

Penn's Stewards

News from the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation

Summer 2025 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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Miles of Beauty: Hiking Pennsylvania's State Forest Hiking Trails

By Matthew Crosbie, Bureau of Forestry

Just as forests provide physical resources that we rely on daily, often used with little thought or lack of appreciation, there are other invaluable benefits that seem even less tangible. The world is hectic, busy, and often anxiety-provoking. When we pause and realize there's a need to shed life's burdens, we will usually find that we look to mountains and forests as a place of escape, refreshment, and healing. Seeking interior forests away from sight and sound of humans can provide this getaway and Pennsylvania's State Forests always stand available with millions of acres to explore. This exploration is obtainable through the many access points and miles of trail throughout the forest. Arguably the best way to find this experience is on one of the 18 designated *State Forest Hiking Trails (SFHTs)*.

While there are thousands of miles of hiking trails on state forest land, these *State Forest Hiking Trails* sit apart and are of regional importance, with specific management guidelines, and often feature the best vistas, forests, and wildlife viewing. Together, these total over 792 miles, and most are longer-distance trails that can be backpacked, with opportunities for day hikes as well. Many interconnecting side trails can be used to form your own hike and adventure.

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President's Message

Marci Mowery

I'm writing to you from a cozy cabin at Prince Gallitzin State Park, where I just had the pleasure of interviewing Park Manager Jess Lavelua for our new podcast, Think Outside with the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation. I also attended a meeting with the Friends of Prince Gallitzin, who have some exciting plans for the year—be sure to check out their Facebook page and website to stay in the loop!

On my way here, I made a stop in Bedford to speak with outdoor recreationists and influencers @OneEyeWanderz and @TheDapperHiker about their experiences in our state parks and forests. What struck me most in these conversations—and in many others—is the deep appreciation people have for our public lands and the individuals who care for them: dedicated staff, passionate volunteers, and thoughtful visitors who tread lightly and respectfully.

And those public lands are seeing more use than ever. You may have heard about the increased demand for camping due to the closure of several Army Corps of Engineers campgrounds. Some state parks are seeing a 30% increase in reservations, while others—particularly near the closed sites—are experiencing up to a 200% spike. It's clear: people want to be outside. That makes continued investment and stewardship in our parks and forests not just a priority, but a necessity—something we're hopeful the General Assembly will recognize in upcoming budgets.

As you read through this issue, I hope you enjoy learning more about our unique state forest hiking trails, the quiet escape of trailside camping, and even tips for improving your fish photography. The work of the Foundation, from training volunteers to increasing access to the outdoors, is only possible because of your support—thank you. With 45 Friends Groups and counting, we're growing a movement that's making a real difference across Pennsylvania.

Yours in the Outdoors,
Marci Mowery



Where did you do your Happy Little 5K? Phoebe, Joe (who took the picture) and I found ourselves at Worlds End State Park!

Continued from page 1...

Trails situated in the Northcentral part of the state within the PA Wilds reach into some of the most remote forests in this part of the country, offering what many would consider a wilderness experience. However, each person's definition of escape and experience of wild character can be different. One can find beauty and peace along the four-mile Rocky Knob Trail in Michaux State Forest where this short trail provides a welcome respite from daily life while still being easily accessed and attainable. Progressing further, one could backpack the 90+ mile Donut Hole Trail in Sprout State Forest and likely not see another person on a multi-day trek.

History

The 18 State Forest Hiking Trails have a history rooted in passion, respect, and love for the wild character of Pennsylvania's state forests. Most of these trails were laid out and built in the 1970s and into the early 1980s, often with extensions or modifications since. A few of them have an earlier start, including the Loyalsock Trail which had original segments opening as early as 1951 when laid out by a local Boy Scout troop. The Alpine Club of Williamsport was formed shortly after to help steward the trail. Efforts to create the Susquehannock Trail System began as early as 1966 with a formal trail club created a year later. The Tuscarora Trail was also constructed in the 1960s, having been laid out as a possible alternate route for the Appalachian Trail -- which was experiencing encroachment issues at the time.

Some trails were laid out largely by Bureau of Forestry staff while others may have been led in part by passionate volunteers. The common theme for most was the involvement of various forms of programs intended to provide employment or learning opportunities for youth and young adults such as the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) and the Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC). Bob Webber, who helped lay out and construct many trails in the Tiadaghton State Forest, would often speak fondly of his times leading these groups. Likewise, those who participated were influenced by the work for years to come. This is a testament to the importance of those programs and similar ones, such as the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps (POC), that continues today.

Since their creation, these trail systems have been popular and beloved by many. Bob Webber would tell of the many hikers that flocked to the Black Forest Trail in the 1970s, with cars lining Slate Run Road that exceeded even the



Source: @OneEyeWanderz

numbers today, and of backpackers frequently using his cabin's front yard, which was along the Black Forest Trail, as a camping spot, before the trail was relocated below their home. Despite the consistent use and love these trails receive, there always seems to be innumerable opportunities to escape the crowds and find locations where you're likely to see more bear or rattlesnakes than you are people, and where you'll enter places so remote and pristine that you may feel like you're the first person to ever view the landscape.

Foot travel over a remote primitive trail brings an exhilaration, an aliveness that cleanses us of our worldly woes and restores our spirit. The Mid State Trail was created to foster these simple, natural, spiritual experiences, so that we may all enjoy a greater respect for nature and therefore protect nature for all future generations.

– Dr. Thomas Thwaites, Father of the Mid State Trail

Continued on page 4...



