



Fall 2019

Park Manager's Report

As I watch the sunset on another season here at Oil Creek I've been reflecting on some of our challenges and successes over the past 10 months. Some challenges were caused by mother nature, and others were caused by staffing shortages. We lost our educator, ranger, maintenance repairman, and we had to make it through most of the summer without these positions filled. We did fill our educator position with a talented and energetic young lady by the name of Ivy Kuberry, but the ranger and maintenance positions still sit vacant. This year, more so than any other has been very challenging for me. But we made it through. Now on to our successes.

Despite the lack of staff and poor weather we did accomplish a tremendous amount of work. We built three new Adirondack shelters at the McCrea Farm group tent area, installed new interpretive signs and kiosks throughout the park, built a new playground at Blood Farm, completed streambank restoration at Boughton bridge, replaced the roof on the train station, treated for invasive species, and passed our park inspection with flying colors. We also had three shelters at Cow Run repainted, solar lights installed at the ski hut, and currently there is an electric charging station being built at the Egbert parking area. To some this may not seem like a lot, but, when you factor in that we were short on staff and still had to perform our regular duties such as mowing and cleaning, it is impressive. I owe my staff a big THANKS for stepping up in the absence of others and getting the job done. I also want to thank our strong and dedicated volunteer groups. You truly help take some weight off our shoulders and make it possible for us to survive when staffing is low.

I have been managing Oil Creek for over seven years. I often get asked by other managers around the state when I am leaving for bigger challenges. Truth is...I love it here...this is home. My family loves it here, and it would truly break their hearts to leave. While I admit that taking on a new challenge does interest me, I also take time to remind myself why I got into this profession. It wasn't to see how I could climb the "ladder". I wanted to enjoy going to work every day. I have found that here. I am extremely proud of this park and seek out every opportunity to show off the great work of the staff and volunteers as well as the beauty and hidden gems that are within the park's boundaries. I don't know what the future holds for me. Change, at some point is inevitable, but until that day I look forward to every day I am blessed to work here.

See you on the trail, David Hallman



OTHG on the trail



Save the day for the Seventh Annual Chicks in the Sticks event June 20, 2020.



The Friends of Oil Creek State Park's Sixth Annual *Chicks-in-the-Sticks* event was held Saturday, June 15, 2019. *Chicks-in-the-Sticks* is a full day of outdoor workshops for women. The workshops are hands on, and designed so that participants produce an item, are introduced to a skill, or get materials that they take home from each class. Eighty women participated in the program this year.

Twenty-one workshops were offered. The workshops include typical outdoor activities such as: basic kayaking, cycling, archery, modern fur taking, fly casting/fly fishing, adventure foods, back packing, trail safety and security, and trail trekking. Terrarium building, painting a bird nest, pottery, leather working, wool felting, making an alcohol micro-stove from a pop can, and the art of pyrography (artistic wood burning) are examples of workshops where women had the opportunity to make an item to take home. Women were also able to choose workshops that introduced them to topics such as medicinal uses of herbs, bee keeping, bird identification, invasive species ID, and. "Come Forest Bathing" a workshop about using your senses to take in the sights, sounds, smells and tastes that surround you in the forest. The day consisted of four one hour and fifteen minute classes. Each woman selected four workshops during pre-registration.

The Chicks in the Sticks Committee members Libby Culbertson, John Kolojejchick, Rebecca Beach, Joe Smith, Evelyn Kolojejchick and Carl Meinstereifel work from March through June to get instructors, sponsors, and supplies for the event. Please visit our website at <http://friendsocsp.org> to link to our 2019 sponsors.

The committee thanks our helpers, Christine Owens (registrations), Rob McCall, Kevin Culbertson, Dave Irwin, Claudette Bedard, Judy and Charlie Stevenson, Chris Salvo, Angie Harriett, Kristen Sutley, and Dottie Valimont for their help with check-in, set-up, and tear down.

