

Women and Their Woods

Information for Women Forest Landowners
Issue 19, Fall 2016

Protecting a Piece of Paradise Love of Place Sparks Stewardship for Women Woodland Owners

By Sandy Long

Women landowners who attended the Women and Their Woods Educational Retreat organized by the Delaware Highlands Conservancy in fall 2016 take the stewardship of their woodlands quite seriously.

Asked to identify what qualities come to mind when they think about their land and its legacy, a series of words emerged that left no doubt women woodland owners are deeply connected to the land they love—patience, perseverance, passion, peace, partnership, protection and planning.

During one morning session, Pennsylvania woodland owner Nancy Baker conducted a mapping exercise guiding participants in setting goals and objectives for their land based upon those connections. “Notice how animated people get when talking about their special place,” she observed.



“A haven,” said Veronica of her land. “It counteracts the stresses beyond our control.” Wendy shared, “I feel total peace in my woods.” Many mentioned their appreciation for the flora and fauna they encounter—oak saplings, cherries, berries, mosses, chipmunks, snakes, ferns, mushrooms and more.

Some cited the natural cycles of birth, growth, decline and death; the sensory stimulation of earthy odors, trickling waters and birdsong; as well as the deep silence that feeds the reverence and renewal many experience in their forest sanctuaries. A sense of relaxation, renewal and discovery was also highlighted.

Kathryn described the details of her private forest landscape, with trails leading to mysteries and wonders, where the scent of moldering leaves contrasts with the sharp fragrance of pine needles, and the “hidden jewels” of berries, mushrooms and flowers abound. The textural bark of trees, animals slipping through the undergrowth and dappled light illuminating the understory all lead her to feel at

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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.

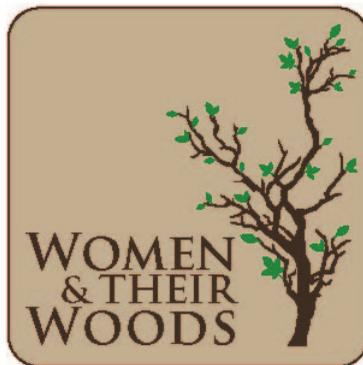
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Throughout our region, women are increasingly responsible for the stewardship of private forestlands. Women landowners require accurate information and relevant knowledge about available options for managing their properties.

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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After sharing their reflections, Nancy turned the discussion to action. “Take your cognitive map and use it to guide your practical applications in planning for your property,” she urged.



A Legacy of Love

Overridingly, the women described their determination to leave a legacy by practicing careful stewardship of the woodlands that have captured their devotion. Learning about the forest’s ecological functions, while understanding how light, nutrients and water relate to overall forest health allows for better management of land for the future.

“Every time you do anything in the woods, you need to think about the long-term consequences,” advised Dr. Susan Stout,

USDA Forest Service Project Leader during her presentation, “What is Forest Stewardship and why does it matter?”

Susan led discussions sparked by thought-provoking quotes. “We must conceive of stewardship not simply as one individual’s practice, but rather as the mutual and intimate relationship, extending across generations, between a human community and its place on earth.” (John Elder, “Inheriting Mt. Tom”)

One young mother shared an inter-generational experience that clearly moved many retreat participants. Tammy wrote, “The sunlight is filtering through the canopy. I hear a woodpecker searching for food in an old, dead tree. There’s a giggle behind me. ‘Mommy, look!’ She’s found a bright orange salamander under a rotted log. Her 3-year-old fingers have become more nimble over the past few months. She cradles the small creature and looks up at me with expressive blue eyes. I remind her to be gentle.

“I kneel down to examine her find, the scent of decay fills my nose. It’s a good smell. The smell of decomposing leaves and wood. Mushrooms and dampness. The tiny salamander crawls on her open hands. ‘It’s time to put it back in its house,’ I tell her. She gently lowers it on the forest floor and covers it with a piece of bark.

“I love you, Mommy,’ she says. ‘I love you, too, Emma,’ I tell her. We continue walking back down the hill, towards home. The sound of the stream is getting closer. I smile. I hope



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her love for the forest continues...”

Empowered with Knowledge



The Women and Their Woods network was further strengthened as women at the 2016 retreat acted on their eagerness to learn all they could, seizing the opportunity to identify tree species during a session led by Sarah Hall, Program Manager, Northern Tier Hardwoods Association.

Studying a handout depicting simple and compound leaves, along with leaf shapes, tips and margins, the women honed their skills in the forest surrounding the Highlights Workshop Facility in Boyds Mills, PA.

Later, they learned how to assess the value of the timber in their forests, employing Biltmore sticks used to measure tree dimensions such as diameter and height, as well as estimating tree volume and practicing plot sampling. Field trips to the Joel-Hill Water Powered Sawmill and to observe a private landowner timber harvest were part of the weekend-long workshop.

In addition, Penn State University Forest Stewardship Program Associate, Dr. Allyson Muth guided participants on planning for their forest's future, while other presenters discussed the “Forest Financials” of record keeping, the art of botanical illustration, identification of invasive plants, forest insects and diseases and the creation of wildlife habitat.