Source: @OneEyeWanderz

Features

State Forest Hiking Trails boast too many unique features to truly count but a minimum of 97 vistas, 10 waterfalls, and 14 trail bridges are inventoried on various trail maps and resources. Hikers may pass wetlands with uncommon plants or animals, enter old growth forests, travel past historic fire towers and along abandoned logging railroad grades, or even skirt daunting cliffs and boulders the size of houses. For those lucky enough, you may even spot an elk in certain areas of the state.

Another unique feature for nature lovers is that these trails provide the best access to some of the most remote places in Pennsylvania. In fact, 23% of state forest hiking trails are located more than half a mile from the nearest road, with 15 miles stretching a full mile or more from any roadway. This level of solitude is rare in the eastern United States — especially in a state crisscrossed by over 120,000 miles of roads. Hikers seeking peace, quiet, and natural beauty away from the bustle will find it here.

Planning Routes and Camping

The State Forest Hiking Trails can be section hiked, through hiked in a multi-day trip, or simply used to access an area of interest. These trails are interconnected with many other shorter trails that can be used to form nearly limitless unique routes. Some of the SFHTs in the PA Wilds even have designated connector trails.

For those looking to visit these trails, it is important to research the trails and area, attain maps and directions, and have a detailed plan. Helpful information can be found on the Staying Safe page of the DCNR website. For multi-day treks, be realistic of your abilities and determine possible campsite locations ahead of time. SFHTs may traverse different ownerships at times who may have unique rules and regulations where camping may not be permitted. While on state forest land, observe Leave No Trace Ethics and abide by state forest rules and regulations and any local closures. For more information on trailside camping see page 8. Remember, DCNR staff are always available to answer questions and provide information and resources.



Management

The Bureau of Forestry aims to provide a wide variety of user experiences while protecting valuable natural resources. A specific goal in the bureau's new strategic plan, *Forests for All*, is to provide diverse, sustainable, forest-based recreation on state forest lands. Many kinds of recreation activities occur and for those who seek hiking opportunities, the State Forest Hiking Trails remain premier destinations. These trail systems are foot traffic only, except for some sections that may be collocated with shared use trails for short distances. Applying this regulation to this small subset of the over 5,000 miles of trail on state forest land allows for retention of wild character and one of the most basic recreation forms — walking and hiking.

Continued on page 5...

The bureau also provides for forest management buffers in many cases, adding to the significance of these trails, and cooperative maintenance agreements with various hiking clubs. A strategy in *Forests for All* is to strengthen planning and management systems to support sustainable recreation. As such, the bureau will continue to seek to understand visitor expectations and values and monitor and manage sustainability impacts. Continued improvements to improve sustainability of these trail systems will ensure they're open and enjoyable to the public now and into the future.

Needs

The State Forest Hiking Trails are a treasure for nature lovers and adventure seekers, but they require maintenance, funding, and overall stewardship. Individual volunteers, organized trail clubs, and Friends groups contribute countless hours and raise significant funds for these trails and others across the state forest system. For those interested in helping keep trails open and in good shape visit the DCNR Conservation Volunteers webpage to learn more about volunteering and reach out to the local forest district office, the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, and Keystone Trails Association. There are numerous opportunities including physical trail maintenance, record keeping, drafting or distributing educational materials, leading interpretive hikes, and more.



Source: @OneEyeWanderz

Conclusion

We are reminded in the classic John Muir quote that *in every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks*, and this will hold true for any visit to one of the State Forest Hiking Trails. With an abundance of solitude, variety of scenery, and numerous miles, the trails always offer more than expected. Take the opportunity to step out and experience it for yourself.

Trail	All Owners	State Forest Only
Baker Trail	112.6	1.6
Black Forest Trail	42.8	42.8
Bucktail Path	33.4	33.4
Chuck Keiper Trail	52.3	52.3
Donut Hole Trail	82.4	78.0
Golden Eagle Trail	8.7	6.2
John P. Saylor Memorial Trail	17.3	17.3
Lost Turkey Trail	26.6	9.2
Loyalsock Trail	59.8	53.0
Mid State Trail	317.8	201.1
NA	0.8	0.8
Old Loggers Path	26.8	26.8
Pinchot Trail	21.6	21.0
Quehanna Trail	71.4	70.9
Rocky Knob Trail	4.3	4.3
Susquehannock Trail	79.0	78.8
Thunder Swamp Trail	24.2	24.2
Tuscarora Trail	76.8	40.7
West Rim Trail	29.3	29.3
Grand Total	1087.8	791.8

Trail miles for the 18 State Forest Hiking Trails on state forest land only and the other ownerships they traverse.

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State Forest Hiking Trails

Baker Trail

Part of this historic trail traverses the beautiful Clear Creek State Forest. Established 1950, extended to Allegheny National Forest in 1971.

Black Forest Trail

This is a true wilderness hike deep within the Tioga and Tiadaghton state forests. Established 1970-71 by Bob Webber, John Eastlake, Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, and Neighborhood Work Crews.

Bucktail Path

Rise to challenge on the Bucktail that lies within the heart of the Elk State Forest. 1976 attempt at building failed. 1977 YACC, 1978-79 YCC, finished in 1980s.

Chuck Keiper Trail

This 53-mile trail covers some breathtaking views in the Sproul State Forest. 1976 by Title X and YCC.

Donut Hole Trail

This 90-mile trail is sure to challenge even the experienced hiker. Thought to be built in the 1970s with Title X and extended in mid-90's.

Golden Eagle Trail

This trail provides some stunning views of the Pine Creek valley within the Tiadaghton State Forest. Built 1973-74, lead by Bob Webber with the Waterville youth.

John P. Saylor Trail

This scenic trek covers 18 miles within the Gallitzin State Forest. Opened November 14th, 1979, after four summers of work by the YCC.

