

Penn's Stewards

News from the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation • Fall/Winter 2009



Black Moshannon State Park

In This Issue

- PG: 1** Transcending Generations
- PG: 2** President's Message
- PG: 3** National Parks
- PG: 4** Great PA Outdoor Challenge
- PG: 5** Community Partnerships Award Nominations
- PG: 6** Friends of Nolde Forest
- PG: 7** New Corporate Member
- PG: 8** Sledding!
- PG: 9** Budget Battle
Elk Country
- PG: 10** CCC Reflections
- PG: 11** Pennsylvania State Park System Ranked #1
Upcoming Events

Contact us:

PA Parks & Forests Foundation
105 N. Front Street, #305
Harrisburg, PA 17101
(717) 236-7644

www.PaParksAndForests.org

Transcending Generations: The Call of Conservation Work

By Brook Lenker, DCNR's Manager of Education and Outreach

Blessed is the man who has some congenial work, some occupation in which he can put his heart, and which affords a complete outlet to all the forces there are in him.

John Burroughs

Conservation is more than just a cause. For the fortunate few, it is an occupation that rivals almost any other in terms of its monumental importance to society. The great naturalist, Aldo Leopold, simply called it "a state of harmony between men and land," but for those who work in the field, figuratively and literally, it is a deeper and more complex relationship. Whatever the specific role or title, conservation as a profession often comes naturally to those who choose it. It is a fiery passion. Some say it's in their blood. There may be a vein of truth in that statement.

Throughout the ranks of Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources can be found "legacy" employees – children of current or former staff carrying on a tradition of caring for our public lands. In some cases, the legacy reaches down multiple branches of a family tree, and, whether it is attributed to nature or nurture, an invisible spark packed with knowledge and conviction jumps from generation to generation.

Case in point: Maria Aaron is a human resource assistant at the Bureau of State Park's regional office in Emporium and the daughter

of Ray Azzato, a former regional park manager known as "Mr. A" throughout his career. Aaron grew up in Pennsylvania State Parks. Her father was the first resident engineer at the George B Stevenson Dam (Sinnemahoning State Park) in 1955. From there, his career took them to Pymatuning State Park, and eventually back to Emporium in 1972, where he remained until his retirement in 1988. "I have so many great memories and stories... hiking in the woods, picnicking, swimming, boating, and building mud pies, to name a few," Aaron said. "To experience the great outdoors first hand as a child is, in my opinion, the foundation of goodness, and something that I will always treasure and continue to reflect upon throughout life."

continued on page 3



Father and daughter team:
Chris Reese and Rachel Wagoner.



President's Message

Marci Mowery



Board of Directors:

Chair

Bruce Heggenstaller
V.P. of Operations, Woolrich, Inc.

Vice Chairman

Wendy McLean
Partner, Lentz, Cantor & Massey, Ltd.

Secretary

Brian J. Clark
Buchanan, Ingersol & Rooney

Treasurer

Robert Griffith
Executive Director, PA Recreation and Parks Society

Directors

Hank Barnette
Skadden Arps

Richard Carlson
Retired, DCNR

Peter S. Duncan
Former Secretary, PA DER

William C. Forrey
Arora & Associates, PC

Representative Michael Hanna
*PA State House of Representatives,
76th District*

Christopher J. Johnston
*Delta Development
Principal - Planning and Economic
Development*

William Mifflin
*Executive Director, Philadelphia
Hospitality Inc.*

George E. Stark

David Spigelmyer
Chesapeake Energy

Rob Wonderling
*President, Greater Philadelphia
Chamber of Commerce*

Ex-Officio

John Quigley
Acting Secretary, PA DCNR

Honorary Members

Linda McKenna Boxx
Joseph Ibberson
John C. Oliver III

As I write this, I'm watching the red leaves of a maple dance in front of my window. I enjoy autumn, the cold nights and crisp mornings, the lighting as the sun begins to set, and preparations by wildlife for the winter ahead. Last night, we watched the most amazing sunset as we harvested the last peppers from the garden—the sky filled with purples, pinks, and magentas as the sun said its farewell.

Autumn brings longer nights and time for contemplation. For us at the Foundation, we are looking back over our first decade as a non-profit organization, while also looking ahead to where we hope to go. This year proved to be a challenging one for parks and forests, with pressures on multiple fronts—drilling, funding, programs. The need for volunteers at parks and forests and for people to step up as the voice of parks and forests is greater now than ever before. Like the Dr. Suess character, the Lorax, we need to speak for the trees (and land, and water), as they cannot speak for themselves.

