



## Friends of Oil Creek State Park Newsletter—Winter 2023

# Park Manager's Report

Peg & John:

I first met Peg and John when I started here in 2012. It took me a little bit to truly get to know them, but one thing was evident from the get-go... their passion for this park and its ski trails was undeniable. You'd be hard pressed to find a couple that cares as much as they do about not only x-county skiing but the park itself. Peg and John have spent countless hours caring for and grooming these trails throughout the years. One thing I could always count on when I would visit the warming hut during the ski season, everyone ALWAYS had a smile on their face. While I was never much of x-country skier myself, I always understood why people were so passionate about the sport.

Thank you Peg and John. The two of you along with your group of volunteers made this park better. I never heard a complaint when it came to the grooming of those trails. I was often told how wonderful the trail system is and how well they were cared for. People would even go as far to say that they are the best ski trails in Western PA! Those compliments are directly linked to their efforts throughout the years. My only regret is that it didn't snow more.

I don't know what the future holds for these trails, but the park will continue to clear down trees and provide maintenance where we can. At some point, State Parks will reach out to see if there is any outside interest in the continued grooming of them. If we get lucky and find someone, then great! However, they will have large Nordic Boots to fill.

Thank you,

Dave Hallman Park Manager





# Chicks-in-the-Sticks

Chicks –in-the-Sticks will be held June 17<sup>th</sup> this year . The committee is getting ready to begin preparations. There will be new classes as well as some of the old favorites.



The picture above is from the class “It's a great day for a hike”. This class hiked through Wildcat Hollow.

# Winter 2023



February 15 – seventy degrees. Looks like John and Peg Sims picked the right year to discontinue the Sun Valley Nordic cross-country ski operation at the Park! Those of us who love the sport appreciate John and Peg’s hard work over the past 11 years and certainly understand their decision. Many of the improvements they made, with help from the official and unofficial Friends of OCSP, have permanently improved the trails, especially better drainage to reduce the wet spots. We will continue to enjoy those improvements, even if we have to break trail without the aid of a machine and John’s skill at grooming and setting track, which made the skiing not only better but last a little longer when the weather warmed.

But this “winter”? A couple of just-barely skiable days on a few inches of snow (which actually turned out to be decent outings), and not nearly enough snow to groom, let alone track. And everyone talking about how great the warm weather is! Usually those folks are complaining now, with the small minority of us who do like winter telling them to move to Florida, much of which will be under water in the not-so-distant future. We all may enjoy lower heating bills and not scraping ice off the windshield, but that’s a poor trade for gliding through the woods nordic-style, screaming downhill alpine-style, skating on a pond, or just riding downhill on a toboggan (especially with kids and maybe a dog involved).

The extreme ups and downs we have been seeing this winter – two days after the February 15 seventy degree day the high was in the low twenties, and several days before it got down close to zero – are apparently going to become more frequent, or at least that’s the current best guess. That will have an effect on all outdoor activities, but perhaps most detrimentally on winter sports. It’s hard to “adapt” when there simply isn’t any snow, or at least none that sticks around. We are fortunate here that we don’t rely on snowpack and glaciers for our water supply. Those who do will be facing major shortages, just as those who live near sea level will have to contend with rising oceans. I suppose to those folks our complaining about losing a recreational activity seems somewhat trivial.

In any event, I’m going to hope that the future holds some “real winters.” I’m not ready to get rid of my basement full of winter gear. I just hope that a few generations from now people will still know what it’s for.



# Photos from Winter 2023



This amazing picture was taken by Dave Bowser

Thanks to both Dave and Dot for sharing their pictures

The stunning pictures below were taken by Dot Monahan.





Hello friends of Oil Creek State Park. I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Heather Nelson and, I am the new *Oil Creek 100 Trail Runs* race director. I have taken the reigns from Tom Jennings, the former race director for OC100. These are some big shoes to fill. As we all know, Tom directed an amazing race for 13 years, and it will be hard to live up to that.

This year has brought some challenges... Switching all the paperwork and other accounts to my name has been the biggest challenge, but we think we have that figured out. Another challenge: The Petroleum Center bridge was closed a week after last year's race unexpectedly. The bridge is a major OC100 trail connection. After Dave Hallman (the park director) contacted Tom and me about this, I headed out on the trail to figure out a new route (since it doesn't look like the bridge will be open to foot traffic for some time). Amazingly, the new route has been the easiest hurdle to figure out. It will be faster, and it's a little shorter.

