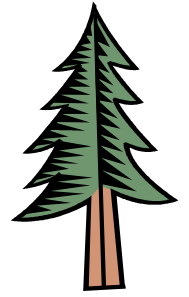


# MFA NEWSLETTER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MICHAUX FOREST  
ASSOCIATION

**Fall 2023**

**President's Column**  
**Deb Rosevear**

[www.michauxforestassociation.com](http://www.michauxforestassociation.com)

**Editor: Steve Cassel**  
**Web Master: Deb Rosevear**

We're nearing the end of another year at our cabins. Many of us are closing for the season and some are getting ready for winter at their cabins. We've had quite a bit of damage this year from large storms with heavy rains and high winds. Met Ed and Brightspeed have replaced many poles and lines and we've had some significant outages. When you pay your yearly membership fees in December please make sure that you have updated your contact information with current phones and emails so our cabin inspector can contact you quickly should storm damage occur at your cabin.

We have no changes to report on the rewrite of the leased campsite guidelines by DCNR. Be assured that when the regulations are finalized, your MFA Board of Directors will review the guidelines and go to bat for you on any changes that will negatively impact our membership.

I hope you've all seen the great work along Mountain Creek that our fellow board member, Tom Reidenbaugh, has done with his crew of volunteers. They've put in an enormous amount of work clearing out invasives and plant-

ing native trees and shrubs along the creek. The MFA has done a lot of work at Pine Grove Furnace!

I met with our District Forester in August at his office. Michaux has 4 full time rangers and they're asking for a seasonal ranger. These rangers work daily and weekends/nights as needed. Currently, our Michaux District Forest team is looking at various sites to build a new district forest office. As many of you know, the current building is small with very little room for public meetings, law enforcement deployment, volunteer engagement and educational programming. Nine potential sites have been researched for the new "Forest Resource Management Center (RMC)." The *South Mountain Golf Course* site is the most competitive with respect to proximity to utilities, cost of construction, ease of access, avoidance of ecological conflicts, and more. If this site is chosen, the Commonwealth will discontinue the venue's lease when it comes up for renewal. A public meeting was held on October 18<sup>th</sup>.

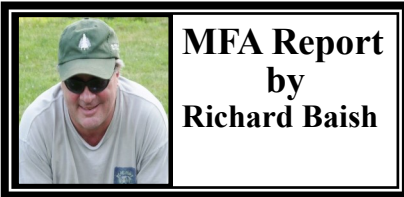
I have a meeting set up with our PGF Park Manager, Chris Houck, in early November. I will be discussing the sorry state of our lakes with Chris. We're concerned about the huge amount of aquatic weeds in Laurel Lake. It's making both boating and swimming difficult. In addition to nearly covering the lake now, weeds are growing inside the roped swimming area! We're con-

cerned about boating safety, also. It would be difficult to see if an adult or child was in danger in the water if a boating accident occurred. We've been told for many years now that the Laurel Lake aquatic plants issue is on a list of things to do – but it never gets done. As for Fuller Lake, the beach and shallows is so full of rocks that it's difficult to walk there! Prior managers have used equipment to sift the sand to remove trash and rocks, and put new sand on the beach on a regular schedule. That is not being done anymore. We'll keep you posted on these issues.

A quick reminder: Make sure you have no invasive plants or non-native trees/shrubs on your lease. Do not place those small decorative flags at the ends of your driveways (off your lease) – and be sure to check with the park or forestry before making any changes to your cabin or lease area. Be a good steward of our beautiful Michaux State Forest and Pine Grove Furnace State Park.

Enjoy our newsletter and have a Happy Holiday Season!





Greetings all:

With the Thanksgiving holiday in the recent past, I am writing this letter on my cabin porch soaking in the above average warm weather that is lingering through fall. The fall foliage season even seemed to be extended, though signs of its surrender are appearing. It is crazy to think that a month from now I could be tramping through knee deep snow and sub-artic temps while doing my inspections (lol)! Guess time will tell, but for now I am enjoying the extension of summer.

