

Penn's Stewards

News from the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation

Fall 2024 Newsletter



The mission of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation is to inspire stewardship of Pennsylvania's state parks and forests.

Vision: To be the trusted voice and advocate to sustain and enhance Pennsylvania's state parks and forests.

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PAParksAndForests.org



Figure I.1 Pennsylvania state foresters, 1908. With Mira Lloyd Dock, Ralph Brock, and Joseph T. Rothrock in Rothrock's office, State Capitol building. (Courtesy: Franklin County Historical Society.)

Cradle of Conservation

A Preview of Dr. Allen Dieterich-Ward's New Book Release

By Dr. Allen Dieterich-Ward

As Ralph Brock rose to give his presentation on "Fertilizers for Renewing Nursery Soils," the 25-year-old forester had reasons to be proud of his accomplishments. Two years earlier, in 1906, he was part of the first graduating class from the Pennsylvania State Forest Academy, which was among the nation's earliest forestry schools. A native of West Chester, Brock's academic success had attracted the attention of Dr. Joseph Rothrock, a botanist at the University of Pennsylvania and the state's first forestry commissioner, who secured the young man's appointment as a student forester. His skills must have been evident to everyone around him, because even before graduation Brock began serving as student superintendent of the school's

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President's Message

Marci Mowery

Recently the board of directors toured several parks and forests in the Pennsylvania Wilds area of the state. These areas were heavily hit by Hurricane Debby. Little Pine State Park and Loyalsock State Forest were extensively damaged.

The localization of storms, droughts, and other weather related events sometimes makes it difficult to fully grasp the extent of the challenges changing weather patterns have on state parks and forests. Take, for example, the parks who experienced Harmful Algal Blooms due to the increased duration of high temperatures and low rainfall. Not only do these weather related incidences impact your visit, they add to the costs of managing the park and forest system.

Weather is just one of the reasons we were disappointed that the proposed \$8.5 million for trails didn't make the cut in the final iteration of the 2024-25 state budget. While supported by 81% of the voters surveyed (see the summer edition of Penn's Stewards), some decision makers hesitated due to the increased complement of staffing in the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources the funding would have created. We believe that increased staffing is necessary to ensure that not only are the trails in Pennsylvania safe, but that Pennsylvania remains competitive in the recreation market for new opportunities on trails—such as mountain biking, connecting trails to communities, and filling trail gaps.

Changing weather patterns also encourage our passion for planting trees, one of the best things (aside from reducing carbon emissions) that we can do not just for the planet, but for our children, and their children, and their children. This year we allocated over \$27,000 for tree planting in state parks and forests, and look to continue doing so with your support and the support of our partners, such as New Trail Brewing, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, the Bob Ross Happy Little 5k, and People First. If you have a company or work for a company that would like to explore tree partnerships, please reach out to me—I am always happy to talk about trees!

And while you are thinking about trees, think also about the 2025 annual awards banquet and nominations, which will be accepted until December.

To all of our state employee friends, and to those who know state employees, look for us during the State Employee Combined Appeal!



Marci, her husband Joe, pup Phoebe and their friend Tim explore another natural area.

PPFF also plans to participate in the annual Extra Give which takes place on November 22. Keep an eye on our social media for more information.

Lastly, I hope this newsletter lands in your inbox in time for Healthy Lands Week. Perhaps I will see you at an event!

Yours in the Outdoors,
Marci

Continued from page 1...

tree nursery, a position he then formally assumed after finishing his studies. In early March 1908, Rothrock's successor, Robert S. Conklin gathered the first two graduating classes along with the four other members of the State Forestry Reservation Commission for an inaugural convention of Pennsylvania foresters and it was here that Brock was about to speak.

The offices of the seven-year-old Department of Forestry were in Pennsylvania's magnificent new Beaux Arts Style state capitol building. When Brock and his fellow foresters arrived that morning, they would have walked up the steps on which President Theodore Roosevelt, himself a well-known conservation advocate, had given a speech dedicating a building he described as the "the handsomest state capitol I have ever seen." "Pennsylvania's soil is historic," Roosevelt declared in an address that praised the commonwealth's role in the Seven Year's War, American Revolution, and Civil War, before turning to a fiery Progressive-era denunciation of corporate greed, political graft, and a narrow interpretation of federal power. The massive bronze doors of the capitol's western entrance would have had special significance to Brock and his contemporaries with their depiction not only of William Penn, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution but also of the mining and agriculture that along with forests defined the state's environmental history. As they entered the building and walked toward their meeting room, Moravian tiles on the rotunda and hallway floors evoked natural and industrial history with colorful depictions of foxes, turkeys, cows, and bears along with a spinning wheel, beer mug, and Conestoga Wagon.



Figure 1.3 The landing of Penn at Dock Creek, Philadelphia, ca. 1830. (Credit: Gift of Mr. And Mrs. Meyer P. Potamkin, The State Museum of Pennsylvania.)



Figure 5.3 New Jersey Zinc Company, Palmerton Plant, Carbon County, Pennsylvania. Placed on the Superfund program's National Priorities List in 1983. (Courtesy: Library of Congress, Historic American Engineering Record.)

