



Friends of White's Woods Monthly Newsletter



Caring for the Land, topic for September webinar

Conservationist Aldo Leopold defined land as “a community to which we belong.”

This will be the theme of the Sept. 28th webinar by Dr. Curt Meine, senior fellow with the Aldo Leopold Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin, and with the Chicago-based Center for Humans and Nature.

According to Meine, the land ethic that he proposed called for us to regard land with “love and respect,” and to be caretakers of land on behalf of all its members, human and non-human, and future generations.

As land stewards, there has never been a more important time to be acting with a land ethic—an ethic of care—in mind, and to contribute to the further development of that ethic, he added.

Meine is also a research associate with the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo and associate adjunct professor in the University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology.

Meine received his bachelor of arts degree in English and history from DePaul University in Chicago, and his master of science and Ph.D. in Land Resources from the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at the University of



Dr. Curt Meine (foreground), a conservation biologist, environmental historian, and writer, will conduct FWW's September webinar.

Wisconsin-Madison. After completing his Ph.D. Meine served in Washington with the U.S. National Academy of Sciences on programs involving biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture, and international development.

Over the years Meine has worked with a wide array of non-profit organizations, agencies, universities, and businesses, including the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the U.S. Agency for International Development, the World Wildlife Fund, and the American Museum of Natural History.

To register for the free webinar, which runs on Zoom from 4 to 5 p.m., please send an email to info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org.

Confirmed Protected, At-risk or Vulnerable Species in White's Woods:

- Seal Salamander
- The Eastern Box Turtle
- Wild Yam
- Black Cohosh
- Ghost Pipe
- Appalachian Violet
- Wood Thrush
- Swainson's Thrush
- Gray Catbird
- Blackburnian Warbler
- Kentucky Warbler
- Black and White Warbler
- Winter Wren
- Eastern Towhee
- Chimney Swift
- Scarlet Tanager

Three Protected Plant Species in the 43-acre Natural Heritage Area (unnamed by request).

The Indiana Bat: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, reporting in a 2023 Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) report, has identified White's Woods as within the range of the federally-protected Indiana Bat.

Our woods are quieter because so many birds are gone. Nearly 30% of all migrating forest songbirds have vanished since 1970, in large measure because of decreasing habitat. We have to do our part to help protect the songbirds of our forest.

Please document the birds, reptiles, amphibians and plants that you see in White's Woods and record your observations online at ebird.org or inaturalist.org. (Or send the photo to FWW!)

UPCOMING WEBINARS AND EVENTS

Sept. 16 and 30: Invasive Plant Removal. 11 a.m. to noon. Meet at College Lodge parking lot.

Sept. 21: White Township Stewardship Committee meeting. 6:30 p.m., White Township Municipal Building.

Sept. 21, 28, Oct. 5: Climate Changes and Its Consequences, 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.

Sept. 28: Caring for the Land, the Future, and Each Other webinar by Dr. Curt Meine, Senior Fellow with the Aldo Leopold Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin, and with the Chicago-based Center for Humans and Nature

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

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

Oct. 11: Plant Walk by Dana Driscoll. 12th Street entrance, White's Woods.

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,

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

Next Naturally Column in the Indiana Gazette

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

Titled *Sassafras: An Appalachian Folk Delight*, the article is written by Dr. Dana Driscoll, an IUP English professor who has been teaching wild food foraging, herbalism and sustainable living for more than 10 years.

Missed the first seven columns?

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

For more information, visit: friendsofwhiteswoods.org

Like us on FaceBook: Friends of White's Woods, Inc.

Follow us on Instagram: [friendsofwhiteswoodsinc](https://www.instagram.com/friendsofwhiteswoodsinc)

Issue 39

September 2023

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE CONSIDERS WHETHER PLAN SHOULD CONTAIN SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Deer hunting, a dog walking policy and whether the final stewardship plan should have actual recommendations dominated discussion at the Aug. 17 meeting.

Will Radell suggested that hunting in White's Woods be viewed through a cost-benefit analysis. He said hunting would not significantly reduce deer browse (the hoped-for benefit), while it risks seriously interfering with the most frequent types of passive recreation in WWNC, lost arrows harming park users and pets, remains of field dressing littering trails, and injured deer escaping onto private property. He further noted that hunting is legal in 52,000 acres (82 square miles) in Indiana County. Hunters have numerous hunting opportunities in close proximity.

Radell requested an extension of the three-minute time limit in public comment, but chairperson Barbara Hauge instructed that he pause his remarks and conclude them during the second comment period.

The committee considered the outline for the stewardship plan. Vice-chair Dave Dahlheimer requested the Natural Heritage Inventory of White's Woods, as well as the sample public land stewardship plans reviewed by the committee, be added to the outline. While Hauge expressed concern that including these plans would make their document too long, Sierra Davis agreed with Dahlheimer, noting that the plans were examined as part of the committee's work and that their final draft should reflect that work. Dahlheimer also urged the committee to examine Duff Park's herbicide policy and volunteered to provide it for review for the next meeting.

