



Friends of Oil Creek State Park~Fall

Park Manager's Report

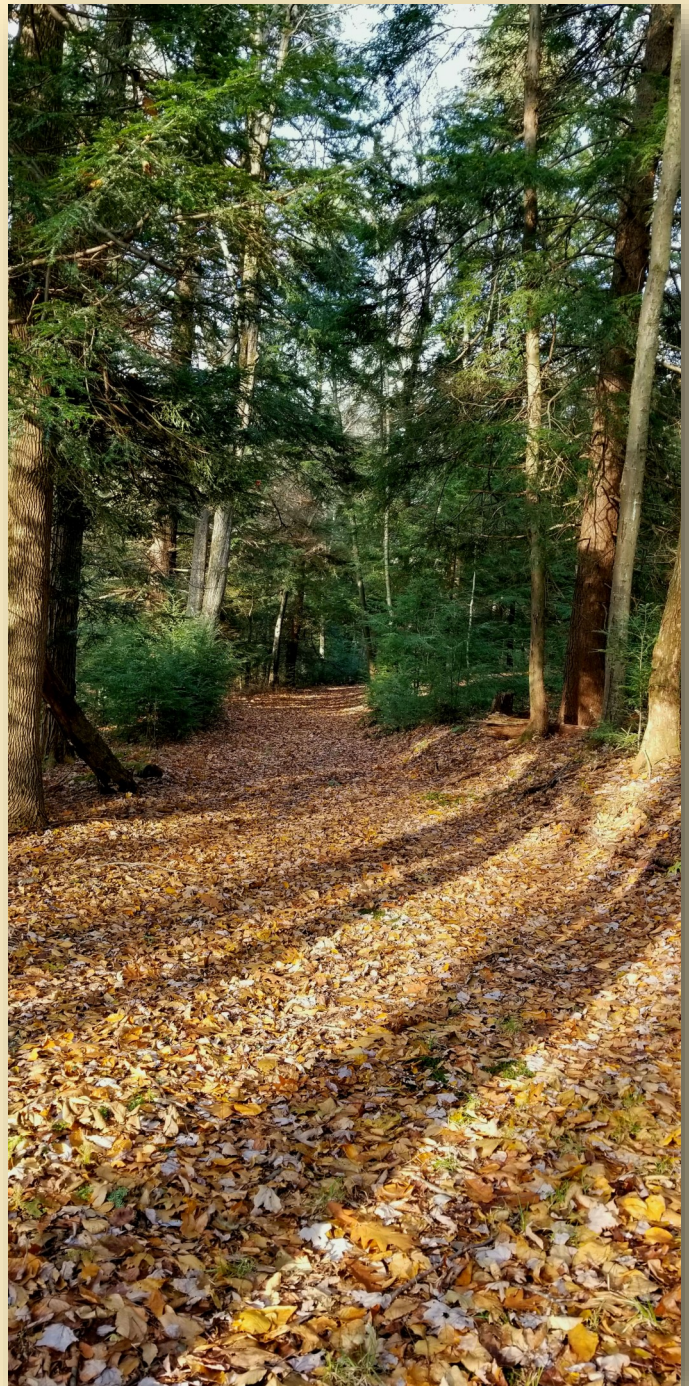
As we start to close out 2018, I would like to share some of the things we accomplished this year, and what we hope to accomplish in 2019. This was a hard year. It seemed like it rained most every day which makes it hard to complete projects. However, we were able to build three new Adirondack shelters at the Wildcat Hollow Organized group tenting area. So far, they seem to be a big hit with the scout groups. Thanks to the generosity of the FOCSP, we were able to repair the stone work at three of our shelters at Wolfkiel shelter site. Park staff replaced several more culverts along the bike trail, painted the restrooms, treated invasive species, replaced picnic tables, mowed, mowed some more, and you got it mowed some more. The grass never seemed to stop growing this year due to an abundance of rain over the summer and fall.

Chris Mosebach continued to bring in large crowds with his environmental and historical education programs. The Over the Hill Gang continued to work their magic on the trails. Chick-in-the- Sticks was a success once again this year. The OC 100 celebrated its 10th year. Runners however faced difficult conditions battling temps in the 80's and strong storms. We also had a handful of other events, including several runs and a fly-fishing tournament. All went well and added to the charm of this park. I look forwards to hosting these events again in 2019.

Here are some of the things that we hope to accomplish in 2019...We would like to replace the kiosks with updated park maps and information, a map of the Erie to Pittsburg bike trail, and park programming information. The new kiosks will be going up at each picnic location, at the park office, and the southern and northern bike trailheads. We will also be replacing the Blood Farm interpretive signs along the self-guided historical walking trail with new and revised interpretive panels. We also hope to replace the roof on the train station, have solar lighting installed at the ski hut, and probably lots of mowing. PPFF and the FOCSP have submitted a grant proposal to PNC to purchase playground equipment which if awarded , will be installed at Blood Farm. We should find out in mid-November if we will be receiving the grant funding. If awarded, the purchase of the playground will take place this year with construction sometime in 2019. Cross your fingers!

