

Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation Fact Sheet for Friends Groups—Firewood Sales

This fact sheet was compiled from information gathered from friends groups that sell firewood at their state park and includes different methods and suggestions. The process of selling firewood takes planning. Before starting, discuss the idea and mutual expectations with your park manager. Many park managers enjoy the extra income from selling firewood for special projects funded by the friends. Selling firewood can be a rewarding fundraiser for your group and the state park.

Firewood. The firewood may either be bought from a vendor or collected from the park. It is important to talk to your park manager or maintenance supervisor to confirm regulations regarding firewood. With diseases and bugs threatening many parks, bringing firewood into the park from somewhere else may not be allowed. Your park may allow you to cut down hazard trees and/or split the wood from fallen trees. One group uses a combination of firewood purchased from a vendor and some collected from the park in order to fill their needs.



Friends of Colonel Denning sell firewood during the camping season.
Photo: Judi Fasick, Friends of Colonel Denning

Tools. Several tools are required in order to start selling firewood. Tools include (but are not limited to) chainsaws, wood splitter, axes, wheel barrows, and volunteers. Some of the tools needed may be able to be provided by individuals within your group or the park. If your friends group does not have a wood splitter, check with local hardware stores that rent them. They may even have lower rental fees or free usage for non-profit organizations. If sales go well your first season, it might be in your group's best interest to buy a wood splitter.

Your group's most valuable tool will be the volunteers who keep the wood split and stocked. It's labor intensive; often volunteers need to split wood once or twice a month to keep up with demand.

Storage. A secure, well-ventilated and dry place to store and distribute the firewood is necessary. Talk to your park; in some cases the park has provided the friends

groups with a shed. Be innovative; one group used recycled building materials from a removed park structure to build a shed. Another purchased a slightly damaged shed from a hardware store. The Friends of Pine Grove Furnace report having spent \$2,000 for their storage shed in 2014.

Be sure to keep your woodshed locked when no one is attending it. Some groups have reported occasional problems with theft.

For a truly innovative means of storing and selling firewood, Shawnee State Park's concessionaire constructed and installed a firewood vending machine that accepts credit cards and dispenses the bundles via a conveyor belt. Park Manager Dorothy Krupa (See **Friends Group Resources** below) is happy to share the details and contact information.

Location. Some parks sell firewood from the campground host site; others sell it from the contact station near the campground entrance. Find a place where it is accessible and convenient for campers. Advertise the sale and location around the park. Several groups have



Shawnee State Park's firewood vending machine is convenient and attractive.

reported having success selling firewood from the campground host site. The Friends of Laurel Hill have volunteers sell firewood every Friday and Saturday night near the park's gift shop.

Price. Firewood is sold between \$3.50 and \$6 depending on the size of the bundle. Some groups bundle by wheelbarrow, some bundle by a percentage of a cord (\$5 for one hundredth of a cord), while others sell it by a 2 cubic feet size bin. It is good to bundle an evening's fire. Set the price at a whole dollar amount that does not require change, especially if using the honor system. One friends group reports that it is helpful to charge a little less at first and build a customer base, then you can increase the price later in the season or in a year or two. Bear in mind also that neighbors outside the park may be selling firewood so keep your price competitive. If your friends group is getting the firewood from the park, the profit margin is great. The only costs are for tools and tool maintenance.

The Friends of Pine Grove Furnace reported earning over \$5,000 by selling firewood and ice during the 2014 camping season.

Collecting Money. Decide who will be in charge of money collection. Some friends groups have campground hosts or a volunteer distribute the firewood and collect money, while others use the honor system. If using the honor system, it is essential to have a steel box that is locked and welded down to secure it from theft. One



A wood splitter is a necessary piece of equipment for firewood sales. Check with local rental companies to see if you can rent at a discount or if the company would provide a rental donation to the friends group. Some Friends have invested in their own splitter.

Photo: Judi Fasick, Friends of Colonel Denning

friends group reports that most campers are delighted by the convenience and the respect of an honor system.

Quantity. The quantity of firewood that a particular park will need for a camping season is dependent on



A regular group of volunteers is just as important as having the right tools to keep the firewood program going.

Photo: Judi Fasick, Friends of Colonel Denning

several variables. Consider the size of the park, the average annual number of camper visitors, the park's regulations regarding firewood, and how or if the park currently provides firewood. It is important to have a quantity of firewood split and ready to be sold at all times. It is generally easier to do most of the splitting when the weather is cooler. After one year of selling the group will have a better idea of the quantity needed to supply visitors for one season. One group estimated that in one season they had sold about 100 truck loads of firewood, while another reported selling approximately 200 cords.

Sales Tax. Firewood is not a taxable sale. However, keep in mind if a friends group is engaged in fundraisers where there is a sales tax liability, you must collect sales tax. Pennsylvania Parks & Forest Foundation is registered for a sales tax number and Chapters of PPF are covered by this number. See the fact sheet, *Collecting and Remitting Sales Tax*, or refer to financial procedures to learn more.

Friends Group Resources:

Friends of Colonel Denning—717.483.3771

Friends of Laurel Hill—724.887.5026

Friends of Pine Grove Furnace—717.763.5579

Friends of Shawnee/Shawnee State Park—814.733.4218