



Working at the Intersection of People and Forests



- THE CENTER FOR -
PRIVATE FORESTS

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



PennState
College of Agricultural Sciences

A Year of Adapting to New Challenges

In January 2020, we set the course for the coming year and beyond—research projects, volunteer trainings, meetings, and planning for our biennial conference. Little did we know how much our world would change just weeks later.

Like so many, we learned to turn on a dime, to adapt in challenging times, and to find something deeper in each of us as we diligently worked to expand our impact at that intersection of people and forests. We have seen our staff, our partners, and those we serve embrace new ways of working together and coming alongside landowners to help them care well for their woods. Now more than ever, ensuring the health and vitality of our forests is crucial, and it is our mission to be a leader in research and to engage the public, landowners, and natural resources professionals as a community to care for forest ecosystems.

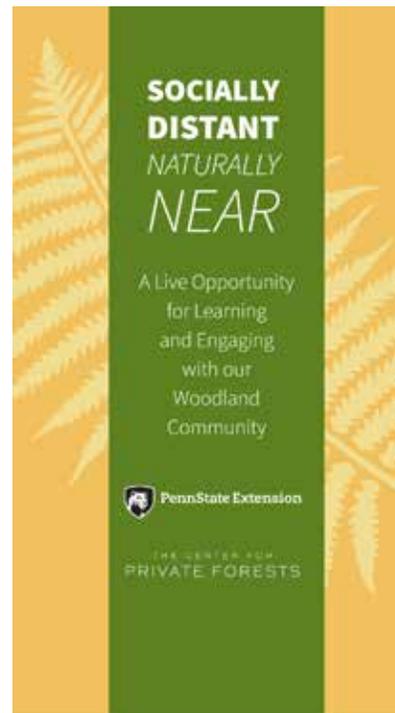
In the face of a worldwide pandemic, we found creative ways to adapt and move forward in our mission, to open new doors, and to continue to motivate forest landowners to apply sound stewardship practices on their land. Here are some highlights of those creative ways:

Socially Distant, Naturally Near Reaches Thousands

This ambitious **social media outreach partnership**, launched at the end of March, covered “everything forest” and was seen by over 68,000 people. With in-person events shut down indefinitely, Center staff teamed with Penn State Extension to keep landowners and stakeholders informed and connected online. [Read more on page 18.](#)

Staying Connected through Facebook Live

As part of the Socially Distant, Naturally Near effort, the Center and Penn State Extension partnered to host 21 **Facebook Live** events from April through June, with topics ranging from wildflowers, legacy planning, and invasive plants to firewood, forest ecology, and finding a job in the industry. [Read more on page 18.](#)



This 14-week social media outreach featured live events and short videos viewed by nearly 23,000 people.

Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Training Goes Virtual

For the first time in its 30-year history, the **Pennsylvania Forest Stewards** volunteer training shifted from multi-day, on-site, hands-on learning to a robust virtual experience via Zoom and Google Classroom. Center staff pulled together a comprehensive six-session course for 23 trainees in just three months. [Read more on pages 12 and 13.](#)

Women and Their Woods Retreat Moves Online

This year's **Women and Their Woods** educational retreat went virtual via Zoom and the Highlights Foundation's online classroom platform, Thinkific. Center staff helped to create instructional videos, teach, and facilitate discussions during this six-session workshop for women landowners, coordinated by the Delaware Highlands Conservancy.

[Read more on page 15.](#)

Walk in Penn's Woods: Adventures all Month Long

With a goal of getting thousands of Pennsylvanians out into the woods and enjoying them safely, the Center and the Walk in Penn's Woods partnership made the entire month of October a **Walk in Penn's Woods** this year. We showcased hiking trails across the state, virtual tours of unique forests, and links to State Parks and partners providing safe, organized woodland adventures. [Read more on page 19.](#)

Center staff took to the woods (and their computers) to create top-notch teaching videos for the 2020 Pennsylvania Forest Stewards training.

Forest Landowners Conference Shifts to 2022

In June, with the pandemic deepening, Center staff made the difficult decision to push the **5th Biennial Forest Landowners Conference** from 2021 to 2022. We look forward to providing powerful learning opportunities and valuable resources—safely and in person—for hundreds of forest landowners April 8-9, 2022.

Research Continues Full Speed Ahead

The enormous effort and dedication by Center staff—and the strong support of the Center's Council, our volunteers, and our partners during a very challenging year—ensured that **we faithfully continued research** that is focused on forest landowners, their land, and the professionals who serve them—research that is essential in developing the knowledge to motivate change. [Read more on pages 4-11.](#)



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From the Director



Dear friends,

2020 was a strange year in so many ways and for so many. We hope you weathered all that the year brought in health and safety, and we send our best wishes to those negatively impacted by the pandemic and accompanying societal changes. We are thankful for everyone who continued to support the Center for Private Forests at Penn State's work.

Despite the challenges of a global pandemic, the Center finds itself in a position of having accomplished what we'd hoped for the year. As everyone did, taking meetings and research into the virtual world, working in our guestrooms, home offices, and on couches, we continued to make strides improving the health and vitality of forests, engaging the larger forestry community, and cultivating a model for applied excellence to sustain forests in Pennsylvania, the region, and beyond.

In the latter half of 2020, as the Center undertook a strategic planning exercise, we focused on articulating the Center's values and how it engages with stakeholders, partners, and landowners to positively affect the care and management of private forestlands through applied research and engagement. These values model the space in which we work and are the foundation for what we do: ↪

To act within these values, the Center conducts applied research focused on forest landowners and their land and the people who guide and advise them, which is essential for developing the knowledge to motivate change. In the near term, a major applied research undertaking in 2021 is the second iteration of the Pennsylvania Forest Landowners Survey, first done by the Center in 2010. Our work occurs, at small and large scales, as a powerful force to improve forest health and vitality by working with professionals and landowners who share a commitment to come together for the stewardship of Pennsylvania's forests. One example of this community is the start of the Caring Well initiative. And we continue to focus on peer-to-peer education, combining individual, practical experience with the knowledge of best practices as an important tool for inspiring change. 2020 marked the 30th year of the Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program and the 30th training of the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards volunteers.

Looking forward, we plan to continue to serve as a convener, a catalyst, and a collaborator in an engaged community of landowners and professionals across Pennsylvania who are wholeheartedly committed to healthy, functioning woodlands, and who act out of their love of the woods to assure diverse benefits for generations to come.

We're pleased to share with you our accomplishments report for 2020. We hope you enjoy reading about the work we've done and are doing. We thank you for your support and the importance you place on the work at the intersection of people and forests.

Stewardship is best accomplished by working at the intersection of people and forests.	Forest landowners contribute significantly to forest health, resilience, and vitality, and we have an obligation to conserve forests and their values for future generations.	Working forests can sustainably provide renewable forest products and a broad range of economic, environmental, health, and social values.	Sustainably managed forests can deliver benefits both to the people who care for them and to the ecosystem as a whole.	Forest stewardship begins with landowner values, emerging through dialogue and collaboration among landowners, natural resources professionals, and communities.
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Allyson Muth'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Allyson Muth
Director

Enrolled Foresters Project

Research uncovers concerns in Pennsylvania's forestry profession

Unlike in many other states, forestry in Pennsylvania is an unregulated profession where anyone—trained or not—can call themselves a forester. Yet consulting foresters play a critical role in the sustainability of millions of acres of privately-owned forests. Over the past three years, Center staff partnered with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Forestry to devise a path for elevating the profession of forestry in the state.

Work began in earnest in the fall of 2017, with the goal of building strong relationships between foresters and forest landowners, inspiring active stewardship, and assuring landowners that sustainability is foremost in activities prescribed. An advisory group of consulting foresters was created, landowner focus groups began meeting, and Center and Bureau of Forestry staff worked together to survey both forest landowners and consulting foresters. This research focused on discovering the disconnects between forest landowners and the foresters serving them and on determining the feasibility of establishing a volunteer program that holds foresters to a high standard.

As discussions continued over the next two years of the project, and as more research was conducted and survey data processed, it became apparent to the advisory group that establishing a voluntary “certification” program for foresters was simply not a feasible solution; the challenges were broader than that.

Going into 2020, we shifted our efforts in the face of what our research and advisory group were telling us, convening an expert panel to incorporate greater support across the professional community. As panel discussions unfolded, it became apparent that the findings and the concerns of this project—and of landowners—are symptomatic of

greater concerns within the forestry profession—how to ensure good forestry practices are occurring. As a result, we began to mobilize a larger effort, outside the Enrolled Foresters project, to serve as a catalyst to promote forestry as “caring well for the woods,” with long-term goals and relationships, and not just focused on single-entry management. Read more about the Caring Well initiative on pages 5 and 6.



Timber harvests are one of the top land-related activities Pennsylvania's private forest landowners undertake. However, many do not enlist the help of a forestry professional. Reasons range from distrust of the professional community or not knowing foresters exist to believing they can negotiate a sale themselves or that a forester's benefit isn't worth the cost. These perceptions can lead to an unsustainable harvest that can impair the health and resiliency of the forest for generations and cause pain and regret for the landowner. We are working to elevate the forestry profession, build better relationships between foresters and landowners, and advance the health and vitality of forests.

