

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Working at the  
Intersection of  
People and Forests



THE JAMES C. FINLEY  
CENTER FOR PRIVATE FORESTS



**PennState**  
College of Agricultural Sciences





# Shaping the Future of Our Forests

## Forests Form the Cornerstone of Life in Pennsylvania

The health of our forests is vital to so many facets of life—the well-being of local wildlife and watersheds, the vibrancy of our state economy, and the availability of leisure and recreational activities so many Pennsylvanians enjoy. Forests clean the air we breathe and the water we drink. They occupy 17 million of our 28 million acres. More than 70 percent of our state's forest is in private hands: individuals, families, forestry and non-forestry corporations, and organizations.

## Penn State Is a National Leader in the Study of Private Forest Landowners

The James C. Finley Center for Private Forests at Penn State is at the forefront of studying private forest landowners, their stewardship, and their land. Through its research and practice, the Finley Center aims to create scholarship, inspire stewardship, strengthen connections among forest landowners, professionals, and academic faculty, and inform policy impacting private forest landowners across the state.

## The Finley Center's Work Connects Research to Practice

The Finley Center is founded on the vision and pioneering academic research of its co-founder, the late Dr. Jim Finley, Professor Emeritus of Private Forest Management and Human Dimensions and Natural Resources and the Ibberson Professor of Private Forest Management at Penn State. This groundbreaking research, which continues to this day under Dr. Allyson Muth, Center Director, is focused on understanding how people engage with and care for their forests, and developing innovative ways to support landowners in the stewardship of their land. The Center also is home to the award-winning Pennsylvania Forest Stewards program, which enlists and trains private forest landowners as peer volunteers to assist fellow landowners in caring for their woods.

For their very survival, our forests depend on multiple generations of landowners, professionals, and other stakeholders who serve as their caretakers. The Finley Center and our partners are striving to bring new perspectives and solutions to today's natural resources challenges and to expand the community of professionals and landowners working to sustain healthy forests on private land.

## Our Mission

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



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“Nothing stays the same. Forests are dynamic; they are always changing. If we are to be good stewards of the land we care for, we have to understand, anticipate, and embrace change.”

— JIM FINLEY, FINLEY CENTER CO-FOUNDER







“Coming from our strong foundations in social science, natural resources management, and education, we recognize that stewardship comes from connecting landowners and communities with the natural spaces around them.”

— ALLYSON MUTH, FINLEY CENTER DIRECTOR



# From the Director

Dear friends,

To begin, thank you to all who have supported the Finley Center in so many ways throughout the years and in 2023. We are grateful to and for you.

As you read this report—and the accomplishments of our small, but mighty, staff—one thing to keep in mind is the tremendous role our partners and stakeholders play in our efforts. We work to build off of foundational research and expand understanding through our applied research. Our goal is to answer big questions and tackle challenging issues in hopes of making a difference. But we also serve a role as a trusted convener and collaborator with numerous partners around the state, region, and nation. Coming from our strong foundations in social science, natural resources management, and education, we recognize that stewardship comes from connecting landowners and communities with the natural spaces around them.

Our partners and stakeholders are key to our successes. We rely on the tremendous contributions of agencies and organizations sharing presentations, exhibits, expertise, and



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*“...together we are working to change the trajectory of woodland care and management to outcomes that cultivate stewardship and sustainability of forests.”*

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financial resources to make the 2023 Forest Landowners Conference happen. We also engage expertise across the whole of the forestry community as we work to define a sustainable future for Penn’s Woods. Our many collaborative efforts occur in spaces that bring members of the forestry community together to collectively create shared resources, programs, and messaging that mean more landowners adopting management practices that improve their forests. With the scope and tenure of the issues faced (we often hear, “We’ve been trying to solve this for 40 years!”), we recognize and are grateful for the opportunities that arise in these broader collaborations: opportunities to hear more voices, build better tools, and find real solutions.

Each partnership is meaningful. Thanks to our numerous partners—Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry, Penn State Extension, US Department of Agriculture Forest Service, and many other conservation organizations—the Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program and our Pennsylvania Forest Stewards volunteer program continue their decades-long impact across the

state. The Walk in Penn’s Woods collaboration, now in its seventh year, has gained the attention of the governor’s office. The convening of the forestry community under Caring Well for Pennsylvania’s Privately Owned Forests, and the deep discussions about our practice as forestry professionals as we share data from the most recent Forest Landowners Survey, are reframing landowner-professional relationships. Through these and so many other efforts, together we are working to change the trajectory of woodland care and management to outcomes that cultivate stewardship and sustainability of forests.

Within the Finley Center, we have a tremendous cadre of volunteers and professionals working with us: our Finley Center Council, our Pennsylvania Forest Stewards volunteers, faculty peers, and our amazing Center staff. Their guidance and willingness to share their expertise and experiences help the Finley Center to convene and create a common vision and clear messaging to support the people who own the majority of the woodlands in Pennsylvania and in the eastern US.

