

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



*Working at the  
Intersection of  
People and Forests*



- THE CENTER FOR -  
PRIVATE FORESTS

# 2011-2021: A Decade of Impact

As we look back over the first 10 years of the Center for Private Forests at Penn State, we are both excited and humbled to stand at the forefront, a trusted leader in studying private forest landowners and their land and building an engaged community committed to improving forest health, resilience, and vitality.

From our beginning, founders Drs. Jim Finley and Allyson Muth and staff drew upon decades of transdisciplinary research and experience to develop new and innovative approaches for engaging private forest landowners in stewardship. They knew that understanding the attitudes, preferences, and behaviors of landowners is critical to achieving tangible stewardship outcomes, and they made sure this was the foundation of the Center's work. We took our place at the intersection of people and forests, working with landowners and the professionals who serve them, collaborating with our many outstanding partners, and responding to the evolving demands of human and natural communities.

Our key accomplishments include creating professional training and landowner resources for legacy planning, working to elevate the importance of professions that conduct and contribute to forest management through

the Caring Well initiative, leading the storied Pennsylvania Forest Stewards peer volunteer program, developing an assessment tool for forest regeneration, cultivating stewardship across property lines, administering landowner and professional surveys, and creating spaces to bring people together to learn and connect.

Going forward, our research and work with private forests, their owners, and the professionals who advise them will continue to inform the development of new solutions to the ever-growing number of natural resources challenges, from clean water to climate change to land conservation, sustaining the ecosystem on which we all depend.

*Training Pennsylvania Forest Steward volunteers for valuable peer outreach, developing tools to aid landowners in assessing forest regeneration, and creating spaces where landowners and professionals can connect are just a sampling of the Center's many accomplishments.*



## Our Mission

Working at the intersection of people and forests, the Center for Private Forests advances research-based insights to inspire and cultivate stewardship of private forests.



# Remembering Jim Finley

*A remarkable man dedicated to working at the intersection of people and forests*

On October 2, 2021, the Center for Private Forests shared the news of the tragic loss of our co-founder and Council Chair Dr. Jim Finley, Professor Emeritus of Private Forest Management and Human Dimensions and Natural Resources and Ibberson Chair. Jim's decades of work informed our understanding of forests, private forest landowners, and all the people who care for the woods, serving as the foundation for the Center's work and guiding its vision for the future.

From the beginning of his career, Jim strived to find innovative ways to protect forest health and vitality. In 1991, a collaborative partnership established between Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Forestry and faculty from Penn State's School of Forest Resources provided a platform for Jim and his colleagues to do so. Focusing on private forest landowners and their land, the Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program emerged from this partnership, and with it, the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards volunteer program. This network of peer volunteers, established to help educate and inspire other landowners to undertake stewardship of their land, celebrated its 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary in 2021. With 769 members trained to date, it serves as a vibrant and knowledgeable resource for landowners and professionals alike, and has become a benchmark program for others around the country.

Jim was also an outstanding academic scholar, with a broad scope encompassing both forestry practice and the connections between people and the natural world. As Jim's career evolved, he dedicated himself to understanding how people engage with, and care for, the natural resources around them. He was also committed to helping landowners, professionals, and communities understand that forests, if managed sustainably, could both thrive and provide a host of benefits to people, wildlife, and our broader society.

Much of his work was in the area that has come to be known as the study of human dimensions. Working collaboratively with others at Penn State, and across the region and nation, Jim was an early pioneer in transdisciplinary forest-related research.

Jim's knowledge and insights were highly regarded within both academic and landowner communities. He mentored hundreds of graduate students,



*Jim Finley's vision and leadership helped build the Center's strong foundation and set its course for a robust future.*

undergraduate students, and natural resources professionals through his long tenure at Penn State. Moreover, he educated tens of thousands of landowners who viewed him as both an immensely knowledgeable resource and a source of inspiration. Walks in the woods with Jim Finley were a highly sought-after experience for anyone interested in forests. Wearing his trademark fedora, Jim could often be found wandering through private woodlots or state forests, followed by groups of landowners or professionals, all having a keen interest in what he had to say.

Jim touched innumerable lives with his passion and care for the woods. He reached hundreds of thousands with his simple but profound message, encouraging all of us to care together for the woods which enrich our lives so much. While we will miss Jim immensely, the Center continues his pioneering work on private forestlands and landowners, exploring innovative ways to provide landowners with the inspiration, skills, and advice needed for effective stewardship.



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**10 Years and Counting:** *With our research-based knowledge, experience, and relationships within the natural resources field and beyond, the Center will continue to be an important force in ensuring broad adoption of stewardship values and practices well into the future.*

## *Our Vision*

A world where stewardship practices sustain healthy and resilient private forests which contribute to the social, ecological, and economic well-being of society.



# From the Director

*Dear friends,*

As we pulled together this annual report, we were forced to consider how best to represent the work of 2021, a year of lows and highs for the Center.

Most significantly, in the latter part of the year, we lost our co-founder and Council Chair Jim Finley to a tragic woods accident. His loss reverberates through our work and friendships as, even after his retirement from Penn State in 2017, he remained engaged and supportive of all the Center is and undertakes. We take solace in the Center, as it represents his life's work, legacy, and vision of what it means to support and encourage good stewardship of the forest and its people and owners. We carry forward the projects and applied research that we know he was enthusiastic about and strongly supported.

December 2021 marked the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the Center's existence, signed into being in early December 2011 to ensure a continued focus on the care and well-being of privately-owned forests. This year, through the Caring Well initiative, we advanced work to improve the stewardship and care of these forests



by strengthening the connections, skills, and resources of the professionals who help landowners engage with their land. We worked with members of the land trust community to enhance how forested lands held under easement are managed. We also continued our work in the space of conservation-based estate planning, cultivating resources to help woodland owners plan for the future of their land after their tenure. And, 2021 saw the distribution of the decennial Pennsylvania Forest Landowners Survey and work to better understand the depths and complexities of relationships between landowners and those who advise them. In this report, we highlight these and other projects worked on in 2021 on pages 4 through 15.

Also in this 10<sup>th</sup> year, through the leadership of Jim and a dedicated committee of Center Council members, we created a strategic plan to guide the Center's future work and direction, to tap into our unique approach and position within Penn State, and to utilize our resources most effectively. Through the six key aims identified—creating scholarship, inspiring stewardship, strengthening connections, expanding the stewardship community, informing policy, and building infrastructure—the strategic plan will guide the annual plans of work for the Center. It will ensure we remain at the forefront in advancing research-based insights about private forest landowners, their land, and the professionals who advise them, inspiring and cultivating the

stewardship of private forests. Our strategic plan is highlighted on pages 16 and 17.

We are 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. They serve as advocates for the Center, for private forests, and for private forest landowners.

The body of work that bridges us into the future and the refinement of the Center's new strategic plan have ensured that the Center will remain engaged and a key collaborator in the care of private forests and the people who own them. Our efforts and events of the past year have defined for us a clear path, ensuring that the foundation of Jim's work, vision, and stewardship ethic on which the Center was built is carried and enhanced well into the future.

We thank you for your support to make this happen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Allyson Muth'.

