



# Friends of White's Woods Monthly Newsletter



June

## White's Woods: diverse canopy; more than 28 tree species

Despite erroneous information disseminated by timbering proponents, an inventory of trees in White's Woods proves the canopy is diverse with 17 tree species topping the forest. Tulip poplar, northern red oak and red maple lead the pack.

The sapling layer boasts 17 species dominated by red maple, sweet birch and hophornbeam. Notably absent from the sapling layer is the sun-loving tulip poplar.

This information was just some of the data discussed by Dr. Marion Holmes of Unity College in her May 25th webinar now available on the FWW website under "Events." The inventory report was funded by FWW.



**American Chestnut:** A stand of American chestnut trees was identified by Dr. Marion Holmes in her inventory of trees in White's Woods.

In addition, the report states: "The diversity of tree sizes at White's Woods is also worth retaining for biodiversity. Tree size diversity is a hallmark of older and long-established forests, and large trees fill distinct ecological roles in forests that cannot be approximated by smaller individuals. Large trees are especially ecologically valuable as wildlife habitat and as seed producers, as size influences the number of fruit or seeds produced. For these reasons, the decline of large old trees has negative consequences for ecosystem integrity and should be avoided. Large trees are also especially valuable for carbon sequestration due to their growth rates. To encourage diversity of canopy structure as well as species composition, large trees should be retained throughout the property.

This webinar is available for viewing any time at [friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events](http://friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events).



## FWW Forms Committees

With upcoming summer and fall activities, FWW will be forming committees to assist with tasks essential to the full functioning of our organization.

We are hoping you will step forward and volunteer your time and talents to these endeavors.

One committee would be the Events committee where members are recruited to staff our tables at area events, such as Earth Day, May Mart, Westsylvania Jazz Festival, etc. The committee would schedule members for two-hour time blocks, setup tables, displays, etc., and ensure enough materials for distribution.

Another committee would be publicity, which would include making copies of the newsletter and distributing to area outlets, contacting radio stations with news items, etc.

We hope you can volunteer for one/both of these committees. Please email us at [info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org](mailto:info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org) to sign up.

We thank you in advance.

## Next *Naturally* Column in the *Indiana Gazette*

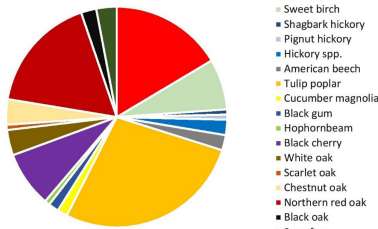
The fifth *Naturally* column, sponsored by FWW and the *Indiana Gazette*, will appear in the June 3/4 weekend edition.

Titled *Spring Is Around the Corner, Time to Jump in the (Vernal) Pool!*, the article is written by Greg Podniesinski, chief, Natural Heritage Section, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Missed the first four columns?

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

a. Canopy composition at White's Woods



According to Holmes, if the deer population is effectively suppressed, forest succession will likely allow regeneration of a diverse canopy. "While creation of artificial canopy gaps by single-tree or small-group harvests has the potential to increase stand heterogeneity at a faster rate than natural forest succession by releasing saplings or initiating new cohorts, the potential drawbacks of harvest in White's Woods likely outweigh the ecological benefits of tree removal at this stage," she wrote.



*Fungi in White's Woods, May 2023*

*photo by Sara King*

## UPCOMING WEBINARS AND EVENTS

**June 14: White Township Supervisors** meeting. 1:00 p.m., White Township Municipal Building.

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

**June 28: White Township Supervisors Committee** meeting. 7:00 p.m., White Township Municipal Building.

Webinars will resume in September. All previous webinars can be viewed at [friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events](http://friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events).

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

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## **MAY STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING CONSIDERS sDEER FENCING, OUTLINE FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS**

The committee considered a report from IUP biology professor Dr. Mike Tyree on an effective response to naturally-occurring canopy gaps including: leaving all downed wood in the woods; leaving the fallen trunk of the downed trees in place; relying on volunteers to roll logs away from the trail; erecting fencing in the newly opened canopy gap; hand-pulling invasive plants; and planting new tree seedlings. Tyree emphasized that, to avoid damage to the woods, no heavy equipment should be used in this, or similar, project(s). Matt Klunk and other committee members expressed appreciation for this report, which was prepared at the behest of FWW. Township manager Chris Anderson also expressed his appreciation for Tyree's report and indicated his hope to work with volunteers, including Dr. Tyree, to follow-through with these recommendations.

Chairperson Barbara Hauge distributed a draft outline of the White's Woods Stewardship plan that integrated plan outline components previously identified by Hauge and committee members Sierra Davis and David Dahlheimer. The chair explained that an approved outline should be presented to the White Township Board of Supervisors at their next meeting (which occurred May 24).

