

The Friends

VOL XII ISSUE 1

SPRING/ SUMMER 2019



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONTHLY TRAIL WORK

First Saturday of each month, 9AM.

STREAM CLEAN-UP

Saturday, April 13
See article for details.

FRIENDS ANNUAL PICNIC

Saturday, June 2
See article for details.

PHOTO CONTESTS

Wednesday, June 26th at 6PM
and Wednesday September 4th
See article for details.

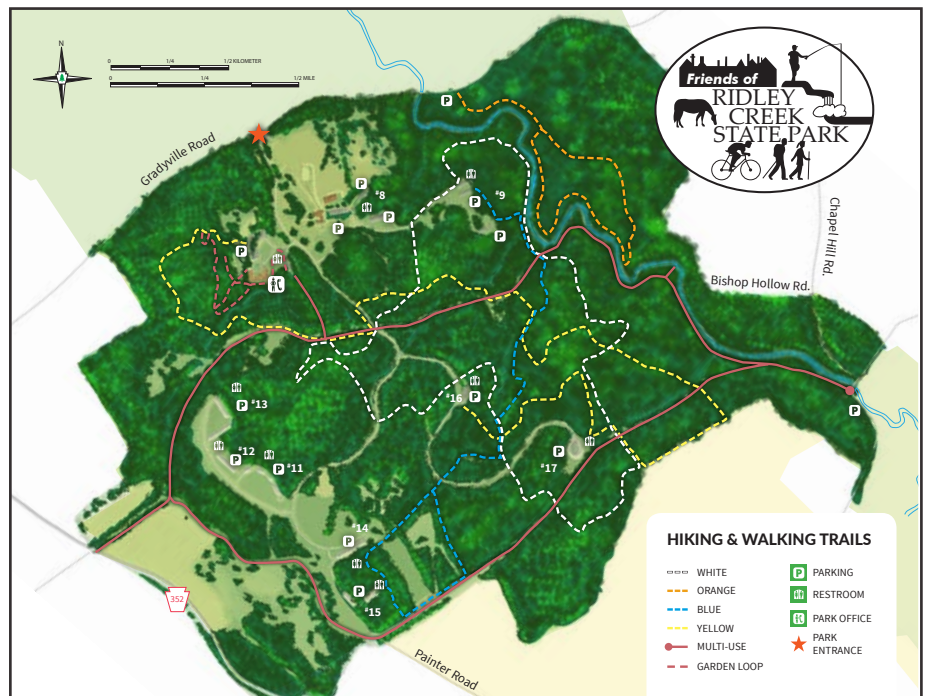
FRIENDS OF RIDLEY CREEK STATE PARK NEWSLETTER

Editor..... Joan Nikelsky
Design.....Mark Dougherty

Friends Publish New Trail Map

by Gary Sawyer, Board Member and Trails Chair

Spring hiking season is coming soon, when people visit the park to walk the woodland trails, marvel at the profusion of blooming flora, and enjoy the fresh air. In addition to the overall park map provided by the state, the Friends have made available a handy color 8 ½ by 11 map that focuses on the popular trails within the park. We had a version of this map that was out of print for awhile, but very popular with park visitors, so we commissioned a new updated one.



This map includes the most current information, including some trail re-routes in recent years. On the back of the two-sided sheet with the map is a description of each trail, including location, distance, and elevation. The map uses GPS recorded tracks while walking the trails, which you can download at our website <https://www.friendsofrcsp.org/trailmap.html>.

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Trail map continued

Some of the data collected from the GPS tracks are included to the right.

Much appreciation goes to the Friends volunteer Mark Dougherty, a graphic designer (www.greystudio.com) who designed the map. The Friends selected Baker Printing in Media to print 20,000 copies (5 boxes!), which should supply curious hikers for years to come. Just ask at the park office if you want a copy.

