



Friends of Oil Creek State Park

Newsletter—Summer-Fall 2023

Park Manager's Report

1

A Year in Recap

As we begin to wind down the season, I thought I'd take a moment to mention some of what we have been up to the past year and acknowledge those doing the work.

Environmental Ed – Ivy Kuberry (Environmental Education Specialist)

Ivy has been busy as usual providing valuable and educational programming in the park, assisting other parks with programming and special events, training others, resource management, developing future waysides for Oil Creek, and so much more. She, along with our amazing intern, Hunter Holcomb, did a fantastic job this year! If you know either of them or have attended one of their programs, please thank them. It is a tireless job, and one that she works very hard at.

Maintenance – Casey Schultz, Andrew Cozad, Joyce Carbaugh, Jay Babcock.

Maintenance also had a busy year. In addition to the regular duties of mowing, trimming, cleaning, invasive control, wood splitting, staining shelters, and much, much more -they have also been busy chipping away at some of our larger projects we have done. Some of the projects include, but not limited to, removal of our old boardwalk and construction of a new one. This is a multiphase project. Once we have completed construction on the new walkway, will start pursuing grant funding for the newly designed interpretive panels that will take the place of our old ones. This will take a few years so hang in there. They will continue working on rehabbing a section of the bike trail at our northern end where several culverts need replaced.

Our maintenance staff really does deal with many challenges throughout the year. The men and women that make up Oil Creek's maintenance staff are truly unsung heroes of the park. Most of them have used the park long before they came to work here, which is part of the reason why they take such good care of our land. If you know or see any of them, please show them some gratitude. They are the ones doing the "dirty work" and don't always get the credit they deserve.

Ranger – Evan Snyder

Evan recently took a position with Cook Forest, and we will miss him here at the park. Evan provided excellent customer service during his time at OC. We thank him for his service and wish him well as he takes on a larger responsibility at Cook Forest and Clear Creek State Parks.

Resource Ranger – Lisa Wishart

I like to think of Lisa as the Swiss Army Knife of the park. Lisa is a teacher during most of the year and spends her summers working here. We utilize Lisa in many ways... from manning the office, taking reservations, invasive work, trail maintenance, programming, and most recently she mapped the entire Gerard hiking trail with our new GIS equipment.

Administrative Assistant – Lisa Hutchinson

Lisa has been working in this role for a little over a year now. She came in with many of the skills needed to do the job here at OC. She is extremely dependable, a fast learner, and has keen eye for the small details of the job. Lisa has done a terrific job over the past year not only learning her new job but performing it at a very high level. She is quickly gaining the respect of her peers and is becoming one of leaders in her position.

I often get comments from people about how lucky we are to work in a place like Oil Creek. Those people are right, we are lucky. However, what people don't see are the challenges and the stresses that come along with these jobs. We are always trying to improve, rehab, build new, make safer, work within our budget, meet deadlines, and do more with less. I am proud to work with such a great crew. They deserve a ton of credit. We are blessed to work where we work and will continue keep this park a special place not only for today but for future generations.

See you on the trail,
David Hallman

Thanks Dot Monahan for
the excellent picture



Chicks-in-the-Sticks

2



Chicks in the Sticks was held June 17th. The day was beautiful, and it was a great success with 96 participants, 20 classes, 18 instructors, and 25 volunteers. We are especially thankful to our instructors who are excellent in their craft. We are also very thankful to our volunteers who helped with set up the day before and tearing down the day of the event. Some of the volunteers are from the Park office staff, The Over the Hill Gang, Pathways, and of course our friends.

Chicks in the Sticks continued to have some of the old favorite classes such as: Always a Good Day for a Hike, Making Herbal Tinctures, Making an Alcohol Stove, Kayaking, and Outdoor Photography. This year new classes were added including: Self-defense, Disc Golf, Moving in Nature, Five Basic Survival Skills, and Beekeeping. All of the participants choose four classes. Each class was hands-on where the women either learned a skill or made a project (which they were able to take with them). In addition to the classes, the women received a fanny pack and goodie bag, they were able to purchase Oil Creek memorabilia, and they had a chance to win prizes. They were served a catered lunch from Little It in Emlenton.



Some of our wonderful organized volunteers

Tambra Sabatin's survival skills class



One of the many tents that were set up.

James Amero's cooking class.