It is fitting, then, that the story of Pennsylvania as the figurative "cradle of conservation" begins here with Ralph Brock and his very real nursery at the dawn of the conservation era. No one recorded their impressions of Brock's presentation or the subsequent discussion on what were rather mundane and technical matters related to seedling propagation. The circumstances and location of his talk, however, allow us to begin exploring a few key ideas that will shape the rest of my new book, *Cradle of Conservation*. While most of the people in the room were White men, Brock was Black; indeed, he was the first African American formally trained as a forester. Also present was Mira Lloyd Dock, the first woman in the world to serve on a forestry commission and the first in Pennsylvania to hold a statewide office. The prominent position of these two figures at such an important moment highlights the fascinating, complex, and often untold stories of the state's environmental history.

Though I did start by talking about forestry, by now it should be clear that environmental history is not just about trees. The term "nature" is often used as shorthand to refer to those elements of the world distinct from human "culture," but, of course, the two are always inextricably linked. After all, paving over a forest to create a freeway does not remove natural processes from the equation, but merely changes them into different forms, with black bears and wolves giving way to automobiles as apex predators, for example.

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Figure 4.2 Aerial view of Levittown, 1952. (Courtesy: Temple University Libraries, Special Collections Research Center, McDowell Evening Bulletin Collection.)

I use the concept of “working landscapes” to emphasize the ways in which the natural world and human culture combine within integrated environments. There are all sorts of working landscapes throughout Pennsylvania’s history – barns, cornfields, and horse-drawn implements in eighteenth century Lancaster County; immense forests, smoke from charcoal fires, and the clank of iron furnaces in nineteenth century Pittsburgh; and diesel fumes, honking horns, and truck stops on the twentieth century Turnpike. As societal needs and cultural values evolved over time, so too did the ways in which human activities manifested as changes in the physical environment. Each succeeding generation was not presented with a blank slate of unblemished green space, but instead found their activities often constrained by their ancestors’ use (and abuse) of the environment.

The working landscapes of the Mid-Atlantic underscore just how porous the boundaries are between nature and culture. Native Americans have occupied this area for at least ten thousand years and began integrating agriculture into their hunting and gathering lifestyle more than a thousand years ago. When Europeans began arriving on the coast, they described the forested woodlands as park-like, which they often interpreted as acts of God rather than recognizing the role of indigenous people in using fire to clear the undergrowth and provide nutrients for their crops. European diseases decimated Native Americans even as Eurasian animals from honeybees to horses, pigs, and cows reordered existing ecosystems. European settler colonialism

brought eastern North America into a trans-Atlantic marketplace that increasingly drove environmental change. Port cities of New York, Wilmington, and Philadelphia developed agricultural hinterlands that used human-, oxen-, and horse-power to translate water, soil, and sunlight into calories that powered an empire and then, following the American Revolution, an imperial republic. The combination of fertile soils with a climate too cool for growing tobacco (in large quantities) and cotton attracted large numbers of poor Europeans whose descendants valorized free labor as they grudgingly emancipated enslaved people of African descent. The region served as the nation’s population center, breadbasket, and workshop as transportation improvements from turnpikes to canals and finally railroads prompted fires of industrialization fed by untold acres of trees and tons of coal.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the degradation of industrial and urban environments increasingly concerned many residents. The national movement to conserve natural resources first gained traction among some of the wealthy civic leaders of Philadelphia and New York City whose families had made their fortunes from extraction: hence, the term “cradle of conservation.” Indeed, the Hudson River School of landscape painting that helped shape a more positive view of non-human nature and thus provided the cultural underpinnings for conservationism arguably originated along the banks of the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia where artist Thomas Cole began his professional career in the early 1820s. However, Philadelphia elites did not develop the same dominance over state politics enjoyed by New Yorkers, who moved in 1885 to assert control over a vast swath of the Catskill and Adirondack mountains to protect their water supply. Instead, Pennsylvania remained more balanced in terms of rural and urban interests, so conservationists here had to build a more diverse political consensus around a system of statewide forest reserves established in 1893.

Pennsylvania differed from New York and the rest of the Mid-Atlantic in one other crucial way – its wealth of carbon resources. Coal, oil, and natural gas transformed the state’s working landscapes, setting the stage for an industrial revolution in the late nineteenth century and a legacy of abandoned

wells with which we are still dealing. The vertical integration of industrial corporations made cities such as Pittsburgh, Johnstown, and Bethlehem symbols of both economic might and, by the mid-twentieth century, cautionary tales of how the fouling of air, water, and land could transform working landscapes from sources of wealth into zones of sacrifice. Like the burning of Cleveland's Cuyahoga River and Santa Barbara's oil spill, the infamous Donora Smog in 1948 endures as a symbol of hubris that led eventually to the rise of the environmental movement and, for Pennsylvanians, the 1971 constitutional amendment that ensures every resident that "right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment."

As Pennsylvanians continue to grapple with the regulatory balance between natural resource consumption and conservation, the crisis of climate change adds urgency to viewing history through an environmental lens. Even as many residents proved willing to embrace an ethic linking their own health and well-being to the rest of the natural world, since the 1970s an anti-environmental movement that questions additional regulation has gained momentum in the wake of deindustrialization. This has proven especially contentious in tandem with demands for "environmental justice" – an acknowledgement that discrimination based on race, class and other social characteristics has always shaped access to environmental amenities. The scientific consensus about the need to decrease the burning of fossil fuels has done little to dampen a new energy boom in the natural gas fields of the state's north and west. Unlike in New York, which effectively banned the high-volume hydraulic fracturing technology necessary to extract shale gas beginning in 2015, the relative power of the state's energy-producing regions forced a more limited approach to environmental politics. In the end, however, it is this very ambivalence toward environmental protection, particularly when it seems to conflict with economic opportunity, that makes an ideal case study for my new book, *Cradle of Conservation: An Environmental History of Pennsylvania*.