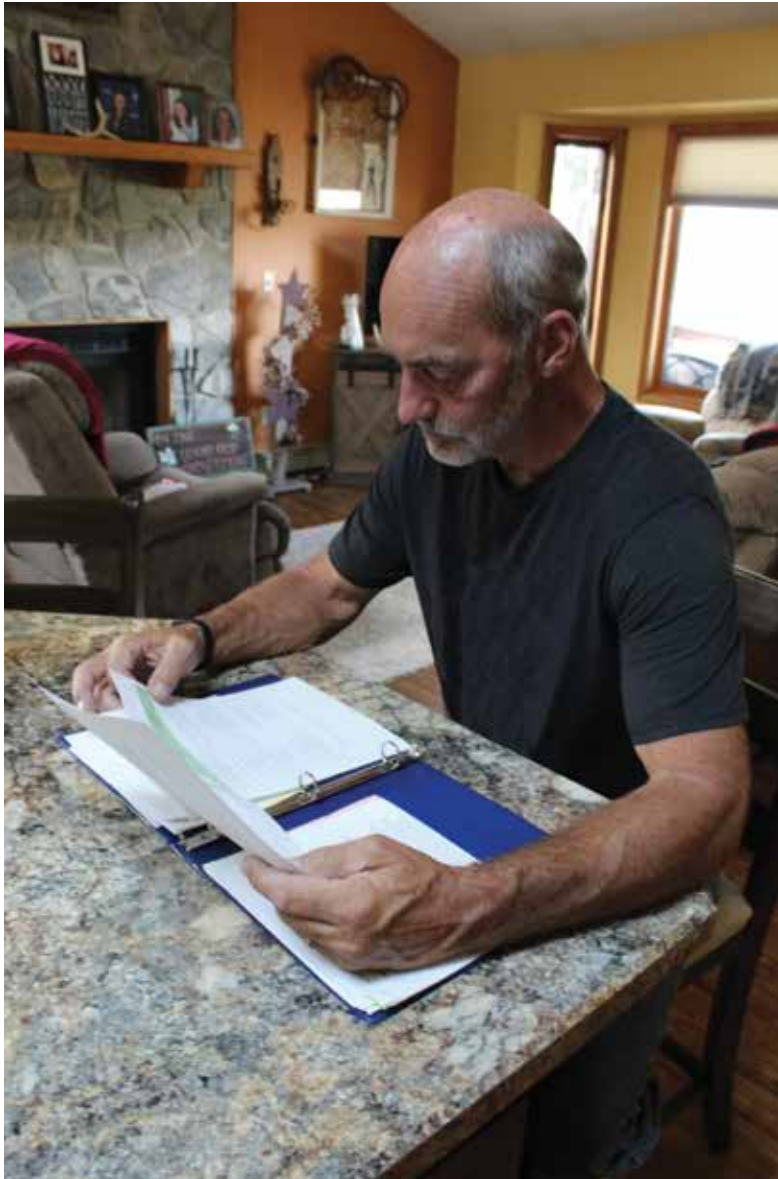
For the community in which we get to conduct, collaborate, and share our work, I am most grateful. Thank you for being a part of that community.

**Allyson Muth**  
Finley Center Director





# Bringing New Insights and Resources for Conservation-based Estate Planning



The decisions forest landowners make—or don't make—can have major consequences for the land they love, for their families, and for society as a whole. Transferring ownership in ways that protect what landowners love about their land while meeting the financial and emotional needs of their families, often called forest legacy planning or conservation-based estate planning, can be a complex and highly emotional process.

Forests are most at risk for subdivision or development when land transfer takes place. With Pennsylvania's private forest landowner population now at an average age of 66, according to our 2021 survey data, planning for the future of their forestland is critical. But too often, the process is overwhelming.

In 2010, Finley Center staff began to work in the space of forest legacy planning, recognizing that, to continue our focus on the care and management of private forestland, we first must ensure that it stays intact, as forest. Legacy planning is not a "one size fits all" venture. It can be long and complicated, causing landowners to disengage. That's why we continue the hard work to create resources that help landowners overcome the hurdles and achieve a successful plan for the future of their woodland. And that's why we have a suite of legacy planning tools readily available on our website, including:

- *It's Your Legacy: A Pennsylvania Landowner's Guide to Conservation-based Estate Planning*
- *Legacy Planning Stories: How Forest Landowners "Like Me" Are Ensuring the Future of Their Land*
- *My Plans For the Land after Me* worksheet

"We want to help landowners progress through the legacy planning process to a successful outcome so that their land can remain intact and forested into the future."

— ALLYSON MUTH, FINLEY CENTER DIRECTOR





In 2023, Finley Center staff completed the Pennsylvania adaptation of *Their Land, Their Legacy: A Guide to Help Inform Pennsylvania Landowners' Decisions about the Future of Their Land*, originally created by colleagues in New England and New York. Center Council member and consultant Paul Roth, who earned his Ph.D. under Jim Finley, led the development of this resource for those who want to help landowners plan for the next generation of ownership. This well-received publication provides trusted advisors and professionals with a roadmap, based on Paul's research, to guide them through the conservation-based estate planning process to a successful outcome.

*Their Land, Their Legacy*, also found on the Center's website, marked the culmination of the Center's effort under a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant, which also supported workshops to help professionals and landowners understand and have the tools to navigate the conservation-based estate planning process.