In closing, I would like to thank all of you- from my staff, the hard-working volunteers and event sponsors, and those of you that come out and just enjoy the park. The interactions that I have with you make my job a lot of fun! I am truly lucky to be able to work and raise my family in such a wonderful place with such great people. I wish you all a Happy Holiday season and New Year.

Sincerely, Dave Hallman



Abandoned Wells in Oil Creek State Park ²



Each year volunteers walk the hillsides and valleys of Oil Creek State Park in search of abandoned Oil and Gas wells.

The first commercial oil well was drilled just north of Oil Creek State Park in 1859. Following that discovery the land that is now Oil Creek State Park became one of the most densely drilled places in the US. The remains of those “old days” now exist as abandoned wells with no known owners.

Abandoned wells act as a conduit that allow oil and brine from the deeper layers to mix with the fresh water layers closer to the surface. This contaminated water flows from seeps and springs into the feeder streams of Oil Creek resulting in reduced fish and other organisms. Abandoned wells also represent a physical hazard to hikers and hunters.

The goal of the volunteers work is to get the wells properly plugged. Through an Act 13 grant, the Venango Conservation District will be plugging 11 wells in the Pioneer section of the park. Work is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2019. Wells designated for plugging will be open

holes along or near the Gerard Hiking Trail. This project has an estimated cost of \$240,000.00 dollars.

Since the park opened approximately 530 wells have been plugged at a cost of 2.2 million dollars. This is an ongoing project and each year more abandoned wells are added to the list. Since 2004, 955 wells have been located in the park by volunteers. Prior to 2004 DEP personnel located approximately 100 wells. There is still a lot of work to be done.



Well hunters locate and mark abandoned wells along the Girard Hiking Trail which could prove to be hazardous to hikers and hunters.



'Tis The Season

As our newsletter is coming out around the Holidays, I thought I would mention the spirit of giving. First, think of what the Park gives to us. The Park gives us the opportunity to see beauty and experience a variety of flora and fauna and changing seasons. We can get away from the hustle and bustle and breathe fresh air. With so many recreational opportunities available throughout the Park, we can create adventures and memories. What a wonderful gift Oil Creek State Park is to us.

So how can we give a little back? Well, joining the Friends for our January to December 2019 membership is one easy way. You could give yourself a membership, or give a membership as a gift to someone who has everything. The membership cost is \$10 for an individual or \$25 for a family. Funds from our membership go to many and varied projects and needs in the park. The Friends welcome all donations throughout the year. Donations can be given in honor or in memory of someone special and can go to support specific needs such as Over The Hill Gang, trail maintenance projects, bird seed, equipment, tree planting, just to name a few.

Membership and donations are tax deductible through Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation. You can send membership and donations by mail to 305 State Park Rd., Oil City, PA 16301. Checks are made out to Friends of Oil Creek or PPFF or go to our website www.friendsocsp.org and click on donate.

Another way to give to the Park is by participating in, volunteering in, or sponsoring our events such as the *Biathlon* and *Chicks In The Sticks*. You can also join one of our trail maintenance groups or Orphan Well Hunters. Another way to volunteer would be to help take care of wild flower gardens, count bats, or other volunteer projects. Taking a turn on our Board of Directors is rewarding as well. Check out our website for volunteer opportunities throughout the year.

Many thanks to the many of you who do all of the above suggestions. We couldn't support the park without you!

Happy Trails,
Peg Sims, FOCSP Chair



Over-The-Hill Gang

The Over-the-Hill Gang has accomplished much since the last newsletter. They have been busy removing trees both large and small that fell across the trails throughout the summer. The Gang also has been replacing, building, rebuilding, and enhancing bridges throughout the Park. They are grateful to the Friends of Oil Creek for their financial support, as well as the collaboration with Oil Creek and Drake Well Parks.

Left- Digging ditches to divert water from the trails.

Right-Teamwork which results in continuous trail improvements.



Enhanced safety of the bridge and trail on the east side north of Miller Farm Road

The plum Dudgeon area...This bridge was lengthened and shingled. The Gang also added a railing and fenders to it. They built a bench to overlook the beautiful gorge in that area.



Here The Gang was working on replacing the longboards between the Jersey Bridge and the bike trail. The bridge is elevated and there are steps on either end.



OC100 Trail Runs held it's 10th year October 6th. The Friends of Oil Creek assisted Shelly Sampson and other Titusville School District cafeteria staff in the preparation and serving of the pre-race dinner as they have each of the ten years. It is always a treat for the Friends to see and talk to the racers before the dinner. They certainly are an amazing breed.

