

Friends of Spring Mill State Park Newsletter – Summer 2020



Fire Pinks along rock wall in park.

Changes

Life as we knew it, has been put on hold this year due to a microscopic organism called Covid-19.

Although nature continues on, spring arrived, the trees and flowers bloomed and the birds still sang, we humans had to make many changes. But one thing that was nice, and brought a bit of normalcy back for people was hiking in the park. The empty campground was a peaceful place and the trails were often empty.

But now that summer has arrived, and restrictions are lightening up, the park has become a bustling place. The campground and Inn are once again full, the trails and lake area are busy, and the Village has had many visitors. Although some restrictions are still in place, and some things will not open this summer, such as the pool and twin caves boat tours, the park is still a beautiful place to enjoy nature.

Door Openers

The Friends of Spring Mill received a grant from Lawrence County Tourism to install a switch activated door opener at the Gus Grissom Memorial. The switches were installed early this spring, and are now in use. The switches are available for going in and out of the memorial building. Two more switches are needed to enter into the actual museum and to exit the museum. The intent of the grant was to make the entrance into the memorial accessible for all people.



Merger

The Spring Mill Campground Friends have joined forces with the Friends of Spring Mill State Park. Two members of the campground group intend to join the Friends Board. The two groups can now work together to support the park on future projects.

Kayaks

The Friends of Spring Mill purchased two kayaks to add to the fleet at the lake. The two 12-foot sit-on kayaks have been seen being paddled around the lake this summer. Thanks to Walmart in Paoli for the \$500 grant which helped in the purchase of these kayaks and Amber Hill for submitting the grant. The person renting the boats at the lake said the new kayaks have been very popular.

Board member Joan Smoke took the lead in researching and finding kayaks and paddles that she thought would be the most appropriate and the best deal for our money. She and her friend Charlotte Eagley hauled them down to the Park and took them on one of their first voyages in the lake (shown here). Joan said, "I'd never been on a sit-on kayak. They were definitely easier to get in and off of. We didn't get wet." She added that they were

easier to turn and maneuver than she thought as well.

Joan and Charlotte gave the new sit on kayaks a grand thumbs up! The cloth seats for the kayaks are kept in the rental house so they stay dry and safe. The kayaks are available to rent Wed-Sun 10-4. They rent for \$8/hour or \$20/day.



Joan and Charlotte paddling on lake



Pollinator Garden

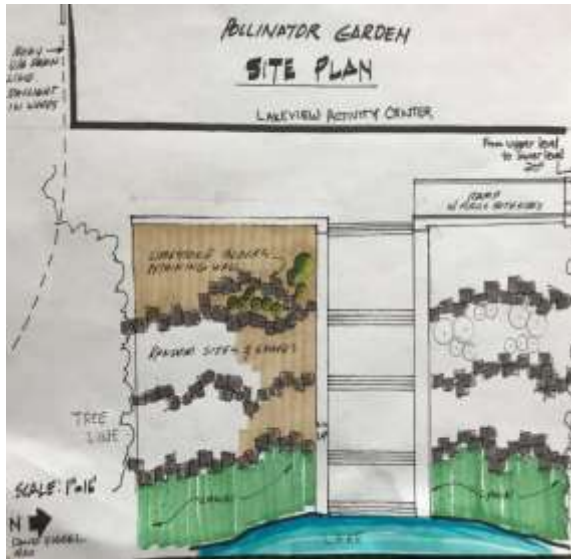
Last year, the Friends worked with Spring Mill staff to start a small pollinator garden behind the Lakeview Activity Center (LAC). In 2020, Sheree Belt ordered 100 new native pollinator plants from the nursery in Prophetstown to add to the garden, so it expanded greatly in size.

In the meantime, the Friends selected the pollinator garden as the focus of their Indiana Park Alliance Grant (IPA) for this year. IPA makes funds available each year to parks and Friends groups to help with projects that benefit Indiana's State Parks. Teena Ligman, Friends President, asked Dave Kissel, a retired landscape architect who had worked with the Hoosier National Forest, to help design the future pollinator garden. Dave Kissel came up with an amazing conceptual design with tiered levels behind the LAC. Teena is sure the design alone won the judges over. "It is so well done, you can just visualize that this will enhance the nature center and allow us to interpret the plants and the pollinators," said Teena. She added, with the design in hand, completing the application was easy.

The concept for the tiered landscape, with over 20 species of pollinator plants, each with a small interpretive sign that will point out the plant name, a picture of the flower, habitat, and pollinators that will benefit. The IPA has awarded our Friends group \$1,500 to see our vision come to fruition. The Friends have a match of just over \$1,000 that they will contribute to buy supplies for this project as well.

