



Friends of White's Woods Monthly Newsletter



Goats, Future Webinars, Grants & Courts: September Activities Reflect FWW's Focus



Twenty-one participants took part in the Sept. 24th Allegheny Goatscape webinar hosted by the Friends of White's Woods, including Indiana County Commissioner Sherene Hess, Indiana Borough Mayor George Hood, White Township Manager Milt Lady and Indiana Borough Council President Peter Broad. Allegheny Goatscape, once known as Steel City Grazers, is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization that uses goats to mitigate unwanted vegetation in

an environmentally safe manner. The webinar showed that goats work 24/7 and can traverse terrain that is difficult for humans or machinery to reach. In addition, the digestive system of the goats destroys the plant seeds that were consumed without depositing them in the soil with their waste products, which, by the way, are the free fertilizer the goats leave behind.

If you would like to attend future webinars (conducted virtually through the Internet), please send an email to: info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org. Our next webinar is slated for 4 to 5 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 22, and will feature FWW's consultant forester Mike Wolf on his assessment of White's Woods' health. Wolf presented to the White Township Board of Supervisors on July 22, but many could not hear his presentation and certainly could not see it. Wolf is a graduate of Penn State University's forest science program and is enrolled in that major's master's program. He has more than 20 years experience in forestry, including working for the Penn State Extension program.

Upcoming topics include trees and stormwater runoff, humane methods for reducing deer population, carbon capture dollars for municipalities with wooded areas, and the positive economic impact of forested areas to the communities. In some good news, FWW was awarded a \$4,000 grant by the Indiana County Endowment to hire consultants to advise on various topics, including the focus of a future webinar on the economic impact of forested areas and the measurable improvement to air quality by such areas.

On Sept. 11, our attorney, Tim Fitchett of Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services of Pittsburgh, submitted responses to the Indiana County Court of Common Pleas on the preliminary objections raised by White Township's legal counsel Bernard P. Matthews, Jr., of Meyer, Darragh, Buckler, Bebenek & Eck of Greensburg. The two objections to FWW's suit claimed that FWW does not have standing to bring a lawsuit against the township and the township contracts with Millstone are exempt from statutory advertising and bidding requirements even though invasive species removal does not qualify as a professional service and the township had initiated the competitive bidding process.



REMINDERS

- The "heArts of Wood" exhibit, scheduled for Oct. 20 through Nov. 14 at The Artists Hand Gallery on Philadelphia Street, will feature the works of local artists. Please patronize this exhibit which is co-sponsored by FWW.

- You can order t-shirts (sizes S to XXL) for \$15 each and masks for \$10 each by sending a check made payable to FWW, Inc., to FWW, Inc., P.O. Box 1271, Indiana, Pa. 15701. Be sure to include size of t-shirt.

Mugs at \$10 are available for sale at Commonplace Coffee, 1176 Grant Street (7 a.m. to 4 p.m., M-F and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., S/S).

- Donations to help cover legal, research, outreach and other essential activities are still needed. Please send checks made payable to FWW to P.O. Box 1271, Indiana, PA 15701. FWW is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization so all donations are tax deductible.

- **Cheri Widzowski Photography** is offering a series of FWW fundraising events in White's Woods. Mini-sessions as well as full-length custom sessions are available through Nov. 1st on select dates. Pets are allowed but must be controlled by the owner. Session fees start at \$75 (plus 6% PA sales tax) and half of the proceeds will go to Friends of White's Woods. For more information or to schedule a session, email Cheri at cheri@cheriphotography.com or see any of the following: <https://www.cheriphotography.com/get-in-touch>; <https://www.facebook.com/CheriWidzowskiPhotography>; or <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofWhitesWoods>.

For more information, visit: friendsofwhiteswoods.org

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October 2020



In this photograph from the 1949 Indiana State Teacher College yearbook, Winter Sports Club students climb Overlook Hill on a hike through White's Woods from the college to College Lodge. Professor Merrill Iams led these hikes for years.



White's Woods rises above 13th Street as Indiana's near-woods, the place that Indians have gone to experience nature ever since nature was hacked back from the boundaries of Indiana.

Indiana's "Near Woods"

by Kevin Patrick, October 1, 2020

The information for this article comes from Kevin Patrick's forthcoming book, Whites Woods: A Year in an Allegheny Forest.



The Eradicator at Work? -- *The top photo taken in mid-May shows a portion of East Pike Recreation Center after the invasive species were "eradicated" using the super-size rototiller. The bottom photo shows the same area three months later with more invasives then were initially removed.*

Sometimes we neglect our farms where the fences seem to be always falling to pieces and, like Rip Van Winkle, walk to near-woods where time has less meaning, and the forest surrounds us with the sense of something eternal. The Catskills were to Rip (and to Washington Irving who could almost see them from his home on the Hudson River) what Whites Woods is to Indiana. These near-woods are the forests close-at-hand that abut the margins of nearly every community where trees are part of the ecosystem. These are the woods settlers went to hunt and gather nuts, firewood and stone; where transients and outcasts went to camp beyond the effective reach of town-folk; where kids still go to cavort away from the watchful eyes of adults, and where adults go to find peace and recreation surrounded by nature.

We revel in the rare opportunity to visit distant sacred groves like the Giant Forest at Sequoia, the Pacific Coast redwoods, Yellowstone, Great Smoky or the Adirondacks, but spend much more time experiencing nature in the near-woods where easily repeated forays allows us to witness the always unfolding drama of seasonal change; winter to raucous spring, spring to verdant summer, summer to showy fall, fall back to barren winter. The value of the

near-woods is not that they are pristine but that they are close. Even when preserved, they carry the slashes and pock-marks of former human activity. The sound of trains shuttling between Concord and Boston were as much a part of Henry David Thoreau's experience living in the woods at Walden Pond from 1845 to 1847 as blue jays, woodchucks and red squirrels. The woods at Walden were not a trackless wilderness but Concord's near-woods where town-folk went to chop wood, fish, hunt, cut ice and commune with nature. So it is with Whites Woods, crisscrossed with trails and scarred by old quarries and gas wells within earshot of trains shuttling coal to the Homer City power plant.

Natural history and human history overlap in the near-woods. Indiana newspaper articles from the 19th and early 20th centuries simultaneously defined Whites Woods as a place where church groups had picnics and Italian laborers cut stone; where locals hunted small game and college students took nature classes. It was also the final sanctuary for a few who went there to commit suicide. Whites Woods' latest incarnation as a nature center ensures the preservation of this cherished near-woods for future generations.

The November installment will be "The Nature of White's Woods."

For more information, visit: friendsofwhiteswoods.org

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