

# Women and Their Woods

Information for Women Forest Landowners  
Issue 16 Summer 2015

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## Your Woodlands: Making Good Forest Stewardship Investments

By Jim Finley

Stewardship is about both today and the future. It involves taking responsibility for something, caring for it while you can, and ensuring it well serves those who will hold it in the future.

Woodlands provide an excellent opportunity for describing stewardship. Most woodland owners find real value in their land – they either have or develop a concern for the trees, wildlife, water, beauty, and solitude afforded them by their land.

A steward, according to some definitions, is a person who has the responsibility of caring for someone else's property. If forest stewardship is about ensuring the future values of woodlands, the current owner is in fact a steward. By looking forward to a time beyond the current owner's tenure, a steward cares for the land for those who will steward the land in the future.

A woodland steward generally wants to protect, enhance, and ensure the continuance of those values they place on the land. The intent is to improve the land – to make it better than when it was acquired. Caring for land ensures it will continue to provide desired values, such as habitat, water, timber, beauty, and solitude.



Pennsylvania has an estimated 738,000 private forest owners who together make stewardship decisions on about 11.5 million acres, or about 71% of all the state's 16.8 million acres of forestland. Granted many of these current owners have small parcels; an estimated 500,000 individual woodlots are smaller than 10 acres, averaging just less than 3 acres. Nonetheless, together these owners make decisions about one out of every eight acres of our state's private forests. For these owners, their small woodland parcels are more likely part of their residence and the decisions they make do affect current and future values. Think backyard habitat, water quality, and invasive plants, for example. On an individual basis, each parcel seems small – “Why should I worry about that? I only have two acres?” However, cumulatively these lands account for much of our urban and community forests and provide many more public values than just a setting for a home.

The nearly 250,000 holders of 10 acre and larger parcels have the potential to really influence Pennsylvania's forests through their stewardship decisions. Yet we find that many of these woodland owners are passive about their stewardship role. The land is there, they enjoy it, and, when it is appropriate, they engage active management – maybe they invest in a road, harvest some firewood, or, perhaps, conduct a commercial timber sale. We often hear that Mother Nature does not need our help. Yet, human impacts have introduced threats

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

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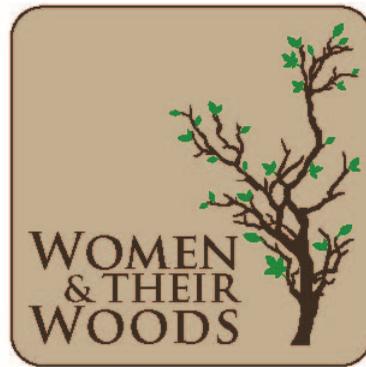
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Throughout our region, women are increasingly responsible for the stewardship of private forestlands. Women landowners require accurate information and relevant knowledge about available options for managing their properties.

**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](mailto: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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that our forests have not adapted to. Think about invasive pests such as the emerald ash borer, Asian long-horned beetle, or hemlock woolly adelgid. These threats were brought in by global trade and introduced into a landscape where there is ample food, but few to no predators. We find that, in many ways, we must undertake action to help mitigate or improve the forest health and protect it from introduced threats.



Active forest stewardship, especially if it does not create income, is sometimes difficult. Finding funding and resources to invest into the care of forestland, especially when that investment will extend beyond a given tenure of ownership, demonstrates a long-term commitment to stewardship. Across Pennsylvania, in every county, there are forest stewards who consistently make such investments. They harvest trees that compromise the health of their forest stands, even if these trees are smaller and have no economic value; they plant riparian buffers with white pine and mixed hardwoods to ensure long-term stream cover when the hemlocks die from the adelgid; they reclaim old fields from invasive plants to ensure that early successional habitat is available to wildlife species which require specific forest structure to breed and thrive. These landowners may not see the benefit in their lifetime, but are instead working to improve the forest for the future.

