

Women and their Woods

Information for Women Forest Landowners in Pennsylvania
Issue 2, Summer 2011

Reflecting on over 5 years of the Oregon Women Owning Woodlands Network

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Around the country, there has been an effort to engage the growing number of women forest landowners seeking education, resources and support. Beginning in 2001 the US Forest Service and University of Maine Extension Service held a series of workshops targeting women forest owners. Seeing the need for a similar group, Oregon State University Forestry and Natural Resources Extension worked to develop the Women Owning Woodlands Network. Since their formation, the group has expanded across the state of Oregon, gained information about the needs of Oregon's women forest landowners and greatly influenced the creation of similar groups across the country.



In 2004 I came to Oregon to work for OSU Extension as a forestry and wildlife educator. It did not take long to notice that women, although physically present at forestry events, were not always engaged. Soon after, I started working with a steering committee of women woodland managers to develop the Women Owning Woodlands Network (WOWnet). The first gathering of WOWnet was in a chilly forest cabin on the McDonald Dunn forest outside of Corvallis, Oregon, in December of 2005. We decided that this Extension program would: a) recognize the growing number of women taking a wide array of active woodland management roles, b) raise basic forestry and decision-making skill levels among women woodland managers through hands-on educational opportunities, c) support and increase women's access to forestry-related resources, and d) encourage communication among Oregon's women woodland managers through the development of statewide and local networks. Since that first meeting the program has grown to include 300 members in nine counties, holding between 24 and 36 sessions per year.

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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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This publication is also available electronically.



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 5& 6 for details).

We need your Email 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.

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In the past six years, I have had the opportunity to spend time with many of the WOWnet members, whether via email, on the phone, or walking around their property. I began compiling data from a survey the women completed. Here is a summary of my findings:

WOWnet Women are Busy - There never seems to be a perfect time to get together, due to many women holding full time jobs, raising children, working on their properties, or being involved in other forestry and community groups outside of WOWnet.

WOWnet Women are Inquisitive.... About EVERYTHING -

When asked what they wanted to learn more about, I received close to 40 topics!

WOWnet Women Do Not Fit in a Box -

WOWnet members are between 15 and 85 years old, owning between 1 and 3000 acres of woodlands that serve the gamut of objectives: a sanctuary, a place to live, a place to raise a family, a way to financially support a family. Some have owned land for less than a year, some are 4th generation forest managers and some will be future landowners.

WOWnet Women like Meeting Each Other - Of all the ways to communicate, in-person meetings were most useful for WOWnet members. Next came mail and email messages, then newspapers, and at the bottom blogs and social network tools.

WOWnet seems to be doing good getting women on board, and connected with other women and resources. We also are achieving our goal of recognizing women as woodland managers and receive endless requests for newsletter and journal articles, reports, and to speak at conferences. We have been highlighted by the US Forest Service, US Department of Agriculture, OSU College of Forestry, Oregon Forest Resources Institute, and many other institutions and agencies. The success of the WOWnet group has since provided inspiration to women in Minnesota, Arkansas, and the *Women and their Woods* group in Pennsylvania. WOWnet has had a tremendous six years, and I look forward to continuing this important work, up until the time we all decide that it is no longer necessary, that time when women woodland and farm managers have a voice and a place at the policy, industry, conservation, and decision making tables.



Nicole Strong will be presenting during the Women and their Woods retreat in October. For more information about Oregon WOWnet, visit <http://womenowningwoodlands.blogspot.com>.

Pennsylvania Forests: Our Link to the Past

Excerpted from Forest Stewardship Quarterly, Volume 3, Number 3, Winter 1993-1994



Long before our state was given the name "Penn's Woods," Native Americans used products from the forests in many ways. They boiled down syrup from maple sap and stored it in "bark boxes", gathered hickory nuts to make a "milk" used in cooking and carved large pine logs into canoes.

Native Americans altered the early forests but these activities were minor when compared with the extensive cutting of forests by early European settlers. In addition to clearing land for their own farms and homesteads, colonists cut large amounts

of white pine, some towering over 200 feet, for ship masts for the British navy. The practice of reserving the biggest and best pines for the King led to great unrest among the colonists, and added to the resentment of English rule that sparked the American Revolution. The white pine, in fact, was the emblem on the first flag of our Revolutionary forces.

After independence, the pioneers turned again to the forests for the resources to build the nation. White oak was prized for barrels; sassafras for its medicinal value, hickory for wagon wheel hubs, and white pine for buildings and bridges. Logs were skidded in winter, on paths covered by snow. Because there were no roads in the wilderness, rivers were used to transport the logs in large floating rafts. In the late 1800s, up to 3000 rafts containing approximately 200 million board feet of white pine traveled the West Branch of the Susquehanna River each year. In the 1860s, Williamsport was regarded as the timber capital of the world. But by 1870, most of the white pines were gone.

Steam-powered sawmills hastened the harvesting of Pennsylvania's virgin forests. The development of gear-driven locomotives allowed the logging of ridges and upland terrain previously impossible to reach. Railroads moved loggers, horses and feed to remote areas, enabling logging to become a year-round activity. After the largest and most valuable trees were gone, all types of the remaining trees were cut for potash and wood alcohol production. Extensive clearcutting left mounds of wood slash behind, and uncontrolled fires burned throughout the state.

