

# Women and Their Woods

Information for Women Forest Landowners  
Issue 20, Spring 2017

## A Love Story for the Forest

By Christine Foland

As I drove from my cottage in Rowland, Pennsylvania to the Women and Their Woods workshop in September 2013, I couldn't help wondering what was in store for me. I had no idea that a new exciting relationship was just around the bend.

My cottage with its 39 acres of woodland has been in my family since 1941. It has been entrusted to me by my family, and I felt the responsibility of that trust very keenly. The woods had always been enjoyed by all of us but with a casual air of benign neglect. "Leave the woods alone." "Don't interfere with nature."

As children, my sister, brother and I loved to run through the woods and down to the brook that meandered at the bottom of the path. The path had been cut and maintained by my grandfather. Now that path was gone, and the woods were impenetrable and overgrown with thick and thorny Japanese barberry. I began to suspect that this neglect practiced by my family was not benign. I needed to know much more.



*Christine, calculating board-feet using a Biltmore stick at the retreat.*



Women and Their Woods taught me that forests are not static and unchanging. Forests impact water quality, air quality and the environment for countless beings, human and otherwise. Forests need active care. I learned that forest owners need to manage their forests and make a plan for the future. The WaTW workshop helped me distill what I wanted to accomplish on my 39 acres. I was passionate in my desire to get rid of the invasive barberry that was doing serious damage to my woods. I became very interested in creating habitat for golden-winged warblers. I needed a forest management plan.

I applied for funding through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which I received. I hired a consulting forester who created a management plan that includes concrete goals for my woods:

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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.

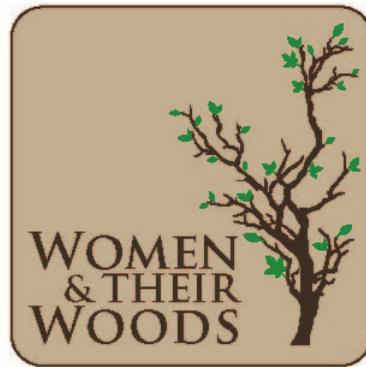
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Throughout our region, women are increasingly responsible for the stewardship of private forestlands. Women landowners require accurate information and relevant knowledge about available options for managing their properties.

**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](mailto:conserve@delawarehighlands.org) and specify if you would like to receive our mailings electronically or continue to receive hard copies in the mail.

...Continued from page 1 1. Improving wildlife habitat, 2. Improving water quality, 3. Enhancing and maintaining aesthetic attributes. 4. Improving hiking and recreational access to my property. The management plan also includes a historical description and old aerial photographs of the property found by my forester. Evidence of early attempts at agriculture and a bear den are apparent.

A deep concern for me was the lack of access to my woods. My neighbor John came to my rescue. He cut a wonderful winding path through the thickets of barberry, so that my beloved Mill Creek and the interior of my woods became available. It has not been difficult to maintain this path with my trusty weed-whacker and the help of friends.

My participation in the WaTW workshop introduced me to the network of women and men who are actively engaged in the care of our forests. Through my interest in creating golden-winged warbler habitat, I was privileged to work with wonderful foresters who walked through my property with me in order to evaluate its suitability for this purpose. Forest land designated for the habitat proved too inaccessible, and the deer population too much of a threat to the early forest growth needed by golden-winged warblers. But this experience greatly strengthened the bond that I have to my woods.



I am pursuing funding through NCRS to help with the eradication of the barberry; I am hoping to plant white pine in its place. I had hoped to create trails so that I can spend more time at the back of my land. Perhaps I would do well to learn the use of a compass instead, so that I can overcome my dismal sense of direction.



WaTW inspired in me the commitment to care for and manage my forest. I am enjoying the guidance and resources offered by these wise women, and the foresters who worked with me in my quest for the health and well-being of my woods. This is not only an adventure, it's a love story. 🍃

## Women and Their Woods Video

See more of Christine's story, along with stories from other retreat participants and local landowners, in our Women and Their Woods video — online at [DelawareHighlands.org/watw](https://DelawareHighlands.org/watw).



## E-Learning Opportunities

At **ForestryWebinars.net**, you can find free webinars on a wide range of topics to help you manage your forest, including stewardship, forest management, forest health, and more. Webinars may often be watched live or on-demand.