**Allyson Muth**  
Director



# Caring Well

## for Pennsylvania's Privately-owned Forests

Over the past four years, the Center and partners have been working to address concerns within the forestry profession, particularly when it comes to “caring well for Pennsylvania’s privately-owned forests.” Past and current research are highlighting shifts in the services landowners are seeking from and the perceptions they have of the forestry community. A 2018 survey showed Pennsylvania’s consulting foresters are spending less than half their time on what has long been seen as their financial mainstay—timber sales. Also, 2021 research conducted by the Center found that landowners broadly have skepticism toward forestry professionals. Furthermore, the average age of consulting foresters responding to the 2018 survey was 60, while studies have shown undergraduate enrollment in forestry programs—the next generation of foresters—has been in decline for decades.

In 2021, this initiative stepped into the heart of these challenges, bringing together members from across the forestry community who hold a stake or play a role in the management or care of private forests. This diverse group began

the work of digging deep into the professions that conduct and contribute to private forest management to determine what is working and to explore the adaptations and expansions needed to reframe the role and perception of forestry professionals and strengthen the forestry community. They identified three initial key areas to address: professional development, the next generation of natural resources professionals, and building connections and trust within the forestry community.

In 2022, the partnership will be working together to develop professional network-based training programs, community-building meetings and exercises, tools to facilitate landowner-professional communication, internship programs, and more. A synergy is building throughout Pennsylvania’s forestry community as a result of the Caring Well initiative. This synergy is laying the foundation for the partnership to achieve its goals and provide the information and action needed to build a broadly-skilled community of trusted professionals. This community can then better serve the breadth of needs and increase the number of private forest landowners taking thoughtful action that promotes long-term sustainability and forest health.



*As forestry professionals take a fresh look at today’s opportunities and challenges, the expanding needs and desires of landowners, and the call for modern business and communication tools, they recognize the need to adapt and strengthen skills, resources, and connections to improve stewardship and care of private forestlands.*

### Building the Network

This professional forestry community-wide partnership is coming together to create a vision for how to more effectively practice forestry on private lands.



## The Roots of Caring Well

For decades, organizations and agencies have worked hard to inspire good stewardship across Pennsylvania's privately-owned forests. While many novice landowners have been reached through these efforts, progress has been slow and, at times, challenging.

Unlike in many other states, forestry in Pennsylvania is an unregulated profession. Four years ago, Center staff partnered with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Forestry to devise a path to bring recognition to the value of the forestry profession. Work started in earnest with the creation of an advisory group of consulting foresters, landowner focus group meetings, and surveys to both consulting foresters and landowners.

In the face of what our research and advisory group were telling us, we shifted our efforts to a much bigger picture: bringing the whole of the forestry community together, creating a space for conversation and building trust, and, ultimately, together setting a vision for how to practice forestry on privately-held lands.

How far-reaching can this collaborative effort be? Potential outcomes include diversifying business models to enable a full suite of practices and products, expanding and elevating the importance of the forestry and natural resources professions, attracting people of diverse backgrounds to the profession, and, importantly, engaging a larger segment of private forest landowners in actively managing their land.

## Understanding Interactions Between Landowners and Their Advisors

Beginning in 2019 and completed in 2021, Center graduate student Abby Jamison conducted research that sought to understand the important elements of landowners' experiences interacting with two advisors—Pennsylvania Forest Stewards and consulting foresters. Abby sat down, via Zoom, with 33 landowners (16 had interacted with PA Forest Stewards and 17 with consulting foresters) to hear about these experiences through stories, questions, and reflections.

Results revealed key information about the value of interpersonal connection with advisors and the perceptions landowners might have as they enter the interaction. First, this research demonstrated that PA Forest Stewards are integral in motivating and supporting the forest management goals and actions of other landowners—they provide a sense of support, learning, and camaraderie, while also granting a landowner space to carve out their own forest management path. Second, we found that the sharing of common ground

and the development of personal, working relationships are vital to a landowner trusting and hiring a consulting forester. This value was put into context by an additional finding: landowners have a broad perception of skepticism toward Pennsylvania forestry professionals.

This research and the picture it paints about the critical value of social-relational elements in forestry practice—as well as the lack of trust some landowners have in the forestry community—have greatly informed the conversations and direction of the Caring Well initiative. It has done so by affirming the realities of public forestry perception at the local level, while also demonstrating the success of a more interpersonal interaction/engagement with private forest landowners. In 2022, this research will continue to inform the outcomes of the Caring Well initiative's work, particularly regarding connection building, adaptations to practice, and trust building.

*Many of the 17 landowners who hired consulting foresters related a general perception of skepticism toward forestry professionals, especially when talking about timber harvests. This generalization was made even by some who had positive, trusting landowner-forester relationships.*

This work is/was supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Hatch Appropriations under Project No. PEN04698 and Accession No. 1019111.



# Forest Legacy Planning

## Conservation-based Estate Planning

Many people believe that the state owns most of Pennsylvania's forests, but in reality, seven of every 10 acres are privately owned. With these private forest landowners averaging in their late 50s, significant acreages of forestland will change ownership over the next several years. As forest landowners plan for the future of their land, legal, financial, and conservation tools must be made more accessible and available to them.

Previous graduate student research under the Center uncovered gaps in the legacy planning process, showing that many forest landowners don't know how to plan for their land's future and many estate planning professionals are unprepared to help them address carrying their stewardship ethic across generations. Under this project, we are working to create networks of experts who play significant roles in the conservation-based estate planning process to guide forest landowners to and through that process. In 2021, we led training workshops for natural resources professionals, land trusts and conservancy professionals, and

landowners to equip them with the knowledge, resources, and current legal and financial tools for successful estate planning outcomes when forestland is involved. Over 130 people attended these workshops. After training each group individually, we began building communities of trained planning professionals, natural resources professionals, and landowners that can skillfully guide landowners working their way through the legacy planning process. In 2021, as part of this project, we started establishing networks in two regions: the Laurel Highlands in southwestern PA and Pennsylvania Wilds in northcentral PA.

In addition to developing and leading workshops and creating communities of experts with the resources to guide forest landowners, Center staff are working on adapting the regional publication *Their Land, Their Legacy* for Pennsylvania, continuing meetings with professionals and landowners, and creating a new publication to help forest landowners understand the planning process, the roles of professionals, their options, and the path to successful planning. The Center's Forest Legacy Working Group has assisted throughout this effort, reviewing workshop curriculum, providing feedback, and assessing resources.

### Providing Assistance

Equipping planning professionals, consulting foresters, and landowners with the right resources is essential to keeping parcels of working forests intact during transfers of ownership.



*Much of Pennsylvania's forests, which are predominately privately owned, are expected to change hands in the coming years. Yet most landowners are unaware of how to incorporate their land and their values for it into their estate plans, and many professionals are not equipped with the tools to help them.*

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



# Working Forests Under Conservation Easements: Developing a Model to Enhance Forest Conservation Values

As a growing number of Pennsylvania's forest landowners turn to conservation easements to protect the future of their land, how conservation organizations and landowners negotiate these easements is becoming increasingly important.

