



# Friends of White's Woods Monthly Newsletter



## Managing YOUR Public Lands, topic for Oct. 26 webinar



Braden Meiter, Lead Supervisory Park Ranger, Allegheny County Parks.

Braden Meiter, Lead Supervisory Park Ranger Allegheny County Parks, will discuss the current relationships between friends groups, volunteerism and resource management in the Allegheny County Parks.

Discussion will include ideas for partnerships, communication, community engagement and resource management strategies in relation to public lands and their stewards.

Braden is an IUP grad who has spent lots of time in White's Woods. He oversees 12,000 acres of forest and trails where they do not timber.

Currently, they are racing to plant trees to fill canopy gaps because, he noted, this is the key to controlling invasive plants.



## Edible & Medicinal Plant Walk Oct. 11

Join Dr. Dana Driscoll to learn more about edible and medicinal plants and trees located in White's Woods. During this early fall plant walk, we will explore a number of plants and trees located in White's Woods and talk about their edible, medicinal, and human craft uses.

In addition to learning about 15-20 medicinal and edible plants, we'll discuss the ethics of wild food foraging and how to focus on conservation and regeneration to increase desirable plant populations. Please understand that this plant walk

requires hiking up trails to get to the top of White's Woods. We recommend appropriate footwear (hiking boots, closed-toe shoes).



Driscoll is a traditional western herbalist, wild food forager, homesteader, certified permaculture designer, certified permaculture teacher, and IUP faculty member. She is committed to regenerative approaches to tending and healing the land and creating a positive, earth-centered vision for future generations.

## WEED PULLING SCHEDULE

Volunteer weedpullers will meet the second and third Saturdays of the month: Oct. 7 and 21.

We are still in need of a new "crew chief" for the barberry removal on the Spring Trail. Please contact us at [info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org](mailto:info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org).

Meet at 11 a.m. (weed pulling is for one hour) at the College Lodge parking lot. Please wear heavy-duty gardening gloves and protect yourself from ticks.

Instructions on removing Japanese barberry will be given on-site.

We hope to see you there. And, bring a friend or two.

## UPCOMING WEBINARS AND EVENTS

**October 1 - Walk in Penn's Woods**, 1-3; 12th St entrance, White's Woods

**Oct. 2: FWW Member** meeting, 6:30 p.m., Zion Lutheran Church, Indiana.

**Oct. 5:** Climate Changes and Its Consequences, Last of Three-Part Series by IUP professor Dr. Jonathan Warnock, 10 to 11:30 a.m., First Unitarian Universalist Church, Indiana. Sponsored by the New Century Club. Suggested donation of \$5 per session benefits Indiana Free Library.

**Oct. 7 and 21:** 11 a.m. Japanese barberry removal, College Lodge Parking Lot.

**Oct. 11: Plant Walk** by Dana Driscoll. 4:30 p.m., 12th Street entrance, White's Woods.

**Oct. 19: Stewardship Committee Meeting**, 6:30 p.m., White Township Municipal Building

**Oct. 26: Managing YOUR Public Lands: Creating lasting partnerships between the public and land management agencies** webinar by Braden Meiter, Lead Supervisory Park Ranger, Allegheny County Parks, 4 to 5 p.m.

**Nov. 16: Spirituality and the Climate Crisis** webinar by Rev. Jim Antal, 4 to 5 p.m.

To register for FWW webinars, which are free and open to the public, please email at [info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org](mailto:info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org). All previous webinars can be viewed at [friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events](http://friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events).

## Next Naturally Column in the Indiana Gazette

The ninth *Naturally* column, sponsored by FWW and the *Indiana Gazette*, will appear soon in their weekend edition.

Titled *A Little Jewel Gets Some Jewelry*, the article is written by Carol Guba, a member of the Todd Bird Club in Indiana, the PA Society of Ornithology, and she has and continues to participate in citizen science projects relating to birds.

Missed the first eight columns?

You can read the eight previous columns at <https://www.friendsofwhiteswoods.org/general-7-1>.

For more information, visit: [friendsofwhiteswoods.org](http://friendsofwhiteswoods.org)

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Issue 40  
October 2023

## STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE DECIDES PLAN GOALS WILL COME AFTER PLAN'S WRITTEN

At-risk species, herbicide use, ecosystem monitoring, land acquisition and deer management were key topics at White Township's September Stewardship meeting.

FWW President Sara King asked what role the yet-to-be approved stewardship plan goals and objectives will play in the development of the draft plan, given that numerous plan sections have been drafted without them. Committee Chair Barbara Hauge explained that when the plan goals and objectives have been approved, the previously submitted sections will be revised as needed.

Vice-Chair David Dahlheimer reported that there are 20 protected or at-risk plant, bird, amphibian, and/or reptilian species in the woods and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has confirmed the federally-protected Indiana bat is within range of White's Woods. Recommendations from DCNR and the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Inventories included: do not timber; leave the canopy intact, leave all dead wood in the forest, control invasive plants, be cautious with herbicide use, and, with the help of citizens, monitor these protected species. Dahlheimer added one more recommendation: Identify all at-risk and protected species that are not currently within the 43-acre Natural Heritage Area in White's Woods.

