



# Friends of White's Woods Monthly Newsletter



## *BOS, DCNR to Review Draft Stewardship Plan*

The draft White's Woods Stewardship Plan, was presented to the Board of Supervisors July 24. It is up to the supervisors to respect the committee's work, consultant advice, and public input and send the plan to DCNR for review. All Project 70 stewardship plans must be reviewed by DCNR.

Township Manager Chris Anderson said the plan included all of the edits approved at the May 2nd meeting of the Stewardship Committee and these edits were based on public input received when the plan was posted from Dec. 23 to March 22. Anderson thanked the Stewardship Committee and underscored the public and committee consultants' important role in helping to develop the plan. Both Anderson and Stewardship Committee Chair Barbara Hague mentioned that after the draft plan was sent to the supervisors they realized that a couple of additional changes needed to be made. FWW is seeking to understand what these changes might be since the committee did not hold a public meeting after May 2.

Friends of White's Woods (FWW) supports this draft plan because it emerged from a DCNR-recommended process rooted in public input, reliant on science-based research, and informed by consultants with expertise in a variety of disciplines. As a result, the plan incorpo-

rates elements that:

- Acknowledge the important role of Project 70 in establishing White's Woods as a regional community forest and preserving this park for future generations as a natural area for passive recreation.
- Allow the nature center to mature into an old-growth forest and, possibly, enroll our forest in the Old Growth Forest Network (OGFN).
- Rely on natural forest maturation processes to protect our natural area for future generations, leaving all downed wood (which is so critical to forest health) in the forest.
- Protect the healthy tree canopy, which is key to the preservation of our forest, and, by providing shade, enhances and expands summer recreational opportunities for park users, as well.
- Enhance the forest's capacity to sequester carbon by maximizing forest density and protecting against disturbances.
- Rely on "least-intrusive" forest management options as the default, basing future management decisions, at every possible turn, on passive management strategies.
- Recognize the critical importance of an ecological perspective in caring for the interlocking forest ecosystems in White's Woods and rely on data provided by ecological experts.
- Protect at-risk species in White's Woods,

including already identified at-risk mammals, plants, birds, amphibians, and other at-risk species that might be identified in the future.

- Follow the lead of the public, as well as experts, to support biodiversity in White's Woods through the use of deer fencing, manual removal of invasive plants, and planting of native species.
- Emphasize the importance of the role that White's Woods plays in various ecosystem services, including carbon absorption and temperature mediation.
- Strictly limit the cutting of any trees.
- Create a Stewards Committee, to include FWW representation, to guide all future management decisions.
- Support passive recreational opportunities that are compatible with preservation goals.

FWW President Sara King noted that the committee worked hard for over two years to complete the plan.

King added that this plan will allow our community forest to mature into old-growth, though it may take another 40-50 years for the forest to develop all of the old-growth characteristics that define such a forest, according to DCNR consultant Dale Luthringer.

"I won't see that," King said. "Maybe it is not too far-fetched to guess that some of you won't see that either. But your children probably will. And your grandchildren definitely will. And that is a sight that hasn't been seen by people in this area – or almost anywhere in Pennsylvania – for over one and a half centuries.

"We already have many trees in White's Woods that DCNR calls "special;" some nearly 150-foot tall and 14 feet in circumference, King continued. White's Woods has some bigger and taller trees than any of the same species in the very celebrated Cook's Forest. White's Woods is a special forest."

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Aug. 7: Preserving Natural Spaces** by FWW, at UU Church, 285 Twolick Drive, 6 to 8 p.m.

**Aug. 8: Big Tree Walk, 5:30 p.m., College Lodge.**

**August TBA: Plant Walk**

**Sept. 26: Forest-clearing to Create Early-successional Habitats: Questionable Benefits, Significant costs webinar** by Michael Kellet, executive director of RESTORE: North Woods, noon to 1 p.m.

**October: Annual Membership Meeting**

**Nov. 7: A Brief Tour of Some of Pennsylvania's Big Trees and How to Measure Them webinar** by Dale Luthringer, DCNR Environmental Education Specialist, Cook Forest State Park, noon to 1 p.m.

Please check [friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events](https://friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events) and/or your email for up-to-date information on upcoming events. Register for webinars by sending an email to [info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org](mailto:info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org)

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

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## Public input needed to assure the U.S. Forest Service strengthens proposal to protect our national forests!

