

Summer/Fall 2016

Volume 20



“And all the lives
we ever lived and
all the lives to be
are full of trees
and changing
leaves.”

Virginia Woolf
To the Lighthouse

Park Manager's Report

Another summer has passed at Oil Creek State Park, and what a summer it has been. This has been the busiest year that I can remember in my short 4 1/2 yrs. of working here. Several factors lead to the increase in numbers- one would be the addition of our new playground. Other factors such as hot but dry temps, especially over weekends, allowed people to get out and enjoy the park. Environmental and educational programming also played a big part with our increase. Hopefully the fall and winter weather will allow for the increase to continue.

The staff had a busy and challenging year. While the hot summer was fun for others, it doesn't always make for pleasant working conditions. Some of their larger projects include construction of our playground, clearing of Benninghoff overlook, ditching of bike trail and culverts, installation of new gates and signs along the ski trail and bike trail, hazardous tree removal, and continued work on our sledding hill which we hope to have completed by winter of 2017.

Our Environmental Educator (Chris Mosebach) was also been busy developing new and exciting programs that have been drawing people in from all over western PA (and even a few from Ohio and New York). Some of Chris's more popular programs include night hikes of varying themes, stream studies, and outdoor survival skills. Chris is currently on leave without pay. He will be back by the end of March when he will begin to develop his programming for 2017.

Last but not least, Oil Creek would like to say farewell to Joe Guthrie. Joe has accepted the Maintenance Supervisor position at Cook Forest and Clear Creek State Park complex. Joe's last day at Oil Creek will be October 28th. Joe has worked at Oil Creek for over five years. In those five plus years he has done a tremendous job with maintaining and caring for this park that we all love and enjoy. Joe always came to work ready and willing to tackle any and all challenges that came across his desk. His dedication to his job and strong work ethic will serve him well as he takes on a new and exciting chapter in his life. It has been my pleasure to work with Joe for over four years. I will miss him greatly as a co-worker, and I am proud to call him a friend. If you see Joe please wish him well and thank him for all the hard work.

Be Safe and Enjoy, David Hallman



The Friends of Oil Creek State Park are 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."

October in Pennsylvania is known for its beautiful Fall foliage of crisp reds, yellows, and oranges. Fresh apple cider and homemade pies are also a must. In addition, one cannot forget about the 500 men and women running throughout the woods of Oil Creek State Park for 32 hours straight, either....wait, what??

Yes, this year was the 8th annual Oil Creek 100 Trail Runs held on October 8-9 in Oil Creek State



Park. This year was another tough year for the runners. Whether you ran the 50K (31 miles), 100K (62 miles), or the prestigious 100 miler, you had your work cut out for you with everything from sweltering humidity and rain in the morning to very cool (39 degrees) at night. As always, we had those who achieved their goals of making it to the finish line and those who will heal up, tweak their training, and try again next year. No matter if you finished or not, every runner, crew

member, and volunteer left this year with some great memories and great friends. The tight-knit family atmosphere of this event is what we are known for.

This year we really wanted to commemorate our aid station #4 to the memory of our dear friend, Craig Williams. Craig was a co-captain of the station with his wife Susan for the past few years, and we will always remember how much passion he had for volunteering his time at this event and being an avid outdoorsman himself.

Thank you to all involved in this event. It cannot happen without our amazing volunteers and community. See you next year!

Adam Peterson



The Finest Trail System in the Region

Oil Creek State Park has, without doubt, the finest hiking trail system in the region. The trails are well marked and maintained thanks to the untiring efforts of the Over-the-Hill Gang. The 36 mile, yellow-blazed Gerard loop and the white-blazed cross trails divide the trail system into five loops which range from about five to 12 miles, crossing Oil Creek at Rynd Farm (Route 8), Petroleum Center, Pioneer (the bicycle bridge), Miller Road, Boughton (the swinging foot-bridge) and Drake Well. When snow is not on the ground, the cross country ski trails add more miles and hiking options. All these options make the Oil Creek trails ideal for day hikes and backpacking excursions, when campers can use the Adirondack shelters at the Wolfkiel and Cow Run camping areas.

Many of the other hiking trails in our region are poorly maintained and marked, and some are at the other extreme with "trails" that are more like roads and four-wheeler tracks. For example, the trails in the Allegheny National Forest are often difficult to follow because of lack of use and poor marking - the trails are marked with diamond-shaped pieces of plastic which are nailed into the trees and, with time, fall off. In addition, the scenic overlooks on those trails are not maintained, so the trees have grown up and there is nothing to see! It is very disappointing to walk a long way to what is described on a map as a scenic view and find that it no longer exists. These vistas are what hikers live for, and, when they are not there, hikers are less inclined to return or recommend the trail to others

The Oil Creek trail system provides an outstanding venue for events such as the annual OC 100 and Biathlon, Boy Scout and other group hikes, and others who use the trails on a regular basis. While OCSP appears on a road map as a relatively small and narrow strip of land straddling Oil Creek, this belies the fact that it harbors many miles of scenic, peaceful and sometimes rigorous trails. Whether strolling a few hundred yards or running dozens of miles, the OCSP hiking trails can't be beaten!