Lost Turkey Trail

This creatively named trail covers 26 miles, nine of which are in the Gallitzin State Forest. Opened in 1976 due to the efforts of the YCC.

Loyalsock Trail

Walk among some of the most picturesque settings you'll find anywhere on this trail that lies within its namesake, the Loyalsock State Forest. Began in 1951 with the Explorer Scouts Post 110 (BSA)-first 30 miles. Extensions made between 1960-62 with the Alpine Club.

Mid State Trail

This famous trail will take the adventurous spirit through portions of five different state forests. Started in 1969 with the Penn State Outing Club. 1970s, Tom Thwaites. MSTa formed in 1982.

Old Loggers Path

This premier trail covers 27 miles within the heart of the Loyalsock State Forest. Effort led by John Eastlake in mid to late '70s and opened in 1981.

Pinchot Trail

This trail is named after former PA Governor and conservationist Gifford Pinchot and covers over 20 miles within the Pinchot State Forest. Laid out in the '70s, Choke Creek YCC 1975; large effort by volunteer Frank Grantz.

Quehanna Trail

For a true backcountry wilderness experience it doesn't get better than this 75-mile trail that will take the adventurous deep within the Moshannon and Elk State Forests. Laid out in the early '70s, built by YACC in 1977 and YCC 1978-79.

Rocky Knob Trail

This is the perfect shorter hike for someone looking for a taste of what the Michaux State Forest has to offer. Partially built on 1937 Civilian Conservation Corps trails, completed 1976-77 by YCC.

Susquehannock Trail

The vast majority of this challenging hiking experience is within the big woods country of the Susquehannock State Forest. Concept created in 1966 with construction beginning the following year.

Thunder Swamp Trail

This trail covers a variety of habitats and terrain and lies within the Delaware State Forest. Built by YCC in 1970s.

Tuscarora Trail

This challenging hike will take you up and over some of the ridges of the Buchanan and Tuscarora State Forests. An issue with the Appalachian Trail led to the Tuscarora Trail in the 1960s.

West Rim Trail

This trail provides some truly breathtaking views of the famed Pennsylvania Grand Canyon within the Tioga State Forest. Likely built in the 1970s-80s.

For those who set a goal to do every mile of the State Forest Hiking Trail System, you can receive the coveted State Forest Hiking Trail Award. The Bureau of Forestry partners with Keystone Trails Association (KTA) to present this to those dedicated individuals each fall. <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dcnr/recreation/what-to-do/hiking.html>

CANOE CAMPING

Pennsylvania is home to not just foot trails, but water trails, the oldest of which is the Susquehanna River Trail Middle Section. Thinking of canoe or kayaking camping? Read on to learn about the six W's of camping!



WHERE

- What is your destination?
- File a float plan—location and time of launch and take out, where you wish to camp.
- What is your back up campsite should your chosen site be full?
- Do you know the water body? What do you need to learn?
- Do you have the appropriate maps? Do you need a permit?



WASTE

- How will you manage your waste, both organic and inorganic?



WEIGHT

- Is your canoe or kayak “trim” or “balanced”?
- Do you have enough freeboard to keep you safe?
- Can you safely paddle and portage the load?



WATER

- Are your skills equal to the water on which you will paddle?
- What will the source of your drinking water be? Are you prepared?
- What is your back up plan in case of inclement weather?



WHAT

- What is on your packing list?
- What extras do you need in case of emergency or to meet the needs of the members of your party?

? WHAT IF

- What are your contingency plans in case you:
 - Lose a paddle
 - Get lost
 - Get delayed
 - Tip
 - get sick



What is Trailside Camping?



Source: @OneEyeWanderz

Trailside camping is a simplistic style of camping and can take different forms but is always a true wilderness camping experience. Campers hike, ride, pedal, or paddle to reach a location and spend the night without the presence of developed facilities. This trailside camping experience takes place off the beaten path, without piped water, restrooms, and other amenities. You pack in all you need, exchanging a few conveniences for backcountry solitude.

Where to Camp

Pennsylvania has 2.2 million acres of state forest land with over 5,000 miles of trails and 5,132 miles of rivers and streams winding through it. Hiking, biking and multi-use trails traverse most state forest districts, and nine districts have designated water trails that transect state forest land.

Guidelines

Those who are trailside camping are often referred to as backpackers, many of whom utilize tents; however, hammocks, bivy sacks, and other equipment are becoming increasingly popular. No matter your preference, be sure to be fully prepared with everything you'll need to spend a night in the woods away from your vehicle.

Beyond just the traditional, trailside backpacking, trailside camping includes overnight camping where all equipment is transported by other non-motorized vehicle methods, including watercraft, bicycle, or horse.

Remember, in state forests, if you are camping close enough to your vehicle to access it to store gear and supplies, you are not primitive or trailside camping, but are motorized, roadside camping. A permit and fee is always required for motorized, roadside camping and can only be done at designated sites. Please plan appropriately.

There is no fee for a state forest primitive or trailside permit. Primitive campers spending no more than one night at a campsite do not need a camping permit; however, a free camping permit is required if:

- You desire an emergency point-of-contact.
- You stay at a campsite more than one night.
- You stay at a campsite designated "permit required."
- A campfire is desired during spring wildfire season -- you must obtain permission from the state forest to have a campfire from March 1 through May 25; no campfires are permitted when the state forest district forester determines the forest fire danger to be high, very high, or extreme.
- You camp using a vehicle for storage or transportation.
- You camp within the Pine Creek Gorge along the Pine Creek Rail Trail in Tiadaghton or Tioga State Forests.

To request a free, state forest trailside camping permit, please contact the state forest district office for where you are planning to camp.

