

Penn's Stewards

News from the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation

Winter 2026 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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Kyle Yates, Cook Forest State Park

250 Years of Independence, 133 Years of Parks and Forests Freedom to Explore Pennsylvania's Outdoors

This year, Pennsylvania celebrates **250 years of independence**, a milestone that invites reflection on our shared history and the freedoms we enjoy today. One of the most tangible ways to experience that freedom is by stepping into the **state's parks and forests**, where trails, rivers, and woodlands offer a space to explore, discover, and connect—with both nature and each other.

While Pennsylvania's state parks and forests have existed for over **130 years**, these lands embody the spirit of liberty. They are living legacies of conservation, community, and stewardship—places where visitors can claim the **freedom to roam**. From old growth forests in the north to rolling hills and river valleys in the south, our forests and parks invite Pennsylvanians to experience independence in its purest form: the freedom to explore.

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PAParksAndForests.org



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President's Message

Freedom to Explore, Caring for What We Share

As we look ahead to Pennsylvania's 250th anniversary, I'm struck by how deeply our parks and forests are woven into our shared story. For generations, these places have offered room to explore, reflect, and connect—with nature and with one another. They remind us that some of our greatest resources are the ones we hold in common.

At the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, our work continues to focus on making sure these places remain welcoming, accessible, and cared for—today and for the generations still to come. Whether through reducing barriers to outdoor recreation, supporting Friends Groups, investing in projects, or elevating community voices, we are committed to strengthening the connection people feel to public lands.

This season has also been a reminder that advocacy isn't always about reacting to challenges. Often, it's about building understanding, sharing stories, and showing up consistently so that when decisions are made, the value of parks and forests is already clear. Each volunteer hour, note that you share with us, conversation with an enthusiast and shared experience helps reinforce why these places matter.

Thank you for being part of this community—your support, your time, and your belief in the power of the outdoors. Together, we are caring for what we share and ensuring that Pennsylvania's parks and forests continue to inspire freedom to explore for the next 250 years.

Yours in the Outdoors

— Marci Mowery

President, Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation



Three generations of my family gathered at Sam Lewis State Park to celebrate the pending birth of my great-niece.

Continued from page 1...

A Living History in Forests and Parks

Pennsylvania's forests and parks are more than recreational spaces—they are **repositories of history and culture**. For centuries, these lands nurtured ecosystems, sustained wildlife, and provided essential resources to communities. In colonial times, forests supplied timber and fuel, rivers carried goods and people, and natural landscapes defined local livelihoods. Today, those same forests—managed carefully for sustainability—offer sanctuary to wildlife, clean air, and quiet spaces for reflection.

The state parks system, established in the late 19th century, grew from recognition that natural beauty and public access were treasures worth protecting. Over 130 years later, Pennsylvania boasts over **120 state parks** and **20 state forests**, encompassing over 2.5 million acres of conserved lands. These areas offer trails for hiking, paddling routes for rivers and lakes, picnic grounds, campsites, and historic sites that tell the story of Pennsylvania's past.

Forests are central to the state's conservation legacy. They are **living classrooms, vibrant habitats, and places for personal renewal**. A walk along the waterfalls of **Ricketts Glen** or the towering hemlocks of the **Allen Seeger Natural Area** is a reminder of the resilience of nature—and of the value of protecting these lands for future generations.



Wilderness Wheels Participating Partner



Marci Mowery, Boyd Big Tree State Park

Freedom to Explore: More Than a Theme

The concept of **“freedom to explore”** resonates deeply this anniversary year. Parks and forests provide spaces where visitors can step away from modern routines, stretch their legs on a new trail, or paddle a quiet river. They are places to unplug, marvel at fall foliage, track the songs of birds in spring, or gaze at the canopy of stars on a clear night.

Freedom to explore also means **accessibility**. Pennsylvania's parks and forests are increasingly designed to welcome everyone, regardless of ability. Accessible trails, educational programs, and innovative tools such as **EnChroma goggles**—available at **Oil Creek State Park** and **Black Moshannon State Park**—help visitors with red-green color vision differences experience the vibrant hues of fall leaves, wildflowers, and forest landscapes.

Try EnChroma Goggles!