Bruce Getsinger

Chicks-In-The-Sticks 2016

On June 18, the Friends of Oil Creek State Park presented the third annual *Chicks-in-the-Sticks* program. *Chicks-in-the-Sticks* is a full day of outdoor workshops for women. The workshops were hands on, and the participants produced an item, were introduced to a skill, and got materials that they could take home from each class. Twenty-five workshops were offered. The workshops included activities such as: basic kayaking, tree and bird identification, geocaching, and backpacking techniques. Terrarium building, linoleum print making, and the art of wood burning are examples of workshops where women made an item to take home. Other workshops included medicinal uses of herbs, macro-invertebrates, fly tying and fly casting, outdoor photography, wisdoms in the wild, and others. Each participant selected four classes each 75 minutes long. A goodie bag (backpack), and lunch was provided for all who attended.

Plans are starting for the 4th annual Chicks in the Sticks event on June 17, 2017

A special thanks to the presenters who donated their time and talent. The program would not have been possible without you. Thanks also to our many sponsors who provided donations of cash and auction items. Please support their businesses. A complete list of sponsors can be seen by clicking on the Chicks in the Sticks Sponsors link on the friendsocsp.org website home page. ... www.friendsocsp.org

Chicks Presenters





Over-The-Hill-Gang

The Over-The-Hill Gang has been working throughout summer and into fall. They have been keeping the Gerard Trail system well maintained. The Gang has concentrated on making bridges safer by adding shingles and fenders to the decks. They have continued to edge trails and put in steps where necessary. They have also done quite a bit of ditch digging and working on erosion in general. Recently, the Gang has been making steps and dealing with erosion on the Titusville bike path entrance to the Gerard Trail. In addition to all that has been mentioned, they prepared the entire trail for the Oil Creek 100 Race which was run by over 400 athletes in early October.



The top of a picnic table made by OTHG member Randy Bean. Ed McMullen was an amazing Gang member and is sadly missed. The table can be found by the bike trail parking lot.

Orphan Wells

Members of Venango PA Senior Environmental Corps., (VPASEC) Orphan Well Project spend their volunteer time looking for abandoned oil and gas wells on public land in Venango County. In the spring of 2016, the group found 24 wells in Oil Creek State Park in a section north of Miller Farm Rd. on the east side of Oil Creek. Those wells brought the total count for the group to 1,054 documented since 2004. VPASEC members hunt for wells on state park, state forest, and game land. They also locate wells on private property with landowner permission. In addition to finding abandoned wells, members also monitor stream water and provide educational programs. The group, who are all members of the Friends of Oil Creek State Park, will continue their well hunts this fall once the leaves fall and visibility improves.

National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL), in 2014, conducted high-resolution, helicopter magnetic surveys over 14.6 square miles of Oil Creek State Park which contains more than 900 known abandoned wells, including some of the oldest in the United States. Richard Hammack of NETL said , “The project’s objective is to evaluate the ability of helicopter magnetic surveys to locate existing wells in heavily vegetated areas of varying terrain. Magnetic surveys locate wells by detecting the unique magnetic signature of vertical, steel well casing, which is depicted on magnetic maps as a ‘bull’s eye’ type anomaly centered directly over the well.” Through the summer members of the NETL team have been conducting ground surveys of the Columbia Farm area of Oil Creek State Park to help improve their aerial magnetic survey information.

Pennsylvania has a 150-year history of oil and gas production, the longest of any state, resulting in more than 333,000 known wells. However, unknown wells may exist because innumerable wells were drilled during Pennsylvania’s early years when incomplete records were kept of well locations. Early wells are likely to be unsealed because regulation was lax during those years.

Many unrecorded wells are thought to be in areas of emerging shale gas and shale oil development where open wellbores might provide a pathway for undesired upward migration of fluids and gas from hydraulically fractured reservoirs.

Orphan well hunters continue to provide data to DEP to increase the states knowledge of abandoned wells and to aid in the development of grants which plug the wells in the park..



2016 Summer Biathlon

It was another stellar year for the Oil Creek Summer Biathlon. We had an excellent group of participants. There were 108 entrants and 79 finishers (25 women and 54 men). The Friends of Oil Creek as well as many others helped with the race set up, the actual race-counting penalty laps, working the range, loading the guns-, and tearing down. The overall winners were Katie Sick of Millville, PA and Pat Maloney of Guys Mills, PA . The masters winners were Ann Sickm of Millville and Russ Wilson of Tylersburg. (Other results are on The Friends web site. ... www.friendsocsp.org)

