



Friends of White's Woods Monthly Newsletter



NOVEMBER

Passive Management of Forests Topic of Nov. 10 Webinar

How to use a passive management approach on forest lands while actively monitoring challenges to the forest will be explained at the Thursday, Nov. 10th webinar sponsored by Friends of White's Woods. Tom Lautzenheiser, senior conservation ecologist for Mass Audubon (Massachusetts), will present the free webinar from 4 to 5 p.m.

According to Lautzenheiser, conservation forestlands face an array of complex, interacting challenges, including invasive pests and pathogens, white-tailed deer overbrowse, and the effects of climate change. Approaches to land stewardship range from strictly hands-off to complete



*Senior Conservation Ecologist for Mass Audubon
Tom Lautzenheiser will present FWW's Nov. 10th
webinar.*

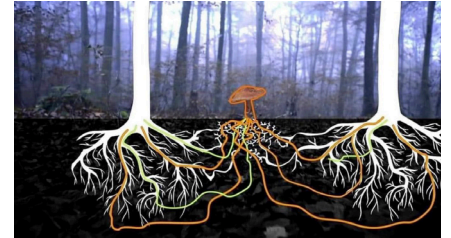
ecosystem engineering.

"The Mass Audubon manages most of its forested acres through primarily passive management," Lautzenheiser said. "Through regular monitoring, active management can be targeted to attain specific management goals."

Lautzenheiser is responsible for ecological management planning and project implementation across the organization's 32 wildlife sanctuaries in the region. Mass Audubon is the largest nature-based conservation organization in New England, serving as a leader and a catalyst for conservation by acting directly to protect the nature of Massachusetts and by stimulating individual and institutional action through conservation, education and advocacy.

To register for the webinar, which is open to the public, please send an email to info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org.

To date, Friends of White's Woods has hosted 18 webinars on topics related to White's Woods. Recordings of all webinars are available at friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events.



MYCELIUM NETWORK: *This underground network provides nutrients and healing by expanding the reach of trees and plant root systems.*

The Mycelium Network

Thirty-three species of birds, 20 different mammals, at least 19 kinds of salamanders, and 26 species of reptiles make some use of dead trees in Pennsylvania's forests, according to Jerry Hassinger, retired Pennsylvania Game Commission biologist at his Oct. 11th webinar.

Dead wood is important to the health of the forest. Thanks to wood-eating fungi that play a major role in recycling fallen trees, the forest ecosystem is constantly regenerating. The fungi digest the dead wood and release nutrients from the bark back into the soil.

Hassinger explained that forest mushrooms aren't just beautiful and (sometimes) edible, they are the visible part of a much larger underground web of mycelium.

Mycelium is an underground network of millions of fungal threads, sometimes miles long, that connect plants and trees, forming mutually beneficial relationships. The network facilitates the flow of nutrients, carbon, electrical impulses, and helps plants and trees protect against insects and pathogens. If a tree is attacked by insects, it sends cues to nearby trees via the mycelium network allowing them to produce chemicals needed to ward off the attack. Trees do communicate and that communication is essential to their survival. Compacting or disturbing the forest floor with heavy machinery or timbering does extraordinary, long-term damage to a forest.

Does dead wood increase fire risk in Pennsylvania forests? "NO!" Hassinger said. Dead wood is essential to the health of a forest and does not, certainly not deep in the forest, present an unusual fire risk.

Hassinger recommended two books: *The Hidden Life of Trees* and *Endangered Life: How Fungi Make our World, Change Our Minds, and Shape Our Future*.

UPCOMING EVENTS, MEETINGS, WEBINARS

Nov. 10: "Engaged Passive Management Strategies for Massachusetts Forestlands." Tom Lautzenheiser, Regional Scientist, MA Audubon.

Nov. 17: White Township Stewardship Committee meeting. 6:30 p.m., White Township Municipal Building.

November TBA: Native American Awareness Events

Dec. 15: White Township Stewardship Committee meeting. 6:30 p.m., White Township Municipal Building.

Jan. 26: "Climate Change." Dr. Steven Hovan, Interim Dean of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

The webinars, offered via Zoom from 4 to 5 p.m., are free and open to the public. To register for a webinar, send an email to info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org. Recordings of all webinars are available at friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events

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Items Discussed at October Stewardship Committee Meeting:

Old Growth Forests, Future Consultants, Data Collection Review

Dr. Joan Maloof, founder of The Old Growth Forest Network (OGFN), took center stage at the October 20th meeting of the White Township Stewardship Committee. Maloof (virtually) presented maps documenting the destruction of U.S. forests: Only 1% of old growth remains in the Eastern U.S.; 6% in the West. The goal of the OGFN is to identify one second-growth forest (since that is mostly all that is left) in each county in the United States that will be protected to allow it to mature into old growth.

