

# SWPWO



November 2004

## Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners

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### Next SWPWO Meeting November 10

Our next meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 10, at 7:00 PM at the Courthouse Square Building, 100 W. Beau St, in Washington, PA. This building is directly behind the courthouse.

Rodney Burns, Wildlife Conservation Officer with the PA Game Commission in western Greene county will present a program: "Bears and Bobcats, Oh My: Charismatic Macro Fauna of Pennsylvania" He will also talk about the commission's D.M.A.P. (Deer Management Assistance Program) and deer deterrent fence programs.

Free parking will be available in the parking garage in the entrance that is the furthest uphill, Beau St. "B-level" entrance. Take the elevator up to the first floor. As usual, the meeting is open to the public and free of charge. Any questions, call Bill at 724-627-6624.

#### *Our Purpose*

*Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners (SWPWO), a not for profit association, is an organization of individuals interested in sound woodland management practices which encourage the diverse use of forests for timber production, wildlife habitat, watershed protection and recreation and to promote this multiple-use philosophy through education and technical assistance for the benefit of the membership and general public.*

### PA Forestland Owners Unite!

I know that we are about sick of politics at this time in the election process however there is a bill looming in our state halls which we need to pay attention to. Pennsylvania Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee has amended and approved HB 657, which would change the Pennsylvania Farmland and Forest Land Assessment Act of 1974, commonly known as the Clean and Green Act. This bill will remove the ability for preferential assessment on farmstead land in the agricultural reserve and, more importantly to us, forest reserve land. The Congress justifies this bill by stating that the land is not being used for agricultural purposes. Only land designated solely for agricultural purposes would retain this preferential assessment. The bill is moving to the Senate. There is support for these changes by the state education committees. Write your Congressperson. Privately owned forestlands are important to Pennsylvania and we need to make our voices heard. Submitted by Gay Thistle. Facts obtained from School Leader News, a publication of the PA School Boards Assoc.

## **2005 SWPWO Election of Officers**

At the November meeting, members of SWPWO will be electing new officers for the 2005 year. Positions on the Executive Committee that are open this year are; Vice President, Treasurer and a Director at Large position. A term for each position is two years and an officer can only serve two terms. This year our Vice President, Dave Brady and Director at Large, Bob Brown have reached their term limits. We thank these individuals for their dedicated service in helping manage this organization.

The nominating committee has recommended the following candidates to run for election.

**Bob Daley for Vice President**  
(Bob currently serves as a Director at Large)

**Ed Hartman for Treasurer**  
(for a second term)

**Max Loughman for Dir. At Large**  
(to replace Bob Brown)

**Maria Piantanida Dir. at Large**  
(to replace Bob Daley)

Please show your support for our organization by attending this meeting and thanking those who volunteer their time for us.

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### **Membership**

Membership to the Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners Association is \$10 per year for an individual and \$15 per year for a household. Dues are requested by the November meeting in order to ensure a timely receipt of the newsletter and notice of the next year's meetings. To join, please send name, address and phone number to: SWPWO

195 E., High St  
Waynesburg, PA 15370

## **Report: Last Meeting "Visualizing Your Landscape"**

Dr. Jim Finley returned to speak to us about a program that his department is working on that helps foresters visualize, on a computer screen, the effects of actions on our forests. A major concern for PA timber industry is that our forests now boast red maple and black birch as our top trees. Whereas, twenty years ago the top trees were oaks. Dr. Finley and his graduate student, Paul Roth pointed out that poor timbering practices as well as poor deer management are major culprits in this change. The Stand Visualization System (SVS) generates graphic images depicting stand conditions represented by stand components, e.g. trees, shrubs, and down material. The images produced by SVS, while abstract, provide readily understood representations of stand conditions. These images help communicate silvicultural treatments and forest management alternatives on paper before the cutting is done. This Stand Vegetation Simulator (SVS) program can be downloaded free of charge from <http://RNRext.cas.psu.edu> under Extension and Outreach, then select Publications and find FVS/SVS Education Program.

