

The Friends

VOL XII ISSUE 1

SPRING/ SUMMER 2020



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

TORNADO	1
FRIENDS PICNIC	2
EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS.....	3
STREAMS CLEANUP	4
PENN'S PARKS SURVEY	4
PHOTO CONTESTS	5
MEMORIAL LAKE STATE PARK	6
COVID-19 UPDATE.....	6

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONTHLY TRAIL WORK

First Saturday of each month, 9AM.

STREAMS CLEAN-UP

POSTPONED - See article for details

FRIENDS ANNUAL PICNIC

Saturday, June 6th

See article for details.

PHOTO CONTESTS

Monday, June 29th at 6PM

See article for details.

FRIENDS OF RIDLEY CREEK STATE PARK NEWSLETTER

Editor..... Joan Nikelsky

Design.....Mark Dougherty

Tornado hits Ridley Creek State Park!

by Friends member Lauren Bacigalupi

We're not in Kansas anymore...



View on the bridle trail

I remember it so clearly - driving through the park on my way home one day in November 2019 - and suddenly everywhere I looked, trees had been ripped from the ground. I couldn't believe my eyes. It actually looked surreal. I knew a tornado had touched down but I did not realize the impact it had. Well, now I did. Of course, my first thought was, how are we going to fix all of this?!

That was nearly four months ago, and though some cleanup has begun, it's a long road to recovery for our beloved park. I spent some time recently with Park Manager Phil Schmidt to talk about the night the tornado came through and his plan to get the cleanup moving.

"It was Halloween night at around 11:30 pm. The wind and rain were pretty hard, and then suddenly we realized, we have to take shelter," Phil said as he recounted the evening the tornado came through. Phil lives on the property, and in the middle of it all, trees were coming down all around him. It was a scary moment.

continued page 2

Tornado continued



View on the bridle trail

As we walked the grounds, it was amazing how clearly you could see the path the tornado took. Trees on either side of the path untouched, but the path itself - total mayhem. According to Phil, it came in off of Providence Road, went through Clonmel Farms, and then crossed Gradyville Road and followed the bridle path for a bit. Approximately 110 acres were affected.

Knowing how the ash tree removal project went, and that they are still in the middle of that cleanup, I asked Phil how he felt this one was going to go. "I started this job after the ash tree removal project was already decided and underway, so this one will be different. I am here at the start and can make sure it's done right. There is a lot of work to do," he said.

The project was sent out for bid to logging companies. Forresters walked the damaged areas and marked the trees that needed to be removed (you will see yellow marking along the tornado's path). Clonmel Farms sustained a lot of damage, as did the bridle path. The logging company,



Park Manager Phil Schmidt surveys the damage

once chosen, should begin work this April. However, the work will likely take all the way through October to complete, including the bridle path. "This is a big undertaking, but we are prepared to get started and get the park back in shape," Phil said.

The money that comes in from the logging company (loggers pay to come and take the wood from the park) will go towards Ridley Creek's 3-year plan of replanting new trees and dealing with the invasive species throughout the park. So that's the good news in all this.

If you get the time, it's worth the drive through to see the tornado's path - it certainly helps you understand Mother Nature is in charge - but we're in charge of cleaning up after. We will surely need a lot of volunteer help to get our beautiful park back in great shape. So if you're willing and able, it's time to join the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park!

FRIENDS ANNUAL PICNIC JUNE 6

Our annual member and volunteer appreciation picnic this year will be on Saturday June 6 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 and will include the annual election for Friends officers.

We'll meet 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. There are always delicious offerings to try!

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 President, Vice-President, and Treasurer positions (currently held by Jack Miller, Joan Nikelsky, and Dave Case) will be up for election or re-election.

Please RSVP for the picnic to help us plan the food. E-mail members@friendsofrcrsp.org or call Joan at 610-352-5685 the number above by Wednesday, June 3, if you can. We hope to see you there!

