



Friends of White's Woods, Inc.

P.O. Box 1271
Indiana, PA 15701

March 9, 2023

White Township Stewardship Committee
950 Indian Springs Road
Indiana, PA 15701

Dear Barb, Sierra, Dave, Matt, and Jeff:

At the February 16, 2023 meeting, White Township Recreation Director Ryan Shaffer indicated that he believed that the White Township Board of Supervisors would be unwilling to expend funds to purchase deer fencing for White's Woods, even though multiple consultants have indicated that fencing at least small plots is essential to control deer browse.

Friends of White's Woods (FWW) thinks that it is important for the White Township Stewardship Committee to point out to the Board of Supervisors that there are other ways that White Township could tap into resources and management strategies that the Township may not have the interest or the capacity to pursue.

Two of these options would rely on the assistance of Land Conservancies, nonprofit organizations that serve as stewards for land protection. To work with a conservancy:

- a. White Township could maintain continued ownership of White's Woods subject to a conservation easement or a long-term lease held by a regional conservancy that would manage White's Woods in coordination with DCNR; or,
- b. White Township could transfer White's Woods to a regional conservancy with FWW and the conservancy assuming any transfer costs or statutory penalties arising from the transfer (with the approval of the Commonwealth).

It might be of note that Pennsylvania Act 154, signed into law on November 29, 2006, facilitates local government partnerships with land trusts.

We would also like to note that we are very surprised at the committee questions regarding the tree species inventory sampling method used by Dr. Marion Holmes in her work in White's Woods. In light of these questions, we would like to call a number of things to your attention:

- a. The design of sampling for any forest inventory project is determined by the goals of the project. And ecological sampling procedures are generally different than those employed in commercial forestry.
- b. The USDA makes clear that 1 sample plot per 25 acres is standard (see attached, p.5)

- c. When Dr. Holmes learned of your question, she was shocked. In an email she replied that: “100 meter plots (10x10) are a standard size used in ecology. I went with 12x12 to expand on that. There’s not an extensive reason for the size beyond wanting to improve the sampling from the 100 meter plots.”
- d. For further information, see attached article that is also posted on the USDA website. (Page 48; excerpt below.)

“Plot-based sampling. Plots are circular or square areas laid out at regular distances from one another, every 20 meters for example. Square plots are usually created using stakes and fiberglass tapes. Circular plots are created using a fixed point in the center (e.g., a stake) and extending a rope or tape to a specific length from the stake in all directions to determine the area of the plot. **The size of the plot will vary depending on the indicator being sampled. For example, tree density requires a larger plot, for example a 10-by-10 meter square plot, while understory cover requires a smaller plot, a 1-by-1 meter plot, for example. A 12.62-meter-radius circle makes a .05 hectare plot.** (Bold added.)

- e. It may also be useful for the committee to recall that, at the November, 2022 committee meeting, forest ecologist Dr. Mike Tyree reported to the committee that, based on observation during his regular visits to White’s Woods, the forest is diverse.
- f. And the committee might also note that the 1995 timber inventory (done for the purpose of identifying merchantable timber) indicated that about one-third of the forest canopy was tulip poplar.

At the February, 2023 meeting, the question of invasive plants was raised. As you know, Dr. Kuebbing’s and Dr. Holmes’ careful inventory makes clear that invasive plants are concentrated at primary trail heads and along those trails that have areas open to sunlight - except for three dense patches of barberry that are located on North-facing slopes.

In conclusion, it seems important to note that the committee is still working in the absence of important data that is necessary before any plan can be developed

Sincerely,

Board of Directors,
Friends of White’s Woods