



Friends of Oil Creek State Park~ Winter 2019

Park Manager's Report

If you believe what the groundhog says, it looks like we may be in for an early spring. Hard for me to believe as I sit here and watch it snow. Either way I know that spring is not far off, and it will soon be time for me to start gathering and restocking my stash of wild spring edibles. Now there are tons of edibles out there, way more than I am familiar with. One of my favorites is called RAMPS, also referred to as wild leeks or onions. The flavor is a cross between a garden onion and garlic. Very strong if eaten raw but mellows and sweetens when cooked. They are great in pasta dishes and soups. They can be pickled, grilled, or sautéed and served as a side dish. One of my favorite ways to preserve them is to make ramp butter. I do this by placing the ramp, leaf and all into a food processor, and then mixing it into softened butter. Once the ramps are mixed into the butter, scoop some (approx. the size of a regular stick of butter) onto wax paper, roll into logs, and place into freezer bags. "They" say it keeps in your freezer for 3-6 months, but I'm still using mine from last spring. The butter has a wide range of uses. Some of my favorites are with scrambled eggs, pasta, or just melted on top of a juicy steak. My wife enjoys eating them raw with a sprinkle of salt. They are good raw, but your friends and family will smell you coming for several days after consuming.



Foraging for ramps has grown considerably over the past decade or so. They are well sought after and used/sold to high end restaurants. Picking ramps in PA state parks is legal for personal consumption, but they cannot be sold or harvested for commercial use. When I harvest, I am very careful to only pick what I will be using and to never over harvest any one patch. It can take four years for ramps to mature and multiply. So, if you dig them all up in one area, they will not return. Another practice I use to sustainably harvest them is by gently digging down and only removing 1/3rd of the bulb, covering the remaining 2/3^{rds} with dirt. This way you are not removing the entire plant, and it will grow again next year.



See you on the trail,
David Hallman
Park Manager

Cross Country Skiing



Even though it has been a crazy winter with numerous ups and downs in temperature, so far this year we have had two decent weeks of cross country skiing. Attendance on the good days was excellent with one day totaling over 80 skiers. The trails were tracked to perfection! John Sims has uncanny skills in laying track. He also is an expert at keeping the tracks usable as the weather and conditions change. We all appreciate his efforts!

The following was written by a local skier...

The cross-country ski season to date has been even shorter than usual – about 2 1/2 weeks, with a wide variety of conditions, including some days of most excellent “kick and/ and glide.”

Skiable temperatures have ranged from around 40° F – to a several degrees below 0 – with wind chills around 30° below zero (guess which day the photo was taken!). Fortunately, our beautiful ski trails at OCSP are for the most part tucked in the woods and out of the wind, so wind chill is not as much of a factor.

Still, most folks, even many winter sports enthusiasts, think it is a little extreme to go out when it is so cold. It is a little extreme – exposed skin can freeze (frostbite) within a few minutes – but with proper gear and precautions, a good time can be had. Who wants to miss a day of our fleeting ski season because it is too cold? – It is, after all, a WINTER activity!

Dress in layers, of course, and be ready to shed a layer and wrap it around your waist or put it in a pack. It’s always amazing how warm you can get working at just a modest pace on even the super cold days. It’s the first 20 minutes that you sometimes wonder if this was such a brilliant idea. It helps to smear petroleum jelly on exposed skin, which is usually only the face. A full face mask is good at the start, but often has to be pulled open to prevent glasses from fogging and the, ah, snot factor.

Hands are usually the biggest concern, and mittens are better than gloves. Although thick down gloves are pretty decent, it’s always best if your fingers can be skin-to-skin, and a lighter coating of petroleum jelly or hand cream helps keep the tips of the fingers from getting so cold. Another great idea is to have hand warmers tucked into your gloves or mittens. The heat they generate lasts for hours. And there is always blasting the heat on your fingers and hand gear during the drive to the ski trail!

