

Protecting woods for future generations

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The Department of Conservation (DCNR) Spring 2021 Pennsylvania Forest Health Report says that the best way to take care of a forest is to learn about it.

After two years of working with experts (e.g. in forestry, forest ecology, stormwater management, forest songbirds, native and invasive plants), DCNR strategic plans (outdoor recreation, climate change and at-risk plant and animal species), as well as 25 years of public input, Friends of White's Woods (FWW) assembled a 123-page document, White's Woods: Current Value & Future Care, that incorporates 44 recommendations to help care for our community forest.

White's Woods was purchased in 1970 through a Pennsylvania statewide, taxpayer-funded program to protect green space for future generations. The woods were designated as a regional forest that was to remain as a natural area for "passive recreation," such as hiking and nature education.

"White's Woods forest is as beautiful as any I've seen in my career ... The reality is White's Woods will outlive all of us, even if we take a do-nothing approach. Time is definitely on our side," said forester Mike Wolf.

"Overall the WWNC is in much better shape than other forests we have studied ... Because of the closed canopy, WWNC is relatively low in non-native species," said University of Pittsburgh/Yale University invasive plant specialist Dr. Sara Kuebbing.

How do we protect this regional resource for future generations?

First, collect data. Only then can we figure out how to protect what we have. How do we keep invasives at bay in our woods? Which at-risk plant and animal species do we need to protect? How can we work with the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage program to protect our woods' valuable native plants and sections of old-growth forest?

FWW also recommends that we take steps to improve access to our community forest, provide educational programming and take advantage of the potential \$211,000 carbon capture payment we could earn to do nothing but let our big trees keep growing.

Development is beginning to surround our nature center. Future generations will be grateful for our efforts to protect it.

See the report at [https:// www.friendsofwhiteswoods.org/ future-possibilities](https://www.friendsofwhiteswoods.org/future-possibilities).

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