I am always glad when I can report that I don't have much to report! Fortunately, that is the case for this past summer regarding vandalism. I am not aware of any confirmed intruder break-ins, not even by our neighborly bears. As always, I discovered several opened doors, but in each instance, the cause was de-

termined to be from weather issues or hasty departures of the cabin's occupants.

Storms in the area, as most of you know, did wreak havoc this summer. Many cabins suffered minor and major damage due to high winds and fallen trees. Areas of Old Shippensburg Road and the premises behind Fuller Lake suffered the worst during one severe storm, perhaps a microburst. But the problems were in no way limited to these areas; nor was that the only storm that caused problems throughout Michaux forest. As mentioned, some cabins incurred serious wreckage, so much so that several have not even been able to have repairs completed yet.

Well, that about wraps up this brief report of my spring/summer inspections. If anyone has any questions or concerns, please let me know. One can leave a message on my cell phone, and I will respond to you when my limited phone service permits me to.

Happy trails to everyone and my best wishes to you all for happy and safe travels to your mountains retreats in the beautiful Michaux forest!

Rich's Phone # 717-226-4959

### New Transformers

Three new large transformers being installed at the end of Old Railroad Bed Road.





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**No Job Too Small**

**Late Breaking News from Chris Houck, Park Manager**  
*Deb was able to speak to him in early November.*

Laurel Lake aquatic vegetation: Chris says that the lake has been due for dredging for a few years and that the "studies and assessment" on dredging are now completed and the funding should come in the next couple of years.

Fuller Lake's rocky beach and shallows: Chris indicates that he puts sand on the beach yearly and there's only one area that's rocky. He indicated that they rake the beach but don't sift it to clean it. He will check on a sifter attachment to remove the rocks.

Tom's work on the riparian buffer along Mountain Creek. Chris said he was worried at first that it would induce people to get into the creek. But he's now very happy with it. He recognizes that Tom knows much about what needs to be done. He's

very happy with all the volunteers and volunteer hours that have been credited to the park.

Large trucks on Rt. 233 Chris had a couple of calls about the trucks. He can do nothing about it as it's a state highway that runs through the park. He has no jurisdiction. It's mostly Allen Distribution trucks and they run it because it's the shortest distance between their facility and their customers.

Here is what is on Chris's special projects list: 1. Dredging Laurel Lake, 2. Repairs and basic maintenance for the Iron Master's Mansion, 3. Cleaning up the furnace stack (getting weeds out of the stones/bricks, cleaning the top)

He's recently hired two new, and much needed maintenance people.

Chris was asked if there's anything he'd like to communicate to our membership. He said to encourage our members to not use the park's dumpsters. They only have one company that bid on the contract for trash hauling for the park..

**MFA Litter Patrol 2023**  
Diane and Bob Shenk

What a milestone! As of June 29, 2023, the MFA has participated in the Adopt-A-Highway program for 30 years. A huge "thank you" to all past and current volunteers who have made this achievement possible. Our scenic 2-mile stretch of Pine Grove Road from the dam breast at Laurel Lake to the Park Office has benefitted from our efforts.

We picked up trash four times between April and September, which fulfills the PennDot requirement for participation in the program. A special thanks to the volunteers who showed up in rain gear on a stormy day in September! We finished just as the rain started.

It was encouraging to see a decrease in the amount of trash we pick up each time, but there always seemed to be litter along the road.

We'll be back in 2024 to continue the MFA's commitment to keeping our section of the forest beautiful. Dates will be announced early next year.

Special thanks to our volunteers in 2023:  
Patti and Jim Deppen  
Judy and Lyle Herr  
Linda and Tom Reidenbaugh  
John Rovigno



**Christmas Candlelight Service at the Pine Grove Chapel**  
Pine Grove Furnace Community Church Christmas Service  
Saturday, December 16th - 7:00 pm  
Bring flashlights and park across from the church  
Wonderful music and message to start the Christmas season  
**For additional information, contact**  
**Pat Harry** <[pharry1450@msn.com](mailto:pharry1450@msn.com)>



Important Emergency Numbers

Cook Township 717-486-8114  
Michaux District Office, DCNR 717-352-2211  
Pine Grove Furnace Office 717-486-7174  
Met Ed/First Energy 888-544-4877  
Brightspeed 800-201-4099

It is important that you also have your account number for First Energy available.



