

SWPWO



Bigtooth aspen

Southwest PENNA Woodland Owners Association April 2012

After the mildest winter in these parts in memory (of even the old timers), we look forward to a stimulating season—our 12th—of learning and laughter.

April 11, 2012 Meeting WED, 7 PM: Washington, PA

You've got a Forest: So, What Is Your Plan?

Russell Gibbs, PA Service Forester for Washington and Greene Counties, will speak on forestry practices of interest to landowners with a variety of objectives.

Location: First Floor Meeting Room, Courthouse Square Building, 100 W. Beau Street, Washington. **Free Parking:** enter through the Beau Street B-Level entrance at the base of the Courthouse Square Building.

April 14 Field Trip SAT, 1 to 4

Jim Patterson's tree farm in Eighty Four, PA

This property will be strip-mined in 2013. The Pattersons have a plan for harvesting timber and for reclamation of their property, which we will discuss during the tour. Next year, there will be a follow-up visit after the strip-mining is completed.

Meet at the Sears parking lot (in front of the car repair area) at the Crown Center Mall in Washington to leave at 12:30. (Driving directions to the property will also be available at the April 11 meeting.)

As we embark on a new year of fellowship in the field, Arlyn Perkey offers the definitive account of last year's final event:

FALL TOUR AT PERKEY TREE FARM

November 12, 2011 was a beautiful day for a tour of Perkey Tree Farm at Catherine's Knob near Daybrook, Monongalia County, West Virginia. We focused our attention on regenerated red oak and chestnut that had been established by planting seeds in tree tubes.

Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners had visited the farm two growing seasons before. We had examined an area that had regenerated to sycamore following a

timber harvest by the previous owner. A nearby sycamore seed source combined with the fact that deer do not prefer sycamore seedlings, resulted in a sapling/pole-size stand of nearly pure sycamore on an upland site. I injected the stems with herbicide to deaden them. I then planted acorns in short (about 18" high) tubes. The second growing season, I selected the best (tallest, most vigorous) seedlings, and put them in prototype, 7-inch diameter, 3 foot tall, tubes being field tested by Plantra.

These prototypes have been improved and are currently being marketed as OMNI Plant Tubes. The larger diameter tubes are supported by 2 fiber glass stakes that are easily driven to a depth of 14 inches in the soil. The performance of the 2-year old seedlings was impressive. The larger diameter of the tubes allows additional light to penetrate to a lower level in the tube. Leaves have more room so they are not held stationary in the tube. They are better able to orient toward the sun and grow to a larger size.

On November 12, red oak leaves were in color transition from green to red or yellow, and then on to brown. Red oak leaves that transition to red are believed to have higher carbohydrate content than red oak leaves that transition to yellow. This made the advantage of additional light for seedlings in the larger tubes visible (red leaves instead of yellow leaves). The timing of the tour was excellent.

Plantra provided a sample of the new OMNI Plant Tube, 2 new supporting fiberglass stakes, and new Stretch Lock ties. Those free samples along with fresh-baked cookies sent everyone home with a smile on their face.

THE RENEGADE ELK OF WESTYLVANIA

The escaped domestic bull elk that was haunting the upper part of the Fish Creek watershed for nearly two years was returned to captivity Feb. 9 at a West Virginia game preserve near Buckhannon. [Notice of the wayward elk was broken in print by the SWPWO Newsletter: see Carl Douglas's "Walking in the Woods" entry from the March 2011 Newsletter, available—as are all the Newsletters from 2004 to present—at www.busybeaver.cs.pitt.edu/swpwo].

The impressive beast wandered away from a private captive facility near Aleppo, PA in May 2010 and, threading his way across Mason & Dixon's Line in Wetzel and Marshall Counties WV and Greene County PA, became the subject of a mounting body of lore, conjecture, and rumor. He inspired his own Facebook page, "Save the Pleasant Valley Elk", started by well-meaning folks near that WV community who named him Elvis and began feeding and photographing our hero, thus ending his rambling ways.

This is great stuff for our macro-fauna loving natures and plays into our ardor for spinning outside tales, replete with cross border byplay, but the issues raised are serious ones. The elk in question is an escaped captive cervid (members of the deer family) and thus is a possible carrier of chronic wasting disease (CWD), which can spread to white-tailed deer with devastating consequences. CWD has been confirmed in the area the elk was inhabiting in WV but has not been detected in PA. A definitive diagnosis of CWD requires lab tests of brain tissue, necessitating the killing of the elk.