Reflecting on her experience, retreat participant, Joan Jubela wrote, “Women and Their Woods was an inspiration for me. I am delighted to have participated. The generosity of spirit of all those involved, and the knowledge conveyed by the many presenters at the retreat, made the experience unforgettable. The curriculum was eye-opening, strong and an incredible foundation for future learning and decision-making.”

Plans for the next educational retreat are being arranged for fall of 2018, along with a field day workshop in spring 2017. A chainsaw safety course for women is in the works. For more information, contact Amanda Subjin, Delaware Highlands Conservancy at 570-226-3164 or Amanda@DelawareHighlands.org. 



New Women and Their Woods Video

We invite you to visit www.delawarehighlands.org/watw and view our new, 4-minute video about the Women and Their Woods program, with footage filmed at the most recent four-day educational retreat.

The video features interviews with program coordinators Amanda Subjin and Allyson Muth, as well as perspectives from women forest landowners in the region about their experiences managing their woodlands, and learning and mentoring from the Women and Their Woods program.

Check it out, share it on Facebook, and let us know what you think!



Christine Foland, PA Landowner and 2013 Retreat Graduate, is featured in the video. Her experiences at Women and Their Woods led her to work with a consulting forester to develop a forest management plan and manage invasive species on her property.

WomenOwningWoodlands.net

You told us your favorite part is reading stories from other landowners...check it out...there are new stories! You'll also find information applicable to your forest landownership and connect through nearby events for women landowners.



Women in the Woods: Sharing WaTW on the National Scale

By Allyson Muth (Photos by Sandy Long)



The 2016 class of Women and Their Woods Retreat graduates.

On Friday, November 4, we had the opportunity to share the story of Women and Their Woods at the 2016 Society of American Foresters National Convention in Madison, Wisconsin.

As part of a full-day diversity and inclusion track, the WATW story was one of outreach to diverse audiences as the profession of forestry works to increase gender and ethnic diversity in undergraduate and graduate education, the workplace, and through our outreach and community building. We were one of two

presentations to focus on outreach to diverse audiences.

We know that in Pennsylvania, about a third of the woodland owners are women who make decisions for about 19% of the state's private forest land. Similar numbers are reflected in states throughout the Mid-Atlantic. Anecdotally and through research we learn of a stronger emphasis on family legacy and holding on to the land, yet many women woodland owners indicate less willingness to attend traditionally offered programs on caring for woodlots.

The Women and Their Woods volunteer program is one of a few outreach models around the country that focuses on engaging women woodland owners. With others popping up in new places, the work you do through the program and the influence you wield with other landowners are being looked to as examples to emulate.

Through our participation in this presentation track, we were part of the larger conversation on creating greater diversity and inclusion in the profession, both as technical service providers and in recognizing

the diversity of landowners with whom we work.



We are grateful for the support you give each other through the Women and Their Woods program. It was an honor to be able to share our story and the outcomes of our work together. 🌿



Perspectives and Plans

"It's great to see women open up about their forestland/forestry in this setting. It's a wonderful opportunity for networking and I really enjoyed the retreat."

"What a wonderful, wonderful thing to do for women to grow. I think this is one of the top two learning experiences I have had during my years (66) on this earth."

"I can't believe how valuable all of this was to us. Now I wish I could bring my husband to learn. I am going to recommend to everyone. I have wanted to be a forest steward for a while, but it was overwhelming to get started. I am so excited and want to correct some wrongs that I have made to our woodlands ASAP."

These comments were entered into our course surveys following the most recent Women and Their Woods Retreat in September. Plans for the next four-day Women and Their Woods educational retreat are being arranged for fall of 2018, along with a hands-on field day workshop in spring 2017. A chain-saw safety course for women is in the works. For more information or to join the Women and Their Woods mailing list, contact Amanda Subjin at 570-226-3164 ext. 2 or Amanda@DelawareHighlands.org.



Clear Choices, Clean Water: Forest Stewardship

If you haven't visited Clear Choices, Clean Water: My Delaware River recently, we've recently added a new Forest Stewardship pledge: <http://mydelawareriver.clearchoicescleanwater.org/forest>

It has information about forest management plans, working with a consulting forester, the values in your forestland, conservation easements, and much more.

Check it out and take the free pledge to put yourself on the map, and see what your friends and neighbors are doing to care for their land and protect our clean drinking water.



Game of Logging Trainings for Women

The Northern Tier Hardwood Association offers Game of Logging trainings in the northeast every spring and fall. To learn more, visit <http://www.nthardwoods.org/> or email Sarah Hall-Bagdonas nthapa@nthardwoods.org.



Save the Dates!



March 24-25: Private Forest Landowners Conference

Hosted by the Center for Private Forests, Blair County Convention Center, Altoona, PA

The region's foremost gathering of woodland owners, forest practitioners, and others interested in woodlands and the wildlife that use them. Whether you own a backyard patch of woods or a large-acreage woodland, this conference will provide you with the tools you need to improve the health and well-being of your forest.



March 15: Forest Health Insect and Disease Briefing

Hosted by Penn State Extension and the DCNR Bureau of Forestry
Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center at University Park, PA

Contact drj11@psu.edu for details.



Forest Landowner Perspective

This newsletter is **YOUR** space! Share your connections to the forest with other WaTW newsletter readers. Send an email to amanda@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!



Women and Their Woods Newsletter

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