



A Newsletter From Friends Of Cook Forest

May/June 2018

JOIN THE FRIENDS OF

A LETTER FROM OUR EDITOR:

Hello All:

This year the Pennsylvania State Park System is celebrating its 125th year of being!!!! What started out as a 7,500 acre parcel of land dedicated to the people, has now turned into a system of more than 330,000 acres. And the state of Pennsylvania can now say that every home in Pennsylvania is within 25 miles of a State Park.

And what a year for Cook Forest State Park to be named "Park of the Year," by the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation. Members of the Cook Forest State Park Office, several Cook Forest volunteers, and yours truly (from Friends of Cook Forest), traveled the distance to Harrisburg in the beginning of May to see Dale Luthringer (Cook Forest Education Specialist) and Jessica Stewart (Assistant Park Manager) accept the award, along with hearing the wonderful things everyone had to say about Cook Forest State Park.

Cook Forest and Clear Creek State Park also has another reason to be proud. Two of its volunteers, Marilyn and Tom Fye, won the Education Award from the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation. The award was presented to them for their decades of education support and programming they have provided to park visitors. In fact the most recent Woodsy Owl Clean Up at Clear Creek State Park, marked their 60th Woodsy Owl event since 1981.

One Word kept on recurring during the annual awards banquet. And that word was "Passion." More than 200 people attended the PPFF awards banquet, mostly volunteers, and listened to many of the awards recipients say that "passion" for the forests, state parks, and conservation was the driving force behind what they do. The people make it happen. The volunteers make it happen. It's clear these forest enthusiasts are the driving force behind one of the most successful park systems in the nation. So keep those volunteer hours coming in, because they sure make a difference.

Oh, and at the end of the newsletter, take a look at our photo page.

Enjoy Your Woods,

Amanda DiBenedetto/"Friends of Cook Forest" - Chair

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.....\$15

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

FRIENDS OF COOK FOREST SPONSORED EVENTS

Saturday, May 19 at 9:00 am - Garlic Mustard Pull - Join the Friends of Cook Forest volunteers as we clear the forest of some of this invasive species that crowds out our native plants. Meet at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Classroom for a short presentation on how to identify garlic mustard, then we will pull this invasive weed. (3 hrs).

Saturday, June 2 at 9:00am - Milkweed for Monarchs Planting Event - Monarch Butterflies cannot survive without milkweed. This is a dilemma, as milkweed continues to decline across the landscape. Please join Friends of Cook Forest at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Classroom for a short presentation, before splitting into groups to plant milkweed in a few prime locations in the park. (2 hrs.)

Saturday, June 16 at 1:00pm - Friends of Cook Forest Series: "Susquehannock Hemlock" - Please meet at the Deer Meadow Picnic Pavilion at the Deer Meadow Campground for a short presentation on the hemlock woolly adelgid, a pest threatening the existence of this state tree, and take an interpretive hike to view the Susquehannock Hemlock. This is the Pennsylvania State Champ and the largest known hemlock by volume north of the Great Smoky Mountains. Treats and beverages will be available. This is always a fun event.(1.5)

STATE PARK SPONSORED EVENTS

Friday-Sunday, May 25-27 - Cook Forest Living History Weekend: Please join us as we celebrate the Pennsylvania Bureau of State Park's 125th Anniversary with a fun filled weekend of living history as we journey through various historical eras of the United States: French & Indian War, Lumber Era, Civil War, WWI, and the War on Terror. Join master story tellers and historical interpreters as they take us through these noteworthy periods in history.

Saturday-Sunday, June 9-10 - "Cook Forest French & Indian War Encampment". Cook Forest State Park will host a series of living history events depicting life during the French & Indian War. Highlights of this full two-day encampment sponsored by the Sawmill Center for the Arts include woodland natives, cannon and musket firing, cooking primitive skills, artisans,tinsmithing, blacksmithing, activities for kids, and much more.

Friday & Saturday, June 22-23 at 9:00 - "American Canoe Association Level 1: Introduction to Kayaking"- Cook Forest State Park will be conducting an entry level ACA sanctioned kayaking course for kayak enthusiasts. The following Subjects will be covered: paddling environment, equipment, loading & unloading, rescues, maneuvers, and strokes. Everyone will get completely wet. Participants must be pre registered. Cost is \$75 per person. Contact the park office for more information: (814)744-8475. (16 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 staff 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 is keeping up to date on the latest survival findings of the HWA since the 2018 winter season.