- **Where:** Oil Creek State Park & Black Moshannon State Park
- **Cost:** Free to borrow
- **Tip:** Ask at the park office upon arrival
- **Experience:** Enhanced color contrast helps visitors with red-green color vision differences see forests, rivers, and wildlife in new ways

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Experiencing Nature Across the Seasons

Pennsylvania's forests and parks offer unique experiences in every season:

- **Spring:** Forest floors bloom with trilliums and wildflowers; migratory birds return, filling the air with song, warm temperatures beckon picnickers and time with family and friends.
- **Summer:** Canopies of green provide shade for hiking and camping; lakes invite swimming, boating, and fishing; wildlife such as deer, foxes, and turtles can be observed in their natural habitats.
- **Fall:** Hardwood forests blaze with reds, oranges, and golds. Fall foliage drives visitors to scenic overlooks, trails, and riverbanks to witness nature's spectacular display, or may inspire artists to set up easels to paint.
- **Winter:** Snow-covered trails and frozen lakes offer opportunities for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and quiet reflection in a serene landscape.

Stories from the Trails

One of the most powerful aspects of Pennsylvania's parks and forests is the personal connection visitors develop with the land.

- **Cowans Gap State Park:** Blend history with nature as you explore this park. In 1755, during the French and Indian War, Colonel James Burd began building a supply road from Shippensburg to aid British forces advancing toward the French-held Forks of the Ohio (Pittsburgh).
- **Tyler State Park:** Take a walk or bike around the park, and let your imagination take you back to the Revolutionary War, when the Doan brothers and their cousin---British sympathizers---used an area of the park as a hideout.
- **Point State Park:** Look for tons of activity at this park in 2026! From the NFL draft to the celebration of Fort Pitt, the western theater of the Revolutionary War and a key supply point for the Continental Army.

For many, these experiences are deeply personal. A first-time hiker may feel a sense of independence and accomplishment. Families can bond over a shared paddle. Volunteers helping restore trails or clean rivers gain a profound connection to the land and community. These stories illustrate how parks and forests are **places of freedom, discovery, and belonging.**

Share your story as we capture 250 Voices for the Outdoors

If you want to share what parks and forests mean to you, scan this QR code or visit :
250 Voices:
<https://ppff.events/250-voices-of-the-outdoors>



If you want to share why you volunteer, scan this QR code or visit:
250 Volunteers:
<https://ppff.events/250-volunteer-stories>



Engaging the Community in 250th Celebrations

To mark Pennsylvania's **250th anniversary**, the **Freedom to Explore campaign** invites residents and visitors to rediscover their parks and forests. Opportunities include:

- **Photo contests:** Capture your favorite park or forest moments and share your vision of exploration.
- **Challenges to help you explore YOUR state parks and forests**, including the BINGO challenge found in this newsletter.
- **Volunteer opportunities:** Help maintain trails, restore habitats, or conserve heritage.
- **Accessibility initiatives:** Support accessibility through fundraising campaigns and hands-on projects.

Share Your Adventure!

Use **#FreedomToExplorePA** and **#CaringForWhatWeShare** to show how you're celebrating Pennsylvania's 250th anniversary in the outdoors. Tag us on your social posts. Selected photos may be featured in future newsletters or on social media.

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Why It Matters

Exploring forests and parks is more than recreation—it supports **physical health, mental well-being, and social connection**. Studies consistently show that time spent in nature reduces stress, improves mood, and strengthens the immune system. It also fosters stewardship: the more people explore and connect with these lands, the more likely they are to advocate for their protection.

In essence, Pennsylvania's state parks and forests are **living symbols of freedom**, spaces where individuals and communities can exercise choice, curiosity, and care. They reflect the values of our 250-year history while providing lessons, experiences, and enjoyment for generations to come.



Erin Patterson, Presque Isle State Park



Sherry Acevedo, Jacobsburg State Park

This year, consider:

- Trying a trail you've never hiked
- Visiting a state forest or park for the first time
- Inviting family or friends to enjoy a new activity or place
- Try a new activity
- Rolling up your sleeves and getting involved in a volunteer day or weekend

From the shores of Lake Erie at Presque Isle State Park to the waving grasses at Big Elk Creek State Park, Pennsylvania's forests and parks are ready to welcome you. **Freedom to explore isn't just a celebration of the past—it's an invitation to create your own story in the outdoors.**



Intern Emily, gathering stamps in her Pennsylvania State Parks and Forests Passport.

Celebrating Freedom to Explore in Your Parks and Forests

As we celebrate **250 years of Pennsylvania independence**, the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation invites everyone to discover the **freedom to explore**. Whether walking a quiet forest trail, paddling a meandering creek, observing or photographing wildlife, or simply sitting among the trees, each visitor has the chance to connect with history, nature, and community in a personal and meaningful way.