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



Our work is empowering landowners, planners, and natural resources professionals to better navigate the complex estate planning process and achieve their conservation-related goals.



# Giving Voice to Pennsylvania's Forest Landowners through the Forest Landowners Survey

Understanding Pennsylvania's 700,000 woodland landowners—their values, motivations, challenges, and connection with their land—is essential to providing the resources and assistance that advance the health and vitality of our nearly 12 million acres of private forests.

In late 2021 into 2022, we set out to capture voices from both large and small private forest landowners through a comprehensive Forest Landowners Survey sent to 6,600 households throughout the state. We heard from generational landowners, landowners who recently retired with time and resources, new landowners who found and purchased their own small piece of Penn's Woods, and many more. In 2023, led by Ph.D. candidate Sasha Soto, we compiled and analyzed data, evaluated results, and compared these results to past surveys.

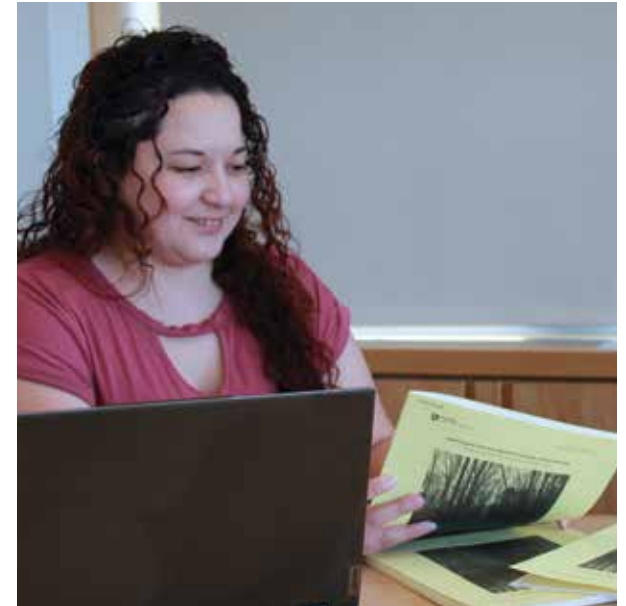
## Some Key Findings

- While the predominant profile of the average Pennsylvania woodland owner continues to be male, white, and 51-80 years old, we found a measurable shift in gender, race, ethnicity, and age diversity, most notably in properties of 1 to 10 acres.
- Only 9% of the respondents have a management plan; of the 91% who don't, just 5% are willing to create a plan.
- Of the landowners who conducted a timber harvest, over 40% did not receive advice before the sale.
- Fewer than 10% have participated in a government-funded cost-share program.

## Next Steps: Building Off Our Findings

There is tremendous opportunity for landowners to make well-informed management decisions for a healthy, resilient forest. But, to effectively engage landowners, work must be done to overcome barriers and bridge the gaps between

landowners and the assistance that can help them care for their woods. These survey results, combined with our previous research, will help inform the work of the professional forestry community as it partners to meet the expanding needs of Pennsylvania's forest landowners and improve stewardship and care of private forests.



“I'm proud of the work we've done. Our research will help support resource initiatives for local landowners. The survey results allow us to target efforts that will benefit private landowner populations, both large and small, in Pennsylvania.”

— SASHA SOTO, PH.D. CANDIDATE, FOREST RESOURCES

This work is funded by the USDA Forest Service and the PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry, and supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Hatch Appropriations under Project #PEN04791 and Accession #7001878.





# Advancing Student Experiences through the Fullers Overlook Project

Undergraduate student Olivia Adams joined the Finley Center team for a summer research project on the Fuller family's northeastern Pennsylvania property. The team took understory and overstory data on over 50 plots in a forested stand to evaluate tree species and health, perform a regeneration assessment, and assess the impact of competitive plants and deer pressure.

In addition to site research, Olivia attended trainings and workshops with service foresters, Penn State Extension foresters, and DCNR Bureau of Forestry staff to enhance her understanding of the challenges landowners face when establishing a new forest, the art and science of restoration, and approaches for engaging forest landowners.

These trainings and the field experience at Fullers Overlook helped the team identify gaps in resource accessibility that may hinder many woodland owners from engaging in their land or seeking valuable advice to understand the options available to them. As a result, we are working to create new resources to support landowner education and provide information to guide them in caring well for their land.

This work is supported by a gift from Mort and Sue Fuller.



“As an up and coming professional in this field, I am grateful for the experience that this project has given me. I was introduced to many vital practical skills in the field as well as an opportunity to work with insightful professionals!”

— OLIVIA ADAMS, FINLEY CENTER UNDERGRADUATE INTERN

## Looking Ahead: Key Research in 2024

### Research launching in 2024:

- **Social and Ecological Capacity of Small Forestlands to Produce Multiple Ecosystem Services**—Finley Center staff are part of a team conducting research on owners of forests smaller than 200 acres to determine land and management potential to enhance ecosystem services. The study is aimed at understanding landowner willingness to adopt climate-adapted forest management practices to promote more resilient and healthy forests in future conditions.
- **Forest Landowners Panel Survey**—Center staff will survey past participants in at least one of three previous statewide surveys conducted prior to 2021 and who still hold forestland to understand how their values, attitudes, and behaviors have changed over time.
- **Forest Assessment Project**—Center staff will perform an assessment of forest condition data to determine the sustainability of forest management practices over time.

