



Fall Newsletter Park Manager's Report

It's been another busy but good year for us at Oil Creek and for those that frequent the park. I'd like to take a moment to update everyone on some projects that were started over the past year.

This summer we partnered with the Pa Outdoor Crews for a habitat improvement project at the Blood Farm day-use area. The goal of this project is to cut down various invasive plants that have taken over the area and follow up with herbicide treatments. This will allow for native plant and animal species to reclaim this area. So far, the project has gone better than expected. Work will continue in this area next season or until we reach our goal.

In early November, we started a timber stand improvement project on a 112-acre track of forest across from the ski hut. Contractors will be cutting down less desirable or nonnative species. This will allow for native species that we want to flourish, creating the type of age structure that we want to see within our wooded areas. This will also allow for more diverse habitats that will benefit a variety of different plant and animal species. This project is expected to last 3-4 months. Once this project is complete, we will be looking into doing a selective timber harvest off of Russel Corners road. The goal is the same here. We will be looking to take some larger trees which will allow sunlight to reach the forest floor, as well as allowing new plant species to grow and diversify the habitat.

We have also been in talks to start looking at our native trout streams and what we can do to improve these streams. We will be inventorying and prioritizing areas of the park where we can strategically drop trees into these wild streams. This will not only create deeper holes for trout to live but will also help to slow down the flow of these streams when we get large amounts of rain, reducing erosion. This project is in its infancy, and there will be more details to come in the future.

This is exciting work that will benefit the park for decades. It can be alarming to some seeing trees cut down on our public lands. However, creating the proper age structure within our forests is a vital part of resource management. If anyone has questions about these projects, please feel free to call the park office for additional information.

See you on the trail,
Dave Hallman

Thank you Tim Rudisille
for this beautiful picture.

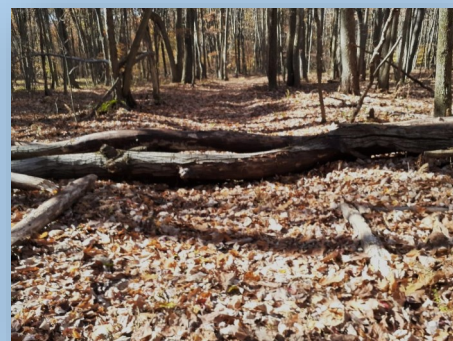




Ski Trail Clean-up



Amy Douthett (organizer), members of the Friends group, and hopeful skiers have been out on the ski trails preparing them for winter. They have removed a lot of debris from the trails. They have informed the Park staff of larger obstacles. The trails are in excellent condition. All we need now is snow!



OC100 took place on October 12th of this year. Kudos to Heather Nelson and her team for another well-organized great race. All went well. The weather was terrific all day long, but took a nasty rainy turn after midnight.

The 25k had 145 runners registered and 132 completed, the 50k had 194 registered and 175 completed, the 100k had 65 registered and 47 completed, and the 100 mile had 47 registered and 18 completed.

The picture on the right was taken the night before the race. From the left are Rebekah Deal, Rebecca Beach, Heather Nelson, and Kat Thompson. Rebekah Deal was a trail sweeper, Rebecca Beach ran and completed the 100k, Heather Nelson is the race director, and Kat Thompson ran and completed the 25K.



Runners along the trail



On April 5, 2024, I made a decision... However, at that time, it did not feel like a good decision. As I was cleaning out my shed that afternoon, my good friend Andrew's wife, Adrienne, texted Andrew and me and asked if we were running the OC 100. She had seen on Facebook that registration was open.

Having run the 50k multiple times and having experience running the trails of Oil Creek dozens of times, I was quite comfortable texting back that I'd be happy to run the 50k and possibly even the 100k. What I thought was friendly joking, Andrew responded, "Nope... 100 Miler." I played along with him, telling him it would be an epic adventure, never thinking he would actually register for that distance. After a few minutes of back-and-forth banter, Andrew sent me the screenshot that changed the next seven months of my life. He had actually done it; he registered for the 100-miler. Thinking that I could not allow my friend to run 100 miles alone, I reluctantly decided to register myself, not having any idea what I was getting myself into.

The decision to run the 100-miler required us to go to work: we researched nutrition, hydration, proper pacing, clothing, and most importantly, proper lubrication. Over the course of seven months, we logged countless hours each week, often times awaking at 2 or 3 am to cram in serious miles before our kids and wives required our attention. Those early mornings were even more daunting when we would make the hour-in-a-half-long drive from our homes in East Brady to Miller Farm Road, where we would park at the bridge and run full loops and sometimes even more. With each early-morning run, though, we became more and more confident. After running Jeff Nelson's Run Between the Suns in June and logging roughly 50 miles, and after Andrew's running the Iron Stone 100k in serious heat and humidity, we knew were fully capable of conquering 100 miles.

As confident as we were, when October 12 came out of nowhere, we were nervous, Andrew especially so, as he was afraid we might get rained on at some point during the race. I took a more "control-what-you-can-control" approach, thinking that rain would be no big deal. I could not have been more wrong.

