



## Friends of Rocky Fork State Park

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

Website: [www.rockyforkfriends.org](http://www.rockyforkfriends.org)

Email: [rockyforkfriends@gmail.com](mailto:rockyforkfriends@gmail.com)

**Neither snow, nor rain, nor sleet or gloom of night will take away the beauty of Rocky Fork State Park!  
But mail doesn't get delivered here!**

### Park News

*RFSP Manager Tim Pharis*

Fun statistics from 2023:

43,000 vehicles visited the park

3,500 people attended programs and events

93 campground reservations

109 attendees for Folk School Classes – featuring Maple Sugaring, Cherokee Baskets, Stone Masonry, Bark Baskets, Flint Knapping, Broom Making, Pine Needle Baskets. Classes in 2024 are being added. Maple sugaring, Cobweb Broom making, Apple tree grafting. Watch for more to be scheduled each month.

The **RFSP Visitor Center** project kicked off on October 26, 2023 and is in the Schematic Design phase. We will provide updates on progress through 2024. Design, Contracting, Construction phases will tentatively complete with a Grand Opening in March of 2026.

RFSP will be hosting a **Bioblitz** for the entirety of 2024 through iNaturalist! What does this mean? It means YOU get to be the scientist and help our team identify species within our park boundaries. It is as simple as taking a picture. Reach out to us leaving a message on our Ranger Station phone number (423-271-1233) or via email ([cory.franklin@tn.gov](mailto:cory.franklin@tn.gov)) for more information.

**RFSP All Terrain Wheelchair** reservations can now be made on <https://calendly.com/rockyfork/wheelchair>

We continue to add new programs and hikes at the park, including the Folk School series. Watch the RFSP Facebook page and check out the RFSP website.

### Upcoming Events

#### February 12

FRF Board Meeting

RFSP Ranger Station 6 pm

#### Mar 11

FRF Board Meeting

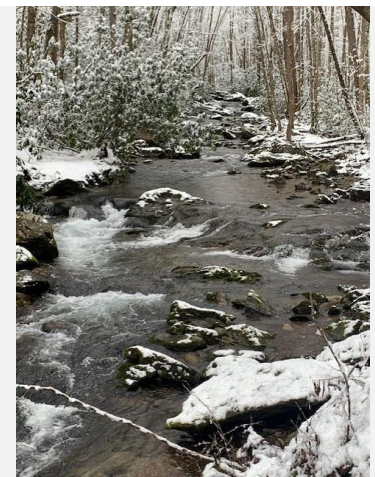
RFSP Ranger Station 6 pm

#### April 26 & 27

#### Upper East TN Fiddlers Convention

Flag Pond

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)



## Park Insights

RFSP Rangers *Jeff Sweeney and Cory Franklin*

### Featured Park Events

The popular **Full Moon hikes** continue monthly.

**Winter hikes** of all levels and lengths are scheduled weekly.

New **Folk School** classes have been scheduled, they sell out quickly.

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

### Trail Ways

**Trail maintenance** days will be coordinated with the park starting in early spring to tackle winter impact on the trails and continuing through growth in the summer and fall.

Keepin' it clean! The **1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the Month Litter Cleanup Days** along the road and parking areas and trails. Join us for an easy walk and social catch up time while we help keep Rocky Fork litter free! Signup on RFSP Events website.

### Member News and Events

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

Our **Friends of Rocky Fork State Park Annual Meeting and Board Elections** was held on Monday, December 4<sup>th</sup> at the Erwin Town Hall.

**Park Manager Tim** shared statistics of visitors and programs in 2023. He talked about plans for Flint Mountain Trail, High Point Trail, eradicating some of the social trails that impact the health of the creeks, and expanding use of the All Terrain Wheelchair. He's looking forward to the start of RFSP Visitor Center planning.

**Capital Projects Manager Don Tate** shared the process and timeline for the RFSP Visitor Center. Design and contracting will be most of 2024, Construction to start by year end. Grand Opening tentatively slated for 2026. It will include a Lobby/Reception Area, Gift Shop, Interpretive Space, Public/Private Meeting Space to accommodate 30 people, Restrooms, Ranger Work Area, Administrative Areas, Park Manager/HR Office Space.

We always learn something new with new with **Park Ranger Jeff** who shared facts and safety information on Bears with his Bear Tales and S'mores presentation.

## 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)

### 2023 Board of Directors

Mike Barroso  
John Beaudet – Vice President  
Andrea Bowman  
Luke Carter  
Bob Fuller  
Lisa Hazlett  
Carrie Hovey –President  
Joe Morris  
Lotta Murray – Secretary  
Teresa Pickett - Treasurer  
Roger Rice

### Keepin' RFSP Clean!



### Have you been on a Full Moon Hike yet?



### Folk School Fun!



**Park Ranger Cory** wrapped up the year with a summary of the interpretive programs and events at the park.

- Upper East TN Fiddlers Convention – 400+ people attended, 150 contestants
- Firefly Lottery – up 82% to 15,560 entries from around the world!
- Folk School Classes took off and sold out almost immediately. 109 attendees experienced hands-on techniques led by expert craftspeople.
- 180 people experience Full Moon hikes – the most attended program at the park.
- There were **128 programs at the park, 2,018 attendees.**  
**Were you one of them?**
- Seasonal Interpretive Ranger Connor offered a variety of new programs (59) with 871 attendees. Good news for us – he will be back in the park soon!

We welcomed **new FRFSP Board Member Mike Barroso**. He's a longtime Friend who has been active in the park for many years. His bio line – He Shows Up!

Thank you to outgoing Board Member **Emily Goepel**, who luckily for us will continue helping with specials projects and Meet The Mountains Festival. We are grateful for her dedication to the park!

