

# WWIA News

## Fall 2018



### *President's Message for Fall*

*By John Hilewick, WWIA President*

The annual potluck dinner meeting, which included biennial elections for officers and voting directors, went off without a hitch on Thursday, October 18, 2018. Re-elected were John Hilewick as president, Fred Lau as vice president, Tony Quadro as treasurer, and Terry Gates as secretary. Voting directors re-elected were Rus Davies, Tom Fitzgerald, Judith Gallagher, and Neva Shields. In addition, Jeff Parobek was elected to be the ninth voting director. The board also appointed Andy Zborovsky and Tim Troup associate directors.

The membership unanimously approved an amendment to the bylaws. Article III, Section 4, will now read: "Membership will be on a calendar-year basis, beginning January 1 and ending December 31 of each calendar year." This replaces "The membership year will begin on

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*Notice: The newsletter committee is always looking for articles. If you'd like to submit a piece or volunteer to recap an event, please contact Celine Colbert at [cecobert@pa.gov](mailto:cecobert@pa.gov) or (724) 238-5044.*

## *President's Message* (Cont'd)

the date of the annual business meeting, which will take place in October each year."

The rationale for this revision was to get back to the original language of the bylaws. The BOD determined after considerable study, as well as input from various members, that a January to December membership window is the least confusing and will likely improve member retention.

We also plan to mail postcards to *all members* before the first program each fall to inform them of their current *dues status* and the most recent year for which they paid their dues. The postcard will also include an invitation to attend the upcoming program and to renew their memberships.

I am happy to report that the annual meeting was well attended, with 34 current members and three new members. All enjoyed the meal, and many compliments were spread around regarding the fried chicken and mashed potatoes, as well as the many delicious side dishes and desserts contributed by attendees.

The program on the eastern golden eagle was exceptional in content and delivery. Cory Wentzel, forest assistant manager with Forbes Forest District 4, was our presenter.

As you may know, 2019 is WWIA's 30th anniversary year. You can visit us at [www.westmorelandwoodlands.org](http://www.westmorelandwoodlands.org) to peruse our full slate of programming for next year. There will be a special anniversary recognition/reception/celebration gala on April 18. Dr. James Finley, professor emeritus at the Center for Private Forests at Penn State, has agreed to be our speaker. We hope to see you all at that event and all the other programs that interest you.



# Tom Fitzgerald Acknowledges Lifetime Achievement Award

by Tom Fitzgerald

To the members of the Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association, and especially to President John Hilewick, I wish to express my deep appreciation for the completely unexpected Lifetime Achievement Award you presented to me on October 18 at the 2018 business meeting.

I feel especially honored and humbled to learn that my ordinary activities as the Westmoreland County service forester meant so much to you that you remembered me so favorably thirteen years after my retirement from the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry's Forbes Forest District in 2005, especially since I have faded into the background during that time.

My wife, Jayne, is equally appreciative of the handmade wooden cutting board John presented to her. She has admired the cutting boards John crafts and has wished for a long time that she could have one.

I grew up on the edge of New York State, about twelve miles from Shinglehouse, PA, and inherited the old homestead and family forest land when my parents died. I have spent a large portion of those thirteen years gradually insulating the house and caring for the woodlot.

In 2009 I was asked to chair Area 4 of the

Pennsylvania Tree Farm Committee. Area 4 comprises ten counties in the southwest corner of the state, including Westmoreland. It's an important position, but one that attracts little notice outside the tree farm committee.

Our daughter Rebecca and I co-edit the newsletter of the Susquehannock Trail Club and Jayne prepares the paper copies for mailing. The club, based in Coudersport, PA, maintains an 85-mile hiking trail in Potter and Clinton counties.

Jayne is a master crafter at knitting and has donated large knitted items to the Forbes District Forest Fire Wardens Association as door prizes.

The award plaque will occupy a conspicuous place of honor in our home, and the cutting board will be put to good use when Jayne and our daughters prepare holiday dinners.