On the Saturday, following this talk, about thirty participants met at Arlyn Perkey's tree farm in western Greene County. The group observed the actual stand of trees that was visualized on the computer at the meeting ten years earlier. Since then, Arlyn has used crop tree management techniques and released certain crop trees. These trees have shown an excellent growth rate in the ten years, especially the oaks.

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## Christmas Trees

It's almost time to "put up" the Christmas tree. Some people will erect an artificial tree; others will buy a living potted tree; still others will select a freshly cut tree from a plantation.

This last practice has come under criticism in recent years, with increased concern over the availability of timber products and better stewardship of the environment. While these concerns are valid, and have merit, there are some facts about cutting Christmas trees that also need to be presented to get a balanced picture.

Less than 1% of the total acreage in the U.S. and less than one tenth of one percent of Washington and Greene counties have Christmas trees growing commercially on them. In the entire nation, only 450,000 acres are Christmas tree plantations. This is an area slightly larger than Greene County. Far more land is being bulldozed for the construction of highways, shopping centers and apartment complexes each year.

Many of the special varieties of evergreens used for Christmas trees would not develop into good timber trees even if left to grow. Scotch pine is one example.

Many of the largest and most prosperous Christmas tree plantations in the United States are located in areas where the soil is shallow and thus unsuitable for growing good quality timber trees.

Even though a live Christmas tree is cut in 6 to 12 years, during its lifetime it has benefited the environment in many ways- watershed protection, wildlife habitat, and the production of oxygen. In

addition, the tree has provided for the gainful employment of many people in planting, management, harvesting, and transportation processes.

When plantation-grown Christmas Trees are harvested, new trees are immediately planted. Trees are a renewable resource; the petroleum products used to make artificial trees are not!

It might be that our concern over cutting Christmas trees could better be channeled into considering how to make wiser use of our idle land right here in Washington and Greene counties, where hundreds of acres are growing up into undesirable brush. Much of this idle land could be planted with valuable timber trees. For more information, write Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, 195 E. High St., Waynesburg, PA 15370, or call 627-6624. *Written by Bill Wentzel, Service Forester, PA Bureau of Forestry.*

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## Photos of SWPWO's Annual Pig Roast Can Be Seen on our Website

October 9<sup>th</sup> was a beautiful day for the second annual SWPWO pig roast which was held at John Burnham's tree farm in Prosperity, PA. We christened John's new sawmill pavilion- the saw was not moved in yet. Andy and Brian Thistle showed off their summer project- a potato gun- for the crowd. At next years picnic we may see bigger and better designs of potato guns. The food was great. There are photos on our website which can viewed at [www.cs.pitt.edu/~daley/SWPWO](http://www.cs.pitt.edu/~daley/SWPWO).

This website is available to us because of the talents and time of webmaster and officer, Bob Daley.

## **Trees on Main Street: Influence on Retail and Shopping Behavior**

Trees make business districts more pleasant places! Yet long-term care and maintenance is needed to gain the most benefit from trees in downtown business centers. Are the returns worth the cost?

Several scientific studies indicate that trees are good for business! A recent study tested the responses of shoppers and visitors in smaller cities throughout the U.S. Three general areas of response were evaluated: district perceptions, patronage behavior, and product pricing. Increased positive responses were found for all of these when people viewed a shopping district with trees.

Merchants in many downtown business districts in the U.S. are working hard to create vital, competitive retail places. Why should trees be part of the action plan? Patrons rated judgments of products and merchants 10% more positive in places having trees. Patrons paid more frequent visits and stayed longer in shopping districts with trees. Patrons chose to pay higher prices for items in shopping districts with trees. Our physical environment affects our behavior, often in ways that we are not aware of. Marketing studies of "atmospherics" test how interior store features influence buying behavior. For instance, a pleasant store atmosphere is correlated with higher spending intentions. Trees are a positive atmospheric for business districts. They create a retail mood that appeals to shoppers and visitors. Trees greet shoppers with a

message of "welcome" even before entering the merchant's door.

