

Women and Their Woods

Information for Women Forest Landowners
Issue 12, Spring 2014

Seasonal Connections to the Land

By Kenna Levendosky

For three generations, going on four, we have lived in harmony with this land. In Winter, snows blanket forests, fields, streams; white silence broken only by cross-country skis sliding through snow crystals. Full moon casts long shadows on lawn and meadows. Late January early morning brings the aroma of maple syrup boiling in partitioned arched pan mounted over red hot wood coals.



As morning awakes, sun rises overhead accelerating the metronome of sap striking metal buckets. We ride through the woods on a bobsled carrying us and a 500 gallon collection vat. Like honeybees, we move from maple tree to tree gathering crystal-clear sap into buckets hung from wooden yokes. Down at the sap house, syrup boils thicker and thicker, passing to end of boiling pan where it drains out a spigot, through cheesecloth into gallon cans or onto snow to congeal as jack wax.



Spring floods pile up huge cakes of ice, blocking river's flow as children lie alongside the Little Delaware collecting fish frozen in ice – to take home for the cats. Ice jams break up or are dynamited. Spring floods signal end of ice and snow as we shoot over rapids past giant whirlpools.

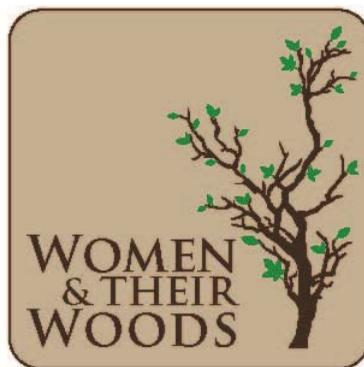
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The Women and Their Woods program is administered by Penn State Forest Resources Extension and the Delaware Highlands Conservancy with support from the Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program, US Forest Service at Grey Towers, and PA DCNR Department of Conservation and Recreation.

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Throughout our region, women are increasingly responsible for the stewardship of private forestlands. Women landowners require accurate information and relevant knowledge about available options for managing their properties.

Women and Their Woods is a dynamic, fun, and informative program that teaches women to effectively care for their lands. **Women and Their Woods** emphasizes conservation stewardship and the value of intact forestlands and instills in women landowners a sense of confidence in their abilities to meet the challenges of forestland ownership.

We hope you find this newsletter helpful. Please contact us for further information on how to be involved.

We need your Email Address!

As conservation-centered organizations, we want to conserve resources by communicating with you through email.

Please send your email to conserve@delawarehighlands.org and specify if you would like to receive our mailings electronically or continue to receive hard copies in the mail.

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Before leaf canopy opens in late April, forest soils erupt with spring beauties; white, pink and purple hepatica; trout lilies; wood violets; jack-in-the-pulpits; Dutchmen's breaches; squirrel corn and carpets of bright green leaks.

Once sugar maples begin to leaf out, syrup turns dark, spiles are pulled and sapping is over. In late Spring fishing season begins in earnest. We work rich soils and plant beginnings of vegetable gardens.



In Summer, we celebrate the river in all its facets. Children build ponds in river's edge and impound captured minnows there. We pursue native brook trout and rainbows in smaller streams and brooks in anticipation of delicious pink meat. Evenings we fish quiet waters for bass from rowboats fashioned by hand.

Early Fall brings a harvest of blackberries, blueberries, apples for canning and freezing. In late September-early October, from high on woodland ledges, we view landscapes transformed to a sea of red, maroon and gold. As one of the children exclaims, 'There is SO much to do here!'



Forest Landowner Perspective

This newsletter is YOUR space! Share your connections to the forest with other WaTW newsletter readers. Send Amanda an email at conserve@delawarehighlands.org with your photos, journal entries, drawings, other artwork, or stories, and we'll share it here.

We're looking forward to hearing from you!



WomenOwningWoodlands.net

Find information applicable to your forest landownership, connect through nearby events for women landowners, and let us know if you have ideas for future content. www.WomenOwningWoodlands.net





Women Forest Landowner Educational Retreat

September 25-28, 2014

Mark your calendar!

Join the 2014 class of women forest landowners for a four-day workshop full of exciting educational programs and field trips related to the care and management of forestland. Women from across the Mid-Atlantic region who own, care for, or are interested in learning more about forestland are encouraged to attend the retreat.

The cost to attend the four-day retreat is **\$130** and covers lodging and meals at Camp Susque near the scenic town of Trout Run, PA. **Applications can be found at <http://DelawareHighlands.org/watw>.**

To receive a hard copy of the application or for more information, please contact Amanda Subjin at the Delaware Highlands Conservancy (570-226-3164) or email conserve@DelawareHighlands.org. **The deadline to apply is September 1, 2014.**

Topics and Activities Include:

- ◆ 'What is Stewardship?'
- ◆ Forest Plant Identification
- ◆ Forest Ecology
- ◆ The Basics of Silviculture
- ◆ Forest Hydrology
- ◆ Wildlife in the Forest
- ◆ Forest Measurements and Calculating the Value in Your Forest
- ◆ Woods Walk
- ◆ Estate and Financial Planning
- ◆ Working with Resource Professionals
- ◆ Skill Sharing and Resources





Growing Your Peer Learning Network

Tools and Tips from the Women Owning Woodlands Network



This toolkit, available for free download at http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/em/em9064_toc.pdf, is designed to engage women woodland owners with an empowering, peer-learning approach.

Peer-learning alternatives will be conducive to open, problem-based, learner-driven exploration. Confidence, engagement in learning, development of mutually supportive personal relationships, and basic

technical skills will all increase, leading to more informed land stewardship decisions.

This toolkit focuses on the nuts and bolts of designing, forming, holding, and maintaining a peer-learning group, whether the group you want to reach is women woodland owners or any other group of people who have similar goals for learning. You'll find in this toolkit templates and worksheets for you to use, with samples to make clear how to use them.

