

# PENN'S STEWARDS

## News and Views

PENNSYLVANIA PARKS AND FORESTS FOUNDATION

SUMMER 2003

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

# Who We Are

## Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF)

is an independent nonprofit organization established in 1999 for the purpose of conserving more of Pennsylvania's natural habitats and enhancing the features of our parks and forests. The Foundation provides supporters of Pennsylvania's vast array of parks and forests with a positive way of making a contribution to the conservation of the Commonwealth's publicly-owned lands and waters.

A growing number of states have begun to recognize that their parks and forests are on the threshold of both future improvements and in-

### Three primary missions:

- ~ Assist citizens to create partnerships with their local state parks or forests.

- ~ Acquire new lands and make improvements to enhance the Pennsylvania park and forest system.

- ~ Provide a tax-deductible vehicle to donate or bequeath money to Pennsylvania's state parks and forests.

creasing demands. These lands are integral to our collective heritage; therefore, we must conserve them for the enjoyment of future generations.

The Commonwealth's 116 state parks and 2.1 million acres of state forests comprise one of



PPFF President, Jack Keith, stands with new DCNR Secretary, Michael DiBerardinis and PPFF Board Chairman, Tom Norris

the largest and most diverse systems of preserved land in the country. This is a stunning resource that provides countless benefits for every Pennsylvanian, and is a great legacy to future generations. People like you are often the best supporters of state parks and forests. The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation welcomes the support of

individuals and businesses who share a commitment to conserving, protecting, and enhancing the natural, scenic, and recreational areas of this Commonwealth. If you are interested in learning more about the PPFF or being on our mailing list, please detach and mail the form on the last page of this newsletter.

"The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all people."

— *Pennsylvania Constitution, Article I, Section 27*

# From the President...



## Board of Directors

### *Chairman:*

**Tom Norris**

Former CEO of PH Glatfelter

### *Vice-Chairman:*

**Elizabeth H. Gemmil**

Tasty Baking Company Foundation

### *Secretary/Treasurer:*

**Melanie K. Popovich**

Utilities Consultant

### *Assistant Secretary/ Treasurer:*

**Robert Griffith**

Director of PA Recreation and  
Parks Society

**Linda McKenna Boxx**

Chairman of Katherine Mabis  
McKenna Foundation

**Peter S. Duncan**

Former Secretary of DER

**Hank Barnette**

Chairman emeritus of Bethlehem  
Steel

**Raphael J. Musto**

State Senator, 14th District

**Michael Nutter**

Philadelphia City Councilman

**Paul McHale**

Assistant Secretary of Defense

**William C. Forrey**

RBA Group

**Clifford L. Jones**

Former Secretary of DER

**John C. Oliver**

Former Secretary of DCNR

**Joe Conti**

State Senator, 10th District

### *Ex-Officio:*

**Michael DiBerardinis,**

Secretary of PA DCNR

It has been almost a year now since I was selected to be the President of an organization with the objective of supporting our magnificent state parks and forests. This novel concept for Pennsylvania was the brain child of numerous individuals, many of whom are members of our Board. Over half of the states have a foundation similar to ours in some form. Many work solely with the development of friends groups, while others limit their activity to the solicitation of money. Most are a part of their state agency that controls their parks and forests. The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation is a totally independent organization with missions that range from assisting with friends groups to soliciting funds for the acquisition of land or facility improvements. Only two other states have foundations similar to ours in that they realize the need to do it all. I welcome the challenge.

I have come to realize how vitally important friends groups are to our parks and forests. To that end I have attempted to tailor an organizational structure for new emerging friends groups that allow them to share in our tax-exempt status and other benefits, while providing relief from the administrative burden associated with being a friends group. This structure allows for all their energies to be focused on the real task at hand, supporting their park

or forest. The model is now refined to the point that we can accommodate any group who wishes to accept our help. My thanks to the several groups who were our test beds and endured my constant tweaking to perfect the model. DCNR Secretary Mike DiBerardinis is quite familiar with the tremendous benefit to be realized and expressed a desire to have a friends group in support of the majority of our parks and forests.

