



The Catoclin Forest Alliance Bulletin

www.catoclinforestalliance.org



Newsletter of the CFA

Vol. 16

February 2026

Editor: Linda Sundergill

Our mission is to preserve and protect the Catoclin Mountain forest for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations

A Note from Our President

Wow! What a winter we have had here in the Catoclin Mountains. Lots of snow and temperatures that we have not seen in years. So glad that spring is just around the corner (March 20, 2026) and that Daylight Saving time begins March 8, 2026. Trails are, in some spots, a little rough and you need to watch your step(s). Speaking of trails, the winter has been tough on them and the forest. Be mindful of the overhead branches and trees that might be leaning at a strange angle. Let the parks know of any down trees on the trails or other issues with the trails.

Our parks are wonderful areas to visit, view the vistas, see the wonders of the forest and enjoy the splendor of the surroundings. The parks are here for our enjoyment today and hopefully into the future. The parks need our help: with budget cuts the parks need volunteers more now than ever. Have your group leader, business organization or just a group of friends get in touch with a park and volunteer for a day or a weekend. These parks are our state and national treasures and we need to protect and continue the work of the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) and the WPA (Work Progress Administration) from the 1930's. Put our time into the trails that need work, the bridges that cross streams, invasive plants that need to be taken care of, building that might need some TLC and many other things. Ask the park rangers what you can do for them.

Be respectful of the beauty and animals that you see as you visit there home. Hike the trails, take in the wonderful views and take the time to listen. Take in the smells of the forest and visit the vistas. Check with the visitor center for information on new trails or future ones to come and see what new changes have been made in the Parks. Please stay safe as you do all these things.

"Happy trails to you"

Jim Robbins, President

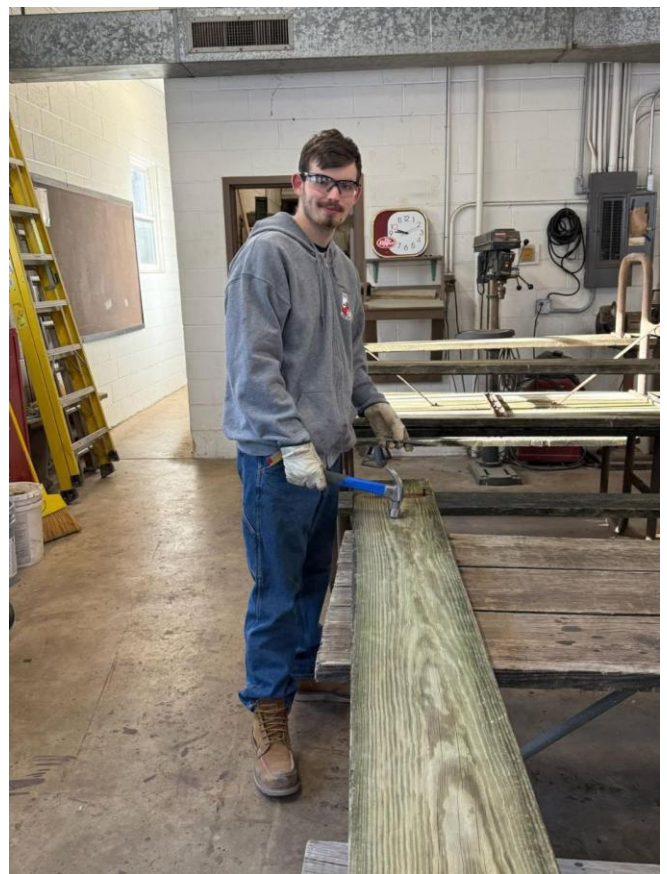
Catoclin Forest Alliance

SUCCESS by Jim Robbins

SUCCESS Academy has been hard at work in taking old picnic tables apart and now are moving outside to enjoy the great wonders of the parks. We are starting to clean camp sites for visitors and learn how to live in the great outdoors. We will be working with the Amish starting in March, 2026, painting shelters in Gambrill State Park and clean-up all over the parks. We spend Mondays at ThorpeWood working with, Julie, with the horses, goats, chickens and cows. We will, with warmer weather, be doing some work in the Carrolton Manor DAR "Never Forget Garden" at Mt. Olivet Cemetery.



Landon and Anthony refurbishing a picnic table



Shay working on a picnic table

SUCCESS continued



Safety lesson on circular saw. Everyone went home with all their fingers!



