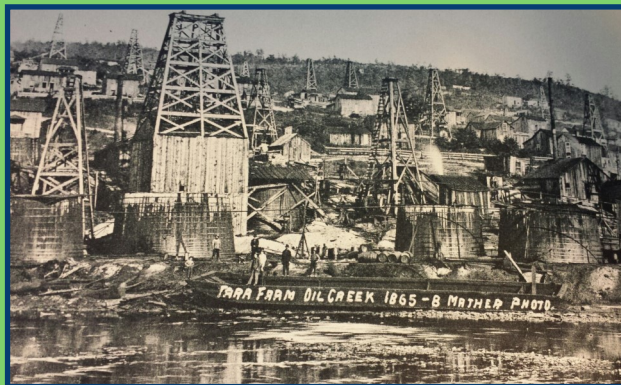


Abandoned Wells in the Park



BENNINGHOFF FARM, BENNINGHOFF RUN

The land that Oil Creek State Park now occupies was once the site of extensive oil and gas exploration and production. Old photos show deforested hillsides with oil wells, derricks and oil production infrastructure occupying every inch. Today trees have reclaimed the hillsides. But the remnants of the oil industry are still present. More than 1200 abandoned wells have been identified in the park



TARA FARM OIL CREEK 1865 - B. MATHER PHOTO.

and many still remain unplugged. Unplugged or improperly plugged wells are an environmental problem. They allow oil and gas from deep within the well to contaminate water layers closer to the surface. These watery layers feed the springs and seeps that generate the many streams within the park. Abandoned wells also represent a physical hazard to hiker and hunters. As the well deteriorates the soil near the surface begins to cave in and large open holes develop. Many open holes have been marked but others are still unidentified.

Each year members of the Orphan Wells Project walk the hillsides looking for abandoned well. The group of volunteers, members of the Venango Pa Senior Environmental Corps (VPaSEC), started looking for wells in 2003, after other groups had also searched for and found numerous abandoned wells in the park. The purpose of the project is to get the wells properly plugged.

Since the VPaSEC project began, volunteers have located over 940 wells in the Park. In 2016 the group added 76 wells to the list. The well hunters work in groups of three to nine looking for the telltale signs of an abandoned wells. Some still have a pumping jack but most are just pipe casings or open holes in the ground. When a well is found, the group photographs, marks and tags the site and records specific details about the well including its GPS location. This information is then turned over to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and DEP then examines the site and adds it to the well plugging list. Well hunters are always amazed at how many abandoned wells they find. They estimate that they have covered about 60 percent of the Park. The well hunters describe their work as a treasure hunt. They never know what they will find. Some days it's abandoned wells, others it's oil field artifacts, and others it's an opportunity to enjoy the wildflowers, fungi and animals of the Park.



Between 1997 and 2010, eleven plugging contracts worth 2.2 million dollars have plugged 528 wells in the Park. More than 700 additional wells are on the list and need to be plugged. Each year the park requests the plugging of additional wells, but funding is limited.

President's Report

FRIENDS-SHIPS

President's report

by Peg Sims



This past weekend brought a record number of Cross Country Skiers to Oil Creek with over 100 on Saturday alone. Folks came from all walks of life and a variety of places, even countries. Some were regulars and some were first timers. The ages ran from 6-76. All were brought together through the shared interests of enjoying Cross Country Skiing, winter, and the outdoors which makes for fertile ground for striking up friendships.

Listen to the conversations over lunch or snacks in the cozy ski hut. Did you have a good ski? Where are you from? What trails did you do? What wax are you using? I skied 12 miles today! Hey, I made it down the Down Hill Thrill II with out crashing! The hemlock ridge is beautiful. What's your name? Can you take our picture? I think I saw a Bald Eagle. I love the lookout.



Have some tea or cocoa. That was so much fun. I'm coming back and bringing friends. There are smiles and laughter all around. No one leaves a stranger.

Even just a brief hello trail side, as two ships passing, has a special bond of friendliness and shared experience. I myself look forward every winter to seeing my snow friends happy and well since not seeing them since last winter! I imagine hikers and trails runners share similar experiences in the spring,

summer, and fall. But there is just something magical that transcends the park in winter creating a perfect place for making "FRIENDS". Come to Oil Creek and be a "Friend" any season.

Membership

The Friends of Oil Creek would like to thank everyone who renewed their membership and to thank the many new members.

Your membership helps maintain existing projects in the Park. Your contributions also support new initiatives throughout the Park. Your dues contribute to the trail maintenance of the Gerard trail, the bike trail, and the ski trails. In addition, these resources help fund the "Over-The Hill Gang's" efforts to keep the trails clear and to erect and maintain the many bridges and benches along the Gerard trail.

If you haven't renewed your membership or would like to join the Friends of Oil Creek, follow the link on our web page ... www.friendsocsp.org . The membership prices are : single \$10, family \$25, and corporate/business/group \$100.

You can become a member or renew your membership by contacting the FOCSP in one of the ways listed below. Our web site has a direct link.

- **Oil Creek Office**
305 State Park Road
Oil City, PA 16301
Park Office Phone: 814-676-5915
- **E-Mail: oilcreekfriends@gmail.com**
- **Website: www.friendsocsp.org**



**Keep up to date
with Oil Creek activities
by visiting our new website at:
www.friendsocsp.org**