Ivy Kuberry (Environmental Education Specialist)

Park Programming 2023: A Summary

This season was another busy, fulfilling year in the park Environmental Education department. We were able to work with several school groups, offer a wide variety of public programming, start some fun new projects, offer three summer camps, and attend valuable trainings that will help with future efforts at the park.

A few of our public programs offered this year were hikes focusing on hemlocks, warblers, woodcocks, wildflowers, local history, geology, waterfalls, and other prominent landmarks. We had environmental interpretive programs on birding, salamanders, snakes, mammals, bats, wild edible plants, seed starting, and more, and offered a ton of outdoor recreation opportunities. There were two fly fishing programs offered with Fly Fishers International, a handful of successful biking programs, campfire cooking, and a women only backpacking trip as well. Our park intern, Hunter Holcomb, also put together his own public program, which was an Aqua Hike exploring the geology, history, and biology in Oil Creek.

We offered three DiscoverE camps as well, which are summer day camps for kids ages 4-5, 6-8, and 9-13. The themes this year were Exploring Nature's Rhythms, Science After Sundown, and Navigating Nature's Wonders. One other camp we offered was a private experience called Adventure Camp for Bethesda Lutheran Services. This camp gives at-risk youth an opportunity to experience the outdoors. We took them hiking and camping here at Oil Creek.

The park offers programs with many different partners. This year we had four programs at the Oil City Library to bring folks in who would not normally visit the park. Each of these library programs was followed by an in-park program the same week to encourage visitation. We continued to offer Petroleum Centre Tours to the public and as a part of select OC&T Railroad rides. For Remake Learning Days we partnered with the Venango Conservation District and Oil City School District on two separate programs to encourage learning in the park, which were called What's in Your Water? and Books and Bikes. We've also continued to work with the Venango Conservation District to offer trainings and help put on the Venango County Envirothon.

We had several groups come out to the park this year, and plenty of in-school visits as well. Cranberry and Oil City are our most active districts here at the park, but other schools come out periodically. We have several homeschool groups that have been picking up steam, too. We aim to add more field trips every year, so if you know any local teachers who might be interested in having a field trip, feel free to give them my contact information!

Other notable projects took place this year as well. We helped with archery programming at the Moraine Regatta and the Pymatuning Onion Festival and provided archery instruction for the Chicks in the Sticks event as well. We also provided kayaking instruction at Pymatuning for Envision Blind, which is a camp for children with visual impairments. I served my first year as a mentor for the new educator at Clear Creek State Park, which has been a very rewarding process so far as well. We also tested out our maple sugaring programs for next year, so look forward to that!

Each year gets better and better, and I'm excited to continue coming back and evolving park programming year after year!

— Ivy Kuberry (Environmental Education Specialist)



THE LAST SHOT

The last shot was taken on the Oil Creek shooting range at the final Oil Creek Summer Biathlon which was held August 12, 2023. The biathlon began back in 2006 with 45 entries and it has grown each year ending with 113 entries in 2023. The biathlon has been held by the Friends in conjunction with the PA Biathlon. Peg and John Sims have been the race directors each year. Several of the aging PA Biathlon Race Directors got together several times and decided that for various reasons this year would be our final year.



To make the ending special, we had a Triple Crown Series that involved three PA events, Altoona, Nescopeck, and Oil Creek. Competitors had to complete two of the three events to qualify for PA Championship Awards. For more race results go to www.pabiathlon.com.

There were also some special awards given out at Oil Creek. Three competitors got perfect attendance awards for participating every year. They were Brian Marendt, Eric Marendt, and Richard Novak. Tom Kliber received the Super Senior award. The Friends provided hotdogs, chips, drinks, and watermelon. After the race, folks hung around eating and

talking and it felt like a family reunion. It was a great way to celebrate and reminisce about our many years of this unique and fun event. We will greatly miss all our Biathlon friends and thank everyone for their support over the years.

The Oil Creek Summer Biathlon has long been one of our biggest fund raisers. It has involved many super sponsors, donations, and lots of time donated by many great volunteers. Over the 18 years the Biathlon has contributed \$22,178,69 to the Friends of Oil Creek. The Friends will be looking to find other events or ways to raise funds in the future. So we sadly say “farewell to arms” and hope that everyone will remember our fun times at the Oil Creek Biathlon and continue to “Run Fast and Shoot Straight!”





