

Pennsylvania Forest Stewards News



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2013 Private Forest Landowners Conference: We Need Your Help

We are looking to PA Forest Stewards to be able and willing assistants at the 2013 Private Forest Landowners Conference, May 10-11, Blair County Convention Center. We will need your help staffing the registration tables, help with room monitoring (ensuring presenters leave time for questions and end on time), and just generally being willing to stop and answer questions from other landowners.

We also need your help to spread the word! If you haven't already, soon you will receive a packet of marketing cards, postcards, and fliers. If you would share these materials with other landowners, post the fliers and/or leave the marketing cards at your local sawshop, native plant nursery, or other places you think might attract an audience. Help us find those landowners who might not get word about the conference. You are the best advocate.

We'd love to have your help. Contact Allyson at abm173@psu.edu or 814-865-3208. Thanks!

2013 PA Forest Stewards Basic Training Nominations

It's time to seek out good candidates to become PA Forest Stewards! The 2013 Basic Training will be the weekends of September 13-15 and October 4-6 at Camp Krislund in Centre County. Enclosed with this newsletter, please find the nominations form. Share the names and contact information of people you think would make excellent additions to our group.

Southwest Region

Volunteers from the Southwest region contributed to this issue of the PA Forest Stewards Newsletter. Here are the resources available in that region.

Woodland Owners Associations:

Laurel Highlands Forest Landowners Association (Fayette and Somerset Counties), c/o Bob Bastian, 347 Blackburn Road, Friedens, PA 15541, Email: bbastian@shol.com

Southwestern PA Woodland Owners' Association (Washington and Greene Counties), 2506 Hollywood Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15235, <http://www.cs.pitt.edu/~daley/swpwo/>

Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association, 218 Donohoe Road, Greensburg, PA 15601, <http://www.wcdpa.com>
Woodland Owners of the Clarion-Allegheny Valley (Armstrong, Butler, Clarion, Forest, Jefferson, and Venango Counties), PO Box 194, Corsica, PA 15829, Email: thewocav@yahoo.com, <http://www.thewocav.org>

Service Foresters:

Allegheny, Washington, Westmoreland Counties: **Mike DiRinaldo**, mdirinaldo@pa.gov, 724-238-1200.

Armstrong County: **Gary Gilmore**, ggilmore@pa.gov, 814-849-7463.

Beaver and Butler Counties: **John Brundege**, jbrundege@pa.gov, 814-226-1901.

Fayette, Greene, and Somerset Counties: **Russell Gibbs**, rugibbs@pa.gov, 724-437-7983.

Indiana County: **Michael Nelson**, micnelson@pa.gov, 814-472-1862.

PGC Wildlife Diversity Biologist:

Tammy Colt, tcolt@pa.gov, 724-238-4064.

Penn State Cooperative Extension:

Jonahatan Laughner (Allegheny), Extension District Director, jbl14@psu.edu, 412-473-2540.

Gary Sheppard (Armstrong, Indiana, Westmoreland), Extension District Director, gls4@psu.edu, 724-837-1402.

Janice Hassen (Beaver, Butler), Extension District Director, jma2@psu.edu, 724-654-8370.

Carolyn Wissenbach (Fayette, Greene, Washington), Extension District Director, cxw32@psu.edu, 724-627-3745.

Janice Stoudnour (Somerset), Extension District Director, jes102@psu.edu, 814-445-8911.

Windfall Times Two

By Louise Sprowls '09

Our Forest Plan for our 60 acres of woods was written with the intent of providing better wildlife habitat, and that included planting evergreens to increase available shelter and diversify food sources. But in a 60-year old deciduous forest, how do you provide enough light for evergreen seedlings?

Several years ago we experienced a strong windstorm, possibly even a microburst. Some larger trees with their grape vines fell in a tangle and we had to reroute our foot trails around them. Blackberry vines sprouted and made the area even more impervious. We knew this would provide shelter and food sources for a while, then the area would grow up again in the same deciduous trees that surround it. Now was our chance to make a change.

Jim's biggest tool purchase was a twenty-horse power tractor, and he will spend all day on it if he has a project. Several days of work transformed the windfall area from a brier tangle and vines to an open area that receives some sun. The slope doesn't face south, so the hours



of sun are limited, but it would be enough. White pine seedlings now populate the cleared area, surrounded by grass to prevent erosion and individual fences to ward off deer.