Under a USDA McIntire-Stennis grant awarded in 2019, Center staff investigated the current level of adaptive management practices allowed by Pennsylvania's conservation organizations on properties for which they hold easements. A survey of the state's land trusts holding easements on private forestland helped establish a baseline understanding of land trust perceptions of and activities permitted on protected forestland. Results clearly showed the strength and pervasiveness of negative attitudes toward forest management, particularly when income generation is a primary goal. For comparison, we benchmarked Pennsylvania land trusts' practices against those of national organizations known to promote active forest management and hold easements on working forests. For these organizations, setting target conditions rather than restrictions, conducting an all-important baseline inventory, and connecting to forest management plans and oversight are part of the easement writing process.

Based on this research, we developed an eight-week training program for employees and boards

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.

of Pennsylvania land trusts. This program explains adaptive forest management and shows how incorporating its practice into the long-term care permitted on forestland under easement will provide better protection and give land trusts the flexibility to readily adapt to future changes in the ecosystem.



*For landowners wanting to manage to improve forest health—or for other values—the hurdles can be large and cumbersome when easements don't allow management practices to take place.*



## What Is a Conservation Easement?

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 their land—such as the right to subdivide and develop—for generations to come. In exchange, the landowner has the assurance that their land will remain as forest long after their tenure.

## Adaptive Management vs. Protecting the Land: Can They Work Together?

Because these contracts are fixed in perpetuity, issues can arise between the terms of the easement and changing environmental conditions. For example, an easement written 30 years ago that prohibits the use of herbicides would prevent a practice critical for management today. Developing robust conservation easement models that incorporate flexibility through adaptive forest management is crucial in the face of these changes.



# 2021 Forest Landowners Survey

Understanding Pennsylvania's private forest landowners—and their relationship with their land—is essential to providing the right education, resources, and assistance to advance forest health and vitality. The 2021 Forest Landowners Survey, sent to 6,600 landowners across the state, will provide important data to the Center and our partners as we work to equip landowners with better tools and professional connections for caring well for their woods.

During 2022, survey data will be evaluated and results compared to past surveys. This study will also inform other key research such as the Caring Well initiative.

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

This work is/was supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Hatch Appropriations under Project No. PEN04698 and Accession No. 1019111.



*This survey provides important insights into the actions and perceptions of forest landowners.*

## Researching the Gap Between Landowners and Assistance

*By Sasha Soto, Ph.D. Candidate*

There is a tremendous opportunity for landowners to make well-informed land management decisions to avoid negatively impacting the long-term sustainability of their forests. Some landowners reject regulatory oversight and are leery of working with government agencies; others have excellent relationships with local, state, and federal service providers. These relationships arise out of different perceptions professionals and

landowners have of one another; at times, a gap, based in misunderstandings or from poor experiences, can prevent successful collaborations. Alternatively, some landowners are simply unaware of help available to them.

To effectively engage landowners, work must be done to overcome barriers. Key—but little investigated—barriers are the social dynamics between private forest landowners and agency officials and policy decision-makers. These interactions can be difficult to navigate,

especially when parties do not fully understand or acknowledge each other's perspectives. My research seeks to work within this gap to find ways to improve stakeholder communications and, ultimately, increase forest sustainability.

To explore the barriers between some landowners and professionals, it is important to identify and acknowledge landowner values, beliefs, and motivations in relation to their forestland. Preliminary data from the 2021 Forest Landowners Survey, combined with the Center's previous work, has revealed that landowners value trust, personal connection, experience, and the ability to develop relationships when choosing to work with professionals. To expand on this work, I plan to use semi-structured landowner interviews to learn where they are seeking assistance or guidance in managing their woods when not utilizing state or federal resources. Moreover, I hope to gain a clear understanding of why they choose to seek advice elsewhere and their level of trust in those resources. My goal is to improve sustainability interactions and communications between forest stakeholders.

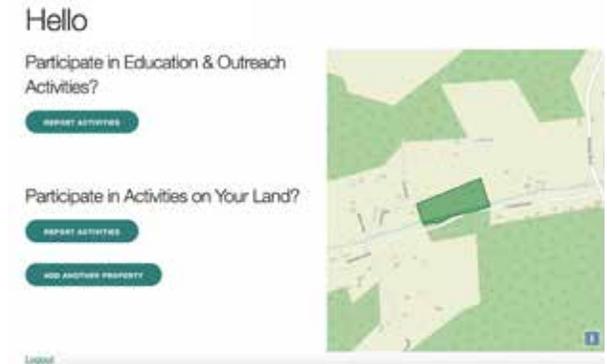


# Forest Stewardship Mapping Project

Working with the Penn State Center for Environmental Informatics, the Center continues to collaborate to create an online spatial tracking app that landowners can use to record the activities they are undertaking on their land. Starting with a test group of Pennsylvania Forest Steward volunteers and expanding from there, this browser-based web mapping tool will allow users to locate and designate stewardship activities as point or polygon features. Landowners will be able to record where stewardship activities occur, acreage impacted, activity type, costs and cost-sharing, and other notes as desired.

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

For PA Forest Steward volunteers, this tool can be used to track when, where, and how they engage in outreach activities, spreading the message of good forest stewardship. 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. As we continue to work with the Center for Environmental Informatics to refine the features of this powerful tool, beta testing is expected to begin in spring of 2022.



*Forest landowners will be able to create a personal historic record of actions they take on their land using a mapping app developed in partnership with the Penn State Center for Environmental Informatics.*



*Basemap layers showing aerial imagery or a street map view provide exceptional detail for landowners to map their property boundaries. Users can create, edit, and delete point or polygon geometry for forest activities, select the activity type, and make notes to digitally track stewardship actions taken over the years.*



# Pennsylvania Forest Stewards

With the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards volunteer program entering its fourth decade, 2021 was a year to celebrate the impact, the importance, and the legacy of this influential network of trained volunteers who are passionate about forest stewardship and dedicated to helping Pennsylvania's private forest landowners better care for their woods. Over 500 active volunteers currently serve as a "boots on the ground" resource across the state, building relationships and sharing their expertise and experience with others, practicing sustainable management on their land, advocating for forests in their communities, and going above and beyond for a resource that sustains us.

## 2021: A Year of Accomplishments

Here is just a sampling of what these Center-trained peer leaders accomplished in 2021: Paula Zankel participated in developing the Master Plan for Detweiler County Park in Dauphin County, Barley Van Clief ran a spotted lanternfly workshop for neighbors, Jim and Laura Faith Bock ordered hundreds of white oak seedlings to plant in a nursery enclosure and to share with neighbors, Travis Carey taught young adults chainsaw safety



*Pennsylvania Forest Steward Paul Solomon, left, explains the farm restoration process he has used on several properties in York County.*

and tree felling, George Kirik hosted 18 students from Clymer High School for a full day at his farm, Tim Shank presented a forest health program to a Cub Scout pack, Rob Stormer provided insight and advice to help other landowners achieve their goals, Michael Thomas and Sam Dengel served in leadership roles with the Dauphin County Woodland Owners Association, Jay Owen organized eight neighbors into a cost-effective *Lymantria dispar* (formerly gypsy moth) spray block, and Louise Hartman and her sisters enrolled their 154-acre forest in the Family Forest Carbon Program which was featured in a story in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

## PA Forest Stewards Class of 2021

In 2021, the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Basic Training returned to an in-person format, bringing together 19 people who were eager to learn and excited to get to know one another. Participants came to Krislund Camp in Centre County to spend a four-day weekend learning—both in the classroom and in the field—about forests, their management, and the role and value of a PA Forest Steward. This enthusiastic group, diverse in age, gender, and experience, left camp on Sunday ready to share their knowledge and passion with others.