We also thank Oil City Cross Country, Oil Creek 100, Take Pride Titusville and others who provided us with canopies and tents for the event. Oil Creek State Park personnel provided us with set-up and security.



Leather work



Pottery



Felting



Winner and course record breaker Cameron Stauffer at finish line.



Aid Station#1

The first year of the Oil Creek 100 Trail Runs was rather entertaining as hikers and hunters weren't yet aware of the Race and were shocked when hundreds of trail runners and volunteers descended into Oil Creek Park that first weekend 11 years ago. Since then, runners and volunteers annually converge into the Park to bring to life the OC100 Trail Runs.

The hundreds of volunteers are the lifeblood of the annual Oil Creek Trail Runs and have been since that very first race. Runners happily credit volunteers for many successful completions of the races (50K, 100K, and 100-mile distances) and for the incredibly well-maintained Gerard Trail. One of the crucial pieces of the volunteer efforts is that many of the volunteers are either trail runners or hikers themselves and are very well-informed about the

trails and can easily, and with familiarity, help coach runners throughout the long hours of the races.

There are many aspects of volunteering that go unnoticed every year, but which are critical to the full success of this weekend; from the weekly trail maintenance by the Over the Hill Gang to the dinner and other preparations by the Friends of Oil Creek State Park; the pre-race aid station prep and volunteer coordination; the all day and all night "rovers" who deliver pizza, water, supplies, and carry exhausted and/or injured runners out of the Park; the communication and emergency support systems; the pre-race volunteers; the post-race volunteers; the sweepers who carefully round up and account for runners in the dark; thousands of trail markers put down and later removed (along with any trail cleanup); the list is crazily endless to try to capture all the angles of volunteerism in this wonderful event.

As usual, the race started the 100-miler runners in the pre-dawn darkness on Saturday, the 12th of October. The 100K and 50K races followed in hour-delay increments. A light rain escorted the runners in all three of the races right on through the early morning hours. The temperatures were cool throughout the two days but made for comfortable running conditions. The temperatures also didn't impede the scores of Volunteers as they enthusiastically worked and cheered and fed and hydrated the hundreds of runners from the Friday set up through tearing it all down again on Sunday.

Pittsburgh native, Cameron Stauffer relentlessly pursued the 100-mile race and succeeded in setting a new course record of 17 hours, 3 minutes, and 31.60 seconds. Pennsylvania runners dominated all three of the races, with Corinne Williams of Harrisburg conquering the 100K in 11:23:51.00; Clarion runner Brian Frank pounded out the win in 4:26:23.50 for the 50K in his 3rd year in a row (4x overall).

Whether participating as a racer or working as a volunteer, this is one event that changes people. The emotional and mental rewards are high for all as people work together to achieve success for those racers who put themselves out there whether against the clock or in conquering themselves. Don't hesitate to talk yourself into participating in this event, either as a racer or a volunteer...or, as many do, both! If you would like more details about the event, check out the website at www.OC100.org.

By, Tambra Sabatini

Special thanks to Mike Henderson for the photos!



Along the Trail



The 12 annual biathlon was held August 10, 2019. The race has a 6km sprint, 31 meter big/big targets - 70 meter penalty loop. This year the race was won by Patrick Maloney of Saegertown Pa. His time- 28:25. Elizabeth Witmer of Grove City won in the female division. Her time 37:16.



Running in ...to the range

The 6K running race is divided into five parts.

First-The timing starts with waves of two runners leaving every minute and running an approximately 1.2 mile loop.

Second-As the runners approach the shooting range at the end of the first running loop, they will run into the range, catch their breath, lie down in the prone position, and pick up an easy to use .22 caliber target rifle. The runners shoot 5 shots at a 4.5-inch metal knock down target 33 meters away. For each missed target, they are required to run a 70-meter penalty loop after the shooting stop.

Third- After this first shooting stop, the runners run out of the range and run the same 1.2-mile loop again.

