



Friends of White's Woods Monthly Newsletter



DECEMBER

Pre-Thanksgiving Walk Honors Native Americans

Imagine Italian cuisine if the tomato was never a part of it!

The tomato, a plant grown by Native Americans in both North and South America, is just one of the foods indigenous peoples shared with Europeans and the rest of the world. White and sweet potatoes, cranberries, maize, chestnuts, squash, peanuts, cassava, chili peppers, pineapples and vanilla are others as well as cotton and tobacco.

These facts -- and many more -- were discussed on the Native American Trail Walk conducted by Dr. Abigail Adams of IUP's anthropology department and her students Nov. 19 in White's Woods.

Braving the frigid weather on a sunny Saturday, approximately 20 hardy souls learned about Native American spirituality and their creation stories, Indian schools where white people tried to eliminate native culture, use of medicinal plants and the cure for scurvy (which was shared with settlers), and the records on Native Americans in Indiana County, including the five central routes in Pennsylvania from east of the Susquehanna to the Allegheny River. The Frankstown Path crossed into Indiana Borough.

Adams has obtained a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission for preliminary



Nov. 19: The cold weather did not deter participants in the Native American Trail Walk in White's Woods.

work on a Native American Trail with stops that will explain the significance of Native Americans to the country and to Indiana. She has contacted White Township about permanently locating this trail in White's Woods.

IUP students participating Nov. 19 included: Amanda Zaner, Lys Hixson, Mckala Hardie, Victoria Albert and Olivia Dove.

A MISSION STATEMENT THAT WOULD ALLOW TIMBERING

The White Township Stewardship Committee considered a draft mission statement at the November meeting that will allow timbering in White's Woods as long as it is not for economic gain.

So, what's wrong with that?

If approved and inserted into the Stewardship Plan, this mission statement might allow for timbering in White's Woods for the next 10 years (the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' required length for a Stewardship Plan) probably without further consultation with DCNR.

White's Woods could be destroyed or, at the very least, be transformed from a natural area to a groomed park.

The "no economic gain" stipulation means that trees could be cut -- for any reason or no reason at all -- and sold to cover the cost of the timbering contract (so someone/some company will reap economic gain). The rest of the timbered trees would need to be donated, cut for mulch for the other township parks or used to fund other township programs.

For more information on possible Township reasons for timbering, review the minutes of the White Township Supervisors meetings. At the Nov. 7, 2018 meeting, former White Township manager Milt Lady said the following:

"Milt Lady stated he does not recommend fundraising for the 50% match required for the DCNR Arena Renovations Grant. He believes the area is economically depressed and Township fees have been recently enacted for recycling and stormwater and rates increased for sewer services. He feels the woodlot management program would generate funds to be used and there is some money in reserves. He also feels businesses would balk at White Township fundraising for the renovations."

The woodlot management program to which he refers became the Millstone plan, which would have eliminated more than 20 percent of the trees in White's Woods.

The stewardship committee's Mission and Vision draft will be on the committee's Dec. 15th agenda.

Please attend this meeting (6:30 p.m., White Township Municipal Building) and voice your concerns about this mission statement. Or login online to the meeting by going to: <https://www.whitetownship.org/news/board-meetings>, click on Stewardship Committee meeting and then login link.

UPCOMING MEETINGS, WEBINARS

Dec. 15: White Township Stewardship Committee meeting. 6:30 p.m., White Township Municipal Building.

Jan. 19: White Township Stewardship Committee meeting. 6:30 p.m., White Township Municipal Building.

Jan. 26: "Climate Change." Dr. Steven Hovan, Interim Dean of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

Feb. 23: "Natural Area Forests in U.S. Cities: Opportunities and Challenges." Dr. Clara Pregitzer, Deputy Director of Conservation Science, Natural Areas Conservancy.

March 23: "Ticks." Dr. Thomas Simmons, IUP biology professor.

The webinars, offered via Zoom from 4 to 5 p.m., are free and open to the public. To register for a webinar, send an email to info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org. Recordings of all webinars are available at friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events

For more information, visit: friendsofwhiteswoods.org

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November Stewardship Committee Meeting Re-Examines Timbering; Presenters Disagree on Opening Tree Canopy, Carbon Sequestration Eligibility

White Township Stewardship Committee members considered a draft Mission and Vision Statement prepared by Sierra Davis at the Nov. 17 meeting that focused on preservation of trees. Numerous committee members recommended alternate phrasing that refocused the draft on timbering and suggested that the committee settle for a ban on “commercial timbering” or “no timbering for economic gain.” It is of note that White Township Supervisors, in the past, have insisted that the extensive logging and forest floor destruction laid out in their 2020 draft Stewardship Plan, the Millstone plan, was not for the purpose of economic gain (*see related article on page 1*).