In another area, a bit more light reaches the forest floor where an occasional tree has fallen or been broken off in an ice storm. Each bright area now sports a small evergreen. Several springs nearby will provide year-round water sources for wildlife, and, as the evergreens grow, they will provide thick shelter from the elements and a new source of food seeds.

We enjoy walking in our forest and checking on the new evergreens. There isn't much change day to day, of course, but with each growing season they will reach higher. Soon more wildlife will recognize this windfall as an opportunity to set up housekeeping, and the forest plan can be declared a success.

Implementing a Small Landowner's "Forest Stewardship Plan"

By Gary & Page Wetterberg (Rockwood/Trent) '05

We became PA Forest Stewards (PAFS) in 2005. One our first activities was to participate in a PAFS group reviewing draft copies of the 2006 (Kays, Finley et al.) manual "The Woods in Your Backyard: Learning to Create and Enhance Natural Areas Around Your Home." This piqued our initial personal interest in a Forest Stewardship Plan.

Our own small forest "patch" is less than 5 acres, located adjacent to "Laurel Hill Creek," a PA-designated "High Quality Cold Water Fishery" trout stream. It is surrounded by lands heavily logged most recently in the early 90s. As part of the 67% of PA forest landowners with less than 10 acres, we readily recognized opportunities for commercial forestry were severely limited in our small stand of "pole timber." Already cut in the late 1800s, it now has passed through succession stages of "Herbaceous Opening," "Scrub/Seedling Brush" and is in the "Sapling/Pole" Stage. Our overall goal is to encourage our natural vegetation (about 75% of the property) to evolve towards the "Mature Forest Stage," with a reasonable mix of wildlife species.

Also, we were too small for any finan-

cial support for planning and implementing activities, or even acknowledgement by the Bureau of Forestry (BOF), that our 2009 Forest Stewardship Plan existed. But we wanted to become personally familiar with the 2006 manual's techniques to be able to knowledgeably discuss it with others, and as opportunities arose, to share Pennsylvania forestry history and our own appreciation for the woods.

Our 2009 Plan Objectives were to use the learning experience and related techniques to:

(1) guide development of our small property, including realistic forest stewardship activities commensurate with its size, and

(2) record property-related information of personally relevant interest, acquired through our 20+ ownership years, which also may be of interest to our six children, neighbors, or others who may someday own the land.

We gave added emphasis to discussions on "Regional Context" and "Water Resources," both of relevant personal interest, in meeting the above objectives. And, while preparing our Plan, we had the good fortune of courtesy property visits by three BOF Service Foresters (or "Actings:" Tom Fitzgerald, Doug Langford, and Michael DiRinaldo) with whom we walked the property and exchanged implementation ideas.

They characterized our property as having a "well stocked mixed Oak-Hickory polewood stand with pioneer species (Black Cherry, Sweet Birch, Tulip Poplar and Aspen) sprinkled within." Oak-Hickory forest communities are the most abundant types in PA. The Service Foresters also found the health of the natural vegetation "generally good although some of the Black Cherry exhibit 'Black Knot,' and several of the Scarlet Oaks have buttswells which likely harbor Chestnut Blight." They found no evidence of Wolly Adelgid in Eastern Hemlock planted along the driveway.

An initial draft was reviewed by Mike Wolf of Appalachian Forest Consultants, who made excellent suggestions as well as a courtesy visit to walk our area. While no BOF "Grand Poobah" could give an "imprimatur" for our Plan, we felt comfortable it had been adequately vetted and met our own personal objectives. We also felt we could knowledgeably, as PAFS, help guide others through the process.

Our first step was to have our prop-

erty boundaries surveyed. The plats for its four lots were originally at different scales and with different map orientations. The survey provided an accurate single map, which we transferred to Google Earth using our handheld GPS, for further elaboration and refinements of our Plan. The surveyed land area was crossed by the 100-year floodplain of the adjacent trout stream.

