

Penn's Stewards

News from the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation

Summer 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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Presque Isle, Photo by Marci Mowery

StayCations

By Marci Mowery

One of my favorite aspects of living in Pennsylvania is how endlessly explorable it is. You don't need to travel far to find something that sparks curiosity — a trail you've never walked, a small town with a story to tell, a museum tucked into a historic building, a farm stand overflowing with summer produce, or a state park that feels like it was waiting just for you.

According to the Department of Community and Economic Development, more than **201 million visitors** come to Pennsylvania each year. Tourism supports **1 in 16 jobs** and generates nearly **\$84 billion** in economic impact. People travel from across the country — and around the world — to experience what we have right here in our backyard.

Here at PPFF, we believe Pennsylvanians shouldn't leave all the fun to the visitors. This summer, we're encouraging everyone to take a **Pennsylvania staycation** — to look at your own community and region with the same sense of wonder that travelers bring with them. When you do, you start to see the Commonwealth differently: not as a place you simply live, but as a place worth exploring.

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President's Message

Like many of you, my passion for nature began when I was first introduced to the outdoors—in my case through my grandfather's passion for the outdoors and as a Girl Scout. This came full circle, when, in April, I was humbled to be recognized as a Woman of Distinction by Girl Scouts in the Heart of Central Pennsylvania.

I don't see this recognition as something earned alone. Conservation work is collaborative by nature. It reflects the volunteers who give their time, the partners who share the vision, the mentors who offer guidance, and the communities who care enough to engage. It is the people like YOU, who support the work of the Foundation.

As I think about the award, I hope that young people know that preserving nature isn't just about protecting trees or wildlife. It's about protecting possibility.

When we care for parks, forests, and open spaces, we are safeguarding places where people discover confidence, resilience, curiosity, and belonging. A trail can teach persistence. A stream can spark scientific discovery. A playground can build social skills. A night sky may spark wonder, while also calming the mind.

Preserving nature is also about fairness. Future generations deserve the same chance to explore, breathe clean air, find adventure, and feel peace outdoors. Conservation is one of the most tangible ways we show care for people we may never meet.

The self reflection that came with the award reminded me that we all belong in these spaces. Nature is not reserved for a certain type of person. It is not limited by background or experience.

As I close, remember that the choices we make today shape the world our children and grandchildren will inherit. That is both a responsibility and an incredible opportunity.

This summer, I hope that you find time to reflect on how you became connected to nature—my guess was it was through a family member, friend, or group such as Scouting. Perhaps you can return the favor, and introduce someone new to the outdoors—and share the possibilities.



Jayne Huston, Chair, Girl Scouts in the Heart of Pennsylvania
Marci Mowery, President, PPFF
Katelyn Smith, Anchor, Channel 8 News.

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A Sense of Place: Pennsylvania's Conservation Landscapes

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with retired DCNR Conservation Landscape Lead **Meredith Hill** to talk about the origin and value of Pennsylvania's **eight Conservation Landscapes**. These landscapes aren't defined by county lines or political boundaries. They're shaped by something deeper — a shared sense of place, where natural, cultural, agricultural, and community assets come together to form a living, breathing identity.



Ohiopyle State Park, Photo by Marci Mowery

Each landscape has its own character:

- **Kittatinny Ridge** – A globally significant migration corridor and biodiversity powerhouse
- **Laurel Highlands** – A region where ridges, rivers, and cultural heritage intertwine
- **Lehigh Valley Greenways** – Where trails and greenways connect people to nature and history
- **Pennsylvania Wilds** – A vast, rural region defined by rugged beauty and outdoor adventure
- **Poconos Forests and Waters** – Chockful of forested slopes, river valleys, and rich cultural history
- **Schuylkill Highlands** – With green spaces woven into some of the state's most populated areas
- **South Mountain** – Where agriculture, culture, and conservation meet
- **Susquehanna Riverlands** – A river corridor linking communities, wildlife, and working lands

What unites them is collaboration. Partners come together to strengthen communities, protect natural resources, and celebrate the unique stories that make each region special. These landscapes are reminders that conservation isn't just about land — it's about people, identity, and the places we call home.

That's why Conservation Landscapes are such a perfect fit for a Pennsylvania staycation. Each landscape is built around a strong sense of place — the trails, towns, farms, waterways, history, and culture that make a region unique. They offer ready made pathways for exploration, inviting you to experience your own backyard the way a traveler would: with curiosity, appreciation, and a willingness to discover something new.

A Perfect Summer for Rediscovery

This year is an especially meaningful time to explore. Pennsylvania is celebrating the creation of its **125th state park** as well as expansion of our state forests, milestones that reflect decades of stewardship and public investment.

In April, Laurel Caverns became Pennsylvania's first underground state park. Donated to the state by owners David and Lillian Cale, the caverns consist of more than four miles of underground trails, and over 400 acres above ground to explore. While access to the park is free, there is a fee for cavern tours, led by experienced staff of the Laurel Caverns Conservancy. Above ground one can find scenic views, picnic tables, and access to the Forbes State Forest and State Game Lands.



