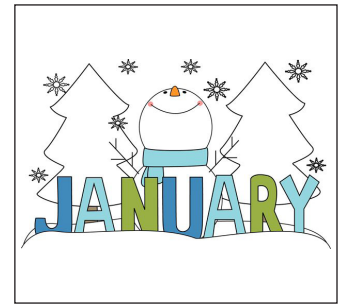




# Friends of White's Woods Monthly Newsletter



## *Supervisors (Finally) Send Stewardship Plan to DCNR for Review*

The White Township Board of Supervisors (BOS) at the Dec. 18th meeting voted unanimously to send the 2023 White's Woods Nature Center Stewardship Plan, titled Preservation & Conservation of White's Woods Nature Center, to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) for review. The motion was made by Rich Gallo and seconded by Sandi Gillette.

Gillette, who noted she was "honored" to second the motion, commented that she wanted to commend the committee: "Kudos to you guys. You are trendsetters, and lots of people will feed off what you've done and what you've created."

The approximately two dozen citizens attending the meeting applauded after Gallo added, "I appreciate all of the hard work you did, and I think it is something we can now value for years down the road and grow on."

Supervisor George Lenz said, "you won't cheer when I'm done." Lenz indicated he didn't oppose the plan, but there were two issues the plan failed to address that are important to him personally. In the 49+ years that he had been a supervisor, Lenz said, White Township has had a policy that "those that benefit, pay." He noted that many people in the room who use White's Woods are not from White Township and jokingly suggested that some could just cut a check to the township to cover the cost of maintenance. In previous years, Lenz had argued that the BOS should investigate a user fee for the White's Woods Nature Center.

Lenz said he did not think the committee's work was finished because he thought creating firebreaks where residential properties adjoin the woods might be a good idea. He pointed to information indicating that most wildfires are started in the backyards of people whose property adjoins a wooded area. Lenz said that

he didn't know the merits of that idea but that the committee's "job's not done."

Will Radell reported research regarding wildfire risk saying the most dangerous wildfires that capture the headlines come from fires in pine forests. Pine trees hold highly combustible pitch and, particularly in the spring, dead needles. Radell explained that one of the key recommendations for fire suppression is planting deciduous forests like White's Woods. The thick bark and high canopy of deciduous trees discourage fire spread.

BOS Chair Gail McCauley said it was a shame that this process had taken this long: "We could have started in '07; we could have been sitting at a table and come up with a solution." McCauley lamented that there were so many people who "refused to listen to what I had to say, and George had to say."

Stewardship Committee Chair Barb Hauge explained to the BOS that the plan is not the end but the beginning in that it creates a path for citizens and experts to convene and address problems.

Township Manager Chris Anderson noted that DCNR had written a letter to the township in 2021 requesting that the township seek public input and that, in response, the BOS had created the Stewardship Committee that had produced this extensive plan that is based on public and expert input. He added that the plan provides avenues for getting questions answered and that he thought that the township owed it to DCNR to show them how much the township and the committee had accomplished.

Rick Ritenour complimented the Stewardship Committee and said that the WWNC stewardship plan could be a model for other townships across Pennsylvania.

Tom Miller read into the record a letter from

FWW written in response to BOS discussions about fire risk in White's Woods at their Nov. 20th and Dec. 4th meetings. The letter reviewed the mechanisms outlined in the WWNC Stewardship Plan for handling questions about future management. The new stewardship plan lays out decision-making steps that rely on public input, tap input from other community experts, and gather input from experts from a variety of disciplines and perspectives. Lenz admonished Miller for carefully staying within the three-minute time limit as established by a township resolution.

FWW President Sara King underscored that over 200 citizens provided feedback to the White's Woods Stewardship Plan last spring and that 95% of these people support this plan. For comparison, King noted, 39 citizens provided feedback to the most recent White Township Comprehensive Plan revision. King noted that over 1,000 volunteer hours have been devoted to the maintenance of WWNC in the last 17 months and that the woods benefit the entire community by helping to provide clean air, clean water, cooler temperatures, and atmospheric carbon absorption. Natural areas, King added, contribute to economic vitality by improving the region's quality of life.