For many woodland stewards, finding resources to invest in the future of a forest is difficult; however, sometimes, with careful planning and help from confident forest resource managers, it might be possible to make improvements with little or no investment.

*Reprinted with permission and edited for length from Penn State Extension's Forest Leaves newsletter. Read the full article online at <http://extension.psu.edu/natural-resources/forests/news/2012/your-woodlands-making-good-forest-stewardship-investments>.*

## **Landowner Story: Women and Their Woods**

By Janet M. Olver, Women and Their Woods Attendee and PA Forest Steward



In 2007 I was invited to participate in a new group being organized by the Delaware Highlands Conservancy for women landowners only. The first meeting was going to be held at Grey Towers in Milford, PA. With the help of the U. S. Forest Service at Grey Towers, the Conservancy offered an educational program just for women landowners. Thus began Women and Their Woods, then a series of workshops and field days for women landowners in northeastern Pennsylvania.

My husband and I were at the stage in our lives where we were deeply involved in the American Tree Farm Program. We were also on the State Tree Farm Committee and the National Leadership Committee. We attended meetings but they were mostly made up of men. Occasionally there would be a woman or two in attendance, but once again I was outnumbered and intimidated.

I am a member and treasurer of the Wayne-Lackawanna Forest

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Landowners Association. Activities are planned annually by the Officers and Board of Directors, trying to keep the interests of the members in mind. The meetings, tours, and woods walks help keep the members informed of the latest forestry practices and give everyone a chance to exchange ideas and concerns. Professional speakers keep everyone informed of proposed legislation that will affect our properties and investments. But, once again, men far outnumber women.



With Women and Their Woods, the programs are planned to appeal to women and to be geared to their levels of knowledge. The number of women who own forest land has increased considerably over the decade. It used to be the only way a woman would own woods is if she inherited it from her family or owned it with her husband. In many instances the husband passes away and the wife is left wondering what she is going to do with the land. Thoughts of managing it for timber and/or wildlife normally don't cross her mind. Her biggest concern is usually how she is going to pay the taxes and insurance on the property. Thank heavens times are changing and the number of young women purchasing land with woodlots is growing, and older women who find themselves alone are looking to do something with their land. The need is there for information and help in managing their woodlots. Women and Their Woods is filling that need.



At the beginning when I joined Women and Their Woods I wasn't sure what to expect or what I would be getting out of it. This group is different from other groups I've been in because first of all, it's for women only. It's geared toward the novice and the inexperienced. This women's network offers such a wide variety of information, tools and resources on how to manage their forests. The Delaware Highlands Conservancy hosts a number of events throughout the year that are aimed specifically at women forest landowners.

## WomenOwningWoodlands.net

You told us your favorite part is reading stories from other landowners...check it out...there are new stories! (And we are looking for stories from you!) Please send them to Amanda at [conserve@delawarehighlands.org](mailto:conserve@delawarehighlands.org).



You'll also find information applicable to your forest landownership and connect through nearby events for women landowners. [www.WomenOwningWoodlands.net](http://www.WomenOwningWoodlands.net)

# Landowner Story: Revisiting the Management Plan

By Renée D'Aoust

In the spring 2012 issue of *Northwest Woodlands*, Scott Hayes asks: “How old is your [forest management] plan?” He writes: “Whatever a person’s reason for owning forestland, writing and following a good management plan is worth it.” Hayes, the president of Oregon Small Woodlands Association, encourages woodland owners to revisit forestry plans, particularly when they are written many years ago and may need to be revised.

I agree. My parents wrote their plan about twelve years ago. In the scheme of a forest, it’s not that long ago, but in the scheme of the changes in our family and activities performed on our land, it’s a long time ago. Plus, as Hayes suggests, “following a good management plan” means revisiting and revising that plan.