The Foundation, through grants from the William Penn Foundation and the Heinz Endowment, will be launching a year-long program to raise awareness about the value of our park and forest system, becoming the Lorax for these precious lands. We'll celebrate the fact that the Pennsylvania Park system won the Gold Medal Award (see related article) as we travel across the state offering a free program on the history of parks and forests in Pennsylvania. Borrowing a phrase from the PBS Ken Burns' series on National Parks, we'll look at Pennsylvania's Best Idea—a sound park

and forest system. If you belong to a community, conservation, civic, church or other group, and would like to schedule this program, contact me, and I would be happy to visit.

As you read this issue of Penn Stewards, I hope that you are inspired by the story of a passion for our public lands as you read how stewardship passed from one generation to the next or about the amazing accomplishments of the Civilian Conservation Corps. I hope that you are encouraged to take a hike, bike, or ski on one of our more than 30,000 miles of trails in Pennsylvania, or perhaps take a child sledding when winter arrives (although I think it already did in some parts of PA)! I hope that your Lorax voice becomes stronger, as your pride in our park and forest system grows stronger.

In the season of gratitude, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the board of directors of their Foundation for the commitment and time to assisting the organization over this past decade. I want to applaud the staff and contractors for the Foundation for their investment in our mission. I want to thank the staff of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for their hard work, particularly in these challenging economic times. Lastly, I want to thank our dedicated volunteers, members and friends for all that they do to ensure that we are able to present the next generation a park and forest system of which we can be proud.

*Yours in the Outdoors,
Marci*



E-subscribe!

Get your PPFF newsletter via email.

Visit the website at www.paparksandforests.org,
click on the link to "Subscribe to our Newsletter/E-blast"
on the right margin of the homepage and we'll add you to the mailing list.

www.paparksandforests.org

Transcending Generations: The Call of Conservation Work

continued from front cover

She views her fellow state park employees as "one big family" – a family for which, like her father, she is grateful.

Rachel Wagoner, a resource manager for the Bureau of State Parks, was raised in and around the natural wonders that comprise the PA State Park System. "(She) was camping as an infant, backpacking since she was four, and later there was canoeing, rock-climbing, and cross-country skiing - much of it on state park and forest lands," explained Chris Reese, her father and manager of Black Moshannon State Park. "Saturday afternoon hikes were a thousand times more educational than any botany lab," Wagoner said. Dinner table conversations even addressed weighty topics like the challenges of balancing recreational demands with the carrying capacity of the natural resources. When conservation is the "family business" as Wagoner refers to it, learning cuts both ways. "It has been great having Rachel as a resource when I have questions about gardening, landscaping, invasives, or pesticide application, etc," Reese shared. "She also helps me have a state-wide awareness that helps control my otherwise myopic one-park view." With 36 years of combined tenure protecting what they love, this father-daughter combination has gained enough environmental insight to last a lifetime.

Casey Moore is the daughter of Michael Moore – not the documentary filmmaker but the chief of GIS Services for DCNR's Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey. "When I first joined the Civil Service, I was uncertain where I wanted a job. My father had, above all else, insisted that I choose a job that I love and

am genuinely interested in," Casey said. "He loves what he does...such passion for one's work rubs off on those around you. One day, I received a notice for a DCNR job, and I realized that DCNR was the exact place I wanted to work." She landed a position as a clerk typist with the Bureau of Facility Design and Construction, a niche that somehow seemed familiar, comfortable.

Michael offered his perspective on the job search: "When she told me her next interview was with Facility Design, I told her that was THE job." He had worked with Gene Comoss, director of the Bureau of Facility Design and Construction, many years ago on a project at Presque Isle State Park. "Casey and the rest of the family took their vacation in Erie while I worked at the park," Michael said. "It was a memorable week in one of DCNR's finest facilities." And one with lasting impact on his daughter. "Presque Isle seemed like paradise to me," Casey recollected. "What I remember most is that for that entire week, it had never really occurred to me that my father was at work. He made the park into one giant adventure for us."

And so it is for the more than 35 million visitors to the parks and forests every year. Many would characterize it as a giant, glorious adventure thanks to the dedicated staff caring for these places. They and the rest of the DCNR "family" take vigorous pride in their work, following in the footsteps of other great conservationists. Some even follow footsteps that are uncannily familiar, a member of their immediate family, to perpetuate a most noble livelihood which transcends decades and lives.



Help Tell the Story of Pennsylvania's Parks and Forests

**Calling all
photographers—
we need your photos!**

**PPFF recently
received funding
to put together a
program promoting
awareness about our
magnificent park and
forest system. We will
be putting together a
PowerPoint program
on the history of
parks and forests
that will be available
to any interested
community group
who would like a
presentation.**

**But we can't tell the
story alone—we need
photos of your travels
to and through state
parks and forests.
We are looking for
general pictures of
parks and forests, as
well as photos of
people engaging in
outdoor recreation.**

To submit photos, please
contact Marci Mowery,
mmowery-ppff@pa.net
or (717) 236-7644 for
more information.