## Climate Forests Update

The Climate Forests Coalition determined that much of the work to protect remaining U.S. old-growth and mature forests will need to proceed on the local and regional levels, rather than the federal level, for the next four years.

According to a [Jan. 21, 2021 New York Times](#) report, the first Trump administration (2016-2020) rolled back over 100 environmental rules in actions that targeted the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act, the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, the National Fish and Wildlife Act, and more. The former president withdrew the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement, withdrew numerous protections for national forests, parks, and refuges, and rolled back protections against logging and road-build-

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**March 27: Public Land Priorities in the Latino Climate Justice Framework** webinar by Olivia Juarez, Public Lands Director, GreenLatinos, noon-1:00 p.m.

**Barberry Removal in White's Woods** is happening every week, weather permitting, often both mid-week and Saturdays. Please email [info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org](mailto:info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org) if you can spare an hour or two to help.

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

Please check [friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events](https://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)

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# Chronology of the Efforts to “Save White’s Woods”

## WWNC Management Plans

### Presented by White Township:

**1995 David Beale Plan**, “Timber Cruise and Appraisal and Timber Sale Recommendations:” This plan called for a “20-30% thinning” and was rejected by White Township voter mail-in ballot by a 2-to-1 margin.

**2007 Babyak Plan** General Recommendations: “It is recommended that certain Management Units, or portions thereof, be harvested by a series of intermediate thinnings over a 10-year cycle. This would involve the selective marking of over mature, mature, dead, and damaged and suppressed or overcrowded saw timber and pulpwood trees. An intermediate thinning is the initial type of harvest utilized in sustaining and regenerating a forest stand. Selective are harvests where individual trees or groups of trees are individually marked for harvest.”

[Note: “Overmature” is a timbering term denoting trees that are too large or old for ideal use as merchantable timber.]

**April 10, 2008:** DCNR informed White Township (“RE: Timber Harvesting in White’s Woods”) that the timbering proposed was inconsistent with the goals of Project 70.

**2020 Millstone Plan:** The statement of Millstone Land Management Objectives for WT Properties included plans to mow or mulch the forest floor, harvest timber to treat invasive plants, and to address the “issue” of “overstocked timber stands.” Millstone proposed utilizing . . . harvests to offset the costs of land management. The stated Millstone Management Goals and Objectives for White’s Woods confirmed that: (a) “[w]ood products were assessed and valued on species, quality, and merchantability” and (b) the highest volume of tree species to be harvested are “high-quality” (merchantable) trees.

**March 21, 2021:** DCNR rejected the Millstone Plan: “While forest management is permitted on Project 70 funded sites, a forest stewardship plan must be completed by the grant recipient and reviewed by the Department. This plan must set the long-term, holistic goals to guide management of the property in a way to help sustain and enhance the recreation, economic and ecologic values on site. Timber harvesting cannot reduce the recreation opportunities, detract from the recreational experience, nor disrupt the ecological function of the site.”

**Dec. 18, 2024:** The citizen-driven 2023/2024 White’s Woods Nature Center Stewardship Plan lays out a plan that is rooted in public input, stipulates reliance on natural forest maturation processes, limited or no timbering, protection of at-risk species,

forest inventories and monitoring to protect biodiversity, deer exclosures, means to address natural canopy gaps, attention to climate change, stormwater management, and public involvement in every step of management in the WWNC.

### FWW Requests for Citizen Involvement in Care for the WWNC:

**2007 - 2008:** FWW made numerous requests for citizen involvement in planning for the care of the White’s Woods Nature Center (WWNC). A hand-written note by former FWW president Mike Kesner following a 2008 meeting with the township noted his wonder at the township’s disinterest in working with citizens.