Celebrate Pennsylvania's State Parks and Forests

Step into your state park or forest, breathe in the fresh air, and think about your role in conserving these special places for future generations. Share your adventures online with **#FreedomToExplorePA**, join a challenge, share your story, roll up your sleeves, and help inspire others to connect with Pennsylvania's outdoors.

2025 Photo Contest Winners

Best In Show



Best in Show - Judges' Choice: Bernadette Chiarmonte, Tioga State Forest (entered in the Tales/Tails on the Trail category)



Best in Show - People's Choice: Cindy Schaltenbrand, Pymatuning State Park (entered in the Peaceful Easy Feeling category)

Beyond the Trail



Beyond the Trail - Judges' Choice: Dallas Runser, Moshannon State Forest

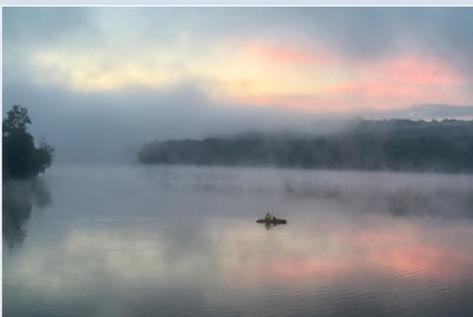


Beyond the Trail - People's Choice: Sondra Ream, Susquehannock State Park



Beyond the Trail - Runner Up: Dorothy Monahan, Pymatuning State Park

Comradery on the Trail



Comradery on the Trail - Judges' Choice: Ingrid Brown, Shawnee State Park



Comradery on the Trail - People's Choice: Cathy Straub, Sinnemahoning State Park



Comradery on the Trail - Runner Up: Crystal Schreffler, Susquehannock State Park

Peaceful Easy Feeling



Peaceful Easy Feeling - Judges' Choice:
Bruce Walkovich, Prince Gallitzin State Park



Peaceful Easy Feeling - People's Choice:
Ally Latham, Ricketts Glen State Park

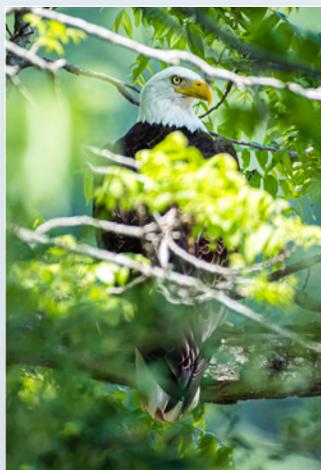


Peaceful Easy Feeling - Runner Up:
Abigail Duncan, Beltzville State Park

Tales/Tails on the Trail



Tales/Tails on the Trail - Judges' Choice:
Benjamin Windle, Benjamin Rush State Park



Tales/Tails on the Trail - People's Choice:
Amanda Wydra, Vosburg Neck State Park



Tales/Tails on the Trail - Runner Up:
Jennifer Scott, Clear Creek State Park

Texture From Trail



Texture From Trail - Judges' Choice:
Colin Gillette, Mt. Pisgah State Park



Texture From Trail - People's Choice:
Laura Nespola, Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center



Texture From Trail - Runner Up:
Carrie Huggler, Presque Isle State Park

Young Photographers



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



Young Photographers - People's Choice:
Chloe Benfer, Shikellamy State Park



Young Photographers - Runner Up:
Nicholas Ingegneri, Norristown Farm Park

Mosaic: Making Pennsylvania's Outdoors Welcoming for Everyone

By Arlene Marshall-Hockensmith, Esq.
DCNR Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

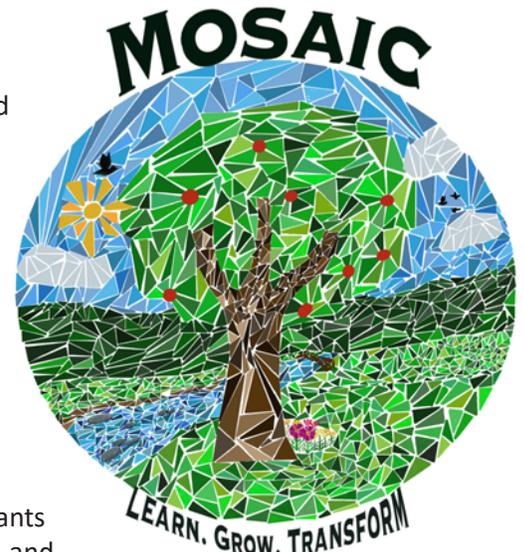
The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) believes the outdoors should be a place where everyone feels welcome, safe, and connected. DCNR's Mosaic Initiative guides how the agency manages and shares parks, trails, forests, and waterways, ensuring they are accessible, inclusive, and reflective of all people. Mosaic also informs the department's efforts to build a workforce that reflects the population of the Commonwealth.

