



Friends of Wild River State Park

Summer 2020

Newsletter

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



From the President:

Becky Leuer, Friends of Wild River
State Park President

It's been an incredible few months here and around the world. It is our hope that you are safe and spending some time enjoying the beauty of nature as we move from spring to summer. The park has been well used during this time with park staff reporting spring visitor numbers nearly equal to summer visitors. This is great news. While public events and gatherings at the park are postponed, there is still much to enjoy at Wild River State Park.

Friends of WRSP has been actively supporting the park during this time. As you know, the State of Minnesota has experienced financial strain, which has trickled down to WRSP. Through a virtual meeting, telephone calls, and doing business by email, we have made two decisions to support the park during this time. First of all, we will be donating \$1000 toward the purchase of new maps for WRSP. Second, we approved funding of \$1500 for the purchase and installation of a new drinking fountain/bottle filler at the Trail Center. As summer is here and the heat is on, it is hoped this can be ready to go in the near future. Thanks to each of you for our continued support of Friends of Wild River State Park.

What are our future goals? We still have the amphitheater project with our next being the creation of a written agreement between the Friends and the DNR. We are also looking into the possibility of installing a drinking fountain/water bottle filler at the Visitor Center, which is a little more complicated because the building is not heated in the winter. In the meantime, we will keep plugging away and spend more time in the great outdoors as summer moves forward.

Event cancellations and unknowns

The world is very different from when we shared our newsletter this winter. While we were looking forward to a busy 2020, many of our planned events have either been cancelled or put on hold due to COVID-19.

As you all know, our Annual Meeting that was supposed to occur on March 14 was cancelled as the state began its stay-at-home order. And while we were hoping to gather for Seegwan on June 13, social distancing restrictions left us cancelling that event as well. As of this printing, the fates of the 2020 St. Croix River Clean Up on July 11 and the October Otter Trotter 5K are unknown.

While we continue to navigate these uncertain times, we'd like to remind everyone that the most update-to-date details for our events can be found at FriendsOfWildRiver.org.

Don't forget the dues!

Many Friends members pay their annual membership dues during the Annual Meeting. Because of this year's cancellation, we just want to share a gentle reminder to send them in if they haven't already. Your dues help pay for projects like the new drinking fountain and park maps mentioned in the President's column. Dues can be paid online at friendsofwildriver.org or by mailing a check to:

Friends of Wild River State Park
c/o Treasurer Jan Kozlovsky
17190 410th St.
North Branch, MN 55056

Thank you for your support!

Facilities beginning to reopen at Wild River State Park

As of June 1, camping facilities at Wild River State Park are opening back up. The equestrian campground opened June 1, the semi-modern campground opened June 8, the guest house opens June 15, camper cabins open June 22, and the group campsites will remain closed through the end of June.

As campers return, various facilities are reopening as well. Currently vault toilets are open throughout the park. Modern restroom and shower facilities reopened June 8 with reduced occupancy and social distancing requirements. Restrooms in the Trail Center and Visitor Center lobby are open. Water will be available at the Ranger station (the office and main entrance), as well as the equestrian day use area. Water will be available at the dump station and in the semi-modern campground June 8.

All campsites need to be registered and paid for ahead of time by calling 1-866-857-2757.

The Ranger Station is open for window service only when staff are present. Hours will be extended on Friday and Saturday evenings. The Visitor Center outer lobby and restrooms are open, but the exhibit area remains closed. Interpretive programs at the park have been cancelled through June 30 and that cancellation may be extended.

Vehicle permits to enter the park can be purchased online. Write down your receipt number and place it on your dashboard when visiting a park.

Many parks across the state, including Wild River, are seeing high amounts of visitors, making it hard to properly practice social distancing. If a parking lot is full or a trail looks busy, find another place for safe, socially-distanced outdoor recreation.



Jack-in-the-pulpit seen at Wild River



Some of the wild lupine found at Wild River

Photos courtesy of Kris Backlund, Park Manager

Wild Friend Award winners for 2020

Even though we had to cancel the Annual Meeting in March due to COVID-19, the board of directors of the Friends was happy to select not one but two winners of our annual Wild Friend Award: Joe Liemandt and Wade Vitalis.

Joe has recently retired after being a DNR employee for the past 4 decades starting at Crow Wing State Park, but spent most of his time at Wild River State Park. His job has been mainly behind the scenes and he has touched every inch of the trails and roads at Wild River by mowing, plowing, grooming and generally making them accessible whatever the season. Joe has helped in many ways with the Candlelight Event and the 5K Otter Trotter to help make those events a success. He especially worked hard on the 5K Otter Trotter trails because he ran in most of them.

Wade has also been very active at Wild River State Park for many years. He is the owner of Wild River Ski Rental and can be found throughout the late fall and winter weekends running the ski rental concession in the Trail Center. He also is very supportive of the Friends group by donating for many years a new set of skis and boots that are raffled off at the Candlelight Night in early February. In 2020 he added snowshoes to his donations and the separate raffle for these was a great additional fundraiser for the Friends.

In all that they have done, Wade and Joe have truly been Wild Friends! Thank you!

Wild River State Park activities for the rest of 2020... maybe

As we all know, activities and facilities at Wild River have been postponed or cancelled since mid-March and are now slowly “re-opening” – see the article on page 2. To keep updated on the many changes the park is experiencing, please visit our Friends web page at ***FriendsOfWildRiver.org*** where there is a “Visitor Alerts for the Park due to COVID-19” section. This list is a copy of most of the information that you can find on the Park’s DNR page, ***www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?id=spk00254#homepage***, and both pages are updated quite often.

The Park manager, Kris Backlund, reports that they still have no approval to offer interpretive programs, and Mike Dunker and other naturalists are mainly helping with park operational needs as they still do not have approval for hiring. There are currently 5 positions unfilled at Wild River.

The Friends are hopeful that the 3 main events that we sponsor for the rest of 2020 will be able to go on. The first is the St. Croix River Clean-up on July 11 by volunteers paddling many canoes. Perhaps we can follow the 6-ft. social distancing requirement for that event. Our tent and activities at the Almelund Apple Festival on Sunday, September 20, is dependent on that event’s organizers – it is currently still on schedule. Finally, the Wild River 5K Otter Trotter is set for October 10 and that is still 4 months away. For these and other Friends events, please visit our website at ***FriendsOfWildRiver.org*** to see if there is a cancellation.

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



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| Name: | | | |
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| State: | | Zip: | |
| 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 410th St.
North Branch, MN 55056

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

www.FriendsOfWildRiver.org

Friends Dues at work!

There have been a couple recent contributions to the Park from the Friends board of directors using funds from dues collected from our members:

- \$1500 toward a new Trail Center water fountain including a bottle filler feature.
- \$1000 for a new printing of Park maps. These also have a note on the map side of the brochure thanking the Friends for their contribution.

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Friends of Wild River State Park
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