



# Friends of Oil Creek

## Winter 2026 Newsletter

### Park Manager's Report

Last year one of our cherished volunteers Denny Pattison passed away from a long battle with cancer. I've been wanting to write something about Denny since his passing, but for the longest time I wasn't ready or didn't have the words.

Denny was an amazing man and volunteer. He was the leader of the Over The Hill Gang for many years... organizing and prioritizing the work on our 36 mile Gerard Trail. Denny was fantastic to work with. He was never one to shy away from a challenge, and he took pride in all that the Gang did.

Denny wasn't just a valued volunteer; he was a friend. His words helped me when I was going through a difficult time in my personal life. Our conversations didn't solve my problems or make them go away. It was just the simple fact that he listened and offered help in any way he could. That meant the world to me at the time, and I will never forget that.

I will always remember Denny as a proud husband, father, and friend.

Dave Hallman Park Manager

Denny accepting a volunteer award for the OTHG from PPFF



One of the many many work sessions led by Denny.

# Cross Country Skiing



John Holden is pictured above skiing at Oil Creek State Park on one of the many skiable days this winter. This picture appeared in the Derrick Newspaper in early January. Thank you to the Derrick for permission to use the photo.

John's father Jim was a devoted outdoorsman. Jim Holden started and was relentless in developing the bike trails in our area. Jim also was very involved with many aspects of Oil Creek State Park, including serving as a director on the Friends' board.

Like his son John, Jim enjoyed cross-country skiing. Jim learned to cross-country ski in the mid 1980's by some very accomplished friends. Jim passed his cross-country skiing passion on to his son John. They began "grooming" trails around their farm in Sugarcreek. John and his father then began to explore other places to ski, including Two Mile County Park and Oil Creek State Park. John continued to pass his love of skiing to his own children and wife in the late 1990's. They spent many weekends skiing in the Park.

John gets to OCSP at least once a year to ski and to bike. (He loves the beauty of the bike trail, especially in the fall.) In the picture above John is using his father's skiing equipment!