Pennsylvania Conservation Heritage Project

The Pennsylvania Conservation Heritage Project began in 2009 as a means to recognize the work of Dr. Maurice Goddard, considered to be the father of the Pennsylvania state park system. Since then it has grown to include oral histories; videos; educational materials; stories about the people, places and events that shaped conservation in Pennsylvania; and most recently, the release of the book, *Cradle of Conservation*.

To learn more about the project, to read about inspiring people who have made and continue to make a difference in Pennsylvania, and to suggest new stories, visit the website at PaConservationHeritage.org or scan the QR code associated with this piece.



You can purchase a copy of the book from the Foundations website, PaParksAndForests.org or follow this QR code. The book will be featured as the November virtual book discussion.



Memorial or Honorary Gifts

You can honor the memory of a special person or joyous occasion while supporting PPF's work in conservation, recreation, education, and volunteerism in our state parks and forests.

Download a form at www.PAParksAndForests.org/support/ways-to-give

Fall Foliage Facts

By Ryan Reed, Bureau of Forestry

Without exception, early interviewers ask me to predict our prospects for a good fall foliage season. Such predictions are both art and science, with heavy emphasis on the latter. A good season depends on a few overarching weather factors, namely, the amount of rainfall throughout the growing season as well as the late summer/early fall temperatures. Timely and adequate rainfall (not too much or too little) throughout the growing season ensures vigorous leaf growth without encouraging formation of leaf fungus, which can mute the season's color. Too little rainfall can stimulate early leaf drop, which obviously doesn't help. An early fall heat wave can delay the timing of the season or shorten it by weeks, and conversely, a cold snap can stimulate a sudden change to vibrant fall colors.

Fall foliage can also be influenced by a few "X-factors". These are factors that occur rarely in a given locale, like major storms and insect or fungal outbreaks. These instances typically do not bode well for the vibrancy and length of the fall foliage season.

Fall color is also dependent on species or forest type, as well as microclimate. Northern hardwoods like maples, cherries, birches, and aspens typically change color earlier in the season compared to their more southern counterparts like oaks and hickories. Trees and forests on north-facing slopes and/or mountaintops also tend to change earlier in the fall. We are blessed with great diversity in tree species and elevation, which only adds to the richness of our fall foliage season.

Fall foliage season is a great time to celebrate Pennsylvania's forests amidst the collage of canopy color and sprinkles of leaf confetti on the forest floor. We encourage you to take the time to appreciate forests in their autumn splendor while acknowledging all the other values they provide.



Anthracoze fungus on maple.



Sugar maple, Rothrock State Forest, 2018.

Stay tuned for the DCNR Bureau of Forestry's first fall foliage report, which is scheduled to air on Thursday, September 26, 2024, here: <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/ForestsAndTrees/FallFoliageReports/Pages/default.aspx>



Penn's View Vista, Bald Eagle State Forest District, 2022.

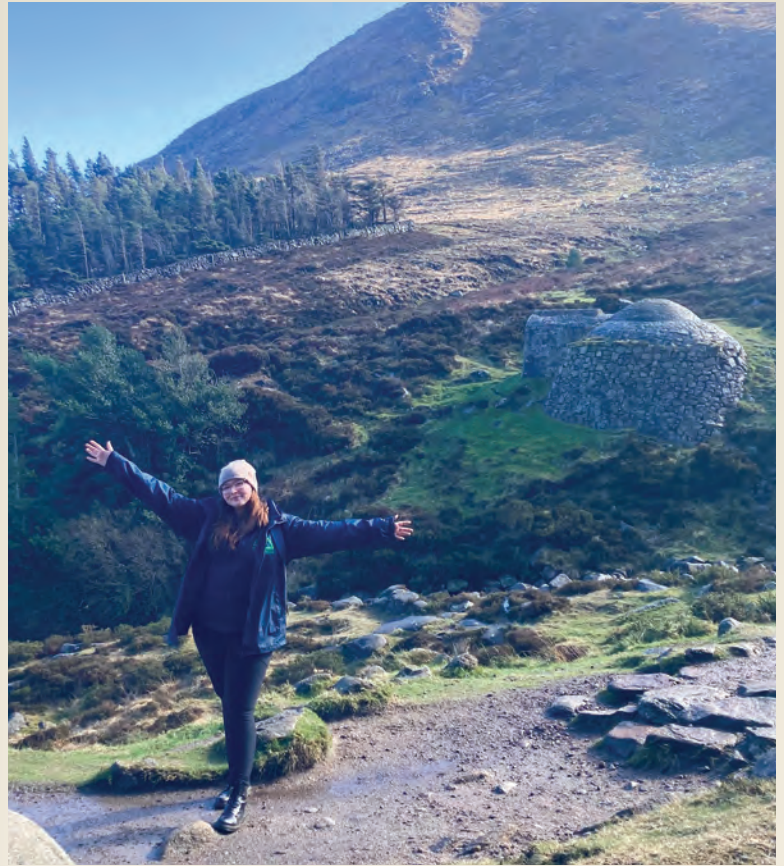
The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF), and the PA Wilds Center are working together to install fixed-mount, binocular-style viewing glasses at strategic, scenic state park spots, typically overlooking a vista or other special natural feature. These viewfinders have special lenses that allow visitors who are color blind to see what the rest of us see as they look through the device. The viewfinders were purchased through a partnership program, the PA Wilds Round Up for Conservation. This effort asks people to round up to the nearest dollar when they purchase items through PA Wilds visitor centers or their online marketplace.