*Class of 2021 participants learned the basics of assessing a sustainable timber harvest as the culminating activity of an intense four-day training.*

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.

## Importance of Peers

This robust community of Center-trained volunteers plays a vital role in advancing better care of forests through building positive relationships with other landowners.



# The Making of a Pennsylvania Forest Steward

*By Jim Scaperotto, Pennsylvania Forest Steward Volunteer, Class of 2021*

On a sunny Thursday late this past September, I found myself traveling quiet country roads in scenic Centre County, on my way to Krislund Camp, a forested retreat nestled on over 800 acres of quintessential Pennsylvania woodlands. I was one of the lucky few selected into the Center for Private Forest's Pennsylvania Forest Stewards volunteer training program and I was both excited and a bit apprehensive at the same time.

The four-day workshop was intense and jam-packed from start to finish, from early morning "sunrise" woods walks to late night bonfires—learning, sharing, and positive attitudes a constant throughout. The program included a mix of classroom instruction and outdoor "hands-on" immersive training in woodland management topics such as tree identification and measurement, creating wildlife-friendly habitats, and silviculture.

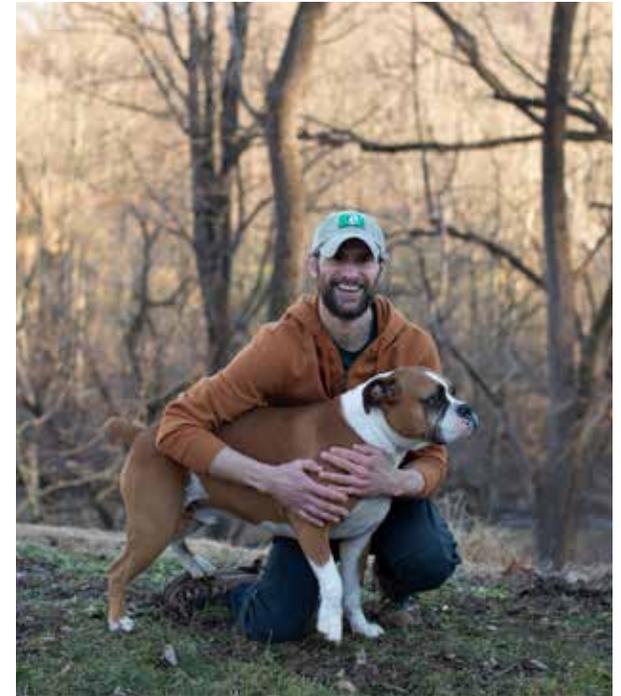
At the core of the entire workshop was the important mission of a Forest Steward volunteer—helping to bridge the gap between local landowners and the public and private resources available to them in the pursuit of healthy and sustainable forestland. Being a Steward means getting involved—that can be anything from talking to neighbors about forest stewardship to leading woodland tours, and even providing information to the media.

To say that the instructors were impressive would be a huge undersell. Clearly some of the

leading experts in their fields, each brought a unique mix of knowledge and experience to the program, but it was their deep passion for forest stewardship and conservation that really made their instruction memorable and impactful.

Good forest stewardship is centered around vital, healthy forests, and the wise and judicious use of the resources therein. For me, it is much more about connecting with the people entrusted with their care and helping them make informed decisions. Truly the best part of the four days for me was meeting my fellow Forest Steward trainees, the wonderful staff and our hosts, and the other guests who joined us. Listening to them explain what brought them there, their love of woods and the natural world, and what they hoped to do in the future to help promote healthy forests inspired me then and still does to this day.

The PA Forest Stewards volunteer training was a seriously great experience, one of the most well-run and fulfilling events of this type I have ever been to. I am looking forward to finding outreach opportunities in the future and have already done some small stewardship activities, including joining a fellow Steward during a Walk in Penn's Woods event in October, talking to neighbors and other local landowners about stewardship principles and invasive species management, and promoting the use of native plants in gardening and landscaping. Given the opportunity to attend, I would highly recommend anyone interested to grasp the chance and join this network of over 500 other active PA Forest Steward volunteers across the state.



*Jim applied for the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards volunteer program out of his love and respect for the natural environment and his desire to contribute to its restoration and preservation. Jim owns 5 acres, 3 that are forested, in Chester County. His wooded acreage serves as a riparian buffer to Birch Run and has many temporary ponds providing excellent amphibian habitat.*



# Measuring Impact: Pennsylvania Forest Stewards 2021 Survey

Every two years, we conduct a survey to measure the activities, influence, and reach of all active Pennsylvania Forest Stewards over the previous 12 months.

Two key measures sum up the impact of their work: total volunteer outreach hours invested and total number of people reached through stewardship outreach activities. This year's respondents reported 15,701 hours dedicated to outreach activities, the equivalent of nearly eight full-time employees at 40 hours per week for 50 weeks. At the current national volunteer average rate of \$28.54 per hour, this work totaled an impressive \$448,107. And, their efforts reached nearly half a million people, an increase of 44 percent over 2019's survey. With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to impact events in 2021,

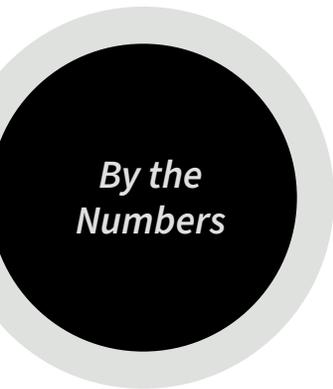
Stewards spent more hours in one-on-one conversations and on outreach through print and social media.

In addition to their outreach work, Stewards spent a significant amount of time on stewardship activities on their own land. This work further builds their experience and expands their toolkit of resources, which in turn increases their effectiveness in reaching other woodland owners.

Funding that supports this volunteer program requires a 1:1 match of time to supplement the grant monies received. Our committed network of volunteers almost triples the total grant monies received to support all aspects of the Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship program, of which the PA Forest Stewards are only one part.



**Media Outreach:** Stewards Brian Zeidner and Nancy Baker worked together to produce this cover story for Penn Lines magazine. Reaching 170,000 households in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the feature article sparked tremendous interest in the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards volunteer program.