### Research continuing in 2024:

- **2021 Forest Landowners Survey**—Application and presentation of the findings of this statewide survey to stakeholders will continue in 2024. Results of this study will inform the professional forestry community's collaborative efforts to build stronger landowner-advisor relationships and improve management practices on private woodlands.



# Two Incredible Days of Learning and Connecting at the 5<sup>th</sup> Biennial Forest Landowners Conference

In March 2023, hundreds of woodland owners, professionals, students, and other interested people gathered at the Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center in State College, PA for the 5<sup>th</sup> Biennial Forest Landowners Conference.

## A Conference that Sparks Change

Since 2013, Finley Center staff and our partners have worked to bring a conference that makes a difference in how Pennsylvania's privately owned forests are cared for. Through a carefully crafted lineup of presentations, keynote speakers, tours, workshops, and exhibitors, we are striving to ensure participants leave not only inspired to make good things happen in their woods, but ready and equipped to take action. When good stewardship happens, we all benefit from healthier, resilient, and more sustainable forests.

We thank our 2023 Forest Landowners Conference sponsors and exhibitors for their support. This event would not be possible without them. See page 18 for a listing of our conference supporters.

“Unmatched by other conferences.”  
“This conference will influence my decisions on conservation and the environment.”  
“Motivation to continue moving forward!”

— REACTIONS FROM 2023 CONFERENCE-GOERS





## Conference Reflections

*“On the surface, the Finley Center’s Forest Landowners Conferences are about forests and how to be good stewards of our woods, but for all of us who have attended these conferences, we know that they are about much more than that. It’s the connections that we renew with familiar faces and the bridges we build with new friends that truly make this meeting a special experience.*

*The drive to care well for our woods pulls us together as we soak up the collective knowledge of academic programs and direct experience, shared in the numerous sessions that range from hands-on workshops to cutting edge forest research. The top-notch keynote speakers inspire us to look at our woods and wildlife with new perspectives and to confront challenges in caring for our forests.*

*As a participant, I value the wealth of knowledge shared by so many caring forest landowners and forest professionals who strive to help us make informed decisions about our forests and its wildlife. As a presenter, I value the opportunity to share my story with other forest landowners. This conference truly helps us to become better stewards of Penn’s Woods.”*

— LAURA JACKSON, FOREST LANDOWNER



COMING MARCH 6-8, 2025

We're teaming up with Penn State Extension to bring these two events back-to-back in 2025:

THURSDAY, MARCH 6

Forest Health, Insect, and Disease Briefing

FRIDAY-SATURDAY, MARCH 7-8

6<sup>th</sup> Biennial Forest Landowners Conference



# Helping Fellow Landowners Care Well for Their Woods through the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Volunteer Program

*“We always thought that if we left the forest alone, it would take care of itself.”*

In survey after survey, our research bears out the wonderful, deep connection Pennsylvania’s 700,000 woodland owners have to their land. Yet, at the same time, this research shows that many landowners aren’t equipped with the understanding or tools they need to care well for their woods.

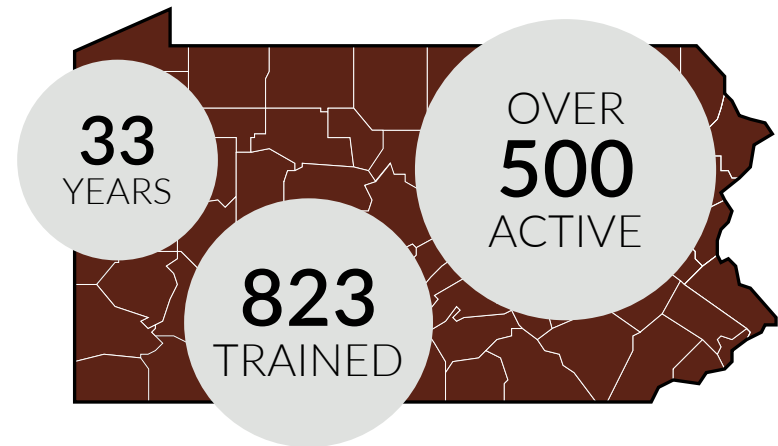
Now in its 33<sup>rd</sup> year, the renowned Pennsylvania Forest Stewards volunteer program is bridging this gap, and more. First and foremost, the over 500 active trained volunteers are the “boots on the ground” across the state, building relationships, hearing the challenges, sharing their knowledge, and connecting landowners to the resources and advisors to help them care for their land. They are leading woodland owners associations, shaping policy decisions, and serving on committees. They are active in local and state government, writing articles, heading up tours and educational programs, and working with natural resources professionals.

Stephen Zuk sums up his role as a volunteer this way: “By word of mouth, I’ve been invited to do site visits to others’ woodlots. I ask what are their goals, assess the forest’s condition, provide suggestions for them to achieve their goals, and, most importantly, give them contact information for resources to best help them with their specific situation.”

This work is funded by USDA Forest Service Forest Stewardship grants and is a cooperative effort of the Finley 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.