Our second growth mixed hardwood forest naturally lent itself to three Management Units with their own distinguishing features, primarily determined through the online USDA NRCS "National Cooperative Web Soil Survey:"

- "Structures and Roads" (with heavily altered areas, cottage, outbuildings, lawn, etc. all in the floodplain and the USDA soil survey classification of hydric "Chavies Silt Loam" on 0-3% slopes below 1890' above sea level (ASL)).
- "Floodplain Forestland" (also hydric "Chavies Silt Loam," previously logged but with regrowth, also <1890' ASL).
- "Upper Forestland" (classified as non-hydric "Rayne-Gilpin Chanery Silt Loams" on 25-65% slopes, >1890' ASL, more than half of our land area).

Each Management Unit was described in terms of its specific goals, location, vegetation, and anticipated projects. The implementation projects were generated from other sections of our Stewardship Plan entitled "Land Management Constraints and Potential" and "Personal Interests in the Land," together with the USDA Soil Survey Classification.

So what types of activities can small landowners carry out to implement their "Forest Stewardship Plan"? . . . More than one might expect. In all cases we followed up on advice of the BOF Service Foresters and Consultant Forester. Plan activities below are ones which we have implemented or otherwise have underway:

Structures and Roads Management Unit

- Maintain riparian buffer along immediate stream bank.
- Stabilize existing deck over stream.
- Enhance visible presence of wildlife, mainly birds, with feeder designed to discourage bears, squirrels and raccoons.
- Initiate National Science Foundation citizen-scientist "Project Budburst"

web-based phenology observation records on trees and plants.

- Remove alternate boundary spruce trees, closely planted in the early 60s by original owner about 1 ½ -2 feet apart along most property lines and directly under power/phone lines.
- Plant arborvitae and construct fence along southern boundary to maintain visual privacy.
- Plant decorative trees/bushes for color and fruit (Lilac, Redbud, etc.).
- Plant flower and vegetable gardens, protected from squirrels, moles, etc.
- Mow tight and trim around structures (to better spot and coexist with numerous water snakes).
- Mark all property lines with small aluminum boundary signs on both sides of trees, using aluminum nails to avoid any possible future damage to saws.
- Construct connector trail to other Management Units on property, including foot bridges across lesser streams, and installation of sitting bench on island they form.
- Maintain an ongoing Natural History Log, noting wildlife sightings, flowering of trees and plants, heavy snowfalls, creek flooding, hurricanes (Ivan, Sandy) etc.

Floodplain Forest Management Unit

- Significantly reduce mowing along adjacent entrance road by establishing a “soft edge” for small wildlife and birds.
- Establish wildlife cover brush and rock piles.
- Prune non-productive and overgrown legacy apple tree to increase flowering.
- Remove invasive species (honeysuckle) along roadway.
- Control ferns by spraying to encourage natural regeneration.
- Occasionally remove firewood as opportunities arise through windfall.
- Enrichment planting of about a dozen American Sycamore (including American Forests’ Historic American “Moon Sycamore” tree from seeds taken on Apollo 14 to moon and later germinated on earth), and planting Red Osier Dogwood & Silky Dogwood along seep runs and intermittent streams to enhance bird habitat and visible winter stem color.
- Safeguard special or unusual species

on unit such as Winterberry Holly with red winter fruits.

- Plant evergreens along two seep runs across unit to provide winter bird cover in deciduous forest.
- Construct walking trail through Management Unit, connecting with others on property.

Upper Forestland Management Unit

- Install and maintain “No Trespassing” signs along far boundaries of property.
- Assure two primary seeps within unit are maintained undisturbed. Plant evergreens near water sources to provide winter cover for birds.
- Join The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) and establish small stand (10 trees, spaced 20 feet apart) of American chestnut trees obtained through TACF, to illustrate the chestnut story and maybe produce nuts during our lifetime. Replace with blight-resistant seedlings when available at a reasonable price for private landowners, to compliment already existing chestnut stump sprouts identified on property (and confirmed by TACF’s Sara Fitzsimons at Penn State).
- Control ferns to allow regeneration.
- Remove firewood occasionally.
- Construct walking trail through Management Unit, connecting with others on property.
- Install bench along trail near property high point, overlooking chestnut plantation.