**15,701**  
HOURS  
total outreach time promoting good forest stewardship

**1,847**  
HOURS  
serving woodland owners associations

**398,875**  
PEOPLE  
reached through media outreach

**3,459**  
HOURS  
participating on conservation-related boards

**8**  
FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES  
equivalent amount of work performed

**477**  
HOURS  
assisting natural resources professionals

**4,423**  
YOUTH & ADULTS  
reached through presentations

**1,122**  
PEOPLE  
reached through one-on-one conversations

**\$448,107**  
DOLLARS  
value of the volunteer time invested



# What Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Are Saying...

*“The Center has a wide-ranging and critical impact on forest landowners. One of the keys is recruiting and retaining the younger generation to practice forest management practices and become invested in the preservation and maintenance of healthy self-sustaining forests. Perhaps with all of the new visitors to State and National Parks, people will appreciate forests and the interconnected ecosystem and want to engage in best practices in forest management.”*

Harry Holt, class of 2015

*“I really appreciate the education and motivation I continue to receive from the program and related resources.”*

John Liebeguth, class of 2018

*“We care, love, and respect our property. The educational opportunities available to us, as well as dedicated folks willing to share their love and knowledge, are invaluable resources.”*

Kathy Ryba, class of 2003

*“For us, the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards program has provided insights, incentives, and connections that have been very valuable. We have joined the Northwest Pennsylvania Forest Landowners Association and the Foundation for Sustainable Forests. We have also developed a fine working relationship with our local service forester. Our mission is to informally encourage others to take advantage of the many opportunities provided, especially PA Forest Stewards.”*

Jim Bock, class of 2006

## ...What Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Are Doing

### Working to Save Hemlocks

When they discovered hemlock woolly adelgid on the Beaverdale Sportsmen’s Association’s 325-acre property, PA Forest Stewards Adam Katrancha, Chad Eppley, Bob Stewart, and Tom Kakabar joined with fellow club members to take on the challenge of saving the hemlocks from these destructive invaders. They researched and collaborated, and, after careful study, they developed an inventory plan to locate and evaluate hemlocks. Using high-resolution, leaf-off aerial photos, they located, tagged, inspected, and recorded information about each tree. Of the 250 hemlocks surveyed, 50 were found to be infested and were subsequently treated with an insecticide applied through soil tablets or basal spray. Long-term observation and monitoring will measure the full success of these treatments. Those participating in this exercise of conservation share a special camaraderie, knowing that, together, they are shaping the future of this piece of Penn’s Woods.



*PA Forest Steward Chad Eppley places soil tablets around an infested hemlock on the Beaverdale Sportsmen’s Association’s 325-acre property.*

### Hosting a Forest Management Workshop for Chatham University Students

PA Forest Steward Matt Veltri hosted a group of students and their professor from Chatham University’s Eden Hall Campus for a hands-on workshop at his property. Students learned about forest management and woodworking, as Matt shared a property overview, forest management objectives that included a sustainable timber

sale, lumber production, and small-scale lumber use. They hiked a portion of the property, visited Matt’s sawmill and log yard, and toured his woodshop. During the workshop, Matt shared that good forest management includes “thinking in 100-year increments,” a concept he learned from Jim Finley during his PA Forest Stewards training.

### Reaching Tioga County Through a Woodland Owners Association

Since 1998, the Tioga County Woodland Owners Association has shared an enthusiasm for forest stewardship and worked hard to educate their neighbors about sound forest management. Eight PA Forest Stewards are an integral part of this active group: Anne Alexander, Tom and Maureen Socha, Marwin Cummings, Dale Spitzer, Jack and Kris Reilly, and Brynn Hammarstrom. Their 2021 activities included a community birdhouse building event, a well-attended wildflower/forest edibles/medicinal plants walk, and a historical walking tour of the Dyer Farm CCC camp.



# Oak Wilt Mitigation Study

Oak wilt is a serious threat to all species of oaks in Pennsylvania. To date, the best available control strategy for this fatal fungus-caused disease requires the use of trenching equipment, which may be difficult to find, expensive to operate, and impractical in natural forest settings. Oak trees commonly connect to nearby oaks of the same species through root grafting, creating a large interconnected underground system through which the oak wilt fungus from an infected tree can quickly travel to nearby healthy trees. Trenching involves setting up a buffer that includes trees around an infected tree, digging a deep trench to break root connections to all trees outside the buffer, and allowing oaks within the buffer to die to preserve oaks outside the buffer.

Led by the Center and the Penn State Forestry and Wildlife Extension team and supported by the Pennsylvania DCNR and partners across the nation, this project raised awareness about oak wilt among Pennsylvania's forest

professionals and the general public, established the effectiveness of more feasible mitigation techniques for forest settings, and expanded partnerships across the region. With assistance from collaborators, our research team identified four oak wilt outbreaks in central Pennsylvania where they conducted an array of herbicide mitigation treatments and documented their effectiveness. In addition, they investigated nine material disposal methods for infected matter.

Our research validated the use of a Midwestern technique for selecting sacrifice trees for removal, aimed at controlling new pockets of oak wilt before the disease becomes widespread, and we refined herbicide application methods associated with this technique. We also refined recommendations for processing and disposal methods. Our experience is informing new fact sheets and definitive management guidance for state forest management agencies. We have also conducted several face-to-face trainings and will expand these trainings in 2022.

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



*By girdling and applying herbicide to kill infected trees, Penn State Forestry and Wildlife Extension educators were able to validate and refine this technique to inform guidance being developed for state forest management agencies.*



*Leaves infected with the fungus that causes oak wilt have large splotches of brown, caused by the tree's inability to get water and nutrients. They die from the margins inward (right).*

## Addressing Challenges

This study brought many partners together to research cost-effective solutions to control the deadly oak wilt disease, a threat to some of our most important hardwoods.



# Walk in Penn's Woods

Walk in Penn's Woods reached a milestone in 2021—five years of woods walks, building public appreciation for all the benefits that our woodlands provide. After a year of changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Walk in Penn's Woods returned to an in-person format with a few new elements. Over the first weekend in October, Pennsylvanians were encouraged to join a hosted walk in their area or to get outside, take a walk of their own, and share their adventure with us.

And on a beautiful, cool weekend, folks throughout Pennsylvania did just that! Almost 500 people took part in 40 organized and seven independent walks across 31 counties. At these

organized walk sites, participants had unique experiences, learning and playing in Penn's Woods. From birding, tree identification, and learning about prehistoric flora and fauna to mountain bike rides, disc golf, and geocaching, there were opportunities for Pennsylvanians of all ages. Participants witnessed improvements in local parks, saw local works of art, and learned the history of Pennsylvania's landscape. And, 2021 marked the third year that Walk in Penn's Woods featured wheelchair- and stroller-friendly sites to provide a more inclusive experience.

With Walk in Penn's Woods going virtual in 2020, we saw the benefit of promoting trails and

experiences and taking folks on “virtual” walks all year round. Because of that, we maintained our 2020 virtual walk experiences in a repository on our website, so anyone, anywhere, anytime can experience Penn's Woods.

Walk in Penn's Woods is a partnership of the Center for Private Forests at Penn State, PA Forestry Association, Penn State Extension, PA Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Implementation Committee, PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry, the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Association of Consulting Foresters, Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, and the PA Forest Stewards volunteer program.