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Comments from the new newsletter editor: Steve Cassel

Hello MFA members. It is my pleasure to be your new MFA Newsletter editor. My parents bought our cabin near Laurel Lake in 1950 and I have been hanging out there since 1955. My mother was a school nurse and my father a contractor, so within days of school recessing for the summer, we moved into the cabin for the summer. My first summer job was working at Camp Thompson and I spent 4 summers working in both Pine Grove Furnace and Colonel Denning State Parks. In the coming newsletters, I plan to share some memories of the many years in the park and forest.


If you would like to share stories about your experiences in the park or forest, past or present, please send them to me at [stevcass@aol.com](mailto:stevcass@aol.com)

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**Bruce Stryker**  
ISA CERTIFIED ARBORIST PD-1068A  
[bstryker@yorktreefamily.com](mailto:bstryker@yorktreefamily.com)



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**Friends of  
Pine Grove Furnace  
State Park**  
*By Mary Soderberg,  
Vice-Chair*

More than 8,500 people came out to enjoy this year's Fall Furnace Fest! The weather was beautiful, and everyone was smiling!! Many people came to carve pumpkins in preparation for the Pumpkin Parade and to check out the vendors, but there were numerous free activities for families to enjoy too. This year 1,343 people enjoyed the hayrides provided by park staff, 1,178 people tasted the cider freshly pressed by the Friends of Kings Gap and Pine Grove Furnace, and 423 kids dipped their very own candles. This was all in addition to the live music, the Birds of Prey programs offered by Miller's Wildlife and Conservation Specialists, Mansion tours by the Friends, bee-keeping sessions by Two Brothers Bees, nature crafts by the Penn State Master Gardeners and charcoal making demonstrations by the Friends. And let's not forget the opportunity to meet Thaddeus Stevens or get your picture taken with Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl! All for free!

It takes a lot of planning and coordination throughout the year to make Fall Fest happen. Staff and volunteers meet in the early summer to map out the plans and timeline. Some things like event insurance and lining up musicians are all done months in advance. In fact, vendors have already begun signing up for next year!

A couple weeks before Fall Fest the staff begins to make sure everything is in place to turn the Fuller Picnic Day Use Area into a festival venue as they do the final mowing, bring out the trashcans, position picnic tables, haul in straw and pumpkins, make repairs to the pumpkin float, mark the parking lots and most importantly make sure the Hairy Hand is ready for Saturday night! Much of the work happens within a four-day period beginning on the Friday before Fall Fest when vendors begin to set up and continuing through the Monday when staff and volunteers finish the cleanup. Not only is the entire park staff fully engaged in the event, but rangers and park educators from other parks assist them throughout the weekend. In total, Friends volunteers contributed 780 volunteer hours over the four days.

Our next event is the First Day Hike on January 1. Statewide, First Day Hikes have become a fun way to welcome in the New Year by taking a hike in a state park. Depending on the weather we can have as few as thirty or as many as 150 people coming out for a hike. The Friends offer homemade cookies, mulled apple cider and hot chocolate to each of the participants. We use the hike to show off some of the trails in the park, always with the goal of providing a good experience for families and inexperienced hikers. In other words, the hike is fairly level and about two miles in length. Bring your family and friends and join us for this year's First Day Hike!

## MFA Tidbits

### **Speed Enforcement:**

Speed limit enforcement has been occurring between Laurel and Fuller Lake on the Pine Grove Road. This will aid in our safety as well as for the safety of our furry friends.

### **Fish Stocking:**

Laurel Lake was stocked with trout on November 14th. That should be good for all of the ice fisherman who frequent the lake. If you've never gone past the lake when it is frozen, you wouldn't believe how many fisherman sit out there in the freezing weather.

### **Utility Pole Installation:**

You may have seen the new (and tall) utility poles that have been installed along Pine Grove Road. The new poles, carrying only electric lines, will be installed from Twirly Top to the park office. As was show earlier in the newsletter, new transformers are also being installed.