Lenses were placed at the following locations:

- Bald Eagle State Park, Centre County
- Black Moshannon State Park, Centre County
- Colton Point State Park, Tioga County
- Cook Forest State Park, Clarion County
- Hyner View State Park, Clinton County
- Kettle Creek State Park, Clinton County
- Little Pine State Park, Lycoming County
- Leonard Harrison State Park, Tioga County
- Sinnemahoning State Park, Cameron and Potter counties
- Tiadaghton State Forest, Lycoming County



Photo Credit: Marci Mowery
PPF board member Dr. Grace peers through the color correcting viewfinders at Leonard Harrison State Park.



Welcome Kathryn Giblin

We're excited to introduce Kathryn Giblin as our first Volunteer Coordinator. She brings over 10 years of experience working with volunteers into her new position. With a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and Sociology degree (double major) from the University of Pittsburgh, recently returning from earning her Master of Arts in Anthropology degree from Queen's University in Belfast, Ireland, and working abroad, her experiences range vastly, including working with charity gardens, guide dog organizations, children's zoos, digital skills support, and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

"This position offers the chance to work closely with passionate individuals and local communities, fostering stronger connections to our parks and forests," states Kathryn. I am excited to learn more about the people who contribute to the running and upkeep of our parks and forests as well as new conservation strategies."

This newly created role marks a significant milestone in PPFF's history, reflecting our ongoing commitment to fostering stewardship and enhancing the volunteer experience on PA's state parks and forests.

Understanding Donor-Advised Funds: The Basics

What is a donor-advised fund (DAF)?

A donor-advised fund (DAF) is a philanthropic financial vehicle in which donors contribute money to an investment fund managed by a sponsoring organization. Donors can contribute cash and a wide range of non-cash assets, including stocks, shares of mutual funds, publicly traded securities, private assets, and crypto.

Donors can then recommend grants be made to charities of their choice using money from the fund.

How do DAFs work?

To open a donor-advised fund, a donor typically must contribute between \$5,000 and \$25,000. The DAF's sponsoring organization then actively manages and invests the funds, providing tax-free growth.

The donor also receives an immediate tax deduction upon contributing to the fund. Later, when the donor decides to donate using the fund, they'll recommend a charity to the sponsoring organization, which will then disburse the gift as a grant.

There are no limits to the contributions and grants that donors can make, and they can even set up recurring grants to their favorite nonprofits—Fidelity Charitable found that nearly 80% of DAF grants are not a donor's first gift to a nonprofit.

What are the types of DAF sponsoring organizations?

There are three primary types of DAF sponsoring organizations:

- **Community foundations** — independent charitable foundations created for the benefit of residents of a specific area
- **National DAFs** — charitable arms of financial services providers, like Fidelity or Schwab
- **Single-issue organizations** — institutions that create DAF programs to support a specific identity, faith, or cause

Community foundations and single-issue organizations have offered and managed DAFs for many years. National DAFs are relative newcomers that have contributed to the explosive rise of this type of giving.

Why do donors use DAFs?

DAFs provide donors with a flexible way to give to causes they care about and a tax-savvy method for setting aside money specifically for that purpose.

Donor-advised funds have significantly increased in popularity with donors in recent years, consistently setting record highs in the total value of contributions, the value of grants made, and the number of individual DAF accounts. More donors are turning to DAFs each year as a smart way to manage their giving habits.

If you have a donor advised fund, consider a gift to the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation. If you are interested in starting a donor advised fund, talk to your accountant or financial planner.

Donor-advised funds (DAFs)

A Tool for Supporting the Work of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation

Source: Adapted from Freewill.com

Donor-advised funds (DAFs) have quickly become one of the most active charitable giving vehicles in philanthropy.

They've grown significantly in recent years, consistently hitting record highs across all metrics—in 2022, those records were \$85.53 billion in donor contributions and \$52.16 billion in grants to nonprofits ([Nonprofit Philanthropic Trust's 2023 DAF Report](#)).

To put this explosive growth into context—grants from DAFs back in 2012 totaled \$8.52 billion, **meaning payouts to nonprofits have more than sextupled in a decade**. This is truly unprecedented growth in the philanthropy landscape.

Training Conservation Leaders Through the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps

By Jessica Aiello

Youth conservation corps across the United States, such as the National Parks Service Corps and the Federal Climate Corps, are helping to train the next generation of conservation professionals for a host of “green” and outdoor-focused careers. The [Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps](#) is another such group closer to home. The Corps was formed in 2016 by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to provide up to nine months of paid work experience, skills training, professional development, and environmental educational opportunities to youths and young adults aged 15 to 25. Through the program, Corps members complete recreation and conservation projects on public lands across the commonwealth.