This work is funded by the US Endowments for Forestry and Community.



Caring Well for Pennsylvania's Privately-owned Forests

A forward-thinking forestry initiative emerging from the Enrolled Foresters project

Findings during the Enrolled Foresters project compelled Center staff and our partners to expand that work into a new, multi-pronged initiative to promote forestry as “caring well for the woods.” In early 2020, a Center-led effort brought together a working group of partners from across the forestry community to begin conversation around the perceived changes needed to implement a broader range of landowner-supported practices aligning with evolving landowner values and interests in ecosystem management. According to a 2018 survey, Pennsylvania’s consulting foresters spend an average of 40 percent of their time on timber sales. All indicators from research and discussions point to a need to expand the foresters’ toolkit to include practices that will broadly sustain, support, and restore forest ecosystems as well as the traditional forest industry.

Results of the Caring Well initiative will inform a larger vision to adapt and expand the practice of ecosystem management on private forestlands. Our goal in re-framing and marketing the real role of the forestry profession will require multi-phased efforts to inform the restructuring of curricula at academic institutions to more broadly represent opportunities within the profession, to focus landowners more on the residual forest—what’s left behind—as opposed to removals, to foster long-term relationships between landowners and professionals, and to build support for younger generations to enter the profession

Researchers are working with consulting foresters and stakeholders from across the forestry community to address concerns and elevate the forestry profession.

This work is partially funded by a Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences Strategic Networks and Initiatives Program (SNIP) Level I Launch Grant.

and help make available the wide range of services demanded by landowners to care well for their woods.

We anticipate the work will make the case for expanding professional development opportunities, establishing apprenticeship and mentorship programs, and expanding curricular offerings at academic institutions to support the increasing demand for services promoting good forest health and long-term forest functionality. In other words, this work provides the profession itself with a newly-defined pathway for evolution and growth in a time when changing conditions may limit its ability to address broader ecosystem challenges. Additionally, as supported by direct stakeholder input, these impacts define the need for a larger, more cohesive vision for “Caring Well for Penn’s Woods.” This vision could then harness and mobilize the energy of government agencies, private industry, educators, landowners, and the public toward a focus on education, cost-share, and marketing programs to deepen engagement with and subsequent care for our forests.



Master's Student's Research Provides Important Insight for Caring Well Initiative

By Abby Jamison, MS Student,
*Forest Resources and Human Dimensions of
Natural Resources and the Environment*

Over the past year, I have had the pleasure and honor to conduct research that sought to understand the nature and impact of the interactions between forest landowners and a few of their advisors—the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards peer volunteers and the consulting foresters who guide them. Particularly, we were interested in how landowners experienced these peer and professional interactions and what about them led to the creation of relationships as well as new understandings that became action in their woodlands.

Through this work, I sat down socially distanced via Zoom or the phone with over 30 private forest landowners to hear their stories. In these conversations, we chatted about their experience with their advisor, their values for their land, and how they have moved forward since their interaction.

From this, we have learned some really cool things about the importance of personal connections to the care of our forests. In fact, the forest landowners I spoke with highly valued the creation or fostering of a trusting, respectful, and reciprocal relationship with peer volunteers and foresters. Whether friends or business partners, having someone to turn to—someone who has their back and understands their character and concerns—matters! Landowners also talked about how

much they appreciated and enjoyed learning from their advisor, from hearing a peer's stories to actively participating in management with their forester.

Regarding peer volunteers, many landowners said things like “I think the fact that there are people like [that], who are forest stewards... and willing to talk to other people is invaluable.” And referring to their forester, many landowners shared that “...when you work with someone over a period of time, you develop a relationship... You see them on a regular basis, monthly or every couple of months...you get to do these projects and you work hand in hand.” This all speaks to the immense value of having a positive interaction that can establish the relationships which carry good stewardship forward.

Beyond these things, this research has given us incredibly useful information about how landowners actually perceive and understand forestry and the people who actively work to manage forests. In 2021, this research will be presented as a part of a graduate master's thesis and will also be shared for publication—stay tuned to read fully about this work, its outcomes, its implications, and the impact these two important groups of advisors have on our forests and those who care for them!

Abby has been with the Center since spring of 2019. Her in-depth interviews with Pennsylvania forest landowners provide key insight into the factors that influence landowner-forester relationships.

Preliminary Results: Landowners with Consulting Foresters

Five themes important to forest landowners in their interactions with consulting foresters emerged from Abby's research:

Behavior—Is my forester responsive, clear, and respectful of my experiences and values?

Meeting Expectations—Are my forester's expectations aligned with mine?

Value of Multiple Roles—Is my forester fulfilling the roles of expert, educator, advocate, and partner?

Value of a Relationship—Are our philosophies compatible?

Trust—Am I confident in my forester's guidance and knowledge?



Forest Legacy Planning Conservation-based Estate Planning

Equipping the professionals who guide landowners as they plan for the future of their forests

As baby boomers enter their mid-50s to mid-70s, significant acreages of forestland will be changing ownership over the next 10 to 20 years as they divest or pass assets on to their heirs or beneficiaries. With this anticipated surge in transfer of ownership, timely legal, financial, and conservation tools must be made more accessible and available to forest landowners as they plan the future of their land.

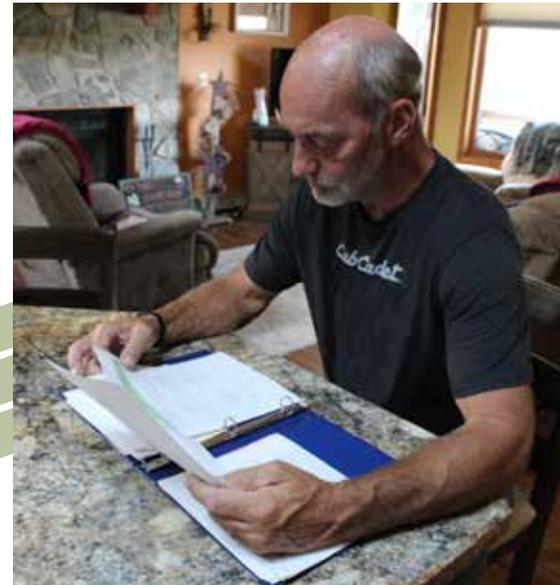
The primary goal of this project is to create networks of those experts who play significant roles in the conservation-based estate planning process to guide forest landowners to and through the process. These networks will be established through a series of workshops for financial and estate planning professionals, natural resources professionals, and forest landowners that increase awareness and implementation of evolving legal and financial tools needed for successful estate planning outcomes.

In 2020, we converted the originally planned face-to-face workshops to a virtual platform. This change necessitated a significant modification of workshop timing and duration. It also allowed us to consider how to more effectively present skill-building techniques and resources and to facilitate planning for incorporating conservation-based estate planning

into existing natural resources professionals' practices. Going virtual also allowed the expansion of target audiences to include conservation organization professionals—from land trusts and conservancies—and to reach more broadly across the state.

The curriculum for each target audience approached final review at the end of the year with the expectation of offering the first workshop through Zoom in the first quarter of 2021. We are also pursuing adaptation of a legacy planning publication created by colleagues in New England to better fit Pennsylvania's conservation-based estate planning communities.

Equipping planning professionals, consulting foresters, and landowners with the right legal and financial tools is vital to keep parcels of working forests intact during transfers of ownership.



This work is funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation through the Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program.

Conservation Easements

Developing a Model to Conserve Working Forests

Protecting working forests through the implementation of adaptive conservation easements

Conservation easements have been growing in popularity as a way for forest landowners to protect their land for future generations. A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency where the landowner contracts to sell or donate certain rights to the land—such as the rights to subdivide or develop—for generations to come. The intent is to give landowners the assurance that their land will remain as forest long after their tenure. Because these contracts are fixed in perpetuity, challenges arise between the terms of the easement and changing environmental conditions. For example, an easement written 30 years ago that forbids the use of herbicides would prevent a practice critical for managing invasives today. Developing conservation easement models that incorporate flexibility through adaptive forest management is crucial in the face of these changes.

In 2019, the Center for Private Forests received a USDA McIntire-Stennis grant to investigate the current level of engagement in adaptive forest management by PA conservation organizations on properties for which they hold conservation easements. In 2020, we benchmarked forestland protection organizations around the US to determine, for comparison, how they were engaging with forest management on properties held under easement. We also conducted a survey to determine PA conservation organizations' baseline understanding of, and their level of engagement with, adaptive forest management on woodlands under easement. The survey results are currently being analyzed for application. We anticipate creating resources and training to support

woodland conservation efforts, as well as to provide guidance for collecting baseline data on which to base forest management decisions. We also plan to develop messaging around the advantages of engaging forestry professionals, and an addendum to Pennsylvania's model conservation easement document that will provide the flexibility needed to consider forest management under changing ecological and social conditions. This project will finish in the fall of 2021.



A growing number of forest landowners are using conservation easements to protect the future of their land. However, implementing adaptive management practices is not always allowable under the terms of a contract that may have been written years earlier. New conservation easements have the ability to provide flexibility in management techniques while maintaining a healthy, resilient forest.

