

Cunningham Falls

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**June 10
Sunday**



It's back! Platformpalooza

will return for a second edition to celebrate that which no other mapped QOC terrain possesses, plentiful charcoal platforms! It looks as though we'll have a relatively cool day for June and the leaves are certainly out to provide shade so participants will likely run in greater comfort than did those who braved last year's unseasonable mid-April heat. The courses submitted to the park for review spanned from white through blue and raised nary a peep of protest, so this event will cater to all ability levels, although the terrain is somewhat slow due to a fair bit of small rock and deadfall underfoot, as well as being mostly trackless, so this isn't recommended as an event at which to run a longer or harder course than you're accustomed to. Orange and advanced courses will have a remote start, not quite as far but still pretty far a walk uphill as in 2017, and a finish very near the parking and registration areas. White and yellow courses, both starting and finishing very near registration and parking, will be hybrids of conventional orienteering and trivia-O, with a portion of the course following the Catoctin Furnace interpretive trail and questions to answer based on the signage along that trail covering the history of the furnace and vicinity going back to colonial times.

Note: the park levies a per person entry fee - \$3 for MD residents, \$5 for out-of-staters, childrens in booster seats no charge. On a summer weekend, there should be someone collecting this at the park entrance.

Pre-registration is now open - click [here](#) [2] to register.

Location

Cunningham Falls St. Park, Manor Area
(Platformpalooza 2018)

Registration

Pre-registration **is now open** - click [here](#) [2] - and is ***strongly encouraged*** to guarantee you a map!

Start Times

You may start your course at any time between 11am and 1:30pm. Don't forget to allow time for

**Schedule**

the uphill walk to the start and to complete your course by 3pm.

Sunday, June 10 11:00 Platformpalooza
am - 2018:
3:00 pm

Volunteers

Event [Gary Smith](#) [3]

Director:

Event [Karla Hulett](#) [4]

Director:

Course [Jon Torrance](#) [5]

Designer:

Location Details

Platformpalooza 2018 From US-15, 11 miles north of Frederick MD Cunningham and 2.7 miles south of Falls St. Park Thurmont, turn west onto Manor Area Cunningham Falls Park [Google Map](#) [6] Rd. After entering the park, keep following the road around to your left, past the parking lots, playground, visitor center and aviary, then park in the large parking lot at the bottom of the incline south of the aviary. Registration will be in the pavilion near the northeast corner of that parking lot.

Course Details

Platformpalooza 2018	Cours	Lengt	Climb	No.
	e	h	(m)	Contr
	Name (km)			ols
	White	2.7	115	10
	Yellow	3.5	145	12
	Orange	4	130	10
	Brown	4.5	120	11
	Green	5.7	210	13
	Red	7.3	250	14
	Blue	9	385	17

Course Notes**Platformpalooza 2018**

This event will take place on the same LiDAR-derived map of a portion of Cunningham Falls State Park used in last April's event, with some additional fieldwork adding more rootstocks, boulders, and a few knolls and small depressions plus an expansion southwards and across route 15 to take in the site of the Catoctin Furnace. The bulk of the map covers a large part of the east-facing side of Bob's Hill, adjacent to the park's Manor Area parking on the west side of Route 15 and the Catoctin Furnace, on the east side. The map scale will be 1:10,000 for orange and advanced courses; 1:7,500 or 1:5,000 for white and yellow courses.



The contour interval is 5 meters. The map is a slightly improved basemap - trails and a certain number of point features, mostly boulders and rootstocks, encountered during scouting and course setting were surveyed by GPS and added to the LiDAR-derived features - so it's fortunate that the LiDAR data is of high quality. In addition to producing reliable contours, it shows the plentiful charcoal platforms - which used to supply the Catoctin Furnace - ditches, slopes steep enough to possibly justify mapping as cliffs, and areas with significant mountain laurel quite well. The mountain laurel in the area the courses visit is generally runnable at reduced speed and with lessened visibility; the surrounding white woods generally offer quite good visibility, even in summer, and are runnable though there is more deadfall and small rock underfoot than on most QOC maps, so don't expect to move as quickly through them as you often can in local white woods.

The terrain, consisting as it does mostly of a single large hillside with relatively few of the kinds of handrails such as trails and watercourses we often rely on in typical QOC terrain, can be expected to challenge intermediate and advanced course participants distance estimation and compass skills. Though a sufficiently skilled orienteer could manage without a compass - despite the paucity of other handrails, there will never be any difficulty distinguishing which directions are up and down on the map or in the terrain. Orange participants in particular are likely to find this terrain a big adjustment - orange participants, who probably lack the precision navigation skills to island-hop from charcoal platform to charcoal platform, should be confident in their ability to navigate largely by large contour features and compass, with some help from vegetation and the major ditches and gullies that mark some parts of the hillside.

The most widely distributed kind of point feature in the terrain, if not necessarily the most common given there are some pockets of intense rock detail, are charcoal burning platforms. Because they show up so beautifully in the LiDAR data and were therefore the great majority of features on the base map, almost all the controls will be hung on them. Charcoal platforms will be familiar to many QOC members from visits to French Creek State Park and other areas in Pennsylvania where they're plentiful. For anyone lacking such experience, the brown triangles on the map mark the locations of eerily flat, more or less perfectly circular patches of ground on the order of 10 to 20m in diameter scattered throughout the park. Since the mapped



terrain is mostly one big, usually moderately to very steep hillside, these flat circular areas stand out like sore thumbs when viewed from above. From below, they tend to be somewhat less obvious, although the built-up edge of the circle on the downslope side generally protrudes above the natural curve of the hillside in a way that an alert orienteer can distinguish from below. If you are new to charcoal platforms, there will be a few of them visible on the walk to the start for you to examine before running your course. The photograph above also gives a reasonable idea of their typical appearance if you mentally subtract the grass from the image.

The intermediate and advanced courses have a common start from which the courses immediately diverge - all courses have different first controls. This start is located ~1300 meters from registration and with ~175 meters climb en route. Intermediate and advanced course participants, please plan the timing of your arrival in the park and departure for the start accordingly. White and yellow courses will start within 50m of the registration pavilion. All courses finish in the same location, across from the park visitor center less than 150m from the registration pavilion. As always, please report immediately from the finish to the registration pavilion to download so we'll know you're out of the woods.

Should you become lost and unable to relocate while doing your course, please return to the event center at the Manor Area by, depending what course you're doing and how far along you are in it, (a) heading south until you reach the trail you hiked on to get to the start, then taking that trail downhill to the event center OR (b) heading downhill (more or less east) until you reach a divided highway (MD route 15) then turning right (more or less south by southwest) and walking alongside it until you reach the Manor Area entrance OR (c) heading downhill until you reach a large creel (Little Hunting Creek) and following it downstream until you reach the Manor Area OR (d) retracing the Catoctin Furnace Interpretive trail back towards the Manor Area.

Entry Fees