Laurel Caverns State Park, Photos by left, Marci Mowery. Right, Pam Metzger

Turn a trip to the Caverns into a multi-day adventure—with side trips to see the historic Wharton Iron Furnace and Pennsylvania's highpoint, Mount Davis, both located in the Forbes State Forest. Take a rafting trip that meets your thrill level at Ohiopyle State Park or bring your bicycle for a ride on the Great Allegheny Passage.

Long distance hiking calling you? The 72-mile Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail connects Ohiopyle to Seward, offering eight shelter areas that can be reserved by calling Laurel Hill State Park. Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, the LHHT might also be explored via day trips.

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State forests recently added a unique destination, when Bilgers Rocks became a part of Moshannon State Forest. This acquisition—combined with other additions—expanded forestry holdings to 2.3 million acres. Bilgers Rocks is a 173-acre tract centered around a 20-acre rock formation described as a classic “rock city” made up of sandstone blocks.

Not just for the geologists among us, Bilgers also includes hiking, hunting (in season), picnicking, horseback riding, geocaching, and educational programming. In the “neighborhood,” you’ll find the David S. Ammerman Trail (traveling from Clearfield to Grampian) for a 20 mile bike ride, access to the West Branch of the Susquehanna River for a paddling excursion, and, a little farther afield, access to the Quehanna Wild Area for a hike in one of Pennsylvania’s truly magnificent wilderness retreats.

And speaking of trails, the Ghost Town Trail in Indiana and Cambria counties recently became America’s second longest loop rail trail. The 52-mile-long trail contains a 32-mile continuous loop, featuring both history and nature, as the trail flows past two massive iron furnaces, old coal-loading tipples, boney (coal-refuse) piles and other traces of industrial history.

Near to the trail, visitors might explore Yellow Creek State Park, where you’ll find 20 miles of trail to satisfy the mountain bikers, community sailing (lessons and regattas), and fishing from the park’s accessible pier.

History and Nature Meet

Did you know that many of Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests provide opportunities to explore the past? From museums to historic furnaces to interpretive panels, these places do not disappoint.

The 2026 State Park Calendar showcases thirteen locations (some now part of the National Park System) that capture the spirit of Americas250. To the right are a few examples pulled from the calendar.

Park	Description
Codorus State Park	The park is located on land that formerly housed the Mary Ann Furnace (built in 1762) believed to be the first charcoal furnace built on the western side of the Susquehanna River. The furnace supplied cannon balls and grapeshot for the Continental Army and employed Hessian prisoners to run the ironworks while many of the workforce were off fighting the British.
Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center	The history of Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center focuses on the Henry Family and their small arms industry, which played a key role in the American Industrial Revolution.
White Clay Creek Preserve	The area was part of the land originally purchased by William Penn from the Lenni Lenape in 1683. The preserve's rich history includes the impact of the Revolutionary War, the establishment of the Mason-Dixon Line, and the abolitionist movement.
Independence National Historic Park	The area that now comprises Independence Mall was initially designated as Independence Mall State Park by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1945. In 1974, the mall was transferred to the National Park Service, and it became a part of Independence National Historical Park in 1997.
Point State Park	Fort Pitt, located within Point State Park, served as the headquarters for the western theater of the Revolutionary War and was a key supply point for the Continental Army.
Valley Forge National Historic Park	Valley Forge was established as the first state park of Pennsylvania in 1893 by the Valley Forge Park Commission (VFPC) "to preserve, improve, and maintain as a public park the site on which General George Washington's army encamped at Valley Forge." [7] The area around Washington's headquarters was chosen as the park site.
Ridley Creek State Park	The Colonial Pennsylvania Farmstead provides visitors to Ridley Creek State Park with an accurate picture of life on a Delaware County farm prior to the American Revolution. The farmstead has been a working farm for more than 300 years. It is restored to a late 18th century appearance.
Susquehanna Riverlands State Park	The Susquehanna Riverlands State Park is situated within a region deeply connected to the Revolutionary War. The area, including the Codorus Furnace, played a role in supplying the Continental Army with materials. The park's history is intertwined with the Hellam Hills Iron Works, which was in operation during the war and produced cannon balls and grapeshot
Fort Washington State Park	Fort Washington State Park is named for a temporary fort built by American soldiers during the 1777 Whitemarsh Encampment. Washington's army camped here for a month before moving to Valley Forge. Fort Hill marks the fort's original site.

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Codorus State Park, Photo by Tammy Martin



Point State Park, Photo by Fort Pitt Blockhouse 1764

In 2024, an intern with the Foundation produced a guide to museums and historical locations near state parks and forests. You can download that file here: ppff.online/museums

Whether you're visiting a beloved favorite or discovering a new gem, every park and forest offers a chance to reconnect with nature, history, and yourself.