“The Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps can be a great way for youth to learn about conservation careers and start building their professional network,” said Mike Piaskowski, Manager of the PA Outdoor Corps for DCNR. “Through participation in the Corps, members organically meet and interact with conservation professionals, which facilitates knowledge transfer to the next generation of leaders.”

In 2024, the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF), with funding from the Richard King Mellon Foundation, worked with DCNR to develop a three- to five-year strategic plan that outlines objectives to enhance the overall program, participant experiences, program sustainability, conservation partnerships, and marketing and outreach. These objectives were developed through one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and steering committee meetings.



“This strategic plan is a continuation of an overall program assessment that has been going on for the past few years,” said Marci Mowery, President of PPFF. “People across the commonwealth recognize the significant role the PA Outdoor Corps plays in developing a youth conservation workforce, but at the same time, people recognize that there are opportunities for growth and improvements. The strategic plan outlines key goals and objectives to help make the Outdoor Corps Pennsylvania’s premier youth conservation workforce training program.”

One goal outlined in the strategic plan is to “increase the diversity and inclusion of the program.” The plan recommends developing work crews within city parks and having crews focused specifically on English as a Second Language or LGBTQ individuals to reduce unconscious barriers to participation.



Another item addressed in the strategic plan is securing consistent funding for the program. In his 2024-25 budget, Governor Shapiro included \$5 million to support the PA Outdoor Corps’ efforts to diversify and strengthen conservation careers for Pennsylvania’s youths over the next five years. That increased funding, which was awarded, in part due to your support of the funding, will help hire additional staff, increase outreach and partnership development, increase the number of individuals who can participate in a crew, and help pay for certifications and training.

“Our youth are our most valuable natural resource,” added Piaskowski. “Investing in their success is the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps’ highest priority.”

To learn more about the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps and how to get involved, please visit <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/outdoorcorps/Pages/default.aspx>.

BY THE NUMBERS

The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation and friends chapters across the state steward YOUR parks and forests through volunteerism, education, and projects. In 2023, we collectively hosted:



282

service projects

185

SPECIAL EVENTS
AND OUTREACH
PROGRAMS

held reaching over
54,434 participants



3,220

volunteers who provided 37,700
volunteer hours of service

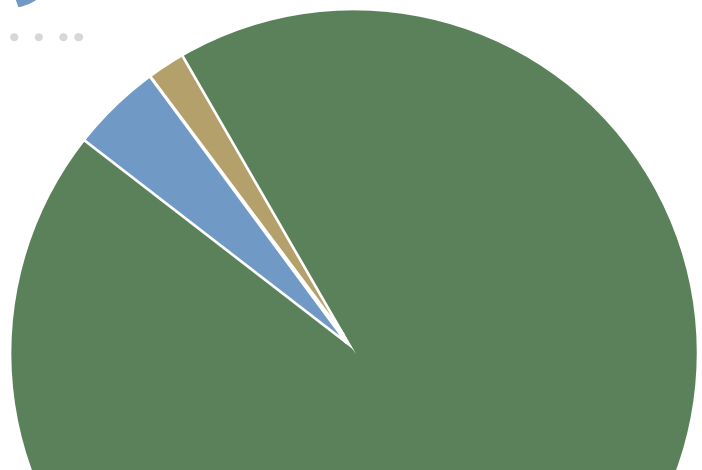
The value of this volunteerism is worth more than

\$1,180,010

EXPENSES

The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation focuses on program, which is reflected in the annual allocation of expenditures.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT FUNDRAISING



A YEAR IN REVIEW

The theme for 2023 was reflections, which afforded an opportunity to not only look at conservation history, but to dive deeper into the various meanings of the word. It provided a venue for exploring a place, such as the Lehigh Gorge, through a richer lens of history, recreation and conservation (see Fall 2023 newsletter)

In this realm, one of the larger projects of the year was the restoration of the boardwalk at Petroleum Center at Oil Creek State Park. This is part one of a multi-phase project to interpret the history of the early oil industry in the Commonwealth. (pull image from fall 2023 you made it happen)

Reflecting might also lead one to look forward—how does one ensure a positive experience in the outdoors for future generations? In this realm, you made possible habitat restoration projects at Michaux State Forest and Bald Eagle State Forest, to support not only game species like grouse and turkey, but those other species that reside in the same habitat.



Continued investment in the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps program—both through support of Corps members as well as an assessment of the program—is another way to pay it forward. Two projects that the Corps completed—shingling restrooms with steel shingles at Ohiopyle State Park and creating a state-of-the-art firewood shelters on the Laurel Highland Hiking Trail—provide long-term dividends for park and forest users



A collective celebration of a hiker-biker campground at Ohiopyle State Park brought smiles to the faces of many when they realized their access to camping—and to town—just got a little bit easier.

Lastly, your advocacy efforts paid off when DCNR was awarded \$112 million for maintenance and infrastructure improvements.

Thank you to all that you make possible through your generosity, your advocacy, and your commitment to the stewardship of Pennsylvania's state parks and forests.

