



FRIENDS OF

Pine Grove Furnace News

STATE PARK Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation

SUMMER 2020

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Park Leadership Changes

Our Park Manager for the past four years, Mike Kutzmonich, was recently promoted to Assistant Regional Manager in Park Region 3. Mike arrived at Pine Grove Furnace State Park in the fall of 2016, just in time to help oversee the Friends' effort to build a bridge connecting the two halves of Mountain Creek Trail. He departs just as we prepare to build a second bridge. Something we will long appreciate from Mike's tenure at Pine Grove is that every year he asked the Friends to support planting replacement trees in multiple locations across the park to make sure we will continue to have a "pine grove" in years to come.



Mountain Creek Trail bridge just after it was completed by volunteers in 2016—Mike Kutzmonich, first from left

Thank you, Mike! We have enjoyed working with you over the last four years, and we wish you and your family the very best at your new assignment and home.



On behalf of the Friends, welcome, Chris, to Pine Grove Furnace

Mike's replacement, Chris Houck, takes over as Park Manager near the end of August. Most recently, Chris was Assistant Park Manager at the French Creek State Park Complex in Bucks and Chester Counties. And just like Mike, one of Chris' first responsibilities in his new assignment will be oversight of the installation of a trail bridge by the Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park.

Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps

Staff and volunteers have been working hard to keep park hiking trails maintained. In June we were very fortunate to have the assistance of members of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps. A small but enthusiastic crew spent several weeks in Pine Grove Furnace State Park fixing a couple troublesome spots on Mountain Creek Trail, uncovering part of a historic feature on Koppenhaver Trail, pulling invasive plants, and starting a new pathway to connect the Furnace Stack with the Fuller Lake parking lot.



Members of the Outdoor Corps working on park trails

DCNR's Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps is a ten-month program for young adults ages 18-25, offering work experience, job training, and environmental educational opportunities. The Outdoor Corps works in state parks throughout Pennsylvania on projects such as habitat enhancement, tree planting, trail restoration, invasive species management, and light construction.

For more information about the program, visit dcnr.pa.gov/outdoorcorps/Pages/default.aspx

Trail Bridge Update

A permit for the new Koppenhaver-Mountain Creek Trails connector bridge was approved by the Department of Environmental Protection. Park staff are now preparing a site along Old Railroad Bed Road for installation of the 50-foot prefabricated steel bridge, hopefully in October. It will connect the two primary trails between Laurel and Fuller Lakes to create a trail system across the park.

The project is being funded by the Friends of Pine Grove Furnace with the support of two grants totaling \$70,000 from the Cumberland Area Economic Development Corporation and the Cumberland County Land Partnerships Grant Program.

LEADERSHIP

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Mary Soderberg, *Vice Chair*
Josh Burleigh, *Treasurer*
Diane Velozo, *Secretary*
Crystal Hunt
Rob Shaw
Brett Weiser
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OUR MISSION

The Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park (FOPGF) exists to keep history alive and promote educational and recreational programs at the park and surrounding areas through special events and trail development while protecting the park's natural resources.

Email us at:

pinegrovefriends@gmail.com

Visit us online at:

www.pinegrovefriends.org

Follow us on Facebook at:

[Friends-of-Pine-Grove-Furnace-State-Park](https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Pine-Grove-Furnace-State-Park)

Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park formed in August 2010 as a chapter of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Official registration may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Summer 2020

The relatively dry summer and COVID-19 have encouraged a lot of people to get outdoors and enjoy Pennsylvania's free state parks and state forests. According to Cindy Dunn, Secretary of DCNR, park attendance is way up in 2020. In May alone, attendance reports show 5.8 million visitors statewide compared to 4.2 million in May 2019. That is an increase of more than 1.6 million for just one month—a 36 percent increase. In some parks located near urban areas, visitation has doubled! Like the rest of the state, Pine Grove Furnace State Park has seen an increase: *monthly attendance is up by 30–50 percent over last year.*

The first impact of COVID-19 on our park was increased trail usage early this spring as people headed outside for exercise. Once the family campground opened on Memorial Day weekend, it has been full every weekend. In addition, there have been more weekday camping reservations as people look for different ways to spend their vacations with minimal exposure to others. Meanwhile, picnic areas and our two beaches have been especially crowded on weekdays as opposed to weekends as people adapt their summer schedules to life during a pandemic.



Fourth of July weekend at Fuller Lake

There is no question that COVID-19 has presented many unexpected consequences. For parks, it brought out a lot of first-time users seeking safe activities outside their homes. Just by looking at license plates it is clear that many are from out of state.

These new visitors keep the rangers busy educating them on basic rules such as pick up your trash, keep your dog on a leash, no alcohol, and please do not feed the bears! Unfortunately, another consequence of increased visitation has been the amount of trash generated and that, along with new cleaning protocols required for everyone's health, has increased the workload of park maintenance staff.



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To keep up with the State Park and the Friends, follow us on Facebook. The Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park Facebook page is a team effort of volunteers and park staff to provide you information about the park and the region.

—Activity Calendar 2020—

★★ **Impact of COVID-19 on Special Events** ★★

Unfortunately, we had to cancel both the Iron Run in June and Fall Furnace Fest in October. National Public Lands Day, a volunteer work day, is still on the calendar, but please check our Facebook page for more information as we get closer to September 26.

SEPTEMBER

- 26 National Public Lands Day—9 a.m. to noon: celebrate National Public Lands Day with a morning of volunteering and giving back to the Park. We plan to plant replacement trees.

With great regret, the Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park must cancel Fall Furnace Fest this year.

We hope to try again next year. The festival is held the third full weekend of October, so that will be October 16-17, 2021.

• For more information and updates, go to www.pinegrovefriends.org/home/upcoming_events. •