Head Out with a Group of Friends – or a Friends Group

Across the state, Friends groups are hosting events, volunteer days, educational programs, and community celebrations. These gatherings are wonderful opportunities to meet new people, learn new skills, and support the parks and forests you love.

From a Lumber Legacy Day with the Friends of Black Moshannon to Fall Furnace Fest with Friends of Pine Grove Furnace--keep an eye on the PPFF calendar of events on the website with a quick scan of the QR or a click to the top of any page of paparksandforests.org.



Photo by Cathy Jackson

Local Communities

Don't overlook the small communities that surround or serve as gateways to state parks and forests. Many of them are filled with local shops, historic sites, artisans, craft beverages, and eateries that give each region its flavor. A staycation isn't just about the destination — it's about the journey, the people you meet, and the stories you uncover along the way.



Buchanan State Forest, Photo by Marci Mowery

A Summer Invitation

So this summer, I invite you to wander. To rediscover the places that make Pennsylvania extraordinary. Whether you travel across the state or simply down the road, there is beauty, history, and community waiting for you.

Let's celebrate this season — and this Commonwealth — together.



Summer Interns

The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF) is pleased to welcome two new summer interns, Annalise Velazquez and Natalie Nichols, whose enthusiasm for conservation will support PPFF's mission to protect and promote Pennsylvania's public lands. Annalise, a recent Bucknell University graduate, brings interests in environmental advocacy, community engagement, and the social dimensions of conservation. Natalie, newly graduated from Shippensburg University, adds experience in archival work, wildlife education, and creative outreach. Together, they will assist with research, writing, interviews, and public engagement throughout the summer.

Both interns share a deep love for Pennsylvania's natural spaces and a commitment to helping others appreciate and protect them. Annalise looks forward to exploring how environmentalism connects people and communities, while Natalie hopes to spark curiosity about wildlife—from birds to wetlands to often-overlooked species.

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 | ✓ | Freedom to Belong | ✓ |
| Voices of the Land | ✓ | We the Stewards | ✓ |
| Paths Through Time | ✓ | Young Photographer | ✓ |

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



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.

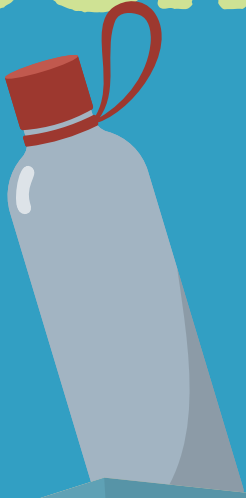
Did You Know? PPFF is able to accept your TAX DEDUCTIBLE donations of stock to support our work and/or projects in state parks and forests.

For more information visit www.PAParksAndForests.org

SUMMER SAFETY

1. HYDRATE EARLY & OFTEN

Bring more water than you think you'll need. Dehydration sneaks up fast in summer heat — especially on steep or exposed trails or when you are exerting yourself.



2. CHECK THE WEATHER BEFORE YOU GO

Summer storms move quickly in Pennsylvania. Know the forecast, watch for lightning, and remove yourself from the water before storms hit.



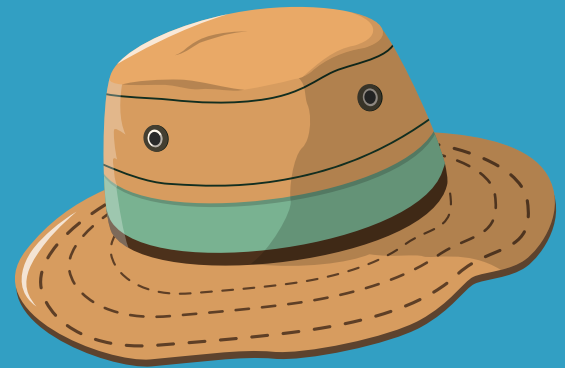
3. KNOW YOUR ROUTE

Download or carry a map — cell service isn't guaranteed. Tell someone where you're going and when you expect to return.



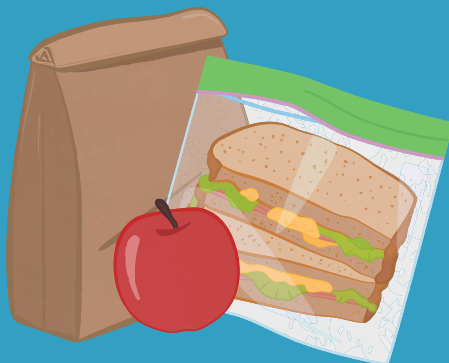
4. PROTECT YOURSELF FROM THE SUN

Wear sunscreen, a hat, and light layers. Heat exhaustion is preventable with simple prep. Plus, know the signs of heat exhaustion.



5. FOOD SAFETY

Harmful bacteria multiply rapidly in warm summer temperatures. Keep perishable foods chilled in coolers at 40 degrees F or below, and discard any food left out in the sun for more than one hour when temperatures exceed 90 degrees F.



