

The crucial need for protecting forests

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All of us share the responsibility of handing off a world to future generations that is at least as good as the one we inherited.

Dr. Susan Cook-Patton, senior forest restoration forester with The Nature Conservancy, talked about some simple steps that each of us can take to do just that in her webinar presented to a local audience on Feb. 24.

There are natural solutions to combating the climate changes and severe weather that are becoming increasingly problematic: Where possible, keep the trees you have — and plant more of them!

Keeping forests is the quickest, easiest, most cost-efficient strategy, but even the more expensive strategy of reforestation is, also, a comparatively easy, quick and inexpensive way to slow down dramatic changes in rainfall and temperature.

In fact, about 1/3 of the target scientists have set for carbon reduction can be met by such natural solutions.

If we can keep the forests that we have and reforest much of the land that used to be tree-covered in the United States, we could absorb over 333 billion tons of excess carbon — a reduction equivalent to taking 72 million cars off the road in the next decade.

Dr. Cook-Patton conducted county-by-county research to identify areas where new trees might be planted: There are 96,000 acres of land (excluding cities, roads and agricultural land) in Indiana County that might benefit from reforestation — a project that could absorb 364,000 tons of carbon. Clearly not all of the 96,000 acres can or should be reforested, but this project has

pointed to land that might be considered for this simple, natural step to try to stabilize our climate.

Simply not pulling the trees that sprout in your yard is one way that each of us can contribute to a natural solution.

A county-by-county map of reforestation possibilities in the U.S. can be found at <https://www.reforestationhub.org>.

Sure, we will still need timber. But we also need to protect forests wherever we can — and plant more trees.

A recording of Dr. Cook-Patton's webinar can be found at www.friendsofwhiteswoods.org.

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