*“We all found this to be not only educational, but very interesting. We're looking forward to more walks in Penn's Woods!”*



*“What a great event. Will do it again!”*  
*“This was really great for kids!”*



*“Awesome ride!”*  
*“Keep building trails!”*

Follow Walk in Penn's Woods at:



facebook.com/walkinpennswoods

www.walkinpennswoods.org



# Inside the Center

## Five-Year Strategic Plan Sets the Course for the Center

*In 2020-21, a subcommittee of the Center for Private Forests Council worked to create a five-year strategic plan to enhance our strengths, better define our work, and lay the course for the next five years. The plan was approved by the full Council in July 2021. In this document, the Center sets out its values, aims, and outcomes for the 2022-2026 planning horizon.*

### Our Values

**We believe...**

#### ***People and Forests***

- That stewardship is best accomplished by working at the intersection of people and forests.
- That forest landowners can contribute significantly to forest health, resilience, and vitality.
- That an engaged community is a powerful force in improving forest health and vitality.
- That we have an obligation to conserve forests and their value for future generations.

#### ***Working Forests***

- That working forests can provide a broad range of economic, environmental, and social benefits to the people who care for them, the wildlife that inhabits them, and society as a whole.
- That working forests are an essential part of the ecosystem on which all of society depends.
- That working forests require active intervention and management to maintain their health, vitality, and capacity to deliver benefits to society sustainably.

#### ***Pathways to Stewardship***

- That forest stewardship emerges through dialogue and collaboration among landowners, stewardship professionals, and communities.
- That forest stewardship is best achieved by understanding and connecting landowner values to sustainable practices.
- That research focused on interactions among landowners and professionals with each other and with the land is essential in developing the knowledge to catalyze change on the landscape.
- That peer-to-peer education, which combines individual practical experience with knowledge of best practices, is an important tool for inspiring change.



**Inspiring Stewardship:** *Maintaining a strong and vibrant network of Pennsylvania Forest Steward volunteers is key to engaging other landowners in stewardship through peer-to-peer learning.*



## Our Six Key Aims

### Create Scholarship

Develop and share basic and applied research and experience to expand understanding of private forest landowners, their land, and the professionals who advise them.

### Inspire Stewardship

Inspire and cultivate a growing community of private forest landowners adopting stewardship values and practices on their land.

### Strengthen Connections

Foster a shared vision and understanding of stewardship among private forest landowners, professionals, and academic faculty necessary for effective collaboration on private forest stewardship.

### Expand the Stewardship Community

Broaden the range of stewardship professionals and organizations advising private forest landowners on the stewardship of their land.

### Inform Policy

Convey knowledge and insights to aid development and implementation of policies and practices that impact private forest landowners and their land.

### Build Infrastructure

Build the Center organization, partnering, and financial capacity to impact forest health and vitality.



**Strengthening Connections:** *Center staff have a long history of effective collaboration with stewardship professionals and academic faculty in understanding private forest landowners and their experiences in caring for their land.*

## Our Key Outcomes

- Remain at the forefront in advancing research-based insights about private forest landowners, their land, and the professionals who advise them.
- Collaborate broadly across the College, University, and stakeholder communities on basic and applied research opportunities, innovative educational approaches, and policies and programs.
- Enhance understanding of how to motivate and inspire action among private forest landowners interested in stewardship.
- Develop new insights and approaches for strengthening relationships between private forest landowners and stewardship professionals who advise them.
- Strengthen, increase, and broaden a network of professionals available to collaborate with, and advise, private forest landowners on stewardship.
- Build and optimize Center infrastructure, particularly the volunteer infrastructure, consistent with aims of the strategic plan.



# Partnering to Build an Engaged Forest Stewardship Community

## *PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry*

In 1991, the first iteration of the forest stewardship program for Pennsylvania formalized a long-standing partnership between Penn State and the PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry. In the intervening 31 years, this partnership has remained strong and resulted in our tremendous peer volunteer network, a wide-ranging stewardship-focused newsletter, publications and other resources to educate landowners and help them care well for their woods, innovative work engaging new landowners and the professional community, and many reciprocal advisory and collaborative roles to together advance our respective missions.



Since the establishment of the Forest Stewardship program in the 1991 Farm Bill, the USDA Forest Service has remained a strong partner to Penn State and the Bureau through 31 years of funding to support the work of Pennsylvania's program. As well, over the years, they have funded innovative applied research, the creation of educational programming, and resources to support advancing good care of private forests in the state.

## *USDA Forest Service*

## *Penn State Extension*

The Forestry and Wildlife Extension team plays a key role in the activities of the forest stewardship program, from presenting at the PA Forest Stewards training and hosting woods walks as part of Walk in Penn's Woods, to collaborating on grants and innovative project proposals. In return, the Center has piloted projects that have become a part of the team's programmatic offerings. The Extension team's commitment to the mission of the Center and the work of advancing forest stewardship in the state raises capacity for carrying forward a message of caring well for privately-owned forests.



# Inspiring and Equipping Forest Landowners for Action

Strong collaborative partnerships are critical to 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 strive 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.



*In the Women and Their Woods program led by the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, members of partner organizations—including the Center—come together to teach women landowners about caring well for their woods.*

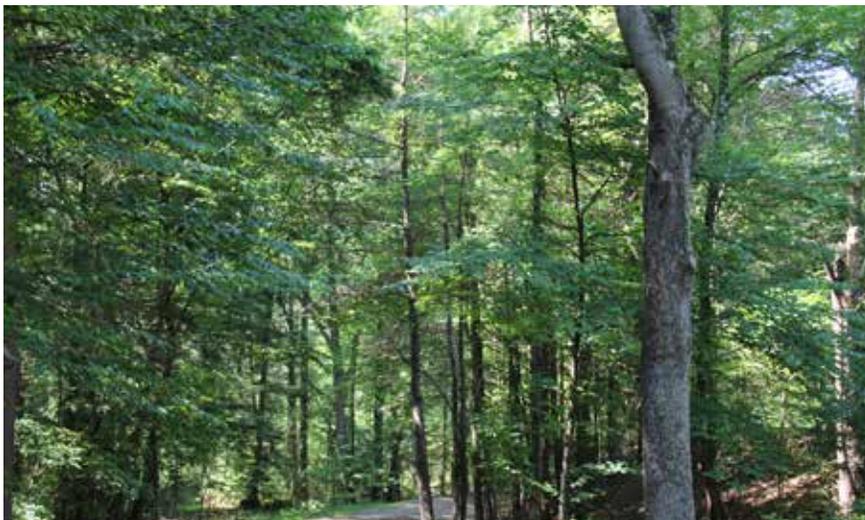
OUR WORK	OUR PARTNERS
Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program; Woodland Stewardship Innovation Team; Forest Landowners Survey; Walk in Penn’s Woods; Forest Stewardship Mapping; Forested Riparian Buffers; Governor’s Green Ribbon Task Force	Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry
Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program	USDA Forest Service
Working Forests Under Conservation Easements	USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture
Conservation-based Estate Planning	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Women and Their Woods	Delaware Highlands Conservancy
Pennsylvania Implementation Committee; Walk in Penn’s Woods	Sustainable Forestry Initiative®
Advice from the Woods; 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 College of Agricultural Sciences
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; Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful; Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation
Centre County Master Naturalists	ClearWater Conservancy; Pennsylvania Master Naturalists



# Supporting Extension, DCNR, and ESM Programs

## *The Woods in Your Backyard*

In 2021, Penn State Extension and its partners continued to offer *The Woods in Your Backyard*, a nine-week webinar series starting in late January. With nearly 500,000 Pennsylvanians owning a small patch of woodlands 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*. Allyson Muth teaches one of the nine sessions during the course. With the series growing in popularity, hundreds of landowners have already completed the course since it was introduced in 2019. We look forward to continuing to support this effort to help landowners plan and implement simple stewardship practices to enhance the land's natural resources.