Hiking in and putting up a tent where you choose, is NOT permitted in Pennsylvania state parks. All camping must be in a designated camping area and on designated sites. Currently, there are five state parks that allow backpacking and overnight hikes. These parks provide backpacking trails

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with overnight trailside shelters or sites. You must pre-register to hike and camp overnight at these state parks.

- **Laurel Ridge**
- **Moraine**
- **Ohiopyle** (but only because it's the entrance to the **Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail**)
- **Oil Creek**
- **Raccoon Creek**



Photo Credit: Marci Mowery

Water Trails

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) promotes 29 water trails throughout the state in cooperation with local partners.

The Bureau of Forestry manages many river islands along these water trails and allows trailside camping on designated islands which are marked with river island locator signs. River island campsites often receive minimal maintenance and can be difficult to identify. If unsure of land ownership at a given location, please do not camp.

Groups of 10 people or less may stay for no more than two nights at any one island campsite. All other State Forest Rules and Regulations apply.

Camping can also sometimes be found along water's edge for water ways passing through state forest.

Water trails with trailside camping:

- **Pine Creek Water Trail** has water's edge camping opportunities managed by Tiadaghton and Tioga State Forests. Permits are always required.
- **Middle Susquehanna River Water Trail** which runs from Sunbury to Harrisburg has 23 volunteer-maintained island campsites which are managed by the Weiser State Forest.



Photo Credit: Marci Mowery

- **North Branch Susquehanna River Water Trail** has multiple river island campsites that are managed by Loyalsock and Pinchot state forests.
- **The West Branch River Water Trail** has limited water's edge camping opportunities managed by Sprout State Forest.
- **Juniata River Water Trail** has six river island campsites managed by Tuscarora State Forest and additional, limited sites managed by Rothrock State Forest.
- **Middle Allegheny River Water Trail** passes through the Kennerdell Tract of Clear Creek State Forest, which manages the Danner Trailside Camping Area, a great option for overnight stay on the water trail.
- **Delaware River Water Trail** has one established trailside camping area along the Upper Delaware River owned by Delaware State Forest. Access to this parcel is **ONLY** by boat. The campsite is administered by the National Park Service and a permit is required. Permits can be obtained by contacting the National Park Service, Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, at 570-685-4871; and entering extension 6608 (there is no voice prompt to enter extension number). Callers can dial option "2" at any time during the message to speak with a park ranger for a permit.

More information can be found at:

- [Pennsylvania Water Trail Guides and Maps | Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission](#)
- [Find a Forest | Department of Conservation and Natural Resources | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)
- [Water Trail Designation | Department of Conservation and Natural Resources | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)

Bike Trails

- **Pine Creek Rail Trail** offers primitive, trailside camping opportunities along its length at Darling Run, Tiadaghton, Hoffman, Tomb Flats, Black Walnut Bottom, and Bonnell Flats Camping Areas. A permit is required and can be obtained from the PA Parks and Forests Reservation System.
- **Great Allegheny Passage** offers a hiker/biker campground in Ohiopyle State Park. This campground was made possible by a generous donor to the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation.

Bicycle users can also ride many shared use trails throughout the state forest in which trailside camping opportunities may exist. Bicycle users and horseback riders may not be permitted on some trails; and there

may be unique camping regulations for these uses, so remember to check with the state forest district office. These opportunities are limited and not often pursued.

Gravel bike riders may also find the designated, roadside campsites in state forests as a good option to bikepack. These sites require a permit from the PA Parks and Forests Reservation System and are traditionally used by campers utilizing cars and small RVs or trailers and so is different than typical trailside camping.

More information can be found at:

- Pine Creek Rail Trail Map and Brochure
- Biking at Ohiopyle State Park | Department of Conservation and Natural Resources | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- See the Spring 2023 issue of Penn's Stewards on the PPFF website

Reminders

- Know and follow all state forest or park rules and regulations.
- All camping should be at least 100 feet from any stream or open water source.
- Bathe and wash dishes or clothes using a container. Washing in a spring, lake or waterway is prohibited. Dispose of wash water at least 200 feet from water resources after filtering for organic and inorganic debris.
- Non-native invasive plants, animals and pathogens threaten Pennsylvania's biodiversity. Help minimize the spread of invasive species by not transporting them. Before leaving a site or body of water, clean off shoes, clothing, pets, watercraft and all gear. Stay on designated trails and do not move firewood.
- Make wise choices in the backcountry setting where emergency response may be delayed, and medical help is not readily available.

Trailside Camping with Children

- Start small with a day trip to a nearby forest or park. This trial run offers children a chance to spend extended time in nature. Next, try an overnighter in the backyard to help assimilate to night sounds and sensations. These preludes will also help you plan a realistic itinerary and allow you to develop a family checklist of things you'll need to pack.
- Pre-trip planning and organizing are key elements to a successful outing. Involving children in the planning process stirs excitement and encourages responsibility. When appropriate clothing, reliable equipment, ample food, a water supply and an emergency plan are taken care of in advance, the trip will be far more enjoyable for the whole family.
- Make activities kid-friendly; adjust time and distance of hiking, biking or canoeing excursions to fit everyone's interest and ability. Children will have a greater interest if the trip is filled with exploration, adventure, quality time together and fun snacks.
- Keep activities simple and focus on fun.
- Trailside camping may build confidence and expand a child's view of the world.