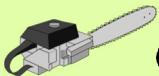
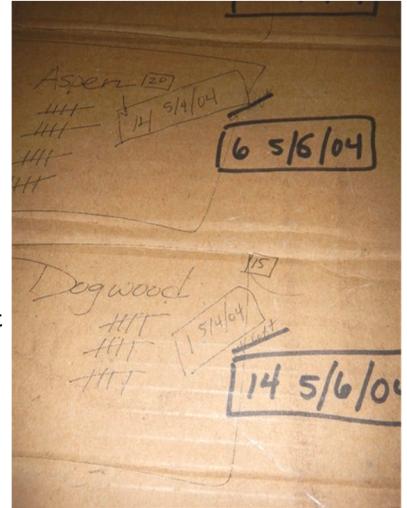
A good management plan does not focus on one item or one goal, but is a series of steps leading to a goal or to several goals. For example, among other items, we manage for forest health and wildlife habitat. Sometimes forest health may mean that we need to perform a regeneration cut, which may mean reduced cover for little critters. Our goals often remain the same, but the strategies to reach those goals may need to change.

But what I want to stress about revisiting management plans is the habit of keeping good records along the way. Then when you revisit your management goals, you’ll have a sense of what has and has not been completed, what strategies have and have not worked, and what plans need to be shelved altogether and/or replaced.

My first step is to collect all the notes I’ve made about our forest. I’m a note keeper, but I’m not an organized note keeper. In other words, I have failed at the very advice I’m giving: keep good records so you can revisit your plan! I write notes on napkins, envelopes, and inside book covers. I write notes and stash them in the top drawer in the bathroom next to the toothpaste. I wrote the numbers and kinds of seedlings planted on the edge of a box and tacked the cardboard to the wall, which has stayed on the wall for years, waiting for me to transcribe it into our logbook. Oh dear.

Over two years ago, I wrote notes about a consulting forester’s visit inside my private journal—Mike Wolcott’s suggestions for what to do about the ox eye daisies, which were taking over our pasture, and a few of our western cedars, which were dying. Where is that private journal now? Talk about organized disorganization. My mother established our management plan, and it was her efforts that led to our designation as an Idaho stewardship forest. It’s time for my dad and I to revisit the plan, but where to begin? How to do it without my mom, who passed away in 2010?

As my dad and I revisit the big picture over the next year, our plan is to start small. First, I need to gather all the information. Our thought is to take it one step at a time, to keep notes, but definitely to proceed. One tree at a time might be too ambitious, but it was always my mom’s goal to know every single tree on our land. #



## Save the Date! October 4, 2015 Game of Logging Chainsaw Safety Training Course Level I for Women Only

Lake Ariel, Wayne County, PA.

For more information visit [www.nthardwoods.org](http://www.nthardwoods.org) or contact Connie Ridall at [nthapa@nthardwoods.org](mailto:nthapa@nthardwoods.org).

# Smartwoods

By Joanna Campbell

If I can see a tree outside my bedroom window, blood flow to my brain will be different than if I were looking at a view without vegetation. Right now, I have a rectangular perspective of deciduous trees and evergreens making their home next to sidewalks and steep neighborhood staircases. The Italian restaurant across the street is shaded by bare-branched trees adorned in twinkle lights.

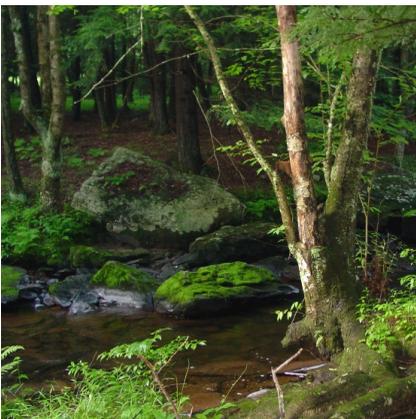
I have lived in Seattle, Washington, for four years, the most urban place I have ever called home. Wildness and development exist as two tangled lovers, bound by each other's bodies. I came from Arkansas, and there was a forest in my backyard. I went to the woods as often as I could.