OC100 2023

This year's Oil Creek 100 trail race was held October 7, 2023 at the Titusville Middle School. 322 runners in all

toed the line. The weather was perfect for running until late at night when it began to rain.

This was my first year taking over the race for Tom Jennings, and I knew we would have issues as I didn't know what to expect. All in all, everything went well, and there no emergencies (which I am so thankful for). Everyone seemed to enjoy everything from the aid stations, to the dinner, to the trails. I myself loved seeing the runners. Being at the finish line was a little slower paced for me, but I totally enjoyed congratulating the runners as they came in.

As with anything new, new things come along. As I get more familiar with the RD aspect of the race, I will be changing things up. This year's biggest change was adding the 25k. This stems from a lot of things, but mostly to let everyone know they can do this. The 25k course includes my favorite trail sections, and I felt there was a need for something like this.

On the down side (and I had warned the long distance runners in emails) there weren't as many runners registered. Because of this, they might need to find pacers so they wouldn't be out alone at night. In the past, there have been enough runners registered between the 100k and the 100 miler that runners could meet someone either on the trail or at an aid station and head out with them for company. Numbers were considerably down this year, but I am hopeful next year we will be able to have a bigger race and get the race to be a Western States qualifier again.

The race takes a lot of time to plan. I've already started working on the 2024 race. When I say it's a



lot, it's a lot, and I put my heart and soul into it. I love this race; it's changed my life along with so many other people's lives. I could not have done this without the help of the many many volunteers who make this race run so smoothly. The trail marking team stepped up. Many of my friends also stepped up and helped in areas where we were lacking. All the aid stations, and many volunteers behind the scenes also helped made this race what it is (along with the countless hours the Over the Hill Gang put in on this course). A family- that's what we are. The volunteers who helped all those countless hours have the passion for the race just like I do, and that's what makes Oil Creek so fantastic!



*I'll see you on
the trails
Heather Nelson
Oil Creek 100
Trail Runs*

Thank you Mike
Henderson for
the great photo-



Over-The-Hill Gang

The Oil Creek Park staff and The Friends of OCSP are so thankful for The Over the Hill Gang. Our trail system of over 40 miles of the yellow blazed Girard trail and the multiple white blazed connecting trails are maintained almost exclusively by the OTHG. The FOCSP and the Park staff hear countless compliments on how our trails are some of the best trails anywhere. We certainly agree. There is no way we would have the trails we have without their efforts. The Gang goes out every Wednesday with well-coordinated plans to work on a project.

Some of this season's endeavors were:

- Rebuilding a bridge on Miller Run
- Replacing treads on steps
- Weed whacking over 30 miles of trail
- Removing and cutting back multiflora invasion (40+ miles)
- Cutting and splitting wood for both shelters
- Widening trails when putting in fenders along the edges
- And much much more...

In addition to the above, Dave Miller, along with other Gang members and his daughter, spearheaded the re-blazing of the entire trail system.

So if you are out on the trails on a Wednesday, and you hear a chain saw, follow your ear. You may be lucky enough to encounter the gang at work.



President's Report

7

Message From the Chairman

The Annual Meeting of the Friends of Oil Creek State Park will be held on November 2, at 6:00 PM at Second Presbyterian Church, 11 Reed St, Oil City, PA 16301. All members and the public are welcome to attend. At the Annual Meeting we elect new and renew board members and officers. Board members typically serve 3 year terms but can renew for as many years as they wish to serve. Officers rotate even and odd years. I have been the chairman of the board for many years and this year I am stepping down from that position so we will be looking to fill the chairman position in November. We will also be in need of a couple of board members. We are looking for anyone who would be willing to volunteer to serve on the Friends of Oil Creek Board of Directors.

Being on the Board is an opportunity to get involved at the park and to help support all the projects and activities we are involved with. It is a great way to give back and to be a good steward of our beautiful park. We usually meet once a month, except July and January, on the first Thursday and the meetings last about an hour. We are looking for folks with fresh ideas and energy. If you think you might be interested in joining our Board of Directors contact us by emailing oilcreekfriends@gmail.com or calling one of the board members or park office.

I have enjoyed my tenure as chairman but feel it is time to hand it over to someone else. There is much satisfaction to be had in becoming involved.

Sincerely,

Peg Sims, FOCSP Chairman

Dot Monahan

Pictures from Summer





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:

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



Thanks Dot Monahan for another great picture.

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.

The Friends of Oil Creek State Park is a **Chapter** of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation

