**Candidates for Election to the
Forest Resources & Ecosystem Science and Management Alumni Group Board of Directors**

The Forest Resources & Ecosystem Science and Management Alumni Group Board of Directors includes 12 at-large members who are elected to serve a three-year term, and who may serve a second consecutive term if re-elected.

Below, in alphabetical order, are brief biosketches of candidates running for Spring 2025 election to the board. Degrees listed are those earned in the School of Forest Resources/Department of Ecosystem Science and Management. Candidates noted with an asterisk (*) are incumbents.

*Vote online at **https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AlumniBoardElection**, or print the ballot and mail it to Ellen Rom, Forest Resources Building, 466 Bigler Road, Room 114, University Park, PA 16802.*

Vote for no more than four candidates. <u>Ballots must be received by Friday, February 14, 2025</u>.

Brent Harding (1999 B.S. Forest Science)
I am a native of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, and the descendant of bituminous coal miners and Bethlehem Steel workers. As a youth, I often left town pedaling a single-speed bike 14 miles, round trip, to explore the forests, mountains and streams of the Laurel Highlands. These frequent impromptu natural adventures contrasted against the blatantly dangerous conditions of mill and mine work – add in John Denver's song lyrics, and I was set on pursuing the profession of forestry at an early age.

I graduated from the School of Forest Resources at the peak of undergraduate enrollment – more than 550 students in the Forest Science, Wildlife and Fisheries Science, and Wood Products majors. As graduation neared, I accepted a position in urban forestry in Washington, D.C. Upon graduation I began my career, but first I fulfilled a childhood dream and bought a used open-air Jeep. I envied the four-wheel drive vehicles Brian Balonick '99 (Jeep Wrangler) and Mark Moreira '99 (International Scout) drove around campus and town as undergrads.

I soon transitioned to a Forester position with the Maryland Forest Service. I worked on the Lower Eastern Shore, primarily Wicomico County east to the coastal bays onward to the Atlantic Ocean. While there, I was very fortunate to be mentored by foresters like John Jordan, Dave Slack, and Dr. Anne Hairston-Strang. The Maryland Forest Service provided me with

invaluable experiences in southern pine plantation management, ecological restoration, riparian buffer establishment, prescribed and wildland fire, tree planting, and remote sensing.

My career then brought me back to Penn State, specifically the Forestland Management Office. Once again, I benefited from working directly with excellent colleagues and mentors like Joe Harding (no relation), Jim McQuaide, and Dr. Todd Bowersox. For more than twenty years, I served in the position of Forester. During that time, I coordinated the field operations for more than 8,000 acres of University forestland. Field operations included timber harvests, herbicide applications, road maintenance, habitat restoration projects, freshwater preservation, stormwater management, research support, outreach demonstrations, internship coordination, and more. Beginning in 2007 I was tasked, with others, to devise, develop, and teach an undergraduate introductory course focused on global position systems and geographic information systems for natural resource management. Since then, I have introduced nearly a generation of forestry and wildlife fisheries students to GPS and GIS.

Beginning in January 2022, I became the Director of Forestland for the University. Shortly after, the Forestland Management Office was extremely fortunate to hire Kevin Cook as the new University Forester. Together, with the support of the Department and College, we continue to facilitate teaching, research demonstration, and outreach across the University's forestland.

My family resides in the Park Forest neighborhood of State College. Annual trips to national parks are a continuation of our ubiquitous affinity for the natural world.

Robert Lusk (2014 B.S. Forest Science)

My Penn State journey began as a member of Tau Phi Delta fraternity and the Woodsmen's Team, where I served as captain in my final year. After graduating, I worked for The American Chestnut Foundation as an orchard technician, helping to restore this iconic tree species. At the same time, I began earning a M.S. in Natural Resource Management with a focus in agroforestry from the University of Missouri that I completed in 2016.

In 2015, I was hired as a Forest Health Forester with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry. In that role I covered southcentral and southwest Pennsylvania. Over the course of eight years, I specialized in the detection and management of forest pests like spongy moth, hemlock woolly adelgid, emerald ash borer, and oak wilt. I also gained extensive experience as an aerial surveyor, assessing forest damage and species health. A highlight of my career was developing and leading the Division of Forest Health's UAS program, where I became a licensed Part 107 UAS operator, significantly advancing our forest health monitoring capabilities.

In January 2023, I was promoted to Forest Health Specialist, where I took on the responsibility of overseeing the aerial survey program. That same year, I started working

part-time as a contractor for Overstory B.V., analyzing satellite imagery for utility vegetation management. My role there quickly evolved into a full-time position as an arborist in November 2023. I currently help optimize AI models used to analyze vegetation along utility right-of-ways, aiding utilities in making informed management decisions. I earned my ISA Certified Arborist credential in June 2024, which further deepened my expertise in arboriculture.

I live in Shanksville, PA, with my wife and young daughter. I am an avid outdoorsman who enjoys fishing, hunting, and hiking with my family, both in Pennsylvania and across the country. Giving back to my community is also important to me, and I regularly volunteer for local events like trash cleanups and the Raystown Lake Wheelin' Sportsmen Hunt.