*“It has been great to work with a passionate group of people with a wide range of skills. Their work, especially their outreach to fellow woodland owners, continues to influence good stewardship practices across the state.”*

— JEFF OSBORNE, FOREST STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM ASSOCIATE





# The Making of a Pennsylvania Forest Steward

## My Story: Mark Mamros, Class of '23

Last spring, I was selected to be part of the Pennsylvania Forest Steward volunteers, class of 2023. I arrived at the Ligonier Camp and Conference Center in the Laurel Highlands of western Pennsylvania on a beautiful Thursday afternoon in early September, one of 25 participants who came together to start our intensive four days of basic training in all things forestry.

There were many positive aspects to this entire experience. In addition to learning, the training provided one of the best opportunities to meet new people who are passionate about the health, welfare, and future of Penn's Woods. It is obvious to all of us that today's forest is constantly faced with new challenges that require our help and management. The valuable information gained from the Finley Center staff, Penn State Extension educators, DCNR Bureau of Forestry service foresters, and each other will be able to be shared with private landowners back home for years to come! I know I'll never be able to meet Jim Finley in person, but he was a very important and influential person with tremendous foresight that will live on in all of us and help to create healthy forests now and for future generations.



Following in-depth training, the 25 members of the PA Forest Stewards Class of 2023 were ready to take what they learned into their communities. This class, the 35<sup>th</sup> class of graduates in the program's 33 years, represents 24 towns and 17 counties across the state.



# For Pennsylvania Forest Stewards, Stewardship Begins at Home

## At Work in Their Communities

Each year, PA Forest Stewards reach tens of thousands of people, building relationships and sharing insights and resources to inspire good stewardship right where they live. In 2023, Pat McKinney planted trees with local high school students, Mary Jane Busch organized a county fair exhibit, Ben Hertzler took children on forest stewardship hikes, and Robert Christopher spoke to professionals about creating ecologically protective municipal ordinances. Bob Wrightstone helped a neighbor enroll in NRCS programs, Mike Thomas led his hometown woodland owners association, and Byron and Jean Black hosted environmental events for over 100 participants. This is just a small sample of how these volunteers are making a difference at home.

## Pennsylvania Forest Steward Highlight: Paul Solomon Earns Lifetime Achievement Award

In spring 2023, Paul Solomon received the Penn State Graduate School Alumni Society's 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award. After completing his bachelor's and master's degrees at Penn State, Paul had an outstanding career in government service. As a Shrewsbury Township supervisor, Paul was instrumental in helping York County receive the prestigious Government Leadership in Land Conservation Award from WeConservePA for its leadership and vision in the conservation of special places and landscapes. As a private forest landowner, he has restored eight farm properties. And, as a Pennsylvania Forest Steward volunteer for over 30 years, Paul continues to inspire both young and older adults to practice conservation and stewardship.

“Too often, woodland owners do not know the subject of woodland ownership well enough to ask the right questions or to access the right expertise. As Stewards, we’re bridging that gap.”

— PAUL SOLOMON, PENNSYLVANIA FOREST STEWARD, '93

## What's Next: Building for the Future

In early 2023, the PA Forest Stewards began a process to evaluate the program and set a course for continued growth and success. We are proud of the impact on forest stewardship these trained volunteers have made over the past 33 years, and are excited to take this robust program to the next level. The PA Forest Stewards Futuring Committee will continue its work in 2024 to develop a dynamic and flexible program that will even better assist Pennsylvania's woodland owners and the professionals who serve them.





# Building Community, Delivering Resources through Social Media and Publications

The Finley Center continues to build connections and trust among forest landowners, professionals, and the public through social media, articles, publications, and resources made available at small and large events around the state.

## Making Connections on Social Media

During 2023, the Finley Center built a consistent presence on Facebook and Instagram, sharing upcoming events, news, tips and information for

forest landowners, partner posts, and more. By year's end, we had 960 followers on Facebook, a 10% increase from 2022, and nearly 100 followers on our newly created Instagram account. Our posts reached over 10,000 accounts, up 30% over the previous year, and had over 1,600 interactions, up over 300%.

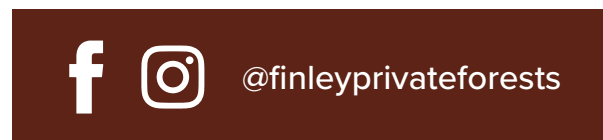
## Open Access for Everyone

The Center continues its long-standing support of access to resources created. We pay open access fees for all scholarly publications to ensure that anyone—not just paid subscribers—can engage with our work and build off it to advance the dialogue of improving forest stewardship and to contribute new knowledge to enhance our

profession. These two highly anticipated journal articles were published in 2023:

**“Forest Landowners and Advisor Relationships: Creating Collaborative Connections to Care Well for Forests,”** Abby Jamison and Allyson Muth, *Society & Natural Resources*. This article explores the importance of intentional landowner-advisor relationship cultivation for natural resource management.

**“Expertise, Identity, and Relationships in Private Forestry Practice,”** Abby Jamison, Ted Alter, and Allyson Muth, *Small-scale Forestry*. This article examines the need to establish connection and build trust in forester-landowner relationships to foster sustainable management practices on private forestlands.