# Photos taken by Amy Douthett While Snowshoeing in the Park



# Gregg Falls/Pioneer

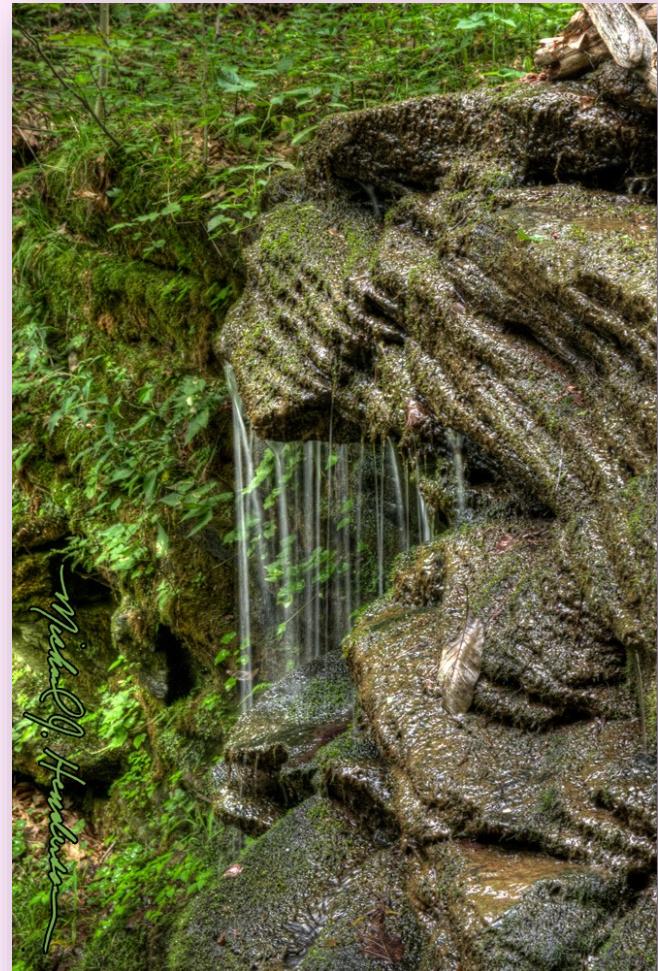


Oil Creek State Park may not be famous for its waterfalls, but it does have a few that are worthy of note, particularly in the spring when the creeks are running strong. Pioneer Falls, also known as Gregg Falls, is one that's fairly easy to get to and can be quite photogenic. There are two easy ways to access the falls, both requiring a  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile hike. If you drive to the end of Pioneer Road, park in the lot at the bottom, and there's a trailhead just off the paved bike trail, south of the parking area. This trail follows along Pioneer Run and is a slight elevation gain up to the falls. The other way in is from the parking area up the hill along Pioneer Road, where the Girard Trail crosses the road. Take the trail to the right as you pull in, and it winds its way down into the ravine of Pioneer Run. The Girard Trail crosses Pioneer Run right at the waterfall, with a neat little foot bridge.

But... did you know there is an Indian hiding within the falls? Mostly visible at low water levels, if you venture out onto the rocks to the right of the falls (looking upstream from below the falls), and if you look closely, there's

a crouching Indian that, when the flow is just right, appears to be weeping. But be VERY careful if you venture out onto the rocks, they can be slick when wet, and a fall could be disastrous. The banks of the ravine are very steep, usually covered with leaves, and not worth risking life & limb if you are not properly prepared. But not to worry, I have done the risky part for you, and here are some photos. Mike Henderson

**Thanks Mike Henderson for the interesting article and the amazing pictures— especially the weeping Indian!**





OC100 will be held October 10th this year. Registration will begin soon. Future information can be found at <https://oc100trailruns.org>

This derrick picture was taken the night of the 2025 OC100 race at the bottom of the Benninghof Hill by Bill Gilbert.



Dot Monahan was thrilled to find this otter frolicking by the dam.



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# Over-The-Hill Gang

The Gang was out in mid-January clearing the “Swinging Bridge to Drake Well loop”. The heavy snows have made many days not conducive to working on the trails. The Gang will be back on the Gerard as soon as they can.

We (FOCSP) feel so fortunate to have the OTHG as part of our commitment to making Oil Creek State Park a premier hiking area. Without their diligent as well as creative maintenance and preservation, the Gerard trail would not be as great as it is. We are truly in awe!



Amazing winter photos  
by Dot Monahan



©Dot Monahan



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# Chairman's Report

The cold and snow have been incredible this winter, but there is nothing like a walk in the woods on a sunny winter day to refresh the spirit. The cold air is more invigorating than the oppressive heat of last summer. The snow sparkles in the sun and you can more easily see birds flitting amongst the trees.

Animal trails are easy to spot as they trek through the snow in search of their winter meal. What animals can you identify by looking at their tracks in the snow?

The beauty of a snow-covered landscape is hard to beat. Oil Creek State Park has a lot to offer to the person who wants to venture outdoors during this pristine time of year.

While not groomed, the cross-country ski trails are open. Last year new signs were installed to help guide newcomers and to encourage responsible usage of these trails.

The bike trail and all other trails are open to walking, hiking, cross-country skiing or snowshoeing. In fact, snowshoeing can open a winter wonderland that very few people ever see. Trails, as such, aren't needed. The deeper snow and winter itself protect any plants that could otherwise be damaged while traveling afoot any other time of the year.

The bike trail is also available for fat tire bike trips, but don't forget to wear a hat underneath your bike helmet!

A very much underutilized feature of the park in the wintertime is Oil Creek itself. Right now, there really isn't a way to safely fish the creek. The water is icy cold, if not actually frozen over. But, the very cold weather won't last forever and the creek will open!

The first stocking we get this year will be on Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>. If the creek is still iced over, the Fish Commission will have to drill a hole through the ice to release the fish. For more information about stocking dates, check the PA Fish Commission website: <https://fbweb.pa.gov/TroutStocking>

Come out to the park to enjoy the winter beauty and a cup of cocoa with extra marshmallows when you get home!

Jen McAlevey—Chairman





# 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



Thank you Dot Monahan for this 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