*The Woods in Your Backyard webinar series teaches small-acreage woodland owners how to create and enhance natural areas around their homes.*

## Advisory Committees

In 2021, Center staff served on the advisory committees listed below. In this capacity, we provided 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
- Ecosystem Management Advisory Committee
- Forest Stewardship Program Advisory Committee

## Center Director Leads ESM's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

In 2021, Center Director Allyson Muth led the Ecosystem Science and Management (ESM) Department's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee in creating a DEI strategic plan for the department, adopted and approved by College leadership. The plan identified 15 action steps for the department to take to guide our efforts in the next three years. Allyson and Dr. Estelle Couradeau from the ESM DEI committee also partnered with the Department of Plant Science's DEI committee to offer a screening of the documentary *Picture a Scientist*, followed by a discussion and panel of women leaders in the University who shared their experiences as women in STEM. The two events were attended by over 100 members of the greater Penn State community.



*A screening of Picture a Scientist followed by a panel discussion drew over 100 members of the greater Penn State community.*



# Expanding Our Impact

## Through Social Media and Digital, Print, and Online Tools

### Social Media

Since 2019, the Center has increased its social media presence, especially in using Facebook as a place to collaborate and connect, and to share valuable information. We share informative posts, engaging infographics, and short video snippets on forest-related topics to reach more forest landowners and the professionals who serve them, to make more connections with the public, and to build our online community.

### Forest Leaves Newsletter

One of the most widely-distributed forestry publications in Pennsylvania, *Forest Leaves* reaches over 13,600 print and email subscribers with news and information on forestry-related topics. In 2021, readers learned about reducing your carbon footprint, seed banks, managing *Lymantria dispar*, forest health, forest-related news, newly-released publications, 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



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Service, the PA Tree Farm® Committee, 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 where to get help in managing your forest, how the timing of defoliation and reforestation matters, and how working forests work for us. News releases are often picked up by newspapers, included in newsletters, and shared among woodland owners. They are also archived on the Center's website at [ecosystems.psu.edu/research/centers/private-forests/news](https://ecosystems.psu.edu/research/centers/private-forests/news).

*With forest products known to most, trees are necessary resources in the supply chain for paper products, lumber, firewood, and even maple syrup. Sometimes less known are the cultural and spiritual values one can experience in the forest. The Center's Sasha Soto introduced a well-received series in 2021, The Forest and Grounding, in the PA Forest Stewards newsletter to share the spiritual properties of forests.*

### 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 draws hundreds of 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 are available on the Center for Private Forests website under Resources for Woodland Owners.



# 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 12 million of the state’s 17 million forested acres 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 10 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 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 Center endowment.*

[ecosystems.psu.edu/give-to-private-forests](https://ecosystems.psu.edu/give-to-private-forests)



## ENDOWMENT PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT

	VALUE
<b>Initial Balance, July 1, 2020</b>	<b>\$550,325.21</b>
Cash Flows	
Gifts and Transfers	33,523.33
Market Appreciation/(Depreciation)	
Includes any market changes for above cash flows	174,216.39
<b>Ending Balance, June 30, 2021</b>	<b>\$758,064.93</b>

## SPENDING ACCOUNT

	VALUE
<b>Initial Balance, July 1, 2020</b>	<b>\$88,167.96</b>
Inflows	
Endowment Spending Allocation	22,518.43
Additional Gifts and Transfers	8,001.95
<b>Fiscal 2020-2021 Total Available Spending</b>	<b>\$118,688.34</b>
Outflows	
Expenditures and Transfers	(24,882.92)
<b>Ending Balance, June 30, 2021</b>	<b>\$93,805.42</b>



# Gifts to the Endowment

The Center for Private Forests at Penn State Endowment supports the work of the Center to extend its applied research efforts to address salient questions that challenge our forest's health and vitality and to prepare 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.

## What the Endowment Supports

Gifts to the Center for Private Forests at Penn State Endowment have, to date, supported undergraduate internships, graduate student fellowships, the ability to hire people to build project capacity, professional and leadership development efforts, and programmatic resources to support the Center's education and engagement efforts.



# Sharing Their Stories

## Tracey Coulter and Chip Mefford Honor Jim Finley's Life and Legacy with Their Gift

*By Tracey Coulter*

I was already a grandmother when Jim Finley became my mentor and graduate advisor. His focus on private forests and their stewardship was a perfect fit for me. Though my graduate work was interrupted by a cancer diagnosis and my father's passing, Jim's kindness, patience, and support throughout my program enabled me to complete my thesis and to realize my dream of becoming a professional forester.

His support didn't end at graduation. When I was hired by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry, Jim helped me to coordinate and to present at workshops, which led to the formation of the Bureau's unique agroforestry program—something that ultimately became my life's work.

Not only was Jim a mentor, he was a good neighbor. He was generous with his time and in sharing his passion for woodworking. When Chip

*"...Jim's kindness, patience, and support throughout my program enabled me to complete my thesis and to realize my dream of becoming a professional forester."*



*Chip Mefford and Tracey Coulter count it a privilege to invest in the future of the Center.*

and I were married, he and Linda presented us with one of his signature bowls. When we moved back to State College, Jim walked our woodlot with us—he never stopped mentoring!

We believe that for Jim, the Center for Private Forests was the culmination of many years of learning, teaching, and dedication to the belief that our private forests and their stewardship are vital to us all.

It was our privilege to contribute to the Center for Private Forests so that his work may continue.

*"We believe that for Jim, the Center for Private Forests was the culmination of many years of learning, teaching, and dedication to the belief that our private forests and their stewardship are vital to us all."*



*Tracey Coulter snapped this photo at Dickinson College Farm on a typical "Jim talking about trees" outing. Thousands experienced these vintage Jim Finley woods walks during his decades of work at the intersection of people and forests.*



# Dennis and Patricia Ringling Support the Center's Mission to Help Landowners Care Well for Their Woods

*By Dennis Ringling*

As we all know, we are living in some “demanding” times, and I would like to add “exciting” as well. What generation couldn’t proclaim the same? What is different from my perspective is the speed of change. For the most part, humans are averse to change in general, let alone quick change.

As a retired Forest Technology Professor of 42 years, I have experienced forest technology grow from the Biltmore stick and staff compass to laser cruising in real time and GPS/GIS and Lidar technology. Such change is occurring throughout the environment as well.

*“Simply put, the forest resources we have make our lives, communities, and the world better! I see the Center for Private Forests at Penn State as a change agent...”*

Disinformation, misinformation, and ignorance have exacerbated the problem of how politics, public advocacy, and the lack of pragmatism affect the change we as a world need to make.