## Looking Ahead: Inspiring Stewardship in 2024

- **Caring Well for Pennsylvania's Privately Owned Forests**—this forestry community-wide collaborative initiative, begun in 2019, will resume activities in 2024, continuing its work to strengthen relationships and skills among landowners and the diverse professionals who can help achieve sustainable stewardship in our state's nearly 12 million acres of privately owned woodlots.
- **Pennsylvania Forest Stewards Volunteer Program**—highlights include our biennial statewide summer meeting in Dauphin, PA and class of 2024 training in Centre County.
- **Forest Stewardship Online Learning**—Center staff will continue to assist Penn State Extension in conducting the *Woodland Stewardship: Guided Engagement with Your Land* hybrid course and *The Woods in Your Backyard* online course, reaching hundreds of landowners each year.



# Partnering to Build an Engaged Forest Stewardship Community

Strong, collaborative partnerships are at the core of the Finley Center’s mission to inspire forest landowners to action. Much of our work happens in partnership with many groups and organizations as we work together to influence caring well for our forests.

Together we are:

- sharing strategies and knowledge,
- developing creative ways to engage landowners in stewardship,
- producing practical educational resources,
- finding solutions to challenges in changing conditions,
- extending our reach and impact, and
- raising awareness of the importance of good forest stewardship.

We know that there is still a tremendous amount of work to do and there are challenges to face. A healthy, resilient forested landscape requires an ongoing, collective effort. As we cultivate relationships and seek to both lead and participate in innovative collaborations, we are proud to be part of a community working together to inspire good stewardship across our forests.

WE WORK ON...	WITH...
Forest Landowners Surveys	PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry, USDA Forest Service
Conservation-based Estate Planning	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Private Woodlands Restoration	Fuller Family and Fullers Overlook
Social and Ecological Capacity of Small and Medium Forests for Ecosystem Services	USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture; Penn State Department of Ecosystem Science and Management Faculty
Forest Owner Climate and Carbon Education (FOCCE)	USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture; Penn State Department of Ecosystem Science and Management Faculty
Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program	PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry, USDA Forest Service
Caring Well for Pennsylvania’s Privately Owned Forests	Pennsylvania’s Forestry Community
Woodland Stewardship: Guided Engagement with Your Land (hybrid course)	Penn State Extension
The Woods in Your Backyard (online course)	Penn State Extension
Woodland Stewardship Innovation Team	PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry and Partners
Walk in Penn’s Woods	9-member Walk in Penn’s Woods Partnership
Sustainable Timber Harvesting	Pennsylvania Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Implementation Committee
Centre County Master Naturalists Program	ClearWater Conservancy; Pennsylvania Master Naturalists





# Partnership Stories

## Working with Pennsylvania SFI® to Revitalize Training Course

When the Pennsylvania Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Implementation Committee wanted to renew *Sustainable Timber Harvesting* as a credited course in their training program, they looked to Finley Center staff to lead the effort. Allyson Muth, Jeff Osborne, and Extension educator Mike Powell, who would fill the role of course instructors, reviewed and updated course content, which includes classroom presentations on ecology and silviculture and field workshops on timber harvest sustainability. The course, originally developed under the direction of Center co-founder Jim Finley, will again be offered as part of SFI's training program in 2024.



## Partnering with Penn State Extension to Advance Stewardship

Our longstanding partnership with Penn State Extension teams brings together research and experience to educate and inspire stewardship through outreach and training. Here are some ways we partnered in 2023:

- Forestry and Wildlife team members participated in the Center's four-day training of the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards class of 2023, Center staff supported the *Woodland Stewardship* hybrid course, and the Center's Jeff Osborne presented workshops and a webinar on tree propagation and planting as part of Extension's outreach.
- Center Director Allyson Muth led the opening session of *The Woods in Your Backyard*, setting the stage for this nine-session online course offered annually by the Urban and Community Forestry team to hundreds of participants.
- Center staff began work with the Water Resources team to understand how to best provide organizational support to their peer volunteer networks.



## Serving on the Woodland Stewardship Innovation Team

The PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry reconvened this team of partners from across Pennsylvania's forestry community in 2023 to focus on private land stewardship. Jeff Osborne is serving as a team co-leader, and the Finley Center is taking the lead on creating a new, collaborative publication, *Welcome to Your Woods*, aimed at helping novice forest landowners recognize the breadth of opportunity and things to consider for them to care well for their woods.



# Financial Overview

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. The Finley Center, with its extensive experience working at the intersection of people and forests, serves as a trusted resource to forest landowners, natural resources professionals, policymakers, academic scientists, and others involved in the care of Pennsylvania’s private forests. Philanthropic contributions play a vital role in ensuring the Center’s capacity to meet the needs of these many stakeholders and to inspire stewardship of forests in Pennsylvania and beyond.

## The Finley Center Endowment

The Finley Center has an endowment in place which is designated for philanthropic contributions supporting our work. All funding the Center receives into the endowment is labeled for our exclusive use. Endowment funds are invested by Penn State to provide income for the Center’s use in the future. Gifts to the endowment are tax-deductible.