Phillip Manning (2007 B.S. Wildlife and Fisheries Science, 2009 M.S. Forest Resources) My passion for the outdoors led me to my journey at Penn State. I began where outdoor enthusiasts do, at Penn State Mont Alto in the fall 2003. The campus was a perfect way to transition into college life and prepare me for my move to University Park in fall 2005. As I progressed through my Wildlife and Fisheries Science program, I expanded my outdoor passions naturally into forestry, where I added a minor in Forest Science. Wanting to continue my education, I entered graduate school at Penn State in spring 2008 to work on modeling Pennsylvania's forest resources and to serve as a graduate assistant to help undergraduates navigate forest management courses.

Graduating in summer 2009, I started working at the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) assisting farmers and producers in effective and optimal management of their natural resources. I also started consulting in forest and wildlife management. I have been and remain a member of the Society of American Foresters and a Certified Forester since 2013. I returned to Penn State in fall 2013 in the Division of Development and Alumni Relations where I worked on university fundraising efforts in various roles until recently in fall 2024, where my career in higher education fundraising has led me to the University of Pittsburgh as the Associate Vice Chancellor of Advancement Technology and Records.

I still reside in the State College area and spend weekends fly fishing Spring Creek, exploring nearby parks and lakes, or attending any number of Penn State events with my wife (B.S. 2008) and son across campus. I am a proud Penn Stater and even stronger supporter of the College of Agricultural Sciences. I look forward to bringing a unique perspective to the board and being able to share my tremendous experiences and skills with the next generation of natural resource professionals. We Are!

Austin Noguera * (2017 B.S. Forest Ecosystem Management)

I want to start off by saying thank you for the opportunity to serve on the alumni board for the last three years. It was a great experience to be involved with the department and our diverse group of alumni. I hope to be reelected to the board for another three-year term to continue our work and to support our students and alumni.

I graduated with my B.S. degree in Forest Ecosystem Management, Forest Management option from Penn State in 2017. While attending the University, I also obtained a minor in Geographic Information Science (GIS). During my time on campus, I was active in a multitude of organizations including the Woodsmen team, Ag Student Council, Society of American Foresters (SAF) student chapter. and Tau Phi Delta fraternity.

Since the last time I ran for election, I have done a bit of job hopping, all within the DCNR Bureau of Forestry. Originally, I was in the Pinchot Forest District, then the Weiser Forest District, and currently I am a Forester with the Delaware Forest District. Being closer to home was important for me and working in the beautiful Pocono Mountains, where I live, is an added bonus. All these experiences have helped me grow as a professional and see the wide realm of possibilities this profession has to offer.

I am involved with the PA Wildfire Program, and I am part of the PA Type 3 incident management team. Along with my wildland fire qualifications, I am an ISA Certified Arborist and Certified Forester through SAF. SAF is another major part of who I am, and I continue my involvement with the organization, currently serving as treasurer for the Allegheny SAF and chapter chair for the Pinchot Chapter.

Hunting, fishing, hiking, and exploring new places are hobbies I enjoy in my free time. I currently reside in Stroudsburg, PA, with my wife Emily (PSU ChE '17), my son Finley (who joined us during my term on the board), our cats (Nugget and Noodle), and our dog (Boomer).

Jennifer Slacum PWS, QP (2000 B.S. Wildlife and Fisheries Science)

The PA Laurel Highlands nurtured my love of the outdoors and moving to the Adirondacks allowed me to further explore my love of the outdoors and spend more time backpacking and rock climbing while completing an A.S. in Math/Science at SUNY Adirondack in Queensbury, NY. After graduation I came back to PA to attend Penn State where I earned a B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Science and the nickname "Hippie" from my School of Forest Resources classmates. While at Penn State I worked with Dr. Robert Brooks and his graduate students at Riparia on the development of HGM rapid wetland assessment protocols where I learned the skills necessary to delineate wetlands and manage field crews post college. I also worked with Dr. Rich Yahner on avian ground nest predation studies and interned several summers at Saratoga National Historic Park conducting grassland bird mist net surveys and salamander studies.

After graduating from Penn State, I served a term with AmeriCorps at Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center at John Boyd Thacher State Park, Voorheesville, NY, and then jumped into environmental consulting taking a position in Savannah, GA. which launched my 25-year career as an environmental scientist working throughout the mid- Atlantic and southeastern United States. I have lived and worked in Maryland since 2004. I spent 6 years with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) Tidal Wetlands Division and the remainder of my career as a private environmental consultant.

At MDE I served as the statewide tidal wetland plant expert and represented MDE Tidal Wetlands on the Maryland coastal resilience work group and on the Chesapeake Bay Trust grant review committee. For the last 12 years I have worked as an Environmental Permitting and Compliance manager overseeing natural resources studies, permitting, and compliance on large infrastructure projects in the MD/VA/DC area. These projects afforded me the opportunity to collaborate with state and federal agency scientists and planners to design and implement programs and technologies to avoid and minimize impacts on the natural environment during construction and operation activities.