

SWPWO



May 2005

Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners

Next Meeting: May 11 Invasive Plants of PA

Our next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 11 at 7:00 PM in building #10 at the Greene County fairgrounds. Jason Fuller, from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, will present a program on "Invasive plants- Identification and Control." Some of the plants to be discussed will be giant hogweed, kudzu, multiflora rose, knotweed (Japanese bamboo), mile-a-minute weed, bush honeysuckle, and tree of heaven.

A follow up field trip will be taken to Ryerson Station State Park in western Greene County on Saturday, May 14, to identify invasive weeds as well as birds, wildflowers and trees. Bring your binoculars and identification books and enjoy an afternoon in one of our state parks. We will meet at the state park office at 1:00 PM. The meeting and field trip are free and open to the public. For additional information contact Bill Wentzel at 724-627-6624.

Electric Transmission Rights-of-Way Provide Valuable Wildlife Habitat

It's a place where wildflowers and butterflies flourish, where salamanders feed on insects and

where wild turkeys build their nests. "It's a mecca," says Richard Yahner, Penn State professor of wildlife conservation. Yahner's research has found that electrical rights-of-way, the corridors that carry power lines across the nation, provide a valuable contrast to the wildlife habitat of the surrounding forests. "The rights-of-way create an early successional habitat," Yahner says, "and in many areas of the state, particularly in the north, early successional habitats are at a premium."

Since 1987, Yahner has served as wildlife specialist on State Gamelands 33 Research and Demonstration Project, a 52 year old study that examines right-of-way management methods and their effect on wildlife. He has conducted two bird nesting studies, a small mammal study, an amphibian study, and a butterfly study. Yahner's work concerns electric transmission rights-of-way, not buried pipelines or the strips of vegetation between highways, which are also known as rights-of-way.

According to Jay Jordan, coordinator of Energy for Wildlife, there are about three million acres of high voltage electric transmission rights-of-way in the United States. Energy for Wildlife, a program of the National Wild Turkey Federation,

works with electric companies to help manage rights-of-way for wildlife. Since its inception, almost two million acres have been enrolled. Energy for Wildlife helps companies write and implement a vegetation management plan that focuses on wildlife habitat, soil erosion, water quality, and streamside buffer zones, while still providing safe, reliable energy.

Jordan encourages private forest landowners who have right-of-way on their property to work with their electric company as well. "Many of the companies have cooperative programs. If you agree to control high growth vegetation, the utility company usually provides some kind of monetary assistance," Jordan says. "The landowner gets to manage the right-of-way for their own goals, and the energy company has help controlling the vegetation. However, if the electric company does not know where you are or what you are doing, the next time the vegetation crew comes along, your right -of-way is probably going to get mowed or sprayed. That's been a problem, people are doing it on their land and not telling the company."

Nancy Baker, a private forest landowner in Bradford County, says she values the service her rural electric cooperative provides, but she also wants to make sure the right-of-way is being managed properly. Before each cycle of management, Baker walks the line with the cooperative's right-of-way manager, her Bureau of Forestry service forester, and the subcontractor. "As a landowner, you might not want them to use herbicides. Some do, some don't.

You can mandate that. Several years ago, the cooperative asked to spray a portion of the right-of-way with a tank truck. Since my land is very steep, I said 'no, but you may come through with a backpack sprayer and spray individual plants.' On this subject, I am standing my ground; it is within my rights to do this."

Richard Yahner advises landowners who have high voltage rights-of-way on their property to make sure their electric company uses the wire-border zone method recommended by the Research and Demonstration Project. Yahner explains, "The wire zone includes the width of the power line plus ten feet on each side. If you have the ability to manage your right-of-way, keep anything above the waist out of the wire zone. In the border zone, big trees will eventually be a problem, but not low growing shrubs like mountain laurel, or small trees like dogwood, crab apple, hawthorn and Cercis (redbud). These plants are beautiful and beneficial to wildlife."

"From an aesthetic, wildlife, and economic perspective, why not leave plants that are unlikely to pose a problem in the border zone? Why mow twice as many acres as you need to mow? Why do more than you have to?"

Yahner's preferred method of management is a combination of mowing and selective herbicide use on woody vegetation. Mowing should be done rarely and never during the spring breeding season- from March to July- when nesting wildlife and their young could be harmed. Herbicide use should be restricted to one of the seven types

approved by the Environmental Protection Agency for rights-of-way.

To learn more about Energy for Wildlife, call 1-800-the-nwtf, or visit the National Turkey Federation website at www.nwtf.org

This article was written by Elizabeth Webster and published in "Southwest Forester Newsletter, Spring 2005 and submitted by Bill Wentzel, Service Forester

2005 SWPWO Schedule of Events

May 11 Meeting: "Invasive Plants and their Control". Jason Fuller of the PA Department of Agriculture. 7:00 PM in building #10 at the Greene County Fairgrounds in Waynesburg, PA.