Nature is unscripted. There are no directors, writers, artists, activists, scientists, or programmers predetermining my experience. No one is cuing or staging events. I get to be surprised on nature's terms, and with thousands of variables at play, the possibilities are limitless. In Seattle, this means a sea gull suddenly appears. Occasionally a bald eagle will soar. I wonder about the village life of microorganisms dwelling in the rosemary bush that Chef Paul uses for his pasta dishes.



By Nancy Free

On clear days, I can see beyond the Italian restaurant and the undulating Seattle neighborhoods, all the way to Puget Sound and the Olympic mountains. Though I have never penetrated the heart of its wildness, glimpsing the glacial-capped mountains from my home perch offers its own kind of exhilaration. I know there are six species of shrews and four species of bats. There are flying squirrels, marmots, and Pacific jumping mice. Wolves and black bears, elk and porcupines and cougars are living somewhere in the folds of the land I see from my living room window. River otters share territory with both the spotted and the striped skunk. And those are just a handful of the mammals. Amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates, birds, and marine animals breathe the same air. There are six kinds of salamanders, four kinds of frogs, one toad, and one newt, the rough-skinned variety.



Yes, humans are part of nature. And, humans are influencing nature in terrifying ways. And yes, there are no longer any places on the planet untouched by anthropomorphic choices. We've altered the chemistry of the atmosphere after all. But still, I know that walking through my childhood forest is vastly different from using a painting or sketching app on an electronically-intelligent, handheld device. The toolbox on the iPad was decided for the "user" by someone else. The forest's toolbox is up to your own imagination.

You may decide the forest is a place for solitude, reflection, adventure, or escape. It may be a place to play, learn, draw, plant, crawl, climb, cry, laugh, or pretend. There is medicine. There is food. There is sanctuary. There are tools and potential tools. There is paint and clay. There are nuts and crystals and vines. There are bones and long branches dotted in

lichen hamlets. All in the forest. All free.

The forest is not framed as a box. It did not arrive in a box. Imperfect spirals and curves and edges separate one thing from another. Nature lives and breathes. Smartphones are not vital

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organs. Swamps are the lungs of the Earth.

Though it's possible to reduce ecological processes to precise scientific explanations, nature is miraculous just as human life is miraculous. It is no wonder I secretly hope trees may speak a human language. Or maybe the trees strain for us to hear them. The skin of the Earth and all the wild things thriving from its body are the souls keeping us alive, holding us, sheltering our sanity, giving us hope and inspiration to be more than users. We are creators. We are imagineers in ways most opposite to Disney's brand of employment.



And here I am, writing this missive on my MacBook Air, created by a wildly imaginative person who loved art and calligraphy and beauty. I am listening to music on iTunes. It is an instrumental piece titled *Become Ocean*. I gaze at trees and buildings framed by 90-degree angles. The music calms and transports me away from the gray dark winter of Seattle. Given these ironies, I still know with all that I am that walking through the woods gives my heart delight unlike any cyber-styled comfort. No, delight is not a correct description. The euphoria of breathing without worry for what may happen, knowing something exquisite could transpire at any moment and a shimmering wave of endorphins will sparkle through the body – that's the feeling. That's the surprise I long for amidst the predetermined criteria of computer-generated beauty. Give me a fungus-infested tree over a perfect sequence of Fibonacci numbers, which produce the ideal pixelated tree. I want the freedom to not understand everything. My body needs mystery and mistakes. #



Mark your calendars now for the **3<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Forest Landowners Conference in 2017**. March 24-25, 2017, we'll be back at the Blair County Convention Center in Altoona, PA with more learning opportunities, resource providers, and inspiring presentations on all aspects of caring for the woods – from the backyard woods and wildlife habitat to creating a forest legacy and understanding silviculture (the art and science of managing the woods).

The first two conferences were great successes with over 450 participants each year from across the state and region. We look to make 2017 even better.

**We hope you'll join us.**



## 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](mailto: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!



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## Women and Their Woods Newsletter



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