Over time, you will start to see changes as you visit our Lakeview Activity Center. A special thank you to David Kissel and the IPA for their continued support of our park and its mission. If you love gardening and volunteering, opportunities to help us create and maintain this beautiful, educational, and eco-friendly garden will be available. Contact the naturalist, Sheree, at sbelt@dnr.in.gov.

Pollinator Gardens are a great way to encourage pollinators such as bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, beetles, and/or wasps depending on the plants you choose. Pollinators, such as these, are vital to habitats and ecosystems that a lot of our wildlife depend on. This garden will allow people to learn more about the importance of these gardens.



Pollinator garden design by Dave Kissel

Trail Challenge

Many people are looking for more activities to do outdoors and the Friends reinstated the Spring Mill Trail Challenge as the perfect activity to safely get people out to exercise and stay away from crowds. The Friends of SMSP sponsor the Trail Challenge to get people out walking in the park and enjoying nature, while raising a bit of money to support projects in the Park.

When you complete the Challenge, you are eligible to purchase a 2020 Trail Challenge T-shirt. There are also plans to develop a Trail Challenge sticker for those who already have a 2019 Trail Challenge T-shirt and may not want a second shirt, though the design is different from 2019.

This year the Challenge will run year-round. To complete the challenge, hike every trail in the Park. There are 10.8 total miles of trail available. Hiking is on the honor system, so hike at your own pace. You have the rest of the year to enjoy the special qualities of each of the Park's trails. Once you have completed all of the trails, go on-line and order a Trail Challenge T-shirt. Shirts are \$20 and are available in several colors. The link is on the Friends of Spring Mill State Park Facebook page, or you can find it at <https://shop-good-sports.myshopify.com/collections>.



Money from the “2020 Trail Challenge” (beyond the cost of the T-shirt) will be used for various Park projects. Once the stickers are developed and available, information will be available on the Facebook page as well. The shirt may be picked up in Bedford or mailed to your address. The Friends hope you'll wear the Trail Challenge shirt proudly to promote the Park and the Challenge.

Wheelchair Available

The All-terrain wheelchair, which was donated to Spring Mill State Park last winter, is ready to go. The Thom Brown family from Bloomington, generously donated a Viking all-terrain chair, which had belonged to Theresa Brown. After her death, they wanted others to enjoy the outdoors with her chair the way she had, and heard that the Friends of Spring Mill were trying to raise money to acquire a chair for the Park. The family made the decision to give the Park this amazing gift.

Due to the rugged terrain, and steps on many of the trails, the all-terrain wheelchair is available for use on Trail 1 up to the Alexander Wilson Monument, and Trail 7. Please contact the office at 812-849-3534 if you are interested in using the all-terrain wheelchair. The Friends were proud of the role they played in helping get this amazing asset for the Park and making some of the trails more accessible to all.

Checking out the All-terrain wheelchair



Red Flashlights

The Friends purchased red filtered flashlights for use on the night hikes at the park. Sheree Belt along with park volunteer Anthony Hack conduct night hikes in various areas of the park throughout the year. The red flashlight helps “light” the way on these hikes.

By using red LED lights, it provides enough light to keep people safe while not affecting people’s night vision or frightening animals.



The Souvenir Stand

Due to COVID19, the Friends board decided not to open the concession stand this summer. Almost all of our volunteers are in the high-risk category and we didn't want anyone to be put at risk. We discussed alternative ways to make up that income. Board member Kaydy Miller from Lawrence County Tourism found a way to sell items on our Facebook page. In the coming weeks

we'll be adding a "Shop" with several items to our Friends Facebook page in order to still bring in funds over the summer.

Check out our Facebook page in a few weeks for pictures of selected items that will be for sale. We are still working out the details of how we will efficiently fill orders and mail out products, and how the taxes will work, but we think this will be a good alternative for whatever amount it might bring in for the Group.

Annual Meeting

With Covid-19 restrictions, the annual meeting of the Friends of Spring Mill was cancelled. The board members have been utilizing Zoom meetings to conduct Friends of Spring Mill business. One of the activities was the election of Officers for this year. All board members agreed to continue in their current offices for this year. Thank you to the board members for your service!



New Art in the Park

Friends of Spring Mill Treasurer John Castrale has donated three barn quilts to the park. They are all located near the camp store. The latest is a dogwood design and is located on the back side of the camp store.



**For more information about
Friends of Spring Mill State Park
or to become a member contact:**

Teena Ligman

tdligman@att.net

or 812-278-0139