Fourth- The second time at the range, the runners will shoot 5 shots at the same targets from the standing position and run the 70-meter penalty loop for each missed target.

Fifth-Once they have completed the standing position, they run out of the range and run the 1.2-mile loop a final time ending at the finish line.

Every second counts!



Penalty laps being counted



The Shooting Range

Ski Trail Prep

The first cross country ski trail work day was October 27, and the remaining two are November 17 and December 1 (meet at 1:15 at the ski trail parking lot). The October 27 turnout was good – about eight people - and the weather wasn't too bad for a leisurely walk on the trails to clear debris and paint trail blazes (trying to follow the Over-the-Hill-Gang's advice that the blazes be no bigger than a dollar bill!). There are a total of about 12 miles of official ski trails and several miles of "unofficial" trails as well. Of course, the trails make excellent hiking trails in the "off season," which, unfortunately, is the vast majority of the year.

There are a few areas of the ski trails in need of work (the intersection of Bissell and Power trails and the Red trail in the area of Drake and Plummer trails) because of damage caused by tree removal machinery and vehicles accessing the gas wells, and we are hoping that they can be repaired in time for the upcoming season.

The ski trail hut has been outfitted with a solar power unit which will provide electricity for lighting, cooking and other purposes.

Three wooden shelters designed for overnight camping were recently constructed near the ski trail warming hut. Each one can sleep several people, and there are picnic tables and a charcoal grill nearby. Information regarding renting the shelters can be obtained from the Park Office or online. It looks like a fun place for an outing - we just hope anyone using the shelters during the fleeting ski season will walk to the side of the groomed trails!

We hope you will join us for some trail work and for some skiing to enjoy the fruits of our labor.

THINK SNOW!!



Over-The-Hill Gang

The Over The Hill Gang was busy with regular trail maintenance throughout the summer. Frequent, heavy rains resulted in flooded streams and trail erosion that required on-going repair. A bridge over Jones Run washed downstream but the gang was able to retrieve, lengthen, and reinforce the bridge. As with many of our projects, this was a prime example of what can be accomplished through dedicated, cooperative effort.

Trees downed by high winds and erosion were a weekly concern, but all trails were kept open. Weed, fern, and multiflora growth appeared heavier than usual, resulting in a need for more fre-



Jones run bridge being replaced



Building a new bridge in the Pioneer area

quent trimming.

Special projects this summer included replacing a 24 foot bridge over the stream on the connector trail just off Pioneer Road near the bike path. New steps and railing were built at the power line about a mile in from the NW trailhead. A scenic overlook on the East side (overlooking Oil Creek and Titusville) was cleared and improved. A new boardwalk was built through a wet, boggy area just south of Old PC Road (Stevenson Road) . A flooded trail section between PC Road and Old PC Road was re-routed and improved. Shingles were placed on more bridges and boardwalks in

order to improve footing and enhance safety.

Future projects include working on bridges that need lengthened and reinforced due to increased frequency and intensity of heavy rains and high waters. Ditching and erosion control will also be emphasized.

The Over The Hill Gang is grateful for the financial support provided by the Friends of Oil Creek State Park. This support enables us to purchase building materials, supplies, and equipment needed to maintain and improve the Gerard Hiking Trail.