Feet are the next concern, but they do not seem to get as cold as the hands do. Be sure to avoid the temptation of wearing socks which alone or in combination are too thick and make your ski boots too tight, this can both cause blisters and reduce circulation to the toes, making them colder. A thin liner with a mid-weight wool sock usually does the trick.

Other concerns are water bottle lids freezing, and cell phone batteries going dead quickly. You can position them closer to your body to keep them warm. A functioning cell phone in extremely cold weather is a good idea, even though cell reception at OCSP can be “iffy “. If nothing else, the signal emitted by the phone will help search and recovery workers find you (or your corpse). Naturally it’s best to go with someone, but as we already discussed, such people can be difficult to find!

So let’s hope we have more skiing to this season, and don’t let any bitter cold get in the way of the fun.





Oil Creek 100 will be held October 12, 2019. Registration will begin March 1st.

The following was written by Stephanie Swope after completing her 1st 50K .

I have run and participated in many races over the years including 5K's, 10K's, half marathon, triathlons, and a 50 mile trail relay, but nothing compared to the experience and exhilaration of training for and running the Oil Creek 50K. One of my good friends, who is also my running buddy, had trained and done this race before, spent a few years trying to convince me to do it. I always called her crazy, and told her I could never journey that many miles at one time...well, the training began. March 1st came and at 6am I get a message from my friend, "I have been on and off every hour since 1am and you are in". OH NO, it is real now, the sudden feeling of butterflies in my stomach and my pounding heart. I thought, I can't do this. Mile after mile trail after trail, I began my journey hiking the hills and pushing myself beyond limits I never expected myself to be able to accomplish. I remember my first 15-16 mile trail run and the exhausted yet exhilarating feeling of coming out of the woods and knowing that I actually did it! Although there were plenty of times I was questioning myself as to what the heck was I thinking, like climbing the switchback on section 2, I never ceased to amaze myself that I was doing it. My favorite part about all of it was the beauty and serenity of the woods. More than 780 miles later, race day came, and I was so excited yet nervous at the same time. We are all gathered together at the back of the school and away we go down the road onto the bike trail, which mind you didn't seem as long in the dark! One section at a time. I finally came out of the woods at Drake Well. My legs hurt, and it was a total mental game between my head and getting my legs to move forward as I tried to run that last dreaded mile or so around Drake Well –which I was warned about! Just to make it clear, the bike trail back was a lot longer in the daylight! The mix of unexpected tears yet happiness that I felt when I crossed that bridge, rounded the corner, and saw my family and friends waiting for me were beyond words. I finished the race, the race I thought I couldn't do. The atmosphere, fellow racers, and the volunteers were beyond amazing! Never underestimate the strength, courage, and ability of what your mind and body can do! I can't wait until Oil Creek 2019!



Stephanie Swope

Chicks in the- Sticks

June 15th, 2019

Basic
kayaking
instruction
and in creek
kayak experi-
ence

The Friends of Oil Creek State Park are planning their sixth Annual Chicks-In-The-Sticks event to be held on Saturday, June 15th this year. The premise for the Chicks-In-The-Sticks is to introduce women to unfamiliar, high-interest outdoor skills. It is a full day held from 8AM to 5PM. It will consist of hands-on workshops for women ages 18 and over. It's held at Oil Creek State Park near the office in Petroleum Centre. It will be held rain or shine so be sure to dress appropriately.

Registration is set to open in mid-April and will continue until June 7th. Be sure to register by May 27th to be guaranteed a t-shirt. The cost is \$45 which includes a catered lunch with drink, a t-shirt, all materials for the classes, and a bag with goodies.

Classes in the past have included: archery, basic kayaking, bike maintenance, fly casting and outdoor photography. Other classes have been: pottery, nature inspired jewelry making, outdoor survival hacks, and self-defense.



Making
herbal
tinctures

Each participant can choose up to four different activities with each course being one hour and fifteen minutes long. Two sessions are in the morning and two sessions after lunch. Scheduling is done on a first come, first served basis, so please be sure to register early to guarantee a spot in the classes of your choosing. Again, all materials and equipment are provided, but please feel free to bring your own.