Why Mosaic Matters in the Outdoors

- **Access for All:** Mosaic inspires improvements such as physical accessibility upgrades, multilingual resources, and sensory-friendly trails so people of all abilities and backgrounds can enjoy nature.
- **Bringing Nature Closer:** Not everyone can easily reach state parks. Through grants and community partnerships, DCNR supports playgrounds, local green spaces, and neighborhood nature programs, bringing the outdoors closer to home.
- **Inclusive Engagement:** Mosaic ensures the agency listens to and collaborates with communities historically underrepresented in conservation, so all voices help shape how lands are experienced.
- **Connecting People to Place:** Pennsylvania's lands hold rich and often untold histories. Sharing these stories helps visitors from all backgrounds feel a personal connection to the land.

Whether it's exploring a state park, visiting a local green space supported by DCNR grants, or discovering the rich cultural histories of Pennsylvania's lands, Mosaic invites everyone to connect with nature, feel a sense of belonging, and experience the outdoors in meaningful ways.

Mosaic is more than a guiding initiative. It's a promise that DCNR's natural spaces are for everyone, today and for generations to come.



Celebrating the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps

By Olivia Leas, Administrative Officer, Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps

2025 was the 10th year for the Outdoor Corps. We'd like to thank the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation for sponsoring our largest alumni picnic yet. It was held at Black Moshannon State Park in August. We welcomed alumni and their families as well as officials from DCNR and Student Conservation Association (SCA).

SCA presented the program with a proclamation to celebrate 10 years of outstanding youth engagement. The picnic is just one way that we stay connected with alumni throughout their professional journey. We are beginning to develop regional alumni events and 2026 will provide multiple events across the state.

The 10th anniversary brought recognition from Governor Shapiro and the state legislature. This provided additional funding which has allowed increased program staff and implementation of a regional staffing model. This immediately led to improvements and growth that the program will bring into 2026!



New for 2026:

- A second adult roving trail crew
- A crew specifically for college students during the summer
- A second American Sign Language inclusion crew in the Philadelphia community
- Return of the Lehigh Valley summer youth crew
- Increased alumni engagement
- Enhanced professional development and environmental education opportunities



PA Outdoor Corps is hiring for summer youth crews!



Work with a small crew and awesome mentors to make a real impact in Pennsylvania's outdoors this summer!

Youth Members

- **Dates:** June 29 - August 7, 2026
- **Schedule:** Monday-Friday 7 am - 3:30 pm
- **Ages:** 15+
- **Pay:** \$17.31 per hour

Field Leaders

- **Dates:** June 10 - August 11, 2026
- **Schedule:** Monday - Friday 7 am - 3:30 pm
- **Ages:** 21+
- **Pay:** \$19.37 per hour

Provided for all: Lunch, personal protective equipment, and daily transport from a central meeting location within your city to the project site.

250 CELEBRATIONS BINGO

To celebrate 250 years of Pennsylvania’s outdoor heritage, we invite you to explore, connect, and give back through 250 Celebrations Bingo. Each square represents a simple way to engage with parks, forests, history, and community—whether from home or out on the trail. Complete activities to fill a row, column, or the entire card.

EXPLORE	READ, WATCH, LISTEN	CONNECT & SHARE	GIVE BACK	PARTICIPATE & ADVOCATE
Visit a museum or historic site near a state park or forest 	Listen to the Think Outside Podcast 	Introduce someone to a park or forest	Volunteer at a park, forest or with a friends group	Take action through the PPFF Action Center
Visit a state park or forest	Read and share a PPFF blog 	Share a favorite park or forest photo	Participate in Healthy Lands Week 	Attend a PPFF or Friends Group, pop-up event or program
Visit 25 state parks or forests this year	Sign up for <i>Take Five Fridays with Pam</i> 	 FREE SPACE Freedom to Explore	Connect with PPFF on Meetup https://www.meetup.com/ppff-events/	Participate in Run for the Trees (walk, roll, or run) 
Learn the history of a state park or forest	Read a PPFF Book Club selection	Share a podcast episode with a friend	Plant a tree at your home or with a group	Become a PPFF member 
Explore a trail, boardwalk, or accessible feature	Watch a Conservation Heritage Project documentary 	Share a memory through “250 Voices for the Outdoors” 	Donate to the Outdoors for All campaign 	Attend the PPFF Annual Banquet 

