



The Friends

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FALL/WINTER 2026

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONTHLY TRAIL WORK

First Saturday of each month, 9 am
Meet at the Mansion.

MEDIA FALL FESTIVAL

Sunday, October 4, State St. in Media
See article for details.

FIRST DAY HIKE

Friday, January 1, 2027 at 10 am.
See article for details.

FRIENDS OF RIDLEY CREEK STATE PARK NEWSLETTER

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

Stairs on a Hiking Trail?

by Gary Sawyer, Board member and Trails Co-Chair

Most hikers are aware of some of the half dozen or so foot bridges along the Park's hiking trails. But did you know that there's also a set of stairs? The Yellow Trail departs the Multi-Use Trail near mile marker 1.0 (close to the frog pond), going up a steep embankment with the help of a set of stairs.

These old stairs have been here as long as I can remember and I have been a park user since 1989. After multiple repairs and obvious erosion at the supports, it was time for replacement. Park Manager Lexi Rose agreed.

Early this Spring, a plan was hatched to replace the stairs, led by one of our volunteers, a retired union carpenter named John Bush. To minimize the time a section of trail would be out of commission for construction, John came up with a clever plan to use the existing supports until a more permanent and sturdy support system could be finished, carrying the load well into the future. Carefully measuring rise and run needed for the stairs, all the materials were pre-cut for the day of construction.



Old Stairs, supported by handrail posts with eroding footers



New Stairs, supported by 6x6 lumber anchored into the ground at top and bottom

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Fast forward to Saturday, May 2. It was a regularly scheduled volunteer day; one that we also worked with Park Naturalist Gary Stolz to remove invasives from the nearby frog pond (part of a belated Earth Day celebration). Detour signs alerted trail hikers to avoid the construction area. Work began in earnest shortly after 9 am. By around 2 pm, the old stairs were removed and new stairs were open for hikers.

But the job wasn't completely done. A boy scout troop (Den 2 Cub Scouts from Pack 110 of Gladwyne) planted nearly 100 plugs of grass in the disturbed ground around the stairs. Trails volunteer John Walters led construction of a permanent top support working around a large boulder in the ground which was not going anywhere!

Finally, by the volunteer work party on Saturday, July 4, everything was buttoned up, anchored in place, and ready to last until the America 300 celebration and beyond - thanks to all the volunteers, with funding for materials provided by the Friends of Ridley Creek State Park. "That was a fun job; I think everyone enjoyed working on it," said John Walters.

The Friends of Ridley's TWO Awards from PPFF

The Friends of Ridley Creek State Park were lucky this year to win 2 awards from the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation (PPFF), which honors outstanding service and programs demonstrating the exemplary work being done in our state parks and forests by both staff and volunteers. We won the Volunteerism Award and the Young Volunteer of the Year Award. All state park and forest groups that have "Friends" groups are eligible to be nominated every year for these awards.

Award winners are recognized at PPFF's annual awards banquet each spring. This year it was on May 12th at Little Buffalo State Park near Harrisburg. Each award is sponsored by a Pennsylvania company or organization, or community leader(s). Each recipient is given a beautifully carved wooden bowl by artists



Display of handcrafted wooden bowls and plaques that were given to award recipients



Sponsors and recipients of the Volunteerism Award at the PPFF banquet: L. to R., award sponsors Charles Davidson and George Asimos; Friends members Paul Mickle, Joan Nikelsky, and Gary Sawyer; PPFF Board member Mary Soderberg



L. to R., PPFF Board member Jessica Lee; recipient of the 2026 Young Volunteer Award Eric Torikian; Eric's nominator and past Young Volunteer Award winner Paul Mickle

Robert Gochnauer and Ron Sheehan, along with a commemorative plaque crafted by Elk and Walnut Creative Corner.

Attending the banquet this year to represent the Friends of Ridley was Gary Sawyer, Board Secretary and Trails Chair, Joan Nikelsky, Vice-President and Newsletter Editor, and Paul Mickle, Coordinator of the Annual Photo Contest. We accepted the Volunteerism Award. The winner of the Young Volunteer Award, Eric Torikian, who participates in Friends of Ridley work events, was unable to attend the banquet, so he was given his award at a special presentation later in the summer at Ridley Creek State Park by PPFF representative Jessica Lee.

Our Spring/Summer Newsletter gives more details of our awards this year. Just [click here](#).

The Friends of Ridley have been honored in previous years by PPFF. We won the Infrastructure Improvement Award in 2010 and Paul Mickle won the Young Volunteer of the Year Award in 2012.

ARE YOU A FRIEND OF RIDLEY?