We have participated in several acquisitions in the past year. Two were small parcels that either removed unkempt properties from the middle of the park or provided for improved habitats. One was accomplished in partnership with the Natural Lands Trust, The Nature Conservancy, and the DCNR. You will find more specifics on these acquisitions later in this newsletter. We will continue to acquire land at the request of DCNR or when we can identify individuals who are willing to donate money in support of acquisition.

Our third mission, that of providing a tax-free vehicle to receive funds donated to our parks and forests, is proving to be highly successful. Currently we have 17 "restricted funds" holding money for a specific project at one of our park or forest facilities. Managers can draw on these funds at any time. Prior to the establishment of these funds, park managers placed all donations in the state general fund with little assurance that they would be made available for their intended

*continued on page 7*

# Friends Groups

Every park in our state can benefit tremendously from a good group of friends. They bring energy, enthusiasm, experience, and a vital human element. Full-time staff must focus on daily operating tasks; whereas friends groups, fueled by a passion for these special places, can concentrate on elements that give the park life.

EVERY PARK IN OUR STATE CAN  
BENEFIT TREMENDOUSLY FROM  
A GOOD GROUP OF FRIENDS.

Working with the Park Management, friends groups serve as stewards of the land, encouraging community involvement in these protected recreational areas, as well as offering new ideas and activities to foster a sense of community and pride in their region. They may restore park structures, interpret natural and cultural history within the park, or assist in upkeep of the grounds and facilities. These groups also may raise revenues in support of the parks and forests through such methods as grants, donations, organization membership fees, sales and special events.

Each individual friends group will be known as a "Chapter of the PA Parks and Forests Foundation." These chapters will elect their own Board of Directors to create goals and policies, in accordance with the bylaws of the Foundation. Chapters may not disburse funds, but may recommend disbursements based upon Chapter projects and priorities. The final decision lies with the Foundation's Board of Directors.

MK Goddard and Ridley Creek are two state parks that are reaping the benefits of friends groups. The members of these groups are actively involved in organizing events to increase awareness and participation from the community.

Friends of Goddard (FRoG) was chartered less than a year ago and currently has approximately 25 members involved in its activities. Prior to initiating this group, FroG President Becky Piccolin worked with PA Cleanways to clean up a dump adjacent to the park. She was also responsible for establishing the first successful Purple Martin nesting program in 2000, which has continued to thrive and expand each year since then. Under her leadership, the group has actively served the mission of their park by supporting environmental education and park programs for adults, as well as children.

*Continued on Page 5*

## WHY CREATE A FRIENDS GROUP?

- To promote the park or forest to visitors through publications and special events;
- To provide volunteer services;
- To lend expertise and knowledge to educational and interpretive programs;
- To assist the local park or forest in maintaining good community relations;
- To advise DCNR on other uses for a park or forest and to recommend improvements that could be made in programs, facilities, and access;
- To raise money through membership fees, donations, sales, and special events targeted for special needs in a park or forest;
- To solicit donations of land or direct financial contributions to conserve and protect the lands adjacent to state parks and forests subject to encroachment from development and other activities.

For more information on how to charter a friends group or become involved in an existing group, please see our website, [www.paparksandforests.org](http://www.paparksandforests.org)





# Land Acquisitions

The first successful acquisition for PPFF is found in the western part of the state at the Maurice K. Goddard State Park, Mercer County. A small 1.72 acre in-holding along the park boundary was sold to the DCNR through the funds raised by PPFF. The property consists of two run-down structures with an assortment of surrounding vegetation, including red maple, black cherry, and American elm trees, along with dogwoods and blackberry bushes. There are two spring seeps that begin on the property and two storm watercourses that pass through the property from the road to the lake.

The acquisition of this property was significant to the State Park for the following reasons:

- It will clear an indenture of the property line, improving maintenance activities such as sign postings and boundary marking.

- It will clean up an unsightly, abandoned homestead.
- It will safeguard this property from potential residential or commercial development that could affect park activities, such as hunting.
- It protects two spring seeps and will buffer storm water run-off from the highway.