All Management Units

- Continue existing voluntary association with groups and activities that promote forest stewardship (especially in Advisory Board and Steering Committee roles) including:

PA Forest Stewardship Program (PAFS)

Laurel Highlands Forest Landowners Association

Somerset County Planning Commission Board

Somerset County Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP Advisory Council)

Forestry for the Bay

Laurel Hill Creek “Critical Area Resource Plan” Advisory Committee

Somerset County Conservancy

Casselman River Watershed Association

To date we have been moderately successful in implementing most of the tasks anticipated in our Forest Stewardship Plan’s “Project Schedule” during the past 3 years. We have shared the Plan with our children, neighbors, and anyone else interested. Our “Project Record” shows our biggest expenses so far were for our professional tree removal along property lines and under power/phone lines (\$2300), and for the official land survey (\$2500). Our original plantings of redbud, sycamores and chestnut have had a tough time with drought and blight, and have had to be redone. Most of the remaining items have been completed or continue underway. We welcome hunters and fishermen. And our walking trails bring happiness nearly every day as we enjoy the change of seasons, observe the natural “pole timber” forest as it evolves, and check our seedlings/saplings in their tree tubes. And, the occasionally sighted ruffed grouse, deer, bear, golden and bald eagles, Allegheny wood rat, osprey, mink, wild turkey, and others that come through our front yard, keep us always vigilant.

New Publication Available for Woodland Owners!

Penn State Extension has released a new publication entitled *Forestry with Confidence: A Guide for Woodland Owners*. This is a 12-page, full color publication designed to assist woodland owners in examining their woodlands and answering numerous questions, including the following: Am I getting all the benefits my woods can provide? Are my woods as healthy and valuable as I would like them to be? Am I taking advantage of the assistance available to me? It includes sections on forest management, management plans, timber harvesting, best management practices, and how to get started.

With proper stewardship, woodlands can provide the kinds of things owners want, including more wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities, increased timber income, and additional recreational opportunities. This publication provides accessible information about forest management, timber harvesting, and what woodland owners can do to obtain added benefits from their property.

Portions of this booklet were originally published under the auspices of the Pennsylvania Sustainable Forestry Initiative. The current publication was prepared by David Jackson, forest resources educator, James Finley, professor of forest resources, and Allyson Muth, forest stewardship program associate.

This publication is available on the web at: <http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/FreePubs/PDFs/ee0048.pdf>

To order printed copies please go to: <http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/PubTitle.asp?varTitle=Forestry+with+Confidence>

Or contact the Renewable Natural Resources Extension Office at:

Phone: 814-863-0401

E-mail: mrnext@psu.edu

Regional Foci for PA Forest Stewards News – South Central Region, You're Up!

Just a gentle reminder for those of you in the South Central region of Pennsylvania... Your region is responsible for an article in the March/April issue of the PA Forest Stewards News. Mike and Laura Jackson (mljackson2@embarqmail.com), Don McCann (mccann.mccabin@verizon.net), or Charles and Grace Snyder (witch-snyder@aol.com) are taking the lead in compiling the region's piece(s). Please contact them if you have items of interest to share.

And heads-up to the Southeastern region! You're on tap for the May/June newsletter. Please contact Fred Peabody (Fredp5@earthlink.net), Carl Martin (cmartin@wildlandspa.org), or George and Patricia Kaufman (gapdkaufman@verizon.net) with your items for that future newsletter.

We're looking forward to hearing from you all!

Dates for Your Calendar

May 10-11– 2013 Private Forest Landowners Conference: the Future of Penn's Woods, Blair County Convention Center, Altoona.

Please note: The PA Forest Stewards Annual Meeting will be held in conjunction with the May 10-11 Conference. While we won't be gathering in July, we hope to see you in Altoona in May!

September 13-15 and October 4-6 – PA Forest Stewards Basic Training, Camp Krislund, Madisonburg, PA (Centre County).

October 4 – Forest Vegetation Management In-service Training, Camp Krislund, Madisonburg, PA (Centre County).

Contact Penn State Natural Resources Extension

Renewable Natural Resources Extension
Dept. of Ecosystem Science & Mgmt
416 Forest Resources Building
University Park, PA 16802

(814) 863-0401

(800) 235-9473

Jim Finley: fj4@psu.edu

Allyson Muth: abm173@psu.edu

<http://extension.psu.edu/paforeststewards>

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Pennsylvania Forest Stewards
416 Forest Resources Building
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802