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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONTHLY TRAIL WORK

First Saturday of each month, 9 am.

FIRST DAY HIKE

Saturday, January 1, 2022 at 10 am.
See article for details.

50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

August 2022, date to be announced.

FRIENDS OF RIDLEY CREEK STATE PARK NEWSLETTER

Editor..... Joan Nikelsky
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The Friends

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FALL/WINTER 2021

First Day Hike in Ridley Creek State Park

by Gary Sawyer, Board Member and Trails Co-Chair

Come celebrate the first day of 2022 with us at Ridley Creek State Park. The Friends of Ridley Creek are hosting a First Day Hike along the Equestrian Trail, a 3.5-mile lollipop loop with views of the creek and a stop at the historic hilltop Russel Cemetery. Join us for hot chocolate after the hike.

The hike starts at the parking lot behind Area 8, descends to the creek at Gradyville Road, passes by an area recovering from a tornado in 2019, and winds around a lovely wooded section up and over Hunting Hill and the Russel Cemetery. The trail is wide, mostly gravel, with good footing. Be prepared for early January weather conditions, and for elevation gains of about 350 ft.



Winter Creek - by Greg Rowan

DETAILS

We begin the hike promptly at 10 am, Saturday, January 1, at the parking lot by the Stables, behind Pavilion #8. Dogs are allowed on leash at all times. We have a limit of 20 participants. Please register by email to muddyboots@comcast.net to secure a spot.

Plan on 1 ½ to 2 hours to complete the hike. We will have hot chocolate, coffee, and light refreshments at the trailhead after the hike.

Gary Sawyer, the Friends Co-Chair for Trail Maintenance, will lead the hike.

Temporary Inconvenience – Long Term Improvement

by Friends President Jack Miller

We used to see signs like this during the roadwork being done on our state highways during the summer season. This year the sign was applicable to Ridley Creek State Park, as Sandy Flash Drive South from the park entrance on Gradyville Road back to the parking lot at Area 14 was repaved. As we publicized on the bulletin board in the park and on our web page and Facebook, the project was started on time and finished just a few days later than the scheduled completion.

The roadway was over 50 years old and had seen many events over the years. The annual patching of the potholes just could not keep up with the deterioration of the original roadway. The first task was to replace the culverts under Sandy Flash Drive South to improve the drainage under the roadway. Visitor traffic into the park was delayed as this project moved along, replacing culverts as the workmen traveled along the road. Drainage is now much improved and should help eliminate water blockages.

The next step in the process was to replace the old roadway. During this task, Sandy Flash Drive South was closed to park visitors during the week to allow a lot of progress in creating a new roadway in the shortest amount of time. The old road surface and all those patches were removed. The roadway was graded smooth and tons of new rock were added to form a more stable base layer.

Varying rock sizes were added to the roadway and finally a layer of fine rock chips were added to create a smooth and level surface - without potholes!

Paving of the new roadway over the prepared base was the final step and the result is what we see today. Hopefully this will last for another 50 years of pothole free service. Most of the new road surface is the standard asphalt but there are two sections that have been repaved with a special mix of beads made from a recycled plastic mix and asphalt. This is a pilot project, announced on October 13, 2021 by PennDot (Pennsylvania Department of Transportation), DCNR (Department of Conservation and Natural Resources), and DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) and is part of PennDot's Strategic Recycling Program funded by the DEP. These sections will be compared to the standard paving operations for a five-year evaluation period. The intent of this experimental process is to provide a demand for plastic waste which removes plastics from landfills. The recycled plastics will not leach into the soil. The hope is that these trials will lengthen the life of the new roadway and provide a model for future projects.

Final touch - The lines were painted on the new road surface in early November. Please enjoy your Long Term Improvement safely!



A load of rocks being delivered - by Jack Miller

Best Ways to Preserve Nature While Hiking

by guest writer Rachel Gaffney

Hiking is a fun workout that nearly everyone can do. One of the best things about hiking is that you can tailor your hikes to your physical condition so that whether you're an experienced hiker or just starting out there are trails that you can hike all over the place. But in order to keep those trails safe and in good condition so that everyone can use them, hikers need to be careful when they hike so that they're not causing damage to the natural environment as they hike. Smart hikers always do the following things to protect nature when they're hiking.