## *WWIA's Walk in Penn's Woods*

*By John Hilewick, WWIA President*

WWIA participated in the second annual statewide Walk in Penn's Woods on October 7. Our ramble took place at the Otto and Magdalena Ackermann Nature Preserve near North Huntingdon. The Westmoreland Land Trust, which owns and manages the 59-acre property, cosponsored the walk.

That Sunday turned out to be a beautiful day for a walk in Penn's Woods! The walk was scheduled for 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., and most folks arrived a little before the start time. The 16 attendees included a wide range of ages, from a gentleman of 84 spry years to a gaggle of young ladies whose ages I estimated as between 6 and 11 years. All who attended had a great time. At least, that is the opinion of this walker.

We started by introducing ourselves to each other and talking about the walk, our ages, former or present occupations, the history of the preserve, and how we all came to know about this event. After the girls had some snacks and hydration, we began our sojourn into the preserve.

As the presumed leader of the walk, I got the group moving toward the trail's starting point. I mentioned that we could either proceed straight out the wide, almost flat, road-like track or turn up to the left and follow the gas-line portion, which quickly becomes a substantial hill. The girls were immediately out front and off to the left, almost at a dead sprint!

I realized a bit later that they had likely

perused the site map and seen the pet cemetery (with headstones) that was just off the trail starting up the hill on the right, a few paces off the gas-line track. Silly me for thinking a nice leisurely start on the flat might be best for all assembled.

After a nice visit to the cemetery site, with the girls as our advance party we trudged up the gas-line hill trail past the old haul-out entrance to the stone quarry, which had been active nearly a century ago, back in the early 1920s. Farther up we topped out and followed the trail as it hugged the edge of the escarpment, providing some great views of the valley below. We could see portions of Brush Creek and at one point a speck of Leger Road.

All along the way we were graced with big trees to admire, as well as smaller ones that apparently just could not compete with the genetically superior specimens. On the flat the trail turned and we began a downward drift along the other side of the quarry, where the edge was pretty much a precipice. By my estimate, it was 60 feet or more down to the bottom of the dry, tree-filled quarry floor.

We continued down past some artificial landforms that appeared to me to be dozed top and subsoil mounds that had been put there long ago as the layer of stone was uncovered. Trees of substantial size were growing there too. Now we were onto the hillside traverse of the trail and passing tree specimens that made us look straight up to try to identify the leaves in the treetops.

Some of these great trees, especially the oaks, I estimated had diameters at breast height (DBH) of 20 to 28 inches.

I teased Betsy Aiken and Loree Speedy of the Land Trust by exclaiming, “Boy, these trees are a furniture maker's dream come true!”

I was quickly informed that the forest management plan embraced an old-growth scenario. I was happy to hear that the plan, still being developed, would include prescriptions to deal with invasive plant species and encourage many native species.

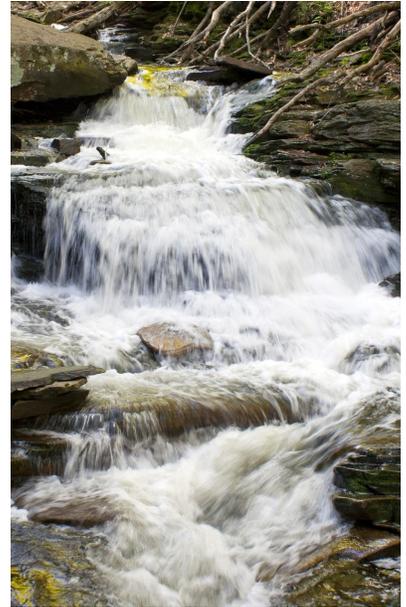
As we progressed across the hillside trail traverse, we encountered the following dominant tree species: red oak, black oak, sugar maple, red maple, black birch, tulip poplar, black cherry, hickory, slippery elm, and beech. Many of these specimens were large, from 14 to 20-plus inches DBH. A tree hugger's dream place. There were also understory species like dogwood, spicebush, and young beech and sugar maples, which do nicely in a shaded environment. If you did not make the walk, now you have some idea of what you missed.