Bears

An estimated 18,000 black bears inhabit Pennsylvania, so there is potential to encounter a bear while camping. Wildlife is a thrilling part of the camping experience. Help protect black bears and keep encounters positive by using these guidelines:

- Pass up campsites with obvious signs of bear activity.
- Keep a tidy camp and don't feed bears.
- Store all food and scented objects in sealed containers away from your tent. Suspend containers with dark cord 100 yards away, ten feet off the ground, and five feet from tree trunk.
- Cook food away from the sleeping area.
- Wild animals typically avoid people. Discourage a bear from snooping around by making loud noises such as blowing a whistle, yelling or banging loud objects together.

Leave No Trace

- Plan Ahead and Prepare.
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces.
- Dispose of Waste Properly - trailside camping is a pack in/pack out form of camping.
- Leave What You Find.
- Minimize Campfire Impacts by using designated fire ring if available and extinguishing your fire completely.
- Respect Wildlife.
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors.

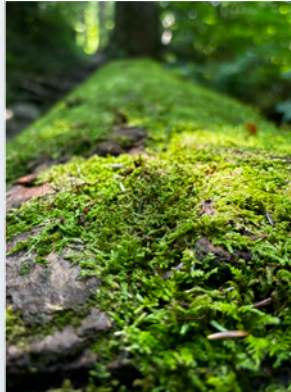
Young Photographers Winners

Oops, we missed it! The Young Photographers section of the 2024 photo contest inadvertently listed the 2024 images with the wrong names. Please see the corrected recognition below. Our apologies to the photographers.

Young Photographers



Young Photographers - Judges' Choice:
Andy Zhang, French Creek State Park



Young Photographers - People's Choice:
Addelyn Brown,
Ricketts Glen
State Park



Young Photographers - Runner Up:
Christian Scheibe, Weiser State Forest

Experience
the Journey

TRAILS

© Jack Neborak

2025 Photo Contest

The contest is open to amateur and professional photographers alike. All photos must be taken in a Pennsylvania state park or forest. For full contest details, visit ppff.online/PhotoContest or scan the QR code.



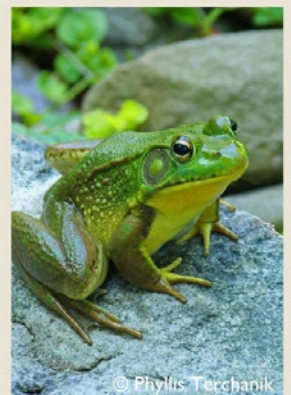
© Beth van Horn

2025 Categories:

- Beyond the Trail
- Comradery on the Trail
- Peaceful Easy Feeling
- Tales/Tails from the Trail
- Texture of the Trail
- Young Photographers (12-17)



Deadline:
Sept. 30!



© Phyllis Terchanik

Our Mission *Mission is to inspire stewardship of Pennsylvania state parks and forests.*
Our Vision *To be the trusted voice and advocate to sustain and enhance Pennsylvania's state parks and forests.*

Partnerships



New Trail Brewing

New Trail Brewing's I Love My State Parks beer made a reappearance in April helping to celebrate the important role Pennsylvania state parks and forests play, not just in the Commonwealth, but across the nation.

Rolling Up Their Sleeves

Members of People First Federal Credit Union rolled up their sleeves to perform a stewardship day at Beltzville State Park. Eleven employees joined PPFF President Marci on the Trinity Gorge and Preacher Camp trails. The most unusual find—a television!

We can all be good stewards, not just on Earth Day. Remember to pack out what you carry in and if you see litter, safely pick up and dispose of it. On a recent walk at Boyd Big Tree State Park, Marci carried out five water bottles she found along various parts of the trail.



Photo Credit: Marci Mowery



Photo Credit: Marci Mowery

Happy Little Trees

Over 11,500 people joined the 13 states participating in the Bob Ross Happy Little Trees virtual 5K, proceeds of which support the planting of trees. A shoutout to those 350 participants who chose Pennsylvania to benefit from their participation.

In this picture, participants sport the 2024 and 2025 shirts - along with their best Bob Ross wigs and socks - as part of their virtual event.



Photo Credit: Aimee Cesarino and Crew

More People First News

Members of PPFF are now eligible for membership in People First Federal Credit Union. Reach out to your local branch to learn more.



Greg Sassaman (interviewed by Timothy Morey) remembering the construction of the Turkey Foot Trail at Leonard Harrison State Park

Capturing the History in State Parks and Forests

Your support is helping to capture the important history of parks, forests and trails by recording oral histories of trail blazers from across the decades. Some of these stories may show up as podcast episodes, others will be presented as papers and stories on the Conservation Heritage Project website.

Cradle of Conservation

Dr. Allen Dieterich-Ward has been back and forth across the state presenting on his new book, Cradle of Conservation. Here he presents to a captive audience at New Trail Brewing in Williamsport. Keep an eye on the Conservation Heritage Project events calendar for an event near you! Or join us on the third Monday of the month at noon on our Facebook, LinkedIn, or YouTube platforms for a live discussion. These discussions also remain on those platforms—visit past episodes to look at African American Conservation History, Women's Conservation History and Grassroots Movements.

What Trails Mean to You

For many Pennsylvanians, trails are far more than just a place to walk—they are a source of healing, discovery, and connection. Survey respondents shared how trails offer peace, solitude, and a much-needed escape from the stress of daily life. They help people unplug, reconnect with nature, and find space to simply be. For some, trails are the only place they feel they truly belong.

Whether it's the joy of exploring with a beloved pet, finding rare plants along the way, or using the time for meditation and mindfulness, trails serve a deeply personal purpose. They are a place for adventure, health, and reflection—where freedom, calm, and inspiration live. As one person beautifully put it, "Trails decrease the hustle of life, nourish the soul, and challenge the body." We couldn't agree more.