At 5:00 am we set off, well ahead of our intended pace; we were not over-exerting ourselves. Rather, we were running comfortably and enjoying the delicious breakfast burritos at each aid station (if the person responsible for ordering these burritos is reading this, please let me know where you bought those things... they were tremendous). The first loop was a breeze. Adrienne greeted us at Titusville Middle School. A very successful runner herself, Adrienne served as our crew chief, until my wife was able to leave my son's youth football game to be her co-chief. Adrienne also paced us for the last 30 miles or so of the race, providing us with direction and foul-mouth motivation. Without our wives providing food, clothing, comfort, and the occasional, "Get your butts moving, you wimps," our confidence probably would not have improved as much as it did. (Side note: their encouragement was a little more profane than "butts" and "wimps," but I did not think it would be appropriate for this newsletter).



Loop two was just as successful as the first: ahead of pace and feeling good. It was not until loop three, at about mile 70, that both Andrew and I both began to feel the effects of a race of this magnitude. Andrew began to experience severe knee pain, while I began to experience overwhelming fatigue. Making matters worse, when we arrived at the Petroleum Center aid station, Adrienne informed us that the rain would start in about an hour. Unfortunately for us, our rain gear was at the Middle School. When the rain finally started, it was intense, and it was cold. I began to seriously fear hypothermia at this point, but I knew if we could make it to the Miller Farm aid station to warm up, it would only be one more section before we could change our clothes and grab our rain gear at the Middle School and move onto the Going Home Loop. After warming up at Miller Farm and eating our staple food (Raman), we trudged through the rain, mud, and hallucinations (Andrew saw the Grim Reaper, while I could hear concert music echoing through the woods) back to the Middle School, where we dried off and changed our clothes.

The thought of finishing 100 miles prompted me to pick up the pace on the Going Home Loop, and even though it felt like it took us hours to reach Boughton Bridge, that last serious climb was actually easy. Finally, after 27 hours and 46 minutes, Andrew and I crossed the finish line and received our belt buckles, our socks, and our OC 100 Mile Finisher stickers, which we proudly affixed to our garage beer refrigerators.

Throughout the course of the race, the idea of quitting never really crossed our minds. However, we both said that we would never run another race of this distance again many times throughout the run. Within a day of finishing the race, though, we were both already scouring the Internet for our next long-distance adventure. I asked myself, “Why would you want to do that again?” The answer is simple: running 100 miles is a feat that not many people can fathom, let alone run. We dedicated ourselves to training—even when we didn’t want to train—and we fortified our mental strength. This race was more than just a physical challenge. It was an opportunity for us to prove to our kids, our wives, and most especially to ourselves, that we are much stronger, both mentally and physically, than we think. I’ve read all the books on ultrarunning, listened to the podcasts, and watched the documentaries, and they all echo the same sentiment: you never truly know what you are capable of until you push your limit. In other words, you either “strike oil or move on.” Well, we struck oil.

I am grateful to have run this race, but it would not have been possible without the family-like support of the volunteers who, even after nearly 28 hours, were cheerful, supportive, and kind. All the folks who work tirelessly to maintain Oil Creek’s rolling trails are also special people—the trail was perfect. And finally, without our wives, Adrienne and Felicia, there is no way we could have accomplished our goal!

-- Mike Stimac



Andrew on the left– Mike on the right

Over-The-Hill Gang

The Over the Hill Gang had a productive and satisfying mid-Summer and Fall. We removed down trees that blocked trails and made repairs to the trails after removing the trees. The Gang cleared ditches along trails in order to reduce erosion and washouts.

Our crews trimmed back branches, brush, and especially multiflora rose. We utilized weed trimmers throughout the Summer and early Fall. Bridges and boardwalks were repaired and improved. Asphalt shingles were applied to the bridges in order to reduce slipperiness and to enhance safety where needed.

The Gang worked with the Park maintenance department while reconstructing a long boardwalk on a swampy section of trail just south of Stevenson Road. The Park supplied treated lumber and all of the treads were replaced. Support braces were added in order to strengthen the entire boardwalk. The collaboration was excellent and resulted in a high quality boardwalk that was completed in a much shorter period of time than could have been completed independently.

The Gang and Park maintenance also worked together to clear a very large group of trees that were blocking the bike trail at the north end of the Park. The trees also damaged railings and a wooden platform on the hiking trail. The damage was repaired and improvements were made.

The OTHG appreciates input from hikers and runners that lets us know when trees are down and other problem areas that need addressed. We were alerted to numerous down trees about a week before the OC 100 race. The Gang removed 17 trees and debris during that week, and we received positive feedback from runners regarding the quality condition of the trails.