How to Play

There's no right way to play:

- Do one square or go for Bingo
- Participate solo or with friends and family
- Share your progress along the way

Most of all, have fun—and help us celebrate 250 Years of Freedom to Explore: Expanding Access for All

How It Works

- Download your 250 Celebrations Bingo card from our website or print out the one on the back of this page
- Complete activities throughout the year—big or small
- Submit your progress anytime using our online form
- Optional: share photos or stories to inspire others
- Rolling participation is open all year

Submissions received by October 31, 2026 will be included in our year-end celebration and prize drawings.

Why Participate

- Discover new parks, programs, and stories
- Support conservation and accessibility
- Be part of a statewide community celebrating 250 years of outdoor heritage
- Be a voice for parks and forests
- Get recognized as a 250 Celebrations Champion



TUNE IN AT THINKOUTSIDE.ORG
Wherever you get your podcasts!

Bonus/Swap-In Squares

- Spend 30 minutes each week outdoors
- Post a positive review of the PA Parks & Forests Passport
- Use the following Hashtags on social media:
#PA250 #FreedomToExplore #PAParksAndForests #CaringForWhatWeShare
- Follow and tag us on your social posts
- Practice Leave No Trace Principles
- Post a picture of you getting a stamp in your Pennsylvania State Parks and Forests Passport
- Visit a small business near a state park or forest
- Create your own adventure!

Recognition & Rewards

Participants may be:

- Featured on our website or social media
- Highlighted in our newsletter
- Included in monthly spotlights and drawings
- Recognized in our year-end celebration

Recognition is always optional—and photos or stories are never required.

You can download a copy of the playing card at:

<https://paparksandforests.org/our-work/stewardship/celebrate-250/>



To submit updates on your progress (at any time!) and to win prizes, visit:

<https://ppff.online/play-celebrate-250-bingo>



Bob Ross Happy Little Virtual 5K - April 18-26, 2026

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

SIGN UP!

You get a tshirt, medal, and race bib!

PA state parks and forests get tree money!

PPFF.Online/Happy5K2026

Partnerships

Seeing the World Through Color Correcting Goggles

Visitors to **Oil Creek State Park** and **Black Moshannon State Park** now have a new way to explore and enjoy Pennsylvania's landscapes. Through a partnership supported by **AARP**, EnChroma® color-contrast goggles are available **free of charge** for visitors to borrow during their park visits.

The EnChroma goggles are designed to enhance color contrast for people with red-green color vision deficiencies, offering an opportunity to experience natural scenery—such as forest canopies, wildflowers, and seasonal foliage—in a new way.

“Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests are for everyone,” said Marci Mowery, President of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation “By offering EnChroma goggles at Oil Creek and Black Moshannon, we are taking another step toward making outdoor spaces more welcoming, inclusive, and engaging for visitors of all ages and abilities.”



source: DCNR

People perceive color in many ways. Color vision differences are common, affecting millions of people in the United States. By making these goggles available at no cost, the Foundation and the state parks aim to remove barriers and invite visitors to explore the outdoors in ways that work best for them.

Educational Improvement Tax Credit

More than 4700 students attended 179 programs supported through the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation’s partnership with our Educational Improvement Tax Credit donors and Pennsylvania State Parks. These students study watershed education or explore the dynamic world of migrating songbirds through hands-on learning classes.