I'm excited to see what this year's race will bring to the region. I am hoping to open up race registration at the end of March or the beginning of April (watch our Facebook group [Oil Creek 100 Trail Runs], and the newly redesigned website in the near future [ [oc100.org](http://oc100.org) – this website is down right now] ). I will be out on the trails as soon as the weather breaks so if you see me please introduce yourself. I'd love to hear your thoughts about the race, and your thoughts on the trails. We are always looking for volunteers. My email is the same as Tom's was ([rd\\_oc100@yahoo.com](mailto:rd_oc100@yahoo.com)). So if you're interested in helping out race weekend or helping with prerace preparation, please contact me.

I want to thank everyone for welcoming me and reaching out to me with all the great words of encouragement. Until next time, get out on the trails and enjoy our beautiful park.

Thanks!

Heather Nelson, race director

Heather Nelson





# Over-The-Hill Gang

The mild winter weather has allowed the Over the Hill Gang to work on trails and projects a little more often than during most winters. We repaired damage to a bridge caused by a fallen limb. Damaged treads on a section of steps were removed and replaced. Both of these projects were at the southern end of the trails just off the bike path. New steps were built about a quarter of a mile east of the swinging bridge. The new steps enhances safety for hikes as this section had significantly eroded over time.

The Gang walked six trail sections (about 18 miles) . Downed trees were removed and leaves and debris were removed from drainage ditches where needed. A bench at one of the overlooks was re-set and secured.

The Gang has cut, split, and stacked firewood at both of the Adirondack areas. We will continue to process firewood as needed this Winter and Spring.

Member turnout for work days has been excellent.

As always, the OTHG is pleased to do whatever we can to maintain trails, enhance safety for hikers and runners, and help with other projects in the Park as needed.

Enjoy the trails and the beauty of our Park.

Denny Pattison  
For the OTHG



Contemplating the next move



Steps repaired



Sawyers at work



# President's Report



## The Final Biathlon

The 18<sup>th</sup> and final Oil Creek Summer Biathlon will be held on August 12, 2023. The first Oil Creek Summer Biathlon took place in 2006 with 45 entrants. Since then, the Oil Creek Summer Biathlon has grown to become the largest summer biathlon in the country, and the only one that takes place in a PA state park. 2016 had the highest number of entries at 108 biathletes. There were 90 entries last year. 2020 was the only year it didn't take place due to Covid. The Oil Creek Summer Biathlon has loyal participants with many having competed for more than 10 years.

The Biathlon requires many volunteers averaging about 35 dedicated persons putting in over 300 combined volunteer hours to hold the event. Since its inception, the Biathlon has contributed \$20,964.84 to the Friends of Oil Creek State Park—thanks mainly to our generous sponsors over the years.

The Oil Creek Summer Biathlon is one of several held through the PA Biathlon Club. The race directors of the PA Biathlon Club events have been race directors for many many years! As they have aged, it is getting more difficult to organize, set up, and run the events. In order to hold such an event there is much that goes on behind the scenes. Recently, the PA Biathlon Club race directors have met several times to discuss the future of the PA Summer Biathlons and after much thought, they have decided that this will be the last year for both the Oil Creek and Altoona Biathlons.

However, we plan to go out with a bang (no pun intended) by sponsoring a special series which will include 3 PA events: Altoona 6/17/23, Nescopeck 7/15/23, and Oil Creek 8/12/23 to declare PA State Champions. Awards will be given to the top male and female in each age group plus a “Top Shooter” award. To be eligible the biathlete must complete 2 of the 3 events. The scoring will be based on the “percent back” method. For more information on the series or to get entry forms go to [www.pabiathlon.com](http://www.pabiathlon.com) or [www.friendsocsp.org](http://www.friendsocsp.org).

If you ever wanted to try this fun and unique event, this may be your last chance.

Peg Sims, FOCSP Chair





# 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:

- Write the Friends of Oil Creek  
PO Box# 1273 Oil City, Pa 16301
- E-Mail– [oilcreekfriends@gmail.com](mailto:oilcreekfriends@gmail.com)
- Website– [www.friendsocsp.org](http://www.friendsocsp.org)
- Call Park Office—814 676-5915



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.