..... National Parks, America's Best Idea

For a week in September, many of us found ourselves glued to the television, watching in awe as the story of our National Park System was presented through the work of Ken Burns. The special, "National Parks, America's Best Idea," was a great reminder of the incredible foresight of America's early leaders. Many of us added parks to our bucket list in anticipation of future vacations.

Here in Central Pennsylvania, the Ken Burns series included

interstitials created by WITF—small video clips focusing on our rich natural heritage. Many of these videos are now available on our website—we encourage you to take a few minutes to enjoy them.

Speaking of our website, be sure to bookmark it and visit frequently, as we continue to add information, events, and links to our site. We're on Facebook too, in several locations: Pa Parks and Forests Foundation, Goddard Legacy Project, and Elk Country Visitor Center.

Something
NEW...

ExplorePAtrails.com

is a new web portal for sharing and exploring Pennsylvania trails information. Created by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the website features an interactive map, driving directions, a forum for updating trails information, and a place where people can upload reviews and share stories about their favorite trails.

Start promoting your trails and website today by uploading your information to

ExplorePAtrails.com



Page 4 | Penn's Stewards

The Sophomore Year of the Great PA Outdoor Challenge

Did you meet your goal?

For the second year, PPFF challenged our members and friends to take some time during the early autumn and not only raise money and awareness of all that's wonderful about our parks and forests, but to ... well, take some time! As PPFF President Marci Mowery pointed out in her website article, there are over 30,000 miles of trails in Pennsylvania. Be they hiking trails or biking routes, streams to paddle or backcountry byways just meant for a meander, we believed there would be something for everyone to do and a place for everyone to support. And so the challenge was issued—let's take the period of September 11th through October 11th and "virtually" travel every one of those miles.

Thirty-two individuals and 11 Friends Groups answered the call. At press time, a total of 11,722 miles have been logged as have over 1000 individual participants in events as diverse as a Star Party at Cherry Springs State Park (where the skies cleared out for the weekend nearest the autumnal equinox and 50 volunteer astronomers helped eager amateur stargazers search out the heavens) to triathlons and long LONG distance trail runs at Oil Creek State Park and a mega hike along the Susquehanna in southcentral Pennsylvania. Volunteers spent National Public Lands Day on September 26th clearing trails, building picnic tables, planting natives and eating (that counts, too). The life of Maurice ("Doc") Goddard was celebrated

with a walk in Camp Hill borough on the trail that bears his name, and Friends of Goddard State Park organized an entire

day's worth of events designed to tempt any outdoor palette. The Challenge, also saw gatherings of friends and family engaging in outdoor recreation, such as a group of friends that biked across Ohiopyle State Park on the Great Allegheny Passage.

Sponsors of this year's event included Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania and Clemens Family Corporation, with prize donations from Berry Patch Products; Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor; Metro Bank; Odwalla; Outdoor Woman; and Recreational Equipment, Inc.

**We'll do it again next year.
WILL YOU BE THERE?**



Walkers prepare to kick off the Great Pennsylvania Outdoor Challenge with a stroll on the MK Goddard Trail in Camp Hill.

Disc Golf Update



Well, try as hard as we might, sometimes we overlook a good thing. Turns out that Pennsylvania State Parks have more disc golf courses than we gave them credit for having in our summer newsletter.

If you are hankering for a round of golf, look to these other venues for playing opportunities:

Prompton State Park, Wayne County, this 18-hole course stretches through woods and meadows overlooking the three mile long lake created by Prompton Dam.

Pymatuning State Park, Crawford County, nine holes of this 18-hole course are already completed and open for business!

Shawnee State Park in Bedford County has General Forbes's Challenge, in the Clearfields Day Use Area. The 9-hole, par-3 course has distance holes and an up-and-over-the-hill challenge.

Community Partnerships

Every year since 2001, Comcast has partnered with thousands of organizations across the country for *Comcast Cares Day*. This past April, more than 60,000 employees and their families volunteered at 600 different project sites across the country – all in the hopes of making a lasting impact on their communities.

In Pennsylvania, Comcast employees, family members and friends assembled at Trough Creek and Colonel Denning State Park as part of their annual *Comcast Cares Day*. At Trough Creek, they helped to clean trails, dug post holes for signs and fences, as well as sanded and stained a park pavilion.

At Colonel Denning, the Comcast and friends group volunteers spent the day planting 90 trees (donated by the Friends), stained the pole barn, mulched trails and playgrounds, put together two dozen picnic tables and cut and stacked firewood! The Friends provided coffee, tea and snacks, and Comcast treated the group to a catered lunch at both parks.

For every employee who volunteers for *Comcast Cares Day*, the company makes a financial contribution. This year, PPFF received a check for \$1640 for both Trough Creek and Colonel Denning State Park to use for park improvements and programs.

