

Women and their Woods

Information for Women Forest Landowners in Pennsylvania
Issue 1, Spring 2011

Women Forest Landowners: Sharing a Connection to the Land

Amanda Subjin

Stewardship & Education Coordinator, Delaware Highlands Conservancy

Throughout our region, women are increasingly responsible for the care and stewardship of private forestlands. Faced with the need to make decisions about their lands, these women are seeking information on how to care for and manage their forests. Many find that being involved in a woodland owner network or otherwise linked to professional resources provides necessary information regarding options available for their property. Others aren't sure where to start in seeking out resources to care for their forestland. A desire to be more connected and learn with and from other women in similar land management roles has led a group of women forest landowners in northeast Pennsylvania to form *Women and their Woods*.

In 2008, with the support of the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, a land trust working in northeast PA, and the US Forest Service at Grey Towers, a group of women landowners met to learn more about the forests they own and how to connect with other women forest landowners. The response was overwhelming, and, since then, the Conservancy has continued to coordinate meetings for women forest landowners in northeast PA and the surrounding area. Topics for meetings have included setting goals and objectives for your forestland, identification and control methods of invasive plants, creating trails on private forestland, and a tour of an award winning tree farm. During each meeting, women gather, share information, ask questions, meet professionals, and enjoy a hearty potluck lunch. Everyone walks away from the event with more confidence and ideas on how to better care for their land. In addition to providing information, the *Women and their Woods* program



...Continued on page 3

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.

For additional information, please contact:

Allyson Muth
Penn State Natural Resources Extension
(814) 865-3208
abm173@psu.edu

Amanda Subjin
Delaware Highlands Conservancy
570-226-3164
conserve@delawarehighlands.org

This publication is also available electronically.



PENN STATE



College of Agricultural Sciences



GREY TOWERS
National Historic Site



Women and their Woods

Throughout our region, women are increasingly responsible for the care and stewardship of private forestlands. Faced with the need to make decisions for their lands, these women should be knowledgeable about options available for their property.

In addition to providing information about their options, the *Women and their Woods* program seeks to instill a sense of stewardship and knowledge about the value of intact forest land.

We hope you find the information in this newsletter helpful for managing your forestland and that you will join us at the upcoming Women Forest Landowner Retreat (see page 6 for details).

We need your E-mail Address!

Like so many other conservation minded organizations, we are hoping to conserve resources by communicating with you through e-mail. 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.

...Continued from page 1

seeks to instill a sense of stewardship and knowledge about the value of intact forest land. *Women and their Woods* is not a new concept. Women landowner groups across the country are becoming more and more active, including the *Women Owning Woodlands Network* in Oregon and the *Women's Woodland Network* in Minnesota. There is even an effort to produce a women forest landowners' network on the national level.

Purpose of the Women and their Woods group:

- 1) Recognize the growing role of women forestland managers
- 2) Empower women by raising their basic forestry and decision-making skill levels through hands-on, fun educational opportunities
- 3) Encourage communication among women forestland managers through the development of statewide and local networks.

The increasing interest in these women's groups has led the Conservancy, with the financial support of the PA DCNR's Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, to partner with Penn State Natural Resources Extension to offer outreach and education to women forest landowners across the state of Pennsylvania in 2011, including informative newsletters like this one throughout the year and emails with updates on events and cost share incentive programs. In addition to the *Women and their Woods* programs typically offered throughout the year, there will be a long weekend educational retreat for women forest landowners from October 13-16 (more info about the retreat on page 6).

Post retreat, attendees will be encouraged to share their knowledge about the

Women and their Woods program in their own community with the goal of forming regional groups - similar the northeast PA group -across the state. Through ongoing trainings and meetings, these groups will continue to receive the support of Penn State Natural Resources Extension and the Conservancy.

If you are interested in being involved with planning for the *Women and their Woods* group or have ideas or stories of your own to share about being a forest land owner, please contact Amanda Subjin by phone (570-226-3164) or email conserve@delawarehighlands.org.