Things that YOU made possible through PPF and friends groups:

6614 Trees Planted

7600 Students Reached through 335 programs supported through EITC donations

518 Miles of Trails Built or Maintained

134 Trails Maintained

133 Bluebird Boxes Built or Maintained

35 Amphitheaters or Other Educational Facilities Built or Maintained

30 Fire Rings Placed

29 Gardens Planted or Maintained

27 Grills Placed

26 Benches Placed

24 Trail Bridges Built or Maintained

22 Blogs Written and Posted

18 Roadside Cleanups

15 Volunteer Training Programs Held

15 Influencers Hosted

14 Spanish Language Radio Shows Held

12 Paint by Numbers Created

12 Buildings or Other Structures Maintained

8 Playgrounds Maintained

4 Playgrounds Built or Updated

4 Conservation Books Discussed

3 Interns

2 ADA Canoe and Kayak Launches Launched

2 habitat restoration projects

1 hiker/biker campground opened

1 ADA Fishing Pier

1 ranger e-bike purchased

1 Public Webinar Held

Equipment purchases-DR mower for trails, etc

Educational Supplies Purchased-Enviroscape, water quality test kits, etc

Pa Outdoor Corps Crews Support

Untold number reached through sponsorship of Wings Over Water

25 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

The work of the Foundation and the Friends Groups could not exist without YOU, members, donors, grant makers, and volunteers. Here is a brief timeline of some highlights of the past 25 years. To take a deeper dive, find our annual reports at link or QR code.

The Friends of Pennsylvania State Parks and Forests forms. (The name is changed to the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation in 2001)

1999

Kick start to the work enhancing habitat with a multi-park project to enhance fish habitat

First Friends Group formed—Cherry Springs Dark Sky Fund to protect 'the darkest skies east of the Mississippi).

2007

2009

Conservation Heritage Project launched—capturing the history of conservation through oral histories, documentaries, and storytelling. PaConservationHeritage.org

The Pennsylvania State Parks and State Forest Passport released, launching a movement to 'see them all'.

2011

2013

EITC—PPFF is added as an Education Improvement Organization, launching a multi-year partnership with DCNR to reach more students with programming. Since that time, more than 40,000 students have benefitted from programming.

First ADA Canoe and Kayak Launch—this also expanded the work to remove barriers to engaging in the outdoors with our goal to "ensure a place and an experience for everyone"

2014

2016

House Bill 2013 introduced in the state house—a bill which proposed to develop state parks to include office complexes, hotels, and more. You made your voice heard, shutting down the bill as it moved to the floor for a final vote.

Infrastructure Report completed, launching a multi-year campaign to highlight the need to invest in state parks and forests. ProtectOurParksAndForests.org

2018

2020

COVID visits to state parks and forests increased visitation to these places by more than 26%. PPFF and friends pivoted, helping new people to understand conservation ethics on these lands, helping with safety protocols, and providing safe opportunities in the outdoors.

State parks and forests receive \$75 million in American Rescue Plan Funding, while the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation receives \$25 million for community grants. You made it happen with your calls and letters.

2022

2023

State parks and forests again receive much needed funding through the budget, with \$112 million allocated to park and forests projects, helping to offset the \$1.5 billion needed for repairs and upgrades.

45 Friends groups with one in the making. Cumulatively, since reporting started in 2007, more than 680,000 PPFF and Friends volunteer hours have been reported and more than 2000 service projects completed.

2024

Partnerships

Beers for Parks

Ohiopyle State Park was the latest in the State Park Beer Series from New Trail Brewing. The beer will support the finishing touches on the new pavilion at the park. See related story.



Inaugural Women in the Big Woods

Fifty women took to French Creek State Park in the inaugural Women in the Big Woods event. A cooperative venture between the staff at French Creek State Park and the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, Women in the Big Woods introduced participants to a variety of outdoor pursuits through workshops lead by local experts who volunteered their time. Activities included, but were not limited to fishing, mindful outdoors, hiking, map and compass, geocaching, mountain biking, and more.

We would like to thank all of the partners and volunteers who made the event possible and the amazing women who joined the event.

People First

So say the members of People First Federal Credit Union (based in Allentown). This summer, the first of what the credit union and we hope will be regular donations toward the planting of native trees and other plants came to PPF in thanks to those members who opted in to online statements. The cost and paper savings resulting from that eco-decision prompted the credit union to put their money where the plants are! We are looking forward to inviting credit union members out for a tree-planting day.



Albright Radio

Ensuring a place and an experience for everyone is a motto of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation. We do this through education, outreach, project investment, and training. One such outreach effort is the continued partnership with Albright Radio, WXAC from Albright College, where volunteers and staff of both the Foundation, Radio and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, host a monthly Spanish Language program. It airs on the third Friday of the month at 11:00 am.

Leave No Trace

Enjoyment of the outdoors improves when following Leave No Trace principles. These guiding ideas help visitors better plan ahead, understand safety, and create meaningful relationships with state parks and forests. Recently, your support and a grant from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources produced one long and seven short videos in Spanish on these principles. Each principle was interpreted by a guest. A shout out to Leave No Trace for their support of this project and a shout out to all of the guest outdoor enthusiasts who made the video possible. The videos can be found on the Foundation's YouTube channel.



