



# Friends of White's Woods Monthly Newsletter



## March

### GreenLatino Public Lands Director, March 27<sup>th</sup> Webinar

On Thursday, March 27th, 2025, from noon to 1:00 p.m., Olivia Juarez, the Public Land Program Director for [GreenLatinos](#), will present a ZOOM webinar titled *Public Land Priorities in the Latino Climate Justice Framework*.

In this webinar, Juarez will explore the deep historical connections Latino/a/e communities have with the land, and steps that can be taken to ensure that everyone, regardless of race, gender, or background, feels a sense of belonging and ownership of public lands: All citizens should have access, knowing that they are safe and welcome.

Juarez will also discuss the need to make national parks more accessible to naturalized citizens. Recently, GreenLatinos called on the National Park Service to offer free passes to immigrants, highlighting the financial barriers many face when visiting public lands. "A pathway to citizenship should include a pathway to public lands," the organization noted.

At the heart of GreenLatinos' work is a commitment to building healthy, connected communities. Advocacy efforts

include working with policymakers to create neighborhoods that are not only free of food deserts but also thriving with opportunities for health and growth.

Juarez, who was named one of the National Parks Conservation Association's "10 Under 40" in 2021, has worked extensively in organizations including Latino Outdoors, the Utah Coalition of La Raza, and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance. Juarez holds an Honors Peace and Conflict Studies degree from the University of Utah, and is devoted to building a more inclusive and sustainable future for all.



Olivia Juarez

You can register for this webinar by sending an email to [info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org](mailto:info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org)

### NEWS FROM THE OLD GROWTH FOREST NETWORK

Two additional Pennsylvania forests were inducted into the [Old Growth Forest Network](#) (OGFN): Klondike Ridge Forest (Somerset County) and Square Timber Wild Area (Cameron County). The goal of the OGFN network is to protect one old growth or mature second-growth forest in every county in the U.S. Thirty PA counties already have forests enrolled.

White's Wood was invited to join the OGFN last year! If the invitation is accepted, the WWNC would be the first forest enrolled in Indiana County.

This invitation followed the release of the White Township Draft [White's Woods Stewardship Plan](#), in which it was noted that enrolling our forest in the OGFN is one of the future management options that "is likely to provide the surest route to long-term success."

Prior to issuing the invitation, the OGFN sent a DCNR forester to evaluate our natural area.

Joining the OGFN will put the WWNC on the map! The OGFN maintains a national map of Network member forests and urges people to visit. Having a forest enrolled also helps secure grant funding, as well as our community's quality of life.

In order to enroll in the OGFN, White Township would have to assure the Network that it is committed to the Stewardship Plan's goals and management strategies to "see this woodland develop into an old growth forest."

The OGFN notes that "it is time now to set aside a few forests and allow them to recover their old-growth characteristics. These 'future old-growth forests' will be our generation's gift to the generations coming after us. If we are able to reverse the decline in mature, native forests we will be the first generation to have done so."

Over 257 forests across 39 states are now enrolled in the OGFN.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**March 27: Public Land Priorities in the Latino Climate Justice Framework** webinar by Olivia Juarez, Public Lands Director, [GreenLatinos](#), noon-1 p.m.

**April 5: Community-wide effort: Removing Japanese barberry from the WWNC**, 10 a.m. to noon.

**April 22 (Earth Day): Predicting and Managing Pollinator Health in a Changing World** webinar by Dr. Christina M. Grozinger, Director, Huck Institutes of the Life Sciences, Pennsylvania State University, noon-1 p.m.

**May 17: WWNC Big Tree Walk**, meet at 12th St. Entrance, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**June 7: A History of White's Woods: Walk** with Dr. Kevin Patrick, author, "Near Woods: A Year in an Allegheny Forest," 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Meet at the WWNC 12th St. Entrance.

Catch the FWW *Naturally* column monthly in the *Indiana Gazette*.

Please check [friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events](http://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](http://friendsofwhiteswoods.org)  
Like us on FaceBook: Friends of White's Woods, Inc.

Issue 56

## JAPANESE BARBERRY UPDATE

FWW has contacted public land managers and researchers, and worked extensively with materials provided online by conservancies to learn more about regeneration, dispersal, and disposal of Japanese barberry.