The widespread destruction of the forests led early conservationists Gifford Pinchot, America's First Forester, and Joseph Rothrock, Father of Pennsylvania Forestry, to fight for the future of our forests through conservation. With luck and protection, Pennsylvania's forests have grown back. But we must remember our links to the past, and do our part to manage our forests with care.

Women Forest Landowner Educational Retreat

October 13-16, 2011

AGENDA DETAILS

Join us for a weekend full of educational programs related to the care and management of your forestland. Women from across the state (and adjacent areas) 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.

The deadline to submit applications is July 1, 2011. Contact Allyson Muth at Penn State (814-865-3208, abm173@psu.edu) for an application or for more information about the retreat.

Thursday, October 13:

Dinner, welcome and evening activities

Friday, October 14:

‘What is Stewardship?’ - Jim Finley, Professor of Forest Resources, Penn State University

Reading Your Forest - Susan Stout, Project Leader USDA Forest Service

Forest Plant Identification - Jane Swift, Educational Specialist, DCNR

Forest Ecology - Jim Finley

The Basics of Silviculture - Susan Stout

Field Trip - fenced timber harvest site on Loyalsock State Forest

Saturday, October 15:

Forest Hydrology -

Sarah Gustafson, Pennsylvania Water Resources Research Center, Penn State University

Wildlife in the Forest -

Lisa Williams, Wildlife Biologist,
PA Game Commission

Forest Measurements and Calculating the Value in Your Forest - Jim Finley

Field Trip - Bodine Mountain,
Loyalsock State Forest



Sunday, October 16:

Woods Walk with Jim Finley

Stories from Oregon's Women Owning Woodlands Network - Nicole Strong,
Forestry Instructor and Coordinator, Oregon State University

National Women Forest Landowner Website - Paula Randler, Forest
Stewardship Program Specialist, USDA Forest Service

Working with Resource Professionals - Cecile Stelter, District Forester,
Cornplanter State Forest

Planning for a Women Forest Landowner Network near YOU!

If you would like more information about the Women Forest Landowner retreat or to receive an application to attend, please contact Allyson Muth at Penn State University.

Phone: 814-865-3208 or Email: abm173@psu.edu

WHAT MY FOREST MEANS TO ME

Marcia Bonta

We own 600 acres of forest land on Bald Eagle Mountain near Tyrone. Our forest changes from section to section. The most varied tree species are in our north-facing hollow, which includes the first-order Plummers Hollow stream. Sitting beside the stream, although I am less than a mile from an interstate, a railroad line, and a huge limestone quarry, I can believe that I am living a hundred years ago, so peaceful is this particular place. On the road and stream banks are a couple dozen native wildflower and shrub species. Of all the forested sections of our property, this is my favorite. Still, the forested uplands, mostly an oak forest, the black cherry forest, and the old-growth forest in our three-acre deer enclosure are also wonderful.



Primarily, my forest is my writing laboratory, where I can observe nature and then write about it. There, in the hollow, I saw my first fisher. In the upland forest, I encountered my first coyote. I've interacted with black bears in every portion of my forest, some mothers with cubs, some adult males and/or females, some yearlings. Our forest mammal list is over 40 species and our woodland bird species number 130. All of these subjects and more are fodder for my writing career.

My forest also is my environmental education center where I have taken college students and nature-oriented organizations on tours and talked about forest issues. It is also where our three sons learned about the environment when they were young. As a result, they are still deeply involved in nature and environmental issues because of their years here in our forest. Now, two granddaughters and a grand niece are also learning about the natural world in my forest, and I hope they will be similarly involved when they are adults.

Of course, my forest is my flower garden. Finding and studying wildflowers, watching them come and go; marking the seasons by what I see is one of my favorite forest activities. It is my birdwatching place as well as my place for high adventure with mammals.

Every day I walk a couple hours in my forest over a 10-mile trail system, not only for inspiration, but also for exercise. At almost 71, I can still out hike most college students.

My forest is my absorber of carbon. Just by owning the land and encouraging the trees grow, I can feel good about helping to cool down global warming.

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“What My Forest Means to Me”, continued from page 7...

In my forest I learn lessons about life and death, about what dying and dead trees do to nourish the earth, about which trees live and which trees die and why. But I have also learned caution about interpreting what I see, to be humble in my tentative conclusions, and to be willing to let the forest teach me instead of thinking I know the answers to the complexity of the natural world.

Born in Camden, New Jersey, Marcia Bonta earned a B.A. from Bucknell University in Pennsylvania before becoming a freelance nature writer. She met her husband, Bruce, at Bucknell and they both have lived near Tyrone, Pennsylvania since 1971 on their 648 acre property known as “Plummer’s Hollow.” Marcia has written nine books, of which her most popular titles are her Outbound Journeys in Pennsylvania books and her Appalachian Seasons series. She also currently writes, as she has done for several years, a column for the magazine Pennsylvania Game News entitled The Naturalist’s Eye. Women with a relationship to Penn’s Woods will enjoy her Women in the Field: America’s Pioneering Women Naturalists. College Station: Texas A&M UP, 1991, American Women Afield: Writings by Pioneering Women Naturalists. College Station: Texas A&M UP, 1995 (which she edited), and especially her blog at <http://marciabonta.wordpress.com>.

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