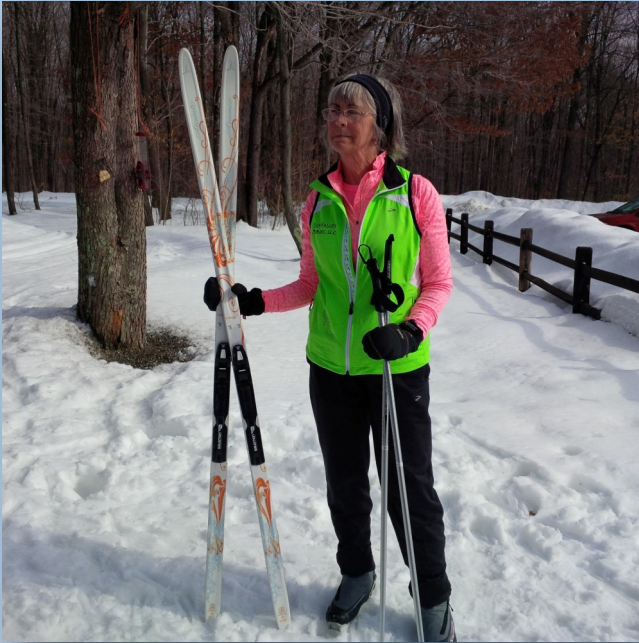
As always, we are grateful for the monetary support provided by Friends of the Park, OC 100, and Oil Creek State Park.

Enjoy the trails and the beauty of our Park.

Denny Pattison
for the Over the Hill Gang



Thank you and Best Wishes



Peg Sims is retiring from the board after being an integral part of the board for 20+ years and serving as president for a huge percentage of those years.

Peg and her husband John started and ran the Oil Creek Biathlon for 18 years. The Friends group considered the biathlon a major fundraiser. The profits from the biathlon helped us in many of our ventures.

Peg and John were also responsible for the CC ski venture, Sun Valley Nordic. They faithfully ran this program for 11 years.

The Friends are very thankful for Peg's service (and John's too). We are going to miss her! We wish Peg the best!

Welcome New Directors

The Friends group has installed two new directors to the board—Northern Wincek and Timothy Rudisille. Welcome! Northern is an avid hiker who often hikes in the Park. Timothy is a professional photographer. He takes beautiful images which he often shares with our newsletters. Some of his pictures are in this newsletter. The picture to the right is one of Tim's!



President's Report

While autumn is a beautiful time of year at the park, there is still so much to see as the foliage thins and the leaves fall. The views and woods open up. This is a wonderful time to watch birds migrate and animals get ready for winter. This fall has been particularly warm, so it is a terrific time to hike, bike, hunt, and picnic while enjoying the change of seasons.

On October 5th, I had the opportunity to go on an educational hike with Emily Pritchard, the new park educator. Our group met at the Train Station. When you are at the Station, be sure to go inside to study the amazing diorama. It is an incredibly detailed representation of Petroleum Center! From the Train Station, we hiked to the Petroleum Center Cemetery. It was interesting to look at the old headstones and imagine the lives of the people when Petroleum Center was a bustling town. Emily pointed out areas of interest and we had time to walk around and look at the headstones. From the cemetery, we hiked on the Gerard Trail to the Benninghoff Farm Tableau. Emily told us the fascinating history of Mr. Benninghoff, as well as providing time to study the historical features of the area. The weather was spectacular that day, and our group was sharing the trail with visitors of all ages. It was wonderful to see so many people enjoying the beauty of the Park.

For folks who are new to the park, like me, here are links to a map and a recreational guide to help get your explorations started: -

http://elibrary.dcnr.pa.gov/GetDocument?docId=1737398&DocName=OICR_ParkMap.pdf

http://elibrary.dcnr.pa.gov/GetDocument?docId=1737399&DocName=OICR_ParkGuide.pdf

See you on the trails!

Jennifer McAlevy, Chairman, Friends of Oil Creek State Park

Gerard trail just beyond the Benninghoff Hill.





Membership

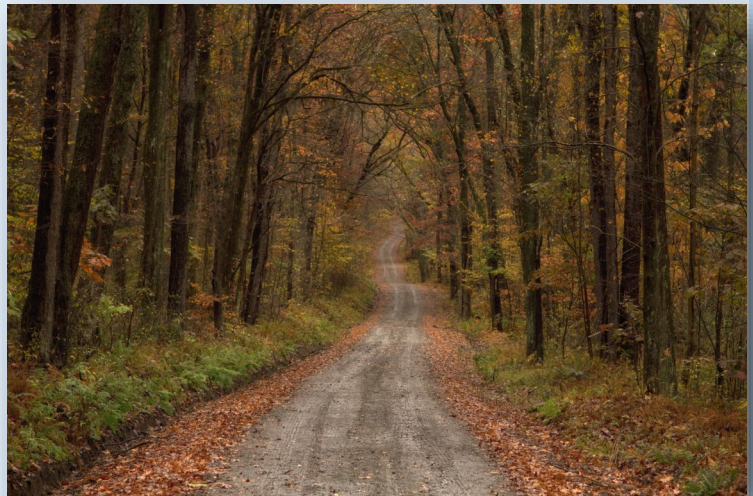
The Friends of Oil Creek would like to thank all the members who renewed their membership and to thank the many new members.

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. Please make all checks payable to PPF. 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
- **Please Make All checks payable to PPF**

Thanks Tim Rudisille
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