	Best Access	Distance	Elevation
Blue Trail. A “lollipop” trail with a small loop.	Areas 9, 14	2.3 miles*	350’ gain 285’ drop (area 9 to 14)
Orange Trail. A “lollipop” trail with a large loop. Much of trail along creek.	Gradyville Road, near creek	1.7miles*	160’ gain 250’ drop
White Trail. A loop trail around much of the park	Areas 9, 16, 17	4.3 miles	690’ gain and drop
Yellow Trail. A linear trail from the Mansion parking lot to Area 16	Mansion, Areas 16, 17	3.7 miles	550’ gain 540’ drop
Equestrian Trail (short loop). A “lollipop” trail with a large loop around the north side of the Park.	Area 8, Gradyville Rd.	2.6 miles*	230’ gain 400’ drop

*Distance does not include return on “stick” of lollipop.

Recruiting Volunteers for Annual Streams Cleanup

by Friends President, Jack Miller



On Saturday April 13, the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park will be working with the Chester Ridley Crum (CRC) Watershed Association on their 22nd Annual CRC Streams Cleanup from 9:00 to 11:30 am. We invite you to join us! Consider it a project to commemorate Earth Day.

Our work area will be the bridge on Gradyville Road where the road crosses over Ridley Creek. When traveling down Gradyville Road from the east, this bridge is at the bottom of the hill just before the Ridley Creek State Park entrance. The equestrian trail runs under the bridge at this location. We hope to get enough Friends volunteers to clean up the stream and banks on both sides of the bridge. For safety reasons, we do not intend to clean up along Gradyville Road. There will be a CRC Event sign placed on the bridge to make the area easy to find.

Each volunteer will be provided with work gloves, bottled water, and granola bars. Volunteers will also receive a CRC T-shirt for their participation on Saturday. If you come, wear a long sleeved shirt, long pants, and be prepared to wade through the Creek to complete our mission. We will clear the Creek of any debris and place the trash in trash bags for collection by CRC. Trash bags will be placed in the dumpsters in Ridley Creek State Park at the end of the event.

Once we clear the area around and under the bridge, we are free to leave and go home. We do not need to spend the whole time at the cleanup site if we finish ahead of schedule. There will be a thank you picnic at a future date for all volunteers who participated – when you are not covered in mud!

To access our work site, please enter Ridley Creek State Park at the Gradyville Road entrance (from Providence Road). Proceed to Area 8 at the top of the hill near the horse farm and go to the trailer parking area. Walk downhill on the equestrian trail, along the pasture fence, to Ridley Creek and you will be at the bridge. This walk takes approximately 20 minutes. We can access both sides of the bridge from the trail under the bridge and can cross Ridley Creek over the bridge to clean up the entire area. Parking along Gradyville Road is limited and dangerous for discharging passengers. Please be safe and go to the suggested parking location at Area 8.

To sign up for this event, visit www.crcwatersheds.org and go to CRC Events, Streams Cleanup and click the box to register. Our site is #220. You will be asked to fill in your contact information and indicate your T-shirt size. You will get an E-mail verifying your signup has been completed. Thanks for your help!

One on One with the Park Manager

by Friends member Lauren Bacigalupi

It's obvious if you spend any time with Ridley Park Manager Phil Schmidt that he loves his job, admires his team, and is fully committed to our beloved park. I was lucky enough to spend a Friday afternoon driving around the park grounds with him just chatting about what's going on and what's coming up to share with all of you.

If you've been driving through the park lately, no doubt the potholes challenged your driving skills. Taking notes for this article was quite a challenge! Good news though - pothole repair is coming, including some on the Multi-Use Trail (MUT). Though Phil says this isn't the best solution, it's better than what we currently have and repaving isn't quite in the budget yet.

Remember all those ash trees that had to be removed? Though clean up is still underway, this spring be on the lookout for new plantings! Harrisburg approved funds to add new hardwood trees to fill in and we're not talking saplings. They are planning on planting much more substantial trees to give them a better shot of succeeding. And... if you'd like to volunteer to do some more tree clean up, the Friends group is always looking for more mighty helpers!