**2020:** FWW letters to White Township on April 20, May 8, July 16, July 20, and Nov. 12 requested that the township “provide ample opportunity for citizen input,” form a “working group of WWNC stakeholders,” allow planning that provides input “from all of the park’s stakeholders,” or “work with community members.”

**2021:** FWW letters to White Township on April 20, April 28, and Sept. 16 requested that the township look for avenues to “work collaboratively,” or recognize that “management goals must begin with community input.”

FWW did not receive a response to any of these letters.

**March 21, 2021:** DCNR responded to the Millstone plan that called for timbering and rototilling the forest: “The Bureau of Forestry recommends the township implement a public input process to help inform both development and implementation of a forest stewardship plan. As a community-owned forest, we believe it is critical for the township to understand the wishes and desires of its residents, and most importantly, identifying and understanding the values citizens hold and expect of these woodlands.”

**April 14, 2021:** Supervisor George Lenz said that he had “been in contact with three (3) noted commercial/industrial foresters: Dave Beale, Dave Babyak, and Michael Wolfe. He asked Michael Wolfe if he would chair a committee of the three foresters, Gail McCauley, and a township resident to work with the DCNR comments and revise the township’s stewardship plan.” No action was taken.

**July 17, 2021:** Supervisor Rich Gallo suggested forming a “commission or committee” that would include interested citizens to address management concerns in White’s Woods. No action was taken.

**Aug. 22, 2021:** Rich Gallo made a motion to create a Woodlot Management Plan (for all White Township properties) subcommittee. Gene Gemmill seconded. The motion carried.

Gail McCauley made a motion to accept applications for the Woodlot Management Plan subcommittee. Sandi Gillette seconded. Assistant township manager Ryan Shaffer clarified that the subcommittee allows for non-White Township residents to apply, but preferential treatment is given to White Township residents. The motion carried.

**Oct. 4, 2021:** FWW sent an email to the township manager and staff noting that a “woodlot” is defined as ““a restricted area of woodland usually privately maintained as a source of fuel, posts, and lumber” and suggested alternative names for the newly established committee.

**Sept. 22, 2021:** White Township received 18 applications for the new committee, almost all from citizens who identified themselves as members of FWW. McCauley moved that the application period be extended to Oct. 13th. The motion carried. Two additional applications were received.

**Dec. 1, 2021:** Five citizens were appointed to the WWNC stewardship plan committee. One of the appointees was self-identified as a member of FWW.

**January, 2022-May, 2023:** FWW members attended every Stewardship Committee meeting, providing public input, public input data, forest inventory data, and information about stewardship planning by other public land managers.

## Climate Forests Update (cont. from p. 1)

ing in the nation’s largest old-growth forest, the Tongass National Forest.

According to an August 2024 article in [Politico’s E&E News](#), “In the Trump administration, trees were crops.”

With this in mind, the revised mission of the Climate Forests Coalition is to create an atmosphere where a mature and old-growth protection action is a “must do” on day one of the 2028 administration. The coalition plans to articulate a clear vision for what our public federal forests should look like and work toward durable protections for mature and old-growth trees. Much effort will be devoted to educating and inspiring members of the public to value mature and old-growth trees and forests and to effectively counter misinformation about the importance and appropriate management of forests. Another important goal is for local and state groups to support environmental champions in their own local and state governments.

Note: Among organizations that often take the lead in seeking legal protection for the environment are [PennFuture](#), [Penn Environment](#), [Clean Air Council](#), [Pennsylvania Environmental Defense Foundation](#), [Environment America](#), [Environmental Defense Fund](#), [Sierra Club](#), [National Resources Defense Council](#), and [Earth Justice](#).

For more information, visit: [friendsofwhiteswoods.org](http://friendsofwhiteswoods.org)

We welcome feedback. Email us at:

[info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org](mailto:info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org)

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