6. GUARD AGAINST TICKS

Use repellent, wear light colored clothing, stay on the trail, and do a full tick check after your hike. Ticks are active all summer — prevention is key.



Connect with us!



PAParksAndForests.org | 717-236-7644

17th Annual Awards Banquet

People Photos by Bryce Kruger



Awards photo by Marci Mowery, Bowls were created by Robert Gochnauer and Ron Sheehan. Plaques were created by Elk And Walnut Creative Corner



Chair's Award
Sponsored by Jessica and Greg Lee
Winner: Marcus Shoffner, Outdoor Inclusion Coalition
PPFF Chairwoman Jessica Lee and Marcus Shoffner



Cliff Jones Keystone Legacy Award
Sponsored by Recreational Equipment, Inc
Winner: Dr. Andrew Mowen
Dr. Andrew Mowen



Education Award
Sponsored by Kate Harper
Winner: Friends of Colonel Denning State Park
L to R: Friends of Colonel Denning members Steve Burd, Rayanne Hockensmith, Todd Hockensmith, Mikayla Traini, Mary Breneman, Greg Breneman, with Kate Harper (award sponsor and PPFF Board Member)



Forest of the Year Award
Sponsored by Purple Lizard Maps
Winner: Buchanan State Forest
L to R: Seth Cassell (Director, Bureau of Forestry), Dave Scamardella (Buchanan SF), Codi Clapper (Buchanan SF), Karli Naugle (Buchanan SF District Forester), Steve Keiper (Buchanan SF), with sponsor Purple Lizard Maps' Justine Andronici and Mike Hermann



Improvement Award Group
Sponsored by Stahl Sheaffer Engineering
Winner: Keystone Trails Association/Bald Eagle State Forest Bridge Flash Crew
L to R: Paul Roth (PPFF Board member), Thomas Krebs (flash crew), Linda Krebs (flash crew), Jenn Ulmer (KTA staff), with award sponsors Jeffery M. Sheaffer, Rod Stahl, Briette Yeater, Cristina Roth,, Matt Beaver (District Forester,Bald Eagle SF), and Mike Marso (award sponsor)



Improvement Award Individual

Sponsored by The Organic Snack Company

Winner: Chad Zimmerman

Award winner Chad Zimmerman with colleague Mike Kuhn



Joseph Ibberson Award

Sponsored KCI Engineering

Winner: Dr. Silas Chamberlin

Brad Mallory (PPFF Board) and Silas Chamberlin



Park of the Year Award

Sponsored by Seneca Resources

Winner: Black Moshannon State Park

L to R: Tina Molski (PPFF Board Member), and park staff Anna Lindemuth-Smith, Mathias Weizen, and Levi Good.



President's Award

Sponsored by Outdoor Business Alliance of Pennsylvania

Winner: Jennifer Marsh

L to R: Jared Bundy, Marci Mowery (President, PPFF), Jennifer Marsh, Brooke Kelly, Haley Feaster, Silas Chamberlin (sponsor)



Volunteer Award (Individual)

Sponsored by Mary Hirst

Winner: June Morgan

L to R: Judy Wiser, Lori Braderman (back), Josie Ranck, Lori Hegedus, Mary Hirst (PPFF board and sponsor), June Morgan (winner), Burr Beard, Jim McNaney, Scott Braderman (leaning in), and Peter Tocco.



Young Volunteer Award

Winner: Eric Torikian



Volunteer Award (Group)

Sponsored by Charles and Susan Davidson and George and Kristie Asimos

Winner: Friends of Ridley Creek

L to R: Charles Davidson (award sponsor), George Asimos (award sponsor), friends members Paul Mickle, Joan Nikelsky, Gary Sawyer, and Mary Soderberg (PPFF Board member).



Young Volunteer Award (Group)

Sponsored by Pocono Whitewater

Winner: Keystone Mountain

Bike Team

Bottom row: Joe Tierney, Bryan Shafer, Jake Crawford, Ariana Brutico, John Strong. Second row: Alaina Dietz, River Crawford, Patrick Strong, Garrett Strong, Tommy Pivorotto, Tessa Willis, Hannah Puttcamp. Third row: Paul Fogal (PPFF board and sponsor) Ethan Fenner, Liam Tierney, William Watt, William Regan, Brady Willis, Paisly Crawford.

Additional Sponsor Recognition

Table Sponsors: REI, Inc.; Stahl Sheaffer Engineering, Friends of Kings Gap, Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park, Pennsylvania Interscholastic Cycling League; Bedford County Development Association

Dessert Sponsor: Art Communication Systems

Beer Sponsor: New Trail Brewing Company

Water Sponsor: Cedar Mountain Natural Mineral Water

Cemetery Training at Boyd Big Tree Preserve with the PA Outdoor Corps

By Quinn Heist

This year's celebration of our country's semiquincentennial represents more than 250 years of Pennsylvanians working in and around the lands that are now our state parks and forests. Our country's history is the history of its people, and their presence can still be seen scattered in cemeteries across our public lands. This year, the PA Outdoor Corps is honoring that legacy by diving deeper into conserving these cemeteries, and their stories, for future generations.