### The Friends of Rocky Fork shared our 2023 support of RFSP at the Annual Meeting

In 2023, the FRFSP participated in trail maintenance, cleanups, built benches and kiosks, provided funding for campsite privies in conjunction with NFS, cleared a historic field just after the bridge, led guided hikes for hiking and conservation groups, supported park guided hikes for hiking and conservation groups, supported park events (Fiddlers Convention and Fireflies), set up at festivals (Erwin Outdoor Festival and Meet The Mountains), promoted a new fundraising event Yoga on Tap, hosted State of Franklin Track Club for the Bear Paw Trail and Bat Road races, and created a Halloween Storytelling & Scavenger Hunt event. We attended the TN State Park Friends Conference and presented the benefits of newsletters.

The **2023 Interpretive Program Plan** results

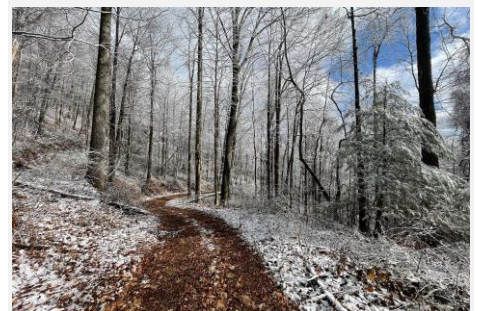
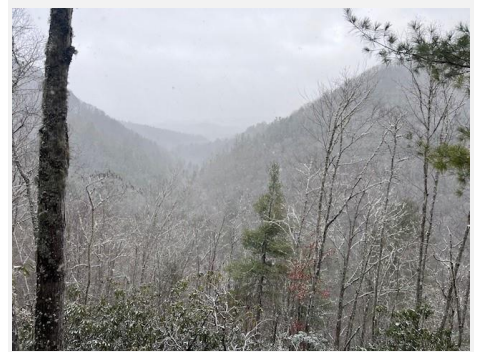
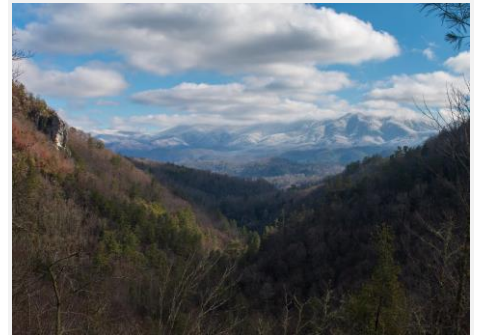
#### PROGRAM GOALS

- ✓ Implemented All Terrain Wheelchair
- ✓ Formalized Trail Adoption Program

#### FUNDRAISING GOALS

- ✓ Upper East TN Fiddlers Convention Goal: \$2500 Actual: \$3439.30
- ✓ Support for All Terrain Wheelchair – A Trailer was provided by TN State Parks. Trail Grading determined not needed for wheelchair.
- ✓ Trail Grading was prioritized for Flint Mountain Trail with a generous donation of \$5000, \$2500 from RFSP annual fundraising campaign and \$2500 from FRFSP.

### Winter scenes at RFSP



Always Beautiful any time of year!!

## MEMBERSHIP GOALS

- ✓ Board Recruitment – Recruit from individuals actively involved at the park and through our current membership. 1 New Board Member Identified and elected.
- ✓ General Membership – Add 20 new members and retain current members for over 100 Members. STATUS: 2022 Membership was 88. Memberships as of December 31 was 103.

The FRFSP Board and RFSP Staff will meet on January 27<sup>th</sup> for a Mini-Retreat and collaborate on the 2024 Interpretive Program Plan which outlines priorities for the Friends of Rocky Fork to support the park. We set events for the year, discuss needs for the park as well as their wish list, trail work, funding for a wildlife survey, and more.

## 2023 Donor Recognition

### Peregrin Falcon Level \$500:

Roy Harmon

### Saw-Whet Owl Level \$100:

Gordon & May Moughon    Emily and Jason Goepel    Linda Good  
Tony and Rene Messina    Megan Taylor    TN Eastman Recreation Club

### Salamander Level \$50:

Joe Morris    Denise Brown

**Donor Advised Fund Grants:** Received at the recommendation of the Christopher Millburn family **\$1500** and from the Schneider Family **\$100**

**Memorial Donation:** For Katharine Tilson Murray **\$300** Ken & Lotta Murray

**Total Friends Donations: \$1299.00    Total Gifts In Memorial: \$300**

## It's Time to Renew Your Membership for 2024

**Thank you to our members** for your support!!

With the change in the calendar year, for everyone who joined prior to October 1<sup>st</sup>, now is the time to **renew your Friends of Rocky Fork membership**. Membership monies support our Mission in the form of funding and purchases for park needs outside of their budget, programs, matching grants, volunteering and more. *Please make sure we have your current email address.*

Renewals can be done (1) via the Friends website [www.rockyforkfriends.org](http://www.rockyforkfriends.org) or (2) by mailing the member form included in the email with this newsletter to FRFSP, P.O. Box 1, Flag Pond, TN 37657

## Board and Member Meetings

Board meetings are held the second Monday of the month at the Rocky Fork Ranger Station, 280 Jennie Moore Road, Flag Pond, 37657. Meetings are open to all members and the public.

## Longtime Friend Dave Ramsay prints are on sale at the RFSP Ranger Station



**Time to renew your membership  
(if you joined or renewed before  
October 1<sup>st</sup>)**



Find info on the Friends website  
[www.rockyforkfriends.org](http://www.rockyforkfriends.org)