



FRIENDS OF

Pine Grove Furnace News

STATE PARK Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation

WINTER 2021

www.pinegrovefriends.org • 1100 Pine Grove Road, Gardners, PA 17324 • pinegrovefriends@gmail.com

Who the Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park Are!

For those of you who might not be familiar with the Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park, we are one of 46 volunteer groups that support a Pennsylvania state park or forest. Each of these 46 friends chapters is organized under the non-profit umbrella of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation which provides administrative support to all of us.

The Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park have about one hundred dues-paying members along with numerous other "friends" who volunteer in the Park. Our volunteers assist in trail maintenance, lead history tours, split firewood, and help with park events, including our trail races and Fall Furnace Fest. We raise funds through the sale of firewood at the Campground, our annual half-marathon and 5K races, the sale of park-related merchandise, and our Fall Furnace Fest.

All the money that we raise stays in the Park to support recreation, conservation, and education. Our eight-member board works closely with the Park staff to determine how best to reinvest our funds back into Pine Grove Furnace State Park.

Some of the items that we have provided funding for include the following:

- two playgrounds
- a concrete cap for the Furnace Stack to protect it from the weather
- a kayak EZ-Dock at Laurel Lake
- support for many educational and volunteer events
- a golf cart for the volunteer campground hosts
- flower baskets for the Park Office
- a new lock and key system for buildings and gates to simplify the workload of Park staff
- support to create a private guest suite at the Ironmaster's Mansion
- a trail bridge near the middle of Mountain Creek Trail



Last year, in spite of cancelling most of our activities and events, we still were able to provide funding for two key projects in the Park:

- paving the new entrance to the Family Campground
- installing a trail bridge to connect the Koppenhaver Trail with the western trailhead of Mountain Creek Trail

Both of these investments in the Park will benefit hundreds of thousands of people for years to come. The new bridge creates numerous hiking opportunities in and near the park by linking trails between the two lakes as well as allowing easier off-road connections with Pole Steeple and the Appalachian Trail. The new Campground entrance will allow easier access for larger recreational vehicles.

Membership in the Friends is only \$10 per year for an individual, or \$15 for a family membership. We have an active Facebook page, a quarterly newsletter, and a website—all managed by volunteers.

For more information or to join, visit our website at PineGroveFriends.org or follow us on Facebook at [Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park](https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfPineGroveFurnaceStatePark).

Environmental Rights Amendment Anniversary

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the Pennsylvania Environmental Rights Amendment. Pennsylvania's voters by a four-to-one margin ratified what is now Article I, Section 27 of our state constitution on May 18, 1971.

Environmental Rights Amendment—Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania State Constitution

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 the people.

The PA Parks and Forests Foundation will celebrate the Environmental Rights Amendment with its 2021 Photo Contest. Categories of photos include Clean Air, Pure Water, Natural Value, Scenic Value, Historic Value, Esthetic Value, and a separate category for Young Photographers. Use your imagination! The deadline for entries is September 30.

LEADERSHIP

Andre Weltman, *Chair*
Mary Soderberg, *Vice Chair*
Josh Burleigh, *Treasurer*
Diane Velozo, *Secretary*
Crystal Hunt
Rob Shaw
Brett Weiser
Donna Weiser

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.

2020 – Park Visitation

The state parks “closed down” in March of 2020 during the early days of the pandemic. This meant that the campgrounds were not open, public programs were cancelled, and staffing was reduced. When the Family Campground finally opened up on Memorial Day Weekend, the pent-up demand was obvious, and the Campground continued to be busy through October! Meanwhile, the rest of the Park was being used heavily for hiking, picnicking, and swimming as people looked for ways to get outdoors.

Even though the Campground was closed in the spring and most of the organized educational and recreational activities were cancelled, park visitation increased dramatically in 2020. Pine Grove Furnace had more than 379,000 visits last year, a 29 percent increase compared to 2019. According to DCNR, statewide park attendance increased from 37 million in 2019 to more than 46.9 million in 2020, a 26.6 percent increase.



A busy Fuller Lake on the Fourth of July 2020

According to a poll conducted during fall of 2020 by the Center for Survey Research at Penn State University, four out of five Pennsylvanians who visited parks and trails believe that time spent outdoors is essential to their physical and mental health during the pandemic. 75 percent of the respondents agree that funding outdoor recreation facilities—such as parks, trails, and open spaces—should be considered a top priority by state

and local governments. The poll also showed that the pandemic has encouraged new outdoor hobbies and skills. About one out of five of the respondents tried a new outdoor recreation activity. Those new activities required new gear, and one out of five bought outdoor recreation equipment, gear, or clothing.

Early indicators point to similar visitation trends for 2021. Reservations for campsites are already filling up, and hiking has continued to be popular throughout the winter months.



**FOLLOW US
ON FACEBOOK**

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 2021—

All events are tentative until further notice. Please watch for updates on our website, Facebook, the DCNR calendar, and Park kiosks.

EARTH DAY, APRIL 24: Celebrate Earth Day with a morning of volunteering and giving back to the Park from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, April 24.

WOODSY OWL CAMPING WEEKEND, MAY 15 AND 16: Bring your family for a weekend of camping and spend Saturday morning volunteering. The campground fills up early, so make your reservations soon. Sign up to volunteer via the park office.

FALL FURNACE FEST, OCTOBER 16 AND 17: A family weekend with food and craft vendors, entertainment, and historical demonstrations. Saturday night will feature the annual pumpkin parade and the legend of the Hairy Hand.

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

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS

Even with all of the uncertainty and the changing COVID-19 rules, volunteers were able to donate 1,358 hours to the Park.



Planting trees on National Public Lands Day



Splitting firewood to sell at the Campground



Volunteers and staff weeding the office garden



Volunteers preparing to work on the Koppenhaver Trail



Volunteers removing invasive barberry bushes



Campground hosts