As we traversed farther across and down the hillside, we could hear the girls having fun in the stream below. Before we joined them, we were treated to a nice view of a stepped waterfall feature of a tributary of the bigger stream in the bottom. The water was completely clear, and I was tempted to scoop a cupped hand into the cascade for a nice refreshing drink. Ultimately I deferred to the likelihood that it was not all that pure.

We negotiated the rather challenging descent to the bottom and across a little planked footbridge over that stream. The girls were having a great time playing in the stream. One exclaimed that she had found an artifact, a really old car radio component-- probably a hundred years old, she surmised.

I said it was unlikely, since there were no radios in the cars of a hundred years ago. That rather disappointed her. After watching the youngsters have fun in the stream for a while, we started our trudge back up out of the bottom. Finally we ended the climb up and onto the flat improved trail/road that traversed the hillside and took us back to our starting point.

I recommend that everyone make a sojourn to this place and let the wealth of the site soak into your soul. There is no



*“I was tempted to scoop a cupped hand into the cascade for a nice refreshing drink.”*

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# Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association Annual President's Report to Members

by John Hilewick, WWIA President

"As stipulated by the bylaws, ARTICLE VII Section 1, the president shall 2) provide at each annual meeting of the association an annual report of the work of the association." Please accept my apology for failing to present this report at the annual meeting.

I would describe 2018 as a very good year for WWIA. We scheduled or collaborated with others on 10 programming events. Total attendee participation was 272 people. At our eight independent events, attendance totaled 250 members, guests, and visitors. The program with the largest attendance was Eric Oesterling's seminar, where 45 people braved unseasonable cold to learn firsthand about tree pruning. Next was our annual meeting/potluck dinner with Cory Wentzel's golden eagle program, at 38 attendees.

The number of paid individual and family memberships increased to 98 from 87 in 2017. These statistics reveal that we might just be doing something right to encourage attendance and memberships.

The BOD has altered its position on "weeding the rolls" for those who have not

paid their dues since 2013. Individual and family memberships on our roster going back to 2013 total 237.

For WWIA's 30th anniversary year, the BOD is undertaking a membership renewal and new-member initiative. We think we have much to offer to private woodland owners throughout Westmoreland County, tree farmers in the county, Pennsylvania Forest Stewards, and members of the general public who appreciate our mission and our program topics, so we will be reaching out to both former members and potential members.

This year we have worked to establish a full board with nine voting directors. The BOD now consists of member-elected officers and directors, board-appointed volunteer directors, and associate directors. We have also persuaded two more members to be associate directors and volunteer their time, experience, and special talents toward the betterment of WWIA.

The newsletter group continues to collaborate and work diligently to produce quarterly editions of a very high quality for the benefit of the membership. Editors

*"The number of paid individual and family memberships increased to 98 from 87 in 2017."*

## Annual Report *(Cont'd)*

Celine Colbert and Judith Gallagher deserve special recognition.

A number of gracious volunteers have contributed blog posts, and our volunteer Facebook administrator, Jessica Salter, has kept that social media outlet current and interesting.



We are hoping that more WWIA members will contribute valuable and pertinent articles to the newsletter, the blog, and our Facebook page. All contributions are welcome! The more hands and minds that are involved in the recipe of this organization, the better the "soup" will be.

Looking ahead to 2019, we have an ambitious year of programming planned! We will need assistance to pull off some of these events. Most especially, we will need help planning a successful WWIA gala 30th anniversary recognition reception/celebration on April 18. That evening will feature refreshments, selections of hors d'oeuvres, and tasty samplings of sweets. Most importantly, we will recognize the founders, early leaders, and long-term sustaining members who have made this organization what it is today. And we will hear from Jim Finley, who has contributed so much to the quality of Pennsylvania forests.

To conclude, I ask that you all seriously consider coming on board as more active participants of WWIA. You can help by suggesting or developing program ideas, contributing to the newsletter, providing snacks for meetings, coming a bit early to help sell raffle tickets, or passing out door-prize tickets. You might also want to provide occasional door prizes. They seem to be making the end of each meeting a pleasurable experience. Thank you for all that you do.

## *Walk in Penn's Woods* (Cont'd)

better balm for a weary mind and body than some time outdoors looking at the creator's handiwork, like big trees and gurgling waters, and soaking in the quietness of nature. Whatever the season, you will be rewarded in your visit!