Enjoy the Trails — Dennis Pattison OTHG



Steps by the NE trailhead

President's Report

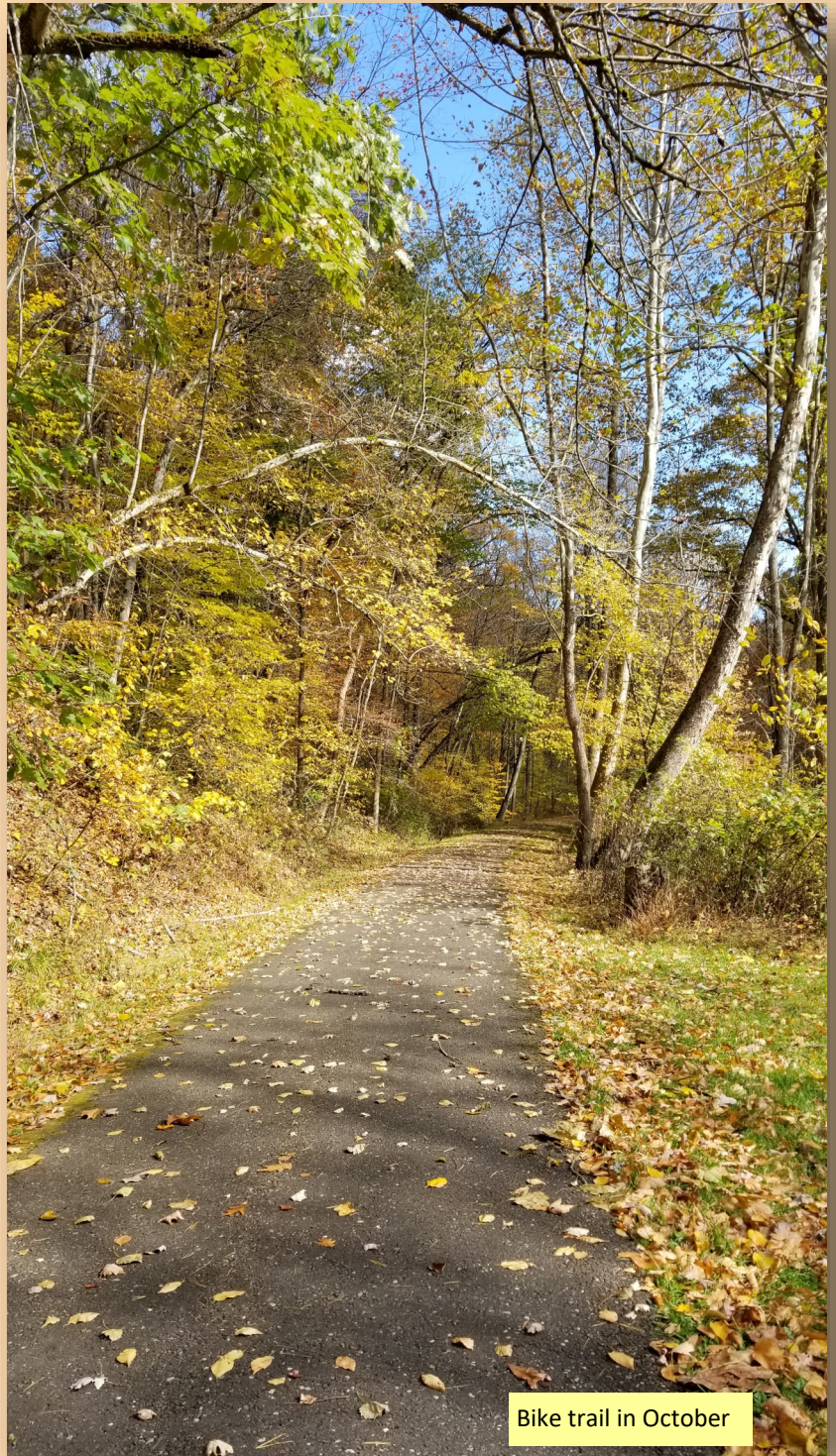
Coming soon is our annual membership drive for the Friends of Oil Creek. The membership year runs from January to December. Memberships are only \$10 for an individual and \$25 for a family. You may be wondering what does my membership do? All monies raised by the Friends goes directly to further our mission to support the park's many needs in the areas of preservation, maintenance, education and interpretation.

For those of you hikers, runners, skiers, and biathletes who use the Oil Creek trails, you know that trail maintenance is a top priority and nearly 100% volunteer maintained. Much of the Friends funds go to the Over the Hill Gang and the ski trail group for materials and equipment. Our trails are the best around because of these volunteers and contributions by our members. When you become a member, you are helping to keep the trails in tip top shape.