Three consultants made virtual presentations to the committee.

Dr. Mike Tyree, IUP biology professor, who lives near and teaches in White’s Woods, noted that these woods have “a beautiful, diverse overstory.” Though there is work to be done, he told the committee that “you should not touch” this intact canopy. It is also important, he said, to leave the litter layer (organic material on the forest floor) intact and undisturbed.

Calvin Norman, Penn State forestry assistant professor, self-described on his Linked In account as a “forester with a demonstrated history of working in the natural resources field industry,” reported that he had visited White’s Woods two different times for a total of three to five hours. Norman asserted that the forest is dominated by tulip poplars and that too many trees of one kind in the canopy could be problematic.

Tyree re-emphasized that the forest tree species are diverse. Tulip poplars grow fast at this stage of forest maturation, but, in general, the overstory is diverse.

Both Tyree and Norman expressed concern about heavy deer-browse. Tyree argued that deer-exclosure fencing

is absolutely essential to promote tree regeneration. Without hunting on the surrounding properties, the deer hunted in White’s Woods will simply fade back to safe areas until the hunting ends. Norman agreed, but worried about the costs of fencing.

Though Norman suggested that White’s Woods is not eligible for a carbon sequestration contract, Alyson Fearon, Allegheny Land Trust Vice President, told the committee that White’s Woods is clearly eligible and that she has worked often with DCNR-protected properties. She also reported that the tree-preservation contract that she once hoped would be appropriate is not available and that her schedule will not permit her to assist the committee at this time to identify a potential contract.

Recognizing the existence of previous 2020-2022 public input for the first time, committee chair Barbara Hauge directed the committee to look at the survey questions distributed by Friends of White’s Woods and IUP (but not the data collected).

Over the objections of one committee member, the committee sent a letter to Dr. Stephen Osborne of the Small Business Institute inviting that program’s undergraduate marketing students to draft and administer a survey investigating numerous things, including reasons people don’t use the park (amenities, trail difficulty) and forest management techniques. Dr. Susan Boser’s (IUP sociology department) June survey was drafted and conducted by doctoral research students. Committee member Dave Dahlheimer suggested that Boser be invited to meet with the committee. Discussion of this question was deferred to the next meeting.

Committee members agreed to schedule Dr. Sara Kuebbing, Yale University School of the Environment, and Dr. Marion Holmes, University of Pitts-

burgh Invasive Plant Laboratory, to meet virtually with the committee in January.

Chair Hauge invited another industrial forestry-trained forester to meet with the committee, though members were not consulted in advance. Industrial foresters view forest management from the perspective of “sustainable forestry,” or maximizing timber for commercial sale.

In Public Comment, Rick Ritenour urged the committee to enroll the second-growth White’s Woods forest in the Old Growth Forest Network so that it can be the one forest set aside in Indiana County allowed to mature into old growth. Tom Miller underscored the uniqueness of our natural area that is so distinct from the other “developed” parks overseen by White Township. Sara King provided a handout to the committee of the survey designs and samples -- all commensurate with both FWW surveys and the IUP Community Interest Study -- used by other government entities to secure public input regarding their local natural areas.

DEER HUNTING UPDATE

The White Township Board of Supervisors voted 4-1 at the Nov. 16th meeting to remove discussion of deer hunting in White’s Woods from the agenda until July 2023. Supervisor Gene Gemmell made the motion that was seconded by Rich Gallo; Chair George Lenz was the lone dissenter.

During the Public Comment period, Will Radell noted that there are over 62,000 acres in or adjacent to Indiana County that are currently open to recreational deer hunting. Recreational hunting opportunities abound without inviting hunters into the 250-acre White’s Woods Nature Center. Radell also called the supervisors’ attention to an Oklahoma deer management assistance program that stipulates that “a minimum of 1,000 acres is required for deer management assistance because it is very difficult to manage deer and achieve realistic goals on small parcels of land.”

**For more information, visit: friendsofwhiteswoods.org
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