Group at the Mt. Olivet Cemetery "Never Forget Garden"

Amish by Jim Robbins

Again, this year we are delighted to have a group of Amish from the Nappanee area in Indiana spending the month of March working in Catoctin Mountain Park. There are 2 couples (house parents and job coach) and 8 young men, age 21-23, who give their time and talents to come and give service to our Federal Park. Our next newsletter will have pictures of projects they will work on and things that they have done while they were here.

We will have another group of 5 couples that will arrive on the 16th of March to work at Gambrill State Park on Pavilion #2 for a week. I am very fortunate to have such wonderful friends.

Director's Commendation Presented to Jim Robbins

by Claudia Padilla, Lead Park Ranger, Cunningham Falls and Gambrill State Parks



Since 2014, Jim Robbins has served as a volunteer for the Maryland Park Service. He began his tenure by serving as the Youth Coordinator for SUCCESS, a partnership program between Cunningham Falls State Park, The Catoctin Forest Alliance and Frederick County Public Schools. The mission of the program is to empower students with disabilities in a safe and nurturing environment to continue post-secondary education. Jim promotes the youth's independence, encourages self-advocacy and assists them in developing societal competency through the various projects in the parks. From carpentry projects to trail building to landscaping, Jim's patient and kind nature serves as a guiding force for these youth. The SUCCESS students under Jim's care have amassed over 25,425 hours of service and counting. The program is entering into its 15th year.

In addition to serving as the liaison for this group, since 2019, Jim has connected Amish craftsman looking to volunteer their skills to Cunningham Falls and Gambrill State Parks, where the crews have created pole buildings, repaired historic CCC structures, replaced roofs and more. These efforts have provided high quality products and saved the parks thousands of dollars.

Last but not least, since 2014, Jim has served as the President of the Catoctin Forest Alliance, a non profit organization comprised of only volunteers who support Gambrill State Park, Cunningham Falls State Park, and Catoctin Mountain Park --- the properties that encompass the Catoctin Mountain Forest in Maryland. As the President of this group, Jim has provided volunteers and donations to the park including the SUCCESS program and sponsoring a yearly Artist in Residence program.

This award recognizes his long service and the spirit of volunteerism he embodies. While the entry form had character limits that prevented me from detailing his extensive work with the CFA and the Amish community, he truly makes each day brighter with his kind nature.



Claudia Padilla, Lead Park Ranger Cunningham Falls and Gambrill State Parks, presents award to Jim Robbins.



Cake to celebrate

Snow Photos from Cunningham Falls State Park

Submitted by Claudia Padilla, Lead Park Ranger



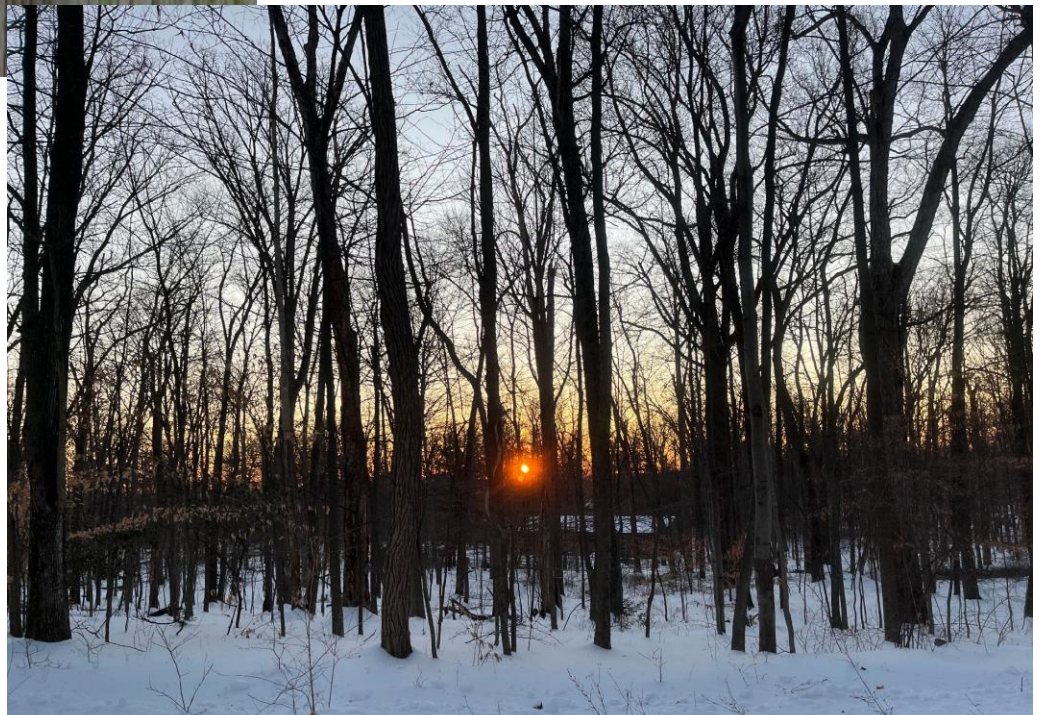
Snow day and Route 15 is covered!