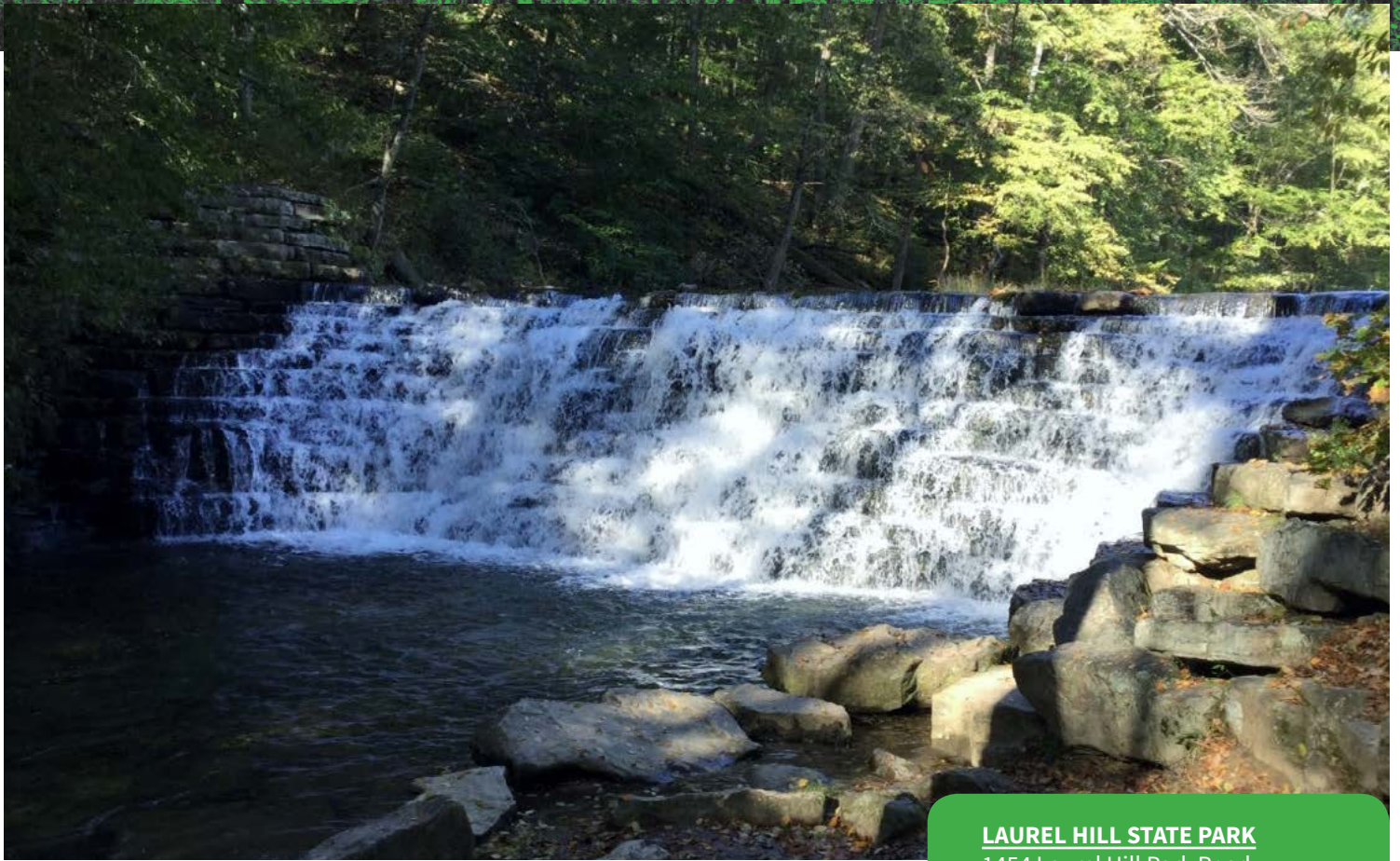
Speaking of volunteers - the PA Volunteer Corp, the group that provides the park with students and recent grads for volunteer community projects, is slated to come our way this summer. While Phil and his team are still deciding on which project they will do, it's exciting to know they will be there to help out. It's likely they will help us with the invasive species around the park, but stay tuned for updates.

Did you know that Eagle Scouts come out to our park as part of their community work? Well, they do! In order to graduate from their scouting program, they have to do a big service project and they came to us. This time around, they are cleaning out and re-pointing the old horse trough right by the bridge leading from the mansion to the MUT. It's a cool piece of history that you may not have noticed before because so much had grown up around it. The clean out has begun, so next time you're taking a walk, check it out. See [the picture here](#).