We want to thank Comcast and all who volunteered to make their parks a better place to recreate!

Comcast Cares Day volunteers helped to stain a pavilion at Trough Creek State Park.



Steve Volgstadt, Park Manager, Caroo Creek SP Complex



Comcast (Mrs. Don Beatty)

Comcast Cares Day volunteers at Colonel Denning State Park.

PPFF President Marci Mowery accepts the donation to Trough Creek and Colonel Denning State Parks from Comcast Cares Day. Pictured left to right, Joe Rocco (Comcast), Marci Mowery (PPFF), and Frank Lynch (Comcast).



Park and Forest Award NOMINATIONS

Celebrate the importance of parks and forests by nominating a park, forest, or friends group that you think represents the best of the best! The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation established an awards program in 2007 to recognize the outstanding service, programs and exemplary work being done at state parks and forests. The awards will be presented at the 4th annual banquet, to be held on Tuesday, May 4, 2010 at the Harrisburg Country Club.

Award Categories

Keystone Legacy Award

This is the top honor, given to a group, individual, or business—chosen at the discretion of PPFF.

President's Award

This award recognizes outstanding citizens or businesses who have made an impact in protecting open space, conservation, outdoor recreation or volunteerism.

Government Award

This is given to a person or department at any level of government to recognize their work in the stewardship of Pennsylvania's state park and forest system.

Park of the Year

This award is designed to recognize a park for their exemplary or innovative work in any or all of the following: customer service; education; programming or recreation; stewardship of the natural, cultural, or historic assets; and/or accommodation of special needs of visitors.

Forest of the Year

This award is designed to recognize a forest district for its innovative and exemplary work in both forest management and recreation for a wide range of activities.

Friends Group Awards

Three awards are given for recognition of achievements made by friends groups. These include awards for volunteerism, improvement, and education.

Award Nominations are due by December 11, 2009

To submit a nomination, please visit our website: paparksandforests.org or contact Marci Mowery, (717) 236-7644, mmowery-ppff@pa.net.

Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center

Located in Berks County, Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center is one of four centers in the state specifically dedicated to providing environmental education programs for both school and public groups.

The land was purchased in the late 1960s by the Commonwealth. In 1970, with the help of federal program grants and the Berks County Intermediate Unit, the Center was established as the first of its kind in the state park system.

As the story goes, Jacob Nolde, a hosiery baron, owned the property in the early 1900s. Back then, a single large white pine tree grew on the property. Inspired by this tree, which became known as the Inspiration White Pine, he decided to plant a coniferous forest for him and his family to enjoy.

Today, the center consists of the mansion which houses staff offices, the C.H. McConnell Environmental Education Hall where all programming takes place, and the surrounding 665 acres of deciduous woodlands and coniferous plantations. Staff provides year-round environmental studies programs for area school groups, in-service training and college level workshops on environmental curricula and topics for teachers, as well as a variety of public programs.

A network of trails runs through the property and along ponds and streams affording many educational opportunities among the diverse habitats. A series of teaching stations are available for teachers to use with their students, while benches along the way provide a place for visitors to enjoy the natural beauty of the property.

For more information
on events and programs
at Nolde: visitparks.com

Friends of Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center

By Ellen Zeph

A small, but very dedicated group, makes up the Friends of Nolde Forest. Established in 2006 as a chapter of PPFF, the group is led by Co-Chairs Jennifer Stinson and Chip Karasin. The group's mission is to support and enrich the educational programming and protect and enhance the diverse habitats at Nolde. They are a little different from other PPFF chapters in that they support an Environmental Education Center, one of four such centers in the state run by DCNR.

In its three years of existence, the group has looked for creative ways to engage the public and raise awareness about the Center. One way that seemed to make sense was to expand the yearly open house and make it a monthly event January through May, and September through December. Jennifer Stinson cites this as one of their greatest accomplishments. "Many people have hiked Nolde, but never saw inside the mansion or knew about its history," says Stinson. "We thought maybe our visitor numbers would drop off, since it is our second year for open houses, but they continue to be very popular. I think word has spread and they are even more popular this year." Between 50-100 visitors come out each weekend for mansion tours, a scavenger hunt, and a variety of programs. To help tell the Nolde story at the open houses, the Friends had a history slide show made into a narrated DVD. They hope to eventually have it for sale to the public.

While recruiting volunteers remains a challenge, the group meets every other month to plan their various projects and programs. Aside from the open houses, the Friends have also had success hosting a pottery show attended by more than 200 people. A local redware potter worked

with the group to hold a spring show and created a redware plate featuring a goldfinch as a fundraiser. They receive \$10 for every plate that is sold. Last year, 75 plates were sold through this partnership! This year's plate features a cardinal.

In addition to open houses, the group helps coordinate a variety of programs at the Center. Among the most popular:

Eggstra Special Eggs where families are invited to decorate eggs using natural products such as onion skins.