Ranger Scott Offutt shoveling snow!



Maple, the Eastern Screech Owl at the Manor Area Aviary



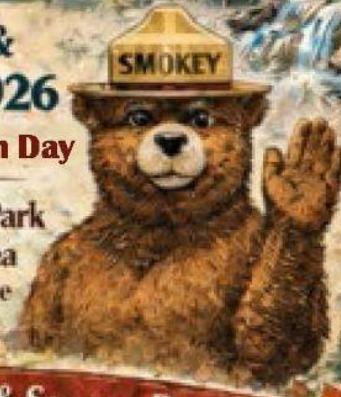
Sunrise at Cunningham Falls Park

55th ANNUAL MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

— Come One, Come All! —

March 14-15 &
March 21-22, 2026
10:00am – 2:00pm Each Day

Cunningham Falls State Park
William Houck Lake Area
14274 William Houck Drive
Thurmont, MD



Maple Sugaring Demos

ASL Interpreter
every day

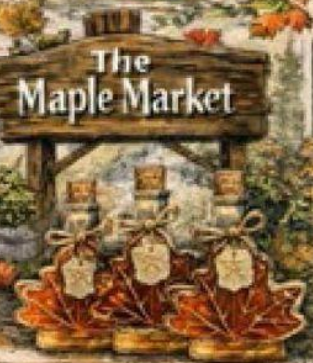
Pancake & Sausage Breakfast

Live Bluegrass & Folk Music



Suggested donation at entrance:
\$5/pp, children in car seats free.

The
Maple Market



Friends of Cunningham Falls
and Gambrill State Parks, Inc.

• www.friendsofCunninghamGambrill.org •

A 501(c)3 nonprofit organization



Consider Donation to CFA

To help CFA continue its programs to preserve and protect the Catoctin Mountain forest, please consider, making a donation. CFA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, so your donations will be tax deductible. Any donation over \$20 will include a one-year CFA membership. Here is what your donation could do.

- \$50 will buy notebooks or clipboards for 40 children at the week-long day camp.
- \$120 will cover the cost for one child to attend the week-long day camp
- \$125 will provide food for 40 children for one day of day camp.
- \$200 helps sponsor the Artist in Residence program
- \$364 will buy protective equipment for a SUCCESS program youth.
- \$400 will buy bus transportation for 40 children to day camp for one day.
- \$1300 will fund the SUCCESS program for one year.



Giving Levels

- **Acorn** up to \$99
- **Seedling** \$100- 499.99
- **Sapling** \$500-999.99
- **Mighty Oak** \$1000 and over

Donation checks can be made out to CFA and sent to Catoctin Forest Alliance, PO Box 411, Thurmont, MD 21788

Join or Renew your Membership to CFA

We'd love to have you join us in our mission to protect the Catoctin Mountain forest. Your support would be a great benefit to us and the forest. To join CFA or renew your membership, please send the membership application form and a check made out to **Catoctin Forest Alliance** with notation "**Membership**" to the address below. **The yearly membership dues are \$20 per person or \$30 per couple.**

You can also join online at <http://www.catoctinforestalliance.org/index.php/join>.

Kathy Byrne
CFA Treasurer
123 Ironmaster Dr.
Thurmont, MD 21788

New members will receive a CFA patch



Name(s): _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email address: _____

Committee Interest

Strategic Planning ____	Membership ____	Conservation/Education ____
Fundraising ____	Artist in Residence ____	Marketing/Publicity ____
Information Technology ____	Finance ____	

Visit our website at www.catoctinforestalliance.org