

## Spring 2019



### Sixth Annual Chick-in-the-Sticks



The Friends of Oil Creek State Park’s Annual *Chicks-in-the-Sticks* event will be held Saturday, June 15, 2019. *Chicks-in-the-Sticks* is a full day of outdoor workshops for women. The workshops are hands on, and the participants will produce an item, be introduced to a skill, or get materials that they can take home from each class.

Twenty-one workshops will be offered. The workshops will include many activities such as: basic kayaking, cycling, archery, modern fur taking, adventure foods, and back packing. Terrarium building, painting a bird nest, pottery, leather working, making an alcohol micro-stove from a pop can, and the art of wood burning are examples of workshops where women will have the opportunity of making an item to take home. Women will also be able to choose workshops where they will be introduced to topics such as medicinal uses of herbs, bee keeping, bird identification, invasive species ID, and fly casting/fly fishing. “Come Forest Bathing” is a workshop about using your senses to take in the sights, sounds, smells and tastes that surround you in the forest. The day will consist of each woman choosing four workshops: two in the morning and two in the afternoon.

All workshops will be presented by trained instructors. All materials and equipment will be provided. You can bring your own equipment if you have it. Lunch will be served from a local barbecue with vegetarian options.

For more information and to register on line or by mail, visit the Friends of Oil Creek’s website at [friendsocsp.org](http://friendsocsp.org) and click on *Chicks-in the Sticks*.



Water bugs



Archery



Kayaking



# Friends Receive HUGE Donation!

Sam Dickson, a local trail runner who lives in Hydetown, recently gave FOCSP a sizable donation of \$1,111 which he raised in about 2 ½ months from about 40 different donors, most of them fellow trail runners. Sam accomplished this through a *GoFundMe* campaign with the help of the OC 100 Trail Run group. Sam has been trail running for the past 2 ½ years or so, and, while training for the OC 100 race, Sam was disappointed to find that the drinking fountains in Petroleum Center at the Park Office and the Egbert pavilion did not work. Sam realized the importance of the fountains to trail runners



Sam training

and, for that matter, anyone else using the Park. The runners especially appreciate having drinking water available so they can refill their containers en route and not have to carry as much on the trail. And the Egbert fountain will be great for the kids getting thirsty playing on the new playground!



Sam presenting check to Friends' president Peg Sims

As it turns out, OCSP Manager Dave Hallman was already aware of the inoperable fountains and their importance to the runners and others, and Dave has obtained state funding for the repairs. Upon finding this out, Sam graciously donated the money to the use of the Over-The-Hill Gang (OTHG) who rely on The Friends of Oil Creek for most



Sam 's OC100 Finish

of their funding. Sam, the other trail runners, and all of us who enjoy the many miles of hiking trails at OCSP are aware of the tremendous job the OTHG has done over the years maintaining the trails. To the uninitiated, this may not seem like much of a task, but it most certainly is – clearing trees (some are huge) that fall on the trail, building “bumpers,” steps and walkways to help prevent erosion, etc.

Sam wanted to be sure and let the OTHG members know how much he and all the trail runners appreciate the hard work. THANKS, SAM !!!



# Over-The-Hill Gang



New overlook bench

The Over The Hill Gang has had a busy, productive Spring. High winds and heavy rains brought down trees, large and small, and caused numerous washouts along several trail sections. The Gang has covered the entire trail at least once and many sections two and three times. Reports from runners and hikers of down trees and problem areas are a great help when we schedule crews each week.



Significant improvements have been made to the steps above the Miller Farm Road bridge ( trail leading to the cemetery on the East side). Work in this area also included digging a long, deep ditch to divert water away from the steps. A 5 feet by 5 feet walkway was built to cover the ditch.