PA Healthy Lands Week Encourages Volunteerism in the Great Outdoors

By Jessica Aiello, PA Parks & Forests Foundation

Studies on the impacts of volunteerism show that people who give their time to worthwhile causes reap many benefits, including reduced stress hormone levels, a healthier weight, and more resilient mental health. One reason is that when people share an interest in the same cause, they build social connections that help to lower levels of anxiety and depression. Pennsylvania Healthy Lands Week provides an opportunity for people in our region and across the commonwealth to improve their part of the world while also improving their health.

What is PA Healthy Lands Week?

PA Healthy Lands Week launched in 2022 with 24 events across Pennsylvania. Originally conceived as a time to focus on volunteerism to grow the number of stewards of Pennsylvania's cultural and natural assets, the week has expanded in recent years to include educational and recreational programming too. The [2024 Healthy Lands Week](#), which runs from *National Public Lands Day* on September 28 to *A Walk in Penn's Woods Day* on October 6, features opportunities for education, appreciation, and conservation across the state, including volunteerism.

"The physical, mental, and emotional health benefits of being outdoors and donating your time in service cannot be understated," said Marci Mowery, President of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation. "Plenty of research shows that outdoor physical activity helps control your heart rate, decrease blood pressure, and lower stress. That is one reason Healthy Lands Week was created. This week provides a platform through which parks and recreation departments, forestry professionals, cultural asset managers, and other greenspace and points-of-interest managers can organize events and volunteer opportunities to benefit the spaces that make Pennsylvania a wonderful place in which to live, work, and play."



How to Participate in PA Healthy Lands Week

"I think it's important we all chip in to make parks and rec bigger and better across the state," said Jason Lang, CPRE, Director of Parks and Recreation for East Goshen Township. "Personally, I think there are a ton of really cool and creative people that volunteer, and I like interacting and being a part of that experience."

So, how can you become a better steward during PA Healthy Lands Week, helping to improve Pennsylvania's parks, recreation, museum, and forest lands?

If you are an entity with an event to promote, list your event on the PaHealthyLands.org website. If you are looking to join or participate in activity, visit the website to review the options that are available!

Last year's activities included tree plantings, trash clean-ups, educational festivals, bike rides, hikes, and more. New events will be added to the site as organizations register them, so check back regularly to find new opportunities to get involved.



Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation Board Retreat

The Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation recently visited the Pennsylvania Wilds to learn about projects underway in the region. The first stop was Leonard Harrison State Park to take in the new color correcting viewfinders and to learn about the upgrades to the visitor center and parking area from Park Manager Ben Stone.

Ben, also shared with us the current upgrades underway at Cherry Springs State Park which will reduce user conflict, expand access, and control light pollution. Next stop, Denton Hill, where we met with Ben and Denton Go representative Scott to learn about their plans for this park, which is back online and receiving visitors.

We then met with Regional Forester Chris Nicholas to learn about the ATV Pilot Project—where it is, where it is going, and what they have learned. We also toured part of the pilot project and visited the tri-divide, the divide between three watersheds—the Genesee, the Susquehanna, and the Allegheny!

The second day of the retreat was an engaged board meeting where ideas were explored for improving our services, celebrating volunteers, and building advocacy for trail and infrastructure investments.



Photo Credit: Cleo Fogal

Bring Your Voice

Thank You!

As you know, Governor Shapiro signed the budget for fiscal year 2024-25, which included about \$614 million for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. This is essentially what is known as a ‘cost-to-carry’ from last year.

Below are some highlights of the budget, as shared by Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn:

- *\$5 million and five new complement positions to expand the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps. This program has helped over 1,100 young Pennsylvanians—our future conservation leaders—develop skills by completing critical projects in state parks and forests.*
- *The budget establishes an annual transfer of \$50 million to the Clean Streams Fund, \$500,000 of which will go into the Keystone Tree Fund to plant trees along streams and in communities.*
- *The budget increases the spongy-moth spraying program by \$1.5 million to help us protect our forests from this damaging pest.*
- *We’re excited about the strong budget support for DCED’s economic development work and Governor Shapiro’s economic development strategy, which includes outdoor recreation as a key component.*

Thank you to all of you who weighed in with your support of the budget, the funding for the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps through the reemployment fund and for trail funding. While we were unsuccessful on the latter, PPF is working to build a strategy for the next budget. If you are a group or individual who benefits from trails and would like to be a part of a trail funding conversation, please reach out to Marci Mowery.

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Friends in Action

Friends of Ole Bull

The annual youth fishing derby is held the first Saturday of June each year with between 110 and 120 young fisherfolk each year. Each one receives a T-shirt, a goodie bag from the Bureau of Forestry, lunch and a prize. Donations to the Friends cover the costs.



Friends of Trough Creek & Warriors Path

The Friends' monthly volunteer day alternates between their two parks. In August, Trough Creek and its historic cemetery (and the trail leading to it) received some much needed care. Signage was installed, too.



Friends of Yellow Creek

The YC Monthly mountain bike races have been going on through spring and summer for several years now. Friends volunteers keep the trails open and rideable. Spring was wet; riders were muddy. But they like it like that!



Friends of Pinchot

One of the most valuable assets a Friends group can have is a well-trained sawyer (and the swamper who helps keep him or her safe) to keep park and forest trails clear of downed trees. The Friends of Pinchot are lucky to have three trained crews who have had their work cut out for them this year. Pun intended! As of the posting of this photo in late July, more than 60 such trees have been removed from Pinchot trails.



