



Salt
Springs

Messenger

The Newsletter of the Friends of Salt Springs Park

Winter 2010

New Contract Signed with the Bureau of State Parks Toby Anderson

In late December, the Friends of Salt Springs Park, Inc. signed a contract with the Bureau of State Parks, Pa. Dept of Conservation & Natural Resources, to continue our operation of Salt Springs State Park. The contract is for three years and is the same as our previous contract in most of its details.

There was never any question of whether we would continue; the question was what, exactly, the contract would say. As our previous contract came toward its end, we had several meetings and discussions with Bureau of State Parks officials. They have consistently praised the Friends for our work in managing, developing and improving Salt Springs, and for the important educational and historical programs we have created and promoted. We are still the only one of Pennsylvania's 117 state parks which is being operated and maintained by a private organization.

Over the fifteen years of our management at Salt Springs, we have consistently maintained that some part of our operating budget should be paid by the state, but that has never happened. We have been successful over the years in competing for grants, for specific projects or improvements, but we have never had state support for the administrative and maintenance

costs of running the park, which is entirely our responsibility under the contract. Those costs must be paid out of our own locally raised funds.

As we have succeeded in promoting the park to both local and distant visitors, the administrative and maintenance expenses have more than proportionally increased, putting a strain on both our budget and the volunteerism of our dedicated staff. This year, we were hopeful that the Bureau of State Parks would take on our utility costs, which would be a major boost to our budget. Unfortunately, this came at the wrong time for the economy of our country generally and Pennsylvania in particular.

Further discussions with the Bureau revealed that the state's financial woes precluded any new assistance. We decided to continue as before, but we reduced the term of the contract to three years, in the hope that the state's financial situation may be better in that time. We will meet with Bureau of State Parks officials in December of each year to discuss our future.

And so, we continue as before: what we lack in sound financial backing, we make up for with passionate dedication to the values and goals of this small organization and the beautiful place we are preserving and promoting. May it continue for a long, long time.

Friends of Salt Springs Park

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www.friendsofsaltsspringspark.org

2010 Board of Directors

John Miskell, President
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Dennis Wilson

Friends' Mission

The Friends of Salt Springs Park will maintain the unspoiled, rural character of the park created by the Wheaton family. The Friends will provide opportunities to enjoy healthy outdoor recreation and education, while conserving the natural, scenic, aesthetic and historical values of the park.

The Friends of Salt Springs Park is a private 501(c)3, non-profit organization. Support for the Friends' work at the park comes from memberships, public and private agency grants, business donations, in-kind donations of materials and services, special events, and program fees for educational services. Contributions are tax deductible.

Board Changes

We thank Michaela Steele, who is leaving us after serving one term. Michaela, an elementary school teacher, has led many of the children's programs at the park and coordinated the children's activities during our annual Celebration. We intend to hold her to her promise to stay involved

We are pleased to welcome five new board members this year: Sandy Babuka, James Kessler, Stephen Spero, Kathy Tuttle, and Dennis Wilson.

Sandy is returning to the board after a year's absence. She is the director of Trehab's wind energy program. She is also Chair of the Friends' Education Committee and an instructor in the Friends' E3 program.

Jim recently retired as the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Forester for Susquehanna County. Over the years he has helped cut new trails, given talks, led walks, and shared extensive knowledge on practical forestry issues.

Steve has worked as Assistant Managing Editor for the *Binghamton Press*. His Bachelor's Degree in Economics as well as his experience with payroll and non-payroll budgets make him a perfect fit for our financial management needs.

Kathy Tuttle, along with Sue Chance and Nancy Wottrich, helped design the Friends' E3 program in 2002 and has since been a participating educator. Kathy is a Math and Science Tutor and an Adjunct Instructor at Keystone College, where she teaches Biology in the Weekender Program.

Dennis is returning to the board after a year's absence. Whether on or off the board, Dennis oversees our trail maintenance work and ensures that all trails are clearly marked. He also leads public llama hikes over the trails.