Also recently finalized was a more sizeable parcel of land found further west in Pike County. This 250 acre acquisition is known as the Pike Ambush. It is located between the Delaware State Forest and the Blooming Grove Hunting and Fishing Club.

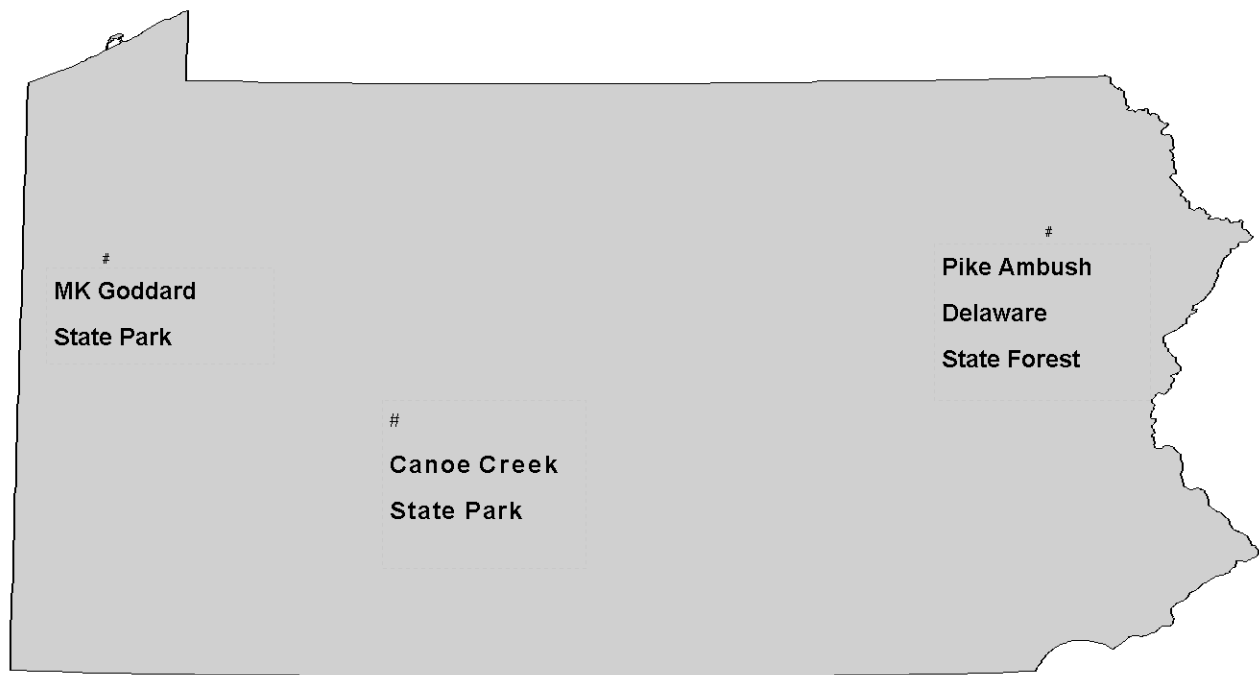
Through the assistance of monies from the Natural Lands Trust and The Nature Conservancy, as well as DCNR contributing half of the cost, PPFF was able to raise the remaining necessary funds and facilitate the sale of this property. The land was formerly used as a paintball war-game site and was ripe for developing. The Blooming

Grove Hunting and Fishing Club, comprised of members from throughout the Northeast, donated a share of the total cost to PPFF. Their generosity made this major acquisition possible and for that we are extremely grateful.

PPFF also played a role in an acquisition initiated by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, demonstrating the power of partnering with other conservation groups. A \$5,000 contribution helped with the purchase of a rather special 2.4 acres in Blair County. Adjacent to this is a small boarded-up church, which appears to have no occupants...that is, until just before dark, when over 20,000 bats depart for a night of insect hunting. This seemingly abandoned church houses the largest breeding colony of Indiana bats found anywhere in the United States. The Indiana bat has been on the endangered species list for the past three decades. This 2.4 acre parcel will be added to the Canoe Creek State Park holding and will provide an essential buffer for the sensitive bat colony.



