

# SWPWO



Red Oak

**Southwest PENNA Woodland Owners Assoc.**

**March 2013**

[www.busybeaver.cs.pitt.edu/swpwo](http://www.busybeaver.cs.pitt.edu/swpwo)

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## **NEXT MEETING and FIELD TRIP**

### **March 13 Meeting**

**WED, 7 PM: Old Concord, PA**

### **PA Forests: Our Challenges and Opportunities**

Jim Finley, Professor of Forest Resources and Director of the recently formed Center for Private Forests at Penn State, will discuss the joys and responsibilities of tending a piece of Penn's Woods. Jim riffs on the woodland owner as the modern equivalent of Jefferson's yeoman farmer-citizen. We make the day-to-day, informed decisions that allow enjoyment, according to our lights, of the country's natural inheritance and pay it forward toward the endowment of future generations and, dare we say, the ongoing health of our Commonwealth.

### **Place: [NEW LOCATION] Old Concord Presbyterian Church Basement,**

PA Rte #18, Washington County, just North of the Greene County line.

[This is our new Wash County meeting site and driving directions are similar to those to John Burnham's Tree Farm. The Church, on Old Concord Rd on the East side of #18, is about a mile—coming north from Greene County--past the Rte #231 turn to John's; coming south, make a left onto Old Concord Rd just before Elwood Day Rd]

### **April 13 Field Trip**

**SAT, 1 to 4**

### **Chestnut Tree Planting, with Gary Micsky, at Burnham Tree Farm**

Check the latest progress in the heroic quest to re-establish what was once the signature tree of the Eastern Forest. Hands-on techniques.

**Complete 2013 Event Calendar is available on our web-site.**

## ***Finley Unchained***

*[Our March speaker here presents the challenge part of his talk, which can be boiled down to repairing an ecosystem degraded by human heedlessness. Come for the challenge, stay for the opportunity. Jim is an enthusiastic observer of the landscape's minutiae, as well as a soothsayer for the long views of nature's way. -ed.]*

If you are a woodland owner or just enjoy woods for their many values, know that our forests are truly under stress. Clearly, some of this is human-caused. Consider how insects and diseases brought to our forests from other places have taken from us

important tree species and threaten others. A hundred years ago, chestnut blight from China began extirpating American chestnut. Soon after, American elm was under attack. Then, in the 1930s, gypsy moth began to take its toll on our oaks. In recent years, Pennsylvania's state tree, the Eastern hemlock, has struggled with hemlock woolly adelgid and elongate scale, which will greatly reduce the presence of this important species that shades our streams and provides habitat. Similarly, emerald ash borer is rapidly extending itself across our forests and will likely eliminate all native ash species. The next major threat is the Asian long horned beetle, which will play havoc with oaks and maples.

The invasion of exotic competitive plants adds to the mix of issues affecting forests. It is difficult to remember or to imagine what our woodlands looked like without multiflora rose, bush and Japanese honeysuckle, autumn and Russian olive, barberry, and privet adding their touches of green. Canopies are filled with native grapes and Oriental bittersweet. Invasive tree of heaven, paulownia, mulberry, and buckthorn are not uncommon, especially along forest edges, roadsides, and in old fields. Consider how our Spring woods now take on displays of color that only a few years ago were uncommon. There is the white of garlic mustard flowers, the purples and lavenders of dames' rocket, and the soft greens of Japanese stilt grass. Increasingly Japanese knotweed and mile-a-minute, or tearthumb, fill in forest openings and provide little but aggravation.

In sum, the loss of native trees, competition from native and non-native plants, and changing weather conditions are affecting the composition of our forests and their health. The complexity of native plants is lessening, leading to a simplification of forests -- there are fewer native species. Simplicity may mean that some plants will move into voids left by the loss of a given species. Consider that in the early 1970s red oak was the most common tree in Pennsylvania; now, it is red maple. Over time, as fewer species dominate, resilience changes. An insect, for example Asian long horned beetle, comes to the forest; its opportunity to wreak havoc is high; and overall resilience declines as yet another species enters a spiral of decline and there are fewer species to fill-in the niche that has opened.