Critter Creations in December, where Christmas ornaments and decorations are created using natural products.

A variety of **talks and walks** ranging from highlighting the local landscape and animals, to raising awareness of invasive species as well as something different like bringing in Charlie Adams, Berks County Master Storyteller who related "Strange Tales of Berks County."

A **Native Plant sale** which also features local artisans and a native plant hike.

They also partner with local service groups, and this year will help fund two Eagle Scout projects.



Friends Group volunteer Bob Frey teaching on the trail.

The group's future plans are only limited by what Stinson cited as their greatest challenge – which is recruiting new volunteers. “I think people are just so ridiculously busy,” says Stinson. The Friends of Nolde are not alone there, as many friends groups find themselves up against the same challenge. Regardless, the Friends keep moving forward, recruiting new members and raising funds to help bring a unique range of activities to the Center.

You Can Help

Join the Friends of Nolde Forest or make a donation!

Membership dues are:

Family - \$25 and Individual - \$10

Send your check (make payable to PPFF) to: Nolde Forest, 2910 New Holland Road, Reading, PA 19607.

Volunteer your time! Stop by an open house or call Jennifer Stinson (610) 404-2136 to find out how to get involved.

What value does a friends group provide to Nolde?

“The Friends group is a definite asset for the Center. We formerly had one open house a year because of staff constraints and programming priorities. The Friends group graciously agreed to staff the monthly open houses which have been a rousing success. The Friends have also scheduled other fiscal/programming with the open houses as part of our Community Program series which they lead. This has increased our program attendance and at the same time frees up our teaching staff for other programs. The Friends group has also sponsored events such as the pottery sale, that would be difficult under the state fiscal/ purchasing procedures. Lastly, with the fiscal problems this year, the Friends have agreed to pay for project materials that we are not able to at this time. This includes materials for two Eagle Scout projects. The Friends group is a definite asset for us in programming and for lending a hand fiscally, especially now with our budget shortfall.”

—Dan Hewko, Nolde Environmental Education Center Park Manager



One of the beautiful trails at Nolde.

PPFF Welcomes New Corporate Member

We are proud to welcome the Clemens Family Corporation as a corporate member at the Black Cherry Level!

The Clemens Family Corporation was founded in 1895 by John C. Clemens and today represents a group of companies including Hatfield Quality Meats, Clemens Development, PV Transport, County View Family Farms, CFC Logistics and Nick's Sausage Company. The company began as a business deeply rooted in integrity and values, and today continues to operate in a way that exemplifies their Core Values of Integrity, Ethics and Stewardship.

Clemens Family Corporation is committed to the environment and communities in which they operate and are involved in giving to hundreds of organizations each year, as well as donating their time for projects in their communities. (source: Clemens Family Corporation website: clemensfamilycorp.com)

The Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation welcomes the participation of local business and corporations like the Clemens Family Corporation in supporting our work.

Corporate and non-profit membership is important to our future success and supports our work in:

- Creating a strong grassroots constituency for parks and forests
- Enhancing and expanding local recreation opportunities
- Strengthening Pennsylvania's park and forest system



With state parks or forests within reach of all major communities in Pennsylvania, there are many opportunities for corporate sponsors to get involved in PPFF. A wide range of membership levels and benefits are available.

Corporate sponsorship opportunities include:

- Annual Park and Forest Awards Program
- Great Pennsylvania Outdoor Challenge
- State Park and Forest Collector Pin (Tag) Program
- Web page sponsorship
- In-kind Services
- Annual Gift
- Corporate Membership
- Passport Program
- Matching Gifts and Volunteerism
- Volunteer Recognition Program

For more information on becoming a corporate sponsor, contact Marci Mowery, (717)236-7644, mmowery-ppff@pa.net. For a complete list of benefits and sponsorship opportunities, please visit our website: PaParksAndForests.org.

Sledding!



By
Allyson Wells,
Student Volunteer

*Left and below:
Sledding at Black
Moshannon State Park*

Have you ever wondered what you could do in a state park after the pools have closed, the leaves have changed, and the lakes have frozen? Many state parks throughout Pennsylvania provide visitors ample opportunities to enjoy the crisp, iced beauty of winter. One winter-wonderland activity has been a favorite for decades upon decades: sledding! Residents that have grown up with snow reminisce about this childhood favorite: flying down a slick hill with nothing but a thin piece of plastic, "Flexible Flyer," or maybe even a trash-can lid, separating them from the ground.

Sledding originated with indigenous tribes of North America, used mainly for transport where wheels were impracticable. Sleds, or similar vehicles known as toboggans, were able to carry heavy loads without

sinking into the snow or requiring a great deal of manual labor or technology. (Visit www.sleds.com/safety/history.cfm for more information.) The practice evolved over time into one of the most popular winter recreational activities among children and adults alike.