This work is supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and McIntire-Stennis Appropriations under Project No. PEN04722 and Accession No. 1020585.



Forest Landowners Survey

Providing important, accurate data about Pennsylvania's private forest landowners and their land

Understanding how Pennsylvania's forest landowners connect with their land, take action, utilize resources and help, and plan for their land's future is essential to developing the right knowledge and tools that both landowners and the professionals who serve them need to protect and improve forest health and vitality. With about 70 percent—nearly 12 million acres in 2010—of the state's forestland privately held, the actions of these landowners will contribute significantly—positively or negatively—to the overall health, resilience, and vitality of these forests.

During 2020, the Center partnered with the PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry to prepare a comprehensive survey that will be sent to 6,600 forest landowners throughout the Commonwealth in 2021. This study repeats the 2010 statewide forest landowners survey and features a new sampling methodology that will ensure an even greater level of confidence in the survey results. This survey will expand on past work with landowners and natural resources professionals, helping us better understand the actions landowners are taking—or not taking—in planning what happens on and to their land. It will give us perspective on how landowners and landownership have changed when compared with the 2010 survey results, and will help improve education, resources, and assistance to landowners, equipping them with more knowledge and tools for caring well for their woods. We look forward to sharing preliminary findings in our 2021 annual report.



This work is funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Understanding what actions forest landowners are taking and how they are implementing those actions is key to providing the right resources, guidance, and support to ensure a win-win for both landowners and the forests they care for.

A Graduate Student's Study: Landowner Perceptions of Forestland Management and Oversight

By Sasha Soto, PhD Candidate, Forest Resources

We believe landowners want to do the right thing by their land, leaving it better than when they acquired it by undertaking activities they believe will improve long-term forest health. However, they may not always know what the “right” management actions are, or they may not have the resources to undertake those actions. It's easy to assume the forest system is not as complex as it is or that all green is good. Landowners can end up “going it alone,” and some turn to the professional forestry community for help.

In Pennsylvania, there is sometimes pressure to focus on the trees removed and their economic values as opposed to the trees that remain and the stand that will be left to grow back into the next forest. Often, limited knowledge about how best to engage in managing the woods and who is available to help leaves landowners at risk for unsustainable actions, such as a high-grade timber harvest, to be taken on their land.

We want to investigate the question: if forest landowners have some level of sustainability assurance for the management practices they choose to implement, would they be willing to have some level of oversight of the practices occurring on their property? Using data from the Forest Landowners Survey, my study will seek to determine the tipping point between oversight and/or required practices and an assurance that landowners are making right decisions that ensure the sustainability and legacy of their land.

Oak Wilt Mitigation Study

Testing novel strategies through herbicide-mediated stand management techniques and practical disposal methods

Oak wilt is a serious and expanding threat to the health of the oaks of Pennsylvania. To date, the best available control strategy of this deadly fungus-caused disease requires the use of soil trenching equipment—which is difficult to find, works only on accessible sites, and is expensive to operate. This method involves setting up a buffer around the infected tree, digging a deep trench to break root connections to all trees within the buffer, and allowing all oaks within the buffer to die from infection in order to preserve oaks outside the buffer.

By working directly with partners from across the nation and the Pennsylvania DCNR, this one-year project, led by the Center and the Penn State Forestry and Wildlife Extension team, seeks to test a novel management approach that is currently being studied in the Midwest, where chemical intervention (using herbicide to kill the infected tree) replaces conventionally mechanical intervention in controlling oak wilt spread. This method can be much cheaper, uses widely available chemicals, and can be applied on more sites, including those inaccessible by machinery. The project will also determine the viability of oak wilt in stems and branches post-harvest to assess the risk of potential infection vector transport through root grafts to adjacent trees. Finally, the project will deliver a biosecurity protocol easily implemented by landowners and other stakeholders to reduce the spread of oak wilt through material transport.

This work is funded by a Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences Science-to-Practice grant.



By girdling and applying herbicide to kill infected oak trees, the cost to control oak wilt can be significantly reduced and the spread to surrounding oaks can potentially be curbed.



Stages of leaf death: without control, affected trees can spread the fungus through their root connections to nearby trees.



Forest Stewardship Mapping Project

Creating an online mapping tool for landowners to track stewardship activities

The Center for Private Forests reinvigorated work with the Penn State Center for Environmental Informatics to develop an online spatial tracking app where landowners can create a personal historic record of actions they take on their land. This browser-based web mapping tool will allow landowners to locate and designate stewardship activities as point or polygon features. They will be able to record where stewardship activities occur, acreage impacted, activity type, costs and cost-sharing, and other notes as desired. As well, for our Pennsylvania Forest Stewards, the mapping tool can be used to track when, where, and how they spread the message of good forest stewardship, further demonstrating the impacts of these peer volunteers. Center and PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry staff will be able to access and aggregate this data to show the on-the-ground impacts of forest stewardship activities and the effects of peer volunteers in promoting good stewardship across the state. Targeted for rollout in the fall of 2021, Pennsylvania Forest Stewards will be the first to pilot the mapping app, with wider use among landowners to follow.

This work is funded by the USDA US Forest Service Year 29 Forest Stewardship Grant.



Using the browser-based web mapping tool being developed by the Penn State Center for Environmental Informatics, Pennsylvania Forest Stewards will soon be able to track stewardship activities on their land, such as this timber harvest to create Golden-winged Warbler habitat.

Center Expands Support to Graduate Students

The Center for Private Forests continues to expand its support of graduate students in the College of Agricultural Sciences. In addition to our two graduate students on the Center staff, Director Allyson Muth served on the advisory committees for these students in 2020:

John Clune, PhD, expected graduation May 2021. *Towards the Development of Nutrient Criteria for Streams of Pennsylvania.* Beth Boyer, Advisor.

Alex Curtze, MS, expected graduation August 2021. *Seeing Past the Green: Quantifying the Characteristics of High-graded Forests.* Laura Leites, Advisor.

Andrea Ferich, MS, expected graduation May 2021. *Landowner Attitudes and Behaviors Toward Riparian Forest Buffers in the Upper Penns Creek Watershed.* Beth Boyer, Advisor.

Teala Ficks, MS, Agronomy, expected graduation 2021. *The Effects of Cover Crop Mulch on Weed Population Dynamics and Community Shifts.* John Wallace, Advisor.

Kalaia Tripeaux, MS, completed May 2020. *Assessing Pennsylvania County Planning Commissioners' Knowledge of and Attitudes Towards Forests and Woodlands Conservation.* Bill Elmendorf, Advisor.

Future Steps and Resources

What are the next steps in caring well for high-graded forests?



Master's student Alex Curtze examined the common characteristics of forests that have been high-graded and strategies to improve their quality in his Pennsylvania Forests Webinar Series presentation.

Pennsylvania Forest Stewards

In its rich 30-year history, the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Volunteer Program has produced 750 peer volunteer leaders

When a group of 22 forest landowners came together in 1991, eager to learn about good forest stewardship and take what they learned to others, the foundation was laid for a network of trained volunteers who could reach Pennsylvania's private forest landowners and influence them to better care for their woods. Today, 30 years later, 750 people have completed training through the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Volunteer Program. With more than 500 currently active across the state, these volunteers are the "boots on the ground," sharing their knowledge and experience with fellow forest landowners—people "like me"—and serving in stewardship-related roles in their communities.

Through their varied talents and many connections, these trained peer leaders are involved in a variety of capacities. Alice Moyer and Eugene Metcalf serve in their woodland owners associations; Mike and Laura Jackson hold workshops and write wildlife articles; Matthew Veltri conducts forest management, timber, and lumber workshops; Anne Alexander and Jay Baum reach out to their neighbors; and Steve Zuk has traveled to Washington, DC for congressional meetings on conservation. These are just a few of the many ways Stewards are working to improve the health and vitality of Pennsylvania's forests. And even during the challenges of 2020, volunteers found ways through technology and using outdoor spaces to serve as a conduit for the message of good stewardship, safely and socially distanced.

Class of 2020 Goes Virtual

When COVID-19 brought a halt to in-person events and programs for the rest of the year, Center staff had to decide whether to cancel 2020's Pennsylvania Forest Stewards volunteer training—typically an intense multi-day in-person program—or shift to an online format. In three

This work is funded by USDA US Forest Service Forest Stewardship grants and is a cooperative effort of the Center for Private Forests, Penn State Extension, the USDA Forest Service, the Pennsylvania DCNR Bureau of Forestry, representatives of the forest products industry, and various environmental and conservation organizations that support the Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program.

months, we put together a detailed course plan, lined up presenters, created educational videos, set up Zoom and Google Classroom, sent out boxes of materials to our trainees, and worked out the kinks that came with going virtual. The result was a comprehensive 25-video, six-session virtual course covering a wide range of topics including forest ecology, silviculture, creating a management plan, forest legacy planning, invasive plants, wildlife, assessing timber harvest sustainability, and more. Starting in mid-September, participants gathered via Zoom to discuss the previous weeks' video presentations and assignments.

In all, 23 new volunteers joined the ranks of Pennsylvania Forest Stewards, five of them "second generation" volunteers. We are grateful to Penn State Extension educators, the PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry, and Delaware Highlands Conservancy who—through presentation videos and engaging classroom discussions—helped make this year's training a success.