### **Park Staff:**

Did you know that the state park has:

- ◇ 1 Full time DCNR Ranger\*
- ◇ 2 seasonal DCNR Rangers\*
- ◇ 3 seasonal Park Resource Officers
- ◇ 1 seasonal Environmental Education Specialist

\*All DCNR rangers have law enforcement powers.

In addition, there is a Park Manager, Office Assistant and a great crew of maintenance personnel. Many of us worked with the park staff during the Fall Furnace Fest and they were wonderful to work with.

**Update: Mountain Creek Buffer Re-naturalization Project**

by Tom Reidenbaugh  
(tgreidenb@gmail.com)



I love this picture of a train buffer, “buffer” meaning a barrier to mitigate the bad effects of one entity on another. In it, the single light-colored car ahead of the long string of chemical tank cars is supposed to shield the guys in the cab in case all the tankers suddenly explode. Yeah, well. And likewise with the Mountain Creek riparian buffer, “riparian” as in the forested margin along the stream.

The trees and shrubs in a riparian buffer protect the stream by providing critical ecosystem services. Their leaf canopy shields it from overheating, allowing oxygen-dependent cold water species such as brook trout. They slow surface runoff after heavy rains, decreasing erosion. Underground, their roots bind the streambanks, also preventing erosion, while they filter out excess nutrients and pollutants—unbuffered, sediment and nutrient loads would flow downstream to the Chesapeake Bay, smothering oysters and eelgrass, and spreading localized “dead zones.” And if the trees are natives, their leaves sustain both aquatic and terrestrial food webs, as they sequester atmospheric carbon in their living woody tissue, gradually releasing it into the soil during decomposition.

Historically, all waterways in the East had functioning riparian buffers, but many or most were degraded or eliminated by post-European development. Widespread efforts are now underway by environmental groups to recreate them, typically represented by rows of plastic tubes enclosing tree seedlings in open meadows, pastures, or lawns bordering streams. With a little upkeep these are immensely successful and the trees grow quickly in open sunlight. You should definitely get involved in a volunteer effort to plant or care for a new riparian buffer near your home community.

But we have a different problem at the Mountain Creek riparian buffer in Pine Grove Furnace State Park. We call our project “re-naturalization” (if that’s even a word), meaning that there was a functioning natural buffer, it was totally overrun with invasive vegetation, and now we’re trying to get it back. The invasives are many, but we’re focusing on the large woody ones: privet, barberry, bittersweet, and multiflora rose. Being invasive, they are non-native and have such reproductive advantages that they outcompete the natives that are supposed to be here for all available space and sunlight, so that no new natives can germinate and grow. Remember food webs? Non-natives don’t support them. Remember carbon? Invasives decompose too fast to incorporate it into the soil, the same reason rain forests are no good at sequestering carbon.

For the past two years our group, 64 total, some from MFA, has worked along the stream from the Fuller Lake bathhouse to the brickyard. As volunteers on State land, we’re approved only to do manual physical labor, and so we do. We’ve dug out over 30 truckloads of woody invasives to make room for new plantings. And in

their place we’ve put 65 large native trees, and lots of smaller seedlings and shrubs. We plan to expand upstream just slightly in 2024. New volunteers are always appreciated. And while we were funded by several grants to purchase trees, we are unfunded for next year. Trees cost about \$125 each, so again, any personal contributions in honor of, in memory of, or just to support the cause would be very, very greatly appreciated.

In the areas we’ve cleared our efforts turn increasingly to maintenance. When we disturb the soil by digging invasives by the roots, we release all the existing seedbanks there. Some are good, and we’re seeing new emergent seedlings of native trees and other plants. But many more are bad, so that there is rapid reinvasion by mugwort, mile-a-minute vine, and bittersweet. We’ve already returned, and will return again, to remove these new invasives. But being realistic, the invasives will always return. The idea is to establish natives in sufficient numbers and grow them to sufficient height to get sunlight, so that they can successfully compete with the invasives to reestablish a healthy riparian buffer.