In addition to the classes and lunch, there will be a 50/50 raffle, Chinese Auction, and Friends items for sale,. So if you are interested, be sure to bring extra money to participate.

If you have any questions, please contact the park office at (814) 677-0050, John Kolojejchick at jokoloje@gmail.com. or Libby Culbertson at libbymclouth@gmail.com.

Over-The-Hill Gang

The Over The Hill Gang continues to meet weekly throughout the winter months. Work on trails has been limited due to the weather. However, the Gang has carried lumber and other materials to locations where projects will begin as soon as weather allows. Project priorities include extending, reinforcing, and shingling bridges, boardwalks, and steps. Trail sections that are prone to flooding and erosion will be addressed by improving ditching and by use of water bars where needed. Some new signs (thanks to Earl in maintenance) are ready to be placed.

The Gang, along with OCSP maintenance, has cut, split, and stacked firewood at Cow Run and Wolfkiel shelters.

Hikers are encouraged to report down trees blocking trails, or other areas of concern, by contacting Denny Pattison by phone call or text (including pictures if available) at 824-657-7011, or by calling Duane Whitehill at 814-827-7509.

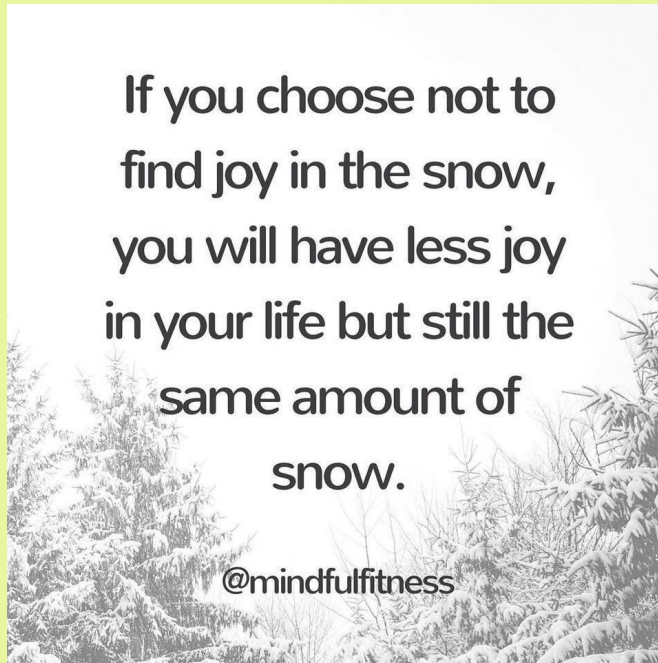


This boardwalk spanning a chronically muddy area near Miller farm bridge was completed before weather turned cold.

Processing firewood for the shelters



President's Report



We humans seem to do a lot of complaining about the weather. It's too hot or too cold or too windy or too wet or too dry all of which is something we have no control over. Of course we cross country skiers can't help but be disappointed in the number of ski days we've had so far. But what we do have is control over our attitude towards the weather on any given day or season. As the attached quote states, we can choose to find joy in it whatever it is.

I would like to encourage our Oil Creek Friends to embrace all types of weather for the gift it is to our park and to get out there and experience it. One example is how the spring melt and rains make for beautiful waterfalls and wild flowers that aren't so impressive in August. Weather can also keep us from being bored and often makes us more appreciative. We welcome a sunny day after a few days of rain, and we welcome a nice rain after a hot dry spell; a breeze can keep the bugs at bay. Hallelujah! Weather can also give us challenges and safety issues so be sure to dress appropriately and watch for severe weather warnings! Always be prepared for quick weather changes. Whatever the weather, Oil Creek is a wonderful place to be any time of the year. Go find the joy!

Happy Trails,
Peg Sims, Chair FOCSP

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.