## Gifts to the Finley Center

Gifts to the Finley Center and the endowment strengthen our capacity to conduct innovative research, to cultivate a community of landowners

and professionals committed to caring well for Pennsylvania’s private forests, and to inform policy impacting forest health. Gifts enable the Finley Center to:

- Continue innovative and vitally important research to advance understanding of private forest landowners and their land.
- Develop programs to foster effective collaboration between natural resources professionals and landowners working to sustain healthy and resilient forests.
- Provide educational and training opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students in the forestry and natural resources fields.
- Provide advice and guidance to inform the design of academic degree programs, educational initiatives, and government policies impacting private forest landowners and their land.
- Continue to host and expand the biennial Forest Landowners Conference.
- Strengthen the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards volunteer program.

With your support, the Finley Center and our programs will grow and flourish, so that—together—we can conserve our state’s signature landscape for generations to come.

## Ways of Supporting the Finley Center

Donations can be made to the Finley Center through our website at any time during the year at [ecosystems.psu.edu/give-to-private-forests](https://ecosystems.psu.edu/give-to-private-forests). The Center also participates in the University’s GivingTuesday campaign, which is held annually in November. For information about other ways of supporting the Finley Center financially, please contact:

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

ENDOWMENT PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT	
	VALUE
<b>Initial Balance, July 1, 2022</b>	<b>\$798,921.32</b>
Cash Flows	
Gifts and Transfers	277,022.86
Market Appreciation/(Depreciation)	
Includes any market changes for above cash flows	(3,754.23)
<b>Ending Balance, June 30, 2023</b>	<b>\$1,072,189.95</b>





# Generosity Unleashed During GivingTuesday



The Finley Center endowment provided funding for student presenters at the 2023 Forest Landowners Conference.

On November 28, 2023, the Finley Center joined Penn State's ninth GivingTuesday campaign as a first timer. With a focus on raising awareness of the Center's contribution to forest stewardship, our first GivingTuesday campaign raised \$18,115 from 69 donors for the Finley Center endowment. That effort put the Center on the Top Ten list out of the nearly 180 campaigns across the Penn State community!

Participation in GivingTuesday not only brought in funds to support the Finley Center and the students who are a part of our work, it also provided an opportunity to introduce the Center to the thousands who took part in the campaign. We hope our participation allowed some new

students, alumni, and friends to get to know us and to learn how they might benefit from all the Center has to offer.

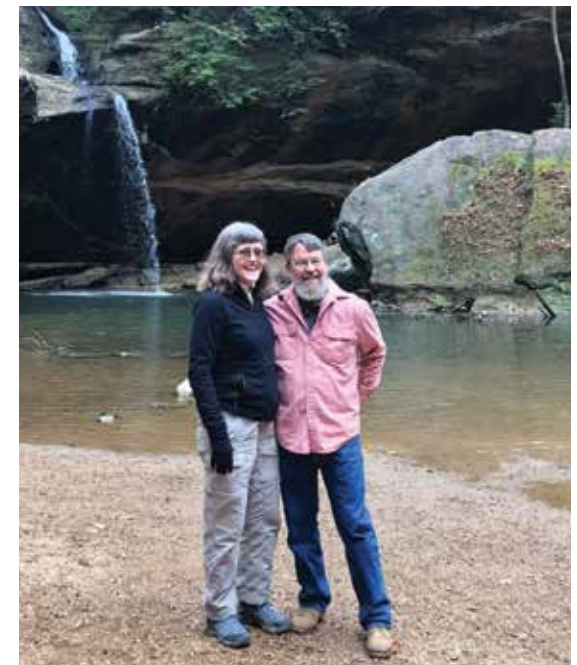
## 2023 Graduate Student Recipients of Finley Center Endowment Funds

- Taylor Blackman, Graduate student majoring in Forest Resources
- Codey Mathis, Graduate student majoring in Entomology
- Sasha Soto, Graduate student majoring in Forest Resources
- Amy Wroblewski, Graduate student majoring in Ecology

## Susan's GivingTuesday Story

*"David and I met in forestry school, and moved to Pennsylvania because of its forests. Working for 40-plus years to understand those forests and develop strategies to care for them has helped me recognize how important private landowners are. The Finley Center is doing great work to understand private landowners and develop research-based strategies to help them care for the wonderful forests they own. So giving on GivingTuesday to the Finley Center's work made great sense!"*

— SUSAN STOUT AND DAVID SNYDER,  
GIVINGTUESDAY DONORS



# Our Donors

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## Thank You

“We are grateful to all who give of themselves and their resources in support of helping people care well for their woodlands.”

