Greetings from Friends of Peninsula State Park

Fall 2019

President’s Newsletter Article - Fall 2019

Chris Holicek - President

Hi to all Peninsula Park Friends and Volunteers,

Thank you so much for all of you who support us in many ways. Thanks again to all the Camp Hosts and Nature Center Hosts that worked at the Park this season. We appreciate your efforts. As you may know the Friends raised over $30,000 matching a state grant to purchase fire rings, picnic tables, and grills. This year we would also like to thank three volunteers, Luke Pawlekiewicz, Kurt Starbuck and Steve Mann who helped the park staff with brush removal, trails, setting up grills, fire rings and picnic tables. We have many more to set up, so if you are interested in helping, please contact Park staff.

This Fall the Friend’s Trail Committee is sponsoring and paying for Chain Saw Training for Friends volunteers who wish to help us in the Park. With more volunteers trained, we will be able to safely assist the staff.

This summer, as in previous ones, we provided grants to fund a summer naturalist and maintenance/trials position. Thank you to Missy Stevanovic’ and Brilyn Breck for all their great work. You can read more about them in the articles they provided for this newsletter.

We are very proud that we achieved our goal of raising $750,000 for the new Eagle Tower. As you may know from visiting our website, peninsulafriends.org, the second round of bids was over the money currently available. The Friends are optimistic that the necessary funds will be secured by the DNR and construction will be able to start later this year. We are very proud that we were able to help with this tremendous project.

We are looking forward to the winter trail activities in the Park and are excited about the staff and volunteers using the grooming equipment provided by Friend’s funding. We hope you can not only enjoy a glorious fall in the Park, but also enjoy its winter splendors.

Several of our board members and our business manager Steve Strucely went to pick out flooring, cabinets, counter tops, tile, outside siding and windows for the Nature Center renovation. We are very excited about the Center’s “new look”. Hopefully, you can visit the Center this summer to see the enlarged space, indoor bathrooms and an all over makeover. Thanks to Tielens Builders who are teaming with us on this project. You are so great to work with! Also, a special thanks to our business manager, Steve Strucely, for all his hard work and dedication. We are so very happy you are a part of our Friends group and appreciate all you do. With several major projects going on at once, we could not do it without you!

Lastly, we are looking for a Friends Board member. Currently we meet on the second Thursday of the month, 8:30 AM at the Park Office. If anyone would be interested in helping the Park in this capacity, please let us know.

If you are on Facebook, please like us!

Have a wonderful fall with family and friends and take some time to enjoy the Park!

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Dear Friends,

As we approach the fall colors, I’m reminded how fast the summer went this year. Perhaps it was due to all the planning for the many upcoming projects or all the great accomplishments. To date our visitor attendance is up two percent from last year, even during one of the wettest seasons.

A couple of active projects that are currently under construction include the replacement of Northern Sky Theater vault restroom with a new flush restroom facility. This also includes a new 800’s shower building in South Nicolet Campground. In addition, renovations for the 700’s shower building and the Weborg shower building will be beginning soon. We’re delighted to share that the Friends donated the construction cost of the nature center addition project. As a result, we are in the process of clearing out the facility and prepping for construction. Planning has begun to gravel all 468 campsites as well as the group camps. A portion of the eleven new vault toilets will be installed in various locations this fall. Our office building will be getting a new roof and new security doors. As a result of these projects, the park may be a little congested with various contractors.

Highway 42 construction project will begin soon, which includes the front entrance of the park. You’ll still be able to gain access, but delays could occur.

You may also see Wisconsin Public Service burying power lines from Highland Road to Group Camp as the first phase of their two year project. This will be a great enhancement to minimize any power outages for the property and to our visitors. We’re also hoping to have them bury the power lines near the front entrance.

Projects that are still in motion include the replacement of the dump station, additional electrification to campsites in South Nicolet Campground, installation of new water fountains, upgrades to the wastewater treatment facility and Eagle Tower construction.

Additional projects proposed for 2020 could include water line replacements, Sunset bike trail improvements, and possibly some road resurfacing.

I would like to thank all the Friends, camp hosts, nature center hosts, groomers, volunteers, partners and staff for all your efforts and contributions. Seeing visitors use the new picnic tables, grills or fire rings is very exciting and it wouldn’t be possible without everyone’s efforts.

I would also like to thank Northern Sky Theater and Friends of Peninsula State Park for all the fundraising efforts to make several projects a reality.

Have a great fall season everyone!

Brian Markowski

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Peninsula Park is decked out with flowers thanks to Master Gardener Volunteers, Marsha and Steve Krzyzanowski, who are in their fourth season of working on plantings seen by thousands of visitors each year.

When Marsha and Steve finished their Master Gardener training in 2016, their instructors, Michelle & Gary Kemp, long time Board Member of the Friends of Peninsula Park, asked if they would be interested in the Park project. Marsha says she and Steve “didn’t think twice.” The Krzyzanowski’s live in the Fish Creek area only three miles from the park and love it for the opportunities to hike, bike, ski and snowshoe. They camped there for decades. It was a natural step to use their interest in horticulture to beautify the park.

The DNR wanted perennial native plants to be used by the park sign. After some research, the team selected coreopsis, gray headed coneflowers, purple coneflowers, prairie smoke, New England asters, wild geraniums, Jacob’s ladder, liatris, butterfly weed, and black-eyed Susans. In the two other areas they plan and plant annuals are used. Around the flag pole they always have a red, white and blue combination. This year they have white cosmos, red dahlias and blue lobelias. They have been using begonias in the shaded wooden sided flower boxes by the main check-in. In winter, they create a winter “planting” with evergreen boughs, dogwood and birchwood. Marsha and Steve estimate that after all is in place, they spend a couple of hours a week weeding and mulching.