In 2025 April Frantz, State Park's Cultural Resources Program Coordinator, and Courtney Troutman, Park Manager at Memorial Lake State Park Complex, organized the first training on cemetery conservation for state parks. This year, the PA Outdoor Corps helped to fund a second training at Stroh's Cemetery within Boyd Big Tree Preserve Conservation Area. At this training, Joe Ferrannini, owner and operator of Grave Stone Matters, and Dennis Montagna, retired director of the National Park Service's Monument Research

& Preservation Program, taught the Harrisburg and Altoona PA Outdoor Corps young-adult crews, along with DCNR employees, skills in aligning, cleaning, repairing, and resetting historic gravestones. They also conducted another training at Ohiopyle State Park that included the PA Outdoor Corps' Cultural Resources crew.



Joe Ferrannini, owner and operator of Grave Stone Matters, demonstrates how to epoxy a broken headstone back together.



PA Outdoor Corps member, Joselyn Pena, learns to use a tripod to safely lift and maneuver heavy gravestones.

Oftentimes, well-meaning citizens will do more harm than good when they try to restore a gravestone without the proper tools and skills. It's important to have patience and good judgement on what can be accomplished responsibly. Documentation and pictures prior to starting a project are key, and not all cleaning agents are equal—Joe and Dennis highly recommend water, or water and D/2 Biological Solution, but nothing else.

The skills our crews gained are now being used to start and continue cemetery restoration projects at Boyd Big Tree, Hickory Run, Evansburg, Gifford Pinchot, Ohiopyle, and Moraine. Hopefully, these are just the start!



PA Outdoor Corps Leader, Quinn Ritter, and member, Jack Ridenour, mortar a fallen headstone back into the appropriate base.

Every stone has a story; from revolutionary war veterans like Christian Stucky at Boyd Big Tree to the Funkite Mennonites at Evansburg who were exiled from their church for their support of the War for Independence. Some early settlers were treated well by the land and spent their life farming, while others, like those at Hickory Run, were prematurely taken by natural disasters like floods. We have a duty to maintain these shared cultural sites and stories by training— and perhaps inspiring— young people to take up the effort. This way, the PA Outdoor Corps can help to ensure that some of these graves will be around for our country's 500th anniversary.



Cemetery training attendees pictured with a group of stones cleaned, fixed, and realigned.

SKILL BUILDER: HOW TO DO A PROPER TICK CHECK

Summer in Pennsylvania means long days on the trail, evenings in the garden, and—yes—more active ticks. A quick tick check is one of the simplest ways to protect yourself and your family from tick borne illnesses. Here's how to do it effectively.

1. START WITH YOUR CLOTHING

Before you go inside, brush off your clothes—especially socks, cuffs, and waistbands. Ticks often hitch a ride on fabric before finding skin.

2. USE GOOD LIGHTING

Ticks can be as small as a poppy seed. Stand near a bright window or use a flashlight or phone light to help you see clearly.

3. CHECK THE "HOT SPOTS"

Ticks prefer warm, hidden areas. Make sure to check:

- Hairline and scalp
- Behind ears
- Underarms
- Inside elbows
- Waistband area
- Behind knees
- Ankles and between toes

If you've been gardening or sitting in grass, check your back and shoulders as well.

4. DON'T FORGET YOUR GEAR—AND YOUR PETS

Ticks can cling to backpacks, blankets, and dogs. Give everything a once over before bringing it inside.

5. IF YOU FIND A TICK, REMOVE IT SAFELY

Use fine tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Clean the area with soap and water. Take a photo of the site to help monitor.

6. MONITOR THE BITE SITE

If you develop a rash, fever, or flu like symptoms in the days or weeks after a bite, contact a healthcare provider.

A few minutes of prevention can make all the difference. Stay safe, stay aware, and enjoy every moment of summer in Pennsylvania's parks and forests.



WHAT ABOUT YOUR PETS?

- **Use vet recommended preventatives:** Collars, topicals, or oral medications.
- **Check after every outing:** Pay special attention to ears, paws, armpits, and under the collar.
- **Brush before going inside:** A quick brush can dislodge ticks before they attach.
- **Wash bedding regularly:** Ticks can hide in blankets and pet beds.

Pennsylvania Healthy Lands Week 2026: Turn Your Passion Into Action

Pennsylvania Healthy Lands Week is both a celebration and a call to action. Pennsylvania holds a wealth of natural, cultural and historic treasures, but these landscapes endure only when people step forward to care for them. This year Bedford County will take center stage. All week (September 26 – October 4, 2026) there will be opportunities to get involved and showcase how stewardship and volunteerism protect the environment, improve our well-being, and strengthen both community pride and the local economy.

