



Friends of White's Woods

Monthly Newsletter



NOV/DEC

Old-Growth Forests: Ecosystems with Community Benefits

On November 13, 4-5 p.m., Brian Kane, Mid-Atlantic Regional Manager of the [Old Growth Forest Network](#), will present an FWW webinar which outlines the ecological qualities and benefits of old-growth forests and shares several examples from the [41 Pennsylvania old-growth forests](#) in the national Old Growth Forest Network.



The OGFN website notes that “The preservation of unique and beautiful tracts of land as National Parks is often called ‘America’s best idea.’ Present generations are profoundly grateful for the foresight and effort that went into setting aside the parks that we enjoy today. Yet today, less than 5% of Western and only a fraction of 1% of Eastern original forests, on average, remain standing. It is thus our turn to do what we can for those who will come after us and save the remnant old-growth (or future old-growth) forests across the country.”

Over 99% of east coast forests have been logged, mostly in the last 120-175 years. In order to have more old growth in the future, we need to protect older second-growth forests like White’s Woods now.

Kane is a landscape architect, environmental educator, and sustainability expert. He has designed numerous culturally significant landscapes throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed in his design career. He has also been a faculty member at Virginia Tech, the University of Maryland, and a sustainability director for a K-12 school. The OGFN, which has enrolled over 300 forests in 39 states, has the goal of enrolling a forest in every county in the U.S. No forest in Indiana County has yet been enrolled in the OGFN, although the Network has issued a formal invitation to White Township to enroll White’s Woods. To register for this webinar, send an email to info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org.

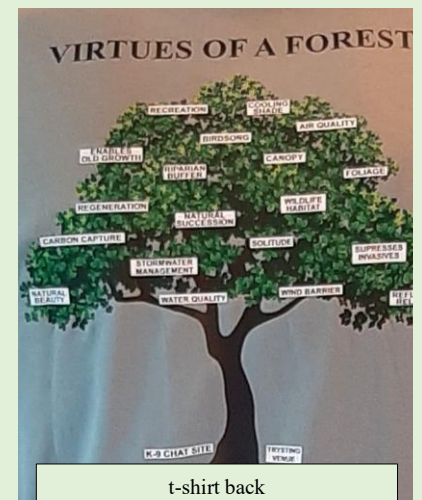
UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturdays: Invasive Plant Removal and/or Tree Protection/Planting 10 a.m. to noon. **Please help!** Sign up at the [FWW website](#) and/or watch your email.

November 13, 2025, Old-Growth Forests: Ecosystems with Community Benefits, Brian Kane, Mideast Regional Director, Old Growth Forest Network, ZOOM, 4-5 p.m. To register for this webinar, send an email to info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org.

HOLIDAYS COMING? FWW HAS NEW T-SHIRTS!

These beautiful shirts identify the many virtues of a forest. Get a new FWW shirt with a \$25 FWW donation.



TO ORDER:

[Go to the FWW Website](#) and click “membership form.” OR send an email to:

info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org

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Friends of White's Woods Member Meeting October 14, 2025

About three dozen FWW members gathered at the Zion Lutheran Church on October 14th to consider the year's accomplishments and future plans, as well as to discuss the possibilities, questions, and concerns about the proposed Homer City power plant and data center.

In the first part of this meeting, FWW board members provided an overview of events and accomplishments in the last year:

- The White's Woods Stewardship Plan, supported by 95% of the 200 citizens who provided plan feedback, was [sent to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources \(DCNR\) last January](#). DCNR is expected to respond to the plan within the next few months.
- 1,700-2,000 volunteer hours have been devoted to removing invasive barberry in White's Woods since July, 2023, with nearly [800 volunteer hours](#) occurring in this year, alone. This project's initial goal, to clear the Natural Heritage Area and up to the tops of all surrounding ridges, has been accomplished.
- FWW is working to clear least invaded areas first and in the coming year will be tackling more densely invaded areas.
- FWW volunteers have started planting and protecting native tree seedlings.
- Volunteers are needed to help remove the small invasive regrowth in future years so that we can protect our success.
- White Township received an official invitation to enroll White's Woods in the [Old Growth Forest Network](#) (OFGN). Enrolling in the OFGN will help to assure that our second -growth forest matures into old growth and is protected for future generations. Being part of the OFGN will also make way for numerous economic and ecological benefits.
- FWW is working with consultants to identify at-risk plants, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals in the WWNC.

Discussion of the proposed Homer City power plant and data center was facilitated by County Commissioner Sherene Hess. To provide a background for the discussion, Hess explained that planning to repurpose the decommissioned power plant commenced in 2024 when the federally-established [Interagency Working Group on Coal & Power Plant Communities & Economic Revitalization](#) came to Indiana County ["to discuss what it called the post-power plant future of the county."](#) This agency's federal program [was cancelled by the Trump administration](#). On April 2, 2025, a private initiative announced by [Homer City Redevelopment, LLC](#) promoted plans for a Marcellus shale fueled power plant that would be used exclusively to power what would become the largest data center in the U.S. Some discussion participants underscored the value of new jobs for our community and expressed confidence that environmental safeguards will be in place. Other participants expressed concern about the extraordinary water use required by data centers, increased Marcellus shale drilling, climate impact, increased levels of some pollutants, and what could be an environmentally-disruptive project resulting in few long-term jobs. Concerns about the general lack of transparency in project planning, including the "piecemealing" permit process, were also raised.

FWW board member Rick Ritenour was re-elected to a three-year term. Other board members include Sara King, David Dahlheimer, Tom Miller, Jessica Jopp, Susan Dahlheimer, Norma Tarnoff, Carolyn Trimarchi, and Fred Heilman.

MAKING IT THROUGH THE WINTER

Our wild friends rely on a [variety of strategies](#) to get through winter. Some, like the redtail hawk (right) and ravens are "partial migrants." Some species members find the winters mild enough to stay year-round. Squirrels, rabbits, weasels and other mammals also stay around, changing their coats to adapt.



Migration is the wintering strategy used by most of our songbirds and butterflies, who migrate hundreds or even thousands of miles, along with some of the "partial migrants" described above.

Some reptiles, amphibians, and animals employ a third strategy, hibernation, to deal with the foul weather. Eastern box turtles bury themselves in soil and go into a semi-dormant state called "brumation." Black bears also go into a state of torpor to conserve energy, though they are likely to have periods of activity over the winter. Because we are seeing warmer, less predictable winter temperatures some species are [struggling to adapt](#).

CLIMATE FORESTS UPDATE

The misnomered [Fix Our Forests Act](#), that calls for extensive timbering to address wildfire is moving from committee consideration to the Senate agenda. Committee member PA Senator Fetterman voted in support. [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](#).

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.