Dahlheimer's overview of the "At-Risk Species" draft section was based on two state-agency inventories and other confirmed reports. The at-risk species (including "Species of Special Concern") in White's Woods include seven plants, 10 bird species, one reptile, and one amphibian. White's Woods is also within the range of the federally-protected Indiana bat.

Recommendations from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Natural Heritage Inventory for protecting at-risk species in White's Woods include keeping the forests we have, controlling invasive plants, and leaving dying and injured trees in the forest. Timbering and invasive species were cited as the two primary threats.

Hauge requested that Dahlheimer provide an executive summary of his draft.

The "Deer Management" section, prepared by Jeff Geesey with assistance from Matt Klunk, recommended that the township develop a deer management plan by working in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, whose hunting regulations govern White's Woods.

Davis expressed concern that, while the draft deer management section provided an overview of deer concerns across Pennsylvania, it did

not discuss specific circumstances in WWNC. Dahlheimer concurred, requesting the report include more detail, saying, "Let's help as much as possible..." by "explaining what's special about WWNC."

Drafts of "Future Management" by Dahlheimer and "Goals and Objectives" by Davis were not discussed, but will be available for review on the committee's webpage. Proposed goals address: Project 70; community engagement; ecosystem health and biodiversity; recreation and education; watershed protection; and climate resiliency.

Davis stated that it is her impression that the supervisors want specific recommendations in the stewardship plan.

Klunk indicated that he felt the report should "not limit the township," because circumstances could change and the committee would be "speaking out of turn" by recommending expenditures (such as deer fencing). Geesey expressed concern that the plan could be "too prescriptive," because any recommendations could be taken out of context and construed by the public as a "mandate." He suggested that the report be prefaced with a statement that the supervisors are not obligated to take recommendations and should use their own "best judgment" in making decisions.

Dahlheimer noted that all recommendations must be grounded in scientific evidence and public input and the committee should consider the following:

- How does it help implement goals?
- Is it consistent with public input as well as recommendations from consultants?
- Is it consistent with ways that work for other natural areas?

For the Sept. 21 meeting, the following assignments were made: Geesey, Klunk – deer enclosures, revise deer management section; Davis – insects/diseases, organize documents to date; Dahlheimer – ecosystem monitoring, land acquisition, executive summary of previous documents; Hauge – storm water management; Klunk – policies (dog walking, bikes, etc.).

Hauge reported that she met with ecologist/forester Mike Tyree to develop a plan to use deer enclosure fencing within a large canopy gap created by a fallen tree. Township manager Chris Anderson said that staff are preparing to follow Tyree's recommendations in late fall.

The meeting concluded with the second public comment section. White Township resident Al Borowski asserted that the deer browse problem in WWNC is urgent, and the township should focus on how to make hunting more effective.

In a continuation of his cost-benefit analysis, Will Radell quoted several studies which showed that not only did hunting fail to reduce deer browse, it sometimes resulted in a notable increase in the herd.

What will the Stewardship Plan recommend?

The township Stewardship Committee met, virtually or in person, with nine consultants and reviewed webinars presented by three others. They heard mostly from foresters and biologists whose specialties included invasive plants, deer management, ticks, forest ecosystems, forest management options, tree species diversity, protection of at-risk plant and animal species, the value of dead wood in a forest, the value of big trees to a community, carbon sequestration, and forest ecosystem benefits to our community.

The committee reviewed sample public land stewardship plans and spoke with a park manager. They have received guidance from DCNR.

What the committee has heard has been consistent: Protect the tight canopy, control invasive plants (in part, by protecting the tight canopy), control deer browse. They've heard that deer fencing will be necessary to protect against deer browse within the naturally-occurring canopy gaps, that dead wood is essential to a healthy forest, and that it is important to avoid the use of heavy machinery in White's Woods. If these steps are taken, the committee has learned, White's Woods, with its currently healthy overstory, will be here for future generations, to be left in its natural state, for use for passive recreation, such as hiking, walking, nature education, and photography.

So, how could it make sense, after all this time and work, for the committee to fail to articulate these recommendations?

ATTENTION: WEED PULLING

SCHEDULE UPDATE

The weed pulling schedule will change in September.

Volunteer weedpullers will meet the second and third Saturdays of the month, beginning Sept. 16.

We are in need of a new "crew chief" for the barberry removal on the Spring Trail ASAP. Please contact us at info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org.

Meet at 11 a.m. (weed pulling is for one hour) at the College Lodge parking lot as volunteer forms must be completed.

Please wear heavy-duty gardening gloves and protect yourself from ticks.

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

For more information, visit: friendsofwhiteswoods.org

We welcome feedback. Email us at:

info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org

**Issue 39
September 2023**