Through this webinar portal you can stay up-to-date with the latest research and industry practices in forestry, conservation, bioenergy, climate change and natural resources. Most of the webinars provide the opportunity to accrue continuing education credits, from professional accrediting organizations such as Society of American Foresters, International Society of Arboriculture, The Wildlife Society, Certified Crop Advisors, and others. You can receive continuing education credits for select live and on-demand webinars, which makes refreshing your knowledge on natural resource topics from your desktop fast, economical, and easy.



### Clear Choices, Clean Water: Forest Stewardship



Visit Clear Choices, Clean Water: My Delaware River at [mydelawareriver.clearchoicescleanwater.org/forest](http://mydelawareriver.clearchoicescleanwater.org/forest) for resources and tools to help you steward your 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.

### 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.



# The Future of Your Land: Benefits of Conservation Easements

Over time, many landowners come to love their land—its forests, fields, and streams, and the wildlife that lives there. Many people would love to know that some or all of their land will remain undeveloped after they are gone. One way to achieve this is by working with the Delaware Highlands Conservancy or your local land trust to permanently protect some (or all) of your land with a **conservation easement**.

Protecting your land does require some planning and decision making. To get started, we encourage you to ask yourself some questions.



## 1) What is it about your land that moves you to protect it for future generations?

Identify what makes your land unique. Does your land have exceptional water resources, wildlife habitat, or productive agricultural or forestland? Does it have river frontage, beautiful old stone walls, or a special spot that is meaningful to your family? Consider your conservation goals, such as protecting a unique plant community, maintaining grassland bird habitat, or continued sustainable harvesting of timber or agricultural use.

## 2) Which portions of the land would you really like to see kept natural? And conversely, where would you like to allow for improvements?

Use your conservation goals to decide where you would like to allow for future improvements and the types of improvements that you would like to see. These may include reserving the right to build an additional single family home, garage or shed, greenhouse, barn, or wildlife viewing areas.

## 3) Do you want an heir to own the land someday?

Think beyond the activities you will carry out on the land and consider the type of land use that may be of interest to future generations. Land protection efforts can face challenges because family members either didn't communicate or could not agree. Discuss your ideas with appropriate family members – the key is to open the lines of communication so the planning process can begin.

## Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a voluntary but legally binding agreement between a landowner and the Conservancy to permanently protect a portion (or all) of a land's natural value.

The Conservancy works with the landowner to craft a flexible agreement that will protect the

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core conservation values of the land, yet be adaptable to future needs. This legacy is recorded in the property deed and the Conservancy agrees to work in partnership with the landowner and future landowners to ensure the terms of the agreement are met, forever.



## Financial Benefits of Conservation Easements

Not only is there personal satisfaction and peace of mind from conserving your property for future generations, but there may be financial benefits for landowners who donate a conservation easement. These benefits may include a federal tax deduction, an estate tax reduction, and a New York State Property Tax Credit.

### Federal Tax Reduction

The “Enhanced Easement Incentive” was made permanent in 2015. Under the enhanced incentive, conservation easement donors are able to deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income when voluntarily donating an easement. Qualifying farmers are able to deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income. And, donors can carry unused deductions for their contribution over an additional 15 years.

*For example: Jane owns a vacant 100-acre parcel that could be divided into 20 five-acre residential lots. The current fair market value for the property is \$400,000. Jane protects her land with a conservation easement that limits development to 2 homes. With these restrictions, Jane’s property is now appraised with a potential market value of \$250,000. The difference between the market value of the property before and after the conservation easement is the value of the easement.*

$\$400,000 - \$250,000 = \$150,000$

*The value of the conservation easement may be used to reduce federal income and estate taxes.*