KEEP DOGS ON LEASHES

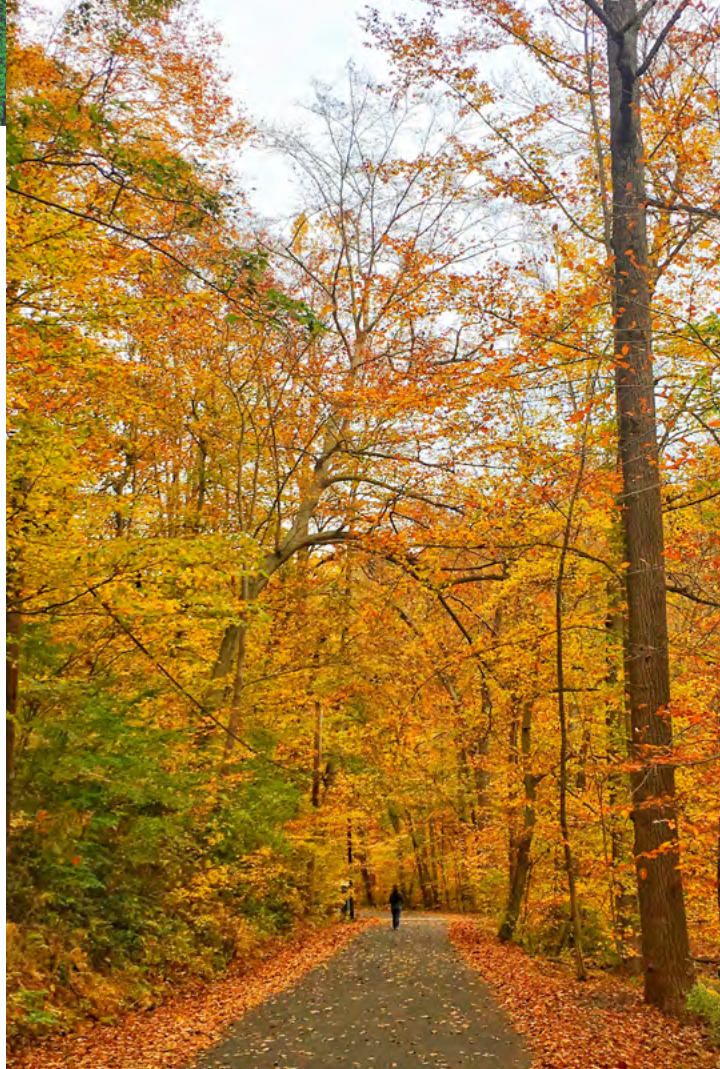
Hiking with your dog is a great way to spend quality time with your beloved pet. Dogs love hiking. However, dogs that aren't leashed can cause a lot of damage to the environment. Excited dogs that are allowed to run free often will trample plants, dig up grass and kill it, chase animals, destroy animal dens, or bark at an annoy other hikers. To make sure that the environment is safe and to protect your dog, keep your dog on a leash at all times when you bring your dog on a hike.

USE REUSABLES

Single use plastic packaging and bottles are devastating the environment and causing major environmental problems. When you're hiking you need to bring food and water with you, but you should be packing your snacks and water in environmentally friendly reusable packs and bottles. Canvas or cotton snack bags and reusable water bottles are a much better choice than single use plastic water bottles and snacks packaged in environmentally damaging plastic packaging. Invest in a good water bottle and some snack and sandwich bags that you can use over and over.

WALK SINGLE FILE ON THE TRAIL

When you're hiking you should always walk single file along the trail. Often the trail is only wide enough for one hiker to walk comfortably. That's because the trails are designed to have minimal impact on the environment. When people walk side by side on the trail, they often kill the grasses and plants that grow along the trail and eventually cause the trail to get wider. That can contribute to soil erosion which can cause major damage to the environment in that area. Walk single file and protect the natural world around you when you're hiking.



Walking Through a Box of Crayons - by Eileen Jacobs

CLEAN YOUR BOOTS

As you hike, your boots are picking up all kinds of things from the ground. Soil, seeds, bacteria, and other debris that is scattered throughout the natural world all end up on your hiking boots. So, when you hike on a new trail you're dropping all that debris in a new area. That can spread diseases among plants and trees and spread plant species from one area to another. To preserve the environment, clean off your boots after each hike so that you're not unintentionally spreading things from one area to another.

TAKE ONLY PHOTOS

Everything that you find when you're hiking should stay where it is. Don't pick flowers. Don't take plants. Don't take sticks or branches or rocks. Take photos of anything interesting that you see but leave the actual things where they are. Otherwise, you could be hurting the natural world.

Rachel Gaffney lives in Boston and works for Personal Injury Help, an organization dedicated to providing the public with information about personal injury and safety information. When she is not working, Rachel enjoys hiking and exploring new trails nearby.