Our drive and chat couldn't just be all business, so I asked Phil, now that he's been here over a year, what was his favorite season at Ridley? While he said Fall, he also admitted that he loves it any time it's busy and bustling at the park. Because so many people who use our park are local, there is always a steady stream of activity - and that's great news! He also said the reason he loves coming to work every day is not only because of the park, but because of the people he gets to work with day in and day out. The mix of seasoned professionals and new team members makes for a great collaborative learning environment. Well, you can't ask for more than that. I told him I was clearly jealous of him!

Thanks for your time Phil- we'll certainly check in again.



Exploring Pennsylvania's Parks: Laurel Hill State Park

by Friends Board member and Trails Chair, Gary Sawyer, in a special contribution to the series about other state parks in Pennsylvania

Nestled in the Laurel Highlands of southwestern Pennsylvania is Laurel Hill State Park, which boasts a lake with a beautiful beach for summer swimming and boating, among its many features. But no matter which season you visit, there's something for everyone:

- 15 miles of trails along streams and through rolling hills, some of which are open to mountain bikes
- Lake and stocked trout stream fishing
- 10 miles of snowmobile trails that connect to 120 miles in a state forest
- 2200 acres open to hunting, including goose and waterfowl
- Prime stargazing on clear nights

It was a brisk Wednesday evening in mid-October when I arrived at their spacious campground (262 sites, 149 with electric hook-ups). A friend and I had hoped to coordinate a backpack on the nearby Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail

(LHHT), but our schedules just didn't mesh, so instead I opted for an upgrade: spend a couple of nights in one of 8 "camping cottages" available in the park. What is a camping cottage? Well, it's a step up from the truly "rustic cabins" available in many parks, but without the amenities or cost of a "modern cabin."

Camping cottages have electricity and heat, but no running water. They're a great place to crash for the night, but not for hanging around all day. They can sleep a family of 5 in a bunk room, with an adjoining tiny sitting room that has a table and chairs. There's also a spacious screened in porch with a nicely varnished picnic table. If you want a camp fire, there's a fire ring just outside with a picnic table. Water, restrooms, and hot showers are in a common building nearby. I was impressed with this clean wooden cottage, with no creepy-crawlies you might find in a rustic stone cabin.

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LAUREL HILL STATE PARK

1454 Laurel Hill Park Road

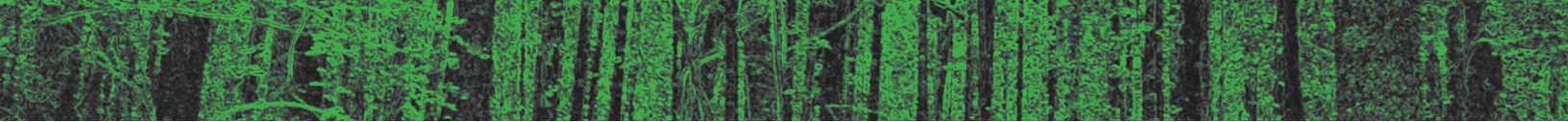
Somerset, PA 15501-5629

Phone: 814-445-7725

MAPS

HISTORY

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS



Even if you're just passing through, try to find time for some of the easily accessible highlights:

- A stand of old growth forest along the Hemlock Trail. Although not as impressive as the expansive stand in Cook Forest State Park in northwestern Pa., it has trees that are older than the Liberty Bell.
- The picturesque Jones Mill Run Dam was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, using hand-hewn stone from a local quarry and a lever system to stack them neatly in place – with no motorized equipment!

It should come as no surprise that a park this diverse and popular has its own Friends group. They serve in a variety of functions, not the least of which is staffing and supporting a Blue Grass Festival in August. Volunteers help staff a gift shop and visitor center. Park staff – especially the resident educator – get involved with planning events and trail maintenance that the Friends support. Hardly a weekend goes by in season without a special event or educational activity – such as flora, fauna, kayaking, history, hiking, stargazing, and yes, even bake sales!