Don't have a sledding hill near you? Fear not! There are twenty-eight state parks that boast wonderful sledding conditions, ranging from Yellow Creek State Park, located in the Pittsburgh region, to Fort Washington State Park in the Philadelphia area. Most parks offer multiple hills open for sledding, as well as other winter sports opportunities, such as cross country skiing, ice fishing, and snow shoeing. A complete listing of all available parks can be found on the Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources website:

www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/recreation/sledding.aspx.

I remember the days of bundling, layer upon layer, only to slowly take off a layer after each hill we climbed. Growing up in the northeastern corner of Pennsylvania, nestled within the Endless Mountains, I was very fortunate to live in an area perfect for sledding! My older sister and I would race down our backyard, usually with our parents in tow. It was not only a fun activity, it brought us together as a family, creating many shared memories. That is the beauty of sledding; it encompasses everyone. On days when the roads were too slick for school, the whole community came together to enjoy the wonders provided by nature. There was always sledding at the neighbor's house, ice skating at the next house, and then back to my house for cookies and hot chocolate. It became an event our community looked forward to, a chance to bring us together to reap the benefits of a snow-blanketed day in northeastern Pennsylvania.

If Mother Nature cooperates, I encourage you to discover everything that our state parks have to offer in winter. You will find adventures and opportunities waiting to be utilized. In today's economy, affordable activities the whole family can enjoy are hard to come by, but sledding, free of charge, at your local state park is one of those hidden gems. Grab your children or friends, some sleds, mittens, and a thermos of piping hot chocolate and enjoy the picturesque beauty of a Pennsylvania winter-wonderland!

Allyson Wells is a student at Elizabethtown College who is volunteering at PPFF for the fall semester.



Budget Battle

Who knew last June that the Pennsylvania budget would become a battle of epic proportions. From the perspective of the environment and recreation, at stake were many resources that you worked hard to protect, such as the Oil and Gas Fund, the Keystone Fund and a complete operational budget for parks and forests. You spoke in favor of a sensible approach to drilling on state forest lands and in support of a severance tax on gas extraction. You made your voices heard, reminding our elected officials that public lands are for the public benefit, and a gift for all citizens.

I want to applaud you for helping us in this protracted debate to protect our public lands and to preserve our heritage for future generations. You responded time and again to our informational email alerts, making calls, writing letters, and spreading the word. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

The following are where the Department stands in relation to their 2008-2009 Fiscal year.

- Budget cuts to DCNR's general fund budget were \$21 million, or more than 20%. State Parks were cut \$9 million, with state forests cut at \$7.4 million. DCNR is required to generate an additional \$60 million in revenue for leasing state forest land for oil and gas extraction; leases will be awarded in January 2010.
- As a result of these reductions, DCNR was forced to eliminate staff, both wage and salaried, as well as shorten wage staff work season by several months. Services will be reduced, such as shortened swimming seasons at pools and beaches, early closing of campgrounds, more selective mowing and snow removal, deferred maintenance on forest roads, elimination of the program that raises and sells native seedlings to private forest landowners, elimination of gypsy moth spraying, and reduced environmental education and interpretation.
- Governor Rendell stepped in and ordered the use of Oil and Gas Funds to keep open all 117 state parks, so there will be no park closures this year. Large infrastructure projects that are needed for long term sustainability or that will generate additional revenue will move forward with funding provided by law specifically for such programs.

This has been a difficult year with some very tough decisions, but the dedicated staff at DCNR continues to work diligently to manage our natural resources for both today and future generations.

Elk Country Visitor Center— Yes, In Pennsylvania!

Elk in PA? You're kidding me, right? Elk once lived throughout Pennsylvania, but by the mid 1800s, their range had been greatly reduced, with the last elk killed in 1867. Between 1913 and 1926, the Pennsylvania Game Commission attempted to restore an elk herd by releasing 177 western elk. This herd grew slowly, but a 2000 count recorded close to 600 animals which called parts of the Pennsylvania Wilds home.



Elk in the wild are an unforgettable sight, and viewing elk has grown in popularity in the past few years. These majestic creatures outsize their deer cousins, with a mature bull weighing in between 700 and 1000 pounds. Observing elk is best done at dawn and dusk, particularly in September and October, during the mating season, or rut. Because elk are wild creatures, their behavior may be unpredictable, so never approach an elk, always view from a safe distance.

To honor the rich elk heritage in Pennsylvania, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources enlisted the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation to help with the completion of the Elk Country Visitor Center in Benezette, PA. The project was initially launched in partnership with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation for the 7,000 square foot visitor center, which includes interpretive exhibits, wildlife trails and viewing blinds. In September, RMEF conveyed its share of the largest elk watching and conservation education facility in the Eastern United States to DCNR.