Members of the Class of 2020 met "screen-to-screen" for lively conversations, fruitful discussions, and helpful Q&A, with attendees joining from as far away as Massachusetts and The Netherlands.



Thoughts from a New Pennsylvania Forest Steward: My Three Key Basic Training Takeaways

By Brian Zeidner, Pennsylvania Forest Steward Volunteer, Class of 2020

I'm always looking for learning opportunities, especially enjoyable ones. Last summer, I was contacted by the Center for Private Forests about participating in the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Volunteer Program's basic training. As a small farm and forest owner, electric cooperative communicator, and community leader, I felt this learning opportunity could be beneficial. I applied to the program and was accepted. Let me share three key things I learned:

1. I should have a plan. Managing a forested property requires a pile of considerations. How do I want to use the property? What do I want the land to look like in 10, 20, or 50 years? What will happen to the forest when I am no longer able to have input? I can address all these desires and concerns if I formulate a plan, preferably a comprehensive written one.
2. A little help goes a long way. I was amazed by how robust forests are. They will naturally regenerate and grow new mature timber—even clear-cut woodlots. This has happened across Pennsylvania for the past two centuries. However, there are a lot of challenges for new seedlings. Competitive vegetation, invasive species (plants, insects, and diseases), poor timber harvesting decisions, and deer browsing have huge negative impacts on a fledgling forest. Helping my young trees overcome these

challenges requires a thoughtful plan and hard work.

3. There's a whole team of professionals willing to help me. During the course, I expected to hear from a forester or two, but I was unprepared for the diverse group of instructors who made this a top-quality learning experience. Educators, biologists, water specialists, ecologists, timber harvesters, soil specialists, and, of course, foresters contributed to the program. I was overwhelmed at the breadth of learning and how approachable each presenter was—and I was impressed by the dialogue and discussion that was facilitated and encouraged.

Roughly 70 percent of Pennsylvania's forests are privately-owned. A much smaller percentage of this land is well-managed. If you have a chance to participate in the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Program, please consider doing so. I am positive the experience will give you a better understanding of the resources that are entrusted to you, and you will be enriched by the learning opportunities.

Brian and his wife Pat own and operate a 42-acre beef farm in Bradford County. Brian also works as the Member Service Director for Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, serves as Chairman of the Bradford County Farmland Preservation Board, is Co-chair of the Northern Tier Industry and Education Consortium, and is a United States Air Force veteran.



Brian Zeidner and his son Zach take a break from management activities on their 42-acre Bradford County farm.

Getting Involved

As a newly-minted Pennsylvania Forest Steward, Brian's outreach plans include joining the Bradford-Sullivan Forest Landowners Association, using his property to host educational events, and helping family and neighbors make good forest management decisions. Here are some other ways Class of 2020 members plan to advance caring well for forests: contacting hunting camps to engage them in developing a forest stewardship plan, sharing with youth through scouting and schools, assisting their service forester, organizing woods walks, writing articles, sharing through work contacts, and creating awareness through one-on-one conversations.

Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Highlights: Three Stories of Volunteers Who Are Making a Difference

2020 Joseph T. Rothrock Conservationist of the Year

Presented by the Pennsylvania Forestry Association

Reneé Carey was named the 2020 Joseph T. Rothrock Conservationist of the Year for her work ethic, passion for conservation, and leadership in the conservation community. A Pennsylvania Forest Steward since 1997 and member of the Center for Private Forests Council, Reneé is in her 27th year with the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy where she is currently the executive director. She has also served the Pennsylvania Forestry Association in many capacities as a board member and volunteer, supporting forest, land, and water conservation. The plaque reads in part, “She is known for encouraging and guiding people to steward natural resources with the vision to nourish communities. Her passion for this work clearly emulates the values she shares with Dr. Rothrock’s concern for natural resource stewardship.”



Reneé Carey (right)

2020 Pennsylvania Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year

Presented by the Pennsylvania Tree Farm Committee

Rebecca Trigger and her son Mark Foley earned the 2020 Pennsylvania Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year award for stewardship activities on Keystone Woodland and Field, their 140-acre tree farm with 100 acres of forested land that is mostly hardwoods in various stages of growth. Rebecca purchased the farm in 1994, but, as she says, the “educated” forest management did not start until 2014. Since then, they became Pennsylvania Forest Stewards (Rebecca in 2015 and Mark in 2018), joined their local woodland owners group, got certified in Game of Logging chainsaw safety, and, most importantly, looked for help. They recently collaborated with West Virginia University and the US Forest Service to nearly eliminate the invasive weed mile-a-minute from the property by using a biological control—a beetle so small it can be transported over the infestation and dropped by drone.



Rebecca Trigger and Mark Foley

Mr. Zuk Goes to Washington

Adapted from an article by Cecilia Michalik, correspondent, Reading Eagle

“We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” – Aldo Leopold

Steve Zuk, Pennsylvania Forest Steward (class of 2015) and forest landowner, is fighting to change this perspective. Steve was in Washington, DC in late February 2020 for congressional meetings on conservation. He spoke to legislators as a representative of the farmers and landowners who have benefited from the Migratory Bird Joint Venture Program. He emphasized the need to continue cost-sharing programs to offset the high costs of some stewardship activities. “My land was overgrazed and needed a protective fence to keep the deer out,” Steve said. “Through cost sharing, I was able to complete the project. I now qualify as an American Tree Farmer because of reforestation.”



Steve Zuk



Women and Their Woods

Expanding the network of women landowners and natural resources professionals

Twenty-two forest landowners and aspiring landowners from across the mid-Atlantic region came together for the 2020 Women and Their Woods Virtual Educational Retreat to learn more about managing their forestland and connect with other women landowners. Instead of the usual four-day, in-person format, Delaware Highlands Conservancy, the Center, and partners moved the biennial event to a 12-week online class with first-rate results.

Through a series of video presentations available to view at their own pace and six biweekly sessions of facilitated and discussion-based learning opportunities held via Zoom, participants explored a broad range of topics including tree ID, forest measurements, water, wildlife habitat, legacy planning, forest ecology, creating a management plan, silviculture, and invasive plant ID and control. Center staff and Pennsylvania Forest Steward volunteers continue to play an integral role in sharing good forest stewardship through this in-depth, fun, and engaging event.

Women and Their Woods is supported by Delaware Highlands Conservancy and its partners.

Videos, like this one on timber harvests, were packed with nuggets of information viewers may not have noticed in the field.



What is a flipped classroom approach?

Both the Women and Their Woods educational retreat and the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards volunteer training used a flipped classroom approach in 2020. Instead of coming together as a class for a lesson, participants watched assigned video presentations at their own pace and came together every two weeks for discussion and Q&A. This approach allowed participants to engage with each other and supported smaller breakout sessions where they could ask presenters questions related to the video presentations in a small group setting. By interacting with each other and with presenters in each class session, they were able to start building the relationships and sense of community that are vital to the continued success of these programs.



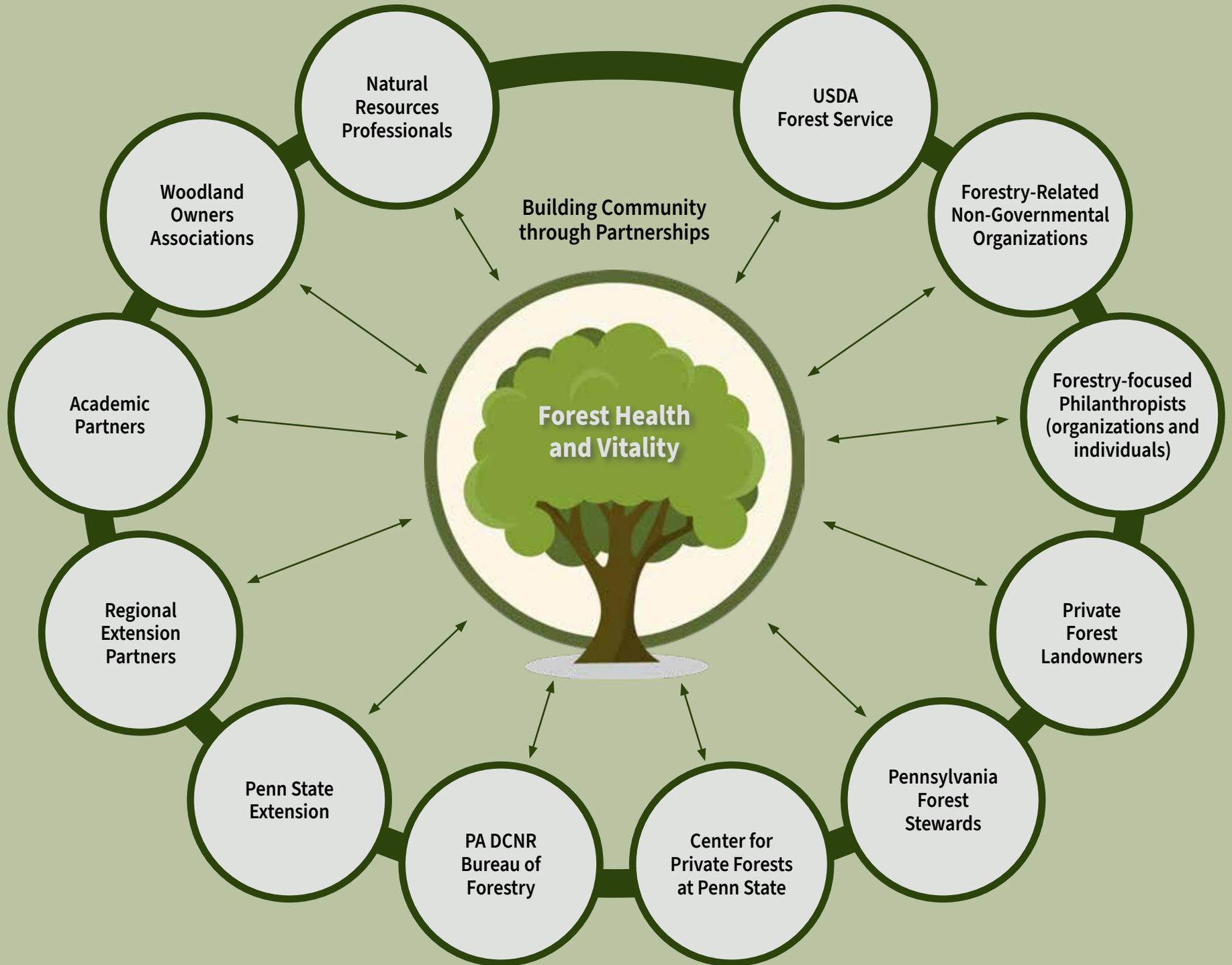
Participants embraced the flexibility of viewing video presentations at their own pace.