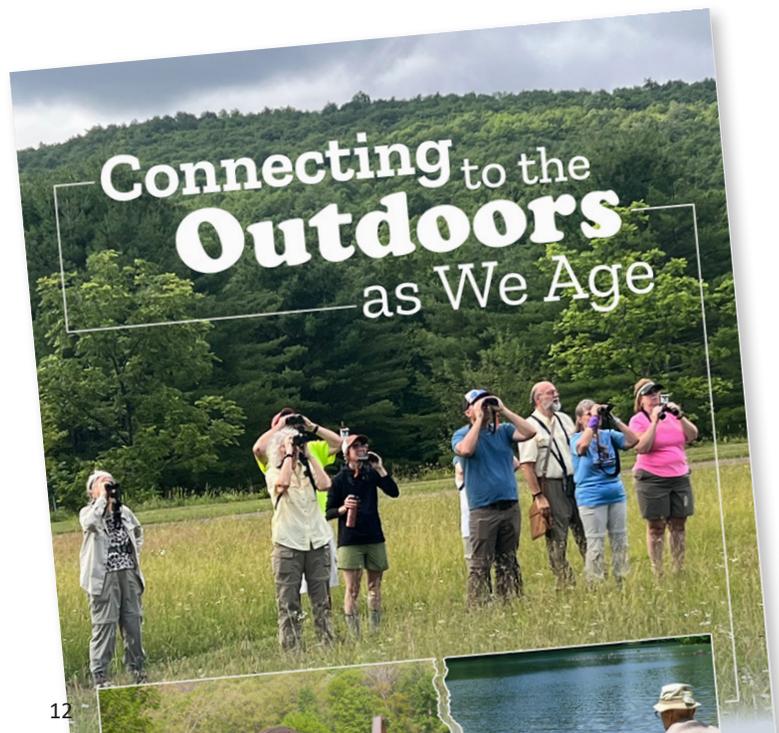
A shout out to our 2025 donors: Mid Penn Bank, Pennian Bank, Weis Markets and Troegs Brewing Company.



source: DCNR

Aging and the Outdoors

Special Guest Nicole Faraguna, Director, Office of Planning & Policy at DCNR, joined **Think Outside with the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation Podcast** host Marci Mowery to discuss the toolkit available for helping seniors remain active throughout their life. The toolkit is available on the DCNR website at: [pa.gov/GetDocument?docId=9777413&DocName=Guide to Keeping Older Adults Connected to Nature.pdf](https://pa.gov/GetDocument?docId=9777413&DocName=Guide%20to%20Keeping%20Older%20Adults%20Connected%20to%20Nature.pdf)





Welcome New Staff Members!

In fall, Tasha accepted a new adventure. This January, we welcomed two new staff members to the team.

Bryce Kruger, Chapter and Public Engagement Coordinator

Bryce feels most like himself when he's surrounded by nature. Whether enjoying a vista, studying native flora, or getting soil under his fingernails, he pursues the lessons of nature with curiosity and awe at every opportunity. With a background including small town main streets, mid-sized agencies, and international organizations, Bryce aims to help others foster mutually beneficial relationships with the natural world around us.

Bryce is a 2025 Alumni of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps, where he served as a Youth Crew Leader in York County. See the article on Page 9 to learn more about the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps.



Carla Eissing, Communication and Outreach Coordinator

Carla's first experience with PPFF was as an intern while she was attending Shippensburg University and she just couldn't stay away!

After almost a decade in watershed education and advocacy, she's back in parks and ready to explore with her rescued & retired greyhound leading the way.

Carla's love of the outdoors and national parks was sparked in middle school during a road trip up the Pacific Coast and since then her wanderlust has never stopped.

Outside of work, she loves to travel, hike, kayak, visit all places spooky and weird, spend time with family and friends, and play roller derby with Harrisburg Area Roller Derby (HARD) and Divergence RD.



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

We Will Miss

Lenwood Sloan

Year end saw the passing of Lenwood Sloan, a true legend in the Harrisburg community and a former member of the PPF Board.

The tribute penned by (we assume here) Barbara Barksdale of PA Hallowed Grounds and the Friends of the Midland Cemetery (herself a PPF award winner) sums up the loss best: [Leni] was full of energy and had a great passion for saving, documenting, living interpretation and speaking about history... He left his mark wherever he went. His deep voice would carry across crowds in a noise filled room. He would ask leading questions to make the audience think and respond... all the time causing more questions and answers.

The photo in Harrisburg's Penn-Live news story of his passing in full Juneteenth regalia brings a smile of recognition in spite of the sadness of the occasion.

Gene Free August 5, 1934 – January 13, 2026

Following his retirement from PennDOT, where he worked as a truck driver for many years, Gene threw himself into community and family. He was an avid fisherman and hunter, was active with Boy Scouts, the Sheakleyville Fair, Commodore Perry School, and Goddard State Park. His late wife, Adda, and he built the butterfly garden at Commodore Perry and were founding members of the Friends of Goddard and were instrumental in the beginning and fostering of Pioneer Frolic, an event celebrating the history and heritage of the area that endured for many years.

Gene's touching obituary included the opening line: "After a life well lived and a love that never faded, Gene A. Free, 91, passed away on January 13, 2026, finally reunited in Heaven with his wife Adda, the love of life." Gene and Adda were certainly a force to be reckoned together and apart.