French Creek State Park

This article is ninth in a series about other state parks in Pennsylvania, contributed by Friends Board member, the much-traveled Paul Mickle.

As the “Covid world” continues, we are going to maintain the same theme in this series by sticking close to home. In this edition, we are going on a 35-mile drive to the northern reaches of Chester County to visit French Creek State Park.

French Creek State Park sits on both sides of the border between Chester and Berks County. It is also part of the larger “Hopewell Big Woods” which is over 70,000 acres of natural woodlands. That is especially notable in this particular corner of the state where urban sprawl has fragmented just about all the land down to much smaller tracts.

Historically, French Creek State Park has been logged repeatedly since the 1700s, making the current forests a mixture of different hardwoods. However, American Chestnut was the overwhelming species originally. The state park itself was created in 1946 and today it hosts an impressive list of amenities.

Besides hiking in the woodlands, some of the activity offerings are two lakes, an expansive campground, a large swimming pool, several historic sites, and the Horseshoe Trail.

The campground has over 200 sites and offers a variety of camping and lodging opportunities from tenting and RVing to cabins and yurts. Running water and electrical access also help smooth the experience for those not ordinarily looking to camp.

When it comes to the lakes, there is both a warm and a cold water lake. The warm one is called Hopewell Lake and it is the largest of the two at about 68 acres. The cold one is smaller at 22 acres, Scotts Run Lake. Both lakes offer opportunities for fishing and boating, including canoeing and kayaking. Neither lake allows gas powered boats and both serve as fisheries for the fish that favor them.

FRENCH CREEK STATE PARK

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MAPS

HISTORY

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS



Photos of Park - by Paul Mickle

When it comes to this series at least, we have not come to a park that has had its own swimming pool like French Creek. The pool is open to the public during the summer months and has a great view of Hopewell Lake. It is also worth noting that swimming is only available at the pool, as neither lake is open to it.

French Creek also manages to deliver opportunities for those who like to venture out in the colder months with activities like ice fishing, hunting, sledding, and cross-country skiing.

So if you are ever passing through northern Chester County or southern Berks County and want a new park to explore or perhaps even camp in, French Creek State Park could very likely be worth a trip!

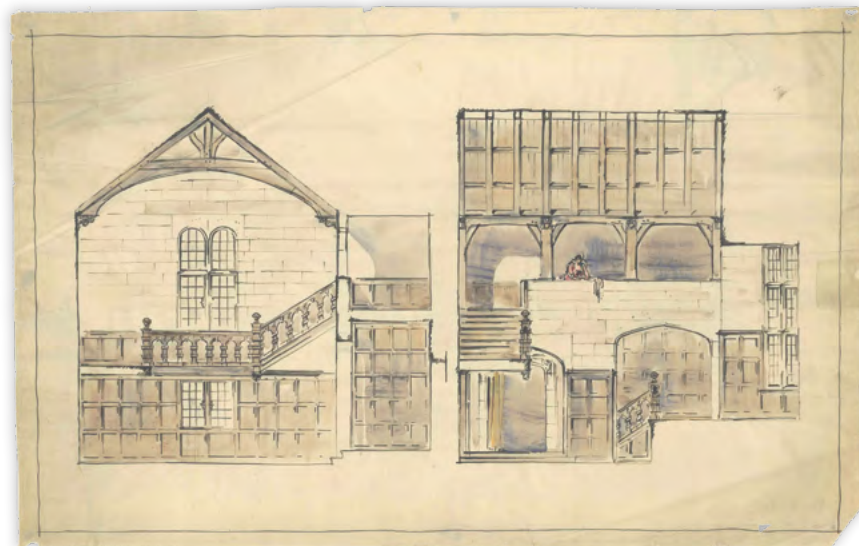
COMING....IN 2022...THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY FOR RIDLEY CREEK STATE PARK

As mentioned in the last newsletter, Ridley Creek State Park was first opened to the public in August 1972. The Friends of Ridley are planning a 50th Anniversary event to celebrate that milestone in August 2022. We are looking for stories, special events, or remembrances from the public that we could share at the celebration.

We are creating a souvenir booklet to commemorate this event that includes photos, documents, and stories collected in the last 50 years. Of course, this event will require some volunteers to help plan and host the event. If you are able to help, please contact Jack Miller, President, through the Friends website www.FriendsofRCSP.org. We'll have more details in the Spring/Summer newsletter.



Taken in of July 1972, Julia Falcone is working on the 3d map of Ridley Creek State Park. This map still hangs in the lobby of the mansion today.



Drawings by Wilson Eyre, the architect of the Hunting Hill Mansion, found in the park archives and date back to the original property.