Eagle Scout Projects in the Park

by Friends President Jack Miller



Outdoor teaching area constructed by scout Benjamin House-Kelly

Ridley Creek State Park is fortunate to have a dedicated group of volunteers who are active throughout the year. They keep the hiking trails open, perform special projects to assist the Park maintenance staff, and make our park an attractive place to visit. We appreciate all the volunteers for their hard work and invaluable help.

Every now and then a separate group appears to take on a special park improvement project. In the closing months of 2019, we had two Eagle Scout projects completed and available for all to use and enjoy.

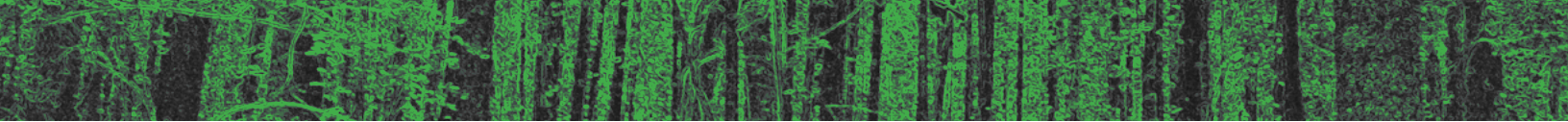
The first Eagle Scout project was the creation of an outdoor teaching area located off the mansion parking lot where an access trail meets up with the Multi-Use Trail (MUT), across from the bus stop. This project was planned and completed under the leadership of scout Benjamin House-Kelly. Benjamin led a group of boy scouts from Troop 76 in Fraser to create an area where a fallen down tree provided a new open space. The area was cleared, six benches were built, and the area was mulched and planted with landscaping plants. This area has already been used for teaching by the park naturalist Gary Stolz and found to be perfect as a place to learn in a natural setting.

The second Eagle Scout project was the construction of a new canopy over the George and Isabel Link bench along the MUT. There was an old structure at this site that badly needed replacement. The new canopy was planned and completed under the leadership of scout Matthew Paoella. Matthew is also a member of Troop 76 in Fraser. The old canopy structure was removed, and the new project was erected at the same site. While the Link bench has been in use for many years, the new canopy structure will be a great asset for hikers - a dry place to escape the showers of spring and a shady spot to rest during the heat of summer.

You can see from the photographs that these projects were built to last and will provide years of use by the park's visitors. We congratulate Benjamin House-Kelly and Matthew Paoella for their attainment of the Eagle Scout rank. We thank them for their dedication to improving people's visits to Ridley Creek State Park.



New canopy constructed by scout Matthew Paoella



Penn's Parks for All Survey: Status Report

by President Jack Miller

The Fall/Winter 2017 issue of the Friends newsletter contained a cover story (“Planning for Pennsylvania’s State Parks of Tomorrow”) about a survey conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). The survey solicited opinions from Pennsylvania residents to create a strategic plan for the management of Pennsylvania State Parks for the next 25 years. Paper copies of the survey were available at the park office and electronic versions that could be filled out online were posted on the DCNR website. Thanks to all of you who participated in that survey.

The results of the survey have been compiled and DCNR has published a preliminary report. Following public and stakeholder input, a final list of strategies will be outlined to help move Pennsylvania’s state park system forward through the next few decades.

The preliminary report is available as a PDF on the DCNR website: dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks. Click on the State Parks tab on the left and look for the Penn’s Parks for All green box on the right and click on it. Once the Penn’s Parks for all page opens, you will be able to scroll down to the Preliminary Report and access the PDF.

The Final Report is due to be issued in the Summer of 2020. During the fall of 2020 the State Park Staff Work Groups will be developing implementation plans for each recommendation.

