



Friends of White's Woods Monthly Newsletter



January

DCNR PROVIDES FEEDBACK TO WHITE'S WOODS PLAN!

PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) feedback to the 2024 White's Woods Stewardship Plan was distributed to Supervisors and the public at the January 14, 2026, Board of Supervisors meeting. The document is [posted on the White Township website](#).

The DCNR feedback was brief, compared to previous responses. In 2021, the Department of Recreation and Conservation, in concert with the Bureau of Forestry, sent a detailed 11-page document regarding the proposed Millstone Plan. At this point, only a succinct three-page letter from the Bureau of Forestry (BOF) has been received by the Township.

The letter noted that "the work to reduce the impact of invasive species has been impressive," indicated support for the Stewardship Plan goal



to enroll the forest in the Old Growth Forest Network, and applauded the 2024 plan goal to seek opportunities to purchase adjacent forest land.

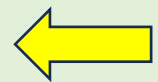
Other BOF comments appeared to affirm remaining 2024 Stewardship Plan goals such as protecting ecosystem services, seeking advice

from forest ecologists, collaborating with volunteers, promoting passive recreation and education opportunities, and using fencing to reduce deer-browse impact.

While also supporting the important goal of protecting the forest's canopy, the BOF suggested that a more extensive tree inventory might be useful.

This BOF response did not address goals such as protecting at-risk species, developing early-response systems for new invasive plants, recognizing the importance of dead wood for forest health, and monitoring bird, plant, and mammal conservation efforts--all items that were incorporated in the 2024 plan.

1. Acknowledges the important role of Project 70.
2. Commits to preserving the forest for future generations as a natural area for passive recreation.
3. Indicates that the WWNC should mature into an old-growth forest and be enrolled in the Old Growth Forest Network.
4. Relies on natural forest maturation processes, leaving all downed wood (which is so critical to forest health) in the forest.
5. Protects the healthy tree canopy.
6. Relies on "least-intrusive" forest management options as the default management plan.
7. Recognizes the critical importance of an ecological perspective in maintaining forest health.
8. Protects at-risk species, including plants, birds, and mammals.
9. Acknowledges WWNC role in carbon absorption, temperature mediation, and air and water quality.
10. Calls for deer fencing, manual removal of invasive plants, and planting of native species.
11. Strictly limits the removal of trees.



**KEY POINTS:
2024 WWNC
STEWARDSHIP
PLAN**

UPCOMING FWW EVENTS

***Invasive Plant Removal:** Weather permitting. **Please help!** Sign up at the [FWW website](#) and/or watch your email.

***March 25, 2026: Volunteers Growing Native Plants for Restoration Projects, Dr. Linda Rohleder, Founder** [Wildwood Restoration Project](#) To register for this webinar, send an email to info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org

***TBA: White's Woods Deer-exclosure: Interim report.** Dr. Mike Tyree, Professor of Biology, IUP.

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Issue 65
January 2026

Climate Forest Coalition Update

25th Anniversary of the Roadless Rule in National Forests

January 2026 marks the 25th anniversary of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The “Roadless Rule,” as it is generally known, was created to protect 58 million acres of forests nationwide. This has meant that for a quarter of a century, our wildest remaining undeveloped national forestlands have continued to provide wildlife habitat, outdoor exploration opportunities, hunting and fishing, clean water and other benefits. The Roadless Rule was officially enacted on January 12, 2001, following a tremendous outpouring of public support. **Before the rule was adopted, more than 600 public hearings were held around the nation and the public provided more than 1.6 million comments, more comments than any other rule in the nation's history.**

[Last summer, the administration launched a new attack](#) against the Roadless Rule with a proposal to repeal it entirely. Although the administration allowed [a mere 21 days for public comment](#), its initial proposal drew extraordinary backlash, with more than 625,000 public comments flooding into the U.S. Forest Service in response, 99% of which opposed the proposed rollback. But the plan to repeal the rule is still moving forward.

[2026 is the year that anyone who cherishes public lands must step up once again](#) to protect the Roadless Rule and keep 45 million acres of forestlands safe from clear-cutting and roadbuilding that would devastate wildlife habitat and ruin recreational outdoor experiences.

The protection of 25,000 acres of the [Allegheny National Forest is at risk](#). Also at risk are some of the nation's [most valuable wildlife areas](#).

What people need to do: **BE ON THE ALERT** for the (hoped for) new public comment period that will probably be opened in March. There is likely to be very little warning about this public comment period and the opportunity is likely to be short. **ALSO**, contact the Pennsylvania Governor's office and all of your representatives to explain how important this rule is for Pennsylvania and for the nation.

A Vole? A Mole?

Voles and moles are among the many creatures that live in White's Woods.

Both moles and voles live underground. Moles tunnel through the soil and voles burrow just below the ground's surface, making “runways” across the forest floor.

Both voles and moles are about 4-6 inches long. (Both are bigger than shrews who are about 3-4 inches in length.)

Moles have small eyes and their ears are concealed under their fur. Their most distinctive characteristic is their large, paddle-like front feet! A mole's front feet are angled to the side and equipped with large claws that make them effective tunnelers. Moles eat insects – so they are considered to be “carnivores.”

Voles have large black eyes, prominent ears, and resemble field mice. They have prominent orange teeth and are vegetarian.

Both moles and voles are important to the health of the forest ecosystem, aerating soil, distributing nutrients and seeds, and helping with pest control.



Image of a mole by Michael David Hill, Wikimedia

Firefighters & Forest Chiefs Say Roads Cause Fires!

According to [Montana firefighter Shaun Opps](#), “nearly 90% of wildfires are human-caused. Research shows fires are four times more likely to start near roads than in roadless areas. Every new road becomes another place where sparks fly, cigarettes land, and campfires escape. The fires threatening Montana communities don't start in remote wilderness. They originate where people are, where people work, where people hunt and fish, and where people recreate.

What firefighters actually need isn't complicated. We need defensible space around homes. Equipment that works. Training that prepares us. Homeowners who maintain their properties. Fuel reduction programs that thin brush while preserving wildlife habitat. Fuel breaks where they make sense. These proven strategies protect people, property, and wildlife habitat.”

“[P]ersistency in the conservation movement is essential” and preserving its successes will require education and public pressure “for all time to come.” Ira N. Gabrielson, first director of the U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service (1940), as cited in Audubon, Summer, 2025.

[Four former U.S. Forest Service Chiefs](#), who collectively have over 150 years of public land management experience also weighed in. The [existing] Roadless Rule provides line officers “full power to pre-emptively reduce wildfire danger to communities, and to fight fires when necessary. The Roadless Rule is working... Our remaining unroaded wildlands are a national treasure.”

The Fix Our Forests Act

The misnamed [Fix Our Forests Act](#), the act that calls for extensive timbering to address wildfire. is moving from committee consideration to the Senate agenda.

[Environmental groups continue to oppose this bill](#) because it limits scientific, public, and judicial review and because the dramatic increase in timbering [may actually increase wildfire risk](#). Committee member PA Senator Fetterman voted in support.

Elimination of [key protections](#) for national forests, rollback of the [Endangered Species Act](#), the [Clean Air Act](#), and the [Clean Water Act](#), reduction of [Park Service and Forest Service budgets](#) to levels that cripple basic operations, as well as erasure of government recognition of the accelerating threat of climate change continue.