

## **Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park Board Meeting on August 3, 2013**

**Attendance:** Board members Marjorie Braught, Sue Breen, Bill Breen, Mary Soderberg, Donna Weiser, Brett Weiser, Andre Weltman (president), and Park Manager Jason Zimmerman.

### **Park Manager's Report**

- **New Park Maps:** A large number of new maps have been received. The new map style being rolled out in parks statewide is larger than in the past, with more room for text (rewritten by the park's Environmental Education specialist, Tara Gettig) and a larger map that is easier to read. The new maps are a little wider than the old ones, so the acrylic cubby-holes on the bulletin boards will need to be modified.

- **Goddard Leadership Legacy Camp:** In July, the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy supported by the South Mountain Partnership held a week-long residential program at the Mansion for 15 students aged 13-15. The goal was to promote the next generation of leadership in the field of conservation. The program seemed to be very successful though it was a lot of work, especially for CPC director Anna Yelk. If this program will be held again next year, Jason suggests the Friends should participate especially with financial support, as we did this year by sponsoring three partial scholarships. Also, Andre conducted a historical activity for the campers.

- **Fall Furnace Fest Update**

- Work is in progress to prepare for Fall Fest, which this year is the last weekend in October (the 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>). We have 24 vendors signed up so far, including 9 food and 15 merchandise. This is about the same number as we had at this point last year. Local companies such as JLG are providing gift items.

- Entertainment is being coordinated by former Board member Jack Burd.

- Fall Furnace Fest volunteers will be coordinated by Margy Schmidt.

- **Silent Auction:** Sue who staffs the front desk at the office is handling silent auction donations. She suggests that certain auction items can be better promoted by adding extras to create a "gift basket" ensemble. This would also enhance the value of donated corporate gift cards. If anyone would like to sponsor such a gift basket for already donated items, speak to Sue.

- **Parking:** Last year, high attendance "maxed out" parking capacity and forced park staff to scramble to handle the situation, for example by opening up Fuller Field for parking. Jason will ask the Fire Police from Mount Holly or Penn Township to assist this year. Brief discussion of off-site parking: it's probably not practical to shuttle people from distant lots, but one idea that might be viable is parking at Laurel Lake and run a shuttle back and forth to Fuller. We made no final plans to do this but it could be arranged closer in time to the Fest if needed.

- **Scarecrow-building:** Donations of straw (and decorative items like corn stalks) would help reduce costs. Margie will inquire at farms in central PA she has personal connections with, keeping in mind that the park cannot make arrangements to pick up items from far away.

- **National Public Lands Day:** This year's event at Pine Grove Furnace had to be moved a week earlier, to Saturday September 21. Volunteers can help with 3 hours of work in the morning such as removing invasive species and improving trails, followed by lunch (grilled items provided by the Friends plus potluck dishes brought by attendees).

- **Donations:** We continue to receive memorial donations, and we also received a general money donation from a vendor. Andre as president will send thank-you letters.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

- We have a healthy balance of \$16,765.65 as we head into a period of expenses for setting up Fall Furnace Fest. As always, we appreciate treasurer Bill's meticulous care of our funds.

- **Firewood** continues to sell briskly at the campground, one of our major sources of income. For the first half of the year, we've taken in \$2165 in firewood sales at \$5 per bundle. Bill has been working hard to split and stack and bundle wood at the park's maintenance area. (After the meeting several Board members bundled wood, but there is still lots and lots to do. Additional work days will be needed to bundle. It is important that bundles be **tightly** tied with twine, so they won't fall apart when park staff transport them to the campground for sale by the campground host.)

- **Merchandise:** The new storage shelves were purchased and are now installed in the office back room. They are working as intended to facilitate rapid identification of clothing and other items by busy office staff. Many items have been selling well, including the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary embroidered patches (a 2<sup>nd</sup> order for 300 patches was placed and received). Brief discussion by Jason about considering "on line" or mail-order sales, including a small handling charge above postage costs, for a limited period for example during the end-of-year holiday season when people want to purchase gifts but may not be able to come to the park personally. This cannot become a routine activity as it takes too much time and effort. Postage might be paid using the park's postage meter, later reimbursed by the Friends.

### **President's Comments:**

- Sheena and Andre swapped positions as president/vice-president. If anyone is willing to step forward to be vice-president in Sheena's place, they would be welcome to do so. Also, when Diane is not available to perform secretarial functions during Board meetings, we need a volunteer to step forward. (Brett took notes during this meeting, thank you!)

- We were offered free vendor space at the Carlisle Sports & Outdoor National Show at the Carlisle Fairgrounds on September 6-8, Friday through Sunday. Our parent organization the PA Parks and Forests Foundation reserved a table but cannot use it themselves. We can use the table for some or all of the weekend as we wish; PPF just asks that we promote PPF as well as our own Friends group. Board members expressed willingness to staff a table and will check their calendars and email Andre with availability. Andre will ask PPF for details including whether they can loan banners or other visual aids to attract passersby (Update: they do have useful banners and backdrops.)

- Website: our volunteer webmaster Morgan continues to offer his services. He recently clarified for us the correct administrator password for our site, [www.pinegrovefriends.org](http://www.pinegrovefriends.org), so that we are not dependent on any one person for access if needed. We will try to be more timely in posting items such as Board minutes and the results of the Iron Run race.

- Grant to Save the Stack: Mary and Andre worked with Marci Mowery of PPF to prepare a South Mountain Partnership "mini-grant" application for funding to repair the top of the stone furnace stack. A cover made of wood and rubber sheeting was installed approximately 30 years ago, but it leaked and after years of water damage the whole thing collapsed this Spring. This left the top of the hollow masonry structure open to rain and snow which will someday cause the stack to crack and crumble (for a sad example of what happens to neglected 19<sup>th</sup> century iron furnaces, look at the decaying Big Pond Furnace located 5 miles northwest of our park). The plan is for a contractor to pour a solid concrete cap all the way across the top to provide more lasting protection for the central feature of our park. It is anticipated that the contractor can do the work in April 2014. This emergency repair was not previously budgeted by DCNR nor the park itself, so the Friends must take action. The project will total \$4880, of which \$2440 would be covered by the grant if successful. The remainder of the budget includes in-kind contributions from the park (for example to ensure visitor safety during construction) and a **direct cash match of \$2041 from the Friends group**. We are optimistic that the grant will be successful as it is not a huge amount of money compared to the South Mountain Partnership's whole grant program, and the need is obvious. If however the mini-grant application is not approved, the Friends should consider funding the entire project directly as it is critical to fix the problem before many winters go by. We expect to learn about our grant application's status in October. Mary did the bulk of the work to write the grant, thank you!

#### **Other comments:**

- Reminder to enter volunteer hours onto DCNR website <https://www.volunteers.dcnr.state.pa.us>. Mary will look into creating a "group" volunteer account for our park, to enter total number of person-hours for events such as Earth Day. This is needed because most volunteers do not take the time to register on the website and enter their hours individually. Even if people do not care about individual recognition, the park benefits by being able to document how much work all volunteers have performed at the end of each year -- totals are tracked at higher levels of DCNR and influence budget allocations.

#### **Next Board Meeting:**

- The next Board meeting was previously scheduled for Saturday October 5, three weeks before Fall Furnace Fest.