



## Friends of the Limberlost

P.O. Box 571, Geneva, IN 46740

[www.Limberlost.weebly.com](http://www.Limberlost.weebly.com)

Facebook: *Friends of the Limberlost*

Phone: 260-849-0308

### Statement to FOL members

For 25 years Friends of the Limberlost—a not-for-profit, 501(c)3 organization, has been working with the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites (ISMHS) supporting Limberlost State Historic Site by providing financial assistance and volunteers. During the same time period we have been supporting the restoration of the Limberlost wetlands, almost exclusively in partnership with DNR—Nature Preserves. Our dual purpose as a support organization for two different state agencies makes sense because of our mission statement: *To foster the remembrance and appreciation of Gene Stratton-Porter by providing financial & volunteer support to help Limberlost State Historic Site be a first-class destination for tourists, schools, and local citizens, and also to assist the Indiana DNR-Division of Nature Preserves in efforts to restore portions of the Limberlost wetlands to further the appreciation of nature and the environment, bringing back the Limberlost Swamp that Gene Stratton-Porter made famous in her novels and nature studies.*

Over the years our partnership with ISMHS and DNR-Nature Preserves has benefited the goals of both state agencies. Today, DNR-Nature Preserves manages nearly 1800 acres of restored and protected Limberlost wetlands and uplands, and Friends of the Limberlost (FOL) has made significant donations for many projects at Limberlost State Historic Site. Most recently it has been the restoration of the Music Room and Kitchen in the Limberlost Cabin, and financial assistance from FOL has been used to help fund the restoration of the library and guest bedrooms. FOL has also raised funds for a new visitor center and an electronic sign to promote events and programs. FOL runs a profitable and well-stocked gift shop and stands ready to provide a core of volunteers to help the site in any way at any time.

Every three or four years, we sign a separate contract with each state agency laying out the details of this cooperation. The contract is called a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

When our MOU with ISMHS expired on June 30 of this year, the current CEO, Cathy Ferree, offered us a new MOU that the FOL Board of Directors found unacceptable. It required FOL to become a “functionally integrated support group”. That means among other things:

- FOL must turn over to ISMHS all funds raised to support Limberlost State Historic Site
- FOL must turn over operation and management of the Limberlost gift shop to ISMHS
- FOL cannot advertise in any media or promote on social media any Limberlost State Historic Site events or programs
- FOL cannot have a membership category that supports Limberlost State Historic Site

For the first time in its history, the FOL Board objected to the MOU and tried to negotiate with ISMHS for better terms, but nothing was negotiable. What exactly motivated ISMHS to take this stand is not exactly clear. Eventually, the CEO determined that FOL cannot be a “functionally integrated support group” since we hold land and contracts that are not directly related to the Historic Site (due to our partnership with DNR-NP). She asked that we consider creating a new 501(c)3 non-profit organization, just for the support of the site, and sign the same MOU.

Because no changes in the MOU were acceptable to ISMHS, there was no point in going through the work and expense of creating another 501(c)3 organization just to sign over FOL funds to ISMHS and to turn over all decision making power for our organization to ISMHS.

So, moving forward, FOL will keep on supporting DNR-Nature Preserves, following a separate MOU we have in place with them (the MOU with Nature Preserves expires in 2022). Since we no longer have a contract with ISMHS, and to avoid legal entanglements, the FOL Board voted to change its name from “Friends of the Limberlost State Historic Site” to “Friends of the Limberlost.” By not signing the MOU contract, we cannot use the name “Limberlost State Historic Site”. We will need a membership vote to confirm this Board decision.

It is worth noting that we are not the only state historic site Friends Group that is having difficulty signing the MOU presented by ISMHS. There are 11 state historic sites under the umbrella of ISMHS. Seven of those 11 sites have Friends groups or a support group of some sort. At the time this article was written, 4 of those 7 groups refused to sign the MOU, and two have reluctantly signed. One of the Friends groups (Angel Mounds) decided to disband rather than sign the MOU.

At this point it appears that ISMHS is not going to allow for any changes in the MOU, and if a Friend Group refuses to sign, then the only option, so far, is to disassociate from their respective sites and work on a "transition plan" to turn over all assets to ISMHS. Even though FOL will be going through this separation from ISMHS reluctantly, we will continue our association with DNR-Nature Preserves, continue to connect members of Limberlost Swamp Remembered to the legacy of Gene Stratton-Porter, and we hope that a better MOU will be offered sometime in the future.

To leave the possibility open of once again joining with ISMHS in support of Limberlost State Historic Site, we are not changing the FOL

bylaws at this point.

By the terms of the previous MOU signed with ISMHS, if our partnership with ISMHS ends, FOL is required to turn over all funds that we have raised in support of Limberlost State Historic Site to ISMHS. Currently as of July 31, 2019, that could be as much as 37 % of our bank account, and we also forfeit gift shop sales as a source of revenue. The loss of those funds will have consequences for how we operate and how much we can do in the future. For the time being until we see how things work out for us financially, we plan to adopt a less expensive format for the newsletter, and should you decide to attend the annual meeting, you'll have to pay for your meal. *To register to attend the annual meeting see below.*

Friends of the Limberlost will continue its Facebook page and website, but as requested by ISMHS all references to the Indiana State Museum and Limberlost State Historic Site have been removed. If you want to know what events or programs are scheduled at Limberlost State Historic Site, you'll have to call the site or look at the ISMHS website.



## **FRIENDS OF THE LIMBERLOST ANNUAL MEETING**

**DATE & TIME: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 5:30 PM**

**LOCATION: Berne Dining Family Restaurant  
1005 US Hwy 27 S, Berne, IN 46711**

**COST: \$10/person + tax & tip**

**Seating is limited. Please RSVP by Tuesday, September 24**

**email: [randyplehman@comcast.net](mailto:randyplehman@comcast.net)**

**call or text: 260-849-0308 to reserve your seat(s)**

### **ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA:**

- **6:30 PM annual meeting for the election of the Board of Directors followed by a short LSR Committee meeting and a short Board meeting.**
- **Members will be asked to vote on organizational changes that need to be made due to FOL not signing the memorandum of understanding with the Indiana State Museum.**
- **Taylor Lehman, the Nature Preserve Regional Ecologist, will review accomplishments made since the 2018 annual meeting and highlight ongoing and future plans.**
- **All members of the Friends of the Limberlost are invited to attend and are welcome to bring a friend or family members, but seating is limited to 40 people. The reservation list fills up quickly, so if you want to attend, please make your reservations ASAP. Unlike past annual meetings, you will be responsible for paying for your meal.**

**WHAT CAN YOU DO? We know many members of Friends of the Limberlost will be very surprised by the changes taking place in FOL's relationship to Limberlost State Historic Site. Some of you have asked if there is anything you can do to help with this unfortunate situation. Here are some things to consider:**

- Write your Indiana state representative and/or state senator and ask them to look into why the Indiana State Museum has adopted a policy that is forcing Friends Groups to withdraw their long-standing support at many local State Historic Sites.
- Keep on supporting the Friends of the Limberlost. The changes that are being imposed by the Indiana State Museum will effect FOL revenue and expenses and will require FOL to make some adjustments. The FOL Board of Directors remains committed to supporting Limberlost projects, and if that support can no longer be given to Limberlost State Historic Site, then FOL will continue supporting the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Nature Preserve.
- We think it is possible that at some point in the future the Indiana State Museum will change its policy and ask FOL to become a partner again by negotiating a more acceptable memorandum of understanding, so we are determined to remain an active community organization ready to lend a helping hand. We encourage you to start attending our monthly Board meetings which take place on the third Monday of the month to see how you can be more involved with FOL.
- Please be patient with FOL as we work through all the changes taking place. We apologize for not letting you know what's going on and for falling behind notifying many of you regarding the status of your membership. We are still keeping track of contributions and will keep on sending out letters acknowledging donations which are tax deductible. Obviously, our attention and time has been focused on our changing relationship to ISMHS. This new arrangement, working solely in support of DNR-Nature Preserves, may cause us to review and update our membership policy and our short and long term goals. So please watch for future notifications.
- FOL will continue to own and maintain the Loblolly Pavilion at the Loblolly Marsh Nature Preserve. At this time ISMHS has stated it is willing to pay FOL for use of the this facility when it is needed for Limberlost events or programs. Your donations make it possible for FOL to maintain this facility.



Pictured above, from left to right: Taylor Lehman (East-Central Regional Ecologist for DNR-Division of Nature Preserves), Tom Swinford (Assistant Director of DNR Division of Nature Preserves), Ron Hellmich (Director of DNR Division of Nature Preserve), Ken Brunswick (Retired Ecologist and Committee Chair for Limberlost Swamp Remembered), Melissa Fey (FOL Secretary), Willy DeSmet (FOL President), Randy Lehman (FOL Treasurer)

Picture taken at the Loblolly Marsh parking lot on September 6, 2019, by Terri Gorney (FOL Vice-Pres.)

**THE LAST LIMBERLOST BLUEGRASS  
JAMBOREE FOR 2019 is SUNDAY  
SEPT. 15, AT 2-4 PM**

The Jamboree takes place on the grounds of Limberlost State Historic Site, and it's FREE (Donations are appreciated). This event is designed for amateur musicians. There are no paid performers. Everyone donates his or her time and talent for the good of the cause. So you never know what you'll hear, but "usually" it's bluegrass, gospel, or folk music. Bring your instrument and join the musicians, or bring your lawn chair, and just sit awhile. Listen to the music. Enjoy life. Refreshments provided.

**BECAUSE SOME BLUEGRASS MUSIC IS ABOUT  
WORKING & DRINKING, WE'D LIKE TO THANK  
OUR 2019 BLUEGRASS SPONSORS ALL  
LOCATED IN HISTORIC GENEVA, IN:**

- **LIMBERLOST CONSTRUCTION COMPANY**  
*(for the working part)*
- **GENEVA CASE & QUART**  
*(for the drinking part)*

*"The Limberlost Jamborees were started in 2001 by Betty Yoder and have become a much loved and highly anticipated local event carried on today by Betty's daughter, Verena Sutton, and a dedicated group of very talented local musicians. The Jamborees are emceed by retired site manager, Randy Lehman."*



We sincerely thank, once again, Creek Run Environmental Engineering employees, family, clients, and contractors for their generous contribution. Creek Run hosted the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual James Peterson Memorial Fish Fry & Cornhole Tournament on August 9, 2019, in Montpelier, IN, (the location of their corporate headquarters).

This charity event is held every year in honor of the late James Peterson, founder of Jay Petroleum and one of the original owners of Creek Run, L.L.C. Much of the money raised from the event is donated to Limberlost Swamp Remembered, a committee of Friends of the Limberlost, which was a charity near and dear to James Peterson. This year Creek Run raised close to \$7,000 for Limberlost Swamp Remembered.



In 13 years Creek Run has raised over \$37,000 for the restoration of wetland habitat at the Loblolly Marsh. We thank everyone who participated in Creek Run's online auction, another part of the fundraiser. There were a lot of great online prizes. FOL looks forward to promoting this event next year!

## LOBLOLLY PAVILION & GROUNDS



The Loblolly Pavilion is open when the Friends or Limberlost State Historic Site has a night-time event or program, and it is also open during the day when school groups do nature hikes at the Loblolly Marsh.



The Loblolly pavilion can be rented for private events. Anyone is welcome to hike the pavilion grounds during the day, but the property is closed at night. The grounds feature a mulched trail which includes a tree identification course. The restrooms at the pavilion are open only when there is an event or program or when a private party rents the facility.

## **FRIENDS OF THE LIMBERLOST NEW MEMBERSHIP & MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

The Friends of the Limberlost, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation supports the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Nature Preserves. Nature Preserves manages the restored wetlands in the Limberlost Territories. They have an office and small staff located at the Limberlost State Historic Site in Geneva, IN. Your membership dues and extra donations are vital and support the many projects that are bringing back parts of the Limberlost Swamp—an area that author, Gene Stratton-Porter, made famous in her novels and nature studies.

**Your annual membership dues will be used by Limberlost Swamp Remembered (a standing committee of the Friends of the Limberlost) primarily on Limberlost Swamp restoration projects.**

Your annual dues and any extra donation you care to make to the Friends of the Limberlost includes a subscription to the quarterly newsletter, and your contribution is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Please fill out the form below to renew your membership or to sign up as a new member. If you have any questions regarding your membership with the Friends of the Limberlost, call Randy Lehman at (260)849-0308, or email Randy at [randyplehman@comcast.net](mailto:randyplehman@comcast.net).

**Please make checks payable to: FRIENDS OF THE LIMBERLOST and mail both your check and completed Membership form to PO Box 571, Geneva, IN 46740.**

**Limberlost Swamp Remembered Committee—dues and any additional donation you make primarily supports Limberlost wetland restoration projects managed by the Indiana Division of Nature Preserves**

**Please Check the Box that best matches the type of membership you want.**

Senior Citizen/Limited Income—\$10       Business—\$50 (please enter contact name below)  
 Individual—\$20       Family—\$35.00       Lifetime—\$1,000

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

Check the box if you want to get the newsletter mailed to you via the U.S. Postal Service. We are happy to mail you a “paper copy” of the newsletter rather than the electronic version of the newsletter, if that is what you prefer—just check the box. If you get the digital version of the newsletter via email, it saves us money on postage, it also saves us time, and the “e-newsletter” is in color!

AMOUNT ENCLOSED (Additional donation appreciated): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

FOL can no longer offer a membership that supports Limberlost State Historic Site. In the past we have always offered individuals, families, and businesses the opportunity to join FOL as a member supporting Limberlost State Historic Site or as a member supporting Limberlost Swamp Remembered, or you could choose to support both sides of the FOL organization by choosing a “combination membership”. Starting today, we will no longer offer a membership that supports Limberlost State Historic Site. It is with deep regret that we agree to honor the decision made by ISMHS, and today we terminate our Limberlost State Historic Site membership.

As we move forward, any membership fees and donations that Friends of the Limberlost receive will be used to support Limberlost wetland projects managed by DNR-Nature Preserves or managed by Limberlost Swamp Remembered (a standing committee of FOL). Donations or membership fees could be used to purchase more flood-prone land which is part of the on-going effort to restore the Limberlost Swamp. A portion of funds now collected by FOL could also be used for maintenance of the Loblolly Pavilion, and any other projects in line with FOL’s mission or that enhance the nature-education and experience of visitors to the Limberlost wetlands.

If you wish to continue supporting Limberlost State Historic Site, you need to become a member of the Indiana State Museum. There are membership benefits associated with being a member of ISMHS—visit [www.indianamuseum.org](http://www.indianamuseum.org) to see a list of those benefits. Anyone wishing to donate to support Limberlost State Historic Site should make their donation directly to the ISMHS. Mention that your donation is intended for the benefit of Limberlost State Historic Site, and the CEO at ISMHS has indicated ISMHS intends to honor the intent of the donor.