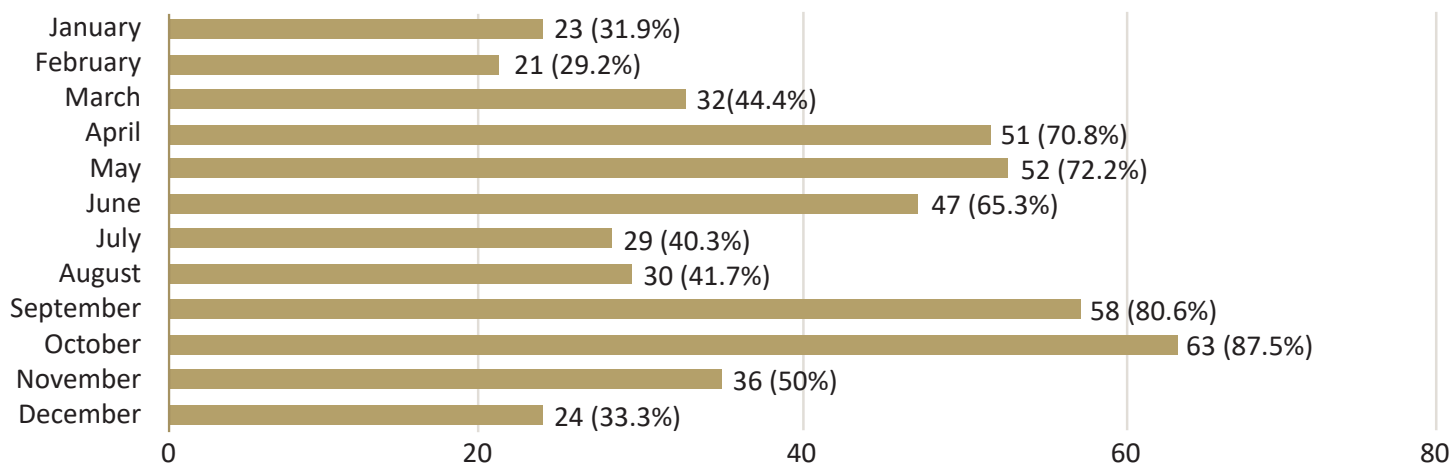
And your favorite months for hiking (people were able to select multiple months):



Taking in a moment of calm on Double Run Nature Trail at World's End State Park. Photo By: Marci Mowery

Favorite Month(s) for Hiking

72 responses



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

New Board Members

Margarita Caicedo

PPFF's first Latina Ambassador, our Volunteer of the Year in 2024, and the regular host of our monthly WXAC radio show in Reading, Margarita works tirelessly to make sure that the members of the Spanish-speaking community know they are welcome in Pennsylvania's outdoors. She knows first-hand what it is like to be confused by all of the options and she has a unique and joyful way of helping erase that confusion for others!



Paul Roth

Paul believes that state parks and forests are the bedrock and crown jewel of conservation and outdoor recreation. Formerly a Project Coordinator with the Finley Center for Private Forests at Penn State, he now works through his own consulting service (Entropia) on issues involving energy, reforestation of mine lands, and forest conservation priorities in general. Paul enjoys anything outdoors, especially with his kids and dogs. Some of his favorite things are fishing, hiking, birding, plant and mushroom identification, hunting, and mountain biking!



Mike Teeter

Our 2024 Education Award winner is always ready to talk to people about the Foundation, the outdoors, friendship, and fun. You'll often find him behind a table with a PPFF banner beside it. Mike's worked in the outdoor industry for 18 years. Whether it's a leisurely stroll or multi-day hike, he loves to get outdoors with his friends and family. You can follow his travels on Instagram @OneEyeWanderz.



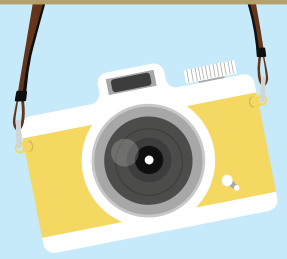
Bring Your Voice

The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation applauds Governor Shapiro for recognizing the vital role of our state parks and forests in his February budget address. His proposed budget maintains DCNR's operating funding and includes an additional \$5 million to expand the state park system (and in subsequent years this funding would help to maintain trails and close trail gaps).

This expansion includes two exciting additions: a collaborative land transfer with the Pennsylvania Game Commission that will bring **Glen Onoko Falls** into **Lehigh Gorge State Park**, and the acquisition of **Laurel Caverns**, which will become **Pennsylvania's 125th—and first subterranean—state park**. These funds will support the development of both sites, with a particular focus on making Glen Onoko a safe and welcoming destination for all.

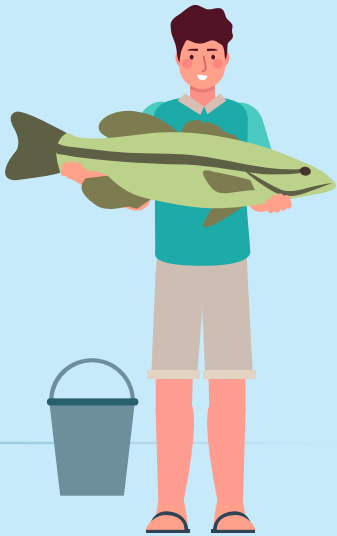
In addition to supporting the Governor's budget proposal, PPFF weighed in on the value of recess for elementary school students and is monitoring a variety of pieces of legislation. You can learn more about what we are following at our Take Action page of our website.

SKILL BUILDER



Taking a picture with your fish is fun to do yet not always beneficial to the fish.

Here are a few simple steps to increase the survival rate of your fish by reducing stress and harm.