Now under construction, the Elk Country Visitor Center is expected to be completed in summer 2010. Broad-based support from the Richard King Mellon Foundation, Dominion, Thorenson Foundation, as well as Safari Club International, the Eastern Chapter Foundation for North American Wild Sheep; the dedication of members and chapters of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and many individual donors have made the idea for the center a reality.

"The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation appreciates the work that the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has done to restore the elk habitat and educate the public about elk," says Marci Mowery, PPFF President. "We look forward to working with the DCNR through the Elk Country Visitor Center to reach out to new visitors, give them a wonderful outdoor experience and share the story of the conservation efforts that have restored many of the natural and wild areas in Pennsylvania."

To watch the progression of the Elk Country Visitor Center, visit the PPFF website www.PaParksAndForests.org or sign on as a fan at www.facebook.com/pages/Elk-Country-Visitor-Center/16372383777?v=wall

Contributions to the center can also be made via the PPFF website.



Elk Country Homestead

Looking for a weekend away? Is the call of the elk luring you to the Wilds? Consider staying at the Elk Mountain Homestead, located within a ball's throw of the Elk Country Visitor Center. Currently owned by DCNR but managed by the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, this 2-story, 3 bedroom remodeled furnished farmhouse includes a 20' x 20'

living room with fireplace and furniture, and a fully equipped kitchen with a stove, refrigerator, microwave and coffee maker and seating for eight people. The 3 bedrooms sleep up to 10 people; linens are provided. Located in Benezette, PA, the heart of the Pennsylvania elk range, the property is a feeding and bedding area for some of the most majestic elk.

For rates and additional information, visit www.PaParksAndForests.org or call 814-787-8530.



Carolyn McKinney at the Laurel Hill State Park CCC statue dedication.

CCC Reflections

By John Eastlake

Members of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, as well as many park and forest users, understand the enormity of what the Civilian Conservation Corps did for the people of Pennsylvania and the nation. The "CCC boys," as they were fondly called, developed a lot of Pennsylvania's State Parks. They planted trees, built roads and trails, developed park infrastructure, fought fires, and more. During my Forestry career, I was exposed to their work almost every day, but I never knew the human side of the CCC. Who were these "boys"? I found out who they were when I went to my first CCC reunion.

When I went to my first reunion, Tom Brokaw's book, *The Greatest Generation*, had not yet been written, though I quickly learned what a special group the CCC boys were. They naturally shared many stories about their camp experiences (boy do they have them)! Many didn't separate their CCC time from their military time, it all meshed together. What the CCC did for conservation was amazing, but what they did for our freedom to enjoy their CCC projects

is even more amazing. Many of them served in World War II and they will invariably tell you that what they learned in the CCC, like discipline, a "can do" attitude, and how

to work together, was invaluable to them on the front lines.

Just recently at a CCC reunion, I met Woody Williams. Woody is a Marine and a Medal of Honor recipient. He earned the medal on the same day that the famous raising of the American flag took place on Iwo Jima. One of the flag bearers was Michael Strank.

Michael was from Franklin Borough near Johnstown and was also a former CCCer. Adolph Semich, who was among the CCCers that the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation honored in 2007 with the Keystone Legacy Award, was a high school buddy of Michael Strank.

In 2007, Laurel Hill State Park dedicated a CCC statue. Carolyn McKinney was there along with a number of the CCC boys. Carolyn had written a book, *The Gentle Giant of the 26th Division*, honoring her Uncle, Alfred A. Wilson, a recipient of the Medal of Honor who was a CCC boy at Kooser State Park. These stories go on and on.

The "CCC boys," as they were fondly called, developed a lot of Pennsylvania's State Parks.

August is the month of reunions. The first Saturday in August they meet in New Castle, thanks to CCC boy Angelo Otero and his wife Kay. The second Saturday is at Leonard Harrison State Park, coordinated by George Pryslak,

Linda Beacker, Audrey Patterson and Chip Harrison. George is also a CCC boy. The third Saturday is at Promised Land State Park, made possible by a dedicated group of Park volunteers. On the third Friday is a reunion in Warren, hosted by Karen and Walter Atwood. I know I've missed some names of the people who help to keep these reunions going – you are all much appreciated!

One reunion that is sorely missed is the one held at Parker Dam State Park. It was hosted by Lou and Helen Adams (King and Queen). Lou was a former CCC member, and both he and Helen volunteered at the Parker Dam CCC museum for many years. The Museum has since been named in their honor, The Lou and Helen Adams Civilian Conservation Corps Museum. The newly created Friends of Parker Dam is looking for volunteers to staff the museum, as well as to assist in preserving the CCC heritage at the park.

So, I encourage you to go to a Pennsylvania CCC reunion, not only to hear the stories, but to offer your appreciation for the work provided for our natural world and our country. These CCC boys are incredible and we owe them so much!



