

# Friends of Potato Creek State Park

Newsletter-Summer 2008

## President's Message

by Marci deGroot

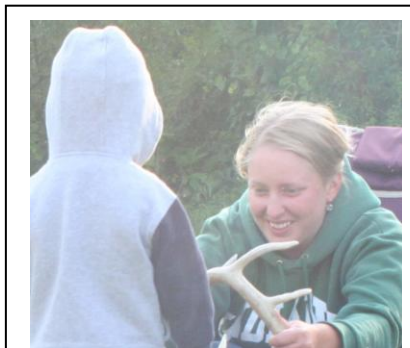
My connections to Potato Creek State Park go back much further than July 28<sup>th</sup> of last year when my husband, Alex, and I moved here from Bloomington, Ind. In the late 70's and early 80's, my parents met and married while working here—my mother, Cathleen, in the office and my father Tom Sutton, on the North Maintenance Crew. We lived in the Borman House on S.R. 4. Some of my earliest memories are of the wetlands of Potato Creek.

In '86, my father became the assistant at Tippecanoe River State Park where I spent most of my childhood and where he has been the manager since '95. My family also spent one and a half years at Shakamak State Park in southern Indiana. I have been described as a "DNR brat", which, I'm sure, many children of managers and assistants could be called because of the potential for moving around to different properties.

Leaving home for IU Bloomington was the first time I had lived off of state park property. After my freshman year, I was fortunate to have an "uncle" managing nearby McCormick's Creek—Dwight Brooks hired me as a housekeeper (just as he had hired my mother as a housekeeper some twenty odd years before), and I continued to work at MCSP as the

supervisor of the Paint Crew until '07. As Alex said, we met during our first season at the park, remained friends for five years, and married in '06 (still friends, of course).

While at McCormick's, Alex and I were very involved with the Friends group, and we planned and volunteered for many large and small events. I had been the President there for several months when we moved up here. Alex's feelings towards McCormick's are very similar to my own, and I look forward to utilizing my experiences



*Marci deGroot, Friends of Potato Creek, President helping a camper appreciate the Park at the June Campfire meeting.*

there to benefit Potato Creek.

With the Friends of Potato Creek, we will focus on finding a balance in our mission's priorities to best support the park. I want to help all the patrons of the park feel a connection to the land whether it be through the resources, the recreational opportunities, or the rich cultural history. This group has a wonderful diversity of interests, which, I will admit, is challenging to manage but is what highlights the

unique aspects of this property. I look forward to exploring all the aspects of this park with all of you.

## Notes from the V.P.

by Ralph Campion

Hello, I would like to thank all of our friends for helping obtain our goals, helping with the events and work parties that were planned.

I welcome our new president and secretary, Marci and Sylvia respectively, all the best and a warm "Thank You" to Brian and Kathy for all their help, dedication and hard work they gave in their terms. A big thank you to Anna Krueger for all her efforts as our events person. Linda M. for the guest speakers she has somehow managed to find and get for us to enjoy and learn from. I must also say thank you to Tim Cordell for his tireless efforts to help in our endeavors to grow and move forward in our efforts to make Potato Creek the state park that all want to come to.

Thank You  
Ralph



*Ralph Campion (r) with past FOPC President and Board member, Brian Krueger*

## 2008 Board Election Results

At the March meeting there were 7 folks interested in the 4 open Board positions. The Friends of Potato Creek State Park members elect people to the Board. The Board elects them to board positions. Each candidate gave a short summary about themselves before the vote.

The candidates were:

Brian Krueger  
 Marci DeGroot  
 Sylvia Kimbel  
 Kay Laney  
 Kathy Serrat  
 Jim Rahilly  
 Anna Krueger

Seventeen members voted at the election and Brian, Marci, Sylvia and Kathy were elected to the Board.

Past board members Jan Shupert-Arick and Jim Rahilly were recognized and thanked for their important contribution to the Friends Group along with the other candidates.

After a secret ballot election during the Board Meeting, the following positions were filled:

Marci DeGroot-President  
[Cardinalvine@aol.com](mailto:Cardinalvine@aol.com)  
 Ralph Campion- Vice President  
[campin-1@mchsi.com](mailto:campin-1@mchsi.com)  
 Sylvia Kimbel-Secretary  
[sylvia.kimbel@comcast.net](mailto:sylvia.kimbel@comcast.net)  
 John Richardson – Treasurer  
[jrichardson@jfnew.com](mailto:jrichardson@jfnew.com)  
 Mark Daily - Member at large  
[mrdaily@hughes.net](mailto:mrdaily@hughes.net)  
 Brian Krueger-Member at large  
[krueger@adsnet.com](mailto:krueger@adsnet.com)  
 Kathy Serrat-Member at large  
[kathy.serrat@us.bosch.com](mailto:kathy.serrat@us.bosch.com)  
 Tim Cordell, Naturalist and non-voting Staff Advisor  
[tcordell@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:tcordell@dnr.IN.gov)

