IUP CO-OP Forest FACTS 101: Trees & Timbering

1. How long CAN the trees in the Co-op forest live?
   Tulip poplars: 300-500 years
   Red oaks: 300-500 years.

2. Why does an industrial forester think of an 80-year-old tree as "old"?

   Eighty-year-old trees are regarded by an industrial forester as an optimal age/size for the sawmill. When the trees get much bigger, they get harder to use for timber to make money.

3. Do 80-year-old trees drop limbs sometimes?

Photo courtesy of West Virginia State Archives, Clarkson Collection

Early loggers stand atop a white oak, probably the largest ever cut in West Virginia. The log on the left is marked "13 ft. diameter, 16 ft. from base, John Vance." The other log is marked "10 ft. diameter, 31 ft. from the base." They were cut by Mangold, Straub and Carlston in 1913 near Lead Mine, Tucker County.

What trees in our area used to look like – and can look like again!

Yes. They are living! They grow. They change. They even prune themselves!
That's why parks sometimes schedule an arborist for regular trail walks to review the trees along the trails!

4. Why did some big trees blow down in the IUP Co-op forest in April, 2025?

   There were sustained 80 mph winds that day and, it appears, some sort of vertical wind shear – a weather anomaly that really packs a punch. Damage from that April 2025 storm was wide-spread.

5. How long will it take the IUP Co-op forest to recover from this proposed "forest re-set" plan?

   One forester who reviewed similar forestry plans some years ago said "there will be a lot of tears." The kind of plan the Co-op is working with right now is a plan you would want if you wanted to tear the forest down and just start over – "re-grow" the forest.

   Those who have lived near such timbering projects say that it takes about 25 years for the forest to start looking something like a forest again. But the big trees are lost forever.

6. What SHOULD be the first two steps for stewardship planning for a community forest:
   #1 See what the users of the forest want for their forest! (A recreation area with old growth? A timber farm?)
   #2 Find out what is in your forest – trees, plants, animals, reptiles, amphibians, endangered and at-risk species*.
   THEN START to plan your next steps!

*White's Woods & parts of the IUP College Lodge forest have been identified as within the range of federally-endangered bats and provide habitat for numerous at-risk plants, reptiles, and amphibians. White's Woods, the connected Co-op sister forest, has been invited to enroll in the national Old Growth Forest Network as a mature second-growth forest to be preserved to become old growth. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of all U.S. east coast trees have been cut down – most since 1880.