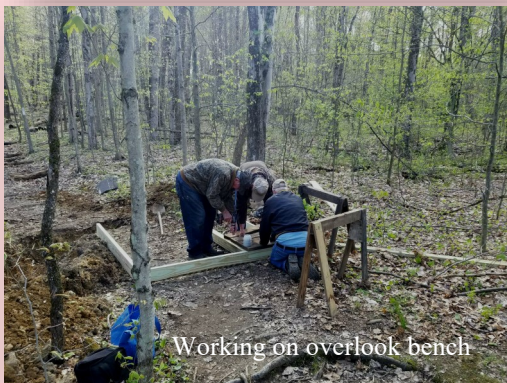
The L-shaped bridge and boardwalk East of the cemetery noted above was moved closer to the bank and securely anchored.

New railings were added to the boardwalk section and shingles were added to improve footing.



The scenic overlook that provides a view of the large, wooden derricks across Oil Creek was cleared and the bench was re-set.

In addition to regular trail maintenance, the OTHG has plans for additional improvements to bridges and boardwalks as well as continuing ditching and fender/bumper work as needed.



Working on overlook bench

Enjoy the trails....OTHG



# It's Not Too Late

There is still time to check out spring wildflowers in Oil Creek. There are many flowers to be seen along the Gerard trail. Although the trailing arbutus and trillium are about done, Jack-in-the-Pulpits, Lady's Slippers, Mayapples, Cow Slips, and many more will be in full bloom by the end of May and into June.



Trailing Arbutus



Trillium



Jack-in-the-Pulpit



Above- Red Lady's Slippers from early spring to late spring.

Left- Yellow Lady's Slippers in early and late spring



# President's Report

## GET YOUR FAMILY OUTSIDE!

Recently, there has been studies showing the benefits of being outdoors on children and families but unfortunately far too many children and families do not experience the great outdoors together. A recent study done in the UK by the National Trust showed that children only spend 4 hours a week in outdoor play and 10% have never been to a park or nature environment. The Seattle Children's Research Institute discovered that 50% of preschoolers they studied lacked even one play session a day outside. Children ages 10-16 averaged only 12.6 minutes of outdoor activity a day compared to 10 or more hours of indoor non-activity. So why is this important? I have compiled just a few thoughts from several resources as to what the benefits of getting your kids outside might be.



Mayapple

Outdoor activity can lead to several physical and mental benefits. Being outside increases Vitamin D levels with promotes healthy bones and mental cognition. Some studies suggested it improves children's eyesight. Being outside can improve sensory and motor skills and can increase attention spans. Of course any physical activity a child can get is good for them. Being outside also promotes better immunity and actually decreases sensitivity to allergens. Nature promotes creativity and the imagination and been shown to reduce stress and anxiety. Children who spend time outside develop an appreciation of nature and the environment and are more likely to be involved with conservation as they get older. So where am I going with all of this? Oil Creek State Park of course.

Oil Creek has much for the family and children to enjoy. There is a state of the art playground near the park office and a new playground to be built at Blood Farm in the near future. The park offers fun and educational programs throughout the summer. The bike trail offers a great place for all ages and levels of abilities as it is mostly flat and paved. Trikes, bikes, strollers, skate boards, scooters, and even wheelchairs can travel any suitable distance. Have a fun family day fishing and wading on Oil Creek and watch for the eagles and other birds and aquatic life. There is family camping made easy at the new shelters at Wild Cat and new ones being built at the ski area. Speaking of the ski area, this is a wonderful place for families to hike. The blue, green, and white connector trails are mainly level, wide, and gentle. There are loops of several reasonable options of distances from one, two, three, and four miles. Folks have told me that the trails are so nice they can take a stroller or pull a wagon for their small children on some portions of the trail. There is ample parking and easy access and composting toilets. There is much variety of flora and fauna for the kids to see and learn about. So take time this summer to give your kids a healthy dose of nature and the outside this summer at Oil Creek State Park. I guarantee you won't regret it.