PCC Signature Project at Salt Springs

The Friends of Salt Springs will get many hours of community service help from several local Pennsylvania Conservation Corps work crews this April to help clear the stream banks and picnic areas of recent flood debris. Each spring all crews statewide undertake such projects, and we're fortunate to be recipients this year. Look for more details in our e-letters.

Don't get our electronic newsletters nine times a year? Give us your e-mail address, and we'll add you to our mailing list.

News & Notes

With Regret

The Board has accepted, with regret, the resignation of our Education Program Coordinator, Nancy Wottrich, effective December 31. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Nancy for her seven years of dedication to the Friends as both a board member and program coordinator.

With her guidance and expertise, our E3 (Earth Ecology and Environment) program has become a standard part of several local fourth grade curriculums, and Salt Springs is becoming known as a place to go for quality (and fun!) programs.

Although Nancy resigned to focus on her environmental consulting business with her husband, we're pleased that she will remain on the Friends' Education Committee. Thanks, Nancy, and good luck!

In This Issue

Toby Anderson's article on page one and Lillian Theophanis' on page four are revealing. Many individuals and groups have worked together successfully for 40 years to preserve and protect—and to share—the natural and historical wonders of Salt Springs. In her historical overview on page five, Debra Adleman aims to show that what Toby and Lillian have written about are actually extensions of human passions and endeavors that reach back over 200 years.

On the Website

For space reasons, Lillian Theophanis' article appears here in condensed form. Please read it in its entirety on our website at www.friendsofsaltspringspark.org/partners.html (a link from the History page).

The membership year begins on June 1st.



Friends of Salt Springs Park, Inc.

P.O. Box 541 • Montrose, PA 18801

Membership Categories

| | |
|--------------------|----------|
| Individual | \$20 |
| Family | \$40 |
| Organization | \$50 |
| Sponsor | \$100 |
| Corporation | \$250 |
| Patron | \$500 |
| Other (any amount) | \$ _____ |

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Email _____

Phone _____

Make check payable to: FRIENDS OF SALT SPRINGS (Your cancelled check is your receipt)

Save These Dates!

Nature Photography. Thursdays, April 1, 8, 15, 7-8:30 pm; Saturdays, April 3, 10, 17, 10-Noon. For the third year, we're pleased to host George Schreck's Nature Photography course for the Montrose Area Adult School. Emphasis will be on avoiding blurred pictures, the composition of scenes and proper exposures for various lighting conditions. Workshop days (Saturdays) will include applying what we learn in the classroom, taking actual photographs, and reviewing them with the class. *Call 570-278-2006 to register. Fee: \$30.*

Barns of Salt Springs. Sunday, May 16, 2 pm. Local timber-frame building specialist John McNamara will talk about the barns at Salt Springs, the 1840s threshing barn that is now our pavilion and the dairy barn that is under renovation for public use. He'll cover barn structures and uses and building techniques and tools. Weather permitting, we'll spend some time at the barns. *No fee, but we'll pass the hat.*

Current Status of the American Chestnut Breeding Program. Sunday, June 27, 1 pm. At the Pavilion. Robin Wildermuth, forester from Pike County, will address the question, Will the real chestnuts ever be able to live here again? *No fee.*

All American Patriotic Music. Saturday, July 3, 7 pm. At the Pavilion. This year the Mountain Aire Brass Quintet will play and lead us in song. Rain or shine. Bring chairs and marshmallows. *No fee, but we'll pass the hat.*

Partnerships Strengthen the Friends' Mission

Lillian Theophanis

For the past 35 years Salt Springs State Park has had a strong bond with the Susquehanna County Conservation District (SCCD), the Susquehanna County Commissioners, the Endless Mts. Resource Conservation & Development Council (EMRC&D), USDA/NRCS, DCNR (formerly DER) Bureau of State Parks and Bureau of Forestry, and TREHAB.