## NIMBA Trail Anniversary

By Kathy Serrat

The one year anniversary of the dedication of the first mountain bike trail at Potato Creek State Park approaches. Friends of Potato Creek members and NIMBA (Northern Indiana Mountain Bike Association) members teamed up to volunteer over 2000 hours making this trail a reality. With the cooperation and support of Park management, the team designed, built and now maintains the trail. The trail is 7 miles of beautiful single-track. You will encounter rocks, roots, hills, flats and lots of woods for plenty of riding challenge. With luck, you will see deer, turkey, racoons and lots of other wildlife as you ride or walk the trail.

The groups working together are a great example of two volunteer organizations teaming up to make a brand new resource for the Park. This new resource has increased revenue and Park use. We are thrilled to see folks riding and walking the trail. We get a lot of positive feedback on the trail from bikers and hikers.

NIMBA will be hosting a "Bike Day" at Potato Creek on July 12th. This includes a bike safety class at 10:00 AM in the Beach parking lot including free helmets for the kids while they last. There will be a men's and ladies mountain bike clinic following the safety class and then the first ever Mountain Bike Time Trial race. All levels of riders are welcome to participate. You may register the day of the race. The race will begin near the beach area at 1:00 PM. If you ride the trail, be sure and go in the proper direction (follow the signs) and ALWAYS wear a helmet.

We look forward to hosting some special events surrounding the sport of mountain and road biking at Potato Creek. Stay tuned for more details. These events will be posted at the kiosks at the start of the trail at the Beach and at the trail entrance in the Campground. You can help support this trail by joining NIMBA, our website is [www.nimba-bike.org](http://www.nimba-bike.org) \$1500.00 of trail signage was funded by IMBA (International Mountain Bike Association), you can join IMBA ([www.imba.com](http://www.imba.com)) to support future trails.

## The State Park "Webb"

by Alex deGroot, Assistant Park Manager

The 2008 season is in full swing. This is my first full summer as an Assistant Park Manager. I arrived in August of 2007. I began my career at McCormick's Creek State Park near Spencer, Indiana as Grounds Supervisor for about 4 years, and before that, as Trail Crew Supervisor for 2 years.

McCormick's Creek State Park is where I met my wife, Marci. We both worked for current Property Manager, Dwight Brooks, and then Assistant Property Manager, Drew Daily. Marci's parents met and married while working for then, Potato Creek Property Manager, Dwight Brooks. Marci spent her first three years living at the Bormann's residence on State Road 4. Marci's Dad, Tom Sutton, was North Maintenance Supervisor for State Parks and her Mother, Cathleen, was an office Clerk.

Jim Webb, current Property Manager at Potato Creek State Park, put in a number of years as Assistant Manager at McCormick's Creek State Park, working for, Dwight Brooks. Drew Daily, the first

Assistant I worked for at McCormick’s Creek, had worked at Potato Creek for Jim Webb as an Assistant Property Manager in the late 90’s. Tim Cordell, Naturalist at Potato Creek also put in “a few years” at McCormick’s Creek State Park. What an interesting web (Webb) we weave.

The years of service at McCormick’s Creek instilled a great passion for that park, and I was sad to leave. I felt like I knew every campsite, trail, structure, and recreation area intimately. I formed personal relationships with all my co-workers at McCormick’s Creek. Many of them have become great friends. Needless to say, I was a little home (park) sick when I came to Potato Creek. My First morning at Potato Creek was the opening of the new mountain bike trail. It was exciting and impressive to witness the opening of a trail that was completely built and maintained by volunteers.

At that moment, everything was new and foreign. The first months were easy going. Jim was very patient with me and let me settle in. Then winter set in, and I got my first experience plowing snow, a large quantity of snow even for this area. I became very intimate with the roads of the park. Since moving to the park, I have hiked all the trails, been to every shelter and recreation building, spent hours in the Nature Center and Offices, and paddled around the lake many times. Each week that goes by, I feel a closer connection to the park. I am not as familiar with the terrain as I was at McCormick’s, that will take time, but the passion and love for this property grows in my heart daily. I am beginning to feel a true coexistence with Potato Creek State Park; a connectivity and passion with the park that provokes me to try my hardest to keep this one of

the finest parks in the State Park System.