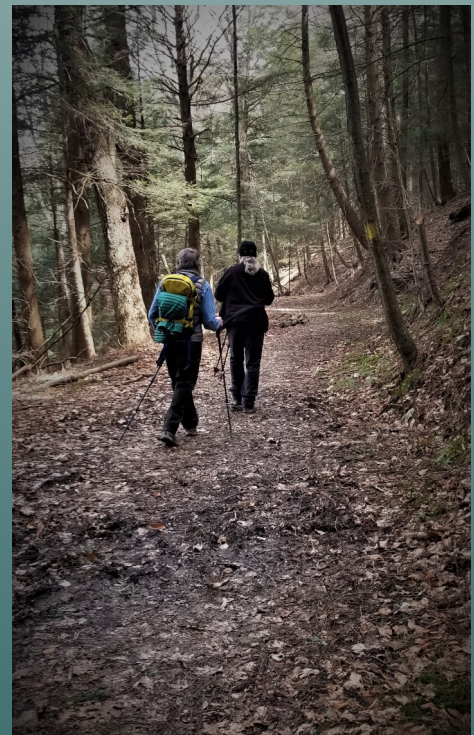
Happy Trails,

Peg Sims, Chairman FOCSP



There are many things to do in Oil Creek State Park. Plan a stay at either the Cow Run or Wolfkeil shelters. ( Your donations at work...The Friends are in the process of having all the chimneys repointed at both areas.)

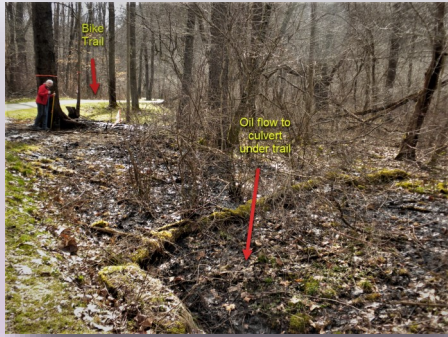
The right picture— Day hiking close to Gregg Run.





# Abandoned Oil Well Blowout

No the abandoned oil and gas wells in Oil Creek State Park didn't get together for a really spectacular party. This was actually the hydraulic pressure in the layers of sandstone beneath the park building to the point that it used one of the weak points (an abandoned well) to get to the surface.



On approximately March 15<sup>th</sup> an abandoned oil well blew out and sent oil and brine on, along, and under the bike trail. Although no one was there to see it DEP estimates that the gusher of oil and brine shot about 30 feet into the air. The blowout occurred in the Funkville area and can easily be seen from the bike trail. The well, which was not previously in the PA DEP database, had been leaking a small amount of oil onto the ground surface said Dave Hallman, park manager.



The blowout was to a well that had been covered with a rock and then covered with dirt at some point in the past. Orphan well hunters had identified a well casing about 2 feet from the blowout site and reported that well to DEP in 2008 , but since the blowout well was covered with rock and dirt and not visible, no action was taken at that time. Other wells in the nearby area were plugged in 2009 due to the presence of gas bubbling up through water filled depressions and oil leaking at the surface casings.



This is just another example of the

danger of abandoned wells in the park. Since 2004, members of the Orphan Well Project have been searching the park for abandoned wells and reporting them to DEP for inclusion in the DEP database. The goal is to get the wells properly plugged. Currently the Venango Conservation District through an Act 13 grant is plugging 11 wells in the Pioneer section of the park. To date almost 1000 abandoned wells have been located in the park , but only about 20% have been plugged.

After the incident...Dave Hallman, Park manager, met with DEP. They placed absorbent padding on any standing oil. Park staff then came in and cleaned the area by removing the top layer of soil and leaves. The spill did not reach the creek. The Park has received a quote for plugging the well. The hopes are that it can be plugged within a year.



# 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](http://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](mailto:oilcreekfriends@gmail.com)
- Website– [www.friendsocsp.org](http://www.friendsocsp.org)



Nature Printing  
Chicks -in-  
the Sticks



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.