Partnering to Build an Engaged Forest Stewardship Community

Strong collaborative partnerships are critical to serving the mission of the Center and cultivating the community that serves the landowners and lands of our changing forests. As you can see on these pages, our work occurs in partnership with many groups and organizations as we work together to influence caring well for the woods. Together we are discovering and applying research-based methods for creative landowner engagement, sharing strategies and knowledge, producing educational resources, finding solutions, extending our reach and impact, raising awareness of the importance of good forest stewardship, and ultimately, working to move woodland owners to action. We are grateful to the myriad partners with whom we work. We continue to cultivate existing relationships and seek new partnerships to inspire good stewardship across our forests.

OUR WORK	OUR PARTNERS
Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program; Woodland Stewardship Innovation Team; Forest Landowners Survey; Enrolled Foresters Project; Walk in Penn’s Woods; Forest Stewardship Mapping; Forested Riparian Buffers, Governor’s Green Ribbon Task Force	Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry
Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program	USDA Forest Service
Enrolled Foresters Project	US Endowment for Forests and Communities
Women and Their Woods	Delaware Highlands Conservancy
Pennsylvania Implementation Committee; Walk in Penn’s Woods	Sustainable Forestry Initiative®
Socially Distant, Naturally Near Social Media Outreach; Oak Wilt Mitigation Project; Walk in Penn’s Woods; The Woods in Your Backyard; Pennsylvania Forests Web Seminar Center	Penn State Extension
Forest Stewardship Mapping	Penn State Center for Environmental Informatics
Caring Well for Pennsylvania’s Privately-owned Forests	Pennsylvania Forestry Community
“Caring Well” Strategic Networks and Initiatives Program (SNIP) Level I Launch Grant	Penn State Department of Ecosystem Science and Management
Building Capacity and Legacy Planning for Woodland Owners	University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Massachusetts
Walk in Penn’s Woods; <i>Pennsylvania Forests</i> Magazine; Pennsylvania Forestry Calendar	Pennsylvania Forestry Association
Walk in Penn’s Woods	Association of Consulting Foresters, Pennsylvania Chapter
Centre County Master Naturalists; Forestry Field Day	ClearWater Conservancy





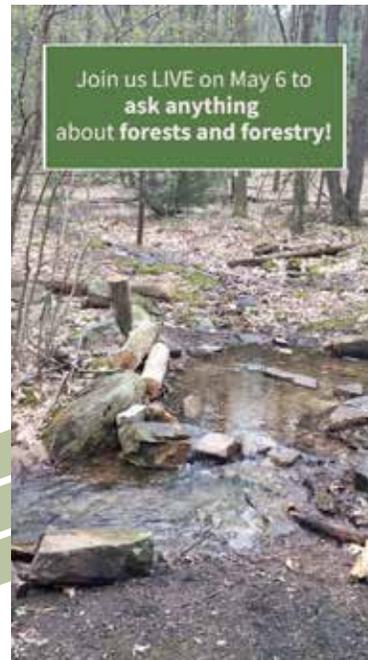
Socially Distant, Naturally Near

Partnering with Penn State Extension to create a new live, organic, and informal engagement space

When mid-March brought a swift end to in-person activities, Center staff knew we needed to quickly adapt to virtual options. Led by master's student Abby Jamison, we partnered with the Penn State Forestry and Wildlife Extension team to begin creating a series of Facebook Live events, short videos, and infographics. On March 29—less than two weeks after everything went remote—we launched a social media campaign to connect people with us during this time. Coined “Socially Distant, Naturally Near,” this energetic undertaking joined us virtually with landowners and the general public so our engagement could continue in the midst of the pandemic. During its 14-week run, the Socially Distant, Naturally Near project produced 76 Facebook posts that were seen by over 68,000 people.

At the heart of this collaborative effort were 21 Facebook Live sessions where Center staff and Forestry and Wildlife Extension educators shared with the public about forest-related activities and fundamentals of forestry and environmental sciences. Live topics ranged

from wildlife habitat, chronic wasting disease in deer, and timber harvests to woods safety, how a forest functions, and backyard birds. Viewers were invited to participate, asking questions or sharing stories and thoughts in the comments section. These 30-to-45-minute interactive sessions kept us involved with our current forest landowners and opened doors to engage with new landowners, wildlife enthusiasts, nature enthusiasts, and novice nature lovers. These live sessions are now a library on Facebook and continue to be widely viewed.



Our two “ask anything forestry”

Facebook Live sessions have totaled over 1,300 views to date.

14 WEEKS

March 29 through July 6

76 POSTS

Facebook Live sessions, short informational video clips, and infographics

68,331

Total reach

7,705

Total engagements

22,931

Total views

544

Total shares



Walk in Penn's Woods

Penn's Woods hosts countless family adventures in October

Walk in Penn's Woods proved to be a breath of fresh air in the middle of a worldwide pandemic. Instead of a day or weekend, the Walk in Penn's Woods partnership expanded the 2020 event, encouraging Pennsylvanians to use the entire month of October to have their own woodland adventures in Penn's Woods. We promoted numerous trails, virtual tours, fun apps, and safe partner events. We used the hashtag **#mywalkinpennswoods** to create camaraderie on social media.

In all, this unique 2020 edition of Walk in Penn's Woods turned out to be a major success. Our Walk in Penn's Woods website received over 1,750 views. The Walk in Penn's Woods Facebook page gained 75 new followers, bringing our total to 677. Our 15 social media posts generated almost 20,000

interactions. As we looked for creative ways to spread the word, we posted a short video through paid advertising on social media that engaged over 4,400 people and generated over 400 visits to the Walk in Penn's Woods website.

While we can't measure the number of people who took a Walk in Penn's Woods because of our efforts, we do know October was a beautiful month to be outside! Many of Pennsylvania's state parks were at capacity, the fall foliage was spectacular, and more people were in the forest. By all accounts, one positive outcome of the pandemic has been Pennsylvania citizens' desire to take to the woods. We continue to promote trails and virtual tours on the Walk in Penn's Woods website at www.walkinpennswoods.org.

 facebook.com/walkinpennswoods



Four generations of the Kline family enjoyed their traditional October woods walk.



A Four-Generation Family Tradition in October

By Alfred J. Kline, PA Forest Landowner

Many years ago, my wife and I started a family walk in the forest with our four small children. In the course of the walk, they asked many questions about the forest and we tried to answer the questions as best we could. When we completed the walk and went back to the house, we ended our family adventure by treating the children to pizza. We did the walk for many years until those four little children grew into adults. They married and their spouses joined us on the walks. Then they had children and they joined our walk too. We are now on our fourth generation with over 40 family members joining us each year on the family walk in the forest.

Three years ago, my wife passed away. She was the matriarch of the family walk. She saw to it that it happened each year. As for myself, at the age of 92 and failing health, I have not been able to participate in the walk for several years. The family came up with an idea that enabled me to join in the walk this past October. They found a park that had picnic facilities plus paved walking trails through the forest.

The good thing about this walk is that any family can start this tradition. There are state parks all over the state with picnic pavilions and walking trails through the forests. Use these or your own facilities for your walk. I bet my boots once you participate in a walk, it will become a tradition every year. I hope you enjoy your family walk in the forest in October!

Alfred Kline's family has owned forest property in Cambria County for over 70 years. He has raised his family there and they continue to steward the forest well.