There is a HUGE opportunity right now to take a stand for the future of our national forests. The deadline for U.S. Forest Service public comment regarding The [Draft Environmental Impact Statement](#) for old-growth forest protection is Sept. 20.

The [90-day Public Comment period](#) began on June 20.

The U.S. Forest Service is working to amend every national forest plan in the country to protect mature and old growth forests, which could become one of the most meaningful safeguards for federal forests that we have seen in decades. The agency is looking for public input on how they'll manage our public forests for generations to come. This is an opportunity that we don't want to miss.

If enough people write in this summer, our country could finally see an end to the harmful practice of logging our few remaining old-growth trees for profit and chart out a course to allow mature trees to keep growing and become the next generation of old-growth.

It may be hard to believe that old-growth forests on our federal lands still lack protections from logging. [Climate Forests](#), a national coalition of over 130 environmental groups, believes that our national forests should be held in public trust for the enormous benefits they provide to the climate, to wildlife, and to communities who depend on them. Too often they're treated like crops to be harvested, rather than the valuable climate champions that they are. Old growth and mature trees are worth far more if left standing, in part because they store and absorb huge amounts of carbon and keep it out of the atmosphere.

The outcomes of this process will depend on whether the public can make clear to

the Forest Service that it needs to establish enforceable protections.

[Help strengthen the demand for stronger protections for forests by submitting a comment today!](#)

The biodiversity and climate crises are closely intertwined, and Climate Forests believes that our solutions must rise to match the magnitude of the challenges we face. To fully address these twin crises, we need lasting protective measures for forests that safeguard both mature and old-growth trees.

Climate Forests emphasizes that we need a federal forest plan that provides a standard for the protection of publicly-owned forests. The plan needs to be durable in that it eliminates management activity loopholes and ambiguous language that allows continued commercial logging of the little old growth that remains. It needs to include standards for protecting mature trees and forests so that we can begin to replace the old growth we have lost. And the new plan must emphasize the importance of forests in carbon and climate mitigation. The current public comment period is the most recent step following the Biden administration's [Earth Day 2022](#) action to strengthen American forests, boost wildfire resistance, and combat global deforestation.

You can take a stand for old-growth and mature forests by sending a letter to the Forest Service today to help protect our oldest trees. For more information and to submit your comment, go to [www.climate-forests.org/take-action](http://www.climate-forests.org/take-action). Climate Forests is working to gather at least 750,000 public comments from people all across the United States to protect our national forests permanently.



*The Audubon Community Nature Center in Jamestown, N.Y., like White's Woods, showcases both the value of deer fencing and downed trees to support the health and development of the forest. On a recent visit, FWW Board member Jessica Jopp took this photo.*

### Protecting the Forest from Deer

The Audubon Community Nature Center notes in [one of their website publications](#) that deer are just wonderful to see: "Deer are a magnificent animal to see. They are large and dynamic and seeing them is a joy. I love searching for fawns in the spring and observing them as they lay unmoving. I love watching the deer watch me with big, soft brown eyes as I walk past, indifferent to my presence." But the Center also reports that young trees and plants both need protection so that they can mature and provide good habitat for songbirds and other forest inhabitants. This Community Nature Center uses both tree tubes and deer fencing to protect the plants and trees.

Downed trees, [according to another website publication](#), are a sign that you are in an old – or at least older – forest. These trees are important to a forest because they provide nutrients for the soil, homes for insects, and nesting opportunities for birds and small mammals.

## DCNR ADDS TWO REGIONAL FORESTS TO THE OLD GROWTH FOREST NETWORK

Both the Bushy Run Battlefield, a National Historic Landmark in Westmoreland County, and McKeever-Clear Creek State Forest in Mercer County have been added to the national [Old-Growth Forest Network \(OGFN\)](#). During the past few years, several PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources properties [have](#)

[been added](#) to this network. The OGFN has a goal of establishing at least one old-growth forest in each county in the United States, and now includes at least 185 forests across 32 states. Thirty Pennsylvania counties now have designated OGFN forests. If we step up, the White's Woods Nature Center would be the first design-

nated forest in Indiana County to become part of the OGFN.

Almost all of the Pennsylvania forests in the OGFN are second-growth forests because nearly our entire state was clear-cut between the early 1800s and the beginning of the 20th Century.

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

We welcome feedback. Email us at:

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