



Pennsylvania Forest Stewards News

A bi-monthly newsletter of the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Volunteer Program

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A Year for a Volunteer

By Bob Slagter '08

In October 2008, I completed PAFS volunteer training and was driven to write about the experience. You might recall my piece about a walk with Jim Finley and seeing a forest through new eyes ... eyes that, as a result of the training, see so much more of what is going on around me. It seems every walk I take now is a learning experience with great things to identify and many more things to notice that I do not know about. These new challenges are the most fun, because they give me a chance to interface with professionals or to use resources from the training.

Most of the neat things that have happened to me this past year started when people ask me what I have been doing with my time. Invariably at some point I mention my Forest Stewardship affiliation and how it provides new opportunities to work with people in their woodlands and to find resources to help them answer their concerns and find new ways to get more from their properties.

Not everything I did was successful, but every experience brought a new chance to learn about forests and to grow with each challenge. Below are some of the experiences I've had.

A Missy's Restaurant breakfast pitch - Terry, whom I've known since high school, is a very successful business man in our home town of Titusville and an avid outdoorsman. He purchased a former Quaker State Oil property of 1400 acres. He wants to promote oil and gas development and grow big bucks (deer that is). He came with his oil driller and part time lumberman who I've also known for some time.

This was my first presentation on Forest Stewardship. I was fresh out of training and I think it went well. There were lots of questions and some very good comments from the driller. At the end I asked to come out (possibly with a service forester), but they "would think about it and let me know." With only one more brief contact, I have never heard another word about Stewardship from these guys, even though I see them fairly frequently.

I did learn my friend is very private and I believe he liked the plan idea but not

having someone from the (hated) state on his property. Yep, he can be a bit militant.

The take away was that this may not be for everyone but it is worth presenting on the chance that something will hit home. Besides you get better at selling the concept.

Earth Day - I live in Bradford Woods, a small borough just outside Pittsburgh. It's about a mile square with zoning regulations requiring one acre minimum lots which results in lots of trees and undeveloped spaces. The Bradford Woods "Conservancy" manages a 3-acre wild reserve centered in the Borough. Annually, in conjunction with Earth Day, we have a presentation on something relevant to local landowners. I invited Jim Finley to present on "The Woods in Your Backyard," a book he co-authored about small woods, like those in Bradford Woods. Jim and his wife Linda came out and spoke to about three dozen folks, sold some books, and conducted a walk through the reserve to demonstrate some of the principles. It was a huge success with lots of strong comments from my neighbors. I now have a semi-permanent position putting on the annual program and some folks even call me "Bob the Forest Guy" - I kinda like that.

Committee Work - PAFS is looking at a negative financial picture sometime in the immediate future. I volunteered for the Endowment Committee to seek help from PAFS and others to increase donations and address the upcoming funding shortfall.

I've learned there are some incredibly talented and dedicated people committed to sustaining the PAFS. This bodes well for our future.

I've also learned it is very difficult to ask for contributions in this economy. I really don't believe I've been as helpful with this effort as I could be; but, I will continue to learn and contribute as I can. Please, think about how you can help and do it today!

The Annual Meeting was a great day. While I was on the planning committee, compared to the real heroes of the day, I participated little. Nonetheless, I saw again how cool learning about woodland is - learning is such a fun thing. Maybe you bid on some of the neat Amish crafts I supplied to the silent auction. This small contribution brought in nearly \$300.

A Potter County Consultation involved a conversation with a college friend at Homecoming. We talked about the lives we were living and came around to PAFS. He said he and 4 other guys own an old 140-acre hunting camp in Potter County. After some haggling over several adult beverages he agreed it might be fun (and even productive) to get together and learn about a Stewardship Plan for the Lucky 7 Camp. We set a date and I invited Stan Hess, the Service Forester to join us. The guys loved the session and Stan's input led to eight actions these guys should and could do to improve this really beautiful piece of PA. They did apply for Clean and Green and I hope they will use their tax savings to fund the other longer-term projects.

Local Park - Ralph Campbell, another Service Forester came to the Bradford Woods Reserve. Like so many of his ilk, his observations were amazing and his contributions were sound. We now have five projects to cleanup invasive species, thin some evergreens, and plant new trees in a community-wide effort.

The Reserve is very special with some 150 year old trees that could use some help and next generation trees.