May 14 Field Trip: "Invasive Plant, Tree and Bird Identification" at Ryerson Station State Park in western Greene county. Meet at Ryerson Park office at 1:00 PM

June 11 Summer Tour: "Stream Improvement and Watershed Program" with Melanie Wertz, Watershed Outreach Manager and Suzy Petry, District Conservationist. Ryerson Station State Park in western Greene county. Meet at the park office at 1 PM.

August 6 Summer Tour: "Growing Fruit Trees and Fruit Production" Krenzelak's Fruit Orchard in s. Washington county. Meet at the Old Concord Presbyterian Church parking lot at 12:30 PM.

September 14 meeting: "Timber Sale Issues" Robert McColly and Tony Quadro, Professional Consulting Foresters at 7 PM in Building #10 at the Greene County Fairgrounds in Waynesburg.

September 17th Field Trip: " A Timber Harvest Site" location to be determined. Meet at 12:30 PM at building #10 at the Greene County fairgrounds in Waynesburg.

October 15 SWPWO Picnic
Current SWPWO members only (renew that membership now!) at a time and place to be determined.

Nov. 9 Meeting: " The Microclimate of the Forest" with Dr. Harold Thistle, Program Manager with the U.S. Forest Service and Arlyn Perkey, retired forester from the U.S. Forest Service. 7:00 PM at the Courthouse Square building in Washington, PA.

Nov. 12 Field Trip: Investigating the Forest Microclimate" at Arlyn Perkey's tree farm and Stewardship forest in western Greene county. Meet at the Greene County fairgrounds at 12 noon at Building #10 in Waynesburg or pick up directions at the Nov 9 meeting.

SWPWO field trips usually run from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. For further information call 724-627-6624. Meetings and Field trips are open and free to the public- everyone is invited to attend.

*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.*

Notable Trees: General Sherman

The largest tree in the world resides in California's Sequoia National Park. It is named General Sherman because of its imposing girth which does not appear to taper near the top as other trees of this imposing genus do. The author describes General Sherman by saying "if (this tree) could not claim the world championship for size, he could claim the prize for ugliness." But you can expect this ugliness from a tree which has seen more than a thousand winters. General Sherman was discovered in 1879. In 1921, surveyors took careful measurements (which are surprisingly accurate, even against modern day lasers) and granted General Sherman the honor of being the largest tree. It has a height of 274 feet- which is not the tallest sequoia. However combined with its 85 foot girth, the overall volume is 55,040 cubic- feet.

Submitted by Gay Thistle. Ref: Remarkable Trees of the World by Thomas Pakenham

Executive Committee for the year 2005

Officers

Harold Thistle- President
Bob Daley - Vice Pres.
Nadine Obermiller- Secretary
Ed Hartman- Treasurer

Board of Directors

George Marichek
Max Loughman
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Advisors

Bill Wentzel` Arlyn Perkey

SWPWO Meeting Summary: Landowner Property Rights

On Wednesday night April 13th SWPWO was happy to host Tom Buchele, Esq. and his law student from the Environmental Law Clinic at the University of Pittsburgh. These speakers clarified the rights of Pennsylvania landowners with regards to hunters, trespassers and berry pickers to name just a few of the scenarios discussed. Though anyone has the right to sue anyone, the picture painted by the speakers was one of fairly limited liability of landowners. For instance, if you are not charging for access to your land, you are generally not liable if a dead tree falls on someone on your property or if a hunter injures himself or another hunter on your land. If you have known hazards on your land, such as open mine shafts, it is prudent to mark such hazards, and the landowner will always be liable for harm from intentional booby traps such as wires to snare four wheelers etc. As was pointed out over the course of the evening, not having liability does not mean you can't be sued and this is a problem as legal fees can be substantial and insurance companies often settle to avoid costly court cases. The lawyers also emphasized that laws change and legal precedents change so legal opinions given today may soon be obsolete. The session was extremely enlightening and we greatly appreciated the effort expended by the Law Clinic to bring us this presentation. *Submitted by Harold Thistle*

SWPWO Field Trip: Tree Planting

On Saturday, April 16th, John Burnham benefited from some cheap labor as SWPWO members met at John's place in southern Washington County to receive pointers on planting trees from Arlyn Perkey and Bill Wentzel. John had obtained 25 red oaks and the group planted the trees after tutelage from our esteemed instructors. An emphasis was placed on digging a large enough hole so that the roots are not restricted when planted. It is almost imperative when planting oaks in this area to plan on planting inside of tree tubes for protection from deer browse. Some choices of tubes were shown but 60" solid tubes are preferred here. Preferably a plot two or three feet square around the planting is cleared of competing vegetation, either chemically or mechanically. Biodegradable mulch mats can also be purchased to keep down competing vegetation. John got a new grove of seedlings and Gay Thistle got a roaring case of poison ivy. (She is auditioning for the SciFi channel as I write.) All in all, a good time was had by all.

Submitted by Harold Thistle

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 expected to be paid by January in order to ensure a timely receipt of the newsletter and notice of the next meeting. To join, please send name, address and phone number to:

SWPWO
195 E., High St
Waynesburg, PA 15370

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