*Submitted by Gay Thistle. Printed with permission from a publication from University of Washington, College of Forest Resources. Fact Sheet #17*

## **Can Harvesting Timber Benefit Global Climates?**

We hear much about the idea of global warming caused by the greenhouse effect (Increased amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere leading to heavier air that traps more of the earth's heat). Not all scientists agree about the existence or the extent of the greenhouse effect. The people who acknowledge that this condition does exist believe a solution is to stop, or greatly reduce, the harvesting of trees for human's use.

Unfortunately, most of what the general public knows about this subject is learned through the news media and Hollywood actors. Seldom is a professional forester ever consulted. As a forester, I would like to present to you a more balanced treatment of the subject and maybe give you something to think about.

We all need to better understand tree physiology and how trees produce oxygen and reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide. This understanding can help us make better decisions about harvesting trees with regard for harm or benefit to local and global climates.

Trees, as do all living things on earth, "breathe" in oxygen and "breathe" out carbon dioxide. This process is called respiration. Now, photosynthesis, on the other hand, is the process only found in green plants, including trees, that uses water, carbon dioxide and the sun's

energy to produce "food" for the plant. Oxygen is a by product of photosynthesis, not of respiration. This is important to the issue in question because most people do not know that it is the food producing process of trees, not respiration, that can help reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide.

Understanding this scientific fact leads to an awareness that it is how fast a tree is growing, not just its presence, which is the most critical factor in the tree's potential to modify the greenhouse effect. It is important to realize that old, mature trees can actually use more oxygen in respiration than they produce in photosynthesis; and in so doing, release more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than they absorb.

Many forested areas in Green and Washington counties are harvested every year. When older trees (less efficient oxygen producers) are cut, new trees (more efficient oxygen producers) grow in response to the increased amount of sunlight. The newly emerging forest grows very rapidly and is soon producing a surplus of oxygen and absorbing excess carbon dioxide.

I am by no means advocating the harvesting of old growth trees that certainly should be a vital component of the forest resource base. Each timber harvesting operation should be undertaken only after careful consideration is made of the wildlife, water quality, soil erosion, economic and visual impacts. My job is to urge people to just this.

Understanding tree life processes can help us make better decisions for the environment when it comes to harvesting and planting trees.

Knowledge based on scientific fact must temper our emotional involvement with the environment.

Trees are a renewable resource. With careful scientific forest management and common sense, we can harvest trees for the many benefits they provide to us and the environment. At the same time, the younger trees coming in after the harvest will help reduce excess atmospheric carbon dioxide while they grow for future generations to enjoy and use. *Written by Bill Wentzel*

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### **Mark your Calendars:**

#### **SWPWO 2005**

#### **Schedule**

**March 23** The microclimate of the Forest with Dr. Harold Thistle and Dr. Arlyn Perkey

**March 26** Field trip

**May** A talk about Invasive plant of PA (date to be announced)

**May** Field trip to Ryerson St Park

**June 11** Stream Improvement talk and field trip

**August 13** Summer Tour to be announced

**Sept. 14** A talk on Timber Harvesting

**Sept 17** Field trip

**Oct. 15** 3rd Annual SWPWO Picnic

**Nov 9** Landowner Rights

More details will be available in the January Newsletter

*This newsletter is produced about 8 times per year. It is published about two weeks prior to the meetings. Articles and/or ideas are welcome. Contact the editors John Burnham at 724-223-8781 or e-mail at [burnhamjc@msn.com](mailto:burnhamjc@msn.com) or Gay Thistle at 724-499-5190 [thistle@greenepa.net](mailto:thistle@greenepa.net)*

**Next Meeting:**

**Wednesday, Nov 10 at  
Washington Courthouse Square  
Building " Bears and Bobcat,  
Oh My: The Charismatic Macro  
Fauna of PA with Rodney Burns  
of the PA Game Commission**

**Executive Committee for the year  
2004**

**Officers**

Harold Thistle- President  
Dave Brady- Vice Pres.  
Nadine Obermiller- Secretary  
Ed Hartman- Treasurer

**Board of Directors**

George Marichek  
Robert Brown  
Bob Daley

**Advisors**

Bill Wentzel      Arlyn Perkey

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