Why Bedford County?

Outdoor recreation is one of Pennsylvania's greatest attractions. It is an economic engine for communities that attract trail users, anglers, paddlers, and heritage tourists. It is also a gateway to a better appreciation for conservation. Bedford County has embraced this momentum, investing in new trail connections, expanding access to parks and historic sites, and elevating outdoor recreation as a driver of economic vitality. But these assets thrive only when volunteers help to maintain them.

During Pennsylvania Healthy Lands Week, residents and visitors alike will have the chance to turn their passion into action by restoring trails, cleaning up litter, improving habitats, caring for historic landmarks, and advocating for healthy lands. Every hour of volunteer work protects the natural and cultural resources that fuel tourism, attract new families, and improve Bedford County's healthy lands.

Stewardship is more than service

Stewardship is a personal investment in the landscapes that make our community healthy and beautiful, sustain local businesses, inspire adventure, and connect people to one another.



Visit pahealthylandsweek.org to sign up for volunteer opportunities in Bedford County or learn how you can be a good steward in your own community.



Buchanan State Forest, site of one of the Healthy Lands Week volunteer opportunities.

Shawnee State Park, site of one of the Healthy Lands Week volunteer opportunities.

Bring Your Voice

As the General Assembly began the month of June, in which critical decisions are made about the budget for the next fiscal year, the Foundation shared the results of our recent poll to help inform decisions. This poll not only focused on attitudes towards investing in state parks and forests, it also looked at attitudes towards data centers and related energy infrastructure and public lands.

A summary of that poll may be found on page: 15

The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation is supportive of the level of funding for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in the budget bill that passed the House. We also support House Bill 2150 (water and energy reporting for data centers) and House Bill 2151 (development of an optional model local ordinance for data centers) that now await consideration in the Senate.

PPFF presented a letter opposing Senate Bill 857, Providing for Local Approvals for Certain Land Transactions.

SB 857 would require county and local approvals for land acquisitions by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Fish and Boat Commission. Notably, no other state agencies or commissions are included in this proposed legislation.

This bill is a startling interference in the rights of private property owners who steward their lands and wish to improve communities and leave a legacy of conservation or public recreation through a sale or donation. It also undermines a voluntary process that has made Pennsylvania's state park and state forest system one of the best in the United States, **contributing to quality of life and Pennsylvania's burgeoning outdoor recreation economy.**

PPFF supports House Bill 1669, legislation sponsored by Representative Tim Briggs that would require elementary schools in Pennsylvania to provide a minimum of 30 minutes of free-play recess each school day.

A wide range of scientific and medical research demonstrates that recess and free play are extremely important to not just a child's physical health, but also their development, learning and mental health.

Studies show that one in three children is overweight or obese, which impacts their health in both the short and long term.

Ten states now require at least 30 minutes of daily, free-play recess, and several other states are now considering similar bills. We hope that Pennsylvania will support improving the physical, mental and emotional health of children through recess.

We Will Miss

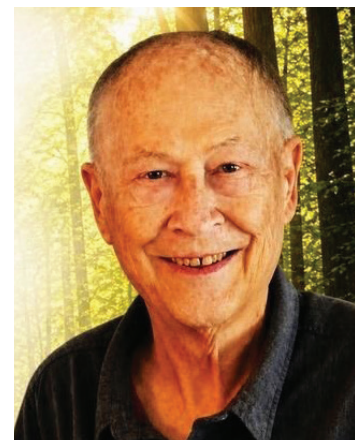
Larry Walsh 6/6/1941 – 2/28/2026

Skier, cyclist, and volunteer-of-all-trades for Confluence and the Great Allegheny Passage, Larry was a PPFF Legacy Society member, joyfully donating a symbolic \$144 in honor of our 20 state forests and 124 state parks annually. Money COMPLETELY aside, we only wish he had been able to make at least one symbolic gift of \$145.



David Barrett 5/11/1951 – 5/1/2026

David began his career with State Parks at Curwensville State Park, before moving to Hyner Run, Ryerson Station, Francis Slocum, Raccoon Creek and ending his 36 year career as Chief Operations Manager for the Bureau of State Parks in Harrisburg.



Outdoors for All

July is Outdoors for All Month in Pennsylvania, and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) has several events planned to celebrate the welcoming, inclusive access to nature across Pennsylvania's outdoors provide for all residents and visitors. DCNR will kick off Outdoors for All Month from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM in Philadelphia at 2200 Kelly Drive, Philadelphia, PA. The event will feature a variety of free activities and local organizations that support outdoor recreation and community engagement.

What began as a single celebration in Pittsburgh in 2024 has grown into a month of events for the public to engage with recreation, conservation, and environmental organizations and professionals to connect with the public in a new way. The statewide series of events continues with events in Harrisburg, Lancaster, and Pittsburgh. See below for more details if you'd like to attend.