PREPARATION:

- **Camera Ready:** Have your camera or phone ready with the timer set before you bring the fish out of the water and have it set for the current photographic conditions.
- **Land the Fish Quickly:** Don't let the fish fight and jump until it's exhausted. Warm water temperatures are rough on coldwater fish.
- **Lighting:** Position yourself, so the fish is well-lit, ideally with sunlight or an even light source at your back. Avoid using a flash.

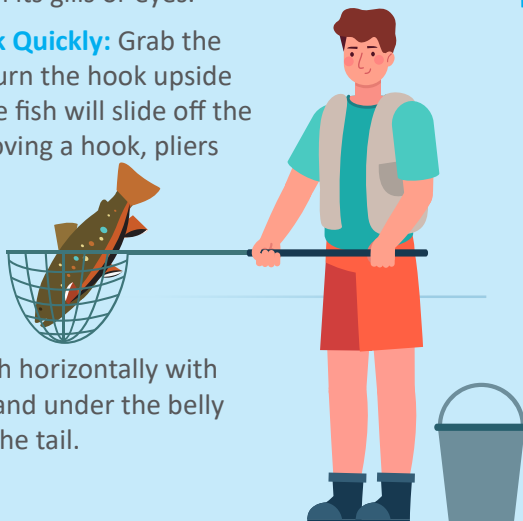
CAMERA SHOOTING:

- **Timer:** Use the camera's timer to give yourself time to position the fish and get the shot.
- **Quick Shots:** Take a few quick shots and then quickly release the fish back into the water. Again, avoid using a flash.



HANDLING:

- **Use a Landing Net:** The best nets have a shallow bag made of fine mesh. If you must handle a fish, wet your hands first. It's best for the fish if you don't handle it.
- **Keep it Wet:** Minimize the time the fish is out of water, aiming for a few seconds at most.
- **Support it Gently:** Hold the fish gently, supporting its belly and tail. Avoid the mouth and gill area.
- **Avoid Pressure:** Don't squeeze the fish or put pressure on its gills or eyes.
- **Remove the Hook Quickly:** Grab the hook shank and turn the hook upside down. Usually, the fish will slide off the hook. When removing a hook, pliers are a helpful tool to have in your tackle box.
- **Horizontal Hold:** Hold the fish horizontally with one supporting hand under the belly and the other at the tail.



RELEASE/POST-RELEASE:

- **Release Gently and Quickly:** After taking the photos, release the fish gently to the water as soon as possible. Give the fish a few seconds to "shake it off." Then, if the fish doesn't swim away, gently move it back and forth in the water. This helps get a fresh dose of oxygen to the fish by moving water over its gills.
- **Observe:** Watch the fish to ensure it normally swims away after release.

Catch a video by scanning the QR code:



THANK YOU TO THE PENNSYLVANIA FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE WITH THIS SKILL BUILDER!

You Made it Happen

Safe Biking for All

A flat tire while biking doesn't need to be the end of the day when you are cycling at Tyler State Park. With your support and a grant from New Belgium Brewing, two new bicycle repair stations were placed strategically at the park. These stations provide the tools you need to change a tire or do other basic repairs. Happy wheeling!



Photo Credit: DCNR

Access for All

At PPFF, we believe that everyone should have access to the outdoors. To support that vision, a new **Action Track Chair** was recently purchased for **Lackawanna State Park**. While it may look rugged, the chair is designed to minimize impact on the land while providing trail access to individuals who use assistive devices—allowing them to explore with friends and family.



Photo Credit: DCNR

This addition was made possible thanks to your generous support, a grant from the **Overlook Estate Foundation**, and a donation from **Abilities in Motion**. We're currently finalizing the details of how the chair will be made available **on free loan** to those who need it.

Out and About with the Podcast

Lately, Marci has been on the road recording interviews for *Think Outside*, the new podcast from the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation. From chatting with park managers and forest district leaders to meeting outdoor influencers and passionate volunteers, it's been inspiring to hear so many voices connected to our public lands. Stay tuned—there's a lot more to come as we explore the stories behind Pennsylvania's parks and forests!



Out and About

PPFF staff and volunteers have been busy—tabling at events, hosting educational programs, and leading discussions about parks, forests, and conservation. Since the beginning of the year, our direct contact work has reached over 3900 people.



Photo Credit: Tasha Ferris



Lending Our Voice

PPFF President Marci Mowery was thrilled to be asked to be a guest on the Girl Scouts in the Heart of Pennsylvania's podcast, *Girl Scouts Amplified Voices*. As a former Girl Scout as well as Girl Scout leader, Marci attributes a part of her outdoor passion to being involved in Scouting.



Annual Photo Contest Reception



Marci Mowery congratulates winners and recognizes DCNR's 30th Anniversary

On April 8, 2025, PPFF celebrated the winners of the annual photo contest and recognized DCNR's 30th Anniversary in the PA Capitol Building. The photos from the winners of the 2024 'Leap In' Photo Contest (ages 12 and up), along with the 'Best in Show' winners from 2021-2023, hung along the walls for the entire month of April in the East Rotunda Art Gallery. Among those in attendance were the winning photographers, DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn, legislators from both the Senate and the House, including Rep. Jim Struzzi (PPFF Board Member), other government

officials, and PPFF Board Members. The annual contest is a staple in the outdoor recreation community and has seen over 2000 photo submissions in the last 4 years, all taken in PA's state parks and state forests. To view more photos of the reception or all submissions to the contest, visit the PPFF Facebook page. Or, visit PAParksAndForests.org/2024-photo-contest-winners to learn more about the 2024 winners.




DCNR Secretary Cindy Dunn congratulates the photographers and the importance of their love of state parks and forests.