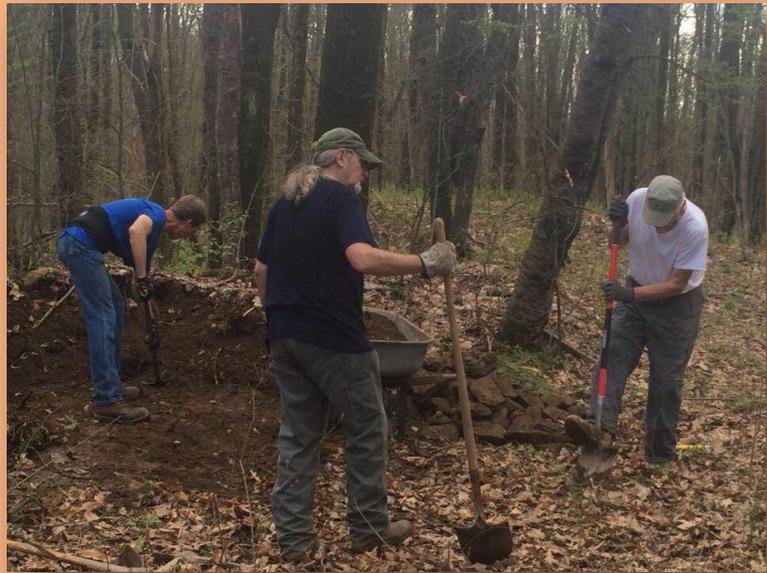
Many thanks again to all our sponsors and volunteers. The Biathlon raised \$2749.50 for the The Friends Of Oil Creek.



This park bench is located by the Ski Trail Hut and the Biathlon range. The Bench is in memory of Jim Holden. Jim contributed many hours to Oil Creek , and he was instrumental in the formation of bike trails in the area.



Volunteers clearing the ski trail.



The Friends of Oil Creek have scheduled 3 fall work days for ski/hiking trail maintenance ;

- Sundays at 1:00
October 23rd
November 6th
December 11th
- Meet at the ski hut parking lot.
- All are welcome and appreciated.
- Please bring your favorite trail tools and gloves. Hope to see you all out there!

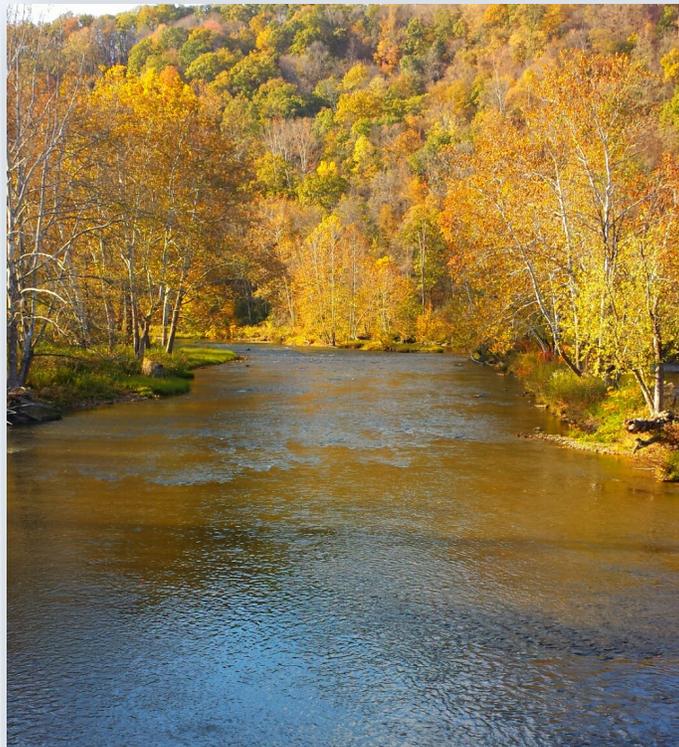
President's Report

TRANSITION

The transition from fall to winter is a marvelous time at Oil Creek State Park. Park visitors and trail workers are scurrying around like woodland creatures storing up the fall fun and preparing for winter. The fall colors are amazing, and the views and woods open up as the foliage thins and the leaves fall. It is a time to spy animals as they get ready for hibernation or building their supply of winter food. The heat and the bugs are mostly gone and the air is invigorating. There is so much to see and do. It's a great time to take a train ride "through the valley that changed the world ". or how about a fall picnic and a romp through the playground? Hiking, biking, and hunting are at their best at this transitional time. Volunteers are at their best too. They are sprucing up the trails and getting ready for winter activities. The transition from fall to winter is an excellent time to embrace all the park has to offer.

Happy Trails,

Peg Sims, President



Membership

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

Your membership helps maintain existing projects in the Park. Your contributions also support new initiatives throughout the Park. Your dues contribute to the trail maintenance of the Gerard trail, the bike trail, and the ski trails. In addition, these resources help fund the "Over-The Hill Gang's" efforts to keep the trails clear and to erect and maintain the many bridges and benches along the Gerard trail.

If you haven't renewed your membership or would like to join the Friends of Oil Creek, follow the link on our web page ... www.friendsocsp.org . The membership prices are : single \$10, family \$25, and corporate/business/group \$100.

You can become a member or renew your membership by contacting the FOCSP in one of the ways listed below. Our web site has a direct link.

- **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**



**Keep up to date
 with Oil Creek activities
 by visiting our new website at:
www.friendsocsp.org**