

Friends of Rocky Fork State Park

P.O. Box 1, Flag Pond, TN 37657

Website: www.rockyforkfriends.org

Email: rockyforkfriends@gmail.com

The days are getting shorter, and the air a bit cooler, it is a golden time of the year to experience the Park!

Park News

from RFSP Manager Tim Pharis

As kids are returning to school, parks generally see less visitors in August and September. This is always a great time to evaluate trails, amenities and future projects before visitation picks back up during "leaf season."

During the past month we have been busy with our continued upgrades to our beloved Ranger Station. We have more gift shop items (Long sleeve T's and hats!) and beginning the planning phase of our Rocky Fork exhibits, ETA Spring 2023. With the addition of our amazing clerk, Brenda Sparks, we are now able to open our ranger station to the public for scheduled hours:

Ranger Station Hours

Friday 9 to 3

Saturday 9 to 3

Sunday 1 to 3

I just returned from our statewide **Park Manager Conference**. I was able to meet our new **Deputy Commissioner of TN State Parks, Greer Tidwell Jr** who has a long standing love for TN State Parks. He and his wife both grew up around parks, regularly took their kids to our parks, and was a long time member of Radnor Lake's Friends group. He has a LONG list of accomplishments and is known for his environmental ethic and mentorship. Full bio can be found at <https://www.tn.gov/environment/about-tdec/about-leadership/greer-tidwell-jr.html>. I am excited to see where State Parks can grow under his leadership. Often, Park Commissioners are scions of business and political action. A commissioner with roots in environmental action is a refreshing sight!

This year's conference was centered around "**Access 2030**," a statewide plan to reach out to new and underserved populations. Our Park stories, interpretive programs, and histories will focus on "Telling Full Stories" to encourage a welcoming, close kinship and protectiveness of their state parks for every park visitor.



Upcoming Events

October 10

FRF Board Meeting

RFSP Ranger Station 6 pm

October 22

Bat Road Race (5 miles)

November TBD

**A southern loop guided hike
Flint Creek to Flint Mountain**

December 3

FRF Annual Member Meeting

and Board Elections – 10 am

Erwin Town Hall

In addition, check out the Rocky Fork State Park website for Park sponsored hikes and activities: [Rocky Fork State Park — Tennessee State Parks \(tnstateparks.com\)](http://Rocky Fork State Park — Tennessee State Parks (tnstateparks.com)) or their Facebook page

[@RockyForkStateParkTn](https://www.facebook.com/RockyForkStateParkTn)

On the Trail ...



Photo credit: Sharon Posniak

Park Insights

by RFSP Ranger Jeff Sweeney

Featured Park Events

Every month there are new as well as regularly featured activities in the park. Full Moon hikes are scheduled each month throughout the year. **Tennessee Serves & National Public Land Day** are combined this year for a **'give back to the trails you love'** day at the park on **Saturday, September 17**. The Haunted Hikes featuring storytellers with local stories sold out quickly, but if there are a few Friends members who are interested, Jeff will try to fit you in.

Check out **Rocky Fork's Facebook page** regularly to see what they have coming up, and feel free to offer your suggestions to them as well!

Trail Ways

Trail Adopters, Park staff, Friends and the public work regularly to **keep the trails in great condition** for all to enjoy. With the wet, hot weather this summer, there has been a lot of weedeating, lopping, bushwhacking to be done. Blockstand and Flint Mountain Trails have received extra attention this summer. Consider joining us on one of the monthly scheduled trail maintenance work days. There's something for everyone to do. One day of trail work and you will see differently (and appreciatively) as you hike or ride in the future. Contact Trails Committee Chair John Beaudet, bodaciousat@gmail.com if you want to help out or for more info.

Friends and 'Soon-to-Be Friends' Guided Hikes

Thank you to Friends Members **Bob Fuller, Sharon Posniak** and Board Member **John Beaudet** who have added and offered two guided hikes this summer. On June 26, it was **Flint Creek out to the AT**, and on September 3 it was a **Grand Tour Hike** including the Rocky Fork, White Oak Flats, Headwaters, Blockstand Creek, and Flint Creek trails for a total of 10 miles and about 1500 feet of elevation gain. Watch your email and the Friends Facebook page for their **Fall hike** – a southern loop out **Flint Creek and over Flint Mountain Trails** in November.

Member News and Events

The Friends of Rocky Fork support the Park and Park staff with projects and funding.

At the Ranger Station, Friends helped remove non-native and invasive plants and **install native plants**. Now we wait and watch them flourish!

Our Mission

Support and assist Rocky Fork State Park management and staff to protect, preserve, promote, and enhance Rocky Fork State Park. (Non Profit 501-C3)

2022 Board of Directors

John Beaudet
Dennis Bokemeier
Peggy Cantrell
Luke Carter
Emily Goepel
Carrie Hovey – Vice President
Carley Lester
Lotta Murray – Secretary
Teresa Pickett - Treasurer
Carl Ramsey
Roger Rice
Nathan Wilson – President



Park Inventory Addition

Friends purchased a **dump wagon** for hauling gravel, wood, bridge stringers and tools to be donated to RFSP.