It was the Conservation District and County Commissioners of the late 1960s that laid the groundwork for the working relationships that exist today. A commitment made between the Conservation District, County Commissioners, EMRC&D, and USDA/SCS staffs led to the acquisition of the park in 1971 by the Nature Conservancy from the Wheaton family. Two years later, management of the park was turned over to the Bureau of State Parks.

In the mid-1970s, the SCCD approved my request to work with the Commissioners, TREHAB, the Bureau of State Parks, and other entities to address erosion and tree stand health issues at the park. During the ensuing years, as they saw the value of the park projects, the SCCD included park improvements in its long range plan.

In the late 1970s, I obtained work crews and crew chiefs through the County's Summer Youth Employment Training Program, then in its infancy and administered by TREHAB. The main goal at that time was to keep hikers from using the trail along the stream, which was becoming badly eroded and endangered the stability of the shallow-rooted old growth hemlock trees growing along the edges of the gorge.

With the help of the SCCD, federal USDA-SCS (now NRCS), and state DCNR Bureau of Forestry staffs, we taught the work crews of teenagers how to cut and clear alternative trails, build thank-you-ma'ams to divert water, cut notches in sections of fallen down trees to make benches, line the trails with smaller diameter trees, and mark the trails by using the tops of cans,

painted in various colors. We created a self-guided trail hike booklet. There were three separate and distinct trails, based on differences in habitat and slope steepness. We also built and installed two new bridges to replace the one rickety, precarious old bridge. Park Supervisor Gerry Frost brought in additional benches and BBQ pits and paid a local person to mow the lawn areas. I am very proud of that collaborative effort that continued for about 10 years.

Conservation of the hemlock forest, the gorge with its waterfalls, the historic homes, and the salt springs still continues. The Friends of Salt Springs Park have a lot to be grateful for. We thank our partners in conservation and hope that our collaborations will continue in the ensuing years.

Our Conservation Partners

This review illustrates how important it is to create collaborations or partnerships with agencies, groups, and individuals. They strengthen our resolve in accomplishing mutual goals and create outreach opportunities that engage the public in protecting and enhancing our natural and historical resources. Visit our partners' websites for more information on their goals and missions:

BUREAU OF FORESTRY - www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry

BUREAU OF STATE PARKS - www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/education/index.aspx

EMRC&D - www.endlessmountainsrcd.org

SCCD - www.suscondistrict.org

SUSQ. CO. COMMISSIONERS - www.susqco.com

TREHAB - www.trehab.org

USDA/NRCS - www.nrcs.usda.gov

Threads through History

Debra Adleman

From its first mentions in the history books, Salt Springs has attracted people with strong ideals and dreams. The first was Balthasar DeHaert. A New Jersey man of Dutch descent, DeHaert had some legal training and moved around New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, working in various county seats, including Montrose. During his travels he heard about “the salt spring,” and he spent years searching for the Native Americans rumored to know where it was. In a letter dated November 20, 1795, land agent Samuel Preston records DeHaert’s success: “*D. Hart and Co. report they have lately found the salt spring. . . . They have had 3 Indians out with them several days and brought in salt water. . . . D. Hart has now gone to purchase the land where it is in. To whom it belongs is to us unknown.*”

It belonged to Tench Coxe, wealthy land speculator in Philadelphia. Given the rarity of salt at that time and the potential for great wealth, Coxe hired DeHaert to establish a salt mine. When he wasn’t in court (which met only periodically at that time), DeHaert lived at or near Salt Springs and mined for salt, at first by hand. DeHaert cut the first trees, planted the first crops, built the first buildings and got the county to build the first roads, Silver Creek (in 1813) and Salt Springs (1824).

It was an aging body, not a broken spirit, that forced DeHaert to abandon his quest. On July 6, 1824, he wrote, “*I cannot get the water to rise through the tube at the Salt Spring to produce more than a peck of Salt on boiling one hundred gallons of it. . . . My exertions have nearly worn me out, and . . . it is necessary that I spend my last days with my brother in Shrewsbury. . . .*” He was 73.