Simply put, the forest resources we have make our lives, communities, and the world better! I see the Center for Private Forests at Penn State as a change agent to offset and balance some of what was alluded to in the previous paragraphs.



*A Penn Tech Forest Technology professor for over four decades, Dennis Ringling taught many students about chainsaw safety and maintenance. He and his wife Patricia have been long-time supporters of the Center's work.*

*“...I view the Center as helping those owners become better stewards for future generations.”*

Pennsylvania is approximately 60% forested—comprising about 17 million acres of forest—with a population of around 13 million people; most of those acres of forest are owned by the private sector—people like you and me.

The Center works with these landowners regarding their investments, strategies, recreational opportunities, conservation goals, management questions, climate and sequestration concerns, and many more environmental connections that go into being a forest owner, and I’m glad to support that work.

Remember, owning forest property is much more than just trees and wildlife. We are very fortunate to have so much of this resource in this country and Pennsylvania, in particular, and I view the Center as helping those owners become better stewards for future generations.



# Our Donors

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Earl Novendstern<sup>\*,1</sup>  
Piantanida Charitable Fund<sup>\*</sup>

*Through basic and applied research, model program development, and the large peer volunteer effort of the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards program, the Center is exploring innovative ways to provide current and future landowners with the inspiration, skills, and advice needed for effective stewardship.*



\* General donation  
<sup>1</sup> In memory of Jim Finley  
<sup>2</sup> In memory of Ben Vaupel  
<sup>3</sup> In honor of John Buzzell  
<sup>4</sup> 2021 Walk in Penn's Woods supporter



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*Our strong collaborative partnerships are central to the mission of the Center and to cultivating a community that serves the landowners and lands of our changing forests.*



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](https://ecosystems.psu.edu/give-to-private-forests)



# Looking Ahead

*Advancing research, inspiring stewardship, expanding community*

Here's a look at a some of our key programs, research, and activities in 2022:

## **Caring Well Initiative**

Caring Well for Pennsylvania's Privately-owned Forests continues to grow in scope going into 2022. In 2021, this diverse partnership began to explore the adaptations and expansions needed to reach the goal of reframing the role and perception of forestry professionals. In 2022, the partnership will be working together to develop training programs, hold community-building meetings and exercises, create tools to facilitate better landowner-professional communication, and initiate internship programs.

## **Pennsylvania Forest Landowners Survey**

The data is in for the 2021 statewide forest landowners survey. A repeat of the 2010 survey, this survey's results will be applied and implemented in 2022 to 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 results 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.

## **Forest Landowners Panel Survey**

Several hundred landowners have participated in each past iteration of the statewide survey (2006, 2008, and 2010). In 2022, we plan to conduct research with those past participants still holding forestland to understand how their values, attitudes, and behaviors have changed over time. What's more or less important than it was? What opportunities have they taken advantage of? What new challenges have they confronted?

## **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. Audience-specific workshops were shifted to a virtual format, with training continuing the first quarter of 2022 and community building planned for the latter part of the year.



*In addition to the programs and activities outlined here, we anticipate a full class of 2022 Pennsylvania Forest Steward trainees in September.*

## **Student Research: Forest Resilience and Forest Restoration**

The Center will expand undergraduate research opportunities with a forest restoration project to begin in the fall. Targeted graduate student research on forest resilience and communication tools is also slated to begin later in 2022.

## **2023 Forest Landowners Conference**

We are excited to host a full two-day conference experience for hundreds of forest landowners, the forestry professional community, and our partners, at the Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center in State College, PA on Friday and Saturday, March 24 and 25, 2023. Preparations will get underway in late spring 2022 and continue through the start of the conference. Mark your calendars and join us for this statewide and beyond event.

Some of the Center's key efforts in 2022 focus on broadening the community of professionals advising private forest landowners, research to understand and support the actions and values of landowners, and engaging students in new work.

*Applied  
Research and  
Engagement*



# Center Staff, Council, and Affiliates

## Center Leadership



**Allyson Muth**

Center Director;  
Council Executive Committee;  
Assistant Research Professor,  
Private Forests Management



**Blaine Aikin**

Council Chair;  
Council Executive Committee;  
PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Founder and Principal,  
Fiduciary Insights, LLC



**Jeanne Riley**

Council Executive Committee;  
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Biopharmaceutical  
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**Susan Stout**

Council Executive Committee;  
USDA Forest Service  
Project Leader (ret.)

## Center Council Members



**Nancy Baker**

PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Forest Ecologist



**Brad Cardinale**

Department Head,  
Ecosystem Science  
and Management,  
Penn State



**Renee Carey**

PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Executive Director, Northcentral  
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**Jim Grace**

Retired Goddard Professor of  
Forestry and Environmental  
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**Laura Jackson**

PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
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**Matthew Keefer**

Assistant State Forester,  
PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry



**Marc Lewis**

Co-owner, Dwight Lewis  
Lumber Company, Inc.,  
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Private Forest Landowner



**Al Luloff**

PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Professor Emeritus of Rural  
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Dimensions of Natural  
Resources and the Environment



**Carolyn Mahan**

Professor of Biology and  
Environmental Studies and Co-chair  
of the Environmental Studies  
Program at Penn State Altoona



**Katie Ombalski**

PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Principal, Conservation  
Biologist, Woods and Waters  
Consulting, LLC



**Rachel Reyna**

Chief, Rural and Community  
Forestry Section,  
PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry



**Tony Riley**

PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Chief Medical Officer,  
Gilchrist



**Paul Roth**

Pennsylvania State Director,  
Energy Foundation;  
Project Coordinator,  
Center for Private Forests



**Craig Schwegman**

PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Financial Advisor,  
Edward Jones



**Bob Slagter**

Steering Committee Chair;  
PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
General Electric Sales (ret.)



**Jim Finley**

Center Co-founder, 2011;  
Center Director, 2011-2017;  
Center Council Chair, 2017-2021

*"My passion for forests and trees and the people who work in the forests has been a big part of my life and I champion those who share a commitment to the health and vitality of forests."*

## Center Staff



**Abby Jamison**

Forest Stewardship  
Program Associate



**Barb Sellers**

Administrative  
Assistant



**Sasha Soto**

PhD Candidate

## Faculty and Stakeholder Affiliates

**Ted Alter**, Professor of Agricultural, Environmental and Regional Economics

**Margaret Brittingham**, Professor of Wildlife Resources, Extension Wildlife Specialist

**Leland Glenna**, Professor of Rural Sociology and Science, Technology, and Society and Human Dimensions of Natural Resources and the Environment

**Dave Jackson**, Forest Resources Educator, Penn State Extension

**Marc McDill**, Associate Professor of Forest Management

**Frans Padt**, Teaching Professor of Environmental Planning

**Gary San Julian**, Professor Emeritus of Wildlife Resources and Human Dimensions of Natural Resources and the Environment

**Alex Metcalf**, Assistant Professor, Department of Society and Conservation, University of Montana

**Sanford Smith**, Teaching Professor in Forest Resources and Natural Resources and Youth Extension Specialist

**Kim Steiner**, Professor of Forest Biology, Director of The Arboretum at Penn State and Human Dimensions of Natural Resources and the Environment

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