It's easy to tow with the Park's side-by-side or four wheeler. It is 6 feet long and is heavy duty with a 1600 lb payload capacity. It will be great for the Park and for our Friends' volunteer days! This purchase will be maintained and insured as part of the Park inventory.

Park Kiosks

In September, Friends will start building 2 or more **Kiosks** for the Park. One will be at the Ranger Station, one at the beginning of Whitehouse Cliffs Trail, and eventually there will be kiosks at the Flint Creek Battlesite.

Kiosk work days will be announced via email for Friends who would like to join in this fun project.



Festivals/Events

Friends set up a booth at the **Meet The Mountains Festival** in Johnson City on August 19 and 20.

As part of the festival, we sponsored an event at Rocky Fork State Park that is published to the public attending the festival. This year, Lisa Hazlett and the State of Franklin Track Club scheduled the **Bear Track Trail Run** in the park. It was a perfect day to be on the trails at the park! Congratulations to Parker Cowden (1st Male), Charlotte Brockmyre (1st Female) and lookout for up and coming Ellie Brockmyre (1st under 18).

Meanwhile at the **Meet The Mountains Festival**, we handed out over **100 Rocky Fork State Park Trail Maps, signed up 4 new memberships and sold t-shirts and merchandise (lots of stickers!!)**. The animal pelts are always a big attraction for kids as well as adults.

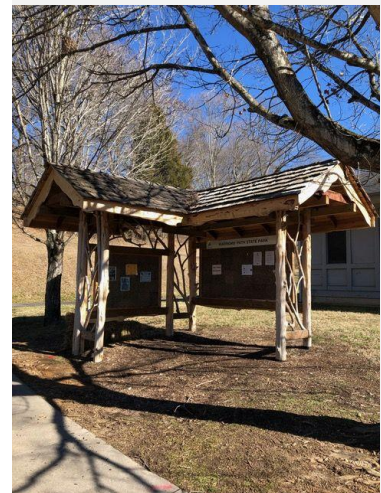
This festival is a great opportunity to share information about the park, many people who attend the festival have never been to the park – **yet!**

Great big THANKS to our Friends members who take the time to volunteer and staff our booth at festivals and events!

Friends Support



Dump Wagon and Jeff



Sample Kiosk we will be modeling for RFSP



Meet the Mountains Festival

Next Festival: Erwin Apple Festival, Oct 7&8



Please consider volunteering!

Other Member News

In July, the Friends Board became aware of National Forest Service plans to designate a management plan and prescriptions for the Rocky Fork Tract that surrounds Rocky Fork State Park. A public comment period had been designated and closed prior to our awareness of the publication.

Plans and prescriptions are usually designated every 10 years. There has been no plan for the Rocky Fork Tract since it was purchased.

Representatives from Cherokee National Forest came to the Ranger Station on August 1 to share information with the Park Rangers, Friends Board Members and other local trail maintainer groups. They explained the various options for prescriptions and their current thinking on what was appropriate and a best fit for the Rocky Fork Tract. There will be a new public comment period opened up with 30 days for anyone to provide comments. At our request, both the RF Park Staff and Friends of Rocky Fork have been added to the notification list. We will advise Friends members when the public comment period is opened and share any links/materials we receive with you.

Upcoming Member Events

Mondays, **September**, plus future dates TBD - **Kiosk Building**

Friday, **October 7** & Saturday, **October 8** – **Erwin Apple Festival** 🍏
(Looking for volunteers to help staff the booth and share info about Rocky Fork State Park – contact rockyforkfriends@gmail.com)

Monday, **October 10** – **Friends of Rocky Fork Board Meeting** (open to the public), 6 pm at the Rocky Fork Ranger Station

Friday, **October 14** and Saturday, **October 15** **Haunted Hikes**
(contact Jeff Sweeney if you would like to try to attend)

Saturday, **October 22** – **Bat Road Race** – 5 miles up Rocky Fork Road

Saturday, **November TBD** – **Southern Loop Guided Hike** – 10 miles

Saturday, **December 3** – **Friends of Rocky Fork Annual Membership Meeting** and Board Elections, 10 am at the Erwin Town Hall, 211 N. Main Ave, Erwin TN 37650

Board and Member Meetings

Board meetings are held every other month (February/April/June/August/October) at the Rocky Fork Ranger Station, 280 Jennie Moore Road, Flag Pond, 37657. A virtual option to join the meeting is now being offered. The annual member meeting and board elections is in December. Meetings are always open to all members and the public.

Friends of Rocky Fork Kiosk

Remember to check out our Kiosk when visiting the park!



You never know who might be there!

SAVE THE DATE !!



**Saturday, December 3, 2022
10:00 AM**

**Friends of Rocky Fork
Annual Membership Meeting
Board Elections**

**Erwin Town Hall
211 N. Main Street,
Erwin TN**