



Friends of White's Woods Monthly Newsletter



February

RESTORING FOREST COVER TO HELP TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE WEBINAR

Preserving and restoring forest cover are prominent tools in the fight against climate change. However, trees are not appropriate for all locations and effective deployment of this strategy requires knowing where opportunities are and how they vary in carbon capture, costs, co-benefits, and feasibility.

This presentation by Dr. Susan Cook-Patton of The Nature Conservancy will describe two recent publications and a web tool (www.ReforestationHub.org) that combine spatial, economic, and feasibility analyses to identify a menu of options for restoring forest cover across the lower 48 states of the United States. This menu includes non-stocked forests, shrublands, protected areas, post-burn landscapes, pasture lands, croplands with challenging soils, urban areas, floodplains, streambanks, and biodiversity corridors. The study found 96,300 acres of potential opportunity in Indiana County, Pennsylvania, which could capture 364,000 tonnes of CO₂ each year. However, the highest-ranked opportunities with respect to carbon capture, costs, co-benefits, and feasibility change depending on location. The maps are therefore publicly available to help people decide whether and where to restore forests to help tackle climate change.

Cook-Patton is a Senior Forest Restoration Scientist on the Natural Climate Solutions Science Team at The Nature Conservancy. She works to quantify the climate mitigation



*Dr. Susan Cook-Patton,
The Nature Conservancy*

potential of reforestation and other natural climate solutions and infuse the best-available science into policy decisions. To do this, she collaborates with scientists across the globe, and from academic, government, and other non-governmental organizations. She has over a decade of experience leading scientific investigations into how changes in biodiversity and climate are impacting forest, grassland, and urban ecosystems. Before joining the Nature Conservancy in 2016, she was a policy fellow at the US Forest Service and a research fellow at the Smithsonian Institution. Susan holds a Ph.D. in community ecology from Cornell University, and bachelor degrees in biology, psychology and

English from Indiana University. The webinar, offered via Zoom from noon to 1 p.m., is free and open to the public.

To register for a webinar, send an email to info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org.

Two Ways to Help Friends of White's Woods Continue Its Work

If you have an Amazon account, you can designate FWW as the 501c(3) that you would like to receive a small portion of the purchase price of items you buy. This method costs you nothing!!! Amazon makes the donation.

To sign up, go to smile.amazon.com, accounts and lists, lists, Amazon Smile Charity Lists, Get Started, Pick Charity. Search for Friends of White's Woods and select it. Takes about a minute to setup.

Then, always go to smile.amazon.com to make your purchases (not just amazon.com). The contributions to FWW will be made automatically.



"Sunlight's Dance" by Beth Wheeler was selected as the 2022 limited print to benefit Friends of White's Woods.

The second way is to receive our 2022 print for a \$100 donation. Send an email to Info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org to reserve and obtain your print.

UPCOMING WEBINARS AND EVENTS

Feb. 24: "Options to Restore Forest Cover in Indiana and Pennsylvania, to Help Tackle Climate Change" webinar by Dr. Susan Cook-Patton, senior forest restoration scientist, The Nature Conservancy, from noon to 1 p.m. (*Note different time*)

April 7: "Natural Succession/Passive Management of the Eastern Deciduous Second-Growth Forests" by Jess Riddle, executive director of the Georgia Forest Watch, from 4 to 5 p.m.

Spring 2022: Bird Walk with Margaret Higbee and Plant Walk with Cindy Rogers. Watch future newsletters, our website and FaceBook page for updates.

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White Township Stewardship Committee begins its work on plan for White's Woods, other town-owned wooded areas

The township's stewardship committee began its work Jan. 20 to develop a plan for the health of White's Woods and other wooded areas owned by the township, and Friends of White's Woods hopes the committee keeps in mind the intent of the Hippocratic Oath that doctors take: First, do no harm.