Researchers and invasive plant managers at the [Black Rock Forest](#), Cornwall, NY coordinate a large [volunteer barberry-removal project](#), and the staff there have been especially willing to provide helpful information. The online information provided by the [Keweenaw Invasive Species Management Area \(KISMA\)](#) has been another especially helpful source. All told, FWW has worked with 15 different sources to define our work with barberry removal from the White's Woods Nature Center (WWNC).

Like other invasive plants, Japanese barberry spreads fast and quickly becomes dense. The plant spreads both by dropping seeds (berries) and developing new plants through underground shoots. The germination rate for Japanese barberry berries is estimated to be as high as 90% and mature plants can produce hundreds of berries.

Disposal of plants that have been removed is not easy, for a variety of reasons. Many state agencies recommend that no invasive plant be transported away from the site where it has been discovered, for fear of increasing the invasive spread. Most experts recommend moving the invaders to selected sites within a forest where mounds of plants can be deposited and left to decompose, and in some cases, burned or chipped. But the berries can't be chipped! Doing so will only multiply the number of potential new plants. Some barberry removal projects painstakingly sort out the berries for special disposal.

In White's Woods, as regular woods-walkers know, we have established a number of sites in various parts of the forest for temporary barberry compost piles. We've covered the piles to limit the spread of the berries and we are working with White Township Manager Chris Anderson to further develop long-range disposal plans.

What we do know is that removal of this invasive plant is important. Not only does Japanese barberry multiply so



quickly that it crowds out native plants, it also alters soil nutrients that native plants need to survive. We also know that one of the next steps in our project is planting native plants to take the place of the barberry that has been removed. Luckily, lists of deer-resistant native plants are now available.

FWW has prioritized barberry removal in ways consistent with expert recommendations, first protecting the woods' most biologically sensitive areas, along with areas that are least invaded. As a consequence, one of our first efforts was to clear this invasive plant from the Natural Heritage Area, which is located in the center of the forest. We've also worked to clear areas from the Spring trail to the top of the ridges that surround this cove on all sides. Volunteers have already gone back through these areas a second time to remove new growth.

Japanese barberry can no longer be legally sold in Pennsylvania because of the risk it poses to public land and private forests. If you have this plant in your yard, please consider removing it.

FWW is going to need a lot more help with barberry next year. The small plants are numerous, often just a few inches tall, and almost anyone can easily remove them. Some regular volunteers go to the woods alone once a week to work on the barberry removal for an hour. Others just pull a half dozen little plants from the side of the trail each time they hike: six plants a day, three times a week adds up to 894 plants removed each year!

When the weather is warmer, FWW will restart twice-a-month group barberry removal events and is planning, once again, a large volunteer event on April 5th. Please help any way that you can. If you prefer to work on your own, someone would be very pleased to walk with you one day to help you learn to spot the small barberry plants that can be easily removed! Please contact [info@friendsofwhiteswoods](mailto:info@friendsofwhiteswoods) if you can help – and watch for announcements of upcoming barberry-removal events.

### Brief Environmental Notes:

- Information about current rollbacks of federal-level environmental protections are available from national environmental organizations including the [Sierra Club](#), [Earth Justice](#), [Environmental Integrity Project](#), [Truthout](#), [Defenders of Wildlife](#), [National Parks & Conservation Assoc.](#), and [Natural Resources Defense Council](#).
- More than \$200,000 was awarded to Indiana County communities in 2024 by the [Pennsylvania's Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program](#). Funding for these grants comes from impact fees on “unconventional natural gas wells” – Marcellus Shale drilling operations. [According to one source](#), about 120 fracking well permits have been issued in Indiana County.
- The ironically named “Fix Our Forests” Act is described by the Sierra Club as a “harmful bill that would undermine forest and endangered species protections, harm drinking water, and worsen deadly wildfires. The bill has already passed the House and is now being fast-tracked through the Senate.” The [Sierra Club is hosting a petition](#) calling for opposition to this bill. The Sierra Club is a member of the Climate Forests Coalition.
- Status of the [Draft White's Woods Stewardship Plan](#): White Township sent the publicly-approved plan to the PA Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCNR) for review on January 6. We await their response.

For more information, visit: [friendsofwhiteswoods.org](http://friendsofwhiteswoods.org)  
We welcome feedback. Email us at:

Issue 56