Update: So far the findings show that a lot of good did come from the extended cold this winter. According to the Cook Forest State Park Office a couple sample areas of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid have been tested for the HWA survival rate this winter. The office says that according to the samples collected by Tim Tomon, our region's forest program specialist, the sample came back better than 90% kills, if not 100% kills. The Cook Forest park office says that this doesn't mean all the HWA is gone from Cook Forest. But from those two samples that were collected, it shows the HWA had a very hard time surviving this winter of 2018.



***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:



Thursday, June 14th 7:00

Patagonia Store on Walnut St.,

Pittsburgh, Pa 15232

What Makes Cook Forest Unique (part 2 of a 3 part series)

THE MESSAGE IS IN THE TREES

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

***Editors note: A damaging storm took place early in May 2018, which did alter some of the data in this article. All information was current as of the beginning of May.**

Cook Forest is home to at least 18 tree species greater than or equal to 150 years old, with 12 species more than 200 years old. The oldest documented tree in Cook Forest is remarkable, a cucumber tree. This peculiar tree that once stood at 11.6ft circumference breast height x 111.2ft high was documented to have 439 rings starting 21 ft up from its base. A ring count of more than 430 years was also confirmed by Eastern Kentucky University dendrochronologist, Dr. Neil Pederson. I believe it is safe to say this tree was easily 450 years old. It is also currently the oldest documented cucumber magnolia in the world! That means this tree started growing easily back into the mid 1500's. This is almost 120 years before La Salle sailed the St. Lawrence!

Cook Forest is known for its superlatives. It is currently home to 13 record trees, either by height, volume, or state champ status. The most well known record being that of the tallest town white pine in the Northeast, which is also the tallest known tree north of the Smokey's. It is affectionately named the Longfellow Pine, and stands at 11.2ft CBH x 184.7ft. high.

Another one of Cook Forest's well known trees is another white pine, named the Seneca Pine. This current state champ is 12.6ft CBH x 174.1ft. High and contains 965 square feet of wood. If this could be translated into marketable timber, we'd be looking at one Tre with over 11,500 board feet of wood! We've also documented this particular stand to contain over 270 basal feet of wood per acre. It was also suggested that if this same reading was taking 20 years ago, before a number of tree had fallen, it would've likely registered over 340 basal feet per acre.

Cook Forest is also home to the tallest known Eastern Hemlock in the Northeast at 12.1 CBH x 147.6ft high and contains 754 square feet of wood. If this could all be translated into marketable timber, we'd be looking at a hemlock with over 9,000 board feet of wood in just one tree.

(continued)

Cook Forest is also home to the state co-champ hemlock, the Susquehannock Hemlock, at 13.7ft CBH x 135.3ft high and 940 square feet of wood translating to 11,280 board feet. And yes it's all single stem. It is also the largest hemlock by volume anywhere in the Northeastern U.S.

So Cook Forest has big conifers, but is that where it stops? Certainly not, I'm sure a number of our forestry friends would love to see our current state champ black cherry currently listed at 12ft CBH x 139.9ft high. It is also the second tallest known black cherry in the Northeast. The tallest is nearby at 143 feet high.



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





FRIENDS OF
Cook Forest
STATE PARK
Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation

Membership Form

☐ New Membership

☐ Renewal Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ ZIP: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Individual ☐ \$15.00

Family ☐ \$25.00

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.



Marilyn and Tom Fye, volunteers at Clear Creek State Park and Parker Dam, accept the Education Award from the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation. As campground hosts at both state parks, the Fyes assist visitor with their overnight stays and provide natural history tidbits. They teach cooking programs featuring “utensil-less campfire cooking” featuring bacon in a paperbag, and omelets in a Ziplock bag. They also just completed their 60th Woodsy Owl clean up event, attending the bi-annual event at Cook Forest and Clear Creek State Parks since 1981.



Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation names Cook Forest State Park “Park of the Year” for 2018. The park. received this award because of its quality of service to visitors, making improvements to enhance the visitor experience, ability to partner, and for working to save the Eastern Hemlocks. Pictured are PPFF Board of Directors Secretary (Brian Clark), Cook Forest Education Specialist (Dale Luthringer), Clear Creek State Park assistant manager (Jessica Stewart), and Friends of Cook Forest chair (Amanda DiBenedetto).



Cook Forests State Park’s new office building, along Route 36, should be completed February of 2019. The new building will house a new visitor orientation site, a public contact point, much needed administrative offices, educational programming exhibit space, classroom, and restroom facilities. Cook Forest State Park is planning a grand opening and building dedication in the Spring of 2019.