Our Mountain Creek buffer re-naturalization project is a trial using manual removal and replanting instead of other options such as widespread spraying. Will it work long-term? On one hand, our native plantings grow well in the cleared areas. On the other, new invasive vegetation aggressively attempts to establish. The jury’s out, but we’ll keep working and we’d like your help. In the meantime, be careful around trains.

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## What's Cooking in Cooke

### Issues Around the Neighborhood



By Andre Weltman

#### Twp. Planning Committee

As a reminder, Cooke Township ordinances, resolutions and other information are available on the Township's website [www.cooketwp.org](http://www.cooketwp.org). Questions may also be emailed to [cooketwp@kuhncom.net](mailto:cooketwp@kuhncom.net).

#### TOWNSHIP MONTHLY SUPERVISOR MEETINGS

Please feel free to attend Board of Supervisors meetings, usually held the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30 P.M. at the Township building. Your attendance and participation are always welcome. Before dropping by, check for schedule changes on our website or on the bulletin board outside the Township building front door at 1700 Centerville Road, Newville PA 17241 (along Route 233, three miles north from the State Park Office). The Township meeting each November is typically moved back one day to Monday, due to the use of the municipal building for elections.

Due to a PA state law, we must post public meeting agendas online at least 24 hours in advance. This update to the state's "Sunshine Law," is intended to give the public adequate notice about issues on which local leaders might take official action. If a new issue is brought to our attention but is not on the agenda, action may need to be delayed until the following month's meeting. If you are considering attending a monthly Town-

ship meeting to discuss an issue, if at all possible let us know at least a full week in advance (and absolutely no later than 36 hours before the meeting).

#### CONSTRUCTION PERMITS

Please remember that building permits are required in Cooke Township. Don't start any building work unless you have checked with the Township directly. This applies to all properties, including those overseen by the State Park or State Forest, and applies even to cabins that have been granted an exemption from construction inspections under the UCC-13 process as allowed by the PA Department of Labor & Industry (see our comments in the Spring 2019 MFA newsletter).

**Cabin owners should start the process by approaching your cabin point-of-contact at the State Park or State Forest, and getting written permission from them for the proposed construction.** Please provide this permission to Cooke Township when seeking a Township permit. Don't assume your contractor has taken care of this legal requirement – it is your responsibility to follow the law. Failure to comply can result in stop-work orders and fines.

#### COMMUNICATING WITH COOKE TOWNSHIP

Our tiny rural Township is staffed by part-timers. We do not have regular office hours and are open by appointment only. The best way to reach Cooke Township is by email at [cooketwp@kuhncom.net](mailto:cooketwp@kuhncom.net) or less efficiently, leave a voice message at 717-486-8114. When leaving emails or voicemails, always please tell us if you are a seasonal cabin owner (and specify State Park vs. State Forest),

and provide your Cooke address as well as relevant contact info to return your message. This will help us respond correctly and will reduce extra back-and-forth communications.

#### ROADS AND BRIDGES

The road crew has been busy blowing leaves out of culverts, and grading certain gravel roads with Cooke's new grader which was purchased "used" from another township. You may notice this large yellow beast parked at the Township building. Planned road work includes fresh "oil and chip" on Michaux Road, Michaux Oaks Road, and a short section of the Township's portion of Ridge Road.

A longstanding problem in our Township is the short bridge on Quarry Road where it crosses Mountain Creek, connecting the State Park's Furnace Day Use Area to the Brickyard Day Use Area. Though located entirely within the State Park, the bridge and the road belong to Cooke. The bridge dates to the 1950s and is woefully inadequate for the park visitor and cabin traffic it carries. The bridge is even potentially unsafe for very heavy vehicles. We are pleased to report that thanks to leadership by the Cumberland County Planning Department, this bridge is going to be replaced using mostly Federal and County dollars plus an expected contribution from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. There will be minimal or no direct cost to our tiny rural township. While actual construction work likely won't begin until 2025, we wanted to acknowledge this key initial step in the process – securing funding – and give you a very early "heads up."





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Open Monday-Friday 7AM-8PM Saturday 8AM-8PM Sunday 9AM-6PM

Michaux Forest Association  
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