The two-page outline lists numerous plan sections, including: the purposes and goals of the plan; the history of White's Woods; the committee's work with experts; descriptive information about White's Woods (e.g., flora, fauna, waterways, slope map, the invasive species map, the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Inventory); options for future administrative management; management philosophy: implementation guidelines; specific policies (bikes, dog walking, trails); and stewardship considerations regarding invasive plants, deer browse, and natural canopy gaps.

The committee made one modification to identify management options to include: (1) park manager/Recreation Board; (2) Land Conservancy; (3) Old Growth Forest Network; and (4) oversight committee/Conservation groups

Dahlheimer suggested that a decision of such importance should be voted on by all five committee members and that the committee should defer a formal vote until Davis, who was excused from the meeting for family obligations, could participate. The outline was approved by Hauge, Klunk, and Jeff Geesey. Dahlheimer abstained from the vote.

A letter from FWW recommending strategies for future management for White's Woods was considered by the committee. This letter urged a full partnership with all key natural

area stakeholders. Regular, constant township and regional public collaboration, the letter argued, should be the driver of all management decisions. Such collaboration between natural area managers and Friends groups is the norm nation-wide and should be central to all management of White's Woods.

Hauge urged the committee to approve a bare-bones summary of the committee's work to date, listing the number of meetings and number of committee consultants as the basis for committee members' public engagement with select organizations. This "Executive Summary for Community Outreach" notes that "We are here presenting to your group as part of the community engagement mission as well as review of previous surveys conducted. We want to update you on our mission, our progress, and what is next. We would also like to hear from you any concerns that you have."

Dahlheimer reminded the committee that Dr. Susan Boser previously emphasized that the committee should prepare a summary of its conclusions and recommendations for use in its next step in public engagement and that Davis had argued at the May meeting that, at the very least, committee "talking points" should be prepared in advance. He observed that Hauge's document provided neither. Dahlheimer again pointed to the need for all committee members to be involved in a decision of such importance.

The document was approved 3-0, with 1 abstention (Dahlheimer).

Geesey suggested that committee members use Hauge's Executive Summary, along with a document distributed by Dahlheimer that identifies draft plan mission, goals, objectives, management philosophy, and implementation guidelines when meeting with the public in coming weeks. However, the only portion of the lengthy document that the committee chose to formally approve was the brief, introductory mission: "Conservation and Preservation of the White's Woods Nature Center."

The remainder of the document, including a commitment to abide by Project 70 guidelines, preserve White's Woods for low-density passive recreation, strictly limit removal of trees, rely on natural forest processes and least-intrusive management strategies reflects committee work, though was not formally approved at this meeting.

Dahlheimer presented the complete summary of what the committee has learned, a summary prepared by Dahlheimer and fellow committee member Davis (*See box in next column*).

### **Expert Advice to the Stewardship Committee about White's Woods**

1. Protect the tree canopy;
2. The overstory is healthy and diverse;
3. Address invasive plants and deer browse to protect the understory;
4. Natural forest development processes work;
5. Benefits of joining the Old Growth Forest Network;
6. The need for extensive ecosystem data (e.g. at-risk species; wildlife; trail conditions);
7. The importance of deer fencing to protect the understory;
8. The fact that public input should drive all management decisions; and
9. Recognition of the impact of climate change.

### **Mission Statement Fails**

At their May 18th meeting, the White Township Stewardship Committee approved the committee mission statement: "Preservation and Conservation of the White's Woods Nature Center."

This approval came six months after the idea of a mission statement was first proposed by committee member Sierra Davis, who argued that the committee needed to make a statement to the public that made clear that removal of trees from White's Woods would be "strictly limited."

Does the mission statement approved by committee majority meet this standard? No.

The statement was meant to be embedded in a clear, lengthy outline of the committee's commitments that should include specific goals: (1) Root all management activities in public input; (2) Honor Project 70 commitments and goals; (3) Preserve as a natural area, left largely undisturbed, for passive recreation; (4) Promote nature education; (5) Support natural forest processes; (6) Protect at-risk species; and (7) Strictly limit the removal of trees.

The mission statement was to be grounded in plan objectives (protect the canopy; protect the litter layer and established seed bank; and support understory development by controlling invasive plants and deer browse) and a management philosophy that states a commitment to letting the forest grow old and to rely on least-intrusive management activities.

But, the entire statement of mission, goals, objectives, management philosophy, and implementation guidelines was not considered at the Committee's May meeting.

Instead, a nine-word mission statement (contained in first paragraph) was approved without all members in attendance, including the member who first asserted that a clear statement rejecting timbering in White's Woods is essential for gaining public trust.

It seems that much work may remain for those who wish to save White's Woods.

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

**We welcome feedback. Email us at:  
[info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org](mailto:info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org)**

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