Site of the acquisition for MK Goddard State Park.



Location of Recent Acquisitions

*Friends groups, cont'd from page 3*

FRoG has planned Park Safety Days, in addition to activities for Earth Day. They are currently planning a **Frontier Frolic** to be held June 28 - 29. **The Frolic** will present an interpretation of life in the 1790's to 1840's. During this era, settlers would often hold workdays involving the entire community, which were known as *frolics*. These workdays were also social events when the young people would meet and play games.

Many area crafters will be featured at the event, as well as speakers, demonstrations, music, and food. The event promises to be educational and lots of fun for the whole family. Admission and parking are free.

*For more information about **The Frolic**, or to find out more about becoming part of the Friends of Goddard State Park, contact :*

**Becky or Anthony Piccolin** at 724-588-1708 or email: [piccolin@advntr.com](mailto:piccolin@advntr.com) or **Park Manager, Don Campbell** at 724-253-4833 or email: [donacampbe@dcnr.state.pa.us](mailto:donacampbe@dcnr.state.pa.us)

Ridley Creek State Park, located near Philadelphia, has a well-developed friends group, also. Here the friends group, known as FoRCSP, seek to foster the educational and recreational opportunities for members of the community in effort to instill a sense of value and appreciation into the following generations. The group has established an innovative education initiative to expand the diversity and amount of programs available to the public. Through this plan, ideas will not be lost in the shuffle; rather, they will go through a systematic flow process for consideration. FoRCSP is also working to create a network of educators and experts in various disciplines associated with the

outdoors to be made available to the public on their website.

Other activities sponsored by FoRCSP include upkeep of the formal gardens surrounding the mansion, a popular spot for weddings and other social events. Also, a photo contest is currently underway with monetary prizes for winners in various categories. Entry forms and more information can be found on their website. The main project the group has currently undertaken is a deer management plan. This work is made possible by a grant to cover the expenses of fencing, sprays, etc.

The group meets the fourth Wednesday of every month and all are welcome to attend.

*For more information about Ridley Creek friends group, visit their website: [friendsofrcsp.org](http://friendsofrcsp.org) or call the park office at 610-892-3900.*

# Featured State Park ~ Cherry Springs

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is home to a rich array of natural resources. A noteworthy spot 75 miles north of State College holds a unique resource that is fast being depleted, particularly on the east coast. This precious resource is **darkness**...in its purest form. Cherry Springs State Park boasts one of the last remaining “truly dark” areas where astronomers of all ages and abilities can come appreciate the night sky. Three years ago, this park was named an official dark sky park, the first in Pennsylvania. Tom Bemus, Coordinator of the Stars-N-Parks Program for the National Public Observatory called Cherry Springs a “mecca” for aspiring astronomers all over the Northeast. The Park attracts an average of 200 stargazers many weekends during the spring and summer months. Astronomers declare the black sky of Cherry Springs to be the most favorable for amateur stargazing. Based on satellite images of

Pennsylvania, the park offers the darkest skies in the state. Cherry Springs State Park has a breathtaking 360-degree view of the sky with no light pollution. Park Manager, Chip Harrison, has instituted an outdoor lighting system with cut-off shields. Also, short shrubs and bushes have been planted along the tree-line to block the headlights from the observing field.

A NOTEWORTHY SPOT 75 MILES NORTH  
OF STATE COLLEGE HOLDS A  
UNIQUE RESOURCE THAT IS FAST BEING  
DEPLETED, PARTICULARLY ON  
THE EAST COAST.

People from all over the Northeast converge in Cherry Springs to take in the expansive black sky that many of them rarely, if ever get to experience at their homes.