Last year the Board simplified our membership policy. Everyone who makes a donation or volunteers with us (or does both!) is considered "A Friend of Ridley Creek State Park." Volunteers help us carry out our mission every month and at every event we hold. Let us know if you have time to help out! Email members@friendsofrcsp.org.

Donations are solicited at our events and can be made at any time. If you missed our fundraising letter in April and want to contribute to our work, use our secure online app <https://ppff.app.neoncrm.com/forms/ridleycreek>.

If you would rather donate by check, make it payable to "PPFF/Friends of Ridley Creek State Park" and mail it to 400 Gradyville Road, Newtown Square, PA 19073. Thanks so much for your support!

Come to any of the events we tell you about. Hope to see you soon in the park!



Media

STATE STREET FALL FESTIVAL

**Come See Us at the
State Street Fall Festival**

October 4, 2026 • 11AM - 5PM

Friends of Ridley at the Media Fall Festival

Once again, we expect to have a booth at the Media State Street Fall Festival on Sunday, October 4 (rain date Sunday, October 11) from 11 to 5. We'll be talking to old friends and new friends who stop by and displaying some photos of the park from our photo contest. We'll offer maps and other literature on our table and an opportunity to sign up on our email list. Hope to see you there!



Winners of the 2026 Photo Contest

by Paul Mickle, Photo Contest Coordinator

The Friends of Ridley Creek Photo Contest returned for another successful season in 2026. After reviewing the diverse collection of entries and a lot of careful consideration, the entries were narrowed down to the winners. First place was the photo “Waiting for Spring,” taken and submitted by Kris Morrison. Second place was Marisa Noel Jones with the photo titled “Snow Puddle Reflections.” Davy Mellado won 3rd place with the photo titled “Tree Maze.” A slide show of entries can be viewed on our website [here](#).

The Awards Ceremony was held on Wednesday, June 17th and honored the contestants and showcased the entries fittingly. It is always a nice opportunity to get to know fellow park users and hear about their experiences. We have seen that photo contest participants look for photo opportunities year round in preparation for this event. It is also great to see many return year after year.



Waiting for Spring by Kris Morrison, 1st Prize



Snow Puddle Reflections by Marisa Noel Jones, 2nd Prize

Annual First Day Hike in Ridley Creek State Park

We are offering again a New Years Day hike in the park. It will begin promptly at 10 am on Friday January 1, 2027 and will follow the equestrian trail. Plan to arrive early to check in at Pavilion #8.

Jack Miller will lead the 3.5-mile lollipop loop with views of the creek and a stop at the historic hilltop Russell Cemetery. It is expected to last 2 to 2 ½ hours. Jack has extensive knowledge of the park's history.

The hike will start at the parking lot behind Pavilion 8, descend to the creek at Gradyville Road, pass by an area recovering from a tornado in 2019, and wind around a lovely wooded section up and over Hunting Hill and the Russell Cemetery. The trail is wide, mostly gravel, with good footing. Be prepared for elevation gains of about 350 feet and for early January weather conditions – it was cold and windy last year!

We will have hot chocolate, coffee, and light refreshments at the trailhead after the hike. We have a limit of 25 participants for the hike. Dogs are allowed on leash at all times.

There will be an online registration process beginning a month ahead of the hike, so be sure to check your emails for the announcement so that you can secure your spot!



YELLOW CREEK STATE PARK

170 Route 259 Highway
Penn Run, PA 15765-5941
724-357-7913

MAPS

OVERVIEW

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

Exploring Pennsylvania's Parks: Yellow Creek State Park

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

In this edition of our state parks tour, we will be going to Indiana County in Western Pennsylvania to a place called Yellow Creek State Park. The park is fittingly named after the 2 main waterways in the region that are lined with yellow clay soil. Yellow Creek State Park was established in 1963 and expanded in 1982. Today it comprises a total of 2,981 acres with 720 of them making up Yellow Creek Lake.

Yellow Creek State Park lies in a very remote part of the state; however, it has also been one of the oldest travelled regions in the state, as the Kittanning Path runs through what is now park land. For those not familiar with it, the Kittanning Path was a very heavily travelled trailway that the Native Americans used to get from the Susquehanna River through the Allegheny Mountains and then over to the Appalachian Plateau.

Recreation activities at Yellow Creek State Park include hiking, fishing, boating, hunting, sightseeing, and just taking in the silence of the lake in the middle of farmland in



rural Pennsylvania countryside. Overnight lodging is also an option, offered in the form of 4 yurts and 6 cottages. Approximately 800 feet of beach frontage has been designated as a swimming area, open from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Yellow Creek State Park sits 40 miles west of Altoona near the college town of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, making it quite far away from Ridley Creek State Park. However, for those looking for an outdoor adventure in an extremely rural setting, Yellow Creek State Park is worth a trip.