



## Friends of Wild River State Park

# Newsletter

www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org ■ info@FriendsOfWildRiver.org ■ 651-253-3498

Winter 2020



### *From the President:*

Becky Leuer, Friends of Wild River State Park president

Friends of Wild River State Park is fortunate to have an extraordinary board of directors that works tirelessly to provide programming and opportunities for people visiting the park. The list of events is quite impressive and the excellent working relationship we have with the staff at the park makes it all possible. While we just finished up two grants, one for tree cages as part of the Oak Savannah Restoration and one that brought nearly 50 North Branch students in grades K-5 to the park in October for a day of exploration, we are already planning for more opportunities to bring more people into the park.

From the Candlelight Night on Feb.8 of hiking, skiing, and snowshoeing to Seegwan, our celebration of spring on June 13, interpretive programs in the summer, or a 5K race in October, we have something for everyone. I learn something new every time I go to the park and you will too.

Finally, our Annual Meeting is March 14 beginning with a pancake breakfast at 9 a.m. in the Visitor Center with a meeting from 9:30 to 11 a.m. Who will our guest speaker be this year? Join us and if you are interested in joining our board, we are looking for a couple of new members. Not a member of Friends of WRSP? This is a great time to find out about us and show your support by joining.

Make the most of winter and take advantage of the opportunities we have at Wild River State Park!

### *Amphitheater Update*

Our dream of a new amphitheater for Wild River State Park is still alive and well. A matching gift from a generous donor helped raise \$6,250 in November and December. At the January 9 Board meeting, the proceeds from the September Silent Auction at the Almelund Apple Festival and the October 5K Run/Walk, totaling \$738, were designated for the amphitheater.

To date, funds specifically targeted for the amphitheater include \$12,352 in our MinnCo accounts and \$12,557.42 in a fund with the St. Croix Valley Foundation, for a total of almost \$25,000. Of course, other funds in our savings accounts could be added to that total as well, meaning we are getting very close to our goal of \$40,000.

So, what's the next step? First, we need to enter into a partnership agreement with Wild River State Park to establish clear expectations on what we will be responsible for. But, the bigger issue is to have this project, which will include not only the amphitheater structure we are raising money for but also improvement to the site (parking, seating, electricity, restrooms, etc.) actually fleshed out by the Department of Natural Resources and included in the department's budget. The wheels of bureaucracy turn slowly. The budget issues at the state level are especially concerning. However, we remain optimistic that in the not-so-distant future Wild River State Park will have a real amphitheater. We look forward to sponsoring programs at that new venue.

For a complete update on the financial condition of the Friends, be sure to attend our annual meeting March 14.

## Candlelight Night No.24 looks to be shaping up to be a perfect evening!

This year's Candlelight Night event will be the 24<sup>th</sup> since a small, but hardy gang put out lanterns and luminaries to help the full moon illuminate cross country trails from the Trail Center to the Visitor Center and back. How far the Friends of Wild River State Park have come since the beginnings in 1996. With the help of over 50 National Honor Society Students from North Branch Area High School each year, we now illuminate more than 6 miles of skiing, snowshoeing and hiking trails to be enjoyed on Saturday, February 8, 2020, at Wild River State Park. This is the largest number of illuminated trails for any candlelight event in Minnesota!! A bonus if my weather predictors are right, there will be a full moon rising at 5:45 p.m. on Saturday the 8th! With the snow we already have and the full moon, this could be the perfect Candlelight Night event!

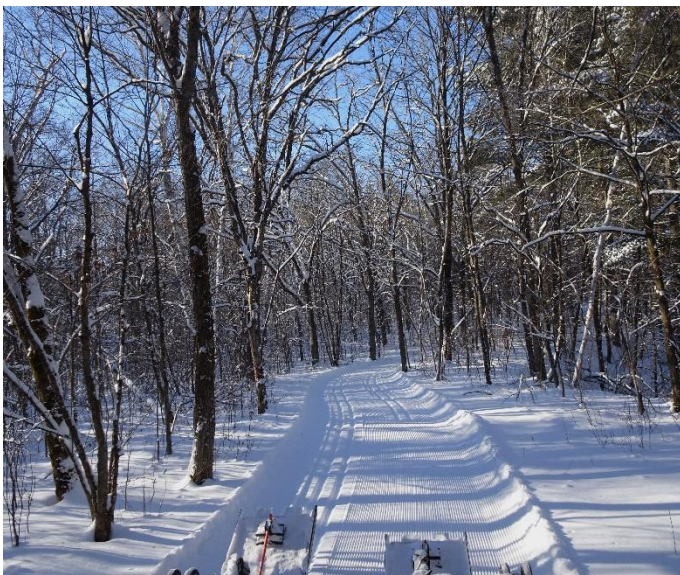
Wade Vitalis, who runs Wild River Ski Rental, is donating a cross country ski package and set of snowshoes that will be raffled off that evening for the Friends of Wild River State Park. If you would like to rent skis or snowshoes that evening, I would suggest you call Wild River Ski Rental ahead of time to reserve the equipment you want. The phone number for Wild River Ski Rental is (651) 257-0685. Thank you, Wade, for your support!