David Johnson 1951 – 2026

Seemingly a born naturalist, Dave Johnson spent the better part of his professional life as the manager (and after retirement a volunteer) at Jennings Environmental Education Center. Dave was an advocate for prescribed fire, Massasauga rattlesnakes, and bees, botany, brews, and blacksmithing. His was a fascinating life and we encourage all our readers to take a moment to read of it at the tribute page <https://www.davejohnson.life>.



2026 PHOTO CONTEST



SALUTING AMERICA'S 250 IN IMAGES FROM PENNSYLVANIA'S STATE PARKS AND FORESTS

Photos:
Main Image - Candice Kubinec, Laurel Hill State Park
Left: Friends of Prince Gallitzin State Park
Middle: Pam Metzger, Laurel Hill State Park
Right: Bill Hamilton, Hyner View State Park

The Categories

- Pursuit of Happiness ✓
- Voices of the Land ✓
- Paths Through Time ✓
- Freedom to Belong ✓
- We the Stewards ✓
- Young Photographer ✓

Get the Rules and Entry Information ppff.events/2026-photo-contest



KEEP PENNSYLVANIA'S DARK SKIES DARK

It can take 30 minutes or more for your eyes to fully adjust to darkness. Small actions help protect night skies for people and wildlife alike.

WHY DARK SKIES MATTER

- Protect wildlife and natural rhythms
- Support human health and sleep
- Preserve our view of the stars
- Reduce energy waste

WHEN CAMPING OR VISITING A DARK SKY AREA

- Use low-level red light or add a red filter to flashlights and lamps
- Close blinds or curtains in tents, cabins, and campers
- Turn off outside lights and string lights when not in use
- Direct light downward, not toward the sky
- Be mindful of vehicle lights when arriving, leaving, or opening doors

CHOOSE NIGHT-FRIENDLY LIGHTING

- Use warm-colored bulbs (amber or yellow)
- Select the lowest brightness needed for safety
- Avoid decorative lighting overnight

AT HOME

- Use only the light you need
- Shield outdoor lights so they shine downward
- Install timers or motion sensors for security lighting
- Encourage your community to pass a lighting ordinance.

Smart lighting improves safety. Thoughtful, well-placed light helps everyone see better at night.

Thank you for helping protect Pennsylvania's night skies—for today and for generations to come.



Connect with us!



PAParksAndForests.org | 717-236-7644

You Made it Happen

When Trees Mean More

After the removal of the ash trees on the Nockamixon State Park disc golf course, the area looked like a dystopian novel. Enter the heroes. Working with park staff, the disc golf club and super volunteer JC have been leading an effort to replant trees. With support from funds provided by donors and People First Federal Credit Union, along with the generosity of Highland Hill Farms, trees are returning.



Members of People First Federal Credit Union pose after a day of tree planting at the park.

If You Have Seen One, You Haven't Seen Them All

The inaugural "Seen Them All Challenge" picnic brought together forty state park and forest enthusiasts to share stories, gain insights, and celebrate Pennsylvania's state park and forest system. Four participants shared their stories and ideas for approaching the challenge on the *Think Outside with the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation* podcast, found wherever you listened to podcast or on our YouTube channel.



These Boots Were Made for... Exploring

Where you might see boots, we see children of all ages exploring the park and learning about aquatic ecosystems. Your support and a donation from the AARP Liveable Communities Grant program enabled the acquisition of boots for Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center



Experiences That Shape Us

Heading towards the bus to leave the park, one student commented, "this was the best field trip I ever had!" To you and I, a visit to a state park is likely commonplace. Even being within close proximity to several state parks, this was the first opportunity most of the students on the field trip had to visit a state park.



Quote from a teacher whose students were able to use a Wilderness Wheels program transportation scholarship to visit Prince Gallitzin State Park.

"We cannot thank you and your organization enough for this opportunity. The kids loved it! 'There is so much to see!' 'This is the best field trip ever!' They got to see animal tracks, signs of their homes in the woods, and actual squirrels, frogs, and deer. What an experience!"

Removing Barriers

Learning, listening, and problem-solving in action. This past October, members of ten Friends Groups gathered to strengthen their skills and collaborate on ways to reduce barriers and expand access to outdoor recreation.



Interns Return

Our summer interns returned for the holiday break, helping to organize the AARP purchases to reduce barriers to outdoor activities, research tour ideas, and to write a history on the Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail.