Join women forest landowners at Camp Susque **October 13-16, 2011** for a weekend educational retreat. See facing page for more information.

Attaching Your Child to Your Land

Nancy G.W. Baker, PA Forest Steward, Bradford County



*The author and her cousin
drawing on the rocks in the creek.*

I remember with great fondness that you can draw with some of the stones in our creek, rubbing the wet red pebbles and the gray-green stones on the large flat rocks. The drawings are ephemeral; they either bake to a powder in the sun or wash downstream in the rain. My attachment to the stream, however, seems permanent. And the land too, under the fireflies and the spiderwebs, the pilot snakes and pines, the darn deer and the bugs, is under my skin.

Richard Louv, author of the best seller Last Child in the Woods, writes, “When people talk about the disconnect between children and nature—if they are

old enough to remember a time when outdoor play was the norm—they almost always tell stories about their own childhoods: this tree house or fort, that special woods or ditch or creek or meadow. They recall those ‘places of initiation,’ in the words of naturalist Robert Michael Pyle, where they may have first sensed with awe and wonder the largeness of the world, seen and unseen.”

Reader, it’s likely you have children, perhaps grandchildren, and it’s probable that you own forest land too. If you wish your offspring to have some attachment to that land, if you expect them to care for it as you do when you turn it over to them, begin now!

Think of this: I have a cousin. He has forested land and family. The family lives in Ohio; he has a Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Plan. The plan, designed by a consulting forester with the assistance of the West Virginia Office of the Nature Conservancy, has as an objective the attachment of his grandchildren to this particular piece of Pennsylvania land. An entire section of the Forest Stewardship Plan has activities for six children, now aged 3 to 13; the explanations are detailed, and there’s an appendix to help mom and pop along.

For example: (the condensed version!)

- Draw a map; give names to all the places you identify.
- Print an aerial photo of your land (magnify it, perhaps you’ll need to tape it together), mount it on cardstock, cut out each field, forest block, house, barn or habitat to make the puzzle pieces.
- Go on a scavenger hunt: Assign scavenger lists that require a child to think creatively or

to look very closely (e.g., A chewed leaf (not by you!), something that makes a noise, exactly 100 of something).

- Call in predators: buy a predator call at a sporting goods store and use it to draw in animals for a closer look.
- Watch a thunderstorm move across the landscape; learn to know the clouds.
- Create a wild garden: Identify, map, and label the plants so friends can see and learn about the natural diversity of flowers and other plants growing in your woods.
- Build a bird box, mount it in the correct habitat, and monitor the occupants.
- Identify animal and bird tracks by taking photos in mud or snow; see if you can follow their trails.
- Keep a journal with notes, pictures, drawings and found objects.
- Sleep outside (remember the bear spray).

What's happened in the years since the plan was created? There's a much loved children's map with the Fairy Forest and the Super Hill of Doom. There's a secret fort. There are piles of sleeping bags and a telescope for watching the stars. There's a little girl who wanted to know what all the different caterpillars were one summer. New collections of stones sit among old collections of moths; the sand mound is seeded with wildflower mix; and it once took a whole weekend to hang up the tire swing on the highest branch. Everyone brings their friends and shares their fun in the woods and fields.

Begin now. Introduce your next generation to your woods; you can make it their "place of initiation." A 3-year-old can identify a cedar tree and a maple—even if she can't tell you what color pants she's wearing. And a 4-year-old can tell the difference between squirrel and rabbit tracks—even if he can't yet read any of the writing on a map. Young children learn through the sounds, scents, and seasons of the outdoors.* You will find a wonderful beginning resource guide to introducing your child to your outdoors at <http://richardlouv.com/children-nature-resources>. And if you are attached to your piece of land, share and teach your attachment to those future owners.



The Children's Map by Amanda Layman. Copies of this map are laminated and used as place-mats for all the cousins' and friends' meals at the farm.

How Becoming a Forest Landowner Changed My Life

Linda L. Finley

I am privileged and proud to be a forest landowner in Pennsylvania; however, I can honestly say that owning forestland was not on my to-do list.