As we look at forests and seek to maintain their health, the challenge is to adapt to changing conditions. What can we do to help threatened species; how might we guide the replacement of one species with a native species that fits the change? If one of the variables is climate change, what species, maybe one on the edge of its range, might be introduced? Eastern hemlock's plight could provide such a mitigation scenario. To protect streams losing hemlock cover and threatened with increased water temperatures and detritus from non-native plants, which do not "feed" native stream insects, a mitigation step could be to increase native white pine regeneration while introducing another species such as rhododendron to provide cover and shading.

***Stewardship, in its simplest form, is living in a way today that helps conserve resources and options for future generations.***

# ***Plan Ahead to Mitigate Threats to Forest Health***

By Chad Gadsby, DCNR Bureau of Forestry Service Forester

By now many people have heard about the emerald ash borer (EAB), the hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) and the elongate hemlock scale (EHS) complex. All of these insect species and others on the horizon will greatly impact the forest, changing the way it looks and functions. The goal for many forest stewards is to mitigate these impacts, retaining a healthy and functional forest.

If a forest steward is to maintain the health and function of their forested property it requires proper planning. The first step is to inventory and understand the resources you have. Do you have a few scattered ash or hemlock, or are they in nearly pure stands? What is growing on or near the forest floor? Is it fern, beech, birch, invasive species, desirable tree species, or nothing at all?

Next, what goals do you have for your forest? Do you plan to use the property for timber harvesting, wildlife viewing, solitude, recreation or multiple values? Your goals and the activities you participate in will affect what decisions you make during the planning process. Once you answer the questions above, you are ready to develop a forest “recovery” plan. The plan should include the assessment of the forest’s current state, as well as your ownership goals. Together this information will help you decide what the future forest should look like. Do you want your hemlock stand to stay a conifer stand, or can it become a hardwood or mixed stand?

Once you reach a decision, with the help of your forester develop a set of steps that will allow you achieve your desired future forest. You will want to address any invasive species, such as multiflora rose, bush honey- suckle, barberry, and autumn olive or competitive species such as hay-scented or New York ferns, striped maple, or beech brush before any other planned activities take place. Your forester can advise you on the viability of management options you choose. Depending on the condition of your threatened woodlot, you may have several options for moving forward: cut/herbicide treatment to remove invasive species, salvage harvest, thinning, or planting trees to increase diversity or to supplement an under-stocked stand.

Early development of a “recovery” plan is crucial, even before you have actual losses, because it will allow you to prepare to act if/when your forest falls prey to EAB, HWA, EHS, or other species. Monitor areas with potential problems at least yearly. Monitoring programs will help you stay in touch with what is happening in your forest and allow you to implement your plan should the need arise.

For more information, contact your local service forester. Service forester listings are available at <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/yourwoods/index.htm>.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Tree People:

I write to commend H. Thistle's discussion of "Hard Water & Glyphosate", which appeared in your Oct. 2012 Newsletter. It caused a light bulb—one of those old fashioned kind that are now hard to come by—to pop on in my head.

I have toyed, per dogma of the SWPWO brain trust, with the spraying of herbicides to control invasives such as honey suckle, but never to great effect. The results were spotty at best, and therefore I was not an enthusiastic practitioner. Something wasn't right, perhaps my abilities as a mixologist. Then along came Doc Thistle's article raising the possibility that glyphosate, the active ingredient in most herbicides, loses potency in combination with hard water.

My situation is this: my well water is "complex", requiring an elaborate filtering and processing system for in-house use. BUT, the outdoor tap, which I use to fill my backpack sprayer, bypasses that system. I was mixing hard water and glyphosate!

This year, using treated water, I will approach my spraying regimen with renewed hope and purpose. May God bless us all.

Larry Chamberlain,  
Muse, PA

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### SWPWO Executive Committee, Officers for 2013

Gay Thistle - President

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John Burnham, Harold Thistle, Bob Daley

### **Our Purpose**

Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners (SWPWO), a not for profit association, is an organization of individuals interested in sound woodland management practices to 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.

### **Membership Information**

Membership dues will be collected at meetings or can be sent to:

SWPWO  
2506 Hollywood Dr.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15235

If sending in dues, please include name, address, phone number and an e-mail address. Membership to the Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners Association is \$10 per year for an individual and \$15 per year for a household. Keep your membership up to date to continue to receive the newsletter and yearly calendar.