When PA's Dept. of Agriculture refused WV's request to return the elk, the onus fell on WV's Dept. of Natural Resources. Leary of killing a celebrity, DNR decided to

transport the tranquilized elk to the W. Virginia Wildlife Center where it will remain separated from other animals for an extended time while undergoing tests for various diseases. It appears healthy and will not be destroyed. However, symptoms of CWD may not become apparent for many years.

Another issue is the private ownership of wildlife, the responsibilities entailed, and how such practices are regulated. In this case, the escape of the bull elk and two cows—one immediately recaptured, the other presumed dead—was not reported to authorities by the owner.

OVERHEARD ON THE SKID PATH

News and notes from our fellow outdoors oriented non-profits

The **Izaak Walton League** and the **EcoStewards Club** of Waynesburg University are presenting an event titled “H2O Know” on Thursday April 12 from 6 to 9 at the Performing Arts Center on campus. The program, featuring five area water and ecology experts, addresses natural and man-made impacts on the Mon River Watershed relating to health, recreation, wildlife and personal actions. There will be informational displays in the lobby area, technical demonstrations, and an extensive question and answer session including all panel members on the topic of clean water.

2012 Remaining Calendar of Events

All meetings, field trips, and tours are free and open to the public

May 9 Meeting

WED, 7 PM: Waynesburg, PA

Forest Succession

Arlyn Perkey discusses the nature of change in the woodlands setting. He will discuss early, middle and late succession vegetation, as well as the role of natural seed sources and artificial regeneration in the developing forest.

Location: Building #10, Greene Country Fairgrounds, Waynesburg

May 12 Field Trip

SAT, 1 to 4

Cooper's Rock State Forest, east of Morgantown, W.Va.

A look-see at the managed forest, while reviewing twenty-year data on growth rates, species composition, and general forest health.

June 9 Summer Member Tour

SAT, 1 to 4

Debbie and Bob Hanes's Property

A visit to the Hickory area in central Washington County.

July 14 Summer Tour

SAT, 1 to 4

W.A. Young & Sons Foundry in Rice's Landing, PA

Our group will receive a private tour of this historical gem in Greene County. The Foundry is a well-preserved machine shop on the Monongahela River that serviced the boating traffic from 1900 to 1965. A step back in time.

Aug 11 Summer Member Tour **SAT, 1 to 4**

Becket's Run Woodlands

Janet Sredy's and Raul Chiesa's 110 acres near Monongahela PA is part of a biodiversity area recovering from the 1948 Donora smog incident and the fragmentation caused by three active gas pipelines and a State Highway. Raul & Janet will focus on their Forest Stewardship Plan and the opportunities they found to meet this forest's challenges.

September 12 Meeting **WED, 7 PM: Waynesburg, PA**

Herbicide Use 101

Christina Becker, Extension Specialist with the Pesticide Education Program at Penn State University, will speak about the safe use of herbicides on common woodland invasives. She will demonstrate proper techniques, tools, and best practices for herbicide use, and will touch on the benefits of becoming a certified pesticide applicator. **Location:** Building #10, Greene Country Fairgrounds, Waynesburg, PA

September 15 Field Trip **SAT, 1 to 4**

War in the Woods: Controlling Invasives

A field demonstration of spraying techniques, and a practical consideration of attendant issues, in the control of multiflora rose, honeysuckle, barberry, grapevine, olive, et.al. Site: To Be Determined

October 6 Family Picnic **SAT, 1 to.....**

Rain or shine, the annual SWPWO Pig in a Poke. With Field Events.

October 31 Meeting **WED, 7 PM: Washington, PA**

Hobby arboretums: Planting a Sampling of Trees on a Small Plot

Guidance for the property owner of limited acreage who nevertheless is interested in tending and presenting a pleasing variety of trees and woody plants. **Location:** First Floor Meeting Room, Courthouse Square Building, 100 W. Beau Street, Washington, PA. **Free Parking:** enter through the Beau Street B-Level entrance at the base of the Courthouse Square Building

November 3 Field Trip **SAT afternoon, 1 to 4**

The Urban Wood-scape

We will venture to the city of Pittsburgh to take in either Shenley or Frick Arboretums. Philip Gruska, Director of Park Management, Maintenance & Policy with the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, will lead the tour.

Executive Committee for the year 2012

Officers

Gay Thistle - President
Mike Irvin -Vice Pres.
David Cressey- Secretary
Maria Piantanida - Treasurer

Board of Directors

Mark Fajerski
Russell Orme
Raul Chiesa

Advisors

Bill Wentzel Arlyn Perkey
Russell Gibbs - Service Forester, PA Bureau of Forestry

Past Presidents

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 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.

Membership Information

For 2012

Membership dues for 2012 are due by January 30, 2012 and 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 receive a calendar of the 2012 programs and to continue to receive the newsletter.