Dahlheimer reviewed the herbicide policies developed by Duff Park and by the Okehoking Preserve. Both pointed to potential problems: invasive plants can become resistant to herbicides after repeated exposure; herbicides can present dangers to native plants, humans and groundwater. Hauge requested that Dahlheimer draft an herbicide policy. He agreed.

Dahlheimer reported on his draft plan section for "ecosystem monitoring." It is impossible to monitor everything, particularly when just starting a stewardship plan, Dahlheimer noted. So the recommendations include monitoring the conservation projects that are underway (removal of invasive plants and planting in naturally-occurring canopy gaps). Dahlheimer noted the committee's stewardship plan should map sensitive areas in the woods and document at-risk species prior to moving on to more sophisticated monitoring projects.

The fourth draft plan section addressed the question of land acquisition. Dahlheimer urged the committee to show the foresight that municipal officials had shown 50 years ago when purchasing White's Woods. Climate change will precipitate a huge internal migration of the U.S. population, and we are in one of the areas predicted for migration of 50 million current U.S. residents. We will need more land for public recreation soon. The committee should recommend purchasing that land while it is available.

Sierra Davis briefly discussed the draft regarding insects and disease, which emphasized the importance of insects for forest and wildlife health.

Committee members Jeff Geesey and Matt Klunk reported they did not have the time to

update the deer management proposal to include discussion of fencing. They did research to identify options and costs and had concluded the costs were much lower than they had anticipated.

Geesey did some research on using perimeter planting of foods deer like to draw them away from the forest interior.

Dahlheimer offered to provide information on deer management that would sum the research by Dr. Will Radell on the impact of the size and shape of White's Woods, the lack of deer management on surrounding properties, and more. Hauge rejected that offer.

Klunk reviewed his draft policy on signage that relied on visitors to use their smartphones to access map and trail information. Dahlheimer noted a big complaint about White's Woods in online reviews is the lack of signs. He noted that many people do not carry smartphones in the woods.

Klunk's draft bicycle policy emphasized the need for trail manners and suggested a prohibition of e-bikes (which is the usual policy in public parks). Dahlheimer suggested that the committee should recognize a need to protect fragile trails.

Hauge referenced her draft policy on waterways and Dahlheimer urged consideration of groundwater in this draft.

In a discussion of implementation priorities, Hauge suggested a "pause" in writing draft sections so that the committee could review and discuss what had already been received. Dahlheimer favored the discussion of sections but offered that he could draft a couple more sections by the October meeting.

Hauge forbade him from any more writing and insisted that editing -- not writing -- is what the committee needs to do. Geesey moved to stop any further writing, but the motion failed for lack of a second. Hauge refused to accept the implications of the motion and continued to insist that no more writing be done prior to the October meeting. Davis and Klunk pointed out that Dahlheimer said that he did have the time to engage in both tasks. Finally, to end the standoff, the committee voted 3 (Geesey, Klunk, Hauge) to 1 (Dahlheimer) to prohibit any more drafting of plan sections. Davis did not vote.

Dahlheimer had requested that enrolling White's Woods in the Old Growth Forest Network (OGFN) be added to this meeting's agenda. He explained that doing so would affirm 30 years of public input and "put White Township on the map." Joining the OGFN would allow the township to declare its commitment to the quality of life that modern people value. Hauge asked if only a portion of the forest could be enrolled in the OGFN. Klunk, who apparently misunderstood the OGFN goal of enrolling second-growth forests like White's Woods so that it can become old growth again, said that White's Woods didn't look like old growth to him.

### **Simple:**

### **Listen to the People**

At the September meeting, Chair Hauge produced a proposal regarding the implementation of the yet-to-be-completed Draft Stewardship Plan, noting that it "may be advantageous for the township to have a community discussion with a facilitator present to lead the discussion of the implementation of this Stewardship Plan."

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) has been very clear that every part of a stewardship plan should be rooted in public input. In a letter sent to White Township on March 21, 2021, DCNR underscored their conviction that as "a community-owned forest, we believe it is critical for the township to understand the wishes and desires of its residents, and most importantly, identifying and understanding the values citizens hold and expect of these woodlands."

The committee has seen nearly 30 years of public input about White's Woods, including three different surveys since 2020. Citizens have attended every Stewardship Committee meeting. The overwhelming majority of the public input provided in the last 18 months is identical to that of the last 30 years: keep our natural area as a natural area to be used for passive recreation. No timbering (means no thinning of trees, no taking down trees to achieve artificial diversity, no clearcutting). Leave the forest canopy intact. In short, the public wants to preserve this Project 70 land as it was originally defined.

Citizen participation is crucial to the success of a democracy and thousands of citizens have taken the time to try to make their voices heard about the importance of preserving the White's Woods Nature Center and allowing this second-growth forest to mature to old growth.

If a plan is produced that is rooted in the public input that the committee has received -- including surveys, emails, petitions, public comment at meetings, letters to the committee -- then the public will be delighted to see that the committee has done their work in the spirit defined by DCNR.

Why would the committee approach their task any other way?

**For more information, visit: [friendsofwhiteswoods.org](http://friendsofwhiteswoods.org)**

**We welcome feedback. Email us at:  
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