As in the past, there will be a huge bonfire (bigger than a house, lit at 5:45 p.m.), an astronomer with a huge telescope (if a clear sky), entertainment, cookies, cider, hot chocolate, and coffee. Tuck a few bucks in your snowshoe/ski togs for a free will offering to help out the Friends of Wild River State Park to fund this event as well as other events. And remember, a vehicle park permit will be required to enter the state park for this event. Permits can be purchased at the park's front office.



*Last year's Candlelight Night bonfire.*

*Photos courtesy of Park Manager Kris Backlund.*



*Park staff stay busy keeping Wild River's ski trails in tip-top condition.*

This is a great family event and I can remember, as it seemed just a few years ago telling my youngest daughter (we won't say how old she is now), "Ski faster and we'll have cookies at the trail center!"

Hope to see you there!

Dave Kozlovsky

Candlelight Night coordinator

## Annual meeting coming up on March 14

Friends of Wild River State Park will hold its Annual Meeting and Pancake Breakfast on March 14 in the state park's Visitor Center. Pancake-slingin' will start at 9 a.m., followed by the Annual Meeting. Join us to hear from a special surprise guest, hear about 2019 projects, future plans, and to vote in new board members. If you're interested in serving on the board and would like more details, send an email to [info@friendsofwildriver.org](mailto:info@friendsofwildriver.org).

## A busy 2020...

As you make your plans for 2020, here are some Friends of Wild River events to keep in mind:

- Annual meeting and pancake breakfast – March 14, pancake breakfast starts at 9 a.m., meeting to follow
- Seegwan Celebration of Spring – June 13, a whole day of outdoor events, more details to come
- River Clean-Up – July 11, help keep the St. Croix River clean on a clean-up paddle

For more details for all of these events, look for future newsletters, check out our website at [www.friendsofwildriver.org](http://www.friendsofwildriver.org), or check our Facebook page.

## No Joe? Say it Ain't So!

by Kris Backlund, Park Manager

After working in state parks each of the last four decades, Laborer Joe Liemandt will be retiring in February. Joe started his career at Crow Wing State Park, but has spent most of his time at Wild River. You could say that Joe is a behind-the-scenes guy, but if you've been on any trail at Wild River, Joe has groomed it, maintained it, mowed it and more. If you felt the warmth of a park building in winter, Joe has made sure the heat is functioning properly. If the roads were a little less bumpy, Joe was involved in patching them for a smoother ride. If you got lost out on a trail or even on the river, there's a good chance Joe helped find you. If you enjoyed the prairie grasses dotted with flowers in every season, this was made possible by Joe's efforts with prescribed burns and prairie planting. If you like the bigger manure bunkers, the newly painted park entrance sign, the trail bridge over Dry Creek or any number of other projects I could mention, Joe had his hand in those too. Joe has always helped make sure the 5K race course was safe and ready for runners, as well as setting up signs for the race, and for the Candlelight Night event.

Joe has directed and mentored many employees, including patiently helping this manager and others with equipment we may not be as familiar with like the skid steer, riding mower or boat. To say that Joe will be missed is an understatement. To say that we wish him well in his well-deserved retirement cannot be overstated. Thank you, Joe, for all of your great work over the years!! We wish you a long, happy, and healthy retirement.

Thank you for your  
Membership

### FWRSP Membership Options

- Junior **Friend, 12 and under** – \$5 / year  
*Includes an "Action Guide" and other benefits*
- Individual **Friend** – \$20 / year
- Family **Friend** – \$35 / year
- Silver **Friend** – \$50 / year
- Gold **Friend** – \$100 / year
- Platinum **Friend** – \$250+ / year



Name:			
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City:			
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Email:			

*(We will never sell or trade your email address.)*

**Option 1:** Mail above with check to:  
 Jan Kozlovsky, FWRSP Treasurer  
 (make check out to "Friends of Wild River State Park")  
 17190 410<sup>th</sup> St.  
 North Branch, MN 55056

**Option 2:** Sign-up Online and use your credit card:

[www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org](http://www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org)

*We will never sell or trade your email address*

### Upcoming events

- February 8 – Candlelight Night, 5:30 p.m.
- February 22 – Snowshoe walk along the river, 1 to 2:30 p.m.
- March 14 – Pancake breakfast and Annual Meeting, 9 a.m.
- Weekends in March – Tapping the Magnificent Maple – join Park Naturalist Mike Dunker to learn about the various stages of tapping and making maple syrup. Each weekend will be a different topic and stage. Visit the DNR website for more details and to sign up.
- April 22 – Earth Day 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Hike

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