If you are:

- An educator or association leader involved with forest and rangeland communities in the United States,
- A woman who owns forest or rangeland and who is not currently engaged in your respective forestry or range communities,
- A woman who owns forest or rangeland and who stands to serve as a mentor or facilitator of a peer network, or
- A woman who may not currently be managing but who stands to inherit or otherwise acquire forestland,

Then this book is for you.

Growing Your Peer Learning Network

Tools and Tips from the Women Owning Woodlands Network



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Alyson Muth, Penn State University; Amanda Sudbin, Delaware Highlands Conservancy; EB Segue, University of Minnesota; Nicole Strong, Oregon State University; and Tamara Walkington, University of Arkansas

The Story of Our Woods: A Memoir from the Heart of the Forest

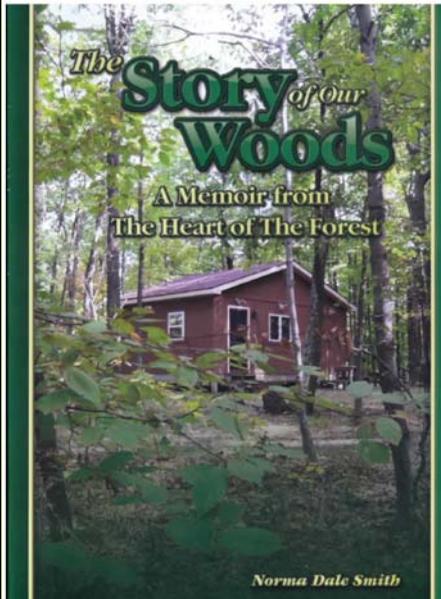
by Norma Dale Smith

It was 1960--the dawn of a new decade. In an area known as Donnertown, a beautiful tract of woods had stood quiet and magnificent for many years. It boasted abundant wildlife, many species of trees and flora, and a lovely little stream known as McDonald's Run.

Dad often walked to and from work, and he came whistling home one day to tell Mom about an idea. I'm sure it was no easy thing to say he needed \$800 to buy one hundred and twenty six acres of woodland out in the middle of nowhere, especially when as a "railroader," he could have been laid off at any time--and who knew for how long?

After I attended the WaTW retreat in September 2012, I came home bursting with enthusiasm. Knowing I had to do something to instill the love of our land and the importance of stewardship to the next generation of our family, I was inspired to write a story. "The Story of Our Woods - A Memoir from the Heart of the Forest" is the finished result of my project.

-Norma Dale Smith



I can only guess how Mom reacted to *that* news. I do know for certain that they didn't have that kind of money back in those days. I'm sure Dad pointed out how much he loved getting out in the country and going for long drives and picnics. "Ag, wouldn't it be great to have our very own woods where we could go whenever we wanted to enjoy Nature?"

He must have felt those Donnertown Woods calling to him, and he immediately began to have visions of building a pavilion there and putting in a pond complete with fish.

Our Dad wasn't a hunter but I found out some time later that when he was a very young man he had spent some time out West cutting timber. Perhaps that's where his

love for the outdoors was kindled. Eventually, through his persistence and charm, Dad convinced Mom and they borrowed the money. As soon as weather permitted, Dad was excited to take Mom and me to see "the property."

Look for more from Norma's story in future issues of this newsletter.





Conservation Corner: We Are All Connected

by Sandy Long

Motivated to begin searching for an escape from the noise pollution of her New York City residence, Helen Beichel came across Mitchell Pond Brook, a protected property that was owned by the Delaware Highlands Conservancy. The land was donated outright to the Conservancy by Mimi Raleigh in 2012, who wanted to ensure the property would always be cared for.



After receiving this generous donation, the Conservancy protected the property with a conservation easement before looking for a conservation-minded buyer.

During her first visit to the property, Helen began to connect with the place. "I really liked the way the cottage was tucked in; the creek was beautiful and there were small red salamanders everywhere," she says. "Later, I learned that the red-spotted newt is common, but is also a good indicator of healthy habitat."

A self-described "city person", Helen began to learn about other natural features of the land, such as the forest types represented there. A blighted American chestnut tree caught her attention, prompting her to join the American Chestnut Foundation. She has since planted four chestnut seeds, specially bred to resist chestnut blight, in hopes of restoring chestnuts to the site, and will soon be planting more.

Because the cottage on the property had become structurally unsound, Helen is replacing it with "as passive a house as possible," with features such as passive solar and straw bale construction. The lumber for the house has been sawn from the trees that once stood on site and pieces of the old cottage have been retained to use in the new house.



The insulation in the home is recycled, and Helen will be installing a solar thermal heating system with propane and a wood burning stove as a backup to try to be as carbon neutral as possible. "I like to say the trees have returned to the land in a different form," Helen explains.

The property has also sparked her interest in Permaculture and led her to take a course with Andrew Faust,



...Continued from page 7 an expert with the Center for Bioregional Living (www.homebiome.com) who stresses the connection between urban centers like Manhattan and the surrounding countryside as bioregions of interdependence.

“We in NYC are completely dependent on water that comes partly from the Upper Delaware region. Water is the source of life and it’s because of the Conservancy’s protection of land that our water is so pure,” Helen explains.



by David B. Soete

“My land is a part of that. We’re all connected. And we need that connection to the land because it’s also a source of rejuvenation and recreation.”

Of the Conservancy’s role, Helen is pleased to have found a like-minded partner. “It excited me that I would be working with people who had similar goals. For example, the Conservancy wanted a Forest Management Plan and they helped me to find the resources to do so. By working together to preserve this land, my three nieces and generations to come will all benefit from this partnership.”

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