Some of the other activities and projects we support include:

- Securing grants for purchase and installation of playground equipment at Egbert and Blood Farm
- Purchase and construction of storage sheds
- Soil and mulch for flower beds
- Repair of fire places and chimneys at Cow Run and Wolfiel shelters
- Summer Biathlon
- Chicks In The Sticks workshops for women
- Support of the Cross Country Ski Area and events
- Purchase of bicycles for park rental
- Sale of bottled water and state park passports
- Purchase of birdseed for park office bird feeders
- Grants for park equipment and interpretive signage
- OC 100 trail Runs- dinner prep and service
- Educational program supplies
- And our lovely Newsletter!

As you can see, Oil Creek State Park relies heavily on the support of people like you who are willing to become a new member or renew their membership in 2020. Your membership contribution is tax deductible through the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation. Just go to our website www.friendsocsp.org and click on the membership button. It's easy and you'll feel good doing it! Memberships are a great Christmas gift or the person who has everything. If you love Oil Creek State Park become a Friend today. You won't regret it.



Bike trail in October

Well Plugging

Have you heard the clanging of metal on metal in the Pioneer section of the park? Maybe you have seen the yellow, orange, or black plastic pipes sticking up out of the ground in some section of the park. If you have you are hearing or seeing the actions/results of well plugging.

Oil Creek State Park has thousands of oil and gas wells, mostly abandoned, that are the result of the “heyday” of the oil and gas industry. The Drake Well, drilled in 1859 just north of the park in what is now the Drake Well Museum Park, started the “Oil Boom” of the 1860s. Oil exploration continued through the 1950s. As the oil “Boom” turned to “Bust”, wells were abandoned without proper plugging. Abandoned wells are environmental and physical hazards. The open well bore allows oil and brine from the oil bearing layers to mix with the water bearing layers closer to the surface. Oil leaks into the parks many streams. Methane gas, a known greenhouse gas, leaks from the wells into the

air. In some

areas the well bore collapses at the surface and produces large open pits that are physical hazards to hikers and hunters. Well plugging is the solution to all of the problems.

The short course on well plugging:

To plug a well, the well must be “cleaned out” and the oil bearing strata must be filled with cement to prevent oil, brine and gas from escaping. Sounds simple right? The problems come from that “cleaned out” part. When wells were abandoned there was no standard method. Some wells had the internal tubing removed and left as an open well bore with casing intact. Others had the tubing and the casing removed and left as an unsupported well bore that could collapse easily at the surface. Some were just left “as is” with the pumping jack, internal tubing and other parts left as they were the last day

the well was pumped. This last type is a real problem for companies doing well plugging. PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) requires that the well bore be “cleaned out” before cement is pumped down into the bottom of the well. To “clean out” the well all internal tubing must be removed from the well. This can be a very time consuming process. Special tool called “fishing tools” are lowered into the well to capture the internal tubing and bring it to the surface for disposal. During a recent trip to view the plugging operation members of the Senior Environmental Corps observed the crew from S & T Services remove tubing in pieces ranging in size from 6 inches to 18 inches in length. To remove 600 feet of tubing at that rate takes a long time. S & T owner Rob Greathouse reported that they had been working on that well for 3 weeks and still needed another 2 to 3 weeks to complete the process before the cement could be pumped into the well.

The current well plugging is the result of a PA CFA Act 13 grant obtained by the Venango Conservation District. The Conservation District watershed specialist Tim Hummel working with park manager Dave Hallman, and DEP staff selected wells along the Gerard Hiking Trail as their focus. The selected wells all represented a hazard to hikers and hunters. The well plugging is expected to continue into next spring.

With hundreds of additional wells to plug it will take a very long time and neither DEP nor DCNR have the budget to pay for the plugging.



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

Plum Dudgeon Run



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.