It was another great race, but the usual challenges were compounded as the temps were well into the 80's with nasty thunderstorms in the late afternoon. The runners persevered and were in excellent spirits. In the 100 mile race 161 runners started the race and 43% finished, in the 100K race –85 started and 65% finished, and in the 50K 167 started and 93% finished. The nasty conditions contributed to this year's low finishing percentage.



Summer Biathlon 2018



The 13th Annual Oil Creek Summer Biathlon was held August 11, 2018. Though it was the 13th, it certainly wasn't "unlucky". (Well, unless you had to run a bunch of penalty laps). The Biathlon was very successful with 86 entrants and really nice weather!

The overall winners were Catie Jaskowak and her brother Daniel Jaskowak from Grove City who were both first time biathletes! Pat Maloney of Seagartown shot clean and so did Nathan Russel of Emlenton. There were some fresh faces and many returning biathletes. Brian and Eric Marendt and Richard Novak have the notoriety of participating in all 13. You can see the entire results on our Friends website.

The Biathlon has long been a major fund raiser for the Friends of Oil Creek. This year we raised \$1,233.19. \$16,812 has been raised from the inception. We can't thank our participants, volunteers, and sponsors enough for this support. All funds raised from our Friends events go directly back into the park to support our many projects and needs. We thank you all from the bottom of our hearts and hope you continue to run fast and shoot straight. Sign up early for next year's biathlon to be held August 10, 2019.



Kayaking on Oil Creek



A kayak/canoe/paddleboard/(what device is next?!) float down Oil Creek through the park is only feasible in high water – unless you're up for some wadding/dragging. But when the "crick's" up, it can be a fun float. On average, spring is best, but heavy rains can bring it on at any time of year. The lowest recommended water level for a kayak is 2.75 feet. And for a canoe it is 3.0 feet. It is not recommend canoeing or kayaking if the level is over 5 feet.. (The website where the public can view stream height in real time. <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/usa/nwis/uv?03020500>)

There's a nice little put-in at the Drake Well bike trail parking area, with about a

ten mile float down to the Egbert Farm area at Petroleum Center. Proper boat registration is required for most launches. If there is a question, check with the Fish and Game Commission. Personal floatation devices (PFDs – life jackets) are recommended to be worn at all times (and **must be** "immediately available"), and they must be worn from November 1 to April 30.

It's not an adventure trip, it's a leisure, beginners' class float except in unusually high water. The fastest water is at the remains of Boughton Dam, a short (class, ah, not *that* difficult) stretch with a nearby eagles' nest. The float is good for fishing – one of the finest trout waters in the state, seeing/photographing beautiful scenery – steep forested hillsides in various hues – and wildlife – eagles, osprey, hawks, turkey, deer, fishers, bobcat, and more... or just cooling off on a hot day.

In addition to Boughton, the trip takes you through the areas of Drake Well, Hunt Farm, Miller Farm, Shaffer Farm, Pioneer, Funkville, Benninghoff Farm, Petroleum Center and Egbert Farm. You can also extend the float through the last few miles of the State Park (although that involves portaging around the ice dam and finding a suitable take-out) or even farther to the new access area off Route 8 (at the Dollar General Store) or further down to the Allegheny to New Orleans, depending on how much food you take along. A very rough calculation is three hours to go ten miles, but this varies greatly depending on water level, the level of exercise the paddlers are up for, time for fishing, goofing off, etc.

A nice compliment to this type of float is to combine it with a bicycle trip on the adjacent multi-use trail, which eliminates the need for two vehicles. Heavy thinking is required to work out the logistics of any float so you don't have to hear "but I thought *you* had the car keys." With the one car system, you drop off the boat and gear at Drake Well (drag the stuff a little ways in the woods if you're worried about it disappearing) and drive with the bike to Petroleum Center (Egbert Area), bicycle back up to Drake Well, stash the bike, and float back down to Egbert. This does involve a fair amount of driving, but going with others makes that part more fun and adds other options.

So wait for some high water and enjoy a beautiful float through The Valley That Changed The World!

Thanks to Timothy Rudisille for the amazing Oil Creek Pictures



Membership

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

Your membership helps maintain existing projects in Oil Creek State Park. Your contributions also help maintain new initiatives in the Park. Your membership also helps to maintain the Gerard hiking trail, the bike trail, and the ski trails. In addition, these resources fund the “Over the Hill Gang”.

If you haven't renewed your membership or would like to become a member, follow the link to become a friend of Oil Creek State Park: www.friendsocsp.org. The membership prices: single \$10, family \$25, and corporate/business/group \$100. You can also become a Friends member or renew your membership by contacting the FOCSP in one of the ways listed below:

- Call or write the 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



The Friends of Oil Creek State Park is 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.