



A Newsletter From Friends Of Cook Forest

March/April 2018

JOIN THE FRIENDS OF COOK FOREST

A LETTER FROM OUR PARK MANAGER

As we begin the 2018 season, it's important to reflect on the accomplishments of the previous year. One noteworthy accomplishment that was recently announced is that **Cook Forest State Park will be receiving the 2018 PA Parks and Forestry Foundation Park of the Year Award.** Although we must wait until the May awards banquet to receive this award, it's been proclaimed that we're being recognized for "exemplary and innovative work in customer service, education, programming, recreation, stewardship of the natural, cultural, historic assets, and/or accommodation of special needs of visitors." With 121 PA State Parks to choose from, it's a great honor to have been chosen. This award is something that we're all very excited to be a part of. Awards like this are made possible by the corps of hard working volunteers that assist the park, as well as on the backs of our park employees.

The friends group recently met with park staff to set goals and objectives for the 2018 season. I can tell you that their commitment to programing and assistance with raising awareness of the **Hemlock Woolly Adelgid** issue fall in line with our park management goals and objectives. If you're looking for new ways that you can become more involved in helping the park, I recommending becoming a member of the friends group and participating in one of their upcoming events.

One new infrastructure item that we're all very excited about is the **new park office** that's currently being built along Route 36. This project will provide for a new visitor orientation site, a new public contact point, and will provide much needed administrative office space within the tourism and recreation hub that is Cook Forest. Included in this new facility will be a critical point for visitor orientation, educational programming space, exhibit space, restroom facilities, and a more efficient park administrative area. We anticipate moving into this new office by February 2019, followed by a grand opening and building dedication in the spring of 2019.

I wish you and your families a safe and healthy 2018 summer season. Thank you for your support of the park and for helping us to achieve our new award winning status! I look forward to seeing you at one of our friends group sponsored events.

Cheers!

Ryan Borcz

The Friends of Cook Forest group is organized to support, assist and promote the mission and activities of Cook Forest State Park, its properties, and facilities.

Become a member and/or volunteer and receive this newsletter regularly, stay informed and become involved.

Annual membership costs:

Individual.....\$10

Family.....\$25

Sponser.....\$50

Join Today!

Name:_____

Address:_____

Email:_____

Phone:_____

Make your check payable to:

"PPFF-Friends of Cook Forest"

PO Box 31

Cooksburg, Pa 16217

UPCOMING EVENTS AT COOK FOREST STATE PARK

STATE PARK SPONSORED EVENTS

Saturday, March 17 at 8:30am - *Eagle Watch*. Please bring your binoculars and spotting scopes to the Park Office for a driving tour to eagle hotspots along the National Wild & Scenic Clarion River. This is the prime time of the year to view bald eagles on their nests and find new nesting sites. Expect a long car-pool and aggressive hike to some of the better areas, but the rewards will be worth it. Hot chocolate and coffee will be available at the Park Office to warm us up. (3hrs)

Saturday, May 12, from 8:00am -1:30pm - CLEAR CREEK STATE PARK - *Clear Creek's WoodsyOwl Workday*. Help out our sister park, Clearcreek State Park get ready for the season. Your participation would be greatly appreciated. Bring yourself, family or Scout group. The project list is growing, from staining outdoor structures to trail work to window washing and landscaping. There's something for everyone. The schedule for the day is as follows:

8:00am - Projects assigned and supplies distributed at Clearcreek Maintenance Complex

8:30am-12:00 noon. -Volunteers complete projects

12:15pm. -Volunteers return tools and supplies to Maintenance

12:30pm. - Lunch provided at amphitheater

1:00pm - Visit from Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl for awards presentation

*If your organization would like to schedule a program or special task, contact Clearcreek Park Manager, Jessica Stewart at (814)744-8407.

FRIENDS OF COOK FOREST SPONSORED EVENTS

Saturday, June 2 at 10:00 *Milkweed Planting*. Meet at the Log Cabin Inn for coffee and an interpretive presentation on the Monarch Butterfly and the importance of the milkweed plant to their existence. Then we will go out and plant milkweed seeds in designated areas within Cook Forest State Park.(2 hrs.)

More Cook Forest State Park events, activities, and volunteer opportunities are being added.

Stay in touch, to see what great things we have planned this season.

Follow us on Facebook at:

www.facebook.com/friendsofcookforest

HEMLOCK WOOLLY ADELGID REPORT

More than fifty years ago the Hemlock Woolley Adelgid native to Asia, was first spotted in the U.S. near Richmond, Va.. Since then this invasive pest has destroyed the majority of the Eastern Hemlocks in the Shenandoah Mountains and the Great Smokey Mountains. Five years ago the HWA was discovered in the largest and oldest stand of Eastern Hemlocks left in the Eastern United States, our own Cook Forest State Park. The Park Service has been working hard to try to save these ancient hemlocks in what has been proclaimed as a National Natural Landmark. The park service has been using pesticides, the introduction of an HWA egg eating beetle, and manpower (including Friends of Cook Forest volunteers), searching through Cook Forest State Park to find where this pest has infested. Through the Friends of Cook Forest newsletter we will keep you up to date on the progress protecting Cook Forest State Park's treasured Eastern Hemlocks. Prolonged freezing temperatures were a blessing to Cook Forest State Park a few years ago. It was estimated that the sub zero temperatures killed 95% of the HWA in Cook Forest State Park that year. But the HWA that survived soon multiplied. Each egg produces around 250 offspring. The Friends group asked Cook Forest State Park Education Specialist, Dale Luthringer, if the HWA was killed by the cold this season. And Dale answered:

"The short answer is 'Probably'. Winter mortality surveys will be conducted by the Bureau of Forestry very soon in late winter/early spring 2018. This will let us know if HWA was affected by this winter's cold and to what degree. The HWA is affected by cold in the following ways: 1. a severe cold event that drops to -25F sometime during winter, like it did a few winters back. 2. Several negative degree days. HWA start the winter with a certain amount of "antifreeze" in their bodies. Continuous days of below freezing will eventually use up that antifreeze, HWA can die from the cold. 3. Temperatures that drop below 9F even for a few minutes in late March/early April."



***Cook Forest State Park has been fortunate to have a film company, Wild Excellence Films, donate their time and talents to produce a documentary on the plight of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and the fight to save the ancient hemlocks of Cooks Forest.**

This beautiful and informative documentary was first shown at Cook Forest Sawmill Center for the Arts in July. It has now been traveling to different locations throughout Pennsylvania. All proceeds and donations collected from these viewings go right back into the fund to save the Ancients here in Cook Forest State Park. All are welcome to attend these upcoming showings:

March 12(Monday) - Mt. Lebanon Public Library,
16 Castle Shannon Blvd.

Pittsburgh, PA 15228

April 13(Friday) - Tom Ridge Environmental Cent.
301 Peninsula Drive, suite 1

Erie, Pa. 16505



What Makes Cook Forest Unique (part 1 of 4 part series)

**By: Dale J. Luthringer-Environmental Education Specialist
Cook Forest State Park**

The message is in the trees! The initial thought of Cook Forest often brings images to mind of huge ancient trees of the forest primeval, full of their original splendor, unsurpassed and untouched through the centuries. Some may disagree with a slight “harrumph,” but after walking through the Forest Cathedral, most come away with a different vision of what they expected. One that often inspires from the majesty of these incredible trees, and often one that re-directs them to the Creator of all life.

No, we do not have redwoods at Cook Forest, but what we do have is the finest stand of tall old growth white pine and hemlock remaining in the Northwestern U.S., and arguably north of the Smoky Mountains. Yes, you could say I’m biased, but after personally viewing, documenting, and collaborating data with other forest ecologists throughout the Eastern U.S. for the past 21 years, we have the documentation to back this supposed braggadocios claim.

It is not news that Cook Forest has old growth forest, but what folks often don’t realize is the great amount of acreage and the extent of it that’s spread around the park. Out of the 7000+ acres that comprise Cook Forest, 2,353 acres have been classified as old growth forest encompassing eleven different old growth stands:

Forest Cathedral Natural Area - 748 acres

Seneca Forest Special Management Area - 391 acres

Ridge Camp Old Growth Area - 275 acres

Cook Trail Old Growth Area - 256 acres

Deer Meadow Old Growth Area - 186 acres

Swamp Natural Area - 180 acres

Tom’s Run Old Growth Area - 125 acres

Maple Drive Old Growth Area - 120 acres

Little Hefren run Old dGrowth Area - 46 acres

Foundation Ridge - 19 acres

Highland Drive - 7 acres

(continued)

Cook Forest contains numerous tall white pines. So many in fact, that no other old growth forest site in the Northeast even comes close to surpassing the sheer number of tall pines. Over the last 21 years we’ve catalogued hundreds of old growth white pine in the Commonwealth scouring many of the well known old growth & tall white pine sites in the state. We also continue to collaborate with a number of other forest scientists as part of an on-going database to document other superlative white pine stands. What we’ve found is that Cook Forest stands well above the rest in terms of sheer numbers of pines over 160ft tall. To date, we’ve catalogued 30 pines 160ft or more.



FRIENDS OF COOK FOREST

Volunteer Opportunities

Trail Stewardship: Monitor and maintain trail conditions. As well as planning and assisting in the restoration of existing trails, their signage and educational qualities.

Habitat Enhancement: Remove invasive plants. In addition to planting vegetation that will improve the habitat of natural native forest species.

Education and Recreation: Program hosting, lead hikes, assist with special events and seminars.

Additional: Administrative tasks, grant writing, public relations, and fundraising, volunteer at meetings, and board positions.

*Gmail: friendsofcookforest@gmail.com

Membership Benefits:

*Subscription to the Friends of Cook Forest newsletter.

*Supporting the protection, improvements, and activities of the "2018 Park of the Year - Cook Forest State Park."

*Meet people with similar interests

*Stay connected and informed

www.facebook.com/friends





Membership Form

☐ New Membership ☐ Renewal Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ ZIP: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Individual ☐ \$10.00

Family ☐ \$20.00

Organization ☐ \$35.00

Supporting ☐ \$50.00

Additional Contribution \$ _____ Total Enclosed \$ _____

Can you spend time as a volunteer? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Make checks payable to **PPFF** and write *Friends of Cook Forest* on the memo line. Mail to:

Friends of Cook Forest
PO Box 31
Cooksburg, PA 16217

THANK YOU!

The Friends of Cook Forest is a chapter of the PA Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF). PPFF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions to PPFF are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. The official registration of PPFF may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.