Old Growth forests provide the greatest biodiversity, compared to all younger forests. But most foresters, said Maloof, almost always recommend timbering, even when though doing so interferes with normal forest development. Why? Most foresters have been trained in industrial forestry and sometimes even without being conscious of the perspectives that dominate their own thinking, they want to clear forest areas to allow room for more money-making trees. Maloof emphasized that, unless the point of your forest is to make money, forests do not need to be timbered.

Older forests also capture carbon from the atmosphere, a process ever-more-critical as we face increasing concentration of greenhouse gases and the climate havoc they cause. Unmanaged forests capture 39% to 118% more carbon. They also have a denser, nutrient-producing fungi network.

Oftentimes, said Maloof, foresters are especially likely to recommend timbering in an 80- to 120-year-old forest, because this is a transitional time period when undergrowth is sparse. As the forest ages through this transitional period, the majesty, diversity, and rich understory unfolds. Humans just need to learn to wait.

OGFN forests sometimes choose to control invasive plants and manage deer and, if they do, said Maloof, they do so in a variety of ways -- there is not one "right way." It is perfectly normal, she

also emphasized, to have one tree species dominate the canopy at certain points in the forest maturation process. And in the 250 million years that forests have managed themselves, tree diseases haven't been much of a worry. Dead trees are important for forest health.

To join the Old Growth Forest Network, a forest has to have an extra guarantee that it will be protected in perpetuity. Some municipalities partner with a Land Trust and secure a conservation

“Unmanaged forests capture 39% to 118% more carbon. They also have a denser, nutrient-producing fungi network.”

easement to provide permanent protection; others enact a special ordinance.

A three-consultant panel -- Dr. Mike Tyree (IUP Biology), Alyson Fearon (Allegheny Land Trust), and Calvin Norman (Penn State Extension forester) -- will speak (by ZOOM) at the committee's Nov. 17th meeting. At the Dec. 15th meeting, FWW consulting forester Mike Wolf (Appalachian Forest Consultants) will speak with the committee.

During the public comment period, FWW President Sara King pointed to natural area surveys previously conducted by other municipalities and agencies and underscored that the data presented in the 2022 IUP Community Interest Study and the 2020 FWW survey clearly meet these data collection standards. Stewardship Committee chairperson Barbara Hauge requested that Dr. Christoph Maier, retired IUP associate professor of mathematics, provide expert review of the IUP and FWW data for the committee.

The committee mission statement is still in progress.

Deer Hunting Update II

At the Oct. 12th meeting of the White Township Board of Supervisors, supervisor Gene Gemmell made a motion, seconded by supervisor Sandy Gillette, that "for this year, we eliminate any kind of hunting in White's Woods." The motion passed 4-1.

"The public has spoken," said supervisor Rich Gallo, saying he was impressed with the citizens who attended the Sept. 28th meeting. Gallo noted there has been too much township focus on White's Woods. The woods are doing fine, he said. Nature will take care of it.

Gillette said that she thought an apology is due to the public and agreed that too much of township time has been spent on White's Woods. Gillette noted that she was impressed by expert Appalachian Forest Consultant Mike Wolf who emphasized that White's Woods is a young forest and expressed hope that Friends of White's Woods and the township could begin working together. Gillette said that four of the five supervisors were unaware that the township had, at any point, any plans to open White's Woods for hunting in October.

Gemmell emphasized his concern that starting hunting without advance notice, then cancelling it, and, then, starting it again would be inevitably confusing: "How are people not going to be confused?"

Only supervisor George Lenz opposed the motion, asserting that hunting is recreation and that he thought the township should support all kinds of recreation.

According to the Project 70 contract establishing White's Woods as a Project 70 natural area, the woods are specifically set aside for passive recreation, such as walking, hiking, and nature education. In their March 2021 letter to White Township, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources made clear that White's Woods management activities "cannot reduce the recreational opportunities, detract from the recreational experience, nor disrupt the ecological function of the site."

What happens next? One supervisor suggested that the township stewardship committee will be working on this issue. Another suggested consideration of the second (winter) hunting season next year with plenty of advance warning to the public. Both Gallo and Gillette made clear that a plan that encouraged killing of four deer (as the just-cancelled plan appeared to do) would not solve a deer-browse problem, though they feared that the cost of fencing would be prohibitive.

At the October 26th supervisors meeting, Lenz insisted that the board re-visit, once again, plans for deer hunting in White's Woods. Though unclear, it appears that the question will re-appear on a future agenda.

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