— ALLYSON MUTH, FINLEY CENTER DIRECTOR



*“I had the opportunity to earn my master’s degree through work with the Finley Center. I learned about the importance of trust, interpersonal connections, relationships, and respect when it comes to the work that we do with people who care for our forests. I’ve been able to take that expertise and the skills learned from my time with the Center and apply that to my work in the Bureau of Forestry as we plan for the future of Pennsylvania’s forests, strategically for this agency and for the whole of the commonwealth, as we move forward into a new, social era of forest management. I would not have those skills and that talent to bring to the table if it was not for my opportunity as a student with the Finley Center. Thank you for that time, that opportunity, and that investment in me as a professional now and into the future.”*

— ABBY JAMISON, MS '21, FOREST RESOURCES AND HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT; CHIEF, FOREST RESOURCE PLANNING SECTION, PA DCNR BUREAU OF FORESTRY



# 2023 Finley Center Council

## Council Executive Committee



**Allyson Muth**  
Center Director;  
Assistant Research Professor,  
Private Forests Management



**Blaine Aikin**  
Council Chair;  
PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Founder and Principal,  
Fiduciary Insights, LLC;  
Private Forest Landowner



**Linda Finley**  
Council Chair-Elect;  
PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Director, NWOA Mid-Atlantic Region;  
PA Forestry Association Board;  
Private Forest Landowner



**Jeanne Riley**  
PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Biopharmaceutical  
Executive (ret.);  
Private Forest Landowner



**Paul Roth**  
Energy and Natural Resource  
Consultant, Principal - Entropia LLC;  
Project Coordinator, Finley Center;  
Private Forest Landowner



**Susan Stout**  
USDA Forest Service  
Project Leader (ret.)

## Center Council Members



**Nancy Baker**  
PA Forest Stewards Volunteer and  
Steering Committee Chair;  
Forest Ecologist;  
Private Forest Landowner



**Byron Black**  
PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Coast Guard Officer (ret.);  
Private Forest Landowner



**Renée Carey**  
PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Executive Director, Northcentral  
Pennsylvania Conservancy



**Patrick Hulle, CF**  
Consulting Forester,  
PH Forestry



**Laura Jackson**  
PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Science Teacher (ret.);  
Private Forest Landowner



**Matthew Keefer**  
Assistant State Forester,  
PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry



**Marc Lewis**  
Co-owner, Dwight Lewis  
Lumber Company, Inc.,  
Lewis Lumber Products;  
Private Forest Landowner



**Al Luloff**  
PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Professor Emeritus of Rural Sociology  
and Human Dimensions of Natural  
Resources and the Environment



**Katie Ombalski**  
PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Principal, Conservation  
Biologist, Woods and Waters  
Consulting, LLC;  
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**Rachel Reyna**  
USDA Forest Service  
Assistant Director of Forest Health,  
Forest Markets, Cooperative  
Forestry, Eastern Region



**Tony Riley**  
PA Forest Stewards Volunteer;  
Chief Medical Officer,  
Gilchrist (ret.);  
Private Forest Landowner



**Amy Shields**  
Executive Director, Allegheny  
Hardwood Utilization Group, Inc.;  
Private Forest Landowner

## Dynamic Council Provides Strong Guidance and Support for Finley Center

The Finley Center works at the intersection of people and forests. In effect, the Center’s work seeks to avoid collisions at that intersection and promote practices that serve the interests of both people and forests. The Center’s Council brings together a diverse and talented group of individuals who routinely “manage traffic” at people-forest intersections. They include public and private sector natural resources professionals, academics who research and teach environmental and social sciences, leaders of conservancies and similar philanthropic organizations, and individuals who are committed to improve their own forested property and share their knowledge with others (most notably, graduates of the Center’s Pennsylvania Forest Stewards program).

As you peruse the brief information provided here for current Council members, I believe you will find it striking that the Center is blessed by success in attracting talented and devoted leaders. It has been an honor for me to serve as Council Chair in 2023, and I am thrilled to serve on the Council as Immediate Past Chair under the capable leadership of 2024 Council Chair Linda Finley and Center Director Allyson Muth.

— BLAINE AIKIN, 2023 COUNCIL CHAIR





# Finley Center Staff and Affiliates

## Center Staff



**Allyson Muth**  
*Center Director*



**Jeff Osborne**  
*Forest Stewardship  
Program Associate*



**Barb Sellers**  
*Administrative  
Assistant*



**Laura Kirt**  
*Marketing/  
Communications  
Specialist*



**Megan Whitmer**  
*Conference  
Coordinator*



**Sasha Soto**  
*PhD Candidate,  
Forest Resources*



**Erik Martin**  
*Undergraduate  
Student Employee*



**Olivia Adams**  
*Undergraduate  
Student Intern*

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Chuck Coup, PA SFI® Implementation Committee: pg 15 top.

Jim Finley: pg 1; inside back cover.

Abby Jamison: pg 4.

Laura Kirt: pg 5 top right; pg 8; pg 9.

Allyson Muth: Front cover; pg 7.

Barb Sellers: Inside front cover left; pg 2; pg 3; pg 5 bottom left; pg 6;

pg. 10; pg 11 bottom left; pg 13; pg 15 middle, bottom; pg 19.

Megan Whitmer: Inside front cover right; pg 17 top left.

Provided by Mark Mamros: pg 11 top right.

Provided by Paul Solomon: pg 12.

Provided by Susan Stout: pg 17 bottom right.

## Faculty and Stakeholder Affiliates

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

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

**Leland Glenna**, Professor of Rural Sociology and Science, Technology, and Society

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

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

**Alex Metcalf**, Associate 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 Emeritus of Forest Biology



## 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.



THE JAMES C. FINLEY  
CENTER FOR PRIVATE FORESTS

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