*Aurora At Cherry Springs - 9/12/99  
Photo by Dave Wymer*

Located along SR 44 in Potter County, this park is named for the large stands of black cherry trees in the park. The 48-acre state park is surrounded by the 262,000-acre Susquehannock State Forest. For directions, or a schedule of stargazing activities, go to

[http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/  
stateparks/parks/cherry.htm](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/cherry.htm)

or

[http://www.madbbs.com/  
~bemusabord/cssp.html](http://www.madbbs.com/~bemusabord/cssp.html)



*Cherry Springs State Park at 2001 Black Forest Star Party*



# Invasive Species



Far Left: Garlic Mustard  
Left: Multiflora Rose  
Below: Purple Loosestrife  
Below left: Russian Olive

All parks and forests of Pennsylvania share a common feature that links them together... they all contain invasive plant species. An invasive plant is one that has become an environmental weed pest. It grows aggressively, spreads, and

flowers and can quickly reproduce by means of roots, seeds, shoots, or a combination of the three. Generally, invasive plants:

- Are not native to North America,
- Mature rapidly,
- Spread quickly by root or shoot reproduction,
- Exploit and colonize disturbed ground,
- Are capable of growing in varied conditions,
- Produce numerous seeds.

taxed park staff would greatly benefit from the volunteers provided and coordinated by friends groups. Please do your part to control these troublesome plants in order to restore the diversity and integrity of our natural areas.



*Presidents notes, cont'd from pg 2*

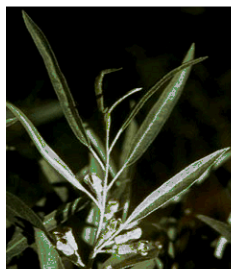
purpose. There is no doubt that this service will receive heavy use.

Before I go any further, I would be remiss if I did not publicly thank Sara Hendershot. Sara is a senior at Messiah College and has served as an intern with the Foundation for the spring semester. She single-handedly crafted this newsletter, along with performing other duties as required. I wish her success in her pursuits after graduation in the field of environmental science, which is her major.

Finally, as I craft this message the trees are beginning to bud and the temperature is forecasted to be in the 60's. The earth is waking up from the sleep of a long hard winter. I urge you to visit our parks and forests...and by all means, join a friends group!  
~Jack Keith

ALL PARKS AND FORESTS OF PENNSYLVANIA SHARE ONE COMMON CHARACTERISTIC...THEY ALL CONTAIN INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES.

displaces other native plants. Invasive plants generally occur more prevalently on disturbed ground. They are strongly undesired primarily because they are difficult to control, can avoid cultivation, and can dominate entire areas. Endangered, rare, and threatened species are particularly vulnerable due to their small populations. Some invasive species are "native," meaning they occurred in Pennsylvania before settlement by Europeans, but became aggressive after the landscape was altered. Most invasives are "exotic," "alien," "introduced," or "non-native," meaning they were brought in from other continents.



Even though these plants may be somewhat pleasing to look at, they do pose a severe threat to native wildlife. For example, Purple Loosestrife can cover a riverbank with a lovely pink color. However, it will create a monoculture which displaces the native plants that serve as food and shelter for wildlife cohabitating the area. Other significant invasive plants listed by the PA DCNR include Multiflora Rose, Russian Olive, Bush Honeysuckle, Garlic Mustard, and others.

Friends groups can play an important role in the removal of these pests by engaging in the identification and eradication of invasives, and ultimately the reintroduction of native species. Already over-



## PENNSYLVANIA PARKS AND FORESTS FOUNDATION

105 N. Front Street, Suite 305  
Harrisburg, PA 17101

*Email:*

jkeith@paparksandforests.org

*Phone:*

717-236-7644

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.PAPARKSANDFORESTS.ORG

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**Please detach form and mail to PPFF, P.O. Box 499, State College PA 16804-0499**

Dear PA Parks and Forests Foundation:

- ☐ Please add my name to the general mailing list
- ☐ Please send me information on creating a partnership or friends group. My local park or forest is: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ To help the PPFF in its mission, please accept this contribution of:

☐ \$500   ☐ \$100   ☐ \$50   ☐ \$25   ☐ \$\_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\* Checks can be made payable to the PA Parks and Forests Foundation

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_