Partnering to Strengthen Relationships Between Forest Landowners and the Professionals Who Serve Them

Woodland Stewardship Innovation Team

With the diversity of roles and skills found throughout the forestry community, professionals are recognizing the need for a concerted effort to come together and build a cohesive foundation to deliver a more unified stewardship message to Pennsylvania's 740,000 private forest landowners. Out of this growing awareness, Pennsylvania's Woodland Stewardship Innovation Team was formed. This partnership of professionals from all walks of the forestry community has been collaborating to focus on their shared common goals and how to work together to develop a stewardship message, delivered with one voice that can be clearly understood and embraced by landowners. Through this coordinated effort, professionals can provide more effective help for landowners, with the goal of engaging landowners and advancing healthy, resilient forests.

The Center for Private Forests is serving as the team's University partner, and MS student Abby Jamison is one of the team's five co-leaders.

Strategic Networks and Initiatives Program (SNIP) Grant

As research under the Center-led Enrolled Foresters project uncovered broader areas of concern within the forestry profession, we began to organize a larger, multi-pronged initiative to promote forestry as "caring well for the woods." In the early months of 2020, we brought together partners from across the forestry community to begin the conversation around what changes are needed in the forestry profession to more effectively support landowners and good stewardship. A Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences Strategic Networks and Initiatives Program (SNIP) Level I Launch Grant enabled us to create a partnership within the University to support the Caring Well initiative. As indicators from research and discussions point to the need for some fundamental changes in the forestry profession and restructuring of curricula at the state's academic institutions, Penn State's participation is essential.

The forestry community continues to seek ways to strengthen relationships with forest landowners.



Partnering to Bring Stewardship Resources into the Homes of Landowners

The Woods in Your Backyard

In 2019, Penn State Extension and its partners offered *The Woods in Your Backyard* as a nine-part live webinar series for the first time. With nearly 500,000 Pennsylvanians owning a small patch of woodland—something less than 10 acres in size—this series teaches good stewardship and the benefits of these small landscapes. Center staff served on the team that developed the manual which is at the heart of this series, *The Woods in Your Backyard: Learning to Create and Enhance Natural Areas Around Your Home*, and teaches one of the nine sessions during the course. With the series growing in popularity and hundreds of landowners already completing the course in 2019 and 2020, we look forward to continuing to support this effort to help landowners plan and implement simple stewardship practices that will enhance the land's natural resources.



Webinar participants learned about forest ecology, wildlife habitat, invasive plants, tree ID, woodlot management, watersheds, and more.

Innovative Engagement Strategies

The Center is working to pilot innovative strategies to engage more forest landowners and build their understanding about their land. From the social media campaign described on page 18 to seeking out funding for support of a Northeastern US podcast series that will attract new and less engaged woodland owners to resources to support their land, the Center continues to work with partners and facilitate processes to test new means of moving people to a deeper connection to their land and equipping them to better care for it.

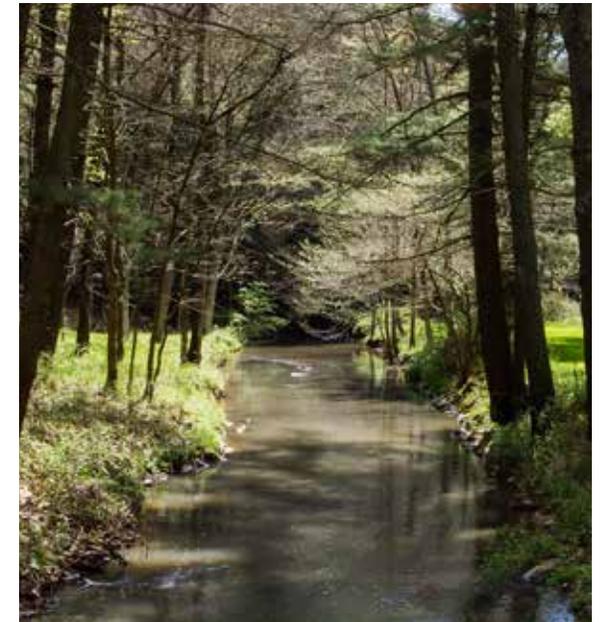


Easily accessible videos, such as a short clip on herbicide control of invasive plants, can be valuable resources for landowners.

Advisory Committees

In 2020, Center staff served on the advisory committees listed below. In this capacity, we offered input based on our applied research-informed experience and expertise to aid in guiding related PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources programs.

- Forested Riparian Buffer Advisory Committee, Allyson Muth.
- Ecosystem Management Advisory Committee, Allyson Muth.
- Forest Stewardship Program Advisory Committee, Allyson Muth and Sara Banker.



The Forested Riparian Buffer Advisory Committee helps find ways to move landowners to implement protective buffers on waterways.

Expanding Our Impact

Enlarging the forestry community through social media and digital, print, and online tools

Reaching Thousands through Social Media

The Center continued to expand its social media presence in 2020, building on our 2019 work to develop a consistent use of Facebook as a place to collaborate and connect, and to share valuable information. As our world shifted and people found themselves shut inside their homes and unsure of the future, we teamed with Forestry and Wildlife Extension to undertake a 14-week venture to reach people through one avenue not shut down—social media. Through the creative work of Center staff and Extension educators, we shared engaging infographics and video snippets, held Facebook Live sessions on forest-related topics, and encouraged people to explore outside, safely and socially distanced. You can read more about this collaborative effort on page 18. Our Facebook page also features eye-catching infographics touching on compelling forest topics and challenges, often linking viewers to programs, resources, articles, and events where they can find more information. To expand our reach to a younger demographic, we continue to share posts on Instagram as well.

This structured social media strategy is enabling us to reach more forest landowners and the professionals who serve them, make more connections with the public, and build our online community. With 111 total posts in 2020, our Facebook page “likes” and “followers” grew by 33 percent over 2019. Many posts were seen by hundreds, and some by thousands. As we move into 2021, we will continue to build on the foundation established in the past two years to share about the value of our forests.

Visit us on:



facebook.com/privateforests



@privateforests



This January 2020 Facebook post was seen by over 7,700 people and was shared 69 times by organizations such as Master Watershed Stewards, garden groups, Allegheny Watershed Alliance, Charlestown Parks and Recreation, Manada Conservancy, Shultz Forest Management and Consulting LLC, and Bradford-Sullivan Forest Landowners Association.



Forest Leaves Newsletter

One of the most widely-distributed forestry publications in Pennsylvania, *Forest Leaves* reaches nearly 14,000 print and email subscribers with news and information on forestry-related topics. In 2020, readers learned about the myths and misperceptions about forests, hardwood forest regeneration, reducing your carbon footprint, spotted lanternfly updates, beech leaf disease, stormwater runoff, winter woods safety, and more. A free publication to all who request it, *Forest Leaves* is a long-standing effort of the Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program, and is a collaboration between the Center for Private Forests at Penn State, the PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry, Penn State Extension, the USDA Forest Service, the PA Tree Farm®, the PA Forestry Association, and the PA Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Implementation Committee.

Forest Stewardship News Releases

Monthly news releases on topics relevant to woodland owners, forestry, and stewardship are another educational tool the Center uses to reach landowners and the public. Over 600 email recipients learned about forest-related topics like promoting forest resilience in a changing climate, the benefits of blackberries, trees and dry conditions, ecological synchrony, and acorn crops. News releases are often picked up by newspapers, included in newsletters, and shared among woodland owners. They are also archived on the Center for Private Forests website at ecosystems.psu.edu/research/centers/private-forests/news.

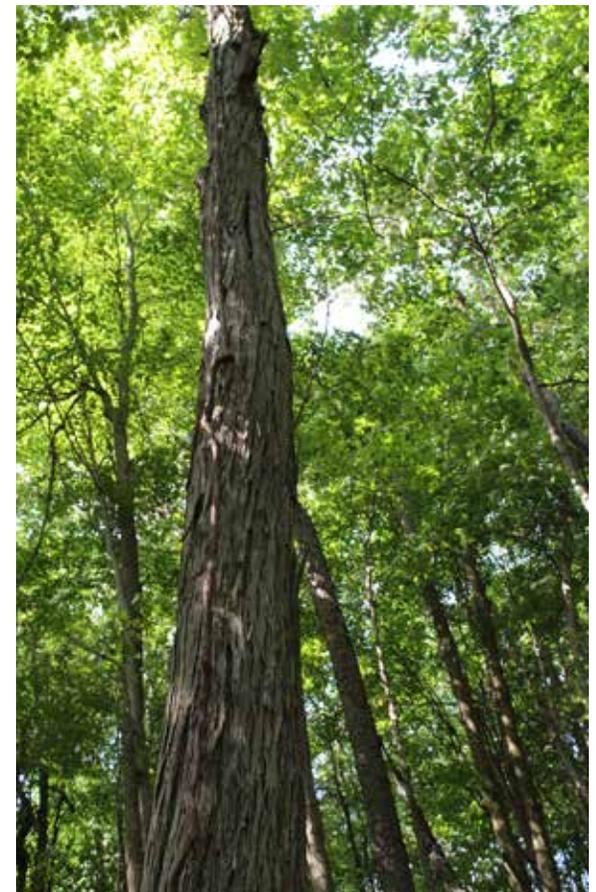
Webinars and Online Courses

Center staff continue to use webinars and online courses to increase learning opportunities over a broad range of topics. A 12-hour, nine-session self-paced online course, *Woodland Stewardship: Management Practices for Landowners*, part of the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards training program, is available to the public through Penn State Extension. Center staff hosted a segment of the highly successful *The Woods in Your Backyard* webinar series, which drew over 300 registered participants. In addition, the Center continues to support the Pennsylvania Forests Web Seminar series led by Penn State Forestry and Wildlife Extension. Over 100 recorded past webinars can be found on the Center for Private Forests website under *Resources for Woodland Owners*.