Fortunately, they have now “trained” some willing park staff members to help water the annuals.

This is a State Friends grant and the Friends of Peninsula Park match this grant to provide funds for flower & miscellaneous expenses every year.

**Membership Report**

Year to date the Friends of Peninsula State Park has welcomed new and returning members totaling 21 businesses, 93 families, 45 individuals, and 126 life.

Membership dues are an important source of funding for the Friends. As less state funding is available, our membership support becomes more vital than ever. Please consider upgrading your membership to become a Life Member.

Our membership continues to grow every year. Since the Friends group began in 2007 with just under 90 members, we have grown each year with 287 memberships in 2019. The two long term funds established by the Friends provide additional funding support. Please consider a donation to these or a general donation to the Nature Center Renovation project. The Friends are dedicated to providing monetary and volunteer support to Peninsula State Park, and your membership is a key factor to continuing these efforts.

Friend’s members receive a 10% discount on all merchandise sold at Park Headquarters or the Nature Center plus newsletters and updates on all the ongoing projects at Peninsula Park.
Hello! My name is Brilyn Brecka. I am currently a sophomore at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, and I am majoring in Wildlife Ecology and Management and minoring in Biology.

This summer I was hired by the Friends of Peninsula State Park to maintain the trails in the park.

Over the course of the summer, I explored the vast network of trails and worked on a variety of projects to improve, maintain, and keep them safe. I took on many large projects on the trails this summer.

One was improving signage at intersections and trailheads. Many signs were old, fading, rotted, or inaccurate. A good majority of signs were replaced or repainted throughout the park.

Another project I worked on continuously was removing hazard trees. After large rain or wind events, I would run almost all the trails in the park to assess any damage to trees along the trails. Fallen trees or trees that were hung up in the canopy were promptly removed from trails to ensure safety and ease of use for users.

I widened Sunset Trail and many other hiking trails by removing invasive honeysuckle. Toward the end of the summer, I worked on improving ski trails by removing stumps and brush to make grooming easier in the winter.

In my three months at the park, I was able to accomplish many tasks to enhance the trails at Peninsula State Park with daily maintenance. This was a wonderful opportunity to expand my job skills, and I feel this was a productive summer for both myself and Peninsula State Park.

Thank you to the Friends for providing the funding for this position and to all the staff at the park for making Peninsula State Park feel like home!

### Summer Programs

**Hannah Sjostrom, the 2019 American Honey Queen, visited the White Cedar Nature Center this Summer.** The Friends gave financial assistance for this event. Her visit was complemented by the Like to Hike bumblebee pin.

**Benjamin proudly displays a “critter catch and release” project he built last summer at a Peninsula State Park program.**
Merchandise

How about the Like to Hike bumblebee pin? This year’s pin was sold out by mid-September. Next year get yours early. By Sept 10 we had sold 573 bees, generated $2,164.20 in sales, and made $804.79 in profits. 224 of these were sold at half price to those who “Like to Hike”.

Total profits for pins and patches was: $2,005.82; all books: $1,542.06; clothes: $3,481.47

Our top selling animals were Otters and Porcupines! We sold 21 of each! Total sales for plush animals was $1,339.50 with profits of $692.22. Don’t forget our “Bug in the Box”.

This year we also began selling sprays for mosquitoes and ticks. This is really important because of the increase in tick borne diseases in Wisconsin.

Coming soon

Are you looking for a unique gift idea for your family or friends? Consider making a donation to the Peninsula State Park Tribute Program in their honor. Gift levels are $1,000, $1,500, and $2,500. Contributors are able to specify the wording they would like for a plate that honors or memorializes a loved one. The plate is displayed on the tribute wall at the Nicolet Beach shelter. Generous donors have contributed $38,500 to date, which has provided new fire rings, grills, and picnic tables for the park, along with 3 new orientation signs. A new panel was just added so there is plenty of room for additional names.

Please visit PeninsulaFriends.org/tribute to download a gift form or make a gift online.
Nature Center Activities

Hello and thank you Friends!

My name is Missy Stevanovic' and this summer I served as the LTE Naturalist.

I graduated this May with a Biology and Educational Studies degree from Macalester College; a perfect combination for teaching about Wisconsin’s great outdoors. This summer has been a whirlwind of fun and learning for Peninsula State Park visitors of all ages. Taking a stroll down memory lane, I'd like to share with you all some of the best memories of this summer.

My first event was a visit from the One, the Only Smokey Bear! Teaching a new generation of children his story and getting to see the delight on their parents faces while meeting him in person was a highlight of a well-planned event.

Working at Peninsula has been in many ways a dream come true. I’m grateful to have received the position and I know that it wouldn’t have been possible without the support and help from Friends like you.

Thank you.

Invasives

Friends funded invasive species work in 2019 by hiring Nature Care Ecological Consulting and Services, a local company owned by Jason Wilke. Pulling garlic mustard to reduce seed base is a management goal.

Photo by Jason Wilke
Construction of an addition to the Nature Center is scheduled to begin in October 1. The project will add about 1,200 square feet of space to the existing facility, including a meeting room, indoor accessible restrooms, a staff office, and storage space.

The original building will receive a facelift including new roof, siding, carpet, and windows. Generous donors have contributed almost $350,000 to make this project possible.

The Nature Center site will be closed to visitors during construction. The new building is expected to open in May 2020. The Friends are already making plans for a second phase which will expand the existing parking and add an observation deck. Please visit https://peninsulafriends.org/nature-center-addition/ for updates or to make a gift.