- **Harrisburg** – Italian Lake Park,
2960 North 3rd Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110
- **Lancaster** – Reservoir Park,
832 East Orange Street, Lancaster, PA 17602
- **Pittsburgh** – Allegheny Commons Park,
West Ohio Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15212

These three events will run from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Join our friends at DCNR and the many partners such as BLJ Rowing, the City of Harrisburg, Let's Go 1-2-3, the Friends of Reservoir Park, the City of Lancaster, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, and the City of Pittsburgh that have committed to supporting this year's events series, which is a part of DCNR's Mosaic—the department's initiative to create a more inclusive environment in outdoor spaces.



Photo by DCNR



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What Likely Voters are Saying



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A March poll conducted by Susquehanna Polling and Research, Inc., included a Pennsylvania Statewide Voter Attitude Survey on behalf of the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation, testing attitudes and opinions towards protection and preservation of state parks and forests and the extent to which parks and forests should be protected from data center development and new energy infrastructure.

94%



of Pennsylvania likely voters believe state parks and forests are either “very” or “somewhat” important to quality of life and the overall state of Pennsylvania – including 85% “very” important. This strong affirmation exists regardless of whether or not respondents are regular visitors to state parks and forests.

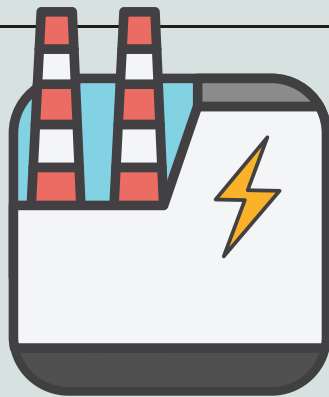
86%



of Pennsylvania likely voters believe state funding for state parks and forests should be a priority of state government – including 50% who “strongly” agree. Agreement that state funding should be a priority is broad-based and bipartisan and includes majorities of voters in key demographic groups.

By an overwhelming

79:11



margin, strong majorities of likely voters support the requirement to create a buffer or “setback” for the construction of data centers near state parks or forests to protect the natural and recreational value of these lands (such as water resources, wildlife, sound quality and dark skies) – even if it means the new buffers would increase the costs of data centers. Support for these buffers is broad based and bipartisan.

78%



of Pennsylvania likely voters agree [that] new energy and/or other utility infrastructure (such as towers, transmission lines and pipelines) should avoid protected lands such as state parks and forests. Only 10% disagree. Agreement is broad based and bipartisan and includes strong majorities of voters in key demographic groups.

You Made it Happen

Advocacy for Outdoor Recreation

PPFF President Marci joined her colleagues Ezra P. Thrush, MPA, Tom Gilbert, and Andy Loza at the Pa Outdoor Economy Summit to talk about the role of the outdoor recreation industry in conservation advocacy. This inaugural event was hosted by the Outdoor Business Alliance of Pennsylvania.

Advocacy is an important part of the work that we at Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation do to inspire stewardship of Pennsylvania's parks and forests.



Photo by Carla Eissing

Making A Difference

Thirteen students and 4 adults from Susquehanna Township High School attended a weekend adventure at Ricketts Glen State Park, transportation provided by Wilderness Wheels (supported through donations). Activities included hiking, outdoor skills, camp cooking, and a community service project. Park staff provided an educational program about the history, animals, and geology of the waterfalls in their park.



Photo by Susquehanna Township High School

Corporate Volunteerism

People's First Federal Credit Union returned in force to Nockamixon State Park to continue rebuilding the tree canopy in the disc golf area of the park. Working with volunteer JC Wank, they planted native trees and shrubs to replenish ash trees that had been adversely impacted by the Emerald Ash Borer. Volunteers then had an opportunity to try their hand at disc golf—as we all know that play is an important part of every day!



Photo by JC Wank

Deloitte's annual Impact Day made a difference at two central Pennsylvania locations. A team of twenty-five took to Little Buffalo State Park where they created habitat, planted trees, and restored the historic cemetery in preparation for an America250 celebration.



Photos by Marci Mowery

A second group of fourteen put their shoulders into trail maintenance at Pine Grove Furnace State Park—a good reminder that a good trail often has many hours of staff and volunteer time behind it. Thank you to Friends of Pine Grove Furnace for leading the crew!

If your company is interested in team building through outdoor volunteer work, reach out to Marci at the Foundation.



Photo by Carla Eissing

You Made it Happen



Out and About

Staff from the Foundation could be found across Pennsylvania—speaking at events, tabling, meeting with Friends Groups, and more. Most recently, PPFF President Marci Mowery joined Outdoor Business Alliance of Pennsylvania President Silas Chamberlin and Pennsylvania Outdoor Recreation Association Executive Director Lutricia Eberly on WITF The Spark, hosted by Asia Mann. The topic was the outdoor recreation economy. You can catch it on your favorite podcast channel.