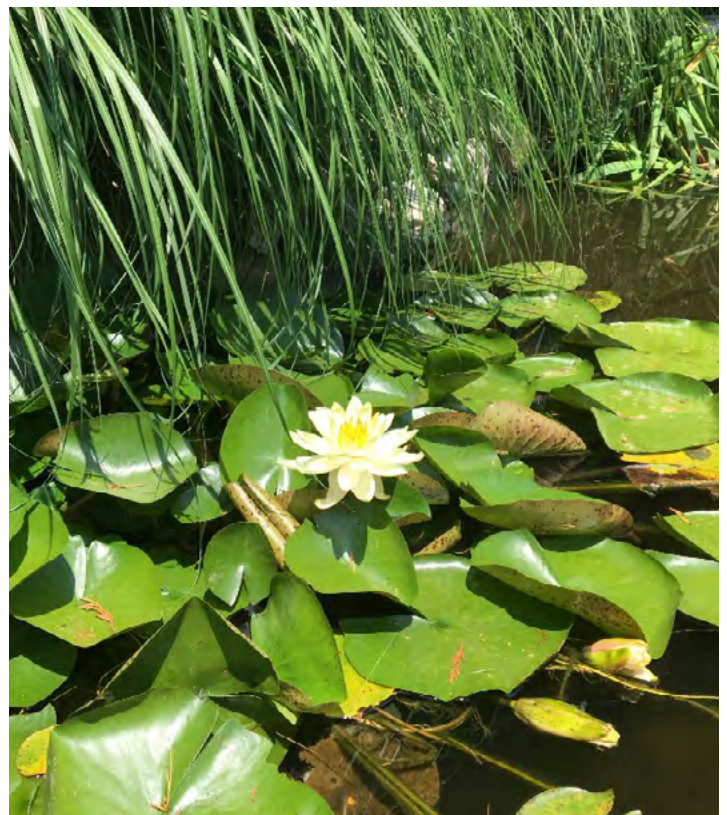
We look forward to seeing which items are chosen to be implemented in Ridley Creek State Park. Again, your input into the 2017 survey will have a bearing on the future plans of the Pennsylvania State Park System. Your opinion counts. Thank you for your participation.

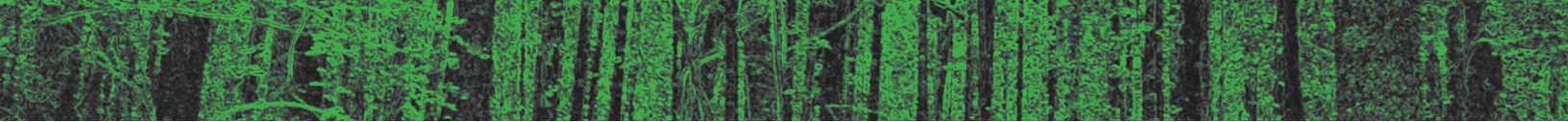
23rd Annual CRC Streams Cleanup is POSTPONED

from www.crcwatersheds.org/what-we-do/streams-cleanup/

While CRC would like to get everyone outside to plant trees and clean our streams in the coming weeks, out of an abundance of caution and under the direction of government recommendations, we will be canceling all events through at least April 15. The tree planting for March 28 and the 23rd Annual Streams Cleanup on April 4 are included in this time frame. We will determine whether to move forward with the plantings in later April. We hope to reschedule these important events for our watersheds, and will keep you updated regarding their status. Thank you all for volunteering and please stay safe and healthy!

Please check our website for updates and future registration.





FRIENDS OF RIDLEY PHOTO CONTEST 2020

Amateur photographers, it's time to get ready for the 2020 Friends Photo Contest! Once again we will hold the award ceremony in June - this time on Monday, June 29 at 6:00 pm. We'll hold it outdoors, but in case of inclement weather, it will be inside the park mansion.

There will be several cash awards in adult and youth categories; we encourage young photographers under the age of 18 to enter. Each person can submit up to 3 photos, with the following entry fees – the first 2 photos for \$10 each, and a 3rd photo for \$5.

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 Monday, June 22, one week prior to the award ceremony, to allow time for judging. Late entries will be accepted up to noon Monday, June 29, and will be posted at the award ceremony, but will not be eligible for prizes.

We welcome photos of all seasons. So gather your pictures and submit your best entries. The photo contest has always been one of our most popular fundraisers, while also raising awareness of the park and the Friends.