DeHaert was not alone for long at Salt Springs. The waterfalls and gorge soon became a “destination.” On November 9, 1813, circuit rider Davis Dimock wrote: “*Went to Silver Lake on business with Dr. Rose dined with four gentlemen from Philadelphia on a visit [who] had stayed the night before at the Salt Springs where they had been for amusement, they dealt in extra-ordinaries about it, as though they had been on a voyage around the world.*”

The Wheatons purchased and moved onto the “Salt Springs tract” in the early 1840s. Their

dreams were more pragmatic—build a home, make a living, and raise a family. This they did for the next 130 years. They raised livestock, farmed the land, sold apples and timber, made bricks, and took jobs as surveyors and justices of the peace. The Wheatons also embraced the duality of their land—the tangible and intangible qualities others sought for financial and spiritual reasons.

The Wheatons were approached periodically during the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s, and again in the early 1900s and 1920s, by individuals and companies, both local and national, who wanted to make their fortunes off the underground salt, oil, and gas. The Wheatons never pursued such efforts themselves, never invested any money or sold their land to the highest bidder. They did, however, accommodate others’ efforts. They signed leases and asked for royalties and then pursued their own priorities.

One of those priorities was to accommodate the “other half” of Salt Springs, and this they did actively engage in. Friends and strangers alike were always welcome to picnic, hike, and camp at Salt Springs, as is evident from a thick guest ledger the Wheatons kept beginning in 1865. In 1868, when signing yet another lease for the “Old Salt Spring,” the family retained “*the right of ways for [themselves] and all Guests and Visitors . . . in passing and repassing from the Spring . . . along the bank of Fall Brook ravine to and around the falls. . . .*”

Family diaries record horse and buggy trips to Kirkwood, NY, in the 1880s, picking up and returning “guests and visitors” to the train station. The local newspapers record hundreds of “gatherings” at Salt Springs for church and school picnics, holiday celebrations, and family outings. In the 1960s, the Wheatons printed a brochure advertising Salt Springs Farm as “an ideal place for a quiet, restful vacation,” amenities including fishing, swimming, shady lawns, and home-cooked food.

In just a few more years ownership of Salt Springs changed hands, and its future well-being seemed uncertain. Then, as Lillian and Toby write, new individuals and groups picked up where the Wheatons left off, again working to protect and share Salt Springs.



**Friends of Salt
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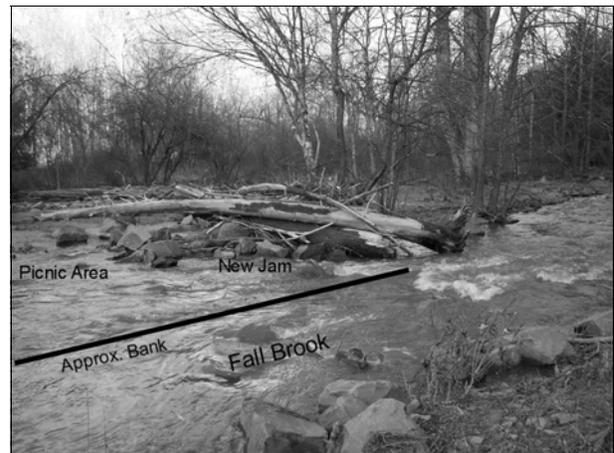
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Here We Go Again

Dennis Wilson has lived at Salt Springs for six years. When the park flooded on Monday, January 25, 2010, it was, Dennis said, the third 150-year flood he's witnessed here. Once again Fall Brook went over its banks, at two places upstream of the foot-bridge and again further below. The back parking lot was stripped of grass, dirt, and rock, and some of the campsites now have sandbars.



Back parking lot, view from the road



Picnic area across the stream from the spring