

Nockamixon State Park – Pennsylvania



AERC Trails Grant, completed 2011

Bucks County Trail Reopens After Grant

by Patti Pizzo



Left: Volunteers ready a series of gabions to be filled with rocks to make a Nockamixon State Park trail usable once again. Right: Riders check out the finished trail work.

Nockamixon State Park is located in southeastern Pennsylvania in Bucks County. The park is 5,286 acres, which may seem small to many people, but horseback riders have been enjoying its 14 miles of horse trails for many years.

In October of 2011 a big storm blew over a very large tree right in the middle of the trail that skirts the lake. The uprooted tree left a 20' by 15' by 6' deep hole in the trail. The trail's steep slope and existing trees made it impossible to go around this uprooted tree so the trail was closed for use.

Mike Quinn and his group of volunteers expressed an interest in fixing and reopening the trail. I became aware of Mike's interest and the need for funding to purchase materials.

I approached Michael Campbell, AERC's Trail and Land Management Committee chair, and Helen Koehler, grants program liaison, then applied for an AERC grant for this project and additional trail work. The process was very easy and in no time our Nockamixon project was approved.

Mike and his volunteer group already knew how they were going to go about fixing the trail. They needed the money to purchase gabions (heavy plastic-coated wire baskets) which would be filled with rocks from piles already found within the park. One of Mike's volunteers had a lovely track skid-steer loader which he graciously used for the project.

Shortly after receiving AERC's grant the informal group formed a more formal group called Friends of Nockamixon State Park. People from many user groups in the park banded together to help the park in this and other projects. Hikers, bikers, equestrians and kayakers all volunteered to help reopen the mainly horse/hike Mink Trail.

The main work day was scheduled for March 17, 2012. Two weeks before Mike and his core group of helpers worked many days getting the project ready. Six 3' x 3' x 9' gabions were purchased and carried by hand down the trail near the cave-in. Quite a few days were spent locating and piling up the rocks that were to go in the gabions. This way an additional purchase of rock was not necessary.

On March 17, 30 or so people showed up for the work day. The first row of gabions had been placed into position on the steep slope the previous day. The cave-in was downhill a good distance from the staging area. The skid-steer carried the rocks as far as it could go down to the volunteers who formed a line. We then passed the rocks down the line and placed them in the gabions.

When the first row of gabions was done they were laced together and another row of gabions was put on top and filled with rocks. Then that was laced shut and on the outside of the gabions rocks were stacked to look like a dry-stack wall and across the top.

The finished project came out looking like it was built by masons many years ago. The trail was then backfilled and raked.

The volunteer day ran so smoothly because of the preparation done ahead of time.

Mink Trail is now open again to equestrians. Of course my horses, having ridden on this trail for years, immediately noticed the new wall. They must have approved because they didn't balk or shy, just checked it out and merrily went on their way.

New brown trail markers were also purchased and installed along the horse trail.