

## Time to turn concern into constructive action

• September 8, 2022 5 hrs ago



White Township supervisors are worried about climate change. This would be good news for our region. Now we need to turn that worry into constructive action.

The headline of the Aug. 10 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, cited by township supervisor Gail McCauley, is a clear warning: “Pennsylvania has so far been able to avoid wildfires. Climate and forest scientists warn that could change.”

It is time for everyone, certainly municipal leaders, to get serious about mitigating climate change.

The DEP Local Climate Action Program provides free assistance to local governments that want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change. In its first three years, LCAP has trained approximately 380 municipalities across the commonwealth.

Municipal climate action plans, as noted in the operational Indiana Borough plan, improve public health, save money and reduce risk, enhance resource security, create jobs, and enhance social equality.

So, in addition to protecting White’s Woods for carbon sequestration, safeguarding regional air quality, and mitigating increasing heat and stormwater runoff due to climate change, a forward-thinking White Township can take the next step to create a multi-faceted, municipal plan.

As for McCauley’s worry about dead wood, even the newspaper article that she referenced in her letter states that Pennsylvania fires would never present the danger of the millions of acres burning in the western U.S. because Pennsylvania’s wet climate prevents massive flame spread: “Forestry and fire experts said those large-scale Western fires are not realistic in Pennsylvania.”

Environmental writer George Wuerthner explains that “[d]ead trees and down wood play an important role in ecosystems by providing wildlife habitat, cycling nutrients, aiding plant regeneration, decreasing erosion, and influencing drainage and soil moisture and carbon storage, among other values ... large numbers of dead trees are critical to functioning forest ecosystems.”

Researcher Chad Hanson sums it up: “We are trapped by an outdated cultural idea that a healthy forest is one with nothing but green trees. An ecologically healthy forest has dead trees.”

Of course it does! The extensive life in dead trees is much of what makes the whole forest alive.

Judy Holliday

White Township