Seen Them All Meet Up

Outdoor enthusiasts who have visited all 124 state parks had the opportunity to get a private tour of Pennsylvania's newest state park, Laurel Caverns. The group also learned about future plans for the park.



Meet the Friends of Buchanan Bear Valley

There is a new group in town, the Friends of Buchanan, Bear Valley Division. This newest group has already been active—building trails—but they have other plans in the works.

Partnerships

Who Loves Their State Parks (and forests?)

You do! New Trail Brewing recently re-released their I Love My State Park beer in celebration of #ILoveMyStateParks Week. A portion of the proceeds from this beer supports the mission of the Foundation.



Cedar Mountain Natural Mineral Water

This new mineral water originates in Pennsylvania from a historic mineral spring near Wellsboro. It features a closed loop system of glass bottles (sources in PA) to reduce waste and reduce exposure to micro-plastics. Cedar Mountain joined us at the Outdoor Business Expo in April and then again at the Banquet in May.



Friends in Action

Friends of Colonel Denning

Since the fall of 2025 the Friends of Colonel Denning have been working with park staff to revitalize the amphitheater area of the park. Improvements included the construction of a stone pad and new bench seats for the theater. The group also built and installed a fire ring and bench seating to support educational campfire programs in the park.



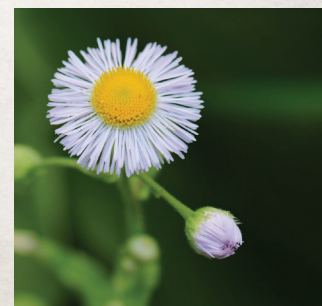
Friends of Milton

The friends held its annual spring cleanup at the park and were helped by members from the Milton Area High School National Honor Society. Participants picked up garbage in the park, cleared trails, and removed downed limbs from walking areas.



Friends of Nolde Forest

In May the friends hosted a flurry of nature oriented events in the park for the public. These included but weren't limited to wildflower and plant identification walks, identifying birds of prey, and a meditative forest therapy walk.



Friends of Canoe Creek

The Friends of Canoe Creek are looking to add nine new holes to the existing disc golf course in the park, which would bring the park to 18 holes! The group is starting work on the tee pads for this project while simultaneously kicking into fundraising gear to support final implementation.



**WE'RE ADDING
9 NEW HOLES!**

WE NEED
DONATIONS TO
MAKE IT HAPPEN.



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CODE TO DONATE
AND GET MORE
INFORMATION!

Friends in Action

Lackawanna Trail Care Crew

The Keystone Mountain Bike Team and Pennsylvania Interscholastic Cycling League teams got together to work and learn about sustainable trail building and maintain techniques, improving the Orchard Trail in the process.

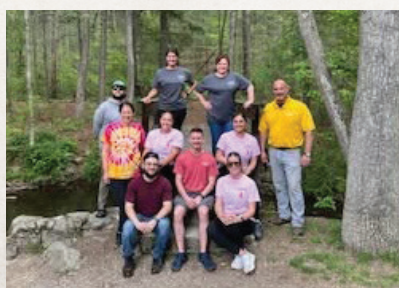


Friends of Oil Creek

Friends board members Bruce, Jen, and Scott out on an early Saturday morning working hard to help keep the Wildcat Hollow trail open.

Friends of Mont Alto

The Friends of Mont Alto hosted a team from Ulta Beauty distribution to kick off spring cleaning in the park. Together they tackled clearing their native pollinator garden, prepare picnic areas, and clean the park of trash and woody debris.



List of Friends

Cherry Springs Dark Sky Association
Friends of Beltzville
Friends of Big Pocono
Friends of Black Moshannon
Friends of Buchanan-Bear Valley
Friends of Buchanan-Sideling/Martins Hill
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 - Roaring Creek
Friends of White Clay Creek
Friends of Worlds End
Friends of Yellow Creek
Lackawanna State Park Trail Care Crew



704 Lisburn Road, Suite 102
Camp Hill, PA 17011

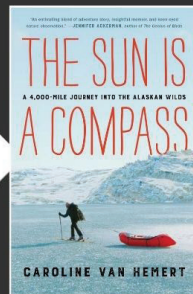


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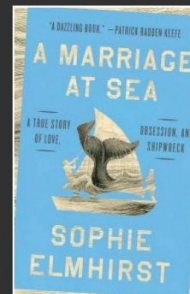
2026 PPFF Virtual Book Club



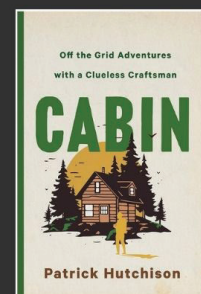
Join us at 12pm online to discuss some of our favorite books! Scan the QR code or get details online at <https://ppff.events/book-club-2026>



Aug. 26, 2026



Oct. 18, 2026



Dec. 16, 2026

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