

NEWS RELEASE

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Iron furnace repairs to be made at Pine Grove Furnace State Park

GARDNERS, PA -- The Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park are pleased to announce that repairs will begin next week to the historic iron furnace in the center of the park.

Supported by a grant from the South Mountain Partnership, the Friends group is working with the state park to have a contractor pour a concrete cap across the top of the old stone stack.

The iron furnace made pig iron from 1764 through 1895. When the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania purchased the former ironworks in 1913, a photograph shows the abandoned stack was already in poor condition. Over the century since then, successive generations have made periodic repairs to prevent the 30-foot-tall masonry structure from crumbling.

In particular, around 1985 Bill Rosevear, park manager at the time, repaired exterior stonework, rebuilt the brick crucible at the bottom, and covered the top with plywood and rubber sheeting. But in early 2013 the plywood cover collapsed, thus exposing the hollow interior to damage by rain and snow.

“**The previous cover** leaked and the whole thing finally rotted and fell into the top of the furnace,” said **Andre Weltman, president of the Friends group**. “**It did its job** for almost three

decades, but now needs to be replaced. Hopefully the new cover will be even more weather-resistant.”

Weltman pointed to Big Pond Furnace, five miles from Pine Grove Furnace, as an example of what can happen to masonry structures if not protected from the elements. Abandoned after a fire destroyed the surrounding ironworks in 1880, the stack at Big Pond eventually cracked. Several years ago one side completely crumbled to the ground.

“We owe it to future generations to preserve our industrial heritage,” said Weltman. “While the old stack at Pine Grove wasn’t in immediate danger, if we ignored it for years it would eventually look like Big Pond. These massive structures seem permanent, but water infiltration and repeated freeze-thaw cycles slowly destroy them. **In the end, gravity always wins.**”

Lorne G. Seifert, Inc. of Dillsburg is under contract to pour a 6-inch layer of concrete to seal the furnace top. Work is expected to begin as early as the end of March, weather permitting.

In October 2013, the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation – parent organization for the Friends group – was awarded a \$2400 “mini-grant” from the South Mountain Partnership to cover half the cost of the repairs. The Friends group will pay for the other half, and the state park will provide material support such as barriers to protect the public.

The South Mountain Partnership Mini-Grant Program has been developed and overseen by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy since 2009 in an effort to engage partners in conserving the high-quality natural and cultural resources while enhancing the South Mountain region’s economic viability. The Partnership is one of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Conservation Landscape Initiatives. Funds for the Mini-Grant Program come from PA DCNR’s Environmental Stewardship Fund; since 2009 more than \$185,000 in grants have

been awarded and has leveraged an additional \$380,000 in matching funds. For more information on the South Mountain Partnership or the Mini-Grant Program visit:

<http://www.southmountainpartnership.org>.

Steeped in natural and historical features, 696-acre Pine Grove Furnace State Park is in a beautiful mountain setting in southern Cumberland County. Surrounded by Michaux State Forest, Pine Grove Furnace features two lakes, a historic area, **the Ironmaster's** Mansion and the Appalachian Trail Museum. For more information on Pine Grove Furnace State Park, visit:

www.visitPAparks.com or call the Park Office at 717-486-7174.

More information on The Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park: www.pinegrovefriends.org