The second annual walk in Penn's Woods was a success throughout the commonwealth, with at least a thousand people joining 67 walks in 48 counties of Pennsylvania.

## *Species Spotlight: Blackgum*

*Nyssa sylvatica*

*By Celine Colbert, Service Forester*

In late summer, the first crimson leaves appearing on the forest floor are a surefire sign that cooler weather is around the corner and that a blackgum is overhead. The blackgum tree, also known as black tupelo, is one of fall's showstoppers. It's the first to start turning and displays bright fall colors as it changes to yellow to orange to scarlet to purple hues. You can pick it out in the forest by looking for its dark alligator-skin bark broken into tiny blocks.

The blackgum is an incredibly adaptable tree. It can be found taking over rocky hillsides or mixed in through a wet area. If your soil pH isn't basic, the blackgum would make an excellent landscaping choice as a medium tree with sturdy branch attachments and an attractive oval form.

Perhaps you've heard of tupelo honey. Though subtle, the small flower of the tupelo is an excellent source of pollen for bees and other pollinators. The wildlife benefits of blackgum don't stop there. Their small berries are high in fat, fiber, and phosphorous, making them an important food source for black bear and more than 30 species of song and game birds. Keep an eye out for this underrated tree. There's a good chance you have it in your woods!



## Reminder to WWIA Members

To renew your membership, please make your check out to WWIA and send your dues to Tony Quadro, Westmoreland Conservation District, 218 Donohoe Rd., Greensburg, PA 15601. Act now and you'll pay only \$10 for 2019. Member benefits include free entry to nearly all WWIA programs.

## WWIA 2019 Calendar

**January.** Field trip/tour of the Ames Hardware/handle manufacturing process facility in Champion, PA. Date & time TBD.

**February 21, 6:30 p.m.** Chelsea Gross from the Westmoreland Conservation District (WCD) will discuss woodland insects that spread diseases affecting animals and humans, especially ticks and mosquitoes, which are vectors for Lyme disease and the West Nile virus.

**March 21, 6:30 p.m.** Alysha Trexler, watershed scientist/project manager at the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, will discuss riparian buffers.

**April 18, 6:00-8:00 p.m.** WWIA's gala 30th anniversary recognition reception. The speaker will be Professor Emeritus James Finley of the Center for Private Forests at Penn State.

**May 16 or 23.** Foresters Mike DiRinaldo of DCNR and Tony Quadro of WCD will lead a walk and talk to view the treatment and mitigation of invasive plant species, deer impacts, and reforestation efforts on the Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park next to the WCD campus. Program time TBD.

**June 8, 9:00 a.m. to about 2:30 p.m.** Jessica Salter and David Planinsek, DCNR foresters working out of the Laughlintown office of the Bureau of Forestry, will lead our ninth annual Forbes State Forest field trip and skills day.

**June 29.** Leslie Horner, Forest Stewardship Program associate at the Center for Private Forests at Penn State, will lead a workshop and field day focusing on woodland health and regeneration assessment at WWIA vice president Fred Lau's woodlot. Time TBD.

**September 19, 6:30 p.m.** Sandy Feather, an educator from the Penn State Extension Service, will discuss the spotted lanternfly and its spread.

**October 17, 6:00 p.m.** The annual WWIA potluck dinner and business meeting will be followed by a presentation on forest regeneration. Speaker TBD.

*Please check [westmorelandwoodlands.org](http://westmorelandwoodlands.org)  
for the latest information about program times and places.*

# Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

Membership Application and Renewal – Dues \$10 per year

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

New Member ( ) or Renewal ( ) Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Make check payable to**

Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

## **Mail to**

Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

c/o Westmoreland Conservation District

218 Donohoe Road, Greensburg, PA 15601

Attention: Tony Quadro

[www.westmorelandwoodlands.org](http://www.westmorelandwoodlands.org)

Westmoreland Woodlands  
Improvement Association

c/o Westmoreland Conservation District  
218 Donohoe Road,  
Greensburg, PA 15601

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