This excerpt from our December 15, 2020 stewardship news release, Gratitude for Growing Trees, reminds us of the important role woodland owners play in caring well for our forests: “In Pennsylvania, a majority of the state’s 16.9 million acres of forestland is owned by people—families, individuals, partnerships—not the federal, state, or local government, and not industry. Pennsylvania likely has more woodland owners than any other state in the nation... It is important to recognize that these unique individuals are daily making decisions about the care and well-being of their piece of Penn’s Woods, and we owe them all a debt of gratitude.”

Center for Private Forests Website

Work began in late 2020 to update the Center for Private Forests website. Staff initiated a thorough review of content, with a focus on updating existing material and adding more resources to keep forest landowners more readily connected to the information that addresses their needs. This effort will continue through 2021. Visit the website at ecosystems.psu.edu/private-forests.



Inside the Center

Behind-the-scenes work that is building a strong foundation for the future

Working Groups

In 2018, the Center implemented a unique approach to inform its work and expand its role as an essential source of expertise for forest landowners and those who serve them by establishing four volunteer-led working groups to address the four major areas of importance to landowners. These four groups—Forest Economics, Forest Legacy, Forest Practices, and Forest Values—started their work in 2019, delving into a predetermined question, and, through landowner interviews, group discussions, and topical reading, building a foundation to answer the question. At the close of 2019, they reported what they uncovered—findings that are helping to guide the Center’s strategic planning and survey development.

As the challenges of 2020 unfolded, the working groups were forced into a holding pattern. In the last months of 2020, Center staff worked to revitalize the groups, meeting with group chairs and members and filling gaps as needed. Seeing the tremendous success of the first assignment and the groups’ enthusiasm and desire to provide concrete support to the Center’s work, we determined that their next assignments would directly contribute to ongoing projects in 2021. We look forward to reporting on these efforts in the future.



Volunteer-led working groups put their finger on the pulse of Pennsylvania’s landowners, so to speak, and report their findings to inform the Center’s work.

Allyson Muth Named Center Director

In fall of 2020, the Center for Private Forests at Penn State announced the appointment of Dr. Allyson Muth as the Center Director. Employed at Penn State since 2004, Allyson previously served as Interim Director following the retirement of Dr. Jim Finley, with whom she founded the Center in 2011. During her nearly three-year tenure as the Interim Director, she demonstrated both skill and success in obtaining and implementing large and small grants and leading applied research projects focusing on forest legacy planning, forest landowner values and actions, consulting forester and landowner interactions, and conservation organizations managing working forests under easements. Her work includes projects conducted collaboratively with other universities as well as collaborative efforts with external groups engaged in forestry and natural resources.

Under Allyson’s leadership, the Center continues to advance research that enables those who care about the long-term health and vitality of forests to work together to share their capacity to enlarge the conversation about the care of privately-held forests. The Center, Penn State’s College of Agricultural Sciences, and the larger Penn State University community understand the need to create this shared dialogue about the role forests serve in providing diverse social, economic, and ecological values, today and into our future.



Building Our Endowment through Development

Through philanthropy, the Center continues to build an endowment that expands its capacity to conduct research, design innovative programs, and collaborate with academic institutions and natural resources organizations to advance stewardship of private forests. The Center is also seeking philanthropic donations that support specific Center initiatives such as student internships, the biennial Forest Landowners Conference, graduate student fellowships, and other applied projects. To buttress these efforts, the Center has expanded its sharing of projects and accomplishments through direct outreach to interested groups and individuals and the creation of a column in our quarterly *Forest Leaves*.

The development professionals within the University and the College of Agricultural Sciences are available to provide information about the many philanthropic tools available to individuals interested in supporting the Center.

The Center believes that investing in training peer leaders is important for inspiring change in the actions landowners take on their land.

Strategic Planning

As the Center for Private Forests enters its 10th year, the Strategic Planning Committee has been diligently working on a strategic plan to guide the Center's work. As a small organization, we must be focused in where we invest our time and resources to maximize impacts. This plan, to be finalized in mid-2021, will focus on the values and attributes that make the Center unique, and how the Center can contribute to both Penn State and the natural resources community at large. It will identify the areas where the Center will channel its efforts, being driven by the Center's vision to advance the health and vitality for forested landscapes. By setting a clear course for the future, the Center will maximize its input and influence across the forestry community.



Looking Ahead

Here's a look at some of our key programs in 2021:

Caring Well Initiative

Caring Well for Pennsylvania's Privately-owned Forests continues to gain momentum going into 2021. During this initial phase, a working group of partners from across the forestry community are coming together to identify concerns in the forestry profession and ways to address those concerns. They anticipate the results of this effort will have far-reaching, positive effects on elevating the forestry profession and developing a more cohesive vision for "Caring Well for Penn's Woods." Stay tuned for updates in 2021.

Pennsylvania Forest Landowners Survey

This repeat of the statewide 2010 forest landowners survey will give us a decade-plus perspective on changes in landowners and landownership and will guide future applied research and outreach strategies for our educational programs and partners. The survey will expand on past work, helping us to better understand actions landowners are taking—or not taking—in planning for what happens next to their land.

Conservation-based Estate Planning

The goal of this project, started in 2020, is to create networks of professionals who are equipped with the legal and financial tools needed to guide landowners to successful estate planning outcomes. Curricula for the planned in-person training workshops were shifted to a virtual format, with training to begin in the first quarter of 2021.

Conservation Easements

Under this USDA McIntire-Stennis grant, we are working to understand how conservation organizations approach forest management on properties under easement, to devise resources to support adaptive management on eased forested properties, and to develop an addendum to the Pennsylvania Model Conservation Easement document to support long-term protection of and engagement with forested properties.



Through the Conservation-based Estate Planning project, the Center is working to equip planning professionals, consulting foresters, and landowners with the tools they need for successful estate planning outcomes.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion to support all members of our Commonwealth and beyond

In the Spring 2020 semester, Allyson Muth collaborated with Dr. David Miller, Associate Professor, Wildlife Ecology, to offer a graduate seminar titled, “Equity and Inclusion in Ecological Professions.” The goal of the course was to expose students to the concepts underlying equity, inclusion, and diversity efforts within institutions, the causes and consequences of inequity, developing equitable and inclusive environments, and addressing how issues of equity and inclusion interface with research and management of natural resources. Sixteen PhD and masters students enrolled from the Departments of Ecosystem Science and Management, Entomology, and Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management.

In the fall of 2020, Allyson Muth was invited to take part in the planning effort for an equity and inclusion initiative for Penn State Extension. Titled, the Racial Action: Conversations in Extension (RA:CE) initiative, the goal was to adapt equity and inclusion curricula for Penn State Extension’s model to foster racially diverse and inclusive work spaces and structures to address opportunities for Extension to grow into a place welcoming of diverse backgrounds. The pilot training is taking place in early 2021 and, upon feedback from course attendees, will be revised and offered more widely to the larger Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences community.

Additionally, to support the work of the Department of Ecosystem Science and Management’s Equity and Inclusion Committee, the Center contributed \$5,000 to the hiring of an equity and inclusion specialist, David Munõz, PhD, to assist the department in creating training programs for faculty, staff, and students, to assist faculty with making their courses more inclusive, and to create a strategic plan and action steps for the department to become a more diverse and welcoming community.



The Center for Private Forests is committed to creating a more inclusive culture with the engagement of people from more diverse backgrounds, both within our academic setting and across the forestry community as a whole.

Financial Overview

As you have read throughout this report, the future of Pennsylvania’s woodlots, both large and small, depends in large part on the private landowners who own nearly 70 percent of the Commonwealth’s forested acreage and those who guide them. This population continues to grow and change as new generations assume responsibility for stewardship of the land.

The Center, with its deep, research-based knowledge of private forest landowners, highly regarded Pennsylvania Forest Stewards volunteer network, and extensive experience working at the intersection of people and forests, serves as a unique resource to both landowners and the natural resources community. The perspective of the Center is needed now more than ever to inform and inspire private forest landowners and the professionals who assist them in caring for their land.

During the nine-plus years since the Center was founded, we have worked tirelessly to secure funding for our many projects and to build our endowment to support research and personnel that are critical to ensuring a sustainable future for our forests in Pennsylvania and beyond. We invite you to take a few moments to read, on the following pages, about our endowment and some specific ways to share in our mission, and two stories of donors who have been inspired to give.