Come and bring your family and friends to the free award ceremony on Monday, June 29, to look at all the beautiful pictures of our park. Light refreshments will be served. We will also have a collection box for canned food items for the local Food Bank; bring a donation if you can. See you there!



Photos on display from Ridley Creek in 2019

YOU CAN ALSO ENTER PPF'S PHOTO CONTEST

The Friends of Ridley Creek State Park is a chapter of the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation (PPFF). In addition to the Friends of Ridley's photo contest, PPFF has an annual photo contest. Here's another way to enter and win an award with your pictures of our park, or, for that matter, any state park or forest in Pennsylvania.

Photos must be submitted by September 8, 2020 to PPFF. Prizes will be awarded in each of the following categories: Selfie; Dogs in the Outdoors; Other Wildlife Sightings; Park and Forest Adventures; Motion; Intergenerational Joys; Young Photographers (ages 12-17).

There are many opportunities to win an award! And the winning photographs will be featured on PPFF's website, Facebook page, newsletter, and other electronic and print communications, as well as a state-wide gallery tour.

Be sure to check out www.PaParksAndForests.org/Get-Involved/Photo-Contest for a complete list of rules and submission details.

COMING....in 2022 – the 50th anniversary of Ridley Creek State Park

Were you around in October 2012 when we held a 40th anniversary celebration of the founding of Ridley Creek State Park? We are already looking ahead to a 50th anniversary in August 2022. It's not too soon to think about what we will do and what kind of event we will have. Do you have any ideas? Would you like to help plan it? Offer to volunteer?

Please send an email to president@friendsofrcsp.org to share your ideas.



Exploring Pennsylvania's Parks: Memorial Lake State Park

This article is eighth in a series about other state parks in Pennsylvania, contributed by Friends Board member, the much-traveled Paul Mickle.

In this series we have gotten around to many parks in the northern and western regions of Pennsylvania. This time we are heading south to Lebanon County, which, for those unfamiliar with that area, is one county east of Dauphin County, where Harrisburg is located. The park we are visiting today is 20 miles east of Harrisburg. The formal name is Memorial Lake State Park and the nearest settlement is Fort Indiantown Gap, which is north of Hershey and Lebanon.

Memorial Lake State Park was created in 1945 to honor the soldiers who served in both World Wars on behalf of the Pennsylvania National Guard. The 320 acres of land the park is made up of today was actually carved out of land owned by the Fort Indiantown Gap Military Reservation that is still in existence today and currently houses the headquarters for the Pennsylvania National Guard. As a result of the surrounding land still being part of the Reservation, the area remains somewhat undeveloped.

As the name suggests, Memorial Lake State Park is named after an 85 acre lake that is figuratively and literally the park's central attraction. In the summer there are all kinds of warm-weather activities like boating, swimming, fishing, and hiking, while in the winter months the activities switch over to ice-fishing, ice-skating, and skiing. For all seasons, the walking trails alone could take hours to explore.

Memorial Lake State Park is arguably not the most dramatic of Pennsylvania's state parks, but it has a very relaxed atmosphere and, because it doesn't draw crowds from far and wide like some of the busier places we've looked at, it maintains a small town charm that makes it worth a visit.

MEMORIAL LAKE STATE PARK

18 Boundary Road
Grantville, PA 17028-9682
Phone: 717-865-6470

MAPS

HISTORY

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

COVID-19 UPDATE

Governor Tom Wolf recently issued restrictions on large gatherings and unnecessary travel, especially in Montgomery County, to deter the spread of the coronavirus. Following that, the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation (PPFF) informed us that the Pa. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) has decided to cancel all events and activities in the parks and forests through the end of April (at least). Finally, on March 14, DCNR added parks in Delaware County, including Ridley, to the closure list, effective for 14 days.

You can stay up-to-date with the most current information by going to www.dcnr.pa.gov. You can also check our website www.FriendsofRCSP.org.

As of this writing, we do not know if it would affect our Streams Cleanup in April. Those who register for that event will be kept informed, so be sure to register.