During my all-too-brief stay, I wanted to check out some of the nearby recreational features as well. Just north of the park is Roaring Run Natural Area, an entire watershed

set aside for protection. Trails take you up the namesake creek and to hilltop overlooks. In a designated wild trout stream, I tried my luck but got skunked as the water was just too high to ford the trail crossings very far upstream.

Also in the area are similarly named sister parks to Laurel Hill:

- Laurel Mountain State Park – for skiers
- Laurel Ridge State Park – whose main features include the 70 mile hiking trail (LHHT) with Adirondack shelters for backpackers, and a cross country ski area with groomed trails.
- Laurel Summit State Park – a scenic picnic area
- Linn Run State Park – scenic hiking, native brook trout, and cabin rentals
- Kooser State Park – OK, not so similarly named, but with 4-season trails, stream fishing, camping and rustic cabins, this small park is a nearby favorite.

YOU ARE INVITED TO THE FRIENDS PICNIC JUNE 2

We will celebrate National Trails Day on Saturday, June 1 with our annual member and volunteer appreciation picnic at noon, rain or shine, after the trail workday. The picnic is open to all trail workers and members of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park (you can join or renew membership at the event!) and will include the annual election for Friends officers.

We will be at Pavilion 8, which is a sheltered site off Sandy Flash Drive at the top of the hill, next to the horse farm building. The picnic treats are compliments of the Friends: hamburgers, hot dogs, potato salad, coleslaw, beverages, and other fare. People are welcome to bring a dessert or other dish to share.

The annual meeting will include officer elections. Current members of the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park and newly signed up members will be able to vote. The Recording Secretary position, held by Gary Sawyer, will be up for election or re-election.

Please RSVP for the picnic so we can plan the food. E-mail members@friendsofrcsp.org or call Joan at 610-352-5685 by Wednesday, May 29, if you can. We hope to see you there!

AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS: TWO OPPORTUNITIES TO ENTER PHOTO CONTESTS

You have two opportunities to enter a photo contest in 2019 and win prizes. The first is, of course, our very own annual Friends of Ridley photo contest, with a deadline of Wednesday June 19, and the second is the annual online photo contest run by PPF (Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation) with a deadline of September 4. So start getting your pictures ready!

For the Friends contest, the award ceremony will be held on Wednesday June 26 at 6:00 pm at the park mansion, outdoors on the patio (weather-permitting), or inside the ballroom.

There will be several cash awards in adult categories, as well as youth categories (under the age of 18), so encourage your children to enter the contest! You can enter up to 3 photos per person at a fee of \$10 each for the first 2 photos, and \$5 for a 3rd photo. Photos of all seasons are welcome. The photo contest has always been one of our most popular fundraisers, while also raising awareness of the park and the Friends.

Look for the contest rules, entry form, and updated information on the Friends website www.FriendsofRCSP.org. Flyers have been posted in the park and on the bulletin boards of the Multi-Use Trail. The submission deadline for photos eligible to win prizes is Wednesday, June 19, one week prior to the award ceremony, to allow time for judging. Late entries will be accepted up to Tuesday, June 25, and will be posted at the award ceremony, but will not be eligible for prizes.

Come and bring your family and friends to this free event, the award ceremony on Wednesday, June 26, to look at all the beautiful pictures of our park. Light refreshments will be available. We will also have a collection box for canned food items for the local Food Bank; bring a donation if you can.

For the PPF photo contest, amateur photographers throughout the state are encouraged to submit their best photos taken in a Pennsylvania state park or forest. Three prizes will be awarded in each of 5 categories, as well as Best in Show, Critic's Choice, and People's Choice (you can vote on your favorite photos posted on the PPF website). The categories this year are: Selfie; Park and Forest Adventures; Dogs in the Outdoors; Other Wildlife Sightings; Motion; Intergenerational Joy; Young Photographers (aged 12-17). So there are many possibilities for contest entry and participation!

The winning photographs will be featured on PPF's website, Facebook page, newsletter, and other electronic and print communications, as well as a state-wide gallery tour.

For more information on categories and prizes, contest rules and submission details, go to <http://bit.ly/2019PPFFPhotoContest>.

We look forward to seeing winners from Ridley Creek State Park at these contests!

*2018 Honorable Mention by Mary Beth Mundy
"The Soulful Cemetery Sentry"*