Growing up in rural York County, with farming grandparents, I was always exposed to the beauty of forest and streams. My father, grandfathers, and uncles all hunted and fished. Most of my summer vacations involved a trip to the mountains or a state park as well as walks and time in the woods near our home.

When I married, my husband also enjoyed the outdoors. At some point, he decided it would be nice to have our own mountain property. Then, in 1983 following his annual deer camp trip, he announced the camp was for sale and it was a tremendous opportunity “we should not pass up.” Sight unseen, I agreed.

We found out very quickly what owning forest land really involves; we had no clue! Simply put, we thought all trees were good, anything green was good, and Mother Nature would take care of everything. What or why would we need to do anything? Of course we knew trees had monetary value, and our woods were mix of hardwoods and conifers – nothing real valuable, as far as we knew. We were just enjoying our trees.

Within weeks, we were approached about cutting our trees. We said no thank you. However, after a year of pressure and lots of reasons why we should cut, we reluctantly agreed. The logger and his crew were on the property about a week. We realized our decision was a big mistake and we needed help!

Where did we go for help? How did we educate ourselves? We discovered the Pennsylvania Forestry Association, and the journey began. As PFA members, we learned about the PA Bureau of Forestry Service Foresters and Penn State Cooperative Extension. Through PFA we obtained a list of consulting foresters and hired a good one. We joined the PA Tree Farm Program and the National Woodland Owners Association. We attended every meeting possible, and each time gained useful information and a better understanding of forests.

About six years after we bought our forestland my husband passed away. I found myself with a property I had grown to love – a special place we



Women Forest Landowner Educational Retreat

October 13-16, 2011

Mark your calendars! Women forest landowners from across the state of Pennsylvania are invited to attend an educational retreat to learn more about managing their forestland and connecting with other forest landowners.



The retreat will be held at Camp Susque near the scenic town of Trout Run, Lycoming County, PA.

Formal invitations will be sent in a few weeks. Lodging will be at the camp which also offers dining facilities for our breakfast, lunch and dinner throughout the weekend. Here is a peek at the agenda:

Thursday, October 13: Dinner, welcome and evening activities.

Friday, October 14: A full day of forest landowner education including forest stewardship, tree identification and forest ecology. We will also visit timber harvest sites nearby.

Saturday, October 15: Programs on valuing your woods, forest hydrology and wildlife.

Sunday, October 16: Stories from Oregon - Information from the Women Owning Woodlands network and how to continue the Women and their Woods educational group here in Pennsylvania.



More details in the next newsletter. See you at the retreat!

“How Becoming a Forest Landowner Changed My Life”, continued from page 6...

had shared with family and friends. I wanted to hold onto “our” woods. As well, I greatly enjoyed the friends we had met through the forestry community. I knew people who shared my concerns about forests and stewardship values. My primary concern was to keep the property.

Several years before my husband passed away, he was elected to the PFA Board of Directors and I reluctantly agreed to finish his term. That decision took me further down the forestry trail. I was elected PFA Vice President and then became the first woman PFA President in 1996 thru 1998 and again in 2006 thru 2009. I have served as a PA Hardwood Development Council representative, on the State Forest Stewardship Committee, the PA Tree Farm Committee, and am a PA Forest Steward Volunteer. I continue to work with PFA and am a member of two county woodland associations.

Along my Forestry Trail Journey, I met Jim Finley, Extension Forester for Penn State. In 1998, we married and I became a forester’s wife. My education continues, and I find endless joy in meeting other forest landowners. My trail has wandered, but I have gotten past pot holes and maneuvered detours, at times with some difficulties. I find Pennsylvania’s forests tree-mendous!

- Introduction
- Women Forest Landowner Retreat Details
- “How Becoming a Forest Landowner Changed My Life”
- Attaching Your Child to Your Land

INSIDE

Women and their Woods Newsletter



Delaware Highlands Conservancy
serving New York and Pennsylvania
P.O. Box 218 Hawley, PA 18428-0218

DELAWARE HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY

Non-Profit Org.
Hawley, PA
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 42