



Friends of White's Woods Monthly Newsletter



INDIANA ARTIST SIGNS 2022 LIMITED PRINTS FOR FRIENDS OF WHITE'S WOODS



Indiana artist Beth Wheeler (seated) signs and numbers the 100 limited prints of her painting, "Sunlight's Dance," which was selected by the Friends of White's Woods Board of Directors as the 2022 print available for a \$100 donation. A native of Bellwood, Wheeler, a landscape artist, holds a bachelor's degree in education from St. Francis University, Loretto; a master's in art history from West Virginia University; and a master's of fine arts in painting from IUP. Her work has been exhibited at St. Francis University, Altoona Public Library, Ebensburg Art in Bloom Festival, Blair County Arts Festival, Bottleworks in Johnstown, and the MIB Gallery in Buckhannon, W.V. Her work is also displayed at the West Virginia University library. Members of the FFW Board witnessing the signing are (from left to right): Tom Miller, Carolyn Trimarchi, Dave Dahlheimer, Susan Dahlheimer, Rick Ritenour, Fred Heilman and Jessica Jopp. To reserve a print, please send an email to info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org.

UPCOMING WEBINARS AND EVENTS

March 15: The White's Woods Nature Center: Current Value & Future Care" (Draft Plan) by FFW Board of Directors, noon to 1 p.m.

March 17: Stewardship Subcommittee, White Township Municipal Building, Indian Springs Road, 6:30 p.m. Open to the public.

April 7: "Natural Succession/Passive Management of the Eastern Deciduous Second-Growth Forests" by Jess Riddle, executive director of the Georgia Forest Watch, from 4 to 5 p.m.

April 9: Garlic Mustard Festival, 11 a.m., 12th Street entrance to White's Woods

April 22: Earth Day Walk to White's Woods (12th Street entrance) with numerous environmental groups, 4 to 6 p.m.

April 30: Bird Walk with Margaret Higbee of the Todd Bird Club, (12th Street entrance), 9 a.m.

May 21: Plant Walk with Cindy Rogers of The Evergreen Conservancy, (12th Street entrance), 10 a.m.

The webinars, offered via Zoom, are free and open to the public. To register for a webinar, send an email to info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org.

FWW PRESENTS PLAN FOR WHITE'S WOODS AT MARCH 15 WEBINAR

After months of working with consultants in forestry, forest ecology, invasive plant biology, stormwater management, invasive plant management, climate change, forest songbird habitat, forest carbon sequestration, along with reading numerous DCNR reports and DCNR management plans approved for other Project 70 lands, Friends of White's Woods is poised to offer both a list of ideal goals and supporting data for long-term protection of the White's Woods Nature Center. All goals must be reviewed by the public and modified as appropriate.

In this webinar, which will run from noon to 1 p.m., FFW Board members will review the assembled 121-page draft FFW document that includes 44 specific objectives, based on public survey input and detailed reports from DCNR, and numerous FFW consultants, including forester Mike Wolf and invasive plant specialists Dr. Sara Kuebing and Dr. Marion Holmes.

White's Woods Nature Center: Current Value & Future Care is divided into six main sections: (1) Purposes of the White's Woods Nature Center; (2) Promotion of Recreation for All; (3) Support for DCNR Efforts to Mitigate Climate Change and to Protect the Indiana Region; (4) Support for the WWNC as a Steady Revenue Source - By Leaving the Woods Intact; (5) Protection of the WWNC for Future Generations; and (6) appendices that include DCNR and FFW consultant reports.

The plan emphasizes reliance on natural succession, allowing this young forest to mature to old growth, reliance on volunteers for Nature Center maintenance, data collection regarding at-risk species and changes resulting from climate impact, along with reliance on least-intrusive means for caring for our community forest.

To register, please send an email to info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org.

For more information, visit: friendsofwhiteswoods.org

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White Township Stewardship Committee considers how to evaluate plans, engage the community

At the second meeting of the White Township Stewardship Subcommittee, member Dave Dahlheimer pointed out that, in order to evaluate the various plans (Millstone, the Penn State Extension, Mike Wolf, the Township, Friends of White's Woods, and Murrysville), the subcommittee needed to identify the standards by which each proposal should be considered. "Are the plan management goals rooted in community values?" "How will the goals enhance or detract from the recreation, economic, and/or ecologic values?" "Is the plan holistic?" "Does it rely on acceptable practices?"

In a lengthy discussion, committee members Sierra Davis and Matt Klunk indicated that they could see advantages to identifying criteria for evaluation and some value, as well, in attention to the public input that has already been assembled.

Subcommittee Chair Barbara Hauge proposed instead that the committee's review of the plans be addressed by identifying "two or three positives" from each.

Sara King lamented that even though DCNR "made clear that the Millstone Plan was problematic because there was a 'disconnect' with community values," the Township staff asked this subcommittee to re-consider the 2020 Millstone Plan without including the feedback provided by 1200 people.

The Township and the Murrysville plans focus on deer management. The Penn State Extension Plan calls for use of herbicide, culling of the deer herd, and some timbering or other means of killing trees to promote regeneration.

After consideration of possible approaches to the review of the plans listed on the agenda, no conclusion was reached.

In the initial Public Comment peri-

od, Rick Ritenour emphasized that White's Woods is to be used exclusively for recreation, conservation, and historical purposes. Tom Miller pointed out that White Township, by participating in the Project 70 initiative, had entered into a covenant and, as such, remains bound to that agreement.

According to Carolyn Trimarchi, "natural succession has created a healthy forest in White's Woods, one that will thrive as we allow it to mature on its own without interference."

Township Manager Chris Anderson reviewed the Sunshine Act, explaining to the subcommittee that they would not be engaging in any business that would permit exclusion of the public or use of Executive Session and that public comment must be a feature of every subcommittee meeting.

Hague recommended that the committee invest a few thousand dollars to hire Westmoreland County consultant John D. Turack to guide subcommittee public engagement. Subcommittee members suggested looking to local resources for this assistance, including those located in Indiana University of Pennsylvania academic departments. Township staff and Dahlheimer will look into local alternatives for help with public engagement and present these at the March subcommittee meeting.

Hague suggested that a carbon sequestration contract is not a viable option for White's Woods, suggesting that markets change and that such a contract would "monetize" the park. Dahlheimer explained that the offer for carbon sequestration is current and real and that the Indiana County Parks is now pursuing a possible proposal

from Allegheny Land Trust.

Township Manager Chris Anderson said he would try to get information about the Indiana County Parks sequestration proposal process.

Dahlheimer asked the committee to consider two DCNR grant possibilities, one to support creation of a stewardship plan and the second to

"Natural succession has created a healthy forest in White's Woods"

support land acquisition to increase available land for public use. Davis indicated that her understanding was that a large parcel of land adjacent to White's Woods is currently for sale. Dahlheimer was asked to provide more information at the March meeting.

Chair Hauge requested that the committee review forest management templates and information provided by the Penn State Extension regarding the management of private forests.

The township's subcommittee must first obtain a good understanding of community values, non-invasive forest management approaches for public lands, and carbon sequestration before drafting a stewardship plan.

White's Woods is healthy, and we need to keep it that way! It is truly critical that FWW members attend these meetings, in-person or virtually, observe the process and make their voices heard. The next meeting is at 6:30 p.m. March 17 at the White Township Municipal Building.

The Friends of White's Woods' draft plan, forester Mike Wolf's 2020 reports, and the Millstone plan are available at friendsofwhiteswoods.org.

For more information, visit: friendsofwhiteswoods.org

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