Friends of Goddard

The annual two-day Music at the Marina festival brings a car cruise, food, vendors, and music to the shores of Lake Wilhelm. Here, vendors set up under a dramatic sky. It got a little windy this year but it was an otherwise beautiful weekend.



List of Friends

- Cherry Springs Dark Sky Association*
- Friends of Beltzville*
- Friends of Big Pocono*
- Friends of Black Moshannon*
- Friends of Buchanan*
- Friends of Caledonia*
- Friends of Canoe Creek*
- Friends of Chapman*
- Friends of Colonel Denning*
- Friends of Cook Forest*
- Friends of Cowans Gap*
- Friends of Davis Hollow Cabin*
- Friends of Goddard*
- Friends of Greenwood Furnace*
- Friends of Kings Gap*
- Friends of Laurel Hill*
- Friends of Little Buffalo*
- Friends of Lyman Run*
- Friends of Michaux*
- Friends of Milton*
- Friends of Mont Alto*
- Friends of Mount Pisgah*
- Friends of Nockamixon*
- Friends of Nolde Forest*
- Friends of Oil Creek*
- Friends of Ole Bull*
- Friends of Parker Dam*
- Friends of Pinchot*
- Friends of Pine Grove Furnace*
- Friends of Prince Gallitzin*
- Friends of RB Winter*
- Friends of Ridley Creek State Park*
- Friends of Ryerson Station*
- Friends of Shawnee & Blue Knob*
- Friends of State Line Serpentine Barrens*
- Friends of Trough Creek & Warriors Path*
- Friends of Tuscarora & Locust Lake*
- Friends of Tyler*
- Friends of Varden Conservation Area*
- Friends of Weiser - Haldeman/Greenland*
- Friends of Weiser - Roaring Creek*
- Friends of White Clay Creek*
- Friends of Worlds End*
- Friends of Yellow Creek*
- Lackawanna State Park Trail Care Crew*

2024 PPFF Virtual Book Club



Grab your lunch and join us at 12pm for a book discussion online at <https://paparksandforests.org/event/ppff-virtual-book-club-2/>

Sept. 25: "On the Trail"

by Silas Chamberlin

Oct. 30: "Blue Highways"

by William Least Heat Moon

Nov. 20: "Cradle of Conservation"

by Dr. Allen Dietrich-Ward

Dec. 18: "My Side of the Mountain"

by Jean Craighead George



the 2025 awards banquet will be here before you know it

Nominate someone deserving at ppff.online/nominate-a-volunteer

You Made it Happen

Sittin' Pretty

Visitors to the Great Allegheny Passage or paddling on the Youghiogheny River at Ohiopyle State Park have a new place to have a picnic or to take shelter from a storm. The pavilion was made possible through the generosity of Wendy and the late Jim. Although Jim authored two well-received books on road-biking, the Homeroskys enjoyed riding the GAP trail for 25+ years. The section between Ohiopyle and Confluence was their favorite, spring/summer/fall.



Photo Credit: DCNR

To Better Serve You

PPFF interns Martha and Emily joined 11 other DCNR staff and park volunteers to learn about customer service and interpretation through the Interpretive Host Training at Codorus State Park. While the course was provided by the education staff at DCNR, your support helped with classroom materials, snacks, and certification.



Photo Credit: DCNR

Working Together for the Betterment of Parks and Forests

Two teams from Deloitte took to parks and forests during their annual Impact Day. One team visited the Hoverter and Sholl Box Huckleberry Natural Area to trim trails, paint places, and steward this unique natural area.

Hoverter and Sholl Box Huckleberry Natural Area is a 10-acre natural area in Tuscarora State Forest which protects a colony of box huckleberry over 1,000 years old. It is thought that it is one massive plant. You can learn more about natural areas by visiting the Pa Parks and Forests Foundation website or following the QR code that is part of this story.



The second group divided and conquered across Little Buffalo State Park, building picnic tables, beautifying areas, and working on gardens.



Photo Credit: Jay Patel Group



Photo Credit: Marci Mowery

You Made it Happen

Trees—More Than Just Shade

Volunteers at Nockamixon State Park recently planted trees made possible by your generosity. The trees replaced Ash trees lost to the Emerald Ash Borer. While we know that trees provide shade, reduce runoff, absorb water and a host more benefits, they also add interest to the landscape and obstacles to a disc golf course.



Photo Credit: DCNR

Welcome New Friends!

Two new friends groups were launched this last quarter—the Friends of Tyler State Park (pictured here) and the Friends of Chapman State Park. Both are eager to get started at their respective parks. Keep your eye on our website for opportunities to get involved.



Children and the Outdoors

Spending time outdoors is good for human health—both for adults and children. To spread the word about this connection, we adapted the video on children and health released last year to include a Spanish language version. Thank you to Camille for her assistance on this project!



Welcoming Places

PPFF continued to table at events to educate participants about state parks and forests and the work of the Foundation in stewarding these special places. PPFF Ambassador Margarita attended the Reading Pride Event.



Plan Ahead! Continue the legacy of conservation of our state parks and forests for future generations through a bequest or life income gift to PPFF.

Did You Know? PPFF is able to accept your TAX DEDUCTIBLE donations of stock to support our work and/or projects in state parks and forests.

For more information visit www.PAParksAndForests.org



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