CCC Reunion at Leonard Harrison State Park.

Pennsylvania State Park System is Number Ranked #1 In the Nation

The Pennsylvania State Park system joined the ranks of the Pittsburgh Steelers, Pittsburgh Penguins, and the Hershey Bears as National Champions. On October 14th, in Salt Lake City Utah, the Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks won the prestigious National Gold Medal Award presented by the American Academy of Park and Recreation Management in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association, and proudly sponsored by Musco Lighting.

The Gold Medal Award, presented every two years, is the highest honor a park system can receive. Winners are determined by a panel of parks and recreation professionals that evaluate application materials with an emphasis on excellence in long-range planning, resource management, citizen support systems, environmental stewardship, program and professional development and agency recognition. Emphasis is given to addressing the needs of those served through the collective energies of citizens, staff, and elected officials.

"The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation congratulates the Bureau of State Parks on their accomplishment," says Marci Mowery, President of the Foundation. "Their 1,600 dedicated staff work tirelessly to not only manage more than 300,000 acres of land for wildlife, water quality and recreation, but to meet the recreational needs of the citizen's through innovative programming, creative budgeting, and partnerships."

Pennsylvania has 117 state parks and three conservation areas that host more than 35 million visitors each year.

Some of DCNR's new and innovative state park programs include:

- **Get Outdoors PA**, which offers hundreds of activities annually for people to learn about outdoor recreation opportunities such as kayaking, fishing and hiking, and learn about how the public can help protect Pennsylvania's natural resources.
- **Adventure Camp**—A joint effort of the Bureau of State Parks, city parks and recreation programs, and youth organizations that exposes urban teens to experiences in nature.
- A **"green" parks initiative** to address climate change and energy consumption in parks.
- **New construction** on the system's first nature inn at Bald Eagle State Park to expand overnight accommodations and attract new visitors.
- A **dedicated volunteer and Friends Program** to assist state parks meet the demands of visitors.

"The selection of the DCNR Bureau of State Parks for the prestigious 2009 National Gold Medal Award, the "Oscar" of recreation and park agency recognition, provides independent confirmation of the high quality of the state parks system available to the citizens of the Commonwealth," says Robert Griffith, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Recreation and Parks Society. "It recognizes quality professional management; significant financial investment such as from the Keystone Fund and Growing Greener; innovative outreach through efforts like "Get Outdoors PA" and urban initiatives; and contributions made by the state parks to tourism, health and wellness, and quality recreation opportunities. We certainly need to protect these state treasures for future generations to enjoy!"

"The Gold Medal Award confirms what the more than 35 million visitors to Pennsylvania State Parks already knew," says Mowery, "which is that our system is number one. What a great treasure to hand to the next generation."

To see the eight-minute video about Pennsylvania State Parks that was part of the award application, visit www.dcnr.state.pa.us and choose the "Modern Day Legacy" icon on the homepage.



John Norbeck, Bureau of State Parks Director, holds the prestigious Gold Metal Award.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

...

Holiday Season Gift Giving

Give the Gift that

Everyone wants:

*That special feeling
of knowing that they
made a difference.*



Visit

GiftsThatGiveHope.org
to learn more.

...

Fourth Annual Pa Parks and Forests Foundation Awards Banquet

May 4, 2010
at the Country Club
of Harrisburg.

conserve enhance enjoy

Living Gifts - A Gift for Life for Pennsylvania's Parks and Forests

Are you tired of looking for a gift for the person who has everything? Want to make giving more meaningful? Eager to leave commercialism behind? Consider giving a living gift from the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation. Show someone you care about them and our environment by purchasing a gift in their name. Honor your family, friends and colleagues while preserving and enhancing our state parks and forests. It is a truly meaningful gift for today and future generations!



Black Mosbannon State Park

PPFF will send cards associated with each giving category to you, along with a tax receipt for your donation. If you are purchasing this as a holiday gift, please donate by December 15 to ensure delivery of your gifts. Visit our website (www.PaParksAndForests.org) for an order form that includes a description of all the gift categories.

**Join
PPFF
Today!**

- ☐ **Friend**.....\$20 (student/senior),
.....\$25 regular, \$35 family
- ☐ **Enthusiast**.....\$50-99
- ☐ **Supporter**.....\$100-\$249
- ☐ **Protector**.....\$250-\$499
- ☐ **Caretaker**.....\$500-\$999
- ☐ **Guardian**.....\$1000-\$2499
- ☐ **Legacy**.....\$2500+

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Email _____

☐ Employee matching gift? Enclose paper work.

Make checks payable to PPFF and mail along with this form to:
PPFF, 105 North Front St, Suite 305, Harrisburg, PA 17101



**or join
online at**

www.PaParksAndForests.org