The experts and consultants contracted by FWW indicated that the health of White's Woods is very good as evidenced by the lush tree canopy, the variety of wildlife and rare plant species and the relative scarcity of non-native invasive species except in areas where the canopy was removed (for gas well installation) and the Woods' perimeter where, again, sunlight is more direct. These experts and consultants included DCNR-certified foresters, IUP biologists, an arboretum director, an ecosystem ecologist, a Penn State Extension wildlife specialist, an old-growth forest expert, an arborist, invasion ecology researchers, a regional urban forester, and a community conservationist, among others.

Another clear indicator of the forest's health is its age. Most of the acreage was clearcut in the 1930s, and, over the past 90 years, there have been no growth or maintenance problems. In fact, the trees in White's Woods have not reached full maturity since tulip poplars and oaks live 200 to 300 years while White's Woods' oak trees have just reached their peak for acorn production. One could consider that White's Woods is now in its puberty.

Just as a doctor takes routine measurements of the patient before prescribing a method of treatment, so must the stewardship committee gather data before making recommendations. This advice is mirrored in the March 23, 2021, Department of Conservation and Recreation's Bureau of Forestry review of the draft plan sent by White Township to that entity. Here is what the review indicated:

"Trees and forests in communities help to improve water quality and mitigate stormwater impacts, mitigate climate impacts and improve air quality, provide recreation opportunities and contribute to sense of place and peace-of-mind, provide habitat for plants and animals, increase property values,

and generate income from harvesting timber. Combined, these values contribute significantly to increased quality of life in White Township. As such, having a plan to guide management of the properties in ways to help sustain and enhance these values is critically important. A typical plan includes key elements such as an inventory or assessment of conditions, goals or objectives, management units and maps, recommended actions along with an implementation schedule, and an assessment of potential costs and revenues. Understanding and articulating community values, interests, and objectives are especially critical for community-owned trees and forests.

Considering our expectations of a community forest plan as described above, the BOF recommends the Township revise its Forest Stewardship Plan to fully maximize its role for helping to achieve community values and interests. Along with concerns about some of the proposed management activities, we are concerned about what appears to us as a disconnect among the stated goals, the proposed management activities and practices, and the wishes and desires of the public."

One of the pieces of data that needs to be collected is an inventory of the trees in White's Woods. Although the draft plan submitted to DCNR did list board feet by tree species, the draft did not include the actual count by tree species. This is akin to saying a classroom has more males than females because the males are taller. White's Woods may be more diverse in tree species than portrayed in the draft plan. FWW has contracted with Dr. Marion Holmes, an ecologist from the University of Pittsburgh, to conduct a thorough inventory of tree species.

DCNR's Bureau of Forestry also advises supreme caution in deciding to cut down trees. In a 2018 article titled "Timber Harvesting Cautions," Dr. Allyson Brownlee Muth, director of the center for private forests, writes: *"Unless they present a risk to life or infrastructure, or insect or disease is in the area, no tree ever needs to be immediately cut. Sure, trees have economic and biological maturity, but in a resource with a lifespan many decades beyond our own, the time frame for decision-making is correspondingly longer. You have time to make decisions that do well by your land."*

In Dr. Joan Maloof's Jan. 27th webinar

for FWW, she illustrated how forests and other wooded areas have been able to withstand fires, environmental catastrophes and timbering and have regenerated on their own. In one example, she noted how American Chestnut seedlings were growing in a Maryland forest some 50 years after being declared extinct due to an Asian blight.

So there is no rush to engage in radical moves in White's Woods -- advice with which DCNR agrees. In the DCNR 2021 Pennsylvania Forest Health Report, they wrote: "Truthfully, in many cases, the best thing to do is monitor and wait. It can feel frustrating to do nothing, but there is tremendous value in understanding and tracking stressors in your forest over a number of years."



On Nov. 13th, a group of FWW members took to White's Woods to plant 26 oak seedlings in an area opened up through tree blow-down.

The group encased some of the seedlings in netting as an unofficial experiment to test whether deer were eating oak seedlings.

So, on a cold yet sunny day, FWW took its trowels, its boxes of seedlings and plenty of good humor and did their part for the health of White's Woods.



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