You Made it Happen

Black Moshannon Tree Planting

Trees create habitat, block wind, reduce shoreline erosion, and help to clean the air. Black Moshannon State Park received funds to help plant trees at the park.



Parks and Forest Feeling the Love

Parks, forests and friends groups also benefited from your support and the grant from AARP Liveable Communities via the donation of items to create access to outdoor recreation. Items donated will be available for free loan from the receiving locations.



Libraries of Things

Access matters. These donated items are now part of local libraries, who have *Libraries of Things*, helping community members overcome common barriers to outdoor recreation and making it easier for more people to enjoy Pennsylvania's parks and forests. PPF worked with twenty libraries to place items across the state, connecting citizens to outdoor recreation to improve physical, mental and emotional health.



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FOUNDATION AWARDS BANQUET

MAY 12 | 4:30 PM - 7:30 PM | LITTLE BUFFALO STATE PARK

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DIFFERENCE THROUGH THEIR WORK AND
VOLUNTEERISM

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2026 PPF Virtual Book Club

Join us at 12pm online to discuss some of our favorite books! Scan the QR code or get details at <https://ppfevents/book-club-2026>

<p>Feb 25, 2026</p>	<p>April 22, 2026</p>	<p>June 24, 2026</p>
<p>August 26, 2026</p>	<p>October 18, 2026</p>	<p>December 16, 2026</p>

Friends in Action

Friends of Colonel Denning

The Friends of Colonel Denning joined the ranks of the First Day Hike hosts with their first-ever trek. Forty people and four dogs shared a hike, hot dogs and cocoa, and the reminder that in addition to this being the 250th anniversary of the nation's Declaration of Independence it is the park's 90th anniversary as well.



Friends of Caledonia

The Friends of Caledonia had a busy December. With the muscle of the PA Outdoor Corps, they funded the lumber for a new bridge connecting the Water Line trail to the Midland Trail and new stone on the Midland Trail. Additional funds were used to purchase an extra large grill for the playground area outside the pool. Your firewood purchases help make great projects like these a reality.



Friends of Kings Gap

Another season of music in and around the Cameron Mansion wrapped up in December with the annual appearance by the Steve Rudolph Jazz Ensemble. It was a cozy and elegant evening!



The Friends of Prince Gallitzin

In October the Friends paid tribute to Joe & Dee Trentini for 25 years as campground hosts. Joe is the longtime Vice Chair of the Friends and both are on task for every event big and small the Friends put together. Congratulations and thank you, Joe & Dee! (Shown here with Park Manager Jessica Lavelua and Assistant Manager Tim Yeager)



Friends of Laurel Hill

The Friends were on hand for the park's 80th birthday party in October where the focus was, naturally, the CCC who built the park. Shown here is the calm before the storm - the crowds were large all day at Camp Tree Army, with cookies, music, and these two vintage vehicles on the grounds. (Photos by Joel Barko)

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

Bring Your Voice

Advocacy Is a Year-Round Commitment

Advocacy for Pennsylvania's parks and forests doesn't only happen when there's a bill to track or a funding decision at stake. Much of the most effective advocacy work happens in quieter moments—when we're building relationships, sharing stories, and preparing to speak up when it matters most.

At the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, advocacy means helping decision-makers understand the value of our public lands long before a challenge arises. It's about elevating the voices of park users, volunteers, Friends Groups, and communities who care deeply about these places. When we share stories of connection, access, and impact, we help ensure parks and forests remain a priority in conversations about funding, policy, and community well-being.

This steady, proactive approach also allows us to respond thoughtfully when action is needed. By staying informed, engaging our supporters, and maintaining open lines of communication with agency partners and legislators, we're ready to mobilize—not react. Advocacy, at its core, is about showing up consistently and speaking with purpose.

Even when there isn't a specific issue on the table, you can be an advocate.

What You Can Do Now

You don't have to wait for a policy debate to be an advocate for parks and forests. Here are a few simple ways to stay engaged and help build a strong foundation for the future (a few of them even allow you to claim a space on your Bingo card):

- **Stay informed** by signing up for PPF advocacy alerts and updates
- **Share your story** about why Pennsylvania's parks and forests matter to you. See the 250 Voices Campaign on page 4
- **Introduce someone new** to a state park or forest
- **Support Friends Groups** through volunteering or attending an event
- **Use your voice** by engaging with the PPF Action Center when opportunities arise

Every action—big or small—helps ensure our parks and forests remain cared for, accessible, and valued.



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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

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 PPF!

\$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

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

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