# Park Happenings

by Alex deGroot – Assistant Park Manager

It has been a beautiful spring and earlier summer here at Potato Creek State Park. The park had a few controlled burns in early spring to help manage the prairies and dam areas, though not as many as we would have liked. There was actually snow a few days before and a heavy frost the morning of the burns. We have had a few strong wind and thunderstorms but nothing like the southern part of the state.

I have seen more wild turkey than I could have imagined here in the park, it is a daily occurrence especially during dawn and dusk. The Osprey and their fledglings seem to be doing great as they are constantly soaring over the waters of Worster Lake. The campgrounds have been sold out nearly every weekend since Memorial Day

Here are some, of the things we are working on or are fairly new at Potato Creek State Park.

- The Mountain Bike trail is extremely popular with all sorts of visitors. We hear all the time how challenging yet enjoyable it is for most skill levels. It is a true asset to the park and will attract visitors for years to come.
- The dog beach is the left third of the beach area, and is dedicated to dogs to run leash free and splash in the water. There is a new set of stairs so dogs have their own entrance and some new signage. There is increasing interest in this area all the time.

- The boat rental has had great response to the rental of kayaks and trolling motors.
- Many of our hiking trails have received new surfacing; this is an ongoing project, the horse trails are currently being worked on for improved drainage and erosion control.
- The park has been able to paint all the gate houses and some restrooms with much more painting to come.
- The park has received and installed a few new wayside signs; these can be seen on the bike trail by Whispering Winds and the Potato Creek crossing on the bike trail. These signs are very informative and entertaining to read.
- The park is beginning to resurface the campsites with new gravel. This is quite the challenge and may take some time to resurface all 360 campsites; so far E-loop had been done in early spring. Some horsemen sites will be next.
- The park has been able to remove some hazardous trees and grind some old stumps that have been around for a while. When the park is able, and a tree naturally falls down in a recreation area, the park harvests the wood for potential future use as campground firewood. This will help prevent the spread of emerald ash borer, the harmful insect that threatens our ash trees.
- The park is anticipating some new pavement in most parking areas, cabin loop, south side roads, and

eventually the campground, won't that be nice and smooth?



Volunteers and FOPC members help with Friends lake bank stabilization project(T.Cordell photo)

- The friends group has completed a bank stabilization project on the south end of the peninsula past the beach. Some of the remaining materials are to be used for more critical bank stabilization in an area just east of the dam.

There are many other small projects going on around the park. One of the most valuable resources for getting special projects accomplished is the Friends of Potato Creek State Park. The Friends group assists the park in endless ways, be it a workday, helping or hosting special events, purchasing equipment, or routine volunteerism. Thank You, Friends!!!

## 2008 Work Days and Events- Help!

Mark these dates on your calendar and plan to Volunteer or participate. It's fun and it really helps the Park.

Saturday, July 19, 2008  
**WINTER WONDERLAND IN JULY** - Get the holiday spirit early and decorate your campsite with your favorite winter

theme in the Friends campsite decorating contest and take part in other activities that you would normally expect in the winter.

Saturday, August 2, 2008  
**'TATER TRADITIONS** - This in depth program will focus on the cultural traditions of the past at Potato Creek. Activity topics will include farmstead and park development. \$1-\$5 Craft fee for materials. No advance registration required. Number of participants will be limited.

September 22, 2008 until winter  
**PRAIRIE MAZE OPENS** - Wander through the 1.5 miles of trails cut in the 7 foot tall restored prairie grasses and try to unravel the mystery of the maze.

September 27-28, 2008  
**NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY** - Join in this nationwide effort to preserve our public lands and help on this park clean up day.

September 27-28, 2008  
**PRAIRIE HARVEST WEEKEND** – A delightful weekend of events centered around the harvest. Activities include a prescribed fire demonstration, crafts and scarecrow building contest. Number of participants is limited in the workshops. Come early. Fees range from \$1 to \$10 for various crafts and workshops.

October 25, 2008  
**HALLOWEEN HAPPENINGS** – The campground will bustle with Halloween weekend events. There will be a campsite decoration contest, trick or treating, a potluck dinner and more! This weekend is co-sponsored by the Friends of Potato Creek.

## Past Meeting Programs

**April** - Jody Melton, Kankakee River Basin , The Impact of Potato Creek to the Kankakee River Basin.

**May** - Steve Craig, retired Potato Creek property manager, "Hiking

the Appalachian Trail with Attitude".



Steve Craig talks about his high "Attitude" experience along the Appalachian Trail at the May Monthly Friends Meeting(M.Daily photo)

**June**- Meeting around the campfire.



Potato Creek State Park Naturalist, Tim Cordell entertains members at the June Friends Meeting around the campfire.(M.Daily photo)

### Newsletter Disclaimer and Opt-Out Notice

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