This visit led to my becoming a local forestry resource. As "Bob the Forest Guy" I now get calls about Gypsy moths, fire damage and unknown species. I hardly ever know the answer, but through the PAFS network I find the answers, and I learn by doing - a real winning proposition.

I guess you can see that I had a fun and interesting year in PAFS. Most recently I am exploring a potential conservation easement through the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy with tax savings benefits going toward a contribution to PAFS. I'll write more on this as it progresses. So, some wins, some losses but always looking for ways to give back to forests and PAFS - it pays dividends.

Nominations for PA Forest Stewards Basic Training

We are currently seeking nominee applicants to the PA Forest Stewards Basic Training on the weekends of September 10-12 and October 1-3 at Camp Sequanota in Somerset County. (We were there in 2004.)

Enclosed with this newsletter, please find a copy of the nomination form.

If you know of someone(s) you'd like to nominate, please submit his or her contact information to us by March 1. We'll send out the application form later in the spring and make attendee decisions in early summer.

PA Forest Stewards Communications Committee

The purpose of the communications committee is to enhance the productivity of the PA Forest Stewards steering committee by improving the quality and quantity of information exchange among steering committee members and PA Forest Stewards. To this end, a survey was taken at the last steering committee meeting to determine the communication methods and information favored by participants. The compiled results are presented below.

The most favored methods of communication are *E-mail* and *website* with *Postal Service*, *telephone conferencing* and *internet meeting* next most desirable.

The most desired information is an *Editable Calendar* and *Links to Forest Related Web Sites* ranked second. *Access to Stewardship Schedules and Events* and *Access to Forest Leaves* were tied for third place while *Steering Committee E-Mail Addresses* had a fourth place ranking.

The committee is currently acting on this information and researching ways to improve our website, ways to make use of social networking resources, the creation of online communities, etc. to improve our communications with all PA Forest Stewards. When this task is completed, the communications committee will issue a report outlining the actions and schedule. If you have suggestions or ideas, please contact Allyson.

Communications Initiative – Yearbook

After years of snapping everyone's photos at annual meeting, we're about ready to launch a PA Forest Stewards yearbook.

We've created a prototype using the steering committee members as guinea pigs, and it's turned into quite a useful document. Now we'd like to take it further and get everyone on board.

Eventually this yearbook will replace the biennial directory that came out of this office. We'll make use of annual online updates to reflect each new class of volunteers.

This is very much a work in progress. Pictures from the annual meetings are being "adjusted." Contact information is being updated. With the next PA Forest Stewards newsletter all volunteers will receive an information sheet with some biographical details we'd like to include in the yearbook. We'll ask you to send it in or email it to Allyson for inclusion in the database.

Many, many thanks to Walt and Marie Petrick for their efforts to make the yearbook a reality. Watch your mail.

Newsletter by Email?

Would you like to receive your copy of the PA Forest Stewards Newsletter by email? We can oblige. Please let Allyson know if you'd prefer not to receive a paper copy. Thanks.

Dates for Your 2010 Calendar

Friday, July 23, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., In-service Training, Chainsaw Maintenance and Woods Safety, Ag Progress Days site, Centre County.

Saturday, July 24, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Annual Meeting, Ag Progress Days site, Centre County.

September 10-12 and October 1-3, Basic Training for New Volunteers, Camp Sequanota, Jennerstown, Somerset County.

Spring: An additional in-service training will be held in the spring of 2010.

Heads-up: 2011 is the International Year of Forests

Trees of Pennsylvania Online Community

After completing his PA Forest Stewards training (then VIP-Coverts), Romuald Caroff lamented the absence of an online clearinghouse for all things forest stewardship related in Pennsylvania. So he created one. The *Trees of Pennsylvania* online community has been a labor of love for Romuald and now he's ready to share it with the masses.

Trees of Pennsylvania (found at: www.treesofpa.com) has been developed as a comprehensive Web informational resource on trees and forests. It also provides an exceptional online community, where those with common interests can share photos and videos and join discussions in groups created by registered users. Other features include the forum, calendar, blog, tree profiles, business/organization directory and much more. Visitors to the site have access to all articles and posts, but registration (free) is required to fully participate in all of the interactive features. *Trees of Pennsylvania* is an ongoing work in progress and has the built in flexibility to respond to the needs and priorities of its users.

Contact Forestry Extension (We've Moved!)

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