House Representative and PPFF Board Member Jim Struzzi congratulates and encourages everyone to keep enjoying state parks and forests.



Attendees viewing the photographs.







Join the discussion!



Cradle of Conservation

with Author **Allen Dieterich-Ward**
Every 3rd Wednesday
12-12:20pm from Feb. to Nov. 2025!

Each month will have a different focus. Visit our YouTube channel, LinkedIn and Facebook to join, scan the QR code, or visit <https://parksandforests.org/event/monthly-history-chat-with-allen-dieterich-ward/>

Celebrate

STEWARDSHIP

of Pennsylvania's natural, historic, and cultural resources

Many hands make healthy lands!



Sept. 28 - Oct. 6, 2025

pahealthylandsweek.org



Friends in Action

Friends of Beltzville

The Friends welcomed a second annual cohort of ten walkers for the Arthritis Foundation's Walk With Ease program, a program shown to reduce pain, increase balance and strength, and improve overall health. PPFF provided funding for three, then later an additional two, members of the Friends' board took the AF's training course last year and led a group of seven through their paces (pun intended), walking three times a week for six weeks. Three of those seven returned this year and all report a very positive experience.



Photo Credit: Friends of Beltzville

Friends of Trough Creek & Warriors Path

The Friends are in the midst of a seven-month long Trail Challenge event, alternating hikes between their two parks. Hikes take place on either Saturday afternoon or Thursday evening and all who complete the seven hike series earn a T-shirt (and bragging rights). You never know what you might see out there, including the work of a very determined woodpecker.



Photo Credit: Diane Mansberger

Friends of Canoe Creek

On the heels (pun intended) of their super popular First Day Hikes, the Friends launched a regular Walk with a Friend hike series. Keep an eye on their [Facebook page](#) for dates and places of upcoming gatherings.



Photo Credit: Friends of Canoe Creek

Friends of Michaux

Something very cool about this tracked mini-dumper purchased by the Friends of Michaux recently is that they learned about it during a trail maintenance Q&A hosted for the Chapters by the Foundation. Knowing the vastness of the Michaux and the sheer number of recreational trails they help to steward, the Friends immediately understood how the equipment would benefit their capacity to move heavy materials onto more remote parts of the forest trails. Thank you to all who support trail-building efforts with time, talent, and treasure!



Photo Credit: Friends of Michaux

Friends of Nockamixon

A dedicated crew of cavity nest monitors has been keeping watch on the 60 boxes that make up the park's bluebird trail for several years. All of the boxes are built, installed, maintained, and monitored by volunteers with worn boxes replaced with wood solicited from local millwrights by the crew's leader, Jan Hardner. They truly are "bluebirds of happiness" for park visitors. Jan reports that last year 359 birds were fledged including 197 eastern bluebirds.



Photo Credit: Jan Hardner

Friends of Chapman

The Friends of Chapman added a Chili Cook-Off competition to the always popular Winterfest held each February. Here Friends chair Jayne Karges and volunteer Kelsey show off the "golden (first place) and silver (second and third) ladles" that served as the friendly competition's prizes. Six different chilis were blind-judged by Ranger Mike, with 75 additional tasters adding their votes for the favorite. Mark your calendar for next year!



List of Friends

Cherry Springs Dark Sky Association
 Friends of Beltzville
 Friends of Big Pocono
 Friends of Black Moshannon
 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 Promised Land
 Friends of RB Winter
 Friends of Ridley Creek
 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

We Will Miss

Roy Siefert

April 8, 1954 - April 17, 2025

We sadly note the passing of Roy Siefert, retired District Forester in the Tioga State Forest.

Roy (shown here re-enacting the famous Joseph Rothrock photograph during an event to celebrate Rothrock's birthday in 2022) was a friend to many and an active, devoted conservationist.



One of his last social media posts: "My short preach is that Pennsylvania State Forests are here to support our environmental security and not our economy. It's our state Constitutional right. That doesn't preclude making money, but that shouldn't be the goal."



Memorial or Honorary Gifts



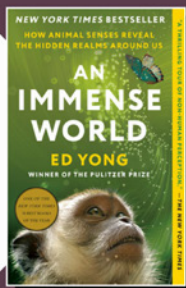
You can honor the memory of a special person or joyous occasion while supporting PPFF's work in conservation, recreation, education, and volunteerism in our state parks and forests.

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

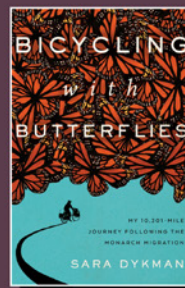
2025 PPFF Virtual Book Club



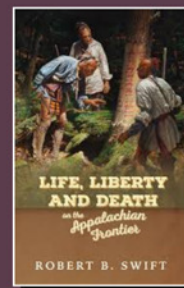
Join us at 12pm online to discuss some of our favorite books! Scan the QR code or get details online at <https://ppff.events/book-club-2025>



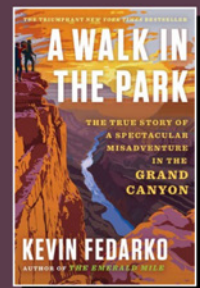
Jun. 25, 2025



Aug. 27, 2025



Oct. 29, 2025



Dec. 17, 2025

Become a Member Today!

If your current membership has expired, visit our website today to renew or use our form below. New members, complete the form and become a supporter of your parks and forests!

☐ \$25 Single Membership

☐ \$35 Family Membership

☐ I'd like to donate extra money to support the work of PPFF!
\$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

To become a member, fill out the information below and mail this form with your check (made payable to PPFF) in an envelope to:

PA Parks & Forests Foundation
704 Lisburn Road, Suite 102
Camp Hill, PA 17011