### New York State Property Tax Credit

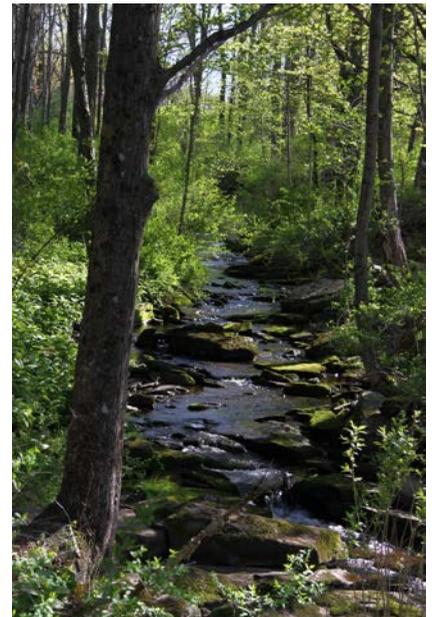
Property owners with a conservation easement in New York may be eligible to receive a credit against their state income tax of up to 25% of school, county, and municipal real estate taxes with an annual cap of \$5,000 per taxpayer, per year, on the undeveloped land. The tax credit does not reduce local property tax revenues, so it does not negatively impact town and county budgets.

### Estate Planning

Without proper planning, estate taxes may force landowners to split up and sell off the farm to pay estate taxes. A conservation easement reduces the appraised value of the property, subject to estate taxes. In addition, the landowner may exclude 40% of the appraised value from the taxable estate, up to \$500,000.

### Contact Us

To learn more about your options for protecting your land, contact the Conservancy’s Land Protection Coordinator Susan LaCroix: [susan@delawarehighlands.org](mailto:susan@delawarehighlands.org), or 570-226-3164 ext. 3. 

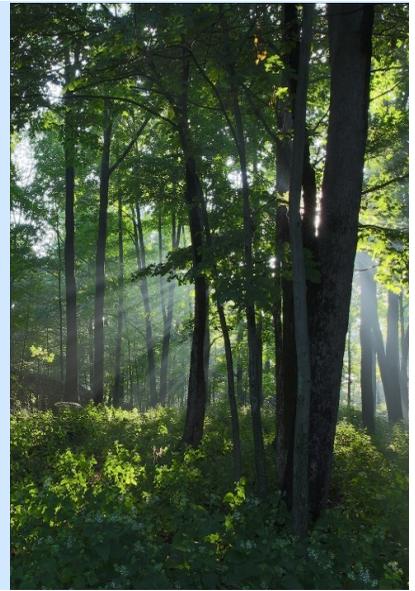


# MONEY DOES GROW ON TREES: Protecting Land, Planning for the Future

May 20, 10am-12pm,  
Grey Towers National Historic Site,  
Milford, PA

At this **free workshop**, learn from local financial and estate planning experts and Conservancy staff about your options for protecting and stewarding your cherished lands, planning for the future, and the possible financial benefits available to you. Get your questions answered and enjoy light morning refreshments and a catered lunch at the Finger Bowl at Grey Towers. Workshop attendees are also invited to a complimentary tour of the mansion after the workshop concludes. Registration is required.

Contact [info@delawarehighlands.org](mailto:info@delawarehighlands.org) or 570-226-3164 ext. 6 to register.



## Sleeping In The Forest

I thought the earth remembered me, she  
took me back so tenderly, arranging  
her dark skirts, her pockets  
full of lichens and seeds. I slept  
as never before, a stone  
on the riverbed, nothing  
between me and the white fire of the stars  
but my thoughts, and they floated  
light as moths among the branches  
of the perfect trees. All night  
I heard the small kingdoms breathing  
around me, the insects, and the birds  
who do their work in the darkness. All night  
I rose and fell, as if in water, grappling  
with a luminous doom. By morning  
I had vanished at least a dozen times  
into something better.

- Mary Oliver

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- MAY 20**      **Money Does Grow On Trees: *Protecting Land, Planning for the Future***  
Milford, PA, 10am-2pm
- JUNE 24**      **Native Plants Walk with Dr. Ann Rhoads**  
Camp Speers YMCA, Dingmans Ferry, PA, 9am-12pm
- SEP 16**      **Community Picnic for our Members and Friends**  
Bethel, NY, 4pm-8pm
- OCT 7**      **Fall Hike**  
Tusten, NY

Visit [www.DelawareHighlands.org](http://www.DelawareHighlands.org), or call 570-226-3164/845-583-1010 to register.



### 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](mailto: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!



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Women and Their Woods Newsletter



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