For more information about ways you can support the Center financially, please contact:



Lauren Steinberg
 Senior Director of Development for the
 College of Agricultural Sciences
 lxs229@psu.edu
 814-865-0158

Those interested in supporting the work of the Center are welcome to contribute to the endowment or to the annual operating fund.

ecosystems.psu.edu/give-to-private-forests



ENDOWMENT PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT

	VALUE
Initial Balance, July 1, 2019	\$379,979.70
Cash Flows	
Gifts and Transfers	167,763.50
Market Appreciation/(Depreciation)	
Includes any market changes for above cash flows	2,582.01
Ending Balance, June 30, 2020	\$550,325.21

SPENDING ACCOUNT

	VALUE
Initial Balance, July 1, 2019	\$217,214.90
Inflows	
Endowment Spending Allocation	16,782.60
Additional Gifts and Transfers	7,632.00
Fiscal 2019-20 Total Available Spending	\$241,629.50
Outflows	
Expenditures and Transfers	(153,461.54)
Ending Balance, June 30, 2020	\$88,167.96



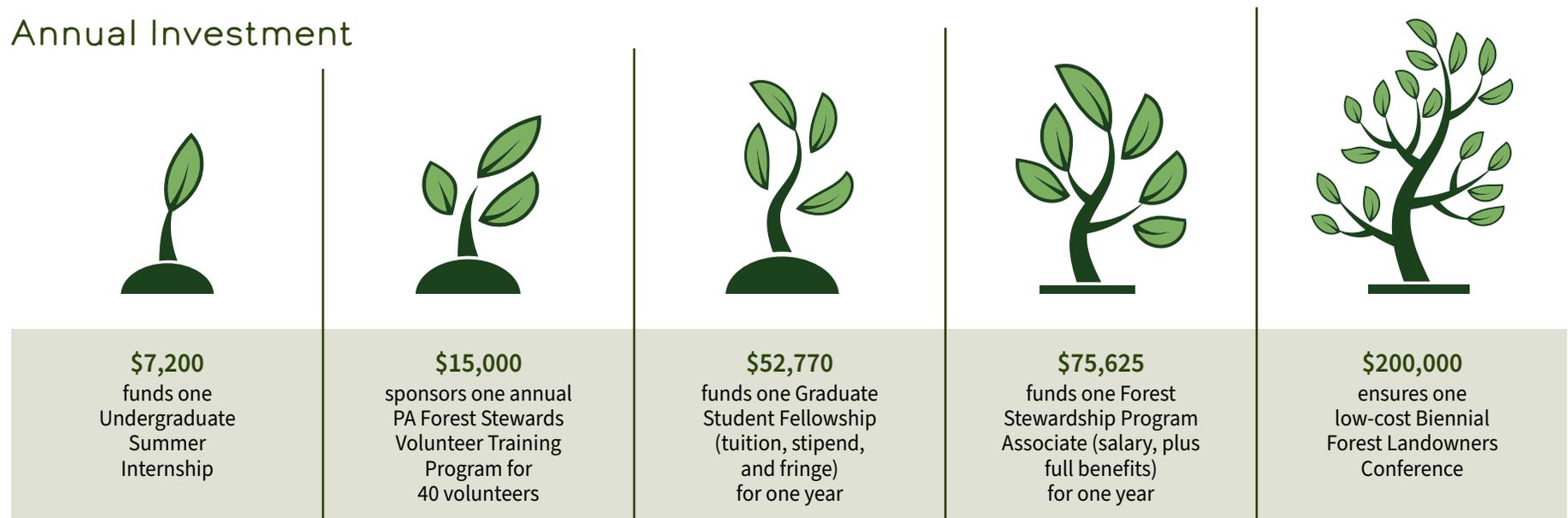
Gifts to the Endowment

The Center for Private Forests at Penn State Endowment provides the opportunity for everyone who cares about the future of privately-held woodlands and forests to ensure that the Center extends its applied research efforts to address salient questions that challenge our forest's health and vitality and prepares future natural resources professionals to work with landowners on forest issues. How does the endowment work? Any funding the Center receives into the endowment is labeled for our exclusive use. It becomes part of Penn State's larger endowment-based investments so that it earns dividends, which become working funds in future years. Gifts to the endowment for the Center are tax-deductible.

Ways to Give

- If you are obligated to take a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your IRA, you may contribute a portion or all of this distribution to a charitable organization.
- Gifts of land — Penn State will accept gifts of land and help landowners, if they wish, protect the land with a conservation easement. Only in rare instances will the University hold property.
- Stock or income distribution — Make contributions directly through your investment fund portfolio administrators.
- Outright charitable contributions — All donations to the Center through Penn State count as charitable contributions and can be deducted from your income tax.

Annual Investment



Endowment Funding to Achieve Annual Investment



Sharing Their Stories

Nancy Baker's Gift Honors Pennsylvania Forest Steward and Walk in Penn's Woods Visionary Ruth Park

By Nancy Baker

Most landowners love their piece of woods; while they may not have the perfect skill set to steward it correctly, their instinct to care for it is ingrained in their sense of ownership. But rare indeed are those individuals who carry that sense of nurture out onto the full landscape, who look to the future forest.

Ruth Park is an inspiration! In 1954, Ruth and her late husband, Bill, began managing a wooded Columbia County farm that had been in the Park family since 1841. More than five generations of the Park family have prized the tract; today, multiple generations are involved in the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Volunteer Program. But Ruth is one of those individuals who also sees into and cares about the future landscape. Her vision initiated the Walk in Penn's Woods movement, educating the Commonwealth's citizens that our forested land is a treasure to be tended for the future, and that educating the public about the resource promotes informed decisions across the landscape.

I've used my gifts to the Center for Private Forests to honor individuals who have made the leap from tending their own cherished tract of land to an ethic that extends to caring for the whole of Penn's Woods and to those who are committed to tutoring its stewards. The Center is at



Nancy Baker is a Pennsylvania Forest Steward and Center Council member

the nexus of forest ecosystem science and those human dimensions of stewardship; it operates at a statewide scale, looking to the future, responsive to its custodians. I was pleased to honor Ruth Park this year. Your gift "in honor of" will make a difference too! The honoree will be celebrated, you'll be rewarded, your own woods will be enriched, and our Penn's Woods will be there for the future.



Ruth Park has instilled her deep love for the forest into her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, teaching them to care well for forested landscapes.



Passion for the Center's Mission Inspires Craig and Monica Schwegman and Daughter Sarah Baker to Give

By Craig Schwegman

I met Dr. Jim Finley and his lovely wife, Linda, in the summer of 2015 during lunch at the Foundation for Sustainable Forests' annual workshop, "Loving the Land Through Working Forests." Jim was welcoming and explained the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Volunteer Program to my wife, Monica, and me. That fall, I attended the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards basic training and thought it was incredible how much I learned in such a short amount of time and could not believe there wasn't a fee to attend. I became more passionate about the organization and their work, so much so that Monica attended the training the following year and we consistently volunteer in our free time.

Over the years, I have discussed the program as a part of our succession planning with our daughter, Sarah, and explained how we have incorporated what we have learned into the management of our land. Sarah could never attend the fall training because of a timing conflict between the program's training weekend and her work schedule. Due to the pandemic and the move to an online training format in 2020, she was finally able to participate. As a family, we are grateful for the common education this program has provided as we discuss the future of our property. Not only is this beneficial to our family but to the neighbors in our community as part of our volunteer engagement.

We continue to give to the Center for Private Forests because we believe in the mission of the organization—to



Craig Schwegman is a Pennsylvania Forest Steward and Center Council member

continuously improve the health and vitality of private forests, engage the public, landowners, and natural resources professionals, and cultivate a model to sustain our forests built on research and experience. We have seen the direct impact of the volunteer work by the Stewards in our communities as we work together to care for Pennsylvania lands. We are concerned that this program continues to exist so that the efforts of the Center are carried forward to future generations, even in the face of funding challenges.



Through the many resources of the Center, Sarah Baker, shown here with her daughter, is prepared to participate in planning the future of her family's property.

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*Through applied research,
education, and resources, the
Center and our partners are
guiding a growing community
of forest landowners in caring
well for their woods.*



We are grateful to all who support the work of the Center for Private Forests through gifts and partnerships. With your support, the Center looks forward to continuing to serve as a leader in connecting people to resources that foster the growing community of all who are committed to the stewardship of our forested landscape well into the future.

ecosystems.psu.edu/give-to-private-forests

* General donation

¹ In honor gift

² 2020 Walk in Penn's Woods supporter



Center Staff, Council, and Affiliates

Center Leadership



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Council Executive Committee,
Assistant Research Professor,
Private Forests Management



Jim Finley
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Council Executive Committee,
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PA Forest Stewards Volunteer,
Founder and Principal,
Fiduciary Insights, LLC



Jeanne Riley
Council Executive Committee,
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The Center is grateful to have a wise and enthusiastic group of individuals who believe in the vision of the Center and have committed themselves to the work by serving as Council members. These volunteers advise the Center Director in setting the vision, direction, and goals of the Center; in collaborating with other natural resources organizations; and in pursuing projects that serve the mission of the Center. Council members serve as advocates for the Center, for private forests, and for private forest landowners.

Center Council Members



Nancy Baker
PA Forest Stewards Volunteer,
Forest Ecologist



Renee Carey
PA Forest Stewards Volunteer,
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Frans Padt, Teaching Professor of Environmental Planning

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